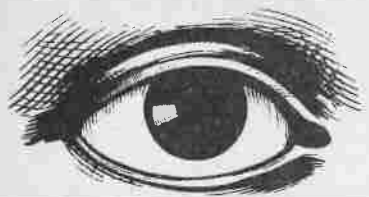


Observations



Thorpe bookshelf

In the wake of the Thorpe trial, there will undoubtedly be some nervous hands on wallets in the literary salons of Bloomsbury. But whatever canny deals might have been lined up by eager publishers, there are going to be some equally shrewd remainder merchants already clearing space on warehouse shelves.

In the thrill of the chase for contracts there will be some who have forgotten a basic rule: in fact as well as fiction, Who-dunnit sells better than I-dunnit (and, of course, better still than I-didn't-do-it).

Remember John Stonehouse's *Death of an Idealist* or Ronald Biggs's *The Most Wanted Man?* Or Sean MacStiofan's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary?* (MacStiofan's line was the IRA, in case you don't remember that, either.) His literary aspirations came a cropper when the editor of the *Bookseller* refused to accept advertising.

By contrast, books about famous misdeeds by complete outsiders have tended to pay good dividends. Think of Paul Foot's *Who Killed Hanratty?*, Ludovic Kennedy's *10 Rillington Place* or Emyln Williams's *Beyond Belief* (on the Moors murderers). And almost any volume with Ripper in the title provides a good standby for a last-minute hole in a publisher's list. Significantly, booksellers report that the most asked-for new book on the Thorpe case at the moment is Auberon Waugh's, expected very soon.

Peter Giddy, manager of Hatchards, the top people's bookshop in Piccadilly, thinks, simply, that self-justification won't wash with the British. (Other manifestations of bad taste obviously don't either. Coronet Books have had to abandon plans to give away matches on Inter City trains as part of the publicity for Piers Paul Read's *The Train Robbers*, out next month.)

Once the journalists' toothbrushes have been safely put away, Old Bailey speculators could do worse than remember Watergate. Woodstein made the money. The literary efforts of Haldeman, Colson and Co. barely raised a yawn.

One of the biggest books for Hatchards in recent weeks has been Harrap's *The Murderers' Who's Who*. Now that's the kind of thing that really make a regular killing.

Life after death

To what Nirvana do bright politicians go when they have lost their seats in parliament but want to go on thinking about current problems and influencing decision

making? The current answer to their prayers is the Policy Studies Institute, the stab at a British-style Brookings that was formed just over a year ago by the merger of Political and Economic Planning and the Centre for Studies in Social Policy.

Both Shirley Williams and John Pardoe, the leading Labour and Liberal election casualties, have just joined the institute as part-time research fellows. They are not the first politicians to work there. Before the Conservatives came into power and he became Minister of State at the Home Office, Timothy Raison was at the PSI, finishing research on social policy and education which he began with the CSSP.

Pardoe will be working on a study of incomes policy. Mrs Williams has a wider brief, the problems facing governments in West European democracies. But she will be concentrating particularly on the effects of new technology on youth unemployment, and ways of managing an economy with few raw materials but rich labour resources.

Both the new recruits will work closely with 40 full-time researchers, who are doing specific projects on aspects of social, economic, industrial and political policy. Like them, they will be financed primarily through a block grant from the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust.

Has the merger created any new shift in thinking? It's probably too soon to say, as the institute has, until now, largely been involved with projects initiated by PEP and the CSSP. But the arrival of Pardoe and Williams, who have made no secret of their desire to return to parliament, should strengthen its aim of acting as a bridge between the thinkers and the doers in the sphere of public policy. Mrs Williams would like to see more politicians come to the institute during periods of opposition, and to see senior civil servants seconded.

It should not be too difficult to tempt more politicians along, either. The institute is well within division-bell land.



Brian Grimwood

Big game fashion

Nobody in Japan understands the American version of football, still less plays it. But selling us-style shirts, helmets, boots, and anything else with authentic American team insignia, is big business there. It is the same in Italy and a lot of the rest of Europe. Britain is now about to get a fresh deluge of exactly the same kind of merchandise.

Bafflingly, tee-shirts embellished with trademarks, logos or advertising can sell faster than identical garments in their virgin state. Uniforms are not new to fashion—remember those police capes and scarlet guardsmen's tunics from the swinging sixties? And perhaps using a trademark for decorative purposes is not so different. But these days, its not just clothes, but every kind of consumer item that gets the treatment.

Manufacturers find putting their name on garments in discreet but visible lettering can add a dash of much-needed chic. So much so that the average wardrobe has become full of a bewildering array of corporate stripes, initials and animals. Gucci luggage is as instantly identifiable as it is meant to be by the mark woven into its fabric. Even shirts bearing advertising slogans from distinctly unglamorous mid-American grocery stores have become much sought after.

Organised American football has not been slow to realise the commercial potential. The 28 teams of the American League have a tightly controlled marketing operation selling the use of their names, helmet designs and uniforms, each of which are registered trademarks. They appear on goods selling to the order of £75 million a year.

Their slick promotional material assures manufacturers that each match is "a plug for your product." But outside America the league was amazed to discover that complete ignorance of football was not an obstacle to booming sales. A campaign to encourage Japanese youngsters to play the game flourished, but was found to be unnecessary anyway, as demand for shirts and jackets emblazoned with the likes of the Dallas Cowboys boomed.

After the Japanese success, the league turned to Europe. Italy was the first target, and suitable licences in Britain are being scrutinised. They will find the market already crowded, but the demand apparently insatiable. The Pittsburgh Steelers' next big game could be in the King's Road.

Bradford bites back

As we continue to await the inquest on Blair Peach, of the Anti-Nazi League, an article in the *Bradford Telegraph* and *Argus* makes salutary reading. Headed "The facts—black and white," it looks at what the national press did with a council report called *The District Trends*.

"Bradford lives on immigration timebomb," shrieked the *Daily Telegraph*. "Tory councillor's fears of deep-seated problems," said the *Express*. Even the

Mirror ran "One in two schoolchildren in Bradford will be coloured."

Yet nowhere was there any basis for these "facts." The word "timebomb" was never used in the report. The "shock independent report," as the *Daily Telegraph* called it, which was a breakdown of the school population into Asian and white, came out with one Asian child for 3.35 white. And the "deeply concerned" councillor, Dale Smith, deputy leader of the Tory-controlled council, was not even discussing immigrants.

The problems he was concerned about were those of the rising numbers of white people over 75 and the number of white mentally handicapped people being looked after in their own homes by elderly parents. "Asians were the last of my thoughts in making that comment," says Smith.

So why was such inaccurate information given such prominence? Arnold Hadwin, editor of the *Telegraph* and *Argus*, which over the years has built a reputation for being one of the most fair-minded of our big evenings, says: "We are constantly trying to sort out the mess from the facts. We were absolutely appalled at some of the treatment of the *District Trends* report which, in itself, is a useful and objective source of information. I am unable to decide whether such deliberate distortion in reporting is due to ineptitude or downright malice. I prefer to think it is ineptitude."

The report goes on to point out that the Asian crime rate in Bradford is very low, that Asians make few demands on care for the elderly, that hardly any Asian children are in care and that the number of Asians admitted to mental hospitals is very low. There are also few Asian one-parent families. But this news did not make any headlines.

Cold front

While millions of us have been cursing the weather in the past few weeks, the Home Office has thanked heaven for our climate. Our chilly reputation in steamy South East Asia may have helped get the government off the hook in its first test on immigration.

After momentary hesitation, the cabinet decided it could not be less civilised than the previous Labour government. British skippers in the area would continue to pick up the boat people, mostly ethnic Chinese, forced out of Vietnam by a government who thought them politically and socially unreliable and wanted to milk them of their accumulations of gold. Britain would accept the full quota of 1,500 Vietnamese Chinese refugees taken on by Labour's former Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees.

That the infant Thatcher government was taking a gamble is indicated by the fact that there are about a million ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, most of them in Cholon, the twin city of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City). The ethnic Chinese are as popular in Vietnam as the Jews in prewar Germany. But when Home Office officials began interviewing the refugee boat people to pick up a couple of

hundred more for Britain among the most skilled and most knowledgeable in English, they were astonished to find how many were repelled by our climate—news received with hilarity by William Whitelaw.

Malaysia's threat to drown the boat people, or worse, rather than to accept any more of these refugees, has reinforced Britain's desire for a UN conference on the subject. A UN-imposed quota will be easier to justify to those who hoped that Mrs Thatcher would turn out to be a blonde Enoch Powell. Such a conference would also spotlight the fact that the Americans have taken 250,000 Vietnamese, and the French 70,000. Britain, cynics are now saying, is protected by its climate from filling even a small quota—whatever David Ennals offers, now that he is an opposition backbencher.

Basic grounding

The queue begins outside the glass doors of the TWA ticket office just off Kensington High Street, and continues alongside the windows fronting the building. It disappears at a right angle past the dustbins in that area of life still known as "The Tradesmen's Entrance."

It's 6 am on Sunday. There are already getting on for 300, anxiously fingering their passports. Their eyes scour the queue ahead, looking for some small sign of movement. "Last time I ever travel by bleeding standby," says an Australian in a white mac who, like many others, had a flight booked on one of Laker's grounded DC10s. "I'd rather take my chances on a bleeding DC10 than stand round here all day," said one woman, and it was hard to disagree. So nobody did. In fact a pipe-smoking American academic in tweeds was telling anyone prepared to listen what a wonderful reputation McDonnell Douglas had. "Made some great airships," he said, looking into the distance through horned-rimmed spectacles.

That part of the queue exposed to the smell from the dustbins was at least protected

Brilliant man seeks . . .

David Walker

With some magazines the first thing to do, the only thing, is to skip the editorials, skip the articles, skip the reviews and turn straight to the back pages. To the personal columns—to those amazing ads where anonymous people sum up, in five lines, the age, type, appearance, life story and essential characteristics of their desired man/woman/lover/friend. You thought that ellipsis was a dying art, that pathos had no place in the modern world? Turn to the personals. But you can't go just anywhere. The place to go, the personal columns par excellence, are not in your sexual athletes' monthly, they are in the *New York Review of Books*.

The NYR for all its return to political respectability in its editorial pages, still has those celebrated personal columns. You can afford to pass over Susan Sontag, even Noel Annan: all human life is there, at the back. At least there's all human life

from the rain. Those at the front had to balance Sunday newspapers on their heads, like young ladies learning deportment.

An orthodox Jew from Stamford Hill, in black hat and coat, sidecurls dangling wet round his chin, had been given a lift to the terminal by his uncle. The uncle got bored waiting in the queue, and returned from the front with the information that "There's no problem getting to New York today so I'll be going now." There was a problem and his nephew had to take the Piccadilly Line not, as he had hoped, to Heathrow Central, but back to Stamford Hill.

Many familiar faces on TWA's flight 709 to New York on Monday. Of course, only a handful of seats were taken in first class. But those turned away from the Kensington terminal would have been angered to learn there were even a few seats vacant in that section of economy class where there's no screen for the in-flight movie.

Students first

One victim of last week's public expenditure cuts is the Social Science Research Council. Because of the suddenness, the main sacrificial offerings are studentships and bursaries for postgraduates. The SSRC posted letters to departments whose quotas have been cut, last Friday: so—who knows?—some may actually have received them by now.

As it happens, NEW SOCIETY had already asked Michael Posner, the chairman of the SSRC, to write us an article on how he saw the council's future, in the light of criticisms generally. The article appears on page 712 this week, and so he has been able to take account of the cuts also.

The SSRC stated this week that "the momentum of research activity will be slowed but not stopped"—though (in a phrase with a Posnerite ring to it) there will be "all due attention to the proper parsimony with public funds."

from Manhattan and the west coast, with a few odd points in between in the vastness of the mid-west. "Impatient Griselda, Emma B, or Mistress Ford: slim lover, all hardcinder and mindspice, hungers for the cornslik honeylight of your roundest colour, PO Box x, Park Forest, Illinois." Maybe it's the endless play of light on the wheatfields that does it.

If these are the legions of the lonely and frustrated, NYR advertisers have an impressive amount of zip/pep/bounce about them. Talk about self-boosterism: "Brilliant man seeks brilliant, generous woman for Sartre-Beauvoir relationship." That element of concreteness in the American national character gives rise to great lists of detailed demands and incredible explicitness about the desired one. A lady in Palo Alto asks: "Is there a six foot two inch, high IQ, single man, who is a Christian Scientist over 35 who likes rock dancing?" Or this one bowls