ASPECTS of HISTORY

The past isn't dead, it isn't even past

OKINAWA AND THE END OF WW2 BY SAUL DAVID

The Kingdom Behind The Sutton Hoo Treasures By Max Adams

Alice of Antioch Rebel Princess By Katherine Pangonis

Flesh & Blood: Otto von Bismarck By Katja Hoyer

Historical Heroes Dante Alighieri By Paul Strathern

ISSUE THREE

From The Editor

Oliver Webb-Carter

Welcome to Aspects of History, the new magazine dedicated to History and Historical Fiction. Published bi-monthly, we showcase authors of both History and Historical Fiction through articles, interviews, short stories and book reviews. Aspects of History reflects the diversity and depth of History, and covers all periods, from the Ancient World through to the 20th century. The past isn't dead, it isn't even past, and we at Aspects of History will seek to encourage all voices so as to encompass a range of views, whilst keeping in mind that history is a foreign country – they do things differently there.

Since we've launched we've had a number of authors contact us to provide content, not only in the magazine, but also on our website. This content is free to access, and so I would encourage you all to visit. You will find articles, short stories, book reviews and interviews from a host of bestsellers and new writers of both history and historical fiction. We continue to strive in our goal for Aspects of History to be a hub to connect both readers and writers to the past and each other. The subject has the ability to educate and entertain, inform and inspire.

Aspects of History is more than just a magazine and website, however. We can organise Author Platforms on our website for historians, historical novelists, academics, and students to write about their books and history in an ongoing way. In addition, we can provide publishing and promotional services to assist authors and would-be authors – from pitch to publication and beyond. If you are a member of an historical society or creative writing group, then do get in touch.

In 2021 our plans are expanding, and we will arrange book prizes, events, writing competitions and a YouTube channel. We will be running a virtual history festival this summer, and I will keep you informed on all of this.

If you are interested in finding out more, please visit our website at aspectsofhistory.com, follow us on Twitter @aspectshistory or email me at editor@aspectsofhistory.com I am always happy to hear from readers and writers alike. This will be as much your magazine as ours.

Oliver Webb-Carter
Editor, & Co-Founder, Aspects of History

ASPECTS of HISTORY

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April 2021

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Editor: Oliver Webb-Carter

Advisory Board: Saul David, Richard Foreman, Roger Moorhouse, Antonia Senior

Designer: Sarah Beckett

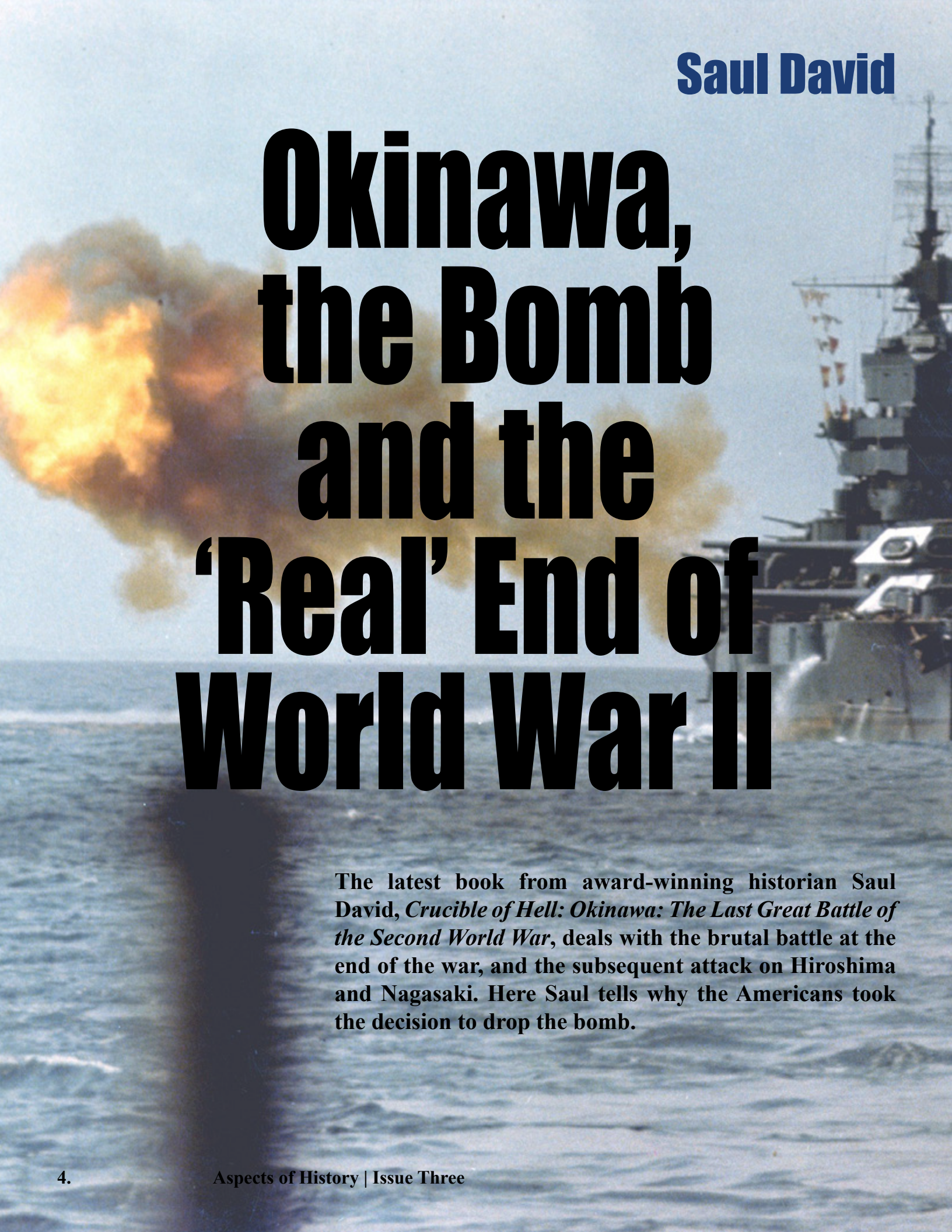
Web Designer: Luke Rogers

Production Assistant: Tara Flynn

Social Media: Will Jarvis

Saul David

Okinawa, the Bomb and the 'Real' End of World War II



The latest book from award-winning historian Saul David, *Crucible of Hell: Okinawa: The Last Great Battle of the Second World War*, deals with the brutal battle at the end of the war, and the subsequent attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Here Saul tells why the Americans took the decision to drop the bomb.

Last summer was the seventy-fifth anniversary of V-J Day – Victory over Japan, 14 August 1945 – the official end of World War Two. Most Britons prefer to celebrate V-E Day – Victory in Europe, 8 May 1945 – the defeat of Nazi Germany, a point underlined by the blanket coverage that was given by UK news outlets to the earlier anniversary, when the later one passed almost unnoticed. Why so? It's partly because Britons, then and now, saw Hitler as their main existential threat, as indeed he was; and partly because the fighting with the Japanese in the spring and summer of 1945 is seen as little more than a series of mopping-up operations.

We have fallen victim, it seems, to one of the classic pitfalls of historical perspective: the benefit of hindsight. Because the war ended on 14 August, we assume that a finish date in the summer of 1945 was more or less inevitable. It wasn't. At the same time that American ground troops landed on the island of Okinawa, the most southerly of Japan's prefectures, on April 1, 1945 – the last staging post before an invasion of the Japanese home islands – British and Commonwealth troops were planning Operation *Dracula*, an air and sea attack on Rangoon, the capital of Burma. In the event, *Dracula* was a bloodless victory because, shortly before it was launched on 2 May, 1945, the Japanese withdrew their defending forces.

With Rangoon and most of Burma in Allied hands, British commanders turned their thoughts to Malaya and the naval base of Singapore, the loss of which in February 1942, after a lightning Japanese advance down the Malay peninsula, had been the most humiliating British defeat of the war. The invasion of Malaya was planned in two stages: first a limited operation (codenamed *Roger*) to capture Phuket off the west coast of Siam; followed by a much larger invasion of Malay proper, Operation *Zipper*. This would enable Singapore to be recovered by the end of 1945.

Roger was cancelled after members of a beach reconnaissance party – the forerunners to the modern SBS (Britain's equivalent of US Navy SEALs) – were captured by the Japanese, thus compromising the whole operation. But that still left *Zipper*, the landing in the centre of the Malay peninsula, which, if successful, would 'draw a string round the middle of the bag; cut off the Japanese retreating southward from Burma and prevent northern advances and reinforcements from Singapore.'

Meanwhile, at Winston Churchill's insistence, sizeable British and Commonwealth forces had been earmarked to support the United States' campaign in the Pacific. During the invasion of Okinawa, for example, a small but significant part of the US Fifth Fleet's sea and air assets were provided by the British Pacific Fleet (BPF). Comprised of four fleet carriers, two battleships, five cruisers (one each from New Zealand and Canada), 11 destroyers (two from Australia) and 220 aircraft, the BPF was the Royal Navy's most formidable strike force of the war.

In mid-June 1945, with the brutally-tough fight for Okinawa all but over – a three-

Truman

month campaign that would eventually cost the lives of 250,000 servicemen and non-combatants – Churchill wrote to General George C. Marshall, the US Army chief of staff, offering to place 10 squadrons of planes on the island to 'take part in the air bombardment of Japan'. The prime minister wrote later:

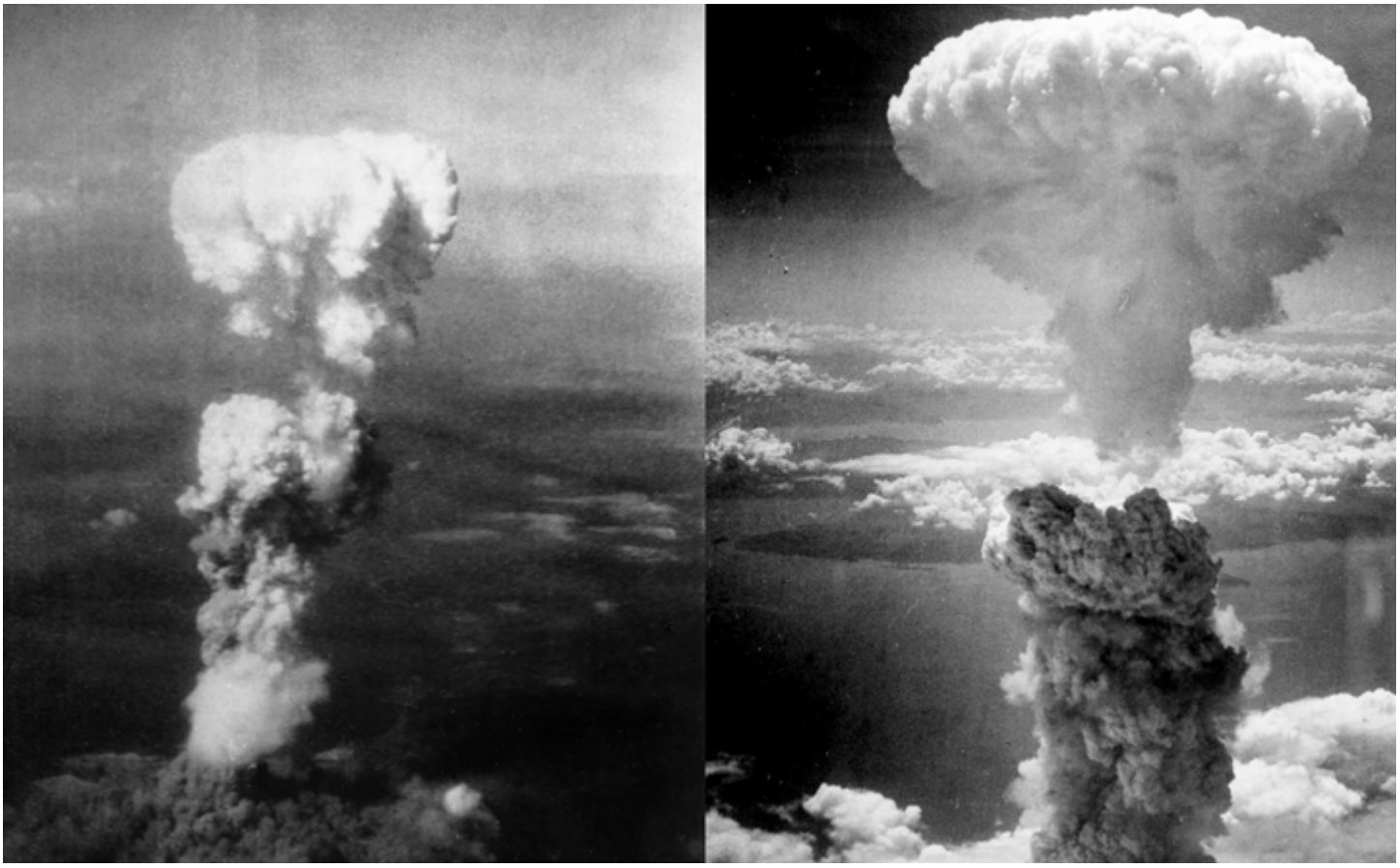
'The Americans intended to seize Kyushu, the most westerly island of Japan, early in November 1945, and from there to invade the main island of Honshu. Here stood an army of more than a million men, well trained, well equipped, and fanatically determined to fight to the last. What remained of the Japanese Navy and Air Force was just as resolute. These two great operations would have entailed bitter fighting and great loss of life.'

Less than a week after Churchill's offer of the planes, President Harry Truman met with his senior political and military advisors in Washington DC to discuss Japan's unconditional surrender. The only way to achieve this, said General Marshall, was to invade Japan's home islands: Kyushu on 1 November 1945, and Honshu the following spring (two operations that were known collectively as *Downfall*). Casualties were impossible to estimate, said Marshall, but given the huge number of men lost on Okinawa, and the fact that the enemy would fight even more fanatically in defence of Japan proper, it would be a 'terrifying, bloody ordeal' for the US servicemen involved. Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who was at the meeting, expected casualties of 'over a million'.

Was there *any* alternative to a ground invasion? asked Truman. Yes, said Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy. To threaten to use the newly developed atomic bomb; and if the threat was ignored, to drop it on a Japanese city. 'I think,' he added, 'our moral position would be better if we gave them a specific warning of the bomb.'

When challenged by others that the bomb might not work, thus tarnishing America's prestige, McCloy responded: 'All the scientists have told us that the thing will go. It's just a matter of testing it out now, but they're quite certain from reports I've seen that this bomb is a success.'

Truman was encouraged by this, but said no decision could be taken until they knew



Hiroshima Left, Nagasaki Right

the bomb would work. In the meantime, planning would continue for the invasion on 1 November. But everything changed on 16 July when Truman received word in Berlin, where he was attending the inter-Allied Potsdam Conference with Stalin and other leaders, that the 'first full-scale test' of 'the atomic fission bomb' in the New Mexico desert had been 'successful beyond the most optimistic expectations'. The memo added: 'We now had the means to insure [the war's] speedy conclusion and save thousands of American lives.'

On hearing of the successful test in New Mexico, Winston Churchill felt only relief. He wrote later: 'Up to this moment we had shaped our ideas towards an assault upon the homeland of Japan… I had in my mind the spectacle of Okinawa island, where many thousands of Japanese, rather than surrender, had drawn up in line and destroyed themselves with hand-grenades after their leaders had solemnly performed the rite of hara-kiri. To quell the Japanese resistance might well require the loss of a million American lives and half that number of British… Now all this nightmare picture had vanished. In its place was the vision – fair and bright it seemed – of the end of the whole war in one or two violent shocks'.

Soon after, Truman signed the final ultimatum to Japan known as the Potsdam Declaration. It called upon Japan to agree to immediate unconditional surrender or face 'prompt and utter destruction'. When Tokyo ignored the ultimatum, Truman gave the order to drop

an atom bomb on Hiroshima, 'an Army city' and 'major quartermaster depot' with warehouses full of military supplies.

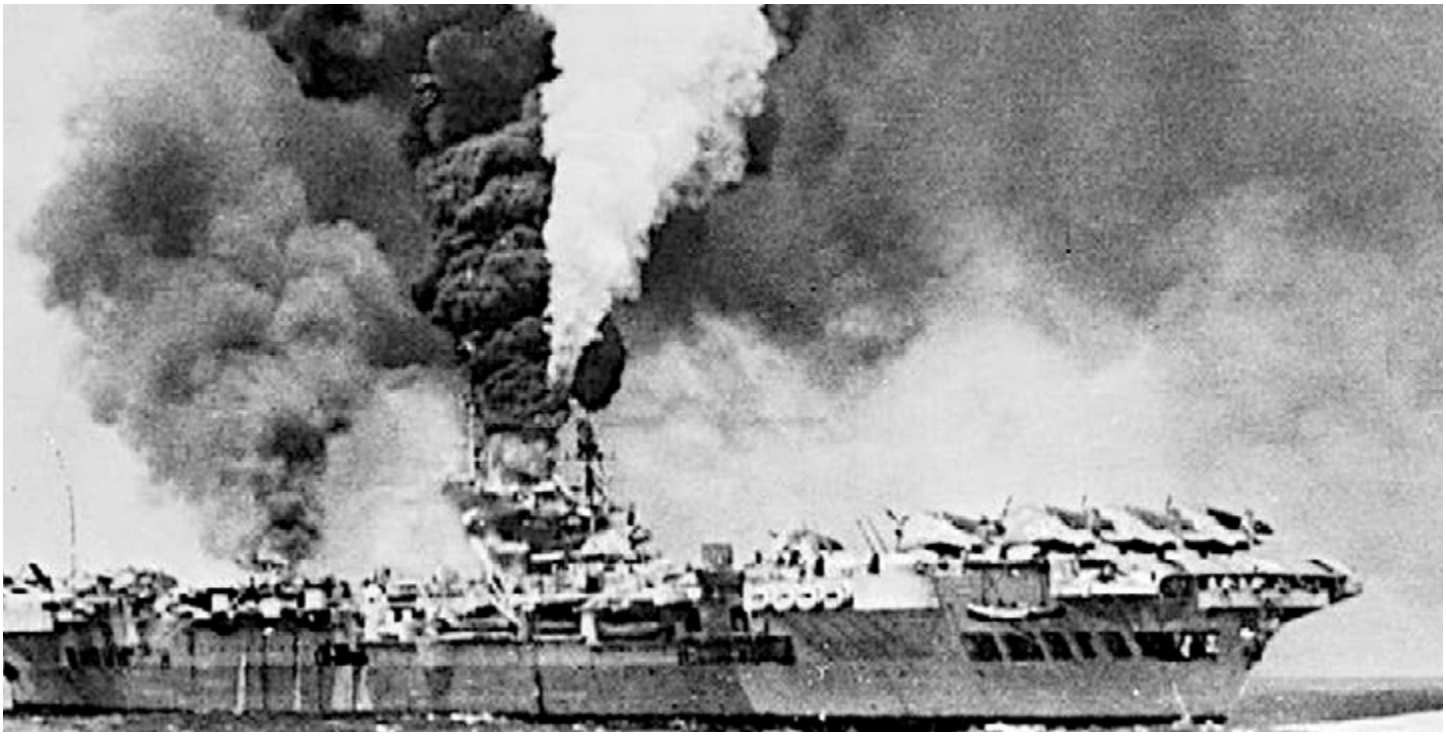
Truman's decision to authorize the use of the atomic bomb was directly influenced by the bloodbath on Okinawa. He feared that an invasion of Japan would look like 'Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other', and that it would cost the US military more than a million dead and wounded. It would also kill countless Japanese soldiers and civilians. 'My object,' wrote Truman, 'is to save as many American lives as possible but I also have a human feeling for the women and children of Japan.'

The first atomic bomb – 'Little Boy' – was dropped by the US B-29 Superfortress *Enola Gay* on Hiroshima on August 6. A second bomb – 'Fat Man' – exploded in Nagasaki three days later. The combined dead from the bombs were 200,000 Japanese, mostly civilians; an appalling total, but less than the number killed on Okinawa, and a fraction of those who would have died if the US had invaded mainland Japan. Such a desperate course of action was no longer necessary.

On 10 August, the Japanese government opened peace negotiations. Even then there were hard-line elements in the military who tried to scupper a deal, but they failed to win the support of Emperor Hirohito and the coup failed. Japan agreed to surrender unconditionally on 14 August, much to the delight of the Allied troops who were due to take part in Operations *Zipper* and *Downfall*. 'Our hopes had been dashed so often,' recalled Lieutenant Bruce Watkins, 'that it took several days to absorb the impact of this event. Relief flooded slowly into our veins and we began to dare to think of going home.'

The decision to drop two atomic bombs on Japan still divides opinion today. Was it necessary to kill so many non-combatants, some people ask, when Japan was going to surrender anyway? Was it done as a warning to Stalin, the first blow struck in the Cold War? Would the bombs have been dropped on a European foe like Germany, or did a racist attitude towards the Japanese play into the decision?

Admiral Leahy, who voiced no opposition prior to Hiroshima, wrote later that the 'use of this barbarous weapon' made no difference because the Japanese were 'already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons'. Being the first to use atomic bombs, wrote Leahy, 'we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages.' This is nonsense. The US Army's Air Force had already inflicted far greater civilian casualties by firebombing Japanese cities, a strategy that Leahy raised no objection to. Nor was there any guarantee that, prior to the dropping of the bombs, Japan was ready to make peace on Allied terms. Even Shigenori Togo, Japan's Foreign Minister and a man keen to end the war, acknowledged later that there was no appetite for 'unconditional surrender' in the summer of 1945. 'We were concerned,' he said, 'with the steps to be taken to obtain



HMS Formidable, after a kamikaze attack, 4th May 1945

suitable conditions; in other words, with how we could obtain a negotiated peace.' As that was unacceptable to the Allies, the war was bound to continue if the bombs had not been used. Even when they were, the senior military men – War Minister Anami, Army Chief of Staff Umezu, and Chief of Naval Staff Toyoda – argued against peace. Later, Togo recalled that:

'I was unable to keep the military men from insisting to the very end that they were not beaten, that they could fight another battle, and that they did not want to end the war until they had staged one last campaign. I could understand how they felt, they were sure they could deal a punishing blow to the American invaders in one last battle, and they were reluctant to drop all their preparations and sue for peace when they knew they could do so – or perhaps even repulse them completely.'

The peace party won out because Togo had the support of a majority of the cabinet and, crucially, the emperor, who realized after the dropping of the bombs, that further resistance was hopeless. But even then it was a close-run thing. Togo noted that:

'From the 12th [August] on, the young officers in the Army grew increasingly restive, and there was talk of a coup d'état to protect the Emperor… There were signs of activity among the military from the 12th until the evening of the 13th – the situation was threatening until around the 14th – but fortunately nothing serious happened… If there had actually been a coup d'état, the peace negotiations would have been blown sky-high.'

Togo's testimony, given in 1949, leaves little doubt that, but for the use of atomic

weapons, Japan would have fought on. If the bombs had not been used, the war might have dragged on for another year and cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Allied servicemen. Winston Churchill, for one, was convinced that Truman had done the right thing. He wrote 'The historic fact remains, and must be judged in the after-time, that the decision whether or not to use the atomic bomb to compel the surrender of Japan was never an issue. There was unanimous, automatic, unquestioned agreement around our table; nor did I ever hear the slightest suggestion that we should do otherwise.'

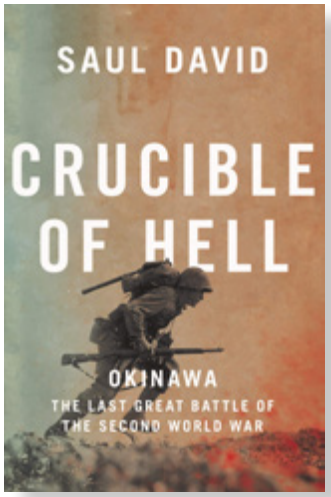
If Truman's advisors and allies were united in their belief that dropping the atomic bombs was the correct thing to do, so too were the men who dropped them and the many soldiers whose lives might have been lost if the invasion of Japan had gone ahead. The *Enola Gay's* pilot Colonel Tibbets, who died aged 92 in 2007, always insisted that he had no regrets. In a radio interview in 2000, he said: 'I thought to myself, 'Gee, if we can be successful, we're going to prove to the Japanese the futility in continuing to fight because we can use the weapons on them. They're not going to stand up to this thing.' After I saw what I saw I was more convinced that they're gonna quit.'

His crew felt the same. Asked in 1985 if he would do it again, Lieutenant Jacob Beser, a radar specialist and the only man to serve on both missions (in the *Enola Gay* and *Bock's Car*), replied: 'Given the same circumstances in the same kind of context, the answer is yes… Three million men were gonna be thrown against Japan. There were about three million Japanese digging in for the defense of their homeland, and there was a casualty potential of over a million people. That's what was avoided. If you take the highest figures of casualties of both cities, say, 300,000 combined casualties…versus a million, I'm sorry to say, it's a good tradeoff.'

Truman himself never doubted he had done the right thing. 'I knew what I was doing,' he wrote in 1963, 'when I stopped the war that would have killed a half-million youngsters on both sides if those bombs had not been dropped. I have had no regrets and, under the same circumstances, I would do it again.'

Crucible of Hell: Okinawa – The Last Great Battle of the Second World War

Saul David



Saul David is an award-winning historian and the author of *Crucible of Hell: Okinawa – The Last Great Battle of the Second World War*, which is now out in paperback.

INTERVIEW

Prisoners of History

Keith Lowe

Interviewed by Oliver Webb-Carter

Acclaimed historian, Keith Lowe, has written a new history, not without some controversy, on monuments to World War Two. His book is even more prescient in the wake of the protests against historical statues in the summer of 2020. Keith sat down with us to discuss *Prisoners of History: What Monuments Tell Us About Our History and Ourselves.*

Over the past year there has been a great deal of controversy about statues and other monuments. Why do you think we have been getting so emotional about them? Have monuments always been this controversial?

No, monuments haven't always been so controversial. I remember the days when people used to walk past them without even noticing that they were there. In fact, twenty years ago there was a lot of academic thinking about why monuments were so invisible. But now, suddenly, they're headline news.

If you want to understand what's been going on, I suppose you have to think about what monuments are actually *for*. On the one hand they're supposed to commemorate historical figures or historical events – and once that history fades, the monuments also begin to fade into the background. But on the other hand, they are also there to represent our values. A statue is never just a statue: it's there to represent heroism, sacrifice, philanthropy, or some other virtue. Sometimes these virtues are timeless, but sometimes, when our values change, the old statues begin to look not just old-fashioned, but sometimes even offensive.

Our values have changed massively in the past 20 years or so. That's why we're suddenly so obsessed with these symbols. They represent old thinking, and old values – and a new generation wants to see them torn down and replaced with something that represents who we are today.

Your book describes 25 monuments around the world and the controversies that have surrounded them. All of these monuments are devoted to the Second World War. Why did you choose these

The RAF Bomber Command Memorial

particular monuments, rather than statues of Communists, or colonialists, or other historical eras?

The Second World War is not only the most important event of the last century, but it is also one of the only events that every nation in the world has in common. Almost everyone remembers the Second World War in one respect or another. So what better way to demonstrate the differences between one nation and another? If we're all supposed to be commemorating the same thing, how come our monuments to the war are all so different?

I've come to see the Second World War as a kind of cinema screen onto which we project our own particular national myths about the past. So, for example, American monuments are all about honour and glory, and about how America liberated other nations during the war. British war monuments are also about a kind of quiet heroism – but also sometimes with a hint of empire thrown in. Russian monuments are all gigantic. The first chapter of the book is about the statue of Mother Russia in the city of Stalingrad (or what is today called Volgograd). It's absolutely colossal: at the time it was built, it was the biggest statue in the world. The Russians want to show the world that they were the ones who made the biggest sacrifices, who were the biggest heroes, and who had the most powerful army.

These are the ideas that each of us are still propagating today. Lots of the monuments in the book weren't built in 1945, but in the last 10 or 15 years. Vladimir Putin has approved at least fifty new monuments to the war in that time. There's something about the Second World War that still appeals to us, even after all this time. But it appeals to us in very different ways, and that's what makes it interesting.

But surely Second World War monuments aren't nearly as controversial as some other monuments? I'm thinking of statues with links to slavery.

Oh but they are! A lot of the themes are exactly the same. During the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 we saw people tearing down statues of slave owners. Well, in Poland, exactly the same thing has happened to statues of the Soviet liberators. There used to be hundreds of memorials to Soviet soldiers across Poland, and symbols of friendship between the two nations. But in 2017 the Polish government started tearing them all down. They didn't recognise the so-called 'philanthropy' of the Soviets any more than the BLM protesters recognised the so-called 'philanthropy' of Edward Colston.

And what about the statue of Winston Churchill in Parliament Square? That too was vandalised by BLM protesters. That was fascinating, because it was a real clash of values. The protesters saw Churchill as a horrible racist and imperialist, whereas the *Daily Mail* and the *Telegraph* saw Churchill as the wartime hero who led us to victory. From a historian's point of view, of course, both points of view are right – Churchill was simultaneously a great leader and a bit of a racist. But statues like this aren't really about history, are they? They're about the values we hold dear.

If statues aren't about history, then why did you call your book *Prisoners of History?* Can you explain the thinking behind that title?

Well, there are various definitions of the word 'history', aren't there? On the one hand you have a strict academic idea of what constitutes history: it's a subject that involves the gathering of evidence, followed by a rounded and reasoned description of the past based on that evidence. But when most of us think about history, we don't think of it in those terms. We think of it as a story about our past, complete with knights-in-shining-armour and damsels-in-distress. That's the kind of history that's represented by our monuments: it's not just the academic idea of history – it also has a bit of memory and a bit of mythology thrown in.

The reason I called the book *Prisoners of History* is that we can't help being captive to both of those definitions of history. Our myths and stories about the past make us who we are. But there's also an objective truth about the past that might not match up to our cosy stories, and we can't avoid that either. That's why Colston's statue was torn down – because people looked beyond the cosy myths at the actual history of what Colston did. So the monuments themselves are just as much 'prisoners of history' as we are.

As a historian, did you agree with the toppling of statues last year, or would you have preferred them to remain standing? Is there an alternative to tearing them down?

As a historian, I suppose I would have liked to keep some of them. But as an ordinary citizen, I'm quite happy that lots of them came down. Like I said, statues are not just about history – they are also about

Grutas Park, Lithuania

values. When a monument has become deeply offensive to large numbers of people, then sometimes they've just got to go.

That said, there are alternatives. We can move them to museums or sculpture parks, like they've done with lots of the old Communist monuments in Lithuania and Hungary. One of the places I describe in the book is Grutas Park in Lithuania, where they have statues of Stalin and Lenin and all kinds of other monsters from history. It's a bizarre place – part sculpture park, part zoo and part children's playground. They've put Lenin in a field full of llamas, which is a great way to undermine the gravitas he once used to have.
Another thing we can do to hold our monuments to account is to build something else alongside them – something that tells a different, and perhaps more truthful, story about our past. That's what they've done in Budapest in front of one of their war monuments. The official monument portrays Hungary as a victim of the war – but the counter-monument in front of it tells a story of Hungarian collaboration with the Nazis.

So there are definitely ways in which we could keep some of our monuments, even some of our dodgy ones, and still hold them to account.

Of all the places that you visited while researching the book, which was your favourite?

Well, I've already mentioned Grutas Park in Lithuania. That place is truly bonkers! I also went to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, Nanjing in China, and various other places in Europe and America. I have chapters about each of them in the book. But I have to say that the Motherland statue in Volgograd was the most impressive. The sheer size of it is impossible to ignore. When you stand beneath it, you don't have to be Russian to feel the weight of all that history – and of all that stone and iron – towering above you. If a good monument is supposed to make you feel something, then that statue works better than any other place I've visited.

***Prisoners of History* was published last summer, right at the time of the debate**

around statues, but for how long had you been thinking about the subject, and how long was the book in the making?

I've always visited Second World War monuments, and taken photos of them – when you're a WWII historian, it goes with the job. But I didn't really start looking at them properly, and analysing what they were actually saying, until about ten years ago. I was giving a TEDx talk in Athens about why we're all so obsessed with the Second World War. In the talk I used the Bomber Command memorial as an example of how we only remember the bits of our history that make us feel cosy, and filter out the rest. That got me looking at all sorts of other monuments in a new way, and the idea for the book really grew from there. I had no idea that the whole world would suddenly go mad for monuments in 2017, and then again last year. I like to think that that makes me a trend setter…!

Are there some statues that are untouchable? For example, when the e was widespread revulsion, and volunteers immediately began cleaning it.

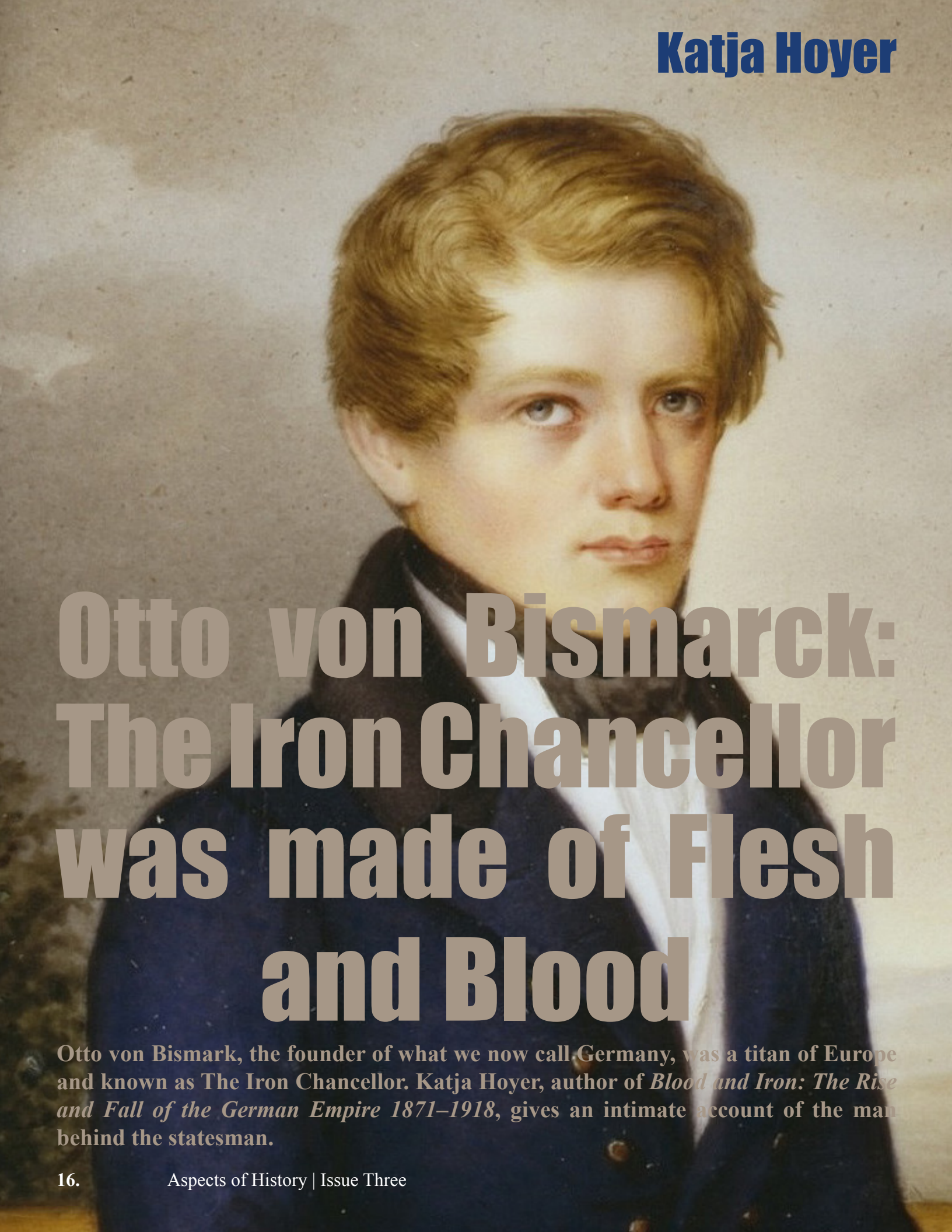
Monuments for the victims of war are almost always untouchable. A hero can be knocked off his pedestal, but no-one wants to criticise a victim. The suffering that they went through makes them pure, saint-like, even if they weren't like that in real life. Try criticising a Polish resistance fighter, or a victim of the Holocaust, and see what kind of reaction you get on Twitter! They might have been a horrible person in real life, guilty of all kinds of moral compromises – but the fact that they suffered, and the fact that they are representative of a larger tragedy, means that they are relatively safe from attack. Abstract representations of communal suffering are even more untouchable. An individual will always have flaws – that's why even the statue of Winston Churchill is not immune to graffiti. But something like the Cenotaph, which represents whole generations of people who gave their lives for their country – well, what's to criticise? It's a monument that includes people of all classes, all ethnicities, both sexes. If you attack the Cenotaph, you're effectively attacking us all.

Prisoners of History: What Monuments Tell Us About Our History and Ourselves

Keith Lowe

Keith Lowe is the author of *Inferno: The Devastation of Hamburg, 1943*, and *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War Two*. His latest book is *Prisoners of History: What Our Monuments Tell Us About Our History and Ourselves.*

Katja Hoyer



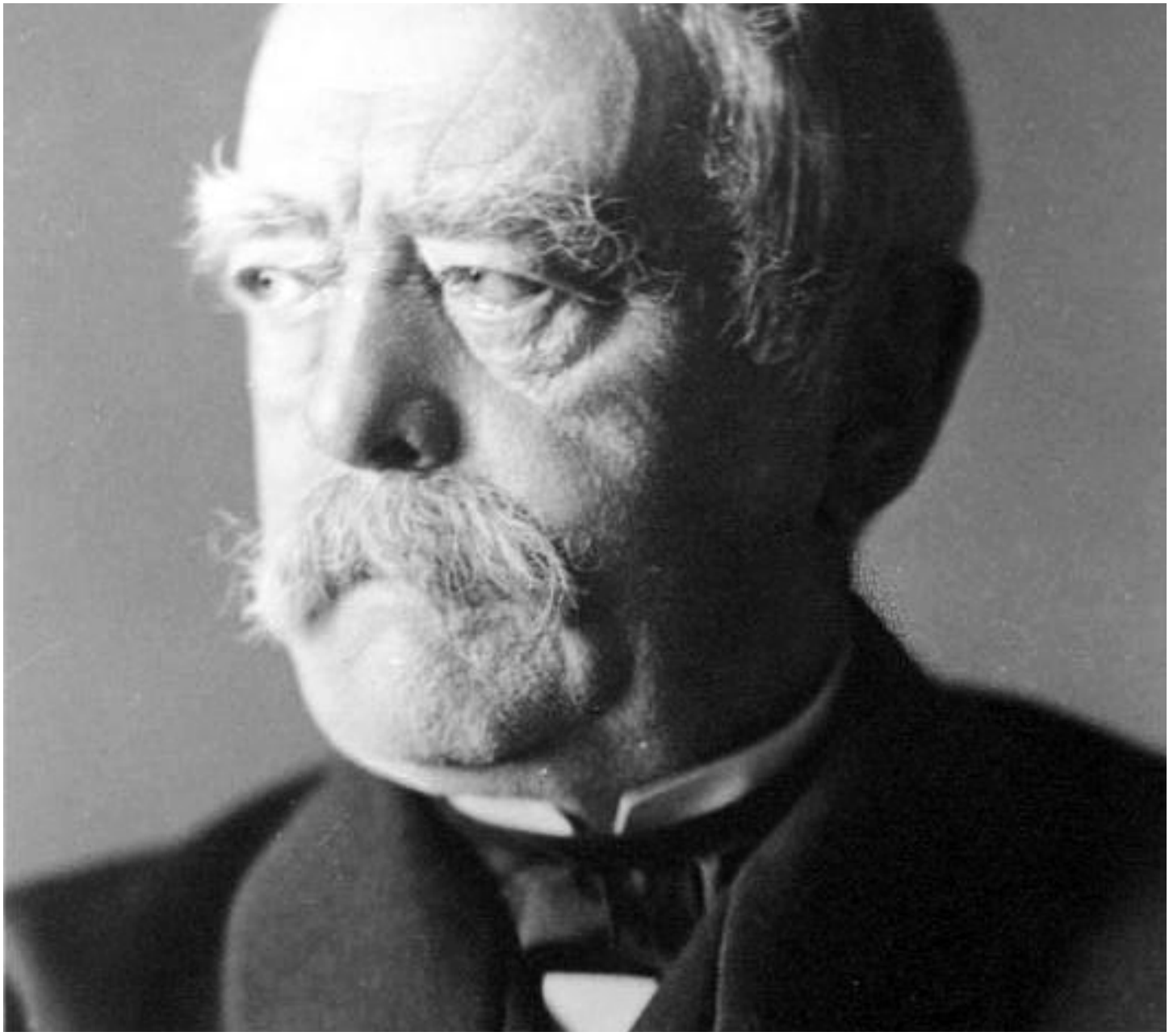
Otto von Bismarck: The Iron Chancellor was made of Flesh and Blood

Otto von Bismark, the founder of what we now call Germany, was a titan of Europe and known as The Iron Chancellor. Katja Hoyer, author of *Blood and Iron: The Rise and Fall of the German Empire 1871–1918*, gives an intimate account of the man behind the statesman.

'Please just let me see my Johanna again' – those were the whispered last words of the once towering figure of Otto von Bismarck, breathed out as he lay on his death bed on 30 July 1898. He had spent a lifetime building up a reputation as a tenacious politician with a ruthless pragmatism that made him one of the most influential men of 19th century Europe. Yet, his dying wish was not for his fatherland, nor his legacy. All the old man wanted was to see his wife Johanna again, who had died four years earlier, leaving her husband heartbroken and empty. In many ways, this detail epitomises the enigma of Bismarck. We still like to see Germany's founding father as the 'Iron Chancellor', a nickname he practically gave himself with his infamous 'Blood and Iron' speech to the Prussian parliament in 1862. But behind the steely-blue eyes and bombastic mannerisms was an impulsive, emotional and flawed man – a human being made of flesh and blood, not iron and stone.

Lenbach painting of Bismarck in retirement, 1895

Otto von Bismarck's childhood already marked him out as an odd character. Social and with a charismatic pull unusual in a child, he was yet strangely alone and dissatisfied internally. Fittingly, he was born in 1815 – a crucial year for the 39 German states, which had rallied together behind Prussian leadership to defeat Napoleon once and for all. His childhood was coloured by bloodthirsty stories of battles against the French and by tales of occupation and humiliation which preceded the glorious victory. These would leave permanent marks on the bright boy's mind as he grew up on his father's estate in Schönhausen, Prussia. His parents Karl and Wilhelmine were an odd match in many respects, and they both passed their distinctive characteristics on to their second son, Otto. Karl came from an old line of Prussian aristocracy; Wilhelmine was the daughter of a cabinet secretary and, just like her father, a sharp-witted and eloquent person. From his father, young Otto inherited a staunch conservatism and bulldog-like stubbornness from his father. At the same time, his mother bestowed him with her natural way with words and a penchant for clever political intrigue and manipulation.



Otto von Bismarck

This potent combination would mark him out as a politician, but it was also what shaped his character from a young age. Even in his early school reports, his teachers described Bismarck's eloquence as astonishing. Using exceptionally evocative verbal images, man and boy found it easy to provoke, irritate, soothe and charm even the most hostile of adversaries.

The trouble was that such a strong-willed and sharply intelligent individual needed purpose, and young Otto struggled to find this for a long time. He spent much of the 1830s and 1840s drinking, gambling and womanising. In his university years at Göttingen and Berlin, Bismarck accumulated vast amounts of debt and yet only made a couple of lasting acquaintances in the process. One such friend was the American diplomat, John Lothrop Motley, who would remain one of a tiny circle of life-long friends. Having gained his

law diploma, Bismarck got bored with the practical training he received afterwards and began to travel in August 1836 with Laura Russell, a niece of the Duke of Cumberland, for whom he fell head over heels. Barely a year later he would continue his travels with her younger friend after a short affair with an older French lady had overlapped with both of these relationships. These fleeting liaisons and his impulsive nature cost Bismarck his final qualifications, required to practice law in Prussia or enter the Civil Service. He tried to resume his training once more but became bored and frustrated very quickly. Turning his back on the Prussian bureaucratic machine forever, he said: 'I want to make music the way I see fit -- or not at all.' This epitomised Bismarck both as a man and a politician. We like to think of him as 'iron', a man with unflinching determination and unshakeable convictions. However, these attributes were nothing without a purpose to apply them to. When Bismarck faced uncertainty or idleness, he became irrational, impulsive and sometimes outright reckless.

When the realisation finally hit him that the purpose he was looking for lay in Prussian politics, this was not due to his own planning and foresight. Having tried agriculture, military service and running his father's estate back at Schönhausen, Bismarck got so bored with all of it, that he once again began to drink and accumulate debt. He cut a garishly colourful figure in rural Pomerania, where everything was old and proper, and so the locals started to refer to him as the 'crazy junker'. The years from 1839 to 1847 went by in a blur of boredom and loneliness. In 1845, he complained: 'My only company consists of dogs, horses and country junkers, and I enjoy some regard in the eyes of the latter because I can read writing easily [and] dress like a human being at all times'. Bismarck's salvation would finally come in 1847 when he was asked to step in for a local member of the Prussian parliament who had fallen ill. He found the world of politics irresistible. In his words, it had him 'in an uninterrupted state of excitement that barely allows me to eat or sleep'. Bismarck had found his vocation, a calling that would later allow him to develop the persona of the 'Iron Chancellor', but it would never change the complex man within that shell.

On occasion, we can trace glimpses of Bismarck's blind recklessness even in his political life. The man that would later spin an intricate web of foreign policy agreements, which helped keep Europe at peace and Germany intact for as long as his policies lasted, had not always been so circumspect. He loved provocation and argument even more than political efficiency. In 1851, when he was the Prussian envoy to the German Confederations' parliament in Frankfurt, he launched his biggest provocation yet. Only the Austrian chair of the *Bund*, Friedrich von Thun, was allowed to smoke in session. Yet one day, in the middle of a debate, Bismarck nonchalantly pulled a cigar out of his pocket, strutted over to von Thun and asked him for a match. A year later, this outrageous incident led to further hostilities –this time with his old adversary Georg von Vincke. The bickering between the two men escalated, and Bismarck ended up insulting Vincke and – for good measure – his mother, whereupon

Bismarck on his deathbed

he was publicly challenged to a life-or-death duel. Bismarck's wife, Johanna, was pregnant at the time, so naturally, a thoughtful Bismarck asked his brother-in-law, Arnim-Kröchlendorff, to look after her and the baby should the worst come to pass. Luckily both duellists missed the mark and then agreed to settle the matter without further shooting. This astonishing incident shows attributes in Bismarck that are hard to reconcile with the calculating master diplomat we know him as. Yet both sides are part of the same Bismarckian coin and remained so until his death.

In matters of the heart, too, Bismarck retained an odd combination of his touching devotion to this wife and frequent infatuation with the many women he encountered in his life. In his days as the 'crazy junker', the only thing that brought a ray of sunshine into his dreary dead-end world was a young woman called Marie von Thadden-Trieglaff. The two became emotionally and intellectually so close that both spoke of having found their soulmate. Unfortunately, Marie had already been engaged to Bismarck's friend, Moritz von Blanckenburg. The latter seemed to have no problem with the situation, and an odd love-triangle ensued. Marie made it clear that divorce was out of the question, and the couple even suggested that Otto marry Marie's bosom-friend, the 20-year-old Johanna von Puttkamer. Moritz, too, urged 'If you don't want her, I will take her as my second wife!' Thus, Johanna was placed at a table next to Bismarck at the couple's wedding. The happy foursome even went on holiday together. Yet Bismarck's and Marie's fascination for each other did not abate. Both confided in letters how utterly taken they were with the other's eloquence, quick wit and charm. Yet Marie would not leave or even betray 'her Moritz' and the tension was finally broken in the most tragic manner when Marie suddenly died of an illness in 1846, which she had contracted while caring for her sick mother. Bismarck was heartbroken and the incident left a life-long scar on his soul as he would later admit. In late December of the same year, Bismarck finally asked Johanna's father for her hand, even citing Marie's death in his famous letter to him.

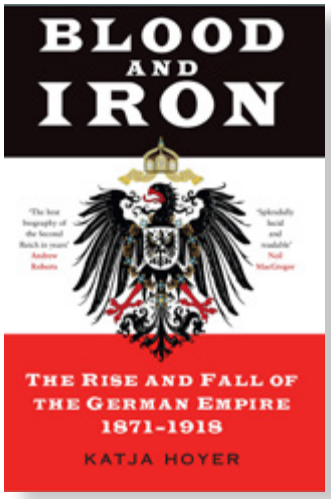
Strange as the beginning of their marriage seems, it was a happy relationship for the most part. A kind, caring, and naturally patient woman, Johanna provided the perfect emotional counterpart to her impulsive and

permanently restless husband. By his own admission, the latter clung to her like a rock, especially during the most tumultuous years of his political career. This seems intuitively contrary to his passionate affairs later in life, the crassest example of which is Katharina Orlowa. The beautiful wife of the Russian envoy in Belgium was only 21 years old when they first met in 1862. On one of their holidays to the French coast, they nearly drowned in the sea and were barely alive when a lighthouse keeper rescued them. Bismarck even wrote to his wife about this, waxing lyrical about the beautiful Katharina and joking that he had 'gulped down some seawater today'. Johanna tolerated all of her husband's failings with the patience of a saint. She would always be there for him when he needed her. He, in turn, wrote her frequent and affectionate letters of which compilations have now been printed. They give a fascinating view of the softer side of a man who was often better known for his threats and scheming.

But does all of that matter or is it just historical gossip? Otto von Bismarck was a towering figure whose doings had a massive bearing on German, European and world history in the 19th century and beyond. It is worth reminding ourselves that these were not the actions of an abstract Prussian Machiavelli character but those of a human being with inherent flaws. With an increased focus on social and economic currents, it is easy to lose sight of individuals' impact on history. This is not a plea for a return to great man theory - but to deny historical figures their human face is to offload responsibility. Bismarck's example shows that behind every decision, no matter how consequential, stands a real person, making that decision guided by reason as well as emotion. His multifaceted personality reminds us that we have agency and are not mere passengers in the tides of history.

Blood and Iron: The Rise and Fall of the German Empire 1871-1918

Katja Hoyer



Katja Hoyer studied at the Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena and graduated with a master-level degree in history with distinction. She was born in Germany and lives in Sussex. *Blood and Iron: The Rise and Fall of the German Empire 1871–1918* is her first book.

Charles Townshend

Why Partition?

2021 sees the 100-year anniversary of the partition of Ireland. Charles Townshend, who has written a new history of the separation, gives an account of the events leading to 3rd May 1921, and asks whether it was inevitable.

Was Ireland partitioned by the 'logic of the Irish situation', or the failure of British statesmanship – or, as Irish nationalists have always believed, by Britain's desire to hold on to part of Ireland? Was partition a necessary expedient or a deliberate strategy? It emerged through unionist resistance to the project of Irish Home Rule - an Irish parliament in Dublin - and the question must be whether that project could have been recast in such a way as to avoid dividing the country. Why would Ulster Unionists not accept 'reasonable' adjustments to devolution – such as an Ulster veto within the Irish parliament, or some form of 'home rule within home rule'? Nationalists attribute this to loyalist 'bigotry' and desire for domination; Unionists to their fear of dispossession under Catholic majority rule. Both perspectives clearly have deep historical roots.

Serious discussion of partition began with a proposed amendment to the third Home Rule bill in 1912. Put down by a fairly obscure Liberal backbencher, Tommy Agar-Robartes, a polo-playing nonconformist Devonian yeomanry officer, in defiance of his party's formal commitment to all-Ireland Home Rule, it spoke not of partition – a word first used by outraged Irish nationalists – but of the 'exclusion' of four north-eastern counties from the jurisdiction of a Dublin parliament. Agar-Robartes's argument was that there were two 'incongruous elements' in Ireland – in fact 'two nations different in sentiment, character, history and religion'. He asserted that 'everyone will admit' this. Was he right? Certainly, it was a contention with a long history. What we might now label as partitionist arguments had first appeared as soon as Daniel O'Connell's campaign to repeal the 1801 Act of Union got under way. The leading historian Lord Macaulay declared in parliament that O'Connell could adduce no argument for a Dublin parliament that would not equally justify one in Londonderry.

Sir Edward Carson signing the Ulster Covenant

After the failure of the *Repeal* campaign, a less radical movement emerged for 'home rule'. It was deliberately designed to maintain the structure of the Union, so heading off unionist objections. In the first Home Rule bill proposed by the Liberal leader William Ewart Gladstone in 1885, Ireland was offered no more than limited devolution; but even this provoked flat rejection. Not least from within the Liberal party itself, where the iconic radical John Bright insisted that the 'loyal and Protestant people' of Ulster must

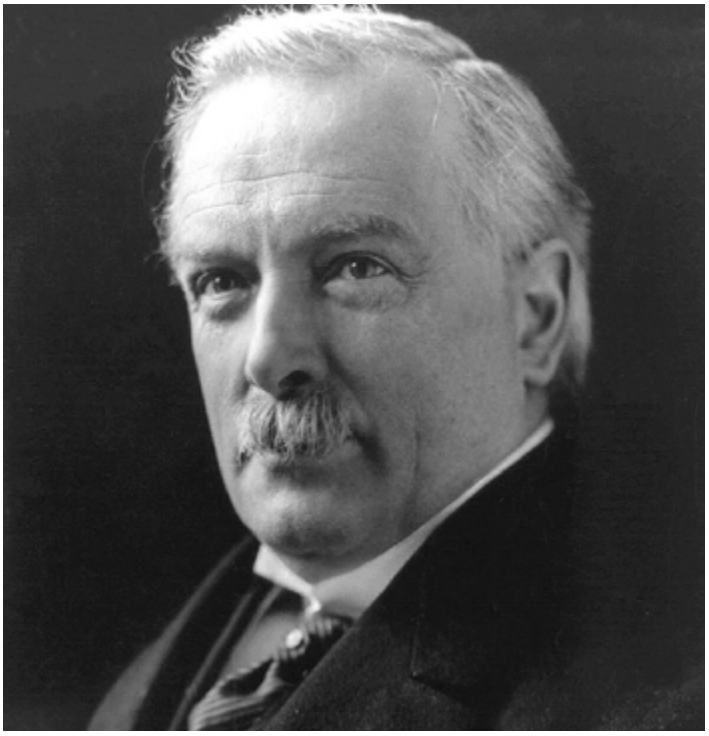
Sir Edward Carson by John Lavery

not be 'excluded from the protection of the Imperial Parliament'. Joseph Chamberlain took the same line, and fatally split the Liberal party. Outside parliament, grassroots Ulster loyalism was mobilising, and by the time Gladstone brought in a second Home Rule bill in 1892 (vetoed by the House of Lords) the threat of organised resistance was unmistakable.

The formation of 'loyal and Protestant' Ulster had been a striking feature of Irish politics after the Union. Before it, Protestants had been divided; Presbyterians like Catholics suffered from civil disabilities, and were prominent in the republican United Irish movement which allied with revolutionary France in the 1790s. Under the Union, though, Protestants gradually united against the threat of repeal and the possibility of a Dublin parliament which would (unlike the pre-Union Irish parliament) be predominantly Catholic. By the time the Home Rule movement emerged, Presbyterians – who had rarely been described as 'Protestants' – had become the most dynamic constituent of a pan-Protestant identity. An extraordinary evangelical movement in the early 19th century emphasised cultural divergence. Loyalists took the dramatic growth and prosperity of Belfast itself as emblematic of Protestant virtue, as the preacher Henry Cook challenged, 'look on Belfast and be a Home Ruler – if you dare!'

This sense of difference was significantly magnified by an equally striking shift in the character of Irish nationalism. The launching of the 'Irish-Ireland' movement in the year of the second Home Rule bill initiated a kind of cultural revolution, leading to Patrick Pearse's resonant insistence that Ireland must become 'not free merely, but Gaelic also'. Alignment of *Irishness* with an overwhelmingly (for some perhaps almost exclusively) Catholic identity made it inevitable that those who did not subscribe to this identity would be seen by some (on both sides) as not truly Irish. Most nationalists, though, still claimed them as part of the political 'Irish nation'.

The confluence of this cultural radicalism with the reign of 'the most reactionary of modern popes', Pius X – whose 1907 decree *Ne temere* institutionalized Catholic hostility to 'mixed marriages' - created a kind of perfect storm conditions for the revival of the Home Rule project in 1910. The redefinition of Irishness was not ostensibly political, but the political movement which grew out of it, Sinn Fein (founded in 1906), confirmed the view that Unionists had always taken of home



David Lloyd George

rule. It was a deception: it would produce not devolution, but separation. When the Liberal party (returned to power in 1906) brought in a third home rule measure as part of a deal with the Irish party to carry the 1911 Parliament Act, abolishing the veto power of the Lords, the reaction was violently hostile.

Agar-Robartes's exclusion proposal was rejected by Asquith's government in 1912, but the idea grew in attraction as the threat of resistance took increasingly ominous shape. The government faced the possibility not just of armed resistance in Ulster, but of a larger civil conflict spilling over into Britain. British public dislike of home rule, though never measured at the polls, was significant, and the celebrated signing of the Ulster Covenant in September 1912 was followed by a British Covenant movement. Grandees like the former commander-in-chief Lord Roberts, and the Imperial proconsul Lord Milner, set out to organise mass resistance and even to subvert the obedience of the army to the government.

This was a serious test of the Liberal commitment to home rule in its Gladstonian form. Some ministers, like Winston Churchill, may have been ready to face down the threatened resistance. But David Lloyd George, the Chancellor whose 1909 'People's Budget' had precipitated the clash with the House of Lords, saw the potential traction of exclusion. Over the next few years he would be central to its gradual evolution. It is clear that he – a native Welsh speaker – was not wholly persuaded by the Irish nationalist case, and he occasionally said enough to suggest that he shared the enduring nonconformist distrust of Catholicism: 'no Pope here'. Though he spoke against the Agar-Robartes amendment along with the rest of the Liberal front bench, he quickly latched on to the project of allowing the four counties to opt out of home rule temporarily. Over the next 18 months the Cabinet came round to his view, and early in 1914 after repeated juggling with mechanisms of 'home rule within home rule' designed to preserve a single Irish polity, Asquith offered a six-year exclusion on the basis of 'county option'. This was in order to guarantee a general election in the meantime.

As Lloyd George saw, this proposal put both nationalists and Ulster unionists on the spot. But while the former accepted that to reject such an apparently reasonable compromise might fatally alienate British opinion, Carson rejected the 'stay of execution' and

Walter Long

demanded permanent exclusion, as well as a clean cut for the whole nine counties of Ulster, with no 'option'. The issue was left there when the Great War broke out, but in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter rebellion, Asquith looked to snatch a quick home rule agreement. He inevitably turned to Lloyd George, who tried to broker a solution which would offer Ulster permanent exclusion while convincing the nationalists that it might be temporary. He came closer than anyone before, but was scuppered by the surviving southern Unionists in the Cabinet, who turned out to be doughtier opponents of partition than John Redmond himself. After Lloyd George became prime minister in the December 1916 coup, he recruited their most stolid spokesman, Walter Long, as architect of the home rule arrangement. This was urgently required to show the US that Britain was moving with the Wilsonian current towards self-determination.

Long had no desire to revive home rule, but it was clear that the 1914 Government of Ireland (home rule) Act – passed under the 'party truce' at the start of the war, but suspended for its duration – could not come into force. In 1919, with abstentionist Sinn Fein MPs forming Dail Eireann and declaring Ireland a republic, an alternative structure had to be found. Long's drafting committee went beyond 'exclusion' to propose two home rule parliaments. Most Unionists still saw this as 'expulsion' from the UK, but it had the virtue of getting rid of what Long called 'the tap root of the Irish difficulty' by ensuring 'the complete removal of British rule from the whole of Ireland'.

The remaining question was the size of the northern area. Long favoured the whole nine-county 'historic province' of Ulster, and hung on to this idea even after it became clear that Ulster Unionist leaders were insisting on a six-county unit - 'as much of Ulster as we can hold'. His belief that an Ulster parliament would 'enormously minimize the partition issue' was based on his hope that such a body would be more likely to move towards unification through the Council of Ireland he built into the bill. Such hopes led ministers to press for this until the day before the fourth Government of Ireland Bill had its first reading on 25 February 1920. In the 10 March Punch cartoon of 'The Welsh Wizard' cutting a map of Ireland in two to place in a top hat labelled 'Irish Council' ('After a suitable interval they will be found to have come together of their own accord – at least let's hope so…), Ulster was still shown whole. But by then the argument of the Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour that a nine-

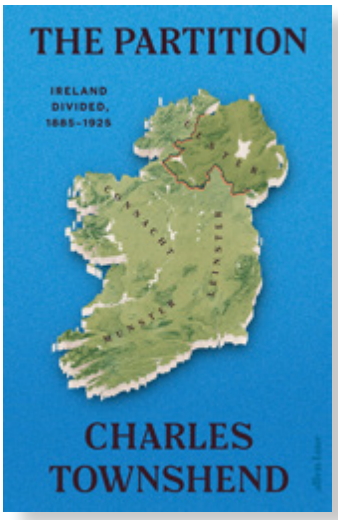
county division would lead to dangerous irredentism, had proved decisive.

The 'partition act' became law on 23 December 1920, and came into operation in May 1921 with elections to the Southern and Northern Parliaments. In the ten months it took to enact it, British rule throughout most of southern Ireland disintegrated. In Belfast, the reaction to the IRA campaign was a sustained attack on the Catholic population, with thousands driven from their workplaces and homes. In September a six-county civil administration began to be set up, and in November the Ulster Special Constabulary, a key emblem of partition, was raised. By the time the elections were held, martial law was in force in south-western Ireland and there was no chance of the Southern Parliament assembling: the mostly unopposed Sinn Feiners became the Second Dail. Ulster Unionists took a comfortable majority in the Northern Parliament which met in Belfast in June. The prospects of the Council of Ireland maintaining a framework of unity had always been slim, but now it could not even begin to function. The border line might not yet be finalised, but partition was nonetheless complete.

It has often been said that partition was a solution sought by nobody and this is, in a sense, true enough. This is not to suggest, however, that an alternative with greater political determination or competence, could have been found. The political cleavage revealed by the home rule project grew more dramatic as the crisis persisted. Partition was shunned for years, but its appeal, if negative, eventually grew. Its direct beneficiaries, the unionists of Ulster, took a long time to embrace it, though when they eventually did the embrace was enthusiastic. The 1921 election generated euphoria, and the state opening of the Northern Parliament was the ultimate northern Protestant triumph. But did partition – as many nationalists believe – primarily deliver what Britain really wanted? Not on the public evidence. The political establishment was vocal in its commitment to Irish unity. Asquith was able to convince himself that 'exclusion' was not partition, and though Lloyd George was less squeamish, his government bowed to Ulster Unionism with no sign of enthusiasm for it. The bottom line, as Balfour had brutally put it in 1918, was that for Britain, Ireland had become 'a sheer weakness'.

The Partition: Ireland Divided, 1885-1925

Professor Charles Townshend



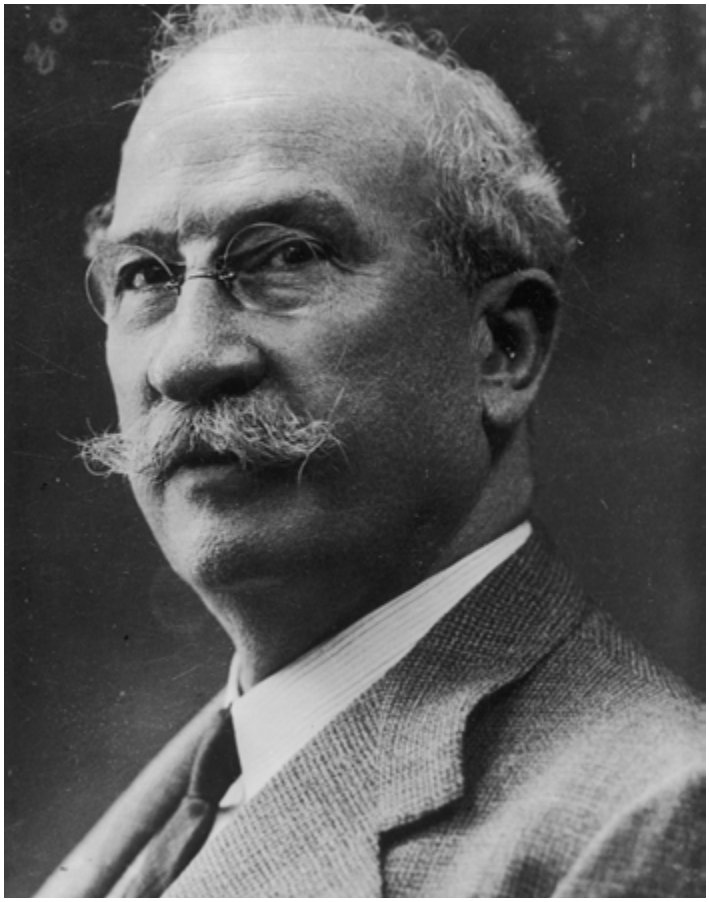
Professor Charles Townshend is the author of the highly praised *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* and *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918-1923. The Partition: Ireland Divided, 1885-1925* forms the third part of his trilogy on how Ireland became independent.

Paul Preston

Spain from 1874 to the Present Day: A People Betrayed?

Modern day Spain has seen much turbulence, from military coups, war, civil war and dictatorship. Throughout, as Paul Preston argues, it is the people of Spain who have suffered at the hands of politicians, the church, and the military.

In one of the greatest books ever written about Spain, the English traveller Richard Ford's 1845 *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain* portrayed ordinary Spaniards as generous and noble but hobbled by misgovernment. Another great observer of the Spanish people, Gerald Brenan, wrote in 1967: 'Spain has been seen as the land of paradox where a people of great independence of character allowed themselves to be governed by corrupt and arbitrary rulers.' Acutely, he went on to make a comment that has an oblique relevance to the Britain of Brexit and pandemic. Commenting on the extent to which criticisms of Spain derived from an idealised image of 19th century Britain, Brenan remarked: 'Who would not have preferred to be a Spanish workman in those days to an English miner or mill-hand or agricultural labourer?' The contemporary resonance of that comment needs no underlining.



Alejandro Lerroux García

Despite the perceptive insights of Richard Ford, Gerald Brenan, and many like-minded Spanish commentators, there is little benefit to be derived from unfavourable comparisons of a benighted Spain with an idealised Britain. Spain is not unique in terms of corruption or governmental incompetence. There are other European nations for which such an analytical framework might be valid. The level of political untruth seen during the Brexit process in Britain, the deficiencies of the negotiation of a post-withdrawal agreement and the incompetence and clientelism seen in the response to the Covid pandemic suggests that a divisive cocktail of lies, governmental ineptitude and corruption is not the monopoly of Spain.

There, the period from the restoration of the Borbón monarchy in 1874 in the person of Alfonso XII, to the arrival on the throne of his great-great-grandson Felipe VI in 2014, illustrates how the country's progress has been impeded by corruption and political incompetence. The prevalence of both resulted in a breakdown of social cohesion that has frequently been met with, and exacerbated by, the use of violence by the authorities. All three themes consistently emerge in the tensions between Madrid and Catalonia which continue to this day. Throughout the restoration period, and most spectacularly during the Primo de Rivera

General Francisco Franco Bahamonde

dictatorship, institutional corruption and startling political incompetence were the norm. This opened the way to the country's first democracy, the Second Republic.

From the inception of the Republic in 1931 until its demise in 1939, corruption was less toxic, although that does not mean it did not exist. A dominant figure in Spain's 20th century politics, the multi-millionaire Juan March, who was behind some of the most spectacular corruption during the Primo de Rivera period, was equally active during the Republic, as indeed he would be in the first decades of the Franco dictatorship. This was also true of Alejandro Lerroux, an important politician who was on March's payroll. A lifetime of shameless corruption reached its peak when, as prime minister in 1935, he brazenly sponsored a system of fixed roulette wheels, an outrageous operation that gave rise to the word *estraperlo* which has entered the dictionary as a synonym for black-market dealings and economic malfeasance.

The victory of General Franco saw the establishment of a regime of terror and pillage which allowed him and his elite supporters to plunder with impunity, enriching themselves while giving free rein to the political ineptitude that prolonged Spain's economic backwardness well into the 1950s. Throughout his life, Franco would express a fierce contempt for the political class which he held responsible for the loss of empire in 1898. Yet, some of his own fatuous errors would far outdo those of the predecessors he mocked. That he would not scruple to put his determination to stay in power above national interests can be seen in his relationships both with the Third Reich and later with the United States. His scatter-brained get-rich-quick schemes ranging from alchemy and synthetic water-based gasoline to the disaster of his autarkic policies, contributed to Spain's backwardness until he was persuaded in 1959 to let others supervise the economy.

The persistence of government incompetence and establishment corruption explain why, with brief intervals when optimism flowered, during the Second Republic and the first decade of the rule of King Juan Carlos, the attitude of Spaniards towards their country's political class has often been

one of disdain bordering on despair. Belief in the incompetence and venality of politicians has been an underlying constant of Spanish life since the Napoleonic invasion, if not before. Franco used rhetoric about corrupt politicians to justify a dictatorship under which corruption flourished unchecked and was indeed exploited ruthlessly by the Caudillo himself, both for his own enrichment and to manipulate his followers.

The humiliating loss of empire in 1898 was just the final confirmation of a truth that had been coming for nearly a century. Henceforth, Spain's internal economic problems could not be alleviated by imperial plunder. A backward agrarian economy, an uneven and feeble industrial sector, the heavy hand of the Catholic Church, parasitical armed forces and growing regional divisions were all endemic burdens. They were perpetuated, as was perceived by the far-sighted polymath, Joaquín Costa, by a corrupt and incompetent political system which blocked social and economic progress and kept the Spanish people in the servitude, ignorance and misery which lay behind the contemporary slur that 'Africa begins at the Pyrenees'. Unfortunately, the solution proposed by Costa, the iron surgeon, led to the disastrous dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera.

The unspoken assumption that political and social problems could more naturally be solved by violence than by debate was firmly entrenched in a country in which for hundreds of years civil strife was no rarity. In modern times, certain forms of social violence have been a consequence of corruption and government incompetence. Electoral corruption excluded the masses from organized politics and challenged them with a choice between apathetic acceptance and violent revolution. The war of 1936-1939 was the fourth such conflict since the 1830s. In the 167 years after the war of Independence against the French, Spain witnessed more than 25 *pronunciamientos*, or attempted military coups. That crude statistic provides a graphic indication of the divorce between soldiers and civilians. From the late 19th century onwards, a process of mutual misunderstanding and mistrust between the Army and civil society developed to a point at which soldiers considered themselves more Spanish than civilians. By the early 20th century, officers were easily persuaded that it was their right and duty to interfere in politics in order to 'save Spain'. That apparently noble objective meant the defence of the interests and privileges of relatively small segments of society. The repression by the Army of deep-rooted social conflicts in the wake of the loss of empire generated hatred within Spanish society.

An officer corps that blamed the humiliation of 1898 on the politicians who had provided inadequate support became obsessed not with the defence of Spain from external enemies, but with the defence of national unity and the existing social order against the perceived internal enemies of the left and of the regions. Spain's rulers tried to shake off the immediate post-war shame with a disastrous new imperial endeavour in

Franco and Juan Carlos 1975

Morocco. While working-class conscripts became militant pacifists in response to the appalling conditions in North Africa, there emerged within the military an elite corps of tough professional officers, the 'Africanistas', of whom Franco was the iconic example. Their belief that they were a beleaguered band of heroic warriors concerned with the fate of the Fatherland exacerbated their sense of apartness from a society which they felt had betrayed them. The Africanistas increasingly dominated the officer corps and were at the heart of the coup of 1936. In the civil war, they used against Spanish civilians the same terror tactics which they had perfected in Morocco.

After Franco's victory in 1939, the military was the dominant element in a kleptocratic regime that lived by terror and plunder. The survival of their 'values' beyond Franco's death would guarantee the determination of sectors of the armed forces to derail the new democracy established in the late 1970s. Fortunately, popular distrust of the armed forces came to an end with the democratization of the army after the military reforms carried out during the first Socialist government. Generational change within the officer corps and the entry of Spain into NATO has seen the armed forces and the Civil Guard replaced in the popular perception of Spain's problems by unemployment and the corruption of the political class.

Equally damaging to Spain's attempts to attain modernity was the dead hand of the Catholic Church. Almost every major political upheaval of this turbulent period had its religious back-cloth and a crucial, often reactionary role for the Church hierarchy. Accordingly, the issues of military and ecclesiastical influence, popular contempt for the political class, bitter social conflict, economic backwardness and conflict between centralist nationalism and regional independence movements are

closely interleaved.

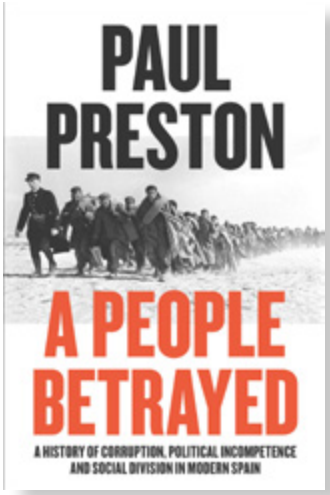
The consequence has been that Spain went from utter despair in 1898 on a roller-coaster that culminated in the present state of almost comparable pessimism exacerbated by the Covid pandemic and bitter conflict between centralists and regional separatists.

In the century before 1977, Spain experienced a pattern of conflict between its political superstructure and its developing social infrastructure. Progressive forces pushed for change until driven back by violence and the imposition of dictatorship. The pattern changed after the democratic elections of 1977. Nevertheless, the new democratic establishment was tainted by the old ways in which corruption and political incompetence had had a corrosive effect on political coexistence and social cohesion. Spain's transition to democracy has been widely admired. Yet the scale of uninterrupted corruption and periodic ineptitude demonstrated by the political class at various levels of society since 1982 has been remarkable.

Politicians of both right and left have been unable or unwilling to deal with corruption and the pernicious clash between Spanish centralist nationalism and regional desires for independence. Only during brief periods in the early 1930s and in the first years of the transition to democracy was there a degree of public respect for politicians. However, widespread contempt and resentment have intensified anew during the economic crisis of recent years. The boom of the 1990s fostered corruption and witnessed political incompetence on an unprecedented scale. From the late 1980s to the present day, endemic corruption and renewed nationalist ferment has brought disillusionment with the political class almost full circle. While not at the low point of 1898, politicians are nevertheless rated by the Spanish population far lower than could have been imagined when the transition to democracy was being hailed as a model for other countries.

A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain 1874-2018

Paul Preston



Paul Preston is the author of *Franco: A Biography* and *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge*. He is Principe de Asturias Professor of Iberian History at the London School of Economics, and was head of the International History Department there for several years. He is regarded as the leading historian of twentieth-century Spain. *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain 1874-2018* is his latest book.

Sean McMeekin

Rewriting the History of the Second World War

In a new history of World War Two, Sean McMeekin argues that it was an allied intervention on behalf of Soviet Russia that led to the triumph of Stalin in Asia, the consequences of which we continue to see today.

In the popular mind, World War Two endures as the 'Good War': a heroic struggle against evil with a happy ending. But there have always been nagging questions, not least whether any conceivable post-war world was worth the sacrifice of 50 or 60 million dead. Why did a war ostensibly waged on behalf of Poland in 1939 end with that country's dismemberment? If 'freedom' triumphed over 'totalitarianism,' why did eastern Europe and the Balkans succumb to Communist dictatorship, followed by China, North Korea, and Vietnam? Why were the earliest freedom fighters against 'Axis' aggression – Chiang Kai-Shek's Chinese nationalists, the Poles, Mihailovic's Chetniks in Yugoslavia – abandoned by the victorious Allies, even while clients of Stalin, Hitler's fellow totalitarian dictator and key strategic ally from 1939-41, won? Why did the 'Good War' consign nearly half the human race from Berlin to Beijing, to the agonies of communism?

The morally perverse outcome of World War Two was no accident. The expansion of Soviet power westward into Europe, and eastward into Asia resulted from deliberate policy choices both by Stalin and Molotov in Moscow, carrying out an expansionist foreign policy with ruthless consistency, and by Stalin's accidental British and American allies who were either manipulated into furthering Soviet foreign policy designs (as with Churchill abandoning Mihailovic and falling in with Stalin's client Tito in Yugoslavia) or, in Roosevelt's case, did so quite voluntarily.

Hitler's genocidal ambition helped unleash Armageddon in 1939. Sources from the Soviet archives opened since 1991, however, make clear that the European war which emerged from the Moscow or 'Molotov-Ribbentrop' Pact of August 1939 was the one Stalin wanted, not Hitler (Britain and France declaring war on Germany was *not* the result desired in Berlin). The brutal partition of Poland which resulted from the German-Soviet invasion in September 1939 was Stalin's idea, not Hitler's – floated in 1938 in order to lure Hitler to the negotiating table. Soviet designs on the Baltic states, Finland, and Bessarabia reflected Stalinist foreign policy aims on which Soviet officials had been working for years before these came to fruition in the Moscow Pact (with the partial exception of Finland, which surprised Stalin by fighting back in winter 1939-40). Far from having any interest in 'collective security' to contain Hitler, as some western historians have suggested based on little more than projection, Stalin was just as adamant a territorial revisionist as Hitler and Mussolini in the 1930s; he was just better at concealing this.

The Pacific war of 1941-1945 was, too, the desired outcome of Stalin's Pact with

The Big Three at Yalta, 1945

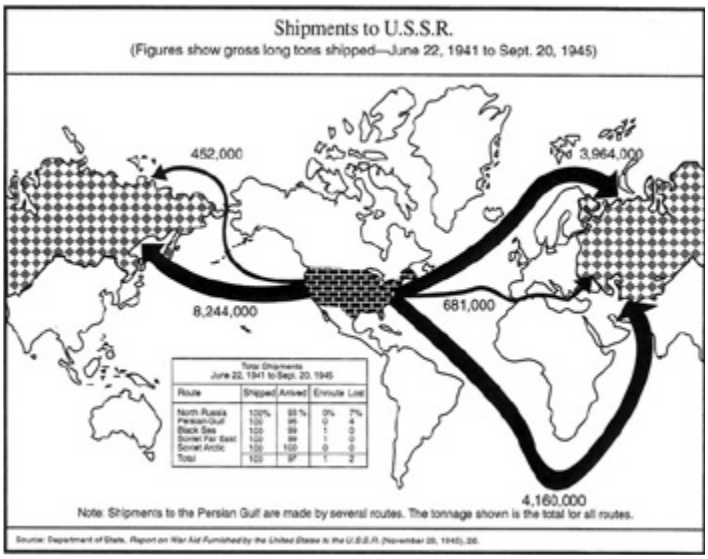
Tokyo of April 1941, which had the goal of unleashing the furies of war in Asia between Japan and the 'Anglo-Saxon powers' he viewed to be his ultimate adversary. With the USSR's Far Eastern frontier with Japan marked by ongoing border disputes dating back to Tsarist times – disputes serious enough that Japanese and Soviet troops fought frontier battles in both 1938 and 1939 – Stalin was desperate to divert Japanese forces away from his Asian borders while he was making his moves in Europe.

By June 1941, the 'imperialist war' between the hostile factions of the capitalist world, as it was styled in Communist propaganda, was going Stalin's way. France and the Netherlands had been routed. The British empire had been humiliated and almost fatally weakened. The colossal Soviet arms buildup underway since the launch of the first Five Year Plan in 1928 was nearly complete. Following Lenin's program to a tee, Stalin had 'exploit[ed] the contradictions and opposition between two imperialist power groups, between two capitalist groups of states, and incite[d] them to attack each other.' 'As soon as we are strong enough to overthrow the entire capitalist world,' Lenin had vowed, 'we will take it at once by the scruff of the neck.'

The one thing Stalin had not reckoned on was that, far from bleeding the strength of each warring coalition equally as had the First World War, the Second had been so lopsided that Germany had hardly been weakened at all. By striking in June 1941, before Russia was ready, Hitler turned the tables on Stalin, disrupted years of Soviet war preparations, and very nearly won the war. By October, the Germans were at the gates of Moscow, and the Soviet government was evacuated east to the Ural Mountains. On the cusp of triumph just four months prior, Communism seemed to be finished.

Stalin had one last card to play: just as his empire was crumbling, Soviet diplomats, sympathizers, and 'agents of influence' in the West helped open a critical Lend-Lease lifeline to Russia. Although, as it turned out, U.S. President Roosevelt, moved by the drama of the German invasion of Russia, needed little convincing.

In a story so bizarre that not even Lenin could have imagined it, Communism was rescued from the brink of defeat by Stalin's sworn and oft-declared arch-enemy Anglo-Saxon capitalism. As Stalin's decimated factories were rescued by vast stores of American metals, industrial components



Map of US Lend Lease shipments to the USSR

and technology transfer were sent as Lend-Lease aid. This was even as the faltering Soviet war machine was replenished with American and British *materiél* from warplanes, tanks, trucks, jeeps, motorcycles, fuel, guns, ammunition and explosives, to the foodstuffs which fed the Red Army, as it saw off German attacks and began its long and bloody march to Berlin.

Stalin's most sweeping and consequential victory, however, came in Asia, where the war followed his planned scenario almost perfectly. Whereas Hitler's Barbarossa gamble had dramatically upset Stalin's timetable for a European war and nearly finished off Stalin's regime in 1941 - producing a horrendous war of attrition which cost his people (if not himself) dearly, Stalin's fidelity to the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact allowed his Far Eastern armies to wait patiently, assembling millions of tons of American war materiél sent to Siberia via Vladivostok, even while Japan's armies exhausted themselves fighting China, Britain and the United States.

By the time Stalin's Far Eastern armies – fuelled, motored, armoured, provisioned and fed by cascading American Lend-Lease supplies – struck in "Operation August Storm," a million Japanese troops had already been withdrawn from China to Japan's home islands, leaving Manchuria and Korea ripe for the Soviet plucking. The Red Army was thus able to conquer an area of northern Asia larger than France and Germany combined in less than a month, sustaining only 36,000 casualties, at virtually no cost to Stalin's treasury. In this way Stalin's clear-sighted strategic vision, helped along by the short-sighted and one-sided generosity of American Lend-Lease aid, allowed the Soviet dictator to plant the red flag over northern Asia, enabling Mao's triumph in China and the standoff in Korea which continues to this day.

Stalin's War

Sean McMeekin

Sean McMeekin is Professor of History at Bard College, and is the author of *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire* and *Germany's Bid for World Power, 1898-1918* and most recently, *Stalin's War.*

Paul Strathern

Historical Heroes: Dante's Revenge

Dante Alighieri, the Florence native, was a forerunner of the Renaissance and the mind behind one of the greatest works of world literature, *The Divine Comedy*. Paul Strathern, who has written a new book on the vast array of creative characters from Florence, discusses his great hero.

In 1308, the exiled Florentine poet Dante Alighieri described how, midway through his life, he found himself lost amidst a dark wood, with no sign of a path. He had no idea how he had arrived where he was. His mind was fogged; it was as if he had woken from a deep slumber. After walking for a while, filled with trepidation, he came to the foot of a hill at the end of a valley. Raising his gaze, he saw the high upland bathed in the rays of the rising sun. He began to climb the barren slope, finally pausing for a while to rest his weary limbs. Not long after restarting, he found his way blocked by a gambolling leopard, its fine dappled fur rippling as it skipped before his feet. By now the sun had begun to rise in the heavens, and the sight of this fine frisking beast in the morning sunlight inspired Dante with hope. But this suddenly vanished when he caught sight of a roaring lion charging towards him. No sooner had he escaped from this fearful beast than he encountered a lean and slavering, hungry she-wolf, which caused him to retreat in terror down the slope, back towards the dark silence of the sunless wood. As he stumbled headlong downwards, he saw before him a ghostly form.

'Help me!' cried Dante. 'Whatever you are – man or spirit.'

The shadowy figure replied, 'No, I am not a man. Though once I was. I lived in Rome, during the reign of the good Augustus Caesar, in a time of false and lying gods. I was a poet, who sang of Troy…'

'Canst thou be Virgil? The very one who has inspired me throughout my own life as a poet?'

'I am he.'

'Oh, save me from this ferocious wolf.'

'She lets no one pass, and devours all her prey. She will gorge on all who try to get by her, until one day the Greyhound will come. He will hunt her through every city on earth. In the end he will drive her back to Hell, whence she escaped after Envy set her free.'

Then Virgil continued: 'I think for your own good that you should follow me. Let me be your guide, and pass with me through an eternal place, where you will hear the hideous shrieks of those who cry out to be released, those who beg for a second death but are damned to torment for evermore. Next you will come to another place and gaze upon those who are happy amidst the fire, because they know that one day they will be purged and rise to take their place amongst the blessed. Then, if you wish, you too can see this blessed realm and its Emperor, to which I cannot lead you, because I was a rebel against his law. From that point on, only another spirit, far worthier than I, can lead you through Paradise.'

Dante replied: 'Poet, I implore you in the name of that God you never knew, lead me through that place you have described, as far as St Peter's Gate, which stands at the entrance to Paradise.'

Dante Alighieri statue at , Florence

So Virgil moved on, and Dante followed him.

Thus opens Dante's *La Divina Commedia* (The Divine Comedy), now widely regarded as the finest poem in the canon of western literature. Its full ambition and scope are realized by the imagination which Dante lavishes on his descriptions of the land of the dead and the souls he encounters there. In many ways, his poem is an outline of the past world and many of its leading historical figures. It is imbued with the spirit of the medieval era, yet Dante's psychological insight into the characters he encounters, and the vividness of their described afterlife, prefigures the coming age of the Renaissance. Each soul he meets on his journey is rewarded according to the life he or she has lived during their time on earth. In this, Dante's thoughts are thoroughly medieval: this life is but a preparation for the life to come, when we will be rewarded, purged or damned, according to our just deserts. Yet although this 'divine comedy' is suffused with the theology of Catholic orthodoxy, as well as the Aristotelian philosophy which underpinned so much of its teaching, the poem is instantly recognizable as being of the modern era.

In a drastic break with tradition, the poem is written in the Tuscan dialect of Dante's native Florence. At that time, all serious communication and learning was written in the Latin used by the Church, scholars and the educated classes. By writing in dialect, Dante was making his poem available to all. Even those who could not read were able to understand his words if they were read aloud. Indeed, Dante's poem would play a significant role in establishing Tuscan as the basis of the Italian language which is written and spoken today, causing him to be seen by many as the father of the Italian language.

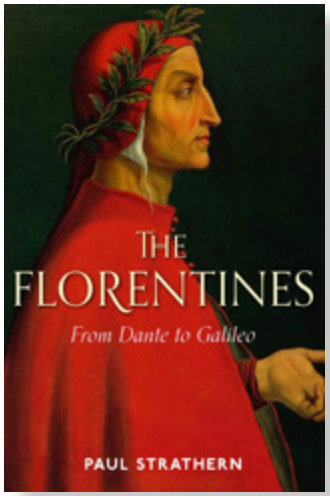
Yet for all its virtues, *The Divine Comedy*

undoubtedly has its dark and vicious side. In 1300, some eight years before Dante began writing his masterwork, he had been elected to the Signoria, the council of nine who ruled Florence. Yet within two years of serving his two-month term of high office he had fallen foul of the rackety 'democracy' which prevailed in the deeply divided city. Consequently, he was sentenced to perpetual exile from his native land, with the warning that if ever he returned, he would be burned at the stake. Not surprisingly, several members of the opposing political faction which brought about Dante's downfall would feature in the *Inferno* (Hell), the first of the three major sections of *The Divine Comedy*. Typical of these was Filippo Argenti, who in life had been a tall, silver-haired aristocratic figure, notorious for his wrath. A contemporary commentator mentions that he had once slapped Dante's face in public, a major insult to which Dante would probably have had no recourse. Argenti's brother is said to have seized Dante's possessions after the poet's banishment, and Filippo's family were most vociferously opposed to those who sought Dante's pardon and recall from exile.

Argenti makes his appearance early in the *Inferno*, as Dante and Virgil are being rowed across the River Styx, in the fifth circle of Hell, which is reserved for those who succumbed to the sin of wrath. Even though Argenti is covered in filth, Dante recognizes him. Virgil explains that, in the world of the living, Argenti had been a man filled with pride, 'and there is no act of goodness to adorn his memory. He must live forever like a pig in muck.' The sight of Argenti reminds Dante of the humiliation he suffered at his hand. Dante is filled with anger, and exclaims to Virgil: 'How I would love to see him submerged in this filth.' Virgil assures him that this will happen before they reach the other shore. Later, Dante sees Argenti being torn to pieces by his fellow wrathful damned. And such is Argenti's own wrath that he even turns on himself, biting at his own flesh.

The Florentines: From Dante to Galileo

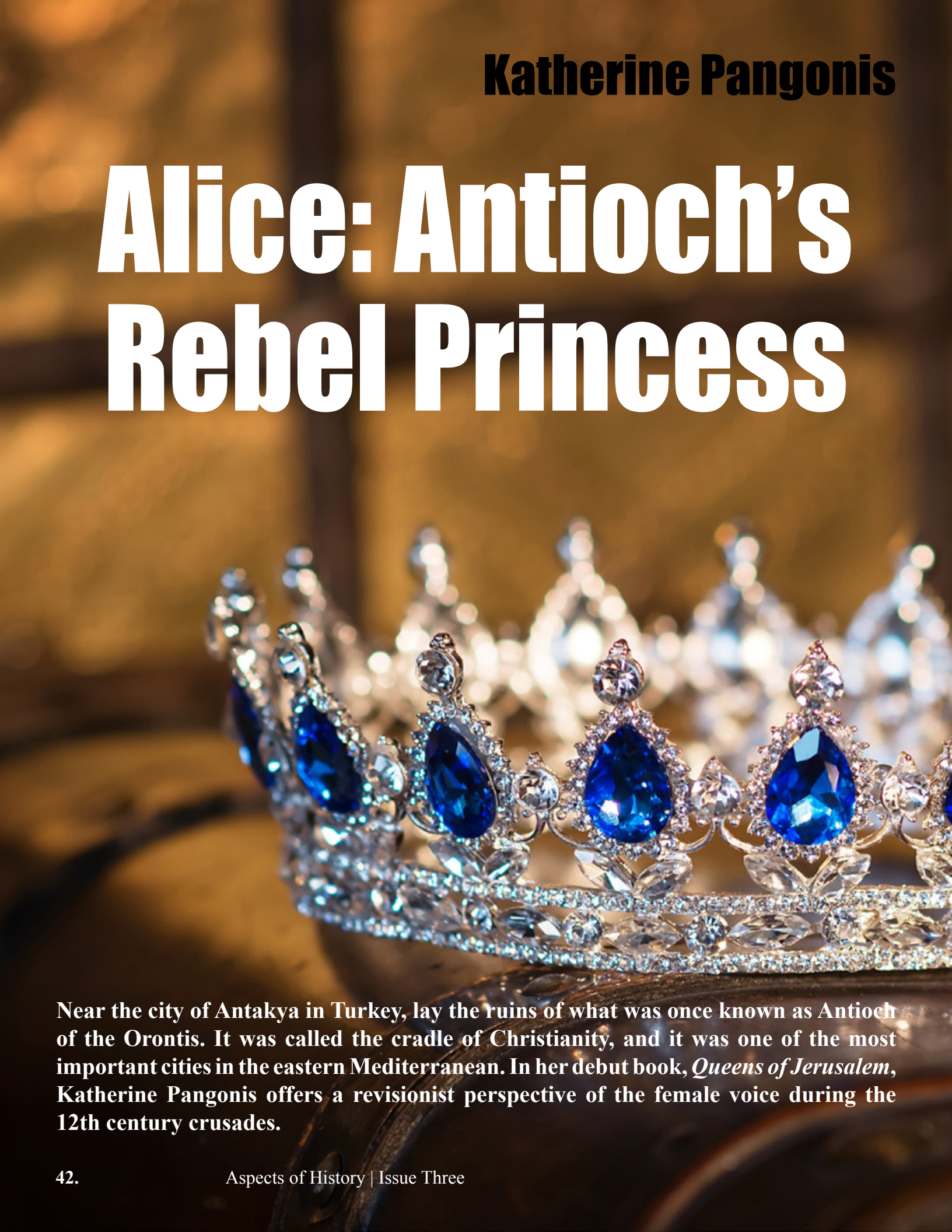
Paul Strathern



Paul Strathern is a Somerset Maugham Award-winning writer and academic. He has written numerous books on history, science, philosophy, literature and economics. His latest is *The Florentines: From Dante to Galileo.*

Katherine Pangonis

Alice: Antioch's Rebel Princess



Near the city of Antakya in Turkey, lay the ruins of what was once known as Antioch of the Orontis. It was called the cradle of Christianity, and it was one of the most important cities in the eastern Mediterranean. In her debut book, *Queens of Jerusalem*, Katherine Pangonis offers a revisionist perspective of the female voice during the 12th century crusades.

On the banks of the river Orontes, some fifteen miles from the Mediterranean coast, lies the modern-day city of Antakya. In ages past, this city was known as Antioch: the capital of Roman Syria. After the collapse of the Empire, the city entered a period of decline, but during the Middle Ages would once again become a place of great importance. A hub of trade and cultural exchange, strategically located, flanked by the great Orontes and the Nur mountains, it became the centre of the second crusader state forged in the eleventh century.

At the age of nineteen the heir to this principality, Bohemond II, made his way to Antioch from Europe to claim his inheritance, and a waiting bride as well. The bride was Alice of Jerusalem, daughter of the King and Queen of Jerusalem, Outremer's greatest power couple: Baldwin II and Morphia of Melitene. Alice had three sisters but no brothers: the legacy and dynastic ambitions of her parents rested entirely on the shoulders of Alice and her sisters. Of all of them, Alice would prove the most headstrong, though it was certainly a close-run contest.

The story of Alice of Antioch is the story of a woman on a quest for independence. The story of her legacy and treatment by historians is one of defamation, prejudice and criticism. Alice was a complicated woman, and certainly a belligerent one. She was not however the two-dimensional villain painted in the history books. William of Tyre, one of the greatest historians of the 12th century, called her 'extremely malicious and wily', and modern historians have called her 'flighty' and 'silly'. Alice's history is full of gendered slander. The reality of her story is far more nuanced, and from a careful consideration of the chronicles, the image of a fierce, indefatigable and ambitious princess emerges.

Alice's husband Bohemond II was presented in these chronicles as a medieval heart throb and their marriage started well. The couple swiftly had a daughter, but within two years of Constance's birth her handsome father was beheaded in a Cilician war. His golden head was sent as a grisly trophy to the caliph of Baghdad.

The demise of Bohemond II heralded the rise of Alice. Widowhood was the freest a woman could be in medieval Outremer, and this was the first opportunity she was given to seize independence. Over the next six years, Alice would rebel against her would-be overlords – the kings of Jerusalem – three times, defying both her family and the fiercely patriarchal rules of her society.

Following Bohemond II's death, Alice needed to act quickly. She wanted to claim control of her city, and rule it in her own right, rather than be thrust into the arms of another husband while Bohemond's body was still warm. She might be able to pull off such a scheme, if she could rally the support of Antioch's nobility behind her, and somehow fend off the army of Jerusalem. Without a moment to lose, she proclaimed herself ruler of the city, and regent for her daughter.

While Alice strategized, her opponents began to move against her. Her father and brother-in-law in Jerusalem would not entertain the notion of a teenage, female regent. With this in mind, they assembled a force and made ready to march on Antioch to take control of the city. When they left Jerusalem, they had no idea that Alice was preparing to resist them.

Hearing of their approach, Alice overplayed her hand through panic. She knew she could not hope to resist the King of Jerusalem in battle, for one thing Antioch had next to no army left since most of its knights had been killed alongside her husband in Cilicia. Alice needed a powerful ally with the military might to challenge Jerusalem. In desperation, she sent a messenger to none other than the Turkish Atabeg Zenghi, a Muslim warlord and the nemesis of her father. Alice offered homage to Zenghi in exchange for assistance in repelling her father and maintaining control of Antioch, deciding that retaining control of Antioch was more important to her than her loyalty to her Christian heritage. In making this decision, she doubtless alienated many of her supporters within the city.

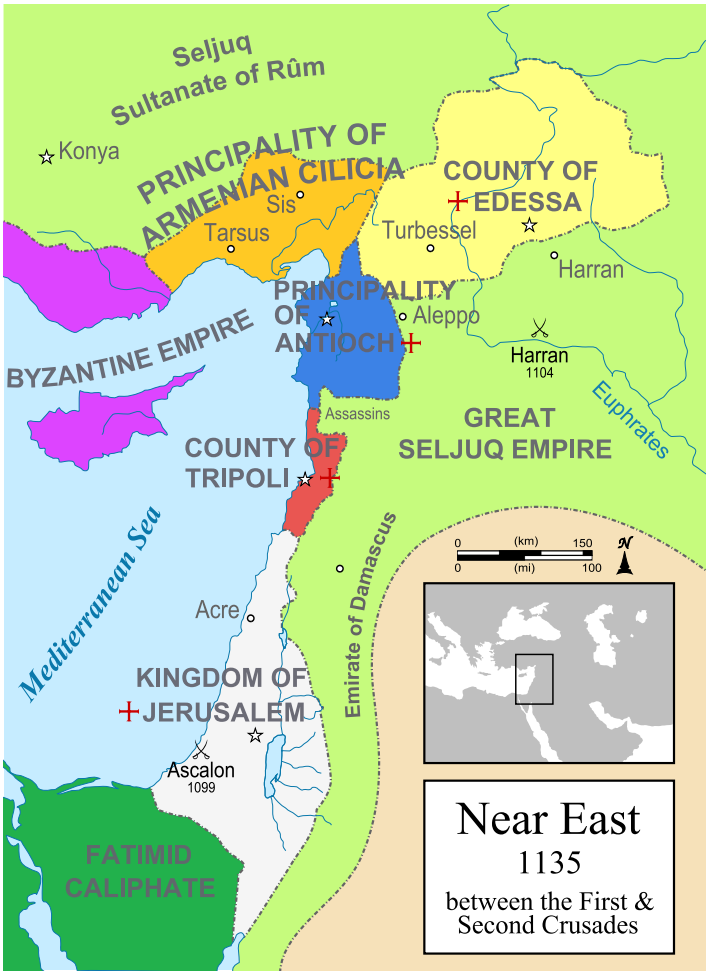
Alice arranged an elaborate and symbolic gift to be sent with a messenger to the Atabeg: a snow-white horse, shod with shoes of silver and adorned with a saddle and bridle of white silk and silver. The messenger and palfrey never reached their destination. They were intercepted by Alice's father's men as they marched to Antioch, and after a brief interval of brutal torture in which the messenger revealed his mission and Alice's intentions he was put to death. History does not relate what happened to the lovely white palfrey.

When Alice's father arrived at the city, brimming with fury at his daughter's audacity, he found the gates barred against him and the recalcitrant Alice refusing him entry, unless he promised her independence and the rule of Antioch. However, at the sight of the assembled fury of Jerusalem at their gates and realising the weakness of their princess' position, many of the Franks within the city began to have second thoughts about supporting Alice's rebellion. A Frankish knight, William of Aversa, together with a monk named Peter the Latin ignored the orders of the princess and opened the gates. In desperation, Alice retreated to the citadel of the city and barricaded herself inside.

It was not long before she accepted that further resistance was futile. After receiving the assurance of her life from her besiegers, she begged forgiveness from her father.

For a variety of reasons, she received it. In lieu of other punishments, she was banished to her dower lands in Latakieh. Baldwin took on the regency of Antioch himself and returned to Jerusalem. Shortly afterwards, he died, exhausted by a life of constant campaigning. He was succeeded as king by his son-in-law Fulk, and daughter Queen Melisende.

Just as the death of Alice's husband presented an opportunity to Alice, so too did the death of her father. The transition between rulers was always a delicate time in Outremer, and



The Levant, 1135, by MapMaster

the death of a king or prince (or a huge battle against the Muslims) marked the time when the kingdom was least stable and least likely to resist an attempt to change the political order. Thus, almost immediately following the death of her father, Alice struck again.

Her second rebellion would focus on contesting the 'suzerainty' of Jerusalem, not only over Antioch but over the two other crusader states of Tripoli and Edessa as well. This second bid for independence would be far more threatening than her first and demonstrates Alice's political skill in building an alliance with other crusader states.

In simple terms, suzerainty equated to over-lordship, and if the king of Jerusalem held suzerainty over Antioch it meant that while although technically the Principality was recognized as independent and enjoyed aspects of self-rule, the practicalities of this independence were limited.

A plot was hatched between the new generation of rulers in the states of Outremer to rid themselves of the over-lordship of Jerusalem once and for all. News of the plan reached the ears of certain Frankish noblemen who were not sympathetic to Alice's cause, and who tipped off Fulk in Jerusalem. The new king immediately began to move his army north, to put down Alice's rebellion and neutralize the unrest in Antioch for a second time.

Antioch lies in the southernmost province of modern Turkey, and to reach it from Jerusalem, one has to pass through modern-day Lebanon, which in the 12th century was the county of Tripoli. When the royal army reached the city of Beirut, King Fulk found that his way was barred by Alice's ally, the Count of Tripoli. Fuming at this insubordination, Fulk loaded his army onto ships and sailed to Antioch.

The king had little difficulty in subduing the city, Alice was not a military leader and had no great army to speak of. Furthermore, Alice had once again failed to ensure the cooperation of the nobles of the city, and so Fulk was able to take control with relatively little difficulty. With the capitulation of Antioch, and the subsequent defeat of her

allies, Alice was forced once again to flee to Latakieh, where she would bide her time, hatching one final plan.

While short-lived, this hastily patched up civil war nevertheless left dents in the armies of both Tripoli and of Jerusalem. Fulk and his advisors decided that Alice's dreams of regency and rule in Antioch needed to be extinguished once and for all.

Surprisingly, Alice was permitted to return to Antioch not long after this conflict, but not as regent, instead under a new government installed by Fulk. Fuming, Alice began to once again marshal her forces in one final attempt to take control of the principality. It was her life's ambition to rule Antioch and once again, she claimed regency and brought the great gates of the city swinging shut and declared herself against Fulk and Jerusalem.

Curiously, King Fulk did not react. No army was sent to Antioch, Alice ruled unchallenged. The princess may have breathed a sigh of relief, believing that perhaps her sister the Queen had intervened on her behalf.

During this period of eerie quiet, another curious incident occurred: a suitor arrived at the gates of Antioch, and offered to wed Alice.

The young man in question was Raymond of Poitiers, 'of noble blood and ancient lineage'. According to those chroniclers that knew him, he was a charming and elegant prince. He was devout, skilled in war, good looking, and generous. This was an attractive offer to Alice, Raymond was only a few years her junior and it may have seemed like a blessed compromise when this man showed up out of nowhere to pay her suit. While Alice had once sought to rule Antioch in her own right, her position had deteriorated in the wake of two failed rebellions, and perhaps she could now see the wisdom of marrying a powerful lord of attractive countenance who could help her retain control of her beloved city.

Indeed, he did seem to appear from nowhere, as he had travelled in disguise to Antioch, and Alice knew nothing of his arrival until he was on her doorstep. The patriarch, anxious no doubt to restore order to the principality under a traditional male ruler, assured her that Raymond was a good match, handsome as he was, from a good family, a similar age to her, and offering promises of co-rulership. Alice, under the patriarch's guidance, consented, and the young man was admitted to the city. The princess set about making preparations for her long awaited second marriage.

No sooner was Raymond admitted and Alice's wedding preparations commenced, than another wedding took place in secret unbeknownst to Alice. The bride was Alice's daughter, the little Constance of Antioch, and the groom none other than Raymond of Poitiers.

While Alice had been busy preparing for what she imagined to be her own wedding, no doubt ordering food and decorations for a feast, her assumed fiancé had married her eight-year-old daughter instead. Beyond the personal mortification this must have caused

Alice, this marriage effectively cut her out of the line of succession and positioned Raymond to be the next Prince of Antioch. This scheme had been Fulk's brain child, and it had been his emissaries that had proposed the match to Raymond in England and smuggled him out to Antioch.

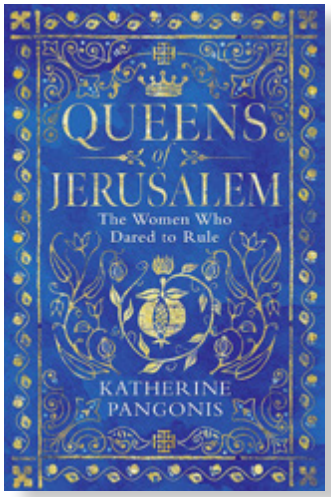
Alice had been duped. This was her final defeat. Consumed with rage and humiliation, she fled the city, retiring to Latakieh where she would pass the rest of her days in quiet isolation. With the marriage of Princess Constance, any claim Alice had had to regency was nullified with immediate effect: Constance was the heir to the city, Alice only a guardian, and a mother is second place to a husband. Alice was publicly humiliated, and her daughter wed to a man four times her age.

This was an anticlimactic end to a career that, while ill-fated, had been exceptional for a woman at that time. Alice's remarkable qualities and unrelenting determination to seize agency have been deliberately discredited throughout history. In the Middle Ages, the most effective way was to undermine her femininity. In describing Alice's rebellions, William of Tyre is at pains to state that Alice was a bad and unnatural mother: he asserts that the child, Constance, 'did not stand high in the favour of her mother' and that 'Alice was determined to disinherit her daughter and keep the principality for herself in perpetuity.'

This kind of petty yet damning criticism was designed to keep women in their place and prevent them from seizing power. Alice's rebellions were not the actions of a 'flighty' or 'silly' woman but rather were political endeavours which challenged the pre-eminence of the Kingdom of Jerusalem over the Principality of Antioch. She was defeated by lack of military strength and ultimately was deceived by Fulk, the Patriarch of Antioch and Raymond of Poitiers. The remarkable career of Alice of Antioch deserves greater recognition than it has hitherto received.

Queens of Jerusalem: The Women Who Dared to Rule

Katherine Pangonis



Katherine Pangonis is a historian specialising in the medieval world of the Mediterranean and Middle East. She holds MA degrees in literature and history from the University of Oxford and University College London. *Queens of Jerusalem: The Women Who Dared to Rule* is her first book.

SHORT STORY

Guile

J.A. Ironside

J.A.Ironside takes us back to Richard II's planned invasion of Scotland in 1385, prompted by the French army's presence north of the English border.

Durham
September 1385

Gregory Maudesley, first Baron of Wynnstree, loyal knight of King Richard II and all-round misanthrope, yanked his head back from the cot window and shoved the shutter into place. Half a second later his swift action was rewarded by the thunk thunk thunk of three arrowheads embedding themselves in the wood, instead of his skull. The third arrow actually splintered the wood and half emerged through the shutter.

"They're still out there, then?" Ghent said, idly testing the edge of his knife with the pad of a forefinger.

Gregory shot the young knight a sour look. "Why don't you play look-out next time?"

"I suppose I'd present a smaller target." Ghent grinned slyly. "Not to mention a prettier one."

Gregory snorted. He towered over most men by at least half a foot, more if they weren't tall to begin with, and his breadth was in proportion to his height. Perhaps there was some truth in Ghent's suggestion that Gregory was an easy target – he had plenty of scars as evidence. In contrast, Sir Bartholomew Ghent was reckoned to be the picture of handsome knighthood, with the fashionable manners and quicksilver tongue to match.

"Remind me why I don't just throw you out for the Scots to play with?"

"Perhaps because you're going to need someone who's handy with a sword in the very near future?" Ghent glanced at the shutter, which shuddered under the blow of another arrow. "I thought the Scots were no great bowmen."

"They can shoot as well as an English or Welshman. They're just not good at leveraging the ability during battle," Gregory replied. They needed to get out of here. Fall back and regroup with the rest of his men.

"All evidence to the contrary," Ghent said, as the shutter trembled again.

Gregory's mouth pulled into a flat line. "The French appear to be much better at deploying archers." A flash of brightness leapt against the ruined shutter, hot and radiant against the cool night. The first

Jean de Vienne

warning scents of smoke curled through the room. “Bollocks in hell!”

“They’ve set the thatch alight,” Ghent said, sounding alarmed for the first time.

“I hate it when they try to burn me alive,” Gregory muttered. “Out through the back. Head for the church. Stop for no one. Let’s see if you can swing your sword as fast as you can flap your jaw.”

They stood by the rear door, swords drawn, snapping the visors of their helmets down. Gregory chose his moment, then charged, bellowing, out into the fire-lit chaos of a Scottish border raid. There were only two men anywhere near the door and they were both facing the wrong way. French, judging from the armour. Perhaps they had not thought anyone who might truly pose a threat was inside such a mean dwelling. Gregory took the nearest man down with a blow that cleaved through the meat between neck and shoulder before the luckless soldier had fully turned to face him. A grunt and a limp, wet thud told him that Ghent had disposed of his own target with as little fanfare.

They pelted into the thickening smoke, feet squelching in the mud, while fires gathered strength and sent leaping, demonic shadows through the narrow streets. The people of this suburb appeared to have abandoned it before the Scottish-French army arrived, fortunately for them. With luck, the Scots would employ their usual smash and grab tactics before returning across the border. Gregory had other matters to concern him.

Figures loomed ahead, indistinct in the smoke. Gregory signalled to Ghent and they turned sharply to the left, following the narrow cut between the houses until it opened on to the edge of a churchyard. They crept around the edge of the church, finding the small south door of the transept damaged but negotiable.

Entering the church, Gregory found himself suddenly nose to blade tip, and then Cuthbert lowered his dagger with a jubilant cry of “My lord!”

Muscles in Gregory’s back he had not even realised were locked, relaxed. “Young fool! Don’t try to hold up a man in full armour with a piddly little knife.”

Cuthbert was unruffled by his master’s tone. “Better distance to stab him from if he turned out to be French.” He grinned, the unloveliness of his crooked teeth, bulbous eyes and lanky, half grown frame somehow completely overshadowed by the

expression, so that he looked momentarily angelic.

"Less talk, lad. Put your back into it and help us barricade the door."

Gregory gestured to Ghent who sighed but also picked up the end of one of the wooden pews. Even with the door barred, their shelter was temporary. The only benefit was that St Giles' appeared to have been looted already, so with luck they would have time to come up with a plan before the marauders returned.

He found to his relief, that Johnson and Rollo were not only alive, but had blocked the main entrance into the church. It was best not to show too much favouritism as a lord but both men were solid, reliable, career men-at-arms. They were completely unalike in all respects – Rollo narrow, lean and laconic; Johnson tall, broad and verbose – save in their loyalty to Gregory. He was glad to have them with him. Of the rest of the party, five of the six men had managed to make it to St Giles. Gregory spared a momentary thought for the poor sod now lost amongst the chaos outside, before setting men to watch while he discussed options with the others. It was supposed to have been a simple mission; track, locate and deliver a message to the king's half-brother, John Holland. But of course, the hot-headed fool had fled straight in the direction of the marauding Scots.

Nothing was ever simple.

Gregory signalled Ghent to join the others, after a moment he called Cuthbert over too. The boy might only be sixteen and along as a servant rather than a man-at-arms, but he had surprising insights at times. Gregory was prepared to hear any idea that would get them out of this mess.

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It had started with an ill-advised campaign in Scotland. The king was almost eighteen-years-old and had no notable battle credits to his name. When France renewed its alliance with Scotland, it had seemed the perfect time for Richard to display a hitherto unseen gift for command, not least since it would make the older, more discontent members of the court more sanguine in his rulership. The king's uncle, John of Gaunt, had been in favour of a campaign in France but parliament had refused to fund such an excursion. When a sizeable French army, led by the chevalier Jean de Vienne, had arrived in Scotland, the plan had changed to the raising of an English army which would engage the Scots in battle on their own land.

It had not gone well.

In hindsight, Gregory thought His Grace, the Duke of Lancaster, ought to have known better than to go along with the scheme since he had led a failed incursion in Scotland only the year before. Perhaps the king had intended the invasion of an English army, fourteen thousand strong, as a *chevauchée* – a punitive march to demonstrate to the Scots the consequences of them being but poor keepers of the treaty. Or perhaps it was to impress upon them the importance of signing a new treaty once the previous one expired. Whatever the reasoning, the Scots responded to the invasion in their time-honoured fashion. They declined to engage

Richard II

with the far larger army and disappeared into the highlands, scorching the earth as they went and leaving nothing for the English army to forage.

After less than two weeks of starving in Edinburgh, Richard declared that they would return to England. Gregory suspected that the young king's heart had not really been in the endeavour, some of which could be laid at his half-brother's door.

On the way to Scotland, John Holland had murdered Richard's close friend, Sir Ralph Stafford. No one quite knew what had caused the altercation and Holland had fled before the king's justice could catch up with him. Richard had been equal parts bereft and enraged, cursing his half-brother for a common murderer, and confiscating all his properties and titles. But the damage was done. When the English army finally arrived in Scotland, it was divided and ill-led, with far more violent quarrelling occurring between different houses and allegiances, than between the English and the Scots.

The final straw had been word of the death of the Princess of Wales, Richard's mother. Those who liked to embellish a tale said she had died of a broken heart due to the rift between two of her sons. Gregory, who had met the king's mother on several occasions, found such fancies laughable. If the Princess of Wales had such a prosaic organ as a heart, he was fairly certain it was made of equal parts granite and steel. Her death was one more blow than the young king could sustain, however, especially in the face of bickering captains, few successes on campaign and a hungry army that was about to turn on itself.

Gregory had thought that was the end of the matter until Richard had summoned him.

"I require you to find my brother, Maudesley," Richard had said. "Take what men you need, but be sure you may trust them."

Gregory had taken this to mean *be sure none of them have particular ties to any of the feuding factions*. "As you will, Sire. What would you have me do when I find him?"

Richard's dark, clever gaze had been full of conflict as it met Gregory's. "I wish you to deliver a message and then bring him home."

"To face justice?"

"To see about repairing the breach between us," Richard had said. "I do not know if I can forgive him but for the sake of our dead mother, he must be heard and if necessary, tried as his station demands."

Gregory had not protested that as a baron, he was no mere messenger. His concerns had lain elsewhere. "I am not the most likely choice for this task, Your Majesty. In truth, I'm as likely to offend your brother as to persuade him."

Richard had smiled then, one of his peculiar, sharp, secret smiles. "That, Maudesley, is why he will believe me to be in earnest."

What Gregory and his men lacked in polish and fashionable manners, they more than made up for in efficiency. Gregory had lived as a mercenary for ten years before inheriting his father's demesne, and was used to applying skills few other nobles ever had to acquire. Holland, hearing word that 'the king's dog' was following him, had led them on a merry dance but had miscalculated in flirting with the Scottish army. Somewhere in this benighted and burning bishopric, the king's half-brother was hiding from the raiders, well aware that his danger from Gregory was nothing to the danger he faced from the Scots. Holland would be a valuable hostage indeed. The Scots might be able to rebuild half of Edinburgh with his ransom.

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"Way I see it," Rollo said, "escaping is less of a problem than completing the mission."

"How exactly do you suggest we find Holland in the middle of a raid?" Ghent said. "Perhaps we might all go and stand in the smoke and call his name. Whoever he goes to, is permitted to keep him."

"Doubt the king's brother would thank you for being compared to a stray cur," Rollo said, without rancour. He seemed not to resent the young knight's sarcasm. Gregory had never seen Rollo lose his temper; the man merely killed whoever needed killing and moved calmly on. It was a little unnerving.

"My lord," Cuthbert began, then wilted under the glare Ghent levelled at him.

"Go on," Gregory said.

"We're desperate enough to take the advice of servants now, are we?" Ghent muttered.

Gregory turned to the younger knight, hands curled into fists, expression dangerously pleasant. "If you've nothing more useful to add Sir Ghent, take a turn on watch. Perhaps the man who replaces you will have more to contribute."

Ghent's mouth fell open as he looked from Gregory to Cuthbert and back. "Yes, my lord." His jaw clenched and walked away.

Gregory bit back his exasperation and ignored the curious glances of the other men. "Go on, Cuthbert."

The boy swallowed. "It's only that we know the king's brother was meant to be staying at *The White Horse*. So if it's only that we need to get there, retrieve him and leave, we can do it, I reckon. The inn's only about a mile away."

"But?" Gregory prompted. Normally he couldn't get Cuthbert to shut up. Despite earning out his indenture and

being presented with arms two years ago, however, Cuthbert was clearly shy of being too outspoken before so many qualified men-at-arms.

"Is his lordship likely to have noticed the raid and stayed put, knowing he'd be a target because of his value as a hostage?" Cuthbert said.

"Holland has a vile temper," Johnson snorted. "He's managed to pick fights with far less cause. The boy's right, my lord. If we go to *The White Horse*, we're as like to find that Holland has charged half the Scottish-French army in a rage."

"Reckon we go to the inn anyway," Rollo said. "We need to know for certain."

"If his lordship's been captured, they might not know who he is yet," Cuthbert said. "Maybe we could free him with no one the wiser?"

The man Ghent had relieved arrived then and Gregory questioned him about the direction of the violence. It seemed the army was sweeping east, which gave them a small window of time during which to reach the inn and find out what had happened. Gregory ordered his men into two groups. They were to make their way as stealthily as possible, only fighting if there was no other option.

"Try not to die," Gregory added. "I hate having to find replacements."

Johnson grinned.

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A half-full ale jug hurtled out of the gloom. Gregory ducked just in time and it struck the door post, the earthenware shattering and scattering pale brown droplets. He was starting to get fed up of missiles of varying types being aimed at his head.

"We intend no harm," he called, trying for a soothing cadence and failing utterly.

"A likely story! Great, scarred brute like you!" A broad, amply padded woman with the sort of arms you'd expect on someone who spent much of their time shifting barrels of ale and knocking drunken heads together, appeared behind the bar. She hefted another jug and let it fly. "Piss off! There's nothing left to steal!"

Gregory and Ghent only just managed to dive out of the way. Her aim was terrifying.

"Truly, Mistress Innkeep, we only want to ask a few questions," Ghent gasped out the words in between several bouts of ducking and weaving, as tankards and mugs filled the air. His usual charm failed to find its mark with the enraged proprietress.

"We don't have time for this," Johnson grumbled.

At the sight of yet another huge man trying to make his way into her inn, the woman let out a shriek of rage, taking up a wicked looking butcher's knife in one hand and a cudgel in the other. Gregory was just considering making a dive for her, hoping that the shock of the attack wouldn't give her time to stab him before he disarmed her, when Cuthbert bobbed up from behind an overturned table.

"We're not Scots. Or French," he said. "We're English. The king sent us."

The woman frowned but the knife in her hand lowered a quarter inch. "The king?"

"We're looking for someone," Cuthbert went on. "That's my master, Baron

Attack on Wark Castle

Maudesley of Essex."

Whether it was because Cuthbert was still only a boy or because he simply had the gift of making people trust him, and even like him on short acquaintance, the woman looked at Gregory again. Whatever she saw convinced her he was no Scot. An expression of horror crossed her face and she set the knife down, bobbing a quick bow.

"My lord...forgive my hasty actions."

Gregory waved her apology off. "We gave you a fright. Answer a few questions and we'll not trouble you further."

She nodded, glaring sideways at Ghent as he helped himself to an unbroken jug of ale but not protesting. "How may I serve you, my lord?"

"You had a noble guest staying here," Gregory said. "I have been sent with a message for him."

"I know who you mean, lord baron, but I'm sorry to tell you that he's gone." Her manner was deferential but she met his gaze squarely. "You can see from the state of the place that the Scots have been through here. Took everything they could carry. I told his lordship to hide. Next thing I know, he's charging down the stairs in his nightshirt, waving a dagger about."

"Was he killed?" Ghent demanded.

The innkeeper gave him a look of supreme disdain. "No. He was taken prisoner. Maybe one of those ruffians recognised him."

"That's it then," Johnson said unhelpfully.

Gregory swore under his breath, temples pounding with fury. The stupid young hothead. First murdering the king's companion, then leading them across half Christendom instead of waiting to hear what they'd been sent to say. And now, when he had an opportunity to hide, Holland had thrown himself into a fight he could not win and got himself taken hostage. The king was not going to be pleased.

"When did this happen?" Gregory said.

"Happen, a half hour or so," the woman replied.

"My lord, we may still have time," Cuthbert said, bubbling with enthusiasm once more.

"Move out," Gregory told his men. "Ghent make sure you pay for that ale." He tossed a coin to the innkeeper. "For your trouble."

They didn't stay to hear her thanks.

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In the end, the plan was simple. They watched from a distance as prisoners were lined up so the Scots and French could see

who they'd caught. Cuthbert, playing the part of a groom, had managed to get close enough to the prisoners to identify Holland and pass on a short message. On no account was he to admit to his birth, name or station. Instead, he should play the fool. Gregory suppressed a pang of anxiety until Cuthbert returned, affirming that he had delivered the message, although he wasn't certain just how much Holland intended to comply. They would just have to try anyway, Gregory decided.

"There's one other thing, my lord," Cuthbert said. "I heard some of the other servants talking. The Warden of West March is one of the commanders."

Gregory groaned.

"West March?" Ghent said. "Isn't that Archibald Douglas' seat?"

"The very same." Gregory glared. "Alienor is not going to be best pleased."

"So, it *is* your wife's father leading this border raid?" Ghent needled.

"It would appear so," Gregory said morosely. "Let's hope this doesn't disintegrate into violence." He did not relish the thought of having to explain to his wife that he'd been forced to kill her father, even if Alienor – who didn't have a good thing to say about the man – probably wouldn't be terribly distressed by such a turn of events.

"If it does, he's as likely to kill you, Maudesley," Ghent said. "I imagine a man doesn't earn the name 'Archibald the Grim' without being a ruthless customer. You may have met your match."

"I'd appreciate you not taking such obvious delight in my impending demise," Gregory said drily.

"Could this be turned to good account?" Rollo mused. "If he's kin, he might be more willing to see you, my lord."

"Spoken like a man without a father-in-law." Ghent laughed harshly.

Privately, Gregory agreed with Ghent. Everything he'd heard about Alienor's father suggested the man was shrewd, ruthless and calculating. A man did not go from dubious beginnings to becoming one of the wealthiest, most influential and powerful landowners in Scotland by being pleasant.

"We cannot leave until we've at least tried to regain Holland," Gregory said. And so, they went ahead with their plan.

Gregory was not a man given to nervous attacks, but he felt a hint of trepidation as he entered the Archibald's presence. He had never intended to meet his father-in-law at all and certainly not under these circumstances. The Scottish-French army had taken up temporary quarters in the bishop's palace, near the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin and St Cuthbert – where the bones of the latter lay entombed.

Archibald Douglas did not rise when Gregory was shown in, trailing Cuthbert walking at a respectful distance, and a disarmed and therefore grumpy, Bartholomew Ghent. He eyed Gregory speculatively. It reminded the knight sharply of the way Alienor looked at a person she was sizing up. In his turn, Gregory took the measure of his father-in-law, searching for likenesses with his wife. Archibald the Grim had the same dark hair and quick, direct gaze as his daughter, but

there the similarities ended. He was a big man – nearly as big as Gregory himself – with a face and figure made for war rather than poetry and tourneys. Gregory had heard that Black Archibald had been accused of being a cook's son; that he was a changeling hence his saturnine looks and occasional bouts of strategic cruelty. Gregory's overriding impression was that here sat a man, well into his middle years, who was not done yet. Whose ambition and intelligence would carry him further as long as his frame would allow it. Middle aged or no, Archibald appeared to be in dangerously good physical condition.

"You'll take some wine?" Archibald said, lowland Scottish accent making the words deceptively soft. "Or you'd prefer a dram of *uisge beatha*?"

"Wine. My thanks." Gregory took a seat where Archibald indicated. Ghent and Cuthbert were left to stand.

"You're a long way from home, Baron Maudesley," Archibald commented.

Gregory sipped the wine. Excellent stuff – no doubt from the bishop's private store. "So are you, my lord."

"Merely passing through." Archibald's dark eyes gleamed and Gregory realised the man was enjoying himself. "But your business is more urgent, I understand?"

"The king sent me to perform commissions on his behalf, which is how I find myself in Durham. I am troubling you now because I have reason to suspect that you're holding one of my servants under the misapprehension that he's a man of greater consequence," Gregory said.

"And you would like this servant back?" Archibald said.

Gregory strongly suspected that the March Lord was playing with him. "Yes, my lord."

"It's strange that a servant of yours should stray into our net. I understood Wynnstree to be in Essex. Do you normally allow your servants to roam so freely?" Archibald's gaze flicked first to Cuthbert then to Ghent.

"I didn't say he was a good servant," Gregory said, then cursed himself for picking holes in his own logic.

"I'm surprised you want him back in that case."

"I can't beat a better standard of work into him if you take him back to Scotland." Gregory reached for a callous tone.

Archibald raised an eyebrow. "You're willing to pay a servant's ransom in order to retrieve a man for chastisement? He must have displeased you gravely, Baron Maudesley."

"You can have no idea," Gregory said feelingly. He wished it was possible to beat some sense into John Holland. And he wished that Archibald did not have the same knack for destroying an opponent in conversation that Alienor had. He'd forgotten how thoroughly uncomfortable it was to be on the receiving end of such tactics. Alienor's thorns had been trimmed by affection, with her husband at least.

"I suppose we can come to some arrangement," Archibald said, with the lazy menace of a lounging tiger. "Say eighty shillings in ransom. A fair price for a servant, I think?"

Gregory ground his teeth. It was a steep

sum, even if he would insist on Holland returning it to him later. "That sounds reasonable."

"Then we'll go, by and by, and view the prisoners. If you can pick out the man in question and provide witnesses that he is as you say, there should be no trouble." Archibald smiled to himself. "Of course, if he's claimed greater importance than he's entitled to, we'll not be letting him go."

Gregory sincerely hoped Holland had kept his mouth shut.

"You've time for a tale while we drink our wine, I trust?" Archibald said.

"Yes, though I'm no storyteller." Gregory would much rather have abandoned the wine, collected Holland and been on his way. He knew from his wife, however, that amongst the Scots, refusing a tale was a grave insult.

"I shall tell it," Archibald said. "Did you know that when I was a lad, I fought at the battle of Poitiers? I fought on the side of the French of course."

Gregory did not seem to be required to speak so he stayed silent. He heard Ghent shifting restlessly from foot to foot behind him.

"I was captured and taken hostage by the English, Baron Maudesley. Not a grand start to a military career." That elliptical smile again. "Do you know how I was won free?"

"No, my lord." A sinking sensation yawed in Gregory's gut.

"Aye well, Sir William Ramsey, who was likewise a prisoner of the English, started a hue and cry. He accused me of theft. Said I'd stolen his cousin's armour. He cuffed me up and down the enemy lines, forcing me to shed it. He took my shoes. And when a guard said I was the son of a laird and should be respected, Ramsey angrily told the man I was a mere scullion and not worth the trouble of binding. He paid forty shillings for my release and sent me out into the ruined field, where the dead of battle still lay, with a boot up my arse." An almost fond light entered Archibald's eyes. "And so, he tricked the great ransom I'd have brought out of English hands."

Gregory felt as if his expression was carved out of granite. The bastard knew. He'd been toying with his son-in-law. "That's quite a tale, my lord."

"Isn't it?" Archibald said affably. "Do you know why I told you this tale?"

Gregory shook his head. It was useless to pretend further. The Scot held all the advantage.

"I have a strong conviction that there should be balance, at least if a man wants his course to run smooth. I paid Ramsey back in coin and in favours. But it was a good deed and that's not so easily redressed." He set his goblet down and rose. "Now I'm the one holding the life of another, potentially valuable man. I see a chance for balancing the scales here. But, Maudesley, be you wed to my daughter or no, I expect debts to me to be paid."

Gregory had also stood up. "What is the price of your assistance?"

Archibald glared at him. "I do a good deed in return for the one I benefitted from. There's no *price*. But one day, I may ask a favour." He moved in on Gregory so they were almost nose to nose. "And when that

day comes, Maudesley, you'll be glad to do that favour."

"And it threaten neither my family, my honour nor my king, no doubt I will." Gregory matched him glare for glare.

Archibald chuckled. "Good enough."

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Gregory's party left Durham the following morning. John Holland rode in the midst of them, happy enough to return to London having experienced the contrast of Scottish hospitality. He had managed not to state his name and lineage for all and sundry to hear, so when Archibald Douglas told his co-leaders that the man was of no consequence and would be released into the keeping of his daughter's husband, they were willing to let Holland go. Gregory chose not to dwell on any future favours his father-in-law might require. At present, it was a small price to pay for returning the king's half-brother and ending the current round of squabbles between noble houses.

There was nothing they could do about the border raids and he was certain that by the time the English March Lords arrived, the Scots would be back in Scotland, followed by the increasingly disgruntled French forces. Cuthbert had overheard a few French soldiers talking to their Scottish comrades. From what the boy had been able to glean, the French had not stopped complaining – about the barbarism of their hosts, the quality of the food, the lack of wine, the weather – since they had arrived. It was not an alliance that promised a permanent army of the two peoples. In time, the Scots would no doubt sign a new treaty and everyone would go back to raiding each other's borders and stealing each other's sheep and cattle as they had for the last few hundred years.

"I'm still not sure how you pulled that off, Maudesley," Ghent commented. "Did he take a liking to you?"

Gregory snorted. "Nothing so ridiculous."

"What then?"

"Archibald the Grim believes in investing in the future and is keen to have potential allies in many kingdoms."

At least Gregory thought that's what had happened. He supposed Archibald had not desperately needed the money the ransom of the king's brother would have brought. He suspected Alienor would have greater insights into her father's motives.

For now, it was enough to be going home.

The End.

The King's Knight: The Complete Campaigns

J.A.Ironside

J.A.Ironside is a novelist and author of *Revolt, Treason and Tyrant,* all part of *The King's Knight* series.

INTERVIEW

The Queen's Rival

Anne O'Brien

Interviewed by Amy McElroy

The Sunday Times best-selling author Anne O'Brien returns with a gripping new historical romance, *The Royal Game*, to be published in September 2021. With over 700,000 copies sold, O'Brien manages to reinvent historical fiction by giving a voice to women of the medieval age, otherwise overlooked. We sat down with her to discuss her work, the agency of women, and her own process of writing historical fiction.

***The Royal Game* is due to be published in September 2021, can you tell us a little about it and what made you focus on the Paston family?**

It was the Paston women who encouraged me to write this book about the family. They open a window for us into the life of a vibrant and ambitious family in the fifteenth century. The Paston men are interesting characters, but it was the women who intrigued me most. What a remarkable group of women they were, through the generations. It pleased me to allow their voices to be heard, loud and clear, from distant Norfolk. And what better way to discover the Paston men than through the eyes of the women in their lives?

This is a tale of social climbing. Of female household management, of driving ambition, of love affairs gone heartbreakingly wrong, and marriages that became perfectly right. Then there was the endless battle over land-ownership, to secure for the Pastons the inheritance from Sir John Fastolf, the jewel in the Paston crown, Caister Castle. In the background, the Wars of the Roses rumbled on, where a change of King could mean success or failure for the Pastons. They were forced to decide which side to support for their best interests, Lancaster or York.

How could I resist writing about them, a perfect example of a family on the rise? A family of resilient and courageous, and sometimes rebellious, women.

***The Queen's Rival* featuring Cecily Neville is your most recently published**

novel. What do you think made Cecily different from most females during the Wars of the Roses?

Cecily Neville, Duchess of York, is one of the most appealing women of English medieval history. Many medieval women verge towards the invisible, two dimensional entities without character or influence; Cecily Neville is an exception, and yet I thought that she had been neglected. I would put that right.

The Wars of the Roses are both vast in scope and complex in the range of family connections. So was Cecily's own Neville family with its royal blood inherited through their mother Joan, Countess of Westmoreland, daughter of John of Gaunt. In true regal fashion Cecily insisted that I write about her.

Cecily was remarkable, living for eighty years through five reigns, interacting with a vast *dramatis personae* of famous, infamous, and influential characters in the tumultuous years of the Wars of the Roses. She was mother of two kings, Edward IV and Richard III, and grand-mother to a Queen Consort, Elizabeth of York, who stepped across the divide between York and Lancaster and married King Henry VII.

On the surface this would seem to be a life bringing Cecily great satisfaction and personal achievement, but it was also a life of tragedy. Cecily outlived all but two of her twelve children, some dying in infancy, others meeting terrible ends. George, Duke of Clarence, was executed for treason, on the orders of his brother King Edward, in the Tower of London. Richard III died on the battlefield at Bosworth; Edmund of Rutland met his end in an act of revenge after the Battle of Wakefield. And what heartbreak Cecily must have suffered with the death of her husband, Richard Duke of York, at Wakefield.

Cecily's life also witnessed its share of scandal. The rumour of her liaison with the common archer Blaybourne, thus prompting the blot of illegitimacy against King Edward IV, was too valuable a rumour to ignore for those such as the Earl of Warwick and Duke of Clarence who would willingly depose Edward. Was the scandal true? Unlikely, but the widespread gossip must be faced. How difficult for a woman of Cecily's pride to accept that her own family would use such false dishonour to destroy her reputation.

Would such tragedy obliterate the strength of Cecily's character? Cecily worked tirelessly for the House of York. She supported her children as far as it was possible, even George of Clarence until reinstatement was no longer possible. In Ludlow, abandoned by her husband, Cecily faced a leaderless Lancastrian army and howling mob intent on plundering the town. She proved to be a woman of great courage. As old age approached, she devoted herself to a life of duty and formidable piety. Cecily was the doyenne of late medieval history, a true heroine, the Queen who was never crowned.

The Royal Game

You are renowned for giving a voice to women of the medieval ages. What inspired you to do this?

Medieval women, even of the Royal Court, are for the most part anonymous. Were these wives and sisters and daughters so lacking in authority, in influence, or even in intelligence? Were they uneducated, fit for nothing but to be decorative witnesses to the daring or desperate ventures of their husbands? The impression is that medieval women remained solar-bound, waiting for their men-folk to return from war, plying a needle as they sang and prayed and gossiped in a feminine world.

Why is this so? They are rendered silent because they lived in a man's world, written by men, about the feats of men. Women are given no voice, not even royal women, except for the very few, such as the infamous Eleanor of Aquitaine whom it was difficult to silence, yet even she was incarcerated by an enraged Henry II for stirring rebellion amongst their sons. Women are recorded for us in their relationships with men: a daughter, a sister, a wife. They are skeletons without flesh, without even a physical description since medieval portraits are rare.
Yet it would seem to me improbable that they should have nothing to say about what they and their husbands were doing. How could they be mere onlookers, with no opinion of the people and the political goings-on around them? Women are rarely silent! I write about them to allow them centre-stage, to express their own views.

Of your books so far, which has been the

Constance of York, Lady Despenser, in *A Tapestry of Treason* presented me with some difficulties. Women who are high-minded, noble and principled, or women who are martyrs for their cause, are relatively easy to write about because the reader will instantly warm to them. Constance proved to be a completely different matter. She was ambitious and devious, as calculating and manipulating, as unprincipled as her men-folk.

How to make her likeable? Readers have to be allowed to understand Constance's reasoning behind her actions. They will, hopefully, have compassion for her even though they do not like her very much. As the main protagonist in the story, she must

**Cecily, Duchess of York,
by Edward Harding, 1792**

keep the reader interested and turning the pages even if her morality is questionable. She must of course be judged by the morals and tenets of the day in which she lived, but it still makes Constance an uncomfortable character. I quite liked her in the end!

Of all the women you have written about who has surprised you the most? Have there been any other surprises during your research?

Alice Perrers came to my attention in *The King's Concubine* with a bad reputation. Mistress of King Edward III, she was to blame for beguiling him into adultery after a lifetime of loyalty to his wife Philippa. Is that all she was, a mistress with devious intent? Taking money and land from the king and an affection that was not hers to take?

Alice was a remarkable business-woman in her own right, the wealthiest commoner in England in her day. Nor was her wealth based simply on gifts from King Edward. Alice used an agent, bought up land the length and breadth of England, and supervised the payment of rents to her coffers. She did not suffer fools who tried to take advantage of her. Did she steal the rings from Edward III's fingers as he lay dying? Perhaps she did but there was far more to Alice than an opportunist thief. I was impressed with her and enjoyed her progress.

The other surprise in almost every book I have written, except perhaps when writing about Catherine de Valois who was a pawn in the political game, is how involved these medieval Court women were in politics. Often it was covertly, influencing their families by letter or persuasion, gentle or otherwise. Sometimes as in the case of the magnificent Joan of Kent who married the Black Prince, it was overt. She was a political animal. I enjoy these women who enable me to give a definite political slant to my novels.

How do you decide who will be the focus of your next book? Are you able to give us a hint of what you're currently working on?

Elizabeth of York

For once this was an easy decision to make. This will be the Paston Family, Book Two. *The Royal Game* leaves the family in the desperate situation with the outbreak of the siege of Caister Castle which they have inherited from Sir John Fastolf. The Duke of Norfolk is proving to be a powerful enemy.

Book Two picks up the progress of the siege as well as the tragic marriage history of two of the Paston women, and one who had designs of becoming a Paston but whose hopes were shattered. The struggle to secure Paston status and land-holding continues through a pattern of success and failure, with some old characters, and some new ones from the next generation. Their story continues to be enthralling.

Is ther you'd recommend your books be read?

My books are all stand alone, mostly from the reigns of King Richard II through to King Henry VI and the Wars of the Roses. There is no compulsion to read in any particular order nor is it necessary to meet a particular character in a previous book. For those who like to read chronologically, or are interested in specific reigns, here is a useful list: https://www.anneobrienbooks.com/what-is-the-chronological-order-of-my-novels/

History is full of research rabbit holes. How do you remain focused on your subject?

Writing about women from their point of view demands focus since, out of necessity, it narrows down the events in which they are involved. They have to be present to experience what they know and discuss. This removes battles, invasions, and court cases as well as some political events unless the women can be written in realistically. However much I might wish to write about a battle, more often than not it is just not possible, and a second-hand description can destroy the vibrancy of the story.

And as with all historical fiction, the factual historical detail must be present but not in

King Edward IV

such thick layers as to detract from a good telling of the tale. A light touch is needed. It must also be worked into the drama. To 'bolt on' historical facts can be dire and depress the clash of characters, which for me is the essence of writing.

What would you like readers to take away with them when they have turned

Medieval history is not merely a clash of ambition between powerful adversaries to take the English crown. Here are stories of real people, about family; the joys, the heartaches, the tragedies of intimate family life. This is what I would like readers to enjoy and remember, the very personal nature of it, within the cut and thrust of bloody politics.

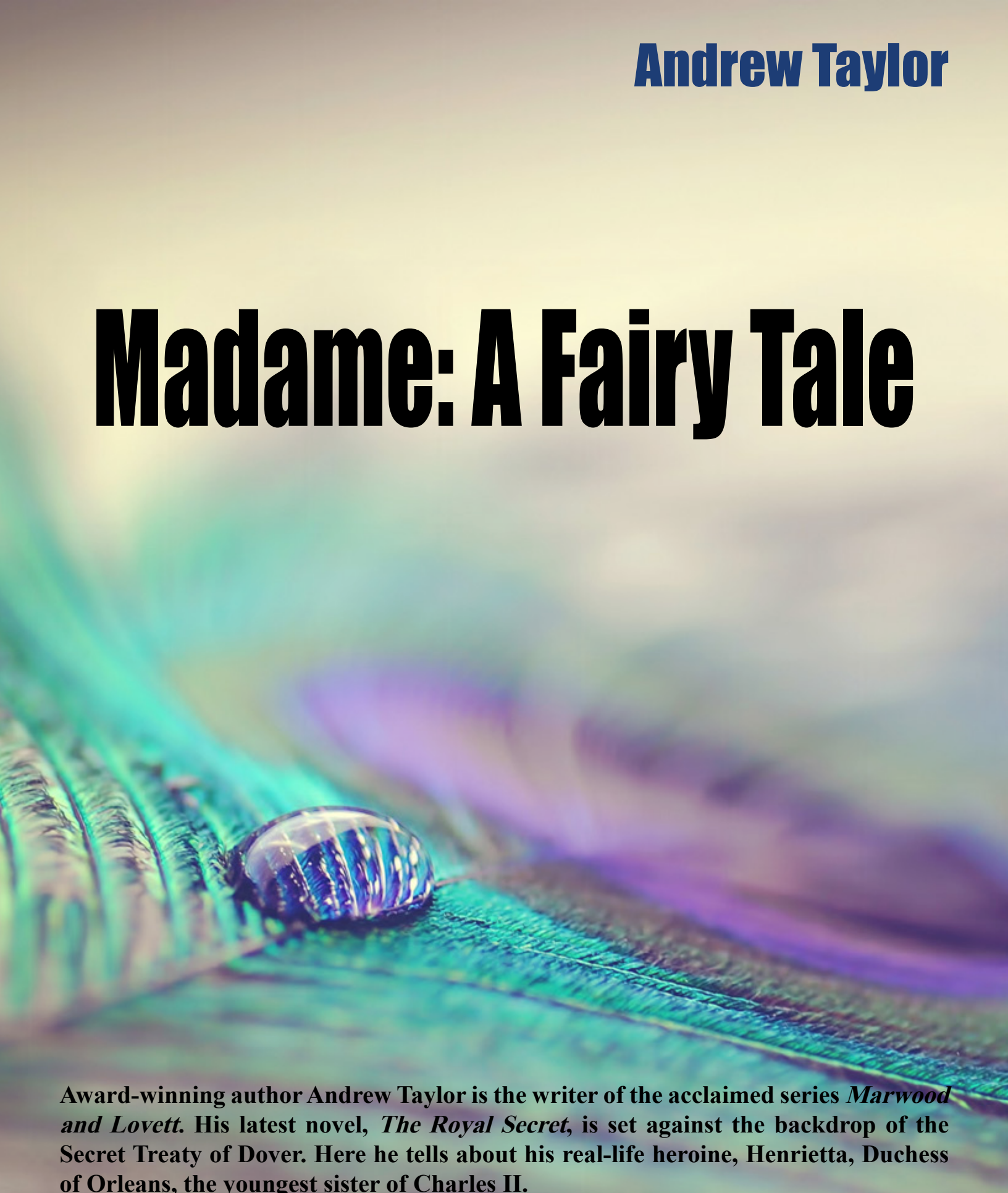
The Queen's Rival

Anne O'Brien

Anne O'Brien is a *Sunday Times* bestselling author. Her latest novel is *The Queen's Rival*.

Andrew Taylor

Madame: A Fairy Tale



Award-winning author Andrew Taylor is the writer of the acclaimed series *Marwood and Lovett*. His latest novel, *The Royal Secret*, is set against the backdrop of the Secret Treaty of Dover. Here he tells about his real-life heroine, Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans, the youngest sister of Charles II.

In 1646, a beggar-woman with a hump on her back set out from Oatlands in Surrey. She was travelling with another woman, two men, and a child. One of the men was her husband, and the child was her lively two-year-old son, Pierre. The little party walked for a hundred miles along the muddy roads and tangled lanes of south-east England, through a countryside scarred by the wounds of the Civil War. Their destination was Dover.

No one they met on the way paid much attention to the prattle of the little boy. He informed all and sundry that his name was not Pierre, and that the ragged suit he wore did not belong to him. He was the Princess, he said, but fortunately nobody was listening.

At Dover, the party boarded a French ship bound for Calais. Two of the men and one woman were servants in disguise. The hunchbacked beggar was Lady Dalkeith, the governess of Princess Henrietta, the fifth and last child of Charles I and Henrietta Maria. Born in Exeter on 16 June 1644, Henrietta had lived most of her short life under siege by Parliament's armies. When the city eventually surrendered, Parliament placed her in protective custody in Oatlands, a royal dower house. Lady Dalkeith decided to flee when she learned that the government intended to move the child to London.

Henrietta's flight from her father's enemies was the opening chapter in the story of a life that often feels like a fairy tale, the sort that ends badly. The princess never saw her father again. In France, she was reunited with her mother, Queen Henrietta Maria, who was a French princess by birth. Henrietta became known as Henriette Anne, as a compliment to their hostess Anne of Austria, who was Queen Regent to her young son, Louis XIV. During her short life, Henriette had several names and titles. After her marriage she was generally known as Madame. Nowadays, she is sometimes called Minette. That was the name her brother Charles used for her - certainly in one of his letters, and perhaps often between themselves.

At her father's command, Henriette had been baptised into the Church of England. Her mother, a fervent Catholic, soon changed that. In the seventeenth century, religion always had a political dimension. For the rest of her short life, Henriette clung to her Roman Catholic faith. Its hierarchical and authoritarian structure made it the natural spiritual home for many of those who believed that a monarch's right to rule, like the Papacy itself, had been personally ordained by God.

A French artist, Claude Mellan, sketched the princess when she was a child. The drawing is said to date from about 1650, when she would have been five or six years old; but to me she looks more like nine or ten. It shows a plainly dressed girl leaning on a table covered with a fringed cloth. She's wearing what looks like a sort of pinafore. Around her neck is a necklace of what might be beads but are probably pearls, the reliable indicator of 17th century status.

Henriette is standing in three-quarter view,

Henriette of England, Duchess of Orléans by Pierre Mignard

with her eyes looking not at the artist, it seems, but something over his shoulder. The small mouth is unsmiling. Her hair is tousled – some of it has escaped from the ribbon or whatever ties it back behind her head. There's a gleam of light reflected in the pupil of the nearer eye: perhaps she's looking through a window or through an inviting open door.

To me, she looks as if she has been playing in the garden. Then authority, in the form of her governess or her mother's *femme de chambre*, has dragged her into the house and told her to stand still while the artist draws her. She doesn't want to stand still and be drawn. She wants to be in the garden.

Henriette saw little of her brother Charles throughout the 1650s. He was elsewhere, trying to whip up support for his flagging cause. When, late in 1659, he arrived on a visit to his mother and sister at Colombes, the queen's country house, the princess had not seen him for five years. She was 15, he was 29. A rapport rapidly developed between them, a deep affection that lasted for the rest of their lives. It's probable that Charles trusted her more than anyone.

After the Restoration in 1660, Henriette's value in the marriage market rose steeply. It soon became clear to everyone that her cousin Philippe, Louis XIV's only brother, was infatuated with the vivacious 16-year-old princess. It was a brilliant match, welcomed by their relations.
But Madame de Lafayette, who was very close to Henriette, struck a warning note:
'Monsieur, the King's only brother, was by inclination as much disposed towards the pursuits of women as the King was averse to them. He was well-made…but with a stature and type of beauty more fitting to a princess than a prince…His vanity, it seemed, made him incapable of affection save of himself.'

By his own admission, Philippe fell out of love with his new wife within a fortnight of their marriage. By this time, his brother had made him the Duke of Orleans, the traditional title for the younger brother of a French king, and he was known as *Monsieur*. Henriette became *Madame*.

Philippe subjected his wife to persistent psychological abuse. His own emotional

King Charles II by Peter Lely

life revolved around strong attachments to male friends, particularly the ruthlessly manipulative Chevalier de Lorraine. With the active encouragement of the Chevalier and other friends, he came to hate her.

He did his dynastic duty, however, and slept with her when necessary. On occasion, he used sex maliciously as a means of control - notably during the weeks before Madame's last visit to England: had he succeeded in making her pregnant, she would not have been able to travel. By the time she died, Madame had had a number of pregnancies. Two of her daughters survived into adulthood.

As Madame's husband, Monsieur was legally her master. His cruelty to his wife was widely remarked and widely condemned. But even his brother, Louis XIV himself, was limited in what he could do to prevent it. Monsieur was untouchable.

During the 1660s, Madame played a leading part in the social and cultural life of the wealthiest and most glamorous court in Europe. Her life revolved around the great palaces of France. There were rumours of affairs - including one with Louis XIV himself - though the evidence is sketchy. Nevertheless, Monsieur was violently jealous, and he took it out on his wife. During the decade, her health slowly declined, partly perhaps because of the endless pregnancies.

Madame had many close and loyal friends of both sexes. Louis singled her out, again and again, for special attention, and his support to some extent protected her from the attacks of Monsieur and his favourites. Her religious faith grew steadily more important to her. So did her desire to bring her Protestant brother, the Supreme Head of the Church of England, to the True Faith of Rome.

In the seventeenth century, European politics was essentially a family business. Both Louis and Charles trusted Madame implicitly. When the two kings began privately to discuss a possible alliance between them, she was ideally placed to facilitate the negotiations through conversations with Louis and private letters to her brother. She represented the views of the one to the other,

Philippe of France Duke of Orléans by Pierre Mignard

and helped to smooth over their differences. In her way, she did her utmost to be loyal to them both.

To Madame's delight, one of the secret clauses was her brother's commitment to announce his conversion to the Roman Catholic faith. This was the 'Great Secret', and only a handful of Charles's most trusted advisers were aware of it.

In April 1670, Madame and a small suite (a mere 237 persons) crossed the Channel to Dover, where Charles II and his court were waiting to welcome them. It was here that the treaty was signed. When, after a joyful and rather longer visit than intended, Madame returned to France, Charles sailed part of the way with her. He came back for a last embrace three times. Colbert de Croissy, Louis's ambassador in England, wrote to his master that he:

'…had never known so sorrowful a leave-taking, or known before how much royal personages could love one another. It appeared during her stay at Dover that she had much more power over the King her brother than any other person in the world…'

Perhaps their grief was accentuated by the bitter knowledge that Monsieur was waiting in France for his wife's return. Louis wanted her to come to Versailles, but Monsieur refused. The unhappy couple went instead to their country house at St Cloud.

Because of its controversial nature, there are a number of eye-witnesses and other contemporary accounts of the events of Sunday, 29 June 1670. In the morning, Madame dined early and made a good meal, though usually she had little appetite. Afterwards she fell asleep. When she woke, she complained of a pain in the side, which was assumed to be indigestion. She asked for a glass of chicory water. As soon as she had drunk it, she collapsed in acute pain, crying out that she had been poisoned.

Monsieur's doctor, however, assured her that it was no more than an attack of colic. But Madame was convinced that she was dying. In the next few hours, Louis and his queen, along with assorted courtiers, physicians and priests, flocked to her bedside. Even

Monsieur appeared greatly upset - indeed he was so histrionically overcome with emotion that Madame begged him to leave her in peace.

At three o'clock the following morning she died with her favourite confessor beside her and a crucifix in her hand. Afterwards, some of the chicory water was given to Madame's dog. Her maid and several friends drank some too. Even Monsieur is said to have tried it. None of them suffered ill effects. But when they finally traced the cup from which Madame had drunk, they discovered that it had already been cleaned by - rather oddly, surely - putting in the fire.

There was, of course, a post-mortem. Louis's grief for his sister-in-law's death was entirely sincere. But he was alive to its political ramifications, and particularly to its potential effect on the fragile, recently concluded alliance. The rumour that Madame had been murdered spread rapidly across Europe. Suspicions centred on the Chevalier de Lorraine: it was alleged that he had orchestrated the poisoning from his exile in Rome.

The autopsy was performed by two French doctors and watched by two English ones. The Frenchmen found no evidence of poisoning and concluded that Madame had died of cholera. The English doctors were not entirely convinced. But both Charles and Louis accepted the verdict, and the majority of their contemporaries followed suit.

Most modern historians have agreed, accepting an early twentieth-century diagnosis, that Madame died from acute peritonitis, following the perforation of a duodenal ulcer. The fairy tale appears to have ended for her with a painful death from natural causes. Probably. But there will always be a doubt.

The Royal Secret

Andrew Taylor

Andrew Taylor is the three - time winner of the CWA Historical Dagger, and bestselling author of the Marwood and Lovett novels. In 2020 he won the HWA's Gold Crown, and his latest novel is *The Royal Secret.*

Dr Simon Elliott

Roman Britain's Lost IXth Legion

Simon Elliot is a historian, author, archaeologist and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Kent. His latest book, *Roman Britain's Missing Legion: What Really Happened to IX Hispana?* considers the evidence for the theories which aim to provide an explanation for the mysterious disappearance. In this article, he shares these theories, as well as a timeline of the IXth Legion.

The fate of the 5,500 men of *legio* IX *Hispana* is one of the greatest historical mysteries of all time. Uniquely among the Roman legions, of which there were over time more than 60 (and at any one time in the Empire a maximum of 33), we have no idea what happened to it. It simply disappears from history, and is a tale which I have loved researching for my recent book through Pen & Sword, *'Roman Britain's Missing: What Really Happened to legio IX Hispana.'*

This historical conundrum has grabbed the attention of academics, scholars and the wider public for hundreds of years. One of the first to write on the subject was British antiquarian John Horsley who published his *Britannia Romana: The Roman Antiquities of Britain* in 1732. In this work he detailed when each Roman legion arrived and left Britain. However, he noted that there was no leaving date for *legio* IX *Hispana*, a fact he found difficult to explain. Then, in the 1850s, the renowned German scholar Theodor Mommsen published his multi-volume History of Rome. In this he speculated that the IXth legion had been the subject of an uprising by the Brigantes tribe of northern Britain around AD 117/ 118, it being wiped out in its legionary fortress at York (Roman *Eboracum*). Mommsen speculated it was this event that prompted the new Emperor Hadrian to later visit Britain in AD 122 and initiate the construction of Hadrian's Wall.

Such was Mommsen's reputation that his theory became the received wisdom regarding the legion's fate well into the 20th century AD, when it was then popularized by a number of historical fiction works. One above all others cemented the fate of *legio* IX *Hispana* in the popular imagination. This was *The Eagle of the Ninth*, the seminal work published by children's author Rosemary Sutcliffe in 1954. Her second book, this told the story of her hero Marcus Flavius Aquila who travelled north of Hadrian's Wall to track down the fate of his father's legion, *legio* IX *Hispana*. Her conceit was that the IXth legion had been annihilated in the far north of Britain, beyond the northern border rather than in York, during yet another uprising. This novel proved as popular with adults as with children, capturing the imagination of an entire generation, and is still a bestseller to this day. The story of the IXth legion also became the subject of an eponymous BBC TV series in 1977, and later received the attentions of Hollywood with blockbusters such as 2010's *The Centurion* and 2011's *The Eagle*.

Given this level of popular interest in the fate of the IXth legion it is often difficult to separate fact from fiction. However, there are a number of incontestable hard facts known about the IXth legion, which enable us to speculate in an informed way regarding its fate. These are:

- 90/ 89 BC. The original IXth legion participated in the year long Siege of Asculum in the Social War in Italy when Gnaeus Pompeius Strabo led his Roman army to victory over their former Italian allies.
- 58 BC - 45 BC. This earlier IXth legion participated in Julius Caesar's

Lorica segmentata. Armour of this type would have been worn by a soldiers of the IXth legion in the Principate. Corbridge

Gallic conquests, including his two British incursions in 55 and 54 BC, and later in the civil wars when Caesar's *populares* supporters fought Pompey's *optimates* supporters in Greece, Egypt, Africa and Spain. It was then disbanded in 45 BC, for unknown reasons.

- 44/ 43 BC. The actual IXth legion that is the subject of popular interest was raised by Octavian shortly afterwards, from Caesarean veterans settled in Italy to counter the rebellion of Sextus Pompeius in Sicily.
- 42 BC. The new legion participated at the Battle of Philippi when Octavian and Mark Antony defeat the Caesarean assassins Gaius Cassius Longinus and Marcus Junius Brutus. It performed well and is shortly afterwards awarded a cognomen styling it *legio* IX *Macedonia*.
- 27 BC - 19 BC. The IXth legion participated in Augustus' Cantabrian Wars, the final stage of the Roman conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. The legion again fought with great bravery, afterwards staying in Spain long enough for its cognomen to change from *Macedonia* to *Hispaniensis*. This is later shortened to *Hispana*.
- c.10 BC. The IXth legion was redeployed to Aquileia in northeastern Italy.
- c. AD 14. The IXth legion was

Tombstone of a Roman standard bearer of legio IX Hispana, York

redeployed once more, to a legionary fortress in Pannonia on the Danube. It was one of three legions which mutinies over the living conditions there given it is forced to share the fortress with two other legions.

- AD 20. The IXth legion was sent to North Africa to support *legio* III Augusta in its campaigns against the Numidian rebel leader Tacfarinas. It participated in a major victory in AD 22.
- AD 22. The IXth legion moved to the legionary fortress at Sisak in modern Croatia, later returning to Pannonia.
- AD 43. Aulus Plautius led the Claudian invasion of Britain, with four legions including his own *legio* IX *Hispana* (the latter from the province of Pannonia where he had been governor). The legion played a full role in the early campaigns of conquest, which lead to the establishment of the original province of Britannia.
- AD 44 - AD 49. The IXth legion headed north as part of the initial breakout campaigns in Britain, skirting the territory of the Iceni tribe in modern Norfolk (a Roman client kingdom), then reaching the River Nene where it established a vexillation fort at Longthorpe. It continued north to found another vexillation fort at Leicester, and then a full legionary fortress at Lincoln on the River Witham.
- AD 60 – 61. A significant component of *legio* IX *Hispana* under its legate Quintus Petillius Cerialis was defeated trying to prevent the sack of Colchester during the Boudiccan Revolt. Some surviving vexillations of legionaries may have joined the governor Gaius Suetonius Paulinus in the Midlands where he ultimately defeated Boudicca.
- AD 71. Cerialis returned to Britain as governor and targeted the Brigantes tribe in the north. He ordered *legio* IX *Hispana* from Lincoln into Yorkshire where it constructed a new legionary fortress at York on an easily defendable plateau at the confluence of the Rivers Ouse and Foss, deep in Brigantian territory.
- AD 82. The legion is last mentioned in contemporary history in AD 82 by Tacitus in the context of Agricola's campaigns to conquer the far north of Britain, when the IXth's marching camp is almost overrun by native Britons. Tacitus says Agricola had to come to its rescue.
- AD 83. The IXth legion was present at the Battle of Mons Graupius in the far

north of Scotland, though took no part given the fighting is carried out by the Roman auxiliaries.

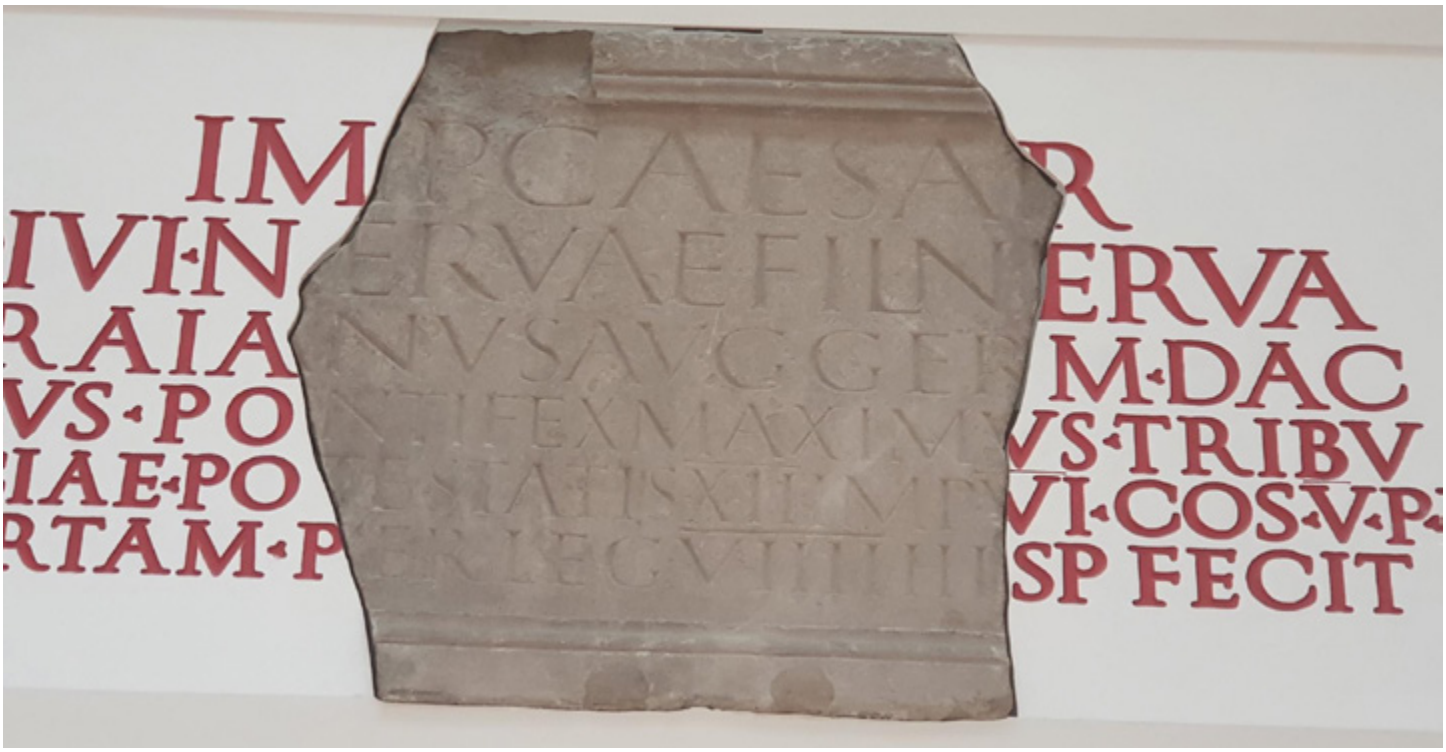
- At some stage between AD 104 - AD 120. A vexillation of legionaries from the IXth legion was redeployed to the legionary fortress of Nijmegen in Germania Inferior. This forms part of a composite force from Britain's three legions to replace legio X Gemina that had redeployed to the Danube frontier to participate in Trajan's Dacian campaigns.
- AD 108. It is last recorded in epigraphy on an inscription referencing the IXth legion in Britain, this found on an inscribed limestone slab that formed the centre section of a monumental inscription referencing the rebuilding of the southeastern gate at the legionary fortress in York.
- AD 122. Arrival in Britain of *legio* VI *Victrix* in York to replace *legio* IX *Hispana*.
- AD 120s. Hadrian's Wall is built, with no inscriptions suggesting *legio* IX *Hispana* participated.
- Around AD 168. Construction of the Collonetta Maffei pillar in Rome with its *nomina legionum* list of contemporary extant legions. The IXth legion is missing, and never mentioned again.

Of these hard facts five are the most important regarding the fate of the IXth legion, namely that it is last mentioned in literature in AD 82, in inscription in Britain in AD 108, it was replaced in York by legio VI Victrix in AD 122, there are no inscriptions referencing it on Hadrian's Wall, and it is missing from the Collonetta Maffei pillar list of legions in Rome from AD 168. The legionary tile and brick stamps from Nijmegen are also important, but the dating of between AD 104 and AD 120 isn't tight enough to be especially useful.

Based on the above detail, in my recent book I was able to tighten the various theories regarding the fate of the IXth legion down to four broad hypotheses. These are that it was 1). lost or disbanded in the north of Britain, that it was 2). lost or disbanded in an insurrection in the south of Britain, that it was 3). lost or disbanded on the Rhine or Danube, or that it was 4). lost or disbanded in the east.

Taking these in turn, most commentators still favour the legion being 'lost in the north' as I style it. A number of scenarios are possible here, principally that the legion was the subject of a devastating local insurrection in the province as speculated by Mommsen, that it was lost campaigning north of the frontier in the region of modern Scotland as speculated by Sutcliffe, or that a combination of both led to a region wide conflagration akin to Boudicca's AD 60/ 61 revolt further south.

In terms of 'lost in the south', here a recent theory known as the Hadrianic War in London might provide context. This is based on research by the UCL Institute of Archaeology's Dr Dominic Perring who argued that three different events which occurred in London during the reign of Hadrian could be interpreted as evidence for what he termed a 'Hadrianic War' in the provincial capital, this again on the scale



The last ever mention of legio IX Hispana, gateway inscription, York

of the Boudiccan Revolt. The events he considered were:

- The finding of large numbers of human crania within the town boundaries in the upper courses and tributaries of the Walbrook valley (this an important stream in Roman London which bisected the city).
- The well-known Hadrianic fire in London.
- The building of the *vexillation*-sized fort at Cripplegate.

In my own research I considered whether this event might provide the setting for the loss of the IXth legion, with two scenarios being examined. The first was that the insurrection in London, in this case timed around the accession of Hadrian in AD 117, was actually caused by the legion rising in revolt and then being defeated as the insurrection was stamped out. In the second, the legion was sent to London to actually put down a rebellion there, it then again being wiped out. In both scenarios, the heads in the Walbrook would then be those of beheaded IXth legion soldiers.

For the third hypothesis considering the Rhine and the Danube, I examined the opportunities the IXth legion might have had to campaign there in the 2nd century AD, having determined (based on my research) that the Nijmegen tile was actually from a single vexillation. The only major opportunity here for it to engage in major conflict was in the Marcomannic Wars of the co-emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, and later Commodus. Finally, in terms of the legion being lost in the east, I considered whether Trajan's eastern campaign, the associated second Jewish 'Kitos War' Revolt, the Third 'bar Kokhba'

Jewish Revolt or the AD 161-165 Roman-Parthian War might provide reasonable scenarios.

Based on the hard facts set out above, and my wider knowledge of the Roman world and military, of these four candidate hypotheses regarding the fate of *legio* IX *Hispana*, the least likely is that it was lost fighting on the Rhine or Danube. There is simply no evidence that anything other than a very specific vexillation spent some time in Nijmegen, and then the evidence trail goes cold. The next least likely hypothesis to my mind is that the legion was lost in the east. Moving on, Perring's Hadrianic War in London has to be considered a serious candidate event in which the IXth legion met its fate, perhaps with a *damnatio memoriae* then wiping it from the official record. However, given the plentiful analogous and anecdotal evidence, I actually think the most likely hypothesis regarding the loss of *legio* IX *Hispana* is with it being lost in some dramatic event in the north of Britain, either within the province as the victim of a Brigantian revolt, or even further north in unconquered modern Scotland with the native tribes there the protagonists, or with the legion on the receiving end of a region-wide rebellion across the whole far north of the province and beyond.

The reality of course is that unless some fantastical new piece of evidence emerges in some long - lost contemporary history, or through the discovery of one of the archaeological finds of the century, we will never actually know the fate of the IXth legion. Until then, based on what we do know, the above is where the available evidence ultimately points.The legion was lost in the north of Britain.

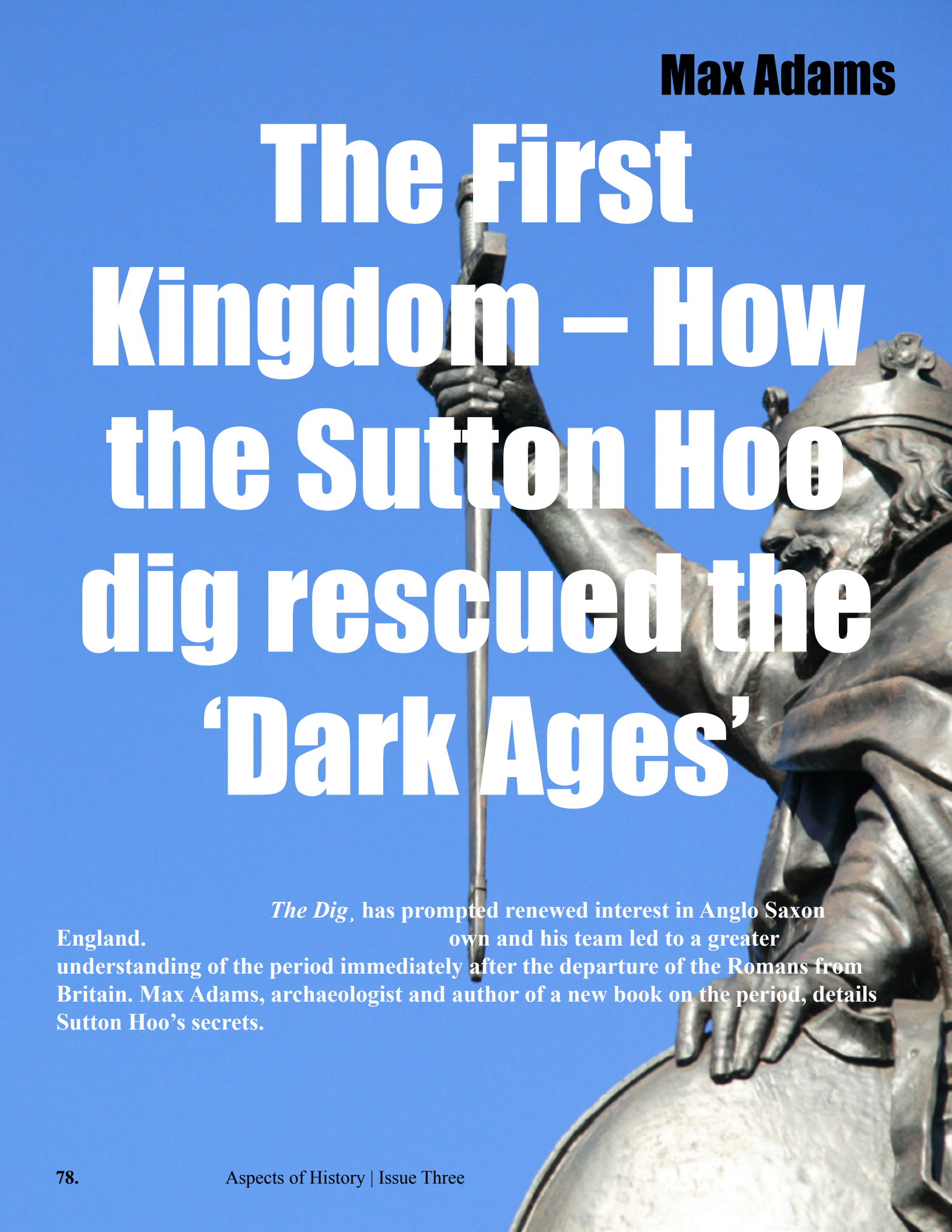
Roman Britain's Missing Legion: What Really Happened to IX Hispana?

Simon Elliott

Simon Elliott is an archaeologist, historian and broadcaster. He has written numerous books on the classical world, with a particular specialisation in ancient warfare, the latest being, *Roman Britain's Missing Legion: What Really Happened to IX Hispana?*

Max Adams

The First Kingdom – How the Sutton Hoo dig rescued the 'Dark Ages'



The Dig, has prompted renewed interest in Anglo Saxon England. own and his team led to a greater understanding of the period immediately after the departure of the Romans from Britain. Max Adams, archaeologist and author of a new book on the period, details Sutton Hoo's secrets.

Before the 1920s, archaeologists excavating the deep past had barely tapped into the potential for their trowels and picks to illuminate the 'Dark Ages' – that obscure period in British history between its exclusion from the Roman Empire (around 410AD) and the emergence (around 600) of its historical Early Medieval kingdoms: Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria, East Anglia, Essex, Kent and Sussex.

For one thing, the historical sources few as they were, told an unequivocal story: how Britain spurned Rome's civilising Christian Empire and became prey to barbarian invasions from Ireland (Scots), Caledonia (Picts) and the Continent (Angles, Saxons and Jutes). Plague, famine, paganism and anarchy ensued. Then, in 597 a papal mission reintroduced Christianity, and along with it a rational, literate model for a new unifying, divinely appointed kingship. The particular skills of the archaeologist were not required when history told the tale.

Should an excavator inadvertently come upon the remains of this period by accident (on their way down to more interesting and soluble evidence for Rome's monuments and the richly furnished burials of Britain's prehistoric indigenes) they may well have missed the subtle material evidence for what some derided as the paper-cup culture of those two centuries. Early Medieval rubbish is conspicuously lacking in diagnostic artefacts such as coins, decorated pottery and solid stone walls.

Basil Brown (front) excavating Sutton Hoo

In the 19th century the discovery of 'warrior' graves containing weapons and artefacts of barbarian manufacture seemed to reinforce the narratives left to us by Bede, Gildas and the British historian known as 'Nennius'. The invaders were real, even if their mead halls – tangible versions of Heorot in the Beowulf poem – had yet to be detected. In 1922 E.T. Leeds excavated an enigmatic type of partially sunken structure at Sutton Courtenay in Oxfordshire. These relics were reconstructed as grub huts, or Grubenhäuser: evidence of the great folk migration of Germanic peoples into Britain that explained, among other things, why we speak English and not Latin or Welsh.

Basil Brown's eve-of-war excavation at Sutton Hoo, an apparent indulgence on the part of the site's owner Edith Pretty, initially snuck very much beneath the radar of the Prehistoric and Roman preoccupations of the Establishment. But it soon alerted excavators to the idea that the testimonies

of Bede and others might not merely be confirmed by archaeology but might perhaps also be challenged. No historical source has suggested that an Insular site would yield such a wealth of barbarian bling or ship technology before the Viking period. Archaeologists and historians of the 'Dark Ages' began to ask if they might identify the remains of other Anglo-Saxon kings and their mead halls and match them to the biographies of known people. Sutton Hoo became indissolubly linked with King Rædwald of East Anglia (who died about 627). Might Bede's great history of the English, the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, also be brought to life by the digger's shovel? Rosemary Cramp's excavations at Jarrow in subsequent decades proved that Bede's own monastery, lying on the bank of the River Tyne amid the riverine bustle of its coalfields and shipyards, could set even the historian in a living context.

Oddly, the war did not entirely stop excavation. A brilliant German archaeologist called Gerhard Bersu, interned on the Isle of Man, uncovered evidence at Balladoole for unexpected continuities between prehistoric and Early Medieval sites. New techniques were developed for identifying what were often ephemeral organic remains, by the characteristic traces of decayed wood that had taught Basil Brown such a revelatory lesson at Sutton Hoo. The war revolutionized archaeology in another way also: aerial reconnaissance became a staple of military intelligence and strategic planning for both attack and defence; and for the first time Britain was comprehensively mapped from the skies. The archaeological yield was astonishing.

The Anglo-Saxon mead hall, reborn

In the 1950s Brian Hope-Taylor carried out a stunning campaign of excavations on a site in a remote valley of Northumberland, where aerial photographs revealed the outline of buildings that he believed might be Bede's *Ad Gefrin* – Yeavering – the palace of King Edwin, Rædwald's successor as overlord of all Britain south of the Forth. Here were great halls and the kitchens where feasts were prepared; tribal totems and burials; a church; a huge cattle corral and even a

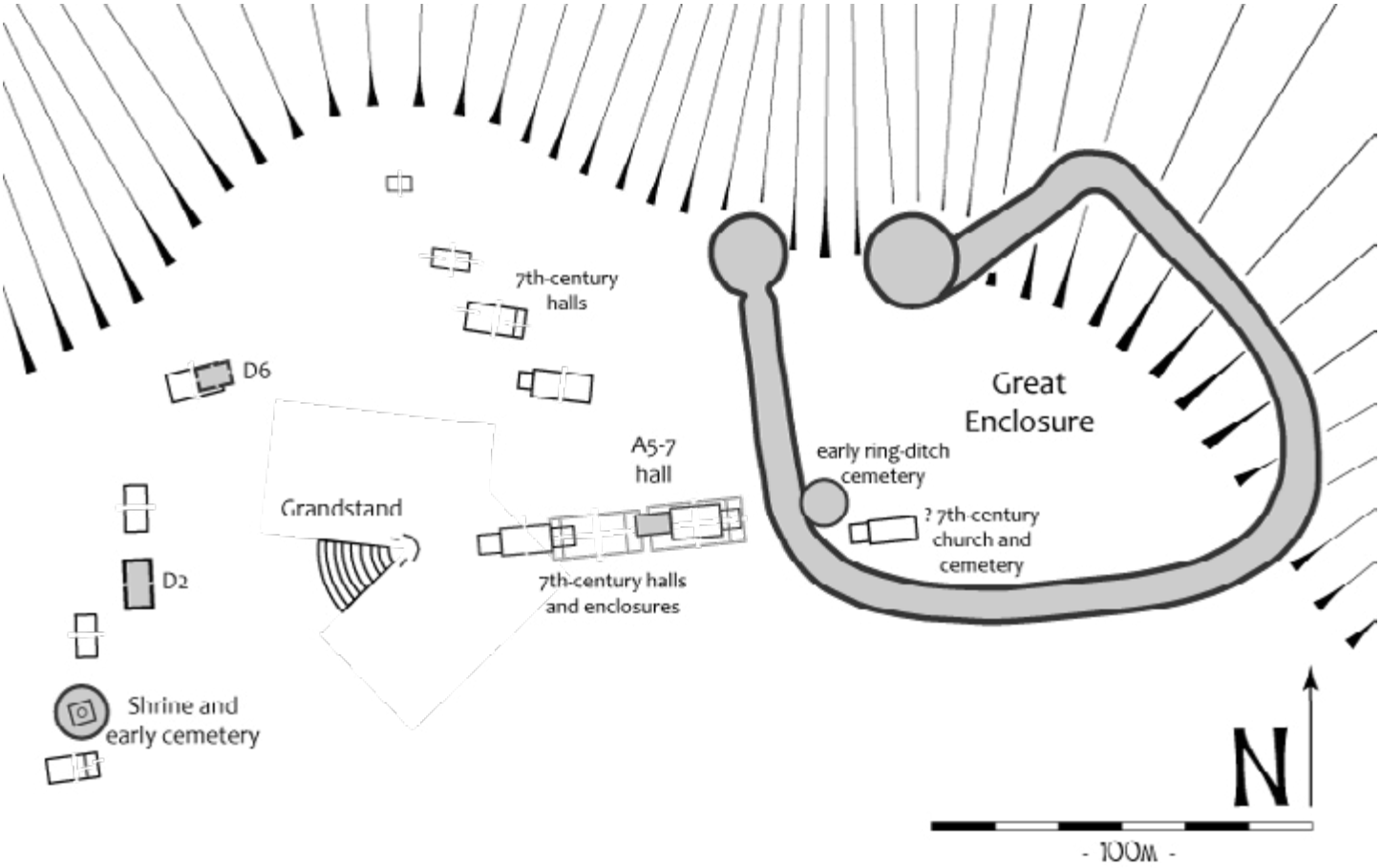
Reconstructed Anglo-Saxon house from West Stow, Suffolk

Roman-style 'grandstand'. Hope-Taylor's much scrutinised reports have often been questioned and critiqued; but no-one has ever seriously doubted that he was right in essence: Yeavering was a royal township of the Bernician kings in the 6th and 7th centuries. The archaeology of Beowulf's mead hall, and of Bede's conversion of the English kings and people to Christianity, had been laid bare.

In the decades since, hundreds of Early Medieval settlements have been excavated across Britain, along with thousands of burials. Three outstanding sites – at Mucking, in Essex, West Stow in Suffolk and West Heslerton in East Yorkshire – spanning those centuries speak of resilient, stable communities. The holes in our knowledge are filling up with stuff, and lots of it – if only we knew what to make of it. The apparently stark discontinuities remain. In the Britannia of AD400 are thriving villas, metalled roads, iron, lead and silver mines; market towns and walled cities; a civil service and bureaucracy; state government; a literate Latin élite. In 600 none of that existed.

There is now a stout cable anchoring Rædwald's and Edwin's tangible Bedan world to the last decades of Roman occupation in Britain. The trouble is, the Roman end of that cable, with its hundreds of multi-coloured fibres, leads into a still impenetrable tunnel of interpretation. When it emerges in the early 7th century there are many fewer fibres; several appear to be missing and the colours are faded. Some of those fibres – notably a very attractive, shiny one from which dangles a round table and a heroic resistance leader – fall apart when you tug at them. We cannot, absolutely, be sure that we are looking at the same rope.

A number of apparent certainties that I was taught as an undergraduate in the early 1980s are less solid than they once were; so archaeologists have been busy, for several decades now, trying to construct as independent a material narrative as they can in counterpoint to the increasingly suspect historical sources. Bede's, Gildas's, and 'Nennius's' historical limitations and biases have been exposed to very serious scrutiny; they have been revealed as, partially, political statements that may say more about the times in which they were written than about what was going on inside that tunnel of uncertainty. Even the previously solid planks of 'Germanic' style objects, language, novel building types and warrior graves no longer convince all archaeologists



The Anglo-Saxon Royal township at Yeavering

all the time. Increasingly, one can recognise in historical narratives stretching from Bede and Gildas to Victorian ideas of race and superiority and 20th century ethnic sensibilities, an overriding need to explain great historical events in predominantly nationalistic terms.

In *The First Kingdom*, while recognising that peoples with distinct tribal identities moved (probably both ways) across the seas that surrounded Britain, during those two centuries (as they had before and as they have ever since), I have decided that there are more fruitful lines of enquiry to pursue – more robust and productive fibres to pull on – if we want to expose the goings-on inside that tunnel. People adopt all sorts of socially advantageous behaviours, trappings, languages, and identities when they are subject to stresses or new realities. For whatever reason, sometime in the 5th century, some groups of people, predominantly on the eastern side of Britain, decided to reject Roman language, mores, taxes, and Christianity. Some clung to those certainties; yet others seem to have got along almost oblivious to great events happening at a distance.

Very well. I believe that I have identified a fibre of continuity which, when given a hard yank, can be pulled right through from the Roman end of the tunnel into the relatively bright light of Bede's day. Taking the institution of territorial lordship,

Grubenhaus and hall: the early Anglo-Saxon settlement at Mucking, Essex

a fundamental unit of power that exists in all sedentary tribal societies as a means of creating stable networks of patronage and social order, I think I can show how it evolved and adapted to cope with the dramatic new realities facing communities in Britain after,

say, 430 when there seems to have been a serious political and perhaps social crisis.

The mechanics of lordship are predicated on a simple principle: discrete local communities rendered services and goods (that is, non-cash taxes in kind) to a lord's residence, for consumption and limited re-distribution. The Roman market economy did not long survive the withdrawal or dismissal of imperial administrators and their calorie-hungry armies; industrial production shrank; transport networks were maintained only patchily. Towns no longer functioned as centres for governance or for the concentration of cheap labour and civic administration, but as the estate centres of a privatised élite – former magistrates; bishops; arrivistes of one sort or another. Many other centres of petty lordship emerged: at Roman forts on Hadrian's Wall and at existing villa estates.

In Early Medieval society, as witnessed by all our available literary sources, the household (Bede's *familia*) was the principal social unit, managing food and craft production, maintaining social relations with collateral family members and spending its surplus on reinforcing advantageous bonds with lords. Some of that surplus was buried with them when they died – a sort of voluntary render to the spirits of another world. Lords, in turn, distributed gifts (brooches; swords; rings); feasted their followers, judged and protected – sometimes fought for – their dependents. They attracted young, unmarried warriors to their *comitatus* – their retinue. The society of the warband in its mead hall was modelled as a sort of fictive household, massaging patronage networks through preferment, feasting and song, advantageous marriage, bling, martial exploits and the prospect of enforcing subsidiary lordship rights over weaker lords and their dependents.

Following the fortunes of indigenous lordship through political geographies 'excavated' from the living stratigraphy of Britain's multi-layered landscapes of hill and field, place-name, boundary and inherited ownership, has proved fruitful. From minor territorial lordship – an early squirearchy, if you will – to kingship and then overlordship, the archaeology and geography of sites like Yeavering, Dunadd in Argyll, Tintagel in Cornwall and Rendlesham in Suffolk – royal township of the East Anglian kings buried at Sutton Hoo – is gradually giving up the story of how the medieval kingdoms of Britain came into being.

British society underwent profound change in those obscure centuries. It lost functioning towns and state bureaucracy, a market economy and much of the written remembrance of its political fortunes. But communities who lived on and rendered the surplus of their land got by; found new (or perhaps old) lords to follow. They practised and sometimes perfected crafts and seasonal ceremonies in the hope of stacking fate's odds in their favour. They enjoyed, or were intimidated by, a rich alternative consciousness inhabited by capricious spirits. They honoured poetry, glory in battle, rank and honour; were acutely sensitive to their landscape and to worlds beyond their

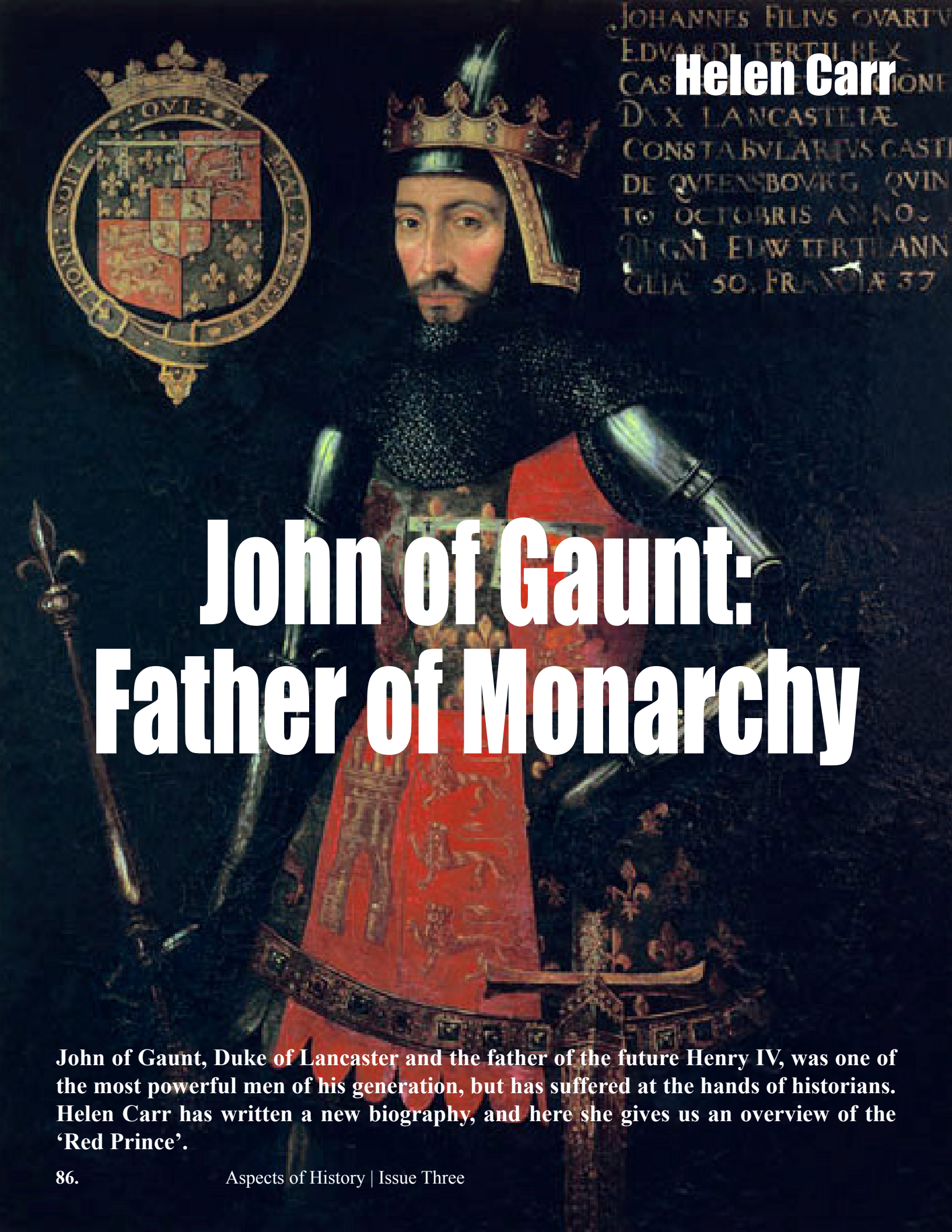
immediate horizons. They were curious and they experimented with existing institutions until they found what worked.

In the end, Britain's great lords – its kings – were persuaded by two very contrasting movements, one from Ireland and the other from Rome. That a new, intellectually demanding, literate, rational form of kingship offered irresistible rewards in legitimising their secular rule by divine right, and in the promise of everlasting companionship in the ultimate fictive household in heaven. They saw it for what it was; and they found that it was good. It is a satisfying irony that King Rædwald, buried in pagan splendour beneath the grassy mound at Sutton Hoo, lived on the cusp of that revolution and died firmly believing that he should maintain a foot in both camps. History and archaeology are both the richer for it.

The First Kingdom: Britain in the age of Arthur

Max Adams

Max Adams is an archaeologist and author of *The King in the North: The Life and Times of Oswald of Northumbria*, and *Ælfred's Britain: War and Peace in the Viking Age. The First Kingdom: Britain in the Age of Arthur* is his latest book.



Helen Carr

John of Gaunt: Father of Monarchy

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and the father of the future Henry IV, was one of the most powerful men of his generation, but has suffered at the hands of historians. Helen Carr has written a new biography, and here she gives us an overview of the 'Red Prince'.

In 1376, the Lords and Commons of England gathered at Westminster Palace to attend the first Parliament held in almost three years, with the intention to reform what they considered to be a corrupt government; this would later be called the 'Good Parliament' and would alter the political landscape thereafter, giving the Commons significantly more gravitas. At 62 the king, Edward III, was approaching the end of his reign and had largely retired from politics. The war with France was - for a time- dormant, but the domestic atmosphere was fraught. The financial repercussions of the king's pursuits in France had become widely felt, but he was yet to hear the complaints of the Commons who endured the weight of the corruption at the heart of the king's *coterie*. As preparations for Parliament began, Edward III, though in ill health, and preoccupied with his mistress Alice Perrers, was eager to make himself scarce. The Lords and Commons gathered at Westminster with a catalogue of grievances to put to the king, but were surprised to find another member of the royal family seated in his place: his son, John of Gaunt. The Good Parliament episode marked John of Gaunt's presence as a controversial, but key player in court politics. In William Langland's contemporary allegory, *Piers Plowman*, Gaunt is described as a devious "cat of the court".

John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster was the third surviving son of Edward III. Of all of Edward's offspring, he was the most loyal to his father's interests and the most ambitious, titling himself King of Castile and Léon- a significant territory in Spain that was currently under the rule of the Trastámaran king Enrique. After a period of civil war in Spain between step-brothers, Enrique and Pedro the Cruel, which ended in fratricide with the death of Pedro, Gaunt diplomatically married Pedro's eldest daughter Constance, in 1371. Through her, he claimed the throne with the intention to extend English power into Spain, which was a continuation of Edward III's ambitious continental policy. However, John of Gaunt was already an influential prince. In 1359 he married Blanche of Lancaster (who died in 1368), the daughter of Henry Duke of Lancaster. This marriage was lucrative for through Blanche he inherited vast Lancastrian wealth and territory, a portion of which Henry had accumulated during the French war. With lands and castles from Bergerac to Pontefract, Gaunt's new found wealth was vast and his influence extensive.

By 1376, John of Gaunt had become an asset to his father. He was a loyal, amenable, and skilled diplomat and politician. When Edward's eldest son and heir, the Black Prince, returned from Aquitaine crippled with a terminal illness, the king looked to Gaunt to take on the lion's share of royal duty. In Parliament, he was the natural representative to defend the interests of the Crown, and was delegated the thankless task of overseeing the most complicated, fractious parliament in his lifetime. Gaunt, loyal to his family, became increasingly unpopular as he attempted to broker the accusations and requests of the Commons without jeopardising his father's authority.

The result was an initial victory for the Commons, which was to be revoked six months later when Gaunt fecklessly reversed the outcome. He re-installed corrupt officials who had been siphoning money from the treasury to fill their own pockets and, to the horror of the contemporary chronicler, Thomas Walsingham, permitted "the unscrupulous whore" Alice Perrers, the king's mistress to return to his bedside.

The events of the Good Parliament accounted for Gaunt's future unpopularity in London. His doggedly royalist beliefs and protectionist attitude over the actions of his father- and Crown authority thereafter- made him enemies. However, with Edward III's death in 1377, the reign of Richard II began. Richard was the Black Prince's heir, who ascended the throne at twelve and was unable to rule in his own right. Despite previous protocol on the succession of a child king, John of Gaunt was never elected as an official regent; instead, Richard was assigned a 'continual council' and Gaunt oversaw the process of his ascension and coronation, swearing on bended knee that he was loyal to the new king. The fact that he was not granted the regency demonstrates how much of a threat Gaunt was considered to be at this stage in English politics: He had extensive lands, which generated extensive wealth, and he was a prince who already called himself 'king'. Gaunt was simply too powerful and too close to the throne by blood right to be given the position of regent. Equally, he was incredibly unpopular: his continental and displaced Spanish court was confusing, as was the way he styled himself King of Castile yet did not rule in Castile. He was a king, yet he was not, and circled the throne of England with only a boy in his way.

Despite the resounding suspicion of Gaunt, he did not want the English crown for himself. He swore on the death bed of his brother that he would protect Richard's kingship and Gaunt- for his arrogance and sense of superiority- was wholly loyal and dutiful to his end. However, throughout Richard's reign, his loyalty was tested continuously and Gaunt faced constant antagonism from the king's inner circle of advisors, determined to condemn him as a traitor and mitigate his authority.

In Richard's early reign, Gaunt was able to exercise his dominance to his own benefit. His loyalty lay with the king, but he profited from his position as the 'powerful uncle'. He formed a court at the Savoy Palace packed with Spanish members of his household, loyal to his cause. He funnelled huge sums into various building projects across his extensive lands and audaciously continued a very public relationship with his mistress, Katherine Swynford, even persuading the king to grant her land and property. He also began to extend his influence into the City, which was largely controlled by the merchant guilds whose influence at court was powerful. Gaunt sought to attenuate the gravitas of the merchant leaders by backing an alternative mayoral candidate- a man he could control- and was even rumoured to try and move the merchant capital to Southampton, which would inevitably

John of Gaunt with John of Portugal

destroy the remunerative trade in the City.

By 1381, Gaunt's unpopularity in the City came to a head in the Peasants' Revolt. As the rebels from Essex and Kent stormed London, local rebels broke into the Savoy Palace, destroying everything inside and eventually, the palace itself. They chanted through the streets of London, "we will have no king named John!" Fortunately for John of Gaunt, he was not in London at the time of the Revolt, but negotiating with the Scots in Berwick-on-Tweed. In Gaunt's absence, Richard came into his own and began to exercise his kingship to brutal lengths. He disbanded the rebels at Mile End, and ordered that their leaders be executed despite having promised to acknowledge their grievances.

By this point, rumours of a large army intent on murdering Gaunt had reached him at Berwick. With no news from the king, John of Gaunt was suddenly powerless and in fear for his life. Did he have crown protection, or was he a fugitive? His initial response was to ride to the Earl of Northumberland at Alnwick for aid. Controversially and shockingly, the Earl refused to help him and Gaunt, humiliated, was forced to turn back and seek the mercy and protection of the Scots, whom he had previously been negotiating with. Meanwhile, Richard had sanctioned a brutal pacification of the rebels throughout the country, particularly in Essex, before finally writing to his uncle in Scotland to reassure him of the situation in the realm - it was as if he deliberately left Gaunt in the dark. Richard's emerging sense of authority, viciousness, self-importance and manipulative politics was a dangerous aspect of his personality that would eventually result in his downfall.

Following the upheaval, Gaunt and Richard were reunited in Reading in the autumn of 1381, and it was soon clear that the power balance had shifted in Richard's favour. Despite Gaunt's cool diplomacy, clear head and duty to his nephew, Richard began to test his patience. As Richard grew into his kingship, he developed clear favourites at court, particularly the social climbing, power hungry Robert de Vere, who alienated the king from his royal uncles. In 1385, word reached Gaunt of an assassination plot against him, sanctioned by the king. After enduring Richard's petulant and spoiled behaviour for years, Gaunt determined to make an example of the king by confronting and humiliating him in front of the entire court at Sheen Palace in Richmond. On a cold February night, Gaunt secretly took a boat upriver under the cover of darkness with a small armed guard and entered the palace alone to confront the king, as he dined with the very lords that plotted his death. The plan worked. Richard desperately pleaded with his uncle and was even forced by his mother, Joan of Kent, to formally apologise. However, despite Gaunt's brave intervention, he wore a breastplate the entire time, anticipating his own murder.

By the following year, the relationship between Gaunt and Richard had wholly soured. John of Gaunt was finally given the go ahead to launch a campaign into Castile and claim the throne from the Trastámarans. In April 1386, Richard gave Gaunt a golden crown and formally proclaimed him King of Castile and Léon, desperate to be rid of his uncle. Gaunt set sail from Plymouth in the hope that he could establish his own court in Spain, realising the continental ambition of his father. His grand plan failed dismally and within two years he returned to England depleted and demoralised, with some of his most loyal and loved men dead from a sickness that ravaged his army, parched in the hot Spanish sun. He finally relinquished his title of King of Castile and Léon and after the death of his wife, Constance, quietly married his long-term mistress, Katherine Swynford, legitimising his children by her, titling them 'Beaufort'.

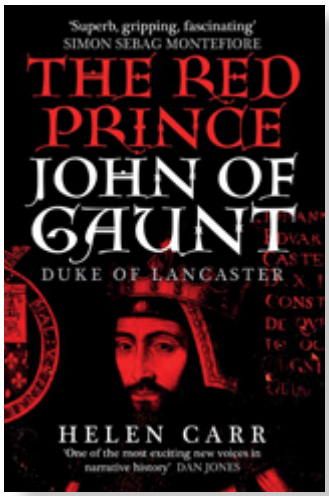
Over the next decade, Richard's tyrannical behaviour became unbearable and Gaunt had little power over the increasingly volatile king. In 1388 Gaunt's son and heir, Henry of Bolingbroke was exiled by Richard, who would later attempt to claim the Lancastrian inheritance for himself.

Gaunt died at Leicester Castle in 1399 at the height of Richard's tyranny and shortly before his deposition. To his end, Gaunt remained mistrustful but loyal to Richard, despite the fact his son was in exile and his vision for a powerful, united royal dynasty was never realised in the Ricardian years. After Gaunt's death, his son and heir, Henry, invaded England and overthrew Richard, imprisoning him in Pontefract Castle and claiming the throne for himself. He became the first Lancastrian king as Henry IV, forging a new line of succession that would re-ignite the Hundred Years War and end in the murder of his grandson Henry VI in the Cousins' War. However, after a period of civil war against York and Lancaster, Gaunt's

dynasty was realised through another line, the Beauforts. Through Margaret Beaufort, the matriarch of the Tudor dynasty and Gaunt's great-granddaughter, his dynastic significance was solidified in perpetuity.

The Red Prince: The Life of John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster

Helen Carr



Helen Carr is a medieval historian, writer and documentary history producer. Helen is a regular features writer for *BBC History Magazine* and has contributed to the *New Statesman* and *History Extra* and runs her own podcast, *Hidden Histories. The Red Prince: The Life of John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster* is her first book.

SHORT STORY

Lantern and the Light

Steven Veerapen

Simon Danforth, Steven Veerapen's cunning detective, investigates murder and intrigue during the reign of Henry VIII.

Another young life lost.

Simon Danforth pictured the boy's body, lying bloodless and cold on the wooden bench of the coroner's office. Harry Alwin had been a few years younger than his own twenty-two. Even now, as he looked into Mr Richard Alwin's face, he pictured it. It was somehow hard to connect the hard-faced, stony man, now deathly pale, with the hollow body of a once-wild London lad.

You did not have to come here, he thought. *You should not have come here.*

'You were no friend to him,' said Alwin, eyes narrowed.

'I did not have that pleasure, no, sir,' said Danforth. His hands were clasped before him.

'Then who sent you?'

It was not who but what. He might have given his colleague in the coroner's office, Mr Blunt, this task, and tramped the streets looking for witnesses and jurors. He had only volunteered because he could not face the excited chatter, part horrified and part delighted, about the other great murder that was about to take place.

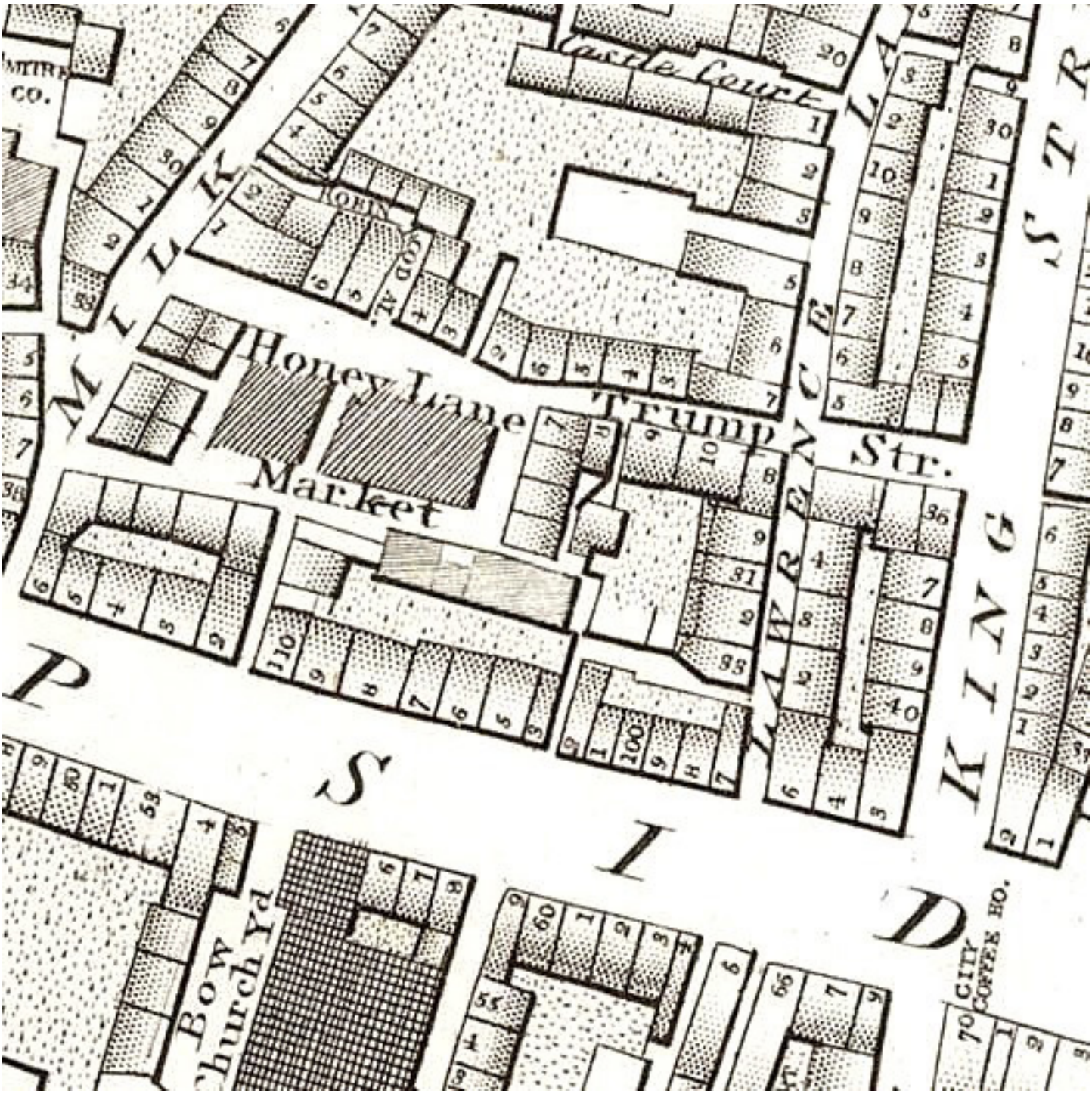
And there was something else, a voice in his head persisted: *you are become an urban brother to the Keres*. He had taken to haunting the grief-stricken as though he might feed on kindred spirits.

'No man sent me.'

'Then why are you come?'

'I assist the coroner.' So suspicious an age. 'I thought you should like to have his things.' Without waiting for a response, Danforth stepped across the room to a fine oak sideboard. It was a good house. Harry had been a young man of gentlemanly stock. Reaching into his doublet, he produced a handful of cheap goods and set them down next to a bowl of dying flowers. A wooden spoon. A length of green ribbon. A fold of leather for keeping money – empty. And a dagger. Of course, a dagger, still flecked with blood. Harry Alwin had given some account of himself before he was pierced through the heart, the blade penetrating his body completely before being withdrawn.

Richard Alwin did not look at the things



Richard Horwoods map of the City

– so few, thought Danforth, to suggest a life. Instead, he stepped across the room and began jabbing at the fireplace with a poker, stirring up the choking smell and lightening the shuttered and gloomy room. It was a good fireplace, surmounted by a carving of the Alwin arms. It was a good home, full of good things, much like his own had once been. Now stripped bare, everything he owned – as meagre as Harry's possessions – lay in a strongbox. This house too would be forever altered by

the loss of its heir. Each floorboard would carry the weightless spirit of the boy who would never set foot on it again. Each doorway would frame an absence. Better these good folk leave, as he would soon be leaving.

'I told him,' said Alwin. The back of his shirt was still to Danforth. 'Warned him, time and again. That it should come to this.'

'What did you warn him of, sir?'

'Already told the constable. Warned him against those friends. He … he was a good boy, my poor son. It was they were the rough brutes. Beasts. By Christ, only yesterday he was with us still.'

Danforth sipped a shallow breath before removing his coat, as much to show off his city livery as anything. A gamble. It either loosened tongues or tied them. 'Might I sit, sir?'

'Mm? Oh, yes, do.'

'Thank you.'

The need to be civil seemed to draw Alwin back. He took a cushioned seat opposite his guest, before dabbing at his eyes with the handkerchief wound round his hand. Clear liquid had collected at the tip of his nose. His eyes were veined with red. His son's corpse had only been discovered, lying in a Milk Street gutter, the previous night.

Alwin opened his mouth to speak. Before he could, the sound of a woman's weeping rose from the next room. It fell and was replaced by the piping of a child. Mrs Alwin had shepherded the younger son from the room on Danforth's arrival, a protective arm around him, her face bruised- and swollen-looking. She had taken the news badly. Women had been known to die of such griefs. Probably the little boy was even now swearing vengeance.

It was unfair. The lady should only be plagued by everyday problems – rising prices and over-listening neighbours. Danforth's mind turned, frustratingly, to his own wife and child, now in the grave. Death had intervened only a day after they too had been living in quietness. One day the world had been theirs: there had been some business about the man who sold fish, whom Alice Danforth had almost quarrelled with, and would it not be a fine thing to get out of London for a day and go into the fields? All had been well. And the next, the plague had swept London like a rapacious tide, and she was gone, and baby Margaret was gone.

Everyday problems had been sucked down the drain, foul-smelling bubbles gurgling up as memories. Into their place, bigger problems had rushed.

'Hush! Hush, woman. There is a man from the coroner here.'

Do not hush her, thought Danforth. Enjoy the sound of her. Odd fragments of Alice's voice still repeated in his head, musical notes only his mind could play and hear. 'But you *said*': her way of making him keep his promises. 'I suppose we couldn't': her way of trying to persuade him that they could. Time would quieten them too.

The weeping and the shrill voice of the younger boy stilled.

'Do you, either of you, wish to see your

boy's body?' Business would chase away the bitterness of memory.

'No, I do not. Mr …'

'Danforth, Simon Danforth.'

'I wish for this grisly matter buried with Christian honour.'

'That it will be. Yet first my master must empanel the jury, hold the inquest.' The report looked like being a dull one. He had been instructed that no blame should attached to anyone in the king's service. 'Did your son have any enemies?'

'I … he …'

'Yes?'

'I warned him! He wouldn't obey though, would he? Boys.' Finally, the armour began to break. 'He was a good, fair boy, as a babe.' Alwin's head fell, and for the first time his voice cracked. He cleared his throat. 'Then he began to get a few whiskers, to haunt the streets. Fell in with …'

'With whom, Mr Alwin?'

'Them. Ruffians. Lads. Roaming the streets, drinking. Fights. I said to him, I told him, get yourself a good place or get out from under this roof. A place – a place in Mr Secretary Cromwell's household. He takes in lads, trains them. Maybe even one day he could be in the king's service.'

'The king,' echoed Danforth. He could feel his lips tighten over his teeth. 'And Mr Secretary. I would have thought you would wish to keep him away from rogues.'

'Eh? We are honest folk, of English blood and honour. Gentlemen faithful to the crown, we are.' Alwin's head had risen and his eyes were fixed on Danforth's livery. 'We follow the king in all matters, and his secretary and good Queen Anne, too. King Henry is the lantern and light of our kingdom.'

'Then I should look into buying good candles.'

At this, confusion drew Alwin's brows together. 'Eh?'

'Nothing. You say your boy fell in with a bad crowd.'

'Bad. Call themselves the Fleet Boys. Wear green ribbons on their arms.' Danforth's tongue darted over his lips. On attending the Alwin house, he had passed a crowd of bickering youths, some of whom were casting nervous glances towards it. 'Rather than join with Mr Secretary's lads, they fight them. Write slanders on the city walls. Wicked things, things against the secretary's chosen people.'

'I have heard of such things.' London had, indeed, grown notorious. Secretary Cromwell had grown quite a household of wayward youths, and those youths had taken on even younger servants, and those servants ranged about the streets, calling the city their own. Small wonder that those not part of the gang formed their own in response. Stirring abroad after dark was a risk, and the constables of the watch did little, lest they find that they had inadvertently taken up men protected by the crown's special servants. 'These are bloody times.'

'Good times, though, sir, under the good king.'

Danforth decided not to argue. It was neither the time nor place. 'Do you think it likely that one of Mr Secretary's lusty boys grew hot-blooded and fought your son, sir?

Thomas Cromwell, by Hans Holbein

Such a youth will find no protection if that is the case.' He knew he could never make that stick.

'No. No, I want no trouble. Better that you look to his fellows, those Fleet Boys. He was set to –'

A knock at the door. Alwin's eyes widened. 'Who the bloody hell is that?' he said, rising to answer it. Danforth watched as he did so. Light burst in and Danforth blinked. Framed in the blazing sunshine of the doorway was a boy of about fifteen. 'What the devil do you want? Get away, away from here!' He slammed the door. 'You see?' He hissed, turning. 'They torment us even now!'

'Who?'

'Fleet scum.'

Danforth hopped up. ‘Even they? I must go, Mr Alwin. I … am sorry for your loss. Truly. You will be informed of the progress of the inquest. You have been a help to us.’ He held out his hand. Alwin didn’t take it.

‘No trouble, sir, I pray you. We are good servants of the king. We would be gone to the execution today, to see the traitor die, if not for … well. We say nothing against it. It is right that the head strikes off the rebellious foot.’ Danforth said nothing, lowering his hand. When, he wondered, had England become such a place of suspicion and fear? ‘Do you have sons?’

‘No.’

‘When you do, I pray He does not let you see the world corrupt them. Nor let you live to see them buried. Intermeddle with those creatures out there at your own risk. Oh, my boy. I cannot yet,’ he sniffed, ‘truly believe it.’ He wiped again at his nose with his shaking, linen-wrapped hand.

‘I think,’ said Danforth, ‘that corruption spreads downwards. From the head of kingdoms. Deforming all.’ The words galloped out like unchained beasts. At first it had felt like the England of his youth was dying, but now it felt rather that it was being reborn into something monstrous. Even the Boleyn woman’s much-talked-of friendship with tiresome old France was said to have collapsed.

He had gone too far.

‘I’m not understanding your meaning. Good day, sir.’ Alwin elbowed him out and shut the door.

Outside the house in Honey Lane, the youth who had intruded on the Alwins stood addressing a crowd of about ten boys. They were indeed the troupe Danforth had passed earlier. Each had a cheap red ribbon tied around his forearm. At each belt hung the same type of short-bladed dagger recovered from the dead boy. He moved towards them, away from the house, wiping the sweat from his brow before raising a hand in salute. ‘Ho, lads. Looks like being a hot one today. No unlawful assemblies here, I trust.’ The rest of the street, he could see, was deserted. His attempt at a joke had fallen flat.

‘Who are you?’ said the leader, nodding in the direction of the house. ‘You kin to our Harry?’ Then he spotted the livery. Danforth frowned; he had meant to replace his coat, still folded over one arm, but his tongue had run away with him. ‘You a constable? We ain’t doin’ nothin’. Just come to say how sorry we was about Harry is all.’

‘I am no constable. A servant of the crown, only. I returned Harry’s things to his father.’

‘That prick. Only saying we was sorry.’

‘He has lost his son,’ said Danforth, his voice low. ‘When did you last see Harry?’

‘Uh … not sure. Dunno.’

Another boy piped, ‘He didn’t show last night, did he, Ned?’

‘Quiet,’ hissed the leader. ‘We don’t know nothin’.’ His eyes were on the livery again.

‘I see. His father seeks justice.’

‘That’s what we come to say too.’ Ned’s eyes became a fury of lashes as he blinked at the sun’s glare. He raised a pudgy hand for shade. ‘We’ll get them other lot for what they done to Harry.’

‘You will do no such thing.’ Danforth lowered his voice. Tried to coarsen it. ‘Make trouble with the secretary’s boys, eh? You’ll have a war. I doubt anyone could save you from the gallows then.’

‘Fuck them lads. They took one of us, we’ll take two of them. Ain’t that right, boys?’

A ripple ran through the assembly. Not, Danforth thought, an entirely enthusiastic one. ‘A fair Jason to lead so scrappy a band of Argonauts,’ he said. ‘So, Ned, is it? You know it was one of them killed your friend, then?’

‘Course it bloody was, dirty, smelly, whores’ sons.’ This drew a more positive reaction from his fellows.

‘Mr Alwin believes there ought to be an end to these broils. Believes,’ added Danforth, ‘that his Harry was ready to break with you fellows.’

‘Harry’d never break with us. Old fucker’s lying.’ Ned stepped forward. He was short, but well built. He came close enough for his body odour to clamber up Danforth’s nostrils.

‘Never,’ said another boy, apparently emboldened.

‘Not Harry!’

‘He was one of us!’

Danforth held up his hands. ‘Just repeating what was said.’

‘Well it’s lies, then, yeah?’ asked Ned.

‘Perhaps. Only …’ He pinched the bridge of his nose. ‘It looks to me like you pups are after a war with the secretary’s lads. I see you have changed from green to furious and vengeful red.’

‘If it’s a war they want then they’ve started it, killin’ our Harry.’ More murmurs of agreement and words of vengeance. ‘We ain’t no pups.’

‘Hm. It simply seems to me that he who uses deceit in war might be much praised for it.’

‘The fuck are you talking about, you scrawny buzzard?’

‘Merely saying that if one wished to make a war and the enemy did not oblige, it would be a simple matter to slay an ally – especially one who spoke of deserting – and blame that enemy.’

Confusion reigned on Ned’s face. It was up to another of the Fleet Boys to step forward and explain. ‘I see him, Ned. I see what he’s all about. Sayin’ you done in Harry so we’d have a reason to fight them lot. He’s sayin’ you killed Harry!’

Eleven hands flew to eleven belts, fists clamping over hilts. Danforth stepped back. His throat ran dry. He could flee to Alwin’s house but doubted if the door would be opened to him. ‘Right, crown man,’ said Ned, moving towards him again. The other boys, turned wolflike, began to form a tightening circle. ‘I reckon you’ve got a big, loose fucking tongue.’

Danforth swallowed before speaking. He bit his lip briefly. ‘That,’ he said, his eyes flitting between the cobbled street and Ned’s face, ‘was exactly what your mother said to me last night.’

A pause.

Ned’s face began to redden.

And then the whole assembly erupted in laughter. Danforth let out a deep breath, thanking God that lads were as puerile as they had been in his university days.

‘The scraggly goat got you, Neddy!’ screeched one. ‘He’s all right!’

Danforth cut a path through them. He paused where Honey Lane met Cheapside and turned. Over his shoulder, he called, ‘you see the accusations the interest of the crown might bring on all your heads, even the innocent ones. In my day, it was wenches lads sought, not bloody wars. Think on that – what kind of half-men prefer to pierce other lads than fair maids?’ He did not get another bout of laughter. Instead, a sudden buzz of conversation followed him. Perhaps he might have turned some of the more reluctant ones away from an idle life of reckless criminality. Perhaps not.

The busiest shopping district in London was quiet, with only knots of elderly people clustered, their heads bowed. Weeping, Danforth thought, but not for Harry Alwin. Across the road he spotted his colleague, Blunt, arms folded as he glared at the close-knit mourners. Skirting a pile of rags that might have been a beggar, he approached him.

‘What news, Mr Blunt?’

‘No one seen nothing, ’cept the father chasing him, demanding he mend his ways, railing on him for dishonouring the name Alwin.’ He belched sour ale fumes. ‘And no honest men to be found to make an inquest jury. Not in the tavern anyway. This other business of the day’s in every man’s mouth. None care about the lad. Just another one dead and better for it. One less ruffian jetting about. Christ, but it’s hot already. How was the parents?’

Danforth jerked his head to one side and led Blunt into the shadows of a gable. ‘I think I have our murderer.’

‘What?’

‘I regret that it was the father slew the son.’

Blunt repeated his question, following it up with, ‘he confessed?’

‘No. I found it by other means.’

‘Those better be some bloody good means.’

Danforth shrugged. ‘You remark on the heat of the day. Yet Richard Alwin burns a merry fire. Like an oven, that house. I daresay he was destroying a bloodied doublet. If we send the constable quickly, he might still find the buttons in the grate.’

‘Slim. Sudden shock brings a chill.’

‘Yes. Yet I think also that the fellow was wounded in the hand by his son. It seems to me that he followed the boy, crying on him to quit his friends by harsh words. The boy drew his dagger during a hot-blooded speech, probably proclaiming on his own honour, and stabbed it at him. And so his father drew his sword. He hides his hand in a kerchief. And,’ added Danforth, wiping his brow where a pearl of sweat popped, ‘the wound on the boy. It was no short blade did that but a long sword. It must have been to go clean through the body. Only gentlemen carry swords. Nor did he wish to look upon the corpse. Frightened it might bleed in the presence of its killer, I fancy, or open its eyes in accusation.’

‘Christ,’ said Blunt. ‘You’re sure of this?’

‘Fairly sure. I suspect the wife and younger son might speak against him. Her face spoke of a beating into silence rather than grief. And it struck me that Mr Alwin

seemed more concerned about his honour than his dead boy. He shed no tears.' He sighed. 'Oh, I know that every man grieves differently. But only a guilty man might counterfeit grief.' He mimicked, 'Oh, my boy,' before adding, 'but not a word about seeking justice – only about hiding from trouble.'

'We need a confession.' Blunt's jaw twitched. 'Yet better an unnatural gentleman than a feud of blood between the secretary's boys and their rivals, eh? No great disturbance to the peace here. The streets of London are safe under the king. You'll be rewarded if we can take him. And no murder, neither, if it were done in chance medley.'

'That is for the courts to adjudge.'

'A fight between father and son. Nothing for the balladeers or rhymesters there.'

'No.'

Suddenly, the air was rent by the distant boom of cannon.

Danforth's jaw unlocked and with it silence fell, as though the whole city was holding its breath. Then came muted sobs, coarsened by some cheers.

'That's Fisher copped it.'

'Cardinal Fisher,' said Danforth, removing his hat.

Blunt did not meet his eyes. 'They say More will be next.'

'I do not doubt it.' Falling like ninepins now: Wolsey long gone, now Fisher, More next, the rightful queen and Princess Mary cast away. He crossed himself. 'Good men. And scarcely a cry, save from those poor old folks.' He gave a shrill of laughter and felt spiky heat prickle on his cheeks. 'I thought we English were a proud, a free people. That we fought back against wild swings from our kings. Now – now, I think that if a great cannon were wrapped in velvets and declared our lord and master, most of us would line up to get shot in the face. Obsequious!

'Is it any wonder we have such strange and unnatural deaths when those few churchmen who still have spines get them severed? By God, that murdering creature Alwin learnt his trade from the governors of this realm. They stir hatred and division and the people look and learn. The lantern and light of our kingdom, indeed – shining the way to murder.'

Blunt drew back, a large hand circling his throat. He glanced around, as though the half-empty street might hide spies. 'Mr – Simon – I … I must away. Find those jurors. You … your speeches grow wild. The heat, eh? I … you'll write up what you found? Good strong report, enough to make an indictment. Maybe tomorrow, eh, give me time to find our men? The news has stirred up your humours. I shan't say nothing about that. Only …'

'What?'

'I think you're wrong. This thing, the boy's death, I mean – it shows that the young bucks aren't the cause of disorder. Simple hot blood is. That's always been with us. Always will be. You … I think you look for causes where there are excuses. Your good sight becomes clouded.'

'Nonsense. There were no such hatreds stirred in my father's time.'

'As you say. And the report for the master?'

‘I shall write it today. Now.’

Blunt nodded, a little too eagerly, before turning on his heel and disappearing along Cheapside.

Danforth remained in the shadows.

It had felt good to speak of King Henry. The tyrant, his minions, his concubine, and his secretary were painting England red with blood. And few men were saying anything, far fewer doing anything.

Blunt might report his speech – he suspected not, but one never knew. Let him, then. The man was stupid and wrong – a bending reed, like the rest of them.

He would write his report and leave Richard Alwin to face whatever justice still existed. He suspected that the man would suffer not because of his obvious guilt, but because it would ensure that none of Cromwell’s rag-tag rabble of hangers-on were associated with the death of one from their rival gang of malcontent young fools.

It was almost a pity that he would not be around to witness it. He took a last look around. He would not see Cheapside again. Nor, in fact, would he see Honey Lane, or Bankside, or York Place, or any number of London’s places again. After writing his report, he would seal and address it to his master, the lazy city coroner, and then take his strongbox and be out of the city before anyone could miss him. London might drown itself in blood and sin, and with it would sink memories of his parents, Alice, little Margaret, Henry VIII and his false queen. All would fade like the ink on cheap paper.

On the morrow, he would take his first steps in establishing a new life in a new country where churchmen did not lose their heads for denying that their sovereign lord was also a little pope. A new country where men were not made afraid to speak. A new country where he might serve men who served the true faith.

Fare you well, England, he thought – and God deliver you from the dark light of a lunatic.

The Queen’s Gold: A Christopher Marlowe Spy Thriller

Steven Veerapen

Steven Veerapen is an academic and author. His latest novel is *The Queen’s Gold.*

INTERVIEW

Choir of Crows

Candace Robb

Interviewed by Peter Tonkin

Candace Robb is the bestselling author of the Owen Archer and Kate Clifford series, set in medieval England. Her latest is *A Choir of Crows*, and she met with fellow author Peter Tonkin to discuss historical fiction and history in general.

Candace Robb, welcome to *Aspects of History*. It was so kind of you to agree to this interview. I hope you enjoy answering the questions. I know our readers will be fascinated to read – and learn from – all of your replies. To begin with, could you please tell us a bit about yourself: Where do you live? What are your hobbies or interests beyond writing or researching? What might you do on your 'days off'?

Thank you for the invitation! I live in Seattle, Washington, though I spend a large portion of my life in medieval York, with occasional trips about England, Wales, and Scotland. I find solace and inspiration in long walks, not to mention walking off the energy built up when writing tense scenes. I'm fortunate to live surrounded by woods and lakes, with mountains and sea nearby. Other activities that engage me are gardening, yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, meditation, reading, and playing with my kitten.

Most successful writers – especially those producing long-running series such as your Owen Archer and Kate Clifford series - have a set writing routine. Can you describe yours if you have one?

My routine is simple: I write every day if possible. I rarely find it impossible. No set time. My writing is slow at the beginning of a project, gaining speed as it takes on shape and the characters are fully engaged. I play with word count goals but don't flog myself if I don't reach them; I know that to be self-defeating. The truth is, I'm always writing in my head, reading background, arguing with characters, who often wake me at night to correct my course.

You describe yourself as a Writer/ Historian and we know you have a PhD.

When did you discover you could write with a pacy novelist's style?

It never occurred to me that I couldn't write with a pacy novelist's style, only that I needed to practice by writing. And reading a lot of fiction; I've always been a voracious reader. I've picked up pointers along the way by asking for honest feedback from good editors.

What is it that inspires you to write? The characters, the settings, the broader background or something else?

All of the above. I might be reading and come upon a fact or an incident that intrigues me, or a character pops into my head, often with some dialogue, and I want to hear more. Walking about historic sites often stirs ideas. Sometimes an incident in one of my books suggests a further story that surfaces in my imagination, typically late at night as I'm falling asleep or during a long walk—I always have my phone handy to record an idea. Often I find myself, wondering why I haven't written about this or that, or which recurring character might be ripe for centre stage.

I assume that your favourite time period is the 14th century. What is it about that time that fascinates you?

I was drawn to the 14th century by Chaucer's poetry, which led to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Piers Plowman, the Pearl Poet; such a burst of poetic genius made me curious about the history and culture of the period. I discovered a time of immense change with the strengthening of the merchant class, hastened by years of poor crops followed by pestilence, and the beginning of a long, complex series of upheavals in the government of the realm we now call the Hundred Years War. A rich backdrop for fiction. It was also a vibrant period for the city of York, the setting for both the Owen Archer and the Kate Clifford series, with a powerful archbishop, an active merchant class, guilds, and a strong economy.

How do you use – either maximising or limiting – the detailed knowledge you have so painstakingly gathered about 14th century England?

My goal is to provide just enough information about the political events, the cultural background, and the setting to inform the story. When I was first exploring genres and voice, I was fortunate to participate in a three-week residential writing workshop with Ursula K Le Guin, Vonda McIntyre, and Elizabeth Lynn. We discussed world building at length, which is key to vibrant science fiction and fantasy, and the importance of avoiding informational dumps. Less is better, and folding information into the narrative in small doses is the goal. I took that knowledge with me into historical fiction.

Writing historical novels is a balance between creating characters that modern readers can relate to and maintaining the 'suspension of disbelief' through

Alice Perrers and Edward III

accurate or convincing historical detail. How do you maintain this balance?

Particularly in my mysteries, the very choice of framing a tale as a mystery with a sleuth who must solve the crime is a modern device. That invites the reader to dive in. The medieval background is the added interest. That they choose to read the book knowing the setting signals that they're game. Using the third person intimate point of view, I inhabit the mind and body of a single character per scene, which reminds me that they are thinking as 14th century people, and I work to sustain that. When I need to add a few words of explanation, I do so as unobtrusively as possible. But after all this time I don't always realize what isn't clear to my readers, and count on my editor, my agent, my copyeditor, and at least one beta reader with little to no background in medieval history and culture to note what is unclear.

Powerful women are a major feature in your work. Who is your favourite e and why? If you could ask them one question what would it be?

Just one out of so many remarkable women? How about a pair? Under the pen name Emma Campion I've written about Alice Perrers (*The King's Mistress*) and Joan of Kent (*A Triple Knot*). Before asking them individual questions I'd ask what they thought of each other, whether or not they were friends and supportive of each other, or perhaps their relationship was more guarded. That would be very interesting; Joan married the eldest son of King Edward, Alice was the king's mistress. Individually, I would ask Alice, "When did you realize you'd made a mistake remaining by King Edward's side?" Of Joan I would ask, "Am I right about why you chose to be buried beside your first husband, Thomas Holland, and not Prince Edward?"

You live in Seattle, and yet you set your stories in the north of England and Scotland, most notably, of course, York. How often do you visit the sites of your stories and how important do you feel these visits to be?

In the early days I spent at least four to six weeks each year in the UK, touring potential locations and becoming intimate with York. In the past ten years it's varied widely, but I try not to be away for more than two years. With COVID, I will miss that mark. But I keep in close touch with friends and historians across the pond and worldwide.

Your descriptions of York are wonderful. Is there a particular spot where you feel closest to your characters? Where do you go for inspiration?

The York Tavern, Lucie's apothecary, and Owen and Lucie's home all face St. Helen's Square, which was a walled cemetery in the 14th century. From there to York Minster is the beating heart of York for me, though I find inspiration everywhere within the walls and along the River Ouse. I love walking the streets, imagining the past.

I know you have been inspired by the writing of Chaucer and his contemporaries but are there any modern writers who have particularly interested you?

I take great pleasure in finding authors who inspire me in all facets of life. My strongest influence is Ursula Le Guin for clarity and a deep sense of place and character. And C.J. Cherryh's science fiction for a deep sense of the other. More recently the historical fiction of Madeline Miller, particularly *Circe*, Anne Louise Avery's fresh take on *Reynard the Fox*, and Naomi Novik's fantasies *Uprooted* and *Spinning Silver* which are based on folklore and in medieval eastern European settings. All of them exude a love of language and a sense of play. I admire all of them.

Is there any other time or location that might tempt you away from the world you have created so brilliantly for Owen, Kate or Margaret Kerr?

I'm content with what I'm writing. But writing the thirteenth Owen Archer, which has a touch of the mystical based in folklore, gave me a taste for more. We'll see.

***Aspects of History* has a wide readership not only among established authors and readers interested in their work but also amongst those just starting in the profession. Is there any advice you would give to a young writer just starting out?**

Listen closely to what's tumbling about in your head. Get curious. Write out what you're hearing or seeing in your imagination. Experiment. Don't be afraid of your style, your unique vision. Write every day. Try out various genres, styles, forms. Do what engages you.

Candace, tell us about your most recently published Owen Archer Mystery, *A Choir of Crows?*

This is the 12th book in the Owen Archer series. In mid-December 1374, Alexander Neville is to be enthroned as

Geoffrey Chaucer

the Archbishop of York, successor to John Thoresby. His election to the seat was orchestrated by his ambitious brother Sir John Neville, Lord of Raby, Admiral of the North, and the king's steward, and the event is drawing representatives of all the noble families of the North to York. The dean and chapter of York Minster and the city authorities are in a state of high alert.

When two bodies are discovered in the minster grounds, and a flaxen-haired youth with the voice of an angel is found locked in the chapter house, Owen Archer, captain of the city bailiffs, is summoned to investigate. Tension deepens when an enigmatic figure from Owen's past arrives in the city. Why has he returned from

France after all these years - and what is his connection with the bodies in the minster yard and the fair singer? Before Owen can make headway in the investigation, a third body is fished out of the river – and the captain finds himself with three mysterious deaths to solve before the all-powerful Neville family arrives in York.

What is your next project after *A Choir of Crows?* – the one, I assume, with a deadline around St Valentine's Day 2021?

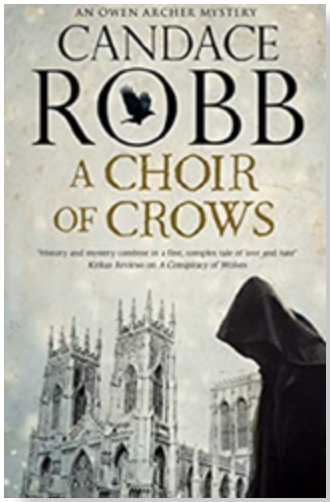
I've just delivered the 13th Owen Archer, *The Riverwoman's Dragon.* At the beginning of a plague summer, a physician new to York spreads a rumour implicating the healer Magda Digby in a wealthy merchant's sudden decline as well as the drowning of his trading factor. As fear grows in the city, so too do accusations against the Riverwoman and other midwives. While Owen Archer investigates the death and outbursts of violence in the city, Magda Digby tends to the folk outside the walls as well as some unexpected guests. But when folk gather outside the walls to attack Magda and the poor who shelter outside the abbey, Owen and Magda join forces to protect the innocent.

Please could you tell our readers how to

You can find me on my website and blog: www.candacerobbbooks.com. Twitter: @CandaceMRobb and Facebook: www.facebook.com/CandaceRobb

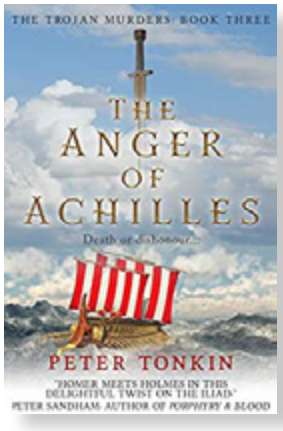
A Choir of Crows

Candace Robb

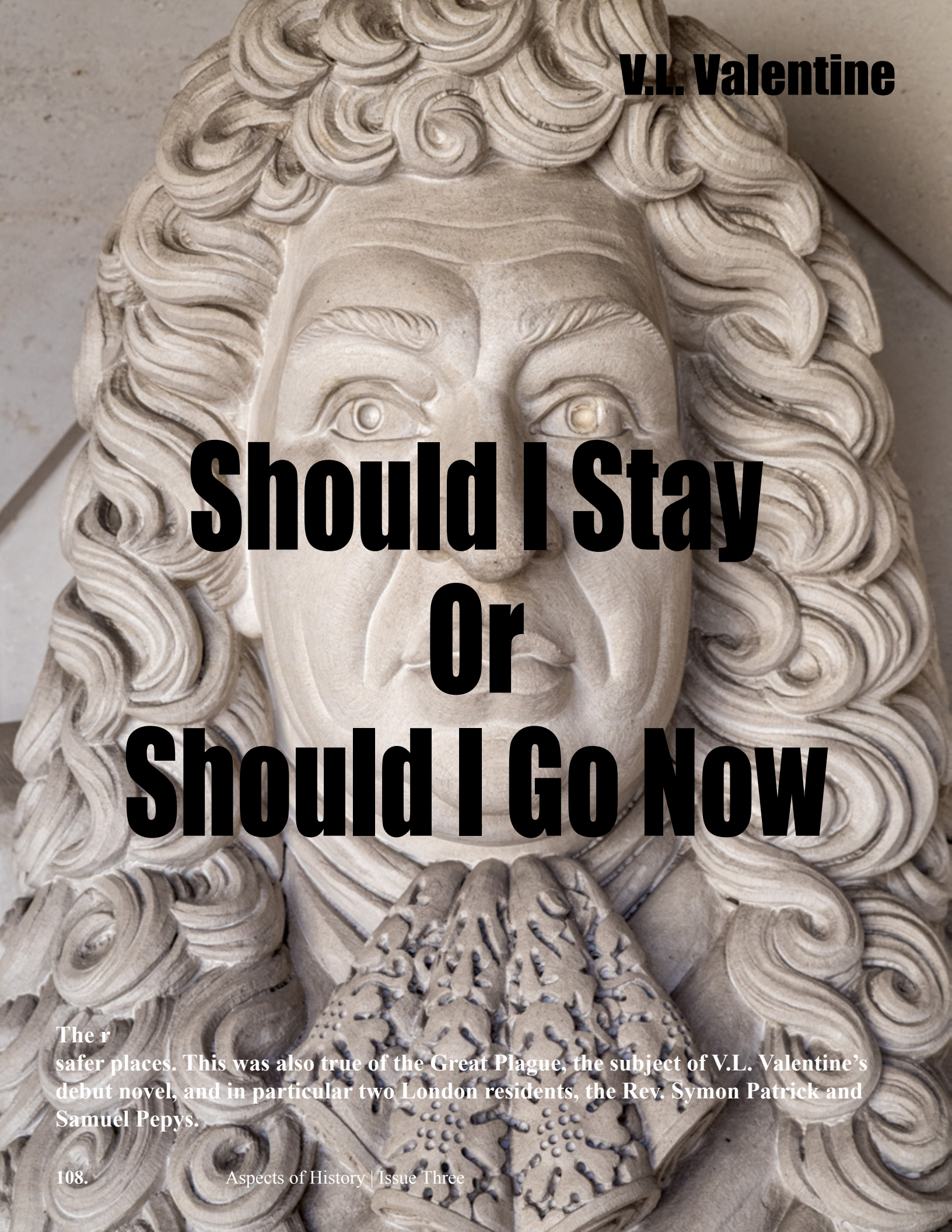


Candace Robb has read and researched medieval history for many years, and is the author of eleven previous Owen Archer mysteries and three Kate Clifford medieval mysteries.

Interview by: Saul David



Peter Tonkin has had more than 30 novels published, including the Master of Defence series set in Shakespearian England. His latest series is set during the Trojan Wars, with The Anger of Achilles the most recent.



V.L. Valentine

Should I Stay Or Should I Go Now

The r
safer places. This was also true of the Great Plague, the subject of V.L. Valentine's debut novel, and in particular two London residents, the Rev. Symon Patrick and Samuel Pepys.

The path toward my novel, *The Plague Letters*, started with letters written by the Rev. Symon Patrick of St Paul's Church, Covent Garden to his friend, Mrs Elizabeth Gauden. The year was 1665 and a massive plague epidemic had broken out in London. After initially hesitating, Patrick, who was 38, decided to stay behind and look after his parish. Mrs Gauden left the city, seeking safety at her sister's house in Burntwood – modern day Brentwood, Essex.

As I read these letters, my curiosity was this: who decided to stay, to go head-to-head with of one of history's most dreaded diseases? How did a person or family survive in such an inconceivable situation – one that I never expected to experience in my lifetime.

My book was already written and on its way to publication when in January 2020, an editor sitting next to me at National Public Radio in Washington said in a dazed sort of way: "They're shutting down Wuhan. No one's allowed to leave." He had just been on the phone with a journalist in China, who had given him the news.

I stood up and asked him to repeat what he'd just said. Because I didn't believe him.

Wuhan, ground zero for the pandemic we're grappling with today, is a city of 11 million. It seemed unfathomable that a government could try to seal off a city that large. And why would they? It wasn't a measure the World Health Organization had ever recommended in previous outbreaks, such as Ebola in West

A scene from The Great plague of London

Africa in 2014, or Zika in Latin America in 2016. Conventional wisdom among public health officials was that large-scale quarantines – shutting in the healthy with the sick – weren't that effective, largely because more people would be hurt than helped. And because people always found a way to escape.

In fact, days after Wuhan was sealed off, the city's mayor estimated some five million people had fled. For those who weren't able to leave, the terror had to have been on multiple levels. What would happen to them if they became sick? What would happen to them if they didn't?

"Who will think of the lives of those of us who are healthy in Wuhan? We are also afraid," a Wuhan resident posted on the social media site Sina Weibo, according to the *New York Times*. "Now we are lambs who will still be slaughtered, and we can only leave our fates to the heavens."

What often struck me during this pandemic was the echo I could hear of the people who lived through London's Great Plague. Who stays? Who goes? Who follows the rules? Who doesn't? The newspapers of today read like the writings left behind in 1665.

Covent Garden's Symon Patrick, who has a second life as a protagonist in my novel, can help answer these questions. St Paul Covent Garden was one of London's wealthiest parishes and its neighbour to the north, St. Giles in the Fields, was one of the poorest. Many of the bodies from St Giles were brought to Patrick's churchyard; he was immersed in both of these worlds as the plague played out that year.

The first inklings that a plague epidemic might be upon London came in December 1664 and for the next few months after that, parishes recorded one or two deaths a week. Houses were being shut up – the healthy locked in with the sick, the infamous red slash that marked a plague house painted on their doors.

In April, Patrick tended to a plague death in his own parish. His clerk, a Mr Ramsbury, noted the cause of death in the parish register as plague, but he did not record it as the official cause in the tally of parish deaths that were sent to the central parish clerks' office, which published the weekly Bills of Mortality for London.

In short, Patrick hid the girl's cause of death, likely out of deference to the family's position in the parish. The girl was the daughter of a well-to-do physician, Dr Ponteus, who lived around the corner from the Covent Garden piazza. Her funeral was attended by family and friends and she was buried under the church floor.

This public funeral went against health orders already in place to protect the living from what was known to be a highly infectious disease. At the time, the dead and even their clothes were thought capable of spreading plague. The poor who were sick a few streets over in St Giles were condemned to their houses; Dr Ponteus' family wasn't.
There was a second plague death in Covent Garden that April, and again Patrick did not make public the cause. But he did decide to leave London. He went to drink the waters at a newly discovered mineral spring for a month – perhaps to flush any drops of plague from his system - then headed to Lincolnshire to stay with his parents. Lloyd and Dorothy Moote, in their excellent history, *The Great Plague*, suggest fear might have been his motive for leaving.

But for some reason, Patrick returned. He wrote in his autobiography: "I resolved to commit myself to the care of God in the discharge of my duty."
And what a miserable sight awaited him

Samuel Pepys

on his return. As he travelled back toward London, he would have witnessed what the Mootes describe as the greatest exodus London had ever seen. The main roads out of the city were clogged beyond belief as tens of thousands fled at the end of June and early July.

Samuel Pepys, a civilian officer in the Navy and diarist, witnessed the same exodus Patrick had battled through to get home. In his diary entry for June 21st, he writes about what he saw through the window the Cross Keys tavern at Cripplegate: "I find all the towne almost going… the coaches and waggons being all full of people going into the country."

The line after that provided the next jumping off point in my novel: "Here I had some of the company of the tapster's wife a while, and so home to my office, and then home to supper and to bed." Pepys' diary is notorious for his frequent mentions of extra-marital

Symon Patrick

affairs, and this entry shows he was not about to let even a plague of biblical proportions deter him from his usual interests.

Pepys and Patrick both held public positions, and both were charged with the care of others. Pepys with the provisioning and ordering of the Navy; Patrick with his parish. They were incredibly civic minded men – and yet, neither one followed the letter of the law when it came to plague.
As the number of plague cases doubled each week that summer, Pepys continued to cross town to do as he always did: make money and entertain himself with London's gossip and London's female servants. He writes one day about how troubled he is to learn that plague was in the house of his neighbour, Dr Alexander Burnett, and the need to set his own affairs in order, "in case it should please God to call me away." Then the next day, a new suit of coloured silk arrives, and he goes on a walk to show it off.

From one entry to the next, even one sentence to the next, Pepys cycles between the urge to live fully and the possibility that he could die at any minute.

Patrick didn't appear to change his routine

by much either. It's striking – this adherence to habit. As much as we don't know about the origins of our current coronavirus pandemic (did it jump from bats to humans? Or bats to some other species to humans? And where?), those living in the 17th century were even more in the dark.

This was well before germ theory and the discovery of bacteria or viruses; no one had the faintest idea that fleas and black rats living in the walls and floors of a family's home were spreading *Yersinia Pestis*.

Instead, there were a number of competing theories about plague's origins. Did it sprinkle down from comets shaped like coffins? Or did it come from pestilential seeds and steams buried in cloth imported from Holland? Or, as 34 - year - old apothecary William Boghurst wrote in his 1666 plague treatise, *Loimographia*, was plague an exhalation arising from the fermenting bowels of the earth?

Symon Patrick threw his lot in with those who thought that plague was God's Destroying Angel, a punishment for sinners. The bite of a flea aside, it was thought that plague spread through the air like a poisonous miasma, and to touch a person with plague, or their things, or even to breath the same air might bring death.

Nevertheless, Patrick and Pepys did not keep their distance. Nor did the medical practitioners who stayed behind, such as Boghurst and Pepys' neighbour Dr Burnett. The apothecary and the physician treated many dying patients at their bedside; Pepys wrote of bodies he encountered in the streets: "It was dark before I could get home, and so land at Churchyard stairs, where to my great trouble I met a dead corpse of the plague, in the narrow ally just bringing down a little pair of stairs."

When Patrick discovered that his parish clerk's wife and child had plague, he again ignored the public health regulations. Instead of ordering Mr Ramsbury shut up in his house with his family, he tells the man to keep coming to work. And Patrick, at the height of the epidemic in September, did not stop his home visits and deliveries of money and food to the sick.

None of these men were in denial. They all believed plague was real and lethal – yet they kept on going.

"Your unworthy friend, you see, is still in this world, by the Great mercy of God to him," Patrick writes to Elizabeth Gauden on September 19th, "how long he continues, none knows." In that same letter, he responds to a request by her to leave: "Somebody must be here, and is it fit I should put such a value on myself, as my going away and leaving another will signify?"

For those who stayed and lived to write about it, we see their emotions roiling just under the surface. Patrick wrote about fears that bread, beer and wine were not safe to buy. Pepys more than once talks about ordering his affairs in case he dies. They both struggled with how long to stay in the

city, when so many of their peers had left.

The number one antidote to plague, as prescribed by physicians at the time, was flight. In fact, out of London's 59 licensed physicians, only ten stayed behind. The Mootes' estimate there were about 500 to 600 medical practitioners – surgeons, apothecaries, doctors, quacks – working in London at the time. Half of them left.

Patrick wrote about this strict demarcation between who left and who didn't: "None but the ordinary sort of people continued (in his parish), all the gentry and better sort of tradesmen being gone." Covent Garden, like many of the richer neighbourhoods across the city, had emptied out. Servants and the working poor were left behind, along with the tradesmen and shopkeepers who couldn't pay for security to protect their goods.

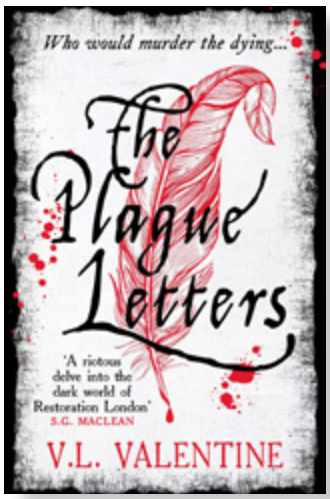
London's population at the time was half a million. It's estimated that 200,000 fled the city, most of those had the money to do so. Those who left the city without a certificate of health from the Lord Mayor or a designated home to welcome them had a hard road, indeed. Villages were unwilling to take in strangers from plagued London, and used force to keep them out. Out of the 300,000 who remained in the city, including after the King and Lord Mayor ordered London closed indefinitely on August 1st, as many as 100,000 died – an incredible death rate.

The rules we've been advised to follow in our current pandemic are not much different from what Londoners were asked to do in 1665. Keep your distance, follow curfews, stay home if you're sick, or go to the modern day, light years-better version of the pest house – the hospital. And from what I can tell in the writings of Patrick and others, the individual response to these rules surprisingly has not varied much either.

Are the motives different these days for disregarding public health recommendations? In some ways, I doubt it. Patrick and Boghurst broke rules out of a sense of professional calling, a loyalty to the individuals in their care. Pepys stayed behind, it seems, out of habit; a love of his London life, a love and commitment to his position with the Navy. There's a predictability to human nature, it seems: in strange times we will do strange things. The why of it is much more elusive.

The Plague Letters

V.L. Valentine



V.L. Valentine is senior science editor with National Public Radio in Washington, D.C. She received her masters from University College London's Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine. *The Plague Letters* is her first novel.

INTERVIEW

Money for Nothing

Thomas Levenson

Interviewed by David Durlacher

The South Sea Bubble in 1721 was the first stock market crash of its kind, and ushered into the modern era a new way of managing government debt. Thomas Levenson, who has written a brilliant account of the crisis, sat down with David Durlacher to discuss how the events echo today's markets.

Thomas, what parallels should we draw between the South Sea Bubble and more recent bubbles of today, like the dot-com bubble in the '90s or even GameStop today?

What's most striking about the South Sea Bubble is how familiar it is; the sequence of events in 1720—the decisions, assumptions, and then escalating pursuit of increasingly outsize gains, culminating in disaster–replicate over and over again. Details change, and the complexity of the financial manoeuvres certainly grows over time, but the basic outlines of the Bubble Year do reproduce, on large scales and small. The 2008 crash that marked the public onset of the Great Recession maps very well onto what happened in London three hundred years ago today.

GameStop, though, is a bit of a different phenomenon. There is a fine, scoundrel-laced history of attempts to game specific markets. And certainly, individual asset booms and bubbles can sometimes have contagious effects. But short-squeezing is usually a phenomenon confined to one, generally small subset of the financial exchanges. The difference this time is in the demonstration that social media changes the pool of people who can get involved in such manipulation—and that does bring it a bit closer to the popular involvement that is characteristic of larger market crashes.

The government at the time saw the risks of speculation and passed the Bubble
by itself in its wake. More recently, exchanges intervened in the Reddit frenzy, resulting in a crash fuelled and led by social media. Should governments and public bodies learn from history and leave markets well alone or should they

Change Alley by William Hogarth

become even more interventionist?

This question doesn't really address the circumstances either in 1720 or 2021; it relies on assumptions not in evidence, and offers a false dichotomy as possible answers.

To begin. The British government in 1720 did not "cause" the Bubble. They contributed to its rise and fall, notably by acquiescing to the South Sea Company's demand that it be allowed to price the debt-equity swap at will throughout the exchange, rather than following prior practice and offering shares at par, or at least at a set, publicly announced level.

But the Company's actions in negotiation and then in fostering the rise of the Bubble were much more proximate drivers of events that spring than anything the ministry did.

More particularly: the government in 1720 did not see the risks of speculation as the key driver behind the Bubble Act; don't be fooled by the name, as "bubble" had meanings then that are different than the most common usage now. Most important: to "bubble" someone meant to defraud them. The concern in the spring of 1720 was the sudden appearance of dozens of new companies seeking funds, often without much or any clear intention

South Sea Bubble Card

of doing anything with the money they might raise. When the Bubble Act was finally passed in early summer, it had essentially no effect on the market. Its enforcement in August was triggered by the South Sea Company itself as a way to rid itself of competition for the public's cash, and its effects—shutting down four small companies with no visible means of support—did not regulate the market for legally chartered companies. Instead, it posed a question: were the surviving companies priced appropriately, given their underlying business case? Simply asking that always-sensible question proved the catalyst for the drastic market moves to come.

And look at what happened afterwards: stable UK interest rates (with contained bumps during high-expenditure wars) for two centuries or more. A stock market that functioned through and well into the industrial revolution. In fact, the valid criticism of the Bubble Act is not that it triggered a crash, but that it slowed the use of some valuable forms of company organization until a new approach came in 1826.

Similarly, the GameStop crash seems hardly primarily an event triggered by injudicious regulation. Shares in a loss-making company with declining revenue shot up ten-fold in two weeks in a publicly-visible short-squeeze. The subsequent price crash (followed by a doubling in two days last week as I write this) would seem to be overdetermined, and the regulatory intervention seems to have been relatively mild and short lived. So it's hard to see how this bit of folly makes any kind of case for either the extent or type of regulation that is appropriate in modern markets.

But the real flaw in the question above are the assumptions a) that history shows that intervention/regulation as a category is bad (it doesn't); and b) that the only choice is between bad regulation and an utterly unfettered market. History shows all kinds of outcomes from different choices made by various actors at particular times.

Among them: the long-standing success of certain kinds of intervention, particularly those that address the risks inherent in unbounded leverage in the marketplace. It also shows a pattern in crashes: financial innovation, especially in ways that multiply leverage, correlates pretty well with trouble. And that suggests an approach for what I see as essential government intervention in financial markets. One thing that history does strongly suggest is that a market free of oversight tends to fail with depressing (if not precisely time-predictable) regularity.

If even highly intelligent, questioning people like Newton and Defoe can be taken in, what hope for the rest of us in making sense of when to invest and when to run a mile?

A minor correction: Daniel Defoe, no brilliant hand with money, (there was that awkward stint in debtor's prison, for example) did not invest in the South Sea Bubble, as far as any records I've been able to find would show. He did comment on it, often, and with an interesting ambivalence, suggesting a largely social or moral concern that grew as the bubble expanded. But the nub of the point is that, yes, Isaac Newton along with many other usually very clever people got sucked into the excitement of the moment and lost all or part of their shirts.

And what that means is that the most important lesson of the bubble is that all of us are likely not smarter than Newton. We are thus similarly no more able than he to rely on our intellect to master our emotions. So that means as much as possible we need to take ourselves out of the moment in investment decisions. Some very sophisticated investors can take advantage of "bigger fool" tactics to ride the rise up and bank profits as individual stocks or whole markets shoot up—Hoare's Bank did exactly that in 1720. But for most of us, the most important thing to remember is that if something appears to be too good to be true, it is. In practice: take a flyer with your lunch money, not your rent money. More formally: distinguish between the investing one does as a long-term play on underlying real economic activity, and the $200 you carry for a fun and cash-limited night at the casino.

What can we learn from the bubble about who people trust? In the days of the South Sea Bubble, government backing as well as that of the big names of their day was the lynchpin - now it is the power of the people's voice through social media and the likes of Elon Musk. Has anything really changed?

I think less has changed in this area than one might think or wish. Looking back to the roaring 20s you see the effects of celebrity (in a different but recognizable form) on playing the market. And certainly, one of the factors in the dot-com wave of speculation was the rise of financial-entertainment TV, marked most strongly by the rise of the CNBC cable channel. That seems to me to be a pretty

Isaac Newton in 1712, by Sir James Thornhill

close analogue to contemporary social media.

But the strongest parallel, it seems to me, is the repeated juxtaposition of people who were genuinely inventing useful new financial tools (not always with the full understanding of what they were doing) and those who recognized the opening to make a dishonest or unethical profit. In some ways the South Sea Bubble may have been the least affected by this. While the Company and its allies certainly had its schemers happy to grow rich on insider trading, most of those involved thought, in the beginning, certainly, that they were simply doing well by doing good, and that the national interest would be served

by their actions. (As it was, in fact, in a development that took a few decades to play out.)

But that was at least in part because the phenomenon of market failure was itself so new: the stock exchange in London was only a few decades old. Since then, clever, unscrupulous people have much more experience and accumulating techniques of bad behaviour to draw upon, and we see deceit as a much more common element amplifying some of these events. But, again, I'd emphasize that major financial innovations carry with them inevitable unknowns and asymmetries of information that are generally much larger factors in unanticipated market crises than pure fraud.

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and what fuels them are clearly seen. And yet we never seem to learn from history. Why not?

I think that this is a simple fact of human experience, one that applies across a lot of domains. We don't have very long memories. The last deep freeze in Texas was just a decade ago, and yet the fatal power outages (and power market disruptions) of February 2021 came as a surprise to Texas's officials (and very much so to the state's population). The 2008 crash was not even a decade old when some of the protections put in place in its wake were weakened by a new administration. In 2001, young traders had never seen a bear market, or a major correction that lasted any length of time. And in the 80s and 90s, with the Great Depression fading from active recollection, reversing some of the measures put in place to prevent that kind of crash seemed just fine.

I don't know what the solution is, except to write as much history as I can, and encourage everyone to read widely about the past. We are not smarter than our forebears, and we can certainly repeat mistakes we should long since have recognized and avoided. We've done so in the recent past, and we will surely do so again—though if I could only be sure exactly when, I'd be rich.

If there was one conclusion you'd like readers to take from the events of the 1700s and the South Sea Company, what would it be?

The ideas and approaches of the scientific revolution--rigorous measurement, empiricism, and the application of mathematics to experience—shaped the early financial markets, both as tools that could be used to understand market phenomena, and as rhetoric to convince the society and culture of the day that abstract ideas of money made sense. The South Sea Bubble and its aftermath demonstrated both the power of such thinking–its real ability to improve human well-being–and its limits. We would do well to remember those same two possibilities, wealth and economic catastrophe, as we explore the financial world we now inhabit.

Drifting off topic slightly, do you think

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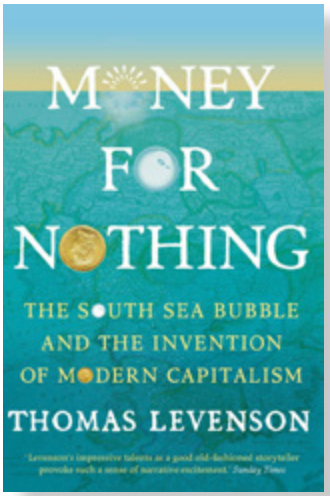
e no longer as highly leveraged, means we won't see another such crash?

No. We will see more crashes. For one thing, the response to the 2008 crisis was modest and has already been weakened at least a little, so I'm not sure just how much protection it provides against the next storm. But the record of past financial crises reminds us that history doesn't so much as repeat itself as that it knows the chords. Financial engineering is an ongoing project; new financial instruments and new ways to trade them (combined with new media, creating a novel information ecosystem) means that the next crash can and likely will develop in ways that are meaningfully different from the securitization issues behind the last one. That's where thinking through market structure and market regulation becomes so important. One characteristic of the most disastrous financial failures has been the phenomenon of contagion–of the spread of the pathology beyond the original confines of the stock market and individual players who go bust. Focusing on reducing the impact financial market fractures have beyond the initial risk-takers—checking the financialization of society as a whole–is a major task, but one that would, I think be very useful.

Money For Nothing: The South Sea Bubble and the Invention of Modern Capitalism

Thomas Levenson



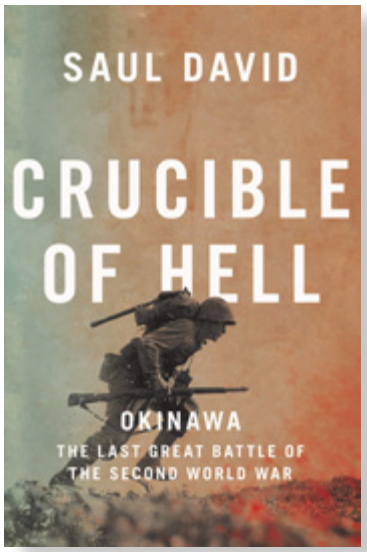
Levenson is Professor of Science Writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the author of *Newton and the Counterfeiter, The Hunt for Vulcan*, and most recently, *Money for Nothing: The South Sea Bubble and the Invention of Modern Capitalism*.

David Durlacher is the UK CEO of Julius Baer, the leading Swiss wealth management group.

REVIEWS

Crucible of Hell: Okinawa: The Last Great Battle of the Second World War; by Saul David

Review by Oliver Webb-Carter



Harry S. Truman's decision to drop the bomb on Japan is inevitably controversial. The events of 6th August 1945, as 'Little Boy' was unleashed on Hiroshima, are brilliantly and tragically described by Saul David in *Crucible of Hell*. It is unpleasant to read of the civilians who experienced the attack, with wounds of indescribable pain and mass death all around. The aircrew that delivered the payload had mixed views, one thinking, 'Thank God the war is over' and another, 'My God, what have we done?'. Add to this the Nagasaki attack three days later, and the Americans had inflicted at least 200,000 deaths on Japan. Robert Oppenheimer, father of the atomic bomb, believed he had blood on his hands and rather unwisely said as much to Truman in a meeting at the Oval Office in October of that year.

Oppenheimer was unaware, in contrast to Truman, of the sheer horrors experienced by American servicemen in their fight to capture Okinawa, the final battle before the planned invasion of Japan. Beginning in late March 1945 and lasting nearly three months, the operation was commanded by the limited Lt. Gen. Buckner. *Crucible of Hell* is a distressing read at times, but always compelling and illuminating too as the ghastly experience of soldiers and civilians is brought to life in a vivid account. The US assault saw heroic acts of bravery in the face of a resolute and utterly committed enemy. But this revealed the problem behind the strategy which, with head-on attacks meeting well entrenched opposition, resulted in 12,500 American dead and 76,000 casualties in total.

David's story is not limited to the military experiences, though. He has uncovered numerous accounts from those participants not usually given a voice in military history: Okinawan civilians, whose culture was increasingly subsumed by Japan, suffered by far the most losses of 125,000; Japanese nurses, tending to their patients, and providing sensitive care that we've grown used to reading from allied sources; and relatives of kamikaze pilots tenderly speaking of their loved ones prior to the horrific suicides.

By the 18th June it was clear to the Japanese that all was lost and further fighting hopeless. Their commander, General Ushijima, refused to entertain surrender and urged his troops to fight to the bitter end. When his final order was issued, an extra note was added, 'Do not suffer the shame of being taken prisoner. You will live to eternity.' Resistance continued until the 30th June.

The battle of Okinawa, along with Iwo Jima, led to the realisation by the US High Command, and ultimately President Truman, that any invasion of Japan would mean vast numbers of US troops losing their lives. David makes clear that it was this conclusion, unanimous among the leadership at the time, which caused Hiroshima and Nagasaki. *Crucible of Hell* goes a long way to putting the reader in the minds of the Americans, both combatants and leadership, in those fateful days at the end of World War Two. As a furious Truman said after his meeting with Oppenheimer, 'Blood on his hands? Damn it! He hasn't half as much blood on his hands as I have.'

Oliver Webb-Carter is the Editor of *Aspects of History*

Prisoners of History: What Monuments to World War II Tell Us About Our History and Ourselves, by Keith Lowe

Review by Laura Parkinson

Keith Lowe, a prominent author of works on the Second World War, examines nations' architectural remembrances of the conflict in this timely book.

Though the 'Rhodes Must Fall Campaign' gained immense traction last summer, and over the past few years Poland has removed its monuments to communism under the PiS government's 2016 decommunisation law, Lowe highlights that globally very few wartime statues have been toppled or consciously removed. Interestingly, and very on-brand with confronting who *Prisoners of History* really are, Lowe remarks that "British and French leaders were…champions of colonialism," and

"American leaders still presided over a racially segregated army"; by that merit, men from the Allied forces whom we have commemorated since the 1940s "engaged in acts that would now be considered war crimes." Considering the global movement to topple Confederate statues in the US, and statues of slave traders and Winston Churchill's memorial in Parliament Square in the UK, Lowe's work is a must-read to grapple the difficulty and controversy of memorialisation of the war. Indeed, as with calls to decolonise the education system owing to a lack of transparency in teaching the nation's youth about Britain's role on the global stage throughout history, the Second World War is sheltered by what Lowe terms "cosy memories"; which risk becoming "a trap, from which escape seems impossible." Why do I make such a comparison if Britain's colonial history is not the topic of Prisoners of History? The answer is simple: Lowe's focal revelation is that monuments to the war are as much a representation of national identity and the ways we choose to use, immortalise and memorialise history. Moreover, it is how we abuse narratives of the past when in plain sight.

Lowe studies 25 memorials from 16 countries, organised into five categories: Heroes, Martyrs, Monsters, Apocalypse and Rebirth. The running argument is that these five subjects underpin collective memory of the war. Even more compelling are the incongruities revealed, most notably that who we view as heroes shifts over time. Lowe outlines that the "martyr is forever," as such, a "nation of martyrs" is then "free to be as selfish as it wishes." This perspective makes Lowe's choice of monuments significant. He includes a well-balanced range enabling the retelling of some remarkable war stories, while simultaneously providing insight into the ways in which nations remember, or deny, issues surrounding national identity and the glory, triumphs, horrors and defeats of war. Lowe's selection features memorials erected by different governments both on home territory and foreign soil; shrines, erected as un-planned acts of remembrance; and others spoiled by the inclusion of war criminals. To Lowe's commendation, his selection is transparent: he examines memorials to atrocities carried out by the Allies as well as the Nazis, and critically engages with monuments to "Heroes" just as he does those to "Monsters."

Prisoners of History is a catalyst seeking to provoke new thought on the memorisation of the past. However, some of Lowe's suggestions perhaps push the limit. This is by no means a critique - personally, I struggled to accept his contention that the preservation of Auschwitz-Birkenau not only memorialises victims of the Holocaust, but also perpetrators. This is where I found the definition of memorialisation should not be skewed, given that by Lowe's logic this means visiting the site "makes monsters" of us. Almost to say that by visiting, we support the actions of the Nazis.

There is beauty to *Prisoners of History*

- it presents fresh-thinking to old ideas. In doing so, it opens such debates about who we immortalise through what we may believe is virtuous memorialisation and commemoration on face-value.

Laura Parkinson is a postgraduate student and researcher, previously concentrating on Nazi-looted art, provenance and restitution. She now focusses on women's artwork, self-preservation and agency during the Holocaust.

Blood and Iron: The Rise and Fall of the German Empire 1871–1918, by Katja Hoyer

Review by Justin Doherty

The seeds of the German nation, nursed into being by the wily statesman Bismarck, were sown in Prussia's humiliation in the Napoleonic Wars. By the time the fragmented German states got their act together, fought back and won at Leipzig in 1813, the journey to unification had begun. Galvanised by a common foe the people of the disparate principalities and dukedoms of the emergent Germany had found a common unifying bond in 'blood and iron.'

Katya Hoyer's galloping narrative tells the story of the new German state from the formal pomp of the Kaiser's coronation at the Palace of Versailles in 1871 to crushing defeat and dismemberment at the Palace of Versailles in 1919, back where it had all begun, nearly half a century beforehand.

By starting her story and situating Germany's journey to world war and holocaust in the year of Bismarck's birth, 1815, Hoyer has taken flack for letting Bismarck - and after him Kaiser Wilhelm II - off the hook. From the very start "A spirit of defensive nationalism had taken hold that would lead to both the creation and destruction of the German Empire." By this analysis, it was the system that was flawed from the beginning.

Nevertheless, this is a story dominated by some remarkable personalities and relationships. A feeble Kaiser Wilhelm I is bullied and manipulated by Bismarck who calls the shots. For Bismarck's *realpolitik* the end justified the means and nothing was off limits, as he schemed his way around his political opponents, undermining, cajoling and manipulating them.

In his day Bismarck was hugely popular. He was the 'Gundervater' in the same way that Angela Merkel is affectionately known

as 'Mutti.' "It seems a nation so fractured and diverse, so scarred by division, war and bitter memories, craves stability and leadership in an almost childlike way."

Under Bismarck the early achievements of the Second Reich were astonishing. A united Germany industrialised fast. German manufacturing powerhouses such as Siemens, BASF and Bayer were born. The new Reichstag building was the wonder of its age, epitomising the *Grunderzeit*, the 'Founder's Period.'

So far this story will warm the hearts of any Europhile. The church was put in its place by a secularising and liberal state. Free movement of people boosted the economy, tariffs removed, and a common currency introduced. Universal male suffrage was introduced. Irrespective of Bismarck's motives this had the trappings of a thoroughly modern state, bolshy parliament and all.

But this was papering over the cracks. The fruits of Bismarck's 'defensive nationalism' led inevitably to a nation "whose patriotic fervour required a constant diet of conflict."

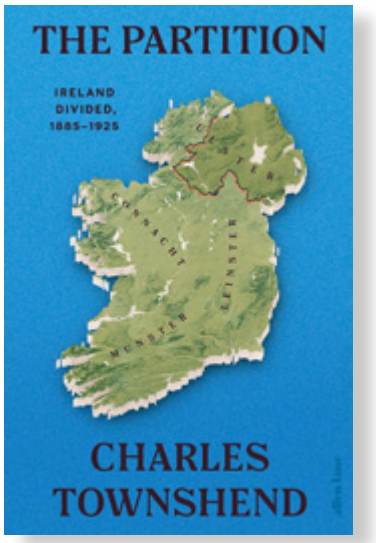
By the time we get to the second half of Blood and Iron we're on familiar turf with the hopeless and infantile Kaiser Wilhelm II. Arrogant and misguided he sacks Bismarck. Physically and emotionally damaged he obsesses about military glory and armies. The Kaiser is inspired by yacht racing at Cowes to build a navy (whilst staying with his maternal Grandmother Queen Victoria). Germany rearms and the story heads towards its all too familiar conclusion.

This is a lively, concise and well-written narrative account. Hoyer covers a great deal of ground at pace. *Blood and Iron* will join works by Neil MacGregor and Christopher Clark as helpful guides to this important nation that defined so much of the 20th century, and which is the world's fourth largest economy today.

Justin Doherty is a classicist, former army officer and advisor to governments on crises and complex situations.

The Partition: Ireland Divided, 1885 to 1925, by Charles Townshend

Review by Oliver Webb-Carter



Anyone who thinks the political machinations since the Brexit vote in 2016 were without precedent should re-read their British and Irish history. The idea that

both the Commons and Lords would do all in their power to thwart a government's intentions was all too apparent the 1900s, so complaints today are difficult to take seriously. The Home Rule Crisis, leading to partition, was far more turbulent, with a so-called military mutiny thrown in. Certainly, we didn't see Theresa May at the receiving end of a projectile from the opposition benches, as Winston Churchill was when failing to avoid a copy of the Standing Orders (a beautiful moment of irony), hurled at him by Ronald McNeill in the autumn of 1912.

Charles Townshend narrates this incident, along with countless others, in the third of his trilogy of books on the Irish Revolution, *The Partition: Ireland Divided, 1885-1925*. With emotions running high, the reasons for the break-up become unrelentingly clear as one progresses through nine elegantly crafted chapters (the same number of counties making up the province of Ulster). His exhaustive research places the reader in the room with the key participants of protracted and ultimately unsuccessful negotiations over a 40-year period, resulting in an outcome none had wanted.

Townshend gives a carefully constructed explanation of a new ideology, unionism, and its emergence from the embers of late 18th century rebellions as Irish nationalism became steadily more sectarian (thanks to the lack of progress with catholic emancipation post the Act of Union). The Ulster identity grew stronger as Home Rulers and Republicans refused to face up to the genuinely felt concerns of those in the north. This identity culminated in the famous Ulster Covenant in September 1912. Partition had been proposed as an amendment to the Third Home Rule Bill a few months earlier, and once raised, it stubbornly remained the most likely outcome.

The Partition brilliantly recounts the increasing determination in the north to resist Home Rule, and the later Free State. The reasons for this resistance should not be difficult to understand: a sincere belief in the union, solidified by the sacrifices made during the Great War. The scene, as Townshend wonderfully describes, when an English civil servant is jabbed in the chest six times by the finger of James Craig to embody U-L-S-T-E-R, can be seen to represent the realisation by England that the six counties were distinct.

Townshend concludes by giving a sobering final analysis of the modern-day desire for unification. Brexit has clearly raised the question again, but polls in Northern Ireland remain doggedly close to religious divides. The UK government's clownish attempts to side-line the reality of the border, has undoubtedly muddied waters, but as in the early part of the 20th century, it is quite possible partition remains the only answer as all others are unpalatable to one side or the other.

Charles Townshend has written the definitive account of the events from 1885

that led to the tragic separation, and in the 100-year anniversary of partition itself, his book is required reading for those with even a passing interest in the history of Britain and Ireland.

Oliver Webb-Carter is the Editor of Aspects of History.

Stalin's War, by Sean McMeekin

Review by Michael Arnold

Most general histories of the Second World War written in the English language tend to take a broad view across the Washington/London/Berlin/Moscow/Tokyo centres of power and do not focus especially on the Soviet element of the conflict. Of course, this is in part due to the relative shortage of Russian language skills of Western historians and the approach of Soviet authorities to the disclosure of historical records.

Sean McMeekin's latest work, Stalin's War, deliberately sets out to narrate and interpret the Second World War from the standpoint of the USSR. McMeekin's extraordinary range of linguistic skills (French, German, Russian, Bulgarian and Turkish) have contributed greatly to this extraordinarily appealing work.

McMeekin contends that the Second World War (which was in reality an amalgamation of conflicts) was a war that Stalin wanted. He initially envisaged that the two capitalist blocks (France and the British Empire on the one hand and Germany and Italy on the other) would fight each other to exhaustion, leaving the way clear for Soviet Communism to expand both its influence and its physical presence westwards. The fact that Stalin under-estimated the power of the German military in 1940 in the west and over-estimated the actual fighting strength of the Soviet forces in 1941 does not detract from that assessment.

Fascinating aspects of the narrative are plentiful. The machinations of Stalin during the period of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, particularly in Poland and the Balkans; the approach of Roosevelt to arming the USSR and the contrast between the hard-nosed terms imposed upon Britain under lend lease compared with the extremely soft terms offered to Stalin notwithstanding the desperate plight of the USSR in late 1941; the existence in Washington of well-placed NKVD agents; the uncomfortable contrasting morality of the approaches of

Hitler and Stalin to their own repatriated prisoners of war; the duplicity of Stalin in Manchuria in his dealings with Chiang Kai-shek; and the efforts that were made by Soviet agents to ensure that a US-Japanese conflict took place, are outlined in persuasive detail.

An illustration of the level of scholarship and detail within the work is the section dealing with the spoils of war which the Germans gained during Barbarossa and the Herculean efforts made by the Soviets to move whole factories farther east in the USSR to try to enable wartime production to continue.

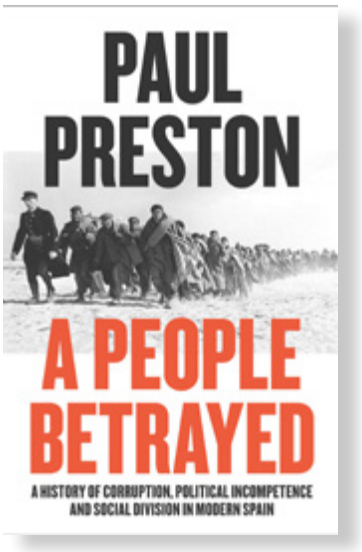
In the sense that the Soviet state emerged from the Second World War in a more powerful position than it had been beforehand, controlling Eastern Europe, spreading Communism in Asia and replete with technological gains, this was indeed Stalin's war. That it came at a cost of the lives of many millions of Soviet and other nationals and unfathomable misery for countless others was not it seems of concern to Stalin.

McMeekin acknowledges the great contribution that the late Norman Stone made to his career. There is little doubt that this superb work is a fitting tribute.

Michael Arnold is a retired solicitor and Secretary of the Nuneaton Historical Association.

A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain 1974-2018, by Paul Preston

Review by Kate Werran



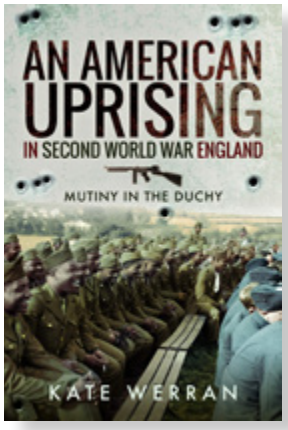
If you are looking for a little light relief, something to uplift and take you away to happier times and places, perhaps like sunny Spain, I am afraid *A People Betrayed is not it*. Nor could it be. This dense book by Paul Preston triangulates the modern Spanish story (1874-2018) using corruption, political incompetence, and social division as parameters. The resulting history is a relentless tale of bloodshed, hunger and misery for the Spanish – utterly compelling, but not for the faint-hearted, or for those seeking a happy ending.

Starting with the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1874, it charts the Second Republic (1931-36), Civil War (1936-39), Francisco Franco's 30-year dictatorship

(1936-1975) and what Preston dubs as the "painful creation of democracy" with King Juan Carlos. The cast list includes kings, dictators and other establishment bandits. The regime changes are frequent and often ruthless (25 military coups between 1814 and 1981); the political spectrum is wide and the scale of violence unfathomable – but the one unflinching constant throughout is the rapacious greed and all-round uselessness of the few who ruled the many.

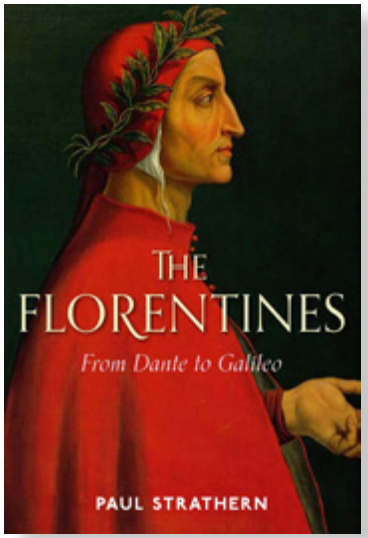
The sums involved are mind-boggling: sensing his time as king was running out, Alfonso XIII managed to spirit 85 million pesetas out of Spain before the Second Republic was created in 1931; Franco, who enjoyed power "of a kind previously enjoyed only by the kings of medieval Spain" left a fabulous fortune estimated at a billion euros today. His wife Dona Carmen's legendary penchant for antiques and gems supposedly led jewellers in Madrid and Barcelona to set up "unofficial insurance syndicates" to protect against her visits and others to shut up shop altogether when they heard she was coming. More recent, post democracy examples of profiteering include pilfering from the EEC's cohesion fund; creaming off a billion euros from the ERE (a fund for those facing redundancy) and the controversial reclassification of land use.

Regardless of *who* was stealing, it was always the Spanish people who paid the price of their leaders' ill-gotten largesse – and cruelty. For instance, take episodes like the Fascist air bombing of Guernica, widely regarded as Hitler's preparation for Blitzkrieg. To add insult to injury (quite literally), the devastating use of Nazi weaponry between 1936 to 1939 was repaid in part by sending Spain's entire olive oil yield to Germany in 1941. While the British spent millions bribing influential Spanish generals to stay the right side of neutral during the Second World War, republicans continued to be persecuted. On top of the 500,000 who died in the Spanish Civil War, more than a million were subsequently jailed and forced to work in mines and reconstruction for private companies. People starved for Franco's dreams of Spanish economic independence, which he ludicrously thought, could be achieved simply by printing more money. For those with less in-depth knowledge of the subject, I would have liked to see other characters better embellished, maps and more illustrations. But these complaints are minor. This is essential to understanding modern Spain. Just don't read it on your holiday.



Kate Werran is a historian, journalist and television producer. Her first book is *An American Uprising in Second World War England: Mutiny in the Duchy*.

The Florentines: From Dante to Galileo, by Paul Strathern
Review by Trevor James



Very occasionally are we offered an entirely new perspective on a body of work with which we already seem entirely familiar but which has the effect of transforming our understanding. Paul Strathern's *The Florentines: From Dante to Galileo* is such a work. What we thought we knew about Florence is presented to us within the framework of a new analysis.

There is new detail, from the prosaic to the complex. We learn at one end of the spectrum that the 'florin', with which we used to be very familiar in England, owes its name to Florence and that when we 'bank' we are reflecting the Florentine practice of carrying financial transactions on open tables. Equally we are offered a stimulating analysis of the imagery of Dante's *Inferno* and the place and significance of the various characters involved.

What Paul Strathern has done is to argue that the special ingredients found in Florence from the late 15th to the early 17th century made it uniquely the cradle of the *Renaissance*. Within this small city and its immediate neighbourhood so much of what we would come to recognize as the Renaissance characteristics emerge. It is an authoritative argument because it is clearly the case that the artistic activities of Michelangelo, the universally recognized inventiveness and artistic output of Leonardo da Vinci and the transformative scientific discoveries of Galileo were all nurtured in this intellectual cauldron. Added to this is the enduring influence of Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* within European political thought and action. The overall impact of these and other local scholars on the intellectual and cultural life of Europe is truly astounding. Naturally other views for the flowering of aesthetic ideas and processes at other locations and chronological periods may easily be offered but the status and importance of Florence at that particular time is basically unchallengeable.

Paul Strathern, therefore, does offer very powerfully the case for the status of Florence as the cradle of the Renaissance. His reasoning is very carefully crafted by analysing the nature of the cultural trends that were emerging in and around Florence, interwoven with its economic, financial and international strengths and links, along with

a convincing explanation of the emergence and importance of the role of the Medici family, within the local political rivalries and power struggles.

This is strongly conveyed, very carefully researched, and the supporting illustrations help portray the dynamism of the Florentine contribution to the Renaissance. This book should take its place as a major commentary on the development and evolution of the Renaissance and just how exceptionally the various elements came together in Florence.

Queens of Jerusalem: The Women Who Dared to Rule, by Katherine Pangonis

Review by Trevor James

For many historians Outremer was the destination of the Crusades and our focus has been on what happened to the crusaders, both on their journeys and in their struggles at that location at the far end of the Mediterranean. Amongst the many attractions of this book by Katherine Pangonis is that she has made Outremer the focus, in effect making that destination the central feature of the book.
The reason why it is named 'Outremer' without the definite article is readily revealed: as with many linguistic developments, 'Outremer' has emerged from its medieval French description and meaning as 'overseas' or 'lands beyond the sea'.

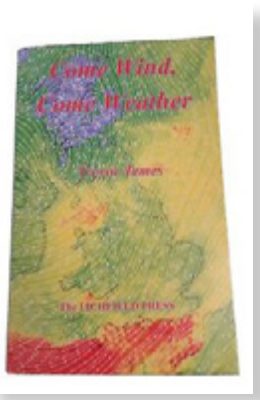
With the provision of very helpful maps, family trees and an extensive chronology the background and development of Outremer is carefully revealed.
The location of the principal state of the Kingdom of Jerusalem is clearly delineated, along with Principality of Antioch and the Counties of Edessa and Tripoli. Understanding this governmental structure provides a good background to her narrative.

Katherine's special purpose is to reveal the remarkable role that various women played in the leadership of these four regions. It is part of a very positive trend to try and unravel what was happening to women in historic times, with documentary and literary sources reluctant to mention them. In this particular instance it is the involvement of a series of high-status women who found themselves at the heart of government in Outremer. Of these the most significant is Queen Melisende of Jerusalem. This is because she was 'queen regnant' as opposed to merely being 'queen

consort'. In other words, she inherited her throne from her father Baldwin II. This gave her a constitutional status, even when she shared leadership with her husband, Fulk, and her son, Baldwin III.
In exploring the role and actions of Queen Melisende, parallels with Helen Castor's 'She-Wolves' emerge. The latter were four talented women who demonstrably exercised power through sheer personality, pointing to the later Tudor conundrum where, following the death of Edward VI, only women could succeed. Katherine Pangolis has demonstrated that this constitutional scenario had already been experienced more than once in Outremer. She has utilised and interpreted all the sources available, principally the writing of William of Tyre, to give us a strong perspective on how Queen Melisende and others exercised their leadership.

For about a century these 'settler' states existed alongside a continuous threat from their Muslem neighbours, with eventually the area being over-run by Saladin. The narrative of how these states managed to survive and then eventually over-run is well-explained in this work. What is offered, however, goes beyond the local narrative because we are also introduced to the inter-relationship of these emergent dynasties with the Byzantine Court and various significant families in France and Italy, along with the religious divergences between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian traditions.

Queens of Jerusalem provides a good opportunity, in a very succinct form, to gain a strong understanding of what was a sustained focus of West European diplomatic and religious policy for over a century, but it also offers a unique perspective on women's history.



Dr Trevor James is a historian and writer, and director of the Young Historian Project. His latest book is *Come Wind, Come Weather: Storm, Tempest and Other Natural Phenomena within Local Sources.*

The Royal Secret, by Andrew Taylor

Review by Steven Veerapen

The Stuart era is currently going through something of a rebirth in historical fiction, with authors turning their keystrokes to

the long-reviled and much-decried Stuarts. Andrew Taylor has been amongst the vanguard in reassessing and promoting this era as the passionate, fascinating, and lively period that it was.

The latest in his rollicking, fast-paced series of mysteries set in Restoration England provides a welcome chapter in the ongoing saga of James Marwood and Cat Lovett-Hakesby. As always, the feel for the period is spot on. In addition to the references to Restoration comedies, the culture and spirit of the age - which straddles the Renaissance and the Enlightenment - comes through in the customs and dialogue without ever feeling obvious or clunky. This was an age of stifling decorum and baroque manners, of poverty and injustice, of elegance and brutality and Taylor does a marvellous job in bringing its contradictions to life. Set against a backdrop of shuttered drawing rooms, sinister servants' halls, packed theatres, and noisy taverns, the action provides a sweep of life at all levels without ever losing the intimacy and intrigue of its characters' (whether scheming or investigative) private lives.

In addition to Cat and Marwood, the novel provides a large cast which is well served by multiple narrative perspectives. The shifts might seem a little overwhelming to new readers, though the clear breaks provided between different characters' narratives and Taylor's masterful use of different voices keep the tale engrossing, and, thematically, this style works in telling a story on this scale and level of intrigue. The opening *dramatis personae* will also be welcome to new readers in keeping up with a period less familiar than the Tudors. Existing fans of the series, I don't doubt, will have no trouble at all. At root, of course, Marwood and Cat provide engaging protagonists, and their curious - and never cliched or predictable - relationship forms the novel's emotional backbone.

The great hook of the story lies in witchcraft and the occult, which are always welcome. However, thereafter multiple plots intersect as high political intrigue collides with domestic drama, murder, and even - and this is marvellous and, as the author's note attests, accurate to the period- a lion. The handling of real-life politics (which are far less familiar, comparatively, to events of earlier and later eras) are well handled and will be welcome to fans of rich historical drama. I am no expert in Restoration politics, and yet I found myself diving into the era with abandon, and doffing my hat at how well actual historical figures were portrayed; Taylor's skill in weaving together real-life personalities and his fictional creations is, as usual, seamless.

Ultimately, I suspect that those who are new to Cat and Marwood might like to start at the beginning and work up to The Royal Secret. Such a journey is, however, most certainly worth embarking upon.

Steven Veerapen is an academic and author. His latest novel is *The Queen's Gold.*

The First Kingdom: Britain in the Age of Arthur, by Max Adams

Review by M.J.Porter

The First Kingdom: Britain in the Age of Arthur is quite simply a stunning book. Max Adams knows his subject but more than that, his writing style is engaging, informative, often verging on the poetic. His intention, at all times, is solely focused on ensuring his readers understand the intricacies of this period. Some might not like his references to the modern, but in explaining something as complex and perplexing as this 300-year period, a connection must be forged between the past and the present.

At the beginning of the book, there is a quotation comparing the historian to the animal "husbandry man", which eminently sums up Max Adams' attitude to the study of history. This sort of refreshing mindset allows *The First Kingdom* to flow with all the ease of a work of fiction, although it is patently not one. It will set many minds tumbling down little-known tracks, forcing them to reconsider much of what they think they 'know' about the island of Britain during the supposed 'age of Arthur'.

Through 13 chapters, divided into three parts, Max Adams takes his reader on a journey from the end of the Roman period, *The End of History*, as he titles Part One (whenever that might have been – perhaps not the often bandied about AD410), via Part Two, *After History*; the part where any Arthur would have existed, if he did, indeed, exist, to Part Three, *The First Kingdom* and the familiar, God-given kings of the seventh century.

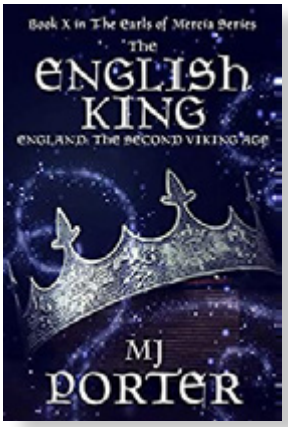
Each 'part' is self-composed, but links to the other, as the narrative reaches its climax. Max Adams is an archaeologist first and foremost, a historian second, and all sorts of other professions in between. He calls himself a woodsman, and his light touch makes even the most daunting of archaeological site reports intelligible. His arguments are so close to the possible, that they can't be ignored, even if they counter the status quo, offering a flip on old, tried

and tested assertions, which the current archaeology simply does not corroborate.

The First Kingdom focuses not just on the current definition of England but on Britain as a whole, including the sea landscape of Dal Riata, allowing Irish sites to be included.

He speaks eloquently about current archaeological projects, with an acceptance that older site reports aren't as precise as possible, lacking the advances made in recent years. The same approach is taken to the historical record, with a move away from a declaration that because a monk, somewhere, wrote it down at some time, it must be a true reflection of the past, from which we must never waver.

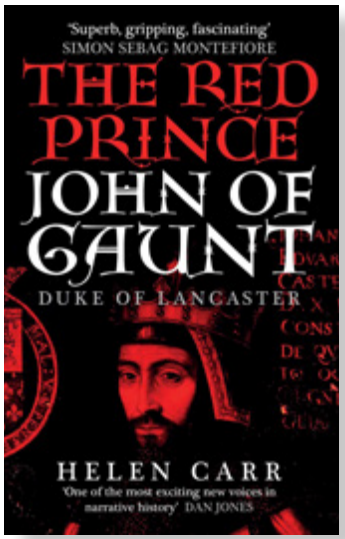
While acknowledging the body of work of long-established and eminent historians and archaeologists, Max Adams isn't afraid to offer new perspectives. They are even more appealing, more deliciously complex and nuanced than the legend of Arthur, as it's currently known, can ever be.



M.J.Porter is a novelist and author of historical fiction sent during the Anglo-Saxon period. Her latest is *The English King. England: The Second Viking Age.*

The Red Prince: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, by Helen Carr

Review by Amy McElroy



John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster is a familiar name to those with an interest in medieval history. Anyone who enjoys reading of the Plantagenet and Tudor dynasties will certainly be aware of him, but just who was he and how much influence did he have?

Gaunt was third son of Edward III, brother to the Black Prince, and father to Henry Bolingbroke who would become Henry IV and the forefather of the Tudors through his Beaufort children. Gaunt was born in the 14th century in Ghent (the English mispronounced the city as Gaunt) whilst England was in the midst of the 100 Years War with France. As a prince of the realm, he faced a life in service to kings Edward III and Richard II and was depicted as a greedy, power hungry individual who would do anything to advance his own cause. This included ambition to ascend to

the throne of Castile. As a consequence, he was unpopular, gaining an unhealthy reputation with the people.

That's the commonly understood character of the man; however, Carr aims to remedy this view and reveal who Gaunt really was and why he was depicted thus. Written with engaging prose, Carr brings Gaunt to life. Though he was a man of ambition and eager to take the Castilian throne, he also showed immense loyalty to both Edward III and Richard II, as well as his extended family. Gaunt shielded Richard II through his diplomatic missions and was respected throughout Europe. Londoners did not agree, and it was they who destroyed his home, The Savoy Palace, during the Peasants Revolt. This dislike was not the case across all of England as Carr highlights it was in the north where he held most of his lands and was well liked. Here he ensured his people's safety and was a notable patron of religion and the arts.

Carr makes the case that for Gaunt family was everything: he grew up close to relatives and was mentored by his elder brother, the Black Prince, ensuring he adhered to a code of chivalry and loyalty for the rest of his life, eager to follow in the Prince of Wales' footsteps. To abide by his brother's dying wish he ensured his nephew Richard II ascended the throne but faced harsh criticism including rumours of possible usurpation. Consequently, his relationship with his nephew was not always simple. Towards the end of his life as this relationship became more fractured, as Gaunt attempted to ensure the safety of his family and the Lancastrian dynasty.

Throughout his life he suffered much hardship and heartbreak which Carr uses carefully to portray a complex, misunderstood man who has been unfairly judged – until now. Through the depiction of Gaunt, Carr also gives insight into other individuals including the Black Prince, Richard II and Katherine Swynford. Carr has written a fascinating new biography, bringing her subject out from the shadows of the past into the limelight, where he belongs, in this thrilling debut.

Amy McElroy is a writer and blogger with an interest in the medieval and early modern periods.

Roman Britain's Missing legion: What Really Happened to IX Hispana? By Simon Elliott

Review by Peter Tonkin

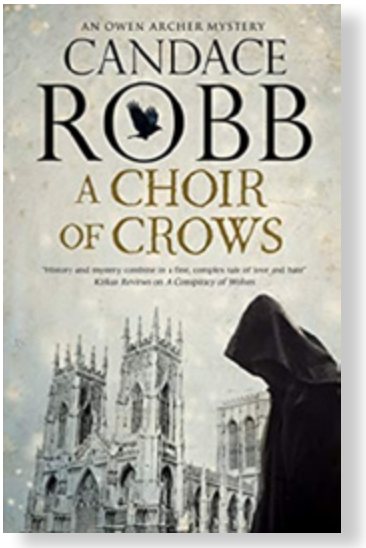
In this gripping and illuminating book, Simon Elliott deals with one of the most famous mysteries of Roman history as he tries to discover what really happened to the IXth legion. He tells several interwoven stories – not simply that of the possible fate of the legion which seemingly disappeared from York to vanish into thin air during the early AD 100's (they are last recorded there in AD 108). He examines the archaeological theories from their earliest iterations, through the 1950's (Rosemary Sutcliffe used current theories of John Horsley and Theodor Mommsen to construct *The Eagle of the IXth* published 1954) right up to the present day. In order to aid the reader's better understanding of the problem, he examines the construction of the legions post Marius and post Augustus. He examines in detail the situation in Britannia and the wider Empire during the time of their deployment and, after their removal from the historical record, he looks into a range of possibilities that take him from the north-western outposts of the Empire in Scotland via London and its possible destruction during Hadrian's reign, to the military outposts along the Waal River at Nijmegen, the Danube and all points east into the deserts of Judaea and Parthia.

The story alone would be enthralling, but Simon Elliott is the perfect guide to take us through the pages of history and across the entire Empire. He is deeply knowledgeable, rigorously sceptical and quite happy to present his own ideas and then knock them down in favour of better ones. His style is at once academic and erudite. He uses the classic thesis-construction of: *This is what I'm going to do; here I am doing it; and looking back, this is what I have discovered/proved/argued most convincingly*. This acts like a compass, as he accompanies us through truly vast speculations, every point supported by a reference to the work of other academics.

It would be as unfair of me to reveal his conclusions as it would be to tell you who carried out the murders in *The Mousetrap*. Much of the great enjoyment the reader finds in this book, which the author himself likens to a detective story, is to be reminded of the manner in which the legions were organised and deployed through a huge range of theatres of war - and the place of the IXth within them. Then to observe Simon Elliott's forensic analysis of theories past and present as to their disappearance; of contemporary records presented on paper and in stone; and of archaeological clues as vast as a river-valley full of severed skulls and as minute as a legionary stamp on a roof-tile. To continue the *Mousetrap* analogy and Dr Elliott's own, it's as riveting as strolling across the Great Grimpen Mire in the company of Sherlock Holmes in search of that elusive hound.

A Choir of Crows, By Candace Robb

Review by Peter Tonkin



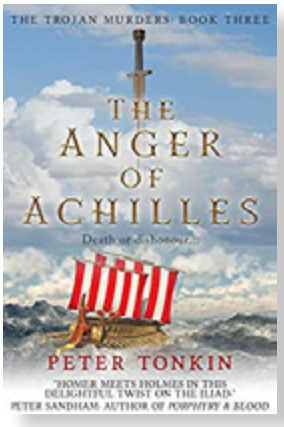
A Choir of Crows is the 12th novel in Candace Robb's enormously successful series of Owen Archer mysteries. It follows *A Conspiracy of Wolves* but, like all the others, it stands on its own. In *A Choir of Crows*, Candace Robb carries her readers back to the winter of 1374 and to her brilliantly constructed mediaeval York. The city is in the grip of an icy December. It is also in the grip of fearful anticipation. Cardinal Archbishop John Thoresby is dead. His successor Alexander Neville is due to arrive for his formal enthronement at any moment, accompanied by members of his own powerful family and their rivals for supremacy in the North, the Percys. Against this background, Owen Archer, Captain of the City and Black Prince Edward's spy, must solve a series of suspicious deaths. He does so with the questionable involvement of old friends, powerful retainers, and various characters cunningly disguised.

What is particularly engaging about Candace Robb's work is that, although Archer is the central figure, the reader meets and grows to know a wide range of characters, seeing into the minds and through the eyes of family, friends and allies (old and new), the bailiffs he commands, the enemies he encounters. The characters are rounded and delicately drawn; the city, the season and the century they inhabit are equally well done.
The novel's dedication to the Medieval Women's Choir, with whom Candace Robb sings, explains in part the theme of contemporary song that is so central to the story. There is little doubt, however, that the author also has in mind the world of Geoffrey Chaucer – who has travelled through many earlier adventures with the redoubtable Owen. It is a world full of bustling, vivid life where the great and the good knock elbows with the halt and the lame. Where simple, holy, monks and nuns can have their contemplative lives disrupted by the most murderous villains, serving a range of powerful masters, and always their own ends as well.

She presents a Europe under the Church of Rome (though the Pope is in Avignon) where, despite the 100 Years War, travel is restricted by nothing other than time for many of her characters and a minstrel last seen performing at the French court of Charles V can appear in great houses south

of York and wander into the city almost unremarked, like a pilgrim from The *Canterbury Tales*. But this ability to travel comes with a price that is currently all-too familiar – for travellers and strangers carry pestilence. And, of course, in Owen Archer's world they also carry secret intelligence at great risk to themselves and to others they might happen across.

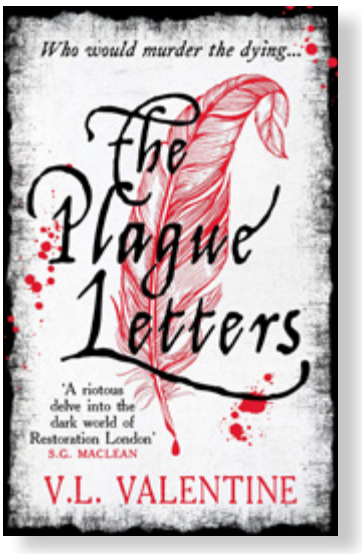
Every page of this spellbinding mystery rings with the authenticity that comes from exhaustive research lightly worn, so that the reality of the background always enhances the gripping foreground narrative. Once Owen Archer's latest twisting, turning investigation grasps the reader, as it does from the very first page, it simply never lets go.



Peter Tonkin is the bestselling author of over 30 novels. His latest book is *The Anger of Achilles*.

The Plague Letters, by V.L.Valentine

Review by Michael Ward



V.L. Valentine's visceral debut skilfully immerses the reader in the dread and despair of plague-ridden London during the stinking hot summer of 1665.

The story centres on Symon Patrick, the young Rector of St. Paul's in Covent Garden, and his discovery that, among the plague dead brought to his churchyard, one has been tortured and murdered. Her hair is shorn, her body cut and burnt, with twine bracelets and anklets attached – the desecration mapped by ink lines drawn across her skin like the work of a demon cartographer.

Patrick finds similar victims and, seeking help, joins the Society for the Prevention and Cure of the Plague - a colourful group of 'medical' men pledged to find an answer to the apocalypse visiting their city. It soon

becomes clear their knowledge is as feeble as their methods as, in a city overwhelmed by corpses, they cannot secure a single one for examination.

There are echoes of Flann O'Brien as Valentine describes this hapless group undertaking their twin missions of finding the killer and a cure for the plague, each of which appears to be entirely beyond their grasp. In the midst of this, Patrick is given too much self-recrimination about his apparent inability to achieve either goal, which seems a little hard on him as the cause of the plague would not be identified for another 250 years. One senses, at times, that he enjoys these mental flagellations. Even in the final pages, he's still at it: 'How many times can a man be a fool', he asks. At these moments, you really want to give him a slap.

One is just beginning to wonder where all this is leading when in steps Penelope, a waif and stray. She lands on Patrick's doorstep as a bag of rags and bones but slowly emerges with the mettle and motivation to assist Patrick in his search. The hunt becomes more focused while, week by week, the charnel pits overflow, until the end of the trail is reached and the suspect confronted.

The 'who-dunnit' element of *The Plague Letters* provides its necessary framework, but what remains with you long after is the heat, the stench of decay and lime, the fear and flight, leaving whole parishes deserted; and throughout it all, the dogged but hopeless sexton and his yard boys, each day stoically digging new pits amidst the rumble of approaching carts bringing ever more corpses. I can't remember the last time a book had such a physical effect on me. I could almost feel at times Patrick's difficulty in breathing as the choking miasma enveloped him.

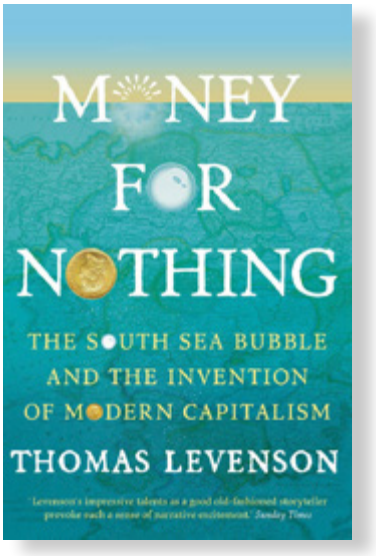
Over 400 pages of such fare would be overwhelming, but for the antics of the Society which leaven the narrative. But such is Valentine's skill, the addition of their surreal behaviour actually makes for a richer stew of disconcerting abnormality. And, in a wonderful twist, on the one occasion Patrick leaves London to escape, he finds that nothing is as it seems.

The true reality awaits him back in his parish.

Michael Ward is a journalist, academic and writer, and the author of the historical thriller *Rags of Time.*

Money for Nothing: The South Sea Bubble and the Invention of Modern Capitalism, by Thomas Levenson

Review by Oliver Webb-Carter



After the 1707 Act of Union, the new Kingdom of Great Britain was experiencing a number of firsts: Isaac Newton had already brought ground-breaking understanding with his theory of gravity; Daniel Defoe was to write the first English novel, *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719; and Robert Walpole would become the first Prime Minister in 1721. The scientific advances that Newton had uncovered were part of a wider revolution that was intrinsically linked to finance (Newton was also Master of the Mint) and it was into this new era that another, more malevolent force arrived: the stock market crash in the form of the South Sea Bubble. Thomas Levenson has written an immensely readable history of the calamitous event and Newton, Defoe and Walpole are key characters throughout.

The South Sea Company had been founded in 1711 as a supposedly ingenious way of consolidating government debt, in addition to capitalising on trade in South America. That trade would be reliant on the goodwill of Spain, which had a violent relationship with Britain, and slavery in which the company had no experience. Whilst the Royal African Company had shown it was possible to make fortunes through the horrors of the slave trade, the South Sea Company proved itself incapable. Regardless, a mania descended on investors, and the price of stock increased tenfold during six months in 1721.

It is remarkable how Newton, the genius of his time, could be swept along by the craze that involved increasingly complex methods of trading. Innovations, common enough today, such as bonds, derivatives, futures and options, all helped contribute to the stock price rise. As Newton famously said, 'I can calculate the motions of the planets, but I cannot calculate the madness of men.' And it was this madness, combined with the new financial instruments that caused him to lose £20,000 (the equivalent of around £4 million today).

Throughout *Money for Nothing*, the 2008 crash was in my mind, but the 1720 bubble, whilst ruinous for individuals, did not have the same global impact. Indeed, Levenson makes clear the foundations of Britain's

subsequent empire were built on Walpole's management of government debt through what remained of the South Sea Company.

But ruinous it was and whilst Newton and the other 'victims' did not have financial history to help steer their decisions, the same cannot be said for the participants of the booms we've seen most recently. Levenson's brilliant book concludes with the Lehman collapse, and the reader is left with a sense of unease of not if, but when we will face the next stock market crash.

Oliver Webb-Carter is the Editor of *Aspects of History*.

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