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THE NEW STATESMAN

New Times New Thinking | 16-22 September 2022 | £4.99 | newstatesman.com

Succession

A special issue on the end of an era and the future of the monarchy

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The Queen held together a restive kingdom

The death of Queen Elizabeth II marks the end of the United Kingdom's long 20th century. No other public figure was so intertwined with modern Britain and its self-identity. Throughout the political and economic convulsions of her 70-year reign, the Queen represented stability and continuity in an age of ceaseless innovation and change.

That so many in the UK and beyond have mourned the Queen's passing reflects not only the length of her rule but the manner and style of it. She embodied qualities that monarchists and republicans alike could admire: dutifulness, humility, civility, common decency, self-restraint and statecraft. During the Covid-19 pandemic, in one of her finest public addresses, the Queen spoke to and for the nation as she drew on her wartime service and vowed, "We will meet again" – an allusion to the 1939 song popularised by Vera Lynn.

Always mindful of the constitutional limits of her role, Elizabeth II avoided direct political interventions. A rare exception came days before the 2014 Scottish independence referendum when she told a well-wisher: "I hope people will think very carefully about the future." Another was on a 2011 visit to Ireland when she bowed her head in commemoration of those who died fighting British rule – a remarkable moment in the fraught process of reconciliation. After the Queen's death, Sinn Féin's leaders, Michelle O'Neill and Mary Lou McDonald, paid tribute.

"The problem is the Queen is the kind of woman who could vote Social Democratic," Margaret Thatcher once said to the interviewer Brian Walden. Whether or not this was true, the remark captures something of the essence of her cross-class appeal and instinct for fairness.

King Charles III, who ascends the throne after the longest wait of any heir in British history, faces formidable challenges. As Martin Fletcher writes on page 28, he has been politically indiscreet, making his views known on a variety of issues, including climate change, GM foods, architecture and homoeopathy. His "black spider" memos to government ministers – so called because of his distinctive handwriting – became notorious as he sought to suppress their eventual publication.

DONALD MCKAGUE/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

No future head of state is likely to command the depths of loyalty and affection that the Queen inspired

As head of state, Charles has pledged to adopt a less interventionist approach. "I'm not that stupid. I do realise it's a separate exercise being sovereign," he remarked in a 2018 interview with the BBC. He is also rightly committed to a "slimmed-down" monarchy that jettisons assorted hangers-on in favour of an inner core.

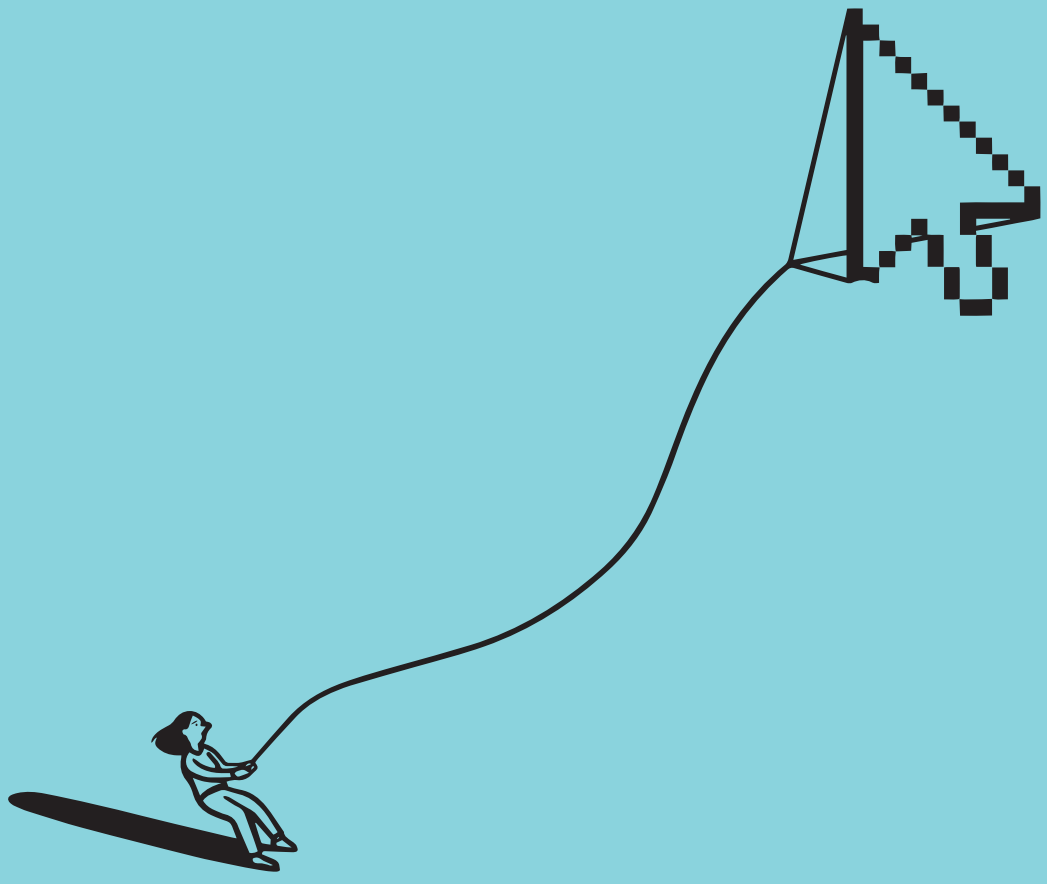
In office, Charles deserves to be held accountable for these promises and scrutinised, not indulged. The recent revelation in the *Sunday Times* that he accepted a suitcase containing €1m in cash from the former Qatari prime minister has cast further doubt over his judgement.

As King, he will need to earn the loyalty and affection of the public rather than assuming it. Though public support for the monarchy remains robust, it has fallen by 13 percentage points over the past decade to 62 per cent, according to a recent YouGov poll. Among 18- to 24-year-olds, backing for an unelected head of state stands at just 33 per cent (down from 59 per cent in 2011).

The death of the Queen would be disorienting even at a time of stability. But these are no ordinary times: the multinational state is fragmented and, in Liz Truss, the UK has its fourth prime minister in just over six years and an ardent right-wing free marketeer. Brexit Britain is struggling to forge a new international role, and in the 14 Commonwealth countries of which the Queen was head of state her death will prompt renewed discussion of republicanism.

The British economy, meanwhile, is on the verge of recession and households are facing the biggest fall in living standards since records began. The institutions that spanned the Queen's reign – the NHS, the welfare state, the armed forces, the BBC – are increasingly enfeebled after a decade of austerity. And the future of the 315-year-old Union itself is in doubt as the Scottish government campaigns for a second independence referendum.

No future monarch is likely to command the depths of loyalty and affection that the Queen inspired through her stoic commitment to her role. The Britain of the immediate postwar era that created the conditions for her remarkable reign no longer exists. But as public servants grapple with a divided and restive kingdom, they could do far worse than recall the example and decency of Elizabeth II.



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MORE IN THIS ISSUE

New Statesman Vol 151, No 5685 / ISSN 1364-7431 / USPS 382260

THE NEW STATESMAN

40-42 Hatton Garden, London EC1N 8EB
Tel 020 8269 7959

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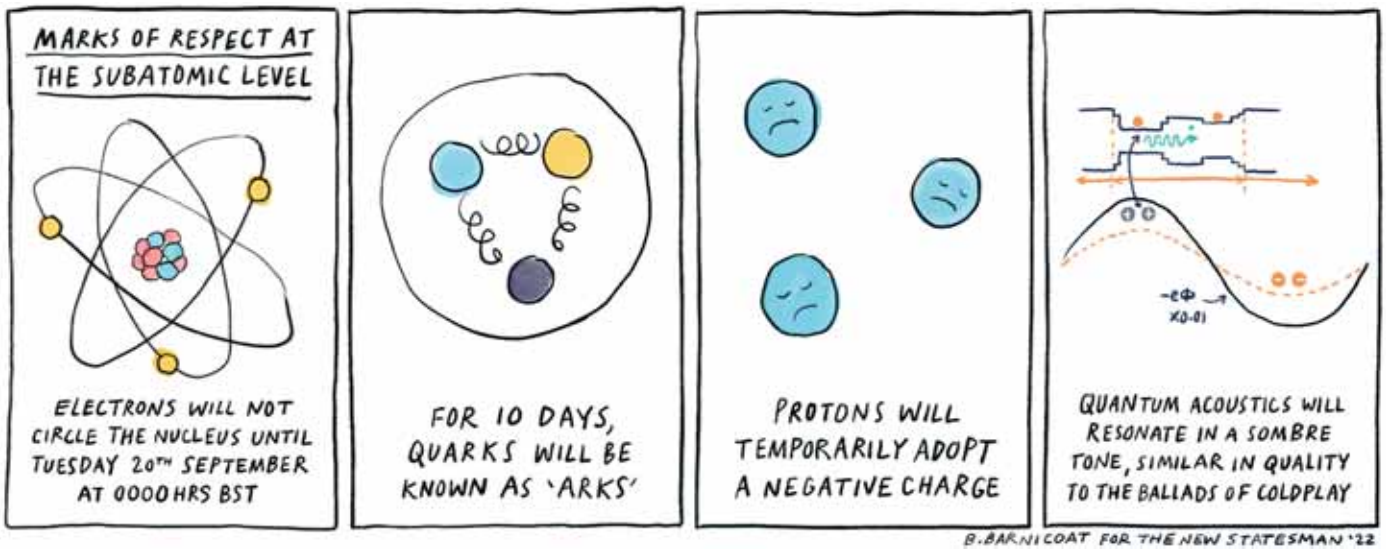

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QUIZ

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- ☐ Some kind of vegan collective
- ☑ People with a rational, non-religious worldview I probably share

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*Global Change Biology, April 2018

JONATHAN NACKSTRAND/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

In from the cold: the Sweden Democrats leader Jimmie Åkesson at the party's election event near Stockholm, 11 September

Comment

How the far right is surging in Sweden

By Jeremy Cliffe

The first crack in the old Swedish political consensus came in Hässleholm in 2017. It was in this small, unremarkable town in southern Sweden that the local branch of the centre-right Moderates used the support of the far-right Sweden Democrats to oust a council led by the centre-left Social Democrats. The move caused a national outcry. After all, the far-right party had its roots in the Swedish white nationalist, fascist and neo-Nazi scenes. One of its co-founders had volunteered to fight in the Waffen-SS during the Second World War. Only two years before the Hässleholm scandal, the then leader of the Moderates (and a former prime minister) had called its leaders "racists and the stiffly xenophobic".

In a country that prides itself on its liberal-egalitarian image, it had been widely accepted that all other parties must maintain a political cordon sanitaire around the Sweden Democrats. But Hässleholm challenged that. As a source from the ▸

◂ party gleefully told the newspaper *Aftonbladet* at the time: "Hässleholm is a premonition of what is to come." It would turn out to be a prescient gloat. In 2019 the Moderates' leader Ulf Kristersson effectively lifted what remained of the old taboo, sitting down with Jimmie Åkesson, the leader of the Sweden Democrats, to discuss future cooperation on topics such as immigration and law and order.

Now, only five years after the Hässleholm turning point, the collapse of the old cordon sanitaire has reached its logical conclusion: a Swedish national government backed by the far right. At the election on 11 September, the Sweden Democrats leaped over the Moderates and into second place. As the *New Statesman* goes to press some final votes (largely from expatriates) are yet to be counted, but the right-wing bloc, including the Sweden Democrats, looks likely to take at least 175 seats in the Riksdag and the left-wing bloc to take at most 174. That gives the right a narrow but undeniable advantage. Kristersson met with Åkesson on 12 September, though a formal coalition looks less likely than a minority centre-right government propped up from the outside by the Sweden Democrats.

Still, that will likely impact government policy and potentially lead to a more central role for the party in future governments. The Sweden Democrats have sought to detoxify their image in recent years (in 2006 abandoning a torch logo adapted from that of the British National Front) but still advocate hard-line authoritarianism on law and order, including the deportation of any foreigner convicted of a crime.

The Sweden Democrats, who will likely prop up a coalition, have roots in neo-Nazi scenes

An increase in violent crime in recent years has fuelled the party's rise and will be a major policy focus of any right-led government.

The election result recalls Austria's 1999 election. Then, too, a social democratic party came first. Then, too, the far right leapfrogged the centre right into second place. Then, too, the third-placed centre-right party broke the old cordon sanitaire and used support from the political extremists to oust the centre-left incumbent – although in that case by bringing it into a full coalition. The big difference between then and now is the wider European context.

In early 2000 there was continent-wide outrage, and the rest of the EU placed diplomatic sanctions on Vienna. Yet since then, the rise of the hard-line right across Europe has made such a singling out impossible. Parties comparable to the Sweden Democrats have formed coalition governments or support relationships with governing parties in Italy, Austria (again) and Finland. Hard-right parties govern in Poland and Hungary. Marine Le Pen took 41.5 per cent of the vote in the second round of the French presidential election in April.

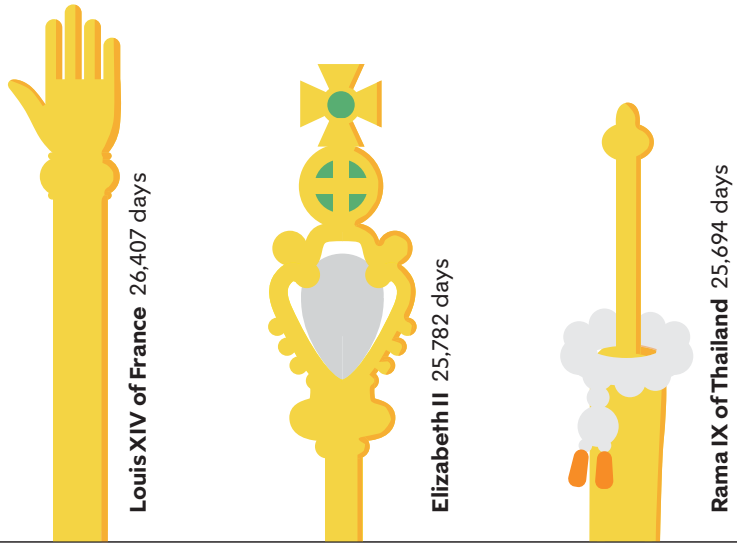
The transformation has taken place as much within mainstream parties, and especially mainstream centre-right ones such as the Moderates, as it has within the far-right parties themselves. In Spain, the conservative Partido Popular formed a regional coalition in April with the far-right Vox party – quite possibly a model for a national government coalition after next year's general election. Centre-right parties in countries like France and Britain have adopted policies (such as Brexit, or deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda) that would once have been confined to the right-wing margins. Further proof of these trends will likely come when, on 25 September, Italians vote in a general election. Fratelli d'Italia, a party that, like the Sweden Democrats, has fascist roots, currently heads the polls and stands a good chance of leading the next government.

Examples from most European countries – with the debatable exception of Britain, in which the first-past-the-post electoral system tends to internalise major shifts within the big parties – suggest that this lowering of the cordon sanitaire often strengthens the far-right parties in question rather than diluting their electoral appeal. That is certainly the case in Sweden, where the Moderates' opportunistic decision in 2019 to move to the right and open up cooperation with the Sweden Democrats has clearly backfired: early analysis of the election results suggests that 14 per cent of those who voted for the Sweden Democrats had backed the Moderates at the previous election in 2018.

Sweden has a long history of being an exception within Europe: from the long political hegemony of the Social Democrats to its standalone resistance to Covid-19 lockdowns. Once, the prospect of a Swedish government reliant on the Sweden Democrats would have been another exceptional case. But in today's Europe, sadly, it is entirely typical. ●

Chart of the Week

Elizabeth II was the second longest reigning sovereign in world history
Monarchs by the number of days they ruled



The Diary

Life without a smartphone, the Queen's Scouse accent, and our need for etiquette

By Frank Cottrell-Boyce

I got my actual diary out to help me write this. It shows with tracking clarity that the first half of the week happened in a different historical era. I was visiting my kids in London and the really big news was that we saw Ed Miliband getting out of the Hampstead men's pond in his Speedos. It says here "unexpectedly ripped". That's his body I think, not the Speedos. My son hosted Sunday lunch in his lovely, spacious kitchen. The day we told my mum she only had a few days to live – we were answering her question "Am I toast?" – her first response was, "Does this mean I'm not going to see the new kitchen?" I never step into it without her making me laugh from beyond the grave.

A hapless app

On the Tuesday (6 September) I set out to attend the funeral of Patti Lomax, wife of Eric Lomax, author of the classic war memoir *The Railway Man*. Eric was a railway enthusiast. The first time I went to visit him I mentioned that I'd had to start my journey in Burscough in rural Lancashire. Without a blink he recited the list of connections I'd had to make to get to his home in Berwick-upon-Tweed. "So... Salford Crescent, Manchester Piccadilly and York." Of course nowadays you can just look at the app. Although when I did that on Tuesday all I found was a series of yellow disruption warning triangles and the return times greyscaled because the timetable had yet to be agreed. This is the moment I decided to ditch my smartphone and get an old-fashioned version – a brick. From now on if a train was delayed I would read a book and not spend anxious ages poking about online to discover what was happening. Quite the week to have chosen to step off the rolling news.

I could have carved a memorial in the time it took me to type out "Have you heard?"

The wisdom of Terry Pratchett

The book I was reading was Rob Wilkins' biography of Terry Pratchett. It contains the revelation that when GK Chesterton was late with writing his copy for the newspaper he would have the commuter train wait at Beaconsfield station until his last paradox was perfectly balanced. One of the things I love most about Pratchett's work was the way he saw the dialectic between reason and faith. The nomes in *Truckers* are supposed to believe the Thing – an inert black box – will bring them home to the stars. None of them really believes it. Until it happens. I find myself remembering this when thinking about the monarchy. Is its very absurdity its strength? It allows us to not really believe in it until we have to. I'm a big believer in the virtue of doubt and uncertainty. The digital age that claimed it was going to connect us appears – at least when it comes to politics – only to have hardened division.

My mystery callers

I really had ditched the smartphone by the time the news came. This was supposed to help me free up more time but I could have carved a memorial in the hours it took me to type out the words "Have you heard?" on my brick. The world had already moved on to memories and memes by the time I pressed send on my text to the kids. There was no way to copy over my contacts, so every number was an unknown one. Answering the phone without knowing whose voice you're going to hear was unexpectedly nerve-wracking. I've thus ended up in conversations with a range of media outlets about how I was partly responsible for making the Queen jump out of a helicopter at the 2012 London Olympics. And I hope never again to have to explain that we didn't ask her. She volunteered through the medium of her dresser, Angela Kelly. How lost must Kelly be feeling today, I wonder? That seemed to be a genuine, warm friendship. Kelly is from Liverpool and apparently taught Her Majesty a magnificent Scouse accent. I like to imagine the two of them greeting each other with "Alright girl" during the grand levee.

My dad used to answer the phone by reciting our phone number and then asking: "Who is it please?" But I let callers keep talking until they give themselves away. The world of phone etiquette has perished and now there's only anxious uncertainty.

The great debate

The good thing about etiquette is that it tells you what to say when you don't know what to say. In Ireland, if someone dies you say: "Sorry for your loss." Here it seems people are not sure how to act. Which is why you end up with a photo of the Queen posed in the Ann Summers shop surrounded by sullen, provocatively-clad models. And why you end up with Boris Johnson hysterically calling her Elizabeth the Great. The last monarch we called "the Great" literally chased Danes across the Somerset Levels and founded a nation and a navy. Elizabeth II was the Queen. She did her strange, arcane but somehow crucial job until the very end. That'll do. ●

HANNA-KATRINA JĘDROSZ FOR THE NEW STATESMAN

Encounter

Politics and power in post-colonial Zimbabwe

Tsitsi Dangarembga on life as a dissident writer

By Ellen Peirson-Hagger

On 31 July 2020 Tsitsi Dangarembga and her friend Julie Barnes went onto the streets of Harare, Zimbabwe, to protest against government corruption. Dangarembga, a novelist and film-maker, carried a sign that read: "We want better. Reform our institutions." The corruption they were protesting against is wide-ranging, she told me. "The enforced disappearances, the torture – sometimes people die of torture – the clampdown on opposition and on people who express any contrary ideas to the ruling party's ideology."

The demonstration was expected to be large, but just before it was due to take place President Emmerson Mnangagwa imposed tighter restrictions on public movement under the guise of reducing rising Covid-19 infections. "However, the constitution of Zimbabwe does confer the right to demonstrate, protest or petition the government peacefully," Dangarembga said, and so she and Barnes, a journalist, went ahead.

Following the protest Dangarembga and Barnes were arrested, spent one night in prison, and then were released on bail. In September 2020 the pair were charged with intention to incite public violence and with breaking Covid-19 lockdown measures. The case has dragged on, with the trial beginning in May of this year.

When we met in a hotel lounge in London in early September, 63-year-old Dangarembga was awaiting

the verdict, due at the end of the month. She was in the city for an event to celebrate her new essay collection, *Black and Female*, and had spoken the previous evening at a bookshop in Bath.

For the last two years she has existed as both an internationally successful author and the target of a criminal case. Just days before she was arrested in 2020, her novel *This Mournable Body*, the third part in the *Nervous Conditions* trilogy, was longlisted for the Booker Prize. It went on to be shortlisted.

"When I was longlisted, I was really happy," said Dangarembga, who wore a black and white checked jacket, jeans and stylish cat-eye glasses. She spoke seriously. "I thought, 'I've been working, as far as I'm concerned, very hard at my writing for decades, and it's nice that there will be some recognition' – because I really was living hand to mouth. And then the arrests came. There were people who immediately started pointing fingers at me: 'She's a Western puppet!' 'Look, she's getting all these prizes now!'"

The way the case has been prolonged, and that there has been so much publicity around it, "makes me feel that something is being engineered here", she said. "It makes me think that a story is being constructed to show people that you may not transgress." And who is constructing that story? "The government."

Dangarembga was born in 1959 in Mutoko, in what was then Southern Rhodesia. Aged two she moved with her parents and older brother to England. Her mother, Susan, was the first black woman from her country to obtain a bachelor's degree, and her father, Amon, would later become a headteacher. The couple had taken up scholarships to study for master's degrees at University College, London, overseen by the British Colonial Office. Tsitsi travelled with her parents only as far as Dover; from there, the children were fostered by a white family while Susan and Amon pursued their studies.

When Dangarembga was six, she returned home with her parents and brother, but the time she had spent away – and the difficulties she faced adapting to life back in Rhodesia – altered her sense of self.

That period in England "was the beginning of the discrepancies", she said. Her parents "couldn't have understood what cross-racial fostering would entail psychologically for a child". But the impact was significant: "The sense of disorientation, the sense of having a part of me that knows something that other people don't know. Writing *Nervous Conditions* was an attempt to put those things down so that other young girls could benefit from the kinds of affective knowledges, if you like, that I had. There were things that simply did not fit as well as other people seemed to have them fit."

Until Zimbabwe became independent following a long war in 1980, Southern Rhodesia was a British colony. The opportunity offered to her parents to come to England was in effect an extension of imperial dominance. "There is not a day when I do not think about how colonisation ripped through my family," Dangarembga writes in one of the essays in *Black and Female*, a sharp and profound collection of writing on "the wounds of empire".

She wrote *Nervous Conditions* during the 1980s, while she was studying at the University of Zimbabwe. The novel follows Tambudzai, a pre-independence teenager, who strives to pull herself out of poverty through education. But the best school she can attend is a convent institution run by white nuns, and her mother fears what will happen to her if she spends too much time with white people. In 1988 the book was picked up by the London-based Women's Press and Dangarembga became the first black Zimbabwean woman to be published in English. *Nervous Conditions* was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1989 and is now considered a landmark African work. Its sequel *The Book of Not* was published in 2006, followed by *This Mournable Body* in 2018 in the US, and in the UK two years later. She has also made a career writing for screen, including *Neria* (1991), the highest grossing Zimbabwean film ever.

Her work is political but she doesn't see herself as an activist. "I'm a writer, and my subject matter is human beings. I look at myself as an engaged citizen." In Zimbabwe, where "the economy is in a critical condition" and where "there is no literary industry anyway" – most of Dangarembga's books are sold outside the country, and for most of her work she travels abroad – there are few ways she can engage in politics beyond taking to the streets. She has been invited to read at events in Zimbabwe "maybe four times" over the course of her 34-year career.

The country's lack of a literary culture is intertwined with its colonial legacy. "Writing has been associated with education, which came into the country not even one-and-a-half centuries ago. Literature was commandeered, first by the colonialists and then by Zanu-PF [the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front, the party that has ruled since 1980]." This political hold over literature "has to be dismantled. I think we have to liberate the imagination, and then we will be able to take advantage of it."

Dangarembga's experience of the Zimbabwean court system has revealed to her how "the organs of the state function. Now I understand why people are reluctant to engage against the government. Many Zimbabweans think, 'I've got so little to begin with; I can't afford to begin to lose even a little bit of it.'"

Yet this realisation does not mean she has lost hope for her country, where she wants to remain and help bring about political change. "Because the government does not seem to have any interest in the well-being of the ordinary person, people are going to realise that even that little bit that they do have will be at stake soon. I think that realisation will push people to be more actively engaged."

In the meantime Tsitsi Dangarembga awaits the outcome of her trial. "They will give whatever verdict they want to, so there's nothing I can do," she said, calmly. "My preference is obviously to be acquitted. But that is out of my control. I've been reading Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* trilogy, so I realise how power can play out in situations like that, and I'm thinking: 'Well, at least I will keep my head.'" ●

"Black and Female" is published by Faber & Faber

"My parents couldn't have understood what cross-racial fostering would entail for a child"

ANDREW MARR

Politics

It is right to question the existence of the Crown – yet the King's voice may be crucial

If ever there was a time for stocktaking, reflection – even second thoughts – it would be in the transition from one long reign to the next one. Monarchy doesn't let this happen. Grief for the Queen is transmuted – by the alchemy of trumpets and Edwardian notions of medieval pageantry – into loyal enthusiasm for the next reign.

The grief is widespread. It is powerful. I shared it. The Queen's uncomplaining sense of duty and her Christian emphasis on compassion and forgiveness comprised a good model for modern times. She stood in contrast to the selfish behaviour of many elected politicians, and against the self-righteous preening of contemporary celebrity culture.

But we are being carried along rather fast, are we not? Among the church services and the queues of condolence, there seems no space or time for a discussion of constitutional monarchy itself. It would seem – what? Impertinent?

Thus, there is the majority of the country united in grief, represented by the establishment. There are a few puce protesters, waving tiny placards, bellowing their outrage before being bundled off by embarrassed police officers. What is there in between?

"Continuity" is just conservatism in formal clothing. The shift from the Elizabethan to the Caroline reign seems, so far, most unlikely to trigger an upsurge of republicanism. Among the quiet majority, it is not entirely impossible – much depends on how Charles III performs his role – but for the time being, there is an upwelling of sympathy for a man in loss, and a great paroxysm of patriotism. He will have the benefit of any doubts for years to come.

Charles's early speeches were well-made and thoughtful. We are told he understands the need for further reform of the monarchy – fewer senior working royals, perhaps fewer palaces. The very first signs of a rapprochement between his warring sons will delight well-wishers.

Many of us who feel uneasy about words such as "liege" and "subject" will discuss our feelings largely with the marmalade jar and the unresponsive newspaper. We all know that the idea of a single God-chosen bloodline standing at the apex of a lively, disputatious democracy is a weird one. But it's not the time. (It's never the time.)

Let's turn to some of the arguments in favour of constitutional monarchy, because they certainly exist. A politically mute head of state provides a gentle anaesthetic in angry times. Seeing rival party leaders clustered together, muttering affably, was almost cheering. Not being led by Donald Trump's (fictitious) cousin Hector doesn't seem such a bad idea; if we had a president, I would prefer Alan Bennett or David Attenborough, but they may not be available.

Second, elected leaders, by definition, are turfed out, often quite quickly. A democratic system may lack the retained experience – the detailed recollection of previous failures and successes – that a monarch can offer in private. Everyone says it: the late Queen was a kind of memory stick whose advice helped inexperienced ministers.

Right-wing ministers with a record of hostility to "green crap" can't be trusted

At the same time her devotion to the Commonwealth, whether you regard it as a relevant organisation or not, ensured that from an early age she appeared to have less racial prejudice than other public figures of her generation – just look at the pictures of her dancing delightedly with Kwame Nkrumah during her 1961 visit to Ghana, three years before the Civil Rights Act came into force in the US. Full-throttle Enoch Powell race politics had no chance in the Britain of Elizabeth II.

But the third advantage, which is an injection of long-termism into inherently short-term, elections-driven democratic politics, makes me rethink some of what I have written before about the man who is now King Charles. Like many, I've always argued that on the throne he must relinquish his previous views and campaigning – conducted in person and by "black spider" letters. His first speeches suggest strongly that he agrees.

It's a popular argument. We all understand it. In a vigorous democracy, constitutional monarchy is never quite safe and a King who "meddles" in politics would seem to be in particular danger. Indeed, he has views many of us would find outrageous if foisted on an elected government – homeopathic medicine and a hostility to modern architecture, for two.

But on the central question facing mankind, our impact on the natural world, which begins with an interest in soil and builds up to the climate crisis, Charles has been early, and right, to recognise the crisis, and his voice is needed more than ever. To put it bluntly, right-wing ministers thinking about a difficult election in 2024 and with a record of hostility to "green crap" can't be trusted. A King who feels differently, and who tries to think in centuries rather than electoral cycles, might be the best short-term argument for monarchy of all.

What's ahead might be more interesting than it seems. Charles is a passionate and thoughtful man who, I imagine, believes that the environment is more important than even the future of the House of Windsor. When he gets his teeth into something, friends of his tell me, he doesn't let go. Watching the first

MARTA SIGNORI

meetings between him and Liz Truss, I couldn't help wondering whether she thought her life was about to get just a little more complicated.

What, finally, of the wider politics? For all our brief national self-congratulation across many areas of public life, Charles's Britain is broken. He cannot mend it. Only ministers can. Public services are thin and tired after the years of austerity. A stuttering, too-low-growth economy has been hampered by Brexit bureaucracy. From public bodies such as the Passport Office and DVLA to the postal service, privatised utilities and the criminal justice system, there is simply too much that isn't working. It all needs close, persistent political attention and investment – and now we have radical-right ministers who don't really believe in the state.

King Charles can't meddle in those kinds of politics. But he has to recognise the political environment in which he operates. In gentle ways, the monarchy can indicate whose side it is on socially; think of Prince William going out to sell the *Big Issue*. In hard times a smaller, more self-aware monarchy, perhaps using a reformed honours system to reward only those giving something back rather than those with plenty already, would be prudent.

Keir Starmer will probably get a bit of stick at the Labour conference in Liverpool at the end of September for showing loyal enthusiasm for the new reign. But a patriotic, centre-left movement has a very good chance of winning a proper majority at the next election and then undertaking a huge programme of reform and rebuilding. Starmer is right, in the spirit of 20th-century Labour leaders, to do nothing to jeopardise it.

None of the above is a convincing, let alone slam-dunk, argument for constitutional monarchy. In 2022 we are nowhere near a republican moment. Recent polling by YouGov shows that 62 per cent are in favour of the monarchy – hardly an overwhelming proportion. But the narrowest of gaps is among younger voters, and over the past decade, the numbers have been moving against monarchy.

So, again, it is not safe in a democratic culture. At the very least, this means the King must keep making the case for himself. He must be eloquently relevant. There is no subject more important – not even the war in Ukraine – than the climate crisis. It follows that if a monarch centred the final act of his life on that great cause, while also demonstrating a decent appreciation of how hard life is for millions of his "subjects" (I still don't like the word), he might have a fighting chance. ●

CORRESPONDENCE

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Letter of the week

Labour's power line

In its eagerness to rubbish the Labour Party, John Gray's article ("The coming autumn crisis", 9 September) contains puzzling contradictions. At one point he argues that if Labour wins power in 2024, "it could alter the voting system for Westminster and make another Tory majority impossible". He then goes on to state that "the Labour leader will follow [Truss] into Downing Street for a few years of impotent rule". I'm not sure that Keir Starmer would regard the elimination of any future Tory majority as impotence.

And it would be interesting to see Gray's evidence for his assertion that "for Labour's metropolitan membership, the only thing wrong with neoliberalism is that it has not been tried on a large enough scale". Surely neoliberalism is an ideology of the Tories and their pals in the US Republican Party?

Gray also writes that "reversing Brexit would mean Britain submitting to the rules of the EU single market, which preclude national governments asserting control over their economies", yet notes, with apparent approval, that President Macron has taken the "giant electricity utility EDF into full public ownership".
Michael Heery, Bristol

Exit stage left

Anthony Seldon ("Why Liz Truss will fail", 2 September) asserts that every prime minister since 1918 has departed office "after election defeat, illness, policy failure or rebellion". Yet I seem to recall that Harold Wilson left office of his own volition in 1976. There was speculation that his resignation was health-related but this was never proven.

An even clearer example is that of Tony Blair who, in 2007, had not suffered election defeat, illness or any obvious policy failure. It is arguable that his duplicity and bellicosity over Iraq in 2003 should have led to rebellion. However, he managed to convince the majority of Labour MPs that it would not be in their best interests to replace him and self-interest triumphed over values, as it always seems to do in the mother of parliaments.
Dan Taylor, Reading

England's education muddle

Philip Collins (Politics, 26 August) makes some important points about making significant changes to the school curriculum and assessment at age 16, but the argument is lacking in two respects. He gets close to the core issue when he contends that grammar schools are "the indestructible cockroach of Tory prejudices", but fails to recognise that in England there are now between 70 and 90 different types of schools, and that the GCSE is crucial to brand distinction in a chaotic market for access to school places. He also writes incorrectly about "British education" and "the UK system", when clearly he is only talking about UK government policy for schools in England.
Helen M Gunter FAcSS, professor emerita, the Manchester Institute of Education, University of Manchester

How Brexit defeated Corbyn

In her review of two books on Jeremy Corbyn's leadership (The Critics, 9 September), Lola Seaton notes that both authors "agreed that the decisive factor in Labour's descent from the poll-defying heights of 2017 to the doldrums of 2019" was its change in policy on Brexit. Given its importance, it is disappointing that there is no account of how it changed.

At the 2019 party conference delegates voted for "a public vote on a deal agreed with the EU giving people a final say between a credible Leave option and Remain", with Keir Starmer announcing "an incoming Labour government will legislate immediately for that referendum to take place". Having previously accepted the Leave result, Corbyn seems to have acceded to the delegates' position instead of providing leadership.
Peter Foster, Edinburgh

Missing music

Yes, more classical music would always be welcome on the BBC (Correspondence, 9 September), especially by composers such as Harrison Birtwistle. But a trawl of BBC iPlayer nets programmes featuring Beethoven, Boulez and Britten, as well as a range of concerts. Aside from one documentary on Lindisfarne's Alan Hull, there is no meaningful coverage of English folk music. There is admirably joyful coverage of Gaelic gatherings, but scarcely a note from south of the Tweed.
Austen Lynch, Garstang, Lancashire

I too valued Michael Henderson's column about the BBC and the Proms (The Critics, 2 September), and David Kirk's letter. The death of the Queen determined there should be no Last Night of the Proms, and many other arts and theatre events were also pulled. There seems a certain irony in the cancellation by the ENO of *Don Giovanni* as a disgraced member of the royal family is accepting sympathy from the wider public.

After arts and entertainment venues went dark for months during Covid, many

who had booked for events are still being prohibited from enjoying them. I hope normal service will resume after the funeral – though I fear for the future of Radio 3, and the demise of BBC Four is depressing.
Julia Edwards, Winchester

Captive audience

I wonder if the word "least" in the question "With which political figure would you least like to be stuck in a lift?" asked of the Subscriber of the Week should be replaced by "most". I would love to be stuck in a lift with Farage, Rees-Mogg, Patel et al so I could give them a piece of my mind from which they could not immediately escape.
Mark Bignell, Tuddenham, Suffolk

@ MarkGoodwin8

Mark Goodwin, teacher, Equal Parts Education

Great *NS* article by @Anoosh_C about the remarkable life of @Sab_CohenHatton, breaking down stereotypes and success against the odds, and decision making, in particular "decision traps".
"How firefighting can teach us to live better", Anoosh Chakelian, 7 September

@ TheFootballLaw

Thomas Horton, barrister and founder of the Football Law website

Great article @Joanna__Hardy in the @NewStatesman. Fully supportive of criminal barristers and what they're standing for in their strike (soggy or not!)
Joanna Hardy-Susskind's Diary, 2 September

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TOM CHITTY

"Well, my dear, I think this calls for another cup of tea"

COMMONS CONFIDENTIAL

By Kevin Maguire

The death of the country's longest-reigning monarch is viewed as a "manageable level of crisis" by the late Queen's shortest-serving prime minister. Liz Truss, clinging to King Charles III's coat-tails on visits to Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast, hopes to appear stateswoman-like. One of Truss's team compared her curtsying and head-bobbing to Gordon Brown's acclaimed handling of flooding, a foot-and-mouth outbreak and the Glasgow Airport terrorist attack during the earliest days of his own reign. Perhaps somebody should nudge Truss and remind her Brown's honeymoon was short-lived.

Boris Johnson's particularly eloquent response on the evening of the Queen's death, explained a disgruntled informant, suspiciously echoed the Downing Street response prepared for whoever was PM. The hastily written reaction from Truss didn't soar as high.

Keir Starmer's office provoked upset in the shadow cabinet in the hours after Buckingham Palace's announcement that doctors were worried about the Queen's health. Following the Labour leader's statement in response, shadow ministers were told not to say anything themselves. Frontbenchers noisily complained that their silence was deafening while Tory ministers were able to express their concern. The gag was lifted, demonstrating the value of solidarity.

The new King's relative informality in his previous role as heir contrasted sharply, according to one cabinet minister, with the pomposity of the Duke of York in his own previous role as an active royal. The then Prince of Wales liked a chummy "Dear Charles" atop handwritten notes for his attention. The duke's office, meanwhile, returned a "Dear Andrew"-headed note with the instruction such correspondence should only be addressed "Your Royal Highness". What goes around comes around, heckled Andy?

David Cameron harboured fears that Charles was a Liberal Democrat during the coalition era. As PM in the early 2010s, he'd moan to Nick Clegg that Charles regurgitated green policies almost identical to those of his coalition partners. Ming Campbell discovered the same during royal chats, and was convinced Chas was a closet Lib Dem. All that was missing were socks with sandals.

One peer with secret republican tendencies described gushing tributes in the House of Lords as "excruciating". In one speech, the former archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, who sits as Lord Carey of Clifton, inadvertently referred to Richard III rather than Charles III. Hansard corrected the slip of the tongue but, murmured my snout, with strikes rocking the country, presumably the 'bish believes now is the winter of our discontent. ●

During the coalition era, David Cameron and Menzies Campbell both thought Charles was a closet Lib Dem

Kevin Maguire is the associate editor (politics) of the Daily Mirror

The sense of an ending

Elizabeth II's legacy and example will endure. But the certainty she provided has gone

By Richard J Evans

On 2 June 1953, everyone who lived in our small block of flats crowded into our neighbours' sitting room across the first-floor landing. They were the only ones who had a television, and had invited us all in to watch the coronation. The adults pushed me gently forward to the front so that I could see the live, black-and-white transmission from Westminster Abbey on the 12-inch screen. I was five years old and it was the first time I had ever seen a TV set. I remember watching the diminutive figure of the Queen, laden with the paraphernalia of royalty – orb, sceptres, a huge, heavy crown and voluminous robes – and surrounded by a phalanx of elderly men dressed in identical gowns and wearing coronets, with the two archbishops kneeling before her. I felt rather sorry for her.

The coronation seemed to mark much more than Britain's recovery from the perils and privations of the war. The news of the first ever ascent of Mount Everest, the highest point on Earth, reached the UK on the same day, and the two events were widely trumpeted as the beginning of a new Elizabethan age, though quite what that meant in practice was somewhat obscure. As in the time of the first Queen Elizabeth, we were supposedly living in an age of national expansion. We had triumphed over our enemies in 1945 and now we were entering an era of renewal, building on the Festival of Britain held two years earlier in 1951. With a new, young monarch on the throne and the British empire reinventing itself as the Commonwealth of Nations – many of whose most prominent representatives could be seen making their way in the royal procession to Westminster Abbey – an exciting future beckoned after years of postwar austerity.

The reality, however, was very different. India had already become independent in 1947; other colonies followed in short order during the 1950s and 1960s as what the Conservative prime minister Harold Macmillan called the "winds of change" swept across the world. In 1956 came the Suez debacle: Britain, together with France, made a misjudged attempt to take back the Suez Canal zone by force after it had been seized by the nationalist Egyptian regime of Colonel Nasser, and had to withdraw after the Americans made clear their disapproval of this neocolonial adventure. By the 1970s Britain had joined what is now the European Union, effectively transferring its economic and political allegiance away from the now-defunct global British empire to the increasingly important trading bloc on its doorstep.

The changes of the decades since 1953 have been huge and often unsettling. The empire has gone for good. Britain has sunk to the level of a middle-ranking world power. After leaving the EU, the UK is once more in search of a role. The seemingly solid institutions that held sway at the time of the coronation – the BBC, parliament, the National Health Service, the Church of England, the judiciary – have at times come under sustained attack from the press and government. In British society, deference has given way to social and cultural egalitarianism, and multiculturalism has largely replaced the hierarchies of 70 years ago.

Through all of this, Queen Elizabeth II provided a calm and reassuring presence as head of state, cushioning the British people from the most radical shocks of the new, and providing a guarantee of their national identity and cohesion. Britain would have found it much harder to cope had it been governed by a series of relatively short-term presidents drawn from the world of politics.

The hereditary principle may be objectionable in many ways in a professedly meritocratic society, but in the person of the Queen it provided a strong symbol of continuity across seven decades that no other system could have produced. True, there have been some notably unsuccessful and irresponsible monarchs, from the eccentric William IV ("Silly Billy") to the self-indulgent and pro-Nazi Edward VIII. But, observing other European countries where elected but powerless individuals have been head of state, it is clear that republicanism is no guarantee of success. The Federal Republic of Germany has experienced 12 heads of state since 1949, discounting acting presidents; but alongside successful figures who could give real moral leadership to the nation, such as Richard von Weizsäcker, there have been individuals who have consistently attracted criticism and ▸

ANTHONY GERACE

◂ even ridicule, such as Heinrich Lübke, who was the butt of many jokes during his inglorious time in office in the 1960s.

In 1948, King Farouk of Egypt, soon to be ejected from his throne by a Colonel Nasser-led coup, declared: "Soon there will be only five kings left – the King of England, the King of Spades, the King of Clubs, the King of Hearts and the King of Diamonds." How, then, has the British monarchy managed to survive, let alone become so widely revered? Perhaps the most important of its many secrets of success has been Queen Elizabeth's unwavering refusal to become involved in politics, her insistence on remaining far above it.

Many European monarchies have fallen as a result of their failure to adapt to constitutional democracy in the 20th century. The authoritarian regimes of the Habsburg monarchy, the German empire and tsarist Russia, for example, were swept away in 1917-18 because they represented social and political systems that refused to accord democratic rights to the majority of their people (defeat in war also undoubtedly played a role). The King of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele III, who had succeeded to the throne in 1900, appointed Mussolini prime minister in 1922 and went along with the fascist regime almost to the end, endorsing its brutalities (including the use of poison gas in Ethiopia); he even accepted the title of Emperor of Ethiopia after Mussolini's victory there. Here was another monarch who was undermined by defeat in war, but it was not until 1946 that he finally bowed to the inevitable and abdicated, handing over the throne to his son Umberto, who lasted only a few weeks until a referendum delivered a substantial majority in favour of an Italian republic.

King Constantine II of Greece was also removed in a referendum. He had made the mistake of involving himself closely in politics in the mid-1960s, then signing into office the reactionary colonels who overthrew democracy in 1967. He behaved inconsistently, leading an attempted counter-coup whose failure caused him to flee the country. There followed several years of dictatorship, with opponents of the regime imprisoned, tortured and murdered. By the time democracy was restored in 1974, Constantine had alienated almost everybody and the Greek monarchy paid the price.

This is where the Queen's resolute avoidance of political intervention carried a risk, for what happens if the government itself threatens democracy, as Boris Johnson's did when it asked her to prorogue parliament in September 2019 in order to push through his hard Brexit? Fortunately, she was rescued by the Supreme Court, which declared the move illegal. But while both the Italian and Greek monarchies were damaged beyond repair by their association with violent dictatorships, Johnson's government was elected by a large majority, which made it much harder to resist. Refusing to sign the prorogation order would have plunged the monarchy into a crisis of major proportions.

The remaining European monarchies, in Scandinavia and Benelux, have generally avoided political entanglements, though the absence of a government in Belgium from 2018 to 2020 inevitably brought the monarchy into play.

In contrast to the "bicycling" Scandinavian monarchs, the Queen has maintained the elaborate ceremonial and pageantry of the British monarchy, realising that this was an important aspect of Britain's projected image. The monarchy brightened up people's lives with its spectacle and colour, which reassured the British that while the world around them was changing, the old traditions remained the same. This was in many ways an illusion: much of the ceremonial was an "invented tradition" of one kind or another. Events such as the shambolic coronation of Queen Victoria, or the chaotic scenes at the coronation of King George IV, when his estranged wife Queen Caroline was forcibly prevented from entering Westminster Abbey, were a world away from the carefully choreographed ritual seen at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, and which can be expected again at the coronation of King Charles III.

At the same time, the Queen also did a great deal to bring the monarchy closer to the people. True, after the death of Princess Diana in 1997, the Palace failed to appreciate the depth of public feeling, and caused considerable resentment by its failure to behave as people in the country thought appropriate. It was only after Tony Blair's intervention that the Queen, perhaps reluctantly, embraced the wave of emotion that had threatened to destabilise the monarchy. But this was a rare misstep, and the royal family paid for it by having to listen to the coruscating condemnation of its behaviour by Diana's brother, Charles Spencer, at her funeral in Westminster Abbey. Since then, the Palace has made serious efforts to acquire more of the common touch and divest itself of the more obvious trappings of inherited superiority.

Since Princess Diana's death the Palace has made efforts to acquire the common touch

This was, in truth, a greater problem for her Court than for the Queen herself. Despite her obvious anchoring in the culture of the British upper class, with its aristocratic pursuits from horse-racing to polo, she had a genuine interest in individuals from all walks of life. She knew how to put people at their ease, leavening her conversation with wry humour. Keeping her private person carefully concealed from public view, she weathered the many scandals unleashed by members of her family, garnering more sympathy than blame. During her reign she spoke to hundreds of thousands of people, and had a knack of making everyone feel she was speaking to them personally, as indeed she was.

King Charles's first days on the throne suggest he has learned these lessons well. His decision to talk to the crowds outside Buckingham Palace was widely appreciated. By openly displaying his emotions in speaking about his mother's death, he has won the sympathy of millions. And he has said he will abandon the kind of political interventions he made during his decades as heir to the throne.

The new King has had decades to prepare for his accession, and he must have a clear idea of how he wants to take things forward. Whatever the rules and conventions may be, it seems obvious that the bloated ranks of the royal family need some thinning down. The immense wealth of the family is perhaps too conspicuous at a time when millions are facing what may well be the most serious economic hardship of their lifetime; the Queen and her staff did not acquit themselves well by lobbying so hard behind the scenes to preserve it.

Does the royal family really need quite so many palaces? Should there be reforms to the Civil List or the royal prerogative? Will Commonwealth countries, especially in the Caribbean and indeed Australia, take the opportunity to end the British monarch's role as head of state? Is Scotland going to stay in the Union?

The Queen's legacy and example live on, but the certainty she provided has ended. Change is coming to Britain and to its monarchy's role in the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and the world – and it may be coming faster than anyone expects. ●

Richard J Evans's latest book, "The Hitler Conspiracies", is published by Penguin

ROWAN WILLIAMS

Another Voice

The Queen had an unwavering belief in the necessity of her strange, parent-like role

People often remark on how the death of a parent can be a psychological watershed. Suddenly there is a sense of being on the front line, without the generation ahead of you offering some sort of protection against mortality and drastic change. It doesn't even have to be the death of a literal physical parent; losing an older adult who has helped shape your identity and your aspirations can have a similar effect.

This surely is part of the reason for the rapidity with which royal transitions are managed. A new monarch is announced and publicly acclaimed within 36 hours or so. There is no vacuum in which to brood on loss and disorientation. But I suspect that the death of Queen Elizabeth has been, for a lot of people, an experience hard to process quite that quickly. Polly Toynbee wrote perceptively in the *Guardian* that mourning such a long-lived figure was going to be deeply bound up with both grieving and accepting our own histories of loss; not a matter to be rushed.

It is not sentimentality to compare the Queen's death with the death of a parent. We spend a lot of our lives dealing with the legacy of relations with our parents, from idolising to rebelling to accepting, perhaps ultimately to understanding something about them and about ourselves. For a small child – all being well – a parent is a source of both excitement and security, mild glamour and practical dependability together; very much how the Queen was seen in the Fifties. But then comes adolescent contempt for the outmoded, hypocritical, philistine regime holding us back from the liberation that is our due – something of the flavour of the Sixties.

It is possible after a while to settle down to a more tolerant but more distanced relationship. A parent is who he or she is, and we can live with that, but might not want to spend much time in their company; which feels a bit like the last years of the last century. The first signs of real human frailty prompt a new softening, not unconnected with both impatience and anxiety. And gradually the generation below us may come to see our own parents as embodying something we lack. They represent viewpoints, even wisdom, that have been hard-won and long-tested, they aren't interferingly in your face all the time, they can put the tiresomeness of parents into perspective and offer a less suffocating or intrusive kind of love. And we may find ourselves able to see them a little more clearly and gratefully through the eyes of our own children.

Good parents, like good therapists and priests, will develop ways of handling this variegated emotional process, recognising projection, recognising their own complicated feelings about it, learning to carry on and not be paralysed by guilt or resentment, or seduced by adulation. The Queen's resolutely stoical and reticent style was not always popular (remember those telling cries of "Show us you care!" at the time of Princess Diana's death), but one thing that could never be said of her was that she basked in celebrity.

Mourning a long-lived figure is deeply bound up with accepting our own histories of loss

Gradually, for some even grudgingly, the realisation grew that she was not driven by the need to be adored. The private face, according to those who knew her best, was often one of intelligent and deflating irony – a kindness that could be disconcertingly bracing, a manifest sense of the absurdity of much of the theatre she lived with (including the theatrical requirement of saying little of substance in public) – and yet also a completely uncompromising belief that it was necessary that she be there and be who she was, a belief rooted, without apology, in her religious conviction. That conviction was nothing to do with a sense of spiritual exceptionality, let alone of infallible wisdom or unchallengeable power. It simply grounded her capacity to weather public changes or crises, private griefs, popularity and unpopularity.

She believed she needed to be there. Not everyone would agree, as she well knew. Her being there, as some have observed, could sometimes shield the nation from noticing just how dysfunctional the rest of society was becoming. But the idea that societies and individuals alike still need images of stable anchorage, of fidelity, that aren't subject to any kind of glamour contest is not a stupid or reactionary one. Imagining and valuing human solidarity as such is nourished by institutions that do not depend on the glamour of compelling public personalities and their success in making (some) people feel good. Sometimes the Queen made us feel good and sometimes she didn't, or didn't do so immediately (Diana again). That was never the point. The point was a relationship as prosaically taken-for-granted as parenthood.

Thinking about this strange quasi-parental role, which the Queen understood in such unfashionably religious terms, just might help us think about our need for communities, practices and institutions in society – voluntary societies and charities, faith groups, the arts, the academy – that have a capacity to keep our eyes on something more enduring than the popularity vote. As politics and entertainment seem to coalesce in the shallows of populism, our perhaps reluctant recognition of what the Queen represented may offer a lesson about what is needed for political – not to mention personal – maturity. ●

MARTA SIGNORI

The homecoming

Elizabeth II did nothing by accident, including her final journey to Balmoral. Was she loading the dice for the Union?

By Tanya Gold

MURDO MACLEOD / GUARDIAN / EYEVINE

The Queen's coffin leaves Balmoral Castle to travel to the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, 11 September

Letter from Scotland

At Balmoral they expect us. The council has built a tiny village for visitors, to be dismantled and folded away. When Queen Elizabeth II leaves, it will, too: she has a very special relationship with infrastructure. There is a row of Portaloos and a medical tent, and a bus shuttle to the neighbouring villages of Ballater and Braemar. Children, the ancient and those with reduced mobility are over-represented in the crowd, coming for succour still.

Peter Morgan, the creator of *The Crown*, had a line about Balmoral in his earlier play, *The Audience*. He made Harold Wilson tell the Queen that it was not Scotland the royal family found here, but Germany: the fir-trees, the mountains, the ghosts of their ancestors. Prince Albert was German, and he built Queen Victoria a castle far from London. (In her yacht *Britannia*, Elizabeth II could go yet further; no wonder she cried when it was decommissioned.) I think the comparison with Bavaria is unfair. Balmoral is an ordinary house of Aberdeenshire granite attached to a wizard's tower, and it represents her perfectly: the pedestrian and the supernatural. The whole estate is 50,000 acres, and there's a statue of a roe deer in the castle grounds.

The flowers outside the gates are restrained. The visitors are restrained, and very courteous. I sense they are trying to be their best selves because Elizabeth II is an ideal they want to meet. I talked to a woman on the train to Aberdeen who lives in Ballater and was returning home: when I told her I was getting the bus, she said her brother would drive me instead.

When I left London on Friday (9 September), the day after the announcement, there were tourists at Buckingham Palace enjoying the death as a spectacle, as you might enjoy a trip to *Mary Poppins* the musical. There were others – drunk young men waving Union Flags on top of the Queen Victoria memorial – who delighted in the reflected majesty. They paid for it; they own it.

But in Royal Deeside, Aberdeenshire, the pain is real: so much so that I, a republican, wonder whether I'm the one with a secret to impart – the Queen was human – or they are. Her mother grew up at Glamis Castle, 50 miles to the south. People here treated the Queen as a neighbour – not Scottish, it is true, but good enough. She did nothing by accident, including coming to Scotland as she declined, her body loading the dice for the Union and the Crown. A survey by the think tank British Future this summer indicated that 45 per cent of Scots want to keep the monarchy, and the latest polling suggests that 46 per cent want to leave the Union. Death, for her, was a political act. Her life was exhausting and, here, they know it. Women, typically middle-aged, walk away from the flowers, their faces striped with tears.

"I am devastated," says a woman who was named Elizabeth after the Queen. "People can't know what they've got before it's gone. We've only ever known the Queen." You can think of the Queen as, among other things, a unit of measurement, or a settled point in space. Some measure her in time passed; others against their own values; others against their own suffering.

"She was thrown into this role and she took it all in her stride," says another woman. "She had problems with family, like everyone does. She just got on with it. I want to give something back..." – she looks down at her posy – "small as it is."

On Deeside it was normal for people to come across the Queen by surprise and scream, or not to recognise her at all. I meet a couple who visit every year and once saw her walking in the woods with the dogs, like a magical apparition. I wish she had gone on her walks in her Order of the Thistle robes, which are green and immense, like those of a sorceress – there is a famous photograph of her on the Balmoral estate in them, looking annoyed – but she didn't. "She was such an ordinary person," the woman says. "She loved it here because she could be herself. People didn't make a fuss."

"I saw her in the hills in the Land Rover," says her husband fondly; "a little face with a headscarf, peering above the dashboard." People say that when the Queen arrived at Balmoral, she hung her crown on the castle gate and became human, but I don't believe that. Queenship is developmental; once you've crossed over, you can't go back.

I meet two women who celebrate every royal occasion together. "I have a drawer full of tiaras," says the first. "I go the whole hog. We get so much pleasure from the royal family: so much fun from sharing the good parts of their lives." A woman with two daughters, all three of them red-headed, says she has come for their sake: "I want them to look back and know that they were part of the Elizabethan era."

> The royal family may never have seen a bin bag, and this is not the day to introduce one

I meet Nathan, who is eight and heard the Queen had died while he was at Boys' Brigade. His great-grandfather was a ghillie here. Nathan has brought his mother and siblings to lay flowers, and thinks the Queen dismantled the empire. "She's really nice," he says. "Encouraging and loving. When we took things away from other countries, she gave them back." He looks at me with honest eyes: "I found that out on the news."

The lake of flowers grows steadily bigger, and then pauses. The royal family are going to church. They will shortly leave the castle, drive a quarter of a mile to Crathie Kirk for prayers, drive back, and view the flowers. The queue to pay tribute is closed. Barriers are erected to create a safe space for the royals, a great curl of tarmac between us and them. The press pen is made smaller. It looks like a metaphor for the national conversation, because this story is a lesson in confirmation bias – only the desolate and the professionals have come, mourners and media.

A council worker spots a bin bag hanging from a railing which the family will pass. "Want the bin bag moved?" she asks, her voice thick with dread. Perhaps she thinks they have never seen a bin bag, and this is not the day to introduce one. "I'll do it," says her colleague, but she is already sprinting towards it.

The policemen position wheelchair users at the front of the crowd and practise their poker faces. A woman bursts into tears. At 1.57pm the gates open and five Land Rovers and a Mercedes minivan roll out, as smoothly as through water. Prince Andrew waves through a window, a dog barks, and they are gone.

The Press Association photographer is their herald when they return, sprinting across the road ahead of them in his blue suit, holding a huge camera overhead. The silence in the crowd is so profound it feels pointed. The royal family get out of their cars: Andrew, Edward, Anne and their children; Charles, the new King, is in London. They look hunted. Anne's swept-up hair is so solid it could be a defensive weapon, or a denial of all she has lost. Andrew, apparently the Queen's favourite, now disgraced and retired from royal duties, clenches his jaw and looks around as if seeking something.

They walk towards the flowers, presenting a row of black royal backs. Sophie Wessex kneels to rearrange a card. Beatrice and Eugenie hold hands, and their father hugs them. The only sound is the whirring of the

camera shutters. Then Anne gestures with a wide sweep of her arms and they walk back towards the gates, turn together and wave. The crowd applauds the performance. Andrew puts his hands together and bows: namaste. Greetings.

Outside Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, dressed in black, Nicola Sturgeon and the Scottish party leaders wait for the Queen's coffin to pass. It is Sunday and all the women except Sturgeon are wearing a variety of hat: beret, cloche, cartwheel. They are by a bus stop and can't help but look as if they are waiting for a bus.

"She's late," I say, watching the Queen speed through the west end of Edinburgh on my BBC phone app, because no one is tasteless enough to make a designated app for the journey of the coffin. "That's because she's not in charge any more," the woman beside me says and smiles.

Applause ripples down the Royal Mile. The Queen passes, her coffin wrapped in her standard; the paintwork on the hearse is extraordinary, as if glossed for a thousand nights by a thousand servants. The applause has a muted and reluctant quality: this is a final performance, but the audience is not ready to leave.

The man beside me has seen the Queen before, at this exact spot in 2019. "I was on the news," he says. He met Charles, too, at a parade, and spoke to him. The Prince of Wales, as he was then, asked him: "How did you know about this?" "It was in the papers," he replied. He won't go to the vigil at St Giles' Cathedral. "I'm playing golf."

I walk to Holyrood Palace to see the flowers that have been left in the garden. The moment is dense with symbolism, so much so that the opening of a Union Jack umbrella is notable. There are English men in town wearing Union Jack ties and handkerchiefs. A 22-year-old woman was arrested at the accession proclamation for King Charles III in Edinburgh, for carrying a sign that read "Fuck imperialism. Abolish the monarchy". It was a symbol too far; the following day she is charged with breaching the peace. At the Oxford proclamation a history tutor was arrested for shouting: "Who elected him?"

I find only one dissenter myself, the indifferent opposition having stayed at home; he is a tall young man in black walking swiftly. "God Save the Queen/The fascist regime/She made you a moron!" he shouts at a police officer, who ignores him.

There were boos at the King's proclamation, too, but here it feels as if physics favours the Crown. "I'm glad she hung on for the bin strike to be over," says a woman with dark hair. "Maybe she thought, 'I'll hang on.' You should have seen the state of it." I thought she had hung on until Boris Johnson, a kind of anti-Queen – lazy and dishonest – had left office, which reminds me that we all imagine we know what she thought. Over seven decades she managed to look interested, or equally uninterested, in everyone she met. The Fair Fairy, giving and denying us all.

This is why the friendship with Paddington Bear – the Platinum Jubilee sketch in which she told him that she, too, kept a marmalade sandwich in her bag for emergencies – was perfect for the Queen's late-era mythology. It was the meeting of two equally improbable fantasies: the all-encompassing love of a perfect stranger, and the existence of a talking bear. The woman who thinks the Queen hung on for the bin strike to end says that she had overheard some American tourists talking as the coffin passed. "They said, 'It wasn't as good as William and Kate's wedding.'" I think they are wrong. A wedding is one thing, burying an ideal is another. ▸

The NS Poem

Floral Tribute

Simon Armitage

Evening will come, however determined the late afternoon,
Limes and oaks in their last green flush, pearled in September mist.
I have conjured a lily to light these hours, a token of thanks,
Zones and auras of soft glare framing the brilliant globes.
A promise made and kept for life – that was your gift –
Because of which, here is a gift in return, glovewort to some,
Each shining bonnet guarded by stern lance-like leaves.
The country loaded its whole self into your slender hands,
Hands that can rest, now, relieved of a century's weight.

Evening has come. Rain on the black lochs and dark Munros.
Lily of the Valley, a namesake almost, a favourite flower
Interlaced with your famous bouquets, the restrained
Zeal and forceful grace of its lanterns, each inflorescence
A silent bell disguising a singular voice. A blurred new day
Breaks uncrowned on remote peaks and public parks, and
Everything turns on these luminous petals and deep roots,
This lily that thrives between spire and tree, whose brightness
Holds and glows beyond the life and border of its bloom.

Simon Armitage is the poet laureate of the United Kingdom

Letter from Scotland

The police have closed the gates to the Holyrood Palace garden, and it is raining as people gather to lay flowers. Droplets gather on the cellophane in children's hands and wet dogs are lifted off the ground.

We wait by the barriers as the police shout for people to move and let more Land Rovers through: one contains only a driver, and clothing in thick plastic bags. It is like the scene in *The Death of Stalin* when the army turns the mourners away: the tutting swells into faint anger. "Please lay these for me," one woman says to another, handing her a bunch of sweet peas and Scottish thistles, her face pinched with sadness because she cannot stay.

Soon the police give up and let us through. "No pushing, no shoving," says the man at the gate. He counts to ten and lets ten through, then counts to ten again. I read the messages. "Ukrainians honour you." "We miss you." "Dear Queen Elizabeth, thank you for your wonderful service." "Thank you for everything you have done for Hong Kong."

There are Scottish flags, a toy unicorn, a Smurf, and a playing card: the Queen of Hearts. This was Diana's title, really – she gave it to herself – but there is no hint of Diana here. The shop on the Royal Mile selling Diana memorial tartan with her photograph outside is closed.

Some of the notes here are from children so young they can barely form letters, and some from romantics: a drawing of an old man and an old woman facing away, with a dog of unknown age, captioned, "Hello again, Lilibet"; a cartoon prince and princess in a cartoon castle, captioned, "Together Again". There is a copy of *Paddington at the Rainbow's End* with an inscription: "One last story, Ma'am". Is Paddington her settled genre now?

A man is arranging yellow roses, trying to stop them falling over. He laid them yesterday, he says, and he will be at St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh's Old Town tomorrow to walk past the coffin. "I hope it will be closed," he says, of the coffin. I am sure it will be: there are limits, even to our intrusion.

On Monday Edinburgh waits to meet the King: he will walk behind his mother's coffin to St Giles' Cathedral with his siblings for a service of memorial. By lunchtime the crowds are eight deep on the Royal Mile in sunlight. It is jovial at first – a fayre or a hanging. Gordon Nicolson Kiltmakers have Balmoral tartan, designed by Prince Albert in 1853, in the shop window. (It is a typically restrained tartan of multiple greys. Stuart red tartan, says the saleswoman, is for shortbread tins these days.) The Royal Mile Gallery has prints of Balmoral in the window: Balmoral with huntsmen; Balmoral with the River Dee. The pubs sell bacon rolls. People wave at the snipers on the rooftops, who wave back.

I take up a perch in front of the CNN broadcasters who are surrounded by plastic flowers. The woman next to me, a tour guide, says that if an independent Scotland rejects the Crown, it is conceivable the people could later change their minds and invite the Jacobite heir to take the throne instead: the 89-year-old Franz, Duke of Bavaria, who is a direct descendant of the House of Stuart. I think Peter Morgan would love this final act.

The atmosphere gets grumpier as the streets fill up, and there is jostling. Having given so much time to this, we cannot let it go. Is our attachment to monarchy an extension of that same sentiment? There are many tourists, who have made this an addition to their holiday. Glencoe, a whisky distillery, a vigil. A woman from the American South tells me she loves the Queen, and then frets that her quotes are not loving enough. Her friend says they have tickets to *Mary Poppins* the musical.

The King is driven past in the royal limousine on his way to Holyrood. The crowd gives a delighted cheer. I only see his right hand so I cannot tell you if he has been renewed by power, like Doctor Who. When I saw him, near my home in Cornwall last month – he visited a seafood restaurant and I stared at him from a car park – he looked human, if unusually well dressed.

Gunfire announces the beginning of the procession from Holyrood. It explodes, sequentially, from the top of the hill: the royal drumroll. Twitter keeps us informed of the progress: a man has shouted, "You're a sick old man!" at Prince Andrew, has been wrestled to the ground by a bystander and arrested.

"Someone called Prince Andrew a 'fucking paedo'," says a woman.

"Well, he is," says another.

"It's not been proven," says the first, "and you can't shout that on the day of his mum's funeral."

"I can't believe we haven't abolished this monarchy already," says the second. "Can I come up to your step for a better view?"

"No."

The King approaches. Those in the crowd with iPhones raise their iPhones; those with flags – we are opposite a delegation from the Royal British Legion Scotland – raise their flags. A man rushes past shouting, "'Scuse me, it's the fucking Queen!"

Charles is at the centre of a small forest of soldiers: members of the Royal Regiment of Scotland and the King's Bodyguard for Scotland. They move as one in a rolling gait up the hill. They pass, and there is determined applause as the coffin goes on: whether we applaud them or ourselves, I cannot tell.

LICHFIELD ARCHIVE VIA GETTY IMAGES

View from the top: the Queen at Balmoral in September 1971

PETER WILBY

Media Notebook

The right-wing press were dismayed by the lack of dissent from the royalist consensus

It's the "woke" liberal elite that threatens free speech, we are perpetually told. Those who hold traditional, patriotic views are allegedly bullied into silence. But try expressing republican opinions in the wake of Elizabeth II's death. Polls suggest that about 20 per cent of Britons want to abolish the monarchy but, as TV, radio and newspapers found innumerable voices to praise (or, in most cases, adulate) both Elizabeth and her successor, Charles III, dissenters struggled to get even a 0.001 per cent share of the coverage.

Tucked away in the *Observer* you could find a few lonely supporters of what Cromwellians, after the accession of another Charles restored the monarchy in 1660, called "the good old cause". The paper quoted Matthew: "There's cause for celebration... it might kick-start the end of the monarchy." Aisha believed "the monarchy... compromises our democratic rights and signifies colonialism". Matthew who? Aisha who? Neither will say. Matthew and Aisha aren't even their real names. "I don't want to be the target of a massive pile-on by trolls," said Matthew, who had crafted Facebook posts arguing for a republic before deciding not to send them.

Later a handful of brave souls – such as a 45-year-old man in Oxford who shouted, "Who elected him?" as the new King was ceremonially proclaimed – were arrested for mild public protests. Few media outlets provided even brief comment.

Otherwise, just about the only acknowledgement that republicans even exist was the *Telegraph*'s report that plans to take the coffin to London by train were abandoned because of fears it could attract "protesters or reckless behaviour".

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The paucity of actual dissent from the royalist consensus was disappointing for the *Mail* and *Telegraph*, always keen to administer a good kicking to anyone guilty of thought-crime. The BBC let them down so badly that the *Mail* columnist Jan Moir was compelled to admit that "solemn as a Bible, it... caught the moment best", with newsreaders' black ties appearing on cue.

But Saturday's *Mail* (10 September) had enough to run a story about "sick jibes". A US academic had tweeted that Elizabeth "sponsored genocide" and wished that "her pain be excruciating". The novelist and former *NS* columnist Will Self had written for US site the *Daily Beast* under the headline "The British monarchy should die with the Queen". The former England footballer and TalkSport pundit Trevor Sinclair asked on Twitter "why should black and brown mourn!!" when racism is "allowed to thrive". TalkSport suspended him and a colleague said it wasn't "an appropriate thought". And after Saturday's televised accession, the *Mail on Sunday* ticked off Jeremy Corbyn, a lifelong republican, for "snubbing" the Privy Council ceremony by not turning up.

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Salvation came from the *New York Times*, now a favourite target for right-wing columnists. In the *Telegraph*, Douglas Murray wrote at length about how, while an "outpouring of grief and affection" was taking place everywhere else in the US, the "poisonous rag" commissioned an "attack" on the late Queen from Maya Jasanoff, "a grievance studies professor" who argued that Elizabeth "helped obscure a bloody history of decolonisation". (Jasanoff's actual title, unmentioned by Murray, is Coolidge professor of history at Harvard University.)

The *NYT*, Murray advised, was driven by "hatred" of Britain, partly because it recruits "otherwise unemployable hard-left journalists from Britain". I tried to check the names of these characters but – apart from a mild-mannered former colleague of mine who began his career at the *Telegraph* and is nobody's idea of a hard leftist – I could find no British "recruits", only a few occasional freelance contributors.

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The last time a British monarch died, in 1952, wartime rationing of newsprint was still in force. Daily and Sunday papers could print only 16 tabloid pages at most. The day after Elizabeth's death, the *Times*'s obituary alone, including photographs, was published as a 40-page "commemorative supplement". The first 35 of the main paper's 84 pages were devoted to royalty, with the government's proposals for energy bills squeezed into four. More thick supplements came at the weekend. Developments in Ukraine barely registered.

Little of the coverage was, strictly speaking, news, with the main exceptions being Charles III's first speech as King and the Windsor walkabout by William and Harry. You would need to live under a rock – or be an exceptionally strict republican abstaining from royal tittle-tattle as some people abstain from alcohol or animal flesh – to be unaware that Elizabeth II was mad about horses, preferred Windsor Castle to Buckingham Palace and didn't get on terribly well with Margaret Thatcher. The past few days added almost nothing to our understanding of her, or to our insight into how the monarchy influences government.

That's fine by most newspapers. Real news – once defined as something that somebody somewhere wants to suppress – is expensive and liable to attract libel suits. It's also, thanks to the internet, ephemeral: break a story and it's around the world in seconds so that nobody needs to buy your paper. Readers will, however, buy and keep illustrated supplements marking royal marriages, anniversaries and deaths. In the age of social media, with its babble of unreliable news and contentious opinion, the commemorative edition gives newspapers a unique selling point. The more unsurprising and uncontroversial, even banal, it is, the better. Elizabeth II, wrote the *Guardian*'s Jonathan Freedland, "was a fixed point in our lives, a figure of continuity when all around was in constant flux". Newspapers want to be part of that.

MARTA SIGNORI

The King and his causes

Charles III is notorious for his political interventions. Will he be an activist monarch or follow his mother's example?

By Martin Fletcher

You can count on one hand the number of times that Queen Elizabeth II commented on political matters during her 70-year reign – and even some of those are disputed.

During a visit to the *Times* offices in 1985 she allegedly blamed one man, Arthur Scargill, for the miners' strike. She was allegedly dismayed by Margaret Thatcher's refusal to sanction South Africa's apartheid regime – or, at least, her press secretary briefed the *Sunday Times* to that effect.

Fearing Scotland would vote for independence in the 2014 referendum, David Cameron asked whether she could intervene with "just a raising of an eyebrow, even, you know, a quarter of an inch". She obliged by telling a well-wisher outside Crathie Kirk, near Balmoral, that she hoped voters would "think very carefully about the future".

In 2016 the *Sun* ran a front-page story headlined "Queen Backs Brexit", based on Michael Gove's leaked account of a lunch at Windsor Castle. The Independent Press Standards Organisation later branded the headline "significantly misleading".

The Queen's lifelong suppression of her own views, her determination to remain above the political fray no matter what, was a major reason why her reign was so successful and Britain's constitutional monarchy has survived. It was a measure of her achievement that her subjects knew practically nothing about her personal opinions, and that republicanism gained so little traction. "I have no idea what her actual politics [are], and I was prime minister for ten years," said Tony Blair.

King Charles III displayed far less self-restraint during the many decades he spent as heir apparent. In interviews, articles and books he expressed robust views on any number of issues, many of them political. He lobbied prime ministers and ministers on causes close to his heart. By his own admission, he "tended to make a habit of sticking my head above the parapet and generally getting it shot off".

All of which raises the question: will he follow his mother's example and avoid pronouncing on any contentious issue from this point on, or will he prove an activist King who defies the constitutional requirement that he remains politically impartial?

The risk of the former course is that the monarchy comes to be seen as an irrelevance, as a costly anachronism. The high esteem it presently enjoys reflects the nation's love for the late Queen, not for the institution she represented. But Charles is liked more than loved. He lacks his mother's absolute integrity and deep reservoir of goodwill. He faces a far less deferential media and, at 73, brings little in the way of youthful vigour or fresh appeal to the role. A recent YouGov poll found only 24 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds thought the monarchy was good for Britain, compared to 74 per cent of over-65s. Charles cannot be

A heavy burden: King Charles III delivers his address from Buckingham Palace the day after the death of his mother, Elizabeth II

YUI MOK – WPA POOL/GETTY IMAGES

passive. He has to earn the country's support.

Conversely, the risk of the King continuing to speak his mind at a time when the country is so polarised, and when so many issues (even climate change) have become deeply politicised, is that he will not be seen as a head of state behind whom the UK can unite. That could just as easily undermine the monarchy.

In the 21st century a hereditary monarchy is hard to defend on rational grounds. For its continued survival, it depends on its subjects lending it their emotional support. However sound his views – and they range from distinctly progressive to profoundly conservative – our new King must tread a delicate line if he is not to become Charles the Third and Last.

No monarch in a thousand years has waited so long to ascend the British throne, and for Charles it has not been a particularly enjoyable experience. His mother was emotionally aloof and often absent. His father was stern and overbearing. He was bullied at Gordonstoun school in Scotland, which he called "Colditz with kilts". Thereafter he obediently followed the rigid course prescribed for him – Cambridge University, then five years' service in the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

Even in marriage he was unable to follow his heart. He dutifully selected Diana Spencer, an eligible blue blood 12 years his junior. "Whatever love means," he replied when asked if they were in love on the day their engagement was publicly announced. The "fairy tale" marriage collapsed in a welter of sensational headlines, and ended in bitter divorce in 1996. The following year Diana and her boyfriend, Dodi Fayed, died in a high speed car crash in a Paris underpass as they were pursued by the media.

Charles's misery was not confined to his marriage. He lacked a defined role. "To be just a presence would be fatal," he wrote in his diary after meeting President Nixon at the White House in 1970. A few years later his wish to serve as governor-general of Australia came to nothing. "What are you supposed to think when you are prepared to do something to help and you are just told you're not wanted?" he complained. "My great problem in life is that I don't really know what my role in life is," he lamented as he turned 30.

His story was "one of constant struggle against the limitations placed upon him by the genetic accident of his birth", a biographer, Anthony Holden, wrote. Charles was "a confused and tortured soul trying to come to terms with a claustrophobic, if comfortable, life of inherited imprisonment... a caring and thoughtful man in search of good to do". He was "determined not to be confined to cutting ribbons". ▸

As the decades passed Charles did eventually attain both a wife that he genuinely loved – Camilla Parker-Bowles – and the role that he craved. Long before it was fashionable, he began warning of the dangers of climate change. He spoke out against the desecration of the planet, industrial-scale agriculture and genetically modified crops. He championed conservation, rainforests, organic farming and alternative medicine. He highlighted inner city blight and social deprivation. He preached religious tolerance and interfaith understanding. He set up a plethora of charities and foundations to promote his pet causes. In the process he regularly breached, or came precariously close to breaching, the requirement that royals remain politically neutral.

Charles infuriated Margaret Thatcher with his dabbling in politics, and enraged her environment secretary, Nicholas Ridley, by decrying the dumping of sewage in the North Sea. He reportedly drove Tony Blair to distraction with his denunciation of genetically modified foods, criticism of New Labour's education policies, opposition to a fox-hunting ban and support for a badger cull, and angered David Cameron by rushing to visit flooded areas of Somerset and Cumbria and complaining at the lack of proper defences.

Charles regularly wrote "black spider" memos – so-called because of his spidery handwriting – to ministers, lobbying them on issues ranging from better equipment for British soldiers in Iraq, to hospital designs, rural housing, alternative medicine, saving London's Smithfield Market and protecting the Patagonian toothfish. On occasion he would summon them to Clarence House to bend their ears. A 2007 Channel 4 documentary was entitled *Charles: The Meddling Prince*.

He did not limit himself to domestic issues. He boycotted state banquets with Chinese presidents out of support for the Dalai Lama. After Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule in 1997, he described China's leaders as "appalling old waxworks". In 2014 he compared Vladimir Putin to Hitler. Following Donald Trump's presidential victory in 2016 he spoke of "deeply disturbing echoes of the dark days of the 1930s".

He has waged war against modern architecture, denouncing a proposed extension to the National Gallery as a "monstrous carbuncle". He likened the National Theatre to a "nuclear power station" and suggested Hitler's Luftwaffe had caused less damage to London. He has, on occasion, sought to circumvent the planning authorities to thwart major construction projects.

He shocked the Anglican hierarchy by speaking of becoming "defender of faith" rather than "defender of the faith" when he became King. He has expressed sympathy for Extinction Rebellion's aims, if not its methods. In 2013 he condemned corporate lobbyists and climate change sceptics for turning the planet into a "dying" one.

As recently as June this year, he was quoted as describing Boris Johnson's policy of deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda as "appalling". Asked by the BBC whether Johnson's government was doing enough to combat climate change, he replied: "I couldn't possibly comment." A senior minister said: "Prince Charles is an adornment to our public life, but that will cease to be charming if he attempts to behave the same way when he's King... That will present serious constitutional issues."

Tom Bower, another of Charles's biographers, wrote in *Rebel Prince* (2018): "Since turning 21, Charles had met eight British prime ministers and countless politicians. There was little respect from either side."

Charles made no apologies for his interventions. He saw his role as that of the people's tribune and the nation's conscience. In 2002 his spokeswoman declared: "The Prince of Wales takes an active interest in all aspects of British life and believes that as well as celebrating success, part of his role must be to highlight problems and represent views in danger of not being heard."

In a 2006 television interview, Charles said: "It would be criminally negligent of me to go round this country and not actually want to try and do something about what I find there." In 2008 he told his friend and biographer Jonathan Dimbleby that, "I simply can't see what I see and do nothing about it." In 2018 he defended his right to raise concerns about issues such as inner city deprivation, saying: "If that's meddling I'm very proud of it."

Marc Bolland, Charles's former press secretary, once said the Prince of Wales regarded himself as a "dissident working against the prevailing political consensus". Bower went further, writing: "He believes passionately that he can make Britain a better country and that he can help the disadvantaged." He added: "Determined to be a figure of consequence... he has used his position since the early 1980s to influence how Britain is governed."

Charles lobbied ministers on issues ranging from rural housing to hospital designs and fish

Charles certainly recognises the need to change his outspoken ways now he is King. Asked in 2018 by the BBC whether his public campaigning would continue as monarch, he replied: "No... I'm not that stupid. I do realise that it is a separate exercise being sovereign."

In his first speech as King on 9 September he pointedly declared: "It will no longer be possible for me to give so much of my time to the charities and issues for which I care so deeply." In his several addresses since his mother's death he has pledged to "maintain the precious principles of constitutional government which lie at the heart of our nation".

A former aide said he had already detected a different tone in Charles's public utterances, and was sure the black spider memos and summoning of ministers would cease. So too, presumably, will his receipt of suitcases full of cash from Middle Eastern potentates eager to secure honours or preferment by donating to his charities. But there are other ways the new monarch can continue to exert considerable influence behind the scenes.

He can exercise what the 19th-century constitutionalist Walter Bagehot described as "the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn" of the British sovereign. He can, and doubtless will, use his weekly audience with the prime minister to ask searching questions. On 11 September David Cameron revealed to the BBC that he held training sessions with Charles while he was prime minister. "From what I saw he will be brilliant at that job. Brilliant at listening, brilliant at asking questions, giving wise advice and sage counsel."

Charles can continue to make speeches, but using more measured language. He can send subtle signals by choosing who and where he visits. He can exploit his status, knowledge and considerable experience to convene gatherings of experts, as he has so often in the past. "I suspect [that] is a modus operandi that will continue as he takes on this new role," his former press secretary Julian Payne wrote in an article for the *Sunday Times*.

He can also use his son, William, to raise awkward or unfashionable issues in the way he himself used to, and suggested as much in his first speech as monarch: "Our new Prince and Princess of Wales will, I know, continue to inspire and lead our national conversations, helping to bring the marginal to the centre ground where vital help can be given." A source close to Charles told the *Sunday Times*: "The urgency and importance of the issues

have not gone away for him. He will just address the issues differently going forwards."

But it remains to be seen whether King Charles will, or can, accept the new constitutional constraints on him. He has a short fuse. He can be headstrong and stubborn. He lacks his mother's iron self-restraint. Having been mocked as "dotty" earlier in his life, he feels justifiably vindicated and emboldened at the way climate change, environmental degradation and other issues he championed nearly half a century ago have now become mainstream. "I'm not sure he will be quite as inscrutable as his mum," the former aide said.

Charles cares deeply about the causes he has embraced, and it will be interesting to see how he will react if Liz Truss's right-wing government seeks royal assent for bills with which he disagrees. What if it seeks to dilute Britain's commitment to achieve net zero by 2050? Or endangers the Good Friday Agreement by reneging on the Northern Ireland Protocol? Would he, or could he, cause a constitutional crisis by withholding his approval?

Mike Bartlett wrote *Charles III* (2014), a play that showed the new monarch refusing to give royal assent to a bill. Bartlett told the *Times* that it will be great theatre watching the real King's conscience vie with his duty, given that "whenever some issue is raised, we know what he thinks anyway".

There is one other feature of Charles's character that sets him apart from his mother, and that is a pronounced messianic streak. According to the journalist Catherine Mayer, who wrote a biography of Charles in 2015, he is "a man with a mission, a knight on a quest". She added that his courtiers "feel he puts his more cerebral passions – his activism – before his royal job. They are a long way from being persuaded of Charles's evolving view: that campaigning and kingship can be synthesised." Charles's other biographers appear to agree. Jonathan Dimbleby has predicted that "he will go well beyond what any previous constitutional monarch has ever essayed." Tom Bower concluded: "I am convinced that he is determined to make his mark on British history, and will not choose an impartial silence during his inevitably short reign. He remains a historian, writer and political activist, and will want to cement Charles III in people's memories for centuries to come."

Those concerned about the future of our fragile planet must hope that the biographers are right, and that Charles can find ways to continue his environmental campaigning, if nothing else, without jeopardising the monarchy. That would perhaps be the greatest service Britain's new monarch could render to his country and the world. ●

Martin Fletcher is a former foreign editor of the Times and an NS contributing writer

Can the war now end only with Russia's defeat?

Ukrainian forces' remarkable counter-offensive is humiliating Vladimir Putin and his military high command. Yet history tells us the Kremlin will fight on

By Lawrence Freedman

Russia's recent military setbacks have led to hopes that the war might be over sooner rather than later, bringing an end to both the continuing death and destruction and the global economic disruption it has caused. What had appeared to be a rather slow-moving confrontation is now more dynamic. In one key respect Ukraine's successful offensive, in which Kyiv has recaptured thousands of square kilometres of eastern territory in a matter of days, has brought peace a little closer. The only conditions for a stable peace involve Russia withdrawing its forces from Ukraine. The prospect of further battlefield humiliations should encourage the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, to seek a dignified exit.

Whether he will is another matter. It was clear what Putin wanted when he started this war: a compliant regime in Kyiv that would accept Ukraine's subjugation. Once the February invasion faltered he could not achieve this. There were negotiations in March, which fizzled out completely in April, that addressed the issue of Ukrainian neutrality. On that, the talks seemed to make some progress, but they did not sort out what neutrality would mean in practice, especially in the light of Russia's demand for Ukraine's demilitarisation. Nor did they fully address the territorial issues.

Then, as Russia bombarded residential buildings and acted viciously in occupied areas, and as its forces gave up on their attempts to take Kyiv, the mood in Ukraine became uncompromising. The only acceptable outcome was to get Russian forces completely off their territory. Moscow claimed to be focusing on the Donbas, although in months of fighting it did not make sufficient progress to be able to control all of this territory. It then seemed to be interested in incorporating whatever it had occupied into Russia, but again was thwarted by Ukrainian resistance, and more recently the astonishing offensives in the regions of Kherson and Kharkiv.

Through this the Kremlin has shown little interest in a political settlement other than a Ukrainian capitulation. While recent events might suggest that this would be a good time to start offering compromises, it would require Putin admitting that he has made a huge blunder. For now he must hope that his forces, despite sustaining heavy losses after half a year's fighting and being rocked by their recent failures, will hang on. Even if Moscow did make an offer, the Ukrainians would be disinclined to accept. They are encouraged by their successes to carry on with their task of pushing out the Russians, determined that aggression must not pay and that there will be no permanent transfer of any territory, including Crimea, to Russia. After months ▸

ARIS MESSINIS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Fighting back: Ukrainian servicemen fire towards Russian positions in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas

◂ of being told by those of a realist persuasion that their hopes of military victory were fantastical – and they should therefore agree to negotiations, even if this did involve ceding some land – they now believe themselves entitled to wait for Moscow to acknowledge the weakness of its military position, and offer negotiations on the terms of its withdrawal.

Russia might have hoped that the energy crisis its war has created would lead Western governments to put pressure on Ukraine to compromise its sovereignty, but they have refused to do so. They suspect that once Putin saw any panic among Ukraine's backers, he would be tempted to raise his demands. Now they will see even less reason to do so, because it is Russia that is at a disadvantage.

In public both sides agree that at some point negotiations will be necessary to end this war, even while doubting that there can be fruitful discussions right now. As the earlier talks demonstrated, one cannot say that

fighting and talking are exclusive. And we can already see how the prospect of eventual negotiations is influencing strategy. Ukraine has been anxious to get on with its offensives because it needs a much-improved military situation on the ground – to demonstrate to its international supporters that it is worth backing; to show the Russians that the tide of war has turned against their country; and to create favourable conditions for bargaining once the discussions start.

Although it is often claimed that all wars end with negotiations, that is not true, unless one calls a formal surrender ceremony a negotiation. Looking back at past wars, a complex picture of the relationship between fighting and bargaining emerges.

To explore this relationship, it is important to distinguish between a peace settlement and a ceasefire; between attempting to resolve the underlying dispute that has led to the conflict, and concentrating on stopping the fighting even though this may leave matters in a state of suspended animation. And we need to make a further distinction, between a temporary truce and a more durable ceasefire.

Truces can be transitory, an opportunity to swap prisoners or provide humanitarian relief to beleaguered civilians, but also to replenish and refresh exhausted armies before the fighting starts again. A durable ceasefire, often accompanied by a disengagement of forces, promises more lasting relief. The problem is that it can imply a political settlement, freezing the positions held by the belligerents at the point at which the ceasefire is announced – as with the one agreed in the Korean War in 1953, which has yet to lead to a peace treaty. This is why Ukraine remains wary of proposals for a cessation of hostilities without a proper political settlement.

For those who believe the priority must be to stop the bloodshed, this can be hard to fathom. As soon as a war starts outsiders will step forward with proposals to end the fighting and resolve the underlying dispute. But most international efforts concentrate on the first part of this equation and not the second. Peace negotiations often take place in the UN Security Council with the aim of agreeing a formal resolution that, it is assumed, the belligerents dare not ignore. The prospect of a ceasefire resolution creates its own operational urgency.

This can be seen in the Arab-Israeli wars. In June 1967 the Israelis delayed accepting a ceasefire for long enough to complete the capture of the Golan Heights from Syria. It was a different situation six years later; by October 1973 Egypt had taken back some of the Sinai Peninsula captured by Israel in 1967. On this occasion the Israelis delayed implementing the ceasefire to give them time to establish a sufficiently large presence on the Egyptian side of the Suez Canal as a counter. Following the war, there were intensive negotiations to induce the two forces to disengage. It was only much later in the decade that Israel and Egypt met to agree a peace treaty.

The same phenomenon could be observed in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, as India pressed forward in December with its invasion of East Pakistan – which as a result became Bangladesh. In this case India's leaders obtained the Pakistani forces' surrender before the Security Council could pass a resolution. In this they were helped by Pakistan's recently appointed foreign minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was sent to New York to negotiate with the Security Council but failed to do so. It suited his own ambitions for Pakistan to split, as he could then take over the rump state (excluding what became Bangladesh).

A decade later, during the 1982 Falklands War, concern about pressure for a ceasefire – especially when it came from the US – was one reason Margaret Thatcher's "war cabinet" was frustrated when British forces appeared slow to move on from their bridgehead at San Carlos Bay. Should such pressure become irresistible, they wanted as much of the Falklands under British control as possible. A ceasefire resolution was eventually tabled, but, as a permanent member of the Security Council, Britain vetoed it and carried on with the land campaign until it had secured the surrender of the Argentine garrison.

Both the Bangladeshi and the Falklands wars demonstrate that there can be advantages when a war ends with a formal surrender. It leaves no doubt about the result and allows all parties to move on. With Pakistan's surrender to India, Bangladesh became established as a new state and, while the Falklands War did not lead to Argentina abandoning its territorial claim, there has been no second round. An immediate result of the defeat was that the military junta in Buenos Aires resigned, allowing a return to democracy, just as Pakistan's military dictator, General Yahya Khan, gave up after he had presided over such a stunning defeat.

By way of contrast, consider the end of the 1991 Gulf War. On 28 February President George HW Bush announced a unilateral ceasefire. Kuwait had been liberated and Iraqi forces were in retreat – attacks on them from the air were causing carnage. Yet Bush wondered at the time whether it would have been better to arrange something equivalent to the formal Japanese surrender on the *USS Missouri* on 2 September 1945. He was right to be worried. Up to this point Saddam Hussein had been fearful that his army and state were about to collapse around him. As soon as he heard the news his mood changed, and

he began to claim that he was the true victor.

When one side expects victory and sees no need for a negotiation, then it may take some serious escalation by the other to force a change of mind. An example of this came when North Vietnam launched a major offensive against the South in March 1972. Richard Nixon had furious arguments with his field commanders, who wanted to use all available air power to slow down the communist advance. His priority was to bomb the North to persuade it to return to the Paris peace negotiations. He wanted a lasting agreement to get a deal that would provide some security to the South after US forces had left. In the end, he put sufficient pressure on Hanoi to get a peace settlement (although it did not last).

These examples all come from wars that were decided through battles between regular forces. Many wars are of a different type – civil wars, for example, in which the regular forces of the state face irregular opponents, relying on terrorism or guerrilla warfare, sometimes with both sides having external supporters. There were a series of such conflicts after 1945, as the European empires struggled to hold on to their colonies until they realised that they were bound to lose. This was not always as a result of the fighting.

In 1954 the Vietnamese communists prepared for scheduled negotiations over the country's future by intensifying their efforts against the French, culminating in the latter's defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Scarred by this, the French then conducted an effective counter-insurgency campaign in Algeria, albeit using brutal and illegal methods. By 1962 Algeria's National Liberation Front had been suppressed and its leadership forced into exile. But from outside Algeria it could still organise strikes and demonstrations inside the country, and gain international support for its demands for independence. When the French president, Charles de Gaulle, accepted that France's position was, over the long term, untenable and began negotiations over Algerian independence, some in the French military considered this a betrayal and tried (unsuccessfully) to mount a coup.

The same considerations apply to international interventions to support a friendly government facing an insurgency. It is usually the policy that the local military should take over from these outside forces, but it is hard to know exactly when it is ready to do so. In the first instance the negotiation is therefore often between the indigenous government and its external backers about providing the assistance it needs to survive. This can be coupled with negotiations with the enemy. These are the processes that went so badly wrong in Afghanistan in August 2021.

ALEX BREENCHLEY

When both sides acknowledge they cannot win, a negotiation may make sense

With Ukraine, attitudes to negotiations are coloured by the Minsk accords of September 2014 and February 2015, ostensibly between the Ukrainian and Russian governments along with the two eastern "separatist" Luhansk and Donetsk republics. These talks combined a ceasefire with a peace settlement. Both agreements were complicated and left a lot to interpretation: neither was ever fully implemented. There were problems of synchronisation and in getting Russian forces to withdraw, and issues concerning fair and free elections in the separatist-controlled areas in the Donbas. There was also resistance in the Ukrainian parliament to the constitutional changes required, which would have given the regions veto power, and a lack of commitment by the separatist groups, whose main aim was to join Russia.

While Volodymyr Zelensky came to power in 2019 on a peace platform, he was unable to make the deal work and concluded that Putin simply could not be trusted. Putin's conclusion went a step further. If he could not influence Kyiv's policy through negotiations, he must impose his own policy through force of arms. Moscow abandoned the accords on the eve of the war. Zelensky has made it clear that there will be no "Minsk III".

This experience demonstrates that we should not necessarily assume that the best way to deal with an ongoing war is to urge negotiations to bring it to a quick conclusion based on mutual concessions. When both sides acknowledge that they have no chance of victory, then a negotiation may make sense. But the most stable outcomes are those resulting from one side prevailing, especially when the defeated side has been engaged, as Russia has in Ukraine, in an unwelcome and oppressive occupation of another state's territory. ●

Lawrence Freedman's new book, "Command: The Politics of Military Operations from Korea to Ukraine", is published by Allen Lane

This England

Each printed entry receives a £5 book token. Entries to comp@newstatesman.co.uk or on a postcard to This England. This column – which, though named after a line in Shakespeare's "Richard II", refers to the whole of Britain – has run in the NS since 1934.

Crackers for Christmas
Christmas superfan Pip Bensley has her festive tree up and decorated already. She is playing Christmas music and will soon open the first door of her four advent calendars.

When married, Pip used to put up her tree in October. Now separated, she puts up the tree after her eldest daughter Alex's birthday in late August. The Southampton florist, 58, said: "Why are people so grumpy about it?"
Daily Mirror (Amanda Welles)

Playing the long game
A schoolboy footballer who scored a controversial equaliser in a derby 50 years ago has said replaying the match "has put a lot of demons to rest".

Graeme Jones bundled the ball and the opposition goalkeeper into the net to level for Gayton Primary against St Peter's CofE Primary in Wirral in 1972.

He said he decided in the first Covid lockdown a replay was needed and spent a year finding his former teammates.

St Peter's CofE gained their revenge in the rematch, winning 6-2. Mr Jones said the match had raised almost £2,000, which would be used to buy sports equipment for both schools.
BBC North West (Daragh Brady)

Need for speed
Two drivers caught speeding 30mph over the limit on the M4 in Wiltshire gave police officers some unusual excuses. Both drivers will be off to court after police speed guns registered speeds of 100mph and 101mph.

One reason given by a driver was that "people see my car and want to race me". The other told road policing officers they needed the toilet.
The Wiltshire Gazette and Herald (John Boaler)

HELEN THOMPSON

These Times

The history of the royals is tangled and bloody. But so is that of the nation they rule

The events of the past few weeks have demonstrated the importance of the UK's constitutional monarchy to parliamentary democracy, the Union, the armed forces, and the liturgies of British nationhood. They have also highlighted the tangled history through which collective life has come to exist in the nation.

On 6 September Queen Elizabeth II accepted the resignation of one prime minister and appointed another, asking both to come to Scotland to meet her. Two days later, still at Balmoral, she died. Having laid in state at the Church of Scotland cathedral of St Giles at Edinburgh, her body has gone to London, where her Anglican funeral service will take place at Westminster Abbey, which was, until 1540, a Benedictine monastery. Meanwhile, the King, now head of the armed forces, and the new prime minister, now responsible for leading the government through Russia's war against Ukraine, are visiting the two kingdoms, the principality and province that constitute the UK.

Even in its own rituals, the monarchy carries many conflicts from the past. Starting the monarchical line at William the Conqueror is the principal means by which Anglo-Saxon England is written out of national history. And yet the core of the coronation service comes from that performed in 973 for one of those forgotten kings, Edgar. The crown that will eventually be placed upon Charles' head by the Archbishop of Canterbury is the St Edward's Crown, even though Edward the Confessor's actual crown did not survive the English republic of 1649 to 1660. Scotland's history as an independent kingdom is also absent from the numbering of British monarchs. But the older, denied history will, again, reappear in the King's coronation via the presence of the Stone of Destiny, a symbol of the old Scottish crown, under the Coronation Chair.

That the monarchy must uphold the hard ecclesiastical limits of the Anglo-Scottish Union has been on display too. The oath that the King took at the meeting of the Accession Council at St James's Palace on 10 September was to defend the independence and security of the Church of Scotland. The promise is legally required by the 1707 Act of Union. Its historical necessity comes from the memory of the catastrophic fallout and civil war resulting from the first King Charles imposing the Book of Common Prayer on Scotland in 1637.

Yet, although it bears the bloody fractures of the Union's past, the monarchy also underpins its present as one of the two strong remaining symbols of Britishness, alongside the armed forces. This state of affairs is both recent and paradoxical, as relatively few of our monarchical dynasties have originated in the British Isles. The House of Windsor is a name devised by George V during the First World War to disguise the present dynasty's continuity from the German houses of Hanover and of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. With the exception of Edward VIII, the Windsor royals have assiduously cultivated the Crown's relationship with the armed forces. It is they who have effectively made the ceremonies of remembrance around the two world wars at least as important as the opening of parliament in the country's calendar of annual rituals.

The monarchy has long had to address its own foundational tensions. While looking like a hereditary monarchy, it still bears some of its origins in the explicitly elective Anglo-Saxon monarchy, where the Witan or king's council chose the sovereign. In her 2013 essay "Royal Bodies", Hilary Mantel noted that the history of Henry VIII and his wives is a story about "body parts" and whether they are "fit for purpose" or "diseased". But in 1688, James II's body being demonstrably fit for purpose was precisely the problem, as his newborn son promised a Catholic succession to what was supposed to be a one-off Catholic reign. And so a group of Protestant nobles invited William of Orange to invade.

The monarchy bears the fractures of the Union's past, and underpins its present

The elective principle also lay at the centre of the 1936 abdication crisis. What might seem a protracted saga can be reduced to a simple fact: Edward VIII renounced the crown because the prime minister, Stanley Baldwin, told him that continuing to hold it was conditional on not marrying Wallis Simpson. Princess Diana offered a version of the principle of elective monarchy when, after their separation, she implied Charles was an unfit heir. And although the Queen was never going to allow the crown to pass directly to Prince William, that King Charles III will have to earn some of his legitimacy arises in part from this long-standing qualification to the hereditary principle.

Elizabeth II came into her own during the early years of the 21st century, a time when the New Labour governments were demonstrating their aversion to the historical constitution and their preference for national modernisation: Britain is a young country, said Tony Blair. Acting on that idea did not include getting rid of the monarchy or disestablishing the Church of England, but it did entail treating the historical ambiguities embodied in the monarchy as forces of conservatism that needed to be stripped of any living energy. But the national rebirth that Blair wanted did not take place. Instead, the monarchy in which all those tensions symbolically reside became stronger. Whether it will remain so resilient depends on how the King and the ministers he appoints each navigate the symbolic and non-symbolic burdens of a crisis-ridden future. ●

MARTA SIGNORI

THE CRITICS

Art

Pictures of Elizabeth

From regal paintings to punk collages, portraits of the Queen have alternately humanised and glorified her

By Michael Prodger

In late 1548, Titian readied himself to paint the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, the most powerful monarch in Europe. Through nerves or clumsiness, however, Titian dropped a brush and, to his bewilderment, the emperor stooped and picked it up for him. According to the 17th-century biographer Carlo Ridolfi: "Titian protested, saying: 'Sire, I am not worthy of such a servant.' To which the emperor replied: 'Titian is worthy to be served by Caesar.'" This courtly exchange exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between monarchy and portraiture.

Kings, queens and emperors have always needed their artists, sometimes more than the artists needed them. Charles V had Titian, Pope Julius II – a spiritual king – had Raphael, Philip IV of Spain had Velázquez, Charles I had Van Dyck, Charles IV of Spain had Goya, Napoleon had Jacques-Louis David, George IV had Thomas Lawrence. In fixing the image of their rulers for eternity, the painters added lustre to both their names.

Queen Elizabeth II did not need portraitists in the same way. As she was the most photographed woman of the age the camera disseminated her features, not the brush. Nor did she have her own Titian or Lawrence, but sat for more portraitists, of very different degrees of competence, than almost all of her forebears. The pictures – whether successful or maladroit – trace not just the shape of her 70 years on the throne but changing attitudes in both art and deference.

The first official portrait of Elizabeth as crowned Queen was a photograph, composed and lit by Cecil Beaton to resemble a painting. Beaton was at the coronation ceremony in 1953 and after the royals returned from Westminster Abbey he preserved the new young queen in an image of ineffable glamour, sitting in her ermine cloak, dressed in the coronation gown designed by Norman Hartnell, with the Imperial State Crown on her head and the orb and sceptre in her hands. The soft-focus backdrop is not Westminster Abbey itself but a painted screen showing the Lady Chapel. This theatrical staging is appropriate for an image that is not a record of a personality but of beauty and majesty incarnated – a fairy tale.

Opposite: Justin Mortimer's 1997 portrait, *The Queen*

Two years later, the Italian portraitist Pietro Annigoni stayed with unreality and reimagined the Queen as a Renaissance monarch, wrapped in a swathe of her Garter robe and staring into the distance. Annigoni, an avowed traditionalist and signatory to a manifesto that denounced abstract art, produced a work that unashamedly drew on the classical tradition – it is even painted in the ancient medium of egg tempera. He had struggled to find a satisfactory expression for the Queen's face until she told him that: "When I was a little child, it always delighted me to look out of the window and see the people and traffic going by." It is not the responsibilities of the crown that lie behind her thousand-yard gaze but the idle thoughts of a people watcher. The painting attracted huge crowds when it was first exhibited and, although it has been derided as a romantic confection, Annigoni's conviction raises it above mere pastiche.

The most "official" of the Queen's official portraits are usually overlooked. Since 1953 five different profile portraits of her, commissioned by the Royal Mint, have appeared on the nation's coinage, each one the work of a different artist. Mary Gillick, Arnold Machin, Raphael Maklouf, Ian Rank-Broadley and Jody Clark may not be the most recognisable of sculptural names but their work – and that of banknote artists such as Robert Austin, who produced the portrait of the Queen for the 1960 £1 note (the first to carry her image) – demanded that they subsume their artistic personalities for legibility and timelessness.

Rank-Broadley, who made the 1998 image for the new, smaller coinage, perfected his profile on an 18-inch plaster disc. He believed his job was to produce a true portrait and that there was: "no need to disguise the matureness of the Queen's years. There is no need to flatter her. She is a 70-year-old woman with poise and bearing." Not everyone agreed, however, and his jowly version of the Queen offended some (giving a taster of the opprobrium lobbed at his 2021 statue of Princess Diana).

Less divisive – and less formal – was Michael Leonard's 1985-86 portrait, commissioned by *Reader's Digest* magazine to mark the Queen's 60th birthday. It is an exercise in comforting realism by an artist who trained as an illustrator, which is why it is based on photographs rather than face to face sittings. Leonard took 100 photographs in Buckingham Palace and used a combination of six for the final work. His intention, he said, was "to play down the remoteness of Her Majesty's special position", so he showed her close-up in a yellow dress (in the Yellow Drawing Room) with one of her corgis, Spark – hence the painting's alternative title of "Corgi and Bess". The result is a benign monarch, almost off-duty and exuding good humour. ▸

JUSTIN MORTIMER / ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF ARTS MANUFACTURERS & COMMERCE / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

THE NEW STATESMAN

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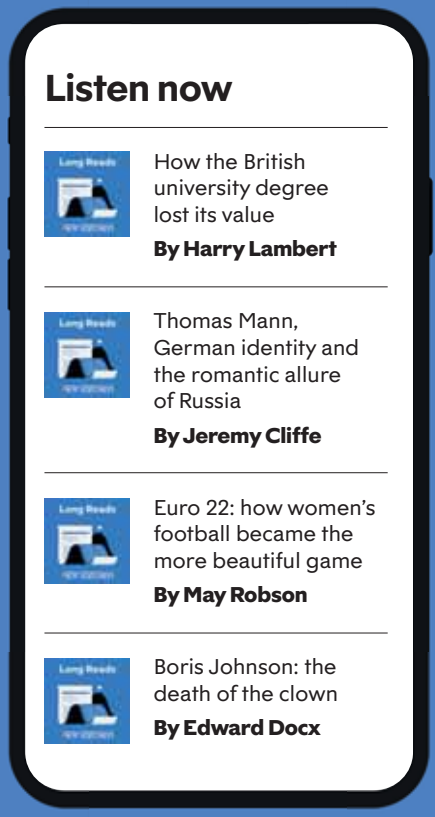

Long Reads Podcast

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What the Queen herself thought of the images made of her remained unknown. As she got older she certainly seems to have been game for increasingly experimental works. In 2004, for example, Chris Levine was commissioned by the Jersey Heritage Trust to make a portrait of her to celebrate the island's 800-year loyalty to the Crown. He devised a larger-than-life-size hologram, mounted in glass and illuminated by LEDs. Over the course of two sittings at Buckingham Palace, Levine took 10,000 photographs using a long exposure and combined them for a composite work. Levine had been telling the Queen about his interest in meditation and she was apparently much interested, so he timed the exposures to match her breathing.

The most surprising image, however, was a still taken during a break in the process. The Queen, in furs and a diamond crown, closed her eyes and the resulting picture, bleached of some of its detail, is almost spectral, showing her momentarily off-guard and vulnerably human behind the pomp.

If Levine's work is one of trust between sitter and artist, the portrait made by Justin Mortimer in 1997 is one of wariness. Mortimer was 27 at the time and a winner of the BP Portrait Award when he was commissioned by the Royal Society of Arts. He was reluctant to accept the proposal in case it damaged his credibility and because he believed another portrait of the Queen would be "an irrelevance". Nevertheless, the Palace gave him carte blanche and in the portrait he produced she is tucked at the bottom of the canvas against an acid-yellow background with her head floating free of her body.

Critics decried the lack of decorum and interpreted the picture as a reference to Tudor decapitations. Others saw it as alluding to the monarchy's disassociation with the public following the death of Princess Diana that year. Mortimer confessed that "there was... a lack of connection between us", and observed that "we are here in the world and she is away from us in the palace". The Queen, however, was not put off and later commissioned him to paint her Lord Chamberlain.

It is perhaps her unofficial portraits that make for the most interesting images. The Queen proved irresistible to some major 20th-century artists, drawn by the challenge of making something different from that familiar face. In 1966 Gerhard Richter made two portraits of her following a royal visit to West Germany the previous year. In one he took a newspaper photograph and enlarged and blurred it so she ends up featureless beneath her hat, but shimmering and pale grey and still instantly recognisable.

Because the Queen was also the world's greatest celebrity, Andy Warhol had a crack at her too, in 1985. She was one of four reigning queens he treated in a series of screenprints to which he added blocks of random colour. The pictures are not among his best, with Warhol seemingly unable to summon up enough enthusiasm to examine either her status or psychology.

Lucian Freud was more interested and rather than being asked, he managed to persuade her to sit for him over an 18-month period in a room in St James's Palace (she wouldn't come to his studio). Although he was already painting huge, fleshy pictures of naked models he squeezed the Queen's face into a canvas just 22cm tall. She wouldn't have expected flattery and she didn't get it: her face is not a good likeness, indeed it resembles Freud's own almost as much as hers. What is does show though is an ordinary woman, whose humanity trumps her majesty, despite the incongruous diamond crown on her head. There had previously been a suggestion that Freud paint Princess Diana, but his friend Lord Goodman warned that while it was "a great, great wonderful idea... I shouldn't leave her in a room with Lucian". The Queen's sole known comment about the sittings and resultant picture was to tell him that: "I've very much enjoyed watching you mix your colours."

Humanity and majesty: Elizabeth II sitting for Lucian Freud in 2001

The Queen's sole comment on Freud's work was: "I've enjoyed watching you mix your colours"

Arguably the most potent portrait was an anti-monarchical wail. During the Silver Jubilee year of 1977, the Sex Pistols' designer Jamie Reid created the artwork for the band's new single, "God Save the Queen". He took an anodyne black and white photograph, set it against a Union flag and placed letters torn, ransom-note style, from newspapers over her eyes and mouth. The image fizzed with the energy and anger of punk rock. It nearly didn't appear at all as the platemakers for the sleeve design found the defacing so offensive.

"She ain't no human being," the Sex Pistols sang, and they were right. The Queen was more than that and Reid's wantagonistic portrait was just one of many that served to prove her mutability. She outlived punk just as she had outlived Cecil Beaton's make-believe, and, looking back, Reid's work inadvertently endowed her with a spiky glamour. Her face, volunteered or co-opted, had always been a blank canvas for others. ●

Books

The long shadow of Chairman Mao

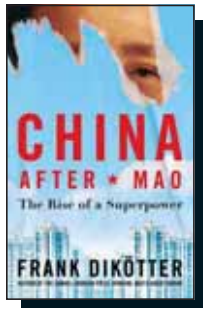
How China's uneven ascent has been driven by debt and the Communist Party's obsessive pursuit of social stability

By Katie Stallard

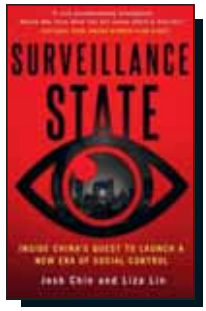
How should we understand modern China? The most common narrative is also the most reductive: that, following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) endeavoured to stabilise the country and embarked on a path of "reform and opening up", welcoming foreign investment and international trade. This led to the so-called economic miracle as China ascended into the neoliberal order (it joined the World Trade Organisation in 2001), built a high-tech empire of "instant cities", special economic zones, high-speed rail networks, innovation hubs and globe-spanning infrastructure projects, and achieved regional superpower status.

But the truth was more complicated, and more interesting, as Mao's successors wrestled with how to reconcile the horrors of his dictatorship with the need to preserve the CCP's legitimacy. All but lost to the popular narrative is the memory of Mao's successor, Hua Guofeng, who became party leader in 1976 before he lost an internal power struggle to Deng Xiaoping in 1978. Hua clung on to his formal titles as party chairman and chairman of the Central Military Commission for three more years, but it was Deng who would be remembered as the architect of China's economic rise.

As the historian Frank Dikötter details in his new book, *China After Mao: The Rise of a Superpower*, the story of China's economic development, and the CCP's approach to economic reform, was more contested than is commonly believed. Dikötter, the author of numerous books on China, including a trilogy on the Mao era, argues that focusing on the country's remarkable growth rates obscures the extent to which that growth was built on debt, creating economic problems – such as the crisis in the highly speculative property sector – that could undermine national stability. As Xiang Songzuo, a senior economist at Beijing's Renmin University and a former deputy director of the People's Bank of China, warned in 2019, "China's economy is all built on speculation, and everything is over-leveraged."



China After Mao
Frank Dikötter
Bloomsbury, 416pp, £25



Surveillance State
Josh Chin and Liza Lin
St Martin's Press, 320pp, £22.99

For Dikötter, China's economic history doesn't show a ruling regime possessed with a "clear vision of how to steer the country towards prosperity", but one beset by "interminable struggles for power" and fixated on the short-term maintenance of political control. "China resembles a tanker that looks impressively shipshape from a distance, with the captain and his lieutenants standing proudly on the bridge," Dikötter writes, "while below deck sailors are desperately pumping water and plugging holes to keep the vessel afloat."

Dikötter's study is not the "myth-shattering history of China" that its publisher claims, nor will it contain many surprises for close observers of the country. In the last five years books by George Magnus (*Red Flags: Why Xi's China is in Jeopardy*), Carl Minzner (*End of an Era: How China's Authoritarian Revival is Undermining Its Rise*) and Dexter Roberts (*The Myth of Chinese Capitalism*) have given cautionary assessments of the world's second-largest economy. Like these, Dikötter's highly readable primer provides a valuable corrective to the popular and more alarmist image of an unstoppable China that will supplant the US as the global hegemon.

Going behind the state's formidable facade, Dikötter details the cheap labour and lack of workers' rights; the influx of foreign investment and cheap credit that fuelled the country's economic growth in the late 1990s and early 2000s; and the countless warehouses full of unsold goods. "By 2005 roughly 90 per cent of all manufactured products were in chronic oversupply," he notes. Yet rather than unprofitable factories being forced to close, they were invariably propped up by new loans, taking on more debt and churning out more unwanted goods in the pursuit of economic targets and the party's all-consuming pursuit of social stability.

The effects of China's manufacturing boom extended beyond its borders: it drew away manufacturing jobs from Mexico and the US and flooded Asian markets with cheap goods that undermined domestic producers. While US officials had presented China's accession to the WTO in 2001 as an opportunity to open up its markets to Western firms, it soon became apparent that Beijing was protecting the financial interests of Chinese companies. By 2003, roughly 70 per cent of goods in American Walmart stores came from China.

The global financial crisis in 2008 intensified Beijing's belief in the superiority of its political and economic system compared to Western disarray and decline. Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2009, China's then premier Wen Jiabao railed against what he called the

"blind pursuit of profit" by Western financial institutions. "It looked very much like Karl Marx's prediction about the collapse of capitalism was finally coming true, as unemployment soared and growth rates fell in the West," Dikötter writes. That conviction has only been strengthened in the decade since, following the chaotic presidency of Donald Trump, the Brexit referendum in 2016, and the early mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic in much of Europe and the US in 2020.

A persistent misconception about post-Mao China among Western leaders is the hope that economic reform would be followed by political reform. Chinese leaders have consistently dispelled this fantasy. "What we are setting up are special economic zones, not special political zones," explained a group of senior officials in 1980 after the decision to establish the first four economic zones on China's south-eastern coast. In 1998, almost two decades later, China's premier Zhu Rongji explained to the former US president George HW Bush that it had no intention of ceding state control over the economy, never mind embracing further reforms; Bush believed he knew better, Dikötter writes, replying with a wink, "we know what is going on".

Under Xi Jinping, Uyghurs have been forced to submit to iris and facial scans so that they can be monitored

KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES

Bussed out: migrant workers leave their shift at a Beijing construction site, 2014

Unlike Mao, who stoked revolutionary fervour among the masses when it suited his political purposes, his successors prize social stability above all else, employing increasingly advanced technology to help ensure it. Dikötter's book ends in late 2012, when Xi Jinping rose to power. In *Surveillance State: Inside China's Quest to Launch a New Era of Social Control*, Josh Chin and Liza Lin, two correspondents for the *Wall Street Journal*, pick up the story with an investigation into China's present and future trajectory under Xi.

Building on years of reporting across the country, Chin and Lin explore the CCP's attempts to harness Big Data and near ubiquitous surveillance networks to scrutinise, track, and even pre-empt the demands of Chinese citizens. The most dystopian use of this technology is in the far western region of Xinjiang, where credible estimates find at least one million Uyghur Muslims have been confined to internment camps in recent years. *Surveillance State* documents in excruciating detail the process by which Uyghur citizens have been forced to submit to iris and facial scans, as well as having their fingerprints taken, voices recorded, and blood drawn so that they can be more effectively monitored.

The book also examines the less sinister applications of this technology, from traffic enforcement to mobile payment systems and the use of QR codes to trace potential Covid exposures. But even here, data capture evolves into yet another system for social control. In June, local government officials in the city of Zhengzhou were accused of tampering with the health codes of people who had been defrauded in a banking scandal in order to prevent them from travelling to a protest.

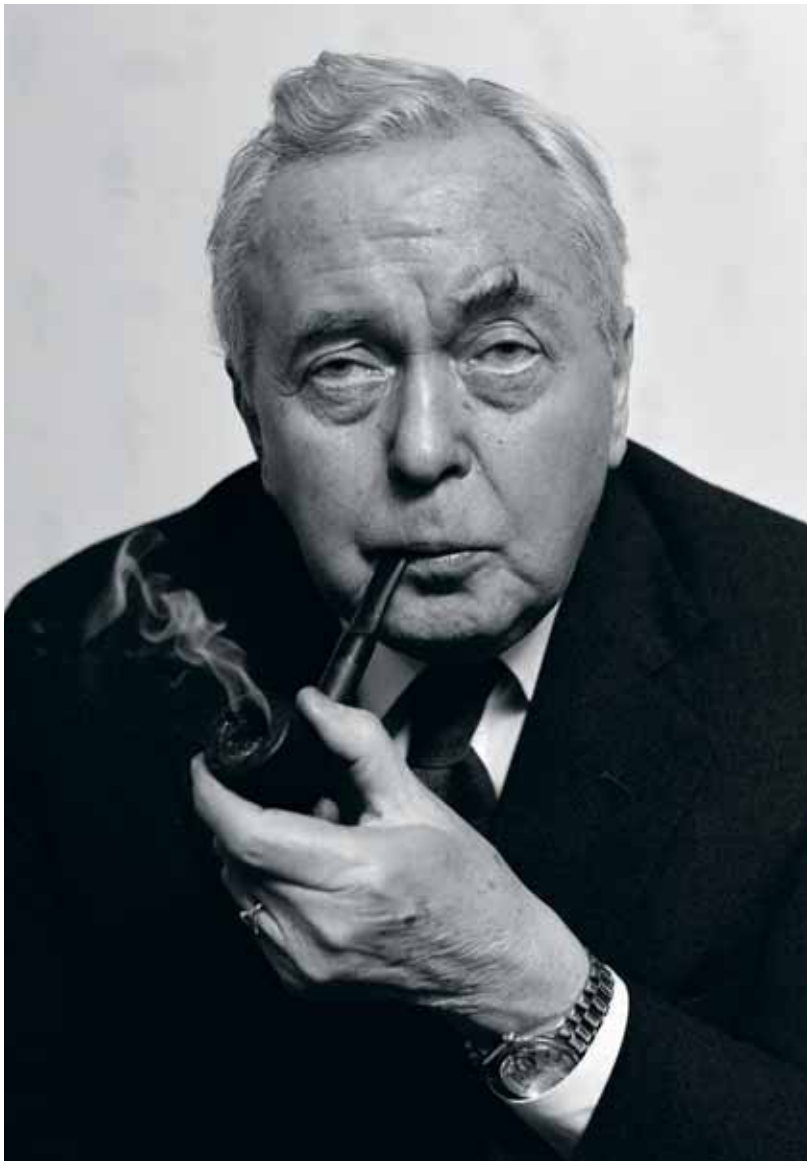
Chin and Lin avoid reducing "the story of this country of 1.4 billion down to a narrative of simple oppression". They also emphasise that this is not just a Chinese story. Police forces in many countries, including the US and the UK, are trialling the use of facial recognition, while Western companies supply much of the underlying technology. "Many of these surveillance tools were invented in Silicon Valley, where tech giants use them to compile behavioural portraits of their users to sell to advertisers." But where Google, Facebook and Amazon exploit this technology for profit, they write, "the Communist Party has adopted it as a means to maintain power".

As Dikötter helps puncture the image of China's inexorable economic rise, so Chin and Lin reveal the weaknesses of China's "surveillance state", a system that is more committed to delivering "the impression, if not the reality, of omnipotence". Together, both books depict a regime that paranoically works to maintain political control even at the cost of sustainable economic growth, as Xi is demonstrating with his "zero Covid" policy. With Xi expected to secure a third term in power at the party congress this October, China has neglected the dire lessons of the Mao era and returned to personalised dictatorship. If China's past remains contested, its future remains equally far from certain. ●

What did Harold Wilson know?

A new biography reassesses the life and career of one of Labour's most successful leaders

By Peter Wilby



Man of the people: Wilson worked hard to cultivate an easy public manner

SEFTON SAMUELS/POPPERFOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

This biography of Harold Wilson, by a senior member of Keir Starmer's shadow cabinet, sometimes comes close to hagiography. But that, perhaps, is no bad thing. Leaving aside the sainted Clement Attlee, Labour has little time for past leaders, regarding them as either failures or sell-outs. Wilson contested five general elections and won four. With him at the helm, Labour lost an election but returned to office in 1974 after a single Tory term of less than four years. The Tories' Reginald Maudling once observed that Britain was "a Conservative country that sometimes votes Labour". Briefly, it seemed that Wilson had reversed that trend. Surely he has something to teach today's leadership, struggling to prevent the Tories from sailing yet again towards almost two full decades in government.

"All bloody facts; no bloody vision," was how Aneurin Bevan described Wilson. He entered parliament in 1945, aged 29, festooned with prizes from a brilliant academic career at Oxford and with a reputation, from his work in the wartime civil service, for formidable organisational skills and mastery of detail. In the Mines Department of the Board of Trade, his boss noted his "gift for forecasting, with quite uncanny accuracy" the country's monthly coal output. He acquired, according to Nick Thomas-Symonds, "a unique insight into how the government machine operated". He "not only had the ability to analyse information put before him, he also had a keen sense of the data he required". How unlike our own recently departed prime minister. The young Wilson was not someone anyone would invite on to a TV panel show.

With that background, his early speeches as a Labour candidate and minister – he was appointed a parliamentary secretary within three weeks of being elected and was in the cabinet barely two years later – were as pedestrian as you might expect. If he later became celebrated for his wit in parliament, his folksy demeanour on the campaign trail and his easy manner on television, which in retirement earned him a short-lived chat show, it was, reckoned the political journalist Alan Watkins, only after "years of hard endeavour".

But it is not quite true that Wilson lacked a vision. He outlined it in his first speech as leader at the 1963 Labour conference in Scarborough. Labour, he said, would forge "a new Britain" from the "white heat" of technological advance. The "conscious, planned, purposive use of scientific progress" would "provide undreamed of living standards and... leisure ultimately on an unbelievable scale". Left to the free market, Wilson argued, technological change would lead to "high profits for a few" and mass redundancies. "If there had never been a case for socialism before, automation would have created it." The speech provided Labour with a narrative that took it through the 1964 general election campaign, 17 months with a narrow majority and the 1966 campaign that won a landslide.

Wilson's vision was abandoned within months of the 1966 triumph when Britain faced a run on sterling. Rather than devalue the currency – which he had to do anyway the following year – he deflated the economy

and slashed public investment. The "July cuts", as they became known, killed off the expansionist "National Plan", the embodiment of Wilson's vision published the previous year. Wilson had lost his nerve. It was another decade before he left Downing Street for the second and last time but, after 1966, it was downhill all the way.

Thomas-Symonds makes a big call and, for Labour's shadow international trade secretary, perhaps a significant one. He argues that Attlee's government, for all its other achievements, had one big failure: unlike its French counterpart, it didn't establish national economic planning, setting targets for industry and ensuring access to the capital needed to meet them. If Wilson had made good that omission, "he could have stood alongside Attlee" as Labour's greatest leader.

Nevertheless, the Wilson governments had substantial achievements. By 1979, when Wilson's successor, James Callaghan, lost a general election to Margaret Thatcher, income inequality in the UK was lower than it has ever been before or since. The Open University would survive and flourish despite one leading Tory calling it "a blithering nonsense". Racial discrimination in housing and employment was outlawed. The 11-plus examination was abolished in all but a few areas and comprehensive schools, attended by only 7 per cent of pupils when Labour came to power in 1964, catered for the large majority by the time Wilson left office. Legislation in 1970 gave women the right to equal pay; in 1975 they gained entitlements to maternity leave. Britain became a safer country: car seat belts were made compulsory, drunken drivers deterred by the breathalyser, health and safety at work greatly strengthened.

Thomas-Symonds rightly credits Wilson with two other achievements. First, unlike Blair, he refused to commit British troops to an American war – in this case, Vietnam – but remained on good terms with the White House. ("All we needed was one regiment," lamented Dean Rusk, the US secretary of state at the time. "The Black Watch would have done.") Second, Wilson "successfully dealt with the European question in British politics" and settled it for a generation. He led a party that was deeply divided on whether Britain should stay in what was then the European Economic Community (EEC). Like David Cameron, who faced a similar problem 40 years later, he opted for a referendum. Unlike Cameron, in 1975 Wilson won – by a resounding two-to-one margin.

His manoeuvrings on Europe sealed Wilson's reputation for being a devious and untrustworthy character who put short-term political advantage over the long-term national interest. As he ducked and weaved in the early 1970s to prevent the party splitting on Europe (as it did a decade later), the *New Statesman* called for his overthrow because "his very presence... pollutes the atmosphere of politics". For most of his career, his own views were opaque: he seemed to think Britain would be better off in Europe but feared the EEC was against national economic planning – one of the few things in which he consistently believed – and he had a soft spot for the Commonwealth.

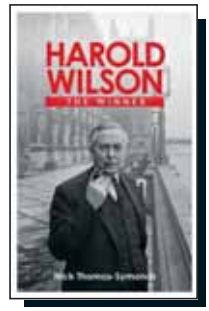
It was the same on other big issues, such as unilateral nuclear disarmament and the pro-nationalisation Clause IV of Labour's constitution. There were never any Wilsonites, as there were Bevanites and Gaitskellites and as later there would be Blairities and Thatcherites, because nobody was ever sure where he stood on anything. He had, as his ally Barbara Castle deftly put it, "ideological limitations". From his earliest days as a rising star, he won most parliamentary support from the Labour left, but he was never exactly on the left. He presented himself as taking "pragmatic" positions; others thought he took the positions most likely to win him power and keep it. As leader, he kept his enemies close and implausibly told leading left figures that "I am running a Bolshevik revolution with a tsarist shadow cabinet".

Even his views on his own government's social reforms – which many regarded as its most important achievements – were ambiguous. Though he appointed the liberal-minded Roy Jenkins as home secretary, agreed to provide parliamentary time for private members' bills on the partial legalisation of homosexuality and abortion, and ignored the whips' advice that the bills were turning "our own working-class support against us", he didn't vote in any of the 45 Commons divisions on them. Once described as "a perfectly sincere Sunday Methodist", Wilson was by instinct a social conservative. He took "an almost boyish pleasure" in the pomp and circumstance of the monarchy, according to Thomas-Symonds, and had great affection for the Queen personally, sometimes seeing her twice a week, instead of the customary once.

Despite his mostly sympathetic treatment of Wilson, Thomas-Symonds acknowledges that it was characteristic of him "to be both a part of something and apart from it at the same time" and amusingly suggests that he extended the principle to his holidays, which were nearly always in the Scilly Isles, off the Cornish coast. "Wilson could travel overseas... but at the same time remain in the UK."

If Wilson had a guiding principle, it was to keep Labour united. But united to do what? Labour's 1974 manifesto promised "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families". Right-wing elements in the security services were so alarmed that they raised absurd suspicions that Wilson was a communist agent and plotted to overthrow him. Because his unexpected resignation was never fully explained, some still believe the plot succeeded. But hardly anybody outside MI5 took the manifesto promise seriously and his governments often ended up, to use his own words, in "a messy, middle-of-the-road muddle" – though that, as he once told his cabinet, was where he was at his best.

This book has Starmer's imprimatur on the cover, proclaiming that it puts Harold Wilson "in his rightful place". But, Wilson being Wilson, one still can't quite decide what his rightful place is. Starmer's view on that is something we may find out in the next few years. ●



Harold Wilson: The Winner
Nick Thomas-Symonds
Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 544pp, £25

He told leading left figures that "I am running a Bolshevik revolution with a tsarist shadow cabinet"

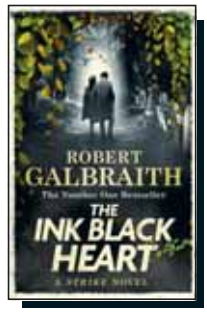
JK Rowling and the chamber of trolls

The *Harry Potter* author's latest crime thriller reflects her obsession with her life online

By Imogen West-Knights

JK Rowling has written a novel about online trolls. *The Ink Black Heart*, the latest in her series of Strike novels, which she writes under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith, follows the private detectives Cormoran Strike and Robin Ellacott as they investigate the murder of one of the creators of a popular YouTube cartoon called "The Ink Black Heart" – a beloved piece of intellectual property that is becoming associated with online toxicity. Edie Ledwell, the cartoonist, had been the subject of a vicious hate campaign online, particularly at the hands of a former fan known as "Anomie", who designed a free game based on the cartoon that also doubles as an anonymous platform for online messaging.

It is easy to draw parallels between the subject of the novel and Rowling's own life: in recent years, she has engaged in a significant number of spats online, particularly over her views on the trans rights movement and the UK's gender recognition laws. So easy, in fact, that Rowling felt she had to address the elephant in the chatroom: she said in an interview that any incidents that mirror episodes in the novel happened after "the first draft of the book was finished". This statement implies the existence of an editorial process I find it difficult to believe in, because this book has 1,000 pages.



The Ink Black Heart
Robert Galbraith
Little, Brown, 1,024pp, £25

Yes, three zeros. More, in fact: there is a coda that begins on the 1,000th page. The book weighs 1.25 kilograms, making it heavier than a bag of sugar and just as unpleasant to consume at speed. A crime thriller has no business being 1,000 pages long. A murder mystery lives or dies on pacing.

I enjoyed the first Strike novel, *The Cuckoo's Calling*. And like nearly everybody my age, born in the early 1990s, I was a devoted *Harry Potter* reader. Rowling has more than proved that she can put together a riveting plot, and so I began *The Ink Black Heart* assuming that, despite its incredible, almost threatening length, it would be a page-turner.

Unfortunately not. It takes 600 pages before the two detectives even interview Ledwell's co-creator and the only witness of the attack that killed her. The book is groaning under the weight of its characters, containing dozens of people who are in both the novel's real and online world, many of whom go by different online handles and usernames. They are hard to keep track of, and even harder to stay interested in.

No novel should contain this many tweets, even when realistically rendered as they are here. Twitter, as Rowling would be the first to argue, is awful. In certain sections, the novel is written in the form of brain-melting simultaneous chat-threads lifted from the game Anomie runs – a game that, incidentally, it is hard to imagine anybody being invested in because neither its appeal nor its rules are convincingly explained. The cartoon's catchphrases are also monumentally annoying, bearing sub-Gollum lingo such as "and now we cuts up mukfluk into smuglik pieces", which would perhaps be tolerable over the length of your average crime thriller, but again: this book is longer than *Moby-Dick*.

I'd hate to conflate the art and the artist, so here is a neutrally presented list of facts about the book. It is a fact that the novel contains a virtue-signalling character who goes by the name "Pen of Justice" and writes long blog posts about Edie Ledwell's transphobia. (I'll leave it up to you to speculate whether this character is revealed to be a good or bad guy.) It is a fact that another character – who refers to herself as a "spoonie", a term for someone with a chronic illness, and reads an article called "10 Tell-tale Signs You Aren't (Entirely) Cis" – accuses Ledwell of being "violently racist and ableist". And it is a fact that Ledwell is accused by one of the book's villains of creating an anti-Semitic caricature, just as Rowling has with regards to *Harry Potter*'s goblin bankers.

I wish I could read this book purely on its own terms – but Rowling has made that difficult. She has filled her novel with details that read as allusions to different online factions involved in the backlash against her. You can't help but suspect that Rowling was so invested in these references that she forgot to make the book good. *The Ink Black Heart* feels like reading an SOS from Strike and Ellacott themselves, held hostage in this sprawling labyrinth of Rowling's obsession with social media wars. Write what you know, they say – unfortunately, for Rowling, that amounts to knowing what it's like to have your brain pickled by spending too long online. ●

CARLO ALLEGRI / REUTERS

Reviewed in short

Eden
by Jim Crace
Picador, 272pp, £16.99

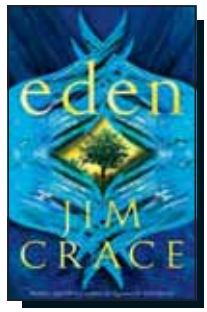
The gardeners of eden want for neither food nor shelter. The trees groan with fruit and the fish-pond is well stocked; the labourers sleep in dormitories, surveilled by feathered angel overseers. But this paradise is also a prison: eden's citizens are not allowed outside its walls, where hunger is rife (alms are pushed through the gates for the needy to take). Disobedience is met with violence, dissent with expulsion: the story of Adam and Eve is repeated as a warning. When an orchard worker decides she must see what lies beyond "eden's sublime uniformity", her escape destabilises the community and threatens the sanctity of the garden.

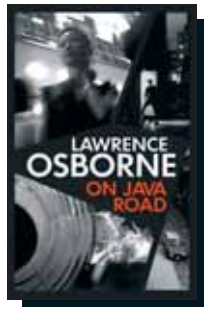
Jim Crace's socialist politics have always infused his fiction, and in *Eden* the preoccupation with power, class, poverty and inequality that lay behind his previous two novels, *The Melody* and *Harvest*, rises up and pushes against the fable-like narrative and fecund prose. He captures the dullness of life in eden almost too well: at times the action, related by a series of characters in overlapping accounts, slackens. But his portrait of a society in which structural power and inequality are entrenched and liberty is constrained contains a powerful critique not only of religion but of the modern state and its anti-democratic turn.
By Tom Gatti

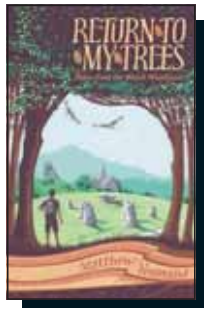
Re-Sisters: The Lives and Recordings of Delia Derbyshire, Margery Kempe and Cosey Fanni Tutti
by Cosey Fanni Tutti
Faber & Faber, 400pp, £18.99

Re-Sisters details the parallels between Margery Kempe, a 15th-century Christian mystic, and Delia Derbyshire, the electronic music pioneer who arranged the original *Doctor Who* theme tune. It's an idiosyncratic premise, made even more eccentric by Cosey Fanni Tutti's inclusion of her own life story as the narrative's third part. But Tutti, an avant garde artist and musician best known as a member of Throbbing Gristle and Chris & Cosey, handles her huge array of historical material with the enthusiasm and dedication of an academic.

In *Re-Sisters* she maps the lives of three creatives who have each been considered the "novelty woman" in their arena. She interrogates the idea of what it is to "record": Kempe recorded her life in writing in the first known English-language autobiography; for Derbyshire, a "recording" involved sounds. In doing so Tutti's exciting and inventive book makes the case for why we need to listen to those on society's fringes.
By Ellen Peirson-Hagger







On Java Road
by Lawrence Osborne
Hogarth, 240pp, £16.99

Lawrence Osborne, has, over the course of half a dozen novels, built up a discerning following. He has two great advantages as a writer of fiction: he is equally accomplished at both short stories and travel writing. The sparseness of the former and embedded detail of the latter are readily apparent in his novels about Westerners abroad, often in east and south-east Asia, made to confront their foreignness.

On Java Road is set in the Hong Kong of someone who knows the place well – its local restaurants, tower blocks and population groups rather than just its neon-lit facade. It is the time of student protests against the increasingly throttling grip of the Chinese state. The old friendship between a just-bumping-along expat English journalist Adrian Gyle and the plutocratic Jimmy Tang comes under pressure when Tang begins an affair with a beautiful pro-democracy protester named Rebecca. When she disappears, Gyle commits to finding out what happened, fully aware that the consequences will only damage him. Here Osborne updates the Graham Greene "entertainment" – social relationships are ambiguous, there's menace in the air, conversations rarely mean just one thing – and it is all stylishly and adroitly handled.
By Michael Prodger

Return to My Trees: Notes From the Welsh Woodlands
by Matthew Yeomans
Calon, 256pp, £18.99

The author and journalist Matthew Yeomans was already suffering from anxiety and panic attacks when the Covid lockdown of 2020 began. Reluctant to rely on medication and with gyms shut, he started to walk around his home city of Cardiff to find inner calm. Soon his short, urban meanderings turned into longer rambles through the woods.

Return to My Trees is the author's tale of reconnecting with the natural world as he follows trails that loop their way through hills and valleys. The Welsh government plans to include hundreds of miles of these paths in a new National Forest, aimed at linking existing woodlands (many areas of which are ancient, and will need restoration) with new trees. Following them also offers Yeomans an immersion in the cultural and industrial history of Wales. National forests, he suggests, could help make nature an "integral part of a national identity"; a proposition that should spread far beyond the Welsh borders.
By Philippa Nuttall

ONE LITTLE INDIAN RECORDS

How Björk found herself

Twenty-five years after its release, the Icelander's third album *Homogenic* sounds as urgent as ever

By Kate Mossman

In the Nineties my father liked Björk so much that one day my brother and I sellotaped a photo of her on his back. He managed a whole trip to the dentist before he realised it was there. Despite our mockery, we rather liked having a dad with cooler music taste than us. Had Dad been asked why he liked Björk, he would have said with characteristic economy that she sounded like no one else. This is still the case. Björk is one of the holy trinity of musicians, along with Joni Mitchell and Kate Bush, to whom any half-decent new female singer-songwriter gets compared – yet there has never been anyone like her. Still, she can be heard everywhere. Her third album *Homogenic* was released 25 years ago; if it sounds like it was made yesterday, it's only because people are still programming records like this a quarter of a century later.

Released on 20 September 1997, *Homogenic* is the album on which the whole concept of Björk was brought into focus. "It's very much grabbing the collar of people's jumpers," she told *Mojo* at the time, "then telling them, look in my eye, this is what I have to say, thank you very much, now see you later."

Björk had a terrible 1996. An obsessive fan in the US, inflamed over her relationship with the British jungle producer Goldie, tried to murder her by sending her an acid bomb in the post; he then killed himself on camera at the end of a 22-hour video diary. Björk sent flowers to his family. She retreated to Spain to write her album and when it was released, said she wanted less attention this time round, not more.

Homogenic had a greater homogeneity of sound (hence the title) than its adventurous, jazzy, eclectic predecessors – and it had a *point*. It said: I am not an Icelandic elf. I am a warrior woman – an *emotional* warrior, she later explained, who confronts people with feeling, and disarms them with love. On the cover image – styled by Alexander McQueen, with ten kilos of hair piled on her head, nails so long she could not eat and a face as impassive as a robot geisha – Björk presented herself as a woman struggling in an "impossible situation", armed only with the weapon of her feelings.

Homogenic said: I am not an Icelandic elf. I am an *emotional* warrior who confronts people with feeling

She joked that she left Iceland around the time of her debut album in 1993 because her life was too easy there – lots of good music and good books and getting plastered; she craved something with more danger. But by 1997, she wanted to create a sonic picture of her homeland. She achieved this with an original concoction of two things: romantic strings, and beats as big as volcanoes. She cooked up the beats with her producer Mark Bell, whom she said had as big an influence on her as Stockhausen: he died at just 43, in 2014, from complications after an operation. Together they created a database of beats, around a hundred of them, with Bell responding to instructions from Björk such as, "I need more oxygen" and, "Give me another silent explosion." The organic-electronic texture they pioneered can be heard everywhere now – from dubstep to Billie Eilish to Kanye West, and throughout the whole genre of folktronica. As her work progressed she blended her classical and electronic impulses in increasingly complex ways, but on *Homogenic* it only sounded stark and clean: simple, but radical too.

"Jóga" was written for Björk's best friend, Jóga Johannsdóttir, the wife of Jón Gnarr, the Icelandic comedian who became mayor of Reykjavík after his Best Party ran for election as a joke. So many pop songs about friendship feel passive – sentiments about "being there for you" – but "Jóga", Björk once said, was the fiercest love song she had ever written. Its heartbeat drums and vertiginous vocal embody one vast "emotional landscape" that emerges between two women: "And you push me up to this/State of emergency/How beautiful to be." The other big number on *Homogenic* is "Bachelorette" ("I'm a fountain of blood/In the shape of a girl"), which rollicks by on timpani, alpine horns and string flourishes that sound like the brush of a giant hand against a giant harp. In a sense it sounds more familiar now than it did then, because in 1997 few people were writing music with the flavour of John Barry's James Bond scores; soon, everyone was.

Björk was working in an era of confessional female songwriters who put rage at the centre of their music, but she was opening herself up neither over the keys of a piano nor through the amplifier of rock. She moved in an entirely different space, where emotion was allowed to unfurl, intimate and unadorned, in long, surprising lines of easy poetry. In "Unravel", love becomes a "ball of yarn" unwound by the devil: "When you come back/ We'll have to make new love." In "5 years", which is rumoured to have been about her other Nineties-producer-boyfriend Tricky, she roars: "I'm so bored with cowards/That say they want/Then they can't handle/ You can't handle love." Björk sang with the freshness and oddness of a new translation, where universal feelings appeared in a more penetrating light. ●

Fifty years of foraging

How Richard Mabey's 1972 guide *Food for Free* anticipated our growing appetite for local, seasonal and sustainable eating

By Alice Vincent

When he was a teenager, Richard Mabey's summers comprised the kind of earthy activities that now inspire fancy anorak catalogues. "We would camp out on a converted lifeboat and run wild on the marshes, looking for birds and just watching the tide," he tells me over Zoom from his home in Norfolk, not far from where he and his friends used to roam. "And we discovered that the locals had these curious habits of eating all kinds of things from the seashore. Wild fennel, a wonderful thing called sea spinach, occasionally sea kale. But samphire was the chief crop."

It was marsh samphire – the strange, salty edible succulent that rises at calf-height above salt marshes every summer – that opened Mabey's eyes to what could be eaten from the landscape around us. Now, it can be found everywhere from gastropub menus and artisanal fishmongers to Sainsbury's, where it lies limp in expensive little plastic boxes, but in the late Sixties marsh samphire was a food known only to the locals who foraged it.

Food for Free, Mabey's first book – an in-depth but practical guide to foraging – did considerable work in introducing samphire to plates across the country and beyond. Inspired by those Norfolk summers, he published it in 1972. Half-a-century later and it's still considered a foraging bible: having sold an estimated one million copies, it's never been out of print. Mabey, now 81, considers it "a kind of pension".

While the book's origin story of gangly, outdoorsy young men snacking from the seashore is charming, Mabey gathered more research from books than he did the locals. He has some good yarns: a bus driver nicknamed Crow re-diverted the usual route during one particularly unusual meteorological autumn because "some of the coastal marshes were so covered with field mushrooms it looked like it had snowed. So Crow stopped the bus and got everyone out to gather the mushrooms before they proceeded to the next stop," Mabey recalls, laughing.

Generally, though, he says that "there was disappointingly less on the ground than in the books", to the extent that "the whole incentive for the book was that this living tradition was getting pretty defunct". In snaffling and munching, testing and crunching, Mabey kept it alive.

His real fascination lay in unearthing foraging discoveries from the distant past: "tracking down long habits which had virtually died out". Mabey looked to books such as *Flora Diaetetica* by Charles Bryant, published in 1783, the first to discuss extensively foraging both in the field and in the kitchen. It includes advice that native rosebay willowherb stems (not the North American ones that line our railways and verges now) were "as good as asparagus". Then there was the wartime government's *Hedgerow Harvest* of 1943, which Mabey calls "a superb booklet", filled with recipes with "epicurean touches": if you're making sloe jam, crushing a few berry stones heightens the aniseed flavours.

Mabey's distinction with *Food for Free* was to eat everything not deemed off-limits by a 1950s missive from the Ministry of Agriculture, *British Poisonous Plants*. "Anything that wasn't in that book or obviously disgusting, I gave a turn to," he explains. "I was able to add 15 to 20 plants that have probably never been eaten before to the list." Among them was sea purslane, the flat-leaved green now available to buy through organic veg-box company Riverford and, as Mabey says, "on the table at any fine-dining restaurant that serves what are called 'sea vegetables'". Less successful were his adventures with wild carrot and parsnip roots. "Both of them were beyond the pale as far as eating was concerned," he says. "But I did my duty and gave them a whirl."

He was inspired by Dorothy Hartley, the pioneering researcher and anthropologist who toured England by bicycle in the 1930s collecting traditional recipes and customs. Published in 1954, *Food in England*, like *Food for Free*, has never been out of print. "She's a great hero," says Mabey. "I think that was probably my main inspiration, both for her wonderful, reckless style of writing and of living. So, you know, I can't claim to have invented a book about wild foods; it was just probably the first book in the next wave."

Mabey's introduction to the 1972 edition of his own book seems strikingly prescient now. "Maybe foraging can contribute even more, in today's ecologically threatened world," he writes. "If plants like wilding apples could contribute to the restoration of lost cultivated varieties, maybe, conversely, the restoration of cultivated land to wild, forageable land could build up new natural ecosystems."

It's an argument in line with the current rewilding movement. The book has tracked several waves of foraging fashion since. Marlow Renton, 45, runs the foraging education company Wild Food UK, and has ▸

Leader in the field: 50 years on, Richard Mabey's guide remains the forager's bible. Photographed by Rick Pushinsky for the *New Statesman*

◂ been using the guide for many of them. "I can't remember a conversation with a new forager during the Eighties or Nineties where *Food for Free* wasn't mentioned."

With the millennium, foraging became artisanal. In 2003, Noma opened in Copenhagen. Now boasting three Michelin stars, its chef René Redzepi was revolutionary in recreating Nordic cuisine with foraged food. By 2011, the *Financial Times* was reporting on UK Michelin-starred chefs leading their teams on foraging expeditions in Kent for chickweed and sea beet, while the *Guardian* was decrying Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Jamie Oliver for the ecological footprint of their well-publicised mushroom hunts. A decade on, and the emphasis on local, seasonal and sustainable eating has kept foraged food on the menu at high-end restaurants.

Mabey believes this approach to wild food is a good one. "What I really like about the fine-dining tradition is that they use minute quantities of wild foods," he tells me. "You won't find half a kilo of chanterelles on your plate. It's just a savour, and I think that is an ethical standard for the rest of us humdrum foragers."

But *Food for Free* has endured during hungry times, too. Sales of the pocket edition tripled in the wake of the 2008 economic crash. Raynor Winn, author of the bestselling 2018 memoir *The Salt Path*, owned a copy of *Food for Free* while raising a family on a farm in Wales. But Mabey's teachings took on a new vitality after she and her husband were made homeless due to a failed business deal, and, destitute, decided to walk the South West Coast Path as a means of survival. "We foraged whatever we could," Winn, 59, says. "Richard's book made me think of things we came across – odd little things, succulents mainly, like sea purslane, that we could slip into our packet noodles."

With the cost-of-living crisis intensifying, Mabey emphasises that *Food for Free* was never intended as a survival guide. "It is strictly a leisure pursuit that will enhance your life, but not fill your pockets," he says. "There are places, way out places in deepest Highland Scotland, where if you combine a lot of crustaceans with available berries you could cobble together a survival diet for a few weeks. But Surrey? No."

It was years after publishing *Food for Free* that Mabey's interest in ecology led him to understand that samphire wasn't just delicious, but a vital part of marsh ecology. "If we gather too much of it, it upsets the plant's ecological function."

The new edition of *Food for Free* sees Richard Mabey less determined to eat everything that won't kill him and more focused on unearthing ecologically sustainable snacks. "I like serendipitous findings, windfalls, small wayside treats, a handful of sweet cicely seeds or wild redcurrants," he writes. "The freedom of the bush" holds as much "liberty" as it does "responsibility". Mabey says he's "no longer flexible enough to get down at ground level", but has developed a game with his grandchildren involving snatching wild, riverside blackcurrants from the edge of his electric boat. "That," he grins, "is the paradigm for my foraging now." ●

Architecture Notes

By Pippa Bailey

Royal appointment: John Stanton Ward's *Opening of the Ondaatje Wing* (2000)

I remember my curtsy, my grey dress. The Queen wore red, and smelled like talcum powder

The escalator in the Ondaatje Wing of London's National Portrait Gallery is a monument of my childhood. It rises up to the Tudor Gallery from a central hall that is Corbusian in its stark whiteness, and compels visitors to begin at the top of the building, as at the Guggenheim in New York.

When the Portrait Gallery was built in the 19th century, it had an East Wing, a sliver of space that looked, on any plan, like it should have belonged to the adjacent National Gallery. Indeed, the Portrait Gallery's architect, Ewan Christian, designed the wing in the style of its neighbour, as though he envisioned the National one day owning the space. Eventually, it did. When the Ondaatje Wing was developed, the National gained the East Wing and, in return, allowed the Portrait to be extended in such a way that would block light to one of its buildings. I know all this because my father was project architect at the practice behind it, Dixon Jones.

The wing's opening, in May 2000, was attended by the Queen – and by eight-year-old me, there to present her with a bouquet. I remember little: my curtsy, my grey dress. She wore red, and smelled like talcum powder. I appeared, briefly, on the news – so briefly that when I took the tape recording into school, it had to be played multiple times before my classmates spotted me. John Stanton Ward was commissioned to commit the occasion to canvas; Elizabeth II is a diminutive figure at the back. I am – quite rightly – nowhere to be seen.

High above us was the new Portrait Restaurant, with its views over columns and domes. In the 2004 film of Patrick Marber's *Closer*, Julia Roberts and Clive Owen's characters meet there to sign their divorce papers. My father has a still from the scene in his portfolio.

Dixon Jones worked on three projects of cultural significance in the 1990s: the Ondaatje Wing, the Royal Opera House and the Annenberg Court at the National Gallery. It was a golden age for public architecture, but even the longest golden ages must come to an end. ●

SAVE THE TURTLE

Italy's Jasmine Coast is a haven for the Loggerhead Turtle. Today a British charity is fighting for its survival

Set on the southernmost tip of the Italian peninsula, the Sea Turtles Rescue Centre is based in Brancelaone a small seaside village on the so called 'Jasmine Coast'. It is managed by the animal welfare group Blue Conservancy CRTM.

The 'Jasmine Coast' is in fact at the centre of the migration routes of the sea turtles and its beaches constitute the most important nesting site of loggerhead turtles in Italy and one of the most important in the Mediterranean. About 200,000 turtles are accidentally caught in fishing nets every year in the Mediterranean alone. 40,000 die shortly afterwards and for every two turtles, one has plastic in its stomach. The loggerhead is an endangered species threatened by plastic pollution and habitat reduction. The decline of the species is heightened by the fact that the animals reach reproductive age at about 35 years and after a brief mating season females might not breed again for up to 9 years. Sadly, the trend seems to be that most of the turtles rescued by the centre are very young; hence highlighting the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to reach reproductive age unscathed.

The centre is effectively a hospital for sea turtles and provides veterinary care and rehabilitation to animals caught in fishing nets or victims of plastic pollution. The centre houses quarantine tanks; a filtered rehabilitation tank; heaters; X-ray machines; and an operating theatre. As you may imagine, filtering and heating systems are expensive to purchase and run.

Today, The Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals (AISPA), in co-operation with Blue Conservancy, is raising awareness to ensure the survival of these beautiful but vulnerable creatures. With a history dating back to the 19th century AISPA is a British based charity which raises funds worldwide in support of grassroots animal welfare projects in Italy. With your financial support AISPA can work to ensure these turtles survive along Italy's 'Jasmine Coast'.

AISPA
The Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals

AISPA, 6th Floor, 2 London Wall Place
London EC2Y 5AU
T: +44 (0)1743 232559
Donate online at www.aispa.org.uk

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Film

A Starman is born

Brett Morgen's unconventional documentary *Moonage Daydream* is a lavish and loving profile of David Bowie

By Ryan Gilbey

Near the start of *Moonage Daydream*, a new David Bowie documentary that is generously proportioned to the point of overkill, the director Brett Morgen – who had millions of audio and visual items put at his disposal by the singer's estate – cuts to a 1970s schoolgirl sobbing after failing to meet her idol. "He's smashing!" she splutters through a veil of snot and tears.

Well, he was, wasn't he? Morgen has said that he couldn't recall whether puberty or Bowie came first in his life, and I can identify with that. As a teenager in the 1980s, I had his albums on constant wheezing rotation on my Walkman. In the 1990s, I saw him play live on four occasions, three of those in the space of a week. A decade ago, I even wrote to his PR to ask whether Bowie might agree to an interview with this magazine solely to discuss his acting. I still reread the reply sometimes: "I will certainly make David aware of the kind invitation but..." Never mind the "but" – David Bowie was aware of my email!

All of which is to explain that I am the ideal viewer for *Moonage Daydream*. Musically, it is magnificent. Around 45 numbers have been lovingly remastered by Tony Visconti, who produced Bowie on and off from 1969, and the sound mixer Paul Massey. It was sensible of Morgen to eschew talking heads, and to mimic visually the texture of collage (as he did in *Kurt Cobain: Montage of Heck*). The movie proceeds ▸

ALAMY

Let's dance: 45 of Bowie's songs have been lovingly remastered by his long-time producer Tony Visconti

◂ chronologically – Ziggy, Los Angeles, Berlin, the stadium years – while still leaping back and forth through time, beginning with the Pet Shop Boys' blistering 1996 remix of "Hallo Spaceboy".

The no-facts, no-dates approach liberates *Moonage Daydream* from convention, though it isn't immune to coasting or cliché. If Morgen didn't delegate the choice of old film clips (*Un Chien Andalou*, *The Seventh Seal*, *Metropolis*) to a bored intern clutching a copy of *1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die*, then he may just as well have done. A lack of variety in the editing grows increasingly deleterious. One retina-frazzling sequence set to a live romp through "Cracked Actor" is impressive. A similar one five minutes later, accompanied now by "Aladdin Sane", suggests a two-for-one approach to crescendos.

Not that there isn't plenty to amuse. Any child of the 1970s will pine for the TV interviewers featured here, such as Russell Harty, mock-scandalised and secretly naughty ("Are those bisexual shoes?" he purrs), or Mavis Nicholson, her fond maternal probing forever haunted by the possibility of sternness, as though she hasn't quite decided whether to offer her guests a Bourbon biscuit or sanction their benefits.

The sight of Bowie rarely palls: the Ziggy plumage like a marmalade ushanka, the custard-coloured clothes-peg teeth a monument to British dentistry. Always there is the electrified self-awareness, as if he is dissecting each experience from a future vantage point. Sitting opposite him in 1979, Valerie Singleton asks if he is playing a character right now. "One wonders," he says.

Any 140-minute film dominated by a single perspective stripped of contradiction risks drifting into hagiography. It's understandable that Morgen is more interested in *Low* than low points. The singer's approving comments about fascism, his Tin Machine debacle, his reading of the Lord's Prayer at the Freddie Mercury tribute concert – these are conspicuous by their absence. But it is the use of Bowie's interviews sewn together into a commentary as soporific as any podcast that turns Morgen's cinematic valentine into a sort of poison-pen letter.

Rock star interviews can be tolerable individually and cringe-worthy en masse (in a clip not used here, Bowie told Singleton: "I'm very thick") and these are no exception. "All is transient – does it matter?" the singer asks in the Mogadon tones of a meditation tape. In the early 1980s, he plots his next move: "The East beckons me," he says, presumably not referring to Norwich.

On and on it goes: "I am emotionally very responsive to life and people... I think the search is the thing... We've got to be positive about our days on the planet." Play these remarks end to end and they begin to resemble the personal statement on a Ucas form. Had the film removed Bowie's speaking voice entirely, it might have preserved the mystery he spent so long cultivating. After all, it's hard to be enigmatic when you won't stop droning on about yourself. ●

"Moonage Daydream" is in cinemas now

Television

We interrupt this broadcast

By Rachel Cooke

News coverage
Various channels

In the Barbican's new retrospective of the feminist artist Carolee Schneemann, there is a piece from 1983 called *War Mop*. In case you haven't seen it, it comprises a TV and a mop, the latter mechanised so that it repeatedly strikes the top of the former. *Thunk*, *thunk*, *thunk*, it goes, and it's enough to drive you mad.

Standing in front of this installation soon after the Queen's death, it struck me as a perfect metaphor for the way some people must be finding the TV coverage right now. *Thunk*, *thunk*, *thunk*... When will it ever stop? But alas, I'm not one of them. OK, so things were a little on the tedious side on Sunday (11 September), when the hearse made its six-hour journey from Balmoral to Edinburgh. But even then, there were moments of fascination. On the BBC, Jane Hill – about to perform the longest gig of her life – was joined by Sir Tom Devine, that great authority on Scottish history, and it was wonderful. His deep expertise, his lightly poetical way of speaking, his absolute refusal to use more words than were strictly necessary. Note to gabbling newspaper royal correspondents: this is how it's done.

MIKE KEMP/IN PICTURES VIA GETTY IMAGES

Historic: Huw Edwards anchors coverage of the Queen's death on the BBC

The BBC has the best experts, the best presenters and the best camera shots. As even the *Daily Mail* has come close to admitting, there really is very little point in watching any other station. Yes, coverage-wise, there's a lot of it – Huw Edwards' announcement of the Queen's death already feels like half a century ago – but I only tune in for the big moments, those times when the exquisite precision involved in these strange days is fully on display.

And here I speak not only of young soldiers sombrely bearing a coffin, nor even of Penny Mordaunt's admirable padded headband (worn at the accession ceremony at St James's Palace), but also of the marvellous demurral of the new Princess of Wales when it came to meeting the eye of the Duchess of Sussex. How did she learn to do this? Is she self-taught, or did some kind of tutor visit Kensington Palace for weekly training sessions? I'm from Yorkshire, the county of grudges, and even I might have wavered in the same circumstances.

It's all mad – and madly interesting. As I write, my highlights include the new King Charles's velvet mourning coat (a lily gilded with thick brocade), Liz Truss's extraordinary bum-curtsy (half the internet has already likened her to Mrs Overall in Victoria Wood's *Acorn Antiques*), and Prince Andrew's vague efforts at unctuousness outside the gates of Balmoral (all it's won him so far is a couple of ageing corgis). I've learned such a lot, including the fact that Professor Vernon Bogdanor of King's College London can give Tina Brown, the former editor of *Vanity Fair*, a good run for her money when it comes to what we shall loosely call analysis: that strange combination of facts, hearsay and covert desire in which TV commentators have no choice but to trade when the endless hours want for punctuation. Though his blond highlights are not half so well done as hers.

Will Nicholas Witchell retire after this, the season of his most panting monologues? (To think the critics thought Ian McKellen was energetic in *Hamlet* recently!) And if he does, will Charles III put the kibosh on his OBE for services to broadcasting? I don't know. To quote Tom Devine, the future is not my period. But I will just say, before I settle down to watch the next glorious instalment, that GB News and its bastard sister, TalkTV, have never seemed more repellent or more useless – something that strikes me as ironic, given their politics.

This should have been their moment: their viewers are, we gather, utmost patriots. But they simply don't have what it takes. Who, in their right mind, wants to watch Trisha Goddard nodding cluelessly at the camera at a time like this? What manner of beast can bear to listen to that bloated creep Dan Wootton, who was last seen in an absurd film he posted on Twitter in which he was taking a moment for "quiet contemplation" outside Buckingham Palace?

My strong guess is that TalkTV's days in particular are numbered, and that this, in the end, may be yet another thing for which we have reason to give thanks to our beloved late Queen. ●

Radio

Creatures crunch the numbers

By Rachel Cunliffe

CrowdScience
BBC World Service

It's been a struggle this week to find something to listen to that isn't about the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth II or what we can expect from our new King – so if this review seems a bit random, I apologise. But when I saw *CrowdScience* on the BBC World Service was asking "Can animals count?", I simply had to find out the answer. I'm sure Her Majesty, devoted as she was to her horses and corgis, would have approved.

It turns out that they very much can. The presenter, Marnie Chesterton, discovers lions who can judge if it's wise to engage with intruders based on whether or not they're outnumbered, and frogs who compete for mates by adding up the croaks of their rivals and then exceeding them.

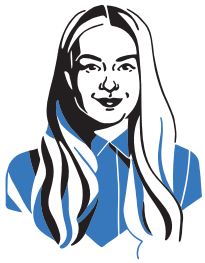
This basic skill of being able to determine more and less is apparently crucial in the animal world – for food, sex and simply staying alive. "We can't even discount the possibility that all animals can count, because if an animal doesn't respond to your experiment, that doesn't mean they can't do it," Chesterton explains, though personally I have my doubts. My cat has never figured out how many paws she has – I sense the mental arithmetic displayed by her distant cousins on the Serengeti plains is very much beyond her.

Later, we hear about a parrot named Alex whose mathematical skills sound truly astounding. But I was fascinated most by the revelation that bees can recognise number patterns, not just of objects found in nature but even of random symbols. And they do it by counting one by one, just like humans do.

It was surreal to read that the royal beekeeper had informed the Buckingham Palace bees of the Queen's death. What do they care? They're bees. But, after listening to *CrowdScience* and realising how much cognition goes on in those tiny insect brains, I'm pleased they were told. If they're able to count, who knows what else they understand? ●

I sense the mental arithmetic displayed by my cat's cousins on the Serengeti plains is beyond her

Deleted Scenes



Pippa Bailey

Another first date, a painful stand-up set, and my best friend's wedding

I write the morning after yet another first date (I go, these days, as much for the column material as anything, and I am beginning to wonder if I could get away with expensing my pints). We meet at a bar in north London for a stand-up comedy night. At the allotted hour, we make our way down to the basement, which has that low-ceilinged, wood-panelled vibe I associate with American movies – *13 Going on 30* or *The Virgin Suicides* (does anything good ever happen in a basement?). They're where teenagers go to play foosball and engage in heavy petting; I imagine the bedraggled remains of a tinsel curtain still hanging over the door from someone's sweet 16th, awaiting a grand entrance.

It becomes apparent fairly quickly that there are only going to be about ten people in attendance, and I would quite happily flee to the safety of the bar upstairs, but my date displays greater perseverance than I and boldly pushes on. Just before the sets start, the compère comes over to the corner booth where we have hidden and beseeches us to fill an empty table further forwards. It turns out to be in the front row. Anyone who's been to a comedy gig knows where this is going...

Before the first set has even started, the compère moves on from questioning a Dutch man next to us about his decision to move to the UK during lockdown, to "the couple next to you". We laugh. Realising he may have assumed too much, the compère asks if we are indeed a couple. "First date..." I proffer. He asks my date's name. "Phil." And mine? I could answer, "Pippa," and leave him to work out the connection – but I already have a sense of the calibre of the talent, and I feel bad for the guy, so instead I hand him the joke: "Philippa..." It's one of the biggest laughs of the night.

The comics are the sort of men – and they are all men – who said something funny once, perhaps a decade ago, and took it to heart when their drinking companion responded: "You should do stand-up, mate." There are, oddly, a lot of jokes about prostate exams, which tells you something about their average age – and which leads to some interesting debrief conversations with my date, about the position one assumes for a prostate exam, and various other times he has lowered his pants for a medical professional. I end up telling him how, the day before, I'd been given some travel vaccinations by the male nurse who also did my most recent smear test, and how my brain spent the whole time going "speculum, speculum, speculum" on a loop, just so he isn't left out alone on this oddly vulnerable conversational limb. (I somehow managed to ask him when his grandmother died with about my third sentence of the date, so all bets had been off for a few hours at this point.)

I feel for our wannabe comics, really – just last weekend I stood up in a room full of people and attempted to make them laugh (though thankfully my audience were more generous). My best friend got married and it was – and I say this as someone who has been to approximately five billion weddings and is thoroughly bored of them – the very best of days. It is not, of course, traditional for women to speak at weddings, but I did my bit for gender equality and rinsed the bride just as the best man customarily does the groom. Helpfully, I had some good material to work with.

My friend, you see, married a boy she met when we were teenagers. Our friendship group hailed from an all-girls school, and so had to outsource our boy supply. Among the group of likely lads from a local independent school who stepped into the void was the man who is now my best friend's husband. The wedding felt, in some ways, more like a school reunion than a wedding: for the first time since we were teenagers, we were all once more at a party together.

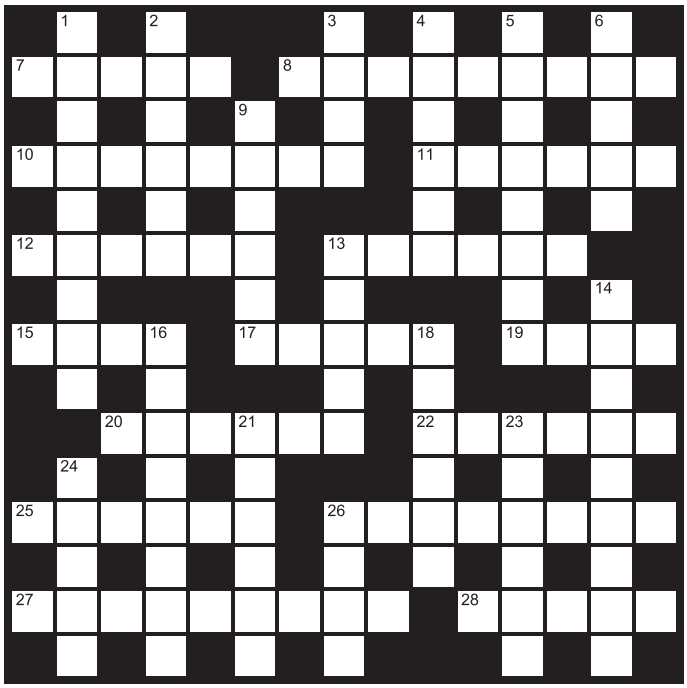
It had the potential to be an awkward day – painful even. Spare a thought for my fellow bridesmaid, who counted three ex-boyfriends among the guests. I spoke for the first time in a decade to a man with whom I went on a date when we were teenagers, and it was funny and sweet to hear the details he recalled: how we had shared our experiences of our parents' divorces.

The sweat and dancing and drunkenness felt almost comfortingly familiar, though the details were a little different: indeterminate items of fancy dress traded for suits and satin; Lambrini for Champagne. There were engagement rings and receding hairlines. No one – as far as I know – found a dark corner in which to snog and no one was locked out on the driveway naked, though at one point four men did take it upon themselves to climb up to the balcony overlooking the dancefloor and begin to perform a strip-tease.

As for my date, I shan't be saying the words, "I, Philippa, take you, Philip..." any time soon, which is a shame – because it would doubtless raise a laugh. ●

MARTA SIGNORI

The NS Cryptic Crossword 599: by Anorak



Across

7 Less convincing Debussy composition (2,3)
8 Forged article is true to life (9)
10 Happen to see bird nesting as resident (8)
11 This factor's macaque (6)
12 Sport in which love means nothing (6)
13 Backed rosy horse and farm bird (6)
15 Firstly hung up salted, smoked fish (4)
17 Could be Cilla Black? No! Purple! (5)
19 Abandoned building (4)
20 Almost top ancient city (6)
22 Standing one behind the other, arguing? (2,1,3)
25 Indian statesman would be headlining with Neil (6)
26 Honestly? No! Quite the opposite! (2,3,3)
27 Picnic food, apparently, for bird (9)
28 Harmony when that chap enters church (5)

Down

1 A bouncer? (3,6)
2 Eat out on badly run vessel (3,3)
3 Fruit – or two, we hear (4)
4 Cast almost accepts gold coin (6)
5 Exams even grasped by fool (2-6)
6 Illuminated and drugged on heroin (3,2)
9 Listen out for Christmas decoration (6)
13 Storms during yoga lesson (5)
14 Sunday roast spoilt. Blame golf (3,2,4)
16 List of clues he'd revised (8)
18 Material clue in the Czech Republic (6)
21 Underwear for shorts, obviously (6)
23 Haggard heroine certainly has changed (6)
24 More than one spoke (5)
26 Conger eel regularly viewed as monster (4)

Answers to crossword 598 of 9 September 2022
Across 1) Lombardy 5) Spates 10) Adieu 11) Nullarbor 12) Olympia 14) Trade-in 15) Pampas 17) Saturate 20) Kittened 21) Gandhi 24) Savanna 26) Ufology 29) Afterword 30) Neigh 31) Fidget 32) San Diego *Down* 1) Llano 2) Meiny 3) Aquaplane 4) Denial 6) Playa 7) Tableland 8) Serengeti 9) Plateau 13) Lea 15) Pikestaff 16) Motivated 18) Unadorned 19) Hexagon 22) Hag 23) Tundra 25) Nerve 27) Oxide 28) Yahoo

Subscriber of the Week: Richard Kiely

What do you do?
Professor of Tesol applied linguistics.
Where do you live?
Chichester, West Sussex.
Do you vote?
Yes, occasionally backing winners at local level.
How long have you been a subscriber?
Since 1990.
What made you start?
It was recommended as a good read on British politics and culture.
Is the NS bug in the family?
Rachel Cooke's reviews are read.
What pages do you flick to first?
Leader, contents, and crossword answers if needed.
How do you read yours?
Usually, beginning to end.
What would you like to see more of in the NS?
Economics and money.
Who are your favourite NS writers?
Andrew Marr, Tomiwa Owolade, Philip Collins.
Who would you put on the cover of the NS?
Greta Thunberg.
With which political figure would you least like to be stuck in a lift?
Liz Truss.
All-time favourite NS article?
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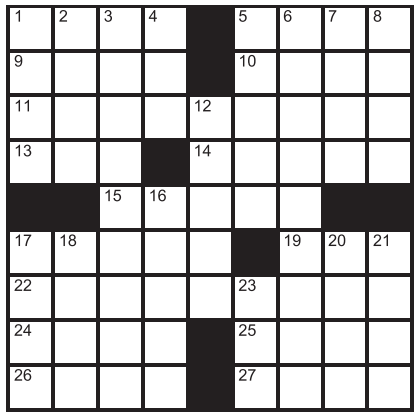
Please email ellys.woodhouse@newstatesman.co.uk if you would like to be featured

The NS Crossword In Brief 48: by Ali Gascoigne



Answers to crossword 47 of 9 September 2022
Across 1) Acme 5) Bros 9) Moot point 11) Pure Honey 12) MPs 13) Its 14) Set 16) Hee 18) Cos 20) Dei 22) Emoticons 25) Sad excuse 26) Poem 27) Stye
Down 1) Am/Pm 2) Coups 3) Morse code 4) Ete 5) Booth 6) Rinsed Out 7) One 8) Sty 10) Phi 15) Totem 17) Eensy

This week's solutions will be published in the next issue

Across

1 Daddy
5 Poetry contest
9 LSD
10 Common work start time
11 "Thumbs down from me"
13 Trawler's equipment
14 Brandish
15 Makes dirty
17 Abbey inhabitant
19 ___-hoo!
22 End disappointingly
24 Do a runner
25 Determination
26 1950s rockers
27 "Your point being...?"

Down

1 Une baguette, par exemple
2 Peak
3 Very small
4 Hoo-ha
5 Slow mover
6 An entire career
7 Very fastidious
8 Fix
12 Spin a baton
16 Seeps
17 "Yeah, as if!"
18 Agitate
20 Affirmatives in Antibes
21 Springfield bus driver
23 Self-image

Down and Out

Nicholas Lezard

However much time you think I spend in bed, you're underestimating it

A couple of weeks ago a letter was published in these pages suggesting that my colleague Pippa Bailey and I move in together so that our respective columns would be a little less miserable. I can see the logic behind this but I am afraid the proposal has not been fully thought through. For one thing, Ms Bailey might be a columnist at this magazine but she is also involved in the production team, which means that in some respects she is my boss, and I shy away from letting too much daylight into the magic of how this column is written. Just as a friend told me "My niece works for the Foreign Office, and however thick you think Liz Truss is, you're underestimating it", however much time you think I spend in bed, you're underestimating it.

And problems can even arise when I get out of bed. I once sent an email to my editor. "Woe is me," I said, or words to that effect. "I am too poorly to write my column today; may I file tomorrow, assuming the gods permit me to live that long?" And who should I run into at the Lord's Test match (for that had been my plan all along) but Jason Cowley, the very editor-in-chief? I mean there were 25,000 people in the ground. What were the odds? This is why I stay in bed.

These days I am honest and truthful when I cannot deliver my words on the appointed day. There are only two valid excuses: illness, and an inability to write anything that is not a howl of anguish. There have to be some jokes in here. That's the point of me, isn't it? But this week and last week have been difficult. Last week I was catatonic with despair at the prospect of Liz Truss becoming prime minister; this week I am *c* with *d* at the actuality. I know this is not the place to belabour the point, but really. Protecting energy companies' profits and making the taxpayer foot the bill; appointing Jacob Rees-Mogg and Suella Braverman; there isn't much to joke about there.

On the night that the votes of Tory members were being counted, there was an incredible thunderstorm just off the coast. I stayed up to watch it and, as the final tick was placed against Truss's name, the firmament directly above me burst with a gigantic crack, the loudest thunder-clap I have ever heard in my life, and I thought: this is it – we're doomed. And I know that this was probably a coincidence, and that there are no such things as omens, but it made me not at all confident that the Conservatives will be thrown out at the next election. Not for the first time, I reflect on the fact – and maybe it was the thought of portents that diverted my train of thought back down the centuries – that one ancient Greek word for "one's own countrymen" is "ἰδιῶται", pronounced "idiotai".

So I try to think of things that are nice, or funny. I'm running a bit dry on the latter. But even when the country is circling the plughole, pleasant things can happen within it. Unfortunately they are very much at the local scale. I went up to East Finchley to cook a Sunday roast for my mother and my children, plus one of their girlfriends. While I cooked, the young ones played cricket in the garden. After lunch the others sat round the card table playing Casino while I, stuffed, rummaged in a box of my books and came up with the oldest one I own, a French 1681 edition of St Augustine I bought in Toulouse 20 years ago for ten quid. I lay on the sofa, opened it at random, and came across this bit (my translation): "Who are you still? You are a shadowy abyss of ignorance and vice; a scorched and sterile desert; a child of the anger of God; a fitting receptacle for the occasions of shame and ignominy; your birth is in filth, your life wretched, your death crowded with terrors; you are nothing but a dung heap in the guise of a man," etc.

I say, Gus, that's laying it on a bit thick, I thought; and then realised, actually, this more or less captures my mood at the moment. (Not that precise moment, of course. I was enjoying my family and was a fitting receptacle not just for the occasions of shame and ignominy, but also half a leg of lamb and about 50 roast potatoes.)

I enjoyed reading this so much that when I got back home I picked up the 800-page second volume of Chateaubriand's memoirs that the publishers NYRB had kindly sent me. I did not know his stuff but it was a revelation, and I am very happily getting stuck in. "Life fitted me badly; death, perhaps, will suit me better," he once said; people call him a Romantic but I'm getting some very Beckettian top notes. (This is a good thing.)

But then what's Chateaubriand got to moan about? He might have lived through the violence and bloodshed of the French Revolution, but at least he never had to put up with the shame and ignominy – *honte et ignominie* – of having Liz Truss as his prime minister.

And then the Queen died. As if things weren't bad enough already. ●

MARTA SIGNORI

State of the Nation

Highlights from the NS's online data hub

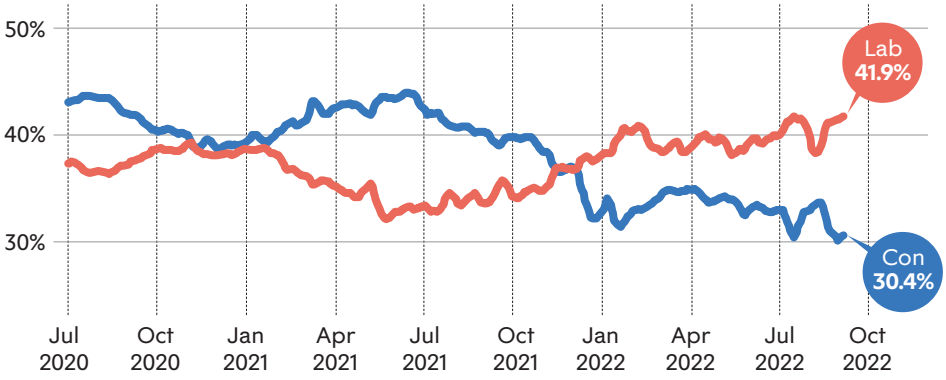
How does the UK compare to the rest of the world?

	GDP growth forecast for 2022 (%)	GDP growth forecast for 2023 (%)	Interest rate (%)	Inflation rate (CPI, %)	Growth in GDP, 2005-19 (%)	Reductions in CO_2 emissions, 2005-19 (%)	Petrol prices (US$ per litre)
Great Britain	**3.2**	**0.5**	**1.8**	**10.1**	**22**	**-28**	**2.0**
Brazil	1.7	1.1	13.3	10.1	–	–	10.1
Canada	3.4	1.8	2.5	7.6	–	–	1.4
China	3.3	4.6	3.7	2.7	–	–	1.3
France	2.3	1.0	0.5	6.1	18	-22	1.7
Germany	1.2	0.8	0.5	7.5	24	-21	1.8
Italy	3.0	0.7	0.5	7.9	–	–	1.8
Japan	1.7	1.7	-0.1	2.6	9	-16	1.2
Russia	-6.0	-3.5	8.0	15.1	–	–	0.8
Spain	4.0	2.0	0.5	10.8	16	-35	1.8
US	2.3	1.0	2.5	8.5	28	-15	1.1

SOURCES: IMF, JULY; TRADING ECONOMICS; GLOBAL PETROL PRICES

Britain Elects: Westminster voting intentions

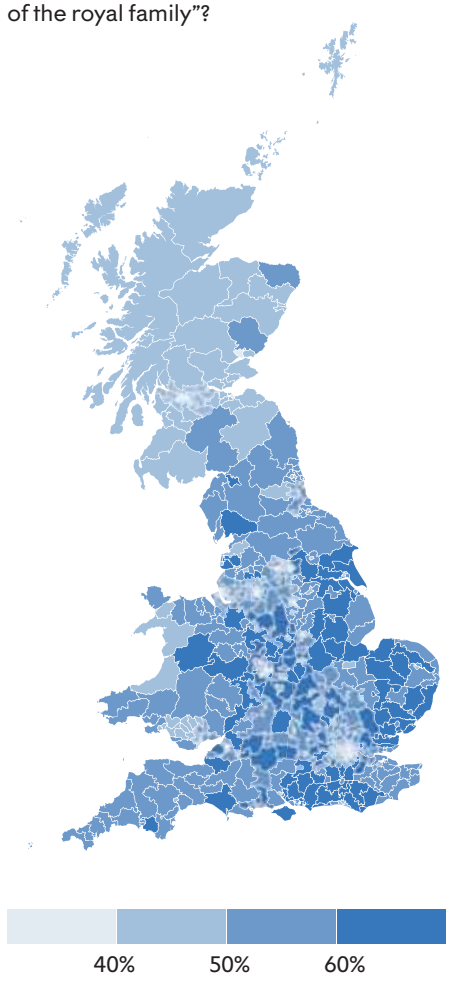
How popular is the Labour Party compared to the Conservative Party?



SOURCE: BRITAIN ELECTS

Across the realm

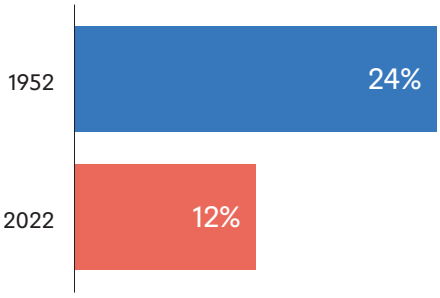
Do you agree with the statement, "I am a strong supporter of the continued reign of the royal family"?



SOURCE: FOCALDATA FOR UNHERD (2019)

Home ownership is even more out of reach

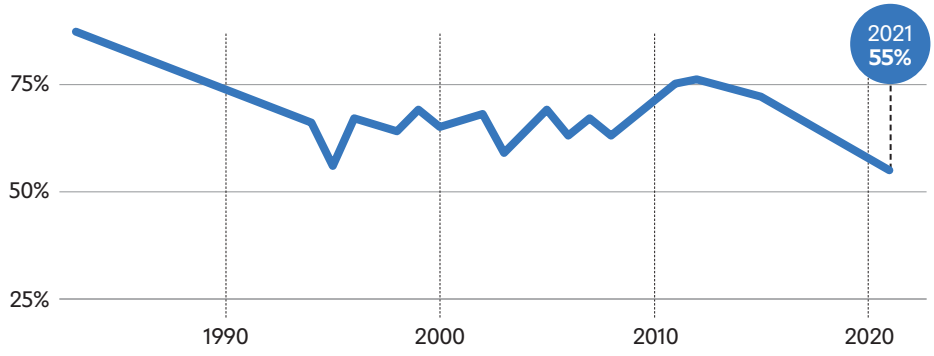
Average annual salaries as a share of the average house price



SOURCE: ONS; NATIONWIDE

Long may they reign?

How the percentage of UK citizens who believe it is important that Britain has a monarchy has changed over time



SOURCE: NATCEN

The NS Q&A

"Men have often forgotten that women even exist"

Anne-Marie Imafidon, Stem campaigner

Anne-Marie Imafidon was born in London in 1990. Aged 11 she became the youngest girl ever to pass A-level computing. She is the founder of Stemettes, a social initiative that promotes women in science and tech.

What's your earliest memory?
The chronology of it all is a bit hazy, but one is typing the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" into my dad's computer, but changing her hood to purple instead of red, so it became the story of "Little Purple Riding Hood". I expect I was about four.

Who are your heroes?
Growing up, my hero was Tim Berners-Lee. I remember being aware that he was a British physicist who created the web, and I remember thinking, "I'm British too, and I'm interested in similar things – I could make something just as impactful." Now I think my hero is Gladys West. She's the mathematician who used data from the Geosat satellite to figure out that by drawing a couple of triangles, you can figure out exactly where you are on Earth. That's why we have GPS, which is the global positioning system. I like to think of it as the "Gladys positioning system".

What book last changed your thinking?
Invisible Women by Caroline Criado Perez. You have to read it. It made me realise that there have been so many times when men have forgotten that women even exist.

Which political figure do you look up to?
None, really, as awful as that sounds. No politician has ever resonated with me.

What would be your "Mastermind" specialist subject?
The "herstory" of Stem (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Or *The Office* one-liners, or *Parks and Recreation* one-liners, or *Abbott Elementary*.

In which time and place, other than your own, would you like to live?
Ten years from now in Watamu, Kenya. There's 4G+ signal everywhere, it's cashless so you don't need to take much with you, the sun is always shining. I get a lot done when I'm in Kenya. In ten years I imagine it'd be even better.

What TV show could you not live without?
I love *Love It or List It*, home makeover shows and property shows. I watch a lot of television.

Who would paint your portrait?
Someone already has. Her name is Susannah Nathanson. It's got augmented reality (AR) in it, so if you hold your phone over it, a video plays.

What's your theme tune?
"The Cure and the Cause" by Fish Go Deep. Every time I go onstage that's the song that plays.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?
Seek forgiveness, not permission.

What's currently bugging you?
Lots of things. Climate change, the proportion of women in Stem... it's a very long list.

What single thing would make your life better?
The eradication of migraines. I get them seasonally.

When were you happiest?
Every time I wake up.

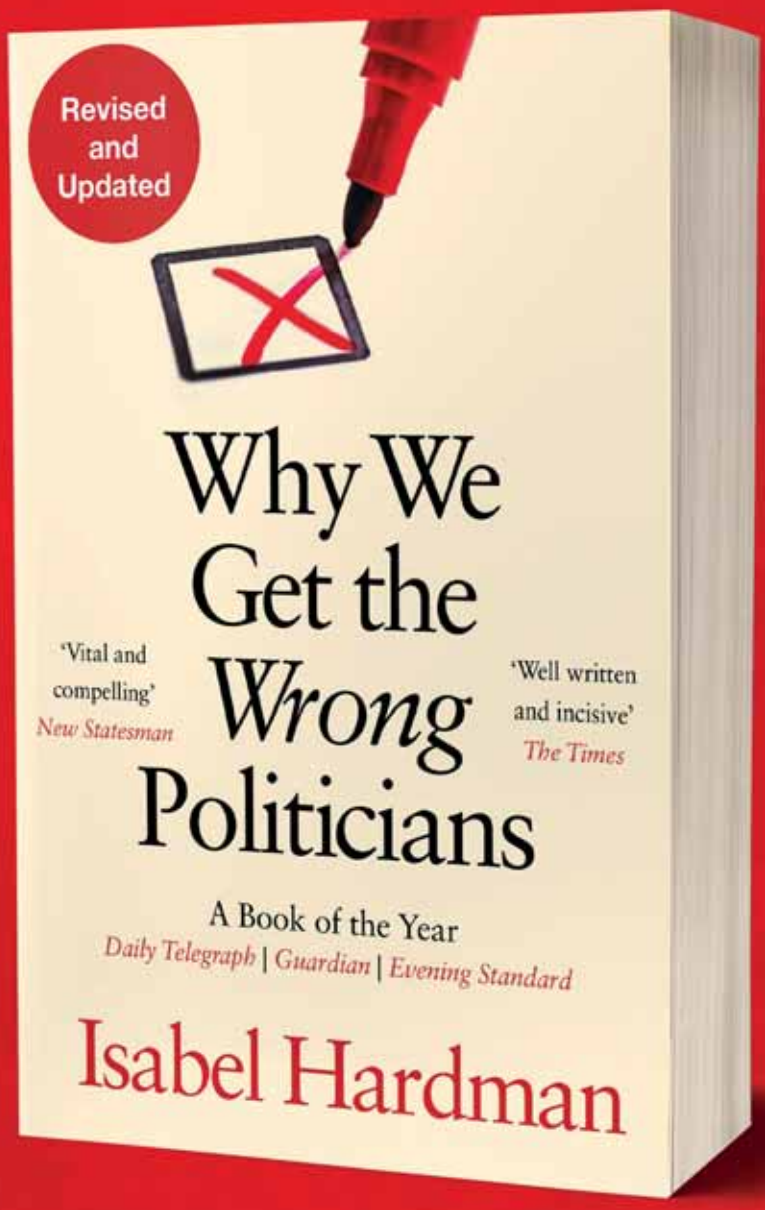
In another life, what job might you have chosen?
I'd be a TV commissioner on tech comedy shows. I'm trying to do that now, but TV is such a complicated space.

Are we all doomed?
We don't have to be. There's a lot more we can do to make sure we're not, and a lot more people we should listen to. ●

"She's in Ctrl: How Women Can Take Back Tech" by Anne-Marie Imafidon is published by Bantam Press

KRISTIAN HAMMERSTAD

CAN WE LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES?



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