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idea of the "Indosphere", both of which seek to express ancient India's great influence and impact on a region "stretching from the shores of the Mediterranean to the islands of Japan". Linking his criticism of these concepts to recent attacks on the "Silk Road" concept ("hopelessly rooted in European imperialism"), Ali suggests that, among other things, they all suffer from the same problem of agglomeration. "There was no single route out of or through India, but instead a series of often unconnected and segmented littoral networks, often operated by disparate social groups".

Granted, there was not one "Golden Road" heading out of India, just as there was not one "Silk Road" heading out of China. Historians have been diligently showing that for some time, as Ali says, patiently breaking down what they regard as inflated concepts. But is that sufficient reason for dispensing with these concepts altogether? Is it not helpful to have concepts

numbskulls), and possibly a "fellow" had a similarly pejorative connotation. Various apocryphal stories circulated about the bear - that Byron used to parade the streets accompanied by it, "following him like a dog", or that it used to sit on the window sill in his rooms wearing a cap and gown.

Byron could have acquired it from a travelling menagerie: one of the largest, Polito's ("birds and beasts bought, sold or exchanged") had visited Cambridge earlier in 1807. It was probably boarded out at the stables in Ram Yard, near the Round Church, where he kept Oat-eater and his other horses. A tradesman's bill survives for £1 9s 7d for "Bread & Milk for the Bear delivd. to Holaday". The bear was later sent to Newstead Abbey, dying there in 1810.

Hewson Clarke, a sizar at Emmanuel College, who savagely reviewed Byron's first volume of poems, went

on to publish a lampoon entitled "Lord B-n to his Bear", to which he added the note: "This bear, which is kept in one of his rooms at Trinity, is a great favourite of his Lordship's, and, if report say true, he has been seen to hug it with all the warmth of fraternal affection!" Byron was so incensed that he called at Emmanuel with his friend Hobhouse and others to challenge the "skulking scribbler" to a duel. Fortunately, Clarke was out.

Bears were not unknown in colleges. The college accounts for Queens' College in 1611 read "For taking out the bear and watching it, and scouring the cellar, 2s 6d", while at Christ Church, Oxford, Frank Buckland in the 1840s took a bear to wine parties and boating on the river.

■ **Graham Chainey**
Brighton

Dogs' lives

Simone Gubler, in her review of Mark Rowlands's *The Happiness of Dogs* (December 20 and 27), tells us about the love the author has for his aggressive dog, Shadow, and how much happier the canine is than its owner. The most profound work I know on the subject of respect for pets (and for animals in general) is the novel *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* (2009) by the Polish Nobel laureate Olga Tokarczuk. Janina Duszejko, the protagonist, murders the hunter who killed her two dogs, but tells others that deer committed the crime because he had killed (and eaten) one of their own. This extreme case of anthropomorphism is continued further when she murders another hunter and blames the deer again, then goes on to murder another, blaming beetles this time. In this instance it is a human who is ferocious (and crafty) and not an animal. Her animal liberationist conscience masks her homicidal tendencies. She is in fact

have traced movements in the opposite direction, such as the immense Hellenizing impact of the conquests of Alexander the Great across the whole of Eurasia (a "Hellenic Road"?). Historians, especially current ones, love disaggregation. They have tried to deny that that there was an "Industrial Revolution", just as they tried to show that there was no "French Revolution" ("the French Revolution never happened", as the historian Richard Cobb once declared in a classic statement). Luckily others have stepped in to restore these indispensable unifying concepts. The historians have their role, but we should be grateful to non-historians or people outside the profession of academic historians for saying what needs to be said, in clear and emphatic terms, as is obviously the case with Dalrymple's book. History is too important to be left to the (academic) historians.

■ **Krishan Kumar**
University of Virginia, Charlottesville VA

helped to flee the authorities by her friends and ends up living securely with an entomologist who applauds her love of insects. The reader is never quite sure if Janina is happy, but it is clear that her victims are past caring. The other thing that is clear is that her excessive (indeed obsessive) love of non-human creatures has led her not only to aggression, but to murder.

■ **Sam Milne**
Claygate, Surrey

A foggy day

In her review of Laura Ashby's *Chasing Fog* (December 13), Annie Worsley writes that she "wished for more about fog in urban settings". I recommend *London Fog: The biography* by Christine Corton (reviewed in the *TLS*, December 11, 2015). This informative, engaging and splendidly illustrated book mobilizes science, history, memoir and fiction to reconstruct the causes, the experience and the often chaotic consequences of the "pea-soupers" that repeatedly brought the city to a halt in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Corton's deeply researched social history also attends to fog's conspicuous appearance in the writing of Charles Dickens, Joseph Conrad and Robert Louis Stevenson, among many others.

■ **Peter Conn**
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia PA

Blake, Milton, Hauer

Having enjoyed Andrea Brady's review of *What in Me Is Dark: The revolutionary life of 'Paradise Lost'* by Orlando Reade (November 29), I thought it might be interesting to those of your readers who aren't from Generation X a Y chromosome may not already know Hauer's character whom Reade men

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Around their shores: indignant
burning with the fires of Orc
becomes

Fiery the angels fell; deep thun-
der rolled around their shores;
burning with the fires of Orc.

■ **Keith Miller**
Londoun SE24

'Ça ira'

In her balanced account of Marie Antoinette (December 13), Catriona Seth writes that the song "Ça ira" suggests that aristocrats "soon will be swinging from lampposts". At the time of the French Revolution street lighting was generally provided by lamps suspended on brackets fixed to the sides or corners of houses, or on a support strung across a narrow street, rather than a free-standing lamppost. Examples of the latter can be still be seen, for example, across streets in the renovated old quarter of Toulon.

■ **Peter Cogman**
Southampton

Literary anniversaries

Though no critic, I'd like to speak up for *Mansfield Park* (NB, December 6). I'm not surprised that Jane Austen's darkest novel was left out of the festivities for her bicentenary at Chawton House. Fanny Price is horribly good, the Crawfords are delightfully bad and Mrs Norris is one of the most subtle villains I've met. Little Betsey trying to show and hide the precious stolen knife at the same time is hilarious. I've reread *MP* the most, even more than *P&P*, which I love as well, of course.

■ **Sarah Walsh**
Denver CO

History wars

In the debate about statues of public figures and their contested meaning, might not one solution be to deposit them in a designated park similar to Grūtas Park in Lithuania? There, statues of Lenin, Stalin and other Soviet leaders rub shoulders with prominent Lithuanian politicians of the Communist era (always half the size of their masters). A UK park (in the home counties?) could accommodate statues of Rhodes, Stanley, Picton, Thatcher et al, which, with suitably informative plaques, would be instructive no matter which side of the argument you happen to be on.

■ **John Barnie**
Comins Coch, Ceredigion

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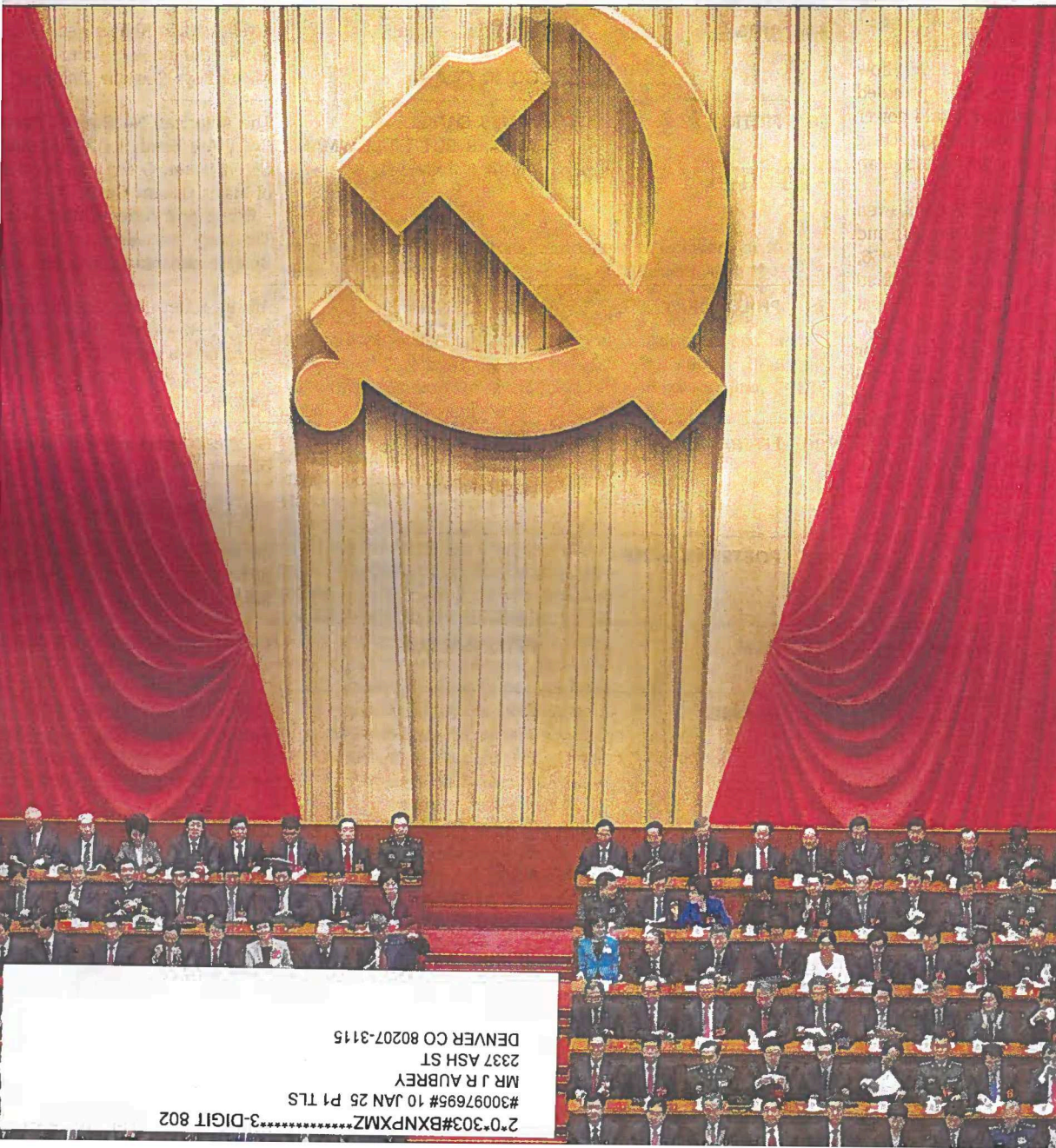
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