

Britain's Big Dig

A costly and unnecessary high-speed rail project is emblematic of the country's cultural decline.

by Theodore Dalrymple



The difference between investment and expenditure seems often to escape British politicians, as does the fact that, while expenditure is certain, returns are not.

Former prime minister Gordon Brown, compared with his successors, had particular difficulty in this regard. Brown always spoke of vast increases in spending on such objects as school buildings as if they were investments that would conduce to higher standards of education. Unsurprisingly, for anyone of minimal powers of reflection, this didn't turn out to be the case. Instead, the school-building program substantially raised public debt.

It appears that Boris Johnson is about to follow Brown's path.
This month, Johnson [*City Journal*](#).