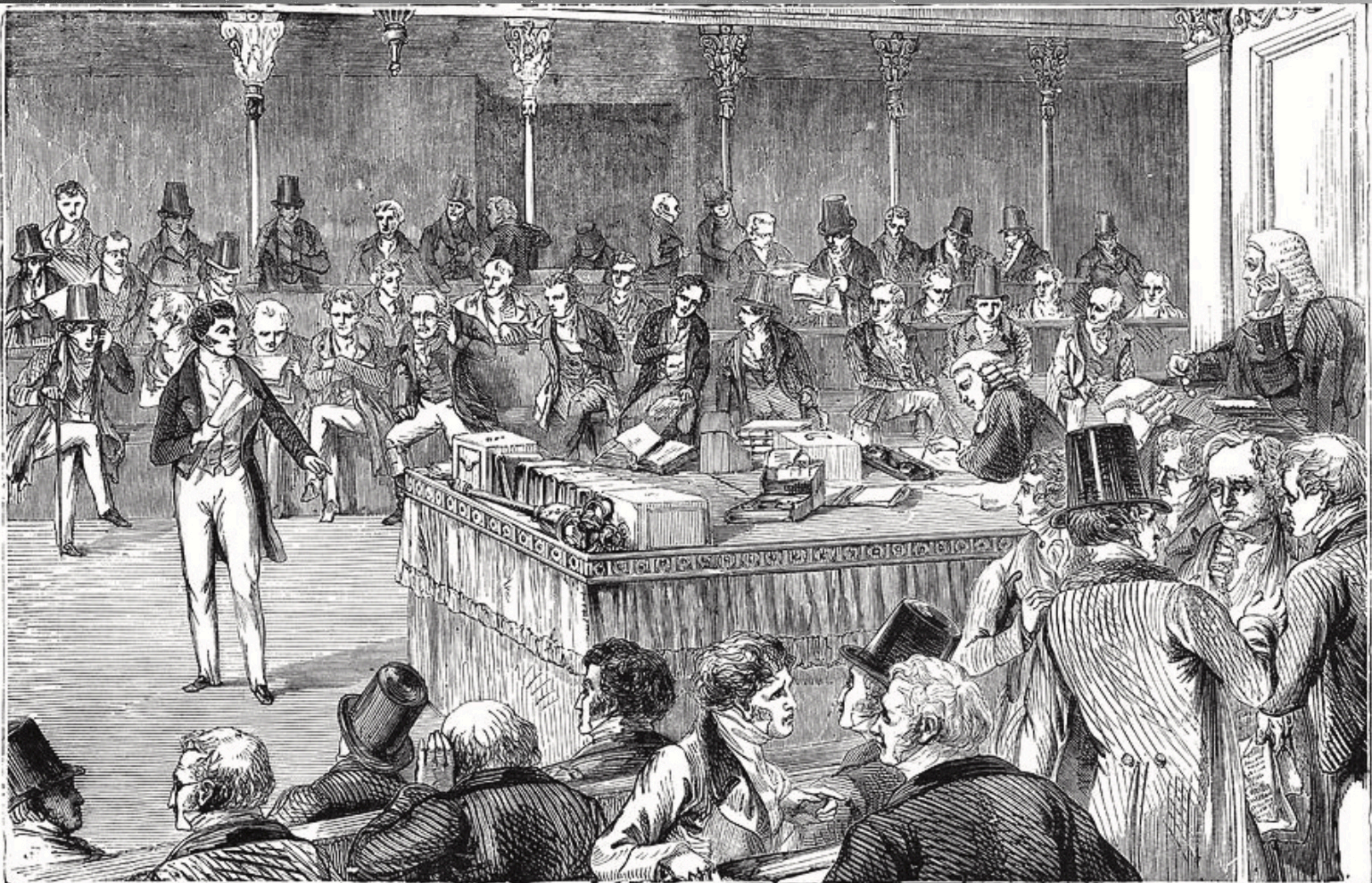
LJR



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Editor: Olivia Saunders

Dear reader,

You may be curious about the significance of the title 'LJR'. It stands for Lord John Russell, former Westminster student and Prime Minister for over six years, from 1846-1852 and from 1865-1866.

Historically, Lord John Russel is attributed with two disparate legacies. The notion of him as the young, moral reformer who was instrumental in shaping 'modern democracy', contrasts with the appreciation that in later life his years can be viewed as an extended political dotage. Born into a grand Whig aristocratic family, he was educated to follow the political principles of William Pitt the Younger's great rival, Charles James Fox (1749-1806). He read and wrote voraciously – mainly history and literature, providing an apt name for this journal. It was, however, his political determination in the 1820s to drive through parliamentary reform, which led him to becoming one of the 'Committee of Four' chosen to draw up the 1832 Great Reform Act. This Act was a settlement symbolic of the first step in the road to democracy and shift away from the immense authority of the landed gentry.

He became a leading influence on the Whig's policy as they developed into a 'Liberal Party' in the 1830s. As a staunch supporter of Catholic Emancipation, it could even be said that he aspired to values, which we might revere today. As Home Secretary after 1835 he reformed the criminal law, and as a result executions only took place for murder and high treason. He promoted the Education Act of 1839, which introduced state inspection of schools and seemed to threaten the Church of England's privileged position in British society.

However, in an age of volatile politics he lacked a sound parliamentary majority. Economic depression and political tensions at home and revolutions abroad led to a reputation for weakness, especially in economic policy. For more than a century, he was remembered as a politician incapable of recognising when to get out of the spotlight. One particularly scathing biographer (Prest) entirely omitted any recognition of his activity in the years subsequent to 1852 on the basis that they were bound to display "no new virtues and emphasise old defects". Reddaway gave the even more blunt perspective that a sensible alternative to his floundering would have been retirement "with his two and a half dozen bottles of Australian wine and his Colt's revolving firearm from the Great Exhibition".

Intellectually superior to many of his counterparts, he was a genuine liberal and idealist. His greatest achievements wrote A.J.P Taylor were 'based on his persistent battles in Parliament over the years, on behalf of his expansion of liberty; after each loss he tried again and again, until finally, his efforts were largely successful.'

OS

Contents

Pg4. *Cambridge fellow David L.Smith discusses Dr Parry's new biography...*

Pg5. *An interview with the Head Master*

Pg8. *Alex Orr- A Review of El Narco*

Pg11. *Mr Edlin: 'The isolation is innate'*

Pg14. *Luka MacInnes-Bouffard discusses Napoleon's Marshalls*

Pg18. *Dr Huscroft describes the book that gave him a life-long love of history*

Pg19. *Turner Ruggi reviews Chernow's biography of Alexander Hamilton*

Pg21. *Willem de mol van Otterloo reviews 'Bismark: A life' by Jonathan Steinberg*

Pg23. *Theo Ruppel discusses a 'History of the World in Twleve Maps' by Jerry Brotton...*

Pg24. *Abhay Goel reviews the film LA 92*

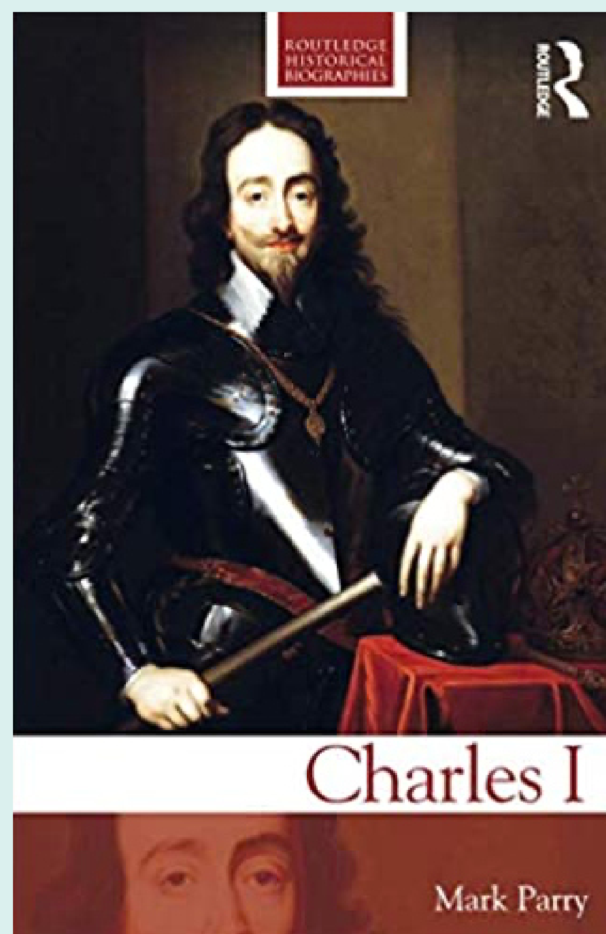
Pg26. *Philip Yanakov discusses 'The Monuments Men' by Bret Witter and Robert M.Edsel...*

With many thanks to Johan Orly and Willem de mol van Otterloo

Cambridge fellow **Dr David L.Smith** discusses **Dr Parry's** new biography: **'Charles I'**...

Mark Parry, *Charles I* (Routledge Historical Biographies, 2019)

Mark Parry's new book on Charles I deserves a very warm welcome. Charles I was the only monarch in British history to be publicly tried and executed. In January 1649 he was sentenced to death as a 'tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy'; shortly after his execution the monarchy was abolished and a republic established for the first (and so far only) time in British history. Yet here was a man of blameless family life, a dedicated connoisseur of the arts, and someone of genuine principles and honour. Why did his reign come to such a catastrophic end? Why has he continued to polarise opinion ever since, with some regarding him as a tyrant while others see him as a martyr? Parry's biography explores these questions in a way that is eminently accessible and readable while also being deeply scholarly and rooted in extensive research in primary sources. It is very fair to Charles without in any way whitewashing him. Above all, the book helps us to understand why Charles was such a contentious figure – what it was about his personality that so divided his subjects as to cause a civil war during his reign and that has led him to be seen in such radically different ways ever since. This is a perceptive, judicious and deeply informed book that will appeal to students and scholars alike. It provides what is now the best starting-point for advanced study of Charles I's life and reign.



An interview with the **Head Master**

OS:
Could I start by asking about your childhood? Do you believe that it sparked your particular interest in history?

Mr Derham:
Absolutely. Coming from an Irish background and a Dutch background I am very clear that we are all conditioned by upbringing. My Dutch mother grew up during the German occupation of Rotterdam with little education and struggled with a difficult relationship with her own mother. My grandmother, like a lot of Dutch people was able to speak German but refused to. Despite my asking, neither of them would ever describe to me their life during the war.

But my Irish family are in many ways more interesting. My father as a strong Irish Catholic republican, had an unusual relationship with his family and so in protest, left to join the British army. His own father died very young, and my Irish grandmother lived in abject poverty in a sort of Irish peasant existence with one room, one kitchen and an outdoor toilet. She used to tell me that although we had once been rich it was the English that stole their land in the nineteenth century. It was extraordinary and always lodged with me, driving my interest in Irish history as I never trusted my Irish grandmother. When I went to Cambridge and insisted on studying Ireland, I discovered that she was incorrect, and my immediate thought was that she had lied to me. But she was illiterate, uneducated and rooted in oral tradition. That is what I find fascinating about history- the oral tradition. I can see in my own children who have little experience of Ireland at all, that they even have the wonderful 'gift of the gab'. I am just intrinsically interested in the manner in which we are conditioned and so have spent my life as a history teacher, even as a person, not rebelling against my family but trying to understand how it has influenced my own actions. I can hear my father's voice and it is a very powerful thing. Through my memory of him and my grandmother I can see elements of them very strongly in my family.

O.S
Do you find that your inclination to be a storyteller influenced your choice to become a teacher?

PSJD:
Partly that, but I had an unusual education. I was in 7 different schools before I was 12 and from the two key years of 12 to 14, I was on board a ship where the learning was rudimentary. An amazing teacher called Mr Fox smuggled books for me to read and gave me an escape from that pretty unpleasant existence. It gave me a different lens from which to see things.

My life changed when I was sent away to another school. I had two history teachers that taught me throughout my time at the school. They were not great teachers in the sense of encouraging discussion or debate. However, I had an interest and they would give me things to read apart from what everyone else was reading. But I was very torn, as I had two phenomenal and inspirational English teachers. I was introduced to great works of Irish

literature and American literature- none of which was on the syllabus. I was very torn between wanting to do English or history but when I came to make the decision it was partly because I wanted to teach History in a more interesting way than I had been taught it, and that is not being critical of them.

When I was lucky enough to get into Cambridge I had little idea what to do before the term began. My headmaster recommended that I teach in a primary school and so before I went to Cambridge I taught history for 2 terms and I loved it. I had no idea how to teach but it was very enjoyable to teach children at a young age who were un-cynical and enthusiastic.

Subsequent to finishing Cambridge I was offered a job in a primary school. I believe that I learnt more history in the two years teaching there than I did in 3 years of highly specialised learning in Cambridge. I had to do everything sequentially. The skill of teaching and engaging a class of eight-year olds was a performance, and you had to be an actor, but I loved it.

OS
When you talk about reading and your love of books do you think that there was one book in particular that inspired you?

PSJD
At the end of my disasterous Cambridge interview, I was asked if there was anything I had read of particular interest. I said yes- the biography of Charles Stuart Parnell . He refused to believe me and so we spent 15 minutes talking about Irish republicanism and nationalism. Three years later, he jokingly commented to me when I graduated that the book was the only reason I had gained a place.

OS
I remember you mentioned in assembly you talked about one of your history teachers inspiring you in life. Do you feel that they were particularly key to your position now?

PSJD
Yes absolutely- my old headmaster, Peter Points. Amazingly, I became head boy and on my last day he talked about this transformative education I had benefitted from and told me that with it came the responsibility to give back. The six words he gave me from Martin Luther King: "'what are you doing for others?" changed my life. For me, Peter Points just changed my life and I recognise the debt that I owe to him. All of my charitable work has come from that. My biggest worry about the current crisis is the impact it will have on the most disadvantaged. We have vulnerable children who are being denied opportunity.

OS
During your time at Pembroke, as an almnus of William Pitt's college did it inspire tou to teach his period?

PSJD
In my final year I had a room overlooking the statue of Pitt, so yes, absolutely and I believe that I have always been fascinated by the position of the Prime Minister. In particular, we are living now through a time of unprecedented circumstances politically. Pitt is so interestinf due not only to the longevity of his career, but because he spanned both times of peace and war. There is also no doubt at all that although I didn't do any Pitt during my time at Pembroke, it became a passion because of the Irish history. I was very interested in the whole of the 18C and Ireland is such a key agenda for any Prime Minister.

OS
How did you gain your position as trustee of Gladstone's library?

PSJD
When I was Head Master of Rugby a member of the Gladstone family came to see me, and it was through this family that I gained the connection. It is particularly incredible to be able to go to the Temple of Peace which is unchanged from the 1890s and feel that real sense of history. The best thing the family ever gave me was a Mr Gladstone calling card- one of my most prized possessions. My interest in Gladstone, who is my hero and inspiration, really came from the opportunity to edit a book of documents on the Irish home rule question.

The Gladstone library focuses on three main themes of his life: human rights; the evolution of democracy and religious tolerance. I feel a huge connection between these values and those of Westminster school. For us we feel it is important to be speaking out on those values. Gladstone spoke out against atrocities in his lifetime which is remarkable and vitally important.

OS
What will you miss in particular about the school?

PSJD
I think for me that connection with the Abbey is something that I will miss highly. It is history- all the extraordinary events at the heart of this nation's history that have taken place here. It is an immense privilege. What I love about Westminster is that we don't take it too seriously and there is no pretension. It speaks volumes for the liberal tradition here.

For me, by the great west door you have Pitt and on the right you have the Earl who set up the charity for the ship that I lived on. I was blown away to see this statue. To see this in the prominent pride of place in the abbey is amazing.

Alex Orr reviews **'El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency'**, by Ioan Grillo...

In 2006, a number of Mexican sicarios (Colombian-style hitmen) rolled five severed heads across a nightclub dancefloor in Michoacán state, just south of Guadalajara, in Central Mexico. In spite of the brief media coverage both in the West and Mexico itself, this is widely considered the new "normal" in a country on the brink of total state-failure. *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*, written in 2011 by British journalist Ioan Grillo, is brimming with such examples of seemingly unnecessary horrors somehow seen in a country within touching distance of the West. For Grillo, there is only one body responsible for this insidious, half-century process which has thrust Mexico, a modern nation, drawing a gross domestic product of over 1.2 trillion USD last year, into a lawless and barbarous anarchy. He refers to it as, "El Narco" (a term previously holding various different definitions and proceeds), with utmost precision, to detail its entire history in the country. In Grillo's book, El Narco takes on a new meaning which is, in itself, crucial to understanding the past and future of the world's most potent drug trade. El Narco is the conglomeration of everything to do with the illegal drug industry: the growers, the *narcotraficantes*, the plaza bosses, the money involved and, crucially, the inaction of the American and Mexican political hierarchies, who had originally been charged with curbing its violent spread. It is through the body politic of the trade, one which pulls in tens of billions of dollars for Mexican *patrones* annually; and through Grillo's brutally-clear dissection of the history of this phenomenon, a phenomenon that now grips both sides of the Mexico-USA border, that we become fully conscious of the "how" and the "why" which transformed an illicit industry into a state-threatening, criminal insurgency.

Part I - History

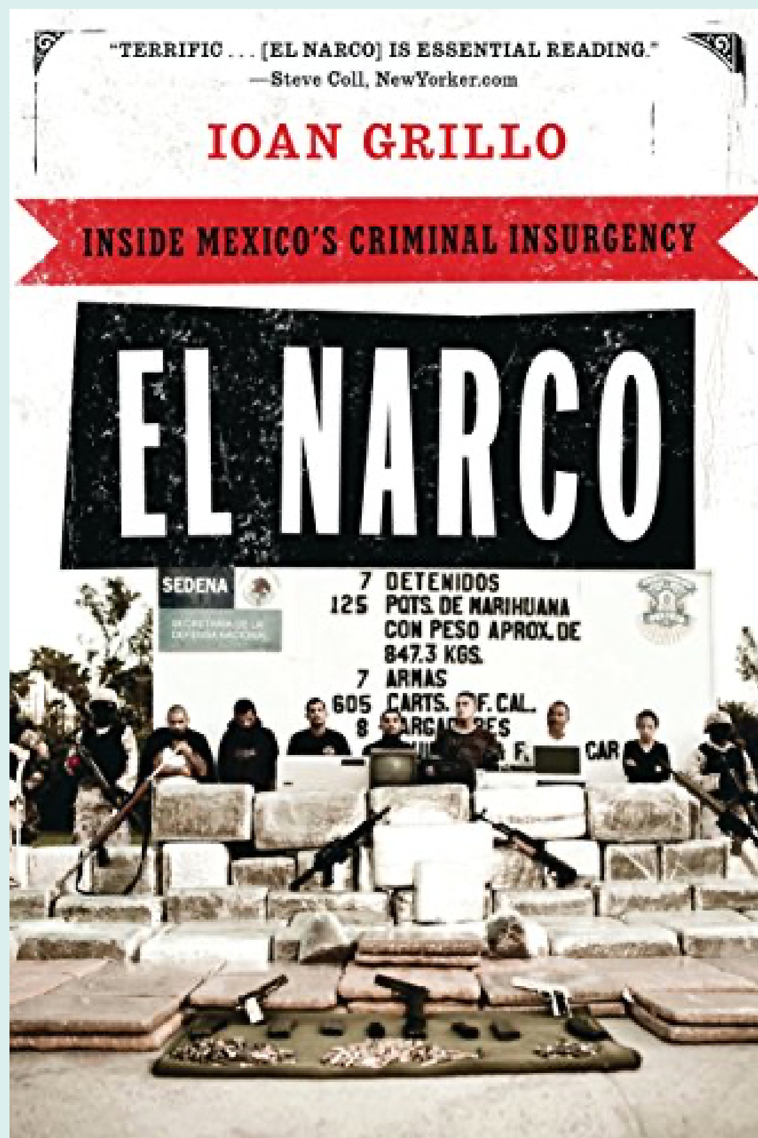
After recording the sobering anecdotes of Gonzalo, currently a convert to Christianity but once a soldier, kidnapper, murderer and now life-long resident of a Ciudad Juárez prison (on the border with El Paso, Texas), Grillo, who has spent the last two decades living in Mexico City, begins the first of the book's three sections – **History**. The chapters of **History** mirror colloquially the chronology of Mexico's drug trade, with the investigative journalist detailing comprehensively the process which has taken the nation from **Poppies** to **Warlords –** a journey signposted by **Hippies**, **Cartels**, **Tycoons**, and **Democrats.** The stories and statistics often prove indescribably gruesome. In tandem with the author's clearly meticulous research, Mexico and its 100-year-old drug problem are brought to life. He traces the root cause, the Harrison Narcotics Tax Act of 1914, which heavily restricted the distribution of opiates and coca products in the United States. Then, painstakingly but successfully, he attempts to weave the hundreds of loose threads together into a complex yet understandable tapestry of the nation's past 100 years up to the present day. Very few authors have been as successful in doing the same.

A highlight of the first section comes with Grillo recounting the fascinating yet shocking story of the Chinese immigrants in Mexico in the 1910s and 20s, who were responsible for initially founding the drug trade. These Chinese-Mexican communities would smuggle opium from towns in the north of the country to Chinese-Americans across the Rio Grande in the United States, where distribution was now, in large part, prohibited. Much of the tale's distressing aspects deal with the fate of those immigrants, many of whom were driven out of the country, kidnapped or killed so that the natives could take over both the production and distribution of opium and cocaine. The parallel the author draws between the mass exodus and genocide of Jewish people in Europe in the 1930s and 40s and the fate of these Chinese-Mexicans at the same time proves particularly poignant, with his analytical yet fiercely-emotional tone creating the perfect balance to retell one of the 20th Century's most unknown yet horrific atrocities. Alex OrrOver the proceeding 100 pages, readers learn about the legacy of the Mexican spring (and later corridor) in immense and honest detail. Grillo transitions seamlessly from the tale of folk-hero "La Nacha", the original "queen of heroin" in 1950s Ciudad Juárez, to the infamous *el Padrino* ("the Godfather") - Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo - a former Sinaloan police officer who managed to monopolise the entirety of Mexican drug production in the 1970s and 80s as head of the Sinaloa Cartel. Intertwined amongst the rises and falls of such infamous *narcos* as Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, the Arellano Felix brothers, Pablo Acosta Villareal and, increasingly as the chronology continues, Los Zetas (a paramilitary organisation set up in alliance with the Tijuana and Juárez Cartels), are the deeply profound and moving stories of those affected by the heightening conflict. We read the tales of mothers, who have lost their sons to cartel-funded gangs on the poverty-stricken streets of Ciudad Juárez and Nuevo Laredo with their very deaths often at the hands of those who they trust the most: the federal or municipal police forces, or indeed those who they fear the most: the cartels. Subsequently, the gruesome retellings of atrocities, which seem so out of place in our supposedly progressive 21st Century world, such as brutal beheadings, political assassinations (as with the murder of the American DEA Agent, Enrique "Kiki" Camarena) and hundreds of mass graves full of decapitated, limbless bodies, feature prominently in **History**, serving as a strong foundation for Grillo's next section – **Anatomy.**

Part II – Anatomy

In the second section of the book, we turn from the chronology to the rationale behind said chronology - the "why". Why would a teenager choose to work for the cartels instead of the police force? Why would he be allowed to work for both? Why are there now open shoot-outs on the streets of Mexican border towns between teenagers working for rival cartels with no one doing anything effective to prevent further bloodshed? Naturally, it becomes clear that money is the driving force; the war started by Los Zetas in the late 2000s was indeed a territorial conflict for control of Nuevo Laredo, a town on the border with Laredo, Texas. However, explaining the extent and extremity of the bloodshed becomes an altogether different and more challenging task, one which Grillo rises to with aplomb. From being trained to torture and murder in police academies, to being taught "fearlessness" by severing the limbs of often innocent, and indeed alive, victims, the anatomy and psyche of the Mexican cartel killer becomes clear. It is an anatomy that promotes fearlessness through fear; so much so that, as Grillo describes vividly, only the truly scared survive. "*Plata o plomo"* ("silver (money) or lead (bullets)"), the old saying goes.

Part III – Destiny
To round off this fascinating yet undeniably sombre history, the author looks to the future and destiny of this criminal insurgency that, as he admits, could transition from drug war to civil war at any moment. In his blunt and honest style, he places a firm focus on what he sees as "the right step" towards lasting peace and a reduction in cartel power – drug legalisation. It is on this (undeservedly) political note that he ends the book. The American "war on drugs" has not worked, neither has that of former Mexican president Felipe Calderón. Thus, he ends with a plea to halt further anarchy when, at the time of writing (2011) the annual murder rate in the country was 24 per 100,000 inhabitants – worse than the averages for medieval Europe. In 2018, it was 29. It is clear that very little has been achieved since.
Without a doubt, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency* by Ioan Grillo is one of the most comprehensive chronologies of the Mexican drug trade and its nationwide influence on the country's political and social institutions. The author's blend of report and anecdote, fact and emotion, provide a truly thrilling read as you leave with an extensive yet terrifying awareness of Mexico's past, present and future, as well as the threat of the drug cartels not only to its inhabitants' way of life, but ours in the West as well. However, for Grillo, one thing is certain; further violence is not the answer.



Mr Edlin: 'The Isolation is Innate'

What makes for the perfect historical lockdown reading? I am not going to suggest anything related to great pandemics, from the Plague of Justinian to the Black Death (although Philip Ziegler's wonderfully readable classic and John Hatcher's more statistical analysis of the latter would certainly speak to these challenging times); rather, I recommend a focus on understanding isolation and its impact. To read of the desert fathers, of hermits and the 'new monasticism', or of late medieval devotional movements and the inward-looking mysticism they produced, would be tempting indeed – but these are all examples of those who chose isolation, to fulfil particular spiritual yearnings or to confront, tangentially, prevailing social trends. Better still, under current circumstances, to read of a culture in which the isolation was innate and far more than the physical fact of space; in which it was, even, an affair of origin.

This describes perfectly, of course, the world of the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy from the eighteenth century until – just about, in some vestigial form – the early- to mid-twentieth. Much has been written about the cultural and political world of the Ascendancy, some of it ill-conceived, and most of it unable or unwilling to detach itself from the author's deep-set personal agenda. The absurd notion that the world of the 'Irish Protestants' (as they called themselves) was half-English and half-Irish is but the most glaring misconception here; the carelessly applied language of colonialism is a more insidious one. In recent times things have improved, with, amongst others, Toby Barnard's work on lives, possessions and material culture ('Making the Grand Figure'), David Fleming's on provincial politics, and Sean Connolly's on the sinews of the Irish ancien regime (Religion, Law and Power) breaking new ground in their approach to unpicking long disputed or neglected historical terrain… so it may seem strange to select a rather older work, and one written by a novelist to boot: Elizabeth Bowen's Bowen's Court, the history of her family and their home in the north of County Cork from the Cromwellian conquest and land settlement through to the early years of the Free State. Why Bowen, then, as a way into this unique and distinctive world?

The first reason is that she understands it from the inside, and her short-story-writer's focus on small details is peculiarly suited to analysis of the outlook of her caste. She writes of the intense, centripetal life within the 'Big House': 'the not long past of these houses has been very intense: no Irish people – Irish or Anglo-Irish – live a day unconsciously. Lives in these houses, for generations, have been lived at high pitch, only muted down by the weather, in psychological closeness to one another and under the strong rule of the family myth…' This is the world of her upbringing, and she understands too the conceptual difficulties others may have in approaching it: 'English people, or people from cities, ask what such families 'do' all day – and the question, exceedingly superficial, cannot be answered in superficial terms. The preoccupation of Irish country people with their own affairs may be found either mystic or irritating. Each member of these isolated households is bound up not only in the sensation and business of living, but in the exact sensation of living here… It is possible that Anglo-Irish people, like only children, do not know how much they miss. Their existences, like those of only children, are singular, independent, and secretive.' As an only child herself, Bowen knew something of this: the way in which isolation can grant colour, texture and

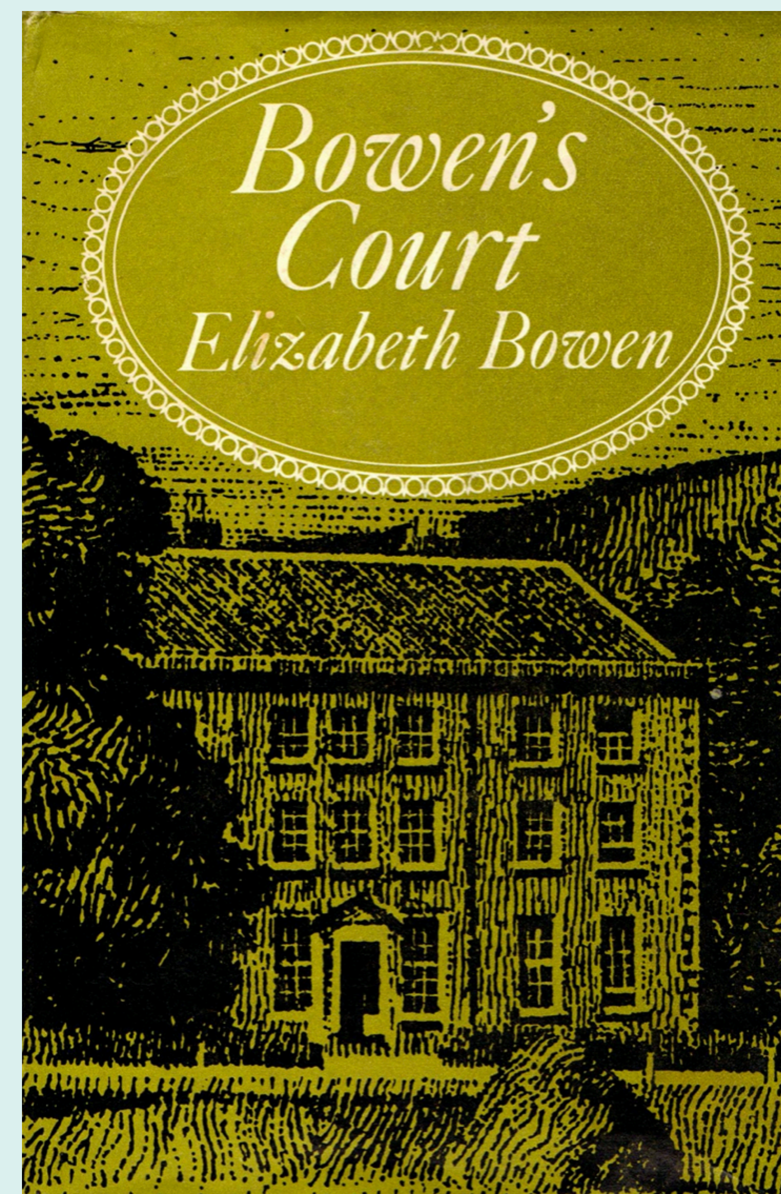
intensity to the creation of personal meaning, of individual narratives: imprinting character on every moment and on each apparently prosaic routine. A lockdown lesson indeed.

Yet there is more: the skill with which Bowen writes of such a life is enhanced and given greater urgency by the never-explicit yet always-present sense of the times in which she was herself writing: the height of the London Blitz. *Bowen's Court* is in this sense both an act of piety, and a form of therapy; Bowen herself wrote that amidst the dislocations and destruction she needed some image of permanence, of meaning and consolation, upon which to fasten: 'I suppose that everyone, fighting or just enduring, carried within him one private image, one peaceful scene. Mine was Bowen's Court. War made me that image out of a house built of an anxious history.' Thus she was able to combine, remarkably, the perspective of writing from afar with the emotional insight of feeling perhaps more profoundly than at any other time in her life the importance of rootedness, of social behaviour, of objects and stories and inherited tradition – and her fears for a world where these might no longer be valued: 'and to what,' she asks, 'did our fine feelings, our regard for the arts, our intimacies, our inspiring conversations, our wish to be clear of the bonds of sex and class and nationality, our wish to be fair to everyone bring us? To 1939.' And, she adds, in riposte to an unspoken criticism, perhaps the most Anglo-Irish statement of all: 'possession has a spiritual side.'

What, then, of the explicitly historical content? Bowen intersperses her account of her family within its county community with a broader survey of Irish History, and there is a sense, certainly, that the broad narrative arc is more than a little affected by her 'tutorials' with Sean O'Faolain, whose radical nationalist past was so different from her own. The recognition of the 'inherent wrong' from which the Bowens drew their position and power (and she does not exaggerate the extent of the latter) is reminiscent of Yeats's *Meditations in Time of Civil War* in its subtle ambivalence: the Bowen line was built on violence, dispossession and iniquity, and yet out of this bitterness had been created beauty, hospitality and measured ease. What might that mean to its heirs? At the same time, the strength of feeling shown for the heroes of the Protestant national tradition, from Swift and Berkeley to Charlemont's Volunteers and Grattan's Parliament, Tone and Emmet to Charles Stewart Parnell, is notably representative. The skill with which generational trends in her own family are interwoven with a broader national picture is remarkable: the Bowen ancestors stand in sharper relief against the generally understood tenor of the their times. It is worth pointing also to the implicit associations which follow from Bowen's decision to number her ancestors as if they were monarchs (and what else were they, in effect, in their 'house islands'?); pleasingly, the fiery energy of Henry II, the defining legacy of the builder Henry III, the unsatisfactory inheritance of Henry IV, the tragically early death of Henry V on his campaigns (of road-building, here…), and the devastating mental illness which struck Henry VI, all might find echoes for medievalists. Perhaps fortunately all round, there was no Bowen Henry VII, or Henry VIII.

Above all, though, Bowen the novelist beats many a so-called historian in keeping her balance: she does not fall into the trap of seeing her 'fairly ordinary Anglo-Irish gentry family' as more than they were, and nor does she gloss over their character flaws and self-indulgences (or those of their class). Henry III is evoked with particular feeling, on the grounds that it is something to have ideals, even if one can't live up to them, and that education is not really as important as people think, for nothing he learned – and at the same time nothing he failed to learn – impaired his innate stylishness or flair for living. In times such as these, it is worth reflecting on a society in which 'isolation, egotism and, on the whole, lack of [access to] culture made in them for an independence one has to notice because it becomes, in these days, rare… To live as though living gave then no trouble has been the first imperative of their make-up; to do this has taken a virtuosity into which courage enters more than has been allowed.'

It is a challenge we are all facing. And *Bowen's Court* is a book which should be far more widely read.



Luka MacInnes-Bouffard discusses **Napoleon's Marshals**...

Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of the French, may have been the most brilliant commander since Caesar, proceeding to eclipse the likes of his own heroes, Gustavus Adolphus and even Lord Marlborough, but he did not fight alone. The unprecedented magnitude of 19th century warfare was such that a single commander by himself could not coordinate his entire force at once during a battle, and so Napoleon relied on a group of twenty or so commanders who executed his commands and coordinated tactical movements on the battlefield. These men were a profound bunch, and among them stood some of the most talented commanders in Europe. Many had risen from the very lowest ranks in the army and society, aspiring to legendary status in France and elsewhere. They were enabled to do so by the revolution, which had terrified most of France's that-far chiefly noble generals, into exile, and which had created vast leadership vacuums to fill. This gave opportunity to talent, and soon France's generals were the most ferocious and effective in Europe, able to consistently outmanoeuvre the old, traditional and incompetent commanders of Prussia, Austria and many others.

Perhaps an overview into the nature of the marshalate, and some of the best anecdotes of them, can be provided here. The title of Marshal had existed long before Napoleon, originating under the Carolingian dynasty as a keeper of the royal stables, and approximately fifty commanders held the honour under the 'Sun King' Louis XIV. Nevertheless, it was under Napoleon that the marshalate was reborn and brilliantly rebranded. It had been abolished near the beginning of the revolution, in 1793, only for Napoleon to re-establish the title of Marshal (Maréchal in French) of the Empire on the 14th of May, 1804, four days before he proclaimed himself emperor. Distinguishing them from ordinary generals, they had their own uniform, and were permitted to wield a blue baton with stars on it, to symbolise their military authority. The uniform was an iconic one: a blue coat with a tall, densely gold-embroidered collar, a blue cloak and a distinctly recognisable (and exceptionally large) white-feathered bicorne hat. On top of these eighteen original marshals, Napoleon would go on to appoint eight more, though the number of active marshals never exceeded twenty at a time. In all, there were twenty-six marshals, who, as will become clear, distinguished themselves in more than just uniform.

While the title of marshal was therefore not entirely new, Napoleon's marshals were certainly unique, and there is something distinctly endearing about them. There was, of course, no obligation for them to stand in front of their men when marching into battle, yet they consistently put their lives in the most extraordinary danger by doing just that. Three marshals were killed, and marshal Oudinot received 34 major battle-injuries over the wars (though he lived on to the age of eighty). Furthermore, there's something dazzling about the way in which so many of them rose and truly earned their ranks. Of marshal Lannes (one of those three to die in battle, after his legs were crushed by a cannonball) Napoleon once wrote 'I found him a pygmy and left him a giant'. He had been the son of a small-time merchant,

and as a boy had become an apprentice to a dyer. The afore-mentioned Oudinot was the son of a brewer-farmer; Augereau was the son of a fruit-seller, and initially became a clock-maker; Lefebvre the son of an Hussar; Masséna that of a shopkeeper, who as boy worked as a cabin boy before enlisting as a private; Murat the son of an innkeeper; Ney the son of a cooper, and Saint-Cyr that of a tanner. There were plenty more of equally humble origins, as well as some noble.. Clearly, Napoleon wasn't one to discriminate, and he consistently esteemed competence above all else. There's little wonder why he's considered a champion of meritocracy.

But his marshal's enchanting tales don't end there. A touching story is that of Michel Ney upon Napoleon's escape from Elba in 1815. Ney had sworn allegiance to the new Bourbon monarch Louis XVIII. Despite his prestige, here he was, exasperatingly disparaged by new high-ranking officials of the restored royal regime because of his common blood. To prove his loyalty to the king, upon hearing of Napoleon's arrival in Southern France (where he was being joined *en masse* by various devisions and regiments who at once remembered their loyalty to their *Empereur*) Ney promised to bring Napoleon back to Paris 'in an iron cage'. He didn't. Instead, melting upon reading a letter he received from Napoleon a few days prior to encountering him again, he joined his emperor, and would play a highly significant (though ill-fated) role in the Battle of Waterloo. His defection proved a decisive blow against the installed king's grip on the army at the time, as Ney had been so popular a marshal, he was thought to be the only man the troops would follow in battle against Napoleon. Years earlier, Napoleon had nicknamed him 'the bravest of the brave', and the troops affectionately called him '*le Rougeaud*' (the ruddy); allegedly, he was the last Frenchman out of Russia. Brave — perhaps even reckless at times — he certainly was: at Waterloo, he had five horses killed beneath him, and, leading one of the final infantry charges that fateful Spring day in 1815, he shouted 'come and see how a marshal of France meets his death'. But death did not want him, observers reported. In fact, Ney was executed by a firing squad only later, that December, on charges of treason, where, of ourse, he'd have it no other way than to give the order to fire

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Like Ney and Napoleon himself, one of his many nicknames being *le Petit Caporal*, other marshals had nicknames too. Marshal Murat, Napoleon's top-notch but flamboyant cavalry officer (incidentally the second marshal to betray him), who was crowned king of Naples in 1808, was called in his time 'the Dandy King', which is far from off-the-mark, going by his wardrobe. Davout earned the name 'the Iron Marshal', for his excellent discipline and competence. He never lost a battle, and at Auerstedt stunningly defeated the main Prussian army with just a single corps (a force less than a third the size of the enemy's). Beside Lannes and Masséna, he is very frequently considered one of Napoleon's most competent marshals — if not the very best — despite the fact he was the most junior of the original 18 marshals, and had been resented at the time by more senior commanders who were passed over from obtaining the title. In spite of his tactical brilliance however, Davout was very gauche and preferred to spend time with his family than advance his social prestige. Indeed, he lacked

rapport with the emperor, and was resented on a personal basis by many enemies, though he came to be respected by all. In particular, he disliked the marshals Bernadotte and the aforementioned dandy Murat. Perhaps it's only a coincidence that these two were the first and second marshals respectively to betray and go on to fight against Napoleon. Napoleon didn't particularly like Bernadotte either (his least-favourite marshal, surprisingly, who went on to become the crown prince and later king of Sweden 1810). What poisoned Davout and Bernadotte's relationship was when Bernadotte seemingly spitefully chose not to go to support Davout in that very battle of Auerstedt where Davout defeated the Prussian main force. Such was Davout's hatred for Bernadotte that he once challenged him to a duel (the emperor interceded)And, when the Swedish army, under Bernadotte, joined the 6th coalition and fought the French in the battle of Leipzig in 1813, Davout requested that he be placed opposite Bernadotte, so that he could personally defeat him. This was denied to him, and though Leipzig was a frustrating French defeat (and the largest battle in history at the time), Davout succeeded in his part.

Masséna was another of those three considered to be Napoleon's most effective marshals, beside Lannes and Davout. Until his humiliation in Portugal in 1810, fighting the young and aspirational Wellington, he was known as 'the darling child of victory'. Until his botched campaign in the Peninsular War, this sobriquet had been testament to his flawless military record; it goes without saying that he was an exceptional general. Unfortunately, Napoleon shot him in the eye in a hunting accident in 1808. He was blinded in that eye, but it was by no means fatal, and he was yet to reach the absolute pinnacle of his career, in Spain (which is incidentally where he ruined it).

Napoleon's use of marshals was in itself innovative. One of Napoleon's great innovations was the implementation of a new *corps* system. Conventionally, it was military canon that an army should be concentrated, so as to be at full strength when attacking the enemy. But this bore problems. Principally, it made the force less mobile, as it depended on a slow-moving supply line, and it would have to march in long lines. Corps were miniature armies of their own, into which the main army was split, consisting of several thousand men, complete with cavalry, artillery and technicians of its own, so that they could could act, to some extent, independently. This enabled the army to march down separate roads and feed itself on villages it passed and the land, rather than being impeded by slow-moving supply lines. This accelerated the rapidity of marches, and the corps could swiftly concentrate to engage the enemy. Consequently, the speed of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* would often surprise and confuse the enemy, allowing for quick, stunning victories. Generally, one marshal would command each corps, so that the corps could theoretically follow a coherent strategy with one another.

The marshals were most certainly an exceptional group of commanders, arguably some of the finest altogether, but they undoubtedly had their flaws. Posterity's principle criticism of them is that they often squabbled when working together in Napoleon's absence. Perhaps this is understandable; from a group of such talented men, there would inevitably be ferociously ambitious competition. This obstructed progress, which cost the empire badly at times, especially in the Peninsular War (1807-1814). Here several French marshals' reputations were ruined, including Massena's, who, till then often considered Napoleon's best marshal, left Spain in a disgrace inflicted on him by Wellington. At one point during Masséna's retreat from Wellington in Portugal, he dismissed Marshal Ney from his role in the campaign. This occurred after Ney had just fought some excellent rear-guard actions to cover the army's retreat, but had then gone on to privately criticise Masséna's decisions which had led to the defeat. Such disputes between marshals were unfortunately frequent, and occasionally led to disastrous outcomes.

Furthermore, in the weeks approaching the battle of Leipzig, his system of marshals may have worked against him (not that it was necessarily their fault, though). The 'Trachenberg Plan' involved a protocol in which Allied generals would avoid fighting where Napoleon himself was present, in recognition of his tactical genius, and engage only his marshals. The strategy worked where it was observed, and was significantly what enabled them to decisively defeat the French at Leipzig in October 1813. It emphasises that for all of some of his marshals' skills and contributions, Napoleon's triumphs were decidedly his own.

There are many fascinating and entertaining biographies on these marshals, and it would be unjust not to pay homage to their literary brilliance and historical entertainment. A profusion of anecdotes and a distinctive narrative of each marshal's life makes 'The March of the Twenty-Six', by R.F. Delderfield, just the book to delve into if one wants to understand who these marshals were. It recounts their rise and fall, depicts their moments of fidelity and treachery, and encapsulates their eccentric characters too. Another enthralling book on the marshals is 'Napoleon's Marshals' by David Chandler, whose historical speciality is the Napoleonic Era. For a biography on Napoleon generally, Andrew Roberts' 'Napoleon the Great' is highly recommended, albeit, as the name more than reveals, it has an unambiguous stance. Finally, I'd like to recommend the mini-series 'Napoléon', with Christian Cavalier acting as the legend himself. Whilst not the most detailed source of information for this period, it's an entertaining insight into the nature of the Napoleonic period, with grand and breath-taking battle scenes. The marshals make frequent appearances here too.

Many of Napoleon's marshals, though they sometimes worked miracles, and many far exceeded other European generals of the time in talent, including Wellington, did occasionally disappoint him, but this was largely because he was so exceptional himself, as the Trachenberg Plan demonstrates acutely. But they were by no means mediocrities, and Napoleon couldn't have done without them. They were of the top calibre of 18th and 19th century men: ludicrously brave, exceedingly talented, loyal, if not to Napoleon, then to France. Typically, as boys, too many had run away from their parents to join the army for it to be a coincidence, partly out of patriotism and ambition, but in many cases just boredom. There is something deeply charming about their stories, anecdotes and achievements. Some were deeply popular with both soldiers and public, and they were more or less the stars of early 19th century France; they were a circle of deeply respected and honoured men who made the single most ferocious and extraordinary modern military machine function. Perhaps this is not surprising: they were, after all, handpicked by the single most talented commander in modern history for nothing but their talents and brilliance.

Dr Huscroft describes the book that gave him a life-long love of History...

Historians read books. It's really how we make our living. We read other things too – primary sources of one kind or another – but we spend most of our professional lives reading what other historians have written. Most of the time, we do this pretty pragmatically. Just as you can't construct a piece of furniture without the right equipment, you can't construct an argument without books: they are the tools of our trade. Accordingly, a lot of the time, we read the bits of a book that we need to read, don't worry too much about the rest and move on to the next one. Some books, though, are more profoundly important than this. Occasionally we read a History book for pleasure, and very occasionally we come across one that influences us deeply and stays with us forever; one that we will return to again and again purely for the joy of reading it. These are the books we wished we had written. Over the years I have found plenty of these, and their qualities are hard to define: scrupulous scholarship is essential, as are stimulating ideas and accessibility. These three things are surprisingly hard to find in combination: scholarly books are often very useful but rather dry, whilst imaginative, readable books often lack the erudition of more serious works.

On Christmas Day 1976, however, I wasn't really thinking like this when I unwrapped the book which, more than any other, gave me my life-long love of History. The book was *People in History* by R.J. Unstead and it transformed my nine-year old life. It's a big, thick book, over 500 pages long (the pleasantly large print accounts for much of the length), and it's a series of forty or so potted biographies of great individuals, all of them heroic and all chosen 'to stir the imagination and shape the lives of ordinary people'. Most of them are English, but some are Welsh, Scottish or Irish, ten of them are women, and it's arranged chronologically: the first biography is of 'Caractacus, the Brave Chief' and the last is of Alexander Fleming (the book was first published in 1957). In between there are descriptions of the lives of people you will have heard of like Alfred of Wessex, 'Master Will Shakespeare' and Florence Nightingale, and others you might know less well: St Margaret, Queen of Scotland and 'Montrose, the Great Marquis', for example. But the delight in these portraits lies in the way they are written – like stories, with real people talking to each other in thoroughly unhistorical ways. Here is King Harold after his victory at the battle of Stamford Bridge, rejecting his brother's advice to ravage the countryside and deprive William of Normandy's army of food: 'How can I hurt my own people? We have beaten one foe, let us now drive out these Norman wolves'. And listen to Admiral Penn talking to Samuel Pepys after the Great Fire of London: 'This is a melancholy business Mr Pepys. All London burning and nothing to be done, save you and I to dig holes for cheese!' To our ears, the style is unashamedly old-fashioned and maybe even a bit silly. All of the saints, patriots, inventors, explorers, kings and queens are described in glowing, highly-coloured terms – none of them ever did anything wrong or had a selfish thought. But it was a perfect introduction to History (the lovely maps and drawings helped, too; I particularly recall the one entitled 'King Henry II flies into a terrible rage') and for all its anachronisms and one-sidedness, it conveyed an excitement about the past that has never left me, even as I developed a Historian's sceptical and questioning instincts.

So what inspired your love of History? Was it a History book, or a historical novel? Maybe it was a film or a TV show. I'm absolutely thrilled that you all now have the chance to reveal your History passions and your History pet hates in LJR. So get writing. Who knows, it might be the start of a lifetime's work.

Turner Ruggi reviews **Chernow's** biography of **Alexander Hamilton...**

At its release in 2004, Chernow's biography of Alexander Hamilton – the fascinating story of an obscure founding father – went somewhat overlooked. Now, after Lin-Manuel Miranda's smash hit 2015 musical, the charismatic former Treasury Secretary is almost a household name. With tickets sold out for the foreseeable future, many have taken to Chernow's book to get their Hamilton fix: Chernow delivers immense insight into the exciting (and sometimes scandalous) life of a figure whose powerful rivals wanted to erase him from history. What Chernow does best of all is balance his heroic actions with his controversial failures.

The biography begins with Hamilton's remarkable childhood. Born the illegitimate son of a prostitute on the Caribbean island of Nevis, his rise to become one of the most powerful men in America is all the more impressive. Chernow notices the parallels between Hamilton's defiant character and his courageous mother, who ran away from her husband despite the legal ramifications this would cause: "In her proud defiance of persecution, her mental toughness, and her willingness to court controversy, it is hard to see a startling preview of her son's passionately wilful behaviour." His humble upbringing is at least partially responsible for his newfound popularity in the 21st century, as the story of an underdog who worked his way up from the bottom on hard work alone resonates now more than ever.

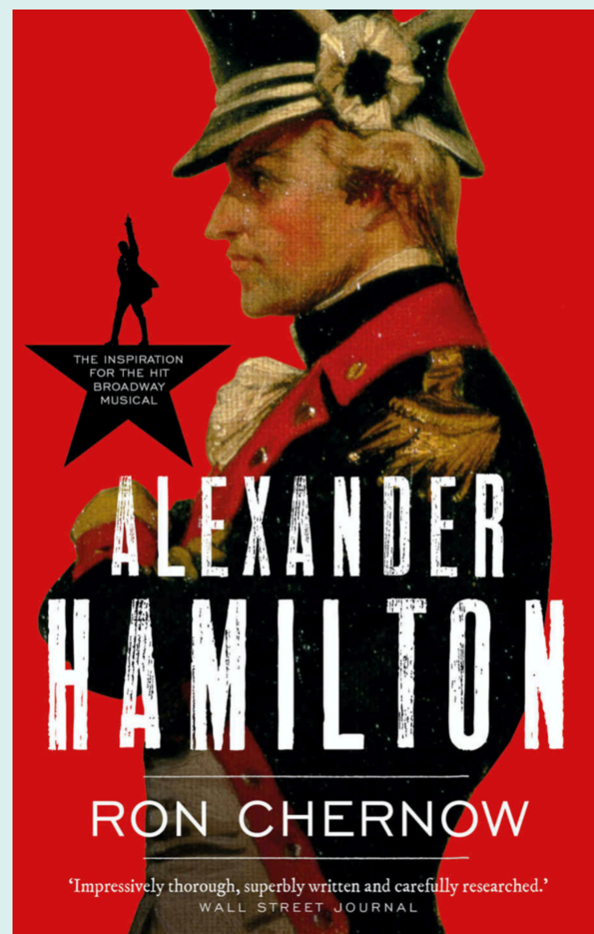
While many now marvel at Hamilton's social climb and his meritocratic spirit, his political views were often very conservative, even by late 18th-century standards. Despite being America's most prominent foreign-born citizen, Hamilton ironically felt that "the mass [of aliens] ought to be obliged to leave the country". These views originated in part because Hamilton overcompensated for his common birth by attempting to live like an honourable aristocrat and look down on others. It was this same passion for honour that landed the Treasury Secretary in so many duels (including the one that killed him in 1804 against Aaron Burr). His political stances could at times seem dictatorial, such as his support of the controversial Sedition Act (1798) that criminalised criticising the government. These old-fashioned views ran parallel to his more forward-thinking ones, such as being firmly against slavery and envisioning industrial America a quarter of a century before the rest of the primarily agrarian nation caught on. Chernow doesn't present Hamilton as straddling these beliefs simultaneously: instead the author tries to draw a distinction between the young and old Hamilton, with the cut-off in around 1797. The younger Alexander is ambitious, driven, and dangerously hard-working, whereas the older Hamilton is hot-headed, paranoid and often aggressive. Despite this drastic shift, Chernow conveys how seamless this change was and marks out where Hamilton's darker turn is foreshadowed in his early life.

Possibly the most striking aspect of Hamilton's life is his murky morals. Chernow is keen to present Hamilton as a remarkable man with "flagrant errors" that brought about his downfall. Even when narrating Alexander's mistakes, Chernow still conveys Hamilton as the victim, arguing his enemies mercilessly pounded these failures over his head for the rest of his life. Chernow tells the unfounded stories Hamilton's rivals said about him. In one, Thomas Jefferson says the greatest men to ever live are Sir Francis Bacon, Newton and John Locke to which Hamilton supposedly responds, "the greatest man that ever lived was Julius Caesar",

suggesting Hamilton loved tyrannical dictators. Chernow then points out that Hamilton's papers are actually filled with pejorative references to Caesar; Hamilton had even called Jefferson himself Caesar as an insult – a far cry from idolising the Roman General. The myths of Hamilton were undoubtedly exaggerated; his foes branded him a closet monarchist, a wannabe Caesar, and an ambitious elitist, but Chernow makes it clear these fears were unfounded. The author's description of early American political life shows how ruthless party members could be with no concern for the truth: Hamilton was in fact a champion for democracy who had defended the American Constitution more than anyone else.

Perhaps where Hamilton evokes the most sympathy is in his post-mortem treatment. After Hamilton's death in 1804, America was led by his rivals – the Republicans – for the next twenty years. Under their rule, Alexander's reputation was successfully obliterated and he was virtually dissolved from history. As a result, for the past two centuries the picture of Hamilton has often been a negative one, considering him a morally bankrupt ambitious warlord, able to manipulate anyone including the President. This was the common view of Hamilton, until this biography. Chernow performs a great service to this once-forgotten founding father by finally giving him the credit he deserves for his incredible career as the first American Secretary to the Treasury and party leader. Hamilton deserves at least partial credit for a plethora of valuable American institutions: Wall Street, the Coast Guard, and the *New York Post*. His lasting influence on the US has led him to be immortalised on the American ten-dollar bill.

At times, Hamilton's mistakes can be hard to read: despite his apparent genius, Hamilton was prone to making foolish errors that even a six-year-old could recognise as a terrible idea. The infamous *Reynolds Pamphlet* in which he publicly confessed to having an affair was disastrous for his political life. As was his childish pamphlet attacking John Adams, which was full of petty personal grievances that made Hamilton appear vengeful and self-absorbed, such as complaining that Adams didn't make him a general. Not to mention the paradox, where by Hamilton ended said pamphlet by urging voters to vote for John Adams despite this attack; in Chernow's words, "for a man of Hamilton's incomparable intellect, the pamphlet was a crazily botched job, an extended tantrum in print". In one instance, Hamilton endorsed a plan to invade South America with himself at the head of the army, which Chernow described as "one of the most flagrant instances of poor judgement" given there hardly was an American army to begin with. The impression Chernow gives of Hamilton both being highly intelligent and at times impulsive makes an intriguing insight into an extraordinary ,and at times, perplexing man.



Prior to producing the musical, when Lin-Manuel Miranda first read Hamilton's biography, he was surprised that no one else had dramatized this incredible life. Undoubtedly, Hamilton lived in a tense moment of history and was personally involved in most of the dramatic turning points of the era. If his life had to be summed up in one word it would be controversy: Hamilton prompted extreme loyalty or extreme loathing. There was no in-between. For anyone interested in the riveting true story of a rise and fall from power like no other, this biography is a must-read.

Willem de mol van Otterloo reviews 'Bismark: A Life", by **Jonathan Steinberg**...

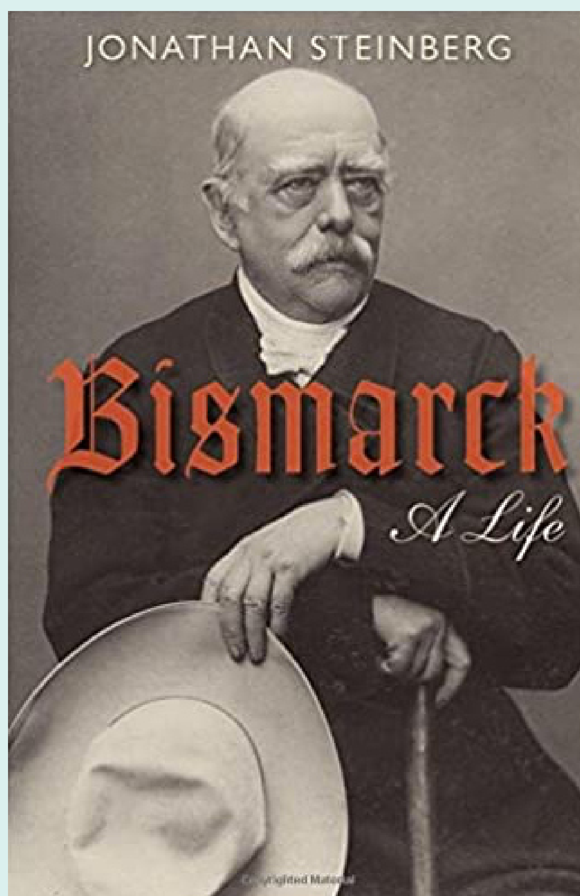
On 23 September 1862, at the end of his political tether and in a desperate roll of the dice, King Wilhelm I appointed Otto von Bismarck as Minister-President of Prussia. For better or for worse, the King entrusted the fate of his nation in the hands of a political genius of verve, vindictiveness and cunning. In *Bismarck: A Life*, not only does Jonathan Steinberg analyse the methods, triumphs and failures of this pragmatic tactician, but he also unravels a complex character who, although seemingly aloof and undeniably full of hatred, simultaneously magnetised those around him with his warmth and charm. As Steinberg puts it: "Bismarck's personality had such contradictions in it that it could be experienced as positive or negative – angelic or demonic – sometimes both at the same time". Steinberg replaces the falsehood of Bismarck as a satanic (Ludwig Windthorst once called him *'le diable'*) and power-hungry despot with an image of a monarchical servant, who served king and country to the very end.

Bismarck arguably achieved more for Prussia and Germany than any other statesman did for their nation in the 19th century. Within a period of nine years, Bismarck had defeated and subdued Austria in the Austro-Prussian War, shattered the façade of the supposedly invincible French army in the Franco-Prussian War and unified the states of the German Confederation (except for Austria) into Germany. The fact that he did this 'without commanding an army, and without the ability to give an order to the humblest common soldier … in the face of almost universal hostility,' as Steinberg justly asserts, is all the more testament to this political polymath who created, refined and then mastered the art of *realpolitik*. Bismarck demonstrated that in many ways, *realpolitik* is the skill of burning international bridges and then rebuilding them when it suits one's interests. Despite defeating and humiliating Austria in the Austro-Prussian War, Bismarck was careful not to exact painful reparations or annex any territories, opening the door for an Austro-German reconciliation. This materialised in 1873 in the form of the League of the Three Emperors (*Dreikaiserbund*) an alliance of Kaiser Wilhelm I, Tsar Alexander II of Russia, and Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria-Hungary. The shrewd adroitness with which he conducted his *realpolitik* deserves further mention. In order to provoke France into declaring war against Prussia, Bismarck cunningly edited and published a recording of a conversation between Kaiser Wilhelm I and Ambassador Vincent Benedetti, a French diplomat. The offensive nature of this telegram was the last straw in a longer deterioration of Franco-Prussian relations, and so, on 19 July 1870 the French declared war on Prussia. With a few deft strokes of the hand Bismarck had engineered a conflict that would unite the fractured and disparate German states under Prussia, a crucial step in the establishment of Prussia as a European superpower. Certainly, in this instance, the proverb 'the pen is mightier than the sword,' rings very true.

However, what is most remarkable about Steinberg's biography of Bismarck is not his narrative of the historical monuments Bismarck left behind, but the revealing description of Bismarck's character. It would be impossible to describe Bismarck's character with a single word since his very nature was coloured by duality. Bismarck never had a fixed disposition: in parallel to his political approach, his character was flexible and fluctuating. He was famed for his irascible temperament – a conflict over the stamp duty on postal transfers resulted in one of his most renowned rages – and his scorn caused him to refuse his son the bride he loved, merely due to her Catholic origin. However, at the same time he could radiate warmth and enchant his audience. A friend of his, Hildegard von Spitzemberg, noted in her diary 'the apparent contradictions in the powerful personality are of such intense magic, that I am bewitched anew every time'. To many

Bismarck seemed cold, aloof perhaps even inhuman, due to the lack of kindness as much as to the feats that he accomplished. However, Steinberg also uncovers the human side of Bismarck: a hapless romantic, who fell more than once in and out of love. Arguably his most significant flame, in terms of the extent of infatuation as opposed to the number of sexual milestones passed, was Marie von Thadden, who was married to his friend Moritz von Blackenburg. Her death only at the age of 24 had a significant impact on Bismarck, triggering many important decisions in his life. Despite the fact that both of his parents had already passed away, Bismarck writes that this was 'really the first time that I have lost somebody through death … whose passing leaves an unexpected hole in my circle of life'. It is in the evaluation of the depth and dimension of Bismarck's character that Steinberg's book exceeds every biography before and after it.

Bismarck has frequently been called a dictator and tyrant (Disraeli wrote that 'he is a complete despot here (Prussia)'). Steinberg justly asserts that this is to misunderstand the nature of Chancellor of the German Empire and whence it conceived its authority. In a parliamentary state, the head of government depends on the confidence of the majority of the parliament; however, in Germany, the chancellor depended on the confidence of the Kaiser. Bismarck's authority completely rested on his relationship with the King and his manipulation of the liminal space between monarch and parliament. Bismarck made sure that the King was wholly dependent on solely him. In one of his more comical moments Steinberg tells us of how "He [Bismarck] ruled Germany by making himself indispensable to a decent, kindly, old man, who happened to be king." Perhaps the most perceptive observation of Steinberg is the irony of Bismarck's authority: that being the powerlessness of the Iron Chancellor. Despite having done more to shape Prussia and Germany than anyone before and after him, Bismarck never had the political leverage many have thought he possessed. Bismarck never possessed a majority in parliament, nor did he have a mass following outside, to put it simply, Bismarck had a public of one. The longevity of Bismarck's tenure is a result of his hate/love relationship with the monarch: when the monarch was displeased with Bismarck, Bismarck would retaliate with the threat of resignation, something Kaiser Wilhelm could not accept because of the extent to which Bismarck had become a centre piece in the maintenance of royal absolutism. Yet, when Bismarck did the same to the new Kaiser, Wilhelm II, the impetuous, young monarch called Bismarck's bluff and accepted his resignation. In the end, it was a King that made him and a King that befell him.



Many politicians and statesmen have made famous quotes that they could not live up to. However, when Otto von Bismarck stated, 'politics is the art of the possible,' he went one further: he showed us that politics is the art of making the impossible seem possible. Bismarck: A Life is unsurpassable in its evaluation of Bismarck's character as much as its depiction of his extraordinary triumphs. It brings us palpably close to the most puzzling and perhaps greatest statesman of the last two centuries.

Theo Ruppel discusses a 'History of the World in Twleve Maps' by **Jerry Brotton…**

Brotton considers twelve maps, detailing personal and global influences on their creation their social, global impact, and what they can tell us about the people and societies producing them. Through this he develops his argument that all mapmakers cannot fully achieve their aims.

During this lockdown one of my favourite escapist activities has been sitting in the sun in my garden reading. Weather permitting, I would go outside after lunch, gather a few cushions and settle down on the grass for an hour or two, my company, *A History of the World in Twelve Maps*. The well written, precise book allowed the Easter holidays – threatened with becoming a depressingly dull time due to the lockdown – to become a useful break in which I could rediscover my limited yet amicable relationship with reading. Zooming in on the creation of maps from Ptolemy's startlingly accurate world map [fig 1] and how it established the scientific tradition of geography, to the religious world portrayed in the Hereford Mappa Mundi, and the politics and technology behind Google Earth, each chapter tells a detailed, personal yet precise and comprehensive story of the creation and consequences of certain maps.

In Each chapter Brotton explains how the subject map wanted to explain the world around it, drawing parallels and contrasts with rival maps and discussing the people behind its creation. He writes with an ability to focus on both the global and personal factors influencing the creation of each map. One chapter on a series of maps used to outline the Treaty of Tordesillas describes the magnitude of this literally global decision, as well as the personal disaffection of the Portuguese creator of the Spanish-biased maps in a dispute over the Treaty 20 years later. Equally this balance of focus on major and minor influences and outcomes keeps the writing entertaining in a way that many other histories lack. Finally, I found this book a very easy format to read. Each of the twelve chapters, between 30 and 50 pages long, about an hour reading, allowing it to be read one chapter a day which I found helped me, not a hugely avid reader, stay motivated to keep reading each day.

Brotton's book was a good read for me; I recommend it to those with or without an interest in geopolitics, particularly those studying History or Geography. Its well-defined structure makes it approachable; held in tandem with a very high level of detail and precise and fascinating writing.

Abhay Goel reviews the film **LA 92**...

LA 92 is an insightful, two-hour documentary film directed by Daniel Lindsay and TJ Martin with National Geographic, about the riots in Los Angeles in 1992, produced for the 25th anniversary of the incidents that took place. These began after four LAPD officers were caught on tape committing acts of police brutality towards young black male Rodney King. This was in the same month that a jury unanimously found shopkeeper Soon Ja Du guilty of the 'voluntary manslaughter' of 15-year-old black girl Latasha Harlins and recommended the maximum sentence, only for Judge Joyce Karlin to go against this and to let her off with no prison time. The very next week, a man got a harsher sentence for kicking a dog; the justice system had just placed the value of a black life lower than that of a dog. These two events precipitated mass rioting, as an expression of anger and racial tensions. This started outside the courthouse in which the four police officers were acquitted, by a jury picked from an area that was 88% white and known to be the home of many police officers.

LA 92 is a brilliant, seamless and deeply shocking documentary film that I would thoroughly recommend watching. I was on the edge of my seat the whole time. When I watched this I directly felt the impact of the decisions, and when they showed footage of the riots, I really felt the fear but also the anger of the people rioting, the unity that they felt as a group but also the injustice that they felt, as well as the guilty consciences there from the looting that was going on.

One thing so brilliant about this film is that it is comprised entirely of clips from courthouses and news reports, and this is good because it allows us to see exactly how events unravelled, and how it was presented to the public; it also allows us to empathise and really feel the pain of the millions who were being told that if you weren't white it was acceptable to be hit 56 times and tasered out of consciousness whilst complying, and that there was no justice in the system. We see a black council member in the fight for peace vent his frustration on camera saying that "[he] tries to go and tell his children that justice is blind, and they reply that it is blind. It is so blind it cannot see people of colour." Many scenes were genuinely painful to watch, particularly the brutal violence on street corners such as that of Reginald Denny, and at times it is sickeningly emotional. This masterpiece is a stroke of directorial genius which cannot have been easy to create.

Throughout this film we see how divisions change and amplify. One thing that is interesting to see is that immediately after the ruling, people call for widespread riots, but also unity amongst black youths; we see two members of opposing gangs rip off their gang colours to show that they are willing to unify to fight the endemic racism that is deep within the system. However, we also see deterioration of this movement, as whilst it starts as a mass movement of hundreds of people walking down a street to confront police (who withdraw), it then breaks down into standing on street corners and looting. We see them attack any white person, dividing the movement, as they would throw bricks at cars, take out the driver and beat them – we see particularly harrowing footage of a white TV technician being beat close to death, and then spray painted black. This riot that started with a purpose turns to a free-for-all with an astonishing 916 structural fires across the city and looting of all property: we see one black shop owner confront the looters, arguing that he "[came from the same ghetto as them]", and was trying to make it out, just like them. However, the majority of shop owners in Los Angeles were Korean immigrants (as Ja Du was) and

this means that racial tensions that had already been present between the Koreans in the area and the Black people were exacerbated. There was a lack of police presence for which the police chief at the time Daryl Gates was later heavily criticised, especially as the mayor had even made sections of the National Guard available. This added to the racial tensions as the Koreans then had to take matters into their own hands, and we see unbelievable videos of live shoot-outs and stand-offs between regular citizens, all recorded from a distance as no news reporter was willing to enter the area. It is interesting to observe this deterioration of relations even amongst the ethnic minorities, which had previously been united in the face of discrimination; and we see many white people protesting outside the courthouse, all of whom are gone by the night, when conditions turn more hostile as ethnic minorities cannot find any other way of taking out their anger.

A link can certainly be made home to London and England with the 2011 Riots, which many of us would have seen; I remember in the Summer of 2011 seeing rioting in Barking, Hackney and Walthamstow, although there was rioting across London and in many other cities such as Birmingham and Manchester; there are parallels to be drawn to the shooting of Mark Duggan in questionable circumstances. Some of the images, and the sentiment of the people in the clips shown from the 1992 Riots, were certainly similar to some of those felt here.

This documentary film overall is a brilliantly vivid and eye-opening display of a historical event that signified the anger at the discrimination that had been going on to an extent for the past 50 years, but to an ever large one for the past 473 years; it is shameful that this continues, and how little we seem to have learnt over the past century. The directors deserve a lot of credit for their outstanding work in making it clear what is going on, linking it to previous protests and riots, all with absolutely no narration whatsoever, and no scripting.

"Tell me what's a black life worth
A bottle of juice is no excuse, the truth hurts
And even when you take the shit
Move counties get a lawyer, you can shake the shit
Ask Rodney, Latasha, and many more"
- Tupac Shakur, in 'I Wonder If Heaven Got A Ghetto'

Philip Yanakov discusses 'The Monuments Men' by **Bret Witter and Robert M.Edsel**...

When Germany capitulated in 1945, just about everybody had something to say about the War. Declassification saw incredible amounts of content ranging from war memoirs to political theorems published and widely read. There are many such narratives we have grown familiar with, many of which have been immortalised in films such as "Schindler's List" and "Saving Private Ryan". In Monuments Men Witter and Edsel investigate and uncover discusthe pieces of artwork that Hitler hunted down in his so-called 'Treasure Hunt'. Not only does the Fuehrer chase the art he held in high esteem, but he also desired to eradicate the art which he considered 'degenerate'. However, this exploration of a side of history that has been overlooked is what makes Monuments Men so captivating and charming.

As the Third Reich's hold over Europe started to finally shrink at the end of 1942, the art that had been stolen from Vichy France and other defeated countries by the regime started to very quickly gain importance. Many of the upper echelons of the Reich shipped their personal collections, as well as the works designated for the future Fuhrermuseum in Linz, back to the Fatherland. This situation became the pretext for the creation of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives programme, or the MFAA for short, led by pioneering American conservationist George Stout. The job of the MFAA was to reclaim and restore art that has become collateral of the war, and to protect the many buildings still at risk of destruction. The people who voluntarily chose to join the programme collectively became known as the Monuments Men.

The book chronologically follows the members of the MFAA as they followed the respective Allied campaigns they were assigned to, performing their duties with the limited resources they had. Not only is the topic fascinating, but the narrative manner in which the authors write allows the reader to engage in the book in more than just a historical-fact-listing sense. We uncover the feelings of characters on both sides of the conflict, as well as the personal motivations behind their decisions. In this way, someone who just wants a good-read will enjoy Monuments Men as much as an archivist desiring to learn about the history of European antiquities during the Second World War.

Although criticisms of the book are scarce and it outlines very well the events of the MFAA's contributions to the humanitarian conflicts of WWII, the book does come across as relatively shallow on the details at times (although this may be due to the work of the MFAA going by relatively undocumented in the first place, making it difficult to research). This does not significantly impact the book, as it still is a captivating narrative, but means one should not read it with the intention of discovering the history of the atrocities committed by the Nazis.

"Monuments Men" is a fantastic read, depicting a side of the War which many may not have heard about. The book also emphasises the debate of just how important the preservation of culture is to a society, and whether one should prioritise a great masterpiece of art over a life in a conflict. Many parallels can be drawn therefore between the work of the MFAA and the work of modern day conservators that strive to protect culture in current conflicts. Like many novels, the film that proceeds Monuments Men does not fully explore the depth of the book. However, if you are a George Clooney fan and you need a quick-fix for the book because of the exams arriving next week, the 'Monuments Men' film might just do it.