

The Laps of the Gods: Power, Sexuality, Publishing and Literature: an exploratory essay



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First published in 2023 by Quemar Press

<https://quemarpress.weebly.com/>

ABN 75691360521

P.O. Box 4, Penrith, NSW, 2751, Australia.

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Maiden, Jennifer ***The Laps of the Gods: Power, Sexuality, Publishing and Literature: an exploratory essay***

Electronic Edition ISBN: 978-0-6457126-1-2

Previous Publications from Quemar Press: **2016:** *Play With Knives - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.)*, *Play With Knives: 2: Complicity - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.)*, *The Metronome - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.)*, *Play With Knives: 3: George and Clare and the Grey Hat Hacker - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.)*. **2017:** *Truth in Discourse: Observations by Montaigne - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.)*, *Aucassin and Nicolette - Anonymous - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.)*, *Play With Knives: 4: George and Clare, the Baby and the Bikies - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.)*. **2018:** *Appalachian Fall: Poems About Poverty in Power - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*, *Play With Knives 1&2: Complicity (Combined volume) - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed.)*, *Selected Poems 1967-2018 - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*, *Play With Knives: 3: George and Clare and the Grey Hat Hacker & Play With Knives: 4: George and Clare, the Baby and the Bikies (Combined volume) - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed.)*, *Vera Rudner: A Study - Katharine Margot Toohey (Paperback Ed.)*, *Gugemer - Marie de France - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.)*, *Play With Knives: 5: George and Clare, the Malachite and the Diamonds - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*. **2019:** *brookings: the noun - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*, *Once She Had Escaped the Tower: Aucassin and Nicolette, and Marie de France's Gugemer - Anonymous and Marie de France - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Paperback Ed.)*, *Lanval - Marie de France - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.)*, *Workbook Questions: Writing of Torture, Trauma Experience - Margaret Bennett & Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed.)*. **2020:** *The Espionage Act - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*, *Guilideluc and Guilladon - Marie de France - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.)*, *The Cuckold and the Vampires - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*, *All She Resolves to Rescue: Marie de France's 'Lanval' and 'Guilideluc and Guilladon' (a romance known as 'Eliduc') - Marie de France - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Paperback Ed.)*. **2021:** *Biological Necessity - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*, *The Ash Tree (Le Fresne) by Marie de France - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.)*, *Meeting Each Other Alive: from letters between Manuela Sáenz and Simón Bolívar - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*, *Honeysuckle (Chevrefoil) By Marie de France - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.)*. **2022:** *Ox in Metal - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*, *Then She Endures Like the Tree: Marie de France's The Ash Tree (Le Fresne) and Honeysuckle (Chevrefoil) - Marie de France - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Paperback Ed.)*, **2023:** *Golden Bridge - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.)*, *The Beauty and the Beast - Villeneuve - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.)*

Previous Publications by Jennifer Maiden: Poetry Collections *Tactics*, 1974; *The Problem of Evil*, 1975; *The Occupying Forces*, 1975; *Mortal Details*, 1977; *Birthstones*, 1978; *The Border Loss*, 1979; *For The Left Hand*, 1981; *The Trust*, 1988; *Bastille Day*, 1990; *Selected Poems of Jennifer Maiden*, 1990; *The Winter Baby*, 1990; *Acoustic Shadow*, 1993; *Mines*, 1999; *Friendly Fire*, 2005; *Pirate Rain*, 2009; *Intimate Geography: Selected Poems 1991-2010*, 2012; *Liquid Nitrogen*, 2012; *The Violence of Waiting*, 2013; *Drones and Phantoms*, 2014; *The Fox Petition*, 2015; *The Metronome Elec. Ed.*, 2016; *Paperback Ed.*, 2017; *Appalachian Fall*, 2018; *Selected Poems 1967-2018*, 2018; *brookings: the noun*, 2019; *The Espionage Act*, 2020; *Biological Necessity*, 2021; *Ox in Metal*, 2022, *Golden Bridge*, 2023 **Novels** *The Terms*, 1982; *Play With Knives*, 1990. *New Revised Elec. Ed.*, 2016; *Play With Knives: 2: Complicity*, 2016; *Play With Knives: 3: George and Clare and the Grey Hat Hacker*, 2016; *Play With Knives: 4: George and Clare, the Baby and the Bikies*, 2017; *Play With Knives: 1 & 2: Complicity (combined vol.)*, 2018; *Play With Knives: 3: George and Clare and the Grey Hat Hacker & 4: George and Clare, the Baby and the Bikies (combined vol.)*, 2018; *Play With Knives: 5: George and Clare, the Malachite and the Diamonds*, 2018. **Nonfiction** *Workbook Questions: Writing of Torture, Trauma Experience - with Margaret Bennett*, 2019; *The Cuckold and the Vampires*, 2020.





Jennifer Maiden was born in Penrith, New South Wales, and has had thirty-seven books published - twenty-eight poetry collections, six novels and three nonfiction works. Among her many awards are three Kenneth Slessor Prizes for Poetry, two C. J. Dennis Prizes for Poetry, the overall Victorian Prize for Literature, the Harri Jones Memorial Prize, the H.M.Butterly-F.Earle Hooper Award (University of Sydney), the Grenfell Henry Lawson Festival Prize, the FAW Christopher Brennan Award for lifetime achievement in poetry, two The Melbourne Age Poetry Book of the Year awards, the overall Melbourne Age Book of the Year and the ALS Gold Medal. She was shortlisted for the Griffin International Poetry Prize. In 2011, the Australian magazine of politics, society and culture, *The Monthly*, listed her collection, *Friendly Fire* (2005), as the Poetry book in their selection of *Twenty Australian Masterpieces since 2000*, when they asked twenty Australian critics to identify 'the most significant work of art in their field since 2000'. She has been Writer in Residence at STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors), at universities and educational institutions, lectured at universities, and has also conducted over a thousand community literary workshops. Following her work as Writer in Residence at the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, Jennifer Maiden and the torture and trauma clinician, academic and researcher, Margaret Bennett collaborated, in 2019, on a workbook to assist torture or trauma survivors to write of their experiences, entitled *Workbook Questions: Writing of Torture, Trauma Experience*. *Golden Bridge*, Maiden's most recent poetry collection, was published at the beginning of 2023.



The Laps of the Gods: Power, Sexuality, Publishing and Literature: an exploratory essay

When I wrote my earlier book-length essay, *The Cuckold and the Vampires: an essay on some aspects of conservative political manipulation of art and literature, including the experimental, and the conservatives' creation of conflict*, I became even more intrigued by many aspects and associations of its topic and promised myself I would explore them further. I'd like now to continue that exploration with you, keeping in mind that my aim is to surprise as well as satisfy us. The previous essay often included the burden, 'it is a lethal business', and there is no reason that in this one, too, we should not keep such danger in mind.

I'd like to begin with D.H. Lawrence. In *Cuckold*, I discussed Lawrence's high hierarchical position in English literature, including for some decades at Sydney University, as a result of his being part of Dr. Leavis' 'Great Tradition', which emphasised humane ethics. I also looked at the political banning of what I believe to be Lawrence's most vital work, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, ostensibly on the grounds of its sexuality, but also clearly as a result of its intense and eloquent rejection of capitalism, and its thesis that capitalism was crippling and could be countered by an understanding of sexuality. In this belief, Lawrence stipulated zealously that all swearing and jokes involving sex were a puritanical attack on idealistic energy. There is great courage, of course, in taking sex seriously. Many writers realise that an important means to breaking through in their technique is to confront and delineate difficult aspects of their sexuality. It is as if this audacity removes the dead skin of acquired persona and allows them to use subjects and styles that were once out of reach. I remember once almost a decade ago, when I tried to push my writing, with huge effort, into greater sexual candour to relax and revitalise it, one of my numerous publishers described the result as 'spicy'. The floor sank



beneath me, as I realised he had no understanding of an enormous bravery I had thought he respected. As the work was to become my third *Play With Knives* novel, it may have been, too, that its political cutting edge was something the publisher wished to blunt by overall condescension, but there is another problem here we should consider.

That problem is epitomised in the career of the remarkable English theatre critic Kenneth Tynan. Tynan created the critical environment in which Britain's new drama in the 1950s was possible, including by declaring that he could not love anybody who disliked *Look Back in Anger*. He was a socialist and a powerful advocate of the Brechtian theatre of East Germany. He supported Castro's Revolution in Cuba, but was able to stop an execution on the spot there by throwing a brief hysterical breakdown. Again, one should aspire to such awkward revelations that discompose persona. Tynan, however, was also a sexual sadomasochist, and felt a Lawrencian mission to reveal and analyse his own and other problematic erotic traits. The social effect of this mission was to lessen respect for his considerable artistic influence, and for his literary skill.

That a person of such professional substance was prepared to risk that in order to investigate what he saw as the sexual basis of political power nevertheless seems to me worth great respect. There is also an endearing naivety about his astonishment that makes one tremble for him sometimes. He couldn't understand why the magazine *Playboy* refused to publish an essay he wrote about the attraction of women's panties. *Playboy* said their magazine's policy must always appear 'normal'. Lawrence might have fathomed even more than Tynan, perhaps, the powerful use of the word 'normal' here.

There is one aspect of Tynan's uneasy relationship with power that seems to me particularly interesting. When I was working as a writer for the NSW Torture and Trauma Rehabilitation Service, and in other workshops, I developed a 'hierarchical theory', in which people who have suffered trauma lose confidence in power figures, and in themselves, and inhabit an



insecure position in all hierarchies, alternating briefly at either the top or bottom. I thought that one solution might be in art, or in sex - including sadomasochism - where there are fluxing power positions between artist and audience, or active and passive erotic partners. Their instability could then be stylised beyond being trapped in repetitive social grief.

In reference to stylisation, it is clear from Tynan's writings about his sexual fantasies that the main charm in them for him was that the female partner be explicitly consenting and that she enjoy the experience. I don't think that this is merely self-justifying on his part, as her described consent has its own intrinsic eroticism. Perhaps we should look more closely later at the concept of consent in that regard? Of course, 'consent' is a dubious concept in some feminist terms, as it can be a legal excuse for what a victim has actually experienced as a violation, and a friendly mutual agreement is usually not the subject of a later dispute. The nearer one comes to the Conservative's exercise of power, however, the more any playing with the concept of consent becomes political. The case of the spurious Swedish accusations against Julian Assange are a case in point.

When I discussed in *Cuckold* the Conservative use of conflict to achieve political goals, some of my focuses were art, addiction, academe, illness and espionage, but Conservative political uses of sexuality also deserve more attention. As I write this, Ghislaine Maxwell has just been convicted of five charges of sex trafficking, and the intricacies of power and consent in her situation are worth noting. One scenario from a retired Israeli Intelligence asset is that she and Epstein were not employed by Mossad but - like her publisher father, Robert Maxwell (Pergamon Press) - Israeli Army Intelligence, and that their sexual manipulations and knowledge of the powerful were designed to gain political influence. This could be even more complex if Mossad had a different position - say, manipulating Trump - and the Army still favoured the Democratic Party's Two State Solution. At any rate, Maxwell's brother quotes her as being convinced Epstein was murdered. In *Cuckold* and some



of my poems, including several later ones - like *Death-Wish Moths* - one of the conflict-tools Conservative forces use for power is public betrayal. It fascinates me that artists in particular seem so trusting of power figures, like patrons or publishers, when bodies from such betrayals are strewn everywhere before their eyes. Or is it not trust? Is the flaw in them so reliable that possible public betrayal is part of the seduction?

Apart from Assange, whose entrapment has a literary flourish, and Maxwell/Epstein, whose arrangements have the ingeniousness of fiction - or her fathers' newspapers - one retired Russian spy observed that he never knew of any espionage service using Honeytraps as such, unless it were a young Israeli woman whose car breaks down outside a military base asking for help as her male colleagues cheerfully break and enter. Red Sparrows not so much. *Red Sparrow* was written by a retired CIA employee (of whom all their other employees must be in emulatory awe) and perhaps the whole Honeytrap universe is a way of restricting sexuality within the powers of art. But there is a gigantic interaction always between the Intelligence Agencies and Literature, and one of the destabilising powers of art is doubt. When I was young, I once described the convoluted speech of a politician as 'like a spy novel, if it were written by Henry James'. But most James novels are about espionage on the hearth, and the guilt of those who practise it, often couples. Anthony Burgess thought guilt was an aphrodisiac, but that may depend on whether the sexuality burrows in, like that of Proust, Hardy and Woolf - or out, like that of Lawrence, Tynan and Márquez. Either direction is powerful.

In Proust, Hardy and Woolf, the sexual power comes from studied inhibition: Proust's chiaroscuro shifting between direct and indirect revelations of homosexuality and sadomasochism, Hardy's savoured ironies about tragic sexual intolerance, Woolf's characters constrained by their sexual caution and apprehensions - what her most poignant character, Louis in *The Waves*, describes as his distractions to defend his 'infinitely young and unprotected soul'.



In Lawrence, Tynan and Márquez, the sexual power burrows outwards to the light, but this is an arduous and oppositional process: in Lawrence the sexuality is finally insurrectionary in itself, and by its existence in exile injurious to capitalist inhumanity, in Tynan there is a deliberate quixotic emphasis on explicating the once-uncomfortable, in Márquez there is an identification of the doubts and complexities that might interfere with the purity of physical passion, as in *The General in His Labyrinth* he presents Simón Bolívar as complexly weighed-down and his lover, Manuela Sáenz, as idealistic and liberated but perhaps lost to him. Márquez's depiction of Sáenz is very positive and contributed to dispelling puritanical prejudice against her in South America, but when I was acting as a sounding board for my daughter's recent translation of Sáenz's and Bolívar's letters to each other, it was clear that Sáenz was much deeper and shrewder and their relationship much less doomed than that portrayed by Márquez. Márquez, of course, was temporarily dispirited regarding revolutions by the disastrous dissolution of the Soviet Union. But female sexuality never ceases to be a redeeming force in his work, whether it is that of the young girl in *Of Love and Other Demons* whose long red hair grows back after she dies from an exorcism, or the fourteen-year-old prostitute in *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*, who becomes the love-object of a ninety-year-old male journalist. The hero's sexual fascination with her grows into his first profound erotic passion and is consummated not in sexual acts but by his devoting himself to providing for her education and welfare. It is interesting that this never seems to be a transcendence of sexuality but rather an insight into its expansive emotional potential.

There is an obvious parallel between the above erotic outcome and that of Nabokov's *Lolita*, where the hero's obsession with nymphets turns into helpless ineradicable love for the grown-up Lolita, even though she is 'ruined' in terms of his sexual orientation. Nabokov was an influential asset of Western Intelligence services during the Cold War, and any paradox in *Lolita*'s thesis should be seen as a reaction to this. The furtive



and fixated North American social landscape across which the characters travel is finally contradicted by the spontaneous overthrow of its acquisitory cunning.

The Intelligence Services' own obsession with under-age sexual objects might be seen as more than just a convenient means to blackmail, but as sometimes part of a larger philosophy. The cheerful knowingness reported and photographed in Ghislaine Maxwell's conversation and demeanour, for example, suggests that, like her publisher father, she felt genuinely idealistic in her patriotism and that her backers provided and instilled in her a worldly reassurance about recruiting unwitting young assets, because they were also serving what was deemed to be the higher patriotic cause.

To refer again to Maxwell in the *Death-Wish Moths* context, it may be significant that the juror who has just suddenly declared that he had been sexually molested as a child, thus potentially giving grounds for a mistrial, has been revealed to be an employee of the Carlyle Group. This Group has been managed by U.S. government figures such as the Bush Family and CIA executives, involved with buying and selling several Arms companies and associated with Saudi Arabia. It is possible Maxwell was reassured that some such safety net would follow her conviction, but whether or not she should trust it is still worth some speculation. What contact could she have had with Robert Maxwell since he disappeared from his yacht, pursued by disappointed creditors?

On the subject of the Carlyle Group, we should remember that in 2004 the Center for Public Integrity questioned the deliberate close inter-relating between the Group and political figures as 'access capitalism', a term invented to describe the Group by Michael Lewis in 1993 in the *New Republic*. A former Carlyle CEO, Glenn Youngkin, was elected Governor of Virginia as a supporter of Donald Trump, whose loss of the 2020 election he regards as illegitimate. Carlyle is also an owner of several major communications satellites, the NEP Group, *Le Figaro*, and Nielsen Holdings, an American information, data and market



measurement firm operating in more than 100 countries with at least 44,000 employees.

No novice himself at access capitalism, Rupert Murdoch's HarperCollins recently suffered a defeat in the British High Court for libel against a Russian - Roman Abramovich - and the Russian state oil company. The book was part of a larger project to fuel anti-Russian feeling and conflict, in keeping with general Fox and News Corp sentiment.

Another current peculiarity in propaganda book publishing that I would like to discuss further here later is the spate of supposedly sympathetic biographies (some by Australians) of Left Wing heroes which actually undermine their political positions and stress their pathology and psychological and social flaws. Recent books on Paul Robeson, Henry Lawson and Ethel Rosenberg are particularly irritating in this regard, and often read like falsely empathetic CIA files.

One rival to HarperCollins is Penguin Random House, owned by German conglomerate Bertelsmann, controlled by the Mohn Family, with a pro-capitalist philosophy and once the largest book producer for the Wehrmacht. Murdoch recently had a partial victory, however, when Penguin Random House's bid to take over Simon & Schuster was put on hold by the Department of Justice on the grounds that Penguin would have owned nearly half the book market in America.

On the subject of anti-Russian propaganda, I have been meaning to differentiate more distinctly between Red Sparrows and Honeytraps. Red Sparrows, as I've suggested, are largely a CIA fantasy, but Honeytraps, such as those innocents procured by Ghislaine Maxwell, do seem to be a significant political factor. Of the two women who accused Assange, one had a CIA history but probably no training in seduction (she simply turned up back at her flat as his host and he was, as expected, obliging) but the other, who was influenced by her, and was thought at the time by Assange's other Swedish hosts to be some strange type of interloping seductress, seems to have been genuinely surprised



by the seriousness of the legal outcome. On that topic, it has always seemed to me that the fact that the condom one of the women took to the police station as evidence against Assange showed no traces at all of semen when analysed was in fact a great piece of historical comedy: since the 'rape' accusation involved him purportedly not using a condom, any sperm on the condom would have actually defeated their case. So they must take in an unused one. We should acknowledge how logical that indeed was.

It has a quietly droll logic that would have appealed to Virginia Woolf. And having begun to discuss Woolf's sexuality, and some of the enormous publishing empires, it is time to look at the history of a smaller publisher, Hogarth Press, to examine Woolf's role in it and without pathologising her to ask why she relinquished it, and what sexual complexities were involved.

There is a tendency among some feminists to blame Leonard Woolf for Virginia's difficulties - one novelist even suggested he murdered her - but Virginia was a powerful strategist and extremely sexually discerning, and her decisions must be afforded critical respect. Her fabled love affair with Vita Sackville-West - beginning in 1925 and the subject of a romantic film now being revived on SBS - was a judicious choice by her. Vita was sexually prolific, and already devoted to Violet Keppel. She posed no threat to Virginia's marriage and indeed strongly supported it. She also supported Hogarth Press, the publishing house founded by Virginia and Leonard in 1917, for which they at first hand-printed books but soon used commercial printers. Vita was a well-known mildly erotic novelist and she gave Hogarth Press her work to promote them financially. They published her *Seducers in Ecuador* in 1924 to tepid sales (1,500 copies in the first year), but *The Edwardians* in 1925 sold 30,000 copies in six months, solidifying Hogarth's finances and allowing Virginia to write less commercial, more profound work such as *The Waves* (1931). Leonard correctly regarded *The Waves* as her great masterpiece, but it was her novel *Orlando* (1928) dramatising Vita's bisexuality and



perhaps sanitising it by changing it to historical alternating sequences, that was another commercial success for Hogarth. It is interesting that just as Virginia used *Orlando* to give Vita her bitterly resented lost inheritance of the Sackville family estate (Orlando concludes as male), Vita later used a novel to show Virginia and Leonard as the competent parents of children, as Viola and Leonard Anquetil in *Family History* (1932). Viola, of course, is one of Shakespeare's most charming pants roles, and Virginia would have relished that, too. In *Family History*, however, Vita underlines one of the most important things about the Woolfs. They were dedicated socialists. This tends to be underestimated in general literary and biographical appraisals of them, but it is vital to our understanding them.

To return to the subject of Virginia and children, however, I have always been uneasy about that portion of Leonard's autobiography in which he describes his anxiety about Virginia having a baby. They were both attracted by the idea but because of Virginia's mental health reluctantly dismissed it, although one of Virginia's doctors recommended it. In the autobiography, Leonard criticises this doctor as old-fashioned and simplistic and stresses that later medical advice was against it, but it seems clear that Vita was at least suggesting that it should remain possible. Vita always had practical insight into Virginia's mental vulnerabilities, and it was she who pointed out usefully that Virginia's remedy of alternating intellectual and physical labour was too exhausting and that it would be better just to alternate intellectual activities.

Virginia declared herself reconciled to not experiencing motherhood, although she did comment wistfully on the attractiveness of babies' bottoms. But she was more astute than Leonard about the physical challenges and paradoxes of being alive, and it may be, too, that she was becoming aware that one has children as ultimately an utterly selfish act that dismisses any concern for their welfare. Having at least one mentally unstable parent is the universal human condition and most children survive it. Having parents as poignantly lovable as the



Woolfs would have been a huge compensation, as is shown by Vita's son Nigel Nicolson's affectionate biography of his own mother. It may have been that Leonard's concern was not for the child, however, but for Virginia. Although one should resist any biographer's hindsight diagnosis of 'bipolar', her breakdowns appeared to take the daunting form of hallucinations, suicide attempts and anorexia. Reading now Leonard's autobiography, it is hard not to see his descriptions of waiting by her bedside patiently with a spoon to encourage her to eat as akin to standard anorexia porn. There is no doubt that women's fantasies often involve anorexia and clinical mental illness as erotic devices to attract and maintain lovers, but it could be that the male side of this is just as seductive.

Virginia's own sexuality was distorted by having been molested by older male relatives as a child, and she used her relationship with Vita to uninhibit herself physically. She was still ambivalent about Vita's sexuality, however, expressing unease about Vita's multiple partners and patronising Vita's 'servant girl' novels. When a socialist uses a class affirming epithet, similarly to that fastidious trait in George Orwell (who hated Oscar Wilde), you can be sure their sexuality senses risk.

It was on socialist principle, nevertheless, that Virginia finally discontinued the physical side of her relationship with Vita, who had become attracted to Oswald Mosley's British fascist movement. Later, this was presented as also being due to Vita not being a pacifist like the Woolfs in preparation for World War Two, but the affinities and dates don't add up. Virginia teased about Leonard's 'silly uniform' when he joined the Home Guard, but one of the reasons she gave for her suicide in 1941 was her terror that the Nazis would invade Britain and destroy Leonard because he was Jewish. There was also the vulnerable publishing history of Hogarth Press. The first non-British author they had published was the Soviet's Gorky, and whilst they championed right-wing modernists like Eliot (they published the first English edition of *The Wasteland*) - who were also anathema to the fascists, if not the Western intelligence agencies



- their publication list was tenaciously socially and politically left-wing. In 1938, following a third suicide attempt, Virginia formally relinquished her interest in Hogarth Press, which became a partnership between Leonard and the left-wing editor John Lehmann (who had been the lover of Virginia's nephew Quentin) until 1946, when it changed to an associate firm of Chatto & Windus. In 2011 Chatto & Windus, owned by Random House, re-launched Hogarth in association with their American sister group, Crown Publishing. If one were cynical, one could suggest that, like an elongated Operation Paperclip, the ex-chief-publisher for the Wehrmacht had triumphed over time.

To return to Leonard and the sexuality of powerlessness, it is clear that publishing in itself can be a manifestation of the need for dominant sexuality, with its arbitrary control of its authors, employees and subjects. The desperately self-aware and inhibited successful power figure Louis in *The Waves* (whose hyper-sensitive existential lover Rhoda has left him and suicided) recalls to himself the medieval lyric of the border soldier:

Westron wynde, when wyll thow blow
The smalle rayne downe can rayne?
Cryst yf my love were in my armys,
And I yn my bed agayne!

Like Lawrence, Virginia sees such power as a hollowed-out lonely yearning for sexuality, but whilst there is no doubt that Leonard's autobiographical portrait of her stresses her pathology and not her power, it is hard to say who was accommodating whose eroticism, and how far the necessities of her illness were romanticised into a sexually recognisable legend for them both and the public. Certainly, she was involved in Hogarth Press long after Lehmann's arrival, and did not relinquish control as easily as it seemed.

On the topic of sexual motives for authors who dismiss other authors, it is worth noting that Woolf when younger described both Joyce and Lawrence as 'over-rated' - a key literary clue



that inhibition is afoot. The Woolfs published seminal works on psycho-analysis and Virginia was no doubt acutely aware of Freud's axiom about how close are the wish and the fear. When she examined her recoil from Leonard's Jewishness, it was in perhaps the same spirit that she examined her class prejudices in her 1936 essay, *Am I a Snob?* But it would have been clear to her that the Nazi demonisation of Jews or Gypsies was due in part to a sexual projection. She must have been puzzled by Vita's attraction to Mosley, as Vita had always claimed the source of her passion and freedom was a gypsy ancestor, and socialised with them often. Lawrence, too, of course, had that concept of the gypsy as sexually liberating, as in his *The Virgin and the Gypsy*, but by the time of *Lady Chatterley* there is no sense that either sexual central character has any quality of otherness or strangeness, and there is no barrier between them and the reader.

We should look now, however, at the deliberate creation of 'otherness' for political reasons in publishing, just as my last essay looked at the deliberate creation of conflict.

'Otherness' in art has many different aspects, some illusive and worth some pains to define. I am thinking again of Tolstoy's observation, intrinsic to my last essay, that if he could wish one thing for people it would be that they could cease work for a while and contemplate their lives. An imaginative transition from the self to another identity, as in art, provides a vantage point for this outer view, but I think carries with it a range of problems and perils. Tolstoy's short story, *How Much Land Does a Man Need*, which James Joyce considered the greatest short story in all literature, describes a man hungry to acquire more and more land whose quest is answered by the provision of a sufficient amount of land for his own body: his grave. In the story, he is unable to emancipate himself from his own ambitions and understand mortality. Tolstoy also explores the necessity of overview in his innovative *The Sevastopol Sketches* about Russian citizens and soldiers during the Siege of Sevastopol in the Crimean War. It is interesting that Crimea, too,



provided the setting for a superb critical political artwork by another passionate patriot, Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, again allowing a compassionate but sternly judicious overview: 'Someone had blundered'.

When the Other in descriptions of war is one's own side, as in the examples above, there seems to be a strong opportunity for emancipatory perspective, as one's own side is newly presented as the exotic Other, a subject of interest, and then examined with care. But we have also been discussing Rupert Murdoch and the MI6/CIA Mockingbird Press. In these, the Other in war is a demonised caricature, described with the diction of ridicule and sexual loathing, and the photographs are often as doctored as the prose. We are seeing that again, of course, in the current propagandisation of the conflict in the Ukraine. Does the demonised Other still offer transcendence? And if so, what kind and by what means? In one of my poems I observed that a vagina or a penis is always first person, and this is the first thing to consider when the Other is demonised sexually. This can even be to the extent of the false report that Gaddafi's soldiers were issued with Viagra so that they could rape and pillage better. There is usually a familiarly contemptuous abbreviation to describe the current demon - such as 'Vlad' - to underline the intimate context. What is the effect on the reader of emancipating from their own reality into the viewpoint of what seems to be a tyrannical libido? The calculation of the Mockingbird Press is that there will be illicit empathy and then a repudiating rejection - one that is more exaggerated by psychological denial of one's own hidden desires.

It should also be noted, however, that the demonised Other does still necessitate a second perspective, and may engender complications not envisaged by the Murdochian inciters. I always remember that scene in Capra's least ingratiating and best film *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*, in which the young female missionary has a nightmare in which she is sexually attacked by a caricature of the Chinese warlord and then in the



same dream is being rescued by a benign depiction of the same man. Freud's the wish and the fear again.

To return to the subject of using gypsies to create a critical Otherness, it is valuable to consider the work of the important nineteenth-century author George Borrow, and his attentive accounts of living with gypsies - in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*. Borrow also wrote sympathetically about the Russians and the Welsh, with a particular emphasis again on the nature of their languages and his attempts to speak them. Explicit often in his work is a preference for these other races against his native English society. We are not dealing with an exotic curiosity but an expansive alternative. *Lavengro* was first published by the well-established publishing house John Murray in London in 1851 and whilst there was some doubt if it were fact or fiction (it's both), it was popular with readers, some of whom absorbed its new perspectives against racial narrowness. It was as well firmly feminist in attitude, making sure to detail the thoughts and way of life of the women in the cultures observed.

John Murray was founded in 1768, and had a history of publishing unlikely but ultimately completely logical authors such as Borrow, Austen, Goethe, Darwin, Conan Doyle, Byron and Queen Victoria. In 2004 it came under the Hachette UK brand, owned by the French conglomerate Lagardère, which is the third largest trade publisher in the world, publishing 17,000 original titles annually, the group owning several business ventures, including entertainment venues and travel. Arnaud Lagardère was appointed as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer when the company converted to a joint-stock company in 2021. He is the son of Jean-Luc Lagardère, former chairman of Matra and Hachette, and was Director of Sogede-Gérance (French holding company for defence, aeronautics and space) from 2007 to 2013, member of the Board of Directors of the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company from 2003 to 2013, and member of the Conseil stratégique des technologies de l'information (Strategic Information Technology Council) from 2004 to 2007. As often,



there is a strong link between publishing and the patriotic industries.

Arnaud Lagardère, who was a friend of Sarkozy, became even more famous in France for a demonstratively affectionate video he made with his to-be second wife, the model Jade Foret, who began her career with Armani at the age of thirteen, and is the co-author of the 'Amber Blake' graphic novels. Some in France suggested the video was a lapse in taste reflecting his business inexperience, but he pointed out that it helped to publicise her career, and his, and there is no doubt that reinforcing the direct link in the French public mind between publishing, power and sexuality was a very memorable strategy.

We should next consider the seminal French novel *The Story of O*, its literary and cultural significance and its implications in terms of author-publisher relationship. Anne Desclos, writing under pseudonyms Dominique Aury and Pauline Réage, wrote the novel as a series of erotic letters to her lover and employer, Jean Paulhan, director of *Nouvelle Revue Française*, who was an enthusiast for the work of the Marquis de Sade, and who, like Desclos herself, had fought in the French Resistance. The latter fact is very important, as the left wing of the Maquis in World War Two became in post-war France and the World a great force to recommend the anti-colonial and the sexually liberated, and tended to associate those two rebellions profoundly. This sexually explicit, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist viewpoint is most famous in the works of former Resistance writers like Beauvoir and Sartre, but it is even more complex when we observe Desclos and her relationship with Paulhan. In public initially, Desclos' authorship of *The Story of O* was hidden, but Paulhan was its public champion and explicator, so that it was always seen as part of the social campaign for sexual liberty. We should remember here that, from the French perspective, the Marquis de Sade was an influential social revolutionary, being supported by many in the French Revolution as a critic of the aristocracy. He was even appointed a Magistrate, but the revolutionaries lost some enthusiasm for him when he was



reluctant to pronounce death sentences, even for his aristocratic mother-in-law, whom he detested. His humanity in this regard, of course, reinforced for his later admirers, like Paulhan, the connection between sexual openness about sado-masochism and the acquired lack of an aristocratic compulsion to practise actual political cruelty. In declaring to Paulhan that she wished to emulate Sade, Desclos was positioning herself as someone supporting personal and political growth, and allowing Paulhan to define her work as both feminist and sexually courageous. She had explained to him that she was refuting his claim that women could not write erotic literature. I am reminded of the renowned American photographer Alfred Stieglitz's exclamation when he first saw the paintings of his future partner Georgia O'Keefe: 'At last, a woman on paper!' By showing her older lover Paulhan the early manuscript of the story of *O* in confidence and ostensibly as an act of courtship, Desclos removed it from the province of her own respectable literary, translating and publishing career, and ensured that it would be incorporated in his ego and published in a wilder and wider ocean.

Encouraged by Paulhan, the book was originally published anonymously in France in 1954 by Jean-Jacques Pauvert. Anne Desclos, as herself, had joined Gallimard publishers as an editorial assistant in 1946, and then as Dominique Aury translated much of her beloved English literature such as Swinburne, Eliot, Woolf, Waugh and Scott Fitzgerald into French, becoming an established critic and literary judge in the process. 1954 was a year in which colonial powers felt threatened: the year in which the left-wing Mendès-France became prime minister of France, the French were defeated in the Franco-Vietnamese War, Algeria was rebelling, and the British Occupation of the Suez Canal ended. *The Story of O* was at first rejected by timid publishers, but Pauvert had just published all the works of Sade and braved eight years of court cases. Indicating recognition of its lucrative notoriety, *O* was published at the same time in rushed English by Maurice Girodias, Pauvert's colleague and the founder of Olympia Press.



Olympia was famous for publishing 'naughty' French novels in English for tourists, to defeat foreign censorship. French censorship laws didn't really mind works in English (perhaps considering it a trivial language), but the conservative British Customs pressured the Paris Police to seize and destroy Olympia books often. In 1955, *O* received a Deux-Magots prize for daring and innovative literature, but became the subject of French obscenity charges. These were annulled in 1959, although advertising and sale to minors were banned for eight years.

Desclos remained devoted to Paulhan, who was elected to the Académie Française in 1963, and was by his bedside when he died in 1968. She is there supposed to have written *Retour à Roissy précédé de: Une fille amoureuse*, published in 1969 by Jean-Jacques Pauvert, but there are doubts about its authorship. Nothing however can come between a French publisher and a good love story. In *O* itself, we should note that the version approved by Desclos does not have the later published ending in which the heroine decides to suicide after being discarded by her lover. This was a version Paulhan believed to be illogical, and indeed it would have a jarring realism and sense of finality uncommon in Desclos' model, Sade. The amputations and abuses inflicted on Sade's heroines tend to have vanished and they are whole again in the next chapter, and it is clear that Desclos wanted to give both Paulhan and the general reader an unshaded sense of pleasure. This fits completely with her purpose that eroticism serves to contradict conservative political power.

Some feminists have a problem with the masochism celebrated in the novel, and it is true that consent in it isn't as explicit at the beginning as at the end (and to some feminists consent in itself is problematical), but vivid in the French literary awareness of masochism would be wry writing such as Proust's description in *Remembrance of Things Past* of Baron de Charlus trying to persuade a concerned hired lover to continue to whip him, even though Charlus begs for mercy. It is through such scenes that Proust redefines the arrogant aristocrat Charlus as a frail and less



powerful human being, presaging the later intensely political ending to Proust's novel (in which all the vital characters are defined or re-defined by their attitudes to the Dreyfus Case), but the scene also confirms that Charlus is completely consenting.

The idea that Sadomasochism is anti-Feminist, or that *The Story of O* approves of violence - as François Chalais accused: 'bringing the Gestapo into the boudoir' - misunderstands the power Desclos is assuming over violence and desire, claiming equality with Sade and depicting an aristocratic landscape in which O's wishes to be made self-oblivious by ecstasy are fulfilled continuously. No other characters have importance - the power figures are objectified ciphers, and any form of pain is defeated by its own erotic function. It was as if Paulhan was confronted with a Sade novel written by Justine herself, which was the effect Desclos intended. The final owl-like stillness, like that desired by Lawrence, is a peace that is alert and sensitised to the point of existential satisfaction.

In terms of the French publishing world - or the publishing world as such - and love stories, the publicity version that the tender Desclos was discovered and persuaded to publish by a paternalistic and protective Paulhan is interesting in that it reflects a central fantasy in the cultural imagination, and one that assumes a subjugation greater than anything Desclos ever chose to explore.

Once a few years ago when I was published by a more conservative publisher than my daughter, who is my current publisher, and had won some prizes, a woman writer and editor friend told me that she had remarked to him how good it was that he and I had 'an old-fashioned publisher-author relationship'. I remember being startled at the time, as my communications with him were then quite minimal (they briefly became closer later when all was already lost in publishing terms). After his initially and unsuccessfully pressuring me to remove some political prose from one book, I was supplying him by email with regular collections and only making a few technical corrections to them. Her remark made me wonder if my intimations of being on



borrowed time were wrong - rather as when some well-meaning outsider praises a hollow marriage - but: no, I was still in a very distant orbit to that sun. Was I sad about that? A little, because the image of an 'old-fashioned author-publisher relationship' is seductive as well as self-evidently dangerous. It occurs all the time in popular fiction, where the author is usually some kind of nervous wreck, alternating between careless risks and neurotic self-protection, and the publisher has both a protective and enabling role. Genders in this seem to be inter-changeable, as in *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* (novel and movie) which has a male publisher and female author, the recent movie *Best Sellers* (female publisher, male author) and variations in which both roles are of the same gender. Linked to cultural traditions such as that embodied by *The Story of O*, the concept also seems popular in pornography as such.

As a concept, it is clear why it would appeal to an author, but it offers a political microcosm just as dangerous as, and closely related to, the conservative creation of conflict. Recently, a reviewer of one of my books misunderstood my observation that some biographers use the same methods as the CIA in recording the psychological frailties of their subject in order to undermine them politically. He thought I was suggesting these frailties were manufactured, but I was pointing out that genuine frailties were being exaggerated and exploited. There is an assumption in intelligence agencies that artists are psychologically vulnerable and manipulable, just as these agencies often prefer such vulnerabilities when they are recruiting.

In regard to one of those recent biographies, which depicts Ethel Rosenberg as being pathetic and unwittingly caught up in events leading to her appalling execution, I was interested that the biographer used at least one interview to make the comparison between the author's version of Rosenberg and the girlfriend of Roman Protasevich, a Western-funded Azov battalion neo-Nazi paramilitary who had been taken off a plane in Belarus and arrested. The girlfriend was in fact the editor of a doxxing channel posting the private addresses of policemen, the judiciary



and other functionaries, but there was obviously some agenda in stressing the unluckiness of her involvement, so it was connected quite surprisingly to the example of Rosenberg. There may be two functions here: to remove Rosenberg's political agency, thus also warning against the dreadful dangers of being politically involved even accidentally, and to underline the supposed victimisation of Protasevich's companion.

At any rate, the accustomed intelligence agency practice of exploiting psychological vulnerability and perceived naivety in a powerful microcosm is very similar to that microcosm offered in the 'old-fashioned publisher-author relationship'. There is again an assumption and encouragement of the frailty of the artist, and the offering of a sheltering microcosm in which the overall political macrocosm need not be considered. My observation from conducting Torture and Trauma Rehabilitation workshops that the experience of trauma can result in an instability of status rotating desperately between high and low positions in a hierarchy is also pertinent in this situation. The attraction of the cosy publisher-author microcosm is that the roles alternate in importance between the commodified creativity of the author and the judgement of the publisher, but at the expense of the author losing independent credibility. It seems to me, also as a matter of interest, that the sacrifice of credibility is a constant fear for many trauma victims, and that artists are often placed in roles where their truth is questioned. Although Kenneth Tynan always argued that many artists are not traumatised, it does seem that intelligence agencies have experimented very successfully on the basis that artists can be manipulated - or recruited - by understanding their private traumas.

The trust created in the author-publisher microcosm has often the same astonishing lack of logic as does the trust of an intelligence asset in their employer. As I write, Ghislaine Maxwell has just been denied a re-trial even though that juror who was employed by the Carlyle Group belatedly declared his partiality in having been molested. What was she promised and what did she believe?



Like Stephen Ward and the multitude before her, she seems monumental in misplaced patience now.

Whether her father's patience was misplaced will never be certain. When he fell overboard from his yacht, the *Lady Ghislaine*, he had embezzled hundreds of millions of pounds from his companies' pension funds and had links to MI6, the KGB and Mossad. At his funeral the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said, 'He has done more for Israel than can today be told.' What also won't be told is what was reciprocated, but Ghislaine may have believed that interlocked family and political ties were a safety net. One of her childhood friends was the current Secretary Of State, Antony Blinken, whose stepfather, Samuel Pizar, was her father's lawyer and close confidante - and perhaps the last person to see her father before he fell.

As part of his coping with his debts involved in his purchase of the *New York Daily News*, Robert Maxwell had sold his academic-oriented Pergamon Press in 1991 for 440 million pounds to the huge Netherlands publishing company Elsevier. It is worth noting that if the author-publisher relationship is microcosmic and often touchingly trusting on the part of the author, the trust shown by academic authors towards publishers is even more remarkable. Elsevier was founded in 1880, using the logo and name of an earlier publishing house. The logo shows their printer's mark: a vine covering a tree and the motto *Non Solus* ('not Alone') while an elderly robed person plucks fruit from the tree. Elsevier says the logo represents 'the symbiotic relationship between publisher and scholar.'

During the past decade, Elsevier has been involved in fierce legal campaigns opposing open-access to academic material, and many international academics and universities have severed contact with it. It has high operating profit margins, often from publicly funded research, and generates vast profits from copyrights. In 2013, it acquired Mendeley, which made software for sharing research on an open platform, and ensured that from then on Mendeley would only use a paywall. Elsevier publishes major reference works such as *Gray's Anatomy*, *Dorland's*



Illustrated Medical Dictionary, and online versions of many journals including *The Lancet*.

Elsevier also publishes many books on expanding fossil fuel production, and works with the fossil fuel industry, commissioning authors and editors employed by oil firms, and marketing data to encourage exploration. Given the importance of academic publication to maintain employment in academic institutions, and given the academic urge to produce work in an encouraging emotional microcosm, it is easy to see why sometimes the vine cannot entangle from the tree long enough to see the macrocosm around it, and to recognise who plucks the tree and what their purpose.

Given that most scholars might be expected to be thoughtful about issues such as open-access or fossil fuels, I thought it useful now to consider a state that the author-publisher relationship can sometimes produce, which it seems to me could be described as authorial infantilism. It must be remembered that scholars are often bred in domestic circumstances in which their main function is to study and achieve academic results. They are enwombed in situations where financial and practical matters are managed by their parents and institutions, and the scholar's mental processes are fed and encouraged to develop without too many banal distractions. They therefore regard later reproductions of this environment as the optimum for their scholarship or art. A similar preference can be observed in many authors. Indeed, they can express indignant irritation at any suggestion that the politics of their management might be relevant to their own creative or research processes. As anything so hierarchical must be intrinsically sexual, the intensity of this loyalty may have aspects of actual autonepiophilia and sexual role-playing. Again, this can be found in pop culture and pornographic depictions of the author-publisher relationship.

In regard to the sexuality of publishing, I also remember how several literary colleagues who were professional editors would regale me with stories of how some publishers, editors and authors would interact erotically, one making a flamboyant habit



of visiting sadomasochistic brothels. Whilst this may not have been universal standard practice, I think it is helpful to observe that publishing's sexuality may be seen to take a horizontal and a vertical form. The vertical relationship, between author and publisher, involves eroticised unequal power positions, and the horizontal, between publisher and publisher, involves greater erotic equality, but with equally complex permutations and contradictions. It is remarkable that for another indelible example of the horizontal, we can turn again, as with *The Story of O*, to two heroes of the French Resistance. Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier met in Paris in 1918 and became lovers for over three decades. Monnier had already established *La Maison des Amis des Livres*, an avante-garde bookshop in Paris which featured new French authors, and Beach soon established one across the road - *Shakespeare and Company* - which featured new American ones. Both were also publishers, Monnier of *Le Navire d'Argent*, a 1920s literary review featuring writers such as Saint-Exupéry and translations of Eliot's *Prufrock* and Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, and Beach was the famous first publisher of Joyce's *Ulysses* and encouraged publication of and sold copies of the first book by Hemingway. Monnier's bookshop remained open to maintain French literature during the Second World War, and her earlier *Navire* editor Jean Prévost died in the French Resistance. Beach had closed her bookshop permanently but still sheltered Allied fugitives, was arrested by the Germans, kept with other female prisoners at the zoo's monkey house (where friends could pay zoo admission to see her), then a camp at Vittel, and when released went back to her apartment full of dangerous books and Monnier until the war's end.

Beach came from a Christian American background, and her approach to literature was evangelical - she was a tall, aesthetic figure - whilst the Parisian Monnier was also a religiously literary devotee but plumper and more practical. Both had initial financial difficulties in their businesses and scores of supportive and enthusiastic writers, including Gide, performed readings in each shop regularly to attract customers for them. Monnier and



Beach remained close until Monnier committed suicide in 1955, suffering from an inner ear affliction, headaches and apparently delusional. Beach, who died seven years later, wrote in a letter, 'I've a queer feeling about Adrienne—that not only is she gone but I've gone away myself somewhere.' Like that of the Woolfs, theirs was a very public union in which the private and the professional intertwined.

One of the dual functions of literary eroticism is to create a sense of transcendence: both into the incarnate physical - even in that the produced books themselves (including the aural or electronic as well as paper) are very temporal and physical - and into a parallel or higher world independent of the everyday. Whilst this can create a sharper awareness, including a political one, as Tynan recommended, it can also encumber the participant with the need to recognise and balance too many conflicting boundaries. This can mean shutting out or simplifying macrocosmal politics altogether, or of losing perspective on the everyday microcosm and feeling overwhelmed by it. In such regression to infantile helplessness, suicide can seem a method of regaining power as well as being a form of avoidance. Beach's intuition that she and Monnier were now both away somewhere else reflects this, as in contrast does Leonard Woolf's quoting Shakespeare in reaction to Virginia's death: 'to lie in cold obstruction and to rot', in which he perhaps intuits Virginia to be unobstructed and away, but feels he cannot follow her.

The duality of concept (and of James' voice and Nora's) in Joyce's *Ulysses* may have been indeed what so attracted Beach to the manuscript. When I was young, I wrote an essay on *Ulysses* in which I briefly compared it to an observation in Paul West's *Words for a Deaf Daughter*, where he describes how the child loves umbrellas because they combine two states of being: 'the as-is and can-be together.' I observed that *Ulysses* was one book when it was open - the narrative of Bloom's Day and the inconstant Mrs. Molly in her constant bed - and another - the parallels to Homer's *Odyssey* - when it was shut. In fact, the two



will not be experienced actually together, but recognised and balanced in the mind.

Whilst Joyce had always been thrilled by Homer, there is no doubt that he used the duality as a form of his chosen ‘cunning’ in terms of survival. He recognised, like Lawrence, that censorship could be lethal, and that the eroticism in his work would be politically vulnerable. The Homeric parallel in *Ulysses* sanitised it to the power structure, even to the point where, in 1932, Stuart Gilbert outlined this theoretical construction to the U.S. District Court (in a trial set up by *Ulysses*’ publisher there, Random House) and the Judge therefore ruled the book was not pornographic. The American academic audience was viewed as essential by Joyce, and he tailored many aspects of his work, including voluptuous dualities and sudden semantic puns, to make sure they never tired of it.

It must be observed that both Beach and Monnier had superbly discerning taste. Indeed, they jointly translated Eliot’s *Prufrock* into French for the first edition of *Navire* in 1925. They also provided the French with an initial experience of Ernest Hemingway, as well as Beach nurturing and promoting his first book, the existentially and numerically accurate *Three Stories and Ten Poems* (1923). In reference to duality and the vertical erotic nature of publishing, it is time we examined Hemingway.

Ernest Hemingway’s most seminal novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, was published in 1926, and set in the Parisian culture inhabited by Beach and Monnier, and in the Spanish bull-fighting milieu. In 1944, at the end of World War Two, Hemingway returned to Paris, after being a war correspondent at the Normandy landing, to enthusiastically embrace Beach and commiserate affectionately with her and Monnier on the closure of *Shakespeare and Company*. He had previously reported extensively (and sometimes with lucrative mythomania) on the Spanish Civil War, and in 1947 he received a Bronze Star for bravery ‘under fire in combat areas...to obtain an accurate picture of conditions’, with a commendation for his ‘talent of expression’. Despite that, however, he would not be out of place



in my earlier essay on the conservative creation of conflict in art. He had a history of perhaps genetic mental illness and depression, about which the FBI kept detailed records, including noting his admission to the Mayo Clinic in 1960 for his depression, where he was given ten ECT sessions and emerged devastated. The FBI had started a file on him in World War Two, their interest ostensibly aroused by his voluntary coast guarding expeditions in search of Germans near Cuba and then his decision to live there, but also no doubt by his socialising with Russian diplomats in the 1940s, and his recruitment as an inactive Soviet agent called 'Argo' in 1941. Since the audience in his rich imagination was generally American, however, and since Western Intelligence always seems to have little loyalty to its assets, we can speculate if his recruitment to Russia was as simple as it seems. In the 50s, J. Edgar Hoover had an agent assigned to watching him in Havana, and there is no need to categorise Hemingway's fears that the FBI were also watching him in America, too, as evidence of paranoia. One must assume that an intelligent awareness of such surveillance, plus frequent revelations about his mental illness in the Intelligence-influenced (and infiltrated) Main Stream Media, would exacerbate any already detected conditions.

Whether or not it was as straightforward as it seems, the danger in Hemingway to Western Intelligence was not espionage, but his ability to influence public opinion. After the death of Roosevelt, there was no impediment to the continuation of what many had deemed the real war - not against Germany, but against Russia. Hemingway's statement, 'Anyone who loves freedom owes such a debt to the Red Army that it can never be repaid' put him on the wrong side of the crusade against Russia, as did his declared sympathy for Castro and the Cuban revolution. Despite his remaining a general propaganda asset for the American Government, our discussion of him nevertheless has a background in which Hemingway and Western Intelligence, especially the FBI, are always regarding each other closely, at length, and with heightened suspicion.



This must affect any exploration of Hemingway's sexuality, and intensify his ambivalence in hierarchical situations. Hemingway came from a traditional Christian background (his mother expressed intense disgust at the sexuality in his work) and his choice was to be guided passively by mentors in learning his craft. Originally a parochial journalist, once in Paris, he met Ezra Pound by accident at *Shakespeare and Company* in 1922, and the next year they toured Italy and in 1924 lived on the same street. Pound was renowned for encouraging new writers, and Hemingway knew that Pound's ability to creatively excise any descriptive impediments from a manuscript, as he did with the work of Eliot, would be an invaluable asset. This led to what Hemingway called the 'Iceberg' technique, in which the text offers minimal information, and the rest of the meaning looms below the waterline outside it.

Pound also introduced Hemingway to Joyce, who became his drinking companion, and helped Hemingway develop a direct but ambiguous contemporary literary style, involving metafiction. Hemingway's genius for absorbing influence is again shown in his deliberate habit of reading The King James Bible aloud with his friend the author John Dos Passos, where he learned to reproduce its incremental plot development, from word to sentence to chapter. He uses a quote from *Ecclesiastes* as the second epigraph (contradicting the first epigraph by Gertrude Stein about the Lost Generation) in *The Sun Also Rises*: 'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.'

I am thinking that one form of sexuality we may be examining regarding Hemingway is the relationship between passivity, sadism and suicide. We can begin with *The Sun Also Rises*, but it is also worth noting in passing that Hemingway commenced his career with a very tricky author-publisher relationship. His initial contract was with Boni and Liveright, who had right of first refusal on his next book, but he wanted *The Sun Also Rises* to be published by Scribner's, so, in 1925, he offered the first



publisher a short satire, *The Torrents of Spring*, about one of their prominent authors, Sherwood Anderson. They recoiled, and he was free to publish with the legendary Maxwell Perkins at Scribner's.

Of all benign but interventionary and successful editors, Perkins is surely the *most* legendary. His authors included Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Thomas Wolfe. His persona in books and movies is that of a prim but perceptive and patient authority figure being humanised or insulted by wild more worldly talents, but his consistent influence was to increase the sexual and sexually violent elements in the literary works he fostered. He justified this to his cautious employers by sales. The original dust jacket of *The Sun Also Rises* shows a partially clad but classic-looking Greek lady with an apple by Cleonike Damianakes, which Perkins explained as 'Cleon's respectably sexy design to attract the feminine readers who control the destinies of so many novels'.

The Sun Also Rises had incredible sexual influence. Women modeled themselves on the main female character, Lady Brett Ashley, a beautiful twice-divorced sexually adventurous young flapper with bobbed hair and a wistful affection for the male narrator, Jake, who is sexually impotent due to a war injury. It is definitely at the bottom of the iceberg whether they remain together at the end of the book. In the meantime, Brett has other relationships, causing friction between the male characters, and including an idealised young matador, Romero, who finally separates from her, apparently because he wants a more feminine woman with longer hair. Romero is also of interest to us because he was named after a famous eighteenth-century bullfighter whose technique involved standing still and allowing the bull to die by impaling itself on his sword - a technique called *recibiendo* (receiving). He killed thousands of bulls and Hemingway deliberately and reverentially changed his own matador's killing method to *recibiendo*. There is a feminist argument here, perhaps, that in fact Jake is the impassive and passive matador and that Brett is destroyed by approaching him:



"Oh, Jake," Brett said, "we could have had such a damned good time together."

Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.

"Yes." I said. "Isn't it pretty to think so?"

But there are other implications, not least that there are likely to be fluxing gender-switches in most powerful art.

Hemingway's enthusiasm for bull-fighting was rationalised by him as the excitement of watching a profound life and death spectacle without being involved - but sexual excitement is involvement. Hemingway was a very well-publicised recreational hunter who finally suicided by sitting down quietly and shooting himself with his favourite double-barrelled hunting shotgun. Just as the wish and the fear can be interchangeable, so are the active and the passive in the vertical sexual hierarchy. Perhaps he was simultaneously frustrating, avoiding and placating the authorities he feared. *Recibiendo*. Despite his enormous attitudinising about action, however, it is the peculiar addicted passivity of the receptive author we see most in his life.

Despite the acceptance - indeed often the approving excitement - amongst readers who find that authors have a tendency to practise candid espionage, from the prolific female playwright Aphra Behn in the eighteenth century to Ian Fleming and a host of others with an Intelligence persona in the 1950s and 1960s - there always seems some element of shock when an *unlikely* suspect is identified and confirmed. When the ostensibly left-wing British journalist Paul Mason was revealed recently to have been in covert correspondence with British Intelligence agents to de-platform and discredit influential dissenting voices, and to have drawn a huge, hierarchical map of what he considered potential tools of the Enemy, the staunch and eloquent socialist George Galloway was among the strongest to denounce him. In doing so, Galloway referred angrily to the



earlier example of George Orwell, who had been revealed decades ago to have made secret lists - for the British Foreign Office - of people he considered left-wing risks in the literary and artistic community, 'ratting' on them even as he ostensibly befriended them.

The issue of Orwell is very complex, and we should examine it here mainly through the lens topic of this essay, which is sexuality. Orwell's notorious list was compiled in different versions over time from a notebook he had begun keeping in the mid-1940s. It was finally given to Celia Kirwan of the Information Research Department. The IRD was a covert propaganda department of the Foreign Office, designed to promote anti-communist and pro-colonial propaganda, to support, create and inform anti-communist politicians, academics, and writers, and to weaponise lies. It had close ties to Oxford University, the CIA and their Congress for Cultural Freedom (including the periodical *Encounter*) and Reuters News Service. Celia Kirwan was a slim, intelligent-eyed, dark-haired young woman who had worked for *Horizon* magazine before being supervised by Robert Conquest at the IRD. Her sister was married to Orwell's friend the writer Arthur Koestler, who encouraged Celia to accept a marriage proposal from Orwell. She didn't, but she did accept his list. She was one of at least four women he courted after the death of his first wife Eileen. Orwell's erotic life was, of course, full of spectacular contradictions. His frequent expressions of dislike for 'pansy' homosexuals was contradicted by his predilection as a schoolmaster for beating his little boy pupils violently on the buttocks, and his contempt for the 'sex-maniacs' of left-wing ideology was contradicted by his own numerous sexual encounters, including with the secretary for Aneurin Bevan's *Tribune*, of which Orwell was literary editor, when he was married to the despondent and courageous Eileen. There is a parallel between these contradictions in Orwell and his rejection of colonialism but attraction to colonial figures and occupations. His father, Richard Blair, after whom he named his adopted son, had been Sub-Deputy Opium Agent in the colonial Indian Civil



Service, overseeing opium production and storage for sale to China, after the defeat of China by Britain in the Opium Wars. Orwell was accustomed to flirting with, as well as criticising, such ideologies in which profit and power are imposed in the name of freedom.

My thesis here would be that Orwell attempted to reconcile his extreme political contradictions through his choice of sexual and marital goals, such goals as Celia Kirwan. The colonial conservative part of his nature demanded expression compulsively and, since he was also genuinely socialist, the courted women's function was to provide an outlet and a mask which allowed him to maintain the dichotomy. The strength of his sexuality was powered by the strength of the contradiction. The notebook he kept in private denouncing left-wing figures has all the intensity and habit of a sexual secret, and as such was certain to find a release.

Significantly, his second marriage, which he formalised months before his death, was with the sensuous Sonia Brownell, who had also worked as the power behind *Horizon*, and as a commissioning force for the publisher Weidenfeld and Nicolson. After Orwell's death, she combined with Orwell's former publisher Frederic Warburg and ensured that the Information Research Department gained foreign rights to most of Orwell's writings. It translated his work into twenty languages, distributed *Animal Farm* worldwide and financed and created the animated film of it with the CIA. It is typical of this type of institution's thinking that they also believed that pigs being denigrated in that story would influence Arab nationalism away from the Soviets, but despite what might seem comedy, we shouldn't underestimate Orwell's deliberation in choosing Sonia to oversee the future of his work.

After a conservative Roman Catholic upbringing and detailed and diligent transcribing of the late medieval *Morte d'Arthur* at Oxford, Sonia Brownell had usurped the power at the avant-garde *Horizon* from Orwell's boyhood friend Cyril Connolly (who was reportedly too lazy to care) and become



sexually adventurous and editorially experimental in a way that was in keeping with conservative political forces. Orwell would have recognised her trajectory. Despite many biographies to the contrary, there was nothing accidental or casual about their marriage, nor was it just to provide a parent for Richard, who was anyway destined to be brought up gratefully by Orwell's younger sister. If it is true that Orwell based the optimistic, naive and energetic character Julia in *1984* on Sonia, it is again evidence that he wished to provide a contradictory authorised version to anything that might be suspected. No doubt both guises were valid for him.

On the subject of dual validity in the ontology of intelligence assets, we can look briefly at Christopher Hitchens, who shared a plain, persuasive, emotive writing style with Orwell, and who wrote a book praising him. Of Orwell's list, Hitchens said it only contained names of those recognised as left-wing already, and that 'Nothing that Orwell discussed with his old flame was ever used for a show trial or...witch-hunt. He just wanted to keep a clear accounting in the battle of ideas.' This was echoed by the old flame, Celia Kirwan, who said that the only bad thing that could happen to the people on the list was that they might not be asked to write for the IRD. Given the dating of Orwell's original notebook, its thoroughness and passion, and the fact that it contains names like Katharine Hepburn and Paul Robeson (whom Orwell thought hated white people, despite his great championship of the British miners), one could see this as disingenuous on the part of both Kirwan and of Hitchens.

Hitchens, of course, has long been a mystery to the Left, which he at first professed to champion. I remember that when I was writing for *Overland*, the then-editor Ian Syson expressed his puzzlement and frustration at Hitchen's unexpected support for the American invasion of Iraq to me, and I said I couldn't account for it, either. I perhaps can now, though. Hitchens' second wife, the beautiful Carol Blue, whom he married in 1991 (calling it 'love at first sight') came from a family which had worked for Lockheed Martin and Atomic International, and the



experienced journalist John Helmer has written that her family was also part of the powerful General Atomics family of military contractors, drone developers and arms manufacturers. With Rupert Murdoch, Facebook, Microsoft, Google, and the Pentagon, the General Atomics Blue family is a large donor to the militarist think-tank Center for a New American Security, which trained Victoria Nuland and others.

Whilst there is no evidence as to whether or not Carol Blue supported her husband's enthusiasm for the second Bush invasion of Iraq (they had both opposed the first Bush war) and his support for other U.S. military occupations, there was perhaps for Hitchens a similar psychology to that of Orwell in embracing a passionate marriage as the way to balance great internal contradictions, and to organise a transition from one pole to the other. Certainly, Blue's writings about Hitchens and his death have a poignancy and persuasiveness that smooths away any sharpness from posterity. All that might be wished to remain is the series of Annie Leibovitz publicity photographs of Hitchens and Blue as a young couple entwined expressively and contentedly on a big floral couch the year before they married, making it almost impossible not to wish them well.

Coincidentally, just after I wrote the above, Annie Leibovitz very recently did another couple-photo-shoot, this time for British *Vogue*. The couple apparently in need of sympathetic publicity this time were Volodymyr Zelensky and his wife, Olena. Whilst the photos used vintage Leibovitz romantic inter-twinings and attracted quite a lot of derision from left-wing political commentators who photo-shopped them with bundles of dollars and thought that the seminal image from the poster for the film *Titanic* was recognisable, we should take the photo-shoot seriously here. In fact, without any political conclusion, we should note that the Western publicity campaign for Ukraine (and perhaps at the expense of its population) has been organised with increasing efficacy since Victoria Nuland's Maidan Coup in 2014 and now employs several strands of sexual persuasion. At the refined pole of the campaign, akin to



what we have seen Scribner's Maxwell Perkins describe as 'respectably sexy design to attract the feminine readers who control the destinies of so many novels', we have examples like the Leibovitz shoot, media replays of the television comedy *Servant of the People* (beginning in 2015) in which Zelensky plays a schoolteacher who accidentally turns into a disarming populist President, and many other suitably casual but reliably soulful photographs and videos. These perhaps involved a little too much reliance on one dark-toned shirt, with the inevitable remarks by commentators after the Leibovitz photos that his wife must indeed be devoted to him, because he never seemed to change it. Again, we should examine this photographic method seriously, however, as it reflects a certain mechanical and perhaps over-confident, even contemptuous, aspect of Western media publicity.

British *Vogue* is the sister of American *Vogue* and, like it, owned by the Condé Nast firm, which also own many other sophisticated publications like *The New Yorker*, *Allure* (with its 'Best of Beauty' Awards) and the articulate Social Media Forum *Reddit*, in all of which many readers feel secure in an erudite, humanitarian, sometimes sceptical but always comfortable community. One of the keys to this is a selection of reliable personae, such as Hitchens, Leibovitz, and now perhaps the two Zelenskys. Sometimes another key is the providing of a themed visual background to enhance the characterisation. This was pioneered by the genius of modern American fashion photography and portraiture, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, who from 1936 to 1958 was a staff fashion photographer at *Harper's Bazaar* (owned by Hearst since 1913). She developed a meticulous but seemingly spontaneous method of setting her subjects against exotic or informational backgrounds and concentrating on infusing dark colours into her pictures to give them more sublimity. At all times, she tried to convey the individuality of her subjects, including glamorously clad women and carefully presented nudes, and was a successful propagandist for the Roosevelt Government's domestic campaigns during the Second World War. She sympathetically



and beautifully photographed left-wing celebrities such as Orson Welles, Ed Murrow and Josephine Baker. She was not in herself such a celebrity as is now the endearing Leibovitz, photographs of whom taking photographs tend to google up even more often than photographs taken by Leibovitz herself.

The essence of fashion photography, of course, is to create a sense of expensive but accessible and desirable sexuality, embodied by personae the viewer recognises and wishes to engage and emulate. When effective, it is characterised by the same sort of personal detail that distinguishes all intelligent erotica from pornography.

In regard to the use of pornography as well as intelligent erotica in propaganda, the topic of Ukraine is again very important. It increasingly seems to me that two aspects of what at first appeared to be negative publicity about Ukraine are in fact intentional propaganda for it, but designed perhaps to appeal to a different audience. The first is the ubiquity of the swastika symbol in photographs of Ukrainian battalions. The second is the routine video footage disseminated constantly on the internet of Ukrainians - deemed antisocial by Ukrainian vigilantes and officials - being tied to public street-posts with plastic binding, then stripped, humiliated and flogged, including frail elderly men and struggling young women. There can be any stipulated cause for this, but one ostensible reason given by the perpetrators is that the victims are Gypsies. Indeed, the rehabilitation of the Nazi-collaborator Bandera as a national hero fits in with this as a manifestation of a genuine Fascist ideology, but as well as that it may be that both the swastika symbols and the flogging are an attempt to attract an S-M audience, which the propagandists regard as just as large and powerful as are the followers of Condé Nast.

Whilst many whose sexuality extends to S-M may be as liberated and tolerant as Kenneth Tynan, there is no doubt that others are furtive and authoritarian, and would gloat about such pornographic violence as that in the Ukrainian videos. The trend in these videos might be expected to become even more violent



and pornographic since Ukraine has extended its military conscription to younger and older age groups and to women, all of whom may be punished for resisting. More evidence that these videos are calculatingly pornographic is that the content is even more so daily, involving bloody wounds, bare buttocks, howling mouths and pretty young children being instructed in how to administer the whippings.

On several occasions in general, I have been aware of power figures having a taste for S-M and suggested to them that they might like to emulate Tynan and be open and discursive about it, but the response is usually one of recoil: furtiveness is clearly an erotic requirement for them. Either that, or there is an element of Ghislaine Maxwell and Jeffrey Epstein, and the furtiveness is necessary to create a secret world in which they can have power by their knowledge about others. Whilst one does not have to assume an organised cabal, such as is supposed to exist for pedophiles or satanists, it is an uneasy concept that such propaganda may be calculated to influence and attract a particular section of the powerful, and that these powerful are as well sometimes the providers of a less extreme form of propaganda, such as that in general publishing or fashion-style photography.

Another interesting aspect of S-M propaganda such as this described is that it is an inversion of expected propaganda, discussed earlier here, in which all the atrocities and sexual peculiarities are attributed to the opposition (although there is always a fair amount of that demonising attribution as well). It should be stressed now that there is no suggestion that the suffering of those tied to street-posts, or their captors' enthusiasm for swastikas, isn't real - the stylisation is that of organisation and presentation. Perhaps if one knew who supplies all those miles of plastic bondage, one might be closer to knowing who the stylists are, but there is doubt that the knowledge would embarrass them, although it might unnerve the self-interest of some of their followers.



To continue this essay in real time, the recurrence of the World Economic Forum in Davos this week (now January, 2023) permits us to consider such gatherings in terms of our topic focus. Some of the more openly conservative press, such as the *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, have already been featuring the fact that at least 100 expensive prostitutes have just arrived in Davos. The Australian (now American-based) conservative journalist Miranda Devine tweeted: ‘Coals to Newcastle’. Accompanying the influx of prostitutes, of course, there would also be an inrush of cocaine, which can be consumed with or without their additional services. One of the prostitutes, Salomé Balthus, commented that her clients are business people rather than politicians, ‘You have to choose between a “drug”: sex or political power. The latter is stronger, it doesn't leave room for other interests and eats up people completely.’ She does not mention that the substitution can still involve the other drug, cocaine, or that several of those career politicians formerly or currently attending are semi-open cocaine users, sometimes with characteristic side-of-the nose presses in their speeches. And whilst she is no doubt correct about the business people, it is also known among these sex workers that indicating the identity of any political clients is legally, and perhaps physically, a very dangerous thing.

On our subject of media and publishers, however, included in the ten companies most represented at Davos are CNBC, Google, Stanford University and the Wall Street Journal, although of course senior editors from many other outlets and publications are also attending, including Andy Jassy from Amazon. Among the featured politicians are Tony Blair, Donald Trump’s Son-in-Law, John Kerry and the Mayor Of Kiev, and a conspicuous attendee is Gautam Adani, chairman of India’s Adani Group, the world’s third-richest person on Forbes’ list and the owner of Queensland’s controversial Adani mine. The scene-setting PR photo is of one of the opening speakers Olena Zelenska, Ukrainian First Lady, with President of Switzerland Alain Berset, President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the founder of the World Economic Forum,



Klaus Schwab. Even more than the latest Frankfurt Book Fair, the latest Davos is a propaganda platform for NATO's War against Russia.

As well as prostitution's general entertainment and relaxation function, public relations exercises often involve prostitution as a valuable tool and lubricant. One of Davos' main functions, of course, has also been as a public relations exercise, initially for the concept of ongoing economic growth. I would like here to reference an interesting book on Davos, published by the Swiss Lars Müller Publishers, who specialise in books on modern design and art. *Davos Is a Verb* (2021) by Jules Spinatsch compiles the celebrated photographer Spinatch's photographs of Davos (where he was born), contrasting the reality with the facade and the alpine context. Reinforcing the surreally atmospheric photos is an onsite essay by Tim Jackson, which at that period of time focuses on the case against economic growth, and references income equality, the onset of Covid and Greta Thunberg's protests there on Global Warming. He gives a particularly poignant account of being woken by a wolf howling hauntingly in the mountains.

I would have liked more analysis of Thunberg being perhaps a capitalist-backed part of the facade - even if at first unwitting, and at last maybe, like the older Malala, genuinely and awarely anti-capitalist (hence her current less sympathetic press), but there is no doubt that the essay and the photographs invite a valuable discussion. Their key fact is that the town of Davos is remade and re-designed temporarily for a short period each annual Davos Forum, with ephemeral structures and facades, after which it returns to its normal appearance as the highest town in Europe (literally, as well as, one assumes, figuratively while the Forum is on) and in a simpler and more idyllic alpine atmosphere.

In contrast, the photographed structures and facades have a fin de siècle, Weimar Republic quality (I was reminded of the mood of Max Beckmann), and show one-dimensional commercial backgrounds (decorated with slogans about the need for



leadership in changing times), or occasional sensual symbols such as the large round gilded Lindt bunny and the rejuvenating evening snow. Most of the diurnal snow is seen raked up in dirty piles in corners. Except for some unofficial visitors and protesters with clown noses, the human beings are usually men in dark business suits engaged intently in some dialogue or other. It is interesting that many of the visiting prostitutes said that they wore business suits when working at Davos - not as protection (prostitution is legal in Switzerland) but to make their clients feel at ease. Of course, there may be another form of protection (apart from that of their own employing firms) involved, as Power Dressing can be a defence against sexual abuse and denigration - which, reportedly, is also common at the Davos Forum. Women dislike walking alone there.

One of Spinatsch's most sensual photographs shows a lovely young woman DJ with blonde hair in rivulets and a stylish tight ornate metallic dress smiling self-consciously as her long fingers operate turntable buttons, that half of the photo tinged in green light, but the half before it golden-lit, with a pool, a waterfall and trees. This is a simple contrast between nature and artifice, but the first photo scene is also landscaped and there is a merging suggestion of facade and deliberation.

One revealing Spinatsch photograph shows the pro-economic growth Ukraine House in Davos, which had already been there for a few years (following the Maidan coup), already even in 2020 with a huge military vehicle and men in military jungle greens outside it, while someone in a ski jacket in front of it uses a prefab ATM, and a couple of unfazed civic officials in fluoro yellow garb look on. There is every kind of uniform in Davos.

If I were being speculative about uniforms, I could suggest that they confer temporal limits on the wearer, rather like the ephemeral trappings of temporary forum Davos, conferring power but also the belief that the role can be escaped by simply shedding the uniform itself. This leads us back to the S-M element in Ukraine propaganda discussed earlier, as the audience to which it is designed to appeal is one that recognises



fascist symbols as part of pornographic discourse (they were considered innocuous enough to be used in photoshoots in 1960s *Playboy*, even though *Playboy* looked askance at Tynan's essay on underwear), and also recognises that discourse as a bonding device between social or political forces. One in-the-news example is that there has for decades been a European-immigrant Fascist faction (some of whom actually were unreconstructed members of the Nazi Party) in the NSW Liberal Party. Many of the symbols might surface at ostensibly innocent private social events. Some young man wearing a black SS uniform at a birthday party, for example, might believe the donning of it to be a temporary even comic roleplay, but the power figures he knew were sympathetic to it are not benign masters and might in some unsafe future use it against him.

In relevance to the peculiarity often observed here that powerful intelligence agencies are spectacularly disloyal to their assets and that the assets oddly rarely seem to expect this, I would argue that those new articles about debauchery at Davos in some conservative Press signal the inevitable abandonment of the Davos project and a possible disowning of the concept of economic growth. Davos itself has already issued a report predicting increasing economic downturn. Of their attendees, Microsoft has just cut 10,000 jobs worldwide, and Amazon plans to cut 18,000. And of the Davos project in general, one might expect that many powerful structures and information and publishing outlets might find that the daytime uniforms they thought ephemeral might return to haunt them, like the howling of a wolf, like 100 ladies of the night.

What might be called the 'Davos Curse' seems to have continued, as there have been many more Media job cuts, and organisations like Adani are now in spectacular financial disarray. The Government of Ukraine itself may be increasingly abandoned by its sponsors. It is interesting that following Seymour Hersh's long CIA-informed essay attributing the destruction of the Nord Stream pipeline directly to the Biden Administration, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have



now suggested the bombers were Ukrainian. Whilst Hersh's piece did seem over-focused on one perpetrator, the new CIA supposition is logistically impossible, and there may be truth in the argument that this supposition against Ukraine is being used, especially in Germany, to begin uncoupling allegiances with the Zelensky regime.

Since the Maidan Coup, at least partly organised by the ubiquitous Victoria Nuland (a member of the even more ubiquitous Neocon Kagan family), one Intelligence function of the Ukrainian Government has been to destabilise Russia politically and financially. As this strategy seems to be proving unsuccessful, it has been suggested that sections of the CIA may wish to disassociate themselves from the Ukraine War, perhaps to concentrate resources on a projected war with China, ostensibly over Taiwan. Again, that disassociation would involve a predictable betrayal of a surprisingly naive asset, but from the point of view of this essay, I wonder if we can speculate that one key clue that the asset will be betrayed is in the extent of the sexuality involved. There are numerous examples such as the publishing house of Robert Maxwell and by extension his daughter Ghislaine (who described as a child how her father made her choose which implement with which he would beat her) or the intelligence-gathering activities of the masseur and artist Stephen Ward. There is a feeling that Western Intelligence Agencies (including those of Israel) view espionage projects that are intrinsically sexual as intrinsically expendable from the start. For at least a decade, sexual aspects of the Ukrainian power and propaganda structure - including Sadomasochism, fascist symbols and theories of racial 'purity' - have been cultivated in Ukraine by Western Agencies.

Involvement in such nefarious processes always seems to include indiscreet anomalies and dubious accidents, perhaps because there tends to be an over-recruitment of indiscriminate people, some of whom have a sexuality involving self-revelation or the implication of each other. One such accident of interest to us is the notorious recent German announcement of intended



tank supply to Ukraine, in which the only two numbers given were 14 and 88 (estimates, not concrete tallies) which linked together are almost always the clandestine sign for a network of white supremacist organisations, whose slogans involve the need for children to be white and the survival of the ‘beauty of the White Aryan woman’. Needless to say, the Internet went wild, with some of the milder commentators suggesting that the German Government could have at least varied one of those explosive numbers.

Ever since operations like Paperclip, in which MI6 and the CIA rescued and rehabilitated many Nazis, partly to work on anti-Communist projects, the Intelligence agencies have toyed with Germany. Events like the Nord Stream destruction and even strange jovial asides like ‘14/88’ suggest that this continues, always with an element of warning, although the tantalising prospect of full re-armament is also held before German eyes, as it is before the eyes of Japan.

Near the beginning of this essay, I quoted an experienced Soviet spy that he had not much experience of the use of ‘Honeytraps’ let alone any sexual manoeuvre such as depicted in *Red Sparrow*, and I suggested that sexual situations like those of the Maxwells and the setting-up of Julian Assange were more literary and had a more conceptual narrative quality than did normal everyday espionage. Another example of the former, of course, would be the Skripal case, where the desire of a Russian spy turned Western asset to return again to Russia with his daughter seems to have been turned by MI6 into an adventure where he was attacked by a mythical mysterious poison only to vanish with his daughter, the whole thing as if pre-scripted for a doco-drama series on the BBC, which it indeed duly became. Considering Honeytraps further, however, I wonder if in fact the use of various forms of sexual manipulation isn’t more peculiar to Western Intelligence agencies and, according to our current thesis, might therefore make them more prone than China or Russia to discard and betray their assets (at least since World War Two, when Russia did betray Richard Sorge in Japan). This



sexuality would also explain why there seem to be differing degrees of consent by the discarded assets.

Another interesting aspect of the process towards a manipulative narrative involves the book as sexual object, and book-burning. When I was in my teens and early twenties, I regarded books as a direct sexual form, and the act of reading as erotic and largely equal, with two creators, in keeping with certain aspects of Post-Modernism, although my ideas were independent of Post-Modernism, which became popular at local universities well after that. I was ambivalent about libraries, as there was something odd about the serial sharing of a sexual partner, and I remember stating that libraries were a form of brothel, although compatible with free thinking also that there was actually nothing wrong with that.

In regard to the vertical sexuality of publishing - the publisher in a hierarchy descending down to the employees and the authors - I've noticed that the more politically conservative publishers seem to regard books as independent objects of sensuousness and reverence, perhaps in keeping with Post-Modernism, produced by them for the awe of the author but the consumption of the reader. This would seem compatible with the fact that some of the more experimental forms of art in the last century were sponsored by conservative forces, such as the CIA. At any rate, the ritual of vast public book-burning, as practised by the Hitler Jungen and presently by the Government of Ukraine (particularly in regard to Russian classics like Tolstoy) can be seen as a form of symbolic S-M communication. It is a public display and a private message, like the tortures in plastic wrapping. I wonder, however, if the audience for the message is as reliable as the practitioners believe. Those Intelligence Agencies who have instigated such systems may be suggesting tastes and beliefs that they themselves only assume at will, even though often genuine. And the international S-M fraternity as such finally seems impressionable but fickle.

I am reminded of the New York documentary film *The Booksellers* where at one point one of the booksellers holds an



ancient necromantic volume made of human skin and says the correct response is not to recoil but to want to hold it. Even though - unlike in Ukraine - the last case adds a grisly form of acceptance, there is a powerful sexuality in the linking of books with annihilation.

In concluding this essay, it seems to me that the vertical structure of sexuality in publishing may result in two different forms of energy: at the top of the structure there is much energy expended in using overt sexuality for persona and control, but lower down, energy may be dammed into secrecy - the displaced energy required by furtiveness in fact means that those at the lower levels of power are severely restricted in their mobility and expression, including their freedom to criticise the structure, including to themselves.

Even in local publishing terms, I receive a message every now and then from some respected author or other who has felt secure at one of my former publishers, only to have been betrayed by them, and needing to know what my own experiences were. To comfort and preserve, I try to explain what I have realised to be the overall political structures involved.

The last case confided to me very recently involved a publisher who began with conservative training, assumed a more left-wing political stance temporarily and then culminated spectacularly in the arms of a major think tank, the *New York Times* and the American publisher New Directions. New Directions, of course, was an example of the CIA philosophy that avant-garde work represented American culture and patriotism, hence the championing of Borges for the Nobel Prize, and their earlier rehabilitation of Ezra Pound's reputation, after he had established his fascist sympathies during the Second World War. They are currently heavily involved in promoting the war on Russia, with perhaps China to come. One of their recent publications, provided by an Australian publisher, describes a Chinese lady being humanised by western culture in a Japanese setting. There is no question that such works are of high literary quality, just as the paintings of the CIA-promoted Jackson



Pollock were of high quality. But it is a part of persona-sensationalism created for political purposes that it may result in public disaster for the artist, as it did with Pollock.

In terms of the sexuality of publishing, however, I would be concerned that Australian publishers and publishers in general might themselves fall victim eventually to the same betrayal practised on some of their authors. It should not be forgotten that the publisher Maxwells were under the protection of the Council on Foreign Relations, and that reportedly Ghislaine was once provided with a bodyguard by them. There is no doubt planning over decades involved in such cases, but that does not guarantee security.

As we have seen often in this essay, the powerful have long regarded all art as intrinsically sexual and, like all their other sexual projects, to be discarded when the time is ripe.

