



While there are other reasons for the current visit, one is the incipient vote in the UK on exit from the European Union. There's a lot to unpack in that sentence, so let's get parsing. And let's just focus on that independent clause. It is early in the morning — about 2am — on 22 June, 2016. Tomorrow is election day for [a single referendum](#), the wording of which is, “Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?”

First thing to note is that this refers to the United Kingdom, not Great Britain alone, and thus includes Northern Ireland. To remind our readers, Great Britain is the island itself, which contains England, Scotland and Wales. The UK is more completely written “The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.” So even the commonly used portmanteau Brexit (British Exit) is, itself, misleading.

An amusing, or tragic, result of this is that if the vote is Leave, then the [border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland](#) will become a 310 mile land border between the UK and the EU, a subject of [much consternation](#) amongst the populace on both sides of it (both border and vote).

So our two sides are Remain and Leave, so named due to the ballot choices presented, “Remain a member of the European Union” and “Leave the European Union.” For the record, **Pawn** comes down firmly on the side of Remain. However, in the interest of fair play and the free flow of information, he last night plopped down in front of the telly with **A** to watch [The Great Debate](#) on BBC|News. **Pawn** is a citizen by birth of the UK, by way of both his own birth on these shores, in outer London, and his father's birth here. **A** is also a citizen by birth, by way of her father's birth in Northern Ireland, but just as **Pawn** also enjoys US citizenship, she enjoys Australian. A complex little pot of nationalities were thus present before the LCD screen last night. She may vote as a current resident, I may not as I have not been registered to vote in the UK in the past 15 years (the cut-off term for this election).

While much has been made of Sadiq Khan facing off with Boris Johnson in The Great Debate — the current Mayor of London vs the immediate past Mayor of London; the first Muslim mayor of a European capital vs a WASP career politician of fluid stripes and naked personal ambition; the second generation immigrant product of a British *comprehensive* education vs. the white scion of the upper-middle class, product of *public* schools and Eton; Labour vs. Tory (although the Tory head, PM David Cameron, schoolmate of Johnson, is putative leader of Remain); the list goes on — there were actually three person sides in this debate, the other four all being women, and it was these others who really made it interesting.

They were, for Remain, Scottish Conservative party leader Ruth Davidson, and Frances Oâ€™Grady, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; for Leave, Labour MP Gisela Stuart and [Conservative party] energy minister Andrea Leadsom. There was much reminding voters of mum-hood and grand-mum-hood, some of which lead to laughs, and there was

much clamouring for the mantle of patriotism (brought flinch from **A**). Gisela Stuart was quick to remind voters that she herself is an immigrant, when it served her ends to do so, and Boris was quick to remind us of the same (her, not him) when it suited his ends, which were not always the same.

Part of what makes this whole thing so blasted difficult for the public is that it's all just so ill-defined for so many people. The term Brexit, for example, that portmanteau I referred to above, confuses people who might be forgiven to think this involves just Great Britain, and not Northern Ireland, with the difficulties that introduces (see border, etc.). Brexit owes its existence as a term to predecessor Grexit, itself a mashup of Greece and Exit, but that had nothing to do with the EU, referring rather to the possibility of Greece being forced out of the [Eurozone](#), and its Euro currency, governed by the [European Central Bank](#). The UK is part of none of those institutions, having its own central bank (BoE) and currency (pound sterling). Into the void of public understanding of just *who* is leaving *what* pour ready vats of misinformation, carefully (or not) fashioned by the two sides, their backers (bankers, unions, business, Russia, USA, Vladimir Putin, Barack Obama, etc.) and the press. There are so many [articles](#), [mentions](#), [debunkings](#), [exposés](#), [exploitations](#), etc. of this misinformation, it can be hard for even a determined voter to get at the truth.

Boris Johnson and friends, for example, were quick to raise the very real spectre of all of southern Europe — meaning Italy & Greece, but really meaning the commonly referred to PIIGS countries of Portugal, Italy, Ireland Greece and Spain — being forced into the worst depression and recessions since the Great Wars, even though, as with Grexit, that has to do with the Eurozone, of which the UK has no part. It may be an effective scare tactic to point to youth unemployment rates as high as 50% in those countries, which is true, but that has no real relevance to the matter at hand, unless one is stoking fears of mass migration, which, Surprise!, is exactly what they're doing.

The cause and effect of mass migration is very much at play here, as are its bedfellows, xenophobia, racism, hatred. Witness, for example, [the image recently introduced by Nigel Farage's United Kingdom Independence Party \(UKIP\)](#):



Those are refugees fleeing war in Syria, by the way, which by International law are protected peoples, but Farage will gleefully use them as a harbinger of huddled brown people flooding the shores of England. And mind you, he's talking just to England here. Scotland is all too happy to welcome more.

The influx of foreigners which has many here upset are those economic migrants coming

from other EU countries, those taking advantage of Freedom of Movement, a central tenet of the EU itself. One can walk into a pub anywhere in this country, so it would seem, and be waited on by a Pole, or other EU migrant. But for maximum effect, Farage focuses not on those *other* white-skinned people, but on our darker brothers and sisters from less savoury places (remind you of someone, Mr. Trump?).

To be fair, there is plenty execrable behaviour on the side of Remain, too. Cameron has proven himself all too willing in this campaign and others, to resort to blanket statements of untruth and conjecture masquerading as fact, to the extent one wonders just how he ever manages to actually win elections. In spite of his own best efforts, it would seem.

Well, enough of this. It is now past 03:00 and time for my time-shifted brain to go back to sleep. Tomorrow waits on the doorstep, the final day of the campaign, and then comes the vote itself.

I would be remiss, however, were I not to mention the assassination of the late Labour MP Jo Cox, of Yorkshire (yes, *that* Yorkshire, you Downton Abbey fans) who was shot *and* stabbed by a crazy man, shouting Britain First! (coincidentally the name of a nationalist, racist party) in Birstall near Leeds. She had come for a "constituent surgery" (think "town hall" meeting) to be held in a library, in her district of Batley and Spen, Yorkshire.



A passionate campaigner for human rights, refugee rights, prevention of war crimes and other humanitarian causes, Cox was also a firm believer in the European experiment, and campaigned strongly in defence of Remain. Her death shook the country in ways large and small, and led at least one Leave supporting Labour MP to switch her vote. Macabre as it is, in response to her death the financial markets rallied, believing the public revulsion at a

political assassination (the first in over 40 years) would bring people back to their senses, as it were.  
We shall see, the final vote tally should be in Friday morning...