

**The Union of History, Politics And Poetry In Tom Paulin's
Volume (The Invasion Handbook)**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show how Paulin weaves historical events and political treaties and occurrences in a poetic fabric. It also seeks to trace the origins of the Second World War and how the poet articulates his message and material. Finally, it presents the main features of Paulin's style and technique in this challenging volume.

Tom Paulin stresses the necessity of living in history, recording the events leading up to the Second World War, at a time when they are disappearing from living memory. He probes into the causes of the Second War, deciphering the personal, political or intellectual flaws that led western leaders to create the conditions for Nazism and Fascism. The flagrant corruption of Europe's leaders is contrasted with the pain and heroism of ordinary soldiers and civilians caught up in the war. Paulin's main theme could be the inevitability of establishing balanced relationships between nations. He sees the Locarno peace treaty as "two pails of water / balanced ...on a plank". The poet who writes about historical events must beware of altering too much, as things can have a different significance in the future. Paulin is longing for a future characterized by peace, justice and balance. He is frustrated with history because evil and aggressive attitudes still govern the world. He is a partisan poet, sympathizing with the poor, the republicans, and the socialists. He is also concerned with the connection between momentous historical events and flawed, mortal individuals.

إتحاد التاريخ والسياسة والشعر فى مجلد توم بولن "دليل الغزو"

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ملخص

يهدف هذا البحث لإظهار كيف أن بولن ينسج الأحداث التاريخية والمعاهدات السياسية فى نسيج شعرى. كما يسعى إلى تتبع أصول الحرب العالمية الثانية وكيف يبرز الشاعر رسالته ومادته. أخيراً، يقدم البحث السمات الرئيسية لإسلوب وتقنية بولن فى هذا المجلد الذى يتطلب براعة فى فهمه. يشدد بولن على ضرورة العيش فى التاريخ، مسجلاً الأحداث التى أدت إلى الحرب العالمية الثانية، فى وقت بدأت تتلاشى فيه من الذاكرة. فهو يسبر غور أسباب تلك الحرب، ويفك شفرات التصدعات الفكرية والسياسية والشخصية التى أدت بالقادة الغربيين أن يخلقوا الظروف المواتية لظهور النازية والفاشية. إن رسالة بولن الرئيسية، فى مجلده الشعرى، هى حتمية إنشاء علاقات متوازنة بين الدول. إن بولن تواق إلى مستقبل يتسم بالسلام، والعدل، والتوازن، فهو محبط من التاريخ لأن التوجهات العدوانية والشريرة لازالت تحكم العالم. إنه نصير للفقراء، كما إنه منشغل بالربط بين الأحداث التاريخية الهامة والافراد المتصدعين العرضة للموت.

Tom Paulin (January 25, 1949) was born in Leeds, but grew up in Belfast. Educated at Hull University and Lincoln College, Oxford he went on to establish a distinguished academic career holding posts at the University of Nottingham, the University of Virginia and the University of Reading. He is now GM Young Lecturer in English at Hertford College, Oxford. A fiercely independent voice in British poetry, Paulin is frequently acclaimed for the rich quality of his poetic language. He is also well-known for his fierce political views, which stem directly from the disastrous political situation in Northern Ireland. His collections of poetry include *A State of Justice* – winner of a Somerset Maugham Award in 1977; *The Stranger Museum*, which won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize in 1980 and *The Wind Dog* in 1999, shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot prize. In 2002 he published *The Invasion Handbook*, the first volume of a projected epic about the Second World War. In 2004, he published his new collection, *The Road to Inver, Versions and Imitations 1975-2003*, which brings together work from the last four decades. His new book of essays, *Crusoe's Secret : The Aesthetics of Dissent*, was published by Faber in November 2005. The aim of this paper is to show how Paulin weaves historical events and political treaties and occurrences in a poetic fabric. It also seeks to trace the origins of the Second World War and how the poet articulates his message and material. Finally, it presents the main features of Paulin's style and technique in this challenging volume.

The Invasion Handbook is made up, as Paulin says, of "orts and scraps torn stamps / bits of debris / staled by other men and women / more random than the nicks on a tally stick" (17). Paulin describes his mammoth book as a "loose leaf epic", "a cultural primer", and a "history lesson", which articulates the European political history and underlines the poet's historical sense. He seeks to represent people caught inside systems and states, "not free standing, not sovereign" (Techne 17). Paulin's 200-page collage is like unmelodic music : "this music though can take licks / the way a stamp does / or some hero in a paper / I mean a loose leaf epic" (Techne 18). Paulin believes that it is the responsibility of poetry "to speak for history, to point out its iniquities, and to lend a voice to its

victims" (par.3).He tries to create poetry as immediate as the daily paper, aspiring, like Pound, to a poem including history. Yet, "history" (as Pound found out) can include almost anything. A poet who wants to write history needs criteria for what to put in and what to leave out. Paulin's method--part documentary, part dramatization, part description--allows him to put in anything at all, from slack textbook language, to sharp quips, to column figures" (par.5).Concerning Paulin's approach in his book, Adam Newey states that the former takes historical events and imagines them from the inside; "he peels those familiar newsreel images off the celluloid and reanimates them with his characteristically sharp wit. Or he wanders behind the scenes of a major--power summit and offers delicate character sketches of the participants" (52). Paulin uses wordplay repeatedly, writing short, snappy lines and illustrating how the interplay of meanings between the languages of Europe echoes and incarnates the historical to and fro of armies, borders and people. His language is rough and demotic, mostly being Northern Ireland slang, or dialect. It is also exotic, with the poet using lots of German words and passages in French. Again, Paulin is continuously and frequently hounded by "the desperate sleeplessness of the historical sense and a belief that it is criminal to try to banish it from the discussion of art" (qtd. in Paloff- the poet at War. htm)

In the *Prologue*, Paulin's first poem in *The Invasion Handbook*,

the poet underscores the failure of the Russian Revolution as the most fundamental event of the twentieth century. Stalin is presented as imagining himself becoming "the metal Shah / the steel Tsar" (3). The image drawn by the poet for Stalin is both satiric and humorous, illustrating the vulnerability of the Bolshevik Revolution and its leaders :-

This drunken shoemaker's son
is Caesar inside a nutmeg or an almond
the king of infinite space
with the power to bring the world to an end
though all these four long years
he knows he has pitched his tent upon a grain of sand (4).

The early and anticipated collapse of the Revolution paved the way not only for Stalin's purges but also finally for Auschwitz. In *Clemenceau*, in Versailles' Hall of Mirrors, before the signing of the unjust treaty that made peace between the allies and Germany, Paulin presents a historical soundtrack :-

When Israel went into Egypt
there was the plockplock of horsehooves
A toltoring bustle clipped scatter
like saoots clocking the cobbles
in some Rhineland town
black as the cavern null and void
of the Empire fire place (5).

This aural effect of history is enhanced by the poet's lyricism and excellence, when describing the injustice of the Versailles treaty in 1919:-

In the hall of mirrors , snow is seen falling
like leaves millions of leaves reeling down on all those
who would say if they could
I am not yet born .
while out of the night and the snow
rises the hunting sovereign dove
as these four men the cloud compellers
weigh Germany's guilt like gold or diamonds (5-6) .

Paulin's obsession with T.S. Eliot is articulated when Clemenceau (the tiger of France) speaks of himself :-

no one knows that I Georges Clemenceau
--I the tiger
no one knows I made war
with 40 grammes of sugar in my blood
senem annis animo juvenum,
--the Latin orator in the Sheldonian
made me Christ the tiger
in the juvescence - wrong spring word-
of the year (6) .

Eliot's influence appears unexpectedly in the midst of the vernacular language used by Paulin. In his review of *The Invasion Handbook* , Judy Cox states that Paulin "follows in the modernist footsteps of poets like T.S. Eliot, using obscure historical and literary references.

He combines them with sharp, simple verses but the poem can still be a difficult read" (file :// F:/Socialist Review.htm,3). Paulin stresses the historical significance of the Versailles treaty, which is fundamentally responsible for sowing the seeds of grudge and hatred in the Germans against humanity. According to this unfair treaty, Germany lost territory and its colonies, and had limitations imposed on its armed forces. The poet describes the state of the Germans in poetically pathetic terms : "Maybe they're Hessians who like Jack Falstaff / are-mortal men sir – full of sack / and sorry the war has staggered to an end". The Germans become like a skeleton "lying there among the puddles and shell holes the mud the debris the bust or abandoned weapons / - like a trapdoor its mouth gapes open / as it lies there static a bleached symbol of ending" (*The Skeleton* 8). Again, after the treaty, "Germany is no longer a people and a state, but becomes a mere trade concern placed by its creditors in the hands of a receiver" (*The Four* 11). The severity of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles encouraged and motivated Germany to seek extreme solutions through tough and inclement leaders.

Paulin digresses, in *The Former Yugoslavia* , to link the collapse of the Habsburg empire with the Balkan wars of the 1990s : " ... first the Serbs / defeated us – us Habsburgs - / and then they badly beat us / when we were Nazis"(15). Germany and its main European allies failed to prevent or stop the 1990s Balkans bloodshed because of the long – standing enmity between the Germans and the Serbs: "Germans and Italians / took a deep stale breath / that stank of ancient puss / - puss and piss"(15). Tracing the roots of the Balkan massacres, the poet says : "those headbanging Serbs/-it's from our pobby (swollen) grudges / at their victories / these new massacres stem" (16). Paulin expresses his frustration with history because massacres and bad things keep happening in Sarajevo and other parts of the world.

To reduce the effect of Versailles treaty, an important international conference was held in the Swiss lake resort of Locarno, in October 1925. The conference was an attempt to bring Germany back into the European community. To the German foreign minister at the time, Gustav Stresemann, "Locarno is the freedom / to win our freedom" (*Locarno One* 41) .Again, stressing

the historical importance of the treaties resulting from the conference, he says :

Gentlemen, peace is the emblem of the day, let the day – when we signed the treaty of Locarno / be a day sacred in the annals of Europe. To Germany and to France it means : finished is that series of agonizing and bloody encounters which have stained all the pages of European history in the past. Finished is the war between us. Finished is the wearing throughout our countries of those long veils of mourning for sorrows which can never be appeased. No more wars ... away with rifles, machine guns, cannons, room for arbitration and peace. (*Locarno Three 70*) .

This passage by the German foreign minister is ironic anticipating the overwhelming violence, destruction, and havoc engendered by Hitler. The repetition of the word "Finished" is significant and ominous suggesting that a forthcoming evil is to start. Aristide Briand, a French statesman and politician during the Locarno conference, anticipates and imagines a future without peace, emphasizing the point that more poetry is written about war and weapons than about peace :-

where the clocks are so high
you can't tell the time
--a stricken figure
under a blank clock
only weeks to live
how much poetry is about weapons
how little about peace. (*Locarno Three 76*) .

The German foreign minister himself, the last symbol of peace, would die within weeks. He emphasizes that the Germans have become the lowest of the low because of the Versailles treaty, and that : "we are now fighting for the immediate existence of the German people / \$ 1 = 3.760.000.000 marks" (*Locarno three 77*). Again , in prose, he highlights the extremity of the impositions on Germany and the useless attempt of Locarno treaties to correct this imbalance and injustice :

the night is dark about us and to many a friend of the
Fatherland it will seem as though the lights of heaven are
forever extinguished for the German people but as the stars are

not engulfed because they do not shine on a dark night so also the moral order of the world is not suspended because we let this injustice pass over us this so-called war guilt is a lie. (*Locarno three 78*).

The lyrical and pathetic words used by Stresemann arouse pity for the Germans and fear of what might result from that flagrant injustice. Commenting on Paulin's technique, Stephen Burt states :-

though, here and there, Paulin sets a section in prose, most of *The Invasion Handbook* uses the techniques of all his recent verse : choppy, two-and-three beat, free-verse lines, with minimal enjambment; short accretive phrases, with ambiguous or absent sentence boundaries; short rare words,..., most dialectal or onomatopoeic; dysphemisms; insults ; self-corrections; and the poet's " I " as an obtrusive running commentator.(par.3).

Back again to the Soviet Russia, the poet underlines the presence of its leaders in the European scene between the two World Wars. Describing the awfulness and terror arising from a visit to Lenin's tomb, the poet says :-

it's not a pilgrimage
to gaze at a face and head
that look like a fossilized plastic egg
laid by a reptile before ever
history was invented
so he could pull
and throw its switches like a signalman- ... (*Vladimir Ilyich 79*).

The image of Lenin's face and head looking "like a fossilized plastic egg / laid by a reptile" suggests horror, aggression and dictatorship. Paulin's diversionary style makes the description less intense and the visit more interesting :-

this terrible tunnel
is stuffed with zeks
drained and invisible
all heading down to
the lacu nigro
nemorumque tenebris
and what is laid out on this table
is one version of Frankenstein's monster

that's both institution and rebel
a bit of dreck
in an ordinary oddly civilian suit
a piece of ash fruit
– in what happens to happen
who or what makes the mistakes . (Vladimir Ilyich 80).

Commenting on Paulin's technical and verbal skill in these lines, Penjamin Paloff says :-

The swift movement of these modestly punctuated two – or three – stress lines, the collision of simple visual detail with less penetrable Latin, and the almost childish rhyme of "suit" and "fruit" earn an otherwise unimaginative historical potshot (" a bit of dreck") some dimension in both sound and sense. The real "Frankenstein's monster" is Paulin's hodgepodge of high rhetoric and the vernacular, holding back any hint of the question we discover and it feels like discovery at the end (par.7) .

Paulin articulates a characteristic attitude towards rhetorical self-indulgence when Trotsky talks about himself : "yes you caught that speech / when I bashed when I wrecked the Mensheviks / way way back". Again Trotsky stresses the importance of history :-

history I know
was our highnoon metaphor
was the actions of a god
we couldn't believe in
our portable predictable altar
but the generations
that've trod have trod have trod
we trod on them untill most
of us were pushed or trodden down" (*Trotsky 176*) .

Commenting on how Paulin skillfully combines history and poetry in "*Trotsky*", Kevin Higgins states : " At a time when poetry has come to be dominated by the short personal lyric and the witty anecdote, *The Invasion Handbook* represents a heroic if ultimately unsuccessful attempt to engage imaginatively with complex historical subject matter"(par.7)

The injustice of the Versailles treaty and the failure of the ill-fated Locarno treaties to restore Germany to the European fabric led

to and encouraged the rise of the Weimar Republic, a decadent entity "with a hole in its heart" in the twenties and thirties. As a result, Berlin became " a Babylonian bottomless deep-at once chaotic and compelling" (*Weimar 27*). Dr. Lipp, people's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, "filled the Foreign Office with red carnations" and was "cornered at a puddle that was found in the ex-king's bathroom, because the king might have spent hours playing with toy boats"(*Weimar 28*).Under that morally and intellectually decadent Republic, there was a great inflation, a beggar threw a 100.000 mark note in the gutter because of its worthlessness, "there was an obsession with food, an almost sexual relation to food" , and "cross-dressing became very popular". At that time Hitler was looked at as a comic figure, with the Bavarian interior minister proposing to deport him in 1921.At high society banquets, Hitler "didn't know how to eat artichoke. He would spoon sugar into vintage wines" (*Weimar 29*).This image anticipates the havoc and horror he would inflict on the world. Again, under the same culture, "Berliners are schlagfertig – ready to strike, always with a reply on the tip of the tongue", and "Berlin became a world city-a Weltstadt-in the 20s". Sex was freely and morally allowed, "Karl Denke sold human flesh smoked in jars as goat's meat", and "Rathenau, the foreign minister, was killed because he was an excellent minister and a Jew" (*Weimar 30*).The Germans taught Kant and lived off the interest, and "of Berlin Goebbels said the spirit of the asphalt democracy is piled up" (*Weimar 31*). Under these stormy and shaky circumstances, Hitler rose to power to bring about all kinds of suffering to the world. Paulin uses prose to draw a horrible image of Hitler's mind and character :-

...,Hitler had a mind. It was coarse, turbid, narrow, rigid, cruel, but it was a mind. A terrible phenomenon, that mind, imposing indeed in its granitic harshness and yet infinitely squalid in its miscellaneous cumber-like some huge barbarian monolith, the expression of giant strength and savage genius, surrounded by a festering heap of refuse-old tins and dead vermin, ashes and eggshells and ordure-the intellectual detritus of centuries. (*Weimar 31*).

The illustration of Hitler's mind as being "surrounded by a festering heap of refuse-old tins and dead vermin,...", is exceptionally

significant, anatomizing his destructive nature and concretizing his brutality and rigidity. Justifying the havoc he is going to inflict on the world, Hitler, in *Chancellor Hitler's Speech*, offers a tally of the armaments Germany has to destroy to fulfill the Versailles treaty :- "59000 guns and gun tubes / 130.000 machine guns / 31.000 trench mortars and tubes / 6007000 rifles and carbines / ..." (99) . The list goes on for two more pages of numbers and nouns to give Hitler enough excuses and justifications :-

now I cite these facts
these hard facts
to justify the lives
and the cities that I
the modern Coriolanus
will soon lay waste. (100).

In his comment on this poem, Stephen Burt states : "Here are most of the poem's problems in little: more facts than we need; lines (all those numbers) that aren't lines, and couldn't be read aloud without fatigue; cliché ("hard facts", "lay waste"); and, most of all, a historical personage giving a speech-in-verse that's half himself, half Paulin, and one drop of inessential Eliot ("the modern Coriolanus") (par.5).In *"Hitler Enters the Rhineland"*, Paulin describes how Hitler's troops occupied the Rhineland on September 1936, causing a lot of sabotage and destruction, and practically cancelling Versailles and Locarno treaties :-

those sabots clocking the cobbles
in some Rhineland town
-they set an echo up
with sabotage
with the French language
its tottering bustle
on a dodgy field telephone
that keeps trying Locarno
then a phone somewhere in Britain
that won't answer. (110).

The aural and visual images of the German invasion incarnate the helplessness of both France and Britain, and shows the futility of the previously signed treaties. Paulin has a good-eye for the dangerous

and the ludicrous. In *The Fuhrer on Language*, he has Hitler (the Fuhrer) consider the German language :-

This means we Germans can think
and see more than what's square or round
but our language is damaged by poverty of vowel sounds-
We must do something about this. (101).

Being meticulous about such trivial and absurd matters, Hitler caused thousands of people to lose their lives, and wrecked Europe for 1.000 years.

Paulin moves on to talk about other spots and topics to emphasize that *The Invasion Handbook* is pan-European. In "*Spain*", he tells about Franco's victory in the Spanish civil war and the ending of revolutionary hopes :-

No pasaran ! No pasaran !
that massed cry
survives defeat
like the fuse of a lark's song
as firing squads take up positions
so no one now can dream
of a new democracy
exact as a sunbeam
warming the mud
at the bottom of the well. (12).

The last image of " a sunbeam warming the mud / at the bottom of the well" suggests the impossibility of establishing a democratic system under Franco's dictatorial regime. Again, in a prose on Spain, in *Europe's Civil Wars*, Paulin writes that "all the Spanish Civil Wars must be seen as part of-engagements in- that long running European civil war which has lasted since the Renaissance"(106). According to Judy Cox, Paulin "seems to believe that there are no historical breaks and crises, only continuity. So the anti-Semitism of the Nazis is somehow linked to enlightenment tradition". (par.9).

Paulin is keen to explore the injustices and genocides that took place in Europe between the two world wars. In "*Kristallnacht*", he talks about a survivor-turned combatant :-

a survivor
bashed but not broken
by all that history

oh Go I share his anger
but how could I ever share it?
It's all that broken glass
The way it litters the streets
as though from the Reformation
To Eikonoklastes
To this night of murder theft danger
there's something complicit.

These lines present a horrible image of the Holocaust and the resulting anger from the world's silence and complicity. According to Benjamin Paloff,

This is not an instance of blistering self-awareness in which the writer accedes to the fundamental inadequacy of literature to connect us to the unimaginable. Quite the contrary : anger may or may not be the right word for what the Other feels, but throughout this collection, it is what the poet himself brings to the table, ascribing it to various personae where he can, throwing it in haphazardly when he can not.(par.7).

Again, in "*Shirking the Camps*", Paulin depicts how the Jews were pushed to be burnt in the furnaces by the Nazis : " – how can you sing / a song of Belsen?/ the Jews the queers the gypsies / pushed like forests of brushwood / into the furnace". He illustrates, through eating habits, the world's callous indifference to the victims of Nazis:

Your life is Swiss
and so still and cool, such a waste
of a good or at least pious
intention – how can you sing a song of Belsen ?
that chunk of Appenzeller
it tastes smoky on your tongue(140).

From the horrors committed by Nazism in the Holocaust Paulin goes on to tell how the Nazi-Soviet pact caused a lot of devastation and suffering to the Polish people. In "*Nazi-Soviet Pact*", Stalin's smile "costs a packet / costs millions of lives / whole reservoirs tense with tears / as they sign away Poland / make it nulle part Poland" (141). Paulin criticizes the Wartime British leadership, in "*Poland Invaded*". He laments the loss of the best young men, who were the victims of foolish Generals :

We shall give the Germans not one button
our General's boast is best forgotten
as we sowed the heaths with our young men
no we shall not see their like again
we were the very last Romantics-
--deeply foolish and heroic (149) .

With the eye of a detached bystander, the poet describes the shameful defeat of the British troops at the hands of the Germans :-
"it was like watching butterflies and ballet dancers / caught in the blades of a mowing machine" (149)

Paulin's meanderings lead him, in *"the Attack in the West"*, to tell an anecdote about the German General Student who, against orders, took "the entire plan for the invasion / of Belgium Holland and France in a plane" (157). It crashed, with the major and the pilot being arrested "as they try to burn / sheet after sheet / of the typed written plan of attack". The wicked Duke of Windsor "will leak the almost abstract existence / of those charred sheets in a safe / in a Belgian barracks / to the Nazi high command" (158-159). Thus the Allies lost this great advantage. On the other hand, the poet mentions how Montagu Norman of the Bank of England had "a secret line to Ribben trop / who coos to the Queen of England / down cunning corridors" (160), and that Halifax had his own key to the palace garden. Commenting on Paulin's lack of purpose in his book, Frank Kermode states that "this is not a complaint :we are dealing with a modern poet and would hardly expect a linked and lacquered historical account of the between-war years, with one thing giving rise inevitably, tragically, to another".(Reports from the Not Too Distant Canon" 9). Paulin gets on with the war, describing in the same poem, how the Maginot Line was quite useless :-

we kept still
and watched their motorcycle patrols
the flash of the field glasses
like stammering lighthouses
at high noon.
as dogs tied to the doors of deserts farms
howled old testaments howls
swollen uddered cows bellowed
a French cavalryman

shot a line of horses
one by one
I knew we were finished then.(163).

The power and motivation of the German troops are contrasted with the inactivity and helplessness of those of the Allies. In "*Churchill*", Paulin's contempt for appeasers allows him a great deal of sympathy with Churchill. He has him say :-

.... the whole of my life
had brought me like Aeneas
to this one glimpse of the Latin shore
--behold the Lord the Lord of hosts
shall lop the bough with terror
and the high one of stature shall be hewed down
and the haughty shall be humbled (170).

After all, Churchill managed to go to Harrow, and the Germans would end up being defeated at his hands.

"*The Invasion Handbook*", a prose segment from which the poem takes its title, has a power of its own, purporting to be the "handbook" for a German invasion of Britain. It is a document meant to instruct a German invasion force on the geography and special peculiarities of the British (Free masons mostly) : "the English, especially those who inhabit cities, read papers in the mornings only" (179), and "the Jews believed they were God's chosen people on earth and this Puritan tradition led the English to regard themselves as the chosen people of this world".(180).In this handbook, there is a special wanted list consisting of two names, Lascelles Abercrombie and Stefan Zweig . Lloyd George and George Bernard Shaw are exempted from the list of two thousand people to be got rid of. When the invasion has succeeded, "it is likely that the Duke of Windsor will be restored to the throne, and that the prime minister will be replaced with Sir Oswald Mosley who is in prison currently" (181).Again, Henry Williamson will soon replace the poet Laureate, John Masefield.

The climax of "*The Invasion Handbook*" is the 12-page poem "*Battle of Britain*" which is both exciting and shocking. There is a sense of pride connected with the re-appointment of Churchill as

prime minister. Churchill took crucial and grave decisions, ordering his forces to "bomb Berlin" :-

--Goering he promised
the defense of Southern England
would last exactly four days
and the Royal Air Force four weeks
--we can for the Fuhrer
guarantee invasion within a month
but Stuffy Dowding he'd studied
their tactics in Spain
and he pulled us back
wisely from Dunkirk
now in Sir John Soane's
Bently Priory
his mind moves over maps. (188)

Paulin articulates his great admiration of Sir Marshal Dowding, who, to his credit, having won the Battle of Britain, was immediately dismissed and thrown into permanent obscurity. He also admires Mitchell, the designer of the spitfire; and Churchill, when he and not Halifax was chosen to succeed Neville Chamberlain. Churchill was the correct choice at such a desperate time because he managed to rescue Britain from the German invasion. This desperate sleeplessness of the historical sense on Paulin's part underscores his obsession with history and politics, and how to formulate them in artistic and literary forms. Benjamin Paloff states that Paulin moves from the treaty of Versailles to the Battle of Britain, barraging "us with so astounding an array of facts and figures, names and dates, excerpts, translations, visual-linguistic experiments, and the guidance of occasional footnotes" (par.4) .

In "*Wear White Gloves in the Blackout*", Paulin achieves his sensitivity for history, with the speaker's attitude being curious. He "wants to know what it looked like when the public moved through pitch-black London streets wearing white gloves to hail taxis, an image that is arresting enough without the poet trying to squeeze himself into it" (Par.8). Instead, Paulin asks questions, guessing as to what these mysterious shapes might be :-

doves or white rabbits
coming out from the conjuror's hat

or are they his own
soft gloves laid on
its black brim ?(196)

This poem pleases the ear, being historically interesting and fascinating even in its condemnation when the poet concludes that these "doves" belong "not by the dark stream / but in or on the immense abime / that Monsieur Clemenceau dreamed / then stuffed us in" (196). Finally, "*In the Blackout*", Paulin offers his audience a poster, which urges them "to pause / before entering the dark / before we step / through this door into that dark"(199). This anonymous poster has "its own civic poetry / and will survive / our pause-yep-and our passing" (199). In his comment on this poem as well as the whole volume, Matt Bryden states that Paulin, in a final image "describes the pen as a balancing pole. By digging for root causes to explain events and inspiring interest in its subject, *The Invasion Handbook* is worth every penny of the grant that brought it about"(par.10).

Paulin's volume, which consists of "orts and scraps torn stamps bits of debris", is a collage of many of cluttered and grandiose poems about not only the history and politics of the between war Europe but also about the literary history of Britain. It is a "loose-leaf epic", highlighting the significant British literary figures in both the past and the present. Paulin, in a poem on Auden, "*Somewhere to Get to*", begins with "car headlights" from Auden's own early verse, then moves through word-play on Auden's "*Musee de Beaux Arts*", and ends up accusing and attacking him :-

the day bombs
started falling on England
you became eloquently dumb
became quite an important failure
as you left
the seas and forests of Europe
and no longer felt
the grab and pluck of its tides. (82)

Auden's voice can be heard through the lights of a car sweeping across a bedroom, as in that early poem named "*The Watershed*", and the "*Pluck*" of the tide, which is reminiscent of "*On This Island*".

In "*The Yellow Spot*", Paulin presents a scene where Montgomery Belgion and T.S. Eliot are dining at the Ritz. Belgion was the author of an anti-Semitic review (*of a book, The Yellow Spot*) in Eliot's criterion, which was assumed to be Eliot's own work. Both Belgion and Eliot have a conversation, coming up with the idea of the Holocaust. Eliot says of Joyce, "I admire his well yes / his Jesuitical intelligence / but we must find some substitute / for that type of sense / it tends rather much to travel / though it could / of course be transported / to somewhere cold ..." (107). Not seeking to embarrass each other, Belgion and Eliot :-

...play a favourite game
and try to come up-yes come up-
with a rhyme for Ritz
no not Biarritz
murmurs Tom if we test our wits
there must be some place some name
far away to the east
- maybe you can tell me what fits. (109)

T.S. Eliot is a ghost haunting Paulin's "*The Invasion Handbook*", which skillfully echoes "The Waste Land". In some respects, Eliot's masterpiece is a leading spirit here :-

the measured cacophony of voices, the pan-European scope, not to mention a degree of thematic concurrence. But the breadth of Paulin's vision and ambition is, if anything, more astonishing, tracking the lines across our fissured continent that link the treaty of Versailles with that of Rome, the collapse of the Habsburg empire with the Balkan wars of the 1990s. This is, truly, a poem for Europe, and a glorious reminder of what poetry can do (Newey 53).

W.B. Yeats is present in Paulin's volume, being felt in reminiscences of "*Long-Legged Fly*". The phrase "orts, scraps and fragments", which also turns up as "des bribes et de morceaux", must come from Virginia Wolf's *Between the Acts*. Ezra Pound's *cantos* must have contributed to the structure and form of "*The Invasion Handbook*". Like John Donne, Paulin is proud to be harsh, refusing to tell the reader what is meant by a "boortree" or a "cuas". He prefers the demotic diction and the natural cadences of Hopkins and Christina Rossetti, neglecting the upper-class dialects and iambic regularities.

The Auden of the *Orators* is present in a surreal catalogue of ailments in the section on "Weimar", and also in the prose of the *The Invasion Handbook*. John Milton makes an impressive appearance in a marginal note in the "Weimar" section, which reads thus : " Du matin jusqu'au midi il roula du midi jusqu'au soir d'un jour d'ete et avec le soleil couchant il s'abattit du zenith comme une etoile tombante " (Weimar 27). Shakespeare is an important source, providing sometimes a phrase : "Waiting for Waftage" from *Troilus and Cressida*, bits from *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Hamlet*. From Macbeth there is a phrase : "like a tale told by an idiot signifying nothing". Speer at Berchtesgaden remarks that the Germans were already so steeped in blood that they could not go back, and Trotsky, too, remembers Macbeth when he describes his "adobe ranch" in Mexico as his "procreant cradle". This compliment preceded Duncan's death by dagger and Trotsky by icepick.

(II)

Tom Paulin stresses the necessity of living in history, recording the events leading up to the Second World War, at a time when they are disappearing from living memory. He probes into the causes of the Second War, deciphering the personal, political or intellectual flaws that led western leaders to creating the conditions for Nazism and Fascism. The flagrant corruption of Europe's leaders is contrasted with the pain and heroism of ordinary soldiers and civilians caught up in the war. Paulin's main theme could be the inevitability of establishing balanced relationships between nations. He sees the Locarno peace treaty as "two pails of water / balanced ...on a plank". The poet who writes about historical events must beware of altering too much, as things can have a different significance in the future. Paulin is longing, for a future characterized by peace, justice and balance. He is frustrated with history because evil and aggressive attitudes still govern the world. He is a partisan poet, sympathizing with the poor, the republicans, the socialists and the Jews. He is also concerned with the connection between momentous historical events and flawed, mortal individuals.

Paulin's politics, as a radical, republican northern protestant opponent of both the Irish and British status quos, are mainly humanist, with his work coming off "as a sustained rant against the us-versus-them tribalism that makes up much of the international news". He believes in the responsibility of poetry to speak for history and politics. He is accused of being anti-semitic, believing that one person should not assume an arbitrary right to someone else's land; the thing which is consistent with his humanism.

In *"The Invasion Handbook"*, the poems fall into two groups. First, there are the politician poems, which present vivid characterizations of Stalin, Clemenceau, Hitler, Churchill, Lenin and others. Second, there is a physical representation of the European predicament after the Versailles treaty and Hitler's rise to power. The second group of poems is gripping and chilling, incarnating the events that led to the Second World War. The poems of the book weave together snippets of text from an encyclopedic range of sources and traffic in moments in diplomatic, economic and military history. Paulin prefers vernacular Northern Irish words like "toltering", "loy", etc., which are not found in the current Oxford English Dictionary. He uses obscure historical accusations against the British upper-class appeasers. To deliver his pan-European message, he uses Latin and French, prose and verse, text and symbol. He juxtaposes verse passages, posters and newspaper clippings to create a collage of the between-war years. *"The Invasion Handbook"* includes a dozen nations and a multitude of characters. It organizes itself around a polyphonic principle which indicates that any history worth telling must have a lot of voices and stories. In the voice of James Joyce, Paulin declares : "I'm after catching another voice / and then another". Other famous voices who is spoken for or speak for themselves include Stalin, George Clemenceau, John Maynard Keynes, Freud, Kurt Schwitters, Martin Heidegger, Austen Chamberlain, Lenin, Auden, Evelyn Waugh, Hitler, the English Fascist writer Henry Williamson, George Orwell, the Duke of Windsor, Albert Speer, Churchill, Trotsky, Walter Benjamin, and the wartime diarist Victor Klemperer. Among the topics treated in the book are the Sarajevo assassination (in flashback), the Bauhaus, the

Jarrow March, Munich, the German invasion of Poland, Norway, the Low Countries and France, the Battle of Britain, Dunkirk, the Blitz.

Reading "*The Invasion Handbook*" is very much the same as being inside a crazed tumble-drier, with Paulin poking his head through the frozen soil of facts. He is obsessed with the desperate sleeplessness of the historical sense. Paulin's poetry and criticism articulate his absolute commitment to a political and vernacular version of literature. The book is considered a brantub of European political history, being a giddy series of close-ups of diplomatic, intellectual and military history from 1919 to 1940, and taking us from the treaty of Versailles, through Weimar, the treaty of Locarno, the Night of the Long Knives, Hitler's occupation of the Rhineland, to the Battle of Britain. Paulin likes his history dry and dirty, having a dubious relationship to his historical material and reaching for "the Zapper / caught between one guilt / and another". He produces endless data rich gabble, articulating a long set of passionate impersonations and improvising historical lectures and lessons. He is concerned with the search for peace and for a shared European culture, exploring the relation of art to war, history, politics and to the questions of national identity.

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