

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A CAD

by Ian Hislop & Nick Newman

adapted from the novel by
A.G. Macdonell

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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NOTE

This edition reflects a rehearsal draft of the script and may differ from the final production.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A CAD was first presented at the Watermill Theatre, Newbury, on 7 February 2025. It was based on the novel by A.G. Macdonell, adapted by Ian Hislop & Nick Newman. The cast and creative team were as follows:

EDWARD FOX-INGLEBY	James Mack
MISS CONSTANCE APPLEBY	Rhiannon Neads
MR HENRY COLLINS	Mitesh Soni
Director	Paul Hart
Set & Costume Design	Ceci Calf
Lighting Design	Charly Dunford
Sound Design	Steven Atkinson
Projection Design	Rachel Sampley
Choreographer	Emily Holt
Assistant Director	Elsa Strachan
Assistant Set & Costume Design	Jacob Wu
Assistant Lighting Design	Nicola Crawford

The **Watermill Theatre** is a small but mighty 200-seat theatre, set in idyllic gardens and nestled on the banks of the river Lambourn in rural West Berkshire, southeast England.

The Watermill Theatre is a unique producing powerhouse of residential and artistic facilities which provide a crucible for creativity, innovative storytelling, and artistic excellence. The Watermill's mission is to make theatre that is surprising, inventive, and exciting and to enable access for everyone. A hallmark of its work is the artistry of actor-musicianship, in both new writing and reinvigorated classics. The theatre nurtures and celebrates talent and creativity in its company, community, and in the wider sector and it holds wellbeing, equity, and sustainability at the heart of its culture.

In 2024, the Watermill was awarded the prestigious title of 'Theatre of the Year' jointly with the National Theatre. This award, recognising excellence in British theatre, was bestowed on the Watermill Theatre for its continued ambition as an independent charity, and the success of their 2023 production of *The Lord of the Rings*. This multi award-winning production, the Watermill's most ambitious to date, has subsequently transferred to Chicago, Auckland, and Australia (tour) before it returns to the UK in October 2025.

Reaching far beyond the 200 seats in its auditorium, the Watermill's productions regularly transfer to the West End or tour the UK and internationally, including *Spike*, *Calamity Jane*, *Bleak Expectations*, *Crazy for You*, *The Wipers Times* and *Trial By Laughter*. *The Autobiography of a Cad* is the fifth production written by Ian Hislop and Nick Newman for the Watermill, following *A Bunch of Amateurs*, *The Wipers Times*, *Trial By Laughter* and *Spike*.

With a core belief in the transformative power of the arts, the Watermill Theatre also runs a comprehensive outreach programme, working with children and young people, those from low-income backgrounds, and isolated or displaced communities.

Artistic Director Paul Hart

Executive Director Claire Murray

watermill.org.uk

CAST

JAMES MACK | Cad/Edward Fox-Ingleby

Training: The Guildhall School of Music and Drama

Watermill credits include: *Much Ado About Nothing* (2024); *Spike* (2022); *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (2020); *The Rivals* (2018); *Macbeth* (2015) and *Journey's End* (2014).

Theatre credits include: *Spike* (UK Tour); *Burke & Hare* (New Wolsey Theatre); *Cinderella, One Man, Two Guvnors* (Torch Theatre); *Robin Hood* (The Old Market Theatre, Brighton); *Ragtime* (Charing Cross Theatre); *The Provok'd Wife* (Go People and Tour); *Dr. Faustus* (Matchstick Theatre Company); *Mermaid* (London Shuffle Festival); *This Heaven* (Finborough Theatre); *Hay Fever* (Duke of Yorks, West End); *A Christmas Carol* (Old Red Lion); *Julius Caesar* (Sam Wanamaker Festival, Shakespeare's Globe); *The Jailer's Tale* (ArtsDepot); *Confusions* and *The Insect Play* (Theatre Royal Haymarket).

TV and Film credits include: *Bad Snappers* (Comedy Central) and *Embryonic* (Door 77 Films).

RHIANNON NEADS | Miss Constance Appleby and others

Training: LAMDA

Theatre credits include: *Supernova* (Omnibus Theatre); *All Lies* (Alan Ayckbourn Company); *The Wind Of Heaven* (Finborough); *3 Billion Seconds* (Paines Plough Roundabout); *Leia and the Roman* (VAULT Festival); *Mary's Babies* (Oak Theatre) and *Great Expectations* (Merton Arts).

TV and Film credits include: *One Day* (Netflix); *Call The Midwife*, *Blitz with Lucy Worsley*, *Father Brown* and *Doctors* (BBC); *Wilding* (Amazon Prime) and *Downton Abbey* (ITV).

Audio credits include: *Lenin Forever*, *Harland*, *English Rose*, *Not With the Eyes*, *Sappho*, *The Blue Lenses*, *Vital Signs* and *Home Front* (all for BBC Radio). Rhiannon is the host of espionage podcast *True Spies* (Spyscape Studios).

Rhiannon is one half of musical comedy duo Stiff & Kitsch whose shows include: *Adele Is Younger Than Us* (Pleasance, Edinburgh) and *Bricking It* (Soho Theatre). Their work has been featured on BBC Three, Comedy Central and *The Now Show* (BBC Radio 4).

MITESH SONI | Mr Henry Collins and others

Training: Guildford School of Acting

Theatre credits include: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (RSC and Barbican); *A Christmas Carol* (RSC); *The Play What I Wrote* (Birmingham Rep and UK Tour); *Oliver Twist* (Leeds Playhouse); *Jack & The Beanstalk* and *Cinderella* (Oldham Coliseum); *Twelfth Night*, *Henry V*, *The Borrowers*, *The Tempest*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Swallows & Amazons* (Chester, Storyhouse); *The Big Corner*, *East Is East* and *Hamlet* (Octagon, Bolton); *A Christmas Carol* (Hull Truck); *Combustion* (Arcola Theatre and Tara UK Tour); *Home Truths* (Bunker Theatre and Cardboard Citiz); *Rudolf* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *Coming Up* (Watford Palace); *Macbeth* (Tara Arts and UK Tour); *Romeo & Juliet* (National Theatre); *The Good Person of Sichuan* (Colchester); *Arabian Nights* (Manchester Library Theatre); *The Firework Maker's Daughter* (Theatre by the Lake, Keswick); *The Rise & Fall of Little Voice* (Dukes, Lancaster); *Peter Pan* (New Vic Stoke); *Rafta Rafta* (Octagon Bolton and New Vic Stoke); *The Jungle Book* (Birmingham Stage Company UK Tour); *Mercury Fur* (Goldsmiths); *Lord of the Flies* (Pilot Theatre UK tour) and *Meteorite* (Hampstead Theatre).

Film credits include: *A Christmas No. 1*, *Medusa Deluxe*, *Mughal Mowgli* *Rise of The Footsoler* 2 and *Syriana*.

Television credits include: *Juice*, *EastEnders*, *Silent Witness*, *The Pact*, *The Agency* and *The Canterbury Tales* (BBC); *Hollyoaks and Run* (Channel 4); *Ted's Top Ten* (ITV) and *Threesome* (Comedy Central).

Awards: Asian Media Awards – Best Production (*Combustion*) and Manchester Theatre Award – Best Ensemble (*Arabian Nights*).

CREATIVE

IAN HISLOP | Writer

Ian Hislop is a writer, journalist and broadcaster. He was educated at Ardingly College and Magdalen College, Oxford. He has been editor of *Private Eye* since 1986. He has been a regular team captain on the BBC show *Have I Got News for You* since 1990. In 2018, Ian curated an exhibition at the British Museum, *I Object: Ian Hislop's Search for Dissent*. He has appeared on *BBC Question Time*, written and presented documentaries for television and radio about various subjects including the Patron Saints of the British Isles, History of Tax, Female Hymn Writers, Dr Beeching, Victorian Philanthropists, Benefit Systems, the First World War, and The Stiff Upper Lip. In 2024, he had two series on Radio 4: *Ian Hislop's Oldest Jokes* and *Orwell vs Kafka*, with Helen Lewis. In 2024, Ian was presented with a Fellowship Award by the Society of Editors.

As a scriptwriter with Nick Newman, his work includes five years on *Spitting Image*, *Harry Enfield and Chums*, and *My Dad's the Prime Minister* as well as numerous radio series. They have had four plays premiered at The Watermill – *A Bunch of Amateurs*, *The Wipers Times*, *Trial by Laughter*, and *Spike*. These subsequently went on to further success including national tours, West End transfers and critical acclaim.

NICK NEWMAN | Writer

Nick Newman is an award-winning cartoonist and writer. He has worked for *Private Eye* since 1981 and has been pocket cartoonist for *The Sunday Times* since 1989. His cartoons have appeared in many other publications including *The Guardian*, *Punch* and *The Spectator*. He was The Cartoon Art Trust's Gag Cartoonist of the Year in 1997, 1998, 2005 and 2016. In 2013 he edited the humour bestseller *Private Eye: A Cartoon History*.

His collaboration with Ian Hislop began with *Spitting Image*, and continued with Dawn French's *Murder Most Horrid* and *The Harry Enfield Show* – with the creation of Tim Nice-But-Dim. They also wrote the BBC1 film *Gobble* and the sitcom *My Dad's the Prime Minister*. In 2008 their film *A Bunch of Amateurs* was chosen for the Royal Film Performance. Their BBC film *The Wipers Times* won the Broadcast Press Guild Award for best single drama, and was nominated for a BAFTA, before its stage adaptation. Radio credits include many series of *Dave Podmore* for Radio 4, along with *Mastering the Universe*, starring Dawn French. With Ian Hislop, he also wrote Radio 4's *Gush*, *Greed All About It*, *The News at Bedtime* and *Trial by Laughter*. *The Autobiography of a Cad* is the duo's fifth collaboration with the Watermill Theatre.

PAUL HART | Director

Paul is the current Artistic Director and Joint CEO of Watermill Theatre.

Watermill credits include: *Much Ado About Nothing* (2024); *The Lord of the Rings: A Musical Tale* (2023) and *Notes from a Small Island* (2023); *Othello* (Co-Director) and *Spike* (2022); *As You Like It* (2021); *Camelot in Concert* (2020); *Kiss Me, Kate* (2019); *Macbeth* (2019 UK Tour/2020 Wilton's Music Hall); *Sweet Charity* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2018); *The Borrowers* (2017); *Twelfth Night* (2017, Wilton's Music Hall/UK Tour); *Crazy for You* (2016/2017); *Journey's End* (2014); *The Tempest* (2012); *Great Expectations* (2011) and *Heroes* (2010).

Other credits as Director include: *The Lord of the Rings: A Musical Tale* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, The Civic [New Zealand] and Australian Tour); *Private Peaceful* and *Pope Joan* (National Youth Theatre and West End); *Doctor Faustus* (National Theatre Studio); *Huis Clos* (Donmar Warehouse at Trafalgar Studios); *How to Find Love in Three Easy Dreams* and *Odd Jobs* (Pentabus Young Writers Festival); *The Revenger's Tragedy* (LAMDA); *Love's Labours Lost* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Rose Bruford College) and *Boys* (Guildford School of Speech and Drama).

As Associate Director for Propeller: *Pocket Henry V* (2014) and *Pocket Merchant* (2013); *Henry V*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Richard III*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice* (UK and International Tours).

As Resident Assistant Director at the Donmar Warehouse: *Red, Life is a Dream*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *A Doll's House* and *Dimetos* (2009).

Radio credits include: *Existentialism in Theatre* (BBC).

CECI CALF | Set & Costume Design

Ceci is a set and costume designer based in London. She trained at The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, graduating in 2018, and has since worked across the UK and Europe.

Watermill credits include: *Much Ado About Nothing* (2024) and *Othello* (2022).

Credits as Designer include: *Farm Hall* (Jermyn Street, Theatre Royal Bath, UK Tour and West End); *Comedy of Errors* (Shakespeare Theatre Company, Washington); *A Christmas Carol* (Opera Holland Park); *HIR* (Park Theatre); *The Barber of Seville* (Waterperry Festival Opera); *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* and *A Skull In Connemara* (Dailes Teātris Rīga, Latvia); *Breeding* (Kings Head Theatre); *Warrior Queens* (Sadler's Wells); *Waiting For Anya* and *The Mozart Question* (Barn Theatre); *Not Now, Yes So I Said Yes*, *How To Survive An Apocalypse*, *Not Quite Jerusalem* and *The Wind of Heaven* (Finborough Theatre).

Credits as Associate Designer: *Anything Is Possible If You Think About It Hard Enough* (Southwark Playhouse) and *Macbeth* (UK Tour, starring Ralph Fiennes).

CHARLY DUNFORD | Lighting Design

Charly is a graduate from Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts and was awarded the 2022 ALPD Michael Northern Award.

Watermill credits include: *Much Ado About Nothing* (2024) and *Macbeth* (2023).

Credits as Lighting Designer include: *Kinky Boots* (Chester Storyhouse); *Peak Stuff* and *Blood Harmony* (ThickSkin UK Tour); *Driftwood* (Pentabus/ThickSkin UK Tour); *this is not a crime – this is just a play* (Liverpool Everyman); *8 Hours There and Back* (All Things Considered UK Tour); *Daneshia* (Box of Tricks UK Tour); *Sherlock Holmes: A Sign of The Four* and *Silla* (Leeds Opera Festival); *Little Red Robbin Hood* (Battersea Arts Centre); *Wild Swimming* (Theatre on the Downs); *Séance* (The Station); *A Very Odd Birthday Party* (UK Tour) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Shakespeare North Playhouse).

Credits as Associate Lighting Designer include: *Fleabag* (Sherman Theatre); *Could This Place Be a Temple* (The Place); *STUFFED* (Ugly Bucket UK Tour); *Curtain Up* (Theatr Clwyd) and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (Northern Stage).

Credits as Assistant Lighting Designer include: *War Horse* (UK Tour); *Cabaret* (Kit Kat Club at the Playhouse) and *What's New Pussycat* (Birmingham Rep).

Credits as Relighter include: *Vortex* (Russel Maliphant Dance Company); *How Not to Drown* (ThickSkin); *Project Dictator* (Rhum and Clay); *Shades of Blue* (Matsena Productions) and *Good Grief* (Ugly Bucket).

STEVEN ATKINSON | Sound Design

Credits as Sound Designer for the RSC include: *Henry VI: Rebellion*, *Wars of the Roses*, *Maydays*, *Myth*, *The Earthworks*, *Fall of the Kingdom*, *Rise of the Foot Soldier*, *Always Orange* and *Measure for Measure* (Stratford, UK Tour and The Barbican).

Credits as Associate Sound Designer for the RSC include: *My Neighbour Totoro* (Original Production 2022/2023) and *King Lear* (Barbican, London and BAM, New York).

Art Exhibition credits include: *Absolute Pressure* (Ribot Gallery); *A Tea Journey* (Compton Verney); *Maladapted* (Baert Gallery); *Defence Cascade* (Compton Verney); *Interview Prototype* (The Lightbox and Ingram Collection) and *Valence* (Gwangju Biennale, as Composer).

Film credits include: *Henry VI: Part One* (as Sound Supervisor).

RACHEL SAMPLEY | Projection Design

Rachel Sampley is a London-based lighting and video designer.

Watermill credits include: *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher* (2023).

Theatre credits include: *Barrier(s)* (The National Theatre); *Perfect Show for Rachel* (The Barbican); *The Great Gatsby* (Immersive – London and Seoul); *Bossy* (Zoo Co and Southbank Centre); *Cassie and the Lights* (59E59, Off Broadway, New York); *Opal Fruits* (Bristol Old Vic and Pleasance Edinburgh); *Immersive* (London, Seoul, Korea and Theatre Clwyd); *Wreckage* (Turbine Theatre) and *Breeding* (King's Head Theatre, Offie nominated for Lighting Design).

Rachel has an MA in Advanced Theatre Practice from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

EMILY HOLT | Choreographer

Emily is a Choreographer and Movement Director.

Watermill credits include: *Much Ado About Nothing* (2024); *A MiniSummer Night's Dream* (2019); *Trial By Laughter* (2018); *House and Garden* (2017) and *The Wipers Times* (2016).

Theatre credits include: *A Christmas Carol (ish)* (Soho Place); *Murder for Two* (The Theatre Chipping Norton); *Killing Jack* (Queen's Theatre Hornchurch); *Shakespeare's Globe 'Celebration of The First Folio 400 Years'* (Stationer's Hall); *A Christmas Carol-ish* (Soho Theatre); *Cinderella, Jack & the Beanstalk* and *Dick Whittington* (Yvonne Arnaud Theatre); *The Suicide* (Storehouse); *The Entertainer* (Curve Theatre, UK Tour); *The Wipers Times* (Arts Theatre London and UK Tour); *Mr Swallow, Houdini and Mr Swallow, Dracula!* (Soho and Pleasance, Edinburgh); *The Little Beasts* (The Other Palace); *Mrs Beeton Says, Mother Clap's Molly House* and *Ruthless* (Mountview); *Let The Right One In, Bare: A Pop Opera, Cabaret, Spring Awakening* and *Fiddler On The Roof* (LAMDA).

ELSA STRACHAN | Assistant Director

Elsa trained on the MA Directing programme at Rose Bruford College, graduating with distinction in 2023.

Since then, she has worked on a variety of productions, including new writing and fresh adaptations of classic stories.

Originally from Aberdeenshire, Elsa has a passion for regional stories and is committed to making live performance accessible to audiences everywhere, believing in its power to inspire and connect communities.

Credits as Director include: *Mum* (Tramshed Theatre) and *Life on the Hyphen* (R&D, Rose Bruford College).

Credits as Assistant Director include: *Operation Epsilon* (Southwark Playhouse); *Stray Dogs* (Theatre 503); *The Angry Brigade*, *Blue Stockings*, *The Welkin* and *Three Winters* (Rose Bruford College).

JACOB WU | Assistant Set & Costume Design

Jacob is a theatre designer and a scenographer from Hong Kong. He is proudly one of the Elemental Artists with the Watermill Theatre.

Jacob was trained in Scenography (MFA, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama), complementing his academic foundation in Set and Costume Design, acquired in his hometown. His work was staged at numerous venues, including the Museum of Home, Shoreditch Town Hall, and the Crypt Gallery. Jacob's performative workshop *Be Right Back* explores, through the lens of children, the uncertainties of a daunting world way larger than them. The piece was staged at the Stockholm Fringe Festival 2023 and won the Audience Choice Award.

Apart from his previous residency as a set designer at Chung Ying Theatre Company, Jacob has crafted site-specific installations and assisted in the design of *Giselle* for the National Ballet of Japan (2022).

Currently, Jacob serves as a Specialist Technician at Wimbledon College of Arts, UAL, where he works with students to hone their skills in model making and set design, and supervises technical workshops.

NICOLA CRAWFORD | Assistant Lighting Design

Nicola is a Lighting Designer who is excited to be working as part of the Elemental Artist programme at the Watermill Theatre.

Credits as Lighting Designer include: *The Fir Tree* (Arts Depot, London); *Flooded* (St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds); *Tiger Country* (Arts Ed, London); *The Sad Club* and *A Series of Public Apologies* (Egg Theatre, Bath); *Evermore* (The Roper Room, Bath); *Enact* (The Theatre Chipping Norton) and *Beautiful Thing* (Tobacco Factory, Bristol).

Credits as Associate Lighting Designer include: *The Artist* (Theatre Royal Plymouth); *Little Shop of Horrors* (UK Tour); *Bonnie and Clyde* (UK Tour); *A Woman Walks into a Bank* (Theatre503, London) and *The Book Thief* (Belgrade Theatre, Coventry).

Credits as Assistant Lighting Designer include: *Ain't Too Proud* (Prince Edward Theatre, London); *Bonnie and Clyde* (Garrick Theatre, London); *The Great British Bake Off Musical* (Noel Coward Theatre, London) and *Hair in Concert* (London Palladium).

Other credits include: *Pretty Woman the Musical* (UK Tour, as Deputy Head of Lighting) and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (UK Tour, as Deputy Head of Lighting). NicolaCrawford.com

CHARACTERS

(if cast with 3 actors)

EDWARD FOX-INGLEBY (CAD) – 35. A charming, vain, deceitful, cynical, delusional, arrogant, callous Old Etonian politician. In other words, a Cad.

MISS CONSTANCE APPLEBY – late 20s. A prim, proper blue-stocking stenographer, who isn't afraid to challenge the Cad's most ludicrous claims. Also plays **MOTHER, WALSH-AYNSCOT, MRS BEDFORD, GERTIE, HUDSON, FORBES, GRANNY INGLEBY, FELICITY, LADY URSULA CLOPPIN, DIANA, FLORENCE** and **VIOLETTA**.

MR HENRY COLLINS – 30s. An impoverished researcher. A former Winchester pupil who is honest, bitter, frustrated and envious of the Cad, while trying to adhere to the truth. Also plays **FATHER, FREDDY DUNCATTON, CYRIL HEReward, BEDFORD, GERALD CHIPPENHAM, LORD OLDHAM, SIR KNIGHTON-BERRY, WINSLOW BUDDINGTON STARRET, MINISTER, OTIS WINCHESTER** and **PRIME MINISTER**.

TIME

Early twentieth century.

SETTING

The fictional county of Midhamptonshire, England.

AUTHORS' NOTES

This play is designed for a cast of three.

One actor plays the **CAD**, who is dictating his memoirs – and plays himself at various stages of his life.

One actor plays **MR COLLINS**, the researcher for the autobiography and all the other male characters from the **CAD**'s past.

One actress plays **MISS APPLEBY** the stenographer of the autobiography – and all the other female characters (and one or two male characters, as necessary) who feature in the **CAD**'s past.

However, future productions could employ a cast as large as is necessary.

HOUSE OF CADS

'I read a book...an unspeakably frivolous and cynical concoction that shows the English plutocrat without his mask. This is the face of the people whom we must overthrow.' The writer is Josef Goebbels, Hitler's Minister for Propaganda, in his diary entry for 8 December 1940. He was referring to the memoirs of Edward Fox-Ingleby, a Tory politician who, after Eton and Oxford (naturally), rose through the ranks of the party by lying, cheating and sleeping his way to the top. Unbeknown to Goebbels, Fox-Ingleby was a fiction – the antihero of a satirical novel by Scottish writer A.G. Macdonell – *The Autobiography of a Cad*.

Published in 1938, the book was not a commercial success. As war broke out the public had no appetite for reading about their degenerate leaders – however darkly comical. The Cad sank without trace – until now. Ian Hislop and I have brought the rotter back to life, in all his absurd, delusional and mendacious glory.

Fox-Ingleby's is an archetypal political memoir – score-settling, pompous and a celebration of self: self-regarding, self-serving and self-pitying. The only self it doesn't feature is awareness. He deplores the vanity of autobiographers, but luckily vanity 'is not, and never has been, one of my weaknesses.'

For a book written over 80 years ago it is remarkably topical. There are similarities to a number of subsequent memoirs and diaries – notably those of Alan Clark, a minister under Margaret Thatcher. Fox-Ingleby has contempt for the working classes, despising the 'stupidity and cunning' of 'peasants' – while Clark wondered whether he'd get sacked for urinating out of the window of his minister's office and 'spattering the ant-like minions below.'

Fox-Ingleby's lechery is unconfined, pursuing shopgirls, actresses and the wives of friends and superiors. Clark, meanwhile, lusted after his boss. 'By God, she is so beautiful,' he wrote of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. '...still bewitching as Eva Peron must have been... I radiated protective feelings – and indeed feelings of another kind.'

The Cad is also reminiscent of the diaries of Tory MP Henry 'Chips' Channon, with his malicious snobbery and louche disregard for social mores. Channon detailed his affairs with everyone – including playwright Terence Rattigan – as well as spankings and his fondness for Nazis.

Channon's words are unminced. He describes the new king Edward VIII leaping to his feet during dinner, announcing: 'I want to pump shit.' Fox-Ingleby is more polite about Royalty – but only because he has hopes for the gong he feels he undoubtedly deserves.

Written with an eye on posterity, political memoirs are more economical with the truth than diaries. Liz Truss's *Ten Years To Save the West* blames everyone except herself, who, far from crashing the economy, 'was seeking to conduct a handbrake turn to avoid driving off the edge.' Critics are 'untruthers', her ousting is by a mysterious elite – a.k.a. 'The Blob'.

Meanwhile the memoir of Truss's predecessor – *Boris Johnson Unleashed* – unleashes his achievements, but not his numerous affairs. The Cad, however, combines the diarist's candour with the memoirist's self-certainty. He is revealing about his sexual escapades (but never in the wrong) and bullish about his place in history (and always in the right).

In his conclusion, following a spate of career-threatening scandals, Fox-Ingleby presages Johnson's boosterish valedictory speech outside Number Ten. See if you can tell them apart. 'I am proud to have discharged the promises I made my party...' said one. 'Together we have laid foundations that will stand the test of time.' And the other: 'Do not forget...that I helped to make Britain a better place to live in... And above all...a better place for women to live in.' The first is Johnson, the second the Cad. And both reference the classics to reinforce their gravitas. While Johnson compares himself to Cincinnatus, returning to his plough, Fox-Ingleby as Minister of Fine Arts likens himself to Pericles, laying down a 'broad basis for a new national culture' (by censoring anything liberal and axing the arts).

The late journalist and broadcaster Simon Hoggart wrote an introduction to this 'magnificently abusive satire', in which he declared it 'as fresh as tomorrow's front page' and funnier than Macdonell's most famous comic creation, *England their England*, with its famed cricket match. 'Obviously the character is a monstrous grotesque. But we can still meet his descendants today.' Hoggart likens him to Jonathan Aitken MP (jailed for perjury) and Neil Hamilton MP (disgraced in the Cash for Questions scandal). The Cad shows that standards were declining long before the arrival of the Thatcherite chancers.

Like his satirical masterpiece, Archibald Gordon Macdonell has largely been forgotten. He is buried in Wolvercote Cemetery along with J.R.R. Tolkien – but unlike the well-maintained shrine to the *Lord of the Rings* author, Macdonell's grave is sadly neglected.

Born in Poona (now Pune) in 1895, he died in 1941. In his 45 years he produced 19 books, short stories, Cowardesque West End comedies – while working as a drama critic and parliamentary sketch writer. Macdonell also stood twice as a Liberal candidate in Lincoln (defeated both times) – so was well-placed to observe politicians at close quarters.

Fox-Ingleby is the antithesis of Macdonell. A Great War shirker (Macdonell served on the front line and was invalided out) a despiser of the League of Nations (Macdonell spent 5 years working there) and an old Etonian who is withering about Winchester College (of which Macdonell was a pupil). A Winchester alumnus once said, 'Wykehamists write the speeches, Etonians make them' – which may be the source of Macdonell's antipathy.

The inspiration for the novel may have been Mary Dunn's *Lady Addle Remembers* (1936), which Macdonell reviewed with great enthusiasm – 'a treasure – a neat, ironic, swift, bantering wit.' Lady Addle was a caricature of an aristocratic Victorian lady, whose family was full of eccentrics like Sir Ludovic FitzTartan. His hobbies included cockroach racing and shooting bees. Like the Cad, Lady Addle is a convincing, if more whimsical creation. Fox-Ingleby is altogether darker and bleaker.

There are challenges to staging the Cad. Actual arts funding cuts necessitated a cast of just three. Macdonell's 'picaresque' approach to storytelling meant creating a dramatic plot. Above all, this awful character had to be someone you would want to spend two hours with in a theatre. Hopefully, the audience will succumb to the outrageous charm of this precursor to Flashman, and become complicit in the misdemeanours of the prototype Alan B'Stard. The Cad is appalling, but like Patricia Highsmith's *Talented Mr Ripley* – appealing. You end up willing him to succeed. Whether he does or not, you will have to see the play to find out.

Nick Newman

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ACT ONE

Scene One

*(Onstage in the spotlight is a lectern. Back projected we see a newspaper headline from the 1920s: 'BELEAGUERED FOX-INGLEBY MP TO MAKE STATEMENT'. The **CAD** appears. He is a typical politician – sombre, earnest, shifty and yet charming. We hear the sound of flashbulbs and cameras clicking.)*

CAD. Ladies and Gentlemen it is with a heavy heart that I address you this afternoon. In recent weeks I have been the victim of rumours and gossip bordering on character assassination. These smears are as false as they are egregious. I have even been called the 'C' word. Not a 'Conservative'. No. A 'Cad'. I acknowledge that I may have become a distraction from the very important business of government. So I have reflected on my record and examined my own conscience – and after much careful consideration I have decided to...

*(The **CAD** then steps away from the lectern and addresses the audience directly. We are now in the present.)*

(To audience.) ...but I'm getting ahead of myself. It is important to tell the story from the beginning. For the benefit of posterity I always knew that I owed it to you, the people, to produce my memoirs in full. So I had embarked on the telling of my remarkable life, provisionally to be titled The Autobiography of a...

(Pause.)

CAD. Political Titan.

Scene Two

(The female stenographer, MISS APPLEBY, is sitting at a desk to the side of the stage taking notes.)

(We are observing the writing process of the Cad's autobiography, taking place in the Cad's study.)

(There is also a wardrobe, from which the CAD will take various garments for costume changes when we go into flashbacks from CAD's past. A chaise longue and screen complete the furniture. Throughout, back-projected Newspaper Headlines set the historical scene.)

MISS APPLEBY. 'The Autobiography of a Political Titan.' Is that still the working title?

CAD. Unless you think it's too self-deprecating?

MISS APPLEBY. *(Laughs.)* No. I don't think it is.

CAD. Good. So let's stick with that Miss Appleby. I had another idea for the opening paragraph...

(MISS APPLEBY sighs. She puts more paper in the machine.)

MISS APPLEBY. Page one, draft seventeen

CAD. *(Dictating.)* 'All great men in the rich pageant of Britain's island history find that there are those lesser mortals who relish the opportunity to diminish their achievements and legacy. But this is not their story. It is *mine*. Have you got all that?'

MISS APPLEBY. Your story. No-one else's.

CAD. And underline 'mine'.

MISS APPLEBY. Obviously.

CAD. (*Continuing to dictate.*) It is the inspiring tale of one Edward Percival Fox-Ingleby of the Midhamptonshire Fox-Inglebys...

(*Enter MR COLLINS. MR COLLINS, about thirty-five, with a dusty old book. He is a hired researcher for the autobiography.*)

MR COLLINS. Yes, I've been checking on the origins of the Fox-Ingleby lineage and the name doesn't seem to go back beyond the mid-Nineteenth Century.

CAD. Nonsense, Mr Collins. I don't pay you as a researcher to undermine my genealogy...

MR COLLINS. You haven't paid me at all sir.

CAD. Is it not reward enough that you are privy to the insight and wisdom of one of your country's leading political figures. Surely it is you who should be paying *me* for the extraordinary opportunity I have given you.

MR COLLINS. I have to say that I am lost for words.

CAD. Which is why I am a successful man of letters and you are a somewhat desperate scribbler who will always struggle to make a living out of your impenetrable poetry and overwrought prose.

MR COLLINS. That's unfair.

CAD. Like the omission of the Fox-Inglebys from the Domesday Book. It's an outrage! We *definitely* came over with William the Conqueror.

MR COLLINS. Though there is no mention of your family in the roll of honour at Battle Abbey.

CAD. Details, details, Mr Collins! My family tree is strong and sturdy.

(*He whacks a riding crop down on the desk to terminate the discussion.*)

MR COLLINS. (*Consulting tome.*) Though some branches appear to have fallen off. And I'm afraid I've discovered some gaps in the foliage.

CAD. Minor gaps. Trivial gaps. The tree is sound! Fine old English oak!

MR COLLINS. I can't find any mention of the Inglebys until the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 when there IS an English soldier recorded called Inglebourne.

CAD. That's the fellow! Flower of chivalry. Leading the charge.

(He hold the riding crop like a sabre leading the charge and performs some imaginary swordplay.)

(MR COLLINS shows him book.)

MR COLLINS. He was hanged for pilfering from the dead.

CAD. That's what his enemies would *want* you to believe. An heroic figure, undoubtedly. I'm afraid Mr Collins you need to work harder, and find some better sources.

MR COLLINS. From my research your family story really begins with your Grandfather who, despite his later fortune, came from a very humble background.

CAD. That is where you're wrong. The fact that my grandfather Jedediah had no inheritance leads me to suspect that *his* father – my Great Grandfather – must have gambled away the Ingleby millions in the Hell-Fire Club, in the company of Fox, Pitt, Sheridan and The Prince Regent.

MR COLLINS. Do you have any evidence for that?

CAD. None. But it is the only possible explanation for Grandpapa Jedediah's impecunious beginnings. So get out and prove it!

(CAD sends MR COLLINS packing, throwing the book after him.)

CAD. (*To MISS APPLEBY.*) Now, we must address another relative who is sadly a lot less eminent. My Father. However deep my grievances against Papa, and no matter how unfairly he treated me, I will not hear a word against him.

(Spotlight on CAD addressing audience allows actors playing MR COLLINS and MISS APPLEBY to exit and change.)

(To audience.) The trouble with Father was that he was a saint. Of the worst kind. He was an *amateur* saint. God knows, professional saints are pretty awful, but amateurs – whether in sanctification or theatricals – are unbearably worse. And my mother was even worse than my father.

Scene Three

(Enter FATHER sporting moustache. MOTHER with basket of provisions for the poor. We are now in flashback.)

FATHER. Good day to you, good day to you all. Yes, I'll be reroofing those leaky cottages – and yes, I'll be rebuilding those old barns for the tenant farmers.

MOTHER. And we will be laying on water and gas for the estate, maintaining fences and gates and paying for hedging and ditching.

CAD. *(To audience.)* Aren't they ghastly?

FATHER. I will forego payment of your annual rent this year on the grounds that the harvest has been ruined by the weather...

CAD. *(To audience.)* Have you heard of anything like it?

MOTHER. I have clothes, boots and sacks of coal for everyone.

CAD. *(To audience.)* No wonder they were the laughing-stock of the county. I loved my mother dearly, and in her own fussy way she was wonderful and well-meaning but she was so generous to the tenants that it was hardly necessary for them to do any work at all!

MOTHER. Congratulations, Mrs Cooper, another baby... I'll bring some blankets and send the doctor round immediately.

CAD. *(To audience.)* She was a positive encouragement to idleness and plebeian incontinence! But it is not for me to criticise.

She was, however, a Fox – and descended, I believe, from Gaston de Foix, who features, you will remember in the fourteenth century Froissart Chronicles.

Scene Four

(Enter MR COLLINS, with copy of the Froissart Chronicles. We are back in the present.)

MR COLLINS. Yes, I'm having difficulty finding a direct link with Froissart...

CAD. I sometimes wonder if you're up to this job. There are a lot of unemployed men out there – not the fault of this government – who would relish the opportunity that you have been given. Instead you repeatedly attempt to plant seeds of doubt about every simple biographical detail.

MR COLLINS. *(Wearily.)* I'll look through the Chronicles again. I'm sure it's in there somewhere.

CAD. *I'm* sure it is too. And that's what counts. And now we must turn to my time at Eton.

MR COLLINS. Must we?

CAD. We must.

MR COLLINS. I am surprised it has taken so long.

(Raises his eyebrows at MISS APPLEBY, who ignores him.)

MISS APPLEBY. Was it all terribly beastly?

CAD. *(To MISS APPLEBY.)* It is customary in major autobiographies of this nature for the subject to give an account of their formative years. It is now fashionable to recount the sufferings and miseries of one's schooldays. So for the record... I LOVED every minute!

(Back projection depicts Eton College.)

(To audience.) I was young, I was rich, I was clever, I was good looking and I acquired a circle of friends that was to last me the rest of my life.

(Sound of boys singing the “Eton Boating Song” in background.)

BOYS.

JOLLY BOATING WEATHER,
AND A HAY HARVEST BREEZE,
BLADE ON THE FEATHER,
SHADE OFF THE TREES,
SWING SWING TOGETHER,
WITH YOUR BODIES BETWEEN YOUR KNEES,
SWING SWING TOGETHER,
WITH YOUR BODIES BETWEEN YOUR KNEES.

CAD. *(Over song.)* Lord Plaistow, Le Comte de St Etienne de La Fosse, Lord Bletchley, good old Freddy Duncatton, Charlie Hudson whose father was Chairman of the Pacific Insurance Company and Harry Walsh-Aynscot who was heir to a Zinc fortune...

MR COLLINS. And what drew you to this disparate group of random young men?

CAD. We shared a taste for the elegancies of life and a distaste for cricket, schoolmasters and the lower classes.

MISS APPLEBY. Are you sure you want to include that last observation?

CAD. Perhaps you're right. We don't want to alienate the cricket-loving reader.

MR COLLINS. Did you not enjoy playing games?

CAD. Heavens no. I was a wet bob!

MISS APPLEBY. What is a wet bob?

CAD. Really, young people today don't know anything. A wet bob is someone who rows – as opposed to a dry bob, who is a muddled oaf who runs about chasing balls.

MR COLLINS. So did you row for the school?

CAD. No. I rowed in a small boat for pleasure! With one other person and a bottle or two of something for refreshment. Ah, happy days...

MR COLLINS. Your time at Eton sounds all-too idyllic.

CAD. That's because you had the misfortune of going to Winchester, Mr Collins.

(**MR COLLINS** *exits [to allow actor to change].*)

MISS APPLEBY. But what about the discipline, and corporal punishment? I've heard stories of severe beatings.

CAD. Yes, there were beatings.

(*Pause.*)

I beat *everyone* I could!

The sons of the nouveau riche, the sons of jumped-up nabobs, the sons of dreary country parsons... one almost got tired of beating bourgeois posteriors!

(**MISS APPLEBY** *looks shocked.*)

I *joke* of course!

(**MISS APPLEBY** *looks relieved.*)

I *NEVER* got tired of it!

(*He whacks at imaginary posteriors all around him with riding crop.*)

Take that, Fenton Minor, you ghastly oik! Six of the best for having a father in trade!

MISS APPLEBY. How does your illustrious Eton chapter end?

CAD. At Oxford of course!

(**MISS APPLEBY** *also exits to change.*)

(To audience.) Ah, the dreaming spires. The ancient seat of learning where a whole new world opened up, which I was privileged to share with new Oxford pals, Lord Plaistow, Le Comte de St Etienne de La Fosse, Lord Bletchley, Charlie Hudson whose father was Chairman of the Pacific Insurance Company and Harry Walsh-Aynscot who was heir to a Zinc fortune...and of course, good old Freddy Duncatton...