



CHARLES MARCH

ART GLEANN BADRAIG

The Hebridean island of Jura, where George Orwell withdrew to write *1984*, is one of the least populated parts of Europe. Along 50 miles of coast, there are only four buildings. One of them has been visited, on and off, for 20 years by Charles March, also known as the Duke of Richmond, who worked as Stanley Kubrick's apprentice on *Barry Lyndon* (1975) and as a photographer in London and abroad in the Eighties before founding the Goodwood Festival of Speed in 1993. In a new book called *Gleann Badraig*, his photographs of Jura's wildness are interspersed with a sequence of short, evocative poems by Ken Cockburn: "as ice melted the land rose/ raising gradually out of the sea these pebbly beaches..." *Distanz*, £50

BOOKS REVIEWS

Why is 'populism' a dirty word?

Asa Bennett on two books that try to make sense of the rise of populism and predict how the West will be in 2100

Many politicians and pundits talk about "populism" as if it were some bizarre alien belief system, and they tend not to mean well when they talk of its practitioners as "populists". Yet "populism" is defined by the dictionary as a focus on "the concerns of ordinary people". Shouldn't that be what any politician aspires to master?

Their failure to do so has led to a deluge of political upsets – most famously the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump. Even though experts are not in vogue, we should be grateful that some are still stepping forward to explain what has been driving voter behaviour, and to draw some lessons for the political class.

In *National Populism* (Pelican, £9.99) Matthew Goodwin, one of the few academics to be vindicated by the political trends of the past few years, has teamed up with Roger Eatwell, historian of the far Right, to knock down the "flawed assumptions, bias and an

overwhelming obsession with the short-term" in which people usually indulge when they try to portray "these populist revolts" as nothing more than a boorish spasm from uneducated voters, who will soon learn the error of their decisions. Eatwell and Goodwin, with a forensic grasp of the detail, show how such commentators have succumbed to "stereotypes that correspond with their outlook" rather than evidence-based conclusions.

Sir Vince Cable notoriously said in March that Brexit was a vote by people who longed for a world "where faces were white". Yet Eatwell and Goodwin point out that it was supported by one in three black and ethnic minority voters. A similar proportion of Hispanic voters (29 per cent) voted for Donald Trump as President, despite his rhetoric against Mexicans. How can that be? Nigel Farage once said that "Voting Ukip is a state of mind... It is not a protest [vote] – it is a positive affirmation that we need different people in politics." The authors come to a similar conclusion.

Clearly, voters' discontent has been inflamed by how poorly they feel served by their established political representatives. When Ipsos MORI asked voters recently if they felt "traditional parties and politicians don't care about people like" me, swathes of respondents across Europe agreed (ranging from a low of 44 per cent in Sweden to 61 per cent in Poland and 67 in France).

Populism also crosses the party divide. As much as Jeremy Corbyn and his followers like to revile populist firebrands, such as Trump and Farage, the authors point out that Corbyn and fellow Left-wingers, such as Bernie Sanders, indulge in the same rhetoric. The Labour leader boasts in Trumpan tones of how he'll fight the "rigged system" and will not "play by the rules". Farage, for his part, tears into "big business" with the passion of a Corbynista. The Scottish National Party's last election manifesto was titled, in "America First" manner, "Stronger for Scotland". Italy's Five Star Movement freely backs policies beloved by the Left, such as a universal basic income, while being hardline on immigration.

Some think that the momentum behind such upsets will literally die away as older voters are replaced by younger ones. But as Eatwell and Goodwin point out, around 41 per cent of white millennials voted for Trump. Their academic analysis will be a reality check to any clinging to the hope that populism, in general, is a passing political squall.

Eric Kaufmann's *Whiteshift* (Allen Lane, £25) covers some of the same terrain – noting, for instance, that liberal voters are more likely to become conservative with age – but he breaks out on his own paths of intellectual inquiry. His starting

point is the idea that we are living through a century of "whiteshift". He predicts that, by 2100, minorities and those of mixed race will form the majority in many countries that are currently white-majority. He asks how society can best handle this demographic change.

His conclusions are provocative, and guaranteed to bring many dinner party conversations to a grinding halt. For example, he argues that white people should not be vilified for fearing that immigration could reduce their ethnic group's share of the population. So their desire for a slower rate of immigration should be heard in an "atmosphere of toleration", with their interests considered equally legitimate to those of other racial groups. Shouting them down, effectively "forcing whites to pay cultural reparations for historic misdeeds", is a recipe, he warns, for stigmatisation, not harmony.

His big idea is to replace multiculturalism, the system now associated with mass migration and ghettoisation, with what he calls "multivocalism". This, he explains, means that people from differing origins would find many contrasting meanings in the same national identity. When Robin Cook and John Major tried to evoke Britishness by the ideas, respectively, of chicken tikka masala and cricket grounds, both were right, says Kaufmann.

He holds up Labour as an example of multivocalism in action, allowing contrasting groups such as liberal feminists and socially conservative Muslims to show their commitment to the party with their own sub-networks. But that seems a naive paragon to have picked, given the problems Labour has had: "Labour Friends of Bangladesh" caused outrage by having politicians address a gender-segregated room, for instance.

Another problem is Kaufmann's writing, which is clouded in dense academic jargon like "left-dernism". Perhaps his clunkiest turn of phrase – and thought – comes when he urges politicians not to forget to "nod to white majority ethno-traditions" when talking to conservatives about immigration. Liberal voters, by contrast, can still be sold on the merits of diversity. But in the age of social media, these politicians would surely be caught out over their inconsistent messages – and the voters craving authenticity would be left even more disillusioned.

Kaufmann's advice may be disappointing, but that doesn't invalidate his insights, which are troubling. He recalls in horror one senior official at an international institution in Geneva waxing lyrical about Lebanon, a country ravaged by civil war, being a "model for diversity". If that's how they feel, no wonder populism is going from strength to strength.

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Lament for the Clearances

Diana Gabaldon admires a riveting study of the forces that separated thousands of Scots from their land

THE SCOTTISH CLEARANCES
by Tom Devine
496pp, Allen Lane,
£25, ebook £12.99
★★★★★

If Sir Tom Devine hadn't chosen to be a historian, he'd have made a great historical novelist. That choice may have been a loss to literature, but *The Scottish Clearances: A History of the Dispossessed*, is worth it. The scope of this book – the Lowlands, the Highlands and the diaspora from the 17th century to the 20th – is impressive, and the detail and depth of knowledge displayed are remarkable – but what's truly amazing about it is how damn readable it is.

To someone with a passing familiarity with Scottish history, the word "Clearances" conjures up

two things: transported Jacobites and sheep. Emotionally moving images showing families cast adrift, in motion toward an unknown place, are common.

Less common is a close look at what moved them. In reality, the forces and influences that separated thousands of Scots from the land that gave them both sustenance and identity were varied and complex. In many instances, departures were voluntary and economically motivated, rather than being at the direct instigation of a hostile government or hard-hearted landlords who thought their lands better sheeped than peopled.

Devine explains the slow decay of the clan system as a matter of agrarian development and industrial revolution (aided by the occasional famine and religious persecution) as much as of government oppression, and shepherds us through the gradual parting of the poorest citizens from the land that was their only sustenance, and from the mythic soil in which their emotions were rooted. And this is the real strength of the book. His scholarship is ironclad, but the hard evidence of tables, figures and a 29-page bibliography is balanced by the

letters, poems, songs and bits of the stories that let the people of the past speak for themselves.

In part, this is a demonstration of Devine's novelistic skills. He changes focus often, drawing the reader back to appreciate the overview of encroaching forces such as enclosure or social climbing by landholders, then zooming in to see the close-up effects of those forces on individuals, allowing us both to understand and to empathise.

He has a deft hand with detail, too. One is always spoilt for choice

when it comes to the details of Scottish history, but Devine has an eye for the human moment that encapsulates and illustrates a situation or a point. The book has a brief section of literal illustrations – photographs, paintings and drawings – but Devine also draws his detail from ballads, paintings and novels, as with this brief quotation from *Annals of the Parish*, an 1821 novel by John Galt. Here we see the Rev Micah Balwhidder, appointed to a parish by a local patron, approach his new church for the first time:



CAST ADRIFT A satirical cartoon of the Crofter Act of 1886

When we got to the kirk door, it was found to be nailed up, so as by no possibility to be opened. The sergeant of the soldiers wanted to break it, but I was afraid that the heritors [landowners] would grudge and complain of the expense of a new door, and I supplicated him to let it be as it was. We were, therefore, obligated to go in by a window, and the crowd followed us making the most unreverent manner, making the Lord's house like an inn on a fair day with all their grievous jellyhooping.

The book's readability depends in good part on a deft separation of the very scholarly substance: "Table 4 number of cattle driven across the Border to England, 1665-91 [...] Table 17 Summonses of Removal in kelp parishes" versus the poetry and politics, such as "Lamentation of the People of Galloway by the Pairking Lairds" by James Charters of the Kirkland of Dalry, which reads in part:

A generation like to this
Did never man behold,
I mean over great and mighty men
Who covetous are of gold.
Solomon could not well approve
The practice of their lives

To oppress and to keep down
the poor,
Their actions cut like knives.

Speaking as an outside observer, this seems to me a uniquely Scottish point of view: the matter-of-fact mingling of the pragmatic and the poetic, treating neither one as more important than the other. The book is filled with fascinating insight into the decay of the clan system and the migration of people, backed up with plenty of data to support its conclusions – but it also explores the mythos of hereditary attachment to both clan and land. The reality was often spurious, but firmly anchored in belief. And is a bond any less strong for being one of emotion rather than of genetics?

One of the most moving themes is the gradual breaking of those emotional bonds – but only to a point. The people left, but they took their sense of a land-based identity with them, and it was the portability of such things as songs and poems that enabled the Scottish emigrants not only to keep their culture, but to reseed it in new soil.

Diana Gabaldon is the author of the *Outlander* series of novels



TALKING BIGLY
President Donald Trump at a rally last week