

The weekly magazine
for higher education



**'Oxbridge should
go private if it
rejects access' 4**

www.timeshighereducation.co.uk

THE

Times
Higher
Education

Pay deal revealed
Salaries climb but v-c
fear for budgets 7

Campus revival
Paper calls for Christ
university for the UK

On my marks
Assessment is everyt
says Sally Brown 38

Romantic entangler
Richard Holmes reun
poets and scientists

Degrees of separation

How the relationship
between HE and FE
could turn sour



£2.20
16-22 Oc
2008
No. 1,867

media and politicians in telling moral panic about the impact of forced migration on labour markets, resources and national identity is examined in some detail. Using a range of different sources the authors demonstrate how racism underpinned reactions to refugees even throughout the Second World War. Tensions between old and new migrant communities, the pressure to assimilate and the alleged need to restrict refugee numbers to prevent the rise of fascism, all echo present-day debates around community cohesion and migration.

A chapter on claiming asylum in the UK sets out the context to the 1951 UN Convention on refugees. Key points of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 are paired with responses from the Refugee Council to highlight the unreasonable nature of legislation. In this chapter, the authors begin to construct an argument, largely absent from the previous descriptive chapters, indicating the ways in which asylum seekers have been unfairly marginalised.

The following chapter on asylum experiences shows how deterrence has replaced protection of forced migrants into ever more desperate, and illegal, means of escape. Stories of detention, institution and social exclusion, and the mistreatment of children dispel myths about the differential treatment of asylum seekers and refugees and highlight the inhumane dealings of many of those in need of protection.

The penultimate chapter focuses on the media and public opinion. This chapter brings together data including verbatim personal stories, policy, media reports, survey material and the opinions of experts to explore the ways in which media influence public opinion.

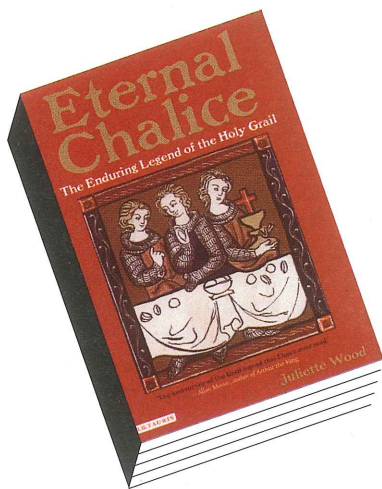
The book ends with a conclusion pulling together the links between previous and present experience, arguing that “unrestrained scapegoating of other in general and asylum seekers, in particular echoes the ‘foreigner’ mindset against the Jews, Chinese and Germany in the early years of the 20th century”. The impact of Islamophobia on the seeking of asylum is also explored before arguments are made to replace deterrence with protection through the reimagining

of the refugee experience, and a change to a positive approach to human rights while addressing the underlying causes of asylum.

Part polemic, part history, this book will contribute to understanding of the story of asylum in Britain for those unfamiliar with asylum law and policy. While it would benefit from a stronger argument linking the descriptive and policy chapters, it enhances understanding around the issue of asylum in a very accessible way. The use of verbatim personal stories, although sometimes at odd points within the narrative, serves as a powerful tool to bring the human elements of asylum, so often concealed by numbers and rhetoric, to the fore.

Reluctant Refuge will provide a useful antidote to the hype more commonly associated with forced migration, and would usefully be deployed in high schools and libraries across the UK.

Jenny Phillimore is a lecturer at the Institute of Applied Social Studies, University of Birmingham. Her research interests include migration policy, migrant integration and community cohesion, and she has undertaken research on new migration for funders, including the European Union, the Home Office and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.



Eternal Chalice: The Enduring Legend of the Holy Grail

By Juliette Wood

I. B. Tauris, 256pp, £18.99

ISBN 9781845113605

Published 28 August 2008

This is an informative book on a difficult topic. It deals first with the original European sources of the Grail story from Chrétien of Troyes to Malory, discussing the gradual

layering of the literary romances and the crystallisation of the object of the Grail into the cup of the Last Supper and/or the chalice in which Joseph of Arimathea received the blood of Christ on the Cross. In a second part, Wood looks at the myth-making surrounding the quest for the

“Today’s quest for the Grail... is preoccupied with the fight against ‘evil’ (person or institution) as part of a personal journey of discovery via a thrilling adventure”

Grail theme in the past century and today. Interspersed within this story is a survey of the various artefacts and places identified with the Grail across the centuries, both in the form of relics of chalices and of secret hiding places, such as Rennes-le-Château and Rosslyn Chapel.

The analysis of medieval texts provides a necessary and helpful synthesis of the literary material. However, the core of the book lies in the study of the Grail story in modern times. Wood traces it from its association with the Glastonbury tradition of Joseph of Arimathea, which led to the revival of Glastonbury in the 20th century with the rise of the pagan and druidic movements, through Welsh folklore with archaeological undertones, to the enthusiasm for the “Celtic” origins of the Grail as stone talisman and cauldron of plenty.

Accretions have developed: the revival of “Celticism”, occultism, tarot, freemasonry, as well as the linking of the Grail with traditional folklore studies, later turning into a search for the Eternal Feminine as the Earth Goddess of Celtic culture, or the repression of witchcraft allegedly representing feminine popular religion by a hostile, male-dominated Church.

A penetrating examination of theories from the 18th century onwards, in response to Enlightenment rationality and in tune with the Romantic movement, shows to what extent the current infatuation with equally mythical Grail legend is not only itself ancient but revives the same old stories, adapted to the modern-day obsession with

conspiracy theories. This involves secret societies (a heady mix of Templars, Cathars, Rosicrucians, Freemasons, the Priory of Sion, the Mafia, the Vatican, the CIA, Opus Dei) and code-cracking heroes fighting the bad, oppressive, established Church, to reveal to the world the secret of the marriage of Jesus with Mary Magdalene, their descentance through the Merovingian line and the nature of the Grail as the real bloodline of Christ.

This particular version of an already old myth, famously repackaged for a modern global audience by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln’s book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, and later by Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*, is seen by many as the literal truth because it reinforces their conviction that world leaders are concealing major secrets from the ordinary person. Today’s quest for the Grail differs from the medieval quest, finite and successful, and is preoccupied with the fight against “evil” (person or institution) as part of a personal journey of discovery via a thrilling adventure. This is why films such as *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and *The Fisher King*, as well as internet games, appeal to modern audiences.

The overall analysis of the way in which modernism has changed Grail fiction, including fantasy novels, thrillers, film, video and role-playing games, underpins this academically impeccable, accessible and wide-ranging work, and the attempt at putting it into context is especially trenchant and concise in the conclusion.

Wood’s book, in examining the Grail myth in its totality rather than only from a historian’s or a literary critic’s point of view, belongs to the increasingly fruitful area of cultural studies with sociological implications, providing a thought-provoking discussion of a controversial topic.

Veronica West-Harling (Ortenberg) is a lecturer in the history faculty and department of continuing education at the University of Oxford and senior lecturer, University of Northampton. She is the author of *In Search of the Holy Grail: The Quest for the Middle Ages* (2006) and a forthcoming monograph, *Modernism and the Idea of the Quest*.