



Online apéros

A year of pandemic has made us all aware of the pros and cons of video conferencing. For the ESC, online events have provided an invaluable means of keeping in touch with members but the easy sociability of a 'live' *apéro* - or coffee morning - is not easy to simulate. What rules apply for an informal chat with a dozen people appearing before you on a screen?

With that in mind and, at the suggestion of Joëlle Glore, we tried out a new idea for the April *apéro*. The format was for participants to bring along a treasured object - which could be valuable, beautiful, historic - but must always have some special significance for the owner. Taking turns, each volunteer then answered questions raised by the rest of the audience, aimed at elucidating the nature of the object. In theory this was 'twenty questions' but, in reality, nobody was counting and we were delighted to learn a variety of interesting backstories.

It was a successful and enjoyable diversion, reminding us how many resources we have for entertainment without mindlessly reaching for the remote control.

Mike Wraith

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new ESC contacts

- General: contact@esc-alsace.org
- Newsletter: newsletter@esc-alsace.org
- Events: events@esc-alsace.org

Upcoming activities

Online Coffee meeting

THURSDAY 20 MAY : 9.30 - 11.30 am

Until the health situation enables in person meetings and the Escale community centre opens again, the next coffee mornings will take place via Teams on 20/5 and 17/6. Watch out for a reminder by email with the suitable link to join the conversation.

Do click anytime between 9.30 and 11.30 and join us for a cosy chat, for as long or short as you wish or are able to. We'd be glad to hear from you.



Garden Apéro meeting

FRIDAY 28 MAY: 6.30 - 8.30 pm

At last can we see each other in person! On Friday 28th May, Sue Moller will organise an apéro in her garden. We are hope to organise further outdoor meetings in June and July.

Watch out for an invitation email to sign-up on Hello Asso.



Book club's monthly reading

MONDAY 14 JUNE: 6:30 pm "Meet Me at the Museum" by Anne Youngson

Members of the ESC book club meet on the second Monday of the month at 6:30 pm (possible change of date during holidays). The member who has chosen the book will host the meeting and is invited to write a review for the newsletter (which is published in the following issue).

Interested in joining the book club? Contact Joëlle at bookclub@esc-alsace.org



French conversation group

MONDAYS, 4.00 pm

The French conversation group gathers weekly on Mondays at 4.00 pm for friendly online meetings on Zoom. They give an opportunity to correct grammar mistakes or explore vocabulary, in the presence of at least one native French speaker.

The group is not at full capacity. Zoom sessions ID & passcodes are sent once you have registered with the group. If you are interested in joining, you are invited to contact Martin Pickford: pickfordmartin@gmail.com.

Spanish conversation group 🇪🇸

MONDAY 7 JUNE, 12.45

Until it is possible to meet in town again, Maria invites Spanish speakers, both native and non-native, to converse online with fellow members in a casual way, on topics to be decided during the one-hour session on Teams. Ten persons have signed-in but the group would welcome more.

If you are interested in joining, please contact Maria at mtremoureux@esc-alsace.org.

English conversation group 🇬🇧

FRIDAYS, 2.30 pm

The English conversation group currently organises weekly online meetings on Zoom on Friday afternoons - one week it is a simple conversation, the following week a more structured session with presentations on various topics of the participants' choosing.

Zoom sessions ID & passcodes are sent once you have registered with the group. If you are interested in joining, please contact Nigel at nigelpermaul@gmail.com - 06 75 63 89 98.

German conversation group 🇩🇪

MONDAY 24 MAY, 6.00 pm

The reborn (from Café Rapp in Kehl) group's initial meeting took place via Teams on Thursday, 29th April. Eleven members took part and one apology was received. One person now living in England but still a member of the ESC would also like to participate. We are fortunate to have several fluent members in the group, willing and able to correct our stumbling German.

The meeting lasted an hour, during which we caught up with general news, read and studied a text from the DNA's *Rheinblick* section entitled "Auf einer Insel, mitten im Rhein", a welcome escape from Covid (the island is Rohrschollen near Strasbourg).

It appears that *Rheinblick* will continue to be a source of articles of interest to us living in Alsace. These interesting articles are generally just the right length and level of difficulty for our purpose.

We intend to have the meetings once a fortnight. They will continue online via Teams until it is possible to meet in person. When this time finally comes, I envisage continuing with a mix of in person (morning or afternoon) and online meetings (at 6 pm), as there are several members who, for various reasons, would have difficulty getting to, say, Kehl during the daytime.

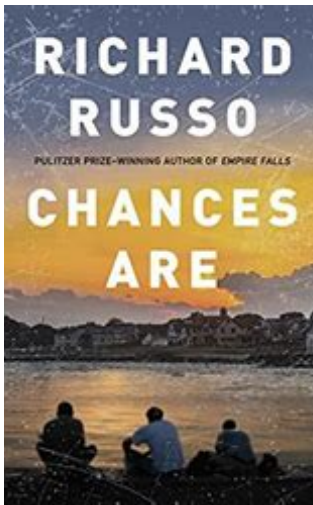
The next meeting will be on Monday, 24th May, at 6 pm on Teams (this date is Pentecost/Whitsun but we hope that members will not be travelling). Please contact me if you are interested and not already on the list of members.

Bronwyn: bharrowfield@esc-alsace.org / 06 85 33 11 24



Book club review

“Chances Are” by Richard Russo



“ The atmosphere is haunted by the mystery of Jacy’s disappearance until the dramatic truth finally emerges after several false trails. ”

“Human beings invariably mistook fate and free will, hurling themselves against that which is fixed and immutable while ignoring the very things over which they had some control.”

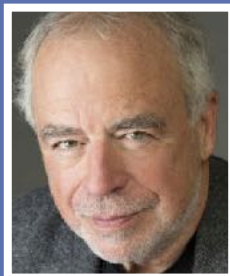
The trajectory of the characters in this splendid and profound novel leads us to consider our changing world and existence - and the way our lives fly past oh-so-quickly.

The story begins in the Vietnam-war years of the sixties, charting the progress of three male college friends, and the shared adoration of their feisty, unconventional student friend Jacy, who disappears suddenly after graduation.

There had been only sporadic contact between the three men in the intervening years when we pick up their lives again decades later at a reunion in Martha’s Vineyard on the New England coast. The atmosphere is haunted by the mystery of Jacy’s disappearance until the dramatic truth finally emerges after several false trails.

Little by little through the book we learn of the differences in family backgrounds of the characters and the ways in which these have influenced their life choices. We are left to ponder the influences of genetic and social factors on the lives we construct for ourselves and the extent to which we can take control by seizing the opportunities that arise.

Christiane Lehmann



Richard Russo is one of the most important contemporary American writers. Born at the end of the 1940s he grew up in New York state and subsequently taught English Literature as well as producing an impressive body of novels and screenplays. He is the author of the Pulitzer prize winning ‘Empire Falls’ and of ‘Everybody’s Fool’ which received the France’s *Grand Prix de Littérature Américaine*.

Interested in joining the book club? Contact Joëlle at bookclub@esc-alsace.org

The next book for discussion before the summer break is:
"Meet Me at the Museum" by Anne Youngson, on 14th June
"American Dirt" by Jeanine Cummins, on 13th September

Letter to the editor

The 'Letter to the editor' section offers a space for the expression of personal opinions from members and does not engage the association; answers are welcome.

This issue is printed a few days after the inaugural event that took place at the European Parliament, here in Strasbourg, on Europe Day, Sunday 9th May 2021, to launch the Conference on the Future of Europe. *

Roger Massie, faithful contributor to the ESC newsletter and passionate about the fate of Great Britain, namely post-Brexit, delivers below a new insight to those who would like a follow-up on some developments of the relationships between the U.K. and its European neighbours.

Alas, poor Yorup! (to misquote Hamlet)

Chatham House (Royal Institute for International Affairs), London, organises useful brainstorming sessions with top academics. As those 'webinars' are for members only, here is my account (no link, sorry).

The author of 'Europe, the Struggle for Supremacy', Brendan Simms, Director of the Cambridge Centre for Geopolitics, supported by colleagues from Queen Mary College and Institut Montaigne experts, discussed the Government's Integrated Review 'Global Britain in a competitive age'.

'Europe' has apparently 'politely' received the more than 100-page document which talks a lot about 'working with allies'. But luckily there's no need for us to read it, since it seems to contain much dishonest waffle. For example, it trumpets our universities, the BBC and Human Rights as 'jewels in the crown' – all of which are now under domestic political fire. Also it fails to set out priorities or explain **how** 'Global GB' will become a 'technological powerhouse'. Nor does it address important challenges such as climate, relationships with China, Russia, Northern Ireland etc. Those would, in my view, need strong engagement with Europe and not just bilateral decisions.

Simms and colleagues reminded us that already in the 18th century our politics were a tug-of-war between Whig 'Continentalists' and 'Blue Water' Tories, who nevertheless recognised the primacy of

our neighbours ('remember where the wind comes from' warned Churchill). Then we were a global super-power! Our transatlantic successor has, ever since the Eisenhower administration except Trump's, preferred to have UK inside Europe. And now with Biden, one can almost talk of 'Global Ireland', given the outreach of the emerald diaspora into the Oval Office.

It is equally true that the deeply divided EU must itself decide what it wants to be. Withdrawing diplomatic privileges from the EU Ambassador in London would not suggest that Global Britain particularly wants such a project to succeed: it may appear as a pretty dubious partner – but it surely needs partners itself. Neither China nor NATO are discussed in the Review but it should not be forgotten that the UK (united for how long?) does more than any European country to confront Russia in the Baltic).

Brendan Simms ended by brandishing a (to me) new terminology to apply (after the current 'period of mourning' for the divorce from Europe), namely the 'E3' strategy (which would be a bad approach) meaning working just with France and Germany, both mentioned very frequently in the Review, and the 'E2' strategy (a good approach), working with and helping institutional Europe to meet our common challenges.

Roger Massie

* <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en>

Contribution

Springtime nesting

For about 5 weeks I have been watching two swans sitting on the bank of the river behind the *Centre de Secours*, on the quai Finkwiller.

Not being an expert I 'googled' these birds to find out how long the female would sit on her nest? 6-8 weeks I was told. So each weekend I would watch them: the female never seemed to move much but the male would come and go. Then, on an exceptionally hot Sunday, I thought this could be the day... On Monday, 10th May, seven chicks were born! So now I wait and see where the family go.

I hope you'll enjoy watching a few shots I took: tinyurl.com/Swanning-in-Strasbourg

Nigel Permaul

Information

Britons living abroad for more than 15 years to be given right to vote

“ Move unveiled in Queen's Speech could impact 3 million British nationals overseas ”

Please follow: Article published in *The Guardian* (11 May 2021 at 15:08:00 CEST)

brought to our attention by Simon Palmer

Newsletter Publication

We'll publish your announcements/advertisements each month, space permitting. Advertisements will be repeated twice only and please let the Editor know if you need your ad repeated.

This service is free to ESC members, €40 for non-members and businesses, which should be included with submission. Items for publication should be in English.

Please forward items by e-mail to Catherine Manini at newsletter@esc-alsace.org

The deadline for next copy is Sunday 06/06/2021 - 6 pm (guidelines can be sent upon request)

Membership / Registration 2021: [link to Register with the ESC-Alsace](#)

Feel free to contact the treasurer at membership@esc-alsace.org. Full details on our website (click on Join Us).