

samples of excruciating verse ("I have crowd-funded my right to scream") stand out as the most enjoyably succinct, efficient parts of a hyper-inflated whole.

Inevitably, online, thigh-slapping stuff like this goes down well with some people. Inevitably, on Twitter, "Titanium"'s account has its cohort of gammon-brained, *Spiked*-reading followers. But why would any of them pay money to read little more than more of the same in hard covers? For it seems that if there is a viable case to be made against (on this account) the stereotypical millennial who cares about the fate of the world, it might necessitate a little more by way of actual thoughtfulness – debate, even. Why might a person in a position of relative privilege wish to help the disadvantaged? Isn't it remotely possible that people who voice their opinions on social media also act in real life according to those beliefs? Could it be that, amid whatever absurdities the other side in a debate are guilty of, they also have some justification for their beliefs?

It is no surprise to learn that *Woke* is really the work of a middle-aged white man called Andrew Doyle – a comedian. Some of it is funny. But, ultimately, it exemplifies the spirit of intolerance that it supposedly lampoons.

P. J. CARNEHAN

## Antisemitism

Deborah Lipstadt

ANTISEMITISM

Here and now

356pp. Scribner. £14.99.

978 0 0052 4337 6

For all the wide differences of view on antisemitism, a degree of incredulity runs through much recent writing on the subject. So it is that Deborah Lipstadt, in *Antisemitism: Here and now*, begins by emphasizing how "challenging" and "painful" her book was to write. However much the Holocaust and other historical horrors have disturbed her, they remain in the past. And while the libel case that the Holocaust-denying historian David Irving brought against her in the 1990s took its toll, that too is in the past. It doesn't seem to have been the primary motivation for writing this book.

Instead, *Antisemitism* responds to a more recent set of developments: Jeremy Corbyn and the antisemitism controversy in the Labour Party; the rise of the far Right in the United States; authoritarian populists such as Viktor Orbán in Hungary; and campaigns for Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel (which many, though far from all, Jews view as either intrinsically antisemitic or as a foundation for antisemitism). While Lipstadt points to statistics that indicate a rise in antisemitic incidents in the past few years, it is the sheer persistence of antisemitism, decades after the Holocaust, that disturbs her as much as its recent growth.

The book is structured around Lipstadt's responses to fictional letters from "Abigail", a Jewish student, and "Joe", a non-Jewish academic, both at Emory University in Atlanta, where the author is a professor. While this device makes the text highly readable, it is not really much of a dialogue. Her imaginary correspondents never lead her anywhere uncomfortable.

Through patient argument and multiple

examples, Lipstadt believes, we can learn to spot antisemitism and arm ourselves in the fight against it, just like Abigail and Joe do. We can also come to a measured assessment of its seriousness and extent, avoiding exaggeration. Lipstadt is alert to antisemitism's many forms, and is scathing about the tendency to ignore it from one's own "side". She castigates Benjamin Netanyahu for cosying up to figures such as Orbán, and the Western Left for ignoring antisemitism in the pro-Palestinian movement.

Unfortunately there is a large gap at the heart of Lipstadt's project. She is uncompromising in her view that "antisemitism has never made sense and never will"; that it is a "delusion" that exists entirely independently of anything that Jews are or do. But this incredulity is not always helpful, and what she cannot answer is why antisemitism became more or less attractive at particular times. Why do some people choose Jews as victims – or cast them as oppressors – rather than other classes of people? And how far does the single term antisemitism really encompass both the Christian anti-Judaism of earlier periods and Twitter-based conspiracy theories about George Soros today? Getting to grips with these questions is the key to understanding this most persistent and slippery of phenomena.

KEITH KAHN-HARRIS

## Rehabilitation

Melanie Reid

THE WORLD I FELL OUT OF

400pp. Fourth Estate. £16.99.

978 0 00 829137 2

A painful divorce followed by slow progress to acceptance and recovery is a familiar theme in memoirs, but the divorce Melanie Reid describes in *The World I Fell Out Of* is a "forcible divorce" from her body. In April 2010, Reid, then aged fifty-two, took part in a cross-country horse show. One minute she was guiding her handsome chestnut mare over a modest jump; the next her face was slamming into the turf. She saw a brilliant white flash and experienced a "most beautiful, intense feeling of warmth". This marked the moment of separation; her legs, arms and torso were now paralysed and "somehow deeply misshapen".

Reid recounts in vivid, painstaking detail the twelve months she spent in Glasgow's Southern General Hospital, and then her adjustment to home life. As a columnist for *The Times* Reid is, after all, a compulsive literary communicator. As she is positioned in the noisy, claustrophobic MRI scanner, her thoughts are of revelation: "I've got to tell people about this. ... It's just so interesting. Who knew?"

Reid the journalist is transformed into an anthropologist. The spinal rehabilitation ward is a foreign country inhabited by an unfamiliar tribe. Whether its members slipped on ice, or were injured in a car, or had an apparently innocuous fall at home, they are all haunted by (usually unrealistic) hopes, their thoughts consumed by the strange assortment of machines that, after exhausting labour and expert physio coaching, might just help them move from bed to wheelchair. Wheelchairs call for labour of a different kind: patients must learn not only how to use them but also how to get in and out safely.