

# ESCALATE

## Marching for Whose Alternative?

Escalate, April 2011

We are not storming heaven, but being marched precariously close to the precipice. The Trade Union Congress is not our tool for emancipation – and neither can it be. Why are we being so skilfully pacified by ‘our’ institutions? We should see clearly how Brendan Barber, Ed Miliband and friends have steered us so neatly toward the cliff-edge. We might crash onto the rocks below, and in the waters that roil about them the TUC, transfixed, might capture a glimpse of its own continued social relevance. Such a shattering fall will surely tear us from our fond illusions. We would hope, however, that we can awake of our own accord. It is time to throw aside the TUC’s terrifying rattle of ‘jobs, growth and justice’. It is a rattle which never belonged to us in the first place, nor is it something we actually seek.

What happened on March 26? The official answer is clear: hundreds of thousands of ‘people from all walks of life’ marched for an ‘alternative’. Who in fact were they, and what are their interests? And what material recourse do they have against their managed impoverishment? Among all the cloddish asinities emblazoned in grim edible pinks across a million A6 flyers, not once does the TUC mention *class*. Its current agenda is one of banal inclusivity. It assumes the necessity of this programme (though of course it makes no public argument for it) on the grounds that it must build the largest possible coalition against state-led austerity. The official slogan is “All Together For Public Services”.

The public relations exercise conducted by the TUC and its institutional supporters has been intended to convince us that opposition to the cuts does not entail opposition to the groups who benefit from their implementation. Such opposition is difficult and antagonistic. The TUC urges us to forget it.

The media divides us as ‘trade unionists’ and ‘anarchists’. Some enthusiasts on the left have declared that the ‘political’ task we now face is the active unification of these groups, as if by the passion of our demand for unity we might solder together the broken halves of a mass opposition. But there are not ‘two halves’: the fractions opposed to ‘the cuts’ are more various than that; and they are divided not only by the *form* of their politics, but also by their *content*. ‘Unification’ will be useless so long as it involves the subordination of all political fractions to the ‘middle classes’. At bottom, the pre-eminence of middle-class ‘values’ is the pre-eminence of bourgeois property rights.

### 1. ‘The Demonstrators’

As is well known and lamented, trade union membership has declined in the last three decades. It was at 51% in 1975. At the end of 2006 union membership was 28.4%. Trade unionism hasn’t declined only because the private sector now makes up a larger proportion of the British economy, rather this diminution of membership is common to all sectors. Union culture in the UK is moribund. During the University and College Union strike, workers picketing the doors of university buildings found that their first task was to explain to students what a strike *is*. Repeatedly those students warmly declared their support as they crossed the lines to buy a Caesar salad or use the wireless internet. Even some of the members of the union seemed puzzled to hear that they ought not to be crossing pickets.

Knowing that the lives of its membership will be mutilated by fiscal tightening, the TUC organises in the knowledge of its own social marginality. The bland pastel colours and sugar-paper lettering of its promotional materials are the livid and desperate register of the organisation’s social insignificance. The abstract entities to which its slogans appeal (“everyone”, “all of us”) are a tacit acknowledgement of the real diminution of trade union membership. All those soothing images and grandly empty pronouns are a kind of self-denial: the more the TUC strains to come across as a division of Mothercare, the more plainly it gives voice to the dissipation of traditional bases of working-class power.

The TUC no doubt believes that it must reach out to the middle-classes if it is to direct a strong anti-austerity campaign. But since it isn’t willing to state this expressly, it instead tries to prove that the effects of austerity are ‘universal’. It therefore (like the Labour party before it) avers to the monumentally pernicious equation of a (partly fictitious) middle-class with the populace as a whole. Class is suppressed in favour of a specious universalism. Under the sign of the unification of trade unionists and the ‘middle classes’, the TUC subscribes to a thoroughly *bourgeois* hatred of social disruption. The ‘alternative’ – even at the level of rhetoric – becomes *comfortable* passivity.

Just like its propaganda, the TUC’s announced political programme of ‘universal’ benefit by Keynesian deficit spending is calculated to suppress basic social antagonisms. It does so by synthesising for its audience a vision of ‘jobs, growth and justice’ where ‘we’ all benefit – whether ‘we’ happen to be workers or the capitalists who exploit them. And yet not only does this image of universal harmony through state stimulated growth spirit away the basic antagonism between capital and labour, it also presents the promise of a state-*administered* recovery. All the masses need do is come out on the streets and mindlessly drool the slogans, and our benevolent fathers in the state and the union bureaucracies will do the rest. The TUC’s propaganda is infantilising; but in this respect it is the mirror image of its political programme, which is paternalist. Both are fetters on the development of an autonomous working-class struggle against capital – one which is for itself, not merely a charade.

For anti-cuts groups, effective politics will be won by refusing to agitate for a void called ‘everyone’. That void will ultimately always be substantiated as a middle-class impassioned only by the slumber of stable exploitation and routinised debasement. Where for working-class activists there is the potential for an intensification and victory in an ongoing social war, the bourgeoisie raises its flag to civil stability. The TUC salutes; the extortion of profit continues unchecked.

### 2. ‘The Anarchists’

Among those designated ‘anarchists’ by the bourgeois media (or ‘autonomists’ by the Leninist

left), we can identify three broad groups.

There are middle-class students and recent graduates (many unemployed), from various institutional backgrounds, recently mobilised by the 2010 student demonstrations. This category might be further subdivided to include middle-class students at elite Higher Education institutions, working-class students at ‘post-1992 ex-polytechnics, liberal activist graduates, anarchist organisers, Trotskyist students, and so on. Second, there are school students, again of multifarious class positions, political dispositions and educations; finally there are committed, ideological anarchists, of various persuasions, all or none of whom may be school and university students, and separately employed, wageless, unionised, or otherwise. This is just to say that the categories are complex, imbricated, and in no sense discrete. For this reason, no one should expect all of these groups to assent to a common programme, and least of all that set out by the TUC.

Yet those engaging in black bloc tactics are no more the vital core of the movement than the small entrepreneurs whom the Labour party and the TUC so incompetently seduce. Thus the separation of the TUC’s march from the more radical direct action reproduced the separation of production and consumption in the economy at large. The black bloc runs up Oxford Street smashing windows screaming “pay your taxes”. It thereby expresses the contradictions of a life lived solely in the ghostly realm of consumption. Anarchism became the negation of shopping. Meanwhile, production plodded towards Hyde Park – and was duly placated by the confirmation from senior politicians that its passivity would be rewarded.

### 3. Direct Action

Direct action cannot always prefigure harmony. While we would like to have an activism which creates a positive politics *directly*, more often than not we find ourselves defensively engaged. Even when the palaces of consumerism are temporarily transformed into crèches and health centres (as in the manner of UK Uncut), the ultimate intention is not to force a permanent change of the space. It is to halt the smooth destruction of the welfare state, of pay and working conditions. In other words, direct action can (and often should) be a *means* – not an *end*. To expand: the direct action undertaken by anti-cuts groups is of a different character to their modes of self-organisation. When we organise in those groups we try to prefigure the world we want to see in our forms of co-operation – we have consensus-based meetings, we adopt specific vocabulary, we work to avoid accidental subordination of participants. Our direct action, however, is of a different sort: we don’t want to live in a world of smashed glass and burning barricades, but these are necessary means for political advance. The trashing of Soho is our ‘transitional demand’, not our utopic end-goal.

This is the source of a strategic problem which has to be addressed and made relevant to those engaged in the anti-austerity struggle of which we are ‘all’, it would seem, a part. The problem is this: for too long we have been losing, perhaps to the extent that we have forgotten what it would mean to win.

It wasn’t difficult to sense this on March 26th. Certainly the property destruction was on the whole politically well-targeted: we will never mourn for shattered glass in The Ritz. What is nevertheless clear is that the scale of what faces us will not be overcome by 100 or 100,000 well-intentioned individuals, or by forever pretending that our ultimate objective is a ‘just’ and well-functioning taxation policy. Inspired heroes cannot save us; ‘jobs, growth and justice’ by the abolition of tax loopholes is fatuous. Capital’s supremacy will not be dented by the symbolism of giant-puppets, or the *fetishization* of other struggles’

sites of resistance, whether Petrograd or Tahrir Square.

We talk not only of overcoming austerity, but of overcoming capital altogether. Capital is social and exists on a mass scale: our resistance must be likewise. Our strategies must be for total generalization. This is in no way an argument against radical action: it is an attempt to open a discussion about the exact form it is to take, and to understand the extent to which it can be taken. This means reconfiguring our categories of peace and disruption, and being prepared not to mourn the welfare state, but to physically resist the attempts made to privatise it.

#### 4. Media and Liberalism

Mainstream media or web-based social media, the message is almost always the same: damn the violent, praise the peaceful. In the bourgeois press, blame takes on a domino effect: the reactionaries say that the TUC are a minority; then the TUC say the activists are a minority; then the liberal non-violent protesters say that the black bloc are a minority. Some in the black bloc condemn throwing paint at McDonalds while children were inside. Are these lines in the sand, or tiresomely voluble attempts at self-exculpation from a collective failure?

Meanwhile, everyone from Ed Miliband to UK Uncut name drops the Civil Rights movement as a bastion of perfect protest – despite the history of these movements being a history of armed struggle, in which hundreds of bombings took place in and around government officers, corporations and campuses. The sit-down tactics which supposedly won the fight are raised on a wave of foam to a decorative plinth. The memory of Martin Luther King is sanitised. Malcolm X is politely ignored. The suffragettes and anti-Apartheid struggles are also mentioned as great victories: but all these three movements have an eerie commonality: they all ended in registering the vote for women and black citizens, while underlying structural inequality perdured. Hypnotised by the mantras of New Labour politicians, who would even recall that the anti-Apartheid and Civil Rights movements were about *black* resistance? Or that the Suffragettes fought for *women*? As the movement stands, the tactics of both the TUC and the more militant protesters are less egalitarian, radical, disruptive or violent than any of the historical movements praised.

In the days after a protest, the arguments are worn thin; there is a constant back and forth over definitions of property, violence, thuggery, intimidation and tactics. The story-line is static. But what really lies thin on the ground is strategy. This is because the liberal discourse is not concerned with strategies for change but with spectacles of increase. A hundred thousand mooning op-eds pass for a political culture. True strategies for change are uninterested in contributing to the range of intellectual consumer goods vended from a rack. We all know the correct strategies of resistance: the disruption of the economy either by attack or withdrawal. But these strategies are unsurprisingly not endorsed by the bourgeois media, which, as it smears its blood and soil over its news and comment pages, does more than any other social institution to promote the kind of authoritarian personality upon which *fascism* has historically relied.

Opening the Sunday papers, “ordinary people” were informed that their moment to be heard had been usurped. Whose fault was this? It was due to the actions of a ‘tiny fraction’ of violent protesters. A small group of individuals, many of them already facing charges, are singled out and declared to be culpable for the continued suppression of the exploited majority. Thus spake liberalism, with all the reciprocity of the master baker kneading his dough into the tray.

The TUC, meanwhile, colluded in this narrative, not only blaming the ‘violent minority’ but lamenting the loss of media attention on the demonstration. As if it weren’t enough that those who wished to march were to do so under such meaningless slogans, and that they were obliged to accept the platitudes thrown down at them by politicians so far removed from the twin horrors of wage labour and capitalist unemployment, the greatest insult was yet to come: the TUC’s

admission that 500,000 trade unionists on the streets was merely a media spectacle. On their command, workers perform some perverse waggledance to the buzzing B-flats of a vuvuzela, and genuflect before the queen bee, Brendan Barber. When protest is so instrumentalised, marching becomes servitude.

#### 5. Political Freedom, Rights and Liberalism

The TUC, the media and our political rulers are the retailers of particular conceptions of what political resistance and freedom *are*. The TUC knows it cannot upset too many consumers of the bourgeois media; and the bourgeois media knows exactly how far this march can and should go before it crosses the line of appropriateness for justified grievances. Protest is permitted so long as does not precipitate change. We are allowed our ‘right to protest’ only to the extent that it doesn’t infringe those other, more pressing civil rights: first of which is the right of capital to accumulate.

A snapshot is in order. The rights of people in central London not to have their day disturbed; the rights of shops in Oxford Street to remain open every minute of the yearly 364 day trading cycle, according to the interests of their shareholders; the rights of consumers to continue consuming unhindered; the rights of motorists not to be discomfited on their journey through town; the rights of businesses to keep their glass fronts pristinely intact; and the rights of everyone looking on from the street or their armchair not to be too unnerved or disturbed by what they see. ‘Of course we recognise their right to protest, but...’. The qualification is a catechism. Protest must be limited so that other and more important rights might be preserved.

We are unnerved and disturbed by 364 day trading cycles, perpetual shopping, streams of traffic that go nowhere, and the brightly lit shop façades that line every street. Those smashing the windows know that the social basis is at bottom two things: exploitation in perpetuity, and the construction of the homo consumer whose ‘demand’ does so much to fuel it.

And yet this is the world of truly inalienable rights – here dissenters must be kindly accommodated, but the desire to change that social basis is legally proscribed. The demarcated route from Embankment to Hyde Park can be interpreted as a tantrum zone, where we all safely cry and scream ourselves to exhaustion. If our anguish and sorrow expresses itself too clearly, if we totter away from the designated route – we are all contained. The police know we will calm down; but they wrongly assume we will accept that mummy and daddy may have been right all along.

Increasingly, those in anti-cuts groups are viewing political protest and resistance as a matter of freedom, not rights. Our freedom to protest through the streets cannot be curtailed, and will not be bartered away in meetings at Congress House between the Metropolitan Police and a TUC stewarding operation. We won’t seek permission to protest in the ways we wish to. The rights that curtail our freedom of protest are exactly those we wish to abolish, because they are the natural accompaniment and support to the institutions we protest against.

Others have recently, and encouragingly, demonstrated their consciousness of inherent political freedom. At Town Halls across the country the mark of the institutionalised liberal philosophy that the TUC exhibits has been on show. Councillors, when passing cuts budgets, have set out small seating areas, limited questions, and allotted time for people to appear before them and petition their mercy. Many residents however have recognised this fraudulent view of their freedom and have refused to play along, in the same way that the black bloc did not play along on March 26th.

When, at town halls, people have found their way blocked by nervous-looking officials, or more frequently by the police, there has not been talk of local people’s ‘rights’: there has been action. Doors are banged and council chambers occupied. Whether storming council chambers is effective as a tactic is not the salient point. What is important is that people come collectively to define their entitlements, in direct refutation of the dissuasive invocation of economic rights. On Saturday

thousands of people, who deliberately broke away from the agreed route of the march, became conscious of their own freedom and did exactly the same.

#### 6. Criminality

When the inestimable Commander Bob Broadhurst says of the black bloc and other hoards of malefactors that he “*wouldn’t* call them *protesters*... [because they]... are engaging in *criminal* activities for their own ends” he provides for us a summary definition. Politics is articulated as action that occurs within the parameters defined by a state’s system of jurisprudence. According to Bob Broadhurst and his functional equivalents and media outlets, criminals may only act ‘for their own ends,’ because otherwise we might be forced to accept that criminality is often enough a political reflex to social conditions of extraordinary depravity.

The reality is that direct action has always been criminal. When in the 1960s radical historians re-evaluated the Luddite movement, they had to overturn an enormous weight of reactionary historical dogma. According to that dogma, the Luddites were not ‘doing politics’; they were acting in defence of their next meal. Because in capitalist societies politics is done by very well fed men who obey the laws that have always redounded to their current accounts, the idea that actions performed either illegally or out of desperate need are *political* is imperiously refuted.

Dominant classes will continue to dismiss as ‘crime’ the occupation of their buildings, the expropriation of their goods, and the disruption of the productive relations from which they benefit, and from which dominated classes suffer, until such time as they are overthrown by those who ‘engage in criminal activities for their own ends.’ Then the tables turn and the criminals become romantic rebels, fit to be reverently invoked in the speeches of Ed Miliband. The actions of the black bloc aren’t so different from the criminal acts of the Algerian teenagers who rioted in the Paris *banlieues* in 2005; but that’s because both groups understand that, in the face of capitalist institutions designed to legitimate near universal impoverishment, crime is the only means of redress.

Many of the political acts in which the militant protesters have engaged are simply the renaming of everyday, petty crimes. Tagging becomes political sloganeering, trespass becomes an occupation, vandalism becomes economic disruption. This is why the right-wing press so *easily* brands them as acts of hooligans, yobs and vandals. But we should have no need to legitimise our actions within the state-approved categories of politics or disorder.

Crime so defined will not on its own bring an end to the wage relation, but it is already political, because wherever it is performed, it opens our eyes to the institutional lineaments of capitalism. Close those eyes and the dream of ‘jobs, growth and justice’ continues. If we are forced to choose between associating ourselves with hooligans or politics then, so long as Ed Milliband represents politics, we should firmly choose hooliganism.

#### 7. Policing

As the glass was cracked on Oxford Street, the state stepped in, in a blaze of violent glory, ready to save our national pride, our royal grocers and (our hearts swell with gratitude) our Olympic Clock. With tactics devised in the heat of colonial oppression, the police coerce, bruise, break, lie, taunt and corner. When they cannot, they coax, wheedle and arrest.

But of the 200 odd who were arrested, almost three-quarters were taken for an occupation where no windows were broken, and where little stock was stolen. Why? The strategy of the police is determined principally by the interests of capital. The protesters at Fortnum and Masons required heavy treatment because the economic damage done to that shop was greater than a smashed window (even if it took 100 people instead of one or two). The mass arrest shows that it is not the protest tactic of violence or non-violence that matters to capital, but the contours of economic damage.

The idea that businesses lose out significantly

from a day of lost trade only confirms what we already suspect about the structures of capitalist production: that these glossy shop-fronts do no more than force-feed passers-by with commodities the demand for which is itself manufactured. It is not only the high-end outlets such as Fortnum and Mason that we can do without (the rich can, of course, drive up the road to Harrods to buy their bread.) The fear of proprietors and managers unfortunate enough to be 'in' retail is an unusual one: that if we restrict the sales of their trinkets they are left with a surplus. For the capitalist, a surplus is equivalent to a loss. But what does the consumer (whose sovereignty we are expected to respect) gain through the purchase of that surplus? For all of the complaints against black bloc, no-one has moaned about not being able to buy a phone that Saturday.

The TUC march, meanwhile, did no economic damage — rather, it perhaps contributed to London's economy, with an influx of revellers and day-trippers flooding through the city's supermarkets and bistros. The March for the Alternative was a carnival like any other, ready to be wrung for profit.

#### 8. Where Next?

The 26th fades from view. In its place there looms the Royal Wedding: a new extravaganza for imbeciles, prepped for journalistic cathexis. Those journalists tremble with pleasure at the prospect of 'anarchists' crashing the vows. For militants who detest the creation of wretched, saleable spectacle, dates like this are irrelevant: the task is unification. But for most militants this just means that the grassroots mobilisation continues. *Pace* the bourgeois media, black bloc did not drop out of the

sky and straight through the windows of Topshop; nor did labour militancy end in 1985.

Effective political action against the cuts (rather than against their decorative reduction) is and will be criminal, because at the global level the economic administrators have made their decisions, and will brook no dissent from career-minded state politicians elected on populist platforms. Within the structural constraints of transnational capital, there is no good alternative. Reduction of the structural deficit should be 'spread over a number of years', writes Larry Eliot in his TUC-endorsed pamphlet. This is surely not the political aim of those engaged in struggle against the government. If the anti-cuts movement becomes a supplication before state and union bureaucracies, then its progress will be like extracting communism from a stone.

For those consciously involved in the anti-cuts struggle, rejecting the greyscale 'vision' of the socially concerned bourgeoisie means participating in grassroots organisation and arguing for militant and illegal direct action (though, given the extremely repressive nature of current trade union law, illegality will not equal militancy). This means arguing for strategic blockading, occupations, shut-downs, and tactical destruction of private property. That base-organising trade unionists and local 'service users' are not yet 'ready to hear' all this is an order dressed up as a psychological insight, grunted by patronizing bureaucrats from the pinnacle of their stepladders. The tacit paternalism of their claim is the natural complement to the TUC's argument that the 'correct' and Keynesian alternative to the cuts shall be administered by experts from above, and like that claim, it is fatal for an active

and effective class politics. A better society will only be durably achieved by the creation of a mass class acting for itself, ready to commit to mass direct action, no longer confined to high-street stores on Saturday afternoons but spreading like a fire throughout workplaces and across national borders.

*Alternatively*, we, 'all of us', can capitulate to the charade of opposition conducted by the Labour Party and the TUC, as they plot to oust the 'Con-Dems' as chief executors of capitalist decline.

Escalate is a collective of writers and activists from around the University of London. Brought together through protest, we come from a variety of political backgrounds but write and edit our work collectively. Anonymity frees us from reputation-seeking and ideological dead weight. We have no wish to contain or regulate the diversity of the movement. We are not its 'voice'. Our writing focuses on the current political situation: insofar as it learns from the past, it refuses nostalgia. We aim to provide analysis and critique that can inform the movement both practically and politically.

[escalatecollective.net](http://escalatecollective.net)

# ...The Hindrance of Assembly Notes for a Tralfamadorian 'book'

## Robert (Bobby) Doohihan

### The Responsibility of Acknowledgement: a Disclaimer

The author of this essay is Ian Brotherhood, but he has chosen to adopt an alter-ego called Robert Doohihan (Bobby for short). Ian's first given 'Christian' name is Robert but he has never used it. Ian's father is also called Ian and his first given 'Christian' name is also Robert, but he was called Ian by his siblings and parents to distinguish him from his own father, who was also called Robert.

To be clear — the relevant Registers show that Ian Brotherhood, his father and grandfather were all Christened 'Robert', but only Ian's grandfather used the name, and no-one ever called him 'Robert' — he was referred to by friends and family alike as 'Bobby'.

Bobby Brotherhood may have been an attractive name in the early 20th Century, but by the sixties it sounded like a cabaret act, and by the nineties it was replete with potentially obscene inferences. Ian (this one) once worked in an office where he manned phones and had to spell/explain his name many times daily — he heard dozens of variations on his name, the most offensive of which was 'Dean Rubberglove'.

The experiences of 'Bobby' which follow are, for the most part, mirrored via the memory of Ian Brotherhood. However, Ian cannot comfortably set down the following as 'autobiography' — the stated intention of this project was to write 'a critical essay'. The subject of the essay was to have been another essay called 'The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism', by Jonathan Lethem, published in Harper's, February 2007. After submitting his

proposal, Ian realised that the essay he proposed to criticise was not conventional, and should not therefore, in the interests of fair-play, be conventionally criticised.

While pondering how best to tackle the proposed essay, 'Bobby' became a virtual assistant similar to the animated paper-clip which offers presumptuous advice on some computer software — he worked hard, helping Ian resurrect memories, sifting the real from imagined while aiming to nail associations between seemingly disparate images and reflections.

Ian Brotherhood is a cantankerous middle-aged unemployed father of two with no respect for pedants, sophists, and language-mangling panhandlers. Bobby (Robert) Doohihan is/was, a fairer, saner, more humane and optimistic incarnation of the same man.

So Ian asked Bobby to write this, and supervised him throughout. It is the outline of a Tralfamadorian 'book'. If you haven't encountered Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*<sup>1</sup> then you will not be familiar with Tralfamadore, its occupants, or their concept of 'book'. This quote may, therefore, be useful before proceeding:

"There are no telegrams on Tralfamadore. But you're right: each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message — describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no

moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time." (p.64)

### The Criticism of Motivation: a Russian Doll

Bobby reads Lethem's 'The Ecstasy of Influence' and doesn't know what to make of it. It's been described as 'a brilliant stunt, a high-concept attention-grabber'<sup>2</sup> but is it an essay?

The more Bobby wonders about plagiarism, influences, jokes, disguises, *trompe l'oeil*, trickery, magic, coincidence and synchronicity, the less he understands what 'The Ecstasy of Influence' is really about. Is it satire? A manifesto? A joke? Bobby tries to evaluate what he's learned from reading it. There's a lot of information, well presented, easily assimilable and entertaining, but the more Bobby tries to discern the subject of the piece, the more he finds himself thinking about Lethem — why did he do it? What was the point? Any teacher goes into a class knowing what the aim of the lesson is. What was the aim of Lethem's essay?

Bobby digs out some of the essays he remembers — the ones which affected him, taught him something.

Jonathan Swift's 'A Modest Proposal'<sup>3</sup> was all about the starving Irish eating their own children to help ease the dire poverty which was embarrassing their English cousins. That was hard-core satire. Pretty clear aim, point to make. Not easy to read, and less easy to laugh at, but Swift was in his sixties, the success of *Gulliver's Travels*