



Our Culture, What's Left of It: The Mandarins and the Masses

Theodore Dalrymple

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This new collection of essays bears the unmistakable stamp of Theodore Dalrymple's bracingly clear-sighted view of the human condition. In these twenty-six pieces, Dr. Dalrymple ranges over literature and ideas, from Shakespeare to Marx, from the break-down of Islam to the legalization of drugs. The book includes "When Islam Breaks Down," named by David Brooks of the New York Times as the best journal article of 2004.

Informed by years of medical practice in a wide variety of settings, Dr. Dalrymple's acquaintance with the outer limits of human experience allows him to discover the universal in the local and the particular, and makes him impatient with the humbug and obscurantism that have too long marred our social and political discourse.

His essays are incisive yet undogmatic, beautifully composed and devoid of disfiguring jargon. *Our Culture, What's Left of It* is a book that restores our faith in the central importance of literature and criticism to our civilization.

Our Culture, What's Left of It: The Mandarins and the Masses Details

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Emily Sullivan says

One star because I don't agree with Dalrymple's ideology. I thoroughly enjoyed disagreeing with almost all of his conclusions of the causes of our country's social ills and would have given the book 4 stars if I hadn't felt that this might imply that I'm against free education and healthcare and the welfare state. I am against Virginia Woolf (because she wrote boring novels and not because she wanted to make bonfires out of schools) and Lawrence (even though the phrase 'twinkling buttocks' is truly inspired and I hope to use it in general conversation soon) and serial killers and bits of preserved carcass in art galleries rather than paintings of nice things.

Michelle says

The British author, Theodore Dalrymple, is a crank (read: conservative commentator). I picked up this book of essays because he had some interesting pieces in the Wall Street Journal about the recent riots in London. Plus I'll admit, I was intrigued by the cover.

Dalrymple is a retired prison psychiatrist, and this fact alone gives him some first-hand insights that most of us will never experience. He certainly has some stories to tell. And like most commentators, from both sides of the political spectrum, he has strong opinions.

I'd have to divide the essays in this book into 3 general categories:

1. Mildly interesting, but somewhat ridiculous (like the beginning of Britain's moral decline was the publication of D.H. Lawrence's "Lady Chatterly's Lover" in its entirety in Britain in 1960.)
2. Possibly interesting, but difficult to say because he used so many words I was unfamiliar with that I couldn't piece together his meaning. I read this book primarily while camping and didn't bring a dictionary. (I know, I know, yet another reason to get an e-reader). I think of myself as having a good vocabulary and so this bothered me. Maybe I'm just not smart enough for this book.
3. Gems that resonated with me. Actually there weren't many of these, but those few saved the book for me. The one I thought was best was "The Starving Criminal". An essay on malnutrition in Britain today. Fascinating.

Interestingly, my husband, who has the broadest vocabulary of anyone I know, didn't know the meaning of many of the words I queried him on. He read the first half of the first essay, slammed the book shut saying "His argument is specious" Fortunately our 11-year-old asked what "specious" meant before I did. :)

I have never been to Britain, but after reading this book, I would like to go, just to see for myself if Dalrymple's descriptions are even vaguely accurate.

Peter N. says

This is excellent book on two levels. First, he is a good writer. There are so many great lines and paragraphs. He is not easy to read at places due to his high vocabulary. He is smart man who spent his days in the prison hospital and the hospital for low income people. He is smart, but realistic, which makes his writing excellent.

Second, he pulls back and exposes so many of the lies of modern, liberal, sentimental, culture. He does this by using specific situations, such as art exhibit, Princess Diana's death, his time as a doctor in Rhodesia, or a murder trial, to expose the folly modern thinking. He says what so many are afraid to, such as the sentimental outpouring after Diana's death was a lie, multiculturalism is impossible, most modern art is trash, or that Britain shouldn't get upset at 22 year old men raping 12 year old girls, when the whole culture pushes sexual freedom on almost every level. He does this not in anger or bitterness, but in a matter of fact, "this is the way it is" way. He sees clearly the black hole that moral relativism has sunk us into. But he is not into nostalgia, as his last essay on the British Empire shows. While he is not a Christian, his understanding of original sin, a term he uses in several essays, protects him from the Utopian dreams of so many moderns.

The one drawback is that his answers are not complete enough. He realizes that Britain is destroying herself, but he is not clear on how to stem the tide. He is great at diagnosis, but the cure alludes him. Perhaps that is because he does not believe there is a cure.

I highly recommend this book for anyone who wants a better grasp on modern culture and what happens when sentimental ideas about how to help people mature and be better destroy actual people.

My Rating System

1 Star-Terrible book and dangerous. Burn it in the streets.

2 Stars-Really bad book, would not recommend, probably has some dangerous ideas in it or could just be so poorly written/researched that it is not worth reading. Few books I read are 1 or 2 stars because I am careful about what I read.

3 Stars-Either I disagree with it at too many points to recommend it or it is just not a good book on the subject or for the genre. Would not read it again, reference it, or recommend it. But it is not necessarily dangerous except as a time waster.

4 Stars-Solid book on the subject or for the genre. This does not mean I agree with everything in it. I would recommend this book to others and would probably read it again or reference it. Most books fall in this category because I try not to read books I don't think will be good. There is a quite a variety here. 3.6 is pretty far from 4.5.

5 Stars-Excellent book. Classic in the genre or top of the line for the subject. I might also put a book in here that impacted me personally at the time I read it. I would highly recommend this book, even if I do not agree with all that it says. Few books fall in this category. Over time I have put less in this category.

Douglas Wilson says

Fantastic.

Rutger says

Don't hold back, Theodore.

I read Dalrymple's "Life at the bottom" over 10 years ago and enjoyed his grim observations of the British underclass. He really seemed to have a love/hate relationship with the chavs and the destitute in the sense that he both can't stand anything about them, but also can't make himself not care about their misery. This book is very similar, but is much broader and shows Dalrymple is pessimistic about much more than Britain's underclass. I have a personal affinity for reactionaries, because they're contrarian, honest and clear – for the same reason I hate conservatives, usually their ideology boils down to defending leftist ideas of 30 years ago.

The book dwells on Dalrymple's feelings about totalitarianism, contemporary politics, Islam, serial killers, drugs, satire, literature, art, immigrants, chavs, sexual deviancy, etc. On every issue he shares his inner thoughts and misgivings. It's always entertaining to see someone so heartfelt disgusted at things like modern art, drugs and loose sexual mores, and it's very well argued. Then again, how many people really want to live the lifestyle of yesteryear? Very few. And we're not all crazy because of that. Dalrymple tends to conflate all forms of social change into a general sense of degeneracy. This is overblown stuff. For one thing, life is fun. Yes, despite our problems, Western life is much better – more challenging, more stimulating, more entertaining – than it used to be. (Anyway, arguing with conservatives about life not being awful is a useless and thankless task, so I'm not interested in that.)

However, Dalrymple does hold back on some issues. For one thing, he mentions problems with immigrants and immigration, but I never see him talking numbers or unpleasant facts. I don't think you can really complain about the growth of the Western underclasses and not go into the role of mass third world immigration. Similarly, he wants drugs to not be legalized – fair enough – but he should be more honest about the socioeconomic consequences of keeping drugs illegal: huge costs and resources will be allocated to the police and judicial system. Is this a price worth paying? I don't think it necessarily is. And "drugs" is a big concept. Can't we just legalize some drugs like marihuana and XTC while we keep heroin and crack off the streets? It seems to be often an all or nothing thing for Dalrymple.

Anyway, I enjoyed reading this essay bundle, but I'd advice the people who already read his columns or "Life at the bottom" to skip this book, as it doesn't bring you much new material.

Adam Ross says

A profound and literary exploration of our declining modernist culture. Dalrymple has more insights per page than most have per book.

Corey says

A tremendous book. Will be required reading for each of my kids before they leave the house.

(What's that? Of course I don't have kids yet. I'm just planning ahead.)

Nick Imrie says

I disagree with Dalrymple on many things, but he's still my favourite writer to go to when I feel the need to challenge my own assumptions, prejudices and opinions. Is originality really that important in art? Is it always good to be non-judgmental? What is the value of being transgressive? His writing can be lucid and moving, but sometimes suffers from pretentious long-windedness.

His essays on good literature and its benefits are a joy to read. No-one could disagree with 'Sex and the Shakespeare Reader's caution against fundamentalism. Almost every essay in the arts and letters section made me want to read every author he recommended. There were also some hilarious deflations of literature's 'greats'. Virginia Woolf was taken down a peg for being a self-pitying whiner; Marx is a narcissist; D.H. Lawrence is a vulgar bore who can't write. Even if you disagree (and I am generally a Woolf fan) you can't fail to enjoy these precision puncturings.

His opinions on society and politics I find harder to agree with. This is partly because of his infuriating failure to back up his opinions with actual numbers. Dalrymple works, deliberately, among the most impoverished sections of British society and yet he assumes that what he witnesses is indicative of a universal trend. On the rare occasion where numbers are included the source isn't given. And so it's difficult to believe him when he claims that crime and violence of all kinds is rising. Especially as I read this in conjunction with *The Better Angels of Our Nature: A History of Violence and Humanity* in which Pinker provides ample evidence to demonstrate that crime and violence have been in a long decline.

Dalrymple condemns the intelligentsia for dismantling our civilisation, through their post-modern insistence that there is no right or wrong, good or bad, and their subsequent promotion of drugs, profanity and promiscuity. He then goes on to demonstrate the detrimental effects of these things on the working class. But plenty of people can indulge in sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll without becoming utterly depraved. Should we conclude that the middle class are capable of indulgences that the working class cannot handle? Doesn't this lead us to the unfortunate conclusion that there should be one law for the rich and one for the poor? Or should we limit the freedom of everyone because for a few that freedom leads to self-destruction?

Elsewhere I just flat-out disagree with him. 'Thanks to the sexual revolution, current confusions are manifold [...] men become women by surgical means, and women men, while demands for tolerance and understanding grow even more shrill and imperious'. I honestly can't see anything wrong with people changing sex if they want to, or in many cases need to, and describing demands for tolerance as 'shrill' in this instance seems rather petty.

Despite disagreeing with him, I do find Dalrymple thought-provoking. I find myself uncomfortable, but persuaded, when he elegantly demonstrates how a welfare culture makes people dependent and their dependency infantilises them, robbing them of the capacity to ever extricate themselves from the situation. But what is the solution? Should we return to the Victorian era when poor children died of cholera but, hey,

at least they had their dignity? I don't know, I don't think Dalrymple does either, but he does make me think about it.

Lauretta says

This is an astounding book on several levels. I do not have the time to write a complete review right now, however, so will just describe the main points of my reaction to reading this book: First, for someone whose specialty is psychiatry, Dalrymple views the world as black and white (read: past is white, present is ever blackening further). If there is one thing that stands out for most psychotherapists (my training is in this field), it's that the world is comprised of infinite shades of gray. And that there are often multiple truths to any given issue. Then, although the author holds "academics" in high disdain, he commits some of the most dreadful "cherry picking" in presenting his arguments and has a poor (at best) grasp on the meaning and interpretation of data--something I would have imagined he was exposed to, be it ever so fleetingly, in med school. But as he noted in some interview I saw online, he aspired to get through med school studying enough to pass with the minimum grade. It shows.

I don't see the world as black and white and therefore could see some merit in his rantings. The first is that he offers a plausible alternative to the question of what motivates terrorists to act. I found his argument to be cogent, well-reasoned, and plausible. At more Machiavellian moments, I thought that perhaps Dalrymple might be taking such extreme positions on the issues he discussed in this book in order to encourage the reader to think about his or her own position on that issue. In this respect the book has merits.

But if you are interested in Dalrymple, I'd suggest reading the "Themes" section of the Wiki article on him. Takes a lot less time, and the prose is not as convoluted as Dalrymple's is.

Deedles says

Well, there goes the last bit of desire I had to see England or France.

In all seriousness, Theodore Dalrymple has some very insightful knowledge. Though not a Christian himself, Dalrymple (best last name ever) observes humankind's natural propensity toward evil, aka Original Sin. He also shows the destructive aftermath of communism/fascism/totalitarianism in multiple countries he has visited as a doctor. Dalrymple is a man who has seen the underclasses from around the world and has drawn reasoned conclusions about why society is reaching such a entropic level of depravity.

Being a disheartened (ex-) art major, I especially enjoyed Dalrymple's views on modern art. It is no secret that I am not a fan of most of the post-World War II movements, such as abstract expressionism. I have nothing against people who like it or find meaning in it or even do it themselves. But I dislike the shift from narratives and social commentary to a private inner dialogue better suited for an art journal shared between the artist and his or her therapist.

The atom bomb brought a change to warfare that changed the world's collective psyche. Not only did we witness dictators dumping their citizens in mass graves but whole cities can now be completely leveled with one flip of a switch. The horrors of both World Wars were an example of the depths of human hatred and the power in which people can destroy governments, cities, and each other.

Artist sought a childish escapism, claiming that no good or beauty could ever be found again. What fools.

Surely the history of humanity has seen things as horrifying and have still found beauty--even over the trenches or barricades there were still birds singing in a blue sky. The most admirable quality of humankind is our ability to be resilient against the evils we do to one another.

This is why the turn toward destructive and pointless art (literature, artwork, music, etc.) sickens me. Art has always been transcendent because it goes against the human nature to destroy. We, as mere mortals, are creating something that can possibly have a lasting effect long after we have perished. Now we are nothing but amnesiac barbarians destroying our past and claiming the wreckage is enlightenment.

Maximilian Wolf says

Dalrymple (Dr. Anthony Daniels) is a nuanced and elegant writer and an unforgiving cultural observer. He's a doctor in prisons and psychiatric hospitals in the UK, or he was, before his recent retirement to France. His observations of the growing underclass in the UK are deeply disturbing. Well, that's an understatement. While I don't always agree with his solutions to the problems he sees, I certainly am intrigued and informed by his voice. Read it and weep. Illiteracy, fatherless children and single mothers who have no concept of "father" for their children, domestic violence, murder and random violence, and everyone on the "sick" and often addicted to painkillers, heroin or alcohol -- it is a grim story all around. This book will have you wanting the people he sees as patients to get religion, any religion. Really. Even if you dislike religion yourself. And, his essays on literature are insightful as well, although I don't think *_Lady Chatterly's Lover_* was the beginning of the end of western civilization, in any event, he does give one pause, even if one does disagree ultimately with some of his conclusions.

Dierregi says

This was the third Dalrymple book I read, during my "*Dalrymple marathon*" and it definitely has the scariest cover of them all. In fact, I really hate the photo on the cover, as a symbol of everything wrong in contemporary society.

It is quite a thick book of over 300 pages, loosely divide in two parts: ARTS AND LETTERS and SOCIETY AND POLITICS. It can be read in whichever order you prefer. Since I studied art, I followed the given order. Among my favorite chapters are the one about DH Lawrence, titled "*What's wrong with twinkling buttocks?*". The notorious Marilyn Manson is also mentioned and I agree with Dalrymple about the tastelessness of his name and act.

Another interesting chapter is about the "*art*" exhibition called "*Sensation*" which I am very glad I missed and never even heard of. Unfortunately, I am familiar with the concept of contemporary art needing to be "*sordid, filthy, perverted, etc..*" or merely "*provocative*" to attract any attention whatsoever. Unfortunately, an increasingly overstimulated public needs stronger and stronger "*emotions*" to get interested.

The second part is also interesting, especially the chapters about "*All sex, all the time*", the dissolution of Islam and the Parisian peripheries. Without being nostalgic, Dalrymple manages to convey the disappointment for a society that reached a relatively high degree of civilization and then started to crumble. The crumbling process being still under way, it is difficult to foresee the results of the final collapse, but undeniably no more "*progress*" seems to be going on.

Holly Work says

These essays are so pathetically immature it is frustrating. Rather than providing any form of reference, Dalrymple relies on his own bigoted anecdotes to support his arguments. Prejudice and generalisations infect almost every page of his text. His writing comes across as angry and bitter and quite frankly if his content wasn't too stupid to consider it would be in danger of offending many people.

Kelly says

Bravo Mr. Dalrymple, Bravo! A big shout out goes to my friend Steve for recommending this book and introducing me to this brilliant author. He is intelligent, sagacious and courageous...writing about the culture and society we live in. I fear I will have to add him to my list of "Authors I Have Ceased to be Objective About". I also fear I will have nightmares from a couple of the columns in this book.

His perspective is incredibly interesting in regard to societal ills because of his work in British inner-city hospitals and prisons. I look forward to reading more from him...and to exercising my brain reading his cerebral work ;-)

It is going to take me a while to put all the quotes I love from this book into "My Quotes" here on GRs.

bartosz_witkowski says

Our Culture, What's Left of It: The Mandarins and the Masses is the second book I've read by Theodore Dalrymple.

The book is a collection of short essays united by the underlying theme of social critique. The author takes the lens of conservatism and applies it to such disparate topics as analyzing Shakespeare, drug legalization, a comparative essay on Marx and Turgenev, the death of princess Diana, reports of mass murderers. The underlying message of the book seems to be that setting limits - on love, expression and behavior through culture makes us more human not less as seems to be the mode of current intellectual thought.

The book is divided into two parts: Arts and Letters, and Society and Politics. Arts and Letters focuses on culture and art and how the two are intertwined.

In another part of the book the author asserts (and I'm paraphrasing) that "Human understanding hasn't progressed since Shakespeare". Indeed, the author's admiration of Shakespeare is readily apparent in the two essays: Why Shakespeare Is For All Time and Sex and the Shakespeare Reader. In the former, Dalrymple analyzes Macbeth and how the book's message on violence and terror even now - in a society that has lived through Nazism and Communism. The latter essay focuses on Measure for Measure and how human sexuality and morals have regressed since the XVII century.

Some other interesting essays in this part of the book were: The Rage of Virginia Woolf in which the author

criticizes Mrs Woolf and her worldview, so typical of intellectuals of the past and the present; How - and How Not - To Love Mankind which compares Ivan Turgenev along with one of his selected work: Mumu with Karl Marx and The Communist Manifesto. In The Dystopian Imagination, the author goes into the propensity of dystopian writing in XX century English literature, and in Trash, Violence, and Versace: But Is It Art? he writes a scathing critique of modern art, art that he compares to pornography.

Society and Politics focuses on social and political analysis, though oftentimes from a cultural point of view. In How to Read a Society, Dalrymple explores the writing of Marquis de Custine and his La Russie en 1839 and how the book predicted the rise of totalitarianism. By analyzing the fabric of society - customs, architecture and the social hierarchy Marquis de Custine was correctly able to predict the rise of the communist regime along with the horrors that it entailed.

Horror Story and Who Killed Childhood, also contained in this part of the book, are two shocking essays - on the surface about mass murderers/rapists. But the author explores another angle of the mass murder phenomenon - how modern British society that sets no limits on conduct of children and teenagers does them a disservice and makes them an easy prey for deviants.

I wish, that at some point in life, I'll be able to write with such wit and depth as Dalrymple does. His essay on Marx and Turgenev was especially striking to me but his other essays had me reconsider my stances on censorship, drug legalization and taking care of appearances. The author has a knack of presenting even the most gruesome or sombre topics with an entertaining style. With quotes like "He had never known his father, who had not even achieved the status of myth in his mind. His father's existence was more of a logical deduction" one could think that the author is unfeeling, yet feeling and sympathy are at the forefront of his writing. Dalrymple is a great example of the traditional British demeanor - "strict upper lip" combine with self-deprecating humor and sarcasm.

While not as good as Life at the Bottom (though truth be told a rare book is!) Our Culture... is a great, intellectually stimulating book. 4 stars.

Will says

“To a hammer, everything is a nail”

Dr Dalrymple is (or was, he's retired now) a prison psychiatrist and very insightful as to the failings of the dysfunctional crowd he had to contend with. It must be very difficult and disheartening to work with people whose lives are doomed by their inability to change – or rather, as he points out, by refusing to take responsibility for their lives; but I think he mistakes those failed individuals and families for the population at large. The whole of British society simply can't be reduced to the archetypal nihilistic lout who graces the front cover of this book.

To be sure, there are some very perceptive essays - from the mass hysteria over Princess Di's death, bad sex writers (D.H.Lawrence is fingered) to radical Islam, but they are overshadowed by an unrelenting negativity, enhanced by too much attention to people at the fringes of society – there are two on England's most psychotic mass murderers alone, and these give the anthology a decidedly unbalanced feel. In addition, he blames virtually everything on a breakdown in family, beginning around the 60s with, you guessed it, the Pill and working women. The ideal society seems to have existed some time between the Victorian era and the

50s, when everyone was polite, deferential and not too tolerant. In D's world, the decline is all the fault of the Left and the intelligentsia. He never explains how exactly, except that they apparently tolerate dysfunction and multiculturalism more than he does.

Interestingly, while D stresses the importance of meaningful work as an essential part of belonging to society, he never examines the contribution of the Right and the multinationals to the despair of those whose jobs were exported offshore.

In short, while he does make some valid points, in the end this is just another angry but literate rant by an old conservative white guy. Not really sure why I persevered to the end.

Undine says

I never thought I would meet an author who makes me look like a ray of sunshine, but Mr. Dalrymple manages to pull it off. These essays on civilization's decline are elegantly written, incisive, and largely convincing (one needs only see the evening news to realize the world is fracturing badly.) The book, however, has a very narrow scope, and--unsurprisingly for a former prison doctor--focuses largely on the worst elements in our society. It would have benefited from a more encompassing overview.

Still, "Our Culture..." makes fascinating reading, if you're in a particularly morbid humor. It's not the sort of book I'd bring to entertain a hospital patient, though.

Paul Bryant says

Theodore is a difficult case. I like his tough-mindedness and his insistence on describing things as they are, and I enjoy the fact that he's clearly a creature of the right (do these terms right & left still carry any weight anymore?). And I recognise the truth of much of what he says. But there's a but. When he anatomises the deterioration of public and private morality in Britain, he fails consistently to make it clear that he's talking about a specific section of the British people. When he describes the childhoods brutalised, the bacchanalia of the average Saturday night, the junkies and the crims, he's talking about the underclass and part of the working class. As an example, he considers the Soham murders, and details Ian Huntley's very numerous relationships with underage girls. He accuses the parents of these girls either of not caring a stuff about their daughters' welfare or actively colluding. In most cases they were unconcerned if their 15 year old daughter was going out with 28 year old Huntley. So TD's vision of British society is one of depravity - the parents are depraved, and so of course are the kids. And in the public discourse about these events, the parents must never be criticised (that would be judgemental) but the authorities (school, police) must always be criticised. Whilst what he says is true, he does not say that the vast British middle class do not act like this. Their kids are not barfing and mooning and falling down in heaps on the streets every Friday and Saturday night. So TD's visions of hell are true but partial.

Doesn't make his essays any less painful to read, however.

Ryan Young says

set of essays on topics as diverse as Shakespeare's Macbeth and Islam in small town Britain. Always with a right leaning theme that we have glorified antisocial and dependent behavior.

the world dalrymple sees is a group of individuals adversely affected by what he calls the 'liberal intelligentsia' (although he doesn't ever say exactly who they are). It's a world where "novel" is misinterpreted as 'good,' and 'traditions' are always maligned, no matter how important they were to stabilizing society.

his central thesis throughout the essays is that a man is actually more free when he practices self restraint (either by cultural influence or rule of law) than if he pursues each whim with reckless abandon. by removing the harsher consequences of bad decisions, the british government has encouraged the creation of a society that wanders from passion to passion, lust to lust, without ever creating a sustainable life for itself. the author notes that even to question the status quo is to label oneself a rigid and unfeeling tyrant, a situation that is itself a kind of tyranny.

although the book is about britain, and the lines between right and left are somewhat different, you can draw parallels to the US throughout the book. the attempts at multiculturalism in my hometown elementary schools are a great example. a noble and well-intentioned program resulted in nothing more than the further segregation of populations from different backgrounds. what's worse, simply stating the failure of the program is to brand yourself racist or intolerant...when in fact you only seek a more practical (and in the end more beneficial) solution to the problem of multicultural early education.

content was a 5, despite some disagreements i had with the author. i don't believe, for example, that the legalization of marijuana would cause pot dealers to seek other forms of criminality to satisfy their "desire to break the law." but the thesis (noted above) is consistent and easy to agree with.

style is a 2.5, not really well written. imagine my disjointed review magnified to 330 pages.

lärm says

Namedropping Dalrymple has turned out to be one of the more efficient ways of de-friending for me. It's like asking people at a charity ball where they have rented their suit. Nobody likes a killjoy.

Our affluent society ,social welfare and especially the multicultural dream are a mess and Dalrymple is the kind of guy who leaves no opportunity unused to burst the bubble of the progressive elite that everything is brilliant. The problem is that he's not some philosopher (or worst, a sociologist) who looks at the world from the penthouse flat of his ivory tower. No, having worked as a doctor and psychiatrist in prisons and hospitals in the most marginal parts of the world, Dalrymple has worked out his point of view straight from his experiences in the frontline. Contrary to the majority of social scientists/workers and politicians, Dalrymple does not adhere to the deterministic views where criminal behavior is the result of factors beyond the individual's control (exogene factors if you wanna use a posh word). Instead he believes in a core of voluntarism, a free will to conduct in a certain way that cannot be blamed on circumstantial elements like poverty or a bad childhood.

Why do people hate Dalrymple? (especially the self-proclaimed “progressive” elite)

- 1) The man knows what he's talking about. Forget surveys and their dubious claims of validity. Years and years of being a doctor and psychiatrists and having thousands of patients gives a more precise view than any sociologist can offer.
- 2) He thinks perpetrators are NOT victims. Not the system made them commit a crime, they were perfectly aware of what they were doing and what the consequences of their actions might be. There is no outside force that shuts off a sense of morality, no matter how much they, AND social workers, claim there is.
- 3) Social welfare is a business like any other, and businesses don't like losing customers.
- 4) Dalrymple claims a shift of ideas, force fed to us by the so-called elite, has caused moral decay. The ‘anything goes’ mentality makes you look trendy amongst the bourgeoisie but the implications for the more vulnerable people are devastating. The attempts to demolish taboos and traditions have left behind a barren social wasteland.
- 5) Many claim to be erudite, especially those who aren't. Dalrymple makes no claim, but his knowledge on culture is breathtaking. He uses Huxley, Zweig, Toergenjev, T.S. Eliot, Burke and especially Shakespeare to make a point.
- 6) His books can't be written off as simplistic political pamphlets. The man is a gifted writer, with a style that aches way more towards prose than academic language. Often sentences need a second read to fully grasp its content.
- 7) No matter how much you disagree with Dalrymple, simply claiming he's wrong is like claiming the earth is flat : it makes you look like a dick.

“Culture, or what's left of it” is a bundle of essays who can be read in non specific order, covering subjects like the death of Princess Di, the murders committed by Mira Hindley or the lack of proper, healthy food in the poorer parts of the city.

No matter how grim Dalrymple's message is, he tells it with a sense of humor and sometimes he makes you laugh out loud (for example when he calls Elton John a creep with an implanted wig).

While Dalrymple can easily be defined as a conservative thinker, his main message is a call for social decency, modesty and moral maturity. What's wrong with that?

The biggest problem with this book is that it demands some education (or a certain amount of intelligence). Therefore those who need to read this book the most will most likely not be able to.
