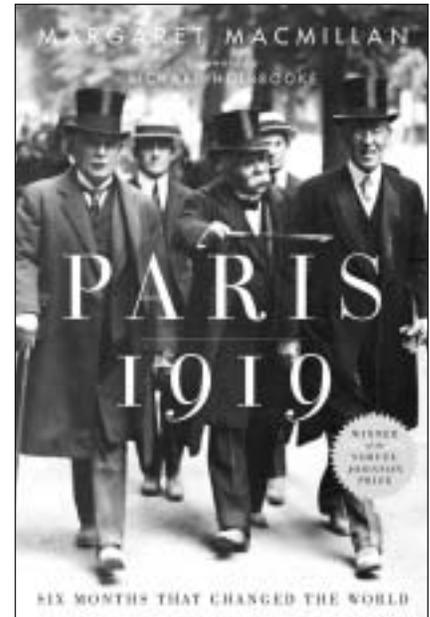


More Treachery, Romance, Idealism and Betrayal Than in All of Shakespeare — All of it Superb

Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. New York: Random House, 2002.

Review by Desmond Morton



About half a century ago, the late Hilda Neatby complained, in her contribution to the Massey Report on the State of Arts and Letters in Canada, that Canadian academic historians generally communicated poorly. I am not sure that the ensuing decades have substantially undermined her thesis, but I would cheerfully offer Margaret MacMillan's *Paris 1919* as a conspicuous exception. Received on the eve of a busy trip to Washington, the volume took over my life. It displaced at least two books I had pledged to review, distracted me delightfully from a significant conference, comforted me through the delays and frustrations of modern air travel, and held my attention until the not-so-small hours of a weekday morning.

Paris 1919 reads like a novel, except that no novelist would be allowed so many wild characters or such dense, intertwined and fascinating plots. From the sexual passions of Paris to Woodrow Wilson's bartering Chinese territory to buy off a Japanese resolution against racism, there is probably more treachery, romance, idealism and betrayal in

this book than in all of Shakespeare's dramatic *oeuvre*.

The terrible 1914-18 conflict fell short of being a world war except to those for whom Europe, the United States, and their empires were all the world that mattered. Still, when most of the world's leaders came to Paris in the first half of 1919, they found themselves shaping more of the world's future than they could ever have imagined. At Paris in 1919, were born Yugoslavia, Iraq and a score of other failed experiments in ethnic homogeneity. Even the seeds of Eretz Israel were sown though the full flowering of Chaim Weizmann's Zionist dream had to await the Holocaust. Arguably, that hideous event also grew out of the 1919 settlements and from the merciless nationalisms which fuelled them.

At Paris in 1919, the United States emerged briefly from its transatlantic isolationism. Having financed the two main victors, Britain and France, and then mobilized the armies that forced Germany to sue for peace, Americans got their first taste of trying to rule the world. Reading this book during a conference on Canadian-American rela-

tions in Washington's beautiful new Woodrow Wilson Institute kept hinting to me that some of the 28th president's blinkered righteousness had possibly passed intact to the 43rd president. Certainly then and now, Americans found the wilfulness and contrariness of other people profoundly frustrating. They could then, of course, fall back across the Atlantic to Fortress America. Perhaps the ultimate horror of September 11, 2001, was its merciless revelation that isolation is no longer an American option.

Margaret MacMillan's book starts with the three men displayed on its jacket. The tall, single-minded Woodrow Wilson had been re-elected in 1916 as the president who kept America out of war. His principles intact, their direction reversed, Wilson promptly took America into the war. Who can be more unpredictable than a man of principle? Of course, America's financial strength had kept the Western allies in the war; its military strength, barely mobilized by war's end, demoralized an exhausted Germany. Wilson arrived in Paris



Bill Bolychuk, University of Toronto Press
Margaret MacMillan

armed with pledges of national self-determination and selfless diplomacy wrapped in his Fourteen Principles. Thanks to Woodrow Wilson, millions around the world awaited to have their dreams come true. Hundreds of them came to Paris, confident that Wilson would believe their good, bad, terrible and always special cases. The combination helped redraw the world's borders and murdered several millions.

Wilson's foil was France's premier Georges Clemenceau, the deaf old tiger who had fought in 1870 and helped prevent a similar disaster in 1917 by executing defeatists as traitors. By forcing France to fight on in the face of its devastating losses, Clemenceau led it to a victory it utterly lacked the strength to exploit. Yet, without added population and resources or an utterly enfeebled Germany, Clemenceau realized that he had merely postponed France's defeat.

The third man in the picture was Britain's David Lloyd George, Liberal, anti-war activist, and self-imagined dreamer from the valleys of Wales. In 1915, Lloyd George had impressed Canada's wartime prime minister, Sir Robert Borden, as the only British leader seriously committed to the Allied war effort. While his aristocratic colleagues went grouse-shooting, the Welsh-born solicitor ran his huge department. Younger and often as insufferable as his accidental partners, Lloyd George emerges from MacMillan's book

as usually the ablest and wisest of the three leaders. In the Middle East, she also admits, he was architect-in-chief of some terrible tragedies which began with the sack of Smyrna and continue to this morning's newspaper.

These three men, and thousands associated with them in Paris, wrestled with problems of incredible complexity, forever clouded in lies, bad history, fake statistics, naive ignorance and righteous intransigence. One of many superb features of the book is that MacMillan lets her readers share the dilemmas of the peacemakers. Japan's delegation, liberal and idealist, demands a declaration of racial equality as part of Wilson's League of Nations Covenant. What is the problem? Lloyd George soon finds out, from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. As a devout Virginian and survivor of the Confederacy, Woodrow Wilson already knows. It becomes easier for him to sacrifice China's Shantung Peninsula to the Japanese, who had captured some of it from Germany, even if he thereby betrays a wartime ally. Could Wilson ignore his voters? Could Lloyd George tell self-governing dominions to go soak their heads? Could any of them, in May 1919, risk letting Japan walk out of the Peace Conference as the Italians already had over Fiume?

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Paris 1919 is also what a distinguished colleague has called a "luscious" book, full of the rich gossip of Paris in 1919. MacMillan takes us into the mansions and hotels of the leaders and their staffs. She has brilliant, and sometimes savage vignettes of the conference's personalities, major and minor, from Edward Mandell House, the tiny ex-Texan who gradually lost control of Wilson to the president's second wife, to

George Nathaniel Curzon, that "most superior person," who foresaw the century-long vengeance of Islam on the peacemakers. Chaim Weizmann, the Russian-born chemist and Zionist, had won British backing through his research on acetone production but he owed even more, MacMillan argues, to the devout Christian upbringing of his two British patrons, Lloyd George and the otherwise indecisive Arthur Balfour. The beautiful Queen Marie of Rumania, a daughter of Queen Victoria, makes her appearance in Paris with her vast wardrobe, her three plump daughters, and her willingness to share her bed and the resulting experience with key negotiators. Included in the cast is the dangerously charming Greek, Eleutherios Venizelos, whose personal popularity in Paris soon doomed millennia of Greek settlements in Asia Minor.

Failure and frustration was the common fate of many who came to Paris. Among them was the dedicated, sometimes deceitful T.E. Lawrence. His Arab costume so outraged the French that they banned him at their border but somehow he made his way to Paris. Lawrence, "claimed that he passed easily for an Arab," but, MacMillan reminds us, Arabs "found his spoken Arabic full of mistakes."

Lawrence's clients, the Arabs, would have little cause to rejoice that he had led them in revolt. Would Lawrence have been wiser not to stand in the gallery of the British hotel, raining sheets of toilet paper on Lloyd George's head.

MacMillan's text is memorably punctuated with savage vignettes of those the author came to despise, including most Italian politicians,

French diplomats, British aristocrats, and long-winded nationalists of any description. MacMillan's sympathies and dislikes parallel, perhaps too often, the judgements and prejudices of David Lloyd George. However, almost daily as the months pass, the influence of Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Wilson on the world they were remaking significantly diminished. Officially, the Great War ended at Versailles in June, 1919; in practice, it had ended with the Armistice of November 11, 1918. No one wants to be the last person killed in a war. How many want to continue risking death or even the discomforts of military life after the fighting is over? Simply put, the armies of the victorious powers began to dissolve as soon as the last rifle shot echoed

into oblivion. Most of Canada's CEF was back in Canada before the embittered Germans signed the peace treaty. Amidst riots, rebellions and imminent war, Viscount Allenby in the Middle East had to send home twenty thousand British soldiers a month. Teetering toward bankruptcy, the major Allied governments demanded ever faster demobilization. Military mutinies seconded the motion.

To some of the ardent nationalists who sought his aid, Wilson offered George Washington's advice a century and a half earlier: "Go home and organize an army." Few needed the suggestion. By 1919, new heroes were ready to die and, even more, to kill for ethnic dominance or survival. Few were more competent than the

Ottoman general who had held the British and Australians at Gallipoli. Kemal Pasha, transformed into a secular Kemal Ataturk, crushed an Armenian republic and then destroyed Venizelos's bid to partition Anatolia. At Smyrna, his troops avenged a massacre of Turks by destroying millennia of Hellenic settlement and despatching a million Greeks to their bankrupt, unfamiliar homeland. Then he humiliated a small British army at Chanak in November 1922. Canadians may remember the event for their blunt refusal to be "ready, aye ready" for the Empire. Lloyd George paid for his blunder with his career and British Toryism was reborn with the 1922 Committee. More important, so was modern, secular Turkey.



Random House

The signing of the Treaty of Versailles at the Hall of Mirrors

The Versailles settlement has been blamed for most of the world's miseries since 1919, from genocide in Rwanda — acquired by Belgium from Germany — to Arab fury at the Jewish homeland in Palestine. The long agony of the former Yugoslavia through most of the 1990s was a direct heritage of the peacemakers in Paris. So too is that mixture of quarrelsome enemies called Iraq. Would it be a country impossible to govern? The British might have heard the expert warnings, but the brilliant, well-connected Gertrude Bell, sole woman of significance in the 1919 peacemaking, knew better. Mesopotamia became a British-dominated Iraq. Palestine became a Jewish homeland; Palestinians suddenly found a voice, and Britain's triumphant conquest of Jerusalem in 1918 rapidly degenerated into the most intractable and dangerous conflict of our own age.

Indeed, the most scorned offspring of Paris, 1919, was the Versailles treaty. Published as a whole only hours before it was presented as an ultimatum to the Germans, MacMillan reports the horror among its creators. The French, of course, felt betrayed and Marshal Foch, appalled that the Rhineland would not be French, predicted exactly what would happen in 1940. The British and Americans were, if possible, even more dismayed. Only then did idealists see how far the Fourteen Points had vanished into shabby *realpolitik*. Even more astonishing, MacMillan reports, was the widespread German conviction that President Wilson and his principles would save them from humiliation and even give them more than they had. The height of their collective illusions only amplified their furious disillusionment.

One misery MacMillan refuses to attribute to Paris 1919: the German claim that Versailles, with its war-guilt clause and the reparations war-guilt justified, destroyed the Weimar Republic and brought on Hitler, the Nazis, the Second World War and the Holocaust. She is scathing about

John Maynard Keynes and his anti-Versailles pamphlet. *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* loaded the Allies with more guilt than even a Presbyterian could handle. Certainly Keynes captivated contrarian opinion between the wars, and provided whole generations of academics with a simple conspiracy theory.

What Keynes accomplished, MacMillan insists, was to give reparations a significance they never deserved. Between 1918 and 1932, Germany paid its former enemies about US\$4.5 billion, significantly less than a poorer, weaker France had paid Germany after defeat in 1870-71. Nor, despite righteous claims, did Germany really disarm. Suspicions about Saddam Hussein and Iraqi disarmament might well begin with a serious reminder of how even a social-democratic Germany

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evaded its arms reduction pledges. If Versailles was a harsh treaty, it was mild by the standard of Germany's own intended peace terms, and thanks in part to Keynes and to US isolationism, the Versailles terms were poorly enforced. Weimar Germany had only to accept Poland to have a buffer from the Soviet Union; France's wartime losses left it even weaker than it had been in 1914. The US Senate rejected Wilson's pledge to come to France's rescue if Clemenceau would only be reasonable, and Britain had turned its mind wholly to its Empire. "The clearest demonstration that the peacemakers had not emasculated Germany," MacMillan concludes, "came after 1939."

Allied leaders made serious errors in their peace process, most notably taking six months to get to a settlement, during which everything in Europe, from food stocks and finances

to their own military strength, gravely deteriorated. Blaming the peacemakers for Hitler's rise to power stretches causation past the snapping point.

Having taught at Ryerson University and recently transferred to be provost of the University of Toronto's Trinity College, Margaret MacMillan claims that she designed her book to capture her students' interest. She set aside the dense texts and long citations adored by academic historians and incorporated humanity and passion. Her students must be very fortunate, and so are her readers. Frustrated scholars have ample footnotes and plenty of alternative sources. They will also, no doubt, enjoy their quibbles. So do I. Professor MacMillan should take another look at the caption for photograph number 3. The bearded, bespectacled man described as Jan Smuts bears a striking resemblance to Canada's delegate, Sir George Eulas Foster, Borden's Minister of Trade and Commerce, and a former temperance lecturer.

With her lively style and brilliant insights, Margaret MacMillan has avoided the sterility Hilda Neatby once denounced. Her readers are denied unambiguous heroes and villains and pre-digested choices. MacMillan treats history as adult entertainment: complex, multi-faceted and unpredictable. *Paris, 1919* is a book for any age but it is not a book for the childish.

MacMillan's manuscript was apparently rejected by the University of Toronto Press. Perhaps the people at UTP recognized their limits as international publishers. A world-class book deserved publishers who could deliver it to American and British markets. Having won international acclaim, MacMillan deserves the applause that we Canadians only bestow after the rest of the world has approved.

Desmond Morton, founding director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, is a professor of history at McGill University. He is the author or editor of thirty-six books.

Quotes tagged as "betrayal" Showing 1-30 of 976. It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend. — William Blake. tags: betrayal, disappointment. Shame, blame, disrespect, betrayal, and the withholding of affection damage the roots from which love grows. Love can only survive these injuries if they are acknowledged, healed and rare. — Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*. He is in a class all of his own because he knows the value of a woman's heart. — Shannon Alder. tags: betrayal, break-ups, cheating, class, compassion, courtesy, gentleman, honor, ladies, leading-a-woman-on, love, manners, manning-up, men, mixed-signals, players, relationships, respect, respecting-others, respecting-women, true-gentlemen. Noel mentioned about her cutting all ties even with her family and Chase, because apparently being the eldest and engaged to Chase means all inheritance of the family and rights will go to Chase (i think this what it meant). Noel continued that they can discuss their next step once he inherited the title successfully (whether they stayed married or divorced). The last few pages were about Irene's thoughts regarding her engagement with her fiance. It somewhat mentioned that her fiance told her that he would never married her. Then Irene thoughts about how her sister seemed to be alright with the situation because they are family after all. Irene decided to leave her house early morning tomorrow (probably to give Noel her decision) and the chapter ended with her parents waiting for her. Much more than documents. Discover everything Scribd has to offer, including books and audiobooks from major publishers. Start Free Trial. Cancel anytime. The study portrays the issue of love and betrayal, love which is a feeling of great fondness or enthusiasm for a person or thing while betrayal is an act of disloyalty or treachery, this study gives an insightful account about the shocking and heart-aching conflicts caused by betrayed as portrayed in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Types of love. Love is contrasted with platonic love which in all usage procedures sexual relationship yet only in modern usage does it take a fully a sexual sense, rather than the classical. Discovering the meaning of treachery through Jane Austen writes that there has been surprisingly little