EthnoScripts

Tom Selwyn

Brexit, Grenfell, Windrush, and the mooring, un-mooring, and re-mooring of home

Abstract

The article argues that three events presently shaping the consciousness of British people - the 2016 Brexit referendum and its continuing fallout, the fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017, and the 'Windrush Scandal' of 2018 - derive from closely related sources deep in the foundations of British political culture, one (of many) source being contempt by the British ruling class for the working class and migrants (especially Muslims). The three events raise key issues about the nature of home and post-home in an age of high migration including forced migration. The cries "Go Home" uttered on both sides of the Atlantic reveal a deep lack of understanding about what home means. Using the terms mooring, un-mooring, and re-mooring, we ask other questions. Where and what is home? Where and what is home for migrants and refugees? Who has what roles in enabling the housing of those who have been expelled from home (by fire, war, or politico-economic processes)? How much of the hostility in the UK towards migrants and towards Europe derives from feelings of being dispossessed? How much from nostalgia for lost empire? Has hostility driven out hospitality? To what extent has the extreme political right been responsible for the fracturing both of British society and home itself? How might we resist?

Brexit, Grenfell, Windrush, and the mooring, un-mooring, and re-mooring of home

Tom Selwyn

Preface

This article argues that three events that have dominated the UK over several years – the 2016 Brexit referendum and its subsequent fallout, the fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 and the 'Windrush Scandal' of 2018 (several decades in the making and continuing as this article is being written) – derive, in part, from closely related sources deep in the foundations of British political culture.[1]

When looking for a frame to explore the connections between the three events, we find many factors at work. Some of these are linked to geopolitical movements at a global level. Others are regional and/or local. There are political, economic and socio-cultural strands too. We may look for one particular cultural strand with which to start the article. Ryszard Kapuściński (2018) argues that the relationship between 'us and them', selves and others, are always and everywhere characterised by either contempt and hatred, on the one hand, or exchange of knowledge on the other. Kenan Malik (2019) develops Kapuściński's insight for the British setting thus: 'Officials eyeing you with contempt. Police treating you as scum. [...] Such is likely to be your experience if you are working class. Such is also likely to be your experience if you are of black or minority ethnic origin'.

The present article builds on these two observations to suggest that one feature of the discourse associated with Brexit, Grenfell and Windrush deployed by the British ruling class and its political bag carriers is, indeed, contempt for the working class and migrants. Nigel Farage's 'Breaking point' poster (see Figure 2) appeared at a key moment in the Brexit process while Boris Johnson's recurring slurs – such as his linking of the *burqa* with post-

---

1　The Brexit referendum or the 'United Kingdom European Union membership referendum' took place on 23 June 2016 in the UK and Gibraltar, asking whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union (EU citizens and the British Overseas Territories Citizens beyond the UK and Gibraltar were ineligible to vote). Grenfell Tower is a twenty-four-story tower block in West London that suffered a catastrophic fire in June 2017, which killed at least seventy-two of its inhabitants. The 'Windrush Scandal', *per se*, broke in 2018 and consisted of popular outrage about the deportation to the Caribbean of hundreds of people of Afro-Caribbean heritage who had lived much of their life in Britain. Deportation of so-called 'illegal immigrants' was being carried out well before the 'Windrush scandal' itself and is, shamefully, proceeding apace at the time of writing (2019).

boxes and bank robbers – pop up routinely. As for the British working class, the ideological principles of the five authors of the tragi-comic manifesto of an extreme rightist clique – the conservative politicians Kwasi Kwarteng, Priti Patel, Dominic Raab, Chris Skidmore and Elizabeth Truss – is clear. They begin chapter four of their book, *Britannia Unchained*, by claiming: 'Once they enter the workplace, the British are among the worst idlers in the world' (2012: 61). Their response to this is to imagine a Britain unregulated by social considerations, free to pursue a 'buccaneering' mode of being, 'getting on the side of the responsible, the hard working and the brave. We must stop', they add, 'bailing out the reckless, avoiding all risk, and rewarding laziness' (ibid.: 112).

The 'othering' of immigrants, refugees, and the working class is achieved partly by the distribution to the British people of powerful mythologies (to be defined and explored below). The article thus considers actions, ideas and values of those involved in producing and reproducing the politics of othering, one assumption being that such complex political notions as 'Will of the People', 'sovereignty' and 'democracy' (and the latest at the time of writing, 'liberty') are being spread around as myth themes rather than subjects of sober thought. It follows that, colloquially put, we can see the Britain of Brexit, Grenfell, and Windrush being led, Pied Piper-like, towards a political and cultural space in which the realities of austerity and de-regulation on the ground[2] have simultaneously been both orchestrated and shrouded from view by economic interests articulated by a political class making sizeable financial gains at the same time as wielding technologically-charged mythologies that have been lying dormant since the 1930s.

We are, to put it in a slightly different way, in Fintan O'Toole (2018) territory where pleasure and pain ('heroic failure' as he puts it) co-exist in a political field into which we have all been invited to experience an ecstasy of humiliation promising to achieve the reclamation of 'sovereignty' and 'independence' through obeisance to the 'Will of the People' at a time when the actual means of democratic renewal have all but been stripped bare (see below). The implications of all this for our understanding of the meanings of home, homecoming and home making in a post-home world underpin everything that follows.

Introduction

Issues of home and 'post-home' are integral to this article, the terms being at the centre of all three of our events. The Brexit process has raised pro-

---

2   A parliamentary report records that The Food Foundation estimates that 1.97 million people within the UK may be undernourished. The British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (BAPEN) places the number of malnourished, specifically undernourished, people at 3 million (House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee 2019).

found questions about the extent to which the British are at home in Europe (as many banners at recent pro-European demonstrations have proclaimed) and/or Europeans are (still) at home in Britain. The fire at Grenfell Tower destroyed all the homes of those living there and has raised many questions about how those made homeless have subsequently been looked after and enabled to find new homes. The 'Windrush scandal' started out as the so-called 'hostile environment' project activated by the then Home Secretary in 2012.[3] This programme sought to persuade people who came to the UK from the Caribbean in the 'Empire Windrush' to 'go home' if they lacked official papers dating from the time of their arrival.

The chapter is divided into four parts. Part 1 (Displacement) itself has four sections. The first and second of these sections consider the present state of the anthropology of home, discusses the notions of 'un-mooring, mooring and re-mooring' in defining home in an age of migration and refugees, and looks at the definition of 'hostile environment'. The third section reflects on the extent to which local democratic processes have been shattered by austerity while the fourth speculates about the senses in which citizens may feel 'intellectually displaced' in a post-imperial Britain. Part 2 (Architects of Brexit) looks at the individuals, groups, networks and ideas leading the Brexit project and describes the aims and objectives of its architects. High on the list of these aims are visions of a British political economy built upon the most extreme principles of individualism, social fragmentation and deregulation, linked closely to a rising anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric. Part 3 (Mythologies) briefly identifies a selection of 'mythologies' – in the Barthian sense[4] – attached to the three events. Part 4 (Resistance) sketches ways in which the politics and practices of resistance to all of the above are presently being fashioned and enacted. Reference to our three events will be made throughout.

Part 1: Displacement

Inspired by the arrival in London docks of HMT Empire Windrush in 1948 (see Figure 1), and the practical and theoretical connotations of displacement accompanying the ship, we build our analysis around the notions of mooring, un-mooring and re-mooring of homes. These nautical metaphors are all too appropriate in a world shaped by seascapes which are nowadays full of small, often unseaworthy, boats carrying refugees attempting to cross into Europe

---

3   Part of this project is the 'Immigration Act 2014' (see Home Office 2014).

4   The term 'mythologies' in this article follows the work of Roland Barthes (1991 [1957]) and his studies of French iconographic objects, actions and ideas – such as the Blue Guide, ornamental cookery, the Eiffel Tower, and so on. One essential aspect of his approach is to show how these 'mythologies' simultaneously highlight particular cultural 'ways of seeing' whilst obscuring crucial material features of the objects.

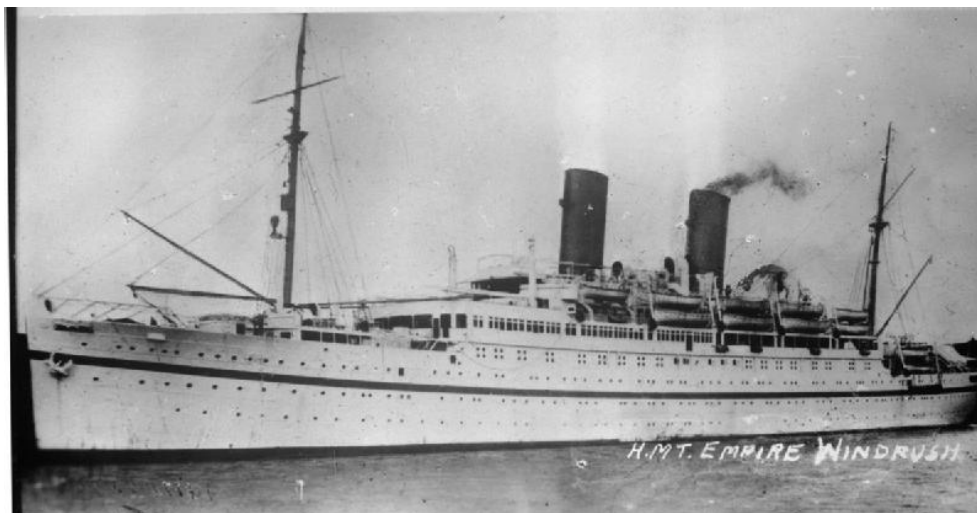from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean in search of good and settled lives in new homes.

Fig. 1. HMT Empire Windrush. © IWM (FL 9448).
https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205120767

The terms mooring, un-mooring, and re-mooring express well where we have reached in the field of anthropology of home. In a recent co-edited volume on home (Frost and Selwyn 2018), I have argued that contemporary anthropological work on the idea of home has been shaped by several discernible features (Selwyn 2018). Firstly, the field is increasingly being framed within a 'world systems' jigsaw in which, for example, 'the life of an asylum seeker in Sydney is inexorably linked to conflict and war in the Spice Islands of eastern Indonesia' (ibid.: 170). Secondly, ideas about home are inseparable from questions of identity and the formation of the self. Thirdly, anthropological work on homemaking has become closely related to analyses of the symbolism of material objects, including the human body. Fourthly, the anthropology of home combines studies of space, identity and the role of civil society and the state in a fragmented and fragmenting world.

Displacement I: home moored, un-moored and re-moored

Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing (2007) have correctly observed that, although home is a 'key term' in anthropology, not a great deal of theoretical use has been made of it over and above its application to the term house. For us, however, the notion of a moored house allows us to understand how a house becomes a home in large measure by being attached to ways of being and doing both within and beyond its doors. Homes are intimately related to places of work, sources of food, to medicine, worship, leisure, familiar and familial spaces, transport and so on, and are, in that sense, moored within larger social, economic, political and cultural circles of ideas, places and

practices. Equally clearly, homes become 'un-moored' by war and forced migration. Refugees, by definition, are searching for new moorings.

Ethnographic analysis of the re-mooring of homes to new and re-shaped systems and structures in contemporary Britain (or, indeed, anywhere else) challenges anthropological approaches in several ways, two of which may be emphasised here. To start with, the spatialities of mooring are complex. Making a home involves constructing, affirming and re-affirming relationships at social and geographical levels ranging from the domestic to the global as well as the many points in between – within urban or regional communities and networks, for example. Secondly, such construction involves making a large number of institutional relationships - from health professionals to diaspora groups, from religious sites to sites of leisure and enjoyment, and so on. Social processes involved in mooring and homemaking are thus also complex and multi-layered. The challenge lies in the analytical capacity to draw together the threads (social, cultural, political, economic) into a coherent and intelligible whole.

One reason why the anthropological usage of the idea of home has been uneven and theoretically marginal is that the term has been used in two different and seemingly contradictory ways (Frost and Selwyn 2018: 5). On the one hand, there is Mary Douglas's (1991) claim that home is to be understood in terms of the routinisation of time and space, and thus of 'patterns of regular doings, furnishings, and appurtenances' (ibid.: 289). On the other hand, Rapport and Overing (ibid.: 176) have argued that, in a globalised world shaped by migration, the term home must address the fact of people's multiple attachments to different places. The crochet-like patterns of senses of identity that accompany these attachments speak precisely of a lack of routinisation. In such a world, they argue, Douglas's approach is 'anachronistic, providing little conceptual purchase in a world of contemporary movement' (ibid.). Frost and I argue that the ideas of home and homemaking in a world of migrants necessarily require the insights of both Douglas and Rapport and Overing (see Frost and Selwyn 2018).

The notion of home à la Douglas connotes the space/house/dwelling place of individuals and the intimate collectivities of which they are a part: couples, families, friendship groups and so on (Palmer 2018). A classic ethnographic description and analysis of such a dwelling is Pierre Bourdieu's (1979 [1970]) exquisite 'The Kabyle House or the World Reversed', a work much admired by Douglas herself and incorporated in her own edited collection Rules and Meanings (1973). In his essay, Bourdieu (1979 [1970]) describes familial structures and processes in a Kabyle house: birth, death, marriage, the raising of children, food production, animal husbandry and so on: in short, the temporal and spatial rhythms of home.

Shifting our gaze from Bourdieu's 'house' towards our contemporary world of migration and movement from north Africa to Europe reveals a fea-

ture of the socio-cultural landscape that has precise relevance for the present article. Kabyle people have a long history of migration to France and elsewhere in Europe, migrating there in waves from 1913 onwards. At the time of writing this (July 2019) a number of web-based platforms of interest to the Kabyle diaspora can be found. For example, 'Algérie Mariage/Charmes d'Orient' is an enterprise based in Lyon, France, offering Kabyle style fashion items for weddings, while Walimation Production Company offers wedding music clips such as 'Alilou – Vive les Mariés'.[5] The site is linked to Facebook comments by members of the diaspora about Kabyle identity in Europe.

Web-based platforms like these and others are best interpreted as quintessentially homemaking agencies. As noted above, the sites tend to be linked to opportunities to comment on what it means to be a north African immigrant in France and are often linked up to support groups of various kinds providing services for incoming migrant families engaged in re-mooring homes in France, whilst also maintaining close links with homes in north Africa. They also remind us, yet again, that home making in our present world tends for many to be an enterprise that occurs on a variety of levels, from the intimate and domestic to the regional and global. In making the journeys from 'La Maison Kabyle' to and from 'Algérie Mariage/Charmes d'Orient' – effectively, from Douglas to Rapport/Overing and back again – what we see are processes of un-mooring and re-mooring of homes. Our task, as anthropologists of home, is to trace the complex forms these processes take.

Displacement II: the 'hostile environment' towards refugees, asylum seekers and 'illegal immigrants'

The title of the iconic image of the 2016 campaign to leave the EU was 'Breaking Point' (see Figure 2). This consisted of a photograph of a long line of young male Muslim refugees in the Balkans walking towards the camera (see Heather and Mason 2016). The image, greatly magnified, was placed on the side of a van which was wheeled out into public view on the day that the former Labour MP Jo Cox was murdered. Cox's views on the need to stay within the EU and to defend immigration were well known. Her murderer, a neo-Nazi, Thomas Mair, shouted 'Britain first' and 'keep Britain independent' as he shot and stabbed her (see Cobain, Parveen and Taylor 2016). Asked to state his name at the trial, he said that it is 'death to traitors, freedom for Britain' (see Booth et al. 2016). During the trial Mair was shown to have multiple links with far-right political groups. The 'Breaking Point' van was reproduced in the media together with a photograph of Farage, then Head of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), positioned in front of the

---

5   See Algérie Mariage/Charmes d'Orient at http://www.algerie-mariage.net/ item/charmes-dorient/ and Walimation Production's 'Alilou - Vive les Mariés' at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3dCJDdXUbs [both accessed 22nd June 2019].
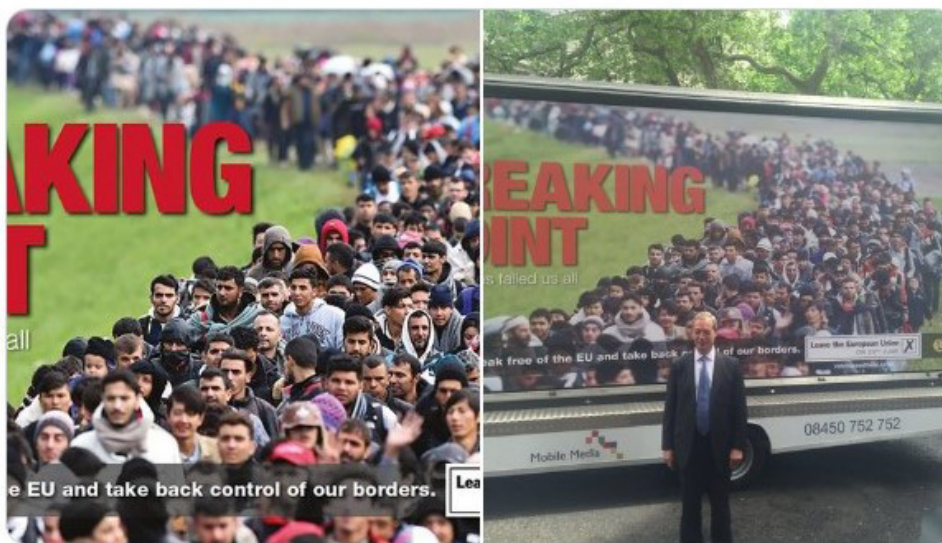
van, pointing towards the text written across the picture of the refugees. This read: 'The EU has failed us all. We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders. Leave the European Union on 23rd June'. Likewise, the UKIP 'Brexit battle bus' toured with a sign 'We want our country back' (see Figure 5).

Fig. 2. The 'Breaking Point' poster, as it appeared in one of Nigel Farage's messages on Twitter, June 2016. Photo: © @Nigel_Farage.

The explosive entry of refugees into the centre of the debate about Britain's relationship to the EU built upon rhetoric that been established some years earlier by the then Home Secretary, Theresa May. In 2012, May promoted what became known as the 'Hostile Environment' policy, which she and the British Home Office named 'Operation Vaken'.[6] This was a programme based

---

6   Simon Hattenstone (2018) drew attention to the fact that the programme was termed 'Vaken' and that this term derived from the slogan *Deutschland Erwache* ('Germany Awake'). This programme, which, according to Hattenstone, was the only British Home Office policy ever to have been given a title in a language other than English, was emblazoned on banners flown at the Nuremberg rallies held annually in Germany between 1923 and 1938 by the Nazi Party. Amongst the many films made to commemorate the rallies, one in particular seems relevant to the present article, namely Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935).

on the promise by the Conservative Party, enshrined in its manifesto, to 'get immigration down to the tens of thousands'. It was to be achieved partly by a programme of deportation of residents in the UK who were unable (often through no fault of theirs) to produce papers the Home Office decided legitimated their residence and/or citizenship in Britain. May referred to such people with the blanket term 'illegal immigrants' or, as she put it at the 2016 Conservative party conference 'citizens of nowhere'.[7] In the case of Vaken, a magnified image of handcuffs and three textual messages were spread out on the side of vans. 'In the UK illegally?' asked one message; '106 arrests last week' announced a second; 'Go home or face arrest' said a third. These inscriptions suggested that at the heart of May's enterprise was an attempt to shape the way we think about ideas of home and homemaking. The reproduction in the British press of the texts on the Vaken vans steered us not only towards determining who amongst us should be invited home and who kept out, but also towards going along with the implication that it was somehow 'normal' to be attached to a single home and a singular identity. Vaken targeted all who were assumed (before any due process) to be *sans papiers* but was arguably felt most strongly by people of Afro-Caribbean heritage living in Britain.

It is out of Vaken that the Windrush scandal grew. The troop-carrying ship HMT Empire Windrush[8] docked in London in 1948 with 1,029 passengers from Jamaica. Of these, nearly seven hundred came from the Caribbean with the intention of settling in the UK. These and others who arrived at the same time are referred to as the 'Windrush generation'. When, at the time of the scandal, it became widely known how this group of people, invited as they had been by the British government to contribute to the post-war rebuilding of the UK, had been so crassly and belligerently targeted since 2012, there were many voices raised in outrage. Despite these voices and the resignation of Amber Rudd, then Home Secretary, officially generated hostility is still in full swing. Home Office (Home Office, 2018) statistics record that in the year ending September 2018 10,190 immigrants were forcibly deported (slightly less than in the previous year) while 2049 were held in detention. Diane Taylor (2018) has written that conditions in detention centres are worse than in prison.

---

7   Theresa May's speech included the following: 'Today, too many people in positions of power behave as though they have more in common with international elites than with the people down the road, the people they employ, the people they pass on the street. But if you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere. You don't understand what citizenship means' (see Davis and Hollis 2018).

8   The original name of HMT Empire Windrush was MV Monte Rosa. This was a passenger ship launched in Germany in the 1930s and used by the Nazis in World War II to deport Jews from Norway to the concentration camps in Poland.

David Lammy has been one of the most vocal MPs on the plight of the Windrush generation, including the children of Windrush families. He has stressed the close relationship between Vaken and the appeasement by the Conservative party of its extreme right wing and its UKIP shadows (see Lammy 2018). During the Windrush debate, Lammy stressed the long relationship (since the first British ships arrived in the Caribbean in 1623), shaped by slavery and colonisation as it was, between Britain and the Caribbean (ibid.). He pointed out that 25,000 people with Caribbean origins had served in the first and second world wars. He ended his speech declaring:

> *This is a day of national shame, and it has come about because of a 'hostile environment'. Let us call it as it is: if you lay down with dogs, you get fleas, and that is what has happened with the far-right rhetoric in this country. (ibid.)*

Despite being an active and visible member of the Anglican church,[9] May has followed others in the use of the sort of far-right language that has found its way into the hearts of Windrush (and Brexit) related speech. She herself built on rhetorical declarations previously made by members of her own party about immigrants. David Cameron had referred to a 'swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean' trying to 'break into Britain without permission' (Elgot 2016), whilst Philip Hammond had spoken of 'marauding' African migrants (Perraudin 2015). May herself spoke of asylum seekers as 'foreign criminals' (Chakrabortty 2017). Indeed, aided by these and other such terms,[10] characteristic as they are of the rhetoric of UKIP, May has done much to encourage a spirit of intolerance amongst the general public towards refugees and migrants more generally. It comes as no surprise that the Oxford University Study of Migration (Allen, 2016) found that, in the decade before its publication, the most common word used in the British press in conjunction with migrant or immigrant was 'illegal'. The linguistic elision between migrant and illegal has underscored the routine holding of asylum seekers, without prior due process, in detention centres and/or in accommodation often unfit for human habitation run by private companies in receipt of public funds.[11]

---

9   A majority of those presenting as members of the Anglican Church voted to leave the EU (cf. Smith and Woodhead (2018).

10   When measured by criteria suggested by this article, the boundary between the Europhobic right wing of the Conservative Party and the extreme right (Farage and beyond) appears highly permeable.

11   Clearsprings Ready Homes is one example. This is a property group that is paid substantial sums of public money to provide accommodation for asylum seekers in London and the South-East. The quality and maintenance standards of the properties managed by the company are reported to be very poor (see Williams 2016).

May's 'hostile environment' vans, their frightening images and texts with their implied messages, were archetypical examples of the 'relentless targeting of hyper-partisan views' which the parliamentary committee of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport later defined as 'fake news' (DCMS 2018). 'Fake news' is fed by a particularly toxic fertiliser in which one set of 'facts' grows into others in seamless elaborations: hostility towards refugees into hostility towards the EU into hostility towards the 'Westminster élite', and so on. Such flowing inseparability is precisely what UKIP and its Brexiteer associates placed at the centre of their efforts to summon the Brexit votes. Nigel Oakes, one of the founders of Cambridge Analytica, in and out bedfellow of Farage and his followers (see Doward and Gibbs 2017), described his profiling work in a 1992 interview: 'We use the same techniques as Aristotle and Hitler. We appeal to people on an emotional level to get them to agree on a functional level' (Robinson 2018).

Displacement III: austerity, urban displacement and the theft of local democracy

The policies and rhetoric indicated above have targeted people who have been displaced from their homes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, parts of sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, and who have made their way to the UK to make their homes in Britain. We will return to this aspect of the theme of displacement in part two of this article. Before that, however, we may consider the theme of displacement from another point of view, namely that which relates to feelings of being displaced from one's own hometown and even the displacement of the town itself. In his conspectus of the effect on local municipal life and governance of 'austerity', Tom Crewe (2016) has described what he terms 'the strange death of municipal England'. We may follow Crewe's lead by referring to a variety of journalistic reports and ethnographic evidence as follows.

Recently made redundant from the closing of the Goodyear factory in Wolverhampton, one of the people interviewed by Jim O'Neil (2017) in the BBC's 'Fixing Globalisation' series explained the background of his city's vote to leave the EU with brutal simplicity:

> *All I have known, in 38 years of working in this country – all my working life – is short-time working, recessions, people losing their jobs, factory after factory closing. [...] This region has been stripped down and taken abroad [...] People voted Brexit as a protest vote. (ibid. emphasis mine)*

He went on to describe the food banks in the town, the homeless and 'people queuing up 60-deep outside Citizens Advice worrying about bailiffs', concluding: 'This is my town, and we've got to do something about it' (ibid.). His

words expressed feelings, not only of despair about what he perceived to be a socially fragmenting and directionless post-industrial economy, but also of deep sadness about the deterioration of social life in his hometown.

O'Neil's interlocutor spoke of the displacement both of himself and of his home town. His words fit with accounts of the ways that urban spaces, as centres for the gathering of familiars and generators of social solidarity all over Britain, have been closed off, shut down, and/or sold off. There are many examples. Tim Coates (2018) has written of the closure of public libraries and the laying off of library staff. The Sutton Trust (see Smith et al. 2018) has documented the systematic closure of Sure Start children's centres. This has left the UK's flagship early years programme 'hollowed out' and in decline (ibid. 5). Local municipalities throughout Britain have been selling off public land under their control in order to fund their services in the face of relentless reductions from central government. Brent Council, for example, has sold off public space it formally controlled, worth thirty million sterling over the past five years for this reason (see Shaw 2019). Most recently, in 2018 and 2019, Brent found itself in the High Court, fighting to confirm its power to acquire a fully operating centre for the Afro-Caribbean community, the Bridge Centre (see Taylor 2019). Brent's plan was, and remains at the time of writing, to shut down the centre, demolish the building, clear the land, and build apartments in order to sell these off in order to make up its budget from the depredations that the government's austerity programme has visited on it.

A report based on a collaborative, cross-country investigation led by reporters from the Huffington Post (see Davies et al. 2019) has reported on the extent to which the cities in the UK's North East have been stripped of funding and, consequently, forced to sell large amounts of public land and property, and cut services to the bone. The report has revealed that several councils in the North East have axed housing support services, including hostel beds, refuges and sheltered housing, as they struggle to meet the demands of fresh rounds of cuts.

In Sunderland, for example, the housing support budget for homeless people in the city is being cut to zero. The Salvation Army, which runs a local hostel, has said that the council faced hard decisions: 'They have closed libraries and children's centres and they are now having to look at cutting support to the most vulnerable people' (Butler and Laville 2017). Sunderland council has stated 'Because of budget cuts and the government's austerity programme, the council is reviewing and remodelling many services' (ibid.). Sunderland voted Leave by a substantial majority in the 2016 referendum and was the starting point of Farage's 'sort of march' (his words). The Council has signalled the imminent closure of Centrepoint, a homelessness charity for young people, following the withdrawal of all council funds. Four hostels for vulnerable young people will close in 2017. Furthermore, with £568,000

budget cut, the voluntary society 'Wearside Women in Need', which runs refuges and a helpline will close (Dawn 2017).

In Birmingham, voluntary organisations wrote to Theresa May in 2017, arguing that it was likely vulnerable people would die as a direct result of the proposed £10 million cuts over two years to services for homeless and mentally ill people.[12] A couple of months before this letter, Chiriac Inout, a homeless man, was found dead near a car park in Birmingham city centre in temperatures of minus 6C (see Cartledge 2016).

In Norfolk, charities have said £5m cuts to housing support services (equivalent to around 55% of the total funding for such services) proposed by Norfolk county council from April 2017 will drive up homelessness in Norwich, which is already reporting record numbers of people sleeping rough on the streets (Butler and Laville 2017). The Norwich city council leader, Alan Waters, described the combination of reductions to the council's budget, the rising rents and the welfare cuts as a 'perfect storm'. According to the Local Government Association, local authorities have a 40% real-terms reduction to their core government grant over the past 10 years and are facing more cuts every year (ibid.). Across the country, other local authorities are in the same position: facing huge budget cuts and deciding whether to continue to cut funding for services into non-existence. What's happening in Sunderland, Bristol, Norwich, Birmingham and elsewhere in the UK is about to happen in the rest of the country.

Crewe's 'death of municipal England' has involved the fracturing of public spaces and the fragmenting of public services. As O'Neil's (2017) interlocutor in Wolverhampton implied with forceful precision, these processes resulted, *inter alia*, in the current disillusion with politics, governance, and (crucially in our case here) the EU. Many would argue, however, that the EU is the wrong address. Austerity is the child of the Conservative government rather than the EU.

There are further aspects to this fracturing, one of which has to do with the 'de-democratisation' of local government by Tony Blair's first government. I will quote, more or less verbatim, from my colleague, Alan Templeton.[13] According to Templeton, in a drive for local efficiency, Blair's 'Local Government Act 2000' required local municipalities to change their traditional committee-based system of decision making into an executive model (see Home Office 2000). One form of this consisted of a council having a leader supported by a cabinet executive. Backbench councillors were granted

---

12   See the full letter sent by the Birmingham volunteer organisations to Theresa May here: https://birminghammind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/TheresaMayLetterFINALVERSIONJan17.pdf (accessed 20 July 2019).

13   I am indebted to Templeton, Chair of Camden Public Libraries User's Group (CPLUG) for this analysis. As noted, I quote him almost verbatim in the paragraphs that follow as well as using his words ('theft of local democracy') in the title of this sub-section.

a scrutiny role but in a way that lessened their power when compared to their situation in their former committee-based structures of governance. According to Templeton (see notes 12 and 13), this was a system copied from the one operating in the national parliament. However, unlike their national counterparts, councillor members of local scrutiny committees enjoy little or no support structures (research capacity, training, access to specialist advice, for example). At the local level, the scrutiny committees have part time councillors with no research and little independent specialist advice available. As a result, power has been taken away from the council as a whole and given to the cabinet without any effective oversight. Moreover, executive members of the cabinet are *also* part timers without independent research and advice. This clearly renders them less able to work with their council officer colleagues with any sense of equality. In short, much of the power wielded by councillors in the traditional form of local government has been transferred to unelected officers. As the price of making municipalities 'more efficient' in the sense of being more amenable to national edicts, local democracy has obviously been weakened.[14]

Displacement IV: nostalgic memorialisation – temporal and spatial displacement

Following research by Danny Dorling (2018) and Lorenza Antonucci *et al.* (2017), Gurminder Bhambra (2018) has drawn attention to the fact that it was the 'squeezed middle', that is to say 'propertied, pensioned, educated, white, southern English middle-class voters uncomfortable with their declining economic position', as she puts it, rather than poor and angry working-class voters (and still less BME voters who overwhelmingly voted 'Remain') who made the statistical running in voting 'Leave'. Noting that prominent slogans before and after the referendum have included 'we want our country back' and 'we are voting for our sovereignty', Bhambra (ibid.) argues that, amongst the 'squeezed middle', the main motivation for supporting Brexit was a displaced reaction to the implications for national identity caused by the loss, from 1948 onwards, of the British Empire.

Bhambra's (ibid.) argument has three interrelated strands. The first is that, as rulers of a multi-cultural empire, the British felt themselves to have global status. Secondly, although this sense of global status continued to be felt when the UK joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, it was a feeling that became tinged with resentment: now Britain was only one amongst 28 nations and thus *primus inter pares* rather than ruler of the

---

14   Templeton points out a fascinating twist to this narrative of the decline of local democracy, namely that the Cameron government's 'Localism Act 2011' made it possible for larger councils to revert to the traditional local authority method of operation provided a locality had a population greater than 85,000 (see also Home Office 2011).

roost. Thus, thirdly, when the multi-cultural inhabitants of the former empire began to 'come home', the sense of resentment grew. Islamophobia and racist dispositions towards Eastern Europeans and others grew. These found their way into anti-European Union rhetoric and the idea not only that the EU was responsible for 'illegal immigration' but that the UK had no power to stop this. This sense of powerlessness has been inflamed by the buffoonery of 'vassal state' utterances by Johnson, Jacob Rees-Mogg, Farage and other leading 'bastards' or 'bad boys'[15] that, as Lammy (2018) has rightly said, conjure sightings of a darkening horizon beneath which lurk the malignant shadows of Tommy Robinson and his fascist thugs. An example of this came to light in 2017, following the Grenfell fire. The largest single donor to the Vote Leave movement, Arron Banks, launched a photograph of Grenfell Tower on the LEAVE.EU Twitter account (see Figure 3). Across the picture was the text 'An amnesty for Grenfell illegal immigrants? Absolutely not! The law is the law'. Next to the group's logo was another one, of Banks's GoSkippy.com insurance company. The Daily Mirror re-published Banks's image in a double page spread excoriating its author and his associates. We return to the image in part III.

Fig. 3. LEAVE.EU message published on Twitter on 22 June 2017, days after the Grenfell fire. Photo: © @LeaveEuOfficial.

---

15   'Bastards' was the late Prime Minister John Major's term for Eurosceptic Conservative MPs, whereas 'bad boys' is Nigel Farage's term for the group of prominent members of the UKIPery, including himself and Banks.

When combined, these threads of British representations over the last decades and more, with their echoes and intimations of times past and future, offer us a complex pattern within which one dominant narrative can be discerned. This speaks of cultural introspection, progressive marginalisation of the idea of the social (including social responsibility) from the lexicon of the political right, and rising abuse and hostility to others. In present contexts the above paragraphs have begun to outline how this hostility has included, via Vaken, Windrush and, by way of local incompetence together with active dislike for public services in general and public housing in particular, Grenfell Tower itself.

So far, we have concentrated on the 'losers' of the displacement processes we have described: the refugees and 'illegal immigrants' displaced from their homes by war; those whose home towns and cities are felt to have been displaced by privatisation; even those in the 'squeezed middle' who feel they have been part of a historical shift that has displaced their own country from the dominance it once enjoyed as ruler of an Empire. It is now time to look at some of the 'winners'.

Part 2: Architects of Brexit

The ground base of this article is that Windrush, Grenfell and Brexit derive from the dispositions towards the concept of society espoused by Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative right wing whose project, since 1979, has involved the shrinking of the state, reduction of taxes, de-regulation, wholesale privatisation and reduction of public services (including public housing and home building), demise of heavy industry and demolition of union strength and influence, and the radical stoking of financial services. When at her pomp in 1987, 8 years after her rise to power, she revealed her beliefs with unusual clarity. In that year, in an interview for Woman's Own, she uttered her *credo* as follows:

> *I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand 'I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!' or 'I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!' 'I am homeless, the Government must house me!' and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women. (Thatcher 1987)*

Five years after this intervention, in 1992, the Maastricht Treaty was signed at a time when Euroscepticism was warming to its task and a more extreme version of Thatcher's project began to stir. In 2007/8 the financial crash took place which then led to the long and unfinished period of austerity. The extreme right, anti-Europe, pro-US free trade lobby groups (see below) began

139

to circle and austerity was joined by a culture of hostility to immigrants and refugees (the 'hostile environment' appeared in 2012) together with all the rest of the extreme right's by now familiar baggage.

Brexit must have seemed like the prize of all prizes: all the aims of the far right could be achieved in one single blow. And the 'people' (as in 'Will of the People') could imagine that the project was none of the above, but rather the fulfilment of the seductive myth of 'getting back control of our money, borders and laws': the most perfect *trompe l'oeil* or, to put it another way, three card-trick, imaginable. All of this invites us to look closely at some of the leading Brexiteers, their flag wavers and their strategies.

Donors and their affiliations

There were at least seven well, or reasonably well-known, associations involved in campaigning for Brexit, the two most conspicuous ones being Vote Leave, the official campaign group and Leave.EU.[16] Following acrimonious disputes between these two, a third group, Grassroots Out, came into being with Peter Bone and Liam Fox (Conservative), Kate Hoey (Labour), Farage (UKIP) and others towing the group on its way. The complex institutional structures and dynamics between these groups is for another day. It needs noting, though, that Leave.EU has become involved in legal disputes about overspending and other alleged criminal activity.

There have been several reports and journalistic interventions listing names of donors to the Leave campaigning groups, noting their business and political affiliations. What follows here is a very narrow, initial, second-hand and incomplete glimpse of where some of the funds for the Brexit campaign came from, using the report by Adam Payne and Will Martin (2017) to chart a path.

Payne and Martin (ibid.) published their list of Brexit donors a year after the referendum. From Lady Annabel Goldsmith (£25,000 given to Brexit campaign groups) to Banks (over £8m) via the pub chain owner Tim Martin (£212,000) and a host of other hedge fund owners, members of the House of Lords, millionaire bankers, a Conservative party treasurer, the chairman/managing director of JCB, Lord Bamford (a supporter of Johnson's campaign to be Conservative Prime Minister), Payne and Martin (ibid.) have subsequently reported that the campaign received over £24m in donations, the majority of which came from the five richest businessmen in Britain.

Payne and Martin, as well as others, have confirmed that the donors to the campaign groups supporting Brexit were, without exception, from the

---

16   Apart from these two groups, some of the more prominent promoters of Brexit included Grassroots Out (a UKIP-related/Faragist entity founded by Peter Bone MP), Labour Leave (featuring, amongst others, John Mills and Graham Stringer MP), and Left Leave (a 'Lexit' outfit supported by the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party).

political right (including the extreme right), mostly attached either to the right of the Conservative Party or to UKIP. Also without exception, all were concerned with the tax advantages to multinational corporations of leaving the EU and the concomitant deregulatory possibilities that Brexit presented.

Brexit: some key ideas and values

Although written by a freelance writer without any apparent institutional affiliation, I have found the blog entries by Richard Hutton (2018) useful in steering the way towards an assessment of the political influence of the large variety of lobby groups active before, during, and after the Brexit referendum. In what follows I give examples of some of these, basing the selection on a variety of sources including texts from the institutions themselves.

As Hutton (ibid.) has said, the Brexit referendum was built on lobbying by many groups starting years before the actual event. In the early days, the lobbyists' aim was to transform the EU into a deregulated free-trade zone thus suiting the interests of British and American businesses. The lobby groups were dedicated to the curtailment of the EU's financial, environmental, and employment regulations within Britain, their intention being to withdraw Britain from the European social model and transform the country into a US-style outfit featuring minimal taxes and maximum profits for transnational corporations.

Here are some examples of the groups, their personnel, and their ideas and values. In 2013, the group Business for Britain, was set up by Matthew Elliott, founder and former chief executive of the right-wing group, the Tax Payers' Alliance. The group was made up of 500 professed business-leaders, used a number of media outlets to circulate a letter to persuade the government to transform the EU into a 'flexible, competitive, Europe with more powers devolved from Brussels' (see Castle 2013). The letter lobbied to 'return control over social & employment laws' to Britain, to 'cut the EU budget to save taxpayers' money', to 'protect the City and financial services', to 'fast track international trade deals' and to ensure the EU dispensed with social protections and employment laws. In the group's view this would allow Britain to be transformed into a free-market zone. It saw the demon principle of the EU as the 'Social Chapter' of the Maastricht Treaty. BforB lobbying was supported by the Telegraph Group (The Daily Telegraph, along with the Daily Express and the Daily Mail constitute the main Brexit supporting newspapers in the UK). Elliott (2016) himself explained that he founded BforB 'to bring together business leaders who supported a referendum and a fundamental change in our relationship with the EU'. The group produced a pamphlet (which it regarded as its *magnum opus*) entitled 'Change or Go' and morphed into Brexit Central in 2016. It is important to add that Elliott had co-launched the Tax Payers' Alliance (TPA) in 2004, a lobby group dedicated

to the reduction of the size of government, and lower government spending. According to Evans *et al.* (2018), the TPA received £223 worth of foreign (including Russian) donations.

As time went on, many other lobbying groups came on the scene. Amongst these was the *All-Party Parliamentary Group for European Reform*, co-founded by MP Andrea Leadsom in 2015 (cf. Parliamentary Register of All-Party Groups 2015). She was joined by several Conservative and opposition MPs (including Frank Field and Gisela Stuart). The group (dedicated to reducing regulation of several kinds, including working hours) records in the parliamentary register that its aims are:

> *to explore each area where EU legislation impacts on the UK and assess whether this is better dealt with at the national or European level. To work with MEPs, interest groups and other experts to explore what a new UK-EU relationship could look like and what needs to be done to get there. (ibid.)*

More and more lobby groups tumbled into the open. Hutton (ibid.) lists, *inter alia*, The Institute for Policy Research, The Stockholm Network, The Social Market Foundation and, importantly, Economists for Free Trade. The Home Page of this group records that its members include Patrick Minford, its chair, Roger Bootle (advisor to House of Commons Treasury Select Committee), Warwick Lightfoot, Special Adviser to the Chancellor of the Exchequer between 1989 and 1992, James Dyson, John Longworth (Chair of Leave means Leave), Owen Patterson, and Jacob Rees-Mogg. As Minford (2019) explains, the group believes (to quote one of its pamphlets) that 'No Deal is the Best Deal for the UK'.

One of the more interesting (for us) lobbying groups is the Legatum Institute. Iain Duncan Smith (IDS), founder of Centre for Social Justice, is a Legatum supporter and Hutton (2018) claims that IDS's approach to poverty is basically to encourage people to find work by ensuring that the benefits they may claim for being unemployed, sick, disabled, caring for others, and so on, are never higher than the wage they would receive if in work. It is a view reminiscent of the Poor Law. Hutton (ibid.) argues that, despite appearances Legatum and the Centre 'are intended to serve the profiteering of multinational businesses'.

The aim of Part 2 of this article has been twofold. The first has been to suggest that the leading Brexiteers are, without apparent exception, enthusiastic heirs of the Thatcher project, bearing it ever rightwards. The second has been to sketch out a few (there are many more) of the financial winners of the Brexit movement.

Part 3: Mythologies and iconography

From the rolling out of the Vaken vans to Grenfell, via the Brexit referendum, several powerful mythologies have come to be created. Some of those surrounding our events serve to obscure rather than enlighten, to re-arrange ethical hierarchies, to privilege the abstract over the concrete in ways we will shortly indicate. The mythologies at issue here have appeared either in imagery ('Breaking Point', for example) or in the oft repeated phrases or texts ('Will of the People', for example) that have filled columns and airways and continue to do so.

Before moving to examples, however, there is an essential question we should ask: what are the conditions (social, economic, political) in the contemporary world that give rise to the generation of, and belief in, the kind of myths we are focusing on here? Hannah Arendt writes in her The Origins of Totalitarianism (1962 [1951]) that, if society and social structures are broken (like those as bruised and fragmented by austerity as those in the UK) and citizens have become more or less isolated individuals, then the ground is ready for the rise of powerful mythological structures that serve to give us what we lack in practice: a sense of purpose and agency even if this is known to be imaginary. As Arendt says, totalitarian regimes succeed because isolated, isolated individuals get a 'sense of having a place in the world' (ibid.: 323-4). We have argued above that this sense of place, equating to a sense of how home should be, is precisely what many feel has been lost in practice in Brexit/Grenfell/Windrush Britain. We may look now at our images and texts.

Breaking point and its predecessors

As noted earlier, 'Breaking Point' was the icon of the 2016 referendum campaign. Farage's poster built on UKIP's 2016 local election poster of a line of people queuing in front of a notice hung in an airport-looking space reading 'UK Citizens'. The title of this image was 'Open door immigration isn't working'. The parent/grand parent of these two latter political advertisements was the Conservative 1979 election icon of a line of people queuing in front of a labour exchange with the title 'Labour Isn't Working', an image credited with winning the election for the Conservatives. According to Michael Heseltine's Campaign magazine it was the 'best poster of the century' (see Kelly 2015). It was the background to Thatcher's dismissal of the existence of society and assertion that 'there are only individuals and families'. As noted, the UKIP promotional brochures at the time of the lead up to the referendum were derivative of those by the extreme conservative right.

Banks's Grenfell

As already noted, Banks launched a photograph of Grenfell Tower at the height of the fire (which the Daily Mirror bravely re-published) with the following words superimposed: 'An amnesty for Grenfell illegal immigrants? Absolutely not! The law is the law' (see Figure 3). Banks's image could well have been the inspiration for an unimaginably and darkly violent ritual incarnation carried out in south London of the myth theme he had constructed. In November 2018 (around the time of Bonfire Night), party goers built and then burned a model of the Grenfell Tower, with brown faces at the windows. Video pictures reproduced in newspapers the following day a group of white party goers lifting the tower into a bonfire and laughing as it and the models inside went up in flames. A George Cross flag appeared in the background. A cheer goes up as the model finally falls, burnt out, to the ground. A cosmopolitan home is reduced to cinders. One cannot help but be reminded of the initial target of those who surrounded Sarajevo at the start of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, namely the Sarajevo Library, also the home and standard bearer of cosmopolitan history and heritage.

Fig. 4. LEAVE.EU message published on Twitter on 29 March 2018.
Photo: © @LeaveEuOfficial.

Banks's seesaw

The Independent newspaper re-published another image tweeted by Banks in 2018: a seesaw with '3 million Muslim votes' written across one end at ground level, and '300,000 Jewish Votes' on the opposite skyward end with a text reading 'Turkeys Don't Vote for Christmas' (see Figure 4). The claim here was that the Labour Party was solely interested in the votes of 'Britain's exploding Muslim population'. Amongst those who took exception to this image was the British Board of Jewish Deputies, who reported that some of its best allies in the fight against antisemitism are Muslims.

Banks's seesaw points out several features of the Brexit project which permeate its institutional variations. Muslims and Jews are conceptualised as having singular and unified identities and dispositions just like two individual persons (as children on either ends of a seesaw in the playground). It is a step away from claiming that all Muslims, like all Jews, speak with one voice. It even implies that members of the Labour party speak with a single voice.

The Will of the People

The term 'the Will of the People', sometimes accompanied by the amendment 'as expressed in the 2016 referendum', emerges repetitively in the rhetorical pronouncements of Brexiteers. The phrase has the quality of the sacred about it, as if it settles an argument rather than opening up a debate. In Brexit discussions, the 'Will' seems to be challenged only in relation to time. The recurring question is asked about whether the 'Will' is subject to change or whether it is fixed for ever. Yet, very little, if any, talk is heard about what the 'Will of the People' actually means.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion of 'General Will' (*volonté générale*) is a complex one. This alone makes its simplification in the Brexit debate problematic or absurd. However, in Rousseau's thought, there are two particular aspects to the idea which are relevant here. First, the formation of 'General Will' is linked to arguments in political philosophy about the legitimacy of government. This is an issue to which various thinkers, including Thomas Hobbes and John Locke (albeit from different standpoints) gave much time and effort. Rousseau (1998 [1762]) himself, in The Social Contract, argued that agreement amongst citizens about law and governance derived from understanding of what was in the 'common good' – what was right, just and necessary for the wellbeing of the political community as a whole rather than the individual. Notions of shared citizenship and collective action are incorporated in the idea of 'common good'. Secondly, therefore, for Rousseau, the idea of 'common good', and thus of 'General Will', come out of a fundamental attachment (both rational and emotional) to the political community of which individuals are a part.

In contemporary Britain, unlike in Rousseau's imagination, the political community has been so battered by cuts to social institutions that in many ways it has been shorn of any potency it once had. Does a political community, in the sense that Rousseau took it to mean, actually exist at a time when society itself has been splintered and broken by austerity?

'Illegal immigrants'

Satbir Singh (2019) has written about the 'arbitrary cruelty of the government's hostile environment policy', adding: 'We all now live under a system of Orwellian immigration laws that find people of colour guilty until they can prove their innocence'. We now live in a country in which immigration is something to be 'controlled', 'brought down', 'mitigated'. Immigration, and by extension immigrants, are a problem. In the present context, we should add that we live in a country in which black British citizens of Caribbean origin are called 'illegal', are detained, denied healthcare and deported.

Tie, blazer, pint and forefinger

Farage's dress codes and stage settings have been of interest for some time (Picardie 2015). In the run up and aftermath to the 2019 European elections, Nigel has adopted several semiotic *dressage* markers of note. Whilst simultaneously acknowledging that he does not speak French but does 'know his way around a good wine list', one of his most recent party-political broadcasts places the familiar pint glass of beer on the table next to him: Nigel the nice guy in the pub. Never filmed without a tie, he now routinely sports a blazer with bright silver buttons: Nigel the good sport/golf club member. He concluded several video broadcasts before the European elections by pointing his forefinger at the camera saying that 'The Brexit Party Needs You'. Clearly this is a reference to the iconic poster of Lord Kitchener beckoning young men to enlist for the First World War with the call 'Your Country's Army Needs You': Nigel the military commander. The BBC (2014) magazine commented on the Kitchener poster, observed 'The authorities anticipated that an image of Kitchener - immensely popular with the public and seen as a great symbol of army and empire - would be good for recruiting': Nigel the smart symbolist historian. And in one other recent broadcast, wearing what appears to be a Piccadilly Field Hat from an established purveyor of gentlemen's field accessories, the setting is (of course!) the White Cliffs of Dover: Nigel as officer rank defender of the country. In these ways, Nigel presents himself as, at once, man of the people, officer, gentleman, possessor of military authority and defender of the Brexit faith. Or, as Yasmin Alibhai-Brown put it on a recent televised edition of the Jeremy Vine show, 'racist bounder'.[17]

17   Journalist Alibhai-Brown made this remark in April 2019, as part of her contribution to the Jeremy Vine Show on BBC.

Fig. 5. 'Nigel Farage's battle bus in Birmingham on the pre-referendum tour', May 2016.
Photo: © Derek Bennett.

'Sovereignty' and 'getting our country back'

The argument advanced by the Brexiteers is that 'Brussels' has taken away the 'sovereignty' of the UK with the help of regulations and laws generated and enforced by the European Commission and the European Court of Justice. Brexit, it is said, will return agency and autonomy to 'The British People'. But, like the 'ornamental cookery' of Barthes (1991 [1957]), this looks and tastes good enough yet, also like Barthes' 'cookery', it hides two features of Brexit in austerity Britain. One of the most basic means of exercising political agency has been all but swept away in the austerity-driven 'theft' of municipal Britain (see above). We have seen here that all the Brexit-related think tanks and institutes, as well as their associated political leaders and followers, have lobbied for significantly more deregulation, as well as the removal of rights, corporate tax avoidance, and so on. In this context, the idea that Brexit will achieve the promised autonomy and sovereignty seems far-fetched.

Summary

The third part of this article has offered brief reflections on select 'mythologies' associated with our three events. The subject here is not myths-as-lies, but myths/mythologies as potentially powerful narratives containing ideas, notions and assumptions that mobilise imagination at the same time as ob-

scuring underlying realities. The notion of 'Will of the People', for example, obscures the reality that, within collectivities, there are many potentially fluid contrasting ideas and values. 'Illegal immigrants' as a notion works to blind us to the suffering and trauma of people displaced by war. 'Labour isn't working' implies unwillingness to work whilst obscuring the downturn, or outright disappearance, of many industries in the face of the rise of the gig economy. And so on. Mythologies such as these allow us to look the other way as members of the 'Windrush generation' are imprisoned or deported, to brush aside the humanity of those who died in Grenfell and to be caught up in a belief that Brexit (which itself has assumed the status of a myth) is going to 'Make Britain Great Again' by way of switching British post-imperial history into reverse gear.

Part 4: Resistance

Ayesha Hazarika (2018) has referred to a 'culture war' in contemporary Britain, one aspect of which is a conflict between the principles of hospitality and hostility. Hazarika links this directly to Brexit. We would wish to extend the link to Windrush and Grenfell. To put it more fully, and as we have described at some length in this article, the Britain of Brexit, Grenfell, and Windrush stands at a crossroads. On the one hand, we have Thatcher's politico-economic project, which, in its mature post-Thatcher form, came to encompass our three events. This was made up of absolutist individualism, further and faster de-regulation, corporate tax avoidance and the definitive end of any kind of 'Social Chapter' (that part of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty from which John Major, then Prime Minister, negotiated a British 'opt out') inflamed by a rhetoric of hostility towards immigrants. On the other hand, there is considerable and growing evidence of multiple civil society projects celebrating hospitality to immigrants, sociability, and the construction of what Mayo and Moore (2002) have called 'the mutual state', namely a government and public sector fully engaged in home making for all.

The relationship between the Brexit related de-regulation project and Grenfell may be illustrated with precision by a single anecdote. Days before the Grenfell fire, the *Red Tape Group* of Brexiteer MPs (founders included Oliver Letwin and Gove) was due to discuss what regulations to junk after leaving the EU. One 'regulatory folly', EU No. 305/2011, imposed compulsory use of construction materials, including external cladding, designed to address the spread of fire. Greenpeace wrote of the group, 'It's obvious that there are powerful political and corporate interests out there, ready to use Brexit as an excuse to get rid of vital laws that they see as a hindrance to businesses' (see Laville 2017). The final piece of the jigsaw is thus to ask where and in what form resistance to the politics of the past 40 years which has been the founding contexts of our three events in particular, is to be found. For us this lies in

de-centralised and geographically wide-ranging co-operation between civil society groups and networks under the level of the state actively supported and encouraged by the kind of 'mutual state' imagined by Mayo and Moore (2002). Flora Cornish of LSE, who investigated the process of community-led recovery in West London in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower, told me that no less than sixty-four civil society groups were formed after the event. These range from Justice4Grenfell and the Grenfell Action Group (with its blog) to the North Kensington Library (recently saved from closure). Here are pointers to a brief selection of others found in the wide field of Grenfell, Windrush, and Brexit practices.

At one of the sharpest ends, there is Medical Justice, a small civil society group of professional doctors and psychiatrists who provide legal help to some of the 30,000 people a year (many with experience of torture, most with significant health problems), who are in immigrant detention centres and facing the danger of deportation. Their office is located in the same building used by the Leader of the UK's largest Opposition party. Then, there is a growing number of projects, frequently overseen by civil society groups and institutions, aiming to provide safe housing for refugees and asylum seekers. The group Abide, based in Ottery St Mary is, in its own words, 'devoted to converting strangers to neighbours' by resettling refugee families within local communities.

In a similar vein, Exeter City Council encourages private landlords to lease flats to the council, enabling it to house Syrian refugees. This particular project has provided the space for one such refugee to carve out a life for himself and his family. My colleague, Nicola Frost, told me about him and his family in detail. Arriving from Syria via Lebanon, their story is marked by fear, insecurity and constant uprooting. Nicola added:

> *Unable to work until his English skills have improved, he has hurled himself at life in Exeter in a way that leaves others full of admiration, if slightly breathless. With a new baby at home, as well as a boisterous pre-schooler, he volunteers with a community-based exercise group. He's also to be found serving free food on the street every weekend (he is a fantastic cook, and dreams of opening his own restaurant one day) and has even recently turned his hand to hairdressing, giving free cuts to homeless people alongside the hot meal. He is involved in planning a local event celebrating cultural diversity, likes to teach himself piano [...].*

This account provides a glimpse into the stories of actual people, stories that tend to be obscured by political rhetoric and the enumeration of migrant bodies.

Then, there is the burgeoning amount of research and development work in universities (from Glasgow to Oxford and UCL to SOAS) and other types of civil society associations imaginatively concerned with refugee issues. Moreover, in schools, libraries, community centres, within faith communities ('refugees welcome' posters in several of the above in north London, for example) and many other public spaces and institutions all over the UK, careful and detailed work is taking place to turn us away from siren voices advocating a 'hostile environment' in the name of 'illegal immigrants', 'Brexit', or whatever, towards one based on principles of hospitality. One of the most remarkable of these spaces is the Lambeth-based Immigration Museum. Working with hundreds of school children, university students and members of the public, this revolutionary museum expresses and represents migration as a homecoming and homemaking to which we are all attached in multiple ways. The museum is immersed in stories of immigrants and their experiences.

Daniel Renwick (2018) spoke of the prophesy of the Grenfell Action Group Blog months before the fire that only a catastrophe would make those in power take proper note of the decrepit state of tower blocks in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Renwick's view of the fire and its relation to Brexit is as follows:

> *'Class contempt, institutional indifference and organised state abandonment brought Grenfell into being. And, Brexit is a project of deregulation and border regime politics which will make a bonfire of European standards and further nudge those in precarity to the margins of British life'. (ibid.)*

Home in a 'post-home' world

And what of the notion of home? What lessons can we learn about homemaking and homecoming from Brexit, Grenfell, and Windrush? Here are some pointers.

In this article, we have suggested that home and homemaking need coordinated co-operation at domestic, regional, national and global levels. Such de-centralised co-operation is very far from the programme of the Brexit funders and their clients. Instead, their project offers cargo cults in which 'cheap food, clothes, and footwear', as Rees-Mogg puts it (see Daly 2018), fall from the sky, while they take advantage of a world without rules. They invite others to imbibe mythologies about migrants and refugees as sources of danger. It is an outlook built on actual and structural hostility bolstered by distrust and dislike of the qualities shown by the people of Windrush and Grenfell.

Thatcher declared her antagonism to society in 1979. A decade and more of austerity since the financial crisis has been a time when the antagonism

towards the feckless working class was pursued with literally catastrophic consequences as food banks, street sleepers, zero-hour contracts have testified. Brexiteers have taken up Thatcher's baton with the aim of constructing an atomised, flexible and (as O'Neil's interlocutor from Wolverhampton said so clearly) a profoundly homeless work force. To achieve this, the Brexiteer leaders have deployed very powerful myths (in the full classical, as well as Barthian senses): 'getting back control', 'sovereignty', 'freedom', 'independence', the slogan of the new Brexit party 'democracy', and now 'liberty'. All these have been laced with the Brexiteer leaders' hostility towards the Windrush generation, the cosmopolitan residents of Grenfell, the refugees fleeing from war and the EU itself.

But we have also pointed towards forces on the ground – not least in the traumatic spaces surrounding our three events – that speak of emergent conviviality, sociability, and the recovery of belief that the means of homemaking and homecoming are on the way to being recovered in our 'post-home' world. Choice of the direction of travel is in our hands.

References

Allen, William L. (2016) Report: A Decade of Immigration in the British Press. The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Report-Decade_Immigration_British_Press-1.pdf [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Antonucci, Lorenza, Laszlo Horvath, Yordan Kutiyski and André Krouwel (2017) The Malaise of the Squeezed Middle: Challenging the Narrative of the 'Left Behind' Brexiter. Competition and Change 21 (3): pp. 211–229.

Arendt, Hannah (1962 [1951]) The Origins of Totalitarianism. New York: Meridian Books.

Barthes, Roland (1991 [1957]) Mythologies. New York: The Noonday Press.

BBC (2014) The Most Famous Pointing Finger. BBC Magazine. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-28642846 [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Bhambra, Gurminder (2018) Everything You Know About Brexit is Wrong. TEDx lecture at the University of Birmingham. https://youtu.be/dkBnkBT_x-M [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Booth, Robert, Vikram Dodd, Kevin Rawlinson and Nicola Slawson (2016) Jo Cox Murder Suspect Tells Court His Name is 'Death to Traitors, Freedom for Britain'. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jun/18/thomas-mair-charged-with-of-mp-jo-cox [accessed: 17 July 2019].

Bourdieu, Pierre (1979 [1970]) Algeria 1960: The Disenchantment of the World, The Sense of Honour, The Kabyle House or The World Reversed. Translated by Richard Nice. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Butler, Patrick and Sandra Laville (2017) UK Council Cuts Will Lead to More People Sleeping Rough, Charities Say. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jan/21/uk-council-cuts-more-people-sleeping-rough-charities-warn [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Cartledge, James (2016) Homeless Man Found Dead on Coldest Night of Year is Named. Birmingham Mail. https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/homeless-man-found-dead-coldest-12279457 [access: 20 July 2019].

Castle, Stephen (2013) British Group Backs Renegotiating E.U. Role. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/23/business/global/23iht-pound23.html [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Chakrabortty, Aditya (2017) If Theresa May Really Wants to Protect Refugees Why Does She Fuel Such Hatred? The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/11/theresa-may-refugees-croydon-attack [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Cobain, Ian, Nazia Parveen and Matthew Taylor (2016) The Slow-burning Hatred That Led Thomas Mair to Murder Jo Cox. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/23/thomas-mair-slow-burning-hatred-led-to-jo-cox-murder. [accessed: 17 July 2019].

Crewe, Tom (2016) The Strange Death of Municipal England. London Review of Books 38 (24): pp. 6-10.

Daly, Patrick (2018) Cheaper Food and Clothes after Hard Brexit Will Help Poorest People, Says Jacob Rees-Mogg. Bristol Post. https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/cheaper-food-clothes-after-hard-1119931 [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Davies, Gareth, Emma Youle, Charles Boutaud and Hazel Sheffield (2019) Revealed: The Thousands of Public Spaces Lost to The Council Funding Crisis. Huffington Post. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/sold-from-under-you-investigation_uk_5c7bee0fe4b0e5e313cb9eac [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Davis, Jonathan and Andy Hollis (2018) Theresa May's Brexit Speech Had Shades of Hitler. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/oct/12/theresa-mays-brexit-speech-had-shades-of-hitler [accessed: 17 July 2019].

DCMS (2018) Disinformation and 'Fake News': Interim Report. Fifth Report of Session 2017–19. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcumeds/363/363.pdf [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Dorling, Danny (2018) What Brexit Tells Us About the British. Lecture at the Geography Society of the University of Oxford, October 19th 2018, http://www.dannydorling.org/?page_id=2921 [accessed 22nd July, 2019].

Douglas, Mary (1973) Rules and Meanings: The Anthropology of Everyday Knowledge. Selected Readings. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Douglas, Mary (1991) The Idea of Home: A Kind of Space. Social Research 58 (1): pp. 287-307.

Doward, Jamie and Alice Gibbs (2017) Did Cambridge Analytica Influence the Brexit Vote and The US Election? The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/mar/04/nigel-oakes-cambridge-analytica-what-role-brexit-trump [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Elgot, Jessica (2016) How David Cameron's Language on Refugees has Provoked Anger. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jan/27/david-camerons-bunch-of-migrants-quip-is-latest-of-several-such-comments [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Elliott, Matthew (2016) How Business for Britain Helped Change the Course of History in Three Short Years. Brexit Central. https://brexitcentral.com/matthew-elliott-business-britain-helped-change-course-history-three-short-years/ [accessed 23 July 2019].

Evans, Rob, David Pegg and Felicity Lawrence (2019) MP Owen Paterson Lobbied Government for Firm He Worked for. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/apr/07/mp-owen-paterson-lobbied-government-for-firm-he-worked-for [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Evans, Rob, David Pegg and Felicity Lawrence (2018) Taxpayers Alliance received over £223k in foreign donations. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/20/taxpayers-alliance-received-hundreds-of-thousands-in-foreign-donations [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Foster, Dawn (2017) Cuts to Sunderland's Homeless Services: A Bitter Taste of Things to Come. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2017/mar/03/cuts-sunderland-homeless-services-local-authorities [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Frost, Nicola and Tom Selwyn (eds.) (2018) Travelling Towards Home: Mobilities and Homemaking. Oxford: Berghahn.

Gordon, Sarah and Harriet Agnew (2016) Brexit Campaigners Out-Fundraise Their Remain Rivals. Financial Times. https://www.ft.com/content/684b41e8-1787-11e6-b197-a4af20d5575e [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Hattenstone, Simon (2018) Why Was the Scheme Behind May's 'Go Home' Vans Called Operation Vaken? The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/26/theresa-may-go-home-vans-operation-vaken-ukip [accessed: 17 July 2019].

Hazarika, Ayesha (2018) I'm Backing a Second Referendum — Extreme Politics is on the Rise, and Brexit Needs an Intervention. Evening Standard. https://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/i-m-backing-a-second-referendum-extreme-politics-is-on-the-rise-and-brexit-needs-an-intervention-a3896036.html [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Home Office (2000) Local Government Act 2000. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/contents [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Home Office (2011) Localism Act 2011. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Home Office (2014) Immigration Act 2014. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/contents/enacted [accessed: 17 July 2019].

Hutton, Richard (2018) Brexit Was the Result of a Corporate Lobbying Campaign Which Backfired. What Did the People Behind It Really Want? Personal blog entitled A New Place of Exile. https://richardhutton.wordpress.com/2018/01/28/brexit-was-the-result-of-a-corporate-lobbying-campaign-which-backfired-what-did-the-people-behind-it-really-want/ [accessed: 18 February 2019].

Kapuściński, Ryszard (2018) The Other. London: Verso.

Kelly, Mike (2015) General Election 2015: From Devil Eyes to Tax Bombshells – A History of Election Posters. The Chronicle. https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/general-election-2015-devil-eyes-8813051 [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Kwarteng, Kwasi, Priti Patel, Dominic Raab, Chris Skidmore and Elizabeth Truss (2012) Britannia Unchained. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lammy, David (2018) Parliamentary Speech During the Windrush Debate in Westminster. https://twitter.com/DavidLammy/status/988467501066608646 [accessed: 17 July 2019].

Laville, Sandra (2017) Government-Backed 'Red Tape' Group Looked at EU Fire Safety Rules on Morning of Grenfell Fire. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/22/government-backed-red-tape-group-eu-fire-safety-rules-grenfell-fire [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Malik, Kenan (2019) Working Class Versus Minorities? That's Looking at It The Wrong Way. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/14/divided-britain-ethnic-pay-gap [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Mayo, Ed and Henrietta Moore (eds.) (2002) Building the Mutual State: Findings from the Virtual Think Tank. London: New Economics Foundation.

Minford, Patrick (2019) No Deal is the Best Deal for the UK. Economists for Free Trade. https://www.economistsforfreetrade.com/who-we-are/ [accessed: 23 July 2019].

O'Neil, Jim (2017) The New World: Fixing Globalisation. BBC Radio 4. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b086s822 [accessed: 20 July 2019].

O'Toole, Fintan (2018) Heroic Failure: Brexit and the Politics of Pain. London: Head of Zeus.

Palmer, Catherine (2018) Being and Dwelling Through Tourism. London: Routledge.

Parliamentary Register of All-Party Groups (2015) All-Party Parliamentary Group for European Reform. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/register/european-reform.htm [accessed: 10 June 2019].

House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (2019) Sustainable Development Goals in the UK Follow Up: Hunger, Malnutrition and Food Insecurity in the UK. Thirteenth Report of Session 2017–19. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1491/1491.pdf [accessed: 22 July 2019].

Payne, Adam and Will Martin (2017) The 21 Richest Donors to the Brexit Campaign. Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.com/twenty-one-biggest-donors-to-the-leave-brexit-campaign-2017-5?r=US&IR=T [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Perraudin, Frances (2015) 'Marauding' Migrants Threaten Standard of Living, Says Foreign Secretary. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/aug/09/african-migrants-threaten-eu-standard-living-philip-hammond [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Picardie, Justine (2015) Decoding Nigel's Coat – What the Ukip Leader's Clothing Tells Us. New Statesman. https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/04/decoding-nigels-coat-what-ukip-leaders-clothing-tells-us [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Rapport, Nigel and Joanna Overing (eds.) (2007) Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts. London: Routledge.

Renwick, Daniel (2018) Failed by the State: The Struggle in the Shadow of Grenfell (Part 1). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tFPCUgjbfA [accessed: 20 May 2019].

Robinson, Martin (2018) A Polo Playboy and the '007 of the Big Data World': How Men Behind Cambridge Analytica are Linked to Royalty, Military and the Tory Party. Daily Mail. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5526671/Polo-playboy-007-data-world-Cambridge-Analytica.html [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1998 [1762]) The Social Contract. Translation by H. J. Tozer. Ware: Wordsworth.

Selwyn, Tom (2018) Afterword. In: Nicola Frost and Tom Selwyn (eds.) Travelling Towards Home: Mobilities and Homemaking. Oxford: Berghahn: pp. 168-173.

Shaw, Adam (2019) Why Brent Council Has Sold Off £30m of Public Land. My London News. https://www.mylondon.news/news/west-london-news/brent-council-sold-30m-public-15961573 [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Singh, Satbir (2019) It's Not Just Windrush: Britain's Immigration Scandal Will Grow in 2019. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/03/windrush-britain-immigration-scandal-hostile-environment [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Smith, George, Kathy Sylva, Pam Sammons, Teresa Smith and Aghogho Omonigho (2018) Survival, Decline or Closure? Children's Centres in England, 2018. London: The Sutton Trust. https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/StopStart-FINAL.pdf [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Stewart, Heather and Rowena Mason (2016) Nigel Farage's Anti-migrant Poster Reported to Police. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/nigel-farage-defends-ukip-breaking-point-poster-queue-of-migrants [accessed: 17 July 2019].

Taylor, Diane (2019) High Court Victory for Group Seeking to Build 'Black Canary Wharf'. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/21/high-court-victory-for-group-seeking-to-build-black-canary-wharf [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Thatcher, Margaret (1987) Interview for Woman's Own ("no such thing as society"), London, Woman's Own.

Williams, James. (2016) Poor Asylum Seeker Housing Conditions Criticised. BBC. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-38196583 [accessed: 20 July 2019].

Tom Selwyn is a Professorial Research Associate at the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, SOAS University of London. His regional interest is in the Mediterranean, especially Palestine/Israel. He has published widely in the field of anthropology of travel, tourism and pilgrimage, and co-edits, with Nicola Frost, Berghahn's book series *Articulating Journeys: Festivals, Memorials and Homecomings*, a recent addition to which is his co-edited *Travelling Towards Home: Mobilities and Homemaking* (2018). For two decades from 1995, he directed inter-European university research and development projects for the European Commission in Mediterranean cultural heritage, with a particular focus on Palestine and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tom founded the MA in the Anthropology of Travel, Tourism and Pilgrimage at SOAS in 2010 (and a Summer School of the same name in 2019). He was awarded the Lucy Mair medal by the Royal Anthropological Institute in 2009 and an Emeritus Professorial Research Fellowship by the Leverhulme Foundation in 2014. He is also the founder and former Chair of the Camden Public Libraries Users' Group (CPLUG) and, for 10 years, was council member and former Honorary Librarian of the Royal Anthropological Association's (RAI) book collection at the RAI Library.