

Do Meghan and Harry know what the monarchy means to Britain?

Theo Hobson, *The Spectator*, 24 August 2026

Dear Harry and Meghan, welcome back to Britain. I hope that things go well for you. But let's be honest: a lot of us are a bit worried about your return. Please allow me to explain why I think this is. We feel that you do not really understand what the monarchy means to us. This might sound strange – you, Harry, were born into it and know it from the inside, so why should you take lectures from a commoner¹? But maybe an insider can sometimes be blind to what is clear to outsiders.

The monarchy is how a certain aspect of our national psyche is expressed. It's an old-fashioned part of our national psyche, but it is not dead. It is difficult to talk about, because our culture is very used to ironising and disparaging it, and is embarrassed about affirming it directly. I'm talking about a few related things: reticence, a sense of duty, respect for traditional order. Most of us are reluctant to affirm these things in a strong way: we do not want to sound like cultural conservatives or reactionaries who dislike modern Britain. But most of us do support the monarchy.

The core members of the royal family obviously have a uniquely difficult task, being the living embodiments of this aspect of the national psyche. In a sense it is ridiculous and impossible. Why should a few human beings be under this immense pressure, why should they be less free than the rest of us to express their individuality? Only a fool cannot imagine the burden.

You chose to reject this burden. You chose to become normal civilians. But of course the old aura sticks to you – the sense that you are special, not quite like the rest of us, set apart even from the most illustrious celebrities, even including the Beckhams.

The question is: what should you do about this? Your response, over the last six years, has been a mixed bag. You have kept your distance, through living in the US. This was a good thing. But you also have also sought attention as celebrities, influencers, charity gurus and so on. This is fair enough on one level: you want to use your fame to have a positive influence, and to secure an income.

But the place to do that is California, not England. If you want to live here, you have to pipe down² like no one has ever piped down in the history of piping down. In fact an apology wouldn't hurt, for all the careless frankness.

I'm sorry if my tone sounds a bit hostile. But you seem not to understand the difference between monarchy and celebrity. When you excitedly married, you seemed to have an agenda: to use your royal status as a gilded³ platform for good causes like anti-racism. When the critics questioned this, you assumed they were bad people, enemies of these causes. But the monarchy is not a platform for other causes. It is its own cause. Either serve that cause – by contributing to the performance of reticence and duty – or get out and stay quiet. Please do not organise any charitable ventures. The good that they might do is hugely outweighed by the likely harm to the monarchy and to Britain. Find a nice gated community in the Cotswolds⁴ where you can play cricket and make jam.

¹ Commoner : roturier.e, de la société civile

² Pipe down : se taire

³ Gilded : doré

⁴ Cotswolds : campagne anglaise – pittoresque et chic