

are now in a post-ideological age, and fails to articulate a platform of ideas that people could rally around". This response includes a return of what Glaser terms "good authority", underpinned by the fact that, "despite all the iconoclastic rhetoric, the embarrassing reality is that we are more in thrall to authority than ever". She calls on the Left to bring real authority and leadership to its politics, citing as examples Ada Colau winning the mayoralty in Barcelona and taking on the city's housing crisis, and Peter Macfadyen in Frome, Somerset starting the Independents for Frome Movement and running an energy co-operative.

While Glaser does slip into a rather simplistic narrative of "Left good, Right bad", she also tries admirably to engage with the ideas of her political opponents. She even describes herself as "a conservative with a small 'c'", who shares the Tory "desire to preserve the traditions and aesthetic treasures of civilisation and the natural world".

Glaser's attempts to raise public debate are admirable. However, *Anti-Politics* is less accessible than, say, Owen Jones's *The Establishment*, and only really prods at a solution. Her book may provoke debate among politicians, but perhaps our troubled times need something more.

CHARLOTTE HENRY

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## Nottingham

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Rowena Edlin-White

EXPLORING NOTTINGHAMSHIRE WRITERS

310pp. Five Leaves. Paperback, £12.99.  
978 1 910170 35 9

What makes a writer a Nottinghamshire writer? Some would insist that, strictly speaking, one may only be born a Nottinghamshire writer. Others could suggest that one must at least be fond of this part of the East Midlands. (In which case, Graham Greene definitely does not qualify: "Thank God Nottingham is over", he wrote when he left the city where he started out in journalism). The literary historian might suggest that it is enough for the county to have had some effect on a writer's life and work. (In which case, Greene is almost overqualified: it is in Nottingham that he converted to Roman Catholicism, and one of his early novels, *A Gun for Sale*, is set in the lightly fictionalized "Not-tich".) Defining, uniting characteristics are hard to come by.

*Exploring Nottinghamshire Writers* by Rowena Edlin-White is an alphabetical and chronological collection of short biogra-

phical sketches, researched and illustrated in colour throughout. A second edition could be improved by the inclusion of a map, not least for the sake of those readers who are tempted by thoughts of literary pilgrimages. They could start with Mansfield, which still boasts the house where the writer and bookseller Robert Dodsley was born, or Holme Pierrepont Hall, where Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was brought up, before she married and travelled to Constantinople.

ADA COGHEN

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## Public schools (3)

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Toby Manning

JOHN LE CARRÉ AND THE COLD WAR

256pp. Bloomsbury Academic. £85.  
978 1 350 03639 0

Earlier this year, a letter written by John Le Carré attracted considerable attention. Available at public auction, the letter denounced English politicians, particularly the institutional privileged elite. In the letter, composed in 2010, Le Carré wrote: "The Etonians have taken back the shop with the help of some B-list inexperienced liberals who will evaporate in their own hot air before long, leaving the shop to a ragbag of ivy league Tories, born again PR men, sexists, anti-Europeans, nostalgists and eco-ostiches".

According to Toby Manning, in his new study *John Le Carré and the Cold War*, this anti-institutional stance should come as quite a surprise. Looking at six of Le Carré's novels as "the finest cultural expression of the Cold War", Manning seeks to remove the author from readings which focus on his "intricate, warren-like plots" and look instead at "the vividness with which they capture the mood of the Cold-War world". But in his examination, Manning's claim that Le Carré's fiction "reflects the Cold-War consensus" becomes skewed – "consensus" appears to be equated with "a particularly partisan picture". He finds, for example, in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, a "landscape of prep school, Oxford and Whitehall reasserting the establishment... as the essence of the nation"; in *The Looking Glass War*, that "the sharper focus is always with the establishment – and so is the textual sympathy"; in *Smiley's People* a "very particular, patrician England"; and in *The Honourable Schoolboy* "the class that claimed the British nation as its own, indeed once claimed the world as its own, and whose imperial entitlement keeps slipping through the novel's

associates) in 1952, which was stepped up in 1955, following Maclean's and Burgess's exposure". The subject might be interesting and well researched, but Manning's account of Le Carré's Cold War is lost to the book's over-riding need for another edit.

ANTONIA CUNDY

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## Romance

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Elizabeth McGuire

RED AT HEART

How Chinese communists fell in love with the Russian Revolution  
480pp. Oxford University Press. £22.99  
(US \$34.95).  
978 0 19 064055 2

When we think about the Sino-Soviet split – the break in the 1960s that permanently fractured the global communist community – we often see it through the lens of high politics: ageing men in opulent rooms arguing about revisionism. Elizabeth McGuire recasts the relationship between revolutionary China and the Soviet Union as a four-decades-long transcultural romance composed of individual love stories. Enraptured by the Soviet example, some Chinese students like Erni Xiao (who named himself after Émile Zola) began coming to Moscow; later their Soviet-born children would face the task of returning home. These personal relationships suggested that the socialist world was indeed a single community only incidentally divided along national lines.

The deep research behind *Red at Heart* pays off in compelling stories and masterfully observed details. As the love lives of Chinese students sparked extensive debate between ascetic hardliners and activists who believed in sexual liberation, the Soviet Union acquired a romantic appeal. Today it is hard to imagine Stalin-era novels like Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered* being viewed as erotically charged, yet for revolutionaries like the writer Wang Meng, they became powerful catalysts for Russophile fantasy.

If the Sino-Soviet relationship seems like a masculine one, it is partly because neither regime ever fully realized the feminist promise of their early days. Leaders were exclusively male, and their female companions were dragged along or abandoned as their partners' political fortunes shifted. With the exception of Mao's third wife He Zizhen, China's revolutionary women rarely had the chance to travel abroad, so it should come as no surprise that almost all the love stories in *Red at Heart* take place between Chinese men and Russian