

NSS REPORT CALLS FOR REALISM AND CONSOLIDATION

"The Catholic Church still has many loyal sons and daughters in strategic positions in legislatures, judicatures, police forces, customs offices and the media", members of the National Secular Society were told at their annual general meeting in London last Sunday. The warning came in the annual report which continued: "With Irish immigration this is true of Britain. It is even truer of the highly controversial Common Market". After the protests and experimentation (with by-products of violence and gimmickry) of the swinging sixties, we may now be in for the sober seventies. There is growing evidence of caution and a sense of reality in local, national and international affairs. It is being recognised that the world's problems cannot be solved by United Nations rhetoric, campus riots, instant television, ceaseless moralising or sporadic bra-burning. Most important of these trends is the replacement of ideological sloganeering with patient diplomacy in world affairs.

The Reckoning

The report said that within the humanist movement, "recklessly oversold by some of its spokesmen in the mid-sixties and now facing the nemesis of inevitable disillusion (which has attacked the innocent and guilty alike), belated sobriety has developed. Organisational claims are muted, one hears less of instant panaceas like school syllabuses in moral education or the fatuities of the 'open society', and there now seems to be some awareness that before one has the right to scatter homilies about 'world order' one should be able to establish order in one's own affairs".

Rock of Ages Cleft

Agonising reappraisal is found nowhere in a more acute form than inside the churches. The Church of Rome may still be Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, but she is One in little more than name. In Spain and Latin America some priests are in open conflict with their own hierarchies. Almost every week the Pope pleads with or storms at dissidents inside the Church on questions like birth control, censorship, sex and family relations, and the celibacy of the priesthood.

Nevertheless, the political and "moral" influence of the Vatican is not to be underestimated. In addition to her millions of loyal followers throughout the world the Catholic Church has incalculable financial resources. Corrado Pallenberg in his book *The Vatican Finances* (1971), estimated the productive capital at £46 million. But this was misleading as it bears no relationship to the entire resources of the Vatican whose art treasures alone are inestimable. And the world wide Catholic Church whose national hierarchies, religious orders and financially autonomous bodies have investments and real estate—much of it contributed by the State, even in non-Catholic countries—of immense value and redevelopment potential.

Social Reform

It was widely assumed that pressures towards reform and "permissive" legislation were spontaneously running out of steam and that the change in government would bring the whole process to a halt. This has largely come

about, and yet another Sundays Entertainments Bill and a privacy Bill were defeated. But a number of illiberal private members' Bills were also unsuccessful in a session dominated by Government measures, like the Industrial Relations Bill.

Opponents of permissiveness who had forecast that a Conservative Government would take active steps to reverse the advances of recent years have been disappointed. When Lord Eccles said the Arts Council ought to vet work supported by taxpayers' money he was rebuffed by the Council, and the Home Secretary has gone out of his way to damp down the hysteria over pot and porn. The Attorney-General refused permission for private prosecutions of *Oh! Calcutta!* and *Council of Love* under the Theatres Act 1968, prosecution of the latter having to be brought under common law.

All but a handful of fanatics, Irish earls or dowager ladies with ample private means and time on their hands, now recognise that the great mass of people are not unduly concerned, one way or the other, over "charters for queers", four-letter words, nudes, profanity or dirty post-cards so long as checks are kept on prices and unemployment. And when a former Labour MP and fierce anti-humanist, Peter Mahon, contested a by-election in a Liverpool Catholic stronghold as the "Labour and Against Abortion" candidate, he was soundly defeated.

Family Planning Progress

The NSS report welcomes the enormous increase in contraception and sex education in the last year. It points out that the Conservation Society (whose chairman, Sir David Renton, is a former Conservative Minister) has called for a comprehensive birth control policy under the NHS, and that a House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology recommended setting up a special office to stabilise Britain's population. Despite an initial storm and some bans on distribution the sex education film *Growing Up* is being shown in many areas. The BBC series of sex education films for eight- and nine-year-olds is now broadcast to a quarter of a million children in 3,000 schools, and have been widely praised by parents

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VIVAT RESPUBLICA

NIGEL SINNOTT

Every few years the question of financing the Royal Family gets a brief airing, and it has recently been resurrected, this time with the added question: can we afford it? English republicanism is an opinion unheard of by the man in the street today, despite the fact that it was a subject of fierce contention a century ago. Republicanism, like forthright criticism of Christianity, fell a victim to the conspiracy of silence produced, perhaps inadvertently, by the media (and particularly the BBC under the Reith regime) 30 years ago, during the cult of "normality" and the worship of the myth that "we have our differences but we really all believe the same thing deep down".

Four weeks ago the Queen's income was criticised in a *New Statesman* editorial, and the editor was in turn duly described in the journal's correspondence columns as "astride an ancient charger" with "the ghost of Bradlaugh . . . holding the stirrup". The correspondent, Roger Fulford, quoted Charles Bradlaugh's 1871 figures for the Civil List (£385,000) and annuities to the Royal Family (£161,000), but pointed out that "the latter figure is virtually unchanged, the former has increased by £90,000". Therefore, he said, "we pay the Royal Family, in real money, less than we did a century ago . . .". Well, I am heartened to hear that Bradlaugh's statistics still disturb the dreams of monarchists!

Mr Fulford went on to say that he thought people today spent too much on themselves, and not enough on "the finer side of life". He concluded: "Should we grudge a tiny fraction of this huge total expenditure on the monarchy which brings colour, dignity, and unselfishness to our life . . .?"

It was exactly a hundred years ago that Charles Bradlaugh first published his *The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*. At the time of Bradlaugh's death in 1891 the book had run through ten editions, and had achieved the distinction of being stamped upon by Lord Randolph Churchill on the floor of the House of Commons; with typical Bradlaughian humour, the ninth edition appeared with the following dedication: "Dedicated (without permission) to Lord R. H. S. Churchill, and Sir H. D. Wolff, as some acknowledgement of their effectual advertisement of the sixth, seventh and eighth editions. March 1883".

Bread and Circuses

I will take Mr Fulford's word that we now pay the Royal Family less, in real money, than in 1871; anyone who has read *The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick* may be tempted to add "and I should damned well hope so too!" After all, one of the fashionable ploys of monarchists nowadays is to tell us that a Royal Family is cheaper than a president. As for bringing "colour, dignity and unselfishness into our lives" well, royalists cannot have it both ways: either we should be loyal monarchists because it is easy on our pockets, or we should be above mercenary considerations and choose monarchy because of the loftiness of its ideal. I should like to deal with the second case in this article.

Frankly, the "colour, dignity, and unselfishness" argument does not wash with this writer, nor the plea that monarchy is good for the tourist trade—it is merely an extension of the opportunist "bread and circuses" idea. Hitler's innumerable rallies were supposed to engender the same sort of "colour" and "unselfishness". Finance alone

is a shallow reason for being opposed to the institution of monarchy, and for me the objection is a strong, and essentially moral one.

As a freethinker, I object to the principle of hereditary monarchy because it becomes philosophically and morally absurd, unless one believes also in supernatural laws such as the divine right of kings, or in the idea that there is an innately superior ruling caste, and both these ideas, ultimately, are at variance with the premises of real democracy. Neither should we accept the plea that monarchy provides a strong, neutral focus-point in a politically divided nation: this is another middle class compromise-myth. Allegiance to the Crown is hardly a non-political or unifying force in Northern Ireland! With a few eccentric exceptions, monarchs have been (and will doubtless continue to be) a reactionary, or at least conservative force in society. In the *Freethinker* (12 June) F. A. Ridley quoted the future King Edward VII's greeting to the general who slaughtered the Parisian communards: "Our Saviour". And King Edward was quite easy-going by the standards of his day. Even where monarchs approximate to "neutrality" this can only be achieved at the expense of their personal freedom, and this is wrong. I object to the Royal Family being deprived of the right to vote and speak freely. Bradlaugh wrote: "I loathe these small German breast-bested wanderers, whose only merit is their loving hatred of one another". Poor Queen Victoria could not publish a reply, but only mutter that Bradlaugh was "the most heavy, desperate sort of character" to a few trusted confidants.

Undemocratic

I am well aware that the present members of the Royal Family are pleasant mannered, and often most public spirited individuals, but both their privileges and restrictions are undemocratic. I am well aware that there are corrupt republics, and those where the presidency has degenerated almost into a dynasty. Nevertheless, I maintain that if we are talking of moral criteria, the republican form and ideal is the more enlightened, dignified, and ennobling. Scratch your liberal royalist, and as often as not you will find a political cynic.

I bear no malice against the persons of the present day House of Windsor (formerly Brunswick), but neither do I forget Bradlaugh's indictment of their forebears: "In their own land they vegetate and wither unnoticed; here we pay them highly to marry and perpetuate a pauper prince-race. If they do nothing, they are 'good'. If they do ill, loyalty gilds the vice till it looks like virtue". Or, in the words of Lord Macaulay: "Down, down, forever down, with the Mitre and the Crown" (*Naseby*).

Long live the Republic!

THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

By DAVID TRIBE

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POPE OF THE SUN AND THE MOON

F. A. RIDLEY

In that unusual and very informative book, *The Secret Archives of the Vatican*, which I recently reviewed in the *Freethinker*, Maria Luisa Ambrosini has written a fascinating chapter based on original documents she has investigated at first hand. It describes the extraordinary career of Pedro de Luna, Pope Benedict VIII, one of the most astounding men ever to appear in the chequered annals of the papacy. You will not find Benedict VIII listed in the modern official register of popes since he was on what turned out to be the losing side in the Great Schism of the early fifteenth century. Consequently he is listed as an Anti-Pope. And according to Maria Luisa Ambrosini he has other claims to distinction including, perhaps, membership of the then underground "witchcraft" cult.

The Great Schism was a stormy era in ecclesiastical history, and bore in some respects a remarkable resemblance to the present phase of cosmopolitan Catholicism. Then, as now, nationalism was often stronger than religion even in the Church itself. Already, a century prior to the Reformation, a fifteenth-century pope (Martin V) complained that in England the King was the real ruler of the Church. The Council of Constance, which both claimed and exercised superiority to the papacy, essentially embodied the claims of the national churches represented there much as Dutch Catholicism has been doing since Vatican II.

In the preceding century the papacy itself had become a mere tool of French nationalism with its headquarters at Avignon. The return of Pope Gregory XI to Rome appeared to release the papacy from its subservience to France, and again threw the highest office in Christendom open to other nations who were understandably jealous of the long French ascendancy.

After Gregory's death a conclave of 16 cardinals, only four of whom were Italian, elected an Italian pope, Urban VI. The French cardinals returned to Avignon and, no doubt hankering after their lost monopoly, elected a French pope, Clement VII. The Great Schism had begun!

The Rival Popes

Christendom was now divided between rival popes, each excommunicating the other as an Anti-Pope. Maria Luisa Ambrosini describes the line-up in the respective camps as follows:

Now the Catholic world divided itself into two enemy camps; the obedience of Clement VII of Avignon, which included France, the Kingdom of Naples, Savoy, Christian Spain, Scotland and parts of Germany; and the obedience of the Roman pope, Urban VI, which was made up of the States of the Church, Venice, Milan, Genoa, Flanders, Portugal and England. England was an enemy of France and therefore on the other side. This confused state of things, with nationalism masquerading as religion, continued until the Council of Constance succeeded in putting an end to the Great Schism.

Meanwhile however, upon the death of the first Avignon pope, his cardinals elected Benedict VIII.

From the evidence accumulated in the Vatican archives we are informed:

The lifetime of Pedro de Luna, the second of the Avignon popes, who reigned as Benedict VIII, spans the duration of the schism. A cardinal before it began, he was the last of the schismatic popes to yield the tiara, and he yielded it only by

dying. Of the line of the Counts of Luna, and with Arab blood, allied to the Royal houses of Aragon and Navarre, he was already aged when elected Pope . . . like other popes before him, he was suspected of a dual priesthood, of allegiance to a religion older than Rome.

Incidentally, de Luna had the second longest reign in the history of the papacy; the record (1846-1878) is held by Pope Pius IX.

Not only did de Luna survive the Great Schism: he and his followers attempted to prolong it. At the Council of Constance the forces of unity finally triumphed over discordant nationalism. The General Council asserted its authority over the Church and the Pope, and deposed both popes at Rome and Avignon. Benedict refused to accept deposition from the Council, declaring: "The Church is not at Constance, the Church is here. Here is the Ark of Noah". In modern parlance: where the pope is, there is the Church. Since 1870, when the dogma of papal infallibility was proclaimed, this has been official Roman doctrine, but de Luna proclaimed his own infallibility too soon!

Flawed Genius

Subsequently, he withdrew to his Spanish castle at Peniscola, where he maintained himself until his death. His last stronghold was carved from the red rock, surmounted by sun and sky, and rumoured to be the ancient headquarters of the Templars, perhaps even one of their secret ports from which they sailed to other continents. "Here is the Ark of God", he said. And there he lived for eight years, eating from tinned dishes when he was alone, from golden ones when there were visitors; sitting on a terrace by the sea and excommunicating his enemies. He was perhaps a centenarian when he died.

Maria Luisa Ambrosini writes that de Luna was a man of flawed genius. The flaw extended to his theology, and always in his enemies' accusations was the charge of priesthood of the old religion: "Pope of the moon, Pope of the sun, heretic". The sun symbol still awakened memories of the "unconquered sun", of the Roman legions and of the solar religion older still.

The fifteenth century witnessed the head-on clash between the Church of Rome and the old witchcraft cult. This pre-Christian cult was one which dated perhaps from the Stone Age, and in which worship of the sun and moon figured largely. Joan of Arc was probably an adherent, and it will be recalled that she died as a witch, not a heretic. Later in the same century, Pope Innocent VIII launched his famous Bull against witchcraft which inaugurated the frightful persecution that only ended after the virtual extermination of the cult.

Was one of Innocent's predecessors a priest of the cult? Were pagan rites celebrated by the head of the Christian Church at Avignon and Peniscola? It represents an interesting speculation. As the writer of *Ecclesiastes* long ago put it: "There is nothing new under the sun". Perhaps including a Pope of the sun? As the author of *The Secret Archives of the Vatican* observes: "What a tragedy Shakespeare could have made out of the strange story of this medieval pope".

FREETHINKER

editor: WILLIAM McILROY

103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1

Telephone: 01-407 1251

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

EVENTS

Humanist Holidays. Summer Centre in the Lake District is now full. Youth Camp being planned for 24 July until 1 August in Salop. Details: Marjorie Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone 642 8796).

Humanist Housing Association, Blackham House, 35 Worpole Road, London, SW19 (near Wimbledon station), Sunday, 27 June, 3 p.m. Garden Party. "Freethinker" readers welcome.

The Progressive League, Halden House, Dunchideock, Exeter, 7-14 August, Summer Conference. Details from Ernest Seeley, c/o Progressive League, Albion Cottage, Fortis Green, London, N2.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 27 June, 11 a.m. H. J. Blackham: "The Open Society".

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RESOLUTIONS

Members of the National Secular Society passed emergency resolutions on Britain's entry into the Common Market and the war in East Bengal, at their annual general meeting last Sunday.

The text of the Common Market resolution was: "In view of the current negotiations between the British Government and the Common Market countries of Western Europe, this AGM (1) Affirms its belief in the importance for world peace of a multi-racial, intercontinental Commonwealth of Nations; (2) Expresses grave concern over the role and extent of political democracy, civil liberties, Vatican influence, and conscription in peace-time within the Common Market; and (3) Urges HMG to take these factors fully into account and tell the British people, in its forthcoming White Paper and elsewhere, exactly where it stands on these issues of such vital importance to the people of this country".

NSS members condemned the Government of Pakistan for suppressing the democratically elected assembly, having massacred and terrorised unarmed civilians in order to gain military control of East Bengal, and perpetrating the systematic slaughter of groups of the Hindu minority as a matter of deliberate policy.

The meeting called on the British Government to continue to stop all its military aid to West Pakistan and to immediately stop all economic aid. The British Government should insist, at the United Nations and elsewhere, that all humanitarian relief for the people in the territory now occupied by the Pakistan Army be supervised by international agencies so that no resources are used for military purposes. Britain should recognise the Government of Bangla Desh, in view of the fact that the union of the two wings can now be maintained only by such brute force as should not be tolerated by the international community, and that such enforced union only endangers peace and stability in South Asia.

Resolutions on a wide range of other subjects were also passed. The meeting welcomed the decision of the Secretary of State for the Social Services in declining to submit controversial clauses in the Abortion Act 1967 to the Committee of Inquiry set up to look into its working. The meeting hoped that ways can be found to circumvent the power of hostile consultants and matrons to prevent virtually all abortions in the hospitals in which they operate. The meeting called for the introduction of full and honest sex education, including information about venereal diseases and contraception in all schools. A resolution calling for a national population policy to include free and freely available contraceptive advice and materials under the NHS was also passed.

Resolutions were passed calling for the repeal of all the blasphemy laws and statute-barring of the common law offence so that the pretence of community religious adherence can be dropped, and creative artists and entertainers saved from vexatious private persecutions; and for the repeal of the blasphemy laws. The meeting affirmed the Society's policy of separation of Church and State, and urged the Government to remove all State subsidies from denominational schools, and worship and RI from county schools altogether.

NEWS

S AND NOTES

While recognising the need for immigration control as part of a national population policy, the meeting called for an amendment of those portions of the Immigration Act 1971 which give non-white Commonwealth immigrants to Britain an inferior status to whites, and could lead to police harassment of non-white people. It also urged the Government to admit without delay those East African Asians who are British citizens, and who wish to enter this country.

Mrs Ethel Venton was the only candidate for the presidency and was duly elected, S. D. Kuebart and W. McIlroy were elected vice-presidents, and G. N. Deodhekar honorary treasurer. R. Condon, J. Farrand, I. Hebden, Professor J. Lewin, M. Lloyd-Jones, W. Shannon, E. Willoughby, Mrs M. McIlroy, Miss B. Smoker and Mrs. E. Warner were elected to the Executive Committee.

W. Miller (Birmingham) and W. Collins (Manchester) spoke in appreciation of David Tribe's splendid work during his term of office.

AWARD

Edward Blishen, the novelist and educational writer who contributes to the *Freethinker*, has received the Carnegie Award for work on children's authorship. Mr Blishen is, with Leon Garfield, author of *The God Beneath the Sea* which was recommended with 32 other books for the award. It was also commended for the Kate Greenaway Award because of Charles Keeping's illustrations. *The God Beneath the Sea* is published by Longmans at £1.75.

At the presentation ceremony the chairman of the Library Association Youth Libraries Group said that the development of children's literature over the past decade meant that it was no longer possible to choose a "best book" or to select runners-up in order of merit. What was now done was to single out creators who were considered to be particularly worthy of an award of merit.

Edward Blishen's review of Maureen Duffy's novel *Love Child* is on page 206.

NEW PAMPHLET

"This document represents all-party initiative by people united in their determination to work for a national population policy", declared David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society when he introduced the Society's latest pamphlet at a Press conference in London last week. Entitled *Birth Control*, the pamphlet is a shortened version of speeches made at a meeting which the NSS organised as its contribution to European Conservation Year.

Mrs Renée Short, MP, said that to date no Minister had been willing to come all out in favour of free family planning under the National Health Service. "I don't know if this is because of bad financial advice or fear of stirring up a Roman Catholic hornet's nest", she added. "The financial argument simply doesn't hold water when one remembers the enormous saving in the cost of health, housing and educational services".

Dr Caroline Deys, who started the first rural domiciliary family planning scheme in Cambridgeshire and is now

pioneering vasectomy training at the Marie Stopes Clinic, said that one of the main difficulties facing those concerned with the problem is the non-availability of family planning in Britain. Many doctors failed to give the necessary advice and information to their patients, and not nearly enough was taught about it at medical schools.

Birth Control will be reviewed in the next issue of the *Freethinker*.

SUBSIDISING CRUELTY

British taxpayers will contribute several thousand pounds towards the expenses of the forthcoming World Hunting Exhibition in Budapest. A committee has been set up to plan the British Pavilion. Several of the organisations are directly concerned with bloodsports, and include the odious British Field Sports Society. The Government has promised to pay a third of the cost. A number of bloodsports events, including pig sticking, will take place.

It is 34 years since Britain participated in a World Hunting Exhibition, and if enough protests are sent to members of Parliament and Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (House of Commons, London, SW1), she may never do so again.

(Continued from front page)

and teachers. The only serious rebuff in recent months was the prosecution of *The Little Red Schoolbook*. However, the NSS pamphlet *Sex Education*, which was favourably received, would probably have been prosecuted in comparatively recent times.

The report concludes on a note of optimism tempered with realism. "There are still religious privileges (which the Chadwick Report on *Church and State* would extend) but religious views are less able to obstruct reform. With constant vigilance by the NSS and the influence of secularisation generally, the public demonstration for God by the Chief Constable of Lancashire and the Mayor of Colne in Blackburn did not become a prototype, RI syllabuses are broadening somewhat and dangerous abuses of the 1944 Education Act seen to be declining. We may then take stock for a while and consolidate our position, strategically and financially. The churches give much time to this—and they have the Lord on their side".

An important new NSS pamphlet

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BOOKS

LOVE CHILD

by Maureen Duffy. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £1.50.

This is not a novel about which I find it easy to form an opinion, of the kind that reviewers are expected to form. After reading it I felt as one might after meeting a particularly complex person for the first time at a party: "Very interesting and striking, extremely puzzling", one might note in one's diary. "Must think about him, what he said, how he looked, etc."

So let me not pretend to an assured view of the book: let me do my undecided thinking, instead. *Love Child* is written in the first person: Kit, the narrator, being the only child of a dazzlingly brilliant couple who belong to the world of universal super civil servants. They live here and there over the face of the earth: for most of the time covered by *Love Child*, they are on holiday in their Italian home, by the sea. Kit may be boy or girl: in a skilful tease, the author withholds any clinching evidence in the matter. I shall use "she" or "her", not because I believe Kit to be a girl, but to avoid an impossible form such "he/she": though I'm ruefully aware that I do harm to the story by the usage. Because much sensual mileage is made out of this uncertainty. When Kit makes love to herself, or is made love to by another child, the impossibility of knowing the precise physiology of the event adds a curious voluptuousness. But love is a word that may not do. In a sense, the whole story seems a gadget designed to smash the received uses of the word. Kit, whose intelligence and literacy are beyond measurement by testing, is translating the story of Venus and Adonis in Ovid. Classical eroticism seems to shape her view of her mother, who is "a work of art" and "perfection". Or near-perfection. Her mother's flaw is to become the lover of her husband's new secretary—whom Kit nicknames Ajax, Kit's mother believes that her feeling for Ajax is "love". Kit knows this to be her mother's belief, having devised ways—involving rope-ladders, a periscope, much intrigue—of watching and overhearing the pair as they lie together in Ajax's hotel bedroom. And *there's* the core of the story—Kit's enjoyment of the hot, excitingly secret, sultrily risky game of spying on the lovers. She doesn't know, she says, what she is trying to find out. Someone says of Kit that she is "like some spiteful elderly cupid". And that might be a perfectly reasonable account of the child—sitting hidden in a cloud in a corner of the painting ("the world's most beautiful painting") of which her mother and Ajax are the subject, and in the end using her cupid's dart, not to inflame love, but to destroy. For in a final sick excitement of mischief, Kit brings about the ruin of the affair and Ajax's death. The death—Ajax drives his car into the sea—completes the re-enactment of Ovid's story: the gearshift stabs into Ajax's groin.

Well, then. It's about an adolescent's inability to share his, or her, mother with another? Or—given the careful ambiguity of gender, and Kit's doubt at one point as to why she'd concentrated "so much on Venus to the neglect of Jupiter"—a story embracing any offspring's complex of passionate feelings about any parent? Or is it about the pagan perfectionism of the half-grown human being? "I am the chrysalis; my mother is the chrysolite", Kit muses at the beginning of the story; at the end she reflects that "my mother's lover has killed Ajax rather than live without the chrysolite". But there are two problems when it

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comes to deciding what sort of story we have been told. One lies in the Chinese puzzle of artificialities into which the story has been locked. Kit and her parents have a brilliance, a beauty, a freedom from normal human trammels that simply doesn't ring true: all the suggestions of glamour have a faintly ridiculous edge, as in advertising by expensive shops. Kit says she feels like a changeling—"as though I had simply chosen the two most interesting people in the world to come and stay with". Again she says: "I am terrified of us. We don't exist as other people exist, defined by their time and place and upbringing. We are the characters in fairy tales . . ." Perhaps it is all a clever, monstrous child's fantasy? But so full of metamorphoses is the story that one isn't even certain that Kit is a child. "Some spiteful elderly cupid", said that other character, "played by a dwarf instead of a child". How old is Kit, after all? And how seriously are we to take the brilliance of these people whose very passage in the street causes people to turn and "stare and chatter after us". Now and again they tape-record their own discussions—symposia of sawn-off epigrams that sound tiresome and sententious for the talk of intellectual gods and goddesses.

And another problem lies in the different order of tentativeness and doubt into which the novel moves at the end. "I am my mother's lover now", Kit cries. "But I didn't know, I didn't know." I think Miss Duffy doesn't really take us the whole way to this final cry. She suppresses part of the journey. But altogether I suspect that this is a novel of cunning suppressions—of hints and indirections that ought to be gathered up by a reader and puzzled over until an answer, or a series of alternative answers, emerges—as in a Ximenes crossword.

I've displayed myself only as a rather worried reviewer, who's not sure if he's too daft by half to understand Miss Duffy's story, or if she has cheated or simply produced too complicated a literary toy. I've said nothing of the reader who enjoyed the writing, greatly, and especially its cunning extravagances ("I pushed through the shallows and off free into the clear still water as though into a lachrymatory filled with warm brine of a beautiful mistress's tears"): and many incidental observations ("There is no such thing as the natural man except in so far as it is natural for man, of all the species, to be infinitely adaptable to his environment"). In the end I found I'd never really been convinced of Kit's monstrosity and malevolence. Perhaps I read *Love Child* too soon after Yukio Mishima's *The Sailor who Fell from Grace with the Sea*, which is so much more terribly convincing about a child's jealousy of his mother and murderous hatred of her lover.

Or perhaps it simply is that a novelist ought to be a little less riddlingly clever than Miss Duffy?

EDWARD BLISHEN

PUBLICATION DATE: 20 JULY

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REVIEWS

WHO KILLED HANRATTY ?

by Paul Foot. Cape, £2.50

Injustice is always provocative. When it involves death it is even more provocative. And somehow, historically, when injustice involves only one man's death in a particular instance, it is most provocative.

The hanging of James Hanratty for the murder of Michael Gregsten (which became known as the A6 murder) has proved to be one of the most provocative events in the criminal history of the past two decades. Although it is not directly comparable with the hanging of Timothy Evans for murders later discovered to have been committed by Christie, there are comparisons. One point of comparison is the number of books which have been written about the cases. For the most part, these have been largely sensational, but with the publication of the book under review, there is obviously to be another point of comparison. Years after the Christie case, Ludovic Kennedy completed exhaustive research and wrote the book *10 Rillington Place*. It was a classic piece of journalism and has won its place in history. The only thing to say about Paul Foot's book is that it exceeds Kennedy's in every way—extensiveness of research, thoroughness of detail, corroboration of facts, and precision.

It is indeed a rare piece of writing, and at times a forbidding work. The facts are presented in tireless detail, and only occasionally presented with any sense of sensationalism or emotion. But always there is the same merciless—often physically tiring—persentation of every iota of fact, to prove each laborious point. And with each point made, the plot, to use a hackneyed phrase, thickens—nay, it curdles visibly.

For the Hanratty case is still very much a mystery. There are many who would stake their lives on the innocence of Hanratty, but repeated attempts to have a public enquiry held have been refused. All I can say is that this book is the next best thing. Even as a journalist, I cannot comprehend how Paul Foot managed to get so many facts out of so many people—facts which often reflect unfavourably on the person concerned. The conclusion Foot reaches is that Hanratty was undoubtedly *innocent*. The destination is often familiar, but the route can be indeed picturesque.

Foot's book is a hardback, illustrated with poignant photographs and expensive. Kennedy's *10 Rillington Place* came out as a paperback, also with illustrations (in the original volume—not in the dearer edition recently produced when the film was released), and for the education of the masses. It is important, in my view, that Paul Foot's should be in a cheaper edition. What's sauce for the Christie capon should be sauce for the Hanratty hen.

My only real criticism of this book is that Foot started it so obviously convinced of the innocence of Hanratty—a view I held long before this book was started—that the "prosecution" arguments are only brought forward when Foot can counter them. A fairer way might have been to put the facts which convinced the jury of Hanratty's guilt, and systematically disprove them where possible. What Foot has done is to give a largely chronological account of the events in 1961 and 1962, mostly from the standpoint of Hanratty's assumed innocence. This happens in all four

sections, including the one entitled *The Cast Against Hanratty*.

An example of this partisan approach is the account Foot gives of the identification evidence of Valerie Storie, companion of Gregsten at the moment of the murder, and the only witness. In one of the long extracts from the actual transcription of what was said in court during the trial, which forms a very large proportion of this book, the complete account by Valerie Storie of what she saw and whom she saw, is given. Foot answers this vital piece of evidence by trying to convince his readers that the witness's view of the murderer was inadequate, her description did not fit Hanratty, and that in the midst of such an experience assimilation is not at its best. The 12 jurors obviously disagreed, for this was clearly a major prosecution argument.

Some intriguing character studies are provided incidentally, and intriguing is the only word to adequately describe this book. To anyone interested in human affairs or modern history, it is compelling reading, in every sense of the word. Like Kennedy's book, once began it cannot but be closed until the last full stop is read. Also like Kennedy's book—but to a lesser extent, owing to the particularly horrific nature of Christie's crimes—it is harrowing, disturbing and disquieting. It is all the more disturbing because every statement made is well documented and corroborated. These horrors actually happened only ten years ago.

I happen to have spoken on several occasions to James Hanratty's mother. "Jimmy", only the day before he walked to the gallows, pleaded with her to clear his name, if it was the last thing she did. Paul Foot's *Who Killed Hanratty?* should make her pledge considerably easier to honour.

These horrors help to prove once again the obscenity of the "life for a life" idea. We are taken into the condemned cell through the medium of Hanratty's letters to his mother. They make very disturbing reading. Clearly there were doubts in this case, as there were in the Evans case. Execution is irrevocable, causing anguish and suffering to the victim's relatives. This is bad enough when someone is caught "red-handed", but when there are bizarre events surrounding a case, which cast doubts one way or the other, it is appalling that such a sentence be imposed and carried out. I challenge anyone to read this book and support the concept of capital punishment after done so.

ERIC WILLOUGHBY

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LORD REITH

DAVID TRIBE

It was appropriate that when Broadcasting House was dedicated in 1931 it should be consigned to the governance of Almighty God, "Sir John Reith being Director-General". Echoing the parable of the sower and Philipians 4 : 8 the inscriptions monumentalised the Governors' "prayer that good seed sown may bring forth a good harvest, that all things hostile to peace and purity may be banished from this house and that the people, inclining their ear to whatsoever things are beautiful, and honest and of good report may tread the path of wisdom and uprightness".

Like some patriarch of old, or John Calvin, or John Knox, John Reith made it his mission to mould first the British Broadcasting Company, then the British Broadcasting Corporation, along these lines. Beginning with a staff of three—an engineer, a secretary and a broadcaster—he saw the organisation grow to thousands within the same tight rein. Unashamedly in an age of democracy he asserted his belief in paternalistic despotism. And if governments and industrialists and even generals flirted with "participation", yielded to the weaknesses of the flesh and lowered the barriers to corruption, he saw to it that in the world for which he was responsible no modernistic infiltration brought decay. The most comprehensive radio service in the world, the first national television service in the world, technological and artistic innovation—all appeared under his regime and adapted themselves to him, not he to them. "Public service" broadcasting on the Reith pattern diffused its influence in non-commercial broadcasting around the globe. "Auntie" was really "Uncle" in drag, Uncle John, indefatigable and indomitable. It was a remarkable achievement.

He had been so long away from the medium—since 1938—that his death will have little impact on his brain-child. There have been great changes since: satire shows, blue comedies, kitchen sink dramas, current affairs programmes on subjects decidedly ugly and of bad report. I do not imagine under his aegis I would have debated the fundamentals of Christianity at Easter Sunday lunchtime with a Catholic MP. But there have been other changes too, and it is right we should recall them at this time. Incredible pronunciations not only of foreign but of English words were virtually unknown in the past. Not so today. I cannot imagine that he would have entertained the deluge of pop and pap we now have or, if he did, that it would have been polluted with the payola scandals revealed by the *News of the World*. In his day there was less religious broadcasting, and what there was was overtly evangelical, not masquerading as social comment or including the blatherings of showbiz personalities. At least he had the honesty to admit that the Religious Broadcasting Department was propagandist, whereas his successors daily manipulate and censor while all the time protesting that they are impartial and open-minded.

Son of a Wee Free pastor Reith came of an age and of a breed that we are unlikely to see again. Secularists must be glad of it. Yet they can spare a moment to recall qualities of greatness and personal integrity that seem to have vanished with him.

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