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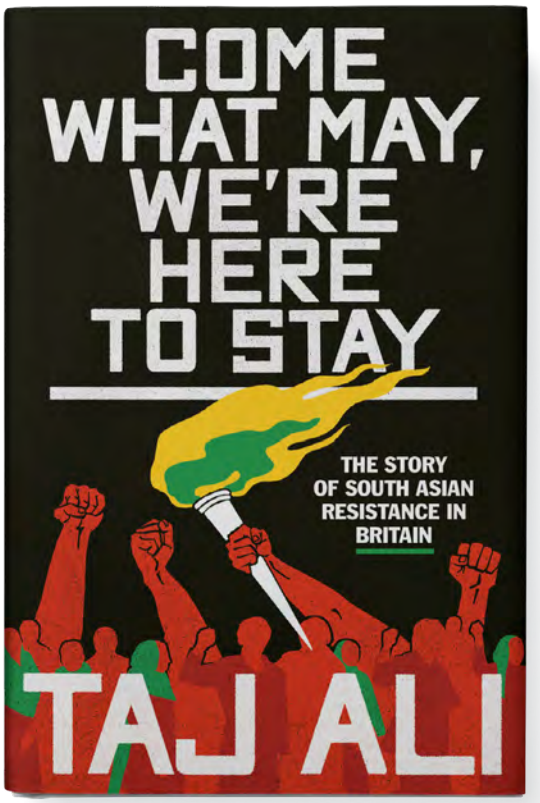
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Come what may, we're here to stay: *The story of South Asian resistance in Britain*

Taj Ali



The inspirational story of how British South Asians have organised against racism in the past and how they continue to fight in the present.

British South Asians have a long tradition of radical political activism. The 1970s and 1980s saw the community grappling with prejudice in the workplace and violence in the streets. But this history is deeper than you might think, from students agitating for independence at the heart of the British Empire to seafarers organising global strikes on the eve of the Second World War.

In *Come what may, we're here to stay*, Taj Ali reveals how successive generations fought for rights, dignity and a sense of belonging while actively shaping the country they now call home. He shows that British South Asian political life has often been defined less by religious difference than by shared commitments to anti-imperialism and anti-racism. In pursuit of these goals, alliances have been forged with other movements, from Irish republicanism to Black Power.

As racism rears its ugly head again, *Come what may, we're here to stay* asks: are we doomed to repeat the past or will we learn from our mistakes and build a better world together?

Taj Ali is a journalist and historian. He is the former editor of *Tribune* and regularly appears as a commentator on the BBC, as well as contributing to the *Guardian*, Al Jazeera English and others. In 2025 he set up Anti-Racist Radar, an organisation that monitors and reports on racist attacks in the UK.

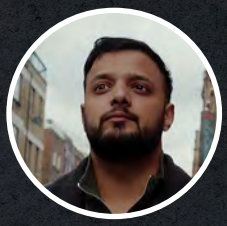
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September 2026 £20.00 | $29.95 Hardback 9781526177582 216x138mm 304 pages

EXCERPT



‘This is worse than America. This is worse than Harlem,’ said Malcolm X as he walked down Marshall Street in Smethwick. People heckled as he passed the red brick terraces. ‘We don’t want any more black people here. What’s your business here?’ demanded one white resident.

The invitation for Malcolm’s 1965 visit to Britain had been sent by Shirley Joshi, the wife of a leading member of the Indian Workers’ Association (IWA) from the West Midlands, Jagmohan Joshi. This was the era of political blackness, where being ‘black’ was about more than just skin colour. Members of the IWA had embraced Black Power politics and Malcolm X’s assertive stance on racism, advocating self-defence.

During his visit, Malcolm witnessed the colour bars enforced by many businesses. Among the starkest examples were the signs hanging outside numerous drinking establishments: ‘No Blacks’. ‘You know we don’t serve blacks,’ said a barmaid at the Blue Gates pub, refusing his entourage entry. Even Smethwick Labour Club operated a colour bar. In contrast, members of the local South Asian and Black communities greeted him with enthusiasm, viewing him as a man who not only understood their situation but articulated their desire for a better and more equitable life with passion and clarity. Malcolm’s visit was later described by the IWA as a ‘shot in the arm for the anti-racist struggle in Britain’.

In the years that followed, the IWA continued their campaigning. As well as fighting discrimination in the workplace, they played a pivotal role in the campaign against the colour bar. IWA members organised pub crawls with white university students, and the organisation’s leaders, such as Avtar Singh Jouhl, collated evidence of discrimination, causing racist landlords to lose their licences.



The Island Book of Records Volume III: *1971–72*

Edited by Neil Storey

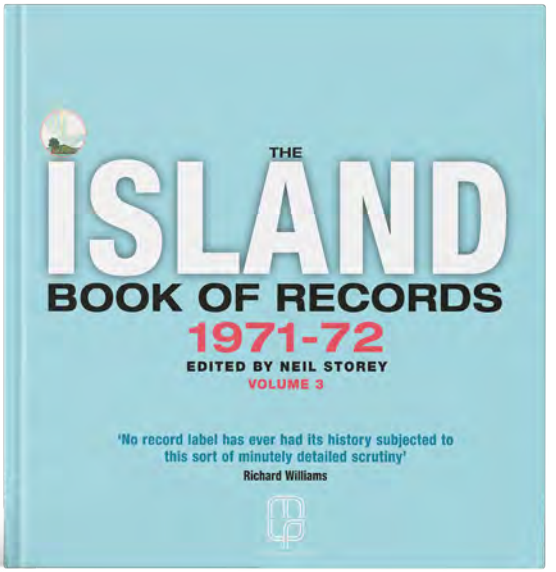
Praise for Volume II:

‘Perfection in print.’

Shindig! Magazine

‘Rich and lovingly curated.’

The Independent



The third in the acclaimed *Island Book of Records* series chronicles 1971–72, two years that saw the label secure a position at the forefront of contemporary music around the world.

Major albums from Cat Stevens, Emerson, Lake & Palmer and Jethro Tull brought international success. Traffic released their era-defining *The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys* and Island returned to its roots with the soundtrack to the most important Jamaican film of all time, *The Harder They Come*. Nick Drake’s masterpieces *Bryter Layter* and *Pink Moon* were yet to find their audience, but a new sensation emerged as Roxy Music released their first LP. Meanwhile, Bob Marley & The Wailers were beginning to record *Catch A Fire* – the album that will be the first to be detailed in IBoR 4.

Featuring material from recent interviews and commentary of the time, and including a comprehensive discography of 45s, the *Island Book of Records Volume III* is lavishly illustrated with album art, gig adverts, tickets, flyers, international LP variants, rare photos, LP and 45 adverts and exclusive ephemera.

Neil Storey has spent almost fifty years at the heart of the music industry. He joined the Island sales force in 1974 before going on to co-run the press office into the mid-1980s.



The Island Book of Records Volume II: *1969–70* | Edited by Neil Storey
£85.00 | $130.00 | Hardback
9781526182241

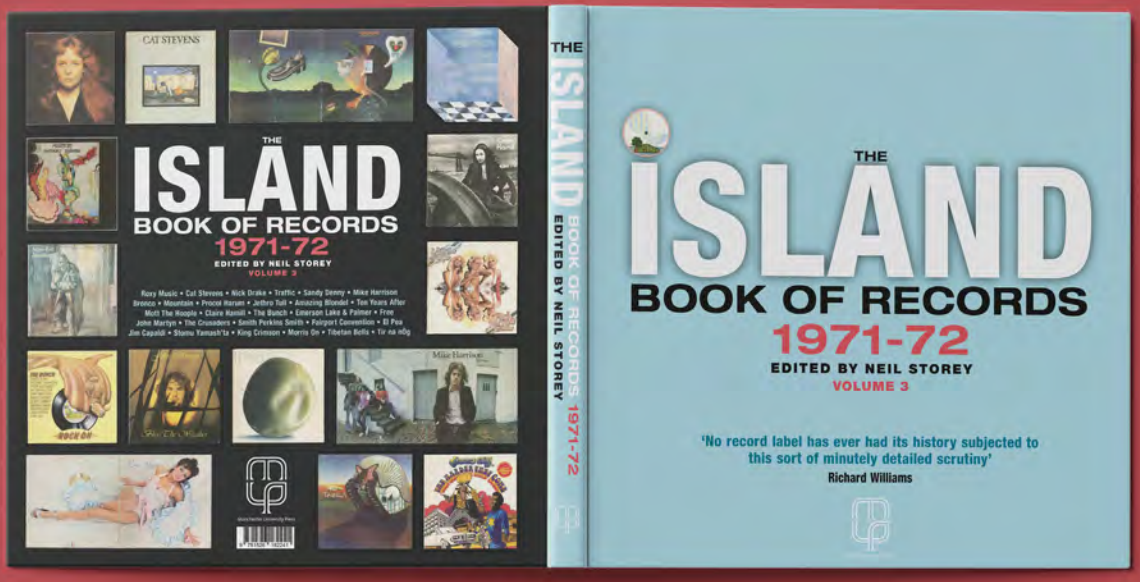


The Island Book of Records Volume I: *1959–68* | Edited by Neil Storey
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9781526173768

October 2026 £85.00 | $130.00 Hardback 9781807072995 500 colour illustrations 300x300mm 480 pages

‘It’s like entering the record shop of your dreams.’

David Hepworth, author, podcaster
and *Radio Times* columnist






THE
ISLAND
BOOK OF RECORDS
1971-72
EDITED BY NEIL STOREY
VOLUME 3
'No record label has ever had its history subjected to this sort of minutely detailed scrutiny'
Richard Williams
PENCILLUS • HB 2


ILPS 9202 Jimmy Cliff • The Harder They Come (OST)
Jimmy Cliff
THE HARDER THEY COME

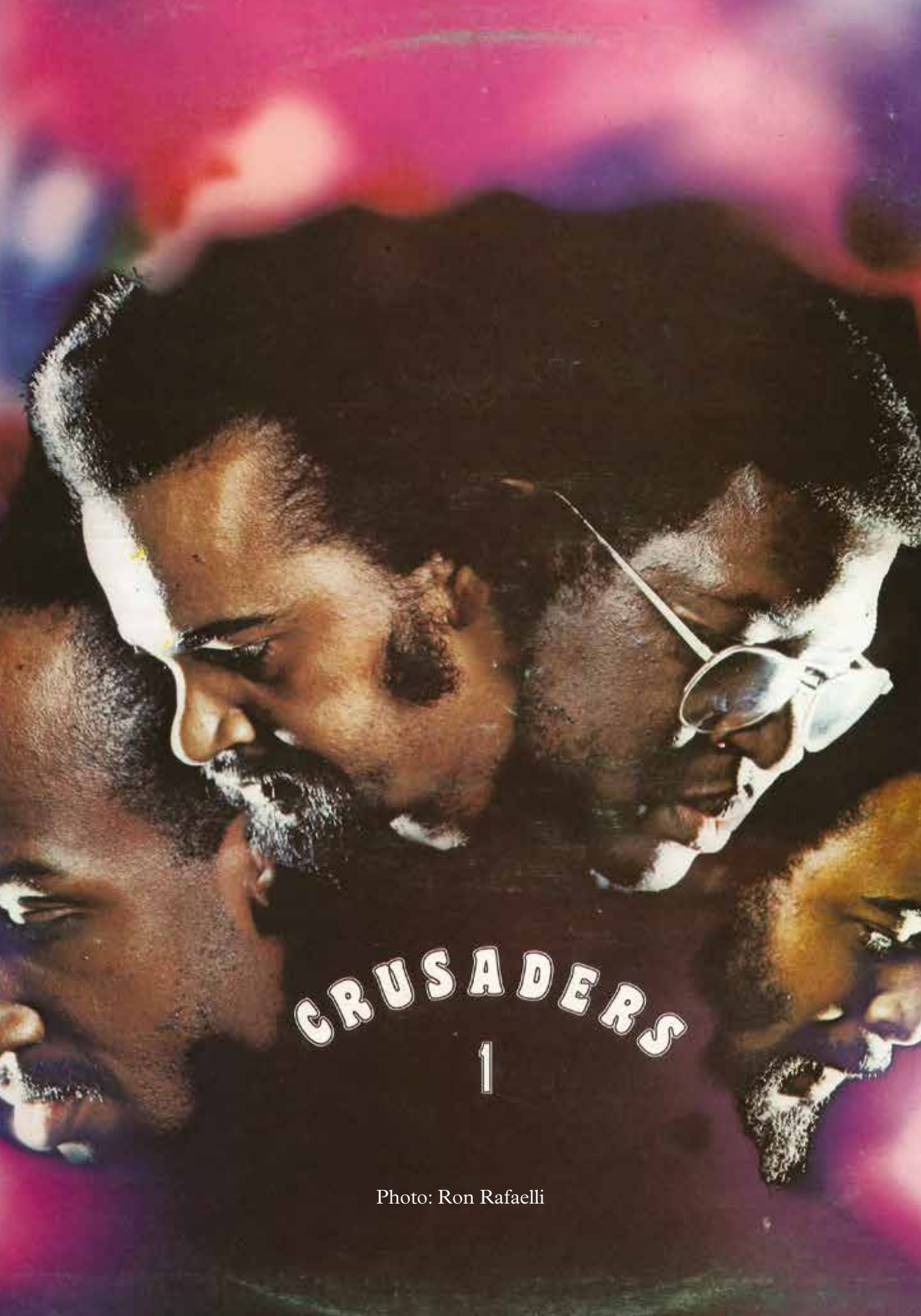
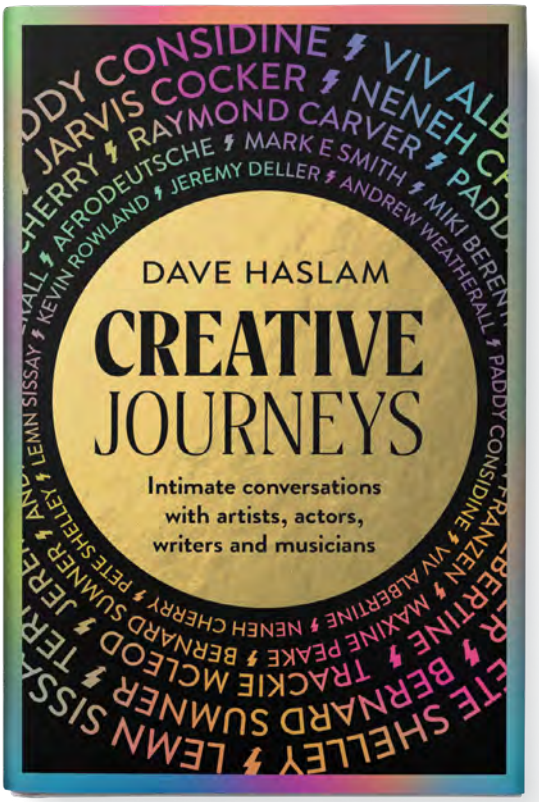


Photo: Ron Rafaelli

Creative journeys: *Intimate conversations with artists, actors, writers and musicians*

Dave Haslam

Dave Haslam presents conversations with artistic trailblazers.



Over forty years, DJ, writer and broadcaster Dave Haslam has interviewed some of the most fascinating figures in music, literature, film and art. *Creative journeys* gathers revelatory conversations with creative characters including Neneh Cherry, Maxine Peake, Lemn Sissay, Andrew Weatherall, Raymond Carver and Jeremy Deller.

From politics and performance to art, fame and addiction, Haslam's interviewees speak with honesty about their creative journeys. Viv Albertine discusses 'Typical Girls' and Paddy Considine recalls *Dead Man's Shoes*. Jarvis Cocker goes deep into *This Is Hardcore*. Terry Hall and Miki Berenyi speak about childhood trauma. Bernard Sumner recalls the loss of Ian Curtis. Jonathan Franzen talks about torturing his characters. There's darkness but much humour too.

The interviews provide fascinating stories of unorthodox, creative artists navigating negativity and personal setbacks to become celebrated cultural icons.

Dave Haslam has been described as a 'genius' by Courtney Love and an 'exceptional writer' by Olivia Laing. He has worked as a journalist, broadcaster, DJ and interviewer. In the mid-1980s he was running a fanzine, writing for the *NME* and beginning a 450-night DJ residency at the Haçienda. He has gone on to DJ internationally, curate art events across Europe and write five full-length books, including the acclaimed memoir *Sonic Youth Slept on My Floor* (2018).

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October 2026 £20.00 | $29.95 Hardback 9781526197214 16 black & white illustrations 234x156mm 400 pages



Jeremy Deller

Photo: Simon Cole



Neneh Cherry

Photo: Elsepth Mary Moore

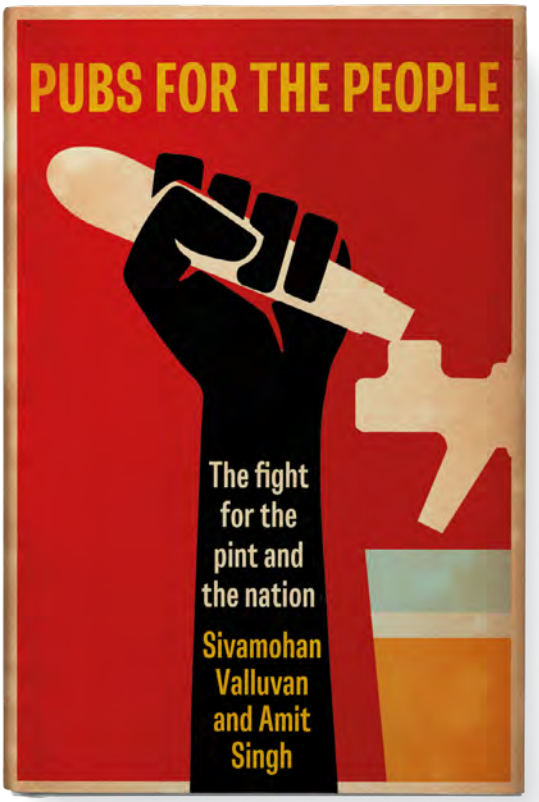
Featuring interviews with:

Terry Hall
Jarvis Cocker
Raymond Carver
Paddy Considine
Viv Albertine
Neneh Cherry
Pete Shelley
Lemn Sissay
Kevin Rowland
Mark E. Smith
Miki Berenyi
Jonathan Franzen
Maxine Peake
Bernard Sumner
Andrew Weatherall
Afrodeutsche
Trackie McLeod
Jeremy Deller

Pubs for the people: *The fight for the pint and the nation*

Sivamohan Valluvan and
Amit Singh

A heartfelt case for why the English pub still matters and how we can save it.



In *Pubs for the people*, Amit Singh and Sivamohan Valluvan offer a daring defence of the humble public house, waging battle against those who see the pub only as a poignant symbol of a bygone England.

Making a journey into the nation's living room, they blend tales of Singh's father – the founder of London's first 'Desi pub' – with a lively travelogue that carries them from a hipster nightmare in Shoreditch to an izakaya-inspired Eccles pub run by migrants from Hong Kong. Along the way, they take on private equity, yuppie gentrifiers and culture-war blowhards who use the pub as a prop for their rage-baiting patriotism.

Life today can seem lonelier, angrier and poorer than it did before. But as Singh and Valluvan show, the pub offers the inviting prospect of a more equal, sociable and comfortably multiracial England.

Sivamohan Valluvan is a sociologist at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *The Clamour of Nationalism: Race and Nation in Twenty-First-Century Britain* (2019). His writing has appeared in the *Guardian*, *Renewal*, *Salvage*, *Red Pepper* and *Progressive Review*.

Amit Singh is a sociologist at University College London. He is the author of *Cancelled Futures: Class, Race, and Place in Post-Industrial Britain* (2026). He would, in another life, have been a fourth-generation publican.

October 2026 £18.99 | $27.95 Hardback 9781526194541 4 black & white illustrations 216x138mm 264 pages

EXCERPT





Kully was driving us towards The Soho Tavern, a pub off the Soho Road. Famed for its mixed grill, the Soho Tavern is part of a thriving Midlands desi pub scene. This would be the first stop on a tour that took us towards West Bromwich and then Smethwick, visiting The Vine, The Red Cow and The Woodlands.

Our instruction to Kully was to show us some of his favoured desi pubs in the area, helping situate our opening portrait of Glassy Junction within a wider canvas – returning us to those questions about how today's England understands its peoples. Who belongs and who doesn't, who is the victim and who is to blame, who shall be 'sent back' and who shall be granted the mercy to remain?

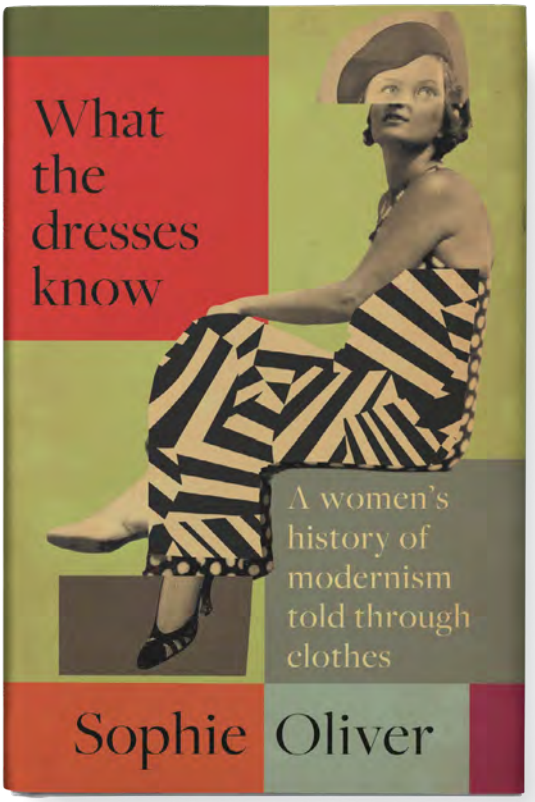
And though the desi pub, and perhaps the West Midlands too, is far too niche to be able to carry all these burdens, it also represents a vital glimpse of solace that isn't about desipubs at all. It instead speaks as one witness to the very different pubs, in many different places, where community is improvised beyond the dictates of national authenticity. The desi pub, though more intimately a story of Amit's father, Amit's uncle, Amit and Vallu, it also a story about all of us and the futures that await.



What the dresses know: *A women's history of modernism told through clothes*

Sophie Oliver

An exciting new history of modernism that re-examines the movement through some of its most brilliant female artists.



Pioneering women were at the heart of the movement known as modernism. In *What the dresses know*, Sophie Oliver offers a new account of their radical experiments and extraordinary lives, told through the clothes they made and wore.

From a dress Vanessa Bell rescued from the London Blitz to Frida Kahlo's *huipiles* and a waistcoat embroidered for Gertrude Stein by Alice B. Toklas, these special objects tell a story of artists seeking transformation. But getting dressed is rarely straightforward. Modernist women used clothes to think through the contradictions of the modern world: the inequalities of industrialisation, the terrible conformities demanded by fascism and racism and the call of feminists, socialists and avant-gardists to act differently and take up new forms of art.

What the dresses know is an exhilarating account of women's bold attempts to make history during years of tumultuous change. A distinctive new voice in cultural criticism, Sophie Oliver uses clothes to explore the challenges modernist women faced – and to understand her own impulses in writing about them.

Sophie Oliver is a critic, curator and academic at the University of Liverpool, where she teaches modernism and feminism. An AHRC/BBC New Generation Thinker, she writes for the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Literary Review* and *Art Review* and has curated exhibitions at the British Library, the National Poetry Library and the Harry Ransom Center.

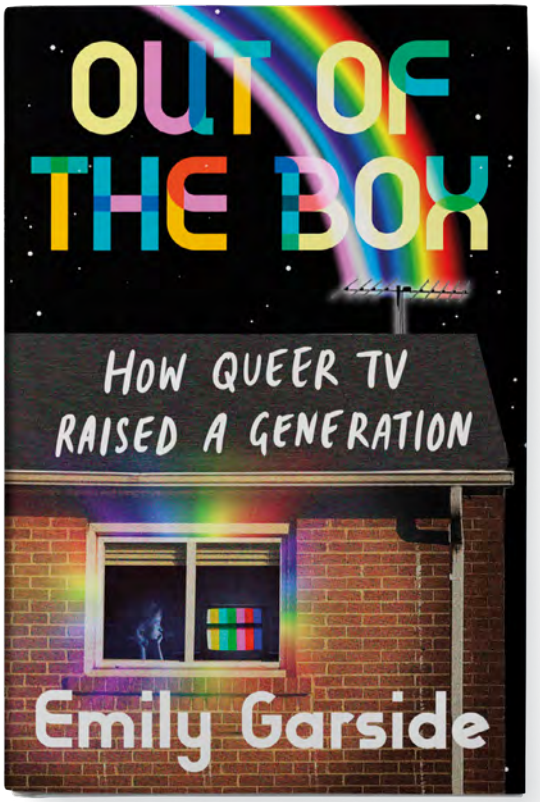
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November 2026 £20.00 | $29.95 Hardback 9781526180520 8 colour illustrations, 47 black & white illustrations 216x138mm 352 pages

Out of the box:
How queer TV raised a generation

Emily Garside

A celebration of queer TV's past, present and exciting future.



In *Out of the box*, Emily Garside takes the reader on a tour through the colourful, complicated world of queer television – where representation is never just entertainment. Examining a wide array of programmes, from *Queer as Folk* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to *Schitt's Creek* and *Heartstopper*, she explores how queer viewers find themselves in the stories TV tells.

Part I dives into the genres that have shaped queer visibility on screen, from the closeted tensions of TV drama to the evolving landscape of sitcoms, musicals, sci-fi and period pieces. Whether it's gay aliens, campy dance numbers or the queerness hidden in historical narratives, these chapters reveal how genre both limits and liberates LGBTQ+ storytelling.

Part II turns to the stories themselves: queer teens navigating first love, coming-out arcs, the thorny politics of sex on screen and the lasting need for AIDS narratives. The book also tackles the negative sides of queer TV, from queerbaiting to the 'bury your gays' trope, and looks at how fans push back through creativity and fanfiction.

Emily Garside is a writer, cultural critic and proud professional nerd based in Cardiff. With a PhD in theatrical responses to the AIDS crisis, she is a go-to voice on LGBTQ+ theatre and queer storytelling. She is the author of several non-fiction books, including *Love That Journey for Me: The Queer Revolution of Schitt's Creek* (2021) and *Gay Aliens and Queer Folk: How Russell T. Davies Changed TV* (2023), and has written for *The Queer Review*, *Slate*, the BBC and *The Stage*. She also writes fiction and plays.

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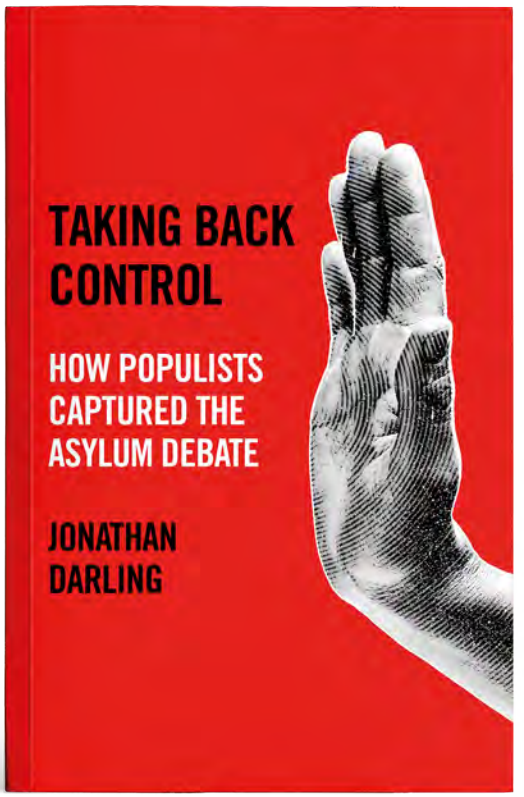
emigarside

January 2027 £18.99 | $27.95 Hardback 9781526187734 216 x 138mm 312 pages

Taking back control: *How populists captured the asylum debate*

Jonathan Darling

An eye-opening account of how right-wing populists have captured the debate on asylum.



Since the 2019 general election, Britain's relationship to asylum has shifted dramatically. As successive governments have struggled to retain support, the rise of unscrupulous political entrepreneurs and clickbait media has brought openly repressive policies crashing into the mainstream.

In *Taking back control*, Jonathan Darling tracks how this shift took place and exposes its devastating effects on British politics. Focusing on boats, hotels, barracks and removal flights, he shows how asylum seekers have been made a focal point for public resentment and how serious policy has been replaced with spectacles of performative cruelty.

From proposals to install wave machines in the English Channel to the costly fiasco of the Rwanda plan, the government has flaunted international law and wasted millions in taxpayers' money on schemes with no prospect of success. *Taking back control* explains how we got here while offering pathways to a more welcoming future.

Jonathan Darling is Professor of Human Geography at Durham University. His research has informed parliamentary inquiries by the Home Affairs Committee and the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, and a High Court Case surrounding the use of former military sites for accommodating asylum seekers. He is a regular commentator on migration and asylum in national and international media.

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February 2027 £14.99 | $21.95 Paperback 9781526188625 198x129mm 264 pages

Welcome to fabulous Las Vegas: *The neon legacy of Betty Willis*

Isobel Harbison

The untold story of the world's most famous neon sign and the extraordinary woman who created it.



Las Vegas in the 1950s and 1960s was a city coming out of wartime and into the public eye. All it needed was the right person to light it up – and against all the odds, that person was Betty Willis.

With the Cold War heating up and A-bomb tests going off just outside of town, Willis led a diverse team of glassblowers, metalworkers and electricians in a bold project to illuminate the desert sky. Her iconic neon creations would attract gamblers, filmmakers and artists from across the world. But working in an industry dominated by men, in a town run by the mob, presented its share of challenges.

Welcome to fabulous Las Vegas charts the career of one of the twentieth century's most brilliant designers. It is an epic tale of a city and the people who built it, from famous showgirls and entertainers with their names in lights to the women and men working behind the scenes.

Isobel Harbison writes on art and culture for a range of magazines, including the *Financial Times*, the *London Review of Books*, the *London Magazine*, *The Baffler* and *Tolka*. Her work has been shortlisted for the Hay Festival Writer's Award and nominated for The Pushcart Prize. She is a senior lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London.

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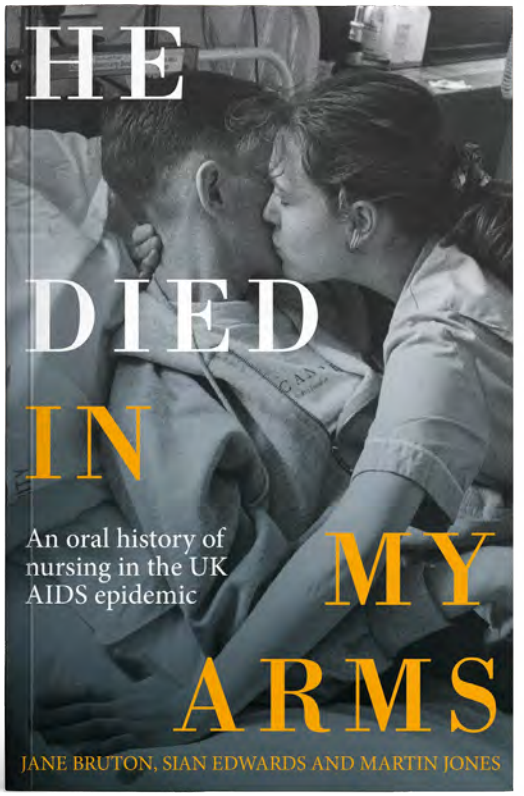
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February 2027 £20.00 | $29.95 Hardback 9781526179227 13 black & white illustrations 216x138mm 312 pages

He died in my arms: *An oral history of nursing in the UK AIDS epidemic*

Jane Bruton, Sian Edwards and Martin Jones

A powerful oral history of the nurses whose dedication and compassion transformed HIV care in the UK.



With the sudden arrival of AIDS in the UK, healthcare workers confronted a new, deadly and highly stigmatised disease. They had little prior knowledge but deep moral resolve. This book tells their story in their words.

The early response to AIDS was shaped by homophobia, conservative moralising and media fearmongering. Against this, nurses and midwives fought for the dignity, rights and autonomy of their patients, mostly young gay men and drug users marginalised by society and facing profound discrimination. Working alongside activists and patients, they tore down the old traditions of nursing and did things differently.

Featuring the real voices of twenty-seven nurses, *He died in my arms* takes the reader inside the wards and hospices of the 1980s and 1990s, revealing the extraordinary truth of nursing in the AIDS era. It was an experience that profoundly changed the nurses who went through it. It would change nursing forever.

Jane Bruton was ward sister of the first purpose-built AIDS ward in the UK and has played an influential role in HIV nursing over the last four decades. She worked in Uganda and St Helena and taught nurses in Eastern Europe. Since retirement she continues to be involved in promoting awareness of HIV in nursing.

Sian Edwards has worked as a nurse in HIV care for over thirty years. Her experience includes both HIV clinical nursing and educational roles in the UK, Australia and Zambia. She is currently the manager of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Health Program in Melbourne, Australia.

Martin Jones worked as a nurse in HIV care from 1986 to 2025, in Cambridge and East Sussex. He has also worked in South Africa. He has written and blogged for *Nursing Times* and has several publications in peer-reviewed journals. He retired from HIV nursing in 2025.

February 2027 £14.99 | $21.95 Paperback 9781807073411 6 black & white illustrations 198x129mm 304 pages

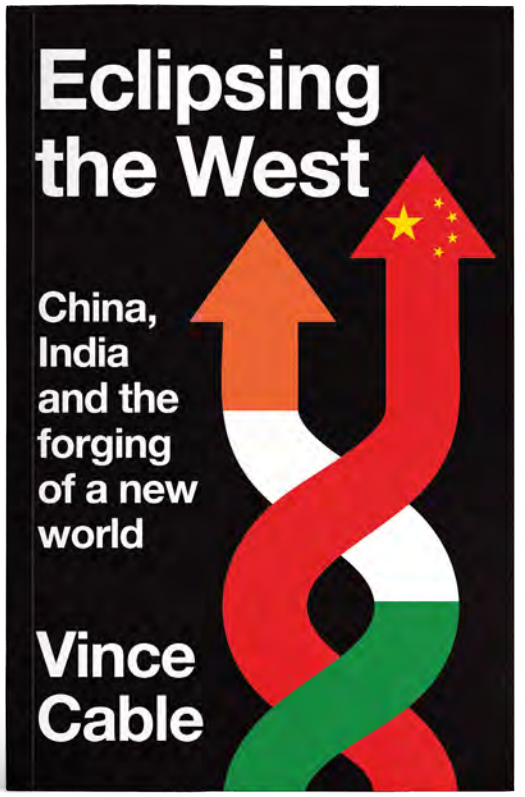
Eclipsing the West: *China, India and the forging of a new world*

Vince Cable

A *Financial Times* best book of 2025: economics

‘Succinct, authoritative and up-to-date.’

Kerry Brown, author of *The Great Reversal*



The Western-dominated world we have known for the past three hundred years is coming to an end. As America abandons its role as enforcer of the international order, other countries are moving in to fill the void. Among them are two rising Asian ‘superstates’.

Accounting for more than a third of the world’s population, China and India have the potential to wield enormous economic and political power. China is already vying with the US for the top spot in the global economy, and on some measures has surpassed it. By the middle of the century India may be number two. How will these countries navigate their growing roles on the world stage? What are the implications for commerce, international law and the fight against climate change?

Vince Cable has followed China and India for decades, first as a professional economist and later as a senior government minister. In *Eclipsing the West* he draws on the latest data and a lifetime of political and economic experience to offer a compelling account of what the rise of the Asian superstates means for the future.

Vince Cable is a Visiting Professor at London School of Economics and Political Science and a Distinguished Fellow at the Overseas Development Institute. He was previously UK Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills and President of the Board of Trade. He has a PhD in economics from the University of Glasgow and in the 1990s worked as Chief Economist for Shell. His books include *The Storm* (2009), *After the Storm* (2015), *Open Arms* (2017), *Money and Power* (2021) and *The Chinese Conundrum* (2022).

@vincecable

September 2026 £12.99 | $19.95 Paperback 9781526179845 34 black & white illustrations 198x129mm 352 pages

Folklore: *A journey through the past and present*

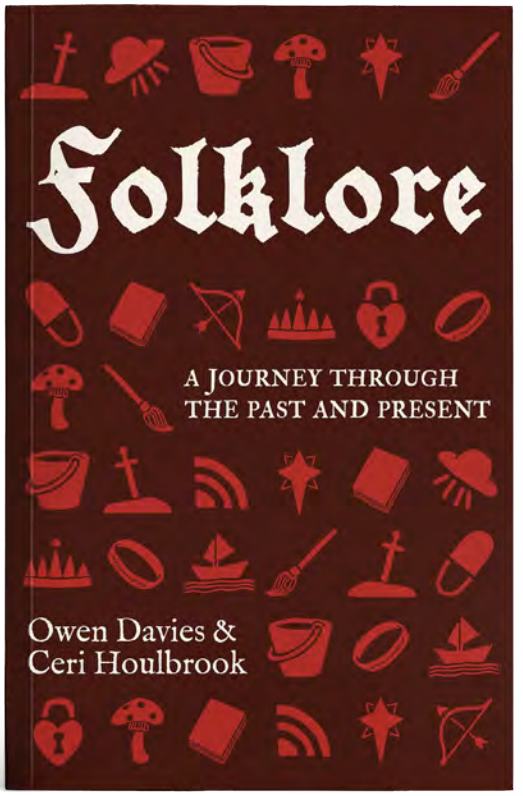
Owen Davies and Ceri Houlbrook

'Rich in strange stories and rewarding insights.'

Malcolm Gaskill, author of *The Ruin of All Witches*

'Inspiring, insightful, authoritative and entertaining.'

Marion Gibson, author of *Witchcraft*



In this unique, deeply researched book, two leading experts provide the definitive guide to British folklore past and present.

Owen Davies and Ceri Houlbrook explore folklore in all its remarkable variations, from village rituals and fairy tales to UFO legends and internet fanfiction. Travelling through a landscape of witches, wizards and wicker men, they reveal how folklore has been researched and written about in the past and show how it continues to be lived in the present. At the same time, they provide the reader with a valuable toolkit for understanding how to interpret the diverse examples given.

The book's key message is that folklore is much more than the fossilised remains of a distant, rural past. Folklore is and always has been ubiquitous, dynamic and political. It is a living tradition that draws from many sources, including migrant communities, and is forever being renewed and updated.

Owen Davies is Professor of Social History at the University of Hertfordshire. He is the author of numerous books, most recently *Art of Grimoire* and *Troubled by Faith: Insanity and the Supernatural in the Age of the Asylum* (both 2023). He has been described as Britain's foremost academic expert on the history of magic.

Ceri Houlbrook is Senior Lecturer in Folklore and History at the University of Hertfordshire. Her books include *The Magic of Coin-Trees* (2018), *Unlocking the Love-Lock* (2021) and *Ritual 'Litter' Redressed* (2022). In addition to her scholarly work, she writes folklore-inspired fiction.

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September 2026 £12.99 | $19.95 Paperback 9781526180407 27 black & white illustrations 198x129mm 336 pages



‘A compelling argument
for the evergreen, sprouting
nature of folklore.’

Zoe Gilbert, author of *Folk*

‘A magnificent exploration
of why folklore is important to today.
Essential reading for
all budding folklorists.’

Lally MacBeth, author of *The Lost Folk*







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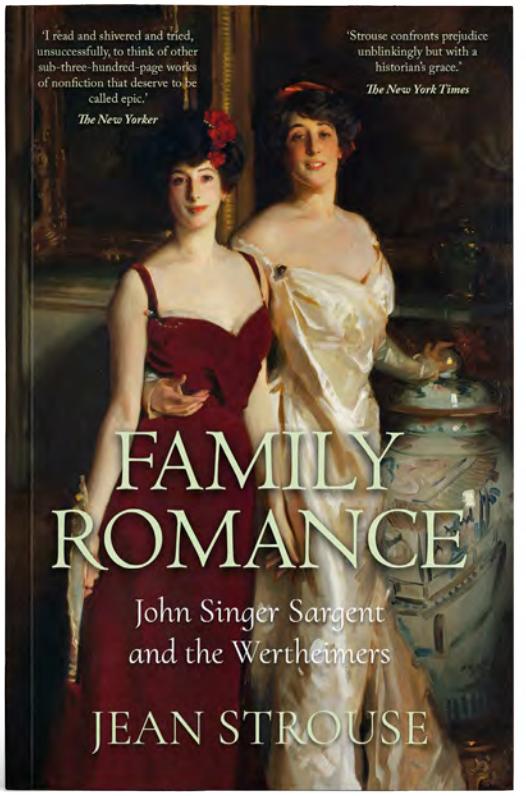
Family Romance: *John Singer Sargent and the Wertheimers*

Jean Strouse

Finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography

‘As finely crafted as the portraits it describes.’

Wall Street Journal



In *Family Romance*, Jean Strouse tells the story of John Singer Sargent and his relationship with the Wertheimer family, structured around the twelve portraits he painted of them between 1898 and 1908.

Asher Wertheimer was a London art dealer of German-Jewish descent. A prominent figure of the Edwardian age, he was at ease among Rothschilds, royals, journalists and aristocrats. In commissioning Sargent to paint a series of portraits of his family, he became the American expatriate artist’s most important patron, as well as a close personal friend.

Recreating the world of turn-of-the-century London, Strouse gives a dramatic account of these extraordinary lives, a tale that encompasses intrigue, tragedy and resounding success. At the same time she traces the decline of the British aristocracy and the rise of new power and wealth on both sides of the Atlantic, a transformation that Sargent captured brilliantly in his art.

Jean Strouse is the author of *Morgan: American Financier* and *Alice James: A Biography*, which won the Bancroft Prize in American History and Diplomacy. Her essays and reviews have appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *New York Times*, *Architectural Digest* and *Newsweek*. She lives in New York City.

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Into being: *The radical craft of memoir and its power to transform*

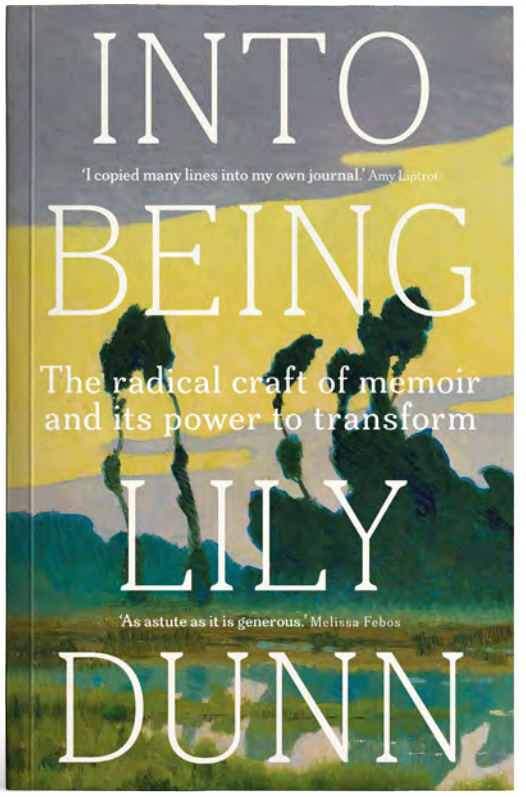
Lily Dunn

‘I copied many lines into my own journal.’

Amy Liptrot, author of *The Outrun*

‘As astute as it is generous.’

Melissa Febos, author of *Girlhood*



Into being is an essential guide to writing radical and empowering memoir. Drawing on her experience as a memoirist and a teacher of creative writing, Lily Dunn presents the ground-breaking idea that the craft of memoir itself can offer a form of transformation.

Dunn demystifies the memoirist’s art, helping readers to find meaning in raw experience and elevate the personal to the universal. She considers compelling questions, from why our memories give greater significance to certain events to how we can write honestly without intruding too far into the lives of our loved ones. She also explores how writers are extending the memoir form to create something hybrid, playful and subversive.

In an age of social media, filled with confessions, re-inventions and distortions of the self, the question of what it means to be an individual is more urgent than ever. *Into being* shows readers how to turn writing memoir into a journey of discovery – one that can be shared with the whole world.

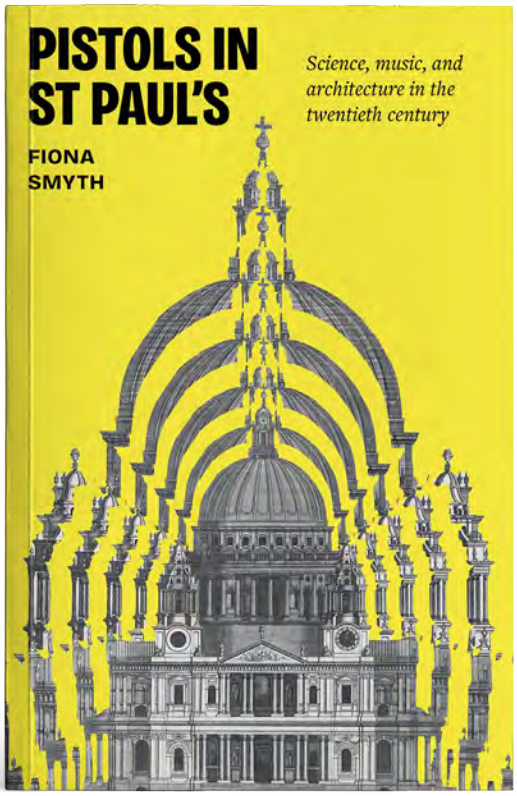
Lily Dunn is a memoirist, teacher and mentor. Her literary memoir *Sins of My Father: A Daughter, a Cult, a Wild Unravelling* was published to great acclaim in 2022, being named a best nonfiction book of the year by the *Guardian* and the *Spectator*. She is co-director of London Lit Lab and teaches creative writing at Bath Spa University.

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Pistols in St Paul's: *Science, music, and architecture in the twentieth century*

Fiona Smyth



Shortlisted for the Architectural Book Awards 2025, the Royal Historical Society First Book Prize and the SAHGB Alice Davis Hitchcock Medallion 2025.

'You will never see (or hear) a building in the same way again.'

Church Times

On a winter's night in 1951, shortly after Evensong, the interior of St Paul's Cathedral echoed with gunfire. This was no act of violence but a scientific demonstration of new techniques in acoustic measurement. It aimed to address a surprising question: could a building be a musical instrument?

Pistols in St Paul's tells the fascinating story of the scientists, architects and musicians who set out to answer this question. Beginning at the turn of the century, their innovative experiments, which took place at sites ranging from Herbert Baker's Assembly Chamber in Delhi to Abbey Road Studios and a disused munitions factory near Perivale, would come to define the field of 'architectural acoustics'. They culminated in 1951 with the opening of the Royal Festival Hall – the first building to be designed for musical tone.

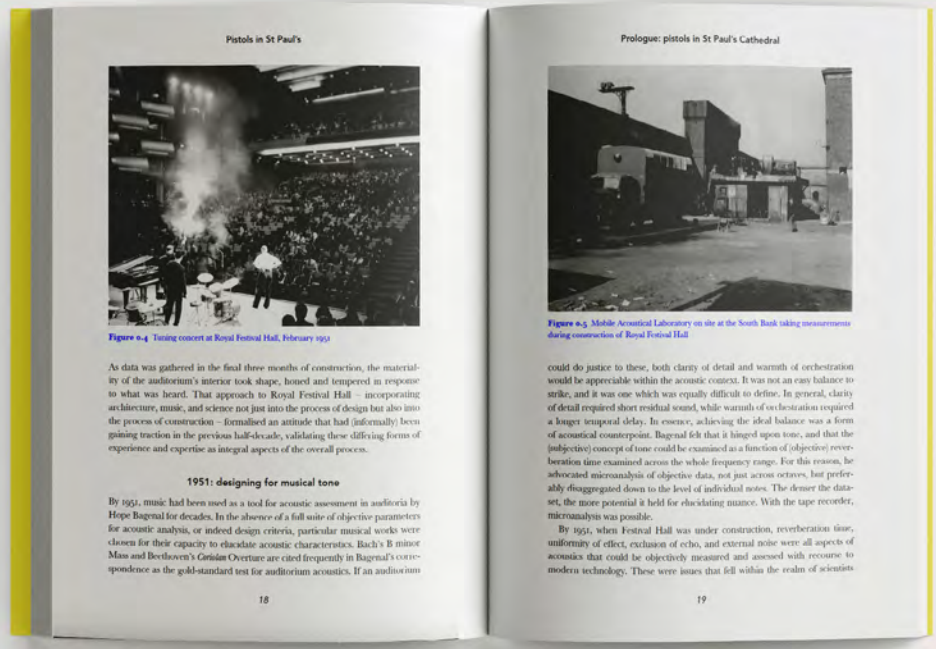
Deeply researched and richly illustrated, *Pistols in St Paul's* brings to light a scientific quest spanning half a century, one that demonstrates the power of international cooperation in the darkest of times.

Fiona Smyth is an Assistant Professor in Architectural History and Theory at the University of Cambridge. Her research has been awarded the Newman Medal for Architectural Acoustics by the Acoustical Society of America, the Stanley Smith Prize for Construction History by the Construction History Society and the Hawksmoor Medal for Architectural History by the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain.

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‘CAPTIVATING AND DEEPLY RESEARCHED.’

Joseph L. Clarke, author of *Echo’s Chambers*



Pistols in St Paul's

Figure 0.4 Tuning concert at Royal Festival Hall, February 1951

As data was gathered in the final three months of construction, the materiality of the auditorium's interior took shape, honed and tempered in response to what was heard. That approach to Royal Festival Hall – incorporating architecture, music, and science not just into the process of design but also into the process of construction – formalised an attitude that had (informally) been gaining traction in the previous half-decade, validating these differing forms of experience and expertise as integral aspects of the overall process.

1951: designing for musical tone

By 1951, music had been used as a tool for acoustic assessment in auditoria by Hope Bagenal for decades. In the absence of a full suite of objective parameters for acoustic analysis, or indeed design criteria, particular musical works were chosen for their capacity to elucidate acoustic characteristics. Bach's B minor Mass and Beethoven's Coriolan Overture are cited frequently in Bagenal's correspondence as the gold-standard test for auditorium acoustics. If an auditorium

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Prologue: pistols in St Paul's Cathedral

Figure 0.5 Mobile Acoustical Laboratory on site at the South Bank taking measurements during construction of Royal Festival Hall

could do justice to these, both clarity of detail and warmth of orchestration would be appreciable within the acoustic context. It was not an easy balance to strike, and it was one which was equally difficult to define. In general, clarity of detail required short residual sound, while warmth of orchestration required a longer temporal delay. In essence, achieving the ideal balance was a form of acoustical counterpoint. Bagenal felt that it hinged upon tone, and that the (subjective) concept of tone could be examined as a function of (objective) reverberation time examined across the whole frequency range. For this reason, he advocated microanalysis of objective data, not just across octaves, but preferably disaggregated down to the level of individual notes. The denser the dataset, the more potential it held for elucidating nuance. With the tape recorder, microanalysis was possible.

By 1951, when Festival Hall was under construction, reverberation time, uniformity of effect, exclusion of echo, and external noise were all aspects of acoustics that could be objectively measured and assessed with recourse to modern technology. These were issues that fell within the realm of scientists

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Bestsellers

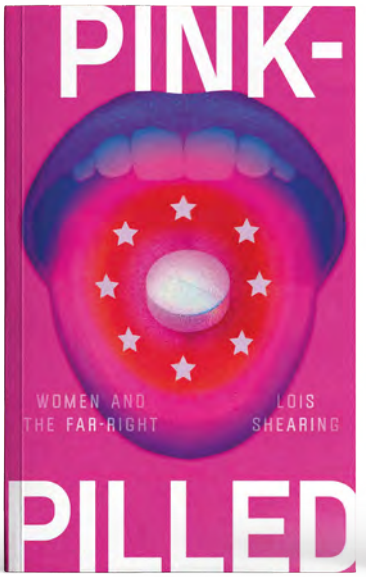


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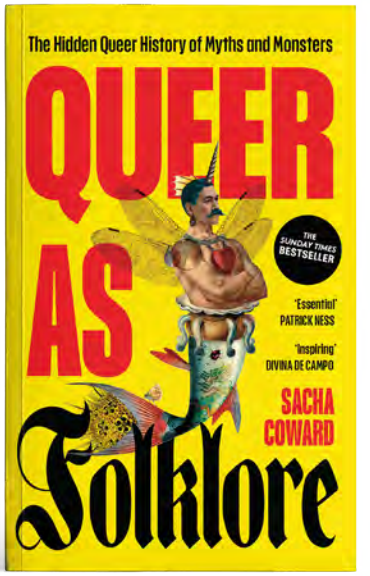


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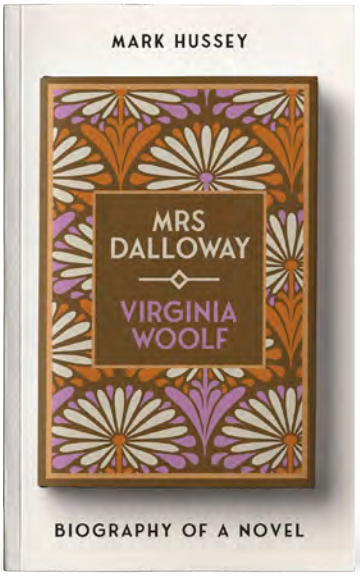


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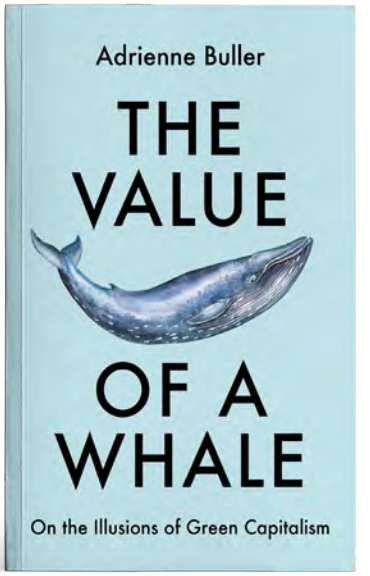


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