

AMSTERDAM REVISITED

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INTRODUCTION

I first went to Amsterdam in 1986 and I fell in love with the place. I went back a few months later, I went twice in 1992, and again in 1993, 1994 and 1996. I have described the seamier side of Amsterdam life in some detail in an earlier paper.¹ This article is just a postscript to that piece which adds a bit more of the same and offers me another opportunity to rant about the pointlessly oppressive way in which the British state treats its citizens.

Anyone who has read my earlier paper will be aware that I wallow in excess. Sex shows, prostitutes, pornography, perversion, drunkenness and heavy metal are some of my favoured pastimes. If you are likely to be offended by lurid descriptions of these types of activities, please read no further.

The last time I was in Amsterdam was in February. When I arrived, it was -9° centigrade. All the canals were frozen over. People were walking across the canals. And on one canal, there were a dozen people ice-skating! When I came out of the central station it was lunchtime, but I was so cold that I did not do a quick tour of the red light district. I just went straight to the hotel to unload my stuff and warm up! After a shower and a good soaping-up of my dick, I went back out. The weather had warmed up a bit. In fact, through the course of that first day it got significantly warmer, until by the evening it was quite mild; and it stayed that way for the rest of the weekend.

SEX SHOWS

In my earlier paper, I said that the main sex shows are at the *Moulin Rouge* and the *Live Porno* clubs in Oude Zijds Achterburgwal. I also said that the *Casa Rosso*, which is between those other two but on the other side of the canal, was just a theatre-front selling tickets for the *Live Porno* club. Well, I was wrong. In 1992, when I bought a ticket for the *Casa Rosso*, I was directed to the *Live Porno*; but that was unusual (the *Casa Rosso* must have been full, or closed for renovation, or something).

I went into the *Casa Rosso* in 1994. It was OK. There were six acts. Three of them were strippers. Two of the strippers were female, the other was male. However, the male stripper was useless: he didn't get his dick out. That was a bloody insult to all the women present. The other three acts were couples — two hetero, one lesbian. The best act was one of the couples: a big black man, and a pretty and petite blond Dutch girl with a shaven fanny. She was gobbling him for ages before they started shagging. Half-way through the screw, she came down off the stage (naked) and into the audience. She sat on some bloke's lap. Then the black geezer came down too (just wearing a pair of boots) and started shagging her, holding her legs in the air, while she was on this bloke's lap (and he was looking over her shoulder to get a good look at the action). A good laugh.

The lesbian couple did a bit of an S/M routine, whipping each other, etc.; but it was all play acting, rather than the real thing (a bit of a disappointment for me).

However, you couldn't buy booze as and when you wanted it. You get four free drinks in with your entry fee, and that's it. Also the entry fee was a bit steep: 75 Guilders (about £27), and no discounts. I prefer the *Live Porno* and the *Moulin Rouge*.

On one evening in 1993 in the *Moulin Rouge*, I got talking to a fellow at the bar. We had a drink together while, on the stage, a lovely young girl removed her clothes in a sensual fashion. He told me he worked at the theatre. I asked him what he did. He pointed to the girl on the stage and said "I fuck that girl!". I didn't know whether to believe him. However, a little while later he disappeared, and then shortly reappeared with the girl on the stage. And sure enough, he fucked that girl!

PROSTITUTES

In the red light district in Amsterdam prostitutes sit or stand in windows, wearing only their underwear. There are loads of them. You take a look around and then take your pick. I have been with so many of these over the years, I just cannot remember them all. Last February I can remember; but I only had sex with two that time. They were both interesting.

I had been walking around the red light district looking for a young and beautiful blond Dutch girl to spend some time with. There were about four of them whom I found it difficult to choose between. However, there was one window which seemed to be getting a lot of attention. Every time I walked passed it, the curtains were drawn, i.e. the girl was busy. And several times when I was approaching it, there was some man or other going in. So I thought I had better wait to see who was in there: she seemed to have a lot going for her. Eventually, while I was still trying to decide between the four blondes, I approached the window and the curtain was open. God, I then realised why she was always busy. She was dark, not blond; and brown-skinned, not fair. But what a body! And what a face! I was entranced. She turned out to be Italian. Her name was 'Stella'. What a pair of tits! What legs! What an arse! And what a blow job!

She was there again the next day; but this time I wanted a blond Dutch girl. And I got one. Young and pretty, almost schoolgirlish. She obviously loved sex, and it still seemed to have a mystique for her. She was really like a young girl discovering a dick for the first time. I paid her double to stay a bit longer. She was absolutely fascinating. I can't remember her name (though I think it might have been 'Bridgit'), but I do remember she lived at the Hague and commuted into Amsterdam for her daily grind.

I really like these prostitutes. They are my kind of women. They are very together. They are women who have chosen to make a living that way not just because it pays them more than any alternative employment they could pursue, but also because they are genuinely attracted to that way of making a living. I don't know how old Stella was. I would have guessed she was about twenty-five. But she said she had been a prostitute for ten years (she started out in Italy and had been in Amsterdam for the last few years), so perhaps she was a bit older. Her minimum charge was 50 Guilders — about £18 — and for that a punter would normally get 20-30 minutes. And she was very busy! She must have been earning about £36 per hour (probably a lot more from some punters). If she does a 7 hour day, five days a week, she could be earning £1,260 a week. And if she does 48 weeks a year, her annual income would be over £60,000. Of course, she would have expenses to pay (basically, rent for the room and condoms). But she would still be on a very high income. And how much would she declare to the taxman? And she's been doing it for ten years. She will probably be able to retire at 30; though I imagine she will carry on as long as the demand is there.

But there are prostitutes and prostitutes. The ones in the windows in Amsterdam are businesswomen. They have my respect. But drug injectors who sell sex in squalid surroundings merely to pay for their habit are not my cup of tea at all. Obviously, some men like them, and seek them out; but I would not have sex with one of them even if she paid me.

BARS AND BOOZE

I always booze heavily in Amsterdam: Dutch and Belgian beer with a minimum strength of 5% ABV. Although I normally stay reasonably sober during the day, I always get totally wrecked at nights. I usually eat at around 6.30-7.00 p.m. and then start serious drinking straight after that. As a result, I am almost always well-pissed by



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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY

midnight, but I carry on boozing into the early hours (there's always some bar open). Of course, some strange things happen when you are drunk.

Last February, I had arranged to meet some friends in Sam Sam Bodega Bar — just off the Leidseplein — at midnight (the bar has a Megadeth poster on the wall!). After a couple in there, we went around the corner to a bar selling a wide range of Belgian beer. Some of that stuff is very strong (7.5% or more). The music was good too: they were playing Black Sabbath non-stop for about one-and-a-half hours! Needless to say, I got totally smashed. Apparently, I was walking into walls in the bar. We left the bar at 2.45 a.m. My friends walked with me to the Leidseplein, but their hotel was in a different direction to mine, so we parted there. Apparently, they had been trying to persuade me to get a cab, but I was insistent that I would walk back to my hotel (a 12-minute walk away). Well, I got lost or something because the next day the bloke on the reception in the hotel said it was about 6.00 a.m. when I got back, and I was covered in snow! God knows what happened. I must have been wandering around Amsterdam for 3 hours in the snow trying to work out where the hell I was.

A couple of years ago I had arranged to meet a friend in Sam Sam at (I think) 9.00 p.m. I had started boozing early-on that day, and when I got to Sam Sam (on time) he was not there. So I went across the walkway to the Hard Rock Cafe. They were playing lots of heavy metal, including UFO (with Michael Schenker), so I was drinking at a frenetic pace. I eventually went back to Sam Sam to meet my friend, but I was out of it by then. He said that he saw me coming out of the Hard Rock Cafe, and that I was *reeling* across the walkway (one step forward, two steps back). Once inside Sam Sam, I explained that I was unable to carry on. He was knackered too, so we decided to go back to the hotel. As we left Sam Sam, he turned right and I turned left. He said: "Dan, it's this way". I said: "I know: I am trying to go that way!"

Last February, I went to a sado-masochistic Cafe called "Hellen's Place" at Overtoom 497, at the top end of Vondel Park. I read about it in *Time Out* (in London). It was described as a women-friendly place, with an ordinary bar at ground level and a sado-masochistic playroom in the basement. Unfortunately, each time I arrived, the place was shut; and the opening times were not displayed. I'll try it again the next time I'm over there, because it sounds like it could be a lot of fun.

DANGERS

Some of the tourist guides say that the red light district is dangerous and should be avoided, especially after dark. The authors of these guides cannot have been in the red light district. It is very safe by the standards of a modern European city. And it is *safer* after dark because it is absolutely *packed* with tourists — and Dutch people — having a good time!

I have been to Amsterdam for seven long-weekends, spending the bulk of my time in the red light district, both day-time and night-time, and I have usually been walking around there on my own. (Apart from the two occasions in 1986, I have always gone to Amsterdam either on my own or with people who have no interest in that side of things.) Yet I have suffered only two untoward experiences.

The first was in 1992 when a couple of young black fellows tried to mug me. There was a bit of pushing and shoving, but as soon as they realised they had a fight on their hands, they were gone (wan-kers). That was in the red light district *in the afternoon*.

The second was last February. I was pickpocketed in the *Moulin Rouge*. One bloke in there was squeezing past me and taking a very long time about it. I thought nothing of it at the time (though it did seem unusual). He got my credit cards, but not my cash (even though it was in the same pocket). Fortunately I was not in Amsterdam by myself that time, so I could borrow some money from my friends.

I have had a lot worse things than these happen to me in an ordinary weekend in London. Indeed, compared to Notting Hill and White City (the areas in which I used to live), Amsterdam is a safe haven.

However, there is one feature of the red light district which can disconcert or frighten some people. This is that you may be approached by people — usually young men of non-white races — offering you drugs. The wife of a friend of mine seems to find this uncomfort-

able. But these blokes are only offering a service (which, though illegal, is blinked at by the Dutch police), and if you decline their offer, they will leave you alone.

RETURNING HOME

When I arrived in Amsterdam the last time, the magic seemed to have gone. I recognised everything. I've seen it all and done it all before. It was just another trip to a familiar place. However, on my last day, when it was getting close to the time to leave, I was on the verge of tears. I kept looking at my watch and just wishing that the time would stop still for a while, so I could spend a little more time in that wonderful place. But of course, the seconds ticked by. It was with a broken heart that I made my way to the airport. For about two weeks after getting home, I just kept wanting to go back there.

Whenever I return from Amsterdam, my first welcome back to this country consists of being harassed by the British state. I almost always get stopped at customs, my clothes and luggage get searched, and my journey home — which had been civilised up to that point — gets delayed for anything up to an hour. Oh yes, sometimes it is just twenty minutes or so, while a customs officer unloads, inspects and then leaves me to re-load the contents of my bag. But other times it can take a lot longer, as the customs officers leave me to wait while they go off to the back room to watch me on a video screen to see if I make any suspicious moves while their backs are turned.

On one occasion I was even strip-searched. I had brought back a couple of hard-core porno mags as souvenirs (*Inspiration* and *Anal Sex* — "the original world-famous anal magazine" — with such humorously titled picture-stories as "Arsehole Artists" and "An Anal Angel"). I had told the customs officer before he opened my bag that I had bought these magazines. I know you are permitted to bring back a couple of mags (though if you try to bring back videos — which I have never tried to do — they confiscate them). However, the fact that I had these mags in my possession gave him his excuse for strip-searching me. (He also found a hand-written list of brothel addresses in my bag and he seemed to recognise straight away what they were, though they were not labelled "brothels" — he has probably visited them himself.) So he marched me off to the back room. He then explained that some men smuggle video tapes into Britain by wrapping them around their dick, so I had to drop my jeans so that he could check. One would expect that one could establish at a glance whether someone had a video tape wrapped around his dick. But he had to crouch down and take a good look. And he was staring at it for *ages*. I thought he was going to take a tape measure to it! When he was satisfied, I was allowed to pull my jeans back up.

A lot of men would have felt quite humiliated by this treatment — especially the close inspection of their codpiece. Yet this is how you are treated by a state official of your own country when you have done nothing wrong, when you are a tax-paying law-abiding citizen who is merely returning home from an innocent tourist visit to a foreign place. What a shocking contrast with the civilised and hospitable way in which the Dutch welcomed me into their country!

Now, as it happens, I personally was not one bit perturbed by the strip-search or by the morbid curiosity that the customs officer showed toward my dick. I felt nothing but the deepest contempt for him and his office. I happen to be very used to all sorts of people taking a keen interest in my dick (and other parts of my anatomy), and I am usually happy to strip off my clothes in front of strangers (and I regularly do so). What *did* bother me was two things. First, the time it all took: I had been travelling for several hours and I wanted to get home. Second, the fact that I was being treated as a criminal when I am in fact an honest and hard-working member of society who should be treated with respect, especially by a so-called public servant.

I said enough about the objectionable restrictions on sexual activity in Britain in my earlier article. But I must add here that, even if Britain legalised hard-core porn, brothels and sex shows, the whole scene in this country would be vitiated by the *perverse* disdainful attitude toward sex that permeates British society. I would still have to travel to Amsterdam to have a good time!

NOTE

1. *A Weekend in Amsterdam: One Libertarian's Experience of Freedom*, Personal Perspectives No. 5, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1992.