BOOK REVIEWS

Michael Brander, *The Clan Gleneil.* Pp. vii + 99. The Gleneil Press, 1996; ISBN 0-9525330-2-2. *The Mark of Gleneil*. Pp. viii + 162. The Gleneil Press, 1998. ISBN 0 952533081

The Clan of the Gleneil describes the history of the Gleneil Clan from its beginnings in 1173 around the time of the Crusades to the last Chief of Gleneil who died in 1949. As well as a look at the rousing activities of the Clan in the past 800 years, Michael Brander (honorary 23rd Gleneil of Gleneil) also looks at the Clan's characteristics, their background, the land they lived on, their economic and natural history, and a more general look at Scottish dress and the way of life in the Highlands. Although not an immediately recognisable name, the Gleneils were a prominent force in Scottish history and, partly because of the small glen they lived in and therefore the need for the Clan to spread further afield, there are members of the Clan all over the globe.

From an almost complete set of diaries spanning the history of the Clan, most kept by the chiefs themselves, Brander has given us an insight into Scottish life throughout the last millennium: from the early chiefs and the crusades through the Hundred Years War (c. 1335-1445), the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, the introduction of sheep into the Highlands and the ensuing clearances in the nineteenth century, ending with the demise of the last chief in the twentieth.

The Mark of Gleneil tells the rousing story of the first of the Clan chiefs. The illegitimate son of the Scottish King, William the Lyon, he earns the titles 'Boarslayer' and 'Master of Gleneil' as a youngster before setting off to the Middle East on the Third Crusade. Here his father knights him after he makes a daring escape from crucifixion at the hands of the Saracens. As he escapes, he takes with him a young 'caliph' and with the ransom paid he is able to return home and establish a castle in the Glen of Gleneil, the home of the Gleneils for the next 800 years. He also takes with him a mark from the nail that pierced his left hand as he was nailed to the cross, a mark all chiefs have been born with since. A long-standing feud with a member of the neighbouring Clan, the Macdonnels, brings the story to a violent conclusion.

Anyone interested in history of any kind will find these books a fulfilling read, and both offer the reader a first hand account of life at the time in the Scottish Highlands. *The Mark of Gleneil* also gives a revealing account of Richard the Lionheart, or Richard 'Yea or Nay', during the Third Crusade, and what chivalry really meant to those at the time. There is also an audio cassette that accompanies these books, containing popular music from the Clan's past, including the lament 'Gleneil is over the water', written at the death of the last Gleneil.

Alistair Boyd

Ulinka Rublack, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany.* Pp. xii + 292. Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-19-820637-2

> A 14-year old girl stabbed her newborn daughter to death to keep the birth secret from her father. She wrote a letter to the child expressing her love and explaining her sense of helplessness. The girl, now 15, became pregnant while studying for her GCSEs. She wept at Nottingham Crown Court as she admitted infanticide. It was 'a tragedy for everybody', Judge Christopher Pitchers said yesterday. He decided not to impose a custodial sentence, saying it was a case that cried out for a judgment that was compassionate and would help the girl rebuild her life. The letter read: 'Please don't think of your mummy as a terrible person. I am not horrible. I love you. You should understand my position and helplessness. If you were here now, I would hold you. I would try and kiss your face . . .'. The judge made a three-year supervision order with a condition that she receive 90 days' counselling. He told her: 'I don't believe any thoughtful member of the public, knowing the facts of this case, could think you needed to be punished'. *Daily Telegraph* (8 December 1999).

This unnamed girl from Sutton-in-Ashfield, near Mansfield, living at the end of the twentieth century, would have slotted easily into the

world of which Ulinka Rublack writes. 'You should understand my position and helplessness' is a plea which might have come from the lips of any of the women, often young and unmarried, who were brought before the courts of south-west Germany during the period 1500-1700, accused of theft or adultery, incest or infanticide. In common with some of those women who lived four centuries earlier, the Nottinghamshire girl concealed her pregnancy with baggy clothes and denied it to herself as well as others. Giving birth alone in the kitchen while her father was asleep upstairs, she first embraced the child, then stabbed it, hiding the body ineffectually in a binliner beneath her bed. Rublack's chapter on infanticide is littered with little corpses, suffocated or stabbed, hastily wrapped and hidden but rarely buried. Ashamed, frightened, but above all unable to see another way out of their problems, there have always been mothers who would risk yet more punishment and opprobrium by killing their babies.

The cross-cultural similarities are striking, but so too are the differences. Whereas infanticide was seldom prosecuted in the medieval period, by the seventeenth century the authorities had adopted what might now be construed as a 'zero-tolerance' policy. Capital punishment was believed to be a deterrent to other women. And to render that deterrent more compelling, guilty mothers were sometimes tortured with hot pliers before being beheaded, their heads stuck up on posts afterwards for all to see. Such measures were a far cry from the 'compassionate' approach of Judge Christopher Pitchers. Another difference lay in the support made available to the girl at the end of the twentieth century: not just the fact that she was represented by the foremost women's rights lawyer in the country, Helena Kennedy Q.C., but also that she was provided with counselling to help her 'rebuild her life'. If the child had lived, social workers and child benefit would have played their part. By contrast, the seventeenth-century authorities who cracked down on infanticide, exhorting masters and mistresses to police the bodies of young females in their midst, offered little assistance. A maidservant impregnated by a passing soldier would have to shift for herself. Mature women in the community who suspected an illegitimate pregnancy would warn such a girl that she would have her head cut off if she killed the child. Some were contemptuous of those who had got into trouble; others offered temporary support. But even the most sympathetic friends and relatives could do little to help in the long-term, since a single woman without burgher rights could expect to be banished upon the birth of her child.

Reading the report of the Nottinghamshire case alongside the tales of beheadings, drownings, and mutilations which form an unavoidable part of Rublack's account, one might momentarily feel glad to be living in a 'civilized' and 'compassionate' age (suppressing, of course, all thought of the 'uncivilized' events which characterise the history of our own time). Both alien and repugnant to us is the treatment of Katharina Hertz, who was placed in the pillory in Memmingen in 1609. Her crime had been to steal cloth, belts and caps. Before being banished from her neighbourhood, the hangman cut off both her ears. Sickening too is Margaretha Müller's story: forced to have sex with her father as a young girl, she ceased to resist his advances; her pregnancy was taken as evidence of her complicity – of her pleasure, in fact – and she was drowned for committing incest and adultery. While mutilations and brandings became increasingly uncommon during the period of this study, Rublack states that 'there was no linear development towards more "humane" punishments'. On the contrary, excluding executions for witchcraft, the use of the death penalty against women rose in many places during the seventeenth century.

Clearly, it is not enough merely to articulate our disgust at the barbaric treatment of female criminals at the hands of early modern law courts. We need to try to understand why early modern people were fined for drunkenness and imprisoned for premarital sex, or why they could be executed for recurrent adultery. In analysing the social, cultural and political factors which determined the understanding and perception of transgression, Rublack's relativism is rigorous and challenging. The reader is constantly asked to consider why certain price-tags were affixed to certain crimes. Throughout the book, it is demonstrated again and again that there is nothing inevitable, natural, or obvious about such apportionings. Why, for example, was infanticide condemned as the loss of a God-given soul, when such claims were curiously absent from contemporary manslaughter cases? And why were elites so

concerned to prosecute petty thefts? As Rublack speculates: if just one Württemberg treasurer had embezzled 20,000 florins and filched silver ware worth 2000 florins, his ill-gotten gains would have exceeded the value of all the goods taken by Württemberg thieves across two centuries.

At one level, these questions find a simple answer: the crimes which most exercised the authorities were those which threatened the social order. And the vision of order shared by the ruling elites of seventeenth-century Germany demanded an increasing distance between themselves and what political writers unselfconsciously called 'the rude multitude' or 'the stupid lot'. So when a maidservant was caught stealing feathers from her master's quilt, her actions represented not just a threat to property but also a threat to order and hierarchy. Superimposed upon this social hierarchy was an increasingly rigid ideology of gender, which opened yet another gulf, this time between the sexes. Whereas men were thought to embody culture, and were held to be rational and civilised, women embodied nature, and were cast as desirous and uncontrolled. The consequences of this ideology may be seen repeatedly in the unequal punishment of adulterers, and in the willingness of the courts to hold women responsible for rape and incest. One of the achievements of this book is to show how ideological shifts played out at the highest levels of society could have real consequences for the common woman.

But complications crowd into the picture. Prosecution rates varied from place to place, and their diversity cannot be accounted for by a neat Protestant/Catholic dichotomy. Punishments encoded in acts of law were not handed out automatically; they were contested and negotiated by the community. And, in an age of expanding criminal legislation but primitive policing, authorities relied on the co-operation of local networks to bring cases to courts. Often the law was only used as a last resort. In the case of property crimes, for instance, most people would seek to catch the thief and retrieve their goods rather than going through the laborious mechanisms of the courts. Magical means of redress and retribution might also seem more trustworthy than officialdom. Weighing all these factors in the balance, Rublack concludes that prosecution patterns were 'an expression of diverse interplays of socio-economic, administrative, political, institutional, and confessional structures, and of change which was often localised and never linear'.

If this reviewer has tried to summarise this fine book within the framework of a 'top-down' narrative, Ulinka Rublack is probably the last person who would do so. First and foremost, this is a book which reconstructs the experiences of the women who were brought to trial in early modern Germany. Their criminal activities occupied only a part of their lives. And while the trials obviously focused on transgressions, the surviving records reveal much more besides. They tell us, for example, of how maidservants struggled to scrape together a dowry by honest or dishonest means, of how men and women attempted to practise birth control, of generational tensions between unmarried women and established matrons, or of the fear which accompanied a lack of privacy in the early modern home. Rublack teases such details out of the records with skill and sensitivity, bringing a keen sense of empathy to every fragment of evidence. The resulting patchwork presents a vivid and intimate picture of women's lives in early modern Germany.

Mary Laven

David Midgley, *Writing Weimar: critical realism in German literature, 1918-33*. Pp. vi + 390. Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-19-815179-9

The Weimar Republic has always carried a heavy freight of symbolism. The First World War, so President Woodrow Wilson famously proclaimed, was intended by the victors to 'make the world safe for democracy'. The republic that was set up in Germany was supposed to live up to this high claim, repudiating the bad old days of the Kaiser, autocratic government and the dominance of the Prussian military establishment. And with political liberalisation came corresponding cultural emancipation from the repressive weight of traditional values. The message seemed clear: under Weimar, anything goes! This is the world of satirical modern artists like George Grosz and Otto Dix, with

their savage satires on the pillars of bourgeois society; the world of 'Dada', with its anarchic repudiation of artistic convention; the world of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, with the rhythms of *The Threepenny Opera* tinkling down the years, shocking and mocking. Come to the cabaret, old chum!

It's a story that ends in tears, of course, with the advent of Hitler. The version that we have long been given rolls up political and cultural developments into a single, stylised paradigm shift: all decadence and democracy under Weimar, all realism and repression under the Nazis. Now David Midgley comes along with an important and persuasive book that shows us that things are not so simple. This is a scholarly study of the literature of the Weimar period, with chapters on poetry and theatre, but mainly devoted to an examination of the novels of the period, with their experiments in representation, their pervasive air of disillusionment, their preoccupation with the First World War, their reflection of the tension between urban and rural life, and their depiction of technology. These are big themes, resting on a command of a vast German literature, both primary and secondary, which this reviewer is not competent to criticise. But anyone who comes to this book ready to learn will come away impressed by the way that Midgley makes his own learning so accessible.

This is not an easy subject and the conclusions are by no means simple. One obvious reason is that unpacking the term 'Neue Sachlichkeit' is central to Midgley's treatment, since one of his aims is to convey, in English, a more subtle rendering of a protean German expression, which is not easy to translate anyway, and which has become a term of art, invested over the years with keenly disputed ideological overtones. For some previous scholars, the 'new sobriety' captured the sense of a movement that self-consciously rejected the excesses of Expressionism in the Weimar period – and thus created an aesthetic that was to be more amenable to the Nazi regime. Midgley shows us that this simple account will not do. He does so, not by redefining the term differently at the outset, but by showing us that there was an ongoing debate over 'Neue Sachlichkeit' at the time. Thus his method, of which an historian can readily approve, is to recover the senses in which the term was used

at the time. When Bertolt Brecht said that ''Neue Sachlichkeit' is reactionary', he had his own reasons for doing so. Midgley, however, also shows us writers who were by no means reactionary adopting this idiom as their way of maintaining an objectivity of outlook upon the post-war world.

Words, after all, are weapons, and watching how they are used to win arguments can tell us something about them that the dictionary will rarely disclose. Midgley's achievement is to make Weimar more complicated, but in interesting ways. Far from throwing the ideas out, he is bringing them back, in the full verisimilitude of their proper context, to explain to us the literary and cultural contests within Weimar. Nor does he allow us to suppose that the catsastrophic change of political regime in 1933 signalled an equally dramatic cultural transformation. It is safe to say that no reader of this book will go away content with the cabaret stereotypes of this era.

Peter Clarke

Joseph MacDowall, *On Floating Ice – Two Years on an Antarctic Ice-shelf South of 75°S*. Pp. 314. The Pentland Press Ltd, 1999. ISBN: 1-85821-720-2

'Antarctica is a very healthy place to live.' Lovers of temperate climes may initially beg to differ with Joseph MacDowall's assertion of life at 75°S at Halley Bay, Antarctica where the mean annual temperature is an invigorating 18.5° below zero. However, on reading his account of the Royal Society expedition to Halley Bay during the International Geophysical Year, 1957-58, one can only conclude that life was extremely healthy in both physical, and perhaps more amazingly, mental aspects.

On Floating Ice is a personal view of the preparation and execution of an extraordinary two year expedition to the Antarctic to undertake scientific research. The author was part of the 21-strong party which left the UK in November 1956 and spent 24 months living on an ice-shelf at Halley Bay. MacDowall was in charge of the Meteorological and

Geomagnetic Group in the first year and took over as expedition leader in 1958.

The expedition was charged with undertaking a broad spectrum of scientific studies covering meteorological, geomagnetic, auroral, ionospheric, radio astronomy, glaciological, seismological and physiological measurements, plus nuclear emulsion plate experiments. This was an extraordinary number of scientific arenas to be investigating given the small size of the team and throughout the book, the reader is constantly being reminded that the field crew had to be both jack and master of all trades. During their time on the ice, the scientists were repeatedly confronted with problems requiring innovative solutions, typically because the equipment was simply not designed to work at –40°C in 100 km. per hr. winds, but also because they were often using unfamiliar equipment whose operation was recognised as a black art by the experts! The commitment of the scientists to obtain data in extreme conditions was remarkable and frequently lead to superficial frostbite. However, the rewards were a ground breaking data set (amounting to ten tons of scientific records – thank goodness for modern data loggers) on a wide range of topics including assessments of potential global warming, proof that Antarctica was indeed a continent and not an ocean basin like the North polar region and perhaps, most fascinatingly, observations which were amongst the first to recognise ozone depletion in that region.

Outwith the science, the experience of working in such a pristine environment clearly had a great impact on the scientists. Numerous references are made to the stunning beauty of the auroral displays, magnificent sunsets, brilliant night skies and the wonder of the Emperor Penguin rookery. After reading several more recent tales of exploration and physical undertaking in the Antarctic, it was a relief to be reminded that the continent can be recognised as a place of awesome beauty, not simply an environment to be tamed.

An amusing historical perspective is provided by some of the more traditional aspects of the expedition. The party composed a birthday message for Her Majesty the Queen and beamed it to London, the

Union flag was hoisted at the base, best suits were worn for various occasions including the Christmas dinner which was preceded by a gathering at noon to hear the Queen's Christmas Message, a religious service was held on Sunday mornings 'after which a bottle of gin was available to share' and the successful launch of the 1000th atmospheric balloon was 'celebrated in the evening by a showing of the film *Dam Busters* and the special issue of a crate of beer'. These observations clearly date the research to another era (although I wish some of them could be resurrected for periods of lengthy field research).

Overall, after reading MacDowall's book, one is left with the impression of a group of extremely dedicated men who successfully carried out an arduous scientific programme. In addition to their scientific activities, they had to play the role of nurse, dentist, psychologist or doctor in a place where you wait a year for your mail, have a bath every two months and roll your shirt sleeves up on a warm day at –7°C. Given such conditions, I come back to the proposition that Antarctica is a very healthy place to live. It may not have many bacteria but it takes a special type of person to survive in such an environment for two years. The group at Halley Base contributed one set of data for the International Geophysical Year whose outcome was summarised by the US congress in 1973 as 'the single most significant peacetime activity of mankind since the Renaissance and the Copernican revolution'. Whilst this may be open to debate, I am sure the experiences of the Royal Society expedition members at Halley Bay profoundly changed their view of the world.

Pete Nienow

BOOK REVIEWS

Victoria Best, *Critical Subjectivities. Identity and Narrative in the Work of Colette and Marguerite Duras*. Pp. 243. Peter Lang, 2000.
ISBN 3-906763-89-7

Colette and Duras represent, as it were, two contrasting branches of French women's writing in the twentieth century. Colette had already achieved fame and notoriety in the *belle époque* before 1914 as an author who explored the full gamut of sexual experience in her life as well as in her novels, where she displayed a singular talent for evoking the physical sensations of emotionality, whether poignant or erotic. Only in the last decade before her death in 1954 was Colette accorded full respect as a major literary figure. Duras is a more self-evidently serious and sombre author, who has long been regarded as the leading French woman writer of the second half of the twentieth century. Her characteristic themes are frustration and unsatisfied longing, and the hallmarks of her narratives are silences, hesitations, the weight of what is left unsaid, and the sheer elusiveness of the significance of emotional experience. Complementing each other as they do, these two authors have attracted a great deal of interest in recent years from critics concerned to identify what may be peculiarly characteristic of women's writing, and of women's perspectives on life. Victoria Best's book, which is a refined and developed version of her doctoral dissertation, engages both with the salient themes of Colette and Duras and with the interpretations and theoretical constructs of these critics, and it does so in an unfailingly lively, perspicuous and thought-provoking way.

At the heart of Best's inquiry is the sense of a troubled relationship between personal identity and sexuality. The adolescent awakening depicted by Colette in *Le Blé en herbe* (1923) is an experience of mysterious interactions between notions of familiarity, unfamiliar bodily impulses, and a cultural environment which contextualises the unfamiliar in ways which can be at once protective and intrusive. Anne Desbaresdes, the protagonist of Duras' *Moderato cantabile* (1958), veers between the sexually sterile domain of her bourgeois home and the

sexually charged environment of the local harbour, and the sense of social identity she experiences in either place interacts in complex and elusive ways with her sense of self as it develops in the course of her story. The female characters depicted by either author are perceived – perceive themselves – as multiple, dynamic, and fragmented personalities. They may exhibit a joyously polymorphous rehearsal of gender roles in Colette, or a darkly inchoate failure to communicate in Duras, but in either case the promptings of the body and the stirrings of desire that are manifest in the narrative texts remain resistant to clearcut psychologising categories.

In order to address the puzzles presented in these texts, Best draws on the full range of theoretical authors we have come to expect to see deployed for such purposes: Freud and Lacan of course, Foucault on the history of sexuality, Julia Kristeva and Catherine Belsey on the disposition of desire, and Judith Butler on the enactment of gender identity as 'performance'. It is from these theorists that Best derives the concepts which structure her chapters, exploring in turn the aspects of performativity and power in gender relations, the relation of the act of writing to bodily desire, the relation of love to narcissism and solipsism, and the depiction of transgressive eroticism. But she always deploys the theories with a keen awareness of where they become dogmatic and limiting. She uses the theoretical discourse judiciously in order to elucidate the fictional texts, and more tellingly, she shows how Colette and Duras explore emotional experiences at a level of subtlety and complexity which surpasses the intellectual compass of the theorists.

The theme to which she pays closest attention is the relationship between mother and daughter. The mother as portrayed by Duras is often a brooding presence who lingers in a realm of anger, hysteria and despair. Sido, the much celebrated mother-figure in Colette, is by contrast beneficent, free-spirited, generous; but she too appears capable of exercising a domineering power over the daughter's most intimate experiences. Best's route to an understanding of the phenomena involved here follows Kristeva's development of psychoanalytical thought, relating the play of desire between mother and daughter to the experience of bonding in infancy and to the challenge posed to that

bond by the agency of the father. In her short story 'Le Tendron' (1943), Colette shows us a mother intervening in her daughter's adolescent development in a manner which seems designed to forestall the daughter's bonding with a father-figure. Duras, in *Un Barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950), shows us a sort of competition for desire between mother and daughter in which renunciation by the one seems to be a precondition for the other's fulfilment – and the daughter achieves a displaced realisation of her desire for her mother through a sexual relationship with a man. More significantly still in the context of either author's career, self-realisation in both cases takes place through the act of writing, as if the command of linguistic expression were the necessary medium in which separation from the mother, and thus the process of individuation, takes place. This, it seems, is why linguistic expression also necessarily becomes an arena of contest between mother and daughter in the works of Colette and Duras.

Critical Subjectivities is a quite densely argued book which presupposes a degree of familiarity with both the fictional writing under discussion and the theoretical issues it raises. But these issues themselves are invariably presented, analysed and challenged with the lucidity of someone who has mastered their intricacies and made a measured assessment of their implications. Even readers unfamiliar with the works of Colette and Duras will be able to appreciate why this book has been hailed as an impressive contribution to current critical debates about French women's writing.

David Midgley

Guy Deutscher, *Syntactic change in Akkadian: the evolution of sentential complementation*, OUP 2000. Pp.xv + 204. ISBN 0-19-829988-5

This is a book with something for everyone. And, in sharp contrast with all too many books that sport 'big' titles but deliver little, this one offers rather more than you would imagine from a quick glance at the nine rather low-key words on the bottom half of its dustcover. First and foremost, it is clearly and elegantly written, making many central

aspects of a language that is way off the beaten track for most linguists fully accessible for the first time. Secondly, it ties detailed analyses of specific phenomena to general issues in historical and theoretical linguistics, and is an object lesson in how apparently 'arcane' data, hitherto familiar to (some) Semitic specialists but not to most historical linguists, can, when reinterpreted in a linguistically sophisticated way, throw light on many current controversies (or as often cast them in a wholly new light). It has long been an obstacle to progress in historical linguistics that philological treatments of ancient and medieval languages, which should be a source of accurate information for general linguists with wider theoretical interests, tend to be written specifically for those trained in the traditional, and often idiosyncratic, conventions of a particular field. Things are easily misunderstood, and frequently are, with inaccuracies and half-truths appearing in the linguistic literature as 'data', and theories built on such 'facts' showing an unsurprisingly rapid rate of submergence. The way forward is for historical linguists first to master their philological brief(s), and no one reading this book could doubt that its author has done so, bringing his obvious expertise vividly to life for a wider linguistic audience.

The Introduction outlines the scope and purpose of the book (which is a revision of the author's PhD dissertation), while the next two chapters set the scene for the meticulously detailed analyses presented in Part II ('structural history') and Part III ('functional history'). Akkadian is the earliest Semitic language to be attested, with a richly documented history spanning some 2,000 years from the middle of the third millennium to the middle of the first millennium BC – the dominant language of Mesopotamia, the vehicle of Assyrian and Babylonian civilisation, and the lingua franca of the Near East. Why then do we need to look at sentential complementation in this language, and what is the interest and importance of analysing change in this domain? Guy Deutscher uses the term specifically to refer to subordinate finite clauses introduced by words analogous to English 'that' and appearing after verbs of speaking, thinking, perceiving, knowing, complaining etc. These are distinguished from functionally parallel cases of subordination with infinitives, and from other types of clause linkage, such as simple juxtaposition (parataxis) or the use of co-ordinating

conjunctions, which may also be used to perform a similar role. The crucial importance of the topic is that not all languages have such complements, and some, like Akkadian, have a long enough history to allow their introduction and development to be traced in detail. Central mechanisms of language evolution are thus revealed: for example, a contextually conditioned shift from causal to factive meaning in certain conjunctions (cf. 'complain because'/'complain that'), or the development of a marker of the introduction of direct speech (meaning something like 'saying') into a true subordinating conjunction (meaning 'that'), processes associated with semantic 'bleaching' and 'grammaticalisation', and in the latter case also with 'deictic shift' (cf. 'he answered saying: "I will . . ."'/'he answered that he would . . .'). Rather more controversially, it is also claimed that finite complementation, far from being a necessary property of human language, is something that emerges in response to the more complex communicative needs that result from state formation and the development of legal systems and other manifestations of higher-level social organisation requiring the full and accurate reporting of complex events. This issue is taken up and developed in Part IV ('complementation as an adaptive process').

However well written and well argued a book may be, it is unlikely to meet with unqualified approval from all experts in a given field, particularly if it deals with what are widely seen to be core theoretical issues characterised by real empirical and conceptual complexity and a certain measure of abstraction from the superficially self-evident. I suspect, however, that few will want (or be qualified) to argue about more than details when it comes to the broad thrust of the account of the major structural and functional changes dealt with here, and most will be only too pleased to see clear and coherent explanations offered for developments that have all too often been taken for granted without proper examination of the underlying assumptions. (For example, how exactly do relative or causal clauses, both proposed from time to time as 'sources' for finite complementation, and both essentially optional, turn into obligatory complement clauses that are often characterised as sentential subjects and objects? The answers provided are sometimes surprising, and sometimes challenge the terms in which such questions are traditionally put). If there is an area where at least some critics will

want to take issue, it will most probably be the account of the motivation for the introduction and development of finite complementation. This is where the author's (otherwise quite subliminally) less than positive attitude to 'generativist' assumptions about language acquisition and change (involving broadly nativist, universalist, and non-functional explanations) most obviously comes to the fore, and where very difficult, and probably still insufficiently elaborated, notions of 'relevance' and 'complexity' (both linguistic and social) are used to play a pivotal role in his own 'adaptive' explanation. But the extent to which this particular treatment brings out the opposition will itself be a measure of the inherent value of this book in raising key questions of causation and evolution from a novel perspective, and in challenging a number of current orthodoxies on the way.

I should perhaps add finally that the book is beautifully produced and is virtually free of typographical and other minor errors. It has a glossary of technical terms, and indexes of subjects and references to quoted texts (mainly personal letters, and it is reassuring here to see that the core preoccupations of the human race have changed rather little over the millennia), together with a comprehensive and up-to-date bibliography dealing with both the descriptive/philological and the theoretical/historical literature. It is not often that a PhD thesis makes such a good book, and not at all often that a first book is such a good one. There is a great deal here for any historical linguist to learn from and to think about.

Geoffrey Horrocks

Michael Brander, *Brander's Original Guide to Scotch Whisky*, The Gleneil Press (Completely revised edition, 2000). Pp.x + 193.
ISBN 0-9525330-7-3

Keen students of such an agreeable topic as whisky will have noticed that there is no shortage of books on the subject. Particularly numerous are summaries and directories of the various malts with notes regarding the salient points of each distillery and its products.

In part, Michael Brander's book is of this type. However, that is not to detract from its value. I should first point out that Brander has in his favour considerable experience; his first book about whisky was published in 1974 and since then his works on the subject have undergone numerous reprintings and editions, culminating in this "Brander's original guide" published by the Gleneil press in 2000. Moreover, the reader is given the benefit of the author's accumulated experience as this book gathers together all the essential elements of the previous works. As such, it is able to offer a considerable amount.

Brander's book is rather more than just a directory of Malt Whiskies (although this does form a large part of the book). He begins with a most interesting account of the history of Scotch Whisky from its earliest origins as a Scottish form of aqua vitae, made with Malted Barley rather than wine, through the ravages of battles with both the powerful Gin distillers of England and with successive heavy taxation imposed by the Government. Having discussed the changing fortunes of the industry right up to the present day, including the good news of several independent distilleries which have emerged within the last few years, Brander describes the factors affecting the qualities of the product today as well as such divisive issues as how, and with what, it should be drunk.

Wisely, before embarking on his directory of Malt Whiskies, he suggests that such matters are points purely of taste as is the choice of which whisky is to be consumed. Nevertheless, his notes on each Malt will prove very useful to the uninitiated seeking a toehold amongst the otherwise daunting variety available. The book concludes with several short appendices including a list of specialist Whisky suppliers; (extremely useful as many Malts are not widely available), a glossary of terms and an almanac of Distilling dates.

The book will not only prove a very useful introduction to the subject but also contains much which, I feel sure, will interest those who have already studied it. Moreover, its modest price should not preclude one from buying enough of the whisky itself.

Aaron Burchell

Michael and Elspeth King, *The Great Rift*, Arco Books, Cambridge, 2000. Pp iv + 158pp. ISBN 0-9539290-0-0

Michael King has spent almost all his working life as a surgeon in Africa. After a short spell in Swaziland, he moved with his wife Elspeth to Blantyre in Southern Malawi, where for 18 years he was Chief Government Surgeon, while she lectured at the Polytechnic. Even now they return from England to the northern shores of Lake Malawi twice a year, thus keeping in touch with Malawi's new democratic era.

'The Great Rift' is a joint account of their African experiences. The title is a reference to the rift valley system which includes both Lake Malawi itself and its southern extension, the Lower Shire basin. As such, it allows us to hear the post-colonial reminiscences of one expatriate family, deeply appreciative of their African surroundings, yet surviving as Europeans with, for example, a daily dose of baroque chamber music!

More significantly - and this is the importance of the book - the title refers to the rift between rich nations and the poor; or more precisely to what the Kings call 'the gap of understanding'. There is no doubt that today there is much concern for the plight of poor countries; the success of the debt-remission campaign Jubilee 2000 (actually the brain-child of a former British High Commissioner to Malawi) well illustrates the public mood in Western countries. But first world idealism and third world realities can often remain far apart. Dr King illustrates again and again how inappropriate have been many of the projects and priorities of, for example, the World Health Organisation. The cost of workshops, seminars and per diem allowances is cited as one obvious waste of money. Another is the installation of specialist equipment that cannot be maintained. Bureaucratic insensitivity to local conditions, such as the shortage of nursing staff, is a constant complaint - affecting in particular the care of HIV-patients. (May I add my own indignation at the recent attempt of the British government to lure the few Malawian nurses we have to work in the NHS.)

The catalogue of unwanted and unforeseen outcomes could easily be extended to other fields of activity. Thus, the swamping of Malawi by second-hand clothes, contributed by a well-meaning public, has decimated the local cotton industry. 'Development' is a word used very

little by seasoned workers here; health provision, education, sustainable agriculture are in decline, while corruption and crime are the growth industries. Meanwhile, aid continues to pour into the country.

It would be easy to dismiss this book as a lightweight contribution to the debate: anecdotal, rather than scholarly in style. Yet the vast personal experience it draws upon and the passion born of that experience demand the serious attention of anyone who cares for the future of the Malawian people. It is to be hoped too that anyone who engages in international policy-making will have access to similar first-hand reports from whatever countries are under discussion. (This book would also make invaluable reading for any members of the College hoping to spend time in Africa: AIDS, polygamy, witchcraft, initiation rituals and political intimidation are among the many topics covered.)

The Kings' central thesis is a simple one: all measures to improve health and therefore to increase life-expectancy (now less than 40 years in Malawi) will fail among a land-hungry population if no attention is given to birth control. A growing population, even after AIDS has done its worst, will degrade the environment even further; in turn this will result in much greater poverty-related sickness and disease. 'The acceptable, safe response to population growth from international aid is to talk about female empowerment and education and poverty alleviation. It is said (by UNICEF) that if people see their children live, they will have fewer. Many of these approaches have yet to work in Africa, and in any case it will take too long.'

Thus they challenge current orthodoxy. Inevitably they take on the Vatican as well, and in their advocacy of safer abortion run up against the Bush administration. Are they then to be termed 'idealists' themselves? Some may think that, while their observations on health, nutrition and demography are irrefutable, their case is incomplete without the support of agronomists and other professionals. Their limited sympathy with traditional African beliefs may mask from them too the political hazards of attempting a Chinese solution to Malawi's problems!

During Dr Banda's regime Elspeth King managed to sow many seeds of dissent among her students. Their secret reports to her are an intriguing

aspect of the book. Now 'The Great Rift' itself is a dissenting report to the international donor community, a heart-felt plea on behalf of the voiceless recipients.

Rodney Schofield
Zomba, Malawi

Jim Charles, *Out of the Fiery Furnace*, IOM Communications Ltd., London, 2000. Pp 153. ISBN: 1 86125 106 8

From the Bronze Age to the present day, metallurgy has played a central role in the production of artefacts, both utilitarian and artistic. In these memoirs of his professional life, Jim Charles provides a wide-ranging tour, from an autobiographical perspective, of the subject which has fascinated him for almost 60 years. Both the title of the book, and the splendid cover illustration of an open-hearth furnace, show how his undergraduate years at the Royal School of Mines (now part of Imperial College) have inspired him with an enduring passion for pyrometallurgy, the study and practice of thermal processes for the extraction and working of metals.

The education of a metallurgist in the 1940s contained elements of apprenticeship as well as scientific rigour, with a strong emphasis on practical experience. Images are vividly drawn of an undergraduate class provided with a ton of gold ore from which to extract the metal; of sampling from an open cyanide bath with a jam jar on a string; and of dodging a spray of molten steel while working as a vacation student in a steelworks. The course culminated not only in theory papers but also in two four-day (sic) practical examinations.

Three years working on diverse projects in the research department of J. Stone and Co., a major non-ferrous foundry, were followed by a decade with the British Oxygen Company, where Charles was involved in pioneering research in oxygen cutting and the use of oxygen in steelmaking. Headhunted by an astute Head of Department at Cambridge, he moved in 1960 to the Department of Metallurgy and to a Fellowship at St John's, where he was also Junior Bursar (the last part-

time holder of this office) from 1963 to 1967. As Director of Studies for Natural Sciences and supervisor in metallurgy, he guided and taught many generations of Johnians until his retirement in 1990.

Reading the accounts of the research projects which Jim Charles has supervised in Cambridge, which embrace a remarkably wide scope of ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, one is struck by the diversity of his interests and expertise, and by how soundly his education both at the Royal School of Mines and in his industrial career prepared him for the intellectual independence of his subsequent activities in Cambridge. The extra stimulus to research provided by industrial consultancies is also abundantly clear.

Charles's interests and background in metallurgical processes provided a fertile seedbed for the development of his work in archaeometallurgy, which originated in 1965 from a chance conversation with Colin Renfrew over dinner at St John's and grew into a major component of his academic career. The origins of copper smelting in the Balkans in the fourth century BC, the use of silver decoration by the Minoans in 1500 BC and a practical method for separating carbonized seeds from soil are just some of the many archaeological topics to which he has applied the specialised knowledge of a process metallurgist.

Memoirs provide a good excuse for nostalgia, and there are certainly events here which are viewed, if not through rose-tinted spectacles, then at least through no. 5 welding goggles. There is also much serious science and history, and Charles makes thoughtful comments on the future of both the profession and the academic discipline of metallurgy. There is technical detail in this book; for those who have forgotten, or never knew, the difference between a peritectic and a eutectic there are few concessions. But there is also humour, some memorable anecdotes (one gem being the account of a court case, with Charles as an expert witness, in which the Hindu god Siva was a plaintiff) and a warm humanity in accounts of former colleagues and research students. It will be of great interest to any metallurgist, and especially so if they have a connection with Cambridge or the Royal School of Mines. To any Johnian metallurgist who knows Jim Charles, it will be a delight.

Ian Hutchings

BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Hinde, *Why Good is Good: the Sources of Morality.* Pp xiv + 241. Routledge, 2002. ISBN 0-415-27752-3 (hardback), 0-415-27753-1 (paperback).

In this book (dedicated to the Fellowship of St John's College, Cambridge) Robert Hinde seeks to lay out what science can tell us about morality. His concern is with how having a moral system comes about, not with what moral system we should have. But he does think that the scientific perspective can enable us to understand ourselves better and can provide some help when we have to confront moral conflict and morally problematic situations.

Starting with Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene*, there have been in recent years many books presenting the findings of evolutionary biology and debating their implications for ethical issues. Hinde's book differs from these in ranging more widely in the kinds of behaviour it considers. He interprets 'morality' to mean the whole package of thoughts, rules and attitudes which underpin judgements about what people ought to do and what character traits they should have. A morality thus includes views about gender roles, social hierarchies, self development and individual rights, as well as about altruism. And Hinde has interesting things to say about all these things. Hinde's book also differs from previous ones in the range of research he calls on. He is concerned not only with the very general predispositions which selection might have favoured but also with the variety of actual psychological structures and social institutions in which these predispositions find expression. So psychology and anthropology are as much part of the story as evolutionary biology.

The broad outline which emerges from this synoptic survey is as follows. There is such a thing as human nature, which is the joint upshot of biological givens and near-universal environmental factors. Included in human nature are pan-cultural propensities for the development of both selfishly assertive behaviour and pro-social behaviour. Evolutionary biology leads us to expect these propensities and

anthropology is consistent with this expectation. But there is no one 'natural' social organisation any more than there is one natural language. There can be many liveable societies which allow expression to basic human dispositions, each offering distinctive rewards and drawback for its members. Patterns of approval or disapproval of others' behaviour in early groups of humans later found verbal expression and were codified in moral systems. But these are not static structures. An individual growing up in a society draws a central part of his or her sense of identity from internalising its attitudes, categories and standards; changing these as an adult, like learning another language, is a seriously difficult matter. Nevertheless each of us is engaged, more or less actively, in warping, stretching or embroidering the fabric of our moral system, as we confront new situations and choices.

What does this story suggest about how we might approach problematic moral situations? Legislators and reformers have long known that it is difficult to change behaviour; attempts will only work if they go with the grain of human nature. Hinde's book gives us some more detailed idea of what that grain might be. Another fact it makes apparent is the variety of goods which social life makes possible, both within and across cultures. A human being, when equipped with the concepts supplied by a value system, comes to recognise many good things which he or she may achieve. We may seek individual development, social approval, justice or the welfare of our families, to mention only a few possible goals. In an ideal world all these might go together, but in practice they often conflict. The idea that there is always some one 'right' thing to be done in any circumstance, the thing by which the preponderance of good is secured, is a mirage. Such thoughts, about the variety and incommensurability of goods both within and between cultures, are familiar to moral and political philosophers. But they gain added solidity when seen in the context of evolutionary biology and anthropological research. Hinde is, however, hopeful that the existence of common human needs and pan-cultural basic moral principles might, especially if widely recognised, provide a basis for mutual understanding and hence for resolution of conflicts between cultures.

But, as Hinde himself would be the first to admit, there is 'no way of weaselling out of the need to make moral decisions'. Evolutionary selection has disposed us to certain likes and dislikes, because those likes and dislikes were the ones which, in our early environment, guided us to the behaviour which enabled us to survive and to reproduce. Cultural developments have given particular form and elaboration to these impulses. But which of those tastes we should now endorse? The need for serious thought and for hard choices is still with us. This humane and stimulating book may contribute to equipping us better for making at least some of them.

Jane Heal

Ben Macintyre, *A Foreign Field. A True Story of Love and Betrayal in the Great War.* Pp. X + 301. HarperCollins, 2001. ISBN 0-00-257122-6

Ben Macintyre has enjoyed a distinguished career as *The Times* correspondent in Paris and Washington, and by means of his reports from the lobby at Westminster is currently providing readers of that organ with daily doses of pure pleasure, not least by not altogether endearing himself to the likes of the Deputy Prime Minister. Meanwhile he has also found time to publish three sparkling works with each of which he has gone from strength to strength, providing his academic contemporaries and their elders with object lessons in the art of the higher journalism.

His latest, as well as being a true story of love and betrayal and a story beautifully told, is also a detective story, the unravelling of which has required the exercise of the most exquisite discretion on the author's part, in particular because his principal informants are descendants of its central characters, the villagers of Villeret in Picardy, one or more of whom committed that act of betrayal in May 1916 and thereby condemned to death the four British soldiers who had remained hidden there throughout the previous twenty months. *A Foreign Field* tells the tale of their survival behind enemy lines after September 1914, of the courage of the locals in harbouring them, of the raw-boned and

garrulous Irishman always on the point of giving the game away, of the Tommy who survived the hostilities immured in a wardrobe, and, above all, of Private Robert Digby who complicated matters for his jittery hosts as well as for himself by falling in love with the beguiling Claire Dessenne and getting her pregnant. The affair of this handsome couple and its consequences lie at the heart of Macintyre's tale and elicit from him some of his most lyrical writing, as well as (to use his own word) his most savoury. In February 1915 Kaiser Wilhelm passed through Villeret. 'Here was the most savoury of ironies: the all-powerful, all-fêted Kaiser, displaying his military muscle and lifting a superior gloved hand to the awed French men and women lining the roads of the land he now occupied; while, a few yards away, an enemy soldier made love in the hay to a young French girl.'

But it couldn't last of course, and of course it didn't. What with all the pre-existing divisions within the place, which Macintyre probes with the deft scalpel of the practised micro-historian, it was only a matter of time before someone made his (or was it her?) way early one morning to the headquarters of the fearsome and futile German commandant whose commitment to representing his type and caste extended to an insistence on auditing the local eggs and raspberries. Who it was who by doing so was ultimately responsible for the plaque which Macintyre saw on visiting the locality in the course of a routine tour of duty for his newspaper, the plaque which read 'Ici ont été fusillés quatre soldats Brittaniques', and was whispered to by the by then wheelchair-bound love-child of the *affaire* of almost ninety years before, whereafter one thing led to another – who it was, readers of this gripping tale will have to judge for themselves in the light of his reports of his conversations with survivors and descendants of those involved on either side of the Channel and the Wilkie Collins-like conclusion of his Epilogue.

And readers of this inadequate account of a book which kept its reviewer *incommunicado* at the expense of competing attractions throughout a Christmas Day afternoon are earnestly recommended to do just that, to judge for themselves. All its reviewer will say is this: that its author, who writes like an angel, read History at St John's between 1982 and 1985, and that by and large it is other than for the reasons for

which readers will make haste to reach the end of *A Foreign Field* that those who were its author's supervisors then crave for the final page of their pupils' essays now.

Ben Macintyre's book is dedicated to the memory of his father, Angus Macintyre, himself a distinguished historian, Tutorial Fellow of Magdalen College Oxford, a wonderful teacher and the loveliest of men, tragically killed in a motor accident in December 1994.

Peter Linehan

Richard Posnett, *The Scent of Eucalyptus: a journal of colonial and foreign service*. Pp. Xx + 275.The Redcliffe Press, 2001. ISBN 1-86064-637-9.

Richard Posnett, later knighted, came up to St John's in 1938, having been born within a week of me. Though we overlapped, I did not meet him either before the War or when he came back at the end from serving in the Colonial Service in Uganda. That is perhaps not surprising given the size of St John's and the fact that he read Maths and I English, at a time when he was relieved at Chamberlain's effort to bring 'peace in our time' while I was appalled. More importantly, he was born in South India, into a family of Methodist missionaries and had decided to enter the Colonial Service at the age of 14. While, like Posnett, I spent much of my life in Africa and abroad, nothing at that time was further from my thought than life in the 'colonies'.

Posnett made an excellent District Officer, getting to know the 'natives' and their language. At the same time he kept up his sporting interests, fostered at St John's, by mountaineering and eventually by representing Uganda on the Olympic Committee. He progressed up the internal hierarchy, becoming head of the Foreign Office in an independent Uganda and then applying successfully, as did many of his colleagues, to join the combined Foreign and Commonwealth Office. That life seems to have agreed less well with his disposition. By and large diplomats were afraid of 'going native' and kept to their own routine of cocktails and dinners. Nevertheless Posnett was able to get to know

some of the leading politicians of the territories to which he was posted and he played an important role in facilitating the process of independence that was being so vigorously pursued by the UN. He completed his career that stretched from colonial to decolonising administrator in a process that changed the whole set-up of world politics. And he ends his story as High Commissioner of Uganda after the rejection of Amin and finally re-visiting the Church of South India, which his family had helped to create.

Despite participating in this 'world revolution', he has much time for the British Raj in India and Africa and presents a strong assessment of what it achieved. As he recognises, the conquered had other views; so too did earlier administrators. But the Empire was not established in order to hand over responsibility to the inhabitants; in the early days they were often ruled in a harsh manner. Posnett came in as the Empire was ending (his father counselled him against applying for the Indian Civil Service which he rightly saw as shortly being Indianized) as the Dominions and Colonies became the Commonwealth. Even so, I cannot agree that 'Racial discrimination had been eliminated almost everywhere in the colonial territories by the time of the Second World War (p251), although certainly times had greatly changed especially as one approached decolonisation. Posnett came at a fortunate time to have an interesting career but the conquered were fortunate to have such a sympathetic administrator.

Jack Goody

Sir Richard Posnett has very kindly arranged for his book to be made available to Johnians at the reduced price of £19.50. To order, please telephone Leah Cunnington on 020 7243 1225.

David Morphet, *Louis Jennings MP: editor of the New York Times and Tory Democrat*. Pp. 276. Notion Books, 2001. ISBN: 0954157303.

A labour of love must be handled tenderly. David Morphet is not a historian by profession; if he were, it would be necessary to comment on

various small errors of method, of which the worst is his failure, when dealing with American subjects, to consult the works of modern American historical scholarship. But he is not a candidate for a PhD or a professorship; he is not on his preferment. He has chosen as his subject the career of a forgotten Victorian journalist and politician – Louis J Jennings – and handled it extremely well. A small piece of mosaic has been slotted into the great pavement of Victorian history. It would be monstrous to be captious about the achievement.

And it would be captious to ask if Louis Jennings was worth so much trouble. Mr Morphet is the best judge of what to do with his time; and he is under no illusions about Jennings's place in the scheme of things. From obscure beginnings (elucidated for the first time by Mr Morphet) Jennings worked his way almost to the top of his chosen trade, journalism: he was editor of the *New York Times* for six years, an extraordinary achievement for an Englishman, even though the *Times* was not yet the venerable institution which it is today. Subsequently Jennings was a Conservative MP for Stockport, made a notable place for himself in the House of Commons, and might well have developed into something more than an energetic backbencher had he not died prematurely of 'congestion of the liver', which I suppose was cancer. At all times he was a prolific writer – it was his only source of income – and he will be remembered as the first editor of the Croker papers. It was an honourable career, and Jennings seems to have led a blameless private life; but it is easy to see why he has been forgotten. In spite of Mr Morphet's efforts, he will probably soon be forgotten again.

Yet he deserved this second glance. It is possible, through his life, to learn a lot about Victorian journalism on both sides of the Atlantic – not least, how closely connected were London and New York journals before the rise of the yellow press. Jennings worked on *The Times* as well as the *New York Times*; he was later employed by James Gordon Bennett, Jr, of the *New York Herald* as well as by John Murray of the *Quarterly Review*. Respectable journalism of the period presented no cultural barriers to competent professionals; they wrote in the same manly style wherever they went (Jennings was *The Times*'s correspondent in India for a year) and discussed the same issues. Jennings was editor of the

New York Times during the epoch of Boss Tweed, and had a lot to do with his downfall; for the rest of his life he was on the alert for signs of corruption wherever they appeared, and denounced them vigorously in his articles. The point could easily be elaborated, but it is enough to say that this was a truly Anglo-American era for the press.

And Jennings' character, his political beliefs, repay consideration. He was in some ways a familiar type. A self-made man (his father had been a London tailor in a small way) he embraced conservatism as the creed of self-made men. He did not believe in pampering the poor or anyone else: he even opposed free elementary education. He agitated against free trade and in favour of protection for the cotton and iron industries. He lost no opportunity of warning England against foreign competition; it never seems to have occurred to him that a country with an uneducated populace and uncompetitive industries might not be well-placed to maintain its greatness. He bitterly resented snobbery and Old Corruption, but clung to Tory Democracy, to the belief in a people guided by the Throne and the House of Lords. He chose to follow Lord Randolph Churchill, the embodiment of these contradictions, and was in due course let down appallingly by his leader. As a journalist he had a sharp pen, which he used to vilify Mr Gladstone; he seems to have been incapable of seeing anyone else's point of view. He hated all change and thought that the Reform Act of 1832 had brought about nothing but disaster. In all this we can see the way in which the Conservatives contributed to so many blunders and half-measures during the twentieth century. (Jennings also worried about immigration). Yet there was something touching about his nostalgia. At heart he was a sentimentalist. He wrote two books on country walks, which had a deserved success; from them we learn that he (typically) disliked Victorian church restorations, and loved the dining-parlour of a good country inn. We may leave him there.

Hugh Brogan

Kathryn Bailey Puffett (ed), *Derrick Puffett on Music,* Ashgate. Pp. 813. ISBN 0754603997

Derrick Puffett would have very much disliked the intrusion of a memoir into a book review. But those of us fortunate enough to remember this very remarkable man must at least mention that from his earliest years he had suffered from muscular dystrophy, and that the whole of his education and life-work was achieved under this lengthening shadow. Senior members of St John's, as well as many generations of pupils there and elsewhere, will recall a determined figure in a wheelchair. But a blunt and impatient voice from the past reminds me that this is quite enough about that, and that he would rather that we considered his work.

Besides his teaching activities (and Puffett was a fine teacher) he was a musical analyst. This is an activity little understood outside the ranks of the musical profession – or, for that matter, esteemed within them. To write about the effect that music has on you creates a certain type of literature – and this has its own value. But the wish also arose to apply scientific methods to its study, and to try to answer the question: how does music work? The *belles-lettres* aspect was overlaid, and an array of diagrams, graphings and algebraic symbols took its place: fake science. During the previous century, the activity of music analysis took on an alarmingly autonomous Frankenstein life of its own; it became a parasitic growth which not only obscured but also vitiated what it fed upon – the music itself. In the hands of inferior or immature practitioners (many of them not remotely musical) music analysis became valueless.

Of these dangers, Puffett was entirely aware. Indeed his whole life was lived in the consciousness of the limitations of analysis on one hand and its virtues when well done on the other; of its necessary relations to textual scholarship and music history; in the contemplation of ways in which by clear presentation it could reach out to a larger number of people. He managed to reconcile the *belles-lettres* and the quasi-scientific aspect; it is not the least of his achievements that he reclaimed music analysis for literature.

One fact is central. He really loved music, and loved listening to it – *really* listening, and absorbing it on every level. His approach is best told in his own words, quoted early in the present book:

> Before I sit down with the score, I just like to listen to the piece lots of times . . . I really like to get the piece inside me and to feel that I could almost play it through in my head . . . .
>
> I suppose the way I try to form a view of the piece by listening is an old-fashioned one. I listen to the piece and ask myself what has made the greatest impression on me. What has moved me the most about it, what has excited me the most, what it is I want to write about, what sets my mind working, what sets off my imagination.

The tone of voice is unmistakable. You can read here a personality in whom claims of emotional response fought hard with those of impatient intellect; and both of them won. The controlling factor is extreme honesty; relentless searching for the truth; never faking one's reactions. These are responses to the musical experience that anyone could recognise and readily accept. So one can follow Puffett into his most abstruse, closely argued technical passages in the certain belief that one is never being led up the garden path.

This is by no means a book only for the specialist – but for all who already love and know some music well, and wish to penetrate further into it. Puffett's range of sympathy and interest was wide and it was completely undogmatic. A certain centre of gravity is to be found in Austro-German music. Those who are already enthusiasts of the operas of Richard Strauss (*Salome* and *Elektra* in particular) will be able to take a much closer look at them. Berg's *Wozzeck* is set in the context of the German opera of the time: there is an opportunity to explore byways like Othmar Schoeck's *Penthesilea* as well as Zemlinsky's Maeterlinck Songs. But there are also articles on Delius and on Bax: a thorough and illuminating analysis of Tippett's 2nd String Quartet is then followed by a witty and comprehensive demolition job on the music and thought of the later Tippett.

The last pieces that Puffett wrote in 1995-96 represent a triumph of the human spirit and will. As his physical condition worsened his work became ever sharper, more perceptive, more entertaining: it has the light touch of an assured virtuosity; it almost glitters with a sort of liberation. A speculation on musical paths that the young Webern might have, but never did, take is an excursion into thought-provoking fantasy. *Debussy's Ostinato Machine* belongs to that very rare category of serious writing about Debussy that is directly about the music, and nothing else. An article on Alexander Goehr's '...a musical offering J S B 1685' is a welcome consideration of one of Puffett's contemporaries.

In the end it was to Austro-German music that Puffett returned: an article on Berg's interpretative reading of Schoenberg's *Pelleas und Melisande* which turns into a character-study of Berg himself; an examination of Berg's op 6 Orchestral Pieces which is quite simply the best analytical article I have ever read; and finally the unfinished torso of a great project upon the Adagio of Bruckner's IX Symphony. What was achieved of it has been put together, and made tantalisingly coherent, by his widow Kathryn – whose editing here is exemplary and quite beyond praise – as it is throughout the whole of this memorable and very valuable book.

Hugh Wood

Stalactites

BOOK REVIEWS

Polly Evans, *It's Not About the Tapas. Around Spain on Two Wheels.* Pp. 303. Bantam Books, 2003. ISBN 0 553 81556 3

. . . though in fact, despite its title, this larky account of Ms Evans's sovereign remedy for an excess of Hong Kong very often is. For our Polly has a healthy appetite, indeed several healthy appetites. In need of relief from the rigours of publishing a weekly mag she decided to take a break from the Orient and, like Dame Rose Macaulay before her, to take it in Spain, a land whose language she had studied while an undergraduate at St John's (BA 1993, MA 1996). Moreover, 'to ensure my recuperation', she writes, 'I'd even take some exercise. I wouldn't just visit Spain – I'd cycle round it,' starting in 'San Sebastían' (presumably the post-modernists in the Department of Spanish weren't doing accents during her time here). And even if in the event it turned out to be not quite *all the way* round Spain, by the time she boarded her last bus, after a thoroughly depressing evening and a very long morning at Consuegra, she had clocked up a thousand miles on her two wheels (bravo!), and with not a single puncture to speak of — though true, puncturing Polly would take some doing.

Above all, therefore, *It's Not About the Tapas* is a treasury of information on the important subject of how to get your bike into and out of buses and onto and off planes and the roof-racks of taxis, which future generations may well come to regard as the definitive work on the subject. Beyond that, in order to do full justice to the author's appreciation of Miguel Induráin's legs and her report of what drugged-up professional cyclists get up to, and where they secrete the stuff, frankly the services of one or other of the *Eagle*'s three regular cycling correspondents are required. All of these seem to have broken chains at present, however. Also, the book's padding-out with thumb-nail sketches of such people as the last king of the Visigoths, Goya's Duchess of Alba, Gaudí, Picasso and Dalí, as well as Ms Evans's distinctive accounts of places (many of them visited by her), renders it almost a new History of Spain, of a sort recommendable to students of the subject unequal to the demands of the works of Elliott and Carr (if not quite the last word on the subject for Tripos candidates). For this reason, despite

the knowledge that sooner or later I am likely to be made to suffer for doing so, I have accepted the privilege of attempting to do justice to this breathless treatment of so many subjects.

Polly Evans's reflections on the Spanish past come fast, thick, furious, at times relevantly, and regularly bestrewn with Pollyisms, amongst which 'slithers of cured ham' is one of the more memorable, reflecting perhaps the usage of Hong Kong where of course they do put porkers through their paces. As she went up hill and down dale through the Spanish countryside, the author found the whole experience 'amazing'. From start to finish, the authorial voice rings in the reader's ears. All very Polly. The scintillating saga of cold beers, chill drizzle and warm sweat positively *howls* of her.

And it wasn't just the cured ham that slithered; it was also Polly herself, who more than once came a cropper while being pursued by wild dogs, a dubious Texan called Michael who tried to take her for a ride in Seville, and highly-strung pigs (pigs again). But then, that's Polly for you. She seems to attract these types. Deep calls to deep. 'Underneath it all, I'm very highly strung indeed', she admits, adding for clarification: 'Patience has never been my strong point.' Those of us who remember Polly with affection will not be inclined to argue the toss. So she suffered some tumbles. But she never got shunted. 'There was no fear of a farewell bonk', she recalls regarding her departure from Barcelona, 'as I was carbo-loaded to the hilt' (again we have to make allowance for Hong Kongese usage here, something similar being described as almost happening on a hill on the way to Pampaneira, yet without so much as a scratch to her bodywork on either occasion). By contrast with the late Dame Iris Murdoch on her sedate expeditions along the banks of the idyllic Isis, Polly had set out fully prepared, with things like rear-view mirrors and lycra-clad thighs. We hear quite a lot, perhaps too much even, about Polly's lycra-cladding as she labours up the slopes in time to catch the next bus, and about her exploding with expletives that she can hardly have picked up at The Cheltenham Ladies' College, and which, wherever it was that she did so, are scarcely suitable for repetition in the pages of a publication liable to be espied by the housemaids of its subscribers.

Quite a lot of what she encountered *en route* — the Saga holidaymakers and the ample ladies who squashed her almost flat in Granada cathedral, the waits for restaurants to open which at her approach promptly put up their Annual Holidays notice – Dame Polly didn't much care for. With her descriptions of the *longueurs* of rural Spain, where it is always half past three in the afternoon, old Spanish hands will readily sympathize, while readers contemplating following the trail of her skid marks will be grateful for her warnings about where not to stay at Barcelona, Cadaqués and Trujillo, *entre otros lugares*, and for her surely actionable estimates of some of the staff of some of the hostelries where she did end up (not that she had ever actually *planned* to rough it). Apart from the agreeable Javi, who adjusted her gears before the first great ascent, and one or two girls at hotel desks whom she rates *simpáticas*, most of the Spaniards Polly met seem to have got as much on her nerves as the cockroaches in the shower and the lizards in her bed. And other than her anxious parents, the only real smart people she met were at the end of it all, her old College room-mate and the latter's companion. By Polly's account, the inhabitants of the part of the country she cycled around are all in need of either education or fumigation.

By the end of it all, however, Polly herself had really come on. She was eating the tarmac faster than the *calamares* could be fished out of the sea in time to be grilled for her supper. She was rarely out of top gear. The ratio of 'grunt, grunt' to 'Wheeeeeeee' had shifted dramatically, and, with three inches shed from her waist, she had even mastered the accentuation of San Sebastián. Spain had done the necessary; the Old World had redressed the awfulness of the New. Back to business. Mrs Evans need not have worried after all. There had been no need for *anyone* to worry about Polly. As the dubious Michael had discovered, evidently to his disappointment, Polly could perfectly well look after herself. With Polly on the loose really it's the rest of us we need to be worried about.

Her publishers describe Ms Evans as 'one of the most exciting new voices in female travel writing', which is not quite how Dame Rose's *Fabled Shore* was promoted. But, like Ms Evans, no doubt they know what they're doing when they tell us that that's what's what.

Peter Linehan

David Morphet, *Seventy-seven Poems*. Pp.111. Notion Books, 2002. ISBN 0954157311

David Morphet (DM) came to the College in 1958 with a Minor Scholarship and read English, gaining a double First and twice winning the Master's Essay Prize (1959 and 1960). He served on the Editorial Committee of *Delta* and of *The Eagle* where he published two accomplished satirical poems in heroic couplets entitled *Ars Poetica* (*Eagle* vol 58 pp 152-158) and *Bridewell Revisited* (*Eagle* vol 59 pp 255-261) serving his time as an irascible young man. He then had a distinguished career in the Diplomatic Service (1961-1974), followed by a transfer to the Department of Energy (1974-1989), from which he emerges as a high-powered businessman.

That a man of his wide experience should publish a volume of verse in his sixty-second year is a remarkable fact. That he should entitle his work *Seventy-seven Poems* when the Portuguese poet Alberto de Lacerda had joined with Arthur Waley to produce in 1955 a book called *77 Poems* adds to the interest, especially when one discovers that the two books have virtually nothing in common except the brevity and variety of the poems they contain. Alberto's book is the work of a young romantic: 'And now' (he writes in *Transfiguration*) 'go away: let me be alone. / Death will come soon and I would receive her / As grave as the sky before a new star.' But DM has his feet on the ground: 'I Hope to die' (he writes in *Endings*) 'with time on my hands: / an old man sifting memory / as the sands run out. / For we need a breathing space / as we turn to face / our mortality.'

While Lacerda and Waley divide their *77 Poems* into two unequal sections of twenty-seven and fifty poems, of which seventeen are untitled, DM more logically divides his collection into seven groups with eleven poems in each group. The poems vary in length from two to forty-four lines and all have titles. In Group I, we visit Russia, Romania, New York, Africa and in Group II, Bombay, Venezuela, Spain, Tours, Aswan. Group III is more philosophical, with meditations on Coincidence, Particles, Scientific Discovery. Group IV is nearer home, in Colne Valley, Black Mountain, Evesham, Hadrian's Wall, Dentdale, Moorland, and Group V in Hospital and its wards, Intensive Care,

Waiting, Meeting. In Group VI we meet two young poets (Keyes and Emsley), García Lorca, Stephen Cox, the dying Auden, DM on poetry and art. Group VII concerns various relations including the 'midget voice' of his 'little aunt' whose 'vocal chords were badly tuned / in childhood when she toppled down / and broke the string of growth'.

Yes DM has his feet on the ground, but he is also a master of words:

Bucharest 1968	crippled with a Latin crutch.
Britain 1979	In the country of the blind the one-eyed man has abdicated.
No Man's Land	A place where the still-possessing meet the dispossessed.
Summer in Cadiz	Cadiz with its sweet salt breeze pecking like a gull at the ocean's edge.
Discovery	questions ramify in endless fractals.
Voices	Silence falls all too quickly on the voices that we love – often before we know, let alone tell, how much they mean to us.
Lately the Winds	Lately the winds have slithered down from dark fields of Arctic ice and threatened spring with funerals. I wrap my hope around me like a cloak.
She Stood Just So	She stood just so. No photograph can show the way she stood. And this I know – a smile, the turning of a head can make the embers glow in recollection, though it was forty years ago.

HATS OFF, READERS – A JOHNIAN POET!

Guy Lee

David Morphet, *The Angel and the Fox.* Pp.72. Notion Books, 2003. ISBN 095415732X

Please see, first, Guy Lee's review, above, of David Morphet's earlier volume, *Seventy-seven Poems*. This is poetry, all right: DM commands and wrestles with words ('another round with sly, elusive words, / which duck and weave'), freed, now, from the diplomatic necessity of using them to say what others direct should be said. He commands, also, metrical structures and rhyme patterns. The poems derive from particular personal experiences and impressions: more places, as in the earlier volume – Kyoto, the Acropolis revisited, Coniston Water, DM's native north Yorkshire dales; more scenes in hospital wards; diplomacy; his mother's tale of encountering a meteorite. There is a surprising amount of geology. There is a lot, too, of bitter, still-angry-young-man satire, a whole section, eight poems, plus, at least, 'Side Effects' in Section 2, and, in a way, all-pervasive. The first section, which gives its title to the whole book (a pity, I think, because the whole is much more diverse), The Angel and the Fox, is self-reflective, about the two pulls that create tension within a personality, noble aspiration on the one hand and canny *se débrouiller* on the other; and at the end of the section, in Poem 18, comes the just, plain language conclusion, 'Neither the angel nor the fox have (*sic*) all the answers . . . In the last resort, / there are questions which they cannot face'.

Plain speaking is Wordsworthianly important in DM's poems. The words are ordinary words, not fancy ones: only seldom, in this set, comes a phrase like '...the tide's consternation'. And in the satires especially, though not exclusively, there are sharp descents of register into colloquialism and jargon ('the fox is a bookie; takes his cut/even before the field has got away'). The things expressed are also ordinary and familiar enough: not banal or superficial, that's different, for this poet's reactions call across to our reactions and elicit, time and time again, the response 'yes, that's exactly so'. Thus, from the love-poem 'Heights': 'You are so much a part of me, / I know that where you stand, I stand. / You are the lens through which I see / love focused till I understand / its sharpness and integrity'. It is that exactitude of the words ('High kites shunting in the sky') that works the poetic trick. That's the Worth of Words.

John Crook

Edited with an introduction by Malcolm Torry[1]**,** *The Sermons of John Boys Smith: A Theologian of Integrity.* Pp.318. Aquila Books, 2003. ISBN 0 9501085 6 1

The Rev Dr Malcolm Torry's edition of the sermons of the late J S Boys Smith[2] is a welcome contribution to the archives of St John's College and a fitting tribute to the memory of one who devoted his life to the service of the College. He was simply a great man, the possessor of formidable ability to think lucidly.

The edition is based upon Torry's larger work, an exploration of the theological pilgrimage of his subject, entitled *John Boys Smith: A Theologian of Integrity.* This work has been deposited in the College Library where it may readily be consulted.

Following his undergraduate days in St John's, JSBS was elected to a Title A Fellowship in 1927 on the basis of a thesis entitled *Religious Faith: A discussion of certain of its characteristics* (unpublished). The piece marks him as a Christian Idealist and it was essentially this stance that he endeavoured to champion in the face of nineteenth and twentieth century challenges. His *Christian Doctrine and the Idea of Evolution* (Cambridge, 1930) is perhaps the clearest example of this his endeavour.

As is well known, JSBS did not pursue his scholarly and theological interests to the point of publishing further works. Whether this was because his stance became unfashionable in the twentieth century and, as a consequence, he felt himself isolated, or whether he found the integrity that mattered so much to him in his more practical administrative and bursarial activities, is an interesting question. For some, naively as I suppose, he abandoned his faith, turning, as the wine circle wits had it 'from God to Mammon'. Those who knew him better knew better. He never lost his core beliefs and to this his sermons, masterpieces of lucidity in moral and theological insight, are an abiding testimony. It is this matter, clearly personal, that Torry's work addresses and it is certainly not without interest and importance, and especially so in the context of the College to which JSBS contributed so much.

The sermons collected by Torry were delivered between 1928 and 1985, many in the College Chapel, but some elsewhere in, for example, Ely,

Westminster Abbey, and the two University Churches. Many of them, then, will have been heard in person by members of the College and for this reason, available now in print, they may stimulate memories of the places and times of their delivery and so of their reception by individual persons.

Amongst those which particularly impressed your reviewer are three: 31 October 1954 (and repeated with variations on other occasions), on the text 'If your eye be single, then shall your body be filled with light'; a masterly account of personal integrity. Secondly, 11 July 1978, 'Our Cambridge Colleges'; a telling exposition of the history and development of the collegiate system and its impact on the moral sensibilities of those who are fortunate enough to have experienced it. Thirdly, 7 March 1971, on the text ' Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?'; an incisive account of Ends and Means with its conclusion that we are judged, not by our aims, but by the means we employ to realize them.

These are philosophers' sermons; they are precise and marked by clear definition. Things are as they are and are not as they are not. And Jesus' parables, based on empirical observation (and obviously much admired by JSBS), are for this reason telling accounts of moral reality; that is to say, that things are, as a matter of fact, as the parables assert them to be.

If the sermons are philosophers' sermons, they are filled with practical commendations of virtues such as gentleness, forbearance and courtesy. And this, too, is traceable in no small part to the influence of colleges and the College. 'It is not', says Boys Smith, 'by arbitrary conjunction that, in promising to promote the peace, honour and well-being of the College, we promise to promote it as a place both of religion and learning'.

Because the sermons are as they are, it is safe to say that any person who reads them, whatever his personal beliefs or lack of them, will not only be led to think more clearly on matters of character and morality, but is also likely to emerge a better person.

Andrew Macintosh

1 BA, 1976.
2 BA, 1922; Chaplain, 1927-1934; Tutor, 1934-1939; Ely Professor of Divinity, 1940-1943; Senior Bursar 1944-1959; Master, 1959-1969; Vice-Chancellor, 1963-1965.

David Nobbs, *I Didn't Get Where I Am Today*. Pp.320. William Heinemann, 2003. ISBN 0434008974

In the history of the College, which Johnian has made the greatest number of people laugh out loud?

The nominations are: Thomas Nashe, for that perennial rib-tickler *The Have-with-You to Saffron Walden*; Samuel 'Erewhon' Butler, whose observation about Thomas Carlyle that it was 'very good of God to let Carlyle and Mrs Carlyle marry one another, and so make only two people miserable instead of four' has raised plenty of well-lubricated laughs as a staple of any respectable best man's speech; Jimmy Edwards, for *Take It From Here* on radio and the flagellation sitcom *Whack-O!* on television; Jonathan Miller, for *Beyond The Fringe*; and Douglas Adams, for *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

And the winner is . . . none of these, but David Nobbs, creator of Reginald Iolanthe Perrin.

The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin, based on Nobbs's novel *The Death of Reginald Perrin*, published in 1975, was first broadcast on BBC1 in autumn 1976, and although it ran for just three series has proved one of the everlasting classics of British television comedy. Reginald Perrin (played with exquisite feel for the dysfunctional by Leonard Rossiter) is a forty-six-year-old middle-management executive at Sunshine Desserts going through a mid-life crisis, which he eventually (though temporarily) resolves by leaving a pile of clothes on a beach and disappearing not into the sea but into a new identity. (The obvious parallel, with the politician John Stonehouse, who had pulled the same trick in 1974, turns out to be pure coincidence.) Reggie then attends his own funeral, re-marries his wife, and carries on in a new guise.

I Didn't Get Where I Am Today tells the life story of Reginald Perrin's creator with frankness, occasional grumpiness, and the odd spasm of insecurity which Nobbs shares with many comedy writers. There are ironies – when the young Nobbs has returned to London from Wiltshire towards the end of the war as the capital was then considered safe, and 'the very last doodlebug, the last bomb to fall in Britain during the Second World War, landed on an inoffensive house in the next street,

Charterhouse Road. It brought down most of my bedroom ceiling on top of me.' Cambridge was followed by National Service, then, after early disappointments ('Nobody wanted my books or plays') the first proper rung on the ladder: one line from a sketch he had offered *That Was The Week That Was* was used by David Frost.

After years of hard graft came success and recognition with Reggie, and Nobbs's reputation was subsequently enhanced by other comic *tours de force*, notably the novel *Second From Last In The Sack Race* and the brilliantly incisive television comedy serial *A Bit Of A Do*, with David Jason and Nicola Pagett.

But it is for Reginald Perrin that Nobbs has entered the comic pantheon. Like all the very best comedy, this portrait of a man whose mind is coming adrift from its moorings weaves into the comic business a powerful thread of the poignant and unsettling: 'I can't be bothered with all this – life's too short!', Reggie explodes during a meeting to discuss marketing strategy for the Exotic Ices campaign (during which his main contribution has been to suggest the slogan: 'I like to stroke my nipple / With a strawberry lychee ripple').

It is the people who surround Perrin who grind him down and wind him up to that self-immolation on the beach. The mantra of the overbearing boss CJ is that 'I didn't get where I am today by [fill in fatuous variable]', which gives the book its title. To one of the Bright Young Things at Sunshine Desserts everything is 'Great!'; to the other, 'Super!'. Perrin's brother-in-law is an ex-military type whose household never has any food in and who regularly comes round to confess to 'a bit of a cock-up on the catering front'. Even the inanimate provide repetitive comic motifs. The train which Perrin takes to and from the office is invariably eleven minutes late, with varying excuses offered. And the leather visitor chairs in CJ's office are chronically flatulent: no matter how carefully Reggie sits down or gets up, the chair eventually lets off.

But what of David Nobbs's time – 1955 to 1958 – at St John's? 'The beauty of Cambridge is awesome. At times, along the Backs, by the peaceful Cam, it threatens to break one's heart. It isn't easy to live up to all that mellow stone and brick, all that history, all those manicured lawns. I felt clumsy, lumpish, unworthy.' It's a familiar feeling.

His first-year rooms were in First Court: 'I bought a Matisse print, a Vlaminck print, and vast numbers of match-boxes of different sizes, which I balanced in various patterns (but not very various) all along the picture rails. I regard this now as an aesthetic gaffe. I wouldn't want you to think that match-boxes were my only stylistic statement. There were the pickled onions as well. I forget now why I thought that the occasional insouciant consumption of a pickled onion beneath my match-boxes might give me a faintly Bohemian air . . . I ate two pickled onions a day for six weeks and still hadn't got through a fiftieth of them. I even suspected that the lady who "did" for me – my "bedder", to use the technical term – was restocking the jar out of spite.'

There's Michael Frayn and Peter Cook, John Tusa and Eleanor Bron, Timothy Birdsall and Bamber Gascoigne, and – his supervisor in his third year – Hugh Sykes Davies ('on the rotund side, and easy-going to a fault. He was rumoured to take opium. There was certainly a slight aura of the exotic about him'). There's theatre and cinema (though he had to trek out to Soham to see Bill Haley and the Comets in *Rock Around the Clock*, which had been banned in Cambridge), *Varsity* and Footlights and a St John's revue called *Feet Up*: 'The show was a hit. As I sat there and listened to the laughter I knew beyond all doubt that comedy was my game.' But for all the romance of such an epiphanic moment, the resounding motif of his time at St John's remains those pickled onions: in his third year, he still had three-quarters of a jar. (This tradition persisted: the ability to ingest pickled onions with one bite was a great badge of manhood in the College in the early 1970s.)

Argue, if you will, that Thomas Nashe or Jonathan Miller had a sharper satirical edge, or that Douglas Adams was brainier, but take into account Reggie Perrin's prime-time exposure, repeats, videos, and global reach as he touched the universal funny bone (you can't go wrong with flatulent chairs), and it's really no contest. David Nobbs has

made more people laugh than any other Johnian in nearly half a millennium of the College's existence. And if that isn't worth an Honorary Fellowhip, then I don't know what is.

Sean Magee

BOOK REVIEWS

Nick Webb, *Wish You Were Here: The official biography of Douglas Adams*. Pp. 370. Headline, 2003. ISBN 0-7553-1155-8, and **M J Simpson**, *Hitchhiker: A biography of Douglas Adams*. Pp. xviii + 393. Hodder & Stoughton, 2003. ISBN 0-340-82488-3

A funny thing happened to Douglas Adams following his death at the preposterously early age of forty-nine in May 2001. He was transmogrified from the writer of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* – which in its original radio version remains one of the enduring masterpieces of British comedy – to the status where the front flap of M J Simpson's biography can describe him as 'one of the most influential thinkers of the late twentieth century'. Even allowing for the licence of publishers' blurb-writers and for the rash of websites which Adams's work has spawned, that judgement is a tad far-fetched, and in the long term it will surely serve his memory better to avoid such inflated claims and remember him for what he was: a writer of quite extraordinary wit, whose far-reaching imagination and fascination with technology created an inimitable body of work.

Born in Cambridge in 1952, Douglas Adams read English at St John's from 1971 to 1974, but the real attraction of his home-town university had nothing to do with academic pursuits. 'I wanted to be a writer or performer in the same way the Pythons are and therefore desperately wanted to get into the Footlights', he said. 'I did have something of a guilt thing about reading English. I thought I should have done something useful and challenging. But while I was whingeing I also relished the chance to do not very much.' Nick Webb's biography catches well the mood of Cambridge in that period: 'At the time the university was not strenuously political. The economy was not as forgiving as in the previous decade, and the students of the Seventies were by and large getting their heads down and working. They were no longer angry, only a bit miffed.'

Having cut his Cambridge comic teeth with CULES – the Cambridge University Light Entertainment Society, for whom his only recorded

performance was in a show for the inmates of Chelmsford Prison – Douglas eventually achieved his aim of getting into Footlights towards the end of his first year, and spent the next two years pouring out material and performing in 'smokers'. After graduating in 1974 he got to know the right people. He became peripherally involved in his beloved *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and worked on various projects with Graham Chapman, but aspirations did not pay the rent, so the famously large-framed Adams took a job with the security staff of an Arab sheikh. Sitting guard outside a swish London hotel room, he observed the regular comings and goings along the corridor of various young ladies: 'At least you can read on the job', one of them observed to him as she passed.

After occasional comedy-writing for radio, a meeting with producer Simon Brett early in 1977 resulted in a commission to write the script for 'a science fiction comedy adventure' to be called *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. The true genesis of the idea is the cause of much vexation for M J Simpson. Adams always claimed that the notion of the series came to him while he lay drunk in a field in Innsbruck, during a hitch-hiking holiday round Europe in the pre-SJC summer of 1971. Nick Webb writes that Adams 'confessed that he had told the story . . . so often that he could no longer recall whether it happened the way he said it did, or whether he was just remembering his many retellings', and adds in a footnote that documentary film-makers have identified the actual field. Don't tell those film-makers, but Simpson has pretty good evidence that it was not in a field in Innsbruck in 1971 at all, but on a rock on Santorini in 1973. Adams was with a Dutch girlfriend on that Greek island, and Simpson speculates: 'Perhaps he changed the story out of courtesy to his unknown Dutch companion', before adding, chillingly: 'That's something for future biographers to discover.'

First broadcast in March 1978 in the graveyard 10.30 pm slot on Radio 4, *HHGG* soon acquired a cult following. The first novel came out in 1979, a second series was broadcast in 1980 (the same year which saw publication of *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*), the television series began in January 1981 – and a quarter of a century later there are still people who will collapse to the ground writhing with uncontrollable mirth at the very mention of the number 42.

There were several other books – including *Last Chance to See*, that wonderful tour of endangered species published in 1990 – but nothing to match *HHGG*, which in the sweep of its imagination (exemplified not least in its novel use of sound effects) was unlike anything before or since.

Whether any future biographers might add to what we learn about Douglas from these two books is doubtful. Nick Webb, whose long friendship with his subject began when he acquired the novelised version of *HHGG* for the publishers Pan after being captivated by the radio series, is much the more relaxing chronicler, happy to wander off the immediate point to indulge in his own musings, in a manner of which Douglas would have approved. Understandably, he is particularly good on the publishing stories, including the fabled episode when Pan boss Sonny Mehta had to incarcerate Douglas in the Berkeley Hotel in London in order to get him to complete *So Long, and Thanks for all The Fish*. M J Simpson's book is much more earnest: the result of dogged research and diligent interviewing, it is crammed with more information than we probably need to know (though we have it to thank for the nugget that in 1979 St John's declined to be used for a location shoot of the fictitious Cambridge college St Cedd's in a *Doctor Who* episode scripted by Douglas, but never transmitted due to a strike at the BBC).

For all the zeal of his biographers, official and unofficial, the essence of Douglas Adams is most tellingly caught in a short but affectionate piece in the Winter 2004 issue of the *Michigan Quarterly Review* by George Watson, who supervised him at St John's and remained a friend. A perfect epitaph for the most celebrated and most imaginative Johnian of recent years would be George's observation: 'His mind was a lumber room, wholly disorganised and richly stocked.'

Sean Magee

Garth Bardsley, *Stop the World, the Biography of Anthony Newley*. Pp. 247. Oberon Books, 2003. ISBN 1-84002-274-4

Garth Bardsley has made a difficult choice for his first foray into biography. Anthony Newley was not, to the outsider, a very sympathetic man. Extremely self-centred – he said that he continually watched himself as he entered rooms – self-important, believing himself to be more of a genius than he was, and capable of being both callous and thoughtless to his several wives and his many lovers, he is not easy for the reader to like, except perhaps when he is being patronised and insulted by the infinitely less likeable Rex Harrison.

Nevertheless, I found him a fascinating study, because he embodied so many of the illusions, fantasies, conceits, evasions and insecurities of that industry of illusion, Showbiz.

His story reads like a Showbiz cliché – rags to riches and back to . . . well, not to rags, but to struggles and relative poverty and obscurity. It is the story of a huge ego, a huge talent and a huge capacity for self-destruction. It is also a search for stability and for the father he never knew as a child. Newley was illegitimate and did not meet his father until a private detective tracked him down when Newley was forty-one and his father eighty-two.

Garth Bardsley tells the story of this turbulent life in rather a plain, unadorned, though thoroughly professional style, which seemed a little dull and swamped in detail at first. I found the first few pages hard going, the people dwarfed by the East End background. I would not have thought, then, that by the last chapters I would be so gripped that I couldn't decide whether to stay up late and finish it, or leave myself the treat of a couple of chapters next morning!

There are two difficulties frequently encountered by biographers of actors, and both of them faced Bardsley. One is the problem of name-dropping, of avoiding vast lists of names of shows, performers, agents, directors and writers. In autobiographies this can be the result of vanity. In biographies it is simply the nature of the beast; it comes with the territory. In the middle of the book there is a plateau in Newley's career.

He's a big success, he's leading a very social life, particularly when married to Joan Collins, and some pages do read rather like a Who's Who of the Theatre. The narrative drive does force its way through, but only just. I urge you to stick with it. The book begins to go uphill as Newley's career begins to go downhill. It became, for me at least, a most addictive read.

The second problem is that the famous person almost always behaves badly, but is redeemed by his or her personality, charm, and humour. Newley, however badly he behaved, was liked because of his enormous charm and charisma. He certainly charmed almost every woman he met and was usually popular with his fellow performers, always excluding Rex Harrison. He was clearly a great host and an entertaining guest. We are told all this, but how on earth can you demonstrate that charm and charisma on the printed page? Charm and wit are butterflies. I have myself been known to make witty remarks on occasion at dinner parties, but if I'm asked 'Tell them that thing you said last night', the repetition goes down like a lead balloon. The butterfly is dead.

Well, in the end, through persistence, generosity and truthfulness, Bardsley does make this butterfly live. I found myself understanding Newley, caring for him, rooting for him, almost weeping for him. Bardsley quotes Newley as saying, 'I'm beginning to feel more and more, that the only things I really enjoy, are things that emanate directly from inside my small cockney head'. The sad truth is that the best things in his work were those that did not emanate from his small cockney head.

The truth is that all his greatest successes, both as writer and performer, came when he shared his head with Leslie Bricusse's rather wiser head. 'Stop the World, I Want to Get Off', 'The Roar of the Greasepaint, The Smell of the Crowd', and 'The Good Old Bad Old Days' were all penned in partnership with Bricusse.

Newley was a brilliant cabaret performer and a very fine straight actor. Some people felt that his Artful Dodger in David Lean's magnificent film of 'Oliver Twist', at the age of seventeen, was the best thing he ever did. Great cabaret artiste, great singer, and great actor. He could have

been a British Sinatra if he hadn't had this urge to make sense of his life through his art, if he hadn't had this burning ambition to write a great musical, an ambition that, since he fell so far short of it, one must describe as pretension.

The culmination of his ambition and pretension, his most personal work, his story of his life as the most important event in world history – which to him of course it was – was probably the worst thing he ever did. It was entitled 'Can Hieronymus Merkin Ever Forget Mercy Humppe and Find True Happiness?' Can we ever forget the title and face going to see it?

I once said, 'I hate Showbiz'. My first wife commented, tartly, 'No you don't. You love it. *That's* what you hate.' I think there was something of that feeling in Newley too. He was addicted, utterly addicted, but his addiction didn't make him happy. He earned and spent several fortunes, and he never really found peace of mind. He was insecure to the last, a hypochondriac, a dreadful traveller, and a professional neurotic.

His decline and his last illness are simply but movingly told, and the affection shown by his children and his wronged wives tells of his charm and charisma more eloquently than any writer can.

This book seemed to me to gain confidence as it progressed. From an uncertain start it grew to a very moving conclusion. It's a very promising debut from a writer who seems quicker at learning than was his subject. I await Garth Bardsley's next book with interest.

David Nobbs

Duncan Dormor, *Just Cohabiting: The Church, Sex and Getting Married.* Pp viii + 136. Darton Longman & Todd, 2004. ISBN 0-232-52484-X

This is an important and most welcome contribution to a debate which now exercises many, both within and outside the Church. It would be an oversimplification to say this whole matter could be summed up in Larkin's famous lines, 'Sexual intercourse began in 1963 (which was

rather too late for me)'.* Duncan Dormor's probing examination of the Church's attitude to cohabitation and to marriage reveals both the complexity and variety of contemporary attitudes.

Like every account of the contemporary state of marriage and committed partnerships, Dormor's traces the modern period back to the advent of widespread access to reliable contraception in the early 1960s. With this development came 'the unravelling of the intimate connection between marriage, childbearing and sexuality' (p79) which had hitherto largely governed the decision of couples to marry, and which had given the Church a considerable measure of control over the official inauguration of long-term partnerships.

It would be all too easy to see this as confirming the general view that marriage is in decline, and the Church's interest in this rite is waning. By contrast, Dormor indicates ways in which the Church should reaffirm its commitment to this central aspect of human life, and should recapture its 'market share' (p116). But this can only happen if it is prepared to re-examine its understanding of marriage, and to see it as a process rather than an event.

Such a shift would be not so much an innovation, but the recovery of an earlier tradition, as the book's impressive survey of biblical, historical and sociological evidence demonstrates. It is in the relatively recent history of the Church that the decree of the Council of Trent in 1563 made marriage before a priest the only legitimate route in Catholic Europe, and the Hardwicke Act of 1753 required the public registration of marriages in England. For the Jewish and Mediterranean cultures in which Christianity was born, and whose marriage customs the local Church tended, with some exceptions, to follow (p53), the marriage ceremony came at the end of a sequence of agreement, exchange of gifts, and formal betrothal that frequently included cohabitation. The sexual relationship of the couple did not necessarily begin with marriage.

Yet Dormor is doing a great deal more than defending cohabitation by appealing to earlier precedents in the history of the Church and society.

* Philip Larkin, 'Annus Mirabilis'

Nor does he suggest that it is an undesirable situation to which the Church must turn a blind eye if it wishes to retain a stake in marriage.

Cohabitation itself has come a long way since the early 1960s, when it was the radical choice of couples who were rejecting a raft of conventional assumptions. The high divorce rate among couples of this generation who proceeded to marriage is not surprising, since these marriages entailed a move towards acceptance by the very structures which the partners had resisted. In the last twenty years, however, there has been a rapid alteration in attitudes towards cohabiting couples. They are no longer seen in depreciatory terms such as 'living in sin', but as 'morally serious' people who, thanks to sophisticated methods of contraception and the economic independence of women, have a considerable degree of control in determining a suitable time for marriage. Divorce rates among couples who have previously cohabited have shown a steady downward trend, consistent with the internal commitment and external acceptance of the cohabiting relationship.

Dormor's hope is that the Church will 'look more imaginatively to ways of meeting and accompanying couples who are seeking to build lives together' (p62). This is no mean task, for, as one pair of sociologists whose work is quoted point out, the contemporary quest for romantic love has become a form of secular religion. It will be the Church's task to confront the high degree of expectation placed on relationships, moderating it healthily to a view of marriage as 'the art of the possible' (p120).

Dormor believes that much of this can be achieved by a new understanding of committed relationships as process or journey. This relates closely to much current theological thinking, not least in the area of liturgy. Thus, he argues, the Church should think in terms of marriage not wedding; of sexual integrity rather than the initiation of sexual practice. There can be no doubt that enhancing the value placed on commitment and fidelity and the journey of mutual discovery would be to the great benefit of many relationships. But it is clear that there remains a wide diversity of views in the contemporary Church.

It is unfortunate that this excellent survey should leave the development of its potentially most original proposal for the last few

pages. Drawing on the analogy of other ecclesiastical rites of passage, like baptism and confirmation, the book identifies a vocation for the Church in advocating a 'marital spirituality' capable of taking on the 'brute stubbornness' of married life and creating an environment in which adults and children will flourish. 1963 may have been 'rather too late' for Philip Larkin. Forty years on, it is by no means too late for the Church to commit itself to finding a 'marital spirituality' through a different appreciation of the journey of marital sexuality. But we will need another book to tell us how this aspiration might become reality.

The Rt Revd Dr Anthony Russell
Bishop of Ely

Isaac ibn Sahula, *Meshal Haqadmoni: Fables from the Distant Past.* A Parallel Hebrew-English text, edited and translated by Raphael Loewe. Two volumes. Pp cxiii + 816. 160 woodcuts and illuminations. The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation: Oxford & Portland, Oreg., 2004. ISBN 1-874774-56-0

The employment of animal figures, which are invested with the power of speech, to convey essential truths, moral guidance or even simpler messages, is a phenomenon known from the literary cultures of ancient Asia, classical antiquity, and medieval Europe, and is today still familiar to us in a wide range of epic tales (popular with adults no less than children), cartoons and advertisements. In the late thirteenth century the Spanish Jewish physician, Isaac ibn Solomon Abi Sahula, concluded, after a visit to Cairo, that it was time for him, as he approached his forties, to adopt a more spiritually impressive lifestyle. Like many of such a frame of mind before and since, he felt constrained to share with his contemporaries the principles responsible for his religious regeneration.

Ibn Sahula, as he was generally known, therefore compiled, in rhymed Hebrew prose and featuring a host of animals, five cycles of fables in which a moralist and a cynic engage in a series of debates – wherein naturally the former invariably prevailed – on the subject of wisdom,

penitence, sound counsel, humility and reverence. Making use of the language, literature and ideology of the major Jewish sources (Bible, Talmud and Midrash), as well as the broader philosophical, medical and scientific culture of his environment, he succeeded in adding something of a classic to medieval Hebrew literature.

And more. For although it was in Egypt that in 1281 Isaac came to his senses, it was in Spain, and more particularly at and around Guadalajara in the kingdom of Castile, that his formative years had been spent. Aged thirty-seven when he completed his masterpiece, he had therefore lived through the reign of Alfonso X, *el Sabio*, and it was his experience of the rule of that learned rather than wise (and, alas, really not terribly sensible) monarch that provided the context of his tales and the whetstone for his wit. Variously represented by the author as the Lion or the Eagle, by 1281 Alfonso was discredited and in terminal decline, and, for all that the conventions of the genre prevent the identification of particular animals and tales with specific individuals and occasions, allusions to many of the causes of the sorry state of that sometime cynosure of his age can regularly be descried in the author's fables from an (in fact) not at all distant past. For those with a nose for such things, now as much as then, Isaac's tales are replete with coded commentaries on the monarch's mismanagement of his kingdom's political establishment and its economy and his obsession with astrological and astronomical speculation, as well as providing a rich source for scholars interested in the complexities both of the impact of non-Christian influences on its literary culture and of the inter-confessional realities of the 'land of the three religions'. In short, Raphael Loewe has placed students of many disciplines permanently and deeply in his debt.

The work, first printed by Gershom Soncino in Brescia *c*1491, and also transmitted in numerous manuscripts, attracted the attention of illustrators and became popular enough in Ashkenazi circles to ensure the creation of a number of Yiddish translations. Alas, however, no English translation was ever completed. This state of affairs has now been rectified. Raphael Loewe (BA 1942, MA 1946) stands in a long line of distinguished Johnian hebraists, including Bishop Fisher in the

sixteenth century and Peter Mason and Charles Taylor in the nineteenth. He has devoted a dozen arduous years to providing, with the assistance of the publishers and of a number of generous donors, a sound and carefully vocalised Hebrew text, and detailed annotations concerning variants, sources and interpretation, together with a complete English translation, brilliantly rendered in rhymed couplets in a mildly archaic style based on English models of similar genre, in a manner worthy of the winner of the University's Seatonian Prize for Sacred Poetry in 2000. He has prefaced the translation with some hundred pages of carefully and helpfully reconstructed background concerning Ibn Sahula, his work and his age (including a synopsis 'for philistines . . . and . . . others . . . in a hurry'!) and has concluded the edition with almost another hundred pages of appendices, bibliography and indices. The text is illustrated with the woodcuts from the second edition (Venice, *c*1547) and vignettes from a fifteenth-century Italian manuscript at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, thereby providing bibliophiles with two sumptuously produced volumes, and medievalists, hebraists and cultural historians at large with a veritable feast of learning and literature. In acknowledgement and admiration of his remarkable intellectual achievement, we can do no better than quote (in Loewe's own felicitous translation, vol 1, p151) the words of Ibn Sahula, commending knowledge to his readers and urging honour for the one who best represents it:

To reason open thou thy mind:
Her parable with favour read
And close attention, giving heed
To honour animals assigned
Unto that beast who, of his kind,
In counsel did the rest exceed;
Thus shalt thou, too, in grace succeed
Good sense, respect, and knowledge find.

Peter Linehan and Stefan Reif

Robert Hinde and Joseph Rotblat, *War No More: Eliminating Conflict in the Nuclear Age*. Pp 228. Pluto Press, 2003. ISBN 0-7453-2191-7

This is a remarkable book by a remarkable duo. Its origins and the pulses which run throughout its pages can be traced back sixty years to a young Robert Hinde in an RAF flying-boat pilot over the Atlantic, and a young Joe Rotblat, part of the British scientific team in America in the New Mexico desert, helping to design and build the first atomic weapons. In 1945, once allied intelligence showed the Germans were nowhere near to making a fission bomb, Rotblat resigned from the Manhattan Project. As his colleague Leo Szilard put it: 'in 1945, when we ceased worrying about what the Germans would do to us, we began to worry about what the . . . United States might do to other countries'.

Rotblat and Hinde have been worrying ever since the first nuclear weapons were dropped on Japan in August of that year – and the width of their six-decade concern is as huge as it is justified. For their anxieties range way beyond nuclear-tipped nations whether in the hyper power bracket or in North Korea or the Indian sub-continent. For them the spectrum of violence, and the human, political and economic impulses which fill it, are their target, from machete-driven genocide in Rwanda to the coming generation of 'sophisticated' precision nuclear weapons with conventional arms and nerve gases in between.

It has always been historically true that the armourer has outrun the ethicist, but the gap has never been so wide. This can lead to despair or various forms of denial – one of which is to concentrate on the most likely or immediate peril and to forget the rest. For example, I share with the authors amazement tinged with regret that the near miraculous ending of the Cold War without a nuclear exchange or a Third World War has led to a decade of relative insouciance about nuclear weapons.

I am currently writing a general history of Britain in the 1950s and this morning, before picking up my pen to write this review, I was re-reading the Strath Report of 1955, Whitehall's immensely secret appraisal (of which a personal copy went to every Cabinet Minister) describing what ten 10-megaton hydrogen bombs would do to the UK. This was declassified for my students by the Cabinet Office two years ago.

It is chilling and, quite rightly, it was written in a way matched by no other Cabinet paper I have seen. If it happened, the report said, within an hour or two, 12 million (then a quarter of the population) would be dead and a further 4 million very seriously injured even before fall-out crept across the country doing its vile work. 'Hydrogen bomb war', ministers were told, 'would be total war in a sense not hitherto conceived. The entire nation would be in the front line.' It is comforting (if only a little) that recently declassified UK material of this sort – and files showing how long it took to create tight command and control systems for the British nuclear weapons capability – have recently been drawn to the attention of key figures in the atomic circles of India and Pakistan.

But this has to do with the more dramatic and most intrinsically powerful pieces on what President Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, called 'The Grand Chessboard' of global geopolitics. Among the most sobering of Hinde's and Rotblat's pages are those that simply enumerate the deaths involved in so-called 'limited wars' since Hinde was demobilised from the RAF and Rotblat came home from Los Alamos. The lives foreshortened and the long shadow of trauma, bereavement as well as the social and economic dislocation even the smallest wars bequeath they rightly see as an affront to 'the miraculous products of billions of years of evolution' which our 'allegiance to humanity' leaves us with a 'duty to pass on' to future generations.

They risk accusations of 'mushy idealism' and press on to analyse and depict the 'hard pragmatic reasons for avoiding war'. The fronts on which they argue society must operate to improve the chances of peace stretch from the Security Council of the United Nations, through cabinet rooms and parliaments, the assessments staff of intelligence agencies whose duty it is to warn of coming strife, the R & D laboratories of governments and private companies, to the teaching in schoolrooms and the conduct of religious affairs.

Optimism keeps breaking through the pessimism that the hard road from 1945 could so easily induce among the knowledgeable and the

sensitive who have trodden it. They may think this a strange observation to make, but they remind me of the very last sentence Winston Churchill uttered in the House of Commons in his final speech as Prime Minister. It was a performance full of paradox. After announcing in March 1955 that Britain was to make its own H-bomb he launched into an impassioned survey of the horrors thermonuclear war would inflict upon the world, concluding with the words: 'meanwhile, never flinch, never weary, never despair'. Hinde and Rotblat are like that and will remain so as long as they draw breath.

Peter Hennessy (BA 1969, PhD 1990)

BOOK REVIEWS

Tony Hendra, *Father Joe: The Man who Saved my Soul*. Pp 288. Penguin, 2004. ISBN 0-2411-4314-4

As a rule I decline to review books by old friends: it puts either one's integrity or the friendship at risk. I make an exception of *Father Joe* because I first read it six months ago, prior to its publication in New York and, while not as overwhelmed as many American reviewers – Andrew Sullivan in *The New York Times Book Review* placed it in 'the first tier of spiritual memoirs ever written' – I did find it an exceptional book that merits its success in the United States.

Tony Hendra is the son of an English stained glass artist from a working-class background, and a mother of Irish – though she liked to pretend it was Scottish – extraction. He was raised as a Catholic and at the age of fourteen was almost seduced by a married woman in the parish. The husband, after catching them in *flagrante delicto*, took Hendra for a spiritual dressing down to a Benedictine monk, Dom Joseph Warrilow, at Quarr Abbey on the Isle of Wight. Instead of a stern Catholic disciplinarian, Hendra found in this monk a man who was kind, wise and understanding. Thus started a life-long friendship with Father Joe.

At the age of eighteen Hendra won an Exhibition to St John's College, Cambridge. He only accepted the place after Father Joe's insistence: he wanted instead to become a monk at Quarr. I too was an undergraduate at St John's; there are two flattering paragraphs about me in this book. I remember him as a farouche character with bright blonde hair, a square face and a cast in one eye; articulate, intelligent, invested with an intimidating energy and constantly wrestling with conflicting drives towards a life of Rabelaisian indulgence and a monastic vocation. He always seemed angry.

By his last year at Cambridge, however, he had channelled that rage into iconoclastic lampoons, joining the circle of satirists at the Cambridge Footlights, deciding to 'save the world through laughter' rather than

prayer. He had also discovered sex, and his girlfriend, Judy Christmas – a fellow student and talented actress - became pregnant. They got married, went to America and there had a second child.

What follows is a powerful, intelligent, witty, stimulating and often moving account of Hendra's fall from Grace. In worldly terms he was a success, editing *The National Lampoon* and *Spy* magazine, co-founding *Spitting Image* on British television and starring in the film satirising a touring pop group, *This is Spinal Tap*. But the ups and downs of his career led him to drunkenness, drug-taking and to neglect his family. 'No father could have been more selfish – treating his family like props, possessions, inconveniences, mostly forgetting them completely in his precious mission to save the world through laughter'. He left Judy Christmas for Carla, a bright young American: one of the best set pieces is the story of how she forced him to propose.

The power of the book, however, lies in the way in which the brutal self-revelation is intercut with descriptions of Hendra's visits to Father Joe at Quarr Abbey. However low he sinks, Father Joe remains his friend and mentor – an *ersatz* father. We are not told the method used by Hendra to reproduce Father Joe's words of wisdom presented here in straightforward dialogue. Are they from memory? Did Hendra take notes after each visit? Or is the Father Joe of this autobiography a semi-fictional recreation of the real man? It does not matter: not only great wisdom emerge from this portrayal of a holy man, but there are also engaging and stimulating discussions of moral issues.

Passages in the book are over-written; there is the odd-mixed metaphor; Hendra's political views are sophomoric; some of the references will be obscure to British readers; and his journalistic style and tempo, in my view, excludes *Father Joe* from that 'first tier of spiritual memoirs'. It is, all the same, the journey of a soul. At the end of the book, thanks to Father Joe, the immature, confused, deluded, unreliable, faithless Hendra rediscovers his Catholic Faith and is rewarded with the love of his new family.

The book itself is an exercise in humility that follows this re-conversion. 'With consummate skill, [Father Joe] led me step-by-step to the

realisation that I had become rather an unpleasant person.' But to have chosen as sub-title *The Man Who Saved My Soul* was to tempt fate: Catholics, unlike Calvinists, have to die before they know they are saved. Has Hendra finally achieved the *contemptus mundi* to which he aspires? There is a touch of prurience in the depiction of his near seduction at the age of fourteen; Hendra uses this autobiography to settle scores with professional rivals such as Micheal O'Donoghue, P J O'Rourke and the producer of *Spitting Image*, John Lloyd. 'You p-p-persist in your error, my son', Father Joe tells him. '*Contemptus* does not mean contempt. It means detachment'. And to me he still seems angry.

Piers Paul Read

This review was first published in *The Spectator*, 15 January 2005 and is re-printed with permission.

Jonathan Smith, *Night Windows*. Pp. 372. Abacus, 2004. ISBN 0 349 11531 1

Jonathan Smith came to St John's in 1960 to read English. He is now an English teacher, having taught at Loretto School, Edinburgh, and more recently at Tonbridge School, Kent. Night Windows *was published in 2004 and appeared on Radio Four's 'Book at Bedtime' feature in August 2004.*

According to research published at the end of 2004, a case of identity fraud (in which thieves gather as many bits of information about their victim as possible, then use these stolen personal details to apply for credit cards, loans, a driving licence or even a passport) occurs every four minutes in the UK. Identity theft costs the British economy over £1.3 billion annually, and its prevalence is rising. Jonathan Smith's psychological thriller *Night Windows* is, then, particularly timely: an experience of the crime is explicitly identified as the author's inspiration, as well as being the mainspring of the action. Smith's mysterious fraudster, however, is interested in more than money and passports. In this novel, the assumption of another's identity is the means to an exceptionally nasty revenge.

Patrick Balfour is a dynamic and charismatic man, a champagne socialist who has made his grade. The innovative and inspiring headmaster of an exclusive London school, a successful novelist and a favoured personality of BBC staples such as *Newsnight* and *Start the Week*, Patrick is a love-him-or-hate-him kind of person. Unfortunately for Patrick, someone does indeed hate him. Yet the foundations of his life (of his 'real' identity, one might say) are crumbling even before they are undermined by the more serious subsidence which occurs with his victimisation. There are cracks in the gleaming paintwork from the very beginning: Patrick lives mostly in his school flat, and rarely in the family home, which has become the territory of the wife he has cheated on and the daughter with whom he finds it increasingly difficult to communicate. His son is away in America, and Patrick consistently is tempted by the spectre of his docklands-dwelling, theatre-going editor-lover. Someone, you see, loves him too; this, it turns out, has always been his problem, though it takes a new theatre, a disloyal schoolmaster and a portly Welsh policeman for this to be discovered.

Inside Patrick's head as we are for much of the novel, it is difficult to share the devotion of Daphne, his secretary, for this too-shiny public figure: Smith has created a selfish character with numerous failings and weaknesses and an un-likeable tendency not to care about others, apart, increasingly, from one particular 'other', who appears to be himself. Indeed, at the beginning of the novel, when we discover with Patrick that he is accused of paedophilia and theft, a half-suspicion is raised that he may indeed be the perpetrator. Paradoxically, this suspicion is diminished the more Smith drops hints about literary doppelgängers who turn out to be projections of the self (the book is a regular roll-call of these): to place Patrick in this literary line would be far too obvious, and Smith, one senses, is going to be more shrewd than this. Patrick is himself an identity thief of sorts: as a student, he is an historian who hangs around with the 'English set'; as headmaster he is almost comically obsessed with Churchill as a role-model. The book is peppered with numerous such allusions to his wanting to be other people, and with indications of his ability to appropriate their quirks into his own identity. Moreover, the symbol of his power, his office, overlooks a place of seeming *par excellence* (the Globe Theatre), and the

bickering of his staffroom (and, as it turns out, his trouble) stems from his having turned the school gym into a theatre.

Only Liz, his erstwhile lover, sees through the bluster, and even his passion for her must be articulated through a vicarious engagement with Rodin's art. Liz provides the opportunity for Smith to allow Patrick an amusingly unselfconscious rant about literary egotism: 'Yes, we're still all bloody Romantics, it's all me, it's all self-indulgence and confessions, all me me me, too much wallowing and letting it all hang out, give me the real world with a bit of edge.' By this point in the novel, it is difficult to disagree with this, and even more difficult to care about the protagonist who declares it. Only at the very end of the book, with a twist into the deeper darkness that comes after the apparent climax, do we really feel any confident sense of pity, and this Patrick must share with someone else, someone more seriously weighed down with guilt.

The book, appropriately as it transpires, wears Smith's Cambridge memories heavily, and memory itself becomes an increasingly significant character as the slippery plot twists and turns through a whole shoal of red-herrings. Smith's technique is to chart the disintegration of the certainties of a mind which initially seems acutely self-assured. He plots Patrick's descent into an unappealing, child-like neediness, apparently represented (aptly, in the circumstances) by the pull his daughter's bedroom exerts on him. Patrick's escalating internal chaos, rendered through an increasing estrangement from his mental map, is emphasised by the deliberateness with which the landscape of the novel constantly is delineated: street names, place names, household names, monuments, works of art (life's landmarks, all) are scattered through its pages, and in juxtaposition to their tangible solidity Patrick must become that perennially ambiguous of literary figures, a wanderer.

It is a nice touch that a book so preoccupied with the assumption of another's identity climaxes (the word is appropriate: unlikely as it may sound, Patrick meets his nemesis just as he engages in a quasi-sexual encounter with the imaginary figure of his ex-lover, a mental discourse with whom has become the stabilising scaffolding of his inner world) with another kind of identity-assumption. Although it is not always

subtle, so long as one can suspend disbelief over the various improbabilities of the plot (from passion-at-first-sight in the UL tea room to the fact that, in Patrick Balfour's world, suspicious photographs featuring a famous headmaster and a young boy can be developed in Snappy Snaps in Kensington High Street and yet not make their way straight to the front page of the tabloids), this is a pleasantly unchallenging and compelling novel. Those improbabilities also dictate, however, that as a cautionary tale it is unlikely to send one scurrying to the shredder with bundles of personal documents.

Sarah Houghton

Simon Conway Morris, *Life's solution: inevitable humans in a lonely universe.* Pp 464. Cambridge University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-521-82704-3

Science involves analysis. Yet the whole is always more than the sum of its parts, and full understanding requires re-synthesis of the products of analysis. As knowledge becomes more detailed, few scientists can attempt a synthesis beyond their own field of expertise. Simon Conway Morris is an exception. In this book he strides across a large part of the scientific endeavour – cosmology, geology, molecular biology, biochemistry, botany and zoology – and maybe I have missed some. The range of scholarship that he displays is exemplary.

The book involves two theses and a reflective conclusion. The first section is concerned with the improbability of the circumstances that made life possible. The DNA code is extraordinarily effective, yet based on four (or five) relatively simple molecules arranged in perhaps the only way that could make life possible. Of a million possible genetic codes randomly selected from around 10 to the 18th power possible arrangements, the natural genetic code is strikingly more efficient, and may well be the best possible. What extraordinary concatenation of circumstances produced this arrangement? Biochemists' attempts to synthesise replicating molecules have been a series of magnificent failures. The near-successes have involved highly improbable environments, and none has reached a satisfactory end-point. And the

conditions required for organic evolution are very special, so that it is unlikely that they exist on many other planets in the Universe: 'The solar system may represent a very special arrangement, and earth an equally special abode' (p 87). Some of the issues discussed are of course controversial, and I am certainly not competent to comment on them all, but in the area with which I have some familiarity, there are very few misrepresentations.

Thus the lesson here is that life as we know it is extremely improbable. Yet here we are. Is life 'genuinely a cosmic accident, a chance fluke arising from spinning clouds of dust and gas?' (p 105). Although the dice seem to be loaded many millions to one against it, are we the odd chance? Here is a hint at the covert theme, only partially revealed in the last chapters.

The second thesis concerns the frequency of convergence in evolution. 'Convergence' refers to the occurrence of similar characters in apparently unrelated species. The multitude of examples that Conway Morris produces is certainly impressive. To cite but three: the very special properties of spiders' silk have been emulated by a number of other invertebrates; the principle of the vertebrate eye occurs many times in the animal kingdom; and something that can be called intelligence has appeared in unrelated groups. Convergences may involve similar mechanisms: for instance the protein rhodopsin occurs in photosensitive cells in widely disparate organisms. Or they may depend on quite diverse mechanisms yet serve a common function. In either case, Conway Morris rightly argues that they provide strong evidence (if such is needed) for adaptation by natural selection.

As Conway Morris admits, there are difficulties with the concept of convergence. One is the difficulty of what one means by similar characters. For instance, what exactly do we mean by 'intelligence'? What are the limits of what can be called 'tool-using' in animals? But convergence, however defined, is clearly widespread. To most scientists this is indeed interesting but on reflection not at all surprising. Evolution has involved both convergence and divergence, and both can be understood in terms of evolution by natural selection. An unfilled

niche provides opportunity for divergence, but a given aspect of the environment calls for a given type of solution, so it is not surprising, for example, that burrowing mammals from diverse groups resemble each other.

Conway Morris interprets the frequency of convergence to mean that re-running the tape of evolution would not produce radically different results, but organisms similar to those with which we are familiar. If there are aliens elsewhere in the Universe, they will not be so very different from us. Maybe, but Conway Morris goes further, seeing in the improbability of the circumstances in which life arose and the frequency of convergence, evidence for the channelling of life and thus for creation. Add the facts that evolution has produced a species with a sense of purpose and admiration for moral greatness and, he argues, we must take the claims of theology seriously. Indeed he goes so far as to label as 'intellectually dishonest' some of those 'pretending to derive from evolutionary biology values that stem from classical, Judaeo-Christian and Enlightenment sources' (p 315). I disagree, having myself argued that such virtues as honesty, trustworthiness, caring for others and courage can be seen as the products of (natural and cultural) selection, and that this perspective involves no devaluation of the values that Simon and I share. Therefore, even though he is a fellow Fellow, it would not be in keeping with academic integrity if I were to conceal my reservations, for here he is riding roughshod over a considerable literature that attempts to unify a scientific world-view with what he calls the 'religious instinct'. For someone who already holds theistic beliefs, the evidence that he reviews may provide a possible route for reconciling those beliefs with the findings of evolutionary biologists, but they are a very long way from *requiring* such beliefs. We both wish to understand the emergence of ethical man. He cannot prove that it requires a theistic interpretation, and I cannot prove that it does not. But I prefer the thesis that is not only in keeping with what we know about natural selection but also does not require additional assumptions. And this involves no belittling of the value of belief to those for whom it is important.

But this is not the place to pursue a disagreement that we can discuss in the Green Room. And certainly it should not detract from the achievement of this book, the encyclopaedic knowledge that it portrays, and the courage that attempts such a broad synthesis.

Robert A Hinde

Register of Twentieth-Century Johnians, Volume I, 1900-1949. Pp xviii + 540. St John's College, Cambridge, 2004. ISBN 0-9501085-7-X. Available for purchase from the Johnian Office, St John's College, Cambridge, CB2 1TP (£30 + £6 postage and packaging in UK, £10 overseas).

The publication of Volume I of a register of twentieth-century Johnians represents a significant addition to the printed historical records of the College. The volume is the culmination of several years work on the assembly and organisation of information on members of the College, most recently by Mrs Fiona Colbert since her appointment as Biographical Assistant in 2001. Special thanks are due to her for her meticulous work as Editor but thanks also to her predecessors in the post (Dr Alison Pearn, 1990-1996 and Mrs Ann Roberts, 1996-2001) and to all those who have supplied information, read proofs, added details and corrected errors. The result, as those of you who have already purchased it will know, is a handsome volume of over five hundred pages recording the biographical information on over 6,000 admissions to St John's in the first half of the twentieth century.

Some background might be useful. For members of St John's and all other Colleges before 1900 Venn's great work is still indispensable[1]. There is nothing comparable for the twentieth century. Several Colleges have published lists of more recent alumni but the overall picture for Cambridge is uneven. For St John's there have been periodic efforts to record the occupation of rooms but, valuable though these are as records of names, they do not include any biographical information[2]. To remedy this, and with the College's 500th Anniversary in 2011 in mind, there has been a long-term plan to update and publish biographical information for St John's for the period since 1900 – an enormous and

time-consuming task. The first step was the creation from our original archival sources of a computer-based Biographical Archive relying in the first instance on the Admissions Register and tutorial records. This Archive now forms the basis of the College's record of its members and is under continuous compilation and revision.

For various reasons it was decided to begin to fill the biographical gap with a record of those admitted to the College between 1900 and 1949, not least, it has to be admitted, because so many members are still alive to supply information and to verify their entries. Arranged alphabetically, the length of entries varies considerably. In her admirable introduction Fiona Colbert explains why this is so and draws attention to the difficulties of putting together a record of this kind. Details vary according to what is available from College records, to the varying life-paths of individuals and to the wishes of the person concerned or their families, especially at this time of increased sensitivity to the availability of personal information. For some there are long entries containing details of career, appointments, honours etc, while for others there is little more than the basic information on date of admission, date of birth, parents, schools and College tutor. Some of the shorter entries are, sadly, for those whose lives were cut short in war and who are commemorated on the memorial in the College Chapel. At the end of this volume is a list of members by year of admission as recorded annually in pen and ink in the Admissions Register, a tradition faithfully carried on to this day by Professor John Crook.

Despite draft entries having been sent to members for their correction there will inevitably be omissions and errors in a compilation of this size. Members are encouraged to write in if they spot them. Addresses are deliberately excluded not only to preserve privacy (but the Johnian Office is willing to forward mail if current addresses are known) but because they change so often. As stated in the introduction: 'the aim has been to produce a work which is accurate at the time of writing and does not contain information that will go out of date'.

Although this is primarily a biographical reference work, what comes through very clearly is the range of backgrounds, social and

geographical, from which the College has drawn its members and also the major contribution subsequently made by them to society here and abroad. Readers admitted from 1950 onwards please take note! Your turn will come in Volume II, which it is hoped will be published in due course. In the meantime all members with a deep and abiding interest in the College should have this volume on their shelves. You only have to write in with a cheque!

Robin Glasscock

1 J and J A Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: a biographical list of all known students, graduates, and holders of office at the University of Cambridge to 1900*, 1922-1954

2 G C Moore Smith, *Lists of Past Occupants of Rooms in St John's College*, 1895
Revd E E Raven, *List of Occupants of Rooms in St John's College, 1895-1936*, 1936
N F M Henry and N C Buck eds., *Use and Occupancy of Rooms in St John's College, Parts I and II*, 1985

N F M Henry and A C Crook (eds), *Use and Occupancy of Rooms in St John's College.*
Part I: Use from early times to 1983
Part II: List of occupants 1936-1976

The two volumes of *Use and Occupancy of Rooms* form one of the most extraordinary books I have seen in a publishing career spanning more than thirty years, and the twentieth anniversary of their first appearance in 1985 is a suitable moment to salute a work of magnetic fascination, especially for those who were at the College between 1936 and 1976, the period covered by the second volume.

Scandalously few Johnians have ever heard of the book. Just occasionally a copy slips into the hands of someone who has learnt of its existence from an overheard remark across the Long Room or a whispered aside in the bar of the Garrick Club ('I hear old ***** actually *asked* to live in North Court …'), but otherwise this remarkable work has mostly gone unnoticed. It is time to right that wrong.

Use and Occupancy of Rooms is part of a long St John's tradition. In 1895 G C Moore Smith published in *The Eagle* the first comprehensive record

of the names of Fellows, their pupils and the rooms they occupied, his historical span reaching back to the sixteenth century. In 1936 the Reverend E E Raven brought the story up to that year, and the present work is a monument to the enthusiasm and benefaction of the late Norman Henry, who died in 1983 not long before the two volumes were ready for the printer. His work was diligently completed by A C Crook, N C Buck and G C Evans.

The first volume, *Use from Early Times to 1983*, chronicles the changing use of College rooms over the centuries. Extensive illustrations include a coloured fold-out of College buildings in 1982 and forty-three architectural drawings by A C Crook of rooms of particular interest. Among these are plans of E staircase, New Court, which give graphic expression to George Watson's famous one-liner: 'There's an octagonal bathroom in New Court – I wonder if they've found an octagonal Fellow to go in it.'

This volume is very illuminating on the general history of rooms in College. In the original First Court, most staircases went only to the first-floor level, the second-floor garret rooms being accessible from the first-floor set. The Fellow occupied the set, and his students the garret space: 'Consequently the newly emerging aristocracy and gentry of the Tudor period could send their sons to the Colleges of the ancient universities without fear that they would be promptly debauched in the manner indicated for medieval Continental universities by Boccaccio and Rabelais.'

So far, so worthy, but it is in Part II that the real magic lies. This volume stretches to nearly 400 pages and consists principally of just two long lists. The first supplies the occupants – men only in those days – of every room in College, from A1 First Court to room 13 at 12 Madingley Road, in chronological order between 1936 and 1976. The second lists every occupant, from *Aarons, J J E* (C1 Third Court from Michaelmas Term 1956 to Easter Term 1958) to *Zoller, K N* (who spent Easter Term 1943 in B2 First Court).

The *List of Occupants 1936-1976* captivates in various ways. For one, there's the allure of any long list of names, for whatever purpose it has been compiled. Rowan Atkinson touched many funny-bones with his on-stage rendition of the schoolmaster taking the register – 'Ainsley,

Babcock, Bland, Carthorse, Dint, Ellsworth-Beast Major, Ellsworth-Beast Minor ...' – but surely the finest example of the genre was the *List of Huntingdonshire Cabmen*, one of the enduring creations of the humorist J B Morton, 'Beachcomber' in the *Daily Express* between 1924 and 1975. This magisterial work (3 volumes) provided a list of the cabmen's names in Cambridgeshire's neighbouring county from Adams, B R to Younghusband, F, and spawned the *Anthology of Huntingdonshire Cabmen*, of which one reviewer (according to Beachcomber) wrote: 'Here are old favourites such as Whackfast, E W, Fodge, S, and Nurthers, P L. The index is accurate, and the introduction by Cabman Skinner is brief and workmanlike.' It is a measure of the iconic status of the *List of Huntingdonshire Cabmen* that in the 1968 BBC television series based on Beachcomber's columns, extracts from it were solemnly declaimed by Sir Michael Redgrave.

The St John's *List of Occupants*, while in no way comic, is destined for similarly lofty heights, for while many a harmless hour can be spent checking out the ghosts who inhabited – or were later to inhabit – your old College rooms, the book has a serious role as a biographical tool. The extent to which character and achievement are shaped by environment remains a key issue of social science, and in that context this volume provides a uniquely valuable resource, allowing as it does the opportunity to chart the in-College habitats of subsequently famous Johnians.

Take Gavyn Davies: the distinguished Goldman Sachs economist and, until unseated by the Hutton Report last year, Chairman of the BBC spent his second year in C3 New and his third in G27 Cripps. But his first home had been D1 Chapel – what an estate agent might call 'the environs of Second Court'. Moral: you *can* get on in life after having lived in Chapel Court.

Another Chapel Court boy made good is Mike Brearley, most cerebral of England cricket captains. He opened his Johnian innings in C7 Chapel, moved to F7 New, then went out to the boundary of room 9A in 69 Bridge Street.

Jonathan Miller's two years in College were passed in F2 and E12 New Court. So he spent his first year on the ground floor and his second right

at the top of the grandest New Court staircase – and maintained that heady trajectory into the cultural stratosphere.

Peter Hennessy, currently the leading contemporary historian in Britain, worked his way back in architectural time. He started in C11 Cripps (in 1966 he was the first ever occupier of that room, which he describes as 'utilitarian but not lovable'); then H13 in early nineteenth-century New Court ('eccentrically atmospheric'); then on to the Elizabethan glory of E6 Second ('exquisite, but the price to pay for beauty was a growing chill as there was no central heating and it was a very cold winter').

Douglas Adams spent his first year in A5 Cripps, and his second at 69 Bridge Street, presumably because it was handier for Footlights than any room in College: there he inhabited room 9B, next door to the very 9A which had been occupied ten years earlier by Mike Brearley. Who said ley lines don't exist?

Adams spent his third year in that Versailles of SJC rooms, K6 Second Court, the magnificent triple set which we all occupied in our wildest fantasies. The guys who actually got to live up there were the true *jeunesse dorée*; they had no spots, spoke in complete sentences, wore their sunglasses on the top of their heads without them slipping off, never ever spilled beer on their trousers, walked out with girls from Newnham with long shiny hair and firsts in Part I Classics, and were destined for serious jobs in the City or the media. They would amass huge fortunes, and years later repay their debt to the College with a discreet but hefty endowment, while the rest of us could only ponder how life could have been so different had *we* lived in K6 Second.

But you will look in vain in these pages for other College luminaries. For example, Edwards, J K O – later to be immortalised as 'Professor' Jimmy Edwards in such radio classics as *Take It From Here* and *Does The Team Think?* (and, among many other achievements, founder of the Handle Bar Club for men with large moustaches) – matriculated in 1938 and took his BA in 1941, but seems not to have lived in College at any time.

My own occupancy, from Michaelmas Term 1969 to Easter Term 1972, is listed as follows:

Magee, B S
M69–E70 H2 New
M70–E71 A3 New
M71–E72 G1 First

That apparently unremarkable sequence contains the key to my post-SJC life. Those three rooms are – more or less – on the main thoroughfare through the College, and passing friends (and sometimes complete strangers) would often drop in unannounced for a bacon sandwich or a beaker of the blushful Mateus Rosé. This engendered in me a social flexibility which has remained both a curse and a blessing ever since.

More to the point, perhaps, those three rooms share one singular feature: *they are all on the ground floor*. Volume I of *Use and Occupancy* notes that in the early days of the College 'ground floor sets were damper and therefore colder' – and as such were suitable for the lower orders rather than the senior Fellows. Exactly how far this randomly dispensed social stigma left me scarred, and how far the inability to slip the surly bonds of earth coloured the rest of my life, I leave to my biographers to unravel.

Get hold of this book, read carefully and reflect – then hope that the *List of Occupants* will be continued beyond 1976 so that later generations may benefit. For whether you are in the 1936-1976 cohort or not, its lesson is timeless and universal.

You can take the man out of North Court, but you cannot take North Court out of the man.

Sean Magee

Use and Occupancy of Rooms is available from the Johnian Office, St John's College, Cambridge, CB2 1TP. A charge will be made for postage and packing.

Ulinka Rublack, *Reformation Europe*. Pp. 226. Cambridge University Press, 2005. ISBN 0-521-00369-5

The history of the Reformation in Europe is very well trodden ground. It is not often that something really new comes along. But here it is: Ulinka Rublack's *Reformation Europe* is a masterful survey that opens some windows and sets fresh air blowing around the scholar's desk.

Structurally, the book is simple, deceptively so. Four chapters cover: Luther and his impact; the general course of the Reformation; Calvin and his impact; and the experience of religious life in the world that the Reformation created. Intellectually, it is a rich and powerful blend, and to appreciate the special contribution of this book it is necessary to set it against the background of the scholarly work done on the Reformation in the twentieth century.

In its understandable reaction against the 'confessional' or sectarian historiography of the Reformation that held sway until at least the 1950s, the previous generation of social historians came close at times to offering us the Reformation with the religion left out. Rublack stands firmly in the social and anthropological school of Reformation history, but hers is social history with the religion (and indeed the politics) put back. In a certain sense, the 'social history of the Reformation' which dominated scholarly research in the later twentieth century was an attempt to play down the impact of 'great men and big ideas' by putting the historical emphasis on 'the people'. The undeniable achievement of this enterprise was to teach us, as Rublack puts it, that 'Luther and Calvin were not successful because people were waiting to hear their brilliant doctrine and only needed to hear the truth.'

The irony of the 'social history of the Reformation' was that as historians learned more and more about the spread of Reformation doctrines through the media of the sixteenth century, it became more and more clear just how important the personal contribution of Martin Luther actually was. This was something that Bob Scribner first began to make clear in an influential monograph on the print culture of the Reformation. Luther was, in short, a classic 'charismatic leader' and the subject of a veritable personality cult. What Rublack adds to this,

making her chapter on Luther particularly interesting, is the insight that Luther's charisma and media impact were not the casual outcomes of those impersonal social 'forces' beloved of an earlier generation of would-be scientific social historians, but the intended outcome of some very conscious and clever manipulation of the sixteenth-century media. What she calls 'the construction of Luther's charisma' was achieved by close control of both the printed word and the printed image, a control which she documents convincingly. The success of this is most tellingly illustrated in her citation of a comment from a letter of Melanchthon to Luther in 1530, in which Melanchthon assures his leader in almost biblical terms that 'apart from you no one can comfort us'. Nothing could show more clearly how the prophet of a religion that allowed no mediator other than Christ assumed himself the role of mediator between men and God. The other main theme of the opening chapter is the importance of Wittenberg itself in the construction and development of the Luther phenomenon. Rublack's exploration of the fashioning of this specific individual in this specific city is a brilliant exercise in using microhistory to illuminate the 'big picture'.

Similar themes emerge in her treatments of Erasmus and Zwingli in her second chapter, but her most important message here is how quickly the spreading Reformation movement escaped Luther's control, for all his undeniable personal prominence within it. With Calvin and Geneva she pulls off much the same trick as with Luther and Wittenberg, and in her final chapter, on Protestant religious culture, she draws on the best of recent research (including her own) to challenge still prevalent preconceptions of the Reformation as a 'modern' and 'rational' phenomenon, at once explaining to us how different that Reformation world was from our own, while also managing through skilful deployment of evidence from everyday life, to make it real and accessible to us.

No two historians would write the same book, and had I undertaken the well-nigh impossible task of cramming the Reformation into a couple of hundred pages, I would have given a little more attention, for example, to the extraordinary intellectual achievement of Martin Luther: arguably, his radical and revolutionary ideas do not get their full credit here. And the reference to the 'Dominican Duns Scotus and the

Franciscan Thomas Aquinas' is not only something to make medievalists wince but also a sign that the theological grasp is not always assured. But in telling the story of the Reformation for a post-Christian generation, this book does well to emphasise that the Reformation was indeed a religious phenomenon, made and experienced by people for whom religion was often more than a mere matter of life and death.

Too often, the short historical survey can be a lacklustre exercise in pedestrian summary and reportage. But once in a while a scholar in complete command of the subject invests real intellectual capital in the enterprise, and produces an invigorating and dizzying distillate of the latest scholarship, distinctively flavoured with the fruits of her own original research. And that is what we have here. The result is an accessible and readable yet profoundly scholarly book. In a busy world that is paradoxically besotted with big books, it is mercifully short. It is an analytical and argumentative book, full of fascinating information and illuminating insights, clearly structured and crisply written. The footnotes are kept to a minimum, and the bibliography is in the best sense of the word modest – for this brief bibliography is designed to help interested students go further, not to scare them off with an exhaustive listing of the vast reading on which this study is in fact based. The series in which it appears is aimed at students and teachers, but it is required reading for anyone with any interest, professional or amateur, in the Reformation. My one worry is that through appearing in a textbook series – albeit one of the best textbook series on the market – it will hide its light under a bushel, leading readers and reviewers alike to overlook the massive amount of research and reflection that is needed to sustain a synthesis as elegant and powerful as this.

Ulinka Rublack informs us, in dedicating this book to the memory of the late Bob Scribner that he, the doyen of modern Reformation historians, was originally lined up to write it. Those are big shoes to step into. But while her professional colleagues will share her regret that he was not given the time to fulfil this commission, we can reassure her with the thought that, though he would not have written the same book, he could hardly have written a better one.

Richard Rex

BOOK REVIEWS

J.A. Charles and A.L. Greer, *Light Blue Materials: The Department of Materials Science & Metallurgy, University of Cambridge: a History*. Pp. 272. Maney, 2005. ISBN 1-904350-35-6. [Royalties from the sale of this book go to a student-assistance fund in the Department.]

Descriptive phrases such as 'stone age' or 'iron age' remind us that the human race has developed and used various classes of material over several millenia. For most of that time progress depended on intelligent deductions from empirical observations combined with (sometimes inspired) experiments. Nevertheless, the urge to gather and publish systematic information has long been hard to resist. The major work *De Re Metallica* by Georgius Agricola was published as long ago as 1556 but it was to be some centuries before the study of metals or other useful materials was accepted as a proper activity for a university. In the UK, it was not until the nineteenth-century that the need to provide education in science and engineering at the highest levels was finally recognised: the culmination of a process that had started at a basic level with the industrial revolution.

In Cambridge, the Natural Sciences Tripos was first examined in 1851, although the University did not immediately provide facilities for teaching practical aspects of those subjects, and education in engineering gradually emerged from the Mathematical Tripos, the initial appointment to the Chair of Mechanism and Applied Mechanics being made in 1875. A few colleges, pressed by influential Fellows of the time, did set up laboratories. The long-since demolished chemical laboratory in St John's, which was situated behind New Court, was an important example, while Sidney Sussex provided the base for the ground-breaking, high precision work on phase equilibria in alloys by Heycock and Neville. This book charts the rise of the present-day Department of Materials Science & Metallurgy from antecedents in such laboratories, through the provision of space for research and then teaching in Metallurgy in the University's Chemical Laboratory, to the establishment of an independent Department of Metallurgy. Also, the subsequent evolution of its title to reflect the growing incorporation of

research and teaching involving other classes of technologically important materials: organic polymers, ceramics, magnetic and electronic materials, superconductors and most recently bio-medial materials, with work on metals continuing to play an important part. The authors have strong connections with the two Colleges arguably most closely involved with the emergence of Metallurgy as an independent academic discipline in Cambridge and with the Department: Dr Charles, a Fellow of St John's, joined the Department in 1960 and, although now retired, is frequently to be found there; Professor Greer, a Fellow of Sidney Sussex, is currently the Head of Department.

The book consists of two approximately equal parts, the first an illustrated history and the second a compilation of information including the Class Lists for Part II from its inauguration in 1938, and for the much more recently instituted Part III from 1999, PhD graduates from 1932 onwards, with the title of their dissertations, and a substantial selection of group photographs starting from 1938. Above all, the photographs demonstrate the dramatic increase in size of the Department since its creation, as well as the great changes in the demographic characteristics of the staff and graduate students over that period. Although one might have supposed that all, or at least most, of this information would have been available in one place, regrettably that was not the case and the authors are to be congratulated on recovering and assembling so much from different sources! Although not possible within the restricted confines of the present book, much interesting information can be mined from this compilation. For example, the Part II Class Lists record the names of over 130 Johnians, many of whom have gone on to successful careers in academia or industry directly building on the subject while others have made their mark elsewhere. The data also reveals how the numbers of undergraduate and graduate students have evolved while the titles of the PhD dissertations tell a lot about the historical development of the subject within the Department and more widely.

After a survey of the national background in the nineteenth century and a brief account of the University's acquisition and development of the

New Museums Site, some or other parts of which have been the Department's main base throughout, we are led systematically through the chronological sequence leading from the laboratories of St John's and, especially, Sidney Sussex to the successive funding by the Goldsmiths' Company of a Readership in 1908, the erection of the single storey 'Goldsmiths' Laboratory', still in use today, in 1920, and the endowment of a Chair, first occupied in 1932. After outlining the events leading up to the creation of the Goldsmiths' Professorship, separate sections deal with major events during the tenure of successive Heads of Department. Of particular interest, not least because hitherto buried in archives, are the analyses of possible reasons underlying the choices made by the Electors of the first two Goldsmiths' Professors: Professor Hutton and Professor Austin, one on each side of World War II. Not every topic is easily allocated to these sections and so a considerable number of panels are interspersed in the text, most consisting of brief accounts of the contributions of various individuals to the work of the Department over the years.

Of major significance amongst points of Johnian interest is the contribution of George Liveing (Fellow 1853-1860 and 1880-1924, and the driving force behind the establishment of the University Chemical Laboratory) in supporting Heycock and so nurturing the development of metallurgy. Without Living's support one may wonder if metallurgy would ever have grown and achieved independence in Cambridge. An early Johnian researcher in metallurgy, working on optical metallography in the Engineering Department around the end of the 19th century, was Walter Rosenhain, who subsequently moved to the NPL and is commemorated by the annual Rosenhain Medal and Prize of (what is now) the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining. A rather more recent example is the work pioneered by Dr Charles himself, linking metallurgy to archaeology, long a notable subject in St John's.

Generally the text retains the reader's interest well and flows smoothly, although a tricky problem arises for multiple authors writing about an institution with which they are closely associated when it comes to mentioning the activities of just one or other of them. Use of the first

person is difficult but use of the third, the authors' choice, is also not ideal. The development of research activities from the days of Heycock and Neville onwards is well represented while the parallel evolution of the undergraduate courses is somewhat less detailed. There is no index as such but the Contents pages are very informative. A rather small number of typographical errors and one or two historically uncertain statements await the eagle-eyed reader; it is a major achievement to have so few!

Anyone acquainted with life in the Department in any period will find much of interest in this book. Johnian readers unconnected with the Department will appreciate the College's involvement in its history and can enjoy the political undercurrents, academic and national, around the emergence of a new academic discipline.

John Leake

John Iliffe, *The African AIDS Epidemic: A History*. Pp.224. James Currey Publishers, 2006. ISBN 0852558902

It is difficult to fully appreciate the scale and human impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic from any single perspective, be it bio-medical or sociological. Early this decade Nelson Mandela declared that the virus has caused more deaths in Africa than 'the sum total of all wars, famines, and floods, and the ravages of other deadly diseases such as malaria.' By mid-decade, experts agreed that the epidemic was merely reaching 'the end of the beginning'. The most recent statistics tell us that over 25 million Africans have HIV/AIDS, 13 million have already died of the disease and 12 million children have been orphaned, but the current global prognosis is that the worst is yet to come. Against this background, it is surprising that, until now, there has been no historical account of the epidemic in Africa, let alone the comprehensive, scholarly and human-centred history of the African AIDS epidemic that John Iliffe has written.

A brief outline of key themes in the book illustrates its breadth and depth. There is an explanation of the origins and nature of the virus,

discussion of the unique progress of the epidemic across the African continent, and the circumstances that have exacerbated its impact. Detailed attention is given to the responses of governments, international bodies and NGOs, the effects on healthcare services, the search for remedies and vaccines, and wider implications of new bio-medical developments. Iliffe also addresses the moral and political controversies associated with HIV/AIDS and the diverse impacts of the epidemic on households, social systems and the economy. In short, the book represents a much-needed in-depth historical account of the most serious epidemiological and human catastrophe of modern times.

When President Thabo Mbeki famously asked why Africa had suffered the most terrible epidemic, his provocative and partial answer focused on underdevelopment, poverty and exploitation. John Iliffe tackles the question in more profound terms from a sequential historical standpoint. The advantage of his approach lies in how it reveals four distinct, if inter-connected historical dimensions to the epidemic which explain its scale and impact in Africa.

First, Iliffe argues that the growth of the epidemic makes sense only if understood as involving a sequence of events. He describes and analyses the obvious contributing factors of poverty, underdevelopment and social inequalities of power relationships, and considers debates about culturally distinctive African sexual systems, but his decisive answer to Mbeki's questions is 'time'. In Iliffe's view, the fact that Africa has had the worst epidemic is because AIDS had established itself in the general population long before anyone fully recognised the existence of the disease.

A second advantage of the historical approach is that it allows for elucidation of how and why the virus evolved with such speed and complexity. Iliffe highlights the uniqueness of the process (and the virus itself) as it evolved under the direct, horrified gaze of medical scientists, and shows how the distinctive characteristics of the virus have shaped both the disease, and all human responses to it.

A third valuable consequence of an historical perspective on HIV/AIDS is that many of the most critical aspects of the epidemic come into

clearest focus only when viewed against the backdrop of urbanisation and the massive demographic growth of the twentieth century. All of Iliffe's expertise as a long-standing leading authority on African history is brought to bear in his evaluation of key factors and processes across the continent, leading to his argument that under the epidemic must be seen as a consequence of key historical factors: those associated with Africa's colonial legacy as well as developments of the later twentieth-century.

Finally, the historical perspective reveals the extent to which the epidemic has changed over time and how it continues to mutate and evolve. In some parts of Africa, the prevalence of HIV has declined, while other countries continue to experience an explosive expansion of infection rates. There is a fascinating account of shifts in infection rates between men and women, richer and poorer sectors of the population, and changes in human responses to the disease. At every turn, such changes require and provoke new questions to be asked about human rights, local and global inequalities, and survival strategies, which must surely concern all human populations, everywhere.

John Iliffe has described his book as having a 'modest purpose'. His intention was to provide an introduction for students and other interested readers to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa through a synthesis of existing literature, organised in historical form. He has greatly exceeded his objective to produce a remarkable history, one which will appeal to a wide and diverse readership. John has not only written an accessible history of the impacts of AIDS across Africa, but has also made a valuable contribution to contemporary understanding of the bio-medical, social and cultural implications of the epidemic that will affect many future generations. This book will be an excellent general-purpose resource for anyone interested in Africa in general, or the spread of HIV/AIDS in particular. It provides a key starting-point for any student seeking an in-depth understanding of the complexity of this contemporary human tragedy. At the same time, specialist readers familiar with the technical literature on AIDS epidemiology or pharmacology will find its historical and socially-orientated perspective illuminating.

This is a very important book which fills a profound gap in scholarship on Africa and HIV/AIDS. It is opens up questions of great importance and provides us with an insightful basis for further reflection and research on what surely must be the most terrible catastrophe of modern times.

Helen Watson

Richard Llewllyn Brown, *A Classical Vet in Modern Times*. Pp. 287. Athena Press, 2005. ISBN 1844013308

Richard Llewellyn Brown and I just missed each other. He graduated as a veterinary surgeon from St John's in June 1981 while I matriculated into the same course that October. But apart from that near miss, our two ships sailed very different courses through life. To the extent that this story is autobiographical, its author's pre-University education, immersed as it was in public school Latin and Greek, couldn't have been more different from my comprehensive schooling. And while it might be thought that all veterinary surgeons must have pretty similar work experiences, his life working in areas as diverse as a veterinary officer in Mayan Indian territory and a partner in a mixed practice in Aberdeenshire has been poles apart from my academic life in Cambridge, teaching Ophthalmology at the veterinary school and Pathology to the veterinary and medical students at St John's.

And yet there are always connections linking us. I was expecting these to be veterinary of course but never classical. Yet even in the first few pages of the book, Brown is taken back in a dream to his school days where the book on his desktop was Kennedy's Latin Grammar. The same Benjamin Hall Kennedy that is, who as Regius Professor of Greek, looks down on me in my rooms in First Court as I supervise. Those who learnt their pathology from Dr Derek White in the same rooms, as indeed did Richard Llewellyn Brown, may remember Kennedy's stern nineteenth-century visage glaring down on them. Yet Kennedy himself was a link between classical times and today – he was one of the first to support women's admission to the University, playing a prominent role

in the founding of Girton and Newnham Colleges. He would, I am sure, have enjoyed the copious classical references in this book. Not perhaps quite so much the veterinary allusions, be they neurologically compromised lambs or cats with abscesses. For even though our professional lives might be so widely separated, these common cases do connect us.

For, if you'll excuse the phrase, there are always dogs' anal glands to be squeezed wherever you are in the world and regularly owners quite as fractious as their snarling pets. So in some of the stories meshed into this book I can readily empathise with the author. In others – the caesarian section performed on a cow half way up a cold dark mountainside for instance – I can only count myself lucky not be in Brown's boots! For as the blurb on the back cover tells us, 'laughter and information are offered in large measure… in this highly detailed and humorous picture of rural life'.

My problem with this book is that I can never quite understand why the general public would be interested in the nitty gritty of a 'downer' cow paralysed after calving, or an ailing calf. But as James Herriot showed thirty years ago and the myriad of veterinary programmes on the television these days, there's something about this way of life and the animal and human interactions that characterize it, which does seem to draw in those who have never experienced it, except perhaps from the client's side of the consulting room table. If you are the sort of person attracted by such stories this book will I'm sure be, as they would say, right up your street. And even more so perhaps, as you are reading this review in *The Eagle*. For many of the general populace might be put off by the copious literary and classical references herein, while old Johnians are, I guess, more likely to revel in those than readers without any knowledge of Persius, Pirsig, Swift and Shakespeare to name but four.

The veterinary aspects of the book are, I fear, not so much 'modern times', as an area fast disappearing from practice life. The majority of the examples given are what we would call fire-brigade work – rushing to an ailing pony, an emergency operation on a sick cow or a house-call to a sickly lamb. The economics of farming these days, in the wake of

Foot and Mouth and BSE, mean that, in the south of England at least, such veterinary work is becoming a rarity. As such, this book is a welcome reminder of a life's work so sadly slipping away from many vets who work entirely in small animal practice, rarely setting foot out of the practice to see an animal in a back garden, let alone a hillside.

The detail noted above, brought out in the discussions between Brown and his old Classics Master, who mysteriously wants to 'see practice' with him as he goes from farm to farm, ranges from the competition commission's rulings on the prescribing of veterinary medicines to the clinical details of treating a prolapsed uterus in a cow. This detail is somewhat perplexing in its intensity until the very end of the book when all is revealed. Yet I am not sure whether non-veterinary readers will really enjoy being immersed to quite such depth in the clinical niceties – or is it nasties? – of diarrhoeric calves or a horse riddled with lice.

Having said that, the next book on my reading list this holiday is *Saturday* by Ian McEwan which delves into the intricacies of neurosurgery in equal gory detail. I'm finding that a fascinating read, so perhaps it is just my familiarity with the veterinary world that makes Brown's book a somewhat less gripping read as far as I'm concerned.

Brown's last classical quotation, 'Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli – the fate of books depends on the capacity of the reader' (Terentianus Maurus, *De Literis Syllabis*) probably shows that I am hardly the ideal reviewer for this book. More than overly familiar with the veterinary world but with no classical education whatsoever, I feel in too deep already with the veterinary aspects of the book but, if you'll excuse my staying with watery allusions, all at sea with the classical quotations!

That didn't stop me from enjoying the read however, and I am sure that many will revel in this book. I can warmly recommend it as a thoroughly good eye-opener on a veterinary lifestyle that is all too quickly ebbing away and an education that, as I said right at the beginning, I never had the opportunity to enjoy in the first place!

David Williams

BOOK REVIEWS

Professor Sir Jack Goody, *The Theft of History.* Pp. 342. Cambridge University Press, 2006. ISBN 0521870696

By 'the theft of history' Professor Goody means the western practices ('the west' meaning the civilization established by formerly Latin-speaking western Europe and its colonization of the two American continents) firstly, of writing the history of human society as an extension of its own history, and secondly, of claiming either priority or uniqueness in the development of several components of human history and culture. Those he selects include feudalism, capitalism, freedom, democracy and love. He considers these claims a 'theft' of history from other cultures, mainly those of western and eastern Asia, whose history remains marginalized, subordinated and in large measure, unwritten. It may be noted that not to write the history of another culture is only one way of 'stealing' it; another is to write it, as many debates, notably in Pacific studies, over 'who owns history?' make clear. If 'we' do not want 'our' history to be stolen, we must write it ourselves; Professor Goody's argument, however, leads in the end to the question how far any human group may call itself 'we' and claim that 'we' have a history, are making and willing it, and are living in it.

In the first place, however, 'we' do make these claims. Professor Goody is a social anthropologist; the writer of this review is a historian of historiography. As the latter discipline sees it, 'histories' are written by, and addressed to, members of a self-conscious (and therefore invented) community – city, state, nation, civilization – who desire to understand it and their relationships within it, in the full knowledge that the story they have to tell is contested, difficult and open to reinterpretation. Not all communities feel the need to write 'histories' in this sense, but 'the west' has needed and produced them for some centuries. Such histories are necessarily autocentric and ethnocentric, and when 'others' outside the community appear in them, 'we' face the choice between excluding them and including them, neither of which is ethnically just or intellectually satisfactory. At present, furthermore, there is an ideology

which aims to use the 'other' to undermine the 'self' wherever the latter appears. Professor Goody is not party to this programme, but like the rest of us faces the need to decide what to do about it.

'Histories' of this kind began taking on a critical and disciplinary character in the eighteenth century, when 'national' histories – notably in France and England – were written around the relations of church to state and law to society, while – notably in France and Scotland – the emergence of political economy from jurisprudence and moral philosophy led to the construction of theoretical narratives of the growth (termed the 'progress') of human society. These were necessarily based on the historical experience of western Europe – Roman, 'Gothic', Catholic, Protestant, Enlightened – because they arose from the need of inhabitants of that civilization to understand it and themselves. Histories in both senses appeared, however, at a time when expanding skills in oceanic navigation – Professor Goody has little to say about these – were enabling Europeans to colonise the Americas and impinge upon the major civilizations of Asia and many other societies of the planet. The problem of including the 'other' in history now began becoming the problem of the 'other' as the subject of domination; but 'others' had appeared in history already.

The world histories, or histories of human society, that now appeared were Eurocentric in the sense that they had been invented to account for the history of Europe; tools for understanding other histories had not yet been developed. They had a Eurasian dimension in so far as European (and more dimly Chinese) history was organized in terms involving recurrent invasions by Central Asian nomads; but shepherd peoples fitted into the Scottish stadial scheme devised by Kames, Smith and Ferguson, whereas in the history of pre-Columbian America they could not be found. Native Americans were therefore relegated to the hunter-gatherer condition known as 'savagery'; while the city civilizations of Asia, which did not seem to fit the schemes of the emergence of systems of law from systems of ecclesiastical control, were relegated to the much older concept of 'despotism'. Such were the beginnings of Eurocentric history at the outset of two centuries of Euro-American domination of the planet.

Professor Goody's problem is how to overthrow notions of European 'uniqueness', leading to European domination, without at the same time denying European history any autonomy of its own; he does not wish to do this, but he has to avoid it. His targets are less historians of Europe than European authors of world history – Max Weber and Karl Marx, Perry Anderson and Norbert Elias, even Joseph Needham (whose *Science and Civilization in China* is hailed as the greatest 'western' achievement in non-'western' history, but still scrutinized to see how far it attributes uniqueness to Euro-American science). Most (though not Elias) were Marxist or post-Marxist, and the professional historian may groan when asked once more to consider whether 'feudalism' was a necessary prelude to 'capitalism' (Professor Goody rightly concludes that it was not).

But readers of *The Theft of History* may not be confronted by the problem of Marxism, or any other comprehensive scheme, so much as by the problem of post-modernism: that is, whether the concept of uniqueness reinforces human autonomy or is to be used to abolish it. Professor Goody attacks the notion that 'democracy' is uniquely 'western' by demonstrating that ancient Phoenicians or modern Ghanaians have managed to assemble and govern themselves; he does something similar with the notion of 'romantic love'. But this is surely to miss the point, which is that ancient Greeks and modern Europeans have written the bitterly-contested notion of 'democracy' into their histories, and at times incorporated it in their practices, to a point where it has acquired a uniquely 'western' meaning in a history as uniquely 'western'. To know whether other human cultures have done anything similar, we should have to read their histories, their literature, or whatever they may have instead of 'history' and 'literature'. It is salutary to inform the inhabitants of any autonomous culture that they have borrowed from others, as well as from each other, in the process of inventing themselves; but in a human world where all is invention, it is the process of invention that counts. This is one reason why everything in history is unique if you look at it long enough; another is that the circumstances in which invention goes on may be discovered and explored without limit.

Professor Goody, an anthropologist rather than a historian, concludes that instead of unified schemes of world history, we need what he calls a 'grid' – sets of generalized expectations, used to see how far and in what ways they were realized in particular times, places and contexts. So far so good: everything happens where and when it does, and is how it happened there and then. But how are the expectations forming the grid to be given specificity and precision? As an alternative to the grid, let me propose that each culture should (perhaps does) write its own history, and that the histories resulting should be juxtaposed and (where possible) translated. But will the others do this, and at whose demand? Professor Goody does not seem to me to have considered the possibility that 'history', as we understand the term, is a highly 'western' phenomenon, and has not so much been stolen from others as imposed upon them. Will 'they' join 'us' in writing 'histories', or prefer other means of self-invention? If the latter, 'we' must work at re-inventing 'ourselves' in relation to 'them' without their assistance in this form.

Professor J G A Pocock
(Honorary Fellow)

Graham Harding, *A Wine Miscellany*. Michael O'Mara Books, 2005. ISBN 1–84317–176–6

If there's one lesson that St John's College has taught us, it is that the single consumable on which we should on no account economise – *ever* – is wine. Whatever we save in our pocket is simply not worth what we will feel in our head the morning after.

For those in residence at the College, the first stage of this simple but vital lesson is imparted by the provision of very good wine at a College Feast, with the second stage coming as dawn breaks and we compare the after-effects of the previous night's imbibing with the hammer-action hangover produced by our quotidian tipple.

For those who have left the College, the lesson is periodically reinforced by the reunion dinners to which we are invited every few years.

These tend to be heart-warming occasions, but be in no doubt about their true purpose. They are less to illustrate how fat your contemporaries have grown than to remind you that the finest wines give you the rosiest awakenings, and that is an important lesson to take with you through life.

To learn it properly you have to establish a marker from which you can compare the good and the bad (and indeed the ugly), and College life in the early 1970s, when both Graham Harding and myself were undergraduates, was essentially *La Vie en Mateus Rosé*.

That pétillant, sweet Portuguese concoction carried an exotic whiff of sunny foreign climes, and for years was the standard lubrication for all manner of occasions. But more important than the taste or quality of the wine itself was the distinctive shape of the bottle, a squat oval whose low centre of gravity rendered it ideal for a second career as the base of a table lamp.

Cambridge at that time featured a glass army of table lamps made from Mateus Rosé bottles as populous as the terracotta warriors in the Emperor of Qin's mausoleum, but while I was doing my best to provide yet more empty bottles to meet the insatiable demand, Graham was laying the foundations of a lifelong interest in wine, which has been triumphantly distilled into *A Wine Miscellany*.

Like all the very best miscellanies, this book provides a wealth of core historical and cultural information which provides a context for the curiosities with which it is peppered. Having concentrated in its early pages on items relating to the history of wine – 'Chinese pottery shards from 7,000 BC show evidence of a mixed fermented drink made from either hawthorn or grapes' – it proceeds to offer a generous lucky dip of intriguing information under such headings as 'Broadbent's Definition of Ullage' (which sounds like something out of a legal textbook but concerns the space between the cork and the wine) or 'The Corpse of Monsieur Thierry Bouchon' or 'What Colour was Homer's "Wine-Dark Sea"?'.

Contentious areas such as recorking are properly covered, as is the remarkable development of the screw cap. The first patent for a screw

cap was taken out by Dan Rylands of Barnsley in 1889, while the current favourite is the Stelvin: a tasting in 2004 of two bottles of 1964 Nuits-Saint-Georges, one stoppered with a screw cap and the other with a traditional cork, could detect no difference in taste, and the advent of the screw top on decent wine has been a great boon to those of us not always fully equipped when the thirst comes on.

Here you will find more than you ever thought you wanted to know about wine labels (an Italian wine producer drew attention to his product with labels portraying Mussolini, Che Guevara, Lenin and Stalin, before one featuring Hitler was banned by the EC); about toasts (Groucho Marx: 'I drink to your charm, your beauty and your brains – which gives you a rough idea how hard up I am for a drink'); about the punt (the indentation at the foot of the bottle: Cambridge scientist Karl Blanks has developed a formula for estimating the price of a bottle by measuring its depth, though whether Three For Two has been factored in is unclear); and about dozens of other aspects of the multi-faceted world of wine, including a recipe for marijuana wine.

We learn that while champagne is sprayed at the end of a Formula One race, the winner of the Indianapolis 500 receives a quart bottle of chilled milk; that the world's largest wine list is at Bern's Steak House in Florida, with a 'working cellar' of 6,500 labels (so don't just ask for 'something dry and white' when you're next in there); that women are considered better wine tasters than men, and that the nose of Angela Mount, senior wine buyer for Somerfield supermarkets, has been insured for £10 million; that the longest recorded flight of a champagne cork is 174.5 feet; that prisoners at the Velletri jail in Italy produce 45,000 bottles of wine a year; that Le Piat d'Or was a creation of the English advertising industry, and despite its slogan 'The French adore Le Piat d'Or' was not sold in France; and that John Maynard Keynes said that his only regret in life was 'that I did not drink more champagne'.

But what about my College staple? When Cliff Richard produced a wine called La Vida Nuova in the Algarve, Joanna Simon wrote in the *Sunday Times*: 'If Sir Cliff Richard was a wine, he would surely be born-again Mateus Rosé – fresh-faced but bland, sweet and a little cloying.'

On practical matters, there are handy hints on *sabretage*, the opening of a bottle of champagne with a cavalry sabre (not that any Johnian would need reminding how to perform that nifty operation), and the issue of wine and health is properly aired. That a couple of glasses of wine a day are beneficial to the body is now well established (though of course it's stopping at the two which is the tricky bit), but better guidance might be had from an anonymous Bishop of Seville: 'I have enjoyed great health at a great age because every day since I can remember, I have consumed a bottle of wine, except when I have not felt well. Then I have consumed two bottles.'

Follow the Bishop's example, but make sure you have *A Wine Miscellany* with you as you do so. It is, in the phraseology of today's supermarket wine labels, the perfect accompaniment.

B S Magee
(BA 1972, MA 1976)

R R Jordan, *Writers and their Other Work: Twentieth-Century British Writers Teaching English Abroad*. Pp.304. Lutterworth Press, 2006. ISBN 0718830335

The 'writers' of the title include many of the best known figures of twentieth-century English literature while the other work is in the world of (T)EFL, (T)ESL and similar acronyms, the generally unsung world of (Teaching) English as a Foreign Language, (Teaching) English for Special Purposes and so on.

The first book written for the purpose of teaching EFL was by a 'Gentleman of Caen', Jacques Bellet, whose *The English Schoolmaster* (1580) was intended for Huguenot refugees in England. In the 1790s William Cobbett, the author of *Rural Rides*, taught English to French immigrants in Philadelphia, putting his ideas into letters to his son, which led to the highly successful, *A Grammar of the English Language in a Series of Letters* (1818).

The earliest major writer mentioned is Charlotte Brontë. Like all the other writers in this book, she used the events, experiences and places

visited as source material. Her unhappiness as the result of unrequited love for the husband of the proprietor of the school in Brussels where she spent a year as pupil-teacher is reflected in *The Professor,* while *Villette* is Brussels in disguise, with another pupil-teacher relationship at its heart. Some years later, Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs* (1915) was based on her time as a pupil-teacher in Hanover. The central character, Miriam Henderson, voices the difficulties faced by many later writers untrained in TEFL: 'The moment would come when there would be a class…waiting for her to speak. How was English taught? How did you begin? English grammar?…Her heart beat in her throat. She had never thought of that…the rules of English grammar.'

In the early years of the last century, E M Forster spent four months teaching English in a German family, an experience he drew on in *Howards End* for the Schlegel sisters' relatives and their Germanic background. Later, there was Christopher Isherwood who, while teaching privately in Berlin, kept a diary, which he used to provide atmosphere in *Mr Norris Changes Trains* and *Goodbye to Berlin*. Many writers taught English as a way of survival while exploring abroad: James Joyce in Pula and Trieste with the recently established Berlitz Schools, Wilfred Owen in Bordeaux, George Orwell and Samuel Beckett in Paris, but others simply wanted, as P J Kavanagh puts it in *The Perfect Stranger*, 'to go somewhere warm where they paid a living wage and there wasn't too much work'. Other writers drawing on their experiences abroad while teaching EFL include John Fowles (Poitiers and Spetsai), Tony Harrison (Nigeria), Anthony Burgess (Malaya, Brunei), Michael Dibdin (Italy), and Edmund Blunden (Japan and China).

Though London University had introduced the first TEFL training course in 1932, real expansion did not take place until the 1960s, when other universities and International House entered the field. Until then it was enough to be a native English speaker or, as Bob Geldof put it of his experience in Murcia, 'not speaking Spanish'.

The second part of the book deals with writers and the British Council. Founded in 1934 and granted a Royal Charter in 1940, the British Council represents Britain's culture, science, technology and education

in over a hundred countries. It establishes English libraries, arranges scholarships and exchanges, sets up British Institutes for ELT and cultural activities, supports overseas institutions for teaching English and arranges for academics and writers to lecture abroad. T S Eliot, who was sent on a highly successful lecture tour of Swedish Universities in 1942, wrote: 'A body like the British Council, by constantly sending representatives of the arts and sciences abroad, and inviting foreign representatives to this country, is in our time invaluable.' John Le Carré's *Absolute Friends* (2003) features Ted Mundy, who works for the Council during the Cold War. Mundy 'likes everything about the Council and everybody in it: breezy, unfettered people, keen on art and spreading the good word, and above all, no politics.'

Many writers have been associated with the Council, either as permanent officers, on short-term contracts or as lecturers engaged for specific tours. Perhaps the best known is Lawrence Durrell. Durrell taught English 'with abandon and circumspection' first at the British Institute in Athens in 1939, then in Egypt and in the 1950s in Cyprus. His first book of poetry, *A Private Country* (1943), contains many poems about Greece; *Prospero's Cell* (1945) is a travel book about Corfu; Egypt inspired the four novels of *The Alexandra Quartet*, while *Bitter Lemons* is about his time in Cyprus, teaching at the Nicosia Gymnasium.

Some writers were Directors of British Institutes: Edwin Muir's period as Director of The British Institute in Prague in 1945 led to *The Good Town*, a long poem describing the city and its destruction. In 1949 he moved to the Institute in Rome, becoming deeply attached to Italy, and Sicily in particular, which inspired *The Island* and *The Desolations*, a poem about Etna. Another Institute Director and poet was Louis MacNeice, whose time in Athens inspired ten long poems published in 1952 as *Ten Burnt Offerings*.

Among the lecturer-writers perhaps two stand out: Malcolm Bradbury and D J Enright. Bradbury's experiences in Bulgaria were used in *Rates of Exchange* (1983), a satirical commentary on cultural exchanges set in an imaginary Eastern European Communist state. The central character, Dr Petworth, is a linguist on a lecture tour. He is 'a loyal worker in the service of...the ideal British product, needing no workers, no assembly

lines, no spare parts and very little servicing…we call it the English language, everyone wants it.'

Enright taught Literature for the Council in Japan, Germany, Thailand and Egypt. In *Splendours and Miseries of a Literature Teacher,* he acknowledges that to teach Literature means to teach Language as well, even with no training for it. In *Memoirs of a Mendicant Professor* (1969) he describes with much humour the difficulties involved in printing and keeping exam papers secret in Egypt, and gives examples of the howlers produced by his students at Bangkok University: 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun' was glossed as 'now we have air-conditioning'. His teachers of English give drunken lectures, hugely popular with everyone but the Council Director. George, in *Figures of Speech,* lives opposite a brothel, which he naïvely supposes is a family with numerous daughters; when he discovers the truth he is intrigued to find the brothel issues season tickets.

Bob Jordan, with his experience of the private language school sector in Cambridge and Finland, of the British Council in Nepal and Sierra Leone, and his many years of EAP at Manchester University, has produced an informative and entertaining volume to sit comfortably alongside his co-authored and appropriately titled *English All Over the Place* (2001).

J B Gannon
(BA 1961, MA 1965)

Alan Mould, *The English Chorister: A History*. Pp. xviii + 366 (including endnotes, bibliography and index). Hambledon Continuum, 2007. ISBN 1–85285–513–4

Tourists visiting St John's College count themselves lucky if they catch a glimpse of the College's Choristers processing in pairs, with capes and mortarboards, into rehearsal in the Chapel or back to their school. England's boy Choristers have attained an iconic status the world over, embodying the contradictory qualities of sweet sentimentality and stiff English discipline. It is for those who love the tradition of child singers in the Anglican choral tradition that Alan Mould has written *The English Chorister: A History*, spanning fourteen centuries of those foundations in

England that made use of children in the daily choral celebration of the liturgy. This limits the subject to cathedrals, to collegiate churches, and to a few parishes that at various times supported daily choral services. Occasional references to the best-loved pieces in the choral repertoire show that the author has in mind a readership with more than a passing experience of choral Evensong. It is this readership that may be most surprised by the contents of the book, which show that, although the tradition of child singers in English choirs can be traced back to the seventh century, today's choral foundations are in many ways modern creations.

The first five chapters are devoted to the Middle Ages, presenting much of interest to the general reader and even to the specialist. It is satisfying to discover here references to the immensely valuable writings of Hildemar of Corbie (*c* 845), little known even among medievalists, who had much to say about the lives of children in monasteries. England's first historian, the Venerable Bede (d 735), whose *Historia ecclesiastica* is full of stories about music and singers, is cited effectively. Tragically omitted from the account is the earliest, and certainly the most poignant, reference to a 'boy chorister' in Anglo-Saxon England. The anonymous *Life of Ceolfrith*, first Abbot of Bede's own monastery at Jarrow, reports the devastating effects of a plague in 686: 'In the monastery which Ceolfrith ruled, all those who could read or preach or were able to sing the antiphons and responsories were carried off by the plague except the abbot himself and one small boy' (tr. D H Farmer, *The Age of Bede*, Penguin 2004, p. 218). This small boy was almost certainly Bede himself, who would have been twelve or thirteen. Although just a child, he was to be instrumental in teaching new singers for the monastery at a time, long before the invention of musical notation, when all music had to be learned from memory. The rubrics of a late Anglo-Saxon liturgical customary, the *Regularis concordia*, and the post-Conquest *Monastic Constitutions* of Lanfranc – both potentially dry and intimidating – come alive in the author's lively and imaginative analysis. The reader may look forward to a happy recapitulation of these medieval customs in the discussion of present-day cathedral practice (p. 226).

Four chapters consider the tumultuous events of the Reformation, the Commonwealth and the Restoration, including a fascinating *excursus* about boy choristers' careers on the stage as dramatic players. The

author here demonstrates considerable skill as a concise narrative historian. Specialists alarmed by the occasional grand generalization (eg 'some degree of reformation of western Christendom was all but inevitable', p. 75) will be comforted to find the other side of the story acknowledged in the notes, with helpful pointers towards the relevant secondary literature. At the present time, it is often difficult to find the middle ground between, on the one hand, the dense scholarly monograph written for an audience comprising a handful of PhD students, and, on the other hand, the bestselling book 'to accompany the TV series', designed only to titillate with controversy or to entrench truisms. *The English Chorister* represents a 'middle way' greatly to be admired and imitated: a presentation aimed squarely at the intelligent layman, offering a responsible digest of existing scholarly writings (see pp. xi and xvi), together with a few new contributions and interpretations, about a subject of general popular interest.

If the reader sometimes feels crushed under the sheer weight of archival and documentary evidence presented, this evidence does at least succeed in establishing the author's authority occasionally to challenge received scholarly opinion. Such is the case with his observation that it is to Elizabeth I, not to Mary Tudor, that Anglican choral music owes its post-Reformation survival (pp. 93–95). Where the author excels is in adding human insight to bare historical information. He remarks, for example, that whatever their religious or political inclinations, singers during the reign of the Catholic Mary must have welcomed a return to more complicated Latin music, 'giving them the chance to exercise again their true skills' (p. 90). It is interesting to read that even under the Puritan austerities of the Commonwealth, some boys continued to be trained to sing polyphony for private, non-liturgical performances. Oliver Cromwell himself had a taste for Latin Roman Catholic anthems (p. 127). A certain amount of continuity prevented the need for complete reinvention of the tradition at the Restoration.

The book concludes with seven chapters tracing the recovery of the Anglican choral tradition, and the improvement in the lot of boy choristers, following an eighteenth-century 'nadir' in standards of education, repertoire and performance. Devotees of Anglican choral

music will be surprised to find that the outstanding quality of English choirs is an achievement of the recent past. English choral superiority over Continental choirs was certainly not apparent to a nineteenth-century traveller who had the chance to hear the choirs of Dresden and Leipzig (p. 180). Those who have sung in choirs of men and boys, or who have worked with them, will recognize many of the milder abuses of the past (such as reading 'secular literature' during sermons) in the misbehaviour of today's choristers. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, choral music in England's cathedrals is at its historical zenith. Johnians will find it of interest that their College Choir is first a villain and then a hero in the story of the revival.

The early statutes of the College make no reference to a Choir, nor to the daily singing of the Divine Office (and presumably for this reason they are not mentioned in *The English Chorister*). The author's first reference to a Choir at St John's dates to 1671, when provisions were made for 'two counter-tenors, four trebles and a music master' (p. 141). We hear little else of the College before 1827, when the chief agitator for reform in the education of choristers, Miss Maria Hackett, wrote of St John's: 'The accounts which have been transmitted to me respecting the present state of the School, under the superintendence of this Society, are such as I forbear to publish' (p. 154). We learn (via the 1891 edition of *The Eagle*) that St John's had choristers in the late nineteenth century, but that the Choir sang only on Sundays and major feast days (p. 209 and p. 322 n. 67). The College School, a one-room affair under a single master for the choristers, probationers and some non-singing boys, was nearly closed in 1955, saved through the energy of Robin Orr and George Guest, aided by a timely telegram of support from Ralph Vaughan Williams (p. 235). It is a relief to read that '*The Good Schools Guide* has described St John's College School as wonderful – or even "utterly wonderful" – in every edition since 1991' (p. 325 n. 18).

Four main themes may be traced throughout the book's chronological arrangement: the institutional conditions of cathedral and collegiate choirs; the development of the musical repertoire and the quality of its performance; the formal education of choristers; and the daily life of children in choral foundations in various periods. This last topic gives the

book its soul and will guarantee its wide appeal. The author has assembled anecdotes from the Middle Ages to the present day, many of which are justifiably introduced as 'charming', 'moving', 'touching', or as telling 'a human story'. At every stage, the author leads the reader to an understanding of the great benefits and personal fulfilment that children of every era (except perhaps the Georgian) could enjoy as members of a well-provisioned and well-administered choral foundation.

This view of 'Choristership' as a valuable tool of nurture and formation of the young informs a very useful discussion of the controversial question of girl choristers. Careful consideration is made throughout the book of the role of women in choral singing. Medieval communities of nuns received girls as oblates, and these would participate in choral services (pp. 41–43). As early as 1676, a lay clerk of Trinity College suggested the use of women sopranos as the only remedy for the weak singing of boy trebles (p. 141), a suggestion renewed in the nineteenth century by the composer S S Wesley (p. 183). Considering the arguments raised for and against the establishment of choristerships for girls in cathedrals, the author concludes that, in addition to nine hundred boy choristers, 'there are now some two hundred and fifty girls enjoying a very specially beneficial kind of childhood' (p. 269). For Alan Mould, support for girl choristers has less to do with abstract questions of fairness or 'political correctness' than with the belief that the experience of choristership gives unique opportunities for the development of children's potential. His list of (male) musicians prominent in English music today, all of whom were boy choristers (p. 273), is an eloquent argument for the cultivation of the untapped talents of the other half of the nation's children.

The English Chorister treats with discipline, insight and charm a subject that will be of interest to many. It is to be hoped that the valuable historical information gathered in this book will inform decisions now made about how best to secure the future of England's priceless choral foundations.

Jesse D Billett

Dare Wilson, *Tempting the Fates: A memoir of service in the Second World War, Palestine, Korea, Kenya, and Aden*. Pp. 240. Pen and Sword Books. ISBN 1844154351

R D Wilson matriculated in 1938. But it was not until 1973 that he proceeded to the BA degree. That he was 'degraded' (to use the technical term of the University) for so long was, however, for the very best of reasons. He was a long-serving, intrepid and gallant Johnian warrior. To return to the status of an undergraduate after nearly thirty-five years in the army and with the exalted rank of Major General requires a certain sort of courage. But then Dare Wilson had plenty of that.

One year at St John's complete, Wilson was whisked away to France to join the British Expeditionary Force with the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (RNF). He was able to escape by way of Dunkirk, having seen action in Arras and, after a long and difficult walk thereafter, he migrated to the Middle Eastern Staff College in Haifa (he loved the place), returning to front line warfare in Northern Europe by way of Italy, where he served with the 3rd RNF Reconnaissance Regiment. His account of progress into Germany provides a realistic and vivid impression of the fighting, the triumphs and the tragedies, the ferocity and the compassion shown by his loyal and beloved Fusiliers. Twice his armoured vehicles were blown up, his crews suffering fatal casualties: once by a landmine and, terribly, in 1945 by a direct hit from an anti-tank round. Here indeed he seemed to have tempted fate, for he had just dismounted from the vehicle in order to confer with colleagues, his crew remaining on board. All of them perished in the resulting inferno. His report of the comfort he received as the sole survivor is a moving testimony to the understanding shown by battle-hardened comrades to those who face the outrage of survival.

The war in Europe complete, Wilson returned to Palestine with the 6th Airborne Division to confront the rapidly escalating troubles which were to see the British withdrawal from the Mandate for Palestine and the Israeli Declaration of Independence. Insurgent activity was met by 'Cordon and Search' procedures and this was to give the author the title of his first book. In common with most British servicemen, his dislike of the fanaticism of the Stern Gang and of elements of the Irgun Zvai

Leumi is apparent. Korea in the early 1950s was the last of the set-piece conflicts in which Dare Wilson served. Here he learned at first hand the enormous value of close air support when he was among fifteen (of an original sixty) who managed successfully to withdraw following a failed assault on a certain Hill 217.

Following a rich diet of front line fighting experience, Wilson contributed to weapons testing work in the USA, to anti Mau Mau operations in Kenya and to the final withdrawal from Aden.

In 1960 Dare Wilson assumed command of the 22nd Special Air Service Regiment. It was he who masterminded their setting up a permanent headquarters in Hereford. And it was at this time that he was introduced to freefall parachuting. He had already distinguished himself on the Cresta Run and here was another opportunity to push at the frontiers of experience. The climax of his endeavours occurred in 1962 when, with six colleagues from the SAS, he jumped from 34,000ft, in temperatures of –50°c. The freefall covered a total of six miles reaching a speed of 230 mph at the moment of the deployment of his parachute. Sadly, but perhaps unsurprisingly, there was one fatality. The experience was 'too intense and complex to put into words'.

Retirement from the army in 1972 brought Dare Wilson back to the College where he read for the Land Economy Tripos, being admitted to the BA degree in 1973. That was not his only acquisition. Here in Cambridge he met his Sarah, another mature student, and they married in the College Chapel in the same year. Thereafter he was appointed National Parks Officer for Exmoor and, later, a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the county. It was here that he and Sarah became the parents of two sons.

Dare Wilson's book covers a very large tranche of experience. If, as in St Marks' Gospel, everything seems to have happened in accordance with the rubric 'and immediately', that is probably an accurate reflection of the life of a successful career officer in the period concerned. The style is readable and there are few infelicities. The heavy use of military acronyms, despite the provision of a glossary, is at times difficult for the layman. But all in all, *arma virosque bene cecinit*.

Andrew Macintosh

BOOK REVIEWS

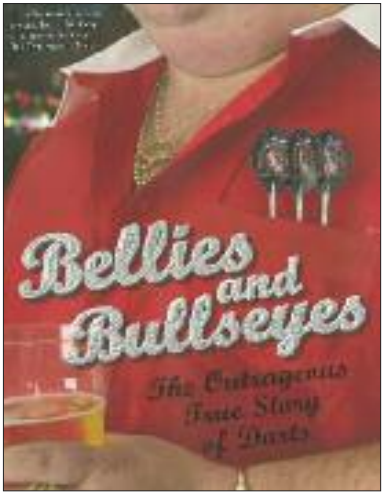
ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

BOOK REVIEWS

Reviewer: Jonathan Harrison, Special Collections Librarian at St John's College, and darts enthusiast.

Sid Waddell, *Bellies and Bullseyes: the Outrageous True Story of Darts* (Ebury Press, 2007).

Pp.346. ISBN 978-0-09-191755-5



When Francis P White entered the name Sidney Waddell into the College Admissions Register in September 1959, he could little have guessed that this slim, bright and sporty lad from Ashington coalfield would become one of this country's most famous and best-loved sports commentators. For this Geordie Johnian would one day earn the epithet 'The Voice of Darts'. What Peter Alliss is to golf or Eddie Waring was to Rugby League, so Sid is to 'tungsten tossing' (as he puts it) – nothing less than a commentating legend among fans and players alike. Darts is no ordinary sport, and Sid, who has been labelled everything from genius to nutcase, is no ordinary commentator. Darts is not the easiest sport to commentate on and it is Sid's great gift that his inexhaustible enthusiasm and verbal antics can bring even a dull match to life.

The title of this, Sid's latest book, sums the plot up nicely, although he might have added booze to the bellies and bullseyes, as the pages are positively awash with the stuff. Sid is uniquely qualified to tell the story of darts having played such a key role in the sport's success, and happily there is quite a bit of Sid's own story here too. *Bellies and Bullseyes* tracks the rise of darts from the heavy-drinking, playing-for-a-few-quid early days to the big-money, professional sport of today. As Sid himself remarks, 'in 1973 180s were as rare as rocking-horse droppings; now they are like flies in a farmyard'. The journey has not always been easy, taking in dips in popularity and the damaging spat between the British Darts Organisation (BDO) and what became the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC). It has not been plain sailing for Sid either. There were his nerves, his asthma (far from ideal in a world of fag smoke and dry ice), fears about losing his voice, and his trouble remembering outshots ('everybody in darts knows that I can't count').

Then there was the occasional hostile reaction to his commentary from the Press (which famously accused Sid of having Tourette's Syndrome) and the public, and the time he almost drank a goldfish from its bowl when he was so engrossed in the action on the oche.

The son of a miner from East Northumberland, the young Sid was something of a sportsman. Captain of the rugby team at Morpeth Grammar, he was also a finalist in the England schools 100 yards. Sid was no slouch in the classroom either, being a teacher's pet and taking his exams very seriously. It was to combat his pre-exam nerves, in fact, that Sid turned to darts down his local pub as an antidote to stress. It worked, for in 1958 Sid won a scholarship to read Modern History at St John's. He would subsequently captain the College Darts team, known as the 'St John's Killers', taking them all the way to the University Four-man Darts final, only to be beaten by Selwyn's team of trainee vicars.

Post-Cambridge, Sid landed a job with Yorkshire Television and by the 1970s was producing the hugely successful *Indoor League*, a game show showcasing members of the public playing pub sports. Sid wrote scripts in an exaggerated Yorkshire accent for the show's presenter, cricketing legend, Fred Trueman. The show became a smash hit and Sid came increasingly to believe that sports such as darts could make dramatic TV. The early stars of darts were emerging: Leighton Rees, who could win a final on the back of eight pints of lager and a couple of brandies before settling down for a real drink, and Alan Evans, a great showman who once appeared in an Elvis outfit, brandishing a leek.

In 1975 Sid moved to BBC Manchester and the following year produced a highly successful documentary on Evans titled 'The Prince of Dartness'. Sid's debut as a darts commentator came in 1977 at the British inter-county finals, and on the strength of his performance the BBC asked him to commentate on the first ever Darts World Championship. While David Vine thought Sid 'a right cocky sod', David Coleman thought he was a natural. Sid got a full-page spread in the *Daily Mail* and was christened 'The Geordie Lip'. But celebrity always comes at a price and the following year a woman who heard Sid's commentary became convinced that his was the voice of the Yorkshire Ripper and promptly called the police. Sid's manic verbal dexterity at this time can best be summed up by this comment by his BBC boss: 'I don't mind Rod Stewart, Shakespeare, Milton, Ivanhoe and a bit of the Old Testament now and then over a week, but you got them all into five minutes.'

Bellies and Bullseyes devotes a chapter each to greats of the game, Jocky Wilson, Eric 'The Crafty Cockney' Bristow, and Phil 'The Power' Taylor. In spite of winning junior school pole vault, Jocky took the pot-bellied stereotype of the darter to new depths. As Sid remarks, Jocky in a bar was 'like a cow in a field of juicy clover', his favourite tipple being 'Magic Coke' (the magic provided by lashings of vodka). But Jocky on the oche produced dynamite darts, winning the world title

in 1982 and again seven years later. Bristow's magisterial darts have prompted some of Sid's best lines: 'When Alexander of Macedonia was thirty-three he cried salt tears because there were no more worlds to conquer. Bristow's only twenty-seven.' Bristow went on to take five world titles, and Sid ranked him alongside Carl Lewis, Viv Richards, and even Aristotle. But Bristow's workload of matches and exhibitions prompted the dreaded 'dartitis', the equivalent to yips in golf, and the door was left open for others to push their bellies forward into the limelight.

Sid has always been matey with the players and has never shied from taking the mickey. Of Chris Lazarenko, one of the greatest exhibition players, Sid remarked 'Cliff's idea of exercise is a firm press on a soda siphon'. But darts' slump in popularity in the early 1990s was no laughing matter. While over eight million viewers had tuned into the 1983 World Final, by 1992 Sid was standing for election as MP for – you guessed it – Dartford, in order to whip up some publicity for the sport. The situation was not helped when sixteen top players, including Bristow, Lowe and Taylor, broke away from the BDO to form the World Darts Council (WDC) – later renamed the PDC – in protest at the BDO's dictatorial approach. When Sid watched Sky Sports' 'vivid, in-yer-chops' coverage of the first WDC World Championship, he saw the future of televised darts and wanted to be part of it. Having left the BBC, Sid joined Sky in 1994, prompting the headline 'Bullseye! Sid's on Sky'. Unlike at the BBC, Sid was encouraged to let his manic patter run wild, with the result that he suffered far less from nerves.

For Sid, Phil Taylor is simply 'the greatest darts player who ever drew breath'. Taylor came from a poor background and before becoming a darting superstar made ceramic toilet chains and beer-pump handles. Sid has the distinction of having had one of his eyebrows shaved off by Taylor, and of having put 'The Power' off a nine-darter by screaming from the commentary box. Taylor has won an astonishing thirteen world titles, and has consistently beaten the rival BDO's best players. His 2004 head-to-head with BDO champ and legendary lager-swiller Andy Fordham had 'The Viking' sweating 'like a hippo in a power shower'. Taylor's incredible all-round game prompted Sid to remark, 'Stopping Taylor – that would be like trying to halt a water buffalo with a pea-shooter'. Taylor and, more recently, Raymond van Barneveld have done much to boost darts' popularity and Sid finishes his book basking in what looks like a very sunny future for darts on Sky.

Bellies and Bullseyes is a thoroughly enjoyable, informative and amusing read, a veritable feast of ton-eighties and title-taking doubles. Sid writes like he talks, so that the reader is caught up in the drama as if he were standing on the oche himself. One can almost taste the lager, smell the fag smoke, and hear the thud of tungsten on bristle. Given the recent vogue for celebrity and sporting biography it is pleasing to see a Johnian getting in on the act – and producing something actually worth reading to boot.

Jonathan Harrison

Reviewer: Paul Kennedy, Professor of History at Yale, and Overseas Visiting Scholar and Fellow Commoner at St John's in 2005, was back in College during the spring of 2008 to write a new book on the Second World War.

Peter Hennessy, *Having it So Good; Britain in the Fifties* (Penguin/Allen Lane: London, 2008).

Pp.740. ISBN 978-0-713-99571-8

Peter Hennessy is one of the most remarkable and prolific historians that St John's has produced during the last half-century – which itself is a bold claim. Graduating in 1969, he went on to a highly successful career in political journalism, paying special attention to the politics of Ten Downing Street, Westminster and Whitehall – the 'Yes, Prime Minister' aspects of our country's history. For those who have not kept up with Peter (can there be anybody out there?), he is currently the Attlee Professor of Contemporary British History at Queen Mary, University of London, and the Director of the Institute of Contemporary British Government, Intelligence and Society.

It is important to call attention to Peter Hennessy's long career in journalism because it helps to explain why his books – his many books – are so special. Unlike most academic historians, myself included, who would shudder at entering the 'Corridors of Power', he relished that possibility; he relished engaging with politicians of all parties, drawing them out, pushing them for clarifications, asking them (when they had retired to the Lords or deepest Worcestershire) what they had been thinking about most when they were in the midst of, say, the 1949 currency crisis or the Suez debacle. He believed oral history was important, and he was naturally gifted at the art of extracting information and opinions. His candour, intelligence and sense of fun only improved his chances. Secondly, the long years of journalism honed his writing skills: he always had to write to a deadline, he had to write within certain word limits (NOT page limits), he had to explain things clearly to a non-specialist readership, and he had to find a pithy phrase and a great anecdote to help him make the larger point.

Thus when he moved into writing more and more substantial books – books requiring large amounts of research in the official archives and in private political collections – he did not abandon those earlier gifts of an easy style and a deep appreciation of how politics worked in practice rather than in theory (being

named Attlee Professor was therefore most apt, since former Prime Minister 'Clem' Attlee was surely one of the most pragmatic Prime Ministers of the twentieth century). This shines through in all his books, and is very evident in his latest work, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties*.

Yet while Peter was educated at a university that was proud of an emphasis upon 'high politics' – whether it be Geoffrey Elton's work on Tudor government, or Maurice Cowling's on Gladstone versus Disraeli, or Ronald Robinson and Jack Gallagher's on the British Official Mind and the scramble for Africa – he also appreciated that the history of modern Britain was also the history of the evolution of an entire people, in all its shapes and sizes. He was fascinated by the story of the common families of Britain in peace and war, of what changed in their lives and what stayed the same, of how the country became 'modern'.

This has clearly now become his life's work (though, as with every good journalist, there's also another book being written on a different topic, like his recent work on Whitehall and the Cold War). A few years ago he began what may be called 'the Hennessy quartet', a four-volume history of Britain since 1945. The first tome, *Never Again: Britain 1945-1951*, published in 1993, garnered praise and prizes for its imaginative exploration of what it was like for this battered island-nation to adjust to the post-war world, with all its promises and its huge disappointments. *Having It So Good* is the second volume and, impossibly, even better than the first.

The high politics are still here alright, with a fabulous analysis of the Suez Crisis as the key watershed event in Britain's great-power decline; and with an equally fabulous and admiring story of how Harold Macmillan ('Supermac') coached the nation towards internal modernisation, and to a steady, sensible withdrawal from empire at the same time as he nudged it towards Europe. But Hennessy's eye ranges further afield, and his retrieval of those years digs much deeper: the end of rationing, the social improvements, the changes in lifestyles, the elimination of the slums, Commonwealth Games, four-minute miles (Roger Bannister), conquering Everest, a new Queen, cold war tensions, *The Goon Show*, Bill Haley and the Comets, Teddy boys in drainpipe trousers, commercial jets, the Aldermaston marches and the CND.

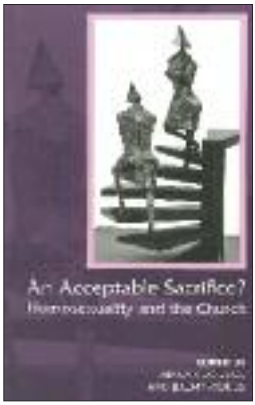
I'd better stop here. This reviewer began the 1950s living in a dreadful row-house without central heating, electricity, a bathroom (a tin bath, Friday nights), or a toilet (it was outside, next to the coalshed). He ended the decade in a 'council' house that had all of the above; so much for dreaded socialism. It is true that we (*sic*) were pulling out of Africa, at the double. But the most important thing in our house was the coming of an electric clothes-washing machine. Truly, we had never had it so good. And Peter Hennessy tells us why.

Professor Paul Kennedy

Reviewer: Andrew Duff (BA 1972, MA 1976) is the Liberal Democrat Member of the European Parliament for East of England.

Duncan Dormor and Jeremy Morris (eds), *An Acceptable Sacrifice? Homosexuality and the Church* (SPCK, 2007).

Pp.180. ISBN 0-281-05851-2



When I was asked to write a review of the Dean's new book for *The Eagle*, I asked some of my several gay friends who go to church why they did so. Or, as the editors of *An Acceptable Sacrifice?* ask, 'How is the Gospel good news if you're gay?' There were four revealing answers. Some seem to go out of a more or less ill-conceived sense of guilt about being gay. Others go in search of a family or congregation, which they do not have in their own, fairly segregated lives. A third answer was stereotypical, 'because of the frocks and the music'. The fourth, from a gay priest, was simply 'belief'. He presumed, he said, that Christ came to redeem everyone, and not just 'straights'.

That last presumption is one that surfaces again and again in this interesting series of essays on the big question that is due shortly to split the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, meeting this July. This book should be required reading for every conference delegate. It would calm some nerves to be reminded that there is nothing new under the Sun. Men and women – especially Greeks and Romans (but not good Jews) – had been enjoying same-sex relationships for centuries before the term 'homosexuality' was coined in Victorian Britain.

Using scripture as gospel, as it were, is not helpful. The Bible is multi-layered and confusing, especially about passion. Its authors had to make do with what they knew; today we ask different questions. Jesus himself challenged the hardness of heart of the Old Testament by teaching with emphasis about relationships, hospitality and generosity.

Much of the scriptural analysis in the book is taken up with St Paul, who sought to reinterpret the Old Testament in the light of Christ. A narrow interpretation of Pauline doctrine certainly supports the traditional Church view that

homosexuality is sinful. Yet Paul ditched ancient Jewish teaching on relationships as a property contract, and encouraged among the disciples the sense of mutual partnership.

The book examines how the Reformation developed the idea of mutuality. Thomas Cranmer prescribed for marriage the 'help and comfort that one might have of the other'. At the same time, marriage was discarded as a sacrament of the Church – King Henry VIII doing his bit to render matrimony not quite as holy as it once was. Clearly, attitudes to homosexuality have fluctuated conversely with attitudes to heterosexuality and, in particular, to marriage. Dormor is right to remind us that, contrary to appearances, sexual behaviour in our own age is in some ways more conjugal than the past.

Since the Reformation, of course, theology has had to compete with biology in the shaping of our understanding of sexuality. Jeremy Morris, Dean of Trinity Hall, contrasts previous generations who viewed homosexuality as a moral failure with our own, more tolerant attitudes. Today our appreciation of equality demotes hierarchy between gender and race. But in all times, he says, moral reflection tends to lag behind science, which has only worked gradually to change attitudes to matters such as race, slavery, contraception and child abuse. While we know more than our forebears, we are still not omniscient.

When the book comes to try to put the 'gay debate' in a wider context it is less convincing. (I am reminded of the breathless banality of Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day' slot.) Malcolm Brown appears to be a Christian evangelical adrift in the alien world of political economy. Can it really be true that anti-gay attitudes are formed by a deeper reaction to the globalisation of markets? And Michael Beasley manages to write a whole chapter on HIV/AIDS without mentioning the condom. Dormor is good, though, on the porn industry – and quite right to suggest that civil partnerships, blessed or not by the Church, should help to reduce promiscuity among gays.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in a foreword to the book, goes further than the editors: 'Sexuality is part of the fullness of our humanity. Some Christians talk about it as if it were simply genital, but it is about the whole person, and to deny the richness of sexual expression to those who are homosexual is to assist in the process of dehumanization.'

The Anglican communion is facing schism over the issue of whether a sexually active gay can lead a good Christian life. Friends and adherents of the Church of England may wish it to succeed in living with its differences. United in diversity it could contribute more than it does both to the causes of European ecumenism and of combating poverty and disease, especially in Africa. Let us hope, therefore, that Lambeth is a success in persuading the wider church of the case for gay rights.

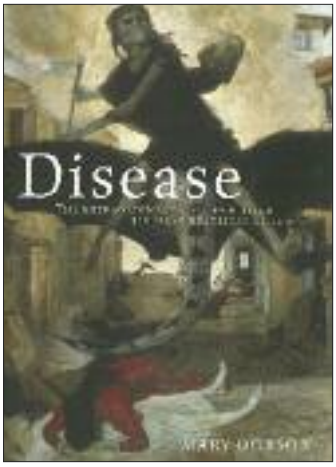
But if schism there must be, we should be sure we know why: Lambeth must provide progressive Anglicanism with a clearly articulated case that *An Acceptable Sacrifice?* goes some way to providing. As St John the Evangelist (13.35) had it, loving one another is a higher Christian injunction than agreeing with one another: 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'

Andrew Duff

Reviewer: Dr Simon Szreter is a Fellow of St John's College and Reader in History and Public Policy at the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge. Simon co-founded the History and Policy website in 2002.

Mary Dobson, *Disease: The extraordinary stories behind history's deadliest killers* (Quercus Publishing Plc, 2007).

Pp.255. ISBN 978-1-84724-399-7



Disease has, of course, accompanied humans throughout their history, turning its course on many occasions. Typhus was a major cause of the spectacular ruination of the *Grande Armée* of Napoleon, which embarked for Russia 600,000 strong in the summer of 1812 and was reduced to just 30,000 within six months. A century later Lenin memorably declared, perhaps with Napoleon in mind, that 'Either socialism will defeat the louse, or the louse will defeat socialism'.

Mary Dobson is the College's resident expert on the medical history of diseases, as this extremely accessible contribution to publicise understanding of its vast subject demonstrates. Mary, whose husband, Chris, is the Master of St John's, made her academic reputation with an outstanding, multi-faceted study of malaria in early modern England, in the style of the great French Annales school, and was

deservedly appointed in the 1990s to direct the Oxford Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine. After a break in her output in the last few years, this book marks a most welcome return of one of our leading scholars in this field.

This new book is a pleasure to read for many reasons. It has an excellent theme. The history of disease is certainly a treasure-house of extraordinary stories, and Dr Dobson has assembled a good number of them here, where they are presented with a lightness of touch that belies the author's wide-ranging erudition. Each chapter is adorned with a range of imaginative, high-quality illustrations, which have been carefully researched – not simply an assembly of the more well-worn images. Note the striking beauty of a cutaway colour model of the HIV virus, for instance. The book comprises condensed but clearly written and lively chapters on a selection of thirty of the deadliest of the hundreds of diseases to have afflicted humans. These have been chosen so that each of the three categories of bacterial, parasitic and viral diseases are represented, along with a final set of 'lifestyle diseases', including both cancer and heart disease, the two major afflictions of contemporary affluent society. Earlier chapters cover leprosy and syphilis, the Victorian sanitary nasties of cholera and typhoid, the viral killers such as smallpox, yellow fever, polio and influenza, and the tropical parasitic diseases, such as sleeping sickness, Chagas' disease and hookworm. There are also chapters on several of the most recent afflictions: Ebola, CJD, AIDS and SARS, as well as both malaria and tuberculosis, which must also be classified among the most contemporary, as well as the most ancient of our diseases. It is shocking to be reminded that well as over 125 years since Robert Koch identified the *tubercle bacillus* and over seventy-five years since BCG vaccination was first deployed in the west on a population basis, about one third of the world's population today are infected with TB bacilli. Bunyan's 'captain of all these men of death' still prematurely kills between 1.5 and 2 million people each year; now it is allied with its able lieutenant, AIDS.

Each chapter includes a clear, brief account of current understanding of the disease and is accompanied by a helpful timeline of the chief events in the medical history of the disease. This is a long history in several cases. The apparent depictions of tuberculosis in 3,000-year-old Egyptian paintings have found confirmation in the scars observed on the lungs of mummies. However, most of the more detailed stories inevitably come from the modern and early modern eras of more voluminous written documentation. They relate to the consequences of the inter-continental contact and trade that have generated horrifying epidemics of initial contact all over the world, stories of great suffering and courageous carers, and of obsessive scientific quests for the causes of such suffering. Each chapter succeeds – through carefully chosen documentary extracts, including the letters and poems of the famous and the pleas of the anonymous, alongside numerous graphical images – in imparting a sense of the

human anxieties many of these diseases elicited and the personal suffering they caused, along with selected aspects of the frequently tortuous and flawed course of scientific medical response. The sad history of puerperal fever, for instance, provides probably the most tragic case of iatrogenic mortality in western medical history and certainly occurred on a scale that dwarfs current worries over MRSA or *Clostridium difficile*. Just as mothers in the world's poor countries today continue to die quite unnecessarily in childbirth, so too did many British women until as late as the 1930s. The implications of the importance of avoiding cross-infection, which both Oliver Wendell Holmes in Boston, USA, and the Hungarian, Ignaz Semmelweis, had each discovered as early as the 1840s, were insufficiently followed through by those attending women in childbirth for decade after decade.

A survey such as this can bring out the profoundly international dimension of the history of the scientific fight against disease. The locations for study were of course often spread across the globe but the individuals who committed themselves to the years of effort necessary to make scientific breakthroughs comprised a league of nations of medical endeavour before the political entity was created. The Japanese Shibabsuro Kitasato and the Swiss-born Alexandre Yersin both identified the plague bacillus in 1894. Leprosy's official name since 1948, Hansen's disease, commemorates the pioneering work in the fjord communities of the Norwegian, Gerhard Hansen, identifying in 1873 the bacillus *Mycobacterium leprae*. It was the Austrian, Julius von Agner-Jauregg, who was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1927 for his bold innovation of using one disease to fight another: killing the *Trepanoma pallidum* in tertiary-stage syphilitic patients with the high temperature fever of malaria and then treating the malaria with quinine. The unravelling of the complex transmission path of *Rickettsia prowazeckii*, the typhus bacteria, was due to the pre-Great War research of the American, Howard Ricketts, the Pole, Stanislas Prowazek, the Brazillian, Henrique de Rocha Lima, who named his discovery in their honour, and the Frenchman working at the Institut Pasteur in Tunis, Charles Nicolle, who was awarded the 1928 Nobel Prize for identifying the final key to the puzzle – *Pediculus humanus corpus* – the human body louse.

As always in history, and particularly in the history of such a fearful subject as disease, there is much humour, black humour, tragedy, farce and sheer folly to divert the reader. The great British chemist, Humphry Davy, became addicted to his own invention, nitrous oxide. No laughing matter. For every prisoner hanged at Tyburn in the early eighteenth century, four others had died of 'jail fever' or louse-born typhus. Rough justice. In the First World War, allied soldiers were warned that 'A German bullet is cleaner than a whore'. Combatants probably agreed: the former might be welcomed by trench-weary veterans, provided the damage it inflicted was not serious, while getting 'the clap' meant loss of pay –

a very serious matter. The ritual of the nit comb and tea-tree oil shampooing, which periodically infuriate today's parents and children alike, enables us to share a source of irritation with Pliny the Elder, Montezuma and Samuel Pepys, whose diary records that finding nits in a newly purchased wig 'vexed me cruelly'.

Most chapters contain helpful boxes, large and small – the latter being a particular favourite of mine for the amusing gems they contain, such as the information in the very first chapter on 'Plague' that a schoolboy at Eton was recorded in 1666 as being 'never whipped so much in his life as he was one morning for not smoking'. I leave it to readers to infer the reason for this but I can inform them that the location of the bike-sheds at Eton in 1666 is not disclosed. Another reveals that the stethoscope (from the Greek *stethos*, 'chest', and *skopein*, 'to look at', though one would have thought 'stethophone' would have been more appropriate) was born from the bashfulness of the dashing young French physician, René Laënnec, who in 1816 rolled up his notebook to listen at a respectful distance to the heart of a young lady patient and discovered he could also clearly hear her lungs.

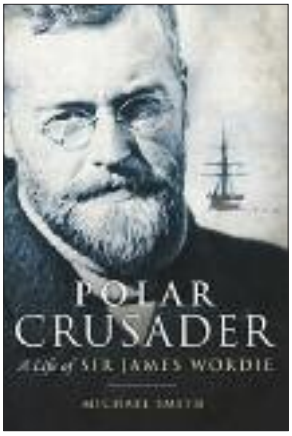
Finally, I am grateful to Mary for bringing to my attention the quintessentially Pythonesque figure of Mr Robert Liston (1794-1847), the somewhat over-enthusiastic Scottish surgeon deemed to be 'the fastest cutter' of the pre-anaesthetic era. This wellington-boot-clad, rapier-wielding impresario, who strode into his crowded operating theatres exhorting his audience with the catch-call, 'Time me, gentlemen, time me', really exceeded himself in an operation on a single individual, which achieved a unique 300 per cent mortality rate. Liston's flashing knife contrived inadvertently to remove his patient's testicles, as well as the leg that was the principal object of the amputation operation, while accidentally cutting off his young assistant's fingers and also slashing through the coat-tails of a distinguished spectator. The latter was the first to die (of fright on the spot), while the other two both subsequently died of their wounds. Not for nothing did Hippocrates in the fifth century BC implore his fellow physicians 'at least to do no harm'.

Simon Szreter

Reviewer: David Shackleton graduated from St John's in 2007 with a BA in Philosophy. He spent the first half of 2008 working for the Burma Campaign UK in London. He is currently doing a language and civilisation course at the Sorbonne, Paris, and will be embarking on a Masters degree in English Literature at UCL in September.

Michael Smith, *Polar Crusader: A Life of Sir James Wordie* (Birlinn Publishers, 2004).

Pp.371. ISBN 978-1-84158-292-4



James Wordie led an extraordinary life. He is perhaps the only Master of St John's College to have engaged in 'University Alpinism', albeit during his student days. University Alpinism, or night-climbing, initially developed as a means for students to get back into college after the gates had been locked; it is the clandestine pursuit of climbing – without ropes or safety equipment – University walls and buildings. Wordie had a particular flair for the daunting climb up the sheer facade of St John's College Chapel tower, the highest building in Cambridge. It was in that same Chapel that, many years later, Wordie, being then President of the College, was to announce himself elected Master of St John's.

Between his student days at St John's, and his becoming Master of that College, Wordie achieved an incredible amount. Perhaps most remarkably, aged just twenty-six, he was a member of Shackleton's famous *Endurance* expedition (1914-16). Shackleton's eminently ambitious plan was to cross the entire Antarctic continent, a distance of around 1,800 miles, deploying two ships and two separate teams of men on either side of the continent: one from the Weddell Sea and another from the Ross Sea. Wordie went as a geologist, one of few scientists amongst the crew.

However, the expedition foundered from its early stages. Due to uncharacteristic weather conditions that year, the *Endurance* became trapped in the pack ice of the Weddell Sea. For the next nine months the crew was held captive in the

entrenched ship, impotent. Under increased pressure from the ice, the *Endurance* was eventually crushed, and had to be abandoned, before finally sinking on 21 November 1915.

After a further six months of living on the ice floe, and left with just three small boats, Shackleton led an epic journey across the ice to the uninhabited Elephant Island. From there, Shackleton took a select party aboard the most seaworthy of the three boats, the *James Caird*, and sailed to South Georgia to find help, traversing a previously unclimbed and unmapped mountain range on the way.

Meanwhile Wordie, along with the majority of the crew, remained on a small, wind-battered and desolate beach on Elephant Island, living under their upturned boats, not knowing when, or if, help would arrive. Despite housing twenty-two, the hut was just 19ft by 10ft; there was not even enough room to stand up inside. It was over four months that they had to wait. Shackleton eventually returned with help on 30 August 1916, happily to find all members of the *Endurance* still alive.

Michael Smith's challenge, as Wordie's biographer, is to bring out the human aspect of Wordie's experience. Wordie himself was astoundingly unforthcoming on the subject, not even talking to his closest family about the expedition in any detail until the last couple of years of his life. Nor was he entirely comfortable with others sharing their experiences. For example, after a dinner party almost forty years later, Wordie's shipmate, Walter How, was entertaining a small crowd of enthralled listeners with anecdotes from the expedition. Wordie evidently considered How too loquacious on the subject, and brought him to an abrupt halt, asking: 'What's going on here, How? Not telling stories out of school, I hope?'

Wordie's expedition diary, of which an abridged version is appended to Smith's biography, is similarly restrained. For example, we find under the entry for 27 December 1915 the comment that 'the skipper had trouble with the carpenter today whilst sledging'. We rely on Smith to expand this elliptical remark. Having just lost the *Endurance*, Shackleton made the decision to attempt a gruelling 250-mile march to Paulet Island, whilst dragging three heavy boats, across almost un-negotiable ice. McNish, 'the carpenter', recognising the futility of the boat-hauling, refused an order to continue the pointless slog. Shackleton, in order to quell the mutiny before it spread, hurriedly assembled the entire party on the ice. McNish argued that he was no longer obliged to obey orders as the ship had sunk, to which Shackleton responded that disobedience would be 'legally punished' and that, regardless of the sinking of the ship, the men would still be paid. The clear insinuation of 'legal punishment' was that McNish, or anyone else, would be shot for any further insubordination.

Smith does an admirable job of bringing to life Wordie's expedition experience. Wordie is presented as diligent and erudite, a resourceful and dedicated scholar. Excluding South Georgia at the outset and the small stretch of beach on Elephant Island, land was never properly encountered during the expedition. Despite being stranded in this geologist's desert, Wordie used his ingenuity to collate enough data to publish a geological article after the expedition – an article that now appears as an appendix to Shackleton's *South*. He managed this feat based on the odd rock or stone brought up by the ship's depth-sounding apparatus, by examining the accumulation of dirt embedded in passing icebergs, and from tiny pebbles retrieved from the stomachs of slaughtered penguin's stomachs. As Wordie later explained, 'penguins have a grinding mechanism in their crop and large pieces of rock can be recovered'.

Further, we see Wordie as tough, both physically and mentally. It seems that Shackleton was concerned for the well-being of Wordie and the other scientists, given the brutal conditions. Such concern was unwarranted on Wordie's account. Wordie was probably one of the fittest members of the expedition, and certainly one of the most experienced climbers. Later, he was only very narrowly to miss out on being one of the members of the 1922 Everest expedition.

Wordie's toughness was demonstrated after the eighteen-day sea-crossing in the open boats, after which the crew were exhausted. Most had suffered from acute dehydration, frostbite, sleep-deprivation, boils, cracked lips, and physical exhaustion to varying degrees. Shackleton records how 'about ten of the party were off their heads'; Wordie himself writes that 'some fellows moreover were half crazy: one got an ice axe and did not stop till he had killed about ten seals: another began eating raw limpets and dulse [seaweed], although during the last two days there had been absolutely no restriction on food'. Wordie, by contrast, was one of the strongest, bringing the boats and stores onto shore, setting up shelter, and even finding the energy to scale the cliffs in search of a more hospitable place to camp.

Wordie did not retreat quietly into the shadows after returning from Shackleton's expedition. He continued exploring, himself leading trips to Spitsbergen, Greenland, and the Canadian Arctic. Indeed Smith argues that Wordie was chiefly responsible for modernising Polar exploration, bridging the heroic age and today's mechanised, scientific age.

Inspired by Amundsen, Wordie pioneered the method of deploying small, hand-picked teams of scientists in the Polar regions, supplied by a small ship and capable of living off the land. His lightweight teams, typically involving six to eight men as opposed to the fifty-six of the *Endurance*, would go to the field for

only two or three months of the summer season, thereby avoiding the costly and unnecessary practice of over-wintering. Other changes that Wordie introduced were: to focus on the Arctic as opposed to the Antarctic; to use new technology, such as radio communications, motor vehicles and aircraft; and, the geography of the Polar regions having being fairly well established, to focus on scientific understanding, particularly geology, glaciology, meteorology, zoology, botany and archaeology.

The list of Wordie's achievements continues. He was elected Chairman of the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge in 1937, President of the Royal Geographical Society in 1951, Master of St John's College in 1952, and Chairman of the British Mountaineering Council in 1953. Furthermore he acted as advisor for numerous expeditions; notably, as Vice-Chairman of the Everest Committee, he planned the first successful ascent of Everest in 1953, by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay.

Wordie implemented a three-year cycle to balance his three great interests: exploration, academia, and his family. The system worked such that Wordie would spend one summer season exploring, another devoted to responsibilities at Cambridge, and a third spent with his family. The summer expeditions were timed conveniently to coincide with the Cambridge long vacation.

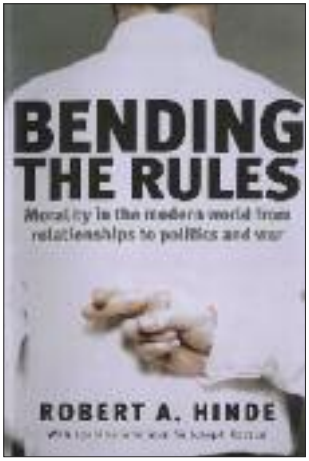
Polar Crusader is engaging and perspicuous. For a biography that reads so easily, one is only very seldom made conscious of its lightness of style. One such instance might be when we learn that the young Wordie used 'to bang on about his own personal favourite issues' in school debates. Such a minor qualm aside, Smith's biography stands as a much-needed commemoration of a figure who, until now, has been undeservedly overlooked.

David Shackleton

Reviewer: Duncan Dormor is Dean of St John's College and lectures in the Divinity Faculty on the sociology and anthropology of religion.

Robert A Hinde (with contributions from Sir Joseph Rotblat), *Bending the Rules: Morality in the modern world from relationships to politics and war* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

Pp.279. ISBN 978-0-19-921897-4



This book continues a trajectory of thinking that Hinde (Fellow of St John's) has explored over quite a number of years: that of trying to establish an empirical scientific grounding for moral thinking and practice. It entails a distinctive approach that in large part eschews the insights of philosophers or others working within established frameworks of ethical reflection in favour of one rooted in the insights of evolutionary biology, ethology and psychology. This approach is mapped out in the first four chapters and provides the foundation for a wide-ranging commentary on the relationship between ethics and the physical sciences, medicine, politics, business and war. These chapters are enriched by the author's personal and political reflections and the passionate and vigorous expression of his moral judgements. Unsurprisingly, Hinde's long-standing public advocacy of the proper exercise of responsibility within the scientific community and his opposition to nuclear arms, and indeed warfare in general, receive clear articulation. Doubtless his friend and potential collaborator, Sir Joseph Rotblat, the former Nobel Peace Prize winner, who sadly died before the book's completion, would have applauded.

Anyone who has grasped the basics of contemporary evolutionary theory, especially the ideas of inclusive fitness, and kin and group selection, will be struck by the congruence between the forces involved in natural selection, as it operates in highly social animals, and the dynamics that shape human society and culture. So an approach to understanding human morality that is informed by such empirically derived concepts is deeply attractive. However the gap between

biology and culture is notoriously easy to underestimate and few attempts to bridge it have yielded startling or novel insights for philosophers or ethicists.

Hinde sets about his ambitious task by arguing that natural selection has bequeathed humanity two propensities, that of being out for ourselves (selfish assertiveness) and that of behaving cooperatively and helpfully with others (prosociality). These two forces, he suggests, have moulded and shaped human morality, which he understands as an amalgam of pan-cultural principles arising out of our evolutionary past and precepts that are restricted to particular cultures. The quest to successfully distinguish between these has of course occupied many great minds across a range of academic disciplines. Perhaps inevitably, whilst Hinde raises the possibility that a large number of pan-cultural principles exist, the central example advanced throughout the course of the book is the so-called 'Golden Rule'. The character and status of the Golden Rule has been subject to intense discussion over centuries and, as a reliable foundation for the systematic elaboration of a moral system, has had its detractors including Kant, Nietzsche and Russell. However, Hinde's primary concern is to elucidate the ways in which being part of a particular group of people with a shared culture leads to precepts and behaviour that are at odds with the simple application of the Golden Rule. It is in this vein that he considers the potentially corrosive impact of political systems, the profit motive and the business of science, and proposes a series of corrective measures involving the promotion of ethical codes and regulations, the cultivation of a whistle-blowing culture and support for a rejuvenated United Nations.

Despite the inchoate nature of the central distinctions available to him, Hinde makes an effective case for the wider appreciation of the social bases for our morality. His stress on the central role that group loyalty plays in influencing or indeed distorting our ethical decision-making is well placed and he provides a number of salutary examples in the later chapters. Whilst not every reader will agree with Hinde's political views, his passionate call that we act for a better tomorrow demands our admiration.

Duncan Dormor

BOOK REVIEWS

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ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Reviewer: Dr Alison Kesby is a Research Fellow in Law, specialising in international human rights law, public international law and international legal theory.

Sir Jack Beatson, Stephen Grosz, Tom Hickman, Rabinder Singh with Stephanie Palmer, *Human Rights: Judicial Protection in The United Kingdom* (Street & Maxwell, 2008).

Pp. 813 (excluding tables, appendices and index).

ISBN 978-0-421-90250-3

On 2 October 2000 the Human Rights Act 1998 came into force. Readers may recall the government's oft repeated catchphrase that the Act was to 'bring rights home' such that rights under the European Convention on Human Rights could be vindicated in domestic courts. No longer would applicants need to pursue their claims in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. In anticipation of the commencement of the Act, Stephen Grosz, Jack Beatson and Peter Duffy published *Human Rights: The 1998 Act and The European Convention* (2000). Part I of that book explained how the Human Rights Act would operate in practice, its 'constitutional status' and relation to existing statutory and common law. Part II examined the European Court's case law on the key Convention rights. Although originally conceived as a second edition of Grosz, Beatson and Duffy, *Human Rights: Judicial Protection in The United Kingdom* is 'an almost entirely new book' (p. ix). Part II has been omitted and the subject matter of Part I expanded to some 800 pages of expert commentary. As to the authors, Sir Jack Beatson, Justice of the High Court, Honorary Fellow of St John's and formerly Rouse Ball Professor of English Law, will be well known to many readers and is sufficient recommendation to purchase the book. His co-authors are distinguished human rights barristers and practitioners. Together they have produced an invaluable resource for legal academics and practitioners alike. In the words of Lord Bingham, the authors combine a 'broad panoramic vision' of the human rights scene with 'a comprehensive, expert, and critical analysis' of the case law and its underlying concepts and principles (see 'Foreword').

The present review, afforded not 800 pages but a mere 800 words, cannot hope to do justice to a work of such breadth. Hence, the discussion below is intended merely to provide the reader with the briefest of tantalising overviews. The focus of the book is the different ways in which human rights are protected in the domestic laws of the United Kingdom, rather than the substantive rights

themselves. As the Human Rights Act is the principal means of protection, it forms the major subject matter of the book. Chapter 1 examines the place of human rights in the laws of the United Kingdom. It is a masterful section that provides the reader with the broad sweep of the relevant areas of law and their interrelation. Chapter 2 considers the values underlying the European Convention such as 'human dignity', 'democracy' and 'equality' and the Court's approach to interpreting and applying the Convention, whilst Chapter 3 examines the general principles applied by domestic courts in human rights cases (namely legality, proportionality, equality, weight, deference and latitude) with a separate section on national security.

Having set out these values and principles, the authors proceed to explore the scope of protection provided by the Human Rights Act (that is, its personal, territorial and temporal scope) (Chapter 4) and its impact on the interpretation of primary and subordinate legislation of the UK Parliament (Chapter 5). The rules and principles applicable at common law and under the Act to decision-making by public officials, and the remedies available for breaches of Convention rights, form the subject matter of Chapters 6 and 7 respectively. Finally the authors examine the protection of human rights in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales under the devolution statutes and the effect given to the Convention at common law in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Some consideration is also given to the place of the Convention in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

Of the plethora of books published on the Human Rights Act over the past ten years, *Human Rights* is unique in providing an integrated analysis of the different methods of human rights protection. It is refreshing to find a book that adopts a multifocal approach to human rights protection in the UK and addresses complex issues of the interrelation of the different bases of protection. In this respect, the authors' decision to omit the former Part II and considerably expand their treatment of Part I is welcome. Looking to the future, we might ask whether further human rights reform is on the horizon. Would a 'British Bill of Rights' enhance human rights protection in the UK? At the very least, any such Bill would need to go further than the minimum requirements of the Convention (pp. 80-1). In this context, one of the book's greatest contributions may well be the authors' pertinent reminder of the enduring importance of the common law protection of human rights. In their opinion its contribution should not be 'underestimated' or 'neglected' and yet its development has slowed, if not halted, since the commencement of the Human Rights Act. Indeed, they remind us that if the Act were ever to be repealed, and not replaced with a bill of rights, it is to the common law to which lawyers would need to turn (pp. 81-2).

Dr Alison Kesby

Reviewer: Ben Alden-Falconer is a current History student at St John's and was a caller in the 2009 Telethon.

Tom Rob Smith, *Child 44* (Simon & Schuster Ltd, 2008).

Pp. 490. ISBN 978-184737126-3

Tom Rob Smith credits St John's with awarding him the Harper-Wood Studentship, which gave him the opportunity to spend six months in Italy attempting a first novel after graduating in 2001. That novel came to nothing, but since then he has gone from strength to strength. Having completed his debut novel *Child 44*, and received critical acclaim worldwide, he already has Hollywood in his sights – with award-winning director Ridley Scott and scriptwriter Richard Price (of *The Color of Money*) backing him. Far from resting on his laurels, he is powering on, having completed the sequel, moved onto his third book, and kept up with his own screenwriting. This is a Johnian whose place in the limelight is only set to grow.

Entering his stylish penthouse in a converted jam factory in London, with panoramic views across the City, it is clear that he is now a far cry from his third-year view of the Kitchen Bridge and The Backs. He remembers being lured from his room by that view, justifying sitting in the sun by taking Aristotle's *Poetics* to read, only to find out later that not a word had sunk in. And, although Smith insists that how people position themselves at Cambridge bears little relation to what they go on to do in the outside world, much that he did here clearly feeds in to his later success.

Describing himself as an 'opportunistic writer' who has always loved plots, for much of his early career the opportunity to write came in the form of plays. He was the first student to win funding to put on his own play from the prestigious Marlowe Society. This exposed him to the commercialised nature of Cambridge theatre with audience levels of just eight – a sharp shock after the guaranteed audiences he had been used to at school. After Cambridge too, it was his scripts that paid the bills, getting his first proper job at talkback Thames after replying to an ad he saw in *The Guardian*: one of the extremely rare ones that said 'no experience required'. From there he had a succession of jobs in TV, before ending up in Phnom Penh with the BBC storylining Cambodia's first soap opera, which led onto a commission to write a film based on Jeff Noon's *Somewhere the Shadow*. It was while researching real-life cases of serial killers for this that he came across the story of Andrei Chikatilo, who had murdered and cannibalised around 55 women and children in Russia over a 13-year period beginning in 1977. Chikatilo was to form the basis of his thriller, *Child 44*.

Ben Alden-Falconer

The book itself is moved back 30 years to the months before and after Stalin's death. This shift back in time not only makes the Russian people truly naive to the possibility of a serial killer, but also allows events to be played out within the complex moral climate of the Soviet system. This makes the detective story all the more compelling. The State's refusal to admit that such 'capitalist social problems' could exist in their supposedly more equal society allows the murders and mutilation of children to carry on unabated, with local authorities blaming homosexuals or the mentally ill for the deaths – but never 'normal' Soviet citizens. To investigate further is to challenge the State, and everyone is aware of the dire consequence this could have on both themselves and their families.

Leo Demidov, the saviour of the day, is an unexpected choice for a hero: a state security officer whose normal job involves interrogating and torturing anyone who so much as thinks about questioning the Stalinist status quo. The sort of guy who has forced any niggling doubts about his work from his mind, justifying his actions on the greater good and the necessity of cruelty to unlock the gates to a 'perfect state'. It is such a mindset that at first sees him dogmatically follow state policy, burying evidence of the murder of a junior colleague's child. It is only when the tables are turned and he finds himself on the outside of this system, saved from execution only by the unexpected death of Stalin, but still exiled to the Ural mountains, that he begins to investigate further.

With a background in television it is hardly surprising that Smith originally conceptualised the story as a screenplay. Perhaps this is why the book has a number of action movie moments that would not go amiss in an episode of *24*. Smith, however, is quick to point out that his film success was not foreseeable. His agent had told him: 'From a commercial point of view it is crazy. Unprecedented. Hollywood hasn't made any movies about Stalinist Russia that haven't been war movies.'

Amid the pacy chase scenes the book draws you into the more serious suffering and fear that held 'Communist' Russia together. It is the distinctive situation that the Stalinist regime created, and how this interacts with the murders that are taking place, that makes the book. As Smith puts it, 'The story and the location are completely intertwined.' He exposes how the Stalinist attempt at a Communist ideal is fettered with flaws, first pulling the reader into the brutality of the fight for survival in the gulags, then the fear that gripped ordinary Russians' lives – you never knew who would denounce you. Ultimately, Smith is showing how a fundamentally good man could have found himself committing horrors to sustain it. Yet this more serious edge (no doubt stimulated by his prolific reading of history books on the period) does not weigh the story down. In fact, Smith has undoubtedly achieved one of his original aims: to write a compelling page-turner that will engross the daily commuter, pulling them away from their squashed, seatless reality on the District line.

Ben Alden-Falconer (2008)