

It is an indication of just how naturalised ideological state apparatuses are, that the movement and expansion of Northern Ireland's police force to the control of Stormont has been greeted nationally and internationally as a capstone in the re-constitution of another devolved half-way house of a stateless nation. The control of the police seems to indicate where proper political power lies: in this regard, the police symbolise and deliver – through hat-wearing force of law – an irreversible be-booted step forward in the 'peace process'. Peace and police might well be partners in rhyme, but if a society needs police to keep peace, then it is in genuine trouble. In their attempts to cope with this sort of trouble – the troubles – the Northern Irish police have shown themselves in the past to be corruptibly, fatally, sometimes heroically – often politically – flawed.

Of long-term concern is the UUP's refusal to sign up to the agreement. Does this signal an important undermining of the policing of Northern Ireland? Probably not entirely, though it is a major blow to those who regard police and state as the mutually legitimising bedrocks of human happiness. Sir Reg Empey's seeming desire is to maintain a version of victimisation and embattled resistance: "We exercise our rights, refusing to bow to the blackmail and bullying to which we have been subjected in recent weeks." Empey's alliterative characterisation of the carrot dangled by Gordon Brown (an £800 million, 1,200 extra-police shaped carrot) casts a jarring light on the PM's pleasure at a fifteen-year process having at last drawn to a happy, safe close. Brown said: "Today the politics of progress have finally replaced the politics of division in Northern Ireland." And if Brown focuses just on the miracle of Sinn Féin, the DUP and the SDLP happily holding hands as they cast their votes, he can believe this to be true. But he has to ignore the UUP to do so. The progress, it seems, is still in divided process.

More worrying for the future, perhaps, is David Cameron's inability to influence the UUP – who are, after all, supposedly in close cahoots with the Conservatives. Worst of all, was the appearance of the Kraken who awoke to intervene. In doing so, this good old fella raised himself above the political waterline for the first time since leaving office – namely *The Drouth's* sorely missed sparring partner, the Decider: George W. Bush. The Texan Bush got on the blower to Cameron who (probably) had strategist Steve Hilton text the DC tweetblog

to Sir Reg. A holy trinity – a veritable daisy chain – of influence in process, delivering, in the end, a 'no' vote.

This issue of *The Drouth* sees a cacophony of ongoing political and critical processes, about which readers will surely say a happy hand-holding YES. Yet these writings point anarchically in all manner of cultural and political directions, rendering the editorial job of coalescing them into order and rationale, both impossible and possibly offensive to the separate tracks our bold writers take.

Both as Sean Aardvaark and as himself, Owen Dudley Edwards bookends this issue. Aardvaark opens with a seriously playful skit on the contemporary political history of Northern Ireland – and the central role of David Trimble. From a son of County Down, to a son of Plymouth. As the *Weekly Entertainer* reported in October 1814, Benjamin Robert Haydon received "the freedom of that ancient borough [of Plymouth] . . . on account of his extraordinary merit, as an historical painter, and especially for his recent picture, 'The Judgement of Solomon.'" That same painting now hangs in the same town hall, though history has not been so kind in its judgement. While Haydon's friendships with – and portraits of – Romantic writers are still studied, his reputation as an artist has suffered neglect. When feeling good about his painting, Haydon famously imagined "air-balloons under his armpits and ether in his soul". Alas he was not lifted as high as he hoped. Owen Dudley Edwards's review essay in response to a new biography of this inglorious failure is the other bookend of this *Drouth*.

Before that, Robin Yassin-Kassab takes us to the construction of narratives of tribal identity purposed to provide safe house and home, while denying others the self-same thing: he interrogates those mythologies of Jewishness which fed into the establishment of an Israeli state, in a review essay of Shlomo Sand's remarkable book *The Invention of the Jewish People*. Johnny Rodger then considers the implications of two current photographic exhibitions in Glasgow, of the German-born artist Steffi Klenz: her theme is home, and the state's interventions in housing and – as Rodger puts it despairingly – homes 'devalued, neglected, despised, abandoned, disgraced, disappeared'.

March of this year saw the premiere of Sean Martin and Louise Milne's documentary



Lanterna Magicka: Bill Douglas & the Secret History of Cinema. This focuses on Douglas's *Comrades* (1987), his last work before his death in 1991. *Comrades* is a study of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, structured through an historical fascination with the pre-cinema moving image. Mitchell Miller's extended analysis of this neglected, ground-breaking film is a timely reminder of Douglas's contribution to both the practice, and the social memory, of cinema. While looking back to lost formats of the moving image, we also look forward to the brave old world of 3D cinema. 3D is now rightly revived, according to Miriam Ross's passionate, learned account of the filmic and experiential possibilities of this re-hashed format, which she enlivens through a close reading of the gargantuan cash monster that is *Avatar*.

EDITORIAL

