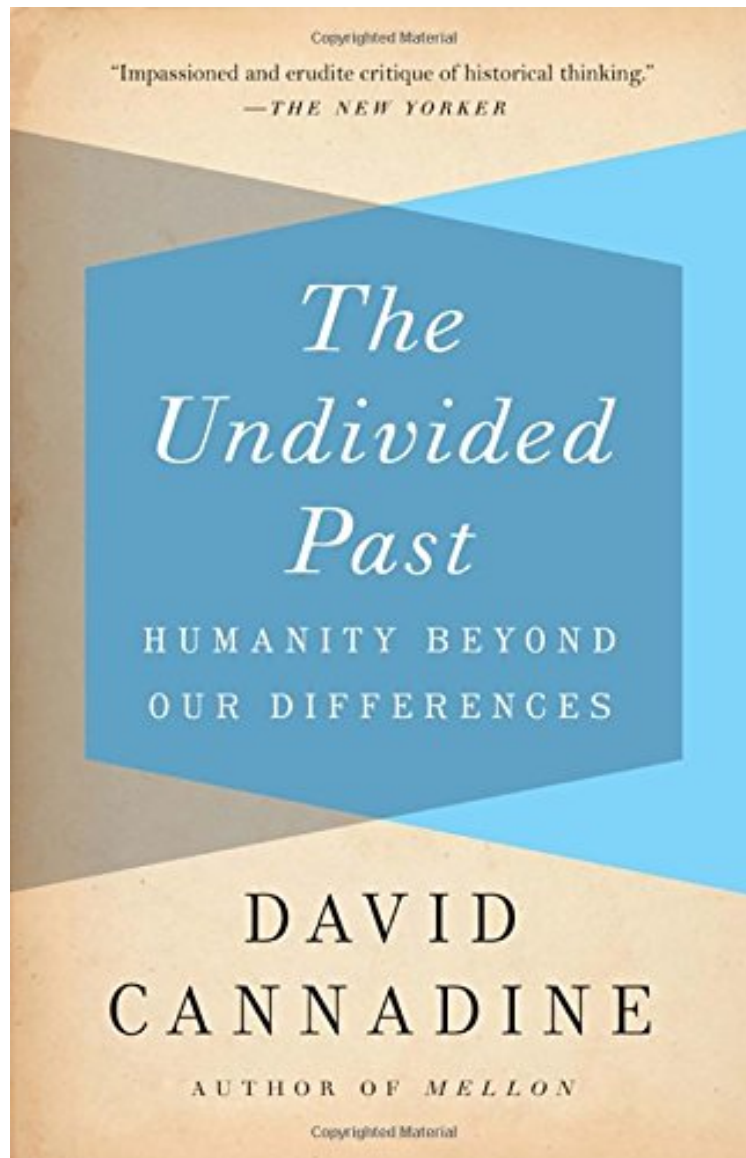


The Undivided Past: Humanity Beyond Our Differences

David Cannadine

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David Cannadine : The Undivided Past: Humanity Beyond Our Differences before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Undivided Past: Humanity Beyond Our Differences:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Worthy of the effortBy MT57The book has a noble aim, to convince the reader that historians, pundits and others who claim that humanity is divided by religion, class, race, gender, etc are wrong. He partially succeeds. I say partially because, while he sometimes shows greater commonality in history, he sometimes shows a fragmentation into more than two camps on the particular dividing theme, and sometimes he just

argues that the claim is just based on poor analysis, period. I give it high marks for its noble purpose, but also because the breadth of scholarship is astonishing. An amazing amount of intellectual history is covered in this book, beyond my ability to assimilate in the rest of my lifetime. I found it a bit difficult to read. It's actually very well written, not at all ponderous or condescending or elitist. It was just that, once I had finished one section of the book, good as it was, I could pretty much guess how the rest of the chapters were going to proceed, and so often found myself choosing not to pick it up and continue because of that. But eventually I kept at it and was glad I did. It is a very learned and yet at the same time heartfelt book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Great Divide By Kenneth Buck Cannadine argues that we are more than a collective solidarity, that the world is not binary and that the Manichean view of a monolithic good on one side and a monolithic evil on the other is too simplistic and factually incorrect. He reviews what he believes are the six primary differences or divides creating this false impression (Religion, Nation, Class, Gender, Race, and Civilization) and shows us that these categories of identity and difference have not precluded us from working and living together in an "Undivided Past." I am not sure I can agree with his understanding of the past and I can't help but wonder whether he missed the most important way we humans identify. A seventh chapter on our liberal/conservative divide would seem appropriate since aspects of the other six divides are clearly found in the fundamental beliefs of both liberal and conservative thought. In fact the liberal/conservative divide seems to me to be the underlying divide in all six of the categories of human identity Cannadine discusses. A very interesting read, but I hope he completes the discussion with a volume two on the "Great Divide: Conservative/Liberal Conflict in History" 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Good book, overstated title By J. Bracey Carradine's volume is a welcome counterbalance to the torrent of volumes which describe the things which divide us. I couldn't help but notice that Carradine necessarily spends many of his words (sometimes) explicitly and (more often) implicitly agreeing with some significant portion of what all those other authors say about our divisions. The value in his work is that while he cannot utterly destroy the concepts of difference, he does manage to demonstrate that those litanies of difference are not the whole story. His title is therefore something of an overstatement, a marketing necessity, it appears. A more accurate but far less appealing and "sexy" title would have been: *The Divisions of our Past Aren't as Desperately Bad as Others Want You to Believe, and We're Not Well Served by Focusing on Division*. (Now THAT'S an atrocity of a title! No wonder he chose differently.)

From one of our most acclaimed historians, a wise and provocative call to re-examine the way we look at the past: not merely as the story of incessant conflict between groups but also of human solidarity throughout the ages. Investigating the six most salient categories of human identity, difference, and confrontation—religion, nation, class, gender, race, and civilization—David Cannadine questions just how determinative each of them has really been. For while each has motivated people dramatically at particular moments, they have rarely been as pervasive, as divisive, or as important as is suggested by such simplified polarities as us versus them, black versus white, or the clash of civilizations. For most of recorded time, these identities have been more fluid and these differences less unbridgeable than political leaders, media commentators and some historians would have us believe. Throughout history, in fact, fruitful conversations have continually taken place across these allegedly impermeable boundaries of identity: the world, as Cannadine shows, has never been simply and starkly divided between any two adversarial solidarities but always an interplay of overlapping constituencies. Yet our public discourse is polarized more than ever around the same simplistic divisions, and Manichean narrative has become the default mode to explain everything that is happening in the world today. With wide-ranging erudition, David Cannadine compellingly argues against the pervasive and pernicious idea that conflict is the inevitable state of human affairs. *The Undivided Past* is an urgently needed work of history, one that is also about the present and the future.

From Booklist *Starred* For much of recorded history, human beings have argued and even gone to war on the basis of perceived differences of religion, nationality, class, gender, race, and civilization. But were not doomed to keep viewing the world as us versus them, argues historian Cannadine. If we move beyond binary notions of good and evil, we can instead focus on our common humanity. Cannadine systematically examines the six most pervasive areas of identities across historical periods, as well as the role of theologians, historians, politicians, and pundits in continually emphasizing differences. For example, historical interactions between Christianity, Islam, and Judaism were far more nuanced and fluid, with as many conflicts within the religious groups as among them, than is now commonly understood. Despite undeniable differences, the common areas of conflict have come from particular group interests, exaggerated notions of the importance of the differences, an insistence on a binary perspective, and reinforced historical accounts that deny our commonalities. Drawing on history, philosophy, economics, sociology, and religion, Cannadine offers a broad and sweeping look at the myriad ways we've been at each other's throats throughout history. Still, he ends with the hopeful prospect that more historians will reexamine the chronicles of group conflicts and offer balanced perspectives. --Vanessa Bush Cannadine does not say so, but he may well have written his book in response to Samuel Huntington's famous argument about the clash of civilizations. I can only hope that *The Undivided Past* . . . so authoritative in its coverage of history . . . will have all the impact of Huntington's work, serving as an important

reminder that human beings around the world not only have much in common but also have improved the conditions of their lives over time. His optimism is both refreshing and necessary. Alan Wolfe, *The New York Times Book* Elegantly written and stimulating. . . . Cannadine is justified in drawing attention to how dangerously politicized history can become. David Priestland, *The Guardian (UK)*One of our most provocative and profound historians, Cannadine confronts the brutally populist, crudely polarized Manichean concept of us versus them in the writing of history. He affirms, rather, the complexity and diversity of humanity and the connectedness of its manifold identities. Iain Finlayson, *The Times (UK)*A spirited case for harmony against the myths of identity politics. . . . *The Undivided Past* succeeds best as a Swiftian treatise on the ignorance of the learned, and the follies of the wise. While the fetishism of a single, adversarial identity still derails the study of history as much as the practice of politics, *The Undivided Past* should earn applause. Boyd Tonkin, *The Independent (UK)*Highly intelligent, stimulating, occasionally provocative and enormous fun to read. . . . To write about the past, Cannadine concludes, requires the historian to celebrate the common humanity that has always bound us together, that still binds us together today, and that will continue to bind us together in the future. It is noble message and one that historians would do well to heed. Philip Ziegler, *The Spectator (UK)*A mediation on the ways in which history has been abused to present the world divided into simple opposing identities of good and evil, them and us . . . if any current historian might speak truth to power then we should wish it to be David Cannadine. Dan Jones, *The Daily Telegraph (UK)*David Cannadine is a distinguished historian; his new book should make him famous. Now at the summit of his career, he brings a message that only a veteran and learned historian could deliver convincingly. Hugh Brogan, *History Today (UK)*Persuasive, impassioned. . . . Historian and editor Cannadine constructs a stirring critique of history that questions conventional approaches to narrating the human chronicle. Cannadine, an accomplished writer, details it in fresh and provocative termsAn incisive argument buttressed by millennia of evidence.Starred review, *Kirkus* sCannadine systematically examines the six most pervasive areas of identities across historical periods. . . . Drawing on history, philosophy, economics, sociology, and religion, Cannadine offers a broad and sweeping look at the myriad ways weve been at each others throats throughout history. Still, he ends with the hopeful prospect that more historians will reexamine the chronicles of group conflicts and offer balanced perspectives.Starred review, *Booklist*The Undivided Past offers us a great historian's skeptical and liberating exploration of the ways in which our various social identities do and do not make us what we are. David Cannadine deploys his penetrating erudition through contentious territory, maintaining always an exemplary elegance and civility.Kwame Anthony Appiah, author of *The Ethics of Identity* and *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*A complex, thoughtful examination of the fundamental ways in which humanity divides itself.Publishers WeeklyAbout the AuthorSir David Cannadine was born in Birmingham, England, in 1950 and educated at Cambridge, Oxford, and Princeton. He is the author of many acclaimed books, including *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, G. M. Trevelyan, *History in Our Time*, *Class in Britain*, *Ornamentalism*, and *Mellon*. He has taught at Cambridge and Columbia Universities and has also served as director of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. He is currently Dodge Professor of History at Princeton University.