Stage Right

Crisis and Recovery in British
Contemporary Mainstream Theatre

John Bull

Macmillan Education

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For Carole and Lydia

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1979–1993: A History

1979

- Jan. Co-ordinated strikes by British Public Service workers result in the 'Winter of Discontent'. 1,500,000 public service workers on 24 hour strike.
- Feb. Shah of Iran deposed. Ayatollah Khomeini returns from exile and assumes control in Iran.
- Mar. Peace treaty between Egypt and Israel signed by President Sadat and Mr Begin in Washington. Airey Neave, Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, killed by IRA car-bomb.
- Apr. Ayatollah Khomeini declares Iran an Islamic Republic.
Riots after National Front Meeting at Southall, during which 340 people are arrested and Blair Peach, a member of the Anti-Nazi League, killed under suspicious circumstances. Further clashes follow as the Anti-Nazi League mobilize opposition to racism.
Near nuclear disaster at Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania.
- May General Election results in Conservative victory, Margaret Thatcher becoming the first woman prime minister. She announces 'sweeping changes', including anti-picketing legislation, in the Queen's Speech.
- June Presidents Carter and Brezhnev sign the SALT 2 Treaty.
- Aug. Lord Mountbatten killed by the IRA.
- Nov. Iranian students and revolutionary guards seize American Embassy in Tehran.
Decision taken to deploy Cruise missiles in Britain.
- Dec. Zimbabwe National Front agrees to accept arrangements for cease-fire in Rhodesian war.
Russian troops invade Afghanistan.

1980

- Jan.–Mar. Strike of British Steel workers.

- Apr. Independence for Zimbabwe.
Iranian Embassy siege in London.
- May Trade union Day of Action against government's economic and industrial-relations policies.
- July US boycotts Moscow Olympics in protest against Russian invasion of Afghanistan.
- Aug. Unemployment in UK tops 2 million for first time since 1935.
Formation of the independent trade union Solidarity in Poland, in the aftermath of the Gdansk shipyard strikes.
- Sep. Labour Party Conference votes in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament.
- Oct. Jim Callaghan resigns as Labour leader.
- Nov. Michael Foot elected as leader of Labour Party.
- 1981
- Jan. Ronald Reagan becomes President of the USA.
Datsun of Japan announce plans to open first UK plant.
- Mar. Social Democratic Party formed in Britain, under the leadership of the 'Gang of Four', right-wing ex-Labour Party MPs.
- Apr. Riots in Brixton, South London.
Hunger strikes by IRA 'H' Block prisoners in Maze Prison, near Belfast. One of the strikers, Bobby Sands, elected MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone.
- May Bobby Sands dies.
'People's march for jobs' sets out from Liverpool.
Mitterand becomes French President.
Following Labour Party's success in local elections, Ken Livingstone elected chairman of the Greater London Council.
- July Police use CS gas against urban rioters in Toxteth and Moss Side. So-called 'copy-cat' riots in a number of other English cities.
Poland holds first 'free' elections in a Communist country.
- Oct. British Nationality Bill receives the Royal Assent.
Socialist Party wins General Election in Greece for first time.

- Dec. Imposition of martial law in Poland.
UK unemployment reaches 3 million.
- 1982
- Feb. Sir Freddie Laker's Sky-Train company collapses.
- Apr. Argentinian invasion of Falkland Islands. British task-force removes the invaders to the accompaniment of a great deal of populist jingoism in Britain.
- June Israel invades Lebanon.
CND movement re-animated as result of government decision to spend more than £10 billion on the Trident missile system, and to deploy Cruise and Pershing missiles. 250,000 demonstrate in London's Hyde Park and 12,000 women join hands around Greenham Common Airbase.
- Aug. Poland and Mexico's debts add to banking crisis over loans to third world countries.
Yasser Arafat flees Beirut.
- Sep. Israeli-inspired massacre in Lebanese refugee camps.
Labour Party Conference votes to expel members of Militant Tendency.
- Nov. Lech Walesa freed in Poland.
- 1983
- Feb. Iran launches major offensive against Iraq.
- Mar. Drought in Ethiopia causing famine affecting more than a million people.
- June Thatcher wins surprise re-election in the aftermath of the Falklands War and with the aid of the SDP split of oppositional voting. She promises a continuation of monetarist programme.
Foot resigns as leader of the Labour Party.
- July £500 million cut in Government spending, including £140 million on health.
- Sep. Neil Kinnock elected as leader of the Labour Party.
- Oct. Over 200 members of US and French 'peace-keeping' force in Beirut killed by pro-Palestinian terrorists in bomb attack.
Continuing protests against nuclear weapons in Europe. Protest in UK centred at the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common airforce base. Largest

- ever anti-nuclear demonstration in London. Huge demonstrations also in West Germany, Italy, Austria, Sweden and Spain.
- US troops invade Grenada.
- In first General Election for ten years, the Radical Party successful in Argentina.
- Nov. First Cruise missiles arrive at Greenham Common.
- US 'peace-keeping' troops in Lebanon in virtual war with Syria.
- Dec. Period 1979–83 slowest for economic growth in the UK since the Second World War.
- IRA car-bomb attack on Harrod's store in London.
- 1984
- Jan. Conservative rebels join Labour Party in opposing 'rate-capping' of local authorities deemed to have set too high rates by central government.
- Staff at GCHQ, Cheltenham, deprived of union membership.
- Feb. Muslim forces capture western half of Beirut.
- First Japanese Nissan car plant announced for UK.
- Mar. Miners' strike starts. Intensive picketing closes nearly all pits.
- European summit meeting in Brussels breaks up after British complaints about size of contributions.
- Sarah Tisdall jailed after admitting leaking information about Cruise missiles to press.
- Arts Council announce fundamental shift in arts funding, diverting £6 million from London to the regions.
- Apr. Police siege of Libyan Embassy in London after PC Yvonne Fletcher killed by machine-gun fire.
- Diplomatic relations with Libya broken.
- May. 292 pickets charged with obstruction at Strathclyde.
- Miners' strike intensifies.
- Four and a half billion wiped off share values as Stock Exchange has worst fall for a decade.
- Biggest ever UK trade deficit.
- June Government defeated in Lords over plans to abolish Greater London Council.
- July National Coal Board declares 20,000 miners redundant.

- Pound at record low against the dollar.
Dock strike.
- Sep. Rioting in black townships near Johannesburg.
Clive Ponting charged with leaking information to the press in connection with allegations about the sinking of the *Admiral Belgrano* during the Falklands conflict.
- Oct. IRA bomb at Grand Hotel, Brighton, during Conservative Party Conference.
- Nov. Reagan re-elected as US President.
British Telecom privatized.
- Dec. 500 killed outright and thousands injured after toxic gas leak at Union Carbide plant at Bhopal.
- 1985
- Jan. Sterling begins year at record low against the dollar, and continues to slide. Financial markets in turmoil.
Oxford dons vote not to award Thatcher an honorary degree.
- Feb. Clive Ponting acquitted of breach of Official Secrets Act.
Panic in city as pound continues to fall and interest rates continue to rise.
National Union of Mineworkers rejects new formula for return to work.
Spain opens gate to Gibraltar.
Sir Peter Hall announces closure of one stage, job cuts and his own departure from the National Theatre as a result of financial crisis.
- Mar. Miners' strike ends after nearly a year. The return to work is marked by marches and banners.
- Apr. President Nimeiry of Sudan overthrown by military coup.
National Health prescription charges raised from 40p to £2.
- May. Lloyd's investors face underwriting debts of at least £130 million.
Conservatives lose control of nine councils in local elections.
Fire at Bradford City Football ground kills 56.
Riot at Heysel Football Stadium, Belgium, with 38

- dead. English clubs banned from European competitions.
- June Bank of England criticised by government for failing to act to prevent the £248 million collapse of Johnson Matthey Bankers.
Cortonwood Colliery, the threatened closure of which started the miners' strike, is to shut with loss of 10,000 jobs in Yorkshire.
- July TWA flight from Athens to Rome hijacked by Shi'ites.
Landslide victory for Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe.
Greenpeace flagship, *Rainbow Warrior*, destroyed by agents of French Secret Service in New Zealand.
State of Emergency declared in South Africa.
Band Aid Concerts in London and Philadelphia raise £50 million for Ethiopian famine relief.
- Sep. Riots in Handsworth and Brixton.
Lebanese militia destroy 12 Christian villages near Sidon.
- Oct. For the first time in England rioters fire shots in major flare-up on Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham.
All UK blood donations to be automatically tested for AIDS virus.
- Dec. Government pulls UK out of UNESCO.
Remaining Ulster Unionist MPs in mass resignation in protest at Anglo-Irish agreement.
- 1986
- Jan. Sikh militants destroy Golden Temple of Amritsar.
Michael Heseltine resigns after Westland Helicopter rescue bid fails to gain government acceptance.
Rupert Murdoch moves News International offices from Fleet Street to Wapping. Start of bitter, year-long mass picketing, with frequent violent scenes and allegations of brutality by pickets and police.
UK unemployment at record level of 3,204,900.
- Feb. After losing election to Cory Aguino, President Marcos of Philippines flees country.
- Mar. South African State of Emergency suspended after 229 days and 757 deaths.
- Apr. US warplanes attack Libya.
Lebanon in 10th year of civil war.

- Greater London Council and other metropolitan authorities abolished.
- May. Reagan renounces SALT 2 treaty.
Violent scenes on Wapping picket lines.
- June John Stalker suspended from the police whilst conducting investigation of 'shoot to kill' policy in the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary).
- July State of Emergency declared in South Africa.
- Aug. Stock Exchange has record one-day fall of more than £4 billion.
Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant shut down temporarily as radioactivity found to be above safety limits.
- Oct. Stock Exchange 'Big Bang' day a disaster as computer fails.
- 1987
- Jan. Terry Waite, Archbishop of Canterbury's special envoy, kidnapped in Beirut.
Chinese students demonstrate in Beijing.
Sir Ernest Saunders resigns as Chairman of Guinness as Department of Trade and Industry continues investigation into Distillers take-over.
Details of sale of British Airways announced.
- Feb. Reagan announces continuation of Star Wars project.
British Gas sold off.
Print unions end year-long dispute at News International offices at Wapping in face of legal proceedings.
Nine animal rights terrorists jailed for total of 37 years for bomb attacks.
- Mar. 288 people killed as *Herald of Free Enterprise* sinks off Zeebrugge.
Worldwide attempts by British government to prevent publication of Peter Wright's *Spycatcher*.
President Reagan accepts full responsibility for diversion of funds to Contras.
- May. 37 crew die when *USS Stark* hit by Iraqi Exocet missile in Gulf.
- June Thatcher wins third General Election, a victory fuelled by the creation of a credit boom and rising interest rates by Nigel Lawson, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

- State of Emergency continued for further year in South Africa.
- July Tension grows in the Gulf as US flags are flown on two Kuwaiti tankers.
 Irangate sessions in USA.
 Thatcher promises abolition of present rates system (for new and bitterly contested 'poll-tax'), and complete shake-up of Education programme.
- Sep. USA and Russia agree to cut numbers of intermediate-range nuclear missiles. It is revealed that Chernobyl nuclear disaster cost USSR £200 million.
- Oct. Sir Jack Lyons and Gerald Ronson charged with theft in aftermath of Guinness scandal.
 'Black Thursday' as £50 million wiped off value of shares in London, part of worldwide collapse of Stock Markets in biggest financial crisis since the time of the Great Depression.
- Nov. 32 killed in King's Cross tube fire in London.
 11 killed by IRA bomb at Remembrance Service in Enniskillen.
- Dec. Israel acts to halt rebellion amongst Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, at least 20 people killed in clashes.
- 1988
- Jan. Margaret Thatcher becomes longest serving Prime Minister of century.
 Liberal Party votes to merge with Social Democratic Party.
- Feb. Comic Relief (television-oriented charity day of comic acts) raises nearly £7 million for famine relief.
 Gorbachov signals willingness to remove Russian troops from Afghanistan.
- Mar. Lieutenant Colonel North and Admiral Poindexter indicted over Irangate affair.
 Iran accuses Iraq of using mustard gas to kill 4000 Kurds.
 Three IRA terrorists shot dead by security forces in Gibraltar. Gun and grenade attack by IRA during their funeral in Belfast.
- June BBC broadcast of Nelson Mandela's 70th Birthday

- concert at Wembley criticized by South African government.
- July Iran accepts UN resolution calling for end to war with Iraq.
167 oil-workers killed in fire on North Sea rig Piper Alpha.
Paddy Ashdown elected leader of new Social and Liberal Democratic Party.
- Aug. IRA bombs in Northern Ireland and on mainland a continuation of enlargement of terrorist activities.
- Sep. Russian troops sent to Armenia to deal with ethnic disturbances. State of emergency declared in Nagorno-Karabakh. Gorbachev reorganizes Politburo. Sport Aid (another post-Band-Aid charity appeal) raises several millions to help under-privileged children.
- Oct. Plans for the privatisation of British Steel and Coal Industry announced.
President Pinochet defeated in first free elections in Chile for 15 years.
- Nov. George Bush defeats Michael Dukakis to become US President.
State of emergency declared in Soviet republic of Azerbaijan.
- Dec. Gorbachev pledges to substantially reduce numbers of Soviet forces. 70,000 people killed in Armenian earthquake.
275 people killed in terrorist-bombed crash of Pan Am plane over Lockerbie, Scotland.
- 1989
- Jan. Hungarian Parliament approves formation of independent and opposition groups.
- Feb. Vaclav Havel imprisoned for incitement in Czechoslovakia.
- Mar. State of Emergency in Alaska as damaged tanker *Exxon Valdez* leaks 11 million gallons of crude oil into sea.
First contested elections for 70 years in USSR.
- Apr. 'Poll-tax' introduced in Scotland, resulting in widespread protest.

- 95 people killed at FA Cup semi-final in Sheffield.
Pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing spread to other Chinese cities.
- June More than 1000 people killed as troops clear pro-democracy demonstrators from Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Widespread arrests follow.
Solidarity wins majority of free-contest seats in Poland.
- July Bill for privatization of water receives Royal Assent.
- Aug. P. W. Botha replaced by F. W. de Clerk as South African President.
- Sep. Bomb detonated outside Liberty's store in London in protest against the publication of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Its author remains under a death threat.
Hungary opens its border with Austria.
- Oct. Nigel Lawson resigns as Chancellor of Exchequer, and is replaced by John Major.
- Nov. Nationwide demonstrations for reform in East Germany. Berlin Wall pulled down.
Criminal charges brought in connection with 1987 Blue Arrow rights issue.
UK government announces abandonment of plans to privatize nuclear industry.
- Dec. Labour Party supports EC Social Charter.
Start of involuntary repatriation of Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong.
US troops invade Panama to depose General Noriega.
Communist Party's legal monopoly of power ended in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. The freed Havel becomes President of Czechoslovakia.
State of Emergency declared after riots in Romanian city of Timisoara. President Ceaușescu flees and is executed.
- 1990
- Jan. Unrest throughout Russian 'republic' states.
- Feb. Clashes increasing in intensity between ethnic Albanians and the Serbian authorities in Yugoslavia.
Nelson Mandela released from prison.
- Mar. Anti-Poll Tax riots in Trafalgar Square, a part of continuing national opposition to scheme.
Gorbachev elected President of Soviet Union.

- Apr. 'Poll-tax' implemented in England.
Rioting at Manchester's Strangeways Prison.
21 local authorities 'rate-capped'.
Government statement confirms attempted sale of 'supergun' to Iraq.
- June First free elections since 1946 in Czechoslovakia.
- Aug. Iraqi troops invade Kuwait.
- Sep. Allied forces begin preparatory build-up around Iraq.
World oil prices at record level.
- Oct. West and East Germany reunified.
Britain enters European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM).
- Nov After organized campaign within her party Margaret Thatcher resigns as Prime Minister.
Widely agreed on all sides that Britain is in the grip of a major recession.
Announcement of dissolution of Warsaw Pact.
- Dec. As Russian crisis worsens Gorbachev given wider executive powers.
Helmut Kohl elected President of unified Germany.
ANC President Oliver Tambo returns to South Africa after 30 years exile.
- 1991
- Jan. Soviet troops, sent to the Baltic republics to quell unrest, kill 14 civilians in Vilnius.
UN deadline for removal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait passes without response, and US launches air attack over Baghdad. Start of Gulf War.
- Feb. South Africa announces abolition of remaining apartheid laws.
IRA launches mortar attack on Prime Minister's Downing Street residence during meeting of War Cabinet. IRA bombs at London railway stations.
Lithuania votes for independent status.
In Operation 'Desert Storm', allied land forces advance to remove Iraq presence from Kuwait. Following its success a ceasefire declared.
- Apr. Gulf allies parachute aid to Kurdish refugees on Turkish border with Iraq. US troops enter Iraq to set up refugee camps.

- Michael Heseltine announces the abolition of the controversial 'poll-tax'.
- May. Rajiv Ghandi, ex-Prime Minister of India, killed in bomb attack.
Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front take control of Addis Ababa.
- June Boris Yeltsin voted President of Russia.
Croatia and Slovenia declare independence from the federal republic of Yugoslavia, which is sliding into civil war.
- July New York court finds two founders of the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International guilty of fraud on the scale of at least \$5 billion.
Presidents Bush and Gorbachev sign the Strategic Arms Reduction treaty.
- Aug. Beirut hostage John McCarthy freed after more than 5 years captivity.
Gorbachev relieved of all duties, as Yeltsin assumes control. Attempted coup fails. Estonia, Latvia and Moldavia declare independence. Soviet government and KGB formally disbanded.
- Sep. Unemployment at 2.4 million, highest figure for two years.
Beirut hostage Jackie Mann released.
- Oct. Bush and Yeltsin agree on halving of numbers of armed forces.
- Nov. Israeli and Palestinian representatives meet for talks for first time since 1967.
Newspaper mogul Robert Maxwell disappears at sea, and subsequently evidence of his misappropriation of funds comes to light.
Terry Waite and Tom Sutherland released from Beirut captivity.
- Dec. IRA bombs in London stores.
Ukraine votes for independence. Soviet Union disbanded. Gorbachev resigns.
Terry Anderson becomes last American hostage in Beirut to be released.
Agreement reached on European Maastricht Treaty on economic and political union. John Major successfully presses for British opt-out on single currency and

Social Charter clauses.

Kevin Maxwell, son of Robert, is issued with writ over an estimated £40 million misplacement of pension funds.

1992

Jan.

President Gamsakhuria of Georgia flees from his burning Parliament in Tblisis. Civil war and battle with South Ossetian separatists continue all year.

Following withdrawal of Red Army troops, territorial fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan. 'Liberalization' of prices in Russia.

Serbian and Croatian forces continue to fight for military and territorial supremacy in disputed Dalmatian and Slavonian parts of Croatia. European Community recognizes Slovenia and Croatia.

Mar.

Clashes in Sarajevo herald the start of the most extensive war in Europe since 1945. Despite UN and EC peace initiatives more than half a million people killed in the fighting by the end of the year. Europe's largest post-war migration of internal refugees resulting in dispersal of hundreds of thousands of Bosnians to Croatia and western Europe.

This dispersal adds fuel to the racial violence and nationalist chauvinism that grows in strength throughout western Europe, and particularly in what had been East Germany, through the year.

Apr.

John Major leads Conservative Party to an unexpected victory in General Election, the fourth consecutive defeat for Labour.

Long-serving Italian premier Andreotti loses power in Election.

53 people killed and \$1 billion worth of buildings destroyed in Los Angeles riots following not guilty verdicts on policemen filmed beating black motorist Rodney King.

June

Danish referendum votes against implementation of Maastricht Treaty.

In France farmers and truckers successfully blockade roads for a month in protest against EC agricultural reform proposals.

- Sep. Black Wednesday as pressure from the foreign exchange markets causes the pound to plummet. The Government raises interest rates, removes sterling from the ERM, allowing the pound to float, and slashes interest rates; all within a day.
- Oct. Government announce plans for closure of 31 coal pits, an announcement followed by strong and organized protest, and a climb-down, legally enforced, whilst a report is prepared.
- Nov. Bill Clinton defeats George Bush in US Presidential election.
- Dec. Edinburgh Euro-Summit on Maastricht Treaty attempts to patch up differences.
- 1993
- Jan. Compromise proposals on pit closures announced by UK Government, but national protests continue.
- Feb. US, backed by UK and France, in missile attacks on Baghdad.
Savage fighting continues between Serbian and Bosnian forces, as evidence of atrocities mounts.
Privatization plans announced for British Rail and London Underground. Hospital waiting lists at record high. Unemployment at 3 million.

what does not change/is the will to change

what also is unchanged/is the resistance to change