

**Tekst 4**

**Naturally, I'm not so wild about the concrete jungle**



RICHARD TOMKINS

- 1 A while ago in this column I described London's Barbican, the place where I live, as a forbidding concrete housing complex with hardly a green leaf in sight. Afterwards, several fellow residents complained that this description was not only unfair but could also quite possibly knock a bit off the value of their properties.
- 2 So in order to reduce my litigation risk, I would now like you to know that I was strolling through the verdant pastures of the subterranean car park the other day when, to my amazement, I found myself almost eye to eye with a red, slinky and very cheeky fox.
- 3 5, urban foxes are hardly a new phenomenon in Britain's towns and cities, where they have discovered they can find much richer pickings in the throw-away society's prolific output of rubbish than in the unforgiving wild. Still, I never imagined they had penetrated this far. The Barbican, after all, sits right next to the heart of London's financial district. What next? Will foxes be stalking the corridors of the typical big City bank, foraging on the trading floor for worms and small invertebrates or stealing chickens from the staff canteen?
- 4 And foxes, I would like to add, are

- not the only creatures of the wild finding comfort in the centre of London. In the Barbican, we also have an infestation – sorry, thriving colony – of seagulls. These graceful ballerinas of the skies, sometimes unfairly described as winged rats, entertain us daily with their melodic screeching and comical attacks on pensioners, postmen and newspaper delivery boys.
- 5 “You don't like nature?” I say to those who complain about having their eyes plucked out or babies taken by these lovable, marauding scavengers. “So, go and live in the country.”
- 6 For this is the paradox, is it not? Once, we all knew where we stood: the people lived in the cities and the animals lived in the wild. Yet, slowly but inexorably, we are trading places. In many countries, including the US, Britain and France, the generations-old trend towards urbanisation has been thrown into reverse as people craving the authenticity of rural life move out of the cities and into the sticks. And in a Hitchcockian act of revenge, the animals are moving in the opposite direction.
- 7 You see this most starkly in the US, where the two forces are clashing in the no-man's land of suburbia. As urban sprawl extends into what used to be the wilderness, and animals are attracted to human habitats by hunting bans and the abundance of leftover food, people are finding themselves living cheek by jowl with coyotes, vultures, wolves, raccoons, deer, bobcats and even mountain lions. Last year, New Jersey faced such

- a rapidly growing population of black bears that it sanctioned its first bear hunt in more than 30 years.
- 8 Frankly, I blame computers and communications technology. Urbanisation was a product of the industrial age as mass manufacturing led to the centralisation of production in big, dirty factories. But, as the industrial economy has given way to the knowledge economy and production has given way to service, this centralising force has eased and people have begun to disperse.
- 9 Just as importantly, anxiety created by our passing from the certainties of the industrial age to the uncertainties of the information age has produced an equal and opposite reaction in our craving to revert to the world as we knew it. From this has come society's obsession with nostalgia, primitivism and the romanticisation of the wild and, with it, an increasing desire to escape the pressures of life by reverting to country living.
- 10 But here is another paradox. On the one hand, we want to go back to nature; but, on the other, we want nature, too, to be what it was: red in tooth and claw. So people are pressing not only for the protection of endangered species but also for the reintroduction of dangerous predators that we sensibly eradicated centuries ago.
- 11 In Britain, giant eagles with 8ft wingspans have already been successfully released in the Scottish Hebrides and people are now enthusing over the idea of bringing them south. With claws the size of a human hand, these enormous birds of prey could soon be nesting at the mouth of the Thames and swooping down over London to seize fish, ducks and perhaps the occasional cruise boat from the river.
- 12 Why is it that the species people most want to restore are the ones most likely to eat us? In the conservation business, the rule seems to be the bigger and more dangerous, the better. In Scotland a wealthy businessman has proposed reintroducing the wolf 250 years after the last one was shot. You have to wonder if conservationists will ever be satisfied until woolly mammoths have taken over the shopping malls and plague-carrying black rats are once again scurrying through the streets.
- 13 Meanwhile, all we can do is fend for ourselves as best we can. Pass me my loincloth and spear: I am going home to the Barbican.

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- 3p **4** Geef voor elk van de onderstaande citaten uit de alinea's 1 tot en met 4 aan of dit wel of niet ironisch is bedoeld.
- 1 "a forbidding concrete housing complex"
  - 2 "in order to reduce my litigation risk"
  - 3 "the verdant pastures of the subterranean car park"
  - 4 "a red, slinky and very cheeky fox"
  - 5 "the throw-away society's prolific output of rubbish"
  - 6 "entertain us daily with their melodic screeching"
- Noteer het nummer van elk citaat, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".
- 1p **5** Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 3?
- A Consequently
  - B Ironically
  - C To be fair
  - D To make matters worse
- "For this is the paradox, is it not?" (paragraph 6)
- 1p **6** Which of the following does the paradox refer to?
- A Damage caused by animals and a lack of effort to prevent this.
  - B Fear of animals and a preference for country life.
  - C Love of animals and abhorrence of their behaviour.
- 1p **7** Which of the following is true of the last sentence of paragraph 6 in relation to the point made previously in the paragraph?
- A It comments sarcastically on it.
  - B It further elaborates on it.
  - C It sheds a different light on it.
- 1p **8** What does paragraph 7 describe?
- A People wanting to live in the wilderness.
  - B Wild animals becoming dependent on people.
  - C Wild animals invading ever expanding urban areas.
- 1p **9** What is the writer's argument in paragraph 8?
- A ICT is causing alienation in communities that were once close-knit.
  - B In the information age work no longer requires people to live in cities.
  - C Modern society increasingly offers room for the individual and for personal choice.
  - D Pollution and hectic city life are driving people to the countryside.

- 1p **10** Which of the following is/are in line with paragraph 9?
- 1 Progress has led to a desire for the familiarity of the past.
  - 2 People are willing to exchange prosperity for a materially sober way of life.
- A** Only 1.  
**B** Only 2.  
**C** Both 1 and 2.  
**D** Neither 1 nor 2.

“But here is another paradox.” (alinea 10)

- 1p **11** Uit welke twee delen bestaat deze paradox?

- 1p **12** Which of the following is true of paragraphs 11 and 12?
- A** They emphasise that wildlife in Britain is still quite abundant.  
**B** They illustrate that the forces of nature are beyond human control.  
**C** They make clear that only the strongest animals of prey can survive in modern Britain.  
**D** They question the initiatives promoting the more extreme forms of wildlife in Britain.  
**E** They ridicule people for whom small and harmless animals lack all fascination.