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In this issue, Richard Lynn writes with characteristic verve and erudition about race differences in intelligence. Prof Lynn is an acknowledged expert on this subject, cited by the mainstream media as well as the technical press, and his writings are always exhaustively researched. The subject of intelligence is self-evidently of central importance to schools, universities, employers, NGOs and government departments in every country, and cuts to the heart of what it is to be human.

Yet Prof Lynn’s article will be the most disputatious in this issue of the journal. The reasons for this are complex, but boil down to the essential incompatibility of hereditarian theories with the mighty post-war political and cultural superstructure that has been raised teeteringly skywards on notions of human plasticity and equality. These fondly-held notions are invariably accompanied by an illogical (if perhaps understandable) belief that difference equals discrimination equals genocide.

If IQ is not only largely heritable, but differently distributed amongst physically distinguishable groups, then our modern cults of internationalism, multiculturalism and egalitarianism are based on stupendous self-delusion – and decades of cultural grandstanding, political posturing and uncountable billions in public spending may have been bootless.

With so many reputations and so much else at stake, it is hardly surprising that audacious thinkers past and present such as Richard Lynn, J Philippe Rushton, Charles Murray, Arthur Jensen, Hans Eysenck and William Shockley have been so roughly treated when they pointed out that IQ varies between groups as well as individuals; that these population differences have persisted over a century of testing; and that IQ has predictive powers on all kinds of
personal, professional and economic indices. There is also mounting evidence for the heritability of various behavioral traits – evidence that to date has been either ignored or anathematized by those who lay the loudest claim to political liberalism and scientific objectivity. Such panicky responses are becoming daily less appropriate, as we learn more about behavioral genetics and fill in the gaps in the map of the human genome.

Nevertheless, it may be misleading, and could actually be dangerous, to use IQ as the chief determinant of human worth or possibility. There are millions of worthy people of average intelligence who nevertheless make important contributions to society. And maybe intelligence is not enough anyway. It has been averred that humans require emotional intelligence just as much as IQ – although this concept of emotional intelligence has hardly been defined satisfactorily.

It is asserted by some that the concept of IQ is dependent on European cultural assumptions for which there are no direct parallels in non-European cultures, although efforts have admittedly been made by psychologists to refine the testing methodology to eliminate cultural bias. There is also irrefutable evidence that the IQ of the economically advanced nations has increased over time (the so-called “Flynn effect”) and is alterable through improvements in tuition and nutrition.

In any case, IQ is obviously not the sole guarantor of cultural preeminence. For example, East Asians have the highest average IQs of all peoples, yet as Professor Lynn acknowledges in his *IQ and the Wealth of Nations* their societies (albeit admirable) lagged behind those of Europe until the second half of the twentieth century. Other unmeasured factors are obviously at play.

The ultimate causes of different group IQs are also unclear. It is claimed by Professor Lynn for one that high median IQs are the product of millennia of adaptation to harsh and challenging (cold) climates. Yet sub-Saharan Africans and Australian Aborigines (who score badly on IQ tests) also live in harsh climates.

Another reason why hereditarians will continue to meet resistance is simply that most people do not think in statistical terms. They think in terms of individuals rather than groups, and everyone knows someone who is an exception to the (probably real) rule.

This is an argument that will doubtless continue indefinitely, as new data constantly emerge and politico-cultural dynamics are constantly reshuffled. The one thing that is certain is that seeking to suppress politically inconvenient or morally unnerving opinions is a disservice not just to science – but also to humanity.
With the advent of the Lisbon Treaty, the time for listening to politicians telling ever more absurd lies about how British sovereignty is still intact is over.

Credible estimates of the proportion of EU-derived legislation already passing through Britain’s parliament already run as high as 85%.\(^1\) Now, the Treaty includes sweeping changes to qualified majority voting (QMV) in many major policy areas including asylum, immigration, security and justice, a president and foreign minister in all but name and a clause making national law formally subordinate to EU law (Declaration 27). It allows for major constitutional changes in the future to be made without a new treaty by the unanimous agreement of the member states (Article 48). It also explicitly prevents a member state from legally leaving the EU of its own volition (Article 50). More of this later.

Even now, there are still some who argue that the EU can be reformed or that powers acquired by Brussels could be returned to nation states. These should remember that Harold Wilson tried renegotiation before the 1975 referendum when there were only nine EEC members and EU law was nothing like as powerful or extensive as now, and he achieved nothing of consequence.

To allow states different status within the EU would undermine both the idea and the practicality of the union. It would go against the concrete-hard federalist and statist culture of continental politicians and, even more vitally, the bureaucrats who control the EU. Having countries of differing status would inevitably increase the tendency of those outside the Treaty group to follow their own national interests. This would inflame the resentment of those within the Treaty who did not have the same freedom of action. The other side of the mixed constitution coin would be an inner group of Treaty states taking action
which would damage those in the non-Treaty group. For these reasons, a variable geometry EU is unlikely ever to be allowed.

Reform would face entrenched opposition from EU politicians of all member states and parties. Because the EU is supranational, politicians of the component national members can no longer be held responsible for functions which have been ceded to the larger body. Decisions are taken by politicians who are not in any meaningful sense responsible to their electors. The result has been the creation of a political class which is effectively beyond the reach of electors and which is beginning to have a class interest, which is not that of the people they are supposed to represent.

The existence of a large, long established and lavishly funded bureaucracy is another massive bulwark against change. Those with experience of the British Civil Service will recognise the power which public servants can wield through a mixture of duplicity and the incapacity of politicians. But British civil servants are not politicians, whereas the EU routinely employs politicians in its highest bureaucratic posts and even the European Court of Justice has a fair sprinkling of politicos (including ex-Soviet bloc judges whose acquaintance with due process is somewhat distant). Even if a majority of elected EU politicians wished to change course towards a less intrusive confederation, they would experience immense difficulty in overcoming bureaucratic inaction or actual subversion.

For those who believe in national sovereignty and democracy, the question to ask is whether Britain should be in the EU at all, not how the loss of sovereignty can be minimised.

Britain has considerable advantages over most EU states. Her economy is large, economically diversified and with a wide variety of trading partners. We have a legacy of being on the winning side in two world wars and an imperial past which still has economic and diplomatic resonance, international influence through our membership of the controlling councils of such bodies as the UN, the World Bank and the IMF. To these advantages may be added the general protection given by WTO rules from the imposition of unfair trading practices. Most importantly, Britain has retained its currency. Outside the EU Britain could again negotiate its own trade deals.

Britain would also receive the direct financial advantage of the cessation of the £14 billion we pay to Brussels each year. Of this, approximately £4 billion goes to subsidise other member states which are of course trading competitors. Much of the balance of £10 billion so graciously returned to Britain is expenditure which would probably not be made if Britain was outside the EU, for much of that goes on EU-designed spending such as structural fund disbursements.
If Britain remains within the EU her contributions, large as they are already, will rise rapidly. Global Vision has calculated that they will rise to an average of £6.5 billion net at 2004 prices for the period 2011-13. More immediately, the European Parliament has just voted to increase Britain’s contributions for 2010 by £5 million a day or £1.83 billion per annum. Britain would also be freed of the mountain of extra costs piled onto business and public bodies by EU directives.

If it is accepted that Britain is better off out of the EU, how difficult would it be to leave? There is a considerable difference between the EU with the Lisbon Treaty in force and the EU with the Treaty unactivated. Article 50 of the Treaty runs as follows:

“1. Any Member State may decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements.

2. A Member State which decides to withdraw shall notify the European Council of its intention. In the light of the guidelines provided by the European Council, the Union shall negotiate and conclude an agreement with that State, setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal, taking account of the framework for its future relationship with the Union. That agreement shall be negotiated in accordance with Article 218(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It shall be concluded on behalf of the Union by the Council, acting by a qualified majority, after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.

3. The Treaties shall cease to apply to the State in question from the date of entry into force of the withdrawal agreement or, failing that, two years after the notification referred to in paragraph 2, unless the European Council, in agreement with the Member State concerned, unanimously decides to extend this period.

4. For the purposes of paragraphs 2 and 3, the member of the European Council or of the Council representing the withdrawing Member State shall not participate in the discussions of the European Council or Council or in decisions concerning it. A qualified majority shall be defined in accordance with Article 238(3)(b) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

5. If a State which has withdrawn from the Union asks to rejoin, its request shall be subject to the procedure referred to in Article 49.”

Apart from requiring a qualified majority of the other EU states (QMV means in practice the support of most of the large EU nations), the state which wishes to withdraw would be excluded from any discussions on the conditions for

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withdrawal. Then there is the delay before withdrawal can be effected. It is probable that the minimum period of waiting before secession would be two years, because it would be extraordinary if the EU did not try to make withdrawal as difficult as possible, while the provision in paragraph 2 that departure must be by negotiation “setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal, taking account of the framework for its future relationship with the Union” means that it will necessarily be a protracted process.

During the time before Britain left she would be bound by EU laws and the EU could adopt directives which could do Britain a good deal of damage, for example, directives which severely interfered with the City. These would not even have to be directives deliberately designed to harm Britain, but simply decisions advantageous to the remaining members which would take no account of any damage that might be done to Britain. Britain would take no part in discussions or votes on EU legislation introduced during the period between asking to withdraw and actually withdrawing. There would almost certainly be significant conditions for withdrawal which impinged upon British sovereignty including agreement to ‘voluntarily’ adopt much EU legislation, both existing and future. With the Treaty unsigned Britain could have simply stated that it was withdrawing. Such a declaration would raise the question of whether Article 56(1) of the Vienna Convention on the Law on Treaties, to which our political elite have also promiscuously bound Britain, would sanction withdrawal. The Article runs:

“1. A treaty which contains no provision regarding its termination and which does not provide for denunciation or withdrawal is not subject to
denunciation or withdrawal unless:

a) it is established that the parties intended to admit the possibility of denunciation or withdrawal; or

b) a right of denunciation or withdrawal may be implied by the nature of the treaty."

Whether the various treaties which encumber the EU before the Lisbon Treaty is in force could be said to imply a right of withdrawal is a matter of legal debate, although the fact that the Lisbon Treaty itself makes provision for withdrawal is a tacit admission that withdrawal was always implied. But legal or not, a situation where the right of withdrawal was claimed where no treaty sanctioned, forbade or laid down conditions for withdrawal would be a vastly more fluid and, consequently, Britain would be in a much stronger bargaining situation than that which would exist after the Lisbon Treaty becomes law. After implementation of the Treaty, Article 54 of the Vienna Convention on the Law on Treaties would apply to the EU. That Article runs:

“The termination of a treaty or the withdrawal of a party may take place:

(a) in conformity with the provisions of the treaty; or

(b) at any time by consent of all the parties after consultation with the other contracting States.”

This is in conformity with the withdrawal Article in the Lisbon Treaty and the EU’s legal position would be greatly strengthened by the Treaty’s implementation. That is one of the reasons why the EU is so desperate to get the Treaty ratified before the next British general election.

But legality in international matters is not the same as legality within a nation state. This is both because there is no democratic legitimacy for international law and for the entirely practical reason that there is no means of enforcing such law, short of blockade or war. Hence, international law is all too often observed in its breach by powerful nations and enforced by the powerful on the weak. Its unreality is shown in Article 42 of the Vienna Convention on the Law on Treaties:

“Validity and continuance in force of treaties

1. The validity of a treaty or of the consent of a State or an international organization to be bound by a treaty may be impeached only through the application of the present Convention.

2. The termination of a treaty, its denunciation or the withdrawal of a party, may take place only as a result of the application of the provisions of the treaty or of the present Convention. The same rule applies to suspension of the operation of a treaty.”
This means that for Britain to legally withdraw from the Vienna Convention all Britain's co-signatories would have to agree to the withdrawal, a truly fantastic hope.

With the Lisbon Treaty ratified and no legal way out because the other members would not agree to it, what could Britain do if she wished to withdraw?

Some have suggested a referendum on EU membership. Referenda are a necessary mechanism of democracy provided they are fairly conducted. But democracy also requires that no decision made by an electorate be irreversible, either in principle or practice.

If irreversible decisions are illegitimate, where does this leave supporters of referenda on either the Lisbon Treaty or on withdrawal legitimate? The honest answer is in a difficult logical position. A vote to either accept the Lisbon Treaty or to remain with the EU would in practice be irreversible by legal means, that is, within the terms of the Lisbon Treaty. It would comprehensively undermine the opportunity for democratic action and consequently would be an illegitimate use of referenda. Contrariwise, a vote to refuse the Lisbon Treaty or to withdraw from the EU would be results which were democratically legitimate because they would improve democratic opportunity, in the former instance, by lessening the power of the EU and, in the latter case, by providing the basis for removing Britain from EU control. Nonetheless such votes would still give credence to the idea that sovereignty can be put at hazard.

There is also the problem of fairness in the conduct of referenda. It might have been possible to hold a meaningful referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. Such a referendum would only be held if the Tories were in power, they would (presumably) campaign against it, the referendum question would almost certainly be simple (something like Should Britain accept the Lisbon Treaty, Yes or No?) and a significant proportion of the mainstream media would be happy to parade their Eurosceptic credentials on anything short of British withdrawal.

A referendum on our continued membership would present a very different picture. All the major British parties would support continued membership. Add to that the overwhelming general EU bias within the mainstream media – no national newspaper has as yet taken our withdrawal from the EU as its editorial stance and the broadcast media is overwhelmingly for Britain's continued membership – the finance available through big business to the pro-EU lobby, and the pro-membership political control of the question which would go on the ballot paper and it is difficult to see how a referendum could be fairly conducted. It should never be forgotten that in the 1975 referendum campaign, the polls were initially heavily for rejection of the new terms the Wilson government had
negotiated and consequently for withdrawal.

But even if there were referendum decisions for either the rejection of the Treaty or for withdrawal, profound political damage would be done because it would give a spurious legitimacy to the idea that referenda can decide whether a country can permanently alienate sovereignty. No parliament has the power to alienate in perpetuity Britain’s sovereignty, for if the British Constitution has one overriding principle it is that no parliament can bind another. More fundamentally, such alienation cannot logically or practically be made whilst free national elections exist because in such circumstances nothing can prevent a party standing on a platform calling for the amendment or complete repudiation of the Treaty of Rome and its subsequent amendments and additions. No statute, treaty or institution can be sacrosanct under an elective system of government, not even where there is a written constitution and an interpretative constitutional court. This is so because a political party may still stand on a platform which states that a change will be made regardless of what the constitution, laws and treaties decree, and make of electoral success a legitimate mandate. By extension, the same argument obtains for decisions made by referenda. There is also a good logical reason why no referendum should be held on the question of withdrawal: none was held before Heath signed us up to the Treaty of Rome in 1972.

The cleanest political course for withdrawal is to forget about a referendum and simply pass an Act of Parliament repudiating our membership and repealing any Acts passed since 1972 which put that membership into British law, and then ride the situation as it develops.

Once out of the EU, Britain should adopt a written constitution which specifically forbade any alienation of sovereignty. That would remove the possibility of future governments trying to lure Britain back into the EU. Unless Britain is given a written constitution which can only be changed by referenda, nothing will prevent a future government repealing any ordinary law guaranteeing a referendum. Moreover, the Lisbon treaty empowers (by unanimous agreement of its members) further amendment to the current treaty situation without the need for a further formal treaty. Hence, a future British government could circumvent the need for a vote in that manner unless a British constitution specifically insisted upon a referendum.

How would the EU react? Other things being equal the EU would be strongly tempted to make Britain’s position as difficult as possible. But the EU has reasons not to be unduly difficult. Their immediate Achilles heel would be the Republic of Ireland whose economy would simply collapse if (a) Britain removed all the privileges Ireland enjoys, including free movement and residency within the UK.
or (b) was affected by trade sanctions against Britain by the EU or reciprocal trade sanctions taken out by Britain in response to EU ones. The EU would be left with a choice between abandoning Ireland, financing it very heavily indefinitely or behaving reasonably towards Britain.

Less immediately pressing but important in the longer term would be the following considerations:

- the fact that the EU trade balance with Britain is heavily in their favour
- there are parts of the EU, especially parts of France, and particular industries, for example, fishing, which rely very heavily on trade with Britain or use of its resources
- Britain is heavily involved in joint EU projects such as Eurofighter and Airbus
- there are more EU citizens from other EU states in Britain than there are Britons in other EU states
- most Britons working in the EU will be in significant jobs while most EU foreigners in Britain will be working in menial jobs (making any exchange of populations much to Britain’s benefit).

What are the chances of Britain leaving the EU? I would not choose to live, in the words of the Chinese proverb, “in interesting times“, but sadly that may be the only realistic opportunity we have of freeing ourselves from Brussels – because our entire political class is saturated with the idea that we must remain in Europe at all costs.

Could the EU empire be so rotten that it will implode as suddenly as the Soviet one? There are reasons to believe that it might. The most likely causes of disintegration would be the failure of the Euro, widespread and prolonged economic distress caused by the recession, and ethnic and racial conflict.

With the advent of Lisbon, anybody who truly believes in democracy should be moving away from the EU back to the safety of the nation state – which, for all its faults, is the largest social grouping which has ever delivered any meaningful democratic control.

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NOTES
1. “EU: is Britain still a sovereign state?” Philip Johnston, Daily Telegraph, 17 Sep 2009
3. “Britain set to pay £5m more a day to the EU budget”, Martin Banks, Daily Telegraph, 26 October 2009
Mercy for Megrahi – brave-heartedly towards Scottish independence?

ROGER KERSHAW detects a latent new foreign policy and national identity principle behind a dramatic prisoner release

In the mid-1990s, at the beginning of my residence in Scotland, a memorable line in the electoral publicity of the Scottish National Party was “Independence in Europe”. This seemed a not entirely discreditable way of foreshadowing an independent Scotland’s place in the world after it had thrown off the English yoke, if it indicated a perception that without subsidy by other British taxpayers some other source of friendly finance would have to be tapped. One could, of course, query how a nationalist movement might claim to have restored its country’s ancient sovereignty when simultaneously surrendering vital powers to a new and much more ambitious supra-national union outside the British Isles. But this was no more ambiguous or dishonest than Tony Blair’s posturing as a British patriot while snuggling up to the European Union.

In any case, Scotland would need to demonstrate, to the world as well as to its own people, its capacity for constructive foreign relationships even while working out the imperatives of historic enmity towards its southern neighbour. The potential for good external relations was already personified by the doyen of the nationalist movement, Winnie Ewing, who, as the effusively romantic incumbent of a seat in the European Parliament, attracted from amused, or slightly bemused, continental colleagues the soubriquet of “Madame Écosse”.

After Devolution in 1997 and three PR-based Scottish elections later, a popular ennui with Labour/Lib-Dem coalition government opened the door to a minority SNP administration, which has now persisted for two-and-a-half years under its generally impressive, reborn leader, Alex Salmond. The legislative programme for Autumn 2009 includes an independence Referendum Bill, and to go with it the Culture Minister has floated a plan for replacing the BBC with
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an organisation that will not only reflect, but have a brief to mould, Scottish culture post-independence. Of course, to get a Referendum Bill through the House may require little less than divine intervention (though Nick Clegg seems capable of playing *deus ex machina*) but the initiative is only one of the ways in which Scotland is being inducted into a politics of ‘mental separation’ by a First Minister who acts for all the world like a national leader with an overwhelming mandate to promote his vision.

Salmond’s brazen ploy stood to gain much in good times. However, in a recession the basic vulnerability of a minority administration will be much more manifest, and a leader whose behaviour belies it runs the risk of attracting ridicule. With regard to independence specifically, many of the mounting army of Scottish unemployed are reportedly loath to see their government indulge in adventurism. And this streak of caution is in tune with the permanent scepticism of most of Scottish business. Alex Salmond is well aware that he must allay this. Yet his response to a number of economic issues, for instance the UK government’s rescue of Scottish banks, has shown a greater flair for rhetoric and bluster than clear-headed reasoning. Possibly ‘your average Scottish voter’ is not analytically fastidious. But if perchance Salmond and his colleagues suspect a shortfall in their credibility, their discomfort could be relevant as component background of the international incident which is particularly in our sights on this occasion. The party has been subject to calls for more clarity in the sphere of international relations itself, where the SNP manifesto of 2007 showed a studious vagueness on the question of NATO membership but the party was previously known as the only mainstream political party in Europe favouring withdrawal.¹

In a climate of moral ambivalence, suppressed radical inclination, and elusive power, the application by the Libyan government (5 May 2009) for release of the man convicted of the Lockerbie airliner massacre in 1988, the now ailing Abdelbaset al-Megrahi, by way of the much later Prisoner Exchange Agreement (PEA) between Libya and the UK (19 December 2007), may have had the initial appearance of a simple issue with an uncomplicated and virtuous, indeed a nationally self-satisfying, solution. Scotland could honour, unambiguously, its own dead at Lockerbie, while identifying itself as an honourable friend of the United States, by refusing to countenance a release. At the same time, assuming that London was inclined to favour release in the light of its commercial and strategic interest, nationalist Edinburgh would gain the bonus of asserting its sovereign autonomy *vis-à-vis* the mood in that quarter. In any case, as Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill explained in his historic statement at Holyrood on 20 August 2009, recent American representations against release had vigorously
asserted on behalf of the victims’ families that categorical assurances were given by the UK government, not only at the time of the Libyan application but on many occasions in previous years, that Megrahi would serve a complete life sentence in Scotland. In the light of these factors, the odds were distinctly weighted against a release. To predict otherwise might require a focused consciousness of the SNP’s record of leftish sympathies in international affairs.2

At any rate, MacAskill did find that the PEA route was closed. Yet this was not the end of the matter. It was open to him under Scottish law to consider compassionate release. Regarding the phenomenon of separate legal jurisdictions in England and Scotland it will be recalled that Megrahi had not been convicted by an English court, but in a Scottish one, under a unique arrangement reached between Libya and the UK government (acting for Scotland, as it had to do in relation to a crime perpetrated above Scottish territory at that time) that the court should sit in the Netherlands, though the subsequent sentence of life imprisonment was being served in Glasgow. It was therefore not possible for a Scottish nationalist government to pretend that Megrahi was a victim of ‘English justice’, and deserved leniency on that basis. But nor was any such fanciful pretext necessary if the Scottish government was disposed to release: a reform of Scottish law itself in 1993 had established the alternative modality just mentioned. Moreover, this power of discretion, inherited by a Scottish minister from the Secretary of State for Scotland at Devolution, actually set Scottish law virtuously ‘above’ its English counterpart, which contained no equivalent provision.

Nevertheless, to release Megrahi on any grounds would surely give gratuitous relief to London. Strengthening (one would think) any disinclination to play London’s game was the serious grievance that was immediately manifest from the Justice Secretary’s statement, in relation to an alleged failure by British ministers to provide full information about the nature of the assurances given to the families of victims, especially in the US. One also senses a feeling that London had pursued its own strategic-cum-commercial objectives with little regard for Scottish government priorities when negotiating the PEA,3 that is, in not taking a stronger stand against Libya’s insistence that no one convicted in connection with Lockerbie should be excluded from consideration for release in any future exchange.4 At any rate, Edinburgh never budged from its stand that Megrahi would never benefit from an exchange. In the eyes of the SNP government the agreement had, all too clearly, been signed “over our head”. In combination with London’s lack of openness about the assurances given to the victims’ families at various times, Gordon Brown’s patent desire to avoid odium in the US by always pointing out that any decision to release was for the
Scottish government alone to make, was not conducive to the Scottish Justice Secretary concurring with American representations.

All this being so, it verges at first sight on the bizarre that the minister opted to cause maximum hurt to the Americans by releasing Megrahi anyway, but under a different procedure. Not only did he appear to fulfil, in ‘fall-guy’ fashion, the UK government’s agenda for ongoing normalisation with a one-time leading exponent of state terrorism, but his action was judged by the Director of the FBI to send a signal to aspirant terrorists that terrorism pays. No doubt Robert Mueller’s private thoughts went further, and cast MacAskill as belonging to the brotherhood of liberal, anti-American fantasists who think terrorists will draw almost exactly the opposite conclusion: that is, that a forgiving civilisation has inner strengths which make it unassailable or certainly too virtuous to justify further attack. Noticeably the minister was at pains to emphasize, more than once, the utterly abominable nature of Megrahi’s actions in 1988, involving not a shred of compassion to his victims, and Megrahi’s lack of remorse, yet still felt able to justify an exercise of compassion. He made a virtue out of it almost in direct proportion to the monstrosity of the crime. If this was all rather unpredictable from a more pedestrian interpretation of Scottish nationalism and its current situation, it may make some sense on the assumption of a leftist or neutralist mindset in international affairs. Or, to reverse the intellectual sequence, one can learn about unsuspected layers of Scottish nationalist thought from this exercise in high-profile and completely original decision-making.5

So what did the minister gain for his government – surely something – from the manoeuvre, even though he has doggedly asserted that there was no political calculation behind it whatsoever? Talking of “learning curves”, I myself found more salient, by far, than any implicit antipathy towards the superpower a distinct Scottish exclusivism, with racist and Presbyterian overtones. This was projected to me as I listened with grim fascination to MacAskill’s statement. Not exactly a pitch for the votes of the English diaspora in the referendum-to-be or future elections! A laboured invocation of superior, thus unique, “Scottish values” overshadowed the recrimination about the British government’s failure of openness. These elements seem not even to belong in the category of “underlying causes”, discovered in retrospect, but suggest a kind of opportunistic, didactic purpose.

“Those who have been bereaved cannot be expected to forget, let alone forgive. Their pain runs deep and the wounds remain. However, Mr Al Megrahi now faces a sentence imposed by a higher power. It is one that no court, in any jurisdiction, in any land, could revoke or overrule. It is
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terminal, final and irrevocable. He is going to die. In Scotland, we are a people who pride ourselves on our humanity. It is viewed as a defining characteristic of Scotland and the Scottish people. The perpetration of an atrocity and outrage cannot and should not be a basis for losing sight of who we are, the values we seek to uphold, and the faith and beliefs by which we seek to live. Mr Al Megrahi did not show his victims any comfort or compassion. They were not allowed to return to the bosom of their families to see out their lives, let alone their dying days. No compassion was shown by him to them. But that alone is not a reason for us to deny compassion to him and his family in his final days. Our justice system demands that judgment be imposed but compassion be available. Our beliefs dictate that justice be served, but mercy be shown. Compassion and mercy are about upholding the beliefs that we seek to live by, remaining true to our values as a people. No matter the severity of the provocation or the atrocity perpetrated. For these reasons - and these reasons alone - it is my decision that Mr Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi, convicted in 2001 for the Lockerbie bombing, now terminally ill with prostate cancer, be released on compassionate grounds and allowed to return to Libya to die.”

Thus while MacAskill is drawing a quite tangible moral boundary, by most obvious implication, between the Scots and the English, in the hope, very conceivably, of instilling or reviving a degree of national pride which will benefit the pre-eminently “national” party by definition, he is also distancing Scotland from the distastefully named ‘Anglo-American Special Relationship’ at government level, as well as apparently advertising Scottish exceptionalism to the countless individual Americans who were going to be outraged, whether or not having a personal connection to the Lockerbie atrocity. The language of “the values we seek to uphold” is lifted straight out of the left-liberal handbook for countering Islamic terrorism, apart from offering a tacit taunt to the American “Christian Right” for a lack of charity towards “them that trespass against us”. This is highly compatible with the SNP’s long opposition to NATO and more recent hostility to American-led wars in Muslim countries. (Does the SNP’s collective memory also inform it that Tripoli was once bombed by USAF F-111s which refuelled in England?) The United States have been put on notice that a centre of sovereign anti-Americanism, or at best, neutralism among contemporary polarities, is struggling to emerge at the northern end of Britain. Without a doubt, the Scottish government has carried out its first distinct foreign-policy action, before ever power in this department was relinquished.
to Edinburgh by London. In this, the SNP has been helped, if not forced, into the role by the failure of the architects of devolution to make provision for any intrusion of an international issue into Scottish political space.

Lastly, to a point which has been made in a rather admirable editorial in this journal: it is indeed not edifying when Western politicians obscure (or sincerely deny) the pragmatic calculation behind appeasing actions towards totalitarian
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regimes, behind (or in favour of) a morally self-satisfying ‘correctness’. However, the essence of the Justice Secretary’s moralistic stand which I think I have identified is its demonstration effect for a divided Scottish audience who are earmarked for indoctrination in a new conception (though indeed in the latter, non-pragmatic mould) of key national values and identity. Of course it would be more than gratifying for the nationalist government of an independent Scotland if such posturing were proven to have delivered greater security for the country from international terrorism. I do not suggest that this was the primary purpose, yet the act of defining Scottish identity diffusely in contrast to the English does serve to mark off Scotland from the world of ‘aggressive alliances’ at which the Muslim world looks askance, even without the immediate demonstration effect of releasing a high-profile Muslim convict. As it happened, Gordon Brown lent credibility to this separation by saying he was “repulsed” by the hero’s welcome for Megrahi in Tripoli. Moreover, London’s motive in the earlier wheeling-and-dealing (to which Jack Straw admitted, if somewhat belatedly) was distinctly commercial, not bridge-building in the inter-civilizational sense.6

A deeper question has to concern the impact of the Megrahi decision and its rationalisation in parliament into a means to form Scottish opinion and national identity: in effect, a kind of ethnic didacticism which should alarm non-Scottish residents, the more so if its motivation were to lie not in any noble ideal but in an opportunistic perception of the potential of a critical national event to unite and mobilise the electorate -- behind a party that cannot be confident of realizing its continuation in government, let alone more epic goals, and in a society that is strangely divided, by dialect, sect and dialectic. The three main parties of the opposition at once picked up, and latched upon, the Justice Secretary’s claim of a prerogative to define the national identity, and in the 2 September debate protested forcibly that MacAskill had not been speaking for them or the Scottish people. It remains to be seen whether this incipient culture war will be resolved, provisionally, by a decline in SNP support among a population who also turn out, counter productively for the SNP, to resent and reject the party’s presumption to have spoken for them, in this vital matter of national political values and international alignment.7

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NOTES
1 In 2009, most SNP members will have known how to respond ‘correctly’ to the deployment and losses of the Black Watch in Afghanistan.
2 The minister’s statement to parliament particularly stressed that he had not the slightest doubt as to the validity of the conviction handed down in 2001. Meanwhile, Megrahi had never admitted guilt. But once he had abandoned his second appeal, in August 2009, he would never be able to vindicate his innocence.
3 In his statement MacAskill did not clarify when the Agreement was negotiated. This emerged in reporting by The Sunday Times, 30 August 2009, based on a letter (written by Jack Straw, as British Justice Secretary to his Scottish counterpart, in which Straw explains the strategic imperative for giving way to Libya over non-exclusion of Megrahi (potentially) from the PEA.
4 London’s accommodating attitude appeared to be rewarded shortly afterwards by a lucrative oil exploration contract for BP. One reason for Edinburgh not cooperating was that there was no Scottish prisoner in Libya.
5 One straw in recent winds was MacAskill’s inclination, as reported by the BBC on 1 July 2007, to attach importance to the fact that the fire-bombers of Glasgow airport the previous day were foreign-born and bred, not a product of tolerant Scotland. This instant judgement preceded the precise identification of the terrorists but was later vindicated, to the extent that the leader was found to be from Iraq – a country which had suffered a Western invasion. The analogy with Megrahi’s Libya, and the pacifist or compassionate lessons to be drawn from Iraq, must have been very compelling. In any event, it was obvious to non-SNP politicians that MacAskill had made up his mind a few weeks in advance of the announcement of release, and that his extraordinary personal visit to Megrahi in prison had the purpose of securing the withdrawal of Megrahi’s new motion of appeal so that compassionate release could go forward without the obstruction of any uncompleted business under another Act or regulation.
6 I detect a sleight of hand in the way the show of mercy is subtly equated with upholding “our values” à la well-worn discourse about not giving ammunition to terrorists by eroding Western liberties. In the Megrahi case, the convict had all the benefits of full legal process! However, MacAskill casts doubt on the validity of any human justice by handing over the power of ultimate sentence to the Almighty. The sententious quality of the MacAskill presentation is rather aptly captured in “Friends like these”, Economist, 29 August 2009, which begins: “Celtic politicians tend to think and talk in the rhythms and idioms of the church”. As against the “Presbyterian angle”, however, one might intuit the possibility that a product of Linlithgow Academy and the University of Edinburgh sees himself as treading a path of tolerance pioneered by the great figures of the Scottish Enlightenment rather than the Kirk.
7 It is a slightly moot question whether MacAskill had even spoken for the whole of his party. He always maintained that he had acted completely alone, while at the party conference in Inverness in October some delegates pointedly boycotted his standing ovation. The Justice Secretary’s personal “testament” offers no tactical clues or philosophical portents, unless converse to his action in 2009 by urging the imperative and benefits of international interdependency for independent states (such as Scotland in the EU)! (Kenny MacAskill, Building a Nation. Post Devolution Nationalism in Scotland. Edinburgh, Luath Press Ltd., 2004. Repr. 2008)
Image manipulation and utopianism – Sparta’s legacies to modern Europe

Classicist KENNETH ROYCE MOORE delves into one of the oldest and most important ingredients of Western civilisation

Spartan tradition, both real and idealised, had a profound influence on such notable philosophers as Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes the Cynic, Zeno of Cyttium and others [EDITOR’S NOTE: Zeno of Cyttium (c 340-265 BC) was the founder of Stoicism]. This is especially the case in terms of those who speculatively explored political theory and that which we would today refer to as utopianism and, by extension, the subsequent Western traditions that derive from their philosophies.

The image of Sparta, if not the reality, represented what amounted to, for some at least, a social order superior to any of other ‘natural’ constitutions of the era – a thing to be examined, refined and, if possible, replicated. However, it was clearly in conflict with the actuality of ancient Sparta; the image came about largely through the pro-Lakonian works of Xenophon and others, not the least being the philosophers named above, along with the official version of Spartan affairs that issued, albeit in a tightly controlled manner, from the Spartans themselves. The truth still remains overshadowed by the legend. Cartledge refers to this phenomenon as “the partly distorted, partly invented image created for and by non-Spartans (with not a little help from their Spartan friends) of what Sparta ideally represented”. In other words, they were effectively no strangers to the modern concept of political idealism. They sought to propagandistically reshape their past and present, thereby attempting to control their future as well, along a specifically ideological course. No small part of the legacy of Sparta, and perhaps that which so impressed the utopian philosophers, was her native skill for re-inventing her own traditions, time and again, with notable success.

The Spartan politeia underwent a series of revisions and constitutional reforms – not, as the pro-Lakonianists would necessarily have us believe, all
at once. The first round of reforms appear to have come about in the seventh century BCE, as Whitby says, when there were some “internal wranglings over the constitution” as well as, perhaps more profoundly, the revolts of the enslaved populace of Messenia. These and other political events seem to have necessitated some deliberate cultural re-ordering. According to the official tradition, the mytho-historical Lykourgos, a lawgiver extraordinaire, took control and revised the Spartan politeia, issuing his Great Rhetra to enact and record these reforms for posterity. The Great Rhetra itself was maintained by oral tradition since the Spartans kept no written records until well into the Hellenistic era. Of course, this made its authenticity subject to the authority of those entrusted with its official recitation.

A primary result of the Lykourgan reforms appears to have been the achievement of a more tightly controlled society in which the lives of most citizens were subject to some type of intense scrutiny, martial regulation and relative socioeconomic austerity. This process involved, amongst other things, the inculcation of accepted virtues through education along with considerable exposure to the state’s official ideologies. The customs changed, according to circumstantial necessity, over time and were given legitimacy as if they had always been part of the ancestral constitution. Sparta’s political restructuring throughout her history seems to have been a remarkable feat of social engineering if only inasmuch as it maintained a kind of static identity of Sparta, itself different at different times, with regard to the other (Greeks, Persians etc.). It is possible that many Spartiates and non-Spartiates drew little distinction between the official mask and the reality.

As indicated, not all of the alleged traditions of Lykourgos can be fairly attributed to the man himself. Some are clearly the products of 3rd century revolutionary reforms. Many were adopted in response to socio-political crises that arose at other times throughout Spartan history (eg, the protracted Peloponnesian Wars, the conflicts with Thebes and Macedonia). The process of self re-invention seems to have been ongoing from the time of Lykourgos up to and after 146 BCE when Rome permitted them to re-establish their ‘Lykourgan constitution’ that had been abolished by the Achaean general Philopoemen in 188. All such reforms were designed to hearken back to an idealised Sparta of old and claim legitimacy by purporting to come from the (orally recorded) Rhetra of Lykourgos himself.

Notable examples of this phenomenon are treated below according to subject, but let us presently consider the case of the Spartan cavalry. Thucydides attests that an equestrian military force was first introduced into Sparta in 424 BCE.
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He calls this change “contrary to custom”. However, Xenophon tells us that it was Lykourgos who divided the Spartans into six regimental units of cavalry and Plutarch, citing the 3rd century source Philostephanus, backs up Xenophon on the official Lakonian version of events. A new tradition appears to have been invented here in order to justify a significant change from heavy infantry-based tactics. Such an attribution to Lykourgos “was the only way to make socially palatable so radical an innovation, born as it was of military necessity”. This example highlights the fact that it is always wise to take the officially sanctioned Spartan traditions that claim ancestral legitimacy with a grain of salt.

Lykourgos and his revisionist successors were not working in a cultural vacuum. In terms of the nature of their reforms, there is a recognised borrowing and influence from afar. Kretan institutions, typically conservative but also having recourse to sophisticated legal codes, are a major case in point. As with Sparta, these too found champions amongst later philosophers. According to Herodotus, the Spartans of his era (fifth century BCE) maintained that their Lykourgan legislation was derived in part from that of Crete.

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Aristotle discusses one historical approach that attempted to make not only the reforms of Lykourgos but also those of Zaleukos and Charondas dependent on one Thaletas who was a legislator of Gortyn. Aristotle rejects this for chronological reasons (not unlike the case of the Spartan cavalry mentioned above) but agrees with the tribute to Crete that it implies. He says that “the true statesman wishes to make his citizens good and obedient to the laws; we have a good example of this in the Kretan and Lakedaimonian legislators”.

Something like Sparta’s mixed constitution is favoured by Zeno of Cyttium in his Republic. A number of the policies in Plato’s Republic and Laws appear to reflect Spartan ways of thinking both real and imagined and this is particularly the case in terms of governmental organisation and the mixed constitution. The politeia outlined in the Laws is especially characterized by a selective blending of Spartan and Athenian elements. There are other connections with the utopianists discussed below.

Sparta’s own system inclined toward gerontocratic oligarchy with limited monarchical and democratic elements. They promoted this system with a zeal. “Honours given to the old at Sparta”, as Powell says, “represented the culmination of an elaborate hierarchy based on age and beginning in early schooldays”. As with Plato, it was essential to ‘get ‘em while they’re young’.

The apparatus of the Spartan government may be loosely described as follows. The gerousia was the actual governing council with more or less supreme authority. The pseudo-democratic apella was made up of the adult,
male citizens and had the right to either support decisions made by the *gerousia* through popular acclaim or, if they disagreed, to remain patriotically silent. The duarchy of the two kings existed largely for ceremonial and martial purposes, although some kings took more active roles in politics than others. The Spartan *ephors* were effectively a ‘watchdog’ branch of government, in charge of the public morality, who made certain that the laws and social mores were upheld by all. They could call any citizen, including in theory even a king or a member of the *gerousia*, to account. They could and did vie for power with the other branches of the government.

The *ephors* in particular serve a purpose that Plato deemed sufficiently valuable to import, albeit in modified form, into both his *Kallipolis* in the *Republic* and Magnesia in the *Laws*. Each of these utopian visions is to be a sort of gerontocracy strongly recollecting that of Sparta – with its Guardians of the Laws (*nomophylakes*) themselves over the age of fifty and the oligarchic Vigilance Committee/Philosopher Kings and Queens made up of the eldest of these. The Platonic *nomophylakes* have much in common with their Spartan counterparts, the *ephors*, in a sort of philosophically idealised way. As Morrow says, they add a Lakonian “monarchical element in the city” further indicating a preference for the “mixed constitution”. They would also have been an effective agency for ensuring obedience and conformity.

The fact that Sparta had undergone legal restructuring with observable results was perhaps a significant factor in its being considered especially worthy of study by later philosophers. Plato’s Sokrates praises Krete and Sparta on various occasions and, in the *Republic*, he cites “the Kretan and Spartan constitution” as an example of the best of the imperfect forms of government. One of the main perceived faults of these constitutions was their inbuilt warlike inclinations. More importantly, they were seen to aim at only one principal part of virtue – courage – rather than the whole of virtue. As with the *Republic*, the *polis* in the *Laws* also aims at the greatest possible happiness (*eudaimonia*); and, this is inextricably linked with virtue (*aretē*). The Platonic lawgiver must aim at fostering all of the virtues – courage, justice, moderation and wisdom – in all of the citizens.

The similarities between Sparta (however idealised) and the constitutions of the *Republic* and *Laws* are too numerous to recount here. Plato employed lessons learnt from Sparta both within and without the realm of text. Plutarch tells us that, under Plato’s influence, Dion, the King of Syracuse, sought to establish a constitution “of the Spartan or Kretan type, a mixture of democracy and royalty, with an aristocracy overseeing the administration of important affairs”. Plato
Moore was not alone in terms of his interests in Lakonian ways. More than a few of his students in the Academy took their lessons in Spartan *cum* utopian politics abroad and influenced political affairs all over Hellas with varying degrees of success.

Aristotle is probably the most famous of Plato’s students with close ties to the political leaders *par excellence* who would set the course of the Hellenistic world: Philip II of Macedon and his son, Alexander, later called the Great. The second book of his *Politics* contains a lengthy account of Kretan and Spartan customs, comparisons between them and a discussion of their historical relationships. Jaeger indicates that the materials used by Aristotle in this section of the *Politics* were assembled during the period of his residence in the Academy, as he says, “when Plato was working on the *Laws* and Kretan and Spartan institutions were a favourite subject of discussion”. Aristotle is in good company here. Iamblichos reported that Pythagoras himself paid special attention to the subject. He was reputed to have had political dealings in Sicily, Lampaskos and Kroton (to name a few places), and he appears to have also held a strong interest in the constitutional formulations of Krete and Sparta. The indications that we have suggest a highly political aspect to early Pythagoreanism. That Pythagoras’ teachings greatly influenced Plato, and thereby Aristotle, is generally acknowledged.

The interest in Sparta extends to the Stoics who also borrow from its traditions. This is probably due to the fact that Zeno of Cyttium follows in the footsteps of Plato and Aristotle and can be seen, perhaps most notably, in the Stoic preference for austerity, along with other Stoic ideals discussed below. But Zeno himself was indirectly influenced by a notable proponent of Spartan customs, Diogenes the Cynic, no doubt as a consequence of Zeno’s own teacher, Krates, having been one of his students.

Such interest from prominent philosophers and thinkers as these highlights the fact that Sparta’s achievements as a society are worthy of consideration. The Lykourgan reforms seem to have provided her with a relatively stable social order in which a minority of Spartiates ruled over a majority of subject peoples, many of whom were not infrequently inclined toward violent revolution. They had an exceptionally superb military machine and, from the end of the Persian wars up to their final defeat by the Theban and Boeotian alliance at the battle of Leuktra (371 BCE), they held an empire that rivalled and, indeed, eventually defeated that of Athens. Virtually all of this, it should be noted, was built on the backs of their many slaves and accomplished by way of calculated social controls.
Certain peculiarities and novel approaches characterise Spartan culture which also attracted the utopianists. Education, for example, was a carefully ordered and influential institution of the polis. Most other ancient Greek cities had various forms of education, exercise and military training available. The Lakonian distinction may be found in terms of organisation. The Spartans referred to their system as the agōgē, which means a ‘leading’ or ‘rearing’ of youths who were organised into ‘herds’ for administrative and proselytising purposes. The Spartan agōgē, in keeping with their national character, appears to have been quite rigid and hierarchical. It consisted of letters and the building of endurance through sport and martial activities. Something very much like this system is espoused by Plato (with Aristotle in agreement) and, to a differing degree, Zeno as well in their respective treatises on political theory.5

The Spartans were amongst the first to make education obligatory and to organise it in so thorough a manner. It was “compulsory for all boys from the age of seven until they attained their socio-political majority (as opposed to physical maturity) at age eighteen”.6 There was also the krypteia, which was a form of military service for older youths akin to the later Athenian ephebeia – but with more sinister connotations in terms of social control.7 Xenophon’s idealised account of the Spartan system envisions a type of institutionalised, physical training to have existed for women as well, but evidently not on a par with that of men. This may have amounted to some degree of preparedness in defending the city if an enemy attacked or if slaves revolted whilst the menfolk were away fighting wars but it represents a marked leap over Athenian citizen-women’s level of public involvement. The apparent, albeit limited, education of Spartan females is a subject of much debate but, along with other aspects of their agōgē, it (or perhaps Xenophon’s idealised version of it) had a profound affect on Plato’s approach to the subject of pedagogy in his Laws and probably Zeno’s politeia too in regard to the near-equal education of women and men. Aristotle’s Macedonian tendencies may have influenced his (rather misogynistic) view on women, clearly at variance with that of Plato and Zeno, as it appears in his works.

The utopian educational programmes of Plato’s and Zeno’s speculative philosophy, and apparently that of Diogenes the Cynic too, strive to instantiate virtue in all citizens. The Spartans allegedly sought this same end albeit adapted to their own overriding agenda. The rigidly hierarchical approach of the Spartans too is incompatible with the somewhat anarchistic politeiai of Diogenes and Zeno. Even so, in Zeno’s ideal polis (or antipolis, as it may be rightly called), youths go barefoot like those in Sparta and comparable emphasis is placed on
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their physical and mental development. As Diogenes Laertius indicates:

“He used to affirm that training was of two types, mental and bodily: the latter being that whereby, with constant exercise, perceptions are formed such as secure freedom of movement for virtuous deeds; and the one half of this training is incomplete without the other, good health and strength being just as much included among the essential things, whether for body or soul”\(^\text{18}\)

As with Plato, the youths must be ‘strapped-up’ with physical and mental labour in order both to quell their natural \textit{hybris} and to mould them into the officially accepted forms that they will take as adults. However, Plato’s narrators have maintained that the Lakonian method needed some revision in particular with regard to its austerity. His Athenian Stranger criticises the systems in Sparta and Crete, in addition to their incomplete approach to virtue mentioned above, since they also compel their citizens ‘to keep away from and not to taste of the greatest pleasures and entertainments’.\(^\text{19}\) This, he says, has left them unprepared for temptations of pleasure and therefore subject to defeat at the hands of those who have mastered them. There is some indication, later discussed, that this was indeed the case.

Music figured prominently into Lakonian education and socialisation, as it did for most ancient Greek \textit{poleis} both real and imagined, but typically with marked differences and significant points of contrast. In fifth-century Sparta, “Tyrtaeus’ elegies were still the most popular songs in the repertoire, but that was because of their moral tone and because they made good marching songs”.\(^\text{20}\) This type of music was designed to leave a powerful impression. “It was a dreadful but inspiring sight”, declares Plutarch, the Lakonophile, evincing genuine admiration, “to see the Spartan army marching off for an attack to the sound of the oboe”.\(^\text{21}\) Clearly music’s potential for inspiring awe and reverence, along with fear in all its shades of significance, was well utilised as a means of social control and inculcation.

The officially sanctioned musical \textit{repertoire} found in both of Plato’s utopian visions self-consciously reflects Spartan practices more so than any other type.\(^\text{22}\) His carefully vetted choice of material for these least resembles the luxurious Persian styles, and evidently, much of the Athenian as well, since his narrator locates the sought-for quality of \textit{andreia} (manliness/courage – as it may be manifested in music) particularly within the Spartan tradition. It seems somehow fitting, and certainly in keeping with Lakonian propaganda, that an idealized view of the Spartans should represent, for some, the quintessence of Hellenic manliness.
As we have seen, a central theme of the Spartan education, identified with virtue, was the inculcation of civic obedience. This is in part achieved through the social leverage allowed by shame. As in Plato’s Magnesia, the “best people” are said to hold “phobos [fear] in the greatest esteem, calling it aidōs [shame/modesty]”.23 This reflects traditionally Homeric values associated with accepted social behaviour and underscores the connection with ancestral customs however idealised.

Xenophon wrote of Sparta that “there, great aidōs stands beside great obedience”.24 This was apparently true in both a figurative and literal sense. A kind of ‘shame-culture’ figured prominently into their civic ideology. Aidōs entails the fear of public censure incurred by the breaching of accepted protocols. It served all over Hellas as an “embedded means” of controlling citizens’ behaviour, but it appears to have found its home in Sparta. The privileged relationship of phobos with the authority of the ephors is emphasised by “the spatial contiguity of the place where ephoric power was exercised” and the actual temple of deified Phobos itself.25

The Spartan approach to social control appears at once brutal and, at the same time, sophisticated. Such practices of psychological and ideological manipulation were perhaps a significant inspiration for Plato’s notion of the so-called ‘noble lie’ (or virtuous fiction) in the Republic along with the use of paramyth – persuasive, if not always factual, legal preambles – in the Laws. However, the deployment of carefully stage-managed (mis)information by Sparta is not limited to musical censorship, the invention of tradition and the exploitation of shame. Spartan official deceit included not only lying to the helots about whether they would be rewarded or killed, misleading other enemies in wartime (which was a practice that Xenophon explicitly recommended to non-Spartans), but also misinforming their own citizens about the outcome of battles involving Spartan forces. Sparta was a fairly closed society that took special precautions to limit citizens’ access to various levels of information while striving to control such information that went into the outside world concerning Sparta itself.

Like Plato’s fictional Magnesia, the freedom to travel and learn about foreign ways was only granted to select individuals by special permission of the Spartan government (that is, the gerousia and the nobles). Officially, there was a concern that if Spartiates travelled abroad they might shed their native values under the (perceived) decadent temptations of alien customs. Some question remains as to when this reform actually took place. There is an account of it in Xenophon and this is in turn supported by other sources of his era.26 However, the first time
that we hear about the Spartans being seriously concerned over foreign travel is from Thucydides in reference to the events of the 470s BCE. At this time, the Spartan regent Pausanias was accused of Medism [EDITOR’S NOTE: Greek sympathy or support for the Medes (Persians), Greece’s ancient enemies] in part because he had allegedly adopted a Persian style of dress and other foreign manners. However, a political motivation may be seen behind this charge resulting from the fact that he was engaged in unofficial acts abroad amounting to his own private foreign policy, perhaps with designs to set himself up as the master of the Greek world. Recalled under threat of being made public enemy No 1, but eventually acquitted of all charges, he was not allowed to return to his previously high level of social standing and was compelled to remain at home in Sparta for the remainder of his life. It seems likely, as Flower suggests, that “the fall of Pausanias provides an appropriate context for the introduction of a ban on foreign travel without official authorisation.”

This innovation was naturally attributed to Lykourgos and what had perhaps been a native inclination in the past thus became enshrined in law.

Another feature of Lakonian social control that impressed later philosophers was their command of the economy along modern-day communist lines. The Spartan lawgivers saw fit to limit the ownership of money and manage its movements within their sphere of influence. This is the policy outlined in Xenophon’s account of Spartan currency after Lykourgos’ alleged reforms:

“...such that even ten minae could not be brought into the house without the master and servants knowing as it would take up considerable space and require a wagon to move it; there were also searches for gold and silver, and if any was found, the possessor was punished.”

In approbation of such an ostensibly beneficent policy, Plato’s Athenian Stranger indicates that “to be exceedingly wealthy and at the same time to be good is impossible”. The absence of valuable legal tender is also compatible, in theory, with the policies in Plato’s Republic, Zeno’s politeia along with the utopian teachings of Diogenes the Cynic.

However, the real and the ideal appear at odds with regard to this tradition in Sparta; in short, it seems to have been a patent invention of later times and circumstances rather than part of the ancestral constitution. There is indeed some indication that the Spartans of earlier centuries were relatively unfamiliar with coinage in general perhaps due to their isolationist character and Sparta may not have minted her own currency. However, as Hodkinson says, “contrary to the programmatic statements in literary sources, a range of evidence indicates official possession and use of precious metal currency before 404”.
The iron-ingot currency purportedly in circulation in ancient Sparta, even if it was not the only kind available, has never been discovered. The motivations behind this innovation in tradition appear again to have been political. Much as with Pausanias a generation prior, the Spartan admiral Lysander was amassing considerable power in the Greek world and much of it appears to have been purchased with Persian gold (foreign currency). This was used for the bribery of Athenian sailors to join the Spartan fleet which probably facilitated his famous naval victories at Notium in 407 and Aegospotami in 405. Perhaps Lysander’s opponents recalled that iron had once been used as a medium of exchange in antiquity and, “re-created an iron currency in the tense atmosphere of 404” as part of their aggressive reversal of his policies. Further complicating the claims of the Spartan revisionists is the fact that there was no coinage known to have been in circulation in Greece at the time of Lykourgos.

Sparta’s command economy went beyond limiting the possession of currency. Strikingly similar to the Magnesians of Plato’s Laws and the philosopher-citizens of Zeno’s politeia, Plutarch tells us (and Xenophon concurs) that “Lykourgos absolutely forbade the Spartans from practicing a manual craft”. In the speculative utopias of the philosophers, the reason for this exclusion is so that the citizens will be able to devote all of their energies to the pursuit of virtue. Sparta’s case is more complicated. Herodotos, writing in the 420s, mentions no such prohibition against banausic labour. He indicates that a bias against those who practice a manual craft existed throughout the whole of Greece, especially amongst the Spartans and least amongst the Corinthians. It is difficult to say precisely when this bias turned into Lykourgian law; however, an explanation may be found in the privations that Sparta suffered after carrying on the lengthy and expensive process of fighting protracted conflicts of attrition during the Peloponnesian Wars. This may have caused them “increasingly to represent themselves, and indeed to see themselves, as fundamentally different from their antagonists”. Again, Plutarch and Xenophon may be telling us only what the Spartans wanted us to hear.

The prohibition of dowries is another curious facet of Lakonian monetary policy and it, along with a division of citizenry presently to be considered, may represent circumstantial evidence for a stronger Platonic connection than is generally acknowledged. In the Laws, Plato’s Athenian Stranger prescribes a ban on dowries in Magnesia and significantly limits brides’ trousseaux in contrast to real-world amounts typically expended. This is consistent with the spirit of (later) Spartan ideals if not traditional practice. The reasons given by Plutarch for the alleged removal of dowries from Sparta were, in characteristically
egalitarian tones, “so that none may be left unmarried because of poverty or sought eagerly because of affluence”.35 Even so, a transfer of material goods seems to have accompanied Spartan brides from the sixth and fifth centuries BCE until the reforms of Agis and Kleomenes in the third century. Aristotle’s reference to this as a *proix* (dowry) may be a loose way of describing the practice as analogous to the Athenian one.36 He says that Spartan women had large dowries, loaned money at interest and were able to own and inherit property.37 The third century claims that dowries were forbidden in Sparta since Lykourgos represent a later “invention of revolutionary propaganda”.38

Dowries and land distribution were problems that haunted Sparta in the altered political landscape after her defeat at Leuktra. By 244 BCE, as Plutarch tells us, “not more than 700 Spartiates were left, and of these there were perhaps 100 who possessed land and allotment.”39 These figures may not be wholly accurate but they nonetheless indicate a society *in extremis*. The Spartan response to this crisis, as usual, was to re-invent a Lykourgan tradition and they may have even had a certain fourth century philosophical text as their guide. We are told that King Agis wanted to divide the land into 4,500 equal and inalienable lots for citizens; although, the task was actually completed by Kleomenes who eventually settled for a citizen body numbering 4000.40 In Plato’s Magnesia, there are to be 5,040 (a number readily divisible by 12, 10, etc.) administrative units for land-holdings by the citizens of the city (*Laws* 737e); each lot supports one family, the number of families is meant to remain at more or less a constant of 5,040 (740b-c). One of the male children will inherit the holding and the females are given in marriage where appropriate; excess offspring will be obliged to emigrate (740d-e, 741). While not precisely the same figure, this is strikingly similar to the reforms of Agis and Kleomenes. The indivisibility of the land units is even more suggestive.

Plutarch tells us in the eighth chapter of his life of Agis that Lykourgos had made this division in antiquity. This “tradition”, as it was related in the 3rd century, maintained that land could only be passed from father to son (or to the State for further re-distribution in the event of no heirs). Yet, in the Rhetra of Epitadeus from the early fourth century, we are told that Lykourgos allowed a citizen to bequeath his estate to anyone he pleased.41 This appears to be one of the main reasons why so much land ended up in so few hands and therefore came in need of redistribution in the third century. The whole concept of inalienable and indivisible lots of equal size was an invention of King Agis with no basis in historical fact.42 Its basis in Platonic literature and pro-Spartan idealisations seems to be a significant possibility, with a kind of bizarre interaction between
idealisers, philosophers and an actual polity.

Other truly ancient Spartan traditions, such as the agōgē (mentioned above) and communal meals had also fallen out of practice by the third century and were reintroduced, with revisions, by the reformers Agis and Kleomenes. In the earlier version of communal dinning, each Spartiate contributed a set amount to the whole meal. Xenophon says of the Spartan common messes “that as long as they are together, their table is never without food”.43 They had evidently grown elitist and exclusive as property and citizenship became more unequally distributed. Here too is another connection with Plato’s Laws and potentially Zeno’s politeia. The former has virtually the same institution and the latter seems favourable to such activities – even if they have not been precisely spelled out in the surviving texts – since communal life is espoused and extolled. While it is clear that this institution served a civic role in binding the Spartan community through shared meals, it also had an educative quality. The Spartan syssition, or “communal mess”, “was looked upon as a school of manners and deportment” and as a means of induction into the accepted modes of public deportment and discourse.44

The common meals were also notoriously hotbeds of institutionalised same-sex activity. The subject of Spartan sexual mores is complex but relates prominently to the works of the utopianists. Same-sex intercourse appears to have been a norm of life in Sparta perhaps even more so than other poleis at the time. It is a concept that many of the later Stoics found acceptable and a system of state-sanctioned same-sex relationships of a Lakonian nature is famously proffered in Plato’s Republic.45 Yet the Spartans reveal, not unlike many regions of the modern world, a contradictory quality with regard to what we take to represent their essential attitude toward sexuality. Xenophon says that Lykourgos forbade same-sex relations between boys and men apart from the virtuous, non-sexual type of relationship favoured by Plato (in his later works), Zeno and other philosophers in theory if not always in practice.46 But Xenophon makes the notable and somewhat startling admission that customs had changed since the inception of these reforms.47 On this account, Plato’s Athenian Stranger decries Sparta and Crete as city-states that, to their detriment, he perceives to have officially sanctioned same-sex behaviour. This is a point where Plato’s final utopian vision diverges from Spartan practices since same-sex relations are to be highly discouraged if not altogether outlawed in Magnesia.48

Some details survive to back up the popular perceptions of Lakonian sexuality. In addition to the alleged proclivities of communal messmates, there is considerable evidence pointing toward a high level of homoeroticism
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pervading Spartan culture. For example, imagery found on bronze figurines, mirror-handles and kylix interiors [EDITOR'S NOTE: A kylix is a shallow cup with a tall stem, similar to an Italian tazza] not only tend to reveal scenes of an erotic nature between males but they often “portray girls and young women with underdeveloped or de-emphasised secondary sex characteristics”.49 Certainly there was same-sex behaviour and homoerotic art to be found in virtually any ancient Greek poleis, but Sparta’s notoriety in this regard is significantly one piece of news that circulated widely beyond the ‘iron curtain’ of Lakonian influence. By the fourth century BCE, their youths had acquired a reputation for amorous proclivities in terms of same-sex intercourse to such an extent that Diogenes the Cynic, “being asked where in all Hellas he found good men, replied: ‘Good men nowhere, but good boys in Sparta.’”50

Lakonian mixed-sex relations appear to have also been fairly unique in the ancient Greek world as well in no small part due to their adherence to an overall theme of communism. Xenophon’s account suggests that their system permitted more freedom of choice for both partners (with limited contact after marriage) and, in some particular circumstances, allowed husbands to share their wives with other men. Even so, “a Spartan woman’s primary role was not, unlike that of her Athenian sister, the performance of strictly domestic tasks – though she was expected to be able to run a home...the goal of her life was childbearing (teknopoiai).”51 The same attitudes appear, albeit in markedly different ways, in the sort of sexual communism espoused by Plato and Zeno in their respective politeiai.

Xenophon indicates that Spartan men often wedded women older than perhaps the Greek norm. Lykourgos allegedly forbade citizen men to marry until their brides were “in the period of physical prime”,52 but some older men clearly still preferred younger wives. He does not say precisely what age the “period of physical prime” entailed. Plutarch gives evidence for a comparable ‘minimum age’ but pointedly does not specify a number.53 The allegedly superior Spartan diet may have helped their girls to mature faster and thus wed earlier or, alternatively, the rigorous athletics might have delayed the onset of menstruation and, thereby, their weddings.54 The precise age of marriage for Spartan women remains unknown.

Sexual communism seems to have been a dominant theme embedded in the Spartan cultural psyche. For example, we are told that they regarded adultery as hardly a crime at all.55 Xenophon does not mention it in his works on Sparta while Plutarch curiously goes out of his way to deny that it existed. “Plutarch seems to have been technically correct”, as Cartledge says, “and this is
a remarkable comment on the emphasis laid on the extra-marital maintenance of the male citizen population at Sparta”. It may have been the case that there was no law on adultery in Sparta except amongst their royal families. Our lack of knowledge about these things with regard to the other citizen classes may be due to the small number of non-Spartiates who had the chance to hear about them. Polybius and Strabo both indicate that the ephors had encouraged sexual license between citizens and the helots as a means of survival in times of
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conflict when legitimate fathers were few and this precedent may have thence encouraged the decriminalisation of extra-marital intercourse.\textsuperscript{57} If so, then this is another example of the re-invention of Lykourgan tradition on a most essential subject. The theme of sexual communism, moreover, was prominently taken up by the utopian philosophers.

I have sought to demonstrate that the Spartans were at once like and unlike their fellow sons of Hellas in significant ways and to indicate some of the potential impact that this difference effected in terms of the speculations of others. As we have seen, many of their institutions (whether real or imagined) impressed and influenced utopian philosophers such as Plato and Zeno of Cyttium who borrowed heavily from perceived Lakonian traditions. Organised education, stringent monetary policies, a mixed constitution and a powerful military aside, perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the Spartans was their ability to adapt and to cope with a changing world in which their Lykourgan values had to be constantly re-invented, doubtless out of sheer necessity, if they were to remain whole and distinct as a society. We have seen that the Spartans themselves, through both the enacting of official policies and the propagandistic promotion of their ideals, have shaped their society along directed paths. In some cases, they appear to have conflated the real and the ideal by later adopting some of the fictional traditions, as advanced by some of their more notable literary proponents, of which perhaps they themselves, at a different time and for different reasons, had originally a hand in the creation.

Far from simply being a static, cultural backwater entrenched in the archaic traditions of a legendary lawgiver, the Spartans were constantly engaging the world around them, interacting with it in their own unique way and adapting dynamically to it. I suspect that this quality was known and admired by Plato and others who undertook such intensive investigations into Spartan civilization and history. How could they who had such insight, and who were so close to the events in question, fail to observe this phenomenon? The ability to call a calculated ‘something’ into existence for the ostensible good of the polis, to give it a name and invent a convention that people will follow is no mean feat. This is ‘the word’ (logos) in action. It strikes at the very foundations of political philosophy and finds its home as much in the modern democracies of the industrialised West today as it did in ancient Sparta.

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NOTES
1 Cartledge (1987), 118
2 Whitby (2001), 9. It was surely a combination of these and other matters of urgent necessity (e.g. the defeat by Argos at Hysiae c. 669—Pausanias II.24.8) that led to the changes
3 IV.55.2
4 Lak. Pol. 11.4, Plut. Lyk. 23. The number of these forces had changed between 424 b.c.e. and Xenophon’s era. There were only 400 cavalry in 424 b.c.e. as opposed to about 720 in the early fourth century (Hel. IV.2.16). The division into six units appears to have happened when the number was increased so that which was attributed to Lykourgos in the Lak. Pol. was not even the original innovation but a subsequent modification of it
5 Flower (2002), 202
6 I.65
7 Aristotle Pol. 1274a, 25-31. This Thaletas is the same Melic poet who was meant to have established the naked-boy dances at Sparta. Cf. Rep. 452c and below
8 Aristotle Nik. Eth. 1102a, 8-11. The Athenian reformer Solon (c, 640-c. 560 b.c.e.) was reputed by some to have been helped in lawmaking by the Kretan Epimenides, Plut. Solon 12. Plutarch’s source was likely an ancient one, possibly Theopompos; cf. Diog. Laert. I.109
11 Rep. 544c; cf. too Crito 52e
12 Nepos, Dion II, IV.1-3; V.4-5; XI.2; XIII.1-4, LIII.2. The extent of his success appears to have been less than Plutarch’s optimistic version of events, for more on which cf. von Fritz (1968), 5-62. On Plato and the Pythagoreans in Sicily cf. Cicero, Rep. 1.10; Fin. 5.29.87; Tusc. Disp. 1.17.39. Also, on Plato in Sicily, cf. Plut. and Plato, Letter VII
13 Jaeger (1923), 300-301, n.1
14 De vita Pythagorica XXV seq. On some of the pros and cons of using Iamblichos as a viable source on the Pythagoreans, cf. de Vogel (1966), 20 and esp. Appendix D, On Iamblichus, 204. Also cf. Kingsley (1995) on recent archaeological data that provides stronger links between the Neopythagoreans of Iamblichos’ time and the earlier Pythagoreans than had been previously supposed
15 On Zeno, cf. Diog. Laert. VII.32-4, he favoured one-to-one education but indicated that all youths should be reared together by the community; on Platonic pedagogical theory in the Laws, 794a sq. Cf. 808c-d for the analogy between a ‘herd’ of children and that of beasts which recollects the Spartan ‘boy herd’. Cf. too Aristotle, Politics VIII.5.1340a14-28 for his general agreement with the Platonic approach to early education in this area
16 Cartledge (2001), 83. Thucydides (II.39) says of this system that ‘they from childhood seek after manliness through laborious training’
17 The krypteia allegedly “culled” any unruly members of the slave and resident alien populations, cf. Hesk (2000), 87, 100-1 on these and Winkler (1990), 34. Cf. too Vidal-Naquet (1986), 142 who indicates, ‘What is true of the Athenian ephebe at the level of myth is true of the Spartan kruptos in practice’
18 Diog. Laert. V1. 70
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19 635b5-6
20 Marrou (1982), 21
21 Lyk. 22
22 629b. Cf. 653c-660c and see Barker (1984) 141-56 on Magnesian music
23 Laws 647a
24 Lak. Pol. II.2. Phobos had his own temple in Sparta and was probably attended by an all-male priesthood; relatively little is known about the religious features of Aidōs, but Richer (1999), 93, is ‘tempted a priori to see in Aidōs a form of Phobos for the use of women’
25 Mactoux (1993), 280
26 Lak. Pol. XIV.4; cf. Plato Protag. 342c-d and Arist. Frag. 543 Rose
27 Flower (2002), 203
28 Lak. Pol. VI. 5-6; Polybios (Hist. IV, 45, 4-6) also says that money was esteemed of no value among the Spartans. Yet the apparently diminished significance of wealth probably represents an ethos from an idealised past that either never happened or was no longer in practice by the time of Plato’s Laws. As even Xenophon (Lak. Pol. XIV.3-4) reports, ‘in former days they were afraid to be discovered possessing gold; but nowadays there are some who boastfully display their property’
29 742e6-7
30 Hodkinson (2000), 167. Sparta minted no coinage of her own until the 260s or 250s. As Hodkinson says (ibid.), ‘several sources from the fourth century onwards claim that gold and silver coinage issued by other states was excluded by Lykourgos and that this prohibition remained in force until 404 when the booty sent to Sparta by Lysander was admitted for public use’. But this “exception” to the rule in 404 appears curious, see below
31 Flower (2002), 194. This reversal of Lysander’s policies also included the removal of the 30 tyrants that he had set up in Athens and the eventual restoration of democracy
32 Lyk. XXIV.2. Cf. Lak. Pol. VII.2-3 for Xenophon’s account that this sort of lifestyle left them free to pursue better interests—such as liberating cities from Athenian hegemony. The banusic retail trade is exclusively limited in Magnesia to a separate sphere of the polis encapsulating resident-aliens and foreign visitors, cf. Laws 919d3-e2 and 920a3-4
33 II.167
34 Flower (2002), 204
36 Hodkinson (2000), 99. The Code of Gortyn (VI.9-12) also refers to the transfer of property to a bride by her father and indicates that, as in Sparta, it remained under her control
37 Cartledge (1981), 98, argues that ‘what Aristotle calls “large dowries” were really... marriage-settlements consisting of landed property together with any movables that a rich father (or mother) saw fit to bestow on a daughter’. Cf. Pomeroy (1997), 55; for Hellenistic and Roman sources on Spartan ‘dowries’ cf. Plut. Mor. 227f-228a, Lys. XXX.5-6; Ael. VH VI.6; Ath. XIII.555c and Justin III.3.8
38 Hodkinson (2000), 98; cf. Patterson (1998), 250

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39 *Agis* V.4. There is no way to confirm these figures but, even if it is an exaggeration, there seems to be every indication that a population/property crises arose at this time.

40 *Agis* VII, *Kl.* XI

41 *Agis* V. Flower (2002), 196, n. 25, indicates that the Rhetra of Epitadeus also has no historical basis for claiming Lykourgan legitimacy.

42 Flower (2002), 196

43 *Lak. Pol.* IV, 2-5

44 Michell (1964), 94

45 *Rep.* 468b and cp. the speeches of Aristophanes and Pausanias in the *Symposium*

46 Cf. Diog. Laert. VII.32-4; *Stoebaeus* II.66.6-8

47 *Lak. Pol.* XIV.1-3

48 *Laws* 636c1-6, 655e1-3, 733a7-8 and, on the slavery to pleasure that results, 777e6-778a4. Cf. Moore (2005), exp. Chapter VII, for more on this.


50 D. L. VI.28; cf. also VI.46, VI.53-54

51 Cartledge (2001), 84


53 *Lyk.* XV.3, *Kleom.* I

54 Ibid

55 *Lyk.* 49c sq. and Xen. *Lak. Pol.* 1.6-10

56 Cartledge (2001), 125

57 Polyb. XII.6b5; Strabo VI.3.3 (279-80); but as Pomeroy (1997), 56, indicates, this may be an aetiological myth to account for the pre-existing phenomenon of sexual license. Cartledge discusses the extreme views of Spartan female ‘liberation’, along with some counter-arguments, and concludes that a balance, or synthesis, of these was probably the case, (1981), 85. 
The geography of intelligence

RICHARD LYNN gives his verdict on a TV programme purporting to address one of the most sensitive questions in science

Along-standing taboo on any discussion of race differences in intelligence was finally broken on 26 October 2009, in a Channel 4 TV programme entitled Race and Intelligence: Science’s Last Taboo. The presenter was journalist Rageh Omaar, who began with the preamble:

“I am setting out on a journey into dangerous territory – not a physical place, but an idea. At its heart is a question so radioactive, that it’s only usually raised in public by political extremists. And the question is: Is there a racial pecking order in intelligence, in which black people are less clever than white people? It seems unbelievable to be asking it in the 21st century, and yet it is a question that finds its way into lecture halls and scientific literature. I have a vested interest in the answer, as a black man with children growing up in a diverse society. But as I’ve gone on this journey there’ve been many people that have told me that I shouldn’t be asking this question at all. Unfortunately, there’s a problem: there is some research that points to what has been called a race gap in some measures of intelligence. Does this race gap really exist? I’d like to reclaim this question from the wild margins. To examine the actual evidence, and discover… the truth about race and intelligence…

“Every decade or so this toxic issue rears its ugly head, only to be swept under the carpet. And it would be easy to leave it there and dismiss it as bad science, but some of it has come from brilliant scientists”.

Following some historical introduction, Omaar turned to James Watson’s assertion in 2007 that blacks have a lower average IQ than whites and told us that Watson had agreed to be interviewed for the programme but had subsequently thought better of it. We can infer from this that Watson intended to stick by what
he had said but on reflection preferred not to go public again. We were also told that a number of academic experts on this issue had been invited to be interviewed but had declined “fearing a backlash.” In the end, only two academics who maintain that there are race differences in intelligence agreed to be interviewed – myself and J Philippe Rushton of the University of Western Ontario.

The original interview with me ran for about three hours and of this approximately two minutes made it into the programme. I was allowed to make three points. First, I gave the world racial IQ hierarchy consisting of Ashkenazi Jews (IQ 110), East Asians (IQ 105), Europeans (IQ 100), Native American Indians (IQ 86), North Africans and South Asians (IQ 84), sub-Saharan Africans (IQ 70) and Australian Aborigines (IQ 62). I then explained that these IQs must be partly genetically determined because when non-Europeans settle in Europe their IQs do not reach those of Europeans (I added that when black babies are adopted by white middle class parents, they do not gain in intelligence, but this was not shown in the programme). Finally when asked what was the biggest problem facing Western societies I said “The single most important issue is the increase in immigration of low-IQ Third World people into the United States, Canada, and Europe.”

Omaar goes next to the United States to meet J Philippe Rushton, and hear the position of ‘the enemy’. He begins:

“He is probably the most controversial of the small number of academics who are prepared to say that there is a racial hierarchy in intelligence. Rushton’s work has been strongly condemned by many psychologists and geneticists. I want him to explain why he thinks people who look like him are cleverer than people who look like me”.

The interview with Rushton lasts about two minutes, during which Rushton says that races exist, and that there are race differences in brain size that are the same as those in intelligence.

A number of people were interviewed to present the environmentalist position, of whom the one with most substance was Richard Nisbett, described as a “distinguished professor” of psychology at the University of Michigan. He made two claims. First, he asserted that the race differences in brain size are irrelevant, and cited a study from Ecuador in which two groups who differed in brain size showed no difference in intelligence. But contrary to this single study, there are dozens of studies that have shown that brain size is related to intelligence between individuals and also between races. The average brain size of Europeans is about ten per cent greater that of blacks and Australian Aborigines, while the average brain size of East Asians is about five per cent greater that of Europeans.
Nisbett’s second assertion was that in the United States there is no association between the amount of white ancestry in blacks and their IQs. If the genetic theory is correct, blacks who have a higher proportion of European ancestry would have higher IQs, but he said there was “not a shred of evidence that this is the case”. This, he contended, is a crucial disproof of the theory that there are genetic differences between the races.

The same assertion was made by Steve Jones in an article published in the Daily Telegraph on the day the programme appeared:

“Any link between skin colour and brain power was long ago disproved by science, despite a new outing for the subject on TV tonight... the programme dredges up a number of living fossils – elderly exponents of racial differences – many of whom I thought had passed long ago to the Aryan hunting ground in the sky... with impressive but misplaced confidence, they roll out a series of hoary, dubious and predictable claims about the abilities of different racial groups; those with lower scores living, oddly enough in the poorest countries with the worst schools”.

Yet as everyone knows, the people of the poorest countries are those with darker skins, and most of them are in sub-Saharan Africa and, as Jones correctly notes, it is these who obtain the lowest scores on intelligence tests.

The assertion that there is no relation between skin colour and intelligence seems improbable because it is a matter of common observation that successful and intelligent blacks in the United States invariably have whitish skins and therefore quite a lot of white ancestry. This is obvious from President Obama downwards and includes Jesse Jackson, Condoleezza Rice and Oprah Winfrey, while Colin Powell has so much white ancestry he could pass for white. The average amount of white genes in American blacks is about 20 percent, but the whitish skins of successful and intelligent blacks in the United States indicates that they have more than this. And, contrary to the assertions made by Nisbett and Jones, the major studies in the United States have shown that there is a significant association between light skin colour and intelligence

It is not only in the United States that there is a significant association between light skin colour and intelligence. This association is present in all multiracial societies. This is so well established that the word ‘pigmentocracy’ has been coined for it. A pigmentocracy is a society in which wealth and social status are determined by skin colour and intelligence. There are numerous pigmentocracies throughout the world and in all of these it is invariably the light-skinned and more intelligent who have the most wealth and highest social status. There are followed by the brown-skinned who occupy intermediate positions, and finally by
the black-skinned who are at the bottom of the social hierarchies.

This was shown for the United States by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray in their 1994 book *The Bell Curve*. They demonstrated that it is the light-skinned Europeans who have the highest social status, the highest average earnings and highest percentage in the professions, and the dark-skinned blacks who have the lowest. In the middle are the Hispanics, most of whom are brown-skinned *Mestizos* of mixed European and Native American ancestry. They also showed the skin colour-coded social hierarchy is largely due to differences in intelligence. When the average European IQ is set at 100, the Hispanics had an average IQ of 86, while the blacks had an average IQ of 82. They also reported that the East Asians had an average IQ of 103 and the Jews an average IQ of 112, and these two groups have higher social status and earnings than white Europeans. These differences have been confirmed in numerous other studies. It can be added that the Native Americans have an IQ about the same as that of Hispanics. The Hispanics have their own pigmentocratic skin colour hierarchy. The light-skinned, who are of wholly European ancestry, are the most successful while the darker-skinned, with a greater proportion of black, do not do so well.

This pigmentocratic skin colour hierarchy is world wide. The countries of Western Europe have become pigmentocracies from the 1950s as a result of the immigration of non-Europeans. In Britain it is the light-skinned Chinese who have rapidly taken their place with the light-skinned indigenous peoples at the top of the IQ and social hierarchy. The browns from the Indian sub-continent have done quite well, while the blacks from the Caribbean and Africa have done poorly. Similar pigmentocracies have emerged in the Netherlands, Germany and France.

There are pigmentocracies in African countries with significant multi-racial populations. In South Africa there are sizeable groups of Indians and “Coloureds”, who are mixed-race hybrids mainly of European and African descent. These two groups have skin colour, IQs, educational attainment, socio-economic and earnings intermediate between whites and blacks. These racial hierarchies are also found in East Africa, where there are (or were until Europeans and Indians were expelled or left) skin colour, IQ and socio-economic hierarchies with Europeans at the top, Indians in the middle and blacks at the bottom. A sociologist explains that throughout the British colonies in East Africa: “The British developed a three-tiered civil service in which rank, salary and responsibility were drawn on racial lines. Civil servants were designated ‘European staff’ and ‘Non-European’ subordinate staff, who were almost entirely Asian; throughout the colonial period the Indians filled the middle ranks of the civil service, the military and police administrations, and the office staff in business; below them was the third group.
of office functionaries, those with less training and experience, who received the lowest pay and were nearly all blacks”2.

**Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean**

There are pigmentocracies throughout southeast Asia where the lighter skinned and more intelligent Chinese dominate the economies of Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. In New Zealand and Australia, the Europeans and newly immigrated Chinese have higher socio-economic status than the darker skinned and less intelligent Maoris and Aborigines. In Hawaii, too, it is the Europeans and Japanese who have the highest socio-economic status, while the native Hawaiians and blacks do poorly.

The same racial hierarchy is present throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, where Europeans, Chinese and Japanese have the lightest skins, highest IQs, highest educational attainment and socio-economic status, followed by mixed race Mulattos and *Mestizos*, while darker-skinned Native American Indians and blacks are at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchies. This colour-based social gradient has been noted by numerous sociologists and anthropologists. As the British social anthropologist Peter Wade has written

“Whites are at the top, Indians and blacks at the bottom, and positions in the middle are defined by various criteria of status, among which colour and descent are very important.”3

Many Latin American countries have small ethnic Chinese and Japanese populations. Most of these migrated to various Latin American countries in the 19th and early 20th centuries to work as labourers on sugar plantations or, in Peru, shovelling guano. The Chinese and Japanese have typically prospered in Latin America. They have risen in the socio-economic hierarchy and by the second half of the 20th century most of them were running businesses or had entered the professions. Robert Kent, Professor of Geography at the University of Akron, explains:

“The Chinese filled key niches, especially in small-scale retailing. As subsequent generations assimilated, the descendants of early immigrants moved into professional occupations and government services in appreciable numbers”.4

It has often been asserted that Brazil is an exception to the racial hierarchies elsewhere. This belief has its origin in a book published in 1945 by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre in which he claimed that Brazil was a racially egalitarian society. Officials at UNESCO were so impressed by Freyre's claim that they sponsored a number of studies of Brazil in the 1950s in the belief that these would reveal the secret of a racially tolerant, unprejudiced and egalitarian
multiracial nation that would serve as a model for other societies, particularly the United States, in which whites were prejudiced against blacks and other non-white racial minorities and discriminated against them. The results of these researches were disappointing in so far as they found that the racial hierarchy in Brazil is just as pronounced as elsewhere or, as a sociologist has recently written “racial discrimination differentially sorts blacks, browns, and whites into the hierarchical system”

The association between light skin colour, intelligence and achievement is also present between nations. It is the European and North East Asian nations which have the lightest skin colour and the highest intelligence, and have made virtually all the scientific, technological and cultural achievements of the last 2,500 years. The peoples of the Middle East and North Africa have also made some important advances and developed significant early civilisations. Sub-Saharan Africans, Australian Aborigines and New Zealand Maoris never developed any indigenous civilisation and did not invent any written language or system of arithmetic.

The explanation for why is invariably the light-skinned who have the highest intelligence and socio-economic status is that the early humans who migrated around 100,000 years ago out of tropical equatorial Africa into North Africa and the Middle East, and then into the rest of Asia and Europe, evolved lighter skins and higher intelligence. They evolved lighter skins because these allow the absorption of vitamin D from sunlight. And they evolved greater intelligence and the larger brains that were needed to accommodate it, because it was more difficult to survive in these colder northern environments than in equatorial Africa.

The programme turned next to the University of California at Berkeley, where since 1997 admissions were determined by SAT scores (‘close cousins of IQ tests’) and where the selection process was ‘colour blind’. In the last 12 years, blacks have been under-represented in relation to their numbers in the population, while Chinese and Japanese have become massively over-represented. This is exactly what would be expected from all the evidence on black-white-East Asian differences in intelligence. As Omaar observed

“For those who think like Richard Lynn, Berkeley provides some evidence that some races are born cleverer than others. But does it? We now enter the heart of the intelligence debate. Is it your genes or your upbringing that determines your intelligence? There is strong evidence that DNA does play an important part in intelligence. Scientists know this from studies of identical twins, particularly those separated at birth, who have the same DNA but a different upbringing. From twin studies like these, it seems the genes you inherit have a substantial influence on how intelligent you
Lynn

are. But does that mean that differences in IQ scores between races are also genetic? Other scientists have a completely different way of looking at exactly the same data”.

Nisbett represented these other scientists, saying

“The Asians who do well in this country who came prior to the immigration law changes in the 1960s ... capitalized on the IQ that they had to a much greater extent than the White population. Which is a reflection both of IQ-type intellectual skills and hard work. If you know about those Confucian cultures it is not surprising that they would have such an ability to capitalize on whatever talent they had.”

No doubt East Asians do work hard but this does not explain why they are massively over-represented at Berkeley (and other elite American universities), because admission to these is based on SAT scores which are essentially IQs. Nevertheless, Omaar ended by concluding that the race differences in IQ are determined environmentally by cultural differences that promote a strong work ethic in Europeans and East Asians, but are less present in blacks.

A pithy verdict on the programme was delivered by Sunday Times television critic Adrian Gill:

“There is no intention of investigative disinterest. It was cast as a human story about a black man confronting white scientists who said that, statistically, black people, particularly Africans such as him, were less intelligent than everyone else. It was an infuriating diminishing of a serious story; making it personal made it smaller and just another television confessional.”

RICHARD LYNN is professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Ulster. This article is based on his books Race Differences in Intelligence (2006) and The Global Bell Curve (2008)

NOTES
6. Sunday Times Culture, 1 November 2009
nothing substantial has changed in American politics since Barack Obama’s presidential inauguration last January. If anything, Obama’s track record after nine months in office has proven to conservatives that he is hardly worse than his predecessor. George Bush’s record spending on domestic social programmes and intemperate global military crusades combined the worst aspects of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. The United States is still fighting two wars in the Middle East, arguing about nationalizing the American healthcare system, and ballooning its national debt with massive federal spending. Yet after nearly a year under Obama’s regime, recent political events highlight the impotence of the so-called American conservative movement to oppose impending leftist threats.

Careful observers will not confuse the American right’s inability to effect change with its overriding desire for political stasis. The American Republican Party has shifted inexorably leftwards since the defeat of conservative presidential candidate Barry Goldwater in the 1964 election against Lyndon Johnson. Today’s Republican Party has usurped the conservative nameplate with disastrous results. During the recent nomination of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and this past summer’s Tea Party protests, Republican operatives proved themselves incapable of leading a starving dog to a pile of raw meat. Such a lack of leadership usually foreshadows doom. This case is no different, though, as detailed later, one faint hope exists.

With Supreme Court Justice David Souter’s April 2009 retirement announcement, the door opened for President Obama to make his first major imprint on the nation’s judiciary. After the last two retrograde appointments of Catholic, Caucasian, conservative males by President Bush, the left demanded
revenge – and Obama came through. In nominating circuit court justice Sonia Sotomayor, the president was able to tick the boxes for female, racial minority, divorcé and left liberal on his scorecard. Her religion, lapsed Catholicism, posed the only potential hurdle; however, her support for abortion assured the doubtful that any potential Romish tendencies would be trivial.

But the protest conservatives mounted to Sotomayor’s appointment proved about as threatening as a nursery school revolt. In a 2001 law lecture at the University of California at Berkeley, Sotomayor exhibited an unhealthy combination of racial pride and judicial indiscretion when she remarked, “I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn’t lived that life”. Talk radio loudmouth Rush Limbaugh and former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich charged Sotomayor with racism, while Senator John Cornyn and other Republican Senators were more circumspect in describing Sotomayor’s racial hubris as “troubling”. Since the savage attacks on Judge Robert Bork during his 1987 Senate confirmation hearings, the political vetting process of Supreme Court nominees has resembled a 17th century witch hunt, in which the most irrelevant aspects of a candidate’s personal history count for more than his legal views. With lifetime appointments hanging in the balance, American officials prefer to focus on whether the nominee smoked marijuana in his youth or complied perfectly with the Byzantine tax code. A prospective jurist’s approach to constitutional interpretation only comes up for discussion during the waning moments of the Senate confirmation hearings after a raft of character witnesses have attested to the nominee’s charm and affability.

For conservatives, Sotomayor’s only appeal harks back to her undergraduate thesis at Princeton in which she argued for the right of Puerto Rico to its own political and economic self-determination. The island, technically an American protectorate, has not provided any material benefit to the United States since it was appended to the nascent empire after the War of 1898 with Spain. Conservatives should have held up Sotomayor’s thesis as the first step toward dismantling our crumbling empire and ridding the United States of the last vestiges of colonialism. Not surprisingly, ersatz conservatives today take the exact opposite tack with their overwhelming support for lengthening American imperial reach.

While Sotomayor’s appointment riled anyone who had even a passing familiarity with the United States Constitution, financial troubles lie at the root of most present day conservatives’ gripes. Economics have caused problems here before. In 1773 the East India Company convinced the British government to
allow its tea destined for the American colonies to forego all duties and tariffs. But unlike today’s cunning lobbyists, whose public relations blitzes obfuscate the self-serving nature of their governmental manipulations, the East India Company carelessly aroused a sentiment that had been brewing for years among their fellow British subjects domiciled in North America. Boston merchant John Hancock, renowned not just for his signature [EDITOR’S NOTE: John Hancock (1737-1793) was a signatory to the US Constitution, whose showy handwriting has ensured that “John Hancock” is often used as a synonym for “signature”] but more so for his large scale smuggling operation, urged the colonists toward violent protest, culminating in the dumping of three ships’ cargoes of tea into Boston Harbor.

By goading his compatriots, Hancock sought to protect his illicit business, then under threat from the duty-free East India Company goods – and so today. The closest historical parallel to the Boston Tea Party revolves around the subversive protection of government-granted advantage. Odd as it may seem, British import laws imposed on the American colonies gave rise to Hancock’s smuggling operation. As the federal government attempts to take complete control of the American health care system in 2009, doctors, insurance companies and other healthcare providers stand to lose their government-granted monopolies. The American Medical Association, a major donor to political candidates, limits the number of “accredited” medical schools and, thereby, the supply of doctors. Insurance companies have benefited from laws that prohibit the purchase of medical insurance across state lines, giving rise to multiple, small-scale, government-enforced monopolies. Angry Americans harangued their congressmen at town hall meetings during the summer recess, complaining that this federal intrusion had gone too far, unlike George W Bush’s budget-busting prescription drug benefit and reprehensible “No Child Left Behind” legislation. The healthcare industry did a great job of enlisting Tea Party attendees to defend its monopoly privileges.

Liberal outrage followed as expected. CNN anchor Anderson Cooper groaned, “It’s hard to talk when you’re tea bagging” during a televised conversation in April with political fixer David Gergen. For those naïve in the language of sexual debauchery, tea bagging refers to the practice of placing one’s scrotum in another’s (usually male) mouth. Mr. Cooper’s use of such execrable language on national television exemplifies the sad state of what passes for political discourse in the mainstream American media. In the London Review of Books, Yale English professor David Bromwich warned readers that “a floating army of the angry and resentful were being urged to express contempt for Barack
Obama, and to exhibit their loyalty to principles they felt in danger of losing – the right to bear arms, the right not to pay for health insurance.”

Forget for a moment that almost all gun legislation for the past 50 years has sought to limit the citizen’s right to defend himself. Instead, focus on Professor Bromwich’s second grumble. Protestors demonstrated against the government’s proposed takeover of the American healthcare industry, with visions of the dysfunctional Post Office and the Dickensian hospital system run by the US Department of Veterans Affairs animating their gatherings. One might wish that a Yale professor would at least get the facts straight in his otherwise ludicrous diatribe. Tea Party protestors, a large percentage of whom comprise the shrinking demographic known as “Americans who work for their paychecks”, involuntarily surrender 1.45% of their pre-tax earnings to fund the bankrupt federal Medicare program for the elderly. Rather than wrongly accusing these Middle American radicals of looking for a free ride, Professor Bromwich might have pursued a more interesting line of inquiry such as: Where was the Tea Party activists’ outrage and spirit of protest when the Medicare tax was first foisted upon them? If you cannot differentiate between a demand for “the right not to pay for health insurance” and a protest against mandatory participation in a government run healthcare system, then an endowed professorship in the English Department at Yale awaits you too.

Rays of hope do exist in the darkness of Obama’s early days. The most encouraging group to surface in the flotsam of the current miasma, OathKeepers, unites active duty military personnel, law enforcement officers and firefighters, who have vowed to fulfill their original oath: to support and defend the Constitution. The OathKeepers list of promises merits enumeration. Members of the group have promised to disobey any order to:

- Disarm the American people
- Conduct warrantless searches, detain American citizens as “unlawful enemy combatants” or subject them to trial by military tribunal
- Impose martial law or a “state of emergency” on a state, or enter with force into a state, without the express consent and invitation of that state’s legislature and governor
- Invade and subjugate any state that asserts its sovereignty and declares the national government to be in violation of the compact by which that state entered the Union
- Blockade American cities
- Force American citizens into any form of detention camps under any pretext
• Assist or support the use of any foreign troops on US soil against the American people to “keep the peace” or to “maintain control” during any emergency

Furthermore, in order to ensure that the United Nations never attempts to dragoon OathKeepers into its Blue Helmet Brigade for the Improvement of the World, members “will consider such use of foreign troops against our people to be an invasion and an act of war”. Finally, the OathKeepers refuse to “infringe on the right of the people to free speech, to peaceably assemble, and to petition their government for a redress of grievances”.

Unlike the pronouncements of most American politicians, who respect the Constitution as much as a rap artist respects a nubile groupie, the small Republican OathKeepers’ declaration has shocked such leftist paragons of liberty, patriotism and justice as the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The ADL slandered the OathKeepers as “part of an anti-government extremist movement that has grown since [because?] President Obama took office”. For groups like the ADL, who refuse to acknowledge the American polity’s original design as a constitutional republic, opposition to the current regime is, by definition, anti-government extremism.

Nothing new there, though the ADL deserves praise for the persistence and illogic of its attacks on its enemies.

But perhaps if the ADL were to imagine some counterfactual history, the potential harvest to be reaped from their malign and misguided accusations might persuade them to temper their demagoguery. For instance, how might the fate of European Jewry have differed if a group which refused to disarm the Jewish citizens of Germany had formed during the Third Reich? And what if that same group had refused to force German Jewish citizens into detention camps under any pretext? Most likely, the loudest protests against such reactionary activity would have come from the Nazis themselves.

Both the healthcare quandary and the politicized judiciary represent just small parts of the American political quagmire. Present day American ‘conservatives’ do not abhor the growth of the central state the way their predecessors did. In truth, strong support for the growth of the federal
Leviathan comes from both the Left and the Right. As long as the policies pouring forth from Washington, DC promote abortion on demand, economic levelling through taxation and preemptive wars fought to promote American ‘values’ (such as universal suffrage, equality of the sexes and ‘diversity’), the left will stand in support. And as long as the federal government supports just a few restrictions on abortion, slightly less economic leveling and preemptive wars fought to promote American values (like universal suffrage, equality of the sexes and the right for American oil companies to drill in Iraq), the so-called right will contribute what little they have left of their after-tax pay cheques to Republican shysters. Conservatism once existed in the United States. Today, the term has come to mean that which is just to the right of the left.

MARK G BRENNAN writes from New York

NOTE
The end of the affair? – Japan’s disenchantment with the West

C B LIDDELL says that August’s dramatic electoral defeat of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party was the logical fallout of deeper dissatisfaction

Like the hand of God, the political ‘butterfly effect’ can work in dark and mysterious ways. In 2008, the ripples from Barack Obama’s victory in the US election started washing up on the shores of Japan like the harbinger of a political tsunami. At first the Japanese seemed to be taking it all with a pinch of salt. A major advertising campaign by mobile-phone company, Emobile, poked fun at the absurdities of Obama mania by presenting a be-suited monkey in the role of a politician proclaiming “Change” before an adoring crowd.

After the inevitable accusations of racism (which overlooked the revered status that monkeys have in Asian culture – Japan’s Toshogu Shrine in Nikko is famous for its carving of the three wise monkeys) the ad was dropped, and the usual polite deference towards America was resumed, bar muttering about the new President’s stress on the importance of the US-China relationship. However, under the surface, the idea of electoral change had caught on in a country heading into its own general election campaign in 2009.

For all but 11 months since 1956, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had held power. Set up with US help, the party had used gerrymandered electoral boundaries and machine politics to maintain its grip on power. It was only in 1993, following the Japanese property bubble collapse, that the LDP lost power to a coalition of seven smaller parties, who made use of their brief taste of government to bring a degree of proportional representation to Japan’s first-past-the-post electoral system. Instead of all 480 of Japan’s Lower House members being elected by Westminster-style constituencies, it was agreed to select 180 of them from party lists according to vote percentage.

This new hybrid system allowed the smaller parties to survive, but the
advantage still lay with the big party that could win most of the directly elected seats. Thus the LDP soon returned to power. Learning lessons from this, the small opposition parties gradually coalesced throughout the 1990s to create the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), a party big enough to mount a concerted challenge in the constituencies to the LDP, which was now propped up with support from the Buddhist New Komei Party (NKP).

The final two pieces in the jigsaw were the credit crunch and the kudos given by US voters to the concept of “change”. When the LDP government tried to stimulate the economy by pouring money into the usual pointless construction projects – a guaranteed way of turning taxpayers’ money into party contributions from construction companies – it merely reinforced the image of the LDP as both corrupt and inefficient, an impression the DPJ deftly exploited with its messages of fighting sleaze and priming the pump by putting money into the pockets of ordinary consumers.

Preaching toll-free motorways, child allowances, and an end to amakudari, the system of golden parachutes by which top civil servants on retirement are given important positions in companies that their departments formerly oversaw, the DPJ pulled off a landslide victory in August, winning 64% of the Lower House seats. It was already the biggest party in the Upper House. However, a large part of the DPJ victory depended on an electoral system that still over-rewards the most popular party. In terms of vote percentage, the DPJ wasn't that far ahead – 42% of the vote, compared to 38% for the LDP and its NKP allies, hardly a yawning chasm at an economically difficult time.

With the economy certain to be shaky for the next few years and the DPJ’s popularity liable to suffer as a consequence, it may seem that the LDP could easily reposition itself to swing back into power at the next general election. While possible, such a superficial analysis, stressing only political and economic factors, ignores so much else that is going on in Japanese society. The truth is that the world’s second biggest economy is tired of the ride and wants to get off to enjoy a quieter life. Although the DPJ’s promises of improving social conditions and introducing more welfare remain vague, the election of the party resonates with the underlying mood and trend of Japanese society in a way that the LDP message of a corporate Japan does not. For those willing to look, the signs of this deep-rooted change have long been evident.

Since the 1990s there have been intriguing changes in Japanese social and cultural patterns. These include the otaku and hikikomori phenomena. Usually translated as ‘fanboys,’ otaku are the large number of young men who have developed obsessive hobbies and interests, like anime (animation), manga

Liddell
comics and computer games as an escape from reality. Hikikomori share many of these traits, but the difference in that they have lost all confidence in social interaction and have given up on useful study and work, instead preferring to largely stay in their rooms. The female corollary of these groups are the ‘parasite singles’, young women who work but choose to remain single and stay with their parents so as to save money and enjoy an easier life devoid of responsibility.

What about the rest of society? In 2006, the columnnist Maki Fukasawa coined the term soushoku danshi (literally “herbivorous male”) to describe a relatively common type of young man, who prefers a quieter, less competitive life, a more vegetarian diet, and who has a limited interest in the opposite sex and high income consumerism. The term caught on and is now widely used.

To understand why these changes are happening and what they portend, it is important to take a wider look at Japanese history. Before 1854, when an American fleet, led by Commodore Matthew Perry, forced Japan to open its doors to the outside world, the country had been a self-sufficient, feudal, agricultural society, where the vast majority of people lived on an overwhelmingly vegetarian diet and were much smaller than today. Faced with Perry’s “Black Ships” and the enormous power of the West, Japan developed a reactive culture designed to overcompensate for the accumulated weaknesses of centuries. In short, from being a sleepy, backward “herbivorous” society, it tried to drastically reposition itself as a dynamic, expansionary “carnivorous” society, just like the dominant powers of the Victorian period that had disturbed its slumber.

Japan’s rulers did everything they could to acquire Western technical know-how, while, at the same time, great efforts were taken to define, defend, and assert the indigenous culture and identity of the country, often by using methods and approaches from abroad.

Faced with the power of Western art, the art scholar Tenshin Okakura developed the idea of a consciously separate style of Japanese painting and aesthetics called Nihonga. In the same way, faced by strict Western codes of behaviour based on Christian morals and European chivalry, the Japanese author Inazo Nitobe created an ersatz code of Japanese ethics called Bushido. Even the extreme emperor worship that took over the formerly low-key religion of Shinto had the flavour of Christian absolutism about it.

In an attempt to make the average Japanese person physically equal to Europeans, the government even changed the eating habits of the common people, towards a more protein-rich diet, encouraging meat eating and milk drinking. This also led to the demotion of Buddhism in Japanese culture.

The result of all this effort was that Japan did indeed become a “carnivorous”
nation, echoing the industrialism and imperialism of its European models but with little of the magnanimity and urbanity that characterized the British and French empires. When this led to war and defeat, the Japan that emerged afterwards – impoverished and hungry – still saw itself as a “carnivorous” nation.

It was this belief that allowed the country to embark on its post-war economic miracle, and which laid the groundwork for the dominance of the LDP, a party that encapsulated the spirit of post-war “carnivorous” Japan. The new society of samurai salaraymen serving feudal export-geared conglomerates, all fuelled by a work-hard-play-hard culture of Stakhanovite effort compensated by jobs-for-life, heavy drinking, and endemic prostitution, was, in its own way, just as much a distortion of the basic Japanese character as the madly overcompensating drive of the Meiji modernists and the Showa Imperialists.

Not surprisingly, when the wheels began to come off the machine in the 1990s, a smouldering rebellion set in. The foot soldiers, formerly obedient to the dictates of suit-wearing conformity, began to break ranks, and question the wisdom of the alien lifestyle that had been foisted on the country. The rise of otaku, hikikomori and herbivorous males can be understood in this context.

What seems to be happening is that Japan is finally snapping out of its 150-year attempt to be a “carnivorous” Western nation in the fast lane, and is instead seeking to return to the lineaments of its former shape as a gentle, sleepy, agrarian society. The true significance of the election of 2009 may be that this tendency finally started to express itself at the ballot box.

C B LIDDELL is a Tokyo-based journalist
Making a hell out of Hellas

DEMETRIS DEMOPOULOS feels that the Greek political class is incestuous and ineffective

At a time when centre-left political parties across Europe are desperate to show that their brand of politics is not fading away, the head of the Socialist International gave them something to celebrate on 4 October.

In Greece, as in the UK, there are two major centrist parties — the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and New Democracy (ND). PASOK won around 44% of the vote and ND 33.5%, its worst ever result. The Greek Communist Party (KKE) saw its vote fall to 7.4% (from 8.1% in 2007), while the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) saw its share of the vote slip from 5% to 4.5%. Only LAOS (People’s Orthodox Rally) a populist nationalist party, managed to take advantage of the collapsing New Democracy vote to increase their vote share from 3.8% to 5.5%. The abstention rate of almost 30% was high even by Greek standards, reflecting widespread disillusionment with politics.

In his first statement as Prime Minister, PASOK leader George Papandreou Junior acknowledged the serious difficulties ahead. Greece has been living beyond its means for decades. Public and private debt has soared; unemployment, especially among young people, is at 21% and corruption in the public sector is widespread. The budget deficit is 8% of GDP and public debt the second highest in the Eurozone (after Italy). At the same time, the indebtedness of private households has increased by more than five times since the introduction of the Euro, from €16.8 to €93.3 billion. Wages are low, with the average monthly income totaling €789, slightly more than Poland (€785) and substantially less than in Portugal (€1,080). There is also a bloated public sector (with over 600,000 employees) and a chronic lack of economic competitiveness, with everyone living on borrowed money and almost all
sectors of the Greek economy controlled by foreign capital.

Greek in its etymology, the word “dynasty” is also a Greek political reality. Politics here has long been dominated by the Karamanlis and the Papandreou clans. They have established networks of corruption and nepotism which dominate the state and every important social sector.

Only one of George Papandreou Jr’s grandparents was Greek. His mother is American, his paternal grandmother Polish. Having been educated in America, Britain and Sweden, his English and Swedish are more fluent and grammatically correct than his Greek. He is soft-spoken, calmer and more discreet than his grandfather George Papandreou Senior. His promise of a “break with the past” and its culture of patronage and nepotism sits awkwardly on a man whose entry into Parliament at 29 was based solely on his family name.

Constantine (Kostas) Karamanlis Junior (twice PM and now opposition leader) is the nephew of the late Constantine Karamanlis – the towering figure of Greek ‘conservatism’ for much of the 20th century, who was prime minister four times and twice president of the republic.

A third political clan, the Mitsotakis, although not as powerful as the others, has the longest lineage, tracing its roots back to Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936) – Cretan revolutionary, seven times prime minister and the “Ethnarch” who defined the borders of modern Greece. The Mitsotakis family is presently represented in parliament by the children of onetime PM Constantine Mitsotakis – Dora Bacoynannis (of whom more later) and Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

After the abolition of the monarchy and the restoration of the Hellenic Republic in 1974, the conservative establishment was chiefly concerned with maintaining its privileges, thus allowing Marxists and communists to take control of many aspects of Greek culture. A leftist terrorist organization, 17 November¹, murdered both Greeks and foreigners (mostly Americans, although the last victim in June 2000 was the British military attaché Stephen Saunders) diplomats, businessmen, police officers and politicians. Two conservative editors (G Athanasiades and N Momferatos, of Vradini and Apogevmatini respectively) were also murdered (in 1983 and 1985) and their newspapers never recovered. However, other minor groups have managed to sustain their presence over the next decades (under various names) through low intensity urban warfare that routinely involves the torching of public buildings, cars and banks as well as regular clashes with the riot police.

These groups have managed to survive partly because they have been romanticized or at least insufficiently condemned by influential journalists or establishment politicians. Furthermore, since 1974 the police have been banned
from entering universities under the pretext of assuring academic freedom. This has meant that many universities have become havens for leftist militants. Even now, these extremists launch occasional violent attacks, for example burning four patriotic bookstores in Athens in the summer of 2008. Neither the government nor the opposition parties, nor even the media, have paid much attention to these attacks.

The riots of last December\(^2\) had little to do with economic inequality or immigration. The hooded rioters are self-styled anarchists and their choice of targets – banks, cars and other symbols of status and wealth – testifies that their sole purpose is to create violence and chaos without offering any alternative forms of government. But in some cases the riots were a flag of convenience for immigrants aggrieved with the government.

Greece, which had a 98% Christian Orthodox population as recently as 15 years ago, is now also experiencing out-of-control immigration. Official data give an immigrant population of about 1.3 million. These data are disputed, but if they are correct, that means immigrants comprise about 10% of the population, one of the highest proportions of any European country.

In 2005, ND offered an amnesty to all illegal immigrants, without having any idea of how many there were or how many (if any) the economy actually needed. PASOK offered similar amnesties in 1999 and 2001 and on 4 November, speaking at the UN Global Forum on Migration and Development, Papandreou announced that children born in Greece of immigrant parents living in the country who had been in the country legally for 10 years should automatically become Greek citizens\(^3\). His attitude towards immigration was summed up on International Migrants Day in December 2008, when he said

“I have been a migrant many times in my life”.\(^4\)

The left is also engineering a dangerous new approach in Greece’s relations with Turkey (which has occupied the northern part of Cyprus since 1974, and whose fighters frequently fly deliberately into Greek airspace) and our northern neighbour, the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), which lays claim to the northern Greek province of Macedonia. Even Papandreou’s present policy of appeasing both countries is being portrayed as chauvinistic by many even further to the left. His staunch support for Turkey’s EU membership even though it occupies a part of another member state is not popular with the Greek public. One reason for his enthusiasm is that the United States is constantly intervening at all levels to promote the Turkish candidacy, and has asked the European Commission to open new chapters of Turkey’s accession negotiations in December 2009.
However, there is a new factor on the Greek political scene and this is the election of a new ND leader. On 29 November, Antonis Samaras was elected as the party’s new leader, easily beating his main rival, Dora Bacoymannis.

Samaras, an Amherst and Harvard-educated economist, with a boyish smile and courteous manners, maintains a cordial relationship with Prime Minister Papandreou (they were roommates at Amherst) – but he may also bring some fresh air to the political arena. His patriotic stances on both Macedonia and Cyprus will cut right into LAOS’s voter base, while his expressed wish to impose socially responsible controls over the market economy will be popular more widely.

There is a belated growing concern on the right of ND about the cultural dominance of the left, although the generally poor quality of the political class offers little hope in the short term. However, there is a slowly growing intellectual response, such as the patriotic think-tank, the Ion Dragoumis Foundation led by Professor Christos Goudis of the University of Patras. Another courageous academic is Prof Neoclis Sarris from Panteion University. Journalists, authors and publishers like Nikos Hidiroglou, George Leontaritis, Ioannis Kolovos, Aristeides Karatzas and others are also making great contributions. [EDITOR’S NOTE: See Ioannis Kolovos, “Greek lessons – how the cradle of the West became multicultural”, Quarterly Review, Spring 2009].

There is a new generation of Greeks who are proud of our heritage, and want our country to be respected. We urgently need new and better leadership, if we are to rediscover our roots and renew our ancient identity.

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NOTES
1. The name 17 November refers to a 1973 student uprising at the Technical University of Athens in protest against the military regime
2. The shooting of a teenager in December 2008 by a policeman was the culmination of a series of violent demonstrations and attracted extensive reportage in the Greek and international media
3. Kathimerini, 22 November 2009. The number of immigrant children in Greece is estimated at between 150,000 and 170,000, but the number of children whose parents are legal residents is much smaller
4. One reason for his enthusiasm may be that immigrants in Greece always lean towards the political left. For example, a VPRC study carried out by prior to the 2000 general election revealed that most immigrants planned to support PASOK
5. Ion Dragoumis (1878-1920) was an anti-Bulgarian intellectual and politician who was murdered by policemen loyal to Eleftherios Venizelos. He was known for his love affair with the author Penelope Delta, who was the great grandmother of Mr Samaras
6. I should also mention Taki Theodoracopulos whose book The Greek Upheaval is a worthy contribution to understanding Greece’s recent history
Cousins-german –
England and Germany
before the Great War

FRANK ELLIS finds that a detailed study of Anglo-German relations
is marred by jargon and post-modern thinking.

With a total of 18 essays in eight parts, (high politics; colonial culture;
gender; legal culture; academic life; music and architecture; highbrow
and lowbrow literature; and popular culture), *Wilhelmine Germany
and Edwardian Britain* is an ambitious and comprehensive project
which provides a wealth of detail and insight into the brief yet critical period
in Anglo-German relations before the slaughter started in 1914. Unfortunately,
some of the essays are flawed by a slavish adherence to feminism (the section on
gender for example) and a barely concealed and often irrational loathing of, and
a failure to comprehend, the nation state, a surprising failing for any historian of
the late 19th and early 20th century.

The essays or the bulk of them do indeed demonstrate the asserted claim of
affinity between the two nation states across a remarkable range of endeavour.
Whether in colonial administration or how to deal with habitual offenders,
Germans and British were eager to learn from one another. Germans studied at
Oxford and the British at Heidelberg. Admiral Tirpitz, architect of the Anglo-
German naval arms race, and, as pointed out by Thomas Weber, “not exactly
famous for his Anglophilia”¹, sent his daughter to Cheltenham Ladies’ College.
Music highlighted differences. In 1914, the year war broke out, Oscar Schmitz
declared in the soon-to-become famous title of his book that Britain was the
“Land without Music”, though by the time of publication there was some evidence
that Edward Elgar and Arthur Sullivan were helping to reverse that perception.
English sports were highly successful exports to Germany. Yet a key difference
emerges in British and German attitudes towards sport. Britain, with a huge
empire and the substance and symbols of imperial success and prestige, could
afford to indulge in the cult of the amateur. Germany wanted to catch up, was in
Ellis

a hurry and above all wanted to win.

The title of this collection hints at a problem that none of the contributors attempts to resolve. Was the growing industrial and military rivalry between Germany and Britain from the 1870s, through the late Victorian and Edwardian periods which then erupted in August 1914, a rivalry between Germany and Britain or was it one between Germany and England? It may have served the purposes of British supra-nationalism/unionism to refer to the rivalry as British-German, so including Irish, Scots and Welsh, but very large numbers of Germans then and now made, and make, a distinction between British and English. The historical sources are full of references to England where one might have expected to find Britain. The Germans sense, maybe they know, that their main rival is not the English plus the Celtic fringe (the British) but the English, their north German cousins, hence the slogan, Gott strafe England! Many of the German sources referred to use English instead of British and this suggests that Germans perceive a tribal rivalry as well as the economic and military dimensions. Given that the editors refer to

“transnational history whose aim is to deconstruct the notion of homogenous, stable ‘national cultures’ by demonstrating that these ‘national cultures’ rest on foreign influences and mutual adaptation”², it is somewhat odd that none of the contributors has confronted the British/English distinction.

In an introductory essay (“As Dependent on Each Other as Man and Wife: Cultural Contacts and Transfers”), David Blackbourn discusses the problems of comparison. He argues that

“comparison that ignores mutual exchanges wrongly treats national societies as sealed-off entities and reinforces the nation-state orientation of historians”³.

As a consequence:

“That view drives the new interest in contacts and transfers, and it follows the dethroning of the nation state as the self-evident unit of enquiry. If nations are constructed and imagined, we can no longer take them for granted”⁴.

The nation state comes in for another battering in Sven Oliver Müller’s generally very good essay (“Musical Transfers and Rivalries”). He insists that:

“Nationalist self-perception is essentially based on these processes of demar-cation and delimitation that stigmatize out-groups. In other words, a nationalist description of the world is indissolubly linked not only to the identification of differences, but also to the devaluation of anything considered foreign”⁵.
How is this supposed to fit in with his earlier view that: “British admiration for ‘German’ music was almost boundless in the second half of the 19th century”? Presumably, Müller’s use of ‘German’ instead of German is intended to convey the idea that German is fictively homogenous (more of which below) whereas British is not?

Blackbourn and Müller protest too much. Historians have always noted the progress and successes of other nation states – and well before the arrival of the anti-historical, deconstruction fad – if only to understand political and military rivals. A prime cause of taking an interest in one’s immediate neighbours is trade. Throughout history principalities, states, emerging states and federations have funded trading expeditions and adventures in the hope of making money. Successful trade means that you have something to offer: spices, gunpowder, accounting methods, furs and grain. The nation state or otherwise that exchanges sable skins and dried fish for spices and tea is manifestly not a “sealed-off entity”.

War is another mechanism undermining the view that nation states or otherwise are sealed-off entities. All Blackbourn can tell us about war is that it “was itself a powerful transnational experience”, so stating the blindingly obvious opaquely. The prevalence and frequency of wars explain why wars have dominated historical narrative: war has proved to be the sternest challenge to the nation state. Indeed, war is another form of exchange, though often not very mutual. War may also be very beneficial (Romans and Normans come to mind). Nor has the nation state been self-evidently dethroned (Russian, Croatian, Serb, Slovenian, Iranian, Iraqi, Chinese, Japanese and Korean readers of these essays would be in agony from laughing). There are far more of them around than in 1914 and all jealously seek to advance their own interests. That groups of people strive to live in their own piece of space called ‘my country’ and have been prepared to fight and die for such an entity and have done so throughout recorded history, is powerful evidence for the existence of the nation as a natural and normal entity that serves and meets the needs of people: patriae fumus igne alieno luculentior as the mighty Romans used to say. Nations can, of course, be “constructed and imagined”, as the disastrous aftermath of Versailles shows, but nations that are constructs, devised and imagined by ignorant politician-meddlers, and these days assisted by one-world ideologues in the UN, will not survive if they do not command the racial, cultural, political and social allegiances of the inhabitants. Hitler made that quite clear and the collapse of Yugoslavia into genocide is another dreadful warning. However, when Blackbourn supposes that nations are “constructed and imagined” I take him to mean that nations are in some way unnatural, false, artificial and undesirable.

The contributors to the section on legal culture, Sabine Freitag ("A Perverse
Determination to Break the Law’: Dealing with the Habitual Offender”) and Harris, already noted, have written outstanding essays which compel one to reconsider the strengths and weaknesses of the two jurisdictions. For example, Harris sounds a note of caution about the view, common in Britain and North America, that contempt for the rule of law and arbitrary behaviour were part of the German legal fabric long before World War One and the Third Reich. He argues that the main influence in this respect was Frederick Maitland’s Rede Lecture of 1901 which was interpreted as evidence that the introduction of Roman law into the various princedoms of Germany had led to state tyranny, and that Britain had avoided this fate because of the robustness of English common law. Harris points out that in late Victorian and Edwardian England it was the post-Napoleonic version of Roman law, not the German version, that was equated with tyranny and that the German Civil Code (1896) was greeted with near universal approval in Britain. Yet there are differences in legal terms which arise from the German and English understanding and application of words which appear to be the same in both languages yet are not identical, such as police/Polizei, magistrate/Magistrat and right/Recht. Then there is what is known in English law as the ‘silence of the laws’ (what is not forbidden is permitted) and the all-important habeas corpus. Alas, even Harris, who is sensitive to the differences of translation of German and English words, falls into the gender quagmire. He notes that the German Civil Code was seen by some “as a breakthrough for equality of the sexes and the matrimonial rights of women, in marked contrast to the powerful elements of canon law, ‘couverture’, and gender bias that were still predominant in the English common law”.

A critical development in relations between states at the end of the 19th century was the rise of public opinion brought about in large part by large-circulation papers, such as the Daily Mail, founded in 1896, and which catered for a mass audience. As far as the Germans were concerned before and after World War One, Lord Northcliffe, the proprietor of the Daily Mail, was responsible for inciting hatred against Germany. Dominik Geppert’s essay (“‘The Foul-Visaged anti-Christ of Journalism’? The Popular Press between Warmongering and International Cooperation”) examines the reputation of Northcliffe and concludes that the myth of Northcliffe-as-evil genius suited Northcliffe, British liberals and the German political-military establishment. It suited Northcliffe since he could claim to have warned of the German threat well before anyone else and it reinforced his personal view as a champion of the people. For example, in order to counter claims that he had helped to incite the war, Northcliffe ordered that the anti-German articles published in the Daily Mail before the outbreak of war be issued as a pamphlet to show how prescient the Daily Mail had been (Scaremongerings from the Daily Mail)
1896-1914: The Paper that Foretold the War, 1914). British liberals could attack what they regarded as the crude xenophobia and jingoism of the Northcliffe press and contrast it with their own world view based (allegedly) on peace and cooperation. Finally, it suited the German political-military establishment who claimed that British propaganda, not Allied arms, had defeated them. To this end Geppert cites the exiled Kaiser: “O, this propaganda by Northcliffe! It was tremendous!” and Ludendorff: “The shattering of public confidence at home affected our soldiers’ readiness to fight” 9. As Geppert notes, this proved to be mightily convenient for the stab-in-the-back legend, the Dolchstoßlegende, which German nationalist groups promoted after the war.

Wilhelmine Germany and Edwardian Britain successfully documents a number of important exchanges between Britain and Germany. Yet it comes with a warning that reaches beyond the two countries. Cultural and other forms of exchange do not automatically lead to better relations in politics between nation states because these exchanges, however altruistic they appear, are primarily driven by self-interest. Nor does it follow that the more I know about another nation, its language, culture and history the less predisposed I will be to take up arms against it, or that I will somehow respect it. One unintended but entirely predictable consequence of legal/illegal immigration is coerced and enforced proximity which frequently breeds resentment, mutual contempt and hatred. This is yet another reason why people who have much in common with one another prefer their own space. Some of these spaces are quite well known – England, Germany, Italy, France, Russia and China – and they have not been dethroned as the focal point of a majority of the inhabitants’ racial (ethnic if you are squeamish), political, historical and cultural allegiances.

Dr FRANK ELLIS is an historian and author, most recently of And Their Mothers Wept: Soviet Literature of the Great Patriotic War (2008). © Frank Ellis 2009

Wilhelmine Germany and Edwardian Britain: Essays on Cultural Affinity, Domink Geppert and Robert Gerwarth, eds., German Historical Institute London, Oxford University Press, 2008, with a foreword by Andreas Gestrich, pp. xi + pp.438, tables and figures, and name index

NOTES
1. Wilhelmine Germany and Edwardian Britain, p.253
2. Ibid., p.5
3. Ibid., p.18
4. Ibid., p.18
5. Ibid., p.325
6. Ibid., p.308
7. Ibid., p.36
8. Ibid., pp.208-209
9. Ibid., p.377
OYSTERS

The fat man laughed because
the restaurant told him to,
though the oysters that slipped
at atrocious expense
through his pinguid lips
were poisonous,
the hock at his elbow hardly less,
and the lady, too,
so svelte in the crypt
of her basilisk dress,
was dangerous beyond the laughable.
Wasn’t that diamond
clipped at her cleavage
an oyster between
white dunes on a beach,
grown luscious on sewage’s
steamy tureen
of barely detectable, radioactive garbage?

ANN STEVENSON is the author of Poems, 1955-2005  (Bloodaxe)
A doomed deal – the Jew who tried to negotiate with the Nazis

STODDARD MARTIN finds that the latest book on a still controversial 20th century “Zionist maverick” is highly stimulating

Adislaus Löb’s Rezsö Kasztner, which was shortlisted for the Wingate Award earlier this year, is a hybrid historical work mixing personal memoir of escape from Nazi-occupied Europe at age 11 with a defence of the individual who engineered his salvation, along with that of 1,670 other hand-picked Hungarian Jews, many of them members of the community’s élite. Löb’s eponymous hero is the controversial “Jew-saver” of Budapest, who became principal leader of the “Zionist mavericks” of the Vaada – a refugee and relief organization operating independently of the official Jewish Council – after the British had arrested his cohort Joel Brand on suspicion of being an enemy spy during a trip to Istanbul in late spring of 1944 to consult with officials of the Jewish Agency there on matters proposed by Adolf Eichmann and possibly Heinrich Himmler.

German occupation of Hungary in March of that year had led to the swiftest round-ups and deportations of Jews from any Axis or associated country. At the same time, it seemed to open ways for negotiations to save Jewish lives. In April and May Eichmann had made propositions to Brand to the effect that for every armoured truck the Vaada could have supplied out of the West for ‘exclusive’ use on the Eastern front, the SS would eliminate 100 Jews from the lists of those to be transported to Auschwitz or elsewhere. 10,000 such vehicles were requested. Brand, and later Kasztner, were to transmit the message not only to Zionists in the Middle East but also to Jewish organizations in Switzerland and the US and via them the Allied command.

Huge questions are raised by this story. Were the offers genuine? Did Eichmann have the authority to make them, let alone to enforce any agreement entered into? Was he acting alone? Could Himmler, if behind it, have pushed...
such a policy past Hitler? Given the state of Nazi prospects by that stage, wasn’t opportunism the main motive – ie, for certain Nazis to position themselves as covertly ‘friendly’ to Jews in order to emerge on the top of the heap after the debacle that they could now foresee? Such questions remain ripe for speculation. What we know is that a game of cat-and-mouse ensued, in which the train transporting Löb and other Jews to ‘freedom’ was used as a carrot and the non-cancellation of round-ups of other Jews in the Hungarian provinces as a stick to get money and material via the Vaada out of such contacts as it could persuade.

The Allies rejected the apparent strategic offer. Some greeted with scepticism all information they received from these irregular Jewish sources, both about the extent of the deportations and the possibilities for halting them. Others either genuinely doubted the credibility of Nazis seeking to deal or dismissed on moral grounds the idea of talking with ‘gangsters’. A few recoiled from a spectre of having ‘millions of Jews dumped’ on them: as the British ambassador in Cairo is said to have remarked, what could he do with so many? He had enough trouble with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem as it was, to say nothing of the Arab world in general. There was above all the prohibitive problem of how to cope with Stalin should the West suddenly perform a treacherous volte-face. Above all too floated the scent of eventual total victory and the rhetoric of ‘unconditional surrender’, both of which by this time must have become irresistible.

Löb cites well-known responses from Eden, Churchill and others in rehearsing these matters. His main purpose, however, is to describe the chutzpah by which Kasztner and associates continued to bargain on their own with competing Nazis, using bluff and counter-bluff, trying to avert or delay disaster for as many as they could. That they were successful for some is beyond doubt. Löb argues that, in addition to his own group, the number may have been as many as 5,000 and beyond that possibly Budapest's Jewry at large, which may have been spared partly through the negotiators’ feints and delays. Masses in the provinces were not so lucky, especially after the indigenous fascist Arrow Cross removed Admiral Horthy finally in October ’44, letting loose an anti-Semitism whose virulence Eichmann himself claimed not to be able to restrain.

Kasztner’s failure to save many, as opposed to his ability to free some, led to suspicions about his motives and methods after the war. He foolishly inflamed these by boasting that he had been responsible for the de-nazification of SS Oberstürmbannführer Kurt Becher, with whom he had dealt even more closely than Eichmann and who would go on to become one of the richest men in West Germany. In 1952 Kasztner was denounced as a collaborator in an Israeli
newssheet. Close associates to him in the ruling party urged him to sue for libel. The trial, conducted by a prosecutor and judge both hostile to the government of the day, convulsed the nation. Kasztner proved a poor witness and was humiliated. An appeal to the Supreme Court eventually voided the collaboration charge, but not before Kasztner was gunned down in a Tel Aviv street. Three assassins were rapidly picked up and convicted. One has since been revealed to have worked for Israeli intelligence. He and the others were released by Ben-Gurion a half-decade later, following consultation with Kasztner’s widow and daughter, the latter of whom gave her assent on the grounds of concern for the assailants’ children.

Again, many questions. It is clear that Herut v Mapai [EDITOR’S NOTE: Herut was a rightwing Israeli political party, founded by Menachem Begin in 1948 and amalgamated into Likud in 1988. Mapai was a leftwing Israeli political party, founded in 1930 and absorbed into the Israeli Labour Party in 1968] politics loomed behind the libel and affected the trial. It is not so clear, or not fully, what may have lurked behind the assassination. Passionate rage on the part of Hungarian survivors and others who viewed Kasztner as a traitor covers some ground, but it remains hard to see all the wood through the trees. In a recent lecture Löb stated that at the close of the war Becher returned $2 million to Kasztner that had been extorted from Jews to arrange their escapes. Only $60,000 of it reached hands that it had been shaken out of. Where did the rest go – into Kasztner’s pocket? Back to Becher? To Zionist colleagues of the former? Postwar associates of the latter? Both? All? If any of these are so, then further extrapolations may be made, including that powerful forces had a motive for preventing one broken former associate from being tempted to spill the beans and/or spread the blame.

Such controversy surrounds these matters that even at this stage further evidence or admissions might well not provide closure for those who have long since taken a view. As Löb noted, by the early 1950s the Israeli government, needing grain, arms and cash, was eager for good relations with West Germany. These would develop, to the benefit of both nations, the one as it sought to bolster its security, the other as it sloughed its pariah status, both as they became rich. The huge sums that Germany paid in reparations were after all not without economic benefit at home too. To cite just one example: the annual rest-cures taken by survivors to bad towns in the Oberbayern and the Schwarzwald, all paid for by the Bundesrepublik, helped not only to restore tourism and create goodwill but also to build one of the world’s most advanced health industries.

As for Reszö Kasztner? His name continues to invite attack. After Löb’s
recent lecture, many asserted that if he had told other Jews the truth about Auschwitz which had learned from Eichmann they might have been able to flee to Romania, or hide from the round-ups or even risen to defend themselves. To this Löb countered that, if he were to save anyone, Kasztner had to keep confidential what his interlocutors said; moreover, that by the time of his traffic with Eichmann most Jews already knew the terrible truth, otherwise there would not have been panic on his own ‘freedom’ train when it stopped in a forest to be diverted to Auspitz – a name rapidly transformed into Auschwitz, causing many to jump out of the unsealed cattle-cars. LÖb argued too that it would have been suicidal for people who might still have been saved, and who were missing most of their men (forced into labour camps) and had no weapons, to rise up against oppressors à la the Warsaw ghetto. Finally, the truth (to which other survivors present testified) may be that most Jews in Hungary, for so long so notably more tolerant than its neighbours, were seduced into hopes that if they just laid low and waited for the storm to pass they would survive. For many in Budapest this proved the case. For others, alas, the Untergäng of the 1940s kept spiralling on, with many refusing to reconcile with not only their racist tormentors but also those of their own kind who had had the temerity to try to treat with them.

STODDARD MARTIN is the author of books on Nietzsche, Wagner and Byron. A shorter version of this article appeared in the Jewish Chronicle. © Stoddard Martin

Rezső Kasztner: The Daring Rescue Of Hungarian Jews: A Survivor’s Account

NOTE
1. At the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College, London, 22 October 2009

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Till unsuitability us do part

STEVE MOXON finds much to ponder in a wide-ranging dissection of modern marriage

Mike Buchanan is surely onto something in his claim that we are not naturally made for lifelong marriage. Helen Fisher, the biological anthropologist, asserts that based on the statistics of divorce, actually we have evolved to stay together only as long as it takes to raise a first child through its infancy. Never mind the ‘seven-year-itch’, divorce rates peak in the fourth year of marriage. Any longer than four years is a bonus – or not, if you take account of the various personal testimonies and arguments Buchanan marshalls in his wide-ranging attack on the much-maligned but tenacious institution.

There is a gathering consensus that Helen Fisher is right, and Buchanan features her, together with evolutionary psychologists David Buss and Steven Pinker (and the Freudian upstart, Oliver James) on the subject. Entitled “Love, lust, sex, fantasy, gender rancour, romance fiction”, the chapter title gives you an indication of Buchanan’s interestingly restless mind. The reader is left with no doubt that two divorces have taken their toll on the author, who is sublimating his psychological angst in endeavouring to warn off hapless males everywhere not to make the same mistaken assumption that ‘marital’ and ‘bliss’ can be easily conjoined.

Choosing not to develop Fisher’s arguments – or to pose alternative explanations for the four-year-itch (which I will do later) – Buchanan does get to grips with other relevant science: that regarding the different natures of men and women, and personality theory; which get a chapter apiece. Regarding the former, he homes in on differences in attitudes to sex. He draws on the popular “Mars and Venus” books but proceeds to cite evolutionary psychologists via Simon Andreae (The Secrets of Love and Lust); and through John Gottman (Why

On personality, Buchanan’s focus is very much on extraversion-introversion. People don’t adapt well to marriage, he claims, whether they are introverts or extroverts: both types find marriage problematic, though most especially if they happen to be introverted, which is how he characterises himself. This chimes with the author’s earlier development of the idea that contemporary pronounced individualism is a major root of our dissatisfaction with marriage (citing Karen and Kenneth Dion’s contribution to the book, The New Psychology of Love). This is surely right; marriage being essentially an expression of how you represent yourselves as a couple. Whether you escape into yourself or out into the world; either would seem to potentially undermine the pair embedded in the group. In this context, the contention re intra- and extraversion is more convincing than as straight psychology. Discussion at this point is the most exhaustive in the book, with long passages from Jung (who originated the terms), and brought fully up-to-date with Daniel Nettle’s 2007 exposition on the “big five” personality dimensions: Personality: What Makes You the Way You Are – all of the fraught history in psychology of competing theories of personality factors now having settled into a consensus with firm statistical foundations regarding five largely independent axes.

It would be hard to quarrel with the overall conclusion that:

“It is likely that key personality factors govern individuals’ propensity to divorce. ... Is it reasonable to assert that we are now seeing something approaching the ‘natural’ rate of divorce in the developed world, at least among people not deterred from divorcing by cultural, financial, religious and other considerations? I believe so. And it follows, I believe, that the lower divorce rate in previous times stemmed more from a lack of opportunity to divorce ... rather than any higher degree of contentment in marriage.”

But what of the nature of the evolved human pair-bond? To return to the four-year-itch: there is a likely alternative understanding of marriage that sits very well with Mike Buchanan’s ire at the trap for men that it represents, but which he has not considered. We now know that provisioning by men is probably not the reason why the human pair-bond evolved; and given that historically there
were plenty of kin and communality to look after babies, childcare wasn't the reason either. The problem for women was and is that their attractiveness — their mate-value — falls off a cliff with age and the effects of childbirth, whereas the attractiveness of men (being very much tied to their social standing or status) often actually rises with age. Consequently, if a woman just sleeps around and conceives willy-nilly, then after she has weaned her first child (naturally, several years), the sort of man she can attract to be the father of a second child will be of a considerably lower genetic quality that the man with whom she conceived her first. This would greatly reduce female ‘fitness’ in the Darwinian sense. If, however, a woman can oblige the man who had fathered her first child to father her subsequent children, then the problem is solved. This seems to be why the human pair-bond evolved.

At typically four years, it is long enough for a woman to conceive, give birth to, lactate and wean a first child and then additionally to conceive a second. The bargain works for men too, because a woman looking for commitment is not as focused on male attractiveness. This means that for any given man, compared to the women who would agree to a one-night-stand, the women who would agree to sex only on condition of pair-bonding are more attractive: they have higher mate-value and therefore higher genetic quality. A man can make up for some lack in his own mate-value by showing honest willingness to stay the course as a husband despite the wife becoming less appealing. Self-evidently a woman can't trust a man's mere word here, but if the sexes share involuntary emotional behaviour that ties them together — what we call ‘love’ — then she can be assured. Very evidently this is how we have evolved to behave.

Love and marriage indeed go together like a horse and carriage. Unfortunately, as we know, after a while the horse often bolts, leaving the carriage in a ditch. On the other hand, many couples settle down into a post-romantic ‘liminal’ mutual regard that sustains the marriage well beyond what it was ‘designed’ for. Hence our former notion that marriage was “Till death us do part”, which survived when there was for most insufficient opportunity to divorce for the factors that would otherwise precipitate the rending of the union to assert themselves, just as Buchanan points out.

A willing trap for sure, but marriage is inherently temporary and notwithstanding inertial survival beyond its use-by date it is very much the delusion Buchanan outlines, and this begs very important questions that the author addresses successfully. There are strong sections in the book regarding the law, notably the unfairness of the courts in financial settlements upon divorce, with the predictable farce of prenuptial agreements belatedly being

Moxon
recognised when – surprise, surprise – unusually it is the wife who stands to lose financially.

Buchanan does not shy away from making radical recommendations: fewer should marry; introverts should be afforded personal space, and extroverts should be allowed occasional extra-marital sex; some prior distinct differences, like religious conviction, are best not discussed; and a couple should decide on one of them to be the main decision-maker. On this last, research reveals that this indeed is what usually happens implicitly.

It might be found off-putting that throughout the book there is frequent use of long passages from relevant texts, breaking up the narrative so that at times you have to check if it is the author making the argument or an authority he is citing. However, that such long extracts are employed increases confidence that nothing is being quoted out of context, and leads the reader on interesting tangents, some of which in any case turn up elsewhere in Buchanan’s exposition; so you get the benefit of the joined-up thinking of the cited authority and not just the author’s own progression. Where the quotes are personal testimony, this is very effectively used to strengthen sections. All in all, The Marriage Delusion, albeit sometimes untidy, has the power to provoke thought.

STEVE MOXON is the author of The Woman Racket (Imprint Academic, 2008)

Minority report on Lincoln, race and slavery

LESLIE JONES discovers that America’s “Great Emancipator” was also a white supremacist

In 1876 former slave Frederick Douglass averred, “Though Mr Lincoln shared the prejudices of his white fellow-countrymen against the negro... in his heart of hearts he loathed and hated slavery”. For Henry Louis Gates Jnr., Director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard, this statement encapsulates Lincoln’s complex position on abolitionism. In Lincoln on Race and Slavery, Professor Gates has made his selection of texts accordingly. He calls into question Lincoln’s reputation as the “Great Emancipator”.

In his First Inaugural Address, 4 March 1861, President Lincoln upheld the Fugitive Slave Act, causing Douglass to dub him, somewhat tendentiously, “an excellent slave hound”. He also endorsed an amendment to the Constitution (never ratified, in the event) that would have guaranteed slavery forever. Indeed, in an open letter to Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, published on 25 August 1862, Lincoln candidly admitted, “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it...”. Furthermore, Lincoln consistently supported colonisation, i.e. the voluntary emigration of African-Americans. According to Gideon Welles, Lincoln’s sometime Secretary of the Navy and his close confidant, he did so because he considered the majority of blacks “an ignorant and inferior race...” and as such inassimilable.

Note, however, that Gates disputes General Benjamin F. Butler’s claim that President Lincoln regarded the former black Union troops as a potential threat and wanted to “export” them. As Gates remarks, if this particular claim were true, it would be difficult to over-state the 16th President’s hypocrisy, since he officially supported the enfranchisement of educated blacks who had performed military service.
Why was Abraham Lincoln opposed to slavery at all or more accurately to the expansion of slavery, given the widespread support for white supremacy in the United States, not least in his adopted state of Illinois? A person of humble origins whose writings are replete with spelling errors, he espoused what Professor Gates calls a “free labour ideology” with a marked bias towards “the order loving citizens of the land of steady habits” (i.e. the North) as against “the pleasure hunting masters of Southern slaves”. Even the ant “who has toiled and dragged a crumb to his nest” was entitled to the fruits of its exertions – so by extension was a black labourer. In a memorable passage in his Second Inaugural, Lincoln portrayed the Civil War as a divine punishment for “...all the wealth piled by the bondman’s ... unrequited toil...”.

Lincoln agreed with Francis Wayland, author of Elements of Moral Science (1835) that justifying slavery on the basis of superior intellect or skin colour exposed even its defenders to the threat of enslavement for there will always be someone more intelligent or fairer skinned. And in a notable speech at Peoria, on 16 October 1854, he deduced that slavery was ultimately “founded in the selfishness of man’s nature” and opposition to it in “his [man’s] love of justice”, although in a contemporaneous speech he argued with startling inconsistency that Northerners would “act and feel” just as Southern slave owners “If we were situated as they are”.

In his abortive 1858 attempt to unseat incumbent Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln depicted slavery as a potential threat to the economic prosperity and political rights of free white labour. If only white men are entitled to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”, why not just rich white men – “it does not stop with the negro...” he maintained. He discerned a conspiracy to nationalise “The Peculiar Institution”; witness Douglas’s Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854 and the Dred Scott decision.
Historian Gary Wills states that Lincoln “showed little indignation at the degradation and cruelty of slavery”\textsuperscript{15}. Two selections from Lincoln’s private correspondence suggest that Wills is wrong. In a letter to Mary Speed dated 27 September 1841, Lincoln described a coffle of slaves which he had observed on a boat trip from Louisville to St Louis. The Negroes, he recalled, were “strung together precisely like so many fish upon a trot-line”. He noted the cheerful demeanour of the slaves, given their “distressing circumstances”, with children separated forever from their parents and wives from their husbands. “God”, he concluded, “tempers the wind to the shorn lamb”\textsuperscript{16}. Professor Gates thinks that this comforting contention bespeaks “a certain tendency to “other” the slaves”\textsuperscript{17}.

This experience evidently left an indelible impression. In a subsequent letter to Mary’s half brother, his close friend and slave owner Joshua F. Speed, dated 24 August 1855, Lincoln confided “That sight [of the shackled slaves] was a continual torment to me; and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio, or any other slave-border”\textsuperscript{18}.

However, Professor Gates emphasises “the complexity of the slavery question” for whites like Lincoln who “disdained slavery and the slave”\textsuperscript{19}. On the one hand, he upheld the inalienable right of each person to govern himself and to own the fruit of his labour. Anything less constituted despotism. Yet, on the other, he explicitly rejected the obvious corollary of self-government, to wit, equal political rights for all African Americans. Indeed, he challenged the notion that blacks and whites were equal at all “in many...respects”\textsuperscript{20}. Lincoln inferred that the majority of white people would not accept black political equality in the event of slavery’s ultimate extinction and added that “My own feelings will not admit of this....”\textsuperscript{21}

Colonization, the resettlement of blacks in Africa, therefore represented for Lincoln an ingenious way of reconciling white supremacy with the emancipation of the slaves. His political hero Henry Clay, who had negotiated the famous Missouri Compromise of 1820, was one of the founders of the American Colonization Society. Like many Southerners Clay considered expatriation a way of removing the free blacks, “a useless and pernicious, if not a dangerous portion of its population”\textsuperscript{22}.

Supporting colonisation also enabled Lincoln to counter the accusation that by backing eventual abolition, the Republican Party was \textit{ipso facto} encouraging miscegenation. In a speech at Springfield, Illinois, on 26 June 1857, Lincoln pointedly acknowledged the “natural disgust” that white people felt about “an indiscriminate amalgamation of the black and white races”\textsuperscript{23}.

As Gates remarks, on 14 August 1862, at the very moment that he was
considering issuing the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, President Lincoln tried to enlist the support of prominent members of the black community from the District of Columbia for the resettlement of blacks in the Chiriqui region of Central America, Congress having appropriated six million dollars for this purpose.

As Lincoln’s address to the assembled black delegation indicates, he remained at this juncture an unrepentant segregationist. In answer to the rhetorical question why people of African descent should be resettled, he declared, “We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any two other races. Whether it is right or wrong, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both...” 24. According to the aforementioned Gideon Welles, at heart, Lincoln was never “a political Abolitionist” i.e. a believer in equal suffrage and it was only “Events and war necessity” that compelled him to adopt a policy of emancipation at all 25. No wonder that when it came to enfranchising the blacks, Lincoln, in the words of one commentator, “...seemed to drag his feet, or, at best, lead from behind” 26. He also held out against the use of black troops, fearing that they would be worse than useless. Lincoln only gave way on black recruitment after reading George Livermore’s An Historical Research Respecting the Opinions of the Founders of the Republic on Negroes as Slaves, Citizens, and as Soldiers (1862) 27.

Henry Louis Gates Jnr. (famously arrested for breaking into his own house earlier this year) has developed into a proper scholar judging from this thoughtful volume, an outcome that readers of his The Signifying Monkey: a Theory of African-American Literary Criticism (1988) might not have anticipated. Once he was lost in that “gloomy wood” of error described by Dante, “Gone from the path direct” but he has found his way.

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* All texts taken from The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, edited by Roy P. Basler
NOTES
1. Douglass quoted by Gates, pxviii. As Gates concedes, on other occasions Douglass was much more positive about Lincoln, (“the black man’s President” etc.). See Gates introduction, p lxii
2. Historians now generally believe that Lincoln’s attitude towards black people evolved. Although Gates accepts this interpretation he highlights Lincoln’s “flaws”. Gates, introduction, p lxiii
4. AL to Horace Greeley, 22 August 1862, Gates, pp 243-244, at p 243
5. Welles quoted in Gates, introduction, p lvi
6. On General Butler’s claims, Gates, introduction, pp lii-lv
7. Concerning slavery, Lincoln’s consistent position before the Civil War was that “the Congress... has no power... to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different States”. See Protest in Illinois Legislature on Slavery, 3 March 1837, in Gates, p 2. He considered the agitation of the antislavery societies counterproductive, comparing slavery to a cancer that would cause the patient to bleed to death if cut out precipitately. On prevalent opinion in Illinois, see Richard Striner, Father Abraham: Lincoln’s Relentless Struggle to End Slavery, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, p 47 et passim
8. Lincoln, Address Before the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, 27 Jan 1838, in Gates, pp 4-8, at p 4
10. Second Inaugural Address, 4 March 1865, Gates, pp 311-312, at p 312
14. Vide Speech at Springfield Illinois, 17 July 1858, in Gates, pp 120-123. By the terms of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the people of the territories would decide whether to have slavery. In the Dred Scott decision of 1857, the Supreme Court declared that slavery could not be outlawed in the territories
16. AL to Mary Speed, 27 Sept. 1841, in Gates, p10
17. Gates, introduction p xxix
18. AL to Joshua F Speed, 24 Aug. 1855, in Gates, pp 79-83, at p 79
19. Gates, p1
20. Speech at Springfield, 17 July 1858, pp 120-123 at p 123
22. Gates., p 31
23. Gates, pp 93-102, at p 95
27. Gates, introduction, p xxxix
Mount Zion Spiritual Baptist Church in Kensal Green, a West Indian place of worship, does not set out to be an art gallery. Nevertheless, art is on display there, in the form of embroidered banners, brightly-coloured murals and mystical chalk “spirit writing” on the carpet. Here are some of the Songs of Zion, sung to the rhythm of the conga drum:

“Somebody watching me-O,
Somebody watching me!
Somebody watching me over yonder,
Somebody watching me!

“Go down in the valley and – talk to Jesus.
Go down in the valley and – talk to Jesus.
Go down in the valley and – talk to Jesus.
Jesus answer prayer!

“Real, real, Christ is real to me!
I love Him, ‘cos He give me the victoree!
Many people doubt Him,
But I can’t do without Him.
That is why I love Him so,
He so real to me!”

Well-known American spirituals are sung here, notably “Hush, Hush, Somebody’s Calling My Name”, “I’ll Fly Away” and “Every Time I Feel the Spirit”. I can remember snatches of wonderful songs – “Shake the tree, Man o’ God, shake the tree” and “Stone in the river got to move” – and some terrifying
ones – “Move, Satan, move” and “My companions, farewell – I won’t go with you to hell”.

One a year, in the summer, the church goes down to Eastbourne in a coach for sea-baptism. An avenue of flickering night lights, placed on the pavement, light the way of the candidates led blindfold from the church to the coach. At the other end, a hastily planted avenue of flags leads down the stony slope of beach to the sea.

Halfway along the beach, a pole with a cloth tied to it, billowing like a sail, seems of great importance. Candidates are led slowly around this pole three times before being taken into the sea. As they are each swished under the water three times before their blindfolds are removed, handbells ring triumphantly and everyone on the hired beach sings:

“Dip dem, Ja Ja Ja, dip dem!
Dip dem in the healing stream!
Dip dem, Ja Ja Ja, dip dem!
Dip dem in the Name of the Lord!”

Afterwards, more songs are sung, such as

“1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,
I am on my way to Heaven.
By the grace of God in me,
7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1”

and (tenderly)

“Do Lord, before you
Keep your child.
“Do Lord, before you
Keep your child.
There is hell and there is heaven,
Take your choice.
“Do Lord, before you
Keep your child.”

ROY KERRIDGE is a freelance writer and author. His latest novel is Triumphs of Communism (Custom Books, 2009).
Second Reading

Diary of a Nobody
George and Weedon Grossmith

In a recent book, Freedoms of Suburbia, former New Society editor Paul Barker notes ruefully that “To call anyone or anything ‘suburban’ is to utter a put-down, an anathema, a curse”. For many (especially on the left) the word evokes a lazy, unfair cliché of Victorian terraces or Edwardian semis with gravelled-over gardens inhabited by hundreds of thousands of narrow-minded, Conservative-voting, muzak-listening, Stepford Wife-marrying, car-polishing, B&Q-going Pooterish automata – a universe teeming with petty secrets and anxieties concealed behind never-still net curtains.

London’s suburbs took off after the 1860s, when phenomenal economic growth, a proliferating and newly prosperous population and the advent of railways combined to make huge swathes of Middlesex, Essex, Kent, Surrey and Hertfordshire suddenly developable. By the time Diary of a Nobody was first published, as extracts in Punch in 1892, then appearing as a separate book in 1894, London suburbia had a frenetic life of its own, and the suburban ‘type’ was already a stock comic character.

George (1847-1912) Grossmith who wrote the text and his brother Weedon (1853-1919) who contributed the delightful illustrations, being of that class and living in Canonbury, were amply qualified to convey the texture of contemporary lower middle class domesticity. In so doing, they coined a useful new adjective, and left behind them an English comedic classic.

The Diary opens with the arrival of Charles and Carrie Pooter at their newly-built house, “The Laurels”, Brickfield Terrace, Holloway. It is a great moment for them, and Charles decides it merits his commencing a journal. Anticipating scorn, he enquires in a spiky introductory paragraph:

“Why should I not publish my diary? I have often seen reminiscences of
people I have never even heard of, and I fail to see – because I do not happen to be a ‘Somebody’ – why my diary should not be interesting”.

So he begins to chronicle the tiniest incidents in detail – and they are tiny incidents. Each section starts with a summary of events, for example:

“Tradesmen and the scraper still troublesome. Gowing rather tiresome with his complaints of the paint. I make one of the best jokes of my life. Delights of gardening. Mr. Stillbrook, Gowing, Cummings, and I have a little misunderstanding. Sarah makes me look a fool before Cummings”

Pooter’s complex personality merits a larger sphere, and he is aware of this. Yet paradoxically he is accepting of his ‘place’, and is supremely at home in the jerry-built convenience of his little man’s empire in London brick.

He is pompous, precise, pedantic, proud, self-satisfied, thin-skinned, reserved, conventional, and concerned with appearances. The Diary is fated to be a record of Pooter’s low-intensity (and usually losing) battle to assert himself against a horde of Holloway headaches – a son more interested in the theatre than in holding down his bank job, careless tradesmen, cheeky delivery boys, forgetful friends, firework-throwing neighbours, indifferent editors, disreputable theatrical types and products – most memorably red paint – that simply won’t do what they are supposed to. He finds almost everything worrying, irritating or socially embarrassing –

“I went to town without a pocket-handkerchief. This is the second time I have done this during the last week”

“I was compelled to face a gang of roughs in a donkey-cart…who followed us for nearly a mile, bellowing, indulging in coarse jokes and laughter, to say nothing of occasionally pelting us with orange-peel”

“I would gladly give ten shillings to find out who sent me the insulting Christmas card…I find myself suspecting all my friends”

“I rather disapprove of his wearing a check suit on a Sunday”

But with all this pettiness and vanity, Pooter is a kind and honourable Nobody, devoted to his family and fond of any respectable pleasures, like country walks (in Hampstead!), dances, party games or intellectual discussions –

“Cummings read a most interesting article on the superiority of the bicycle to the horse”.

He is loyal to his friends; he works uncomplainingly, saves money and strives in his small way to improve society, whilst simultaneously standing up politely for his rights. The Diary of a Nobody is a perfectly judged and warmly witty portrait of a certain kind of English Everyman at an expansive time.

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WINTER LIGHT

In mid-December, mackerel skies in banks move swiftly, leaving patches of faint blue and filtered rays of sun. The year outflanks us, though we’d barely noticed. Its adieu, as autumn blows itself away, is brief — acknowledgment of passage, then a pause, before the solstice turning brings relief. One needs the wheel of seasons and their laws, which temper and illuminate the range of life. Fine mist along the bayou, rain, raw wind out of the west befit our strange hibernal mood of happiness and pain — as winter light affords long, private hours for thinkers — and for lovers growing old, whose colloquies among late-blooming flowers assay the keenest meanings of the cold.

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