

The Observer

THE NEW REVIEW

SUNDAY 3 DECEMBER 2017

Five years after
the gang-rape and
murder of 23-year-old
Jyoti Singh on a Delhi bus,
**what has changed for
women in India?**

Special report by
Gethin Chamberlain and
Soudhriti Bhabani



A student at an
anti-rape rally
in Hyderabad,
September 2013.
Noah Seelam/
AFP/Getty

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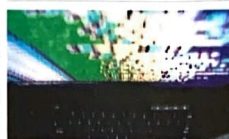
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As well as standing at the summit of great Doctors, Matt is a superb theatre actor and utterly delightful in person (Cover: interview with Matt Smith, star of *The Crown* and formerly *Doctor Who*). A genuine original who doesn't care what others think.

Eileen Rogers

Everyone has their own idea of what climate change looks like. For some, it's a polar bear on a melting iceberg. But for more and more girls, climate change is the baby in their arms as they watch their friends walk to school (Gethin Chamberlain: *Why climate change is creating a new generation of child brides*).

@Greenpeace on Twitter

Isabelle Huppert makes every character credible, human and fascinating (On My Radar). It follows that her comments on art are insightful, down to earth and generous.

melchiscott

The super-impressive Anna Soubry on fire in this interview (the Tory MP discusses Brexit with Rachel Cooke).

Chris Deerin @chrisdeerin

I'm looking forward to seeing a presidential portrait that is more than a guy in a suit looking all serious and, after watching a film about Wiley, knowing there will be vibrant colours (Q&A with Kehinde Wiley, the artist painting Barack Obama's portrait).

JoAnn chartler

It's good to see the can-do entrepreneurial spirit of endeavour that made this great nation what it is so enthusiastically displayed by Mr Lee (Stewart Lee: My futile attempt to sell satire to the *Daily Mail*). I think those killjoys at the *Mail* should be ashamed for not giving this hard-working fellow a contract.

freespeechoneach

I enjoyed hearing about this artist and his work (Tim Adams talks to Trevor Paglen). Here is someone with a mission and the know-how necessary to reveal the hidden world of surveillance that we are only just beginning to understand. A worthy objective for an artist in these times.

spartacus69

Paglen's satellite sounds amazing. I hope there will be an app to predict when it passes overhead.

JekonGregory

I have kept every single book I've owned. They are memory markers for places I've been and states of mind I've experienced. I doubt [my collection] will be replaced by an e-reader in the near future (Spinal columns: Mark Vessey's photographs of collections).

Starlight Zero-Niner

 Somewhere beneath A Thousand Splendid Suns
you drift towards a Brave New World.
The Sea stretches out before you
as you pass Fantastic Beasts and Beautiful Creatures.
For Days Without End you consider
How to Stop Worrying and Start Living,
when suddenly you spy Treasure Island.
You reach The Beach and head off Into the Wild.
This Must Be the Place, you think.
And sure enough, beyond
The River Cottage, and just East of Eden,
you find what you're looking for.

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Stewart Lee

Can Harry and Meghan make Britain whole again?

In 2005, the then 20-year-old Prince Harry appeared as a Nazi at a fancy dress party. Perhaps the uniform had been inherited from his great-grand-uncle, Edward VIII, who was not averse to a spot of recreational Sieg Heil.

But next year Prince Harry is to marry the mixed-race descendant of a black American slave, his wedding garments scrupulously stripped of any stray swastikas. Cosmic order is restored.

Has the Prince nobly taken upon himself the symbolic role of a healing force in our rapidly unravelling world, suddenly riven with the sort of open racism and fears of nuclear annihilations that we had assumed had been laid to rest? I'm all for 70s and 80s revivals, but these aren't the parts of my childhood I feel nostalgic for. A Fab Lolly, an Altered Images 12-inch remix and a vibrant trade union movement would have done.

Today, we need the hope that the forthcoming royal nuptials offer more than ever. Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's marriage could be a healing ritual for our ruined land, a joining of races that fascists would have us divide. But of course, the racist writing has been on the wall for years.

In 1965, during Eric Clapton's tenure in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, the phrase "Clapton Is God" began to be graffiti'd around London. But in 1966, Jimi Hendrix arrived in the city and Clapton was usurped, a seething Salieri to Hendrix's soaring Mozart.

Ten years later, on stage in Birmingham, a drunken Clapton praised Enoch Powell and declared, "Get the foreigners out, get the wogs out, get the coons out. Keep Britain white." The Rock Against Racism movement was formed soon after his pronouncement, and the Stranglers brought cowering strippers on stage with them to smash racism at a Victoria Park RAR concert. Different times.

Today, western world leaders openly praise neo-Nazis, but instead of forming a grass roots rock'n'roll resistance, young people remain passively plugged into their PS4s

playing PacMan Go, waiting for their brandied fuck-buddies to come round with some racyfying bong-weed, I expect, while laughing at You-net films of people gobbling down more cinnamon than is necessary, squandering bakers' dwindling spice reserves.

There's currently a cynical viral marketing campaign for Clapton's forthcoming Hyde Park show that sees the ancient phrase "Clapton Is God" sprayed up all around London once more by paid PR-vandals. I have prepared a stencil saying "Clapton is an alcoholic racist", but getting it out there doesn't, at the moment, seem like a great use of time. There are worse people to worry about than Clapton or, to give him his blues name, Mississippi Nigel Farage.

We should have seen all this coming, but I thought the culture wars were won when New Order got John Barnes to do a rap on their 1990 World Cup single. I expect I was too busy being ironically racist in a Shoreditch bar, drinking Grolsch from a pop-top bottle and toasting Tony Blair. It's not only Eric Clapton who has a shameful past.

Alarm bells should have been ringing. Somewhere around the turn of the century, in the perineal period between the ubiquity of email and the pervasive idiocy-tsunami of Twitter, my BNP-voting auntie sent me an attachment, typical of the era, designed to melt my snowflake mind.

It comprised a supposedly scientific study, using history and genetics, to prove that all Muslims were demonstrably culturally and morally inferior, and downright dangerous. Of course, a quick Google showed that neither the academic who wrote it, nor the institution he worked for, had ever existed, a discovery that one would have thought would discredit the piece.

But confronted with this evidence my auntie just said, "All the same, I think it makes a lot of good points." How pleased she would be, were she alive today, to know that her research reached the same exacting standards as that of the president of the United States of America.

This morning, on LBC radio, the professional wasps'-nest-poker Nick Ferrari was audibly rattled. Ferrari, a man who is 85% wazzock, and who has made a living out of inflaming the unstable passions of the "political correctness has gone mad" brigade, realised the monster robot he had reared on raw opinion meat and a vapour of Facebook hearsay was now beyond his control and he'd forgotten to install its emergency-stop button.

Cautiously describing Trump's Britain First-endorsing missive as "a tweet too far", Ferrari suddenly found his white-knuckled listeners largely disagreeing with him, and retorting that these videos needed to be aired, whether they were verifiable or not. Could straight-talking Ferrari smell the smoking torches of a previously loyal mob approaching his own mountaintop castle, his Jaguar F-type aflame on the brick-paved driveway?

On Monday, as Theresa May cautiously accepted that we will have

to pay for EU schemes we were already signed up for, and the inevitable impossibility of the fluid Irish border was at last made flesh, it seemed to me that the wheels had finally fallen of the lie-encrusted Brexit battleship.

But the quiet coup currently enacted by the billionaire tax-avoiders behind Brexit continued its forward motion, as cognitive dissonance drove their brainwashed leave-voting serfs to misdirect their ongoing anger towards everyone but themselves.

But Harry knows the power of symbols and he begins the enactment of a healing ritual. Has Harry, ever the self-aware prankster, chosen the tiny St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, as his wedding venue in a coded satirical message every bit as meaningful as the clearly pro-EU hat his grandmother wore at the opening of parliament last June?

In a comic pantomime of self-immolating isolationism, our next National Royal Ceremony will be performed in a room too small to accommodate all those who might have been expected to attend, in a building named after our national saint, a man famous for fighting something that didn't exist, a dragon as unreal as Boris Johnson's *Daily Telegraph* vision of a banana-hating EU.

The chapel's roof is decorated with heraldic animals. Guests might find themselves staring up at a unicorn, which canters away into the mist of myth, as gaseous as an NHS promise, the porous Irish border, the cake that can be eaten and had.

And here come the prince and his scion of slaves, to make us whole again. Meghan Markle. Her name even sounds like "Mrs Merkel", and she symbolises an America far better than Trump's, a virgin new land coming into conjugal union with a grizzled Britain that, like the Prince himself, could still choose to divest itself of its unattractive fascist garments and begin again.

Stewart Lee's Content Provider is in London until 3 February and continues to tour in 2018; see stewartlee.co.uk

ILLUSTRATION BY
DAVID FOLDVARI



SNAPSHOTS The real East Enders

Over 22 months, photographer Maryam Eisler scoured the streets of east London for colourful, interesting characters to photograph for her book *Voices: East London* (TransGlobe and Thames & Hudson £28). From a retired gangster to a pearly queen – and more established personalities, such as drag artist Jonny Woo – Eisler found many of her subjects by word of mouth or by chance on the street. Many have become lasting friends. "There's a great sense of camaraderie in east London, and it's a fertile ground for creativity," says Eisler. "Even despite gentrification, you still have a sense of community and unique thinking. People here have this incredible ability to reinvent themselves; they embrace change, like chameleons." Stacey Smith



PHILIP COLBERT 'He's a pop artist with incredible art history knowledge,' says Eisler. 'He lives and breathes theory.'



DOREEN GOLDING 'Doreen has been a pearly queen for more than 20 years – they collect money for charitable causes.'



LYALL HAKARAIA 'He's a designer and has worked with some of pop's biggest stars: Lady Gaga, Madonna, Beyoncé.'



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