Country Life

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Books Edited by Kate Green

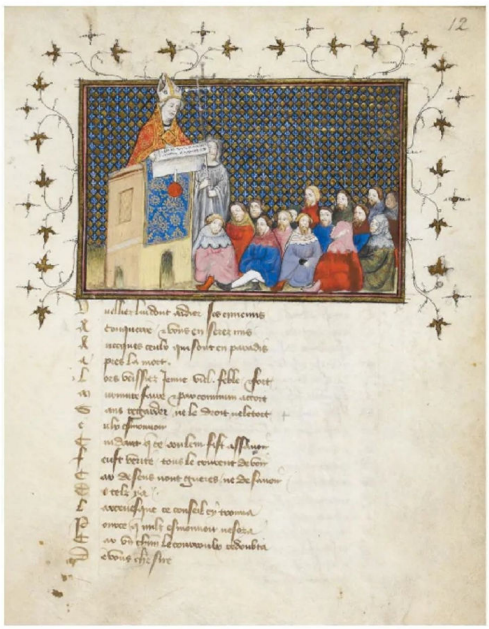
A misunderstood man revisited

Archbishop, Chancellor, Kingmaker: A Life of Thomas Arundel
Chris Given-Wilson
(Yale, £30)

THOMAS ARUNDEL, Archbishop of Canterbury, died on February 19, 1414. The following day, he was laid to rest in the nave of his cathedral church, under the third most easterly arch of the north arcade, where a tomb-chest within a free-standing chantry chapel stood ready. It was a position that recalled the burials of founders and benefactors on the north side of sanctuaries in other great churches, a deliberate reflection, perhaps, of Arundel's generous contribution of £666 to the cathedral fabric fund, which had allowed for the successful completion of the nave rebuilding programme.

There is, however, no trace of Arundel's monument in the Kentish cathedral today. Thomas Cranmer, the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury (1533–55), loathed the memory of his erstwhile predecessor, Chris Given-Wilson tells us. In 1540, Cranmer ordered the demolition of the chapel and tomb, seemingly in retribution for Arundel's all too zealous suppression of Lollardy and for the belief that he had introduced the practice of burning heretics to England. Undoubtedly, Arundel arouses strong feelings, not least for his pivotal role in the condemnation and state execution (by burning) of William Sawtre and John Badby, England's two Protestant protomartyrs. Nevertheless, to measure such an industrious and multifaceted life through a single lens is evidently far too simplistic, as this impressively learned and deeply humane new volume so skilfully illuminates.

Born in 1353, Thomas was the youngest son of Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel (d. 1376). In 1373, he was made Bishop of Ely, an exceptional appointment for such a young man, and entirely due to his father's considerable wealth and influence. Fifteen years later, he was promoted to the archbishopric of York, in recognition of the prominent role he had now assumed in the government of the kingdom. Indeed, in 1386–89, Arundel served as chancellor (chief minister) to Richard II, a position he occupied again



The powerful and energetic Thomas Arundel preaching to Londoners in 1399, regarding the evils of Richard II's rule

> 'He "never wanted to burn heretics; he wanted them to save themselves"'

in 1391–96. Then, in September 1396, he became Archbishop of Canterbury.

In the event, amid a wider political crisis, it was Arundel's opposition to the King's reckless style of government that led to his exile in the autumn of 1397 and it is at this point that Prof Given-Wilson's biography gathers real pace. In 19 chapters, part chronological and part thematic, we are treated to a beautifully written and carefully balanced account of all aspects of Arundel's life, whether it be as a tireless defender of the Church's authority and rights, or as a major figure in the secular politics of early-15th-century England.

In exile, Arundel moved from Ghent to Rome and eventually to Florence. By early June 1399, however, he had rendezvoused with Henry of Bolingbroke in Paris. For the next six months—from their return to England, through the forced abdication of Richard II and Bolingbroke's coronation as Henry IV—Arundel was constantly at Henry's side, his 'principal and indispensable adviser… and kingmaker'. On return to his position at Canterbury, Arundel made an energetic start to his archiepiscopal duties. In September 1401, for instance, he made a visitation to the diocese of Ely, resolving various difficulties through 'firmness without vindictiveness', which may have been typical of the Archbishop's approach. State duties were never far away, however, and Arundel served as Henry's chancellor no fewer than three times. The position was quite remarkable, with no earlier tradition in England of the head of the Church also acting as head of the royal administration.

All the while, for Arundel the threat of Lollardy (the 'English heresy') was 'an ever-present drumbeat', in particular the central Lollard belief that the Eucharistic rite did not truly transform the host into the body of Christ was one he simply could not ignore: it challenged 'the keystone of the Catholic edifice'. Even so, Prof Given-Wilson insists, Arundel 'never wanted to burn heretics; he wanted them to save themselves'. In the four chapters that cover 'Arundel the man', we learn that the Archbishop's sister, Joan, was his only real source of strong familial support; he inspired great loyalty and affection in his diocesan and provincial ministers. Despite being widely read, it's 'hard to avoid the conclusion that Arundel was simply not a scholar'. In sum, this is a truly exceptional volume, with detailed endnotes and references further demonstrating just how industrious its author, emeritus professor at the University of St Andrews, has been.

David Robinson

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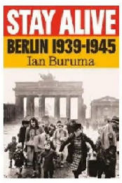
Hotel Exile: Paris in the Shadow of War Jane Rogoyska (Allen Lane, £25)

Stay Alive: Berlin, 1939–1945 Ian Buruma (Atlantic Books, £22)



THERE is a chilling sense of doom over the opening passages of *Hotel Exile* that the reader hopes is not prescient, as anti-Semitism rears its foul head again. 'Suddenly you want to scream Wake up! But people living normal lives cannot imagine that their normality will ever end in a single cataclysmic moment of change.' In this beautifully written book, with its spare, expressive prose and illuminating quotes from letters and diaries, the lives of those caught up in the Nazis' machinations are revealed in small, telling moments, from the first escapes from Germany in the 1930s to the subsequent exodus from Paris when refugees realised that their safe haven was not safe after all. Their welcome, before the war, is genuine and the realisation that safety is yet elusive is slow; Jews acquiesce with the request for registration without realising that such lists will be used to round them up for transportation to death. The French capital herself takes on a character, when the Nazis enter with 'almost indecent ease', she 'yields, but the disdain remains'.

> 'Paris and Berlin thrive today. We can only hope the likes of Kyiv rise again, too'

At the centre is the Hotel Lutetia, home at first to intellectuals, writers and activists, then the Nazi counter-intelligence service the Abwehr and, finally, ragged, haggard survivors of the concentration camps. The staff are impassive, competent, mostly nameless, except for the likes of Marcel Weber, who hides the best vintage wines and Champagnes behind a false wall in the cellar to avoid the Germans plundering them. After the surrender: 'All over Paris thousands of cooks, waiters, chambermaids and shopkeepers are faced with the same dilemma. How are they to behave toward the enemy who is now their ruler?' After the Armistice, the hotel offers deportees succour, its volunteer staff, including boy scouts, shocked by what they see.

Above: **Forced fun: SS officers survey Wannsee beach, one of many scenes featured in Nazi documentaries.** *Below:* **Concentration-camp survivors rest at last in Hotel Lutetia**

Jacques ventured upstairs from the kitchen: 'They stared right through you… They were people who had the air of not being people.'

Through powerful vignettes, interspersed with heart-clenching numbers—'Not known in 1945: 165,000 people deported to Nazi concentration camps and prisons from France'—Jane Rogoyska peels back the layers of a city under the Nazi yoke, the brave men, women and children who tried to escape, to resist, to survive, the writers who dared to describe what they saw, from German refugee Anna Seghers to James Joyce, and the parents who tried to educate their children. This is a compelling book full of lessons we may not wish to hear.

Hotel Exile's counterpart is *Stay Alive*, charting life in Berlin under Nazi rule. Author Ian Buruma has personal links to the German capital: his father, Leo, was studying in the Netherlands when conscription of foreign workers began to keep German industry going in 1943. He tried to escape, but was sent into forced labour in Berlin, one of 400,000 such non-German workers. His participation in the war, however unwilling, haunted him, but his letters home, censored and careful as they were, inspired his son to write this book: 'Even without wishing to fraternise, one would have met Germans who were not Nazis. Some Germans managed to remain decent, when decency could be very dangerous.'

What follows is a dense account, again drawing upon diary entries—including those of Goebbels—letters and newspapers, of life in a city whose people were condemned to a war not always of their own making. There are horrific accounts of Berliners' fervent anti-Semitism, the police who tortured Jewish prisoners 'for sport', the crowds who cheered anti-Semitic propaganda films, the neighbours who reported on neighbours. Class barriers were ripped down in the service of the socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*, even as the Nazis luxuriated in stolen mansions, leaving all strata of society condemned to rationing and lack of coal in freezing winters. Members of the old upper classes, now shunned, 'felt excluded from what they regarded… as a movement of vulgarians', gathering quietly and often becoming members of the resistance. Many others resisted in the early years by sheltering 'undesirables' or smuggling meat to Jews, but it was always dangerous.

The picture is of a brittle, cruel place, with forced gaiety when the Nazis demanded it and extreme privations, especially for anyone who showed signs of non-compliance. Mr Buruma's final message is one of hope, praise for how Berlin has confronted its terrible past, memorialised the Murdered Jews of Europe and moved on. Both Paris and Berlin, scarred from the worst impulses of mankind, thrive today. We can only hope that the likes of Kyiv and Tehran can rise again, too.

Octavia Pollock