

because we'd published the paper like the week before on the dying white people and he said, 'We're going to talk about your paper.' And he'd read it down to the footnotes!" (Obama) 2015 45

Our waitress is full of American efficiency and the first of our food arrives quickly, a trout rillette served with pickled fennel and potato chips that Deaton has nominated as a favourite. An avid fly fisherman, he spends his summers stalking trout in Montana. "After a day's fishing I'll know the solution to something or have good ideas that were not accessible before," he tells me later.

Back to Obama. "The man has a lot of class," says Deaton. "He may not have been a very effective president. But that's beside the point now I guess."

In the wake of November's US presidential election result, the quip is telling. Deaton is among those who sees Trump's election — and the Brexit vote that shocked the UK earlier in the year — as a consequence of the arrogance of political elites.

He is scathing about the Clintons, and Hillary Clinton in particular, for their links to a broken establishment. "One of the great benefits of the election to me is that I don't have to pretend that I like her," he tells me at one point, even as he confesses he reluctantly voted for her. (Hillary Clinton)

But his bigger frustration is with what he sees as the detached and technocratic backgrounds of so many people in centrist politics nowadays.

"If you think about the first leaders of the UK's Labour party, they were singing hymns on the train platform as they went off to work. And they were of 'those people'," he says. "If you think of someone like Gordon Brown, who I have immense admiration for, and Obama — and the high point of my year this year was my meeting with Obama — he's not one of 'those people' any more. He's an intellectual with progressive views who is making policy in a way that he judges is good for those people." (Gordon Brown)

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Deaton's view is derived from his own background. Born in Edinburgh in 1945, he is the grandson of a Yorkshire coal miner, and the son of a civil engineer whose own battles to get an education drove him to push young Angus into a rigorous study routine that eventually led to a scholarship to Fettes, Scotland's Eton, then Cambridge.

"I've always — and not always happily — considered myself an outsider," Deaton tells me. "Certainly at Fettes. And then the Scots are always outsiders in England. They are always putting you in your place in one way or another and there is this pretty rigid class hierarchy."

This, he considers, "is a true sympathy that I think I have with these people who support Trump."

Fishing in Montana has also contributed to his understanding. "You meet these people who are quite impoverished and they have a different set of values. Fishing guides with health problems, who are veterans and refuse to go to the [Veterans Administration hospital for free care] because they see it as a handout."

