



Modernity Britain: Book 2: Book Two: A Shake of the Dice, 1959-62

David Kynaston

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David Kynaston's history of post-war Britain has so far taken us from the radically reforming Labour governments of the late 1940s in Austerity Britain, through the growing prosperity of Family Britain's more placid 1950s, to the very cusp of the 1960s and the coming of a new Zeitgeist in Modernity Britain. The first part, *Opening the Box, 1957-59*, plotted the main themes of the new spirit of the age. Now, in part two - *A Shake of the Dice, 1959-62* - through a rich haul of diaries, letters, newspapers and many other sources, Kynaston gets up close to a turbulent era as the speed of social change accelerated. By 1959 consumerism was inexorably taking hold (stripes for Signal toothpaste, flavours for potato crisps), relative economic decline was becoming the staple of political discourse (entry into Europe increasingly seen as our salvation), immigration was turning into an ever-hotter issue (the controversial coming of controls), traditional norms of morality were perceived as under serious threat (*Lady Chatterley's Lover* freely on sale after the famous case), and traditional working-class culture was changing (wakes weeks in decline, the end of the maximum wage for footballers) even as *Coronation Street* established itself as a national institution. The greatest shake of the dice, though, concerned urban redevelopment: city centres were being yanked into the age of the motor car, slum clearance was intensified, and the skyline became studded with brutalist high-rise boxes. Some of this transformation was necessary, but too much would destroy communities and leave a harsh, fateful legacy. This profoundly important story of the period of transformation from the old to the brink of a new world is now told brilliantly and in full for the first time.

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