Potemkin vistas

By David Pryce-Jones

There'll always be an England, the casual visitor may comfortingly remind himself. Outward signs seem to affirm it. Derby day, Wensleydale cheese, cricket and football, policemen in quaint helmets, Georgian brick terraces, hedgerows, country churches: these things are as they have always been. Wearing her expression of patient exasperation, the Queen looks set to reign as long as her great-great-grandmother Victoria, that unequalled symbol of stability. The Household Cavalry still ride with historic splendor alongside the monarch in a landau to the state openings of parliament in Westminster. "My lords, ladies, and gentlemen," intone innumerable toastmasters in their well-cut semi-military scarlet uniforms at banquets given in assemblies official and unofficial all over the country.

But what lies behind the trappings? Because the trams are running, they think this is a normal country, the poet Osip Mandelshtam said of Stalin's Russia. Britain is not a bogus construction like the Soviet Union, nor has it been subjected to anything like the horror of Communism. All the same, over the last fifty or sixty years decline and change in a sometimes indistinguishable combination have shredded its tradition and its spirit, even its identity. The revolution has been accomplished by peaceful and often imperceptible degrees, but it is a revolution all the same.

Part of this may well have been the mysterious process of history whereby countries rise and fall, and the people within them have to adjust accordingly. To put things in a personal perspective, my grandfather was a professional soldier, one of the thin red line. Serving in the Boer war, he had seen a man condemned to Field Punishment Number One, which involved tying a soldier accused of cowardice in the face of the enemy to the wheel of a gun in action, and he had commanded the firing squad set up for a prominent Boer commander who had been captured. As an old man, distinguished in his stiff collar and regimental tie, and his invariable tweed suit, these memories troubled him. He had also served in Nigeria and spoke of the Ashanti, the Hausa, the Fulani, and the others, with admiration and affection, and I have a notebook in which he recorded the names of the Nigerian men enrolled with him, and the medals and the live ammunition issued to them.

One day at the end of the Second World War, he and I read the copy of *The Times* in which was printed the list of some 30,000 Englishmen whom the Germans intended to execute summarily after a successful invasion, and there was my father's name. Previously a Bright Young Thing of the 1920s, thoroughly cosmopolitan, with literary and musical gifts, my father spoke German well and had become a colonel in the Intelligence Service. Yet not many years were to pass before he settled in the United States, where he was still able to live— as he used to say a little wistfully—with the

freedom he had always taken for granted.

The end of empire drained the lives of many generations of Englishmen, including my grandfather's, of their extraordinary achievements. In far-flung countries where once there had been the rule of law and the spread of British standards in health and education, every sort of misgovernance from brutal tyranny to anarchy now flourished. In Prime Minister Macmillan's words, "the winds of change" were blowing, as though so many abuses had nothing to do with misguided human decisions, but were climatic and so beyond the reach of reason. These same winds served to place the blame for everything on the British, thus absolving those new nationalists who were actually responsible for injustices and crimes in their own countries. A lexicon of words like honor, duty, service, and self-sacrifice duly became obsolete, as did the conduct that went with them. Now it was time to attribute all ills to the past, and to look after oneself.

The welfare state emerged as a structure far more definitive socially and politically than the empire had ever been. From the standpoint of someone like my father, the welfare state could only cramp his style with taxation and regulations, giving in return nothing that he wanted. For him and many of his generation, another lexicon of words and their associated conduct became obsolete, words like liberty, creativity, artistry, responsibility, self-help, and learning. To play Schubert and Schumann from memory, and to enjoy Rilke, Lorca, and René Crevel in their original languages, as he did, was now to be marginalized and condemned as elitist.

Surveying his handiwork as architect of the welfare state, that quintessential bureaucrat, William Beveridge, once wrote a poignant letter to the prime minister who was also its prime mover, in which he wondered whether he might not have destroyed irretrievably the British character. To such as them, there seemed no alternative; the social democracies had to establish that they were superior to Communism in the care that they could provide for their citizens. Opposing Communism, they complemented it. None of the European social democracies today can afford the immense and complex structures of benefit and subsidy they have set in place. Communism is no longer a threat, but they find themselves unable either to dismantle the social protection erected against it, or to pay the bills. All are locked into the consequences. The lexicon of obsolete words further incorporates all the categories of the toastmaster's "My lords, ladies and gentlemen," as well as family, marriage, parenthood, spinster, and bachelor, and fewer and fewer children are able to make much sense of the commandment to honor their father and mother. Moral relativity of this sort spreads moral chaos through the whole society.

Out of the same authoritarian and protectionist impulses has grown the super- welfare state—in its way an empire—known as the European Union. Going back to the 1920s, this project has at its core the Leninist concept of building utopia through bureaucracy. For the previous three centuries or so, Britain had been able to form coalitions with other states, separately or in combination, to maintain the balance of power in Europe. Hitherto usually in opposition to one another, postwar Germany and France have come together through the European Union in a combination strong enough to pull in the other

continental states. All they have in common is that they were losers or neutral in the Second World War. Isolated, trying to recover former alliances now unavailable, Britain has been under unprecedented political pressure to abandon its unique status as one of the victors of that war and instead throw in its lot with the losers and neutrals.

Successive governments have steadily promoted the reinvention of national identity inherent in acceptance of the European Union and its demands. Decimalization of the currency, metrification of weights and measures, the redefinition of counties, devolution for Scotland and Wales, may seem part of the usual run of bureaucratic decisions, but adjustments to the national character and behavior necessarily follow. Shilling, florin, and half-crown are among additions to obsolete words, and mile, yard, pound, and pint are reprieved only for the time being. It is already an offense punishable by law to sell a pound of bananas, rather than a kilo.

Institutions that once framed and governed the nation exist in name but not in the efficacy which once was their pride and justification. Carefully built down the ages in order to accommodate conflicting interests with various checks and balances, the original machinery of the state is being dismantled. Some two-thirds of the legislation affecting the country now originate from the European Commission and Council in Brussels. To outward appearance, the Westminster House of Commons is familiar, with its bewigged Speaker and attendants in breeches, but its proceedings are more and more irrelevant, rubber-stamping through committees what it is powerless to affect. Prime Minister Blair has hastened this decline by curtailing the time allotted to question the government, and by attending hardly more than 5 percent of parliamentary votes, where no previous prime minister fell below 50 percent. He has abolished the hereditary peers from the House of Lords, thereby ensuring a chamber of cronies and placemen, with the corresponding obsolescence of all associations of aristocracy. Even eighteenth-century cynics would blink at the way that large donors to Blair's New Labour are rewarded with commercial contracts, ennobled, and appointed government ministers.

Repudiating its socialist roots, New Labour is the vehicle for Blair's version of a presidency. Blair likes to present himself to television viewers in his shirt sleeves, always informal, "a pretty straight kinda guy," as he once chose to put it. More than one critical official report has described how in reality he governs from his sofa, a pocket Napoleon dispensing orders via scores of unelected advisors and spin-doctors, politicizing the civil service and evading what last vestiges of parliamentary and constitutional procedure still exist. One fine morning, apparently over breakfast, he decided to abolish the thousand-year-old post of Lord Chancellor, responsible for the administration of the law—only to learn that this could not be done constitutionally. In another typical move, he appointed a young woman to clean up anti-social behavior on the streets, whereupon in a public speech she proclaimed that everyone worked better when drunk. Blair's proudest boast is that he introduced human rights legislation into the country, giving it a supremacy over British law that undermines the legal and social order, and which the electorate, if it had the opportunity, would reject overwhelmingly. But as Peter Mandelson, a Blair crony rewarded with the appointment to be a Commissioner in Brussels, ominously said after

the 1997 election, “The era of representative democracy may be drawing to its close.”

Historically the Conservative Party spoke for the nation and patriotism. Successive Conservative leaders have been unable to reconcile their innate sense of the national interest with the ever more insistent demands of Brussels. At present, the party is attempting to choose its fifth leader in eight years. Contenders have no clear idea either about what they wish to conserve or on the contrary to modernize. In this intellectual and political void, the national and patriotic vote has fragmented to minority parties, one of them openly fascist.

Other major institutions of the state have similarly mislaid their purpose. The behavior of some members of the royal family, and those who married into it like the late Princess Diana, has called into question what Bagehot emphasized as the important “dignified” aspect of the monarchy. Polls consistently show that, after the Queen’s death, republicanism is a distinct possibility. The new Archbishop of Canterbury, a Welshman, has been eager to describe himself as a Druid as well as a “hairy Leftie.” In a manner which would once have exposed them to Swiftian satire, factions within the Church of England dispute savagely about women bishops and whether a gay clergyman can live openly with a male lover if he promises to abstain from sex. More Muslims attend worship than Christians do. Once as influential on public opinion as the Church, the BBC now behaves like a political pressure group or party, abandon- ing objectivity in order to indulge its anti-Americanism, its propaganda for the European Union, and its campaigning to delegitimize Israel. According to a BBC diktat, Islamist terrorists are to be referred to as “militants.” The rest of the media, the press and publishing, likewise confuses reality with *bien pensant* opinion. *The Times*, formerly the paper of record, is now an erratic and cheapened tabloid. At Covent Garden, the opening act of *Rigoletto*, of all operas, was staged as a sadomasochistic orgy. There are scores of museums and universities, but no great art or scholarship; scores of prizes, but no great fiction or poetry.

A special case, the army is acquitting itself well in Iraq. One soldier, originally from Granada in the Caribbean, won the Victoria Cross, the highest award for bravery in the field. But there too the writing is on the wall. British soldiers are being charged with war crimes in Iraq. One of them, a lieutenant colonel commanding his regiment, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, second only to the Victoria Cross, and is now being brought to trial to answer for the conduct of several men under him—a confusion of reward and punishment last seen in 1945 when Vichy Frenchmen were simultaneously decorated and condemned to prison.

Meanwhile, the British army is being reorganized and reequipped as part of a European Rapid Reaction Force with its command center in Brussels. Should defense contracts and cooperation with the United States really be abandoned, the two main English-speaking democracies within a few years will not be able to fight alongside, and furthermore Britain will no longer be in a position to implement an independent foreign policy, as in the Falkland Islands yesterday, and in Iraq today. A portent was the recent celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar, presented as some unidentifiable

contest between “reds” and “blues” in order to obscure the historic defeat of the French and Spanish navies (see Andrew Roberts’s “Trafalgar then and now,” in this issue). Admiral Nelson and the concept of British victory, it turned out, were also obsolete.

Some of these ills are paralleled elsewhere in the world, and may be ascribed to the imperfections of democracy, the universality of political correctness, or the malevolence of the zeitgeist. Britain is not alone in relativizing morality. And as Adam Smith famously observed, there is a “deal of ruin” in a country. All the same, the sudden eruption of British Muslim terrorists exposed the Potemkin façades of the institutions amid which everyone—and above all these actual or would-be murderers—had grown up and taken their ease. The facts are stark. By origin, these men had no real claim on the British welfare state, yet they were its products and beneficiaries. For themselves they claimed the tolerance and diversity which they were not prepared to grant to others. The prevailing ethos of multiculturalism to them meant jihad, the imposition of their exclusive religious imperialism. Cornered by the police, one of the survivors of a failed bombing in London emerged stripped to the waist and shouting, “I have rights!” This cameo of everything that has gone amiss ought to imprint itself on the national memory.

In the wake of the bombings, Blair rightly condemned the “evil ideology” of the Islamist terrorists. At the same time, some of his ministers hastened to preach the intrinsic peacefulness of Islam, and to blame the attacks on anyone and anything except those who incited and supported them. In a press conference, a senior police commissioner informed the nation that Islam and terrorism were two words that did not go into the same sentence. In which case the bombings are merely deranged acts, and no further analysis or preventive steps need be undertaken. But, pointedly, imams here and there in the country have come out in support of the bombers. “Even if I’m British,” one of them declares, “I don’t follow the values of the U.K. I follow the Islamic values. I have no allegiance to the British Queen whatsoever, or to British society.”

Legislation old and new is on the statute books to protect society from Islamist terror. So far, over seven hundred suspected terrorists have been arrested, but only one sentenced to imprisonment. The Law Lords, acting as a Supreme Court, frustrate justice at every turn; notably they have ruled against detention without trial. One of them, Lord Hoffman, earned his place in the nation’s memory when he commented on proposed anti-terrorist measures, “The real threat to the life of the nation, in the sense of a people living in accordance with its traditional laws and political values, comes not from terrorism but from laws like these.” So movements like Hizbut Tahrir and Hamas and al-Ghurabaa, dedicated to Islamist imperialism through violence and consequently mostly banned in the Muslim world, operate and publish and recruit with impunity in what has been well described as Londonistan.

Lord Hoffman speaks for the multicultural moral relativists who control public discourse, but who nowhere connect with public opinion. The man on the street is outraged that the government has lost control of its borders, tolerates half a million illegal immigrants, allows an escaping suicide bomber to leave the country in the comfort of the Eurostar train, and even if this means that Blair must eat humble pie, he expects derogation from

the Human Rights Act, and perhaps the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees as well and the immediate deportation of anyone promoting Islamist terror.

Islamism is hardly the threat to the country that Hitler was in 1940. Since then, however, time and circumstances have so eroded the moral values necessary to survival and independence that the outcome of another Battle of Britain is an open question. It may be that Islamist terror will have the unintended consequence of reviving the many national institutions which went into making England what is was, but whose vital purposes have been so heedlessly emptied of meaning. Otherwise England and its role in the world seem set on a course which will increase the lexicon of obsoletes.

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British intellectual life today

By Daniel Johnson

French intellectuals are often vain; German intellectuals are notoriously obscure; British intellectuals are merely embarrassed. But are they embarrassed to be British, or embarrassed to call themselves intellectuals? Unlike other Europeans or, for that matter, Americans, the British have traditionally tended to be self-deprecating about intelligence. The habit of nicknames reflects a society in which "highbrows" know their place, and that place is to be eccentric, or marginal to public life. Academics are faintly comical "dons," scientists are "boffins"; they live in "ivory towers" or are "cloistered," and all are "too clever by half." Unless, of course, they are foreigners, who are allowed, indeed expected, to be intellectuals. For the concept of "the intellectual" still sounds vaguely foreign, even suspect, to British ears. It was a suspicion that W. H. Auden ridiculed in a famous quatrain: "To the man-in-the-street who, I'm sorry to say,/ Is a keen observer of life,/ The word 'Intellectual' suggests right away/ A man who's untrue to his wife."

Yet these suspicions were—and are—not wholly unwarranted. The word "intellectual" replaced "man of letters" in English parlance only a century ago, imported from France and popularized by Emile Zola at the time of the Dreyfus affair. Hitherto the British had made do with humbler words, such as "educated," "erudite," or "learned," to denote a person of higher culture. The ideal was to be "a scholar and a gentleman." An intellectual, by contrast, might or might not be a scholar, and he was quite likely to look

down on gentlemen. “Man of letters” was descriptive; “intellectual” is aspirational. The former was a passive observer; the latter an activist, wielding power and prestige. One became a man or woman of letters by virtue of a way of life, whereas anybody could call himself an intellectual (even if few who did were likely to be genuine). Though an occasional gallant voice is still raised for the older ideal of literary life, and others have drawn attention to the hypocrisy of modern intellectuals, the latter have displaced the former as a type.

A little later the Russian “intelligentsia” entered the language. It originally denoted the educated class, but it came to mean those who considered themselves intellectuals. As in Soviet Russia, the word carried a connotation of privilege. Bulgakov mercilessly mocked the state-salaried Soviet intelligentsia in *The Master and Margarita*. Proust and Musil did the same for the French and Habsburg intellectual elites. Because the British intelligentsia have never been as thoroughly discredited as those of continental Europe, they have also escaped without a thorough debunking. George Orwell and Aldous Huxley rebuked them for their totalitarian tendencies, Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell for their social pretensions. But no British novelist of the generation now in its prime—that of Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, and Ian McEwan—has succeeded in writing a full-blown satire on the British, let alone the European, intelligentsia. Nor has a younger generation so far made good their deficiency.

It is so much easier, of course, to mock Middle England. For Middle England is still as solidly philistine as it was when Matthew Arnold wrote 150 years ago in *Culture and Anarchy* that “we have not the word because we have so much of the thing.” And Middle England uses the word “intellectual,” either as a noun or an adjective, only gingerly, as if picking up something the cat brought in. William Hazlitt, one of the first Englishmen whom one might identify as a modern intellectual, thought the French “a more sensible, reflecting, and better informed people than the English,” and thought the intellectual superiority of female conversation in France proof of this. The French historian of England Hyppolite Taine disagreed: “The provision of facts carried in the head is three or four times as considerable in the case of a well-educated Englishman as in that of the equivalent Frenchman.” A century and a half after Taine, a Briton may pass for an intellectual with as light a baggage of learning as any Frenchman. Nietzsche had a word for such *halbgebildet* (“half-educated”) intellectuals: they were *Bildungsphilister,* “educated philistines.” Today no uneducated person is as philistine as those who call themselves intellectuals. That is why no intellectual ever draws attention to the fact.

Lately, a refinement, the “public intellectual,” has been imported from the United States. The phrase is now common enough, though some English satirists still think it very droll to make scatological mockery of the pretensions of this species as a “public convenience” (a euphemism for lavatory). A year ago, *Prospect* magazine ran a poll to find “Britain’s top 100 public intellectuals.” While the exercise was questionable, not only for its inclusions and exclusions, but also for its inherent vulgarity, the results mercilessly illuminate the advancing mediocrity of British intellectual life.

Top of the list was Richard Dawkins, the Professor of the Public Understanding of

Science at Oxford. Not even his admirers would claim that Professor Dawkins is an eminent scientist; he was only elected to the Royal Society in 2001, presumably for ornamental reasons. As his title suggests, Dawkins is a popularizer, with a talent for anthropomorphism ("the selfish gene") rather than an original thinker. Nothing wrong with that, even if such a figure belongs in a television studio rather than an Oxford chair. The best popularizers of science have mostly been great scientists themselves: Einstein, Schroedinger, Feynman, Hawking are all examples. Though true scientists sometimes speculate about the metaphysical consequences of their theories, they rarely claim authority outside their own domain and are usually content to let science and theology coexist, side by side.

Professor Dawkins represents something quite different: the institutionalization of atheism. He is a professor of propaganda, who uses his prestige to promote a militantly secularist and scientistic agenda. His case for atheism boils down to the argument that God is simply bad logic: "The creationist, whether a naive Bible-thumper or an educated bishop, simply *postulates* an already existing being of prodigious intelligence and complexity." Dawkins imagines that God should be no less explicable than any other natural phenomenon. But it is he, not the Christian, who is guilty of a category mistake. God, by definition, cannot be explained according to the laws of nature, since He is the source of those laws. One cannot just reduce metaphysics to physics. In many ways, Dawkins is cruder than his Victorian equivalents, Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer. That Dawkins is enjoying some success in his endeavor to reverse fifteen centuries of Anglo-Saxon Christianity is demonstrated by the fact that St. Augustine's most recent successor as Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, came sixteenth in the *Prospect* poll. Dr. Williams used to be Professor of Divinity at Oxford; his chief contribution to scholarship was an apologia for Arius, the greatest heretic of antiquity. The success of Dawkins has been won by default. "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

Just below Professor Dawkins came two intellectual survivors: the feminist Germaine Greer and the historian Eric Hobsbawm. Just as Dr. Greer remains the angry author of *The Female Eunuch* long after feminism's *raison d'être* disappeared, so Professor Hobsbawm remained a card-carrying Communist until the party dissolved itself. He now rejoices in his status as a Companion of Honour to a monarch whose family would, if the professor's comrades had ever come to power, almost certainly have shared the grisly fate of their Russian cousins at the hands of Lenin.

The otherwise inexplicable esteem in which the likes of Hobsbawm are still held becomes comprehensible in the light of a recent web poll, conducted by BBC Radio 4, to find Britain's favorite philosopher. The winner was Karl Marx, with more than twice as many votes as David Hume. Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, Plato, and Kant were left far behind. In no country that has recently emerged from the long shadow of Marxism would such a vote be conceivable. But British intellectuals treat Marx as if he were harmless; his advocate, Francis Wheen, wrote a revisionist biography which depicts Marx as a jolly Dickensian character, rather than as the ruthless disseminator of the most destructive doctrine in history. Hume is the antithesis of Marx in every respect—metaphysics,

morals, politics, economics—with one exception: religion. It is another sign of how far the secularization of British culture has progressed that of the nation's two favorite thinkers, one was an atheist, the other a deist, and both were notorious critics of Christianity.

How do we explain the choice of Marx over Hume, admittedly by a self-selecting sample of the British intelligentsia? After all, Hume was a rigorous thinker, who has influenced almost every philosopher since Kant, whereas Marx was scarcely a philosopher at all. Where Marx's works are the accumulated outpourings of a revolutionary ideologue, Hume's thought is empirical, sceptical, conservative: all qualities calculated to appeal to the British. As a historian or essayist, too, Hume is more readable and less dated than Marx, and his personality is incomparably more attractive. The one advantage Marx enjoys over Hume—and it was evidently decisive in the BBC poll—is that Marx's desire not merely to understand but to reorder the world according to a pseudo-scientific system makes him an archetypal modern intellectual, whereas Hume's more contemplative cast of mind belongs to an earlier age.

Intellectuals of Marx's type, who are the products of illiberal societies, are often illiberal themselves. In Continental societies lacking the freedom of the press, figures like Balzac and Zola, Heine and Ibsen, Herzen and Tolstoy performed a necessary function. But just as the Enlightenment *savants* from Voltaire and Rousseau onwards infused the French Revolution with its unprecedented extremism, culminating in the Terror, so the "revolution of the intellectuals" in 1848 spawned the ideology of socialism which, in its Marxist form, gave the entire twentieth century a totalitarian hue. The intellectual as secular missionary sees his own vocation in levelling the finger of accusation at his own society, economy, and culture. Despite the evidence of a century of grand revolutionary projects, every one of which has ended in catastrophe, this presumption of guilt is still ubiquitous among the self-appointed arbiters of European intellectual life. For them, the purpose of politics is to demolish the past, to rebuild the present from scratch and to mortgage the future, all for the sake of an unexamined and morally dubious premise: that the intellectuals know what is good for the rest and, moreover, how to bring it about.

By what Hegel called "the cunning of reason" (*der List der Vernunft*), the British, who had never suffered the exigencies of the police state, adopted the characteristic attitudes and assumptions of the European intellectual, who had abased himself before that police state wherever he could find it. There was no British Heidegger or Sartre, worshipping Hitler or Mao, but by the same token the British were not inoculated against these Dr. Caligaris. Just at the point when the intellectual was discredited on the Continent, he has been slavishly imitated, consciously or unconsciously, by the 1960s generation of Britons—a generation ignorant or contemptuous of the hard-won liberties that their ancestors had cultivated in splendid isolation. Belatedly, but with all the zeal of the convert, the British adopted the vices of continental culture, which usurped authority over the indigenous tradition of individualism and eccentricity and came to dominate British intellectual life.

This process may take a relatively benign form. Of my own contemporaries, those now in

their forties, the only public intellectual who scored highly in the *Prospect* poll was Timothy Garton Ash. For two decades he performed the valuable role of interpreting the transformation of central and eastern Europe on both sides of the Atlantic. He knows and identifies with intellectual kings and kingmakers such as Vaclav Havel or Adam Michnik, and, though he has no political ambitions of his own, presidents and prime ministers from Margaret Thatcher to George W. Bush have solicited his advice. During his evolution from anti-Communist *Spectator* journalist to fashionable academic, Garton Ash has gravitated to the liberal end of the spectrum. Now based in Oxford and the Hoover Institution at Stanford, his main organs are the *Guardian* and *The New York Review of Books.* Yet he has never abandoned his original model, George Orwell—surely one of the last authentic English men of letters—and he has avoided the temptation to succumb to the new European religion of anti-Americanism.

But Garton Ash has preserved his intellectual status only by walking a transatlantic tightrope, suspended far above the quotidian level at which political decisions are made. It is enough for him to remind his readers that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in neoconservative philosophy. The fact that the pro-European liberal Garton Ash conforms to the British notion of a public intellectual, while nonconformist, conservative Euroskeptics of the caliber of Roger Scruton or Noel Malcolm do not, is another indication that the legacy of the 1960s still weighs heavily on British intellectual life, especially in the universities.

Perhaps the most influential British academic literary critic of the past forty years has been Terry Eagleton. Yet another product of Oxford and Cambridge—though he has recently migrated to Manchester as Professor of Cultural Theory—he too figures prominently on the *Prospect* list of public intellectuals. In his study of *Wuthering Heights* and the Irish Famine of 1845–1847 (*Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*), he concludes that it was not so much the Anglo-Irish landlords or the British government who were to blame for the famine, as "the [capitalist] system they sustained." "Had that exploitative system been transformed—rent abolished, the graziers and strong farmers expropriated and their land equitably redistributed—a million men and women would surely not have perished." What Eagleton is advocating here is precisely the policy adopted by Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union, which led directly to the Ukrainian famine of 1932–1934 in which six to seven million died; by Mao Zedong in China during the "Great Leap Forward" of 1958–1961, in which up to forty-three million died, the worst famine in history; and by many other dictators since, including Robert Mugabe in present-day Zimbabwe. Unlike all these tyrants of the Left, who deliberately created famine as an instrument of policy, the Peel government did what it could to alleviate the Irish famine, with soup kitchens and other famine relief amounting to nearly £10 million: probably the first government aid program of its kind in history, but not enough to satisfy Eagleton, who complains that seven times as much was spent on the Crimean War. Needless to say, *Wuthering Heights* itself does not actually mention the Irish Famine, but this does not prevent Eagleton writing a whole book about their supposed connection.

It is with some relish that he remarks: "Ireland is the biological time-bomb which can be heard ticking softly away beneath the civilized superstructures of the Pall Mall clubs." As

a diehard apologist for Irish republicanism throughout the terrorist campaigns in Northern Ireland and Britain from the 1970s to the 1990s, Eagleton knows very well that his metaphorical bombs became real ones in the hands of the Provisional IRA. Just as Hobsbawm stayed in the Communist Party to the bitter end, so Eagleton was loyal to the IRA until—having lost the battle for American and Irish public opinion after 9/11—the terrorists abruptly abandoned "the armed struggle" in July 2005.

Note, by the way, how that word "civilized" can now only be used ironically by a cutting-edge British academic like Eagleton, just as an essay on "Defending the Free World" can only be a sarcastic exercise in anti-Americanism. When he sneers at Christianity in the same breath, however—"I have resigned my membership of the Christian church, as there is clearly something theoretically dubious about the Good Samaritan"—he speaks more honestly than he pretends. Some forty years ago, before he acquired the airs and graces of a public intellectual, Eagleton was a "Vatican II Catholic," whose first book, *The New Left Church*, wrestled with the problem of reconciling his Catholicism with Marx and his other idol, the now discredited psychologist R. D. Laing, whose popular book *The Divided Self* taught that schizophrenia was a species of alienation, not so much a medical as a socio-political problem.

In those days, Eagleton thought he could be both a Christian and a Marxist; indeed, he thought that Marxism would help him to resolve the "paradox of destroying oneself and community in order to build community." "We [Christians] have to decide whether we are the kind of radical who is prepared to use almost any weapon to bring about justice." Over the past four decades Eagleton has indeed justified almost any enemy of Judeo-Christian civilization, but he draws the line at renouncing the "civilized superstructures" of Oxford and Cambridge, which kept him in thrall for some forty years after he arrived there. Still clinging to the faith of his fathers in 1966, he voiced the forlorn hope that "by trying to make our meanings intelligible to ourselves, we might find eventually that they have become intelligible to others." But, like the rest of the 1960s generation, he soon gave up trying and took refuge in esoteric lucubrations of "critical theory." What was once a "love-hate" relationship with Catholicism has evolved into an unambiguous hostility, which found expression in venomous diatribes against the late Pope John Paul II, whom he blamed for the deaths of "countless Catholics" and "one of the greatest disasters for the Christian church since Charles Darwin."

Not every British intellectual reasons like this. For a few thoughtful conservatives, such as the politician Oliver Letwin, the "sacred task of politics" is "the preservation of civilization." In the present intellectual climate of England, however, such highfalutin sentiments evoke only ridicule from Right and Left alike. The relics of that distinctively Anglo-Saxon civilization lie all around us, unconsidered trifles, soon to be forgotten, lest they remind an amnesiac nation whence they came and who they once were.

On the desk before me is one such melancholy reminder: a copy of the *Opera Inedita* of Roger Bacon, the thirteenth-century Franciscan friar, who four centuries before his more famous namesake Francis Bacon, pioneered the experimental method and thereby inaugurated the scientific tradition of the West. This volume of some 1400 pages was

edited for the first time as part of the Rolls Series, so-called because in 1857 the Master of the Rolls, one of the most senior judges in England, instituted the publication of all the most important medieval chronicles and memorials, at the expense of the Treasury. Bacon's *Opera Inedita* was among the first few dozen volumes to appear; it is a monument to Victorian scholarship, containing three important treatises, all still, 150 years later, standard texts.

What caught my eye was the fact that this book, no doubt like hundreds of others like it, had belonged until recently to Brighton Public Library, but had evidently been discarded. All over Britain, thousands of public libraries are disposing of millions of books now deemed to be superfluous. In universities old books are still studied, but there the Eagletons hold sway. Foreign languages, ancient and modern, are vanishing from our schools, because they are no longer needed in an Anglophone world. The British are returning to the state in which Bacon found himself more than seven centuries ago when, as he exclaimed, "there are not five men in Latin Christendom who are acquainted with the Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic grammar," while scholars "neglect and condemn the sciences of which they are ignorant." A new dark age threatens, in which knowledge of all kinds is instantly accessible, but the majority even of the educated are incurious about anything beyond their immediate purview, and those who are cultivated enough to put knowledge to good use are fast dying out.

Where, though, are the protests? When, some eighteen years ago now, Allan Bloom hurled the incendiary torch that was *The Closing of the American Mind* into the gathering gloom of academic mediocrity, few expected it to catch fire as it did. But Bloom knew how to raise the stakes, and his parting shot is even more on target today than it was when he wrote it: "This is the American moment in world history, the moment for which we shall forever be judged. Just as in politics the responsibility for the fate of freedom in the world has devolved upon our regime, so the fate of philosophy in the world has devolved upon our universities, and the two are related as they have never been before." Having shuffled off this sense of responsibility onto American shoulders at the outset of the Cold War, the British did not take the dangers illuminated by Bloom seriously, though their universities suffered from all the same vices.

No British writer of the stature of Saul Bellow stood up to defend Bloom, nor is it likely that this could happen today, in the unlikely event of such a critique of British intellectual life emerging. Now that Bloom's disciples are in government in the United States, and the defence of Western civilization has taken on a new, deadly serious meaning since 9/11, the Atlantic pond has widened to become an ocean again.

For over in Britain, there is no sign of such a return to sanity, nor even an accurate diagnosis. Indeed, the patient's case seems almost hopeless. Politicians, churches, the press, the BBC, the universities: all are complicit in the denigration of the West. The age-old, more or less harmless philistinism of the British has been filtered through the intelligentsia, to re-emerge in a new, all-encompassing betrayal of the very civilization that made it possible to lead the intellectual life. The overweening arrogance of the overeducated invited healthy skepticism; but the new *trahison des clercs* is driven by

pathological self-hatred. Intellectuals seize on any anti-Western ideology, however threadbare, to justify this masochism of the mind. Even Islamism, repulsive as it ought to be to any true-born Englishman (and especially Englishwoman), is a useful stick with which to beat the West in general and Britain in particular. In a recent poll, 10 percent answered "No" to the question "Do you believe Britain has been, on balance, a force for good in the world?"

That 10 percent is the intelligentsia, or a large section of it, who disdain such achievements as the spread of parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech, the rule of law, and religious toleration across the world; the defeat of Napoleon and Hitler; the scientific, agricultural and industrial revolutions of the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries; the abolition of the slave trade; many of the world's favorite sports. All this, and much more, is outweighed by post-colonial guilt, larded with snobbish contempt for the invented traditions and quaint trappings of British nationhood.

And so we return to our point of departure. Despite his public mockery of British hostility towards intellectuals like himself, Auden privately endorsed the gut instinct of the man in the street, who (as he remarked in a letter written in the same period as the poem) "is not altogether wrong in thinking that intellectuals are usually immoral for few of them seem able to take experimentation beyond the destructive stage." The British are still suspicious of their intellectuals—but with good reason, because the intellectuals are far more hostile to the rest of their compatriots. Their pathological self-flagellation is nothing to do with traditional British self-deprecation.

The intellectuals' critique of British anti-intellectualism, by contrast with the continent, is largely nonsense, anyway. According to Charles Murray, from 1400 to 1950 the British produced more creative individuals than France, Germany, or Italy, their nearest European rivals. In science, only the United States has produced more Nobel laureates than Britain. Incorrigibly suspicious of public intellectuals, yes; inhospitable to genius, no. The shadows that fell across British culture some four decades ago were long and deep, but the luminosity of the remoter past is only in eclipse.

Now that the power of intellectuals as a quasi-sacerdotal caste has been exposed as a sham by their failure to prevail upon the British to repeat the calamity of the 1930s by abandoning America, there are signs that a younger generation may be adopting a less stridently anti-Western tone. If British culture is ever to recover its universality—dare I say its catholicity?—then it must regain its equilibrium by avoiding both narcissism and masochism, by paying due respect not only to its physical but also to its metaphysical inheritance.

We must listen to the voices still among us who draw strength from the Judeo-Christian core of British culture. We must listen once more to our poets, chief among them Geoffrey Hill. It is no accident that the greatest living English poet has sought refuge in New England, fleeing the old country and "her quiet ways of betrayal." Yet Hill's fealty to another England, inviolate and inviolable, is a reminder that no one generation of charlatans can eradicate such a history. "Again, bring/ recollection forward, weeping with

rage./ Debit the lot to our chequered country,/ crediting even so her haunted music." The intellectual life of a great nation transcends the lives of its intellectuals.

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The real British disease

By John O'Sullivan

There is nothing in the law of unintended consequences that dictates such consequences must be unpleasant ones (though that's the way to bet, as Damon Runyon remarked of Ecclesiastes 9:11). An unintended and beneficial consequence of the London bombings is the transformation of the debate in Britain over multiculturalism and "Britishness." The discovery that the original four bombers were cricket-playing native sons of Yorkshire has alarmed people who had reasonably assumed that the children of Muslim immigrants would assimilate to "Britishness" as a natural result of growing up in the country.

The bombings on the London underground shocked everyone out of this complacency, at least temporarily. None of the usual explanations seemed to apply. The bombers were not poor; they were not "marginalized"; they were not from disturbed or broken homes; they were not living in a culturally separate world. Some fit the profile of a potential terrorist, others did not. One was the son of a successful small businessman; another had fallen into petty crime and gone briefly to prison. Outwardly, they were young Brits of "minority" appearance out on a jaunt; inwardly, they were jihadis avenging the West's supposed crimes against Islam.

These unsettling facts inevitably raised questions of political identity and allegiance. What had transformed ordinary young Brits into jihadists and mass murderers? What were we to make of the polls that showed substantial minorities of British Muslims sympathizing with them? And did these polls suggest that Muslims had been diverted from developing towards "Britishness" by a multiculturalism that encouraged them to cling to a separatist religious identity? Yet though these questions were put more sharply, they were not new. The British have been conducting a debate on "Britishness" and

multiculturalism for most of a decade—indeed, they have been conducting two debates.

The first debate took place between academics, civil servants, think tanks, minority pressure groups, center-left politicians, and what the British call "the Great and the Good." Like its doppelgänger on the Right, this debate took place in response to a series of major reports on Britishness and multiculturalism—notably, the two Crick reports on education for citizenship and naturalization, the MacPherson report on "institutional racism" in the police, the Parekh report on Britain's national identity and multi-ethnicity, and the Cantle report on the background to racial riots in northern cities. This center-left debate shaped policy, especially at the outset, but it neither reflected nor significantly influenced public opinion.

That was not wholly surprising because most of those participating in it did not accept the idea of a single British public. They saw a multicultural society as either inevitable in Britain or as having existed for many years. They therefore rejected any assumption that "native" British culture or cultures should be privileged over those of recently arrived minorities. Indeed, the Parekh report's sixth principle held *inter alia* that "insisting on the superiority of a particular culture" was simply disguised racism. And they argued that schools, the police, local government, and other social institutions should be reorganized to accommodate and reflect the culture of the different "communities" inhabiting Britain.

There was, however, a central theoretical difficulty running through this debate. Some cultural ideas and practices—the legitimacy of killing apostates, female genital mutilation, polygamy—were radically inconsistent with the broadly liberal and progressive outlook of the various debaters. So they had to go in for quite exquisite distinctions in establishing why multiculturalism, properly understood, did not protect such outrages, and in effect conformed to a liberal version of a common culture.

This hypocrisy was seized upon by the second set of debaters: tabloid newspapers, a handful of columnists (notably Melanie Phillips in the *Daily Mail* and Minette Marin in the *Sunday Times*), some renegade academics, and a few bold Tories such as Norman Tebbit. This debate reflected public opinion, but it acted mainly to restrain or obstruct policy rather than to inspire it. Its bedrock argument was that Britain was not a multicultural society but a multi-ethnic society united by a common culture. Even then, ethnic minorities were only 8 percent of the British population and almost everyone spoke English. Multiculturalism was not only false as a description of Britain, therefore, but it also implied ideas and practices that were incompatible with the nation's liberal common culture. Its theory of the equality of cultures both implied human inequality, since some cultures denied the equality of women, and protected such practices as genital mutilation. It was therefore a reactionary political doctrine. Yet the growing influence of multicultural ideas —especially the concept of institutional racism—had persuaded government and social institutions to fund separate "faith schools," to encourage minority children born in Britain to retain a non-British culture, and even to overlook crimes like genital mutilation as legitimate expressions of minority culture. The police in particular were in the grip of a vulgarized cultural anthropology, which became embedded as a kind of institutional correctness, to the extraordinary extent of not investigating "honor

killings." And such intellectual fashions had allowed a perverse multiculturalism to emerge in the form of government-subsidized ethnic, religious, and linguistic ghettoes.

Following the London bombings, there is widespread agreement (including such sensible social critics as Janet Daley) that attaching a greater social significance to the ceremony of citizenship—and to citizenship itself for the children of immigrants—would be an important contribution to uniting cultural communities and rebuilding national cohesion. It is argued by both Crick and Daley that the old British system of simply taking an oath before a lawyer undervalues the drama of reinvention that a new citizenship implies. A new citizen needs to commit himself psychologically to his change of nationality in some public way. Besides, the proof of the pudding is in the eating: America has had greater success in assimilating immigrants than Britain because it turns Americanization into good theater.

There is, unfortunately, less in this argument than meets the eye. To put it as crisply as possible, it is the inherent strength and appeal of a national identity that converts people to it, not the marketing of it nor the ceremonies of conversion. A national identity includes citizenship, but also a great many other things. And a citizenship will have more appeal in proportion as it rests on great national achievements.

Thus British citizenship involves legal rights, political allegiance, and a whole host of patriotic associations and cultural achievements. Everyone will have his own list. Mine includes Magna Carta, the defeat of the Armada, Shakespeare, the Glorious Revolution, Isaac Newton, Burke's indictment of Warren Hastings, Nelson at Trafalgar, Jane Austen's novels, the Royal Navy's suppression of the international slave trade, *habeas corpus*, Captain Oates, "Our Finest Hour," the conquest of Everest (admittedly by a New Zealander and a Nepalese), and many other men and achievements that convey a picture of Britain as a great country that brought freedom to much of the world.

Bernard Crick, Tony Blair, and the modernizing revolutionaries of New Labour would think the above list just a lot of tribal mumbo-jumbo—and very likely an obstacle to economic growth and transnational cooperation. Their concept of citizenship is thinly political. The Crick citizenship test asked questions about the national minimum wage, youth culture, and working rights. And as Melanie Phillips acidly noted, Crick's citizenship test would not require applicants to reach any particular standard of English, merely to do better, and would impose no test of history at all, let alone anything to stir the blood and stiffen the sinews. It demands not patriotic assimilation but a weaker civic assimilation to rules and legal obligations. An applicant for British citizenship of this kind would be applying to join a social democratic supper club.

It was the American identity, not the "Americanization" ceremonies, however elaborate, that transformed immigrants into loyal Americans. Long before they qualified, they desperately wanted to become Americans, as Leo Rosten, among others, wittily but evocatively demonstrated in *The Education of Hyman Kaplan*. Exactly the same is true, however, of the British identity before, say, 1970. It was a strong brand image and, like Americanism, it had an ideological component as well as historical echoes. A Hungarian

friend of mine chose to emigrate to Canada in 1956, knowing nothing of the country except that it was "governed by the Queen of England" and so must be a country in which the police obeyed the law like everyone else. Orwell points out in "The Lion and the Unicorn" that this was an

all-important English trait: the respect for constitutionalism and legality, the belief in "the law" as something above the State and above the individual, something which is cruel and stupid, of course, but at any rate incorruptible. … Remarks like "They can't run me in; I haven't done anything wrong," or "They can't do that; it's against the law," are part of the atmosphere of England. The professed enemies of society have this feeling as strongly as anyone else. One sees it … in letters to the papers from eminent Marxist professors, pointing out that this or that is a "miscarriage of British justice."

This was an enviable national reputation—in part because it was a more than national reputation. As Mark Steyn has pointed out, "Britishness" was the original multi-ethnic identity. It defined everyone who owed allegiance to the Crown—a Canadian farmer, a Jamaican nurse, a Hong Kong trader—as a British subject with the rights of a British subject. This latitudinarian concept of legal citizenship spilled over into cultural identities—in particular the moral ideal of the English gentleman. This ideal is famously hard to define—it is better extracted from practice, as the Chicago-born Anglo-American scholar, the late Shirley Robin Letwin, does in *The Gentleman in Trollope*—but the ideal gentleman is someone who always strives to treat people fairly. It is thus the social equivalent of Orwell's legal incorruptibility. When the British identity was a confident and enviable one, you ran into English gentlemen of every nationality everywhere —in an Indian officers' mess, going down on the Titanic, writing musicals on Broadway, playing polo in Argentina, and in the Inns of Court. Many of those English gentlemen were Muslims on the Indian sub-continent. Native-born Brits took pride in this identity and its cultural flavorings, and those seeking naturalization generally wanted to share this pride which meant adopting the heroes, heroines, and achievements of the British people as their own. That is the meaning of the old joke about the East European immigrant in London who meets a friend from the old country in full morning dress on the way to Buckingham Palace to be knighted. The new knight is crying and, when his friend asks why, he explains: "We lost India."

No one thinks that today's British identity has this iconic appeal. And U.S. social critics would be unwise to imagine that the American identity has not suffered a similar, if lesser, fall in esteem. According to a Pew Hispanic Center study (taken, significantly, after September 11 when U.S. patriotism was at its height), 55 percent of Americans of Mexican descent said that they considered themselves Mexican "first," 25 percent chose Latino or Hispanic as their primary identity, and only 18 percent chose "American." Reluctance to embrace an American identity is not confined to Hispanic- or Mexican-Americans. Hudson Institute scholar John Fonte quotes a study of Muslims in Los Angeles showing that only 10 percent of such immigrants felt more allegiance to America than to a Muslim country.

Compared to the recent past, both British and American identities today are weak ones.

Their appeal is soft and seductive, making few demands, offering not pride and achievement but a pleasant life, available welfare, low standards, and easy self-esteem. In a world without migration, that might not matter. But migration has brought people with a strong and challenging identity into their countries—notably, Muslims who have established resistant faith communities wherever they have lived. British life succeeds in tempting many Muslims into an apostasy—to secularism, alcohol, and sex rather than to Christianity—but that makes those remaining in the faith still more determined to remain orthodox and, at the extremes, to attack the decadent society that is corrupting the faithful. An earlier Britain might have made the four young Muslim bombers from Yorkshire into soldiers of the Queen. Today's Britain, uncertain and neurotic, allowed them to drift into a culture of religious murder.

It is not altogether surprising that the British should be experiencing a collective identity crisis. They have endured a series of setbacks and discouragements since 1945. These range from such sharply painful events as Suez and the loss of empire to the more insidious transfer of power from national institutions like Parliament to the European Union. These external shocks were accompanied by a gradual cultural revolution in which one British institution after another was derided and weakened. The tercentenary of the 1688 Glorious Revolution—Britain's 1776—was officially celebrated as "300 Years of Anglo-Dutch Friendship." Britain's unwritten constitution was denounced as an undemocratic *ancien régime* by an influential left-wing pressure group, Charter 88, which, trading on the prestige of Czech dissidents, succeeded in weakening parliamentary sovereignty through passage of the Human Rights Act. That empowers judges to declare laws unconstitutional—and now hobbles Ministers in their attempts to fight terrorism and deport terrorist suspects. The monarchy and the Monarch were subjected to savage public humiliation at the time of Princess Diana's funeral with the sly encouragement of both New Labour ministers and culturally radical outposts of the establishment such as the BBC. British history—in particular, imperial history made sensitive by immigration—was less and less taught in schools because it might offend minority pupils. And successive governments sought to make the nation's membership in the European Union palatable to a largely Euroskeptic people by arguing that Britain was economically and politically too feeble to survive outside.

This prolonged exercise in destroying the morale of the British nation culminated comically in New Labour's "re-branding" of the country as "Cool Britannia"—a new young nation that rejected the traditional symbols of national continuity and would now impress the world with its style, fashion, pop musicians, dress designers, and celebrity chefs. It seemed for a moment that, as Desmond Donnelly once feared, Britain would "sink giggling into the sea."

Even before that nadir was reached, it seemed obvious that the British needed to adopt a new posture internationally to correspond with their changed circumstances and humbler (or more masochistic) outlook. Dean Acheson had famously remarked that Britain, having lost an empire, had not yet found a role. At the time the only roles available were to be a loyal subordinate to the U.S., to lead the Commonwealth of former colonies, and to join "Europe" as an equal. Churchill advocated juggling all three, but he and his

successors tilted in practice towards the Anglo-American special relationship. Then Suez and Washington's support for European integration made that a dubious choice. Was the role of "attendant lord" really available? Similarly, her former colonies did not want to be led by Britain. Indeed, with the Third World emerging and the issues of South Africa and Rhodesia dominating the agenda, the Commonwealth restrained Britain rather than augmenting its influence. Finally, when Western Europe was still enjoying rapid postwar growth, joining the Common Market seemed to offer Britain an end to economic stagnation as well as a new international identity. The country's entry into "Europe" in 1972, confirmed in the 1975 referendum, was seen as a decisive choice—Britain had found Acheson's role and would progressively loosen its ties to America and the Commonwealth as it was absorbed into a European polity.

But only a minority of Brits had committed themselves to a European identity and destiny. "Europe" had been sold to the rest as purely a free trade area; the idea of political union would have been rejected if it had been honestly advanced; and the gradual encroachments of economic regulation and political integration on British life were increasingly resented and resisted. In the years that followed the referendum, events tended to cast doubt on the overriding importance of the European link. The "Second Cold War" of the 1980s strengthened Britain's ties with the U.S. The Falklands War demonstrated the diplomatic value of the Commonwealth to Britain. Above all, the British economy began a sustained recovery because of the Thatcher reforms.

As a result—and despite expensive attempts by both the E.U. and Whitehall to convince the British that they were part of some new "European" *demos*—the European identity simply did not "take" in Britain. Blair himself demonstrated this by default. Though a passionate "European" who repeatedly argued that Britain should commit herself to a European destiny without reserve, he held Britain back from joining the European single currency and avoided holding a referendum he knew would be rejected on it. It was his characteristic luck that when a referendum on the proposed European constitution looked inevitable—a referendum that would have revealed the settled Euroskepticism of the voters—the French and Dutch came to his rescue by rejecting the constitution first. In doing so, however, the continental electorates revealed that the European identity was running into trouble even in its birthplace. There has been a mountain of commentary on the reasons for these rejections, mostly seeking to establish they were not a rejection of the European project itself. But European and national identities were nonetheless deeply implicated in the crisis—national identities because they seemed under threat from the E.U. Most obviously, the voters saw the constitution as intruding on some characteristically national practice or institution. And there was everywhere a tendency to see Europe as an elite project that had removed from national parliaments and electorates the power to run their own affairs.

Nor did a European identity offer any escape from these anxieties. To begin with, the very idea of a European identity turned out to be mysterious. Was it rooted in Christianity, the secular Enlightenment, multiculturalism, geography, or nothing in particular? The Vatican's campaign to have God and Christianity mentioned in the constitution's preamble was successfully opposed by secular politicians with Muslim

support. So much for Christendom. But when a distinguished Italian Christian Democrat was rejected as Commissioner for Justice by the European parliament because he privately considered extramarital and homosexual sex to be sins, both Christians and Muslim were indignant at the effective imposition of an anti-religious test for office. Enlightenment secularism, then, commanded only a very shaky majority, if that—and for how long? Large-scale immigration of Muslims into Western Europe at a time of declining local birth-rates suggested a multicultural future at best. But present-day voters increasingly rejected such a future along with the rates of immigration that made it plausible. Those nervous of Muslim immigration were naturally skeptical about admitting Turkey since it was not only Muslim and it would be the single largest nation in the E.U. but it is also outside the geographical boundaries of Europe. How could Ukraine and Russia reasonably be excluded if the Turks were admitted as geographic Europeans? And how could North Africa and the Middle East be kept out if the test were diluted to contiguity and historical trading patterns?

In short there seemed to be emerging at the time of the referendums a Europe not only of the Bible, Shakespeare, Bismarck, and Beethoven, but also of the Koran, Omar Khayyam, and Ataturk. This is a Europe without real foundations or recognizable boundaries. Such a Europe might form the basis of a free trade area or other economic association, but it is inconceivable that it should give rise to a *demos*, develop into a democratic polity, and provide its citizens with a satisfactory identity.

Within the space of a month, then, the multicultural version of British identity had dissolved in contradictions, the emergence of a new and hard Muslim identity had become visible, and the concept of a powerful European identity had begun to wither and die. That left the British with a Janus-faced problem. Internally, how were they to revive their traditional identity so that Muslims and other minorities could feel a natural part of it? Externally, what international role was open to them if a purely “European” one was turning out to be a blind alley?

Into this vacuum has stepped a new concept—the Anglosphere, or the collectivity of English-speaking countries, comprising the U.S., Britain, and most of the countries of the Commonwealth. Of course, the English-speaking nations were a political bloc during the Second World War, and Churchill’s *History of the English-Speaking Peoples* served to keep the idea alive for some years afterwards. But it fell out of fashion with the retreat from empire and the Cold War, and it is never likely to revive in the various forms—racial, imperialist, and hierarchical—that it inhabited in those and earlier years. For practical purposes the Anglosphere might best be thought of as an entirely new development. It is an unintended consequence of the decline of racism, which has removed an obstacle to cooperation among culturally similar countries. It is the positive product of new strategic, economic, and technical advances. Among them: the Cold War is over; the Third World has split between rising market democracies and failing rogue states; economic barriers have fallen in the process of globalization; and the internet has effected a communications revolution.

It is the communications revolution that is most significant here. The extraordinary

rapidity of modern communications means that people all over the world can cooperate in a multiplicity of ventures far more efficiently and quickly than ever before. As David Brooks pointed out in a recent *New York Times* column, however, this development is not equal in its impact. It especially fosters cooperation among people who speak the same language and share the same cultural world. That can have some dangerous implications—easier cooperation, for instance, between Islamist terrorists. Its main international impact, however, is to elevate the importance of culture and to downgrade that of geographical proximity in military alliances, diplomatic cooperation, and much else. Think of the European Union as the last of the great empires made possible (and limited) by railways; think of the Anglosphere as a new form of political organization reflecting the new age of network communications.

Indeed, James C. Bennett in his path-breaking book *The Anglosphere Challenge* sees the contemporary English-speaking world as what he calls a "network civilization"—that is, a set of countries that shares a common cultural heritage going far beyond language. His list of commonalities includes the Common Law, habeas corpus, personal property ownership, a sense of fair play, maxims such as "my word is my bond," a tradition of entrepreneurship, and—in all countries except the United States—cricket. Bennett does not argue that the different nations of the Anglosphere will or should be formally organized into a single political structure such as the E.U. or NATO. What he foresees is the gradual spread of cooperation across several spheres of activity—governmental and private, economic, cultural, legal, and political—until the web is so dense that the different countries form what he calls a network commonwealth. Though formally sovereign, these countries would almost always work together in practice. Eventually their citizens would no longer think of the other Anglosphere countries as "foreign," rather as merely provincially different from themselves.

This sounds faintly utopian until we see that it is already happening. Foreign direct investment—today a more important economic factor than physical trade—shows a clear pattern whereby companies invest in societies culturally similar to their own. Spanish companies invest in Latin America, British companies in the U.S. As for defense cooperation, it scarcely needs underlining that Britain, Australia, and New Zealand were among the first countries to assist the U.S. in Afghanistan. Together with Canada, the same nations comprised the U.N. military committee running the intervention in East Timor. And when the tsunami struck Asia, the U.S. was joined by two Anglosphere countries, India and Australia, together with Japan, in the disaster relief effort, while the U.N. and the rest of the world were surveying the situation.

The role of India here is especially significant. India is the largest English-speaking country in the world and it is also a rising economic power and potential superpower. Its information sector services U.S. companies. Indian graduates work in Silicon Valley. Indian diasporas are dotted across the Anglosphere. And with the end of the Cold War and the rise of terrorism, the country has moved from hostility towards the U.S. to something like an Indo-U.S. alliance. These reforms were possible, or at least easier, because 300 million Indians speak English, live in a liberal democratic culture shaped in part by Britain, and have privileged access to the countries and industries of the advanced

world. These advantages were recognized by the new Indian prime minister, Manmohan Singh, in a speech receiving an honorary degree from his alma mater, Oxford University:

Our notions of the rule of law, of a Constitutional government, of a free press, of a professional civil service, of modern universities and research laboratories have all been fashioned in the crucible where an age-old civilization met the dominant empire of the day. These are all elements which we still value and cherish.

This speech was one of several indicators that from India's standpoint the post-colonial period is over and that the Third World is following the Cold War into history. Having helped invent the Third World in the 1950s, India is now refashioning itself as an Anglosphere power with special ties to the U.S. and Britain. And this change of national identity is a voyage of rediscovery.

A similar voyage of rediscovery would benefit Britain even more substantially. The growing markets of the future are in North America and Asia and, not coincidentally, in nations that were once British colonies—India, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, the Gulf, New Zealand, Canada and, ahem, the former thirteen colonies. It would be wiser for Britain to direct its economic gaze to these countries than to concentrate on a Europe that is growing slowly, facing serious demographic problems, and seemingly wedded to a failed statism. That does not necessarily imply "leaving" Europe, but it does argue strongly for reforms that would enable member-states to choose continental free trade without political union—and to establish, maintain, or develop older relationships with older friends. The Anglosphere, by contrast, threatens no intrusion on the sovereignty of any nation, yet it is composed of the very peoples whom the British, according to polls, would most like to visit, emigrate to, or emulate politically. Any such cooperation would rest comfortably on a common legal, cultural, and political heritage and, of course, a common history. It would therefore put the British back in touch with their own history and with those peoples with whom they once shared a multi-ethnic identity across oceans and with whom they now share a common nationality at home. In a fascinating article in the London *Daily Telegraph*, Mihir Bose, the author and biographer, points out that this aspect of Britishness is a further contrast with the American experience:

America can impose a coherent historical narrative on immigrants because the countries they come from had no previous involvement with America. Settlers are able and encouraged to discard their native histories and accept the American version.

But the vast majority of non-white immigrants to Britain have come from our former colonies, and bring not only their own cultures but also their own versions of our shared history. So, in trying to construct a single coherent narrative for this island, we are faced with trying to marry two historical streams: the "home" version and the "export" version.

Bose is not being pessimistic here. He makes clear that while teaching imperial history will have its embarrassments and difficulties, it will also unearth many mutual heroes, joint achievements, and common reasons for pride. My earlier list of patriotic associations, for instance, should have included at least one of the many Indian soldiers awarded the Victoria Cross. (It will do so in future.) The common achievements soften

the embarrassments and eventually overcome them entirely. It becomes possible for both the "native" British and the "minorities" to feel a common pride not only in the glorious history but also in the creditable present—the fact that the former British colonies are almost invariably countries where, as my Hungarian friend observed, the police obey the law and where prosperity, the rule of law, and individual liberty are most secure. Bose should be encouraged, incidentally, by the several reviews of the republished *Our Island Story* in which the reviewer confesses surprise that the author one hundred years ago had given fair accounts of enemies of the Crown and critical ones of British actions.

If the British were now to reorient their policies towards the Anglosphere, as India is doing, that in itself would signify at least the beginnings of cultural self-confidence. As they were developed, moreover, Anglospherist policies would restore some of the openness and opportunities of the former empire in a wider non-imperial setting. National narratives of different English-speaking countries, now rendered meaningless or unspeakable by multicultural attack, would be given a fresh and forward-looking aspect. The Britishness shaped by this new national orientation would be one that incorporated "minorities" not in separate cultural en-claves but as equal contributors to our common island story and culture. It would be a Britishness to which British Muslims could assimilate with pride and a genuine sense of common ownership rather than with the shameful feelings of someone entering a multicultural brothel. Would such a Britishness safeguard us against domestic religion-based terrorism. Not entirely perhaps, but it would reduce support for it among the uncertain and give the majority of all faiths greater fortitude in resisting it.

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The people vs. the E.U.

By Rodney Leach

The once seemingly unstoppable project of European integration, started after World War II by Jean Monnet and long backed by the State Department, appeared momentarily to have hit the buffers after decisive French and Dutch referendum defeats on the proposed E.U. Constitution. If the British had not been denied their own promised referendum, they would have added a third and heavier defeat, which would have been all

the more significant because the future of the E.U. would have been at the center of the debate.

In the absence of a new Charles de Gaulle or Margaret Thatcher (neither of whom succeeded in the endeavor), one force only was strong enough to confront the bureaucratic machine driving the E.U. towards political, social, and economic integration—the will of the people. The Europeanists thought they had this under control. For fifty years they had engineered the cumulative transfer of powers from the democracies to the E.U.'s unaccountable institutions in a series of obscurely worded treaties whose implications were largely invisible to the public. The Constitution was to mark the crowning achievement. All that was previously hidden would be brought out into the open, and the E.U. would become a fully fledged country, complete with currency, legal supremacy, a president, a foreign secretary, and the sovereign right to enter into treaties. Yet, out of the blue, popular discontent collided with the project, triggered by economic failure and alienation from the political classes. Bitterly, indeed, the Europeanists reproached themselves for having allowed the people a chance to vote.

For a few weeks, panic reigned. Was this the end of "Europe"? Temporarily captives of their own campaign literature, in which they had portrayed defeat as an unthinkable disaster, the elites' initial reactions were all over the place. Some were inclined to throw in the towel, others to push ahead with piecemeal (and therefore not valid) nation-al ratification or to tell the recalcitrant countries to vote again and get it right this time. But France and Holland are not small countries, like Ireland and Denmark, both of which had once been threatened with eviction from the E.U. for rejecting treaties. Far from cowing them, a second referendum might encourage their electorates to an even bigger NO.

Soon, therefore, the elites regrouped and developed a better plan. They would simply ignore the results of the referendums and discredit the motives of the voters. Because the Dutch and French NO campaigns had been very different, the consensus grew in right-thinking circles that these votes could be discounted as the ignorant product of malcontents of left and right, united only in outdated forms of nationalism. As such, they must not interfere with the serious professional business of integration.

It would be more accurate to say that the difference between the various national NO campaigns reinforced, rather than undermined, the objections to the Constitution. For the chief lesson of the referendums is the fundamental irreconcilability of the social, legal, and economic systems and instincts of European member states. The French, resentful of competition from the likes of China and India, essentially voted against free markets and in favor of welfarism and protectionism. The embryonic British campaign, by contrast, was marshalling the pro-competitiveness arguments against statist interventionism and preparing to marry these to the democratic case for self-government. The Dutch, too, voted mainly for self-determination, with emphasis on the issue of Muslim immigration. In a recent book, *The Missing Heart of Europe*, Tom Kremer explored these and other deep-seated national characteristics with acute historical awareness, dividing Europe broadly into open and centrist societies, of which the prime exemplars are Britain and France respectively. The logical conclusion of his analysis is that if Europe is ever to be

at ease with itself, powers must be returned to the member democracies, not centralized and harmonized by Euro-pean courts and commissars.

This type of conclusion, of course, requires an intellectual hinterland which Tony Blair altogether lacks. One of the more troubling revelations of the goings-on in Downing Street was that made by the PM's six-year economic adviser, Derek Scott, to the effect that during his time at No. 10 there was never any substantive discussion of the merits of issues such as the euro and the Constitution—only of how to sell the Government's intentions to an unreceptive public.

What Blair does not lack, however, is agility. With typical speed, he has responded to Europe's crisis of legitimacy by seizing the linguistic high ground, demanding unspecified "reform." The credulous British media have taken his conversion from European orthodoxy seriously, insufficiently suspicious of how sympathetically this once unpalatable message is suddenly being received in Brussels, where all bar a handful of Commissioners and slow-witted integrationists are "reformist" now. Perhaps, they ask themselves, by embracing Blair's language, they can rescue the project from collapse? Reform à la Blair is, after all, content-free. At most, it will probably amount to little more than tinkering with the institutional structure and tweaking the date at which the Common Agricultural Policy will be reviewed, maybe in return for canceling the cash rebate negotiated for Britain by the hated Margaret Thatcher. To exchange real concessions for token promises would be, after all, vintage Blair.

Like officialdom and politicians everywhere, the eurocrats have boundless faith in words. "Setting Europe on a new upward trajectory," "renewing the Lisbon agenda" (a fatuous aspiration to be the world's leading information-based economy by 2010). Yes, that's how the next phase of integration must be presented. "Blair the standard bearer for a new Europe." Commissioner Peter Mandelson, Blair's favorite spin doctor, was working the media in the desired direction within days of the referendum setbacks.

Meanwhile, in the real world, events are taking their course. Italy's competitive situation has deteriorated dangerously. Its traditional path to safety, devaluation, is barred by its membership of the single currency. Even a big fall in the euro itself would do nothing to improve the country's position relative to its neighbors. For the first time, economists and heavyweight commentators like *The Times*'s Anatole Kaletsky are asking if Italy might exit the euro and reinstate the lire, with truly seismic implications. Unemployment in the eurozone is approaching levels that pose a threat to social cohesion. E.U. corruption is reaching third-world standards, with punishment only meted out to a few brave whistle-blowers. Voters, long bamboozled by treaty mumbo-jumbo, are incensed to find that they cannot usefully change their situation through the ballot box, or exact fitting revenge for their plight by evicting their elected politicians. Whatever their particular anxiety—be it economic distress, immigration, Islamic influence, corruption, or over-regulation—all the levers of power have been put in the hands of remote foreign judges, bankers, or civil servants, who are answerable to no one and nothing, except their own interpretation of two unreadable treaties.

When, therefore, a few of Europe's populations were given a once-in-a-lifetime chance to express their views in referendums on the Constitution, they grabbed it, each electorate in its own way expressing the wish to assert its identity. Of course, this can be—and was—caricatured as the French pig-headedly rejecting Anglo-Saxon liberalism, the British being narrowly defeatist about Franco-German domination, and the Dutch selfishly withdrawing into themselves for parochial reasons. But the people are tired of being lectured by the Great and Good about their petty nationalism and lack of European vision. Besides, they suspect that the desire for government of the people, by the people, for the people is not less noble than the concept of government by a self-interested oligarchy of distant bureaucrats, however loudly those bureaucrats profess their own idealism. Through a glass darkly, voters perceive that the defining weakness of Europe is the absence of a *demos*, without which no European democracy (still less the despised European Parliament) can be other than ersatz.

Those of us in Britain who have taken on the role of eurocritics find ourselves today in a frustrating situation, like that of Hannibal when the Romans, unable to defeat him, invented the strategy of avoiding combat. Every time a set-piece battle has taken place, the eurocritics have handsomely won it. First, over whether the U.K. should abandon the pound. Next, over whether there should be a referendum on the proposed Constitution. Finally, over the outcome of the Constitution. Similar victories have been won by our Continental allies in referendums on the Maastricht Treaty, the single currency, and now the Constitution. The ordinary people of Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, and Switzerland have all at one time or another subscribed their names on the list of winners.

But there is no longer any set-piece battle in sight. Britain's two referendums (on the euro and the Constitution) have both been kicked by the government into the long grass. Meanwhile, the Constitution, 85 percent of which is little more than a left-of-center manifesto, is being implemented in its political dimension as though it had never been defeated. Thus the E.U. is creating a Diplomatic Service, a Foreign Minister, an Armaments Agency, a prosecuting magistracy, and a space program, all of which are authorized only by the defunct Constitution but are proceeding anyway. The unequivocal supremacy of European law over national laws (including constitutional law), for the first time spelled out in the Constitution, is now simply asserted by the European Court of Justice. British defense capability, once inextricably NATO-oriented, is being quietly assimilated to the European Rapid Reaction force, with procurement organized on a pan-European basis, regardless of cost or of compatibility with U.S. weaponry.

The remaining 15 percent of the Constitution concerns revisions to the E.U.'s governance arrangements, such as voting modifications and the appointment and term of a President. It is chilling for a democrat to observe the mindset of those who continue to push for this part of the Constitution to be implemented. A current study by the Bertelsmann Institute starts from the premise that Europe is "in crisis" solely because of the rogue defeat of the Constitution, allied to "the lack of political will in certain member states in the fields of monetary, internal, and social policy." What is therefore needed is the incorporation of the "uncontroversial central innovations" of the Constitution into a new treaty. Astonishingly, the Institute's proposed revised text even contains provisions that had

been knocked out of the original by the British negotiators as too integrationist during the preparation of the Constitution.

The Bertelsmann Institute is a highly respected private body, which undoubtedly reflects official German thinking about the E.U., although this is as far removed from the opinions of grassroots German voters (who have never been offered a say on either the euro or the Constitution), as are the ideas prevalent in Whitehall, Brussels, and the Quai d'Orsay. When the next European treaty finally emerges, it will be portrayed as a mere tidying-up exercise, unsuitable for submission to the popular will, on the grounds that the technical provisions of the Constitution are complicated, necessary to accommodate the E.U.'s expansion, and uncontentious, not having been singled out for dispute during the lost referendums. Thus, the Institute proposes that the changes be introduced by way of a revision to the Treaty of Nice, itself a revising treaty incapable of comprehension without reference to other treaties. A brazen spin accompanies this undemocratic proposal—"the restricted revision of the Treaties by an intergovernmental conference" [read "without referendums"] "strengthens … the E.U.'s democratic legitimisation" but "deliberately eschews a strikingly symbolic emphasis on the treaty-based nature of integration" [read "hopefully the people won't notice"].

For British eurocritics, then, the question is how best to mobilize the large and growing popular domestic majority that bears goodwill towards Europe but supports a policy of repatriation of powers from the center and the injection of a massive dose of flexibility into the E.U.'s structures. Monnet, faced with a similar question in reverse (in his case, how to circumvent the will of the majority), set about winning over powerful politicians, succeeding spectacularly with Adenauer, Schuman, and de Gasperi in the Continent's three major countries. In Britain, the Conservatives have at last grasped both the problem and the elements of the solution, but they are as far from power as ever. The Poles, the Czechs, Gordon Brown, Nicholas Sarkozy, and Angela Merkel are all occasionally spoken of as reformists, but none has the appetite for the sort of radical system transformation that the E.U.'s loss of purpose and legitimacy now requires.

The tragedy of the present juncture is that the E.U.'s historic objectives have all been attained—Franco-German reconciliation; a forum for resolving neighborly differences; a common market; the absorption of the ex-dictatorships of Spain, Portugal, and Greece; the reunification of Germany; and the creation of a safe haven for the former Soviet satellites and the Balkan countries. Europe's twenty-first-century objective should not be the imperialist one of constructing an artificial counterweight to the U.S.: it should be the reversal of what today looks to be an inexorable decline relative to the emerging economies of Asia. In an era when technology and capital are readily transferable and high skills, often combined with very low wages, are in over-supply throughout the East, it is hard to believe one's eyes when one sees the sheer volume of anti-competitive legislation and regulation that is gripping the economies of Europe.

But each country needs to find its own route to success. Central direction may work best for France, liberal markets for Britain. Germany's great postwar recovery was market-led, under Ludwig Erhard, but it has also been a prominent exponent of the "social

market economy." Whatever the path chosen, it will be accompanied by pain and the casualties of change, which can only be assuaged and reconciled to the greater good through credible national democracies. And that is something a Europe of different mentalities, histories, law systems, policy preferences, and political structures cannot either replicate or pretend into existence by flags, anthems, and symbols.

Everything, therefore, points in the same direction. Far from being a catastrophic setback, the referendums show us how Europe should revitalize itself and connect with its peoples by setting them free to return to their inheritance, nowadays without the least fear of a recrudescence of the confrontational or military aspects of nationalism that discredited the concept in the 1930s. Call it devolution, if you want to be modernist.

There is already far more diversity in the E.U. than is commonly recognized. Fewer than half the twenty-five member states use the euro (and only twelve of the fifteen core Western European states). Several members are either neutral or exempt from the common defense policy. Britain and Ireland have opt-outs from some of the E.U.'s border control arrangements, while the Nordic countries have their own passport-free zone which includes two non-E.U. states. The recent accession of eight ex-communist countries has further added to the list of exceptions, which would be again expanded if Islamic Turkey were to join. Instead of treating these phenomena as tiresome aberrations, they should be viewed as trailblazers for a better future.

For any believer in democracy and the open society, Europe's salvation is clear. Be thankful for past achievements, discard much of the clumsy superstructure, and let the nations find their own way, some alone, others in partnership, some Atlanticist, others eastward-looking, some protectionist, others free-marketeers, all united in common values, friendly links, and relief from the ordeal of enforced mutual embrace.

Rodney Leach's most recent book is *Europe: A Concise Encyclopedia* (Profile Books Ltd.).

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The end of virtuous Albion

By Theodore Dalrymple

My wife, who is French, has lived in England for twenty-five years. When she arrived,

she was both surprised and favorably struck by, among other things, the comparative uninterest, even of the rich, in material comfort and pleasures, and by the uprightness and straightforwardness of the public administration. Her subsequent career as a doctor was spent treating old people, and she developed a great respect for the British character as exhibited by her patients. Among their virtues, which visitors to our shores earlier in the century had also noted, were politeness, lack of self-importance, stoicism, fortitude, emotional self-control, and an ironic detachment from their own experience, especially when it was unpleasant. Irrespective of their social class, they had dignity, self-respect, and a fundamental integrity. Their virtues far outweighed their vices.

My medical experience of my older compatriots bears out this impression completely. I remember at the beginning of my career serving for a short time as a doctor in a rural area, where one day an old man called me out to his home. He had had rectal bleeding for some weeks, and by now had lost so much blood and was so weak that he had difficulty in raising himself from the sofa on which he was lying.

“I tried for as long as I could not to bother you, doctor,” he said, “but I can’t manage it any longer.”

What he meant by this strange but moving little speech—strange, for what could a doctor like me possibly have been doing that was more urgent than attending to someone like him?—was, “I am not so important that I expect others to dance attendance on me.” This kind of humility is not much in fashion nowadays, to put it mildly, because so few people are able any longer to distinguish between humility and subservience, convinced as they have become that the exercise of power is the only important or real relation that exists or can have ever have existed between men. We are all Leninists now: and “Who whom?” (who does what to whom?) is the only question worth asking.

The husband of another of my patients, a man in his late seventies, described how his wife’s compulsions—constant checking that the gas was turned off, for example, and repeated scrubbing of surfaces that were obviously already spotlessly clean—had sometimes made his life very difficult. His wife’s compulsions had lasted fifty years, and since she never completed her checking she was often unable to leave the house.

“Why did you stay with her?” I asked, my question demonstrating that I was myself a creature of the modern age.

“I made a promise in church fifty years ago,” he said. “And I meant it.”

These days, such an adherence to your word given half a century before, against your own apparent interest (which is, of course, to have as much pleasure as possible) would strike most people as risible, or at least retrogressive, rather than a sign of a deep, noble, and incorruptible rectitude.

Another of my patients, a man likewise in his late seventies, began to have nightmares, reliving over half a century later a dramatic and horrible event that he witnessed in the

Indian Ocean during his war service in the Royal Navy. His ship had been torpedoed, and the lifeboats were so crowded that the sailors had to take it by turns to hang in the sea by gripping the lanyards. His best friend, whose turn it was half to immerse himself in the sea, was killed by a shark that bit off his legs.

My patient's nightmares began when he received treatment for Parkinson's disease. He had never told his wife what happened in the Indian Ocean, and she therefore could not guess the content of his nightmares. (Incidentally, he had known her exactly a month when he married her, marrying quickly while on leave because he thought he might not survive very long. How different are the reasons nowadays for swift decisions to cohabit!) He took the view that a trouble shared was not a trouble halved but doubled; he could see no good reason to distress his wife with his own experiences of utter horror. Such fortitude would now be thought of as absurd, laughable if it were not an irresponsible invita-tion to psychological breakdown, largely deserved because self-inflicted. But he had successfully sheltered his wife from knowledge of what he had seen and experienced for more than half a century, throughout which he and she had lived a satisfactory life. He did not regard himself as heroic, only as normal, for he had behaved as he thought anyone else, at least of his time and place, would have behaved.

On walking through the hospital in which I formerly practiced, I came across the husband of a patient of mine who had always accompanied her to her appointments. He was sitting down and waiting to be called for an examination. He was much thinner than I had seen him before, and he was so jaundiced that he was almost orange in color. At his age, this could mean only one thing: hepatic secondaries in the liver, and fast-approaching death.

I passed the time of day with him, and wished him and his wife well, though I knew that he was dying, he knew that he was dying, and he knew that I knew that he was dying.

"We'll just have to do the best we can," he said.

Indeed, he died two weeks later. There had been no protest, no self-pity, no demand for special attention. He understood that I commiserated with him, though I said nothing except that I was sorry to see that he was unwell, but he understood also that my commiseration was of a degree commensurate with the degree of our acquaintance, and that demanded no extravagant and therefore dishonest expression. By controlling his emotion, and his grief at his own imminent death, so that he should not embarrass me, he maintained his dignity and self-respect. He retained a sense of social obligation, a vital component of what used to be called character, until the very end of his life.

I mention these people not because they were in any way extraordinary—a claim they would never have made for themselves—but because they were so ordinary. They were living up to a cultural ideal that, if not universal, was certainly very widespread (as my wife would confirm). It is an ideal that I find admirable, because it entails a quasi-religious awareness of the metaphysical equality of mankind: that I am no more important than you. This was no mere intellectual or theoretical construct; it was an ideal that was lived. Unlike the claim to rights, which is often shrill and is almost so self-

regarding that it makes the claimant the center of his own moral universe, the old cultural ideal was other-regarding and social in nature. It imposed demands upon the self, not upon others; it was a discipline rather than a benefit. Oddly enough, it led to a greater and deeper contentment, capacity for genuine personal achievement, and tolerance of eccentricity and nonconformity than our present, more egotistical ideals.

I don't think there is much doubt that the ideal that I have described has been abandoned as absurd, oppressive, and anachronistic by more than one generation of Britons. Self-control now seems merely ridiculous to them, and even harmful. If you feel like screaming and shouting in public (the guarantee that at least you feel something), why shouldn't you? Who has the right to tell you not to get drunk *en masse* with your companions, if that is what you want to do? Who has the right, justified from Cartesian first principles, to stand in the way of the expression of your whims? For the modern Briton, the self is sovereign, and everyone is a shopper in that great existential supermarket called life.

It is not surprising, to me at least, that the new national character is a deeply flawed and unattractive one, as charmless as any that I know, completely unbalanced by any compensating virtues. It is composed of disinhibition, vulgarity, aggression, self-importance, egotism, and arrogance. It makes the British, at least wherever they gather abroad, intensely and justifiably disliked and feared. Official genuflections in the direction of multiculturalism notwithstanding, the British assume that their tastes, almost always for the most debased products of their increasingly derivative material culture, are universal; they are multiculturalists only in the sense that they believe everyone has the duty to put up with them, because public drunkenness and aggression are part of the culture, and all cultures and therefore all modes of conduct are by definition equal and thus permissible.

Of course, I am aware of objections to my observations. It might, for example, be objected that nothing human ever remains the same for very long, so that it is pointless to lament change, or that my observations are inaccurate, or at least only partial, or that they are merely the consequence of the approach of late middle age, when men are almost biologically programmed to regret the passing of the world of their youth.

But even if change is inevitable, that portion of change that is the result of human thought and decision is susceptible to moral evaluation. Change is inevitable, but not any and all change; some of it is the work of deliberate destruction. And while any observation upon a complex society is necessarily partial, its partiality is not in itself proof of its inaccuracy. The essential truth of *1984* is not invalidated by the survival in the Soviet Union of Richter and Shostakovitch. Finally, even if it is true that old men by nature lament, sometimes they have been right to lament, and sometimes they have not lamented enough. It all depends.

I am not alone, of course, in my observations. Foreigners who know our country well have noticed the same changes—immigrants too. Moreover, evidence from statistics points in exactly the same direction, towards a deterioration in the national character: and

a country that in my youth was as orderly (without order being heavy-handedly imposed by authority) as any modern society could be has changed within a few decades to the least orderly and most crime-ridden in the western world, where the young impose a curfew on the old (and where authority is increasingly heavy-handed without being effective). It is now estimated that the average Briton is photographed 300 times daily by closed-circuit cameras, but this seems to do nothing to improve his public conduct.

The result is that I feel I inhabit a different moral and cultural universe from that of my young compatriots: I feel more abroad when I am at home than I do when I am abroad. I realized recently that there was an unbridgeable gulf of sentiment between us when I was teaching a master's course to toxicology students. Needless to say, they were far from being bad young people: they were intelligent and pleasant, even if their cultural interests were scarcely distinguishable from those of people much less educated than they (this is a characteristic of modern Britain). Somehow or other, the subject of self-control came up after my lecture, and I described how, in my childhood, it was regarded as a rather low-grade thing to do to eat on the street, and furthermore that it was regarded as a moral discipline not to eat between meals even if you were hungry. You ate with others, or not at all, and the fact that you sometimes refrained from eating when you were hungry, and were sometimes obliged to eat when you were not hungry, taught a very important lesson, namely that your inclination of the moment was not the only thing to be consulted in making a decision as to how to act.

The students laughed, much as they might have done had I been describing some outlandish practice of a backward or primitive tribe. How peculiar it was to them that anyone should think of delaying gratification when there was no necessity to do so. Perhaps it is not altogether surprising that many of the criminals whom I used to meet in the prison in which I worked had never, in their entire lives, sat down and eaten at a table with another person.

How did this radical asocialization, visible in minor degrees everywhere in our streets, and that gives to daily life in Britain an unpleasant tenor despite a great increase in material prosperity and improvement in almost all phases of physical existence, come about? Was it the result of a spontaneous demand from below for greater freedom from restraint, or was it the result of an intellectual movement that worked its poison?

There is little doubt that man's recurrent and eternal desire to escape his bonds, to go beyond the limits laid down for him, however necessary or beneficial they might be, was present in an acute form in Britain after the years of sacrifice caused by the war, years that were gray and seemingly without end. And along came intellectuals who either ridiculed those restraints, and showed them to be merely ridiculous, or who claimed that they were positively harmful. Something akin to a gestalt switch took place, and those cultural attributes that had previously been deemed good were now bad, and those that had been bad were deemed good. Not long ago, I shared a public platform with Germaine Greer in which she stated that to be good—to lead a virtuous life—entailed faithfulness or truth to one's inclinations. It is scarcely any wonder that young Britons can no longer see what is wrong with vomiting drunkenly in the street, or screaming with either

pleasure or hostility. If your inclination is to be a barbarian—well, be true to yourself, be a barbarian.

One of the currents that brought about the great British cultural gestalt switch was the psychotherapeutic view of life, in a distinctly sub-Freudian form. It was, as Auden so perceptively said in his obituary poem for Freud, not so much a theory as a whole climate of opinion, a zeitgeist whose practical effect took years to manifest itself. Of course, Freud's view of human life was tragic, in the sense that he recognized that mankind was imbued with desires that could not all be satisfied simultaneously; frustration of one kind or another was therefore man's lot. But he was soon misinterpreted to have said something much more gratifying to those craving more gratification than the old culture allowed: that an uninhibited festival of the Id would solve man's problems, and give him pleasure without unpleasant remainder. Adultery used to be known as petty treason: the new petty treason was to the self, when it failed to do what it was inclined to do, and therefore poisoned itself with unnecessary frustrations.

At the same time, the white man's burden became the white man's burden of guilt. The nationalist movements in Britain's former colonies were successful not only in gaining their independence, but also in persuading their erstwhile masters that British history was nothing but a catalogue of crime without achievement. It followed, surely, that all the moral values that were associated with that bloody history were tainted by it, and indeed were mere masks for oppression and exploitation. Out, then, with the old, and in with the new: the new being, as far as possible, the opposite of the old.

Yet you don't have to be an imperialist of the kind intent upon proving that imperialism was a good thing because Egypt under British suzerainty was able to borrow money on the international market at a lower rate than it would have been as a fully independent state (and was therefore able to develop economically further and faster than it would otherwise have done), in order to assert that there the British left behind them something more than a memory of oppression and despoliation. That is why British cultural patterns persist so tenaciously in India (and elsewhere), to which you must go if you want to hear spoken British English of heartbreaking purity, and meet real Britons of the best kind.

The strange thing is that when I meet young Indians, admittedly of a certain class—I do not encounter the children of untouchables—I do not feel, as, increasingly, I do when I meet young Britons, that I am encountering creatures across a gulf so great that it amounts to a species gap. On the contrary, I feel an instinctive affinity with them, an instant sympathy. And this reassures me that my perception of what has happened so disastrously, so hideously, in my own country is not merely the psychological product of embittered old age, in which the ancientry as a matter of course decry and deride youth as being nothing but the getting of wenches with child and stealing and fighting, but something more accurate and objective. And this in turn is depressing, for it means permanent exile and estrangement from the land of my birth, wherever I may live.

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Farewell, Church of England?

By Peter Mullen

As we prepare for our Harvest Festival Services, we see that what's left of the English Church is indistinguishable from a lunatic asylum. Everywhere you peer inside this once refined and educated, lovely and lovable national institution, there is only a mania for self-destruction. How else can you account for church services that compete with pantomime for dramatized idiocy? For example, I recently attended a conference for clergy at a beautiful medieval church in Oxford. It was supposed to be a choral Eucharist but there was no organ music—only some plinky-plonky stuff on an out-of-tune piano and mindless choruses in the *Jesus Goes to Toytown* fashion: interminable glum repetition of what was not worth singing once.

Then the Bishop came on and told us that at the laughably misnamed riot called "The Peace" he didn't want us merely to shake hands but to "hug one another"—and not just to hug one another, but to put our arms on our neighbor's shoulders and say three times, "You are everlastingly loved." When, with varying degrees of squeamishness, grown men fawned on one another in this way, the Bishop came on again in full pantomime mode and said, "Not loud enough! Again—louder!" Not one word from the *Book of Common Prayer* throughout the three-day conference or indeed from any source that might be identified as religious in the traditional sense. And that Bishop is now Archbishop of York.

They have thrown out the *Book of Common Prayer* and *The Authorized Version* of the Bible and substituted dumbed-down, politically correct prayers which sound as if they were written by a committee made up of Tony Blair, Karl Marx, and Noddy. I was at a synod for all the London clergy in All Souls, Langham Place. When it was time for the prayers, a female crooner came on the stage. Stage? Stage? But you thought this was supposed to be the church? Don't ask! She warbled syrupy phrases about "race relations" and "those who seek to bring signs of enrichment." Between each peti- tion was the soporific chorus, "Remember, remember." That excruciating service was no anomaly. This is how it is almost everywhere you go in today's Church of England. But are we supposed to turn to these fools for spiritual guidance? And don't look to the next generation either: the giggling theological colleges are run like children's television.

When it comes to Christenings, Weddings, and Funerals, the Church has given up talking to grown-ups and instead produces the sort of touchy-feely guff used in adverts directed at moony adolescents. At the Wedding, for instance, the new official book for every parish, *Common Worship,* makes the priest pray, "Let them be tender with each other's dreams." I think there should be a rubric in the margin saying, "At this point the congregation shall throw up—bride's family's side first." At Christenings they have dropped the renunciation of "the devil and all his works" and there is barely a mention of sin. So what is Holy Baptism *for*? Only a sentimental prelude to the booze-up and the cake.

No "vile bodies" or "worms" are allowed to contaminate the new, euphemistic fu- nerals. And instead of "Jesus wept" we are given, "Jesus was moved to tears"—as if he'd just watched the lovers going down in the film *Titanic* for the umpteenth time. None of this mealy-mouthed, evasive schmaltz is the slightest use to the bereaved, of course. *Blessed are they that mourn*—but not here. And, where the traditional Prayer Book's Holy Communion used to say those unbearably moving holy words "In the same night that he was betrayed," the new book says, "He had supper with his friends." I am not making this up. You couldn't make it up. This is the official worship book of the Church of England. In the face of such blasphemous idiocy, mere satire becomes impossible.

Unbelievably, it is supposed that congregations might experience difficulties in comprehending even this sort of baby talk. So the Archbishop's Council has produced an idiots' *Guide to Common Worship* which enables us to dumb down even lower than Saturday evenings on BBC1. "Compline" becomes "Night Prayer." In case we cannot understand, "O Lord, open thou our lips," the *Guide* suggests we print at the start of the service, "We say hello!" And "Con- fession" is retitled, "Doing the dirt on ourselves."

The way modern preachers talk down to congregations is bum-clenchingly embarrassing. Last Christmas I heard one say, "Like us, Mary had to accept that her son would grow up." Is this insight, wisdom, or *Woman's Hour*? Recently at our church of St. Michael, for the City Service, we had three hundred senior bankers, liverymen, and the Lord Mayor of London in the congregation. Here was a wonderful op- portunity for our distinguished visiting preacher to say something inspiring to the movers and shakers in the financial heartlands. All he could come up with was the usual, economically-holier-than-thou politics of envy combined with a vast ignorance of what actually goes on in the Square Mile.

He said, "Money is important—but it's not all-important." Really, the men were too polite to stand up and jeer: their eyes merely glassed over and they dozed for the duration. Afterwards a Master of one of the top twelve liveries came up to me and spoke vehemently, "We know *that*! Why didn't he take the trouble to find out that we spend 2 percent of our income on wining and dining and the rest of our time in boring meetings deciding how we're going to give the other 98 percent away?"

The whole institution is like a psychotic kindergarten. To this is added a myop- ic, self-righteous arrogance which allows modern clergy to mistake their failed parroting of

1960s corporatism—taxation, intervention, regulation—for prophecy. When they get the opportunity to broadcast, the result is flabbergasting: the other week a Christian minister devoted the whole three minutes of his *Thought for the Day* to a defense of voodooism. *Thought for the Day* is regularly used by Anglican bishops and parsons to denigrate the very tradition that has given them their status.

As might be expected of an institution that is intellectually catatonic, its practical policies aren't up to much either. So the C. of E. is on the verge of bankruptcy and can no longer afford to pay clergy housing costs. It's well known that the Church Commissioners lost £800 million at the end of the 1980s, but even that was only part of a far greater loss. A generation ago, the Diocesan Boards of Finance were given permission by the Commissioners to sell off thousands of fine old vicarages—many of these in extensive grounds—at the bottom of the property market and to re-house the parochial clergy in inferior houses on the new estates of the Seventies and Eighties. The result, of course, is a huge devaluation of the Church's property portfolio. This squandering of historic resources amounts to colossal mismanagement and a betrayal of trust.

On the back, as it were, of this theological, liturgical, spiritual, moral, and financial dereliction, church leaders still contrive to offer us political guidance. I was at a clergy gathering on September 11, 2001, standing in front of a huge TV screen and watching the horror unfold. One senior clergyman turned to me and said, "I hope Bush doesn't retaliate. The West has brought this judgment on itself." I have since met hundreds of clergy who share this misperception, this knee-jerk condemnation of the civilization which has been the cradle of Christian culture for two thousand years. And now Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, effectually blames the West for the attack on New York: "We have something of the freedom to consider whether or not we turn to violence and so are rather different from those who experience their world as leaving no other option." We have heard the same excuses made by senior clergymen after the London tube bombings.

How did this falling off occur? In the early 1960s when I was a young man and a candidate for Ordination, the Church was enjoying something of a revival. The figures for Baptism and Confirmation were all rising steadily along with Sunday congregations. There were more men offering themselves for the priesthood than at any time since before the First World War. So how did the rot set in? There were three main causes: theological, liturgical, and social.

First, the 1960s saw the popularization of radical theology largely through the media of paperback books and television doc- umentary programs. The biblical criti- cism of nineteenth-century theologians such as Strauss and Bauer and the more sensational "demythologizing" method of Ru- dolf Bultmann were widely disseminated through the popular paperbacks *Honest to God*, *Soundings*, *Objections to Christian Belief* and *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*.

Bishop John Robinson previewed his book *Honest to God* in a front-page article in *The Observer* newspaper entitled *Our Image of God Must Go.* Robinson said, "In place of a

God who was literally and physically 'up there,' we have substituted a God who is metaphysically 'out there.'" And so the cat was out of the bag—the idea was put about that traditional belief was no longer possible. God in the secular age was past his sell-by date. Rudolf Bultmann wrote, "It is impossible to believe the miracles and the resurrection in an age of electric light and the wireless." Few seemed to ask, "Why?"—preferring the radical chic of secular Christianity, a demythologized creed and what Paul Van Buren and Thomas J. J. Altizer described as "the gospel of Christian atheism."

These innovations and fashions may be seen as part of the general sloughing off of traditional habits and ways that characterized the 1960s. The flashy consumerism of the post-war boom at its height—the Prime Minister's assertion, "You've never had it so good"—and the widespread contempt for anything that was seen to belong to the old order of deference, respect, hierarchy, and authority—spread into the churches too. The anti-doctrinal, anti-metaphysical mood extended to Christian moral teaching, and the Ten Commandments were derogated as out of date in the climate of act utilitarianism, or "situation ethics," in which it was declared that "All you need is love"—which by coincidence was just what the Beatles were singing in 1963.

The liturgy was next to suffer. W. H. Auden referred to the *Book of Common Prayer* as the "good luck" of the Church of England and, in the face of its sidelining, asked, "Why spit on our luck?" But spit the authorities did, introducing new rites and ceremonies wholesale. This is not the place for a detailed criticism of the new services, except to draw attention to their main result: they were so many and various that soon no one knew any prayers by heart. The luck of the Church had meant that Anglo-Catholics such as Newman and Pusey, evangelicals and low churchmen like Kingsley and Charles Simeon and the broad churchmen Maurice and Inge had all been happy to use the *Book of Common Prayer.* At a stroke this cornerstone of Anglican devotion was removed and usage in the Church came to resemble a new Babel. Suddenly there were four or five versions of the Lord's Prayer. The result for Christian education, particularly of the young, was catastrophic.

Finally, the Church accepted wholesale the new social agenda of permissiveness. The Bishops supported the lifting of the ban on Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover.* Bishops and other leading churchmen urged their congregations to give support to the proposed new Parliamentary Bills to liberalize abortion, divorce, and homosexuality. In all these cases the coercive procedure adopted was the same: a perceived evil was identified, the "reforming" Bill was declared to be the remedy, and the predicted consequences were promised to be rosy. It is important to understand that here again were the same situation ethics which had lately become the moral code of the Established Church. The old belief that certain actions were prohibited by God's Commandments was simply *passé*—something that "modern man come of age" could safely leave behind.

In the case of the legalization of abortion it was argued that this would put an end to the sordid, life-threatening operations described as "back street." What was not envisaged—or at least left undeclared—was that the legalization and medicalization of abortion would lead to today's figure of 190,000 embryos, in Britain alone, ripped untimely from

the womb merely as a form of contraception. Homosexual law reform was said to be humane and necessary in order to prevent the criminalization and blackmail of men who shared a bed. The terms of the Act decriminalized homosexual practices "between consenting adults in private." "Between" meant two; "adults" meant twenty-one; "private" meant behind locked doors. It did not mean what it means now: hordes of screaming sexual exhibitionists with painted faces parading their sexuality like a carnival, homosexual "activists" themselves doing the blackmailing by attempting to "out" public figures—including a former Archbishop of York; the love that once dared not speak its name is now yelling at the top of its voice in high camp in the main parts of British towns and cities.

The depth of the pit into which the C. of E. has fallen is revealed in the fact that most Anglican lay people no longer recognize the modern Church as bearing any resemblance to the institution in which they were brought up. But the people in the pews are powerless against the torrent of ignorant and arrogant "modernization" thrust upon them by the uneducated new generation of clergy who are in thrall to the most tawdry aspects of popular culture.

Perhaps it is not altogether too late? The Church has been at death's door before. And the Lord did say that the gates of hell would not prevail. The gates of hell are having a damned good try. But it will take a miracle to revive the Church now. Perhaps at the Harvest Festival we might implore in the words of the Psalm, *Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered.*

Always remembering that the enemies are within.

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Two concepts of the moral life

By Kenneth Minogue

One way of tracking the movement of a civilization is to follow the evolution of thought and sentiment in the moral life. The moral life is not, of course, any particular moral system, but the daily flow of thoughts and desires we experience as we respond to a sense

that there is some right thing we ought to be doing. People have very different ideas, of course, about what the right thing is, and that is my theme. The situation is further complicated by the fact that very few styles of morality ever disappear entirely, so that Britain (for example) is morally a vast patchwork of responses to the world, responses that are constantly changing. Such changes can to some extent be tracked in public discussion and actual conduct over the generations. And my argument here is that by the end of the twentieth century, a striking new style of moral response to the world had come into being.

Let me indicate the kind of change I mean by sketching elements of the historical movement of the moral life in recent times. We commonly observe that in the later part of the nineteenth century, the more educated Britons were often struggling with religious doubt aroused by Darwin's evolutionary theories. A widespread response among Queen Victoria's subjects to the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" of the Christian faith was to absolutize a morality of Duty detached from its religious moorings. In the novels of Henry James and a little later of Joseph Conrad we have the most exquisite imaginable sensibilities of a purely moral kind. But within a gen-eration, these upright Victorians looked repressed and stultifying to (for example) D. H. Lawrence and the Bloomsbury circle. Sexual freedom and an accommodation with natural impulses—that was the thing! The history of twentieth-century morality is one of elite freedoms seeping down to the more respectable classes, partly as a result of experiences such as that of war, and partly from the implications of political radicalism. Out in the expanding suburbs of Britain, things changed slowly, but the young were always convinced that they lived in a more liberated world than had their elders. The upper crust may have been as morally adrift as Evelyn Waugh portrayed them, but the wider world valued respectability, and pregnancy generally led to marriage.

The Second World War continued the process of liberation, partly by detaching so many people from norm-reinforcing communities, and partly by continuing to undermine popular respect for authority as such. The reputation of the 1950s seems strange to the historian: moral attitudes had strikingly liberalized, yet later generations have locked them into legend as dull and restrictive. The reason, one may guess, is that the young were already looking forward to making an even grander bonfire of accepted conventions than actually occurred. Just such a bonfire soon came as the 1960s experience of popular tertiary education created dreams of new liberations. Heterosexuality and monogamy crumbled as absolutes, or even as dominant standards, and the vogue for moral and political satire made defenders of "morality" look as if they were the fossils of an earlier time. Ethical relativism, long familiar in the universities, drifted into the advanced chatter of the sophisticated.

The period since the 1960s has largely developed the themes already evident earlier in the century. It has been a time in which ideas accepted as radical and liberated have spread to all corners of society, and some of their implications have begun to be explored. The main agents of change have been the government on the one hand, and commerce on the other. The consequence has been a rather dramatic "transvaluation of values." The virtue of chastity, for example, has been left for dead, and a Roman Catholic priesthood

demanding celibacy has barely survived, so dominant has become the idea that sexuality is a natural expression of human wholeness whose denial must be in some degree unhealthy or pathological. Again, loyalty has been notably downgraded in moral terms. The rich and the royal have great difficulty in finding employees who will not soon cash out their intimacy with the famous for the benefit of a tabloid readership. Loyalty to employers has been weakened partly by economic and political changes, but perhaps most obviously by the emergence of a kind of counter-morality in which the citizen or the employee has a higher loyalty to truth. The "whistleblower" is admired for an integrity that transcends mere loyalty. Loyalty to one's own country has also changed. Mere patriotism was reclassified as an unthinking prejudice especially by many who had been to universities and there picked up the idea that morality was adherence to abstract principles, preferably principles in conflict with one's own apparent interest. Peace and justice were higher values than merely loyalty to one's country.

And what of thrift as a virtue? A few children still have piggy banks, but saving up to buy something for which we yearn began to disappear in the 1950s. Partly this was a function of rising wealth, and partly of the credit policies of such banks as the National Westminster, which famously offered to "take the waiting out of wanting." In the slogan "we want it now," the radicals of the 1960s tried to turn anger and impatience into virtues serving politico-moral causes. Inherited morality had regarded the suppression of these tendencies as part of self-mastery, but the newly popular sentiment of impatience diffused itself throughout society. It is thus one of the arenas in which moral conflict has been fought out. A capacity to "defer gratification" had long been identified by economic and social historians as an element in the success of rising capitalism, but capitalism itself was the subject of politico-moral critique. Thrift thus began to disappear, partly because wealth and commerce combined to make it easier for people to buy things. There was another powerful force that led in the same direction. The British Government diminished the incentive to save. In the past, people had feared being unable to pay the doctor, the hospital, or even the undertaker. Losing one's job was also a serious matter in less flexible times. People saved for a "rainy day," but now the government has abolished rainy days. At the personal level, the balance between saving and expenditure changed dramatically.

It might seem as if these developments constituted nothing less than a bonfire of the virtues and that British society was sliding into a kind of moral chaos. Many people do indeed think this, and many changes in society would make such a conclusion plausible, but it is far from being the whole picture. Sexual liberation, for example, has been the most dramatic of the changes, but the restraints that were once recommended to the young on moral grounds have found a new life in arguments of prudence about the dangers of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases—AIDS, of course, most notably. Abortion as a form of birth control remains an area of hot dispute, though a glance at the moral history of the Soviet Union would make it clear that the long-term effects of large-scale abortion as a form of birth control can be serious. Thrift again has disappeared from morality, only to resurface in the pensions crisis, in which the present generation finds itself facing massive financial commitments for which no serious provision has been made. Loyalty has not been a beneficiary of this widespread

transposition of the moral into the prudential, and for the moment, the posture of being "above the battle" in national disputes, even indeed "above" cultural or civilizational partisanship, remains the dominant attitude of those who have been to universities. Even that judgment minimizes the change: many people are almost viscerally hostile to the West and all it stands for. It may be, however, that this attitude will change as a result of the crisis over Islamic terrorism.

Replacing moral obligations by prudential ones might well seem to be merely a change of vocabulary. Surely, it might be argued, conduct remains the same, even if the ideas sustaining it are different. In fact, those sustaining ideas have lost a significant amount of their force. In sexual matters, for example, the decline of marriage and the emergence of units consisting of a mother and her children have large social consequences. But in any case, the thought that goes into a moral act is itself a part of that act. The reasons we act in one way rather than another reflect back on our conception of ourselves, and these reasons have a variety of "hooks" or implications that have important effects on the development of individual character. A prudent act is much less fixed in place, and much more susceptible to circumstantial variability, than an act done from the moral conviction that it is right. In other words, the moral situation has certainly changed, even though many of its appearances have not.

The collapse of some of the virtues into prudence is therefore significant, but it leaves one question open. Assuming as I do that human beings are irredeemably moral creatures, and that thinking morally is an essential element of their psychological furniture, what has happened? We have observed a pretty clean sweep of important moral convictions in the collapse of the virtues of chastity, loyalty, and thrift. Is this merely to be recognized as a case of moral decline? Or have these virtues been replaced by something else? And if so, what? The moral life has clearly evolved—but where has it gone?

The evident answer, I think, is that moral sentiments now focus on benevolence, philanthropy, and charitable causes. In the dynamic market of moral responses, some virtues are always losing value and others gaining it. Benevolence is a seventeenth-century virtue developed as a counterweight in an individualist society to the vice of self-partiality or self-love. It emerges from Christian precepts about loving thy neighbor. Philanthropy in modern times described the way in which the benevolent rich have used their resources to improve the condition of society or some people in it. But should it be only rich people who benefit their fellows by good works? The idea has spread that we all have something to contribute to others, and that "giving something back to society" is perhaps our most important duty. The ideal goal of philanthropy is to make itself redundant, but there are suggestions that it may serve the purpose of cultivating character. Philanthropy is an important duty recommended in courses about "citizenship and values" in British schools, and in the United States there is instruction in the administration of charity. Is this perhaps how the moral life has been evolving?

As a new morality, this development prides itself on releasing judgment from a narrow concern with sex in order to bring ethical standards to bear on the really serious decisions

made in government and commerce. As one admirer of the new turn observed, it gets morality out of the bedroom and into the boardroom. It seeks to encompass corporations no less than individuals, and thus lies on the borderline between morals and politics. It finds expression in such enterprises as the "fair trade" movement or the spread of "ethical investment." It has been a great generator of Non-Governmental Organizations. It is deeply egalitarian in its rejection of any version of the sin of pride, and especially in any idea that we are superior to other peoples. The new morality thus incorporates both multiculturalism and "political correctness," in that both basically respond to a solicitude for the sensitivities of people different from "us." This sentiment extends to the view that it is merely good fortune that allows some of us to live prosperous and secure lives, while others live in poverty and insecurity.

Ethics and politics thus come together in what we might well call "the politico-moral" arena, and the consequences are dramatic. In this explosion of charitable endeavors, people of all kinds set themselves tasks whose point is to be "sponsored" by others who will make a financial contribution to the enterprise that will be given to good causes. The fashion among the young for a "gap year" between school and university has generated schemes by which the young will be funded to go and perform good deeds in the underdeveloped world. The British government has a multi-million pound scheme to enroll "volunteers" for good causes, while an alternative to punishment by prison has been "community service," in which the delinquent performs useful non-paying work.

Nothing, however, has been as dramatic an expression of the new morality as the response of the British public to the financial appeal for the victims of the Asian tsunami in 2005—unless it be the Live 8 concert whose point was not to encourage the giving of money, but the taking of it from the public budgets of rich countries so that we should "make poverty history," especially in Africa. Spending other people's money is one of the favorite occupations of modern democracies, but here was this ambition on quite a new scale. All these endeavors are promoted on impeccably moral grounds, but prudence has not been entirely left behind. Government ministers are often to be found saying how such charity teaches the philanthropic new skills, and how good it will look on the *curriculum vitae*.

Here then, we seem to have the materials for advancing a long way towards the dominant aspiration of our contemporaries: namely, perfecting society. Morality has broken out of the confines in which it linked the duty of integrity to oneself with the good of those we actually encountered. It has now become the moral and metaphysical condition on which we relate to the rest of the world. It has above all identified the people who need help, both those victimized by disease or misfortune in our own society and those afflicted in other parts of the world. Morality has thus liberated itself from the merely personal element of being true to oneself and become a program for perfecting the world. We would seem to have the materials here for a radical leap forward.

Alas, the imperfections of the human condition are not so easily removed. In considering the moral evolution of British society, our attention to the vast and perfectly real benevolence toward outsiders has been only one side of the picture, and the other side is

all too familiar. It largely comes under the heading of social disorder but it has to be understood as a form of moral collapse. Schools have trouble keeping order and bullying is a major problem. Vandalism distorts the visual aspects of British cities, and arson sometimes results from disgruntled pupils, some of whom merely think it a good way of securing a holiday. Doctors in casualty departments and firemen fighting blazes find that they are abused and assaulted as they try to help people, while the transport services threaten strike action unless they are protected from the gratuitous violence of angry customers. Intimidation is so rife on council estates that the new device of the Anti-Social Behaviour Order has been invented in order to deal with it. Intimidation, which threatens the role of witnesses in courts, has also reached nasty levels in some ethnic communities, particularly among those that have come to specialize in some criminal activities, such as Albanians in sexual exploitation and Jamaican "yardies" in drugs. The aesthetics of intimidation have recently been enriched by the practice among teenagers of wearing the hoods of their jackets up, partly, it seems, so that they may indulge in low-level thieving without being easily recognized. Young people have problems making commitments, even commitments short of marriage, while the welfare state is surrogate father to the many women without resources who become pregnant. The rising number of single-person households is exacerbating the housing shortage, while polls suggest that lots of couples are locked together unhappily because they don't have the resources to separate. The government has recently invested millions in the training of debt counselors to help people who cannot be trusted with plastic credit cards. Admittedly, there are elements of this litany that can only provoke sardonic amusement, but we have said enough to make the point that British life is dramatically different from what it was a less than century ago, when George Orwell, the benchmark authority on this question, described the peaceable, orderly, and disciplined character of the British.

Here then is the paradox: Britain is an improving society with very high levels of virtue, and Britain is in a condition of near social collapse. The moral lives of Europeans were in earlier times more or less all of a piece. The rich may have been louche, but they were usually discreet. Most of those in employment were middle or respectable working class and they respected the moral pieties of the time. This kind of orderliness required a fair amount of self-conquest, and this was a virtue that had generally been acquired in childhood, often as a result of religious belief. And then on the edges of "society" could be found a marginal group of ne'er-do-wells, criminals, casual workers, immigrants, people with mental problems, and others who scratched along in and out of official care, but who threatened the moral order only at times of high political tension.

Today, however, we have a remarkable dissonance between a vast public allegiance to the betterment of our fellows, on the one hand, and a vicious incapacity to behave morally to those who are closest to us, on the other. Part of the paradox is that we seem to hate people who are trying to do us some good, as with teachers, doctors, and firemen. This contrast is at the level of practice. At the level of public utterance, pious expressions of tolerance and love of diversity collide with a rather violent hatred of what is taken to be prejudice, bigotry, racism, and other forms of intolerance. At the level of manners, we may certainly see a decline in civility—more jostling in public places, children who sit contentedly in seats while women and the elderly are standing. And at a theoretical level,

there is a notable gap between a general skepticism about morality, and bureaucratic dogmatism in the enforcement of the strictures of political correctness.

The paradox has, then, many aspects. Some of its features but not others are replicated in other Western states. And there are, of course, wide variations within states; Britain itself is far from homogeneous. The puzzle is how to make sense of the contradictory ways in which people behave. Let me finish by making a few suggestions.

It might be that the benevolent and the delinquent Britons are two entirely separate parts of the population. Perhaps the antisocial might be Ferdinand Mount's recently discovered "downers," or Charles Murray's "underclass." But if so, we might well ask the simple question: What makes the delinquents behave as they do? Could it perhaps be that the one moral impulse actually feeds off the others—that the very philanthropic desire that seeks to improve and to understand better the conduct of the delinquent (its "root causes," as people confusedly put it)—might create perverse incentives to its worsening? It may be that "anti-social conduct" has its own rewards in eliciting attention and other benefits from the rest of society. Children now have rights and many of their delinquencies are costless amusements. The British Government even has a Minister for Children whose latest idea for dealing with delinquency is to supply the young with plastic cards on which they may earn rewards for good behavior—a misjudgment of human nature that will certainly rank high in the annals of fatuity. But perhaps the basic point here is that the transposition of bad moral conduct into the language of social acceptability and social capital removes it entirely from the innerness of the moral life. It misunderstands human beings by treating them as mere organisms mechanically responding to the conditions in which they live.

But no human society is neatly divided into its good and its bad lots. Let us focus on something else: it is difficult to imagine that this so-called "anti-social behavior" greatly increases the happiness of its practitioners. Indiscipline in class has its amusements, but only as a bit of Saturnalia. As standard behavior, it becomes sour and boring. Can it be, perhaps, that much of this problem is to be explained in terms of a vulgar error in moral understanding, an error that has been especially influential in the period since 1945? The error I refer to starts from the premise that Morality with a capital M is forbidding stuff that stands in the way of our pleasures and desires. It is merely the arid disapprovals of the old and the dull. Morality frowns on drinking, smoking, sex, and a good deal of other forms of merrymaking. It seems to demand that we approach life with a solemn humility. The conclusion that might be drawn is that the less of it we have, the happier we'll be. Hence the program of sloughing off the inherited prohibitions of past times—particularly in such areas as sex, where technology has changed the terms and conditions—looks like liberation into a jollier form of life. The point is, of course, that the moral sentiments of the very young are significantly different from those of the wider world, and lack the advantage of a basis in experience of the real world. This foolish view of Morality as merely repressive fails to understand that (in any of its many varieties) morality is an education in self-mastery. Without some such element of self-control, human beings are vulnerable to every idiocy that impulse might suggest.

We often describe any qualifications of our desires as “moral restraints,” which suggests that they are merely inhibitions, but they are, of course, more subtle than that. They canalize and redirect our desires in ways that offer more fecund satisfactions over the long term. If therefore moral agents forsake these inner complexities of the moral life in favor of the simplicities of “anything goes,” they are left with nothing to sustain order except the brutishness of regulation or the pains of shipwreck. It is significant that polling data, for what it might be worth, does suggest that people are less happy today than they were in earlier decades. Critics have seen another type of paradox here—that prosperity (contrary to supposed popular belief) is negatively correlated with happiness. Perhaps. But at a more profound level, we would have to diagnose moral confusion.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the new morality is the way in which it turns inherited morality upside down. Our basic moral duties today are owned not to those we encounter daily but to those who on a utilitarian calculus are in most need of them. The new politico-moral order imposes on us duties to strangers, people we have never met, and for the most part never will. Particular duties to family and friends, much less that central duty of integrity to ourselves on which the older moralists laid so much stress, hardly enter the picture. Indeed, it is worse than that: doing good things for our friends is at best doing what comes naturally (and therefore is hardly morally significant) and at worst exercising our virtue on those who probably need it much less than others. In these concerns, we may merely be adding to the injustices of society. Sending one’s children to a good and expensive school, for example, may well be caricatured as the selfishness of “pushy parents.”

A paradox, of course, lies in how a situation is described. Reality knows no paradoxes. Our problem is therefore to find some structure of understanding that can make sense of the way in which public policy and moral evolution in modern Britain has created a Jekyll and Hyde society. There can be little doubt that this is a central issue in our civilization.

A notable oddity of our situation is that past generations differed from us in accepting the imperfections of human life, partly because they doubted much could be done about them, and partly because many thought in Christian terms. Today a generation of secularists has higher aims. To every imperfection there now corresponds the aspiration to set up machinery to make sure that such things will never happen again. We seek, in other words, nothing less than perfection. Could it be, however, that our very greed for social perfection has destroyed our grip on the real moorings of human life? Perhaps our sentimental addiction to the superficialities of social perfection has eroded our capacity for the hard and demanding work of moral integrity. Certainly, tolerance and benevolence are often shallow virtues. But it may well be that this personal loss of integrity merely reflects a similar collapse of integrity in the institutions of civil society as they respond to the sickly embrace of government and of projects of social perfection. Our judges have been less concerned with the dry and limited technicalities of the law since they have been given all those delicious rights with which to make a just society. The universities are less and less concerned with scholarship because they dream that their research will

solve the problems of society. The churches have abandoned otherworldliness in order to become the public relations branch of an improving government. Industrial firms are hounded by activists into giving up their basic business of making good things at a decent price; they now want to be respected for their "social responsibility." And I have not even begun to mention our police, now focused on communal relations, or our prison service, which is no longer content with punishment but wants to improve its charges as well. Nor have I been able to mention teachers and journalists, subjects in their own right. Such wonders of improving benevolence we all enjoy! But can it be that all of these cooks with their muddled ideas about improving the world are just spoiling our social broth?

This then is the world we have made, wittingly or not. It is a world that corresponds—for better or worse—to what we want. Will it still be what we want as we experience the way it will develop in the longer term? The fundamental problem is that that very question, like any suggestion for improvement, exhibits precisely the cast of mind in which we currently live.

Aesop tells the story of a bird with a worm, who saw its image in a pond, and dropped the worm in its desire to have that other reflected worm, as well. What a foolish creature!

Kenneth Minogue's *Concept of a University* has just been republished by Transaction Publishers with a new introduction.

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Trafalgar then & now

By Andrew Roberts

The many celebrations of the bicentenary of Admiral Lord Nelson's death at the battle of Trafalgar on October 21, 1805 tell us much about how Britons view themselves in the early twenty-first century. No one has waited until the autumn itself for the festivities to start; they are already in full swing. Yet there is also a tangible sense of atavism, yearning, and perhaps even sorrow about the anniversary, for the way it italicizes the contrast between Britain's former naval greatness and national heroism and her present unprecedented maritime weakness.

Nothing highlighted this so forcibly as the International Naval Review on June 28, when

the Queen reviewed 167 ships anchored off Portsmouth. When her grandfather, King George V, reviewed the fleet there for his Silver Jubilee in 1935, there were 160 warships present, every single one of them from the Royal Navy. This June, ships from thirty-five foreign countries had to make up the numbers because the Royal Navy is now far too small to be able to mount a review on its own. It could not even furnish the largest vessel, which was the 223-yard-long French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*. The Queen reviewed the fleets not from her own yacht, which was scrapped by John Major's government, but instead from the Antarctic survey ship HMS *Endurance*.

For the first time in modern history, the French navy is larger in terms of tonnage, manpower, and firepower than the Royal Navy. Writing to the French ambassador Count Sebastiani in January 1840, Lord Palmerston, then the British foreign secretary, said, "Public opinion and ministerial responsibility will never allow an English government, whether it is Whig or Tory, to allow our active fleet to be in a minority with the French Fleet, either in time of Peace or in time of War." He could not, however, have foreseen the prospect of a New Labour government.

Of course, the thirty-three ships of the French and Spanish fleets at the battle of Trafalgar were also larger in terms of tonnage, manpower, and firepower (though crucially not rates of fire) than the twenty-seven ships of the Royal Navy, but the Admiralty Board of those days was not continually seeking ways to cut back on naval expenditure. On July 6, with the Fleet Review safely over, Britain's defense secretary, John Reid, announced that from the end of 2005 there will be only one frigate or destroyer on patrol in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean instead of the two that have hitherto been involved in counter-terrorism patrols and in protecting shipping in the narrow Gulf waterway. The very day after the government announced this cutback in the war against terror, four suicide bombers killed fifty-six people in London and injured over 700 more. For all the defiant statements made after those atrocities, the government is cutting back on the Navy's anti-terrorism capability.

With the fleet being reduced from thirty-one frigates and destroyers to a mere twenty-five by New Labour, Britain is at her weakest in terms of relative sea power than at any time since the reign of Henry VIII, the monarch who built the modern Royal Navy. There are more admirals on the Service List today than there are warships in commission, and the vessel that is assigned to the Atlantic Patrol Task North, which takes part in the fight against the Caribbean drug trade, will now only be on station between July and October, rather than all the year round. With one of our three aircraft carriers, HMS *Invincible*, being withdrawn from regular service six months earlier than planned, and HMS *Ark Royal* in refit, it is doubtful that the Falklands operation could be restaged were Argentina ever to reinvade Las Malvinas.

Rightfully, this sad tale did not put off the crowds of over a quarter of a million people from watching the International Fleet Review in the Solent on June 28, but there was another cringe-making aspect of modern-day Britain to come. In order to save the French and Spanish participants in the Review any embarrassment at having been defeated two hundred years ago, the reenactment of the battle was fought not between the British and

Combined Fleets, but between what were euphemistically dubbed the red and blue fleets. Although an actor playing Nelson, with eye patch and empty shirtsleeve, was rowed on board the sailing ship representing HMS *Victory*, for reasons of political correctness the Navy organizers did not want formally to identify the reenactment as actually being of Trafalgar itself. "I didn't want to go in for some great triumphalist gesture," said the First Sea Lord, Sir Alan West. The Queen was able to visit Washington during the Fourth of July bicentennial in 1976, which represented the loss of a great empire for Britain, yet the French were not deemed ready to come to terms with the commemoration of a lost battle.

As Lord Nelson's and Emma Hamilton's great-great-great-granddaughter Anna Tribe, aged seventy-five, pointed out, "The idea is silly. The French and Spanish are adult enough to appreciate we did win that battle." Sure enough, when the French rear-admiral who commands the *Charles de Gaulle* was asked about the result of 1805, he merely gave a classic Gallic shrug and talked about future naval cooperation with NATO, as one might expect. With political correctness running rampant through the British education system, however, one wonders how long it will be before schoolchildren are taught a history curriculum that is designed not to offend our European partners. The Battle of Waterloo, teachers will one day tell their pupils, was fought between the red and the blue armies.

Much more heartening has been the way that British publishing has risen to the opportunities offered by the bicentenary. Some truly first-class books have been released this year, featuring, *inter alia*, over five hundred unpublished letters written by Nelson; a quite superb new biography of Nelson by Roger Knight; an insightful cultural appreciation of the battle by Adam Nicolson; *The Trafalgar Companion*, a fine standard history of the day itself edited by Alexander Stillwell; and good biographies of some of Nelson's band of brothers, such as *Cuthbert Collingwood* by Max Adams and *Philip Durham* by Hilary Rubinstein. These will doubtless be the longest lasting of the bicentenary's legacies, and they are a tribute to the present vigor and scholarship of British history writing.

In addition to publishing, the auction industry has cashed in successfully on the bicentenary. Descendants of Trafalgar survivors, especially those of Nelson's captains, have been waiting, in some cases for years, for this opportunity to sell off their Nelsonia. The results have been spectacular. In Edinburgh, a letter from Nelson referring to his perfect recovery after losing his right arm fetched £42,000, ten times its estimate. At Bonhams auction in London, in July, the lots fetched a total of £1.8 million, achieving five world-record prices. A cased Lloyd's Patriotic Fund Trafalgar Sword that had been awarded to Charles Tyler, captain of HMS *Tonnant*, fetched £179,200, and the Naval Gold Medal awarded to Captain Eliab Harvey of HMS *Temeraire* fetched £95,200. A silver meat dish and a silver plate from Nelson's dinner service at the Nile campaign fetched £60,000 and £26,400, respectively. On October 19, Christie's will hold a special auction of pictures, *objets*, manuscripts, locks of hair, medals, arms, and militaria associated with Nelson and Napoleon, which will include a set of the battle orders for Trafalgar personally signed by Nelson. On a more modest scale, the Christie's estimate for a letter signed by Nelson to one of his captains, William Bedford, about two other admirals, for

one of whom he stood as character witness in a manslaughter charge over a duel, is only £3,000.

The veneration of objects relating to the battle has been taken to its logical, triumphant conclusion at the magnificent "Napoléon and Nelson" exhibition at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, which lasts until November 13 and includes the musket ball that killed Nelson (visibly dented where it hit his bones) as well as the blood-stained breeches in which he died (cut open to the groin by his surgeon William Beatty). There is also Napoleon's absurdly extravagant Egyptian-style hooded cape and the rest of the clothes Nelson was wearing when he was shot, along with his blood-stained purse, his pigtail, Beatty's manuscript account of the death, and Napoleon's surrender letter—all lovingly preserved.

According to recent surveys, fewer than half of British eleven- to eighteen-year-olds know that Nelson sailed in HMS *Victory* at Trafalgar. One hopes that by the end of this bicentennial year that proportion will be far higher. Winston Churchill once minuted his education secretary R. A. Butler: "How do you make children more patriotic? Tell them Wolfe took Quebec." The same thing can be achieved by teaching them that Nelson, even at the cost of his own life, won Trafalgar. Monthly magazines like *History Today*, *Literary Review*, and *BBC History* have all done their bit to educate Britons by putting large pictures of Nelson on their front covers, advertising important articles about him within.

Nevertheless, British daily newspaper journalism would not be the perverse and argumentative phenomenon it is unless somebody attempted to decry all this veneration of Nelson and Trafalgar. Sure enough, there have been some attempts to introduce such jarring notes into the festivities. An article in *The Times* by the historian Ben Macintyre in June was wittily entitled "Nelson: Enough Blind-Hero Worship." This pointed out how monumentally vain Nelson was, how he was the first self-made super-celebrity of modern times (a precursor of Diana, Princess of Wales), and how he treated his wife badly. Most of what Macintyre wrote was fair and factual, although it was too much to say that Nelson's blind eye and missing arm were a crucial part of the brand, considering that Nelson could hardly have sprouted new ones. The only truly substantial criticism Macintyre made was that Nelson was guilty of a war crime in hanging ninety-nine Neapolitan rebels in 1799, after they had been given safe passage.

More tendentious was the author Adam Nicolson's attack on the International Fleet Review as glorifying Trafalgar in an unacceptable way. Writing in *The Guardian*, Nicolson—himself the author of an excellent new book about the battle—argued that what he called "today's jamboree down at Portsmouth" should not have been staged because Trafalgar was a horrific, bloody occasion on which thousands of people died. He asked whether we would celebrate the battle of Passchendaele in the same festive manner. The answer, of course, is that while there are people alive today whose fathers and grandfathers fought at Passchendaele, no one knows anyone who fought at Trafalgar, or indeed probably anyone who knew anyone who knew anyone. So the analogy breaks down, and with it Nicolson's moral point. We are celebrating the moment when Britons

knew for sure that the country was safe from invasion and subjugation by a murderous and tyrannical foreign empire: thus, festivities are wholly in order.

And what celebrations there shall be! Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Philip will be dining with all the surviving First Sea Lords of her reign in the captain's cabin of HMS *Victory* on Trafalgar Day itself, Friday, October 21, the same evening that literally hundreds of dinners, great and small, will be taking place up and down the country to toast the Immortal Memory of the greatest military hero of our long island history. That night there will hardly be a sober breath drawn by any Briton who has any patriotism in his soul, let alone any seafaring connections. Rum will be drunk by those who otherwise rarely touch the stuff.

Special Trafalgar exhibitions are being staged in the Norfolk Nelson Museum (Great Yarmouth), the Royal Naval Museum (Portsmouth), the Nelson Museum (Monmouth), the Maritime Museum (Bucklers Hard), the National Fishing Heritage Centre (Great Grimsby), and the Australian National Museum. Scores of conferences are being organized by Portsmouth, Greenwich, Exeter and Oxford Universities, the Institute of Historical Research, the Royal Society of Medicine, the 1805 Club, the Nelson Society, the Society for Nautical Research, the British Academy, and so on. A sequence of bell-ringing in churches will begin in New Zealand on Trafalgar day and will be taken up as dawn breaks in Australia, then South Afri- ca, then Gibraltar. The English-speaking peoples intend to celebrate this bicentenary with gusto.

Of course, if the British are accused of venerating and being fascinated by Nelson in this bicentenary year, it is small beer besides the obsession the French have had for Napoleon every year since his fall in 1815. Here is the new French premier, the no- toriously Anglophobic and anti-American Dominique de Villepin—who has written a book about Napoleon—writing about the Élysée palace in his 2002 work *The Cry of the Gargoyle*:

Napoleon and de Gaulle still haunt these walls. At this late time of night, I feel their breath in the office which was once the chapel of one of them during the Hundred Days and the council chamber of the other at the beginning of the Fifth Republic.
Elsewhere in his book, which is full of the kind of prose-poetry verbiage that no Anglo-Saxon politician could ever get away with without facing coruscating ridicule, de Villepin writes things like "France is a large old oak tree, full of everlasting sap," "The man free of baggage walks along the horizon, eating the dust and the sky, forever watching out with his black eyes for the call of the god within himself," and (my personal favorite):
Let us stop drinking from the everlasting waters of Lethe, which strike with amnesia those who want to quench their thirst, and let us dare to taste those fresh waters that run from the lake of Memory as the words say on the golden bars of the disciples of Orpheus, that bard of metamorphosis and of ascending reincarnation.
France might well be a large old oak tree full of everlasting sap, but her prime minister is full of something that rhymes with it.

Overall, Britain can be very proud of the way she is commemorating one of her most

sublime victories, and the death of one of her greatest military heroes. Although it was, ironically enough, the French who preserved our sovereign independence earlier this year by voting NO in the European constitution referendum on May 28, the tangible sense of patriotism engendered by the Trafalgar bicentenary reassures us that, if we had only been given the chance, Britons would have done the same by an even bigger margin. The only sadness is that, given the unrelenting Treasury pressures on the Royal Navy over the last two decades, on October 21, we will have to sing about how Britannia rules the waves with a decided sense of irony, nostalgia, and betrayal.

Andrew Roberts's forthcoming book is *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900*.

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Some Americans in London

By John Gross

There is an essay by George Orwell entitled "Decline of English Murder." Written in 1946, it celebrates—if that is the word—the golden age of British domestic homicide, which Orwell sees as running from roughly 1850 to 1925. He picks out the nine or ten murderers from that period whose notoriety has, in his opinion, stood the test of time, and points out how much (setting aside Jack the Ripper) they had in common. They were mostly middle-class, and gen-erally motivated by passion, or rather by the need to conceal passion. Where they killed for gain, the sums involved were small, and their crimes took place amid surroundings of dingy respectability.

Almost all the figures Orwell mentions are now much less well-known than they were at the time he wrote. But one name still burns brightly—that of Dr. Crippen, who in 1910 poisoned his wife Cora, buried her remains in the cellar of their house in north London, and fled to Canada with Ethel Le Neve, a young typist with whom he had fallen in love.

The most sensational aspect of the case was that he was the first murderer to be apprehended thanks to radio-telegraph. When he and Ethel (who was disguised as a boy) landed in Montreal, the police were waiting for them. Beyond that, it is hard to see why he should have achieved such an enduring fame. The fact that he was called "doctor" no doubt helped (he had qualified as a homeopathist); so, perhaps, did the name "Crippen"

itself, with its suggestion of crypts and cripples. But a large part of what appealed to the popular imagination must have been that he seemed so ordinary—a small man with a weak face and a manner for which the term "inoffensive" might have been invented.

Orwell's essay rests on a contrast between the old English tradition—of which Crippen was the most famous representative—and a case which had created a great stir in Britain the previous year, the so-called "Cleft Chin murder." The Cleft Chin killer was a U.S. army deserter who was on the run with a British "good time girl"—and how redolent of its period that phrase now seems. The world in which they moved was one of aimless violence, cheap dance halls, and stolen cars. The G.I. boasted that back home he had been a big gangster; the girl told the police that she had always dreamed of being a gangster's moll. Was this the shape of things to come? Orwell ended by reflecting darkly that it was perhaps significant "that the most talked-of English murder of recent years should have been committed by an American and an English girl who had become partly Americanised."

Which is all very well—but Hawley Harvey Crippen was an American, too. He was born in a small town in Michigan in 1862, studied homeopathy in Cleveland, and came to London, where he initially managed the British branch of an American patent-medicine firm, in 1897. By this time he had already married Cora, who was the daughter of a Polish immigrant who ran a fruit-stand in Brooklyn. She was by all accounts an unpleasant woman, and she certainly gave Crippen a hard time. The only splendid thing about her seems to have been her original first name, dropped in favor of "Cora," which was "Kunigunde."

Americans crop up in the history of London in all kinds of circumstances. So do American influences, though their origins have often been forgotten, and sometimes deliberately concealed. Cora Crippen, who tried to make a career for herself as a music hall singer, may well have come across one of the leading music hall stars of the day, Florrie Forde; she can hardly have avoided hearing—few people could—Florrie Forde's most famous song, "Down at the Old Bull and Bush." The Bull and Bush is a historic pub in Hampstead, on the edge of Hampstead Heath. The song breathes the very spirit of Edwardian London, of cockneys having a good time. Only it turns out to be the work of the Tin Pan Alley songwriter Harry Von Tilzer (born Detroit, 1872; died New York, 1946). It began life in America as a beery ballad entitled "Under the Anheuser Bush." The new words were supplied by an adroit local writer when it was repackaged for audiences in England.

Crippen was a law-abiding man whose life took a criminal turn. Meanwhile plenty of professional criminals had found their way from America to London, and continued to do so. There is the interesting figure of "Chicago May" Sharpe, for instance, one of many compatriots who descended on the city in Edwardian times to ply their trade as hotel thieves, safebreakers, and the like. In 1907 she and an associate with whom she had fallen out were involved in a gunfight in Russell Square. It was a rare kind of occurrence in the London of those days: it is nice to reflect that it took place just round the corner from where Virginia Woolf and other members of the Bloomsbury Group had recently set up

house.

Or again, to move closer to our own times, in the 1960s American crime bosses established a number of gambling joints in London, including one called “George Raft’s Colony Club”—fronted by the movie star in question, though reputed to have been controlled by Meyer Lansky. (It gave a certain amount of childish pleasure, as I recall with a blush, that when you approached it from one direction the half-obscured neon sign outside read “George Raft’s Colon.”)

These are ephemeral matters, however (and Raft was soon deported by the British authorities). A dodgy character of vastly more significance was the financier Charles Tyson Yerkes. Born in Philadelphia in 1837, he made his first fortune before he was thirty, came to grief, served a prison sentence, made another fortune, and then moved to Chicago, where he gained control of the city transport system. Then, in 1901, he shifted his headquarters to London, where more than anyone else he was responsible for the electrification and expansion of the Underground railway network.

Yerkes’s methods were ruthless, but he got results. It would be almost impossible to measure the impact he had on London life. To take only one example, he built a new line out to Hampstead and then pushed it further north, opening up great new tracts of land for suburban development. Eventually he overextended himself. At the time of his death in 1905, his fortune was melting away. But along with his Underground lines he left a mighty monument in the generating station which served them, at Lots Road in Chelsea. He also has his commemoration in literature: He is the original of Frank Cowperwood, the central character in Theodore Dreiser’s novel *The Financier* and its sequels.

Americans played a major role in the London financial world for much of the nineteenth century, though nowadays it is largely forgotten except by specialists. One wonders, for instance, how many people today could identify Joshua Bates, who arrived in London from Weymouth, Massachusetts in 1817 (with four dollars in his pocket, he used to say) and rose to become the dominant figure in Barings Bank for over thirty years, exercising a power in the City which rivaled that of the Rothschilds. Nobody cares much now, apart from economic historians. And if the name of George Peabody, who settled in London twenty years after Bates, still means something, it is less on account of his banking career than because of his subsequent benefactions.

Peabody (also from Massachusetts) first made his mark in London negotiating a loan for the state of Maryland, and soon established himself as the City’s leading specialist in American securities. He took longer to win full social acceptance—he was once turned down by the Reform Club on account of his nationality—but eventually his prowess as a banker carried all before it. During the Great Exhibition of 1851, he gave a huge banquet at which the octogenarian Duke of Wellington was one of the guests. (As he made his entrance, the band struck up “See the conquering hero comes.”) Both men were later commemorated by statues which stand near to each other in the heart of the City. There is an equestrian statue of Wellington in front of the Royal Exchange, and a frock-coated

statue of Peabody in the concourse behind it.

In 1857, Peabody's bank found itself facing a crisis. It survived, but the hitherto workaholic Peabody emerged feeling it was time to slow down. The following year he retired, handing over to his younger partner, Junius Morgan (the father of J. Pierpont Morgan), and leaving himself free to concentrate on philanthropy. The largest sums he disbursed were in America, but he also came up with an ambitious scheme for London—a series of "model dwellings" for working-class tenants. To modern eyes the buildings that were put up have a barrack-like appearance, but they represented a great improvement on anything those who lived in them were likely to have known before. There were bathrooms and laundry rooms, and tenants who could no longer work were allowed to stay on rent-free—an incomparable boon at a time when there were no old-age pensions.

The Peabody Trust still exists, and Peabody Buildings, which house over 40,000 tenants, are still a familiar part of the London landscape. Two of the terrorists—I suppose one had better say "suspected terrorists"—who were arrested after the failed bomb attempts of July 21 this year were detained in a Peabody flat, after it had first been flooded by the police with tear gas.

Charles Yerkes and George Peabody both helped to change the face of London. So, in a more localized but striking fashion, did Gordon Selfridge, who hailed from Ripon, Wisconsin. After a successful career with Marshall Field in Chicago, he decided to start up his own store in London—in Oxford Street, near Marble Arch. It opened, to the accompaniment of an unprecedented advertising campaign, in 1909. The building itself, which had been designed—maintaining the Chicago connection—by Daniel Burnham, established a strong and distinctive presence; although I have heard its pillared frontage dismissed by an architectural historian as an example of mere "façadism," I can't help finding it curiously likeable, as I suspect lots of Londoners do. (There is an affectionate evocation of the exterior of the store in Vikram Seth's novel *An Equal Music*.)

As for Gordon Selfridge's retailing techniques, they were the fruit of his American experience. British shoppers were introduced for the first time to all kinds of concepts and services—a Bargain Basement, an information bureau, a soda fountain—and for the most part they were pleased with what they found. Selfridge was a master of publicity, too, of wrapping things up attractively.

Not everyone was impressed. There is an amusing passage in a letter from Henry James to Bruce Richmond, the editor of *The Times Literary Supplement*. (The year was 1913.) James had proposed writing something for the paper's "Spring Fiction Number," though he couldn't help recording his objection to the use of such a term at the same time: "The words, you know, if you can forgive my irreverence, somehow suggest competition with a vast case of plate-glass 'window-dressing' at Selfridge's!"

For most Londoners, however, comparing something to one of Selfridge's displays would have been an undoubted plus. He certainly thought long and hard about his windows. He

lured Marshall Field's chief window-dresser over from Chicago to take charge of them. Selfridge himself had an ebullient personality. For many years he was a cheerful fixture on the English social scene. He threw big parties, loved the theater, and found it hard to resist actresses. Eventually he ran through his fortune: he was ejected from his own firm and retreated to a small flat in south London. When he died in 1947, at the age of eighty-nine, he was penniless.

London is full of American ghosts. Some of them can be tracked down by means of the blue commemorative plaques on historic homes. Henry James and Whistler have their plaques, needless to say. So does Pound (someone has written a whole book entitled *Ezra Pound's Kensington*). So, less expectedly, does Bret Harte: the author of *The Luck of Roaring Camp* spent his last years in Bayswater, not far from where Kate Croy's aunt is supposed to have had a house in *The Wings of the Dove.* A plaque to Herman Melville was recently unveiled, in a street running down from the Strand towards the river; by chance, or some higher irony, there is already a plaque in the same street commemorating Benjamin Franklin.

In David Kynaston's magnificent history *The City of London*, the author quotes a sulphurous description of the City (meaning the financial district) from Melville's novel *Israel Potter*:

Whichever way the eye turned, no tree, no speck of any green thing was seen—no more than in smithies. All laborers, of whatsoever sort, were hued like the men in foundries. The black vistas of streets were as the galleries of coal mines, the flagging as flat tomb-stones, minus the consecration of moss, and worn heavily down, by sorrowful tramping, as the vitreous rocks in the cursed Gallipagos, over which the convict tortoises crawl … And more, in the same black vein.

But Melville was capable of enjoying London, too. He gives a sprightly account in his journal of exploring the City and finding the site of the house where Dick Whittington, the famous medieval mayor, once lived.

Many authors or literary sites remain unplaqued. There is Jack London, walking the streets of the East End. There is the young Willa Cather, contriving what turned out to be a very uncomfortable meeting with A. E. Housman. And there is the drab-looking Charing Cross Hotel, where Edith Wharton spent the night with her lover Morton Fullerton before he caught the boat-train—after which she wrote a poem, which also marked her temporary separation from him, called "Terminus." It would be pretentious to say that I always think about Edith Wharton when I pass the Charing Cross Hotel, but I sometimes do.

Performers and entertainers naturally loom large among the ghosts. No nineteenth-century American visitors to London had a greater popular impact than Tom Thumb (he was invited three times by Queen Victoria to Buckingham Palace—when she asked him to sing a song, he obliged with "Yankee Doodle") or Buffalo Bill (Mr. Gladstone came to watch his company rehearsing at Earls Court and was introduced to a Sioux chieftain

called Red Shirt).

The first American man of the theater to make a big hit in London was the actor and playwright John Howard Payne, who appeared at Drury Lane, wrote plays for Edmund Kean, and managed Sadler's Wells, until he went bankrupt. (Payne was a rolling stone who ended up as the American consul in Tunis, where he died: it seems appropriate that his only claim to fame today is that he wrote "Home, Sweet Home.") As for women of the theater, the first American actress to rouse London audiences to full-blast enthusiasm was Charlotte Cushman, who starred in a season in the West End in 1845. One of her most admired roles was Romeo, with her younger sister Susan playing Juliet.

The number of performers who have won acclaim in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is so large that even a short list would stretch to the horizon, though everyone has his favorites, and my own anthology of scenes at which I would like to have been present would certainly include Fred Astaire and his sister Adele taking the town by storm in 1923. As for pop and rock stars—well, there is a plaque to Jimi Hendrix in Mayfair; the same house also carries a plaque commemorating Handel.

You could spend years tracing significant American connections in London. Within the limits of an article, two more examples must serve—two very different but equally extraordinary lives.

Henry Wellcome—he ended his days as Sir Henry—was born in a log cabin in Wisconsin in 1853. He qualified as a pharmacist, explored the forests of Peru and Ecuador for a bark from which quinine could be extracted, and at the age of twenty-seven came to London, where he joined forces with a fellow American, Silas Burroughs, in establishing the pharmaceutical company Burroughs, Wellcome. (Among other things, the firm gave the world the word "tabloid.") As the business prospered, and money came pouring in, he sponsored archaeological expeditions, took up the cause of a dispossessed native tribe in Canada, assembled an enormous collection of books, artifacts, and miscellaneous bric-à-brac, and helped bring malaria under control during the construction of the Panama Canal. He also married Syrie Barnardo, the future Mrs. Somerset Maugham: the marriage ended in a bitter divorce, with Maugham cited as co-respondent.

Above all, Wellcome was a patron of medical research, on what ultimately proved to be a massive scale, and of research into the history of medicine. The institutes he created to pursue those ends are housed in the Wellcome Building on Euston Road. They are one of the academic glories of London.

The photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn was a generation younger than Wellcome. He was a Bostonian who first came to London with his mother in 1899, at the age of seventeen, and took part in an exhibition at the Royal Photographic Society the following year. In 1906 he was back for a one-man show. (Bernard Shaw, whom he had photographed in the nude, in the pose of Rodin's *Thinker*, wrote the introduction to the catalogue.) In 1909, he settled in London for good, once again with his mother.

Coburn's work includes the photographs used as frontispieces for the New York edition of Henry James's novels (the soft-focus view of Portland Place accompanying *The Golden Bowl* has been particularly prized), and some memorable portraits of writers and musicians. He also took a set of wonderfully atmospheric pictures for his book *London* (1909). Shaw maintained that "like Whistler, Mr. Coburn has the advantage of looking at London much more imaginatively than any born Londoner could."

A few years later, he began experimenting with more modernist photographic techniques. But by the 1920s, he was increasingly preoccupied with the occult. He became first an ardent mason, then a Rosicrucian, then a member of a hermetic society called the Universal Order. His last years were spent in a small coastal resort in north Wales: he lived on—it's a strange thought—until 1966. If he had wanted to, he could have listened to Jimi Hendrix.

Perhaps one day a museum will stage a big exhibition (which should certainly include Wellcome and Coburn) about London and its American connections. I'm not sure what such a show would prove, beyond demonstrating that the famed Anglo-American Special Relationship is complicated and multifaceted. But why should everything be expected to yield a theory or a thesis? If the show did justice to its subject, it would be extremely interesting and entertaining—and that, surely, is enough.

John Gross's most recent book is *A Double Thread: Growing Up English and Jewish in London*.

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