

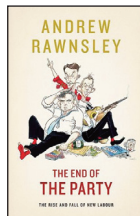
# books

## THE END OF THE PARTY

Andrew Rawnsley  
(Viking, £25)

Labour's counter-offensive against this book and its claims of Gordon Brown's bullying rests on the author's use of unnamed sources, which John Prescott says fuels tittle-tattle.

Rawnsley's reliance on anonymous sources makes his weekly *Observer*



columns somewhat barren, a Westminster parlour game. But this book, which picks up the New Labour story after Tony Blair's crushing 2001 election victory and follows it into the Brown bunker, is fascinating contemporary history.

Rawnsley reveals that at the height of the 2000 fuel protests, a minister asked the head of MI5: "Why aren't you doing the farmers for us like you did the miners for Margaret Thatcher." He doesn't reveal who said Brown had "psychological flaws" – a

claim from his previous book – but now adds that Blair said psychological flaws weren't "the half of it". And he's confident enough about his analysis of how intelligence was presented before the Iraq War to say "the integrity of the system was disastrously compromised".

The sources are less forthcoming as we get closer to the present day but this is still essential reading for students of mainstream politics.

KEVIN GOPAL

## Author Q&A: Sue Hampton

### THE WATERHOUSE GIRL

(Pegasus, £7.99)

According to the NHS, an estimated 8 million women in the UK suffer from serious hair loss. Inspired by her own experiences with alopecia, children's author Sue Hampton – who lost all of her own hair aged 25 – has written *The Waterhouse Girl*, a moving tale of a young girl called Daisy dealing with the stigma and emotional turmoil of female baldness. It's her sixth book since leaving her career as a teacher and is aimed at kids aged 10-plus.

#### To what extent is *The Waterhouse Girl* autobiographical?

Daisy isn't me and her experience isn't exactly like mine. The parallel is that we've both lost all of our hair, but in the book she loses hers when she is 11 and I lost mine when I was 25. I was at a rather different place and for me it's been 28 years now that I've been completely bald. I wasn't aware of a children's story about a girl with alopecia, so it seemed the obvious thing for me to do. Although I hadn't lost my hair as a child I could use my own experience and translate that into fiction.

#### It's been ten years since you first started writing the book. How has the novel evolved over that period?

It began as a simpler version of the book as it stands now. It was a very emotional experience for me writing

it and I did cry a lot when I wrote it and I did very much feel for the character of Daisy. I suppose I was partly grieving for my own loss of my own hair, but I was also very much emphasising with the character. Because of that I think it was powerful but it was possibly too intense. I wanted to lighten the story, add more humour and broaden the story.

#### The book's sleeve features a photo of you both wearing a wig and without. Has it taken you a long time to come to terms with your condition?

There was a point where I sort of gave up hope and I couldn't actually face the image of myself in the mirror. Because of that I had to hide so I had a series of lovely wigs. I think what's difficult if you're pretending is that there's always the risk of discovery. Now I've decided that it's much easier and I certainly feel braver if I dispense with the wig and it's out in the open. This is me.



RICHARD SMIRKE

Take it or leave it. If you've got a problem with it then it's your problem, not mine.

#### What were some of the misconceptions about alopecia and female hair loss that you were trying to address with *The Waterhouse Girl*?

I think women who have alopecia feel a little bit of self-loathing sometimes. A lot of women feel that it's almost self-indulgent to take it too much to heart. You can reason it away and you can say there's nothing wrong with me. I'm absolutely fine. But it's not the practical terms that really seem to matter. It's the emotional side and it's the loss of self-esteem and a lot of women do become very unhappy because of it. A lot of relationships end and there are even suicide attempts because of alopecia, which shows you what a powerful thing it is.

#### What do you hope audiences gain from reading *The Waterhouse Girl*?

All my books are about individuality and our right to be ourselves, regardless of any pressures that other people try to put on us to conform. So I hope that anybody who reads this book, adult or younger person, will feel that it is okay to be different. Whether they're different because they've lost their hair or whether they're different because they just feel different in some other way. I hope that it will support people whose self-esteem is under threat in any way.



## Off the shelf

### THE EDGE

Chris Simms

(Orion, £6.99)

Top quality crime fiction in the fifth instalment from Simms' series following DI Jon Spicer sees life getting even more morose. Tracking the death of Spicer's drug-addicted, dead brother whose dismembered body is found on the moors, Simms captures the haunting and anonymous topography of the Peak District.

### THINGS YOUR MOTHER NEVER TOLD YOU

Olivia Lichtenstein

(Orion, £6.99)

A touching and honest story about the unique bond between a mother and her daughter, Lichtenstein's second novel focuses on Ros who is middle aged and finds her world falling apart. Fortunately, her mother's posthumous diaries help her make sense of her values and upbringing.

### METALLICA: ALL THAT MATTERS

Paul Stenning

(Plexus, £14.99)

The fact that Stenning doesn't actually get to interview any of the band for this book doesn't mean it's a write-off, as interviews with their close friends and old associates give valuable insights that will delight hardcore fans.

### FLAWLESS

Tilly Bagshawe

(Orion, £6.99)

Considering the imaginative scope of chick-lit authors is about as broad as the size zero waists they portray, Bagshawe has decided it's time to break into the exclusive world of the diamond business. Little time is spent on character development as the thrills of shady dealers and stunning wealthy women provide more instant thrills.

LIANNE STEINBERG