

FRIDAY BOOKS

Why finding £20 doesn't make up for losing a tenner

SMALL CHANGE
by Dan Ariely and Jeff Kreisler
(Bluebird £16.99)

MARCUS BERKMANN

AS SOMEONE who has been broke for as long as I can remember, I need this book. In fact, the only way I could need it more would be if its pages were hollowed out and filled with banknotes. That really would be helpful.

Small Change is subtitled Money Mishaps And How To Avoid Them and is aimed squarely at those of us who thought we had a spare fiver in that trouser pocket and turn out not to.

They start with gambling. Don't do it, at all. You won't win. No one ever does. The authors tell a terrible tale of a man who went to Las Vegas with \$5, and through extraordinary luck increased this over a weekend to \$300million. Then he bet the lot on the turn of a card and lost. When he got home he was asked how much he had lost and he said \$5. This is the gambler's mentality: self-denial to the point of mental illness.

Dan and Jeff are excellent on the pain of paying for things. Jeff goes on honeymoon and pays for the whole thing upfront. He has friends who go on the same holiday and pay for things as they emerge: drinks at bars, meals at restaurants, absurdly expensive deck-chairs on beaches.

They probably pay less than Jeff and his wife do in the end, but the agony of constantly having to cough up ruins their holiday.

The best way to stop buying stuff, therefore, is to increase that pain. Dan and Jeff talk of 'salience', which is the grown-up term for awareness of something — in this case payment. Paying with cash has built-in salience.

We hand over the notes, and we get only coins in change, so we know that something has cost us.

Credit cards have much less salience: we're putting off paying until much later, so we can forget about it. And digital payments have barely any salience at all.

Have you ever bought anything off the internet late at night when slightly drunk? Were you at all surprised when the delivery men turned up with a sofa three days later?

We value gains and losses differently, to the extent that if we lose a £10 note, the pain of doing so is about twice the pleasure we'd get if we picked up £10 on the street. In fact, the pain of losing £10 is equivalent to the pleasure of finding £20. Bonkers, if you think about it.

People value effort over expertise. A locksmith tells them that, when he started out, he took for ever to open a lock and often broke it in the process. He charged for the parts as well as his standard fee — people were happy to pay it and tipped him freely.

As he became more proficient and opened a lock quickly without breaking it, customers not only didn't tip, but argued about his fee.

To whom do we turn for guidance in times of doubt and uncertainty? Dan and Jeff reveal that the person we trust the most is...ourselves. They give countless examples of people making terrible decisions based on little more than a personal whim.

There's some sound advice here, a lot of it cheerfully counter-intuitive. You won't make any money from reading this book, more's the pity, but it could turn out to be the most sensible £16.99 you've ever spent.

BOOK OF THE WEEK

THE RED ATLAS

by John Davies and Alexander J. Kent
(University of Chicago Press £26.50)

ROGER LEWIS

Russia's plans to INVADE

BEWARE utopian schemes. There will be blood. After the excitement of the storming of the Winter Palace, in 1917, and the execution of the Tsar and the imperial family, the Russian Revolution ushered in a world of horror and death.

Stalin, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, who avidly read and annotated torture reports, personally signed lists of execution quotas. In 1937 and 1938 alone, 681,692 people received a bullet in the back of the neck.

Terror was used by the KGB and its forerunner, the NKVD, i.e. the secret police, to ensure obedience and suppress discussion and dissent. As capitalism was overthrown, businesses were nationalised, private property was confiscated and the mass media was controlled.

Bureaucracy was intensified, 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', was imposed, and Stalin's purges eliminated potential rivals, scholars, artists, military officers, and anyone else who was mildly intelligent. In the Ukraine, food, grain and livestock were requisitioned and 4 million people were deliberately starved — an organised famine, or genocide, to punish 'anti-party elements and saboteurs'.

Had not NATO kept them the other side of the Iron Curtain, it was Stalin and his successors' absolute ambition and intention to bring their mad Marxist ideology here and raise the hammer and sickle flag above London.

As the UK's Army chief predicts Russia may start a war, a new book reveals they've had detailed maps of our secret military complexes for decades

Mapping activities were put under state supervision by Lenin in 1919.

It was Stalin, however, who created the Military Topographic Directorate of the General Staff of the Soviet Army. It was a massive secret enterprise involving thousands of people. Up to 2million maps were made of the West, which were kept under armed guard in a series of 25 humidity-controlled vaults.

Even within the Soviet hierarchy, 'army officers who were required to use maps for training and exercises had no idea of the extent and scope of the project'. Every map and chart had to be returned to the depot after use. 'If it became damaged, even its remnants had to be returned.'

The joke is that the Russians knew more about Britain than the average British citizen, as on our own Ordnance Survey maps there are frequent blanks, called security deletions. Sensitive information is excluded from our view.

With the help of their spies, however, the Kremlin knew all about our secret military installations and complexes. In their Red Atlas they drew every hut and barrack at the Royal Navy dockyard at Pembroke, an RAF flying boat base.

They knew the berth length and channel depth at Chatham, where submarines were built and maintained. They could have found their way blindfolded around the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield, near Reading, where nuclear warheads are constructed. Even Google Maps omitted this place until recently.

John Davies and Alexander J. Kent grow wistful as they recount the story of the Soviet cartographic enterprise, which has never been told until now. The maps themselves, which began to be leaked to the West after the pulling down of the Berlin Wall in 1989, 'have rarely been publicly displayed'.

The craftsmanship is indeed tremendously skilled. 'The sheer beauty of the maps makes them mesmerising,' we are told. 'The use of colours, lines and geometric shapes



Picture: AP / KRISTY WIGLESWORTH



Picture: GETTY

PART of the 'enormous and secret infrastructure' of the Cold War involved the Soviets creating amazingly detailed maps, 'useful for invading armies and occupiers', which were intended to support civil administrators 'when the entire world is communist'.

On the evidence of their maps of a Britain they imagined they could one day possess, 'the Russians didn't miss much', write the authors of this book.

Using high-altitude aircraft, satellite imagery and missiles bearing reconnaissance cameras, the Russians plotted every inch of our islands, continually revising and redrawing the maps 'to keep up with the transforming landscapes'.

The Russians also deployed 'people on

the ground, quietly walking down the streets, looking' — Le Carré-esque double-agents who sent back to Moscow details of factories, their output and ownership. The size and shape of buildings were of great interest. Every high-rise and low-rise dwelling in Southampton, for example, was known by the enemy.

The utilities, industries and transport systems were recorded — the width of roads, the height and dimension of bridges, their load capacity and

construction material. Local terrain was scrutinised — forests, the type of trees, height, girth and spacing. Railway signals, timetables, and even disused tracks were drawn, in case they could be reinstated.

The Russians were very keen on marine areas and navigable rivers. They marked spot depths, dredged canals and tidal ranges. The water speed and flow at estuaries fascinated them — the Mersey at Liverpool, the Forth at Edinburgh, and the Medway at Rochester and Chatham.

lend them an Art Deco feel.' Possibly, I find it dead creepy to think that my very home was literally on the map if Moscow had ever invaded and won a war.

I live in Rochester, which the Soviets transliterated for Warsaw Pact commanders as Roczyyste. Other places in the vicinity are Czetem/Chatham, Hen-Bei/Herne Bay, Magyt/Margate and Mejdsten/Maidstone.

Like William the Conqueror, it can be guessed where the Red Army planned to arrive on our shores. Sussex and Kent were in the firing line. The Soviets were also very interested in Cambridge: 'The lodging houses and their lecture halls are reminiscent of monasteries or ancient castles...there is rain on 12-14 days each month.'

The university is where all the spies were educated: Philby, Burgess, Maclean, Blunt. Perhaps Moscow assumed their battalions would get a big welcome when they turned up there in force.

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Brutal murderer who became man of God

HISTORY

THE MINISTER AND THE MURDERER

by Stuart Kelly (Granta £20)

JOHN PRESTON

ON MAY 19, 1984, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland trooped down a long passageway known as the Black and White Corridor at their Edinburgh headquarters into their Assembly Hall.

The issue they were to discuss that day was anything but black and white.

A 39-year-old man called James Nelson had applied to be ordained as a Church of Scotland Minister.

What set Nelson apart from other would-be priests was that he was a convicted murderer.

Some 15 years earlier, he had smashed in his mother's skull with an old police truncheon, then used a brick to beat her until he had obliterated her features.

He then packed an overnight bag and disappeared into the night.

Two days later, he handed himself in to police. Asked what had happened, Nelson claimed that his mother had said some

unflattering things about his girlfriend and he'd just 'lost his head'. He felt no horror at what he had done at the time, he said, nor did he express any remorse.

At his trial, Nelson pleaded not guilty due to diminished responsibility. A psychiatrist, speaking on his behalf, declared that he'd suffered 'years of deprivation' at the hands of his mother.

His sister confirmed this, recalling 'persistent beatings' from both their mother and father.

All this put the General Assembly in a very tricky position. You might assume that the Bible takes a robustly critical line about murder — but, in fact, the line is a lot fuzzier than expected. True, the

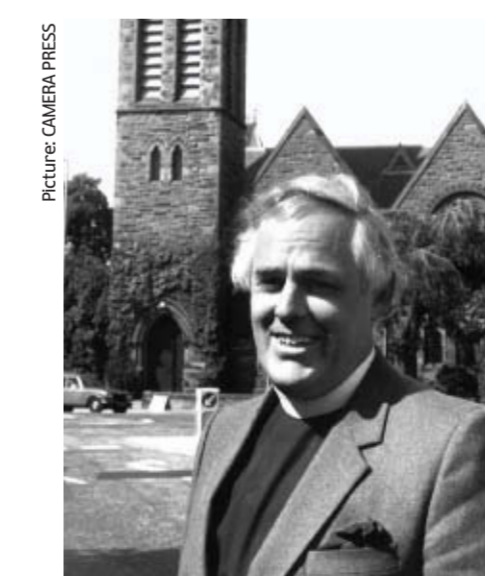
Fifth Commandment says: 'Thou shalt not kill'. On the other hand, Moses, who, of course, brought down the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, was himself a murderer. In Exodus, Moses is described as killing an Egyptian whom he saw beating a Hebrew, and burying his body in the sand.

Nelson was found guilty and served nine years of a life sentence, before getting parole. He then studied divinity at university and married a fellow student.

According to Nelson, his conversion happened while he was in prison — it appears to have been a gradual process, rather than a blinding flash.

The trouble is, he also said a great many things about wanting to become a priest that make one — to put it mildly — uneasy about his motives.

On being asked why he wanted to become ordained, Nelson claimed he was only 'in it for the money'. Given how little Church of Scotland ministers earned at the time, it seems safe to say this was a joke — albeit a remarkably ill-advised one.



Godly: James Nelson by his church

When someone asked if he thought there was any risk he might murder anyone else, Nelson said he thought it unlikely — 'I'm a wee bit older,' he said. 'I'm a wee bit wiser'.

This was not the sort of ringing declaration of repentance the General Assembly was looking for.

Nonetheless, after an impassioned debate, the Assembly finally voted by 622 votes to 425 that he could be ordained. Soon afterwards, Nelson became minister at Chapelhall and Calderbank in Lanarkshire — 'a brisk 20-minute walk from where he had killed his mother'.

As far as author Stuart Kelly is concerned, 'Nelson is a keyhole through which I can see issues and ideas that have troubled and intrigued me for decades' — namely the nature of forgiveness, his own faith and the possible existence of evil as a real force in the world.

Nelson died of lung cancer in 2005, so clearly Kelly can't talk to him, but

he makes surprisingly little effort to contact people he knew. Rather, he's happier to play up Nelson's contradictions, as if to emphasise there's a little bit of him in everyone.

However wobbly Kelly's focus might be, there's much to chew over here, as well as admire. Genuinely eccentric books don't come along often and this is undoubtedly one of them — erudite, agonised and, at times, plain bonkers.

He's particularly good on forgiveness — especially on how hard it is. He writes, too, about his own loss of faith: about how 'what seemed to be exquisite and intricate turns out to be nothing but ash, in the blink of an eye'.

At the end of his account, James Nelson stands less as a flesh-and-blood man and more as a moral weather vane, swinging wildly in one direction, then another. Showing us the very worst we are capable of and — just possibly — the very best.

MUSTREADS

Out now in paperback

THE ANGRY CHEF

by Anthony Warner
(Oneworld £9.99)

THESE days, it is hard to open a newspaper without being told by some celebrity clean-eating guru that our diet is poisoning us and we need to switch to kale and wild blueberries without delay.

Anthony Warner is a professional chef with a degree in biochemistry — and food fads drive him mad. Since 2016, he has been flaying the foolish nonsense peddled by some in the diet industry in his Angry Chef blog.

He has now gathered his thoughts into a bracingly outspoken book.

If you have ever been tempted to follow an extreme diet, the Angry Chef's funny, furious and sometimes profane polemic will swiftly put you right.

He is inexorable in debunking the pseudo-science of diet gurus with the less glamorous, but fully researched, evidence of the real thing.

VICTORIANS UNDONE

by Kathryn Hughes
(4th Estate £9.99)

BITISH historian Kathryn Hughes is the biographer of George Eliot and Mrs Beeton.

But in her latest book, she attempts to show what long-dead historical figures were actually like: 'Did they lean in close and whisper, or stand at a distance and shout? 'Did they smell (probably,

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EMILE ZOLA

by Michael Rosen
(Faber £9.99)

'ON THE evening of Monday, 18 July 1898, Emile Zola disappeared.' So begins former Children's Laureate Michael Rosen's account of the year the French novelist Emile Zola spent in exile in England.

Zola's flight from France began with a famous open letter, 'J'Accuse', written in defence of a Jewish Army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, who had been wrongly convicted of treason.

Zola hoped that his essay would clear Dreyfus's name. Instead, he was found guilty of libel and sentenced to prison — a sentence that he fled to England to avoid.

Eventually, Dreyfus was pardoned and Zola was able to return home.

In a moving postscript, Rosen reveals his great-uncle Oscar was deported to Auschwitz on the same train as Dreyfus's granddaughter, Madeleine.

most people did) — but of what exactly?

Hughes takes five subjects: Lady Flora Hastings, spitefully bullied by Queen Victoria, who believed that she had become pregnant while unmarried; Charles Darwin; George Eliot; Dante Gabriel Rossetti's voluptuous model Fanny Cornforth; and a murdered child, Fanny Adams, whose name lives on in the slang expression 'Sweet Fanny Adams'.

Beginning with a single physical attribute — Eliot's hand, Darwin's beard — she explores what it really meant to be human in the 19th century.

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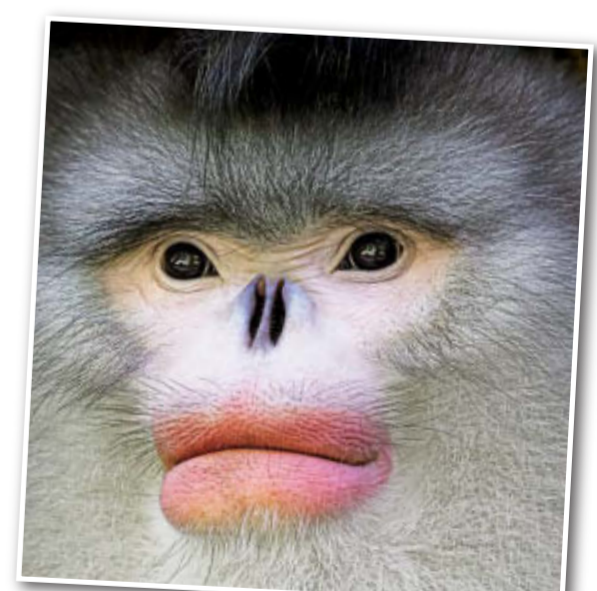
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PICTURETHIS

ENDANGERED

by Tim Flach (Abrams £50)

ACCLAIMED photographer Tim Flach's new book is the result of a multi-year project for which he travelled from the Congo to coral reefs around the world to explore the diminishing species of our planet. From sea angels to snub-nosed monkeys (above), this book showcases fabulous portraits of these animals with insightful commentary from zoologist Jonathan Baillie. A wonderful record of creatures we may never see again.

KATYA EDWARDS