

## BOOK REVIEW

'Straw Dogs', John Gray, published by Granta, £8.99 from all good bookshops.

Did we jump or were we pushed? This is just one of the many questions tackled head on by that rarest of objects, a British 'intellectual', in this case, John Gray. A common sight in France, the role of public intellectual is not one eagerly filled in British society, such is our mistrust of all things cerebral. We're doers, not thinkers, and heaven help anyone with the temerity to philosophise sober.

John Gray probably couldn't care less. The son of a Tyneside shipyard joiner, he befriended Isaiah Berlin at Oxford before setting out to overthrow the great man's justification for liberalism. Berlin's argument was that liberalism was the only creed that allowed humans to live the life they'd chosen. But choice is

an illusion, or at least conscious choice is. In his book, 'Straw Dogs', Gray backs up his intellectual argument with the obligatory scientific fact, in this case, the fact that the electrical impulse that initiates action occurs half a second before we take the conscious decision to act. The brain *prepares* us to act and then, a split second later, we have the subjective experience of *deciding* to act. In reality, that decision has already been taken somewhere in the labyrinth of our brains to which we remain completely oblivious. Computerally speaking, we process roughly 14 million bits of information per second, whilst consciously, we're aware of about 18 bits. In other words, we have conscious access to around a millionth of the information we use daily to survive. Clearly, therefore, we were pushed.

## CHRISTMAS CRYSTAL

**Tourmaline**, ruled by Libra, Alone with Topaz this mineral also possess a positive and negative electrical charge. Inspirational – it diminishes fear with understanding. Again comes in a variety of colours often containing many colours within one stone. Good for lower back arthritis heart disease and balancing adrenal glands. Tourmaline stimulates balance between left and right sides of the brain.

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# Mad Hatter Monthly

Free

December 2005

## BLEEDING MONEY? HERE'S A PLASTER

Dave finds the real Christmas spirit with some community sharing

When we spend our hard earned cash on goods and services we are aware that part of the money we hand over is going to make the rich richer. Fat cat bosses grin at us with the huge sums they award themselves through ripping us off. Shareholders clamour for more and more profit. We have become almost slaves to stuff we take from trees and turn in to pound notes. The thought of my hard earned cash going in to these merciless grasping hands pisses me off; 'Waste not want not' springs to mind. But what can I do about it, am I impotent, just a pawn to be used by those who hide behind high walls and security cameras?

Well! I've found an old established way of stepping outside the system. It's a method that was pioneered by the Co-op. Yes, that now run down department store standing precariously on one of England's most polluted streets, London Road. Originally started in the 1840s, the Co-op still is a great idea. Its simple – workers within the Co-op are all

members, so as well as their wages, they also get a fair share of the profits. No milking of the cream for the cash addicts here.

Inspired by this ideology and with minimum investigation, I discovered the state of play of co-operative systems in Brighton and beyond today. For a kick off, the UN reckons that in one-way or another half the world's population are dependent for their survival on co-operative movements. In the UK alone its stated on the world-wide-web that 9.8 million Britons are members of different co-ops.

Being a member of a co-op or two, brings advantages all round – even the planet benefits. For the co-ops, as well as being fair, are also ethically minded. Most are run on the Old Labour maxim 'from each – according to their ability to each according to their need'. Members enjoy cheaper goods and or a share of the profit.

(Continued on next page)

**Christmas** ❄️  
**bumper edition 2005**



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## OPERATION CO-OPERATION

(Continued from front)

Here in Brighton & Hove there are more than 100 co-ops such as the Co-op Bank, the Credit Union, the Housing Co-op, Infinity Foods etc. Take the Cowley Club, a co-operative run restaurant/club. Because its run by volunteers it can offer delicious vegan food and drink a lot cheaper than normal eateries. There are various co-ops that exchange skills not money. Say you're old and housebound but can sew, you sew for others and earn points. These can be exchanged, so you can get a decorator in to do your front room.

In the old days, before the advent of the car, communities automatically pulled together – even London is really a collection of villages – there was natural co-operation – try finding the telephone number of an old people's home before tarmac ruled the earth's surface. Is it a pre-conscious memory of that spirit, dissatisfaction with what we've allowed ourselves to become, that some of us unite

again in co-operation amongst each other – or purely survival against a system that bleeds us?

If you want a chat and save money whilst being green, try the Phone Co-op. This co-op like so many others, gives back to the planet what it takes – they plant trees to offset the damage done by CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that their members are responsible for. They use part of the profit in enabling new co-ops to start up. A return flight to Spain, for example, is covered by planting two trees to balance the pollution caused.

Brighton along with Hiroshima is one of the UN's 80 designated 'peace messenger city'. Means bugger all to me, but I'll definitely feel more peaceful circulating my money around my community doing good, rather than buying some greedy sod a new Ferrari.

**For details on all Brighton's co-ops, call the Peace and Environment centre on 01273 766-611**

## WINTER CHILL - WEATHER WARNING COULD BE WRONG

This winter is expected to be one of the coldest ones in recent history. However the *Hatter's* undercover correspondent has learnt that the forecasters may have got it wrong. More worryingly, as our agent uncovered, is that weather forecasters are urging people to switch off their heating to make it even colder so their prediction can hold true and they can save face.

"If everyone turns off their central heating we expect the national temperature to drop by 5°C and then we can have a truly cold winter," says a weather spokesperson

Mr. D Hiscover, the Hatters very own science correspondent, analysed the findings. He says, "The startling realisation that people could reduce national, and consequently, global warming by turning off their central heating is the rudiments of common sense. Mind you, advising the country to follow suit to make sure the MET office's winter chill prediction holds true, is like NASA saying, we are confident aliens will visit us next month as long as we all dress up in green suits and say glog glog blue glog gilly gog." So there you have it: Take a chill pill!!!



Since the beginning of this year Norris, the Hatter's pet spider, has been travelling on a spiderdelic journey, his travels have taken in to space towards spiderdelic love, stones and sonic liberation. His journey continues...

*Norris here, Hi all*

Spinetta and I have recently returned from caves in the Golden Ranges. There, drawn by the irresistible beauty contained in the sound we heard at the Lite Bites concert. We have both been deep in meditation. We followed the sound within and it took us up up and away. Eventually we reached a sort of inner plateau from where we could rise no further. The sound still ascending entered an area of light far too bright for us to even look at. From the space we glanced back to where we had come from – our bodies motionless and still within our cavern. Between that place and far below our bodies we beheld a vast spiritual sky all a-hum with the vibrations of magic sound. At first we saw what looked like hundreds balls dancing in the sky. Then to our amazement we understood that the balls were universes like the one we come from – like bubbles, some forming some bursting. What a sight.

We're off now to swim in a special lake. We're told bathing in its water removes impurities, not only from the body, but from the mind – keep you posted on the experience.

Spinetta and I send you all our fondest greetings and may your Xmas be full of love.

*Norris X*

## ASTRO ASSISTANCE

**Jaki Miles-Windmill D.F. Astrol. S**  
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## PURSUING THE CHANGE OF WINTER

I.

When winter comes, dive for it!  
Take the plunge and kick  
for the murky bottom. The wet  
and the cold will seep in a little -  
but the welcome down there  
is warmer than you think.

Yes, for a while you can watch  
from a safe distance,  
as the high green wave of summer  
hurls itself into the open  
and thirsty brown arms  
of the self-soaking Earth.

But, really, you have no choice.

If you snub the gaze of the deep,  
fixing your desperate eyes on the far bank  
of spring, half way across  
the taught line of the solstice sun  
will snap you down  
so fast, you'll never be dazzled again.

Even the slow ladder to darkness,  
always clinging to the rungs of what was,  
is a one-way snake,  
slippery and silent.

Better to leap screaming into  
the plunge pool and beat  
the sediment in its reluctant race.  
That way, your writhing  
will shape its own tide,  
that makes a trampoline of winter's depth,  
and sweeps up again  
into spring.

*Ben Fairlight,  
Pursuing the Change of Winter  
November 2005*

## YULE LAUGH

maybe

How do snowmen travel around ?

By iceicle !

How do you know when there is a snowman in your bed ?

You wake up wet !

What happened when the snowgirl fell out with the snowboy ?

She gave him the cold shoulder !

What do you give a train driver for Christmas ?

Platform shoes !

What did the big candle say to the little candle ?

I'm going out tonight !

What happens to you at Christmas ?

Yule be happy

## HATTER INTERVIEW

The Hatter's staff happened to loose  
Nick Drake's number, so they inter-  
viewed each other...

**Matt:** "Today I'm going to interview one  
of the foremost literary critics of our gen-  
eration, a man whose influence extends  
throughout the world of words, Mr. Lau-  
rie Baker. Hello Laurie."

**Laurie:** "Hello."

**M:** "So, Laurie, have you read any good  
books recently."

**L:** "No, but I've heard that paper is used."

**M:** "What, to write the books or to read  
them?"

**L:** "Both."

**M:** "HmMMM, interesting."

**L:** "And if you hold the pages up to the  
light, you can see the image of a cathed-  
ral."

**M:** "Which cathedral?"

**L:** "Ely."

**M:** "Isn't that the smallest city in Brit-  
ain?"

**L:** "Are you including the largest paper  
mill in Europe?"

**M:** "In what?"

**L:** "Ely."

**M:** "Yes. Thank you Laurie."

## BUFFALO BILL'S?

Duck Bill's if you want pork, says Matt

Just like the buffalo, you've got to watch  
Bill's. Ostensibly magnificent, there's  
something ever so vulnerable beneath  
that seemingly impenetrable exterior of  
golden brown hair and outlandishly  
stacked fruit. How, for example, do you  
reconcile the plum franzipan tart enli-  
vened by Chinese five-spice and masca-  
pone with a pot of tea made using a  
common or garden tea bag? What is one  
to make of that piece of perfection that  
is their peppered steak sandwich on  
'housemade' focaccia with honey roast  
vegetables, aubergine pickle, spring on-  
ion and crème fraiche, when stood next  
to a bacon sandwich in which the bacon  
never threatened to reach the edge of the  
bread, not to mention its over-cooked  
and under-cured character that left me  
contemplating Judaism?

The lesson to be learnt, clearly, is  
stick to the fancy and shun the simple,  
but it shouldn't have to be like this. The  
devil's in the detail and if you can't be  
bothered to grill a bit of bacon properly  
then, quite frankly, you can shove your  
Indian spiced vegetable, chick pea and  
coconut soup up your arse. Or pour it.



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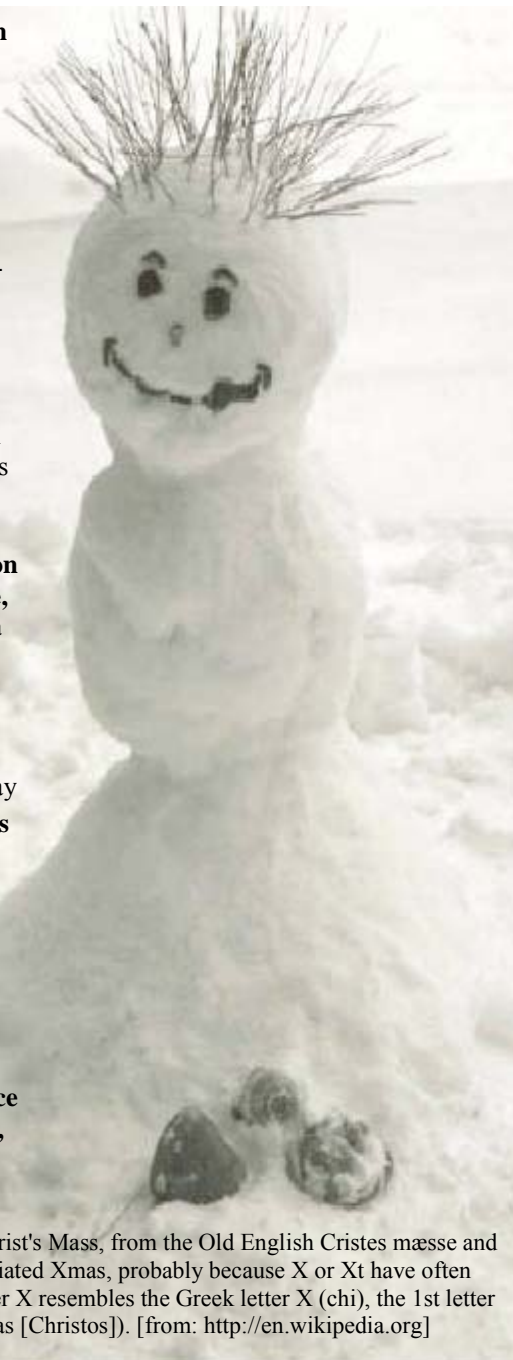
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## CHRISTMAS FACTS

- **A Mongolian wild ass can run 8 mph faster than a reindeer.**
- Christmas pudding should be stirred from east to west.
- **A traditional Christmas dinner in early England was the head of a pig prepared with mustard.**
- On Christmas Eve in 2001, the Bethlehem Hotel had 208 of its 210 rooms free.
- **There are 1.76 billion candy canes produced every year.**
- Kris Kringle, a man in his 40s, lives in North Pole, Alaska, and delivers pizzas for a living. He drives a 1984 Ford Tempo.
- **Based on a 1999 estimated population count of North America and Europe, on Christmas Eve of that year Santa Claus had to visit 42,466,666 homes in a 12-hour period -- that's 983 homes per second.**
- We eat 100 million turkey sandwiches between Xmas day and New Year's day
- **We spend £28 million on Xmas cakes each Christmas**
- No other country in the world eats Christmas Pudding
- **We eat 10 million turkeys over the Christmas period**
- We spend £30m annually on Brussels sprouts
- **If you laid down the number of mince pies bought per year laid end to end, it would be 3 times the size of the Great Wall of China**
- The word Christmas is a contraction of Christ's Mass, from the Old English Cristes mæsse and referring to the ceremony of mass. Abbreviated Xmas, probably because X or Xt have often been used as a for Christ. The English letter X resembles the Greek letter X (chi), the 1st letter of Christ in Greek (Χριστός transliterated as [Christos]). [from: <http://en.wikipedia.org>]



## CHRISTMAS CULTURE

This month over 1.1 billion Christians from 238 countries across the world ranging from the USA, Brazil, Mexico, China, Japan, Russia, India, Nigeria and many more places will come together to celebrate Christmas. That's a lot of people having a lot of fun and it's probably an underestimate, as many non-Christians will also be joining in. So what's Jesus got to do with it?

December has long held traditional festive value. Pagans celebrated the winter solstice and the burning of the magical Yule log, to ward evil spirits and celebrate fire and earth. The Romans, as far back has 3000BC, celebrated a festival called Saturnalia that fell on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December and finished on the 25<sup>th</sup> [in the calendar used at that time]. During this time the Romans ceased warfare, temporarily freed their slaves, and exchanged gifts.

Santa Claus, (also known as Saint Nicholas, Saint Nick, Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, Santy or simply Santa) seems to have little to do with Jesus. Each name is a variation of Saint Nicholas, but there are various folklores surrounding his origins. He is rumoured to have been a bishop from Turkey [4<sup>th</sup> century bishop of Myra, East Asia] who gave gifts to the poor and to children. Saint Nicholas is the Patron Saint of Greece, children, Russia and other places.

Many myths surrounding him began in the Netherlands where they celebrated his birth on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December by exchanging of gifts. The Dutch name is Sint Nikolaas, and the English reduced it to Santa Claus in colonial New York and moved his feast day to the English festival date, Christmas. The

look of the Santa is associated with a Russian chap called 'Ded Moroz', ('Grandfather Frost') who wore a red coat and delivered gifts. So what's Jesus got to do with Christmas?

Of course it's a celebration of Christ's birth. The nativity and the travelling of the magi, who in turn gave gifts, just like Saint Nick; shepherds, the angels. All equally as magical as the Christmas itself. The date of his birth is still debated and as is the celestial evidence for the star of Bethlehem.

In Brighton & Hove, there are 146,000 Christians, 3,358 Jews, 3,635 Muslims, 1,747 Muslims, 237 Sikhs, 2,000 other, 66,00 with no religion and 222, thousand who didn't state a religion. [from 2001 census]

And winter sees many of these faiths celebrating. **Diwali** - Festival of Lights, celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs, **Hanukkah** - this Jewish Festival of Lights happens over eight days in December, **Paranirvana Day** - a Buddhist festival which marks the anniversary of the death of Buddha. **Chinese New Year** - is an exciting celebration of the earth coming back to life with fireworks, lanterns and special meals.

To keep multi-culturalism alive and enjoy its positive offerings, each culture needs to actively celebrate freely in its own way and also enjoy the differences of other cultures. Values are fast becoming lost. However Christianity and Christmas is perceived, the folklores, dating back to Pagan Myth, Roman Saturnalia and the legend of Santa have all have one thing in common: exchange of gifts, birth and celebration of life. Christmas needs to be celebrated at this time of year. Enjoy.