

Predatory and cunning, the Jimmy Savile we never saw



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THE allegations that Jimmy Savile was a child abuser came as a complete but unsurprising revelation to me. Thirty years ago, London was abuzz with rumours that he couldn't be left alone with young girls. Yet as his esteem grew, and he was even rewarded with a knighthood, I naturally assumed the rumours had been baseless. We now know that he was a serious violator of young children: predatory, cunning and charismatic, using his immense personality to cow his victims into silence, and to intimidate those adults who were aware of what he was up to into passive complicity.

We in Ireland have had the dubious advantage of having been given a guided tour of this territory, courtesy of many priests and brothers: but of course, almost no nuns. The power of such abusive clergymen was closely related to their outward religiosity, and the same was true of Savile, whose embrace of Christianity was public and uncompromising. He once argued that priests should always wear clerical clothes, so that the laity could instantly recognise them in time of need, and he manipulated his charitable deeds to promote his reputation as a good man.

It was of course all horseshit, part of an industriously created facade that was also based on a very outward devotion to his mother – 'The Duchess' as he called her – which gave him the freedom to exploit and debauch young girls, as far back as the 1960s.

Evil seldom is as usually seen in fiction or so risibly enacted by Saddam Hussein. Evil is usually arraigned in outward charm, abundant wit and overt kindness. Stalin beguiled people with thoughtfulness, his ability to remember their children's names, his extraordinary patience during Politburo meetings. Hitler had the same qualities of care, kindness, tolerance. How can evil ever triumph unless it is protected by a bodyguard of apparent virtues? And look at Savile: £50m raised for charity by the jester who was an honoured guest at Downing Street and Buckingham Palace. So what was he really?

Well, primarily a sublime and charismatic narcissist, whose self-belief intoxicated those around him into accepting his own delusions about himself. Once people are initially duped by the mesmerising psychopath, it is extraordinarily difficult for them to undupe themselves, especially if the duper has become the embodiment of virtue. For would it not be a violation of all the good he has done to unmask him? And since his bad and increasingly flagrant behaviour is never punished, the abuser/duper probably

comes to see his victims as his just reward in a society that is no better than it ought to be. Moreover, do his many charitable deeds – and in Savile's case they were very many indeed – not entitle him to the occasional reward of these young girls?

This is the closed ethical world of a true psychonarcissist: and the only limits to his conduct are in the range of his appetites. In moral construction, Savile was probably not much different from Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper. Curiously, both men came from the same county, and both their mothers were of Irish Catholic origin, though not even Ian Paisley at his most deranged would suggest that there was a connection there.

But this does raise the gender-question, for it is almost impossible to imagine any woman leaving such a vast legacy of sexual abuse behind her as Savile did (never mind Sutcliffe: with almost no exception, serial killers are male). We have now had some two decades of revelations about the sexual abuse of children by men, which have run in parallel with the increasing imposition of a feminist agenda that is based on "equality between the sexes". Only a dogmatic and ideological denial of quite heroic proportions could permit this absurd equality-heresy to remain as the political orthodoxy of our times. It could almost be from Orwell's '1984', that the entire mountain of evidence about how differently men and women behave is systematically ignored, even as a political agenda whose goals are utterly unrelated to reality is enforced across the western world.

Yet deduct male murder from society, how much homicide remains? Deduct rapists and male sexual abusers, how many prisoners are left in the sex-offenders' wing? And on the week that sees the 70th anniversary of the first flight of the V2, the forerunner to the world's space programmes, deduct men from those programmes, and what remains has the exploratory vigour of the Kingstown & District Presbyterian Knitting Circle.

So Savile was merely a distillation of some very male disorders, and only death was able to remove his personal magnetism from the hapless iron-filings that were the people around him. Furthermore, we have recently seen what utter ruin can be wrought in the world's financial institutions by the power of greedy, charismatic men. Yet instead of devising legal mechanisms to control such men – admittedly a difficult task, and maybe even an impossible one – we have created a body of law around the perfectly ludicrous precept that men and women are equal. As indeed they are: but as Savile conclusively showed, some are very much more equal than others.