

Tommy Robinson and the Enduring Tragedy of Politics

Christopher DeGroot in [The Unz Review](#) (August 20, 2018):

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Protest in support of freeing Tommy Robinson at Trafalgar Square. Credit C. Suthorn

Morality is the weakness of the brain. –Rimbaud

He's no fool, Dominic Green. A Jazz musician, a lecturer in politics, and a lively and witty writer, Green is what used to be called a man of parts. It's rather disappointing, then, that in "America, meet Tommy Robinson – if you must," his [August 1 column](#) in *Spectator USA*, Green engages in facile moralizing and indulges his class snobbery toward Tommy Robinson where an exacting consideration of hard issues would

be far more fruitful.

Those issues, in Green words, are “Europe’s crisis of Islam and immigration.” Tommy Robinson, says Green,

is a defender of free speech, and has contributed to the exposure of a scandal that the police, the BBC, and much of the mainstream media seemed unwilling to cover, the mass grooming and rape of underage white girls by gangs of men, almost all of them of South Asian Muslim extraction.

On August 1, Robinson was released from prison on appeal. Green gives the background of his imprisonment:

In 2017, Robinson was given a suspended sentence after broadcasting on Facebook Live the names and faces of four Muslim men during their trial on charges of raping an underage girl. That the men were found guilty does not alter the fact that Robinson broke the law. Broadcasting the names of people who are still legally innocent might prejudice a jury. It might even cause a prosecution to miscarry, and allow guilty suspects to escape conviction.

In May, Robinson repeated the offense during the trial of four Pakistani men in the northern English town of Leeds. By the end of the day, Robinson had been tried and sentenced to thirteen months’ imprisonment for contempt of court...

Lord Burnett, who freed Robinson on appeal today, called the haste with which Robinson had been arrested, sentenced and imprisoned at Leeds 'a fundamentally flawed process'...

Robinson's behavior, we are to take it from Green's account, has been admirable in some respects but mixed on the whole. The man has been heroic where police and mainstream media were cowards, as indeed they remain, and he has suffered considerably for that. Yet he has also repeatedly broken the law, actions in which there were moral evils besides.

The full story is not so simple, however. "Broadcasting the names of people who are still legally innocent might prejudice a jury"—yes, very true—but a regular practice in British media, even so. When Robinson was charged with contempt of court, the BBC and the *Daily Mail* were [still broadcasting](#) the names and photographs of the accused in the case. In fact, it was from [this list](#) on the BBC website that, during the second trial, Robinson [recited](#) the names of the alleged rapists and sex traffickers on Facebook Live. Why no outrage toward the mainstream media? Probably because these are "respectable" sources—that is, politically correct—while Robinson is not. He was a vociferous agitator, too. No wonder he was subjected to a 'a fundamentally flawed process' and received only a four-minute hearing in court.

Given the manifest failure of British politicians and police to deal with "Europe's crisis of Islam and immigration," one may fairly ask, who if not the uncouth Robinson and his rabble of supporters should provide resistance to "the mass grooming and rape of underage white girls by gangs of men, almost all of them of South Asian Muslim extraction"? The madness of political correctness may be even worse in England than it is

here in these States, where Green, a British export, now lives and writes, and with the usual fear of being thought “racist,” the police chose not to protect the most vulnerable among them. [Lizzie Dearden](#), in a February 23 [article](#) in *The Independent*, reported:

Grooming gangs abused more than 700 women and girls around Newcastle with “arrogant persistence” after police appeared to punish victims while letting the perpetrators walk free, a case review has found.

After examining evidence on the abuse of hundreds of girls in the North-east, investigators concluded that local authorities claiming there is no grooming in their area “are not looking hard enough”.

Before 2014, police were responding to incidents on an ad hoc basis, with efforts by authorities trying to persuade victims to keep away from the abusers and change their behaviours.

The review found the approach led to “consideration of deterrent punishments of victims for being drunk and disorderly or for making false allegations when accounts were changed”.

“This sent an unhelpful message to perpetrators – they were unlikely to be prosecuted or prevented from continuing to abuse – encouraging an arrogant persistence,” it added.

“It also had a significant impact on victims who learnt that nothing would be done against perpetrators.”

On July 17, in the same magazine, Dearden gave us [more disturbing details](#):

The government received information detailing the extent of grooming gang activity in Rotherham as far back as 2002 but failed to properly act on it, a review has found. The National Crime Agency’s ongoing investigation has revealed that more than 1,500 girls and young women may have been abused in the Yorkshire town between 1997 and 2013.

A report by Alexis Jay exposed “blatant” failures by police and the Labour-run local council, where officials feared racism accusations at the time. The independent inquiry said an unpublished Home Office research report from 2002 described the extent of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham and a series of criticisms over the response “that should have raised concern”. The independent review of information passed to the Home Office in connection with allegations of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham between 1998 and 2005 was commissioned after Professor Alexis Jay’s independent inquiry suggested the department had been passed information about the scale of abuse in the Yorkshire town many years before anybody was convicted.

“Britain’s politicians and policemen,” Green observes,

are paralysed by fear of exacerbating tensions between British Muslims and non-Muslims. British governments have admitted Yusuf Qaradawi, an Islamist and anti-Semite, but have refused to admit the batty but less dangerous Pamela Geller. That's just not cricket, and it shows how scared the politicians, civil servants and police are of a violent crisis—and how easily intimidated they are by the belligerence of the Islamists.

But for all that, Green does nothing to hold the British elite accountable for the policies that resulted in this parlous situation. "In a recent *Sunday Times* poll," he writes, "24 per cent said they would support a new hard-right party that promised to halt all Muslim immigration." Well, no wonder, one might respond, because however objectionable the new "hard right-party" may be, the mainstream right has been utterly incompetent in regard to "Muslim immigration;" and as Peter Hitchens has long documented, incompetent in general.

Green's own response reveals much about how his character, and how little serious he is as a writer. "Who," he asks, "would want to be associated with Tommy the free speech martyr?" "When a 'Free Tommy' rally marched on 10, Downing Street," he goes on, "Robinson's supporters were filmed giving fascist salutes, shouting 'Sieg Heil', and fighting the police." Green's general laziness and irresponsibility are well evidenced by this easy deflection and silly assumption of guilt by association, as if the characters of "Robinson's supporters"—with whom he may or may not identify ideologically—proved anything about the man himself. Nice work, Mr. Green! *Jacobin* or *The New Republic* couldn't have done it any better.

For all one can tell, Green is not troubled by the “‘blatant’ failures” of the British politicians, police and mainstream media. Nor does he explore what Lord Burnett, who freed Robinson on appeal, called ‘a fundamentally flawed process,’ or in other words, “the haste with which Robinson had been arrested, sentenced and imprisoned at Leeds.” *Defending England*, when those who are supposed to do so have evaded the most vital task—*this* is a project for which Green, so busy moralizing, shows no sympathy or appreciation. Though he doesn’t say so, the very difficult present situation in England—namely, the group conflict between Brits and Muslims—didn’t have to come to pass, because after all, it was never necessary for there to be any mass immigration of Muslims into England in the first place. Brits could have chosen to do what was best for themselves, a wise judgment that, before recent (read: exceedingly weak because so moralistic) times, would have gone without saying. Instead, they made the easy, the weak, the “moral” choice.

What *certainly* bothers Green, his column shows, are the unseemly elements in what he accurately describes as “the revolt of the majority.” Nor is that surprising, because like the “respectable” people who are culpable in this mess, Green himself is a politically correct empty suit. Thus, instead of assuming the hard work of substantive analysis of the issues—Islam and mass immigration—Green tells us that Robinson is

an ex-football hooligan, an ex-member of the racist British National Party, and the founder of the English Defense League, a motley of football hooligans and erstwhile BNP supporters who have turned from fighting each other and hating Jews and Blacks to fighting ‘anti-fascists’ and hating Muslims—the ‘counter-jihad’, as they call it.

Well, by his own account, Stephen Christopher Yaxley-Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson, took on his pseudonym after a football hooligan of that name in order, as Green relates, "to spare himself retaliation from Islamists." On July 25, 2011, [the BBC reported](#) that Robinson

led Luton Town supporters and chanted 'EDL till I die', as they clashed with Newport County fans in Luton [on August 24, 2010]....

Lennon, from Luton, was found guilty of using threatening, abusive or insulting behavior....

District Judge Carolyn Mellanby told him: 'I am entirely satisfied you were at the front of this group of angry Luton supporters looking for trouble when you were confronted by the group of Newport supporters who were also angry and fired up looking for trouble.'

Robinson, however, claimed that

I am being done for what I am saying rather than what I am doing....

In the last 12 months I've been banned from protesting, going to the football and my assets have been frozen. It is a police state...

It is because we are evaluating animals, it is well to observe here, that journalism, like the life of the mind generally and indeed life itself, is so very difficult. The sort of person we are—the result, to a significant extent, of our personal history and culture—inevitably determines our perceptions and therefore beliefs and moral judgments, usually unawares. Of this *essential bias*—which, [I have argued](#), is intrinsic to reason itself—Green’s simplistic, moralizing perspective on Robinson is an instructive example. Get ready, America, he informs us, Robinson is “an ex-football hooligan”! Boston College, where Green is an adjunct lecturer in politics, may wish to have him do double duty, for as we see here, he would make a fine leader of bias response teams. With his profound sensitivity to racism and other evils, Green might plant himself at the university square during busy hours; there, at the sight of any microaggression, he could dispatch the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion by blowing a hearty burst of his characteristic hot air into his saxophone.

I would not, of course, deny that Robinson is “an ex-football hooligan,” nor do I think his culpability in the football fight is implausible. But there is something pretty curious about Green’s account: Although he notices that “the police, the BBC, and much of the mainstream media seemed unwilling to cover...the mass grooming and rape of underage white girls by gangs of men, almost all of them of South Asian Muslim extraction,” he nevertheless does not allow for the possibility that Robinson, who was willing to cover this thorny issue, might have been a victim for precisely that reason. Green does not consider the possibility that, just as “the police, the BBC, and much of the mainstream media” had failed to do their actual duty, as it were, lest they should be “racist,” so the police who dealt with Robinson at the football match on August 24, 2010, as well as District Judge

Carolyn Mellanby, herself an agent of the State, might have been biased in their treatment of him. After all, it is surely not unreasonable to believe that the same politically correct motivation which kept “the police, the BBC, and much of the mainstream media” from investigating and prosecuting the evils in question,” might have prompted these persons to treat Robinson unfairly, to suppress and punish the pesky fellow. I am not saying that this is *necessarily* what happened. It may or may not have happened. My main point is that the situation is mor complicated than Green gives us to understand. He is too confident in the truth of his assertions. He lacks rigor, a full sense of context, and most of all, a proper epistemic skepticism.

Contra Green, there is little connection between football players—or rather, “hooligans,” so offensive to his delicate nature—and the British National Party. There was a two-or-three-year period when the British National Party’s predecessor, the National Front, recruited at football games with some success, but that was in the late 1970s, before Robinson was born. Robinson did spend a year as a member of the British National Party, in 2004. About that time he has [said](#): “I was looking for a way out, I was looking [for] somebody to be addressing this Islamic extremist problem...I didn’t Nick Griffin was in the National Front, I didn’t know non-whites couldn’t join the organisation. I joined, I saw what it was about, it was not for me.”

Young men, God knows, have a knack for making big mistakes. Laudably brave as Robinson is, it is still prudent to be somewhat skeptical of his explanation. It is a safer bet, I think, that his efforts with the English Defense League (EDL), which he founded in 2009, reflect better intentions on his part. Although the British mainstream press misrepresents it

as a matter of course—akin to how the liberal press misrepresents Trump supporters and the Tea Party here in the US—the avowed purpose of the EDL is to defend England against what Green inaccurately calls “Islamism” (more on that shortly). Nevertheless, Robinson left the EDL in October, 2013, having [become concerned](#) about “the dangers of far-right extremism.” For by that time the EDL had been in a number of violent altercations with groups which the mainstream media tends to refer to as “counter protestors” or “anti-fascists.”

Here it is absolutely necessary to take a detached perspective and resist any quick and easy moral judgments. Only in this way can we grasp the immense complexity of the circumstances. First, we must be clear that these are *group conflicts*: Brits and other Europeans versus Muslims who, having immigrated to England, are abusing and sexually assaulting Europeans, mostly young women and girls. Further, Brits and Europeans themselves have protested against the EDL, thus providing another source of potential conflict, an in-group kind. We must also recognize that throughout history, for a group to abuse and sexually assault members of another group has always been a source of brutal violence in response, especially if the victims were women and children. Recall, moreover, the gross failure of the British police and politicians to endeavor to rectify this situation. Now, with all this in mind, I think the only reasonable conclusion is that engagement—violent, if necessary—by a group such as the EDL was necessary, and therefore, justified. This belief, I stress, should not be interpreted as “a rationale” for the “moral evils” of Robinson and his allies, because in the circumstances such a moral judgment is a categorical error. It does not apply. For again, group assertion was the only effective recourse; therefore, it would be irrational and self-destructive to refuse that recourse for “morality’s” sake. It is only too easy for Green to moralize concerning Robinson and the EDL, while not asking

or answering the question, what is to be done? and doing nothing himself.

History, let us be clear, is constituted by group conflicts. Though today few of us may want to recognize it, people have always defined themselves and their interests by virtue of their *opposition to other groups*, that is, their competitors. Nor has this *agon* ceased, as our vexed time increasingly shows. And again, we know from the events that reliance on the law did not avail, the law's agents having failed the citizens. The only alternative, then, to popular resistance, with people being willing to engage in violence if need be, would have been submission. And what an apt word that is in context, the word Islam itself denoting submission, and the religion itself aiming, by its very doctrine, to achieve world domination. For women, life under Islam is [de facto sex slavery](#). "The mass grooming and rape of underage...girls by gangs of men, almost all of them of South Asian Muslim extraction," is by no means ideologically inconsistent with the general treatment of women under Islam. What is more, there is [abundant historical evidence](#) that for centuries, Muslims have treated European women as an especial good to be acquired and enjoyed, first by means of the slave-trade, and now by sex grooming, which is obviously no different in kind from the former method. The sex trafficking and sexual assault epidemics are European-wide phenomena, and for England as for other European nations, it would be quite absurd and self-destructive to resist engagement and violence for the sake of not being "racist" toward *your enemy*.

Besides, EDL members include blacks, Asians, and other non-whites. For such diversity Anders Brievik, a wicked mass murderer whom Robinson has expressly condemned, has [called](#) the organization "naïve fools." Robinson [rejects](#) being labeled a

racist and anti-Semite. He considers himself a Zionist, in fact, and [counts](#) blacks and Muslims among his friends. Not to simplify or pardon the man in general, however: Robinson does have a history of crime independent of his activities with the EDL and the like nationalist movements. "I am a working class man from Luton," [he states](#).

I have made mistakes....[But] what has got me on to this programme is what I am seeing. My violent offence was 10 years ago as a young man. I have done things I am not proud of. But I have been to jail and I have seen militant Islamism in jail. It is a threat not being tackled...We don't have people doing Nazi salutes, the pictures are manipulated, Islamism and Nazism are the same coin, we oppose both.

It is obvious that Green did little research for his article on Robinson. Indeed, he appears to be more interested in affecting a moral superiority to him than digging into his complicated history. Robinson, Green writes, has "false front teeth because his real ones got punched out, a conviction for drunkenly assaulting an off-duty policeman, and another conviction for mortgage fraud." Seeing as Robinson may relocate to America, where he has the support of vulgar men like Steve Bannon, Green asks himself, "Should I apologise preemptively for Tommy Robinson?" Ah, good team members should expect nothing else, but alas for Green, the question finds him nostalgic for the old, better days:

Once, the British would have sent Robinson to Australia in chains. Now, there is every chance that British officialdom will be happy if market forces export him to America. He's already made some powerful friends, and he likes the

camera. He'll probably chance his way into media prominence in the US as a defender of free speech and Western values.

So let me apologise once more. I didn't think it could get any worse after Piers Morgan, but it's about to. America, meet the Cary Grant of the alt-right.

Green, one imagines, is very pleased with himself for writing that, and doubtless such work will keep him well liked among the faithful and invited to their cocktail parties. But Time is likely to render a very different judgment, for Green's is nothing but genteel conservatism, an evasion of exacting thought: which is precisely why this sort of thing is ever in demand. After all, the big money and social distinction are not obtained by being intellectually rigorous and morally principled—quite the contrary. That is the way to end up *persona non grata*.

Green reduces complex cultural and political movements to sheer caricature. Like a millennial student in his cultural studies class, keen to impress big fancy wise professor—to say nothing of his monkey-like peers!—he signals his disapproval of “popular revulsion at Islamism” and “old fascists in anti-Islamist clothing.” He accepts the false distinction between Islam and so-called Islamism. And yet, as Ibn Warraq [shows](#) in *The Islam in Islamic Terrorism: The Importance of Beliefs, Ideas, and Ideology* (2017), what is called “radical Islam” derives from Islam itself. Hence Gad Saad, an admirably principled intellectual, and other serious scholars refuse to use that inaccurate phrase. It is possible, for God's sake, to be truthful about Islam without thereby implying that all Muslims are bad. And the plain truth is that *Islam as such* is fundamentally incompatible with the modern world and with the

liberal democratic West in particular. Europe, of course, is now learning that the hard way, having chosen, very like our own country in regard to the southern border, to act on blind pity and needless guilt where only sober, unflinching judgment regarding [certain tragedy](#) can do. This is, ultimately, the price the West is now paying for having become so rich, for enjoying so much material progress. For it is this that allows for the rule of the weak and unthinking. Stupid moralistic sentiments become dominant over severe, tragic decisions.

Men and women having turned their eyes away from the grim truth, their politics now take a darker turn. The populist and nationalist uprisings that we are witnessing throughout the United States and Europe teach life's deepest, most enduring lesson: willful blindness, from which disaster may issue. Although he despised democracy, for Thomas Carlyle, [the French Revolution](#), awful as it was, was only to be expected, the elite having exploited and betrayed the people, then as ever. So it is [in our time](#). "The fruits of free trade policy during the last 25 years," [writes](#) Pat Buchanan,

are the frozen wages of U.S. workers, \$12 trillion in U.S. trade deficits, 55,000 factories lost, 6 million manufacturing jobs gone, China surpassing the U.S. in manufacturing, all causing a backlash that pushed a political novice to the Republican nomination and into the presidency.

Whatever form government takes, selfishness and intractable delusion in the face of overwhelming complexity and one's own evils are permanent aspects of our condition. Nationalist economics, and turning immigrants away for the sake of the common good—which is necessarily limited—are readily passed

over for the sake of easier and less controversial gains, destructive though they shall prove in the end. From this grave background there arise men like Tommy Robinson, as necessary as they are unpalatable. [Says](#) Emerson:

Those who have most of this coarse energy, – the ‘bruisers,’ who have run the gauntlet of caucus and tavern through the county or the state, have their own vices, but they have the good nature of strength and courage. Fierce and unscrupulous, they are usually frank and direct, and above falsehood.

In our time, ‘bruisers’ like Tommy Robinson find their antagonists in the politically correct, in effete types like Dominic Green who, in the rotting decadent post-Christian West, make an enemy o