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Article

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"Fundamental British Values": What's Fundamental? What's Value? and What's (Now) British?

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Abstract

Here we give shallow answers to the 'deep' questions raised in the title of this piece. We slight the question of 'value' as mainly 'interested commodities' and throw darkness rather than light on the now increasingly troubled question of 'British' identity. Our approach is not to define "Fundamental British Values" (FBV) (as we will show, that proved impossible) but to represent the multiplicity of contradictory contents that invest its form. In such a "performative agonistics", we anticipate a dissemination rather than an insemination of meaning in contrast with the ongoing neoliberal "rage for certainty". "Fundamental British Values," in Badiou's terms, is a polysemous "event," whose performances and contexts should be regarded within a series of theatrical metaphors—an "amphitheatre" of meanings, perhaps, in a "post-truth" world. Thus, these deconstructions should be seen as part of a more generic critique of neoliberal enclosures that seek for definitions, essences, identities, and quantifications.

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It is not doubt but certainty that drives you mad (Nietzsche, on Hamlet, cited in Zizek, 2015, p. 90)

We're never suspicious enough of words.. (Celine, 2006, p. 256)

Agon 1

There are a minimum of three questions to consider, as our title suggests. Each can be interrogated as a critical departure. The "first" conflict indicates how mere grammar can influence meaning through an unconsidered back door. The expression "Fundamental British Values" comprises two adjectives and a noun. Therefore, a minimum of three questions to consider, as our title suggests. Each can be interrogated as a critical excursion. "Fundamental British Values," capitalized as such, offers a singularity, a "noun phrase," a considerable reification: it offers a singularity. Three becomes One. The question "What *are* Fundamental British Values?" becomes "What *is* Fundamental British Values?" The notion, represented in this form, is a *thing* to be taught and learned. The form is the content, and the content is the form.

"Fundamental British Values" is also reductive. The potentially critical becomes technical. Indeed, in some curriculum talk, the notion is referred to by its initials as FBV, an operative deployment that is part of a moral and educational curriculum which can be taken more or less for granted, like its curricular cousins, Personal and Social Education (PSE), Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE), and so forth. As such, it becomes a curricular commodity that can be defined, assessed, and marked in the sense that migrants can pass or fail that status. Currently, the threshold is policed by "Life in the UK Test: the essential study guide for the British citizenship test" (2016, first published 2006). The cover boasts "Over 500,000 copies sold." Such a successful commodification of FBV is a "win-win" situation for a government making a profit (test fee in 2019 is £50) from people who it may want to keep out. And the idea that "migrants" might pay to be *excluded* from the UK must warm the coldest of Brexit hearts.

What does *agon 1* tell us about "Fundamental British Values"? One answer lies in the sequence "critical-technical-operative." It expresses an increasingly definitive UK relation between policy, professionalism, and practice whereby British teachers are operatives in a considerably deprofessionalized field. That is their "value." They move from critique and pedagogy to "deliverology" (Bower, 2016, p. 368). Teachers are not even the vendors of FBV. They are reduced to the status of couriers, (deliveroology?), mediating the transaction between the makers and retailers (the Government, assisted by the media) and the consumer/child/family household.

Agon 2

In *agon 1,* we began to scratch the surfaces of "Fundamental British Values" from a grammatical/ideological perspective. But what could the expression *perform*, as

opposed to define? Here, we want to put the term into a number of discursive contexts, treating it somewhat in the manner of Zizek as ".. inconsistent space traversed by a multitude of practices" Zizek (2015). First, as Bower points out, political discourse in the UK (and elsewhere) has been reduced to a "discipline of vacuity," mere sloganized injunctions. He draws on Blair, in particular: "the future not the past," "the many not the few" (one of Corbyn's few debts to Blair), "Britain deserves better," and "secure borders, safe haven" (2016, p. 249). It is fun to take apart that last slogan. It says "secure" [in!] "borders" [out!] "safe" [in!]. In, out, shake it all about: this is political hokey-cokey. The content is risible, but again it is the form that performs in the populist theater of educational politics. And the in/out of Brexit was a hell of a way for Boris & Co to end that particular dance. As Gary Younge concluded at the time: "The standard of our political discourse has fallen more precipitously than the pound and cannot be revived as easily" (*Guardian*, June 30, 2016), although we doubt any easy revival of the pound. So, of course, we will have to get "fit for purpose" and start "punching above our weight" while, of course, "going forward" (Ledwidge, 2012; Thompson, 2016; Boltansky & Esquerre, 2016 provide many other examples). It should be noted that this hypersimplification in the UK 2017 election back-fired—"the magical money tree" versus "strong" and "stable" "leadership" was perceived to be insultingly vague. According to Davies (2019, p. 9), such discourse offers "a new frontier in the marketization of politics." Parry also notes the reduction to "tabloid-style slogans" (Parry, 2019), while Meek reflects on the "mythic simplification" of such discourse, particularly in relation to the "dreamscape" rhetorics surrounding Brexit (an abbreviation for "British exit," referring to the U.K.'s decision in a June 23, 2016 referendum to leave the European Union). Brown's summary seems apposite: the Conservatives 'constructed a consummate political narrative ("the government can't spend money it hasn't got") to the politics of blame ("cleaning up the mess made by Labour") to the politics of fear ("the Greek bogey") to grand economic strategy ("reducing the deficit is a necessary condition for sustained recovery") (Brown, 2018, p. 356).

A second estrangement takes a different course. In analyzing World Bank reports, Moratti and Pestre note "semantic transformations," such as moves from the concrete to the abstract, from events to frameworks, industry to finance, and so on. They conclude there has been over time a "bureaucratisation" of the discourse that "self-organises around a few elements" in such a way that World Bank Reports read as "strangely metaphysical documents" (Morati & Pestre, 2013, pp. 76, 88, 91). Freedland offers a similar but apparently unconnected account of the different registers deployed by Conservative and Labour publications around the 2015 election. Labour also loves abstract nouns, like equality, fairness, aspiration, and opportunity, also reflected in Democrat-speak in the USA. The Tories, in contrast, speak a much more vernacular narrative—mending the roof/mess left by Labour/maxing out Britain's credit/driving the car into the ditch/ balancing the books/living within our means (see also Stronach et al., 2014 on "metaphors of the meltdown," where the global capitalist crisis is proleptically reduced (Thompson, 2016) to the tale of the Improvident Father in a strangely

efficacious argument-by-Old-Testament-parable). Freedland regards this as Labour losing the "war of metaphor," although we would rather call it a war of narratives, the one abstract and disembodied, the other a homely and family-oriented story of recovery by "hard-working families" as opposed to "benefit scroungers." A leading Conservative, Iain Duncan Smith, called this "strivers" versus "skivers"—a poetic labor that must have left him exhausted. Freedland concludes that Labour must "learn to speak human" (Freedland, 2015, July 15). There is an interesting paradox here: the American and French revolutions of the 18th century were full of powerful and polarized abstractions whose oppositions were historically productive (Arendt, 1977). The retreat from abstract reasoning to bed-time stories reflects the infantilization of political debate, via a highly strategic process. As ever, the form is much more sophisticated and performative than the banal content.

These stultifying tendencies are reflected in both precautionary (e.g., "Prevent") and celebratory (e.g., "British Weeks") versions of FBV (see Hodkinson, 2020). The former looks suspiciously for signs of radicalization in relation to Muslim youth in particular, but its warning symptoms seem to include a more universal teenage-hood—character changes, losing interest in the previous activities, and secretive behavior (see Pattison, 2020a). More specific danger signs include "[s]howing a mistrust of mainstream media reports" and "[a]ppearing angry about government policies, especially foreign policy" (*Independent*, September 4, 2015, p. 4). (We refuse to state the obvious at this point.) Zuboff's account of "surveillance capitalism" is relevant (Zuboff, 2019), whereby increasing state/corporate power is extended via " instrumentarian power."

The latter FBV tendency celebrates a Britishness as an all-encompassing way of life, as in one school's fairly typical "British Week" (an FBV-sponsored ritual, May 2015). Furthermore, much is signified in this vein by the setting in which the anthem is performed. In the aforementioned school's British Week, the "climax was the children's performance of 'The National Anthem' – the children were dressed in red, white and blue for the occasion. Mrs Strickland said, 'I was really pleased with the respectful way in which the children sang the National Anthem'." If we pause to examine this off-the-cuff remark, most striking is the passive tense notion that the children "were dressed" in red, white, and blue, as if the colors were imposed on them. They sing the anthem and literally "flag" their engagement. Similar "celebrations" are common, as an online search revealed.

Agon 3

If thus far we have disrupted the FBV term itself and given it a contextual location as part of an impoverished political discourse, in *agon 3,* we can draw on the practices of Badiou (2005, 2013) and Zizek (2013, 2014, 2015) to deconstruct it further.

The most commonly invoked aspect of FBV (for brevity's sake, and perhaps levity's as well) is a cluster of concepts around the portmanteau notion of "freedom" (democracy, equality, liberty, fairness, etc.). Zizek links that notion of "freedom" to what he calls "wordless" capitalism (Zizek, 2015, p. 7). Such wordlessness

represents, without Representation of course, the "Real of the global market" Zizek (2015, p. 8). This "Real" is a Lacanian notion, or as Badiou might put it, a manifestation of the "void of being," an inevitable yet constitutive ontological lack (2005, p. 327). With a satiric nod to Donald Rumsfeld (but not to the unacknowledged antiquary of the "Johari window"), Zizek suggests we focus on a neglected quadrant of Rumsfeld's inventories of the "known" and the "unknown," the "unknown known" (Zizek, 2014, p. 12). So, we need to interrogate "Fundamental British Values" both in terms of what they claim to be (surface 1, see later), what they suppress (surface 2), and what they nevertheless enable through that expression-suppression (surface 3). Surfaces 1 and 2 are intentional, but surface 3 is consequential and somewhat unpredictable.

Zizek opens his argument with the couplet Greek/Barbarian, pointing out that in this juxtaposition, all the differences of the world become the Other, a catch-all of discrepant identities that need to be *fought* rather than *thought*. Arendt comments, ".nationalist concepts of citizenship depend to a very large extent upon the presence of the common enemy from abroad" (Arendt, 1977, p. 69; Arendt, 2013). Zizek calls this ".. an empty container for all such unfitting elements" (Zizek, 2014, p. 34). It is easy to see how this Othering might translate into the couplet British/unBritish, and even easier to see how it might explain American/unAmerican. This is difference as war, a violent semantics of "us" and "them." So far, so obvious.

Zizek then turns to the notion of "freedom." Our empirical exploration of the FBV phenomenon yielded "free market," "free choice," "free world," and even "entrepreneurs – of – the – self" (see also Zizek, 2015). This is the "dogmatic slumber of false freedom" (p. 60), and Zizek offers a striking contemporary illustration: "Whistleblowers […] render public the unfreedom that underlies the very situation in which we experience ourselves as free" (p. 59). Such governmentality, as Allen aptly puts it, reflects a reality where "government has finally learned to rule us through our freedoms" (Allen, 2014, p. 282). But behind all such "freedoms" and "flexibilities" lies the ghost of Marx's "reserve army of labour," differently mobilized in the form of "zero-hours" contracts and the like. British Values are serviced, indeed, by the precariat, whose values do not include freedom, fairness, justice, and equality. *Agon 3* illustrates the slipperiness of the notion of "freedom" as part of FBV. Fundamental British Values is officially defined as comprising "democracy, personal liberty, rule of law, and tolerance and mutual respect" (Home Office, 2015, p. 2). Obama seems to agree, characterizing British Values as "democracy, rule of law, open markets," although it is interesting to see capitalism as overt and positive "value" (Ash, *Guardian*, April 29, 2016).

On the other hand, Runciman is skeptical, arguing that financial values [implicit in "market capitalism"] are subject to "Gresham's Law" whereby "bad practices drive out good":

> A gun-slinging ethos can all too easily spread in which greed is good, nice guys finish last, and if you want loyalty go get yourself a cocker spaniel. (Runciman, 2016, p. 43)

But BBC Radio 4 remained upbeat: British Values aim to "uphold global democracy (December 4, 2015, 4.30 p.m.)." According to Arendt, such originary myths originate in an "unmastered past" (2013, p. 42), as for example, in Germany and in Israel. Devine offers examples from Scottish clans, including the "dreamscape" of the Campbells tracing themselves back to King Arthur (Meek, 2018). These notions of an "unmastered past" express FBV as a reflection of a "zombie imperialism" (Meek, 2018).

Each of these "value" couplets could be deconstructed in similar processes of scrutiny, looking in particular at "surface 3" effects created by "..a vicious cycle of two poles generating and presupposing each other" (Zizek, 2015), a consequential chaos. A final illustration of the oppositional couplet missing-in-action was supplied by then PM David Cameron. He posited the centenary of the Battle of Jutland as a fine expression of British Values, "They fought in defence of British Values" (*Press & Journal*, May 26, 2016). Cameron's account is historically nonsense but structurally perfect sense. British Values/extremism is the FBV couplet. It posits virtue against terror, friend against enemy, and good against bad. Thus, "Jutland" can offer "value" very well as an "interested commodity" expressive of friend/enemy, democracy/tyranny and can even be hailed as a victory/defeat narrative (although the Germans inconveniently won that battle).

It is significant that war should dominate metaphors hereabouts not least because "Jutland" was about imperial domination. Its "British Values" concerned "empire," with its inherent racism and exploitation, and rapacious global capitalism. Perhaps, the choice of metaphor had its own Unconscious. After all, Negri defines "empire" as "the ontological fabric in which all relations of power are woven together" (Negri, 2003, p. 18) and where ".. the whole of social life, production and reproduction and cooperation is subsumed by capital" (Negri, 2003, p. 13). "Jutland," then, can be seen as a confrontation of Capital by the capital ships of the British and German navies; a sort of FBV, all at sea.

Finally, Slavoj Zizek offers this conclusion: "Reference to traditional values enables individuals to justify their ruthless engagement in market competition in ethical terms" (Zizek, 2015, p. 170). Zuboff's recent analysis of "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2019) would presumably concur.

Agon 4

Here, we turn from "values" to their "Britishness." It was the Romans who made the "British," through "enslavement" according to Tacitus (1999, p. 17), certainly through colonization (see Hodkinson, 2020). And it may well be the anti-Romans (cf., Treaty of Rome) that will unmake it. In addition, the Brexit call for Britain to regain its political sovereignty ("we want our country back," "the will of the people," etc.) may not stop at the UK. Scotland has returned to that issue with calls for a second referendum by 2021. Northern Ireland is also unhappy. Powell's conclusion still stands: "Paradoxically, it is the Little Englanders who will have brought about the end of the

United Kingdom" (*Guardian*, June 30, Powell, 2016). As Blair noted: "Euroscepticism is a form of British nationalism, mostly confined to the most 'British' island nation, the English." (cited in Bower, 2016, p. 878). In which case, we can see invocations of "Fundamental British Values" as an oblique and tiny epitaph of imploded "empire."

An almost universal effect of that dynamic of past/present/future is a subordination of the "present" and the promotion of the Collective Individual (Douglas, 1980). The collectivity is reduced to an individual whose qualities define the nation or people, in what might be called a "manic tribalism" (Mishra, *Guardian*, July 25, Mishra, 2015). O'Toole sees this tribalism, with its determination to demonize "Europe," as a "weird need to dream England into a state of awful oppression" (*Guardian*, November 16, 2018, p. 11).

This manic tribalism has different aspects. Partly, it is the growing populist desire for national reclamation—wanting to get your country back (Farage, Trump, le Pen, Sturgeon, Putin). But national identity turns out to be an incoherence circling a perceived state of permanent loss, an enduring yet threatened presence as national essence, and a future promise that is never realized. Thus, essence, lack, and promise jostle in "heritage mania" (Boltansky & Esquerre, 2016, p. 34; Carter, 2019, for an extended narrative account), and in the proliferation of a "loose conglomeration" (Boltansky & Esquerre, 2016; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) of spectacles, commemorations, and public competitions—the burgeoning of "Poppy" Commemorations being the latest example.

The allusory Present summons the illusory Past. It seems that the less we are, the more we need to be. So, there is a "British" claim to be fair, free, and friendly down the ages from time immemorial, and yet at the same time, a "Sleeping Beauty" who has been dormant for a hundred years, but is now ready to re-awaken. The theme is well encapsulated as "a loss of some primordial unity and harmony which never existed, which is just a retroactive illusion" (Davis, 2015; Zizek, 2014, pp. 49–50; Nabulsi, 2017).

More prosaically, there are inventories of particular values that seem to itemize this identity. Thus, official UK accounts of FBV portray "Britishness" as expressing the Individual-as-Citizen committed to "democracy, personal liberty, rule of law, and tolerance and mutual respect" (2015, p. 2), although it may be significant that PM Theresa May in interview substituted "enterprise" for "tolerance and mutual respect" (Radio 4, November 12, 2016). The Casey report also trumpets the "British Values of tolerance, inclusion and equality" (Casey, *Guardian*, December 5, Casey, 2016a).

As Fox points out, there is a futility in such inventories. Her anthropology of Englishness prefers to regard it as a dynamic, circling around notions of a competitive, arrogant "one downmanship" and more centrally "dis-ease" (Fox, 2014, p. 539, 557). Alan Bennett would certainly see them as constitutive of a founding English hypocrisy, although he is either smart enough or English enough to personally plead guilty ("What we do best is lip service," Bennett, 2016, p. 349).

Nor have such invocations of national essence or identity ever been stable over time. As Shapiro points out, Shakespeare had a Tudor identity that was clearly

"English" and celebratory ("This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England") (Shakespeare, 1993, p. 388; Shapiro, 2015, p. 206). And then came a Stuart sponsorship that emphasized Britishness rather than Englishness following the Union of the English and Scottish Crowns in 1603. Thus, the Fool, in *King Lear*, is licensed to opine: "Then shall the realm of Albion/Come to great confusion" (Shapiro, 2015, p. 34). But the conventional British originary myth reverses that with the component parts united (more or less) with the accession of James VI and Ist, when Shakespeare slyly rewrote "English" history in British terms, including even "fee fi fo fum I smell the blood of a *British* man" (Shakespeare, 1993, our emphasis). It is a current irony that James even proposed a new currency for his new "Great Britain": it was to be called the "Unite."

National identity, then, is a political contingent, a circumstantial artifact rather than an essence. Its various inventories are largely mythic and contradictory (Bower, 2016, p. 885; Ebbutt, 1910; Fox, 2014; Tombs, 2015, p. 761). Graham Greene in "England made me," cites Musgrave (1583) "on a lawless people" who "will be Scottish when they will, and English at their pleasure" (Greene, 1982, p. 132). Robb is also excellent in dealing with the "debatable land" where identities emerge from "the black hole of border history" (2018, p. 91). Blair's list reflects the confusion of identities rather well: "both conformity and eccentricity, bluntness and reticence, deference and assertiveness, honesty and hypocrisy, community spirit and privacy" (cited in Bower, 2016, p. 885).

Agon 5

We turn now to look more specifically at "Britishness" and its other national components. Our strategy here is not to promote essences of national identity, whether British, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, or English but to assert hybridity and fluidity: most nations, after all, are imperial bastards.

The necessary "moral mythology" (Fox, 2014, p. 555) of this new post-Tudor Great British unity was invested with metaphors of "marriage and fraternity" (p. 50). As James VI/I put it: "Had not God first united these two kingdoms both in language, religion and similitude of manners?" (Shapiro, 2015, p. 40). It is telling that the Conservative Party and the Union (in the face of calls for a united Ireland) is now propped up by the Democratic Unionist Party, whose British Values, very different now to the ones that are mainstream on the British mainland, stake a reactionary conservative position in relation to gay marriage, abortion, and women's rights, not to mention creationism. It seems that some forms of religious extremism are ineligible for the "Prevent" treatment.

As we have seen, the more uncertain the essence of identity, the more certain the compulsion for icons and myth. As Meek notes, myth is "an instrument by which people simplify, rationalize, and retell social complexities" (Meek, 2016, p. 3). Our approach here is to illustrate various constructions of national identity by looking at the "national" branding of three iconic poets: Dylan Thomas (Wales), Hugh

MacDiarmid (Scotland), and Seamus Heaney (Northern Ireland). Poets tend to "stand for" the country with unusual intensity, especially when they receive a national recognition. Think of England's "Poet Laureate," or Scotland's "makar," or the Welsh "bardd."

Davies' account of Dylan Thomas notes that his parents, despite being Welsh-speakers, did not want him to speak Welsh. Nor did they want him to even sound Welsh, sending him for elocution lessons (Davies, 2014). And Thomas himself had ambivalence about Wales—"Land of my fathers/my fathers can keep it." But Davies claims him as an "institutional Welshman" (p. 33), whose "creative strength depended on the very ground of Wales" (p. 114). Thomas had a "national authenticity of style" and a "bardic element" (p. 83) that resisted English nationalist kidnapping by the likes of Saunders Lewis's: "He belongs to the English" (1938, cited p. 103). In this way, Davies burnishes a "right" Dylan Thomas reminiscent of the Mr Right that Mae hankered after, in *Under Milk Wood*. Mae, "raw as an onion," was waiting for "Mr Right to leap up the burning tall hollow splashes like a brilliantined trout" (Davies, 2014, p. 136; Thomas, 1995, p. 340). Dylan Thomas emerges as Davies's "brilliantined trout," glistening in his Welshness. Our purpose here, though, is not to adjudicate Welshness, but to trace the insistency and contingency of its construction, as well as to note its uneasy relation to "Britishness" or "Englishness."

If Dylan Thomas was claimed for Wales, then it might be said that Hugh MacDiarmid claimed Scotland for himself. In his epic poem *A drunk man looks at the thistle,* MacDiarmid pulls together (but apart) a heterogeneous collection of cultural, linguistic, psychological, and philosophical traits that he calls a "gallimaufry" of Scottishness (MacDiarmid, 1987, ed. Buthlay, p. li). Each register carries with it some version of polar opposites that characterize the contradictions of the culture, in a "jostling of contraries" (p. xxiii). He sees Scotland peculiarly torn by Apollonian manifestations of form, rationality, and restraint, as well as by Dionysian energy, life, and idiosyncracy. Thus, MacDiarmid invokes what he calls a "Caledonian Antisyzygy." MacDiarmid has no time for compromise in his "gallimaufry" of past, present, and future Scottish identities. His hope, as Buthlay saw it, was that "through the violent destruction of traditional values, a new mystical vision would become feasible.." (Buthlay, 1987, p. xxxii). So, the identity strategy is very different from Davies in respect to Dylan Thomas. Davies looked back in order to connect Dylan Thomas to Welsh traditions. MacDiarmid looks forward to a new "Caledonian" future, sharing a Nietzschean scorn for the "anti-education" of the past (Nietzsche, 2016):

> I'll ha'e nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur/Extremes meet. (MacDiarmid, p. 14) [I'll have no half-way house, but always be where/Extremes meet]

Again, as with Dylan Thomas, we do not wish to subscribe to any particular version of Welshness or Scottishness, but rather to trace some of the disparate ways the various "'surfaces" of identity and difference are mobilized.

[Apologies to Heaney for raising the question of UK-ness or Britishness. Learning that his work was to appear in the *Penguin Anthology of British Poetry,* he famously asserted his Irishness: 'Be advised my passport's green. No glass of ours was ever raised to toast the Queen' (*Independent*, October 5, 1995)]. Nice one, Seamus!

Conclusion

'Let there be Licht,' said God, and there was

A little' (MacDiarmid op cit., p. xxvii) [Licht = Light]

Thus far, we have deconstructed "Traditional British Values" as a grammatical / ideological term, located in a reflection of an impoverished political discourse, and as a political conceit concerning a range of values and virtues connected to "freedom." Fundamental British Values constructs are contradictory even where they are not deliberate deceit. We argued that the term presented a series of "surfaces" which obscured an underlying repression. Its "positive" surfaces suppressed a much darker history. The results (which we called "surface 3") are a set of contradictions where positive expression and negative suppression encounter each other in an inevitable incoherence. Hence, Blair's antinomies are not so much foolish as they are true, especially perhaps as an inadvertent, personal confession.

Earlier, we invoked the notion of this paper as an "evental space," drawing on the work of Badiou (2013) and Zizek (2014). It follows that our ambition is performative rather than descriptive, seeking to mobilize meaning in a number of different ways (Blyth et al., 2016). The first of these is a desingularized approach to "identity." We have already cast doubt on national identity claims, whether British, German, or whatever other manifestation of the "collective individual." Even more so, however, we note that antagonistic definitions singularize in even more insistent ways—"the Taliban," "al-Queda," "boko haram," and so on, such a "surface 3" expression/repression has consequences: "A sizeable percentage of Britain's population now live without freedoms enjoyed by the majority. But the majority don't see this. They only see an individual black, brown or Muslim Brit – alone, bearded, on the Tube, taking his seat on a plane, waiting for the bus with bulky shopping between his feet" (Nabulsi, 2017, p. 28). Nabulsi gives an example of extremist "othering": "One despondent [Asian] man discussed the possible causes of his insomnia with his GP: 'It makes me so angry what is happening in Iraq, and Syria, and it makes me so depressed'. Instead of treatment, he got a visit from the police" (p. 28).

Boltanski and Esquerre offer a key question which we might deploy to link nationalisms to globalisms:

What is the link between de-industrialization, the increased demand for "exceptional" products, and the heritage mania? (2016, p. 34)

First of all, it is clear that populist politics in England and Wales has given voice to classes made precarious by de-industrialization and the emergent "gig economy." Similar phenomena are clearly involved in the Trump election and in Macron's France In both cases, the problem was real, the solution illusory, investing Brexit with the "ghosts of industry and empire" (Hazeldine, 2017, pp. 53–54). What is now emerging is a political scenario which make moderate progressive journalism sound radical. Will Hutton of the *Guardian* (November 3, 2016) writes:

> Britain faces its biggest peacetime crisis since 1945. Prolonged economic stagnation, perhaps depression seem inevitable. A liberal, tolerant, outward-looking country is being transmuted into an illiberal, intolerant, inward-looking one. A battle is being joined for our soul, yet many are strangely mute.

If true in 2016, how much more so now?

A sudden inversion of FBV? As Alan Bennett recently observed, you only have to stand still these days in order to move to the left. Bennett was also more skeptical about "British Values." As we saw, he took hypocrisy to be foremost. The distinguished journalist, Ascherson, would presumably agree: "Nothing in British history resembles this [Brexit] spectacle of men and women ramming through policies everyone knows they don't believe in" ("England prepares to leave the world" *LRB*, November 17, 2016). Ascherson reports Nigel Farage, ex-leader of UKIP, as declaring June 23, 2016 as "England's independence day," a declaration that may become true in a manner he did not anticipate. [We note the characteristic elision of Britain/England.]

Finally, we leave FBV, in all its confusion, with one more observation. When peoples perceive external threats (Islamophobia, immigration, global competition, etc.), they invent "magical" cures so tiny as to be positively homeopathic (and with the same efficacy). They do so as a universal relief from uncertainty. So, what kind of mantra is FBV in the end? We are reminded of Che Guevara's account of Congolese struggles where rebels believed that bullets could be turned into water by appropriate rituals. He called it "dawa." (For a more general account, Guevara, 2001). Such belief was common in Southern and Central Africa (Mozambique, and South Africa in the Xhosa Risings of the 19th century). It helped insulate the local from more global fears. So, FBV ends up as a homeopathic delusion, except in so far as it offers a gestural politics to politicians and policy-makers—"we are doing something about this." How much longer will we listen to our "witch-doctors"?

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