Patrick Bade | Victorian Britain: “Land of Hope and Glory”? 06-07-23

Slides are displayed throughout the lecture

- Thank you, Judy. Well, before I get to the main subject tonight, I'd like to look in a little bit more detail at two of the questions that came up last time. There were a couple of people who asked what it means to talk about a dark voice or a bright voice. And it's really to do with two things, first, tessitura and timbre. Tessitura is the level that you're singing on, and it is generally thought that a lower voice will have a darker timbre. So a bass will have a darker timbre than a tenor. And a contralto or a mezzo will have a darker timbre than a soprano. But within the tessitura, there is also timbre, that's the actual colour of the voice. So you can have two singers, two tenors, take a Pavarotti and Domingo singing the same piece of music. Listen to them singing say "La donna e mobile" from "Rigoletto." And I think you'll find that Pavarotti's timbre is a lot brighter and that Domingo's timbre is a lot darker and mellower. Interestingly, when Domingo, at the end of his career, he began singing baritone roles very beautifully actually. But a lot of critics complained that he just sounded like a tenor without the top nodes, that he didn't have the timbre or the colour of a baritone. And in the sopranos, think about if you compare Maria Callas with Joan Sutherland, Maria Callas generally has a much darker timbre than Joan Sutherland. Although Maria Callas had the remarkable ability to vary the colour of her voice according to the role. So if you actually listen to her in two different roles, you listen to her as Gilda in "Rigoletto," voice sounds a lot brighter than it does as Lady Macbeth or "Gioconda" where the voice has a darker colour.

Now, the other thing that came up, somebody asked a question I thought a lot about it, thought it was an interesting question. How was it that Paul Robeson could reconcile his Christian background with his communist beliefs? The more I thought about it, I thought, no, there wasn't really a, there shouldn't be or wasn't a contradiction. If you look at Christianity and communism in their pure form, their original form, they actually have an awful lot in common. Well, we all know that the Christian churches and communism very quickly became corrupted and they strayed from their original ideals. But if you look at this on the left is a poem by Bertolt Brecht called "In Praise of Communism." And it's stressing that communism should be about not exploiting your fellow man, should be about a sense of brotherhood of man. That is not really so different from the essential teachings of Jesus Christ. And also, I'd like to point out that Paul Robeson's mother came from a Quaker background. And in my opinion, even though I'm actually, well, I wouldn't regard myself as a Christian anymore, I'm a lapsed Catholic. But if you ask me which form of Christianity is the purest and the truest and the closest to the original doctrines of Christ, I would say Quakerism. And Quakerism is a very egalitarian form of Christianity. William Penn, when he was talking to King Charles II in the 17th century, he addressed him as Charles Stewart. And that's how Quakers address one another. They don't use terms like mister or missis or Lord, or as far as they're concerned, every human being is equal. And that is, I suppose, a form of communism.

Now, to get to the main story tonight, which is Victorian Britain. When I used to teach at Christie's, I always used to begin my lectures. Well, I used to precede a lecture with a piece of

music. This was partly to get me into the mood and partly to get my students into the mood. And I'm going to start, I'm going to continue with that practise tonight and from time to time. And for me, the piece of music which expresses the triumphalism of the British Empire at its height is Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory." This was actually written in 1901, the year that Queen Victoria died, and it was written as an orchestral piece. But the new king, Edward VII, heard it, and he suggested that words should be written to the tune. And in fact, this version of the tune, "Land of Hope and Glory," was used as an anthem at his coronation in 1902. So here we're going to hear it in a historic recording dating from around 1930, conducted by the composer Sir Edward Elgar.

Music plays
♪ Dear land of hope, thy hope is crowned ♪ ♪ God make thee mightier yet ♪ ♪ On sovereign brows, beloved, renowned ♪ ♪ Once more thy crown is set ♪ ♪ Thy equal laws, by freedom gained ♪ ♪ Have ruled thee well and long ♪ ♪ By freedom gained, by truth maintained ♪ ♪ Thine empire shall be strong ♪ ♪ Land of hope and glory ♪ ♪ Mother of the free ♪ ♪ How shall we extol thee ♪ ♪ Who are born of thee ♪ ♪ Wider still, and wider ♪ ♪ Shall thy bounds be set ♪ ♪ God, who made thee mighty ♪ ♪ Make thee mightier yet ♪ ♪ God, who made thee mighty ♪ ♪ Make thee mightier yet ♪

- When that was written, the British Empire was, as I said, at its height, it was the largest empire the world had ever seen, it encompassed 1/4 of the entire land surface of the globe. As you can see from this map on the right-hand side, it actually comes from my mother's school atlas, which dates from the 1920s and which I was given as a child in the 1950s. So Victoria reigned from 1837 till 1901, 64 years. She was the longest last reigning monarch until superseded by our recently deceased queen. In 1839, on 15th of October, to be precise, 1839, she proposed to Prince Albert. And by all accounts, it was a happy marriage. Well, initially, I think there were actually quite some difficult, but once they resolved, it turned into a happy and successful marriage, it lasted until his death in 1861 and they had nine children. And then, as you can see on the right-hand side, the Widow of Windsor, she really became a kind of professional widow for the rest of her very long life. And she made a cult out of her deceased husband. And there are numerous monuments erected to him, the most splendid, of course, this one, the Albert Memorial, opposite the Albert Hall in West London, an extraordinary, extraordinary structure. I think it was Monty Python who did a skit on it and suggested it being used as a moon rocket.

And through her many children, she became the grandmother of European monarchy, and she also managed to pass on haemophilia to the royal families of both Russia and Spain. Here she is talking to her favourite little grandson, Kaiser Wilhelm II. And she had two Jubilees, 1887, 1897, that were celebrated all over the globe. And during her lifetime, they're already numerous, numerous statues that it's been estimated that after the Virgin Mary, there are more statues to Queen Victoria than any other woman in history all over the world. Here you can see a statue being raised for her 1897 Jubilee on the left-hand side, on a typically rainy London day, and two more statues. Of course, after the fall of the British Empire, these colonial

statues were not necessarily loved or welcomed in places like India or Ireland. On the right-hand side is a park in Ireland, I think this is, for unwanted British colonial statues, and there are similar parks in India. But in other places, in Burma, she is revered or her statues as revered as fertility goddesses. And why not? As she had nine children. One, I think we feel differently about Victorians than we do to any other earlier peoples. They feel closer to us and one reason for this, I think is the invention of photography in the 1830s.

So by just around the time that Victoria came to the throne, photography became familiar. So we don't have to rely on flattering images of artists like Winterhalter on the right-hand side to know what Victoria and Albert looked like. We know what they look like because we have photographs of them and we know what all the great Victorians, the great and good of Victorian England look like. There's Tennyson on the left-hand side. There's Disraeli in the middle, there's Burne Jones looking very lugubrious with William Morris on the right-hand side. We know what the most beautiful woman in England looked like in the late Victorian period. By universal acclaim, this was Lillie Langtry. Everybody who saw her was absolutely swept away with admiration for her incredible beauty. And I think we can see here in this photograph her very perfect regular features. What we can't see in this photograph, of course, is the colouring that so bewitched people, she had these very beautiful blue eyes and she had a ravishing complexion.

So in one sense, photography, I think does Victorian England a disservice that we tend to see it either in black and white or in sepia, in any place, in monochrome. Actually, the Victorians loved very loud, garish colours. And this love was satisfied from the 1850s onwards by the invention of aniline chemical colours. And the first of these was mauve. And I recommend you very strongly a book by somebody called S. Garfield, and the title, it's quite a slim book, you'll get through it very quickly, but it's absolutely fascinating. Title is "Mauve, How One Colour Changed the World." And it tells a story of this man, William Henry Perkin. And he was experimenting with waste products from the coal industry. Coal so important of course for the Industrial Revolution, the industrial might of Britain. And in a test tube, he accidentally discovered this extraordinary colour of mauve. And it turned out to be the first chemical, completely colorfast dye. And it said that the whole of London and Paris went mauve within a couple of years. And it was followed by other chemical dyes, scarlets and magentas and so on, very virulent colours.

But what is really interesting, I think, in this book is all the consequences of this discovery, good and bad, that to do with the perfume industry, to do with colour photography. There were a whole lot of consequential discoveries coming on from Perkins's discovery and distantly, eventually, even the production of Cyclone B gas, which was used in the Holocaust to murder millions of Jews. Of course, he couldn't be blamed for that, he couldn't know what his discovery would lead to. I think it's no coincidence that the two wars of this time that have a particularly bad reputation for being sordid, brutal, nasty, are the Crimean War and the contemporary American Civil War. And I think the reason for that is that war could be depicted as something glorious and wonderful if it's not in your sitting room, if it's something very distant that you don't really come into contact with. But through photography, people could

actually see what a battlefield looked like, what the destruction looked like. The man top left is called Roger Fenton, and he photographed the Crimean War. And the bottom photograph here is the famous "Valley of Death" celebrated in the poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade" by Tennyson, which used to be learned by heart by every English school board. In fact, it was an incredible piece of folly, it was an absolute military cock-up of the worst kind. And I don't know what it is about the British that they somehow managed to always turn their military defeats into something legendary and glorious, think Dunkirk later.

Well, towards the end of Victoria's reign, you've got press photography and you have moving photography. So if you want to, you can, it's amazing now what you can do. You can Google Queen Victoria's funeral and you can actually see moving footage here. In fact this, you can see recognisable by his moustache. You can see Kaiser Wilhelm II following the cortege of Queen Victoria. So the buzzword of the 19th century, and not just, I suppose, in England, but elsewhere in the Western world, is progress. And we've got this page of illustration showing progress over the century from sailing ships to steam ships, stagecoach to steam trains, gas light at the beginning of the century just coming at the beginning of the century, to electric light at the end of the century.

But probably the biggest factor in the progress of the 19th century was the invention of the railways. Anything I can really compare with it in our time is the invention of the internet. It's something that galvanised the entire economy of the world, made huge fortunes, it shrank the world as well, it enabled people to travel. So the very first railway stocks in Darlington, 1825, first into city train, 1830, was Liverpool Manchester. The man top left looking rather pensive as well he might was the MP William Huskisson. He was a guest of honour at the opening of the first intercity railway. But he stood in the wrong place and he was run over and killed, mortally injured by a train. So he was the very first victim, you could say, of the railway age. So the repercussions of railways were absolutely endless, as I said, economically, culturally, architecturally, the development of grand hotels, the enormous growth of cities, the growth of suburbs, because people could live outside the centre of the city and come into the centre of the city by train, and, of course, railway stations.

This is St. Pancras station, I passed through that last night. These are often described as the cathedrals of the 19th century. And on the right-hand side, it's the shed of St. Pancras station still intact, still a very, very impressive structure. I think the very first railway trains must have been pretty uncomfortable to all the, you know, smutty smoke coming from the engine at the front and not really very much protection to the passengers. I don't think that would've been a great joy to travel on that train. But by the end of the 19th century, you can see railway travel had become, either way, I love railway travel myself. Unfortunately, Eurostar, which I take every month, is not quite like the images we see on the screen, but you can see if you had the money, travelling by rail could be something very delightful by the end of the 19th century. Also travelling by sea, this, you've got the very famous engineer, Brunel, on the top left-hand side with the chain of his ship, the Great Eastern, which was launched in 1858 and was capable of carrying 4,000 people across the ocean.

And so it's a heroic age of engineers, of course, not just in Britain. You've got Eiffel and Gillespie in France and great engineers in America and around the world. But there are tremendous engineering feats. And one of the most spectacular in Britain is the fourth bridge you see under construction here. And travel, people are travelling much more than they had done at any point in history. This is Thomas Cooks, which was founded in 1841 and went into bankruptcy in 2019. So it's a travel company that lasted 178 years. And you could go there in London and you could book a summer holiday for yourself. And if you wanted, you could travel down the River Nile. You could go to all sorts of amazing exotic places. Communications, this is another fact, a great area of progress. This is the rotary press, which was patented in 1847. And this, of course, leads to mass circulation. Newspapers, a dangerous thing in a way. We've seen, in our own time, with how public opinion can be manipulated by wealthy and unscrupulous people. This is beginning already in the 19th century. And the telephone invented by the Scotsman Alexander Graham Bell in 1876. This is a photograph top left of the very first telephone call that was ever made between New York and Chicago. I bet it was just as banal as an uninteresting as one of those “I'm on the bus, I'll be there soon!” I'm sure it was a very banal conversation. And this is Marconi, who in this very same year, 1896, he patents a radio that was also to have enormous implications for the 20th century, for communications, for propaganda, for military purposes, for entertainment.

If you're going to list the great Victorians, very high up that list would be Charles Darwin, who published "The Origin of the Species" in 1859, one of the most influential books of modern history, a book that has been used and abused in all sorts of ways for which as he cannot be blamed. I mean it was used to develop in inverted commas, "scientific forms of racism and anti-Semitism." But as I said, he himself cannot be blamed for that. Sanitation, I think if we could take a time machine back to the 19th century, we'd probably still find it pretty smelly. I think we'd, you know, any historical period actually before the 20th century would probably offend our noses. This is how your shit was got rid of in the early to mid 19th century. You can see, by hand, on the left-hand side, public toilets introduced in Victorian period. Sewage, well, for those of you who are following the news in Britain, of course, it's a big issue at the moment. It would seem that sanitation, sewage, all that stuff has not really improved since the Victorian period. It was during the Victorian period that people began to understand the connection between hygiene and sanitation and disease. And there were numerous outbreaks of cholera and typhoid and other infectious diseases. The River Thames effectively became a giant sewer, and that was only corrected in 1865. This shows the opening of the great sewer that runs alongside the River Thames through London, right underneath the embankment of London. And this enabled the Thames to be radically cleaned up and the health situation of London to be greatly improved.

Hygiene, now, I'm sure I've talked about this in previous historical lectures, that it is bizarre really that Christianity is the only major world religion that doesn't have a strong link between religious belief and hygiene. In fact, quite the opposite. Of course, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, hygiene is really a part of the religion. But for much of the history of Christianity, it was the opposite, that the filthy you were, the more holy you were, the less you regarded the wellbeing of your body, the more spiritual you were. So, you know, Mary, Queen of Scots, was

denounced because she took baths and that was considered to be immoral. And it was really, I think, only in the 19th century, in the Victorian period with people like Pasteur and so on in France. And Florence Nightingale, I'll talk about a bit in England, that the connection between hygiene and health really came to be understood. And that people began to wash more. The image on the left-hand side is The Savoy Hotel. This was a pioneering grand hotel, very modern, opened in 1889. And you can see an interior on the right-hand side. So this was the most luxurious hotel in London. And when it opened, it was a bit of a scandal because every room had an en-suite, bath and toilet. And newspaper journalists were saying, "What's going on in this hotel? What kind of dreadful immorality could be going on in this hotel that every room needs to have a bath and that people need to bath every day?" This is what baths look like in grand hotels in the 19th century and that wonderful-looking shower on the left-hand side. And, of course, toilets, and the Brits were leading the world of Victorians when it came to bathrooms, hygiene, toilets, famous firm of Thomas Crapper, which used to produce these wonderful flush toilets. That was a new innovation of the Victorian period.

And health, I think the second half of the 19th century was the first period where you might have been willing to entrust yourself to a surgeon to have an operation. More often than not, before the 1840s, shall we say, an operation was a death sentence. This is an operating theatre, an early 19th century operating theatre, that survives in London. I think this is in St. Thomas' Hospital. You can go and visit it. Filthy, unhygienic, nobody washed their hands between operations. This is what an operation looked like, pretty grim stuff. And you wouldn't want to have these things used on you without any degree of hygiene, people washing their hands, sterilising instruments. It was Dr. Lister, Joseph Lister, you see him insert here in the 1840s who brought in antiseptic surgery and insisted on all the instruments being washed in carbolic acid. And, of course, it's around about the same time that you also could have, anaesthesia was introduced, and you could have relatively pain-free operations.

Now, the woman who's credited with being the founder of the modern nursing profession, although in recent years, there is a black nurse, I'm trying to remember what her name was, who was also involved with the same campaign in the Crimean War, who's been getting some credit for this as well. So Florence Nightingale went off to the Crimea to look after wounded troops. And she was a very thorough and she was a very efficient woman, and she did a lot of number-crunching. And she came to the rather galling conclusion that her hospital was killing more people than it was saving, and this was through the unhygienic conditions. So it was in fact after the Crimean War when she came back to England, that she really founded the modern nursing profession and introduced hygienic practises to hospitals. And this is what a hospital looked like later in the 19th century.

This is another very brave, pioneering woman. This is Josephine Butler. And she campaigned for the repeal of the so-called Contagious Diseases Act. One of the great scourges of the 19th century was syphilis, which had been around certainly, well, now people think it's been around for thousands of years, but people have been aware of it in Europe from the end of the 15th century. And it seemed to go in phases. There were phases where it was more virulent and as it was in the 16th century, and it was certainly very virulent in the 19th century and it was a

huge problem. And so the Contagious Diseases Act very specifically laid the blame for the spread of syphilis on women, not on men. So it was the police had powers, any woman, 'cause any woman walking in the street unaccompanied by a man was thought to be immoral, possibly a prostitute. So any woman could go for a walk in the street and she could be seized by the police and she could be forced to have a very degrading medical inspection. The print you've got on the left-hand side shows a secondary syphilitic rash. Anyway, it was Josephine Butler who, as I said, campaigned and eventually succeeded in getting this really barbaric practise ended.

Now this is what the British Empire looked like at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign. So you could see, of course, we already had India, we already had Canada, we already had Australia, New Zealand and other odd bits and pieces. And we had a toehold, so to speak, in South Africa, from the end of the Napoleonic Wars. So Africa was really up for grabs. And this is what Africa looked like. Again, this is my mother's school atlas, which dates in the 1920s. So by this point, I think the only two countries in Africa that had any degree of independence were Liberia and Abyssinia. Up at the top, they're yellow, you can see pale yellow, every other, as the green is France, or you can see an orange colour for the Portuguese, the darker yellow for the Spanish. In fact, even though Egypt is nominally independent here, it's got a pale yellow, it was effectively under the control of the British. So the great ambition of the British was to be able to go on red territory from Cairo to Cape Town, from the top of Africa to the bottom. And actually, for three years you could do that because after the first World War, the Brits took the German colony of Tanganyika, which you can see just over halfway down. And so for three years, you could, if you had a map from those three years, it would be red from Cairo to Cape Town.

Now, this is where the Brits and the French really came into conflict. Because we look at this map, you can see the French, that they were in East Africa and Central Africa, and they were moving steadily. No, they're in West Africa and Central Africa moving steadily eastwards. So inevitably, at some point in the Sudan, the Brits and the French were going to come into conflict. This is the famous expedition of Captain Marchand in the late 1890s. It was a heroic exploit. We started off on the coast of West Africa and his expedition went through deserts and jungles and all sorts of terrible hardships trying to get to the source of the Nile to claim it for the French. But the Brits had started off in Cairo and they just calmly sailed down the Nile and they got there first. So after all these heroic exploits, the French got there and found that the British had already raised the Union Jack. The illustration on the left-hand side, so Cecil Rhodes astride Africa, and he aimed to introduce a telegraph line from Cairo to Cape Town. So you could communicate directly by telegraph between Cairo and Cape Town. Tremendous growth of nationalism and patriotism in the 19th century. You can imagine how irritating this particular illustration from a children's book must have been to Germans and to Kaiser Wilhelm himself. Our queen, our empress, is greater and wiser than all foreign monarchs, including der Kaiser.

The painting on the right-hand side is in the National Portrait Gallery. And well, of course, for us today, it's kind of completely cringe worthy really, isn't it? The Brits, well, not just the Brits,

all the Europeans had this idea that they were the bringers of civilization to the rest of the world. The fact that they were enrichening themselves, that they were plundering, they were exploiting, the rest of the world was conveniently forgotten. So here we see Queen Victoria and Albert graciously offering the Bible to some kind of all-purpose native, where does he come from? Hard to tell from his costume whether from which part of the globe this grateful native actually comes. These images, of course, are rather distasteful and shocking to us of the Brits in India. Incredible entitlement and sense of privilege and superiority. So we have the Westernisation of much of the globe. In 1891, the French artist, Paul Gauguin, he wanted to escape Western civilization. So that's why he went to South Seas, why he went to Tahiti. And he undertook this journey of thousands and thousands of miles. And he got to Australia on the way, he got to Melbourne, he got out of the ship in Melbourne and of course, he was absolutely aghast and horrified. He said, "Look, I've travelled to the furthest end of the globe, and I've landed onto a place that looks just like London." So this is what Melbourne looked like around the time that Gauguin arrived there. And we, not just the Brits, French, Italians, the Spanish, everybody, I suppose, the Belgians, they left their colonial architecture around the world. This is Bombay Railway station, the Victoria Terminus. I'll be talking about that in the context of my architecture lecture next time.

Now, the British Empire, was it glorious or was it a criminal organisation? Certainly, many crimes were committed. We have here images of the terrible potato famine of the 1840s. A completely artificial, totally unnecessary famine, in which a million people died and millions more were forced to emigrate. While people were starving, the Irish were still forced to export all their food to mainland. It was a shocking, wicked, wicked thing, totally unjustifiable. And Trudy and I, 'course we love to argue, we argue about everything. It's the joy of our deep friendship. She, of course, worships Disraeli. I'm a bit more sceptical, partly because of the role that he played in the oppression of Ireland in this period. One of the most shocking and notorious crimes of the British Empire was the genocide. And I use that word very, I know that word is often abused and, you know, it's often used just in a very emotive way. But this, in the absolute true correct definition of genocide. What was done in Tasmania was a genocide. It wasn't a huge population, but it was a populated island with an Indigenous people. And they were systematically murdered. The British settlers moved across the island shooting every human being they could find. There were posters put up with rewards where you could get a five pound reward for every dead adult Tasmanian. And if you killed children, you only got two pounds. And so once they got to the other end of the island, there was pretty well nobody left. The photograph you see on the left-hand side are the absolute last surviving Tasmanians looking very unhappy, very miserable, in their Victorian dress.

And while we're listing all the crimes of British Empire, and one that's also left a very bitter legacy that certainly is coming back to bite us now. And that are the Opium Wars, two of them, 1839 to '42, 1856 to '60. Shocking business when the at gun point, we forced the Chinese to produce and export opium. Of course, the consequences were terrible everywhere and they were terrible for China. They were actually terrible in Europe. And the insert here is Lizzie Siddal who died of an opium overdose. She was prescribed laudanum, a solution of opium, by her doctor and probably committed suicide with an overdose. And, again, I know we have

many South African listeners, so they'll be familiar with the horrors of the Boer War where the British introduced a new invention, the concentration camp. Now, of course, the Germans at the time were absolutely horrified. The German press was loud in denouncing the incredible inhumanity of the British concentration camps. But obviously, certain Germans put it away in the back of their mind for future use. Of course, one has to say that although thousands of people died, particularly women and children, in British concentration camps, the purpose, the intent of the camps, it wasn't genocide, they weren't intending to wipe out a whole people.

And the thing that used to be known as the Indian Mutiny. Now I'd think we'd say it was an abortive war of independence in India in 1857 carried out with terrible barbarity, one has to say, awful, appalling cruelty on both sides. So the other side of all of this, of course, is emigration, people leaving Britain to go to populate other parts of the world, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United States, very famous image called "The Last of England" by Ford Madox Brown, I'll talk about that in a week or so. This poignant painting, I think, by Richard Redgrave of the immigrant's last view of the house where he was born. He's turning to look at it for the last time. He knows he will never see it again. And you have to think all these millions of people who crossed the Atlantic and or went even further, went to Australia, how brave these people were. It was such a leap into the unknown. And they, you know, no WhatsApp, no mobile phones, just a very remote distant postal system. You know, it would be months before communication reached your family and you knew you were never going to see your family again. I think it, of course, the greatness, the energy of America in particular for me was created by immigration, people who are going to get into a boat and cross the sea. They are going to be enterprising people. They're going to be very brave people. And as I said, I believe that the greatness of the United States, its energy in the 20th century was down to immigration.

So I want to play you another musical excerpt. And if I had to choose one voice to be the voice of Victorian England, it would be Madam Clara Butt. She was a very tall woman, she was over six foot and she had a dark voice. She had a very deep voice, and it's an extraordinary sound, really. But also, I want you to hear the emotionalism. This is raw, pure Victorian emotion. This is the kind of song that would've had people sobbing in sympathy, "Kathleen Mavourneen." One wonders whether the nice middle-class people in their drawing rooms who sang these songs or listened to these songs and shed tears, if they stop for a minute to think why Kathleen Mavourneen's lover is leaving her, why he has to leave her, he has to leave her, of course, because of the appalling policies of the British towards the Irish. But here's a pure taste of Victorian emotion.

Music plays

♪ Kathleen Mavourneen, the grey dawn is breaking ♪ ♪ The horn of the hunter is heard on the hill ♪ ♪ The lark from her light wing, the bright dew is shaking ♪ ♪ Kathleen Mavourneen, what slumbering still ♪ ♪ Oh, hast thou ♪

- So move on. Communism again, communism was the "Das Kapital," this is "Communist Manifesto" of 1848. But "Das Kapital" was written by Karl Marx in the reading room of the British Museum. And it's another one of the most influential texts, whether for good or bad, you may disagree, of the 19th century. So Britain was a very welcoming country to people who were exiled for a wide variety of reasons from all over the rest of the world. And 'cause Karl Marx's theories, as they were developed in Britain, and they were based on what he could see because Britain was the cradle of the Industrial Revolution. And this was capitalism, red in tooth and claw, the most brutal, untrammelled side of capitalism. Appalling exploitation, dreadful, dreadful slum dwellings, but also the creation of enormous wealth. In fact, things didn't turn out quite like Marx envisaged. For him, Britain should have been the country where the great revolution happened, but it never was for a variety reason.

In fact, the British, to a certain extent, of course, were able to reform themselves and mitigate some of the worst aspects of capitalism. On the left, we have here an image of Bedford Park. This was a sort of ideal housing for, I mean, nowadays, of course, if you want a house in Bedford Park, it'll cost you millions. But these houses were actually built for ordinary middle-class people. And it was meant to be healthy hygienic housing for people on modest income. Of course, we had that, and gradually through, I mean the Victorians have got such a bad reputation for exploitation, but I think one has to give them credit for the fact that there were repeated laws through the 19th century to improve the rights of workers and to protect workers from the kind of horror that you see in this. And gradually, through the Victorian period, suffrage was increased. The chartists, they were out, they were presenting petitions, demanding the vote for all adult men, universal male suffrage. They weren't asking for votes for women yet. So this is a very early photograph of a chartist demonstration. Oh, so different. We are so different from the French, what can I say? Look how orderly and peaceful this is, not like recent events on Saturdays in Paris, I can tell you.

Now, here are the two great statesmen who dominate Victorian England, Gladstone, Disraeli, and, of course, they faced each other across the House of Commons. And I thought of them often, in recent times, my God, some of the pathetic, miserable, you know, when you saw exchanges, say between Corbyn and Theresa May, and you thought this is what it's come to. This was where Gladstone and Disraeli thundered across the Commons to one to one another on an incredible level of rhetoric. So that sort of shabby exchanges that we've tended to see in the House of Commons in use in recent years does not really reflect well on political progress. Now, as I said, Disraeli is a great hero of Trudy, and I'm quite sure if you had the choice of sitting next to Disraeli or Gladstone at a dinner party, you'd have much more fun sitting next to Disraeli, who was fantastically clever and witty man who was quite unscrupulous, I would say. He was certainly not in, I wouldn't put him amongst my moral heroes, but he was a favourite of Queen Victoria. And there was quite a lot of rye comment when he arranged to have her crowned Empress of India. And she, in return, ennobled him as Lord Beaconsfield. He was one of those who actually, in 1868, he introduced an act to enlarge the vote, to introduce far, really, to double the suffrage of adult males thinking it would help him to get reelected, but it didn't. He actually lost the following election.

Here is the backbone of Victorian Britain. This is my family. And the little girl in the middle is my granny, who I dream about and I have very fond memories who was a very loving presence in my childhood. The little boy on the rocking horses, my Uncle Harold. I was terrified of him 'cause he was so ugly that I used to hide behind the sofa. And over on the left-hand side is my great-great grandfather. And he was a man of humble origins, self-made man, typical Victorian, who became quite rich in the insurance business. And here are some of my, this is my great, that's his wife on the left-hand side, my great-great grandmother and various aunts.

I'm running out of time, so I'm going to move on, this Albertopolis. I wanted to talk quite a lot about women because today, if you want to say something, if you say, "Oh, it's positively Victorian," you mean that it's women who are abused, oppressed, disregarded. In fact, I'd say the Victorians have a heroic role in this, that you've got a constant agitation for the vote for women. It didn't actually happen, of course, till the end of the first World War. You have education brought in for women and it's a great period of for women in the arts here. Here, the Bronte sisters, although, of course, they published their novels in 1847 under male pseudonyms. And people were terribly shocked when they discovered that "Wuthering Heights" was written by a woman, such a savage and passionate novel. They thought, oh my goodness. Two more great Victorian women writers, Mrs. Gaskell and George Elliot. And this is John Stewart Mill, who was a great campaigner for votes for women. And he published his seminal text, "The Subjugation of Women" in 1869.

And you find many images, people are really becoming aware that women have got the short end of the story. Is that the right phrase for it? Whether they were, this is a working-class woman, what could a working class woman do? She could be a washer woman, she could scrub floors, or she could be a seamstress working through the night going blind to earn a pittance. Or if she had education, she could be a governess. But what you know about what that was like from the novels of Charlotte Bronte, that was not a very happy fate either. Or the other alternative, of course, was prostitution. And to the subjugation of women, I think was also very much expressed in women's clothing, particularly the crinoline. The crinoline was effectively a cage that the woman had to walk around in with a tent wrapped around it, certainly made travel, made sport, you know, the women's clothing, I mean that way. Try playing hockey or rugby or wearing dresses like these. Votes for women.

No, it's strange to think now that the two things that probably did more to liberate women than anything else in the 19th century were the sewing machine and the typewriter, sewing machine from the 1860s typewriter from the 1880s. The sewing machine meant that a woman could stay at home and look after her children and earn a living. So if you were a man in a middle-class man or an upper-class man in the 19th century and you got a working-class girl pregnant, if you are a real gentleman, the decent thing to do was to give her a sewing machine and then she wouldn't be reduced to destitution. And eventually, of course, the typewriter enabled women to work outside the home. And so there's another, I want to end by saying there's another side to Victorian Britain. We think of it as being stuffy, puritanical, you know, no sex please, we're British kind of thing. But there's earthy side to the Victorians as well. This

is Marie Lloyd. She was the queen of the music halls and she was really, I suppose a bit like the Mae West of her time or if Brits will know Frankie Howerd. She could make anything sound incredibly smutty, incredibly rude. And her songs are full of double entendre and they shocked the moralists. And she was summoned before a committee of, you know, morally outraged people and ordered to perform her songs, which she did very in, very sweetly. And they said, "Oh, well, we can't see what the problem is here." And she said, "Well, I've got one more song I'd so like to sing. Would you like to hear how I sing 'Come into the Garden Maud'?" Which was a sort of popular ballad in every Victorian drawing room. And they said, "Oh, we'd love to hear how you do 'Come to the Garden Maud.'" And, of course, she sang it in a way that was so suggestive and so indecent that they were absolutely shocked out of their minds. And she wanted to show them that really indecency is in the ears and the mind of the listener and the audience. So here is a little touch of the very, very naughty Marie Lloyd in a song showing how every little gesture can have a naughty meaning if you want it to.

♪ Up to the ♪ ♪ Straight from the country came Ms. Maud ♪ ♪ Power of fury ♪ ♪ A foot in den jury ♪ ♪ Oh, that's the way the ladies are residing in town ♪ ♪ 12 months ago ♪ ♪ Sit on apparently ♪ ♪ And if you should want a kiss ♪ ♪ She's ♪ ♪ Like this ♪ ♪ But now she groups them just one at a time ♪ ♪ And every little movement has a meaning of its own ♪ ♪ Every little movement has a tale ♪ ♪ When she walks in dainty a hovel ♪ ♪ At the back for round here ♪ ♪ There's a kind of wibble-wobble ♪ ♪ And she guides like this ♪ ♪ Then the journey's following in her trail ♪ ♪ But when she turns her head like this ♪ ♪ And they doing, don't you know ♪ ♪ Every little movement, there's a tale ♪

Q & A and Comments

- I think I'm going to end here with the wonderful Marie Lloyd and see what you've got to say. Oh, I had no idea how that is bizarre that "Land of Hope and Glory" should be played in America at graduation ceremonies. And this is Gita saying, "You're lucky to have Sir Mark Elder conducting the Halle in three oratories, the three old Elgar." Well, I'm not going to say I envy you. It's not my taste really. I don't think I could bear to sit through three oratories by Elgar. Lyric, you are so right. Shelly, bang on. The lyrics of that are the rationale for both sides in World War I, that's very well put. And also Shelly. Ooh goodness, you had to memorise parts of the light brigade in the swinging '60s, I'm amazed, you know, Mary, isn't it funny? I mean I know "Land of Hope and Glory" doesn't make me cry, but, you know, "Nimrod" from, I remember when Diana died in that terrible accident and I was in Germany at the time and hearing on TV, they were playing "Nimrod." And that really did make me cry.

This is Julian who sat and through all by Mozart's "Requiem" in the San Carlo. Please, by all means discuss with me. Old operating, is it guys? Thank you. Yes, thank you so much. It's so many years since I've seen it. I haven't seen it in this century. Mary Seacole, thank you, is the Black nurse who is now accredited with the nursing revolution alongside Florence Nightingale. This is Sandy saying great-grandmother born 1840s. Isn't that amazing? thill May is out. I think country folk were sewed into their underwear into apparently, that's true. Mary Seacole,

somebody else several. Ooh, obviously, she's quite famous, Black nurse who is getting some credit. I'm sorry if you thought that was racist, it's probably an unfortunate way to put it. No, I hope she's getting credit. She needs to get credit. Check out her history. I did see an exhibition about her at the National Portrait Gallery. I was thinking of Mary Seacole. God, she's obviously a very big one with you.

Or the second temple up had sewage, it took fill to the solo impulse. Hence the fact that before Shabbat, every, yes. Yes, as I said, hygiene is in. Yes, syphilis back in the news. And this is Margaret saying in her school atlas that Egypt was stripe yellow and pink, which was the fact that it actually reflects the fact that it was really controlled by the British. Yes. And of course the set this Garfield dying of sepsis. And of course you all know about the whole business of corporal fever with the doctors not washing their hands between birth, killing enormous numbers of people in the 19th century and talking about the no Indigenous people in Canada suffering a similar fate. Lots more about Mary Seacole. And we are getting a recommendation here for a book about British colonialism. This is Anate about the Irish potato famine. Another recommendation. Thank you very much for books on the British Empire.

Having listed all your trust to the British colonies, I think you should have balanced these with some positive contributions. Well, I'm sure there were some. But yes, I mean interestingly, I was on the way over, I was sitting next to two Indian women, obviously Indian, Indian women, not British Indian women who were talking to one another in English. So the English is of course the one common language of the Indian subcontinent, the railway system. Yes, you can point to some things. I mean Mussolini of course made the trains run on time. There you can find good things to say about Mussolini. More interesting recommendations. Thank you for all your recommendations about books. There is that terrible famine that nobody knows about in Britain, it's really amazing. Talk about the Bengal famine with millions of people who died. It's the same story as the potato famine with the Indians forced to export food when they were starving. Yes, I'm not sure about, thank you for your information about cholera and other medical things.

Great stink of course was one of the reasons that Bazalgette built his great sewer. Right, if you heard your hunches last Sunday with hundreds, you wouldn't have said that. Yes, maybe one day I'll come to it in my increasing old age. Yes, the Romans of course have brought, that were very, were relatively very hygienic compared with an awful lot. In a South Africa, you talk about the Anglo Boer Wars, not the Boer War, thank you for that. This is Arlene, who's English teacher grade 8, 1960 was from Scotland, Ms. Mackenzie. Yeah. So thank you for all of that and I've got to the end. And apologies if my language about Mary Seacole seemed offensive, I certainly don't wish to downgrade her in any way whatsoever. She was obviously a very important woman and deserves to be fully recognised. Thank you. Bye-bye.