

IAN DUNT LIBERALISM IS IN A FIGHT FOR ITS LIFE AND NEEDS YOUR HELP

THE NEW EUROPEAN

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THE **FOOL** OF SIX

IN THE WEEK BORIS JOHNSON URGES US TO OBEY NEW RULES, HIS FIVE PREDECESSORS UNITE AGAINST HIS CONTEMPT FOR THE LAW. SO WHAT'S THE PM REALLY UP TO?



THE BOOK THAT HAS
DIVIDED FRANCE..
AND FEMINISTS
**CONSTANCE
KAMPFNER**

CULT COMEBACK
FOR THE
RUBIK'S CUBE
**ROGER
DOMENEGHETTI**



Lords sure to bring drama but long run matters more

Andrew Adonis



This week's Brexit row has a retro feel. Michel Barnier and an impasse in Brussels. Tory rebels led by a former attorney general. 'Get Brexit done'. For old time's sake we even had Ed Miliband gesticulating frantically at the despatch box and Nigel Farage popping up to declare 'this isn't the Brexit we voted for'.

Equally retro were Boris Johnson's Facebook ads whipping up his grassroots after Monday's House of Commons vote. 'Labour has just voted to side with the EU – AGAIN! We're the only party that's standing up for the integrity of the entire UK'.

All we need now is a People's Vote march, and Chris Grayling hiring ferries from companies with no ferries, and we can all adjust our watches to October 2019.

I suspect there is more *déjà vu* to come. After this brinkmanship will probably come a deal next month to avoid no-deal in January, precisely a year after the October 2019 deal on Northern Ireland which avoided no-deal this January.

The immediate constitutional crisis is reminiscent – more *déjà vu* – of the prorogation crisis also exactly a year ago in September 2019. This time it will probably be the House of Lords, rather than the Supreme Court, which prevents Johnson and Cummings taking the British state into legally disgraceful territory by rejecting the Internal Market Bill, which overrides Johnson's own Withdrawal Agreement and Northern Ireland protocol.

It looks as if the rejection of the bill in the Lords will be a largely Tory affair. Michael Howard and William Hague have both strongly condemned Johnson's latest antics and I expect one or other of them will wield the knife on the elegant red benches. "Breaching international law would leave Britain perilously exposed," wrote Hague in Tuesday's *Telegraph*. "As foreign secretary I saw first-hand how much we rely on our reputation for upholding global rules."

It is essential that the House of Lords rejects Johnson's cavalier disregard for international law. Doing so will come to be seen as a staging post in the ultimate fightback against this monstrous government which gets ever worse over time as it mismanages Covid-19 with as much incompetence and malevolence as it implements Brexit.

However, provided it is indeed *déjà vu* all over again and there is a deal of some kind, this autumn's drama will not of itself reverse Brexit or even stop a fairly hard Brexit which leaves us out of the single market and all the EU's political institutions, with only a Canada-style free trade agreement covering goods, where we have a massive trade deficit with the EU.

There won't be 10-mile tailbacks to Dover and food shortages, but we will be worse off over time.

Herein lies the critical problem for Johnson and the critical opportunity for us pro-Europeans. Just as the 'law of compound interest' is one of the greatest insights of economics – when you let money accumulate at compound interest over a long enough period of time, it increases far more than you imagine at the outset – so the 'law of compound decline' is one of the greatest forces in politics.

Once a nation starts declining, the pain and suffering escalate much more rapidly than you expect at the outset when the change is only fractional. Ask the Venetians and the Egyptians.

Even two years of a British economy growing at a slower rate than France and Germany's will make itself felt in lower incomes. And if this hits bankers and lawyers disproportionately, as the City suffers from the end of 'passporting' of financial services and the relocation of some business to Paris and Frankfurt, the squeals on the golf courses of Surrey and Sussex, and in Tory constituency associations, will get steadily louder.

This is *déjà vu* too. For it was precisely the growing sense of falling behind the French and Germans which persuaded Harold Macmillan, that ever feline physician of Tory Middle England, to make the first application to join what was then the European Economic Community in 1961. It took precisely 11 years to get from there to joining under Heath in 1972.

So put a big circle around 2031 in your *New European* calendar.

11 THE WOMAN WHO HATES MEN

The author who has divided France .. and feminists

BY CONSTANCE KAMPFNER



12-13 LIBERALISM'S FIGHT FOR LIFE

Why we all have a duty to defend the globally embattled concept

BY IAN DUNT



33-37 ART'S AVENGER

Artemisia Gentileschi and the anger that seethed from her traumatic past

BY CLAUDIA PRITCHARD

38-39 CUBER REVOLUTION

How tech revived the Rubik's Cube craze

BY ROGER DOMENEGHETTI

21-27 FIELDS OF DREAMS

A riotous history of British musical festivals

BY IAN WALKER



28-29 HISTORY'S LESSONS

Broadcaster Neil Oliver on Scottish independence, cancel culture and toppling statues

BY MATT WITHERS

40-41 THREE IN CHI

The trio of musical genres that were reshaped in the city of Chicago

BY SOPHIA DEBOICK

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AGENDA

Making it up on the hoof



MICHAEL WHITE ON THE WEEK INCOMPETENCE MET FANTASY IN TEST AND TRACE FAILURE

“Regulations...are not to be regarded as unlawful on the grounds of any incompatibility or inconsistency with any relevant domestic or international law” – Clause 45 (2) (a) on state aid in the Internal Market Bill

It already seems an age ago, but when I first heard Boris “Moonshot” Johnson used the phrase “the rule of six” I immediately wondered who the other four might be. Dominic Cummings would obviously be the driving force behind the new junta. And Michael Gove, he’d be there as Dom’s note-taker and executive officer. I supposed that Boris would have to be included to make the coup look vaguely respectable. But who would make up the numbers?

I didn’t have to wait long. The rule of six applies, of course, solely to the Covid-19 crisis. But the government’s authority, its competence and legitimacy, are increasingly bound up to both the pandemic and its confrontational gamble over the post-Brexit negotiations. So the Two Horsemen of the Johnson Apocalypse may eventually collapse in an exhausted heap together.

For all his bluster, Johnson’s position looks increasingly implausible. After all, the real link is the opportunity cost of Brexit. From day one of the Wuhan pandemic the ministerial eye was on another ball. This week the airwaves are full of dreadful test-and-trace stories. NHS staff are unable to get a test for five days – while Boris fantasises (but fails to consult his experts) about doing three million tests a day. In the real world Michael Gove’s transition team is being warned of 7,000 lorries stuck at Dover and two hour delays on Eurostar if there is no post-Brexit deal. No wonder individual anxiety levels has reportedly tripled in a decade.



The World King’s credibility could finally unravel in floundering diagnostic labs (“world-beatingly bad,” says loyalist, David Davis) or in the choppy Irish Sea. Jittery Johnson’s shabby performance in justifying the Internal Market Bill to a ghostly Covid-Commons on Monday evening was the most intellectually disreputable second reading speech by a senior minister that I can recall in 34 years of sitting in the press gallery, gazing down on eight prime ministers. Boris stepped in when it was decided Alok Sharma wasn’t up to the task. Nor was Boris.

As respectable people in most respectable countries lined up to express shock and amazement at the cabinet’s declared willingness explicitly to “break international law” – it’s customary to bluff out such offences – the cabinet’s

second-rate Yes men and women did what they were appointed to do. They fell into line behind the Cummings Doctrine, the one borrowed from Facebook: move fast and break things.

The tech giant’s motto does not look so smart now that Silicon Valley is engulfed in smoke from distant forest fires, fuelled by climate changes the choking techies cannot fix. Donald Trump puts it down to bad forest management and promises California it will “get cooler” soon. He’s wrong, but there as well as here many people in virtual reality headsets believe what they feel comfortable with, even if it burns their house down.

Never mind. Robert Buckland, justice secretary and (it’s his turn) lord chancellor, rallied behind the boss after Brandon (“specific and limited”) Lewis had blurted out the strategy at the dispatch box last week. All five living ex-PMs – united at last! – plus pro-Brexit Michael Howard, Norman Lamont and sacked attorney general, Geoffrey Cox QC, expressed varying degrees of dismay. So did EU flip-flopper William Hague and Brexit’s Sajid Javid. Undeterred, Cox’s successor, Suella Braverman, seemingly perjured herself for the cause and has packed her advisory panel of lawyers with Leavers too. No wonder the head of Whitehall’s legal department quit.

We now know too why the Falstaffian Cox, briefly a hero of the Tory sketch writers, was ditched: he wouldn’t take the knee for Cummings. Young Sue eagerly did. Buckland, Lewis and Braverman, they’ll do to make up the vassal numbers in the rule of six gang. Theresa Villiers or Andrea Jenkyns can stand by to be the token woman if Ms B has to socially isolate. In craven opportunism women can definitely be the equal of men. The SNP’s Joanna Cherry QC ripped Braverman’s stance apart.

In fairness, after watching the debate in which 60 MPs spoke, I must report that widespread disquiet about the stalled UK/EU negotiation was not confined to London’s latest theatrical (“Nixonian madness”) posture. Labour MPs, including Hilary Benn, chair of the Brexit select committee, and Ed Miliband, deputising well for Keir Starmer (self-isolating while a family member gets a Covid test) registered displeasure at the EU’s hard negotiating stance. “Exit summary declarations” for goods travelling from Northern Ireland to the mainland are unnecessary, added Benn. Starmer’s Labour is trying to avoid No.10’s “Remoaner” trap.

Several such complaints sound valid. But that is what EU Commission negotiators do, doggedly rigid until last minute flexibility, they have 60 years of practice. The issue here is whether Johnsonian talk of a “blockade” of goods moving between Britain and NI – among

other horrors – has any serious basis in fact or is just Boris in columnist mode. He is a notorious fantasist, as EU officials old enough to remember his *Telegraph* days in Brussels remember with a shudder. In the debate there was plenty of assertion, eagerly amplified by backbench lapdogs, but scant evidence from the talks. Secrecy is another Cummings weapon.



Brussels denies any ambition to “break up” the UK or even detach NI from it. And why should it? Dublin has happily fudged the province’s sovereignty for years, as does the withdrawal protocol. It can hardly be keen to take on all Belfast’s burdens, let alone Brussels embrace indebted Scotland. A Britain isolated and broken by populism and nativism, cut adrift from Europe and the US, is what EU leaders fear when they can spare a moment from their own pressing problems. It’s why Putin the Poisoner and his bots back Brexit.

The EU27 may be being rigid and short-sighted, but it is Boris who is letting the genie of conspiracy theory nationalism out of the bottle. He is already finding it a hard genie to control. Have you noticed that the ‘libertarian’ rabble-rousers most in favour of breaking international law include many who are also actively defying the government’s latest pandemic laws, which seem less coherent by the day?

Priti Patel’s demand that you do in your neighbourhoods for unlawful mingling in the street merely makes the home secretary look absurd to ‘libertarian’ Tories as well as to the party’s embattled internationalists. They want to obey both sets of law. Right wing lawyers like super-brain, Lord Jonathan Sumption, tear strips off the Covid regulations – insensitively so in Sumption’s case – but so do progressive lawyers, more gently. It is all grist to an ugly mill where serious medics suspect that ministers’ T&T contracts for flagging private test centres are backdoor privatisation of a key NHS service.



Back to Brexit. Assuming that UK ministers have a genuine negotiating grievance, the appropriate way to handle it was what troubled Tory rebels – two (Roger Gale and Andrew Percy) voting with Labour and 30 abstaining in the 10pm vote, won by a reduced majority of 73 (340-263). Sir Bob Neill led a very gentle charge, saving his energy for next week’s amendments. The Lords have made their displeasure known, but don’t bank on them. Their Lordships usually avoid dying in the ditch.

On Monday Neill and Jeremy Wright, another discarded attorney general, argued that a dispute mechanism exists within the Withdrawal Agreement and the joint committee which Michael Gove co-chairs. It is there to resolve ambiguities in the Northern Ireland protocol regarding state aid provision, sensitive goods – notably food stuffs and UK products ‘at risk’ of seeping into single market Ireland via Belfast or Larne. I had missed the news that Whitehall is requiring Stormont to build posts to make phytosanitary checks on the Irish land border. Apparently Stormont’s trade minister is using this week’s bill as an excuse to stop the work.

Beyond that there are international mechanisms – the WTO even – untainted by the “political” European Court of Justice for a wronged UK to seek redress. Whitehall mustn’t implement the Internal Market Act until all other routes have been tried, says Sir Bob. Even passing the bill is a breach of international law, other MPs insist. Alas, the damage is already done to Britain’s relatively respectable reputation, though much exaggerated in the minds of its former colonial subjects, including 60 million Americans who claim Irish ancestry. That’s why speaker Nancy Pelosi threatened to block a US trade deal if the Good Friday Agreement is damaged. She can do it. Another win for the Kremlin poisoner.

Even among Johnson loyalists that points to an appalling communications strategy since the *FT* got a sniff of the plan two Sundays ago. After five days of shifting explanations No.10’s boy geniuses came up with the “blockade” idea for “breaking up the UK” which Johnson floated in the *Telegraph* at the weekend. He luridly embellished it in the Commons with stories about English clotted cream and blue cheese being stopped at an internal UK border.

There is a serious case for tidying up all sorts of regulation of the internal UK market, now that Brussels no longer has that regulatory role. Useful work has apparently been started. It does not help that devolved governments – separatist and pro-Union – suspect Whitehall plans a power grab to keep most to itself. It certainly plans to set up a UK-wide Office of the Internal Market to oversee developments. Did anyone mention “unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats”, asked the SNP’s Ian Blackford. Surely the biggest threat to the Union at present comes from Boris the careless Unionist, who keeps boosting SNP poll ratings?



Two passages in the Commons debate struck me forcefully. One came when ex-cabinet minister, Andrew Mitchell,



recalled sorrowfully that he had sometimes cast votes he later regretted – for section 28 on gay education, for the poll tax and for Tony Blair’s Iraq war. “But I do not believe I have ever gone into a lobby to vote in a way that I knew was wrong. And I will not be doing it on this occasion either.” He abstained. Ouch.

The other was the prime minister’s own opening passage in defence of the four nation union of 1707 (with Scotland) and 1801 (Ireland), “not just a political event but an act of conscious economic integration that laid the foundations for the world’s first industrial revolution and the prosperity we enjoy today. When other countries in Europe stayed divided we joined our fortunes together and allowed the invisible hand of the market to move Cornish pasties to Scotland, Scottish beef to Wales... (etc)”, the eternal columnist declared.

This is complete and sentimental nonsense which we might forgive in a less educated minister, but not this one. Yes, 15 of the 25 clauses of the 1707 Act of Union were economic and it served bankrupt Scotland’s merchant class well in terms of tobacco and the slave trade. Among them was the great 18th century

philosopher, David Hume, whom grievance archaeologists have de-platformed at Edinburgh University this week, for his “comments on matters of race”. But the Union was a contentious affair – resented then, even more so in today’s world of identity politics.

As for the 1801 union with Ireland, a bloody wartime imposition just after the 1798 uprising. Promises of the vote for Catholics were betrayed, the Irish economy dominated by absentee landlords and by a potato crop which would lead to mass famine in 1845, the sheer historic insensitivity of it made Jeremy Corbyn look like a Friend of Israel. As for “other countries staying divided”, by my calculation all the EU’s member states except Sweden, Portugal and the Netherlands were under the thumb of imperial autocracies – Russian, French, Austrian, Turkish, British too – and/or domestic tyrannies in 1707, 1801 and well beyond.

Many have been oppressed in living memory. The avoidance of repetition is partly what the EU is about. New York-born, Brussels-Eton-and-Oxford-educated Johnson should know this. We will pass on his “invisible hand” nonsense and

what it did to the industrial working class. To regurgitate this thoughtless rubbish drafted by a speech-writer is an insult to all concerned – and a disgrace to his office. It serves to remind us what a casual half-baked crew we are ruled by.



If it is any guide to their serious intentions, voters should brace themselves for a U-turn disguised as a triumph. MPs got a taste of that prospect when Liz Truss – speaking before Johnson on Monday – hailed her draft free trade agreement with Japan as opening the way for Britain to share rising prosperity around the distant Pacific.

Are Japan’s agreed terms on state aid more onerous than those sought by the EU? Don’t ask. Is the deal worth 0.1% to UK GDP compared with 15% at risk with the EU27? Ditto. If things turn out badly Team Johnson can blame Truss – as they did Matt Hancock this week when the new Covid rules proved unpopular in tabloid-land.

How long can this last, rational *TNE* readers must ask themselves? A while

yet, I fear, because the crises we now face are so challenging in so many ways – 700,000 jobs lost, Covid infections rising along with the unseasonal heatwave – that many of us take refuge in irrational belief. The EU’s threatened “blockade” of the Irish Sea is one of many. Will it deploy the Austrian or Hungarian navies?

But there are so many genies out of bottles now. By Trump standards Johnson’s regime is a model of restraint and probity even as he pillages the White House playbook for ideas. Presidential aides accuse Covid-cautious doctors of treason and newly-pardoned Roger Stone urges his president to seize power if he seems to be losing on November 3. Stone has been letting the dark genie of authoritarian populism out of the bottle for decades. The captured Republican party is a more recent enabler of unconstitutional actions that soon become the new normal.

But it’s a bit late for Messers Howard, Lamont and Geoffrey Cox to throw up their hands in horror. They have been Boris and Cummings enablers up to now. Time to ship out to Venus? I hear it’s not as uninhabitable as we feared.

AGENDA

Tracing the failures of testing system



JAMES BALL'S DECONSTRUCTED



Had we been asked to predict the top political issues of 2020, few of us would've picked clinical tests among them – but these are testing times.

An understanding of exactly who has Covid-19 is an essential part of working out how the virus can be controlled and how our society, economy and lives can function.

The government has a lot on its plate right now, but the importance of a functioning testing system could not be greater. Ministers seem to understand this because they tell us often enough. But the reality is that the system is in a mess, and they must shoulder much of the blame.

Even for a government defined by messaging that's mixed at best and outright garbled the rest of the time, its statements on coronavirus testing have been entirely incoherent.

Just since the start of September, the government set out a “moonshot” vision of 10 million tests a day, analysed within 20 minutes, to return life to normal. It also claimed to have vastly increased daily testing capacity – and then simultaneously claimed that testing capacity was being overwhelmed by demand, blaming selfish individuals taking tests when they shouldn't.

Should we be taking tests more often than we are? Or less often than we are? Is

needless demand the problem? What's actually been going on?

The government's statements tell us almost nothing – but the real picture is one of failure after failure, with at best half-hearted efforts to catch up.

Some of the issues began long before Boris Johnson became prime minister – while the UK has a substantial biotech sector, it doesn't have as large a testing industry as, for example, Germany.

Neglect and overconfidence had left the UK's longstanding pandemic preparation plans in much worse shape than experts believed they were. The UK had a decent start to the pandemic, but wasn't in quite as good shape as it thought it was.

Several of the early mistakes with testing were compounded by the UK expert establishment trying to pretend its position was stronger than it really was.

In mid-March, deputy chief medical officer Jenny Harries said publicly that the community phase of testing was over, it was no longer an “appropriate intervention” and that the country would now focus testing on hospitals and care homes.

We later learned this was a decision driven by the country's testing capacity – but at the time it was suggested it was a decision driven purely by the science, potentially taking pressure off increasing capacity. This proved to be a critical

mistake. Sources within the science departments of the UK's leading universities have told of their institutions offering to help in March, making personnel, equipment, labs and expertise available. The offers were not taken up. Some of those making them received no reply whatsoever.

Now, some six months down the line, those same labs are receiving requests to help the UK's ‘Lighthouse Labs’ initiative – the public/private partnership that has sprung up in a bid to urgently boost the UK's lacklustre testing capacity.

While the willingness to help is as strong as ever, many researchers have expressed frustration at the lost summer months.

Most of the other problems relating to the system really stem from this initial sluggishness and then – partly to try to compensate from this sluggishness – the government's early obsession with hitting largely arbitrary headline targets, an obsession which saw any test posted out to the public counted towards those targets.

The subsequent complications associated with doing that have become clear: home postal tests are surprisingly complicated, requiring a particular series of steps, form-filling, and barcode sticking, and a sizeable minority of people make mistakes. Sometimes, reportedly, these mistakes include urinating on the swab rather than getting a saliva sample.

Even if the test is completed correctly, home tests can be spoiled during transit, where they can get too warm within postboxes, or while they're actually being



transported – especially if they're going to far-away labs because of local capacity problems.

But the core issue seems to be that the government doesn't seem to have grasped just how many tests we will need to get through winter – even though the famous winter-preparedness report Keir Starmer waved at Boris Johnson during Prime Minister's Questions months ago set out just this.

You should get a test if anyone in your household had any one of these symptoms: a new, persistent cough, a fever, or a loss of taste.

The UK's children have gone back to

Keep counting on the rule of

The new laws are already facing calls to be scrapped. Public health expert **KK CHENG** says we should stick with them



The day before the “rule of six” rule came into force, Carl Heneghan, a professor of evidence-based medicine, and Tom Jefferson, a research fellow, both from the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine at Oxford University, wrote an opinion piece for the *Spectator*, calling for the rule to be “binned”.

The *Daily Telegraph* repeated Heneghan and Jefferson's assertion that

“life should return to as close as possible to normality”.

The number of Covid-19 cases has been rising rapidly. Unlike earlier in the summer when there were local outbreaks, the upsurge is now much more widespread. But hospital admissions and deaths are still relatively low, which prompted Heneghan and Jefferson to argue against tightening control measures. They might turn out to be right, but there are several reasons for not following the path they recommend.

First, for much of the summer, most cases were in young people, who are at low risk of serious complications. But there is now evidence that the rates of infection among older age groups are going up.

One thing we have learned in this pandemic is that even places held up as successful examples, such as Germany

and Hong Kong, have not managed to shield the vulnerable when community transmissions rise above certain levels. Indeed, the Department of Health wrote to care homes on September 11, warning them of signs of a rise in cases among care home staff.

Second, in Leicester, where there was an outbreak in the summer, the increase of cases was reflected in hospital admissions and deaths. In July, there were 24 deaths in Leicester, more than any other local authority areas in the UK. The city has a population of around 330,000 or about 1/200 that of the UK. If we crudely extrapolate its death rate in July to the entire UK, there would be 4,800 deaths in a month, or 160 daily. And this estimate is conditional on the epidemic curve not rising further since Leicester entered into a local lockdown. Is this a level that the society should accept as part of the ‘new

normal’? Spain and France have also seen a large upsurge of cases in recent weeks. That the number of deaths there is ‘limited’ to several dozens a day might embolden commentators such as Heneghan and Jefferson, but they have forgotten that control measures have also been introduced there. They might also have forgotten what happened in the spring in the UK.

Using Birmingham as an example, the level of community transmission now might be similar to the first week of March given the lack of testing then. A delay in introducing national lockdown then probably caused hundreds of extra deaths in Birmingham.

The chief executive of the local NHS Trust, which had the largest number of Covid-19 deaths in the UK during the first wave, said there had been obvious surges in intensive-care admissions in the last



PUSHED OFF
TRACK: Workers
at Covid-19
testing centre in
Bolton

Photo: Getty
Images

school, its students are returning to university and flu season is beginning. All three of the key coronavirus symptoms are among the most noticeable signs of cold and flu.

Anyone could have seen a need for far more tests, even if coronavirus wasn't increasing at its current rate. The government appears to have missed this almost entirely – a shocking case of negligence – and is trying to pin the blame for the inevitable shortfalls on people taking tests they “don't need”.

Responding to coronavirus was always going to be a vastly difficult exercise. Any country and any government will make

mistakes and any country would have to build capacity into its systems for dealing with it.

The problem with UK testing seems to have been a lack of candour. To cover for the fact the country had no capacity to test at scale in March, the government simply pretended it didn't need to. To cover for the fact there is not enough now, ministers are pretending it's irresponsible demand.

The first step of fixing a problem is admitting it: the UK government needs to admit it still doesn't have enough tests. Then it needs to start actually fixing that.

six for now

two weeks. As a Birmingham resident whose office is 200m from the intensive care unit of this hospital, I can perhaps be forgiven for being less sanguine than Heneghan and Jefferson seem to be.

Third, Covid-19 doesn't just cause death. A substantial number of patients also suffer from what is now known as “long Covid”. It is irresponsible to discount the risk of exposing millions of people to the infection when so little is known about the long-term prognosis.

Johnson's rule of six may prove to be over-cautious, as Heneghan and Jefferson suggest. Interestingly, they included Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, in the group of “little more than a Dad's Army of highly paid individuals” who came up with the idea. However, several senior members of Sage (the government's scientific advisory committee) have now issued stern

warnings. Meanwhile, Anthony Fauci, the eminent US physician, cautioned against looking at the rosy side of things in a pandemic.

The rule of six is an attempt to halt the virus and to simplify instructions. One of its important objectives is for schools to remain open and for university students to return to campuses. That is, for life to return to some normality. It would also still allow catering venues to operate. If those senior scientists are wrong, I would be as ecstatic as anyone to see the rule binned in due course. But if we listen to Heneghan and Jefferson now, the damage may be irreversible.

■ KK Cheng is a professor of public health, and primary care director of the Institute of Applied Health Research, University of Birmingham; this article also appears at theconversation.com

Best immunity is via vaccine

A vaccine would provide better immunity than an actual Covid infection, explains

MAITREYI SHIVKUMAR



Two recent studies have confirmed that people previously infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, can be reinfected with the virus. Interestingly, the two people had different outcomes. The person in Hong Kong showed no symptoms on the second infection, while the case from Reno, Nevada, had a more severe disease the second time around. It is therefore unclear if an immune response to SARS-CoV-2 will protect against subsequent reinfection.

Does this mean a vaccine will also fail to protect against the virus? Certainly not. First, it is still unclear how common these reinfections are. More importantly, a fading immune response to natural infection, as seen in the Nevada patient, does not mean we cannot develop a successful, protective vaccine.

Any infection initially activates a non-specific innate immune response, in which white blood cells trigger inflammation. This may be enough to clear the virus. But in more prolonged infections, the adaptive immune system is activated. Here, T and B cells recognise distinct structures (or antigens) derived from the virus. T cells can detect and kill infected cells, while B cells produce antibodies that neutralise the virus.

During a primary infection – that is, the first time a person is infected with a particular virus – this adaptive immune response is delayed. It takes a few days before immune cells that recognise the specific pathogen are activated and expanded to control the infection.

Some of these T and B cells, called memory cells, persist long after the infection is resolved. It is these memory cells that are crucial for long-term protection. In a subsequent infection by the same virus, the memory cells get activated rapidly and induce a robust and specific response to block the infection.

A vaccine mimics this primary infection, providing antigens that prime the adaptive immune system and generating memory cells that can be activated rapidly in the event of a real infection. However, as the antigens in the vaccine are derived from weakened or noninfectious material from the virus, there is little risk of severe infection.

Vaccines have other advantages over natural infections. For one, they can be designed to focus the immune system against specific antigens that elicit better responses.

For instance, the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine elicits a stronger immune response than infection by the virus itself. One reason for this is that the vaccine contains high concentrations of a viral coat protein, more than what would occur in a natural infection. This triggers strongly neutralising antibodies, making the vaccine very effective at preventing infection.

The natural immunity against HPV is especially weak, as the virus uses various tactics to evade the host immune system. Many viruses, including HPV, have proteins that block the immune response or simply lie low to avoid detection. Indeed, a vaccine that provides accessible antigens in the absence of these other proteins may allow us to control the response in a way that a natural infection does not.

The immunogenicity of a vaccine – that is, how effective it is at producing an immune response – can also be fine tuned. Agents called adjuvants typically kick-start the immune response and can enhance vaccine immunogenicity.

Alongside this, the dose and route of administration can be controlled to encourage appropriate immune responses in the right places. Traditionally, vaccines are administered by injection into the muscle, even for respiratory viruses such as measles. In this case, the vaccine generates such a strong response that antibodies and immune cells reach the mucosal surfaces in the nose.

However, the success of the oral polio vaccine in reducing infection and transmission of polio has been attributed to a localised immune response in the gut, where poliovirus replicates.

Similarly, delivering the coronavirus vaccine directly to the nose may contribute to a stronger mucosal immunity in the nose and lungs, offering protection at the site of entry.

A good vaccine that improves upon natural immunity requires us to first understand our natural immune response to the virus. So far, neutralising antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 have been detected up to four months after infection.

Previous studies have suggested that antibodies against related coronaviruses typically last for a couple of years. However, declining antibody levels do not always translate to weakening immune responses. And more promisingly, a recent study found that memory T cells triggered responses against the coronavirus that causes Sars almost two decades after the people were infected.

Of the roughly 320 vaccines being developed against Covid-19, one that favours a strong T cell response may be the key to long-lasting immunity.

■ Maitreyi Shivkumar is a senior lecturer in molecular biology at De Montfort University; this article also appears at theconversation.com

AGENDA

Scotland's first minister might appear unassailable, but, says GLEN O'HARA, there are signs her dominance has shaky foundations



Scotland's first minister is on a winning streak. Nicola Sturgeon's personal approval rating is sky-high. Her party leads by miles in the polls, despite having been in power for more than 13 years.

Her Scottish National Party's cherished dream and *raison d'être* – Scotland's independence – now appears to be the choice of a majority of Scottish voters. Can she do no wrong?

It certainly appears that there is nothing that can stop the SNP. Whatever they mess up, and however they bungle, they come up smelling of roses.

Scotland's coronavirus outbreak has been one of the worst in the developed world. With over 4,200 Covid-19 deaths which saw the virus mentioned on the death certificate, only a handful of states have done worse on a per capita basis. This would normally blow a hole in anyone's reputation for competence: except, of course, that one of those countries suffering even more was England, grist to the nationalists' goal of separation.

No-one can say that the Holyrood government did well during the coronavirus outbreak. That's not a particularly harsh criticism, because the disaster came on suddenly and caused unique difficulties for any administration. But allegations of an early cover-up over a Nike conference in Edinburgh, a paltry testing effort and now a resurgence in case numbers are no hallmark of success either.

Scotland's disastrous handling of its school leaving qualifications is another case in point. Anyone looking at a universal calculation of unique and individual grades should have got shivers running down their spine much faster than they did.

Yet the first minister and her education secretary, John Swinney, took nearly a week to see the writing on the wall and swerve rather than smash into it.

Their saviour? That's obvious, because he sits in Downing Street and poses as an avuncular national figurehead, occasionally baring his teeth – as over devolved powers or a no-deal Brexit – only as a counterpoint to the jolly, bouncy character he's invented.

That fictional simulacrum, of course, is called 'Boris', and in his guise as prime minister Johnson has come to signify almost everything that many Scots loathe about the Union.

It's worth pausing at this stage to consider just how dominant Sturgeon's party has become, and why. The last three opinion polls for next May's Scottish election, all from different pollsters, have thrown up leads of 33%, 27% and 37% in the constituency part of the poll.

That's a wide range of results, but they all would mean a large overall majority for the SNP on well over half the vote – quite a way up even on the 46.5% they gained in 2016.

What's driving that? Well, it's hard to conclude that it's anything other than the



Sturgeon and the shifting sands

vacuum of leadership on the other side of the aisle.

The last YouGov poll in Scotland gave Johnson a terrible score on whether he was doing 'well' or 'badly' (-54), while Sturgeon racked up a stratospheric approval rating (+50). One might suggest that lagging your main opponent by over a hundred points is a sub-optimal situation.

From the moment that Johnson eased hard lockdown in early May, and replaced his 'Stay Home' slogan with a message to 'Stay Alert', his stock has fallen: in Scotland and Wales, that means that the well-known rally-round-the-flag effect, which sees voters stand by their leaders in a real crisis, has transferred even more strongly to the just slightly more

cautious governments in Edinburgh and Cardiff.

They can win the Scottish parliamentary elections next May very easily. The SNP's Scottish opponents, as well as their London rival, are ineffective and invisible. The Scottish Tories' new leader, Douglas Ross, is a fluent media performer, but has had little time to make an impression. His seat is also, as yet in the Westminster, and not the Edinburgh, parliament. Scottish Labour's titular 'leader', Richard Leonard, is a living Invisible Man act most Scots would struggle to pick out of a lineup.

Even so, all of these gifts to the SNP should make them wary. Their apparently unquestionable dominance rests on parts of the political puzzle that could change,

TIGHTROPE: First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood, Edinburgh

Photo: Getty Images

not the determined march to nationhood many imagine.

It is all too easy to appeal to this or that 'structural' reason why large-scale changes are happening, rather than understanding the proximate and immediate political context too. Johnson, coronavirus and the weakness of their opponents are supporting the SNP's ratings right now.

But take away those factors – just as Brexit and Corbynism will no longer really help Johnson at the next UK election – and things might look very different.

It's easy to imagine from the polls that there is a groundswell of Scottish national feeling. But whatever the short-term movements of opinion since the



advent of the Johnson premiership and Brexit, there is little evidence of a really strong, long-term realignment of national feeling and self-perception.

There was a general move downwards, not upwards, of those voters feeling 'wholly or mainly Scottish' between devolution in 1999 and the first independence referendum in 2014: only thereafter did the number tick back up a little.

Even after that very divisive battle, YouGov found that 'Scottish not British' or 'more Scottish than British' went up from 51% in January 2012 to 57% in June 2018. All of this is hardly the earthquake you might expect from some of the numbers quoted in headlines.

Most Scots have long lived with the fact

that they in general see themselves as Scottish, but might feel somewhat British as well; or (for fewer of them) that they feel British, but are definitely Scottish too.

There need not be any contradiction in that blurry framing, just as there wouldn't be after independence either.

One could say the same of Brexit. One of the main drivers of the SNP's success right now is the understandable feeling, on the part of many Scots, that they are being dragged out of the European Union against their will.

Polarisation around this issue seems to be one of the main drivers of pro-independence feeling: the last YouGov poll on that question showed that 53% of Scots favoured a Yes vote in a second referendum, a heavily Brexit-related choice that saw 60% of Remainers, but only 35% of Leavers, opting to abandon the UK.

There is a long way to go in this debate. A new referendum cannot possibly happen before 2022 at the earliest, and may be delayed for years by Conservative resistance or wrangling at Westminster. Any number of things can change in that time, as they have since the SNP's relatively disappointing Westminster election performance in 2017.

What seems unlikely today can reappear as tomorrow's received wisdom. Maybe the Westminster government will seal a trade deal with Brussels, drawing some of the sting from that issue. Rapid deployment of an effective vaccine could make coronavirus seem like a thing of the past, and, if the UK government has bought enough doses, begin (unjustly) to seem like a 'British' success story.

The Conservative government could be displaced in 2024 by a Labour-led administration under Keir Starmer – a prime minister Scots are likely to find much more acceptable, and who might be governing with the SNP's approval.

The SNP is not a happy ship behind the scenes, and Sturgeon is their only really plausible leader right now: any scandal or really egregious policy disaster could change things. And so on.

Sturgeon's course forward is a tightrope, like all leadership – akin to John Major's and David Cameron's attempts to ride the Eurosceptic tiger without getting eaten by it, Tony Blair's attempt to spend much more money on working class and low-income England without middle class voters minding, or Theresa May's ill-fated efforts at Brexit compromise.

All of those examples show you, of course, that after riding high a spectacular fall may follow.

Scottish independence needs now to be taken very seriously indeed. Its likelihood is rising strongly.

But as ever, the winds and seasons and sands can shift very quickly. As in Shelley's epic vision of *Ozymandias*, King of Kings, Sturgeon's opponents look for now on her works and despair. But there are plenty of ways that the edifice could still turn into a colossal wreck.

■ Glen O'Hara is professor of modern and contemporary history at Oxford Brookes University. He is the author of a series of books and articles about modern Britain, including *The Paradoxes of Progress: Governing Post-War Britain, 1951-1973* (2012) and *The Politics of Water in Post-War Britain* (2017). He is currently working on a history of the Blair government of 1997-2007

A tragic wake-up call for Europe

The unfolding refugee crisis on the Greek island of Lesbos underlines the EU's failure to get to grips with the issue, says
GEMMA BIRD



Fires at a reception centre for asylum seekers on the Greek island of Lesbos have left thousands of people without shelter.

Around 13,000 people – including those from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and west Africa – lived at the Moria Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) in a space intended for just over 3,000.

Most will have lost the few belongings and flimsy and insufficient housing they had.

Lesbos is now in an official state of emergency. Ships are being sent to help shelter those left sleeping on the roads outside the camp, some of which were blocked by police to stop people entering nearby villages.

Meanwhile, there is confusion over how asylum cases will be progressed when many of the administration zones in the camp were also damaged by the fires.

This blaze is just the latest in a number of tragic cases of fire and violence, as well as inhumane conditions, endured by those seeking asylum on the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Leros and Kos. It is a stark reminder of the failures of the current system and the need for change.

Covid-19 led to increased restrictions on the freedom of movement of those in the island centres, making already dangerous conditions a lot worse. While restrictions imposed across Greece in late March have now eased, the date for lifting the lockdown on the island centres continues to be pushed back.

Other residents of the five islands and tourists have been free to meet for coffee, go to the beach, or go out for dinner, but RIC residents have had their freedom of movement restricted in scorching heat. They were left in unsuitable conditions, with limited access to sanitation, food and water. The risk of Covid-19 remains high, and 35 people tested positive in Moria before the fires.

So what should the EU and the Greek government do now?

The day after the Moria fire, the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, said that the commission is ready to support Greece, and that its priority is "the safety of those left without shelter".

Yet as recently as March von der Leyen thanked Greece for being Europe's *aspida* (shield) because of its location at the EU's border with Turkey.

A situation in which Greece is understood to be Europe's shield, one which pushes the responsibility for migration and border policy to

neighbouring states, is one that will inevitably lead to overcrowding in camps on the Aegean islands as well as lives lost at sea in the Mediterranean.

So too will an approach that ignores offers by cities in the Netherlands to rehouse refugees as national governments continue to rely on Greece.

Policies designed to push back, return or prevent people from entering Europe will not ensure genuinely safe and legal pathways for crossing borders.

The EU's policy has allowed Greece to build closed detention centres on the Aegean islands and to speed up the asylum process by relying on non-specialist case assessors drawn from the police force.

These measures do not guarantee a safe, fair and just system.

Under international law people have the right to claim asylum, they also have the right to cross borders to be able to make that claim. To detain people without a time limit does not respect this.

So what is the alternative? First, it is not to rebuild Moria. Neither Greece nor the EU can continue to rely on the five Greek islands as a space to hold people for months, often years, in unsuitable conditions.

At the start of 2020 there were 40,000 people housed on the islands – although collectively the RICs were built to support closer to 5,500. The numbers have decreased due to relocations of unaccompanied minors to other EU states and transfers to alternative accommodation in mainland Greece. But the current policy does not prevent the number of people stuck in the reception centres from going back up.

To genuinely change the conditions facing those claiming asylum requires a radical rethinking of the collective European response to asylum, one that recognises the positive outcomes of welcoming refugees.

Such a system relies on a rethinking of the rhetoric surrounding migration and refugees. Europe needs a new welcoming stance – one that is focused on offering people in vulnerable situations a chance at a stable life, the ability to work, to study and to have their rights to a family life protected.

This means opening up rather than closing down borders. It means recognising that passports and place of birth are a matter of luck and nothing more. It means an end to the reliance on Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Leros and Kos as places where people's lives are put on hold as they wait months for a decision on where they go next.

If this change doesn't occur, if the islands remain overcrowded, reliant on detention, then tragically it is more than likely just a matter of time until the next disaster happens.

■ Gemma Bird is a senior lecturer in politics and international relations at the University of Liverpool; this article also appears at theconversation.com

AGENDA

This Bill embarrasses our country

New Lib Dem leader ED DAVEY on how the Internal Market Bill undermines British values



As someone who is passionately pro-European, the Brexit process is painful enough as it is. Now, the government are rubbing salt into the wound. Breaking international law is a new low.

The UK has left the EU. All that needed to be done, voters were told, was for Boris Johnson to implement his "oven ready" deal, including his Withdrawal Agreement. It seemed, frustratingly enough for those of us who fought tirelessly to stop Brexit, that the case was almost closed.

The Conservatives stood on a manifesto that championed the Withdrawal Agreement and each Tory MP elected pledged to vote in favour of this agreed deal. In December and January, immediately after winning a huge majority, they duly did so – ensuring that the agreement passed effortlessly.

At every step of the Brexit process,

Liberal Democrats were clear in our pro-EU position and I will always be proud that we stuck to our guns on that. We marched in the streets, we marched in the parliamentary lobbies, and we were resolute that the UK would be better off remaining at the heart of Europe. But, after Johnson's general election success, it became clear that Brexit was happening. We'd managed to delay it several times, but it was clear that there was now no way to stop him from pushing forward with his deal. Now, the same Tory MPs who were told in December that they had to vote for the Withdrawal Agreement are being told they have to vote against it. And in doing so, they have to vote in favour of the UK breaking international law.

The situation is so risible that some amongst this most loyal of Tory cohorts are finding it difficult to swallow. Several Tories have rebelled on the Internal Market Bill and many have spoken publicly about the damage this disregard for the rule of law will do to our country internationally.

As Tobias Ellwood, Tory MP and chair of the defence committee, has pointed out: how can we expect countries like China to abide by international law and the agreements we have signed with them if we don't?

How can we defend the people of Hong Kong under the Sino-British Joint Declaration if we don't stick to our end of the bargain when it comes to other agreements?

It used to be that the rule of law was a non-partisan issue. That however other party lines were drawn, you could be certain that all MPs from all parties had the integrity to commit to the rule of law. This was a staple of British values, taught in our schools and championed in our parliament. Now it seems that certainty is lost to a bygone era.

From the unlawful prorogation of parliament, to breaking lockdown to test one's eyesight, to an utter disregard for international law: Boris Johnson's government have made it very clear that it is one rule for them and another for everyone else.

All this at a time when we've been told we're all in it together. While the pandemic ravages our population, economy, and jobs across the country, we are told that at least we're all in the same boat. Yet now the government are sending a very clear message: while they sail on in a super yacht, the rest of us must patiently and dutifully stay in our dinghies.

For a government to break the law at any time would be unacceptable. But

right now it's unbelievably irresponsible. To fight coronavirus effectively we need people to abide by the rules and obey the laws. It's been tough on everyone and it will continue to be tough. These are some of the most far-reaching draconian laws we've ever experienced. But we've all followed them in order to protect each other and save lives. By breaking the law, Boris Johnson sets an example that undermines this message and the unity that has got us through these difficult months.

I am a liberal. Always have been. And because of that, I am a European. I believe in tearing down walls, not building them. And I believe firmly in democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. As Liberal Democrat Leader I am clear that these are the values we most fight for. That is why my party is focusing on opposing Johnson's efforts to break the law, preventing a no-deal Brexit, and stopping any rushed Brexit deal that would be bad for the country I love so much.

At a time when we are already battling with the impact of coronavirus, it is unthinkable that any more pressure would be added to our NHS, jobs, and the economy. That is why Liberal Democrats oppose this embarrassing and unlawful Internal Market Bill.

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I'm walking down a road on the outskirts of Nantes, minding my own business and fully engrossed in my podcast about female octopuses, when out of the corner of my eye I see a car pull up alongside me.

"Eh Mademoiselle!" a man shouts. Auto-program kicks in: keep walking, don't make eye contact, try to ignore that feeling in the pit of my stomach.

"Hey, where are you going?" the man calls out as he cruises along besides me. Now anger rears its head too; I can't concentrate on what the marine scientist is saying about octopus parturition and it's pissing me off.

So I look up to shoot the driver a filthy glare and do a double take. It's my flatmate on his way home from work. He's offering me a lift. He apologises for startling me – he was only messing about.

I apologise in turn for the death stare and quickly re-adjust my facial expression to something more congenial. But as I clamber into the car, the emotion I was harbouring just seconds before towards my close friend takes longer to shake off. It feels a lot like hatred.

According to the 25-year-old French writer Pauline Harmange, I have nothing to feel guilty about. Her debut book *Moi les hommes, je les déteste* (which loosely translates to 'Men, I Hate Them') argues that men have given women every reason in the world to dislike them – so why shouldn't we?

As a Brit who's lived in France I must say that it takes a while to get used to the gender dynamics there. I get the impression that I am constantly being made aware of my femaleness, whether at work, on the street or in social situations, a state of affairs only emphasised by the constant use of the feminine in language.

A Parisian friend of mine who now lives in the UK told me she always feels like a weight has been lifted from her whenever she crosses over the Channel. "I worry so much less about what I'm wearing when I leave home in London," she tells me. Which, given the stat that 85% of young women experience sexual harassment in British public spaces, is saying something.

In her book, Harmange, a long-time volunteer for a charity that fights against sexual abuse, cites figures from 2018 that show that 96% of people convicted of domestic violence were men, as were 99% of those convicted of sexual violence. Women, she has pronounced, "are encouraged to like men, but we should absolutely have the right not to".

Happily married to a man herself, she maintains that women should be allowed not to love the male species as a whole but instead make exceptions for certain anomalies. Coming together in a shared hatred of men, she wryly suggests, could prevent women with "a joyful and emancipatory path".

The 90-page essay has upset a lot of people in France, no one more so than Ralph Zurmély, an advisor to France's gender equality ministry who has tried to have it banned.

This has, of course, had the opposite effect of what he intended and demand for the book – which had a miniscule first print run of only 450 – has soared. Its 'micro-publisher' is overwhelmed and has had to ask a bigger publishing house to step in as copies fly off the shelves.

Harmange's unapologetic defence of "man-hating" may seem extreme, but to

The woman who hates men.. and the book that has France hooked

A book by 25-year-old Pauline Harmange has been a surprise hit – helped by an attempt by a government official to have it banned. CONSTANCE KAMPFNER reports on an issue that has shown up the complexities of French feminism



her newly-acquired fans it makes total sense. She reminds her readers that misandry, after all, is merely a response to misogyny and she does not incite violence.

Yet the link between what might seem like more innocent forms of harassment and serious violence towards women is supported by statistics in both countries. In the UK, two women a week die at the hands of a partner or an ex, according to data from the Office for National Statistics. In France the figure is three women killed a week, says l'Observatoire des violences faites aux femmes.

The controversy around Harmange's book casts a spotlight on

UNAPOLOGETIC:
Pauline Harmange
Photo: Contributed



a fraught wider debate that has been taking place on the issue of feminism in France.

A divide exists within the feminist movement, mainly felt along generational lines. Younger women are increasingly concerned with inclusivity in all its forms, whether that be around racism, LGBTQ rights or class, while older feminists fall back on France's universalist tradition.

They are more interested in seeking economic and social parity with men, emphasising their similarities rather than their differences.

Back in 2018, as the #MeToo movement was building momentum across the world, more than 100 influential French women signed an open letter defending a man's "right to bother". In the US and UK, the movement led to the

defenestration of the likes of Harvey Weinstein, Jeffrey Epstein and Kevin Spacey. Yet in France it has so far been little more than a slap on the wrist for the establishment.

At times it seems to have had the opposite effect. A year ago, the journalist Sandra Muller was ordered by the courts to pay 15,000 euros in damages to the TV boss Eric Brion after her accusations against him for sexual harassment were ruled to be defamatory.

There is a worry among many in France that, if unchecked, a wave of puritanism risks hijacking the public discourse. Many view the younger generation's growing concern with "political correctness" as an unwelcome Anglo-Saxon import (it is not unusual to hear people refer to "*le bodypositivisme*" or "*le mansplaining*").

One could almost hear them scoff at our feminism as they do at our food: tasteless, over-simplified, and potentially dangerous if ingested without caution.

The signatories of the anti-#MeToo letter argued that the right to offend is "indispensable" to artistic creation. They say objecting, for example, to prizes for Roman Polanski's films, on moral grounds, confuses "the man and the work". Against the hysteria of the Anglo-Saxons, they portray the French as the last defenders of free speech, the protectors of passion and their country as a haven for unfettered artistry and humour.

Which is why Zurmély's objection to Harmange's book seems particularly ironic. This is a country in which the question of whether or not a magazine article which depicts a black female politician as a slave in shackles is racist or just good satire is seen as a legitimate subject to debate on national television (look up the Danièle Obono scandal if you haven't already heard about it).

Some point out that the anti-censorship argument is often used against the more vulnerable in society. If they have the temerity to fight back, the establishment cries foul. When an aide to the ministry of equality throws a hissy fit about a book with a readership of less than 500, threatening legal action against an artisanal publishing house, whose freedom did he think he was protecting?

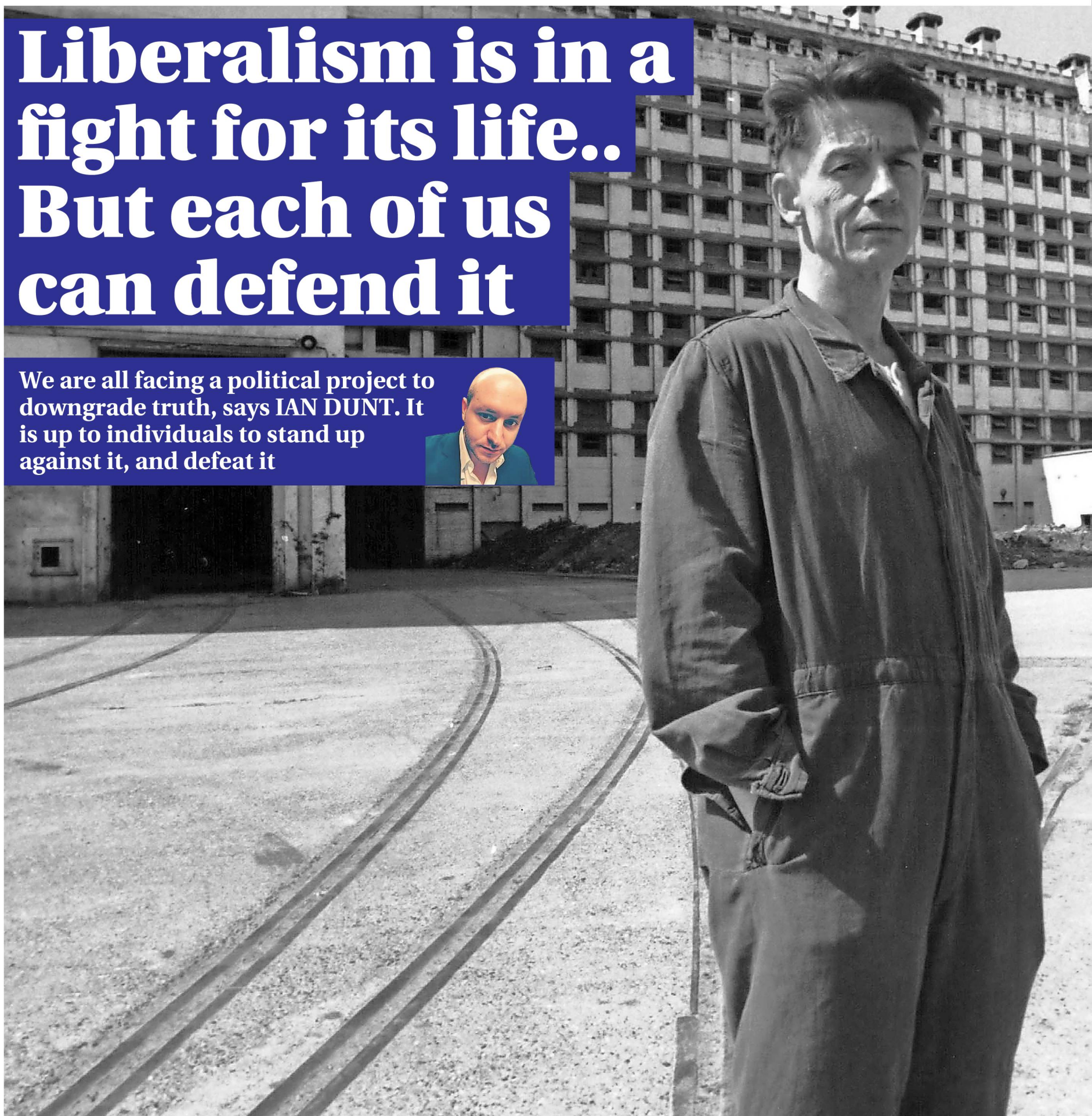
Far from prudish or puritanical, the new brand of French feminism is often radically creative and funny. The underground group who call themselves the 'Colleuses' spend their nights on guerrilla missions, pasting collages all over French cities denouncing harassment and violence done to women. Meanwhile members of 'La Barbe' don stick-on beards and storm the red carpet at the Césars film awards, or set up camp at a Freemasons meeting, and congratulate men on their obvious supremacy. Harmange's book – serious in content and facetious in tone – is the latest provocation to arise out of this movement.

Which brings me back to my walk with the octopus. The momentary hatred I felt for my flatmate left me confused, but I did not feel as regretful as I might have done. Once home, I was glad to get back to my podcast. It was an account of the epic feat of a deep-sea octopus that brooded over her eggs for almost five years without once eating, only to die of exhaustion once they finally hatched. It left me with a thought: where was the dad? Probably trying to ban a book...

AGENDA

Liberalism is in a fight for its life.. But each of us can defend it

We are all facing a political project to downgrade truth, says IAN DUNT. It is up to individuals to stand up against it, and defeat it





To read the papers at the moment is to watch the concept of truth decompose in front of your eyes. The debate over the Withdrawal Agreement is the kind of thing which makes you question your sanity.

We're told that the document is intolerable. It's the result of European "dirty tactics", according to the *Sun's* political editor. It "never made sense", according to the front page of the *Daily Telegraph*. The government says it is a threat to British sovereignty and that it has to trash it – to knowingly break a treaty it only just signed.

But just a few months ago we were told this was an "oven-ready deal". When Boris Johnson signed it, he said it was a "fantastic moment" for the country. He repeatedly insisted that the deal entailed "no checks for stuff being exported from NI to GB" – the very fact which he now says warrants his attempt to undermine it.

He spent an entire election campaign urging people to support it. The great phalanx of pro-Brexit commentators united to defend it and smear the motivations of those who raised objections to it.

There are two interpretations to this. The first is that the government is so inept it signs legal documents it does not understand. The second is that it is so cynical it signs legal documents it does not intend to uphold. In either case, it turns the UK into an international basket-case, a country which simply cannot be trusted to stick to its word.

But the most important element of what is happening is not about strategy. It is about psychology.

It is extraordinary to watch people – politicians, journalists, online commentators – turn 180 degrees so suddenly, seemingly without any awareness that they are contradicting themselves.

The very same people who just weeks ago were loudly proclaiming how wonderful the deal was are now stressing how terrible it is and they don't appear to even recognise that their position has changed. This is what it makes it feel as if you're going mad – having people say one thing and then another without acknowledging the switch.

This psychological phenomenon isn't happening by chance. It isn't some sudden deterioration in the standard of our debate or our capacity for memory. It is the result of a political project.

The notion of objective truth has been downgraded throughout Brexit, in the purposefully false statements in the referendum campaign to the turgid years of nonsense about WTO-deals and frictionless borders in the period which followed. Dominic Cummings and Johnson operate on the basis of made-up narratives in place of reality.

Britain isn't unique in going through this. The rejection of truth as a core value in political debate is one of the chief qualities of nationalist governments. It allows them to portray their failures as victories. It means they can avoid scrutiny. It expands their power.

It is happening around the world. In the US, Donald Trump lies more easily than he breathes. The *Washington Post* estimates that he has made more than 19,000 misleading claims during his presidency. In Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro repeatedly insists that there is no coronavirus crisis, even as it runs

SEARCH FOR TRUTH: Actor John Hurt in costume, on the set of the film *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984)

Photo: Getty Images

rampant through his country and his own body. In Hungary, Viktor Orban held a referendum on an apparent plan for open immigration by financier George Soros, despite the fact that it never existed.

In Poland, Andrzej Duda portrays anti-bullying education initiatives in schools as the "sexualisation of children" in order to further his militant anti-gay agenda.

Sometimes, when you watch these events take place, it feels like the world is falling out from under you. They lie. They get away with it. There is no sense of honour to keep them to their word. The values we assumed would always be there have started crumbling away.

Taken day-to-day, it is hard to make sense of it all. But when you take a step back, it becomes clearer. What we are witnessing is not just bog-standard political cynicism. It is an ideological assault. It is the triumph of nationalism over liberalism.

My book, *How to be a Liberal*, published this week, is an attempt to address that. It's a reminder of what liberalism is, how it freed us from superstition and absolute executive power, and how we can grasp it now to turn back the nationalist tide. When we go back to first principles, we find the way to fight back.

Here's one example. On November 10, 1619, the French philosopher René Descartes had a nightmare. His later recollection of it was a jumbled-up mixture of strange visions – a storm which wouldn't let him stand up, a loud explosion, a weird conversation with a stranger by a table. But whatever the content, it really shook him up. And he was unnerved, most of all, by how lifelike it felt, how there was no way to prove at any given moment that he wasn't dreaming.

So he developed a weird obsession. He spent the rest of his life in a quest for certainty, for things which he could say without doubt were true.

In the end, he came up with something quite remarkable: the self. He did it with one of the most famous sentences in philosophy: "I think, therefore I am." You can doubt pretty much anything, but if you're doubting, then you definitely exist.

The self had at least one quality. It was thinking. It was only through thinking that it knew it existed. And it wasn't just thinking any old thing. It was thinking logically. It was using reason. These two elements – the self and reason – emerged as the only certain things in a world of doubt.

Descartes then added one final piece to the jigsaw. In his period, people used to think that the things they saw or felt in objects were part of their substance. So blood, for instance, had the quality 'red' in it. It was a completely human-centric view of the world.

Descartes rejected that. He believed that the object and our experience of it were different things. What we perceived was just our own subjective experience, not something innate to the object. This was a revolutionary thought, one which

would help bring down the era of religious control.

Because if your experience of something is different to its real quality, you will need to come up with hypotheses and develop instruments which can test them on the basis of evidence. And by the time you're doing that, you're doing science.

This picture Descartes had drawn became the standard operating unit of liberal politics: The individual self, using reason, and applying it to empirical reality. It was a form of political thought designed for people who thought independently. People who thought for themselves, who would not turn with the flock when the wind blew in a different direction.

Around 300 years later, the English journalist George Orwell was pursuing the same idea in the book *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. He imagined a world of complete totalitarian dictatorship, in which the Party controlled all aspects of people's lives. And the only source of resistance he could find in such a world was precisely the one Descartes had discovered – independent minds who based their assessments of the world on objective fact.

The Party felt differently. It knew that it would only have full control if people had no grasp of objective reality, no way to assess if what it was saying was true

or not. "Whatever the Party holds to be truth," one of its agents said, "is truth."

It was this which allowed it to constantly change the identity of the regimes it was at war with, without anyone in the public even seeming to realise that a shift had occurred. "Oceania was at war with Eastasia," Orwell said in one of the book's most famous passages. "Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia."

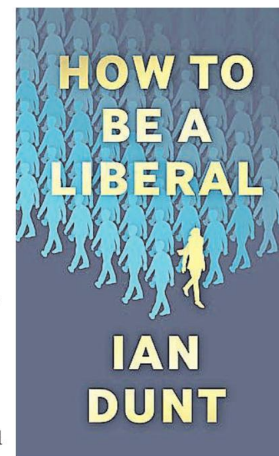
This same principle applies now. The Johnson administration demands that you forget everything which you think you

remember about the months between October 2019 and September 2020. All those comments about how good the deal was and why you needed to support it are gone in a flash. We have always been at war with the Withdrawal Agreement.

There is nothing more dangerous to this government than independent minds who base their views on evidence. And that is why liberalism was established on precisely those values: because they pose a threat to power, because they challenge, scrutinise and restrain it. The moment they fade, power can do whatever it wants.

We'll never defeat right wing populists by emulating them, or respecting them, or compromising with them. We will defeat them by rediscovering our principles and using them to fight back. And to do that, we need to go back to core principles, back to our primary convictions, and use them to turn back the nationalist tide.

■ *How to be a Liberal: The Story of Liberalism & the Fight for its Life* is published by Canbury Press, hardback £25 (also available as ebook and in audio)



LETTERS: Have your say, email letters@theneweuropean.co.uk

Sensible Tory voters are now politically homeless

Your correspondents and letters pages rightly focus on the future challenges for Labour and the Liberal Democrats, shell-shocked by the election. “Is Starmer more Major than Blair?”, asks Peter Kerr (*TNE* #210) – but is Starmer more John Smith, perhaps?

Recovery is not enough now; inspiring vision is also needed. Harold Wilson, another exemplar, also ran the modernisation vision (‘we cannot fight the battles of the future with the rusty weapons of the past’).

Ed Davey needs to succeed in the double task of inspiring passionate pro-Europeans, while also proving the Lib Dems are not just a ‘one-trick-pony’ party – another vision challenge.

Ever since Jo Grimond, the Lib Dems and Liberals have been the party most passionately in favour of Britain being in the European partnership of nations and need to continue to inspire us pro-European internationalists. But a positive vision of ‘power to the people’ is also needed again; not power to the powerful, or to the central state, but to people and communities.

But spare a thought also for the Conservatives, whose party has been taken over by Vote Leave. Where is a natural conservative to go?

The party of pragmatism and good business sense has been sacrificed on the altar of the hardest Brexit, and the party of law and order has been superseded by the party of law-breaking and braggadocio.

Anthony Thacker
Hinckley

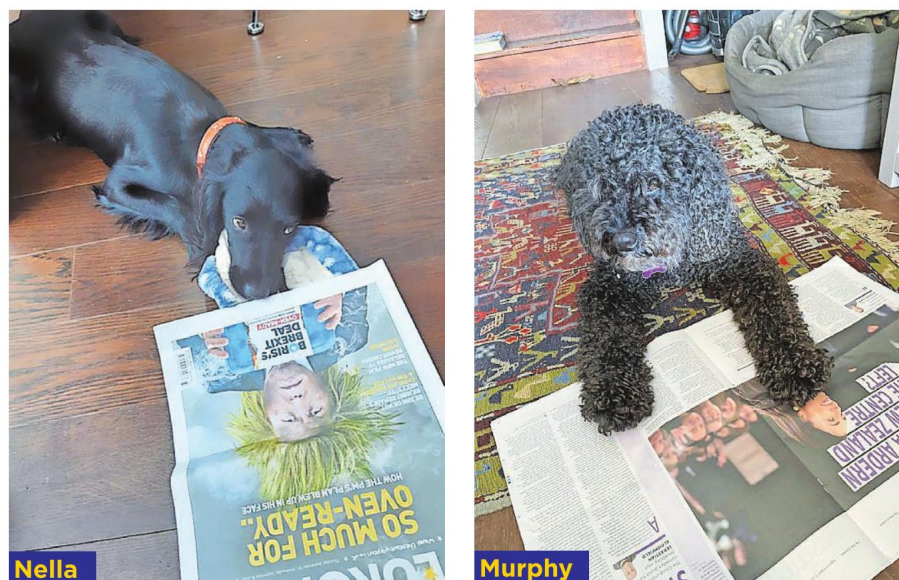
The Liberal Democrats are charged with being undemocratic for wanting to revoke Brexit had they won a majority in the general election, and the collapse of the ‘Red Wall’ suggests that northern working class voters no longer think that the Labour Party best represents their interests.

But what of the Conservative Party (or indeed the Conservative and Unionist Party) – surely the most inappropriate name of them all? A dictionary definition of ‘conservative’ is “disposed to preserve existing conditions, institutions, etc., or to restore traditional ones, and to limit change”.

The Johnson government is embarked on an approach of ‘disrupting’ (destroying?) our economy, our planning rules, the BBC, the judicial system, our democracy, and probably the Union. Should they not be challenged on their misleading name, surely the ‘Destructive Party’ would be a more honest one?

Nick Roberts
Selly Oak

Sir Keir Starmer has made a solid start but instead of grasping the opportunity to unite opposition parties and the



Animal readers of THE NEW EUROPEAN

Reader Jennifer Lunn writes: “My daughter’s Sprocker, Nella, with *TNE*. She had to turn away as she can’t bear to look at Boris!”
Reader Deirdre O’Brien writes: “Here is Murphy, looking outraged.”

■ Does the animal who runs your household read *TNE*? Send photographic evidence and crucial biographical details to letters@theneweuropean.co.uk, putting ‘Animal Readers’ in the subject field.

electorate behind a long-overdue agenda for political reform he is now backing Brexit, writing in the *Sunday Telegraph* last weekend that the “Leave-Remain divide is over” and we need to “Get on with Brexit and defeat the virus. That should be the government’s mantra”. These are words that could be straight out of Boris Johnson’s mouth.

After a crushing election result, the Lib Dems have yet to wake up. In a political broadcast last month, they seemed more concerned about ‘standing up for immigration’ and open borders than getting Britain back on its feet.

Meanwhile, Johnson now confirms that the government will spend £120 million we urgently need for more immediate priorities, on a celebration of UK innovation and exceptionalism, dubbed a ‘festival of Brexit’. Are our politicians serious?

Brian McGavin
Wilmslow

We won’t get fooled again

Caroline Voaden (“Ed is right. This is not the time to commit to Rejoin”, *TNE* #210) is correct that those who supported

Remain should not get into arguments publicly with each other. She is wrong however in her implication that we should leave it all to the established parties now, for they have let us down twice already.

When the 2017 general election was announced the relief amongst the parties was palpable – back to party politics as usual. That went well, didn’t it? Then in 2019 the leaders of the Labour, Lib Dems, and SNP actively conspired to give Boris Johnson the election he needed – treachery to the pro-EU cause.

No, Caroline, what pro-EU supporters must do is both join a political party of their choice and a ‘For Europe’ grouping within it, and join a single-issue organisation resolutely supporting Rejoin. We must not be let down again.

John Gaskell
Farnham, Surrey

Between September and December 12 last year, I and a dedicated group of Lib Dem canvassers knocked on every door of the four Harpenden wards, not once but twice as we pushed to unseat Bim Afolami, our careerist, lacklustre Tory MP. Harpenden and Hitchin voted 61% in favour of remaining in the EU, so many of the residents we spoke with were Lib Dems or supported EU membership. As

the weeks went by, it became obvious that the Revoke policy was exceedingly unpopular.

However, our doorstep conversations were much more nuanced than just Article 50 – activists, supporters and EU adherents of all stripes realised that Europe, as a single issue, was no longer at the heart of this country’s travails. What ailed, and ails it, is the taking over of British politics by a party that promotes an anti-immigrant, go-it-alone type of patriotism, that lies and puts loyalty to its incompetent leader above all else.

Your newspaper has highlighted recent polls suggesting that only 2% of respondents believe the European issue to be their main concern. Thus Ed Davey does speak for the majority of this country when he says that rejoining the EU should not be the central plank of Lib Dem party policy.

Please do not forsake the Liberal Democrat party. Never has it been more important than now to hold aloft the beacons of rationality and openness. All the opposition parties should be working together to remove an administration that pours scorn on our time-honoured institutions of an impartial judiciary and the rule of law and acts with no compunction about deceiving us all.

Dr Allison F Wren
Harpenden

I sympathise with Tim Walker, (“The party has sold off its stock as it is about to soar”, *TNE* #210), who is leaving the Lib Dems following Ed Davey’s announcement that rejoining the EU would be “for the birds”. Many people, including me, joined the party because of its firm commitment to opposing the epic wrongdoing of Brexit.

Any doubt about that commitment was dispelled by their bold Revoke policy at the last election.

Although it is fashionable to criticise this now, we must be careful not to be wise with hindsight, for had the nation been sensible enough by some miracle to vote for its implementation, expressing their majority Remain convictions in a democratic election, Jo Swinson would have been a heroine.

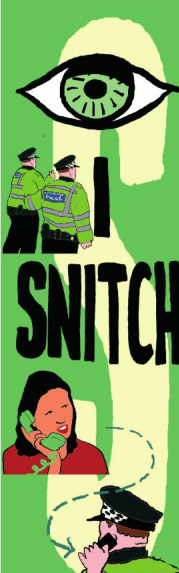
Just think about it for a moment. At a stroke we could have cancelled three years of trauma and anguish, retaining all our opt-outs and privileges with the EU, no questions asked. Never was such a golden opportunity tossed so carelessly aside.

Davey, Starmer and others seem to have taken the failed Revoke policy too much to heart, fearing the public is too battle-weary to want to fight their way back to proper membership.


Such timidity, self-doubt and diffidence, such deference to Euroscepticism and half-hearted, apologetic support for the ideals and values of the EU, have been

Should you snitch on your neighbour?

TIM BRADFORD




IF YOUR NEIGHBOUR CYNICALLY WROTE LIES ON THE SIDE OF A RED BUS...?



It's so tempting, but sadly it's not (yet) illegal to be an unctuous schemer.

NO SNITCH

IF YOU KNOW THEY BROKE RULES IN THE PAST - BUT GOT AWAY WITH IT...?




God it would be nice to put this one away, but the cops won't want to know.

NO SNITCH

IF THEY MAKE A REALLY TERRIBLE MESS, BUT DON'T CLEAN ANYTHING UP...?

GET BREXIT DONE


THREE WORD BULLSHIT



Looks like they have been incredibly careless, but you'll get called out for snitching.

NO SNITCH

IF YOUR ANNOYING NEIGHBOUR BRAZENLY BREAKS INTERNATIONAL LAW...?



Yes, go for it. How can we get through all this if we allow such rogue behaviour?

SNITCH

the Remain movement's Achilles heel from the beginning. Those who judge Brexit harmful have a duty to continue to openly disagree with it, rather than claiming to be reconciled with it (or staying silent about it).

I hope the Lib Dems will revise their position. We need a party with the guts to say what it believes in.

John King
Pebworth

I am keeping my Lib Dem membership and I urge others to do so.

Only by experiencing life outside the EU will the people realise what they have lost. We will also see the kind of electoral pact necessary to defeat the Tories.

PR will be brought in and never again will the country have to suffer an 80-seat Tory majority government led by incompetent ideologues.

Jackie Terry

One point regarding Tim Walker's assertion that he joined the Lib Dems "as it was the only party in England that was unequivocally opposed to Brexit."

I think you'll find the Green Party was unequivocally opposed to Brexit.

Jim Craig

Depressed

I applaud Alastair Campbell's wholesale demolition of the government's claim to be a champion of free speech, made in response to Extinction Rebellion's blockade of Murdoch's press ("These ministers are not champions of free speech," *TNE* #210).

It is an excellent catalogue of anti-democratic behaviour which, regardless of XR's campaign, needs to be called out.

However, XR's rationale was to highlight the failure of the Murdoch press to tell the truth about the climate crisis, and this hugely important campaign has been buried in the debate on the freedom of the press.

A further response to these events is needed, and that is for the responsible press to analyse the coverage of the

BETTER LETTERS

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■ **Email letters@theneweuropean.co.uk before 9am on Tuesday for possible inclusion in the following Thursday's edition.**

■ **Put the contents of your letter in the body of your email rather than adding an attachment, such as a PDF.**

■ **Please be concise. With limited space available, letters over five paragraphs long will almost always be edited before printing. Thank you!**

Murdoch papers on the issue of climate change as effectively and accurately as possible, including significant omissions as well as misrepresentations. I think

Alastair Campbell would make an excellent job of this project.

Most people who are concerned about the environment probably don't read the Murdoch papers. I certainly don't - though I was tempted to check out the *Sun's* response to XR's more targeted

campaign strategy of topless protests!

Without combatting the sources of misinformation about climate change it will not be possible in a democratic society to achieve the necessary consensus to carry out the changes of policy necessary to prevent a climate crisis of catastrophic impact; XR's target is well chosen.

Jenny Hubbard
Burton-in-Kendal

Alastair Campbell is right to lambast the UK government for using freedom of speech as justification for its shameful attack on Extinction Rebellion.

On September 7, Priti Patel told the *Daily Mail* that "the freedom to publish, without fear nor favour, and to inform the debate on events that affect each and every one of us is absolutely vital".

Yet two days earlier that *Independent* reported that the UK government has been formally warned by the pan-European Council of Europe for threatening press freedom after it blacklisted a group of investigative journalists from the online site *Declassified UK*.

The Ministry of Defence has declined to deal with *Declassified UK*, a refusal described by the investigators as an "act having a chilling effect on media freedom".

The last time the UK was issued with a state-focused media freedom alert was in May this year, when, ironically, an *OpenDemocracy* website journalist was banned from asking questions at the UK government's daily coronavirus press conference.

The home secretary is utterly shameless; the government should be collectively ashamed.

Dr David Lowry
Stoneleigh

We in the Republic of Ireland share many things with our first cousins across the sea, but there is one big exception! We have access to the same media as you do but it's tempered by a larger variety of opinion from our national press and we have not built up the same confused

arrogance many in the UK seem to suffer from.

The right-wing politicians and their backers have succeeded brilliantly in persuading many that the EU is the cause of all their troubles and that by magically leaving with no deal or a hastily cobbled together sham of one, their futures will mysteriously improve.

For an enlightened people, this is so perplexing and I wonder how long it will take for the hollowness of the current strategy to become apparent?

Peter B. MacNamara
Limerick City

Crash Corsica

Stan Abbott ("Death in Paradise", *TNE* #210) imparts vividly the paradox that is Corsica. We visited in 2001, and our coastal hotel was idyllic and welcoming.

Travelling into the mountains, the atmosphere altered. Stopping in a village bar, my husband thought me melodramatic when I warned against parking alongside 'status' cars in the square; the chilly hostility exuded by the watchful men in the bar proved otherwise.

It reminded me of Ireland in the 1970s.

A lesson to be learned, perhaps, as the UK veers towards greater insularity and isolation. Inward-looking islands, resentful of outside influence, run the risk of incubating dispute and fomenting division.

Linda Johns
Suffolk

Lost case

The headline for James Ball's excellent piece about the PM ("Who will PM choose to betray?", *TNE* #210) neglected to use the accusative case correctly.

As any fule kno, because the betrayed people are the object, the headline ought to read: "Whom will PM choose to betray?"

Were I to take out the subscriptions

AGENDA

▶ From page 15

offer on the preceding page or take one out for my mum, who teaches English, whom I respect and whose opinion I sought, would your headline writers be able to use 'whom' correctly?

Jonathan Brick
Watford

Keir Starmer asked a pertinent question about the efficiency of testing for Covid-19 in last week's Prime Minister's Questions.

Boris Johnson replied attacking him for not supporting the efforts the government is making, and for undermining the public's trust.

It is essential that the government is held to account. With unequivocal support from the opposition (as he demands from his cabinet), PMQs would be irrelevant.

David Buckingham
Leamington Spa

Deceit is on

It now becomes clear why, in the months after the Withdrawal Agreement, Boris Johnson often said "there will be no checks on trade in the Irish Sea" when the agreement provided for such checks.

Was he ignorant of the terms, or was he lying? Neither – it was always the plan to sign the deal first and change it afterwards.

They now have the brass neck to blame it on the EU's "bad faith". This outrageous manoeuvre has now damaged the UK's reputation in the world.

Daniel Beck
Huntingdon

Ed Miliband almost got it spot-on by stating that Johnson either lied to the country about the Withdrawal Agreement or didn't read it.

Only almost, because the truth is he most likely did both.

Anne Green

During the Napoleonic War, Napoleon referred to Great Britain as "Perfidious Albion", suggesting that no one should trust us.

While seeking post-Brexit trade treaties, the government now thinks it is a good idea to negate an international agreement into which Britain freely entered.

This has a knock-on effect. What reputable country will make a trade deal with a country that cannot be trusted? That seeks to break international treaties when it suits them?

When would-be trade partners look more closely, they will see the pattern of government decision making, of at least 11 U-turns, they will back away, or demand massive financial guarantees up front.

Great Britain's reputation took centuries to build. This country is increasingly being seen as some kind of banana republic, its government as dodgy and unreliable.

Pete Milroy

I have seen and heard many comments about the international aspect of the new

internal market bill, but what about deep concerns about the domestic aspects?

The draft legislation refers not just to "international", but also to "domestic" law, including "any... legislation, convention or rule of... domestic law whatsoever, including any order, judgement or decision of... any... court or tribunal".

So, apart from breaking international law, would this new bill also mean that the government could override existing and future parliamentary legislation and Supreme Court judgements?

Does it mean that the government could then, for example, prorogue parliament and ignore any Supreme Court judgement declaring it illegal?

Such an enabling act by another country in the past has been judged by Britain as establishing a dictatorship as the government is unanswerable to any checks.

Could you bring this aspect to public attention?

Louise Bell

The attorney general Suella Braverman's advice on the internal market bill omits a well-established principle in international law: you cannot cite national law to justify breaches of international law. The principle of this is clearly repeated in Article 27 of the Vienna Convention on the law of treaties.

The bill clearly damages the honour and safety of the United Kingdom. This is not rehashing the rights and wrongs of Brexit – that is done. I am merely writing to protect a future for my son in his country of birth.

Alena Useinovic
Quorn

If you realise you have signed an international treaty you hadn't read and didn't understand, that will result in lasting damage to the economy, and the break-up of the United Kingdom, and there is no way out, would you:

- Criticise your opponents? Sack the civil service? Talk about building a new international bridge or something even more expensive and attention-grabbing?
- Break the law? Sack the cabinet? Resign? Emigrate? Make a fortune on the event speaker circuit?

Of course you would...

Stephen Johnson
Chidham

Should we be worried about where the collapse of negotiations with the EU may be taking us?

Gavin Williamson, in his previous incarnation as defence secretary, talked of gunboats to protect fisheries. With a no-deal Brexit, will EU trawlers continuing to fish in 'our' waters only be enforceable by escorting naval ships, both ours and theirs? At the Irish hard border, how long before the patience of queuing lorry drivers with perishable loads, breaks?

The heat of these situations will be fuelled by the red meat patriotism of backbench Brexiters, blaming all our ills on the 'unreasonable' Europeans, who have been predicting these consequences since 2016.

Johnson and friends are lashing about looking for scapegoats for their ill judgements, the young for the lack of

Covid control, the old Remainers for their 'treacherous' delay tactics, the Irish for sticking with the EU.

Beware those 'patriotic' leaders who think they are victims of a foreign conspiracy and where they will lead their country to... history has enough lessons of where this has led, even within lifetime memory.

Chris Clode
Wrexham

Bad books

I have just finished reading *Superforecasting: The Art & Science of Prediction*, the book designated as essential reading by Dominic Cummings and provided to each cabinet member. I thought I should read it to understand what drives his thinking which results in so many government gaffes and U-turns.

The cover blurb suggested it could improve my ability to predict the future. In fact, I did not need to improve my ability, since the book was as I had predicted.

It is little more than a detailed synopsis of the types of skill regularly used by any experienced and competent business analyst, with some basic probability theory thrown in for good measure. There is nothing extraordinary about the "ability to predict the future" from the examples given. They are not an "elite group". They are intelligent people with a particular methodology – nothing more, nothing less.

Incidentally, there isn't a chapter on government gaffes, U-turns or breaking international treaties.

Jon Bardsley
Radcliffe

Japanned

The trade deal the UK government has announced with Japan has been heralded as the UK's "first major trade deal as an independent trading nation", a symbol of the clout of "global Britain".

The full details have not yet been released, but it's already clear the agreement largely replicates the contents of the tariff-reducing deal that the European Union concluded with Japan in 2018.

For UK firms trading with Japan this is not some kind of surge forward but simply largely replicating what was already in place.

And while the government announcement highlights potential gains to the UK economy of £1.5bn over the long term, that represents less than 0.1% of our economy.

Moreover, this is a gain relative to a future in which the UK had no trade deal with Japan, not relative to the UK's current position as a participant in the EU-Japan deal.

Britain's total trade with Japan in 2018 amounted to £29bn, while our trade with the rest of the European Union, by contrast, was £650bn. So as a trading partner the EU is 20 times more important.

When one considers the 0.1% of GDP support from this Japan trade deal, don't forget that the UK government estimate that the long-term damage of a no-deal Brexit would be around 7.5% of GDP.

With the disastrous events of this week in the EU trade talks, this deal with Japan is paltry in economic terms when

compared with the looming threat of a no-deal Brexit.

Alex Orr
Edinburgh EH9

Our first great post-Brexit trade deal has been signed with Japan. Clearly Brexit was a good decision after all!

I am sure the British cheese industry will boom thanks to the special protections our competent and knowledgeable international trade secretary Liz Truss spent months negotiating for Wensleydale, Stilton, Cheddar and the like.

Oh wait, I've just remembered that Japan is over 90% lactose intolerant. The Japanese are laughing all the way to the bank.

Joe Reading

Game over

Richard Corbett ("How Europe's top clubs have parked the bus", *TNE* #209) gives a good account of the relatively recent concentration of financial resources within both national football leagues and European competitions such as the Champions League.

But we all know in our hearts that football – at that level – is no different from any other business. People are paying for a product they like, for which they are prepared to pay, and which gives them satisfaction, in this case, the ability to watch games through subscription television services.

The romantic notion of supporting one's local team has largely disappeared; with this phenomenon perhaps being most starkly illustrated by all those fans of Manchester United who have never had any connection with the city.

The Bosman ruling 25 years ago was simply in line with the four freedoms of EU citizens, including the rights of movement and residence for workers. Most regrettably that will end in a little over three months, but did those Brexiters who also enjoy football realise what they were voting for?

In his penultimate paragraph, Mr Corbett suggests some changes which could result in a welcome wider distribution of those very significant monetary rewards for success – but would current beneficiaries support such moves?

David Rogers

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Alastair Campbell

Editor-at-Large



Let me mention two political figures, one of whom, Douglas Alexander, you will likely have heard of; the other, Brendan Boyle, of whom more later, may be less familiar to a British audience.

Douglas Alexander was a Labour MP, first elected in 1997, who fell victim to the SNP surge in 2015. A long-time strategic advisor to Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, he served in various ministerial roles, including secretary of state at the now abolished Department for International Development, whose scandalous demise means we have to rely upon the word, values and international commitment of Boris Johnson and Dominic Raab to ensure the UK pulls its weight in helping the poorest people in the world. So farewell to all that.

Douglas and I go back a long way. We have broadly similar political outlooks and antennae though we have also had a few disagreements from time to time, most recently his chastisements that I am far less hostile to the SNP and their central cause than he thinks I should be. We see each other less than we did. Indeed, pre the Covid restrictions, funerals tended to be the only events where most of the New Labour team got together in the same place, and now even that can't happen. So when I got an invite from Pinsent Masons law firm to listen in to a 'virtual retreat' of its partners, at which Douglas was to give an overview of politics home and abroad, I accepted.

It was on one level invigorating, for it was a veritable tour de force on the American presidential elections, the Brexit negotiations, climate change, Covid, the future of Labour, Scottish independence and much else besides. It was rich in detail, strong on analysis but also with ideas about how to challenge the populist virus doing so much damage to politics generally, and more specifically to the countries which have imbibed it.

It was a reminder of how smart he is, how much he reads, how closely he follows trends and developments. When, in the Q and A, he got a specific question about South Africa, I thought 'oh, here we go, he might have to go into politico-waffle mode' here. Far from it. He was right across the detail, of political and economic development there and elsewhere in Africa. Ultimately however, I found the whole thing depressing, for what it said about the standard of ministers today. I could not think of a single current government minister, with the possible exception of Rishi Sunak, who could get even close to the kind of depth and reach that Douglas was displaying. Certainly not Johnson, who currently appears incapable of mounting an argument that goes beyond the latest three-word slogan. Actually now we are down to one word – Moonshot – this from a government whose record on Covid would make me fear they would not know how to book a

Right minds, just in the wrong places

bloody Uber, let alone land a man on the moon, or Covid-test an entire nation.

Douglas also singled out Sunak's Treasury as the one part of the state's armoury that had showed at least some level of competence, (though I wonder whether the recent upturn in the virus was part caused by his 'Eat Out to Help Out' initiative). In any event, the chancellor shines mainly by comparison with colleagues.

Raab, who only has Johnson's tenure at the Foreign Office to thank for being viewed there as 'the second worst foreign secretary we've ever had'. Priti Patel, of whom I have yet to hear a single civil servant, police officer or AN Other outside the ranks of solidly tribal Brexiteer MPs say a decent word. In the mould of Johnson, she seems to combine incompetence, nastiness, and a smug sense of superiority. It's a lethal mix.

Michael Gove is viewed by many, not least himself, as the cleverest member of the cabinet, but it is a cleverness in playing the political and media 'game'. His recent starring role in the defence of the indefensible, the breach of international law as their latest Brexit gambit, underlined his unmooring from principle when a political expediency is at stake. Gove, who previously served as lord chancellor, has taken an oath always to uphold the rule of law. He has broken it. Because the game of the day demanded that he do so. And so far as he is concerned, that is fine.

IF ONLY... : Our government is sadly lacking in talents such as US senator Brendan Boyle, below left, and former Labour minister Douglas Alexander

Photos: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

Even Michael Howard has spoken out against it, for heaven's sake! And anyone and everyone who was actually involved in making the Good Friday Agreement, as opposed to those, like Johnson and Gove, who willed its death even before it was born, have warned of the direct risks it faces from their words and deeds. The joint article from John Major and Tony Blair alone ought to change the mind of any Tory MP prepared to back this latest episode in the serial of Johnson-Gove Brexit lies, excuses and shifts of blame.

Now meet Brendan Boyle, at 43 a decade younger than Douglas Alexander, and physically not dissimilar. Both are fresh-faced, with thick but tidily kept dark hair, and the 'boyish good looks' that profile writers tend to award to anyone who looks younger than they are. The son of Irish immigrants, Boyle is a Democrat congressman from Philadelphia. He came across my radar in an interview for *Channel 4 News* after Northern Ireland secretary Brandon Lewis told parliament said that yes, the government was breaking international law in a specific and limited way.

Boyle was speaking after Gove had publicly rejected a demand by the EU that the UK government re-commit itself to standing by an agreed international treaty which, in the pre-Johnson era, would not even have been a question, let alone one with the answer Gove gave. Of course

Lewis was not on the programme because *Channel 4* is on the list of media outlets covered by the Johnson-Cummings boycott which, as I said here last week, exposes as entirely

hypocritical their stated commitment to free speech. But what became very clear very quickly was that Boyle, an American, knew more about the politics of Ireland, and the workings of the Good Friday Agreement, than any member of the government I had heard on the subject. It was so refreshing, after all the sloganised rubbish and legal weaselling that had come from Tory mouths, to hear someone who actually understood the agreement, and cared deeply about the peace process.

My former Number 10 colleague Jonathan Powell, who has forgotten more about the peace process than Johnson has ever troubled himself to learn, pointed out that at least five different reasons were given for breaking international law on the Northern Ireland protocol – and all were bogus. The most contemptible was the claim that this was about saving the Good Friday Agreement, when in truth it threatens it by resurrecting the need for a hard border to protect the EU single market. As Boyle put it: "I give them credit for saying it with a straight face. Nobody believes it. It is sheer nonsense."

Then there were the Johnson claims that 'nobody realised it would create a customs border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK' and that the whole process had been too rushed. People who actually know what they are on about had been united in warning him about the customs border, which is why so many MPs had asked him to slow the pace. And by the weekend, we had a new bogus reason, trotted out like so many of his lies in an article for the *Telegraph*, that the Withdrawal Agreement he had signed, and hailed as a triumph for him and for the country, was in fact an EU plot to break up the UK.

Of course the real reason for this car crash was to serve as a distraction from the total mess on Covid, and to create a fresh fight with the EU in the hope it appeals to pro-Brexit supporters who can indulge once more in the joy of being at war with Europe, and feed their pre-programmed belief that it shows we will be 'better off without them'. Which we won't. But by the time this 'strategy' blows a hole in the planned US-UK trade deal, they will have another distraction and someone else to blame – hopefully (say I, not they, so Trumpian have they become) president Joe Biden.

Not just Brendan Boyle, but more significantly house speaker Nancy Pelosi, mindful of the US role as a guarantor of an agreement that ensures no hard border in Ireland, made clear that if the UK went ahead with breaking it, then they can say goodbye to the trade deal.

These are serious people looking at serious issues in a serious way. Boyle's interview, and Douglas's presentation, were a sad reminder that our current government is headed by, and largely populated by, unserious people handling serious issues in a way that can have many descriptions applied to it, but 'serious' is not one of them. The consequences, however, are all too serious. Deadly serious. Yet they really do not give a damn, provided the pro-Brexit rags stay on board, their new supporters buy the line it is all Europe's fault, and new targets for blame emerge over time.

"This is a fragile peace," said Boyle. "I don't know why anyone in their rights minds would do this." Indeed.



AGENDA

How the lurch to the left could have gone right

Labour historian FRANCIS BECKETT on a new account on what went wrong under Jeremy Corbyn... and how differently things could have been



Back in 2018, I was working on the anti-Semitism section of a book about Jeremy Corbyn.

After several emails and phone calls to the leader of the opposition's office went unanswered, I sent Corbyn's head of communications and strategy, Seumas Milne, the notes of my briefing from the Board of Deputies of British Jews about their meeting with the then Labour leader. They had told me that Corbyn left all the talking to an excited and aggressive Milne, who accused Israel of ethnic cleansing.

That produced a phone call, not to me but to my co-author Mark Seddon. Milne understood, he said, that I was writing a whole chapter about anti-Semitism. Didn't we understand that mentioning the subject was just playing the Tory game? Mark replied I was not writing one chapter on anti-Semitism, but two chapters. Milne was apoplectic.

None of my questions were ever answered, and Mark and I were left contemplating the appalling fact that the Labour leader was taking his communications and strategy advice from a man who thought it was possible, in 2018, to write a book about Corbyn without even mentioning anti-Semitism.

The lobby journalists Gabriel Pogrund and Patrick Maguire, who are responsible for another book, which is just out – *Left Out: The Inside Story of Labour under Corbyn* – seem to agree with me that Corbyn is not anti-Semitic, and is genuinely hurt and perplexed that anyone should think he is. But they show how some of those round him saw the need to engage with the issue. And they chart relentlessly his persistent and incomprehensible failure to do so, seeming to give ground inch by inch, reluctantly and with bad grace.

Now that it can no longer do any good, Corbyn and Milne apparently want to engage with the issue, and have their day in court.

The same goes for Brexit. Corbyn never engaged. He seemed to have a policy, but not to agree with it. When asked about either of these issues, he became tense and irritable and tried to talk about something else.

That is part of the reason why, from the high point of the general election in 2017 when Corbyn did unexpectedly

well and deprived Theresa May of her parliamentary majority, Corbyn's standing went into freefall.

Pogrund and Maguire offer gruesome detail on how Corbyn's office manoeuvred behind the scenes to keep Brexit off the 2017 Labour conference agenda, as though not talking about it could make it go away.

At the best of times, labour movement politics can be ugly, and these were the worst of times. Pogrund and Maguire have talked to everyone who mattered, and built up a gruesome picture. Their balanced, thoughtful and readable account shows us an atmosphere in which allegations of sexual abuse are seen as weapons in Labour's internal trench warfare.

They describe how the rot began when Corbyn and Milne managed to make such a hash of their response to the 2018 Salisbury poisonings that people suspected them of being in Vladimir Putin's pocket. The book describes how Corbyn's office stoked anti-Semitism accusations by rebuking then shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry for asserting Israel's right to exist, and punished her for mentioning in an email a second referendum on Brexit by banning her from visiting Nato's annual summit.

And we find out that none of this needed to happen. There was a voice of common sense: trying to stop Corbyn

making an ass of himself over Salisbury; pleading for an imaginative response to anti-Semitism accusations; demanding a clear line on Brexit; begging his leader to make serious overtures to his old enemies on the party and have a unity shadow cabinet; trying to stop his leader from taking disciplinary action against Jewish MP Margaret Hodge for calling Corbyn an anti-Semite; begging him to take the media ("the hyena class", as Milne called it) seriously, and to stop prioritising interviews with *Muslim News* and a weekly Bangladeshi newspaper over interviews with the BBC; and eventually trying to stop the



suicidal rush into a general election in 2019.

That voice belonged to shadow chancellor John McDonnell. And McDonnell's reward was unremitting hostility from Corbyn's office and so serious a rift with his oldest friend in politics that they were not on speaking terms throughout the summer of 2018, and blanked each other when they passed in the corridor.

They fought over issues great and small, and one of the smaller ones was whether they should cooperate with me and Mark Seddon. McDonnell saw nothing but good in helping two left wing writers whom he and Corbyn both knew, and he promised me he would intervene.

He tried, and failed. But when the book came out, he went out of his way to pose for a picture of me presenting him with a copy.

McDonnell was a serious politician and a heavyweight shadow chancellor. As Pogrun and Maguire put it: "McDonnell obsessed over the pursuit of power – for without it Labour could never enact the genuinely radical socialist programme he had spent his career fighting for." If it had been McDonnell's turn to carry the left's flag in the 2015 leadership election, I feel pretty sure we would not now be looking at an 80-seat majority for the least trusted and most reactionary prime minister of my lifetime, and a no-deal Brexit.

That is Corbyn's legacy, and he must own it. In a sense it is Milne's legacy even more than Corbyn's, for Pogrun and Maguire make it clear that Corbyn's temperament, and his dislike of confrontation, meant that the man he called "the great Milne" was calling the shots.

Milne was a left wing journalist all



his working life, a former industrial correspondent and opinion page editor. It sounds like a decent CV for the job. But here's the problem. Pogrun and Maguire say Milne had "flirted briefly with Stalinism in his youth." That's one way of describing a man who worked at the Stalinist magazine *Straight Left*, and to this day will not hear a bad word about Arthur Scargill.

Practical politicians like McDonnell know, as Harold Macmillan put it, that what decides the agenda is "Events, dear boy, events". Milne and Corbyn acted as though they could rewrite the agenda, and subject it to 'the line'.

And this book reveals that on election night 2019 it was Milne who circulated The Line that true believers have parroted ever since: it was all the fault of the Remainers, and if only Labour had listened to "working class communities" and followed the Boris Johnson line on Brexit, all would have been well.

It's tosh. But it's the line.

■ *Left Out: The Inside Story of Labour under Corbyn*, by Gabriel Pogrun and Patrick Maguire, is published by The Bodley Head

MISTAKES:

1 Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and shadow chancellor John McDonnell at the 2018 Labour Party conference in Liverpool

Photo: Getty Images

2 Francis Beckett with John McDonnell after the publication of his book

Photo: Barney Jones

3 Former Labour Strategy and Communications Director Seumas Milne

Photo: Getty Images

Mandrake

Tim Walker

mandrake@theneweuropean.co.uk



@thattimwalker

Cummings is a turn-off for publishers

Seemingly unsackable and above the law, **Dominic Cummings** can legitimately lay claim to being the most powerful man in the land. **Boris Johnson's** omnipotent adviser has still, however, to be the subject of a single biography.

Mandrake hears that one journalist, who has lately stepped down from a national newspaper, has shown publishers what I am told is an "intriguing dossier" on Cummings, *pictured*, but there are as yet no takers.

"One or two writers have touted the idea around, but there isn't much enthusiasm," one leading literary agent tells me. "There's probably a great chapter to be written about the period Cummings spent in Russia, but the rest of his life is, on the face of it, pretty well-documented and pretty boring. A book needs to have some trans-Atlantic appeal, too, to command a good advance and a lot of people haven't heard of him on this side of the pond, let alone on the other."

Another agent says: "I think there's resistance to it just because of the idea of Cummings' face on the cover. It's like when you see Johnson's now. It just makes a lot of people – certainly the kind of people who read hardback books – feel nauseous and it's frankly the last thing they want to read."

If a book does get off the ground, I trust Cummings' biographer will talk to his former friend, the art historian **James Beechey**. He told me earlier this year how Cummings had once admitted to him "he was emphatically not a Tory, but an anarchist".

Tom Bower's biography of Johnson – the third so far – comes out next month from W H Allen. Shrewdly, perhaps, Johnson saw to it that the Brexit-supporting author's wife **Veronica Wadley** was elevated to the Upper House in his last controversial honours list.

Wrong Ron

The playwright and Oscar-winning screenwriter **Sir Ronald Harwood** was laid to rest in a traditional Jewish ceremony on Sunday where numbers were restricted because of the coronavirus crisis. The obituaries in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Times* made much of how politically incorrect he was – which is quite true – and the implication was that he was right wing. **Michael Cashman**, the actor, went so far as to state he was **Margaret Thatcher's** speechwriter.

That dubious distinction happened to belong to **Sir Ronald Millar** – a common mistake – and this Ronald was a

passionate defender of the weak against the strong. He was a former president of PEN – which promotes the freedom to write and to read, even in oppressive states – and he was also, although this was not mentioned, passionately opposed to Brexit.

"His admirable daughter **Deborah** was an influence here, but

Ronnie could see for himself how damaging it would be to the country and how all there was at its rotten core was prejudice, which he hated above all things," one of his friends tells me. "Even at the Garrick club – where the members include **Michael Gove** and the former *Daily Mail* editor **Paul Dacre** – he made no secret of how he felt on this issue."



In the money

One question **Sarah Vine** may care to address in her inaugural column for the *Mail on Sunday* this weekend is how, despite the humongous salary she's reputedly paid by her proprietor **Lord Rothermere**, the Barlby Group, the private company she set up to channel her journalistic income, still trades at a loss. Its latest accounts to Companies House show a net deficit at £21,742 for the year ended November 30, 2019. Vine set her firm up in 2012, and, despite posting an annual profit on occasion, it has still to report a surplus on its balance sheet.

Her husband Michael Gove is, meanwhile, raking it in. He's in receipt of £45,003 in ministerial pay on top of his basic £81,932 annual salary for being an MP. Gove has also declared £65,000 worth of 'support' donations in the Register of Members Interests, including £35,000 from **Lord Harris of Peckham**. His lordship may be hedging his bets perhaps for a future leadership battle.

Lying King

The theatre critic **Mark Shenton** wondered out loud last week what a Boris Johnson musical might be called. The hills were soon alive with the sound of great ideas.

My favourites were *The Lying King*, *Scamlot*, *Gobspell*, *Gove Never Dies*, *Fiddler With the Truth*, *Worst Snide Tory*, *The Non-Commitments*, *Top Prat*, *Shamilton*, *The Prince of Eejit*, *Illegally Blonde*, *The Book of Moron* and *Seven Sons From Seven Mothers*.

The humour here would probably be lost on Johnson as I've never once seen him in a theatre. *Shamilton* was, by the way, the idea of the splendid actress **Kathy Burke**.



AGENDA

Anti-woke warrior keeps on acting crazy like a Fox

There's a classic showbiz story about comedy double act Mike and Bernie Winters on their debut at the feared Glasgow Empire in the 1960s. Their act opened as it usually did, with a classic bit of misdirection; straight man Mike playing mellow jazz on a clarinet until his wacky brother suddenly thrust his head through the curtains and broke into a cross-eyed, music-stopping, toothy gurn.

This ice-breaker was guaranteed to bring the house down elsewhere, but not so here. Instead, a bored voice came up from the stalls: "Oh Christ, there's two of them."

That Glaswegian groan sums up my reaction to word of a new political movement featuring the combined talents of Laurence Fox and Martin Daubney. Misfiring comedy duos are sometimes dubbed "the first double act with two straight men", but this hook-up between the anti-woke actor and the former Brexit Party MEP potentially offers the first political party led by two comedians.

"We need to organise and we are organising," said Fox in a 40-minute joint broadcast on YouTube channel Un-locked. "It's very exciting stuff," added Daubney, who has been tweeting of late about "the gaping chasm for a new party" to fill "the political void".

While the Conservative government seems determined to carry out the Brexit Party's agenda, is there really a void on the right for this pair to fill, or is the only gaping chasm between Daubney's ears?

Much of what the duo discussed in their streaming chat could have been said by any right-wing Tory, although few of them have Fox's way with a phrase. "It's very difficult once you instigate a law to uninstigate a law," he explained at one stage, before pointing out that the difficulty with Covid marshals was "how

Steve Anglesey



do you unmarshal them?" Meanwhile, his rant about Greta Thunberg ("by the way, sweetheart, your carbon footprint age 15 is about 50 times what my mother's was in her entire life and she didn't moan about this stuff, she got on and she was an amazing woman") said far more about the Old Harrovian's state of mind than it did about the young Swede's supposed hypocrisy.

The key point of difference between the Foxneys and the Tories seems to be the government's response to coronavirus, which Fox has dubbed "Covid-1984". On the rule of six, he told viewers: "It would be quite funny if everyone got together in groups of seven and had a pint" (spoiler: this would not be funny). Meanwhile Daubney said the government response didn't "feel British" and moaned about the dangers of "giving power to people who are no-marks". A good point at which to remind ourselves that Martin Daubney was an MEP for six long months.

The other topic that the Loztns seem to want to make their own is race, and here again they are unwise. The idea that "systemic racism is utter rubbish" might be worthy of debate, but surely not a debate led by Fox, whose deepest thoughts on the matter include outrage that several books in airport branches of WH Smith are about the topic. He explained: "It's all about race and you're like, 'I just want a Frederick Forsyth novel to go on holiday'. I want Andy



McNab, Chris Ryan, Frederick Forsyth. And it's like, race, black, white, colour. No-one else has got a shot." Truly, Fox highlights discrimination at its worst and those who marched with Martin Luther King can count themselves lucky not to have known such hardship.

Lozza believes that American blacks should chill out as they only have a "three in a million" chance of being killed by the police (research published by the *LA Times* in 2019 showed about one in 1,000 black men and boys in America could expect to die during an encounter with cops, 2.5 times the figure of that for white men and boys).

None of the above seems likely to put him back in favour with old colleagues like Rebecca Front, who played his boss in ITV's *Inspector Morse* spin-off *Lewis* for several years, and with whom he

BROTHERS IN HARMS:
Laurence Fox and Martin Daubney
Photo: YouTube

recently had a public falling-out. Fox says his career has been damaged by his views, and this really is a shame: he was excellent in *Lewis* despite severely diminishing returns in terms of scripts and co-stars towards the end of its nine-year run. He can be mesmerizing even in a rubbishy *Poirot*. Daubney, meanwhile, has a nice blue suit.

But what happens to Fox if the political thing follows his acting career down the gurgler? His attempts to become a professional singer-songwriter have been murdered by a sleepily out-of-tune appearance on *Jeremy Vine On Five*, but there is still a chance that he could build a career in music.

Because when Fox told Daubney: "Life's not about being dead, it's about being alive", it struck me: He'd make an ideal third member of Bros...

STEVE'S SELECTION

LIZ TRUSS

"I believe the EU referendum happened three years ago," the international trade secretary told the Commons, trying to brush off Brexit-related jabs at her shiny new trade deal with Japan. While it's entirely possible that Liz has lost a year after sampling some delicious British cheese, perhaps someone with a better grasp of detail should be in the job instead.

Truss also told the Commons that US trade talks were going well, meaning that she must also have slumbered through last week's statement from Nancy Pelosi that "if Brexit undermines the Good Friday accord, there will be absolutely no chance of a US-UK trade agreement passing the congress"!

FREDDY VACHHA

Only 14 UKIP leaders left until Christmas now as Vachha became the latest casualty; his long rule (since June) ended by allegations of bullying, harassment, verbal abuse and other conduct likely to bring the party into disrepute, all of which he contests. That nice Neil Hamilton has since become temporary leader but Vachha will always be remembered for his 2019 conference speech, which he made reading from notes written on toilet roll. He likened it to the moment "when on the men's toilet mirror in Alexandria, Field Marshal Montgomery sketched out the plan for the invasion of Sicily. The wrong plan, as it was, as he invaded the wrong place..."

SOLO PERFORMANCE:

Michael Fabricant
Photo: Getty Images



MICHAEL FABRICANT

When Boris Johnson's connection gave out during a Zoom call with Tory MPs to urge them to support the Internal Market Bill, the extravagantly coiffured Brexiteer filled part of the 10-minute gap with an impromptu rendition of *Rule, Britannia!* But was it really impromptu and were the audience delighted? No-one else joined in, one Tory MP said they believed Fabricant was simply reading the words from a piece of paper, while another told the *Sunday Times* they had "muted the whole call" during the pint-sized Pavarotti's patriotic performance.

ANN WIDDECOMBE

"The only difference between the modern day cancel culture and the Spanish Inquisition is the absence of physical torture," writes Widdecombe in her ever-sensible *Daily Express* column, adding that while "nobody is going to be put on the rack, burnt at the stake or chained up and starved in prison... we merely make it impossible for people to function in normal society, working and earning, speaking freely, bringing up their children according to their moral code." This would be a far more convincing argument were it not written in a national newspaper by a well-paid columnist who also continues to work and earn on TV...

EXPERTISE

SUMMERS OF LOVE:
The Isle of Wight
Festival, 1970
Photo: Getty Images



FESTIVALS OF BRITAIN

With tickets costing £1 and including free fresh milk, the first ever Glastonbury Festival was held 50 years ago this week. **IAN WALKER** explores the history of British music festivals, from their humble, often riotous beginnings, to the behemoths they are today (Covid notwithstanding)



On June 1, 1985, the Peace Convoy, a nomadic band of New Age travellers aboard a convoy of scruffy, repurposed and salvaged coaches, ambulances and vans, attempted to set up camp near the ring of prehistoric standing stones, for what would have been the 11th Stonehenge Festival.

This was despite a court injunction prohibiting the event from going ahead. Some 1,300 officers from Wiltshire Police had been deployed to enforce the

injunction with a four-mile exclusion zone.

Precisely what happened next is debated. The police claim that the convoy tried to barge its way through to the stones. The travellers deny this and say the officers began to smash their vehicle windows.

A section of the convoy left the road and entered an adjacent field. Here, the

EXPERTISE



From page 21

travellers tried to regroup and to begin negotiations with the police. At 7pm, officers started to clear the area. They achieved their aim using tactics of swift deployment and violent assault – methods that had been developed in the recent miners' strike.

There were more than 500 arrests, and many of the vehicles were damaged. The 11th Stonehenge Festival never happened. ITN journalist Kim Sabido, covering the story, said that at this 'Battle of the Beanfield' he had seen "some of the most brutal police treatment of people" that he had ever witnessed.

Those travellers that were able to get away retreated into Somerset. They made their way to Worthy Farm, the home of Michael Eavis, the man behind the Glastonbury Festival – which was first held 50 years ago this weekend.

Instinctively, Eavis was an ally of the New Age travellers and they had helped shape his festival over the years, their ideals and outlook influencing and informing how it was organised. This intensified after the Battle of the Beanfield, as Worthy Farm offered

sanctuary, and the travellers were allowed to create their own free space within the Glastonbury Festival.

Five years later, though, riots between travellers and security teams broke out on the day after the festival, over claims they were looting, ending in 235 arrests and £50,000 of damage. From that point on, it was clear that the festival had to change and become more professional to survive.



That five-year period, from the Battle of the Beanfield to the travellers' rioting in 1990, was the end of a particular tradition in British festivals. It was a tradition that went back to the free festival movement of the 1970s and back even further to the very origins of the events.

One of the earliest was the Beaulieu Jazz Festival, first held in 1956. Inspired by the American Newport Jazz Festival, Beaulieu featured on its bill acts like Acker Bilk, Johnny Dankworth and Ian Menzies and the Clyde Valley Stompers, which, whilst not quite as impressive as Newport (Sinatra, Fitzgerald, Basie, Ellington, Armstrong, Holiday to name a

few) did appeal to that first generation of British teenagers who used music to define their place in the world.

And if you think that those trad-jazz teens were a fairly mild bunch, you'd be wrong. In 1960, there was a riot at Beaulieu, supposedly caused by Bilk's billing, with fists flying between the trad-jazz and modern jazz faction. A BBC scaffolding broadcast tower was demolished in the fracas.

The incident led to some of the first tabloid 'youth gone wild' headlines of the 1960s. Long before the mods and the rockers and Mick and Keith's orgies, the British press ran lurid tales about jazz-loving nihilistic beatniks. But there are also accounts of the riot that suggest that it had nothing to do with a trad-jazz, Acker Bilk, running order squabble fest.

There is some evidence that the violence in 1960 was caused by Teddy Boys from Portsmouth who just liked to make trouble. If this is true then, as we shall see, this would not be the only time that young men from Portsmouth did their best to ruin an English festival.

The one person who did have a good 1960 Beaulieu festival was the 16-year-old Rod Stewart. According to his autobiography, Stewart snuck into the

site via an overflow sewage pipe. In the beer tent, he got chatted up by a much older and much larger woman. He ended up losing his virginity to her. If nothing else, Stewart's anecdote demonstrates that part of the appeal of festivals for the young has always been about booze and sex.

But the other significant thing about Stewart's attendance at Beaulieu is that his subsequent musical development mirrors that of the development of festivals themselves. Jazz festivals became jazz and blues festivals, jazz and blues festivals then became jazz, blues and R+B festivals.

The most famous of these festivals was the National Jazz Festival which took off as Beaulieu closed down. By 1963, this event had moved far enough away from trad-jazz to include the Rolling Stones in its line-up. It moved about a lot in the 1960s, but in 1970 it settled in Reading, and with a couple of exceptions (one caused by Tory councillors and the other by Covid) it has been there ever since. And if Glastonbury is the UK's alpha-festival, then Reading is its nearest rival.

Moreover, many among us prefer Reading because firstly, it was always

PIONEERS:
1 Acker Bilk and his jazz band on stage at the Beaulieu Jazz Festival in Hampshire. The event was marred by fights between trad-jazz and modern-jazz fans Photo: Keystone/Getty Images)

2 Slade guitarist Dave Hill on stage at the 1981 Monsters of Rock Festival at Donington Park, Leicestershire Photos: Getty Images

EXPERTISE



GOLDEN DAYS:
3 Two hippy girls arrive for the Isle of Wight Festival, 1969

4 Ecstatic fans at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival. Estimates suggest 600,000 music fans crossed the Solent to be there

Photos: Getty Images

more about music than lifestyle, and secondly, it's not on a farm miles from anywhere – and therefore has better transport links.



It is impossible to separate the history of the UK's festivals from those of the USA. The Newport Jazz Festival inspired not only Beaulieu but the Cambridge Folk Festival, which began in 1965 and still takes place in the same venue and sticks to its core musical identity.

But it was Woodstock, in upstate New York that set the tone for so much of what followed. So many people turned up there that the organisers declared it free (the authorities declared it a disaster zone). And it was this counter-culture belief, held among the mostly middle class, largely white, hippy movement, that getting something for free, something for nothing, was a radical act, that would shape festival culture over the next few years.

Back in the UK, the first Hyde Park Festivals were free. Somewhere between a quarter of a million and half a million people supposedly turned up to see the Stones in 1969. A few weeks later, the

second Isle Of Wight festival took place. This one wasn't free. There was a business plan of sorts, and while the organisers, Roy and Ron Foulks, were tending to make it up as they went along, they did a fantastic job, especially, because, as Ray Foulks put it in the title of his memoir, they managed to steal Dylan from Woodstock.

One of the joys of British rock and pop is that all that sex and drugs and rock and roll stuff, and all that guitar hero, genius poet, male ego, straddling the earth twaddle, is often played up in provincial circumstances.

At the time, Dylan lived in Woodstock. He had retreated there after being in the spotlight throughout the 1960s. And it was Dylan who had given Woodstock its bucolic status. It was his retreat into nature which had turned Woodstock – the place – into something pure in the counter-culture imagination, as a rejection of the urban, modern world. "We are starlight. We are golden" as Joni Mitchell in her song about Woodstock had it. So everyone expected Dylan to play the festival.

But he didn't. Instead, he went to the Isle of Wight. Wootton, where the festival was to be held, was about as middle

England as you can get. But, contrarian as ever, Dylan chose here instead of upstate New York to make his comeback. And because he did so, the festival was a success. So the Foulks decided to outdo themselves.

The line-up of the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival reads almost like a culmination – albeit an obvious one – of the 1960s musical imagination; Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, The Who, Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen. As line-ups go, it was a belter, which is why everyone wanted to be there.

It has been estimated that 600,000 people crossed the Solent to get there. To put that into some an oblique intergenerational context, that is about four times as many as crossed the Channel on June 6, 1944. I once met a man who claimed to have nicked a rowboat from a boating lake in Gosport on the mainland to row across the Solent to the festival.

It was all a bit like that. Anything that the organisers put in place was immediately undermined by this huge crowd who were happy to improvise anyway they could. And much of that improvisation involved not paying.

The tearing down of the fences to allow

the crowds to get into the festival is usually blamed on French anarchists who believed the world should be free to them. There are also stories that bands of young men from Portsmouth were also in this 'something for nothing' vanguard. If that's true (and my Gosport boating lake heist source swears it is), then this was the second time lads from Pompey tried to undermine a festival. Despite the line-up, despite some incredible performances (Jethro Tull supposedly 'won' the festival), despite the festival selling out, that was it. There wouldn't be another Isle of Wight Festival until 2002.

During that same summer of 1970, Somerset farmer Micheal Eavis went to the Bath Festival of Blues and Progressive Music, which was headlined by Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin. Thrilled by what he saw he thought he'd have a go at organising a festival on his farm.

He booked The Kinks, one of his favourite bands (he liked listening to them while he milked his cows) and began to sell tickets. Unfortunately, the Kinks pulled out at the last minute, but T-Rex replaced them. Marc Bolan,

EXPERTISE



ISLAND LIFE:
1 Festival-goers disembark from the Lymington to Yarmouth ferry to attend the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival

2 Music fans at Big Narstie's set at the 2015 Bestival on the Isle of Wight

Photos: Getty Images / Redferns



From page 23

worried that he would snag his velvet jacket on the hawthorn-lined paths on the farm, was just on the cusp of pop-superstardom at the time.

So, on September 19, 1970, with 30 stewards manning the site, 1,500 headed to the farm, paying £1 for tickets (including free milk).

In hindsight, T-Rex were an excellent act to have as the first headliner, but at the time, Eavis was just pleased that the whole thing had happened. He'd pulled it off, but the festival made a loss, and it's never that clear if Eavis was that committed to trying again. Hendrix had died the day before this first Glastonbury. In the early autumn of 1970, it was starting to feel like the 1960s were a done deal.

But the 1960s weren't quite over yet. In 1971, two posh hippies, Andrew Kerr and Arabella Churchill (granddaughter of Winston) were drawn to the mystical aspects of Glastonbury. The area has a reputation for being England's spiritual HQ. Its mixture of Christian, Wicca, and Albion/Avalon mythology has made it a draw for druids, Morris dancers and

weekend pagans. So Kerr and Churchill asked Eavis if it were possible to host a free festival at the site.

Eavis went along with this and the event, which featured David Bowie, went well enough. But Eavis didn't enjoy it. There was something about that posh, hippy, consequence-free existence that didn't sit comfortably with his methodist upbringing, which had combined a concern for the welfare of others with individual responsibility. This wouldn't be the last time Eavis would find himself split between the counter-culture's belief in freedom and that meaning things should be free.



But in the early 1970s, the nature of festivals themselves and of the counter-culture was changing. Growing out of West London, especially around the Ladbroke Grove squatting scene, came a much harder, much more politicised radicalism, one that argued for rent strikes and communal living. From this came the birth of the free festival movement.

This was a different sort of radicalism to the Woodstock-influenced love, peace

and harmony freedom of Kerr and Churchill.

In 1972, the first Windsor Park Free Festival was held, deliberately and provocatively, in front of the Royal residence. In 1973, a second took place. But in 1974, the festival was outlawed, and the police shut it down.

But that didn't stop the free festival movement. They now made Stonehenge the centre of their operations. Starting in 1974, The Stonehenge festival would be held until the Battle of the Beanfield 11 years later.

Eavis himself restarted Glastonbury in 1979. His remit throughout the 1980s was, in part, that it should be a focus for anti-Thatcherism, which was made explicit by naming the festival Glastonbury CND. In 1984, Eavis invited EP Thompson, the historian and author of the *Making Of The English Working Class*, to address the crowd from the main stage.

In this speech, known as the Alternative Nation speech, Thompson argued: "That this has not only been a nation of money-makers and imperialists, it has been a nation of inventors, of writers, of activists, artists, theatres and musicians."

Like Eavis, Thompson came from a

Methodist background. His argument wasn't just that the arts are important but that the act of creativity was how you make a better world. And this is what Eavis believed he was doing with Glastonbury – he was actively working at making a better world.

Glastonbury became an anti-Thatcher stronghold, and it was this that put Eavis on the side of the travellers (fellow travellers if you will). But there were lots of troubles ahead.

Glastonbury was not a huge event in the 1980s and 1990s. It struggled to sell out, and this was partly to do with this hangover from the 1960s and 1970s – that festivals should be free. Everyone could climb over the fence to get in, so everyone did.

Eavis didn't mind too much that people weren't paying, but what was a problem was that it made the festival impossible to manage.

The vast majority of New Age travellers were idealists and were decent people, but if you want to live outside of society then you create a space for people who want to live outside the law.

When I was a teenager the New Age traveller site was where people bought drugs – both soft and hard. Any idealism about this being an alternative lifestyle

FREEDOM:
3 The free festival at Glastonbury, 1971

4 Tents at the Isle of Wight Festival, 1969

Photo: Getty Images

EXPERTISE



IAN'S 10 KEY FESTIVAL MOMENTS

Glastonbury bores will almost always begin their Glasto anecdotes by mentioning how they never saw anyone on the Pyramid Stage, or never watched any music at all. This means they missed out on the one thing that has constantly made Britain's music festivals so good – which is the music.

1. The Rolling Stones at the National Jazz and Blues Festival, Richmond Park, 1963

This early incarnation of what would one day become the Reading/Leeds festival featured the Rolling Stones way down the bill, just after Terry Lightfoot's Jazzmen. Terry would one day go on to run a pub in Harpenden.

2. Paul Simon at the first Cambridge Folk Festival, 1965

Paul Simon visited the UK in the mid-1960s and worked with various members of the UK folk scene. Various members of that folk scene still perform at the festival.

3. The Stones in Hyde Park, 1969

This happened two days after the death of the recently sacked founding member of the Stones' Brian Jones. A book could be written about death and festivals.

4. Bob Dylan at the Isle of Wight Festival, 1969

Extraordinary that he came out of retirement. Extraordinary that he didn't do this at Woodstock. Extraordinary that he arrived on the Isle of Wight by hovercraft.

5. Jimi Hendrix at the Isle of Wight Festival, 1970

This felt like the end of something because it was the end of something. Hendrix would be dead within the

month. Jim Morrison, also on the bill, would be dead within a year.

6. Hawkwind at any free festival gig

A product of the Ladbroke Grove world of freaks, heads, and space cadets, Hawkwind were a fixed point in the chaos of the free festivals. Lemmy played bass in the band before being sacked after being arrested for taking amphetamine across the Canadian border. Motörhead is a slang term for a speed freak.

7. Meat Loaf being showered by bottles of urine at Reading, 1988

Poor Meat Loaf wasn't alone in being targeted in this way that year. Bonnie Tyler also suffered, though she dealt with it with more dignity.

8. Nirvana at Reading, 1991

Everybody knows about Nirvana at Reading '92, but they also played at Reading '91. This was before *Nevermind* was released. The British music press hadn't quite 'got' Nirvana yet. But whoever booked the bands for Reading knew what they were doing.

9. Orbital at Glastonbury, 1994

Many lists of the best performances at Glastonbury feature those from the 1990s. The crowd-pleasing Britpop bands and Pulp and Radiohead all had their moment. But perhaps the most significant thing to happen was when Orbital played in '94. Rave culture and festival culture were now the same things.

10. Paul McCartney at Glastonbury, 2004

Seeing a Beatle sing a Beatles' song is as good a festival moment as any ever could ever be.

was tempered by knowing that among these outsiders, criminal elements also mixed. And on the festival sites themselves, crime began to spiral. In the 1990s, tent theft became a problem. In 1991, a friend of mine woke to find a man with a knife in her tent



By the late 1980s festivals in general were in trouble. Reading was still trundling away, but by the middle of that decade, it was starting to lose the plot. This culminated in the bizarre 1988 festival which saw Bonnie Tyler, Iggy Pop, Meat Loaf, Jefferson Starship and The Ramones all on the same bill. For his troubles, Meat Loaf was showered with bottles of urine.

Then there was rave culture. Dancing in fields was no longer about the worship of blokes with guitars. In the late 1980s, a spontaneous, informal, illegal world of raves sprang up on farms and in disused warehouses and airfields.

However, instead of being a threat to Glastonbury's 'rock-festival' status, rave culture very quickly became part of Glastonbury. Informal sounds systems began to spring up on the site.

But one of the side effects of this rave culture was that criminal gangs began to organise aspects of that scene too. The control of the drug trade was lucrative, and while drugs had always been part of what festivals were about, it was, by the early 1990s, becoming quite heavy. There was a danger that the festival organisers weren't really in control.

Another sign had come in 1988 at the Donington Festival (now Download). Guns'n'Roses – at the time one of the most exciting bands on the planet – were playing and the crowd was so raucous and surged so violently, that two young men were killed. Donington had become another fixed feature of the festival scene, and this tragedy raised questions about the scene's viability.

But it was what happened next at Reading that probably saved Britain's festivals and made them what they are today. In 1988, the Mean Fiddler took over the running of the Berkshire event.

The Mean Fiddler was a chain of music venues run by Irish businessman John Power. He has a reputation for being a ruthless, effect and unsentimental

EXPERTISE



From page 25

businessman. But this was what Reading needed. The festival became safer, more focussed. The facilities got a better. No one threw bottles of urine at Meat Loaf after that. Power saved Reading from bankruptcy and he made it profitable.

Throughout the 1990s it was becoming obvious that Glastonbury also had to change to survive. The amount of people still bunking in was becoming absurd.

It may be that there were about 300,000 at the festival in 1994, 200,000 of whom didn't pay. Also, that year, five people were wounded in a drug-related shooting. Not surprisingly, each licence application for the festival became a struggle.

Eavis approached the Mean Fiddler to help. Power wasn't interested in helping a rival and walked away, but Melvin Benn who worked with Power, and who would later run Mean Fiddler (which itself would later become Festival Republic), was happy to get involved.

Eavis had already worked with Benn and had liked his no-nonsense approach to security and ticketing when the New Age travellers had proved difficult to

manage. In 2002, a partnership was formed between Glastonbury and the Mean Fiddler.



It would be nice to tell the story of British festivals as an idyllic triumph of art over commerce. But that's not true. It was the Mean Fiddler/Festival Republic that did most to create the 21st century British summer of festivals.

They turned Reading into Reading/Leeds, Donington into Download, they transformed Glastonbury into what it is today and they created new events such as Latitude and Wireless. And most of the other festivals – the modern Isle of Wight Festival, Bestival, End of the Road, and the dozens of others which have sprung up – all came in the wake of Reading/Leeds, Download and Glastonbury.

I've been going to festivals since the late 1980s, long enough to witness how they have changed from that new-age last hurrah of the counter-culture into something more commercial and more professionally run. There will always be part of me that would have loved to have

seen Hawkwind at 3am in a field in Wiltshire in 1973, but these modern festivals are a brilliant part of modern life.

I've generally managed to keep fairly balanced about things during this Covid year, but the one time it got to me was over the weekend of what would have been the Cambridge Folk Festival. It would have been my 50th festival I think. I missed seeing my friends, and the music, and the ritual of being able to take a few days out of it. Most of all, I was worried that it may be a while before that world comes back. Festivals are about becoming lost in the crowd. Crowds are not something we can even contemplate in 2020.

Being at a festival, watching an act you adore, being in the vivid immediacy of it all, along with thousands of others, is something I've been doing since my teens. I want it back asap.



In 2012 Eavis and Benn went their separate ways (amicably). Eavis was able to do this because his festival, now professionally run thanks to Benn, and

which now featured the biggest acts on the planet, never sold-out to commerce.

It still gives its profits to charity; there's still no commercial sponsorship; and the creative energy that came from the New Age travellers still give shape to the various fields and zones and stages that you don't normally see on the BBC coverage.

The history of British festivals is a history of the changing politics and culture of the country over the last 60 years.

You could strip it down to each generation's festival drug of choice; from jazz festivals with their marijuana (and cider), to LSD in the 1960s, to speed (and cider) in the 1970s and early 1980s, to ecstasy in the late 1980s and 1990s, and now the recreational weekend cocaine use (with artisanal cider) of this century.

Reading is the only festival to have gone through all these stages, but it is Glastonbury that was most dramatic in how it managed to get from that self-indulgent LSD stage, through the excesses of the belligerent speed stage, to pretty much invent the weekend recreational stage. Of course, you don't need drugs to enjoy a festival. But you do need crowds...

GOLDEN DAYS:

1 The Monsters of Rock Festival at Leicestershire Donington Park, 1994.

2 Massed fans in the crowd with a moshpit cleared in the centre in front of the main stage at the 2009 Reading Festival

3 Ralph McTell on stage at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival

Photos: Getty Images / Redferns

EXPERTISE



MAINSTREAM:
4 Opera star Katherine Jenkins performs at Latitude, 2017

5 You Me At Six's set at the 2012 Reading Festival

6 Caravans, buses and tents at Stonehenge, 1985. There were more than 500 arrests in the 'Battle of the Beanfield' as police prevented the Stonehenge Free Festival from taking place

7 A muddy festival-goer at Glastonbury, 1982

Photos: Getty Images /Redferns

EXPERTISE

There's a passage early on in Neil Oliver's new book, *Wisdom of the Ancients*, where he writes of his love of "the few square miles around my house in Stirling. I could stay here for years on end". Now that Covid means the entire UK has pretty much had that experience enforced, I wonder how it feels. "It was quite enjoyable for a while but now I'm completely sick to death of it," he says. The day we speak two pupils at his children's school have shown potential Covid symptoms and the tests his family is being offered are hundreds of miles away.

He's talking to me from that Stirling home as he promotes the book, in which the archaeologist and television presenter delves deep into time to consider how the messages from our ancient past might apply to our lives today. More a meditation than a standard history work, flitting from Scotland to Tanzania, Sweden to Australia, it is, he says, a book which has been on his mind for as long as 30 years.

"I had always felt constrained from giving free rein to my emotional connection to these places, because history and archaeology are fairly scientific subjects," the 53-year-old says.

"They're approached in a very serious way. It's all – and properly – about research and sources and, you know, peer review, and the net effect of that is to create works which are very serious and very informative but they can also be dry and missing emotion.

"And I finally kind of decided to take the leap and be the one that would write about how these places made me feel, which for a lot of historians and archaeologists, I'm quite sure, especially in academia, they would say that that was irrelevant and not necessarily the right way to think about and to write about these places and these events.

"But I thought, damn the fear, that's really always been my heartfelt inspiration for being interested in these subjects."

What he realised as he pulled the various stories and messages together, he says, is he was "getting at times a kind of comfort and reassurance from common strands that seemed to be there in stories from a million years ago right up until much more recent stories, or sites that had been affected by historical events much more recently.

"So I started to see and try to bring together these common strands like the

importance of family, the importance of home, love of place, the importance of memory."

It is, I say, in many ways an accidentally timely book – written before the pandemic, a period when the word 'unprecedented' has been in constant usage, it's a reminder that nothing in human history, really, is unprecedented. It is "unintentionally prescient", Oliver agrees.

"It's hard not to see that these people, in circumstances unimaginably different to our own, had found the time to express grand thoughts. They were clearly asking each other and themselves what it meant to be human and alive, and what did it mean to die. And what might be expected after death. They were doing that 8,000 years ago in an unimaginably different time, and I thought: these people, then, were seeking answers to questions that we're still seeking answers to now. And maybe their answers are just as helpful in our time as they were to those people in their time."

When he thinks of the preoccupations of our 2020 world – Covid, Brexit, the future of the UK – he says, "although they obviously profoundly affect all of our lives moment by moment, they are nonetheless a thin scraping of butter over the end of a very thick loaf of bread.

"I like reminding myself, you know, the kind of King Solomon notion of 'This too shall pass'. In 10 years from now, 100 years from now, whatever, the preoccupations of whoever is living here will be entirely different, and they will just look back at our high-tempered obsessions as things they possibly don't even remember, far less teach about in schools. It means so much to us, but in the wider context of history and deep time, it'll probably matter not at all."

The book is timely in other ways. Written not just before lockdown, but this summer's Black Lives Matter protests, he touches on the destruction of statues and writes of how we "lose some part of the truth of ourselves, good and bad". Have this summer's events made him reflect further, I ask?

"I am by nature a conserver," he says. "I like to keep things, old things. I've got that kind of instinct. And so it's hard-wired into me to keep rather than to throw away and start afresh.

"When it comes to the statues that were either being torn down or recommended for being removed on the basis of who they represented, I just felt that was completely back-to-front and wrong-headed. To me, you don't erase history.

"The analogy I use, I suppose, is, you know when you got a new jotter at school, in the good old days when you wrote in jotters, and it was always a thrill to turn over and get the first clean white page? And you'd kind of be tempted to use your best handwriting. You might sustain it for a page or two, but then eventually you'd made your first mistake and you'd have to do your crossing-out and it was quite heartbreaking. And there was a temptation to get another new jotter and start again without the mistake.

"But in reality, when you do finally keep that jotter and there's the scorings out and the mistakes, at the end, when the jotter is finished, it's much more interesting when you look back at the work, to be reminded of the mistakes. Sometimes you're reminded of something even more significant than all the correct answers. And so to look at the statues and decide these are the people

'WE'RE SEEING A NEW KIND OF HERESY

..IF PEOPLE SAY THE WRONG THINGS THEY'RE BURNED AT THE STAKE'

Broadcaster Neil Oliver talks to **MATT WITHERS** about cancel culture, the toppling of statues and Scottish independence



OUTSPOKEN UNIONIST: Neil Oliver
Photo: Bill Osment

Left, the statue of slave trader Edward Colston is pushed into the River Avon in Bristol
Photo: Getty Images



EXPERTISE



DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

In his book *Oliver* recounts the story of a farmer from Rousay, off Orkney Mainland, who won a trip to London as a prize.

“He was flown south and met by a chauffeur who drove him round the city in a limousine. He saw Buckingham Palace, Tower Bridge, the British Museum and the rest. In the evening he was taken to a Soho nightclub for

sophisticated entertainment. On his return to Rousay his friends asked if he enjoyed it and would he ever go back.

“‘Ach, no,’ he said. ‘There’s nothing there.’

“It does a heart good to get a new angle on the world, see it through different eyes; to see that not all folk are drawn to the same centre of gravity,” Oliver writes.

we shouldn’t be remembering I think is just a mistake.”

Oliver – who was an unenthusiastic Remain voter – is an outspoken opponent of Scottish independence, something which has made him a target of criticism for many in the country in which he still lives. In fact, some of the words used to describe him that I found in the pro-independence *National* newspaper when researching the interview, I had to put into Urban dictionary (“hyper-yoon” = obsessive unionist). Probably naively, I wonder if, as a public figure, he ever just wishes he’d kept his powder dry.

“Scotland is a very cowed country at the moment in terms of, if you’re an opponent of the government or the SNP or independence it’s uncomfortable to speak up,” he says.

“There is an overweening attempt to silence criticism and opposition and that’s a red rag to a bull to me. And so the more I’m shouted down the more vociferous I tend to become.

“I’ve got three kids and it’s in the run of things when you’re a dad, or a mum, a parent, that, you know, if your kids are reporting being bullied at school, we all know what you say. You say: you have to stand up to that.

“I felt I’d be a hypocrite if I was saying that to my children and I wasn’t prepared to do it for myself. I mean, it was a very heated and hot-tempered debate long before the [Scottish independence] referendum happened, and it was already apparent that taking a pro-Union stance was liable to, you know, attract the attentions of the mob. But I thought I mustn’t allow that to deter me from giving my opinion.

“That has led to years of fairly non-stop abuse. But, in answer to your question, do I wish I had just let the bullies keep my mouth shut? No, I don’t. I feel it’s an absolute obligation of every human being who’s capable of expressing an idea and of voicing a reasoned opinion... it is a right, but more profoundly, it’s an obligation. You have an obligation to the universe, to the fabric of reality, if you like, to speak up.”

This year nationalists thought they’d got their scalp when Oliver stepped down as president of the National Trust of Scotland, an appointment which sparked a petition of thousands due to his pro-Union views, amid a row over his support for the historian David Starkey (Oliver points out his three-year term ended this month).

Oliver had tweeted that he “loved” the historian prior to an interview in which Starkey claimed “slavery was not genocide” because “so many damn blacks” survived, comments for which he was fired from many fellowships and other positions and which he has since made an apology for.

Oliver says his comment came from the “warmth and the kindness” that Starkey had shown to him when he had previously been a guest at an event in London which Oliver hosted, and his admiration for his work.

“And then, of course, he gave the interview and he said the things that he said... of course I disavow the things that he said and he indeed himself subsequently apologised profusely and admitted the wrongdoing.

“All I was expressing was an admiration for work that he’d done in the past. I’m a television viewer and obviously I watch all sorts of history. You know, Simon Schama, David Starkey, Mary Beard. And I’m liable to express love for any one of them. I don’t have ideas about what other thoughts about other subjects those people might have expressed in the past.

“[Starkey] said what he said, and he’s now been eviscerated. He’s a pariah, he’s been cast out of society. And I think that that cancelling of people on the basis of remarks made, however egregious, is wrong. I believe in freedom. Freedom – not just freedom of speech, but freedom and a free society. And if freedom is to mean anything it’s surely the freedom to make mistakes and to then be able to express regret for mistakes made and to learn from mistakes and to carry on as still part of the body of society.

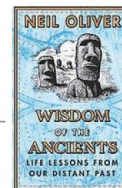
“But what has emerged in more recent times is a return of a kind of heresy, and heretics are to be burned at the stake. So there’s a new religious orthodoxy, and if people say the wrong things then they are to be burned at the stake, so there is nothing left of their body at all, just a pile of ashes that can be flung in a river and swept out to sea.”

Next year’s Holyrood election, if the polls are to be believed (Oliver believes polls are “about as much use as an ashtray on a motorbike”) will see a large pro-independence majority and years of wrangling over calls for a second independence referendum. Will it change Oliver’s mind?

“It’ll get ugly, it’ll get desperately cruel, and vicious. I wouldn’t rule out anything, at this moment of time, in terms of consequence,” he says.

“But I will continue to be in favour of the United Kingdom. That’s my position. People’s opinions change, and maybe something will happen to me and I will radically alter my position. As of this moment in time, I believe in the continuation of the United Kingdom. And I feel an obligation to say that.”

■ *Wisdom of the Ancients* is published by Bantam Press, priced £20



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Face masks are hindering our ability to communicate. But, says psychologist **NIGEL HOLT**, our eyes are still giving plenty away



There's a good chance that you when you leave the house today you'll put on a face mask that obscures your mouth. Such coverings can affect our ability to communicate and provide a particular challenge to those that need to see lips to understand speech.

But what of the eyes that remain uncovered? Shakespeare said the eyes were the windows to the soul. I'm not sure about souls, but it's very clear that eyes can provide a great deal of information.

It's why poker players sometimes wear dark glasses because of a fear of giving away a 'tell', a tiny almost imperceptible cue to other players that they are holding a good hand, or bluffing. This might be common wisdom, but there is also science that supports this.

Our emotions are how we understand others and how they understand us. And research has found that it is possible to interpret people's emotions by analysing their eyes. In 2017, researchers at Cornell University showed volunteers images of eyes expressing different emotions: sadness, disgust, anger, joy, surprise or fear.

The participants were able to consistently rate how well different words describing mental states matched the 'eye expression'. The researchers concluded that the eyes provide essential interpersonal insight, and that different aspects of the eyes (such as how open they are or how sloped the brow is) give information about different mental states.

The neuroscience is also interesting here. We know humans are exceptionally sensitive to very tiny changes in direction of gaze. When you are trying to judge which direction someone is looking in, it significantly activates your amygdala, a part of the brain we have long known to be associated with emotion. This shows there is a link between emotion and eyes at a neurological level.

We know that the amygdala is relevant in all things to do with emotion, and it is best known for its role in fear and its mediation of the 'fight or flight' response.

Further research has shown that the amygdala is also active when we are monitoring the scene for events where a person may be looking in our direction, or changing their direction of gaze.

This could indicate the importance of the eyes in finding a mate, expressing interest in others, or perhaps conversely in identifying threats from others.

In short, we are wired to extract information from the eyes – information that can help us assess the emotions of those around us and so allow us to engage more effectively with them.

There is further evidence of the



WINDOWS TO THE SOUL: The face might be masked, but our eyes can betray a whole range of emotions

Photo: Getty Images

importance of the eyes from neurochemistry. We know that oxytocin, a naturally produced hormone, is important in social interactions and that it may be important in how we perceive the faces of those around us.

Researchers have found that, when shown images of faces, people who are given oxytocin spend more time looking at the eyes than those given a placebo.

Since oxytocin is a factor in social interactions, this finding suggests the eyes are very important in how we understand our engagement and interaction with those around us. Those with elevated levels of oxytocin appear to seek out the eyes to help them better engage socially with others.

For the dog-lovers among us, there's

also some research that suggests that when dogs and their owners look into each other's eyes, oxytocin levels increase in both the humans and the pets, suggesting an increased social bond.

This only seems to happen with domesticated dogs with whom a close social bond is important to the owners and their animals, the results are not shown with wolves.

There are, however, some things that the eyes can't tell us. There is one rather sticky myth that comes from so-called neurolinguistic programming (NLP), the approach often favoured by those who like to claim you can use psychology to achieve an advantage over others.

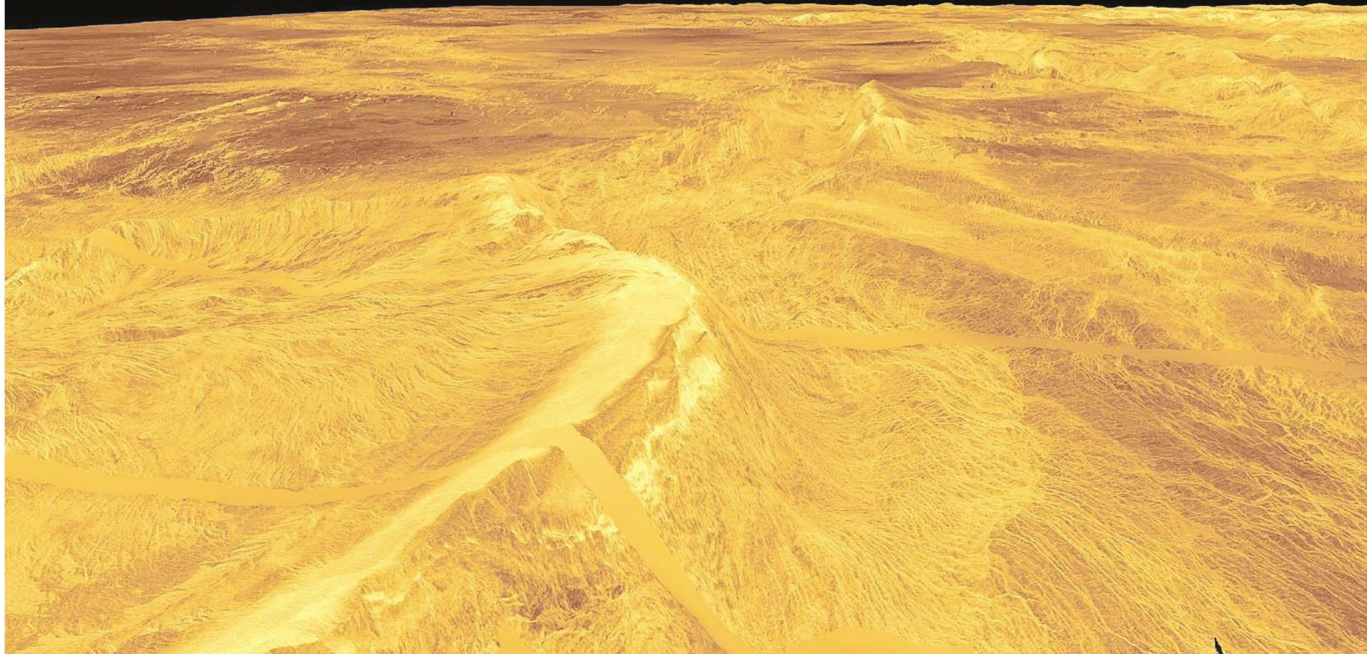
The theory goes that if someone is looking up and to the right when they are

talking then that somehow indicates that they are lying. But when researchers filmed a group of people telling true and false stories, and then asked another group to try to spot the lies by looking at the speakers' eyes, they found no evidence for a link between lying and eye movements at all.

If you want to know what someone is feeling when face coverings are the norm, the eyes may well have the answer you are looking for. We can definitely tell if people are smiling by looking at their eyes, and a smile is so very important, now more than ever.

■ Nigel Holt is a professor of psychology at Aberystwyth University; this article also appears at theconversation.com

WHAT PLANET ARE YOU ON?



Mitch Benn

Comedian,
Musician,
Writer



STILL EVOLVING:
A computer-generated image of Venus. Scientists have discovered a chemical linked to life in the planet's upper atmosphere

Photo: Getty Images

Like many of you, the other day I woke up to read headlines screaming “SCIENTISTS DISCOVER LIFE ON VENUS”. Like, I trust and expect, most of you I did not react to this by leaping to my feet and shouting “OMG LIFE ON VENUS” but rather by clicking on the link in question and saying “Yes, but have they really?”

Well no, of course they haven't. What they have discovered is traces of a chemical called phosphine in Venus's upper atmosphere. This chemical, as far as we know, does not arise unbidden, as it were, but rather is – again, as far as we know – either artificially produced in a chemical plant or the result of microbial activity.

So what scientists have discovered is, while not exactly the “LIFE ON VENUS!!!” the headlines suggest, something whose presence in Venus's atmosphere is, currently, difficult to explain without the presence of at least monocellular life somewhere in the planet's biosphere.

It's worth pointing out right now that unless astronomers are seriously mistaken about conditions on Venus, then monocellular life is likely to be as good as it gets, given that down on the planet's surface the temperature is about 500 degrees Celsius. So even if this discovery is fully borne out in time, don't be expecting to make contact with Venusians any day soon. And there is, of course, always the possibility that

scientists will discover a method by which phosphine *can* be generated in a lifeless environment, at which point this will all be confirmed as having been a big fuss about nothing.

It is worth pointing out that the scientific method never claims to produce the final and definitive explanation of any observed phenomenon; simply the most convincing explanation we've yet found. Everything is under constant review and re-examination; scientific ‘fact’ is always provisional.

I say this is worth pointing out because there is still a body of (misinformed) opinion which seems to regard the fact that “science” occasionally changes its mind about things as a weakness, a sign that “science” isn't to be trusted.

The anti-masker brigade, for example, will occasionally point to the fact that the ‘everybody wear a mask’ recommendations/ordinances didn't start until the pandemic had been under way for a few weeks as a sign that the whole wearing a mask thing has been retroactively bolted onto the pandemic as an opportunistic effort at population control (or something; who the hell even knows any more).

That's aside from the ones who still don't believe the pandemic itself is actually happening, of course.

The truth is that this virus has been known to exist for less than a year; the medical and scientific establishments are learning about it in real time as the rest of us watch. So to begin with, masks were not considered an effective tool against infection as the virus wasn't freely airborne. In due course, it became apparent that a lot of transmission was happening in public places as a result of people walking through the ‘cloud’ of virus particles that an infected person breathes out, and that if the (unknowingly) infected person wore a

mask, the size of that ‘cloud’ would be greatly reduced, and so masks for all it was.

A lot of the resistance to masking up in the United States seems to stem from a general cultural resistance (especially on the American right) to the whole notion of a collective good, and indeed against the very idea of doing something for the benefit of other people.

Start caring about the welfare of strangers and the next thing you know... communism. It's the very fact that wearing a mask is meant not to protect the wearer, but other people *from* the wearer; that seems to put some off.

There's also the fact (and this is perhaps more internationally applicable) that putting on the mask is effectively a tacit acknowledgement that one might have the virus; some people don't want to contemplate this and understandably so. But even if one knows for certain that one is uninfected, putting on the mask contributes to a culture of mask-acceptance, and makes it all the more likely that the unwittingly enviro-what-to-do.

Apart from some vague, huffing faux-libertarian victimhood-craving, I'm not even sure what the case against masks (in this country at least) is any more. Even those railing against mask use (including, I'm sorry to say, a radio host who has been a friend of mine for decades; that's going to make any future meetings we have a bit awkward) don't seem to know what their actual objections are, other than a foot-stamping, toddlerish nobody-tells-me-what-to-do.

Well maybe nobody does, but let's not let them pass off throwing a petulant tantrum as taking a heroic stand for personal freedom, because it's not.

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EUROFILE



THE ART AVENGER

CLAUDIA PRITCHARD
on Artemisia Gentileschi
and her most powerful
painting, which seethes
with anger
from her own
traumatic
experience



MASTERPIECE: Artemisia
Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying
Holofernes*, 1612-13

Credit: Museo di
Capodimonte, Naples

▶ Turn to page 34

EUROFILE ART

▶ From page 33

In 1630, as plague devoured Venice, killing one third of its citizens, one successful young artist slipped south to Naples, in search of cleaner air and commissions. Artemisia Gentileschi was highly skilled not only at painting but also at assimilating.

Born in Rome in 1593, she learned her craft in the shadow of her painter father Orazio Gentileschi, her mother dying when Artemisia was 12.

Her girlhood was spent looking after younger brothers and acquiring skills that would secure her a good livelihood as a painter in her own right.

In Florence, where she moved on marrying, she briefly adopted the ancestral Tuscan surname Lomi, to improve her local credentials.

She fitted right in, being paid rather more than most for her contribution to the lavish decoration of the Casa Buonarroti, near Santa Croce.

Once the home of Michelangelo, who had died 50 years earlier, the house was preserved in an almost shrine-like state by his great-nephew. Visitors today can still see Artemisia's ceiling painting, appropriately an allegory of inclination, or innate artistic ability, and probably a self-portrait.

Successful in Florence until she got on the wrong side of the supreme Cosimo II of Medici, after a row about quantities of a valuable pigment, Artemisia hightailed back to Rome in 1620.

In the late 1620s, Venice beckoned, until, after three years or so, its embrace was toxic. Her retreat to Naples in 1630 was interrupted in 1638 by the chance to work alongside her father once more, in London.

At the Queen's House in Greenwich, father and daughter worked on the allegorical ceiling paintings that are now in Marlborough House in St James's.

Artemisia stayed on after Orazio's sudden death, probably leaving in the early 1640s.

In the mid-1650s she died in Naples. Another wave of plague, seeping up from north Africa to Spain and southern Italy, may finally have caught up with her.

Often in the right place at the right time, the restless Artemisia Gentileschi took command whenever one or both of those coordinates were wrong.

From an early age she had been obliged to adapt. Although raised in a world of pigments and models, her obvious early talent was not fully nurtured.

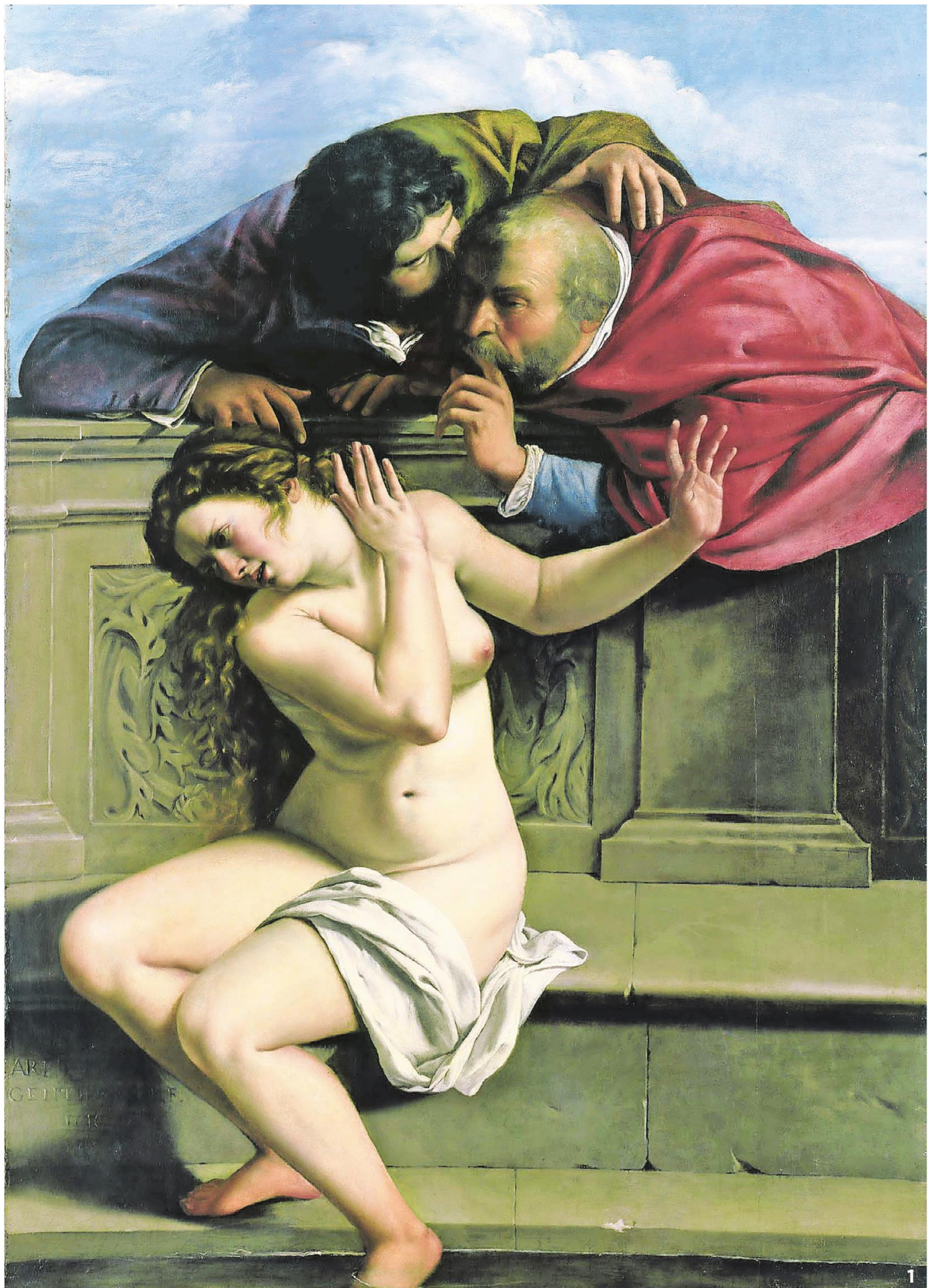
She was not allowed to draw from life, nor venture out alone in her art-enriched native Rome, to draw and to learn from its classical sights.

And yet she had the advantage at least of observing and imitating her father, and developed enviable skills that paved the way to decades of success as a painter in her own right.

Less advantageous to his daughter was the company that Orazio Gentileschi kept. Raped by one of his associates, she was tortured in accordance with the law of the day, to test the veracity of her tale.

"It's true! It's true! It's true!" she cried out as the fingers that held her brushes were crushed by an ever-tightening binding.

The same father who had kept his daughter indoors and denied her drawing



▶ Turn to page 36

ART EUROFILE



INVESTED WITH FURY:
1 *Susannah and the Elders*, 1610

Credit: Schloss
 Weißenstein collection,
 Pommersfelden

2 *Esther before Ahasuerus*,
 c. 1628-30

Credit: The
 Metropolitan
 Museum of Art

3 *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*
 by Artemisia
 Gentileschi's father
 Orazio, c. 1630-2

Credit: Royal
 Collection Trust /
 HM The Queen

4 Artemisia
 Gentileschi's *David and Bathsheba*,
 c. 1636-7

Credit: Columbus
 Museum of Art, Ohio

CULTURAL KILLING

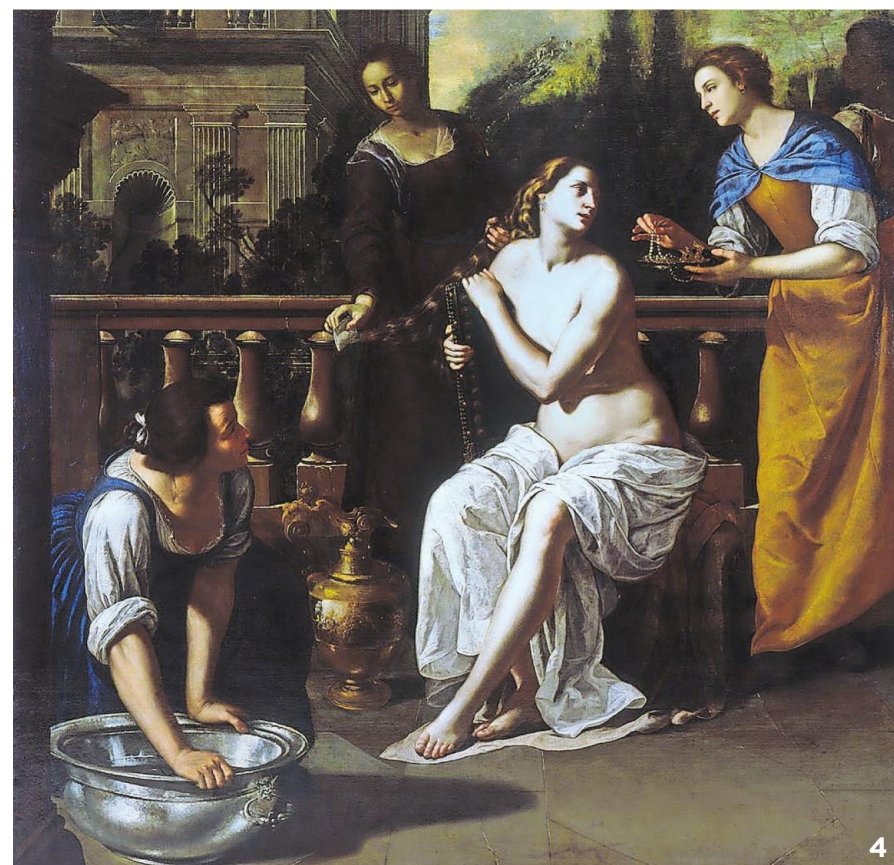


Judith with the Head of Holofernes by
 Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1530

The slaying of Holofernes was the subject of many paintings and sculptures of the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

The story is from the Book of Judith in the Old Testament, and describes how Judith, an Israelite widow, is able to enter the tent of Holofernes - an Assyrian general who is about to destroy her home city of Bethulia - because of his desire for her.

Overcome with drink, he passes out and is decapitated by Judith. In European art, she is often accompanied by her maid.



EUROFILE ART

▶ From page 34

opportunities in the city, only took her part when her attacker refused to marry her. Legal action centred not on the assault itself, but on the deflowering of his daughter.

Small wonder, then, that the paintings of Artemisia are invested with a fury that suited the visceral biblical subjects that artists constantly revisited, interpreting scenes that were familiar to their audiences with ever maturing psychological insights, dramatic compositions and bravura technique.

Of all Artemisia's substantial output, it is *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1613-14) that seethes most vividly with a woman's hatred for an abusive man.

On loan to the National Gallery from the Uffizi in Florence, for the first major exhibition devoted to this increasingly respected painter, it is an uncompromising calling card.

It takes two women to pin down the Assyrian invader. Even then, without this one unrepeatable surge of strength both will perish if the unwieldy victim overpowers them.

Artemisia drills into the composition with a force born of injustice and of her singular capacity for beating the odds – as a rape victim, as a woman making her way in an art world dominated by men, and as a wife and mother scrabbling through domestic and professional challenges, packing up and moving at a moment's notice.

This Judith is no graceful righter of wrongs invested with divine strength, but a determined flesh-and-blood assassin, with a single chance to bring down a lustful tyrant. Her female accomplice is no less aggressive. Women, when Artemisia was at the easel, were not merely ornamental.

As a relatively rare female artist, Artemisia had one major advantage. She could give her female subjects verisimilitude – and save money – by setting up a mirror and using herself as a model.

In self portraits of herself as Saint Catherine of Alexandria, as a lutenist, as a martyr, she appears over and over again.

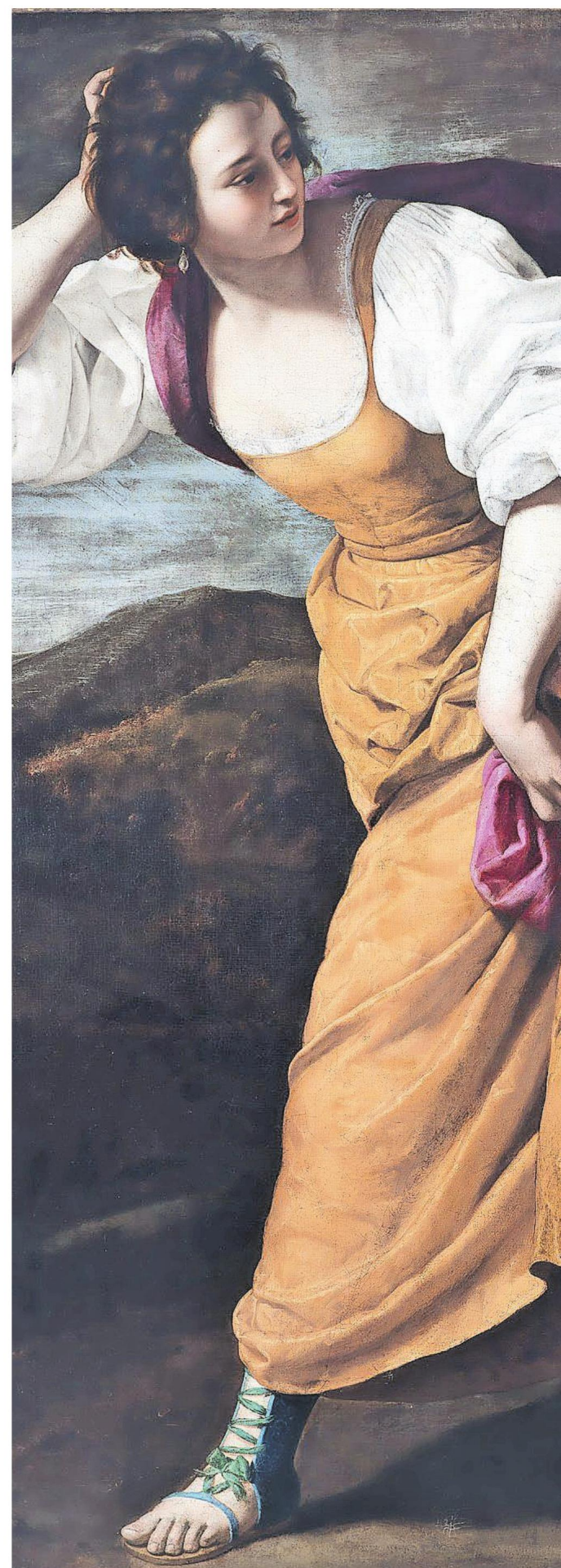
Her broad face with its strong features and her sturdy physique, with arms honed by hard graft, give a unity to work that spans 40 years.

She does not flatter herself, but her own portraitist and friend Simon Vouet is kinder, presenting not an artisan but a lavishly dressed gentlewoman with impressive pearl earrings, her gracefully curved fingers displaying the small, neat tools of her trade. There is no hint here of Judith, sawing through gristle.

Before her foray to Florence, Artemisia absorbed through Orazio the influence of Caravaggio, active in Rome during her childhood apprenticeship.

His *chiaroscuro* effects and intense dramatic compositions echo in her own early work, as they do in the work of her contemporaries.

Two years before the death of Caravaggio, Orazio shows Judith, taking advantage of the lust of her enemy Holofernes, slaughtering the drunk Assyrian general in his tent. She and her servant swing round, alarmed by a noise outside, and the possibility of detection. Will they be disturbed and found out too soon to make their escape? The drama and lighting is Caravaggesque.



ART EUROFILE



MELLOWING THEMES:

1 *Judith and her maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*, 1608

2 *Self Portrait as a Lute Player*, c. 1615-17

Credit: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut

3 *Corisca and the Satyr*, 1635-1637

Credit: Private collection, Italy

4 *Portrait of Artemisia Lomi Gentileschi*

Credit: Public domain



But when Artemisia tackles the same theme in her early 20s, now as a wife and mother, she depicts more knowingly the intimacy of women, placing the figures much closer together, heightening the sense of fear.

It is subtle variations such as these that impress National Gallery curator Letizia Treves. "It is not the subjects that are unique, it is the way she approaches them."

Perhaps the scars of the assault fade with the years, for angry early pictures give way to something more secure or benign. Whereas, in an early portrayal of the virtuous Susannah, the wronged wife from the Book of Daniel cringes from the lascivious elders who ogle her as she bathes naked, a later Susannah confidently meets their gaze.

Artemisia herself is focused and workmanlike in her *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting (La Pittura)* (1638-39), painted at the time of the Queen's House commission and owned by Charles I, who had invited the artist to London.

Sold in the Commonwealth sale and retrieved during the Restoration, it is once more in the Royal Collection. But, believes Treves, other works from this period are yet to be recovered. The story of Artemisia's restless life and works is far from over: "There must be others out there."

EUROFILE CULTURE

ROGER DOMENEGHETTI

on how the humble Rubik's Cube took the world by storm, before being overtaken – and then revived – by technology



In 1980 there was one must-have toy. It didn't need batteries. It didn't speak or light up. It wasn't a doll or action figure, nor was it linked to a film or cartoon. It was just a cube, made up of 26 smaller, coloured cubes which could be moved and interchanged. The Rubik's Cube had taken the world by storm.

The cube had been invented six years earlier by Erno Rubik, in the cramped two-bedroom apartment he shared with his mother. The 29-year-old, an interior design lecturer at the Academy of Applied Arts and Design in the Hungarian capital, Budapest, had not intended to make a toy.

Instead he was fascinated by the inherent structural problem: was it possible to get the smaller, constituent cubes to move independently of each other without the larger cube falling apart?

His first attempt was a crude affair; a mini 2x2 cube made of eight smaller cubes held together by paper clips and rubber bands, which soon snapped after repeated use. It was also, due to the small number of blocks, fairly limited.

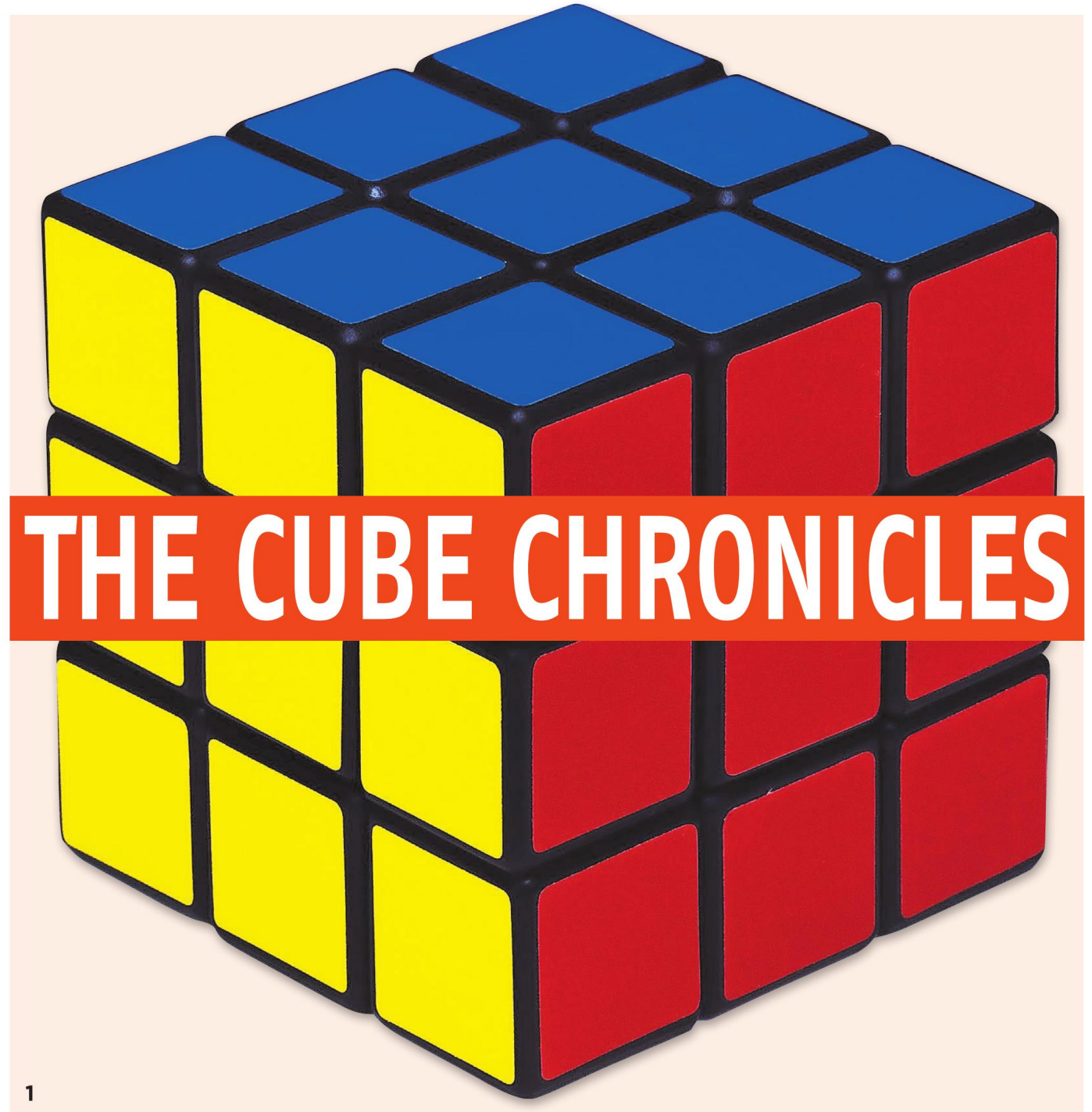
So, Rubik created a larger 3x3 cube with 26 smaller cubes moving around a central 'core' (essentially a 27th cube) to which the middle cubes on each six sides were attached. This 'core' allowed the central cubes to move up and down or left and right but always in line with the central cube directly opposite (for example, on a standard Rubik's Cube the middle red cube will always be paired with the middle orange cube).

For the corners and edges, Rubik crafted cubes with protrusions at the back. These both created a circular 'track' and allowed the pieces to pivot around the middle cubes and the core within that track. The protrusions also interlocked to hold the cube together. Remove one piece and the rest would fall apart, leaving just the central cubes.

He also decorated the cubes so each side of the larger cube was a different colour. His prototype was bulky and made of wood but it worked and, other than a few minor refinements, the design has changed little since. Rubik began to play around with the cube, twisting the blocks, breaking up the solid walls of colour:

"It was wonderful to see how, after only a few turns, the colours became mixed, apparently in random fashion," he would later write. Eventually he decided he wanted to reconfigure the cube in its original state, but he hit a problem.

A standard 3x3 Rubik's Cube has just one correct permutation and more than 43 quintillion (that's 43 with 18 zeros) incorrect ones. The more Rubik twisted the blocks to try and get the cube back to its original state, the more jumbled the colours became. Anyone who has ever attempted to solve a Rubik's Cube knows



how frustrating it can be. Rubik was the first to give it a go.

He was fascinated by the puzzle but without the aid of other people's research and YouTube tutorials he wasn't even sure if there was a solution. He began to wonder if he'd ever be able to re-form the cube in its original state, but he kept going and after a month of intense effort he did.

He showed the cube to his friends and when he saw that they too were enthralled he realised that he might have a puzzle toy on his hands. In early 1975 he applied for a Hungarian patent and approached Konsumex, the state trading company.

The wheels of production moved slowly behind the Iron Curtain and it was not until 1977 that Buvös Kocka (the Magic Cube) hit the shelves in Hungary. In the following five years, two million Magic

BEGUILING:

1 Rubik's Cube

Photo: Art Images via Getty Images

Cubes were sold – one for every five Hungarians.

In 1979, Konsumex negotiated worldwide rights with Ideal Toys. As Rubik had not applied for an international patent, the cube was renamed the Rubik's Cube, to afford Ideal at least some measure of copyright protection. It was released to the international market in early 1980.

In today's highly digitised world it's easy to forget that the Rubik's Cube was launched in a decidedly analogue era. There was no internet, the home computer boom was just round the corner, but hadn't arrived yet. VCRs were barely a decade old and the first Blockbuster store would not open until 1985. The fact that an infuriatingly coloured puzzle cube could beguile both children and adults alike was not a surprise.

It quickly became the fastest selling toy in history, with around 200 million sold in three years. Numerous people cashed in in other ways. There was a diverse range of imitations and more than 100 books purporting to reveal the secret to solving the puzzle were published. A plastic hammer called the Cube Smasher, with which you could take out your frustrations on the cube and "beat it into 43 quintillion pieces", was produced. There was even a Saturday morning cartoon show for kids: *Rubik, the Amazing Cube*.

Clubs were formed to study the cube and uncover the solution with the fewest number of moves, which became known as 'God's algorithm'. Serious cubers took their cubes apart and lubricated the insides to create 'racing cubes'. Then in June 1982 the 20 best cubers gathered in Budapest for first world championships

CULT COMEBACK

1975

Erno Rubik gains a patent in Hungary for his 'Magic Cube'. A worldwide distribution deal is signed four years later and the cube is released globally in 1980

1981

The Simple Solution to Rubik's Cube by James G. Nourse becomes the best selling book of the year, selling 6.8 million copies. At one stage the top three selling books in the USA are all Rubik's Cube-related

1982

The New York Times notes that the Rubik's Cube "craze has died". Video games and E.T. dolls are now all the rage

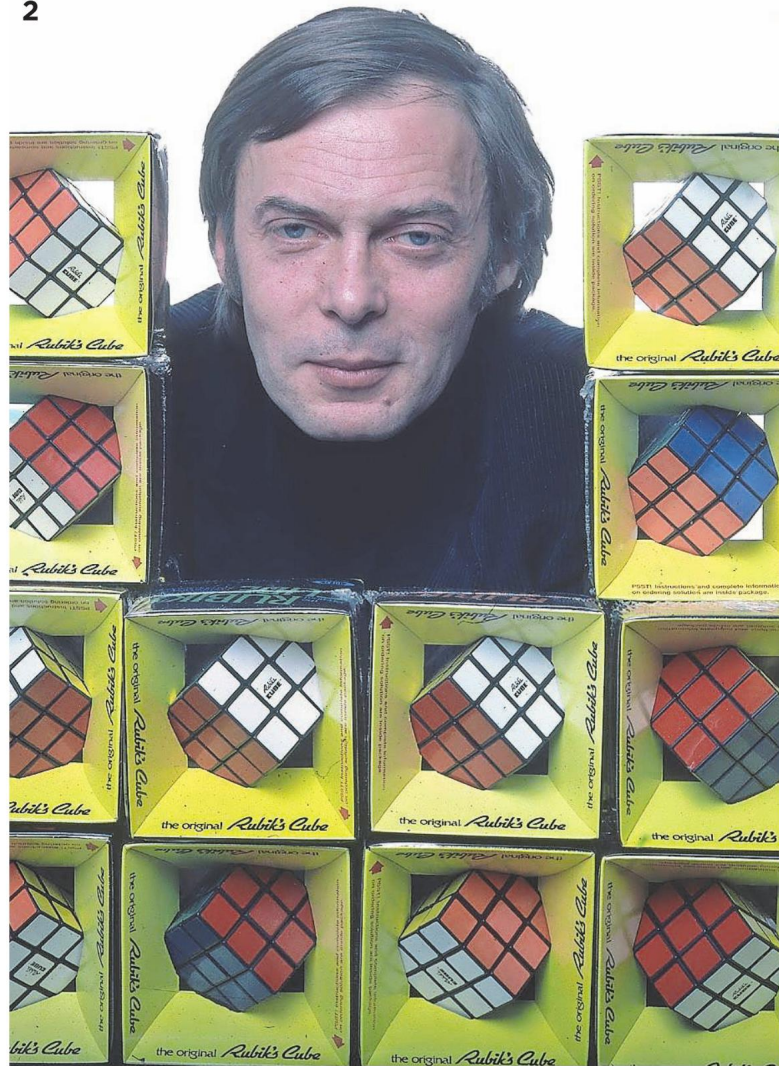
1996

The nascent internet provides a platform for revival when Mark Longridge creates the Domain of the Cube website, an early online community for cube enthusiasts

2019

The 10th Rubik's World Championships are held in Melbourne, Australia. America's Max Park dominates the tournament, but Germany's Philipp Weyer wins the blue riband 3x3 final in a time of 6.77 seconds.

2



and Minh Thai, a 16-year-old from Los Angeles, unscrambled the cube in a then-world record 22.95 seconds.

The huge success of the cube turned Rubik from an unknown academic earning \$150 a month into Hungary's first self-made millionaire almost overnight.

Yet almost as quickly, the craze died out and sales fell away. The frustration many had with being unable to unscramble the cube meant they were abandoned, unloved at the back of cupboards as people turned instead to computer games and video rentals.

While the rise in digital technology helped stifle the initial Rubik's Cube boom, it would also ultimately spark the resurgence in its popularity.

Jessica Fridrich was the only female competitor at the 1982 World Championships and she never lost her love for cubing. A professor in electrical

engineering, by 1997 she had come up with a series of algorithms for solving the puzzle and decided to post them on the internet, then just a few years old.

Her system quickly spread and has become one of the most popular methods used by speed cubers. The internet also created an environment for cubers to communicate with each other. In 2003 this online community came together to organise the second World Championship, in Toronto.

They also formed the World Cubing Association to oversee national and international competitions and records began to tumble. In 2007 Thibaut Jacquinet, from France, became the first person to solve a cube in under 10 seconds. In 2015, Lucas Etter, from the USA, broke the five-second barrier. Three years later China's Yusheng Du broke the four-second barrier with a time

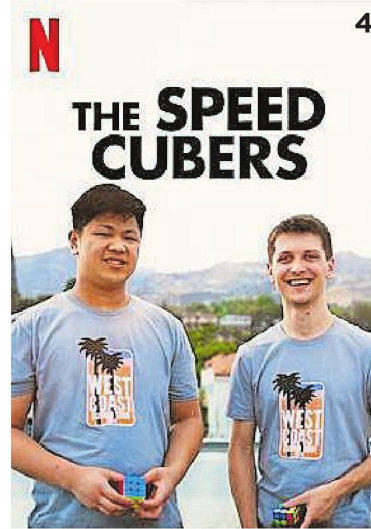


WORLDWIDE PHENOMENON: **2** Erno Rubik with his invention

3 It took 100 children 52 minutes to solve 8,188 Rubik's Cubes in a challenge in Wuxi City, China, 2020

4 Netflix documentary *The Speed Cubers* featured Max Park, left, and Feliks Zemdegs

5 A 1980s advert for the cube
Photos: Getty Images

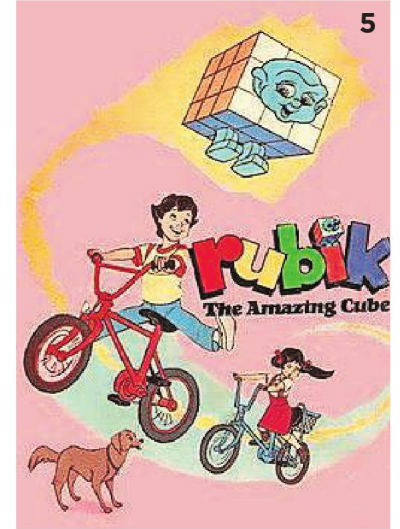


of just 3.47 seconds, a record which still stands.

The last decade has been dominated by the Australian Feliks Zemdegs who, along with his friend and rival Max Park, of the US, is the subject of a Netflix documentary released earlier this year, *The Speed Cubers*. At 25, Zemdegs is considered a veteran in a world dominated by kids in their teens or even younger.

But the cube has appeal beyond these dedicated competitors. It is embedded in our popular culture and has made appearances in music videos by artists such as the Spice Girls and Taylor Swift as well as playing small but important roles in films as diverse as *The Pursuit of Happyness*, *Snowden* and *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*.

In 2017 sales of the Rubik's Cube rose 45% year-on-year. Some \$250 million worth were sold, more than in any year since



the 1980s heyday. Just like vinyl records, another ghost from the analogue past which has seen a recent rise in popularity, the Rubik's Cube taps into feelings of nostalgia as well as the tangible pleasure of owning a physical product in the era of cloud storage.

But could that sudden rise in popularity also tell us something more fundamental about human nature? Erno Rubik once said: "If you are curious, you'll find the puzzles around you. If you are determined, you will solve them."

The year before that sales spike – 2016 – saw the election of Donald Trump and the Brexit vote usher in a period of seismic political and social upheaval. Perhaps at some level the Rubik's Cube taps into a widespread desire to both understand an ever more complex and confusing world and a determination to solve its problems.

EUROFILE MUSIC

Chicago

A CITY IN MUSIC



**NOW LISTEN
TO THE MUSIC...**

Find the accompanying playlist on Spotify. Just search

NEW EUROPEAN: CHICAGO

Featuring:

Sweet Home Chicago
Robert Johnson

Rollin' Stone
Muddy Waters

Keep On Pushing
The Impressions

Your Love
Frankie Knuckles

SOPHIA DEBOICK on a city which has played an immense role in the shaping of three distinct musical genres



Chicago is the blues. While today veteran bluesman Buddy Guy's Legends club keeps the genre alive in the city, it's a story that began almost a century ago. The Great Depression and the ensuing Great Migration saw millions of African Americans move from the southern states to the industrialised north in search of work, and they brought the music of the south with them.

While the likes of Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton brought Dixieland jazz from New Orleans to Chicago, the blues of the Mississippi Delta was a more appropriate soundtrack to the poverty and crime migrants so often found in their new home. Yet, Robert Johnson's 1936 song *Sweet Home Chicago* – now something of an anthem for the city – shows how Chicago retained an image as a promised land for black Americans seeking to escape the poor and segregated south.

Johnson's song hinted at the new, urban blues that was evolving in Chicago – a sound which would become the foundation for almost everything that came after in popular music. The city's Maxwell Street Market was one of the incubators of this new 'Chicago blues'. Originally established by Jewish immigrants in the late 19th century, the mile-long market became a seething hub for the city's black communities and a place where itinerant musicians plied their trade.

Bo Diddley, who had been brought up on Chicago's predominately black South Side, was a regular performer at the market as a teenager in the mid-1940s, playing right there on the pavement, and such noisy, urban settings were key to the development of this new blues. The acoustic guitars of southern blues just couldn't cut through the crowd, and Chicago blues would be all about electricity and amplification and would have a new sense of attitude and aggression derived from the struggle for survival in the city.

The Arkansas-born Big Bill Broonzy would have known Maxwell Street well, and was the figure who more than any other made the bridge between the country and the urban styles of blues. Born in 1903, Broonzy had arrived in Chicago as early as 1920 and honed his guitar skills by playing at social gatherings and clubs on the South Side while working menial jobs. He had made recordings on acoustic in the 1920s and 1930s but made the switch to the electric guitar in the early 1940s, and his 1945 recording, *Where the Blues Began*, with fellow southern migrant Big Maceo Merriweather on vocals, was a watershed moment.

But it would be a man a decade younger than Broonzy who would take Chicago blues to its full conclusion. Mississippi's Muddy Waters moved to Chicago in 1943, working as a truck driver and in a factory while moonlighting opening shows at the city's clubs for Broonzy. He soon



1 SUPER FLY GUYS:
1 Curtis Mayfield, 1972

2 Chicago DJ
Frankie Knuckles, 1988

3 Muddy Waters,
1978
Photo: Getty Images



discovered that amplification was essential to make an impression in those garrulous settings, went electric and made some recordings for local label, Aristocrat Records. *I Can't Be Satisfied*, with *I Feel Like Going Home* on the B-side, from 1948, showcased a new sound in which electric guitar riffs were front and centre, and the legend of Muddy Waters was born.

Aristocrat Records would in fact be crucial in the story of Chicago blues. Rechristened Chess Records in 1950, it was where not only Waters, but his contemporaries and fellow Mississippi migrants Willie Dixon, Sonny Boy Williamson and Howlin' Wolf, would make their names. Waters released his seminal *Rollin' Stone* single the year of the label's renaming. When a certain London group took that name and went

on to record their 1964 instrumental *2120 South Michigan Avenue* at the Chess Studios, now home to the Blues Heaven Museum, it was clear just how much this migrant music, developed 4,000 miles away, was directly responsible for Britain's beat boom.

But Chicago would also play a key role in the development of another world-changing genre – soul. Born at the same time as Chicago blues, Curtis Mayfield was a native Chicagoan who grew up on the notorious Cabrini-Green housing project, giving him a keen sense of the problems afflicting the city's black communities.

He met Jerry Butler while both were singing in a church choir and the two joined local group The Roosters, later rechristened The Impressions. The band had 10 Top 20 hits between 1958 and 1970,

MUSIC AND THE MOB

Chicago's mafia king Al Capone was an unlikely patron of jazz. His bootlegging empire sustained the city's speakeasies, which themselves provided a proving ground for jazz musicians, many of whom he knew personally. It's been claimed that Louis Armstrong, a regular performer in the Chicago clubs as a member of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, was close to Capone, and the bebop-pioneer Earl Hines, pianist at the Capone-controlled Sunset Café, was considered such an asset by the mob boss that he supplied him with bodyguards.

Blaxploitation film *Super Fly* would give him his first and only solo Top 10 hits, and he performed both on *Soul Train*, a production of Chicago's WCIU-TV station and a vital part of the city's soul history. Mayfield's influence echoed down generations of Chicago acts – *Move On Up* would later be heavily sampled by Chicago-raised Kanye West on 2006's *Touch the Sky*, but in the 1970s he influenced everyone from multi-racial funk band Rufus, fronted by Chicago born and bred vocal powerhouse Chaka Khan, to the mega-selling Earth, Wind & Fire – founder Maurice White started as a session drummer at Chess, and the band explored soul and funk directions before they became synonymous with disco.

The sequin-adorned disco of the likes of Earth, Wind & Fire was precisely what led to the unedifying spectacle of 1979's 'Disco Demolition Night', when disco records were blown up on the Chicago White Sox ground in the middle of a baseball doubleheader (*Boogie Wonderland* was in fact released just weeks before the stunt).

The implications of the incident were not a little racist and brought into focus the divide between black, dance-oriented music and white rock, but the former could not be silenced in Chicago.

When The Warehouse club opened on South Jefferson Street in 1977, few could have foreseen that it would give its name to a genre that would take over the world. New Yorker Frankie Knuckles pioneered house out of the ashes of disco as The Warehouse's resident DJ before opening The Power Plant on out-of-the-way Goose Island in 1982, and later The Power House just a block away from the old Chess Records building.

While the Chicago club scene was thriving by the mid-1980s, and 1986 saw the opening of the legendary gay club, Club LaRay, in the Boystown area of the city, offering a steady diet of house music, house was ready to break out of the city's underground.

That same year, Frankie Knuckles released his classic *Your Love* with Jamie Principle, and Chicago native Steve 'Silk' Hurley (aka J. M. Silk) had hits with *I Can't Turn Around* and *Jack Your Body*. House made its way not only across the country but across the Atlantic – *Jack Your Body* was a UK No.1 for two weeks in January 1987.

The pure hedonism of house proved that much of Chicago's music has been defined by its defiance of the realities of life in the big city.



migrating from doo-wop to gospel-influenced soul and rivalling Motown's male vocal groups in their pop appeal. Certainly, Mayfield's exquisitely sweet vocals held their own against any in Berry Gordy's stable.

The Impressions would be a vehicle for Mayfield's growing social consciousness. His writing talent was evident on civil rights anthem *Keep On Pushing* (1964), released the same year as the Chicago-raised Sam Cooke's *A Change Is Gonna Come*, and songs like *People Get Ready* (1965) and *We're a Winner* (1967) followed in the same hopeful vein at a time when Jesse Jackson was heading up black rights activism in Chicago and Martin Luther King was pushing the Chicago Freedom Movement, demanding better housing and conditions in the city. *This Is My Country* (1968) came at the end of a year that saw King's assassination and the violence of the Democratic National Convention protests in Chicago; the song stated simply "Too many have died in protecting my pride/ For me to go second class".

Mayfield would deal extensively with black pride on his 1970 self-titled debut solo album, a record which segued into the funk sound and contained his jubilant, conga-laced *Move On Up*. The album's other single, the opener (*Don't Worry*) *If There's a Hell Below, We're All Going to Go*, directed itself to 'Sisters! N****s! Whities! Jews! Crackers!', pointing out that all humanity is united in its ultimate fate.

The two singles from Mayfield's acclaimed soundtrack to the 1972

STAR TURNS
BY TIM WALKERACTRESS WHO MADE
THE QUEEN TEARFUL

I find it somewhat ageing to admit that I once interviewed an actress who had played the title role in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* with the author himself in attendance. I have thus shaken the hand of a lady who had shaken the hand of Thomas Hardy.

Dame Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies was celebrating her 99th birthday when I interviewed her, two years before her death in 1992. She was still managing to get by on her own in her little cottage in Stambourne in the Essex countryside and she indubitably had her wits about her. Always a jobbing actress, she instructed me to make it clear in my piece that she was still very much "available for work".

Her old mate Sir Nigel Hawthorne had got in touch to suggest I interview her as a birthday treat, and, when I showed up, she poured me a very fine Amontillado in a pint glass and filled it half full. She was a remarkably unworldly individual. A television journalist who interviewed her in her kitchen just before me had emerged looking like the Jolly Green Giant. He'd ruefully explained she'd been chopping parsley with manic intensity as they'd filmed her.

I find no one in the theatre world has ever been remotely impressed when I've let slip I've interviewed the likes of Kirk Douglas, Lauren Bacall and Peter Ustinov, but the eyes widen in amazement at the mention of Ffrangcon-Davies' name. She's a part of cherished theatrical folklore. She made only a handful of films – including two Hammer horrors – but was unforgettable in all of them, and, while not a conventional beauty, she was acknowledged as a major stage star.

Sir John Gielgud, who played Romeo to her Juliet in 1924, considered her to be one

of the finest actresses of her generation. In 1950, she succeeded in making the Queen cry when she saw her play Katherine in *Henry VIII* at Stratford. She was very much an actress of the Victorian era. She had learnt her craft at the feet of Ellen Terry, Sir Henry Irving's leading lady. All she could remember of Thomas Hardy, by the way, was that he was a "respectful and encouraging" presence in the audience, and, when he came backstage afterwards, he told her she was very much how he had envisaged Tess.

In person, Ffrangcon-Davies was diminutive, immaculately dressed and made-up and spoke a bit like a rather fruity Lady Bracknell, a part she once played in a well-regarded stage production. She certainly didn't look her age, but then she never really had. Anna Massey once underestimated how old she was by a quarter of a century. "I am not old because I do not think of myself as old," she told me, adamantly.

She grew to be revered by generations of actors, but never, for one moment, overtly sought stardom or fame for herself. "That would have been very vulgar. I have no time for young people who tell me that's what they want. It is something that might happen to you if you are very talented and very lucky, but it should be the last thing on your mind when you are starting out. My dear, the very presumption of it."

In her long career, she had in any case seen how many fellow actors couldn't cope with it. "Sometimes they achieve it all too early and it's too much for them. Sometimes it proves to be a transient quality. Others of course just haven't the temperament for it and it's terribly damaging for them and in this regard I think of poor dear Vivien Leigh."

She said, however, that one of the great pleasures of being around for a very long time in the theatre world was seeing people who, when they were starting out, she might have dismissed as quite mediocre, but in old age they ripened into something unexpectedly impressive.

Ffrangcon-Davies was, by contrast, good and dependable throughout her career. Not long before we'd met, I had seen her on the *Wogan* chat show when she had recited, word for word, the famous death scene of Juliet. She made her final acting appearance in a teleplay of the Sherlock Holmes mystery *The Master Blackmailer* at the age of 100. "You don't give up, unless you have to," she told me. "Who wants to be left twiddling their thumbs between giving up a job they love and the grave?"

REVERED: Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies as Lady Macbeth, 1942

Photo: Getty Images



EUROFILE BOOKS

CHARLIE CONNELLY on a deeply unsettling book by an author who is just getting into her stride



Sometimes you read a book and within a day of finishing it you struggle to remember the first thing about the plot and characters. Others you put back on the shelf and can see yourself revisiting one day. There are books you enjoy so much you earmark them as possible gifts for like-minded reading friends. And then, very occasionally, there is a book that seems to inhabit you, whose characters linger long after you've closed the cover on them, whose prose is so immersive the pictures it builds in your head return again and again.

Not many novelists can pull this off. Even those who can don't manage to work that particular brand of magic on every reader: taste and resonance are particular things and life would be extremely dull if we all loved the same things.

Daisy Johnson's *Sisters*, however, is more likely to stay with you than not. It's not just the plot, prose quality or vividly drawn characters that make this such an arresting book, it's all that and more.

Sisters is a book that somehow manages to have all your senses thrumming. You can feel the breezes on your skin, the earthy musk of the setting lingering in your nostrils, its dark tone and plot twists prompting shudders when you're least expecting them.

Johnson's previous novel, *Everything Under*, was shortlisted for the 2018 Booker Prize and at 27 she was the youngest writer ever to make the final six candidates for literature's most prestigious award. That kind of attention could break some authors of similar youth, the glare of publicity either intimidating them into a nervously bland follow-up or convincing them of their own genius and inspiring work of intense self-regard in which they fall in love with the sound of their own voice.

Luckily Daisy Johnson, who only turns 30 this year, proved resistant to both those extremes, producing a novel that's concise, sparse yet richly descriptive – and deeply unsettling.

Although *Everything Under* made headlines, *Sisters* is more reminiscent of Johnson's debut 2017's collection of short stories *Fen*, a slithery, shivery bundle of tales in which the flat, marshy landscape of England's central-eastern region is a constant malevolent presence looming over nightmarish stories and unnerving scenarios.

The same eerie landscape underpins *Sisters*. The eponymous siblings are July and September, born 10 months apart, and at the start of the book they are driven north from their Oxford home by their mother Sheela, writer of children's stories in which her daughters are the focus.

It's soon clear that something awful has happened at the girls' school and whatever it was July and September were at the heart of it. They're heading for a house on the eastern fringe of the North York Moors, close to the sea. The Settle House it's called, charmless but remote

enough for the family to hunker down until the fallout has settled.

"Mum said, getting into the car, Let's make it before night," says July. "And then nothing else for a long time. We imagine what she might say: This is your fault, or, We would never have had to leave if you hadn't done what you did. And what she means, of course, is if we hadn't been born. If we hadn't been born at all."

The sisters are in their mid-teens and claustrophobically close: at the Settle House they're even sharing a mobile phone, inventing fake identities on dating apps to tease and taunt sleazy suitors. It's a neat allegory for how the sisters inhabit their own space and keep the rest of the world at bay, on their terms. September, the eldest, is the dominant sister, fiercely loving and protective of July yet also willing to use her seniority and assertiveness to belittle her. July is in awe of her older sibling and September is occasionally willing to take advantage in a way that is childlike for someone on the verge of womanhood. So close are they that September has insisted from an early age that the girls celebrate their birthday on the same day. Her birthday.

"When one of us speaks we both feel the words moving on our tongues," says July early in the book. "When one of eats we both feel the food slipping down our gullets. It would have surprised neither of us to have found, slit open, that we shared organs, that one's lungs breathed for the both, that a single heart beat a doubling feverish pulse."

This symbiosis manifests itself in a particularly startling manner at a beach party, but for all the closeness of their bond the sisters have very different personalities. July is timid, as if overawed by life and thankful she has her sister to help guide her through it. September is volatile and prone to violent outbursts in a way that unnerves Sheela, reminding her of the girls' father, Peter, who died when they were young and who was born in the Settle House.

Sheela has rented the house from Peter's sister, also born there, and it's a place to which she has retreated before when suffering attacks of depression.

"In Sheela's mind going to the house would feel like relief, everything falling away, the white walls a calmness, the bedroom soft and forgiving," writes Johnson. "She could not trust her own flesh but the house would cocoon them, would protect them all in a way she had become unable to do."

Yet this is not a homely place. When they arrive July takes in "the empty sheep field behind pitted with old excrement, thorn bushes tall as a person" and sums up its demeanour as "rankled, bentoutashape, dirtyallover". The house is soulless, as if all its residents have been brief and transient, never staying long, never making it a home, leaving the knocked together, knocked about feel of a student house but without the vigour and joy of youthful expectation.

The house feels so bleak it lends the book a strange kind of timelessness. When Johnson describes it she begins "At the start there was only earth where the house would be. Strong trees made to survive the sea winds, the dirt sodden and salted, teeming with life".

This sense that the soil is master here adds to the atmosphere. It's an austere place, bleak and monochrome, a house you can never imagine has ever felt truly warm, so when there are mentions of the

THE NEW QUEEN OF ENGLISH GOTHIC

girls' laptop and an engineer comes to set up the broadband it feels strangely anachronistic. The Settle House is somewhere the reader is never permitted to, well, settle.

In a sinister way the house itself feels almost alive. There's an eeriness about its very fabric, one that's reminiscent of the story *A Bruise the Shape and Size of a Door Handle* from *Fen* in which a house gradually absorbs one of the characters,

swallowing her into the bricks and plaster itself.

Metamorphosis is a theme that runs through all of Johnson's work and it's present here as strong as ever. When July is duped cruelly by school bullies, setting in train the events that prompted the flight from Oxford, she frets about her new status as the centre of attention. "I was so use to melding with the walls, people seeming not to



JUST GETTING STARTED: *Sisters* author Daisy Johnson, 2018

Photo: Getty Images

see me as they passed," she says. Some chapters are written from the point of view of Sheela, who laments how "her love for them was like carrying shopping bags up a hill and at times she became convinced they wanted the very foundations of her, wanted to break the bricks of her body apart and climb back in."

It's as if a house should be a refuge, a home, a place of safety, but the darkness

is already in the Settle House and, we learn, in Sheela herself. September, as well as her father and aunt, was born in the Settle House. These bricks and mortar were almost her cocoon, giving a sense that the older sister is in a sense returning to the womb.

There's a foreboding running through *Sisters* that makes it such an exquisite slice of modern English Gothic. There is the isolated, spooky house. The damaged

FIVE GREAT BOOKS OF ENGLISH GOTHIC

STARVE ACRE
Andrew Michael Hurley (John Murray, £8.99)

Hurley burst onto the scene with his first novel *The Loney*, published originally by a small press in a run of just 300 copies but going on to win Best First Novel at the 2016 Costa Book Awards. He followed that success with the chilling *Devil's Day*, and this, his third novel is arguably his best yet. A couple mourn the death of their five-year-old son at the house whose name gives the book its title. Mother Juliette is convinced the boy is still in the house, father Richard distracts himself by digging in a field opposite in search of ancient oak. A haunting exploration of grief and the landscape.



Thomas Prize. This is a Gothic-tinged tale in which the reader feels the earth between their toes, harnessing a peculiarly English form of rural eeriness. The village setting is haunted by its past, time stretching and contracting, and then Dead Papa Toothwort emerges from the woods...



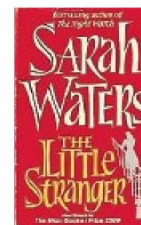
THE SILENT COMPANIONS
Laura Purcell (Raven Books, £7.99)

Newly married and newly widowed, Elsie is sent to see out her pregnancy at her late husband's crumbling country estate, The Bridge. The servants are resentful, the locals hostile and Elsie only has her husband's slightly odd cousin for company. Or so she thinks. For inside her new home lies a locked room, and beyond that door lies a 200-year-old diary and a deeply unsettling painted wooden figure – a Silent Companion – that bears a striking resemblance to Elsie herself. Deliciously creepy.



THE LITTLE STRANGER
Sarah Waters (Virago, £8.99)

It's a post-war summer in rural Warwickshire and a doctor is called to a patient at remote Hundreds Hall, home of the Ayres family. The once grand Georgian pile is crumbling, its grounds choked by weeds. But is this just down to social change and basic economics? Or is the Ayres family stifled by an historic secret? Shortlisted for the Booker in 2009, this is a classic, eerie, haunted house story.



THE COFFIN PATH
Katherine Clements (Headline, £8.99).

Another spooky house on the North York Moors – Scarcross Hall, on the old coffin path between the village and the burial ground on the moor. Mercy Booth lives there, untroubled by the rumours of an evil atmosphere until three old coins go missing from her father's study, a shadowy figure starts lurking at the gates and a man appears, looking for work, looking to change things.



characters, one of whom is our unreliable narrator. There's the empty eeriness of the landscape and most of all the sense of a huge and tragic secret hanging over the book, a strong sense of the past lurking right on the shoulder of the present while a storm is about to break.

There's little colour here, the story is almost seen in monochrome, the only splash is the orange anorak and red hair of John, a local boy who is the closest we get to a love interest and also the only significant step away from the intense trinity of women at the heart of the story.

Yet for all its classically Gothic structure and atmosphere this is a distinctly 21st century story. At the heart of the incident that prompted the family's flight is some cold-hearted text message phishing, the kind of thing we see in the news most days, a vulnerable person's

hopes raised and dashed in heartless fashion.

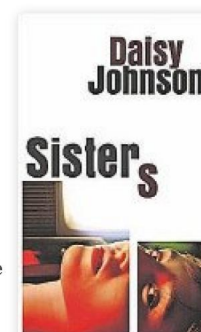
July and September may seem out of time for much of the book but they are very much of our time and it's down to Johnson's skill that this dichotomy is so seamless.

The moment we learn the truth as to why the family was forced to take flight is genuinely gasp-inducing, a twist and reveal that demonstrates a writer of extraordinary gifts who more than justifies building the sinew-stretching suspense.

This is a book to absorb as much as read. At less than 200 pages it can almost be devoured in one sitting, but

it's a novel whose every word you will want to savour. And Daisy Johnson is only getting started.

■ *Sisters* by Daisy Johnson is published by Jonathan Cape, price £14.99



EUROFILE POEM AND PUZZLES

a poem for europe



DAVID HEAD is a former academic Germanist who is now a literary translator. This is his translation of a poem by Bertolt Brecht, whose works were banned and publicly burned in Nazi Germany and who wrote the poem in 1937 while in exile in Denmark and living on the island of Funen

Bertolt Brecht

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE EXPRESSION "MIGRANTS"
Translated by David Head

I have always thought that the name they gave us is wrong:
Migrants.
This means emigrants. But, you see, we
Did not emigrate of our own free will
To choose some other land in which to live. Nor did we enter
Another country with the aim of staying there, maybe for ever.
We fled. We are refugees, exiles.
And do not think it was a place called home that took us in, it is a place of
Exile.

We are sitting here like this, restless, as close to the frontier as possible
And waiting for the day of our return, watching out for the smallest change
On the other side of the border, eagerly questioning
Each new arrival, forgetting nothing and giving up nothing
And forgiving nothing, forgiving nothing that happened to us.
Oh, the stillness of the straits does not deceive us! We hear the
Screams

That come from their camps and reach us here. After all, we ourselves are
Almost like rumours of atrocities that escaped from over there,
Across the borders. Each of us
Who walks through the crowds with shoes in shreds
Is a witness of the shame that now sullies our land.
But none of us
Will stay here. The last word on the subject
Has yet to be said

A poem for Europe is edited by Briony Bax, Poetry Editor.
Submit your poems to poetryeditor@theneweuropean.co.uk

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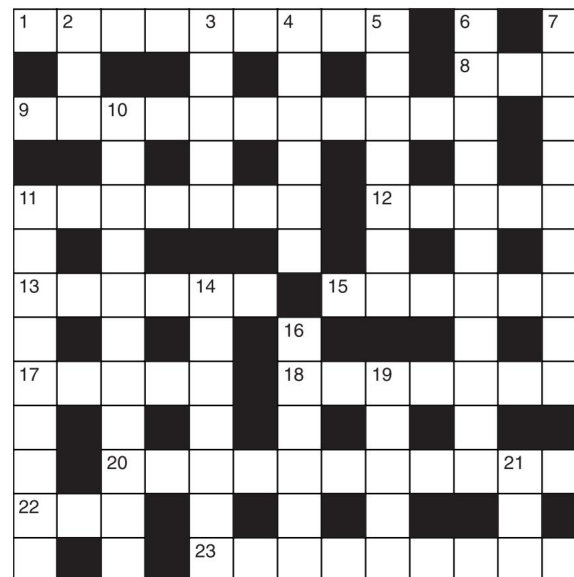
Cryptic 1

Across

1. Get a smart plan rearranged (9)
8. Beat a tailless young creature (3)
9. Seeing after a short time the gift of the prophet (6,5)
11. The fellow precedes the girl, we hear – that's not natural (3-4)
12. One goes to bed to work (5)
13. A sharp pain produced by a needle (6)
15. Injury will make mother go grey (6)
17. Requires to change from being dense (5)
18. A trip to disturb the country lover (7)
20. Becoming slower in playing – all ran to end confusion (11)
22. A way for the French to show regret (3)
23. Sauntering and turning round at the end of the street (9)

Down

2. In the event I expect to level the scores (5)
3. Pacific island conveyance (5)
4. This is used for heating fuel on the plane (3,3)
5. A battle colour (7)
6. A matter of taking it in turns to convert a whole people (11)
7. Tool to put to some use (9)
10. Small measures – a hundred interest me in an unusual way (11)
11. Give wrong information to girl in class, we hear (9)
14. As men on the board, they should be impregnable (7)
16. Sounds like a member of the nobility to come on stage (6)
19. Add up nearly everything – and that's the lot (5)
21. Spaniard almost exhausted (3)



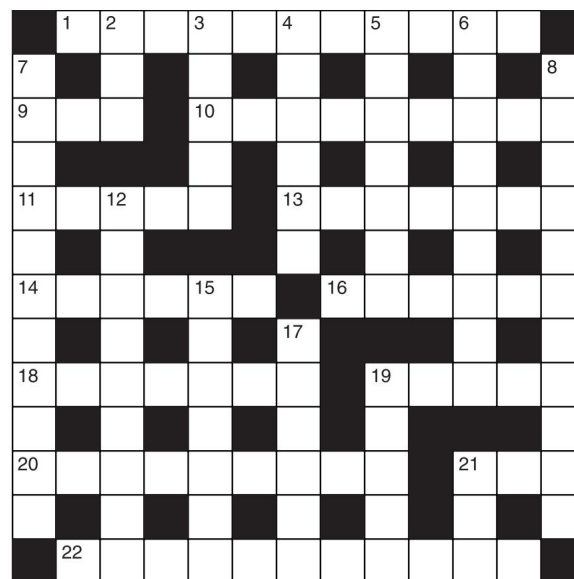
Cryptic 2

Across

1. Beware of letters where the sentry stands (4-3,4)
9. Put questions to some taskmasters (3)
10. Unequal part aside (9)
11. Listen in when these drop (5)
13. Time for a duet, say? (7)
14. Come with a crash so as to do injury to the French (6)
16. Hoarse when not at sea (6)
18. It makes the secret public (7)
19. It's commonplace to outlaw a local leader (5)
20. An untruth twisted at end, caused estrangement (9)
21. Bread with top cut off by fool (3)
22. Immaturity – a time for affection? (6,5)

Down

2. All right – article inserted in tree (3)
3. The glory of raising turf by Britain (5)
4. Higher groups experience disturbances (6)
5. Acting members of the team? (7)
6. Leave the witness box: the platform has collapsed (5,4)
7. Steal metal to get in front (4,3,4)
8. All right – go away and get rich! (4,4,3)
12. Adaptable tail oddly mentioned in poetry (9)
15. Sort of friend at court? (7)
17. Gambler has recovered? (6)
19. This emblem is a tailless animal (5)
21. It is put in by those who want a row (3)



Crossword solutions

- Cryptic 1**
Across: 1 Strategem; 8 Lam; 9 Second sight; 11 Man-made; 12 Nurse; 13 Stitch; 15 Damage; 17 Needs; 18 Patriot; 20 Rallentando; 22 Rue; 23 Strolling.
Down: 2 Tie; 3 Tonga; 4 Gas jet; 5 Magenta; 6 Alternation; 7 Implement; 10 Centimetres; 11 Mishmish; 14 Castles; 16 Appear; 19 Total; 21 Don.
- Cryptic 2**
Across: 1 Look-out post; 9 Ask; 10 Disparate; 11 Faves; 13 Tuesday; 14 Hurtle; 16 Ashore; 18 Leakage; 19 Band; 20 Alternated; 21 Oar; 22 Tender years. **Down:** 2 Oak; 3 Kudos; 4 Uppers; 5 Players; 6 Stand down; 7 Take the lead; 8 Very well off; 12 Versatile; 15 Learned; 17 Better; 19 Badger; 21 Oar.

Sudoku solutions

Medium 1 Medium 2

6	4	9	1	5	8	3	2	1	7
3	5	7	1	9	2	4	8	6	
2	8	1	4	6	7	9	3	5	
1	3	4	9	7	6	8	5	2	
8	7	6	2	5	1	3	4	9	
9	2	5	8	3	4	7	6	1	
4	1	3	7	2	5	6	9	8	
5	9	2	6	4	8	1	7	3	
7	6	8	3	1	9	5	2	4	

Hard 1 Hard 2

5	9	2	1	7	8	3	6	4	
4	8	6	2	9	3	1	7	5	
1	3	7	6	4	5	9	8	2	
6	2	9	3	1	4	7	5	8	
7	4	5	8	6	9	2	1	3	
8	1	3	7	5	2	4	9	6	
2	5	8	9	3	1	6	4	7	
3	7	1	4	8	6	9	5	2	
9	7	4	5	2	7	8	3	1	

Numberfit solutions

4	4	1	6	4	6				
6	3	6	2	3	2	1			
5	4	2	0	2	3	4	1		
9	2	7	1	2	7	5			
1	0	0	1	2	2	0	3		
6	5	3	2	2	6	3	4		
4	3	4	5	0	6	3	4		
6	7	6	0	0	6	3	4		
6	6	4	3	4	1				

Sudoku – medium 1

	4		5	8	3		1	
3			1		2			6
				6				
1	3						5	2
8		6				3		9
9	2						6	1
				2				
5			6		8			3
	6		3	1	9		2	

Sudoku – medium 2

	3			7		6		
7					8	1	3	
		5	3		4		2	
		1		4		6		2
			8	6				
5		8		1		7		
	2		9	1	3			
1	5	6						9
	8		5				4	

Sudoku – hard 1

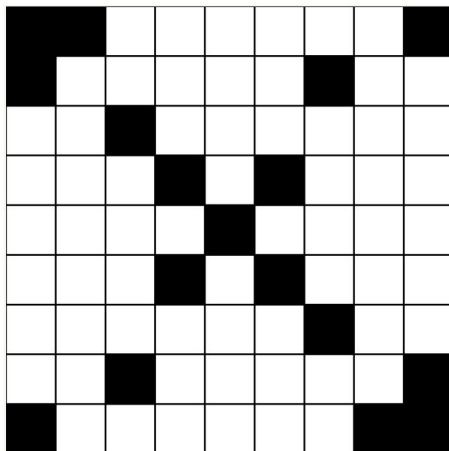
	9		1	7				
4		6				1		
	3			4			8	
6			3		4			
7		5				2		3
			7		2			6
	5			3			4	
		1				5		9
				2	7		3	

Sudoku – hard 2

		8	3		6			
			8			9		
2		4					8	
9	7			4				1
			1		5			
1				6			3	8
	4					5		9
		5			7			
			5		2	8		

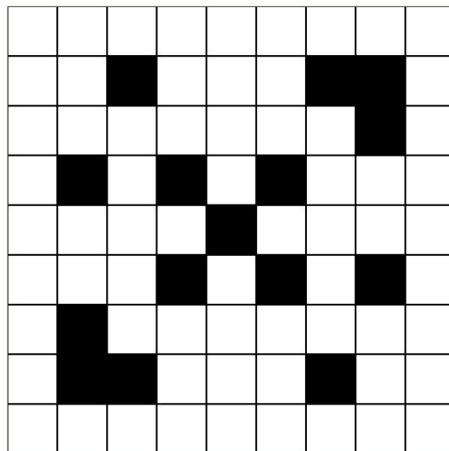
Numberfit

Fit the listed numbers into each grid.



Numberfit 1

- 2 digits: 21 - 31 - 43 - 54 - 56 - 67
- 3 digits: 275 - 462 - 527 - 564 - 632 - 634 - 653 - 664
- 4 digits: 1001 - 1201 - 2003 - 2203 - 3226 - 7034
- 5 digits: 60634 - 63623
- 6 digits: 115346 - 202341 - 434506 - 441646 - 551646 - 664341
- 8 digits: 62470354 - 64205376



Numberfit 2

- 2 digits: 14 - 18 - 28 - 92
- 3 digits: 173 - 293 - 317 - 379 - 381 - 767 - 811 - 921 - 927 - 935
- 4 digits: 8098 - 8448 - 8667 - 8931
- 5 digits: 38316 - 38436
- 7 digits: 6909634 - 7133693
- 9 digits: 212184482 - 212785872 - 227189582 - 235183882

ACADEMIC INFLATION

PETER TRUDGILL on a self-aggrandising trend in educational language



When I left school in 1963 at the age of 19 after 15 years of full-time education, nothing happened. Nothing at all. We just walked out of the school gates, knowing that we would not be coming back anymore, except as visitors. There were no ceremonies, no dressing up, no handing over of pieces of paper, no music playing, no dances.

Things have changed a lot over the last decades. Nowadays there seems to be a tendency in many aspects of British education to big things up, to make more of a fuss, and to ensure everything seems more significant and impressive. Some children leaving primary schools and even nursery schools these days participate in graduation ceremonies where they are given diplomas – which they show every sign of feeling good about.

Some of these boosting practices seem to have been borrowed from the United States, and this sometimes shows in the educational vocabulary which is typically used. Until recently, British schools had *pupils* who received *marks* evaluating their exam performances and class work. Increasingly these days, schools instead have *students* who are awarded *grades*, à la américaine.

Substituting *student* for *pupil* does represent American usage, but it is surely also an attempt to make young people sound more impressive and significant through the adoption of a term originally applied to more senior people. In the USA, it has even been rather normal for kindergartens (or *kindergartens*) to have *students*, so I am guessing that has probably begun to happen here as well.

The term *students* used to be found only in further and higher education in this country. In the 1960s, everyone understood that complaints in the newspapers about “students” were referring only to people aged 18 and over who were in further or higher education. They were the ones who tended to wear their hair long, flout convention and – according to the older generation – generally behave badly, in contrast to the young people who had proper jobs and went out to work.

In those days young people who were still in primary and secondary education were never known as *students* but as *pupils*, *schoolchildren* or *schoolkids*. But today, even the words *child* and *children* seem to occur relatively infrequently in a secondary school context.

In higher education, *students* who have graduated from a particular British university are now known by the American term *alumni*, a Latin word unknown to most people here in the 1960s. I remember coming across *alumnus* in an American novel at about that time, not understanding it, and failing to find it in the dictionary.

At least one Cambridge college reports that they used to employ the terms *former members* or *graduate members*, but switched over to American *alumnus* in 1997. Even secondary schools in Britain nowadays have *alumni* rather than *former pupils*, *old boys*, or *old girls*.

Part of this is simply American linguistic influence, as in many other spheres of activity, as with *clever* becoming *smart*, and *pictures* becoming *films* becoming *movies* – there are, after all, very many more of them over there than there are of us over here.

But this is not always simply a linguistic matter: some British universities have now made the institutional change of appointing *associate professors* and *assistant professors*, positions hitherto found only at institutions across the Atlantic.

And there is also clearly a bigging-up element in these terminological changes. Calling an institution a *high school* rather than a *secondary school* is probably simply a case of Americanisation. But the tendency of schools nowadays to have *principals* rather than *headteachers*, and the practice of *schools* renaming themselves *academies* and *colleges*, build up a picture of a mindset which is oriented towards making everything seem as important as possible.



GOOD OLD DAYS: In the classroom, early 20th century
Photo: Getty Images

PUPIL

Pupil ‘someone being taught’ and *pupil* ‘opening in the iris’ were originally the same word. The Latin for ‘orphan, ward, minor’ was *pupillus* (male) or *pupilla* (female). The ophthalmic usage came from the image of yourself you see if you look into someone else’s eye which, because small, was likened to a *pupilla* ‘female child, doll’.

EUROFILE GREAT LIVES

INTIMATE: *At the Dressing Table*, 1909, self-portrait by Zinaida Serebriakova

Photo: Getty Images



GREAT EUROPEAN LIVES

BY CHARLIE CONNELLY

#164

ZINAIDA SEREBRIAKOVA

DECEMBER 12, 1884 – SEPTEMBER 19, 1967

The winter of 1909 came early to Russia. One morning, in the house on her family estate at Neskuchnoye in what is now Kharkiv, Ukraine, Zinaida Serebriakova looked out of the window at the snowy landscape then sat down at her dressing table. Bare-shouldered, she was grateful for the fire burning in the hearth. When she looked in the mirror and began to comb her hair Serebriakova was struck by the milkiness of the wintry light on her skin, how it made everything luminous. She put down her comb and took up her sketchpad.

The sketch turned into a watercolour that showed Serebriakova in the act of combing her long, dark hair, eyes sparkling, a smile playing on her closed lips, her dressing table strewn with scent bottles, powder puffs, a string of pearls and a small cushion stuck with brightly coloured hat pins. *At the Dressing Table* is joyously informal, an intimate self-portrait of a woman entirely content with life and the world.

She hadn't painted with a view to exhibition, she just wanted to capture a moment on a morning when she felt warm and safe and happy, but her brother Yevgeny persuaded her to add the picture to the dozen or so canvases she was sending to the 1910 Union of Russian Artists exhibition in St Petersburg. *At the Dressing Table* was the hit of the show, so much so that it was purchased for display by the specialist fine art Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, where it hangs to this day.

That morning as the snow fell silently outside and the flames crackled in the hearth, Zinaida Serebriakova was immersed in a decade-long period of almost unadulterated contentment. In later life she would look back on that morning, think about that portrait, and wonder if she could ever feel like that again, even for a moment.

Neskuchnoye, which means 'never dull', belonged to her mother's family, the Benois, who had fled the Great Terror in Paris and settled in the cultural haven of St Petersburg during the 1790s in the culturally rich twilight of Catherine the Great's reign. Serebriakova's uncle Alexandre Benois was a well-known artist and a set designer for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russes. Her mother was a talented sketch artist and her father Yevgeny Nikolayevich Lanceray was a noted sculptor, ensuring art was a part of young Zinaida's life from the cradle.

Serebriakova never knew her father; he died of tuberculosis when she was two years old, so she was brought up a Benois. Summers were spent at Neskuchnoye with the rest of the year in a sumptuous apartment next door to the Mariinsky

Theatre in the cultural heart of St Petersburg. She retained a strong streak of Lanceray, however.

"Zina grew up a rather ailing and unsociable child," wrote her uncle Alexandre, "in which she resembled her father more than her mother and sisters, who were all merry and sociable."

She was accepted into the Princess Tenisheva Art School in St Petersburg in 1901, where she became a protégé of the noted realist Ilya Repin. Her studies were interrupted when her mother, as Serebriakova suffered a bout of ill health with a Russian winter ahead, took her to Italy for eight months where she haunted the galleries studying the Renaissance masters. Back in St Petersburg she commenced studying at the studio of Osip Braz who encouraged his students to copy portraits displayed at the city's Hermitage gallery. Her summers on the family estate in Ukraine lent her the opportunity to work on landscapes as well as portraits, and especially the paintings of peasant women at work that would become almost her trademark. The hardships of peasant life were idealised to an extent but the pictures were vivid and full of life.

It was out in those same fields during her 21st summer at Neskuchnoye that she fell in love with her first cousin, Boris Serebriakov, a railway engineer also spending his summer in the country. After a swift courtship the couple sought and won family approval for marriage despite their being related, but it took a hefty donation to convince the Russian Orthodox Church to marry the cousins in September 1905.

Meanwhile, away from the newlyweds' rural idyll, unrest had been building. A combination of social and economic issues fomented a wave of revolutionary uprisings that brought chaos onto the streets of St Petersburg and prompted Serebriakova and her family to relocate to Paris for the winter of 1905. With her mother she enrolled at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière but was disappointed to find Paris engulfed by a torrent of abstractionism, a million miles from the peasant scenes, landscapes and nudes still popular at home.

By the spring of 1906 Russia was simmering but calm enough for the family to return, this time permanently to Neskuchnoye. The couple's first child Yevgeny was born soon afterwards. Three more followed. The decade between her return to Russia and the revolution of October 1917 constituted the happiest, most settled and creatively fulfilling years of Serebriakova's life.

The year 1917 should have marked her creative peak. She produced two of her best works, *Sleeping Peasant* and *Bleaching Cloth* that year, and was nominated for

membership of the Academy of Arts. The revolution erupted before she could be ratified, however, and 18 months later Boris was arrested in Moscow during the Red Terror, contracted typhus in prison and died. In the spring of 1919 Bolsheviks arrived at Neskuchnoye, ransacked it and burned it to the ground.

Now a single mother of four children, not to mention caring for an elderly mother, Serebriakova left the smouldering ruins and made for St Petersburg. It was there in 1920 that she painted *House of Cards*, a study of her children around a table building a tower of playing cards. In contrast to the vivacity of her previous work all four of them look sullen and glassy-eyed, their task an utterly joyless one.

Four years of uncertainty and financial insecurity followed – frequently she had to barter paintings for food and clothing – until Serebriakova sent some of her work to a travelling exhibition in the USA where two of them were purchased for sums high enough to fund a visit to Paris in 1924. Portrait commissions had been hard to come by in St Petersburg and a spell in France might produce enough lucrative work to ward off the financial pressures at home, she thought. She wouldn't be gone long, she told her children, and things would be better when she returned.

Serebriakova was in Paris for just a few days when the USSR closed its borders and when she tried to return she was turned away. Distraught, she remained in Paris, living frugally and sending home as much of the money she made from portraits as she could while making increasingly desperate pleas to the Soviet authorities. Grudgingly, in 1926 her youngest son Alexander was allowed to join her and two years later her daughter Katya was also permitted to leave the USSR, their joy at being reunited with their mother tempered by the wrench of leaving their siblings behind.

Both proved also to be gifted artists and between them the family managed to carve out a comfortable life in exile, creating portraits mainly of fellow Russian émigrés as well as works for exhibitions across western Europe. They never lost a sense of fracture about their existence, however, the feeling their household was incomplete.

The Second World War brought more hardship. Shortly after the Nazis arrived in Paris in 1940 Serebriakova was threatened with arrest: her correspondence with the family she hadn't seen in nearly two decades was classed as illegal communication with an enemy nation. To stay out of the prison she was forced to renounce her Soviet citizenship, extinguishing any hope she might have nurtured of ever returning home. It would be six years before she had any further contact with her children in Russia and it would take until 1960 for her daughter Tatiana to be granted permission to visit her mother in Paris, 36 years after Serebriakova had bade her children a temporary farewell.

Tatiana proved to be her mother's artistic champion in the Soviet Union, organising a retrospective in Moscow and lobbying for her mother to finally be allowed to return. In 1965, more than 40 years after she left, Serebriakova travelled to the Russian capital to see her own exhibition.

Eighty years old, she stood alone in front of *At the Dressing Table* and saw a flawless vision captured in the snowy light of a different age, a different world, a different self.



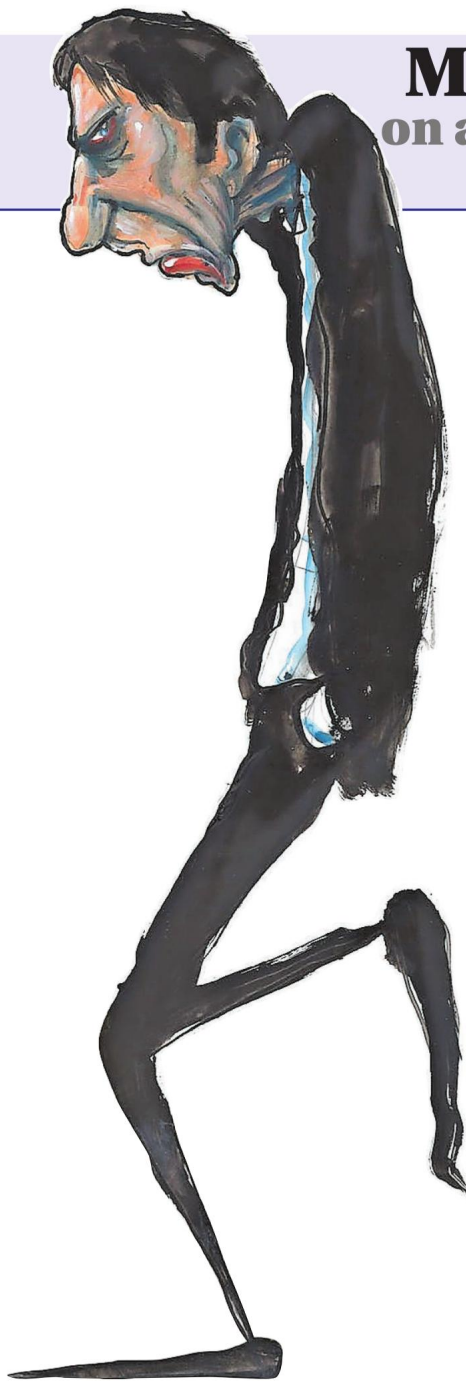
WILL SELF

I remember having lunch with Terence Conran – who died last week, aged 88 – at his Bibendum restaurant on the Old Brompton Road sometime in the early 2000s. It was a bizarre experience: sitting on a banquette in an interior curated – if not exactly designed – by my companion, who was wearing a suit designed by his son, Jasper; and discussing his far-flung empire of stuff emporia and stuffing-your-bourgeois-face eateries. Still, this wasn't the first time I'd deeply penetrated the world of Conran – back in the 1990s, I did a magazine feature that saw me attempting to live for a week entirely in Conran – and his extensive family's – productions. I, too, wore a Jasper Conran suit; I dined at Quaglino's or Mezzo or the Pont de la Tour every night; I was already hustling my youngest about in a pushchair designed by his son Sebastian, but during that week I thrust it to-and-from the Conran Shop, or Habitat, or the Bluebird Garage on the King's Road, all the while assiduously reading one of his books on soft furnishings, or kitchen, or vegetables – for he was a prodigious would-be author as well.

At that lunch I was meant to be interviewing Conran, but there was none of the stand-offishness, or ill-concealed character armour I would've expected from such a high profile subject, especially one with a fair few stripped-pine and rag-rolled skeletons in his ample walk-in wardrobe – not least the collapse of his Storehouse Group a decade previously. Instead, he was emollient, chatty, and almost overly familiar. The explanation came during the cigars-and-coffee stage of the meal, when he sat back, placed marsupial paws over a little pouch of a paunch, and said – in response to some sally of mine: “Well, as you once said to me yourself, Will...” then proceeded to retail some little *aperçu* or other, that, although long consigned to oblivion, I nonetheless recognised at the time as bearing the unmistakable mark of being the sort of thing I might well say.

I sat, stunned, searching my lint-furred memory banks – the reason being that I had absolutely no recollection of meeting Conran before at all, let alone an encounter significant enough for it to form the basis of anecdote. Moreover, if there were a tale to be told, surely I – as the younger by some 30 years – would've been the teller? Anyway, I managed to keep my cool – helped mightily by the Hoyo de Monterrey petit robusto I was smoking – and took my leave, none the wiser as to the nature of mine and his relationship: were we mere acquaintances, old friends... former lovers, even?

Then, cycling back over Chelsea Bridge, and observing the – at that time – hollowed-out shell of Battersea power station, it struck me: of course Terence Conran knew me, because in an important sense he knew every British middle class person born after 1960. During lunch Conran had been animadverting on plans then afoot to move the Design Museum (at that time located near Tower Bridge), to the power station once it was refurbished. The museum had been his adoptive mind-child in the first place, but while I admired his enthusiasm, my feeling was that its existing premises were



Multicultural Man .. on an unforgettable encounter with Terence Conran



EPITOME OF BOURGEOIS CULTURE: Terence Conran

Photo Getty Images

quite large enough – or, rather, that the entire country was already sufficiently replete with Conran's own products and productions for such a gargantuan repository to be a mere synecdoche of that yet greater phenomenon: a British bourgeois culture that he'd played a leading role in creating.

My first trip, with my mother, to the newly-opened Habitat in Churchill Square in Brighton, took place in 1969. We wandered the aisles stunned by the clean lines and pleasing functionality of the home ware and furnishings – the store's design was itself a gestalt: an assemblage of well-chosen artefacts that created a pleasing interior; and it was immediately clear that this represented an ideology of domesticity. Over the succeeding decades the Arne Jacobsen chairs, clay chicken bricks, enamelled coffee pots, and most especially globular paper-and-wire lampshades went forth and multiplied, and multiplied, and multiplied some more, until the expanding British middle class's homes were as freighted with such artefacts as a pharaoh's tomb with, um, funerary goods.

An apposite image given the recent demise of this Wizard of Odds and Sods – but it's also fitting because the class he helped to create is now on its way out as well. Conran was never a great designer himself – more a pasticheur who mixed and matched the visions of others – and the middle class mores he inculcated his customers in the same philosophy of dilettantism and consumerism. In the 1970s, 80s and most conspicuously the 90s, Conran taught the British to eat ratatouille rather than read Racine, and to buy their aesthetic prêt-à-porter, rather than creating it for themselves. The Conran aesthetic of clean, Scandinavian functionalism bedizened with French cookware has metastasized into the social body; the vectors being such hard-selling flat-packers as Ikea. Now, you can walk almost any suburban semi-lined road in Britain and see some discarded stick of furniture or other that – albeit once or twice removed – is still one of Conran's mind-children. As of course am I.

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