



Anglomania: A European Love Affair

Ian Buruma

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To some, England has long represented tolerance, reason, and political moderation. To others, it is a bastion of snobbery and outdated tradition. Ian Buruma, can speak from both sides of the English Channel. Born and educated in Holland, as the son of a Dutch father and a mother whose family left Germany for Britain and became passionate admirers of their adopted country, he provides an illuminating look at Anglophilia - and Anglophobia - over the last two hundred years.

From England's most vociferous fans, Voltaire and Goethe, to grateful political exiles like Herzen and Garibaldi, to notable England-bashers like Napoleon, Marx, and Kaiser Wilhelm II, *Anglomania* gives a sharply satirical look at Europe's sometimes comical, sometimes deadly prejudices. And as England, at the close of the twentieth century, yokes its political and economic future to that of the Continent, *Anglomania's* themes - what makes England different from Europe, and what they have in common - remain as vital as ever.

Anglomania: A European Love Affair Details

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D?nnis says

If you like me seek insights into and understanding of other nations' fascination (or a lack of it) with Britain you probably took a wrong book. For it only researches feelings of a few representatives of different nations, whose views quite often are at odds with those of the general populace.

Claire says

Especially interesting in light of Brexit.

Nancy says

A creative and incisive look at how Europeans since the 18th century idealized Britain, and the reality. Broad-ranging, entertaining and informative.

Gabriel says

Històries de famosos anglòfils contades d'una forma molt amena.

Kyra says

Started off a tad slow - kind of like being back in school and having an assignment which taxed one's brain - but Ian Buruma is a terrific writer and this sometimes slightly meandering discussion of (mainly) European attitudes towards Britain and les choses anglaises is brilliant & thought-provoking & informative and I loved it.

Mshelton50 says

I am an Anglophile, so it is only natural that I would read this book; why I waited so long to do so is an open question. Ian Buruma uses a host of European individuals (e.g., Kaiser Wilhelm II and Theodor Herzl) to illustrate the various forms of Anglophilia (and Anglophobia) from Voltaire's time down to the modern day. He also uses his own experience--he is the child of a Dutch father, and an English mother born to parents of German-Jewish ancestry--to illustrate and frame the story. Buruma is the new editor of the *NY Review of Books*, so it is not surprising that he has a fine mind and a great facility with words. Highly enjoyable and informative read.

Antonio Gallo says

One of my diseases ...

Vicki Beyer says

I can't do any better than to quote The Economist's review of this book: "Mr. Buruma's fluency--the ease and erudition with which he mixes anecdote, personal reminiscence and reportage--should not disguise the seriousness of his book--. Readable and intelligent."

Justin says

An interesting and at times even fascinating romp through European history, with a peculiar Anglo lens. Almost unbelievably, the premise of the book is even more relevant today on the verge of a potential "Brexit" than at the time of publication.

Buruma is an incredibly witty and intelligent writer with an amazing eye for irony. He is a bit too fond of meandering off course through anecdotal side streets which, while often enjoyable trips, come at the expense of any sort of narrative momentum towards the main destination. The last couple chapters felt like an overlong victory lap in a short book that took forever for me to finish. Like the Brits and Brit-wannabes it chronicles, this book is whimsical, eccentric, stuffy, clever and a bit too precious for its own good.

Shawn Thrasher says

I couldn't figure out what this was supposed to be about, so I finally gave up. Very literarily unsporting of me, I know - but so little time, so many books.

Steve says

Low 1. This was a desperately turgid read with far too little structure and far too disparate in scope,

Lizixer says

I tried really hard to finish this book, I'm normally a fan of Ian Buruma and enjoy his cultural analysis but I just couldn't get into this one. I finally got stuck on the story of the man who started the modern olympics and got no further.

I may have another go at the second half of the book one day but, on the whole a disappointing read

Patrick McCoy says

Ian Buruma has been one of my favorite contemporary public intellectuals with the likes of Christopher Hitchens, and Milan Kundera. He has a vast array of knowledge from Asia (he has lived in Japan and China and speaks both languages fluently), he is of Dutch and English ancestry (essentially he has two native tongues), and has an interest in contemporary politics and religion. He has written books on Japan, China, other Asian countries, Germany and Japan's post war guilt, Muslims in Holland, and the rift between eastern religions and the west. So it should come as no surprise that he has written a book about Europe's fascination with English culture, *Anglomania: A European Love Affair* (1998), which is a combination memoir/history book.

The first chapter, "Churchill's Cigar" is about Buruma's personal history as an Anglomane due to his lineage as the son of an English mother of German heritage and a Dutch father. He also goes on to explain his Dutch associations with Anglomania. The next section is "Voltaire's Coconuts" which is a discussion of England's image to Voltaire as a land of freedom and tolerance. For many in Europe it was a model of liberal and religious tolerance, which Voltaire likens to coconuts that will thrive if planted anywhere after a period. "Goethe's Shakespeare" in Chapter three looks at the great German writer's appreciation and influence from Shakespeare. Chapter five, "Fingal's Cave," Buruma explores the intellectual differences between Great Britain (Scotland in particular-David Hume, Adam Smith, James Boswell, and James Macpherson). The Scottophila tradition is that of romance of pre-civilization of an apolitical community of natural men or noble savages. This is in contrast to the Anglo tradition of idealization of political institutions, social arrangements of a civilized society. Then there's the whole romantic tradition of Sir Walter Scott to consider as well. Buruma then looks at German Prince Hermann von Pucker in chapter five, "The Parkomane," which was one of his monikers along with Musakau, Prince Pickle (in England), and Lord Smorttork (in Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*). This name is related to his reputation as "the Goethe of landscape gardening"-which corresponds to gardening as a symbol of England and a metaphor for their culture. It seems that this figure and several others throughout the book have mixed feelings about England and prefer their idealized versions of the country to the true state. This is a motif that is discussed throughout the book. Chapter six, "The Graveyard of Revolution," discusses all the dissents like Marx and the all the others from the failed revolutions of 1848 who found freedom to voice their opinions and plot their next step in England. This includes dissidents from Hungary, France, Russia, and Italy. In "School Days," chapter seven, Buruma and many Anglophile's fascination with English public schools are discussed. In particular a series of books called *Tom Brown's School Days*. "A Sporting Man" (Chapter eight) deals in particular the idea put forth by Wellington that Napoleon was defeated on Eaton's playing fields is discussed. British games have always been an important aspect of the culture. In chapter eight, the importing of British games (cricket, rugby, and the establishment of the modern Olympics) to Europe is discussed. Buruma's mixed German/English background is the focus of chapter nine, "Wagnerians." This chapter also begins a discussion about Jews in England since it seems most Germans who emigrated there were of Jewish ancestry. Thus, Chapter 10 follows with "Jewish Cricket" and the influence of English Jews like Theodor Herzl and Benjamin Disraeli. The concept of Zionism in particular came from these quarters and is one of the major subjects of this section. "The Anglomane Who Hated England" (Chapter 11) continues to discuss Germanic concepts of Englishness via the impressions of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who obviously had mixed feelings about the English. The actor Leslie Howard is the subject of Chapter 12, who is known to embody the idea of a true Englishman in spite of the fact that he was a Hungarian. Architecture is the subject of Chapter 13, "Dr. Pevsner." He was another European obsessed with English architecture and the study and recording of the many examples. Buruma follows this chapter with a discussion of his time as a writer for *The Spectator* in Chapter 14, "The

Man In The Tweed Coat.” It shows his ambivalence about being an Anglomane. The last chapter, Chapter 15, “The Last Englishman” is a sort of postscript or coda about the separation of England from mainland Europe and what the future might hold.

As usual Burma has written a book that is well researched and a compelling read for anyone interested in England and its relationship with Europe. I like how Bururma drew on his own experiences growing up in Holland with an English mother as well as making observations from his life living in places like Japan, Hong Kong, and England. It is probably only of interest to those who have an interest in British culture and the history of ideas.
