

Amy Gibbons: No Shits Gibbon



By [Amy Gibbons](#), Deputy Editor (2015/16)

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Today I'm sitting down to write my column in front of Channel 4's 'Food Unwrapped', on which they appear to be making moss. Having unmuted the television, I have learned that it is in fact green tea. Really fascinating stuff, and I shit you not the cinematography rivals the Sherlock series finale.

I'm a big fan of Channel 4 generally, and while that might be in part due to my addiction to First Dates, First Dates Abroad, and First Dates Hotel, I rather suspect it has something to do with its reputation as a channel for all people (publicly owned since 1982), complimented by its commitment to diversity.

Diversity, it seems, has been a major player in my week, and something firmly on my mind as we approach Donald's Day on the 20th. As I booked my Hamilton tickets this morning I remembered my friend saying how much she loved the fact that the story of the privileged white, slave-owning founding fathers of America had been popularised by an exclusively minority cast, heavily influenced by modern black and Latino culture. Women too are given a voice in Hamilton, the testaments to whom are sparse in history, somehow writing themselves back into the narrative.

Such acceptance, even celebration of diversity in an otherwise extremely divided country got me thinking about the fate of liberalism in 2017 and, bizarrely, the consequences of William the Conqueror's invasion of Anglo-Saxon England in 1066, my set reading for High Medieval Literature this week. Yeah, I know. Please bear with me.

Particularly relevant it seemed, was the deep set discomfort among the Anglo-Saxon people who felt, somehow, that William's victory meant their national identity was in jeopardy. After the invasion, the streets were suddenly teeming with foreign soldiers, many speaking a language that the locals didn't understand. Institutions were dominated by names the Saxon people didn't recognise, the new king was insisting on life a certain way, and the face of the country was changing. On top of all this, people believed a saving grace (the Danes) were lining up to show William the door, and take their country back. Ring any bells?

While Norman invasion by means of brutal battles, prolonged close combat and multiple castle seizures culminating in a near ambush bears absolutely no resemblance to the topic of immigration in today's world, the tendency of people to be hostile in the face of change is not altogether dissimilar. Encouraged by rhetoric and, dare I say it, mob mentality, we are driven to protect what we deem our own. And in 2017, as opposed to the mid-11th century, this apparently means Brexit, and it means Trump.

National identity is a funny thing to feel passionately about. After all, many of us would argue that diversity is among the best things to happen to any nation, and some would go so far as to say England especially has never been, well, 'English'.

Why, then, do we care so much? And why, God, do I insist on making this column about actually giving a shit, as opposed to complaining about the new 20p charge under £5 via Yoyo Wallet (which is frankly obscene)?

There's nothing wrong with having an identity, or being proud of where you come from (as long as it's not Derwent, am I right?), but ultimately flexibility breeds diversity, and diversity breeds empathy. We've seen what chaos momentum can cause both to the Right and to the Left, so perhaps it's worth standing still for a moment. Steady yourself, take one look at America, and tell me one thing they've gained. It's certainly not control.

That's my two cents, anyway.



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