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MY SHOUTTom
EvansSETTING THE WORLD TO RIGHTS,
ONE DAY AT A TIME**Beware of the
Boojum: Carroll's
lessons for the
modern age**

WHEN Lewis Carroll (or, as he's known in Runcorn, "Lewis Carroll, who's from quite near Runcorn") wrote *The Hunting of the Snark*, it's safe to say he didn't have the recent rise of right-wing populism in mind.

If he did, we really are through the looking glass.

But even though it was finished in 1876, Carroll's nonsense resonates through the ages.

It concerns an expedition led by an arrogant, dogmatic Bellman to hunt and capture a Snark. It's never explained precisely what a Snark is – Snark means Snark, I suppose.

"What I tell you three times is true," the Bellman tells his loyal crew – badly qualified chancers whose usefulness to the mission comes second to their being friends with the leader.

"His courage is perfect," purrs the Bellman of one colleague, who has forgotten his own name, "and that, after all, is the thing that one needs with a Snark."

Their map is useless, a featureless square of nothing but ocean, but the crew (who have had enough of experts) lap it up; it's "a map they can all understand".

Even though the Bellman's only plan is to ring his bell and bellow orders, they make it to dry land. But it doesn't end well.

For all the Bellman's bluster, none of them has a clue how to find a Snark, and when one does it turns out to be a Boojum – a completely different creature, and a dangerous one.

And that's how such missions end. What brought down communism in the Eastern Bloc wasn't its leaders' corruption, or their brutality, or their flawed ideology, or their incompetence, but their failure – the life they provided their citizens didn't match expectations.

Donald Trump has the potential to be as corrupt, brutal, flawed and incompetent as any dictator, and journalists have a duty to point this out as often as we can. But more importantly, he will fail, and his failures – to create millions of jobs, to provide absolute security from terrorism, to make climate change stop happening because he's said so three times – will define him.

And whatever the colour and consistency of our eventual Brexit, it won't solve the problems of post-industrial decline in the UK's medium-sized towns and cities. That failure, not the venal lies about £350m for the NHS, will define Brexit.

I could be wrong; we could be about to snare us a Snark. But if Trump and the Brexiters are leading the West into the jaws of a Boojum, the people won't forget.

TALKBACK

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**Claims of miracle cancer
cure put patients at risk**

SUNDAY'S edition of the Liverpool ECHO featured the story of Sean Walsh, a local cancer patient who has elected to ignore the advice of doctors and to refuse treatment for his condition (Man with cancer beats 8 month prognosis - despite shunning hospital treatment, January 22).

While we sincerely wish Mr Walsh the best of health, we believe the article's uncritical promotion of his regime of alternative 'treatments' is deeply troubling and irresponsible.

Throughout the article Mr Walsh's choice to dismiss the advice of cancer specialists is praised, with his "different approach" to treatment described as being "gentler on his body". Also troubling is the positive report that Mr Walsh is "bringing his knowledge back to the UK to help people in Liverpool" – a statement which can only be seen as encouraging other vulnerable cancer patients to follow his example. This is the kind of advice which can lead people to make dangerous and misinformed choices with their healthcare, with potentially lethal consequences.

The ECHO may argue that the inclusion of an opinion from Cancer Research UK absolves the newspaper of any culpability for its promotion of these dangerous quack treatments; given that the overwhelming majority of the

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You cannot allow so many roadworks at the same time, it has a knock-on effect... the citizens of our city deserve better.

R. Lee, Liverpool 15

article is dedicated to the uncritical promotion of disproven therapies, this justification holds little weight.

The treatments promoted in the article have been investigated and studied, by independent researchers and professionals, and for each there is no suggestion that they are worthy of any of the faith some patients and practitioners place in them. There are, however, hundreds of very vulnerable patients who have sadly been convinced by savvy practitioners of regimes like the Gerson regime to waste thousands of pounds – and, worse, critical treatment time – on interventions that have been comprehensively disproven. For many hopeful patients, their last months were spent not in the company of their loved ones, but in a foreign country, undergoing an invasive, deeply uncomfortable and fruitless

regime of enemas, vitamin injections, restrictive diets and false hope.

The clinics offering these types of treatment are often based abroad, in jurisdictions where regulations are more lax, allowing them to continue making claims and advertising cures without good evidence of effectiveness. They often promote their successes with case studies and testimonials of 'cured' patients – sadly, too often those testimonials are quietly removed from their literature when the patient succumbs to their disease. For the clinics, there is little or no repercussion, they merely erase the patient from their literature and carry on; for the patients and their families and friends, there is only heartbreak and tragedy.

The miraculous claims for 'alternative' cancer cures make for impressive headlines which are doubtlessly seductive, but as a responsible publication you have a duty to your readers to put truth ahead of sensationalism. By promoting these so-called cures without scrutiny, the ECHO lends these dangerous quackeries the legitimacy of the publication's well-earned reputation, and promotes clear misinformation to some of the most vulnerable of its readers.

We sincerely hope that Mr Walsh's condition is as positive as



he believes it is. However, it is almost certain that any recovery he has made has nothing to do with the ruinously-expensive diet and vitamin regime he has been sold; it is unlikely that the next ECHO reader to follow the advice promoted in this article will be so fortunate.

Alice Howarth; Professor Sarah Coupland; Professor Andrea Varro; Professor Michael Clague; Doctor Diana Moss; Doctor Ewan MacDonald; Doctor Fiona Hood; Doctor Adam Linley; Vicky Smith; Aitor Martinez-Zarate; Zohra Butt; Doug Grimes; Leah Wilson
Traffic chaos

THE gross mismanagement of roadworks in this city is creating chaos and an increase in road traffic accidents. You have gridlock on many roads.

#TRENDING

What's hot on social?



#heritage
Our history celebrated as city is named a UK Heritage role model



#Mexico Looks like new US President's Trumps plans are driving us up the wall



#Eto'o Cheeky post has former Blues striker on the move to Russian club – or is he?