

Odds & Ends

“Extraordinary” ... as they say on Radio 3

Christopher Hogwood: Yes, well, at this moment, I'm more of a Haydn enthusiast than a Mozart enthusiast. Haydn, you see, has structure, architecture, *design*. One can analyze it. Whereas, you know, there's something of the self-pitying show-off about Mozart. He does so put himself centre-stage. Hogs the limelight, you might say.

Letters other editors didn't print

(Readers invited to send in their own)

To the *Telegraph*, 8 Aug 2001

As the British working class is so obscenely, and dangerously, racist, why doesn't the Government house people who are seeking asylum in this country in areas in which they would be welcome, Islington, say, or Hampstead?

To the *Telegraph*, 21 Aug 2001

Your leader-writer and your correspondent are both right: we can have too much algebra and grammar (and not enough art and philosophy) or we can have too little. But what's wrong with our schools and universities isn't that they have got the balance wrong between subjects different in kind but equally genuine. It is that they are stuffed full of subjects (and the staff teaching them and the students being taught them) that are fakes. And the more fake education we provide and pay for, the less we seem able—officially at least—to distinguish it from the genuine. The absurdly named “Quality Assurance Agency” is supposed to assure the standards of university teaching but who or what is to assure its own standards? You report it (August 16) as saying of one of Manchester's departments that its final-year work “lacked sufficient academic rigour in terms of theoretical underpinning, critical analysis, and familiarity with current academic research,” which sounds like a judgement that might be worth having—but only if you don't happen to notice that the department in question is “Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism”, one guaranteed to be made fraudulent by the least touch of anything resembling theory, analysis or research. The Quality Assurance Agency merely reproduces and reinforces the fraudulence it ought to expose. Which is to say what, but it is a fraud too? And then there is your newspaper—making itself party to the fraud by reporting the QAA's judgements as if they were a sort of *Which?* guide to washing machines.

To the *Telegraph*, 10 Jul 2002

If Dr David Hope thinks there's any wonder or mystery in Harry Potter the Church can learn from., he's a fool, and unfit to be a parish priest let alone Archbishop of York. He certainly can't read. The Harry Potter prose style takes wonder and mystery out of wizards and magic as surely as the *New English Bible* and so-called *Common Worship* take it out of angels and miracles. The Church has nothing to learn from Harry Potter. It got there before him.

To the *Telegraph*, 11 Sep 2002

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Janet Daley complains about the BBC and *The Guardian* hating the Americans? Where has she been living for the past 35 years? The BBC and the *Guardian* hate the British ... well, the English ... and the Northern Irish ... and the Gibraltarians ... and the Falklanders. What's so special about the Americans, that they shouldn't hate them? I don't hate the Americans but I do wish they'd show a bit more consciousness that, as well as being the victims of one sort of terrorist one day last year, they have been the supporters of another sort, in Northern Ireland, for years on end.

To the *Telegraph*, 5 June 2003

You say, the word "university" will mean anything the government wants it to mean from now on. From now on? Mrs Hodge began the corruption of the university system the day before yesterday, when she renamed seven institutions "universities", which the day before that had been mere vocational "institutes" and "colleges"? You do have a short memory. It was John Major who first thought of this wheeze, when he renamed the polytechnics universities in 1991. (And in the face of what opposition from the *Daily Telegraph*?) And it was also Mr Major, four years later, who had the further bright idea of creating a Department of Education and Employment, as if the purpose of the one was to obtain the other. (Again, in the face of what opposition from the *Telegraph*?) The corrupting of the idea of the university, which has made possible the corruption of the institution, has been going on for thirty years at least. If you would like to know what would count as opposition to it, read *The New Idea of the University* by Ian Robinson and me, which came out a couple of years ago (and was judged to be pretty poor stuff by your education editor).