

**BLOOD**

'I can think of  
no-one I would  
rather read on  
this subject.'

Ian McEwan

**CLASSES**

**AND  
EMPIRE**

*The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship*

**CHRISTOPHER  
HITCHENS**

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS is a widely published polemicist and frequent radio and TV commentator. He is a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair* and visiting professor of liberal studies at the New School in New York.

‘Intelligent, perceptive, occasionally perverse and often extremely funny.’ Philip Ziegler,  
*Daily Telegraph*

‘A mordant, episodic, brilliantly lucid history of transatlantic negotiations of power and cultural influence... Combines an irresistible journalistic raciness with the distinction of scholarship... Hitchens brings a Chomskian rigour to the “deep grammar” of the special relationship... Wonderfully readable.’ *Independent on Sunday*

‘Hitchens is a clever, funny and an excellent writer, all of which qualities are apparent in the book.’ *Spectator*

PRAISE FOR  
*Blood, Class and Empire*

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“A definitive account of the American ruling classes’ infatuation with British naval history . . .”

—*The Guardian*

“[*Blood, Class and Empire*] is a mordant, episodic, brilliantly lucid history of transatlantic negotiations of power and cultural influence. Interrogating the assumptions behind Harold Macmillan’s pious belief that Britain’s twentieth-century role is to play civilizing Greece to America’s Rome, Hitchens shows how the British insinuated the ideology of Empire into America’s “expansionist” foreign policy . . . [It] combines an irresistible journalistic raciness with the distinction of scholarship. From his analysis of Caspar Weinberger’s cack-handed interpretation of the Suez crisis to his account of the ambiguously-worded “modus vivendi” agreement which sited American nuclear missiles on British soil, Hitchens brings a Chomskian rigour to the “deep grammar” of the special relationship . . . [*Blood, Class and Empire*], combative and opinionated though it may be, is wonderfully readable.”

—*The Independent on Sunday*

“Hitchens is a clever, funny and an excellent writer, all of which qualities are apparent in the book. I would strongly recommend it, among other things, for his entertaining descriptions of how insecure new arrivals at the pinnacles of American society politicians like Ronald Reagan or millionaires like Walter Annenberg exploit and are exploited by the British establishment, not excluding the royal family, in the yearning for a kind of prestige which England still seems uniquely equipped to provide.”

—*The Spectator*

“In this intelligent, perceptive, occasionally perverse and often extremely funny book, Christopher Hitchens, with loving distaste, disembowels the Anglo-American relationship and exhibits the entrails for our delectation. . . This is a genuinely important book, and not the less so because it is so entertaining.”

—Philip Ziegler, *Daily Telegraph*

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# **BLOOD, CLASS AND EMPIRE**

*The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship*

**CHRISTOPHER  
HITCHENS**



Atlantic Books  
London

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*For Carol Blue*

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# *Acknowledgments*

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I used to wonder why there was no attempt at a general discussion, in book form, of the related phenomena of Anglophilia, Anglophobia, Anglo-Americanism, and Anglo-Saxondom. I now wonder less. The subject is so vast and extensive that any attempt at synthesis will disappoint somebody. The following pages are neither a narrative history, nor a cultural survey, nor a full-dress political analysis. But they are offered as incisions, made at selected crucial points, into the hide of this intriguing animal. Some parts of the anatomy will, I hope, have become clearer to view.

I have more people to thank than it is decent or possible to mention. Andrew Wylie, my literary agent, and Steve Wasserman and David Rieff, my editors, were present at the very first conversation which led to this book, and had the grace to keep up their interest until the very end. Authors who moan with praise for their editors always seem to reek slightly of the Stockholm syndrome, but authors who do not thank their friends are being remiss. Without these friendships, and the steady duties which came with them, I would have written an infinitely poorer book.

Leonard and Rhoda Dreyfus offered a true refuge for writer and editor in the closing stages, lending us the flawless English and colonial (and revolutionary) ambience of their beloved Virginia which rescued me from the Carnaby Shoppe, the Piccadilly Pub, and the Royal Burgers of the neighboring mock-Tudor "English Inn." I hope that some of the happiness of this outcome is reflected in what follows.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHCOCK  
*Charlottesville, Virginia*  
*October 1968*

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# Preface

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To open a paper at the overseas news pages during the year of grace 2003 was to be confronted by a fairly predictable menu of crisis, if not an exactly measurable standard of crisis management. An American foreign-policy “expert,” whether headquartered in Langley, Virginia or Foggy Bottom, Washington, or at one of the nations proliferating think-tanks and institutes, could be expected to have something to say about many or all of the following:

- Along the so-called “green line” that has divided Israelis from Palestinians in an informal manner for many years, a physical wall was being constructed, partly for “security” reasons and partly for annexationist ones.
- The frontiers of Iraq were becoming heavily porous, with the postinvasion nation-state open to unlicensed entry from Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey.
- The expansion of NATO and the European Union was being jeopardized by a petrified intransigence on the part of the Turkish occupiers of Cyprus. Realpolitik appeared to demand an accommodation with Turkey, while law and precept and the resolutions of the United Nations all told against the grabbing and settling of Cypriot soil by Turkish forces.
- In Northern Ireland, repeated attempts to square the circle of Republican and Unionist attrition were foundering on embedded reefs of distrust, as the demography of the Six Counties moved slowly towards a Catholic demographic majority and as Sinn Fein emerged as the largest Republican party.
- Along the borders of India and Pakistan, and the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and within the disputed state of Kashmir, a toxic combination of Hindu-Muslim rivalry, “holy war” infiltration, and thermonuclear weapons offered the most appalling likelihood of what is no less appallingly euphemized as a nuclear “exchange.”
- In Zimbabwe, the prosperity so urgently needed for a respite in the woes of Southern Africa was being squandered by the kleptocratic autocracy of Robert Mugabe.

On most days, the news was fairly sporadic as between Tamils and Sinhala in Sri Lanka, or between the United Kingdom and Argentina on the Falklands/Malvinas question. But the plain fact remains that the main duty of an American foreign-service officer was to master the legacy of partition and postcolonialism that has been bequeathed to the United States by the United Kingdom. Every one of the frontiers cited above, from the Durand Line in Afghanistan to the Iraq-Kuwait demarcation made by Sir Percy Cox in 1921, was drawn by British diplomats. Sometimes the spirit of their activity could be summarized in the title of Sir Penderel Moon’s celebrated memoir of the scuttle from India: “Divide and Quit.” America has inherited, not to say assumed and annexed, responsibilities from other European powers as well: It is the superpower arbiter in formerly Dutch Indonesia as well as the formerly Belgian Congo (as it had been, also, so memorably and calamitously, in French Indochina). But it is the relationship with Britain above all that conditions its present posture, and furnishes the ethnopolitical boundaries that it patrols. Even in the case of former Yugoslavia, which was not previously part of the British imperial dominion, American policy in the 1990s was to a near-fatal extent determined by a historic British friendship with Serbia, and by the partitionist tradition—one could almost say fanaticism—of the British Foreign Office, as exemplified

by Lords Carrington and Owen.

I completed this book just as the long Cold War was drawing to a close, and I am grateful now that its main intention was retrospective. I had not imagined—in my chapter on Kipling, say—that within a decade or so there would again be British soldiers, let alone American ones, on the North West Frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Nor would I have thought that an Anglo-American expedition to occupy Mesopotamia was a very strong probability. If it comes to that, I had not expected that the ominous place-name Sarajevo would become vivid and actual for an entire new generation. Yet I have since spent, or had to spend, a good bit of time in these locations, as the unraveling of a pseudo-stable superpower standoff has released or encouraged primeval forces, and perforce reconstituted one of the most durable alliances of the twentieth century in an improvised attempt at confronting a new set of antagonists.

The best I can claim for this work is that anybody reading it for the first time might still be able to trace the filiating threads that make that same alliance so intelligible historically. It was no great shock to me, either, to witness British and American forces acting in concert in Kurdistan in 1991, in Bosnia and in Kosovo later in the decade, and in Basra in 2003. They both had a self-conscious sense of a tradition: one that could be readily resumed both rhetorically and politically. Of the chapters of this book, I could most easily update the one on the cult of Winston Churchill. American official speech after September 11, 2001 was more rife than ever with Churchillian tropes, whether uttered by Rudolph Giuliani or Donald Rumsfeld, and once again a British ambassador to Washington was able to donate a bust of “The Last Lion” to a war-minded administration. (During later hostilities in Iraq however, no further use was made of Churchill’s famous recommendation that truth in wartime must be protected by “a bodyguard of lies.” One wonders why this remark was not deployed on the one occasion where it might have done some good.)

Most Americans and a large but probably diminishing number of British people tend to take it for granted that an Anglo-American partnership is in the natural order of things, and another conceivable merit of this book is to have argued that such an assumption is historically unsound.

There have been notable fluctuations in the level of amity and mutuality that supposedly binds London to Washington and, surprisingly to some, these fluctuations are more apt to occur under Conservative government than a Labour one. I vividly remember standing on an American diplomat’s private lawn in Aspen, Colorado in early August of 1990, watching Margaret Thatcher and George Bush respond to the news that Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait. (The period of post-Berlin Wall “peace dividend,” now so hard to remember but then so eagerly anticipated, had thus lasted for perhaps nine whole months.) President Bush gave off an impression, which I have never been able to dispel in my mind, that the news had not come as a complete surprise to him. He spoke with complacency and understatement. When it came time for Mrs. Thatcher to seize the microphone however, the entire tone of things underwent a dramatic change. She spoke of aggression and invoked defiance. I always believed the story that has since been confirmed officially—that she instructed Bush in private that “this is no time to go wobbly.” Be that as it may, on the following day the President himself was reaching for Churchillian language and saying that the Iraqi occupation “would not stand.” (This in itself is consistent, by the way, with the suspicion that a partial Iraqi intervention in Kuwait would not have been a *casus belli*, whereas the full-scale annexation that soon disclosed itself was more than had been foreseen. The then American ambassador to Baghdad, Ms. April Glaspie, had on the occasion of her last meeting with Saddam informed him that the United States took no view of the border dispute between Iraq and Kuwait: a border drawn by the abovementioned Sir Percy Cox some seven decades previously. She had even gone so far as to tell him that Americans were prepared to be understanding about this, having had their own problems “with British colonialism.”)

At the time of the Aspen summit, it was an open secret in Washington that the Bush administration now looked to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's freshly reunited Germany as America's best friend-to-be in Europe. As Sir Robin Renwick, a distinguished British envoy to Washington, phrases it in his book *Fighting with Allies*:

Margaret Thatcher breathed a sigh of relief when George Bush defeated the Democratic contender in the 1988 presidential election. But with the new team's arrival in the White House she found herself dealing with an administration that saw Germany as its leading European partner, that proclaimed its support for European integration, and also disagreed with her about nuclear defense. "I felt I could not always rely as before on American cooperation."

Bereft of her once-mighty admirer Ronald Reagan and almost pathologically hostile to Herr Kohl, Prime Minister Thatcher saw an advantage at once. Did Germany have any traditional friends among the emirs and sheikhs of the Gulf? Any useful bases and intelligence connections? Any experience of fighting in the region? No. But Britain did, and could make itself highly serviceable to any American effort. The first "coalition of the willing" was forged that very day, though of course—and given the fact that Saddam had abolished the very existence of a UN member state—it was very much easier for this coalition to secure the assent of the Security Council and General Assembly.

Mrs. Thatcher did not remain Prime Minister for long enough to hail the eventual triumph of allied arms in Kuwait, having been deposed by her own party while attending a summit in Paris and having been replaced by John Major. And President Bush's victory in the Gulf was not enough to insulate him against the Clintonian challenge in the summer and fall of 1992. The accession of Clinton was, in some superficial ways, the advent of the most Anglophile administration imaginable. The new President and a whole clutch of his inner circle—Strobe Talbot, Robert Reich, Ira Magaziner, George Stephanopoulos—had been Rhodes Scholars at Oxford. Yet, by a most odd and ironic chance, Bill Clinton had himself previously been a student at Georgetown of Professor Carroll Quigley, author of *The Anglo-American Establishment*. This book, which was not able to find a publisher in the good professor's lifetime, is an exposé of a secret plan, formulated by Cecil Rhodes and his successors, for a covert Anglo-Saxon "New World Order." It is still to be found by way of certain conspiracy-minded book clubs, and contains some absorbing information about the role played by the empire-minded Milner group or "Round Table," and by successor cliques such as the pro-appeasement Cliveden set. One cannot know the precise effect of this teaching upon the impressionable young Clinton—who did cite Quigley as a formative teacher during his presidential campaign—but one can be certain that for other reasons the "special relationship" went into a decline during the Clinton-Major years.

Those in the United States who wished to prevent the obliteration of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Great Serbia, this being the ostensible if vacillating policy of the Clinton administration, were met with consistent discouragement from the British Tories. In an especially cynical twist, the Major government denied the right of the Americans even to pronounce on the ongoing atrocity since there were no American "troops on the ground." (The British ones, it seemed for most of the time, were there only to protect themselves or to guarantee Serbian gains.) The Republican Party in the United States, for its part, held fast to the idea, so tellingly phrased by one of its spokesmen, that America had "no dog in this fight." This had also been the view of the Bush-Baker-Eagleburger administration.

In the result, the American military rescue of Sarajevo by a brief aerial bombardment was the outcome of another coalition, not so much of the "willing" as of the internationalist left-liberals and the neoconservatives. Barely recalled today but highly significant, this alliance was to be reconstituted for the war in Kosovo, which finally put an end not just to the "Greater Serbia" fantasy but to the regime of Slobodan Milosevic himself. My categories are not precise: Many left-liber

internationalists opposed the intervention and some neoconservative types (Henry Kissinger prominent among them) did so likewise. However, an agreement between elements of both such forces was for the first time thinkable. And by that point, Tony Blair had replaced John Major in Downing Street.

Comment on the Clinton-Blair relationship was at first confined to the production of an immense amount of lazy prose concerning the so-called “Third Way” between traditional social democracy and globalized transnational corporate capitalism. As might have been predicted, this relationship turned out to be self-managing. What was not so predictable was the emergence of what one of Tony Blair’s later nemeses was to term “ethical foreign policy.” While Robin Cook was still his loyal Foreign Secretary, in April 1999, Blair made a speech at the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations in which he declared that coexistence with acquisitive and aggressive dictatorships was both unwise and immoral as well as ultimately impossible. It was Blair who urged a faltering Clinton into a full-scale engagement in Kosovo, and who resolved to send British forces on a rescue mission to defend the government of Sierra Leone against a bloody tribalist aggression supported from neighboring Liberia. And all this while, half-hidden from view and memory, British and American aircraft were taking to the skies every morning and evening, and patrolling over northern and southern Iraq to enforce the “no-fly” zones. This ten-year joint enterprise for the protection of the Kurds and the Shi’ites, which had also involved French planes for the early part of its existence, was the unexpired portion of the first Gulf War and the unacknowledged portent of the war to come.

It is now a commonplace to say that the assault on American civil society of September 11, 2001 “changed everything.” It did not so much change as confirm the preexisting Anglo-American understanding; an understanding which had been somewhat indistinct since the advent of George Bush to the presidency. Bush was by nature a provincial isolationist and had campaigned as a foe of “nation-building” and other internationalist schemes. He was for lifting sanctions where possible and dubious of the role of American forces in the Balkans. No doubt most of Blair’s entourage would have preferred the election of Albert Gore. However, the engulfing flame of the twin towers in lower Manhattan, in which British citizens were the second-largest group of victims, was to rekindle (if the term may be allowed) a much more traditional version of the London-Washington axis. Many Americans were heard to say that they wished it had been Mr. Blair rather than Mr. Bush or even Mr. Giuliani who spoke for them that dreadful week: Moments of emotion and crisis even now seeming to require someone to whom the heritage of Shakespeare and Churchill was somehow in the genes.

Not only that, but there were British special forces, and British cruise-missile submarines, ready and willing to go to battle stations in and around Afghanistan. Indeed, and as in the case of former Yugoslavia if diametrically reversed, there were British advisors who counseled the immediate insertion of ground troops as against the American overreliance on high-altitude bombing. Moreover, there was residual British influence in both India and Pakistan, and expertise, too.

Neither was British influence in NATO or the European Union to be despised. The Tories, who had often spoken too glibly about a Britain that could “punch above its weight” (while using their own weight to prolong the reign of Slobodan Milosevic) could only envy this signal example of bravura statecraft. It sometimes seemed that, if Bush would not remove the Taliban from power, Blair was willing to try it on his own.

In his 1999 Chicago speech, Tony Blair had in fact mentioned Saddam Hussein as a once and future threat and as a man with whom a reckoning could not be indefinitely postponed. He can thus be acquitted on the vulgar charge that he only turned his own attention to Iraq when a faction of the Bush administration decided to carry the war into Saddam’s camp. He was also wont to stress the record of Ba’athist genocide and aggression, and not to confine himself to allegations about terrorism and the threat of weapons of mass destruction. However, the confrontation with Iraq was to become, for him

the obverse of the relative triumphs in Kosovo and Kabul. And we have it on his own authority, and that of many of his advisors, that he felt that America should not go into Iraq alone. Or, to put another way, that British support would almost by definition cancel the charge of American “unilateralism.” He seems also to have felt that British endorsement would permit “leverage” on other issues of concern, such as the Palestine question and the precarious state of Africa.

The United Nations is, of course, a product of a “coalition of the willing”—to be exact, of an Anglo-American coalition. Its name comes from Franklin Roosevelt out of conversations with Winston Churchill (who borrowed the actual two words from a poem by Lord Byron) and its very existence predicated on the idea that war is a first resort and diplomacy a second resort. (To qualify for membership, nation-states had to have declared war on the Axis powers by a certain date in 1945; those who declined were excluded for many years.) One might also mention some other considerations, such as the strong suggestion that member states should sign away some of their sovereignty by subscribing to Eleanor Roosevelt’s “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” (The USSR and Saudi Arabia were the main countries to refuse this invitation when it was first preferred.) However that may be, by the spring of 2003 the majority of the UN membership believed themselves to be in a postcolonial and multilateral universe, and were well practiced when pressed in invoking the highest ideals of law and procedure rather than pick a fight with one of their most delinquent states.

The Blair government attempted to split this difference, arguing both for an American-sponsored resolution that threatened the Saddam regime with penalties for noncompliance, and for a second resolution specifying the penalties. Underestimating the politicized intransigence of the Clinton government in particular, this policy had the effect of making London seem abjectly subordinate to Washington, while simultaneously obliging the United States to mount an enormous propaganda effort for which it felt no enthusiasm. Colin Powell and George Tenet, envoys of the two American ministries that were most viscerally hostile to the “regime-change” policy in Iraq, were put to the trouble of mounting an unconvincing presentation about Ba’athist weaponry and Ba’athist support for terrorism. The neoconservatives in Washington were privately furious with Blair, and much of the British press publicly so. The first faction knew that he was by no means their “poodle,” while the second could not let go of this facile and memorable coinage.

It was once said (by the Reverend Ian Paisley as a matter of fact) that “bridge builders” are doomed because bridges—like traitors— “go over to the other side.” Blair as bridge builder is anticipated—not predicted—in this book: It was obvious that someday the United Kingdom would have a Prime Minister who saw, or rather felt, no contradiction between the Atlantic and the European dimensions. In retrospect, the bizarre reflection is that such a politician took so long to emerge. How can one describe Churchill as a man of global vision when he refused even to participate in the early building blocks of the then “Common Market”? How can a man like Sir Anthony Eden have risen to be Prime Minister and then decided to fight Eisenhower, Dulles, Krushchev, Nasser and the United Nations all at the same time? How could Harold Macmillan have put himself in the position of a wretched supplicant for membership of Europe who could be loftily vetoed by General de Gaulle? How could Harold Wilson have botched both Britain’s application to Europe and been Lyndon Johnsons boot-licker in Vietnam? One’s sense, as a reasonable English person, of having been ruled largely by provincial morons does not diminish in retrospect when it comes to the scrutiny of Edward Heath (too fixated on Brussels to bother with Washington) or James Callaghan (too insular and chauvinistic to take Europeans seriously, yet a credulous ditto to the doctrines of Henry Kissinger) or Margaret Thatcher. The latter, at least, displayed some scope and grandeur when it came to the resolutions of Irish and Rhodesian questions at Hillsborough and Lancaster House, and was prescient about Mikhail Gorbachev, but soon collapsed into a phobic relationship with Europe and a clientelistic one with Ronald Reagan.

Blair's very formation as a person, as distinct from a politician, was highly congruent with the educated majority of his generation, to whom a sojourn in Manhattan or San Francisco, and an ease and familiarity with American style, was noncontradictory as regards a trip on the Eurostar for a lunch in Paris, or a vacation in Tuscany or Catalonia. It is a vast condemnation of the British political class to have failed to produce, until almost the end of the twentieth century, a notable leader of whom this could be said. It is an even more considerable condemnation, when one reflects that most actual potential leaders of the major British parties still do not quite match this unexceptional standard.

In one way, Blair's historic role in persuasively eliciting and confirming American interventionism is a vindication of my chapter on "Greece to their Rome." Knowing that the United States under Bush was likely to settle Saddam Hussein's hash in any case, the Prime Minister decided to try and civilize, or at any rate temper, the inevitable. In undertaking this, he clearly overestimated his ability to carry other European governments with him, and also his capacity—strongly manifest in Bosnia and Kosovo—to persuade his party and his voters that a matter of Gladstonian principle was at stake. I dwell this long on the Iraq war because, whatever its implications may turn out to be, it has obviously remade American and European politics in a manner not seen since the era of Vietnam. Once again there are celebrations or denigrations of the "Anglo-Saxon" or "Anglo-American" global axis. While almost fifteen years after this book was first published, and almost a decade of "New Labour" governance, British life is still dominated by a stalemate between European institutions and American connections.

Eclipsing this, in a new but unplanned synthesis, is the unprecedented alliance between British social democrats and American conservatives in a worldwide conflict with delinquent states and the non-state nihilist proxies. It's easy enough to point out that this alliance is both ad hoc and inconsistent—Pakistani generals and Saudi princes do not feel the weight of it in the same way as Iraqi generals and Afghan fundamentalists have done, and there is a narrow but deep division between London and Washington when it comes to the long misery of the Palestinians. Nonetheless, and on the credit side of those like myself who are in general support of the war aims of the Coalition, it can be argued that the British and American governments were quicker to realise that the world really had altered with the revival of jihadism, while other equally conservative European and Asian regimes tried to act as if only a few uneasy adjustments were necessary. The most unreformedly and unapologetic colonial regime in Europe—the France of Jacques Chirac—was salient in trying to make a separate peace with every outlaw from Saddam Hussein to Robert Mugabe. Powers that at least attempted a new world order are not necessarily to be judged in the same way as those who seek to profit from chaos and cynicism.

This moment happened to coincide with a revisionist episode among Anglo-American historians and intellectuals. Sometime between the confrontations with Afghanistan and Iraq, Niall Ferguson's history of the British Empire began to enjoy a considerable vogue among American scholars, who were not displeased at an accounting of imperialism which presented it in the light—a more Scottish than English light, as few detected—of a civilizing and modernizing process. Professor Ferguson's work was more than nostalgic: It seemed to explain why it was that so many former colonies were now beseeching their former masters for aid and succor. It was in this period of opportunity, also, that an American publisher was found ready to publish—or rather to republish—David Gilmour's magnificent biography of Lord Curzon, the most grandiose and most Orientalist of the viceroys of India. Lord Curzon had doubtless, if only because of his celebrated conceit, had an unfairly bad press heretofore. One still stirred with unease at the idea that direct rule of entire subcontinents was being discovered to have retrospective merit. I return the inquisitive reader to the same set of postcolonial calamities with which I began. The dull term "exit strategy" barely serves to cover such a retreat.

At the same moment, an enormous audience was found for Professor Bernard Lewis's panoptic

explanation of disorder within the Islamic world, and his book *What Went Wrong?*, which was serialized in the *New Yorker*, went through several fast-selling editions and was cited in almost every learned discourse. Taking as his starting point the same date proposed by Osama bin Laden—the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate and the arrival of British imperial soldiers in the streets of Jerusalem and Constantinople in 1917/18—Lewis showed that there was a pervasive and ultimate reactionary yearning for a return of the lost world of Muslim dominion.

This point was valuable on its own. (Few Western “anti-imperialists” paused to notice, in the denunciations of Bush and Blair, that bin Laden was calling for the restoration of an empire far more authoritarian and theocratic than the British one: an empire, moreover, that had foundered in an alliance with the Kaiser’s Germany and that had proclaimed *a jihad* that utterly failed, as all jihads do.) I turned Professor Lewis’s pages with some impatience, all the same, as I waited for his pronouncements on the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration. After all, that secret Anglo-French carve-up of Syria and Palestine and Iraq, and that more open British official promise to allow both a Jewish “national home” in Palestine *and* self-determination for its “non-Jewish” population, were also quite contemporary with the other earthshaking events in the Levant of that period. Bernard Lewis, I was rather disappointed to discover, dealt with these two developments by omitting them entirely from his account. In his story, Arab nostalgia and resentment was chief, atavistic and had no genuine historic grievance with which to sustain itself. How odd, then, that so many of the founding Arab nationalist leaders and intellectuals were Christians, who had no desire to see the restoration of Ottoman rule....

In the same time-frame, Max Boot (a man with a name almost perfectly crafted for his metaphorical purpose) produced a volume titled *Savage Wars of Peace*. This title is a line from Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden” (discussed at some length on pages 64-68 of this book) and Max Boot, a writer for the *Wall Street Journal* and a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, took an unapologetic view of the wars of colonial counterinsurgency from the Philippines onward. In time, he argued, the Western way of war would prevail and the sort of resolve that the British had lost would replenish itself anew. (I couldn’t help but notice that the Muslim Moro Islanders in the Philippines, whose massacre was protested so strongly by Mark Twain during his disagreement with Kipling and Churchill, had again emerged as a population willing to shelter the surrogates of al-Qaeda.) Similar arguments were made, drawing on more classical Greek precedents, by the military scholar Victor Davis Hanson and by Philip Bobbitt, nephew to Lyndon Baines Johnson and onetime member of the Clintons National Security Council. Most especially in Mr. Boot’s work, the intention was to rescue the word “empire,” when attached to American policy, from any kind of pejorative connotation.

As I was completing this introduction, I was invited by the hawkish *Washington Times* to contribute an article about the Hollywood version of Patrick O’Brian’s twenty-volume seafaring masterpiece, produced on celluloid under the title *Master and Commander*. Surely, said the commissioning editor, I would admit that the pluck and grit of Captain Jack Aubrey were somewhere in my makeup, and that now was the time for the Nelson touch to be brought to bear to vanquish the foe. I replied that I had been born in Portsmouth, brought up on naval bases, schooled to the “Hornblower” tales, and had thus been unaware until relatively late in life that Horatio Nelson had supported the slave trade and had hanged the leaders of the Neapolitan Republic after they had surrendered under a flag of truce and safe conduct. Stephen Maturin, the cosmopolitan freethinker who was at Aubrey’s elbow, was more my type, but wasn’t going to be played by Russell Crowe....

Another notable historian actually underwent second thoughts in the opposite direction at about the same time. Professor Paul Kennedy of Harvard had attracted enormous attention a decade or so previously, with his work, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. This was an essentially simplistic and projectionist text, which argued for a general historic principle of “imperial over-stretch

Whether Roman or British, all great centers of power would sooner or later discover that their legions and commitments were too far-flung and too costly. No throne or dominion was exempt from the cycle, and the American one was fast becoming too-much extended in debt and strain. I gave the book as bad a review as I could when it came out, for its sheer banal determinism, but never expected Canossa on the scale that Professor Kennedy later offered to his critics. He had occupied some of his intervening time studying the evolution of the modern American “carrier group,” any one of which is a gigantic carrier bearing an airforce the size of Italy’s and a cruise-missile arsenal capable of making war on a superpower; each carrier shadowed by a flotilla of smaller but more agile ships, and escorted by nuclear submarines the size of dreadnoughts beneath the waves, and highly sophisticated airplanes (invisible in the skies above) was the equal of any fleet ever to take to the seas. And the United States had more than a dozen such “carrier groups,” and was outfitting more of them.

Astonishingly, this titanic investment represented barely a statistical point in the national budget and might indeed have a more than Keynesian effect in providing both highly paid employment and technological spin-off. This was not naval and military and aerial “superiority” as earlier powers had conceived it. It was absolute global military mastery, outdoing all potential rivals combined and doubled, on a scale that no other power in history had even been able to conceive.

There was also a political or perhaps near-ideological point that did not disclose itself immediately in the *Tendenzwende* (as Germans historians call a shift of scholarly opinion) of so many experts. The United States Department of Defense had partly invested in such technological and cybernetic superiority in order to obviate the need to leave punctured American bodies on the battlefield. It could pound and destroy almost all potential enemies from mobile positions that were invulnerably over the horizon. General Wesley Clark’s celebrated dispute with his political masters during the Kosovo war had largely to do with his conviction that ground action rather than high-altitude bombardment would be more efficient as well as more humane: a conviction that violated the late-iggos dogma that war should be casualty-free, at least on the American side. The immolation of thousands of American and other civilians in their places of work on September 11, 2001 has clearly altered the national attitude towards body bags, though it remains to be seen by quite how much it has done so. The situation in postvictory Afghanistan, for example, would obviously have been more decided if American forces had been willing to deploy farther “in country.” This point was made with particular force by many British officers, whose experience of close-order and low-intensity fighting is one asset in which they are not surpassed by their senior partner.

It was in reaction to British and French perfidy in such instances as the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which clearly revealed the First World War to be an imperialist war, that President Woodrow Wilson was compelled to announce his “Fourteen Points” concerning national self-determination. It was actually the Bolshevik Revolution that caused the publication of these “secret treaties” and which dispelled forever the aura of lofty and disinterested diplomacy. The Wilsonian moment, and its successor moments in the campaign for the League of Nations, the Atlantic Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has long attracted the scorn of those—beginning with Rudyard Kipling (see pages 78-80)—who see a pharisaic veil being draped over the ugly figure of superpower ambition. Not just the element of hypocrisy, but also the element of hubris, is obviously present in these deliberations. Great powers are not altruists, to begin with. And even Professor Kennedy might wonder if he had overstated his revised case, at a time when even official circles in Washington are wondering aloud if the forces of the American empire are not being stretched too tightly and too thin in lands where they have more military than cultural influence. Has it not also become obvious that thermonuclear weapons, once a central pillar of the “special relationship,” are more than ever obsolete as well as hateful, while the “war on drugs” is merely another name for the colonialism that once waged Opium Wars? Now more than ever is a time to be selective and discriminating about resources.



as well as methods.

I closed the original version of this book, at a time when I hoped the long Cold War might also be closing, with the pious thought of “a world without conquerors.” I was aware even then that this was a slightly sanctimonious ending. Anglo-Americanism has some attainments to its credit. The English language has become a lingua franca, in India and Africa and elsewhere, not because of its association with empire, but because of its flexibility and capacity for assimilation (and because of the extraordinary literature, more and more of it written by Asians and other former “subjects,” with which it is associated). It is the tongue both of the Internet and of air-traffic control. One of Nelson Mandela’s first actions as President of a liberated South Africa was to reattach his martyred country to the British Commonwealth. English is also the language of the English Revolution and of its descendant, the American Revolution of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson and of the documents in which the doctrine of human rights has become, at least on paper, universalized. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the atrophy or discredit of the Chinese and Cuban ones, the ideas of the revolution are the only valid ones remaining. In other words, one aspires to conquests made by ideas and values, not nations. The fight to make these ideas and values symmetrical with the demands of combat, in a clash not of civilizations but about civilization, will be the great task of those who hope to learn anything from history.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHCOCK

*Washington, D.C.*

*October 21, 2003 (Trafalgar Day)*

# **BLOOD, CLASS AND EMPIRE**

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## Introduction

In the United States, it is considered extremely insulting to say of somebody that he or she “has been history.” To be told “You’re history” is to be condemned as a has-been. I know of no other country that has this everyday dismissal in its idiom. But then, I know of no other country that has such a great weakness for things that originate in England—the has-been country par excellence. (A British person seeking to be extremely self-deprecating about something in his or her own past, might say modestly and dismissively, “But that’s all ancient history.” I trust the distinction is plain.)

In fact, no nation can quite do without a stock of historical and mythical and semi-literary references, and the United States is anything but an exception. It has a powerful need for evocations of *grandeur*, which makes it the more noticeable that, when reaching for such necessary evocations, it so often ignores its own past and letters. On a surprising number of occasions, the preferred imagery is derived from England, and from the British Empire. Often, those who deal in this rhetoric are public figures who dare not risk an obscure or a confusing allusion, and who presumably have reason to think (not only because their advisers tell them so) that these points of reference are familiar and customary. Even as I was writing this book, on these themes, my attention was caught by a bizarre little exchange in front of the House Foreign Affairs Committee in Washington. On December 9, 1986, I was following the first public appearance made by Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, who was in the process of igniting a huge national debate about secret government, overseas intervention, American will, and—descending abruptly to bathos—his own decision to plead the Fifth Amendment. Two California congressmen, Robert Dornan and Mervyn Dymally, had a verbal exchange as North was completing his bombastic and contradictory testimony. His own voice almost as gravid with emotion as North’s had been, Congressman Dornan hailed the errant soldier:

Then I have just one observation. Almost a century ago, Rudyard Kipling wrote a rather tragic poem about the ingratitude of all peoples toward their military forces in time of peacetime, and I will just paraphrase the first of six lines: “He is Ollie this and he is Ollie that. Get him out of here, the brute. But he is the savior of his country when the guns begin to shoot.” Thank you for your service, Colonel North.

MR. DYMALLY: Will the gentleman yield?

MR. DORNAN: I will be glad to yield.

MR. DYMALLY: There is another line: “To thine own self be true, and it must follow the night, the day thou canst be false to any man.”

The fascinating thing about both these impromptu West Coast interjections (Representative Dornan, a farouche Orange County right-winger, may have polished his a little beforehand) was not the mangling of the quotations but the relative accuracy with which they were rendered. True, ~Kipling’s “Tommy”—though no tragedy—is one of his better-known doggerels, and not even Allan Bloom would claim that Polonius is no longer taught in schools. But it seemed automatic for these two legislators to reach for these tags when debating about matters of empire, war, and destiny. This is

supreme, if oblique, compliment to the depth at which the so-called special relationship between the two countries and cultures operates and obtains.

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Although it is expressed in idealistic terms and based upon a carefully cleansed reading of “history” this relationship is really at bottom a transmission belt by which British conservative ideas have infected America, the better to be retransmitted to England. The process of transmission has been made easier, admittedly, by those Americans who are themselves receptive to the temptations of thinking with the blood, or the temptations of empire, or the temptations of class and caste superiority. But it was always in the British mind to press these ideas upon them. If you want to know what, and how, people really think, then catch them talking in private during wartime. Here is what British Security Coordination, the special organ of Winston Churchill and Sir William Stephenson (“The Man Called Intrepid”), wrote in its secret history of the campaign to mold American thinking between 1939 and 1945:

In planning its campaign, it was necessary for BSC to remember the simple truth that the United States, a sovereign entity of comparatively recent birth, is inhabited by people of many conflicting races, interests and creeds. These people, though fully conscious of their wealth and power in the aggregate, are still unsure of themselves individually, still basically on the defensive and still striving, as yet unavailingly but very defiantly, after national unity and indeed after some logical grounds for considering themselves a nation in the racial sense.

British self-confidence about American vulnerability on these scores was based on a careful appreciation of “history” and upon the old and trusted verities of blood—the very tie they had been exploiting since Kipling. With the advantage of ethnic solidarity and homogeneity, and with a strong instinct for social hierarchy and “the right people,” the British Establishment was enabled to fight far beyond its own weight, and to behave for some time as if it controlled a much larger country than it really did.

But, having inculcated imperial habits and disciplines into their larger, clumsier cousin, the British had in time to accept that they, too, could be manipulated. The self-congratulatory tone of BSC in the 1940s is matched if not surpassed by another secret memorandum, this one from the 1960s. It is Richard Neustadt’s report to President Lyndon Johnson, written in July 1964, about the possibility of taming and domesticating an incoming British Labor government. Neustadt had been talking to the right people in London, and knew his Harold Wilson. He proposed some intensive ego-stroking on the forthcoming Washington visit that Wilson was to pay:

Numbers of things can be done on the cheap to avoid shocking his sensibilities. For one, the President might ask for his advice on a short list of replacements for David Bruce. For another, Averell Harriman might figure prominently among his hosts. . . . It will be worth our while to ease the path for Wilson, pay him a good price.

It is amusing and ironic to see an American plan to use the embrace of American aristocracy—the Bruce-Harriman Georgetown network—to captivate an untutored British politician. But such is the nature of the special relationship. Nor was this all. Emulating the British tactic with American Neustadt proposed to his President that use be made of domestic British sympathizers. As he boasted

What follows has been drawn from conversations with *politicians* (mainly Wilson, Gordon Walker, Healey, Brown, Mulley, Jenkins—and Heath), with *officials* (mainly Hardman, Cary, Palliser, Armstrong, Bligh) and with *spectators* (mainly Gwynne-Jones, Buchan, Beedham,

Duchene). Before I left, I swapped appraisals at our Embassy with Bruce, Irving and Newman.

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Neustadt here demonstrated a very shrewd knowledge of the inside track that runs between the Foreign Office, *The Economist*, the stately home think-tank at Ditchley Park, and Grosvenor Square. Since the central matter was the securing of continued British conformity with American nuclear policy, it was essential for Neustadt to be exact. In fact, he was well equipped by these conversations to be prescient. Noting that Wilson wanted to be viewed in his own Cabinet as “first brains-truster of the model, he says, of JFK,” he minuted:

When officials get their hands on the new Ministers, Foreign Office briefs presumably will urge affirmative response to us (assuming we stand firm) and then hard bargaining about terms and conditions. Assuming Gordon Walker is the Foreign Secretary (he almost certainly will be) I expect he will submit with little struggle. . . . Assuming Denis Healey is Defense Secretary (he seems confident he will be), his own interest in a mission East of Suez (and in sales of British aircraft), his mistrust of continentals, his disdain for MLF, comport well with the bulk of these official views.

Seeking to massage British pride over the loss of sovereignty in nuclear matters, Neustadt first stressed the main point, which was that there could be talk of Atlantic consultation on strategy and policy “up to the final decision on the trigger, which is yours and must remain so.” Having thus reassured LBJ, he suggested some easy reassurance to the Brits: “some symbols both for public satisfaction and for Gordon Walker’s *amour propre* (to say nothing of Wilson’s). Symbolically, there are British colonels now at Omaha, could we have them ostentatiously replaced by generals?”

At one level, this is ordinary Washington “bottom line” talk. At another, though, it is the distilled essence of a “special relationship” that has been built up in an ad hoc fashion to suit the needs—sometimes contrasting, sometimes harmonious—of two elites. The hypocrisies of this marriage of convenience have often been occluded, at least partially, by an apparent cultural and linguistic familiarity. (Even Neustadt employed Kipling’s famous phrase “East of Suez” as if it were natural to him.) This is evident whether one is considering—as I shall be—the relationship in its thermonuclear, its racial, its imperial, its espionage, or its poetic aspects. The rituals of Anglo-Americanism and Anglo-Saxondom, so often unexamined, reveal the subtext of this mutual manipulation, and suggest that the English connection has been used to seduce and corrupt America, the better to suborn itself. This is “history,” and not all that ancient either.

On a smoggy evening in the spring of 1989, I found myself standing under the palms of Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles, outside the ornate ugliness of the Beverly Hilton Hotel. This was one of many incongruous locations where I had pondered the question: What is it that explains the special place occupied by Englishness in the American imagination? That evening, Ronald Reagan was due to receive the Winston Churchill Award at the hands of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and the consort to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The master of ceremonies was to be Bob Hope, assisted by Rosemary Clooney. In this labyrinth of clashing images, I hoped to find a few intelligible threads.

The Beverly Hilton is owned by Merv Griffin, and its ballroom was for years the setting of the Academy Awards dinner. At first, the evening looks like any other tuxedoed rally of California show biz, with the paparazzi shouting questions at celebrities from behind a police line. But tonight, when these celebrities reply automatically that they are “excited,” they are replying to a different question. Here comes Marvin Davis, head of 20th Century-Fox and, if not a big noise in the oil industry, certainly a very loud report. When he tells the boys he’s “wild about it,” it’s because they have asked

him: “How does it feel to be dining with Royalty?” Of course, by “Royalty” the celebrity-hardened Los Angeles reporters *could* mean Princess Caroline of Monaco, or some princeling of the Gulf who tankers bear the American flag, or King Juan Carlos of Spain. But there is an unspoken capital which comes with British Royalty; the cachet of the real thing. Combine this with the evergreen and potent name of Churchill, and you have blue-chip Anglo-Americanism on its highest department.

There is a deal of received wisdom about this blue-chip status, which derives itself from solemn and sound observations about the common blood, common language, shared history, and recognizable similar institutions that span the Atlantic and the years. This, preeminently, is to be an evening of reaffirmed speechifying along such well-established lines. The Churchill Foundation, a coalition of American businessmen which is hosting this weighty soiree, is only one part of a nexus of scholarships, trusts, foundations, and institutions devoted to the care and feeding of what the British—but no longer the Americans—are still given to calling the “special relationship.” An educated American knows, when prompted, that his country’s “oldest ally” is France. Many Americans, if given a word-association test for “special relationship,” would probably reply “Israel.” Yet there is something to the texture of mixed affections and impressions, summarized in the frequent use of the phrase “the Old Country,” or even, in sentimental moments, “the Mother Country,” that reserves the British a singular place.

For one of the many mutations of this Anglo-Americanism, one need search no further than the Beverly Hilton’s bar. On a ground floor, only a few yards from the neon and deco of Wilshire Boulevard, and wisely screened from all natural light, one discovers the Red Lion. Here, the simulacrum of an English country pub or “snug” has been lovingly faked. In the bogus grate burns phony, heatless log fire. Beer pumps draw up franchised, tasteless American lagers with German names. Unconvincing paneling combines with rounded and “aged” wooden tables and chairs to share the dingy atmosphere of a “Dickensian” alehouse as shown off to willing American tourists. (Eight time-zone hours ahead, in London, any pub with a trace of Sam Weller or Mr. Pickwick is being hurriedly converted into an L.A.-style cocktail bar.)

There are pubs like this, often in airport terminals for some reason, that demonstrate the strength of British traditional imagery all over America. The word “tradition” is in fact the key to an appreciation of Brit kitsch. Evelyn Waugh, on an earlier exploration of the special relationship and its Los Angeles dimension, did very well with the Church of St. Peter-Without-the-Walls, created by the visionary Dr. Kenworthy to lend tone to his Whispering Glades burial plaza:

For this is more than a replica, it is a reconstruction. A building-again of what those old craftsmen sought to do with their rude implements of by-gone ages. Time has worked its mischief on the beautiful original. Here you see it as the first builders dreamed of it long ago.

Later dreamers have improved on Dr. Kenworthy, by importing the *Queen Mary* and London Bridge to American climes.

Quitting the Red Lion for the ballroom is exchanging a poor microcosm of Anglo-American fellowship for the full-dress reproduction of all its most distinctive features. The ceremonial part of the dinner begins with Walter Annenberg, former Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s and formerly indicted newspaper tycoon, giving the toast to the House of Windsor. With unusual unctuousness and deference, he insists on giving it the full title of “The Loyal Toast”; a mark of etiquette which would make him appear ostentatious even among English royalists. In reply, Prince Philip proposes the health of the President of the United States.

Then come the national anthems, played by a smart Marine band. “God Save the Queen” commends itself, as usual, for its brevity and is, after all, the selfsame tune as the American standby “My Country

Tis of Thee.” “The Star-Spangled Banner” takes longer. Written in 1814 after its author, Francis Scott Key, had watched the British bombard Fort McHenry in Baltimore on their way to burn Washington, has a third verse which is increasingly omitted from official printings. Referring to the British, declares: “Their blood has wash’d out their foul footsteps’ pollution.” It goes on to say:

*No refuge could save the hireling and slave  
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave.*

As a slight salve to British honor in the squalid matter of 1814, the music to the national anthem was composed by an Englishman named John Stafford Smith, who lived between 1750 and 1836. We have, alas, lost his original words, though the song was called “To Anacreon in Heaven” and was meant as a ditty for a young men’s drinking club, in a tavern as unlike the Beverly Hilton’s Red Lion as it is possible to imagine.

Since Ronald Wilson Reagan is no longer President, we are spared a rendition of “Hail to the Chief,” the words of which were taken from a ballad by Sir Walter Scott in *The Lady of the Lake*, and set to music by the Englishman James Sanderson. But we do get the Marine Hymn, one of the few official American ditties to which English people seem to know the words. Expressing as it does the first American ambition to be as far-flung as the coast of Libya and the heart of Mexico, it answers to some chord in the British breast; perhaps confirming that the errant former colony could still recognize the right colonial and martial stuff when it saw it.

The ex-Chief, Ronald Reagan, is only the fourth person to be honored by the Churchill Foundation. Previous recipients have been W. Averell Harriman (a mandarin among foreign service mandarins and a special confidant of the Atlanticist class as well as a relation by marriage of the Churchill family), H. Ross Perot, and Margaret Thatcher. Perot, who is usually described by nervous subeditors as “the eccentric Texas billionaire,” has run a foreign policy all his own on the gross revenues of innumerable corporations, and could by a stretch be said to have that odd word “swashbuckling” in common with Sir Winston.

Prince Philip, the social centerpiece of the night’s events, is in fact following in his son’s footsteps as a bridge builder of the “special relationship.” Prince Charles was the one who put the Churchill medallion around the neck of H. Ross Perot in 1986, and he also can claim to have bestowed the royal warrant upon Mr. and Mrs. Walter Annenberg. In their protracted struggle to acquire the patina of “class” for their operations and for their many charities and promotions, they have found the patronage of the Prince of Wales to be essential and continuous. When she was Ronald Reagan’s chief of protocol, Mrs. Annenberg once so far forgot herself as to curtsy publicly to Charles when greeting him at Andrews Air Force Base; an impromptu gesture of fealty that did minor damage to the stipulations of the American Constitution and which led to some growling from those who still remember the United States as a republic.

In Los Angeles at any rate, visiting British crowned heads get, as it were, two bites at the cherry. They can appear in the vestments of former British glory and pageantry, much as they do elsewhere, and represent the astonishing historic continuity of the United Kingdom. But they also constitute a uniquely appetizing morsel for those who live by the codes of stardom and who hunger for a star with “class” and magic. I found this out for myself by making an appearance on *Sonia Live*, the upper-bicoastal chat show hosted by Sonia Friedman and transmitted on the Cable News Network with the Hollywood logo in the background. In front of a primetime audience of daytime viewers, I was asked to comment on the Charles and Diana marriage, and the rumors of its impending breakup. When I said that I thought the whole thing was a press bonanza, and that the obsession with monarchy was beginning to bore even the British, the tempestuous Sonia was appalled. “*Mister Hitchens*,” she

intoned in reproof, “how can you sit there with that lovely English accent and say such a thing? The wedding was a fairy tale for all of us here.” It was as if I had offended a specifically Californian household god. Which in a way, I had. In 1988 it was announced that Princess Diana had been, by a large margin, the woman most often featured on the covers of American magazines in the course of that year. One could scarcely enter a supermarket without seeing her photograph on the rack, or barely utter a sentence in an English accent without inviting friendly inquiries about her. Across a swath of the imagination of America, it seemed, England was understood principally as the home of the Windsors; a sort of theme park for royal activities and romances. Without the monarchy, ran the unstated question, what would be the *point* of the old country?

This attitude, to which the British embassy defers as a matter of course, was amply catered for in November 1985, when Prince Charles and his bride paid an official visit to Washington. The much hyped joint appearance was timed to coincide with an immense exhibition, “Treasure Houses of Britain,” at the National Gallery of Art. Taken together, the Prince and Princess and the country-house extravaganza could have been designed to reinforce the impression of Britain as a museum run by people of certain faint breeding, a museum, moreover, uniquely accessible to monied Americans. I can still recall the half-embarrassed frenzy which seized the nation’s capital in the days before the momentous opening; the pseudo-debutante flurry of “coveted invitations,” protocol crises, and etiquette hysteria.

Republican values were the loser in this carnival. The British Tourist Authority inserted a special supplement, consisting of *one hundred and sixteen* pages, into *The Washington Post*, in which the first paragraph misidentified John Adams as the third President of the United States. This did nothing to quell the general enthusiasm. The “Style” section of the *Post* forgot itself completely at the reception for the country-house owners, writing: “With guests like the Duke of Bedford and Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, the wave of Anglophilia continued to wash over the town. After all, laughed Chinese ambassador Han Xu, ‘they were here before.’ ‘I think Washington has always been Anglophile—since Churchill,’ said Clare Boothe Luce. ‘I think we’re all Anglophiles,’ noted Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin. ‘How can we fail to be Anglophiles? Unless we hate ourselves.’ ” (In 1961, Mr. Boorstin published a celebrated book called *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*.)

John Adams (the *second* President of the United States) wrote to Thomas Jefferson in July 1813: “I read in Greek a couplet, the sense of which was ‘Nobility in men is worth as much as it is in horses, asses or rams; but the meanest blooded puppy in the world, if he gets a little money, is as good a man as the best of them.’ ”

In reply Jefferson, the third President of the United States, wrote: “The passage you quote . . . has an ethical rather than a political object. I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. . . . There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents.”

This correspondence might as well never have been written for all that Georgetown could have cared during that week. Gushed the *Post* in still another special spread: “Susan Mary Alsop, Senator James Rockefeller, Katharine Graham, Evangeline Bruce, philanthropist Ethel Garrett and Washington doyenne Polly Fritchey— there may not be titles before these names, but they are Washington’s social nobility, the kind of people who don’t pay a couple of pounds to visit the Treasure Houses; they stand there as guests. It will be old money, old power, old china and lots of familiar faces.” The echo of “social mobility” in the tautology “social nobility” is very, very distant.

But note, again, the latent connection between British “style” and American “class.” The existing Georgetown aristocracy, already heavily inflected with Anglophilia, so to speak recertifies itself as aristocratic by its ease of access, not to an exhibition about stately homes but to the homes themselves. Thus, between the cult of vulgar celebrity and the cult of wellborn good taste, the English have the rather maddening ability to score twice. They can produce genuine dukes and real lineages



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