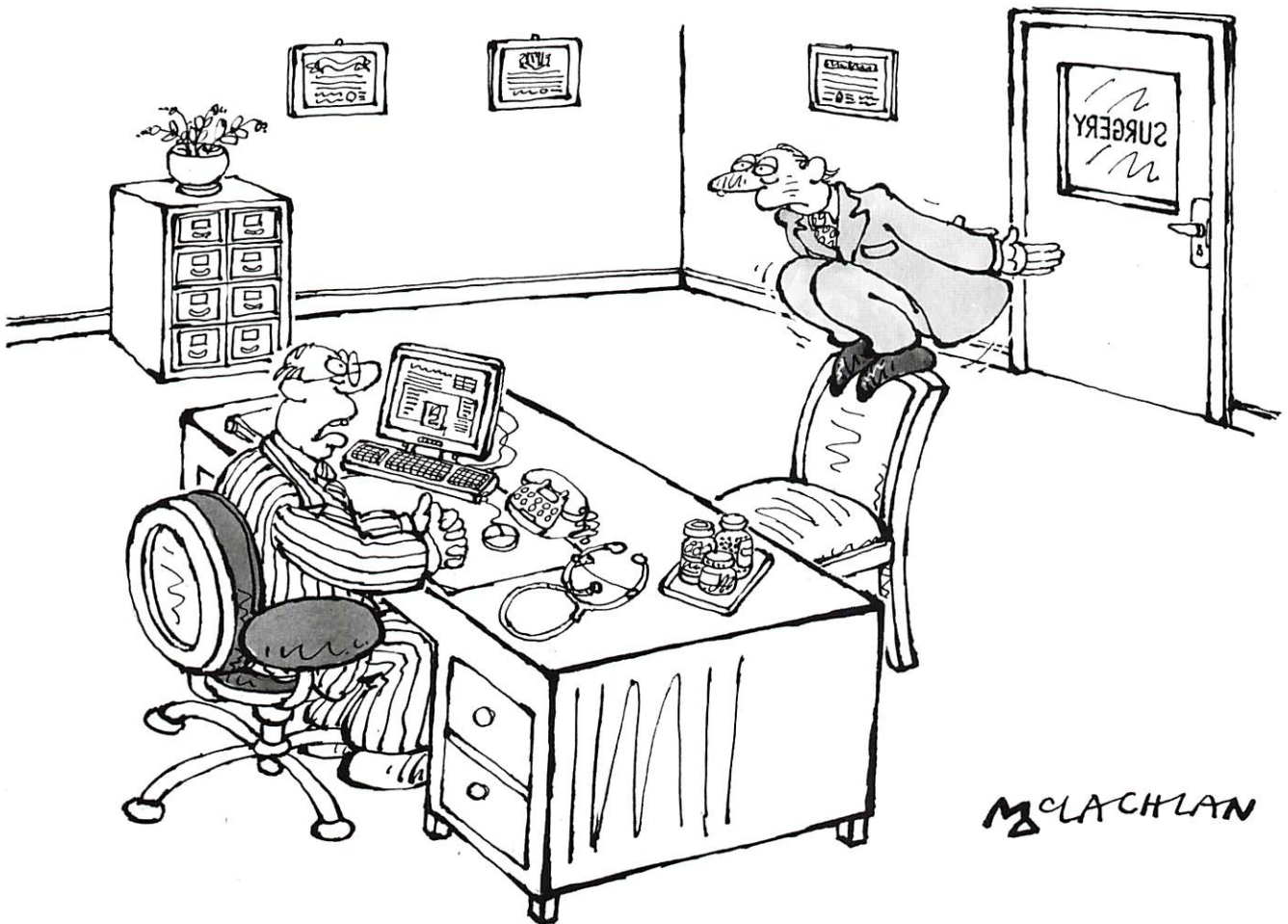


# The Salisbury Review

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought

"So you think you may have caught this bird flu, Mr Dregley."



McLACHLAN

## Admitted to Mayhem

**A Week in an NHS Ward**

*George Gittos*

**Tyrants & Sorcery**

*Sophie Masson*

**Conduct & Belief**

*Theodore Dalrymple*

**Looking for a New Carnegie**

*Marc Sidwell*

**America's New Chapter**

*Amol Rajan*

**Tory Heroine**

*Alistair Cooke*

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(The Salisbury Review after 25 years)

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# The Salisbury Review

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'I cannot fiddle but I can make a great state out of a little city.' Themistocles.

Ferocious protests from the Left greeted the appearance of the *Salisbury Review* in 1982. Fury erupted at the audacity of publishing a journal which not only challenged the Left's 'smelly little orthodoxies', but did so with intellectual brilliance and panache. High intelligence could never, in their view, be associated with the 'stupid party'.

In 1984 leftists saw their opportunity to brand us as a racist, fascist organ when the headmaster of Bradford Middle school, Ray Honeyford, wrote in our pages how multicultural educational policies were ghettoising thousands of immigrant school children in Bradford. Denied a traditional British education, they were being brought up without a knowledge of the history and traditions of their adopted country, and in consequence faced a lifetime as internal aliens. Honeyford was forced out of his job for writing the article, but the *Salisbury Review* put its finger on a growing political abscess the left has never been able to lance. How can uncontrolled immigration and multiculturalism be reconciled with a stable social fabric? Too late, but at last today pundits, including Trevor Phillips, admit that multiculturalism is not only unworkable but dangerous.

In quieter times our lot is to be ignored rather than openly reviled by the Left-leaning intelligentsia. This is the reason why the *Salisbury Review* is still undeservedly unknown. Although for those readers who do know us the compensation for the *Review's* small circulation is the quality of its contributors and subscribers. Famous names grace our pages but we keep an open house; the magazine benefits from writers who are not professional journalists but have a story to tell, an important argument to make and who often speak from the heart as well as the head. Modern magazine publishing requires a lot of money to reach a mass readership. To put a journal like the *Salisbury Review* into the shops would cost £13,000 a year and would require a minimum print run of 30,000. That is quite beyond us. Advertising is also too expensive.

Instead, while some other magazines and think-tanks enjoy generous subventions, the *Salisbury Review*, which insists that there are other things in economic and political

life apart from the free market, relies on subscriptions, occasional donations from generous friends and people discovering it by chance. It is these, and our loyal readers, who are the secret of our continuing existence.

We rely on the dedicated, voluntary commitment of our editorial board who meet four times a year but email and telephone each other frequently. Distribution used to take place in the Managing Editor's home with two or three helpers but this is now done more efficiently by the printer. This still leaves a great deal of work: maintaining the data base, chasing subscriptions and potential contributors, keeping accounts, preparing the magazine for publication and many other tasks, all of which take up more than half a working week. The Internet has been a valuable tool and we are grateful to our readers who have embraced it. It has halved the effort of putting the magazine together, facilitated subscriptions through Paypal and hopefully spread the word.

This year will be a difficult one for us as for many others. New Labour has successfully engineered the destruction of Britain — and the country may now face not only bankruptcy, but internal unrest and the elimination of traditions which inspired the democratic world. Cameron's Conservative Party appears to be no more than New Labour's shadow, interested in power without principles not principles with power. *The Salisbury Review* must provide a platform for all those questions that people are afraid to ask. Why are the bankers who stole the nation's savings being rewarded by the government rather than enjoying our jails? Why are millions of people who have no right to our social security funds being allowed to plunder them? Why have we lost the right of *habeas corpus*, and what new restrictions on free speech, even travel, are likely to be imposed on us. There are many battles ahead, some of them not for the faint hearted.

How can you help? By maintaining your subscription, by paying on the internet, by giving your copy of the magazine to friends and by identifying and encouraging prospective subscribers, by asking your library, club or association to subscribe. Please e-mail or write to the Managing Editor and we will send copies. Remember together 'we may not be able to fiddle but we can make a great state out of a little city.'

# A week in the Gloucester Royal Hospital

George Gittos

**G**unfire!' This Royal Artillery command has only ever been given once, at the opening of the Battle of El Alamein. Normal orders require the number of rounds to be specified. This scrap of information came my way as a young artillery officer many years ago, and has lodged in my mind ever since. Some years later I looked down over Gloucester for the first time and my eyes fell on Gloucester's magnificent cathedral, an astonishing assertion of man's pursuit of the divine. A little to one side, rose up the huge ugly brown tower of what I later discovered to be Gloucester Royal Hospital. Mentally, I immediately set about the business of deploying a battery on guns on my hillside. After a few ranging shots, I gave the order, Gunfire, and sat back with a feeling of a job well done as my battery of trusty guns reduced the monster to rubble. A few weeks later I came across the vista of Gloucester's Shire Hall from the river side. It is another unforgivably ugly building and I wondered if I had not been a little unfair to the hospital. I have pondered the choice often since.

Recently I have had the misfortune to be incarcerated on the seventh floor of the Brown Tower. Unfortunately I became quite ill in the early hours of the morning. My wife called an ambulance which was despatched to come and get me. Now we live in a remote part of the Forest of Dean, with many steep and narrow single-track roads. The response of the ambulance team was magnificent. Two able young men appeared in a relatively short time, carried out some tests, bundled me into the ambulance and set off. The slopes were such that the vehicle could not cope. The local farmer halted his morning milking to come and haul us out. The job was well done.

Arriving at the A & E Department at first light I was mildly troubled by the sight of a furtive group taking a crafty cigarette by the parking pay machine, and a litter of fag ends about. Once inside I was immediately surrounded by an able team, who set about determining what was wrong. It seems I had lost a great deal of blood, and I was swiftly hooked up to a blood supply and a drip. By this time my wife had caught up with us. She was treated with courtesy and consideration and given such information as was available. After some further discussion it was determined that I needed to be

shipped off to Cheltenham for radiotherapy treatment. Ambulances appeared, and off I went through the evening rush hour. Treatment was swift and efficient, after which I was shipped back to the Brown Tower.

Suddenly everything changed. I was no longer an emergency in the care of the professionals. I became a product being processed through the system. The awful and brutish reality of the NHS descended. On arriving in a ward the first thing that strikes you is the profusion of notices and signs, most of which are written out on A4 and then fixed to the wall. I cannot say how I was classified. This was not evident from my five fellow patients. One was able to communicate but chose not to. Two were so ill that they were in a more or less permanent stupor, a third was ga-ga, and prone to call out at all hours of the day and night. All three were seriously incontinent. The fifth was addicted to television and never turned it off. Noise was more or less continuous, coming mostly from the staff or the phones. Fortunately my son brought me in an i-pod to blot out the noise. However late night Beethoven at full tilt does not make for good sleep. Sleep was just not an option. Opposite me on the wall the biggest sign of all read 'Quiet Please'.

The food was a disgrace. No sign of fresh food — all dull grey mass-produced rubbish supplied by a subsidiary of an international food giant. Beverages came from the same source — grim beyond words. No doubt some sharp young catering executive had been given instructions to get a good price. The drinking water stank of chemicals and the service was truculent. Scurvy seemed a real risk. The family shipped in supplies of clean water, juices and fruits.

More alarming was the hygiene or the lack of it. Cleaning was carried out by a young operative carefully rigged in disposable plastic overall and rubber gloves, armed with a tissue and a bottle of spray. Odd surfaces here and there were given a wipe — not the windowsill and not the much prodded TV. Never once did I see a wet mop and bucket in action in the patients' areas, although one did appear in the staff corridor along with the statutory notice. Not a single item of furniture was shifted. Two vacuum cleaners made a showing. One lacked an air filter, and the other was an impressive machine with a great powerful dome at its base. Such

was its size that it was impossible to get it under the beds. In the seedy Day Room the windows were filthy — inside and out. Fixed to each window a rectangle of dirty, faded, brown Selotape betrayed the existence of a former notice. I could not help wondering what it had written on it. 'Don't Jump!' perhaps?

The toilet facilities were functionally efficient but barely adequate and lacked any ventilation beyond the door. The WC was of the pull chain variety, the handle of which struck me as a source of infection. The room sported the usual crop of notices, usually about bed pan drills. One notice helpfully informed me that the water in the tap was at 60°C. There seemed no means of testing this claim. Conspicuous by its absence was a notice on the NHS policy on mirror heights. In the absence of any evident policy some bright spark had fixed a small mirror at waistband height above the sink. I am a tall man and so had to get down on my knees to see in it to shave. Even a small man would have had the same problem. Rigged up to a mobile drip, this manoeuvre took some doing. I was probably the only one there fit enough anyway.

I realized with horror that the weekend approached and the whole system would go into sleep mode. I began a release campaign.

'Get me out of here!'

'Not possible without signed chitty'

'Get the chitty signed!'

'No one about with the authority'

'Get hold of my consultant!'

'Will see what we can do' — which means 'I'll leave a message, but I'm going off duty now.'

'Get me a private room!'

'No one about to sign the chitty — very difficult procedure.'

I finally got hold of my consultant who turned up Monday at midday and released me.

The staff were for the most part trying to do a good job, trying to stick to a job description and provide some sort of care in a miasma of instructions and information most of which was in conflict with other bits of information. Nobody was in charge. Most of the staff were obviously fulfilling the elements of their job description, carrying out the laid down procedures and recording every action in detail. If all the forms were filled and all the boxes ticked, the job is seen as having been completed to plan, and the organisation can protect itself against any prospective complaint or litigation. It is a most impressive defence system designed for the benefit of the organisation, not the patients. Most of the patients display an air of impotent resignation. It is an extremely miserable place.

The problem was self evident and obvious. It is not a question of money. This is a problem of management

and leadership. Quite clearly nobody was in charge. If there is somebody nominally in charge they clearly lack the support and authority to effect the required changes. In the absence of management, a tick the box system devised by third-rate lawyers has evolved. The most critical piece of equipment in the modern NHS is the ballpoint pen. Without these the system would seize up within an hour.

Leading, directing, motivating, and inspiring a team are critical skills. The vital component is leadership. Leadership requires authority. One without the other will always fail. Authority may be effected through a variety of styles, but it must be there, and it must be recognised. Authority may be delegated but it may never be shared. Neither can the responsibility that goes with it. The NHS has chosen to ignore this and rely on a system. The leader may come from any discipline — be it medical or managerial. Any good leader will surround himself with subordinates or advisors who complement his skills and compensate for his weaknesses. That is the art of management.

Big organisations need not be badly managed, but there comes a stage when the sheer size and complexity of the organisation renders it effectively unmanageable. The NHS passed that point years ago. Decisions are made so far away from the point at which they will be implemented, that all decisions become inappropriate because they relate to an average and not a specific on the ground. Funding may be a national problem and should be raised nationally. It does not follow from that that delivery of the service should be controlled nationally. Service is a local and variable requirement and needs to be controlled locally. The much trumpeted call for an end to what the press calls 'the post code lottery' is a particularly witless demand. Local variability is what any good system requires.

It is not difficult to devise solutions provided we enable those close to the local problem to design their system, give them the money and the authority and responsibility to get on with it. Any centrally imposed system with its guidelines and targets will be wrong. What on earth is the point of national wage scales? They are precisely what we don't need. Audit inspections can keep an eye on the funds. The state monopoly sector suffers from a fatal disability. It is denied the option and the threat of the liquidator. Once created the organisation becomes immortal. Sloth and incompetence deserve their natural reward. Obsolete structures can be pulled down, redesigned and reinvigorated. The change requires only the political will.

In the meantime, 'Gunfire!' Shire Hall will have to wait.

*George Gittos formerly ran his own market research company specialising in the licenced trade.*

# America's New Chapter

Amol Rajan

Barack Obama will be a failure by almost every conceivable measure, but posterity may nevertheless rank him in the top league of Presidents. This is not just because of the charming improbability of his biography. More than any leader of the free world since Franklin Roosevelt, History has dealt him a favourable hand. His second term in office already seems likely, because Americans will take a long time to blame their sluggish economy on him rather than George W Bush.

This does not detract from his deserved victory: this son of a Kenyan scholar ran the most disciplined campaign in modern times, using technology with genius and enduring immense personal strain with fortitude. Bush's unpopularity made Obama's vacuous message of Change resonate, but his defeat of John McCain owed still more to a calm temperament and superior intellect. In achieving victory he conquered America's greatest living hero shortly after imposing a similar fate on its most powerful political machine, the Clintons.

Already the Republican Party is exhibiting a degree of self-flagellation not seen since Richard Nixon narrowly lost to John F Kennedy in 1960. Talk in the *National Review* is of a coming Democratic generation. The most vogueish book by a conservative intellectual in 2008 was a manifesto called *Comeback: Conservatism that can win again*. Billionaire businessmen are deserting the Republicans in favour of their new friends from the other side. If this is the start of a new era in American politics, it is because of three related but distinct inheritances: a fundamental but reversible change in attitude to government; a fading in the relevance of the 1960s; and an exhausted Republican brand in need of intellectual and administrative renewal.

It was difficult, standing twenty metres from the tall, slender Senator in Chicago's Grant Park last November 4th, not to feel in the grip of profound historical forces. I was in the gargantuan press area when, half a mile away, gates opened and 70,000 members of the public were allowed to run into the main section of the Park, each seeking as close a view as possible of Obama's victory speech. Onrushing hordes, like so many

wildebeest eyeing a salt-free lake after a particularly harsh drought, battled to be closest to their new hero. A wall of skyscrapers, many of them abandoned before completion because of shrivelling credit, formed an exquisite backdrop. Giant, fluorescent letters U, S, and A beamed across them. Above us helicopters aimed their spotlights among the crowd, illuminating a mist that gave Chicago more than a passing resemblance to Gotham City. In front of us, and behind Obama, the vastness of Lake Michigan unfolded.

The irony was that to students of American history (even those as young as me) it was all eerily familiar. Grant Park, on this night the stage for the supposed rebirth of American liberalism, had four decades previously been handmaiden to its death. The anti-Vietnam riots of August 28th 1968, taking place just metres away from the site of the Democratic convention and culminating in the arrest of a hippy who

climbed a flagpole and started lowering the American flag, helped solidify a countrywide suspicion of the Democrats, who lost seven of the next ten elections. American presidents are always voted in

mainly because they are the more believable provider of economic security. The scenes in Grant Park back then sanctified the growing impression that Democrats were synonymous with social upheaval and economic disorder. A fussy east Coast elite, breeding these crazed hippy kids, could not satisfy the American yearning for stability. Ronald Reagan's message that 'We the people are the driver, the government is the car', resonated because, in contrast, it offered the possibility of control.

Today, as we stare into the abyss of what might be a 21st century Depression, Republicans have become synonymous with chaos and insecurity. The second Bush has personified fiscal mismanagement. America's recent wealth originates in a myth of ever-expanding asset prices and, once this deceptive coil has painfully unwound, nobody knows what will replace it. The free market associated with rampant excess and private gain (of which there has been an enormous but over-localised amount) is considered hostile to public order. Bernie Madoff is considered the *zeitgeist* made flesh.

This attitude is, of course very immature, for

*his defeat of John McCain owed still more to a calm temperament and superior intellect. In achieving victory he conquered America's greatest living hero shortly after imposing a similar fate on its most powerful political machine, the Clintons.*

capitalism needs defending urgently now. But Americans have come to a position advanced, with characteristic cogency, by John Gray in his 1994 essay *The Undoing of Conservatism*. 'It is a general truth', wrote Gray, 'that, when they are disembedded from any context of common life, and emancipated from political constraints, market forces — especially when they are global — work to unsettle communities and delegitimize traditional institutions'. This assertion now seems prophetic for America where it has recently become orthodoxy. Bush is thought to have sponsored a kind of reckless market fundamentalism. In response, for the first time in several decades, government is seen as a warm blanket of security. Long suspicious of centralised power, Americans suddenly feel moved to embrace it.

Partly because he seems to embody responsibility, and openly talks about it (for example when he tells black Americans not to abandon their children, as his father did), Obama is able to make the link between government and economic stability explicit. He acquired an insurmountable lead in the polls when the collapse of Lehman Brothers pushed the economy even more clearly to the top of voter concerns and many young Americans to whom the sixties are increasingly irrelevant favoured him by a huge margin

It is difficult for many amateur observers to understand the significance

of that decade on the American psyche. It can hardly be overstated. Yet in 2008 its relevance lay chiefly in Obama and McCain's having missed it. The former was just emerging from diapers; the latter was having his arms stretched in the Hanoi Hilton. Consequently, this election offered Americans the chance to move on, not just from Grant Park in 1968, but from the whole ethos of 'positive polarisation' started by Pat Buchanan, Richard Nixon's chief strategist, two years earlier. Republican politics has for four decades attempted to split America in two, knowing it would have the bigger half, and has used the culture wars of the 1960s to do so. This is true even of the Reagan era. The template was Nixon's campaign against George McGovern in 1972.

When in doubt, Republicans revert to the most divisive issues thrown up by that decade: guns, God, and abortion, so when he knew he was losing, McCain chose Sarah Palin, a wholly inadequate candidate (though she may not be in 2012). Such issues matter in America, but less than they used to. The culture wars are a national memory beyond the experience of many new voters, especially in the swing states. Increasingly,

*When in doubt, Republicans revert to the most divisive issues thrown up by that decade: guns, God, and abortion, so when he knew he was losing, McCain chose Sarah Palin, a wholly inadequate candidate*

they find such issues boring, and prefer the idea of national unity. It might have been trite, but Obama's line about America being composed not of blue states or red states but united states was effective. David Frum, the Canadian author of *Comeback*, mentioned above, has told *The New Yorker*: 'Republicans have been reprising Nixon's 1972 campaign against McGovern for a third of a century. As the excesses of the 1960s have dwindled into history, however, the 1972 campaign has worked less and less well'.

The central thesis of Frum's book is not only that Republicans continue to ignore the issues of today, but that America's demographic destiny hugely favours the Democrats. American voting intentions used to form a bell shape: the poor and the rich voted Democrat, but the majority in the middle leaned right. In 2008, however, the graph forms a straight line: the richer you are, the more likely you are to vote Democrat. The middle classes are fleeing leftward at a time when ever more voting Americans are college educated and earning strong salaries — that is, becoming middle class. America's population, meanwhile, is changing and becoming irreversibly younger and less white. Young people and immigrants leaned heavily towards the Democrats even before a 47 year-old black man became their President.

As Frum and the writer David Brooks are constantly urging their fellow conservatives, if Republicans

wish to resurrect themselves, they must appeal to the instincts of these new voters by talking about issues — like healthcare and the environment — which they have long avoided. They must talk less about the 1960s. This requires new faces, new ideas, and new leadership, very little of which is presently forthcoming. For all their current self-doubt, Republicans won't forget that America remains a deeply conservative country. Despite Bush, Katrina, Iraq, and economic catastrophe, 46 per cent of Americans voted against Obama. Partly because he knows how conservative America is, his initial appointments have been in the mould of a pragmatic anti-ideologue and he will govern as a centrist. There is no point portraying him as a dangerous left-winger. Doing so would only reinforce the recklessness with which Republicans have become associated. Their task now is to restore the link between conservatism and stability, and wake up to the fact that America has changed while they have not.

*Amol Rajan is a reporter at the Independent*

# Tyrants and Sorcery

Sophie Masson

**T**yrants create their own twisted reality, and force their people to live inside the dictator's skull, and inside his own private drama, endlessly re-enacting it. So complete can this process be that it gives an occult impression: that of a spell cast over an entire country by a master sorcerer. When the tyrant is overthrown or dies, it is as if an entire population is liberated from the spell — there is much relief, but also much surprise — and shame — at being held in thrall for so long.

Of course, this image is the stock-in-trade of a great many fairy and folk tales, legends and in our time, fantasy fiction. It is stock-in-trade because it has a psychological resonance which cannot be denied. But it's more than just metaphor. Astonishingly, many tyrants have used 'real' magical powers and psychic tools not only to control their people, but to gauge and manipulate their own destinies. Tyrants aren't the only ones with an interest in parapsychology and magic applied to government policy; democratic governments have also run projects investigating the possibilities of using psychics in intelligence work. But tyrants have been keen on the whole idea of using the sorcerer's talents, as well as the secret policeman's, the torturer's, and the informer's. Tyrants are instinctive manipulators, but not necessarily analytical, and often do not understand their own rise to, and hold, on power. So they place a great deal of stress on the notion of 'Providence', which has ordained their destiny, and protects them, but which must also be placated.

The pre-eminent modern example of the sorcerer's realm was Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Most people are familiar with the details of the repressive state apparatus and vicious practices by which the dictator of Iraq and his cronies kept their hold over Iraq for decades. But few know that Hussein, his family and his circle not only believed in magic, but used it both to promote superstitious fear in Iraqis, and to also try and 'second-guess' their opponents and protect their own destinies.

Magic has a strange place in Muslim countries. Its practice, but certainly not its existence, is denied by fundamentalist Muslims — as it's mentioned several times in the Koran, as being a very real force, it cannot be discounted, but is discouraged (and in some places suspected magicians are in danger of death). Despite this, many ordinary Muslims frequent magicians, faith-healers, fortune-tellers, and many other practitioners of magical arts. There is, like anywhere else, a distinction made between good and bad magic, most of which is carried out using the intervention of either angels or jinn (genies) — the latter being seen as much less reliable than angels,

being habitual liars and mischief-makers. Nevertheless, jinn (who can be compared to both fairies and demons in Western imagery — some are good, some bad, some merely highly unpredictable) are considered to be easier to use by ordinary magicians. The belief in such magic cuts across all social classes: though it's more common amongst the less well educated, even educated people often hedge their bets.

Saddam Hussein always believed in magic. His mother, Sabha, was a peasant woman who sometimes worked as a fortune-teller. Saddam himself was supposed to have inherited some of his mother's psychic gifts, and was reputed to have had modest success in 'studying the sands' (a form of fortune-telling) and summoning jinn to do his bidding. Many people in Iraq believed that he had seven jinns to protect him, and that he spoke daily with the king and queen of the jinn, who advised him. He ordered Baghdad University to set up a department of parapsychology, to investigate methods to use in the Iran-Iraq war, and later to 'mind-read' UN inspectors searching for WMDs in Iraq.

He also personally patronised magicians of all kinds, and had a rotating circle of favourite magicians — including not only Iraqis, but a French Arab, a Turk, a Chinese, a Japanese and an Indian magician, and a beautiful Jewish witch from Morocco. His personal magician, interviewed by a reporter from the *Washington Post* in Baghdad in 2003, before Saddam's capture, said that most of his work for the Hussein family involved 'mostly issues of love, faithfulness and sexual prowess.' Saddam's oldest son Uday — who was also a firm believer in magic — scouted very actively for magicians and other psychics to come and work for the Hussein family, and advertised on his own TV station for such practitioners to come forward. It wasn't a comfortable post to be in; if Uday or other family members took exception to a prediction or a spell, you might well be imprisoned or even executed. (The magician interviewed by the *Washington Post* was even imprisoned for six months because Saddam suspected his own wife, no doubt angry with his womanising, had paid the magician to cast a spell to hurt the dictator's leg.)

One or more of these sorcerers had made Saddam a special talisman, a magic stone which he wore either around his neck, or had had implanted under the skin of his arm, depending on who you listened to. This stone made him invulnerable, and meant he could not be killed. Indeed the dictator survived several assassination attempts (including one by Mossad, which is regarded in almost

supernatural terms by many people in the Middle East), countless plots, the Iran-Iraq war, the first Gulf War, and even the second Gulf War. His survival could only add fuel to the image of Saddam the Sorcerer, arch-manipulator of all kinds of forces, and best not meddled with. Many believers in Saddam's magic powers were profoundly shocked by the TV images of the Master of Magicians being pulled, haggard and dirty, from his hiding place by US forces, but still feared to the last that he would somehow escape his fate by a call on the supernatural forces that had protected him for so long.

As well as being surrounded by images of traditional magic, Saddam Hussein was also the focus of UFO stories. These stories suggested that as well as housing magicians in his palaces, Saddam had some extraterrestrial guests as well — aliens rescued from a crashed UFO that had landed in the desert. These aliens had taught Saddam and his scientists some amazing bio-technology, including the capacity to bio-engineer a race of giant scorpions that Saddam employed as watchdogs outside weapons facilities, and as killing machines. Some conspiracy circles claimed that the Iraq war was 'really' because Saddam, with his magic powers and his contacts with extraterrestrials, had access to 'stargates' to the so-called 'Planet X', or 'Nibiru', a planet reputedly beyond Pluto which is supposed to be the home of the 'Elohim', otherwise known as angels.

If Saddam Hussein's court of fortune-tellers, soothsayers and sorcerers was like something out of full-bore Dark Lord style fantasy fiction, then his fellow tyrant, the mercurial North Korean Kim Jong-Il, has fashioned himself an image and a narrative more familiar from Marvel comics and superhero movies. 'Superstition', as in traditional magic, is officially decried in Communist North Korea; but defectors have painted a picture of a population, which in its despair and chaos has turned increasingly to '*jeomjaengi*' (fortune-tellers) and exorcists. These practices are officially tolerated. Indeed, many North Korean officials now frequently consult *jeomjaengi* themselves. Meanwhile, 'Dear Leader' is a firm believer in all kinds of prophecies and signs: learning that it had been said that one of a triplet would one day replace him, he has had all triplets born in North Korea taken from their parents and put in State orphanages where they can be carefully watched. His fixation with the significance of his own birthday, February 16th, has led him to use the numbers '2' and '16' wherever possible, including on his many cars.

Kim Jong-Il has a great love of magic, particularly of the illusionist kind. He patronises various stage magicians in North Korea, and favours beautiful, leggy girl magicians, who put on private shows for him and his closest cronies. His favourite magician, though, is Japanese: the celebrated Princess Tenko. Once a singer

named Marie Akose, the strikingly beautiful, gothically-clad magician became apprentice to a noted Japanese sorcerer, Tenko Hikida, in 1976, and took on the name Princess Tenko after his death. She is famous not only in Asia but all over the world, for her amazing razzmatazz shows, which have been described as 'Madame Butterfly meets Star Wars'.

Kim Jong-Il's obsession with Princess Tenko led to a bizarre international incident. After he managed to entice her and her staff to Pyongyang to perform in a festival some years ago, he invited her back every year. On such a visit to North Korea a few years ago, Princess Tenko fell ill. The North Koreans then attempted to hold her in the country, using her illness as an excuse, and it was feared they would kidnap her, as they had kidnapped some prominent South Korean film-makers some years before. Princess Tenko managed to escape, with help from her embassy; but since then, Japanese newspapers have reported, she has been harassed by hundreds of mysterious phone calls, always at 2.16 pm (note Kim Jong-Il's magic numbers) which attempt to entice her back to North Korea and the 'Dear Leader' who misses her so.

Kim Jong-Il has the typical tyrant's pretensions to artistic creativity, and he is the composer of several operas and books on art criticism. He is an avid film-watcher, with tens of thousands of videos and DVDs. If Saddam Hussein's favourite films were *The Godfather* and conspiracy movies such as *Enemy of the State*, Kim Jong-Il's tastes run more to the gung-ho superhero style: the modern version of the demi-god with semi-divine powers who overcomes all enemies. He loves the Rambo movies, for example — but his favourites are the James Bond films. He has expensive James Bond tastes in wine, cigars, and lovely girls and projects himself as his country's 007, battling innumerable enemies with style and amazing powers. He must have thought the James Bond narratives were tailor-made to his image, which would have made the shock even greater when he saw the last Pierce Brosnan Bond film, *Die Another Day*. The whimsical tyrant's dangerous nuclear brinkmanship at the time might have been triggered by his sense of personal betrayal over the portrayal of North Korea in *Die Another Day*. Raging that the film 'clearly showed that the US is the root cause of all disasters and misfortune of the Korean nation and is an empire of evil,' he demonstrated the tyrant's absolute belief in the complete permeability of fact and fiction. In a hermetically sealed world such as Kim Jong-Il's, a fictional superhero's deeds are more real than the fate of his own people.

Nowhere does the horrible nexus between tyranny, sorcery and violence emerge more clearly than in the devastated continent of Africa. Two generations after the end of colonialism, and a decade after the defeat of Communism ended interest in *realpolitik* intervention, the

continent is in the grip of what for many of its inhabitants is a nightmare without end. The human landscape is all too often like something imagined by Hieronymus Bosch. Death and bloody tyranny stalk defenceless populations; convulsions of nihilistic hatred slaughter millions, as in Darfur and Rwanda and Congo; corruption at the highest levels entrenches grinding misery and poverty; the mass movement of people to the cities empties the countryside and turns towns into fetid, crime-ridden slums. AIDS has cut deeply into the population in a way not seen anywhere in the world since the horror of the Black Death in 14<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. Meanwhile, African leaders show little real leadership; in the worst cases, as in Zimbabwe and Sudan, they wage war against their own people. In other places, as in Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia, they simply fight their rivals, using ordinary people as their battlefields. In the least worst places, like South Africa, they are too weak to show any moral leadership in any forum, except in rhetoric.

Against this background of anarchy, tyranny and death, an old evil has been making rapid progress. The rapid and cataclysmic breakdown of African society has meant that, just as in Europe's calamitous 14th century, all kinds of inhibitions and beliefs have broken down. The belief in the optimism of Christianity; in its capacity for reform, and its possibilities of hope is still important to many Africans, but it is turning into something very different from its original form. Beliefs and practices long gone, or at least repressed, are returning with a vengeance. As traditional society, with its traditional safeguards, has disappeared, only the most terrifying and ruthless of the ancient beliefs flourish. People feel entirely at the mercy of malevolent forces, which many believe to be orchestrated by demonic entities in league with human witches. In the Congo, for instance, children are being named as 'witches' by their own families and cast out, leaving thousands homeless; the hunting down and killing of witches is common in South Africa. In Zimbabwe, President Mugabe once said that 'goblins will be unleashed upon you' if the Opposition won in an election — the implication being both that the Opposition were witches capable of calling up goblins, and that Mugabe's Government was capable of doing so: thus playing terror from both ends. Recently his Government has amended the country's Witchcraft Act, which made it both illegal to practise witchcraft *and* to accuse someone of practising witchcraft, or to solicit others to 'name witches'. It's no longer illegal to *accuse* someone of witchcraft; only the practice of sorcery is banned. Hitherto African Christians condemned both witches and witch-hunters; today many Christians, as well as many 'traditional healers' who practise the more benign forms of magic, strongly support the changes.

Not only the witch-hunters are coming back but terrifying old forms of sorcery, long thought dead and

buried, have reappeared. Ritual murder is now practised to such an extent that the South African police now have an Occult Crimes Unit — the first of its kind in the world, which gave advice to British police when the limbless torso of a young African boy, the victim of sorcerous murder, was discovered in the Thames a few years ago. The Unit deals with extremely gruesome cases — like the spate of mutilation murders of Soweto boys aged between 1 and 6, traced to a ring of sorcerers who were making 'prosperity' or 'virility' spells for their clients. The motives for the ghastly tortures and deaths of innocents are often shockingly mundane. In Zimbabwe, would-be businessmen wanting to take advantage of the Government's freeing-up of the transport system, employed sorcerers to make spells for them so that they would be able to get a minibus and run it successfully. The spells are designed to conjure up a goblin, or demon, who will work for you to make it possible. And the goblin must be fed fresh human blood and organs — preferably those of little children. And so there was a rash of disappearances of poor or orphaned children. The sorcerers and their clients always prey on the most vulnerable. In Zimbabwe, too, there was the 'vampire sorcerer' case of the farm invaders who killed a farmer, drained his blood and, mixing it with alcohol, drank it as a potent potion. In Malawi, there's talk of vampires terrorising the countryside. In Mozambique, just as in South Africa and Zimbabwe, dozens of children have disappeared, to be used in hideous rituals, their pitiful remains found in rubbish dumps. And in Nigeria, ghastly discoveries were made recently at a secret forest shrine: mutilated limbs and heads offered at an altar; and these 'obeah' murders, as they're known there, even crossed the seas with expatriate populations, to Britain and to Ireland, where separate cases of ritual murder have been uncovered. It's not hard to see why, for many Africans, this is the hand of Lucifer at work.

In the 14th century, the nobleman Gilles de Rais, a great warrior and a personal friend of the martyred Joan of Arc, turned violently against God, the Church, and all human decency because of what had happened to Joan. He would, he said, worship the Devil who he was now convinced was the true ruler of the world. The resulting reign of terror, in which he kidnapped and murdered dozens of local children, ritually offering them to Satan before finally being unmasked and put to death, has never left the folk consciousness of France: he lives on in French children's nightmares as Bluebeard. Something like that is happening all over Africa to hundreds and thousands of victims.

*Sophie Masson's new novel The Madman of Venice will be published in April. This article was first published in Quadrant.*

# Conduct and Belief

Theodore Dalrymple

What connection, if any, is there between political belief and private conduct? Do those who espouse the highest principle or love of humanity behave best or worst? It is in vain that we look in human affairs for unbreakable rules, for laws as binding as those of gravity. But the impossibility of finding such rules or laws should not, indeed, cannot, inhibit us entirely from making generalisations. Whatever generalisations we frame may have to be revised in the light of experience, but generalise we must.

I was provoked into thinking about the connection between political belief and private conduct by something I read in *The Observer*. American authors were asked to comment on President Bush's legacy, and not surprisingly they had not a good thing to say about him. A man who leaves office after eight years with two unresolved wars for his successor to resolve, and an economic crisis of a huge, and unprecedented scale, is unlikely to have won the plaudits of a class of person who despised him from the first.

The comments of Tobias Wolff, however, caught my attention in particular. Mr Wolff is a distinguished memoirist (he served in Vietnam) and short-story writer, who is also a professor at Stanford University, one of the best institutions of higher learning in the world. He said that whenever he witnessed anyone behaving badly to a waiter, he assumed that he had voted for George W Bush.

Now here I am entering the realms of speculation. Stanford is not a redoubt of red-necks, and it seems to me likely that most of the restaurants patronised by writers there fall into one of two categories: the bohemian or the chi-chi. I would imagine that a straw poll taken in most of them would reveal that only 5 per cent of their clientele, or less, voted Republican. If bad behaviour towards waiters were randomly distributed between people of differing political beliefs, therefore, it would be far more likely, on purely numerical grounds, that an abuser of waiters there would vote Democrat than Republican.

Let us not quibble too much over the definition of a conservative, or whether George W Bush actually qualifies as one. Most conservatives in America would have voted for President Bush rather than the alternative, even if they had reservations about him. And conservatism is more a way of looking at and being

in the world than a fully-fledged doctrine or ideology in the Enlightenment mould (though, of course, rational arguments can be made for it, difficult as they are to get across in sound-bites between advertisements or pop songs).

How, then, may we characterise the conservative mind-set? The conservative, knowing himself to be fallible and limited in capacity, respects the past and mistrusts grand schemes to make the world anew. He does not believe in a society so perfect that no one will have to be good. He is aware that the line between good and evil (to quote Solzhenitsyn) runs through every heart, including his own. He is not averse to change, but understands that change can be for the worse as well as for the better. He values prudence very highly. He believes that a capacity for gratitude is a vital part of the human personality, and that trust is necessary for a decent human society. Irony suffuses his thought, for he knows that what is aimed at can seldom be hit. He believes that man's capacity for compassion is limited, and beyond those limits (in most cases) it becomes moral exhibitionism. He is at ease with hierarchy, believing it to be natural and inescapable, but ascent in the hierarchy should not confer unlimited powers, and does not obviate the duty to behave well. Because he believes that everyone is capable of evil, and even inclined to it, he thinks that a person's principal locus of moral concern should be his own conduct, especially to those round about him.

Compare this with his opposite, the political projector (it is hard to think of a term in current use that unifies all people who think that politics is, or ought to be, but the application of abstract principles). This person tends to think that the evils of the world are structural, that they have nothing to do with the qualities of the human heart, but are the result of impersonal forces that can be wholly overcome, even if with difficulty, by legislation or strong-arm tactics. He believes in plans and blueprints. He is proud of his own free-standing and independent intellect, as he sees it, and mistrusts trust. He thinks that those who came before him were either nullities or malevolent, mere pursuers of their own interests, or at best outdated, and that everything that they achieved and handed down is worthless. He thinks that change is a good in itself, and does not mistrust himself to bring it about in the desired direction. He does not believe

in unintended consequences, and if his policy does not work it can only be because it was not carried out with sufficient thoroughness or ruthlessness. Though generally privileged in his existence, he believes in equality, and this introduces various tensions and complexes into his relation with others. He believes that gratitude is a retrograde emotion, and that all that comes to us should come by way of entitlement, or else it arrives capriciously. According to him, each of us is a plaything of circumstance, and therefore the proper locus of everyone's moral concern, especially his own given his high and superior endowment of intellect, is circumstance, which is to say the large forces that mould a man. What, to the fate of humanity, is passing the time of day politely with a neighbour compared with carbon emissions?

I am not saying that there is nothing valuable in the

latter outlook, that elements of it are never justified, or that it is never possible to miss the larger picture by concentrating too closely on one's own conduct in one's own sphere. I am merely concerned to ask which of these two outlooks, described here *grosso modo*, conduces more to politeness to waiters and other subordinates? I think the question answers itself. A few years ago, I was talking to a man in Holland who arranged conferences of public intellectuals. He said it was curious how conservatives, who believed in hierarchy and the rightness of inequality, never complained about the conditions in which they were lodged, but those who believed ferociously in equality often did though, of course, they were lodged luxuriously.

Theodore Dalrymple's most recent book is *In Praise of Prejudice* Encounter Books.

# Baby P and the Child Abuse Industry

Stephen Baskerville

**T**he Baby P killing reveals the child abuse industry at its most cynical. The Soviet-style ineptitude revealed daily is the product not of poor training or underfunding but of the logic inherent in bureaucratic politics.

We have long known what causes child abuse and why children like Baby P die. The vast preponderance of child abuse and child deaths occurs in single-parent homes. Very little abuse takes place in married, two-parent families. London's Family Education Trust long ago demonstrated that children are up to 33 times more likely to suffer serious abuse and 73 times more likely to suffer fatal abuse in the home of a mother with a live-in boyfriend or stepfather than in an intact family. Figures from the US Justice Department show that single mothers accounted for 55 per cent of child murders. Shorn of politically correct euphemism, what this means is that the principal impediment to child abuse is a father. 'Fathers have often played the protector role inside families,' writes Adrienne Burgess of Fathers Direct. A study in the journal *Adolescent and Family Health* found that 'The presence of the father ... placed the child at lesser risk for child sexual abuse.'

Yet instead of allowing fathers to protect their children, fathers are forcibly and systematically removed from their homes and children by family courts with the

active support of social work bureaucracies. Ironically, this is often effected using trumped-up charges of child abuse against fathers, though statistically biological fathers are responsible for very little abuse. Judges claim they remove fathers, even without evidence of abuse, to 'err on the side of caution'. In fact they are erring on the side of danger, and it is difficult to believe they do not realize it. Thus the child abuse apparatchiks remove the children's natural protector, whereupon the real abusers — the single mother and her boyfriends — are free to abuse his children with impunity. Groups like Fathers4Justice and protesters like Jolly Stanesby are vilified for calling attention to the confiscation and abuse of their children, when they are merely responding as any parent can be expected to do when someone interferes with his child.

The sanctimonious hand-wringing now on display in Britain is endemic throughout the industrialized world. 'We cannot tolerate the abuse of even one child,' says the US Department of Health and Human Services. But HHS funds an army of officials and programmes that remove children from their fathers' care and then claim to protect them from subsequent abuse. The logic is marvellously self-justifying and self-perpetuating, since by eliminating the father, officials can then present themselves as the solution to the problem they

themselves create. The more child abuse, the more the proffered solution is to further expand the cadres of what amount to plainclothes police. Clichés about social workers being ‘overworked and underfunded’ and in need of more ‘resources’ provide a fairly clear indication of a thriving bureaucratic enterprise expanding its turf.

Refusing to face these truths also means an increasingly repressive state machinery and authoritarian habits of mind that are unhealthy in a free society. Urging citizens to watch and report on their neighbours should they detect ‘signs’ of abuse, and requiring professionals to do so, can only foster a society of busybodies and snoops and will certainly mean more harassment of innocent parents and removal of their children, as is already happening.

Child abuse is entirely preventable. The current epidemic grew up with the welfare state and the divorce revolution, with the resulting proliferation of fatherless homes. It continues because of entrenched interests employed pretending to combat it. It is a

textbook example of bureaucratic government creating a problem for itself to solve. As Dickens observed ‘the one great principle of the English law is to make business for itself’. Appalling as it sounds, the conclusion seems inescapable that we have created a massive governmental machine staffed by officials with a vested professional interest in abused children.

Britain deserves credit for the huge public discussion prompted by this case — a discussion that has not been held in the United States or elsewhere. But until we have the courage to tell the truth about who is abusing children and the state’s role in permitting and even encouraging them to do it, then all our professed concern for children is mere posturing.

*Stephen Baskerville is associate professor of government at Patrick Henry College in Virginia, USA, and author of Taken Into Custody: The War Against Fathers, Marriage and the Family (Cumberland House, 2007).*

# Looking for a New Carnegie

Marc Sidwell

2009 is the centenary of the greatest anthology ever compiled and a vital moment to remind ourselves how bold action and cultural ambition can inspire mass education on heroic scales. The first volume of the *Harvard Classics* was published in 1909. This collection of classics from the canon of world literature was designed to make good on a statement by Charles W Eliot, Harvard’s greatest President, that anyone could give themselves a liberal education by reading for fifteen minutes a day from a five-foot shelf of books.

The *Harvard Classics* were an extraordinary success. When Eliot died in 1926, some 300,000 complete sets had been sold — and each set contained 51 volumes. The sets offered, ‘to present so ample and characteristic a record of the stream of the world’s thought that the observant reader’s mind shall be enriched, refined and fertilized.’ Thanks to Eliot’s energy in his retirement and the vision and salesmanship of his publishers, a library that made a fair stab at the best that has been thought and said in the world became an adornment to many ordinary American homes.

In America, the Great Books are scarcely in fashion as years ago, but thanks to Eliot, the concept does still have resonance. To celebrate the anniversary of ‘Dr Eliot’s Five Foot Shelf’, Christopher R Beha spent 2007 reading his way through Eliot’s selections. His book, *The Whole*

*Five Feet*, will be published this May and the American edition of Anthony O’Hear’s *The Great Books* will also be published in February. Last December, Britannica ran an online forum on the future of the Great Books; contributors disagreed about what lay ahead, but at least they all understood what was meant.

In Britain, the picture is far gloomier. It is not just that we have declined in a century from a period where working-class self-education was a heroic endeavour, where — as Jonathan Rose records in *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* — Alexander Pope might be quoted at the coalface, and Milton’s ‘Lycidas’ was learned by heart to the movement of shuttles over factory looms. In the absence of voices to succeed the like of F R Leavis, T S Eliot, R H Tawney and Albert Mansbridge, our national culture has lost any popular sense of the classic as a meaningful concept.

Today, the term is debased in popular use by publishers eager to declare each new work an ‘instant classic’, and resisted by decades of scholarship that has seen the canon as oppressive and hegemonic: a bookcase stuffed with Dead White Males that get in the way of clear thinking, rather than leading the reader into wider consciousness. In J M Shaw’s novel *The Illumination of Merton Browne*, there is a telling moment when the titular hero breaks into the basement of his comprehensive and discovers the

grammar school library that has been locked away. It is an image of the worst excesses of British state education, and more widely of the obsessive cultural levelling that has deprived all but the elite of an introduction to great literature. When Everyman's Library tried to make its classic editions available to every child in 2007, they found many schools refusing the offer — either because Austen, Shakespeare and Dickens were not 'relevant'; or because they did not have a library at all.

The chatter about 'relevance' and oppression is a horrible mistake. Promoting 'relevance' is the last thing teachers are for. The classics, and the ideal of liberal education that they serve, have always been concerned to lift the individual above his local limitations and expose him to a life of the mind that knows no identity politics. That is the dream articulated by Isocrates in 380 BC in his *Panegyricus*, where he declares that the students of Athens 'have become the teachers of the world, and she has made the name of Hellas distinctive no longer of race but of intellect, and the title of Hellene a badge of education rather than of common descent.' It is the understanding of learning that Michael Oakeshott was still defending in 1975 in *A Place of Learning*, praising 'sheltered places where excellences may be heard because the din of local partialities is no more than a distant rumble'. It was Charles Eliot's goal too when he wrote in March 1909 that his volumes 'free you from the limitations of your age, of your country, of your personal experiences ... take you out of the rut of life in the town you live in and make you a citizen of the world. They offer you the companionship of the most interesting and influential men and women who have ever lived... They offer you — if you will only accept their gifts — ... education, the means of making your life what you want it to be.' Freedom and scope are and remain the gifts of the classics. They open, they do not limit. They permit conversation with the educated world. They challenge assumptions. They encourage rigour and ambition. Above all they delight: they are the best of their kind; the best that our kindred could produce.

Yet we should not despair. If there is any advantage to be gained from our current financial slump, it is that serious works and permanent writings begin to show their virtues more clearly. And just as they do so, an opportunity presents itself. If the classics are no longer at home in British schools or in its public libraries, they are enjoying a new flowering online. It may be that the internet terminals crowding out real books from reading rooms offer a real hope for the classics in the twenty-first century. But the chance must be grasped.

The classics are doing well in digital form. There has been a recent breakout of new technologies that suit digital reading: handheld devices; electronic ink screens; automated book-scanning machines. Classics are out of copyright and provide first-rate material free to fill the first

generation of readers. In a similar fashion, classics were the cheap books for the masses at the turn of the last century. So today on the iPod Touch and iPhone a free, searchable collection of Shakespeare's plays is one of the most popular applications. Another, simply called Classics, includes *Paradise Lost*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and *Gulliver's Travels*, presented in a format that mimics an old book, even crackling as you turn the page. The Sony Reader, with its paper-like screen that can instantly adjust its typeface to suit your eyes, is supplied with 100 free classics, from *Great Expectations* to *Romeo and Juliet*. Online, Project Gutenberg and Google Books provide access to vast libraries of scanned out-of-copyright material.

Yet this sudden moment in the sun for the classic cannot last. Our economy will improve, and the taste for the perishable will reassert itself. The price of new electronic books will fall, just as it has for music files. Project Gutenberg and Google Books, intent on completeness, will fill the internet with every old book ever written, drowning out the classic in a sea of mediocrity. There is a narrow window of time, a matter of years, in which the classics can be given a real future.

It is ninety years since the death of Andrew Carnegie, that great founder of libraries, whose generosity in creating opportunities for self-education was so astounding. What we need today is a new Carnegie, some one or some many with the determination to bail out not failing car companies but our cultural treasure house. Alongside Project Gutenberg and Google Books, a space on the web where the whole canon was available to read online on one site, in good, reliable, uniform editions, with assurance to users that the material was copyright-free worldwide. It would connect readers around the world, and emphasise the role of the canon as an inspiration for new creative responses. It would correct a lifetime's half-remembered quotations and continue the work that Eliot began. It could even follow Amazon and Sony in creating its own dedicated reader, something William F Buckley once advocated in America: a device the size and weight of a paperback holding the entire canon. We have the technology: it just needs will and money.

120 years ago, Carnegie published what became known as *The Gospel of Wealth*: a wealth-creator who dies without having administered his surplus wealth for the public benefit dies disgraced. In the last few years, Bill Gates and others have shown an interest in following his example, focusing on development work. And with these bleaker economic times, that message is gaining even more traction. While saving lives is vital, there are minds to be saved as well, and an intellectual tradition. The classics need their champion and someone to build them a digital haven before it is too late.

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# Dark Matter

Brian Ridley

The credit crunch and the staggering amount of national debt planned inspires us to ask 'What is economics, an art or a science?' Surely not the latter or, if so, what a poor science it must be not to have predicted the current financial turmoil. But no worse, perhaps, than the science of the environment, where there is little consensus about global warming and its origin, except among its lay aficionados. There is a common feature here — the complexity of the system — of global economics on the one hand and of global climate on the other. So if the study of climate counts as a science, which of course it does, economics must surely be a science, even though in both cases the power of gut feelings is not inconsiderable. That power is very evident in the promotion of overviews — Keynesianism, monetarism, carbon dioxide the culprit — which, being gut feeling, rather tilt the balance in favour of art, in spite of those impressive differential equations and those sophisticated computer algorithms. It is a dark matter to all but the deeply insightful minds of our intelligentsia, who see the cause of the credit crunch as originating in the internal contradictions of American capitalism (indeed of any kind of capitalism) and the cause of global warming in mankind's profligate need for energy. If so, we are doubly fortunate here in the UK in having a government who not only agree with this analysis, but are eager to solve the problems by abolishing capitalism altogether and teaching people to enjoy the undoubted virtues of living in the dark. Think of the savings in the National Health Service with power cuts replacing those of overpaid surgeons; think of the benefits in making that defining feature of the present administration, keep-in-the-dark education, truly in the dark.

The government has made a promising start by nationalising the odd bank, but there is a long way to go. Subsidising the building of wind turbines is a subtle part of the whole scheme. Capitalists, non-British at that, own the conventional power stations and nuclear plants that produce our energy. What better way of reducing their grip than to invent an ineffective form of energy that no self-respecting capitalist would invest in, and then to demonise the production of real energy? If physics can invent the concept of dark energy to solve its cosmic problem, what is to deny the concept of renewable energy in the context of UK's need? And the demonising of real energy can be safely left to those intellectuals whose practice at demonising America will stand them in good stead.

Whatever the results of the dark-energy policy of the present government, future generations, probably living abroad, will have plenty of reasons to look back on this time as a dark age. It scarcely needs remarking that we live in a levelling period. In education, media studies are considered more relevant than classics; physics, chemistry and biology are economically collapsed into 'Science'. In TV quizzes, commonly regarded as highbrow, the categories of questions such as 'Music' and 'Arts and Books', test knowledge not of the rich cultural heritage of music, art and literature, but instead of modern pop and who married whom last year. We live in the dark age of the common man, whose tastes dominate everything. Apart from those tastes, his lot has improved immeasurably over the years, at least in the West. He is free; he lives in a democracy; his health and well-being are looked after; he is not allowed to starve; he is surrounded by technological miracles. He does not ask how it all came about. If taught, he would be told that it is his inalienable right. In the current system it is unlikely he would be told the truth. The fact is that man has been raised from savagery and servitude to the present bountiful level by the thoughts and actions of countless individuals of genius. It has not happened by magic, nor has it been the action of a mysterious force called human rights. It has come about through the sweat and labour of men and women endowed with talent beyond the norm. Such are the elite of humanity.

It is truly a dark age that regards egalitarianism with more favour than the encouragement of talent and genius. Grammar schools are denigrated as élitist. Of course they are! That is their point. In the real world there is no such thing as equality. Individuals with talents far above the common level will always exist; but in the present inimical climate, those living amongst us today are likely to drop out of public life in favour of merely looking on. Can this explain the dearth of talent so evident in parliament, in our financial institutions, the BBC and in local government? Or perhaps they have emigrated, as they did in the brain-drain of the last dark age. Or, like the Rosicrucians of the 17th century, who opted for secrecy in the threat of the Inquisition, they have formed a powerful secret society in the face of the prevailing anti-élitism, dreaming of Holy Blood and Holy Grail. Or maybe they are exactly those deeply insightful intellectuals we have mentioned before. Dark matter, indeed!

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# Mugabe and Israel: Why antiracism is racism

Christie Davies

**G**ordon Brown has declared that Mugabe must go. It has taken him a very long time to say so. The Archbishop of York John Sentamu has also said Mugabe must be toppled but the other bishops have, for a group that is so fond of moral harangues about politics, said very little. They have left it to the Archbishop of York on the grounds that he is the only African among them. As a Ugandan the Archbishop knows exactly what life must be like under Idi Amin's lookalike, Mugabe.

Among the countries close to Zimbabwe only Botswana, perhaps the best governed country in Africa, has forthrightly demanded that Mugabe be got rid of by the simple expedient of cutting off the petrol supplies that Mugabe's armed thugs need if the ordinary people are to be repressed. The other countries have been silent until now, a point when a combination of a cholera outbreak and a flood of refugees has posed a direct threat to their own countries. South Africa, Zimbabwe's powerful neighbour, has done very little to disturb Mugabe's position.

The reason for their silence and inaction is simple — black racism. Mugabe fought against and eventually replaced a Rhodesian government based largely on the support of white settlers. Therefore he could not be criticised, nor did anyone dare to admit that life for ordinary Africans had been far better under white minority rule. Zimbabwe's problems began when white farmers were thrown off their land because they were white. The farms went to the thuggish supporters of Mugabe, the so-called 'freedom fighters'. It was inevitable that this would lead to a collapse in the production of basic foodstuffs and the ability of the country to earn foreign currency. That is why ordinary people are starving, sick and suffering on a scale never seen in the old Southern Rhodesia. The South African leadership does not want to admit this; indeed some of them would like to do a Mugabe and expropriate the property of their own white, and indeed, Indian minorities. Most of them know this would be impractical and lead to disaster, but like other African leaders they were prepared to prop up Mugabe because he embodies the absurd myth that Africa's current problems spring from white or colonial rule.

If other African politicians had denounced Mugabe they too would have been forced to take full responsibility for their own corruption and incompetence. For the time being South Africa survives as a productive multi-racial society but one wonders how long it is going to last. A steady trickle of English-speaking whites is leaving and in particular South African Jews are emigrating to Israel which they see as a more secure society. The Afrikaans speakers, whom we have long derisively called Boers, are stuck because they have nowhere to go. After being in South Africa for hundreds of years that is where they belong. As soon as the threat of the Soviet Union and its creature the South African Communist Party had receded, the Afrikaners' enlightened leader Willem de Klerk handed over power to the black Africans voluntarily and peacefully. Yet now the Afrikaners are subject to violence on their isolated farms and can not defend themselves nor rely on the state to protect them. Their institutions are being dismantled and their culture and language undermined. They could disappear as a people altogether. None of our British advocates of 'diversity' sees this as unfair.

Our justly respected Ugandan Archbishop has not told the whole truth about Uganda. Amin was indeed overthrown by the army of a neighbouring African state but only after he had invaded Tanzania in an attempt to annex the province of Kigera. The Tanzanian intervention was not disinterested and Nyerere does not deserve the respect bestowed on him by the Archbishop. Amin was never brought to trial — deposed African dictators never are — but given a secure comfortable retirement by his fellow Muslims in Saudi Arabia.

When I was in Uganda in 1969 two years before Amin came to power, I was struck by the violently racist opinions expressed towards Asians, even by prosperous educated Africans. They referred to the Asians as 'blood-suckers' and even suggested that they were plotting to take over the country. It was like the language of anti-Semitism in Eastern and Central Europe, where the Jews had been so prominent in business and the professions, much as the Asians were in Uganda. Whilst this social and economic background helps to explain both phenomena, it does not in any

way excuse racial hatred. When I returned to England I gave a lecture about the East African situation at the University of Leeds. No Africans came but many white 'anti-racists', communists and Trotskyites were absolutely furious that I had drawn attention to black African racism. One woman screamed at me that only 'white racism' counted and a bitter little man said that I had no business commenting on a matter that only concerned Africans. I realised then that those who call themselves anti-racists are in fact racists. Outside the hall were a group of Ugandan Asians who had been sitting at the back of the hall but had been afraid to say anything. 'You are the only one who has told the truth and spoken up for us'.

After Amin had turned on his own people, the Africans came to see Amin as a monster. When the Asians were expelled the Ugandan economy collapsed, and after Amin was deposed some of the leading Asian entrepreneurs had to be brought back to sort out the mess. There was a moral there for Mugabe and his friends but they were too racist to recognise it. British leftists never learn. In the past their mad thirst for equality led them to glorify the proletariat and to refuse to recognise the terrible nature of the Soviet Union. They were and are the kind who hate their own country, and give their unthinking loyalty to anywhere and anyone that can be defined as alien and 'other'. Today they are self-hating racists for the same reason they were once class warriors on behalf of a class to which they did not belong.

It is here rather than only in anti-Semitism itself that we must seek an explanation for their hatred of Israel, most recently expressed in the attempt by left-wing academics to boycott Israel's universities. Israel is perceived by them as white and European, a colonial intrusion into an Arab world that would otherwise be uniformly prosperous, peaceful and abounding in human rights. Curiously the Israelis are if anything rather darker on average than the Palestinians, given the numerous Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia, India, the Yemen and Morocco who look much like the inhabitants of the countries from which they came. Their dominant culture is European but that is the secret of their ability to get things done. If Israel were to be Levantinized it would sink to the level of its neighbours.

Israel has been and always will be condemned as racist at the various 'anti-racist' international jamborees, with the entire support of the British leftists. All African racisms, which usually take a tribal form, will be ignored but Israel will be exposed to anti-Semitic abuse by the Arabs and the Africans will go along with it, much as they never raise the question of compensation for the Arab slave trade. The continued force of African tribal feeling can be seen in Kenya where the Luos love

Obama whose father was a Luo, whereas the Luos' bitter rivals the Kikuyu resent and dislike the new American President. Tribalism, like untouchability in India, is in effect racism, for they all arbitrarily restrict an individual's chances in life and define him or her as inferior merely on the basis of ancestry. But you will never get the anti-racist third-worlders and their self-hating white supporters to see this.

The only line of ancestry they are all willing to condemn is that of the Jews, a religion that is largely inherited because it is difficult to convert to it. Now the leftists are even condemning the Old Testament because it provides a written historical account of the Jews' distinct identity and ancestry. They are prepared to condone the Koran and the savage oppression and hatred to which it has led but the idea that the Jews are a 'chosen' people is anathema to them. Yet, from our point of view, if they had not been chosen, there would be no Christianity and no western civilisation. An attack on the Jewish scriptures is an attack on us all.

Yet the leftists began their attack on Judaism much earlier than is now remembered. The pressures of a shameful and vicious anti-Semitism, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, and in France in the nineteenth century, led both to Zionism and also, as Disraeli had feared, to the enhanced recruitment of Jews by left-wing revolutionary movements such as the Bolsheviks; the latter was to create and intensify an irrational anti-Semitism among those who rightly feared a cruel and destructive Bolshevik revolution. What the fearful ones failed to see and what we have forgotten is that those Jews who had abandoned their traditional religion and taken up Marxism hated Jews as much as they hated everyone else and particularly hated the Zionists. This was to lead to the anti-Semitism of the dark years of Soviet Jewry, 1945-53, and to the Soviets leading the way in denouncing Israel as racist. We should never accept or respect those Jews who hate Israel, side with Israel's enemies and then have the cheek to say 'I am Jewish and therefore can't be anti-Semitic'. On the contrary they are part of an anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist mode of thought that dates back over a hundred years. The older ones among them have an evil personal history of having supported the Soviet Union.

We have arrived at the second part of the paradox. Not only are the anti-racists racist but the Jewish anti-Zionists are anti-Semitic. Beneath it lies the truth that those who prefer a fanatical universalism to the mild, everyday loyalties that most of us espouse are the world's worst haters and persecutors. The anti-racists and the anti-Zionists do not love the Africans or the Arabs, they merely loathe us and indeed themselves.

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# Tory Heroine

Alistair Cooke

As usual the great Lord Salisbury got it absolutely right. In 1887 he commended the annual party conference for declaring itself in favour of votes for women (as it was to do on several subsequent occasions before 1914). The opposition reacted in a most satisfactory manner. It was extremely gratifying to see ‘the fright the Radicals are in about women’s suffrage’. Salisbury’s problem was that many dim-witted Tory MPs got frightened too. They were more than usually obtuse. Day by day masses of women were displaying their devotion to the Tory cause. Hither and thither they went delivering Central Office’s leaflets and bearing information about the details of the quite complicated electoral registration process to potential Tory voters. At elections they were omnipresent, ‘directing envelopes, sending circulars, writing letters and omitting nothing that could be done to secure the return of the candidate’, as an admiring male observer put it in 1893.

Their faith was renewed and reinvigorated at meetings of the Primrose League, the first Tory organisation to gain a mass membership, which had been set up as a kind of perpetual memorial service for Disraeli. Hardly anyone at this stage belonged to the Conservative Party itself. The million women in the ranks of the League — half the total membership — were chiefly responsible for its remarkable success. Its 2,300 branches could have sent forth a new regiment of Tory voters to help defeat Mr Gladstone, the implacable opponent of women’s suffrage. Nevertheless, this blindingly obvious means of securing partisan advantage failed to stir Tory MPs as a whole into supporting Salisbury over women’s suffrage. If Salisbury had carried the day, not a window would have been broken or a single prison cell occupied by Mrs Pankhurst and her militant suffragettes — and Mrs Pankhurst herself, who at the time of her death in 1929 was the official Tory candidate in Whitechapel, might have joined the Conservative Party in her prime.

Remarkably, Westminster’s short-sightedness made

absolutely no difference to the zealous women of the Primrose League. Their tradition of simple ardour lived on in the Conservative Party’s own women’s organisation formed in 1918 to gather in the votes of those women who now had them for the first time. Salisbury’s wiser heirs sought to make further progress by encouraging constituencies to send a reasonable number of these loyal standard-bearers to the House of Commons. The party leadership was not looking for great contributions to Conservative thought or to policy-making from an exciting new perspective: it has never involved its backbench MPs in such things,

having little interest itself in serious thought and regarding policy-making as its own private preserve. There was a simple party point to be made. By drawing into parliament a significant number of able and interesting women, the leadership would be able to display once again the party’s remarkable talent for responding successfully to great changes in the life of the nation.

In the event Salisbury’s political heirs in the 1920s were not very pleased with the four women they actually got: three were married to peers while the last member of the little contingent, who never had a word to say for herself, replaced a

husband whose election had been found to be invalid. They reinforced the upper-class character of the party, which had not been the intention at all. The only one of these women to achieve a certain fame, Lady Astor, usually made the headlines for embarrassing reasons. Harold Macmillan, who was well-disposed to her personally, described her speeches as ‘a source of confusion to her political friends rather than to her political enemies’.

With women forming a majority of the electorate after 1928, the leadership asked with ever greater urgency for more women MPs from a variety of backgrounds. The wholly autonomous constituency associations flatly refused to answer the call. There were thirteen Conservative women MPs in 1931: today there are seventeen, just four more. Salisbury’s heirs today find it impossible to ignore the predicament that



this creates for a party which prides itself on its ability to move with the times and which produced the first woman prime minister. The issue has therefore been at the centre of David Cameron's quest for modernisation which, though promoted as a novel phenomenon, is in fact just the latest phase of a process seen recurrently in Conservative history.

Throughout all this the extraordinary propensity of women to vote Conservative survived, keeping the party in power single-handedly for most of the period since their enfranchisement. Within the party itself the women's Primrose League tradition of devoted service also continued to flourish. After 1918 professional women officials were appointed to strengthen both the Party and the League. Dorothy Brant was part of that first generation: now aged 102 she is its last survivor. For most of the inter-war period she was based in the north-east of England where the Conservative cause was not greatly loved by the electorate generally. She taught the faithful Tory women new tricks: principally public speaking which was then being given a central place in constituency affairs for the first time. Adhering firmly to the 'one nation' tradition of Conservatism, she never for a moment regarded her highly conventional middle-class upbringing as an obstacle to seeking out fresh additions to the party faithful in Labour heartlands. In 1930 she found a rich seam of Tory support among women in Labour's mining fiefdom of Seaham, then represented by Ramsay MacDonald. At Easington colliery under the very noses of the constituency's left-wing establishment, the new Tories went partying to the sound of the Ladies' Imperial Band. The very next year their votes saved MacDonald from ignominious defeat when his own party dedicated itself to securing his destruction after he had formed a national government

with the Conservatives. 'There is no doubt', wrote the chairman of the Seaham Conservative Association, 'that it was owing to the Conservative women's vote at the last election that Mr Ramsay MacDonald has been returned as our Member'. Dorothy Brant's own little constituency coalition of MacDonald's residual Labour supporters and women Conservatives had prevailed.

There was much to be said for being a woman official rather than a woman MP. At Westminster the little band was patronised by many and sneered at by Winston Churchill, though it secured some major victories for women's interests (unlike its Labour counterparts). Dorothy Brant had the satisfaction of helping to lead a great Tory recovery in the north-west after Churchill's crushing defeat in 1945. Six years later the political descendants of the ardent Primrose League women could rejoice that their party had recaptured the region, winning forty-two seats (which subsequent generations allowed to dwindle to a mere nine by 1997).

Dorothy Brant rose in the 1960s to the highest position open to women officials. It was the last decade in which Tory women exhibited their traditional enthusiasm for the cause, gathering in their thousands for their annual mass rally at the Albert Hall, then one of the great events in the party's calendar. Thereafter many drifted away from a party which did not seem to appreciate their efforts. The great Lord Salisbury who first encountered the problem would have sympathised and understood.

Dorothy Brant died on 1st February 2009.

*This article is based in part on Alistair Cooke's new book, *Tory Heroine: Dorothy Brant*. Copies which cost £7.50 each can be ordered by emailing [joanna.hindley@conservatives.com](mailto:joanna.hindley@conservatives.com).*

## Enter Shakespeare, Stage Left

Ralph Berry

**T**he Left has wrapped its tentacles around Shakespeare on the English stage. Shakespeare has been absorbed into many of today's agendas, emerging as a man of advanced liberal views. Stage productions have set out a Shakespeare who can be claimed for the *bien-pensants*, and the litmus test for feminism is *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Shaw's verdict on the final scene was that it is 'altogether disgusting to modern sensibility' and here we are, a hundred years on, our no less modern sensibilities no less disgusted. 'No man with any

decency of feeling can sit it out in the company of a woman without being extremely ashamed of the lord-of-creation moral implied in the wager and the speech put into the woman's own mouth.' Still, the relations between the sexes have somewhat adjusted since Shaw's day, and the comedy continues to attract large mixed audiences, at what cost to decency of feeling it is impossible to hazard.

In practice, there are various strategies by which the director can refine the excesses of Katherina's final speech. He can have the actress play it in tones of

accusing irony, all out, as Michael Bogdanov did for the RSC. (With a sinister emphasis on ‘Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy *keeper*...’) Petruchio was shattered. Katherina can also go for rapt sincerity, a glowing affirmation of a great truth. Petruchio can be shown to be undertaking the re-education of Katherina, in what can be termed the social worker approach. But Gale Edwards, who directed the RSC *Shrew* (1995) brought to the play advanced Australian views on male oppression of womanhood. The final wager was made in large banknotes, which Petruchio imprudently left on the floor. Katherina saw them and her face tightened. So that was his game! Her face wore an accusing and unforgiving scowl throughout her final speech. Katherina had acquired a grievance and would never let it go. The *Shrew* had simply adjusted her tactics to married life. For the documentary evidence, one should read Petruchio’s (Michael Siberry’s) abject confession in *Players of Shakespeare 4*, a series in which RSC actors discuss their playing of major parts.

The latest *Shrew* (RSC, 2008) ties the play, implausibly, to Jack Holland’s *A Brief History of Misogyny*. Katherina is depicted as broken physically and mentally by the ordeals to which her brute of a husband subjects her. She has to carry two suitcases on the journey, like the other servants, while Petruchio and Hortensio walk free of burdens! At the end, she delivers her speech in spiritless, robotic tones. She has become the sex slave of her master. There is no trace in this production of the good-humoured search for a *modus vivendi* that is the core of the comedy. The *Shrew* has become agitprop. *The Taming of the Shrew* now bids to join *The Merchant of Venice* in the codex of banned plays, at least with certain pressure groups. With them, it can only be staged as a show trial, in which brutish men confess their sins to unforgiving female inquisitors. The director takes over the role of Vishinsky.

Less obviously, a further test case for advanced thinking occurs in *Troilus and Cressida*. Cressida has traditionally been thought of as a baggage, but Juliet Stevenson (RSC, 1985) was much praised for her portrayal of Cressida as a symbol of oppressed womanhood. When five Greek officers greet her with a kiss, she bristles. It is sexual harassment. A more easy-going Cressida was on show in Ian Judge’s production (RSC, 1996), and this met with critical disapproval. If Cressida does not meet the victim standard she cannot expect plaudits.

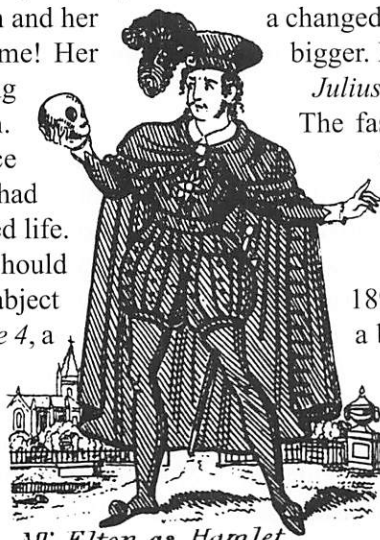
A minor tail-piece to this thought-line has occurred

in recent productions of *King Lear*. The physical test of the actor comes down to that unforgiving stage direction *Enter Lear with Cordelia in his armes*. Is he up to it? ‘Get a small Cordelia’ was Gielgud’s advice. But Cordelias are strapping young women these days. Oliver Ford Davies’ *Lear* at the Almeida (2002) balked at carrying Cordelia on stage, viewing it as ‘the ultimate test of an ageing actor’s virility.’ He might embrace the feminine qualities, but he won’t heft them. I have seen other actors (Robert Stephens, Corin Redgrave) fudge that test, and I conclude that patriarchs are adjusting to a changed world. Men have grown smaller, women bigger. *Lear* would know.

*Julius Caesar* offers a distinctive political slant. The fascist Caesar, reborn with the RSC, is a cliché that dates from Welles’s Mercury production of 1937 but it had no pre-fascist existence. Beerbohm Tree, whose production held the stage from 1897 to 1913, presented a reformist Caesar, a benevolent despot twinned with the hero of Shaw’s *Caesar and Cleopatra*. For those audiences, Caesar was simply a leader, rather over the top and apt to get stubborn at the wrong moments. ‘For I am constant as the Northern Star’ is another version of ‘No, no, no.’

Fascist Caesar has been re-born in a number of RSC productions. But the real problem is Brutus, not the alleged fascist beast Caesar. Brutus, sometimes thought of as a tragic hero, is merely a letterhead peer on the board of conspirators who thinks that his distinguished lineage entitles him to act as managing director. He grasps at every Roman fallacy within reach, confident that critics will applaud his conduct as ‘idealism.’ Nobody ever accuses the honourable Brutus of meanness, but I will. Caesar offers his guests wine (‘Good friends, go in, and taste some wine with me’). Brutus does not offer his fellow conspirators so much as a cup of coffee.

Brutus is the archetypal liberal. His mode of speech is through passionate abstractions, a linguistic feature well known among today’s politicians. While Antony is concrete — ‘blood,’ ‘parchment,’ ‘seal,’ ‘mantle’ — Brutus prefers to speak of ‘honour,’ ‘ambition,’ ‘love’. He also allows dud analogies to take the place of thought — ‘It is the bright day that brings forth the adder.’ It is not hard to place Brutus today. The best Brutus I ever saw was John Wood’s, for the RSC (1972). This was a *Guardian*-reading liberal, ostentatiously polite to his black manservant Lucius, concerned above all with ‘honour’ and his standing in the world. The type is always with us: Brutus today would be heavily into global warming and human



rights. He would be useless at running a war.

The Histories pose problems of values, and their translation on to the stage. 'Treason,' 'traitor' figure in all those plays. Yet treason has more or less been written out of today's society (the present Government is said to be considering the legal abolition of treason). *Henry V* is admittedly difficult for today's directors to feel at home with. The hero is a successful warlord, not at all the type one wants to encourage or glamorize. What is to be done to bring Henry within our fold? From Laurence Harvey on (1959) the stage has given us a neo-pacifist Henry, torn between his wish to win battles and his conviction that the English Army ought not to be fighting them. The RSC *Henry V* of 1994, directed by Matthew Warchus, found a novel slant. The soldiers who marched on to the camp by Agincourt were all carrying heavy backpacks, which they laid down while they listened to Henry's oration, 'This day is called the Feast of Crispian.' At its end, each man picked up his backpack. So did Henry. He manfully shouldered his burden and marched off with his troops. Here was a true democrat, far ahead of his time, disdaining a batman, willing to do his share of heavy lifting and setting a glowing example to indolent noblemen trapped in the class prejudices of the fifteenth century. Perhaps the troops would rather that Henry saved his energy for thinking, but no one said anything.

Of an American production, Herbert Coursen describes the troops' reaction to the Harfleur speech, with its threat of unspeakable deeds done to the Harfleur womenfolk if the citizens continued to resist. 'Henry's army, insulted, glared at him angrily. His brother, Gloucester, refused to salute him after the speech. I neither represent nor condone that kind of talk, Gloucester seemed to be saying.' Really? The Army can have had no prophetic vision of the storming of Badajoz and San Sebastian, four centuries later, when Wellington's soldiery delivered what Henry promised. The American actors must have felt that Henry was not living up to their ideals.

All this opens up territory of political correctness. It is many years since I last heard a Benedick pronounce on stage the fatal words 'If I do not love her, I am a Jew.' Something seems to stick in Benedick's throat, and he fails to end the sentence. However, Greg Doran made a much better fist of a difficult line in his RSC *Much Ado About Nothing* (2002). In this production, the troopship was just back from Abyssinia in 1936. And Ursula was played by a black actress. Fixing her with a stern gaze, Claudio said 'I'll hold my mind, *were she an Ethiope*.' Ursula tossed her head at this disgraceful statement, and flounced off. We all liked that.

Which leads us to the dismal topic of integrated, or colour-blind casting. This is a pet project of the Left.

It becomes an issue only with classic drama, above all Shakespeare, for contemporary drama can simply cast as appropriate. Unfortunately, most front-rank plays have already been written (Trevor Nunn, for one, has said that he prefers to direct only classics). So it is open season for integrated-casting assaults upon Shakespeare.

For the most part, this need not be a problem. Ethnic castings are fitting for Othello, Aaron the Moor, the Prince of Morocco, Caliban. Cleopatra ought to be played as 'a tawny front,' but the sisterhood of white actresses has closed ranks round this one. 'An actor,' said Michael Goldman, 'is a man who wants to play Hamlet'; an actress, I would continue, is a woman who will wade through blood to play Cleopatra. Elsewhere there are decent second-order roles at the functionary level, for example with Oswald, Provost, Enobarbus, which have no built-in ethnic expectations. The Histories are the key challenge to integrated casting, for they are all about kinship. Kinship means that the audience notices ethnicity.

They could hardly do otherwise in Michael Boyd's RSC production of *Henry VI* (2000, revived currently). David Oyelowo (King Henry VI) hails from Africa, but nobody drew attention to this evident fact. Presumably people reckoned that the Plantagenets were notoriously colour-blind, or were too well-bred to notice that a Nigerian sat on the throne of England. The production passed off to widespread critical praise, another significant feature of our times.

It should be added that films are different. Films treat ethnicity literally. The camera is the absolute witness of truth, and a black actor in a film is always taken to represent a black in real life. Similarly with whites. Films have then a certain resistance to the kind of 'progressive' casting that flourishes on the stage. It is perhaps significant that Kenneth Branagh's recent film of *As You Like It*, in which David Oyelowo appeared as Orlando, was universally panned.

The English stage is the arena for much of today's *Kulturkampf*, and Shakespeare offers the most intense struggles. In casting, in the choice of text, in a production's super-objective, in the celebration of actor heroes, the Left makes plain its dispositions. Laurence Olivier is under deep suspicion. He has not been forgiven for playing Othello and for leading the National Theatre in its opening years of glory. Paul Scofield was given only the most grudging obituary acknowledgment when he died lately. These things happen; but we should understand what is happening, and frame our own judgments accordingly.

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# A Frenzy of Righteous Barbarism

Margaret Brown

Forty years ago the Great Vietnam March of 27th October 1968 and the events surrounding it had just initiated the Year of Student Revolt in Britain. The most memorable upheavals occurred between October 1968 and May 1969. Smaller ones followed in the next few years. During that *annus mirabilis* the London School of Economics was the epicentre of disturbance. To mix metaphors, it then handed the baton to the North London Polytechnic. But post 1968-9 commotions were basically aftershocks.

In October 1968 I started a post-graduate course in history at the LSE. I arrived as the extreme Left was conducting a campaign to occupy the LSE to provide a base for the Great Vietnam March. The LSE already had a fearsome reputation and the events of 1968-9 were to swell it. The focus of agitation switched from the Vietnam War to tensions in Southern Africa to the Greek colonels' regime to LSE authorities to just about anything. In that one year I learnt more about mass hysteria, rationalisation and self-deception than I had in my three or four years at Sussex University. It was the most exciting year of my life and dramatically altered my future. I moved right across the political spectrum from the Labour Party through the Liberal to the Conservative Party and from the *New Statesman* to the *Spectator*.

Of course twenty years on the world changed. Vietnam became communist but now advertises its beauties in American travel brochures. Power sharing has come to Northern Ireland. Southern Africa now has a black dictator and black oligarchies instead of white oligarchies. The Iron curtain has gone. Chairman Mao, whose name was once painted on LSE walls by his devoted admirers, has been posthumously exposed as a mass murderer. America has a black president and Germany a woman chancellor. In the LSE and every other college and institution the *jeunesse dorée* has mutated into the *jeunesse endettée*. The end of free education finished off student revolt. Abroad the famous Danny the Red became Daniel Cohn-Bendit again. The youth who once said 'Never trust anyone over 30' became Deputy-Mayor of Frankfurt and is now campaigning for the Greens. In Germany Joschka Fischer was embarrassed, when he became Foreign Minister, by the appearance of a photo showing him attacking a policeman in his revolutionary days.

Two events in 1988 showed the swing from one

manifestation of intolerance to another. One was the LSE Roadshow held to mark the 20th anniversary of the start of the Great Student Revolt. It was an occasion for nostalgia, though relatively few of the hard-liners of either side were present. The scene in the Old Theatre was akin to that at the end of *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* when Marcel's old acquaintances turn up looking like caricatures of their former selves. The one-time student rebels might have stooped to the mess of pottage and joined the affluent society but a virtually simultaneous event dwarfed the disturbances of the past and set a terrible precedent for the future. Salman Rushdie published *The Satanic Verses*. Small sections of this were held to constitute blasphemous reflections on Mohammed. Militant Islam, already on the rise, buoyed up by oil in its countries of origin and the establishment of virtual enclaves in Britain and Europe, took violent offence. In 1968 there had been about 850,000 Moslems in the UK. By 1988 this number had more than doubled.

Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran put out a fatwa on Salman Rushdie, a price was put on his head and there were riots in both West and East where dozens died. Those whose soft liberalism had undermined the universities now had to apply it to a wider field. They deplored the book and sympathised with Muslim feeling, but were in favour of letting Rushdie, now under police protection, live. The affair started the process of contracting the area of permissible discussion of religious matters and encouraged fanaticism. The torch of unreason was handed from politics to religion and from the Western young and their apologists to Eastern youth and its leaders. Tower Hamlets College provided shelter for Moslem activists of the more extreme varieties, the shelter that LSE and the NLP had given, partially only, to political extremists.

2001 marked another watershed. The destruction of the Twin Towers inaugurated the age of large-scale suicide onslaughts. These young men operated from communities in which there was a predisposition to make allowances. The 'umma' of believers put heavy emphasis on loyalty. In places this non-hostile ambience solidified into foci of varying degrees of tolerance and support. There were surges of 'It's all the fault of America' from both inside and outside Islam. In Moslem lands reactions were violent and inconsistent. In the Lebanon the 11th September was hailed with

dancing in the streets — followed by threats to lynch a French TV crew filming these celebrations.

In these fits of delirium, reason, fact, balanced assessment and concern for the consequences are swamped by the feeling of the moment. If the victim quotes from a condemned person or source he suffers for it. In 1966 Sinyavsky and Daniel were tried in Moscow for anti-Soviet views expressed in their stories. The court assumed that they shared the views of the characters they created. 40 years later the same principle was applied to the Pope's Regensburg speech.

This type of persecution has only been possible since people started living in groups large enough for the emotions required to reach critical mass and effective expression. In communities on the edge of survival this cannot occur. If you will starve unless you kill a seal or find berries, you cannot waste energy on attacking your fellow-tribesmen. Aggression and testosterone are siphoned off into the need to live. But if society's margin of survival widens, the aggression and testosterone have to find other outlets. Physical and psychological discomfort underlie much disturbance and desire to inflict suffering. It is not hardship *per se* but the relaxation of the absolute and immediate need to find food and shelter that makes irrational collective action possible.

In 1968 student revolt was largely play-acting. However it undermined the universities and led to uncertainty among those opposing the erosion of freedom in general. As earlier indicated, its apologists claimed that it was idealist in motivation. Perhaps it was an unconscious borrowing from the 1930s in Germany. Nazi students dominated the campuses and persecuted their Jewish fellow-students. Universities feared being castigated as anti-youth and unpatriotic. One university advised its Jewish students not to 'provoke' their nationalist-minded colleagues. The 1968 liberals should have contemplated the results of the 1930's acceptance. Now the stakes are very high indeed and the play-acting conceals some terrible realities which could result in the manufacture and universal imposition of an ever tightening collective mental straitjacket and the consequent distortion of civilisation. Individual targets of extremism might lose their usefulness and sink into protective relative obscurity. Salman Rushdie's knighting brought only half-hearted complaints and attempts to re-ignite the Danish Cartoons controversy failed. But each of such episodes alarms people. They become cautious and even a joke can be fatal. Religious correctness has been added to political correctness. Any criticism has to be indirect and wrapped in qualifications. The cumulative effect of years of the repression of opinion and the near

indulgence of terrorism by soft-line liberals might lead to disaster. The Inquisition plunged Spain into more than two centuries of backwardness.

The last thing needed now is moral weakness and with it eventual material and physical defencelessness in the face of climate change, economic instability, and the threat of anarchy. In *An Appeal to Reason* Nigel Lawson has maintained that climate change control, in so far as it is necessary or possible, should be dealt with quickly so that resources and concentration can be channelled towards the real problem — terrorism. It might be more realistic to reverse these priorities. Terrorism must be suppressed so that society can deal with the world's more important issues.

Nobody knows what will happen to the Moslem community. The sections which actually come into contact with other cultures and religions might find themselves being absorbed in all but their religious practices into their non-Moslem environments. The others might continue their fratricidal Sunni-Shia wars and/or try to carry on living in any of the centuries of the past, striving to preserve their purity and being left in the backwaters. In the long run they might well fail. The process of compulsory adaptation, if it occurs, might be protracted and painful. Would terrorism and refusal to change permeate the *cordon sanitaire* of moderate Moslems or would the desire for peace finally swamp the extremists?

One of the disquieting factors in assessing the probabilities is the relative youthfulness of the core nations. Half their populations are under 20 and in some cases under 15. This means a larger pool of susceptibility to testosterone-fuelled hysteria in communities unwilling for religious reasons to restrain or condemn it anyway and unused to living in modern society with all its diversities. Professor Nomanul Haq of Harvard University has summed up this outlook. 'The Moslem nations have not gone through the turmoil of the Enlightenment and they have seen no scientific revolution; their sensibilities are different.' Passing episodes of youthful violence, the perpetrators of which constantly redirect then finally lose their force, might stamp their values on to customs and legislation and set them in stone. On the other hand these nations might be seduced by the comforts of the West.

Nearly all the non-Moslem nations contain Moslem minorities. As extremists lament, most Moslems are law-abiding and useful. But, however unenthusiastically, they provide an ambience for the less well-intentioned. It is precisely the West's liberal traditions that make this situation so difficult. There is a tendency to duck painful choices. In 1930 showings of the pacifist film *All Quiet on the Western Front* were disrupted by the

Nazis. Some excused the Nazis on the grounds that it was a bad film. In the same way there were claims that *The Satanic Verses* was a bad book and, by implication, not worth the trouble of annoying vocal and violent groups. In prison extremists are allowed to indoctrinate their less assertive co-religionists. Some liberals are so mesmerized that they change sides. Yvonne Ridley, a British journalist, was captured and converted by the Taleban. Now dressed in a burka she tours Britain opening Islamic bookshops and claiming that she has never met any Islamic extremists.

The conflict between rationality and irrationality has to be fought again and again. There is no final victory — but there might be final defeat. The West should recover the robust confidence in its better traditions that made its civilisation great and it should stop trying to placate extremists with their endlessly shifting demands. In the words of 1984, the object of persecution is persecution and what is being demanded is the right to persecute without restraint or time limit. Some people pursue policies which involve persecution and violence not although but because these are part of the policies or can be made to seem so. Some one can always be found to be worthy of persecution.

The extreme groups should be subjected to serious questioning. It might propel them into questioning themselves. They should be asked why they are not devoting their energies to reconstructing their own societies, ensuring that nobody starves or dies through lack of medical help in them and undermining corrupt tyrannies. If they want to change and convert the

world, they should be setting a good example. The Saudi government sends imams to see jailed terrorists to convince them that their behaviour is contrary to the Koran. Some extremists should be told not to be ridiculous and reminded of past follies — with a request to justify them or apologise.

What is really needed is the acceptance of reality, the will to deal with it and a sharper sense of justice and self-preservation. If we do not reacquire these primitive survival qualifications, we will find the West dotted with isolated and psychologically inward-looking states within states. They will form a network repeatedly invigorated by contacts with their inhabitants' countries of origin. The Baader-Meinhof Gang and various Red Army Factions in Italy and Japan succeeded for a time because they were isolated. These states within states will be large enough to survive and expand until they merge.

'A frenzy of righteous barbarism' was how the South African writer Nadine Gordimer described the campaign against Salman Rushdie. It labels a strand of human behaviour which must not be allowed to dominate society. Nadine Gordimer made this comment when she was compelled, for security reasons, to withdraw an invitation to Salman Rushdie to address the South African Writers' Congress. The title of the scheduled talk was 'Where they burn books, they will also burn people', a paraphrase of Heine's famous warning.

*Margaret Brown writing as Margaret Ann Rooke is the author of Anarchy and Apathy (Hamish Hamilton 1971).*

# Future Imperfect

## Evita Peron's Ghost

Myles Harris

"Great Britain does not meet the entry criteria for the euro" Lorenzo Bini Smaghi, the ECB's board member in charge of international affairs. *Daily Telegraph* 8th January 2009.

In November 2012 Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke announced Britain had no choice but to request entry to the 'safe haven' of the Euro. We were suffering 36 per cent inflation, North Sea Gas reserves were 40 per cent lower than thought and our main sources of income, tourism and banking, were obliterated by the 2008 crash. Even if Britain was not in economic trouble it needed the Euro. Trade barriers were being erected all over the world. President Obama led the way with swingeing tariffs on imported cars,

electronic goods and foodstuffs. Other countries took America's lead and were rebuilding their industries behind tariff walls. The EU agreed to have a single customs barrier excluding most imports on condition all members sign up to the Euro.

But what would have been a simple matter for Britain a decade ago was now a huge problem. Because the pound was so weak Germany and France doubted the wisdom of letting us join. Devaluation, they reminded us, was not confined to our currency. Because Britain's education system had collapsed it did not have the expertise to rebuild its industries. Our car plants would need engineers, new nuclear power stations would require experienced physicists, electronic factories

circuit designers. We also needed craftsmen and skilled administrators. But twenty years of grade inflation at Britain's universities had left it without experts. Social work and soft history degrees were useless when it came to designing industrial plant. Two month's work experience in a bogus technical college was no substitute for a five year apprenticeship, a university science course teaching nothing of substance a confidence trick. Britain had become a desert of foolishness, its ill educated, moronic inhabitants giggling in front of TV or downloading internet porn.

In contrast France and Germany's schools, universities and technical colleges had always demanded high standards from their students. As a result they had no difficulty in finding skilled men and women. Why should Europe be held back by an educational and fiscal lame dog?

European politicians also complained bitterly about our hidden immigrant population. The passing of the 'Publication of False Immigration Statistics Act' of 2010 with its draconian prison sentences had silenced all debate on the subject in the UK, but experts in Brussels and Switzerland alleged there was a large phantom population of illegals in Britain plus dependents, who had difficulty in paying their taxes or social security — if they did they would be discovered — or more usually lived outside the tax net altogether. They were an uninsured burden Europe was not prepared to shoulder. In addition Britain's lack of effective migration controls meant it would hold the door of the EU open to migrants from all over the world. Unless we were prepared to tighten our immigration controls entry to the Euro was out of the question.

By boosting the population with all comers while destroying the pound, the only interests served were a political élite of bankers, champagne socialists and New Tories, with identikit economic views, who had taken the country back to a Victorian world of servants, rack renting and sweat shops. Only the rich, who sat down to dinner parties to discuss human rights and the servant problem, prospered. Eva Peron's Argentina came to mind.

Like Peronist Argentina, Britain was influenced by mobs. Thousands of Socialist Worker's Party members began a mass day and night picket outside the new fifteen story high complex of EU offices in Vauxhall demanding UK entry to the Euro. Once Britain was a full member, party zealots hoped, British officials would renew their pressure to admit Turkey and the countries of the North African littoral to the EU thus bringing the socialist dream of universal working class mobility and dictatorship of the proletariat closer. The protestors had cynical allies in Whitehall, whose mandarins, advised by The City, recognised in North

Africa an abundant source of cheap labour — Eastern Europe's had dried up — which would even undercut the perilously low wages of British workers. Cheap labour was a way out of the recession.

The demonstration finally decided the Council of Ministers, meeting at Lyons, to turn down Britain's request, the Cameron government fell and the country went to a general election. Turnout was poor, few people saw any difference between Labour and Conservative and the only gainers were fringe parties such as the Hindu People's Alliance of Britain who returned two seats to Parliament, and the Party of God, (Islam) four. The new government that took office under Prime Minister Ruth Kelly was a coalition of Labour and Tory relying on very occasional support from the religious parties. The BNP had been banned two years before.

Without a freely convertible currency and isolated from Europe, Britain lapsed into apathy rather than revolution. Some industries made a partial recovery but, hampered by a lack of hard currency, and locked out of trade with the EU, Britain became, like Ireland under De Valera in the 1930's, an impoverished nation gazing back to a largely mythical past. Every child knew about Winston Churchill but shoes were in short supply. Pop nostalgia thrived, but half the buses and trains stopped running.

Paradoxically a new class, originating from highly successful and hard working migrants from the Indian subcontinent, began to consolidate. Remembering the experience of their grandfathers in Africa they were instinctively wary of too high a profile in politics. They nevertheless, deservedly, came to dominate the managerial and professional classes. Without them Britain would have sunk even lower. With extensive overseas links they were the only group with sufficient hard currency to educate their children abroad and, just as their grandfathers had survived African dictatorships in the sixties, were able to weather successive tax hikes imposed on business by a supine political class. The latter was made up of a mixture of the failures of both Conservative and Labour administrations. Lord Mandelson, for example, briefly led a coalition government in 2014 only to be forced into retirement the following year. He was followed into office by Prime Minister Keith Vaz and nine months later by the bizarre premiership of the former 'Come Dancing' celebrity John Sergeant. This caused a mixture of outrage and laughter, but by then, with the pound trading at twenty six to the US dollar, laughter was all most people could afford.

*Myles Harris is a consulting editor of the Salisbury Review*

# Letter from Iran

Mark Watterson

In the 1930's Robert Byron described three wines he had found at Shiraz: 'a very dry golden wine; a dry red claret, nondescript at first but acceptable with meals; and a sweeter vin rosé, which induces a delicious well-being'. Forty years earlier Lord Curzon praised the wines of the area as the best in Persia, echoing a seventeenth century European traveller, who considered them 'stomachical and generous'. All the more vexing then that the only 'liquor' a visitor can buy in Shiraz today is non-alcoholic beer. And this in the city of Hafiz, the medieval poet so given to celebrating wine, women and music. Such contradictions, however, are common in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

It starts on arrival at Emam Khomeini airport, a name conjuring up images of gun-toting revolutionary guards and bearded clerics. Nothing could be further from the truth as one is whisked through the sleekest of modern terminals and decanted on to a pristine highway for nearby Tehran.

Such initial impressions do not long survive the pollution, congestion and ugliness of so much of the city. The best antidote is the breathtaking National Jewels Museum, deep in a basement vault. Enough sparkle to give our own crown jewels a run for their money.

For the frisson of being in an 'axis of evil' country the former US embassy or 'US Den of Espionage' is easy to find. One is cautioned by the authorities, about photographing the anti-American murals on the compound walls; the uniformed guards within the entrance, however, are all cheery grins and waves.

Cultural cross-currents also produce surprises. A few hours' drive north-west of Tehran in the village of Soltaniyeh is the possible inspiration for Brunelleschi's great dome of the Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence. The mausoleum of the Mongol sultan Oljeitu was built in the early fourteenth century, at a time when Soltaniyeh was an international trading centre, attracting merchants from Italy. It has one of the biggest domes in the world. One thinks of St Pauls in London or the Blue mosque in Istanbul. Byron thought of Brunelleschi. The dome in Florence, built about a century later, is strikingly similar.

Further west in the mountainous Kordestan region is the most perfect of archaeological sites, Takht-e Soleiman, the Throne of Solomon. The allure of this

fortified settlement, built around the hot waters of an oval lake, means it has been occupied by Achaemenids, Parthians, Sassanians, sacked by Byzantine, Roman and Arab armies and searched, in 1939, by Nazi archaeologists looking for the Holy Grail. Remote and little visited.

Iran's famed attractions are further south. Shiraz has an air of sophistication befitting a city long celebrated as the heartland of Persian culture. The climate is particularly agreeable. Curzon's comments are valid today: 'The life and beauty of Shiraz were always extra-mural in character.... and were centred in the umbrageous gardens and beside the poets' graves that have won for it such a place in the realm of song.' The tombs of Hafiz and Sadi still draw huge numbers.

Forty miles away are the remains of Persepolis, the royal capital started by Darius the Great in the 6th century BC. At once one is connected to Macedon, Thermopylae and Athens. (Messages from the Aegean arrived here in under two weeks.) From that part of the world, in the fourth century, came Persepolis's destroyer, Alexander the Great.

As striking as the reliefs and columns is the lack of the horrors of modern tourism. Think Egypt without the persistent crowds, touts and hawkers.

The Achaemenian Emperors and following dynasties were sustained by the Zoroastrian faith. The Arabs arrived with their new religion, Islam, in the seventh century AD. The poet Ferdowsi, writing about this conquest in the tenth century, has a Persian general lament: 'Curse this world, curse this time, curse this fate/ That uncivilized Arabs have come to force me to be a Muslim'. There is a tension in Iran between Islam, imposed by Arab conquerors, and the rich heritage of pre-Islamic times.

The largest remaining community of Zoroastrians is in the wonderfully preserved desert city of Yazd. A temple houses a sacred flame, burning, apparently, since the fifth century AD. On the southern fringes of the city, on the tops of two hills, are Zoroastrian Towers of Silence. Within living memory the bodies of the faithful were exposed to vultures inside them.

'Esfahan is half the world', runs a vainglorious saying. Hyperbole apart, this is one of the great cities of the Islamic world and the place to savour the high

*Young Iranians blog furiously. In common with most private conversations, the blogs express real dissatisfaction with the country's leaders and a desire to engage with the world.*

refinements of Persian culture. (These achievements will be highlighted this year in a British Museum exhibition on the reign of Sha Abbas the Great, 1587-1629.) Like his contemporaries Elizabeth 1st and Philip 2nd of Spain he managed to unite his people and instil in them a sense of shared destiny. Esfahan is largely his creation, especially the great maidan or Naqsh-e Jahan at its centre. Nearly a mile in perimeter, this massive open square is home to the enormous Emam Mosque and the sublime Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque. At its peak few cities on earth could compete with Esfahan.

Something of this cosmopolitan past can be perhaps captured by strolling in the evening along the banks and over the bridges of the Zayanda river. Doing just this Byron experienced 'one of those rare moments of absolute peace, when the body is loose, the mind asks no questions, and the world is a triumph'.

Set against such past splendours, today's Iran, fractured in recent decades by violent revolution and

war, seems an impoverished place. Dress codes have certainly relaxed over the last few years, but hard-liners maintain control. Confrontation with the west guarantees their survival.

Generational change, however, may be against them. The majority of Iranians were born after the 1979 revolution. Young Iranians blog furiously. In common with most private conversations, the blogs express real dissatisfaction with the country's leaders and a desire to engage with the world. These sentiments are to the fore when a blogger writes in a recently published collection, 'I pray for Ahmadinejad's protection and well-being everyday. If allowed to run his course, by the time of the next election we will see a beleaguered and discredited President, the definite collapse of all this revolutionary mumbo jumbo, and the ultimate demise of extremism. It is only then that you will see this society flower.'

*Mark Watterson is a tour guide.*

# An Englishman's Home was his Castle

Jan Maciag

It is said that an Englishman's home is his castle. The aphorism conjures up the image of an armed gentleman in his battlemented pile; ready to keep the forces of state coercion away. This image is as symbolic as it is dated for while the poor fellow was on the roof the State had driven a tunnel into his treasure vault, checked his plumbing and made off with his personal information ... which it then probably lost at the earliest opportunity.

But if the State could invade the Englishman's house, at least the comforting myth persists that it is still *his* house and *his* land. He can, surely, do with it what he pleases? Well, (except in London) until the Public Health Act of 1848, and within the constraints of polite behaviour, he pretty much could. Ownership meant ownership.

Unfortunately, by the mid 19th century, the industrial revolution was transforming building decorum and local traditions of architecture into mass produced shoddiness. With that loss of custom, the State felt obliged to step in to restore order and minimum standards; effectively replacing individual judgement with 'rules'. A stream of additional regulation and legislation followed, designed to enhance or reverse

the fog of unintended consequences. This process culminated in the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, which repealed all previous legislation and, in the spirit of post-war renewal, made an entirely new beginning. That Act, amended in 1951, 1953, 1954 and 1959, was itself replaced in 1962 and again many times since to produce the bloated sclerotic 'planning system' we now enjoy.

The 1947 Act was a genuine child of wartime control. It contained some of the most drastic and far reaching provisions ever enacted affecting the ownership of land and buildings. Afterwards, ownership carried with it nothing more than the bare right to go on using it only for its existing purpose. The Act did not nationalise property but gave the State control (and quasi-ownership) of the development rights. As usual, the legislation was forced on the country by urgent need; in this case, for post-war reconstruction, but the dam had broken and the State's intervention (which had started modestly) became increasingly more onerous and intrusive. It has recently also become a tool of social engineering and an avenue whereby certain pressure groups (such as the climate change lobby) can impose their concerns directly (and at no cost to

themselves) on to other people's property.

The hidden agenda of the 1947 legislation was also intended to cement class warfare practices already well under way. Curious bits of legislation such as Compulsory Rights Orders had allowed Manny Shinwell to deploy the Coal Board as his secret weapon against the land owning 'enemy'. A year after we had defeated Hitler in 1945, Shinwell sent a 'column of lorries and heavy plant machinery' into the Park at Wentworth Woodhouse to defeat 'the privileged rich' by vindictive open cast coal mining right up to the door of arguably the most magnificent house in England. 100 acres of wonderful parkland and ancient trees were destroyed. Later, the coal turned out to be of poor quality and almost useless.

Meanwhile, and largely un-noticed by the British, another strand of thought that was destined to shape the look and pallor of these islands was forming. Modernism, or the theory that the present was the enduring culmination of all history, was concocted in Europe before the Great War, when a handful of artists reasoned that art and architecture should reflect the new era of industrial production.

This avant-garde community of mostly Marxists or Fascists hoped that, along with the new aesthetic order, would come a new social order of

common ownership and State control. But if the New Man was to be created the old one (a stubborn foe) had to be broken first. The Past became the enemy and with it all the traditions embedded in civil society; family, art, music and buildings would have to be overturned and forgotten.

This argument received only a minor audience until the moral desolation of the Great War, after which it was easier to convince ordinary people that the Past was, indeed, *all* bad. Such so-called progressive thinking encompassed much of the 20th century's politics and dominates art and architecture still. It was manifested in a great clean-up and was driven forward by tyrannous regimes of every 'left-right' persuasion. Eugenics for people, for culture; eugenics for art, music and architecture were clothed in acceptable terms such as Progress, Innovation, Purity and, more recently, in that vague standby, Change.

The British looked upon all this intellectual and aesthetic turmoil with tired amusement. Steeped in an intact social structure, the joy of the unspoilt countryside, Georgian architecture and warm beer in old pubs they felt that a war on tradition, on the Past, was a fad so ludicrous that it would pass in time. By 1945, although the Axis threat had been defeated, the cost in treasure and destruction was so great that the

British were now also receptive to an attack on the Past. Modernity would have its day. Gavin Stamp's book *Lost Cities* shows the orgy of destruction that far exceeded anything that Herman Goering could have dreamt of. Many fine buildings were destroyed, like the Imperial Institute in Kensington. The word Imperial was offensive, the building erased and castrated to become the Commonwealth Institute. Conservatives did not defend our heritage. When J M Richards, at that time editor of the *Architectural Review*, went to plead with Harold Macmillan (a conservative Prime Minister) for the retention of the Euston Arch, he recalled that 'Macmillan listened...or I suppose he listened [...] he sat without moving, with his eyes apparently closed. He asked no questions; in fact he said nothing except that he would consider the matter'. A better metaphor for conservative ennui could scarcely be imagined.

There are very few villages, towns and cities (those we call unspoilt) that escaped Modernisation. Roads were widened for cars, banal council house developments were forced through local opposition and 'slum clearance' thrust into place. Old buildings

that had stood for centuries were demolished and all who voiced concerns were 'reactionaries', clinging to the past because they were afraid of progress and the

future. History was a conveyor belt and progress was inevitable. It would be unleashed as new fashions, new ways of behaviour and new architecture. Alongside the destruction of historic town centres it is estimated that over 1500 important country houses were lost to forced neglect and punitive death duties.

The sneering accusation was that the greatest ambition of an Englishman was the attainment of sufficient wealth to retire to a country estate. Even if so, this apparent fault of character produced a matrix of estates, both large and small, that created extraordinary landscapes. Indeed, the English country house and garden probably represents this country's most enduring and civilising gift to domestic life around the world. Thus, when times improved in the 1980's and 1990's, some individuals pressed back to the unfashionable old ways. They bought and restored existing country properties and proposed replacements.

In 1997, John Gummer, then Secretary of State for the Environment, issued new planning guidance in a circular called PPG7 (Planning Policy Guideline) that recognized the anomaly in planning 'logic' of fine new country houses. Planners had spent decades keeping the countryside as underdeveloped as possible but clause 3.31, the 'Gummer Clause', allowed for exceptional new houses and, wisely, set the criteria for consent

*...startlingly, it was the first time in modern British history that the government had dared to tell Her Majesty's subjects what architectural style they must adopt in the design of their own private property, purely for ideological reasons.*

almost exclusively on quality. Fifteen new houses were granted consent before 2003 when Keith Hill, a minister in Prescott's sprawling Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, decided that this situation was beyond endurance. In a new volume of advice, now called Planning Policy Statement (PPS)7, and misleadingly titled Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, the Gummer Clause was removed. Country houses for the rich, it was proposed, were socially divisive and unacceptable.

The Royal Institute of British Architects put up some feeble opposition. It was a little embarrassing as the architectural establishment, including ennobled Labour peers, saw *its* government abolish a body of architectural work, albeit in a niche market. A cunning plan was needed and, at the apogee of their hubris, New Labour had a modest totalitarian tryst. It wasn't much noticed, but they produced PPS7 clause 11. The Gummer Clause was thus reborn but with a poisoned barb. It would permit the construction of new country houses but only if they were of a Modernist (and therefore egalitarian) design. Naturally, in an Orwellian wordplay the new policy was spelt out carefully in terms such as 'groundbreaking' design and 'reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture'. In the architectural world these are code words for Modernism but from the outside it was more ambiguous... who could be opposed to quality or high standards?

Laughably, Keith Hill stated that the government was not intent on discouraging particular styles of *contemporary* architecture and would not preclude a design if it 'reflects the evolution of architecture from its historical roots'. Weasel words again. Despite all, government policy would require privately commissioned traditional designs to demonstrate 'evolution' to a higher life form! Classical architecture, cradled in tradition and the past, would have to perform an impossible aesthetic contradiction in terms.

The result was predictable and country house building ceased. The government may have said one thing publicly but the planning authorities knew what it meant; *no* traditional designs. A few 'contemporary' proposals were granted enthusiastic consent and disproportionate publicity. The most notable, by Kathryn Findlay and called the 'starfish', has not been built because it has not found a buyer after five years and is now (to disproportionate silence) being redesigned in a classical style.

This story of political interference has attracted little comment. It affected few individuals but, startlingly, it was the first time in modern British history that the government had dared to tell Her Majesty's subjects what architectural style they *must* adopt in the design

of their own private property, purely for ideological reasons. The planning 'system', initially devised to regulate building activity for the common good, has subtly introduced the notion that private property is also the property of the State. Anyone who wishes to obtain permission to carry out building work on their own property must now satisfy the authorities with a filing cabinet of proof including environmental assessments, a design and access statement, tree surveys, bat and bird surveys, public consultations, archaeological digs, highways analysis and finally a Section 106 Agreement ... a financial 'contribution' for local government projects. The applicant must often demonstrate that their proposal is (in the words of the *Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment*) equal 'regardless of age, disability, ethnicity and social grouping'. To this burden must be added VAT, stamp duty, capital gains tax and death duty and it is apparent that the state no longer seeks just to control development. It has become a ponderous, but rapacious, partner with every property 'owner' in the land. As possibly the greatest beneficiary, is it any wonder that the government did so much to encourage the recently ruptured property bubble? But while we are prepared to become incensed as individuals when some pettifogging planning official imposes his or her 'ideas' on our property, we refuse to see it as a broader problem. We like 'planning' because we feel it controls others but our acquiescence has allowed the governing elite to deform the built fabric and heritage of this country to a seemingly unstoppable Modernist order.

The latest manifestation of this trend is the 2008 amendment to the 2004 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act that gives your local Planning Department the power to turn down 'poorly designed' schemes. Who is to say what is 'poor design'? Certainly not the owner and apparently not the owner's architect. Despite decades of incompetence, the planning officer will decide.

Is it not time to drastically reform the corrupt, dysfunctional planning 'system' and rebalance ownership rights? Is it not time to abandon State promotion of the failed 'egalitarian' Modernist prescription for public and private architecture? Can we expect, at the very least, the next administration to restore something like the Gummer Clause? Will that minor reversal be the first shot fired back in anger or will the next Prime Minister also close his eyes to 'consider the matter'?

*Jan Maciag is an architect*

# The Housing Trap

Tom Burkard

Most of us, I suspect, were secretly pleased when Housing Minister Caroline Flint announced that meeting Gordon Brown's target of building three million new homes by 2020 was going to be a 'challenge'. The magnitude of the challenge became apparent when I last visited Queen's Hills, a new estate just west of Norwich projected to have over 500 new homes. It's being built on a reclaimed gravel pit; now, it is an ugly finger of development pointing up the River Tud straight at our own rural retreat.

Happily for us, development has come to a complete halt. The only builders in sight were working — as slowly as possible — to complete the new primary school. Although it has officially opened, it may be a long time before the school is full. Throughout Queen's Hills, houses have been abandoned at all stages of construction. The effect is dismal beyond belief. The houses already completed are bad enough, even those lucky enough to find buyers: the pastiche of styles and materials does nothing to disguise the architects' paucity of ideas, nor the bleakly utilitarian nature of houses designed as machines for living.

The building industry is more prone to extremes of exuberant expansion and deep depression than most. Hence, we fear that once the current slump is over, the demand for houses will condemn even more of the ancient English countryside to the banal attentions of our planners and architects. House building was, until very recently, big business — and the PR skills employed in it have conned us all into thinking that we have a genuine shortage of housing. Although it is now generally conceded that prices still have a long way to fall, it won't be long before investors are encouraged to take advantage of bargain prices, and first time buyers urged to get on the housing ladder while they can. Funny how no one talks about the housing snake, which has wiped out so many incautious buyers.

Yet this snake may be a lot longer than we think. For as long as most of us can remember, houses have been a one-way bet, at least for anyone who had the foresight, patience and resources to sit out the cyclical troughs. But it wasn't always this way. From the repeal of the Corn Laws until the end of the war, property values declined steadily. We may very well be entering another era of steady decline for Britain has far more houses than it really needs, even if one discounts the ruined

housing estates in the North. The latest report indicates that Britain has a million vacant homes — and that doesn't take into consideration the number of owner-occupied houses which are virtually empty.

To illustrate: in 2004, some friends bought a modern four-bedroom house in a Wiltshire village. They bought the most expensive house they could afford on the theory that its value would appreciate more than a cheaper one. For three years it did just that, so in 2007, they invested in a three-bedroom terrace and rented it to their son — a single working man — at a peppercorn rent. Since their daughter went to college, most of the time they have three empty bedrooms.

In March, this peaceful suburban idyll was shattered: Martin was made redundant. He works in a crowded field — information technology — where it's hard enough for young men with degrees to find jobs. And his health is failing. Fiona makes a good salary (ironically, as an executive in one of our surviving building societies), but not enough to pay all the mortgages. They could just about make it if it weren't for the upkeep and taxes on their holiday home in Brittany. It has been three years since they've had any income from letting it, and now they can't even afford to go there themselves. Luckily, they bought it a long time ago, and they're sitting on a large paper profit — just the same as the other 50,000 Brits with second homes at the other end of the Roscoff ferry. Altogether, they own 10 bedrooms, and only two of them are occupied.

They were seduced by the notion that housing was a one-way bet. Such words of warning as myself or anyone else offered were brushed aside — they were mesmerised by the magic cash machine which could be tapped at will, this golden goose. Every month, my old-fashioned views were being proved wrong — Martin and Fiona's house was going up in value by £2,000 per month, which was more than Martin's net salary. Now, of course, all of their real estate is virtually unsaleable. At property auctions, some houses fail to attract any bids. Most are withdrawn after failing to meet reserve. Forced sales — foreclosures — often bring in less than half of 2007 valuations. Official figures which show a 12 per cent drop in prices since this peak badly understate the case: in a slump, only the most desirable properties sell (except for the small percentage that are sold at distress prices). Contracts

exchanged on the derivatives market indicate that it will get much worse — a further drop of 36 per cent has been factored into current trades, and no recovery is expected in the next decade.

No doubt the housing market, the banking system and the economy will eventually rebound, but it may be a long time before the term 'safe as houses' is used with any but ironic intent. The current financial crisis will almost certainly be one of those watersheds, like the great depression of the 1930s, which fundamentally alter the way people think. Although the negative equity problems of the late 1980s were soon forgotten, we will be lucky — or perhaps unlucky — to get off so lightly this time. Although people may still continue to buy more housing than they really need for other reasons, subtracting cupidity from the equation will greatly reduce demand. Even more to the point, the 'demand' that fuelled the pre-2007 bubble was merely a reflection of the amount of money available — and not an indication of any real shortage of bricks and sticks. Given enough money, many if not most of us would live in much grander houses than the ones we now inhabit — but the ready availability of houses and flats to let or buy tells us all we need to know about Britain's housing 'shortage'.

It is possible that in five years' time, the economy will have recovered, and more immigrants will be needed to do the jobs that are now beneath our children, spoiled as they are by the sour milk of the welfare state. But the outlook is not good. The North Sea oil is rapidly running out, and the City — which has allowed us to live beyond our means for generations — has lost its

reputation, and in finance, reputation is all. Since our shining City lost its lustre, the pound has fallen by 25 per cent against the dollar, and even further against the euro: even though the current crisis is world-wide, Britain is among the hardest hit.

Neither David Cameron nor anyone else has any easy answers to these problems. We have become a nation of paper-pushers, and the world has finally rumbled that most of this paper has no economic value whatsoever. Gordon Brown has encumbered us with a bloated public sector payroll whose primary purpose seems to be the creation of regulatory burdens for the surviving few who produce goods or services that anyone wants to buy.

We can reasonably predict that Martin and Fiona will find the value of their pensions greatly reduced, with the cost of council tax, heating and electricity all way up. They may have to take in lodgers — already, agencies report a 15 per cent increase in the number of people renting out spare rooms in their own houses. Their grown-up children have no inclination to produce the grandchildren whose birth is assumed by our planners. Indeed, many grown-up children are doing the sensible thing, and moving back in with their parents.

The rest of us can tighten our belts a little — no bad thing in itself — and stop worrying about the seemingly inevitable march of new housing estates built by aesthetic illiterates. Just recall — it wasn't so long ago that the onward march of socialism seemed unstoppable.

*Tom Burkard is Director of the Promethean Trust*

## Conservative Thoughts

Liberalism cannot either see or deal with the domestic jungle and the backward regions; the two challenges are closely similar. Liberalism is unfitted by its rationalistic optimism, its permissiveness, its egalitarianism and democratism, and by its guilt. Consider once more the logic of liberalism in relation to the backward regions, bringing it to bear on the question of survival.

From the universalism and democratism of the liberal ideology there follows the familiar one-man one-vote principle. This principle implies by simple arithmetic, the subjugation of the West: the members of Western civilisation are a small minority — it is as simple as that. The economic egalitarianism of the liberal ideology implies the reduction of Westerners to hunger and poverty. Of course liberals hide these implications from themselves and Western public opinion. They dream up some sort of world democracy in which a reasonable world society uses the one-man, one-vote principle to achieve universal freedom, peace and justice, and economic egalitarianism means plenty for all. But that is ideological fantasy. It is the subjugation (or disappearance) of the West, and Western- indeed universal-hunger and poverty that are the unavoidable end terms of the logic of liberalism.

*James Burnham Suicide of the West*



## Roy Kenridge

Special reptile pet shops have sprung up all over Britain to meet the demand for fierce and frightening pets. Most of these shops sell tarantulas and occasionally scorpions. My niece bought a leopard gecko, but when she tried to handle it, it gave her a nasty bite. My mother and I were given custody of the gecko. The shop also sold us a tank furnished with gravel and large pieces of bark.

We placed stones here and there, and balanced the two pieces of bark on pebbles to make cave-like houses. We then introduced the gecko, an imperious desert-dweller from Afghanistan. It was marked with a jigsaw puzzle of dark brown spots that looked as if they could be fitted together to make a solid brown gecko. Beneath the spots, the lizard was cream coloured. When in good spirits it glowed in alternate bands of mauve and yellow. Soon the gecko developed a routine of walking slowly and deliberately from one bark cavern to another. It proved to be a ground gecko, not the sort who climb up walls. Those tiny delicate baby-like hands and feet had no finger-sucker pads and were never meant for climbing.

When basking crocodile-like under the sun lamp, the gecko would let its forearms lie limply backwards, pink palms uppermost, baby fingers outspread. Normally, though, it lurked inside a cave or prowled leopard-like up and down in search of prey. Like a leopard in more ways than mere spots, it had upright-slit cat's eyes, set in the front of its impressively bulgy brain box. This lizard clearly thought of itself as a huge and important

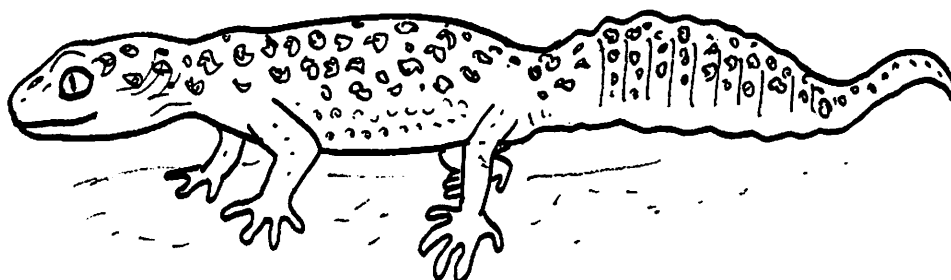
dinosaur. As it marched into its cave, it held its tail on high, graciously twirling the end of it as it settled down, dragon-like, to glare out on the world from its shelter. I felt shrunk by its baleful gaze. Sometimes I felt like a medieval serf confronted by a dragon; at other times I felt more like a Hollywood caveman encountering a dinosaur.

The lizard's large tail, fat in the middle and narrow at each end, can be shed and re-grown at will. However, as with a desert sheep, the tail stores fat, so to shed it would be like throwing a filled hamper away. Our gecko, on a diet of locusts and waxworms, swiftly grew from six inches in length to eight. As soon as I put the tank light out, the veteran locusts, survivors of many a hunt, would climb high up on the wall. The gecko hunted in the dark. Its tongue was huge, bright pink and bear-like, not thin, quick and slitty as I had expected. It was like Daffy Duck's tongue – a surprise when contrasted with realistic Donald's. With this large tongue it lapped noisily at its water bowl, then licked its lips. I never handled the gecko, but put food in and took dirt out, watched sardonically all the while.

Often at night the gecko would look at me searchingly, as if wondering why I held it a captive against its will, but nevertheless kept it well-supplied with food and drink.

'What's in it for him?' it seemed to be musing.

When shedding its skin, the gecko pulled its finger skin off with its mouth, as if pulling off gloves. Then he ate it.



# Conservative Classic – 34

Stefan Zweig's *Beware of Pity*

Anthony Daniels

A cultivated German woman of pronounced literary tastes once told me that Stefan Zweig had a peculiar place in the German literary firmament. He was still widely read, but guiltily, half-clandestinely: as if no one could believe that a writer so readable was anything but superficial. To admit to liking Stefan Zweig was, in literary circles, to lose caste.

Somerset Maugham occupies more or less the same position in English letters. And, indeed, there are many parallels between the two writers. Both were cultivated, polyglot and intensely francophile; both were distinguished literary critics; both travelled the world extensively and used their experiences, and the stories they gathered from interlocutors, as material; both wrote novellas in which the deepest human passion is described with an objectivity that belies their compassion for their characters; and both were immensely successful from the sales point of view (Maugham collected paintings, Zweig priceless manuscripts), which aroused hostility, envy and what is not at all incompatible with envy — suspicions of crude commercialism.

Unlike Maugham, however, Zweig wrote only one full-length novel, *Beware of Pity*. First published in 1939, and republished several times, it is not as well-known in the English-speaking world as it ought to be, perhaps because its implications are so unwelcome to people for whom virtue consists largely of the expression of the appropriate sentiments towards the wretched of the earth.

Though the book is quite long, its plot is simple. It is told through the eyes of a young Austrian cavalry officer, Anton Hofmiller, in the days immediately before the outbreak of the First World War. Hofmiller is posted to a Hungarian garrison town, and is soon invited to the house of the local magnate, Herr von Kekesfalva, whom he assumes to be an aristocrat, but is in fact a Jewish trader who by dint of shrewdness, intelligence and hard work has risen greatly in the world from his impoverished background and has put

his old identity behind him. Kekesfalva, a widower, has a daughter, a sensitive and intelligent girl of 17, who has been paralysed from the waist down by an unspecified disease (either polio or perhaps Guillain-Barre syndrome). Under the double blow of his wife's death and his daughter's paralysis, Kekesfalva has lost all interest in making money; his only desire now is to obtain his daughter's recovery and secure her future.

The impoverished, thoughtless, but decent young Hofmiller is flattered by the attention and consideration given him by the rich Kekesfalva, and impressed by the refined comfort of his home, a great contrast with the rather brutish barracks life; but more importantly, he feels pity for his daughter, Edith, and visits her every day, without making clear to her why he is doing so.

He is blinded by the warm glow of his own generosity, which he assumes to be an unmitigated good; for the first time in his life he becomes indispensable to someone else, he does not see what should have been increasingly obvious to him: that the young woman wants him not as a companion to while away her lonely hours, or to be the object of his pity, but as a lover. Right until the end of the book, his pity, which becomes indistinguishable from moral cowardice, renders him

incapable of frankness in her presence (for example, he encourages her hopes, which he knows to be vain, of a complete and radical cure, in order to avoid the pain of witnessing her despair when told the truth); and his

equivocations lead to a terrible denouement, namely her suicide and the death from grief shortly thereafter of her father, Herr von Kekesfalva.

The hero of the book, in so far as it may be said to have one, is Edith's general practitioner, Dr Condor, at first sight a somewhat unattractive and commonplace man, but one who is compassionate without being sentimental, and who understands both the necessity of hope and the dangers of illusion. He says to Hofmiller what he does not want to hear and does not understand until it is too late:

... pity is a confoundingly two-edged business. Anyone who doesn't know how to deal with it

*there are at least two important lessons in the book, with conservative implications. The first is that human beings are never just the passive recipients of the charity, pity or compassion of others, that they have reactions of their own, often unpredictable ones*

should keep his hand, and above all his heart, off it. It is only at first that pity, like morphia, is a solace to the invalid, a remedy, a drug, but unless you know the correct dosage and when to stop, it becomes a virulent poison. The first few injections do good, they soothe, they deaden the pain. But the devil of it is that the organism, the body, just like the soul, has an uncanny capacity for adaptation. Just as the nervous system cries out for more and more morphia, so do the emotions cry out for more and more pity, in the end more than one can give.

The need for this bogus emotion is as great for those who give it as those who receive it, for (says Dr Condor) there are two kinds of pity:

One, the weak and sentimental kind, which is really no more than the heart's impatience to be rid as soon as possible of the painful emotion aroused by the sight of another's unhappiness, that pity which is not compassion, but only an instinctive desire to fortify one's soul against the sufferings of another...

*When you consider British public policy over the last decades, it is clear that much of it has been motivated by, and appealed to, pity of the self-indulgent kind that Zweig dissects so acutely*

The other kind of pity, the true and unsentimental kind, requires not self-indulgence and emotional gratification, but self-sacrifice; and, of course, is a great deal less common.

Now what, you might ask, has this to do with conservatism? Zweig was certainly not a conservative in politics, though as a cultivated and civilised man he had a great deal of respect for the achievements of the past. He was, rather, a liberal in the best sense: genuinely attached to freedom, including that of others, by no means impervious to innovation, well-versed in his own culture without despising or disdaining other cultures, in short open to the best in human civilisation.

But there are at least two important lessons in the book, with conservative implications. The first is that human beings are never just the passive recipients of the charity, pity or compassion of others, that they have reactions of their own, often unpredictable ones, because they are human beings. Hofmiller's greatest mistake is in supposing that Edith is an empty vessel, into which he can simply pour his generous feelings evoked by her misfortune (which is indeed worthy of compassion). He fails to think of her seriously as anything other than a young woman in a pitiable situation.

The second is that pity of the sentimental kind is not only emotionally dishonest, leading to frightful cant and humbug (because, as Hazlitt says, 'people would be thought to know and care... rather more than they actually do'), but to disaster in actual practice. People

ought, and in reality can, never be reduced to mere objects upon whom one can exercise one's emotions for one's own gratification; and if one tries to do so, the people whom one uses in this fashion are apt, even at the cost of self-destruction, to react in such a way as to disturb one's complacency and peace of mind. It is clear from Hofmiller's narrative that his entanglement with Edith meant more to him than the carnage of the First World War, whose advent he welcomed as a relief from the turmoil created in him by her suicide.

When you consider British public policy over the last decades, it is clear that much of it has been motivated by, and appealed to, pity of the self-indulgent kind that Zweig dissects so acutely and thinks has such disastrous consequences. Governments and officialdom have treated those in unenviable situations much as Hofmiller treats Edith, as passive recipients of their benevolence. And just as Hofmiller finds

that he is rewarded for a time with material as well as psychological comforts for the continued expression of this pity for Edith, so, too, have British governments

and officialdom feathered their own nests by means of institutionalised pity, while preening themselves on their own virtue and compassion. Mr Brown's desire to save Africa from poverty — somewhat muted now, thanks to a crisis that may yet plunge a considerable proportion of the British population into real and raw hardship — is born precisely of this kind of pity.

*Beware of Pity* is certainly not a call for Gradgrindian utilitarianism; it is not a fictional illustration, either, of the crude philosophical doctrine that all human conduct, even the most apparently altruistic, is in reality selfish and self-interested. It is, rather, a condemnation of the kind of cheap emotional dishonesty and self-deception, commonly known as pity, that Hofmiller comes himself (but too late) to see as self-indulgent, cowardly and dangerous, and that has been the driving force of British politics for a long time.

*(Translation by Phyllis and Trevor Blewitt, in Penguin Twentieth Century Classics.)*



# Reputations — 23

Wyndham Lewis

David McCann

Why, for over half a century, has our modernist art establishment refused to honour Wyndham Lewis with a retrospective? The answer was provided by the National Portrait Gallery's small exhibition of Lewis's portraits held late last year. After returning unscathed from his bombardiering exploits on the Western Front and grown contemptuous of 'pure form', or a people-less avant-garde art, Lewis devoted the rest of his career to making peace with nature. While the doyens of modernism were increasingly devoted to abstract formalism, cleansing painting of representation, Lewis submerged his pioneering pre-war geometrics in the 'coloured vegetation, the flesh and blood of life'. While they became practitioners of subjectivism, his art and writing became conspicuously classical. Where modernism preached enslavement to the *Zeitgeist* and to 'isms' or 'movements', Lewis extolled the virtues of artistic individualism. Under his Plutarchian critical alter-ego, 'The Enemy', he virulently attacked modernism's most powerful English advocates, dismissing Roger Fry first as having 'the distaste for reality of the scholar, and some of the spoilt-child qualities of the Rich Man' and later 'the knighted anarchist' Herbert Read as 'a Mister-Abreast-of-the-Times for Everyman who paints or sculpts'. 'What every artist should try to prevent is the car, in which is our civilized life, plunging over the side of the precipice – the exhibitionist extremist promoter driving the whole bag of tricks into a nihilistic nothingness or zero' he wrote.

This trailblazing anti-modernism, voraciously maintained until his death in 1957, proved as disastrously reputation-wrecking as his penning a part-flattering account of *Hitler* in 1931 and providing his 1939 critique of anti-Semitism with the facetious title, *The Jews are they Human?* His only major retrospective, in 1956, the pet-project of his most devoted acolyte and 'Vasari of English Art', Sir John Rothenstein, passed virtually unnoticed in the halcyon days of Abstract Expressionism. Though receiving reasonable reviews from well disposed critics, 'Wyndham Lewis: Portraits' has suffered a similar fate in 2008, eclipsed by the queue-round-the-block retrospectives at Tate Modern of the dead-end-ism of Mark Rothko and the absurdist scribbles of the absurdly named Cy Twombly.

Lewis kicked off his campaign against the fanatical championing of arbitrary innovation in the arts as early as 1919 in *The Caliph's Design*, describing the espousal of fashionable 'isms' as the pastime of the 'constipated and sluggish'. Preventing painting from fizzling out in a 'fireworks of pseudo-scientific stunts' was inseparable from his recognition of the quality of what was being produced by those forced out of the limelight by the internationalists. As the first serious contender for the role of an English Clement Greenberg or Peggy Guggenheim, Lewis debunked Clive Bell's rabidly Anglophobic, inferiority-inducing maxim that 'to talk of modern English painting as though it were the rival of modern French is silly', with the fiercely patriotic one-liner: 'nothing but a stupid parochial snobbism could make a half-dozen English names I can think of, seem any less weighty than a half-dozen French'. Justifying Sickert's description of him as 'greatest portraitist of this or any other time' he was meanwhile churning out the first totemic heads of T S Eliot, James Joyce and Ezra Pound, while the Bloomsberries were promoting the Francophile Duncan Grant as Picasso's English equal. Lewis saw through Grant's pastiches as he did Virginia Woolf's, describing *Mrs Dalloway* 'an undergraduate imitation of Ulysses', before demolishing the rest of this 'family of Strayed and Dissenting Aesthetes' (and dilettantism in general) in his hilarious non-moral satire, *The Apes of God* (1930).

Lewis was not merely, in Eliot's words, 'the greatest prose master of my generation', with a plethora of novels to prove the poet right, but he was also one of the greatest cultural critics of the 20th century; mercilessly undermining every cult and clique of his time. As an isolated exponent of Western Civilization's 'great, central, and stable canons of artistic expression', painting himself in 1921 as Raphael, he discouraged in *Time and Western Man* (1927) the fetishization of child art by ridiculing 'Stein-stutter' and though with 'heart and soul upon the side of the melting-pot', rebuked, in the pages of *Paleface* (1929), his fellow Caucasian D H Lawrence for idealizing 'dark' culture. Incidentally, in the same book, Lewis condemned the notion of Jewish inferiority as 'the most intense and inveterate racial superstition the world has ever known' — an opinion which violently contradicts his posthumous status as

a ‘gurgling anti-Semite from morning till morning’ like Ezra Pound.

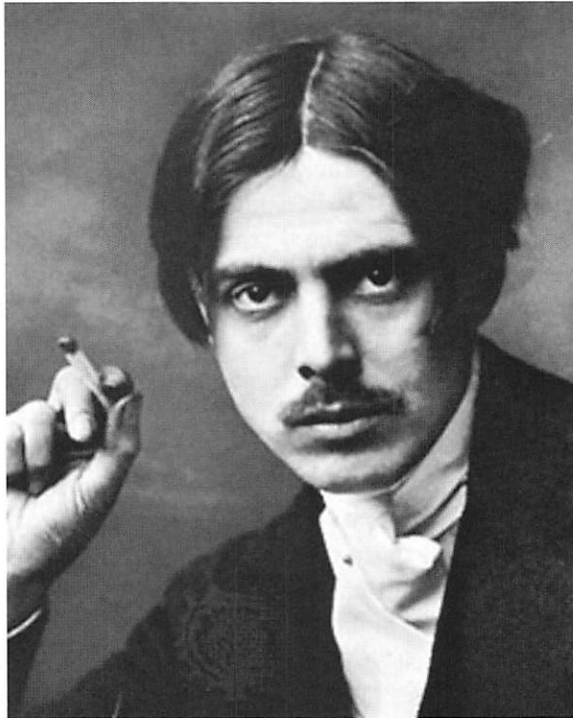
In the mid-thirties he came to see himself as the liberator of British art from its subjugation to continental avant-gardism; beckoning Henry Moore ‘to come out of the land of plastic shorthand’ while simultaneously breathing new life into the fetid academic tradition by painting Super-Naturalistically: ‘nature transformed of all her latent geometrics into something outside “the real” — outside the temporal order — altogether.’ Having compromised in the interests of the ‘Reunion of the Public and the Artist which is so greatly to be desired’, Lewis submitted his Super-Naturalistic rendering of T S Eliot to the Royal Academy’s 1938 summer show. But in revenge for his Vorticism, the denizens of this pre-modernist institution rejected it as too modern. A year later, Lewis crossed the Atlantic.

*Self-Condemed*, the brilliant autobiographical novel of these purgatorial years in the New World spent portrait-painting, lecturing and warning against the superfluous patronage of abstraction, was published nine years after his return to England in 1945. He arrived to find British figurative art fighting for survival. ‘The moment Croesus’ he wrote ‘cast his gorgon-eye upon a blank blue canvas, with two pink spots at its centre and a scarlet triangle up in one corner — gazed at it bleakly and found it *good*, the doom of all that was not *blank* was sealed’. In 1949, Lewis became art critic of the BBC’s house journal, *The Listener*. In his weekly column he took on his *Zeitgeist*-obsessed contemporaries with a ferocious zeal; lambasting their eagerness ‘to plug to the hilt, to trumpet, to expound any movement in painting or sculpture ... which was obviously hurrying along a path as opposite as possible from what had appealed to civilized man through the ages’, and ridiculing with great aplomb their propensity to over-promote painters who ‘unable to do the straight stuff ... disguised their limitations in a pretentious technical mumbo-jumbo’.

Only Lewis had the courage to discredit the fatuous exhibiting policies of the state-funded, Read-run, Institute of Contemporary Arts as ‘the ballyhoo of

newness’ and to combine his pioneering exposé of the devastating results of what he perceived as art gone raving mad in modernism — ‘the next great enemy of modernism’s vices, Peter Fuller, was then barely out of nappies’ — with appraisals of unfashionable figurative painters, old and young. The inexcusable critical neglect endured by his friend, the brilliant Vorticist-turned-landscapist David Bomberg, is severely admonished in a eulogizing review of the painter’s work dated 10 March 1949, anticipating Richard Cork’s celebrated resurrection of the artist’s reputation 38 years later. His endorsement of the burgeoning careers of Michael Ayrton, Francis Bacon, Robert Colquhoun,

John Craxton, John Minton, Ceri Richards and Keith Vaughan, not only innovative — as was his vindication of fashionably disdained Pre-Raphaelitism, to which he gave an enthusiastic thumbs up — does much to discredit persistent negative literary and press portrayals of him as deeply self-obsessive. His (fanatical) desire to advance the profession of the British Guyanese painter, Denis Williams, was hardly the action of the career racist both Jeffrey Meyer’s regrettably still influential 1980 biography and John Carey’s *Intellectuals and the Masses* perversely set out to prove he was. Lewis’s



fearless flaunting of critical commonsense continued, reaching its zenith of achievement with the publication in 1954 of the slim, black-bound, *Demon of Progress in the Arts*. Damned by the absurdly influential Clement Greenberg, forgotten, and then in the early 1980s omitted from the Black Sparrow Press’s otherwise impressive array of Lewis reprints, the book’s unpopular central message, that an unhealthy sponsorship of fads and fashions would conspire to drive art past the limit ‘beyond which there is nothing’, stands alone as a prophetic description of the art scene in post-millennial Britain. A re-issuing of this mini-masterpiece in 2009 might have the desired effect. Lewisian scholar C J Fox thought it would in 1972, when, having seen ‘The New Art’ exhibition of Conceptualist claptrap at the Hayward, he sent the gallery a copy of the book and a note which read: ‘I have decided that you need this book more than I do: may it promote your earliest possible aesthetic recovery’.



Our minds have become jaded from so many horror stories. Another young person shot or stabbed to death in London and it is nothing out of the ordinary. But sometimes there is an event so manifestly evil that even our drowsy consciences are startled awake. Last year a mob encouraged 17 year old Shaun Dykes to jump to his death from the roof of a shopping centre. A group of onlookers gathered to watch while trained negotiators spent three hours trying to coax him down. Some of the mob taunted Shaun, who lived in the Derbyshire village of Kilburn, and shouted: 'Go on then, jump!' Students from Shaun's college were nearby and heard the goading, according to his head teacher Rob Howard: 'One student told me he could not believe people place such little value on life. It's almost as if they are in a television show. It's unreal.' The hateful mob was not made up only of young louts. Neatly dressed middle-aged and middle-class people, ordinary shoppers, rushed to where Shaun had fallen to photograph his body on their mobile phones.

I was struck by the sense that our society has lost the knack of distinguishing between appearance and reality. We are so much enthralled by the voyeuristic culture of Big Brother and You Tube that we tend to mistake real life events for play-acting. Often reality and fiction are deliberately confused and to reflect this new words have come into the vocabulary: 'docudrama' and 'infotainment'. The result is the massive desensitising we saw in the Derby mob. Then I remembered those words of Charles Sisson years ago: 'What makes St Augustine remarkable is that he lived through times which were very much like our times — and he rejected them.' Modern society uncannily resembles the sorts of things that were going on near the fall of the Roman Empire which St Augustine condemned in his great book *City of God*: the cruelty of the arena, the gladiatorial contests and the deadly games in the Coliseum where spectators would vote by a show of hands on whether a man should have his left foot or his right hand cut off first.

Augustine describes a state in which people are, '...unconcerned about the utter corruption of their country — "So long as it lasts" they say — so long as it enjoys material prosperity'. The downfall of the Roman Empire was preceded by a whole series of financial crises, overwhelmed by mass immigration and threatened by barbarian violence. The comparisons with our own time are very striking. Augustine

prophesied against '...rulers who are interested not in the morality, but the docility of their subjects; they are regarded not as directors of conduct but as controllers of material things and providers of material satisfaction.'

Doesn't that make you think of extravagant loans to people who could never afford them; of laws to encourage 24/7 shopping and 24/7 drinking; of the whole world turned into advertisements? Art and culture debased, as Sir Peter Maxwell Davies said of the Damien Hirst exhibition, '...into manufactured artefacts without content, with just a brand tag supposed to guarantee market value'. A civilisation cannot survive on such debased conduct, on pretend values which are really valueless.

Augustine describes a society where: 'Full publicity is given where shame would be appropriate; close secrecy is imposed where praise would be in order. Decency is veiled from sight; indecency is exposed to view. Scenes of evil attract packed audiences; good words scarcely find any listeners. It is as if purity should provoke a blush and corruption give grounds for pride.'

Reading *City of God* is like reading modern newspapers. For instance, I thought the solecism of referring to a sectional self-interest group as a 'community' was a particularly modern mistake. Augustine said, 'They define "the community" as meaning not every association of the population but an association united by a common sense of rights and a community of interest.' Such things are pressure groups or even ghettos; and as such they are divisive of the commonwealth, the whole community of the nation.

Augustine lived at a time when the church was persecuted and when it was blamed for all that was going wrong. He faced these accusers:

Why is it that you put the blame on Christians when things go wrong? Is it not because you are anxious to enjoy your vices without interference and to wallow in your corruption untroubled and un-rebuked? For if you are concerned for peace and general prosperity, it is not because you want to make decent use of these blessings with moderation, with restraint, with self-control, with reverence. No! It is because you seek an infinite variety of pleasures with a crazy extravagance; and your prosperity produces a moral corruption far worse than all the fury of an enemy.

Today Christianity is derided by atheist intellectuals and prominent journalists as something which is

primitive, unbelievable and restrictive. Restrictive of what? Of their desire to scorn and abolish Christian morality — because it puts them in the wrong. Augustine mentions the enemy. Many of us claim that the chief threat comes from a foreign enemy — such as Islamic terrorism — but a people of integrity can always defend themselves against external foes. What we cannot defeat so easily is an enemy so deeply embedded in our own psyche and culture that we do not even recognise it as one. This is aggressive secularisation; there is an influential and growing faction in our country who want to see Christianity altogether abolished.

What can be done? The antidote to the destruction of our society by rampant secularism is for the church to recover its wits and its confidence. The philosopher and President of the Italian Senate, Marcello Pera, spells it out: 'Christianity is so consubstantial to the West that any surrender on its part would have devastating consequences. Will the Church and the clergy and the faithful be able to be purified of the relativism that has almost erased their identity and weakened their message and witness?'

*Peter Mullen is Rector of St Michael's, Cornhill.*

## LETTERS

Sir,

In Tom Burkard's interesting review of Zamoyski's study of how Polish forces stopped a Soviet army from seizing Warsaw and going on to conquests in western Europe, he speculates about 'why it has been virtually air-brushed from the collective consciousness of the West' (*Salisbury Review*, Winter 2008). One reason may be that an eye-witness of events in Warsaw in August 1920 was Kurt Eric Suckert (1898-1957) who, under his pseudonym 'Curzio Malaparte' published a lively chapter on the subject in his once-famous book, *Technique du Coup d'état*, (Paris, 1931). Mussolini gaoled him for ten years when the book appeared, but Suckert was widely believed to be a fascist sympathizer. His chapter on the Polish victory (which he attributes to Weygand) is a discussion of why the chaos in Warsaw at the time did not lead to a communist coup. He seems to appreciate the wider implications of the Polish victory. 'Anyone who takes an unprejudiced view of events in Europe in 1919 and 1920 cannot help wondering how Europe managed to get out of such a serious revolutionary crisis. In almost all countries the liberal bourgeoisie showed itself incapable of defending the State.' Incidentally, in my unrevised 1948 French edition of his book Suckert recalls, 'I was twenty years old when I witnessed, in Warsaw, the days of August 1920. Beside me ... at the same window of the Hotel Bristol, was another spectator: a French commandant named Charles de Gaulle.'

J F Bosher,  
Ottawa.

Sir,

While I agree with Alexander Boot (Winter 2008) that the equating of apes with humans is daft, I fail to see the connection with Darwinism. As with human rights (Bentham — nonsense on stilts) animal rights fall in the category where as Hume had it, reason is the slave of the emotions — we take a position first and then find reasons to justify it.

So while one Darwinist may instance physical closeness as a reason for accepting kinship another may see it as an instance of how great a gulf only minor variations of DNA can create. As to the unfilled links in the evolutionary case, given that the subject encompasses the whole of life, past and present, it is unsurprising that everything is not yet accounted for, and the Creationists emphasis on the gaps is merely a smoke screen to hide the elephant in the room — the question who created the creator?

Gordon Haines  
Suffolk

Sir,

Alexander Boot's frenzied inventions about science challenging evolution and supporting Genesis came as a shock after expecting a reasoned argument against Spain's granting human rights to apes (*Monkey Business*, Winter 2008), built up by sage comments in your editorial.

Charles Darwin was a great British thinker. His insights remain the basis for modern biology and much else besides, and they grew from our tradition of liberty, that accepts spontaneous order arises without authority-from-above: a tradition that dignifies, and does not destroy, the individual. I hope that Darwin's anniversary year will not find your magazine rejecting that discovery. An unscientific and illiberal conservatism would be impoverished indeed.

Marc Sidwell  
London NW6

Sir,

Darwinism is subject to revision and development. But despite the deficiency of 'transitional' fossils, why replace evolution with a theory that each species was specially created. This alternative explanation, as Alexander Boot found it inside an old book, states that every animal, reptile, bird and winged insect now existing originated from a collection made by a 600 year old boat-builder and that the different population groups all descend from his three sons.

Paleontology and genetics hardly support this account as effectively as the hypothesis, for example, that Australian aborigines, Pygmies, Bushmen and Scandinavians display selective adaption to diverse climates — whether their ancestors came 'down from Ararat' within the last 40 centuries or, more likely, 'out of Africa' much earlier.

Sin and immortality are theological not scientific concepts. Several books like CS Coon's *The Origin of Races* (1963) could prove at least as informative as stories about the Tower of Babel or the Land of Nod.

J Robertson  
Norfolk

Sir,

I much enjoyed Christie Davies's review of Antony Flew's book *There is a God* (SR Winter 2008). According to Davies, Flew concluded that God must exist simply because the probability of life, of human life, emerging from an inanimate universe is exceptionally small.

Does it need a Freud to explain just how it comes about that Flew somehow omitted the further question:

just what is the probability of an almighty God being created, or evolving out of this same universe, or at some point in eternity?

E J Mishan  
London NW11

Sir,

Alistair Miller has drawn attention to the widening gulf between private and public education (SR Winter 2008) and advises parents to choose private schools whatever the cost. However in the last few months the implications for private education because of the financial downturn have become very evident.

Some parents may have to move their children into state schools and as the number of well paid jobs falls, the process will accelerate. Some private schools have already closed and more may do in the future. The shock of acquaintance with some state schools might drive some appalled parents into organising an effective campaign to bring all schools up to standard or they might organise large home groups in which the newly unemployed professionals could teach. Certainly many British parents are determined to educate their children properly and the nation's survival may depend on that.

Margaret Brown  
Pembrokeshire

Sir,

Which is more destructive, Blair, (Curse you, Mr Blair, Winter 2008) or his rival, whom he failed to sack? Blair played the international statesman and left the economy to Brown, which he spun as 'no more boom and bust' and 'we have saved the world'. Christie Davies lets him off far too lightly. Blair's disastrous inheritance has been compounded by Brown's ideologically inspired economic mismanagement: a millstone around the necks of the present and future generations. But why, in a situation crying out for reform, are the Opposition not far ahead in the public mind?

Malcolm Trevor  
London N6

# ARTS AND BOOKS

## Off with his Head

Paul Lay

**A History of Political Trials: from Charles I to Saddam Hussein**, John Laughland, Peter Lang Ltd, 2008, £12.99.

The central contention of John Laughland's absorbing, rigorously argued but ultimately unsatisfying history is that there is nothing new about the nature of international tribunals, those key components of the 'new world order'. The blueprint for such trials of heads of state goes back to that of King Charles I in 1649 and continues with some regularity up to the execution of Saddam Hussein in 2006 and beyond. Indeed, the International Criminal Court continues to issue indictments against numerous Africans accused of war crimes to this day.

Laughland points to two important facts. The first is that, in the 360 years since the regicide, no head of state who has stood trial has ever been acquitted, although Erich Honeker, the grim Stalinist head of the DDR, escaped conviction due to terminal illness; and Slobodan Milosevic died mid-trial. Danton's judgement that a king is 'dead as soon as he appears before the judges' appears to be one borne out by history. Secondly, Laughland claims that all the trials he mentions here — from Charles I to Petain, Bokassa, Quisling and Ceausescu — were rigged, most often by retroactive legislation or jurisdiction. Usually, specific laws are passed after the head is defeated and captured, and the judges and juries who hear the trials are inevitably former opponents of the accused. Again, the trial of Charles I set the precedent: Pride's Purge, the military coup of December 1648, cleared the House of Commons of anyone remotely sympathetic to the monarch, thus ensuring by force that only enemies of the king could pass judgement on him. Similarly, the jury that tried Petain was made up entirely of former members of the French Resistance; there were no Ba'ath party members left to judge Saddam Hussein.

The fulcrum of Laughland's study is his account of the Nuremburg trials, which he sets within the context of the many trials which took place in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War when the leaders of other countries apart from Germany and Austria were also judged. Bulgarian, Czech, Finnish,

Hungarian and Greek leaders found themselves in jail or facing a firing squad, their fate usually dependent on how influential the ruthless Soviets were in that particular country. Nuremburg is also subject to Laughland's wrath because those being judged were so obviously guilty of terrible crimes but, technically at least, were only ever tried for the new and rather puzzling charge of 'waging aggressive war', a crime never pursued since, which also served to mask the Allies' own violations of international law such as the bombing campaign against German cities — Germans were never prosecuted for war crimes the Allies had also committed. Even worse, the collusion between the victorious allies and Stalin was criminal in itself, not least the attempt to blame the Katyn massacre of 20,000 Polish officers on the Nazis rather than the actual perpetrators, the NKVD.

Laughland is against coercive international law, which is why he writes favourably of the International Court of Justice, which became the high court of the UN in 1946, though its origins can be traced back to the Permanent International Court of Justice, established in 1920. The ICJ bases its judgements on the premise that states should resolve their disputes peaceably and not become involved in one another's internal disputes. It is a position quite at odds with the interventionism favoured by proponents of universal human rights and international criminal law.

From the treaty of Westphalia, which brought an end to the carnage of the Thirty Years War, until the beginning of the First World War, international conflict was seen for what it is, part of the human condition. And, in Europe at least, the enemy country was customarily regarded as legal in its actions. Now it seems a just war is often preferred to unjust peace by apparently well-intentioned politicians and lawyers.

All these criticisms are well targeted, but Laughland's account is flawed. He is right that the International Human Rights lobby is in danger of making matters of conflict worse, especially with its ideology of interventionism, *pace* Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans. 'Those who in Elysian fields would dwell, do but enforce the boundaries of hell', as Michael Oakeshott observed. But as Oakeshott also pointed out, there is no rigid path a ship of state must follow. Is it right for a serious historian to lump together such disparate characters in such differing circumstances as Charles I, Marshal Petain, Saddam Hussein and Emperor Bokassa? Are we comparing like with like, and what

possible general principle can we draw other than that there is no general principle? That is the contingent nature of history, and why it is so difficult to navigate. Sometimes it is right to intervene morally and out of self-interest: how much better the 20th century might have been had we halted Hitler's ambitions at the Rhine, or in the Sudetenland! The first Gulf War having been declared, there is a strong argument that the coalition forces should have trundled on to Baghdad, with what consequences we do not know, but worse than now? And was the massacre at Srebrenica caused by intervention or by the failure of those who were meant to intervene, Dutch troops, with hair touching their collars, ill-equipped to face genocide? Things might have been different had 3 Para been protector, Srebrenica a byword for the defence of civilised values rather than genocide.

Laughland is a brave man to put his head above the parapet, and this combative, skillfully written account is to be valued as an important corrective to the media's general unthinking acceptance of the human rights lobby. But it too often mirrors their pursuit of an unattainable perfection.

## Eastern Entanglements

Jules Stewart

**Butcher and Bolt**, David Loyn, Hutchinson, 2008, £18.99.

The title of David Loyn's book says it all: *Butcher and Bolt*, the unsavoury policy deployed by the British in the tribal territory of the North-West Frontier that became a part of British India in 1849. In that year, the British Army won a decisive victory over the Sikhs and forced the Maharajah Duleep Singh to hand over the Punjab. With this annexed territory came the forbidding mountainous tract of land that straddles the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

No sooner had the Raj taken possession of its new territory, than the Army found itself embroiled in a century-long conflict with the Pashtun tribesmen of the hills. Eschewing set-piece battles in favour of harassing their enemy with guerrilla tactics, Pashtun marauders wreaked havoc on caravans, rearguard columns and outposts. In retaliation, the Army would dispatch troops on a punitive expedition to the offending tribesmen's villages to dynamite their homes, destroy their crops and carry off their farm animals — and then swiftly make themselves scarce. It was acknowledged from the outset that the Pashtuns might be made to suffer, but never to succumb. This has been learnt with varying degrees of pain by invaders from Alexander the Great

to the Soviets, for these are the same people from both sides of the Pakistani-Afghan border who filled the ranks of the Taliban, ousted with much breast-beating after 9/11, only to come out fighting with renewed strength today.

Loyn has obviously put in his time at the British Library and the first half of the book is largely an account of the three Anglo-Afghan wars fought between 1839 and 1920. This lively narrative by a seasoned war correspondent amounts to a useful and highly readable primer for the uninitiated in the ruthless and duplicitous history of Afghan conflict. But it is in the second half of the book, which deals with the catastrophic Soviet invasion, the emergence of the Taliban and subsequent Western entanglement, that Loyn delivers the real treat of his first-hand experience, much of it acquired on the front line.

The West's failure to bring Afghanistan into the fold is the result of having always treated the country and its obstinate Pashtun majority as a military instead of an economic problem. Britain is the Western power with the deepest historical ties to Afghanistan, having successively invaded, defeated militarily, briefly occupied and administered the country's foreign policy. Yet this was always done in defence of British self-interest, not to stabilise this strategic crossroad between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Much the same can be said of the US, which has inherited Britain's superpower role in the region. Washington's Afghan policy has never gone beyond containment, which really amounted to dancing to the tune the Russians played. I remember being told by a State Department official at the time of the Soviet invasion in 1979, 'We've always acknowledged Afghanistan to be Russia's backyard, but this is taking things a bit too far.'

This leads into Loyn's amusing chapter on Congressman Charlie Wilson from Texas (of *Charlie Wilson's War* film fame) who, accompanied variously by dolly birds *Snowflake* or *Sweetums*, took the war to surrealist heights by supplying warlords like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar with arms of Soviet origin seized by the Israelis from Palestinian fighters, to be shipped to Pakistan to supply the mujahadin who were fighting the Soviets. Hekmatyar brushed off this amazing operation with a casual, 'Allah has many mysterious ways of providing for his faithful.' Some \$600 million of the \$3 billion the US provided to the mujahadin ended up in the pockets of this brutal murderer, whom Loyn rightly brands an Islamo-Fascist.

Two outstanding passages in Loyn's book are the highly insightful story of how the Taliban came into being and his description of the battle for Kabul in 1996, as his was the only camera crew to witness the

Taliban takeover.

The West's failure or inability to recognise the gathering threat posed by the Islamist radicals who ousted the Soviets is responsible for our current desperate situation in Afghanistan. Loyn points to three missed opportunities to recover Afghanistan from the fundamentalists. Firstly, Washington was backing the wrong horses by lavishing money and arms on homicidal thugs like Hekmatyar. Secondly, the US made the mistake of standing back as fighting raged among rival factions in 1992. The Clinton administration then refused to engage with the Taliban when there was still time to work constructively with the new regime in Kabul. Granting legitimacy to the Taliban would have been a controversial step, to say the least, though perhaps no more so than extending diplomatic recognition to China or half of Africa.

A consensus is finally spreading that we must talk to the Taliban (the Pashtun, not the Arab Taliban, that is), who have in the past couple of years regained control of 30 to 50 per cent of Afghan territory, thanks to the mistrusted, corrupt and ineffectual government the West has installed in Kabul. Another matter to be addressed is our failure to promote proper governance, crack down on corruption and follow up military successes with real nation-building. Foreign aid gets short shrift in this book: 'The biggest international failure, leading to worsening insecurity after 2001, was in the delivery of aid.' And later, 'Aid was a sideshow, given the scale of theft and corruption in the country.'

If we content ourselves with building the odd primary school or women's clinic, while ignoring the failings of the Karzai regime and turning our backs on those who are truly winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, it is only a matter of time before Afghanistan slides back into the primeval mud of 7th century Islam.

## Did We Recover?

Christie Davies

**The Politics of the Thatcher Revolution: an interpretation of British Politics 1979-90**, Geoffrey K Fry, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, £60.00.

Geoffrey Kingdon Fry has now published the third volume in his trilogy of interpretations of British politics that began with his analysis of the crisis years 1931-45 and continued with what he aptly called the politics of decline, 1945-79. Indeed this book should have been called 'the ending of decline'. Mrs Thatcher's achievement was not that she initiated a revolution but that she *prevented* the revolution that might have

occurred if Britain's accelerating decline during the 1960s and 1970s had continued and worsened. By 1979 inflation, powerful and irresponsible trades unions, wasteful government expenditure, over-regulation including stringent exchange controls, a top rate of income tax of 83 per cent and on invested income 98 per cent had made it impossible for capitalism to prosper. As Fry shows, waiting in the wings were Benn and assorted academic economists eager to replace this creaking social democracy with a dose of real socialism, with yet more nationalization and a tighter web of controls. It could have happened.

Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mrs Thatcher's first Chancellor of the Exchequer, aptly quoted by Fry, summed up the essence of the problem: 'If more public spending was the proper engine for growth and jobs, Britain should now lead the world in both....'.

It is not just that without profitable investment there can be no growth, but also that prices and profits are the crucial signals without which no economic unit, no economy, can function properly. In their absence we have the kind of muddle Fry finds at British Leyland, by then effectively a nationalised industry under the silly new name BL:

When the head of the National Enterprise Board asked the Chief Executive at BL which types of car made profits and which did not, he received the reply that 'the accounting system is such as not to produce an answer'.

Mrs Thatcher did not, though, create a new and revolutionary economic system. She merely restored the conditions which capitalism needs if it is to function. As Fry shows in detail, she and her team quickly abolished exchange controls, lowered taxes and stabilised prices. Soon after came the privatization of the nationalised industries, the sale of council houses and the smashing of the unions. It was a revolution in the sense that it went against the established consensus of opinion of the years of decline 1945-79, but how revolutionary would it have seemed to Andrew Bonar Law, whose outlook Fry discusses in his prologue? Mrs Thatcher made the ungovernable Britain of the 1970s governable but then it had been governable before; hers was not the truly revolutionary achievement of, say, a Pinochet whose country had lost all order and stability, and any semblance of a market economy.

Part of the British tradition of governability rested with the civil service, that rusty corrugated iron frame that held Britain together. Fry, as the author of *Statesmen in Disguise*, the standard history of the Higher Civil Service, is able to assess Mrs Thatcher's reconstruction of that body accurately, the most radical shake up ever of the civil service in peacetime. Fry has

read everything and assimilated it — archives, official papers, diaries, and memoirs; he has even interviewed some of the old buffers who used to run it. I particularly commend this section to readers.

Yet there are limits to what Mrs Thatcher could achieve by her mixture of administrative reform and economic liberalism. Our educational system was in a worse state when she left office than when she came to power and today British levels of productivity are still far lower than in France or Germany. As Fry shows, Mrs Thatcher was curiously ambivalent about the grammar schools and though both Joseph and Lawson could see clearly the problem of British education, they did nothing useful about it. Indeed, they conferred extra powers on those most likely to make matters worse, something Blair and Brown have been quick to exploit. Mrs Thatcher saw that freedom brings prosperity but she never understood that equality is synonymous with failure, as we are still discovering.

After reading Fry's insightful and detailed account, I am inclined to argue that Mrs Thatcher's major blunder in political economy was not the Poll Tax issue which brought her down (she was trying to solve a very real problem, that of representation without taxation) but her, albeit reluctant, abandoning of her opposition to Britain entering the European ERM (exchange rate mechanism), a prelude to a single European currency. The consequence was an economic crisis that eventually put Labour into power in 1997, and they have stayed there. The Thatcher revolution was but an interlude and in late 2008 it is back to inflation, debt and strike.

In his chapter on 'The "Iron Lady" and Defence of the National Interest' Fry unleashes his well known capacity for the witty annihilation of the hapless and incompetent:

Those who had viewed the history of the Foreign Office with scepticism were not to be disappointed in their expectation that the bi-centenary of that institution would be marked by a foreign policy calamity, especially with Carrington at its head. Sure enough the celebrations coincided with the Argentine invasion of the Falklands and shortly after Carrington had published a lecture entitled 'My Job', he felt obliged to resign.

Fry notes how Carrington had attracted bad luck throughout his career:

... the Crichton Down affair took place during his time at the Ministry of Agriculture and when the Portland and Vassall Spy cases occurred, it was his misfortune to be the First Lord of the Admiralty.

That such a man of disaster should survive and go on to be associated with the coming to power of Mugabe

of Zimbabwe and the invasion of the Falklands proves that in politics nothing succeeds like failure. Yet Mrs Thatcher was, as Fry well demonstrates, extraordinarily lucky both in gaining and in retaining power. Perhaps luck is a personal quality.

Fry's thesis is that Mrs Thatcher's dominant social quality was that, like Lloyd George and Bonar Law, she was an outsider who chose to *remain* an outsider. She neither came from nor was willing to be absorbed by the Establishment. All her life she kept the virtues and the instincts of the lower middle class and particularly its grocers. Those 'above' her thought she was 'common' but those below that she was not common enough. Her virtues and indeed her patriotism also kept her out of that other British establishment, the 'liberal' establishment, that privileged sect devoted to a high-minded combination of guilt and sentimentality about those two contemptible bundles of paupers, the British lowest orders and wilfully backward countries perversely unable, or rather unwilling, to improve their economies. Yet, as Fry shows, Mrs T was never as populist or as reactionary as the leftists believed. My only disappointment as I came to the end of this excellent book was when I realised that it was the last in Professor Fry's enjoyable and informative series of books about British political history. Can the author not be persuaded to go back and write a 'prequel' about the fascinating era 1918-31 which he knows well? It could perhaps be followed by a new edition of his *The Politics of Decline* that will also take in the dismal heritage of Blair and Brown? We can only hope.

## The Uses of Adversity

### Alexander Deane

**The Austerity Olympics: When the Games Came to London in 1948**, Janie Hampton, Aurum Press, 2008, £18.99.

The forthcoming global humiliation of London 2012, when our masters demonstrate just what our country can't run in a brewery, is constantly on one's mind whilst reading Janie Hampton's timely and excellent new book.

There is as much austerity here as Olympics. It presents a fascinating snapshot of our country in the immediate post-war period. Basic goods were still rationed (and indeed the calorific ration for individuals was lower than in 1945). British athletes were at a disadvantage as they trained whilst on rations themselves. Massive areas of the capital were still bomb sites (in stark contrast to Hiroshima, which had,

remarkably, rebuilt 85 per cent of its streets by 1948). There were still many German prisoners of war in the country, who were put to work on the construction of some of the infrastructure for the Games. 19,000 deserters were still 'on the run'.

The coverage of the 1948 Olympics itself is just as good. Unless a very serious sports fan indeed, there will be more than you would ever ask for by way of results and the description of events and long-forgotten athletes and feats. I found myself skipping sports a little and seeking more of the interesting anthropological anecdotes Hampton has dug out. There are some striking differences in comparison with the modern games: There was no participation from Germany, Japan or the Soviet Union. The 1948 Games was also a watershed in the history of the Olympics: it was the last to feature aesthetic competition, with fields such as poetry and sculpture competing and being judged alongside track and field. The sheer size of the Games required a restriction of fields in future events. However, the decline of the idea of absolute standards in the arts made the continuation of such competition impossible.

Organised in two years, the entire budget for the 1948 Games was £760,000. The Games turned a modest profit of £29,000 (which was then made subject to tax, which came as a surprise to the organisers — a surprise repeated exactly by our present bid committee, which failed to consider the eminently foreseeable repercussions of tax on our budget...). This tax was in accordance with the motivations of the government and organisers of the event, who were primarily concerned with drawing capital into a war-ravaged economy. Such a concern usually motivates the organisers of modern Games, sometimes without success — Greece pushed itself outside the permitted Euro-debt levels to host their round of the Olympics, and the Chinese found that the tourist levels in Beijing were lower than usual during their Games.

In any case, the Austerity Olympics were certainly run with admirable economy. Competitors in 1948 were responsible for sourcing their own towels and kit. Equipment was sold off after the event to recoup costs. There was no luxurious, purpose-built Olympic Village or series of mega-venues. Schools, colleges and RAF camps were converted into hostels. Greyhound tracks and old sports grounds were patched up to a sufficient standard and venues outside of London were used where they already existed and could be utilized more cheaply than building new ones. One does wonder why such precedents were lost on our present committee.

I expressed my doubts about the forthcoming games here previously (*SR Vol. 27, No. 1*). Still, let us not forget that the recent refurbishment of the single stadium at

Wembley (once the Empire Stadium, and as such a significant venue in this book) cost around 757 million pounds and took seven years. For 970 million pounds, Germany constructed or refitted the 12 spectacular stadia that hosted the 2006 World Cup — in much less time. Considering the catastrophic Millennium Dome in hindsight, Tony Blair said 'I should have listened to those who said that governments shouldn't try to run big visitor attractions.' Certainly, with our track record, our government shouldn't. In 1948 we managed it.

Hampton has a hard time making up her mind whether the 'make do and mend' spirit she conjures up so well was the dominant sense of the day, or if 'the wartime imperative to pull together had gone and the grumblers and backbiters enjoyed a heyday'. Of course, they're not mutually exclusive, and certainly she shows both aspects well. Perhaps in many years' time those who, like me, pour scorn on the 2012 Games will be viewed as misguided grumblers and backbiters too. Indeed, the Sydney Games received a healthy dose of mockery and pessimism from the Australian press, only to emerge as the 'best Olympics ever'. The 1948 Games showed that a committed and passionate group of people can scabble together a good enough event, but expectations and standards were entirely different at the time. Combining higher modern expectations and lower organisational capabilities produces a pretty ugly prospect. I think there is a case for the present hosts to consider the precedent of Denver in 1970 — the good burghers of Denver looked at the spiralling numbers of their Winter Games budget and promptly voted to abandon the Games, which went to Innsbruck instead. They knew that their Games would go badly and would cost a fortune, so they did the wise thing and abandoned ship. Few now remember it, nobody holds it against Denver, and they saved themselves a generation's worth of higher taxation. Worth contemplating given the state of our (non) preparation, isn't it?

The book is well bound and pressed, with a good number of well-produced pictures. It's comprehensively sourced and fully indexed and, whilst not without the usual proofreading hiccups, it is in all respects a very attractive volume. Much of it draws on firsthand accounts from participants and observers from the Games, and the march of time has naturally dimmed memories and sadly thinned the ranks of those able to offer their insights. Hampton's access to primary resources was hampered by the loss of much of the British Olympic Association's archive in a flood. Nevertheless, it is a first rate piece of work and a great read. Sixty years on, this pointed and powerful review of the tremendous job done by our forebears in a London still shattered by war should bring blushes to the faces of those in charge of the current effort.

## In Agincourt Field

### Edward Short

**Agincourt: Henry V and The Battle That Made England**, Juliet Barker, Little Brown, 2006, hb £20.00.

Henry V, the Lancastrian king who at twenty eight led the English to victory at Agincourt (1415), the most celebrated battle of the Hundred Years War, has never been without his critics. William Hazlitt conceded that Shakespeare's Henry might be 'an amiable monster' but the historical Henry 'seemed to have no idea of any rule of right or wrong, but brute force, glossed over with a little religious hypocrisy ...'. The Whig historian J R Green contrasted Henry with his predecessor Edward III, the victor of Crécy (1346) and Poitiers (1356), and argued that 'Edward had been forced into the struggle against his will by the ceaseless attacks of France ... The war of Henry ... was ... a wanton aggression on the part of a nation tempted by the helplessness of its opponent ...'. More recently, in *Shakespeare's Kings* (1999) John Julius Norwich charged that Henry's claim to the French throne 'was without a shred of legal or moral justification' and that Agincourt 'marked the climax of a military adventure of almost criminal foolhardiness and irresponsibility'.

Juliet Barker is an expert on mediaeval English tournaments, who has also written good biographies of Wordsworth and the Brontës. She brings to her subject not only redoubtable scholarship but shrewd judgment of character. She also writes what Coleridge once called a 'good nervous mother-English'. Alfred Burne, Christopher Hibbert and Anne Curry have all written good books on Agincourt but Barker's is the best.

The Henry that Barker describes in her meticulously researched book has more in common with the Henry of the chronicler Edward Hall and shows that Henry did take a fatherly interest in the well-being of his subjects and inspired not only obedience but love, and was a genuinely devout Catholic. Several factors prompted Henry to invade France. He needed a successful invasion to justify his father's dethronement of Richard II, secure his own embattled rule, stop French pirates plundering English shipping and satisfy English veterans itching to get their hands on the lucrative ransoms of war. Strategically, Henry sought a cross-Channel empire based at Calais to gain control of Normandy to the south, Picardy to the east, and Flanders to the west. This would give him not only mastery of the Seine, the Somme, the Straits of Dover and the Channel but drive a wedge between

his ancient enemies, France and Scotland. Then there was the vulnerability of France itself. With Charles VI mad, the Dauphin incompetent and John the Fearless and the Burgundians waging civil war against Charles d'Orléans and the Armagnacs, the country was ripe for invasion.

It was said that the Salic Law of Charlemagne recognized male heirs only. Barker disputes this. 'Nicely dressed up with an entirely spurious ancestry dating back to the eighth century, the new law ... made no mention of whether the right to succeed could be passed down through the female line. Edward III could therefore still legitimately claim to be the rightful heir.' Moreover, for Barker, Henry's invasion was 'not made out of egotism or the desire for personal aggrandizement, but rather because he wanted, and considered it his duty, to recover the "just rights and inheritances" of the crown'. The French historian M Perroy epitomized the French attitude to all such English claims when he referred to the Hundred Years War as 'essentially a feudal quarrel between a Gascon vassal and his French overlord'.

Swayed by Shakespeare or Olivier's charming film, we tend to regard the martial pretensions of the French at Agincourt as derisory but Barker is surely right when she says that 'The French were not vainglorious amateurs playing at war, as they are so often portrayed. They were hardened veterans who had spent their lives in arms: on crusade, fighting in Italy, Spain and Portugal and, most recently, in their own civil wars. They were as used to wearing their armour as their civilian clothes.' It was not incompetence that defeated the French.

The battle of Agincourt took place in a funnel-shaped field between two woods on St Crispin's Day, October 25, 1415 with the French ranged in three columns at the wider and the English in one line at the narrower end. Since one of the axioms of mediaeval warfare was that when 'foot soldiers march against their enemy face to face, those who march lose and those who remain standing still and holding firm win', both armies stood still for the first four hours of their encounter. Then Henry, knowing his men were dead-tired, famished and unlikely to survive any longer standoff, gave the famous order, 'Advance banner', at which his whole army knelt, made a cross on the ground, kissed it, and began their march forward. When his archers were approximately 250 yards from the first French column, they drove in the stakes that would wreak havoc with the retaliating French cavalry and opened fire. Barker's description of that first volley is vivid:

Five thousand archers then raised their longbows and loosed a volley of arrows so dense, so fast and so furious that the sky literally darkened over as though

a cloud had passed before the face of the sun.

When the first French attack failed to break the English line, many of the French either fell in hand-to-hand combat or were thrown back into their own advancing second column. Their difficulty was increased by the rain-soaked ground which gave them nearly as much trouble as the mud of Passchendaele gave the English in 1917. What decisively worked against them was their very numerical superiority. As they advanced forward in the funnel-shaped field, they had less and less room for manoeuvre and became bunched together, which made them a perfect target for the stunning efficacy of the English pole-axe. Within half an hour, the first and second French columns had been so decimated that the dead towered over the living.

Then word reached Henry that the French were preparing a third assault. As it happened, this never materialized. Still, he had to be ready to repel it. And then he learned that his tents had been attacked. Rather than risk encirclement he ordered all but the most illustrious prisoners put to death. Fifteen hundred were killed outright.

Here was an order that flouted every convention of civilized warfare but Henry's first responsibility was to the protection of his troops and if he had spared the prisoners, he would have exposed his troops to annihilation. (Churchill's sinking of the French fleet after the fall of France in July, 1940, which cost the lives of 1,500 French sailors but kept the fleet out of German hands was a similar act of necessary beastliness.)

Dover Wilson, the Shakespeare editor, observed: 'Fluellen's exclamation, "is expressly against the law of arms, tis as arrant a piece of knavery, mark you now, as can be offert!"', is in accordance with much contemporary comment on the battle, which shows that the treacherous assault left a deep stain upon the chivalry of France'. Barker confirms this, stressing that the French blamed their own marauders, not Henry, for the dispatch of their prisoners. G M Young neatly summed up matters when he said: 'Henry V commanding his men to kill their prisoners was *improbis*. But he won Agincourt.'

That victory gave the English a sense of destiny that would stay with them for centuries. As Gerald Harris points out in *Shaping the Nation* (2005), 'Agincourt became the centrepiece of a carefully constructed myth: that God had deliberately stacked the odds against the English, reducing their numbers through sickness and their self-confidence by the long march, in order to demonstrate His support in their divinely ordained mission.'

## Teach Yourself about Music

Robert Hugill

**A Student's Guide to Music History**, Robert J Stove, ISI Books, Wilmington Delaware, 2008, \$8.00.

This book is a short history of Western classical music, produced as part of the *ISI (Inter Collegiate Studies Institute) Guides to the Major Disciplines*. According to ISI's publicity, their guides are both for students and the general public, and are written by leading scholars. Robert J Stove is a professional organist, composer and writer based in Melbourne, Australia with very wide interests apart from music; he has written a book on Secret Police forces.

*A Student's Guide to Music History* is very compact, deliberately so. It runs to some 135 pages and covers both 122 pages of narrative plus a useful glossary and 8 pages of suggested further reading, which is a useful feature in a such a small book — a pity there is no index. Stove has organised his narrative into six chapters, each covering a relatively coherent period of history. (*From the Beginnings to 1600; From the Gabrielies and Monteverdi to Bach and Handel; From Gluck and Bach's Songs to Beethoven and Schubert; From Weber and Rossini to Wagner and Verdi; From Brahms and Bruckner to Sibelius and Stravinsky; Between the Wars; Epilogue: Since 1945*).

Stove has of necessity written direct narrative history, eschewing any of the fancier ways of organising classical music histories. The book is inevitably Western European centric, with a brief excursion to the Americas. In addition to the main narrative, Stove includes potted notes (in smaller type) covering 15 of the main composers. These are, in theory, brief lives but the material veers alarmingly between summaries of the composer's musical output, biographical facts not fitted into the main narrative and Stove's rather personal views of the composer.

With many books of musical history the author's personality is evident in the way facts are included or omitted, but in this little book Stove is candid in his opinions without ever being too vitriolic. He includes everyone, even Alkan, Szymanowski and Scriabin. But he gives the early 19th century Italian *bel canto* pretty short shrift, clearly favours Berg over Schoenberg, feels that Stravinsky wrote nothing of interest after *Les Noces* and veers on the side of Bruckner rather than Mahler, whose symphonies he describes as episodic rather than coherent. His view of Messiaen is that he was the greatest composer in France and possibly anywhere else to have emerged since Ravel's last years.

But I'm sorry that he describes Walton's *Façade* as predominantly witless.

The narrative is also peppered with useful and amusing anecdotes; Heinrich Isaac was known as *Arrigo Il Tedesco* (Harry the German) in Italy, Lully's self-inflicted fatal wound, Domenico Scarlatti's later sonatas lack hand crossing because his patroness had got too fat; C P E Bach's waspish tongue. He is also quite free with his personal opinions, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* is 'unrelievedly sombre', *Lakme*'s primary claim to fame seems to be the TV commercial and *Pictures at an Exhibition* is a contender for history's least idiomatic piano work.

When it comes to the later 19th and 20th centuries, Stove is good at identifying what made a composer particular, what made them ground-breaking. His brief summary of Schoenberg's stylistic development is masterly and he is similarly clear sighted about Debussy. But Scriabin's non-musical interests do rather set Stove off. Rather curiously, he seems to have an interest in some composers' sexual interests. He notes that Lully was a pederast; not a particularly useful fact and possibly untrue as Lully's most notorious affair was with a page, but we should not assume that court pages were children. He notes both that Handel may (or may not) have been bi-polar, and may (or may not) have been homosexual. He is similarly short with the theory that Schubert may have been bisexual. This sort of information makes fascinating reading in the right places, I myself have written articles on the subject, but in a book as compressed as this there is no place either for theorising or for dismissing other pet theories. Given his interest in some composers' bedroom activities, it is strange that he fails to mention the important relationships between Janacek and Kamila Stösslová, and between Franck and Augusta Holmes.

Stove starts his narrative with the first composer whose output survives in bulk, Hildegard of Bingen. And he finishes with a brief (seven page) summary of music since 1945. Between these two Stove's narrative is lucid and opinionated. But in a book as compressed as this, it is inevitable that we will be able to pick holes. Stove's virtues shine through as well. First and foremost this book manages to be both knowledgeable and readable and gets a remarkable amount of information crammed into these 135 pages while you never feel any indigestion. His writing style is direct and he manages to link his sections into neat chapters. Sometimes the segues feel slightly forced, but Stove certainly creates the feel of a narrative rather than simple lists of things. Perhaps his greatest virtue is that repeatedly he makes you come away thinking that you would like to learn more about a particular topic.

## Business is Business

H E Taylor

**What they Teach You at Harvard Business School: My Two Years Inside the Cauldron of Capitalism,** Philip Delves Broughton, Viking, 2008, £12.99.

Published in America as 'Ahead of the Curve', this book is in some respects precisely that, although not always in the way suggested by the catchy title. In common with the other members of the Harvard Business School MBA class of 2006, Philip Delves Broughton embarked on the two-year programme with high expectations of lucrative career enhancement. Right at the outset it was pointed out to the students that 'simply by getting into HBS, "You've won."' Inconceivable then that just four years later, under a front page banner 'Blame it on Harvard', the *Financial Times* should ask 'Is the MBA culture responsible for the financial crisis?' (*FT*, 21 October 2008).

Delves Broughton entered business education from a background in journalism, dissatisfied with his position as Paris Bureau Chief of the *Daily Telegraph*, and uneasy about the future of print media. At 32 he was somewhat beyond the class average age of 27. As an Englishman he was a long way from the supposed HBS stereotype of 'Mormons, Military, and McKinsey'. And of the students who did not fall into any those categories he seems to have been unusual in having had no business experience whatsoever. So while his social interaction with his classmates appears to have been perfectly satisfactory, a sense of outsidership soon begins to build.

Well past his years of innocent receptiveness, it is not long before he starts asking awkward questions. In fact he struggles to accommodate himself to the school's mission statement, which is 'to educate leaders who make a difference in the world'. In his opinion 'there is a thin line between making a difference and just imposing your will', and his attempted deconstruction of the school's stated objective sows the early seeds of doubt.

The author has faced a number of technical challenges in writing this book, and it would be nice to imagine that his MBA training has helped to steer him through them. He targets a largely unexploited middle-market niche that is as far from high-end academic exegesis as it is from a popular beginner's guide. Assuming neither prior knowledge nor complete idiocy, his approach is to take his readers with him on his journey of exploration. He does an excellent job in outlining the course content and making it interesting and accessible

to readers not previously exposed to ‘Alpha’, ‘Beta’, ‘Leverage’ and ‘Big Hairy Goals’. No one wanting to Get Rich Quick will find the answer in this book, but the target readership will learn much, and will be grateful for an honesty of purpose. His analysis of the extra-academic environment is equally interesting. And while some of the chapter headings promise more than they deliver (*Riding the Booze Luge* refers only to a commonplace student drinking game), it is impossible not to be grateful for the sing-along with the self-styled and seemingly deranged *Risk Master*.

Running alongside Delves Broughton’s belated *éducation commerciale* are the burgeoning beanstalks of doubt. Faculty members are scrutinized for ability and indeed for qualification to teach their subjects, and some are held to come up short. He also considers where his fellow students have come from, and where they are going. A large number are refugees from the world of business itself, taking a well-earned break. From the tales they tell it is possible to construct a view of marginally-skilled Stakhanovites, slogging away at the financial coal-face, fiddling their expenses, helping to rip-off the firm’s clients and making a thoroughly disagreeable difference in the world. Well paid too, of course, which why almost all of them want to go back there. Whether the Harvard MBA course exists to reform or reinforce this sort of behaviour is at the heart of the author’s dilemma. As his classmates point themselves towards careers in private equity, investment banking, fund management and consulting, it becomes clear to him that their workaday (and night) achievements will always be matched by corresponding liabilities on the human unhappiness side of the balance. He cannot but notice that so many of the alumni recalled to address the students quite obviously regret their failed and stunted domestic lives.

One senses the tugging of a cultural bias of sort identified by Martin J. Wiener in his 1982 study *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*. But it would be wrong to depict Delves Broughton as hostile to business: he works hard, completes the course with good scores and is graduated a Master of Business Administration. But he is not, and perhaps cannot ever be, a businessman. His mid-course efforts to secure a summer work placement are uniquely fruitless. Instead he settles for the library and writes a novel. His later trek through an absurd, almost insolently time-wasting interview process with Google is also abortive. In a sense he has proved a point against Harvard: he has not ‘won’. And he has not fallen into the trap of entering a field to which he is personally unsuited.

And yet events have smiled on Delves Broughton’s take on his MBA experience. In a letter to the *Financial Times* Professor Ken Starkey of Nottingham University

Business School has pointed to ‘the role of the MBA ... in the carnage on Wall Street’ and suggested that ‘leading business schools will need to develop a different language and a new narrative to legitimise their function and to overcome their fascination with a particular form of finance and economics .... They will need to cultivate an appreciation of the role of the state and of collective action to counter the fixation on markets and individualism (ie, greed and selfishness)’. (*Financial Times*, 20 October 2008).

Two years earlier these were in essence Delves Broughton’s own conclusions. And his reporter’s shorthand skills served him well when Jack Welch, the book-plugging former head of General Electric, appeared at Harvard to assert that business is ‘the most important institution. It all revolves around that. Government generates no revenues. Government lives off taxes generated by business ... don’t ever forget that.’ The shallowness of this opinion astonishes the author. ‘Did he seriously believe that business could run without sound government? Were the two not mutually dependent?’ He will therefore have enjoyed reports of Welch’s recent address to the World Business Forum in New York. Convinced that ‘we are in for one hell of a deep downturn’, Welch ‘praised the actions taken so far by Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and New York Fed President Timothy Geithner, calling them “Brilliant public servants” who have “not let ideology get in the way of taking action”’. (*Reuters*, 24 September 2008).

The events of 2008 suggest that in condemning Welch’s now discarded ideology as narcissistic and hubristic Delves Broughton was indeed ahead of the curve.

## Don’t Just Look, Read!

Alistair Miller

**Inside the Secret Garden: The Progressive Decay of Liberal Education**, Tom Burkard, University of Buckingham 2007.

This book is essential reading for anyone who cares about our schools and for any parent whose child is learning to read. It is really two books in one: a systematic debunking of the progressive mythology that dominates the world of education; and, in its central section, a detailed and compelling exposition of the case for synthetic phonics — a case whose denial by the educational establishment has done incalculable damage to the lives of all those who, as a consequence, never learned to read. The whole

amounts to a devastating indictment of those who manage state education.

Twenty years ago Tom Burkard founded the Promethean Trust, an educational charity that teaches children who have been failed by the system to read using the method of synthetic phonics. He is one of a small band of people that has tirelessly promoted synthetic phonics in the face of implacable opposition from government officials, the architects of the National Literacy Strategy and the wider educational establishment. He is therefore well qualified to write on the pedagogy of reading, the more so now that the case for synthetic phonics has been vindicated by large-scale trials conducted in Scotland, trials whose results were so remarkable that it prompted a government enquiry. The resulting Rose Report of 2006 has forced the complete revision of the National Literacy Strategy's conceptual model of reading.

In his book, Burkard explodes the myths that have formed part of the reading pedagogy that has dominated the post-war period: that words can be recognised as wholes (the 'Look-and-Say' approach), that children's phonological awareness should be developed before they learn to read, that reading involves a psycholinguistic guessing game (the 'whole language' or 'real books' movement), that some children fail to read because they are not ready ('reading readiness'), and that reading failure is caused by 'dyslexia'. However the central myth underlying the others is 'the contention that reading is understanding', that reading 'should be defined as a process of getting meaning from print'. In fact, the truth is deceptively simple. Reading is a mechanical process of decoding the text in which letter sounds are blended together to make words; and synthetic phonics is simply the systematic training of children in how to do this. The text cannot possibly be understood until it has been read and then the process of understanding it — 'reading comprehension' — is no different to the process of understanding spoken language; and the most important factor in determining a person's understanding of the text is simply their knowledge of relevant subject matter.

This might appear to be plain common sense and yet the grasp of this simple truth has eluded the educational establishment. The consequences have been disastrous. Not only have children not been taught how to read; the accepted practice of encouraging children to guess unknown words using contextual clues has actively hindered them from developing the automatic decoding skill that alone produces reading fluency. Burkard goes on to argue that the explosion in the number of children diagnosed with 'special needs' — ranging from dyslexia to ADHD — can be attributed in large

measure to their early failure to learn to read.

How could this ever have been allowed to happen? Burkard's answer is as simple as it is revealing. The process by which children learn to read is inherently unnatural and therefore demands didactic teaching. But to admit this runs the danger of exposing the central tenets of progressive education as a fiction: that education is a process of natural development, that learning should be effortless, and that the teacher should not impart a body of knowledge but act as learning facilitator and child psychologist. The truth therefore cannot be admitted.

Burkard's wider argument against progressive education is both enjoyable and illuminating. His account of the historical genesis of the progressive movement is well researched and illustrated with some marvellously apt quotations. Horace Mann, a nineteenth-century pioneer of 'Look and Say', describes the letters as 'skeleton-shaped, bloodless, ghastly apparitions' that the children are compelled to face; and R S Peters comments on Rousseau's *Emile* that 'the methods of learning from Nature and things are so contrived and controlled that even Skinner might be envious'. However, Burkard's treatment of topics as diverse as the special needs industry, the teaching of maths and history, selection and grouping by ability, critical thinking skills, information technology and ADHD is inevitably at times sketchy. Some of the impact of Burkard's detailed exposition of the case for synthetic phonics is therefore blunted; and this, together with the generally polemical tone of the book, might deter those who could most benefit from reading it.

Perhaps it is wishful thinking to imagine that the potent blend of child psychology and egalitarianism that goes to make up progressive mythology is susceptible to rational argument or empirical evidence. Just as the recommendations of the Rose Report are being written into the Literacy Strategy, the government is expanding its 'Every Child a Reader' initiative, which promotes 'Reading Recovery', an intervention programme whose 'reading for meaning' pedagogy is precisely the one rejected by the Rose Report. Meanwhile, the revamped Literacy Strategy adopts an even more extreme form of the developmental, whole language, 'apprenticeship' approach to reading comprehension and writing — 'skills' that can apparently be developed in a knowledge vacuum. It is as if having lost the battle over phonics, the authors of the strategy are pursuing their progressive agenda elsewhere with even greater zeal.

One concludes with Tom Burkard that there is only one way in which 'the web of progressive educational mythology' and officially sanctioned 'best practice' can be broken through, and that is to privatise our

schools. Privatisation is not a panacea, but it is at least possible that reason and common sense will prevail over ideology.

## More than Lemon and Sugar

Katharine Szamuely

**Pancake: A Global History**, Ken Albala, Reaktion Books, 2008, £8.99.

The life of a book reviewer is a tough one. It is not enough that we have to spend time in libraries and bookshops finding potential subjects, reading about them and then writing about them. When writing about a book such as *Pancake* there is clearly other research needed. For it would be an affront to the public to pretend enough knowledge on a book about pancakes without both cooking and eating them. I would like to assure readers that I offer no such affront.

There are many places to eat pancakes. Across the United States there are thousands of diners serving platefuls of rich, airy pancakes which can be drenched with maple syrup (or more often maple-flavoured), and combined with bacon, ham and eggs. I must confess I have never managed to get through a portion. I have now learnt that the waffles served in the same diners, while equally delicious and equally impossible to get through, are not classed as pancakes because of the way they are cooked. (Similarly Chinese *po-ping*, served with Peking duck, does not make the grade. It is actually a thin-rolled flat bread.)

There are pancake houses, such as the chain International House of Pancakes, which plays on the nostalgia related to pancakes as childhood comfort food with red-checked gingham and colonial looking signs. (Whose childhood memories are colonial in America? Is that how long you live if you eat pancakes?).

The South Indian equivalent is the *udapi*, which is open early in the morning and serves *dosa*, a pancake made from rice and black gram beans which are soaked, ground, mixed into a paste and then left overnight to ferment. *Dosa* are served for breakfast with *sambhar* (a thin vegetable and lentil stew) or coconut chutney. An *udapi* serves only vegetarian food so that orthodox Hindus can eat there.

*Injera* is the filling basis for Ethiopian cuisine. The pancakes are made very large and thin and left to ferment, giving an unusual sour taste which is surprisingly pleasant. They serve as plates, with small heaps of food placed on them. Proving their flexibility, they also serve as a knife and fork, as bits are broken off to scoop up the stew.

In Japan there are special restaurants that serve

*okonomiyaki*. These are literally ‘as you like it’, and they contain whatever you feel like adding. The batter is non-dairy and contains *dashi* stock with fish and seaweed. In some restaurants the customer chooses and cooks the ingredients for himself.

One of the most common places to buy pancakes is on the street. There are street stalls serving pancakes across South America, North Africa and Asia. There are the famous *crêpe* stalls in France, with regional specialities such as *galettes* in Brittany. There are, however, no traditional street pancakes in English-speaking countries, although Albala suggests (a little improbably) that the ice-cream cone might be a close relative of the pancake.

As much fun as eating pancakes is cooking them. I am a coward and do not flip them. Albala reassures me with science on this one. Apparently flipping pancakes can aerate them too much.

Although cooking pancakes is a fairly obvious technique for any type of ground grain, the earliest known recipe is in 1588. This contains an enormous amount of cream as well as eggs, ale, butter, sugar and spices. The amount of flour is impossibly small. Later recipes alternated between water and cream as the liquid, and were often spiced with mace, cinnamon or ginger.

The association with holidays is an old one, be it Christmas, Hannukkah or, of course, Shrove Tuesday. In Thomas Dekker’s play of 1599, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, a shoemaker called Firk says ‘When the pancake bell rings, we are as free as my Lord Mayor’. Work stopped and all the apprentices went on the street to celebrate. These Shrove Tuesday celebrations sound similar to the traditions of Twelfth Night, with everything returning to normal (or even more sombre since it was Lent) the following day.

Some people saw the celebrations around pancakes as pagan practices and tried to have them banned. In 1620 in *Jack a Lent, His Beginning and Entertainment*, John Taylor described pancake making in this way:

Then there is a thing cal’d wheaten flower, which the sulfory Necromanticke Cookes doe mingle with water, Egges, spice and other tragicall, magicall enchantments, and then they put it little and little, into a Frying pan of boyling Suet, where it makes a confused dismal hissing, (like the Lernean Snakes in the reeds of Acheron, Stix, or Phleeton) until at last, by the skill of the Cookes, it is transform’d into ... a Pancake, which ominous incantation the ignorant people doe devoure very greedily...

A pancake as an ominous incantation? How could anyone resist? It must be time to be off and get cooking.

## Drills versus Dogma

Stewart Birch

**In Foreign Fields**, Dan Collins, Monday Books, 2008, £7.99.

The Armed Forces learn and develop drills from experience. Perhaps they could teach other, more dogma-ridden areas of our society a few lessons. The common feature of their service life is their *esprit de corps*. The Army could also provide ideal role models to repair our 'broken society' especially in the education and policing professions.

This book is an account of how 24 heroes and a young heroine earned their decorations for bravery in Iraq and Afghanistan. The accounts are 'in their own words', and they always show that the British Armed Forces are a learning organisation, as the American General P J Schoomaker demonstrates in *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. It is ironic that one of the most traditional parts of society demonstrates how to learn and adapt in a rapidly changing world.

Many of the soldiers' stories stress the importance to their survival of the drills they've devised, learnt and practised. The Armed Forces have adapted swiftly and dramatically to the wars that they have been sent to in Iraq and Afghanistan. The accounts show changes and adaptations in formations, procedures and equipment made as a result of practical experience, not religious or political dogma. As individuals these 25 young and youngish people give accounts of their exploits that are positive and sometimes humorous. Without exception they come over as modest, self-sacrificing, and aware of others: their comrades, friends, families and even the families of the enemy combatants.

Anyone who speaks ill of the young and thinks the generation gap is unbridgeable needs to read this book or speak to Major Featherstone who was awarded an MC for commanding a company of The Princess of Wales's Regiment in Al Amarah between April and September 2004. In this period they had 188 major contacts where over 100 rounds were expended. He sums up his experiences and declares, 'People say that modern recruits aren't what they were. Rubbish.' He observes that, unlike in former times, they do not come from a hard physical farming background but, 'they soon pick it up.'

Each of the heroes' accounts gives a potted version of their backgrounds. They are a broad church reflecting well on the all-encompassing nature of the Armed Forces. There are lads who were heading for prison, career soldiers who until Iraq haven't even seen an angry char wallah let alone a shot fired in anger, city workers, members of Army families, women, TA soldiers, redundant miners, and adventure seekers. These are normal people doing extraordinary things and living with

the consequences. Some have had nightmares and many comment on the peculiar pressures that come of having been recognised as being brave.

I use the term hero in the true sense, not as applied to so-called celebrity or sports heroes. It is interesting to note that the title of the book was changed from *Heroes* at their instigation. This modesty is a common characteristic of their understated accounts like when 21 year old Cpl Jardine CGC of the King's Own Scottish Borderers is single handedly charging an enemy position dominating a vital bridge. He closes within 15 yards of them as they fire at him. He observes that, 'they were firing on automatic and while the AK is a good weapon it is quite inaccurate. Luckily'.

The understatement and humour of many of the accounts contrasts sharply with the dramatic media reports. Here the pendulum swings from tragic stories of our casualties to the lack of the right equipment. The unhelpful media reports are often mentioned. However the news coverage is not sapping the will of the soldiery for they are aware that they are doing a worthwhile job. It probably is reinforcing the age old rift between the military and the public first immortalised by Kipling. Lt Campbell MC of The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers remembers vividly the day after 9/11 when they were told in no uncertain terms that those attacks would affect their lives. They are fighting an implacable enemy on two important battlefields. They are engaging terrorists, who use human shields, with remarkable restraint so as to avoid innocent casualties.

The gulf between the outlook of civilians and of people who have been in mortal combat will always be huge. Even if you don't agree with the politics behind the wars you should read this book to see what nobility there still is in Britain if it is nurtured. The British Armed Forces has a formidable system of personnel development for they have built on the shoulders of giants for generations and produced an Army that punches so far above its weight that it is exceptional. It has fought, resisted and ignored fashionable trends in order to best equip its men for a dangerous job. Unfortunately social engineers are unlikely to be reading the book.

This is a good read for anyone wanting an informative account of what has been and still is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is superbly laid out with the list of medal recipients, two inserts of photographs showing the medal holders, abbreviations explained, a glossary, and a preface that sets the mood. The accounts are in roughly chronological order which puts the whole in some sort of perspective with the first account mentioning 9/11. The accounts have a format of a general background to the action followed by a brief history of the character, an account of the action with quotes from the participants about their thoughts and quotations from their citation.

# FILM

## The Baader Meinhof Complex

Directed by Uli Edel

Helen Szamuely

In the introduction to Jillian Becker's book on the Baader-Meinhof gang, written and published as the story was still unfolding, *Hitler's Children*, there is a description of what happened when, in 1976, an Air France airbus was hijacked on its way from Tel Aviv to Paris, after a touch-down in Athens, for many years the world's least safe airport. Most of the hijackers were members of the PLO but there were two German terrorists from one of the several cells that had sprung up in West Germany. The Jews among the passengers were separated and, as Becker says, once more German orders were heard urging Jews to move faster with German hands delivering blows if they did not do so. When approached by a camp survivor who showed the leader of the group, Wilfrid Böse, his indelibly tattooed number, the latter pushed him aside, shouting that he was not a Nazi but an anti-capitalist idealist. The plane was taken to Entebbe in Uganda and the event culminated in the Israeli commandos rescuing almost all the hostages. Incredibly, the country was condemned in the UN for violating the sovereign territory of Uganda, then under the rule of Idi Amin, who was supportive of the PLO.

This was an important episode in that terrible decade as it was the first time in which the hijackers found themselves out-manoeuvred by those they had challenged. Because Entebbe was largely about Middle Eastern politics, it is not mentioned in the 'Baader-Meinhof Complex', Uli Edel's film about the eponymous gang. It was the subsequent rescue of German hostages by GSG-9 group in Mogadishu that is important from the point of view of the plot, not least because the failure of this particular hijack pushed Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe, already sentenced for multiple murders and other crimes, to commit suicide in Stammheim prison. Ulrike Meinhof, reduced to a nervous wreck by her supposed comrades during the trial, had committed suicide some time before.

The film, based on Stefan Aust's book, came out last year and has been nominated for the foreign language Oscar. It has caused something of a stir in Germany, not least because it has resolutely refused to glorify

that gang of emotionally autistic and politically simple-minded criminals or even to pretend that they had any deep political ideas. Aust, who knew Meinhof quite well and several of the others slightly, wrote his book in the early eighties on the basis of his own recollections, contemporary reports and interviews with many of the participants.

The film has many good qualities. The script, by the producer Bernd Eichinger who fulfilled the same dual role in *Downfall*, is first-rate. The acting is even better than that. Astonishingly, the actors manage to look like the originals and convey their neuroses extremely well, though by all accounts Baader was even more unpleasant than Moritz Bleibtreu makes him.

Nevertheless, the film remains unsatisfactory. I went to see it with someone who has heard about the gang and some of the episodes of that period but is too young to remember that time. When we discussed the film afterwards (and it is certainly worthy of much discussion) I spoke of those terrifying years when it looked like the West was disintegrating. With the economic situation far worse than now, the Americans abandoning South Vietnam and apparently retreating into isolation only to emerge under President Carter to commit every mistake in foreign policy one could think of, the West was retreating everywhere; West Germany seemed almost on the verge of collapse; the constant bombings and hijackings apparently reduced several governments to complete impotence; the terrorist organizations all round the world seemed to have formed a loose alliance, benignly watched, armed and financed by the Soviet Union and its satellites. It seems extraordinary now to look back to that period and see it for what it was. Inevitably, our understanding is overshadowed by the knowledge that just over a decade after Mogadishu and the Stammheim suicides, the Soviet Union collapsed and the terrorist gangs had to start looking round for other paymasters. Indeed, the West European ones (as opposed to those who happen to be in Western Europe) simply folded.

None of this was made clear in the film. There were some attempts to show the mass of events through various media reports but these failed. The best parts remained those that concentrated on the main members of the gang. Indeed, the secondary members or those who formed the second generation of the RAF appeared, disappeared and reappeared with such speed that it was hard to work out who was who and how they fitted into the story. The same was true for the forces

of law and order. There is no explanation of who Horst Herold, the man who led the fight against the terrorist groups, might be. Played by Bruno Ganz in his usual enigmatic fashion he appears from time to time, makes gnomic pronouncements and feeds lobster soup to his subordinates. He *actually* succeeded by tripling his staff, quadrupling his budget and creating a phenomenal database.

There is little indication of the international aspect of the whole problem although the film does have some very funny moments when the spoilt German bourgeois kids go off to train in a PLO camp in Jordan. Above all, there is not a single mention of East Germany or the Soviet Union, both highly significant players at the time. However, Stephen Aust does trace most of the East German involvement, as does Jillian Becker. The best recent summary can be found in the relevant chapter of

Michael Burleigh's history of modern terrorism, 'Blood and Rage'. The Stasi aided and abetted several RAF members' movements in and out of West Berlin, knew exactly what was going on and helped to train those who later went to Yemen. None of this is referred to in *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*. Curiously enough, there is no allusion to the brooding history – many of the subsequent criminals had started their protests because they were disgusted by their parents' and grandparents' Nazi past. It is one of history's bitter ironies that some of them ended up screaming 'schnell, schnell' at Jewish hostages, justifying their behaviour by their support for their Arab 'brothers' about whom they knew very little.

But the film is worth seeing. It will inspire those who remember the period and those who do not to read more about those extraordinary and terrifying years.

# First Thoughts, Last Thoughts

Robert Hugill



When we go to the opera, we tend to assume that what we are hearing is the composer's final, perfect version of the work. Operas are works of art which might have gone through a period of change but ultimately the composer hones the work to perfection. This is, of course, not entirely true, particularly for works from the mid 19th century and earlier. In many cases there is no real final version. But even where there is, the version commonly performed owes as much to performing tradition as it does to the composer's final thoughts.

When Mozart supervised the Viennese premiere of *Don Giovanni* in 1788 he made one or two changes, partly to accommodate the differing personalities of his cast. Soprano Caterina Cavaleri (a pupil of Salieri's and the first Konstanze in *Die Entführung*) as Donna Elvira received an extra aria, *Mi Tradi*. Tenor Francesco Morella (Don Ottavio) received *Dall'ua sua pace* instead of *Il mio Tesoro*, whilst Leporello and Zerlina gained a duet *Per queste tue manie*. The printed libretto for the Viennese performance omitted the final ensemble and Mozart also made a shortened version of this, though it is unclear quite what was performed in Vienna.

Mozart's changes are typical of the time where composers responded to cast changes with alterations to the music. Operas were not regarded as monolithic,

fixed works but moveable feasts. If Mozart had lived he would have undoubtedly made further changes to *Don Giovanni*, when it was revived.

This process can be seen quite clearly in Handel's operas and oratorios. Handel almost always made changes to a work each time it was revived, in response both to personnel changes and to give his audience further novelties. A fairly extreme response to personnel change is the impact of castrato Gaetano Guadagni on *Messiah*; Handel created elaborate versions of some of the arias for him, which reflected his status as a virtuoso.

Handel's changes were not always improvements; with one or two notable exceptions Handel's first version is usually to be preferred. The exigencies of finance and personnel availability meant that he could frequently be quite vicious to his own works. One of the exceptions is *Messiah*. This received annual performances, underwent numerous changes, though there does seem to have been some sort of consensus regarding a standard version. Our traditional version of *Messiah* is very much based on the version used by Handel later on in his life.

Mozart could similarly produce versions of works which were less than perfect. After the first performance of *Idomeneo* in 1781 (where Idamante was a soprano castrato and Idomeneo was a tenor), Mozart considered

revising the work so that Idamante became a tenor and Idomeneo a bass. Nothing came of this plan, which was linked to his ideas about giving the piece a more Gluckian cast. A concert performance of the work was given in 1786 in Vienna. For this Mozart wrote some new music and changed the role of Idamante from soprano to tenor. This is less than ideal because it means that there are 3 main tenor roles (Idomeneo, Idamante and Arbace). Mozart's death has again deprived us of a possible rational version of *Idomeneo*.

Gluck did produce a final version of his operatic version of the Orpheus legend. Having written the piece in Italian for a court wedding (which means that *Orfeo ed Euridice* is quite short), he reworked it for performance in France. This version, *Orfée et Euridice*, is longer and more developed, and a profoundly satisfactory opera in every sense but one: the title role is written for a type of voice (haute contre) which had disappeared by the mid 19th century. This caused Berlioz to conflate both versions to create pretty much the opera we know today, designed for a female contralto voice. At first the idea of this patchwork *Orfeo* being the standard version rather grates but then we learn that Gluck was something of a re-cycler himself. He habitually re-used material from earlier operas in later ones; his only limitation was that he did not repeat material in the same city. Even during the period when he was writing his Italian Reform operas (*Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Paride ed Elena*, *Alceste*), he was creating other operas based on earlier material. So his re-working of the Italian material for Paris must be seen in this light. Gluck himself probably did not regard the French version as the final result, simply a further version. And he would probably have had no problems with the idea of Berlioz further re-working the material.

It was during the 19th century that this situation changed. Verdi travelled around Italy staging his works, but he was not in the habit of customising them for different performers. Part of this change came about because the composer started to be regarded as an artist and operas as works of art. A great facilitator of this change was the development of publishing, the role of the publisher and a more sophisticated conception of copyright. Verdi's publishers, Ricordi, kept a production book for each opera and if you wanted to perform the opera you had to do it according to the production book. And, of course, Wagner's desire to have total control of his artistic output led him to performing his operas in his own theatre.

The idea that the composer was an artist, rather than a musical journeyman, meant that his work could develop over time. This helped to give primacy to the later versions of operas, which are seen as more developed

and more refined examples of the composer's art. This can be seen reflected in attitudes to Verdi's *Macbeth* and *Don Carlos*, where the composer's final version of each is regarded as definitive.

This all seems quite clear doesn't it? Except that attitudes are never that simple. Whilst performers intend to stay true to the composer's intentions, all works acquire cuts and changes which are hallowed by tradition. The standard version of *Don Carlos* reflects the fact that the work was regularly performed in Italy, in Italian translation, whereas Verdi always worked with a French libretto, regarding the work as a French one. Verdi's production of a 4-act version of the opera was a reaction to the cuts generally applied by Italian opera houses.

In Verdi the issue of faithfulness to the composer's intentions is generally compromised in performance nowadays because singers frequently adhere to the traditional versions. Whilst cuts may not be grossly disfiguring, it shows that our insistence on the primacy of the composer's final thoughts is something to which we are only intermittently true. And an opera like *Don Carlos* which exists in a variety of versions, has proved a great temptation, provoking producers and directors to create strange patch-work passages in a way that hardly does justice to Verdi. Like the multiple versions of Mozart, Gluck and Handel's operas, the multiple versions of *Don Carlos* represent Verdi's response to differing performance situations. It is fascinating to hear the original French version of *Don Carlos* but it is a reflection of Verdi's genius that this is a very different opera to the final Modena version and it is surely unwise to mix them.

With Berlioz we see a composer conspiring to cut up his own work, in desperation to get it performed. No one would ever think of regarding as definitive the version of *Les Troyens* performed during Berlioz's lifetime. He cut the opera into two and performed only the 2nd half, *Les Troyens a Carthage*, and even then he had to cut the opera further to cope with the limitations of the theatre. So upset was he over the poor staging of the ballet sequence, the Royal Hunt and Storm, that he cut it after the first performance. A similar thing happened to *Benvenuto Cellini*. The first performances in 1838 at the Paris Opera were a disaster and the work languished until Liszt offered to put it on in Weimar in 1852. The Weimar version was heavily cut and you get the impression that Berlioz was more interested in salvaging as much of the best music as possible than worrying about a coherent version of the opera. Though the Weimar version is performed, it is hardly the best version of the opera and certainly not a case of a composer refining his thoughts with each version.

As can be seen from this selection of edition and

version problems in opera, it is by no means a clear cut thing to assume that a composer's last thoughts were his finest. And too often the version performed owes more to sloppy thinking and adherence to traditional versions, with lip service being paid to the composer's intentions. We should accept that the usual version of

an opera is not holy writ, but simply what has come to seem most effective. What we need is more conductors, and singers, willing to experiment. And for everyone to accept that in some cases neither a composer's first thoughts nor his last may be best, and that to achieve perfection may be impossible.

# On and Off the Wall

Andrew Lambirth



When I was living in Sussex I spent hours in Hardham admiring the 12th century paintings of St Botolph's, which exist only in a fragmentary state, though rather better preserved than so many others. Our rich heritage of medieval murals suffered badly in the years of Puritan iconoclasm, and if not defaced they were simply painted over. Centuries later, it was the fashion in the Victorian period to remove the plaster from the walls to reveal the stonework beneath. In this process, many more murals were lost than in the Reformation, though some were re-discovered. Among these were the Hardham paintings, rather fine and inventive images probably made by a travelling guild of artists in a mixture of English and French styles. Although my head was full of the glories of the Italian Renaissance, I responded at once to this surprisingly high-quality native achievement, and began to research them. That was twenty-five years ago, and I remember the paucity of information then available. There hasn't been a great deal written on the subject since, but finally a book has been published which lays out the general outlines of this unexplored territory.

*Medieval Wall Paintings* by Roger Rosewell is published by The Boydell Press at £39.95 in hardback. It contains a historical survey of the subject, a gazetteer of over 500 mural sites in England and Wales and a guide to the subjects depicted. When you think that there are some 10,000 medieval churches, yet less than 10 per cent retain significant traces of murals, the extent of the destruction (in the name of religion) begins to hit home. And of the remaining traces, far too many are only ghosts that scarcely bear listing or illustrating. This book runs to nearly 400 pages without attempting to be in any way exhaustive, though ironically it's rather heavy to handle and slightly overpowering in design (an unnecessary preponderance of black), but the writer's enthusiasm breathes off the page. His first example in the introduction is another St Botolph's, in Slapton, Northants. There's a particularly fine mural

of St Christopher in this church, wading through water full of fish and even a mermaid. Much of the drawing is still apparent, but the colours are sadly diminished. 'We have to visualize complete schemes and salvos of coppery greens, ocean blues, and bold reds blazing across walls lit by flickering candles and tapestries of coloured glass.'

Imagination is essential: the indistinctness of most medieval murals makes one long for the restorer's brush to transform and restore them, but that would never do. We need their fragmentary nature to remind us of the historical and religious vicissitudes which they have survived. The earliest wall paintings date from Roman times, though the first demonstrably 'English' ones belong to the Anglo-Saxon period (Winchester c 900 and the angels of Nether Wallop c1000). The Romanesque designs at St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill, c1080 — for instance, a wide-eyed angel summoning the dead to the Last Judgment — are perhaps some of the finest early examples. I particularly like the dramatic and expressive Atlas figure at Coombes Church in West Sussex dating from c1100 — a strong man apparently holding up the Chancel arch.

Of course, changes in the actual fabric of churches also threatened wall paintings: windows are one of their main enemies. The rector may want more light, but at what cost? Half a painting may have to go. The best cycles inevitably exist on unbroken walls, and tend to belong to 'unmodernized' Romanesque churches. Gothic architecture with its greater emphasis on fenestration allowed less wall space for paintings. And the painting style changed too, a greater naturalism gradually took hold, rendering the figures more curvaceous and realistic, though this was balanced by the influence of French elegance, much given to willowy serpentine figures. Pleasing shapes or naturalism? The debate has been going on for thousands of years.

We are accustomed now to think of the interiors of

old churches as being gloomy but brightly coloured, with the murals making a conspicuous contribution to this end. But look at the marvellously complete grisaille paintings made for Eton College Chapel in the late 15th century. Colour has been leached out, and all the ingenuity has been focused on drawing and complexities of pattern. These monochrome designs are deeply impressive but look more like carvings or low relief work. They are not wall paintings as we think of them. However fragmentary and faded the typical medieval mural, the mineral pigments (malachite green, ochres and reds) are an important component in its effect.

I am grateful that someone has finally produced a book on English wall painting, but this one does not really go far enough. There's not a great deal of discussion on the art of the painters, their subjects eliciting more comment and explanation. (For instance, Rosewell reminded me that at Hardham there's the unique depiction of Eve milking a cow; she's usually shown spinning.) There are more than 230 colour photographs in the book, but their quality is not good. The gazetteer is arranged not alphabetically but by county, which can be confusing. And the paintings are just listed, with no comment as to whether they're good or not. It would be useful to have some sort of rating here, if only to argue with. However, there is much to whet the appetite for visiting country churches, whether it's the delicate 'Noli me Tangere' at St Giles in Risby, Suffolk, or the Tree of the Seven Deadly Sins growing from the head of a woman (interestingly contrasted with a unique Tree of the Seven Virtues) at St Mary and St Bartholomew in Cranborne, Dorset. Whatever its faults, this is an essential reference book for anyone interested in English churches or English art.

I turned to a massive three-volume set of *The History of British Art*, from 600 to now, just published by the Tate (£25 per volume, boxed set £70), to see what it had to say about mural painting. Only one double-page spread on the Doom painting at Holy Trinity, Coventry, together with three secular wall paintings from Hill Hall in Essex, reproduced on another page. And this was all the coverage for our heritage of mural painting in a volume devoted to Medieval Art, though admittedly it has to deal with the vast period from 600 to 1600 in just 296 pages. Manuscript illumination and architecture fare a great deal better. Although beautifully produced, with striking photographs and well-designed pages, I began to have doubts about

*Our rich heritage of medieval murals suffered badly in the years of Puritan iconoclasm, and if not defaced were simply painted over. Centuries later, it was the fashion in the Victorian period to remove the plaster from the walls to reveal the stonework beneath. In this process, many more murals were lost*

these books. Their overall editor is David Bindman, an art historian I have previously read with interest. In his general introduction he writes: 'One of the chief aims of these volumes is to reinterpret British art in the light of Britain's inherent instabilities of identity, which still define it in a global world.' Immediately, the hackles begin to rise.

However, I do like the mix of short and long essays which allows a focus on particular works to appear next to a meditation on broader themes. And from the passages I've sampled, the texts seem generally readable, given the range of writers over three volumes, from historians of the calibre of Charles Harrison and Stephen Calloway, to promising students of contemporary obfuscation. But the three volumes certainly do not comprise the definitive history that is claimed for them. We are far too near many of the events of volume 3 to be able to get anything like a proper perspective, and the accounts of them here are riddled with political correctitude. Even in the central volume, covering 1600 to 1870, there's far too much about such nebulous notions as 'the discourse of landscape painting'. When I read the phrase 'epistemological impasse' I reach for my art critical harpoon to loosen up the meaning. As usual, there's a profound lack of common sense in much of the writing, and an overwhelming addiction to theory.

The problem with theory is the in-fighting of factions that invariably results, and the ludicrous distortions exacted by fashions in thought. The best art is timeless and totally unaffected by the endless reinterpretations to which it is subjected. Art history is not always about the best art that has been produced, but about what fits best into the categories or pet theories of its writers. I began to check whether a few of my favourite artists had been mentioned in volume 3 and in the process spotted a number of mistakes and omissions. It was good to find a mention of Eileen Agar, though her dates were wrong. Roger Hilton was given two separate dates of death and Lucian Freud's christian name was mis-spelt. No mention of Craigie Aitchison, Maggi Hambling, or Nigel Hall, and only passing references to John Armstrong, Gilbert Spencer and John Nash. I wonder who these books are aimed at. I don't believe they will nourish a love or understanding of art in the young, however much they might gladden the hearts of those whose blood races at a battle of theories. Should you see one anywhere, treat it with extreme caution.

# IN SHORT

**The Spice of Life: A Selection**, John Jolliffe, 2008, Brunton Books, Embleton, Alnwick, NE66 3HQ, £15.99.

John Jolliffe, one of our more eminent reviewers, belongs to that vanishing species, the independent man of letters, and after a lifetime in publishing, reviewing and other writing has now produced a perfect bedside book. The first part is a memoir of the forties and fifties, a vanished age feeling much further away because of the great social changes of the sixties and seventies. He recalls the sunset of life in a big house: Mells in Somerset with its army of eccentric old retainers, the last period when big houses boasted the full complement of servants. Evelyn Waugh was an occasional visitor and picked up a phrase from his grandmother's doctor which has passed into the language 'Up to a point Lord Copper' and 'Definitely Lord Copper'. Prep school, Eton and Oxford are of course well trodden territory but Jolliffe looks at these familiar experiences of the upper classes with more astringent eyes: dank Thames Valley winters, wartime marriages, sub-standard teachers — the best ones were often away at the war; even Eton seemed austere and rundown.

The second part of the book is an anthology of his elegant contributions to various periodicals and reflects his wide interests ranging from Eleanor of Aquitaine and Shooting Eccentrics to Violet Bonham Carter, John Betjeman, Queen Marie of Romania, and Empress Zita. There is a fine piece on Leonard Cheshire, one of the great heroes of our time. Jolliffe is a Eurosceptic and gives an excellent account of the profound differences between us and other Europeans and why a union would never work. Russian and Eastern European subjects are a source of fascination; he agrees with Norman Stone that compared with Eastern Europe, the study of Western Europe has become about as interesting as the North Thames Gas Board. Michael Charlton's *The Eagle and the Small Birds* is described as a perfect introduction to East-West problems and other pieces in this section include Max Hayward 'the custodian of Russian literature in the West', Newcastle's Soviet heretic Zamyatin, and Chaliapin.

*Merrie Cave*

**Global Jihad: The Future in the Face of Militant Islam**, Patrick Sookhdeo, Isaac Publishing, 2008, £15.99.

Plenty of books and on-line discussions, from Muslims and non-Muslims alike, explore the 'theory and practice' of military jihad. This one is among the few indispensable contributions, more than ever relevant when cities in our once Christian kingdom, including its 'Olympics' capital, not only remain vulnerable to 'Islamic' atrocities but notoriously also harbour perpetrators regularly described (without intentional irony) as 'British'.

Over 600 documented pages of meticulous scholarship examine the sacred texts, traditions and pronouncements that have promoted aggressive militancy ever since the days of the Prophet, evaluate various explanations offered for its international explosion, particularly since the Palestine-Israel conflict, look at countries and organisations prominently involved, and consider whatever counter-action might prove effective.

The author fully substantiates his contention that 'terror and violence' are rooted within classical Islam. The myopia or malice that needlessly introduced sizeable and expanding communities wedded to this alien faith into the western world could not be clearer. Dr Sookhdeo's valuable work comes with endorsements from security or military experts including Prof Richard Holmes. This publication is available from the Barnabas Fund, Priory Row, Coventry, CV1 5EX.

*David Ashton*

**Balanced Migration**, Frank Field MP & Nicholas Soames MP, Migrationwatch UK, 2008.

The National Statistician reported last December that for the population to stay below 70 million, net immigration had to be cut by 80 per cent, which 'may not be a realistic scenario' — certainly not if Labour's favourite think-tank, the IPPR, succeeds with its bright idea that additional influx 'flexibility' would assist 'recovery' from recession, nor if large numbers of illegal immigrants are allowed to remain. 'Our border security is a laughing stock amongst drug dealers,

people traffickers and Islamic extremists' (Mark Pritchard MP).

This readable and reliable booklet is prepared and published by Migration Watch, a competent organisation that keeps enquirers continually informed with facts, figures and comment. It presents a commendably concise yet remarkably thorough outline of the whole problem, with numerous charts and answers to objections. Actively supported by a parliamentary group, it also proposes a solution: a limit on permanent settlement (coming largely from outside the EU) to bring down total numbers approximately to those of citizens emigrating. Of course, this still leaves England with a high overall population density, and avoids the morally legitimate objective of restoring English cultural and institutional 'hegemony' to its ancestral territory through the peaceful dissolution of communal cluster, resource competition and inter-ethnic conflict.

Half a loaf, of course, is better than none. The trouble is that all we get from the high table of the political establishment in any event are the few familiar crumbs of discomfort — inadequate response, hypocritical prevarication and false assurance.

*Marianna Robinson*

**The Vitamin Murders**, James Ferguson, Portobello, 2008, £8.99.

Sir Jack Drummond is mostly remembered as the victim, along with his wife and child, of a brutal murder in the South of France in 1952. It was probably the most famous French murder of the twentieth century, fascinating the French more than the English, with dozens of books and hundreds of articles published over the years.

But the tragic circumstances of his death obscure Drummond's great achievement of revolutionizing the British diet during the Second World War, after which we were apparently much healthier in spite of its privations, and this book is an excellent account of his work. Drummond was appointed as the Senior Adviser in the Ministry of Food on the strength of his book *The Englishman's Food: A History of Five Centuries of English Diet*. The Industrial Revolution and the movement from country to town had brought about a sharp decline in standards of nutrition particularly for the poor. The army knew this from having to weed out unsuitable recruits. A pioneer in the importance and use of vitamins, canned food and healthy bread, Drummond was given a free hand in the organization

of food distribution and regarded rationing as an opportunity to improve the British diet. Thanks to his efforts arable land increased by 63 percent and the Dig for Victory campaign ensured that we managed to produce three quarters of our food by the end of the war.

Fergusson traces the decline of healthy eating after the war and the development of agro-chemicals and processed food, following up many theories that suggest that Drummond's opposition to these trends might have brought him enemies and been responsible for his death. The author consulted one of our reviewers, Ronnie Payne, who as the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Paris was present at Domenici's trial. Fifty years on he is still convinced that the Dominicis were guilty — the only question was which one of them had pulled the trigger.

*Merrie Cave*

**Great Quotations that Shaped the Western World**, Carl Middleton, Paragon House, Minnesota, [www.paragonhouse.com](http://www.paragonhouse.com), 2008, \$29.95, £19.99

In his article 'Why I am not a European' (*SR* Autumn 2008), Marc Sidwell explained how knowledge of the past had helped the West to withstand assaults on its civilisation and how looking back should construct a valid renewal now. However he sees more hope of this happening in America, where the Great Books movement still provides a framework of the Western canon, than in Europe. The compiler of this outstanding book of quotations explains that it differs from other anthologies because he is a conservative and recognises the urgent need to pass on our culture to the next generation. Books do not have to be burned but left unread for a couple of generations to be lost. He also emphasizes the need for extra-curricular instruction in ethics and virtue to counteract the effects of multiculturalism and moral relativism.

The book is chronologically organized as a history of Western civilisation with sections like the Greek Knowledge explosion, the Age of Science, the Age of Reason, Industrialization and the Victorian Ages, all of which are preceded by lucid and instructive prefaces. The second part of the book deals with themes and two chapters are devoted to the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

*Merrie Cave*

**Look at Me: Celebrating the Self in Modern Britain,**  
Peter Whittle, Social Affairs Unit, 2008, £10

I offer a definition of a celebrity as a person you've never heard of. And the celebrity culture — there's an ace oxymoron for you — is just part of the general cult of me-ism which washes over us like a tide of lukewarm porridge. *Look at Me* cheerfully mocks this cult with merciless accuracy and deadly disdain.

Here are some of the dramatis personae: Kayleigh who's had it up to there with the 'boring bastards' who are not impressed when she stands up in her stretch limo and waves at them. Kayleigh is 'saving up for a boob job'. Next, meet Harriet who 'works in a public relations company specialising in event-management and she *totally* loves her job'. And Marc won 'Personality of the Year at the Marketing Awards last year'. He lives with his 'partner' Sue in a minimalist apartment with 'shiny floorboards, stark white walls and a few pieces of agonisingly tasteful furniture'. All these empty-headed fashionistic clones think of themselves as 'unique'. It's all appearance and no reality. I'm reminded of Kierkegaard's jibe: 'When you see a sign in the window TROUSERS PRESSED HERE, don't believe it: only the sign is for sale'. Modern reality is constructed in the style of an advertisement.

As Peter Whittle says, 'The traditional British trait of self-effacement has gone the way of the bowler hat. Be understated about your work — "Oh, it keeps the wolf from the door" — or what you have done with your life — "this and that" — and you will be taken at your word. For many modern Britons, raised to cherish self-esteem, such modesty is tantamount to self-negation. Hyperbole rules the day, regardless of the banality of the circumstances: I'm "devastated"; you're "totally incredible"; he's "completely bizarre".' What are the words to describe the narcissistic, infantilised, self-obsessed, self-esteeming, preening, dilapidated chic world we now inhabit?

Whittle's marvellously sneering rage fingers these vacuous drones perfectly, lethally. He ends by urging us to 'discover the adult within' and fight back. I am not confident that we shall quickly, or even at all, recover intellectual, moral and aesthetic seriousness. Things have gone too far. T S Eliot coined a phrase: 'dissociation of sensibility'. It meant that there comes a time when so much has been lost that it becomes impossible to find enough reserve to build on. 'What branches grow out of this stony rubbish?' I think we have crossed the boundary between decadence and apocalypse. Some sort of end is nigh.

*Peter Mullen*

## The Salisbury Review

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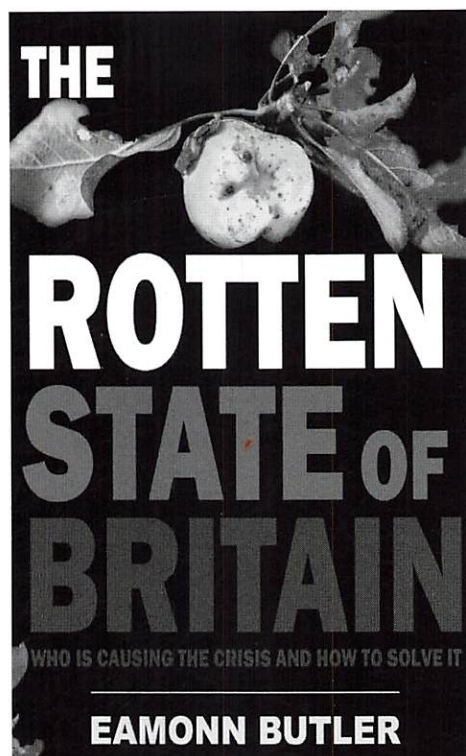
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Almost a decade and a half ago, a series of books on the ills of Britain by Will Hutton became the cornerstone of the Gordon Brown/Tony Blair policies. In this first deeply-researched analysis of the state of Britain, their record is held to their own standards. Eamonn Butler, head of the Adam Smith Institute, finds a shocking litany of failures since 1998 based on a perverse use of government by stealth, particularly by Gordon Brown. Under his influence, the government has become more centralised than ever under Margaret Thatcher, doubling rules and regulations, criminalising ordinary citizens, and arrogantly allowing the misuse of legal powers to rule by media headlines. Britain is now in a worse crisis than the rest of the world, as a result, and Eamonn Butler argues how to escape from it.

***The Rotten State of Britain* by Eamonn Butler is published on 5 March 2009**

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