

Em [*Emma, Graham's daughter and my niece*] and family were here this week. She and Nick were really excited about the election and are already campaigning. Sheffield is more fertile ground than Banbury which has had a Conservative MP since Jurassic times. I argued that the polls were bad for Labour and getting much worse quite quickly, and that Corbyn has historically low ratings – lower even than the previous record holder, Michael Foot. I see little hope other than for the toffs to win by some margin and immediately renege on their promises about how we leave Europe, as well as on promises to protect worker rights, the NHS, food standards and more. Once they have a working majority it will be a turkey shoot. I cannot believe, still, that Em and Nick voted to leave. They argued at the time that the EU was a capitalist conspiracy and that a social democracy could only be achieved outside it. I wonder, if they were in a room with car workers who have already lost their jobs due to Brexit, or with low paid workers fearful of their few remaining worker rights being trashed, or our lodger Joanna, and her Polish friends, fearful that she will be thrown out of the country, whether they might get lynched if they rehearsed their idealistic rationale to them. I'm too depressed about how things stand to summon up optimism about the election.

There was a piece in the Guardian Review last weekend in which a series of famous and literary people each wrote a love letter to Europe. They often cited experiences of flowering understanding and friendship with various Europeans during visits when younger, and how upset the current situation makes them. Our neighbours in France now are French Algerians, who fled the war in Algeria and went to Paris, many years ago. They seem to be genuine Europeans who understand the dangers of nationalism. They have more in common with Vicky and I, and have said so, than with Charente locals who support Le Pen and who would vote 'Leave' if they had the chance (indeed the countryside in France has twice voted overwhelmingly not to endorse the Maastricht and Lisbon treaties, but been narrowly outvoted by urban areas – in a margin of similar narrowness to our margin in favour of leaving). One of the things that motivates the likes of Macron is that they know if they held a referendum on Europe right now they might well lose. It terrifies them.

I am conflicted – because I support much of Labour's manifesto and hope at least some of it were to come about. But I feel alienated from Labour, with its antisemitism and its mealy-mouthed flip-flopping on the Leave issue, and its bullying of elected MPs who do not share Momentum views of the world. I agree with you that had Labour come out and said we are Remainers, the toffs are wrong, and attacked the duplicity and dishonesty of the toffs more effectively,

then we might be in a very different place right now. A historical mistake, and largely Corbyn's fault. My vote won't make any difference in Banbury. In local and EU elections I vote Green. In national elections I vote Labour so as not to split the vote, but Labour always lose by a huge margin (and Oxford elected a green MEP). Interestingly despite local conservatism (and Conservatism) the referendum vote was one of the closest in the country. I've had interesting correspondence with Prentice, our Tory MP, about this, as she actually voted remain.

I have to say I don't understand the logic of feeling you have to 'honour democracy' by leaving. First, Parliament has always tried to stand above popular issues, such as the death penalty, and do what is right rather than what is popular. It should stand above things again, better informed than the population. And voters change their minds all the time (and will again in this election) and we honour the change and a new government with different views forms, and some years later it changes again. The problem with actually leaving (as opposed to just thinking that it might be a good idea to leave) is that it cannot be undone, at least for a generation. Democracy is fickle. In my view it honours democracy by checking people still feel the same way. Governments rarely introduce radical policies until their second term, fearful the first time round that they don't really have a mandate.