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tijdvak 2

Engels

Tekstboekje

MO IBRAHIM PRIZE

Five million US dollars is a lot of money. But will it be enough of an incentive to keep an African head of state on the straight and narrow? The annual prize just announced by Africa's most successful businessman, the mobile phone entrepreneur Mo Ibrahim, will offer a substantial pension to leaders on that continent who provide good government to their subjects – and then leave office when the constitution says they should.

It is certainly a bold initiative. The temptation for leaders in Africa has been to line their pockets in anticipation of the day when the mansions, cars, banquets and fine wines evaporate as they leave power. The theory is that if a departing president knows he is in the running to get \$500,000 a year for the next decade, and \$200,000 annually for the rest of his life, he won't need to nick it from the national treasury. The trouble is that many African politicians have

seized the chance to purloin an awful lot more than that in the past.

But there are other ways to create incentives for political leaders to do the right thing. Perhaps the best is to promote debate among African electorates – and to create systems of public accountability to make that debate well-informed. Mo Ibrahim is doing just that by setting up a rigorous new index to measure good governance in sub-Saharan Africa on a country-by-country basis – and ensuring its independence by having it run by the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Information like that will put real power in the hands of African voters. In the end, that is the only thing that will improve standards of political leadership on that unhappy continent.



Mo Ibrahim

The Washington Post

Washington vanishes

NEW ORLEANS

(1) ALTHOUGH it ended more than a century ago, slavery engendered a deep anger that remains near the surface of American life. In New Orleans, that anger has found an unlikely target: no less than George Washington, the country's first president.

(2) Last month, in keeping with a policy of dropping slave-owners' names from public schools, the city's school board changed the name of George Washington Elementary. The school was renamed after Charles Drew, a pioneering black doctor who urged the army to stop segregating blood by race. No one doubts that Drew deserves the honour. The question is whether Washington deserves the dishonour, just because he owned slaves.

(3) Washington's was the latest in a string of school name-changes, 22 since the policy took hold four years ago. Although their names still appear on statues and streets throughout the city, Confederate leaders such as Robert E. Lee, P.G.T. Beauregard and Jefferson Davis are gone from school walls. Some schools have been renamed after accomplished blacks, others after white civil-rights leaders.

(4) Those changes give the city's young blacks cause for pride, says Carl Galmon, whose civil-rights group fought for the name-changing policy. He points out that the city's public schools are 90.3% black; yet, out of 121 schools, 49 were originally named after slave-owners. He thinks it is "a total insult to have our students receiving diplomas, wearing band uniforms ... singing songs and



honouring people who enslaved our ancestors."

(5) Changing a school's name still takes work: a vote of parents, faculty and students, and approval from the board. But protesters say the Washington case proves the policy is still too knee-jerk, and favours simple politics over complicated history. George Washington has an impressive resumé, after all: victory in the Revolutionary War, the framing of government. Couldn't the board make an exception for the father of the country?

(6) The board should also think a bit about history, says William Gwyn, a retired professor of political science at Tulane University. In the 1790s, Washington was far more enlightened than most slave-owners. He freed his slaves in his will and disapproved of slavery. But he thought he could not destroy the institution without jeopardising the nation. "To judge the man on this one aspect of his life alone, I think, is grossly unfair," Mr Gwyn said.

(7) But Mr Galmon says that, when it comes to slavery, there are no mitigating circumstances. "I've never heard of a good slave-owner," he says. He next wants to purge the names of four mixed-race New Orleanians who owned slaves despite being part-black themselves. Theirs may not be a pretty legacy. But one wonders whether the alternative is much better: a past seen only as black or white.

The Economist

Archives expose Churchill's true thoughts on immigrants

David Ward



Prime Minister Sir Winston and his cabinet colleagues, concerned at the number of “coloured people” moving to Britain, considered introducing immigration controls more than 50 years ago, according to records released yesterday from the National Archives.

In hand-written notebooks, the cabinet secretary, Sir Norman Brook, noted that the then home secretary thought there was a good case for excluding “riff-raff”.

Brook stated that controls were discussed at a cabinet meeting on February 3 1954, six years after the ship the Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury with 492 immigrants from Jamaica.

Churchill commented: “Wd lke also to study possibility of ‘quota’ – [number] not to be exceeded.”

The prime minister began the discussion, saying: “Problems wh. will arise if many coloured people settle here. Are we to saddle ourselves with colour problems in UK? Attracted by Welfare State. Public opinion in UK won’t tolerate it once it gets beyond certain limits.”

Florence Horsbrugh, the minister of education, added that the problem was becoming “serious” in Manchester. David Maxwell-Fyfe, the home secretary, reported that the total of “coloured people” in Britain had risen from 7,000 before the second world war to 40,000 at the time of writing, with 3,666 of those unemployed, and 1,870 on national assistance, or benefits.

He referred to those “living on immoral earnings”. Of 62 people convicted the previous year in the Metropolitan police area, 24 were “coloured”. He added: “All adminve. measures to discourage have bn. taken. Only further step wd. be immigrn. control. Wd have to admit in Parlt. tht. purpose of legislation was to control admission of coloured. There is a case on merits for excludg. riff-raff. But politically it wd. be represented & discussed on basis of a colour limitation. That wd. offend the floating vote viz., the old Liberals. We shd. be reversing age-long tradn. tht. B. [subjects] have right of entry to mother-country of Empire. We shd. offend Liberals, also sentimentalists.”

But fearing public feeling, he said the risk of introducing controls should not be taken “today”. He warned: “The col. popns. are resented in Lpl., Paddington & other areas. By those who come into contact with them. But those who don’t are apt to take Liberal view.

Another cabinet member referred to an “increasing evil” and said that principles “laid down 200 yrs. ago are not applicable to-day. See dangers of colour discriminn. But other [Dominions] control entry of B. subjects. Cd. we present action as coming into line ... & securing uniformity?”

Churchill said the question was whether it might be wise “to allow public feeling to develop a little more – before takg. action... May be wise to wait... But it wd. be fatal to let it develop too far.”

The Guardian

Tekst 4

De volgende tekst is het begin van hoofdstuk 1 uit de roman The Mission Song, van John le Carré.

My name is Bruno Salvador. My friends call me Salvo, so do my enemies. Contrary to what anybody may tell you, I am a citizen in good standing of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, and by profession a top interpreter of Swahili and the lesser-known but widely spoken languages of the Eastern Congo, formerly under Belgian rule, hence my mastery of French, a further arrow in my professional quiver. I am a familiar face around the London law courts both civil and criminal, and in regular demand at conferences on Third World matters, see my glowing references from many of our nation's finest corporate names. Due to my special skills I have also been called upon to do my patriotic duty on a confidential basis by a government department whose existence is routinely denied. I have never been in trouble, I pay my taxes regularly, have a healthy credit rating and am the owner of a well-conducted bank account. Those are cast-iron facts that no amount of bureaucratic manipulation can alter, however hard they try.

In six years of honest labour in the world of commerce I have applied my services - be it by way of cautiously phrased conference calls or discreet meetings in neutral cities on the European continent - to the creative adjustment of oil, gold, diamond, mineral and other commodity prices, not to mention the diversion of many millions of dollars from the prying eyes of the world's shareholders into slush funds as far removed as Panama, Budapest and Singapore. Ask me whether, in facilitating these transactions, I felt obliged to consult my conscience and you will receive the emphatic answer, 'No.' The code of your top interpreter is sacrosanct. He is not hired to indulge his scruples. He is pledged to his employer in the same manner as a soldier is pledged to the flag. In deference to the world's unfortunates, however, it is also my practice to make myself available on a pro bono basis to London hospitals, prisons and the immigration authorities despite the fact that the remuneration in such cases is peanuts.

I am on the voters' list at number 17, Norfolk Mansions, Prince of Wales Drive, Battersea, South London, a desirable freehold property of which I am the minority co-owner together with my legal wife Penelope - never call her Penny - an upper-echelon Oxbridge journalist four years my senior and, at the age of thirty-two, a rising star in the firmament of a mass-market British tabloid capable of swaying millions. Penelope's father is the senior partner of a blue-chip City law firm and her mother a major force in her local Conservative Party. We married five years ago on the strength of a mutual physical attraction, plus the understanding that she would get pregnant as soon as her career permitted, owing to my desire to create a stable nuclear family complete with mother along conventional British lines. The convenient moment has not, however, presented itself, due to her rapid rise within the paper and other factors.

Our union was not in all regards orthodox. Penelope was the elder daughter of an all-white Surrey family in high professional standing, while Bruno Salvador, alias Salvo, was the natural son of a bog Irish Roman Catholic missionary and a Congolese village woman whose name has vanished for ever in the ravages of war and time. I was born, to be precise, behind the locked doors of a Carmelite convent in the town of Kisangani, or Stanleyville as was, being delivered by nuns who had vowed to keep their mouths shut, which to anybody but me sounds funny, surreal or plain invented. But to me it's a

biological reality, as it would be for you if at the age of ten you had sat at your saintly father's bedside in a Mission house in the lush green highlands of South Kivu in the Eastern Congo, listening to him sobbing his heart out half in Norman French and half in Ulsterman's English, with the equatorial rain pounding like elephant feet on the green tin roof and the tears pouring down his fever-hollowed cheeks so fast you'd think the whole of Nature had come indoors to join the fun. Ask a Westerner where Kivu is, he will shake his head in ignorance and smile. Ask an African and he will tell you, 'Paradise,' for such it is: a Central African land of misted lakes and volcanic mountains, emerald pastureland, luscious fruit groves and similar.

In his seventieth and last year of life my father's principal worry was whether he had enslaved more souls than he had liberated. The Vatican's African missionaries, according to him, were caught in a perpetual cleft stick between what they owed to life and what they owed to Rome, and I was part of what he owed to life, however much his spiritual Brothers might resent me. We buried him in the Swahili language, which was what he'd asked for, but when it fell to me to read 'The Lord is my Shepherd' at his graveside, I gave him my very own rendering in Shi, his favourite among all the languages of the Eastern Congo for its vigour and flexibility.

Illegitimate sons-in-law of mixed race do not merge naturally into the social fabric of wealthy Surrey, and Penelope's parents were no exception to this time-honoured truism. In a favourable light, I used to tell myself when I was growing up, I look more suntanned Irish than mid-brown Afro, plus my hair is straight not crinkly, which goes a long way if you're assimilating. But that never fooled Penelope's mother or her fellow wives at the golf club, her worst nightmare being that her daughter would produce an all-black grandchild on her watch, which may have accounted for Penelope's reluctance to put matters to the test, although in retrospect I am not totally convinced of this, part of her motive in marrying me being to shock her mother and upstage her younger sister.

Faith is the greatest analgesic

Placebo: The Belief Effect

by Dylan Evans

Reviewed by Phil Whitaker

1 Dylan Evans begins his account of the placebo effect with the observations of a US anaesthetist named Beecher during the later stages of the second world war. With morphine supplies exhausted and battle casualties still being brought in, Beecher found, to his astonishment, that injections of salt water were effective at relieving a severe pain. His findings 9 people's perception of placebos and, more fundamentally, the prevailing understanding of the workings of the human body.

2 Placebos have a long tradition in medicine: pills made of sugar; tonics containing nothing more medicinal than a dash of alcohol. Treatments in short that should not work. Doctors prescribed them when they wanted to appear to be doing something. The intention was sometimes honourable, but often the motive was more to do with invigorating the practitioner's income than pepping up the patient. Until Beecher, though, no one seriously thought that placebos might actually affect physical disease.

3 From a current-day perspective Beecher's results are readily explained. Pain is now understood as a subjective phenomenon. Peripheral nerves conduct information about bodily injury, but translation by the brain into the perception of pain depends on many other factors. The wounded

servicemen's belief that they had been given morphine, coupled with their expectation that it would alleviate pain, proved sufficient to do just that.

4 Evans discusses studies that show placebo treatments to be capable of diminishing objective manifestations of inflammation such as swelling and muscle spasm, as well as regulating measurable immunological activity. Other studies have defined characteristics of placebos. For there to be a response patients must believe the therapy will be effective; and the placebo must be administered by another person, preferably someone perceived as a healer. Elucidation of the biological pathways that mediate the placebo response offers tantalising glimpses of intricate chemical conversations going on between the brain and the rest of the body.

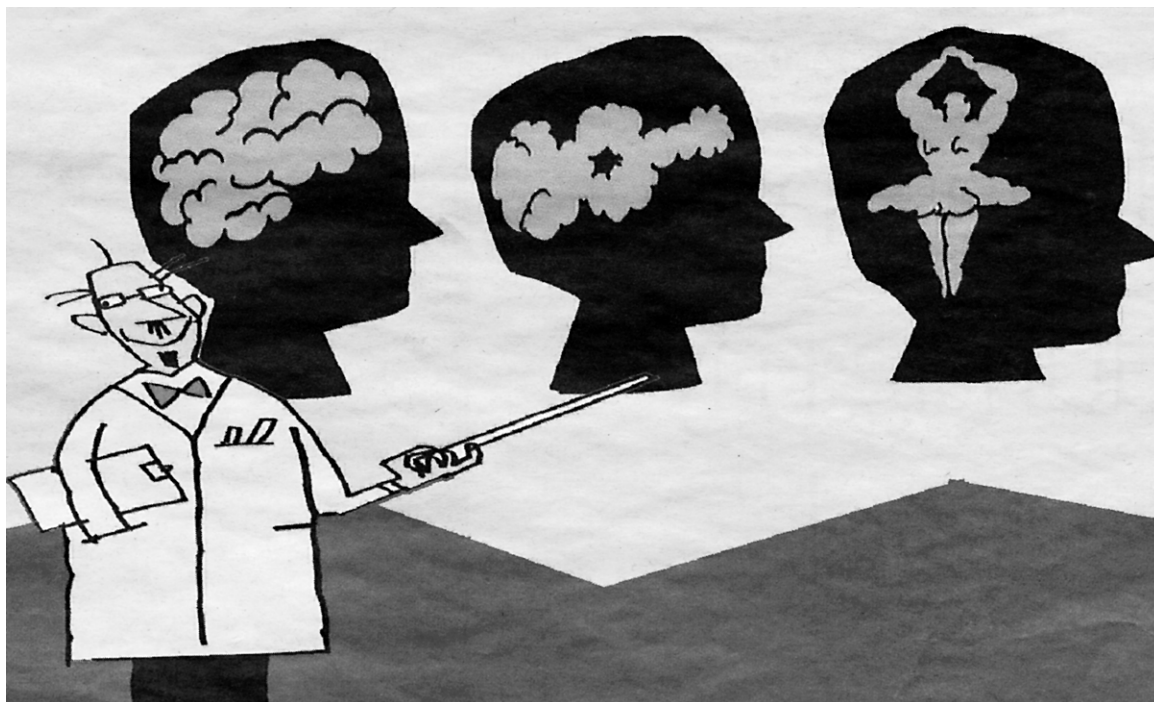
5 The picture that emerges raises many questions, not least why we should be equipped to respond to the ministrations of others in this way. Has this capacity evolved as a result of our propensity to care for others in our social group? In probing these wider issues Evans is discomfited by the lack of hard evidence, and the putative answers he advances are awkwardly argued and somewhat limited in scope. Evans is a disciple of the scientific world view. The idea of the placebo response as a stimulus for successful social organisation is not considered, and readers with a theological perspective will divine alternative meanings in the evidence he presents.

6 The most striking aspect of this fascinating if blinkered book is the fact that the placebo response can be

evoked by any treatment, whether biologically explicable or not. The effectiveness of some surgical operations and many pharmaceutical preparations will be enhanced if the recipient believes in them and in the

healing abilities of their doctor. As Evans gracefully acknowledges, it is orthodox practitioners who have most to learn from the intriguing findings he presents.

Guardian Weekly



Multiple intelligence? It's a flaky theory

John White

- 1 'How many of your intelligences have you used today?' This notice at the entrance to an Australian school refers to Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence (MI) theory, which is big in school improvement in Britain and across the world. Gardner claims that there are eight or more intelligences – not just one – including musical, spatial and bodily-kinaesthetic as well as the linguistic and mathematical sorts found in intelligence tests. There is only one problem: the intelligences have no substance.
- 2 This is not just of academic interest. Across the world, pupils are being taught that they are by nature bodily or spatially or interpersonally intelligent. They are becoming

imprisoned in mythical self-perceptions which may well limit their ideas about what they are capable of learning. Granted, MI is a godsend to teachers dealing with children weak on the basics and hampered by thoughts of themselves as “thick”.

- 3 There is an excellent example of this in Channel 4's recent series *The Unteachables*. Teacher of the Year Phil Beadle, faced with a group of disruptive and low-attaining 13-year-olds, managed to get them sitting down long enough to tick their way through an inventory of their various abilities. The verdict was, as he told them, that most were strong in bodily and musical intelligence. He tailored his pedagogy accordingly, teaching punctuation karate-fashion and the concept of the

adjective via lyrics sung to the guitar.

4 It was a riveting piece of teaching, but does the theory behind it hold water? Human beings are intelligent creatures in all sorts of ways, and Gardner is right that there is no reason to privilege abstract areas like language, logic and mathematics. Intelligent behaviour is about flexibility in the ways one reaches one's goals and there are as many types of intelligence as there are types of goal. Whether we take boxing, biology, or bringing up children, each activity brings its own kind of practical judgment.

5 Gardner has corralled this variety into eight categories, not by painstakingly examining how people behave, but through his own value judgments about what intellectual competences are important. He is looking for "a reasonably complete gamut of the kinds of abilities valued by human cultures" – and the multiple intelligences are what fit the bill. As he admits, he might well have decided not to call them "intelligences" at all, but "forms of knowledge". This is not psychology at all.

6 The further one looks into the theory, the more unsubstantiated it appears. There are eight criteria by which an intelligence is identified, but no reason is given for selecting them. Gardner stirs into his own flaky theory another 18 one about symbols, taken from aesthetics. He also holds that each intelligence unfolds from birth to maturity on the pattern of biological development in plants and animal bodies.

7 This is assumed, not argued, and it is also false. As they grow up, children usually become better at understanding other people, but this is

not because some seed of interpersonal intelligence has been genetically implanted in their brains and gradually develops to its full potential. It is because of what they learn through experience, from those around them and the writers they may read.

8 Back to Phil Beadle and the thousands of other British teachers sold on MI. Why do they think it true? Do they go along with it because so much of today's teaching world says it delivers the goods? Because it emanates from a Harvard professor who must have done the proper research?

9 We don't know. What we do know is that for many of them it is a lifeline. They use it to change pupils' beliefs about themselves, to coax them to learn in non-traditional ways. Does it matter, then, if MI theory leaks like a sieve as long as it works in practice? In other words, does truth matter?

10 It should do, to teachers of all people. That aside, is it really the case that MI yields results? Zaak and Grace and the other young "unteachables" may now think of themselves not as thick but as bodily or musically intelligent. That is the sort of person they are. They are made that way, so how could they be expected to be anything else? The danger of this kind of thinking should be obvious – especially to teachers sceptical about the traditional idea of intelligence and its assumptions about mental limitations. MI shares with this idea its determinist orientation, its belief that nature calls most of the shots. In its pluralistic way, it is as constraining as IQ.

The writer is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Education

The Independent

Why Hemingway Is Chick-Lit

By Lakshmi Chaudhry

“When women stop reading, the novel will be dead,” declared Ian McEwan in *The Guardian* last year. The British novelist reached this rather dire conclusion after venturing into a nearby park in an attempt to give away free novels. The result?

Only one “sensitive male soul” took up his offer, while every woman he approached was “eager and grateful” to do the same.

Unscientific as McEwan’s experiment may be, its 23 is borne out by a number of surveys conducted in Britain, the United States and Canada, where men account for a paltry 20 percent of the market for fiction. Unlike the gods of the literary establishment who remain predominantly male – both as writers and critics – their humble readers are overwhelmingly female.

In recent years, various pundits have used this so-called “fiction gap” as an opportunity to trot out their pet theories on what makes men and women tick. The most recent is *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, author of *Bobos in Paradise*, who jumped at the chance to peddle his special brand of gender essentialism. His June 11 column arbitrarily divided all books into neat categories – “In the men’s sections of the bookstore, there are books describing masterly men conquering evil. In the women’s sections there are novels about ... well, I guess feelings and stuff.” His sweeping assertion 24 publishing industry research, which shows that if “chick-lit” were defined as what women read, the term would have to include most novels, including those considered macho territory.

Brooks’ real agenda, however, is not to deride women’s fiction, but to 25 the latest conservative talking point: blaming politically correct liberals for a “feminized” school curriculum that turns young boys “into high school and college dropouts who hate reading.” According to Brooks, we have burdened little boys with “new-wave” novels about “introspectively morose young women,” when they would be better served by suitably masculine writers like Ernest Hemingway. “It could be, in short, that biological factors influence reading tastes, even after accounting for culture,” Brooks claims. “The problem is that even after the recent flurry of attention about why boys are falling behind, there is still intense social pressure 26 biological differences between boys and girls (ask Larry Summers, who was denounced for bringing them up).”

It takes a bizarre leap of logic to connect current school curricula to the reading habits of adult men. Moreover, there is no indication that men “hate reading” – women just read more fiction. Men out-read women by at least ten percentage points when it comes to non-fiction books – surely good news for the bestselling author of *Bobos in Paradise*.

27, conservatives like Brooks are not the only talking-heads to resort to biological determinism in explaining the “fiction gap.” Psychologist Dorothy Rowe told *The Observer* that women like fiction because they have richer and more complex imaginations. “Women have always had to try to understand what 28 because women have always had to negotiate their way through the family,” she said. “They have always had to get their power by having a pretty good idea of what’s going on inside a person and using that knowledge to get him or her to do things.” Quite apart from the

unintended implication that feminism is likely to fulfill McEwan's worst fears – i.e., kill the novel – such arguments reproduce the worst kind of gender stereotypes: Women as sensitive, emotionally intelligent creatures; men as unreflective dolts.

Cognitive literary critic Lisa Zunshine, whose multidisciplinary field integrates the insights offered by cognitive science to better understand fiction, offers 29 hypothesis. Her book, *Why We Read Fiction*, argues that fiction as a literary form offers us pleasure because it engages our ability to mind-read, “a term used by cognitive psychologists, interchangeably with ‘Theory of Mind’, to describe our ability to explain people’s behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires.” Fiction, therefore, “lets us try on different mental states.”

Women are more likely than men to enjoy reading fiction, period (as opposed to just reading about “feelings and stuff”), because “they generally want more input for their Theory-of-Mind adaptations,” says Zunshine. “They want to experience other ‘minds in action’ – which is another way of defining ‘empathy’ – much more than men do.”

Zunshine underscores the fact that such cognitive research is based on “average statistical scores,” and offers no guidance as to what individual men or women may read. 30, the biological difference between male and female Theory-of-Mind is small, and likely only accounts for a “somewhat greater” predilection for fiction among women.

But in a culture infused with polarizing messages about gender, such small differences can be magnified into vast disparities. If reading novels today is considered more “girly” – because of female-dominated book clubs or a publishing industry increasingly geared toward its most loyal customers, i.e., women – then men are 31.

Desperate efforts to “macho” up the novel include Penguin’s “Good Booking” campaign, which sent out – who else? – beautiful models to award prizes of £1,000 each month to any British man under 25 caught in *flagrante* with one of its testosterone-friendly titles. The advertising tag line? “What women really want is a man with a Penguin.”

Apart from sex with beautiful models, men are also socialized to seek out activities that 32 – which, these days, sadly doesn’t include reading novels. According to novelist Walter Kirn, “If novelists have become culturally invisible – at least to today’s men – it’s partly because the life of a novelist offers few rewards to the traditional male ego. It’s not about power, glory and money,” unlike the adulation our culture reserves for rap stars, athletes and movie actors.

Don’t look now, but we may be headed back to the 19th century, when the novel was considered a low-status, frivolous, pastime of ladies of leisure, unfit for real men.

It’s a good thing, then, that the great male novelists can still rely on us girls to finance their literary careers.

www.inthesetimes.com

Vegetarianism

A History

by Colin Spencer

Reviewed by Ellen Ruppel Shell

- 1 The British radiologist and irrepressible wit Sir Robert Hutchison once famously remarked that “vegetarianism is harmless enough, although it is apt to fill a man with wind and self-righteousness”. In *Vegetarianism: A History*, British novelist and cookbook author Colin Spencer seems hellbent on making Hutchison’s case.
- 2 Spencer begins auspiciously in a chapter entitled “In the Beginning,” reminding us that Adam and Eve were herbivores, and then posing a big question: “What is food?” He addresses this puzzle in a lengthy discourse on evolution, stretching back millions of years to the early Miocene, during which hominoids subsisted on roots, berries and grubs, through the birth of omnivorous humans roughly 100,000 years ago, whose penchant for raw meat he disputes, to the domestication of plants and animals 10,000 years ago. Along the way, he delivers insights on the mating habits of whales, the nutrient content of sea water, the relative penis size of primates, and assorted other arcana of such mind-boggling specificity that one marvels at the dexterity of the author’s web search engine.
- 3 Spencer traces many of our contemporary qualms over meat-eating – environmental, medical, ethical – back some 25 centuries, to Pythagoras, the Greek theoretician and philosopher best remembered for his theorem on right triangles. Pythagoras regarded the soul, as he did numbers, as an abstract concept that was not tied to any particular material entity. He naturally advised against meat-eating, for, as Spencer writes, “To kill and eat any living creatures, whether they be bird, reptile or fish, was to murder one’s cousins and eat their flesh.” The followers of Pythagoras, the Pythagoreans, abstained from eating not only meat, but also most other foods: One Pythagorean equated eating beans with “eating the heads of one’s parents.” Spencer applauds this asceticism, as he does that of a long list of other vegetarian heretical sects, the Stoics, the Essenes and what appears to be his personal favorite, the Manicheans.
- 4 The Manicheans surfaced in the second century in Persian Babylonia (modern-day Iraq) and over the next several centuries spread widely through northern Africa, India and China. They believed that the world was sharply divided between good and evil, light and darkness; all matter was at its heart dark, but plants contained illuminating “light particles” and were therefore okay to eat, while flesh 36 and was therefore taboo. Manicheans were discouraged from having sex, so as not to create more flesh, and were forbidden to drink wine or to plant or pluck vegetation.
- 5 This did not prevent the Manichean elite from enslaving less “enlightened” souls to till their soil and harvest their produce, a practice that could hardly have endeared them to the local peasantry. They were also rumored to gorge on sweets and mead, and to take a rather damning view of human life other than their own. All this, rather than their refusal to eat meat, may have caused the Manicheans to be reviled in some quarters. But Spencer

does not belabor this possibility, for his book is essentially an extended argument that portrays vegetarians through the ages as a persecuted minority driven to the fringe or, in some cases, extinction, chiefly by their saintly refusal to eat animals.

6 Spencer reminds us that the Cartesian view of animals as soulless machines led to some horrifying practices. Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, did experiments with his wife's dog that we would find disgusting. Butchers of the period whipped calves and pigs to death to tenderize the flesh, and bled turkeys and other birds to death by hanging them upside down with a small incision in the vein of their mouth. What we think of as modern factory farming flourished in Elizabethan times, with pigs confined to cells so tiny they could not move, and poultry piled in great heaps in their cages.

7 That Elizabethans not infrequently treated humans with similar unkindness is perhaps beside the

point, for this is a book about the struggle to come to grips with our palates, not our humanity. Still, one can't help but question Spencer's priorities – and to wonder by the end of this long and weighty book whether he might not be nearly as obsessive as some of the vegetarian sects he so sympathetically portrays. The final section is a no-holds-barred rant, riddled with errors and misconceptions. He makes the ominous and entirely false charge that “no research has ever been conducted on the effect of BST milk on humans”. He cites as if it were made yesterday a 14-year-old prediction that “a large segment of the UK population may be at considerable risk” of Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease from eating infected meat.

8 Spencer is a lively writer. But in this idiosyncratic history his senses of humor, proportion and ultimately, reality, appear to have been betrayed by a furious sense of purpose.

The Washington Post

Tekst 9

Why castrati were pop stars of their time

The special quality of the castrato voice

By Louise Jury
Arts Correspondent

Many were great artists, some were great lovers, and scandal seemed to follow them everywhere when they were at the peak of their fame. But the very thought of the operatic castrati today is enough to make a grown man wince.

A new exhibition, however, is hoping to overcome the public's squeamishness on the subject by telling the stories of the band of castrati singers who worked for the composer George Frideric Handel.

It will show that for all the pain caused in the 17th and 18th centuries, when up to 4,000 boys a year were castrated in the service of art, the rewards could be immense. They earned fortunes far in excess of what Handel himself earned and more than other singers of the time. One castrato, Caffarelli, a notoriously difficult man to work with, accumulated sufficient wealth to buy himself an Italian dukedom on retirement.



Alessandro Moreschi (top), was the last known castrato, whose emotional impact has been likened to pop singers such as Chris Martin of Coldplay (bottom)

They were like the pop stars of today, according to Sarah Bardwell, director of the Handel House Museum in London, which is mounting the show next March. "The best castrati were superstars, admired by audiences, appreciated by composers and adored by female fans," she said. "Their voices had a tremendous emotional impact on the audiences of the day. In some ways, pop singers like Chris Martin of Coldplay or Tom Chaplin of Keane are the castrati of today. They, too, have legions of fans and can use the highest register of their voices to deliver songs that go straight to the heart."

So famous were the castrati of Handel's time that while there were some cartoons which mocked them, many more engravings, paintings and accounts of their performances survive as testimony to their hero status.

The legendary Italian lover Casanova famously fell in love with a castrato, although the object of his attentions actually proved to be a woman in disguise.

The seven who worked regularly for Handel were Senesino, Nicolini, Bernacchi, Carestini, Caffarelli, Conti and Guadagni.

Guilio Cesare, which is being performed at Glyndebourne, was written for Senesino, whose likeness was captured in an oil painting which will be on show at the exhibition.

The original scores of pieces they sang will be among the items at the museum in Mayfair, alongside surgical

instruments used to perform the castrations.

Nicholas Clapton, the show's curator and author of a biography of the last known castrato, Alessandro Moreschi, said castration usually took place when boys were placed in a warm bath and drugged with drink and opium.

Performed before puberty, it prevented a boy's larynx from being fully transformed by the normal physiological

effects of puberty. As a consequence, the boys retained the vocal range of pre-pubescence and developed into adulthood in a unique way.

The result was a quality of voice unknown today when the parts are normally sung by women or by countertenors. Clues to the castrati sound survive in a single recording, dating from 1902, of Moreschi, which visitors will be able to listen to during the exhibition.

The Independent