

# THE QUARTERLY REVIEW

IDEAS AND CULTURE

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*An exclusive interview with cult US novelist* **TITO PERDUE**

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# QUARTERLY REVIEW



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# WHY WE SHOULD NOT “RELAX” ABOUT ISLAM – OR ANYTHING ELSE



**I**n February, the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested that aspects of Islamic *sharia* law might have to be incorporated into British civil law. Dr Williams said, “It seems unavoidable and, as a matter of fact, certain conditions of *sharia* are already recognised in our society and under our law, so it is not as if we are bringing in an alien and rival system.”

His remarks attracted great opprobrium. Many felt that the Archbishop’s remarks betokened a lack of religious, cultural or political certitude – while even government ministers and journalists who have long encouraged mass immigration and multiculturalism criticised the Archbishop as being naïve or even a ‘reactionary’.

Dr Williams is a thoughtful and fair-minded man, but on this occasion he is wrong and those who disagreed with him are right. The “constructive accommodation” sought by the Archbishop (and many others) is really a species of

surrender. *Sharia* law is an alien and rival system, and its introduction is not “unavoidable” unless non-Muslims start to believe that it is. That the government also seems to believe secretly in such “unavoidability” – which is why it is subsidising Muslim schools and permitting Islamic banking – is irrelevant, except insofar as it demonstrates how much less honest it is than Dr Williams.

Also in the news recently was the Bishop of Oxford, who intervened in a planning row over a request to broadcast Muslim calls to prayer by loudspeaker, by asking Oxford’s dwindling number of Anglican communicants to “relax” and accept their diminished status.

The advice to “relax” is emblematic of more than just Anglicanism – which fading faith now seems headed for global fragmentation and national disestablishment. The British as a whole have ‘relaxed’ while Britain has been altered immeasurably, within just a few decades. What used to be called ‘the Establishment’



– the Church of England, certain arms of government, academe, the arts – is becoming part of a meta-process that promises to transform Britain utterly and forever, and probably not for the better.

Islam is a dignified creed, and there have always been cultivated and humane Muslims. The cultural achievements of some Muslim administrations were also considerable. It is also fair to note that Western foreign policies have sometimes occasioned justifiable retaliation. We must remember that Islam is not monolithic, and the vast majority of Muslims are respectable citizens. Yet Islam does pose specific problems for non-Muslims.

Muslim armies invaded and tyrannized large parts of southern and eastern Europe for centuries, and were only held in check by leaders like Charles Martel of the Franks, John Sobieski of Poland and the Hunyadis of Hungary, and the bravery of innumerable soldiers of many nationalities. European literature is filled with remembrances or poetical re-imaginings of those campaigns, from *The Song of Roland* to the lurid tales of Vlad Tepes's excesses, Cervantes's memories of being a slave aboard an Algiers galley and John Buchan's *Greenmantle*. Eastern and southern Europe are filled with mementoes of those times, from former mosques become cathedrals to Saxon fortified churches, like that of Cisnădie in Transylvania, called "the Red Town" by the Turks because so much blood was spent in their unsuccessful attempts to

capture it. Such a history is not easily surmountable, and the 'Islamophobia' felt by many Europeans is grounded in this history.

Although often the religion may have been used as a pretext, one reading of the Koran (although one that is far from being universally accepted) does lend itself to aggression. So until Islam itself implodes there will always be a minority of its adherents who will use it as a vehicle for self-glorification.

Yet many Westerners nevertheless believe in propitiation of Islamists – if not out of a belief in inevitability, then out of a wish to be 'tolerant', or a romantic notion that the Islamic world has retained spiritual insights lost to Christians, or for short-term political reasons, or just plain fear. The net effect of these decisions is that Britain and the West look weak and divided to hostile outsiders.

It is foolhardy to believe that concessions to *sharia* will mollify radical Muslim opinion. In fact, it will encourage further demands.

Postwar political life across the West has generally been characterized by myopia, cowardice and laziness. Principled tolerance has become sheer carelessness, and this has spawned a host of looming dilemmas, of which radical Islam is only the most obvious and urgent. It will not be easy to break our decades-old addiction to easy fixes. But if we are to retain anything at all of our character and identity, somehow we must try – and soon. ♦

# A VISIONARY REACTIONARY

*Derek Turner quizzes cult American novelist TITO PERDUE*



**Y**ou have been called “America’s lost literary genius” and compared with many different writers – James Joyce, William Faulkner, Samuel Beckett, John Kennedy Toole, to name just some – but with whom would you wish to be compared? Who or what made you want to be a writer?

My fate was sealed, I believe, when my father began reading aloud each night a chapter from some piece of children’s or young adult literature – *The Swiss Family Robinson* for example, or *The Call Of The Wild*. Later on as an adolescent I bumped into the novels of Thomas Wolfe, and thereafter I had no choice but to try to do what I’ve tried to do. I think maybe Swift and Aristophanes (I do not compare myself to these masters) felt as estranged from their societies as my character Leland (Lee) Pefley from his.

Your novels tell the story of Pefley at different stages in his own life,

through the lives of an ancestor and even posthumously. Pefley is reactionary, elitist, misanthropic, arrogant, intolerant, dreamy and inspired; he delights in being hated. He possesses a literally extreme idealism – “It accorded with his philosophy that good things should be far, far better than they were, and the bad worse, and never to avoid an extreme” – with exceeding nastiness – cudgelling people, stealing cars and books, leaving toilets unflushed to show contempt for the next user. Obviously, you do not behave as he does, but equally obviously he is at least semi-autobiographical. I have to ask – where does Perdue stop and Pefley begin?

Lee actually carries out actions that his creator would often wish to perform if he but had the courage. However, most of Lee’s worst behaviour occurs after he has lost his wife. I am minded of a line in Eisenstein’s *Ivan The Terrible* when, after the Tsarina has been poisoned,

Ivan declares that he now intends to be fully as terrible as he had been credited with. Of course, a person who feels genuine contempt would not consider his fellow citizens significant enough to deserve mistreatment.

Pefley is appalling, but he is also occasionally admirable. He loves beautiful things, he loves learning, and he has a devotion to his wife that lasts even beyond the grave. He does not hate people, but rather society, for turning them into ovine voters and sports fans – infantilized, weak-willed, sensate, soft, avaricious, narcissistic, guilt-ridden, frightened. What, for you and/or Pefley, are the chief causes of civilizational decay?

Some people believe our decadence has been caused by loss of faith, but I've come to believe that loss of faith is itself caused by prolonged prosperity, which dissolves discipline and offers temptations that cannot be resisted by most people. America could have stood up to anything except this.

For Pefley and/or you, the 1950s were a time of transition "between the rough men of the past and the soft ones of the generation coming up". Can you explain what you mean by this?

I think I've read that G B Shaw once prophesied that America would prove the first civilization to advance direct from barbarism to decadence without having ever passed through civiliza-

tion. And yet we did have that brief period, about 15 or 20 years worth between 1940 and 1960, our very own *Belle Epoch* when people behaved well for the most part, the economy was sufficient without being sumptuous, and a man could support a numerous family on his one salary alone. It was a romantic age, too, and in a way that lies altogether outside the experience of the young people of today.

You have Pefley say, at the age of 18, "I had rather be young now, in this decade, than rich and immortal later on", and you write about the specific qualities of Pefley's teenage years in the 1950s – how much better the music was then, how much pleasanter society, and so forth. But isn't this sort of thing highly subjective? Doesn't every generation think itself special, and its experiences and tastes richer than those of previous generations?

Lee is predicting that his age, the 1950s, will have been far better than the next generation's, a remarkably prescient piece of prognostication for one so young. But he's not dismissive of the past, if I remember correctly. On the contrary, as an adult he is prone to idealizing past ages.

Pefley is contemptuous of the incurious – "They would rather have something than be something – had they rather to read in Persian or have a new



car? How I long to grant to them the death that Crassus had – a good full meal of molten gold!” But surely the majority of people have only ever been as civilized as their exemplars?

There are an infinite number of people who could be selected as exemplars. And if the majority has always preferred rock stars and basketball players to composers and heroes of thought and action, then let them be criticized for it.

Some people strike Pefley as particularly objectionable, especially those who are economically successful – “[Lee saw] a nightmare face in a sports car. The car was a miracle of science and engineering, the driver himself pure rubbish, a pattern that seemed to hold for the century at large.” Pefley is always panting for the return of poverty, which for him is intrinsically ennobling. But surely poverty more often has a degrading effect?

Not poverty, but a certain degree of austerity, that’s what fosters the best. Under present conditions, the very wealthiest people are also generally among the very worst. It is far, far better under contemporary capitalism to short-sell futures indexes than to be any sort of creative human being doing actual work. It’s embarrassing to talk about these matters, as debased as the system is.

Must there always be an inverse correlation between economic prosperity and social decay?

Between sumptuousness and decay, yes I think so. The Hellenistic Period was far richer than the Hellenic. Of Rome, Gibbon writes, “Prosperity ripened the principle of decay.” Britain has never been wealthier than today.

If true, doesn’t that mean that civilization is always doomed to fail?

Civilizations don’t have to get wealthy. Sometimes they become poorer. America was a better, if more uncomfortable, place during the Great Depression than it is now.

Pefley seems to feel that all that can be done is a kind of opting-out, like Christian setting out from the City of Destruction. What would he think of someone who shared his views, but who wanted to fix things from inside?

Lee would have the greatest respect and sympathy for anyone striving to repair the system from within, even if he also believes such people are on schedule to fail. His rather morose view is that nothing can save us short of a catastrophe of some kind, a pandemic perhaps, or well-targeted meteorite.

Lee’s character is prefigured in his grandfather (*Opportunities in Alabama Agriculture*). Yet despite having similar natures and impulses, Ben stays and endures in rural Alabama,

whereas Lee moves away – although he is admittedly drawn back eventually to his hometown. Is Lee's leaving a product of his simply having an enquiring mind – or is it just because he could? Don't people always leave if they can? What price then Pefley's idealized 'life on the farm'?

A farmer, if he owns his own land, is his own boss and will rise or sink according to his own merits and effort and luck. A person of that sort is likely to form his own opinions and is largely immune to current fashion. America once was populated by just such folk, and the result was splendid. Lee himself, of course, is much too refined for a life like that, and consoles himself by admiring it from afar.

Leland didn't understand what he was doing when he abandoned the South at age 18, and paid dearly for his mistake by ending up in New York.

One of Pefley's chief targets is ugliness – "He, who had thought all of life to be like certain divine measures in the music of Debussy and Ravel, saw instead that there was a gas station, an immense pile of disused tires, and warehouses with broken windows". Do you really feel that society today is less interested in aesthetic matters than at other times?

Today's society suspects that there might well be such a thing as beauty, but doesn't know where to find it.

Instead, our people rely upon the recommendations of authorities, who tell them that a canvas covered in camel dung is an example of high art. They want to do the right thing, but what is it?

It is said that when the Greeks put on a play, the people would come from miles away – that when Byron issued a new volume, crowds would begin to gather an hour before the shops had opened – that Verdi was the most admired Italian of his times. Today that sort of recognition belongs only to the aforementioned rock stars and basketball players.

**Can a lost aesthetic sense be recovered? Is it inherent or inculcated?**

Inculcated, Lee and I believe. Unfortunately, the condition of American education makes impossible the inculcation of a sense of beauty in the young, primarily because most educators are themselves ignorant of art and literature. My mother, who attended a one-room schoolhouse in which boys and girls of all ages were crowded together, received a much better education than any young person of my acquaintance. She could recite long passages from Browning and Tennyson when she was 96.

You say of Pefley "In him, the aesthetic had long ago overborne the ethical". Should aesthetics be more important than ethics?

I think of Wagner, an unethical man who created in my opinion the greatest work of art in any format at any time. Would it have been better on balance if he had never lived? In him the aesthetic justifies the unethical. Mao Zedong, on the other hand, wrote poetry, and nothing can justify him.

Your books seem highly melancholic, albeit relieved by surreal gallows humour and numinous language. Death is always present for Lee – the Elizabethan ‘skull beneath the skin’. What is wrong with our present way of thinking (or not thinking) about death?

Modern people seem confident that it is better to be alive than not, a rash assumption. Lee loves that poem by Poe in which life is treated as a sickness that can be cured only by death. And then, too, there are so many other possibilities. If we can believe in black holes and ten dimensions and the outrages of quantum mechanics and particle physics, then we ought to be able to conjure up all sorts of inviting alternatives to eating and sleeping and earning a living.

*Fields of Asphodel* is set posthumously, with Lee searching for his wife’s ghost through a purgatorial landscape. The sort of afterlife you conjure up is as hallucinogenic as anything envisioned by Hieronymus Bosch. I have the impression that your conception of the afterlife may not be all that

different from that which obtained in medieval Christendom. Can you summarise your religious views?

I believe in something, but I don’t exactly know what it is. Humans are so complicated and capable of so many fine things that it is hard to believe that they are designed simply to transmogrify to mulch. The secularists say that love and beauty are but prejudices that arise in the mind as a result of atomic interactions – are illusions in other words, good only for appeasing some natural requirement. I doubt it. Cockroaches have no great appetite for poetry, but biologically do quite well. No, I think beauty is a reflection of something that actually exists in some domain that is not available to us in our present state. ♦

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TITO PERDUE

*was born in Chile in 1938 and brought up in Alabama. He obtained a BA in English and History at the University of Texas, and an MLS in Librarianship and an MA in Modern European History at Indiana University. He has worked as an insurance underwriter, librarian and bibliographer, and is the author of five acclaimed published novels – Lee (1991, reprinted 2007),*

*The New Austerities (1994), Opportunities in Alabama Agriculture (1994), The Sweet-Scented Manuscript (2004) and Fields of Asphodel (2007). Fields of Asphodel is reviewed on p74*





# THE FUTURE OF ENGLAND'S CITIES: IDENTITY AND POLITICS

*In the second part of his in-depth analysis of the effects of immigration, JOHN COURTHORPE considers political affiliations and implications*

**I**n the first part of this article, the likely effects of the ethnic diversification of England's cities were examined from the perspective of 'social capital'. This concept has principally been associated with the work of Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam, who has found over many years of research that higher levels of interpersonal trust within communities is generally correlated with better health, longer life expectancy, lower crime, higher levels of political participation, increased prosperity, and greater happiness. Controversially, Putnam has found that levels of social capital tend to be lower in multi-ethnic communities, even when other variables are taken in to consideration, and this result has been replicated by other academics<sup>1</sup>. The British government's Commission on Integration and Cohesion rejected Putnam's findings in its 2007 report, *Our Shared Future*, though it admitted that its own concept

of social cohesion is closely related to Putnam's social capital. However, statistics gathered by the now defunct Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for its comprehensive 2006 publication, *State of the English Cities: A Research Study*, show that some of the social ills identified by Putnam are indeed more highly correlated with ethnic diversity than they are with other possible explanatory factors.

The recent popularity of the concept of social cohesion among British commentators and politicians has helpfully moved debate regarding issues such as immigration and multiculturalism into the more sophisticated terrain of the social sciences, where in theory evidence should prevail in place of ideology and sentiment. Furthermore, official documents often contain data about the consequences of immigration and ethnic diversity that relate to issues much more tangible than abstractions such as social capital. These allow us to further investigate the likely future

course of life in England's urban areas, and eventually the country as a whole.

One of the most remarkable of such government reports issued in recent months was a Ministry of Justice study into the working of juries. It has long been assumed by some that the criminal justice system is inherently unfair to ethnic minorities, and that predominantly white juries may be biased against minority defendants. In order to test this hypothesis, an academic from University College London staged a research project at Blackfriars Crown Court between February 2005 and June 2006, using real jurors who had just been released from jury service. The jurors were asked to take part in a research project examining their decision-making, and 98% agreed, giving 319 participants in total, of whom 76 were members of an ethnic minority. The subjects of the experiment were presented with evidence based on a real case of actual bodily harm, and asked for their verdict. However, the Ministry of Justice were principally interested in identifying any patterns of racial bias, and thus varied the ethnicity of the defendants, jurors and victims, whilst keeping all the other evidence identical. When the juror and defendant were both white, 40% of jurors gave an initial verdict of guilty, prior to any deliberation with other jury members. White jurors were found to be more lenient to ethnic minority defendants, with only 32% returning a guilty verdict. On

the other hand, ethnic minority jurors were even more lenient with minority defendants, with only 24% voting for conviction, whilst being staggeringly harsh to white defendants, who were deemed guilty on 73% of occasions. The Ministry of Justice argued that this huge bias by minority jurors against white defendants is not important, as even in London, ethnic minorities only make up a small proportion of juries, so it is unlikely that a biased minority juror would cause the conviction of a white defendant who would otherwise have been acquitted<sup>2</sup>. Of course, one can imagine the outcry that there would have been had these results been reversed.

Furthermore, the government's statisticians concluded that conviction rates were also influenced by the ethnicity of the victim, with white victims being less likely to see either white or minority jurors voting for conviction of the defendant. When all other factors were taken in to account, it was calculated that white jurors voted 'guilty' in 29% of cases where the victim was white, and 35% of the cases where the victim was from an ethnic minority, whereas for minority jurors these figures were 23% and 36% respectively<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, both white and minority jurors were more likely to vote for conviction when the defendant was white, and when the victim was not white. This tendency was most pronounced for minority jurors, who were markedly less likely

than whites to vote 'guilty' when either the defendant was from a minority, or the victim was white. Nevertheless, this research received very little media attention when it was published, and BBC Radio reports on 13 June 2007 repeated the Ministry of Justice's assertion that the study showed that British juries are not biased.

However, due to the demographic trends mentioned in the previous part of this article, ethnic minorities will doubtless form an increasing proportion of jury members in future, so any bias on their part against whites cannot be so easily dismissed. Indeed, whites will become an ethnic minority themselves in a number of towns and cities within the next few decades, according to calculations made by geographers from the University of Sheffield. As of 2006, whites were already a minority in the London boroughs of Newham and Brent, and it is expected that whites will become a minority in the boroughs of Harrow and Redbridge by 2016, in the city of Leicester by 2021, and in the city of Birmingham and the boroughs of Croydon, Ealing and Hounslow by 2026<sup>4</sup>.

These changes will affect far more than just the level of social capital, or the chances of white defendants and victims receiving fair treatment from the justice system. Local politics is one area where a more ethnically diverse electorate seems likely to bring changes. The early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and

in particular the local elections of 2006, saw a sudden growth in the reported incidence of voting irregularities in British elections. The Committee on Standards in Public Life lamented that, whereas in the mid-1990s "only an eccentric would have queried the integrity and functioning of the British electoral system", this was no longer the case only a decade later. The Committee noted that electoral fraud was "prevalent in certain communities in the North of England, the Midlands and some London Boroughs where there are marginal wards or where there is factional infighting for control within local political parties or those communities". The list of locations where such fraud was being or had been investigated by the Police revealed a disproportionate number of ethnically diverse areas, as it included Birmingham (twice), Blackburn, Bradford, Bristol, Burnley (twice), Hackney, Oldham (three times) and Tower Hamlets, alongside some areas less known for diversity (namely Derby, Guildford, Halton, Havant, Peterborough, Stoke-on-Trent, Woking, and heavily Unionist Coleraine in Northern Ireland)<sup>5</sup>.

Such incidents of political malfeasance would come as no surprise to many, as it has long been known by international organisations that corruption tends to be worse in ethnically diverse areas. An economist working for the International Monetary Fund has even developed a mathematical



model explaining how democracy exacerbates this problem. Democratic politics usually entails the mobilisation of voters on the basis of their collective identities, which leads to situations arising among diverse populations where the community leaders of ethnic groups find themselves as 'king-makers', as they hold the balance of power between larger coalitions of interest groups. The incentive for politicians to offer both collective benefits to these ethnic groups and personal rewards to their leaders thus becomes irresistible, especially when the electorates are uninformed and thus cannot judge the issues for themselves nor hold their leaders to account<sup>6</sup>.

Although there is little evidence yet of systematic corruption in British politics, the perception of ethnic bias on the part of some local authorities has contributed to the tensions behind some of the worst race riots of recent years. The committee set up to investigate the disturbances in Oldham in May 2001 noted that although the population of the metropolitan borough of Oldham was approximately 6.7% Pakistani and 4.4% Bangladeshi, these two groups had received respectively 20.8% and 51.7% of the money that had been paid out in home improvement grants by the borough's Housing Department. The average size of the grant given to successful Bangladeshi applicants had been £14,863, compared to only £3,059 for white recipients<sup>7</sup>. It may be that the

bureaucracy at Oldham Town Hall had functioned entirely without bias, but these figures do seem grossly disproportionate. Meanwhile, a report into the causes of similar unrest in nearby Burnley in June 2001 alleged that the outlook of local politicians was partly to blame. The authors noted that councillors in Burnley "are particularly well tuned to their local wards and the community groups within them", but that "there appeared to be no overall political leadership in the town" because they "see themselves primarily as lobbyists for 'their' wards, 'their' communities and 'their' service areas"<sup>8</sup>. A divided town was therefore mirrored by a fragmented council.

The emphasis on local and ethnic factors in an ethnically diverse area such as Burnley appears to reflect differences between whites and minorities in the way that their identities are structured. In 2002, the Commission for Racial Equality published some research into identity, in which a representative sample of whites and minorities were asked to name the two or three "areas or communities" with which they most identified. The list of options suggested included "this local area", "this region", England, Wales, Scotland, Britain, Europe, and "the country of my family's origin". It was found that whites and minorities were roughly equally likely to choose Britain as one of the two or three areas with which they identified, with this option being chosen by 45%

of the overall sample and 42% of ethnic minority respondents. Among the sample as a whole, and thus presumably whites, Britain was tied for first place with "this local area" as a focus of identity, with the historic nations of England, Scotland and Wales coming third with 39%. However, among the minority respondents, Britain was only in third place, behind 46% citing "the country of my family's origin" and 57% citing "this local area".

The stronger focus on local identity among ethnic minorities could be a symptom of the concentration of those minorities in England's urban areas. The census of 2001 revealed that about 55% of England's ethnic minorities lived in just three cities (London, Birmingham and Leicester). The identification of minority groups with their local areas thus reflects the obvious differences between those areas and the rest of the country. Meanwhile, the continuing identification with countries of ethnic origin is a part of the increasingly recognised phenomenon of 'trans-nationalism'. Modern technology, such as satellite television and the internet, allows migrant groups and their descendants to remain in close contact with their ethnic homelands, with the consequence that issues and events from abroad are beginning to exert an undue influence on British politics. Indeed, the Home Office investigation led by local government

official Ted Cante into the background to all the disturbances of summer 2001 cited the prevalence of foreign politics among Asians as a factor. The report noted that: "In some areas, the Asian community have drawn our attention to a situation where some local political activities, including the selection of candidates, owe more to familial and other inappropriate connections, than to the legitimate and pressing concerns of the local electorate. The 'politics from back home' was often cited, not only as a dis-



DEREK TURNER

traction, but also as a factor in priorities and decision making, overriding the merits of the local circumstances"<sup>10</sup>.

The authors of the *Cante Report* seem to have thus regarded trans-nationalism as an obstacle to ethnic minorities' integration in to wider society. However, this view was not shared by the later Commission on Integration and Cohesion, which was formed in

the aftermath of the July 2005 terrorist incidents in London. Their report claimed that retaining links to countries of origin would actually help migrants integrate into British society, and they argued that people with strong ties to their ethnic homelands would feel more self-confident in their new circumstances. Nevertheless, the same document frankly admitted that trans-nationalism "may mean that conflicts from abroad are played out on UK streets"<sup>11</sup>.

There is another, more obvious way in which immigration and ethnic diversification will transform British politics. As in most Western countries, the party allegiance of immigrants and the descendants of recent immigrants differs markedly from the host population. The House of Commons Library's own research report into the 2005 general election largely avoided this topic. The issue of whether the ethnicity of voters affected their preferences was mentioned only once in 153 pages, and only then in order to examine the question of whether Labour's support for the American invasion of Iraq had reduced their popularity among Muslims. It revealed that Labour still won nine of the ten seats with the highest proportion of Muslim voters, despite falls in their share of the vote of up to 21.4%, with radical Leftist George Galloway winning the second most Islamicized constituency, Bethnal Green & Bow<sup>12</sup>. Meanwhile, in a report written for the

Electoral Commission by a group of academics from the Universities of Essex and Texas, the topic of ethnicity was principally raised in connection with its influence on the likelihood of voting. These researchers found that 7% of those eligible to vote at the 2005 general election were members of ethnic minorities, but that only 56% of them had voted, compared to 68% of whites<sup>13</sup>. From these figures, it can be deduced that 5.8% of those who voted in the last general election were members of ethnic minorities.

It required some separate research from MORI to shed light on the issue of how these minority electors had actually voted. Their investigation found that, of the 88% of their sample who were prepared to admit their preferences, 65.9% had voted Labour, 11.4% Conservative, 18.2% Liberal Democrat, and 4.5% for other parties<sup>14</sup>. If these figures and those cited above regarding turnout are accurate, then it can be calculated from the overall results of the election that among whites, the Conservatives had narrowly outpolled Labour, by 33.6% to 33.4%, with 22.3% choosing the Liberal Democrats. The most significant aspect of ethnic minority voting preferences is thus Labour's enormous lead over the Conservatives, as compared to the even level of support for the two main parties among whites. This was even more marked among particular ethnic groups, with 80% of Caribbean and 79% of African



voters admitting to voting Labour, compared to only 3% and 2% for the Tories. The minority groups most likely to admit to having voted Conservative were those of mixed and "other" origin (still at only 13% and 16%). Meanwhile, when examining the influence of religion, MORI found that Labour enjoyed the open support of 52% of Hindus, 49% of Muslims and 64% of Sikhs, as opposed to Conservative support among these groups of only 12%, 10% and 9% respectively<sup>15</sup>.

It would therefore be an understatement to note that ethnic diversification is thus very beneficial to the Labour Party, and one hypothetical scenario will illustrate the scale of this. As noted in the previous section of this feature, the Professor of Demography at Oxford University has predicted that Britain's population will be 29% non-white by 2051<sup>16</sup>. Given the different age structure of minority groups, we could thus assume that about a quarter of the electorate in the 2050s will be non-white. This may seem a long time into the future, but today's newborn children will only be in early middle age. The 2005 general election was supposedly held when Labour had alienated a number of ethnic and religious groups through its support for American foreign policy, so let us assume conservatively that in a hypothetical election in the 2050s, party support among minorities would be the same as it was then. Over the intervening period, it seems likely

that the Labour Party may be able to retain or even increase its support among minorities by following policies designed to benefit them, such as introducing American-style 'affirmative action' quotas in employment and education. Let us further assume that this approach would damage support for Labour among whites, so that the three-quarters of the electorate who will be white in the 2050s vote in a pattern similar to that of the 1983 general election, the post-war nadir of Labour's fortunes. It can thus be calculated that, in a hypothetical general election in which 75% of the electorate voted 42.4% Conservative, 27.6% Labour and 25.4% Liberal Democrat, whilst the other 25% voted as ethnic minorities did in 2005, the overall share of the vote for each party would be: Labour 37.2%; Conservative 34.6%; Liberal Democrat 23.6%.

It is possible to calculate a hypothetical general election result by entering these percentages into the BBC's on-line "swingometer", which was developed to predict the outcome in the 646 seats fought over in 2005<sup>17</sup>. This takes account of the Labour Party's in-built advantage, which arises from the optimal concentration of their support, the smaller electorates in their constituencies, and the benefits they enjoy from tactical voting. The result in this scenario would be the election of 379 Labour MPs, compared to only 190 for the Conservatives, with Labour

having a majority of 112 over all other parties. Ethnic diversification would therefore promise the Labour Party that if it was able to maintain the level of support among ethnic minorities that it obtained in 2005, a year when it supposedly polled poorly among these groups, then it could retain a hundred seat parliamentary majority, even if its support amongst whites dropped to its lowest levels since 1945. As long as it retained its current levels of minority support, the Labour Party could feasibly become a hard-left socialist movement, even if this drew the support of barely a quarter of whites. A cynical Labour strategy for the coming decades would therefore see the party oppose the introduction of proportional representation, whilst introducing measures to encourage minorities to spread out more evenly around the country (thus mitigating the possible over-concentration of its electoral base).

Of course, a lot of other factors may have changed by the 2050s. Britain may have ceased to be a nation-state in any meaningful sense due to European developments. The same demographic changes may allow a new far-left party to emerge and challenge the existing system, with the growth of Respect perhaps being the first signs of this. The impact of issues such as climate change or resource depletion may have revolutionised the economy, society and politics beyond recognition. It is even possible that the Conservative

Party could adopt some variant of the 'Southern strategy' pursued by American Republicans during the 1960s and 70s, and thereby gain the support of a clear majority of whites by subtly addressing their anxieties. However, the scenario above illustrates that ethnic diversification on its own would be enough to transform British politics completely, and probably in a leftwards direction. This is really quite an obvious point, and at last, mainstream journalists such as Max Hastings and Minette Marrin are beginning to make the allegation that the Labour Party is permitting unprecedented mass immigration in order to benefit itself rather than the existing citizenry<sup>18</sup>.

The evidence available from various official and academic sources thus indicates that, if existing trends and patterns continue, mass immigration and ethnic diversification promise to alter England's cities and the country as a whole in a number of ways. 'Social capital' will fall, and crime levels will rise. 'White flight' from the cities will lead to sharp demographic differences between urban and rural England. Existing biases against whites in the criminal justice system will become a serious issue for the first time. Local politics will be increasingly susceptible to corruption and malfeasance, and foreign issues and conflicts may take root on British soil. Meanwhile, national politics could be transformed beyond recognition, possibly to the benefit of the left.

However, perhaps the most surprising insight that can be gleaned from official publications is that there is one area of national life which is affected by mass immigration, but which is unlikely, given existing trends, to be revolutionised by it: the economy. The principal justification used for the policies that are bringing about the massive social changes described so far is the argument that mass immigration is of enormous economic benefit to the existing population. The economics of immigration is a complex topic that could only be covered adequately in a separate article. Nevertheless, it can be confidently claimed that there is an extraordinary level of agreement among economists that the short to medium-term impact of immigration upon key economic indicators such as unemployment and per capita income is small, regardless of whether they believe that the impact is positive or negative. The net cost or benefit seems quite often to be within the statistical margin of error for such studies<sup>19</sup>.

This is further illustrated by a recent dispute regarding the impact of immigration upon the public purse, in which the Home Office admitted that civil servants had manipulated official statistics in order to claim that immigration produces a net fiscal benefit to the Treasury. Government economists had attempted to calculate whether the taxes paid by immigrants exceeded the cost to the taxpayer of providing pub-

lic services to them and their families. However, the calculations were skewed by the inclusion of the cost of providing services to the children of 'mixed' households (where the parents comprised one immigrant and one non-immigrant) as a debit entirely against the non-immigrant population. The pressure group Migration Watch UK spotted this deception, and the Home Office admitted that its method had produced a different conclusion than would have been reached by apportioning these costs fairly. Nevertheless, the government tried to justify its misleading technique by noting that the children in question will not be classed as immigrants when they grow up, thereby ignoring the fact that the current costs associated with their presence in Britain is undeniably a consequence of immigration<sup>20</sup>. The Home Office had originally trumpeted the supposed fiscal benefits of immigration, but by being drawn into this dispute with Migration Watch, they had revealed the level of benefit was so small it could be negated by a seemingly minor correction to the method by which the statistics were calculated.

More recently still, a report by the ITEM Club, a respected group of economists sponsored by the accountants Ernst & Young, predicted that continuing mass immigration would reduce wages and increase unemployment among the existing workforce. However, the scale of the anticipated effects is moderate. Growth in real wages

is predicted to be 0.4% lower than it would be otherwise during 2008, and 0.2% lower in each of 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2010. Meanwhile, unemployment was predicted to be approximately 100,000 higher throughout the period 2007 to 2009, as a direct result of the "immigration shock". In particular, the report admitted that jobseekers aged between 18 and 24 may have had their economic prospects damaged by the recent surge in immigration<sup>21</sup>. There are already about 1.3 million people in this category who are economically inactive, and the dire outlook for this group of NEETs ("not in education, employment or training") has led even Labour MPs, such as Frank Field, to oppose further immigration<sup>22</sup>.

Overall, the ITEM Club report argued that immigration was beneficial to the economy, but as it seems to have been damaging to those who earn their income from paid work, it must be concluded that it is other groups (such as investors, business owners and property owners) who have reaped any rewards. The government's claims that there is a strong economic case for permitting mass immigration have also been undermined by Adair Turner, the academic and businessman that they themselves appointed to investigate Britain's pensions system. Whilst presenting evidence to a recent House of Lords inquiry into the impact of immigration, Lord Turner argued that there are few economic benefits attributable

to the influx, and that they are totally outweighed by the increased costs arising from congestion and housing shortages. Furthermore, Turner claimed that the government are aware that this is the case, but fear that there would be a widespread backlash against immigrants if they admitted it<sup>23</sup>. Finally, it should be noted that it is difficult to find any study concerning the economic consequences of mass immigration that takes into account the economic and fiscal impact of the other social changes that have been discussed. If ethnic diversification results in higher crime rates, increased corruption, the importation of foreign conflicts, political pressure to institute discriminatory policies against indigenous populations, and a shift back towards centralising socialist politics, it seems likely that any small short-term gains in per capita income will be entirely fruitless.

As the current wave of mass immigration into Britain and the accompanying social changes are largely without precedent, predicting the future course of events is difficult. I have hitherto assumed that existing trends will continue for the foreseeable future. However, this seldom happens in history. New combinations of factors often produce either 'tipping points', where existing trends accelerate, or turning points where they halt or go in to reverse. Predicting the longer-term future thus requires consideration of broader historical precedents, and knowledge of the underlying psy-



chological, social and economic forces that shape society, and are themselves shaped by human nature. Long-term predictions can thus seldom be precise, but often have to limit their speculations to a number of plausible scenarios. It is to the consideration of four such scenarios for the future of England and its cities that I will turn in the third and final part of this feature. ♦

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*is the pen-name of  
a freelance writer*

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# THE ADVENTURE OF THE DISAPPEARED SUBPRIME MINORITY BORROWER

TAKUAN SEIYO *tells a sorry tale  
of dodgy finances and even dodgier politics*

**I**t was on a bitterly cold and frosty morning, towards the end of the winter of '07, that I was awakened by a tugging at my shoulder. It was Holmes. The flash-light in his hand shone upon his eager, stooping face, and told me at a glance that something was amiss. "Come, Watson, come!" he cried. "The game is afoot. Not a word! Into your clothes and come!"

My friend had recently sunk into his customary melancholy, his presence but a wailing violin behind a closed door. Nevertheless, as I was hurriedly getting dressed, I remembered that a change had come upon him on the previous morning.

Mrs Hudson had just brought in the morning papers, along with our toast. I was fiddling with the dial of our new Marconi, when Holmes' sharp cry from the breakfast table diverted my attention. He was marking with his fountain pen an item in the paper. The lustre had returned to his eyes. Curious, I let go of

the dial knob and leaned over Holmes' shoulder.

The underlined column read: "Study: Minorities' 'dream' foreclosed", and underneath, "The subprime-mortgage crisis will cost black and Hispanic homeowners up to \$256 billion – the worst financial hit for minorities in modern US history"<sup>1</sup>. Just then, the Afro-American voice that had been carrying on in the radio programme cohered into distinctive words:

"...money-lenders have already sucked the value out of whole communities, urban and suburban. The wealth loss is staggering: People of colour have collectively lost between '\$164 billion to \$213 billion over the past eight years' with Latinos losing slightly more than African Americans"<sup>2</sup>.

Holmes was buttering his toast, apparently listening.

"Before the crisis hit", the distinctive voice was now choked with indignation, "it was estimated that it would

take 594 years – more than half a millennium! – for blacks to catch up with whites in household wealth. Now, in the aftermath of the home mortgage massacre, it could take ten times as long – more than 5,000 years! – before Blacks achieve homeowner parity with whites”<sup>3</sup>.

Holmes was leaning back in his chair with a whimsical smile, as the commentary concluded, “Looking backward, that stretches from now to when the great pyramids were built!”

I turned off the wireless and sat down at the table.

“A cup of tea, Watson?” Holmes said.

“A nation destroys its banking system and its currency to fake the putative minorities’ creditworthiness”, my friend continued as he poured my morning restorative, “...and showers unearned benefits on them. When the subterfuge falls apart, its impact on the same minorities is twisted around to bolster an imputation of racial discrimination”.

He stood up, tying the sash of his dressing gown.

“I say, Watson, from the point of view of the criminal expert, new opportunities are arising that may alleviate my singular boredom since the death of the late lamented Professor Moriarty.”

As we boarded the hansom cab, I had a premonition that a new adventure had just begun, related somehow to that statement...

## Looking askance at finance

The financial debacle of a 1.4 trillion-dollar pool of subprime mortgages of which half are now deemed unpayable and 25% irrecoverable did not start in a political vacuum. For decades, the American political and cultural establishments badgered the banking industry about the ‘racism’ implied in its loan portfolio. The denial of mortgage loans to ‘minorities’ at a greater percentage than denial to whites has been deemed



ORIGINAL 1890S ILLUSTRATION BY SIDNEY PAGET

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND DR. WATSON

a *prima facie* evidence of racial discrimination.

“Classical socialism called for direct state ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange”, thus begins Peter Brimelow’s 1993 article, taking on the race-drunk mortgage industry critics. “Neosocialism just aims at political control. Socialism claimed to be more efficient. Neosocialism claims

to be more equitable. Above all, neosocialism professes to combat 'racism', since this magic word cows all opposition. Apparent neosocialist objective of the season: commandeering the banking system and forcing it to subsidize key client constituencies"<sup>4</sup>.

Brimelow relayed how the *Wall Street Journal* had carried five stories in late 1992, alleging, based on raw rejection rates, that lenders were discriminating against minorities. Such allegations were obvious rubbish, as they took no account of standard credit considerations like employment, income, and net worth. Later, the *Journal* reported about a Federal Reserve Bank of Boston study that did correct for these criteria, and still found that minorities were rejected at a slightly higher rate. This difference, the Boston Fed had concluded, could only be due to racism, even though it noted that rejected minority applications on average had "poorer objective qualifications" so that "a systematic bias in mortgage lending is very difficult to document".

Brimelow inquired of the Boston Fed whether it had taken into account default rates for black and white mortgage holders. It had, the Boston Fed's Research Director replied, and it had found equal default rates. Brimelow then pointed out that this proved pure market forces were working in mortgage lending. Mortgage lenders were somehow able to weed out impartially credit risks, reducing defaults down to

the same rate for whites and blacks.

"[That] is a sophisticated point' responded the Boston Fed's Research Director. 'I do believe discrimination occurs', she reiterated, but then conceded, 'I do not have evidence ... no one has evidence'."

"They don't have evidence, but they sure have convictions", states Brimelow, relaying how his article on the Boston Fed study's fatal flaw would be passed over by the mass media. He then concludes:

"Neosocialism, however, is not science. What's going on here is a witch-hunt, conducted by the religious Left and aided by key elements of the civil service. The innocent victims will be the banking system, the savers of America, the economy, and ultimately liberty itself. The craven banking industry cannot be expected to resist. It is time conservatives stopped piously chanting about capital-gains tax cuts and woke up to the fact that their capital is under attack"<sup>5</sup>.

The same wishful assumptions masquerading as 'research' by high public officials and reported by journalists as the truth were examined by four specialists, who published their findings in a 1996 paper, "Mortgage Discrimination and FHA Loan Performance"<sup>6</sup>. Their conclusion:

"Results of the analysis fail to find evidence of better performance on loans granted to minority borrowers. Indeed, black borrowers are found, all



else being equal, to exhibit a higher likelihood of mortgage default than other borrowers. These findings argue against allegations of substantial levels of bias in mortgage lending".

Three years later, two finance professors, Stanley D Longhofer and Stephen Peters, pointed to the same fatal flaw behind all the caterwauling about the higher rejection rates for black and Hispanic mortgage applicants<sup>7</sup>. With the racial partisans' purposeful omission of creditworthiness

variables like loan-to-value ratios, liquid assets, and credit history, allegations of racial discrimination were fanciful propaganda.

The US Fair Housing Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act prohibit discriminatory lending considerations by reasons of race, gender, marital status, religion, national origin, familial status, and handicap. Longhofer and Peters stated that the righteous labels notwithstanding, these laws have nothing to do with fairness: they target social inequality, not bigotry. It's socialism through the back door, the front door being somewhat of an embarrassment.

"[E]verything else being the same, minority applicants are probably less creditworthy, on average, than whites. Therefore, in the absence of fairlending laws, it is likely that minorities would

be denied loans more frequently than whites and would pay higher interest rates and fees on approved loans... [F]air-lending laws have the perverse effect of forcing lenders to cross-subsidize minority borrowers from the higher profits they earn on white borrowers. Such cross-subsidization is inherently 'unfair' because it works as a tax on one group that is used as a subsidy for another"<sup>8</sup>.

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Thirty years of faked research and horrendous noise from 'social justice' partisans, all amplified by the left-driven mass media, and the political elite figured out which direction held the most rewards. After a further dose of demagoguery from subpar politicians, and some hard pushing by the steel tins of the maw of state, mortgage lenders

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found a solution to inconvenient reality. It was the subprime loan.

No social forces were available to foil society's unbalancing by cultural Marxists, socialists, noisy 'minority' chieftains and power-hungry opportunists. Instead of leading a counteroffensive, the government pushed toward the fall, and the bankers went along, even though it was their capital they were converting to cotton candy.

Banks started throwing out mortgages as though they were consolation prizes for the poorly educated of shaky

employability, or achievement awards for the undisciplined and uneducable with no collateral. Overwhelmingly, these have been 'people of colour'. Presto, many more 'people of colour' could achieve 'the American Dream'; some a few times over, as people with no money and no credit were able to buy several houses each, hoping for a quick and profitable flip. And the occupants of CEO suites were happy too, for they had gained points with racist and socialist lobbies, favors with weathervane politicians, and enormous end-of-year bonuses to boot.

In trampling on rules of sound banking going back at least to medi-

eval Italy, our financial wizards discovered the eternal quest of alchemy – how to convert lead into gold, for a while, at least, before it turns into garbage. Employing PhDs in high mathematics, they diced and mixed financial offal, stuffed it into sausage skins, gave this dubious

bologna properly pinstriped labels such as 'mortgage-backed securities' and 'collateralized debt obligations', and sold it off by the slice to equally greedy and heedless financial institutions down the line. From inception through each change of hands, each putrid sausage slice generated fat fees for its handlers.

But reality is stubborn. The underlying loans went sputtering, then died. The new, miracle collateral reverted to the ordure it had always been. Mortgage lenders started going bankrupt. The sausage makers – the major financial powerhouses of the United States and Europe – started writing off tens, eventually hundreds, of billions in 'nonperforming' assets.

Nobody knows what the total of losses in the global banking industry will be, but at the G-7 meeting in February 2008, it was estimated at \$400 billion. With the \$8.6 trillion equity loss in the stock market alone, the subprime debacle qualifies as the greatest financial

disaster in history<sup>9</sup>. And it's not over yet.

The mega-hustlers who steered venerable banks into this mega-iceberg are not hurting. The press describes the CEOs of two of the greatest malpractitioners of banking, Merrill Lynch and Citigroup, as having 'fallen on their swords', but not for these

types such a noble end.

Stan O'Neal, the ousted CEO of subprime-bombed Merrill Lynch, received, reportedly, a US \$160 million 'retirement' package. The golden chute for Chuck Prince, the CEO who led Citigroup to the biggest loss in its 196-year history, was US\$42 million. John Mack, the CEO of Morgan Stanley, had

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*In trampling on rules of sound banking going back at least to medieval Italy, our financial wizards discovered the eternal quest of alchemy – how to convert lead into gold, for a while, at least, before it turns into garbage*

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to forego his 2007 bonus, but he is not hurting, as at the height of the subprime scam, in 2006, he had received stock options and salary worth reportedly \$41 million.

The banks themselves have not had to drink the hemlock they had brewed either. Instead of falling under the weight of their own malfeasance, the American banks have been receiving a bailout from the US federal government, as have the subprime-tainted European banks from their respective governments. Technically, it's not a bailout using taxpayer money, but it's a bailout nonetheless, explains the World Socialist Website in an 18 October 2007 article:

"The government-backed bailout plan for Citigroup and Wall Street underscores the increasingly parasitic and socially destructive operations of American and world capitalism", states the socialist writer. "The role of the SIVs<sup>10</sup> exemplifies the degree to which immense wealth is generated for a layer of multi-millionaires and billionaires on the basis of financial manipulations almost entirely divorced from the process of production and socially useful investment"<sup>11</sup>.

Exactly right, says this vehement anti-socialist, but it's just one side of the picture. For, at the other end of the spectrum from the princes of finance are the mostly 'minority' rubes who bought houses they could not afford with money they did not have, based

on income data they had falsified. And there are enough of them, and their skin tones are compelling enough, to generate enormous political pressure for government action to bail them out too.

This, after all, is the government of the 'conservative' George W Bush, whose declared motto is "When somebody hurts, the government has got to move". He has already initiated a massive bail out of subprime borrowers at the expense of the taxpayers. All the viable 2008 presidential contenders are promising to do much more.

Entering "subprime minority" into Google yields 234,000 links, with typical items reading:

"Minority Subprime Borrowers - Minorities Pay More for Home Ownership" <http://www.consumerunion.org/finance/minority-rpt1002.htm>

"Study Finds Disparities in Mortgage by Race - New York Times" <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/15/nyregion/15subprime.html>

"Study Finds Subprime Lending More Prevalent in Minority, Low ..." <http://www.nyls.edu/pages/335.asp> (New York Law School)

"Foreclosure Crisis Will Hit Minority Communities Hardest Says New ..." [www.civilrights.org/press\\_room/buzz\\_clips/foreclosure-crisis-will-hit.html](http://www.civilrights.org/press_room/buzz_clips/foreclosure-crisis-will-hit.html)

"Minorities hit hard by rising costs of subprime loans - USATODAY.com"

[http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/housing/2007-04-25-subprime-minorities-usat\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/housing/2007-04-25-subprime-minorities-usat_N.htm)

"Borrowers in Minority Areas More Likely to Receive Subprime ...." <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/15/subprime-mortgages-concentrated-in-citys-minority-neighborhoods/NYTIMES>

Even this small sample reveals the main sources of the incessant harangue: ethnic grievance lobbies and socialist fronts and their two megaphones: academics and the mainstream media.

To save greed-demented bankers and freeloader borrowers from themselves, the US Fed has repeatedly cut interest rates, pumped tens of billions of dollars at artificially low rates to the subprime-tainted banks, and pushed such banks to extend credit to borrowers. The US government has assumed the risk for a significant portion of subprime loans, and promises to do much more.

All such actions are akin to printing more mountains of US dollars when trillions of the stuff is already in the hands of foreign governments and investors. This, and the Fed's manipulative pruning of interest rates, lowers such parties' reward for holding American money and commercial paper. Result: an international selloff of the dollar in preference for safer currencies of higher yield, or gold.

Since 2002, the US dollar has lost over 60% of its value against the Euro. A similar fate may be in store for the British pound, with economic policies in the UK almost as reckless, subprime banking almost as rampant, but socialism and self-dissolution through Third World immigration even more entrenched, and current account deficit creeping toward 6% of GDP.

And so we have a government practicing selective socialism on behalf of insatiable corporations on one end, and improvident individuals on the other, at the expense of the vast majority in between. It's socialism that plunders the savers and the bond investors in order to save the debtors; to harm vast numbers of citizens, particularly the old and retired, in order to bail out younger 'minorities' and aliens, and ageless plutocrats.

American society is tipped off-balance through false allegations of racism, and a force-fed and largely illegal immigration. It is then hoisted for a fall through bankruptcy-courting fiscal and financial measures implemented by the government to benefit the improvident 'minorities', and the important plutocrats. Opposition to this is made ineffective through purposefully implanted taboos.

This is the basest perversion of both morality and justice, substituting an innocent party to be punished for the malfeasance of another. For all the 'noble' government efforts: from frantic



lowering of interest rates to 12-digit 'stimulus' packages, to guaranteeing subpar loans, stoke inflation that raises prices for all, devalues savings, and sabotages the responsible, provident, saving citizen.

The government, knowing this, 'cooks' the books. Inflation in the US – the direct result of 'throwing money from helicopters' – is currently running at 7.5%, but the government Core Consumer Price Index figures are 3% lower. To know the truth, one has to rely on *samizdata*, in the best USSR tradition<sup>12</sup>.

A *de facto* devaluation of the dollar has now accelerated so much that a formal devaluation may be necessary. Therein lies the spectre of the Weimar Republic: people exchanging wheelbarrows of banknotes for a loaf of bread, and a strong, indignant leader saving them from the nightmare with passionate oratory, national socialism, and the goose-step.

This farce in four acts, with costumes, masks, trapdoors, sliding plywood scenery and weeping violins in the orchestra pit has been enacted for 40 years without letup for one reason only: to camouflage or otherwise deny racial group differences in IQ and in mean ethnocultural traits such as the propensity to defer present gratification for the sake of a future one, or the importance attached to education and to obeying the law. In the realm of statistical reality, all these, and not third

party obstacles such as 'racism', bear directly on the chances of material success in life, including home ownership.

A detour is necessary now, because the average, ie 'mean' reader has been so programmed by purposefully skewed education and media content that these statements counter everything she thinks she knows about the human species. It is not in vain that 'to disappear' is deployed here as a transitive verb, the way it has been in the struggles for power in Latin American politics.

First of all, the statements in the above paragraph that might be deemed controversial are not only observable in one's daily life – if one but unplug those electrodes implanted in the brain by government PC enforcers – but are based on thousands of peer-reviewed studies going back over 100 years. The issues related to group IQ differences are better known, and are further explored below. But the corollary issues of ethnic group differences have been studied with conclusive results for almost as long. Some of the relevant findings are summarized in Richard Lynn's "Racial and ethnic differences in psychopathic personality"<sup>13</sup>.

Second, the hysterics shrieking 'Racism!' when this sort of discussion transpires are the ones who provoke such discussions. Ultimately, each individual must be judged on his own merit. His group's mean characteristics are irrelevant. But by granting racial

group preferences to 'minorities', and arguing that favoured treatment is needed to offset white society's ongoing discriminatory treatment of 'minorities' as groups, racial demagogues and *bien pensant* liberals compel truth-seekers to dig for statistical findings related to such groups, to refute the *prima facie* fraudulent charges of 'racism'.

Instead of condemning the near-suicidal magnanimity of bestowing home ownership on the mostly-'minority' improvident whose only qualifications were their skin tones and loudmouth advocates, America is busy pouring ashes on its head because of the inevitable consequences of folly that, by an incredible coincidence, fall disproportionately on the selfsame 'minorities'.

It's not often in history that such extraordinary delusions have been so pervasive, and with such negative consequences.

### **More adventures of disappeared minorities**

The US Transportation Security Administration spends \$5 billion a year to delay, harass and annoy 678 million passengers on 10.35 billion occasions per annum<sup>14</sup> for the sake of weeding out their toothpaste tubes and making them feel equally debased as they crawl toward the selection chute beltless and barefoot. All this in order not to have to notice that a definite statistical portrait – excluding the overwhelming majority of all

passengers – emerges from tabulating the ethnic and demographic markers of the many terrorists who have attacked American (and British) targets over the last quarter century.

In another realm, the American educational system spends over half a trillion dollars per year on Sisyphean K-12 education. The official projection for the 2007/8 school year is \$490 billion<sup>15</sup> but it appears to be an incomplete figure, counting only what the states spend and excluding the federal government's outlay, \$84 billion in 2006.

In a 2007 comparison of 25 OECD countries, the US has come up first in education expenditure, spending approximately \$10,000 per year, per pupil, while scoring (among 15 year olds) ninth in mathematics, fourteenth in science and thirteenth in reading. The Czech Republic spends about \$3,000 per year, per pupil, yet it's sixth in mathematics, fifth in science and second in reading scores. Could it be, perchance, that the vaunted strength of our 'diversity' has been overblown when compared to the boringly 'non-diversified' societies of the Czechs, the Finns, or the Japanese?

Per US government statistics, 42% of students enrolled in American public schools in 2005 were 'minorities', and 20% spoke a language other than English at home. 'Minorities' is a euphemism that has nothing to do with numerical strength but everything

to do with disappearing their being non-white. And the inconvenient truth is that there are large mean IQ racial group disparities, and these have been disappeared too.

### Statistics 101 for political castrati ('PC')

'Minorities' register mean group IQs of 85 for Afro-Americans and 88 for the main 'minority' in the US, the Mexican *mestizos*, versus 100 for American whites, with the latter containing subgroups with an IQ mean as high as 115. This is as close to science as anything has ever got in the social sciences. An authoritative review of the last 30 years of relevant research is readily available<sup>16</sup>. The implications for success in education, employment etc. are overwhelming and, again, covered in depth by major researchers, *ad infinitum*. To quote a succinct summation by Professor Linda Gottfredson:

"People with IQs between 75 and 90 are 88 times more likely to drop out of high school, seven times more likely to be jailed, and five times more likely as adults to live in poverty than people with IQs between 110 and 125. The 75-to-90 IQ woman is eight times more likely to become a chronic welfare recipient, and four times as likely to bear an illegitimate child than the 110-to-125-IQ woman"<sup>17</sup>.

Due to the mathematical properties of the bell curve, 68.3% of the distribution lies within one standard deviation

("sigma") from the mean, and 95.5% lies within 2 sigmas. Since the sigma in intelligence studies of the American population is normally set at 15, that has deep implication relative to educational and other attainments.

An IQ of 100 is considered necessary for a successful completion of high school – real completion of a real high school, as opposed to the 'social promotion' of the dumb through the already dumbed-down curriculum in the Anglo-West<sup>18</sup>. With a mean IQ of 100 for American whites, 50% of them have the capacity to acquire that high school graduation ticket to further knowledge and prosperity. But a mean IQ of 85 for American blacks, for instance, means that only 15.9% of them have that capability, with nonwhite Mexicans having a slightly higher ratio<sup>19</sup>.

In reckoning with such metrics of reality lie the answers to all societal woes of the Third World-infused, multi-racial society. We have a criterion by which to stop the pouring of further treasure down a bottomless well to 'correct' what are not the faults of society but the woof and warp of the manifest forces of nature. We have a yardstick by which to assess the national interest relative to unrestricted immigration to the West. We have a map by which to pursue more effective solutions to the problems of crime, welfare, cultural dissolution and more. But perhaps not in our lifetime, not until many more

people can be defined through the poet Robert Frost's quip that a conservative is a liberal who has been mugged by reality.

It's a fraud to attack those who speak out on racial differences as 'racists', as though salient characteristics of group averages denied the potential of some members of such groups. It's a fraud to brainwash many millions of vulnerable young minds in the classroom that a pervasive 'racist' environment is responsible for the under-achievement of 'minorities'. It's the 'minority' students' own, hereditary<sup>20</sup> qualities that are in free play here: IQ, parents, ancestral culture, the hand that fate has dealt.

The cultural Marxist, intent on shouting down reality and seeing 'racism' everywhere, may drown in a lake whose mean depth is four inches, while protesting that the three tallest men in the world, who are in fact Chinese, invalidate comparisons of the mean height of Chinese and Scandinavians. But it's encouraging that among the most prominent and articulate opponents of this tyranny of imputed "racism" are black American intellectuals like Clarence Thomas, Ward Connerly, Walter Williams, Thomas Sowell, Bill Cosby<sup>21</sup> and others.

For 40 years now, and perhaps for the first time in 350 years, the West, *en masse*, has been retreating from the Enlightenment that had catapulted it to the pinnacle of civilization. The forces of reason, empiricism, truth-seeking,

basic freedoms (before they became 'rights'); the flowering of genius in all areas of human endeavour, all are in retreat everywhere at the same time.

A liberal dogma, a totalitarian taboo divorced from any reality that has ever existed, has taken hold. The new Nicean creed posits that discrimination, ie the perception of differences between groups: males v females; shepherd Muslims v urban post-Christians; Mexican *mestizo* peasants v Danish professors of physics; High Protestant culture v Hmong tribal custom, are the greatest, the cardinal, sin. The overwhelming preponderance of black multimillionaires in the NBA, NFL and rap passes without a comment, but the preponderance of whites in the sciences, the professions and upper corporate ranks, and the material rewards that accrue to that, are seen as racism.

*Cherchez la gauche.* A whole roomful of Professor Moriarty's could not have conceived a more diabolical scheme to destroy the West morally and materially. ♦

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## NOTES

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2. Actual words of Glen Ford of Black Agenda Radio, [http://www.blackagendareport.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=502&Itemid=1](http://www.blackagendareport.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=502&Itemid=1)
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4. "Racism at work? – racism in mortgage loans", Peter Brimelow, *National Review*, 12 April 1993
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6. "Mortgage Discrimination and FHA Loan Performance", James A Berkovec, Glenn B Canner, Stuart A Gabriel, Timothy H Hannan, *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, Volume 2, Number 1, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, February 1996. See also their response to critique, [http://bus.utk.edu/finance/fac\\_staff/flautt/berk2.pdf](http://bus.utk.edu/finance/fac_staff/flautt/berk2.pdf)
7. "Why Is Mortgage Discrimination Illegal? A Fresh Look at the Mortgage Discrimination Debate", Stanley D Longhofer and Stephen R Peters, *Regulation*, Volume 22, No 2, 1999, [www.cato.org/pubs/regulation/regv22n4/longhof.pdf](http://www.cato.org/pubs/regulation/regv22n4/longhof.pdf)
8. *Ibid*
9. <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,23217631-5014099,00.html>
10. SIV – a structured investment vehicle is a fund that raises capital by selling short-term securities at low interest and then invests that capital by buying long-term securities at higher interest, generating profit for investors from the difference. SIVs typically invest in asset-backed securities, and many of those have been the packaged, subprime – and therefore highly vulnerable – mortgage loan products
11. "US government brokers scheme to bail out Wall Street banks", Barry Grey, <http://www.wsos.org/articles/2007/oct2007/bank-o18.shtml>
12. Eg, [www.shadowstats.com](http://www.shadowstats.com)
13. "Racial and ethnic differences in psychopathic personality", Richard Lynn, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2002, 32, pp273-316. A shortened version is available online at [http://www.amren.com/mtnews/archives/2004/10/race\\_and\\_pscho.php](http://www.amren.com/mtnews/archives/2004/10/race_and_pscho.php). A summary review of Prof Lynn's work and the vitriol it attracts is available here: <http://www.gnxp.com/blog/2006/02/world-of-difference-richard-lynn-maps.php>
14. <http://www.transtats.bts.gov/>
15. <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>
16. Eg, "Thirty Years of Research on Race Differences in Cognitive Ability", J. Philippe Rushton and Arthur Jensen, *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 2005, Vol 11, No 2, 235-294, <http://psychology.uwo.ca/faculty/rushtonpdfs/PPPL1.pdf>
17. "The General Intelligence Factor", Linda Gottfredson, *Scientific American*, Volume 9, Number 4, Winter 1998
18. For a concise discussion of the related issues see a three-part series by Charles Murray in the *Wall Street Journal*, January 2007: "Intelligence in the Classroom" <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110009531> "What's wrong with vocational school?" <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110009535> "Aztecs vs Greeks" <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110009541>
19. This is the conclusion that an educated, unbiased, non-specialist reader might draw from reading relevant publications by renowned scholars in psychometric research and IQ sociology, such as Charles Murray, Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen. Cultural Marxists vehemently deny such findings and attack their disseminators, but mainstream scholars posit even larger racial differences. Arthur R Jensen, for instance, states in *The g Factor: The Science of Mental Ability* that American blacks score 1.2 sigmas below whites, which is equivalent to 18 IQ points, not 15
20. From the supporting statement that 52 scholars published in the *Wall Street Journal* in response to the witch-hunt on Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray at the publication of their *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* in 1994: "Heritability estimates range from 0.4 to 0.8 (on a scale from 0 to 1), most thereby indicating that genetics plays a bigger role than does environment in creating IQ differences among individuals" <http://www.udel.edu/educ/gottfredson/reprints/1997mainstream.pdf>
- But in "Genetic and environmental influences on adult intelligence and special mental abilities" by Thomas J Bouchard Jr, *Human Biology*, April 1998, the author states "Various studies converge on a heritability estimate between 0.60 and 0.80 for IQ". [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3659/is\\_199804/ai\\_n8799352/pg\\_1](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3659/is_199804/ai_n8799352/pg_1)
21. William Henry Cosby, Jr, who had a PhD in Education, was otherwise known as Bill Cosby – one of the most beloved, famous and successful entertainers ever

# KOSOVO – EU-SPONSORED ETHNIC CLEANSING

EDWARD SPALTON *tells the sad story of Kosovo's disappearing Serbs, and the instability likely to be caused by Kosovan independence*

**S**howing any sympathy for the present plight of Serbia is swimming against the tide of received opinion, which was largely generated by the successful propaganda of the West, particularly concerning Bosnia and Kosovo. The demonization of Serbia was taken to grotesque proportions and, in general, faithfully and uncritically repeated in the mainstream media. So, for many people, their 'default setting' is that Serbs were uniquely wicked and brutal to their erstwhile fellow Yugoslavs in pursuit of a 'Greater Serbia'.

This narrative is a grossly inadequate basis from which to make an appreciation of Serbia's present situation. As the weight of repetition of the 'demon Serb' theory is so overwhelming, I will be putting the contrary case whilst conscious that no side in the unhappy disintegration of Yugoslavia was guiltless of atrocity.

At this area of the world's surface, where the tectonic plates of Islam, Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity collide, one could start the story at least as far back as the Fourth Crusade but it is only necessary to go back to the Second World War to form a coherent picture of what has happened in Kosovo. It had always been a heartland of the Serbian Church and national consciousness, containing churches as important as Canterbury, Salisbury and Winchester are to England.

The Axis powers favoured Albanians and arranged for a large part of the Serbian population to be expelled from Kosovo<sup>1</sup> and replaced by Muslim Albanian immigrants. This was the beginning of the now overwhelming Albanian majority in the province. At the end of the war, Marshal Tito agreed with his communist comrades in Albania that the incomers should remain in new Socialist Yugoslavia and

prevented the expelled Serbs from returning.

The communist takeover after the war was bloody in the extreme. Not only were wartime scores settled but there were wholesale massacres of those deemed to be 'enemies of the people'. The new masters made as sure as they could that there would be no competition with their leadership from the former elites. The *bien-pensant*, leftish world came to regard 'non-aligned' Yugoslavia as a more moderate version of socialism than the Soviet variety but it was certainly not so at its inception nor for many years thereafter.

Tito's treatment of the Serbs was conditioned by two considerations – first, that many Serbs had backed the royalist Resistance (the Chetniks) under General Mihailovic and secondly that Serbia should not dominate the new Yugoslavia, as it had done before the war. The communist partisans' civil war with the royalist Chetniks had been fought at least as vigorously and dirtily as the war against the German occupiers.

To reduce Serbian influence, he drew the boundaries of the constituent republics, so that large numbers of Serbs would live as minorities in Croatia, Bosnia and elsewhere outside Serbia. Whilst these borders were more or less local government boundaries, it was not such a burning question. Yet these were the boundaries which the Western powers would later recognize as the

borders of sovereign states – states furthermore with aspirations to Serb-free, racial and religious purity.

A sort of political correctness was enforced in socialist Yugoslavia in which multiculturalism between and within the constituent republics was officially maintained. The basis of the state was a form of Marxist class outlook which was supposed to predominate over cultural and linguistic differences. The slogan was "unity and brotherhood". In some ways this appeared to be reasonably successful. Inter-marriage between different cultural groups was quite common and the atheist stance of the authorities tended to mask religious differences.

As testified by Mitar Balevic at the Hague tribunal, Kosovo was different – subject to Albanian agitation for an ethnically pure state from the 1950s onwards. There were large scale demonstrations on Albanian Flag Day in 1968 and Serbs were persecuted throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s. There were murders, expulsions and rapes, as well as desecration of churches, exclusion from public employment and medical discrimination at Pristina Hospital – especially in the maternity department. Between 1961 and 1981, the Albanian population doubled and the Serbs declined from being one quarter to one sixth of the population.

Tito granted local autonomy in 1974 but this only increased the Albanian appetite for driving out the Serbs. The

Serbian alphabet was banned and Serbian school text books destroyed. Some 20,000 Serbs fled after the riots of 1981. After the death of Tito in 1980, German foundations and institutes<sup>2</sup>, were prominent in supporting the Albanians. Their efforts were increasingly supplemented by the German Secret Service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*) which fostered the separatist movements in all parts of Yugoslavia.

It was against this background that Slobodan Milosevic went on 24 April 1987 to speak at Kosovo Polje, holy ground in the Serbian national story – the battlefield where the Serbs went down to glorious defeat at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in 1389 – “The Field of the Blackbirds”.

This speech has been consistently misrepresented in the West as a sort of declaration of war on the mostly Muslim Kosovo Albanians but that is a total untruth<sup>3</sup>. Milosevic's words were shot through with the Yugoslav brand of multicultural political correctness – “Protect brotherhood and unity”.... “nationalism always means isolation from others, being locked in a closed circle and stopping growth”. He exhorted people to “emerge from a state of hatred, intolerance and mistrust” whilst making clear that there would be no ethnically cleansed Kosovo, from which all Serbs would be expelled.

That may have been one cause of Albanian outrage. Until then, they had been consistently successful in

working towards that aim. The other famous incident on this occasion was an attack by Kosovo-Albanian police on some of the Serbian crowd which provoked Milosevic's remark “Nobody should beat you”. This was reckoned to be somewhat incongruous in the vocabulary and discourse of “unity and brotherhood”. Apart from that, he appealed for calm. Yet time after time, this speech is represented in the West as the provocative ravings of an extreme nationalist.

A couple of quotations from separatist leaders supported by the West make an interesting comparison.

“Genocide is a natural phenomenon in keeping with the human-social and mythological divine nature. It is not only permitted but even recommended by the Almighty...for the maintenance and spreading of the One True Faith”<sup>4</sup> – Franjo Tudjman, first President of post war Croatia, who also said “Thank God, my wife is neither a Jew nor a Serb”. (Mrs Thatcher later accepted a decoration from him.)

And

“There can be no peace or coexistence between the Islamic faith and non-Islamic institutions. The Islamic movement must and can take power as soon as it is morally strong enough, not only to destroy the non-Islamic power but to build a new Islamic one”<sup>5</sup> – Alija Izetbegovic, first President of Bosnia-Herzegovina, eulogized at his funeral by Paddy Ashdown as the father of

his people. With Ashdown's approval, Bosnian war dead were officially classified as *shahid* – martyrs in the  *jihad*  against the 'infidel'.

So, a clerico-fascist and an Islamic extremist were supported by Western intelligence agencies, governments and armed forces as bearers of 'European values' to the benighted Balkans. To do this, the EU member states broke their obligations under the UN charter and the Helsinki Accords by which they had guaranteed to accept existing national borders in Europe. They recognized Slovenia and Croatia diplomatically. This was done principally at Germany's instigation and the German government regarded this sudden about turn by the other EU states as a triumph. The Foreign Minister was cock-a-hoop "By this, Germany has regained diplomatically everything lost in Eastern Europe as a result of two world wars".

The pretext for the later air war on Yugoslavia was based on the accusation that Serbs were committing genocide against the largely Muslim Albanians in Kosovo. It undoubtedly was an unpleasant, dangerous time. Statistics from the period before the war suggest that an Albanian in Kosovo was about as likely to meet a violent death as an ordinary inhabitant of Washington DC at the same period, whereas a Serb was around twelve times more likely to come to an untimely end.

The Kosovo Liberation Army was known to police authorities all over

Europe as a major criminal organization, deeply involved in drug smuggling and human trafficking.

Yet both the German and American governments contributed to its training and arming for Kosovo's 'liberation'. Its commander from 1998 (later prime minister of Kosovo in 2006) was one Agim Ceku, a former Yugoslav army captain who first became a general in the HVO (Croatian Army). Assisted by access to all NATO intelligence on Yugoslav forces and with the aid of NATO airpower, he was a very successful commander, responsible for the expulsion of around 200,000 Serbs from the Krajina region of Croatia in "Operation Storm" (1995). He also appears to have had command responsibility at the time of the Medak Pocket massacre where Croatian forces fired on Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. They later discovered the evidence of the massacre for which nobody has been brought to book. An Interpol warrant exists for Ceku's arrest.

Wartime 'information' from NATO told us that at least 100,000 young Albanian men from Kosovo were missing, presumed murdered. Yet the Spanish forensic team, sent to look for mass graves was seriously embarrassed. In late 1999 its leader complained that he and his colleagues had become part of "a semantic pirouette by the war propaganda machine because we did not find one, not one mass grave". The *Wall Street Journal* concluded that NATO



stepped up its claims when it saw "a fatigued press corps drifting towards the contrary story – civilians killed by NATO bombs... The war in Kosovo was cruel, bitter, savage. Genocide it wasn't".

The Spanish forensic team found 2,108 bodies in 1999. The killing did not stop with the end of the war. According to a report in the *Sunday Times*, based on figures from the UN mission in Kosovo, 420 Albanians were killed between June 1999 and March 2000, as the KLA dealt with perceived traitors. In the same period 1,041 non Albanians (mostly Serbs) were killed. The 'protection' offered by KFOR and their KLA allies was distinctly shaky. Serbs have continued to 'disappear' or be found dead since, yet nobody has been brought to court, let alone convicted. In the same period (1999-2008) some 154 Orthodox Serbian churches have been destroyed<sup>6</sup> and some 300 mosques have been built with funds from extreme Saudi Arabian *Wahabi* organizations. Like Bosnia-Herzegovina, where some 1,500 foreign *mujahedin* have settled as Bosnian citizens, Kosovo has become part of the 'green wedge' of Muslim territories pushing closer to the gates of Vienna.

In spite of its experiences at the hands of the West in general and EU powers in particular, there is considerable support for membership of the EU in Serbia. The recent re-election of Boris Tadic as president (with 50.57% of the vote) is an indication of this. Pro-EU

Serbs think that the EU is 'modern' and a safe place to be. Given Serbia's former demonization, isolation and pariah status, it is easy to see the attraction of this. Then their clinching argument is 'It is inevitable'. But the narrowness of Tadic's victory shows that there is a large body of opinion which is by no means reconciled. Tadic has talked tough for domestic consumption but, if he runs true to form, he will succumb to EU blandishments.

Will the EU dispensation eventually make former Yugoslavia into an area of harmony and cooperation? How stable is the EU/NATO-imposed settlement? Is it a settlement or merely an armistice until some shift in the balance of great powers? It is too early to say, but the omens are not propitious. ♦

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*writes from Etwell in Derbyshire*

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND NOTES

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1. <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk>, Issue 230, published May 1999

2. [www.freenations.freeuk.com](http://www.freenations.freeuk.com) - various articles and also contribution by former ambassador Miroslav Polreich, Czech Republic in "European Voices" Section

3. [www.slobodan-milosevic.org/news/milosevic-1987-3-eng.htm](http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/news/milosevic-1987-3-eng.htm)

4. [www.slobodan-milosevic.org/news/smorg-rp100104.htm](http://www.slobodan-milosevic.org/news/smorg-rp100104.htm) - the resurgence of fascism and war in Croatia by Andy Wilcox

5. [www.srpska-mreza.com/library/facts/alija.html](http://www.srpska-mreza.com/library/facts/alija.html)

6. According to a Serbian government Ministry for Kosovo and Metohia news release of January 2008

# TO GUNNERS, GUARDSMEN AND RIFLEMEN

FRANK ELLIS *goes on a special attachment with the British army in Iraq, and finds his faith in Britain restored*

**S**omething tickles my hand. I wake up with a start. In the red light of my torch I see a scorpion running for cover. Cheeky bastard. I flatten it. Shivering in my gonk bag, I look at my watch. It is 0450. Even though it is brass monkeyish I cannot help but marvel at the masses of stars. Orion and his faithful companion, the Dog Star, look down at me, something I find reassuring. There has to be more to this life than council tax bills. I roll over in the shell scrape to see whether my companions, Corporal Wayne Rimmer and Cookie, are moving. Nothing. They're either still dossing or perhaps just lying there, revelling in the warmth for as long as possible. Then I hear voices. Cookie asks Wayne how he slept. "Like a baby", replies Wayne. Slight pause. "You must've heard me. I woke up at three o'clock screaming and then I shit the bed". We have a laugh. A good way to start the day.

At 0500 we have to get all our kit packed in our rucksacks ready to stand to at 0530. We get moving. I am out of the bag, put my wind-proof on and in a couple of minutes, everything is sorted. Old habits die hard. I'm a poor advertisement for a civilian. I'm probably brainwashed; even my underwear is camouflaged. By 0530 we are ready and manning our fire positions, scanning our arcs for any attack that the militia or insurgents might be tempted to make. Major Nathan Teale, our company commander, is looking for trouble, but he is disappointed. The morning sky lightens without incident and we are stood down. Good, because I am gagging for a brew. I devour a Yorkie bar while the chocolate is still hard and crisp. In a few hours, as the temperature rises it'll turn to sludge. Then I'm slurping tea from my trusty airborne mug, scoffing Biscuits Fruit. What more can a man want?

I am with a company of 4 Rifles in Maysaan province. We deployed yesterday from Basrah in relays of choppers. Our mission is to show a presence in this border province, to offer training to the Iraqi Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) and to see what is going on. Policing this vast border region is a formidable task and most of the advantages are with the insurgents and arms smugglers who have an intimate knowledge of the terrain which our lads do not have. I am mesmerised by the shallow craters and desert scrub, with its bird life. I have already identified a saker falcon, sand grouse, a crested lark and some sort of plover. Our approach in a US Black Hawk took us low over vast tracts of reeds and marshes. I wonder whether Wilfred Thesiger, author of *The Marsh Arabs*, had ever visited some of the places beneath us. Being a border province, Maysaan saw some of the heaviest fighting in the Iraq-Iran war in the late 1980s and a staggering amount of unexploded ordinance lies untouched, often in a dangerous state, especially mines which both sides used indiscriminately and without any records of where they were laid. The danger from anti-personnel mines is very real. When I served in the Dhofar war with the SAS, mines, anti-personnel and anti-tank, were a big problem. I hate the bastard things. I am grateful for the fact that a member of the Royal Engineers checks the area selected for our trench before we dig in.

While we are filling sandbags, Wayne and Cookie talk about their girl friends. Wayne is a very brave man: he's marrying the Regimental Sergeant Major's daughter. However, the RSM, now the Motor Transport Officer of 4 Rifles, has set one condition. Wayne doesn't do heights, so his future father-in-law insists that he must do a parachute jump before he can tie the knot with his daughter. Wayne is a bit of a philosopher. He stops digging, lights up a fag and then turns to me and says: "You know, Frank, I'm more in touch with my feminine side since I've been out here". "Seriously?", I query him, wondering what I am supposed to make of this New Age man stuff from a tough, veteran corporal in one of our élite infantry regiments: "Oh, yeah, no question about it", he adds. And then, as if to make the point, he farts loudly and gloriously, and at some length I might add. I am reassured that all is well.

Led by Lieutenant-Colonel Sanders, one of the British Army's outstanding infantry battalion commanders, 4 Rifles, or simply The Rifles, as the battalion is known, has seen a great deal of action while in Iraq. On arrival the battalion deployed troops to Basrah Palace which endured constant attacks from small arms fire, rockets and mortars. The Palace and other locations have to be re-supplied and this basic fact of military logistics affords the militias and their hired hands the opportunity of attacking

the supply convoys with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Typically, an IED will be an isolated artillery shell or a series linked together which can be detonated by an insurgent at the end of a command wire. In most cases, once the ambush has been sprung, the patrol will be attacked by small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). The IRA used the same detonation method to attack British vehicles in South Armagh. If artillery shells are not available, then a large amount of explosives will be laid along the likely route of a convoy.

Intersections are especially dangerous and it was on the approaches to Basrah Palace that B (Rorkes Drift) Company, 2 Royal Welsh attached to 4 Rifles, lost three soldiers. In the privacy of his office in the Contingency Operating Base (COB), map in front of him, Major Steve Webb, the company commander, told me what had happened, reliving that violent night in May. I have loads of questions but I sense that this is not the time to interrupt. Major Webb talks, pauses and explains at great length – no bullshit, just the hard, uncompromising truth – how these three soldiers died. I leave Major Webb's office deeply moved. He has gone way beyond anything I, as an outsider, have a right to expect. His honesty, his concern for the men under his command and the sense of sheer professionalism are truly

inspiring. If Major Webb has been hardened and made wiser by his experiences, the same is true of his impressive second-in-command, Captain Toby Skinner. He understands the fact that soldiers need assurances and that they look to their officers for answers. "It is times like these", he tells me, "when the pips on your shoulders get quite heavy".

People who have never served in the army might think that private soldiers and junior NCOs just carry out the orders of their superiors. They do much more, for in the execution of an order they bring not merely their training to bear but also their individual quirks and character. Like Major Webb and Captain Skinner, Major Bryant, R company commander has also been profoundly affected, even changed by the men under his command. When he briefed me on his company, Major Bryant spoke with undisguised admiration for his section commanders and the individual riflemen who had distinguished themselves in the many contacts. He mentioned one eighteen-year old rifleman who suddenly came good in the heat, fear and uncertainty of a contact. That young soldier will not know that his actions and resolve in a critical situation left an indelible mark on his company commander. Should Major Bryant get posted out of the battalion, I suspect he will call that young lad aside and tell him. I hope so.

When they return home the bulk of the Irish Guards will not be wearing tee-shirts inscribed with the words "Probably the most attacked palace in the world" which is one way in which 4 Rifles have chosen to let the rest of the army know that they were there. Yet their training mission conducted at Shaibah and the trainers who replace them are going to have a lasting effect on Iraq one way or the other. Some of the more enlightened and forward-looking Iraqi army and police officers with whom I spoke fully understand that the time is approaching, maybe faster than they realise, when they shall assume full responsibility for national security. Since May 2007 some 1,500 Iraqi soldiers and border enforcement officials have been trained and the plan is to make Shaibah a centre of training excellence in southern Iraq. Major Ed Wilson, whose company has had responsibility for the training, has no doubt that among Iraqis "there is very little sympathy for the insurgency". Better still, he sees signs of real improvement in the Iraqi army. The planned British withdrawal from Basrah Palace dramatically increases the stakes in the training mission.

I watched Iraqi soldiers and officers being put through their paces. The training emphasis is on the following: anti-ambush drills which are especially vital in the streets and roads of urban Basrah; recognizing and countering the threat from Improvised Explosive

Devices; and conducting searches and arrests of suspects in buildings. On one exercise I am with the "enemy", members of the Irish Guards who are playing the part of insurgents. From my vantage point I watch a group of Iraqis as they deploy and make ready to assault the building. They enter the building. We move from room to room, luring them on. One of the instructors sets off a smoke grenade. In seconds I am enveloped in thick, acrid smoke. I am disorientated and coughing. I wander into another room to escape the smoke. I do not see that the wall on one side of the building has been blown out. The instructor sees where I am going and shouts a warning. Just in time. After the smoke clears I look over the edge. It's about a 30 feet drop with lots of twisted junk metal and rubble at the other end. Even training has its moments. I thank the instructor profusely. By this time the Iraqis have grabbed their suspect. I know that he has a training hand grenade on him with instructions to detonate it back in the detention centre. But this bunch of Iraqis are switched on, they find the grenade. Good for them. They have foiled the instructor's plot, which they rather enjoy, but, more importantly, they have learned a valuable lesson. After the exercise there is a thorough debrief and the instructors, with the help of an interpreter, go through each phase highlighting the good and the bad points. This is all standard British



Army stuff and it seems to work. During the training I am reminded that we are still in the middle of a counter insurgency. Last night, for the first time in about six weeks, the camp was rocketed. I counted at least four explosions. An Iraqi soldier, one of the trainees, has brought in the remains of one of the rockets, a large, ugly piece of metal. I shudder to think what would have happened had it struck the very large petrol tanker which was about 25 metres from where I was dossing.

Another task, this time with 2 Company, Irish Guards, commanded by Major Chris Ghika, underlines the risks of trying to train Iraqis when the security of one's own troops is also a major factor. We are not far from the bank of the Shatt Al Arab waterway. The plan is to visit an Iraqi army unit with a view to train soldiers. We stop in the ruins of some massive fertiliser factory, overgrown with scrub. The neglect is appalling. I think of the Tractor Factory in the ruins of Stalingrad which saw some of the bitterest fighting between the Germans and Russians. No sooner have we arrived than we are visited by teenage Iraqis. Some of the guardsmen are not convinced that their interest in us is entirely friendly. The blokes reckon they are spying on us or "dicking" us, as it is known in the trade, almost certainly for the militia. Stand to positions and arcs of fire are allocated and then we settle down to our defensive routine. Time for a brew.

Out come the tin friend and a packet of Biscuits Fruit of which I have a big supply. At 0045 hrs those of us who are stood down are woken by small arms fire and some explosions. Our sentries identify no firing points. We return no fire.

In the morning we find that the Iraqi officers are somewhat jittery. The offer of training is not welcome since too many of the civilian workers are regarded as militia sympathizers. The Iraqi colonel is convinced that we are going to be attacked. He tells us that a large number of scooters and motor bikes were in the area last night – I heard them – far more than usual, and we learn later that all the civilians have been told to be away by 1600. All the signs are that we are going to be attacked. There is only one way out of this giant industrial slum and once we are through the gates we shall have to pass through a built-up area which will afford cover for any ambushers. Moreover, given that we have been here overnight, the militia have had plenty of time to set up IEDs. They know we're coming.

Now it is all down to Major Ghika, the lonely leader: Ampleforth, Sandhurst and Irish Guards versus tactically adept militia. He briefs his subordinate commanders on the extraction plan. It is a crisp, professional delivery with a novel twist to fool the enemy. Throughout the briefing the Company Sergeant Major

stands there, running an eye over all the commanders. I sense he is weighing them up. I detect a slight nod. He knows the soldiers in his company. In our vehicle, Guardsman Madden, one of a number of Brummies in 2 Coy, is top cover. Like so many of the soldiers I meet he has a delightfully irreverent sense of humour. The banter that flies back and forth between him, the vehicle commander and driver has to be heard to be believed. I am in stitches. As top cover, he has a close relationship with a long-standing friend of mine, the General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG). I am conscious of a pang of jealousy. We set off at 1430. We pass through the built-up area without incident. We have either wrong-footed the enemy or he's decided it's too risky to take us on.

Counter-insurgency operations are a mix of soft power and hard power. On some occasions troops will be involved in a massive fire fight – the case in Basrah Palace – on others they will be trying to build trust and consent among the civilian population. 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment Royal Horse Artillery has played a major role in both types of operations. On my first patrol with the regiment we travelled to Az Zubayr and I saw first hand the difficulties involved in civil aid and reconstruction projects. Such operations are frustrating and dangerous: frustrating because the officers who engage with local leaders must take a great deal on

trust and must also demonstrate quite exceptional powers of tact and diplomacy. When one is tired, frequently pissed off by what appear to be evasive answers and buck-passing, the strain is considerable; dangerous because talking to local people, often in buildings where full security is not always possible, means that one must relax and de-escalate the aggressive posture. This may mean removing body armour and helmet and placing one's personal weapon on the floor, though close to hand. This goes against the basic training of every soldier. Yet you have to relax the security if any kind of rapport is to be achieved with your hosts, the essence of what the army calls Key Leadership Engagement (KLE). And this is where the danger arises. Officers involved in lengthy negotiations and discussions with tribal leaders are highly vulnerable to sudden attacks and ambush. There is also a heightened risk of being abducted.

In some ways these rapid and unforeseen changes are the essence of counter-insurgency operations. One moment soldiers are surrounded by laughing, impish children, the next the streets are empty and there is an eerie quiet before the crack of small arms fire and rockets. The strain on soldiers is intense. One part of you wants to respond to small children, to open up, to break down the barriers, while another part is aware of the risks. Some soldiers I met had decided



RPG LAUNCH IRAQ. FROM *CENTURY*, EDITED BY BRUCE BERNARD, PUBLISHED BY PHAIDON. PHOTO: DELAHAYE

that they wanted nothing to do with Iraqis. They were polite but no more. Others discovered that they had something of a knack in dealing with them, even if their command of Arabic was non-existent.

The question that bothers me is whether the Army, having trained its soldiers to fight wars and to kill people, can expect its soldiers to become all touchie-feelie when the threat of lethal attacks from snipers, improvised explosive devices and small arms is ever present. This merely adds to the psychological strain.

If counter-insurgency operations are now firmly established as one of the British army's primary missions, the army may well find that it is going to have to make much sharper distinctions in training between war fighting and killing and building consensus and winning trust among belligerents in lands riven by inter-ethnic hatreds. Recognising that the skills of personal interaction so often required in counter-insurgency operations may not be found in all soldiers (all soldiers do not shoot as well as fully trained snipers), army trainers might have to

consider specialist selection and preparation. The result might be that each unit would have a specialist company selected, trained and equipped for interaction with local populations in the same way that each infantry battalion has a specialist support company.

Our intended stop in Az Zubayr is the council building. We stop some way off from the building, ensuring that the armoured vehicles are able to dominate certain approaches and then a small group of us heads off on foot to the council building. The aim here is to test the way the Iraqi army and Iraqi police work together in dealing with a number of scenarios: fires; accidents and shooting incidents. These exercises are known in the trade as TEWTS (Training Exercises Without Troops), although when I did my basic training some sergeant said it meant Training Exercises with Twats.

On top of the council building I have a chat with one of the gunners providing cover while we go about our business. His name is Gunner Hancock and he comes from Doncaster. There is an aura of quiet strength about Gunner Hancock. He is the sort of bloke you want to be with when the shit hits the fan. Later, I learn that he played a big part in a contact when a group of heavily armed militia unwisely took on his patrol. This comes as no surprise. The view from the top of the building

is good. Yet there are so many alleys and street corners and windows from where a gunman could fire that you realise just how exposed and vulnerable we are. I note a man hanging about on the edge of a corner. He keeps appearing and disappearing. I point him out to Gunner Hancock who examines him through the scope on his rifle. He is satisfied the man poses no threat; but he keeps an eye on him.

After the training session is over, Captain Hendry, known as the Battery Captain, meets a representative of the Farmers' Union. The issue at stake is whether a very large sum of money, some \$350,000, will be made available to the Farmers' Union in order to refurbish the building where the farmers meet. One critical question, and one, as far as I could tell that was never really answered, is who actually owns the building. The question of ownership is, believe or it not, far more serious for the future of Iraq than most people realise. Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party was full of deluded socialists who believed that all assets should be owned and controlled by the state. Now if title to all assets resides in one party what happens when that entity disappears? Who has good title to buildings, infrastructure and, above all, the vast oil wealth of Iraq? Exactly, the same problem confronted Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

We walk across the street to inspect the existing building. The whole place had been gutted by mobs in the power vacuum created in the immediate aftermath of Saddam Hussein's down fall. I doubt very much whether any meetings or much else for that matter take place in this building. And then something strikes me quite without warning. I cannot explain it but in one room I feel the presence of death. Do not ask me how I know, I just know that some poor bastard has died in this room and whoever it was had not died easily. I am glad to leave this building behind. It gives me the creeps. Outside the hot sun banishes that horrible chill. I say nothing to the artillery lads; they would probably think the sun had got to me.

There is no doubt in my mind that the British army is making progress towards a handover to the Iraqis. Progress is slow and often frustrating, but things are moving in the right direction. The wild card is what happens in Iran. If the Americans decide to attack Iran's nuclear installations, then the situation in southern Iraq will rapidly deteriorate. Even if he wants to maintain some kind of a ceasefire, Muqtada al-Sadr, the Shia nationalist cleric, might find that he has no choice but to order attacks on the British and the Iraqi security forces. Worse still, the Iraqi security forces might start to crumble under the pressure and British troops would have to be sent

back into Basrah to restore some semblance of order. Progress to Iraqi control would be set back by many years. All these thoughts come to me on the flight home.

We've landed at RAF Brize Norton. We collect our luggage. The lads, some on leave, some returning for good, practically run out of the hall to waiting girl friends and wives. One beautiful young mother, tears on her face, stands there with a little girl. Then her husband is in her arms. Moments of bliss. I look away. I bid farewell to Major Nathan Teale, who has travelled back on the same flight. Then I'm alone. I think of Corporal Wayne Rimmer, Cookie, the "Karate Kid" from Romford, Penny, Stan, Ed Pointer, Major Webb, Major Bryant, Captain Alex Gray, Gunner Hancock, Guardsman Madden, Captain Charlie Williams, Captain Bassett, and all the other gunners, guardsmen and riflemen I've had the privilege and honour to meet and who have made such a deep impression on me. I hope they've had one hell of a leave. They've deserved it. They've done themselves and Britain proud. ♦

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Dr FRANK ELLIS

*is an author and former academic, who served in both in the Parachute Regiment and the Special Air Service. His latest book, And Their Mothers Wept: The Great Fatherland War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Literature, is published by Heritage House Press*

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# PHONICS: OUR STOLEN EDUCATIONAL BIRTHRIGHT

*ALICE COLEMAN explains that teaching phonics is the key not just to preventing illiteracy, but also to a whole range of educational and civilized qualities*

**F**or over 3,000 years, ever since the alphabet was invented, reading was taught by the phonic method of equating letters with their sounds and blending them together to build up words. It was highly effective and left just under 1% of British pupils illiterate. But with the coming of progressive education just after World War II, phonics was dismissed as old-fashioned and also too abstract. A faulty study of eye movements claimed that adults read whole words and not individual letters, but even if this were true, (and later studies disproved it), it was unsafe to assume that learners needed the same technique as the already-proficient.

Progressivism's whole-word method makes children look at a whole word, hear what it says and remember its shape. This is also called 'look-say'. Phonics uses letters as a strategy for tackling unknown words but 'look-say' is sheer memorizing of word-shapes,

and there is a limit to how many a child can recall. Exponents of look-say begin with distinctive shapes in initial words (eg, 'elephant') which seem to give a splendid start but which stall progress as soon as pupils meet similarly shaped words (eg, 'cat' and 'cot'), and this leads to guessing.

As early as 1950, Dr Joyce Morris of the National Foundation for Educational Research proved 'look-say' defective and subsequent research confirmed this. In 1950 the superb phonic i.t.a. (initial teaching alphabet) enabled four-year-olds to master reading and it spread to 10% of infant schools. Alas! The whole-word power structure feared that i.t.a. would undermine it, so new heads were offered extra funding if they ousted it!

In 1991, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) complained that only 5% of school starters could already read and said all should be able to do so. They shuffled off their most basic task and expected untrained parents to

achieve what they with all their training could not.

Illiteracy continued to increase and one current statistic is 42% among school leavers. This depressing figure may be an underestimate as some leavers are borderline readers and soon lose the skill. One study showed that half as many again had not read a single book in a year at age 20. NAHT's abdication raises the question of who actually does teach successful readers. Over 7% go to independent schools that parents strive to pay for at the crucial beginner stage. Another 25% receive home tutoring from tutorial agencies able to cite numbers, though not all for reading. Families, friends, neighbours and non-agency tutors rescue many more, while some teachers risk their jobs with under-the-counter phonics.

Mona McNee is a tutor who has taught 360 dyslexics to read normally. Her phonic reading scheme, *Step by Step*, was rejected by publishers because of the schools look-say market, so she printed it privately and most families found that it usually completed reading instruction within about three months. To date it has sold 21,000 copies and its clear style makes it effective across the whole age range, from pre-school children to adults. Its reading-readiness test shows that children who can match letter shapes are ready to start. One little girl aged two years and nine months passed and her parents doubtfully embarked upon the *Step by Step* course, only to find

that she took to it eagerly and reached the reader-for-life stage in ten months. Mona McNee says it "school-proofs" children before look-say can make them illiterate and impair their mental development. The existence of her course may explain why 20% of school starters can now already read, and letters from grateful parents who have rescued dyslexic strugglers tell how acquiring the ability to read causes the emotional stress of illiteracy to wither away. The whole-word method creates untold misery. Despite its claim to make reading easier, it actually makes it much harder and probably impossible for those who do not receive out-of-school help.

The torch of learning has been kept alight by independent schools, grammar schools, universities and, surprisingly, secondary modern schools. Independent schools outdo state schools in the league tables and though this is attributed to smaller classes, the fundamental reason is the use of phonics that makes all their pupils literate and able to profit from subsequent reading. Actually, state schools with their teaching aides and assistants have a higher staff-pupil ratio. State grammar schools outshine the independents as well as the comprehensives. They are a splendid way of enabling gifted children to realize their potential, but the government is pressing to abolish those that remain. The same ethos has also infected the Conservatives. David Cameron claims comprehensives are a desirable 'non-elitist' option.

Caroline Cox and John Marks<sup>2</sup> found that grammars plus secondary moderns achieve better national averages than comprehensives, with all grades together. Secondary modern pupils are deemed stigmatized but as they are not in the constant shadow of brighter classmates, any stigma is not worrisome. These schools tend to be smaller, so every child is known to all teachers and receives more constructive attention. But if comprehensives were made universal, these pupils would be left to flounder among huge numbers without realizing their potential.

A three months' phonics course could rescue all non-readers and restore their self-esteem. Catering for 42% of pupils could be done within a year, given the insight and the will that the government lacks. Teachers attend an annual five days of in-service training (INSET) so if the present progressivist indoctrination were replaced by phonics training, all staff could rescue illiterates and prevent future failures.

**What governments did (or did not do)** Margaret Thatcher launched two relevant initiatives but was balked before action. As Minister of Education in 1972 she asked Alan Bullock to chair a Committee of Inquiry on The Teaching of Reading but it was hijacked by the progressivists. Bullock, as an Oxford college head, had no hands-on experience of teaching to read and became a gullible catpaw. His report ridiculed

phonics and while Margaret Thatcher would have seen through it, Labour had taken over before it reported. Her 1988 Education Act introduced a National Curriculum with sensible reforms but closet progressivists were put in charge and worked covertly to undermine it. A circular to progressivist supporters said: "We have people in place at every level of education to subvert the National Curriculum"<sup>3</sup>.

Margaret Thatcher began to perceive their ploys and replaced a few of them with people genuinely concerned to raise standards, but was prevented from completion by power-motivated cabinet members who coveted her job and drove her to resign. Her successor, John Major, chose an Education Secretary of State, Gillian Shephard, with a phonics-bashing record in Norfolk.

After Thatcher and Major came Blair declaring that his priority was "education, education, education". David Blunkett, his Education Secretary, introduced the National Literacy Strategy (NLS), which intensified look-say but tried to disarm critics by mentioning phonics. However, even if teachers had understood phonics, the NLS would have undermined it because look-say trains children to guess at words and makes it hard for them to settle down to the early phonic stages of building up letters.

### ***The Clackmannan Report***

A rigorous seven-year study by Joyce Watson and Rhona Johnston in

Clackmannan<sup>4</sup> compared the progress of pupils taught by three reading methods. Two were named analytic phonics and phonemic awareness to masquerade as true (synthetic) phonics. Each one begins with a different element needed for reading. Analytic phonics, like the NLS, starts with whole words. Phonemic awareness starts with sounds, whereas synthetic phonics starts with letters.

After six months, NLS analytic phonics and phonemic awareness had raised the average reading age by only five months but synthetic phonics had raised it by 13 months. This fast progress was normal before the onset of progressivism, and reveals how the criteria for reading ages have been surreptitiously dropped to disguise the decline – another form of grade inflation. After seven years the synthetic phonics group was found to be three years ahead educationally.

A phonemic awareness test after six months should have favoured those taught by that method, but did not. The synthetic phonics classes were again streets ahead. Children find it hard to pick sounds out of spoken words but easy to learn them from letters shown first. Phonics is a more effective way of achieving what phonemic awareness claims to do.

When the *Clackmannan Report* hit the headlines, Ruth Kelly, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, set up

a committee and later advocated synthetic phonics in schools. This was just disarming spin. Had she truly meant it, she could have recommended eight good existing phonics primers for immediate use but instead she delayed to permit the production of a new government scheme, misleadingly entitled *Letters and Sounds*. It made no mention of synthetic phonics and relegated a thin and tattered version of it to about 25% of its content. Half, including the whole first year, was devoted to phonemic awareness and about a quarter to analytic phonics, partly by wasting time on premature spelling drill.

Good phonics schemes push actual reading ahead, keeping to simple, straightforward spelling as long as possible, to build up maximum confidence. Only on reaching the stage when the same sound is spelt in different ways, eg, 'pane' and 'pain', is formal spelling instruction needed. *Letters and Sounds* not only wastes initial time on spelling drills but also prematurely introduces the confusion of alternative spellings.

It claims to teach reading in three years but as it is totally untested, that remains to be seen. The dominance of the two failed methods makes it unlikely. It would hold pupils back even more than the NLS, which at least required learning the 26 letters and a few digraphs in the reception class, whereas *Letters and Sounds* defers these until its second year.

## The dyslexia epidemic

Another look-say problem is the dyslexia epidemic. Before 1945, dyslexic illiteracy was almost entirely a product of head injuries but progressivism unleashed it in children. As it was new, some denounced it as just a middle-class excuse for backwardness, including the Tizard Committee set up to report on it. Ironically, Tizard was advised by the head of a phonics-based primary school, which had no dyslexic illiteracy. Those who still call dyslexia an excuse are ignoring W E Drake's 1968 paper on Harvard neurologists' study of brains from bodies donated for research. Dyslexics' brains proved to have fewer connections between the two hemispheres, so that new learning acquired on one side could not be passed across to the other side. While phonics directly addresses the languages centre in the left hemisphere, look-say's word shapes address the pattern-recognition facility of the right hemisphere, and dyslexics cannot get it across the barrier to develop reading. The male brain structure makes this more likely and Mona McNee<sup>5</sup> showed that there are four times as many dyslexic boys as girls.

She explains that although dyslexia is genetic, the illiteracy is only potential and needs an activating factor, which look-say provides. Her cure of illiteracy in 360 dyslexic strugglers proves that phonics could rescue virtually every mistaught struggler.

## Testing

Progressivism regards testing as too stressful and also in conflict with its equality dogma, which urges accepting mistakes and praising good and bad work alike. When the 1988 Education Act decreed testing, progressivists set out to subvert it. Grade inflation at GCSE and A-Level is obvious, but testing at seven is worse. Reading standards have been lowered, poor achievement ranked as acceptable and emphasis laid on social-engineering snooping. Teachers have to record 117 aspects for each child, which steals teaching time and helps the decline on its way. It also misleads local authorities. Knowsley, with the UK's second worst reading record, received eight social-engineering awards, which blinded it to the academic failure<sup>6</sup>.

A simpler test is proposed by Mona McNee and myself in *The Great Reading Disaster* (Imprint Academic, 2007).

## Indiscipline

Dumbing down is worsened by indiscipline, masquerading as kindness. It was thought cruel to make children all listen to the teacher despite different individual needs. So classes were split up into groups to promote democratic discussion and responsibility for fetching work materials. However, classes talking and walking about sap orderliness and standards. Chatterboxes do not concentrate on learning and may waste up to 75% of lesson time. Reading failure fuels further disorder. Some



children play truant or become bullies or are insubordinate to teachers and/or sink into delinquency and crime. If illiteracy robs pupils of self-esteem, they may compensate by bullying brighter ones. Well before age 16, many illiterates regard school as a sheer waste of time and take their revenge.

Other aspects of national life also need rescuing from decline, but education should be a priority because it is a major bulldozer pushing our civilization even deeper. ♦

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was on the staff of Kings College  
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housing. Her jointly-written book (with  
Mona McNee), *The Great Reading  
Disaster*, was published by Imprint  
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#### RECOMMENDATIONS

In *The Great Reading Disaster*, Mona McNee and I advance various recommendations, which can be summarized as follows.

Teach uncontaminated synthetic phonics from age four.

Close teacher training establishments to eliminate progressivism at source.

Abolish local education authorities (LEAs). Many of their 40 functions are needless and others could more economically be passed to schools.

Streamline central government supervision. Making all schools essentially private would mean that the DfES could be closed. The Treasury could issue vouchers to parents and their fixed value would help curb wasteful expenditure.

Encourage the crime-free size limits of 400 for primary schools and 700 for secondaries, established by A E Smith in a study of 763 Kent schools<sup>6</sup>. Reduce voucher-redemption above these limits.

The Inspectorate should cease to threaten teachers with non-promotion if they deviate from progressivism.

Standards would be substituted by league table results enabling parents to choose good schools and parents' ability to remove children and vouchers from poor schools. The Clackmannan research showed that synthetic phonics made children three years ahead by age ten, so higher standards would obviate the alleged need for extra years at the older end, again a great cost-saving.

The proposed abolitions need not cost a king's ransom in redundancy payments. No-one need be made redundant as it would be reasonable to transfer anyone in education back into the classroom to help solve teacher shortages. They could even keep their higher salaries if they went into bad schools.

# KEEPING AN EYE ON THE PARANOID

HELEN LEWIS *looks at a few 'conspiracy files'*

**I**f internet pornography resembles Augean filth, 'conspiracy theories' on-line are like the Hydra monster, multiplying uncontrollably. The electronic capacity to spread misinformation and fake photography, and facilitate cyber-warfare, is creating a serious social problem.

Any fool can Google into this website wilderness, but wise enquirers can evaluate screen content, and best reflect on the entire cultural phenomenon, by carefully consulting relevant print material.

Conspiracies are private combinations that intentionally cause public harm, from industrial espionage to assassination<sup>1</sup>. Big or small, they have occurred throughout history. The worst 20th century example, international communism, is amply documented<sup>2</sup>. Lenin originally aimed for worldwide "proletarian dictatorship" and decades later President Kennedy indicted the "ruthless conspiracy" that relied on covert methods while conscripting human

and material resources on an immense scale. The Kremlin's dependence on foreign technology only reinforced the suspicion of discreet external help.

During the Cold War, several US organisations, notably the John Birch Society, discerned a concealed, overarching operation that not only nurtured the USSR but went back as far as the Bavarian Illuminati. As Marxist historian Prof Hobsbawm noted, if any 'religion' flourished among the late 18th century continental elite, "it was rationalist, illuminist, and anti-clerical Freemasonry"<sup>3</sup>. The basic objectives have been summarised as the abolition of monarchy, patriotism, property inheritance, traditional religion and family life<sup>4</sup>. Sometimes 'stuff just happens', but various networks have unquestionably promoted these ideas for well over 200 years.

Deliberate transmission of subversive policies is not as problematic, of course, as the duration of its confidentiality, and

its successful top-down implementation. Ralph Epperson's comprehensive introduction to the 'powerful insider' theory<sup>5</sup> remains useful, not least because his rare clarity enables students to identify unverified assertions and inferences that typify such literature.

Although the Soviet collapse deflated some conspiracy theories, fresh formations developed to combat the 'financier' residuum of the previous 'vodka-cola' nexus<sup>6</sup>, 'political correctness', immorality and immigration.

Others have taken – often contrary – sides over Middle East issues, with occasional conjunction of 'right' and 'left' positions. Some 'theories' are worked into entire belief-systems, which, if related to apocalyptic end-time predictions about Israel, not only visualise an 'Armageddon' but also bring it a little closer to realisation<sup>7</sup>.

Numerous examples exist of important facts or disquieting probabilities being combined with far-fetched generalisations; and paranoid personalities especially make associations between people and phenomena because of visual or verbal coincidences rather than causal connections. This discredits and hampers competent investigation of clandestine malpractices in the common source-material.

David Icke's latest gross compendium<sup>8</sup> illustrates this loss of occasional gold dust down a drain of drivel. Anything attractive from the vast bunkum-bank of 'alternative anthropology' is grist to

the mill of the only sane man in a universal asylum programmed by a meta-conspiracy of Lizards that Came from Outer Space, via Lost Lemuria (map supplied). Amazingly, these vampirish visitants have given us Christianity, the Federal Reserve, fluoridation, etc. And whereas other plot-peddlers merely make the Queen the ruler of a drug-funded British Imperium, Icke exposes HM as yet another reptilian hybrid. His answer to ultimate tyrannosauran catastrophe includes daydreaming, tolerating different lifestyles, and changing our vibrations to attain Infinite Awareness! The notion that this irrepressible scribbler is simply 'feigning' mental disorder in order to circulate anti-Semitism in a coded format and/or to discourage assassination is itself a 'conspiracy theory' raised to a 33rd degree of improbability.

In a contrasting 'matrix', Michael Newton's "conspiracy encyclopedia"<sup>9</sup> contains over 500 topics, though with entries on every country and on American criminals that reduce space for adequate coverage of major subjects. However, his slovenly style and left-wing bias are all too obvious in the statement that Jesus was "allegedly born at Nazareth" in "about 33 BC" and in the discussion of mass-murders under Stalin, a fictionalised "bogeyman".

A more presentable historical reference work<sup>10</sup> is edited by Thom Burnett (pseudonym). Each thematic section – covering al-Qaeda, disinformation, intelligence, key figures, murder mys-

teries, and so forth - carries a thoughtful introduction, though well-informed readers will spot some howlers. A marginally better written handbook from James McConnachie and Robin Tudge<sup>11</sup> provides annotated websites and film-lists. Readers can profitably compare their accounts of old favourites: Jack Kennedy and David Kelly, Pearl Harbor and Twin Towers, ECHELON and HAARP, Rosslyn and Roswell, Carroll Quigley, Harold Wilson, the Klan, the Mafia, Skull & Bones, etc.

These publications are not free from errors, or questionable interpretations, which could be corrected by intensive primary research. Although the CIA is justifiably criticised, for instance, they play down KGB provocations, or recite mantras against "McCarthyism"<sup>12</sup>. This again illustrates the adverse effect of unexamined preconceptions upon data analysis.

Also worth noting is a massive tome compiled with scholarly assurance by a "Grand Archdruid"<sup>13</sup>, though even this expert seems insufficiently sceptical about the "occultism" of Adolf Hitler.

A persistently predominant fear among conspiracists is of a global regime, destructive of national sovereignties.

The distinctive Rothschild and Rockefeller dynasties have been targets of hostility. David Rockefeller admitted working towards an "integrated global political and economic structure - one world". His Trilateral Commission, the "Bilderberg" Group, and "Davos", are

involved. While some might welcome high-level efforts by English-speaking Westerners ostensibly to minimise international conflicts over food and energy supplies during climate change, others regard the "Bilderbergers" as a "virtual shadow government" secretly planning to transform the planet into a "single marketplace" regulated by a world bank and police-force, its eventually micro-chipped population being reduced to a materialist existence<sup>14</sup>.

Another writer accuses this particular combination of turning Europe into a neo-nazi society<sup>15</sup>. This pyramid of ideological misconception and racial improbability balances on the point of Prince Bernhard, a prime mover of Bilderberg gatherings and well-born motor-sportsman, who (like Richard Strauss and Martin Heidegger) had optimistically joined National Socialist organisations before leaving home by 1938 and later assisting the Anglo-Dutch armed resistance against Hitler<sup>16</sup>; a careerist, not a "fascist". The EU itself evolved partly from supranational controls imposed on German military-industrial resources to prevent further aggression. Similarities between wartime and post-war technocrats regarding co-operative development reflect continental geography, not racism.

Real-life Nazis thought Jews were in league with Freemasons. According to opinion polls, nearly half the Muslims in our midst share this view today<sup>17</sup>. Arab publishers and websites like Radio Islam have revived the *Protocols of the*

*Elders of Zion*. Concocted over a century ago, this anonymous document attributed to Jews a monstrous conspiracy for world domination by multiple strategies, with Masonic lodges as unwitting instruments (not vice versa)<sup>18</sup>.

Recent literary detection has challenged the usual explanation that it was composed in France for use in Russia with the hypothesis that it was originally drafted within the Tsarist Empire, with Parisian allusions (Panama Scandal, Empain's Métro) added afterwards. A significant proportion unquestionably comes from Maurice Joly's *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu*, a brilliant satire on the techniques of tyranny<sup>19</sup>. Other passages resonate with the aims of various revolutionary societies, but the text lacks a genuine internal Judaic idiom.

It is the French background of economic crisis, parliamentary intrigue and social decadence<sup>20</sup> that gives naïve readers the impression of looking at a picture, and therefore a plan, of future events. Its "prophetic recommendation" of Léon Bourgeois, a gentile Radical and Grand Orient member, who became Premier and helped to found the League of Nations, is often overlooked.

It also threatened to establish terror in one country as an "example" to others. Later "identification" of this with the regicidal Bolshevik police state, whose leaders included a noticeable number of Jews, was probably responsible for the subsequent influence of its malignant contents<sup>21</sup>.

Although *jihad* extremists<sup>22</sup> have tak-

en the *Protocols* seriously from puritanical repugnance, its present rerun among Muslims generally arises from their perception of Israel and its American supporters, the so-called "fatal embrace". However, the *Protocols* nowhere proposed a Zionist project for a territorial homeland. Psychopathic obsession with this imagined grand Judeo-Masonic 'conspiracy' is nevertheless all too likely to encourage actual conspiracies of 'sacred' terrorism against 'Zionists', 'Crusaders' and 'Pagans'<sup>23</sup>.

Concerns about galloping intellectual pollution from nonsensical conspiracy theories and bogus history, and the technological dissolution of hierarchies of knowledge, have been strongly expressed by the *Catholic Herald's* formidable Editor-in-Chief<sup>24</sup>. He describes one danger.

Although "cyberspace anarchy" enables many unwelcome activities of powerful interests rightly to be exposed and opposed, this medium is not totally invulnerable to technical interference and deliberately confusing disinformation. That is another danger.

The popularity of grotesque fantasies should not deter research into the unpublicised activities of intelligence services, pressure groups, criminal cartels and terrorist organisations. After all, "groups of communists, capitalists, Zionists, Freemasons and Catholics have in fact secretly plotted, often against one another"<sup>25</sup> for specific political ends.

What matters is the independent, serious search for truth, wherever it leads.



Unfortunately the untutored imaginations of egalitarian consumer-democracy confuse fact with fiction in both religion and entertainment. *The Da Vinci Code* sold better than Umberto Eco's erudite satire on such gallimaufry in *Foucault's Pendulum*, and Priory of Sion-Mary Magdalene rubbish has been demolished by historians<sup>26</sup> and even television's Tony Robinson, all to little avail.

Overcoming official 'conspiracies' against proper education, academic integrity and untrammelled enquiry is perhaps the most urgent requirement, which is where we came in. ♦

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HELEN LEWIS

(pen-name)

is a student of modern cults

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#### NOTES

1. Rodney Castleden, *Assassinations and Conspiracies* (London, 2007) ranges from Philip of Macedon to Pim Fortuyn
2. See eg Stefan T Possony, *A Century of Conflict* (Chicago, 1953); Jan Librach, *Rise of the Soviet Empire* (London, 1965); Christopher Andrew, *The Mitrokhin Archive* (London, 2000)
3. E J Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (New York, 1962), chapter 12
4. Nesta Webster, *World Revolution* (Chulmleigh, 1971), page 34. Several writers noted here describe somewhat inaccurately "anti-Semitic" writing by this conspiracy 'doyenne' which she explicitly clarified (*ibid*, pp.299-300)
5. *The Unseen Hand* (Tucson, 1985)
6. See eg, Antony C Sutton, *Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution* (New Rochelle, 1973); Armand Hammer & Neil Lyndon, *Hammer: Witness to History* (London, 1988)
7. Eugen Weber's *Apocalypses* (London 1999) traces such millennial expectations through the ages, but the novel factor is nuclear proliferation

8. *The David Icke Guide to the Global Conspiracy* (Ryde, 2007)
9. *The Encyclopedia of Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theories* (NewYork, 2006)
10. *Conspiracy Encyclopedia* (London, 2005)
11. *The Rough Guide to Conspiracy Theories* (London, 2005)
12. See M Stanton Evans, *Blacklisted by History: The Untold Story of Senator Joe McCarthy* (New York, 2007)
13. John Michael Greer, *The Element Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Hidden History* (London, 2006)
14. Daniel Estulin, "Bilderberg 2007", *Nexus*, August-September 2007. For Denis Healey's 'authorised version', see Jon Ronson, *Them* (London 2002) pp 287-292
15. Rodney Atkinson, *Europe's Full Circle* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1996)
16. Jonathan Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich* (OUP, 2006), p 267
17. Melanie Phillips, "Reflections on Londonistan", Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, 2 January 2007
18. The Wikipedia account gives newcomers enough taste of its unsavoury contents. See also an Israeli master mason's textual critique at [www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/9991/protocols.html](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/9991/protocols.html). Careless mistakes dot the enormous literature; eg Lindsay Porter's *Who are the Illuminati?* (London, 2005), which could have been a reliably documented overview, says (p 13) the "Soviet" secret police fabricated the Protocols
19. Boris Souvarine thought its precepts for duplicitous dictatorship might well have been "written for Stalin"
20. Cf Douglas Johnson, *France and the Dreyfus Affair* (London, 1966) pp 214-215; cf Mildred J Headings, *French Freemasonry under the Third Republic* (Baltimore, 1949)
21. Dan Diner & Jonathan Frankel, "Jews and Communism: The Utopian Temptation", *Dark Times, Dire Decisions* (Oxford, 2004) pp 4-6; Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime 1919-1924* (London 1994) pp 101-105, 112-114, 254-258
22. Eg, Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'rakatuna ma'a al-Yahud* (Jedda, 1970)
23. Cf Neil Doyle, *Terror Base UK* (Edinburgh, 2006)
24. Damian Thompson, *Counterknowledge* (London, 2008); cf Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy* (Berkeley, 2003)
25. Jeffrey M Bale, "Political paranoia v political realism", *Patterns of Prejudice*, February 2007
26. Craig A Evans, *Fabricating Jesus* (London, 2007) pp 208-213

# EVERYDAY ECONOMIC POWER TO HELP LOCAL CAUSES AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY

MARGRIT KENNEDY *believes that tangible economic benefits can be brought to communities by using inflation-proof complementary currencies*

**T**he increasing realisation that modern Western economies are built on increasingly unstable foundations has led to renewed interest in complementary currencies – locally produced and accepted currencies that run in tandem with traditional government-supported currencies.

Complementary currencies (CCs) may be defined as means of payment with a built-in target, intended not to replace the existing national or international currencies but to complement them. In areas in which the present monetary system does not work very well, such as social, cultural and ecological projects, new liquidity can be created without burdening the taxpayer or governments with additional costs. Complementary currencies can be seen as a powerful tool for strengthening the economic viability of a specific social sector or region. In many instances, they have proven their potential to

support and strengthen the economy – especially during difficult times.

Between 1932 and 1933, the small Austrian town of Woergl started one of the first model experiments of complementary currencies – based on a book by Silvio Gesell, called *The Natural Economic Order* (1916). Backed by an equivalent amount of ordinary schillings in the bank, the town sent 5,490 ‘work certificates’ into circulation. This money lost 1% per month. A stamp worth 1% had to be glued to it, so it would keep its value. This caused the work certificates to circulate 463 times in the next 13.5 months, thus creating goods and services worth  $5,490 \times 463$  or over 2,283,840 million schillings. At a time when most countries in Europe had a decreasing number of jobs, Woergl reduced its unemployment rate by 25% within a year. Income from local taxes rose 35% and investment in public works 220%. The fee collected by the town government which caused the money to change hands

amounted to 12% of 5,490 schillings (658 schillings). This small amount was used for public purposes and thus no single individual gained from it, but the community as a whole. When, however, 130 communities in Austria began to be interested in adopting this model the Austrian National Bank saw its own monopoly in danger and prohibited the printing of any local currency.

The Fureai Kippu Care Ticket, the WIR *Wirtschaftsring* or the Saber are just a few more recent examples of such currencies. In 1995, a retired Japanese minister of justice realized that Japan's old age pension schemes would not provide the means to care for the growing number of elderly persons in the country. He introduced Fureai Kippu Care tickets as a solution. These give younger people a chance to accumulate credits in the form of "hours". These hours can either be used by the helpers themselves at a later date, or by others – like their parents – in another part of the country. The decentralized system is coordinated on a country-wide scale and now provides millions of elderly people in Japan with extra care. Since an hour remains an hour, this is a totally inflation-proof currency.

The WIR *Wirtschaftsring* ("trading circle") serves small and medium-sized businesses in Switzerland as a parallel currency to help them in difficult times. More than 60,000 members are organized into 15 regional groups, and they have been providing cheap loans and

additional marketing for buying and selling their members' products for over 70 years. Whenever the economy is depressed, they are able to trade amongst themselves and give each other credit in WIR. When the economy booms and WIR members can sell their products in Swiss francs, the turnover in WIR tends to decrease. This shows that CCs tend to act anti-cyclically, thereby supporting the policies of governments and central banks, which have the same goal. Banks, in contrast, will give credit easily when the economy is booming and tend to be more hesitant when it slows down, thus amplifying the boom and bust cycles.

A recently devised sectoral currency is the Saber, a planned Brazilian educational currency. As 40% of the population of Brazil is under 15 years of age, the country has an enormous educational problem. Accordingly, when the mobile telephone industry was privatized, the government put a 1% surcharge for education on mobile phone bills. This resulted in a fund of US\$1billion (three billion *real*) for education in 2004. Saber is a voucher system designed to expand the number of students who can afford to obtain a college level education. The value of the Saber will be nominally the same as the *real*. However, it will only be redeemable for tuition payments for higher education and lose 20% per year to give an incentive to pass it on. The vouchers will be given to schools for their youngest pupils, on condition that they choose a mentor from an older

class to strengthen a weaker subject. The Saber is then transferred to the older schoolchild, and so on, until at last a child of 17 years who wants to go to university can use the Sabers to pay for a part of the tuition. Together with a system which incorporates a 50% reduced tuition rate for those subjects with free spaces in the universities, the Saber may thus increase the benefits for education by a factor of ten.

Another solution is the introduction of the concept of regional complementary currencies mostly to be found in the Germanophone parts of Europe. The so-called 'Regios' are usually based on demurrage, a time-related fee on money, and provide a means of increasing the speed of circulation and thus of increasing the production of added value, which will remain in the region, because everyone who accepts Regios will pass them on to another person who again does the same etc, as opposed to the Euro, which can go anywhere in the world.

Regional currencies can help to provide or keep essential public utilities in the hands of the inhabitants of the region. They provide closer links between consumers and producers, strengthen the local markets and reduce transport (ie, energy needs). They also – last but certainly not least important – help to revive local identities and diversity.

22 regional currencies are now in operation. One of the first was the Chiemgauer, which circulates in the area around Lake Chiem in southern

Germany. Initiated as a complementary currency by the Waldorf School in Prien in January 2003, it uses a voucher model. It is designed so that all participants benefit. A bonus of 3% is given to selected regional associations for purchasing Chiemgauer vouchers. The associations in turn sell one Chiemgauer for one Euro to their members, who profit by supporting their association without losing or paying money. The members who buy the Chiemgauer from them can then spend the Regio in over 560 participating shops. The first buyers of the new currency were Waldorf School parents, who bought vouchers to support the construction of an addition to their school. Since then, over 100 mostly non-profit projects have joined the scheme and, since 2003, they have received over 30,000 Euros for distributing it. There are approximately 2,000 participants across the region. As in the Woerl model, users accept an annual fee of 8% to guarantee circulation. Four times a year, a stamp worth 2% of the value of the voucher has to be attached to the Chiemgauer note, in order for it to retain its nominal value. The businesses that accept the vouchers can either exchange them for Euros at a five percent fee, or they can use them for paying other businesses, employees, the publisher of the local newspaper, etc. If they pass on the vouchers, they don't pay the fee.

For the majority of businesses, accepting the Regio vouchers and the

small fee, which is tax-deductible, is a matter of cultivating customer loyalty and supporting the region. The basic philosophy could be summarized as 'We have plenty of money. What we need is to make it circulate faster and, thereby, create more added social and economic value in a region to which we are linked by common cultural and ethical values'.

The 550,000 Chiemgauer that were issued in 2006 circulated about three times faster than the Euro. They changed hands more than 20 times, while Euros changed hands on average seven times per year. Since August 2006, an electronic version of the Chiemgauer has been in use in Wasserburg/Inn, a small town in the region.

Money is based on an agreement to accept something – usually a coin or a piece of paper – as a means of exchange. Trust in that token is of utmost importance. Therefore, new types of money which are not legal tender have to create a high level of trust to become functional. They not only have to provide the same measure of security which professional banks provide, but also have to grow in acceptance and usefulness over a relatively short time. Successful examples were initiated by trustworthy individuals, and also had to provide an acceptable backing. This can be the national currency, a banking licence, goods and services, or time.

The differences between complementary and traditional currencies

are marked: instead of being profit-oriented they are use-oriented. They are intended to connect underutilized resources with unmet demands. Their limited instead of general acceptance provides a 'semi-permeable membrane' around the function (or the region) for which they are designed. They cannot be used, for instance, to buy cars from abroad or to speculate on the international financial markets.

Complementary currencies can be established through a transparent process and therefore can be democratically controlled by the users. As they are always 100% covered by services, complementary currencies are inflation-resistant. Complementary currencies can stop the drain of financial resources to low-wage countries and tax havens, thereby calling a halt to the resulting loss of wealth and job opportunities, and promoting community spirit instead of destroying it.

Whether the aim is expansion of education or helping the elderly, protecting cultural identity, marketing regionally grown foods, or encouraging renewable resources, complementary currencies bring benefits to everybody. ♦

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*runs the Money Network Alliance  
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exchanging experiences of  
complementary currencies  
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# CORPORATE VIRILITY AND TOWNSCAPE DEGRADATION

BILL HARTLEY *says that our towns are being sacrificed in a war for supermarket supremacy*

**T**he growth of the modern supermarket company as a retailing phenomenon has been endlessly discussed in articles and books. Some commentators believe that whilst the supermarket carries many benefits, particularly in the areas of convenience and cost, that it has a pernicious impact on our townscapes. This is because supermarkets need space and lots of it, not just for retailing but also to provide car parks and the access roads to bring in the motorists. The consequence has been a reshaping of our towns.

Not all of this has been done from necessity. Cash-rich supermarkets go a stage beyond creating the infrastructure needed to trade conveniently and our towns are affected as a consequence. Awash with money, the supermarkets demonstrate their virility in ways that transcend mere competition. This type of behaviour isn't new; there are parallels between the corporate practices of

modern supermarkets and Victorian railway companies.

The ability of the supermarket with deep pockets to take on and outspend a local authority in planning battles is well known. Then once established there is the inevitable toll on small businesses as the supermarket hovers up the trade in such specialist areas as meat and fish. This in itself alters the composition of the high street as a varied shopping experience, particularly for fresh produce. To achieve this, the supermarket needs space but its land-guzzling activities can do more than alter trading patterns. Like the railway companies before them, supermarkets are prepared to sweep aside anything that gets in their way. When a company has huge profits at its disposal, the temptation is to use this money not simply to weaken competitors but also to encroach on a rival as an exercise in corporate virility. This is an approach first used by the 19th century railway

companies and our towns are feeling the impact.

In her book *Shopped*, a study of supermarket behaviour, Joanna Blythman shows how this approach alters townscapes. The example she cites is Dundee. After the council had spent money improving the approaches to the city, Tesco got planning permission to build a superstore on the most scenic and desirable location. Subsequently along came ASDA and then Sainsburys. Now most routes through and past Dundee seem to lead to vast supermarkets. By 2003, the city had four Tescos, two Safeways and ASDA with two, had submitted an application to build a third on a greenfield site. Since Dundee has a population of only 143,000 something more than mere commerce and competition may be at work.

The same behaviour could be found in Dewsbury, a small Yorkshire mill town, during the 19th century. The town got its first railway station in 1846 and shortly afterwards the company which built it considered and then abandoned the idea of expanding the facility. The reason was obvious; other railways were springing up on the periphery of the town, rapidly reducing the market area. Yet a few years later along came a second company, which built another line ending in a terminus. Shortly afterwards a third company arrived, uniting with the second to build an even bigger terminus which significantly dwarfed the town's original station.

In effect, company number two was in competition with itself. Finally a fourth company arrived. Dewsbury was a one industry town involved in weaving shoddy, a cheap cloth at the bottom of the wool textiles hierarchy. By the time these additional companies were establishing themselves, the town was in decline. Yet this was the era of railway mania and with money to spend the aim was to establish a presence.

Northallerton, county town of North Yorkshire, has the bad luck to be the victim of both railway and supermarket. Anyone unfortunate enough to be passing through when there is a breakdown of level crossing gates will quickly appreciate the power of the Victorian railway company. The town is bisected by rails at street level on a south west/north east axis. If one crossing gate breaks down, all seize up in sympathy and the town is largely closed off.

We may think such an imperious invasion by private companies couldn't happen today but just down the road Tesco has reshaped things to its liking. From modest beginnings the supermarket has colonised a whole corner of the town just behind the high street, demolishing buildings and absorbing acres of land to meet its needs. The town has two other supermarkets and once all were of a similar size but such has been Tesco's impact that the High Street is fast becoming a retailing desert with charity shops in premises that were once occupied by butchers

and fishmongers. Northallerton hardly qualifies as a market town any more and it can be said that Tesco in particular has sucked the life out of the high street, as a consequence of its desire to outbuild the competition.

When a company is making huge profits there are things which can be done to demonstrate to the shareholders that the momentum is being maintained - for example, finding new areas of business such as selling financial services. This though is business conducted under the same roof. A company healthily in the black can afford to look for other more noticeable ways to demonstrate its virility. Hence the desire to encroach on a rival even if the busi-

ness case does not exist, as in Dundee. It makes the threat of competition as tangible as possible and is behaviour that would have been familiar to railway bosses. In each case, the effect is to alter townscapes and reshape them to the needs of business. Clearing up the consequences of this behaviour on the part of the railway industry has taken many years. The broad spaces acquired in our towns by the supermarkets may leave future generations with a similar problem. ♦

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BILL HARTLEY

*writes from  
Barton in Yorkshire*

# THE GREAT READING DISASTER

RECLAIMING OUR  
EDUCATIONAL BIRTHRIGHT

MONA MCNEE  
AND  
ALICE COLEMAN

By the late 1980s half the nation's children were receiving eleven years of progressivist schooling that failed to give them even the elementary basis of education. Cambridge University published a review concluding that £500 million was spent on the National Literacy Strategy with almost no effect. This great reading disaster was caused by the 'look-say' method, which presented whole words not individual letters. This book explains the causes of and solution to this problem.

In 2006, the education department ordered schools to use phonics but there is no serious teacher re-training programme. This book is thus needed just as much as ever.

Mona McNee is founder of the UK Reading Reform Foundation; Professor Alice Coleman lectured at King's College London.

342 pp., £17.95/\$34.90, 9781845400972, pbk.  
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# THE FIELDS BENEATH – THE LAST OF MIDDLESEX

JOHANNA RHIANNON JOHNSON *is saddened by the likely loss of some of the final fragments of rural Middlesex*

**H**aving long ago conceived an aversion for Cellophane and dust-jackets, I very seldom augment the contents of my bookshelves from the selections of old stock the local library sells off from time to time. But there was an occasion when it was as much as I could do to stop myself saying aloud to a rare purchase 'You will be loved and cared for where you're going'.

Unkind people would doubtless call *Middlesex*, published by Town & County Books in 1984<sup>1</sup>, a coffee-table book. But while I live, it will serve honourably as a point of demarcation, standing sentinel as it does on my shelves between Bartholomew's 1948 London atlas<sup>2</sup> and those cornerstones of any collection of Middlesex topography, Walter Jerrold's *Highways and Byways in Middlesex*<sup>3</sup>, Norman G Brett-James's *Middlesex*<sup>4</sup>, Arthur Mee's *King's England* volume with the same title<sup>5</sup> and, last but by no means least, the volume celebrating the Jubilee of the County Council in 1939<sup>6</sup>. One of the more

haunting images among its colour plates is that of a sturdy square church tower seen across two fields of wheat, with the hills of Surrey and Berkshire beyond rising faintly through a morning haze. A little to the right of the church can be seen one of the roofs of a great tithe barn. It is a view of Harmondsworth. Together with Harefield a little to the north, South Mimms, beset by traffic rather further away to the north and east, with a deal of what once was Hertfordshire in between, and small pockets here and there where odd hedgerowed corners have been overlooked, the village is all that now remains to us of a Middlesex of fields and farms. And soon, if those for whom humanity exists only that economies may prevail<sup>7</sup>, Harmondsworth, along with its near neighbour Sipson and a hundred acres of green belt land, will be no more. In their place will be a third Heathrow runway, along which, business-bound, those in thrall to their economies will be rushed up into skies no less tainted by

those seeking the sun and fitful fun on the desecrated coasts of the Moor and Spaniard.

The county of Middlesex had long ceased to be essentially rural in character when *Highways and Byways* was published in 1909. Its proximity to London has rated it ever to suffer at the hands of outsiders; Jerrold's "humming electric tramcars"<sup>8</sup> were hardly harbingers of a metropolitan expansion already impelled by railway magnates and money-men from places as diverse as Manchester and Chicago. The act of Parliament that abolished the county in all but name in April 1965<sup>9</sup> merely ratified what had long since been accomplished by bricks and mortar and the red Tube train.

Middlesex had been England's second smallest county. It is hard for the Ruddleman, whose own county has happily been restored to some semblance of its former status, to imagine his native ground as a place only of arterial roads, 'corners', shopping parades and malls interspersed with recreation grounds and endless blossomed 'avenues' where none see the stars at night.

But he may soon find it rather easier. For it is clear that the government's Planning Reform Bill 2007 has been conceived with other objectives besides that of steamrolling a third Heathrow runway into being. The government wants to see houses being built at a rate of 240,000 per year by 2016, no small percentage of them for no purpose other than that of accommodating migrants who will add further to a

population in a sense already superfluous because essentially the residue of one increased by virtue of an industrial epoch now receding into history. No-one seems to ask why a country that no longer depends upon its manufacturing prowess, no longer grows its own sufficient food nor mines its own natural resources and which ultimately can sustain only a finite number of service and facilitator enterprises needs immigration on the scale that we see now. This may well be because the answer lies too near the bone. That 'economic benefit' to which all and sundry pay lip service means not that of a kind accrued from the development of a high quality specialist manufacturing capacity, the making of new reputations in other fields of necessary enterprise and endeavour, still less that derived from a revival of agriculture in the full vigour of its ethos, but a mere provision of sufficient means of supporting a spoilt generation in its Botoxed dotage.

Notions nebulous and cynical of mass property ownership aside, another possible reason for housebuilding on such a scale is less easy to articulate because, no less rooted in our flawed nature as it is, it impinges upon the abstract and spiritual. The enmity between the serpent's and the woman's seed<sup>10</sup> is as nothing to that which exists between he who loves beauty and the boor who does not. Where the one does no more than look away from all that is unbeautiful, the other cannot look upon any fine or graceful thing but that he must defile it. What offence and



reproach there must be in a summer morning on a South Country hillside for a Caliban intent upon peopling an island by proxy.

Middlesex was never beautiful in the way that many parts of its nearest neighbours still are. What threatens Harmondsworth and Sipson is something more insidious than any combination of economic forces and philistinism. The brave band of those resolved to oppose the Heathrow plan might profit by an understanding of something more than the bare ambition of their foe.

The love of the easy path, the soft option, the facile expedient, is the mark of a spoilt generation. Such a generation, as it has arisen in our time, is at once the creature, client and prey of those whose view of life is founded upon an inability to face the essential truths of the human condition that, at times, seems almost wilful. Kept in ignorance from the very first, because it suited its creators that it should be sundered from its roots, it has grown in ignorance of its own country, estranged from a native genius as it has found expression in a Middlesex no less than in any other fairer, grander shire. Cheated thus, and all too often willingly, for ignorance is a ravening thing, of all that for which a popular culture that is the apotheosis of ignorance cannot supply, what could be more natural to this generation than that, seeing how so very little is left of what was once a countryside, it should shrug its shoulders and stand idly by? As the farce of a planning process is acted out. As the

bulldozer begins its work.

When Harefield and South Mimms in their turn have been buried under bricks, how expedient, how so very much easier, it will be to build over that tract of ex-Hertfordshire in between. If it has not already gone by then. And when the time is long since past when so many hundred thousand 'homes' per year were not enough, then will the Ruddleman, if such still lives, know what it is to find pathetic pleasure in discovering that the tree that shades the remnant of a hedge beside what has become a tarmacked path is a rare hornbeam. And he will perhaps compare its grain with that of a generation all too willing not to care because there was so little left to save. ♦

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JOHANNA RHIANNON  
JOHNSTON  
*writes from Northampton*

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#### NOTES

1. *Middlesex*, Philip Scoones, photos John Bethell, Town & County Books, London, 1984
2. *Bartholomew's Reference Atlas of Greater London*, John Bartholomew & Son, Edinburgh, 1948
3. *Highways & Byways in Middlesex*, Walter Jerrold, illus Hugh Thomson, Macmillan, London, 1909
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5. *Middlesex*, Arthur Mee (ed), Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1940
6. *Middlesex, The Jubilee of the County Council 1889-1939*, O W Radcliffe, Evans Brothers, London, 1939
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10. Genesis 3, 15

# OPERA WARS – POLITICS BY PROXY

MICHAEL KEITH SMITH *shows how 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century operatic works shaped and were in turn shaped by wider political developments*

A few years ago, some inclusively-minded 'cultural' oracle proclaimed "All operas are left-wing". Well, I suppose many works written from the Enlightenment onwards might be described as conveying a 'liberal' message, Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Verdi's *Don Carlos* being obvious examples. In Brussels, Auber's *La Muette de Portici*, inspired by the Neapolitan revolt against the Spaniards, touched off a real-life revolution against the House of Orange.

But the truth is that none of this can be said of early opera, once a closed book, but now an important part of the modern repertoire. From the philosophical and historical researches of the Florentine *Camerata*, to the dawn of the Enlightenment and beyond, opera manifested itself as an art form which, with its casts of heroes, gods and wise princes, tended to glorify absolute monarchy. Absolute monarchs, after all, more often than not paid the piper.

True, opera prospered in republican Hamburg and for a meteoric but glittering period in constitutional England under Handel, Bononcini and other first rate composers. In London, however, the art remained very much an exotic import, and it is perhaps significant that the Dutch Republic, for all its wealth and love of novelty, remained an operatic desert.

Yet a revolution lay on the horizon. Naples was very far from being a *Rechtsstaat*, let alone a democracy, but in the streets of the most musical of European capitals the common people sang from morning to night, finding a freedom in music they were denied in the field of politics. It was in Naples in 1733 that a brilliant young composer, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, produced a simple one-act comic opera *La Serva Padrona*, which employed folk-song like arias to tell a charming burlesque story of a cunning maid who tricks her elderly master into marrying her.

The piece was originally no more than an *intermezzo* inserted between the acts of Pergolesi's *opera seria*, *Il Prigioniero Superbo*, a work that rapidly disappeared from view. *La Serva Padrona*, however, was an immediate hit. Three years later Pergolesi lay dead at the age of 26, but his musical offspring survived to conquer Europe.

In 1752, *La Serva Padrona* was given in Paris by an itinerant Italian troupe of comic actors, who needed little singing talent to perform the simple work. Immediately the cause of this new form of opera was taken up by men of letters who, needless to say, had ulterior motives for their partisanship. The resultant controversy, conducted in the columns of newspapers and in pamphlets was celebrated as the *Querelle des Bouffons* ("War of the Comedians") and may to some extent be seen as a proxy for the largely suppressed political arguments of the day.

The debate highlighted the differences between what was characterised as the vibrant and progressive character of Italian opera and the stultified traditions of French *Tragédie-lyrique*. Now this is an interpretation which may be strongly challenged, but what is without doubt is that in France, under the patronage of the absolute monarchy,

an art-form had developed which had become exclusively French, for all its Italian roots.

In the operas of Monteverdi and Cavalli we find continuous streams of harmony with an absence of discrete songs or *arias*. This was the tradition that Jean-Baptiste Lully, himself an Italian by birth, had brought to the court

of Louis XIV and which, after his death had continued as if preserved in aspic. Operas by Lully remained in the repertoire for decade after decade, and were joined by the imitative works of lesser talents such as Delalande and Destouches.

Certainly, with his début opera *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1733, Jean-Phillipe Rameau had brought about a much-needed revolution in *Tragédie-lyrique*, but it remained still *Tragédie-lyrique*; sung in French, relying upon semi-declamatory vocal harmonies

rather than melody, and eschewing the services of the talented and glamorous *castrati* who had taken the rest of Europe by storm.

As it happened, the 1752 performance of *La Serva Padrona* coincided with a revival of Destouche's *Omphale*, a work which was now 51 years old. This was the catalyst for the *philosophe* Grimm, who launched a stinging attack upon the creaking work and upon the

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Opera itself. "The composer is dead" wrote Grimm, "and his work had little enough life in the first place".

Grimm's *Lettre sur Omphale* whipped up an immediate storm, with men and women of fashion and learning taking up the cudgels either for the cause of cultured French opera or for the demotic, easy-going manners of the Italian interloper. Now came to the fray Grimm's friend, the expatriate Swiss Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on this occasion motivated less by political ideology than by motives of revenge.

When Rousseau came to Paris in 1743, he had done so as a would-be composer and musical theorist, and his idol was the greatest living French composer, Rameau. The austere and cerebral Rameau, as famous for his works of musical theory and philosophy as for his keyboard publications, had won new laurels when he started to compose opera at the relatively advanced age of 50. This giant, who had absurdly proclaimed music to be "first among the sciences", was widely hailed in France as "The Newton of Music".

The newcomer had brought with him a plan for a revolutionary new system of musical notation, which rapidly sank without trace. Rousseau brought also the sketches for an *opéra-ballet* entitled *Les Muses Galantes* in blatant imitation of Rameau's highly successful work *Les Indes Galantes*. The intended tribute was brusquely rebuffed by the notoriously rude Rameau, and Rousseau now con-

ceived in his heart an implacable hatred for his former hero.

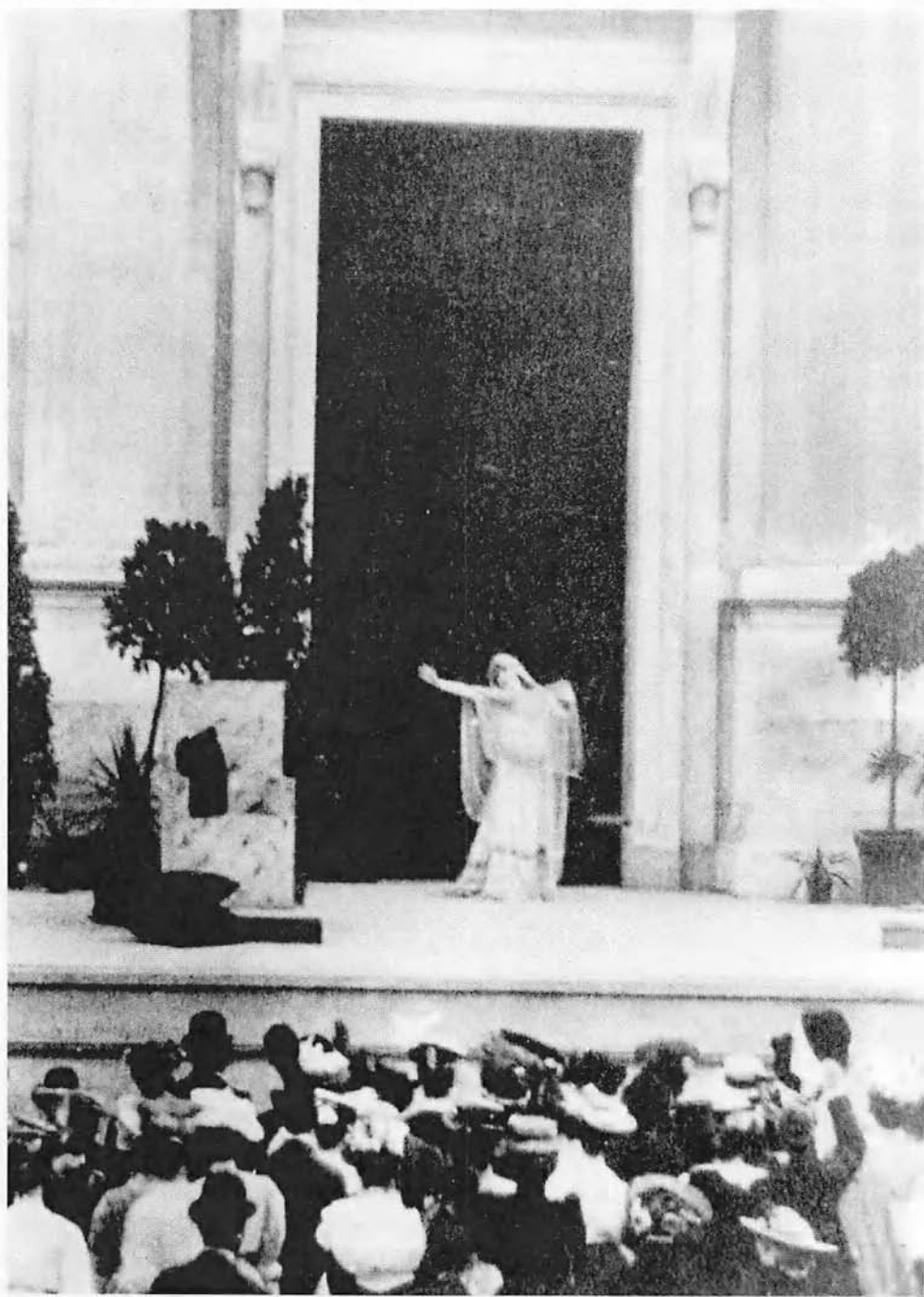
By 1752, however, Rousseau had himself found fame with a miniature French comic opera of peasant life which was performed before Louis XV and the court at Fontainebleau, to enormous acclaim. The king's unmelodious voice was heard around the palace singing Rousseau's hit aria *J'ai perdu mon serviteur* and Rousseau, had his daemon not led him in a different direction, could have claimed a freely-offered place as a favoured and cosseted court composer.

Now, with his place in the operatic pantheon apparently assured, Rousseau turned with relish to uphold the cause of Italian *opéra buffa* against the aristocratic grandeur of the Paris Opera and, therefore against the living symbol of that grandeur, Jean-Philippe Rameau.

Rameau, who himself had years before been denounced as an anti-traditionalist, remained aloof throughout the controversy, but it must have pained him deeply to see his wealthy patron, the *fermier-général* Le Riche de La Pouplinière, drawn to the 'Italians'.

Meanwhile Rousseau's assault upon French opera in particular and French music in general became ever shriller. Finally in *Lettre sur la musique Française*, published the following year, he overstepped the mark completely:

"I think that I have shown that there is neither measure nor melody in French music, because the language is not capable of them; that French



SARAH BERNHARDT, SAN FRANCISCO, 1906. PHOTO: ARNOLD GENTHE, COURTESY JAMES MOORE COLLECTION



singing is a continual squalling, insupportable to an unprejudiced ear; that its harmony is crude and devoid of expression and suggests only the padding of a pupil; that French 'airs' are not airs; that French recitative is not recitative. From this I conclude that the French have no music and cannot have any; or that if they ever have, it will be so much the worse for them."

Paris reacted with outrage. Rousseau's free pass at the Opéra was summarily withdrawn, he was allegedly abused and kicked when he attempted to enter the building and the members of the orchestra burned him in effigy. With characteristic paranoia, Jean-Jacques decided that there must be a plot to murder him and in 1754, he decamped to his Genevan birthplace. This was to be the first leg of that tormented yet productive journey through an unsympathetic Switzerland which led him, catastrophically, to England before his final return to France.

Now Rameau, who had carefully avoided being drawn into the opera controversy, could not resist taking a swipe at his stricken tormentor, and he launched an attack on Rousseau's contributions to the musical entries in the *Encyclopédie*. To Rameau's chagrin he now became the personal object of counter-attacks from d'Alembert and Diderot. The lasting legacy of this quarrel was Diderot's brilliant satirical dialogue *Le Neveu de Rameau*.

Wounded by the criticism from his fellow-intellectuals, Rameau retreated into a crabbed and disillusioned old age and died in 1764 at the then considerable age of 81. The daring and dazzling effects of his last, unperformed, stage work, *Les Boréades*, proved that for all his disenchantment he remained the unchallenged king of French opera.

In 1767 Rousseau fled to France from England in panic, his head whirling with fantasies of planned kidnap and assassination. He relocated to Paris in 1770 and lived in quiet seclusion, a shadow of his former self.

Now to Paris came Christoph Willibald Gluck. In Vienna, Gluck had been music tutor to the Hapsburg princess Marie Antoinette. In 1770 his pupil married the Dauphin, the future Louis XVI. In 1774, the same year that Marie Antoinette became Queen of France, Gluck obtained a contract to write for the Paris Opéra.

Years before, Gluck had declared himself a disciple of Rousseau. *Orfeo ed Euridice* received its premiere at Vienna in 1762, and with its tiny cast and pure melodies stripped of superfluous ornament, Gluck seemed to have realised the apotheosis of the type of opera exemplified by *La Serva Padrona* and *Le Devin du Village*.

Yet *Orfeo* had been this and much more. Gluck's little masterpiece consciously integrated drama, music and dance in a manner more reminiscent of the stage works of Rameau. His first work for

Paris, *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774), took the process a stage further, synthesising the French tradition of *Tragédie-lyrique* with that of Italian opera.

Yet the premiere of Gluck's superb work gave rise to a storm of controversy. Unlike the *Querelle des Bouffons*, which had deep intellectual roots, the inspiration of this row seemed to owe more to a general chauvinistic resentment of a clever foreigner who had set out to teach the French their business. So, with a breathtaking absence of logic the patriotic party chose as their champion an Italian, Niccolò Piccinni, whose light-hearted if lightweight *opere buffe* had amused the Parisian public for years. In her memoirs the celebrated portraitist Élisabeth-Louise Vigée-Le Brun gives a vivid picture of the new battleground:

"The love of music was so general that it occasioned a serious quarrel between those who were called Gluckists and Piccinists. All amateurs were divided into two opposing factions. The usual field of battle was the garden of the Palais Royal. There the partisans of Gluck and the partisans of Piccini went at each other with such violence that there was more than one duel to record."

1774 saw the premiere of a recast and extended version of *Orfeo*, translated into French with the former castrato title role now given to a tenor, in accordance with Parisian taste. The production was generally well received, and in

that year a poignant meeting took place between the ailing and reclusive Jean-Jacques and his admirer, the glamorous Chevalier. The two men got on remarkably well. Rousseau died four years later, one of his last published writings being an enthusiastic review of Gluck's opera *Alceste*, a reinterpretation of the very same story which had inspired one of Lully's greatest masterpieces.

So, in a sense, the story had come full circle, with little more than a decade to run before the world-shattering events of 1789. In 1779 Gluck suffered a stroke and returned to Vienna, leaving the Paris Opera in the capable hands of his protégé Antonio Salieri. In 1787, the year of Gluck's death, Salieri scored a huge triumph with *Tarare*, to the libretto of Beaumarchais. In the tradition of Gluck's reforms Salieri's music served the drama, and what a drama! The death of a royal tyrant and his replacement by a patriotic and popular commander uncannily reflected the unstoppable march of French history. As the people crown Tarare, the final chorus proclaims "Your greatness comes not from your rank, but from your character". The politics of opera had been replaced by the opera of politics. ♦

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## NOTES

The **Florentine Camerata** was a group of artists and intellectuals who gathered during the 1570s and 1580s to discuss the arts. They believed that music had become corrupt, and sought to reconstruct the drama of ancient Greece, which they erroneously supposed to have been predominantly sung rather than spoken. In 1598 this project culminated in the staging of *Dafne*, composed by **Jacopo Peri**, which is generally regarded as the first true opera. It was written in a style of continuous harmony which reached its peak in the work of **Claudio Monteverdi** (1567–1643) at Mantua and later Venice. *L'Orfeo* is his earliest extant opera and was the first to reclaim popularity. Monteverdi's work for the public opera house at Venice was continued by **Francesco Cavalli** (1602–1676). Cavalli visited Paris at the behest of the Italian-born Cardinal Mazarin and in 1662 his *Ercole amante* was given at the Tuileries in honour of the marriage of Louis XIV and Maria Theresa, albeit two years after the nuptials. It was a curtain-raiser for the era of Lully.

**Giovanni Battista Bononcini** (1670–1747) was a composer and cellist, born in Modena. From 1720 to 1732 he worked in London, where for a time the popularity of his operas rivalled those of Handel. His later works include a funeral anthem for the Duke of Marlborough. He left London after charges of plagiarism.

**Jean-Baptiste Lully** (1632–1687), was a composer of Italian birth, who spent most of his life working in the court of Louis XIV of France, with whom he enjoyed great personal favour, notwithstanding his humble origins. Lully founded French opera or *Tragédie-lyrique*, sung in French, and eschewing the developing division in Italian opera between separate recitatives and arias. Set-piece dance movements figure large in Lully's work, reflecting his early work as a composer for the ballet.

**Michel Richard Delalande** (1657–1726) and **André Cardinal Destouches** (1672–1749), a former soldier, continued the musical tradition of Lully after his death. The reputation of these composers for derivative mediocrity has been exaggerated.

**Giovanni Battista Pergolesi** (1710–1736) was an inspired but short-lived Neapolitan composer now recalled for his *Stabat Mater* (written in the year of his death from tuberculosis) and the two act buffa intermezzo, *La Serva Padrona* (1733) which, almost 20 years later, would spark Paris's *Querelle des Bouffons*.

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau** (1712–1778) in his day as famous a musicologist and critic as a philoso-

pher, was a major protagonist of the 'Pergolesi' faction in the *Querelle des Bouffons*. His comic opera *Le Devin du Village* captivated France and was translated into English by Charles Burney, and performed in London as *The Cunning Man* in 1762. The hymn tune "Rousseau's Dream" is an arrangement of music from this opera.

**Jean-Philippe Rameau** (1683–1764). Beginning his musical life as an organist in Dijon, Rameau spent years as a composer of keyboard pieces and a musical theorist, in which field he made his name with his *Treatise on Harmony* in 1722. Rameau was nearly 50 when he started to write opera with *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1733, a work which challenged the harmonic conventions inherited from Lully. The resulting feud between 'Lullistes' and 'Rameauneurs' mirrored the later *Querelle des Bouffons*, by which time Rameau's role had transmuted from revolutionary to reactionary. Attractive rustic dances add light relief to Rameau's operas which were moving out of favour by the time of his death. However, he has reclaimed his place among France's musical greats.

**Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm** (1723–1807). A native of Ratisbon, Grimm, the son of a pastor, came to Paris in 1748 as secretary to Count Friesen, a German nobleman in the French service. Rousseau brought Grimm into the circle of the Encyclopaedists, and his pamphlets and letters advancing the cause of Italian opera made his reputation and kick-started the *Querelle des Bouffons*. Subsequently, Grimm served as a diplomat in the service of France, various German states and Russia. His friendship with Rousseau ended in intense acrimony.

**Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck** (1714–1787). Raised in Bohemia, the scion of a prosperous family of foresters, Gluck attended the University of Prague before travelling through Europe in search of commissions. His first opera, *Artaserse*, was given at Milan in 1741. In 1745 he was in London, where he composed operas for the King's Theatre and benefited from the influence of Handel. By 1754 Gluck was Imperial *Kapellmeister* at Vienna and in 1756 he was knighted by the Pope. Gluck's reforms of opera, giving equal emphasis to music, drama and dance bore fruit in *Orfeo ed Euridice* and the works that followed. In 1773 Gluck moved to Paris where he developed a new genre, synthesising the traditions of Italian opera and French *Tragédie-lyrique*. Gluck returned to Vienna where he continued to work for the Court until his death.

# LEE PEFLEY

## – SOCIOPATH AND SAGE

DEREK TURNER *enjoys* Fields of Asphodel, the last (and weirdest) installment of Lee Pefley's fictional life

**F**ields of Asphodel is the latest of Tito Perdue's (see interview, page 4) five critically acclaimed satires detailing the uproarious, curmudgeonly life of Leland (Lee) Pefley. It is impossible to review this book in isolation, so we need to know what has gone before – all the more necessary for a mostly British audience because, for some inexplicable reason, Perdue has never been published in the United Kingdom.

The first book was *Lee*, which appeared in 1991. This features Pefley as an old man who has gone back to his Alabama hometown to die and who beguiles the tedious time by hitting or fantasizing about hitting those he sees as ignorant or ugly, and generally making himself as disagreeable as possible. He is a man characterized by overweening arrogance and a generic loathing for the modern world, and gnawed by disillusion, loneliness (his deceased wife Judy is constantly in his thoughts) and a pro-

found melancholia. *Lee* received rave reviews from just about everyone who read it, except for one or two journals which felt that surreal originality, a vigorous prose style, profound culture, mordant humour, marvellous characterization and moving evocations were all very well, but they couldn't counterbalance Lee's 'snobbishness'. But astuter critics were united in their view that here was a Southern Samuel Beckett or James Joyce for the 1990s.

*The New Austerities* (1994) was a prequel, which showed Lee packing in his detested insurance job in New York, and driving back down to Dixie with Judy in a car on which he has only made one payment, drifting down an hallucinogenically-imagined east coast, believing that Alabama may be their Land of Potential Content. But he finds when he gets there that the bucolic, conservative, unregimented South of his memory or imagination has become 'the New South', an increasingly unfree and homogenized

place, where pick-up trucks driven by hard-faced, self-reliant farmers are being replaced by nearly new cars driven by soft executives in suits.

*Opportunities in Alabama Agriculture* (also 1994) is a pre-sequel, leapfrogging two generations backwards to Lee's grandfather Ben, born and raised in Alabama just after the Civil War. Ben is a dreamer (as Lee will be), the son of a dreamer and with brothers who are so impractical that they become alcoholics and die young. Unsuccessful as a shop assistant and as a farmer, yet gifted with a curious literary talent, he eventually lands a job as a rural postman, the area's first – ironically heralding the start of the systematization his descendant will hate so much. *Opportunities* is filled with time elisions and sideslips, set in an Alabama that is part modern but also part prehistoric. It is also suffused with the essence of childhood – close observation of small things and acceptance of the status quo, blended with wonder at the strangeness and size of the world.

The fourth book in the series is *The Sweet-Scented Manuscript* (2004), which returns to Lee's own life, following his journey at the age of 18 from Alabama to university in the North. He finds new books and peers, but most of all he finds Judy, his perfect mate, who thereafter becomes the lodestar of his life. Although all of Perdue's books are partly autobiographical, this is perhaps the most obviously personal, conveying beautifully the bittersweet ardency that is the

common lot of many young adults. It is redeemed from being saccharine by Lee's ever-present knowledge that youth and health and optimism are highly perishable fruits. He is hauntingly aware that the fresh female face he strokes today will be furrowed tomorrow, and the day after that they will both be "tumbling forever among the stars".

So we come to *Fields of Asphodel* – without a doubt the strangest of five very strange books. It is difficult to know how to do justice to a book that combines a comforting (and quite traditional Christian) faith with conversations with God about 1950s music, courtly archaisms with crude street slang, eldritch imagery with allusions to medieval theology, philosophical points (some a little ponderous) with haemorrhoid-related humour.

But it is safe to presume that it will be the last in the series, as now Lee is dead, yet still sentient, searching for Judy across a twilight landscape resembling a limbo dreamed up by a visionary painter. Far from being the Elysian place the title suggests, it is bleak and ugly, filled with ill-conditioned people of the sort Lee hoped he would have left behind on earth. Lee still has his bodily ailments and infirmities, to which are added wet, cold and hunger, and the discomfiture of meeting intellectual equals who are able to defeat him in verbal sparring matches, as they all shuffle or limp across a freezing and largely featureless landscape towards the hoped-for "higher domains".



On the way, he is sometimes scourged – being pelted with cabbage, being interviewed by officials, working as a salesman, being threatened with death for ‘having no compassion’, having his shoes stolen and having everyone refusing his Canadian currency. But there are also compensations, such as warmer weather, caning officials and sales managers, meeting some of his revered Greek philosophers, being offered a job binding books by hand, seeing voluptuaries being eaten alive by pigs or having molten gold poured into their mouths while whole cities burn in the far distance. Eventually, he can see “mountains of royal blue where shepherds were harassing each other with trumpet calls”, and he knows he is nearing his apotheosis. Entering the personally customized village at the far side of the desert (architecture and society *circa* 1910, flora and vegetation *circa* Silurian), he knows that he has finally been “transported into a legendary person”.

It would be easy to dismiss Lee Pefley (and by extension his creator) as distastefully fundamentalist. But although Lee’s approach obviously goes too far, the Pefley/Perdue critique of modernity is of great importance, including such questions as – why are our countries increasingly characterized by *angst*, anger, alienation and anomie? Why do we produce no great art? Why does everything have to be so ugly? Why does nothing work properly? Why are our politicians so incompetent and untrustworthy?

We should remember that Lee is not

naturally bitter; his admittedly sociopathic traits are the by-products of what he sees (correctly) as a toxic society. His chief hope has always been childishly simple – that people will try to live up to their potential, and that society should be as civilized as can be. That people and society always fall short is not his fault, but theirs; they (or we) have never really tried. They (or we) have unprecedented health, wealth and access to information and culture – yet the majority of us prefer to spend our time making and spending money, or reading about Kylie, or watching random agglomerations of men chasing after a ball.

Lee’s ideal appears on p231 – “Always he had wanted a small world getting smaller, a fine people getting finer, all of them dwelling far apart in hand-build cottages on a glebe getting gorgeouser”. What he has always hated – and what we should likewise hate – is the contemporary cross-party concept of nations being economies with countries attached, instead of the other way around. The unlikeable, unforgettable character of Lee Pefley embodies a paradox – that some of those who seem by today’s standards to be the most acerbic, the most misanthropic, the most ‘irrelevant’ and ‘out of touch’ may secretly be the greatest idealists of all. ♦

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DEREK TURNER

*is the editor of the Quarterly Review*

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**FIELDS OF ASPHODEL**

*Tito Perdue, Overlook Press, New York, 2007, hb, 252pp, \$25.99*



**H**ere is the good news. For any of you out there nostalgic for the lovable extra-terrestrial, NASA is beaming out songs into deep space trying to lure anything that might be out there to our shores. The bad news is that scientists warn that transmitting songs could put the earth at risk of an alien attack. They voiced fears that advertising humanity's place in the universe could attract the attention of aliens who are less friendly than ET. Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI) plans more broadcasts from its base in Mountain View, California. Dr Douglas Vakoch of the SETI Institute, which has been leading the search for extraterrestrials, told *New Scientist* magazine: "Before sending even symbolic messages, we need an open discussion about the potential risks". For the past 20 years, SETI has used radio telescopes to scan the skies for alien

radio messages. After getting nothing but static, some of its researchers have decided that listening for aliens is not enough. Instead, they say, we should be actively sending out friendly signals to the stars. Now comes the horror that might signal the end of life on earth.

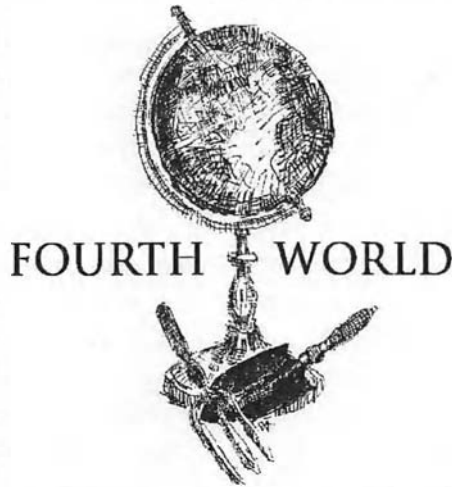
NASA broadcast a Beatles track toward the North Star, and sent a craft with engravings attached to the outside, depicting humans and our planet, and containing tapes of voices, music and maps showing where the earth is situated. The problem is the voices and the Beatles. If some terrestrial hears the lyrics of a rapper, or listens to the boring tunes of the Beatles, our goose is cooked. Thank God they are not able to send out pictures. Seeing Barbra Streisand or Ronnie Wood, not to mention Puff Daddy, would alert unfriendly species to cross interstellar space with deadly intent. Mind you, not everyone is as pessimis-

tic about our chances as I am. Dr Seth Shostak says that if there are any extra-terrestrials listening out for us, they will have already had plenty of experience of the earth's vulgarity. Early broadcasts of *Star Trek* and *I Love Lucy* are washing over one star system a day. Radio waves travel at the speed of light, around 186,000 miles per second. This means it would take a radio broadcast four years to reach the closest star, Alpha Proxima. Well, as they've just started to send out Beatles music, we are guaranteed four years without an alien invasion. After that anything can happen, but here's a suggestion which could save life on earth. Recall immediately the signals and begin sending out Mozart and Beethoven symphonies and piano sonatas. When the ETs out there hear them, they will be bathed in a celestial light, and even the ignoramuses among them will come around. But let's assume that there are aliens with no sense of melody, passion or drama. What we do is deluge them with jazz, the first and only American contribution to high art. Louis Armstrong, Duke Wellington, Fats Waller, Charley Parker – the ETs will go nuts and start dancing in their space ships. And if some of them are racists and don't like African-American jazz, we hit them with grace, sophistication and wit à la Cole Porter, George and Ira Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Rodgers & Hammerstein, Jerome Kern, and Lorenz Hart. Just imagine. These extra-terrestrials are

buzzing around 431 light years away, and to put it mildly they are bored stiff. How excited can one get after the millionth cosmic ray collision? Suddenly their antennae pick up Hoagy Carmichael's *Star Dust*. And they even get nostalgic when they hear Hoagy singing about a place they may have been a trillion years before: "I'm gonna get a moonburn when I'm out with you tonight, and when the glowing stars above ... flash the words that you love me, the moon will warm my heart". Now that's a real signal in a language any self-respecting ET will understand and appreciate. And what about Cole's *Night and Day*, with Fred Astaire's tap dancing in the background. Broadway will also swing them to our side. South Pacific, The King and I, Guys and Dolls, Oklahoma, Anything Goes, My Fair Lady, Show Boat, Of Thee I Sing – they'll be rolling in their space capsules. And those wonderful songs of a bygone era: *These Foolish Things*, *You Go To My Head*, *I'll Never Smile Again*, *Chattanooga Choo-Choo*, *Fools Rush In*, *Body and Soul*, *All the Things You Are*, *You're the Top*, *East of the Sun and West of the Moon* (this would really get them excited). I could go on and on. Let's for once be smart. Do it my way and all Earthlings will have a long life to look forward to. ♦

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**L**et no British citizen feel any sense of aloofness from the turmoil which has erupted in Kenya; it is a phenomena endemic from one end of this vast continent to the other and it is British colonialism and its constitutional arrangements for independent rule which are largely responsible.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the rival colonial powers of Europe proceeded to carve up the entire vast continent, wholly ignoring the historic local tribal identities and their governments as they drew lines on maps to confirm their own particular interests.

As a result, ancient tribal peoples found themselves living in different colonial territories which had no correspondence or relevance to their tribal boundaries, or they found themselves lumped together with many other tribes in vast territorial aggregates such as the Congo, Nigeria or Kenya which

inevitably threw them into conflicts of interest with each other.

When the colonialists, after a little more than 100 years, just a blip in the scale of history, scuppered from the mess they had created they did so in the most tragic and explosive manner conceivable. Instead of restoring power to the tribal authorities they had so ruthlessly and ignorantly suppressed, they proceeded to install centralised 'national' governments modelled on their own forms of government.

It did not matter that the new forms had no roots in African life or experience and no correspondence with their historic identities, nor that the so-called European 'democracies' were themselves in a state of anti-democratic chaos and, as the Iraq war and the empty elephant of the EUropean imposition from Brussels clearly indicate, were not even working in Europe. The new governments were adroitly imposed in

many parts of the continent, sustained in the main by local mass political party leaders. Some of them, such as Nyerere of Tanzania or Kaunda of Zambia, were highly principled, first-rate men, whilst others were political adventurers in the familiar European mould; others, as in Nigeria, were leaders of majority tribes, who then proceeded to oppress the minority tribes as ruthlessly as the colonialists themselves. The achievement of independence all too often proved to be the creation of a new indigenous kind of colonialism; such leaders rose to the top of new structures and achieved a new power interest, often at the expense of their own tribal loyalties and identities.

The result has been a tragedy of historic and continental proportions beyond the power of any pen adequately to convey. Millions have died in the ensuing and inevitable civil wars, millions have been made homeless and seen their local economies destroyed, and the toll of human suffering and wretchedness continues to mount. Large areas of the former Belgian Congo, an area far larger than Europe, is now a wilderness, as can be said of conditions in large parts of the Sudan, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kenya and elsewhere. In every case the cause lies in explosive tribal conflicts, the grounds of which were laid by the departing colonialists. It has to be said that as long as these post-colonial conditions continue to prevail the situation

can only lead to a further spread of lawlessness and social collapse, with more civil wars and more and more human tragedy and travail.

It is high time to recognise the immensity of the tragedy colonialism and neo-colonialism have created, time to learn the lessons of this historic, multiple blunder, time to recognise that there is not the least prospect that the tribe is going to fade away, but is going to dominate Africa's future as it has dominated Africa's past. It is time to recognise above all that the tribe *is* Africa and that no peace or any degree of harmony and stability can be achieved that does not recognise tribal identities and make due provision for tribal freedom and self-government.

It is not, after all, a problem unique to Africa. The assertion of tribal identity and the determination to achieve tribal self-rule is endemic across the world and signifies that freedom and the goal of democratic government has come of age everywhere. What else is Welsh or Scottish nationalism? Or the Irish imbroglio? They too are not going to fade away, nor is any kind of progress remotely possible whilst the rights of the varying tribes of the Arabic and Asiatic worlds continue to be ignored and whilst they remain in the grip of empires long established by conquest and repression, means which are today neither tenable nor acceptable.

Part of the problem, especially as it relates to Africa, lies in the persistent



European illusion that a *mass* democracy is anything more than the queen of all oxymorons. There is a failure here to grasp that democracy is above all a moral objective, and that since morality is a function of personal relationships, it is a factor which can only operate on a local, human-scale level. Since any *mass* government is dominated by power relationships, that power is necessarily deployed in ways which enslave the citizen to centrally operated bureaucratic procedures operated by anonymous office holders, and which are of course about as democratic as a death trap. The argument that the use of the ballot box on a mass basis solves this problem ignores the extent to which they compound it, since mass voting procedures are themselves dominated by centrally controlled financial forces able to secure mass adhesion to whatever they may choose to project.

The time has arrived for an entire team of far-seeing African statesmen to work to undo the colonial mischief and to re-establish the tribal boundaries of African history. It may well prove a long-term project, but there is no other way the continent can be restored to any kind of stability and where the always evolving principles of democracy can prevail.

We need to recognise that the age of empires is over, including those of China, India, the USA, Russia, Europe and any other entities. These are enti-

ties which, simply because of their size, mean their mere existence is a denial of fundamental human rights; so too is the age of bogus forms of democracy on a mass basis which gives power to great leaders and their vast centralised bureaucracies whilst they disempower the individual citizen, who is reduced to a status of manipulated insignificance.

We have advanced to the age of real democracy, one where countless small tribes will govern their own affairs in accordance with the decisions of their members, and where in larger units different local concerns, schools, police, health, planning and public utilities are restored to local community control so that power itself is wedded to an organic principle of maximum dispersal, and where the elements of centralised control are restricted to a minimum. 'That country is governed best which is governed least' is a principle we can no longer afford to ignore, and the tragic events in 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany, Russia, Italy, Spain and elsewhere need to be seen for what they are – a lesson and a warning of what we must expect if we continue to ignore it. ♦

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JOHN PAPWORTH

*was the founding editor of both Resurgence and Fourth World Review. He has travelled extensively in Africa and is the author of several books on human scale themes, the latest being Village Democracy published by Imprint Academic*



## CINEMATIC CLASSICS

**B**lade Runner (1982) is simply one of the greatest science fiction movies ever made. It really deserves the appellation 'sf' rather than 'sci-fi' – the former being the term used by fans for serious science fiction. It is the almost archetypical example of the so-called 'cyberpunk' subgenre in science fiction.

The cyberpunk subgenre typically focusses on a gritty future of planet-wide corporate rule and ecological disaster, where a lonely, somewhat dysfunctional hero tries to retain some measure of decency and humanity in a world dominated by vast impersonal forces – such as the frequently malevolent artificial intelligences (AIs) that lurk in cyberspace. William Gibson's 1984 *Neuromancer* coined the term cyberspace, envisioning it as an electronic realm where the planet's real power-struggles take place – in attempts to protect or steal data.

Cyberpunk also addresses the

relentless manipulation and alteration of the human and the natural through pharmacological, biological, electronic, and electromechanical means – raising the question of what it means to be human in a world where human nature is apparently so malleable. It is the latter element that is the crux of *Blade Runner*.

The film is loosely based on Philip K Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* but the deft changes to Dick's prose have engendered what is possibly an even greater artistic triumph. The screenplay for *Blade Runner* was written by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, but Scott's vision clearly animated the whole endeavour. Some of the groundwork for this movie was laid in Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) – which is also renowned for portraying a gritty, 'lived-in' future.

It is 2019 in the ecologically-wasted cityscape of Los Angeles, with its almost perpetual black rain. Down-on-

his-luck policeman Rick Deckard (the 'blade runner' of the title) is forced into taking one last assignment. He must hunt down and 'retire' a group of replicants who have run amok in the off world colonies and illegally returned to earth where they can be shot on sight. Their plan is to confront their creator, genetic engineer Dr Eldon Tyrell, President of the Tyrell Corporation (motto "More human than human"). But as their leader Roy Batty (Nexus 6 combat model, optimal self-sufficiency) wryly observes, "It's not an easy thing to meet your maker".

The replicants, who are genetically engineered humanoids, are highly intelligent and physically superior to human beings in various ways such as the ability to endure extreme temperatures. But their design contains an irreversible fail safe device – accelerated decrepitude, a lifespan of only four years. Batty wants more life. But his maker, it transpires, cannot repair what he has made.

As "one man slaughter house" Deckard (played by Harrison Ford) wanders the dystopian cityscape, deep questions arise about what constitutes a human in this kind of world. How exactly do humans differ from replicants who are physically almost indistinguishable from them and who have developed certain human-like emotions, notably conscience and the fear of death? The obligatory

love interest Rachael (played by Sean Young) falsely believes that she must be human because she has memories. But these, it turns out, were "gifted" by Tyrell via brain implants. And Deckard eventually begins to suspect that despite having memories, he too is a "skin job".

It is because what it means to be a human is problematic that the scene in which Batty (played by Rutger Hauer) "dies", after inexplicably saving Deckard's life, is so affecting. Hauer reportedly improvised Batty's valedictory remarks, which underline his emerging "humanity", "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe, attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion... All these moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die."

One of the most captivating features of the movie is that it presents an entire cityscape and soundscape – a future that definitively feels inhabited. Much of the ambience of the setting is delivered through the electronic- and synthesizer-based soundtrack by the Greek composer Vangelis. Some of the vistas shown in the movie are truly amazing, such as the views of the megalopolis from the air – where one gets the feeling of gazing out at the 'air-conditioned nightmare' of the future. The earliest cinematic precursor to *Blade Runner* is Fritz Lang's famous *Metropolis* of 1927.



THE WHITE UNICORN IS A SYMBOL  
OF FREEDOM IN *BLADE RUNNER* - BUT  
IS IT A MANUFACTURED SYMBOL?

It is possible to discern certain political subtexts in the movie such as the fear of a disastrous ecological transformation and the attenuation of the public-political realm. Subtexts more specific to the political right include opposition to mass immigration (in terms of population the once sunny California is depicted as the new Asia) and the apparent triumph of the polymorphous lifestyles of the hyper-urban cityscape.

But whether the significant opposition to a world like that portrayed in *Blade Runner* emanates from the nominal left or the nominal right may not ultimately be that important. Most

of us can agree that a world where there are no nations, no borders and "no religion too" (pace John Lennon) - would most likely in practice be a dystopian nightmare dominated by trans-national corporations or inhuman bureaucracies - or some combination thereof.

It should be noted that there are several slightly different versions of the film. Ridley Scott released a director's cut of the movie in 1992, and a "Final Cut" in 2007, and has apparently tried to take the 1982 version out of circulation. The director's cut removed the voice-over narration by Harrison Ford as well as what some regarded as a tacked-on happy-ending. Yet the voice-over narration is often properly contextualizing, or, even, towards the end of the movie, profound and moving.\* And the upbeat ending is so exhilarating after the almost unrelenting gloom of the movie heretofore, that some may well prefer this version. But whichever one you choose, *Blade Runner* is a powerful and prescient cinematic experience. ♦

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MARK WEGIERSKI  
*is a science-fiction aficionado  
who writes from Toronto*

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#### EDITORIAL NOTE

However, Harrison Ford allegedly tried to stymie the voice over narration by turning it into a parody!



In the long interview with Kirkpatrick Sale (Autumn 2007) you yourself nailed the key flaw: total failure to understand human nature. To assert as he does the old-fashioned anthropological view that prior to the modern civilisation we all lived in a 'heterarchy' (that is, there was no hierarchy) just will not do. Anthropologists – yes, even they – now accept that all human society is, was and always will be hierarchical. And that most certainly includes small hunter-gatherer communities, as we may envisage ultimately we will be 'bombed into', as it were. It is clear to anyone who has a grasp of human nature that the future lies in nested social structure, and that does not involve destroying the nation state: the reverse is required. We need to assert the state over the futile international bodies that pretend to usurp them.

I was struck reading the interview with Sale, that it was not a million miles from EF Schumacher's "small is

beautiful" ideas. But Schumacher recognised that you can have a hierarchy of levels of social organisation, based on a general principle that you should engender the exercise of power at the lowest level at which it is feasible; not that you should aim for what would be unstable anarchy.

Steve Moxon,  
Sheffield

John Papworth (Fourth World, Winter 2007) seems to have a very rosy view of the Church of England and its recent primates. Every primate of All England from Dr Ramsay to Dr Williams has allowed the C of E to wither on the vine. The *King James Bible* and the *Book of Common Prayer* have been junked along with the wealth of liturgical music that was the glory of Anglicanism, in the name of modernisation. The clergy have jumped on every trendy bandwagon from youth culture to multiculturalism.



As to immigration, a far more important issue than motoring, the churches, the C of E included, are generally in favour on the spurious grounds that the 'Holy Family' took refuge in Egypt for a short while. To be fair, Dr Williams himself has said virtually nothing about the issue, for or against. A far greater culprit is Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, leader of the Roman Catholic church in England and Wales. A few months ago he went on the *Today* programme to argue in favour of an amnesty for some half a million illegal immigrants. In his Christmas sermon at Westminster Cathedral he lectured the rest of us about the need to welcome immigrants. The fact is the Cardinal is shamelessly putting his own sectarian interests before those of the nation as a whole. Whilst the C of E has recently admitted that its regular communicants have fallen below the one million mark, the Roman Church in England is growing apace. This is not because those indigenous English people who have abandoned the C of E have all converted. It is because of mass immigration from Eastern Europe.

We should, however, expect no more from the Roman Catholics who are an international church. However, our 'national' church, the Church of England, has either turned a blind eye or positively encouraged immigration and pandered to multiculturalism and interfaith dialogue. They simply do not care about the English. But then, we

have lost faith in the C of E too. We have nothing to gain or hope for from this moribund state church or any of the other denominations.

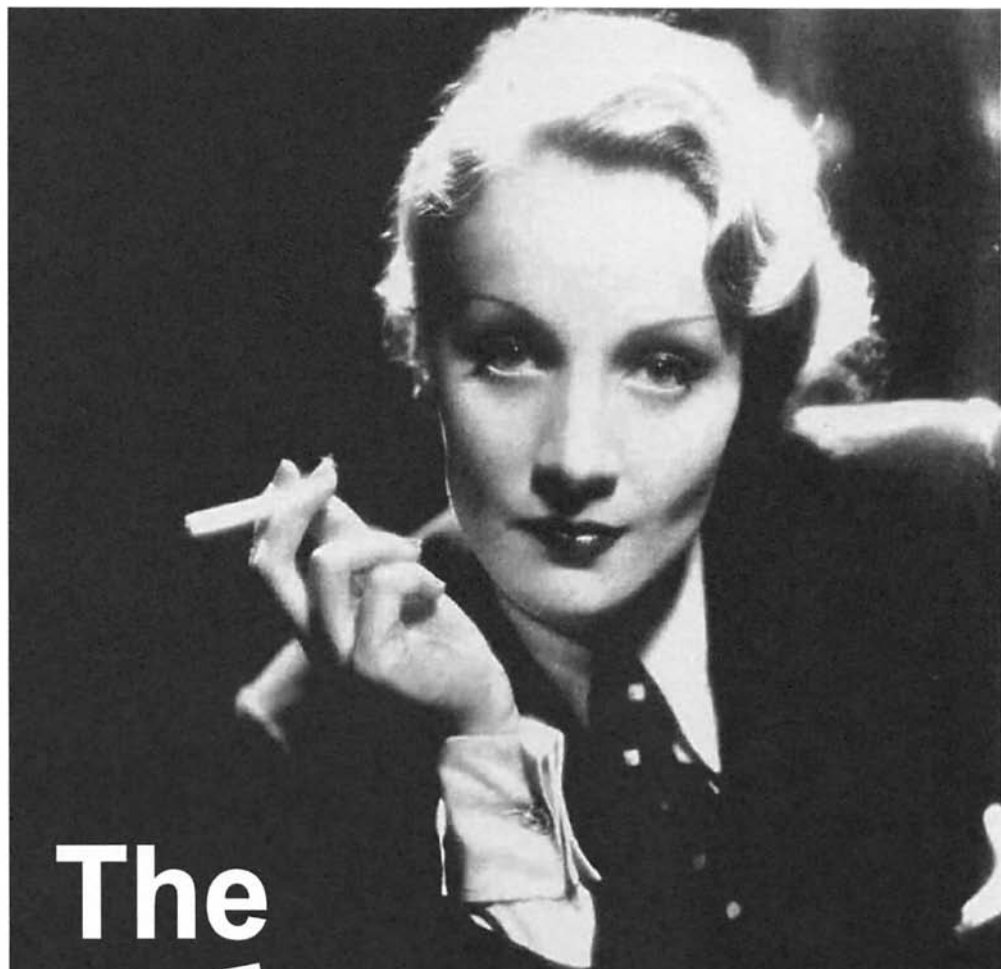
Ian Holt,  
Gloucester

Looking back over the first year of the *Quarterly Review*, I am of course reminded of many good things which I have enjoyed and by which I have been instructed. But what to me is almost unbelievable and even scandalous is the lack even of any mention of the reduction of the self-governing United Kingdom into a mere region of the European Union.

Prof Antony Flew,  
Reading

Derek Turner replies - Issue 1 did contain an article advocating the UK's withdrawal from the EU, written by Labour Eurosceptics Brian Burkitt, Mark Baimbridge and Philip Whyman, but Prof Flew is quite right that we have given this important subject insufficient attention. We shall repair this omission in the near future.





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