

FINALE
A KNIGHT COMMANDER'S
MUNIFICENCE

FINAL TRIBUTE TO
PROFESSOR SHELDON ROTHBLATT

IN GRATITUDE TO AN ACADEMIC OF
INSPIRATIONAL GENEROSITY, A CONSTRUCTOR OF
CREATIVE PATHWAYS, A CULTURAL HISTORIAN
OF SEMINAL INFLUENCE
THANK YOU

...beautiful souls are they that are universal,
open and ready for all things
Montaigne, Essays, (1580-88)

JAMES ANTHONY MANGAN: AN APPRECIATION

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(Extracts)**

PRIVILEGE

It is a privilege for me to attach some thoughts about Tony Mangan to this collection of essays. I would also like to commend the publisher for having the wisdom to bring together a substantial body of stylish writings that merit special attention. More than a quarter of a century ago, a remarkable book was put into my hands for reviewing. I had read a fair amount on the history of the world-famous, elite English boarding schools (now called independent schools). Even then the literature was large but, except for several titles that have actually helped, fairly routine. I used what appeared to be relevant in my own early work. No historian, no scholar, works in a vacuum. It is wise and proper to acknowledge predecessors. That is the classic way in which our understanding of subjects, events and people accumulates and adjusts. In the early literature ideas and suggestions remain embedded, to be winkled out by the careful reader. And yet, these necessary qualifications notwithstanding, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* was, and remains a path finding book. I was subsequently pleased to learn that Noel Annan, my teacher at Cambridge, a scintillating writer on matters Victorian and no mean judge, thought so as well. I read Tony Mangan's book with admiration and - dare I say it? - a touch of envy. My review was therefore more restrained than it should have been, but the more I thought about what was being said, the more my enthusiasm increased...

EYE-OPENER

How did Mangan manage to push what we thought we knew to so many unusual places? Every page was an eye-opener. Even when - what shall we call it? - unconventionally and effectively. Here too was the first systematic use of anthropological matrices for any study of schooling known to me. I suppose we ought to make mention of Philippe Aries...

Aries scattered his shot as is often typical of the Annaliste school. Mangan was for more systematic and focused in his use of anthropology, even a bit ahead of his time. When I came to Berkeley to teach in 1963, my colleagues in History talked about uniting history with sociological method. One close friend and colleague, who left us for the University of Chicago, argued that anthropology offered treasures that were being overlooked.

Ritual, symbols, ceremonies, special dress - the mechanisms by which communities order their conduct, established priorities, create hierarchies and dispense rewards and punishments.

I still recall the dazzling lecture that Mangan gave to a class of mine on the captains of the boarding schools, in which the entire organisation and discipline of the school were encapsulated in a teenager possessing unheard-of authority. If this understanding of the great schools was not about education in the very broadest and deepest sense, what was?...

ANOTHER DIMENSION

There was another dimension. The story that was being told was not just about a particular category of select schools, important then and important still, nor was it limited to discussions of sporting and athletic activities, nor to portraits of leading beaks, in which Mangan remains a master of the genre. The book that I was admiring was about a civilisation, a culture (for different authorities, these words bear different meanings) that had curiously spread beyond simple boundaries to become the foundation of a worldwide empire. This perception became more evident in Mangan's subsequent writings, and it dominates the following chapters... If there was any sort of key to how a seafaring people and a small island nation had conquered the earth, here it was: a strange, powerful mixture of discipline, muscularity, determination occasionally bordering on the fanatic, an absence of self-doubt, or self-doubt savagely repressed, and the magic adhering to Europe's most successful gentlemanly heritage.

Rudyard Kipling caught its spirit in *The Man Who Would be King*. Mangan went to its source.

BERKELEY INVITATION

I welcomed an opportunity to bring Tony Mangan to Berkeley, the first of a number of visits. I cannot recall whether I had any clear notion of where his subsequent investigations might lead; but as someone who remains a firm believer in the importance of a community of scholars devoted to a common pursuit, I was clearly eager to encourage the next stages. These are now far too familiar to the scholarly community to enumerate in detail. They include with the generous approval of others such as my colleague at Berkeley, Roberta Park, also an historian of sport and athleticism - the establishment of an entire subfield of historical studies, the formation of an extensive international community, workshops held in different locations to encourage productive activity, publications in journal and book form, all pursued with vigor and strength...

DOMINATION

Through his writings and academic activity, Mangan disseminated the message of the centrality of the worship of the body through competitive games into what it pleased Edward Gibbon in his account of the Roman Empire to call the farthest corners of the earth. Mangan saw that sports would one day dominate public and media attention. He was so right. Indeed, is there anything else to watch on television?

Mangan's pioneering chapter on women versifies of the Great War senses the new world coming into being for women, their greater career opportunities and chances for social recognition admixed with concessions to the warrior formula. The androgynous society emerges. The final sentence of that chapter is especially moving.

A BLEAKER VIEW

The bleaker view of an ethos that once possessed some appeal for Mangan, however qualified, appears in any number of other chapters.

First, he takes strong issue, with the view that religion, even the established religion, even the famed importance of chapel, remained a significant part of the public school agenda. If so, it was pro forma, simple part of the baggage inherited from the past, or it was the business of headmasters but no one else.

Any religious feelings or sentiments were subordinated to what might even to be termed a pagan tandem of worship of the body and preparation for the fight. Stoicism rather than Christianity is the operative reference, but at times it did appear as if the Gospel of Christ was significant, if intertwined, says Mangan, with the Gospel of Games. Edward Bowen, possibly the greatest of all the beaks of the second half of the nineteenth century and the subject of a superb portrait by Mangan, said that the ancient Greeks pursued honour, war and games.

And we need to recall Geoffrey Best's point that the public schools educated the British officer class. That was the formula; and to make certain that readers understand the significance of what he is saying. Mangan unites the formula to the strains of social Darwinism making the rounds before the century turned and even afterwards. Historians have long debated whether social Darwinism was an actual driver of imperial policy or a firm doctrine of survival of the fittest, or merely a casual tune played by various intellectuals, journalists, drumbeaters and publicists. That issue need not be resolved here in order to state Mangan's point that the dominant idealism behind the imperial public school ethos was certainly not Christianity nor altruism as conventionally understood. It was rather service to state and empire.

Harold Laski, in a deft caricature of the English gentleman, observed that British industrial supremacy first ran into problems when a commercial middle class bought into the style and values of landed society. These include 'A refusal to be absorbed by one's business activities: so Saturday afternoon becomes gradually a holiday which extends from Friday until Monday, with golf on weekends, a fortnight at Christmas in Nice, and a conspicuous expenditure which satisfies the craving for social prestige'. A couple of needy aristocrats are put onto the Board of Directors in an effort to 'find a side door into society'. But the last rung of social climbing is reserved for the public school where the son whose father wishes him to shed all traces of a base origin will acquire the 'habits of mind' of the true gentleman...

MANGAN: PROSE STYLE

The Swiss Victorian historian of culture, Jacob Burckhardt, wrote in his marvelous account of the emergence of modern individualism that the form in which history is transmitted to the living cannot be a matter of indifference.

No appreciation of Tony Mangan's astonishing corpus of work and contributions to the making of a subject of the first importance should be permitted to omit the form in which he has transmitted to us his very large vision of sports and games in the making of our world today.

Notice the strength of the prose, the tough and rich sentences, the force of passion expressed with uncommon simplicity and effectiveness and very moving into the bargain...

If ever there was a prose style so completely fitted to the subject - a muscular prose not without sympathy, a strong voice not without unexpected sentiment, a direct message but one that appreciates cultural complexity - here it is for all of us to note and enjoy.

Mangan's work lives on to continue to inspire new and continuing scholarship. On this first day of the second decade of the new millennium, congratulations are absolutely in order.

Extrates from James Anthony Mangan: An Appreciation by Sheldon Rothblatt in J.A.Mangan; Manufactured Masculinity: Making Imperial Manliness, Marality and Militarism, London: Routledge, 2012, 1-8.

THE LATER MANGAN

What of the later Mangan? the fascination with the sporting culture of the schools remains. It is particularly captured in the essays discussing school poetry, often dismissed as shallow and as doggerel. Much of it is, but Mangan asks us to look again and not to view what appears to have been a popular activity as only second rate verse but as substantial emotional expressions of love, affection, of beauty, of a yearning for youth, of a sense of time passing, of being left behind. One of the most extraordinary aspects of Victorian and Edwardian schoolboy culture, and its carryover to the ancient universities, was a remarkable stress on the virtues of being young, or of being young and beautiful before decay set in. Indeed, the public school ethos was dead set against decay, which is why empire was so strong an element of it. It was through imperial dominion that renewal and rebirth occurred. Empire was the quintessential utopian New World waiting to be conquered. Through its extension and through its on-going vitality the public school view of mastery of the self, and through that of others, would be perpetuated. If Mangan asks us to take school verse seriously as an indication of profound attachments and loyalties, but also as active contributors to the making and use of functional symbols, he is nevertheless now entering further into territory that might have been glimpsed in the beginning of his writings - I didn't notice it then but which is now pushing outwards with considerable force. The point takes rise from the notable book by David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning*. First published in 1961, Newsome's book described the transformation of Victorian school culture from the sort of religious earnestness associated with the period to the masculinity and muscularity that came afterwards, what Mangan, in association with a later generation of historians and others, calls social construction or the manufacturing of identity.

THE LATER MANGAN: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

The notion of socially constructed identities, to include gender, is not without its critics. It assumes a certain plasticity to human nature that might indeed have pleased the followers of John Locke but not the Berkeleyans, either idealists or kantians. Social construction downplays the qualities of characteristics that human actors might possess before they are acted upon externally. It overplays the authority of settled institutions, and it more or less overlooks a human capacity to rebel against constituted authority. Mangan is certainly sensitive to all aspects of the argument.

Insofar as it has always been the function of education to shape personality, especially those schools defined as character forming entities, the great schools are as good a candidate for social construction as we might have. *Athleticism* provided us with the specific institutions and costumes, often deliberately designed by reforming headmasters and strong housemasters, used to create identities, promote school loyalty and fulfill the nineteenth-century mandate of schools for political and administrative leadership.

THE LATER MANGAN: A DARKER VISION

What did Karl Marx once say? Man makes himself but he does not make himself exactly as he wishes. Circumstances, contingencies, events, leftover assumptions in various combinations construct selves.

Mangan returns to his original qualification regarding the rhetoric of public school morality in 'Swansong'. He recalls having said that for all the self-delusion of headmasters, for example, or the myopic idealism, there was always an element of sincerity present, or at least, the artificers of schools and empire were not hypocrites. They were not ignoble. This was a key to their success, although there were certainly slips in conduct. The public schools were always 'on message' as Americans are wont to say these days. Their view of the role of education was simple and straight forward. This was the task, this the obligation, this the means: so get on with it and learn to serve a higher cause, patriotism, for example. Mangan does not exhaustively develop the theme of patriotism for us in these chapters, the thoughtful even lofty linking of citizenship to the common political good at times of danger, but he notes its legitimacy, perhaps his last concession to the positive character of the public school ethos. But his vision does grow darker as the First World War approaches the horrors inflicted upon the world since then, horrors screamed in today's headlines, merely confirm his conclusion that the well meaning Victorians, and the Edwardians who came after, were succumbing to an impulse of violence for its own sake. It is always dangerous to use words that seem to apply to wholly other contexts, words such as 'fascism' which is the word Mangan adopts to suggest the dangerous emotional tendencies of the twentieth century. But we are asked to accept it as a broad term and outside the specific political systems purported to be built upon the idea, or, since historians find variants, ideas thereof. A George Sorel might make this more explicit than beaks, but Mangan's final remarks on the issue are not comforting. He talks about the vulnerability of even democratic societies. We live in an age that celebrates warrior strength, comic book heroes, the insults (my word) of street fashion, star wars video games, rock bands and Arnold Schwarzenegger. The 'modern myths of masculinity' are now so pervasive that they affect women as well as men. The instruments of persuasion available to governments and to commercial societies are greater than at any other historical moment.

Jane Austen, I might add, wished for the feminization of the male, the inculcation of the better Enlightenment values of gentility and courtesy.

Modern culture seeks the masculinization of the female, the inculcation of the imperial values of conquest, domination and primacy. As long as battle is romanticized, the aggressive male, and now the aggressive female Mangan says, will be needfully 'constructed'...