

BUSINESS EYE

GB, a divided nation

WRITTEN BY

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This week's warbling comes to you direct from the Hay Literary Festival in Wales where our team is a sponsor and to which I have travelled to have my mind expanded by some of the UK's more creative thinkers, who are prepared to look beneath the emotional immediacy of the changes we are currently enduring.

On the back of the European elections there is a lot of deep thought about at Hay this year, a situation which I believe con-

trasts with our society in general at the moment, where our politics are now dominated by division, emotion, fear and blame.

Members of the Hay Congregation of readers and writers with a professed interest in the drivers of a life well-spent and happiness beyond guttural reaction and emotional responses are reeling with the meaning of Brexit.

In many ways, life now feels like a scene from an old black and white movie where old Etonian Cameron somehow lost Brexit in a late-night poker game and the rest of the family are now all trying to deal with the consequences and meaning of this purposeful accident.

I think we can all agree that there is no way back to where we were in 2016, a seemingly tolerant society, respected and looked up to around the world, and a super-magnet for industrial inward investment into Europe.

That particular moment



in our partial, skewed national narrative has well and truly passed and will not be recaptured even were we to revoke Article 50 and decide not to leave the EU.

The damage is done. The catalytic change has been wrought. Humpty ain't getting put back together again.

On reflection, it seems to me that the deepest and most depressing damage now exists in the terrifying divisions across society which Brexit has brought upon us.

Despite the murder of an MP, the clear and present dangers to the Good Friday Agreement which brought to the end the murder of over 3,000 peo-

ple, the massive uplift in racist overtones, the rise of the far right and the end to marriages and family harmony, I fear the scale of the terrifying fault line we have prised apart is beyond what most people imagine and is irreparable.

It's as though Lex Farage-Luther's plan to detonate nuclear charges at the weak points of the San Andreas fault has succeeded in breaking a now sinking California free from mainland USA. Where the hell is Superman when you need him?

Ignoring the sheer scale of the swindle that got us here and looking at the larger canvas, I fear we have de-stabilised not just a weakened Europe struggling under the challenges of migration, but have helped usher in the end of the Free World as we know it by making it OK to kick the establishment or some 'elite' for all and every reason.

Hence Trump, the rise of Le Pen and the resurgence of hate crimes.

I want to live in a Britain where we stage inspirational, hopeful 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremonies, not one where Nigel Farage is feted for threatening to put on khaki and pick up a rifle if he doesn't get the purity of his wishes.

I want to live in a Britain where the division is not so clearly one between the young and the old.

There is a straight-line relationship between age and propensity to have voted to leave the EU.

When I was a lad in the 80's we endured the long miners' strike complete with its three-day week and the sores are still with us.

The Withdrawal Agreement is not even the negotiation on trade, which is the difficult bit.

There will be young people now who will, by the time they retire from work, ONLY have known the divisions around Brexit. So sad.

I want to live in a Britain where we are focused on the

challenges of homelessness, loneliness and the existential threat to our species that is global warming, not one that takes relief by blaming the EU, immigrants or Theresa May.

What worries me most is that once the EU has been killed as the erroneous but convenient external target, who will be next? We've done MPs, the press and bankers already. It's your turn next.

Our politics is broken. We are doing partition to ourselves.

To my mind, Parliament seems to be working as it should.

Don't be fooled by the bile and opprobrium sent in its direction by the emotionally immature.

What is bust is the two-party system, not Parliament. In the face of such a crisis we have a wannabe Margaret Thatcher wanting to be replaced by a wannabe Winston Churchill. God help us and the world.

Where is the hope? Who will shine a light into this darkness?