

# **ON & OFF THE PAGE**

**compiled  
by  
J. L. Herrera**

**For Peter Mobey & Pam Whalan**  
for the bookcase

And with Special Thanks to  
**Megan Schaffner, Anthony Raymond,**  
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### **Introduction**

What is it that makes an idea leap from the page? Oh *yes*, I must find out more about so-and-so? I wonder what else he wrote? *That's* an intriguing thought. I wonder when that was first published ... and so it begins. In some ways it's like a detective story, finding the connections, linking writer and work and age and response. And the oddest little books can set me forth on a journey.

It is also distinctly addictive. I was talking with a lady in the Save the Children op-shop one day and we decided that books and reading *are* addictive. We also decided that it is a very pleasant addiction. But writing 'calendars' is also addictive and I don't know if it's an addiction I share with anyone; perhaps the compilers of anthologies and 'Thoughts for the Day'?

Curiously, there are people who now feel I must've heard of almost every writer born and almost every book published! I hate to disappoint them. But it isn't exactly about reading and writing. It is about seeking out that little spark, that something that starts a chain of engrossing thought. Perhaps out of every twenty books, one might offer something which grips me. The others I read for enjoyment, because someone urged me to read something, because I want to know more about something ...

But the possibility of finding that spark, of fanning it into life (and there are ideas that smoulder a while, then gradually die), of following its will-o'-the-wisp trail, provides an extra dimension to my reading. I prepared my first calendar without fully realising this. I finished my third and knew there'd be a fourth.

So browse, enjoy, and I hope you too will find a spark or two.

J. L. Herrera  
Hobart. 2004.

PS. I asked the question in *A Writer's Calendar*: 'Who was Hommy-Beg?' So in case you've been wondering too here, from Barbara Belford, is an answer, 'In 1893 Caine dedicated *Capt'n Davy's Honeymoon*, with fulsome tribute, to Stoker, who reciprocated with *Dracula*, but in code: "To My Dear Friend Hommy-Beg." Hommy-Beg is Manx for "Little Tommy", a name Caine's grandmother called him.' Caine was Sir Thomas Henry Hall Caine who wrote a number of popular novels set on the Isle of Man.

## ON AND OFF THE PAGE

January 1<sup>st</sup>: Maria Edgeworth  
Sir James Frazer

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‘Accounts of Irish literary history, to date, have been male-dominated and male-centred, even though the first writer of fiction in Ireland was a woman, Maria Edgeworth. A history of women’s writing in Ireland and the place of women’s writing in the literary history of Ireland is just beginning to be established through the work of writers such as Janet Madden-Simpson and Nuala Archer. But much work remains, particularly around the question of whether contemporary writing has been influenced by Irish women writers of the nineteenth century.

‘Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent*, published in 1800, details the behaviour of an “incompetent, wasteful” and “downright cruel” privileged family from the viewpoint of Thady Quirk, a family retainer. It was Ireland’s first published novel and the first regional novel in the English language. It employs literary techniques (such as monologue) that, according to the literary critic Anthony Cronin, anticipate the work of Irish writers such as Samuel Beckett, especially *Malone Dies*, James Joyce in *Ulysses*, and the contemporary writer, Dorothy Nelson, whose novel *Tar and Feathers* is a depiction through monologues of a working-class family in crisis. Maria Edgeworth’s critique of the life of privilege in Ireland also anticipates the highly acclaimed oeuvre of Jennifer Johnston, whose work is represented here by the story “Trio,” and that of Molly Keane, especially her novel *Time after Time*. Johnston, like Edgeworth, writes novels of social criticism.’

(Contemporary Stories of Irish Women Writers, *Territories of the Voice*.)

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I spent quite a lot of time trying to find out how the name Huband-Smith came into our family (my grandmother was Beatrice Huband-Smith) and finally came to the connection when Edward Smith married Catherine Huband in Dublin at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Catherine’s brother was Willcocks Huband who as a young man had been secretary of the local branch of the United Irishmen. He had studied law at Trinity College Dublin (and nineteen of its students were expelled for their sympathies with the UI). Willcocks had to do some fast talking to get himself accepted into the conservative ranks of the Irish Bar. He married Frances MacCartney and had a sizable family; one of his grandchildren becoming Secretary to the Bishop of the Falkland Islands ...

But I mention him in this context because he was also a talented artist and engraver and wrote several books on grammar. Strickland’s *Irish Artists* says of him: ‘He was author of an “Essays upon Taste and Judgment in the Fine Arts,” and in 1810 produced his “Critical and Familiar Notices in the Art of Etching upon Copper,” which he printed and bound with his own hands, and illustrated with etchings done by himself. Of this book, a small quarto, twenty-five copies only were printed, which the author presented to his friends. One copy he presented to Trinity College and another to the Royal Dublin Society who, in thanking him for the gift, referred to “the varied genius it displays in the originality of its design, the critical elegance of its composition, and the masterly execution of its plates.” Miss Edgeworth, in return for a copy presented to her by the author, sent him a complete set of her works, and so highly was the book esteemed and so eagerly sought after as a rarity, that a pipe of port was once refused for a copy.’ I like the idea of someone in the family knowing Maria Edgeworth and, as he didn’t need her patronage, it suggests, at the least, a pleasant acquaintanceship.

This aspect of her life, her warmth, kindness and generosity, brought her friendship and affection wherever she went. She wasn’t a Jane Austen writing discreetly when the family was

out. She never felt the need to hide behind a male pseudonym. She was very modest about her writing but equally she never tried to hide the fact that she spent a great deal of her time working at it. Given her large number of half-brothers and half-sisters, her duties on the estate, her quite lively social life, it suggests a high degree of self-discipline to continue to write and publish over a busy lifetime.

She also made the extraordinary amount, for those times, of £11,062.8.10 from her writing. A small amount of this was from her shared work with her father, such as the £300 *Practical Education* brought in. But the vast amount of it was from her own work. She lavished her own money on her family, friends and relatives, but also on the wider community. During the Famine when she was in her eighties food was sent directly to her, such as the ‘hundred and fifty barrels of flour and rice’ from the children of Boston labelled “To Miss Edgeworth for her Poor”, as people knew she would see it got where it was most needed. Perhaps that generosity of spirit is what helped make her Ireland’s most popular novelist of her time—and perhaps it is her best epitaph.

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Ireland’s first novel was written by a woman who was born in England; whereas several of England’s best known papers were started by a man born in Ireland. Richard Steele is probably remembered, if he is remembered much, as the friend, sparring partner, and business associate of Joseph Addison. As Addison is also not much remembered ...

This piece by T. H. S. Escott in *Masters of English Journalism* doesn’t tell me much about Steele but I enjoyed it for its sense of the period in which Steele was writing:

‘That paper (the *Tatler*) had been started by Addison’s old contemporary at Charterhouse and Oxford, himself also, as editor of the *London Gazette*, filling a Government post. In the work of popularizing the newspaper, the mantle of Defoe may be said to have fallen upon Steele. He had, indeed, taken Defoe’s *Review* as the model for his own venture. The guns he carried were fewer and lighter than Defoe’s, nor did he take Defoe’s serious interest in the graver issues of current questions, moral or political. In his earliest journal he showed himself true to the name he had chosen for it. Adopting the pseudonym made famous by Jonathon Swift, Steele put forward Isaac Bickerstaff as the *Tatler*’s editor.

‘The early eighteenth century witnessed on the part of the newspaper-writer an intimacy as various and close with tavern life as was to be claimed by his later successors with the smoking-rooms of clubs. The journalist’s forerunner, the newsletter-writer, picked up much of his information at ordinaries like those described in the *Fortunes of Nigel*. A little later, between 1698 and 1736, *White’s Chocolate House* formed a centre for fashionable chit-chat of all kinds. About 1750 *White’s Tavern* was started as *White’s Club*; the old Almack’s became Brooks’s. These two grew into the chief West End clubs. They were not, however, to provoke much imitation till many years later. In Steele’s and Addison’s day the public to which the *Tatler* largely appealed, as well as the source from which its intelligence came, was the tavern. The distinction between Whig and Tory taverns was not less clearly defined to the middle of the eighteenth century than that between Whig and Tory clubs in the following age. Addison, Steele, and their friends had their house of call at *Button’s*. Here, too, Pope, Arbuthnot, Swift, and St. John (Bolingbroke) often dropped in, sitting after dinner over their wine or punch till the place closed or they were due at the theatre, frequently, too, returning to supper from the play, or perhaps a cup of tea with some hostess in Russell Square. The receipts of the chief taverns, if they could be examined, would throw light upon the fortunes of the newspaper men who were their chief customers. *Button’s* long survived in the *Bedford*, Covent Garden, shorn, however, in that shape, of its former glories. In Hanoverian days the journalists, who were the creation and the pride of Queen Anne’s reign, began socially to be at a discount. Their conversation had lost its freshness; citizens and macaronis no longer bribed waiters to give them a seat near Steele, Addison, or those who worked for them. But neither Addison nor Steele would ever have become journalistic forces in their own age and transmitted their influence to posterity if, during most of the eighteenth century, the gentlemen of the press, with

an eye to picking up what they could at *George's* or *Garraway's*, had not, at both these haunts, attracted the most select among the patrons of the place. *George's*, in our own day the George Hotel at the top of Devereux Court, opposite St. Clement's Church, was once or twice visited by Sir Robert Walpole, though more frequently by some of his understrappers, to whisper in the journalist's ear something the Minister wished to find its way into print. Sometimes the coffee-houses and the tavern were distinct; but frequently they were combined beneath the same roof, the rooms only being separate. Steele and Addison, however, with all their colleagues, had many another point of social or convivial rendezvous than those already mentioned. To begin with, there were the two great gathering-points for wits, scholars, literati of all degrees at *Will's*, near Temple Bar, and the *Grecian*, a little further west. At the back of St. Clement's Church, in, as it was then called, Butcher's Row, the two colleagues of the *Spectator* feasted at *Clifton's* off the best mutton chops in London. When the present writer in 1865 first dined at the *Cock* in Fleet Street, Tennyson's plump head waiter told him he remembered Dr. Johnson well, and pointed out the box where he used to sit. So some one else knew very well Lemuel Gulliver and found his biographer, Jonathon Swift, only incorrect in not saying enough about his residence in Wapping. Occasional appearances were also put in by the fathers of journalism at the *Mitre*, then as now lying between King's Bench Walk, at the east end of the Temple, and Fleet Street. *Dicks'*, Thackeray's favourite resort, flourished in the mid-Victorian era, just as it had done when, in 1709, Steele took to dine there some country friends, who proved so punctilious about precedence that he had a difficulty in getting them from the narrow crooked passage into the coffee-room. Further eastward in the City the poet Cowper, when keeping his terms at the Temple, used, at *Batson's*, to take his modest repast, thinking all the time what he should say in the next of the articles that, signed "Villager," were then appearing from his pen in the *Connoisseur*. Hard by *Batson's*, in 1710, Addison and Swift for the first time dined together at *Kivat's Ordinary*, the landlord obliging them with some good wine at seven shillings a bottle, considerably, he said, below the usual price.

'Such were the favourite resorts of the newspaper men with whom is now our immediate concern, as well as of the readers addressed by the *Tatler* or by the sheets which followed it. Addison, Steele, and their comrades of the better sort had their days and hours at the places now mentioned, less that they might pick up the talk than that the social atmosphere of the tavern might suggest to them some new and attractive feature for putting into their broadsheets—some novelty, social or political, like those for which Defoe had ever been on the watch. This was how the journal grew in favour with the wives and daughters who pored for hours over the print which the head of the family, when he did not live above his place of business, brought home with him to Bloomsbury or to one of the new northern suburbs by way of entertainment or instruction for the ladies of his household. Neither by Addison nor Steele were fresh notions struck out in the same sense and to the same extent as by Defoe, the one great teacher of both in every phase of the co-operation that continued actively till within a month or two before Addison's death, after a sharp quarrel which served to bring out in strong relief the difference between the temper as well as the genius of the two men. Addison, as we already know, made himself a newspaper man not in the hope of winning political office, but of confirming in power the political friends who had made his fortune. Without further lifting of the journalist's pen, he would probably in the natural order of things have reached the Secretaryship of State that fell to him in 1717. As a fact, however, two years before that promotion he had performed his chief work as a pure journalist in the *Freeholder*. This was exclusively his own production, before which Addison's contributions to periodical letters were those of the essay writer rather than of the party publicist. That did not prevent Addison, in the opinion of himself and his friends, from always having served his party even more as a social than as a political writer. The *Spectator* refined and educated the middle classes. Surely to have done that was to have reflected not less public credit on the Whigs to whom this journalist belonged than if the *Spectator* influence had affected to the Whig advantage a division in Parliament or an election in the country. Steele, on the other hand, though, like

Addison, he sat upon the Whig benches in Parliament, and as editor of the London Gazette was a Whig placeman, had always been a freelance, as much at home with St. John and Harley as with Cowper or Halifax. He supported, indeed, the Whigs for choice, and with zeal so long as their conduct provided good material for his pen. But to a degree of which Addison knew nothing, Steele ever looked beyond the politicians who praised his writing to the readers who bought them, for instruction or amusement, as the case might be. The question ever present to Steele, was What does the public want, and what, during the longest period, may it be trusted to buy? And again, When can my paper improve its prospects by playing the part of candid friend to the Whigs rather than by being merely their champion? The reckless Steele believed in strong writing rather than in deep thinking. The decorous Addison, on the other hand, thought more of winning one Whig proselyte than of filling columns with pungent paragraphs. As journalists, Addison and Steele were both equally concerned, and equally contributed, to make their vocation, as well as those who plied it, independent of the patron. Each had a share in producing incomparably the most popular sheets which up to that time had appeared. Their broadsides, by their political, as by their miscellaneous contents, might or might not gratify the Whig managers. As to that neither cared so long as their subscribers and casual purchasers were pleased. Nevertheless, throughout most of their course the two men worked together, and remained necessary to each other. Macaulay's exaltation of Addison at Steele's expense has been sufficiently exposed by John Forster. It is enough here to point out that, so far, as Macaulay says, from Steele never having succeeded without Addison's help, Addison's ventures never prospered so much as when he had the co-operation of Steele. Thus the *Spectator*, which in 1711 had superseded the *Tatler*, flourished just so long as Addison was supported by the keen, inventive, practical, and inexhaustibly resourceful Steele: that is, up to December 6, 1712. A year and a half later (June, 1714), Addison revived the *Spectator* by himself. The resuscitated print, now that Steele's pen and management were withdrawn, survived only for six months. In 1715, while Scotch Jacobitism was at its height, Addison produced the *Freeholder*, entirely a ministerial organ. Steele praised its literary style, but protested its writer, instead of playing on a lute, ought to have blown the trumpet. To show what Addison ought to have done, Steele actually launched a journal of his own, *Town Talk*, followed by the *Crisis* and one or two other short tracts. These lived about as long as the *Freeholder*; they rendered, however, nothing like the same service as the new dynasty. Addison's *Freeholder* lived for just six months, from December, 1715, to the following June; it was followed by his *Old Whig*. This had been started to answer Steele's attacks in the *Plebeian* on Sunderland's Peerage Bill; when that episode was over it ceased to exist, and with it there died the memory of Addison's final attack on his old friend. ...

'In the hands of Defoe, the English newspaper first earned its conventional title by becoming, in reality as well as in name, a Fourth Estate. Defoe's *Review*, supplemented by his other broadsheets, exercised a supervision over the national administration and expenditure more close and more trusted by the masses than the control of their representatives at Westminster. The daily or weekly journal, as conceived by Defoe, supplied the initiative and leverage for all movements or political progress or social reform. For Addison and Steele it was reserved, while organising public opinion in support of the slowly accepted Revolution Settlement, to ally the animosities mutually embittering against each other, not so much rival factions in politics as competing orders and interests in society.'

*Masters of English Journalism* by T. H. S. ESCOTT

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Maria Edgeworth was born, brought up and educated in England but in 1782 her family went to live at the family home in Ireland, Edgeworthstown, and this became the centre of her world for the rest of her life. Her first efforts at writing were a translation from the French, of *Adèle et Theodore*, in what was said to be fluent French, and her first children's stories which she wrote out on a slate were written to amuse her many small siblings. These were later collected up and published as *The Parent's Assistant* and *Early Lessons*.

The family had its share of tragedies; Richard Edgeworth's first three wives died while only in their twenties, and at least three of the children died from consumption. Yet it all seems impossibly remote from the similar losses of the Brontë family. The sorrows of the Edgeworth family do not make them a tragic family. Part of the reason, I think, is the character of Richard Edgeworth himself. He is remote in personality and outlook from the figure of Patrick Brontë locked away in his study while his children created imaginary worlds of their own. Richard Edgeworth must have spent quite a lot of time closeted in his study too while his children played in imaginary worlds in their nursery. But he also made certain he was a large cheerful encouraging practical part of their lives.

Maria has been criticised for her children's tales in that her main characters, Frank and Rosamund but especially Frank, were impossibly good. But I think this is to misunderstand their purpose and genesis. Maria loved her younger siblings and she saw her stories as entertaining them rather than 'improving' them. It is probably not chance that made the character of Frank so virtuous, whereas most writers allowed 'boys to be boys' and made their girls into patterns of sickly perfection. Maria and the family were poking sly fun at their father who was the adult who was Always Right, who Always Knew Everything, who Had Never Placed a Foot Wrong. So if Father was always right then the Boy Who Became the Man must also have always been right! I can imagine the children having much fun with the ever-perfect character of Frank.

Maria did a lot of the secretarial work for her father's opus, *Practical Education*, and his style, which Emily Lawless calls 'the brobdingnagian phraseology of her father's best and most superior Johnsonese', was damaging to her own development as a writer of fiction. As Lawless puts it in her 1904 biography, 'No study of Maria Edgeworth, however slight, could possibly pretend to completeness without a somewhat careful survey of her father. The admirers of her admirable gifts are apt, with hardly an exception, to bear a somewhat heated grudge against the memory of this too consciously edifying Richard Lovell Edgeworth. They are wont to consider that the author of *Miss Edgeworth's* being was also too frequently the author of the least satisfactory portions of her books. Even when not actually guiding her pen—a piece of parental presumption of which he was perfectly capable—in spirit he hovered over it, and that a desire for the paternal approbation was with her the first and strongest of all incentives there can be no question. Wherever, in her case, the didactic impulse is seen to distinctly overpower the creative one; wherever we find Utility lauded to the skies as the only guide of an otherwise foundering humanity; above all, wherever we find an enormous emphasis laid upon the necessity at all times and places of a due subordination of the feminine to the masculine judgment,—there we may feel sure that we are upon his track, and that such sentiments were uttered primarily with a view to the approbation of the domestic critic.'

Her one book in which he seems to have played no role, *Castle Rackrent*, is also seen as her most successful. Maria said of its inspiration, 'The only character drawn from the life in *Castle Rackrent* is 'Thady' himself, the teller of the story. He was an old steward (not very old, though, at that time; I added to his age, to allow him time for the generations of the family). I heard him when I first came to Ireland, and his dialect struck me, and his character; and I became so acquainted with it, that I could think and speak in it without effort; so that when, for mere amusement, without any idea of publishing, I began to write a family history as Thady would tell it, he seemed to stand beside me and dictate; and I wrote as fast as my pen could go. The characters are all imaginary. Of course they must have been compounded of persons I had seen, or incidents I had heard, but how compounded I do not know; not by 'long forethought,' for I had never thought of them till I began to write, and had made no sort of plan, sketch, or framework. There is a fact, mentioned in a note, of Lady Cathcart having been shut up by her husband, Mr. M'Guire, in a house in this neighbourhood. So much I knew, but the characters are totally different from what I had heard. Indeed, the real people had been so long dead, that little was known of them. Mr. M'Guire had no resemblance, at all events, to my Sir Kit, and I knew nothing of Lady Cathcart, but that she was fond of money, and would not give up her

diamonds. Sir Condy's history was added two years afterwards: it was not drawn from life, but the good-natured and indolent extravagance was suggested by a relation of mine long since dead. All the incidents are pure *invention*; the duty work, and duty fowl, *facts*.'

The novel was published anonymously but it was so successful that the second edition a year later carried her name and it was soon translated into French and German.

It has many delightful dry asides:

'The heroes of history are so decked out by the fine fancy of the professed historian, they talk in such measured prose, and act from such sublime or such diabolical motives, that few have sufficient taste, wickedness, or heroism, to sympathise in their fate. Besides, there is much uncertainty even in the best authenticated ancient or modern histories; and that love of truth, which in some minds is innate and immutable, necessarily leads to a love of secret memoirs, and private anecdotes. We cannot judge either of the feelings or of the characters of men with perfect accuracy, from their actions or their appearance in public; it is from their careless conversations, their half-finished sentences, that we may hope with the greatest probability of success to discover their real characters.'

'Wigs were formerly used instead of brooms in Ireland, for sweeping or dusting tables, stairs &c. The Editor doubted the fact, till he saw a labourer of the old school sweep down a flight of stairs with his wig; he afterwards put it on his head again with the utmost composure, and said, 'Oh, please your honour, it's never a bit the worse.'

'As for the law, I believe no man, dead or alive, ever loved it so well as Sir Murtagh. He had once sixteen suits pending at a time, and I never saw him so much himself; roads, lanes, bogs, wells, ponds, eel-weres, orchards, trees, tithes, vagrants, gravelpits, sandpits, dunghills, and nuisances, every thing upon the face of the earth furnished him good matter for a suit. He used to boast that he had a lawsuit for every letter in the alphabet.'

Lawless writes, 'It has been sometimes asserted that Miss Edgeworth was the parent and first inventor of that engine of instruction "The Novel with a Purpose," but if *Castle Rackrent* is a novel with a purpose, one would be glad to be told what that purpose precisely is.'

This was probably its strength but also Maria's undoing. Whether it was pressure from her father or her critics or her own deep-seated belief that a novel should carry if not a purpose then at least a moral meant her following books were very different in style and success. They mostly come under the category of 'romance' and do not appear to be a form with which Maria was comfortable.

Rachel M. Brownstein in *Becoming a Heroine* says, 'In English, too, the words "novel" and "romance" have been used interchangeably. When Lady Delacour, in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801), refers to "the novel" of her young friend's life, she means what the anonymous American diarist means by "the romance" of hers: "If you would only open your eyes, which heroines make it a principle never to do—or else there would be an end of the novel—if you would only open your eyes, you would see that this man is in love with you." A heroine's primary allegiance is to her romance: she cannot allow her intelligence to compromise the potential power of the ending. Life, like a novel, tends to remind her every now and then of this irony. Lady Delacour's irony reminds us *Belinda* is a piece of realism, rather than a mere romance, and also that, on the other hand, it is not real life but only a novel.'

Whatever else Maria's eyes were, and she had a lot of trouble with them, they were certainly open. When she came to revise *Belinda* for re-publication she said "I really was so provoked with the cold tameness of that stick or stone, *Belinda*, that I could have torn the pages in pieces! As the hackney coach-man said, 'Mend *you!* Better make a new one!'"

The gloom in her later novel *Ormond* is attributed to the fact that her father was dying while she wrote it. She then gave over her own work to completing the books and articles he had left unfinished. But despite the regret that she, consciously or unconsciously, tried to become another Jane Austen in her later work rather than doing the things she did best, she also left a number of light-hearted and popular books. The first one *Letters to Literary Ladies* was overshadowed by *Castle Rackrent* but her later *Tales from Fashionable Life* were well-read



and her *Moral Tales* found, I am sure, a large readership. Her little morality tales are saved from pedantry by her light touch and sense of humour and the way she could sketch in a character in a few well-chosen words—‘Mrs. Dolly had been laundry-maid in a great family, where she learned to love gossiping, and tea-drinkings, and where she acquired some taste for shawls and cherry-brandy’—which suggest both the person and the milieu. But perhaps the remarkable thing about her writing is how fresh and readable it is, often even more so than the later Victorians.

She didn’t set out to comment on society or politics yet by writing about absentee landlordism and related issues she found herself commenting on both:

“To serve in Parliament the nation,  
Sir Ulick read his recantation:  
At first he joined the patriot throng,  
But soon perceiving he was wrong,  
He ratted to the courtier tribe,  
Bought by a title and a bribe;  
But how that new-found friend to bind  
With any oath—of any kind—  
Disturb’d the premier’s wary mind.  
Upon his faith.—‘Upon his word.’  
Oh! that, my friend, is too absurd.  
‘Upon his honour.’—Quite a jest.  
‘Upon his conscience.’—No such test.  
‘By all he has on earth.’—’Tis gone.  
‘By all his hopes of heav’n.’—They’re none.  
‘How then secure him in our pay,  
He can’t be trusted for a day?’  
How?—When you want the fellow’s throat,  
Pay by the job,—you have his vote.” (from *Ormond*)

She turned her pen to a variety of types of writing but the one that shouldn’t be overlooked is her letter-writing. She travelled quite widely and met many interesting people including the Polish hero Kosciusko, Sir Walter Scott, Sir Humphry Davy, and the Darwin family. Her letters convey her own cheerful and optimistic outlook on life. Writing to her aunt, 5 September 1798, at the time of the United Irishmen, she says, “We are all safe and well, and have had two most fortunate escapes from rebels, and from the explosion of an ammunition cart. Yesterday we heard, about ten o’clock in the morning, that a large body of rebels, armed with pikes, were within a few miles of Edgeworthstown. My father’s yeomanry were at this moment gone to Longford for their arms, which Government had delayed sending. We were ordered to decamp. Each with a small bundle; the two chaises full, and my mother and Aunt Charlotte on horseback. We were all ready to move, when the report was contradicted; only twenty or thirty men, it was now said, were in arms, and my father hoped we might still hold fast to our dear home.

“Two officers and six dragoons happened at this moment to be on their way through Edgeworthstown, escorting an ammunition cart from Mullingar to Longford: they promised to take us under their protection, and the officer came up to the door to say he was ready. My father most fortunately detained us; they set out without us. Half an hour afterwards, as we were quietly sitting in the portico, we heard—as we thought close to us—the report of a pistol, or a clap of thunder, which shook the house. The officer soon afterwards returned, almost speechless; he could hardly explain what had happened. The ammunition cart, containing nearly three barrels of gunpowder, packed in tin cases, took fire and burst, half way on the road to Longford. The man who drove the cart was blown to atoms—nothing of him could be found; two of the horses were killed, others were blown to pieces, and their limbs scattered to a distance; the head and body of a man was found a hundred and twenty yards from the spot. Mr.

Murray was the name of the officer I was speaking of: he had with him a Mr. Rochfort and a Mr. Nugent. Mr. Rochfort was thrown from his horse, one side of his face was terribly burnt, and stuck over with gunpowder. He was carried into a cabin, and they thought he would die, but they now say he will recover. The carriage has been sent to take him to Longford. I have not time or room, my dear aunt, to dilate, or tell you half I have to say. If we had gone with this ammunition, we must have been killed.

“An hour or two afterwards, however, we were obliged to fly from Edgeworthstown. The rebel pikemen, three hundred in number, actually were within a mile of the town. My mother, Aunt Charlotte, and I rode; we passed the trunk of a dead man, bloody limbs of horses, and two dead horses, by the help of men who pulled on our steeds; all safely lodged now in Mrs. Fallon’s inn.”

The house survived the ups-and-downs of Irish history. The town is now known as Mostrim and the house where Maria lived and wrote is a nursing home.

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- January 2<sup>nd</sup> : Isaac Asimov
- January 3<sup>rd</sup> : J. R. Tolkien  
Lucretia Mott
- January 4<sup>th</sup> : Casimiro de Abreu  
Sir Isaac Pitman
- January 5<sup>th</sup> : Umberto Eco  
Sir John Burke
- January 6<sup>th</sup> : Kahlil Gibran
- January 7<sup>th</sup> : Charles Addams
- January 8<sup>th</sup> : Wilkie Collins
- January 9<sup>th</sup> : Karel Capek  
Robert Drewe  
Simone de Beauvoir
- January 10<sup>th</sup> : Robinson Jeffers
- January 11<sup>th</sup> : Alan Paton
- January 12<sup>th</sup> : Dorothy Wall
- January 13<sup>th</sup> : Michael Bond  
A. B. Guthrie
- January 14<sup>th</sup> : Pierre Loti (Julien Viaud)
- January 15<sup>th</sup> : Moliere  
Martin Luther King Jr.
- January 16<sup>th</sup> : Dian Fossey
- January 17<sup>th</sup> : Anton Chekhov
- January 18<sup>th</sup> : A. A. Milne  
Daniel Webster
- January 19<sup>th</sup> : Edgar Allan Poe
- January 20<sup>th</sup> : Harold L. Gray
- January 21<sup>st</sup> : Emma Gad  
Friedrich Karl von Savigny  
John Cheney
- January 22<sup>nd</sup> : Lord Byron  
Francis Bacon

August Strindberg

January 23<sup>rd</sup> : Derek Walcott  
Subhas Chandra Bose

January 24<sup>th</sup> : Joice Kilgallen Loch  
Edith Wharton

January 25<sup>th</sup> : Robert Burns  
Robert Boyle  
W. Somerset Maugham

January 26<sup>th</sup> : Flora Kickmann

January 27<sup>th</sup> : Lewis Carroll  
J. Rendel Harris

January 28<sup>th</sup> : Colette  
Sabine Baring-Gould

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Sir James Frazer is seen as probably the pre-eminent 19<sup>th</sup> century collector of folklore, legend, and myth. Certainly he produced 12 volumes to make up *The Golden Bough* (which is probably why the shortened single volume version has the feeling of leaping wildly from place to place, idea to idea). But he wasn't the first; he probably wasn't even the most prolific. English clergyman, Sabine Baring-Gould, not only spent his life collecting both stories and information on the natural world; he, too, believed that people's legends and folk songs and stories contained germs of factual information. Frazer devoted at least one book just to his collection of Flood stories and the curious way such stories can be found everywhere, even the most remote and 'untouched' places.

I pondered over whether to write about Frazer or Baring-Gould and I felt that, in a way, Baring-Gould as one of that disappearing breed of squire-cum-parson-cum-writer faced an added challenge as he collected up his books of myth and legend in Europe. Here were stories, wise, funny, tragic, full of revenge or salvation, and which were simply seen as folk lore. But when it came to the *Bible* and *its* stories, even those which have no obvious moral purpose, these had to be presented as the Word of God. I wonder if he often sat in his study or mounted his pulpit and pondered on the why. He was ready to question things—he suggested that the image of angels with feathered wings was based on pagan stories of swan maidens—but he never became a focus of religious controversy.

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I came upon this ad for a boat-building course: 'What Noah Knew, You Can Too'. But what *did* Noah know when it came to boat-building? Not much. Given that God had to tell him exactly what to do. It is hard to imagine a Phoenician version going into that kind of detail. But the curious question arises: was the detail there because of the Hebrew view of who Noah was and where and how and when he lived—or is the detail there simply because the listeners and readers were *no longer* coastal-dwelling peoples and therefore not familiar with boats? Or is the detail there because all the earlier versions of a Great Flood story in the Middle East also contained some information about the actual building of the Ark and therefore listeners expected it as part of the exciting build-up to the climax of the story?

Ambrose Bierce poked fun at the Biblical story of the Flood: '*Inundation, n.* A flood. The greatest inundation of which we have any account was the Noachian deluge described by Moses, Berosus and an Assyrian chronicler translated by the late Mr. George Smith. Inundations are caused variously, but this one was due to a long spell of wet weather—forty days and forty nights, Moses says. So much water fell in that period that it covered every mountain on the earth, some of which—the highest being near where Noah lived—have an elevation above sea-level of 30,000 feet. Our heaviest rains are at the rate of about six inches in twenty-four hours—a fall of two feet would strangle one who should attempt to walk abroad in

it. But Noah's rain fell at the rate of 750 feet per twenty-four hours, or 31½ feet per hour. It was quite a rain.'

Or as he has Berosus describe it: 'quite a smart shower considering the season.'

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J. B. Phillips in *Ring of Truth* wrote, 'What triggered off my anger (righteous, I trust) against some of our "experts" is this. A clergyman, old, retired, useless if you like, took his own life because his reading of the "new theology" and even some programmes on television, finally drove him, in his loneliness and ill-health, to conclude that his own life's work had been founded upon a lie. He felt that these highly-qualified writers and speakers must know so much more than he that they must be right. Jesus Christ did not really rise from the dead and The New Testament, on which he had based his life and ministry, was no more than a bundle of myths.'

I believe that people's beliefs, their faith, their legends, their lore, *are* just as much precious possessions as more tangible things. And yet it raises profound problems when we come to questioning ideas which should be questioned, or that cannot avoid being questioned. Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist, wrote 'in short, we should do nothing to disturb a man's faith, if it be a delusion which increases his happiness. But I hope and believe that the discovery and propagation of every truth, and the dispelling of every error, tends to improve and better the condition of man, though the act of reforming old opinions and institutions causes so much pain and misery' and Anthony de Mello in *the song of the bird* puts it very simply, 'Faith is never lost through the fearless search for truth'; but we tend to stop somewhere in the quagmire, the maze of conflicting research, we become angry, upset, lost, distressed, dismayed, the road seems to be undermining our most cherished beliefs ... we are afraid to go onwards in case we lose not only half our faith but the whole precious bundle; in the end, in a sense by clinging to the wreckage rather than trusting sufficiently in that wonderful promise 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free', we lose out doubly. We can't really go backwards. The lovely simplicity of childhood faith cannot be regained. No matter how damaging and undermining the great swell of Biblical, archeological, linguistic, and other kinds of research may seem—trust in the future, keep going forward in your journey, be aware that digging for Biblical truth can never undermine faith.

No wonder fundamentalists of every persuasion insist every word is the Word of God and cannot be tampered with. To start allowing that there might be mistakes in translation, mistakes in copying, mistakes in the original writing, that the original writers had agendas which were more about recording or glorifying their own history than the 'fearless search for truth', is to run a terrifying risk. To tamper with one word is to make all words vulnerable. But it, to me, suggests a wrong use of the Bible.

John Dominic Crossan in *A Long Way from Tipperary* wrote, "I do not think the Enlightenment was an unmitigated blessing. For all the marvelous gains in reason and experiment, science and technology, there were heavy losses for the human spirit as well. We began to think that ancient peoples ("other" peoples) told dumb, literal stories that we were now smart enough to recognize as such. Not quite. Those ancient people told smart, metaphorical stories that we were now dumb enough to take literally. Enlightenment, yes, but Endarkment also."

Thomas L. Thompson in *The Bible in History* upset many people. "When we separate the Bible from history we are not getting rid of the Bible. It is where it has always been: playing among its stories and legends. History is a modern interest that the Bible rarely shares. It does use occasional tidbits of history here and there. It often refers to places, great figures and even some of the things that occurred in the past, and it occasionally seems to understand something of these episodes." I imagine the use of 'playing' would not go down well. And it was the seeming precision of Biblical chronology which ironically convinced many otherwise thoughtful people that it *must* be the Word of God—for how else could anyone know exactly when things had happened so far back in time? We are told how old Noah was when he died

but not how old Solomon was. Therefore God *must* in some way be handing this knowledge to his human scribes.

As Dr Anstey put it in Philip Mauro's *The Wonders of Bible Chronology*, "The chronology of the Old Testament is in strongest contrast with that of all other nations. From the creation of Adam to the death of Joseph, the chronology is defined with the utmost precision; and it is only towards the end of the narrative of the Old Testament that doubts, difficulties and uncertainties arise. With all other chronologies the same is exactly the reverse. They have no beginning at all. They emerge from the unknown, and their earliest dates are the haziest and most uncertain, instead of being the clearest and most sure. If the trustworthiness of testimony and the canons of credibility are accepted in this case, the early chapters of Genesis will answer every legitimate test that can be applied to the determination of their genuine historical character."

The aspects that should have made thinking people suspicious were instead used to underpin them as both 'true history' and 'received truth'.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the story of Noah's Ark and the Flood. Huge amounts of money and time have been put into the effort to find an 'ark' on Mt Ararat. Claims have been made that a curious formation visible from the air is a boat embedded in a lava or possibly a mud flow. It certainly has a boat-like shape—but then the Giant's Causeway was originally believed to have been the creation not of nature but of human or superhuman ingenuity. As Charles Berlitz wrote in the *The Lost Ship of Noah*, "Therefore almost any unusual feature of the mountain is likely to be associated with the Ark by observers from the air, the plain, or the nearby hills. These observers, even if they do not realize it, are psychologically conditioned to believe in its reality." I do not mind in the least if people believe the ark still sits on the mountain slopes. What does disturb me is when people twist or fabricate information in the attempt to 'prove the Bible true'.

The curious thing is that when literal truth has been put aside in favour of seeking deeper spiritual, human, and moral truths, it sometimes appears that the discarded literal truth is based on memories of something both historically and symbolically real. This is a hard thing to accept. And yet the much-quoted saying 'You shall know the truth—' is not just something to be quoted when trivia is at hand. This has been on my mind as I have been reading in the growing pile of Biblical archeological literature. At first archeology seemed to have proved that Jericho had walls and that these had been violently thrown down. Ah ha! So Joshua did attack Jericho. Then doubt was thrown on both the age and size of the walls. Perhaps it wasn't quite as the *Bible* says but he still came that way with the Children of Israel. Then it was suggested that the invasion was just some little tribal skirmishes. And the walls had never been destroyed anyway. Then this was changed to gradual infiltration and assimilation. But now it has reached the most radical point of all: *that the Israelites and the Canaanites were the same people.*

William G. Dever's paper in *Archeology and Biblical Interpretation* shows how views have gradually changed. 'In the history of modern biblical and archaeological scholarship there have been several hypotheses, or 'models', that have tried to account for the data that we have on how Israel emerged in Canaan.'

His first model is the Conquest Model, taken from the story of Joshua.

'This model has the merit of simplicity, and it adheres to at least one strand of the biblical tradition. But the model has fared so badly archaeologically that it has been almost entirely abandoned by biblical scholars in the last two decades, and it is overwhelmingly rejected by archaeologists. The full story of this model's demise cannot be told here, but the main points are as follows. One should bear in mind throughout this discussion that both the newer archaeological evidence on settlement-history and the famous 'Victory Stele' of Pharaoh Merneptah mentioning a 'people Israel' in Canaan c. 1207 BCE require a thirteenth-century date, rather than the fifteenth century date found in older handbooks.

(1) The Exodus story is nowhere illuminated by reference to 'Israelites' in Egyptian

New Kingdom texts, or by the discovery of nomadic routes and encampments in the Sinai desert, despite intensive exploration of the latter by Israeli archaeologists. The one identifiable site excavated — Kadesh-barnea, where the Israelites would have sojourned for some forty years in the thirteenth century BCE — has no remains whatsoever before the tenth century BCE.

‘(2) Most of southern Transjordan is now well known archaeologically, but it is clear that the Edomites, Moabites and other sedentary peoples that the incoming Israelites are said to have encountered were not yet settled in the Late Bronze Age, indeed not until two or probably three centuries later. They were simply not there to be ‘conquered’. As an example, the specific cities of Dibon and Heshbon, where great Israelite victories are described, have been located (Tell Dhibân and Tell Hesbân) and extensively excavated. But they were not founded before the twelfth-eleventh centuries BCE, and there are no remains there at all of the ‘conquest’ period.

‘(3) The same is true of Jericho and ‘Ai where great victories are hailed in the Bible. Both have been extensively excavated, but were abandoned much earlier (Jericho a thousand years earlier) and show no evidence of occupation at all in the thirteenth century BCE.

‘(4) One may list all the cities in western Palestine that are mentioned by the biblical writers as the site of Israelite destructions and then look closely at the archaeological evidence. In doing that it must be concluded that only *one* — Bethel in the hill-country near Jerusalem — has a destruction layer *c.* 1225-1175 BCE that could possibly be attributed to incoming Israelites, and even there we have no direct evidence for the cause of the destruction. Either the biblical sites were not destroyed; not destroyed at the requisite time; or destroyed by other agents, such as the ‘Sea Peoples’ or Philistines.’

‘In summary, the mounting archaeological evidence does not support a ‘conquest’ model of any sort or explain the cultural changes of the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron I horizon in central Palestine or the rise of Israel, and indeed renders such a model impossible.’

It was followed by the ‘peaceful infiltration’ model, and a brief flurry of interest in the ‘peasant’s revolt’ model, and gave way to an ‘indigenous origins’ model. Dever says ‘The newer models, which are indeed bringing us to a near-consensus on ‘indigenous origins’, still lack a convenient label, but I suggest adopting Volkmar Fritz’s term ‘symbiosis’. This term stresses the common, local, overlapping roots of both Canaanite and Israelite society (and religion as well) in the thirteenth-eleventh centuries BCE, and it sees the process of change as relatively slow and complex, involving much assimilation.’

(Gary Greenberg in *The Bible Myth* turns the Bible story on its head and suggests that it was fleeing Egyptians, followers of the disgraced Pharaoh Akhenaten, who settled in Israel; but this idea still faces the problem of the lack of archaeological remains in Sinai and Canaan ... )

I know that the turn of a spade can change history or take us in quite unexpected directions. But I much prefer this new understanding. I always found the story of Joshua distasteful. Why was the behaviour of other leaders and rulers rightly condemned while it was quite all right for Joshua to behave like a monster? “So the priests blew the trumpets. As soon as the men heard it, they gave a loud shout, and the walls collapsed. Then all the army went straight up the hill into the city (ie. Jericho) and captured it. With their swords they killed everyone in the city, men and women, young and old. They also killed the cattle, sheep, and donkeys.” ... “Joshua kept his spear pointed at Ai and did not put it down until every person there had been killed. The whole population of Ai was killed that day—twelve thousand men and women. The Israelites kept for themselves the cattle and goods captured in the city, as the Lord had told Joshua.” The explanation that ‘God has given us this land and bad luck to everyone already living on it’ effectively turns the concept of God into something cruel and callous ...

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Undoubtedly the ancient Israelites, before they were designated as such, (and it is curious that it is the term ‘Israelites’ rather than ‘Judeans’ which has survived, even though the tribes

of Israel were (supposedly) largely assimilated into the broader Assyrian population; it might also be argued that the tribes of Israel were only marginally different to the tribes of Assyria).

Biblical archaeology gained a massive boost in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; everything that was turned up seemed to bear in some way on people and places mentioned and it was assumed that the Book would be shown to be literally true by the actions of the spade. Layard and before and after him Rich, Botta, Rawlinson, Smith, Koldewey, Peters, Breasted and many others descended on the ancient cities of Nineveh and Babylon. Swarms of treasure-seekers and scholars (and it was often hard to determine where one ended and the next began) descended on Egypt. But the first confident assertions began to be undercut by doubts, firstly that there appeared to be far older civilisations in the area, such as the Sumerians, about which the world knew almost nothing, and secondly that many of the Biblical stories did not make sense if read literally. If Jacob and seventy or so of his kinsmen went down to Egypt to buy grain and nearly two million men, women and children fled a brutal and repressive regime after four hundred years in slavery to return home ... then either they must have been there vastly longer than four hundred years, those men must have found Egyptian wives, or the brutality and oppressiveness of Egypt was vastly over-stated. Scholars, linguists, and theologians tinkered with the story to make it remain as the great memory of achieving freedom which underpins the chapters of the Bible but on every level it began to be undermined. Yes, the Egyptians used house slaves but the pyramids seem to have been built by farmers and labourers in those times when their land was under the Nile. Yes, there are unexplained gaps in the chronicle of Egypt's rulers, particularly the Hyskos dynasty, but no sites of settlements other than nomads have been found outside the well travelled routes across the Sinai that can be dated before the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the Hyskos dynasty was much earlier ...

But it is the Flood and Noah's Ark which both intrigues me and may hold some clues.

There are three basic scenarios:

1) World-wide tales of the (or *a*) Flood exist (and claims that they are all the result of Christian missionaries don't stand up to close scrutiny) suggesting that many are a memory of the ending of the last Ice Age. It is tempting to see sea-level rises as a few centimetres a year but there is now acceptance that it was much more dramatic than that, possibly as much as 150 metres in 50 years; and the rise was accompanied by greatly increased rainfall, seismic activity, cyclonic winds, dramatic changes in coastal contours and even the tilting of the great land-masses as the ice sheets slipped and the land, freed of that immense weight, literally sprang up, hastening the slipping process. Giant waves caused by massive weights of ice tipping into the oceans inundated low-lying lands. The water levels gradually receded slightly and stabilised but not before any small existing coastal camps and villages had disappeared. Most people were still semi-nomadic, or so it is thought, so they could usually move. But in the space of a lifetime the Mediterranean was turned from a string of large connected lakes into a sea. Southern Mesopotamia was inundated (and it may be that the salination of the land came back to haunt the Sumerians when they set up intense systems of irrigation). The land bridges of South East Asia were changed into a string of islands. Perhaps this explains the enduring fascination of Atlantis. If there was a place where small camps and shelters had given way to a perceivable town then its disappearance and the gradual exaggeration of the marvels it supposedly contained would become the stuff of legend. Exaggeration and hyperbole were the 'story starters' of the ancients. For example Herodotus describes the walls of Babylon as being 56 kilometres in circumference; when they were measured in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were found to be about 13 kilometres.

2) The idea that perhaps due to an earthquake a land bridge between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea gave way and the larger body swept into what had been a freshwater lake. Any small coastal communities would have faced gradual inundation. The huge bulk of Mt Ararat must have loomed as a safe haven to people living along the southern shores of the Black Sea.

Eberhard Zangger in *The Future of the Past* says, 'The Assyrians called the area around

Mt Ararat Uruatri. “When arranging the Hebrew biblical text, Jewish scholars translated the proper name (which had been written with just consonants as ’rrt) as ‘Ararat’, because normally, where a vowel was missing, the letter ‘A’ was inserted. We now know from Assyrian cuneiform documents that the Hebrew ’rrt actually corresponded to the Assyrian term ‘Urartu,’ which was used over the whole of the Near East. It represented a mountainous region occupied by small states and city-states’.

This scenario which is dated well after the ending of the last Ice Age may prove to be relevant to the small communities in the area. But it is hard to link to Noah and his Ark, unless we radically re-think some of the early parts of the Bible, and it cannot explain the world-wide presence of Flood stories.

3) River flooding. The Tigris and the Euphrates, like the Nile, swept down in flood every year inundating the surrounding areas with water and silt. Massive flooding can be seen in the silt levels but this happened every year. Even a very powerful flood varied only in degree. People probably witnessed thatched and wooden structures carried away, boats, rafts of debris with animals marooned on them, but this kind of flooding was remote from Mount Ararat. The floods swept south. No boat could be carried north and north-west against the torrent

The early flood stories bring the hero to rest on various other mountains beside Ararat—Nimrud, Nizir, Judi/Cudi, Demavand, Nimush, even sometimes ‘the heights’ or just high ground. The cause of the water varies too. The Epic of Gilgamesh refers to a south storm. There is talk of great rains. Genesis also refers to an upwelling of water. And various things are blamed. That there were too many people, that they were making too much noise, that they were wicked.

All this is fascinating. But none of this explains why the writers of Genesis brought their ark to rest on Mount Ararat, a mountain that none of the Biblical writers, if they were writing in or near Jerusalem, would ever have seen.

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‘The present article deals with Proto-Armenian religion as revealed in Vannic or ‘Khaldian’ cuneiform inscriptions. The Indo-European Armenians, who are described by Herodotus and Eudoxus as immigrants from Phrygia, did not become masters of the Armenian highlands till the close of the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Kretschmer brings them from Ormenion in Thessaly by way of Armene, near Simope. The name Armenia is first met with in the Babylonian and Persian cuneiform inscriptions of the Achaemnian age, and may be connected with the Vannic Armani, ‘written tablet’. The country had been previously known to its southern neighbours as Urartu (Hebrew Ararat), which the Babylonian scribes explained as a compound of *Ura-Urtu* or ‘Highlands.’ *Urtu* is the name of the district near Lake Erivan in Vannic inscription of Sarduris II., though in a bilingual inscription of Topzawa *Urartu* is the Assyrian representative of the Vannic *Lulus*. The word and title assumed by the Vannic princes was ‘king of Biainas’ or ‘Bianas,’ the district in which their capital Tuspas (Tosp), the modern Van, was situated. Biainis is the Buana of Ptolemy, now Van.

‘The Vannic inscriptions, which extend from about B.C. 840 to 640, are written in the cuneiform characters of Nineveh, but in a language which is neither Indo-European nor Semitic, and is believed by some scholars to be related to Georgian. It seems to have been spoken over the larger part of the later Armenia, and to have been connected with that of Mitanni in Northern Mesopotamia. Like the language, the religion of the Vannic population was peculiar, and is difficult to correlate with that of any other people.

‘At the head of the pantheon was Khaldis, whose children the Vannic kings and people regarded themselves as being in a special sense. Hence they called themselves ‘the Khaldians,’ a name also applied to the numerous local deities who were ‘children of Khaldis.’ But though Khaldis was the national god, he could be localized like the Semitic Baal, and we hear of a ‘Khaldis of the north (?)’ and a ‘Khaldis of the south (?)’ while a dedication is sometimes addressed to ‘all the Khaldis-gods.’ Along with two other divinities, Teisbas the Air-god (Assyrian Hadad-Ramman) and Ardinis the Sun-god, Khaldis was the member of a triad which



occupied the supreme place in the Vannic divine hierarchy, and the conception of which may have been borrowed from Babylonia. Below the triad came the multitudinous deities of inferior rank, including even the 'Khaldis-gods,' or local forms of Khaldis. A long list of these, with the offerings, to be made to them, is engraved on a rock called Meher Kapussi, two miles east of Van. Among them is Selardis the Moon-god, as well as the gods of the various cities and countries incorporated into the Vannic kingdom by conquest or otherwise. Most of these deities were merely deified States, and consequently had no individual names of their own; it was only when they were within the limits of the district originally inhabited by the tribe whose supreme god was Khaldis that they properly became forms of the national god, and could be called 'Khaldians.' As the Vannic kingdom extended, however, and the idea of a common nationality grew stronger, the deified State, even if originally outside 'the land of Khaldis,' tended to pass into a Khaldis; thus the deity called at Meher Kapussi 'the god of the city of Ardinis' (the Muzazir of the Assyrians), became a century later, in the time of Sargon, himself a 'Khaldis.' Only one goddess is mentioned in the inscriptions and since her name, Saris, seems to have been borrowed from the Assyrian, Istar, it is possible that she was of foreign origin. The later (Armenian) legends which bring Semiranis into the plain of Van are possibly an echo of the fact.

'How far Vannic religion, as it comes before us in the inscriptions, may have been influenced by Assyria or Babylonia it is impossible to say. Teisbas, however, who was afterwards united into a triad with Khaldis and the Sun-god, appears originally to have been the god of a tribe or nationality which was distinct from that of the Vannic 'Khaldians,' while among the neighbouring Hittites each city had its Sun-god, who was identified with the deified State. The conception of gods in the Assyro-Babylonian sense may have been due primarily to contact with the cultured lands of the south, like the titles 'lord of multitudes' and 'faithful shepherd of mankind' given to Khaldis. At all events, underneath all the divine hierarchy of the official cult we find clear traces of an earlier phase of belief, in which the material fetish takes the place of the god. Sacrifices were made not only to Khaldis and his brother deities, but also to 'the gate of the land of Khaldis,' 'the gate of Teisbas in the city of Eridias,' 'the gate of the Sun-god in the city of Visis'—all of which are carefully distinguished from 'the Khaldis-gods of the door' or 'the Khaldis-gods of the chapel'—as well as to 'the shields of the land of Khaldis,' and even to 'the foot-soldiers of the land of Khaldis' and 'the foot-soldiers of Teisbas'. These foot-soldiers were the temple-guards, armed priests, and attendants, who were called Seluians, Urbikans etc. A prominent object of veneration was the vine, the sacred tree of the Vannic people, which was sometimes planted by the side of the temple of Khaldis, sometimes in a sacred enclosure of its own. Sar-duris II., in one his inscriptions, describes his endowment of one of these vines, which he had consecrated and named after himself, on the north shore of the Lake of Van. The vine was often planted in the middle of the garden which was attached to the temple. Spears and shields, specimens of which from Yoprak Kaleh are now in the British Museum, were hung up on either side of the entrance to the temples, large basins of bronze or terra-cotta, on stands, being placed in front of the shrine for the purpose of ablution.

'The endowments made to the temple usually took the form of provision for the sacrifices and offerings, which were numerous and plentiful. The great inscription of Meher Kapussi gives a long list of the sacrifices to be offered to each deity and sacred object recognized in the vicinity, on every day of the month. Thus 6 lambs were to be offered to the Vannic triad, 17 oxen and 34 sheep to Khaldis, 6 oxen and 12 sheep to Teusbas, 4 oxen and 8 sheep to the Sun-god, 1 ox and 2 sheep to the gate of the land of Khaldis, 2 oxen and 4 sheep to the foot-soldiers of the land of Khaldis. Libations of wine were also to be poured out, the wine being made, it would seem, from the fruit of the consecrated vines. Comparatively few, however, of the vast herds of oxen and sheep presented to the gods could actually have been offered in sacrifice; according to the inscription of Kelishin, when 'the gate of the land of Khaldis' was dedicated to Khaldis, 112 oxen, 9020 sucklings and lambs, and 12,490 sheep

were presented to the god. Most of these must have been intended to serve as a source of income. Similarly the prisoners who were devoted to Khaldis would have been given as temple slaves. In the case of victory, the share of the god, we are told, was a sixtieth of the spoil. The temples, of which there were several varieties, probably possessed festival halls, since we hear of sacred feasts in honour of the gods.’

(from the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.)

Was Abraham of Ur of the Chaldees really Abraham of Uru of the Khaldis? Were his travels by way of Harran, a place in Syria, the natural memory of a nomadic pastoral people gradually moving south, perhaps because of struggles within the rising Hittite kingdom and its efforts to take over smaller kingdoms such as Mittani and Uruartu?

‘In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the new discipline of ethnology struggled to find a way to group the ancient peoples of the Middle East and North Africa. “The “Semitic Race” owes its name to a confusion of ethnology with philology. A certain family of speech, composed of languages closely related to one another and presupposing a common mother-tongue, received the title of “Semitic” from the German scholar Eichhorn.’ (Another German, Wilhelm Marr coined the term anti-Semitic.) ‘There was some justification for such a name. The family of speech consists of Hebrew and Phoenician, of Aramaic, of Assyrian and Babylonian, of Arabian of South Arabia and of Ethiopian or Ge’ez. ... But whatever justification there may have been for speaking of a Semitic family of languages there was none for speaking of a Semitic race. To do so was to confound language and race, and to perpetuate the old error which failed to distinguish between the two.’

‘Unfortunately, however, when scholars began to realise the distinction between language and race, the mischief was already done.’ (Professor Archibald Sayce)

The Egyptian of the Pharaohs is also accepted now as a Semitic language. I recently came upon the information that of 18 remaining Semitic languages (i.e. still in use) 9 are found in Ethiopia. The mother of this language group, which belongs to a much larger grouping called Afro-Asiatic, has not been positively identified but there is a good chance that the languages originated in this part of Africa and spread up the Nile and across the Red Sea into Arabia. Languages don’t respect borders and tend to spread outside the area of their development. In ancient times Egypt and Babylon were the great drawcards of traders. The complex web of trade-routes also carried languages. Akkadian, a Semitic language, was used as a lingua franca over a huge area.

But ...

The assumption that because the writers of the Bible used a Semitic language therefore they *must* have also been a ‘Semitic’ people is an inference which depends on the Bible itself. There is in fact no proof.

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But what of the actual writings and life of the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould? He was born in 1834 and died in 1924 and in his long life he was ‘squire-parson’ at Lew Trenchard in Devon for many years. But he acquired his interest in people, places, history and folklore when as a small child his father took the family on a 13-year-long tour of Europe. He trained as a teacher and was noted for his eccentricity, sometimes taking a class with a tame bat on his shoulder. At the age of thirty he took holy orders but he continued to write prolifically. He wrote many well-known hymns including “Onward, Christian Soldiers” as well as books of sermons and theology and the 16 volume *Lives of the Saints*; but he also brought out lighter books including biographies, travel books, folklore including *A Book of Werewolves*, at least 30 novels including the popular *Mehalah*, and ghost stories (which came out as *A Book of Ghosts* in 1904). All told he wrote more than 100 books, setting himself to do a chapter a day, and written standing at a lectern-type desk because his hyperactive nature would not allow him to sit calmly in a chair and work. I found that any time I picked up old books and saw the publisher’s list advertised at the back there was a good chance that there would be a Baring-Gould advertised. He was interested in almost everything. Yet his fame and popularity have

faded. Some of his books were books of their time and we have moved on. It is really only some of his hymns which have lasted and while I am not a fan of “Onward, Christian Soldiers” I do find others such as “Now the Day is Over” rather lovely. But his prodigious energy, enthusiasm and output deserve to be remembered—and I wonder what his own sermons were like? And did his pet bat take up residence in his belfry?

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January 29<sup>th</sup> : Germaine Greer  
                  Thomas Paine  
January 30<sup>th</sup> : Shirley Hazzard  
January 31<sup>st</sup> : Kenzaburo Oe  
February 1<sup>st</sup> : Muriel Spark  
February 2<sup>nd</sup> : James Joyce  
                  Christopher Marlowe  
February 3<sup>rd</sup> : Simone Weil  
                  Gertrude Stein  
February 4<sup>th</sup> : Rabelais  
February 5<sup>th</sup> : Susan Hill  
February 6<sup>th</sup> : Dermot Bolger  
February 7<sup>th</sup> : Charles Dickens  
                  Sinclair Lewis  
                  Thomas More  
February 8<sup>th</sup> : Jules Verne  
                  Martin Flanagan

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Martin Flanagan, in his memoir *In sunshine or in shadow*, writes “When I was growing up in Tasmania, sport and culture were deemed to be mutually exclusive. Not only were the judgments habitually made about the world of sport and those who inhabited it sneering, they were ignorant, since sport, like dance, is a language of the body’. It is an interesting point. That most physical of activities, ballet, is described as ‘culture’, gymnastics is described as ‘sport’, calisthenics, tai chi, yoga, and their relatives, come under ‘health and fitness’, ‘exercise’, ‘physical education’, ‘meditation’ ... who decides which is what?

But curiously I tend to associate sport with memory. I was thinking of this one afternoon when I saw James Griffin interviewing John Harms in the Oakey Football Ground, and I thought, ‘that’s strange, I’ve been to the Oakey racecourse and showground, I’ve played basketball at the Oakey State, both primary and high, I’ve been to the swimming pool there, I’ve even gone roller-skating there many years ago (with disastrous results), but I’ve never been to the footie ground.’ And each of those memories came back to me so clearly, who I was with, what the day was like, whether I enjoyed myself or not ... even what I wore in some cases ... even though most of my memories are forty years old and more. Is there something about the excitement, the tension, the crowd, the venues, surrounding sport that locks each experience into our memories? Perhaps if I was a sports journalist like Harms and Flanagan it all would have acquired a kind of blurriness, one match fading into the next.

John Harms in his autobiography *Loose Men Everywhere* rarely provides the kind of introspection that is part of Flanagan’s book. He says “I was born a Geelong supporter” and his chronicle is light, readable, and sometimes very funny. But I found myself wondering how a Geelong supporter ended up in Oakey.

His father was a Lutheran minister. Harms writes of their move from Victoria: “We arrived in Oakey in August 1972. The move was made easier by Geelong’s abysmal form—we had lost the first nine games that year. ... Oakey is a small town just west of Toowoomba. It

sits among the last hills before the vast fertile plain of the Darling Downs spreads out towards Roma. In those days it had about two thousand people.

“Arriving for the first time, we drive down the main street—a long thoroughfare of houses, schools, pubs, a swimming pool, a railway station and a few old shops. It is as if no one is game to live more than a couple of blocks away from the main road. Peter, David and I sit wide-eyed in the back seat. What is this place? Mum is having serious doubts, I can tell. Dad stops the Vee-Dub outside the local primary school and explains tactically how much character it has. Like many Queensland buildings, it is on stilts, a classic colonial structure established in 1874. The expansive grounds include rugby fields, netball courts, tennis courts, palm trees, gum trees, pepper trees, and gardens. The grass is all brown, the colour frozen out of it by Oakey’s frosty nights. There are no people around. ‘You’ll like it here, hey fellas?’ Dad says in a voice part pastoral and part fatherly. I suspect the lads at Gowrie Street State School were right: we really have landed back in the early fifties.”

For John and his brothers, brought up on VFL, it also required a complete change in orientation to rugby league.

“Despite the changes we were accepting of life in Oakey. Dad’s work had purpose. He had come to tend the Lutheran flock which consisted of three congregations: one in Oakey, and two among the wheat and sorghum at Aubigny and Norwin. About six hundred Lutherans had lived in the district for years. They were easy to pick with names like Ziebell, Bothmann, Hausler, Nuske, Ciesiolka, Folker, Schelberg and so on. They had come as German peasants in the late nineteenth century. Their hard work had seen them prosper and now some of them were wealthy land-owners with huge plants of equipment and dams and tax problems. Others struggled.”

He describes his own struggles with sport, the fiercely cold winters with the oval like a ‘tundra’, and his eventual move to university in Brisbane and then his return down south again. And in Melbourne he becomes a close friend of Flanagan’s:

“Martin Flanagan understands time. Because he does, he asks you questions other people wouldn’t. He gets straight to the things which matter. And he tells you things. He wants to know you and he wants you to know him. His conversation makes you realise how deeply he empathises with people. He lives their sadness. He also delights in those things that sustain us all—like hearing stories and telling stories, like going to the footy, like following a footy team.”

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But Oakey’s most famous and best loved sporting hero is not a man but a horse. Bernborough. His statue stands in the main street; his memory permeates the place.

Romano’s was one of the best known restaurant’s in Sydney before and after World War II; its owner, the larger-than-life Azzalin (the Dazzlin’) Orlando Romano, had left his home in Verona as a ten-year-old to go and work as a pageboy in a Vienna hotel. As he put it “From pageboy to receptionist, to waiter, to cook, to wine butler, to head waiter, to manager, to managing director.” In 1923 he arrived in Sydney and eventually opened Romano’s which saw a procession of celebrities, Gracie Fields, Vivien Leigh, Maurice Chevalier, Frank Sinatra, Prince Philip, Katharine Hepburn and others, come there. He spoke five languages, he was a patron of the opera, he went to the races “in striped pants and frock-coat, spats and grey topper and diamonds” and, as David Hickie notes in *Gentlemen of the Australian Turf* he ran a sly grog operation on the side. He also became the owner of Bernborough but only because of a series of extraordinary events.

An Oakey farmer called Fred Bach bought an old mare Bern Maid with her foal at the dispersal of the Rosalie Plains stud in 1940. He paid 150 guineas for the two. It was a very canny or a very lucky purchase. But there was a problem. Fred Bach had been disqualified from racing for life. At first glance this seems very unlikely. I imagined Mr Bach and his sons as stolid decent German farmers milking cows and generally going about a farmer’s business. But Fred Bach had owned what appeared to be a not very good horse called Brulad. He had

raced a few times in Brisbane then been taken home to the farm where Fred claimed he had died. Then he began racing a horse called Daylate which was quite successful and a lot of money was won on him. But as usually happens someone got suspicious. Daylate just might be Brulad. When the police went to the Bach farm someone shot and wounded a policeman. Fred had an alibi and no one was charged. But then Fred was caught sneaking Daylate out of the trainer's stables in Brisbane. His story wasn't believed and he was disqualified. And yet for this scam to have worked a lot of people must have known what was going on. Fred was the only one charged.

So to get his new youngster, now named Bernborough, to the track he had to find someone else to race him. He claimed that a man called A. E. Hadwen had bought him but stewards on all the major tracks refused to accept that the sale was a genuine sale rather than a 'front' operation for the Bach family. Nevertheless stewards in Toowoomba accepted that Mr Hadwen *had* bought the horse and Bernborough raced there, winning 11 times in 19 starts. Bernborough as a six-year-old was finally sold to Mr Romano for 2600 guineas and went on to win an extraordinary 15 races straight, carrying huge weights and winning from 6 furlongs (1200m) to 1½ miles (2400m). Mr Romano then annoyed a great many people by selling Bernborough to the USA where he was very successful as a sire.

And the moral of this story? Perhaps it is that horses like everything else need time to mature; running them into the ground as two-year-olds probably makes it less and less likely that horses like Bernborough will delight racegoers in the future. And Frank Hardy wrote, "Mulley told me years later, 'There was a mystery about the sale. Over the years, at parties, listening to various conversations, I gathered that certain important people in Sydney had arranged the sale and that apparently the original Queensland owner still retained a half-interest in the horse.'"

Old Fred and his sons may have been scallywags and rogues but they obviously knew a good thing when it came their way.

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*The Chronicle* 17/5/1996: 'It took Toowoomba police inspector Bob Good 20 years of investigation across two states to unravel one of Queensland's most amazing untold murder stories.

Today a book telling the story of the cattle duffing, horse thieving and murdering Kenniff brothers and the people involved will be officially launched at Mitchell.

The Kenniffs were pursued in a massive manhunt by nearly a third of Queensland's police force over an area the size of Belgium after the murder of a policeman and a property manager in 1902.

It took three months to capture the men with the aid of a wily and amazingly patient blacktracker Sam Johnson.

Something of the Kenniffs' activities was known in the Mitchell area and the town adopted them as a tourist attraction and even named the old Court House after them. But it took the patient sleuthing work of Inspector Bob Good to unravel the true story about who did what and when.

About 20 years ago Bob Good was stationed at Oakey and had occasion to check out some old stables at the rear (of) the police station. Inside the abandoned stables he found dust-covered police records dating back to last century.

The first folder he picked up had an Order for Search for the Kenniffs. It told about the massive deployment of police to capture the brothers. He was amazed at the size of the operation.

Little did he realise that he would take 20 years (on the story).'

There were two Kenniff brothers, Patrick and James. Patrick was hanged, James was given life.

'The book *Ketching the Kenniffs* is not dull historical reading; in fact it will be a welcome addition to anyone interested in Queensland history.

It was published by the Booringa Shire Council and the Booringa Action Group as part of the Major Mitchell 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations starting today. It was printed by Harrison Printing Co Pty Ltd, Toowoomba.’ (Byline: John Morris)

I was interested to hear of the book because we knew Bob Good when he was stationed in Oakey. It also sparked the question: why have most people heard of the Kelly gang but hardly anyone has heard of the Kenniffs? Do the baddies have to get into a suit of home-made armour for them to become a household word? A reward of £1,000 was offered for the capture of the Kenniff gang. Big money at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. So it wasn’t for lack of a profile at the time. Would we not have heard of the Kellys either if they had been Queensland outlaws? Would Peter Carey have been writing *The True History of the Kenniff Gang* if their locations had been reversed?

In 1968 I worked for a couple of months at Oakey Hospital and there was an elderly man there called Charlie (I can’t think of his surname but he was Irish) who talked frequently about the Kellys and how he had known Kate Kelly when they were both young; he would have been born long enough ago for the times to have been realistic. He was rather a charming man with a white beard and the nurses enjoyed talking with him; they teased him about loving Kate Kelly but I think everyone believed he really *had* known her. I certainly did. I know nothing of his life in-between but he had reached that stage where he obviously liked best to talk about his very early life. Charlie died in the late sixties and I had forgotten him until I came upon a news article in *The Saturday Mercury* in 2001 which raised the question as to whether several members of the Kelly Gang, Steve Hart and Dan Kelly, did actually die in Glenrowan in 1880; the suggestion being that Dan came north to Queensland and settled on the Darling Downs.

Dan Kelly and Steve Hart probably did die in Glenrowan. I am not one of those who regard the Kellys as heroes. They were young fit healthy men who could have gone anywhere, worked hard, saved enough to buy better land. Instead they went on a murderous rampage. They weren’t interested in bettering anyone else’s life, they weren’t local Robin Hoods, they weren’t demanding a better deal for Irish immigrants or women or Aborigines or struggling farmers or starving drovers; they were simply out to enrich themselves and they didn’t care how they did it. The Lloyd brothers, Jack and Tom, were Ned Kelly’s cousins, and worked with a travelling buckjump show; they also put on charity events to raise money for poor families. It’s not that the Lloyds were saints, they weren’t averse to a bit of cattle duffing, but they had their virtues. So why do we only remember Ned the thug? Even so, I was appalled when I heard that Ned’s skeleton was on public display, on the grounds that this is our heritage. If our heritage requires that kind of indignity then, to paraphrase George V, ‘Bugger Heritage.’ And I do feel a degree of sympathy for the Kelly womenfolk. So if old Charlie *had* been a friend of Kate’s then I think she was lucky in her friends.

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Just as Oakey was the little snippet which stayed in my mind from John Harms’ story so the little anecdote which stayed with me from Martin Flanagan’s book is this story: ‘In 1982 the *Examiner* sent me to the Brisbane Commonwealth Games. Before leaving, one of the executives, Lloyd Whish-Wilson, called me in and said that some of the best sports writers in the world would be at the Games. If I had the chance to spend a night in their company, I should; the paper would meet the cost. Having arrived in Brisbane, I scoured the media bus for likely types, eventually selecting an elderly grey-haired man dressed totally in white. He struck me as the sort who would sip a pink gin at Raffles between forays into South-east Asia. Over the course of several trips, I summoned the courage to approach him and introduce myself. He was a cleaner from the QE2 stadium; thereafter we travelled together. I did meet Colin Tatz, that powerful, driven academic who did a lot of pioneering work in the area of Aboriginal sport. He was writing pieces for the *Australian*, I’d read one and was able to say I admired it; after that we got around together. The only other member of the press corps with whom I became familiar was a skinny fellow with lank black hair from the Falkland Islands named Patrick. Patrick ran a radio station—possibly the only radio station—in Port Stanley.

The war in the Falklands had just finished and the biggest roar at the opening ceremony—in fact, the biggest roar I’ve ever heard from a sporting crowd—had been when the Islands’ two-man shooting team entered the stadium. Patrick, a man of great initiative, had hitched a ride to the Games on an RAF plane. One night, he and I missed the last bus to the city from the stadium and thumbed down a ute. Patrick stood upright in the back like Boadicea in her chariot, singing at the top of his voice. He then insisted I accompany him to one of Brisbane’s fashionable nightspots. I was reluctant, not least because I was wearing thongs, but Patrick wasn’t taking no for an answer. We pushed inside and had scarcely made it to the bar when two men at a nearby table got up, momentarily leaving their female companions, whereupon Patrick shoved me into the recently vacated space like a book into a library shelf. I had scarcely landed before he was in beside me and leaning across the table like a greyhound lunging for the rabbit, trying to chat up the women.

Instead of dealing with us in the traditional manner, by taking us out the back and hammering us, the two ousted males called the bouncers, who looked like rugby league forwards only bigger. Standing on either side of us, they told us to leave. Patrick said we wouldn’t, and at this moment I recalled him saying an Argentinian officer had held a pistol to his head and ordered him to play an Argentinian folk tune while he dropped the needle on the Beatles’ ‘Penny Lane’. Thus it was that in a flash Brisbane bar, with bouncers on either side of me, I had my first real insight into the Falklands War. I wrote about this and similar happenings as they occurred; the *Examiner* printed every word and readers lapped it up. Tim always says that’s when I got my start in journalism.”

Patrick Watts is alive and well in the Falklands and still the mainstay of the local broadcasting station, known affectionately as FIBS.

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February 9<sup>th</sup>: Brendan Behan  
February 10<sup>th</sup>: Boris Pasternak  
Charles Lamb  
February 11<sup>th</sup>: Maryse Condé  
February 12: Charles Darwin  
February 13<sup>th</sup>: Judith Rodriguez  
Georges Simenon  
February 14<sup>th</sup>: Bruce Beaver  
Thomas Malthus  
February 15<sup>th</sup>: Bruce Dawe  
February 16<sup>th</sup>: Peter Porter  
February 17<sup>th</sup>: Banjo Paterson

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St Valentine’s Day is seen to be about the search for and celebration of love and romance; but in most people’s minds romantic love shifts uneasily between the search for happiness and the desire to possess. Love is about neither.

‘I had spent much of my life searching for the true secret of happiness. I crossed deserts, I climbed mountains, and I sat at the feet of gurus. But still I felt this great emptiness inside. Then one day I saw the author Deepak Chopra on television and he looked so happy I immediately read his best-selling books *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* and *The Way of the Wizard*.

Still, though, something was missing, something I couldn’t explain. Then I saw Leo Buscaglia on a talk show and was incredibly impressed with the joy he projected, so I read his best-selling books *Personhood; Living, Loving and Learning*; and *The Way of the Bull*.

Although they were fascinating, they didn’t seem to have the answer I needed. So I attended a seminar given by Wayne Dyer. He seemed so content, so centered, that he appeared to me to have found what I so badly wanted. So I bought his best-selling books *Your Erroneous*

*Zones* and *Staying on the Path* and read them twice from cover to cover.

These books contained valuable advice and important suggestions, but none of this information made me feel happy deep inside. Robert Fulghum appeared on a talk show and I liked his no-nonsense approach to finding happiness in life, so I read his best-selling books *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* and *It Was on Fire When I Lay Down on It*. For almost a full day after completing these books I could feel something stirring inside me. Could it be? I wondered. But a day later that feeling was gone, so I suspect it had been caused by bad food.

If anybody had truly discovered the secret of happiness, I realized, it had to be M. Scott Peck, whose *The Road Less Traveled* had been a best-seller for a decade and given joy to millions of people. On his best-selling inspirational video, Peck seemed to be completely at peace with himself, just the way I wanted to be. So I read all his books, including *Further Along the Road Less Traveled* and *The Different Drum*. They made such good sense, but somehow they didn't provide the solution to my quest. I just knew it was out there somewhere, so I kept searching for it.

So many people told me they had learned so much from Marianne Williamson that I went to hear her lecture, then read her best-selling book *Return to Love*. Her thoughts seemed to make such good sense, but still left me wanting more, wanting to find what she had so obviously found.

I was plagued by worry and self-doubt. I knew there was a secret, all of these people seemed to have found it. What could it be? I wondered. What could these people have found that continued to elude me? And finally, like a bolt out of the blue, it came to me. One day, I discovered the secret of happiness. It had been right in front of me the whole time. To find happiness, I realized so clearly, just as all of these fine writers had done, all I had to do was make a small fortune writing my own best-selling inspirational book.'

David Fisher in *Chicken Poop for the Soul*

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Coming up to St Valentine's Day the library was offering everyone the chance to borrow a 'mystery' book (they called it a mystery date) and would I like to be in it? Oh yes, please. I love mystery books. So they handed me a book in a brown paper bag. (I'm not sure why coloured wrapping papers have cornered the market when nothing can beat the mystery and restrained eroticism of a brown paper bag.)

When I got outside the library I opened my bag, my mouth dry, my hands trembling, my eyes turning to dark beads.

Inside was a book called *The Looking Glass* by Richard Paul Evans.

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St Valentine? I got this little bit of quasi-history from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. No one is certain whether there were two Valentines, or one who got turned into two, or none at all. There was probably one, the Bishop of Terni, who was beheaded in Rome in around 269 "during the persecution of Claudius the Goth". The idea of martyrs as saints is one I always feel a little uneasy with. Martyrs require some bad guys. Saint/martyrs who work miracles would not be able to do so if they had not been placed in the position where their courage and faith were tested to the extreme. Mr and Mrs Joe Blow living peacefully and contentedly in a peaceful society, kind and good, but unremarkable, are not very useful to the whole issue of martyrology. But if we cannot go beyond the everyday experience of goodness except in the presence of great evil ... then what does that say about our ideas on good and evil?

Still, this doesn't have anything to do with the modern celebration of St Valentine's Day. "The late medieval custom of sending love notes on St Valentine's Day stems probably from the belief that it marked the mating season of birds." So should we be sending little cut-out paper birds or recordings of birdsong ... instead of hearts and flowers?

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While I was reading a book called *The Superior Person's little Book of Words* I found



myself pondering on the idea that great literature is inevitably about love, preferably tragic love, and I realised I didn't agree with that idea. Is 'Anthony and Cleopatra' a better play than 'Hamlet'? The most dazzling bits in *Ulysses* aren't to do with the interplay between Mr and Mrs Bloom but when Joyce becomes drunk on words. It seems to me that great literature can be *about* anything but it has a fundamental requirement: that the writer be in love with language.

It was Peter Bowler's entry in *The Superior Person* for the Abecedarian insult—'Sir, you are an apogenous, bovaristic, coprolalial, dasypygal, excerebrose, facinorous, gnathonic, hircine, ithyphallic, jumentous, kyphotic, labrose, mephitic, napiform, oligophrenial, papuliferous, quisquilian, ventripotent, wlatsome, xylocephalous, yirning, zoophyte.' Translation: 'Sir, you are an impotent, conceited, obscene, hairy-buttocked, brainless, wicked, toadying, goatish, indecent, stable-smelling, hunch-backed, thick-lipped, stinking, turnip-shaped, feeble-minded, pimply, trashy, repellent, smarmy, foul-mouthed, greasy, gluttonous, loathsome, wooden-headed, whining, extremely low form of animal life'—which set me thinking, not about insults, but about the way we teach children language. As soon as they've got some basic English we start to confine them. How to spell it, how to put it in sentences, how to write it in straight lines, what a verb is ... But surely we've got it topsy-turvy? Should we not intoxicate our children with the marvellous richness and potential of language before we bring out the strait-jacket?

And there is one other awkward idea which naturally pops up and demands an answer. Much that is called great literature doesn't pass this test. Ernest Hemingway for example. Was he in love with language or did he see words more in the way that a bullfighter sees all his nasty little tools-of-the-trade ... as the means to an end?

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There is another kind of love I think writers need: the love of writing. I know there are always going to be agonising moments when the mind goes blank or a word you want continues to cower in its burrow and refuse to come forth, moments when you find something too depressing, boring, sad, pedantic, or confusing to go on with. But I would always rather buy a book which has been a labour of love than a book that was written to make money or those books where the authors moan and groan and you feel you should offer sympathy that they put themselves through such agony to produce something for you to read ...

I was thinking about this when I came upon the autobiography of Brazilian woman Carolina Maria de Jesus. She was a single mother living in the slums of São Paulo who longed to write. Her paper was the little scraps she found as she collected saleable rubbish round the streets to make enough to keep herself and her children in a one-room hovel. She began writing a diary of her life and it was her joy and ultimately her way out of poverty and powerlessness.

'When I got home I was starving. A cat came around meowing. I looked at him and thought: I never ate cat, but if he were in a pan, covered with onions and tomatoes, I swear I'd eat him. Hunger is the worst thing in the world.' ... 'I didn't sleep because I went to bed hungry. And he who lies down with hunger doesn't sleep.' ... 'In the morning the priest came to say Mass. Yesterday he came in the church car and told the favelados that they must have children. I thought: why is it that the poor have to have children — is it that the children of the poor have to be workers? In my humble opinion who should have children are the rich, who could give brick houses to their children. And they could eat what they wanted.' ... 'I have now observed our politicians ... What I saw there made me gnash my teeth. I saw the poor go out crying. The tears of the poor stir the poets. They don't move the poets of the living room but they do move the poet of the garbage dump, this idealist of the favela, a spectator who sees and notes the tragedies that the politicians inflict on the people.' ... 'Today I'm sad. God should have given a happy soul to this poetess.' ... 'The evening in a favela is bitter. All the children know what the men are doing ... with the women.' ... 'Prostitution is the moral defeat of a woman.' ... 'The people don't know how to fight back. They should go to the Ibirapuera Palace (the mayor's office) and the State Assembly to give a kick to these shamefaced

politicians who don't know how to run the country.' ... 'The voice of the poor has no poetry.'

But in with her powerful indictment of the lives imposed on the poor is her own belief that writing gave her moments of magic. 'Poems, novels, plays, anything and everything, for when I was writing I was in a golden palace, with crystal windows and silver chandeliers. My dress was finest satin and diamonds sat shining in my black hair. Then I put away my book and the smells came in through the rotting walls and rats ran over my feet. My satin turned to rags and the only things shining in my hair were lice.' But, like Cinderella, she came through the sad times and her diary made her famous.

So am I trying to give an insight into love? I'm not sure. But I can say two things, I think. Love can never be static, it can't be possessed and kept and held; it always has to be stepping out into the unknown, or it fades and dies like old bouquets. And love is a creative process. Sometimes there is a sense of satisfaction, even of new beginnings, in destruction. But love is about growth. It may seem banal but poets are right to link it to spring and birdsong and blossom and hope ...

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- February 18<sup>th</sup> : Toni Morrison  
February 19<sup>th</sup> : Carson McCullers  
                  Sven Hedin  
February 20<sup>th</sup> : Mary Durack  
                  Voltaire  
February 21<sup>st</sup> : John Rawls  
                  W. H. Auden  
                  Anne (McVicar) Grant  
February 22<sup>nd</sup> : Sean O'Faoláin  
February 23<sup>rd</sup> : Samuel Pepys  
February 24<sup>th</sup> : David Williamson  
February 25<sup>th</sup> : Anthony Burgess  
February 26<sup>th</sup> : Gabrielle Lord  
                  Victor Hugo  
February 27<sup>th</sup> : James Farrell  
                  Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
February 28<sup>th</sup> : Robin Klein  
                  Stephen Spender  
Kalavala Day in Finland to remember their national epic ...  
February 29<sup>th</sup> : Howard Nemerov  
March 1<sup>st</sup> : Robert Lowell  
March 2<sup>nd</sup> : Sholom Aleichim  
                  Dr Seuss  
March 3<sup>rd</sup> : Edward Thomas  
March 4<sup>th</sup> : Alan Sillitoe  
March 5<sup>th</sup> : Mem Fox  
                  Edward Dyson  
March 6<sup>th</sup> : Gabriel García Márquez  
                  Cyrano de Bergerac  
                  Elizabeth Barrett Browning  
March 7<sup>th</sup> : Thomas Masaryk

March 8<sup>th</sup>: Kenneth Grahame  
March 9<sup>th</sup>: Mickey Spillane  
March 10<sup>th</sup>: Henry Watson Fowler  
March 11<sup>th</sup>: Rupert Murdoch  
March 12<sup>th</sup>: Jack Kerouac  
                  Bishop George Berkeley

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‘If we reflect that it took the combined efforts of England, Ireland, and Scotland to produce the great triumvirate of British empiricism—Locke, Berkeley, and Hume—then we may also be grateful, for the sake of variety, that the national traits of each group emerge in the philosophers themselves. Certainly the Irishman George Berkeley (1685?-1753) exhibits its qualities which we commonly associate with the Irish: a capacity for poetry and the poetic, a sweeping and sometimes fanciful imagination, and a boldness to plunge into a position that, at first glimpse, might seem utter paradox. On the other side of the coin, he had very acute critical powers. He wrote an important work on Newton’s calculus, making some very sharp criticisms of its mathematical concepts that were not to be adequately dealt with until the mathematicians of the nineteenth century. It was these critical and dialectical powers that he was to turn on Locke.

‘But before we come to the dialectical detail of his arguments, perhaps we should retain for a moment the poetic impact of his thought, for philosophy becomes impoverished without that impact. The poet Yeats, with the fervor that perhaps only one Irishman can command in saluting another, writes:

And God-appointed Berkeley that proved  
    all things a dream,  
That this pragmatism, preposterous, pig of a world,  
Its farrow that so solid seem  
Must vanish on the instant  
If the mind but change its theme.

‘If we choose to be literal, Yeats is mistaken here: Berkeley does not prove all things a dream—far from it. No matter; Yeats’s beautiful and impassioned lines register the spiritual impact of Berkeley: He is, above all, at least in the acceptance of the general reader, the philosopher of mind, and of the power of mind over matter. The phrase “the power of mind over matter” may seem too vague to some technical philosophers, but it is readily understood and indeed charged with meaning for ordinary people; and philosophy loses much of its vitality if it loses contact with the life of the people. The power of mind over matter! The question of freedom is compressed into that phrase. For if our mind (however you analyze the mind) does not have power at some point over matter and the force of matter, then we are not free. Or consider the emergence of mind within the course of evolution: Mind may be an accidental freak appearing arbitrarily within the world of matter. But suppose the passage from matter to mind is indicative of some significant trend in its nature. Then perhaps there is some meaning to this world, and perhaps even a God. Thus the great issues of human freedom and God are implicated with the question of the rival claims of mind and matter. And on this point there is no doubt where Berkeley stands.

‘Nevertheless, he does not reduce the actual world around us to a dream. On the contrary, he comes forward as its great defender, against Locke. The real world of our common experience contains trees, grass, singing birds; houses and other people; chairs and tables; etc., etc. In our daily life these are evidently and substantially there, and not at all “subjective” appearances of something else. It is Locke who would undermine their reality, and make it secondary to some underlying abstractions of physics. And here Berkeley turns Locke’s own empiricist weapons back upon their originator.

‘Locke had stripped the world of its colors, sounds, odors—the so-called secondary qualities. His argument had been that these qualities were obviously relative to the perceiver and the conditions of his perceiving, and therefore could not be objective. Color, for example, varies with the conditions of light, the eyes of the perceiver, and his distance from the object. Very well, then; if relativity is the great arguing point of Locke, why not give it back to him at full force? Are his precious primary qualities exempt from all reference to the perceiver? What, for example, is *the* shape of an object but a series of perspectives we have of it? And motion and rest, which Locke as a good Newtonian had taken as absolute, are clearly relative to the movement of the perceiver. Here Berkeley introduces the principle of relativity in a bold and thoroughgoing form that was not to emerge again until Einstein in the twentieth century.

‘The motion or rest of material particles had been taken as absolute by Locke because there was the absolute space of Newton in which they moved or remained at rest. And here Berkeley performs one of his most audacious acts of analysis, as he seeks to pull down one of the sacred pillars of the Newtonian world. Space—the absolute space of Newton, container of all that is—is not given as a reality in and of itself. It is built up as a high-level abstraction from our perceptions of touch and vision. It is derived from experience; it is not the container of experience. We invert the proper order by taking the abstraction as a concrete reality.

‘In sum, the whole world of matter, which Locke would make the substratum, or underlying reality, of the world of our common experience, is in fact a high-level intellectual construction. It is a case of misplaced concreteness, as the philosopher A.N. Whitehead in our century has called it: the abstract concepts of physics are taken as ultimately concrete in place of the ordinary world of common experience. Berkeley stands with this ordinary world, and he consistently reassures his ordinary reader that he is on his side against the materialism of sophisticated philosophers.

‘Yet there is a difference, for Berkeley points out that this common world of ours is everywhere permeated by mind, and this is an aspect the ordinary citizen is not usually aware of or chooses to forget. There is no entity—nothing at all—that we can speak of as existing in and of itself apart from some perspective or structure of the mind that grasps it. This is a principle that Immanuel Kant will later take over and build upon; and the triumph of Berkeley’s analysis is to have established this principle against materialism. We cannot escape from mind, not even, as in our day, by fleeing to the computer.

‘Indeed, the computer itself bears witness to the primacy of the human mind through the whole course of its operations. ... In the first place, the computer itself is a tool, a machine, that has been created by the human mind. We may yet design computers that build other computers—as we inhabit more and more a world of robots—but the initial push in the whole process must come from a human mind that plans the whole. But beyond its sheer existence, in its most banal operations the computer bears witness to the presence of mind in the programming of its operations. The machine is perfectly useless in the hands of someone who does not know how to program it. A program is an intelligent design (that is, design initiated by a human intelligence) in accordance with which the machine operates significantly. We speak of “hard facts,” and the computer is thought to store these up for us and deal them out when they are needed. But whether the so-called hard facts are significant or relevant depends on some intelligent perspective from which they are organized. We come back always to the presence of mind in the whole process.

‘Though Berkeley claims persistently that he is speaking in defence of our common, everyday experience, there nevertheless seems to be a snag for the ordinary person when Berkeley encapsulates his whole position in the famous slogan: “*Esse est percipi*, to be is to be perceived.” Do objects, then, cease to exist when they are not perceived? When I walk out of this room, do the chairs and tables I am now perceiving go out of existence? Berkeley keeps to his slogan but introduces God as the perceiver who is always there to maintain the constant existence of objects when human perceivers vanish. Here God would seem an unnecessary intrusion into an otherwise cogent analysis of sense perception.

‘How can Berkeley, the arch-empiricist, more critically empirical about our sense

perceptions than Locke, speak so directly about the mind of God? Or about mind at all? He had fired his dialectical buckshot at Locke's notion of matter as being ungrounded in our ordinary sensuous perceptions. But mind, like matter, is not given in sensuous experience; how, then, in all consistency, can he introduce the notion of mind as meaningful? Because, he answers, we have a direct awareness or intuition of our own minds: When we are conscious of anything, we are also conscious that we are conscious. And by analogy, of finite with infinite, we may speak of God as infinite mind. This "notion" of God, though dimly and imperfectly grasped, will nevertheless not be meaningless like Locke's concept of matter, which runs roughshod over the ordinary facts of perception.'

*Death of the Soul: From Descartes to the Computer*, by William Barrett.

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Sir Ifor Evans wrote, "George Berkeley (1685-1753), like Mandeville, saw life as corrupt, but he approached the problem, not with irony, but with a generous and idealistic desire for reform, which led him to attempt a campaign among the settlers and the natives in North America. While thus concerned with the practical side of life, he brought to the problems of philosophy one of the most acute minds of the age. In a series of volumes beginning with *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), he expounded in a clear prose the theory that the material world does not exist, and that human knowledge is based on the ideas within the mind. While materialism was increasing man's attachment to the concrete world, Berkeley reasserted an idealism which, though closely argued, has in it strong elements of mysticism."

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Amalia Elguera introducing *The Tragic Sense of Life* by Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno writes, "The contemplatives wondered whether man, fallen in nature and limited in mind, was capable of God (*capax Dei*). Unamuno wonders whether man, deprived of the idea of God, remains capable of man. The true question posed by *The Tragic Sense* is the following. If man is incapable of God *only* because God does not exist, does this not imply an appalling frustration for the human creature? It means that man has created God, yet cannot enjoy the fruits of his supreme creation. For "the man of flesh and bone," therefore, the religious problem is not one of believing or disbelieving in God, but of wanting God to exist.

"Thus formulated, the problem offends believers and unbelievers alike. This double offence is precisely Unamuno's purpose, scrupulously maintained throughout his vast *oeuvre*. He despises the complacency and anti-Christian delectation of materialists fallen "from the superstition of a childish and ludicrous hell and heaven into the superstition of a vulgar earth." Behind much of Unamuno's anti-rationalism there lurks this dark suspicion: that modern man, forbidden by reason to think of God, may surrender his prerogative to dream Him, and so impair human creativeness. If God is "that than which no greater can be thought," then He is also that than which no greater can be felt: should man abdicate the right to this experience, modern sensibility would shrink pitifully compared to that of former times. In a sense, Unamuno believes it has already been so diminished; hence his proposal that Spanish literature of the XX century should strive to bring about "the resurrection of God."

Unamuno himself wrote, "It is the furious longing to give finality to the Universe, to make it conscious and personal, that has brought us to believe in God, to wish that God may exist, to create God, in a word. To create Him, yes! This saying ought not to scandalize even the most devout theist. For to believe in God is, in a certain sense, to create Him, although He first creates us. It is He who in us is continually creating Himself.

"We have created God in order to save the Universe from nothingness, for all that is not consciousness and eternal consciousness, conscious of its eternity and eternally conscious, is nothing more than appearance. There is nothing truly real save that which feels, suffers, pities, loves, and desires, save consciousness; there is nothing substantial but consciousness. And we need God in order to save consciousness; not in order to know the why and how of it, but in order to feel the wherefore of it. Love is a contradiction if there is no God."

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‘The idea that our experience of reality—all our experiences, for that matter—are only “secondhand” depictions of what may or may not be objectively real, raises some profound questions about the most basic truths of human existence and the neurological nature of spiritual experience. For example, our experiment with Tibetan meditators and Franciscan nuns showed that the events they considered spiritual, were, in fact, associated with observable neurological activity. In a reductionist sense, this could support the argument that religious experience is only imagined neurologically, that God is physically “all in your mind.” But a full understanding of the way in which the brain and mind assemble and experience reality suggests a very different view.

‘Imagine, for instance, that you are the subject of a brain imaging study. As part of this study, you have been asked to eat a generous slice of homemade apple pie. As you enjoy the pie, the brain scans capture images of the neurological activity in the various processing areas of the brain where input from your senses is being turned into the specific neural perceptions that add up to the experience of eating the pie: olfactory areas register the delightful aroma of apples and cinnamon, visual areas perceive the sight of the golden brown crust, centers of touch perceive the complex mix of crunchy and gooey textures, and the rich, sweet, satisfying flavors are processed in the areas responsible for taste. The SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography) brain scan would show all this activity in the same way that it revealed brain activity of the Buddhists and the nuns, as blotches of bright colors on the scanner’s computer screen. In a literal sense, the experience of eating the pie is all in your mind, but that doesn’t mean the pie is not real, or that it is not delicious.

‘Similarly, tracing spiritual experience to neurological behavior does not disprove its realness. If God does exist, for example, and if He appeared to you in some incarnation, you would have no way of experiencing His presence, except as part of a neurologically generated rendition of reality. You would need auditory processing to hear His voice, visual processing to see His face, and cognitive processing to make sense of His message. Even if He spoke to you mystically, without words, you would need the cognitive functions to comprehend His meaning, and input from the brain’s emotional centers to fill you with rapture and awe. Neurology makes it clear: There’s no other way for God to get into your head except through the brain’s neural pathways.

‘Correspondingly, God cannot exist as a concept or as reality anyplace else but in your mind. In this sense, both spiritual experiences and experiences of a more ordinary material nature are made real to the mind in the very same way—through the processing powers of the brain and the cognitive functions of the mind. Whatever the ultimate nature of spiritual experience might be—whether it is in fact a perception of an actual spiritual reality, or merely an interpretation of sheer neurological function—all that is meaningful in human spirituality happens in the mind. In other words, the mind is mystical by default.’ ...

‘The universe certainly is strange, but to the average rationally minded individual, nothing is stranger, no concept can be more bizarre and inexplicable, than the claims of the mystics that another plane of being exists that is literally more real than the reality of the material universe. The transcendent reality they describe, in fact, would absorb the material world, along with the subjective self that perceives it, into the spiritual All, or the mystical Nothing, depending upon your metaphysical point of view.’

(*Why God Won’t Go Away*, by Newberg, D’Aquili, and Rause)

So if the size and shape and solidity of a table is perceived by the brain in a series of electro-chemical blips—and the mystical and religious experiences people continue to have are also perceived by the brain as a series of electro-chemical blips can we say that one is real and the other not?

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In *The Holographic Universe* Michael Talbot dwells on: The twin developments: that the mind appears to comprehend and store and ‘remember’ the world as a hologram; that quanta particles appear to cease to exist as matter when we cease to observe them and become, instead, waves. So perhaps Berkeley was right to introduce God into the equation; things continue to exist

when we cease to observe them simply because they are a projection of God's mind. The question that so many physicists seem to ask: Can we know the Mind of God? is tied into this sense that everything exists and yet may only exist as a projection and therefore doesn't exist; yet it offers a curious kind of comfort and resolution. Of course we can hope to know the Mind of God because we live inside that Mind; we are an integral part of the Mind of God. So fascinating! Did Berkeley glimpse a different way of perceiving the universe simply because his whole focus *was* God?

Hungarian physicist and mathematician, John von Neumann, says the mind can store 280,000,000,000,000,000,000 'bits of information'; I'm not sure what constitutes a 'bit' but the question which continues to intrigue is how the brain stores everything; everything you've ever seen, heard, smelled, felt, learned ... He says, "Similarly, he (David Bohm) believes that dividing the universe up into living and nonliving things also has no meaning. Animate and inanimate matter are inseparably interwoven, and life, too, is enfolded throughout the totality of the universe. Even a rock is in some way alive, says Bohm, for life and intelligence are present not only in all of matter, but in "energy," "space," "time," "the fabric of the entire universe," and everything else we abstract out of the holomovement and mistakenly view as separate things.

"The idea that consciousness and life (and indeed all things) are ensembles enfolded throughout the universe has an equally dazzling flip side. Just as every portion of a hologram contains the image of the whole, every portion of the universe enfolds the whole. This means that if we knew how to access it we could find the Andromeda galaxy in the thumbnail of our left hand. We could also find Cleopatra meeting Caesar for the first time, for in principle the whole past and implications for the whole future are also enfolded in each small region of space and time. Every cell in our body enfolds the entire cosmos. So does every leaf, every raindrop, and every dust mote, which gives new meaning to William Blake's famous poem:

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour.*

"One thing that we do know is that in a holographic universe, a universe in which separateness ceases to exist and the innermost processes of the psyche can spill over and become as much a part of the objective landscape as the flowers and the trees, reality itself becomes little more than a mass shared dream. In the higher dimensions of existence, these dreamlike aspects become even more apparent, and indeed numerous traditions have commented on this fact. The Tibetan Book of the Dead repeatedly stresses the dreamlike nature of the afterlife realm, and this is also, of course, why the Australian aborigines refer to it as the dreamtime. Once we accept this notion, that reality at all levels is omnijjective and has the same ontological status as a dream, the question becomes, Whose dream is it?

"Of the religious and mythological traditions that address this question, most give the same answer, It is the dream of a single divine intelligence, of God. The Hindu Vedas and yogic texts assert again and again that the universe is God's dream. In Christianity the sentiment is summed up in the oft repeated saying, we are all thoughts in the mind of God, or as the poet Keats put it, we are all part of God's "long immortal dream."

"But are we being dreamed by a single divine intelligence, by God, or are we being dreamed by the collective consciousness of all things—by all the electrons, Z particles, butterflies, neutron stars, sea cucumbers, human and nonhuman intelligences in the universe? Here again we collide headlong into the bars of our own conceptual limitations, for in a holographic universe this question is meaningless. We cannot ask if the part is creating the whole, or the whole is creating the part because *the part is the whole*. So whether we call the collective consciousness of all things "God," or simply "the consciousness of all things," it doesn't change the situation. The universe is sustained by an act of such stupendous and ineffable creativity that it simply cannot be reduced to such terms. Again it is a self-reference cosmology. Or as the Kalahari Bushmen so eloquently put it, "The dream is dreaming itself." "

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Writing in the twelfth century, Joachim da Fiore, the master of St. Francis of Assisi, had already foreseen a time when sacraments and dogmas would no longer serve Christian education. He spoke of an era of fear under the Father, an era of discipline under the Son and a future era of friends under the freedom of the Holy Ghost “L’epoca degli amici”.

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“What it fails to address is the much greater mystery of ‘Why?’ or, more specifically, ‘Why then?’ At one given moment a person is alive, functioning, however weakly, and the next they are dead, gone. The switch has been thrown and whatever was the spark that caused the form to live is suddenly there no more. Something has departed, something tangible but without form, something real yet ethereal.

Life has a genuine presence that you can only really feel as it moves from a body. That is the sole time it shows itself, through its sudden absence. Though you cannot touch it, see it, or hear it, and while it is not truly tactile, life is nonetheless something one *can* feel, like electricity.

It is also true that one does not have to be physically close to sense the microsecond when it moves on. It is possible to perceive its passing at a considerable distance.

Whether the body physically moves or not, whether or not you can see a man’s chest rise and fall as he struggles to breathe and then stops, whether or not you can see his eyes and the pupils dilating and then becoming fixed in that empty stare, the moment of the passing of life, the actual instant in which death replaces life is unmistakable.

... Death, the moment when a person’s life force leaves them, is not signaled with a long exhalation of breath or a sudden limpness of posture. It is something else. The body may still be moving, may seem still to be breathing, to be alive. But suddenly, in a moment, before any death rattle or convulsion, something vital is missing, it’s just not there. The spark has gone.

You can tell from 100 metres. Some people have felt it from a continent away.

From a clinical view, the moment of passing, the choice of the particular portion of time to die, is fascinating. At any one instant a patient is rarely noticeably any sicker or weaker than a second earlier. In the previous moment they were alive, only just, perhaps, but nevertheless able to function. Then, in the next, they are dead.

All I get is what is left. I can look at the evidence and establish what it was that caused the body to finally stop functioning. But I have absolutely no idea why it stopped functioning at that particular second, why one moment it could survive and the next it could not. Who turned off the switch?”

(*Cause of Death, Memoirs of a Home Office Pathologist*, by Dr Geoffrey Garrett and Andrew Nott)

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“As quantum physics has opened the windows on to unimaginable new landscapes where science and mysticism meet, spiritual healing has begun to advance on the wave of growing understanding that we are dealing with finer and subtler forms of energy than we ever thought possible. Areas where matter and energy become interchangeable, where consciousness and body come together, where all the mechanical ways in which we have described ourselves for far too long begin to seem terribly crude.

“The basic law of life is motion — radiant, vibrant energy — and science is at last beginning to discover what mystics have always known, that matter itself is made up of this energy. That beyond molecules, atoms, protons, neutrons and electrons there are components that can no longer be characterized as matter but as waves or particles. In other words, all matter however dense it may appear can be seen as a constant dance of energy and although our bodies may appear to be solid and opaque, at the most fundamental level, we are made up of pure energy. This ‘too, too solid flesh’ of ours is not really solid at all”, or so says Allegra Taylor in *Healing Hands*, reminding us that it may well be the healing profession which carries humanity forward into new understandings, rather than mathematicians, philosophers, physicists and other academics remote from the public in their laboratories and ivory towers ...



When I was looking for my gr-grandfather's family (he arrived in Australia in early 1868) I found that his mother was Catherine Cecilia Jephson and her gr-grandfather was the Ven. John Jephson, Archdeacon of Cloyne, at the time that Bishop Berkeley illumined the diocese there. I love the thought that he might have listened to the Bishop expounding his philosophy but I cannot help wondering how good the Bishop was in carrying out his normal duties or was his mind usually elsewhere, leaving his archdeacon to do much of his more prosaic work?

I have struggled to get my mind around Berkeley's writings and I found this description in the *History of Philosophy* by C. C. J. Webb helpful. "Of this "denial of the existence of matter," for which Berkeley became famous, we are told by Boswell that Dr. Johnson said, "striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, 'I refute it thus!'" This, however, showed a misunderstanding of Berkeley, who intended to deny nothing to which the senses bear witness, but only the existence of something imperceptible by the senses, underlying what we actually perceive.

"In saying that what we perceive with our senses is no other than the real object and not something else which represents it, Berkeley agrees with common sense; but when he goes on to pronounce that the very being of everything that is so perceived lies in being perceived, we are at once disposed to ask: What, then, becomes of it when it is not being perceived? Berkeley's reply would be that, if it is not being perceived by any conscious being or (as he says) spirit, it cannot exist, for, if we ask ourselves what we really mean by its existence, we shall always find that we mean its existence as an object of perception; and, if we imagine it existing unperceived, we are in truth only imagining it perceived without framing an idea of the person perceiving it. Such an idea, which we frame at will, is what we call an idea of imagination: but there are many ideas which are not so framed at will, which are "more strong, lively, and distinct" than these, "and which have a steadiness, order and coherence, and are not excited at random, as those which are the effects of human wills often are, but in a regular train or series." These we call "ideas of sense."

"As we cannot ourselves produce such at will in ourselves (and still less in other beings like ourselves), and as the supposition of an unthinking or unperceiving "material substance" has been found to be unintelligible, we can only attribute their production to a thinking being or Spirit more powerful than ourselves, whose wisdom and benevolence is sufficiently proved by the "admirable connexion" of these ideas according to what we call the laws of nature. We cannot, indeed, discover any necessity in this connexion, "without which we should all be in uncertainty and confusion, and a grown man no more know how to manage himself in the affairs of life than an infant just born." It is only by experience that we learn what it is; and it is only by a convenient looseness of language that we describe it by calling one idea the cause of another—fire, for example, of warmth. An idea is nothing but a perception; it is meaningless to attribute to it power or activity. The only active beings we have any reason to suppose exist are *spirits*. We are spirits, and in a measure active, as our power of forming ideas of imagination shows; and it is reasonable to suppose ideas of sense produced in us by a being of like but higher nature. These ideas of sense (which constitute what we call the external world) may thus be regarded as words of a "divine language" by which this greater Spirit communicates with ourselves.

"Without stopping to inquire whether there may not be some weak places in this reasoning, we must now point out that to Berkeley the principle of Locke that all our knowledge of bodies comes through sensation was welcome because, as we have seen, he held that, when more consistently worked out than it had been by Locke himself, it removed all ground for belief in a material substance, existing on its own account in independence of a mind perceiving it. If, however, we have no ground for such a belief, we shall not attribute the order and system which we observe in our experience to any necessary connexion between the parts or movements of such a substance, but rather to the only principle of order whereof we have any direct knowledge, namely, the will of an intelligent being. The tendency, which Berkeley observed prevalent in his day, to dispense with a God or at least, with Spinoza, to conceive his nature as capable of being

expressed in terms of a material system, could thus be shown not only to be no necessary inference from the fashionable philosophy of Locke (who, indeed, had not drawn it himself), but to be actually inconsistent with that philosophy.”

But the senses by which the mind perceives the word as material seem impossible to deny. I tried to work out a scenario in which all the senses are totally denied and could not achieve an adequate one. No perfect blindness, no total silence, no absence of temperature, no sense in which the body is totally unable to feel itself and the world around it ...

The body cannot *not* perceive the world around it. It is only in death where the soul is separated from its physical senses that it also separates from its perception of a material world and therefore its perception of the material existence of that world. In effect the body perceives the existence of a material world through its senses. And the soul perceives the world of the spirit.

And as I was struggling to imagine a world in which I could not sense and perceive I could see very clearly that our minds depend for their sense of being conscious and therefore perceiving on actions, on doing; even if I do not ask my body to run or jump but just allow it to slump in a chair the me which thinks, remembers, imagines, senses, yawns, is constantly in the process of *doing*. And when I try to wipe away every sense of that *doing*, no matter how meagre, which is essential to the understanding both of myself as a physical and mental being and of the world around this me, I come to the knowledge that the perfect cessation of consciousness is nothingness. Yet, modern neurological studies are suggesting that even in this state a part of the brain remains active yet separate from those parts dealing with the involuntary workings of the body. This has given rise to the idea that the mind itself is ‘hard-wired’ to connect with the Mind of God. We can perceive, sense, marvel, wonder, at God through Creation as perceived by our senses. But we can only *know* God by the cessation of every human sense.

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Bishop Berkeley may be remembered for his philosophical writings but he was known to children of his era for a far more unpleasant reason: his promotion of tar-water as a cure-all and preventative. He wrote about it in ‘Further Thoughts on Tar-Water’, he talked about it, he drank it. “There was, pre-eminently, tar-water, whose virtues were extravagantly broadcast by the philosopher and prelate Dr George Berkeley, for several years Bishop of Cloyne. ‘It is impossible to write a letter now without tincturing the ink with tar-water,’ the Archbishop of York was assured in 1744. ‘This is the common topic of discourse both among the rich and poor, high and low, and the Bishop of Cloyne has made it as fashionable as going to Vauxhall or Ranelagh’ ”, Christopher Hibbert writes in *The English* but this gives no hint of its horror as the castor-oil of its time. Emily Lawless in her biography of Maria Edgeworth says, “That detestable legacy of an illustrious prelate—“Bishop Berkeley’s tar-water”—was still at that date pursuing its dreadful career, and carrying tears and misery into innumerable families. Here was a chance for a disciplinarian! “Mr. Day thought that the tar-water would be of use to Maria’s inflamed eyes,” the polite Mrs. Edgeworth relates, and accordingly “he used to bring a large tumbler full of it to her every morning.” Evidently the specific was not intended to be applied to her eyes, but quite otherwise, for we are expressly told that she dreaded to hear his “Now, Miss Maria, drink this!” although her stepmother is again good enough to remark, that “in spite of his stern voice, there was something of pity in his countenance which always induced her to swallow it.”

“Any reader of these lines who is old enough to remember the days of unmitigated dosing—those days when, as the author of *The Water Babies* truly says, an infant’s inside was regarded as much the same thing as that of a Scotch grenadier—will perhaps kindly pause for a moment, and meditate sympathetically upon this picture. Instinctively there rises before the mind’s eye the vision of some cold winter’s morning, and of a shivering small person waking up in the rawness of an as yet unwarmed nursery, or similar dormitory. Before the eyes of that small person there presently enters an executioner in *déshabille*, carrying a cup, which cup is—abhorrent vision!—being slowly stirred by a spoon, to which loathly red or black particles adhere! If to this once too familiar picture the reader will kindly add one crowning terror more, that of the author of *Sandford and Merton*, with his oft-described long black locks floating behind him, the

detestable cup in his hands, and clad presumably in a quite ungarnished dressing-gown; such a reader will, I think, agree with me that the cup—too literally cup—of Maria Edgeworth’s youthful troubles must now and then have been felt to fairly brim over!”

Another earnest advocate of tar-water was the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, who wrote in his book *Primitive Physick*, “Drink half a pint of Tar-water, morning and evening”; he recommended it for rheumatism and longevity. He was also a firm advocate of cold water bathing and drinking lots of cold water but he also suggested such esoteric things as cobweb pills for malaria. His book went through twenty-five editions so people must have found it useful. In parts.

It conjures up an awful image of that black sticky stuff that goes on to our roads being diluted and fed to babies. But what exactly was tar water? I came upon an interesting snippet about it in Barbara Griggs’ *New Green Pharmacy* as she looks at the impact of John Wesley’s expertise as a medical man. Although he is mainly remembered for Methodism he also wrote the very influential *Primitive Physic, or An Easy and Natural Way of Curing Most Diseases* which ran through 23 editions before he died and was much sought after by people in the rising industrial towns of England who could not afford to pay for medical care. “A favourite remedy of Wesley’s was tar water, made from pine resin. Tar water was popularized in Europe by Bishop Berkeley, the philosopher and amateur doctor, who first heard of this remedy in Rhode Island. North American Indians used pine resin in a variety of ways — among others, as a salve for wounds, boils and ulcers; in decoction for chest ailments; and as a kind of medicinal chewing gum for upset stomachs. Bishop Berkeley adopted the remedy with enthusiasm, and came back deeply convinced of its virtues. He made his version by mixing a gallon of cold water with a quart of the sticky resin, letting it stand for three days, then pouring off the clear “Tar Water”. The Bishop recommended this remedy so whole-heartedly, and for such an astonishing variety of diseases that its therapeutic virtues were as widely and energetically debated in the 1740s as are those of acupuncture or aromatherapy today.”

Berkeley came up with the idea of a controlled clinical trial. Something unheard of for those days. Two hospitals. Two groups of patients identically fed and lodged. But one group to be provided only with ‘a tub of tar-water and an old woman; the other hospital, what attendance and drugs you please.’ The doctors refused. They could not risk the old woman and her tar water proving more useful than their regular bleedings, blisterings, and purges.

Pine resin may have tasted abominable but it doesn’t have the same awful connotations as tar—and certainly Bishop Berkeley (69), John Wesley (88), and Maria Edgeworth (82) lived long and interesting lives.

\* \* \* \* \*

March 13<sup>th</sup>: Hugh Walpole  
March 14<sup>th</sup>: Maxim Gorki  
March 15<sup>th</sup>: John Barbeyrac  
March 16<sup>th</sup>: Sully Prudhomme  
March 17<sup>th</sup>: Julien Cornell  
Kate Greenaway  
Roderic Quinn

\* \* \* \* \*

When I was a tiny bit of a girl  
In a country meeting-house  
Where I was expected to sit as still  
As a frightened little mouse,  
Perhaps I did not relish the feast  
Which the good old parson spread  
But I did enjoy my grandmother’s treat  
Of a fragrant Fennel head.

I'm a grandmother now, myself, you know,  
But the dainty blue-eyed girl,  
Who sits by my side in a city church  
With her feathers all in a curl,  
Will never know in her Greenaway gown  
Exactly the joy I knew,  
As I tasted the fresh, sweet 'Meetin' Seed'  
That in grandmother's garden grew.

Anon

Bryan Holme in *The Kate Greenaway Book* suggests that her work 'prompted Robert Louis Stevenson to write his *Child's Garden of Verses*. According to Graham Balfour, "Louis took the *Birthday Book* up one day, and saying, 'These are rather nice rhymes, and I don't think they would be very difficult to do,' proceeded to try his hand.'"

He compares her with Beatrix Potter, though she came first (1846-1901), 'In this and other respects parallels can be drawn between Kate Greenaway and the queen-to-be of nursery books, Beatrix Potter, whose *Peter Rabbit* first bounded into the limelight in 1902. Both ladies were English and of Victorian background; both wrote and illustrated books that were—and still are—adored throughout the world; neither ventured abroad; both names became household words among children everywhere, and yet, neither Kate Greenaway (who never married) nor Beatrix Potter (who married late) had children of her own. One difference between the two was that Kate Greenaway drew children beautifully, while Beatrix Potter could hardly draw people at all, and, conversely, that Miss Potter drew animals beautifully, while Miss Greenaway had such trouble with them that she felt it the greatest triumph to manage even the likeness of a rat, quantities of which creatures she had to send scurrying across the pages of *The Pied Piper* or *L'Homme à la Flute*, which her French publisher, Hachette & Cie, called his runaway best seller.'

Even so, I wouldn't mind being able to do Potter's children and Greenaway's rats! Though I must admit that some of her dogs could be mistaken for lambs but she might have been using large unshaven poodles as her models. I think the more important difference between them is that Potter was basically a storyteller—we remember her characters such as Peter Rabbit, Jemima Puddleduck, and Samuel Whiskers better than we remember each illustration—whereas Greenaway is remembered for her idealised pictures of Victorian childhood rather than her verse. She has been accused of creating an unreal and sentimental picture of children's lives, and it is true that her children are usually clean, well-dressed, and attractive, but I still think she did something wonderful for children. Most of her illustrations are of children outside *playing* in a world where adults rarely intrude and in which their happiness in their own games and relationships shines through. For Victorian children, hedged in on every side by parents, relatives, governesses, schoolmasters, employers, nannies, clergy, and other authority figures, these idealised little scenes left a world of restrictions and Thou Shalt Nots behind. It is no wonder that her illustrations were so popular.

She was born in 1846, the daughter of a wood engraver, and went to the Slade School of Art to train; equally important to her development was the two years she spent on a Nottingham farm as a child. Although she lived most of her life in London and had her studio there the images of country life permeate all her work. She found work as an artist with the *Illustrated London News*, as well as doing cards, calendars, other people's children's stories, the covers for the *Girls' Own Annual*, and eventually her own books. 'Kate Greenaway was earning a modest living designing Christmas cards as well as illustrating books for such publishers as Frederick Warne until Evans produced her collection of verses and pictures *Under the Window* (1879), which eventually sold 70,000 copies for Routledge. Further successes followed, notably an edition of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* in 1888. Although Kate Greenaway has been criticised for her over-idealised pictures of children and her inadequate figure-drawing, John Ruskin was a great admirer of her work, and her popularity continues to

inspire reprints.’ From *Children’s Literature; An Illustrated History* ed. Peter Hunt.

She was influenced by fashions in art, not least the Pre-Raphaelite Movement and the craze for Japonalia, but in turn she set her own fashion. Her careful designs, her use of bold outlines and soft colours, her stylised use of nature and the sense of capturing people and freezing them in that moment, her influence on fashions for children (which became known as the Greenawisme style in France), the sense of quiet happiness which pervades her work, all contributed to her popularity. But perhaps she also deserves to be remembered as a woman who made her own living by her own talent and hard work in an era when women’s abilities were rarely nurtured and promoted. And she did so with grace, style, and dignity.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘When *The Wind in the Willows* was first published, it appeared without illustrations; its publishers, Methuen, had approached the greatest illustrator of the day, Arthur Rackham, but he was ‘too busy illustrating the *Midsummer Night’s Dream*’ and refused. He later came to regret his decision, and in 1940 provided a set of illustrations, but by that time Ernest Shepard’s dreamier and less precise line drawings were well known and loved.’

‘Rackham was a great original: for power and vitality of line, combined with an exact sense of colour, his work remains unmatched. It combines the idealization of the Pre-Raphaelites and their careful observation of the natural world with an almost Gothic delight in the grotesque, the gnarled and twisted, and displays a delightful sense of humour.’ (from *Children’s Literature*, edited by Peter Hunt)

C. S. Lewis says of coming upon Rackham’s illustrated *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods* as a child, ‘I have seldom coveted anything as I coveted that book; and when I heard that there was a cheaper edition at fifteen shillings (though the sum was to me almost mythological) I knew I could never rest till it was mine.’

I remember we had a large copy of Frances Browne’s *Granny’s Wonderful Chair* at some stage of our young lives. It always gave me delicious shivers up the spine. But when I saw a paperback copy in the library one day and borrowed and re-read it it made very little impact on me. It must have been the illustrations that gave the stories that extra twist of mystery and muted apprehension. When I asked my mother what had happened to the book she said she wasn’t sure but she thought a cousin had it. But as soon as I started looking at some of Rackham’s illustrations I felt sure he had been the illustrator.

Despite the strangeness of his illustrations—the feeling that something lurks—his life was conventional enough. Whereas Frances Browne, called ‘the blind poetess of Donegal’, had a life that was truly a triumph over adversity. She was born in 1816 and became blind as an infant after an attack of smallpox. She was the seventh of twelve children in a poor Presbyterian family in the west of Ireland and her only education was her sisters reading to her but she still managed to become a writer. Her first poem was published in the *Irish Penny Journal* in 1840 and she went on to produce two collections of poetry, *The Star of Atteghei: The Vision of Schwartz* in 1844 from which comes this verse:

‘Words—words of love!—the ocean-pearl  
May slumber far and deep,  
Though tempests wake or breezes curl  
The wave that hides its sleep;  
So, deep in memory’s hidden cells,  
The winds of life pass o’er  
Those treasured words, whose music swells,  
Perchance, for us no more,—  
But, Memnon-like, its echoes fill  
The early-ruined temples, still’ (from ‘Words’)

and *Lyrics and Miscellaneous Poems* in 1848.

She eventually moved to London where she provided stories to the magazine *Leisure Hour* for 23 years as well as bringing out books of fairy tales, her best known being *Granny’s*

*Wonderful Chair* in 1857. When this was re-issued in 1904 Frances Hodgson Burnett said of the author 'To her was given the inward eye of imagination and the mind.' She wrote her autobiography in 1861.

The nineteenth century brought some truly great artists to the world of children's books. But I found myself sparing a thought for them at times. They were asked to illustrate some quality writing but I can't help wondering how they felt when they were handed a manuscript such as *Wee-Wee Stories for Wee-Wee Girls* or *Stories for Little Curly Locks* and asked to do the contents 'justice'.

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March 18<sup>th</sup> : Wilfred Owen  
March 19<sup>th</sup> : Tobias George Smollett  
March 20<sup>th</sup> : David Malouf  
March 21<sup>st</sup> : Thomas Shapcott  
March 22<sup>nd</sup> : Rosie Scott  
March 23<sup>rd</sup> : Joseph Quincy Adams  
March 24<sup>th</sup> : Olive Schreiner  
March 25<sup>th</sup> : Anne Brontë  
March 26<sup>th</sup> : Robert Frost  
                  A. E. Housman

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George Orwell in his essay *Inside the Whale* wrote, "When one says that a writer is fashionable one practically always means that he is admired by people under thirty. At the beginning of the period I am speaking of, the years during and immediately after the war, the writer who had the deepest hold upon the thinking young was almost certainly Housman. Among people who were adolescent in the years 1910-25, Housman had an influence which was enormous and is now not at all easy to understand. In 1920, when I was about seventeen, I probably knew the whole of the *Shropshire Lad* by heart. I wonder how much impression the *Shropshire Lad* makes at this moment on a boy of the same age and more or less the same cast of mind? No doubt he has heard of it and even glanced into it; it might strike him as cheaply clever—probably that would be about all, yet these are the poems that I and my contemporaries used to recite to ourselves, over and over, in a kind of ecstasy, just as earlier generations had recited Meredith's 'Love in a Valley', Swinburne's 'Garden of Proserpine', etc., etc.

With rue my heart is laden  
For golden friends I had,  
For many a roselipt maiden  
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping  
The lightfoot boys are laid;  
The roselipt girls are sleeping  
In fields where roses fade.

"It just tinkles. But it did not seem to tinkle in 1920. Why does the bubble always burst? To answer that question one has to take account of the *external* conditions that make certain writers popular at certain times. Housman's poems had not attracted much notice when they were first published. What was there in them that appealed so deeply to a single generation, the generation born round about 1900?

"In the first place, Housman is a 'country' poet. His poems are full of the charm of buried villages, the nostalgia of place-names, Clunton and Clunbury, Knighton, Ludlow, 'on Wenlock Edge', 'in summer time on Bredon', thatched roofs and the jingle of smithies, the wild jonquils

in the pastures, the 'blue, remembered hills'. War poems apart, English verse of the 1910-25 period is mostly 'country'. The reason no doubt was that the *rentier*-professional class was ceasing once and for all to have any real relationship with the soil;" so that the further people moved from their rural roots the more nostalgic they became for country themes and word-pictures.

He describes his poet as "Housman was Masefield with a dash of Theocritus" with his themes of "murder, suicide, unhappy love, early death", with "his implied sexual revolt and his personal grievance against God" ... "he stood for a kind of bitter, defiant paganism. The conviction that life is short and the gods are against you, which exactly fitted the prevailing mood of the young; and all in charming fragile verse that was composed almost entirely of words of one syllable."

This may explain why the next generation took Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' to their hearts with its sense of cynical world-weariness, pathos, failure, and an underlying longing for a glimpse of nature untrammelled.

But, curiously, Orwell writes, "Whether Housman ever had the same appeal for girls I doubt. In his poems the woman's point of view is not considered, she is merely the nymph, the siren, the treacherous half-human creature who leads you a little distance and then gives you the slip."

I first came upon mention of the *Shropshire Lad* in Dorothy Sayers' *Strong Poison*; you may remember where Wimsey sits up late trying to work out how a murder was done.

'Bunter put the books quietly away, and looked with some curiosity at the chosen few left open on the table. They were: *The Trial of Florence Maybrick*; Dixon Mann's *Forensic Medicine and Toxicology*; a book with a German title which Bunter could not read; and A.E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*.' I assumed that the Housman was significant so I went and took it down off a library shelf and started to read—

From Clee to heaven the beacon burns,  
The shires have seen it plain,  
From north and south the sign returns  
And beacons burn again.

Look left, look right, the hills are bright,  
The dales are light between,  
Because 'tis fifty years to-night  
That God has saved the Queen. Etc.

—it was all very pleasant, even if the Queen did send young men off to war at regular intervals, but I couldn't see anything about arsenic in it and so I put it back. It was only much later that I got round to reading the book right to the end and I realised it *did* hold the key to the mystery:

There was a king reigned in the East:  
There, when kings will sit to feast,  
They get their fill before they think  
With poisoned meat and poisoned drink.  
He gathered all that springs to birth  
From the many-venomed earth;  
First a little, thence to more,  
He sampled all her killing store;  
And easy, smiling, seasoned sound,  
Sate the king when healths went round.  
They put arsenic in his meat  
And stared aghast to watch him eat;  
They poured strychnine in his cup  
And shook to see him drink it up:

They shook, they stared as white's their shirt:  
Them it was their poison hurt.  
—I tell the tale that I heard told.  
Mithridates, he died old.

Joseph Addison in *Plant Lore* says that Mithridates VI, King of Pontus and Bithynia, (on the south coast of the Black Sea) is said to have made himself immune to poison by taking a preventative consisting of twenty leaves of rue, two dry walnut kernels, two figs and a grain of salt pressed firmly together. It may have given Dorothy Sayers the idea for a good plot but I am not sure I would trust it too far.

But did this mean that Dorothy Sayers as a woman had a partiality for Housman—or does it mean that she assumed that Wimsey as a man would have found in him the same delight that the young Orwell found? She actually gives Wimsey 'Bredon' as a name (Peter Death Bredon Wimsey) which strictly speaking means that as she gave him a birthdate of about 1890, the poem was not out then. But as this is fiction that caveat need not apply. She began writing the Wimsey books in the 1920s when Housman was at the height of his popularity and she may have felt that her readers would be so steeped in Housman that her cryptic mentions were all that were needed.

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“James Marsh, the British chemist who invented an incredibly sensitive test for arsenic — so sensitive that it could detect a thousandth of a milligram of arsenic — was a scientific prodigy who was never appreciated. He worked all his life for thirty shillings a week at the Royal Military Academy. For his great discovery he was given the gold medal of the Society of Arts — but would have undoubtedly preferred cash. Frustration turned him into an alcoholic and when he died at 52, he left his wife and children destitute.”

(*World Famous Murders* by Colin Wilson)

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So who was Mithridates and did he die old? Mithridates VI Eupator Dionysius ('The Great') (120 – 68 BC) “continued the expansionist policies of his pre-decessors, bringing most of the Black Sea coast under his control and acquiring Tigranes I of Armenia as a son-in-law. Attempts to control Cappadocia and Paphlagonia and to remove Nicomedes IV from Bithynia were less successful. Raids into Mithridates's territory by Nicomedes were the immediate cause of the first of the Mithridatic Wars against Rome. When finally defeated, Mithridates fled to the Crimea. There the demands on his subjects to raise new forces resulted in a revolt led by his son Pharnaces. Immune to poison, Mithridates asked one of his guards to kill him.” (*A Dictionary of Ancient History* by Graham Speake) He is said to have had 80,000 Romans slaughtered in his territories but no one seems to have bothered to count how many of his subjects the Romans slaughtered. Pontus had several Greek cities along its coast but its hinterland was composed of a number of different tribes. And did he die old? I suppose 52 was a goodly age for those ancient and unsettled times.

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March 27<sup>th</sup> : Kenneth Slessor  
March 28<sup>th</sup> : Mario Vargas Llosa  
March 29<sup>th</sup> : Sigurd Magnusson  
March 30<sup>th</sup> : Sean O'Casey  
March 31<sup>st</sup> : Octavio Paz  
Gogol  
Edward Fitzgerald (Purcell)  
John Fowles  
Robert Brasillach

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On February 6, 1945, French writer Robert Brasillach was executed for treason. But as



Alice Kaplan points out in her book *The Collaborator* the debate then and ever since has focussed on the way he used his writing to influence people and how direct is the relationship between the written word and the provoked action. A number of writers signed a petition for clemency. Others felt that as an unpleasant fascist propagandist they didn't mind in the least if he went to the scaffold. Many didn't like what he wrote but accepted his right to his own opinions and his right to express them. Others felt that forgiveness rather than justice or revenge would help France recover from the years of war. Some felt that he was being unfairly singled out when other collaborators had been much more blatant or dangerous. For some it was the death penalty itself which seemed wrong. And some felt that death would turn him into a martyr—which is what happened, with people like Jean-Marie Le Pen using him as an eternally youthful 'golden boy' for the National Front.

The debate over the power of the written word is one which probably cannot be resolved. Governments bring forward legislation against libel, against villification, against the written and spoken and filmed word. But there is an equal case to be made for the lack of such legislation. Censorship makes people want to see and hear and read things they might not have given a second thought to otherwise. The sense of forbidden fruit and human perversity gets muddled in with what level of courtesy and respect we have a right to expect in our public and private lives.

The question of using the written word is probably unresolvable. There is a terrible irony in the many societies which persecuted Jews at the same time were using Jewish texts as their justification for drowning and burning huge numbers of Christians, mostly women, for alleged witchcraft. This use of Bible texts to underpin all kinds of behaviour, from homophobia to beating children, has declined, although the use of the Koran for similar purposes still seems alive and well. But I think there is in it one clue to the way we should respond to the influence of the written word. The more assumed power it carried with it (and what was more powerful than calling it 'the Word of God?') the more it influenced people's behaviour. Words still influence people, if they didn't many people would not bother to write them down, but they tend to come with less baggage.

If anything the debate has shifted away from the posited power of the written word to the more graphic but not necessarily more dangerous power of the commercial image. When a young man in New South Wales, Darryl Phillips, watched a violent video in which a psychopath armed with a knife killed people in his neighbourhood, one fateful day in 1991, and then walked out of his house and put the video into action by knifing neighbour Irene Glanville to death the judge drew a parallel between the two. It was probably hard not to see a connection. But it might be asked why that young man who had probably watched hundreds of violent videos put that particular one into action. What was there about that image? What was there about his life on that particular day?

Colin Wilson says, "The first "Locked Room Mystery" was Poe's "Murder in the Rue Morgue". The first locked room novel seems to have been John Ratcliffe's *Nena Sahib*. This inspired a real murder. In 1881, the wife and five children of a Berlin carter named Fritz Conrad were found hanging from hooks in a locked room. It looked as if Frau Conrad, depressed by poverty, had killed her children and committed suicide. Police Commissioner Hollman was suspicious, and when he found that Conrad was infatuated with a young girl student, he searched the apartment for love letters. He found none, but came upon a copy of *Nena Sahib* and read Ratcliffe's account of a "perfect murder", in which the killer drilled a tiny hole in the door, passed a thread through it, and used this to draw the bolt after the murder; he then sealed up the hole with wax. Hollman examined Conrad's door, and found a similar hole, filled with sealing wax to which threads of horsehair still adhered.

Confronted with this evidence, Conrad confessed to murdering his wife and children, and was sentenced to death."

But the question that cannot be shirked by any writer, whether politically motivated like Robert Brasillach or not, is what level of responsibility for their words should any writer be

expected to take? Once something is out in the public domain there is no control over who reads it. They may be paragons of good sense who will never confuse fiction and fantasy with real life. They may be sick confused psychopathic violent dangerous people who are only marginally responsible for what they do with the words they read and who perhaps need and deserve protection from the casual dissemination of dangerous ideas and violent images.

It is an awesome thought.

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April 1<sup>st</sup>: Thomas Fowell Buxton

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‘The Buxton family were descendants of the great anti-slave-trader Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786-1845) the English philanthropist who married the sister of Elizabeth Fry. In 1818 he published his ‘Inquiry into Prison Discipline’. He was elected MP for Weymouth. Buxton worked for the abolition of slavery in the House of Commons and devoted himself to a plan for ameliorating the condition of African natives. When the Niger expedition failed in 1841 he was deeply shocked and was said never to have recovered from the blow.’ Errol Trzebinski in *Silence will Speak*, his book about the relationship of Denys Finch Hatton and Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen.

Thomas Fowell Buxton’s son Charles prepared a memoir of his father’s life and work. He notes that it was the cruelty towards the slaves which fired his father to white hot indignation: ‘in the four “crown colonies,” the home government was able to do what it pleased, and accordingly it required every planter to give in sworn returns of the punishments inflicted on his estate. By these sworn returns there were registered, in the two years 1828-9, 68,921 punishments. The law allowed, in the crown colonies, twenty-five stripes to a punishment, which limit was incessantly passed. Taking the average, however, at but twenty stripes, this puts the total amount of stripes inflicted, in regular floggings, for these four colonies alone, in two years, at no less than one million three hundred and fifty thousand! Twenty-five thousand and ninety-four punishments, or, at that rate, half a million of those stripes were sworn to as having been inflicted upon *females*.’

(The crown colonies were the two sections of Guyana, Trinidad, and St Lucia; by the time the other British colonies were added in it comes to a truly terrifying total; this from a section of society who constantly insisted that their slaves were happy and that they treated them with every kindness.) Charles Buxton saw very clearly that it was the horrors of slavery which drove the thousands of ordinary people who sent in petitions for abolition and which filled every corner of the Buxton household—but that it was economics which ultimately brought slavery to an end.

After the slave trade was outlawed, slavery itself could only continue so long as slaves reproduced themselves. And it was the free Africans who had the children, not the slaves. ‘It was not by stories of atrocious cruelty that the eyes of Parliament were opened to the wickedness and folly of slavery. If any of our readers would turn to the pages of Hansard, they would find that what gave the death-blow to slavery, in the minds of English statesmen, was the population return, which shewed the fact, “the appalling” fact, that although only eleven out of the eighteen islands had sent them in, yet in those eleven islands the slaves had decreased in twelve years by no less than 60,219: namely from 558,194 to 497,975! Had similar returns been procured from the other seven colonies, (including Mauritius, Antigua, Barbadoes, and Grenada,) the decrease must have been little, if at all, less than 100,000! Now it was plain to every one that if this were really so, the system could not last. The driest economist would allow that it would not pay to let the working-classes be slaughtered. To work the labouring men of our West Indies to death might bring in a good return for a while, but could not be a profitable enterprise in the long run. Accordingly, this was the main, we had almost said the only, topic of the debates on slavery in 1831 and 1832. Is slavery causing a general massacre of the working classes in our sugar islands, or is it not? was a question worth debating, in the pounds, shillings, and pence view, as well as in the moral one. And debated, it

was, long and fiercely. The result was the full establishment of the dreadful fact.’

Thomas Fowell Buxton brought great eloquence to his speeches in parliament. “Now one word as to the right of the master. There are persons whose notions of justice are so confused and confounded by slavery, as to suppose that the planter has something like an honest title to the person of the slave. We have been so long accustomed to talk of ‘my slave,’ and ‘your slave,’ and what he will fetch, if sold, that we are apt to imagine that he is really *yours or mine*, and that we have a substantial right to keep or sell him. Then let us just for a moment fathom this right. Here is a certain valuable commodity, and here are two claimants for it—a white man and a black man. The white man says, ‘it is mine,’ and the black man, ‘it is mine.’ Now, the question is, if every man had his own, to whom would the black body belong? The claim of the black man is just this—Nature gave it him—he holds it by the grant of God. That compound of bone and muscles is his, by the most irreproachable of all titles—a title which admits not, what every other species of title admits, a suspicion of violence, or fraud, or irregularity. Will any man say he came by his body in an illegal manner. Does any man suspect he played the knave and purloined his limbs? I do not mean to say that the negro is not a thief—but he must be a very subtle thief indeed, if he stole even so much as his own little finger.

“At least you will admit this. The negro has a pretty good *prima facie* claim to his own person. If any man thinks he has a better—the *onus probandi* rests with him. Then we come to the claim of the white man. What is the foundation of your right? It shall be the best that can be possibly conceived. You received him from your father—very good. Your father bought him from a neighbouring planter—very good. That planter bought him of a trader in the Kingston Slave Market, and that trader bought him of a man-merchant in Africa. So far you are quite safe! How did the man-merchant acquire him? *He stole him*, he kidnapped him. The very root of your claim is robbery, violence, inconceivable wickedness. If anything on earth was ever produced by evidence, it was proved by the Slave-Trade Committee, that the method of obtaining slaves in Africa was robbery, man-stealing, and murder. Your pure title rests on these sacred foundations.”

But that was the problem. The West Indian planters had bought their slaves. They made up a powerful and wealthy lobby in Britain. And they refused to give up their slaves unless they were compensated. The deep reluctance on the part of many politicians to earmark twenty million pounds to compensate wealthy people who refused otherwise to relinquish their right to hold slaves stymied parliamentary action for more than two decades. Today we find it hard to understand how people did not rush to dismantle a repugnant system ... but hearing our government refuse to apologise to Aboriginal children who were kidnapped and forcibly held in institutions or parcelled out as cheap labour for farmers, graziers, and institutions *because it might open the government to compensation claims* suggests that human nature hasn’t changed much.

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Thomas Fowell Buxton, William Wilberforce, James Stephen, Thomas Clarkson, Joseph John Gurney and the others who made up the leadership of the Anti-Slavery Movement are an intriguingly interconnected group. Some were evangelical Anglicans, some were Quakers and other Dissenters. But they were bound together by friendship and sometimes family relationships. Buxton was married to Elizabeth Fry’s and Joseph John Gurney’s sister. Thomas Clarkson was a close friend of the Wordsworths and also was a friend of a number of Quakers which led him to write a book on them. (This came out in 1806 and rejoiced in the title *A Portraiture of Quakerism as taken from a View of the Moral Education, Discipline, Peculiar Customs, Religious Principles, Political and Civil Economy, and Character, of the Society of Friends*.) They all worked on a range of important issues: prison reform, the death penalty, slavery, the plight of the poor, working conditions, children, the plight of indigenous people in South Africa and elsewhere, animal welfare. These years at the beginning of the nineteenth century saw a great push to educate and change society, to explore places and conditions and

ideas. And yet there was a remarkably small group pushing for change on a wide range of fronts. Perhaps twenty men and women led the pressure to change and improve society and they were almost all friends and relations. I have never come upon a book which explores their connections yet it is a reminder that people are more effective when they can work with the friendship, support, understanding, and inspiration of friends and family. I think there is a lesson in there for modern activists.

Temperance did not become a major issue for them until further on into the nineteenth century. It is probably not something Buxton could have stood behind as his family wealth came from a brewery but one of the best-known temperance advocates in England was lolly manufacturer, Joseph Rowntree, a friend of other sweet manufacturers such as the Fry and Cadbury families. Anne Vernon says of him, "*The Temperance Problem and Social Reform* is not an attractive title. One can hardly imagine anyone but a student or a social writer taking it eagerly from the library shelves. Yet, oddly enough, it was a best-seller. There were six editions published in the first eight months, two more in the next year, and a cheap edition in 1901. Altogether about ninety thousand copies were sold."

Vernon writes, "Public opinion on the subject of temperance was not easily changed. The old admiration for a man who could drink hard and hold his liquor like a gentleman did not disappear quickly. Eighteenth-century Parliaments, which had more than once had to adjourn early because members were too drunk to do business, found their echo in late nineteenth-century mayors' banquets, where it was not uncommon for an alderman to be under the table before the end of the evening. ... It was generally recognized that ladies should not get drunk, and that gentlemen should only do so when they were on their own (hence the practice of women retiring to the drawing-room after dinner and leaving the men to their port), but on the whole the drinking-habits of the upper classes went uncriticized. 'As drunk as a lord' was a phrase which held more envy than censure.

"The drunkenness of the poor was another matter. They did not carry their liquor in a civilized manner. Nor could they afford it. It destroyed their efficiency as workers. And this, as the Industrial Revolution got into its stride, was serious."

A licensing system had been in existence since 1552 in England and was tinkered with every so often, putting prices of spirits up or the price of beer down, changing the cost of licences or the ease with which they could be obtained, or even allowing beer and cider to be sold without a licence. But nothing made much difference; not least because the gin-palaces and ale-houses provided a social outlet and a relief from work which was hard, dirty, noisy, and monotonous.

Joseph Rowntree and Arthur Sherwell "surveyed in some detail the situation in other countries. From the 'dry' states in America they collected facts about Prohibition, and from Russia information about the Government Monopoly of Spirits. They investigated the 'Company System' in Sweden and Norway—a system of employing salaried managers who got no profit from the sale of alcohol." The state of Maine in the US had been 'dry' on and off since 1851 but illegal saloons flourished openly. In Sweden the town of Gothenburg had formed a company to take over all bars. A manager was put in to each on a fixed salary. All profits belonged to the company and were turned over to the town after a small dividend was paid on the original capital provided to take over the bars. The managers no longer had an incentive to encourage drunkenness. A similar situation was in place in Norway. But it couldn't be implemented in Britain, it seemed, because of the sheer amount of capital it would have required. A small experiment was tried in the setting up of People's Palaces in East London and Glasgow. They were situated in slum areas and provided culture, safety, a pleasant atmosphere, and temperance cafés.

The Temperance movement itself was divided between total abstinence and moderation, between personal development and commitment, and government legislation such as shorter opening hours. Rowntree and Sherwell wrote four more books exploring many aspects of the issue: *British 'Gothenburg' Experiments*, *Public Control of the Liquor Traffic*, *Public Interest*

or *Trade Aggrandisement* and *The Taxation of the Liquor Trade*.

There is still no one-size-fits-all response. But Vernon notes that many things have contributed to the growth of a more sober society in Britain and I think the same could be said for Australia. But beyond all the tinkering and ideas and experiments lies one simple fact, “perhaps, in the end, the most powerful factor was the abolition of that hopeless inescapable poverty from which drunkenness was a welcome though temporary release.”

If we are really serious about any kind of addiction, and I am not sure that we are, I think the two clear messages in all this need to be taken to heart. So long as individuals and businesses profit from addiction there will continue to be addiction. So long as people are unemployed, underemployed, or employed with no way out of boring unpleasant work, then there will continue to be addiction.

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Curiously, the Rowntrees, Frys, and Cadburys all went into the import and promotion of cocoa because they saw it as a healthy safe alternative to gin and beer drinking. The mother of Young Irelander, William Smith O’Brien, wrote to him “putting down Ale houses would in my mind tend more to the benefit of Ireland than anything that can be done.” This is not quite the same as Prohibition which forbade the distilling and sale of liquor rather than focusing on the places it got sold. As a child I lived in a place with no pub. A few dedicated drinkers would travel regularly to the nearest pub but they did need to make a real effort. Other people might buy a few bottles for a party or to have on hand but it probably reduced the incidence of drunkenness considerably. I was in my teens, I think, before I ever saw a drunk person.

The best known Irish temperance advocate was Father Theobald Mathew, a Capuchin priest from an old family in Cork, and his focus was on personal responsibility and commitment to a temperate life. Thousands of people rushed to ‘sign the pledge’. So extraordinary was his appeal that it is estimated that a mind-boggling 5 million people out of a population of 8.2 million eventually had committed themselves to teetotalism. Temperance before his campaign had focused on the drunkenness of the upper rather than the lower classes and was promoted by non-conformists, evangelicals, and the Dublin professional elite. Daniel O’Connell signed the pledge in 1840 but he also used the huge temperance movement to promote Repeal. He took advantage of the network of temperance halls, societies, and committed people to spread his message. Fr Mathew ran into controversy both within and without the church. He was accused of misusing campaign funds, of being too cosy with Protestants, of accepting a civil pension, and then his movement lost steam under the impact of the Famine. Yet he should be seen, if anyone can be, as the saint of the Famine—because his massive movement to achieve sobriety and direct the small incomes of peasants and farm labourers away from drink meant that many families went into the Famine healthier both in body and pocket than they would otherwise have been. The death toll would certainly have been higher without him. And temperance fell into the doldrums without him. The Catholic Church showed no interest in encouraging personal sobriety and it was not until a Jesuit, Fr James Cullen, formed his Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart in 1898 that the movement regained its impetus. His organisation still exists and is one of the largest of its kind in the world. Despite the image of the drunken Irishman it is estimated that about 20% of the Irish population are total abstainers.

In a way Fr Mathew’s was the best method because it was personal choice, and it underlies personal programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous. But I think it also depended a great deal on his inspiring leadership and personality. Without this, people drifted back into their old ways. I came upon Desmond McCarthy’s critical 1903 work *Priests and People in Ireland* in which he points out that priests themselves were quite often involved in the grog business; the irony being that most of the brewers and distillers were Protestants, and the sadness being in situations like this: “A servant girl from one of the towns, not in the Meigh district, got married recently. Previous to marriage, she went home to her parents, and, on the eve of the wedding, the neighbours brought presents to the bride. Instead of being of a useful

nature, the gifts consisted of quarts of whisky; or a pint of whisky and a pint of wine. After the marriage the wedding party assembled at déjeuner, and the priest who performed the ceremony honoured them by his presence. He sat at the head of the table, and filled out “tumblerfuls” of wine, which he handed to the females present, each of whom approached the priest and made a curtsy as she took her tumbler of liquor from his hands. To the men who were present the priest handed “cups and tumblerfuls” of whisky. After the company had imbibed freely, the priest arose and went round with the bridecake, which he sold in pieces to the men and women present. Each one paid him for his or her slice, taking the piece of cake and dropping the money on the plate instead of it. When the priest had gone the entire round of the company, he took the proceeds from the plate and put them in his pocket, and he shortly afterwards took his departure from the house. This habit of “selling the bridecake” by the priest is very prevalent at weddings of poor Catholics throughout the north of Ireland. It is a degrading habit to the priest, and even more degrading to the company; for when the priest, to whom they look up so much, can stoop to such ignominy, what can be expected from the poor people who follow his example? In addition to the proceeds of the sale of the bridecake, which, at this servant girl’s wedding, I am told by an eye-witness, amounted to over £5, the priest also received a fee from the bride and bridegroom. Thus all the kindness of the young couple’s friends in this instance went to the support of the priest and the publican and the drink manufacturer; and the married pair did not receive a single useful present either in cash or kind to help them to start in life.”

Another great temperance advocate was Thomas Cook. Before he ever ran a tour he ran the Leicester Temperance Society and opened a Temperance Hotel and he was active in the printing of tracts and leaflets for the society. His first tours came about because he saw that many of the people who joined the temperance society could not afford to travel. His first working class tours were just day trips and weekend excursions. But as the lives of working people gradually improved they could also afford the train fares for short journeys but often felt nervous about travelling away from home. He gradually introduced the things that we now take for granted: guides and guide books, timetables, tickets, someone to look after the luggage (and better designed luggage), travellers cheques, a string of cheap temperance hotels, group bookings, water purifiers, even specially transported camping equipment. But he also kept up his involvement with now-forgotten magazines such as *The Temperance Messenger*, *The Children’s Temperance Magazine*, *Progressive Temperance Reform*, and, interestingly, *The Anti-Smoker*.

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The Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and the Civilisation of Africa was partly Buxton’s creation and it expresses perfectly that high-minded belief in the ‘dignity of man’ whilst allying it to the belief that it was England and its version of civilisation which should be taken to Africa and spread from coast to coast. The Niger expedition in 1840 was designed as a first exploration into the West African hinterland. Its failure due mainly to its death toll from tropical fevers was seen by Buxton as a very personal failure and sense of guilt at sending its members into danger. But its failure only delayed, not stopped, the spread of all things English.

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The anti-slavery crusade in Britain was very much the creation of friends and relations. The anti-‘blackbirding’ movement in Australia, which eventually brought an end to the kidnapping of Pacific Islanders to work on Australian sugar plantations owes much to the crusading spirit of David Syme, proprietor of *The Age* newspaper. And then there was the crusade of the chocolate manufacturers. William Cadbury in *Labour in Portuguese West Africa* tells how rumours reached Britain of slavery on the cocoa plantations of São Tome and Principe, two small Portuguese islands off the coast of Africa, where it masqueraded as contract labour. He wrote, “It seemed advisable, at this point, in order to avoid misunderstanding in Portugal, to widen the basis of enquiry beyond that of a single private firm, and some of the large cocoa makers of England, America, and Germany were asked to

join us in a commission of investigation as suggested by the Portuguese planters themselves on the occasion of my first interview. Our friends, Messrs. Fry of Bristol, Rowntree of York, and Stollwerck of Cologne, readily agreed to give us their full assistance, and have supported us in all subsequent action. A large American firm approached did not, much to our regret, see their way at that time to interest themselves in the subject.”

Cadbury went about it thoroughly, hiring Joseph Burt to do a year’s investigation in the field and himself visiting government officials in Portugal and in São Tome. The contract system was complex, drawing on tribal conflicts and problems in Angola to buy or capture men, women, and children who were then marched in shackles to the coast where they were forced to sign contracts. Illiterate people, many with little or no knowledge of Portuguese, were given this to sign: ‘The labourer, as the second contracting party, contracts with the first contracting party his services for AGRICULTURAL work which he agrees to carry on in the island of ..... At the planation of .... Therein situate FOR THE TERM OF FIVE YEARS in accordance with the terms of article 31 of the regulation of 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1903’ etc. Not surprisingly the labourers had no idea what they had signed before they were shipped out. High mortality, strict punishments, long working hours, all combined to make São Tome a terrifying place and Principe was even worse because sleeping sickness had become endemic. But the worst part of it was that once the labourer was there he had no way home. Some labourers escaped into the interior mountains where they lived precarious lives. A few managed to steal boats but their fate is not recorded.

The campaign shows in microcosm all the problems such campaigns still face. In Portugal government officials assured them that the system was being reformed but these sentiments failed to reach the immigration agents and plantation owners in Africa. When the cocoa buyers showed their goodwill towards the Lisbon government by refraining from bad publicity to give such reforms time to be implemented it simply resulted in business as usual. The plantation owners accused them of trying to wreck their livelihoods so they could come in and buy cheap cocoa plantations. They agonised over whether a boycott would increase pressure on the Portuguese government or whether the cocoa would simply find buyers elsewhere and they would lose their leverage. But they finally made the decision that they could not in good conscience continue to purchase cocoa not produced by free labour.

“On March 17, 1909, the English firms issued to the press a notification that they had ceased buying S. Thomé cocoa. On the following day Messrs. Stollwerck Bros., of Cologne, issued a similar communication. In ceasing for the time being to buy cocoa from these Portuguese islands, the English firms do so with no personal or international prejudice. They will be the first to welcome reforms that are downright and sincere.”

These firms purchased approximately one third of São Tome’s cocoa output. But it is hard to determine just how much of the eventual phasing out of this brutal form of contract labour and the beginnings of people returning home can be directly attributed to their actions. In 1902 there was an uprising in Angola and in 1909 there was a mutiny of labourers in the islands which reminded officials and plantation owners that there is only so much oppression people can take. There was also the impact of a younger generation of colonial officials who found the old system distasteful. But the cocoa manufacturers conducted their campaign with dignity, thoroughness, firmness, and courtesy. In that it was a model of its kind.

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April 2<sup>nd</sup> : Hans Christian Anderson  
Emile Zola  
George MacDonal Fraser  
Sir John Squire

April 3<sup>rd</sup> : Reginald Hill  
Jane Goodall

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‘Aunt Dot said she must get down to her Turkey book quickly; or she would be forestalled by all these tiresome people. Writers all seemed to get the same idea at the same time. One year they would all be rushing for Spain, next year to some island off Italy, then it would be the Greek islands, then Dalmatia, then Cyprus and the Levant, and now people were all for Turkey.

‘How they get the money for it I can’t think. Turkey costs about a pound an hour. I suppose they have Contacts. People are so dishonest in these days. What do you think they are all writing about?’

‘The usual things, I suppose. Antiquities and scenery and churches and towns and people, and what Xenophon and the Ten Thousand did near Trebizond and what the Byzantines did, and coarse fishing in the Bosphorus, and excavation everywhere, and merry village scenes.’

(*The Towers of Trebizond*; Rose Macaulay)

It is a strange thing but fashions come and go in detective fiction just as much as in travel books. Suddenly it seems that dogs and cats are solving the crimes, or we are learning the antiques trade along the way or the books are scattered with food and recipes (what a friend called ‘food and fear’) or new female private eyes are turning up by the bushel or homeless people are the key ingredient; next thing I expect it will be people smugglers or more shenanigans in the board room. I like it when writers find some odd little niche rather than simply jumping on the current bandwagon but as books have a long lead time it’s hard to know whether it is fashion, nudges from publishers or agents, what’s been in the news, or a mysterious case of ‘great minds—’

But I admit there are problems for writers like me who cannot claim any kind of expertise. Do you go out and study something deeply and hope you don’t make the one little mistake that brings your whole careful edifice crashing down? Do you write human interest on the grounds that you are human and interested if not interesting? Do you get yourself hooked up to the Internet in the hope that surfing will provide you with both the ideas you need and the information to carry them forward? Do you simply go ahead and write about the things you know a bit about, then ask around for the extra bits of information you need? Or do you, like me, just charge ahead and hope for the best? Whichever way, it’s still fun. So good luck and may your detective have a long and prosperous life.

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Ngaio Marsh said of her creation, Roderick Alleyn, ‘Dorothy L. Sayers has been castigated, with some justification perhaps, for falling in love with her Wimsey. To have done so may have been an error in taste and judgment though her ardent fans would never have admitted as much. I can’t say I have ever succumbed in this way to my own investigator but I have grown to like him as an old friend. I even dare to think he has developed third-dimensionally in my company.’ Though P. D. James questions this claim: ‘I like Dalgliesh very much. A writer can’t carry on a character for a series of books without really liking or respecting him. An occupational hazard for us is said to be falling in love with our detective. I think Ngaio Marsh did to a certain extent and Dorothy Sayers certainly did—’

Reginald Hill wrote: ‘I can’t imagine anyone wanting to dine with a real-life Dalziel *twice*.’ Perhaps not, but I am happy to be in the company of the fictitious Dalziel as often as Reginald Hill feels like churning out a new Dalziel & Pascoe mystery.

And that is the curious thing: characters that might not be likeable if they truly came to life can work well on the page precisely because their range of faults and virtues gives them both a sense of humanity and an ability to carry a well-rounded story.

And Hill had the added advantage that his creations came to life on the screen well, with vigour and humour.

(Though I just noticed an odd thing: books and films vary in the humour they choose to highlight. Where the Dalziel and Pascoe book, *Bones and Silence*, has—

‘Hello, Mrs Appleyard,’ he said. ‘How did Jane Eyre end up?’



‘Like a guide dog. Fetching and carrying for master. I thought you said it had a happy ending!’

—the film says: ‘A right let down, isn’t it. She settles for being an ’ousewife, doesn’t she? Domestic bliss. Sod that for a lark!’

Curious.

Dalziel and Pascoe belong in that long list of real-life and fictitious duos, from Dr Johnson and Boswell, to Sherlock Holmes and Watson, to Batman and Robin. But there is an important difference, they are not guru and admirer, but two people realistic in their own right. I like that. After all, someone who hangs on your every word and transcribes it faithfully or turns up regularly to be your punching-bag or dirty-linen washer is someone with *big* problems.

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Dalziel and Pascoe also belong in that long tradition of popular series characters. The other day I was reading a piece which looked at the question of books for boys (though it did not deal with the underlying problem of who sets school curricula). Boys of course were more likely to be in trouble fifty years ago; girls often did better in their exams, their homework, their behaviour and their overall performance at primary school in that era—but nobody saw boys’ failures as a problem. Girls weren’t in competition. It didn’t matter if they did well at that level. They were very unlikely to go on with their education. All the good jobs were for boys. Girls would get married. They weren’t in the race. What did it matter if they did better in Grade Six? But girls started to receive encouragement to stay on, to aim higher, to want more than motherhood and a kitchen full of Tupperware ...

But what did boys read then—and how well did they read?

Because, in my school, there were only two teachers for eight grades quite a lot of time was spent in doing set work (there was no point in trying to engage the teacher’s attention, for good or ill, if the teacher wasn’t there to be engaged) but we also were sent out on to the school verandah every day and told to stand in a circle and read aloud from our reading books. In a sense we all helped each other; we all got stuck now and again, and although there were good readers and poor readers, it was a kind of mutual support situation. And we didn’t have any benchmarks. We didn’t know how well we were supposed to be reading, whether we were better or worse than other kids of the same age elsewhere.

But while I was mulling over this situation it occurred to me that one thing that encouraged us to read for pleasure was that most children’s books of that era were series books: the Secret Seven, the Bobbsey Twins, the Hardy Boys, Biggles, the Famous Five, Shirley Flight Air Hostess, the Billabong Books, Blinky Bill, the Gumnut Babies, Just William ... If someone turned up with the next book in a series, they would find a queue forming of kids wanting to borrow it—and yes, we were all conscientious about returning books, not to do so would have meant you no longer got loaned books. It seems strange but I remember being aware that adults didn’t always share our honesty in making sure books got back to their owners.

Yet series books have rather gone out of favour with children’s publishers. Perhaps this helps to explain the popularity of the Harry Potter books. Kids are looking for characters whose lives they can share beyond the one book.

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Bettina Selby in *Beyond Ararat* says of her arrival in Istanbul, “I was at once reminded of Rose Macauley’s Aunt Dot in *The Towers of Trebizond*, and her pronouncement of ‘Abroad isn’t what it used to be’. Istanbul is currently the world’s fastest growing city, having more than doubled its population in the past seven years.” But if Istanbul is very definitely alive ... “Trebizond, of course, does not exist. For more than five hundred years it has been Trabzon, a run-down Turkish port, recently grown prosperous on oil, and currently host to half a million itinerant Russians hawking their mixed bag of shabby goods along the littered front. But as my guidebook stated: ‘The English-speaking world still thinks of Trabzon as Trebizond, a remote

and romantic outpost.’ And I am sure this is right, at least in my case it is, for the name Trebizond (and even now I cannot think of it as Trabzon) conjures up the very breath and fibre of romance. From earliest times it was the gateway to Armenia, and the place where the trade route from Persia and the East descended to the shores of the Euxine. When Xenophon’s Ten Thousand had fought their way through Kurdistan and survived the terrible ice-bound crossing of the mountains, it was to this spot, already a flourishing Greek town, that they came. For two thousand years it continued to be the principal port on the Euxine, an urbane and gilded city, host to kings, ambassadors, and such travelers as Marco Polo. But the most illustrious period — and the reason for its remaining Trebizond in the hearts of not only ‘the English-speaking world’ but the Western world in general — was the two hundred years that followed the scandalous occupation of Constantinople by the Latins. Then, as Trebizond, it housed the brilliant world of the Comneni dynasty, and kept alive the genius of the Byzantine Empire. In the fifteenth century, after the Ottomans, under Mehmet the Conqueror, had finally taken Constantinople and seemed poised to sweep on through Europe like a tidal wave, Trebizond was all that remained of the Byzantine Empire, and had held out in the lofty citadel of the Trapezus Rock, surrounded by a sea of Islam, for eight further desperate and heroic years. And although some historians are fond of pointing out that cruelty and corruption characterized the Byzantine Empire quite as much as brilliance, I can only agree with Rose Macauley who wrote in *The Towers of Trebizond*:

... like most empires, they no doubt deserved to go under, but not so deeply under as Trebizond has gone, becoming Trabzon, with a black squalid beach, and full of those who do not know the past, or that it ever was Trebizond and a Greek empire ... ”

And John Pilkington in *An Adventure on the Old Silk Road* says of it, “Founded 800 years before Christ, Trebizond was already flourishing (under the name of Trapezus) when Xenophon arrived with his ‘Ten Thousand’. The emperor Hadrian — fated, it seems, to be remembered for his engineering projects rather than his governing skills — built the city’s first artificial harbour; and over the next 1,800 years it grew to be the Black Sea’s principal port. The Polos favoured the Mediterranean for shipping goods to and from the East, but theirs was the last generation to do so. Warfare and political instability in the Euphrates and Tigris valleys had, by the 1840s, diverted most of the east-west traffic to Trebizond — a business said to have been worth £1 million a year. From the west came the products of a budding Industrial Revolution; from the east such exotica as leeches, rhubarb, arsenic and, above all, opium. It was the latter which gave Trebizond its reputation for intrigue and vice.”

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Intrigue and vice? Reginald Hill does both rather well. But while I was familiar with his vice I was intrigued recently to come upon his ‘spy novel’ *The Spy’s Wife*. It seems very dated in the post Cold War era and yet it had that ‘awful ordinariness’ which John le Carré has made his hallmark. It also interested me because it is not about the man who goes to Moscow but about the woman (or women) who stay at home. The question has often intrigued me: did the mothers, wives, friends, sisters, neighbours of the household-name-spies suspect? Did women with their habit of noticing little details have unanswered questions? Is it purely chance that a number of the well-known men were homosexual and had less close relationships with women? I know that it might be how society treated such men but spies didn’t defect either to east or west because capitalism or communism had come to terms with those who didn’t fit the mould. What was illegal or frowned upon in one country tended to be illegal or frowned upon in its *bête noir*.

While I was thinking on this I came upon John Welcome’s introduction to his *Best Spy Stories*. He gives the prize to an unexpected candidate for coming up with the world’s first genuine spy story: James Fenimore Cooper. I have never been able to go back and read *The Last of the Mohicans* after being told to read it by a particularly unpleasant teacher. But Cooper

was a prolific writer and *The Spy* was his second novel, coming out in 1821; it deals with the activities of a man called Harvey Birch and his spying during the American War of Independence and he is said to be “eloquent in both words and silences, dedicated to his cause, driven by patriotism as by a demon, and lonely as a hero in a Byronic poem”. A spy is a spy but he is a very different conception to Reginald Hill’s sense of the nondescript suburban-living suit-and-tie collector of useful information. Real spies haven’t really changed but spy stories have.

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April 4<sup>th</sup> : Maya Angelou

Robert Sherwood

April 5<sup>th</sup> : Algernon Charles Swinburne

Booker T. Washington

April 6<sup>th</sup> : Furnley Maurice

April 7<sup>th</sup> : Gabriela Mistral

William Wordsworth

April 8<sup>th</sup> : Ursula Curtiss

April 9<sup>th</sup> : Cyril Pearl

Charles Baudelaire

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Cyril Pearl writes of the magnificent library that Japan bought from George Ernest Morrison for £35,000: ‘The Morrison library was given a permanent home in 1923, when a building to house it was erected in the Hongo quarter of Tokyo, where the Imperial University is situated. “Each volume ... will bear Morrison’s bookplate, in which, in memory of his Australian birth, a kangaroo figures prominently,” said *The Times*. The bookplate had more zoological than artistic value, though Morrison was very proud of it. “The design is not quite original,” he explained to Ashton Gwatkin. “It was drawn for me by one who was said to be a Royal Academician in the service of the Army and Navy Stores ... It is based upon two drawings in that great work in three volumes ... ‘Pictorial Australasia’ [*the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*].”

*The Times* listed some of the more interesting items in the library:

‘The Morrison collection includes over four hundred early manuscript dictionaries and grammars, some twenty thousand printed volumes, four thousand pamphlets, and two thousand maps and engravings. Among the treasures are five beautiful examples of the rare books printed on rice paper at Macao in the latter part of the 17th century, a Chinese-Latin manuscript dictionary finished in 1724, a Latin translation of the Nestorian tablet, published in 1685, forty-one editions of Marco Polo, including the first edition of 1496 in Italian, and the first English, French and German editions, the MS. Dictionary used by Sir John Barrow in 1793, together with the log book of the Lion frigate which took Lord Macartney and Barrow to China. The books in the collection are in over twenty different languages; they include the most complete collection known of missionary literature and other special subjects, that relating to ornithology being particularly fine.

‘A feature of the collection is the section devoted to pamphlets, reports and Blue-books; the pamphlets alone fill several hundred cases. The maps, which date from 1565, are very valuable; in one of them Korea is shown as an island.

‘Dr Mikinosuke Ishida, an accomplished Chinese historian and linguist, who as a young graduate had supervised the removal of the library from Peking, remained in charge of it until 1934. When I saw him in 1964 he told me, over a cup of lemon tea, a huge banana, and a paper towel, how the library had been moved during World War II to a remote village in the North of Japan, and had escaped damage. But in January 1949 *The Times* reported that the books, which were still in the north, were “merely tied up with straw ropes, inadequately protected against

the rain and snow”. The Japanese were afraid that the library might have been claimed as war reparations, and took the view “that they would rather see the collection perish than allow it to fall into alien hands”. The Australian Minister for External Affairs, Dr Herbert Evatt, is said to have demanded it for Australia and to have been rebuked by General MacArthur for making such an undemocratic proposal.

‘The “Morrison Library”, as its creator wished it to remain and to be known for all times, no longer exists. In contempt of Morrison’s wishes, the books have been distributed through the library of the Toyo Bunko—the Tokyo Institute of Oriental Studies—and can be identified only by the sad and reproachful kangaroo that looks out from the bookplate.’

Pearl also writes that during the Boxer Rebellion, ‘Morrison watched with emotion the destruction of the greatest library in China, and the oldest in the world, the Hanlin Yuan, which stood immediately to the north of the British Legation. Some of its buildings were separated from the legation by only a few feet. A strong wind was blowing right into the legation, and the Chinese saw an opportunity to burn the foreigners out. They set fire to “the most sacred building in Peking ... centre of all learning’. To the rattle of musketry and the roar of flames, Morrison wrote:

... the combustible books, the most valuable in the Empire, were thrown in a great heap into the pond round the summer house ... a heap of debris, timber and ashes, sprinkled with torn leaves, marked the site of the great library of the Middle Kingdom. Other great libraries, the Alexandrian and in Rome, had been destroyed by the victorious invader, but what can we think of a nation that sacrifices its most sacred edifice, the pride and glory of its country and learned men for hundreds of years, in order to be revenged upon foreigners? It was a glorious blaze. The desecration was appalling. Noble manuscripts lying untouched on the shelves for centuries were scattered, burned, stolen: tons of splendid editions were in the water hole.

‘To save the legation it was necessary to dismantle the remaining library buildings. An attempt was made to save the more valuable manuscripts, but few survived. Books carried away as loot were handed to Sir Claude MacDonald, who, after the débacle of the Austrian Legation, had replaced the Austrian naval captain, von Thomann, as commander-in-chief. While the fire in the Hanlin Yuan was raging, Sir Claude sent a note to the Yamen saying that he had endeavoured to save the books and asking for officials to be sent to supervise the salvage. The note was not answered.’

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Rabbi Joseph Telushkin writes in *Jewish Literacy*, “In the Jewish tradition, sacred works, such as Torah scrolls, prayerbooks, and the Talmud, are regarded as too hallowed to be thrown out. When they become unusable, they are generally buried in the ground — indeed, in 1988, several Torah scrolls that had been partially burned by vandals were publicly interred in a New York cemetery. Alternatively, they may be stored above ground, as was done in the medieval Ezra synagogue in Cairo. A large attic called a *geniza* (storing or hiding place) was set aside to store holy papers and books. With the passage of time, medieval Egyptian Jews, confident that the room’s contents would be left unmolested, began storing other important documents there. The Cairo Geniza soon contained personal letters, business correspondence, historical documents, and an extraordinary variety of religious writings.

“For hundreds of years, the material lay undisturbed and uninspected. There was a superstition among the Jews of Cairo that disaster would befall anyone who touched the sacred papers (similar perhaps to the belief that a curse would befall anyone opening Tutankhamen’s tomb). But more than superstition dissuaded would-be probers from inspecting the Geniza. The room was hardly accessible; it had no doors or windows and could be reached only by a ladder leading up to a large hole on the attic’s side.

“The Geniza finally was opened in 1896. Shortly thereafter, its contents were examined by the great Jewish scholar Solomon Schechter. Under his direction, some 100,000 pages of the Geniza material were transferred to Cambridge University in England, where Schechter taught for many years. A permanent scholar is still employed, *almost a century later*, to oversee

studies of the collection.

“In the years since they were discovered, the Geniza’s 250,000 documents have been recognized as one of the great treasures of Judaica. Perhaps the most famous find was of most of the Hebrew original of the Apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus, which was previously known only in its Greek translation. More significant, however, was the uncovering of numerous documents on the history of Jews in Egypt and Israel from the time of Mohammed until the First Crusade. Nothing had previously been known about this period. Much material on the history of the Karaites was also uncovered. One great scholar, Shlomo Dov Goiten, spent fifty years studying the Geniza’s holdings, on the basis of which he published five volumes, entitled *A Mediterranean Society*. Goiten depicts with extraordinary detail the day-to-day religious, intellectual, and social lives of medieval Arabic Jewry.”

And Alfred J. Kotlatch writes in *This is the Torah*, “A Torah that is old and shabby or one that has been corrected so many times as to become unseemly must be buried in a cemetery as soon as practical. In earlier times a Torah awaiting burial was often stored in a special room in the synagogue building. This storage room, known as a *geniza* (literally, “a place to store or hide”) was a depository not only for worn-out Torah but also for all types of religious writings and objects including the ark itself.

“The Cairo *geniza*, the most famous of all storage rooms, is situated on the upper floor of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fostat (Old Cairo), Egypt. Built in 882, the Ben Ezra Synagogue was the house of worship in which Moses Maimonides prayed in the twelfth century. But it was not until 1896 that Dr. Solomon Schechter, then on the faculty of Cambridge University, visited the synagogue and discovered the full extent of the literary treasures in the Cairo *geniza*.”

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‘Our destination, Liuyuan, seems to have even less to commend it than Daheyon. My ever-cheerful guidebook suggests that visitors should bring a costume and a song-and-dance act to comfort the inhabitants of this desolate place. Not a flower brightens its gardens; not a tree relieves the frontages of rotting concrete which line its single street. In fact, during the couple of hours I spend there, I scan the verges in vain for a single blade of grass.

But Liuyuan is the gateway to an oasis, the very name of which excites historians all over the world. Dunhuang is not only where north and south branches of the Silk Road come together after circumnavigating the Taklamakan; but the nearby caves of Magao once harboured some of Asia’s most celebrated manuscripts — not to mention countless works of art. According to legend, the fourth century AD saw a Buddhist monk called Yue Zun passing through the area. Fifteen miles south-east of Dunhuang, in a valley flanked by sandstone cliffs, a thousand Buddhas came to him in a dream, and to commemorate the vision he dug caves in the cliffs, filling them with statues and frescos. For more than a millennium his successors continued the work, leaving some 2,000 statues and 45,000 murals in 500 separate caves. One cave contained a library of manuscripts chronicling desert life during the Han Dynasty. Surprisingly, Marco Polo seems to have been unaware of these ‘Caves of the Thousand Buddhas’. In the fourteenth century they were bricked up, and for the next 500 years their contents were preserved in the dry desert air.

In 1900, the hoard was rediscovered by a Taoist monk called Wang Yuan, and soon came to the attention of Aurel Stein. There followed one of the most contemptible lootings in the history of the Silk Road. Stein himself carted off twenty-nine packing cases of treasures to the British Museum, where they remain today. Other ‘foreign devils’ followed close on his heels, until the Empress Wu Cixi, outraged by news of the plunder, ordered the remaining manuscripts to be taken for safe keeping in Beijing. But few reached the capital, for during their journey yet more were pilfered, this time by local officials who had become wise to their value. Today you can see Dunhuang manuscripts in the museums of several Western countries — but none in China.

Dunhuang’s modern visitors are taken through ‘show caves’, closely chaperoned in case

they have ideas of carrying on where Stein left off. But little is left to see. The caves are poorly lit; the remaining statues and paintings impossible to examine closely, and my request to see Cave 17, where the library used to be, is met with a truculent ‘*Méi-yóu*’ (‘No’).”

(John Pilkington, *An Adventure on the Old Silk Road*)

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‘The earthquake of the French revolution and the Napoleonic Wars tumbled out archives from their hidden recesses, from regal and state and aristocratic libraries, and the aftershocks of that seismic event laid bare new rifts of documents—the French and Prussian revolutions of 1848, the Austrian recapture of Venice that same year, the Italian capture of the papal libraries in 1848 and 1870. Acton himself benefited from most of these exposures of old documents to the light, and he was just one of those who greeted them as if they were new lodes struck in a scholarly gold rush.

Napoleon had set the pace when he took the Vatican archives (3,230 large chests of them) by wagonloads back to Paris. People had long wanted to confirm their worst suspicions about the Galileo trial, the Inquisition, the Borgia papacy, the Council of Trent, and other dark secrets of the papacy. Napoleon himself asked to see the Galileo records, and when, at his downfall, the rifled papers were sent back to Rome, those records had disappeared, to be returned only partially and years later. General curiosity, along with the scholars’ focused zeal, had been titillated. The paper chase was on.’

(Garry Wills, *Papal Sin.*)

Paul Collins in *From Inquisition to Freedom* says of the loot, “Some were returned after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 almost in their entirety (such as the archives of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide), but unfortunately about half of those of the Roman Inquisition were destroyed, a proportion dispersed (there is a sizeable set of Roman Inquisition material in Trinity College, Dublin), and what was returned to Rome has now become unavailable because it is part of a closed archive — that of the CDF.” The CDF is the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The wholesale carting off of other people’s libraries may have declined but thefts from libraries, archives, and rare book collections still occur regularly. Miles Harvey in *The Island of Lost Maps* tells about both a notorious map thief and some of the disturbing activities of libraries.

He has this delightful bit: “The George Peabody Library in Baltimore’s historic Mount Vernon neighborhood is, by any measure, a remarkable place. “There is no other library like this in America, or anywhere else excepting the parallel universe of Jorge Luis Borge’s fiction,” the poet and essayist Daniel Mark Epstein wrote. From its lofty reading room, surrounded by gilt-framed portraits of long-dead librarians, to its Grand Stack Room—measuring sixty-one feet from the white marble floor to the latticed skylight, appointed in ornate cast iron and gold leaf, and containing 250,000 of the world’s rarest and most important volumes—the Peabody has lived up to its original conception as “a cathedral of books.”

“The man who built the library was also remarkable. Born poor in South Danvers, Massachusetts, in 1795, and receiving no more than a fourth-grade education, George Peabody built a small fortune in the dry-goods business in Baltimore, then moved to London, where he made millions in the financial markets. But Peabody was equally adept at giving money away. In England he built more than forty thousand rent-free units of housing for poor people. In the United States he endowed seven cultural institutes and libraries, including the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard and the natural history museum at Yale. At the end of the Civil War, he also established the Peabody Education Fund with \$2 million (about \$20 million in today’s dollars) to provide schooling for the “destitute children of the Southern States.” All told, his gifts totaled more than \$7 million—something like \$70 million in today’s dollars.”

When he died in 1869 he was called “the most liberal philanthropist of ancient or modern times.” His philosophy has been described as “Let others save souls; Peabody was interested in

minds” and he wanted his library to be free to everyone with “the best works on every subject”; it was here that H. L. Mencken worked on his books on the American Language and John Dos Passos wrote his big sprawling novels of American life. But the library now owned by Johns Hopkins University is under threat as its ancient books are broken up and sold off to generate funds to maintain the library. It is like a form of self-mutilation.

Of course libraries everywhere sell off old books so as to be able to buy new books. I don't have a problem with the For Sale trolleys most libraries have. But at what point should certain books be regarded as sacrosanct? Is it age? Rarity? Their value to the local community? Who donated them? What the library originally paid for them and how that money was raised? What makes a book precious not only of itself but to a certain place?

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Albert von Le Coq in his book of his expeditions, *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, wrote, ‘Since the exploration of the ruins of Nineveh by Sir Austen Henry Layard, no expedition has yielded results that can be compared in importance with those achieved by these researches in Central Asia; for here a *New Land* was found. Instead of a land of the Turks, which the name Turkestan led us to expect, we discovered that, up to the middle of the eighth century, everywhere along the silk-roads there had been nations of Indo-European speech, Iranians, Indians, and even Europeans. Their languages, some only known by name and others not at all, were found in numbers of manuscripts. They were all deciphered in Berlin, translated, and dealt with in a scientific way. The number of such manuscripts is exceedingly great, and there are no less than seventeen different languages in twenty-four scripts amongst them.

‘Numerous Sanskrit manuscripts throw much fresh light on the knowledge of Buddhism; great quantities of liturgical works of the Nestorian-Syrian Church in the Syrian tongue were found, and also many manuscripts dealing with Nestorian Christianity in the Sogdian tongue as well.

‘It was not until the rainless district of the Turfan oasis was explored that a great part of the Manichaeian literature, which had entirely disappeared, was at last brought to light. It is generally written in wonderful calligraphy on excellent paper, often in various coloured inks in the beautiful Manichaeian script, and contains important information concerning their remarkable religion. We also found pages of books of this religious sect, adorned with surprisingly beautiful miniatures. Credit is due to Professor F.W.K. Müller for discovering the character of the writing and its meaning. The languages in which this literature is written are Middle Persian and other Iranian dialects, especially the Sogdian. Later, Turkish translations of this literature make their appearance in late Sogdian script — a script which, moreover, had been used by the Sogdians at an early date in a *ductus* of a former time.

‘These Manichaeian finds are the more valuable, since in the whole of North Africa, South Europe, and Western Asia, where the Manichaeian religion was in earlier times very widely spread, owing to the hatred of Christians and Mohammedans alike, not the slightest trace of this literature has survived.

‘Of very special importance, too, is the knowledge that the Indo-European inhabitants of the country brought to the Far East not only Buddhism but Buddhist art as well. But this art, coming from Bactria and North-West India, is founded on late classical Grecian art, and our investigations have succeeded in proving that the celebrated Buddhist art of the Far East is, after all, dependent on Greek art in just the same way as are the expressions of art in Western nations.’

(Notes: Manichaeism was the creation of Mani or Manes, said to be an Aramaic-speaking Christian who developed a dualistic religion influenced by Zoroastrianism but which emphasised the ethical struggle between good and evil rather than light and dark. It became very popular partly because it was seen as a quest for the origins of evil, spreading throughout the Near East and even reaching China. It drew also from Gnosticism, Judaism, and

Christianity but was opposed by Nestorians, some Christians, the emperor Diocletian, and followers of the Greek philosophers. Its adherents were either the Elect or Hearers according to the degree of asceticism they had attained. Augustine was a Hearer for 9 years. Nestorians were followers of the Syrian bishop Constantinople Nestorius who believed the divine and human aspects of Christ's nature were separate. He called Mary Christokos (mother of Christ) rather than Theotokos (mother of God). He and his followers were condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 so he formed a separate church which flourished in Persia and parts of the Arab world until overtaken by Islam. Small groups of Assyrian Christians still follow Nestorian beliefs. Sogdian was the language of Sogdiana, a country situated in Central Asia where the modern state of Uzbekistan now exists. It was invaded by Alexander the Great and later by the Mongols. It became an Islamic Society but with some remaining Greek influence.

Mitanni rose as a kingdom in about 1550 BC east of the Euphrates. It expanded into Syria and east as far as the upper Tigris and, at the height of its power, it rivalled both the Hittite and Egyptian kingdoms.)

And he goes on

... 'with the increase of population came the peasants' craving for land. Whole districts of the town (Turfan) had a clearance made by the gradual carrying off of the ruins, then the old sites and ground were levelled, water canals brought in to the ruined town, and with them the damp that worked such havoc. In many places the water had risen in the loess walls and done terrible harm to the ancient relics they contained.

'Thus I had the grief of discovering in the Manichaeian shrine *K* a library which was utterly destroyed by water. When I had unearthed the door from the heaped-up loess dust and sand we found on the threshold the dried-up corpse of a murdered Buddhist monk, his ritual robe all stained with blood. The whole room, into which this door led, was covered to a depth of about two feet with a mass of what, on closer inspection, proved to be remains of Manichaeian manuscripts. The loess water had penetrated the papers, stuck everything together, and in the terrible heat of the usual summer there all these valuable books had turned into loess. I took specimens of them and dried them carefully in the hope of saving some of these manuscripts; but the separate pages crumbled off and dropped into small fragments, on which the remains of beautifully written lines, intermingled with traces of miniatures executed in gold, blue, red, green, and yellow, were still to be seen. An enormous treasure had been lost here.'

And ...

'In other ruins of the old town (Syrkyp) we found enormous quantities of ruined Indian documents, more or less destroyed. The pages were often so torn that each scrap showed no more than one letter of Indian Nagari; in any case, the destruction was mainly aimed at Buddhism.

'It must also be mentioned that documents belonging to all four of the religions practised in the country were discovered in the same shrine; hence Buddhists, Christians, Manichaeians, with isolated Zoroastrians, appear to have used the same places of worship — a fact which points, if our assumption is correct, to great tolerance and ... to the great political power of the Uighur Turkish kings.'

And ...

'I had asked Herr Bartus during my absence to visit and work at the old settlement of Shui-pang, near the hamlet of Bulayik, north of the Chinese town of Turfan, a settlement that we had visited before. He carried out my request, and dug out of the terribly ruined walls a marvelous booty of Christian manuscripts. Amongst these a complete psalter in Pahlavi inscription script of the fifth century, also middle-Turkish translations of the Georgios legend as well as of a Christian apocrypha, dealing with the visit of the Three Kings to the Infant Christ. But special value attached to great numbers of manuscripts in a variant of the Nestorian Estrangelo script, and in a language which was afterwards found out by F.C. Andrea and F.W.



K. Müller in Berlin to be Sogdian. Here was also fragments of the Nicene Creed, portions of St. Matthew's Gospel, the legend of the finding of the Holy Cross by the Empress Helena, and other Christian texts. A page among these Greek texts bore a line in the Greek Script and language, which, according to U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, belongs to the ninth century. So there we have ninth-century Greek in West China. Finally he found numerous liturgical and other Nestorian documents in the Syrian language and script.'

Anne Barwell, introducing von Le Coq's book, writes:

'Just as the two men (von Le Coq and Bartus) were loading their camels and preparing to head back to Kashgar, they heard rumours of a huge and mysterious library of ancient manuscripts which a Chinese priest had found hidden behind a wall at the great temple complex at Dunhuang (Tung-hwang). Now this lay some seventeen days to the south across the Gobi desert. To get there would have involved at least a month's detour, and they were already running late for their rendezvous with Grünwedel. Moreover, they had investigated such tales before, and had wasted much time on fruitless searches.

'Von Le Coq decided to spin a coin, a Chinese gold dollar. It came down tails. And so it was that he handed to his rival, Stein, the triumph of discovering and removing to Britain the great Dunhuang library which included the earliest known printed work. Such a turn of events was hardly calculated to improve von le Coq's relations with Grünwedel, which were never over-harmonious. This was partly due to temperamental differences, but also to a divergence of view over the removal of wall-paintings from sites.

'Grünwedel believed in studying and recording these *in situ*, and not in carrying them away, while von Le Coq was convinced that they must be rescued and transported to safety in the West. This difference in view was to lead to repeated quarrels between the two men, although von Le Coq, being the more forceful personality, tended to win these battles. His case for the wholesale removal of the treasures rested on the damage, described in (his) book, which was being inflicted on them by both man and nature. There was a bitter irony in this argument, as will be seen, although von Le Coq did not live to witness it.

'The outbreak of the First World War put an end to the German expeditions, although Stein was able to continue excavating. In the meantime the Frenchman, Pelliot, had removed from Dunhuang what still remained of the long-lost library. It was this, as much as anything else, which drew the attention of the authorities in Peking to what was going on in this remote corner of their empire. Eventually, they were to slam the door on all foreign expeditions, but only after most of the great treasures had been removed.

'The contestants could hardly complain. They had had an astonishing run for their money, or rather that of their sponsors, having carried away enough treasures to fill the Central Asian galleries of several museums. The Germans, thanks to von Le Coq and the hard-working Bartus, had done particularly well.

'But that is not the end of the story. Von Le Coq was to die in 1930, a poor and saddened man. Not only was he financially ruined by the First World War, but he never got over the death of his only son, killed fighting his lifelong friends, albeit archeological rivals, the British.

'His one solace was to wander among his treasures in the Berlin Museum, reliving those heady days on the Silk Road. But mercifully his death spared him one terrible further blow. Between November 1943 and January 1945, during the second World War, the museum was hit no fewer than seven times in Allied bombing raids. The great building, backing on to where the Berlin Wall now runs, ended as a heap of charred rubble.

'The more easily moved treasures had been taken away on the outbreak of war and placed in bunkers or coal-mines for safety. Thus some sixty per cent of the Silk Road collection survived the bombing. But because they were cemented firmly into place, the largest of the wall-paintings could not be moved and had to be left in the museum. All that the staff could do was to cover them with iron shields and sandbags, and hope for the best.

'As a result, twenty-eight of the finest of the paintings which von Le Coq and Bartus had so painstakingly cut up and carried out of China, including the ninth-century masterpieces from

Bezeklik, were totally destroyed. Had he not died — in an asylum, in 1935 — Albert Grünwedel might have felt vindicated by the ironic fate which befell these works of art. For it was he who had advocated that such treasures were best left where they were found.

‘Nor were these the only Silk Road treasures removed by the German excavators that were to be lost by the museum (although one day they might still turn up). For in 1945, when the Russians occupied Berlin, they looted at least ten crates of Silk Road sculptures from a bunker they discovered beneath the zoo. These — like Schliemann’s gold from Troy, which also vanished from Berlin at this time — have never been seen since, despite repeated requests to the Russians for their return.

‘The horrifying loss of the huge Bezeklik paintings has led to a wide-spread belief, especially in China, that *all* the Berlin Silk Road treasures were destroyed during the war. The Chinese cite the loss bitterly when refuting any suggestion that men like Stein, von Le Coq and Pelliot were really *rescuing* these works of art from destruction by peasant farmers, Islamic iconoclasts and earthquakes. A strong case can be made for both arguments, but it ultimately devolves on what would have happened at each particular site had the paintings, sculptures and manuscripts been left *in situ* for present day Chinese archeologists to rescue. In many case they would certainly not have survived, while in others they probably would.

‘One reason perhaps for the enduring belief (among Chinese scholars anyway) that all the German treasures were destroyed during the war is Berlin’s present isolation. For few people are in the fortunate position of being able to jump on a plane and make their way out to the leafy West Berlin suburb of Dahlem where the surviving pieces can be seen in their magnificent new home. At the time of writing (1985), the treasures have only left Berlin once, in 1982, when some of the finest of them were flown to New York for a special Silk Road exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

‘With the bulk of the works of art and manuscripts from this long-lost civilization now spread through more than thirty museums and institutions outside China the question will one day arise as to whether they should be returned to the country of their origin. Indeed, the sympathy Peking has expressed for Greece’s demand for the return of the Elgin marbles suggests that the Chinese might intend to make similar claims for their own cultural heritage in London, Berlin, Delhi, Paris, Tokyo, Leningrad and elsewhere.

‘But that, in turn, would raise awkward questions. Why, it would be asked, did the Chinese do nothing at the time to prevent the wholesale removal of these works of art from the Silk Road? It could even be argued that senior officials on the spot actually gave assistance to the archeologists, especially to Stein (who was later knighted by the British government for his work). Many of these treasures, moreover, are not Chinese in origin, but belong, if to anyone, to the Uighur inhabitants of the region, whose ancestors produced them.

‘Peking’s most likely claim would be for the Chinese-language manuscripts removed from Dunhuang by Stein and Pelliot, now in the British Library and the Bibliothèque National in Paris. For these are the very bones of a period of China’s history which is poorly documented, and which Peking considers to be its rightful property.

‘But whatever the rights and wrongs to all this, it is almost certain that we have not heard the last of those caravan-loads of ancient treasures that von Le Coq and Stein, Pelliot and others, removed from China’s remote western regions during the early years of this century.’

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‘In reviewing the vast literature on the subject, one gains the strong impression that the whole story of the Rome-China trade has been vastly exaggerated by the myth of the Silk Route. The images it evokes now could be further from the truth. Such is the power of the Silk Road today that few realise that the whole thing is a modern fabrication. The term was only coined in the mid-nineteenth century by the Baron von Richtofen, a German geographer of Central Asia, to describe the largely imagined silk trade with China in Roman-Han times. Even then the term did not come into common usage until the twentieth century. The person now probably associated with the ‘Silk Road’ more than anybody else, Marco Polo, would never

have heard of the term. It was not until 1938 that a book was first published entitled *The Silk Road*, by Sven Hedin, himself one of the main explorers of the region. Another of the same title was published in 1966. Since then the term has not only gained credence, but has caught both popular and academic imagination with an enthusiasm bordering mania proportions. Any number of spurious tracks throughout most countries between the Mediterranean and China are confidently pointed as ‘the Silk Road’ — not only by tourist guides but by academics who should know better. Modern scholarship has become almost obsessed with the idea and virtually all discussion of Roman trade with the East revolves around it, with the ‘Silk Road’ being the glib answer to all questions of trade and communication. It is significant that Edward Gibbon, writing of Roman trade with the East before the contemporary obsession, makes no reference to any purported ‘Silk Road’ or route nor even any reference to China. Eastern trade was seen — correctly — solely in terms of Arabia and India, China is not mentioned, and silk only referred to in passing in reference to India and the spice trade. Today, there seem to be few references to the history or geography of the inner Asian countries without some reference to it. The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 prompted a virtual ‘Silk Road’ mania. Its ‘reopening’ has been formally announced on several occasions, even by heads of state, and there is a rash of ‘Silk Road’ conferences, projects, exhibitions, institutions and publications of every description at highest academic level. The ‘Silk Road’, in other words, has now been elevated to historic fact. But the fact remains that the existence of the ‘Silk Road’ is not based on a single shred of historical or material evidence. There was never any such ‘road’ or even a route in the organizational sense, there was no free movement of goods between China and the West until the Mongol Empire in the Middle Ages, silk was by no means the main commodity in trade with the East, and there is not a single ancient historical record, neither Chinese nor Classical, that even hints at the existence of such a road. The arrival of silk in the West was more the result of a series of accidents rather than organized trade. Chinese monopoly and protectionism of sericulture is largely myth. Despite technology existing in ancient China far in advance of anything in the West, most of it did not reach the West until the Middle Ages (usually via the Mongols) when much of it was already up to a thousand years old. Both ancient Rome and China had only the haziest notions of each other’s existence and even less interest, and the little relationship that did exist between East and West in the broadest sense was usually one-sided, with the stimulus coming mainly from the Chinese. The greatest value of the Silk Road to history is as a lesson — and an important one at that — at how quickly and how thoroughly a myth can become enshrined as unquestioned academic fact.’

Warwick Ball in *Rome in the East*.

I was thinking of this when I read Peter Fleming’s 1935 travel book *News from Tartary*. He certainly calls his route the Silk Road (“For most travellers, and all merchants, the road from China into India lies, as it has lain for centuries, through Sinkiang, along that ancient ‘Silk Road’ which is the most romantic and culturally important trade route in the history of the world”) but never mentions silk. But as I read I began to wonder. Could this area with its limited pasture, saline lakes, and rare oases actually support regular sizeable caravans? And if camels and mules had to carry their own fodder to survive could they have carried enough silk, enough anything really apart from precious stones, to make such a long journey viable? So I picked up Annabel Walker’s biography of Aurel Stein which has the sub-title ‘Pioneer of the Silk Road’ in the hope that it would tip the debate one way or the other. She regularly calls it the Silk Road but I only found three paragraphs which make brief vague passing references to silk.

Perhaps like the ‘Golden Road to Samarkand’ or ‘the Road to Mandalay’ it is too romantic an image to need to be bolstered by dull statistics. Yet, the more I pondered on it the more I felt that far from being romantic the story is a tragic one. The attempts to use this route for regular trade, regardless of what the camels and mules carried, or where their destination, helped create ecological disaster. The once thriving towns now lost in shifting sands, the shallow saline lakes, the dry river-beds, the disappearing pastures, the spreading desert ...

Perhaps the question should not be whether it is honest to talk of The Silk Road or not. Perhaps the question is better phrased: should we ever hide the damage caused by the actions of human beings under romantic and beautiful images?

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Christa Paula describes her visit to Chinese Turkestan (the West China province of Xinjiang) in her book *The Road to Miran*. But the ancient treasures—or what remains of them and I was relieved to find that quite a lot *does* remain in sand-covered ruins and tourist-guided caves—tend to be overshadowed by the damage being done to the region by China's nuclear-testing program, by creeping desertification, by uncontrolled asbestos mining, by the serious conflicts between predominantly Muslim Uighurs and atheistic Han Chinese and the very real fear on the Uighur side that China intends to swamp them ethnically and wipe out their culture and way-of-life by government decree and economic pressures. I was also intrigued to find that many Uighur are still grey-eyed (was this how 'the street of grey-eyed men' in Urumchi got its name?) with brown hair ...

She writes, 'Reports of ancient ruins in the Taklamakan Desert first reached western ears in 1855 from the papers of a certain Mohamed-I-Hameed, an agent hired by Her Majesty's Government in India to conduct a secret exploration of the Taklamakan oases. He spent six months in Yarkant, where he heard rumours of an 'ancient capital of Khotan'. His mission was followed up in 1866-7 by William Johnson, an intrepid young Englishman in the employ of the Survey of India. Though primarily interested in the burgeoning Russian activities in the region, he pursued Mohamed's report and visited a ruin near Khotan. He was, in fact, the first of many Europeans to explore the eastern Silk Road and hunt its treasures.

'The following year Russia took Samarkand and slowly encroached upon Xinjiang. In 1870, Tsarist troops occupied Guldja in the north-west of the province. The same year, and again in 1873, the British agent Douglas Forsyth led a mission to Yarkant to establish diplomatic relations with Yakub Beg, the feudal warlord of Kashgaria, who was consolidating his rule over the area. Forsyth's expedition brought back small artifacts and coins which he discussed at the Royal Geographical Society in London, in a lecture entitled 'On the Buried Cities in the Shifting Sand of the Great Desert of Gobi'. With the continuing Russian expansion, similar reports began to trickle back to the academic community in St Petersburg. Albert Regel, a Russian physician and botanist stationed at Gulja, in 1878 described his visit to Turfan and its ruined ancient capital Gaochang. One year earlier, Nikolai Przhevalsky, who was to become Russia's most formidable Central Asian explorer, had returned from his first expedition. Nevertheless, real academic interest was not kindled until the 1890s when a series of ancient manuscripts came to light.

'A fifth-century Sanskrit text in Brahmi script written on birch bark was purchased by Hamilton Bower, a young Scottish lieutenant, in Kuqa. This was older than any known Indian manuscripts. Other fragments, written in the old North Indian script Kharosthi and dating from even earlier, were bought by the French cartographer Dutreuil de Rhins in 1892 at Khotan. A Russian expedition to Turfan in 1897 brought back more manuscripts, as well as the first wall paintings cut from Buddhist shrines. The same year the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin returned from his first two-year mapping expedition in the southern Taklamakan Desert with additional fragments. These new finds were presented to the Indian Section of the 1899 International Congress of Orientalists in Rome, causing a considerable stir in the academic community and resulting in financial support for a number of subsequent expeditions.'

But, curiously, I had always associated Colonel Przhevalsky with a quite different kind of 'treasure', a living one, and I turned up my old 1961 edition of R. S. Summerhays *The Observer's Book of Horses & Ponies*.

'Thousands upon thousands of years ago—no one knows exactly when—prehistoric artists drew pictures on the walls of caves, pictures of animals they saw in their daily lives, and most likely hunted. Some of these ancient studies were preserved, and came to light in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Spain and France, and thus are able to tell us across the ages what some of the

creatures of those days were like. Among the animals most faithfully reproduced there was a small, pony-like creature with a large, heavy head, rather roman-nosed, and a tufted tail. Apparently the same type roams today the highlands of Central Asia.

In 1881 the skin and skull of one of these animals was obtained by the Russian explorer Colonel N.M. Przevalski, in whose honour it was named *Equus przewalskii*. It was described by Lydekker in "The Horse and its Relatives" as:

... being intermediate in characters between the horse on the one hand and the kiang and onager on the other, having chestnuts on all four limbs. The general colour was described as dun, with a yellowish tinge on the back, becoming lighter toward the flanks and almost white on the belly, with no dark dorsal stripe. The short and upright mane, which was not continued forward as a forelock, was dark brown, and the long coat was wavy on the head. The skull and hoofs were stated to be horse-like.

In 1902 Carl Hagenbeck of Hamburg, of menagerie fame, sent out an expedition to the Gobi to collect living specimens of this wild horse. Adults were unobtainable, but with the aid of a small army of Kirghiz Hagenbeck's agents were able to capture 32 foals. From among these, two colts eventually found their way to the London Zoological Gardens.

Since then this creature has been closely observed and studied, and naturalists generally agree that it is a distinct species and that it has affinity with the various types of prehistoric European horses whose remains have been found at Solutr  and other places and whose portraits were made on the walls of the caves of Santander, La Madeleine and elsewhere.

In appearance this interesting animal is definitely horse-like, although it has asinine characteristics as well. It is about 12 hands in height, has a massive head with small ears and eyes, heavy jaws and unusually big teeth. It has a stocky, rather ungainly body, with heavy neck and straight shoulders. The tail is tufted, but not in the same way as the ass's; the hairs at its root are much larger than those of the body and rather harsh, merging gradually into the terminal tuft. Legs are fairly slender, pasterns well sloped, hoofs definitely equine. In colour it is dun, with a mealy muzzle, a stripe, black or brown and often very faint, on the back, and some black below the knees and hocks. In summer the mane forms an erect crest, but in the winter, when the coat is long and thick, the mane to some extent falls over on the neck. Originally discovered in the Kobdo district of Mongolia, north of the Altai Mountains, it moves about in small herds in Western Mongolia, and is very wild indeed and practically unapproachable by man. It interbreeds freely, however, with the local Mongolian ponies which roam those regions in a practically feral state.

Little need be added to this, but attention must be drawn to the influence which the Wild Horse has had, not only with the local Mongolian ponies, as is shown: its type and characteristics are traceable in varying degrees among the ponies of China and Burma and the breeds and types found in the northern parts of India. In addition, and as has been shown elsewhere, many of the North European breeds either trace their descent or have been influenced by Przevalski's horse. Specimens of the true Wild Horse are to be found in different parts of the world, including the Zoological Gardens at Whipsnade Park, where a stallion, born in Regent's Park in 1931, and a female, given by the Duke of Bedford in 1942, are kept, and anyone who is interested in the horse breeds of the world is advised to see these interesting specimens. There are now several running in paddocks at Whipsnade.'

Henry Wynmalen in *Equitation* writes: 'The legend of the Centaurs, prominent in Greek mythology and which occurs, curiously enough, in a very similar form in the *Chanhay-King*, a book of Chinese mythology of some 4000 years antiquity, must have found its origin in the observance of strange and foreign tribes, who rode on horseback and thus inspired their observers with astonishment and awe.

For neither the ancient Egyptians, nor the ancient Greeks, though they both held the horse in high esteem and harnessed it to their chariots of war, knew the use of the horse to ride on. For there is no sign of a ridden horse on any of the many monuments of ancient Egypt; neither is there in Homer's *Iliad*, written some 1000 years B.C., though it contains many elegant verses about superbly harnessed chariot horses driven into battle by gods and by

heroes.

Yet at more or less the same period the art of horsemanship already flourished in Asia, where notably the Assyrians and Babylonians were horsemen of no mean ability. Convincing proof thereof may be seen in the British Museum, where one of the stone-carvings recovered from Nimrod's palace at Nineveh, shows the King out hunting. He appears to sit his horse, a real blood-type, well proportioned and with a small and beautiful head, with consummate ease and elegance, and seems able, notwithstanding the speed of a full-stretch gallop, to let fly his arrow at the quarry. Two 'hunt-servants', equally well mounted, are in attendance, one carrying a supply of spare arrows and the other the king's lance. The bridles used appear to have been made much on the same principle as that of a modern snaffle; saddles, of course, are unknown, the King riding on a richly embroidered cloth and his assistants on skins.

And that is, as far as I am aware, our first historical record of horse-riding, and proof at the same time of the generally accepted belief that the use of the horse for riding came to us from Asia.

It was some time during the sixth century B.C. that the first book on horsemanship appears to have been written; at least Pliny the Elder, in his *Naturalis Historia* (xxxiv, xix, 5) makes mention of such a book, written by one Simonides, of Athens. But the oldest books preserved for us to read, and they are both remarkable and well worth reading, are those written by the great Greek knight, soldier, horseman and author, Xenophon. Remarkable, in that written nearly 500 years B.C., or some twenty-four centuries ago, they are so modern in their outlook.

*Hippike*, Xenophon's 'Treaty on Equitation' in twelve chapters, deals exhaustively with the different aspects of horsemanship as he knew it; points of the horse, his upbringing and breaking, stable-management, how to buy a horse, advanced training, teaching the horse to jump ditches and stone walls, and even a certain amount of very advanced training, such as to-day would be considered 'high-school' riding. The tenth chapter shows that the importance and the theory of 'good hands' were well known to him.

One quotation will suffice to illustrate the modernity of his views, a quotation moreover that even to-day cannot be too often repeated:

'Never to lose one's temper with the horse is a good precept and an excellent habit; to lose one's temper is unreasonable and makes one do things one can but afterwards regret. When a horse shows fright of some object and refuses to go near it, one must make him feel that he has nothing to fear, and the more especially so if the horse be a high-couraged one; the rider will do well to walk up to such object himself and touch it, subsequently to lead the horse quietly up to it. Those riders who force the horse by the use of the whip will only increase his terror, for he will imagine that the pain he feels is inflicted upon him by the object that frightens him.'

Xenophon's second book, *Hipparchikos*, 'The Cavalry Commander', is equally striking in its comparative modernity.

His method of schooling the horse was based on preparing him for use as a cavalry mount. And this, we will find, is the golden thread, the *leitmotiv* that runs throughout the history of equitation, the necessity of adapting one's schooling to the intended use of the horse.

From Xenophon we have to jump twenty centuries to find the next trace of equitation in literature. Of the intervening period we know little, though we get an occasional glimpse, as when Plutarch relates that Julius Caesar could perform intricate feats of horsemanship on a bridleless horse.'

\* \* \* \* \*

That the Christians destroyed the great library of Alexandria is widely accepted, but I was curious to learn that there was not only a main library but a well-regarded 'daughter' library as well as a vigorous book trade emanating from Alexandria. The warehouses of books that Julius Caesar destroyed when he burnt the port area in 47 BC are believed to be books waiting to be shipped out of Alexandria to many destinations in the Mediterranean region.

Alexandria came under threat during a civil war in the late 200's AD, but it was the collection housed in the temple of Jupiter Serapis, the 'Serapeum', that the Emperor Theodosius incited his Christian followers to destroy in 391 AD. The library had been founded by Ptolemy I.

The great library was not so much a library in our sense of the word but rather a place where one copy, a master copy, of each work was held and hundreds of scribes were at work copying. Everything there also existed elsewhere. Its value was in its size and collection rather than the uniqueness of any of its contents. Nor was it a collection of books in every language; its focus was the collection of books in Greek. But that doesn't make its destruction any the less to be regretted.

I was also curious to discover that the 'great library' of Alexandria competed with the 'great library' of Pergamum in its hey-day yet I did not even know exactly where Pergamum was let alone what its library may have contained. My dictionary tells me merely that it was the capital of a Hellenistic monarchy of the same name in Asia Minor and that it later became a Roman province. So I went in search of more about Pergamum ...

It was a city in Mysia, in Asia Minor, and the capital of the Attalid kingdom. It was said to be a "model of Hellenistic town planning on an extensive terrace system. The upper town included palaces and fortifications, temples, a theatre, a library which rivaled Alexandria's, and monuments celebrating military victories over the Galatians. These included the precinct of Athena and the Great Altar of Zeus, decorated with a famous sculpted frieze depicting the battle of the Gods and Giants. Lower terraces contained sanctuaries, agoras, and the largest gymnasium of the Greek world. Nearby was the healing sanctuary of Asclepus, where Galen (a native of Pergamum) practiced medicine. Pergamum ranks among the greatest Hellenistic cities in beauty, wealth, and culture. The kingdom was bequeathed to Rome in 133 BC." Alexandria's libraries contained between 200,000 and 500,000 volumes. Pergamum is believed to have had about 200,000. So what became of this rival library. Did it survive? Yes and no. It died slowly by a process of removal, dispersion, destruction, and attrition.

N. K. Sandars introducing a translation of *The Epic Gilgamesh* writes, 'Assurbanipal was a formidable general, the plunderer of Egypt and Susa; but he was also the collector of a notable library of contemporary historical records, and of much older hymns, poems, and scientific and religious texts. He tells us that he sent out his servants to search the archives of the ancient seats of learning in Babylon, Uruk, and Nippur, and to copy and translate into the contemporary Akkadian Semitic those texts which were in the older Sumerian language of Mesopotamia. Amongst these texts, 'Written down according to the original and collated in the palace of Assurbanipal, King of the World, King of Assyria'. ...

'Tukulti-Ninurta I of Assyria sacked Babylon in the thirteenth century BC and looted its libraries for his own collections. All the great temples would have had their own libraries, and the last great kings of Assyria who ruled from Nineveh in the early seventh century BC stocked the libraries of their palaces and temples with copies taken from texts in the temple libraries of Babylonia. Because of the looting and copying, tablets found in the cities of Assyria and of Babylonia contain more or less identical versions of myths, and this has led some scholars to deduce widespread conservatism of scribal practice in which texts were faithfully transmitted and variation is all accidental and unintentional. Such homogeneity within Mesopotamia gives a false impression, however, for if one looks further afield, to Tell-el-Amarna or to Bogazköy, one sees that great variation did indeed exist, to which in particular the two versions of *Nergal* and *Ereshkigal* bear witness, and the divergence cannot possibly be explained by scribal error. Many such myths must have existed which were not composed in Babylonia, nor diffused from there with fidelity to a hypothetical original. The newly found third tablet of *Anzu* with its colophon giving Hanigalbat (far to the north-west of Assyria) as the original source of the text contributes a healthy reminder that independent cuneiform libraries existed outside Assyria and Babylonia.

'Akkadian myths and epics were universally known during antiquity, and they were not restricted to the Akkadian language. Some were definitely told in Sumerian, Hittite, Hurrian,

and Hebrew; the story itself flourishes beyond the boundaries of any particular language or ethnic group. This happened partly because Akkadian was the language of diplomacy through the ancient Near East from the mid-second to mid-first millennium BC, even in Egypt, Anatolia, and Iran, and trainee scribes in those far-flung countries practiced their skills on Akkadian literary texts; also because strong nomadic and mercantile elements in the population travelled enormous distances, because national boundaries frequently changed, and because trading colonies abroad were ubiquitous. Therefore Akkadian stories share common ground with tales in the Old Testament, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the works of Hesiod, and the *Arabian Nights*; they were popular with an international audience at the dawn of history.'

Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*.

It was the extraordinary library of Assurbanipal that Austen Layard and Hormuzd Rassam found when they began to excavate Nineveh in 1839; the kudos naturally went to the Englishman Layard but much of the hard work of overseeing the excavations and translating the clay tablets went to Rassam, a Chaldean. Unfortunately neither man was a skilled archeologist and it was very much a case of learning on the job. Beautiful, rare, and unique things were lost in this process.

Great libraries, valuable archives, the massive business of collecting in a central place, inspires ... but it also carries with it the seeds of its own destruction. We know a great deal about life in Ancient Egypt simply because its records were dispersed over hundreds of sites, not collected together in one vulnerable place.

Though even this is not necessarily a protection. George N. Patterson wrote in *Tibet in Revolt*, "In Derge the Chinese destroyed over two hundred and fifty monasteries, including the famous Dzokchen and Derge monasteries containing priceless manuscripts and treasures. Well-known lamas were dragged to death behind their horses, and famous Tibetan leaders were taken bound down-country to China" and "Without warning the Chinese bombed the monastery of Ba-Chyo-De, the chief seat of the Tsong-ka-pa sect, fifteen times until it was levelled to the ground. Some of the rarest books of the Gelugba doctrine vanished in the bombardment. Not content with this, the soldiers followed it up by burning the remnants. Tashi Naljor, who was conspicuous for his bravery in the fighting, was beaten to death along with others. A gigantic statue of Gewa Jampo, Maitrya Buddha, measuring three storeys high, was desecrated and smashed to pieces by axes. Sacred prayer leaves enclosed within the statue were thrown into the river ... "

So is there a moral when it comes to collecting books? To collect them into libraries is to place them at the mercy of both individuals and governments. I came upon a little pamphlet called 'The Chained Library in Hereford Cathedral', used as a bookmark in an old book donated to a stall; with 1,444 chained books it is the largest chained collection in the world but it is only by the Grace of God and some caring people that it survived the centuries. 'In 1842 the great restoration of the cathedral commenced. Again the books were gathered up and carted away to the Vicar's College. Here they were thrown into a lumber-room until 1856, when the Custos wrote to the dean and Chapter saying that, unless they removed "the rubbish" there would be a bonfire in the quad that night. Once more they were hurriedly gathered up and brought back to the muniment room, to lie as heaps of rubbish. As an illustration to show how much the Dean and Chapter valued these books at the time:—A niece of one of the canons was shown into the library and asked if she would like one of the chains for her puppy.'

Among the chained books were 9<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts.

Valuable as National Libraries are, perhaps we should always give pre-eminence to what ordinary people have in their homes and small regional libraries. The more widely dispersed books and documents and records are the better the chance of at least some surviving natural or man-made catastrophes. Perhaps Cicero was being wise when he wrote, 'To add a library to a house is to give that house a soul.' Millions of small souls seem better than a small number of large and vulnerable ones.

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April 10<sup>th</sup> : A. E.  
                   Joseph Pulitzer  
 April 11<sup>th</sup> : Christopher Smart  
                   Bernard O'Dowd  
 April 12<sup>th</sup> : Jack Hibberd  
 April 13<sup>th</sup> : Seamus Heaney  
                   Samuel Beckett  
                   Amanda Lohrey  
 April 14<sup>th</sup> : Arnold Toynbee  
                   Erich von Daeniken  
                   Frank Serpico  
 April 15<sup>th</sup> : Jeffrey Archer  
                   Henry James  
 April 16<sup>th</sup> : J. M. Synge  
                   Anatole France  
 April 17<sup>th</sup> : Isak Dinesen  
 April 18<sup>th</sup> : Henry Clarence Kendall  
 April 19<sup>th</sup> : Richard Hughes  
 April 20<sup>th</sup> : Dinah Craik  
 April 21<sup>st</sup> : Charlotte Bronte  
 April 22<sup>nd</sup> : Henry Fielding  
 April 23<sup>rd</sup> : William Shakespeare  
                   Halldór Laxness

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Victor Robinson in *Victory over Pain* writes:

'In Arthur Brooke's *Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Iuliet*, which preceded Shakespeare's version, Friar Laurence described to Juliet a soporific potion:

It doth in halfe an howre / astonne the taker so,  
 And mastreth all his senses, that / he feeleth weale nor woe;  
 And so it burieth up / the sprite and living breath,  
 That even the skilfull leche would say, / that he is slayne by death.  
 One vertue more it hath / as meruelous as this;  
 The taker, by receiving it, / at all not greeved is;  
 But painless as a man / that thinketh nought at all,  
 Into a swete and quiet slepe / immediately doth fall;  
 From which, (according to / the quantitie he taketh)  
 Longer or shorter is the time / before the crimina waketh;  
 And thence (theeffect once wrought) / agayne it doth restore  
 Him that criminal unto the state / wherein he was before.

In describing a similar scene, Shakespeare revealed a profound knowledge of the effect of anesthesia. Friar Laurence tells Juliet what will happen when she drinks the potion:

Take thou this vial, being then in bed  
 And this distilling liquor drink thou off;  
 When presently through all thy veins shall run  
 A cold and drowsy humour, for no pulse

Shall keep his native progress, but surcease:  
No warmth, no breath, shall testify thou livest;  
The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade  
To palsy ashes, thy eyes' windows fall,  
Like death, when he shuts up the day of life;  
Each part, depriv'd of supple government,  
Shall, stiff and stark and cold, appear like death:  
And in this borrow'd likeness of shrunk death  
Thou shalt continue two and forty hours,  
And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.

Shakespeare elsewhere makes references to poppy, mandragora, and “drowsy syrups,” and his contemporary, Christopher Marlowe, speaks of “poppy and cold mandrake juice.”

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If anyone had asked me years ago why cannabis had become a prohibited substance I would probably have blamed it either on the tobacco or the drug companies. So I was fascinated to learn that it was actually the paper manufacturers who put pressure on the US Government. Andrew Tyler in *Street Drugs* says, “If cannabis is such a powerful medical therapy, Herer (author of *The Emperor Wears No Clothes*) asks, why was it criminalized in America with the 1937 Marijuana Tax? His answer is that prohibition was only marginally to do with medicine, much more to do with the plant's utility as a fibre and fuel. By the 1930s, paints, varnishes, paper fabrics, and thousands of other commercial products were all made from this sturdy, fast-growing weed. The success of hemp, claims Herer, threatened to bankrupt the paper industry, stifle an emerging synthetic fabrics industry, challenge the dominance of petrol and oil and, yes, cause problems for the pharmaceutical trade, which, at that time, didn't know how to convert the plant into an easily marketable chemical product. It was these forces, Herer argues, which conspired against cannabis, helping to stigmatise it as an irredeemably dangerous drug.” The companies didn't say “we don't want any competition from cheap sources of paper”—Oh no! they presented it in terms of the dangers of addiction. And what responsible government is not sensitive to the possibility of having half its population wandering round ‘stoned’? That the US Government had recently learned that the prohibition of alcohol, though done with the best of intentions, did not do away with the social problem of alcoholism, but also gave a huge fillip to the organisation of crime, did not influence the debate.

Governments, one by one, encouraged or coerced by the US, fell into line and banned marijuana and hashish. In Australia, opium had been banned largely because of racism—it was seen as a purely Chinese ‘vice’. Morphine and heroin had been declared illegal except by prescription in the long battle fought by the medical profession to undermine the power of both chemists and the manufacturers of patent medicines. Heroin was regularly prescribed in childbirth throughout the 1930s and was still a constituent of cough mixtures into the 1950s.

Marijuana was freely available in Australia in products called Cigaros de Joy which were advertised as being pleasant to smoke and effective in the treatment of asthma, bronchitis, hay-fever, flu and sore throats. This may be why they never caught on with the youth of the day. But eventually the confusion and misinformation used to ban cannabis in the USA was transferred to Australia. On the one hand it was described as a narcotic, that is, a drug used to induce sleep and on the other hand, users were portrayed as sex fiends. Careful research, both medical and social, was conspicuous by its absence.

In some cases American pressure on other nations caused economic disaster, as in Bangladesh, where hemp-growing was a major source of village income and export earnings. And organised crime, shut out of the grog trade, turned to each substance that government legislation newly made illegal. J. Edgar Hoover, a man with an intimate knowledge of corruption, refused to allow his FBI to have anything to do with narcotics. As Anthony

Summers pointed out in *Official and Confidential* Hoover saw very clearly that policing drugs corrupted police and had little chance of success. American pressure on other nations led to a similar growth in organised or semi-organised crime. When coca leaves were legal throughout South America and Mexicans legally ingested marijuana there was little or no crime associated with their use. American decisions and American pressures effectively created the powerful crime cartels.

But I would like to argue that in throwing out the bathwater we also lost a very valuable baby. The plant which provides the two popular drugs, marijuana and hashish, the hemp plant or *cannabis sativa*, is one of the most useful plants on the planet yet it is, because of government fears about drug addiction, vastly under-utilised. It is an annual growing to about 5 metres under ideal conditions. It can grow from the tropics to cool temperate climates, from sea level to the mid-heights of the Himalayas, and from moist jungle conditions to semi-arid areas, provided a small amount of irrigation is available. The plants are fast-growing, hardy, and with few pests and diseases.

Virtually every part of the plant is usable. The seeds have many of the properties of soya beans. They can be used in products as various as ice-cream and bird-seed mixtures. They produce an oil which can be used in paints, varnishes, soaps, and as a cooking oil. The flowers and leaves are used dried as your everyday 'joint' while the plant resin provides hashish, but they also contain up to two thousand chemical compounds, most of which are unstudied and some of which are believed to have possible medical uses in the fight against cancer, AIDS, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, glaucoma, epilepsy, asthma, and many other diseases as well as being of possible help in pain relief. They are also used as a fast-growing stock feed in poor countries such as Bhutan and Nepal. The stem fibres can be turned into ropes, cordage and twine, they can be used to weave hats, mats, bags, even sails. They can be woven into material nearly as fine as linen. They can be used to make paper, cardboard and a light building board. They can be used as firewood and for light fencing materials.

Hemp was used in medieval Europe for gout, cystitis, urinary pains through infection and childbirth; it was also used as a salve for gunpowder burns and as an infusion for coughs, mouth ulcers, jaundice and other troubles of the liver and spleen.

There are a number of varieties of hemp with varying degrees of usefulness but with their banning, study of their properties was severely curtailed. In general we know that the higher the fibre content the lower the hallucinogenic content. But the massive amount of research, cross-breeding, medical and industrial usage carried out on many other plants is largely stymied by government fears of youthful populations gaining easier access to marijuana.

Now smoking or eating marijuana *can* cause damaging side effects and these should not be under-estimated. They include a slowing of reflexes and drowsiness which can cause accidents. Eye problems are reported in heavy users. Regular heavy smoking can cause the same sorts of throat and lung problems that tobacco causes. Long term heavy use can bring about psychotic states, confusion, anxiety attacks, loss of memory and a loss of connection with everyday life. There is the possibility that they lower birth weights and may cause birth defects. But we don't know if the so-called 'bad trips' and other side-effects are intrinsic to the substance or are related to adulteration, contamination, or poor growing, curing, or storing practices. Mouldy substances, legal or illegal, can cause mental aberrations.

Making marijuana illegal means there are no quality controls on what is being sold. Prohibition pushes prices up and pushes the growers, dealers and users underground. Decriminalisation would make it easier for users to seek medical advice or counselling but it would not remove that underground connection. So long as the same people are supplying both criminalised and de-criminalised drugs then they have a vested interest in moving people from the cheapest least addictive substances to the dearest most addictive ones. Equally it still does not allow for quality controls or proper labelling.

I believe governments have to make the difficult decision to allow marijuana to be bought over the counter at your friendly neighbourhood tobacconist in packets of quality-

controlled filter-tips replete with health warnings and taxed for money to fund health, research, and education programs.

There is probably no resource of great value which comes trouble-free. Sunlight is vital but also causes sunstroke, melanomas, heat exhaustion, drought and famine. The poison that killed Socrates helps heart patients. Penicillin saves lives. Penicillin allergies take lives. The value of the hemp plant far outweighs its side effects. Making those who smoke its leaves into criminals will probably be seen as absurd by future generations and the real criminals will be seen as those who refused its cultivation, research and use in a huge range of medical, industrial and agricultural uses, particularly in poor Third World countries, with diminishing forests and without the foreign exchange to pay for synthetic alternatives to hemp-based products. So why wait for the future? Why not start using the humble *cannabis sativa* with its myriad uses, many probably still to be discovered, right now. And let us be honest and clear-sighted about the differences between medical problems and benefits, social problems and benefits, and economic and environmental problems and benefits.

Prohibition of alcohol undoubtedly made many families safer and put more and better food on their tables. But Prohibition was repealed when it was seen that its potential harm was outweighing its potential good. We need to bring that kind of balance to all our debates about hemp, hashish, and marijuana.

Friends, I rest my case.

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‘Phytoremediation comes from the word *phyto* meaning plants, and *remediation*, the act of repairing or healing. Phytoremediation is a new field in science and a new business investment. Certain plants have the ability to take in and absorb toxic metals, which the stems and leaves of the plant hold safely in their cells and use in defense against insects or infection. These plants are now being used to clean up polluted soil.

‘In a Boston suburb, alpine pennycress drew up lead, zinc, and cadmium from a backyard where children were not allowed to play. Most plants cannot tolerate more than 500 parts per million dry weight of zinc. But pennycress stores up to 25,000 parts per million. At an abandoned zinc smelting plant, pennycress increased its rate of absorption of zinc and cadmium in the second and third year. The now-contaminated plants were then uprooted and safely destroyed.

‘Other flowering plants are being considered for a variety of jobs. Poplar trees have been used to remove chlorinated solvents in groundwater. Clover may remove petroleum. In India, aquatic plants deal with the chromium produced by tanneries. Some plants can defuse explosive compounds like TNT in the soil. Sacred datura takes up heavy metals like lead. Cabbages can reduce radioactive particles.

Sunflowers also absorb and store radioactive material. A company in New Jersey used sunflowers to decontaminate a uranium factory. In their hydroponic tanks, the roots of the sunflowers created a bio-filter for wastewater. In experiments in Chernobyl, sunflowers absorbed 95 percent of radioactive strontium in a pool near the leaky reactor. In 1996, the U.S. secretary of defense and the Ukrainian defense minister ceremoniously sprinkled sunflower seeds over a former missile silo.’

*Anatomy of a Rose. The Secret Lives of Flowers.* Sharman Apt Russell

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Francis Bacon in his essay ‘On Gardens’ writes, ‘God Almighty first planted a garden, and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures; it is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man, without which buildings and palaces are but gross handyworks; and a man shall ever see, that when ages grow to civility and elegance, men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection. I do hold it, in the royal ordering of gardens, there ought to be gardens for all the months in the year, in which, severally, things of beauty may be then in season. For December and January, and the latter part of November, you must take such things as are green all winter; holly, ivy, bays, juniper, cypress-trees, yew, pines, fir-

trees, rosemary, lavender; periwinkle, the white, the purple, and the blue; germander, flag, orange-trees, lemon-trees, and myrtles, if they be stoved; and sweet marjoram, warm set. There followeth, for the latter part of January and February, the mezereon tree, which then blossoms; crocus vernus, both the yellow and the grey; primroses, anemones, the early tulip, hyacinthus orientalis, chamairis, fritellaria. For March, there come violets, especially the single blue, which are the earliest; the early daffodil, the daisy, the almond-tree in blossom, the peach-tree in blossom, the cornelian-tree in blossom, sweetbriar. In April, follow the double white violet, the wall-flower, the stock-gilliflower, the cowslip, flower-de-luces, and lilies of all natures; rosemary-flowers, the tulip, the double peony, the pale daffodil, the French honeysuckle, the cherry-tree in blossom, the damascene and plum-trees in blossom, the white thorn in leaf, the lilac-tree. In May and June come pinks of all sorts, especially the blush pink; roses of all kinds, except the musk, which comes later; honeysuckles, strawberries, bygloss, columbine, the French marigold, flos Africanus, cherry-tree in fruit, ribes, figs in fruit, rasps, vine flowers, lavender in flowers, the sweet satyrian, with the white flower: herba muscaria, lilium convallium, the apple-trees in blossom. In July come gillyflowers of all varieties, musk roses, the lime-tree in blossom, early pears, and plums in fruit, gennittings, quodlins. In August come plums of all sorts in fruit, pears, apricocks, barberries, filberds, musk melons, monks-hoods, of all colours. In September come grapes, apples, poppies of all colours, peaches, meloctones, nectarines, cornelians, wardens, quinces. In October and the beginning of November come services, medlars, bullaces, roses cut or removed to come late, hollyoaks, and such like. These particulars are for the climate of London; but my meaning is perceived, that you may have *ver perpetuum*, as the place affords.

And because the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air (where it comes and goes, like the warbling of music) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight, than to know what be the flowers and plants that do best perfume the air.' ...

He goes on from perfumes to garden plans, hedges, fountains, garden size, aviaries and more. All very interesting. Imaginative. Even delightful. But it's not the writing of someone who tossed off thirty-six dramas. It is the writing of someone for whom property and the improvement thereof was a given. Someone who took himself and his place in the world seriously. Or so I read his essays ...

\*

Richard Rudgey notes in passing that hemp seeds have been found in Stone Age sites in Europe, that the spread of the opium poppy in ancient times may have been as widespread and plentiful as the Victorians downing their laudanum with the abandon of a tea-drinker, that the ancient peoples of the Americas put great care into the growing and storage of tobacco and coca leaves, that the use of betel was obvious in pre-history, and that the Aborigines developed the preparation of a psychoactive plant called pituri (*Duboisia hopwoodii*) to a fine art. He says "The standard theory concerning the origins of agriculture is that this change of lifestyle was primarily concerned with food production. The Australian evidence may lead us to think otherwise. The Oxford archeologist Andrew Sherratt has suggested a similar genesis of agriculture for the Near East and notes with particular reference to Neolithic Jericho that the first cultivated plants were not perhaps cereals at all but more valuable and portable commodities. He suggests a number of narcotic plants like mandrake, henbane and belladonna (deadly nightshade) as possible candidates."

Nevill Drury in *Exploring the Labyrinth* takes this idea further.

"(Terence) McKenna was interested in the fact that, biochemically, *ayahuasca* appeared to resemble psilocybin, the active principle in the sacred psilocybe mushrooms used by shamans in the highlands of central Mexico. He also believes — and this is where he enters the realm of anthropological controversy — that the intake of psilocybin by primates living in the African grasslands prior to the last Ice Age may have led to the origins of human language itself. Psilocybe mushrooms produce a state of consciousness where the soul 'speaks' to the mind. These mushrooms also grow prolifically in cattle dung and McKenna argues that the

entry of psilocybin into the food chain in Africa between fifteen and twenty thousand years ago and the subsequent domestication of cattle may have led to the establishment of the first Paleolithic religion — that of the Great Horned Goddess. More specifically still, he maintains that psilocybin itself has a unique role to play in human culture because of its role as an inspirational guiding agent ...

“During an interview I conducted with him, he explained the significance of this concept (that it is the *Logos* of the planet) both in relation to shamanism but also with regard to the origins of the western philosophical tradition.

“Under the influence of psilocybin there is an experience of contacting a speaking entity — an interiorised voice that I call the *Logos*. If we don’t go back to Hellenistic Greek terminology then we’re left with only the vocabulary of psychopathology. In modern times to hear ‘voices’ is to be seriously deviant, there is no other way to deal with this. And yet if we go back to the Classical literature the whole goal of Hellenistic Greek esotericism was to gain access to this thing called the *Logos*. The *Logos* spoke the Truth — an incontrovertible Truth. Socrates had what he called his *daimon* — his informing ‘Other’. And the ease with which psilocybin induces this phenomenon makes it, from the viewpoint of a materialist or reductionist rooted in the scientific tradition, almost miraculous.”

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Yes, I hear you say, this is all very well when it comes to marijuana and I agree entirely but you are surely not suggesting that we take the same road with ‘hard drugs’, are you? You don’t want your friendly neighbourhood tobacconist selling heroin and cocaine, do you? My first thought would be to say no ... these drugs are in a different category ... but after long pondering, I think I would have to say yes, that is exactly how I want such drugs sold. (Better still, I would like to see them sold openly by chemists in plain packets with health warnings.) We have brought some care to the situation in the form of safe injecting rooms, better counselling, a greater understanding of addiction, the knowledge that it is unhygienic conditions and a lack of analysis of the strength of the substance being smoked, ingested, or injected that kills. Not addiction itself. It is the fact of ‘banned substances’ that both criminalises the culture in which they are used and kills the user by what are effectively the results of that criminalisation. Banning substances, rather than tackling aspects of human behaviour, seems to me a bit like the medieval concept of putting animals on trial and executing them for their ‘crimes’. Nor are we consistent. I can sniff everything from petrol to correction fluid as much as I want; no one is going to make them illegal; not because they won’t damage and possibly kill me but because too many people have a vested interest in keeping them legal.

Take, for example, cocaine and this excerpt from an article by Douglas Farah in *Crimes of War*. ‘The Colombian crisis could exist with or without the drug traffickers. But while they are not at the root of the war, or of the social and historical events that provoked it, they are at the root of the criminalization of the conflict, itself a malign development in contemporary Colombian history. The drug traffickers have shown themselves willing to work with and finance both sides. The situation is far from the ideological contest that marked the Colombian conflict thirty years ago. Guerrillas and paramilitaries alike grow rich off the war and the profits that the war has engendered make the prospect of peace that much more elusive.

‘In the wake of the narcotraffickers have come common criminals who are willing to work for any group willing to pay for their services, and, of course, are even less mindful of the laws of war than the guerrillas and paramilitaries themselves. Perhaps predictably, the violence of the conflict has spilled over into almost every corner of Colombian life. The country is now among the most violent in the world, with an annual homicide rate of about seventy per 100,000 inhabitants.’

Ranulph Fiennes in *The Sett* takes this further: ‘Colombia’s non-narcotic export earnings total only \$5750 million, a tiny fraction of the \$375,000 million from cocaine. Small wonder that all aspects of Colombian life are influenced by the drug. Even the Church has been

corrupted. Avianca, the national airline, is heavily involved in drug transport. The government, the military, the local police, with a few valiant exceptions — are all rotten to the core.’ And the corruption that illegal drugs bring with them cannot be perfumed with the suggestion that they help the poor, that they provide opportunities for the marginalised, that they provide opportunities in hierarchical societies. Louis de Bernieres’ *Señor Vivo and the Coca Lord* is fiction but it has a message when he writes, ‘I oppose those who claim that the coca trade is indispensable to our national budget. It is estimated that the coca Mafia earns some ten billion dollars per annum. Of this, nine billion apparently finds its way via Switzerland and other countries into investment in legitimate European and United States industries. The one billion that finds its way back again leaves the country immediately because it is spent on luxury foreign goods destined to embellish the palaces of the caudillos. It is very clear, then, that the destruction of the coca trade would be positively beneficial to our balance of payments.’ (It could of course be mentioned in passing that Britain’s illegal opium trade into China financed the building of hospitals and schools in India!)

Nor is it just Colombia but wherever the illegal drug trade passes. ‘Miami, the Indian word for ‘sweet water’, was founded in 1896. Not yet ninety years old, the city was already mired in corruption. Traffickers bribed judges, drug barons financed local politicians and civil servants sold information from confidential documents, such as upcoming road and property developments, to the highest bidders. Criminals were defended in court by lawyers who had once been the city’s most eminent prosecutors. Many erstwhile top anti-drugs agents now worked as private detectives for Miami-based Colombian mobsters.’

The same is true wherever illegal drugs find a busy market.

When both the coca leaves and the refined cocaine were produced, sold, and consumed legally it simply did not generate enough money to influence the wider situation. But the ‘money obtained from drug trafficking gives the guerrillas and the paramilitaries access to the international arms market while freeing them from previous constraints on how they use the new weapons they have acquired’ and ‘the fighting can be shown to wax and wane according to the amount of narcotics money being channeled to both sides’. Legal drugs, tobacco, alcohol, glue, petrol and so on do not improve difficult economic or social situations, (Franco was initially bank-rolled by a tobacco millionaire), nor do they help the health of individuals, families or communities. But their legality keeps the danger of the entry of a criminal substratum to the existing problems of unemployment, troubled families, declining neighbourhoods etc, very small. The criminalising of certain substances makes not only the problem of addiction harder to solve, it makes a whole raft of problems harder to solve.

Despite huge advertising and sponsorship budgets both tobacco-smoking and alcohol-drinking seem to have peaked. Over the counter heroin and hashish would almost certainly follow the same path. A growth in use, a peaking, then a slow decline as medical and social messages, age-cards, peer pressure, Quit campaigns, undermine the attractiveness of use. Removing the criminal element every step of the way from production to use would allow us to understand, research, and cope with the situation in a calm and rational way.

Dream on.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘Shakespeare, with his wide knowledge of legend and poetry, would have based Desdemona’s sad song ‘Sing all a green Willow’ on the much older version clearly popular with forsaken lovers for many years before his day:

All a grene wyllow, wyllow, wyllow

All a grene wyllow is my garland,

Alas! By what meane may I make ye to know

The unkyndnes for kyndnes, that to me doth growe?

That wone who most kynde love on me should bestowe

Most unkynde unkyndneses to me she doth showe

For all a grene wyllow is my garland.

Shakespeare must have known every story of the deathly miasma which had always attached to the willow tree, with its long drooping branches like lank tresses dipping into and reflected in the water; a picture so fostered by the morbidly romantic. The queen in *Hamlet* gives a most dramatic picture of how poor Ophelia came to where:

... a willow where aslant a brook;

That shows his hoar leaves in a glassy stream;

There with fantastic garlands did she come

Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples.

She goes on to describe how, when Ophelia was clambering up to try to hang her 'coronet weeds' on the tree, the bough gave way and plunged her headlong into the water.

Will Shakespeare, the country-bred lad, who had spent his boyhood in Warwickshire's woods, lanes, and meadows, knew exactly what he was talking about when it came to plants and flowers, what they meant, and just how to write the tragic little sentence implied in his own epithet 'fantastic'. This is proved by John Ingram, who was certainly one of the greatest authorities on the language of flowers, and who says that the floral sentence hidden in Ophelia's chaplet is the 'greatest example of Shakespeare's florigraphy'. Ingram translates as follows:

CROW-FLOWERS (meadow-campion), Fayre mayde.

NETTLES, Stung to the quick.

DAISIES, Her youthful bloom.

LONG PURPLES (Purple orchis, Dead Men's Fingers), Under the cold hand of death.

A fair maid, stung to the quick, her youthful bloom, under the cold hand of death.'

(*A Witch's Guide to Gardening*, Dorothy Jacob)

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Susan Wittig Albert in *An Unthymely Death* writes: 'In Tewkesbury, England, during Shakespeare's day, ground mustard seed was mixed with honey, vinegar, and horseradish. The thick paste was formed into balls, which were sold in London markets. (In *Henry IV*, Falstaff snorts, "His wit is as thick as Tewkesbury mustard.") To serve, the dried balls were broken apart and mixed with more liquid — vinegar, beer, wine, cider — along with sugar, cinnamon, or honey. This method of managing mustard seems to have fallen into disfavor around 1800, when a Mrs. Clements, of Durham, began grinding and sifting mustard seeds to produce a fine flour. She was followed by Jeremiah Colman, who marketed his ground mustard in the still-familiar yellow tin.'

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We don't know how much of Shakespeare's 'herbal lore' came already incorporated in the material he adapted and re-wrote. Nor do we know how intimately such knowledge was part of people's mind-set, appearing naturally in their conversations, letters, and thinking. Barbara Griggs in *New Green Pharmacy* writes, 'Shakespeare's plays are stuffed with knowledgeable allusions to herbs: 'give me mandragora and let me sleep', and it was part of every gentleman's breeding to be familiar with them. Every good library in the kingdom possessed one of the fine new Latin herbals then in print, and in 1526 — the year that Henry's eye first strayed to Anne Boleyn — the *Grete Herbal*, the first English one, was published with the object, like the French work from which it was translated, of 'enformyng how men may be holpen with grene herbs of the gardyn and wedys of the feldys as well as by costly receptes of the potycaryes prepared.' Shakespeare may well have read or owned a copy but I have two images of him; one as the grown man who took a keen interest in his food and health and everything related, the other as the boy who went rambling through the woods and lanes around Stratford, interested in everything he saw from the old women collecting herbs for tinctures and poultices to the rhymes and curses linked to the wildflowers and weeds that grew near his home and which he may have heard from his mother.

It adds a depth and richness to his writing which is missing in a lot of modern writing where a tree is just a tree and grass is that stuff that gets mowed at weekends and herbs come



dried in little bottles in the supermarket.

\* \* \* \* \*

April 24<sup>th</sup> : Sue Grafton  
Robert Penn Warren  
Marcus Clarke  
April 25<sup>th</sup> : Walter de la Mare  
April 26<sup>th</sup> : Morris West  
April 27<sup>th</sup> : Mary Wollstonecraft  
April 28<sup>th</sup> : Anna Clarke  
April 29<sup>th</sup> : William Randolph Hearst  
April 30<sup>th</sup> : Paul Jennings  
May 1<sup>st</sup> : Giovanni Guareschi  
Joseph Addison

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Is there a particularly Italian kind of humour? I have never come upon a discussion of this subject. Certainly there are slapstick episodes, innuendo-style comedies, farces dealing with sex, food, religion, but is there some particular quality that marks out their humour as uniquely Italian?

I got lots of fun from several pieces, such as this from Alberto Moravia's 'The Empty Canvas': 'In the beginning was boredom, commonly called chaos. God, bored with boredom, created the earth, the sky, the waters, the animals, the plants, Adam and Eve, and the latter, bored in their turn in Paradise, ate the forbidden fruit. God became bored with them and drove them out of Eden; Cain, bored with Abel, killed him, Noah, bored to tears, invented wine; God, once again bored with man-kind, destroyed the world by means of the Flood; but this in turn bored Him to such an extent that He brought back fine weather again. And so on. The great empires—Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman—rose out of boredom and fell again in boredom; the boredom of paganism gave rise to Christianity; that of Catholicism, to Protestantism; the boredom of Europe caused the discovery of America; the boredom of feudalism kindled the French Revolution; and that of capitalism, the revolution in Russia ... Then I grew bored with the whole project and abandoned it.'

Or Italo Calvino going into a bookshop to buy a book in *If on a winter's night a traveler*: 'you have forced your way through the shop past the thick barricade of Books You Haven't Read, which were frowning at you from the tables and shelves, trying to cow you. But you know you must never allow yourself to be awed, that among them there extend for acres and acres the Books You Needn't Read, the Books Made For Purposes Other Than Reading, Books Read Even Before You Open Them Since They Belong To the Category of Books Read Before Being Written. And thus you pass the outer girdle of ramparts but then you are attacked by the infantry of the Books That If You Had More Than One Life You Would Certainly Also Read But Unfortunately Your Days Are Numbered. With a rapid maneuver you bypass them and move into the phalanxes of the Books You Mean To Read But There Are Others You Must Read First, the Books Too Expensive Now And You'll Wait Till They're Remaindered, the Books ditto When They Come Out In Paperback, Books You Can Borrow From Somebody, Books That Everybody's Read So It's As If You Had Read Them, Too. Eluding these assaults, you come up beneath the towers of the fortress, where other troops are holding out:

the Books You've Been Planning To Read For Ages,  
the Books You've Been Hunting For Years Without Success,  
the Books Dealing With Something You're Working On At The Moment,  
the Books You Want To Own So They'll Be Handy Just In Case,  
the Books You Could Put Aside Maybe To Read This Summer,  
the Books You Need to Go With Other Books On Your Shelves,

the Books That Fill You With Sudden Inexplicable Curiosity, Not Easily Justified.

Now you have been able to reduce the countless embattled troops to an array that is, to be sure, very large but still calculable in a finite number; but this relative relief is then undermined by the ambush of the Books Read Long Ago Which It's Now Time To Reread and the Books You've Always Pretended To Have Read And Now It's Time To Sit Down And Really Read Them.

With a zigzag dash you shake them off and leap straight into the citadel of the New Books Whose Author Or Subject Appeals To You. Even inside this stronghold you can make some breaches in the ranks of the defenders, dividing them into New Books By Authors Or On Subjects Not New (for you or in general) and New Books By Authors Or On Subjects Completely Unknown (at least to you), and defining the attraction they have for you on the basis of your desires and needs for the new and the not new (for the new you seek in the not new and for the not new you seek in the new).<sup>7</sup>

Whew! I never knew buying books could be so tiring! Even stepping inside the door—

But then you turn left by the door and there is a row of Don Camillo—

Garry Wills in *Papal Sin* writes, 'The double consciousness of Catholics is increasingly being stratified, the hierarchy accepting the papal view, and the laity ignoring it. Only priests, caught between the two strata, are expected to incorporate both views in their conduct.'

Don Camillo, in this sense, is an extraordinarily subversive character. He bypasses the church hierarchy—Monsignors, Bishops, Cardinals, and Popes are as nothing—as he goes straight to Jesus, and receives practical yet loving guidance.

There is also, often, a dry wit and a sense of earthy wisdom, eg. In *Don Camillo and the Devil* 'And Don Camillo was not too perturbed by the outcome of the election, for he knew that in politics we can often obtain more from our enemies than from our friends.'

Guareschi writes of himself as someone always running late to meet his deadlines: 'At such times I am full of coffee, nicotine, bicarbonate of soda and fatigue. My clothes are sticking to me because I haven't taken them off for three days; I have dirty hands and stubble on my chin. My mouth is furry and my head, stomach, heart and liver are all aching. A lock of unkempt hair is hanging down over my nose and black dots dance before my eyes.'

"Why do you always wait until the very last minute?" they ask me. "Why don't you do your work little by little, while there is still plenty of time?"

But if I had paid attention to the punctilious penpushers, I wouldn't have got even as far as I am today.

I remember distinctly the day of December 23, 1946. Because of Christmas, the work had to be in "ahead of time," as the penpushers put it. At that time, beside editing the magazine *Candido*, I wrote stories for *Oggi*, another weekly put out by the same publisher. On December 23, then, I was up to my ears in trouble. When evening came I had done my piece for *Oggi* and it had been set up by the printer, but the last page of *Candido* was still unfinished.

"Closing up *Candido*!" shouted the copy boy.

What was I to do? I lifted the piece out of *Oggi*, had it reset in larger type and put it into my own paper.

"God's will be done!" I exclaimed.

And then, since there was another half hour before the deadline of *Oggi*, I wrote a hasty story to fill the gap.

"God's will be done!" I said again.

And God must have willed exactly what proceeded to happen. For God is no punctilious penpusher. Because, if I had heeded all the good advice poured into my ear, Don Camillo, Peppone and all the other characters in this book would have perished on the day they were born, that December 23, 1946. For the very first story of the series was written for *Oggi*, and if it had appeared there, it would have gone the way of its predecessors, and no one would have heard of it again.

But after it came out in *Candido*, I received so many letters from my two dozen

subscribers that I wrote a second story about the big priest and the big Red mayor of a village in the Po River valley.’

And a third and a fourth and ...

Guareschi reminds me of both James Thurber and Nicholas Bentley in his style of humour; like them both he was a cartoonist, his cartoons simple and spare, and like them there is a gentleness and compassion in his humour. But, unlike them, he looks likely to last better.

Perhaps because his humour does not depend on a knowledge of a particular moment in time.

“And why should I have helped you rather than the others? Your men had twenty-two legs and so had they, Don Camillo, and all legs are equal.” So says the Lord from his crucifix. And even when it does refer to a particular political moment it is only in general terms: “Those were the days when there was a great deal of argument about that piece of international political machinery known as the “Atlantic Pact,” which may (have) owed its name to the fact that between words and deeds there lies the breadth of an ocean.”

The place, “Between one and three o’clock of the afternoon in the month of August, the heat in these districts that lie under hemp and buckwheat is something that can be both seen and felt” and the era, “In the old days electric power was a luxury confined to the city, and since a moving-picture projector has to be run electrically, country people had no chance to see any pictures. But Peppone’s father mounted a dynamo on the steam engine that powered the thresher, and when his machine wasn’t needed in the fields he hitched two oxen to it and went from village to village, giving picture shows”, the life of the little community suggests something left behind in the rush to modernity which is perhaps why it has something of the attraction of Agatha Christie’s village settings.

Many years ago in my fruitless struggle to learn a bit of Portuguese I bought a book called *Dom Camilo em Moscovo* which begins: “A bomba explodiu numa Segunda-feira, por volta do meio-dia, quando chegaram os jornais.

Um habitant da vila ganhara o Totobola, o que representava um prémio de dez milhões. Segundo a imprensa, tratava-se dum certo Pepito Sbezzeguti; mas naquela terra não se conhecia nenhum Pepito, e menos ainda Sbezzeguti.”

The English version is called *Comrade Don Camillo* and starts off: The news exploded like a bomb around Monday noon, upon the arrival of the newspapers. Someone in the village had won ten million liras in the national soccer sweepstakes. The papers gave the name of the winner as Pepito Sbezzeguti, but no one in the town was known under such an exotic name. The bet collector, besieged by a curious mob, threw out his arms hopelessly.”

The mysterious winner is really the ‘Red’ Mayor Peppone. And it is his acrimonious, abusive, critical, amusing, and win-one-lose-one relationship with Don Camillo which give most of the stories their interest. The irony is that Guareschi, a strong anti-communist, created a figure in Comrade Peppone who is both memorable and as likeable, or as unlikeable, as his Catholic priest.

People tend to cling to the idea that Don Camillo was small and Peppone large and that therefore it was Don Camillo’s wit, faith, and wisdom which frequently brought him out on top. But Don Camillo was just as big as Peppone and just as willing to resort to blows, fisticuffs, threats, and bribes. It is instead their world which was small in size, petty in many of its interests and considerations, and by-passed by many of the issues of the time.

But when people sent parcels to flood victims in the Po valley in 1951 “For the people of Don Camillo and Peppone” they were paying tribute to the sense that these were real people living real lives in a real place, not only in the hearts and minds of Guareschi’s readers.

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May 2<sup>nd</sup> : Alan Marshall

May 3<sup>rd</sup> : Niccolo Machiavalli

May 4<sup>th</sup> : Marele Day

Thomas Huxley  
 May 5<sup>th</sup> : T. E. Brown  
           Karl Marx  
 May 6<sup>th</sup> : Sigmund Freud  
 May 7<sup>th</sup> : Asa Briggs  
           Robert Browning  
 May 8<sup>th</sup> : Thomas Pynchon  
 May 9<sup>th</sup> : Patricia Cornwell  
 May 10<sup>th</sup> : Olaf Stapledon  
 May 11<sup>th</sup> : Camilo José Cela  
 May 12<sup>th</sup> : Edward Lear  
 May 13<sup>th</sup> : Daphne du Maurier  
 May 14<sup>th</sup> : Maria Irene Fornés  
           Monty Roberts  
           Richard Deacon

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I sold a second-hand copy of Monty Roberts' *The Man Who Listens to Horses* to someone on the point of heading to the Antarctic and wanting some interesting reading matter for the long cold nights. I rather liked the idea of reading about horses and looking out upon penguins. I hope he did too.

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A cousin of my mother's writing about her grandfather, W. J. B. Cameron, in *A Strange Bird On The Lagoon*, says, "We often heard Dad say of "The Wild Irishman" that he had paid fifty pounds to "Professor" Rarey, to see him break in a horse, and had incorporated much of it into his own system. My sister, Pat, therefore, in the extensive researches she did for me in this book, traced down the "Professor". She copied the following from "Summerhays' Encyclopaedia of Horsemen", Warne.

RAREY, John Solomon. (1826-1866)

A Horsetamer and farmer from Ohio, who came to England in 1858 and "cured" many violent tempered racehorses. He attained his end by a process of exhaustion, and though his methods subdued a horse for a time, it was not invariably permanent. This "cure" must not be compared with "Galvayne's" humane method.

GALVAYNE, Sydney.

A renowned student of the horse and a horse breaker and trainer of the golden age. He came to England in 1884, and introduced a humane system for the training of unbroken and vicious horses. He utilized scientifically the horse's superior strength against itself, and stated that he had never had a failure. He held over three hundred classes in Great Britain and in 1887 appeared before Queen Victoria.

She goes on to comment, "Summerhays is either guilty of a base canard against Professor Rarey, or my grandfather and father incorporated a lot of Galvayne's Humane Method into their system. My father's method of breaking in an unbroken young horse was completely humane, quickly done, and produced quiet horses."

I suspect Summerhays either was biased against Rarey, as an American, or had not done his research properly.

Somerville and Ross, both skilled horsewomen, also wrote about Rarey in their story 'The Maroan Pony' in *The Irish R.M.*

The pony, to stop it winning its race, has been secreted in a small shed on the hillside, apparently only reachable by a set of steep stone steps. It is one thing to find the pony, quite another to get it out of the shed.

‘Looking back now to the affair, I cannot remember that Dr. Fraser did anything in the least remarkable. She took hold of the halter with one hand and with the other patted the pony’s neck, high up, near the ears. She also spoke to it, the sort of things anyone might say. For the life of me I could not see that she did more than anyone else had done, but Nancy lowered her head and put her ears forward.

Dr. Fraser gave the halter a gentle pull, and said, “Come on, old girl!” and the pony started forward with a little run.

At the doorway she stopped. We held our breaths. Dr. Fraser patted her again and placidly descended the first step; the maroan pony placed a trembling foot upon the threshold, steadied herself, poked her nose forward, and dropped her forefeet on to the second step.

“She’ll come down on top of her!” said Andrew, starting forward.

“Don’t touch her!” exclaimed Miss Longmuir, grasping his arm.

With the tense caution of an old dog, the pony let herself down from step to step, planting her little hoofs cunningly on the rough-set stones, bracing herself with the skill learned on the rocky staircases of her native hills. Dr. Fraser kept a step in advance of her. Thus, with slow clattering, and in deep gravity, they joined Philippa in the yard.

Five people cannot advantageously collaborate in putting a saddle and bridle on a pony, but we tried, and in the grim hustle that resulted no one asked questions or made comments. Amongst us the thing was done, and there were still seven minutes in hand when Andrew shot out of the yard on her back. Hard on her heels followed Philippa and Miss Longmuir, with scarcely inferior velocity. I returned to the remaining member of the party and found that she had seated herself on the steps.

She said she was tired, and she looked it.

“I dare say getting that beast down the steps was rather a strain?” I said, spreading the pony’s rug for her to sit on.

“Oh, that was nothing. Please don’t wait for me.”

I said in my best ironic manner that doctors were of course impervious to fatigue, and indeed superior to all human ills.

She laughed. “I admit that I was rather nervous that the thing wouldn’t work, or would break down half-way.”

“What thing?” I demanded. “The pony?”

“No. The secret. It is a secret, you know. My grandfather gave Rarey thirty pounds for it. I’ve never had much to say to horses, but I have started a jibbing hansom horse in Oxford Street with it.” She laughed again apologetically.

“You needn’t believe it unless you like. I must say I was afraid it mightn’t include a flight of steps!”

The pony wins the race. Her owners discover there is a hidden back entrance to the hillside shed. And it is clear that Rarey’s method incorporated both gentleness (and gentle words) and the understanding that horses prefer to follow.

It is this understanding which Monty Roberts refines and develops and incorporates into his skillful system.

In his book *The Man Who Listens to Horses* he gives his first step towards understanding and incorporating ...

‘My Uncle Ray told me that when Cherokees wanted to capture wild horses on the great plains of the mid-west of America, they faced the problem of how to get close enough to rope them. They overcame this obstacle in a remarkable fashion.

Instead of driving them into the neck of a valley or building other traps of that sort — which would be difficult given the landscape — they used a much quicker method.

First of all, they followed the herd of horses. They weren’t driving them hard, but simply walking after them, pressing them away.

This would continue for a day or two.

Then, when the time was right, the Cherokees would turn and walk in the opposite

direction.

Invariably, the horses would turn round and follow them. There was a yo-yo effect.

The Cherokees would simply lead the wild herd into corrals between 2-5 acres in size.

Apparently the Cherokees used similar tactics to get close to the beasts they hunted to eat. They used this same yo-yo effect to hunt deer, antelope and buffalo. To be effective with the bow and arrow, the Cherokee Indian needed to be within 40-50 feet of his target. They'd press the animals away from them for a while, then turn around and head back the other way. The animals would turn and follow them.

After this oscillatory movement had been repeated a few times, they found themselves near enough to make an easy kill.

Later on, I would come to understand the reasons behind this curious tendency of horses to turn back and seek intimacy with their pursuers, when I was to have the opportunity to observe them in the wild for myself. I would give this phenomenon a name, 'Advance and Retreat'. It would form the basis of my technique in working with horses.

But for the nine-year-old boy that I was at the time Uncle Ray told me the story, it was a mystery. I believed it to be true, but didn't know why.'

He developed his system while still a teenager and after the opportunity to closely observe the behaviour of a herd of mustangs in the wild. He demonstrated it to the Queen years later, he rode in rodeos, films (including as the stand-in for Elizabeth Taylor in the riding scenes in *National Velvet*), trained and bred racehorses, worked with problem horses, and trained others in his system of gently developing trust with each horse. As he puts it: *A good trainer can hear a horse speak to him. A great trainer can hear him whisper.*

I assumed that this understanding informed Nicholas Evans' novel *The Horse Whisperer* ... The film was more concerned with significant looks between the main characters and wide angle views of the countryside; I couldn't see that they were doing anything remarkable in the horse scenes. So I turned to the book. Evans also refers to Rarey: 'There was a man from Groveport, Ohio, called John Solomon Rarey who tamed his first horse at the age of twelve. Word of his gift spread and in 1858 he was summoned to Windsor Castle in England to calm a horse of Queen Victoria. The queen and her entourage watched astonished as Rarey put his hands on the animal and laid it down on the ground before them. Then he lay down beside it and rested his head on its hooves. The queen chuckled with delight and gave Rarey a hundred dollars. He was a modest, quiet man, but now he was famous and the press wanted more. The call went out to find the most ferocious horse in all England.

It was duly found.

He was a stallion by the name of Cruiser, once the fastest racehorse in the land. Now though, according to the account Annie read, he was a 'fiend incarnate' and wore an eight-pound iron muzzle to stop him killing too many stableboys. His owners only kept him alive because they wanted to breed from him and to make him safe enough to do this, they planned to blind him. Against all advice, Rarey let himself into the stable where no one else dared venture and shut the door. He emerged three hours later leading Crusier, without his muzzle and gentle as a lamb. The owners were so impressed they gave him the horse. Rarey brought him back to Ohio where Cruiser died on 6 July 1875, outliving his new master by a full nine years.'

*The Dictionary of American Biography* says 'Rarey's methods for the most part were merely an improvement upon those of earlier horse tamers, but more than his methods, it was his indomitable courage, iron nerve, rare patience, and self-control, and seemingly intuitive knowledge of the character of every horse coming before him that enabled him to achieve results which astonished the world and which none of his thousands of pupils could approach.' The critics of Rarey probably felt that his methods with Cruiser were not humane; he 'broke his spirit by leaving him all night alone in a stable with his forelegs tied up and his hind legs drawn up and tied to a collar which had been put over his head'. This *was* drastic. But if the only alternative was seen as blinding or destroying the horse it probably struck him as justified.

Rarey wrote two books: *The Educated Horse* (1854) and *The Modern Art of Taming Wild Horses* (1856).

I quite enjoyed *The Horse Whisperer* but at one level I found it a little disappointing. It was about human relationships; the damaged horse is a useful catalyst for the plot but I didn't really come away with any greater knowledge or understanding of the complex relationship between people and horses or, indeed, any greater knowledge of what horse whispering really involves.

And, curiously, although Rarey is remembered for his method of 'taming' horses, Galvayne is remembered for something quite different: a way to work out a horse's age by looking at a mark on its teeth. This is now known as Galvayne's Groove.

\* \* \* \* \*

Henry Blake described 42 'words' (ie sounds and postures) in his book *Talking with Horses* and it is clear that his work was based on careful observation and the desire to understand 'problem' horses.

But it sparked a curious thought. All human beings can learn to speak. There are thousands of human languages. A lot of effort has been put into trying to prove or rebut the idea of a human 'mother language' but I have a different question. What noises were natural to humans and used by all humans, before they developed speech, in the way that all horses neigh and whicker? All horses can communicate with one another. Parrots can learn to speak but we also know what noises are natural to parrots. At first glance it might be assumed that ahhs and umms, grunts and groans, various kinds of whistles and screams, are all fundamental. But are they? Similarly there is an assumption that body gestures are universal. But this too doesn't seem to be so. James Thurber wrote a delightful story called 'The Wonderful O' in which all use of the letter and sound of O is banned because a character says 'I've had a hatred of that letter ever since the night my mother became wedged in a porthole. We couldn't pull her in and so we had to push her out.' Different peoples drop different letters. The letter W doesn't appear in a number of languages. Also the letter Q. Aboriginal languages didn't have sibilants even though English-speakers would regard S as a natural human sound. Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine in *Vanishing Voices* point to the language called Ubykh in Turkey which has 81 consonants and 3 vowels and Rotokas on Bougainville which has 5 vowels and 6 consonants. (Both these languages are virtually extinct; we tend to think that what is normal in the 'big' languages has always been normal). Monica Furlong in her biography of Thomas Merton says the Cistercian monks used over 400 signs to communicate with each other without breaking their silence; God was a triangle with thumbs and forefingers raised up but for cat you made the animal sign, then curved and moved your finger and 'pulled the moustache' and 'for candle you combined the signs for bee (i.e. beeswax) and light'; while an Irishman was indicated by stroking your cheek. It raises the question as to whether there have been universal signs to go with universal sounds or whether they too always have a cultural component. Joanna Hackett in *The Reluctant Mariner* wrote "Back in Sri Lanka, we had been forced to make a conscious effort to remember that the gesture for 'no' is a nod and the gesture for 'yes' is a side-to-side wobble of the head. To us, the latter looked more like our 'no' or, perhaps, a tension-reducing neck exercise. The body language in Turkey was different again and initially confusing until we realised what was intended. To indicate 'yes', a Turk moves his head forward and down. To indicate 'no' he moves it up and back or perhaps just raises his eyebrows." Sylvia Leith-Ross in *African Conversation Piece* said, "I watched some children singing English nursery rhymes and action songs translated into Ibo. Words and tunes seemed to fit in to their surroundings, but it was curious to perceive how utterly alien were the gestures. The African child does not shade its eyes like we do, or put its hand beneath its cheek as it goes to sleep, or wave its hand, or blow a kiss. It does not even pick up sticks in the same way, or hop or skip. I wish the schools would allow the children to use their own gestures instead of these unnatural imitations". While Jaime de Angulo in *Indians in Overalls* wrote "But a good raconteur like Wild Bill or old Mary tells it with gestures, mimicry, imitation noises—a regular

theatrical performance! If there are several people in the audience they grunt in approval after each telling passage. Instead of applauding by clapping as we do, they raise their chins and say: Hunh ... ” We see clapping as a sign of appreciation but in Tibet and other places clapping is designed to frighten away bad spirits. Even good luck and bad luck come in different ways as Pamela Conder says of bats, “In China, a bat flying into the house signifies that good luck will enter the house; in Europe, the same event signifies death. In Greek mythology bats accompanied spirits to Hades.” Travel books stress the need for travellers not to touch children’s heads in one country and not to touch with their left hand in another. But to what extent are all differences and taboos cultural? Can we peel away the layers of learned behaviour and find the universal beneath?

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Many people have made their name writing about horses, or breeding, riding, and training them. But two people who are not remembered for their horse skills nevertheless are household names in the racing world.

Admiral Henry John Rous:

He was the second son of the first Earl of Stradbroke; born in 1795, he joined the navy and saw action in the Napoleonic Wars. He was sent to India as captain of the *Rainbow* but also took in a visit to Hobart arriving on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1827, then on to Sydney. This was the first of his two trips and he named both the Clarence and Richmond Rivers as he sailed up the coast. He explored Moreton Bay and named Stradbroke Island. His impressions of Australian racehorses were poor, leading him to send two thoroughbred stallions and an Arab to Australia. Back in England he eventually became Chief Steward at Newmarket, a position he held till his death in 1877. In 1850 he brought out his classic *The Laws and Practice of Horse-Racing*. In it he ranged far and wide over every aspect of horse-racing and also refined and re-worked his weight-for-age scale. This scale is still used worldwide in weight-for-age races. But, strangely enough, the race which remembers him, the Stradbroke Handicap, is a handicap rather than a weight-for-age race.

Bruce Lowe:

‘The history of the thoroughbred, like so many other departments of animal breeding, has been characterized by emphasis on the value of the male. An Australian, C. Bruce Lowe, writing about a century ago did much to shift the emphasis. Possibly no one has done more to bring the worth of mares into proper perspective. His book, *Breeding Horses by the Figure System*, was published in London in 1895, though he did not live to see its publication.

‘He set out to demonstrate that certain families are more successful than others, and he went so far as to propose that the breeder who follows these leading families will do better than the breeder who does not. In order to identify the families he went back to the beginning of recorded thoroughbred history around the time of Oliver Cromwell. He examined the merit of each mare listed in the original Stud Book on the basis of winners produced by each mare’s family, and he identified those mares by numbers:

‘The figures are derived from a statistical compilation of the winners of the three great English classic races, Derby, Oaks, and Leger. The family with the largest number of wins is No. 1, the next No. 2, and so on to No. 34, though the figures actually run up to 43, and include families whose descendants have never won a classic race.

‘It follows that Rain Lover, being from family No. 1, comes from the female line which had had the greatest success in the classics at the time of Bruce Lowe’s research. But our good horses today are found in the high numbers and low numbers alike, and his theory is totally discredited. It is a recurring theme in this book—and of course no more than an opinion—that what lies beyond about the fifth or sixth remove tells us very little about the merit of a horse either on the racecourse or at the stud. It may be appropriate to look back much farther to observe patterns and influences in a horse’s breeding, but this is very different from attaching considerable weight to a single name among many thousands. Lowe’s numbered mares are seldom closer to today’s gallopers than about 25 to 30 removes. Each number does,



incidentally, represent a named foundation mare. Number 6, for example, was a mare called Old Bald Peg ...

‘Lowe’s work is still with us and is still significant not because of his theories but because—leaving racing ability aside—it provides us with a painstaking classification of horses according to the foundation mares of the seventeenth century. It has great value for the historian, although the average follower of breeding may well be satisfied merely to know what the numeration means. Most leading authorities use the figures. The Australian Stud Book, for example, records Teppo as a member of No. 2 family. The Bloodhorse Breeders’ Association of Australia and the prestigious English magazine *The British Racehorse* use the numbers in every pedigree, as does the authoritative American publication *The Thoroughbred Record*.’

(From *The Australian Racehorse* by B. M. Wicks.)

And Bill Ahern wrote in *A Century of Winners*: ‘Nearly 100 years ago, Mr. Bruce Lowe, prominent breeding agent, undertook the monumental task of tabulating the breeding and the various winners of major races, segregating them into so-called families, according to the number of winners in top-class races, produced. For instance, No. 2 family produced the second largest number of winners. Of recent years, the Bruce Lowe system has fallen into disuse, except by out and out breeding enthusiasts, but still seems to hold up well.’

One of the most famous breeders of all time was an Italian, Federico Tesio, known as the ‘Wizard of Dormello’. Like Roberts he was the quintessential observer. Edward Spinola in a book about his work *Breeding the Racehorse* says “The keynote of the farms seemed to be that “Nature knows best”. The pastures were natural grasslands, for Tesio did not believe in irrigation which forces the growth of the grass and deprives it of its strength. He even went to the extent of favouring the horses’ natural inclination to migrate southward during the winter by shipping his weanlings each autumn to the farms of his partner, the Marquis Incisa, in the warmer climate of the Roman countryside.

‘So his colts grew up as nature intended, with plenty of freedom and exercise and good green grass, but always under his vigilant eye, for Tesio knew that the weanling of today is the race-horse of tomorrow and that training can develop but not create his qualities. As he looked over his young animals he asked only one question about each: “How does he move?” If the colt seemed to run for the sheer joy of running and with the ease and grace of the race-horse he was satisfied. If the colt was sluggish or awkward he was worried for no trainer, not even a Tesio, can win races with bloodlines alone.’

Tesio also was firmly against any idea of artificial insemination believing that sex was not simply a way to produce foals (or anything else) but that the act itself had an importance in passing on vigour. I don’t know if there is anything in this idea. That where species have been bred in test-tubes and pipettes and laboratories generation after generation something, some life-force, will eventually disappear ...

He also, perhaps more controversially, said, ‘As far as I am concerned, after giving the matter careful thought I am convinced that there is no such thing as instinct and that the word should be banished from the dictionary. We usually attribute to instinct those actions which we are unable to explain, but if we examine these so-called instinctive actions carefully, we will find that they come under one of the following headings:

1)—actions to satisfy a craving or relieve a discomfort. These actions are not the result of instinct but of *intelligent reasoning* applied to physical sensation.

2)—automatic reactions to a mechanical *centre of balance*.

3)—actions directed by a *sixth sense*. He placed this in the ears and saw it as being some kind of electrolytic linkage.

Spinola says, ‘From 1900 to 1945 Dormello averaged less than a dozen foals a year—an unbelievably low figure on which to found a worldwide reputation.’ For this reason I think his ideas deserve serious consideration.

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From *Horse Nonsense* by W. C. Sellars and R. J. Yeatman: “Lastly we come to the

controversial question — should the horse be washed? Very few people know the right answer, but as a matter of fact it is — Yes: there is no truth in the panicky rumour that horses are liable to shrink in the wash (except, of course, the special breed of Shetland-wool ponies, which have already shrunk enough and if washed any more would probably become first woolly sheep and then woolly caterpillars and finally minute particles of fluff invisible to the naked eye).”

And in case you're still feeling a bit down try J. B. Morton who wrote a column as 'Beachcomber': "SIXTY HORSES WEDGED IN A CHIMNEY. The story to fit this sensational headline has not turned up yet."

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I had come across the struggle of women to be accepted as trainers and jockeys. When Mrs Jamieson was told that Mrs MacDonald would not be allowed to be listed as the trainer of her horse Catalogue she was furious and wanted to remove her horse from the Melbourne Cup in protest. "The VRC committee was quite prepared to allow women, as owners, to support racing in Victoria; it was quite prepared to take women's money at the gate; but allow them to train ...?" Mrs MacDonald managed to talk her into allowing her horse to run and Catalogue duly won.

When Rosemary Henderson owned, trained, and rode Fiddler's Pike into 5<sup>th</sup> place in the 1994 Grand National Steeplechase in England she was over 50 years old. As a young woman she would not have been allowed to ride in the race. As she says "When I started point-to-pointing in the 1960s ladies could only ride in Ladies' Open Races."

When Miss Dorothy Shiel trained Precocious to win the Grand National Steeplechase in Victoria in 1932 according to Pierce and Kirkwood in *From Go to Whoa* she "was promptly refused entry to the presentation and was the immediate cause of a V.R.C. by-law that forbade women trainers. Training horses, said V.R.C. Chairman, L.K.S. Mackinnon, was not their proper sphere." L. K. S. Mackinnon is remembered by a race named after him. Dorothy has been forgotten.

But I hadn't given any thought to the struggle of Aboriginal people, both men and women, to take their place on the racetrack until I came across John Maynard's *Aboriginal Stars of the Turf*. In the early days there were sometimes 'Blackboys' Races' or a rider might be listed as 'Charley — Aboriginal' or just as 'blackfellow'. Yet there have been a number of brilliant Aboriginal riders. The sad thing is that to avoid discrimination and gain a first foot on the ladder they had to resort to subterfuge and hide their Aboriginal identity. The first great rider was undoubtedly Peter St Albans who by the time he was seventeen had won one Melbourne Cup and been second twice. But he seems to have had the advantage of working in a place where there was concern for the plight of Aboriginal people, the St Alban's stud in Victoria. For others such as Rae Johnstone (who called himself Portuguese) Darby Munro (who put his dark complexion down to Jewish blood) Jimmy Dries (who won every race on the program at Moree in the 1920s but called himself an Islander), Frank Duval (who called himself a Maori) and Frank Reys (who identified himself as Filipino) there is strong evidence to suggest they were *all* Aboriginal. Australia doesn't deserve its sporting stars if it is not even willing to allow them their identity.

By the time well-known Aboriginal jockey Darby McCarthy came on the scene things were changing. But he was also part of the process of change. He insisted that every success he had should be seen as an Aboriginal rather than an individual success. He once said, "At Cunnamulla, we lived between the cemetery and the sewerage outlet mate. Blacks weren't allowed up in the town mind you. What's even more important, I could not even vote in my own country brother." His scathing comments still hold true. "Now they still haven't dealt with our law, they still haven't dealt with our education. And they have got to think about reconciliation. They're running around saying we'll reconcile this we'll reconcile that, like ducky! You just can't grab a culture and law, that is one of the oldest in the world bar none and fix it all up in twenty or thirty years. You can't do that.

"Unfortunately a lot of government and a lot of our people believe you can. What are we

reconciling. It's supposed to have been a war? There's been no war. There's just been murder and a mass genocide of this country and our people and finally after a couple of hundred years, 'Yeah alright, there were people here, no more Terra Nullius anymore'."

\* \* \* \* \*

May 15<sup>th</sup> : Xavier Herbert  
Frank Baum

May 16<sup>th</sup> : Honoré de Balzac

May 17<sup>th</sup> : Robert Smith Surtees

\* \* \* \* \*

If Surtees is remembered then it is probably for his simple statement "no foot, no 'oss" which he put into the mouth of his best-known character Jorrocks. Surtees (1803 – 1864) was born in Durham in the north of England and trained as a solicitor in London. He wasn't a very successful or fortunate lawyer but he began submitting sketches to the old *Sporting Magazine* and in 1830 he combined his knowledge of the law and his love of horses to bring out the *Horseman's Manual being a Treatise on Soundness, the Law of Warranty, and generally on the Laws relating to Horses*. With a friend he started the *New Sporting Magazine*, after the old one folded, and he created Mr. John Jorrocks "a sporting grocer" of "Cockney vulgarity, good humour, absurdity, and cunning". These sketches were the inspiration for Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* but they in their turn may have been inspired by Cowper's immortal 'John Gilpin'. He also collected them up into book form as *Jorrocks's Jaunts* which came out in 1838. His friends urged him to write novels and he brought out a number including *Handley Cross*, *Ask Mamma*, and *Mr. Romford's Hounds*. I came across the suggestion that the only memorable things about his books were the lively illustrations done first by John Leech and later by 'Phiz'. But in a world where people were surrounded by horses, where horses were an essential part of life, and where accidents, scandals, and misrepresentation involving horses were everyday talk his immense popularity in his lifetime is understandable. And after managing to track down a copy of *Handley Cross* I would dispute that comment on the illustrations. In fact the illustrations are misleading; they make Mr. Jorrocks so fat he would have difficulty getting on a horse, let alone galloping across country!

Handley Cross is a small sleepy country town. But "One Roger Swizzle, a roistering, red-faced, round-about apothecary" ... "Hearing of a mineral spring at Handley Cross, which, according to usual country tradition was capable of "curing everything," he tried it on himself, and either the water or the exercise in walking to and fro had a very beneficial effect" and very soon the little town has become a fashionable spa. The local hunt, made up of farmers and shopkeepers and hangers-on is suddenly popular; its Master cannot cope with the sudden demands upon him and resigns so people look around for a new MFH. They light upon John Jorrocks. "Mr. Jorrocks was a great city grocer of the old school, one who was neither ashamed of his trade, nor of carrying it on in a dingy warehouse that would shock the managers of the fine mahogany-countered, gilt-canistered, puffing, poet-keeping establishments of modern times. He had been in business long enough to remember each succeeding lord mayor before he was anybody—"reg'lar little tuppences in fact," as he used to say. Not that Mr. Jorrocks decried the dignity of civic honour, but his ambition took a different turn. He was for the field, not the forum." "A natural-born sportsman, his lot being cast behind a counter instead of in the country, is one of those frolics of fortune that there is no accounting for. To remedy the error of the blind goddess, Mr. Jorrocks had taken to hunting as soon as he could keep a horse, and though his exploits were long confined to the suburban county of Surrey, he should rather be "credited" for keenness in following the sport in so unpropitious a region, than "debited" as a Cockney and laughed at for his pains." The "hupper crust" of Handley Cross believe they will have him as putty in their hands but Mr. Jorrocks hasn't got to his present position without possessing a very hard head. "I've lived a goodish while i' the world—say a liberal 'alf 'under'd—and I've never yet found money good to get. So long as it consists of pen, ink, and

paper work, it comes in like the hocean; many men can't 'elp puttin' their names down in subscription lists, especially when payin' time's far off, just as others can't help noddin' at auctions, but confound it, when you come to gether in the doits, there's an awful fallin' off'.

The book covers the ups and downs of his life running the hunt in Handley Cross and includes a court case involving a warranty on a horse, something Surtees knew a lot about, but he has the jury decide in Jorrocks' favour simply because they are cold, hungry, and want to finish up and go home.

Surtees has Jorrocks say, " 'Untin', as I have often said, is the sport of kings—the image of war without its guilt, and only five-and-twenty per cent. of its danger." But despite the fact that I enjoyed the book which is lively, light, amusing, and colourful, with interesting insights into dress, food, horse lore, and social customs, I can see that it wouldn't attract modern readers. It is a version of Merry England rather than Dickens' underbelly of Victorian crime and pathos. And apart from modern anti-blood-sport sensibilities it faces the problem: if you are going to read Victorian literature it makes more sense to read the giants ...

Surtees eventually returned to Durham where he became a J.P. I was curious to learn that a much-later but equally famous member of this family was the British show-jumping champion Pat Smythe. I wonder if some families have a genetic disposition to be drawn to horses ... or lions ... or budgerigars ...

And speaking of horses' feet—we used the jingle:

One white foot, take care,

Two white feet, beware,

Three white feet, sell him to your foes,

Four white feet, shoot him for the crows,'

—or the English version:

If you have a horse with four white legs,

Keep him not a day;

If you have a horse with three white legs,

Send him far away;

If you have a horse with two white legs,

Sell him to a friend;

And if you have a horse with one white leg,

Keep him to the end

—which, although it was merely a way of saying that horses with light-coloured feet were more likely to have foot troubles than horses with dark feet, always made me feel very sorry for those poor horses with their four white feet.

\* \* \* \* \*

May 18<sup>th</sup> : Betrand Russell

May 19<sup>th</sup> : Edward de Bono  
Jim Lehrer

May 20<sup>th</sup> : Kate Jennings

May 21<sup>st</sup> : Dorothy Hewett  
Harold Robbins  
Plato

May 22<sup>nd</sup> : Arthur Conan Doyle

May 23<sup>rd</sup> : Linnaeus/ Carl von Linné

May 24<sup>th</sup> : Queen Victoria  
Mary Grant Bruce  
Joseph Rowntree

May 25<sup>th</sup> : Jamaica Kincaid

May 26<sup>th</sup> : Denis Florence Macarthy  
May 27<sup>th</sup> : Tony Hillerman  
          Julia Ward Howe  
          Sir Henry Parkes  
May 28<sup>th</sup> : Nathaniel Colgan  
          Patrick White  
May 29<sup>th</sup> : André Brink  
May 30<sup>th</sup> : Julian Symons  
          Mikhail Bakunin (18<sup>th</sup> May in the old calendar)  
May 31<sup>st</sup> : Judith Wright  
          Walt Whitman  
June 1<sup>st</sup> : John Masefield

\* \* \* \* \*

I held that when a person dies  
His soul returns again to earth;  
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise,  
Another mother gives him birth.  
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain  
The old soul takes the road again.

Such was my belief and trust;  
This hand, this hand that holds the pen,  
Has many a hundred times been dust  
And turned, as dust, to dust again;  
These eyes of mind have blinked and shone  
In Thebes, in Troy, in Babylon ...

I know that in my lives to be  
My sorry heart will ache and burn,  
And worship unavailingly  
The woman whom I used to spurn,  
And shake to see another have  
The love I spurned, the love she gave.

And I shall know, in angry words,  
In gibes, and mocks, and many a tear,  
A carrion flock of homing-birds,  
The gibes and scorns I uttered here.  
The brave word that I failed to speak  
Will brand me dastard on the cheek.

And as I wander on the roads  
I shall be helped and healed and blessed;  
Kind words shall cheer and be as goads  
To urge to heights before unguessed.  
My road shall be the road I made,  
All that I gave shall be repaid.

So shall I fight, so shall I tread,  
In this long war beneath the stars;

So shall a glory wreath my head,  
So shall I faint and show the scars,  
Until this case, this clogging mould,  
Be smithied all to kingly gold.

John Masfield in 'A Creed', quoted in *Reincarnation* by Joseph Head and S. L. Cranston.

And his poem 'Good Friday':  
I had a valley farm above a brook,  
My sheep bells there were sweet,  
And in the summer heat  
My mill wheels turned, yet all  
    these things they took;  
Ah, and I gave them, all things  
    I forsook  
But that green blade of wheat.  
My own soul's courage, that  
    they did not take.

These verses suggest a very different Masfield to the salt-encrusted old sailor presented to us as Poet Laureate when I was in Primary School, a man far more at home in his famous:

I must go down to the sea again,  
to the lonely sea and the sky.  
And all I ask is a tall ship  
and a star to steer her by.  
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song  
and the white sail's shaking.  
And a grey mist on the sea's face  
and a grey dawn breaking. ('Sea Fever')

Masfield became Poet Laureate in 1930 but he had begun his sailing career at the age of twelve on the old HMS *Conway*, a training ship moored in the Mersey at Liverpool; from there he moved to the *Wanderer* and later wrote of it:

All day they loitered by the resting ships  
    Telling their beauties over, taking stock:  
At night the verdict left my messmates' lips,  
    "*The Wanderer* is the finest ship in dock."

I had not seen her, but a friend since drowned  
    Drew her, with painted ports, low, lovely, lean,  
Saying the "*Wanderer*, clipper, outward bound,  
    The loveliest ship my eyes have ever seen—"

She may have had good lines but she was known as a voodoo ship and Masfield did not stay long with her. Nor did he remain as a sailor, giving up the deck for the desk. He was a vigorous writer; poems, novels, children's stories, all poured from his pen. I suppose he isn't much read any more but I occasionally come upon an elderly person who remembers him with affection. So I couldn't resist Tim Thorne's poem called '...and a Pound of Round'—

Taking the festival posters around,  
went into the butcher's shop in the Quadrant.  
The old guy came up to the counter.

“Poetry eh?  
 Had a bloke in the shop the other day  
 talking about poetry  
 I told him: ‘Shakespeare,  
 Shakespeare’s the best poet there ever was.’  
 He said to me, ‘What about Wordsworth, eh?’  
 ‘Wordsworth? He was English wasn’t he?’  
 the one I always like is that feller  
 Mansfield. You know:  
 ‘I must go down to the seas again.’  
 That one comes to me mind  
 every time I go down to the beach  
 at night like. Yeah  
 I do a bit of fishin’.  
 ‘The lonely sea and the sky.’  
 Yeah. That’d be my favourite.  
 Course you can put a poster on the door.”

—because those lines of Masefield’s always come back to me when I go down to the beach too and I like to think they add something to the experience of the sea, a kind of romance and sense of longing ...

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There was considerable interest in ‘occult’ ideas in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century writing. For instance the best-selling novelist, Marie Corelli (in real life Mary MacKay) who was read avidly by Queen Victoria, both promoted such ideas and disowned them. She could write in *Ardath: The Story of a Dead Self*, ‘I know naught of death—save that it is a heavy, dreamless sleep allotted to over-weary mortals, wherein they gain brief rest ’twixt many lives—lives that, like recurring dawns, rouse them anew to labour ... Life after life hast thou lived ...

If I were certain that death was no more than a sleep, from which I should assuredly awaken to another plane of existence—I know well enough what I would do! ... I would live a different life *now!* ... so that when the new Future dawned for me, I might not be haunted or tortured by the remembrance of a misspent Past! ... Thus, if we indeed possessed the positive foreknowledge of the eternal regeneration of our lives, ’twould be well to free them from all hindrance to perfection here—while we are still conscious of Time and Opportunity.’

Leslie Weatherhead notes that many well-known writers—Ibsen, Tennyson, and many more—gave some credence to the idea of reincarnation. Masefield may simply have been playing with the idea of reincarnation when he wrote of a soul returning to earth or it may have been his own belief which he felt more comfortable presenting in poetry.

The most famous claim to a past life I suppose in recent times is that of Bridie Kelly, the young American woman who, under hypnosis, appeared to be reliving the life of an Irish housewife. Sceptics got to work on this problematic story and soon discovered that the young woman had had a neighbour, a Mrs Kelly, when she was growing up in Chicago. Of course she had simply regurgitated some of the experiences Mrs Kelly had shared. Problem solved. But other researchers looked at this ‘evidence’ and discovered that Mrs Kelly had been born in New York, not Ireland, and although a neighbour she had never been more than an acquaintance. No one really engaged with the question of why the young woman should move into one particular person’s experiences and resolutely stay there over many hypnosis sessions. If she was reproducing someone else’s experiences then it would seem most likely she would also bring forth a mish-mash of her own experiences, family and childhood memories ...

But Bridie Kelly as a mystery is certainly not unique. For instance an English housewife, Annie Baker, when hypnotised, only spoke in French, a language she couldn’t speak, and

appeared to be reliving a life from France in the 1790s. While the possibility of a subject putting on an Irish accent is certainly acceptable, faking it in a language you cannot speak raises more difficult issues. But it doesn't prove that she lived another life then. She may have been presenting something she was picking up telepathically, she may have been in some form of contact with a spirit, she may have been bringing out things from a movie she watched in French without taking in particularly, perhaps while on holidays. It is one of those curious possibilities which does not lend itself to easy proof or disproof. Even under hypnosis there is no proof that strange experiences belong in the subject's own past life. But it is intriguing ... and it does not surprise me that many writers have pondered on the idea ...

\* \* \* \* \*

Masefield was president of the National Book League in Britain.

'An independent voluntary society with no political, religious, or commercial bias, the National Book League is supported entirely by its members. Its aim is to increase the use of books and give information and guidance on reading in all branches of study and recreation.

Every day the *Information Bureau* of the National Book League answers scores of questions and inquiries about books submitted by its members. Lists of specially selected books on every kind of subject are provided. Titles, authors, dates, references and allusions are verified. Personal guidance is given.

All members of the League receive its famous *Book Lists* on special subjects, of which over two hundred have been published. A monthly news-sheet, *Books*, is sent to all members, who can also attend the lectures and exhibitions organized by the League, and make use of the Library and other club facilities provided at the League's headquarters in London. The annual subscription is 10s.6d.'

Odd how often things are 'specially selected' rather than simply 'selected' and I wonder if Masefield did the special selecting for members who enquired about books on ships and sailing?

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I was surprised to discover that Muriel Spark wrote a biography of John Masefield. I do not associate her with biography nor with Masefield's interests and style of writing. She says she was drawn to him because of his 'narrative art' and described him as "A lovely-looking old man. Rosy cheeks, white skin, pure-white hair and moustache and blue, blue eyes. A charming voice which carefully enunciates all vowels and speaks boldly."

He used his knowledge of sailing in his first book *Salt Water Ballads* but he also worked in a bakery, a carpet factory, and a livery stables. He says he began writing seriously in 1911 and brought out plays, both adult and children's fiction, poetry collections, autobiography and history including his histories of the battles of Gallipoli and the Somme, as well as on Shakespeare, the Spanish Main and even on St Katherine of Ledby.

Spark says of him "Buddhism interested John Masefield most of his life, and he certainly seemed to be temperamentally drawn to its teachings. He had written, in various dramatic forms, of the trial and crucifixion of Christ; there is very little suggestion of the Divine in these writings, but of the Enlightened—whether embodied in Christ, Gautama or some other figure—there is much."

\* \* \* \* \*

June 2: Thomas Hardy  
Sir Flinders Petrie  
Hedda Hopper

\* \* \* \* \*

Michael Macrone in *Brush Up Your Bible!* writes on the term 'Philistine' as from Judges 16: 7—10: Always thorns in the Israelite's sides, the Philistines here make yet another bid to foil Samson, the current Jewish champion and Judge. In this effort they have a handy ally: Samson's wife, Delilah, herself a Philistine. Here she attempts to carry off an ambush but is foiled—at which point she has the gumption to accuse Samson of tricking *her!*



Though the Philistines appear throughout the Hebrew Bible, this passage was singled out for comment in a late-17<sup>th</sup>-century German sermon, in which local anti-intellectuals were likened to the Philistines. This usage caught on in Germany and then eventually in England, where “Philistine” had earlier simply meant “enemy” or on occasion “drunkard.”

(It could, of course, be argued that the Israelites were thorns in the Philistine side.)

Thomas Carlyle, for example, referred in 1851 to “Philistines ... what we would call bores, dullards, Children of Darkness.” More famously, Matthew Arnold, that self-appointed champion of culture, warned in his *Study of Celtic Literature* (1867) that “We are imperiled by what I call the ‘Philistinism’ of our middle class,” who are characterised by “vulgarity,” “coarseness,” and “unintelligence.” Is it a surprise that Arnold was the son of an English headmaster?

But G.K. Chesterton was much kinder: ‘I have a sympathy with the tribe,’ said Father Brown. ‘A Philistine is only a man who is right without knowing why.’

Henry James in his notes for *The Europeans* says of Philistine: “if he has little claim to sagacity, Mr. Wentworth has every right to look mystified for Felix’s gloss on ‘Philistine’ is as his use of the epithet is anachronistic. Matthew Arnold, who first used the term in his essay on Heine, popularized it in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869): ‘Philistine gives the notion of something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children; and therein it especially suits our middle class, who not only do not pursue sweetness and light, but who even prefer to them that sort of machinery of business, chapels, tea-meetings, and addresses from Mr. Murphy and the Rev. W. Cattle, which makes up the dismal and illiberal life on which I have so often touched.’ Here as elsewhere, Felix seems to be reassuring Mr. Wentworth that, unlike his sister, he has no intention of upsetting the harmony of New England society by asserting a discordant identity of his own.”

Another American, Ambrose Bierce described a Philistine as ‘One whose mind is the creature of its environment, following the fashion in thought, feeling and sentiment. He is sometimes learned, frequently prosperous, commonly clean and always solemn.’

It is this image which Robert Service seems to have used in his poem, ‘The Philistine and the Bohemian’, which begins:

She was a Philistine spick and span,  
He was a bold Bohemian.  
She had the *mode*, and the last at that;  
He had a cape and a brigand hat.  
She was so *riante* and *chic* and trim;  
He was so shaggy, unkempt and grim.  
On the rue de la Paix she was wont to shine;  
The rue de la Gaité was more his line,  
She doted on Barclay and Dell and Caine;  
He quoted Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine.  
She was a triumph at Tango teas;  
At Vorticist’s suppers he sought to please.  
She thought that Franz Lehar was utterly great;  
Of Strauss and Stravinski he’d piously prate.  
She loved elegance, he loved art;  
They were as wide as the poles apart;  
Yet—Cupid and Caprice are hand in glove—  
They met at a dinner, they fell in love.

Originally, “Philistine” derived from *p’lishtim*, the Hebrew name for the so-called “sea people” (which refers only to their arrival in various places by boat rather than any essential unity to them; their migrations took them as far afield as the Black Sea and North Africa and suggests they may have been the result of natural disasters and overpopulation on the Aegean islands) who had settled in Palestine. (The place name in fact

derives directly from the Hebrew term.) John Wyclif, in his 1382 translation of Amos (9:7), actually calls the people “Palistens,” even while he uses “Philistynes” elsewhere.

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“Moreover, Egypt is geographically a part of the African continent, and the blood of indigenous Africans has always been there. Yet some scholars and other observers even today exclude Egypt from African history and include it as part of the Middle Eastern World. The questions which logically emerge from this are: who were the Egyptians and what was the relationship between them and other Africans?

One of the foremost proponents of the division of Africa into Hamitic-Negro areas was C.G. Seligman, an English anthropologist who later became a German citizen. In simplified terms, Seligman applied the concept of Social Darwinism to African ethnography, which amounted to the attribution of absolute values to white and black physical types, with the latter at the lower rung of advancement. According to Seligman, “the Hamites—who are ‘Europeans,’ i.e. belong to the same great branch of mankind as the Whites, “civilized Africa.” The civilizations of Africa are the civilizations of the Hamites, its history the record of these people and of their interaction with the two other African stocks, the Negro and the Bushmen.” Seligman described the ancient and modern Egyptians as Eastern Hamites. With a few strokes of the pen Seligman thus denied that Africans developed a civilization, and attributed the meaningful aspects of their history to outsiders! The clear inference of this hypothesis was that ‘inferior’ blacks were civilized by superior Hamites (whites), and that the degree of political and cultural evolution of Africans depended on the amount of white blood the blacks had.

Sir Harry Johnston, a popular observer of Africa in general and the Bantu in particular, graphically portrayed his views in *A Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*:

The Negro, in short, owes what little culture he possesses before the advent of the Moslem Arab and the Christian white man, to the civilizing influence of ancient Egypt; but this influence travelled to him, not directly up the White Nile, but indirectly through Abyssinia and Somaliland, and Manites, such as the stock from which the Galla and Somali sprang, were the middlemen whose early traffic between the Land of Punt and the countries round the Victorian Nyanza was the main, almost the sole agency by which the Negro learnt the industries and received the domestic animals of Egypt.

Thus it was Egypt, which was not regarded as African, that served as the civilizing force; the Hamites (whites) who were the carriers; and the blacks who were the waiting recipients. The stamp of racism thus made its indelible imprint not only on the history of Africa, Africans, and all black people, it also prejudiced scholarly studies of black people for most of a century

...

The most impressive challenge to the Hamitic concept has come from the Senegalese writer Cheikh Anta Diop who, drawing on evidence from eyewitness accounts of Herodotus and others, concluded that the Egyptians were indeed black and that their contributions to the world—agriculture, science, religion, the calendar, writing, etc—were all contributions of black people. According to Diop:

It remains ... true that the Egyptian experiment was essentially Negro, and that all Africans can draw the same moral advantage from it that Westerners draw from Graeco-Latin civilization.”

Laurens van der Post toyed with the idea that it was the ‘Bushmen’ who were the original Egyptians. It seems equally possible ...

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‘Much of the information which we possess about the predynastic Egyptians is so slight that deductions from it concerning their thoughts and beliefs are very uncertain. Not much is even known about their physical appearance, while attempts to determine their ethnic character remain very tentative. But it is now generally thought that at the time of the unification of the land the race was already very mixed, containing strains which stemmed both from Asia and

Africa. The evidence of the language spoken in dynastic Egypt in the earliest times shows that the process of fusion between Hamitic (African) and Semitic (Asiatic) peoples must have taken place over a very long period of time. It is, however, impossible to point to positive signs of how the Asiatic element arrived. In the century or so before the beginning of the First Dynasty, certain artistic and material innovations appeared in Egypt which suggest positive links with Asia; examples are the cylinder seal, certain distinctive decorative designs, and particular methods of construction with mud-brick. At this time there may well have been very strong cultural connections with the east, but to what extent they contributed to the political developments of the period will probably never be known.'

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E. E. Kellett in *A Short History of Religions* writes, 'A precise definition of religion is probably impossible. Matthew Arnold's attempt is well known: religion, in his view, was "morality touched with emotion." Unfortunately, in almost all nations, till comparatively recent times, that which all are agreed to call religion had little or nothing to do with morality: and often the first step in the construction of ethical systems was to denounce the current religion as at best non-moral. The great teachers, for example, alike in Palestine and in Greece, those men whose doctrines form the basis of modern "religion," are conspicuous for the vigour with which they combated the religion of their times. Isaiah would have nothing to do with incense or vain oblations; Micah asserted that Yahweh cared nothing for gifts or thousands of rams: yet incense, gifts and rams were the very essence of religion as understood by the men of that time. Xenophanes, Socrates, Plato are full of censures of the immoral tales told of the gods and heroes whose altars crowded every town in Greece; and Homer, in whose poems these tales were told, was politely but ruthlessly banished from Plato's moral commonwealth. The Iliad was the Bible of the people, and the basis of religion, but the ethical teacher must get rid of it. If we go back earlier, the divorce between religion and morality becomes, if possible, still clearer. "Divorce," however, is the wrong word; for the two had never been united. Religion was a series of external actions, or of abstentions from action, intended to propitiate supernatural powers: it said nothing as to what we to-day call "good conduct," and if purity of heart existed, it existed almost in spite of religious taboos. Let the reader consider the Ten Commandments as given in the thirty-fourth chapter of the Book of Exodus—a code which seems to have directed the religious life of the Hebrews till it was superseded, somewhat late, by the Ten Words of the twentieth chapter. In the earlier commands there is not one but had to do with childish superstitions, not one which is concerned with the moral law as we understand it. There is no prohibition of murder or theft, but we are straitly forbidden to seethe a kid in its mother's milk. Nothing is said about covetousness or undutifulness; but we must not keep the fat of God's sacrifice until the morning.

From "holiness," which we now regard as the very sublimation of morality, consisted then in ceremonial purity merely: it meant nothing but the avoidance of any uncleanness which might annoy the gods. To kill a man was nothing; but to touch a corpse was a horror, and necessitated a tedious process of getting rid of the taint. This sort of thing persisted, even in Judaism, down to a very late time. We are accustomed to think of the Founder of Christianity as holy. This is exactly what, in the view of the formalists, he was not. Nothing irritated these "religious" more than his disregard of technical holiness, or than his contempt for the outside washings of cup and platter.

The more deeply we probe into early religion, the more clearly we perceive how little it has to do with the morality of which Arnold speaks, however strongly it might be touched with emotion, and that, though sometimes the emotion of hope, far more often the emotion of fear. And, looking again, we discover that the second element entering into it was, strange as it may seem, an infantile and elementary, but none the less genuine, physical science. Surrounded with unknown influences, tormented with terrors of ghosts, demons, spirits of all kinds, men searched, timidly and hesitatingly, into the causes of these plagues, and leapt eagerly at the first possibilities that presented themselves for avoiding or mitigating them. Like our own people

during the Black Deaths and other catastrophes, they ran after everyone who could promise them immunity, and seized greedily on any talisman which happened to have been worn by someone who had himself escaped. And, as whole ages were ages of perpetual plague, and the whole world a nest of contagion, everybody was then as superstitious as our own grandfathers were during the cholera. Any man who professed to know was like an advertiser with his panacea to-day: that is, he was a man of "science." The science might be mistaken, but it was none the less dominating, and had all the force of an oecumenical council. The antagonism between physics and religion, which filled so great a space in modern history, did not exist in early times: on the contrary, religion was the natural development of physics, and without physics could scarcely have arisen. The priest was in fact the professor, and the minister was the medicine-man. People went to him for explanations of natural phenomena, and for relief from the fears those phenomena aroused. Out of his esoteric knowledge, such as it was, he prescribed for their diseases and dispelled their anxieties. "Do this or that," he said to them, "and these terrors will vanish."

Thus, while not every philosophy is a religion, every religion is a philosophy. Religion, to be worth anything, must cast out fears, allay bewilderment, solve perplexities: and this cannot be done without the formation of theories, that is, without philosophising. No one can conceive an object of worship, however crude or loathsome, unless he has first reflected on the "causes of things": and without such reflection he will be the victim of "terror and insane distress," of which we can hardly imagine the least advanced of human beings not to desire to rid himself.

A much more satisfactory definition of religion than Arnold's is that proposed by Sir James Frazer: "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to control the course of nature or of human life": but this considers certain actions of men rather than the state of mind leading to such actions. If we *do* consider that state of mind, we may prefer the account given by the American Howerth, and endorsed with the weighty approval of Warde Fowler: "Religion is the effective desire to be in right relation to the Power manifesting itself in the universe." We might perhaps prefer to call this a definition of *religiousness* rather than of religion, and to adopt Frazer's words for the acts such religiousness induces: and if so, we shall have a fairly satisfactory working definition both of the rituals and of the kind of mental attitude from which ritual springs. But it will, I think, be seen that religion and religiousness, thus understood, alike imply a philosophy. For it needs a philosophy to conceive of such a Power or Powers as are here postulated: and it needs still more philosophy to believe that they can be conciliated. As was said by a profound student of religion in a later stage, "He that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him: and such belief cannot arise unless the believer has first *thought* about the universe. That he first *wondered* about it is of course true; wonder is the necessary preliminary to examination. So far we may admit that emotion enters into religion. But there is not the slightest sign that the early thinkers regarded the Power they conceived to exist as in any sense moral."

Leonard Cottrell writes in *Lost Cities*: "My third conclusion is one with which some readers may disagree; it is that even the highest religions have not made men more tolerant, merciful or humane. The Assyrians, a pagan people denounced by the Hebrew prophets, behaved with the most abominable cruelty. But their worst barbarities were no fouler than those perpetrated against the American Indians by some European Christians three thousand years later. Conversely, some ancient people, also pagan 'idolators', were comparatively humane. There is little deliberate cruelty in the Hittite records. The Incas gave up human sacrifice, and from their behaviour towards their conquerors they seem to have been more just and tolerant than the Spaniards. Nor, among the Europeans, were cruelty and inhumanity confined to Catholic Spain. Protestant England conducted a profitable and barbarous slave-trade between West Africa and her American colonies.

Even in ancient Ceylon, where the lofty religion of Buddhism forbade the taking of life,

human or animal, the Sinhalese rulers ordered execution by impalement, mutilation, being crushed beneath the feet of elephants. And, as we know, all these barbarities have been exceeded in the twentieth century both in Christian Europe and atheist Russia.

Yet, in its 3000 years of existence, the civilization of Ancient Egypt, which ended more than twenty centuries ago, contains fewer records of cruelty and intolerance than any other, despite the fact that the Egyptian religion was animistic, and contained little if any ethical teaching. There seems to be no necessary connection between morality and religion.’

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A. W. Reed, known for his energetic collecting of Aboriginal myths and legends, writes, “Separated by some two thousand kilometres of ocean, and with different racial characteristics, some interesting comparisons can be made between the Aborigines of Australia and the Maoris of New Zealand. In New Zealand the famous field-worker Elsdon Best once stated that the Maori people (one of the several branches of the Polynesians) had taken the first step towards monotheism in their belief that Io was the Divine Father of Mankind, the uncreated, the creator, omnipotent and omniscient. The Io cult was an esoteric belief known only to the highest grade of Tohunga (priest), and possibly only to certain tribes. Those who had not been trained in the *whare wananga*, the school of sacred lore, were unaware even of the name of the highest and holiest of gods, being content with a pantheon of departmental gods who controlled the forces of nature, and groups of lesser deities.

... The environment that white Australians regard as barren and hostile and incapable of sustaining human life, was home to the Aboriginal, at least that part of it that belonged to his totemic ancestors. Away from that familiar territory he was indeed lost and defenceless. Within it he was a part of it, attuned to its every mood, relaxed, under the most gruelling experiences, confident in his oneness with the spirit and presence of the ancestors, living a full life in the region created for him and all who proceeded and succeeded him.

The concept of a Father Spirit, which was held by some of the larger tribes, a deity who was before and beyond even the ancestors, was therefore an astounding leap of the human mind and spirit from the material to the divine.’

The Father Spirit took on different names in different tribes; he also curiously often had a son who made his wishes known to the tribe. He was known as Baiame, Nooralie, Mungan Ngour, Bunjil, Pern-mehid (whose son was called Wirtin-wirtin-jaawan) and numerous other names. Baiame, for instance, says “I will clothe the power of my thought in flesh” and this idea, too, was widespread. It suggests that monotheism in the sense of an ultimate or supreme god or goddess was the first great leap that people took in the realms of religious thought; the massive pantheons of gods that come down to us from Egypt, Greece, Rome and elsewhere were a result of increasing urbanisation, warfare, trade, and movements of people. Other peoples’ gods were incorporated; gods too were created to be the deities of new ideas and inventions, for example, the Mesopotamian god Nabu, god of the new invention: writing.

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‘Mordle was saying, ‘My speciality, if you can call it that, is Ancient Egyptian writing and language. There are several sides to this. The actual symbols used have a primeval beauty of their own, an epic quality. Then of course there are the linguistic problems, working out the grammar and syntax of the language and so on. That sounds most frightfully dry, perhaps, but it can throw light on completely different questions in a rather exciting way. For instance, it’s always been assumed the inhabitants of Ancient Egypt belonged racially to what we now call the Middle East rather than to Africa; but certain elements in the language contradict this.’

Kingsley Amis & Robert Conquest, *The Egyptologists*.

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John L. Sherrill in *They Speak With Other Tongues* tells how in the lobby of a New York hotel a man called Harold Bredesen left his hat on a chair; when he came to pick it up he found a young woman sitting on the chair.

“At the time, Bredesen was a bachelor and his male instincts prompted him to extend the

conversation beyond a formal excuse-me-have-you-seen-my-hat? The girl noted the clerical collar and in a few minutes they were deep in a conversation on religion. After a while the young lady volunteered the information that her own religious life somehow left her dissatisfied. And soon Bredesen was telling her that he too had felt this lack, but that he had found a new dimension in his devotional life through speaking in tongues.

“Through what?” asked the girl.

“Speaking in a language that God gives you,” Bredesen said, and went on to tell her a little about his experience. In the girl’s eyes he read disbelief and also something like apprehension.

“Can you speak in these tongues any time you want to?” she said, and he thought she edged almost imperceptibly to the far side of her chair.

“They’re given us for prayer.”

“Well, can you pray in tongues whenever you want to?”

“Yes. Would you like me to pray this way now?”

The girl looked around the lobby, outright alarm in her eyes this time.

“I won’t embarrass you,” said Bredesen, and with that he bowed his head slightly and after a short silent prayer began speaking words that to him were unintelligible. The sounds were clipped and full of “p’s” and “k’s”. When he finished, he opened his eyes and saw that the girl’s face was ashen.

“Why ... why ... I understood you. You were praising God. You were speaking a very old form of Arabic.”

“How do you know?” asked Bredesen.

Then he learned that the girl was the daughter of an Egyptologist, that she herself spoke several modern Arabic languages and had studied archaic Arabic.

“You pronounced the words perfectly,” she said. “Where on earth did you learn old Arabic?”

Harold Bredesen shook his head. “I didn’t,” he said. “I didn’t know there was such a language.”

Sherrill in his study of ‘speaking in tongues’ also raises the idea that when poets sometimes reach a point where they are not communicating intelligible ideas, and he mentions Blake, Auden and Gerard Manley Hopkins, they have moved from controlled speech into ‘tongues’. “The human heart finally reaches a point where words — the dictionary definition of words — simply aren’t adequate to express all that cries out to be said.” I find this an interesting idea. And it leads on to a further possibility: did human beings seek out language because in moments of deep emotion, or trance, they began speaking in tongues? In effect they began speaking words before they had attached meaning to the sounds they found they could make?

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‘The distinguished Egyptologist Sir Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) made an extended study of Predynastic and later Egyptian occurrences of such signs and made it quite clear that rather than these early marks being the origin of Egyptian writing they were, in fact, a separate system that existed before and then later alongside the hieroglyphs. Petrie was also aware of the similarities between the Egyptian signs and those found elsewhere in the Mediterranean region, and suggested that they may have been some kind of international *lingua franca*. He also expressed the belief that because of their similarity of form with the signs that were later used in alphabetical scripts, these early signs may well have something to do with the origins of the alphabet. Other early investigators also expressed the opinion that the various groups of signs in the Aegean and Mediterranean cultures might well represent an early, even prehistoric, forerunner of writing.’ Richard Rudgley in *Lost Civilisations of the Stone Age*.

Petrie wrote *A History of Egypt* in 6 volumes as well as *Egyptian Tales* in 2 volumes and *Egyptian Decorative Art*.

His great friend was Archibald Arthur Sayce whom he’d met at Oxford. Sayce was an

Orientalist but interested in almost everything, Hebrew and Assyrian studies, the deciphering of rare scripts, a pioneer of Hittite studies, a champion of the infant field of ethnology. He is described as “a bachelor of independent means, forced by delicate health to winter in a warm climate”. He was a prolific writer of papers and reports on the state of archeology and did some sterling work himself; as well as floating various provocative ideas such as his view that the Hyskos pharaohs came from Mitanni bringing with them their worship of the sun, an idea which seems more likely to have originated in a land where people depended on the sun’s warmth rather than a river’s flooding for their crops and wellbeing. But he could not quite rid himself of the idea of superior and inferior races and it makes some of his writing hard to read. Even so I am grateful to him for the interesting way he suggested, in *The Races of the Old Testament*, that, “In Hebrew, as in other Semitic languages, the relation between a mother-state to its colony, or of a town or country to its inhabitants, was expressed in a genealogical form. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were regarded as “the daughter of Jerusalem,” the people of the east were “the children” of the district to which they belonged.” So when “Canaan begat Zidon his first-born, and Heth,” it meant that the city of Sidon and the Hittites were both to be found in Canaan. The Sidonites were Phoenicians, the Hittites came from the northern mountains. When “Elam and Assur” were given as the children of Shem it meant that Assyria, Elam and also Babylonia were neighbours. “They constituted the three great monarchies of the eastern world, and their three capitals, Nineveh, Susa, and Babylon, were the three centres which regulated the politics of Western Asia. They were brethren not because the natives of them claimed descent from a common father, but because they occupied the same quarter of the world.” The complex way symbolism, ethnology, and geography were intermingled is interesting and even, at times, rather beautiful.

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Herman Melville wrote, “Champollion deciphered the wrinkled granite hieroglyphics. But there is no Champollion to decipher the Egypt of everyman’s and everybeing’s face. Physiognomy, like every other human science, is but a passing fable.”

Champollion is credited with the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone although the history of the stone suggests that it was Fate, Chance, Predestination, Something, which brought knowledge of its engraved languages into his life and made him famous.

Peter France in *The Rape of Egypt* writes, “In 1799 Captain Bouchard, officer of the Engineers, had been digging the foundations of a defensive position called Fort St Julien on the west bank of the Nile, when he noticed a large chunk of black basalt with inscriptions on its face lying in the mud. When the rock was cleaned, it could be seen that the inscriptions were in three separate bands, the lowest in Greek, the second in unknown characters, and the third in hieroglyphics. If the inscriptions turned out to be translations into different languages of the same text, the stone might provide a key to the decipherment of hieroglyphics. The philologists of the Institute indentified the middle band of writing as ‘cursive characters of the ancient Egyptian language’, and recognised Egyptian words in the Greek band. The first step had been taken towards the greatest advance of knowledge in the history of Egyptology.”

The Rosetta Stone in that time when England was taking over from France as the European power in Egypt was sent as a gift to George III who could see no use for it and passed it on to the British Museum. A copy was sent to Paris.

Many people had looked at the Egyptian records in hieroglyphs and wondered. The Greeks thought they “enshrined the ancient and occult wisdom of Egypt”. Athanasius Kircher believed they could be deciphered, the Abbé Tandeau believed they were arbitrary marks and decorations rather than symbols, the Chevalier de Palin linked them to Chinese characters, Marie-Alexandre Lenoir wrote at length to prove they were a form of Hebrew; Jean Jacques Barthélemy, George Zoega, and others promoted and published theories.

The Stone had first to have its Greek translated and Professor Porson in London and Dr Heyne in Germany did this; Sylvestre de Sacy was able to pick out proper names in the cursive Egyptian, Johan David Akerblad broadened this process but was stymied because he failed to

realise the text used no vowels. Thomas Young took this further by realising that the hieroglyphs were not presentations of objects, but rather presentations of sounds. But Young was not singleminded about this research. He was doing important studies in optics and many other fields.

Jean-François Champollion was dedicated to this one thing—the decipherment of hieroglyphics. All his studies were to that end. He learned Arabic, Syrian, Chaldean, Coptic, Persian (and eventually kept his own journals in Coptic). He was nineteen when he became Professor of History at the University of Grenoble. He believed the Egyptian system worked symbolically but he too came to develop his system using a phonetic base.

‘There is little doubt that Champollion learned more from Young than he was prepared to admit, and that the discoveries which were announced with such a flourish, and which have since been celebrated among Egyptologists, were less of a sudden revelation than a patient and skilled extension of existing research. However, it would be as useless to attempt to diminish Champollion’s great achievements as it would be to perpetuate the image of a genius working in isolation, which he and his supporters sought to promote:

“With the force of an earthquake the illustrious Frenchman overthrew the puny edifices of his predecessors; and from that hour, the Annals of Egypt, her time-honoured chronicles, her papyri crumbling in the dust of ages ceased to be mysteries! The ‘Veil of Isis’—‘the curtain that no mortal hand could raise’—which, for 2000 years had baffled the attempts of Greeks and Romans, with the still more vigorous efforts of modern Egyptologists—was lifted by CHAMPOLLION LE JEUNE.”’

He became Conservator of the Egyptian collection in the Louvre.

The same could be said of Henry Rawlinson, who is known as the ‘Father of Cuneiform’; he too depended on the work of others, the discoveries made by illiterate boys in the desert, the help and support of fellow academics ... but particularly ‘his wild Kurdish boy’ lowered on a rope to transcribe rock inscriptions in inaccessible cliffs and clefts ...

But it is impossible to write of ancient Egypt without feeling a sense of regret for what has been lost, damaged, destroyed, stolen, dispersed ...

Peter France gives chapter and verse to the first swarm of human locusts but every writer on Ancient Egypt gives at least lip service to the incalculable sense of loss. Gerald O’Farrell in *The Tutankhamun Deception* takes this to the far reaches of human greed. He claims that Howard Carter and Lord Carnavon did not find the tomb in 1922 but at least eight years earlier when they began systematically looting its riches. The official ‘opening’ was a brilliantly stage-managed piece of theatre. Most writers these days suggest Howard Carter had already been inside the tomb and had some idea of its contents but O’Farrell presents it as a full-scale deception which involved moving the artifacts into a smaller area (and thus involved cutting up chariots and bundling things into untidy piles which, it was then claimed, showed that tomb-robbers had been there in ancient times ... but had kindly left most of the gold and jewels to be found in the 20<sup>th</sup> century), building new walls and repainting murals. He makes two other claims which I found less convincing: that the papyri originally mentioned by various people in connection with the tomb (and most tombs contained papyri) disappeared before being listed in the contents and that this material contained the information that Tutankhamun’s father Akhenaten with his attempt to develop the sun as a single supreme deity is in fact the Moses of the Old Testament with his attempt to impose monotheism on the Jewish people ... and the so-called curse of the mummy was a systematic attempt to kill everyone who had read or heard about the contents of the papyri. He does not hazard a guess as to who might have done the murders.

Interesting. But I don’t see any great likelihood that the papyri would have referred to Jews or Israelites as they did not then form a definable religious or ethnic identity in the melting-pot that was Egypt. I also have some concerns about the use of the word monotheism to describe early movements towards the idea of ‘one God’. As soon as the sun was made the centre of worship it drew people’s gaze towards the heavens and raised questions as to what



kind of deities were represented by the moon and stars. More particularly what we see as monotheism back beyond say three thousand years is in fact a belief in a *chief* god. 'Thou shalt have no other gods *before* me.' Every ancient civilisation accepted that other peoples believed in other gods and rarely tried to impose their god on anyone else. Different peoples had different gods. Gods watched over their chosen group of people. And every civilisation tended to elevate one or sometimes two gods to chief status. Lesser gods sometimes retained their role in the pantheon. And sometimes they gradually faded to become mere angels, demons, giants, monsters, devils, spirits ...

In fact this question of the racial identity of the peoples of the Upper and Lower Kingdoms of Ancient Egypt is a fascinating one. And I would like to add yet another strand to the weaving. In various places I have come across the suggestion that at least one pharaoh had red hair and that fair-skinned red-haired people were sometimes used as special sacrifices in that society. I also came upon the information that when the Spaniards first arrived in the Canary Islands they found fair-skinned blue-eyed people. The Guanche people of the Canaries are believed to have come from Morocco. But the idea came to me: Plato is said to have garnered the idea of Atlantis in Egypt. He recast it for a Greek audience. And all stories have two tendencies when constantly re-told and passed on to new listeners; their sense of exaggeration grows, numbers get bigger, events became more grandiose, people acquire a larger-than-life quality; and they tend to incorporate other stories. The original single event becomes a series of events or a massively intertwined multiple event. Although much has been written about Plato and his interpretation of the event no one seems to have really asked what its significance to Egypt might have been.

This is just a theory. The Celtic peoples spread right across Europe from the far west to Asia Minor and they are distinguished by language affinities and cultural affinities rather than a particular racial aspect. But who were their forebears? I would like to suggest that the fair-skinned red-haired people who existed as a remnant population right across north Africa from Egypt to the Canaries were proto-Celts. As the majority of people who later became known as Celts moved into Europe, both through Asia Minor but also, importantly, from north Africa into the Iberian peninsula and by boat up the western shores of Europe and out to the Canary Islands, small pockets of proto-Celts remained in north Africa gradually becoming a curiosity, either elevated to god-like status or despised and feared and treated as scapegoats.

We know that Aboriginal people crossed open ocean more than fifty thousand years ago to reach Australia. Whether they used rafts, canoes, large tree trunks, simple coracle-type vessels, debris or other means we do not know. But human beings took to the sea long before there were identifiable civilisations such as the Phoenicians known for their sea-going abilities. I believe that in the last Ice Age the Canary Islands formed a large connected land mass much closer to the African mainland than it now is. And it was almost certainly populated. It seems very unlikely that its people had large advanced cities but they may have used soft volcanic tufa as well as thatch and stones.

My idea that the last Ice Age ended with a gentle rise in sea level was dispelled by reading *Eden in the East* by Stephen Oppenheimer. The picture he creates in the Atlantic is of a massive and sudden rise in the sea level, huge tsunamis created as the great ice sheets covering northern Canada slipped sideways into the North Atlantic causing an increase in earthquakes, volcanic activity, unnatural amounts of rainfall caused by the greater amount of material in the atmosphere ... in other words a disaster for people living along the coasts of the low-lying land masses. It may have been at this time that the land bridge connecting Iberia and Africa was finally covered in a dramatic and memorable inrush of water into the Mediterranean. Is this the story that was carried across north Africa to Egypt as the Canary Islands once so close and accessible to Africa became remote and forgotten and myths grew up about its people? By the time the stories reached Egypt they were easily re-cast to suit Egyptian beliefs that an advanced civilisation naturally must have had large imposing stone buildings and must have carried out wars against all the neighbouring kingdoms. Because Plato only mentions a war against Athens

it has been natural to assume that if Atlantis existed it was most likely somewhere close to Greece. But it seems very unlikely that the Egyptians would have had a story in which the only war recorded was fought against Athens. It seems far more likely that Plato dropped anything he didn't think would interest his audience back home in Athens.

Along with the fascinating mix of African and Near Eastern peoples in Ancient Egypt I would like to add my proto-Celts. And the Greeks added their own mixture when Alexander the Great invaded Egypt in 331 BC and via the Ptolemaic dynasty gave us the enduring figure of Cleopatra.

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'And another memory of those Brecon days is of the Flinders Petries, who came down and stayed with us on one of their rare holidays. The term 'holiday' is a relative one. Petrie's mind never 'let up' for an instant. He had chosen 'stone circles' and cairns for his holiday task, and morning after morning he would go off into the landscape with this set purpose. On the first day I asked him what instruments he proposed to take with him. A look of ineffable cunning came into his eyes as he produced a single slender bamboo pea-stick and—a visiting-card. The pea-stick, he said, planted in the ground gave him the line, whilst the visiting-card, sighted carefully along two of its sides, gave him a right-angle. At night after dinner, by the light of an oil-lamp, he would get out a notebook containing lists of measurements resulting from his day's work in the field, and, with the help of a logarithm table, would ultimately reduce them to a schematic diagram.

'I recall this story as a curious, rather human sidelight on the paradoxical character of a man whose microscopically precise measurements of the pyramids of Gizeh are almost legendary. By his incredible ingenuity complex problems were liable to be rendered excessively simple and surmountable, and simple problems might be tangled into inextricable complexities. But he was a genius in the full sense of that abused term. Younger generations have sometimes blamed him for sinning against their own standards, forgetful that the immense stretch of his working life extended long after his period of intellectual receptiveness had passed. We might as well blame Xerxes for not deploying torpedo-boats at Salamis, or Napoleon for attacking the British squares with cavalry instead of machine-guns. Petrie fought with the weapons that he knew or himself invented, and in his youth fought better than any of his contemporaries in the East.

'His unresting mind is my last memory of him. It was years afterwards, early in 1942, when I happened to be engaged upon fieldwork of a non-archaeological kind in Egypt. Petrie had then been living for several years in Palestine, and one day I heard somehow or other that he was dying. I took twenty-four hours' leave, drove across Sinai to Jerusalem, and made my way to the hospital where Petrie in his eighty-ninth year lay placidly upon his death-bed. The picture of him is stamped on my mind. He was swathed in white sheets, and a sort of turban of white linen was about his head. His grey beard and superb profile gave him the aspect of a Biblical patriarch. His mind was running even faster than was its wont, as though it had a great distance still to cover before the approaching end. In the course of ten minutes it ranged without pause over a wide variety of matters, from the copper implements of Mesopotamia to the lethal incidence of the malarial mosquito in Gaza. I left the room quietly, my brain stretched by the immensity and impetus of a mind for which there were no trivialities in life and no place of respite.'

*Still Digging* by Sir Mortimer Wheeler.

Sir Flinders Petrie was the grandson of Matthew Flinders who, with George Bass, was the first explorer to circumnavigate Australia.

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June 3<sup>rd</sup> : Larry McMurtry  
Cicero

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What were you doing when Kennedy was assassinated? What were you doing when the

Berlin Wall came down? I have no idea. Just the usual, I suppose. The Twin Towers? Well, as we heard on the early news, I assume I was having breakfast or washing up or something of that nature. But I do know exactly what I was doing when I heard that Baghdad's Museum had been looted and priceless treasures stolen or destroyed. I was reading Larry McMurtry's *Some Can Whistle*.

Now it wasn't his fault, he is a lively and very readable writer, but the book suddenly seemed to be all that is wrong with America, as in: 'I said vomit!' T.R. said. 'Impeccable taste makes me want to throw up. Who gives a fuck, other than rich people? I hate impeccable taste. I guess I was just born tacky.'

The Land of Tack. Tacky language, tacky relationships, tacky ideas, tacky perspectives, tacky solutions. It wouldn't matter if the USA was a small non-influential nation. A tacky Iceland or a tacky Tonga (not that I have ever thought of either nation in such terms) is not going to spread its tack to the far corners of the earth. But American tack undermines and diminishes us all; we start looking for simplistic solutions, we see things in dollars and cents, we believe a few casual slogans and references to God, democracy, and freedom are a good substitute for the individual and collective growth of human courage, wisdom, and spirituality. We start looking for the artificial, the quick fix, the constant restless moving on, the wasteful, the wanton, the irresponsible.

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'Indians who broke the British salt monopoly, Danes who obstructed Nazi military shipments, Chileans who organized against dictatorship: many who used nonviolent action instinctively recognized that power derived from what they did, not only from what was done by those who sat in palaces and presidential mansions. In the words of the great theoretician of nonviolent power, Gene Sharp, "Nonviolent action is possible, and is capable of wielding great power even against ruthless rulers and military regimes, because it attacks the most vulnerable characteristic of all hierarchical institutions and governments: dependence on the governed." '

Peter Ackerman & Jack Duvall *A Force More Powerful*.

This does not work where people have been deemed completely expendable: the Jews under the Nazis, the Aborigines in Australia, the East Timorese and West Papuans under Indonesia, Tibetans, rainforest and nomadic tribes, people whose presence is seen merely as a nuisance. Other ways of coping and working for change have to be found. But no one has ever suggested that Saddam Hussein did not depend on the governed.

George W. Bush could have gone down to his local library to learn that. Two hundred billion dollars and rising, the loss of much of Iraq's priceless heritage, the killing and maiming of little children, further ecological damage, the undermining of the position of women in Iraqi society, confused notions of indebtedness, gratitude, anger, and powerlessness ... all this and more when set against the possibilities of people working slowly but steadfastly for their own liberation and empowerment ...

It should be engraved on every political institution: You Are Dependent On The Governed.

Last week I happened to read two books which look at American society from what seem at first to be very different perspectives:

David Alexander in *Conspiracies and Cover-Ups* wrote "It's just that the grade-school conditioning about how godlike we Americans are, how noble and how great our institutions, how mighty our science and industry, and conversely how corrupt and impoverished just about everyone else on earth is, has finally begun to wear off after Vietnam, Watergate, Iran-Contras, insider trading, Abscam, Heaven's Gate, Nazi gold at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Monica Lewinsky, the Florida ballot recount and a thousand other unpleasant revelations, large and small, that have shattered post-World War II notions of infallibility that were once held by most Americans as unshakeable articles of truth.

"The imperfections, the hypocrisy, the corruption, the scams, the bullshit—all of it was always there, but nobody wanted to look at it square-on. Today it's just the opposite. People

can't help looking and are scared by what their eyes behold. My position is that conspiratorial cabals are as much a functional part of society as are flags, megacorps, toxic waste, paper money and presidential groupies.

"But as is the case with so many things, right and wrong, good and bad, sick and well, it all adds up to a question of degree. When conspiratorial modes of dealing with situations become business-as-usual, when the cult of secrecy and lies becomes the preferred mode of interpersonal and intergroup dealings, when the machinations of the few at the top become the style of doing business for those in the middle and bottom, then a cancer of sorts has spread through the body politic and it must be rooted out before it begins to mutate into the HIV of totalitarianism, as happened in Germany and Italy seventy-odd years ago, and in Russia twenty-odd years before that.

"Whether conspiracy theories are wrong or right, their very currency has important consequences for everyone. If there are segments of society with little or no accountability, it robs the rest of us of freedom and introduces a way of life based on deception and fraud. Once telling lies becomes a way of life and doing business, once it's taken for granted that nothing anybody tells you—whether it be the president, your doctor, or the mechanic fixing your car—can be totally believed, then we live in a Kafkaesque world of increasing insanity, unreality and amorality.

"Another consequence of the lie as a way of life is that it pumps up the level of rage in society. A person lied to is a person used and a person used soon becomes a person angry. Multiply that anger by a factor of around two hundred million and you get a compelling explanation for the level of hostility on the roads and in the market place that has never before been greater. It explains a great deal about why a total stranger will whip out a handgun and shoot another total stranger on the highway for cutting in front of him, or why a schoolboy will tote a rifle to school with him one day and gun down other schoolchildren eating lunch in the cafeteria."

He ends his account: "Conspiracy theorists posit a deliberate interlocking, overarching master plan to explain these developments, but I have my doubts. It could simply be that there's an historical drift toward a less "free" society, at least by previous definitions of the word "freedom," and that the price for a more peaceful and stable world is the imposition of a corporate-style global technocracy, and that this is the true "new world order" that is in store, for us.

"If so, it's a drift that's been propelled by the increasing partnership of global business interests with government and a style of management native to commercial enterprises that has transformed the way government runs itself, turning politicians into technocrats and cutting more and more of the bottom line from public works programs of every type.

"It's a drift from a government of ideals to a government of balance sheets, a change from a humanistic standard of values to one based on indifferent calculation of advantage and disadvantage, profit and loss, status seeking and the application of leverage.

"It's a drift toward a society that enshrines cynicism and disdains compassion, but that has so lost its ethical footing that it does not even dare to admit its duplicity to itself and so is forced into the ultimate cover-up—the chronic self-deception of Orwellian double-think.

"In this case, the most dangerous conspiracy of all may well be the conspiracy of silence that nurtures this tragic state of affairs on the part of those who should know better. If we're not careful, it may usher us all into a future many times more bleak, and one, unlike today, from which there is no longer a way back to the place we started."

Whereas B. R. Myers subtitled his *A Reader's Manifesto* as 'An Attack on the Growing Pretentiousness in American Literary Prose'. It is true that pretentiousness seems a very small 'crime' compared with lies and cover-ups. But ...

He provides 'Ten Rules For "Serious" Writers:

I. Be Writerly. Read aloud what you have written. If it sounds clear and natural, strike it out. This is the whole of the law; the rest is gloss.

- II. Sprawl.
- III. Equivocate
- IV. Mystify
- V. Keep Sentences Long
- VI. Repeat Yourself
- VII. Pile On The Imagery
- VIII. Archaize
- IX. Bore

X. Play the Part ... 'Make sure everyone understands that while the English language might have worked for pikers like Shakespeare, it's a couple of sizes too small for what you have to say. Pompous? Sure. But most interviewers are like most readers; the more pompous you act, the more deferential they will become.'

These rules are well worth keeping in mind every time you sit down to write. How you use them, of course, is up to you.'

We are told constantly that we are in the midst of the info-revolution. I wonder. Dickens has a lot to say to his readers about 19<sup>th</sup> century England. I'm not sure who I would go to for an insight into twentieth century USA. Twenty-first century? There is a daunting galaxy of words swirling around out there. But trust is another matter.

Of course if Americans want a society based on dishonesty, pretension, and tack that is entirely their choice and who am I to murmur that there are other possibilities? But what I strenuously object to is the export of that vision of society and its underpinnings. The US seduces, bribes, bullies, threatens, and invades in its efforts to clone pro-and-proto-American societies across the globe. For example, I came across an article in our local peace newsletter *Peace Priorities* which was an excerpt from a George Monbiot article from *The Guardian* of March 26, 2003:

"Columnist David Aaronovitch has suggested that before September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Bush administration was "relatively indifferent to the nature of the regimes of the Middle East". Only after America was attacked was it forced to take an interest in the rest of the world.

"If Aaronovitch believes this, he would be well advised to examine the web-site of the PROJECT for the NEW AMERICAN CENTURY, the pressure group established by, among others, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Jeb Bush, Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis Libby, Elliot Abrams, and Zalmay Khalilzad, all of whom are now in government.

"Its statement of principles, signed by those men on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1997, asserts that the key challenge from the US is "to shape a new century favourable to American principles and interests." This requires "a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges: a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad: and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities".

"On January 26<sup>th</sup> 1998, these men wrote to President Clinton urging him to "enunciate a new strategy", namely the "removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power". If Clinton failed to act, "the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states and a significant portion of the world's supply of oil will be put at hazard". They acknowledged that this doctrine would be opposed, but "American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council." Scotland's Sunday Herald obtained a copy of a confidential report produced by the Project in September 2000, which suggested removing President Saddam was the beginning not the end of the strategy.

"While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein." The wider strategic aim it insisted was "maintaining global US pre-eminence."

"Another document obtained by the Herald written by Paul Wolfowitz and Lewis Libby called upon the US to "discourage advanced industrial nations from challenging our leadership

or even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.”

“On taking power Bush’s administration was careful not to alarm its allies. The new president spoke only of the need “to project our strength with purpose and humility and to find new ways to keep the peace”. From the first week in office, however, he began to engage not so much in nation building as in planet-building.

“The ostensible purpose of Bush’s missile defence programme is to shoot down incoming nuclear missiles. The real purpose is to provide justification for the extraordinary ambitious plans—contained in the Pentagon document entitled “VISION for 2020”—to turn space into a new theatre of war. Developing orbiting weapons systems that can destroy instantly any target anywhere on earth.

“By creating the impression that his programme is merely defensive, Bush could justify a terrifying new means of acquiring what he calls “full spectrum dominance” over planetary security.

“Immediately after the attack on New York, the US government began establishing “forward bases” in Asia. US now has bases in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgistan, Tajikistan and Georgia. Their presence has destroyed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation which Russia and China had established in an attempt to develop a regional alternative to US power.

“In January the US moved into Djibouti, ostensibly to widen its war against terror, while incidentally gaining control over the Babal-Mandab—one of the world’s two most important oil shipping lanes. It already controls the other one—the Straits of Hormuz.

“The United States now exercises strategic control over almost all the world’s major oil producing regions and oil transport corridors.

“It has used its national tragedy as an excuse for developing new nuclear and biological weapons while ripping up global treaties designed to contain them. All this is as the project described. Among other policies, it has called for the development of a new generation of biological agents, which will attack people with particular genetic characteristics.

“Why do the supporters of this war find it so hard to see what is happening? Why do the liberal interventionists who fear that Saddam Hussein might one day deploy a weapon of mass destruction refuse to see that Bush is threatening to do just this against an ever growing number of states?

“Is it because they cannot face the scale of the threat, and of the resistance necessary to confront it? Is it because these brave troopers cannot look the real terror in the eye?”

And now that I have depressed you utterly—here is a little piece from Erma Bombeck’s *The Grass Is Always Greener Over The Septic Tank*:

“Following World War II, when the nation began its migration to the suburbs, there was fear that the economy would give way to a period of depression.

“There entered upon the scene three commodities destined to bring the country to its economic feet again: The Picture Window, the Green-Lawn Syndrome, and two teenage dolls, Barbie and Ken.

“No one could have imagined the impact these three items had on the spending habits of the settlers. In retrospect, it was simply a matter of figuring the odds. Thirty million suburbanites, all supporting and maintaining a picture window, green grass, and two naked dolls—it would have brought any nation out of the darkness of despair and into prosperity once more.”

Or if you would like a different kind of cheering up, try this from Han Suyin’s *The Crippled Tree*: “But in 1905 a boycott of American goods by the Chinese occurred, and it staggered the Western Powers. It was the first time that the Chinese used, and proved immensely successful at using, modern methods of economic sanctions. The boycott was in protest against immigration laws imposed by America on coloured and “Asiatic” labour. The Americans became afraid, and let the Hankow-Canton railway go, although at an enormous profit.”

And if economics is your thing: here is a conversation from Nicholas Coleridge's *With Friends Like These*: 'I keep being told,' she said, 'that you supplied weapons to the Vietcong during the Vietnam War. Wasn't it rather immoral as well as illegal to do that. When you knew they were being used to kill young American conscripts?'

Greer took a long time before replying and you could hear the tension on the tape.

'You may be right. I can see that to somebody of your generation, particularly if they were impressionable emotionally it might look that way. But don't forget,' he continued steadily, 'that nobody other than Beijing was sending anything to Hanoi, and the Chinese weapons were either basic or redundant issue, didn't work half the time. Whereas Saigon was being shipped several hundred million dollars' worth *a month* by the Americans, probably seven hundred billion over the course of the war. Heinous waste of money, of course. It'd have been far cheaper, as I never tire of pointing out, to have presented each and every member of the Vietcong with a villa in St Tropez and a staff to run it.'

I can't say that villas in St Tropez ever occurred to me but I have often thought that the entire population of Vietnam, men, women and children, could have simply been handed a few million piastres each, urged to Buy American, and left to get on with the job of becoming enthusiastic capitalists. Those who refused on principle no doubt would have been told: 'This is your choice: You take our money or we bomb the hell out of you!' A miserable choice but warfare would soon become a thing of the past if the costs of wars went into, rather than out of, the pockets of ordinary people.

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George Bernard Shaw wrote: 'A healthy nation is as unconscious of its nationality as a healthy man is of his bones. But if you break a nation's nationality it will think of nothing else but getting it set again.' He was, of course, thinking of Ireland. It could be used in many cases. But the puzzling question it raises is: If Australia is a healthy nation, and we like to think we are, democratic, free, open, prosperous, with a fine egalitarian tradition, respect for human rights, all those things in degrees, then why are we so *conscious* of our nationality?

The same question might well be asked of the USA.

I began a little poem called 'God Bless the Democratic Republic of—', the first two verses run:

God Bless—it sings so often in our ears—  
And then the booming comes so pat—America!  
Bells and whistles on, prancing palomino ponies,  
Marching girls and stepping majorette—all that jazz—God Bless!

You never hear—well, God Bless the Democratic Republic of—  
The Hermit or the Hashemite Kingdom of—the Unitary Nation—  
The People's Republic of—if you've heard, I haven't, and I wonder  
Why? Are they blest already and know full well that blessing's theirs?

The patriotism of the United States has such an 'in your face' quality that it appals me. So I was curious to come upon this little piece introducing a story called 'The Man Without A Country': "The Man Without A Country ranks as one of the most inspiring tales of patriotism ever written. In this day and age, when no one thinks of these United States as anything but a firmly knit nation, it is difficult to realize that at one time it was necessary to inspire patriotic fervor by speeches, pamphlets and books. It was with an eye to showing what one's country means to its citizens that Edward Everett Hale wrote "The Man Without A Country." The story was first published in 1863 during the years when the nation was being torn by bitter strife, and though it had no foundation in fact, there were several historical incidents which gave the author ideas for his story.

"When Scott wrote "Napoleon" he told of a pathetic incident which occurred after the overthrow of the great Emperor. Napoleon had surrendered himself to Captain Maitland of the

“Bellerophon” and owing to some fantastic delusion, he regarded himself as a guest on board the ship. The English considered this attitude to be rather much of a joke, and it was not long before Napoleon was made a prisoner on St. Helena, despite his complaints that he was the victim of a breach of trust. Upon reading this story, Hale had the feeling that the English government would have been much wiser if it had allowed Napoleon to remain on the “Bellerophon.” Thus he would have been carried from port to port, and never would have had the opportunity to communicate directly with anyone. This idea became the basic plan for Philip Nolan’s punishment in “A Man Without A Country.” There were several other half historical and half fictional facts which entered into this story. Hale used names of actual naval men and ships, though he was careful to place them in different localities and different times from those in which they actually existed. So the story of Philip Nolan—The Man Without A Country—inspired by truth, and colored by imagination, stands as a literary triumph in patriotic writing and is destined to incite a feeling of national loyalty where it is read.”

(Leonard S. Davidow. 1937)

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“It’s not about oil, they say. But if Iraq produced radishes instead of oil, who would ever think of invading it?” (Eduardo Galeano, *New Internationalist*, May 2003.)

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TABBY: from Al-’at-tabiya, a suburb of Baghdad named for Prince Attab where a cloth was made known as *attabi*; this was usually striped. Later applied to cats.

(John Edwards, *Multilingualism*.)

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“And how do you control the oil? Nobody puts it more elegantly than the New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman. In an article called ‘craziness Pays’, he says, ‘the U.S. has to make clear to Iraq and US allies that ... America will use force, without negotiation, hesitation, or UN approval’. His advice was well taken. In the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as in the almost daily humiliation the US government heaps on the UN. In his book on globalization *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Friedman says, ‘The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist. McDonald’s cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas ... And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley’s technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.’ ”

(Arundhati Roy in *The Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire*.)

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Michael A. Bellseiles in *Arming America* writes, “An astoundingly high level of personal violence separates the United States from every other industrial nation. To find comparable levels of interpersonal violence, one must examine nations in the midst of civil war or social chaos. In the United States of America in the 1990s, two million violent crimes and twenty-four thousand murders occurred on average every year. The weapon of choice in 70 percent of these murders was a gun, and thousands more are killed by firearms every year in accidents and suicides. In a typical week, more Americans are killed with guns than in all of Western Europe in a year. Newspapers regularly carry stories of shootings with peculiar causes, like the case of the Michigan man who shot at a coworker who took a cracker from him at lunch without asking. In no other industrial nation do military surgeons train at an urban hospital to gain battlefield experience, as is the case at the Washington Hospital Center in the nation’s capital. It is now thought normal and appropriate for urban elementary schools to install metal detectors to check for firearms. And when a Denver pawnshop advertised a sale of pistols as a “back-to-school” special, four hundred people showed up to buy guns.

... “Guns are absolutely fundamental to the way Americans understand themselves. In a society that regulates and registers almost every commodity, the gun leads a charmed life of perfect freedom. In the United States teddy bears are subject to four different types of safety standards, and the Toy Manufacturers Association established voluntary toy-safety standards in 1976. In contrast. There are no federal safety standards on American-made firearms, nor any



voluntary safety standards. Several state legislatures have passed bills specifically prohibiting their own citizens from bringing suit against the gun industry; no other manufacturer receives such state protection of its interests. Legislatures have even encouraged gun use, as when Louisiana passed a law granting its citizens the right to shoot to kill anyone attempting to steal their car. In 1996 Congress cut \$2.6 million from its appropriation for the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the exact amount the CDC spent on firearm injury research. Congress also instructed that “none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control.” This legislation has been understood by those who work at the CDC as a gag order, and it has effectively terminated research on gun-related injuries. Likewise the Washington State legislature was so concerned over the statistical evidence that gun ownership increased the likelihood of being shot that it placed its police files off-limits to epidemiologists. The gun must be protected from research.”

But Bellesiles thoroughly debunks the widespread belief that the United States was always a gun culture, from the moment Europeans stepped ashore. “... an examination of the social practices and cultural customs prevalent in early America suggests that we have it all backward. This book argues that gun ownership was exceptional in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, even on the frontier, and that guns became a common commodity only with the industrialization of the mid-nineteenth century, with ownership concentrated in urban areas. The gun culture grew with the gun industry.”

Why spend billions on a ‘war on terrorism’ when most terror is homegrown? But then it may be that the ‘culture of terror’ is growing with the growth of the terror industry.

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In April 2003 I had this letter in *The Mercury*. ‘The media is referring to both “the Gulf War” and “the Second Gulf War”. In fact this is the Third Gulf War. The Iraqi invasion of Iran was referred to as “the Gulf War” until Iraq invaded Kuwait. This semantic confusion hides a deeper problem. Iraq’s invasion of Iran was the blatant military violation of another nation’s sovereign territory and therefore a clear violation of international law. Yet few nations condemned it and no member of the UN Security Council pressed it to act. Nor did any nation, other than Iran, seek to have the Iraqi government indicted for crimes against peace, crimes against humanity or war crimes, even though the invasion and war, which took more than a million lives, involved all three categories.

The reason for inaction, that the Iranian government was anti-American, was insufficient excuse for Iran’s rights under international law to be ignored. The right of nations to their territorial integrity goes beyond the stance of governments and the behaviour of leaders, cliques and parties.

Had the world through the UN and through the response of individual governments upheld this right it is very unlikely that the current dangerous situation would have arisen. The beliefs of national leaders, let alone the working out of various ‘national interests’ on the world stage, remain a very limited, biased and chaotic substitute for the impartial application of international law.’

Now we are told that this war is right because it got rid of Saddam. But Saddam could, and should have been indicted for war crimes as soon as he crossed the border into Iran. He could, and should have been indicted for crimes against humanity when he used poison gas against the Kurds. Instead he continued to receive ...

I came across this curious chapter in John Parker’s book *The Killing Factory*. In 1988 a factory in Boca Raton in Florida was set up under the name of Product Ingredient Technology to make food flavourings. Its main investor was a man called Barbouti.

“What was ostensibly an innocent-looking food additives plant had the potential for something much more sinister. The natural fruit flavouring process gave up a very useful by-product — hydrogen cyanide. Saddam was desperate for that particular chemical. Within a year, the factory was producing thousands of gallons of the stuff.

“If there were any doubts about Barbouti’s plans for the plant, they could have been intensified by the general atmosphere at the factory. He installed expensive security procedures, threw a 24-hour security patrol around the perimeters and installed electronic surveillance. Barbouti executives and personal aides came and went, driven in Jaguars and protected by armed bodyguards.

“The CIA knew about that too. In the spring of 1989, they were contacted by a security consultant who told them he had been asked to quote for the installation of a system of video cameras, microphones and a cyanide detection system at the factory. Champon would tell investigators that he believed most of the cyanide was poured away.

“It wasn’t.

“Barrels of it were loaded on to specially equipped lorries and transported through the night to Houston, Texas. There, they were crated and given a new identity and driven to Baltimore for shipment to Aqaba in Jordan and finally by road to Baghdad. The route was established and the export of cyanide to the Iraqis was running.

“On 1 July 1990, however, Barbouti was found dead. The official cause of death was given as natural causes, from heart trouble. He was buried in a black marble tomb at the cemetery near his home in Brookwood, Woking, in Surrey, surrounded in death as in life by strong security in the shape of a large brick wall.

“His death remains as mysterious as some aspects of his life. Rumours abound among his business associates, of whom there are still many around the world. One has claimed he had dealings with MI6 and the CIA at the time of his death. Others say he was assassinated by Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, which was also tracking him. There was an alternative theory that he did not die at all; that he faked his death with a substitute corpse because Saddam had discovered he had intelligence connections.

“None of those possibilities should be discounted. A string of strange deaths and covered-up shenanigans among both intelligence and political circles was rife during those months and years immediately prior to the onset of the Gulf War. Dr Gerald Bull, inventor of the Supergun, was assassinated in Belgium in March 1990, probably by Mossad. British journalist Jonathon Moyle, editor of *Defence Helicopter World*, was murdered in his hotel room in Chile in the same month when he began asking too many questions about arms procurement for Iraq. Farzad Bazoft, a journalist working for *The Observer*, was arrested and executed in Iraq for spying — for revealing details of Saddam’s nuclear weapons programme.

“There was undisputed MI6 involvement with executives of the British engineering company Matrix Churchill, which had been taken over by an Iraqi front company with the full knowledge of the British government. The resultant inquiry, which saw ministers squirming their way through the howls of media derision, provided a view through a half-opened window on a particularly distasteful era in British politics, which has never been satisfactorily explained or resolved.

“Edwin Dorn, Under-Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness at the Department of Defense in Washington, explained with familiar understatement: ‘Iraq clearly represented a case in which past efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction had not been effective. We halted the Argentine Condor Programme that was aiding Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction programme. And we spearheaded the effort to prevent Iraq from acquiring a more capable missile than the Scud. But it has to be remembered that all exports made to Iraq in the 1980s were completely consistent with the laws at that time, and Iraq was not considered a hostile country.’”

Even though Iraq was in Iran throughout the eighties and had killed or wounded anything up to a million people, some with poison gas, and had used the same poison on its own people. Not hostile? And I have rather gone off food flavourings.

Alan Friedman in *Spider’s Web* also covers some of the business dealings between the USA and Iraq. “The philosophy of the Reagan White House was that although Saddam might be an odious figure, he was one who could prove acceptable as America’s new regional

policeman. He was also convenient, being a sworn rival of Iran and in control of vast oil reserves, and being a cynical deal-maker who welcomed American business, unhampered as he was by either religious fanaticism or political ideology. What is more, ever since September 1980 Saddam had been locked in a bloody war against Khomeini, a war that suited Washington's interests both in containing Islamic fundamentalism and in insuring that neither side was strong enough to exert hegemony over the Gulf. The war also made Saddam desirous of Western military and financial help. Before then, Moscow had been his principal benefactor; thus, Washington reasoned, American assistance could have the additional benefit of drawing him away from the Soviet Union.

"As the Iran-Iraq war dragged on for eight long years, the White House spent a disproportionate amount of time plotting strategies, both overt and covert, that would bolster Saddam. By the late 1980s, Iraq had become a vehicle for the White House, and soon the prime vehicle for furthering U.S. economic and political interests in the Persian Gulf. The State Department put this in forthright terms in August 1988, in a secret memo on American concerns in the region that was sent to its embassies from Washington: "The U.S. has vital interests in the Persian Gulf. Access to oil at reasonable rates and blunting Soviet policies as well as the political orientation of each of the Gulf States is important to us ... Iraq is our only improving market."

"Thus had oil, money, and political power been mixed into a Molotov cocktail of Western policy toward Baghdad. In Washington throughout the decade, few policy-makers had more pro-Iraq views than George Bush and James Baker. So convinced were they that American business interests would benefit from a close government relationship with Iraq that they turned a blind eye to the perils of treating Saddam Hussein as a friend. They believed that neither the public nor Congress could be trusted with the truth of America's deepening involvement with Saddam. They were the ones who knew what was best for America, they understood the politics of oil, and they believed Saddam could in some way be turned around, sweetened, made into a more reasonable junior partner. Bush and Baker were among the architects of a series of secret policies that committed American taxpayer dollars to assisting Saddam and allowed the reckless export of U.S. technology to some of the Iraqi dictator's most cherished and lethal weapons projects.

"This deeply mistaken vision ultimately led to Saddam's near success at building an atomic weapon, and then to his conviction that Washington would not react if he invaded Kuwait. More than anyone else, Bush and Baker must bear responsibility for paving the road to Operation Desert Storm, a war they justified as necessary in order to wipe out the very nuclear weapons capacity the U.S. had helped foster in Iraq. There was also grand rhetoric about preserving the sovereignty of Kuwait, but the bottom line was once again Washington's determination to guarantee itself access to oil. Even as Bush basked in the glory of leading Operation Desert Storm, he was presiding over a systematic cover-up in order to avoid being embarrassed politically. The Bush administration's attempts to hide the truth about American policy was a more insidious threat to the proper functioning of democratic government than any weapon Saddam could have employed."

... "Still more insidiously, low-level American, British, and Italian foot soldiers in government, in banking, and the military, and in the world of espionage ended up taking the fall for the U.S.-driven embrace of Saddam Hussein. In the end those individuals were punished for decisions that were really made at the policy level and in government-to-government understandings, whether these were between the United States, Britain, and Italy."

... "These actions were not the result of a conspiracy. Bush, Baker, and their advisers didn't think they were engaged in a cover-up, any more than did Thatcher and her ministers, or Italy's Guido Carli—and that makes it all the more outrageous. These politicians perceived their actions as reasonable damage control, or as the legitimate desire to protect state secrets. But the absence of malice is no excuse. The result was cover-up, and the cavalier manipulation of the truth at the highest levels of government.

“In fact, Iraqgate is not like other scandals that the Western world has experienced over the past twenty years. It embodies a broader, more systematic abuse of power, one that contributed to the prolonging of the Iran-Iraq war, in which one million people died, and to Operation Desert Storm, which cost the lives of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis who were already living in the hardship of Saddam’s tyranny. For these reasons the secret history behind these events demands a much fuller examination than has occurred to date.”

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I can imagine genuine puzzlement through the ranks of American (and, sadly, part of Australian) politics. A few old Ottoman letters got burnt, some clay figures got smashed, a few bits of mildewed bronze disappeared. Never mind. You will be able to replace it with some nice new things, all Teflon-coated and Nylon-backed. You’ll soon notice the difference.

Clay, so dismissed and overlooked, in fact, is one of the most remarkable materials ever used. I was reminded of this while reading of Denise Schmandt-Bessaret’s work.

What we call the Stone Age might equally be called the Clay Age. It was used in everything, sun-dried bricks, pottery (and the earliest pottery found is so far, intriguingly, in Japan dating back at least 13,000 years), to make ovens and ornaments and votive offerings and writing tablets. Norbert Casteret in *Ten Years Under the Earth* writing about his explorations in French caves in the Pyrenees says, “The rock engravings and clay statues are from the beginning of the Magdalenian era; they date back, according to scientifically authenticated chronologies, about 20,000 years. There are fifty pictures (in the Montespan caves) of various animals (some species extinct or emigrated), deeply incised in the walls by means of flint gravers. The clay modeling is represented by thirty specimens, from real statues forty inches high down to little high-reliefs swallowed by the drip.” Some of the clay models found were so ancient they had been covered by limestone layers; and as well as figures they also included masses of pellets and small balls and other non-representational shapes.

Ideas about the development of writing were based on the assumption that ancient people began by simply drawing pictures and these gradually became stylised and simplified until more abstract symbols could be taken as representing actual things such as horses and houses. But the likely answer came from a quite different realisation by the American archeologist Denise Schmandt-Besserat that the thousands of small clay ‘tokens’ found in Middle Eastern sites were the key to understanding the development of writing. In her book *Before Writing* she explains her breakthrough: “I must say that the tokens came my way by chance. It all started in 1969-1971, when I was awarded a fellowship from the Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, Massachusetts, to study the use of clay before pottery in the Near East. This led me to visit systematically Near Eastern archeological clay collections dating from 8,000 to 6,000 BC stored in museums of the Near East, North Africa, Europe, and North America. I was looking for bits of Neolithic clay floors, hearthlining, and granaries, for bricks, beads, and figurines, and I found these aplenty. I also came across a category of artifacts that I did not expect — miniature cones, spheres, disks, tetrahedrons, cylinders, and other geometric shapes. The artifacts were made of clay and belonged, therefore, to my study. I noted their shape, color, manufacture, and all possible characteristics, counted them, measured them, sketched them, and they entered my files under the heading ‘geometric objects’. Later the term *token* was substituted when it became obvious that all the artifacts were not in geometric form; some were in the shape of animals, vessels, tools, and other commodities.

“I became increasingly puzzled by the tokens because, wherever I would go, be it Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, or Israel, they were always present among the early clay assemblages. If they were so widely used, I reasoned, they must have had a useful function. I noted that the tokens were often manufactured with care and that they were the first clay objects to have been hardened by fire. The fact that people went to such efforts for their preparation further suggested to me that they were of importance. I sensed that the tokens were part of a system because I repeatedly found small and large cones, thin and thick disks, small and large spheres, and even fractions of spheres, such as half and three-quarter spheres. But what were they for?”

No one could tell her. What she had come upon was a sophisticated accounting system which underpinned widespread trade. A set of tokens accompanied by a cuneiform description was found at Nuzi in northern Iraq. It fitted the contents and she now knew what many of the different tokens stood for. But in her further studies she found that when they needed to store the tokens they often used abstract symbols based on the shape of the tokens to represent what was being stored. This was the beginning of the cuneiform script. And as people realised they could represent figures and trade items by simple shapes the tokens themselves gradually became obsolete. This writing developed out of trade and a simple easily understood accounting system, not from pictures as originally thought.

When looters rushed through the priceless collections of Iraq's museums to carry off precious objects and left a trail of broken and powdered clay trampled underfoot they were destroying the fascinating records of the development of writing.

Not something to regret and get angry about?

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June 4<sup>th</sup> : Elizabeth Jolley

June 5<sup>th</sup> : Christy Brown  
Socrates

June 6<sup>th</sup> : Alan Seymour  
Alexander Pushkin

June 7<sup>th</sup> : Elizabeth Bowen

June 8<sup>th</sup> : Jocelynne Scutt

June 9<sup>th</sup> : George Axelrod

June 10<sup>th</sup> : Saul Bellow

June 11<sup>th</sup> : Anna Akhmatova

June 12<sup>th</sup> : Johanna Spyri

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She was born Johanna Heusser in 1829 in the Swiss town of Hirzel. She married a lawyer Bernhard Spyri and moved to Zurich where she began writing. *Ein Blatt auf Vronys Grab* (A Leaf from Vrony's Grave, which is a rather lugubrious title) came out in 1870, *Heidi* in two volumes came out in 1880-81, *Heimatlos* in 1881 and *Gritli* in 1882. Her books were like her life, marked by a great love for her mountains, gentleness, cheerfulness, piety, quiet wisdom, and a love of children and a desire for their happiness in childhood.

But the question I found myself asking was 'what was it about *Heidi* that gave it never-ending life?' I read it in childhood, I've heard it on tape, I've seen it on countless op-shop shelves, but calling it a classic isn't sufficient in itself. So I've just been re-reading it. It does have many of the things which became staples of children's literature: the orphan child, the child who wins over the anti-social grumpy old man, the sense of innocence and natural joy, a strongly-described landscape, the clear movement between sadness and happiness, the strong moral tone, the hopeful ending, the way that adults change under the influence of children ...

*Heidi* isn't remarkably well-written but it *is* an attractive book and deserves to be remembered and passed on to new generations.

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The other famous 19<sup>th</sup> century Swiss writer for children was Johann David Wyss (1743-1818) author of *The Swiss Family Robinson*. In his story the wide-ranging influence of Robinson Crusoe can be felt and like that worthy his family find almost everything they need on their island. But Wyss can be forgiven his lack of accuracy when it comes to his flora and fauna. He was a pastor of a church in Berne and simply created the story as a bedtime enjoyment for his four sons; unlike stories created *for* children the book was also created *with* his children. When he was talked into publishing it the book was a scrappy thing done over his

spare time and from notes he had jotted down. He didn't regard himself as a writer and it was partly the work of his son Johann Rudolf to collect it all together, edit it, and get it published. It came out as *Der schweizerische Robinson* in 1812; an English version appeared in 1814 (the first translation done by William Godwin), and a number of editions with further additions and editing appeared in the following years. As it wasn't covered by copyright a variety of other writers took parts of the book and created their own shipwrecked families. Johann David, the father of the book, died in 1818 but the son Johann Rudolf went on to have an important literary career of his own as a folklorist, editor and writer. He was a professor of philosophy in Berne as well as chief librarian at the municipal library. He collected up Swiss folklore in *Idyllen, Volkssagen, Legenden und Erzählungen aus der Schweiz* which came out in 1815, he wrote Switzerland's national anthem, and he also edited the *Alpenrosen* almanac which collected and published the best Swiss literature. He died in 1830.

But the enjoyment of the *Swiss Family Robinson* is not in its plotting or sense of adventure but rather in the way a father used this medium to instruct and interest his children in the world beyond their small corner of it.

“Really,” said Jack, “the karata is a far more valuable plant that I had supposed. But these thorny things that lie scattered all around us can be of no possible use.”

“You are altogether in the wrong,” I replied, “in concluding so hastily that these are useless. The aloe, for instance, produces a juice which is very much used in medicine. Then there is the Indian fig, with its battledore-shaped leaves. This plant grows in the most arid soils, where, but for the timely succour of its fruit, many a weary traveler would be in danger of perishing by hunger.”

At these words Jack dashed among the foliage to gather some of the fruit, which he was impatient to taste; but the long prickles with which they were covered pierced his hands in all directions, and he returned crestfallen and crying, regarding the fig-tree with a look of unmitigated disgust.

His mother hastened to remove the thorns from his fingers, and while she was thus employed I showed the other children how to pluck and eat the fruit without running so much risk.

Having taken a short stick and pointed it, I stuck the sharp end into one of the figs' ...

I wonder if Wyss had actually tasted the fruit of the Indian fig or prickly pear or if he was using the tales of Swiss travellers or merely reading up the necessary details before he created his little island? He was an educated man and he had read *Robinson Crusoe*, but Allan R. Bosworth introducing one edition of the book says, ‘The story did have a basis in fact, however. Wyss had a friend who was a Russian sailing-ship captain. Once, after a voyage to the South Seas, the captain told him of putting in at an island “near New Guinea” and finding there a Swiss clergyman and his family who had been shipwrecked, but were well clothed, well fed, and generally prospering. The Reverend Johann David Wyss saw a parallel in this, and began telling his sons stories built around the actual castaways—and the stories grew.’

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The Swiss are usually not thought of in terms of great nineteenth century travellers; any number of dotty English, the first brash Americans, precise Germans ... but not Swiss of any persuasion.

Yet probably *the* great European traveller of the early nineteenth century was the Swiss, Johann Ludwig Burchardt. To him went the honour of bringing the strange and beautiful ‘lost’ city of Petra to European notice; he was the first European to enter Mecca, he drew the world's attention to the rock tombs at Abu Simbel in Egypt and helped interest a whole generation of young Europeans in the antiquities of Egypt (he may have helped them to want to remove the antiquities also but he is hardly the main culprit); he was an accomplished linguist and Arabic scholar with an enviable ability to ‘melt’ into his surroundings; and he provides a delightful down-to-earth domestic tone to his various books such as *Travels with the Bedouin* and *Notes on Travels in Syria* ...

Because, unlike the explorers who came to prove (or disprove) aspects of the Bible, or who came in search of the erotic and the exotic, there is a rather touching domesticity about Burkhardt's writings; as though behind his discoveries and his daring journeys lay a profound desire not to see the strange but to see the normal, the little household details, the way that people lived their everyday lives.

"The Turkman women are very laborious; besides the care of housekeeping, they work the tent coverings of goats' hair, and the woollen carpets, which are inferior only to those of Persian manufacture. They seem to have made great progress in the art of dyeing: their colours are beautiful. Indigo and cochineal, which they purchase at Aleppo, give them their blue and red dyes; but the ingredients of all the others, especially of a brilliant green, are herbs which they gather in the mountains of Armenia: the dyeing process is kept by them as a national secret." And, "Their looms are of primitive simplicity; they do not make use of the shuttle, but pass the woof with their hands. The wool of their carpets is of the ordinary kind; the carpets are about seven feet long and three broad, and sell from fifteen to one hundred piastres apiece. While the females are employed in these labours, the men pass their whole time in indolence."

"Butter is made in the following manner: — the goat's or sheep's milk (for camel's milk is never used for this purpose) is put into a large copper pan, over a slow fire, and a little sour milk, or a small piece of the dried entrails of a young lamb, thrown in with it. The milk then separates, and is put into the goatskin, which is tied to one of the tent-poles, and for one or two hours constantly moved backwards and forwards; the buttery substance then coagulates, the water is squeezed out, and the butter put into another skin: if after two days they have collected a certain quantity of butter, they again place it over the fire, throw a handful of dried wheat into it, and leave it to boil, taking care to skim it. After having boiled for some time, the wheat precipitates all the foreign substances, and the butter remains quite clear at the top of the copper pan. The buttermilk is once more drained through a bag of camel's hair, and whatever remains in it of a butter-like substance is left to dry in the sun, and then eaten."

"We heard the report of a gun, and were soon after gratified by seeing our huntsman arrive at the place where we had left our camel with a fine mountain goat. Immediately on killing it, he had skinned it, and then put the carcass again into the skin, carrying it on his back, with the skin of the legs tied across his breast. No butcher in Europe can surpass a Bedouin in skinning an animal quickly. I have seen them strip a camel in less than a quarter of an hour." And: "The chief specimens of Bedouin industry are, the tanning of leather, the preparing of water-skins, the weaving of tents, sacks, and cloaks.—The women sew the water-skins which the men have tanned. Their method of dyeing and tanning is this. To render the camel's skin yellow, they cover it with salt, which is left upon it for two or three days; they then steep it in a liquid paste, made of barley-meal mixed with water where it remains for seven days; then they wash the skin in fresh water, and clear it easily of the hair. Next, they take the peels of dry pomegranates, ... pound them, and mix them with water; they let the skin remain in that mixture three or four days: the operation is thus completed, the skin having acquired a yellow tint. They then wash and grease the leather with camel's fat to render it smooth. If pomegranates cannot be obtained they use the roots of a desert herb called *aerk*: this is about three spans long, and as thick as a man's finger: the outer skin ... dyes the leather red. ... For some time the skin imparts to the water a bitterish taste; this, however, the Arabs like."

"Nothing distresses the Bedouin women so much as fetching water. The tents are but seldom pitched very close to a well; and if this be only at half an hour's distance from the camp, the Bedouins do not think it necessary that the water should be brought upon camels; and when asses are not to be procured, the women must carry the water every evening on their backs, in long water-skins; and they are sometimes obliged to seek a second supply at the well."

"The (Arab) women eat in the harem what is left of the men's dinner; they seldom have the good fortune to taste any meat except the head, feet, and liver of the lambs. While the men of the camp resort to the tent in which a stranger is entertained, and participate in the supper,

their women steal into the harem of the hostess to beg a foot or some other trifling portion of the animal killed for the occasion.”

He also set in motion a discovery which eventually changed the face of the history of the Near East. Michael Haag in his *Cadogan Guide to Syria and Lebanon* writes: “For all Hama’s lack of ancient ruins, it was the discovery here of a number of inscribed basalt stones that led to nothing less than the realisation that there had once been such a thing as the Hittite Empire. On monuments all over Egypt, Ramses II had repeatedly broadcast his rather dubious victory at Kadesh over a people his inscriptions called the Hatti. But nothing connected the Hatti to the Hittites, who until then were known only through several slighting and confused Old Testament references. In Joshua 3:10 for example they appear among a mostly humdrum list of local peoples when the Israelites enter the Promised Land: ‘And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Gigashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites’. Later, in II Samuel, King David’s lust fixes upon Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, a mercenary in the King’s service. On every count Uriah is dispensable and David, to freely gratify himself, arranges for Uriah’s death in battle. There is nothing in these biblical accounts written hundreds of years after the fall of what we now know to have been the Hittite Empire to suggest the true history of Uriah’s people nor to locate them anywhere other than within the bounds of the Jewish kingdom. Yet their seeming insignificance is contradicted in II Kings 7:6 when ‘the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians’ are mentioned in one breath.”

(Hama is in Syria north of Damascus on the road to Turkey.)

“The stones at Hama were noticed in 1812 by the Swiss adventurer, John Lewis Burckhardt, who was also the first modern European to come upon Petra in Jordan and Abu Simbel in Egypt. ‘In the corner of a house in the bazaar,’ he wrote in *Travels in Syria*, ‘is a stone with a number of small figures and signs, which appear to be a kind of hieroglyphical writing, though it does not resemble that of Egypt.’ But the stones remained in obscurity until 1870 when the American consul in Beirut came upon them again and published a facsimile of the inscriptions on one. An attempt was made to purchase a stone embedded in a wall, but its owner would not part with it owing to the income it provided, deformed people being willing to pay for the privilege of lying upon the stone in the hope of a cure. The following year Sir Richard Burton visited Hama to inspect the stones and published a series of facsimiles in his *Unexplored Syria*. But despite speaking 28 languages, one of which, said his detractors, was pornography (he translated *The Perfumed Garden* and *The Kama Sutra*, as well as *The Thousand and One Nights*), the language of the stones eluded him. He urged, however, that the stones be bought at government order, and this is what happened; they were prised from the walls of shops and houses, lifted from lanes and gardens, and delivered to the museum at Constantinople, with casts sent to the British Museum, so making them available for scholarly study.

“When at the close of the decade British Museum excavators found similar inscriptions at Carchemish on the Euphrates (now just over the border from Syria in Turkey), A.H. Sayce, the Oxford Professor of Assyriology, travelled to the Karabel Pass at the opposite end of Anatolia, almost within sight of the Aegean between Sardis and Smyrna (now Izmir), to see for himself a relief that Herodotus had described more than 2000 years before: ‘The carved figure is two metres high and represents a man with a spear in his right hand and a bow in the left, and the rest of his equipment to match—partly Egyptian, partly Ethiopian. Across the breast from shoulder to shoulder runs an inscription, cut in the Egyptian sacred script: ‘By the strength of my shoulders I won this land’.’ In fact Herodotus’ translation of the ‘Egyptian script’ was pure invention, but the relief with its pointed helmet that he took to be of an Egyptian pharaoh was not unlike that seen in 1834 by the Frenchman Charles Texier carved on the King’s Gate at Bogazkoy, those then still mysterious ruins east of Ankara which would later be recognised as Hattusas, capital of the Hittite Empire. While Sayce was no more able to decipher the



inscriptions at Karabel, Bogazkoy, Carchemish and Hama, he saw their similarity and made the startling proposal ‘that in pre-Hellenic days a powerful empire must have existed in Asia Minor which extended from the Aegean to the Halys (the modern Kizilirmak which flows near Bogazkoy) and southward into Syria ... (possessing) its own special artistic culture and its own special script’.

“Making a series of inspired connections, he identified the descendants of this once great empire as those biblical cuckolds the Hittites, further venturing that they were one and the same people as the Hatti who at Kadesh had checked the ambitions of Ramses II. By pointing to a Hittite homeland not in Palestine but much farther to the north, with the Orontes as its southern limit, he renewed interest too in the massive ruins at Bogazkoy, which Hugo Winckler of the German Oriental Society began excavating in 1906. Almost at once he hit upon the Hittite royal archives, its tablets inscribed in Bablonian cuneiform, the diplomatic language of the day, which told him this was indeed the imperial capital, called Hattusas. Soon one such tablet came into his hands which not only could he understand at sight but with whose contents he had been familiar for years:

*The covenant of Ramses, Beloved of Amun, Great King  
Of the land of Egypt, hero, with Hattusilis, Great King,  
King of the land of Hatti ...*

‘Here was something,’ said Winckler, ‘that might perhaps have been yearned for in jest, a gift from the fairies’—it was the Hittite copy of that peace treaty between the coequal ‘brothers’ Ramses II and Hattusilis III, successor to Ramses’ royal adversary at Kadesh, its cuneiform matching word for word the Egyptian hieroglyphic version long known to scholars on the temple walls at distant Karnak. Thanks in part to the stones of Hama, the Hittite Empire, lost to the world since before Homer’s time, had re-entered history.’

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‘In 1902 the Norwegian scholar J.A. Knudtzon announced to a skeptical world that he had discovered a new Indo-European language. It was to be found, he claimed, written in a cuneiform script on two clay tablets which had been discovered fifteen years earlier at El Armarna in Egypt among the diplomatic correspondence of the pharaohs Akhenaton (c. 1367-1351) and his father Amenophis III (c. 1405 – 1367). Since one of the tablets was addressed to the king of a hitherto unknown country called Arzawa, the language was named Arzawan. Knudtzon’s suggestion of an Indo-European connection, though plausible, found little favour with his contemporaries, but it was known that a few fragments of tablets written in the same language had been found at Bogaskoy in central Anatolia and excavations begun there in 1906 soon brought to light an archive of thousands of tablets, many of which were written in ‘Arzawan’. What was first called Arzawan proved to be the language of the Hittites which appeared in two dialects, one written in cuneiform and the other in hieroglyphics.’

J. G. MacQueen in *The Hittites*.

‘In 1879 the great Orientalist Professor Archibald Sayce examined the ‘Sasostriis’ and ‘Cybele’ reliefs and recognised that they belonged to the same sculptural tradition as the carved rock sanctuary of Yazilikaya on the central Anatolian plateau. In a paper read to the Society of Biblical Archeology in 1880 he was bold enough to draw the conclusion that they were all products of a ‘lost Hittite Empire’. His hunch was corroborated in 1887, when letters from the Hittite Emperor Suppililiuma were discovered at El-Amarna in Egypt, then completely confirmed in 1906 when the archives of the Hittite emperors at Boghazkoy were excavated. The Hittite empire, stretching at its maximum extant from the Aegean to Damascus in Syria, now becomes a reality.’ *The Sunken Kingdom* by Peter James.

But there is an irony in that the Hittite language was first called Arzawan. Arzawa was the great rival of the Hittite kingdom. Although Arzawa was a coalition of states rather than a single large kingdom it managed to almost destroy the Hittites near the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC. The Hittites rebuilt but were overthrown it seems somewhere between 1,100 and 900 BC. Though this doesn’t mean that Hittite names in the Bible prove those references were written

before 900 BC. Long after their capital had been destroyed and segments of the population dispersed, the people would have gone on identifying themselves as Hittite—or, in the words of other languages of the region, as Hatti or Khittim.

The Hittites are also thought to be the earliest inhabitants of the island of Cyprus which suggests that they were not always defeated but in this case were absorbed by later invading people.

Hittite names include Ahhiyawa = Achaea, Lukka = Lycia, Millawanda = Miletus, Apasus = Ephesus, Lazpus = Lesbos, and Zippasla = Sipylus.

So that most unfortunate character in the Bible, Uriah the Hittite: was he, or his family, a refugee from the final overthrow and destruction of the Hittite kingdom? Or was he a fictitious character created to carry forward a lively and memorable story? Or was he, most likely, a fragment of memory from the time when there was a strong Hittite presence throughout the land that was Canaan and became Palestine?

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Nor was Burkhardt the only Swiss to distinguish himself in this area. Peter James in *The Sunken Kingdom* writes: ‘In 1924 the Swiss scholar, Émile Forrer, announced that he had identified Homer’s Achaeans in archives of the Hittites from Boghazkoy. These refer to a western country called Ahhiyawa, whose king was of great enough status to address the Hittite Emperor in writing as ‘My Brother’. The name Ahhiyawa, Forrer reasoned, was simply Achara, the land of the Achaeans, and only mainland Greece itself was capable of supporting a kingdom of this rank. At first his ideas received some acceptance, then doubts set in and alternative identifications for Ahhiyawa were experimented with—including Troy, Thrace and Rhodes. Now, however, after decades of doubt and controversy, it has been generally agreed to accept the inevitable—Ahhiyawa was, after all, Mycenaean Greece, and its kings resided at Mycenae.

‘It is now clear that Hittite texts from the late fifteenth to thirteenth centuries described almost constant interference by Mycenaean kings in the affairs of the Aegean coastal states. This discovery is momentous, although the academic world as a whole has been rather slow to reveal what a sea-change has happened. The political and military struggles of Ahhiyawa to establish its power on the Aegean coast of Anatolia provide a perfect historical background to the story of how the kings of Greece combined under the leadership of Agamemnon to crush the power of Troy and its Anatolian allies. In short, we may be only a spit away from finding contemporary documentary proof of the Trojan War. (Indeed, that evidence may already be lurking, unrecognised, in a cuneiform tablet from Boghazkoy.)’

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It was Swiss scholar Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815 – 1887) who developed the ‘MOTHER RIGHT’ theory. He believed there had been a struggle between the early matriarchal societies and the developing patriarchal societies; and that this is the sub-text for many ancient myths. As patriarchal societies gained ground so they eventually wrote these earlier societies out of history. The large numbers of small carved or molded pregnant female figures found in sites throughout Europe suggest many of these societies may have been matriarchal.

(Nor are these figures confined to Europe. C. Scott Littleton writing of Japan in *Understanding Shinto*, “It is open to question whether the prehistoric Jomon culture (ca. 11,000-300BCE) possessed a faith centred on the reverence of *kami* (“Spirit,” “deity,” “Divine being,” or “god/goddess”), at least in anything like the form known today. These preliterate, seminomadic foragers and fisherfolk produced *dogu*, stylized female figurines with exaggerated hips and breasts.” ... )

I always find the reference to prostitution as ‘the world’s oldest profession’ both inaccurate and silly. I was tempted to see hunting and gathering as the world’s oldest professions. But I don’t think they were professions (as opposed to a general way of life), in the sense of requiring skills, tradition, the passing on of information, and lore, until tribes

developed a sense of stratification which probably also required them to reach a critical mass in terms of numbers of members. I was thinking of this recently. I came upon hunting songs sung by Aboriginal women and found that these were hardly unique in tribal societies. In most hunter gatherer communities the roles were not rigidly defined. The whole tribe at times went out to encircle animals or collect shellfish along a beach or build a fish weir. In almost all such societies girls and boys collected birds' eggs, practiced catching fish, picked fruit, or carried water, while old men were as likely as old women to remain behind and care for the fires and the toddlers.

The only position that was clearly defined was motherhood. The process of bearing babies and breastfeeding small children was unmistakable. Children belonged to the tribe. They were its future. But for a brief space of time women had that clearly defined role we call MOTHER. It is not surprising that it was of central importance and that it gathered around it all kinds and degrees of myth and mystique.

At what point in human development was the role of the father defined? Did it depend on an expanding population, urbanisation in its first simple manifestations, the development of the family rather than the clan or the tribe as the essential unit in a community, ideas about monogamy, the development of hierarchies, changing attitudes to religion and magic ...

Lithuanian archeologist Marija Gimbutas, according to Richard Rüdgel, "became an increasingly controversial and marginal figure in archeology as her rewriting of European prehistory developed over the years. According to her account, between 7000 and 3500BC the early farming communities of Europe coexisted with each other and with nature in a largely peaceful fashion, worshipping the Great Goddess. This period of stability and civilization began to come under threat from the repeated invasions of Proto-Indo-European peoples from the east. During the period of these assaults, between 4300 and 2800 BC, the ancient cultural values of Old Europe gradually collapsed, only surviving in outlying areas and eventually disappearing underground, lasting into historical times only in a partial form in folklore and mythology."

She developed her ideas in books such as *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe: 6500-3500*, *The Language of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe* and *The Civilisation of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe*. But it remains unclear whether there were simply widespread fertility cults showing pregnant figures—or whether there were genuine matriarchies.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans reluctantly accepted that there were amazing civilizations earlier than Greece and Rome. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was equal resistance to the idea that other societies might have developed writing systems before the Sumerians. Researchers still refer to the mass of symbols found in ancient European grave-sites and caves and excavated villages as 'pre-writing'. Until it can be deciphered it may be impossible to state whether these were societies run by women or run by men and women on an equal basis ... or whether they worshipped a Great Goddess but gave men more power than women. If they were genuine matriarchies then I am willing to believe they were more peaceful than the male-dominated societies which replaced them. The Bible sees the pain and danger of childbirth as something women have to put up with because of their natural wickedness. There is no sense that because of the danger to women and babies, each child should therefore be seen as a precious life, not to be casually squandered in the most trivial and forgettable of wars and skirmishes and campaigns. But I think a society which put motherhood truly at its centre would treat each child as precious. And by doing that it would not only have different attitudes to war and co-existence but also different attitudes to animals and nature.

This raises curious questions about the nature of Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon societies. If they were both matriarchal it becomes less likely that Cro-Magnons simply wiped out the Neanderthals. And those old cartoons with the cave man and his club dragging some unfortunate woman away by the hair become ridiculous ...

And to go back and look at creation stories is to realise that only some of them place a

man and a woman as the key proponents. Some of them have large numbers of people. Some of them have the gods and a woman giving birth. Some of them have relationships between animals and people. Some of them have people who were not yet quite people. We inherited the Adam and Eve model. (And there is a strong chance that it looks back on those earlier models; as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie says in introducing *A Medieval Miscellany*, ‘In the Book of Genesis, an *angel*, armed with a *sword*, expels from the *verdant* paradise the *fecund* Eve’, not only expels her but denies her all power, denigrates her, and now treats her as the source of evil ... and in the process reduces motherhood from something miraculous to something which women must now merely *suffer* ... ) But I like the thought that in this as in many things there are many routes we might have travelled. And might still choose to travel ...

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Years ago I came upon the suggestion in a little paperback about hypnosis that Hitler had hypnotised the German people. At the time I dismissed the idea out of hand. Now I’m not so sure. Many people meeting Hitler for the first time spoke of his ‘hypnotic blue eyes’, his ‘hypnotic gaze’, and so on. But while I could understand a personal one-on-one impression I wasn’t sure about the wider implications. Certainly we have a greater understanding of the psychology of crowds and the way that people think, feel, talk and act in groups, gangs, crowds, demonstrations, marches etc, in ways that they probably wouldn’t act alone. (An important book in this regard is Elias Canetti’s *Crowds and Power* and much more readable than psychology treatises.)

But it wasn’t until I came upon this little piece—‘Dr. Rudolf von Urban, Dr. Alexander Pilez, and some colleagues made a study of the Indian Rope Trick. They were interested in the problem of mass hallucination and it was their idea that the Indian Rope Trick would serve as a good experiment for their purposes. They collected several hundred people and a Fakir to put on the show. All of the observers, including the scientists, saw the Fakir throw a coil of rope in the air, and saw a small boy climb up the rope and disappear. Subsequently dismembered parts of this small boy came tumbling down to the ground; the Fakir gathered them up in the basket, ascended the rope and both the boy and the Fakir came down smiling. It is astonishing that several hundred people witnessed this demonstration and agreed in general on the details as described. There was not a single person present in the crowd who could deny these facts. However, when the motion pictures of this scene were developed subsequently, it was found that the Fakir had walked into the center of the group of people and thrown the rope into the air, but that it had fallen to the ground. The Fakir and his boy assistant had stood motionless by the rope throughout the rest of the demonstration. The rope did not stay in the air, the boy did not ascend the rope. In other words, everyone present had witnessed the same hallucination. Presumably the hallucination originated with the Fakir as the agent or sender. At no time in the course of the demonstration did the Fakir tell the audience what they were going to see. The entire demonstration was carried out in silence. In view of this fact we must assume that the hallucination was telepathically inspired and therefore extended to the several hundred people present as receivers of this delusion’ from *Beyond Telepathy* by Andrija Puharich—that I wondered if there mightn’t be something in the idea after all.

Hitler had least impact on people who didn’t speak German, people who had known him from the very earliest days, people outside the ‘circus’ of media, rallies, personal contacts, and the people he feared most in his rise to power were the Strasser brothers. It has always been assumed that Hitler wanted them killed because they were genuine socialists and questioned his concept of socialism and that they were a threat to his control of the party. One was killed; the other managed to escape out of Germany. But it may be that he got rid of them because he understood very clearly that they were so closely attuned to *each other* that they were effectively not open to his form of hypnotism.

His close associates often spoke of the banality and boredom of his long monotone monologues that they were subjected to in private but whether they were listening closely or not his few key ideas were constantly being reiterated and reinforced in their minds. Without

Hitler the whole edifice would have fallen apart because Hitler was the hypnotist and without him they were just a bunch of not very bright, not very organised people who would have dissipated the movement in bickering and greed and stupidity. When Hitler met Goebbels he found the right tool to incorporate his understanding of how to mesmerise a people; first he mesmerised the man, then the man mesmerised the people by organising every occasion so that the focus was always on the arch-mesmeriser, its 'Doctor Nikola' figure ...

Would anything have been different if people had understood how hypnosis works? If they had understood that saying 'all this is a lot of bunkum and silly nonsense' is not going to influence people who have been hypnotised, a state much more powerful than being talked, persuaded, influenced into believing ... I think we still do not fully understand how easy it is to hypnotise people and implant a few simple key ideas ...

He is said to have garnered many ideas on staging mass events from his childhood in the Catholic church with its repetitive litanies, its incense and candles, its dim churches, its congregational focus on the single mystical figure of the priest at the altar, at the even tenor of the chanting rising to the more dramatic peaks of the sermon and the mass, then dying away again, its use of organ music with its reverberating tones and the well-known words to the hymns ... but it seems very likely that he had attended at least one hypnotic 'entertainment' which reached a crescendo of popularity in late nineteenth century Europe when people crowded halls and stadiums to see the hypnotist turn crowds into barking dogs or crying babies; it was fear of the way that people could be used that both amazed and terrified people and eventually lead to some controls ... I have never had much interest in Axel Munthe's famous *The Story of San Michele* but he gives a terrifying account of what went on in the 'hypnosis circuit': "Hypnotized right and left, dozens of times a day, by doctors and students, many of these unfortunate girls spent their days in a state of semi-trance, their brains bewildered by all sorts of absurd suggestions, half conscious and certainly not responsible for their doings, sooner or later doomed to end their days in the Salle des Agités if not in a lunatic asylum."

For a long time it was believed that people could not be hypnotised against their will and that they could not be asked to do things under hypnosis (Colin Wilson pondered on this question in *The Black Room*) which they would not do normally; for example, commit a crime. Both those beliefs have now been shown to be false. Virtually everyone is hypnotisable and virtually everyone can be talked into doing or saying things they would not normally do, even things that would embarrass, humiliate, or horrify them. But if we take this to its logical conclusion then what is the legal and moral responsibility of people who have, unwittingly, been hypnotised into doing something for which they are being held responsible? Dean Koontz took this to a terrifying fictional conclusion in *False Memory* but does it also have historical relevance? The massive light and sound rallies of the Nazis were designed to have a hypnotic effect on the huge crowds who attended. There is a sense in all the Nazi speeches that they constantly reiterated key words. Various memoirs talk of the hypnotic quality of Hitler's stare. But the idea that an entire nation could be hypnotised is almost mind-boggling.

And if Chamberlain, Daladier, and everyone else had understood that it wasn't sweet reason that they needed to talk but the need to find a way to break these hypnotic threads would the history of the world have been different?

Ambrose Bierce described Mesmerism as 'Hypnotism before it wore good clothes, kept a carriage and asked Incredulity to dinner'.

In fact Anton Mesmer wasn't sure what he had discovered though he came to call it 'Animal Magnetism'. I found him described as both German and Austrian but I must admit I had always thought of him as Swiss. This confusion is probably understandable. He was born in 1734 in Iznang on the German side of Lake Constance (which forms part of the border between Germany, Switzerland and Austria); Switzerland was still immersed in its turbulent history—so different from our modern view of it as a settled steady state, sober, industrious and not very interesting—where Germany, Austria, France, and Italy all played, mostly

unedifying, roles in its history. Mesmer studied in Ingoldstadt and Vienna where he was influenced by the ideas of Paracelsus and an English physician Richard Mead to produce a thesis which “suggested that the gravitational attraction of the planets affected human health by affecting an invisible fluid found in the human body, and throughout nature”. He changed his theory from one of “animal gravitation” to one of “animal magnetism” and promoted the idea that disease resulted when the flow of this invisible fluid was blocked. He used both magnets and the development of trance states in his patients. He was forced to leave Vienna after being accused of medical fraud. He went to Paris where again the medical fraternity forced him out of his lucrative practice. He insisted on a commission being set up to investigate his claims. But the tribunal, which included Benjamin Franklin, dismissed them. Yet he was often very successful in his treatments. Denied a practice in Paris he went to Switzerland and eventually died near the shores of Lake Constance. It was a disappointed life. He didn’t understand what he had found but he could see that it could work to make people happier and healthier. In a sense, like Chinese acupuncture and Indian chakras, we still don’t understand how hypnosis really works. How could putting someone in a trance actually remove very obvious physical symptoms such as skin diseases? In the nineteenth century Baron von Reichenbach proposed the idea of an ‘odylic’ force pervading all of nature, but particularly present in sensitive people, to explain how mesmerism worked. Today the idea of an invisible fluid has been changed to the idea of an invisible force or flow of energy, allied with statements about the subconscious and the power of the mind.

Hypnosis *is* a fascinating thing. If you don’t believe me go and read a book such as *The Couple Who Became Each Other* by David Calof.

We remember Franz Mesmer in words like mesmerism, mesmeric and mesmerised and I think that mesmerism would still be a better name for the state than hypnosis which implies sleep. Mesmer probably looked back on his life with very mixed emotions and I sometimes wonder how such people feel as they look back from the standpoint of eternity on what the material world has done since with their ideas ...

\* \* \* \* \*

- June 13<sup>th</sup> : Fanny Burney  
William Butler Yeats
- June 14<sup>th</sup> : Harriet Beecher Stowe
- June 15<sup>th</sup> : Thomas Randolph
- June 16<sup>th</sup> : Joyce Carol Oates  
John Wesley
- June 17<sup>th</sup> : Henry Lawson  
John Hersey  
J. B. Stephens
- June 18<sup>th</sup> : Robyn Archer
- June 19<sup>th</sup> : Ethel Pedley  
Salman Rushdie
- June 20<sup>th</sup> : Vikram Seth  
Lillian Hellman
- June 21<sup>st</sup> : Jean-Paul Sartre
- June 22<sup>nd</sup> : Erich Maria Remarque  
H. Rider Haggard  
Anne Spencer Morrow Lindbergh
- June 23<sup>rd</sup> : Frank Dalby Davidson
- June 24<sup>th</sup> : Ambrose Bierce

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I love Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary*; it exactly suits my kind of sardonic humour (sour, some people might say) so here are some selections:

Aborigines. n. Persons of little worth found cumbering the soil of a newly discovered country. They soon cease to cumber; they fertilize.

Abroad. Adj. At war with savages and idiots. To be a Frenchman abroad is to be miserable; to be an American abroad is to make others miserable.

Australia. n. A country lying in the South Sea, whose industrial and commercial development has been unspeakably retarded by an unfortunate dispute among geographers as to whether it is a continent or an island.

Bedlam. n. A house whose inmates are all poets—'of imagination all compact.'

Beggar. n. A pest unkindly inflicted upon the suffering rich.

Biddy. n. One of the oppressed of all nations, for whom our forefathers thoughtfully provided an asylum in our kitchens.

Impiety. n. Your irreverence toward my deity.

Invasion. n. The patriot's most approved method of attesting his love of his country.

Mouse. n. An animal which strews its path with fainting women. As in Rome Christians were thrown to the lions, so centuries earlier in Otumwee, the most ancient and famous city of the world, female heretics were thrown to the mice.

Prudent. adj. A man who believes ten percent of what he hears, a quarter of what he reads, and half of what he sees.

Revolution. n. A bursting of the boilers which usually takes place when the safety valve of public dissension is closed.

Repudiation. n. What theft is called, when the thieves are States.

Scribbler. n. A professional writer whose views are antagonistic to one's own.

Telephone. n. An invention of the devil which abrogates some of the advantages of making a disagreeable person keep his distance.

Wit. n. The salt with which the American humorist spoils his intellectual cookery by leaving it out.

His short stories too have a good dollop of his "satirical black humour"; he produced quite a large number and they still appear in both general and supernatural anthologies, and I have come upon his stories like 'The Middle Toe of the Right Foot', 'The Secret of Macarger's Gulch', 'A Horseman in the Sky', and 'An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge' in various collections. His Civil War stories were collected up in *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* (1891) and some of his ghost stories were also collected but many were written for papers and periodicals. Some of his ghost stories, Richard Dalby says, hark back to his grim childhood dreams which he remembered with great clarity. To critics of his ghost stories he responded "If it scares you to read that one imaginary person killed another, why not take up knitting?" And H. L. Mencken commented: "the reputation of Bierce has always radiated an occult, artificial drug-store scent."

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I much prefer poetry collections which are written on a theme or subject. Selected poems may contain excellent individual poems but I am often left with a feeling of scrappiness. So I particularly enjoyed Karen Knight's book *Under the One Granite Roof* which takes the life of Walt Whitman as its centrepiece.

In the book there is this interesting little piece called 'Match up the Notables':

- (a) I volunteered to fight and I fought like a gladiator.
- (b) I lost an arm, but I found a river.
- (c) I dreamt of dizzy buildings each time I stacked up the dead.
- (d) I stayed alive to write my morbid story.
- (e) I never hurt anyone knowingly in battle. I always aimed high.

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- (i) Ambrose Bierce, writer of *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, a favourite on the

reading lists of Junior High Schools.

- (ii) William Le Baron Jenney, father of the skyscraper.
- (iii) Robert Livingstone, David's remarkable boy.
- (iv) John Wesley Powell, navigator of the Colorado River and Grand Canyon.
- (v) Lew Wallace, author of *Ben Hur*.

Was Bierce's story morbid? It is not precisely the word I would think of in connection with him. Cynical, sarcastic, dry, even callous at times.

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It was not his birth in Ohio or his long years of writing but his death which created a sense of the macabre about him.

Ernest Jerome Hopkins introducing a new edition of *The Devil's Dictionary* says, "The pulp writers of a half century ago made much of Bierce as a 'mysterious disappearance case' after he staged his dramatic exit into revolutionary Mexico at the end of 1913, never to return. It is clear from his letters that this vigorous literary veteran of seventy-one had no real intention or expectation of returning; the attempt to discover the precise how and where of his Mexican death was futile enough to begin with, and so remains today." Pancho Vila may well have been the sort of man who appealed to him. And perhaps he was tired of his life in the U.S. He had brought his *Collected Works* out in 12 volumes. He had worked for a number of newspapers including those of the notorious William Randolph Hearst. He had come through the times of destitution and worry and threatened libel. Perhaps he despaired of an America which seemed unable to fully appreciate satire and particularly his brand of satire. But his travels to Mexico have the sense of taking one last great adventurous plunge. To come back would be an anti-climax.

Yet his disappearance, planned or accidental, created one of those enduring mysteries which has people sighted all over the place years later. In his case he sparked off both stories based on fact and purely speculative fiction to explain his disappearance. I came upon one such story written forty-three years later by Gerald Kersh called 'Oxoxoco Bottle'. It was a good yarn. But the puzzle of his death remains. I am inclined to think that was the way he wanted it.

\* \* \* \* \*

June 25<sup>th</sup> : George Orwell  
John Horne Tooke

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While I was reading a book of Orwell's essays *Inside the Whale* I came upon his piece 'Lear, Tolstoy and the Fool' in which he writes: "Tolstoy's pamphlets are the least-known part of his work, and his attack on Shakespeare is not even an easy document to get hold of, at any rate in an English translation. Perhaps, therefore, it will be useful if I give a summary of the pamphlet before trying to discuss it."

This little pamphlet 'Shakespeare and the Drama' came out around 1903 as an introduction to Ernest Crosby's pamphlet 'Shakespeare and the Working Classes'.

Orwell writes: "Tolstoy begins by saying that throughout life Shakespeare has aroused in him 'an irresistible repulsion and tedium'. Conscious that the opinion of the civilized world is against him, he has made one attempt after another on Shakespeare's works, reading and re-reading them in Russian, English and German; but 'I invariably underwent the same feelings; repulsion, weariness and bewilderment'. Now, at the age of seventy-five, he has once again re-read the entire works of Shakespeare, including the historical plays, and

I have felt with an even greater force, the same feelings — this time, however, not of bewilderment, but of firm, indutiable conviction that the unquestionable glory of a great genius which Shakespeare enjoys, and which compels writers of our time to imitate him and readers and spectators to discover in him non-existent merits — thereby distorting their aesthetic and ethical understanding — is a great evil, as is every untruth.



“Shakespeare, Tolstoy adds, is not merely no genius, but is not even ‘an average author’, and in order to demonstrate this fact he will examine *King Lear*, which, as he is able to show by quotations from Hazlitt, Brandes and others, has been extravagantly praised and can be taken as an example of Shakespeare’s best work.”

Orwell goes on, “Tolstoy then makes a sort of exposition of the plot of *King Lear*, finding it at every step to be stupid, verbose, unnatural, unintelligible, bombastic, vulgar, tedious and full of incredible events, ‘wild ravings’, ‘mirthless jokes’, anachronisms, irrelevancies, obscenities, worn-out stage conventions and other faults both moral and aesthetic. *Lear* is, in any case, a plagiarism of an earlier and much better play, *King Leir*, by an unknown author, which Shakespeare stole and then ruined.” ... “Having dealt with *Lear* Tolstoy draws up a more general indictment against Shakespeare. He finds that Shakespeare has a certain technical skill which is partly traceable to his having been an actor, but otherwise no merits whatever. He has no power of delineating character or of making words and actions spring naturally out of situations, his language is uniformly exaggerated and ridiculous, he constantly thrusts his own random thoughts into the mouth of any character who happens to be handy, he displays a ‘complete absence of aesthetic feeling’, and his words ‘have nothing whatever in common with art and poetry’.”

Orwell struggles to find a reason for this vitriolic attack. By this time Tolstoy was elderly; he had come to believe that writing should contain a clear moral purpose, he believed that a writer should be sincere, (and Shakespeare, both from his habit of re-working other people’s pieces and his need to appeal to audiences, potential sponsors and patrons, and perhaps because he was far more aware of his place in society than Tolstoy, born with the proverbial silver spoon, ever needed to be, can be accused of insincerity but as we don’t know exactly how he felt about either his plays or his poems it is hard to know to what extent he incorporated his own ideas and beliefs), he may have felt that Shakespeare was his main rival in the posterity stakes, and as we don’t know to what extent he had read Shakespeare in sub-standard translations—or how well his grasp of English could take him into the English of Shakespeare’s day—it may be that on the evidence of the versions available to him many of his criticisms were partly or wholly justified.

The extravagance of Shakespeare’s language and the melodrama of his plots also had the effect of driving his successors into greater and greater absurdity, bombast and extravagance; audiences brought up on Shakespeare, Marlowe, Kyd, and others expected no less and probably much more. In this increasingly exaggerated and absurd hot-house atmosphere the quality of the theatre declined dramatically.

The Puritan ban on the theatre has been criticised but for the next generation of playwrights it came as a strange kind of manna from heaven. When Charles II restored the theatre twelve years later, dramatists no longer had to compete with their immediate predecessors or with the expectations of audiences brought up on a steady diet of murder, mayhem, and licence. They could write the plays they wanted to write, take the theatre in new directions, develop new tastes for new audiences, and it ushered in a new era of good playwrights, relieved of the burden of Shakespeare and Marlowe sitting on their shoulders.

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I see that the question of Shakespeare as author is again under the spotlight; the three points re-raised are 1) Shakespeare didn’t have enough education, 2) Shakespeare didn’t have a library, and 3) Shakespeare was not extolled by his contemporaries.

I don’t find any of these points compelling.

Of the best-remembered nineteenth century writers those who enjoyed a university education such as Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, and Meredith are increasingly forgotten; those whose education was poor such as Dickens (who left school at 12), George Eliot (with an education in a small girls’ school) and the Brontës (whose school did little for their minds and endangered their health) remain popular and well-read. In fact many if not most of the giants of the literary world did not have a university education; while Australian writers still read, like

Henry Lawson and Steele Rudd, did not even get to high school, let alone university ...

It might be asked what Shakespeare could put in his library. There were no reams of dictionaries, though he may have had a copy of Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* which came out in 1565 or Robert Cawdrey's *A Table of Alphateticall English WORDES* from 1604. But the great range of dictionaries we take for granted had to wait till the seventeenth century and onwards. The passion for collecting folk tales and legends did not really flower till the late eighteenth century, though there were a few earlier offerings like Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Shakespeare would probably have had a Geneva Bible to start with and then probably a King James Bible. We know he depended heavily on Ralph Holinshed for his historical 'facts'. His geography was, to put it politely, a trifle askew.

A. S. Byatt said Georgette Heyer's library contained: 'The OED, the DNB, Lempriere, dictionaries of slang, dialect, Anglo-Saxon, Fowler, Roget, Debrett, Burke, an 1808 dictionary to the House of Lords, proverbs, place-names, foreign phrases ... standard historical works in both the mediaeval and the eighteenth-century periods ... histories of snuff-boxes, of sign-posts, and coaching ... several shelves on costume from Planché's two-volume *Cyclopedia of Costume* (1876) to Alison Adburgham on *Shops and Shopping*, Grand-Cartaret's *Les Elégances de la Toilette* to *The History of Underclothes*.' Apart from the fact that most of these kinds of books were not available to Shakespeare, he wasn't interested in this kind of detail. He doesn't tell us what people were wearing, how they did their hair, what they drove, how they prepared their food, what kind of houses they lived in, how they spoke, what they believed. Richard III sounds much the same as Henry VIII does, and they both speak like Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony, not to mention Timon of Athens, the Duke of Milan, or Macbeth of eleventh century Scotland

But my feeling is that Shakespeare was an observer of people not a reader of books; even if a broader range of dictionaries and histories had been available he would not necessarily have bought them. As a lively young man from the provinces who had just cut loose from his wife and small children London must have been a kind of paradise for a 'people watcher'; not only were there the local people from every walk of life, but London even then was a magnet for people from the provinces with all their dialects and colourful expressions; added to this mix were sailors and merchants from France, Spain and the Low Countries, not to mention people from the further reaches of the kingdom who still spoke their own languages, Welsh, Cornish, Gaelic, Manx and Irish. Who needed books?

There are few contemporary accounts extolling Shakespeare as a dramatist. The reason, I think, is a simple one. Shakespeare did not write very many of his plays himself. A considerable proportion of them were adaptations of other people's work. The precursors of some such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* we know. Others were probably anonymous ideas and fragments circulating in the theatre world. His theatre company constantly needed new plays. There was no copyright. Undoubtedly he was on the constant lookout for ideas and material that he could expand, re-work, adapt, change, and re-use. In a world where many plays were never printed for a reading public it is now impossible to say for certain just how many of his plays were his sole and original work.

C. E. Montague in *A Writer's Notes on his Trade* says: 'Of the opposite school the head man is Shakespeare. Shakespeare seems to have shunned, wherever he decently could—and sometimes where the strict ethics of letters might say that he decently couldn't—the pang of sitting down to a desk with nothing to hand except pen, ink, paper and the uncertain gusts of the creative spirit. If possible, he made the job an affair of revision or disengagement—the paring down and burnishing of some pre-existent work, or the extrication of a core of significance and beauty from the clumsy Colossus left in the stoneyard by some previous mason. One can imagine him feeling his art might be dulled or held down to the earth by the coolie work of making all his own raw material first. Sooner than that, he would take someone else's middling play or novel and lick it into fineness; or out of the rough rock of some old chronicler like Holinshed he would carve just what he wanted, seeming sometimes to value

himself on doing not a bit more of this chiseling-out than he need, so close does his metrical dialogue come to the prose he found in those naïf historians. Like the sagacious builders in Renaissance Rome, who quarried the stone for the Vatican out of the ruins of the Coliseum, he took every bit of ready-made stuff he could find.

‘Of course he was more free to do this than anyone is now. No fuss was made in his day if a new writer took from an old one whatever material he found congenial for his own operations. Greene, no doubt, spoke nastily about an upstart crow decked in other birds’ feathers; nobody else seemed to have minded, so long as the result was agreeable, any more than they reprobated the practice of an equally spirited acquisitiveness by British heroes in the Spanish main. But nowadays one cannot quite see Sir James Barrie meeting the public demand for another of his charming plays by taking down a dusty volume of W.G. Wills or of the author of *Caste* and falling to work with a blue pencil. The ears of critics would prick up at once; their neck hairs would bristle. Like our young married couples after the War, the gifted literary cuckoo of to-day is oppressed by an intractable housing question; people who, with a little assistance, might build Vaticans find their genius cramped by notice-boards to the effect that anyone who carries off any more of the Coliseum will be prosecuted.’

Of course writers continued to re-use and revise older materials. I remember thinking Dickens’ comment in *Nicholas Nickleby* about the headmaster, ‘Mr. Squeers’ appearance was not prepossessing. He had but one eye, and the popular prejudice runs in favour of two’ was clever and amusing but later on I found that Sheridan had used this idea earlier in his play ‘The Rivals’—‘... and though one eye may be very agreeable, yet as the prejudice has always run in favour of two, I would not wish to affect a singularity in that article.’

Judith Cook in *Murder at the Rose* says “The stealing, poaching and pirating of original playscripts was a real problem in the early days of the playhouses, and it was not until playwrights were able to register their scripts at Stationers’ Hall that matters began to improve. In some cases dramatists took their ideas from older texts; there are, for instance, previous versions of plays later rewritten by Shakespeare including *Richard III*, *King John* (eg. *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of Engly*) and *Henry V* (eg. *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*). There was also an earlier play of *Hamlet* before Shakespeare’s, the text of which has long since disappeared but it is usually attributed to Thomas Kyd. Robert Greene found himself in trouble after selling his adaptation of *Orlando Furioso* to several companies at twenty nobles a time, assuring each of them that they had the sole rights.” Shakespeare possibly based ‘The Taming of the Shrew’ on a Spanish morality tale ‘The Man Who Tamed a Shrew’ by Juan Manuel (1282-1349) in his collection ‘Count Lucanor’.

The audience for each play was quite small, the runs would have been short, and ‘new’ plays constantly needed. Re-working an existing play, like re-working a popular fable or fairy tale, made sense. I came upon the interesting suggestion that Shakespeare took the idea for *King Lear* from the real life court case in which the two daughters of Sir Brian Annesley, Lady Sandys and Lady Wildgoose, tried to have him declared insane and his property passed to them. His third daughter Cordell, tried to prevent this happening. But being based on a true event doesn’t necessarily make Shakespeare the first to see in it dramatic possibilities.

This question of attribution raises the query in a suspicious mind: perhaps Shakespeare had a very sensible reason for not carting back to Stratford all the volumes and fading manuscripts he had drawn on in a lifetime of very productive cribbing—perhaps he felt posterity at his shoulder—

His poetry has never been attributed to anyone else perhaps because the prime candidates, Marlowe and Bacon, are not remembered as poets. Edward, Earl of Oxford, another contender in some people’s minds, was a poet but his style seems to me very different.

*Venus and Adonis* was first printed in 1593, *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594 and the *Sonnets* in 1609. Louis Wright and Virginia LaMar in their edition of the *Sonnets* note “As early as 1598 Shakespeare was so well-known as a literary and dramatic craftsman that Francis Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia: Wits Treasury*, referred in flattering terms to him as “mellifluous and

honey-tongued Shakespeare,” famous for his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, and “his sugared sonnets,” which were circulating “among his private friends.” Meres observes further that “as Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage,” and he mentions a dozen plays that had made a name for Shakespeare. He concludes with the remark that “the Muses would speak with Shakespeare’s fine filed phrase if they would speak English.”

The sonnet was a popular Italian form. “The first work to popularize the sonnet by name (in England) was published by a printer named Richard Tottel in 1557 as *Songs and Sonnets*.” The form was taken up by a variety of English poets including Sir Philip Sidney, Michael Drayton, and Edmund Spenser. It also became popular in France and the Low Countries. It seems unlikely that Shakespeare drew on anyone else’s work for his subject matter, not if he had been commissioned to write them for or about William Herbert, but he drew on a style, a fashion, a particular way of speaking of love and procreation, jealousy, death ...

\* \* \* \* \*

The forgery *Vortigern* came very close to being accepted into the Shakespearian canon. It is a fascinating episode, not least for its insight into the mind of its perpetrator. Roger Manvell tells the story in his biography of Sarah Siddons. ‘Sarah was in fact fortunate during the spring of 1796 to have managed to free herself from any connexion with the celebrated Shakespearian forgery — the play *Vortigern*, in which it was originally intended she would appear. She wrote to Mrs. Piozzi in March 1796, and reveals that she had no time for this audacious bid for fame by the Irelands, which deceived so many scholars:

All sensible persons are convinced that *Vortigern* is a most audacious imposter. If he be not, I can only say that Shakespear’s writings are more unequal than those of any other man. I am studying for *Vortigern* and *Almeyda*, and only scrawl these few lines, for fear you should have been frightened at some story of my biting or barking.

The forgery of *Vortigern* is a remarkable example of the gullibility of people in the literary world, as well as reflecting the almost pathological private obsessions of the forger, William Henry Ireland, and his father, Samuel Ireland, a topographical artist, etcher, and antique dealer. Ever since Garrick’s elaborate promotion of Shakespear as the Immortal Bard at the Jubilee celebrations at Stratford in 1769, the dramatist was to become a national cult figure, handed on with reverence by the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, and by the nineteenth (with bowdlerization) to the twentieth — each generation of scholars, critics, actors, and devoted public remodeling him to suit their current tastes. The *entrepreneurs* soon entered the market, acquiring, manufacturing, or falsifying ‘relics’ for sale, as if Shakespeare had been some kind of saint with powers to heal. The unscrupulous exploitation of these antiquities, or Shakespeariana, had already created interesting market-values when Samuel Ireland and his son entered the stage.

Samuel Ireland realized that the Shakespeare document market was virtually a blank. If only some of his letters or manuscripts could be discovered, not only fame but fortune lay in the discoverers’ hands. Aided by another scoundrel, John Jordan, a Stratford wheelwright, Samuel began to acquire ‘relics’ of Shakespeare. Both he and his eighteen-year-old son absorbed from Jordan all the necessary Shakespearian patter about the Bard’s associations with Stratford, both true and fictitious. The only thing no one seemed able to supply were manuscripts, however fragmentary, from Shakespeare’s plays or personal papers.

William Henry Ireland appears to have been illegitimate, born to Ireland’s housekeeper and mistress, Mrs. Freeman, a woman with both money and some education. William Henry’s birth was shrouded in mystery, and his mother may well have been some other woman, though Mrs. Freeman was held to be the mother of most of Ireland’s children. A lonely child, to some extent despised and neglected by his father, William Henry’s one idea during his adolescence was to impress his father and share in his cultural dealings. He was obsessed by Chaucer, filling his bedroom with ‘relics’ and medieval armour. He was also influenced by the

astonishing career of Chatterton, who had died in 1770. So he began to try his hand at writing poetry in a kind of medieval style, with pseudo-medieval spelling.

It was in 1793 that William Henry had accompanied his father to Stratford. Here he learned of the absence of Shakespearian manuscripts, which Samuel found so frustrating. After they had returned to London, he began to experiment with forgery, using fragments cut from old vellum documents and special inks. From small beginnings, such as author's dedications in books, he progressed by the end of 1794 to present his first Shakespearian forgery, a property deed. This proved such a success with his father that in quick succession during January 1795 he produced a whole series of Shakespearian 'finds'. He was careful to use parchment scraps of the right period cut from documents in his employer's archives; since he was apprenticed to a lawyer who specialized in the conveyance of property, there was no shortage of parchment on which he could draw. He dried the ink of his inscriptions brown before the fire. He told his father the documents came from the collection of an aristocrat who refused to have his name revealed.

The forgeries of William Henry Ireland were to develop into one of the great hoaxes of literature. Both father and son were by now, in their quite different ways, in a state of compulsive excitement. They were 'possessed' by the possibilities of what lay before them. While Ireland senior put on a special exhibition of his new and most precious 'relics' in February 1795 at his place in Norfolk Street, his son hastened to create new and even greater ones, working away from home on his employer's premises. Among the exhibits was a ludicrous perversion of the second quarto of *King Lear*, and some 'leaves' from *Hamlet*, both manuscripts, omitting Shakespeare's 'indecencies', and dressing what was left with bogus period spelling which became more eccentric than that of Chatterton. Boaden was among those who visited the exhibition, and he was at first as completely taken in as anyone. He wrote in his journal, *The Oracle*:

By the obliging politeness of Mr Ireland, of Norfolk Street, the conductor of this paper is enabled to gratify, in a general way, the public curiosity ... There are various papers, the *domestica facta* of this great man's life, discovered. [The letter] 'to the lady he afterwards married! ... [is] distinguished for the utmost delicacy of passion and poetical spirit ... The conviction produced upon our mind, is such as to make all scepticism ridiculous, and when we follow the sentiments of Dr Joseph Wharton, we have no fear of our critical orthodoxy.

'He was delighted to find that Shakespeare's mind was after all so pure; 'the licentious passages' as 'confirmed by the original! — they are not SHAKESPEARE'S, but the foisted impurities of buffoons.' Boswell himself went to Norfolk Street, where he excited the attention appropriate to his fame by kneeling and kissing the sacred relics. But the array of 'believers', including John Taylor and many well-known scholars such as Wharton, had from the first to face the scorn of the 'unbelievers', led by the redoubtable, though rival, Shakespearian scholars, Stevens and Malone. But the believers were not to be put off, scholars or not. Meanwhile William Henry was excelling himself by writing an entirely original Shakespearian tragedy — *Vortigern*, adapted from Holinshed. It took him only two months to complete this, and he presented it to his father in hastily composed sections.

'At the same time he protected his 'copyright' by forging a deed of gift of the plays to a fictitious ancestor, Masterre William Henrye Irelande. Then, to end the series of forgeries, since they had to end sometime, he produced an early Shakespearian Will, dated 1611, to challenge the genuine, later one, dated 25 March 1616, which had come to light in 1747. In this he gave Shakespeare a bastard son. While this work was being completed, Samuel Ireland was busy collecting subscriptions, at four guineas a time, for the publication of the documents, and at the same time pressing his son only too hard to introduce him to the unduly retiring aristocrat from whom the documents had come. Among the subscribers to the publication were Boswell, Burke, Pitt, Sheridan and Dora Jordan; neither Kemble's nor Sarah's name appears on the list. Sheridan — rather against his will because, on the whole, he did not much care for Shakespeare — signed a contract in September 1795 to produce *Vortigern* at Drury Lane. He felt that at least he owed it to himself and his theatre to be the first to present the great

dramatist's newly-discovered work, for what it was worth, and he fully expected Kemble and Sarah, as dedicated Shakespearian players, to appear in it together.

'Kemble, in fact, was violently opposed to *Vortigern* and did everything he could to postpone its production. Sheridan, too, procrastinated; he thought what he had read of the play to be most disappointing, and he did not live up to his word to give *Vortigern* a grand presentation, with new scenery and the greatest *réclame* worthy of the occasion. Kemble and Sheridan were still pressing to get the completed script from Ireland before having any new scenery constructed. William Henry, however, though refused the patronage of Sheridan, Kemble, and Sarah, managed to secure more generous treatment from Drury Lane's second lady, Dora Jordan. She took him straight to her lover, the Duke of Clarence, who readily at her bidding joined the claue of believers in the authenticity of *Vortigern*, and put himself down for several copies of Samuel's publication. Thus encouraged, William Henry started to work on another Shakespearian play, *Henry II*. The papers were published on 24 December, but still *Vortigern* lacked a production date.

'By the New Year, Boaden had lost his faith and moved over to the ranks of unbelievers; he published a retraction of his initial support; he was, he said, victim of a 'wished impression' of the authenticity of the papers. By now it had become a race — would *Vortigern* be produced at Drury Lane before the hoax was finally exposed? The production actually won by a very short head. The discussion for or against authenticity was still in balance when the play was presented on 2 April 1796; Malone's scathing 400-page *Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers* appeared on 31 March. Sheridan by now did not care one way or the other, since he was certain the theatre would fill. He was right; the streets outside were crammed two hours before the start of the play at six-thirty.

Sarah's withdrawal from the cast was made tactfully but firmly:

Mrs. Siddons' compliments to Mr. Ireland; she finds that *Vortigern* is intended to be performed next Saturday and begs to assure him that she is very sorry the weak state of her health after six weeks of indisposition renders her incapable of even going to the necessary rehearsals of the play, much less to act. Had she been fortunately well she would have done all in her power to justify Mr. Ireland's polite sentiments on the subject when she had the honour of seeing him on Saturday.

'Kemble's hostility showed itself in a number of ways, most of all in his refusal to bill the play as written by Shakespeare. *Vortigern* was announced quite simply as 'a new play' without benefit of author. There were, however, 'new Scenes, Dresses, and Decorations' and the presence in the cast of both Kemble himself and Dora Jordan. The Duke of Clarence was present, but not the Prince of Wales, who had granted an audience to Samuel Ireland the previous December. A musical entertainment was added, *My Grandmother*, with Miss de Camp in the cast; it dealt with the gullibility of an art collector. Samuel Ireland was there — in a box with Mrs Freeman, while William Henry remained behind the scenes with Dora Jordan.

'The tension in the theatre ran high. The Prologue appealed to the audience to keep an open mind, and the first two acts survived fairly enough. Laughter only began during the third act, and Kemble had to appeal for silence. Ireland was by now sure that Kemble had maliciously miscast the play in order to encourage derision, and this was confirmed when a comedian, Mr Phillimore, having played a warrior who died in combat on the stage, lay in such a position that the drop curtain came down directly on top of him, and the audience could see him extricate himself. Gradually the production declined into a farce, at which even the actors seemed to connive. Kemble gave the *coup de grâce* to the evening by the way in which he spoke the line

'And when this solemn mockery is ended.'

'When it was announced from the stage that the play was to be repeated, the house rose in uproar in spite of the presence of the Duke of Clarence, a 'wonderfully and ridiculously conspicuous' supporter of *Vortigern* as a Shakespearian discovery. The production was never repeated. Kemble, though his behaviour can scarcely be commended, never concealed the fact that he was determined the play should not succeed; he gave his own, much refurbished

account of it, some years later. The *Annual Register* summed up the general verdict: the play, it said, was the work of ‘a copyist who is more intent on imitating the language than the genius of Shakespeare’.

‘The melancholy end to the story is well known. William Henry’s total profit for all his work, a gift from his father since he was still only a minor, was £90. Samuel persistently believed in the authenticity of both the papers and the play until his death. Perhaps the greatest tragedy for William Henry was his father’s resolute refusal to accept any hint that he could have been the author of the Shakespeare papers; how could such an idiot have composed these wonderful writings? The very thought was, to William Henry’s father, a further proof of his son’s ‘insolence and vanity’. William Henry left his father’s house for good in June.’

Malone was the theatre critic and Shakespearian scholar Edmund Malone; he was also the man who exposed Chatterton, and Boswell dedicated his *Travels in the Highlands* to him. I found myself thinking that an actor would be the ideal person to know if a play was internally authentic. That study of every line, every word, every nuance, should help.

But I wonder what Ireland’s ‘original’ would now fetch on the curio market? For many collectors it is the odd, the curious, the blemished, the forged, the mistaken, which provides part of the fascination. And, damning though the admission may be, I think the literary and theatre worlds would be less interesting without the occasional scallywag to liven everything up.

The twentieth century believed some of Shakespeare’s work must be the work of other writers because of the lack of documentation. The nineteenth century was more concerned with expunging the ‘naughty bits’. The eighteenth century saw the lack of documents as a business opportunity. I wonder how the twenty-first century will see Shakespeare.

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I was surprised to learn that famous writer of Westerns, Zane Grey, wrote many stories about sharks, and that Louisa May Alcott wrote about the joys of marijuana, and that Jules Verne, remembered for his science fiction, also wrote several novels about English tourists going on package holidays, and that poet Walt Whitman published a temperance novel in 1842. I think I knew, vaguely, that Michaelangelo had occasionally dashed off a sonnet in between painting and sculpting but the other day when I was looking for something quite different in the reference library I happened to notice that they had a book of his sonnets. So, as soon as I could spare the time to read a book of sonnets, I went back to indulge myself.

His sonnets did not particularly engage me, though that might have been partly because of the translation, but I found it interesting that he refers to the pain involved in his work and uses stone and hammers as images. His ideas are conventional in their piety and he rarely uses the sonnet for poetry of love.

This is the last piece he wrote (it is interesting that Michelangelo lived to eighty-nine and produced his masterpieces mostly at an age when his contemporaries were already dead); if it wasn’t a very happy life, and his sonnets are as much about failure and regret to reach his own high standards as any other subject, it was a life which allowed him the fullness of experience and wisdom and maturity.

LXXVIII.

Dear to me is sleep: still more, being made of stone.  
Which pain and guilt still linger here below,  
Blindness and numbness—these please me alone;  
Then do not wake me, keep your voices low.

\* \* \* \* \*

Even if Shakespeare could not draw on the plethora of histories, guides, dictionaries, and encyclopaedias we take for granted—or buy them for his library—there was one kind of book which has a long pedigree and which he might have enjoyed for its attack on grossness: the book of etiquette.

Christopher Hibbert in *The English* writes, “Even noble pages in the fifteenth century had

to be advised in books of etiquette such as *The Babees Book* that wine must not be drunk when the mouth was full; that the upper part of the body must not lean forward over the table with the head hanging into the dish; that neither nose nor nails must be picked at meal times; that salt should not be flicked out of the cellar with a knife; that dirty spoons should not be put down on the cloth; that the knife should not be used to carry food to the mouth; that meat should not be cut in the manner of ‘field men who have such an appetite that they reck not in what wise, where or when or how ungoodly they hack at their meat’, and that when the meal was finished, the guest must ‘ryse uppe withoute lauhtere, japyng, or boystrous words’. In his *Booke of Nurture*, John Russell, marshal of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, thought it necessary to add that young gentlemen must not spit or ‘retch too loud’, or put their fingers into cups ‘to seek bits of dust’, or lick dishes with their tongues. Another well-known book of etiquette, the *Booke of Courtesy*, cautioned against spitting on the table, cleaning the teeth with the tablecloth, wiping the hands on skirt or tippet after the nose had been blown into them, and against playing with the animals that scratched about under the table eating scraps:

Whereso thou sitt at mete in borde,  
Avoide the cat at on bare worde,  
For yf thou stroke cat other dogge,  
Thou art lyke an ape teyghed with a clogge.”

Alison Weir in *The Wars of the Roses* writes of medieval etiquette, ‘Elaborate codes of courtesy and etiquette were followed slavishly, these being considered the outward manifestations of an ordered society. So intricate were these rituals that a stream of books on manners appeared at this time. The number of steps one took to greet one’s guests was determined by one’s rank. According precedence was a refined art, and social inferiors were expected to refuse precedence a stated number of times, according to rank, before gracefully giving in. Pages and sons of the nobility were forbidden to drink wine while still chewing food, lean over the table, pick their noses, teeth or nails during meals, place dirty utensils on the cloth or eat with their knives.’

The nineteenth century was the hey-day of the etiquette bible; they came out in their hundreds, maybe even in their thousands. They had names like *The Habits of Good Society*, *Society Small Talk*, *Party Giving on Every Scale*, *Don’t: Mistakes and Improprieties more or less prevalent in Conduct and Speech* ... They were as much about the nuances of the social scale (where to sit people according to the infinite gradations of their position) as about eating nicely and not belching at the dinner-table. But the earlier ones were as much about improving hygiene (as straw and stone gave away to cloths and furniture) as about manners; such as this piece by Thomas Tusser in his 1573 offering, *Five Hundreth Goode Pointes of Husbandrie*:

The sloven and the carles man, the roinish  
nothing nice,  
To lodge in chamber comely deckt, are seldom  
suffred twice.

With curteine som make scabbard clene, with  
coverlet their shoo,  
All dirt and mire some wallow bed, as spanneils  
used to do.

Though bootes and spurs be nere so foule, what  
passeth some thereon?  
What place they foules, what thing they tearse,  
by tumbling thereupon.

Foule male some cast one faire boord, be carpet  
nere so cleene,



What maners careless maister hath, by knave his  
man is seens.

Some make the chimnie chamber pot to smell like  
filthie sink,  
Yet who so bold, so soone to say, fough, how  
these houses stink?

They therefore such as make no force what comely  
thing they spil,  
Must have a cabben like themselves, although  
against their wil.

But gentlemen will gently doe where gentleness  
is shewd,  
Observing this, with love abide, or else hence  
all beshreawd.

Erasmus brought out *De Civilitate Morieum Puerilium* in which he tells people to turn away when spitting “lest your saliva fall on someone”. He also advocates that you “catch the sputum in a small cloth”; he also reminds people to turn away while using their handkerchief “if more honourable people are present”.

My image of etiquette was of an Emily Postian figure pronouncing from on high and if you should happen to use the wrong fork your social life would be forever blighted. But I recently came upon a book called *The Penguin Book of Etiquette* by Marion von Adlerstein. She says ‘The concept of etiquette, as we know it, is said to date from the court of Louis XIV (1643 – 1715) when a ticket or card (for which the French word is *etiquette*) was posted outlining the rules of courtly behaviour.’ But although she deals with how to address people in various positions to what wine to serve with what food she also deals with some very modern concerns such as divorce, a new lover, and drug addiction. She writes in an attractive and sensible way and I quite agree with her assertion that in an ever more crowded world courtesy makes our relationships just that little bit easier and more pleasant.

\* \* \* \* \*

John Galsworthy in *The White Monkey* wrote: ‘The offices of the P.P.R.S. were not far from the College of Arms. Soames, who knew that “three dexter buckles on a sable ground gules” and a “pheasant proper” had been obtained there at some expense by his Uncle Swithin in the ’sixties of the last century, had always pooh-poohed the building, until, about a year ago, he had been struck by the name Golding in a book which he had absently taken up at the Connoisseurs’ Club. The affair purported to prove that William Shakespeare was really Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. The mother of the earl was a Golding—so was the mother of Soames! The coincidence struck him; and he went on reading. The tome left him with judgment suspended over the main issue, but a distinct curiosity as to whether he was not of the same blood as Shakespeare. Even if the earl were not the bard, he felt that the connection could only be creditable, though, so far as he could make out, Oxford was a shady fellow. Recently appointed on the Board of the P.P.R.S., so that he passed the college every other Tuesday, he had thought: ‘Shan’t go spending a lot of money on it, but might look in one day.’ Having looked in, it was astonishing how taken he had been by the whole thing. Tracing his mother had been quite like a criminal investigation, nearly as ramified and fully as expensive.’

It is interesting that Edward de Vere (1550 – 1604) was still seen as being in the running in that dark-horse-race at the time Galsworthy was writing; since then he has dropped well back and must be seen as a rank outsider. Now I am actually distantly connected to Edward, as we share John de Vere, the 12<sup>th</sup> Earl, though for me he is sixteen generations back, and I would love to be able to claim I was related to Shakespeare, but I don’t see the slightest hint of a clue

that Edward wrote any of the work credited to William. Edward lived a busy rake-helly life; there was time in it for some poetry but not for dozens of plays as well; Edward lived his life very much in the public eye, his papers exist, his time was accounted for, he frequently sold off his (or the family's belongings) so as to fund his expensive existence ... but perhaps most compellingly his work shows no affinity with that of Shakespeare. No matter how versatile and flexible and wide-ranging a writer is they still stamp something of themselves on their work. Edward wrote lively and accomplished poetry in a variety of forms, such as his epigram—

Were I a king, I could command content;  
Were I obscure, hidden should be my cares,  
Or were I dead, no cares should me torment,  
Nor hopes, nor hates, nor loves, nor griefs, nor fears,  
A doubtful choice, of these three which to crave,  
A kingdom, or a cottage, or a grave.

—but his sonnets, even though they belong in the sonnet tradition of his time, are unlike Shakespeare's sonnets.

I liked this poem of his—though he didn't let his understanding impel him forward into changing anything.

The labouring man, that tills the fertile soil,  
And maps the harvest fruit, hath not in deed  
The gain, but pain; and if for all his toil  
He gets the straw, the lord will have the seed.

The manchet fine falls not unto his share;  
On coarsest cheat his hungry stomach feeds.  
The landlord doth possess the finest fare;  
He pulls the flowers, the other plucks but weeds.

The mason poor, that builds the lordly halls,  
Dwells not in them; they are for high degree.  
His cottage is compact in paper walls,  
And not with brick or stone, as others be.

The idle drone that labours not at all,  
Sucks up the sweet of honey from the bee.  
Who worketh most, to their share least doth fall;  
With due desert reward will never be.

(Manchet was the finest flour; cheat the coarsest.)

I don't know if Edward saw himself as an idle drone; he was certainly extravagant. But the poem seems to me quite unlike anything Shakespeare wrote, either in style or subject matter.

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I used to see the whole world of heraldry as being one of snobbishness on the one hand and of arcane and esoteric language on the other. I still think it is both those things. But it does have its own fascination, insights, and usefulness. Heraldry harks back to the days of medieval warfare when contending armies needed a way to distinguish men clothed in armour or chain-mail; the devices they created for their banners and pennants, for their shields, their horses' caparisons, their helmets and cloaks and other means of distinguishing each other from the danger of 'friendly fire' or, more correctly, 'friendly sword' (it doesn't have the same cosy sound to it, does it?) gradually developed into a whole art and tradition. It has two unexpected uses to a family historian: it can provide insights into how families relate to each other and, because people had to submit their documents and evidence to close scrutiny, usually by the local sheriff or a visiting herald, material accepted was more likely to be correct than material

written up for other purposes. They were certainly not infallible—I'm sure money or a 'brace of pheasants' at times passed under the table, or officials were careless or uncaring—but the material checked at each Visitation is useful. And the medieval world would have been a darker drabber grimmer place without the rich and colourful designs that belonged to families, clans, corporations, cities, councils, and prelates.

I was curious about the suggestion that Shakespeare showed a knowledge of heraldry in his plays. So I wondered: did he study heraldry for the purpose of his work, did he simply incorporate material already written up in Holinshed and other authors, or did he have a personal familiarity with heraldry?

I found that his father John was granted his own coat-of-arms in 1596.

Part of the letter announcing the grant says: 'Wherefore being solicited and by credible report informed that John Shakespeare of Stratford Uppon Avon in the counte of Warwik, whose parentes and late antecessors (grandfather is written in above antecessor) were for theyre faithfull and va[leant service advaunced and rewarded by the most prudent] prince King Henry the Seventh of [famous memorie, sythence which tyme they have continewed at] those partes, beng of good reputacion [and credit; and that the] said John hathe maryed [Mary, daughter and one of the heys of Robert Arden, pf Wilmcote, in the said] counte, esquire. In consideration whereof, and for the encouragement of his posterite, to whome such Blazon [or Atchevement] by the auncyent custome of the lawes of armes maie, I the said Garter King of Armes have assigned, graunted and by these presentes confirmed this shield or cote of arms, viz. Gould, on a bend sables a speare of the first, steeled argent, standing on a wrethe of his coullors, supporting a speare gould, steeled as aforesaid, sett upon a helmet with mantelles and tasselles as hath been accustomed and dothe more playnely appeare depicted on this margent. Signifying hereby, and by the autorite of my office aforesaid ratifying, that it shalbe lawfull for the sayd John Shakespeare gent. And for his children, yssue and posterite (at all tymes and places convenient) to bear and make demostraction of the said Blazon or Atchevement upon theyre Shieldes, Targets, Escucheons, Cotes of arms, Pennons, Guydons, Ringes, Edefices, Buyldinges, Utensiles, Lyveries, Tombes or Monumentes, or otherwise, for all lawfull warrlyke factes or civile use and exercises, according to the lawes of armes' ... etc ... (20 October 1596)

This is all very interesting but I am intrigued by the question: whose idea was it? William's or his father's? Did he want to make more of a dash in London? Did he feel inferior when dealing with some of his colleagues and patrons? Or was it something that John had applied for quite some time previously? And did John want it for personal reasons, to help his sons, or because his wife's family already had their own coat-of-arms?

Shakespeare certainly brought heraldry into his work. But—"The famous badge of the Earls of Warwick, a bear chained to a ragged staff, was produced by uniting devices which were originally separate. They appear on the brass of Thomas, fourth Beauchamp Earl of Warwick, the bear at his feet and the ragged staff on his elbow-plates and scabbard; and they are united in the seal of the fifth Earl of Warwick. Though said to have been of greater antiquity, these badges are first recorded as having been borne by the Earls of Warwick of the Beauchamp family. Shakespeare tripped when he made Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, (the King-maker) say:

"my father's badge, old Nevil's crest,

The rampant bear chained to the ragged staff," (Henry VI. Pt 2. V.1.) for the King-maker derived this badge not from his father but, with the earldom of Warwick, from his wife, the heiress of the last Beauchamp Earl. The King-maker's father, Richard, the Earl of Salisbury, bore as his crest a demi-griffin inherited from the Montagues and if he used a badge it would appear to have been the Neville bull." (*Boutell's Heraldry*. J. P. Brooke-Little.)

Even so, I think Shakespeare managed very well in juggling so many characters in his historical works.

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“As I looked at the rope I further considered how strange it was that ropes had never been worshipped. Men have worshipped the wall, and the post, and the sun, and the house. They have worshipped their food and their drink. They have, you may say, ceremonially worshipped their clothes; they have worshipped their headgear especially, crowns, mitres, tar-ras; and they have worshipped the music which they have created. But I never heard of anyone worshipping a rope. Nor have I ever heard of a rope being made a symbol. I can recollect but one case in which it appears in a coat-of-arms, and that is, I think, in the case of the County or City of Chester, where, as I seem to remember, the Chester knot is emblazoned. But no one used it that I can remember in the Crusades, when all coats-of-arms were developing. And this is odd, for they used every other conceivable thing—windmills, spurs, boots, roses, staffs, waves of the sea, the crescent moon, lions and leopards and even the elephant, and black men’s heads, birds, horses, unicorns, griffons, jolly little dogs, chess boards, eagles—every conceivable thing human or imaginary they pressed into service; but no ropes.”

Hilaire Belloc in ‘On a Piece of Rope’.

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Nicholas Basbanes wrote a book called *Among the Gently Mad*, subtitled *Strategies and Perspectives for the Book Hunter in the Twenty-First Century*, in which he chronicles a telephone duel at an auction to acquire “an immaculate copy of the 1623 edition of William Shakespeare’s dramatic works, known as the First Folio”, the winning bid gaining it for \$5.6 million (US). At the same auction William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* (1789) went for \$941,000 and a first edition of Sir Isaac Newton’s *Principia Mathematica* (1687) went for \$358,000.

After the auction Basbanes was asked why anyone would pay that amount for a First Folio. After all, there are at least 250 copies in existence. He pointed out that most copies are in institutions, that this one was in wonderful condition, and that it had been owned by the poet John Dryden. Even so, I wasn’t totally convinced. When it came to the Blake I found his explanation more compelling. Blake had done everything, not just written the words; all the artwork he had done by hand, and the printing, the illuminations, the stitching and cutting and binding. As Basbanes puts it “his fingerprints are here”. Perhaps for a Blake lover that sense of touching something Blake had made with such love and care the price would be worthwhile. None of the Folios have that kind of intimate connection with the author. I can understand people wanting to own something that is rare and beautiful ... but you wouldn’t buy a First Folio to read because you would always be terrified of dog-earring it or spilling your coffee or leaving a sweaty fingermark. You would still need your cheap version to read; that is, if you intended to read it.

From this you can see that I am not a true bibliomaniac. Basbanes says, “The first documented use of the word *bibliomania* in English came in 1750 when Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield and a wily politician with a gift for turning a memorable phrase, sent a haughty letter to his illegitimate son, then away at school, to warn of a consuming diversion that should be avoided like the bubonic plague. “Buy good books, and read them,” the lord advised the impressionable lad, urging him to choose the sanity of substance over what he felt was the senselessness of scarcity; “the best books are the commonest, and the last editions are always the best, if the editors are not blockheads.” Several decades would pass before the term came to widespread prominence, and even then it was drolly described as a “fatal disease” by its most famous chronicler, a country clergyman named Thomas Frognall Dibdin whose insatiable passion for books led him to write a landmark tract on the subject, aptly titled *The Bibliomania*. The reverend’s tongue-in-cheek diagnosis caused a minor sensation when it first appeared in 1809, and came to epitomize a good deal of the fervor then taking place in what became known as the Heroic Age of Book Collecting.”

The Stanhopes were noted for a degree of eccentricity (the famous traveller Lady Hester Stanhope was a member of the family) but there is a lot of good sense in the lord’s advice.

“Buy good books and read them”. Bookshops might like to take it as their motto.

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Sheridan Morley in *The Theatre Addict's Archive* includes a little piece by James Thurber. An American lady has picked up some small paperbacks and finds that she has included *Macbeth* among her collection of crime fiction. With nothing else to read this aficionado of the detective story brings her mind to bear on the problem. Did she like it? Definitely not.

‘In the first place, I don’t think for a moment that Macbeth did it.’ I looked at her blankly. ‘Did what?’ I asked. ‘I don’t think for a moment that he killed the King,’ she said. ‘I don’t think the Macbeth woman was mixed up in it either. You suspect them the most, of course, but those are the ones that are never guilty—or shouldn’t be, anyway.’ ‘I’m afraid,’ I began, ‘that I—’ ‘But don’t you see?’ said the American lady. ‘It would spoil everything if you could figure out right away who did it. Shakespeare was too smart for that. I’ve read that people never *have* figured out *Hamlet*, so it isn’t likely Shakespeare would have made *Macbeth* as simple as it seems.’ I thought this over while I filled my pipe. ‘Who do you suspect?’ I asked, suddenly. ‘Macduff,’ she said, promptly. ‘Good God!’ I whispered, softly.

‘Oh Macduff did it, all right,’ said the murder specialist. ‘Hercule Poirot would have got him easily.’ ‘How did you figure it out?’ I demanded. ‘Well,’ she said, ‘I didn’t right away. At first I suspected Banquo. And then, of course, he was the second person killed. That was good right in there, that part. The person you suspect of the first murder should always be the second victim.’ ‘Is that so?’ I murmured. ‘Oh, yes,’ said my informant. ‘They have to keep surprising you. Well, after the second murder I didn’t know *who* the killer was for a while.’ ‘How about Malcolm and Donalbain, the King’s sons?’ I asked. ‘As I remember it, they fled right after the first murder. That looks suspicious.’ ‘Too suspicious,’ said the American lady. ‘Much too suspicious. When they flee, they’re never guilty. You can count on that.’ ‘I believe,’ I said ‘I’ll have a brandy,’ and I summoned the waiter. My companion leaned toward me, her eyes bright, her teacup quivering. ‘Do you know who discovered Duncan’s body?’ she demanded. I said I was sorry, but I had forgotten. ‘Macduff discovers it,’ she said, slipping into the historical present. ‘Then he comes running downstairs and shouts, “Confusion has broke open the Lord’s anointed temple” and “sacrilegious murder has made his masterpiece” and on and on like that.’ The good lady tapped me on the knee. ‘All that stuff was rehearsed,’ she said. ‘You wouldn’t say a lot of stuff like that, offhand, would you—if you had found a body?’ She fixed me with a glittering eye. ‘I—’ I began. ‘You’re right!’ she said. ‘You wouldn’t! Unless you had practiced it in advance. “My God, there’s a body in here!” is what an innocent man would say.’ She sat back with a confident glare.

I thought for a while. ‘But what do you make of the Third Murderer?’ I asked. ‘You know, the Third Murderer has puzzled *Macbeth* scholars for three hundred years.’ ‘That’s because they never thought of Macduff,’ said the American lady. ‘It was Macduff, I’m certain. You wouldn’t have one of the victims murdered by two ordinary thugs—the murderer always has to be somebody important.’ ‘But what about the banquet scene?’ I asked, after a moment. ‘How do you account for Macbeth’s guilty actions there, when Banquo’s ghost came in and sat in his chair?’ The lady leaned forward and tapped me on the knee again. ‘There wasn’t any ghost.’ She said. ‘A big, strong man like that doesn’t go around seeing ghosts—especially in a brightly lighted banquet hall with dozens of people around. Macbeth was *shielding somebody!*’ ‘Who was he shielding?’ I asked. ‘Mrs. Macbeth, of course,’ she said. ‘He thought she did it and he was going to take the rap himself. The husband always does that when the wife is suspected.’ ‘But what,’ I demanded, ‘about the sleep-walking scene, then?’ ‘The same thing, only the other way around,’ said my companion. ‘That time *she* was shielding *him*. She wasn’t asleep at all. Do you remember where it says, “Enter Lady Macbeth with a taper”?’ ‘Yes,’ I said. ‘Well, people who walk in their sleep *never carry lights!*’ said my fellow-traveller. ‘They have a second sight. Did you ever hear of a sleepwalker carrying a light?’ ‘No,’ I said, ‘I never did.’ ‘Well, then, she wasn’t asleep. She was acting guilty to shield Macbeth.’

Feeling that it is time to re-read *Macbeth* he borrows her copy and reads it that night. But the next day he seeks her out in a rather cloak-and-dagger fashion.

‘I’ve found out,’ I said, triumphantly, ‘the name of the murderer!’ ‘You mean it wasn’t Macduff?’ she said. ‘Macduff is as innocent of those murders,’ I said, ‘as Macbeth and the Macbeth woman.’ I opened the copy of the play, which I had with me, and turned to Act II, Scene 2. ‘Here,’ I said, ‘you will see where Lady Macbeth says, “I laid their daggers ready. He could not miss ’em. Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done it.” Do you see?’ ‘No,’ said the American woman, bluntly, ‘I don’t.’ ‘But it’s simple!’ I exclaimed. ‘I wonder I didn’t see it years ago. The reason Duncan resembled Lady Macbeth’s father as he slept is that *it actually was her father!*’ ‘Good God!’ breathed my companion, softly. ‘Lady Macbeth’s father killed the King,’ I said, ‘and, hearing someone coming, thrust the body under the bed and crawled into the bed himself.’ ‘But,’ said the lady, ‘you can’t have a murderer who only appears in the story once. You can’t have that.’ ‘I know that,’ I said, and turned to Act II, Scene 4. ‘It says here, “Enter Ross with an old Man.” Now, that old man is never identified and it is my contention he was old Mr. Macbeth, whose ambition it was to make his daughter Queen. There you have your motive.’ ‘But even then,’ cried the American lady, ‘he’s still a minor character!’ ‘Not,’ I said, gleefully, ‘when you realise that he was also *one of the weird sisters in disguise!*’ ‘You mean one of the three witches?’ ‘Precisely,’ I said. ‘Listen to this speech of the old man’s. “On Tuesday last, a falcon towering in her pride of place, was by a mousing owl hawk’d at and kill’d.” Who does that sound like?’ ‘It sounds like the way the three witches talk,’ said my companion, reluctantly. ‘Precisely!’ I said again. ‘Well,’ said the American woman, ‘maybe you’re right, but—’ ‘I’m sure I am,’ I said. ‘And do you know what I’m going to do now?’ ‘No,’ she said. ‘What?’ ‘Buy a copy of *Hamlet*,’ I said, ‘and solve *that!*’ My companion’s eye brightened. ‘Then,’ she said, ‘you don’t think Hamlet did it?’ ‘I am,’ I said, ‘absolutely positive he didn’t.’ ‘But who,’ she demanded, ‘do you suspect?’ I looked at her cryptically. ‘Everybody,’ I said, and disappeared into a small grove of trees as silently as I had come.’

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June 26<sup>th</sup> : Pearl Buck

Colin Wilson

June 27<sup>th</sup> : Lafcadio Hearn

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Writing of Jean Henri Fabré of Serignan, France, Edwin Way Teale says, “Like Plutarch, he lived in a village; like Thoreau, he was an explorer who stayed at home. For nearly as many years as the average life-span of his day Fabré toiled to obtain the modest means required to enable him to do what he wanted to do, to engage in the work that made him famous. Had he died at Thoreau’s age, he would be unremembered even in his own community, and those charming, beguilingly simple volumes, through which the reading world has come to know the man himself as well as his work, never would have been written.

“This morning, one of those volumes lies in the grass beside me, dappled with green and golden light. A tiny leaf-hopper, fallen from the limb above, is toiling across its tan-coloured cover. I have been leaning back against the bark of a gnarled old trunk enjoying one of those little jests of history. I have been wondering about those practical, worldly-wise, oh-so-sensible people of Fabré’s village of Serignan. Who to-day can tell the name of the mayor or the richest man or the strongest bully—the powerful and feared—who loomed so large in Fabré’s day? All are gone; none is remembered. But this poor schoolmaster, this idler among the fields, this questioner of wasps and beetles, this associate of the lowliest of creatures, is known in distant corners of the world. A man almost as poor as St. Francis of Assisi, almost as individual as Thoreau, Fabré was disregarded by his neighbours until he was acclaimed by the world. ...

“Fabré’s long struggle for that humble goal—that thistly waste he called his Eden—is symbolic of all our dreams, of all the worth-while aspirations of humble folk; dreams that also

often recede into the mists of to-morrow. The attainment of his “harnnas” on the outskirts of Serignan, not far from the foot-hills of the Alps, was the focal point of Fabré’s life. It was more than the crystallization of his long desire. Like Thoreau’s cabin on Walden Pond, this open-air laboratory of his signified his outlook and his way of life.

... “His discoveries, made in exploring for nearly forty years within the boundaries of slightly more than two acres, have become known throughout the civilized world. They caused Charles Darwin to call him “the incomparable observer”; Maurice Maeterlinck to declare he was “the most profound admiration of my life”; and Victor Hugo to name him “The Homer of the Insects” ...

“His long list of books—such classic volumes as *The Life of the Fly*, *The Life of the Grasshopper*, *The Life of the Caterpillar*, *The Mason Bees*, *The Mason Wasps*, *Bramble-Bees And Others*, *The Hunting Wasps*, *The Glow-Worm and other Beetles*, and *Insect Adventurers*—forms an achievement in literature almost as unique as was the author himself. Years of lonely research lay behind each volume. Fabré worked with scant encouragement from science and with only his children as helpers.

“When Fabré died, during the war-torn days of 1915, the floor of his observation room was marked with an oval trail—worn of shuffling steps. Single-handed, and with the crudest of equipment, Fabré, during his long years of labour, had helped to bring the biology of the insects out of its Dark Ages.”

(from *Near Horizons: The Story of an Insect Garden*: Edwin Way Teale)

Fabré definitely influenced writers in the early twentieth century; both as man and as researcher. Aldous Huxley wrote in *After Many a Summer*, “Because there were no issues and nothing led anywhere and the dilemmas had an infinity of horns and you went round and round, like Fabré’s caterpillars, in a closed universe of utter cosiness—” and Maurice Maeterlinck drew on his work in *The Life of the White Ant*: “The insect,” J.H. Fabre, the great entomologist, somewhere observes, “has no morality” and “J.H.Fabre, who spent his life studying the question, does not admit intelligence in insects. He has proved by apparently convincing experiments that the most ingenious, the most industrious, the most admirably provident insect, if disturbed in its routine, continues to behave mechanically, and to work uselessly and stupidly in the void. “Instinct,” he concludes, “is omniscient in the unchanging paths that have been laid down for it: away from these paths, it knows nothing. Sublime inspirations of science, astounding inconsequences of science, astounding inconsequences of stupidity, are alike its portion” ...

Fabré’s most famous book was *Memórias Entomologicas*. Curiously, he was a firm opponent of evolution, at least as it might apply to insects. He was born in Aveyron in 1823 and died in 1915.

Why am I writing about insects in connection with Lafcadio Hearn? Simply because I always associate him with insects. They fascinated him—though for the life of me I can’t find what I’ve done with the little piece he wrote about the Japanese custom of keeping fireflies—but also at a more symbolic level he was a writer of the beauty of the tiny, the non-lasting, the ephemeral life lived in the moment, the wonderfully and meticulously observed ... I am not surprised that he felt at home in Japan and in Japanese literary forms ...

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‘Long before he went to Japan, where he lived for fourteen years before his death in 1904, Lafcadio Hearn had seen much of the world in Ireland, England and France and largely in New Orleans and the French West Indies. His Irish father and his Greek mother dropped out of his life before he was seven, and his great-aunt in Dublin sent him to boarding schools in Yorkshire and, for a while, near Rouen. He is supposed to have spent two years in Paris. At nineteen, he was shipped off to Cincinnati where, as a waif, he slept in a hayloft and a rusty boiler in a vacant lot and worked as a servant in a boarding house. Abnormally shy, puny and frail, he had lost an eye in an accident, and, attracted all his life by dark-tinted skins, he married a pretty mulatto who had once been a slave. He went on to New Orleans and there, as a

newspaperman, he wrote a book of Creole proverbs, *Stray Leaves from Strange Literatures*, and *Some Chinese Ghosts*, which was published in Boston. He made a name as a translator of the French romantic writers who had been in vogue when he was in Paris: Gautier, Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant and later Pierre Loti and Anatole France.

Partly from these writers, Lafcadio Hearn acquired the style for which he became famous when he went to Japan but which was already developed when he wrote, in New Orleans, *Chita: a Memory of Last Island*. He had spoken in a letter of “my ancient dream of a poetical prose, compositions to satisfy an old Greek ear”; and, except for a certain floridity that lingered in this book, the phrase perfectly characterized the style of *Chita*. Before this Lafcadio Hearn had shown the proclivities that marked all his early writing, the taste for Creole folklore, for esoteric knowledge, and even for the horrible and the revolting. He had written newspaper observations in the morgue and the dissecting-room, and this had won him in Cincinnati the name of “The Raven,” for he reminded readers of Edgar Allan Poe. He had also described juba-dancing on the levees of the Mississippi, voodoo rites and other Negro scenes. But he was a student of languages, too, and the lore of distant peoples—Egyptian, Assyrian, Hebrew and Chinese. He made a study of gypsy lore and the superstitions of the slaves, and he picked up all manner of out-of-the-way information from flower-girls and Negro washerwomen. He knew more than virtually anyone else about New Orleans folklore and the patois and customs of the Creoles, and he loved the French quarter of New Orleans with its small walled gardens and the mysteries of its shuttered windows and narrow alleys.

Once, for a vacation, he spent some time on Grande Isle, the beautiful Gulf island off the Louisiana coast, where he hoped to collect material for impressionistic sketches. Pierre Loti had sent him a photograph and a letter of thanks for his translations from *Lakmé*, and he dreamed of rivalling these in his own compositions. On this island he could indulge his taste for deep-sea swimming, which he only gave up, in the shark-infested waters, when a great fish under the surface brushed against him. With its fine beach and rustic hotel, the scene suggested Last Island, which had been overwhelmed by a tidal wave only a few years before. At a dinner in New Orleans, he had heard George W. Cable, the writer of Creole stories, describe this catastrophe, and it was on Grande Isle that he began to write the story of the little girl who was saved from the flood. All the high fashion of New Orleans had been dancing in the Last Island hotel when the great wave swept it away, and the child was discovered floating beside the body of her drowned mother near one of the huddles of shacks in the swamplands of lower Louisiana. It was a village of fishermen and alligator-hunters where they spoke a rude French mingled with Spanish and Italian words, and Chita was adopted by the fisher-people. There in the reedy wastelands she grew up, not recognizing her father when he came to die there. It was the country of the bayous where, two generations before, Audubon had come to study the water-birds.

Lafcadio Hearn never wrote anything more beautiful than *Chita*, a story that, for all its romantic overtones, was, nevertheless, realistic. Hearn disliked Zola, who took the blue out of the sky for him, as he disliked the people whom William Dean Howells wrote about—but neither novelist conveyed the quality of actuality more firmly than Hearn conveyed it in this book. No professed realist could have improved the report of the swelling sea and the cannonade of waves during the tempest or the general account of the great storm that swept the hotel away, drowning Chita’s mother with the other dancers. Or the chapter about the sensations of a swimmer in the tropical waters of the gulf and the “long quivering electrical caresses” of the great creatures of the sea whose bodies brushed against him as he swam. The story, too, is personal, for one identifies the author with the little girl who was all but lost in the hurricane. Hearn had learned, like Chita, the fables and sayings of the sea, the proverbs about its power and its deafness, and he, too, saw the pinkness of waters curled by the morning breeze and the shoreless, cloudless azure of perfect summer days. He knew the shifting colour of the sea, and he had suffered from the yellow fever that carried away Chita’s father; moreover, he also was familiar with the tropical mosquitoes and their sound “as of water



boiling in many kettles.” Later Lafcadio Hearn complained that he could not write a story, and he seldom even attempted to write another, or at least one dealing with actual persons; but he had produced in *Chita* a most poignant human tale, and one that was destined to live with his best compositions.’

Van Wyck Brooks introducing *Chita*.

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The George W. Cable mentioned, George Washington Cable (1844-1925), was in the words of Chris Baldick ‘one of the leading writers of the ‘local color’ movement in American fiction.’ He took ex-slaves, fishermen, planters, the poor southern Creoles, as his subject matter, both as a way of weaving stories, almost Gothic in style, of folklore and superstition, of folk memory and the rich pastiche of French and English and Spanish and remnants of African languages, and wove them into short stories where the swamps and bayous often serve as powerful background to the clash of cultures and the clash between older attitudes to the land and money-making and the new pressures coming from the modern industrialising north with its penchant for draining and spraying and homogenising and sub-dividing ... but he also had a deep sense of landscape. In ‘Jean-ah Poquelin’ he writes, ‘The alien races pouring into old New Orleans began to find the few streets named for the Bourbon princes too strait for them. The wheel of fortune, beginning to whirl, threw them off beyond the ancient corporation lines, and sowed civilization and even trade upon the lands of the Graviers and Girods. Fields became roads, roads streets. Everywhere the leveler was peering through his glass, rods men were whacking their way through willow-brakes and rose-hedges, and the sweating Irishmen tossed the blue clay up with their long-handled shovels. ... Some months passed and the street was opened. A canal was first dug through the marsh, the small one which passed so close to Jean Poquelin’s house was filled, and the street, or rather a sunny road, just touched a corner of the old mansion’s dooryard. The morass ran dry. Its venomous denizens slipped away through the bulrushes; the cattle roaming freely upon its hardened surface trampled the super-abundant undergrowth. The bellowing frogs croaked to westward. Lilies and the flower-de-luce sprang up in the place of reeds; smilax and poison-oak gave way to the purple-plumed iron-weed and pink spiderwort; the bindweeds ran everywhere, blooming as they ran, and on one of the dead cypresses a giant creeper hung its green burden of foliage and lifted its scarlet trumpets. Sparrows and red-birds flitted through the bushes, and dewberries grew ripe beneath. Over all these came a sweet dry smell of salubrity which the place had not known since the sediments of the Mississippi first lifted it from the sea’.

‘Jean-ah Poquelin’ came out in *Scribner’s* in 1875 then in his collected stories, *Old Creole Days* (1879).

At the time I wrote that up I thought that was all I needed to say about George Cable but much later I came across some more about him in Van Wyck Brooks’ *The Times of Melville and Whitman* and I found it so interesting that I finally gave in. So here is an in-depth description of The Times of George W. Cable.

“The New Orleans writer George W. Cable was one who cared deeply for the local life and used the Creole dialect, on the whole, discreetly, although he made every effort, after the most patient historical research, to convey its finest shades in the precisest fashion. He was enchanted by the musical patois of the French-speaking ruling class, which had its effect in the shaping of his own literary style, as well as the language of the French-speaking Negroes, with whom he took great pains to talk, and the speech of the Acadians who had come from Nova Scotia. Cable, whose mother was of New England descent while his Virginia father owned steamboats on the Mississippi before he failed, had enlisted in the Confederate army ... Cable, who became an engineer, joined a surveying party in the swamps and bayous of the Atchafalaya River. Later his adventures as a soldier appeared in *Kincaid’s Battery* and *The Cavalier*, while his observations in camp in the delta country figured in many of his novels and shorter stories, scenes in which he had roamed surveying the great gulf marshes and reedy isles, the haunts of alligators, wild-cats, raccoons, and serpents. There were the tangled

waterways, familiar to smugglers, slavers, and pirates, with their memories of the old buccaneers and the brothers Lafitte, the vast green wastes and narrow channels between the luxuriant hummocks where Audubon had delighted in the sea-snipe, the plover, and the curlew. One saw the pirogue of the hunter still and the lateen sail of the oyster-gatherer in this maze of marsh islands bordering the half-drowned mainland as one followed the Mississippi out to sea.

Cable, who had begun to write—he was a reporter on one of the papers—had visited the Acadian villages that lay to the west, the parishes with the names of saints where lakes and plantations bore French names and French was the language of the whites and blacks alike. He had spent hours as a boy on the levee watching the half-naked Negro gangs that sang as they pressed the cotton bales, and since then he had studied the uncanny side of the Negroes too, the side that especially interested Lafcadio Hearn. This other reporter was drawn to Cable when he published the story of *Jean-ah Poquelin*, attracted as he was by everything that was horrible and gruesome: Hearn and Cable together collected African-Creole folk-songs and Hearn wrote an article about Cable and the scenes of his romances. Later Joel Chandler Harris, who had come to New Orleans a second time in search of Negro spirituals and hymns, went to prayer meetings with Cable in the Negro churches, piqued as he also was by the ‘vague and mysterious danger’ that lurked on the outskirts of slavery, as he said. ... Cable had picked up the story of the Negro chief Bras-Coupé which he related afterwards in *The Grandissimes*, the giant, like Harris’ Blue Dave, who had escaped to the swamp and become the terror of hunters, slavers, and children. He had chosen his name to signify that the arm which no longer might shake a spear was virtually a useless stump for anything else. As for the Acadians, in their villages in western Louisiana, they did not like to be reminded of their Canadian past, for the proud Creoles had looked down upon them, laughed at them, and lorded it over them when they were peasants and the Creoles were slave-holding planters. The Acadians were small farmers still, illiterate and poor, though, for good or ill, they were catching the spirit of progress, acquiring schoolhouses with the English language, a free paid labour system, Cincinnati furniture, melodeons, and sewing machines. The swamps had been cleared of their rushes, flags, cypresses, and willows for the building of the railroad that followed the public school. Cable soon pictured these people in *Bonaventure*.

But, with all his feeling for the Acadians and the Negroes, Cable’s great interest was the Creoles themselves and their setting in old New Orleans, which always charmed him, the city whose history he explored for sketches in the Picaune, reading old newspapers, ransacking the municipal archives. Working as a clerk in the Cotton Exchange of which Degas painted a well-known picture—during his months in the town, visiting a brother—he followed in the footsteps of Charles Gayarréas a student of the Louisianian past from the days of the Jesuit explorers. A lover of Creole antiquity, he dug up strange true stories that exhibited the romance and picturesqueness of the New Orleans life, stories of the twice-married countess, the haunted house in Royal Street, the young aunt with white hair, and the white slave Salome. With small concern for its obvious aspects, the lotteries, the gambling, the races, the notes of New Orleans that appealed to more commonplace writers, his imagination dwelt on everything that gave its uniqueness to a town where one felt ‘further away than elsewhere from everywhere else in the world,’ he said. In the outskirts he knew the plantation-houses that lined the river and the bayou front, the pillared porches half hidden by laurustines, the moss-draped live-oaks with shadows a hundred feet across, the colonial villas with avenues of oleander. The roofs, red and grey by turns, rose out of orange and magnolia groves or the deep shade of mighty willow jungles that were often surrounded by fields of sugar cane. As for the French quarter and its balconied façades and cool flagged flowery inner courts, Cable had known it from the earliest boyhood in the town, with the dazzling white walls of the St Charles Hotel where the nabobs of the river plantations had come in the heyday of the quadron balls at the Salle de Condé. Though the city was a hundred years younger than Boston, it seemed already decrepit with age as it basked in a Mediterranean picturesqueness, for many of the great doors were grey with cobwebs, the ironwork was begrimed and rusty, the corrugated red-tiled roofs were over-grown

with weeds. Old Franco-Spanish piles of yellow adobe or stuccoed brick were faced with showy shops and gay with flowers, with battered brass knockers highly burnished, hinges on the gates a yard long, and the graceful scrolls of the balconies freshly painted. ... Here dwelt the Creoles of whom Cable was writing when Edward King appeared in the town and accepted his work for *Scribner's* in 1873, delighted to find a Southern author who was doing with the New Orleans folk what Bret Harte had done with the argonauts of the Western shore."

The curious thing is that despite his fascination with every aspect of the life he found around him and his great sensitivity towards all its shades and colours he remained a Puritan at heart. "For blemishless piety and limpid innocence, Mark Twain said, the Apostles were 'mere policemen' to George W. Cable." But he also looked for innocence, goodness, warmth, generosity and piety in his subjects ... and usually found it. The thing that damaged his reputation was being taken up and turned into a popular and professional writer. He had written out of his own private fascination with the world around him. Now he was writing for a northern audience who weren't particularly interested in or sympathetic towards the French undercurrents in his writing ...

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Something of the same style and colour can be seen in Lafcadio Hearn's New Orleans' period.

'But the pleasure-seekers of Last Island knew there must have been a "great blow" somewhere that day. Still the sea swelled; and a splendid surf made the evening bath delightful. Then, just at sundown, a beautiful cloud-bridge grew up and arched the sky with a single span of cottony pink vapor, that changed and deepened color with the dying of the iridescent day. And the cloud-bridge approached, stretched, strained, and swung round at last to make way for the coming of the gale,—even as the light bridges that traverse the dreamy Têche swing open when luggarmen sound through their conch-shells the long, bellowing signal of approach.

Then the wind began to blow, with the passing of July. It blew from the northeast, clear, cool. It blew in enormous sighs, dying away at regular intervals, as if pausing to draw breath. All night it blew; and in each pause could be heard the answering moan of the rising surf,—as if the rhythm of the sea moulded itself after the rhythm of the air,—as if the waving of the water responded precisely to the waving of the wind,—a billow for every puff, a surge for every sign.

The August morning broke in a bright sky.—the breeze still came cool and clear from the northeast. The waves were running now at a sharp angle to the shore: they began to carry fleeces, an innumerable flock of vague green shapes, wind-driven to be despoiled of their ghostly wool. Far as the eye could follow the line of the beach, all the slope was white with the great shearing of them. Clouds came, flew as in a panic against the face of the sun, and passed. All that day and through the night and into the morning again the breeze continued from the northeast, blowing like an equinoctial gale....

Then day by day the vast breath freshened steadily, and the waters heightened. A week later sea-bathing had become perilous: colossal breakers were herding in, like moving leviathan-backs, twice the height of a man. Still the gale grew, and the billowing waxed mightier, and faster and faster overhead flew the tatters of torn cloud. The gray morning of the 9th wanly lighted a surf that appalled the best swimmers: the sea was one wild agony of foam, the gale was rending off the heads of the waves, and veiling the horizon with a fog of salt spray. Shadowless and gray the day remained; there were mad bursts of lashing rain. Evening brought with it a sinister apparition, looming through a cloud-rent in the west—a scarlet sun in a green sky.'

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"Lafcadio Hearn on *Beetles in Poetry* is something like what Adderly makes fun of in one of his books—the Vicar's wife who gives a course on 'Insects of the Bible'. As you say, all this is capable of personal application, as is proper in good sermons. Take for instance David's remark to Saul, 'Is the king of Israel come out after a flea?' Try Lafcadio on Blake, it is much

better than the Beetle section.” (J. Rendel Harris)

I came upon a delightful little booklet called ‘Isiah as a Nature Lover’ by Frederick John Lazell which inspired me to go and read him again. Current thinking is that Isiah actually had two authors, at least, and maybe more. Although I must admit I’ve never thought of the Bible as the home of nature writing ... or of insects for that matter ...

Lafcadio Hearn is now inextricably linked to his time in Japan and his writings about Japanese folklore, Japanese legends, and beliefs, but his curiosity about insects is a thread running through his life. He was also a key figure in the popularisation of Japanese haiku in the West. William J. Higginson in *The Haiku Handbook* says ‘Lafcadio Hearn’s translations of hokku and tanka scattered through his many books on Japan were collected and published as *Japanese Lyrics* (Boston, 1915). Considering the distance between almost all of Western poetry and these traditional Japanese modes, Revon, Chamberlain, and Hearn acquitted themselves well.’ Perhaps someone who delighted in the tiny manifestations of life, like beetles and fireflies, was also attracted to the tiny when it came to poetry, rather than to the great sprawling epics of Victorian verse.

I also found Lafcadio Hearn being praised in a book *How to Write Haiku* as one of the people who popularised haiku in the West: “Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) was already a lover of the macabre before he arrived in Japan and collected a number of Japanese folktales and weird stories. But the style of Japanese haiku may have influenced his prose, which seems more lucid and free of unnecessary decoration in the books he wrote in Japan. An extreme example, perhaps, is his diary of a climb up Mount Fuji, *In Exotics and Retrospectives*; here is a short, haibun-like excerpt:

“Open country with scattered clumps of trees,—larch and pine. Nothing in the horizon but scraggy tree-tops above what seems to be the rim of a vast down. No sign of Fuji ... For the first time I noticed that the road is black,—black sand and cinders apparently, volcanic cinders; the wheels of the kuruma and the feet of the runners sink into it with a crunching sound.

The rain has stopped, and the sky becomes a clearer gray ... The trees decrease in size and number as we advance.” (A kuruma was a cart.)

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He also wrote on the question of re-birth: ‘The very delusion of delusions is the idea of death as loss’. (*Kotto*) ‘Hopeless ... any attempt to tell the real pain of seeing my former births. I can say only that no combination of suffering possible to individual being could be likened to such pain,—the pain of countless lives interwoven. It seemed as if every nerve of me had been prolonged into some monstrous web of sentiency spun back through a million years ... For, as I looked backward, I became double, quadruple, octuple;—I multiplied by arithmetical progression;—I became hundreds and thousands,—and feared with the terror of the thousands,—and despaired with the anguish of thousands ... yet knew the pleasure of none ...

Then in the moment when sentiency itself seemed bursting into the solution, one divine touch ended the frightful vision, and brought again to me the simple consciousness of the single present. Oh! How unspeakably delicious that sudden shrinking back out of the multiplicity into unity!—that immense, immeasurable collapse of self into the blind oblivious numbness of individuality!

“To others also,” said the voice of the divine one who had thus saved me—“to others in the like state it has been permitted to see something of their pre-existence. But no one of them ever could endure to look far. Power to see all former births belong to those eternally released from the bonds of self. Such exist outside of illusion,—outside of form and name; and pain cannot come nigh them. But to you, remaining in illusion, not even the Buddha could give power to look back more than a little way ... ” (*Within the Circle*”; *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields*)

He arrived in Japan in 1890 and taught at the Imperial University from 1896 to 1903. He immersed himself in things Japanese, he married a Japanese wife, and changed his name to

Yakumo Koizumi. And the books he wrote there are both his fascination with Japan and his attempts to explain the country to the West. *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* came out in 1894 and *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation* in 1904. He also collected Japanese poetry, folktales, and customs.

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I came upon a book called *Iceland Fisherman* by French naval officer turned prolific writer and playwright, Pierre Loti, about the life of a Breton fisherman who works the waters around Iceland in the late nineteenth century and is sent to fight France's wars in Indochina. It is a sorrowful life: 'They remained there together, almost mute, these two women, as long as the June twilight lasted—and it lasts long in Brittany, and in Iceland it does not end. In the fireplace the cricket, little herald of happiness, made, all heedless, his shrill music. And the yellow light of the evening entered by the skylight, into this cottage of the Moans, all of whom the sea had taken, who were now an extinct family ...'

But it was this segment that gave me a sense of *déjà vu*, I felt I was re-reading Lafcadio Hearn ...

'It had changed its aspect, also, and its colour, the sun of Iceland, and it opened this new day by a sinister morning. Completely rid of its veil, it gave out great rays which traversed the sky in jets, announcing impending storms.

It had been too fine in the last few days and a change was due. The wind blew on this assembly of boats, as if it felt the need of scattering them, of ridding the sea of them; and they began to disperse, to flee like a routed army—simply before this menace written in the air, about which there could be no mistake.

And it steadily increased in strength, until men and ships alike shivered at it.

The waves, still small, began to chase one another, to group themselves. They had been marbled at first with a white foam which spread over them in slaver; but presently, with a sound of crackling, they gave out a smoke of spray; one would have said that the sea was boiling; that it was burning—and the shrill noise of it all augmented from minute to minute.

There was no thought now for the fishing, but only for the management of the boats. The lines had been hauled in long before. All were hurrying to get away, some to seek a shelter in the fiords, striving to arrive in time; others, preparing to pass the southern point of Iceland, deeming it the safer course to take to the open sea and have free space in which to sail before the wind. They still saw one another a little; here and there, in the hollows of the waves, sails rose up, poor little things, wet, weary, fugitive—but keeping upright nevertheless, like those children's toys of pith of elder-wood which one may lay flat by blowing on them, but which always raise themselves again.

The great shag of clouds which had condensed on the western horizon with the aspect of an island began to break up at the top and the tatters coursed across the sky. It seemed inexhaustible, this shag; the wind stretched it, extended it, unraveled it, making issue from it an indefinite succession of dark curtains, which it outspread over the clear yellow sky, become now livid in its cold depths.

And still the wind increased, agitating everything.

The cruiser had made off towards the shelters of Iceland, the fishermen remained alone on this agitated sea, which now had an angry air and a dreadful colour. They made haste in their preparations for foul weather. The distance between them increased. Soon they were lost from sight of one another.

The waves, curling in volutes, continued to chase one another, to unite, to join forces in order to become still higher, and, between them, the hollows deepened.

In a few hours all was ploughed up, convulsed in this region which on the preceding evening had been so calm, and, in place of the silence of before, one was deafened with noise. Very quickly the scene had changed, and all now was agitation, unconscious, useless. What was the object of it all? ... What a mystery of blind destruction! ...

The clouds were completing their unfolding, coming always from the west, overlaying

one another, hurrying, swift, obscuring everything. There remained now only a few yellow openings, by which the sun sent down its last rays in sheaves. And the water, greenish now, was veined more and more with white slaver.’ ...

Although I think Hearn was the better writer it reminded me that it is ages since I read a good description of a storm; plot-driven modern novels would have condensed all this into a paragraph or two.

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June 28<sup>th</sup> : Luigi Pirandello  
Jean Jacques Rousseau  
June 29<sup>th</sup> : Antoine de Saint-Exupéry  
June 30<sup>th</sup> : Czeslaw Milosz  
July 1<sup>st</sup> : Dorothea MacKellar  
George Sand  
July 2<sup>nd</sup> : Hermann Hesse  
July 3<sup>rd</sup> : Franz Kafka  
July 4<sup>th</sup> : Fay Zwicky  
July 5<sup>th</sup> : George Borrow  
July 6<sup>th</sup> : Bessie Head  
July 7<sup>th</sup> : Robert Heinlein  
July 8<sup>th</sup> : Fergus Hume  
July 9<sup>th</sup> : Barbara Cartland  
Anne Radcliffe

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The other day (5<sup>th</sup> February 2003) a friend gave me a copy of Barbara Cartland’s *Book of Celebrities* to put on my next stall. I opened it up and read:

‘In 1976, by writing twenty-one books, she broke the world record for the number of published works by one author in a year. In subsequent years, however, she broke her own record repeatedly with twenty-four, twenty, twenty-three, twenty-four and twenty-four. In the *Guinness Book of Records* she is listed as the world’s top-selling author.’

Now it is true that I sometimes joke to my kids that they might like to send me into that book to be listed as the world’s most prolific unpublished author; but when I got into bed I found myself pondering on the question of *fast* writing. Of course lots of fast writing gets done but is it *good* writing? Is it the best writing that person can do? Of course Ms Cartland had secretaries, agents, panting publishers, and mainly used the same plot over and over again. Even so—it’s an impressive output. Say 24 books @ 190 pages each = 4,560 pages or 40,000 words per book = 960,000 words.

But the more I pondered the more I realised that speed says nothing about the worth of a piece of writing. Georges Simenon used to write a book in 10 days, Erle Stanley Gardner used to write his pulp novellas in 48 hours, Douglas Adams used to lock himself away the night before his manuscript was due on his publisher’s desk. I’m not sure that their work was the worse for this haste. Ideas written down at white-hot speed often have an intensity, an excitement, a sense of cohesion that books that took ten years to write lack. Oscar Wilde putting in a comma in the morning and taking it out in the afternoon (or vice versa) may have written exquisite prose but this kind of care can tip over into pretentiousness and preciousness.

I know there are competitions for people to write a book in 3 days; I have even heard of one for 24 hours. I haven’t actually read any of the results (I did hear of a famous Mills & Boon author who wrote her books in 3 days and had to retire to the Isle of Man, poor dear, to avoid the taxman—but I can’t honestly say whether the results of her speed showed or not) ... but a couple of years ago I decided I would try to write a book in 3 days. I had no idea how

people went about it. Were they allowed to bring in notes, outlines, character sketches, plotting details—or did it all have to be done sort of cold turkey?

I used a character I'd used before but started the plot from scratch—which made it difficult; at least having an idea of where I was going probably would have helped. At the end of my 3 days (I'd written it in long-hand) I typed it up and found it came to 30,800 words. Only a novella. I was slightly disappointed. But it was an interesting exercise. (I called it *Hedging Bets* and later put it in a set of three novellas which I called *Novelty Events*.)

After thinking over the Queen of Romance's 24 titles, I decided it might be a good exercise to try and finish some of the books I'd started, sometimes years ago, get them finished, out of my hair, get all those messy browning pages typed up—and see if any of them are worth doing anything further with. If not I could at least start out with a sort of clean slate.

So this is my record of a year's writing:

End of February 2003:

Not much to crow about but I have almost finished the first draft of *Faintly Fox Country* (I did the first six chapters last year)

Done about a third of a long prose-poem *Bluebeard's Wives*, begun this month

Finished *Old Car Bodies*, except for some fine tuning and the illustrations. I had done about three-quarters of it last year.

Finished the first draft of *The Spanish Walk*, it still needs some more research, a lot of polishing and the illustrations. I had done about three-quarters of it last year.

Added some more poems to *A Book of Seals* and *A Day at the International Palm Research Institute*. Started another Bob Creighton novella, *Ride a Pale Horse*, and wrote another short-short to go in *A Book of Siblings*.

End of March:

Finished the first draft of *Faintly Fox Country*. Finished the first draft of *Bluebeard's Wives*. Otherwise this has not been a productive month. All I can point to is a couple of small and unimpressive poems and a couple of extra pages done in *What is Truth, Sally Hearne?* Perhaps April will be better. Wrote a couple of pages of a possible mystery novel, *Coloured Glass*.

End of April: Alas, I thought I would have more to point to. I have finished the first draft of *A Book of Seals*, started two small poetry booklets, *Aunt Minna's Drawing Room* and *And the Walls Came Crumbling Down*, added a couple more pieces to *Syd's Tip*, started two new novels, *State of Denmark* and *The Water Birds* (and there I was thinking I might finish some old novels!), did some proof-reading on *Portrait of a Bad Marriage* and noticed that *On & Off the Page* has grown from 60 pages in length at the end of last year to 115 pages at the end of April.

End of May: Oh dear, oh dearie me. Do I sound like the White Rabbit? I should. A whole month gone and all I've managed is to write two new short stories, both for competitions and to go in to 'A Book of Siblings'. At this rate, I'll be lucky to have finished anything by the end of the year. Lots of ideas, of course, and I suppose I can claim them as quality ideas; no one will ever know if there's no quantity to back up any extravagant claims I might like to make. Ideas for poetry books: Ghost Town, The Horrible History of Mrs. Hilary Halliwell, A Bad Crowd, The Pelicans, The Knight, The Bishop and the Pawn, Haunting, A Dark Car Waits (I might try that out as a story idea also) ... I sometimes think that coming up with ideas and titles is such fun I hardly need to bother about the content!

End of June: If anything I have gone from bad to worse. One story written ('A Dark Car Waits'), one poem written ('The Padded Cell'), a couple more bits and pieces added to *On & Off the Page*. I feel that Barbara Cartland's record is not under any threat from me.

End of July: Hardly an improvement. A bit more added to *On & Off the Page*, a bit more family history added to, I finished the first draft of a little set of poems called *Haunting* (which includes 'The Padded Cell'), I've finished *A Book of Seals* except for some polishing, ditto *Bluebeard's Wives*. I turned 'A Dark Car Waits' into a long prose poem *The Chalk Man*. I

started a story I've been thinking about for a while and called it tentatively *Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall*, ditto I am a bit further along with two other stories 'The Bat People' and 'Nature Programs: The Watching Of'; I did a poem 'A Bad Crowd', another piece for *Aunt Minna's Drawing Room*, started another long poem *The Glory Box*, and worked out the fields to go in *Syd's Tip*. Not much to boast about but I suppose it is a bit better than June.

End of August: A few lines added to *On & Off the Page*, a few pages added to *State of Denmark* and a few to *Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall* ... I finished 'Ghost Town' but as it is only 5 pages it hasn't turned into the small booklet I originally planned. I made a start on 'Danae—' and jotted down some ideas to turn *The Manual of the Timor Pony* into a book of poems. I made a tentative start on 'Atlantis Rising' with the idea of putting together 12 narrative pieces under the title *The Chalk Man & Other Stories*.

End of September: I've added a further 30 pages to *State of Denmark* and finished part one of *Danae*. (It is designed to be a re-telling of the myth in 3 parts.) I started *The Water Gourd* and added 50 pages more to my resource book *Edmund & Caroline*. I can't say that I feel very impressed with my level of production. Still it is awkward while Ken is busy at the piano working for his final exams and Julio is at home most of the time. But I think the real problem has been a sense of fascination with the family research which tends to push other things aside. I'm not sure whether to just be firm and put it aside or whether to spend a couple of days doing nothing but and maybe wear myself out because I find I do get tired of it if I have been working at it fairly intensely. I probably should start something else that I can work at in dribs and drabs rather than a novel which requires more focussed thinking and planning.

End of October: Not doing brilliantly. I've finished the first draft of a novel *State of Denmark*, and two pieces that were going to be long poems but instead have ended up quite short: *Danae of the Hang-Nail*, 8 pages, and *The Warehouse*, 2 pages.

End of November: I finished another not-very-long poem *Manual for the Timor Pony*.

End of December: I started another long prose-poem *Arachnodactyly*. So I've finished 2 full-length novels, ended off Book One of a family resource journal, completed 2 booklets of poetry and started and finished 3 more booklets, as well as several individual poems and short stories. I've got an idea for a book of 'ghostly' short stories *The Land of Long Odds*.

End of January 2004: I might as well keep going and document this year. I've finished the first draft of 2 short prose poems, *Arachnodactyly*, and *War Toys* and drafted 3 short stories.

End of February: I've written 2 small poems and one short story.

End of March: Nothing except a small poem.

End of April: Things have brightened up. With Ken gone I have been spending more time at the computer and have finished the first drafts of a short novel *Exile*, a collection of ten 'books' of poetry, *Keenping Sheep & Stranger Beasts*, (though several pieces are just makeweights and the illustrations need more thought) and a collection of short stories, *A Book of Siblings*, as well as finishing two of the novellas to go in *Swan Bend*. It was just going to be three novellas but I think it needs five.

End of May: Nothing to point to except a couple of short stories of no worth.

End of June: Finished re-writing *Branch on a Breaking Wave*, changing it from third person to first. Still not much of a story but a bit better. Wrote a short novel called *Theft* and a couple more short stories and finally did the first draft of *Knit One, Herring Two*. I had got stuck after about fifteen pages so it is a relief to finally have a draft done.

End of July: Nothing finished. Tut tut. The computer has been playing up. I have been so cold. Excuses excuses. A few more lines added to *On & Off the Page*.

End of August: At the beginning of the month I listed where I was at with all the books I wanted to have finished by the end of the year. I thought if I could have at least 20 pages done on all of them I would at least know if they are all workable as ideas. I've divided them into 4 collection of 6 short novels so of the unfinished books: (1) *The Water Birds*: 12 pages *Twelve Good Persons*: 1 *Montage of a Small Place*: 1. (2) *The Mind of Molly Miller*: 6 *District Notes*:



0 *Closely Settled*: 0 *Sally Hearne*: 12 *Country Childhood*: 23. (3) *The Day the Visit*: 12 *The Cemetery*: 13 *Mirror, Mirror*: 35. *All Hallow's Eve*: 7. *Mish Mash*: 1 (4) *Lullabies*: 4 *The Time of the Tempest*: 4 *Swan Bend*: 35 Extras: *The Level Crossing*: 3 *Women's Business*: 8 *Ennui*: 0. And some of these may need to be re-thought! End of the month I have finished the first draft of *Mirror Mirror* and *The Day, The Visit*, and done the third novella to go in *Novelty Events* as well as two more stories for *The Land of the Long Odds* and *Swan Bend*.

End of September: I've finished the first draft of *The Cemetery*, and *Swan Bend*, and done another short novel I've called *Siege*. I changed *Ennui* to *Deserted* and wrote a couple more stories to go in *The Land of Long Odds*.

End of October: Finished *The Land of Long Odds*. Wrote a couple of short stories.

End of November: Finished the first drafts of *Country Casebook* and *The Water Birds*.

End of December: Finished the first draft of *The Mind of Molly Miller* and another novel *Journey*. I am also finishing up the second resource book of *Edmund & Caroline* and sorting out what's still to be checked in *On & Off the Page*. I am still not a fan of Barbara Cartland or her books but I have come to admire her discipline and commitment. Even with secretaries and editors and agents and all the rest of it, she still had to sit down every day and get all those words on the page. That takes determination. The world is full of people talking about the books they are going to write, people being precious about the book they are writing, people researching a book they will eventually write, people talking about that 'one good book'. I am inclined to think it's better to get in to good disciplined habits of nurturing the imagination, seeking out the needed background information, and writing the words down—and the good book will look after itself.

Stephen Dando-Collins wrote "an unpublished manuscript is as useful as an unbaked cake, is of no value to the writer or to the community." But I have come to think that that isn't true. It isn't possible to write and not learn and grow. It is not the fate of the finished book which ultimately matters. It is the process of writing. The temptation, when no one wants your finished work, to simply give up writing is unfortunate. And it is unfortunate that successful writers promote it. Writing itself is a joy, a fascination, a window on new worlds. That joy goes beyond questions of quality, commercial value, timeliness, and current fashions in literature.

I came upon an interview with Jon Cleary in the *Weekend Australian* by Murray Waldren: 'But he still writes every day, with his back determinedly turned on the distractions of his home office view of quintessential Sydney (opera house, harbour and bridge), for two or three hours on his trusty 1948 Olympia typewriter. Now, though, for the first time he doesn't have an idea for his next book. "Maybe I need to revisit some old terrain." You've been coming up with ideas for 150 years, I tell him, of course (there will) be another book. At which he laughs, "I know there will be. I'm determined to outdo Barbara Cartland. She was 92 when she died and she wrote more than 600 books. I can't beat her in books written but I can in years lived — the only problem is, I'm not sure how good I'll look in pink chiffon."'

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Speaking of love ... I came across Yevgeny Yevtushenko's book *Love Poems* in which he says: 'This is my second attempt at a foreword to this collection of love poetry. My editor dismissed my first effort with characteristic charm. "Not good enough, Genia," she said. Or, to give it its Russian translation, "not good at all."

"Are you sure?" I asked with grim hopelessness. "Are you really sure a collection of love poetry should have a foreword?"

She readjusted her glasses and peered through them with the ruthless resolve of a horsebreaker on the wild prairies of publishing. "I'm sure," she said.

And with that she took off her glasses and, instantly, her face seemed embarrassed and vulnerable. "A woman with glasses is two women," I thought.

As always, I was disarmed by a woman's vulnerability. A foreward about love? Unthinkable. Impossible. Love itself is a foreward!'

But he obediently presented his foreward.

Perhaps there is no subject which has not been dampened by a foreword.

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July 10<sup>th</sup> : Frederick Marryat  
Marcel Proust

July 11<sup>th</sup> : Harold Bloom  
Alexandr Afanesev  
Sir Kenelm Digby

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“It may be, some ages hence, voyage to the southern unknown tracts, yea, possibly, to the moon, will not be more strange than one to America”. Paper to the Royal Society 1660 by Sir Kenelm Digby.

... “that extraordinary fat versatile creature, Sir Kenelm Digby, hardly human in his cleverness, who never stopped talking” ... (*The Stranger Prince*, Margaret Irwin)

“Sir Kenelm Digby contrived to hoodwink many, including himself, with his powder of sympathy for the healing of wounds. It was applied not to the wound but to the weapon which had caused it, or to some detached part of the sufferer’s clothing. An elaborate theory was propounded to explain how forces radiating from the blood and the balsam mingled together in a healing cloud. It does not appear to have occurred to anybody that the wound healed only because it was left alone.” (*Call the Doctor* by E. S. Turner.)

I came upon some distant relatives who called their son Kenelm Digby Starkey. This rather intrigued me and I went and looked up a bit about him. The famous Sir Kenelm (1603 — 1665) has descendants but their surname now is Glynne. But he came from a large family of Digbys, many of them tending towards that larger-than-life sense. He fell in love with Venetia Stanley and planned to marry her but while he was away in Spain she was left without protection and vulnerable in the way that women were then and gossip was spread that she had become someone’s mistress. Kenelm planned to repudiate her but he met her unexpectedly on his return and realised he was still in love so he went ahead and married her.

He comes across as a kind of late renaissance figure, interested in everything, mathematics, the occult, studies of nature, travel, public affairs, writing, becoming a bon vivant, being a friend to a variety of public figures including Descartes and more trickily both to the Stuarts and to Cromwell, but probably not being particularly good at anything. He tossed off works on all kinds of topical subjects but his articles and opinions haven’t survived the test of time. He comes across as a character who created the story of his own life and etched it into history. The man is remembered and is still a lively subject for the novelist as Pamela Hill found when she came to write *Digby*; his writing and ideas are forgotten—or perhaps superceded is the word I want.

‘In time of contagion, men use to carry about with them the powder of a toad ... which draws unto it the contagious air’; he wrote. But toads too have been superceded; they can now relax in comfort—when they’re not getting squashed by cars and large mechanical harvesters.

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July 12<sup>th</sup> : Pablo Neruda  
Henry David Thoreau

July 13<sup>th</sup> : John Clare  
Isaac Babel

July 14<sup>th</sup> : Gertrude Bell  
Irving Stone

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There are a number of books such as *Unsuitable for Ladies* by Jane Robinson or *Victorian Lady Travellers* by Dorothy Middleton about women travelling in the days before it became a relatively simple ho-hum thing for women to do but more fascinating than anything I’ve seen anthologised is this: ‘Another early Friend was Mary Fisher (1623-1698), servant of a

family which had been converted as a group. This young woman became the most noted traveler of all early Quakers because of her missionary trip in 1658 to Turkey, a country with a terrifying reputation. Part of her journey was by ship, but she also walked alone over six hundred miles of rough country. Unfamiliar with the language or culture, she was graciously received by the Grand Turk, Sultan Mohammed IV, who believed her when she said she brought a message from God. This is the same Mary Fisher, who with Ann Austin preceded Mary Hooton to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1656. Both were arrested before leaving their ship, imprisoned later in a cell with sealed windows, and examined for marks of witchcraft. Their books were burned, and they were shipped back to England. How markedly the trip to Turkey contrasts with the trip to New England!

(*Women Ministers* by Robert J. Leach; in fact she had the company of Beatrice Beckley for some of her journey, another woman of humble background and little means.)

Lady Hester Stanhope, Jane Digby, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Gertrude Bell and Freya Stark are remembered as early women travellers in the Middle East. But they all came from wealthy, educated and privileged backgrounds. Mary Fisher, like other early Friends and before the Society had taken shape and structure, did not precisely set out to convert anyone to a religion, (though they tended to couch their words in Christian terms) but rather they set out to convert them to an *idea*; the idea that no intermediary between each human being and God was necessary. For many people this was profoundly liberating—despite the fundamental dilemma inherent in Quakerism: that a people who saw (and see) themselves as Christians and wrote and spoke as Christians also believed that direct access to God, without the intermediary of Christ, was the birthright of every human being.

Of course there were already plenty of women in the places western women occasionally travelled to. Francis Galton in his 19<sup>th</sup> century bestseller *The Art of Travel* gave this helpful advice: Women.—Natives' Wives.—If some of the natives take their wives, it gives great life to the party. They are of very great service, and cause no delay; for the body of a caravan must always travel at a foot's pace, and a woman will endure a long journey nearly as well as a man, and certainly better than a horse or a bullock. They are invaluable in picking up and retailing information and hearsay gossip, which will give clues to much of importance, that, unassisted, you might miss. Mr Hearne the American traveller of the last century, in his charming book, writes as follows, and I can fully corroborate the faithfulness with which he gives us a savage's view of the matter. After the account of his first attempt, which was unsuccessful, he goes on to say,—“The very plan which, by the desire of the Governor, we pursued, of not taking any women with us on the journey was, as the chief said, the principal thing that occasioned all our want; ‘for,’ said he, ‘when all the men are heavy laden they can neither hunt nor travel to any considerable distance; and if they meet with any success in hunting, who is to carry the produce of the labour?’ ‘Women,’ said he, ‘were made for labour: one of them can carry or haul as much as two men can do. They also pitch our tents, make and mend our clothing, keep us warm at night; and in fact there is no such thing as travelling any considerable distance, or, for any length of time, in this country without their assistance.’ ‘Women,’ said he again, ‘though they do everything, are maintained at a trifling expense: for, as they always stand cook, the very licking of their fingers, in scarce times, is sufficient for their subsistence.’ ”

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Gertrude Bell writing home from Urfa (now called Sanliurfa) in southern Turkey, Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1911:

We had two long and rather difficult days from Ras al Ain to Harran. We could get no corn at Ras al Ain and therefore had to do the journey on grass, which meant stopping 2 hours in the middle of the day to let the horses feed—and there was really nothing for them to feed on. Then there was also trouble about a guide; my soldiers knew nothing of the desert way and I set out from Ras al Ain with only a compass to direct me, and a map. But the good old head of the Circassians, Hassan Bey, sent a boy after me and it was as well he did, for though we should probably have found a way through, the water was scanty in the extreme and not easy to

find. The first day we met no people and saw only the very smallest traces of former habitation. The second day we passed a very interesting fortress. Lack of food obliged us to push on. Then we came to a large ruined town, quite deserted and full of dead sheep. There was a large encampment of Arabs not far from it and near there we stopped and pastured our horses. Soon afterwards we reached the crest of the high ground and saw the great mound of Harran below us, two or three hours away in the fertile plain. We got into camp at 7 p.m. having started that morning soon after 5 a.m. Harran is said to be the place where Abraham met Rebecca, at any rate, it was out of this origin that the Jewish tribes migrated to Canaan and the huge village mounds scattered thickly over the plain are an indication of its early importance. I had come there to see the ruins of a very splendid mosque of the early Abassid period. We camped in the great court and I spent nearly 3 hours next morning photographing it stone by stone. It was wonderfully interesting. There is no town now, only a collection of mud-built huts inhabited by half-settled Arabs, and the mound with an immense ruined field round it, all enclosed by the remains of a fine stone wall. There was a very ancient moon cult here, as old as Abraham probably; the Emperor Julian came to propitiate the goddess before he set out on his fatal campaign. So we rode into Urfa over the fertile plain, and were not sorry for once to have done with desert and with marches 12 hours long. The town lies on the lower slopes of the hills and I camped above it in a terraced garden which was once a café but has fallen into disuse, fortunately for us. I have spent the day here: it's a beautiful place and like Harran and Hierapolis it goes back into the dimmest mists of Oriental history, of which it preserves the memory in the sacred pool stocked with unmolested fish which may not be caught.

It has become really hot and this morning we set out before sunrise, while it was still cool. But we did not avoid heat and it is still at 6 p.m. 87 degrees in the shade. I do not mind it, but it makes the horses languid. Birejik is one of the most famous of the Euphrates passages. Here Crassus passed over the river to his defeat at Harran: the eagles of the 5<sup>th</sup> Legion turned backwards from the bridge of boats, but he would not heed the omen. Tomorrow I go to Carchemish in the hope of finding Mr. Hogarth there.

Just after I had written to you the Kaimmakam came over to call on me and told me that Mr. Hogarth had left but that Mr. Thompson was still at Carchemish. Accordingly I went there—it was only 5 hours' ride—and found Mr. Thompson and a young man called Lawrence (he is going to make a traveller) who had for some time been expecting that I would appear. They showed me their diggings and their finds and I spent a pleasant day with them.'

She was quite right in her assessment of the young T. E. Lawrence. He became a traveller. He was also an interesting travel-writer, and explored many of the places Gertrude Bell also visited, even if readers do not turn to his writings for his descriptions:

'Nature had divided the country into zones. Men, elaborating nature, had given to her compartments an additional complexity. Each of these main north-south strip divisions was crossed and walled off artificially into communities at odds. We had to gather them into our hands for offensive action against the Turks. Feisal's opportunities and difficulties lay in these political complications of Syria which we mentally arranged in order, like a social map.

'In the very north, furthest from us, the language-boundary followed, not inaptly, the coach road from Alexandretta to Aleppo, until it met the Baghdad Railway, up which it went to the Euphrates valley; but enclaves of Turkish speech lay to the south of this general line in the Turkoman villages north and south of Antioch, and in the Armenians who were sifted in among them.

'Otherwise, a main component of the coast population was the community of Ansariya, those disciples of a cult of fertility, sheer pagan, anti-foreign, distrustful of Islam, drawn at moments towards Christians by common persecution. The sect, vital in itself, was clannish in feeling and politics. One Nosairi would not betray another, and would hardly not betray an unbeliever. Their villages lay in patches down the main hills to the Tripoli gap. They spoke Arabic, but had lived there since the beginning of Greek letters in Syria. Usually they stood aside from affairs, and left the Turkish Government alone in the hope of reciprocity.

‘Mixed among the Ansariyeh were colonies of Syrian Christians; and in the bend of the Orontes had been some firm blocks of Armenians, inimical to Turkey. Inland, near Harim were Druses, Arabic in origin; and some Circassians from the Caucasus. These had their hand against all. North-east of them were Kurds, settlers of some generations back, who were marrying Arabs and adopting their politics. They hated native Christians most: and, after them, they hated Turks and Europeans.

‘Just beyond the Kurds existed a few Yezidis, Arabic-speaking, but in thought affected by the dualism of Iran, and prone to placate the spirit of evil. Christians, Mohammedans, and Jews, peoples who placed revelation before reason, united to spit upon Yezid. Inland of them stood Aleppo, a town of two hundred thousand people, an epitome of all Turkey’s races and religions. Eastward of Aleppo, for sixty miles, were settled Arabs whose colour and manner became more and more tribal as they neared the fringe of cultivation where the semi-nomad ended and the Bedawi began.

‘A section across Syria from sea to desert, a degree further south, began in colonies of Moslem Circassians near the coast. In the new generation they spoke Arabic and were an ingenious race, but quarrelsome, much opposed by their Arab neighbours. Inland of them were Ismailiya. These Persian immigrants had turned Arab in the course of centuries, but revered among themselves one Mohammed, who, in the flesh, was the Agha Khan. They believed him to be a great and wonderful sovereign, honouring the English with his friendship. They shunned Moslems, but feebly hid their beastly opinions under a veneer of orthodoxy.

‘Beyond them were the strange sights of villages of Christian tribal Arabs, under sheikhs. They seemed very sturdy Christians, quite unlike their sniveling brethren in the hills. They lived as the Sunni about them, dressed like them, and were on the best terms with them. East of the Christians lay semi-pastoral Moslem communities; and on the last edge of cultivation, some villages of Ismailia outcasts, in search of the peace men would not grant. Beyond were Bedouin.

‘A third section through Syria, another degree lower, fell between Tripoli and Beyrout. First, near the coast, were Lebanon Christians; for the most part of Maronites or Greeks. It was hard to disentangle the politics of the two Churches. Superficially, one should have been French and one Russian; but a part of the population, to earn a living, had been in the United States, and there developed an Anglo-Saxon vein, not the less vigorous for being spurious. The Greek Church prided itself on being Old Syrian, autochthonous, of an intense localism which might ally it with Turkey rather than endure irretrievable domination by a Roman power.

‘The adherents of the two sects were at one in unmeasured slander, when they dared, of Mohammedans. Such verbal scorn seemed to salve their consciousness of inbred inferiority. Families of Moslems lived among them, identical in race and habit, except for a less mincing dialect, and less parade of emigration and its results.

‘On the higher slopes of the hills clustered settlements of Metawala, Shia Mohammedans from Persia generations ago. They were dirty, ignorant, surly and fanatical, refusing to eat or drink with infidels; holding the Sunni as bad as Christians; following only their own priests and notables. Strength of character was their virtue; a rare one in garrulous Syria. Over the hill-crest lay villages of Christian yeoman living in free peace with their Moslem neighbours as though they had never heard the grumbles of Lebanon. East of them were semi-nomad Arab peasantry; and then the open desert.

‘A fourth section, a degree southward, would have fallen near Acre, where the inhabitants, from the seashore, were first Sunni Arabs, then Druses, then Metawala. On the banks of the Jordan valley lived bitterly-suspicious colonies of Algerian refugees, facing villages of Jews. The Jews were of varied sorts. Some, Hebrew scholars of the traditionalist pattern, had developed a standard and style of living befitting the country: while the later comers, many of whom were German-inspired, had introduced strange manners, and strange crops, and European houses (erected out of charitable funds) into this land of Palestine, which seemed too small and too poor to repay in kind their efforts: but the land tolerated them.

Galilee did not show the deep-seated antipathy to its Jewish colonists which was an unlovely feature of the neighbouring Judea.

‘Across the eastern plains (thick with Arabs) lay a labyrinth of crackled lava, the Leja, where the loose and broken men of Syria had forgathered for unnumbered generations. Their descendants lived there in lawless villages, secure from Turk and Bedouin, and worked out their internecine feuds at leisure. South and south-west of them opened the Hauran, a huge fertile land; populous with warlike, self-reliant and prosperous Arab peasantry.

‘East of them were the Druses, heterodox Moslem followers of a mad and dead Sultan of Egypt. They hated Maronites with a bitter hatred; which, when encouraged by the Government and the fanatics of Damascus, found expression in great periodic killings. None the less the Druses were disliked by the Moslem Arabs and despised them in return. They were at feud with the Bedouins, and preserved in their mountain a show of the chivalrous semi-feudalism of Lebanon in the days of their autonomous Emirs.

‘A fifth section in the latitude of Jerusalem would have begun with Germans and with German Jews, speaking German or German-Yiddish, more intractable even than the Jews of the Roman era, unable to endure contact with others not of their race, some of them farmers, most of them shopkeepers, the most foreign, uncharitable part of the whole population of Syria. Around them glowered their enemies, the sullen Palestine peasants, more stupid than the yeoman of North Syria, material as the Egyptians, and bankrupt.

‘East of them lay the Jordan depth, inhabited by charred serfs; and across it group upon group of self-respecting village Christians who were, after their agricultural co-religionists of the Orontes valley, the least timid examples of our original faith in the country. Among them and east of them were tens of thousands of semi-nomad Arabs, holding the creed of the desert, living on the fear and bounty of their Christian neighbours. Down this debatable land the Ottoman Government had planted a line of Circassian immigrants from the Russian Caucasus. These held their ground only by the sword and the favour of the Turks, to whom they were, of necessity, devoted.’

He gives pen-portraits for Jerusalem, Beyrout, Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo.

‘—Jerusalem, was a squalid town, which every Semitic religion had made holy. Christians and Mohammedans came there on pilgrimage to the shrines of its past, and some Jews looked to it for the political future of their race. These united forces of the past and the future were so strong that the city almost failed to have a present. Its people, with rare exceptions, were characterless as hotel servants, living on the crowd of visitors passing through. Ideals of Arab nationality were far from them, though familiarity with the differences of Christians at their moment of most poignant sentience had led the classes of Jerusalem to despise us all.

‘Beyrout was altogether new. It would have been bastard French in feeling as in language but for its Greek harbour and American college. Public opinion in it was that of the Christian merchants, fat men living by exchange; for Beyrout itself produced nothing. The next strongest component was the class of returned emigrants, happy on invested savings in the town of Syria which most resembled that Washington Avenue where they had made good. Beyrout was the door of Syria, a chromatic Levantine screen through which cheap or shop-soiled foreign influences entered; it represented Syria as much as Soho the Home Counties.’

‘Damascus was the inevitable head; the seat of lay government; and the religion centre. Its sheikhs were leaders of opinion, more ‘Meccan’ than others elsewhere. Its fresh and turbulent citizens, always willing to strike, were as extreme in thought and word as in pleasure. The city boasted to move before any part of Syria. The Turks made it military headquarters, just as certainly as the Arab Opposition, and Oppenheim, and Sheikh Shawish there established themselves. Damascus was a lode-star to which Arabs were naturally drawn: a capital which would not smoothly be subservient to any alien race.’

‘Homs and Hama were twins disliking one another. All in them manufactured things: in Homs often cotton and wool, in Hama brocaded silks. Their industries were prosperous and

increasing, their merchants quick to find new outlets, or to meet new tastes, in North Africa, the Balkans, Asia Minor, Arabia, Mesopotamia. They demonstrated the productive ability of Syria, unguided by foreigners, as Beyrout proved its skill in distribution. Yet while the prosperity of Beyrout made it Levantine, the prosperity of Homs and Hama reinforced their localism; made them more firmly native, more jealously native. Almost it seemed as though familiarity with plants and power taught people that their fathers' manners were best.'

'Aleppo was a great city in Syria, but not of it, not of Anatolia, nor of Mesopotamia. There the races, creeds, and tongues of the Ottoman Empire met and knew one another in a spirit of compromise. The clash of characteristics, which made its streets a kaleidoscope, imbued the Aleppine with a lewd thoughtfulness which corrected in him what was blatant in the Damascene. Aleppo had shared in all the civilizations which turned about it: the result seemed to be a lack of zest in its people's belief. Even so, they surpassed the rest of Syria. They fought and traded more; were more fanatical and vicious; and made most beautiful things: but all with a dearth of conviction which rendered barren their multitudinous strength.'

This was the land over which Gertrude Bell travelled and through which Lawrence later spread the 'Arab Revolt'.

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It is to Lawrence the strategist or the spy that we are more likely to turn:

'Most wars were wars of contact, both forces striving into touch to avoid tactical surprise. Ours should be a war of detachment. We were to contain the enemy by the silent threat of a vast unknown desert, not disclosing ourselves till we attacked. The attack might be nominal, directed not against him, but against his stuff; so it would not seek either his strength or his weakness, but his most accessible material. In railway-cutting it would be usually an empty stretch of rail; and the more empty, the greater the tactical success. We might turn our average into a rule (not a law, since war was antinomian) and develop a habit of never engaging the enemy. This would chime with the numerical plea for never affording a target. Many Turks on our front had no chance all the war to fire on us, and we were never on the defensive except by accident and in error.

'The corollary of such a rule was perfect 'intelligence', so that we could plan in certainty. The chief agent must be the general's head; and his understanding must be faultless, leaving no room for chance. Morale, if built on knowledge, was broken by ignorance. When we knew all about the enemy we should be comfortable. We must take more pains in the service of news than any regular staff.

'I was getting through my subject. The algebraical factor had been translated into terms of Arabia, and fitted like a glove. It promised victory. The biological factor had dictated to us a development of the tactical line most in accord with the genius of our tribesmen. There remained the psychological element to build up an apt shape. I went to Xenophon and stole, to name it, his word *diathetics*, which had been the art of Cyrus before he struck.

'Of this our 'propaganda' was the stained and ignoble offspring. It was the pathic, almost the ethical, in war. Some of it concerned the crowd, an adjustment of its spirit to the point where it became useful to exploit in action, and the pre-direction of this changing spirit to a certain end. Some of it concerned the individual, and then it became a rare art of human kindness, transcending, by purposed emotion, the gradual logical sequence of the mind. It was more subtle than tactics, and better worth doing, because it dealt with uncontrollables, with subjects incapable of direct command. It considered the capacity for mood of our men, their complexities and mutability, and the cultivation of whatever in them promised to profit our intention. We had to arrange their minds in order of battle just as carefully and as formally as other officers would arrange their bodies. And not only our own men's minds, though naturally they came first. We must also arrange the minds of the enemy, so far as we could reach them; then those other minds of the nation supporting us behind the firing line, since more than half the battle passed there in the back; then the minds of the enemy nation waiting the verdict; and of the neutrals looking on; circle beyond circle.

‘There were many humiliating material limits, but no moral impossibilities; so that the scope of our diathetical activities was unbounded. On it we should mainly depend for the means of victory on the Arab front: and the novelty of it was our advantage. The printing press, and each newly-discovered method of communication favoured the intellectual above the physical, civilization paying the mind always from the body’s funds. We kindergarten soldiers were beginning our art of war in the atmosphere of the twentieth century, receiving our weapons without prejudice. To the regular officer, with the tradition of forty generations of service behind him, the antique arms were the most honoured. As we had seldom to concern ourselves with what our men did, but always with what they thought, the diathetic for us would be more than held the command. In Europe it was set a little aside, and entrusted to men outside the General Staff. In Asia the regular elements were so weak that irregulars could not let the metaphysical weapon rust unused.

‘Battles in Arabia were a mistake, since we profited in them only by the ammunition the enemy fired off. Napoleon had said it was rare to find generals willing to fight battles; but the curse of this war was that so few would do anything else. Saxe had told us that irrational battles were the refuges of fools: rather they seemed to me impositions on the side which believed itself weaker, hazards made unavoidable either by lack of land room or by the need to defend a material property dearer than the lives of soldiers. We had nothing material to lose, so our best line was to defend nothing and to shoot nothing. Our cards were speed and time, not hitting power. The invention of bully beef had profited us more than the invention of gunpowder, but gave us strategical, rather than tactical strength, since in Arabia range was more than force, space greater than the power of armies.

‘I had now been eight days lying in this remote tent, keeping my ideas general, till my brain, sick of unsupported thinking, had to be dragged to its work by an effort of will, and went off into a doze whenever that effort was relaxed. The fever passed: my dysentery ceased; and with restored strength the present again became actual to me. Facts concrete and pertinent thrust themselves into my reveries; and my inconstant wit bore aside towards all these roads of escape. So I hurried into line my shadowy principles, to have them once precise before my power to evoke them faded.

‘It seemed to me proven that our rebellion had an unassailable base, guarded not only from attack, but from the fear of attack. It had a sophisticated alien enemy, disposed as an army of occupation in an area greater than could be dominated effectively from fortified posts. It had a friendly population, of which some two in the hundred were active, and the rest quietly sympathetic to the point of not betraying the movements of the minority. The active rebels had the virtues of secrecy and self-control, and the qualities of speed, endurance and independence of arteries of supply. They had technical equipment enough to paralyse the enemy’s communications. A province would be won when we had taught the civilians in it to die for our ideal of freedom. The presence of the enemy was secondary. Final victory seemed certain, if the war lasted long enough for us to work it out.’

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A Spanish traveller, Benjamin of Tudela, visited Baghdad in 1160: “Bagdad contains about one thousand Jews, who enjoy peace, comfort and much honour under the government of the great king. ... The principal of all these ... is Daniel, the son of Chisdei, who bears the titles of Prince of the Captivity and Lord, and who possesses a pedigree which proves his descent from King David. The Jews call him ‘Lord, Prince of the Captivity’, and the Mahometans entitle him Saidna Ben Daoud, noble descendent of David.... The Emir-al-Mumenin, the lord of the Mahometans, has ... confirmed his power by granting him a seal of office ... All the Jewish congregations receive authority from the prince of the captivity to elect rabbis and ministers, all of whom appear before him in order to receive consecration and the permission to officiate.... The prince of the captivity possesses hostelryes, gardens, and orchards in Babylonia, and extreme landed property inherited from his fore-fathers, of which nobody can deprive him.... He is very rich, an excellent scholar, and so hospitable that



numerous Israelites dine at his table.

Many of the Jews of Bagdad are good scholars and very rich. The city contains twenty-eight synagogues, situated partly in Bagdad and partly in Al-Khorkh, on the other side of the river Tigris, which runs through and divides the city. The metropolital synagogue of the prince of the captivity is ornamented with pillars of richly coloured marble, plated with gold and silver; on the pillars are inscribed verses of the Psalms in letters of gold. The ascent to the holy ark is composed of ten marble steps, on the uppermost of which are the stalls set apart for the prince of the captivity and the other princes of the house of David.”

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Gertrude Bell was very definitely a traveller and a travel-writer and she rarely lost herself in the philosophical musings that are so much a part of Lawrence’s writing. Her travel books include *The Desert and the Sown*, *The Thousand and One Churches*, *Amurath to Amurath* and *The Palace and Mosque of Ukhaidir*. Her books about her travels were popular, partly because she was a woman travelling alone in Arab lands, but she was also a lively and interesting writer and a thoughtful commentator wherever she went:

‘The Arabs do not speak of desert or wilderness as we do. Why should they? To them it is neither desert nor wilderness, but a land of which they know every feature, a mother country whose smallest product has a use sufficient for their needs. They know, or at least they knew in the days when their thoughts shaped themselves in deathless verse, how to rejoice in the great spaces and how to honour the rush of the storm—’

‘Fellah ul ’Isa and Namred fell into an interesting discussion over the coffee, one that threw much light on the position of the tribes of the Belka. They are hard pressed by encroaching civilisation. Their summer quarters are gradually being filled up with fellahin, and still worse, their summer watering places are now occupied by Circassian colonists settled by the Sultan in eastern Syria when the Russians turned them out of house and home in the Caucasus.’

‘The sidrs dwindled and vanished, and before us lay a sheet of hard mud on which no green thing grows. It is of a yellow colour, blotched with a venomous grey-white salt: almost unconsciously the eye appreciates its enmity to life. As we rode here a swirl of heavy rain swooped down upon us from the upper world. The muleteers looked grave, and even Mikhail’s began to lengthen, for in front of us were the Slime Pits of Genesis, and no horse or mule can pass over them except they be dry. The rain lasted a very few minutes, but it was enough. The hard mud of the plain had assumed the consistency of butter, the horse’s feet were shod in it up to the fetlocks and my dog Kurt whined as he dragged his paws out of the yellow glue. So we came to the Slime Pits, the strangest feature of all the uncanny land. A quarter of a mile to the west of Jordan—the belt is much narrower to the east of the stream—the smooth plain resolves itself suddenly into a series of steep mud banks intersected by narrow gullies.’

The Slime Pits of Genesis! What a marvellous name for a horror story.

And would politicians have constantly referred to Turkey as the Sick Man of Europe and therefore of no account if they had read her 1907 assessment of their fighting qualities? ‘Other armies may mutiny, but the Turkish army will stand true to the khalif; other armies may give way before suffering and privation and untended sickness, but that of the Sultan will go forward as long as it has arms, and conquer as long as it has leaders. There is no more wonderful and pitiful sight than a Turkish regiment on the march: greybeards and half-fledged youths, ill-clad and often barefoot, pinched and worn—and indomitable. Let such as watch them salute them as they pass: in the days when war was an art rather than a science, of that stuff the conquerors of the world were made.’

Gertrude learnt Persian, Arabic, and other languages to a lesser fluency. She climbed mountains. She travelled throughout the Middle East. She translated. She fell in love twice, each time with sad outcomes, both young men dying. Her stepmother, Florence Bell, author of *At the Works: A Study of a Manufacturing Town*, described her as ‘Scholar, poet, historian, archaeologist, art critic, mountaineer, explorer, gardener, naturalist, distinguished servant of the

State, Gertrude was all of these, and was recognised by experts as an expert in them all.’

She was an imperialist, believing that to live within the boundaries of the British Empire was an unmixed blessing, but she didn’t expect people to become British, revelling instead in their differences of language and religion and culture. In the first World War she became an intelligence expert at the Arab Bureau (which also employed T. E. Lawrence) as their Basra expert, then in 1919 she was given the post of Oriental Secretary to the Civil Administrator of Iraq, the newly-created nation, with a newly-imposed king, King Feisal, which Britain ruled under a League of Nations Mandate.

She described her work when she first came to Baghdad: “My duties are of the most diverse kinds. We are very short-handed. I take on everything I can to spare Sir Percy—interview representatives of innumerable creeds, keep an open door to tribal sheikhs and messengers from the desert whose business I discover and send up in brief to Sir Percy, and then behind all this there’s my real job, the gathering and sorting of information. Already the new tribal maps and tribe lists are getting into shape, and the first big batch of confidential notes on Bagdad personalities will be issued to our Political Officers to-morrow—that’s not bad going. Presently all the new surveys will begin to come in and I shall have the revision and correction of the place names, a thing I like doing because in the first place it’s so nice to get them right, and in the second it teaches me so much geography. And then I’m going to be Curator of Antiquities or at least I’m going to show the Revenue Commissioner all the old buildings and scraps of buildings that are left here, and he has promised to keep guard over them ... ” (27/4/1917)

Many Britons found positions in the new Iraq, some with later tragic consequences when the imposed monarchy was swept away by a group of army officers in the 1950s—‘On Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> July, revolution swept Iraq, and on that Tuesday they were playing football with the Crown Prince’s head in the streets of Baghdad. Of Robert Angorly, who by nature of his office as chief game warden numbered as one of the tyrant’s personal entourage, I have had no word since.’ (Gavin Maxwell, *Ring of Bright Water*) But Gertrude’s time in Iraq was mostly happy and successful. There were those who maliciously described her as the ‘uncrowned queen of Iraq’ and she sometimes experienced problems as a woman in a man’s world—and she, herself, was not always sympathetic to the struggles of other women not blessed with her degree of education, wealth, and intelligence.

But she deserves to be remembered as the founder of Baghdad’s Museum of Antiquities in 1923. A plaque there was put up to

GERTRUDE BELL

Whose memory the arabs will ever hold in reverence and affection

Created this Museum in 1923

Being then Honorary Director of Antiquities for the Iraq

With wonderful knowledge and devotion

She assembled the most precious objects in it

And through the heat of the Summer

Worked on them until the day of her death

On 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1926

King Faisal and the Government of Iraq

In gratitude for her great deeds in this country

Have ordered that the Principal Wing shall bear her name

And with their permission

Her friends have erected this Tablet

But her role often brought her into conflict with powerful interests in the world of archeology. 6/3/1924. ‘It’s a difficult and rather agonizing job, you know. We sat with our catalogues and ticked the things off. But the really agonizing part was after lunch when I had to tell them that I must take the milking scene. I can’t do otherwise. It’s unique and it depicts the life of the country at an immensely early date. In my capacity as Director of Antiquities I’m an

Iraqi official and bound by the terms on which we gave the permit for excavation. J.M. backed me but it broke Mr. Woolley's heart, though he expected the decision. I've written to Sir F. Kenyon explaining ...' But it had its compensations. 30/4/1924. 'To-day I went to the Museum in the morning where Sir Henry, Seem and Captain Vaughan visited us. I burst with pride when I show people over the Museum. It is becoming such a wonderful place. It was a great morning because there were 6 boxes from Kish to be unpacked—the remainder of our share. Such copper instruments as have never before been handed down from antiquity; the shelves shout with them.'

She deserves to be remembered because she inspired the respect of many of the men she met and worked with; her interest in Iraq's past encouraged its people to treat their treasures with greater care and respect; and her work and status encouraged a greater level of freedom and respect for women in Iraq. The war has seen her archeological legacy terribly damaged. I hope the relative freedom and opportunities enjoyed by Iraq's women will not suffer a similar fate.

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Wilfrid Thesiger's name is linked to the other great explorers of the region; yet he came on the scene relatively late and added little to the map and what he did add, though it helped make his books such as *Arabian Sands* and *Marsh Arabs* very popular, left him with a sense of ambivalence. As Michael Asher writes, "Thesiger was aware of and resented the fact that, as a District Commissioner in the Sudan, during the 1930s, his job was ultimately to impose the values and customs of an alien civilization. Even as an explorer in the Empty Quarter, he realized that he himself was the harbinger of a different world: 'When I was with the Arabs,' he wrote, 'I was led only to live as they lived, and now that I have left them I would gladly think that nothing in their lives was altered by my coming. Regretfully, however, I realize that the maps I made helped others with more material aims to visit and corrupt a people whose spirit once lit the desert like a flame ...' Thesiger was drawn to the traditional ways, to the wild and unspoiled lands, with a rare passion, yet he belonged to a generation and an era that did more than any other to destroy them. Perhaps this is why he prefaced one of his books with Oscar Wilde's famous line, 'Yet each man kills the thing he loves.' "

He was a misogynist, an imperialist, a traveller and big game hunter on a grand scale. I didn't find him terribly attractive as a person yet I cannot help admiring anyone who willingly and uncomplainingly puts themselves through the physical and mental strain of long camel journeys through a searing desert landscape ...

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July 15<sup>th</sup> : Iris Murdoch  
July 16<sup>th</sup> : Christopher Koch  
          Mary Baker Eddy  
July 17<sup>th</sup> : Christina Stead  
July 18<sup>th</sup> : W.M. Thackeray  
          Clifford Odets  
July 19<sup>th</sup> : Gottfried Keller  
          A.J. Cronin

\* \* \* \* \*

Men locked in aimless fight,  
Minds full of witless tags,  
A banner torn to rags,  
A people lost in the night ...

At first he lied alone,  
Now thousands shout his lies,  
Like thunder to the skies,

Thus has his power grown ...

And when this evil spell  
Has long ago been broken,  
Of it will then be spoken,  
As of the reign of hell ...

For a long time I believed this poem to refer to Hitler. Then I found that Keller was a Swiss poet. And as he lived from 1819 to 1890 he could not know anything about Hitler. He was born in Zurich and was apprenticed to a landscape painter, later going to Munich for two years for lessons. But he ended up deserting painting for literature. His first publication was a collection of poetry. Then he wrote his best-known novel *Der grüne Heinrich* which was said to show great power and originality. I found this comment about it, 'In his novel *Green Heinrich*, the Swiss poet Gottfried Keller describes Feuerbach as 'a magician in the shape of a bird who sang God out of the hearts of thousands'. And the same book has a portrait of a schoolteacher who has lost his job because he is an atheist, but who travels around Germany exclaiming: 'Isn't it a joy to be alive?', and forever marveling at the glory of being free from the 'encumbrance' of God.' It was perhaps just as well that he published it in Germany rather than in Calvinist Switzerland but the book is largely autobiographical and has been described as one of the best *Bildungsromans* in the German language. He eventually published two volumes of poetry, several novels including *Martin Salander* and *Green Henry*, two volumes of novellas under the title *Die Leute von Seldwyla* or *The People of Seldwyla* in 1856 (which has sometimes been thought to refer to Zurich but which is far more likely to be a set of stories set in a small imaginary town). In 1872 he published a series of very attractive stories called *Seven Legends*.

He is described as a 'liberal revolutionary and volunteer irregular' in the time of the upheaval leading to the formation of the Swiss Federation. He was disappointed in some of its results and continued to wield his pen to damn corruption and public abuses. I also found it said of him 'Keller's prose and poetry are full of genial humour and exuberance matching the quality of his fundamentally human attitude, and his love for his country takes many forms, from hymns of praise to pungent social criticism.' He was a very small man hardly larger than a dwarf and it was his misfortune to long for tall women of birth and fortune ... or perhaps he felt that if he was going to dream he might as well dream on a large scale. He never married and lived most of his life with his mother and sister.

His poem has nothing to do with Hitler and yet it has always seemed to me a simple yet very effective commentary on tyranny, past, present, and future.

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July 20<sup>th</sup> : Louisa Anne Meredith  
Francis Petrarch

July 21<sup>st</sup> : Arthur Mee  
Francis Parkinson Keyes  
Ernest Hemingway

July 22<sup>nd</sup> : Tom Robbins

July 23<sup>rd</sup> : Alex Buzo  
Coventry Patmore

July 24<sup>th</sup> : Lord Dunsany  
Alexander Dumas

July 25<sup>th</sup> : Elias Canetti

July 26<sup>th</sup> : Junie Morosi  
George Bernard Shaw  
Carl Jung

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*Immaturity* was to lie ‘dumb and forgotten’ for fifty years; the *Passion Play* and *My Dear Dorothea* remained unpublished during Shaw’s life; a short story he had written, ‘The Burial of Cain’, was steadily rejected by magazines over five years until his one copy disappeared in the post. Of more than a dozen other stories and articles he had written in 1879 on ‘subjects ranging from orchestral conducting to oakum picking’ most were rejected, some were lost. The two that were eventually published (the first, ‘Opera in Italian’, being unsigned and unpaid for; the second, on ‘Christian Names’, appearing anonymously in *One and All*) earned him fifteen shillings. In the summer of 1880, attempting another assault on critical journalism, he approached John Morley, the new editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, enclosing some examples of his work and asking whether he might make a music or theatre critic. ‘I cannot hesitate to say.’ Morley answered, ‘that in my opinion you would do well to get out of journalism.’ For a long time following this rebuff, Shaw was to remain the complete professional failure — ‘nobody would pay a farthing for a stroke of my pen’. To John Morley, revealing his self-dislike, he replied: ‘I fear I am incorrigible ... Should you ever require anything particularly disagreeable written about anybody, pray remember, yours faithfully, G.B. Shaw.’

Describing this period later on, G.B.S. fashioned it into a retrospectively painless experience. Though the most foreign of all foreigners — an Irishman — he was no peasant lad setting his foot courageously on the lowest rung of the social ladder — and he advised his biographers to put all such romantic notions out of their heads. ‘I never climbed any ladder. I have achieved eminence by sheer gravitation.’ It was a matter of waiting in line for the rather overcrowded career of professional man of genius. Had he been capable of gratitude, he would have inflicted it on his parents. He sponged off them without shame and they, in their poverty, tolerated him as a burden they could not dislodge. ‘I did not throw myself into the struggle for life. I threw my mother into it. I was not a staff to my father’s old age: I hung on to his coat tails ... People wondered at my heartlessness ... My mother worked for my living instead of preaching that it was my duty to work for hers: therefore take off your hat to her, and blush.’

(Michael Holroyd)

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‘The black rhinoceros, in fact, very well establishes the point made by the late Bernard Shaw that carnivora (lions, tigers, leopards, and many human beings) tend to skulk and turn away at the sign of danger, while vegetarians (bulls, rhinoceroses, buffaloes, and Shaw himself) are much more belligerent.’ (Alan Moorehead, *No Room in the Ark*)

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‘At nine o’clock (the Opera began at eight o’clock) a lady came in and sat down very conspicuously in my line of sight. She remained there until the beginning of the last act. I do not complain of her coming late and going early: on the contrary, I wish she had come later and gone earlier. For this lady, who had very black hair, had stuck over her right ear the pitiable corpse of a large white bird, which looked exactly as if someone had killed it by stamping on its breast, and then nailed it to the lady’s temple, which was presumably of sufficient solidity to bear the operation.

I am not, I hope, a morbidly squeamish person, but the spectacle sickened me. I presume that if I had presented myself at the doors with a dead snake round my neck, a collection of black beetles pinned to my shirtfront, and a grouse in my hair, I should have been refused admission. Why, then, is a woman to be allowed to commit such a public outrage?

... I once, in Drury Lane Theatre, sat behind a matinee hat decorated with the two wings of a seagull artificially reddened at the joints so as to produce an illusion of being freshly plucked from a live bird. But even that lady stopped short of the whole seagull.

... I suggest to the Covent Garden authorities that, if they feel bound to protect their subscribers against the danger of my shocking them with a blue tie, they are at least equally bound to protect me against the danger of a woman shocking me with a dead bird.’

(George Bernard Shaw, letter to *The Times*, 1905. Shaw had been instructed

to wear a black tie at Covent Garden. As quoted in Matthew Parris' *Scorn with Added Vitriol.*)

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July 27<sup>th</sup> : Hilaire Belloc

July 28<sup>th</sup> : Beatrix Potter

July 29<sup>th</sup> : Booth Tarkington

July 30<sup>th</sup> : Emily Brontë  
William Howard Gass

July 31<sup>st</sup> : Primo Levi

August 1<sup>st</sup> : Herman Melville

\* \* \* \* \*

Whales Weep Not

They say the sea is cold, but the sea contains  
the hottest blood of all, and the wildest, the most urgent.

All the whales in the wider deeps, hot are they, as they urge  
on and on, and dive beneath the icebergs.  
the right whales, the sperm-whales, the hammer-heads, the killers  
there they blow, there they blow, hot wild white breath out of the sea

And they rock, and they rock, through the sensual ageless ages  
on the depths of the seven seas,  
and through the salt they reel with drunk delight  
and in the tropics tremble they with love  
and roll with massive, strong desire, like gods.  
Then the great bull lies up against his bride  
in the deep blue of the sea,  
as mountain pressing mountain, in the zest of life:  
and out of the inward roaring of the inner red ocean of whale blood  
the long tip reaches strong, intense, like the maelstrom-tip, and  
comes to rest  
in the clasp and the soft wild clutch of a she-whale's fathomless body.

And over the bridge of the whale's strong phallus, linking the wonder of whales  
the burning archangels under the sea keep passing, back and forth,  
keep passing archangels of bliss  
from him to her, from her to him, great Cherubim  
that wait on whales in mid-ocean, suspended in the waves of the sea  
great heaven of whales in the waters, old hierarchies.  
And enormous mother whales lie dreaming suckling their whale-tender young  
and dreaming with strange whale eyes wide open in the waters of the beginning  
and the end.

And bull-whales gather their women and whale-calves in a ring  
when danger threatens, on the surface of the ceaseless flood  
and range themselves like great fierce Seraphim facing the threat  
encircling their huddled monsters of love,  
and all this happiness in the sea, in the salt  
where God is also love, but without words  
and Aprodite is the wife of whales  
most happy, happy she

and Venus among the fishes skips and is a she-dolphin  
she is the gay, delighted porpoise sporting with love and the sea  
she is the female tunny-fish, round and happy among the males  
and dense with happy blood, dark rainbow bliss in the sea.

(D.H. Lawrence)

Lawrence has been overlooked both as a poet and as a 'nature poet'. I liked his little piece called 'Self-protection':

A tiger is striped and golden for his own glory.  
He would certainly be much more invisible if he were grey-green.  
And I don't suppose the ichthyosaurus sparkled like the humming-bird,  
no doubt he was khaki-coloured with muddy protective coloration  
so why didn't he survive?

Perhaps he did? And we don't recognise him as he flies past. But a thing that intrigued me was that Herman Melville was also a poet. This was a facet of his writing of which I was completely ignorant until I came upon an essay by Robert Penn Warren. Yet Melville wasn't, as you might imagine, a poet of the sea in the way that Masefield was; nor was he a nature poet in the vein of Whitman or a poet drawn to epic aspects of history as Longfellow was. If there was a subject which drew him then it was probably the American Civil War. Here is a taste:

Did all the lets and bars appear  
To every just or larger end,  
Whence should come the trust and cheer?  
Youth must its ignorant impulse lend—  
Age finds place in the rear.  
All wars are boyish, and are fought by boys,  
The champions and enthusiasts of the state

No berrying party, pleasure-wooded,  
No picnic party in May,  
Ever went less loath than they  
Into that leafy neighborhood.  
In Bacchic glee they file toward Fate,  
Moloch's uninitiated;

But some who this blithe mood present,  
As on in lightsome files they fare,  
Shall die experienced ere three days are spent—  
Perish, enlightened by the volleyed glare;  
Or shame survive, and, like to adamant,  
The throe of Second Manassas share.

(from 'The March into Virginia')

But Penn Warren sees Melville's poetry as a continuing struggle to work through the major ethical questions he saw in the world around him. He struggled with them in his prose, he struggled with them in his poetry, but it is less obvious whether he saw his poems as a way of writing better prose—or vice versa.

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Herman Melville writes in *Moby Dick*. 'That great America on the other side of the sphere, Australia, was given to the enlightened world by the whalers. After its first blunder-born discovery by a Dutchman, all other ships long shunned those shores as pestiferously

barbarous; but the whale-ship touched there. The whale-ship is the true mother of that now mighty colony. Moreover, in the infancy of the first Australian settlement, the emigrants were several times saved from starvation by the benevolent biscuit of the whale-ship luckily dropping an anchor in their waters.'

Local writer Ken Dallas brought out a little book called *Trading Posts or Penal Colonies* in which he said, 'until about 1950, the approach was that until wool export became considerable Australia had no economic history worthy of study.

'In 1950 this view was challenged by a G.R.T.S. student, Tom Errey, asserting that all significant events have economic forces somewhere behind them. The answer to that was: "Well, if so, whaling would have had something to do with it."'

Quite a lot in fact. At school we were taught that Cook's voyages were inspired by 'pure scientific investigation' and the desire to know just what the mysterious Great South Land actually consisted of; and the arrival of Philip with the First Fleet was inspired by the need to find somewhere to dump the constantly increasing convict population in Britain. We learnt a great deal about the overflowing prisons, the hulks moored in rivers and ports, the huge number of transportable offences. None of us thought to ask why Britain didn't come up with better and more imaginative ways of treating petty crime. But the image we were left with was of a nation drowning under unwanted people. What we weren't told was that the rapidly expanding populations of Europe were demanding ever increasing quantities of whale oil, especially the highly-prized sperm whale oil, to light their lamps. Already the Atlantic numbers were starting to show scarcity in their most accessible areas. The hunt was on for new whaling grounds. Wherever Cook went he looked at the commercial possibilities: whales everywhere, New Zealand flax, timber, fur seals, victualling possibilities, fresh water supplies, sheltered harbours ... all this for some unwanted people? Dear me no! The hard-headed merchants and politicians in London had in mind a complex web of trading ports and routes from Cape Town to South America, avoiding the Dutch East Indies but reaching from the Russian fur trade in the North Pacific to the whaling grounds of the Far South ...

As William A. Robinson puts it succinctly in *To The Great Southern Sea*: "Whale oil became Australia's first export when 750 'tuns' left Port Jackson in five ships in 1804. Nine other whaleships, manned by 270 men, were then operating from Sydney. Two years later bay whaling began in Van Diemen's Land, and by the 1860s Hobart was the most important deep-sea whaling base in the British Empire."

If Australia was founded on anything then it was the hope of massive new supplies of whale oil.

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*Moby Dick* is always described as a story about Captain Ahab's obsession with the white whale Moby Dick. In fact Ahab takes two hundred pages before he even appears on the scene. The book is really about Melville's fascination with whales, whalers, whale ships, whale weapons, whale lore, whale fantasy ... The book gives the impression of someone constantly collecting up curious little tid-bits which he finally realises need a plot to justify the book and so the Captain makes his appearance. Nathaniel Philbrick suggests rather that Melville was intrigued by the story of the *Essex*, the whale ship that was attacked by a large whale and sank in the Pacific; its crew managed to get away in boats but then in a long-drawn out agony the crews finally turned to cannibalism as they died of hunger. The story fascinated and horrified people.

*Moby Dick* in effect ends where Philbrick's *In the Heart of the Sea* begins. He writes, "I soon discovered that Owen Chase, Herman Melville, Thomas Nickerson, and Uncle Charlie were not the only ones to have written about the *Essex*. There was Nantucket's distinguished historian Edouard Stackpole, who died in 1993, just as my own research was beginning. There was Thomas Heffernan, author of *Stove by a Whale: Owen Chase and the Essex* (1981), an indispensable work of scholarship that was completed just before the discovery of the Nickerson manuscript. Finally, there was Henry Carlisle's compelling novel *The Jonah Man*



(1984), which tells the story of the *Essex* from the viewpoint of the ship's captain, George Pollard." (Thomas Nickerson had been a cabin-boy on the *Essex*.) Nor were they the only ones to make use of the story; both Ralph Waldo Emerson and Edgar Allan Poe were among those who incorporated it in stories and poems. Captain Pollard ended up as a nightwatchman after losing another ship; Owen Chase became a captain but lost a ship to fire. Nantucket's harbour gradually silted up and on November 16, 1869, its last whaling vessel, the *Oak*, sailed out of the harbour, never to return.

When the *Essex* sank three boats took to the sea: one was eventually washed up with only skeletons in it, one left men on tiny Henderson Island and they were eventually rescued, and on the other "Two months after deciding to spurn the Society Islands because, Pollard's words, 'we feared we should be devoured by cannibals,' they were about to eat one of their own shipmates." Like the downed plane in the Andes there was no suggestion that anyone had been deliberately killed before being eaten but there was still a sense of horror in the story. If my dead body can help keep someone alive I am only too happy for them to go ahead and munch it up ... but there is that lingering fear that someone might be tempted to hasten death.

Philbrick also shows something of the whaling port of Nantucket, particularly the lives led by its women. A whaling voyage could last up to three years. Many women had no choice but to become public figures, shopkeepers, farmers, teachers, dock-workers, fire-fighters. It made for a sturdy independence of spirit. They were both mothers and fathers to their families. But it also brought loneliness and great anxiety at times. He also writes, "An island tradition claims that Nantucket women dealt with their husbands' long absences by relying on sexual aids known as 'he's-at-homes.' "

Melville says, "Now, Bildad, like Peleg, and indeed many other Nantucketers, was a Quaker, the island having been originally settled by that sect; and to this day its inhabitants in general retain in an uncommon measure the peculiarities of the Quaker, only variously and anomalously modified by things altogether alien and heterogeneous. For some of those same Quakers are the most sanguinary of all sailors and whale hunters. They are fighting Quakers; they are Quakers with a vengeance. So that there are instances among them of men, who, named with Scripture names — a singularly common fashion on the island — and in childhood naturally imbibing the stately dramatic thee and thou of the Quaker idiom; still, from the audacious, daring, and boundless adventure of their subsequent lives, strangely blend with these unoutgrown peculiarities, a thousand bold dashes of character, not unworthy a Scandinavian sea-king, or a poetical Pagan Roman." But Philbrick says the islanders were actually converted to Quakerism by a woman called Mary Starbucks rather than being settled initially by Quakers.

That Melville was familiar with the story of the *Essex* he makes clear by saying "At this day Captain Pollard is a resident of Nantucket. I have seen Owen Chace, who was chief mate of the *Essex* at the time of the tragedy; I have read his plain and faithful narrative; I have conversed with his son; and all this within a few miles of the scene of the catastrophe."

Owen Chase also wrote his own version of the tragedy, *The Wreck of the Whaleship Essex*. He said, "The town of Nantucket, in the State of Massachusetts, contains about eight thousand inhabitants. Nearly a third part of the population are Quakers, and they are, taken together, a very industrious and enterprising people.

"On this island are owned about one hundred vessels, of all descriptions, engaged in the whale trade; giving constant employment and support to upwards of sixteen hundred hardy seamen, a class of people proverbial for their intrepidity. This fishery is not carried on to any extent from any other port of the United States, except from the town of New Bedford, directly opposite to Nantucket on the mainland, where are owned probably twenty sail."

He describes whaling as "An exterminating warfare against those great leviathans of the deep." But if an industry sees itself as a war then it will obviously wind up ceasing to be an industry; there is a curious lack of insight into this aspect of the trade. He also gives a graphic account of the *Essex*'s last minutes, "—I observed a very large spermaceti whale, as well as I

could judge about eight-five feet in length. He broke water about twenty rods off our weather bow and was lying quietly, with his head in a direction for the ship. He spouted two or three times and then disappeared. In less than two or three seconds, he came up again, about the length of the ship off, and made directly for us at the rate of about three knots. The ship was then going with about the same velocity. His appearance and attitude gave us at first no alarm, but which I stood watching his movements and observing him, but a ship's length off, coming down for us with great celerity, I involuntarily ordered the boy at the helm to put it hard up, intending to sheer off and avoid him.

"The words were scarcely out of my mouth before he came down upon us with full speed and struck the ship with his head, just forward of the fore-chains. He gave us such an appalling and tremendous jar as nearly threw us all on our faces. The ship brought up as suddenly and violently as if she had struck a rock and trembled for a few seconds like a leaf.

"We looked at each other with perfect amazement, deprived almost of the power of speech. Many minutes elapsed before we were able to realize the dreadful accident. During this time the whale passed under the ship, grazing her keel as he went along. He came up alongside of her to leeward and lay on the top of the water, apparently stunned with the violence of the blow, for the space of a minute. He then suddenly started off in a direction to leeward."

But the whale hadn't done with the ship.

"I turned around and saw him, about one hundred rods directly ahead of us, coming down apparently with twice his ordinary speed and, it appeared to me at that moment, with tenfold fury and vengeance in his aspect. The surf flew in all directions about him, and his course towards us was marked by white foam a rod in width, which he made with the continual violent thrashing of his tail. His head was about half out of water, and in that way he came upon and again struck the ship." The ship sank, twenty men got away in three boats. Had whaling in small sailing ships continued it is possible that whales would eventually have learned both evasive action and their own version of this kind of warfare. Philbrick says, "In 1850, the *Pocahontas*, out of Martha's Vineyard, was rammed by a whale but was able to reach port for repairs. Then, in 1851, the year that *Moby-Dick* was published, a whaleship was attacked by a sperm whale in the same water where the *Essex* had been sunk thirty-one years before." And, "Five months later, the crew of the *Rebecca Simms* succeeded in killing the whale that sank the *Ann Alexander*. By then the bull appeared 'old, tired, and diseased.' Its sides were shaggy with twisted harpoons and lances; huge splinters were found embedded in its head." When Melville heard this he wrote to a friend "Ye Gods! What a Commentator is this *Ann Alexander* whale ... I wonder if my evil art has raised this monster."

Metal replaced wood. Steam replaced sail. Whales grew harder to find. The last North American whaling voyage was the *John R Manta* out of New Bedford in 1925.

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But, curiously, Nantucket's most famous child was not a whaler but the feminist and anti-slavery campaigner Lucretia Mott who was born Lucretia Coffin on the island in 1793. Constance Buel Burnett in *Lucretia Mott, Girl of Old Nantucket*, gives a sense of family life in which the fathers were absent for long periods. "Many Nantucket children are born while their fathers are away at sea," Mother told them. "I myself was twice as big as Betsy before I saw my father." Margret Hope Bacon in *Valiant Friend, The Life of Lucretia Mott*, also captures both the life Lucretia lived in her childhood on Nantucket and the fascinating role she played in the wider society of early to mid-nineteenth century America.

Bacon describes Nantucket: "Thirty miles south off the coast of Cape Cod, Nantucket is a crescent-shaped sandbar eleven miles long and surrounded by treacherous shoals. The trees were cut long ago for fuel, and much of the island is bare except for moors covered with heather, beach plum, and wild cranberry. When the fog lifts, the island is bathed in a certain stark, brilliant light that leaves sharp shadows. Its shingled cottages are low, seeming to huddle against the land, weathered silver by wind and salt. In the summer rambling roses climb over the houses and the fences, and the moors are patchwork quilts of greens and mauves. In winter

it is all blacks and grays and white, a desolate landscape to some, beautiful to those who have learned to love it. And always there is the pounding surf and the crying of the gulls.

‘Settled in 1659 by ten “proprietors,” Nantucket grew slowly until whaling was discovered. From 1700 to 1850 it was the center of the whaling industry in the United States, its men sailing as far as China in quest of whale oil and blubber while its women operated the farms and shops and ran the affairs of the island. The result was the development of a hardy, self-reliant breed of both sexes, famous for their sharp wit, shrewd trading, and fierce independence.’

Lucretia was sent away to school on the mainland and there she became aware that female teachers did more of the work but for less than half the pay. She married James Mott and went to live in Philadelphia where she became involved in the anti-slavery movement and was a founder of the Female Anti-Slavery Society where both black and white women worked together, and one of the members was Abba Alcott, mother of Louisa May. It was a middle class group but they were probably as effective as the various male-run organisations. As a popular symbol of the abolitionist movement was a kneeling male slave asking ‘Am I not a Man and a Brother?’ they used the symbol of a female slave asking ‘Am I not a Woman and a Sister?’ In effect it was the information, confidence, sense of the world and understanding gained in the work of things like the Underground Railroad and welfare work with escaped slaves which gave a great push to the development of the feminist movement. Lucretia, as a Quaker, was involved in both the bitter splits among American Friends in the early nineteenth century but she also knew that women were ostensibly equal to men in the Society of Friends and could run their own affairs and make sensible decisions and speak in public. She always urged women not to use the excuse of their naturally softer voices as a reason not to develop public speaking skills. And it is strange, looking at her life, that she unlike many women of that era depended not on her pen, though she was a tireless letter-writer, but on her voice. She didn’t prepare her speeches but simply trusted to ‘the Spirit’ to tell her what to say when she stood up on a platform.

Women faced heckling, disruption, and even physical violence whenever they spoke in public. At a feminist convention in New York mobs of young men were stirred to fever pitch. ‘In the audience were many who regarded Lucretia Mott’s own self-possession as a beautiful sight. For if the mob had been asked to pick a single target for their rage, it might indeed have been the small figure in gray. Called the Black Man’s Goddess for her pioneering role in the antislavery movement, a religious liberal often attacked as a heretic anti-sabbatarian, sometimes even called a socialist, Lucretia Mott was the very symbol of those meddling reformers and “rampant, unsexed women” the *Herald* thundered against and whom the Rynders mob was determined to silence.’

Although she is referred to as a feminist and an abolitionist her ideas on society were much broader than specific problems. During a recession she said, asking for radical reform, ‘We are all full of anxiety and pity; still this is an unavoidable result of overtrading in borrowed capital, low credits, bank discounts etc, as any natural consequence of violation of physical laws. Strange it is that sound philosophy should not be brought to bear upon mercantile proceedings as upon every other branch of natural science ... There is a need for preachers against the existing monopolies and banking institutions, by which the rich are made richer, and the poor, poorer ... It is contrary to the spirit of this Republic that any should be so rich ... It is not enough to be generous, and give alms; the enlarged soul, the true philanthropist, is compelled by Christian principle to look beyond the bestowing of a scant pittance to the mere beggar of the day, to the duty of considering the causes and sources of poverty.’

Although she did not travel far during her life, except a visit to England and Ireland, poets such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, radicals such as William Lloyd Garrison, ex-slaves such as Sojourner Truth, writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, and politicians such as Henry Wilson and Andrew Jackson, came to her. In Britain she met with, among others, Daniel

O’Connell, Lady Byron, Thomas Clarkson, Elizabeth Fry and Amelia Opie; at first she wasn’t taken seriously—what did an American have that might make her worth listening to?—but gradually people came to appreciate her gifts and the person she was. She did not always see a problem until it was pointed out by someone (such as violence against the Native American people or segregation on the streetcars of Philadelphia) but once she saw it her first response was what can be done to end it. Her list of involvements was huge, from providing aged care to coloured people to the fledgling peace movement, from the infinite pains she took to help and support her family, travelling Friends and even total strangers, to her deep belief that it was only in dependence on the Spirit as the source and well-spring of faith that changes could come about in people’s hearts and minds and thence in society as a whole. Everything she struggled for: the abolition of slavery, suffrage, equal pay, an end to discrimination, poverty and neglect, the creation of peace and harmony, she believed could not be imposed but were the natural growth of a good life lived in obedience to the Spirit. Her courage and endless hard work and struggle against her own ill-health so that she could help others are inspiring. She refused to allow the failure of the body to dim the light of the soul.

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‘The Cetaceans hold an important lesson for us. The lesson is not about whales and dolphins, but about ourselves. There is at least moderately convincing evidence that there is another class of intelligent beings on earth besides ourselves. They have behaved benignly and in many cases affectionately towards us. We have systematically slaughtered them.

‘It is at this point that the ultimate significance of dolphins in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence emerges. It is not a question of whether we are emotionally prepared in the long run to confront a message from the stars. It is whether we can develop a sense that beings with quite different evolutionary histories, beings who may look far different from us, even “monstrous,” may, nevertheless, be worthy of friendship and reverence, brotherhood and trust. We have far to go; while there is every sign that the human community is moving in this direction, the question is, are we moving fast enough? The most likely contact with extraterrestrial intelligence is with a society far more advanced than we. But we will not at any time in the foreseeable future be in the position of the American Indians or the Vietnamese—colonial barbarity practiced on us by a technologically more advanced civilization—because of the great spaces between the stars and what I believe is the neutrality or benignness of any civilization that has survived long enough for us to make contact with it. Nor will the situation be the other way around, terrestrial predation on extraterrestrial civilizations—they are too far away from us and we are relatively powerless. Contact with another intelligent species on a planet of some other star—a species biologically far more different from us than dolphins and whales—may help us to cast off our baggage of accumulated jingoisms, from nationalism to human chauvinism. Though the search for extraterrestrial intelligence may take a very long time, we could not do better than to start with a program of rehumanization by making friends with the whales and the dolphins.’

‘The Cosmic Connection’ by Carl Sagan.

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August 2<sup>nd</sup> : Isabel Allende

August 3<sup>rd</sup> : P. D. James

Ernie Pyle

Leon Uris

August 4<sup>th</sup> : Tim Winton

August 5<sup>th</sup> : Ted Hughes

August 6<sup>th</sup> : Mary Friedrichs

Louella Parsons

‘Rolf Boldrewood’

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cherished by their husbands. Henry's foreign wives all suffered; Anne of Denmark had to pretend to not notice her husband's male favourites, while Catherine of Braganza, Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen and Alexandria of Denmark had to pretend to not notice their husbands' endless female favourites and the large numbers of illegitimate heirs they had sired; Henrietta Maria had to hasten back to France when Charles I ran foul of Parliament and lost his head; James II's Mary of Modena was slandered by people who claimed she had had a baby smuggled in to her confinement room and then faced the long humiliating years of exile; George I kept his wife in prison and his successors were not noted for their loving kindness to the wives they brought to England. George IV denied his wife even the most basic of courtesies, let alone the right to be treated as Queen, and probably married her bigamously. It would have been surprising if the Establishment had given Edward VIII's choice a warm welcome. They didn't have many runs on the board ...

There was a degree of snobbishness in society, and perhaps a natural wish for Edward VIII to take an English wife, but they would actually have got better taste with Wallis than with Elizabeth.

'... sad, isn't it, the idea of some great lumping colonial at Hampton!'

'Simply tragic!' said Davey. 'Poor Mountdores, I do feel for them.'

'... and some American gets it all.'

'Australian, I heard. Imagine an Australian at Hampton, sad when you come to think of it.'

From *Love in a Cold Climate* by Nancy Mitford.

But the question that intrigued me was that hoary old claim that still pops up: that Wallis was a German spy. Yet the 'evidence' brought forward 'wouldn't hang a cat' as the saying goes.

1. That she had access to Cabinet documents. Edward was said to be careless with papers. But Wallis wasn't a reader. She read magazines and some history and biography to make her better-informed. But it is difficult to picture her ploughing through great quantities of turgid bureaucratise so that she could say to the Italian Ambassador over dinner "I see the Hoare-Laval agreement seems to be meeting some resistance in Cabinet". I also happen to believe that Cabinet documents, except in exceptional circumstances, should not be secret anyway. Cabinet Ministers are there to serve us not hide their machinations away for thirty years.

2. That she met Hitler and other Nazis. She spent less than two weeks in Germany and as she didn't speak German she was dependent on an interpreter or Germans with a knowledge of English. As their visit was carefully planned and organised it is hard to see very much significance in any aspects of it.

3. That the Windsors's house in Paris wasn't looted during the War. As the house was only rented and as the Windsors had taken all their valued possessions to the Bahamas it is hard to see why the Nazis would want to bother carrying away some heavy French furniture of no great value along with a few curtains and light fittings.

4. That the Windsors were approached in Portugal. The attempt by the Nazis to kidnap or at least persuade the Windsors to stay in Europe was a complete debacle. I have never come across the smallest suggestion that Wallis instigated, approached, contacted, or organised their brief stay in such a way that she could collect or pass on information.

5. That she had affairs with one or two high-ranking Nazi officers. Wallis clearly had a taste for the mysterious and the melodramatic. Her relationship with the homosexual Jimmy Donahue showed her love of sailing close to the wind—rather than her love of sex. But there is in fact no evidence to suggest that she had affairs with anyone, not even Edward before their marriage; in fact I am inclined to see her as the kind of woman who isn't very interested in sex and prefers to replace it with other kinds of activities, including eating, entertaining, dancing, travel, clothes, and light witty flirtatious gossip. If she had been born twenty years later she might have been the kind of woman who flew solo round the world but she doesn't fit the profile of a woman who gained what she wanted in life by sex. And if she'd had affairs with all

the men attributed to her she would have been too worn out to hold dinner parties and the shops would have overflowed with kiss-and-tell biographies ...

6. And that the FBI kept a file on her. J. Edgar Hoover kept files on almost everyone. When an obscure professor at the University of Colorado, Howard Higman, said that the Russians could have built the Bomb without help from atomic spies in the USA Hoover began to keep a file on him. "In 1991, when he obtained his partially censored FBI file under the Freedom of Information Act, the professor was astounded to find that it totaled some 6,000 pages, covered many years, and included investigations not only of him but of his children." Hoover simply collected everything, gossip, rumour, hearsay, opinion, and fact. At the other end of the line Germany's war time files have been ploughed through, picked over, studied minutely, by a huge variety of people, from historians to lawyers to politicians to ordinary people seeking compensation or information. No one has ever found so much as a memo from Wallis, let alone material sourced from her. I think if there was something it would've been found by now.

People spy for money, for ideology, for love, because they are being blackmailed, even occasionally because they believe everyone should have equal access to secret knowledge. Wallis doesn't fit any of these motivations in a practical or a psychological sense. Nor does she really fit the physical profile. She was a perfectionist. She paid inordinate and time-consuming attention to the tiniest details. She was a very tense and fastidious person. She suffered from stomach ulcers.

Charles Higham in his biography *Wallis* suggests that if she spied for anyone then it would have been the Americans (he also flirts with the idea she spied for Russia) where she had close connections through family and friends to people in the intelligence community. But no hint has ever surfaced there either. There is a further suggestion which has never been seriously considered and that is that she spied for the French. She loved French fashion, French food, French chic, the French lifestyle; she endeavoured to learn the language; she lived half her life there by choice. This makes more sense as a psychological explanation. But I don't believe it either. I think it has suited various people to throw mud without needing to provide any actual evidence other than innuendo. I think it did hurt her in her lifetime, though she had many pleasant consolations, but more importantly it is a reminder of the way that innuendo can be recycled endlessly, constantly garnering new scraps of innuendo along the way ... and innuendo can be far harder to deal with than an outright accusation.

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Phillip Knightley in *The Second Oldest Profession* notes that the CIA was spending \$1,500,000,000 a year and the National Security Agency around \$3,500,000,000 a year when he wrote his book; the KGB was estimated at \$1,650,000,000 per year; Britain was officially spending £92,000,000 (and unofficially £300,000,000) on SIS and MI5 which doesn't include its various other agencies ... "Britain's intelligence community must come to at least £600,000,000 a year". Given that Frederick Forsyth wrote of the CIA and I am sure that this is now true of most intelligence services "the CIA had computerized masses of its most covert files, confiding its innermost secrets to the most insecure tool ever invented" ordinary citizens might well ask whether intelligence is really worth the name let alone the cost.

More to the moment Knightley wrote, "That leaves us with the spy who is generally considered to have been most important to the Soviets and most damaging to the West, Klaus Fuchs. Fuchs, a refugee from Hitler, who had arrived in Britain in 1933, had been shipped to a Canadian internment camp in 1940. In 1942 he was brought back to Britain to work on the British atomic bomb programme and two years later was seconded to the American project where he worked in Chicago, New York and Los Alamos. He returned to Britain in 1946. In 1949 CIA cryptographers, working routinely through a mass of coded material stolen in 1944 from the New York offices of the Soviet Government Purchasing Commission, a known front for industrial espionage, came across Fuchs' name on a report about progress at Los Alamos. It was passed to MI5, Fuchs was interrogated and on 10 February 1950 confessed—on the

promise, later broken, of a light sentence—to passing classified information to Soviet agents in Britain and the United States.

Fuchs' spying breaks down into four periods. In the first period, from early 1942 to December 1943, he was working with Professor Rudolf Peierl's team at Birmingham University. Fuchs told the Soviet Union that Britain considered an atomic bomb to be a definite possibility, that similar work was being done in the United States, and that there was collaboration between the two countries. He gave his Soviet contact carbon copies of his own calculations on the theory of the gaseous diffusion process for separating isotopes of uranium, and his conclusion that uranium 235 produced in this way might be used in an atomic bomb.

It is unlikely then, given the state of nuclear knowledge in the Soviet Union in 1940-1, that Fuchs' information would have been either new or important to Russian scientists, except in so far as it confirmed what Flyorov had deduced from the absence of papers on nuclear fission in scientific journals: Western scientists were working on an atomic bomb. Fuchs himself noted that his Soviet contact was in no way surprised to hear that Britain and the United States were working on an atomic bomb. In fact, the Soviet contact surprised Fuchs by asking him what he knew about electromagnetic techniques for separating uranium 235. Fuchs knew nothing of any work on this method and had never considered it. The conclusion must be that, at this stage, the Soviet Union was already studying the technical problems of producing an atomic bomb.

During the second period, from December 1943 to August 1944, Fuchs was a member of the British Diffusion Mission. In this capacity, he learned a good deal more about the American programme, in particular its general scale and effort. In the third period, from August 1944 to the summer of 1946, Fuchs was at Los Alamos. There he realized for the first time the full nature and magnitude of the American atomic energy programme. He wrote a report for his Soviet contact summarizing the whole problem of making an atomic bomb as he then saw it. He later gave the contact a sketch of the American test bomb and its components and all the important dimensions. But there was other, equally crucial, information such as details of production, of pile design, construction and operation, that he did not know and could not have passed on to his Soviet contact.

In the fourth period, while working at Harwell atomic energy research establishment, Berkshire, Britain, from the summer of 1946 to the spring of 1949, Fuchs filled in the picture of the plutonium bomb that he had already given the Russian from Los Alamos and provided mathematical details, such as the blast calculators of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. He also described the ideas in Los Alamos on the design and method of operation of a super bomb which were current at the time he left.

The Soviet Union has never acknowledged that it received *any* information from Fuchs, a surprising omission considering the propaganda mileage it could have gained from using him as an example of the 'international attitude which should inspire all nuclear scientists'. This lack of recognition means, however, that there is little indication in Soviet sources of what actually happened to Fuchs' reports. David Holloway says that his extensive researches leave the issue unclear except for the following item. 'In one of his confessions Fuchs noted that questions had come back to him from the Soviet Union about the derivation of the Bethe-Feynman formula for estimating bomb efficiency. Fuchs had passed on the formula, which was basically a heuristic device, and evidently it had reached the appropriate Soviet physicists.

As to Fuchs' value to the Russians, Holloway cannot reach a positive conclusion. He says Fuchs did provide potentially useful information. Some of this the Soviet scientists already knew, or else they would have discovered it: 'But I think it is hard to dismiss it as worthless, especially as it gave the Soviet authorities some indication of what the American's were up to. The estimates I have (from scientists who worked with Fuchs) suggest that he might have saved the Russians as much as a year or eighteen months in building the atomic bomb.

We do, however, have Fuchs' own assessment of what help he had been to the Soviet



Union. This should, of course, be treated with caution, but the Harwell scientist who took down Fuchs' confession felt obliged to note that he seemed to be 'trying his best to help me evaluate the present position of atomic energy works in Russia in the light of information that he had, and had not, passed to them,' Fuchs claimed that he had been extremely surprised that the Russian explosion had taken place so soon as he had been convinced that *the information he had given could not have been applied so quickly* (my emphasis), and that the Russians would not have had the engineering design and construction facilities that would be needed to build large production plants in such a short time.

To sum up: the atomic spies, unforgiveable though their treachery might have been, did not give the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union."

The image in this is of a man without loyalties; denied his own country by Hitler, unwanted in Britain until it suddenly occurred to someone that he might be useful (and if it hadn't then it seems quite likely he would have lived out the war in that internment camp); in other words, to use words like loyalty and treason in this context begs the question of what they really mean to someone who is essentially stateless and unwanted ...

But Fuchs, though he does seem to have believed along with Niels Bohr that atomic knowledge is safest and best when shared among scientists everywhere, is very much an illustration of the way a spy is made—in childhood and youth. 'Give me a man before he is twenty and I will define his loyalties for evermore' to paraphrase the Jesuits ...

Brenda Bailey in her book about her parents *A Quaker Couple in Nazi Germany* wrote:

'Emil's eldest son, Klaus Fuchs, later became a renowned physicist. He is remembered in the West as a traitor who disclosed the secrets of the atomic bomb to the Russians.

Yearly Meeting in 1939 ended with a personal tragedy for Emil Fuchs when his 30-year-old daughter, Elizabeth Kittowski, committed suicide by jumping out of a moving railway carriage soon after the train had left the Pymont station. Emil had been holding her by the hand because he knew she was very depressed. The train was very crowded and they walked along the carriage to look for a seat. The train jolted, he lost his balance and let go of her hand. In an instant she had opened the carriage door and had thrown herself out. The train was stopped and Emil and Friends who were with him, brought her body back to Pymont. Mary and Leonhard and the Pymont Friends supported Emil through these difficult days.

Emil Fuchs was such an inspiration to Friends and was especially close to Mary and Leonhard. He had been born in 1874 and died, aged 97, in East Germany in 1971. As a young man he had been a Lutheran Pastor, in contact with Quakers since their relief work activities in the twenties, but he did not actually join Friends until 1933. He was a short man with sparkling eyes and a small expressive mustache, and had a loving personality which drew people to him. Emil was a gifted Bible scholar, who knew how to present the old stories whilst drawing attention to contemporary problems. In 1931 he became Professor of Divinity at Kiel University. This was the year of his wife's suicide. His daughter Elizabeth had found her mother dead on the kitchen floor and was profoundly affected by the experience.

In 1933 Emil was dismissed from his Professorship at Kiel because he had been an active Social Democrat and refused to sign the Nazi loyalty oath. He was then interrogated for five weeks and subsequently re-arrested several times. From then on he had great difficulty in earning a living. He and his four young adult children, Elizabeth, Klaus, Kristel and Gerhardt, decided to resist the Nazis through the Communist Party. For security reasons the family decided they would be safer if they took themselves and young Klaus, Elizabeth's orphan child, by running a car hire business. This provided an income as well as being a useful means of escape for the people Gerhardt was helping. Eventually Gerhardt himself had to flee abroad.

Emil's daughter Elizabeth had married Klaus Kittowski, a Communist who at the time of the Yearly Meeting in 1939 was in prison. A number of Friends had noticed her deep depression. She had named her baby Klaus, born 1934, after her husband, but it was also the name of her brother Klaus Fuchs, who had already emigrated to Bristol, and Emil's middle name. Little Klaus was left at home while Elizabeth and Emil attended Yearly Meeting.

Unfortunately the child's father died in prison and so the orphaned child became Emil's responsibility. The other daughter, Kristel Heineman, had gone to Pendle Hill, the Quaker centre in America in 1936, and later married an American.

Not long after Elizabeth's death Gerhardt and his wife had to go into hiding in Czechoslovakia. He eventually died of TB in a Swiss sanatorium. Emil was alone with young Klaus, without a secure home, income or employment. He was greatly helped by a Quaker family, Curt and Charlot Nuthmann, and earned some money by writing a Christian Socialist newsletter which was sent to subscribers by post. With the help of the Nuthmanns, Emil was free to undertake pastoral care among the scattered Quaker groups all over Germany and gave encouragement to those who had sorrow in their homes.

Eventually Emil agreed Klaus should be evacuated from the heavy bombing of Berlin to a village in the mountains. Emil joined him there in 1943. Emil's faith remained unbroken throughout these terrible times. He experienced great sadness through the broken lives of his children, but it was his grandson, Klaus, who sustained him. After the war Emil wrote that at last the dark depression had left him, but not the pain.

Emil's son Klaus Fuchs had been studying physics at the University of Goettingen, until his Communist activities made it too dangerous for him to remain in Germany. In February 1933, after the Reichstag had gone up in flames, he fled to Paris and was helped by the Quaker Refugee Centre there. He later found a home with a family in Bristol, where he resumed his Communist connections. It seemed for him the only way to fight Nazism. He was able to continue studies in physics at Bristol University, and went on to do research work for Britain's atomic weapons programme. In 1940 he was interned as an enemy alien and evacuated to Canada. In 1941, at the request of Max Born, another German physicist with Quaker connections, he was brought back to Britain to resume atomic research.

By 1943 Klaus Fuchs, who had become one of Britain's most promising scientists, was transferred to atomic research in America at Los Alamos, New Mexico. After some time there, he renewed his contacts with the Russian spy ring. Like his father, he had very high principles, and could not be bribed into betraying secrets. However, he became convinced that the world would be a safer place if the Russians also had the knowledge of how to manufacture the atomic bomb. In 1946 he was invited to return to Britain, joining the atomic research team at Harwell. In January 1950, having spent several years passing highly sensitive technical information to the Soviets, he was arrested and tried as a spy. Before this he had already begun to question his own actions, which he later described as arising from a kind of 'controlled schizophrenia'. At his trial he was found guilty of espionage and sentenced to 14 years imprisonment. On his release in 1959, at the age of 48, he was particularly distressed to discover his betrayal had deprived him of the British nationality which he prized so highly. Though a brilliant scientist, he seems to have been naïve and totally misunderstood the effects of his actions. When he came out of prison he chose to go to East Germany, to live in Dresden with his father and young Klaus Kittowski.

After the war Emil lived for some years in West Germany. However at the age of 75 he was offered an attractive Professorship at Leipzig University which gave him time to follow his interests in education. As a life-long socialist he identified with Communist East Germany, and left the capitalist system of the West. He remained a Quaker to the end, though his support for his son Klaus Fuchs and the high regard of the East German government for the family may at times have caused a certain distance between him and the fifty Quakers in the GDR. Emil became a founder member of the Prague Christian Peace Conference, to which some Friends in Britain and Europe also devoted a great deal of energy during the Cold War period.'

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Robert Milliken wrote in *No Conceivable Injury*, 'Walter MacDougall was born near Melbourne in 1907, the son of a Presbyterian minister, and he died in Melbourne 69 years later after spending an extraordinary life among the Aborigines of central Australia. It was in the

Kimberley region of northwest Australia that MacDougall began working with Aborigines as a lay Presbyterian missionary in the 1930s. He married a schoolteacher deaconess and they spent their honeymoon riding on camels through the Kimberleys. Later the MacDougalls moved to another mission, Ernabella, in the Musgrave Ranges of South Australia, about 200 kilometres north of Emu Field. Britain already had a military interest in South Australia dating from 1947, when the Woomera rocket range was set up to test British guided missiles. Two anthropologists, Charles Duguid and Donald Thomson, had argued strongly that movement of whites into the proposed Woomera range would have disastrous consequences for the black inhabitants, and in response to such representations the Australian authorities had decided somewhat reluctantly to appoint a native patrol officer. MacDougall, with his unique experience from the Kimberleys and Ernabella, where he had learned some Aboriginal dialects, got the job.

‘From the start, MacDougall had to fight with the authorities even to get his own vehicle to patrol the huge range. Later, he was reprimanded when he attended to sick Aborigines living on cattle stations just outside the Woomera prohibited zone. His superiors told him somewhat loftily that he should confine his work to the blacks within the range area. MacDougall replied tersely: ‘I consider it part of my duty to defend them wherever the need arises.’

‘He was a tall, extremely thin man with ginger hair and the sort of snow-white skin totally unsuitable for exposure to the cruel sun of the Australian outback. He would often spend weeks on end travelling between settlements with only his silky terrier dog for Company. A loner by nature, he appeared shy and retiring to many who knew and worked with him. But MacDougall was never more at home than when he was spending time on some remote settlement with the Aborigines whose interests he considered almost his own personal property, and his blue eyes would flash with anger whenever some ignorant official back in Woomera or Canberra disagreed with his advice.

‘It was while he was working in the Kimberleys that he accidentally shot the thumb and forefinger off his right hand with a Winchester rifle. This earned him another name from the Aborigines — *mara pika*: sick hand. MacDougall adapted to writing by learning to hold a pen between his remaining fingers, and he would spend his evenings writing long, detailed and learned reports about how the Aborigines lived and warning of the threat to their future posed by the incursion of white miners, soldiers, scientists, weathermen and others involved with such projects as mineral prospecting and the atomic bomb tests — reports which, for the most part, were ignored in Canberra and never seen in London. Here is MacDougall writing in 1950 in one of those reports about the significance of tribal lands to the Aborigines:

The country that each tribal Aborigine looks upon as peculiar to his family is important to both his domestic and secret life. It is his birth place — his spirit’s home. He believes that ceremonies within its boundaries and certain places are necessary for his existence, to ensure the continued supply of game and foodstuffs on which his life depends. If deprived of this by force, he is likely to die of homesickness. If he leaves it voluntarily, he quickly degenerates into the useless outcast seen, among other places, along the east-west line [the railway linking eastern and western Australia]. In fact, he becomes detribalised. Because the law as we know it gives him nothing to take the place of tribal law and culture, he becomes useless to himself or to anyone else.

‘There were two places, in particular, where Aborigines lived on which the impact of the atomic bomb tests was profound and lasting. The first was Ooldea, a settlement on the east-west railway line about 40 kilometres south of Maralinga itself. This was where William Tietkens, the explorer, had first encountered Aborigines in the 1870s near what was to become the Maralinga test site and had witnessed their colourful tribal corroborees. By the early 1950s, Ooldea had become a very different place. The United Aborigines’ Mission, a Christian fundamentalist group, had set up a settlement there in the 1930s in a bid to evangelise the local Aborigines. Daisy Bates, the eccentric Irish writer and adventurer, had gone earlier to live among the Ooldea Aborigines and provided them with clothes and food, although she refused to have anything to do with the missionaries. The attraction of food brought Aborigines in large

numbers into Ooldea from traditional tribal grounds to the north. It became a harsh place, plagued by sandstorms and water shortages. By the early 1950s, many of the aborigines had lost their confidence or incentive to return to their old hunting grounds and were reduced to begging along the railway line or to selling curios to travelers whenever the transcontinental trains stopped briefly at Ooldea to take on water.

'In June 1952, the United Aborigines' Mission, as a result of a dispute within their own ranks, decided to close down their mission at Ooldea. In the meantime the state government of South Australia had bought some land on a former sheep station at Yalata, about 120 kilometres south of Ooldea, and it now asked the Lutheran Church to take over Yalata as a mission station for the Aborigines from Ooldea. Yalata was to become a disaster for the Aborigines in every respect. It was just off the Eyre Highway, the main road linking east and west Australia, and much closer to the corrupting influences of white society along the South Australian coast. The ravages of alcohol at Yalata were to become appalling. It was also outside the tribal lands of the Pitjantjatjara people, who comprised the majority of the Aborigines at Ooldea when it closed. Most of them wanted to go north, into the 'red sand' of the Pitjantjatjara land around Maralinga which many of them had known as children, not south into the 'grey sand' of a place like Yalata with which they had no affinity.

'This was in June 1952, four months before the first atomic test at Monte Bello, when the British were already secretly discussing the need for a permanent land test site in central Australia. Ooldea's closure was the result of other events: the missionaries' disputes and the government's belief for some time that the Aborigines should be moved away from the harsh environment and the public gaze along the railway line. But there is little doubt that Ooldea would have had to be closed once the decision was made to set up the test sites at Emu Field and Maralinga and the atomic bomb trials started. One British cable at the time described as a 'hitch' the fact that the proposed prohibited bomb trial zone overlapped the Ooldea Aboriginal reserve. The state government of South Australia quickly acquiesced with a later request from Howard Beale, the Australian minister for supply, to revoke its control over the reserve so the bomb tests could take place.

'Two anthropologists, Maggie Brady and Kingsley Palmer, spent several weeks in early 1985 gathering evidence to be presented at the Australian royal commission from the Aborigines who used to live at Ooldea. Brady and Palmer reported:

The closure of the Ooldea mission came as a shock, as there was virtually no knowledge among Aborigines that an argument was brewing over their future ... There is no doubt that the sudden closure of Ooldea was a traumatic experience. Aborigines described being split up, cut up into groups, not knowing where to go, wailing and crying.

'Some actually got on the train in a bid to go to places north of Maralinga like Ernabella, where they knew there could be work, but MacDougall, for whatever reason, persuaded them to return. A year after the enforced move to Yalata, the distress and unhappiness among the Aborigines there so convinced the new secretary of the Aboriginal Protection Board, a man named Bartlett, of their desire to go back to Ooldea that he planned to return them there. This produced a stern cable from the range superintendent to the authorities at Woomera warning them of Bartlett's plan and asking that it be stopped: 'Return of Abos to Ooldea would be undesirable in their own interests and it could be a serious embarrassment to us'.

'But it was MacDougall, in one of his many detailed reports, who captured the resignation, apathy and sense of defeat that had set in among the Aborigines at Yalata by 1954, by which time their tribal lands to the north were about to become a full-scale atomic weapons testing ground:

Secret life significance has ended, mainly due to lack of interest shown by the young people and opposition to it by the missionaries. Owing to the fact that there are many of their relatives buried at Ooldea, and that it is the actual birth place of many of them, also that many of them spend their childhood days at the soak [water hole],

there is a strong sentimental attachment ... They all — young and old — have become dependent on government rations and easily obtained water supplies, and they consider the difficult conditions north of Ooldea as too hard even to contemplate.

The tragedy that was imposed on the Aboriginal people has effectively never come to an end; no one knows for sure how many of them died from exposure to the blast and radioactive fall-out; nor has their land ever been truly cleaned up. Nor was anything gained from the tests: it did not help either Britain or Australia in their diplomatic, social, or economic lives; there were no useful spinoffs; the taxpayers asked to foot the (ineffective) clean up bill gained nothing from the bomb blasts.

The two things pushing the atomic bomb programs—British desire to continue to be seen to be a great power—

—‘We persist in regarding ourselves as a Great Power, capable of everything and only temporarily handicapped by economic difficulties. We are not a Great Power and never will be again. We are a great nation, but if we continue to behave like a Great Power we shall soon cease to be a great nation. Let us take warning from the fate of the Great Powers of the past and not burst ourselves with pride (see Aesop’s fable of the frog).’ Sir Henry Tizard 1949—

—and Australia’s sycophantic desire to be seen as a good friend to Britain—must surely be two of the most puerile reasons for spreading disease, contamination, and misery to Australia’s indigenous people that anyone has ever come up with!

‘It was at this stage, even before the first bomb was built, that the first abortive bid was made to control the spread of nuclear weapons. It came through Niels Bohr, the brilliant if diffident Danish scientist whose crucial article on the eve of the Second World War had explained the fundamentals of uranium fission. Bohr had stayed in Denmark after it was occupied by Germany in 1940, but had conducted a clandestine correspondence with Chadwick who was keen for him to join the British atomic work. By late 1943, when it was clear that Bohr and his family were in danger of arrest, they were smuggled out of Denmark. Bohr himself arrived in England hidden in the empty bomb rack of a Misquito bomber. He was astounded to learn how far and how fast the Americans and British had moved towards making a bomb, and he now became one of the first scientists to grasp the real meaning of the atomic bomb for the future of the world.

‘Bohr realised that unless, even now, atomic energy was placed under some form of international control, the implications could be horrendous. He became desperate to see Churchill and Roosevelt. At first Churchill refused to see him. The prime minister had other preoccupations: the Allied invasion of Europe was imminent and, besides, Churchill had a somewhat lofty disdain for scientists, even those as outstanding as Bohr, getting involved with politics.

(The reverse did not necessarily hold: with the atomic bomb, it was the politicians and their advisers in the military and the civil service who were rapidly taking over the labours of science.)

‘Among those who implored Churchill to give Bohr a hearing, however brief, was Sir Henry Dale, president of the Royal Society, the most prestigious scientific body in the country. Dale had been a member of the original Tube Alloys consultative council, and he wrote Churchill an impassioned letter putting the question in the starkest possible terms: ‘I cannot avoid the conviction that science is approaching the realization of a project which may bring either disaster or benefit on a scale hitherto unimaginable to the future of mankind.’

‘Dale’s entreaty worked, for it helped to persuade Churchill to receive Niels Bohr in May 1944. The meeting was a disaster. Churchill did not want to hear Bohr’s fundamental argument: that the Russians would inevitably build their own bomb after the war; that this would lead to a terrifying arms race; and that one way of avoiding this would be to take the Russians into confidence about the Manhattan Project, so the problems of future control of atomic weapons could be confronted here and now — to wait until after the war, when the

fragile Soviet-Western alliance would surely disintegrate, would be too late.

‘This argument was anathema to Churchill, who already regarded the Russians with the gravest suspicion. It simply lacked political realism. Moreover, Bohr’s manner irritated Churchill. Indeed, Sir Henry Dale’s worst fear—that Bohr’s ‘mild, philosophical vagueness of expression and his inarticulate whisper’ may fail to make an impact on the prime minister — proved to be right. As Bohr took his leave, depressed and demoralized, he asked gingerly if he could write to Churchill and explain his views further. The prime minister replied that, of course, he would always be honoured to receive a letter from Professor Bohr, as long as it was not about politics.

‘Bohr fared somewhat better with Roosevelt, whom he met three months later, in August 1944. The president was not as cursory as Churchill, and listened to Bohr for an hour and a half. He shared the professor’s concern about the political problems raised by the bomb; Bohr’s spirits lifted immensely when Roosevelt undertook to raise with Churchill the possibility of an early approach to the Russians about it.

‘In fact, just the opposite happened. When Churchill and Roosevelt met in America the following month, they signed another accord, known as the Hyde Park Agreement, which consolidated the secrecy surrounding the atomic bomb.’

The idea of sharing atomic secrets has always been anathema to the world’s leaders ... and yet there is a very good reason why it should have been, and still should be done. Every nation which has tested atomic bombs has done so on land owned by indigenous, tribal, remote, usually poor, and largely powerless peoples. The Americans in the remote Native American and small farming communities of its arid regions; the British on Aboriginal land; the French on Polynesian land, the Chinese in the remote areas of Turkestan; the Russians in the small communities east of the Ural Mountains; the Indians and Pakistanis in their remote tribal hinterlands. Whatever knowledge was gained, and I doubt if it was ever going to be information the world can’t live without, it was gained at the expense of people it was never intended to benefit.

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‘I have a certain regard for Hoover — fondness would be much too strong a word — because he was from Iowa, and so am I. Besides, you have to feel a little sorry for the poor man. He was the only person in American history for whom attaining the White House was a bad career move. Nowadays when people think of Hoover at all, it is as the man who gave the world the Great Depression. Hardly anyone remembers the half-century of remarkable, even heroic, achievements that preceded it.

Consider his CV: orphaned at eight, he put himself through college (he was in the first graduating class from Stanford University) and became a successful mining engineer in the western United States. He then went off to Australia, where he more or less started the mining industry in Western Australia — still one of the most productive regions in the world — and eventually ended up in London, where he became a vastly wealthy and influential pillar of the business community.

Such was his stature that at the outbreak of the First World War he was invited to join the British Cabinet, but declined and instead took on the job of directing famine relief throughout Europe, which he managed with such distinction that he is estimated to have saved ten million lives. By the end of the war he was one of the most admired and respected men in the world, known everywhere as the Great Humanitarian.

Returning to America, he became a trusted adviser to Woodrow Wilson, then served as Secretary of Commerce under Harding and Coolidge, where he oversaw a 58 per cent rise in American exports in eight years. When he ran for president in 1928, he was elected in a record landslide.

In March 1929 he was inaugurated. Seven months later Wall Street crashed and the economy went into freefall. Contrary to common belief, Hoover responded at once. He spent more money on public works and unemployment relief than all his predecessors combined,

provided \$500 million in assistance to troubled banks, even donated his own salary to charity. But he lacked the common touch and alienated the electorate by insisting repeatedly that recovery was just around the corner. In 1932 he was defeated as resoundingly as he had been elected four years before, and has been remembered ever since as an abject failure.’

Bill Bryson. *Notes from a Big Country*.

Goronwy Rees said of him, ‘President Hoover was a tragic example of an intelligent, high-minded, extremely able man who was hopelessly trapped by intellectual orthodoxies which no longer corresponded to reality’ and ‘because he was sensitive to criticism, and bitterly resented the charges of inhumanity made against him as one who would subsidize fodder for animals or fertilizers for crops but refused aid and assistance to human beings’ he became trapped in his own natural pessimism. ‘The White House became a mausoleum of Hoover’s hopes and beliefs. The domestic atmosphere became intolerably oppressive; visitors commented on the air of gloom and anxiety which pervaded it, and its staff rejoiced when the Hoovers were away. H.G. Wells, when he visited the President in 1930 found him ‘a sickly, over-worked and overwhelmed man’; meetings with him became ‘like sitting in a bath of ink’.’ ‘His name was used as a symbol of everything that was shoddiest and shabbiest about the depression, for Hoovervilles, Hoover blankets, Hoover wagons, Hoover handkerchiefs, all *ersatz* mimics which the unemployed substituted for the real thing’ ... ‘No one ever laboured harder or more conscientiously than Hoover for the wellbeing of the United States; no one failed quite so ingloriously. The White House has seen many personal tragedies, but perhaps none quite so complete as his.’

His childhood was a long struggle against poverty and loneliness. His father, a small-town blacksmith, died when he was six and his mother when he was nine. The children were split up and he was sent to an uncle. He eventually worked his way through Stanford University. His development as a mining engineer has a curious side to it. Brian Carroll says in *Australia’s Mines and Miners* ‘Herbert Hoover, the mining engineer destined to become President of the United States, visited Broken Hill in 1905, arranged to buy millions of tonnes of tailings on time payment, and formed the Zinc Corporation to treat them. He too got financial backing from W.L. Baillieu, as well as from sharebrokers Lionel Robinson and William Clark. The company had a series of ups and downs and changed its processes several times before it finally prospered.

‘Hoover had been to Australia before, in the 1890s, when he was a consulting engineer with the London firm of Bewick, Moreing & Co, which had strong connections on the Western Australian gold-fields. Quiet, ambitious, teetotal and a bachelor, Hoover was twenty-two when he arrived in Coolgardie in May 1897, fresh from Stanford University and the mining fields of the Rocky Mountains.

‘Hoover’s firm bought the Sons of Gwalia mine at Leonora, 160 km north of Kalgoorlie, partly on his advice, and installed him as manager. He did the job conservatively and well. Rather than rush into an expensive development programme, as other mine managers of the time were inclined to do, Hoover accumulated ore until he had 72000 tonnes ready for treatment, waited until the dam was full of water, and only then built a large mill to process his stockpile of ore.

‘By the time Hoover left, the Sons of Gwalia provided work for 100 miners and had a long life ahead of it.

‘The flotation process Hoover helped establish at Broken Hill improved steadily until in 1910, F.J. Lister, mill superintendent of the Zinc Corporation, developed a method for the selective flotation of zinc and silver-lead concentrates. Until then the various processes had been capable only of recovering the zinc in a mixture with what had been left over of the silver-lead from previous treatment of the ore.’

As Carter and Williams say in *Investment in Innovation*, ‘In mid-1929 Mr. Bernard Baruch said in an interview, ‘the economic condition of the world seems on the verge of a great forward movement’; in the autumn of that year Professor Irving Fisher thought that, ‘Stock

prices have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau'; in November the Harvard Economic Society went on record that 'a severe depression like that of 1920-21 is outside the range of probability'. ... Hoover was immensely effective in his relief programs in Europe not least because he had no economists and advisers telling him what to do and how to do it. As director of relief and rehabilitation in the post-war period he expanded existing programs eastward into famine-stricken Poland, the Ukraine, and Russia until it was providing food and clothing to 200 million people. He ran what was the single largest relief effort the world then had ever seen.

He was an intensely shy man, rather abrupt and tactless as shy people often are, but his marriage to Lou Henry was long and happy. He experienced the Boxer Rebellion in China as well as World War One. He brought the Marines home from Central America and Haiti. He wrote several books including a biography of Woodrow Wilson. He even tried his hand at poetry:

Enjoy thy stream, O harmless fish,  
And when an angler for his dish,  
Through gluttony's vile sin,  
Attempts, the wretch, to pull thee out,  
God give thee strength, O gentle trout,  
To pull the rascal in ...

But my curiosity is not so much with the question of whether Hoover deserves all the stick he received for his failure to turn around the American economy; given his continued faith in his economic advisers and their ideas about sound finance he was probably doomed anyway (and Roosevelt would have been equally doomed had he taken over in 1929 as he brought much the same attitudes, initially, to his position as Governor of New York; his great advantage was to see what *didn't* work, that the money men *didn't* know what to do and their prophecies had degenerated into wishful thinking)—but rather would history have been different if Hoover had still been president when Hitler came to power? I can only speculate. But Hoover did have a deep knowledge of Germany, whereas Roosevelt had almost none. Hoover was a non-interventionist but it seems unlikely that he would have followed an isolationist policy. His attitude to Europe was that America had a humanitarian, diplomatic, and commercial role to play there. How he would have seen that role is harder to predict but the very fact of close American interest and the possibility of America becoming involved in European politics might have provided some sort of check on Hitler.

While I was thinking on whether history would have been different if Roosevelt and Hoover could swap presidencies I found myself thinking: what if Edward VIII and Wallis *had* been on the throne in that period? I know assessments of her influence and personality tend to be deeply negative. But my own assessment of Wallis's impact had she become Queen is the exact opposite. I would even go so far as to say that had she been Queen there might not have been a World War II. Because she wasn't just a woman. *She was an American woman*. And her coronation would have been accompanied by a wild outpouring of excitement and fascination on the part of millions of American women. Some might feel it was a pity the King had chosen a twice-divorced woman (but then Hollywood stars did so too so it wasn't all *that* terrible) but she, in effect, would have become the embodiment of the dreams of millions of women and girls. And with that interest in every tiny aspect of her life as Queen would have come a wider interest in Britain and Europe and what was happening there. The American Government might have wanted to stand aside and say, it isn't our business, but bombs raining down on America's first Queen of England would have energised American women to demand that she be supported and listened to. Her politics were conservative in the extreme but she liked women and women usually liked her. As Queen she would have changed history.

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"When Victoria first acceded, and was under the genial influence of Melbourne, who had learned tolerance in as hard a school as man ever attended, there was every hope that the



English tradition in the court, still rather weak, would be strengthened and preserved. It might have been, in spite of Lehen, in spite of Uncle Leopold, in spite of the preference in literary and artistic circles, for German thought, German art, German poetry, German music and German scholarship over those of any other nation, even in spite of the cleavage, due largely to anti-Catholic bigotry, which had existed and grown since the expulsion of the Stuarts, between England and the civilized continent. One thing, however, was fatal: and that was the marriage of Victoria to Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Had the Prince-Consort been a bad man, or a stupider man, less of a bourgeois or a bit of a bounder (like the Queen's dreadful uncles) his influence on the English court might not have been so devastating; or again, had he lived longer, Victoria's loyalty to her husband might not have taken the unfortunate form of perpetuating all that was most tiresome in German principalities in the unsuitable setting of the English court. Prince Albert not only thoroughly Germanized; he also prevented that natural gaiety of her girlhood, which Melbourne encouraged, from developing into a sense of humour and of proportion. Sense of humour has been in and out of fashion since then; and it can often be inappropriate and rather trivial. It is, however, a necessary disinfectant in courts; for it alone will prevent seriousness from hardening into solemnity, and it enables the highborn to remember that dignity is a quality which should be permitted only a negative exhibition. A truly dignified person is only recognizable as such when his dignity unbends: a poker cannot be dignified, but merely stiff.

"For many years the English, and not only Society but the ordinary people, fought against the growing Germanization of English habits and conventions. Prince Albert was not popular, and though a good deal of his unpopularity was due to his good qualities, most of it came from the way in which he exercised his good qualities and his bad ones. The stiffening of etiquette, and the Queen's insistence, under Albert's tutelage, on its preservation on informal occasions was one cause of dissatisfaction; then Albert's knowledge of the English Constitution was from book-learning, and too logical for our statesmen; and there was a good deal of effort, due to meanness, to keep this disciplinarian out of things. Only the Queen's determination secured his admission and that grudgingly accorded and in secret as it were—to a share in public affairs. After Albert's death, his influence was even stronger than during his life. The Queen's morbid sentimentality, her Egyptian respect for the trappings and personal effects of the departed, her refusal to subdue private grief to public duties—all these had effects which put the Crown thoroughly out of favour. And still the royal personage was surrounded by a screen of adulation which only a very few (Henry Ponsonby was one, Randall Davidson was another) ever ventured to penetrate with the unwelcome weapon of plain speaking and good advice."

(H. L. Shepherd. His father was Chaplain at Windsor.)

Would an American influence at court have been more pernicious? As Noel Barber says of Wallis in *The Natives Were Friendly So We Stayed the Night*, "She was a perfectionist, with taste, with elegance, and with determination, and had the circumstances of their marriage been less distressing, I would have described her as the power behind the throne.

"Her taste, as I say, was impeccable. When the Windsors moved into the large old-fashioned house, the entrance hall was dominated by an unsightly statue of a horseman, an eyesore which could not be removed. Yet after a few weeks it seemed to have vanished. She had hidden it—disguised it—in such a manner that no one could guess the statue was still there. Of course she had the advantage of power and money. She could call on the best brains to advise her, but that does not detract from her intelligence, for she went to immense trouble to find out where the best brains were."

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'Larry Kramer had been in Europe for a month. In late July, in Munich, Germany, he was killing time; he had no idea what to do with himself. It was three years since that summer on Fire Island when he had talked to Enno Poersch about the mysterious disease haunting Enno's lover Nick. It was barely two years since he had held the first AIDS fund-raiser in his

apartment and organized the Gay Men's Health Crisis. Christ, it seemed like a lifetime ago, he thought. It was his life Before.

In Munich, Larry saw a sign that said "Dachau." He took the subway to a streetcar, which took him to a bus that made its way through the suburbs to the famous death camp.

"Dachau was opened in 1933," Larry read in the museum.

He stood there stunned. He had had no idea the camp had opened so early, just months after Adolf Hitler assumed power in Germany. World War II started for the United States in 1941, Larry thought.

"Where the fuck was everybody for eight years?" he wanted to shout. "They were killing Jews, Catholics, and gays for eight years and nobody did a thing."

In an instant, his fury turned to ice. He knew exactly how the Nazis could kill for eight years without anyone doing anything. Nobody cared. That was what was happening with AIDS. People were dying, and nobody cared.

As the anger rose again in Larry, he knew what he would do. That night, he jumped a plane to Boston. He quickly made his way to Cape Cod and spent his first night in the States at the Hyannisport Holiday Inn. Within a few days, everything fell into place. He found a cottage on the water and sat down to write a play that would force people to care."

(from *And the Band Played on*, by Randy Shilts; he writes 'By the time President Reagan had delivered his first speech on the epidemic of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, 36,058 Americans had been diagnosed with the disease; 20,849 had died.')

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'At the BBC's request, Mountbatten broadcast a tribute to the departed ex-king, in which he claimed, with silver-tongued mendacity, that 'He was more than my best man, he was my best friend all my life.' Following the Duke's death, he tried to take control of the disposal of his assets — but met his match in the Duchess's formidable lawyer, Maitre Suzanne Blum. Mountbatten also tried to persuade the Duchess to bequeath her money and possessions (including her legendary jewellery collection) to Prince Charles and other members of the royal family — including himself — but to no avail. Cruelly, he piled pressure on the increasingly sick and traumatized Duchess, who told a friend, 'He wanted me to make out a will right there and then, giving everything to David's family and of course some to himself. He had it all worked out, just where everything should go.' He wanted to set up a charitable foundation, to be headed by Charles, which would absorb the income from the Duke's estate, but failed in this too.'

From *War of the Windsors* by Picknett, Prince, and Prior.

I have seen it variously claimed that the Duke gave Wallis 'the Crown jewels', 'the family heirlooms', 'Alexandra's emeralds' and variations on that theme. Well, he certainly didn't give her the Crown jewels which are still on show at the Tower of London, nor did he give her the family jewels which are still hidden from prying eyes at Windsor Castle and other royal residences. Alexandra's emeralds are a more contentious claim because there is no agreement on what is meant by this phrase. Alexandra didn't bring family heirlooms from Denmark, nor did she casually give away anything that she acquired as Queen, but she did have a perfect right to pass on her own jewellery to anyone she wanted to give things to and her eldest grandson seems a perfectly logical candidate for such largesse and as he was not going to wear tiaras and necklaces himself it seems equally natural for him to give such things to his wife who in the normal way of things would have become queen. But I have come upon the suggestion that Alexandra did have a lovely collection of twenty-one emeralds given to her by her sister who had married the Tsar of Russia and therefore had access to precious stones, both old and new. If this is so it could be argued that these belonged to Alexandra, not to the British Royal Family, and she had a perfect right to do what she wanted with them. Whether her sister should have sent them out of Russia is a different matter.

In fact the phrase Crown Jewels is a very emotive one. It is also used without qualification to deal with the famous and mysterious theft in Ireland of that country's heritage.

Mark Bence-Jones in *Twilight of the Ascendancy* says that in May 1907: “Four days before the royal yacht was due to steam into Dublin bay, the diamond St Patrick Star and Badge worn by the Viceroy as Grand Master of the Order, together with other valuable insignia, were found to be missing. The door of the safe in the Office of Arms in Dublin Castle where they were kept was open and showed no sign of having been tampered with; the thief had obviously managed to get hold of the keys, which were in the custody of Sir Arthur Vicars, Ulster King of Arms. The missing Star and Badge, valued at £40,000 and the property of the Crown, were officially referred to as Crown Jewels which to the press and public made the crime appear even more sensational, as though crowns and sceptres had been stolen.”

The government offered a reward of £1,000. Dublin police and Scotland Yard investigated. The King wanted Vicars sacked. Vicars wanted an enquiry. He was eventually found guilty of negligence. But the story doesn't end there.

Sir Arthur was murdered at his Kerry home in 1921. The IRA disclaimed responsibility “giving rise to the belief that, like the death of Pierce Mahony, it was somehow connected with the theft of the Crown Jewels.” Mystery also surrounded the death of Pierce Mahoney. “On that Sunday, while the rifles were being unloaded at Howth, a search was going on at Pierce O'Mahoney's home in County Wicklow, Grangecon, for O'Mahoney's son Pierce Mahoney, the former Herald, who had been missing since the previous afternoon. He had planned to row across the lake to have tea with the neighbours on the other side; he had set off, taking a gun and cartridges with him, hoping to get some waterfowl on the way. But he had not turned up at the neighbours' house and the boat had not been taken out. Eventually his body was found lying in the water near the boathouse with the gun beside it. He had been shot through the heart, both barrels having been fired. The inquest called it an accident; people inevitably believed that he had been murdered because he knew too much about the theft of the Crown Jewels.”

Bence-Jones says, “Perhaps the most likely solution to the mystery is that the theft was an ‘inside job’, carried out by one of Vicars' three Heralds, who frequently stayed in his house so would have had easy access to his keys. Of the three, Mahoney is above suspicion; but one of the other two was a young man of extravagant tastes and doubtful character who some years later went to prison for fraud. That the police chose to ignore so obvious a suspect can be explained by his having frequented a clique of highplaced homosexuals who included Lord Ronald Gower, the uncle and close friend of the King's brother-in-law the Duke of Argyll. The theft of the jewels occurred only a couple of months after the homosexual scandal involving the Kaiser's friend Prince Eulenburg; it is possible that the King was determined at all costs to avoid a similar scandal in which his brother-in-law might have been involved.”

So what happened to the Irish ‘Crown Jewels’? Like the jewellery stolen from the Duchess of Windsor it has never resurfaced.

But when the great sale of Wallis Windsor's jewellery and personal belongings went ahead after her death in 1987 there was no sign of any emeralds. Wallis had some of her jewellery stolen when staying briefly in England in the 1950s and this jewellery has never been found. The theft remains mysterious. A Scotland Yard detective was on the premises. No stranger was seen in the vicinity. The dogs didn't bark. The Windsors were staying in an upstairs bedroom. The belief then, that it was an inside job, remains the most likely explanation. It doesn't precisely explain what an ‘inside job’ means. Was it the Duke and Duchess in an insurance scam or was it one of the guests? Were the jewels taken at the request of the Royal Family? Were they taken by a staff member with links to ...

C. C. Benison in *Death at Sandringham House* creates a corpse wearing the Duchess of Windsor's stolen tiara. ‘Oh, yes, the Alexandra emeralds,’ Her Majesty said drily, twisting her wedding ring. ‘A ridiculous story. My great-grandmother, Queen Alexandra, supposedly bequeathed my uncle David a collection of jewels, including emeralds, which he subsequently gave to Mrs. Simpson, as she was then. I don't know why this story has persisted. There are no “Alexandra emeralds”. Even if there were, it makes no sense to me that the Duchess would

have carried uncut stones from France to this country as part of her travelling collection. You can't wear uncut stones. And there would have been no other reason to bring them. As for the rumour that my family might have been involved in retrieving these fictional jewels, well, I can only say that it is utterly untrue."

Dennis Altman in *AIDS and the New Puritanism* quoted Dr David Harris of AID Atlanta: 'Many people in our community feel that whatever money is raised should automatically go to research. Whereas the sentiment is well-intentioned, it is naïve. To believe that the few thousand dollars that we raise in our community can even partially finance such a massive research effort is to ignore the facts ... Your money can better be used in lobbying efforts, such as the FARO lobbying project which is mandated to lobby for \$100 million for AIDS research.'

Wallis Windsor's jewellery collection, much of it bought by her doting husband from the world's most famous jewellers, was valued by Sotherbys at around £7 million before the sale. It was the notoriety and the public persona of Wallis as the woman for whom a king gave up his crown which boosted the price of every piece. The sale brought in more than \$50 million. Wallis had left everything to the Louis Pasteur Institute, the same organisation which identified the cause of AIDS and developed the first drugs to combat it. Wallis was villified by many as a greedy unscrupulous gold-digger. When AIDS becomes a thing of the past I hope that some recognition will be given to her as part of the process which made a cure possible.

Wallis was sent to a school whose motto was Gentleness and Courtesy; they are not really adjectives which cling to her although she was always a woman of her time and place. But one thing that has been overlooked is her wry sense of humour.

'When, however, Wallis says in her memoirs: 'Queen Mary had only to change her coat to start a new style' she is obviously having a quiet laugh to herself, because Queen Mary never changed her coat. She adhered to the fashion of her youth and though everyone liked her iron-clad appearance, long skirts, frizzled hair, waisted dresses and toques made of massed pansies, nobody would have dreamed of copying them, when the fashion was for the short, shapeless chiffon shift, shingled hair and the *cloche* hat' Diana Mosley says in *The Duchess of Windsor*. Nor was she expressing a philosophy when she said a woman can never to be too thin or too rich; in an era when the big busty blondes of Hollywood were every woman's ideal, to be small and thin and dark was to be *most* unfashionable. But she had the confidence to poke fun at the prevailing fashions.

*Switzerland 2 april 1987.* the first item, a jewelled clip, went for 70,000 Swiss francs, at least ten times its actual worth. "A lorgnette framed in diamonds sold for \$117,000; it wasn't worth a penny over \$5000. The modest cufflinks, coat buttons and studs of the Duke of Windsor went for \$400,000, at least forty times their actual value. When everybody finally trailed out two-by-two at the witching hour, the auction had already raised close to ten times what it should have. The next night, when Nicholas Rayner banged his gavel for the last time, the total sales were almost \$51 million." (Charles Higham in *Wallis*.)

If she had become Queen her jewels would have disappeared into a strong-room at Windsor Castle. If she had refused to marry Edward there would have been no jewels and no money for medical research.

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"I felt the Duchess of Windsor had always been locked up. As a child she had been imprisoned by the snobbish conventions of Baltimore. She had been shut in the bedroom by Win Spencer, her drunken, jealous first husband. Ernest Simpson had restricted her in a different way. The boredom of her life with him had made her feel like a bottle of champagne that had been kept too long in the ice box. When the future King of England abdicated for her sake, she had no alternative but to marry him. Once he had renounced so much, it was very difficult for her ever to leave him, although he was so dependent on her, so unflinchingly besotted, that the obsessional nature of his need for her must have often seemed like a prison."

She burst out—briefly—from this cage with the very rich and very vulgar entrepreneur

Jimmy Donahue. But it didn't have anywhere to go—except perhaps to release a bit of pent-up steam.

“Then the Duke had died and the Duchess had fallen into the hands of Maitre Blum. The Duchess had always been a figure of myth, and it was this myth that had captivated her old lawyer.” From *The Last of the Duchess* by Caroline Blackwood.

But the myth was ultimately a saving myth.

As was the life of Mary Friedrichs. She was an Englishwoman married to a German. She saw herself as an ordinary housewife without any particular skills, knowledge, income or influence. Her husband Leonard had a small business printing Quaker books and tracts. This was closed down under the Nazis and he was imprisoned in Buchenwald. Yet Mary Friedrichs, practical and caring, got more than fifty people away to safety out of Hitler's Germany.

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August 7<sup>th</sup> : Dean Farrar  
August 8<sup>th</sup> : Marjorie Rawlings  
              Charles A Dana  
August 9<sup>th</sup> : John Dryden  
              Isaak Walton  
August 10<sup>th</sup> : Laurence Binyon  
              Herbert Hoover  
August 11<sup>th</sup> : Enid Blyton  
August 12<sup>th</sup> : Robert Southey  
August 13<sup>th</sup> : Allan Aldous  
August 14<sup>th</sup> : Bryce Courtenay  
              H. Montgomery Hyde  
              John Galsworthy  
August 15<sup>th</sup> : Sir Walter Scott  
              T. E. Lawrence

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Jane Sherwood claims she began to receive automatic writing communications from T. E. Lawrence in 1938, communications she eventually published in 1964 as *Post-Mortem Journal*. She wrote, ‘The riddle of ‘Scott’s’ identity is not difficult to guess. He is Colonel T.E. Lawrence. He first wrote for me in 1938 and from the beginning he used his own name. But as soon as any question of publication arose he demanded of me a promise to respect his anonymity. This promise I gave. I found in him always an ambivalent attitude towards his public image. It undoubtedly had a strong attraction for him and any reference to his name in the press produced a strong agitation which, reflected as it had to be upon my own mind often shook me badly. Had it been straightforward joy or even unmixed annoyance it would have been easier to bear. In process of time this reaction decreased in power and almost disappeared as though he had at last become indifferent to his fame.’ She recorded:

‘Suppose for the sake of argument that this was death; what kind of world was this? I thought with a pang of ‘Sheol’, place of the Shade. It was that, all right. Had Charon already rowed me over the dark river and was this the accursed Hades? If so, the Greeks had been right after all, as they nearly always were. My thought seemed as bound by shadows as my surroundings. All life and living was reduced to a monochrome. No sound, no movement, no light, no joy: only a dreary acquiescence in this half-light, half-living. A grievous lassitude invaded me. Existence, endurance; endurance, existence. How much better to have flickered out for good!’

She touches on many of the ideas that regularly come up in automatic writing: bodies made of emotion, the power of the will, thought as a creative force, a need to continue learning,

knowledge as desirable ...

‘A good deal of suffering is caused among us by the memories of our past which continually recur to remind us of mistakes or crimes. It seems that an earth-consciousness can tolerate the thought of wrong-doing and find excuses for it which ease the mind; one can learn to live with one’s mistakes and can be satisfied to cover up one’s crimes. Here we have to know and feel more keenly the things we have done; we can no longer ignore the point of view of the man we have injured and we have actually to experience what he felt in the matter as though we had ourselves been the sufferer. On earth, most of us lack the imagination to do this or we might be held back from many of the blindly ruthless actions we do. Imagination now takes a more poignant form; we have intimately to experience the other’s suffering.

... I myself am tormented particularly by an incident of my war years. It caused me infinite distress at the time, but now the agony of realisation I am enduring is in proportion to my keener powers of feeling. During guerilla warfare in the desert I had thought it my duty to condemn a man for conduct likely to imperil the campaign. Justice demanded, I thought, that if I passed sentence I must carry it out myself. So, under the pretext of military necessity, I murdered that man. Moreover, I bungled the job and so protracted his suffering. Although at the time I could see no other course, I know now that my poverty of imagination and resource drove me to this. Now I have to endure all that I did to him; not only the physical suffering — the smallest part of it — but I have to know his despair and remorse and the awful blow to pride and affection inflicted by my condemnation.

... ‘The desert has all and more than its remembered beauty but none of its terrors. It is not possible to get lost and hunger and thirst can no longer prove one’s undoing since one can go on indefinitely without food or drink. I am revelling in the clean, bare land and savouring again the desert air with its piercing purity. Lovely to be free also from dependence upon a surly camel, a train of followers and all the tiresome paraphernalia necessary in the old days to keep one alive.

... ‘The silence, the solitude, judge me and I know myself to be unworthy. I can recall only one soul who might be attuned to these awful simplicities, a wandering, ragged holy man whom I once met in some such conditions on earth. He had the soul of a child, of a fanatic; he was mad, or else so sane as to shame others into calling him mad. He, I thought, may well be at home here where he will find an easier approach to the vision of the infinite which possessed him.

‘So thinking, I had climbed a rocky eminence when I came upon him. This should not have surprised me, since my thought had led me to him. His radiance warmed, pierced and enlightened me so that I could not approach him closely. We did not speak; words would have been an impertience in that place; but a light of love and understanding flashed between us and I too entered into that holy of holies where he communed with God. Too pure and rarified the air on this mountain top for me to bear for long.’

‘All this makes plain to me the necessity for the ‘Adversary’ in human affairs. It is only on earth that growth in the essential self takes place and this only through its conditions of strife and tension. Many wounds may be suffered and earth life may appear to show failure, humiliation and defeat. Yet these are a small price to pay for the actual gain in soul-stature. The wounds will be healed, the weaknesses strengthened and the sorrows of earth comforted here, since all such injuries are evanescent. The ‘Judgement’ is real enough, but it is not entirely concerned with the results of sinning and suffering. What is weighed is the growth of being which experience has produced. This is why the ‘publican and sinner’ go often into heaven before the ‘good’ man. So many of earth’s solemn scale of values runs in terms of being and not of behaviour.’

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The living T. E. Lawrence often gives the impression of a man fascinated by the concrete world of the Middle East; ‘... you will never know what Petra is like, unless you come out here ... Only be assured that till you have seen it you have not had the glimmerings of an idea

how beautiful a place can be.’ He was alive to the romance of *places* but I don’t think he ever found the people romantic nor did he like being cast as a romantic figure by people back in England.

He travelled widely in the Near East and North Africa but this suggestion by Byron de Prorok intrigued me: ‘In 1916 Germany and Turkey thought they had persuaded the Emperor (of Ethiopia). They promised him Djibuti for a seaport when the Allies were defeated, together with Italian and British Somaliland, Eritrea, and the British Sudan. Picturing himself as a second Menelik the Great, Lidj Yassou had dreamed of an all-African-Empire under the banner of the Prophet.

“At that time a strange little man arrived in Addis Ababa, an archeologist and a linguist. His understanding of the Oriental mind made him an ideal member of the British Intelligence Service.”

My friend’s Zaphir’s description of the man’s abilities fitted remarkably with that of the author of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and *Revolt in the Desert*—Lawrence of Arabia.

“This mysterious Englishman was closeted with the British Minister for several days—only a short time later things started to happen—and things changed abruptly for the Emperor. First he became less popular, then unpopular, and then the whole country became anti-Lidj Yassou. This had been accomplished in a very adroit manner. Thousands of the most obscene photographs were circulated all over the country simultaneously.”

“Pictures of Lidj Yassou?” I asked.

“Yes—that’s what they were supposed to be. One showed him dressed as a Mohammedan and surrounded by Moslem priests at prayer; the others showed him in a harem with dozens of beautiful white women in vile poses. Lidj Yassou was the key figure in every group, and beneath each picture, written in Amharic, were the words: ‘The Anti-Christ.’

“The Coptic Church is the single, strongest power in Ethiopia. It probably was delighted to use the idea suggested by an Englishman. The photographer who faked the pictures was an Armenian named Leon. He may have felt that his was an act of patriotism, since his race has always been persecuted by the Turks. The Germans and Turks had persuaded Lidj Yassou to join with them, but before he could move the name ‘the Anti-Christ’ echoed and re-echoed throughout the Empire. People began to speak of him as Shaitan—the devil. Then one day the streets of Addis Ababa swarmed with thousands of armed men. The Revolutionary Party had marched up to the Imperial Palace, led by the head of the Coptic Church, Abouna Matheos. When they reached it they learned that Lidj Yassou was away—collecting virgins in the Aroussi Province, it was said.

“The Abouna Matheos pointed to the flag of Ethiopia and stated, ‘Our glorious flag is sullied by the Mohammedans. In the name of the true Cross, the Maskal, and the Ethiopian Church, I excommunicate Lidj Yassou; and I absolve you all from your oath of fealty and fidelity to the Anti-Christ.’

“The revolution was accomplished, and the Anti-Christ was doomed. In due time the new Emperor, Haile Selassie, was enthroned; and Lidj Yassou was captured, escaped, was recaptured, and imprisoned in the Iron Cage. That is why Ethiopia did not join with Germany and Turkey in the first World War.”

(*Dead Men Do Tell Tales*: Byron de Prorok)

Interesting. But was this ‘little man’ Lawrence? I can find no hint of him visiting Ethiopia. Nor does that method of removing a ruler somehow fit with Lawrence’s ascetic and rather prudish mind-set. Nor is it very likely that he would risk anything which might risk a Muslim backlash when he so urgently needed Arab support ...

I came upon an even more improbable claim. Peter Fleming writes in *News from Tartary*: “That night, at the aksakal’s, we rifled a Khotan-bound postbag and borrowed the latest of M. Moldovack’s *Times Weekly Editions*. This told us of the death of T.E. Lawrence, and as I sat there in the cool courtyard listening to the evening bugles I remembered the fantastic rumours which had linked him with Sinkiang. They had started, I suppose, in Moscow, but they were

firmly believed at Urumchi. A young German engineer who—luckier than his two imprisoned compatriots—had returned from Urumchi to Peking in 1934 had assured us as a fact that Lawrence was active in the British cause among the Tungans; it was well known in Sinkiang, he said, and a friend of his in Srinigar had actually seen this ubiquitous hero start for the Himilayan passes with a force of Sikhs. Not the least fantastic part of the Lawrence legend is this Central Asian footnote.”

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It is hard to realise now, when the Middle East is criss-crossed with modern borders firmly drawn on maps, to understand his difficulties in trying to meld a sense of identity among people whose rulers were the far-away Ottoman Turks and whose loyalties were to local sheikhs, mullahs, and tribal leaders, and whose way of life varied enormously. He began by seeing the Jews as the ideal mentors for the Arabs of the Middle East but this view gradually changed as he became more familiar with the region and its people. “Now Feisal wants to know (information had better come to me for him since I usually like to make up my mind before he does) what is the arrangement standing between the colonist Jews (called Zionists sometimes) and the Allies ... What have you promised the Zionists, what is their programme?”

“I saw Aronson in Cairo, and he said at once the Jews intended to acquire the land-rights of all Palestine from Gaza to Haifa, and have practical autonomy therein. Is this acquisition to be by fair purchase or by forced sale and expropriation? The present half-crop peasantry were the old freeholders and under Moslem landlords may be ground down but have fixity of tenure. Arabs are usually not employed by Jewish colonies. Do the Jews propose the complete expulsion of the Arab peasantry, or their reduction to a day-labourer class?”

“You know how the Arabs cling even to bad land and will realise that while Arab feelings didn’t matter under Turkish rule ... the condition will be vastly different if there is a new, independent, and rather cock-a-hoop Arab state north and east and south of the Jewish state. I can see a situation arising in which the Jewish influence in European finance might not be sufficient to deter the Arab peasants from refusing to quit—or worse!”

We don’t know when Lawrence became aware that the promises he had been urged to make to the Arabs so they would attack the Turks—that they would be fighting for their own independence—could not be fulfilled because Britain had entered into two agreements: by Arthur Balfour “His most important action occurred on Nov.2, 1917, when, prompted by the Zionist leaders Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Sokolow he wrote a letter to Baron Rothschild, head of the English branch of the Jewish banking family, that contained the so-called Balfour Declaration. This declaration, pledging British aid for Zionist efforts to establish a home for World Jewry in Palestine, gave great impetus to the establishment of the state of Israel” and the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 9 May 1916 between Britain and France with Russian assent to dismantle the Ottoman Empire. This gave 1) Russia to acquire the Armenian province of Erzurum, Trebizond, Van and Bitlis with some Kurdish territory to the south-east. 2) France to have Lebanon and the Syrian littoral, Adama, Cilicia and the hinterland next to Russia’s share including Aintab, Urfa, Mardin, Diyarbakri and Mosul. 3) Britain to have southern Mesopotamia including Baghdad, and the Mediterranean ports of Haifa and Acre. 4) Britain and France to further decide how to carve up Arab lands. 5) Alexandretta to be a free port. And 6) Palestine, because of its holy places, to be under an international regime. It was even more complicated, and hypocritical, because Britain had already given a pledge to Husayn ibn ‘Ali, sharif of Mecca, that the Arabs would gain territory if he brought the tribes of the Hejaz into the war on the side of Britain.

D. Van der Meulen in *The Well of Ibn Saud* wrote: “What,” asked Snouk (Professor Snouck Hurgronje, Islamic and Arabic specialist in Leyden University), “had Lawrence done in Arabia? He had not gone there as an explorer although he was a student of archaeology. Lawrence went to Arabia could be of any use to his country which was then involved in a life-and-death struggle with powerful enemies. There was no war in Arabia. He brought it there using for his purpose a clever tongue, promise of worldly power for the great, and the glittering



display of wealth before the greedy eyes of his humbler listeners. He did it by blowing on cinders of passion and proposing *ghazus* (raids) for loot and bloodshed. He supplied the Arabs with modern weapons for warfare. He did not plainly tell them that his object in getting them to follow him was that his country might be victorious and go on ruling the world. He told them that he would show them the way to independence, freedom and honour for their people.” Snouck continued bitterly: “And what has been the result of all this? The promises given were not kept, could not be kept by his Government. The man in Mecca who trusted Lawrence and his chiefs in Cairo and who insisted that the British should fulfil the promises they had made, was abandoned and ended his life as Britain’s deluded guest in the isle of Cyprus. And what happened to the Arab nations? Great Britain imposed on them rulers for whom they had not asked and whom they did not like. Lawrence was a man who used the Arab people for Great Britain’s sake, who had helped to build a political structure which, being based on sand, would be swept away by those who lived in it the moment England was not there to keep it upright. Lawrence’s fame was undeserved. What he had done in Arabia was of no real benefit to the country or to its people.”

The dilemma he was faced with was: if he didn’t tell the Arabs about the British-French carve-up then he was asking them to continue fighting, and possibly dying, for the sake of a lie but also for the sake of the Britain to whom he owed his first allegiance; if he did tell them there was nothing at all in it for them then they would immediately and understandably simply melt away into the hills. But Britain desperately needed their help. The focus on the ‘romance’ of the Australian Light Horsemen, of General Allenby’s entry into Jerusalem on a white horse, has completely obscured the fact that Britain was moving out its Middle Eastern forces to plug the desperate manpower shortages on the Western Front. Without regular Arab attacks and sabotage Turkey would almost certainly be able to retake the whole area and Britain and France would have little choice but to cut their losses.

If this had happened the Middle East would be a different place today. Better? Worse? The imponderables are too great. The Balfour Agreement for a Jewish homeland would have been meaningless if Turkey had been able to retake the Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. Iraq would be a completely different concept. Independence from Turkey would have come piecemeal; different nation-states would have arisen with different attitudes and alliances ...

But Lawrence *didn’t* tell the Arabs what had been signed off on in London and Paris ... and the Arabs only discovered they had been deceived when Imperial Russia fell to the Bolsheviks and the terms of the Sykes-Picot Agreement became public ...

Much ink has been wasted writing about his decision to join up, after the War, as an ordinary serviceman. To me it seems perfectly natural. At last he could simply get on with a job of work without being the one who made the decisions, developed the strategies, took the ultimate responsibility, chose which horn of each moral dilemma, lived with the results and outcomes of other people’s duplicities, agonised over the roles he had played ...

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‘A tiny secluded cottage built for a gamekeeper or woodsman in about 1808 is one of the best-known Georgian cottages in Dorset. It lies on the heath, about a mile north of Bovington Army Camp and is now cared for by The National Trust. It is T.E. Lawrence’s (of Arabia) former home at Cloud’s Hill. Lawrence purchased the cottage, made of brick with a tiled roof, in 1925. The tiny interior of the dwelling remains virtually untouched, and is as it was when he lived in it. It contains his furniture, personal belongings and other relics. There are two upper rooms, one of which is miniscule, and two downstairs rooms. The entrance door of the cottage is set in a windowless wall. The philosophic Greek inscription over the door broadly translates into ‘Does not care’, or ‘Why worry’. The thatched outbuilding beside the cottage is almost certainly where Lawrence garaged his Brough Superior motorcycle, before his untimely death on it in a road accident in 1935.’ (*Farmhouses & Cottages*, by Michael Billett, in the Discover Dorset series)

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August 16<sup>th</sup> : Georgette Heyer  
 August 17<sup>th</sup> : V. S. Naipaul  
 August 18<sup>th</sup> : Nettie Palmer  
 August 19<sup>th</sup> : Samuel Griswold Goodrich  
 August 20<sup>th</sup> : Robert Herrick  
 August 21<sup>st</sup> : Mudrooroo (Colin Johnson)  
                   St Francis de Sales  
                   Will Ogilvie  
 August 22<sup>nd</sup> : Ray Bradbury  
 August 23<sup>rd</sup> : Geoffrey Faber  
 August 24<sup>th</sup> : Jorge Luis Borges  
 August 25<sup>th</sup> : Thea Astley  
                   Bret Harte  
 August 26<sup>th</sup> : Eleanor Dark  
 August 27<sup>th</sup> : Antonia Fraser  
                   Theodore Dreiser  
 August 28<sup>th</sup> : Sheridan Le Fanu  
                   Johann von Goethe

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The other day I found myself contemplating a Terry Pratchett book called *Eric* and above that the word *Faust* was crossed out. Curious, I turned it over, and read on the back, ‘Eric is the Discworld’s only demonology hacker. Pity he’s not very good at it. All he wants is his three wishes granted. Nothing fancy — to be immortal, rule the world, have the most beautiful woman in the world fall madly in love with him. The usual stuff.’

While I was browsing in a musical dictionary I suddenly noticed that next to the Bible and ‘fairy tales’, Faust seems to have been the most used single source for inspiration for operas and other musical extravaganzas. Certainly Shakespeare has been popular but his popularity has been spread over a number of his creations—Verdi’s opera ‘Othello’, Mendelssohn’s ‘Macbeth’ etc. Sometimes it is Goethe’s ‘Faust’ which inspires, sometimes it is earlier or later versions of the story.

Marlowe, of course, wrote a popular earlier play and the introduction to one version of his ‘Dr Faustus’, says, ‘In 1587, there was published in Frankfurt-on-Main a German prose book *Historia von D. Iohañ Fausten*, the work of an anonymous Lutheran. Within a few years, an English translation had appeared. The sole surviving copy of a 1592 edition of this is now in the British Museum ... This translation, by an author whose initials (P.F.) have not sufficed to identify him for us, was the main source of the English play.’

But there were many English versions besides Marlowe’s, such as *A ballad of the life and death of Doctor FFAUSTUS the great Cunngerer* entered in the Stationers’ Register on 28 February 1589; curiously an ‘anonymous *Taming of a Shrew* and Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, implicitly refer to *Doctor Faustus*, the one by echoing it, the other by emulating it. But the earliest text of *A Shrew* belongs to as late a date as 1594; and Greene’s play, far from emulating Marlowe’s, may well have preceded it.’ Did Marlowe use the prose work or the play on which to base his own work (and did Shakespeare use the anonymous *Shrew* as the basis for his version) or were stories like Dr Faustus and the Shrew already part of the common currency of story-telling in England?

So was there a Faust in history and why does this story have such enduring appeal—and what did Goethe do with him? A description of the anonymous German version describes it as “a curious patchwork of genuine folk-tales that were really current about Doctor Faustus, a

charlatan, who, it is presumed from certain documents, flourished in the late fifteenth century.”

Walter Kaufmann in his introduction to his translation of Goethe’s play says, “The historic Faust was born, it seems, in Knittlingen, Württemberg, about 1480. (Luther was born in 1483.) According to Melanchthon, Luther’s friend, Faust studied magic at the University of Cracow, in Poland. In those days, magic was also taught at the Universities of Salamanca and Toledo. There are reports that Faust disparaged Jesus’ miracles and boasted that, whatever Christ had done, he, too, could do as often as he wished. Needless to add, Luther and Melanchthon regarded Faust with horror and contempt.

“Others, more impressed by him, induced him to teach school, but it is said that he molested the boys entrusted to his care and, found out, had to flee to escape punishment. Many traditions connect him with the city of Erfurt. The story goes that at the university there he lectured on Homer, and, to entertain his students, confronted them with Homer’s heroes in the flesh. A Franciscan monk, Konrad Klinge, admonished Faust to return to God and threatened him with eternal damnation” but Faust is said to have told him he had already pledged himself to the devil with his own blood to be his for all eternity, body and soul. The monk urged him to truly repent, to renounce magic and association with devils, and to atone for his terrible behaviour, and promised to hold a mass for him so that he could be rid of the devil. But Faust rejected the offer, saying he had deliberately despised God and that his pact with the devil signed with his own blood was irrevocable. The monks then had him expelled from Erfurt. He then went to Leipzig, in 1525, supposedly with the devil accompanying him in the shape of a dog. Then, even more strangely, he was said to have sailed to Venezuela. But he obviously returned to Europe because he was said to have died in Staufen in Breisgau in 1540. He sounds very much like the Aleister Crowley of his era. Unpleasant. Though mostly hot air and wild claims to get attention. But his showmanship and adventures, fact or fiction, soon gave rise to books, plays and verse. Johann Spies is credited with the first accredited version in 1587 and it is his version which formed the basis for Christopher Marlowe’s play.

Goethe however seems to have used the version by F.M. von Klinger, *Faustus: His Life, Death and Descent into Hell*, the German edition coming out in 1791 in St Petersburg in Russia, as his guide and inspiration.

I came upon this suggestion in Richard Holmes’ *Coleridge*: ‘The loss of Coleridge’s version of *Faust*, which would surely have been spectacular, had a curiously suspending effect on Goethe’s reputation in Victorian England. Shelley (who said that only Coleridge could do it justice) translated fragments of the drama in 1822 in Italy, which were published by Leigh Hunt in *The Liberal*; and Coleridge in turn said he admired these “very much” ... But full translations did not appear until the late 1820s, by which time it was heavily bowdlerized. By 1833 even Coleridge claimed he had turned it down as “vulgar, licentious and most blasphemous.” ... Gérard de Nerval translated it magnificently in France (1828), but no major poet attempted *Faust* in England until Louis MacNeice (1951). Instead there were somewhat guarded essays by Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, and a fine humorous biography by George Eliot’s husband, G.H. Lewes (1855).”

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When Camarupa, wavering on high,  
Lightly and slowly travels o’er the sky,  
Now closely draws her veil, now spreads it wide,  
And joys to see the changing figures glide,  
Now firmly stands, now like a vision flies,  
We pause in wonder, and mistrust our eyes.

Then boldly stirs imaginations power,  
And shapes there formless masses of the hour;  
Here lions threat, there elephants will range,  
And camel-necks to vapoury dragons change;

An army moves, but not in victory proud,  
Its might is broken on a rock of cloud;  
E'en the cloud messenger in air expires,  
Ere reach'd the distance fancy yet desires.

But Howard gives us with his clearer mind  
The gain of lessons new to all mankind;  
That which no hand can reach, no hand can clasp,  
He first has gained, first held with mental grasp.  
Defin'd the doubtful, fix'd its limit-line,  
And named it fitly. — Be the honour thine!  
As clouds ascend, are folded, scatter, fall,  
Let the world think of thee who taught it all.

#### Stratus

When o'er the silent bosom of the sea  
The cold mist hangs like a stretch'd canopy;  
And the moon, mingling there her shadowy beams,  
A spirit, fashioning other spirits seems;  
We feel, in moments pure and bright as this,  
The joy of innocence, the thrill of bliss.  
Then towering up the darkening mountain's side,  
And spreading as it rolls its curtains wide,  
It mantles round the mid-way height, and there  
It sinks in water-drops, or soars in air,

#### Cumulus

Still soaring, as if some celestial call  
Impell'd it to yon heaven's sublimest hall;  
High as the clouds, in pomp and power arrayed,  
Enshrined in strength, in majesty displayed;  
All the soul's secret thoughts it seems to move,  
Beneath it trembles, while it frowns above.

#### Cirrus

And higher, higher yet the vapors roll:  
Triumph is the noblest impulse of the soul!  
Then like a lamb whose silvery robes are shed,  
The fleecy piles dissolved in dew drops spread;  
Or gently wafted (*sic*) to the realms of rest,  
Find a sweet welcome in the Father's breast.

#### Nimbus

Now downwards by the world's attraction driven,  
That tends to earth, which had upris'n to heaven;  
Threatening in the mad thunder-cloud, as when  
Fierce legions clash, and vanish from the plain;  
Sad destiny of the troubled world! But see,  
The mist is now dispersing gloriously:  
The language fails us in its vain endeavour —  
The spirit mounts above, and lives for ever.

Not one of Goethe's greatest effusions certainly, and I must admit I had never heard of Luke Howard until I picked up a little book of that name by Douglas Scott. He begins with a reprint of an article which appeared in *The Times* in 1964.

'The name of Luke Howard, who died a century ago to-day at the age of 92, is a household word among meteorologists who honour him as the founder of the modern classification of clouds and inventor of the terminology that is still in general use: 'cirrus', 'cumulus', and 'stratus' were first named and defined in Howard's *Essay on the Modification of Clouds* published in 1804.

At the recent joint Meeting of the Royal Astronomical and Meteorological Societies, which was devoted to the question whether anything outside the earth has a noticeable effect on the weather, Howard was also gratefully remembered as the first meteorologist to undertake a scientific investigation into the theory of lunar influence on the weather.

He is also well remembered by members of the Religious Society of Friends as one of the earliest pioneers of Quaker relief work....

In 1814 Howard and his fellow-worker, R.H. Marten, were given the freedom of the city of Magdeburg for the noble service they had rendered among the east German peasantry in the lands laid waste by Napoleon's retreating armies. To this day the Magdeburg city archives preserve the letter of thanks for the great honour, which Marten sent from London in 1816....

For his services Howard also received a diamond ring from the King of Prussia and two Meissen vases from the King of Saxony....

Howard has probably never been well known to the general public but the chemical factory which he founded in 1797 still flourishes in Ilford....

There is small danger of his name being entirely forgotten but it is curious that the only source for the biographer of his early years is still the long letter which he wrote to Goethe, at the poet's request in 1822....

Goethe admired a number of English poets and scientists but Howard was the only Englishman he ever called 'our Master'. The poem entitled 'To the Honoured Memory of Howard', in which he acclaimed the cloud scientist who was the first to 'give precision to the imprecise, confine it, name it tellingly', was followed by an attempt to get in direct touch with Howard.'

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"A 'disinterested' social science has never existed and never will exist." Gunnar Myrdal in *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*. I think most people would accept that statement but when it comes to the physical sciences there is much greater unwillingness to look at the question of bias.

"In fact, while it purports to be empirical, scientific enquiry is often highly subjective and value-laden, as Thomas Kuhn demonstrated in his influential book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Here Kuhn explained how scientific perspectives evolve, and in describing his concept of paradigm shift he also explored the dynamics involved when one paradigm replaces another." (Dr Fritjof Capra in *The Tao of Physics*)

"The classical measure is yourself. That is, you judge others in terms of what you know about yourself. Both spiritual and objective persons adhere to standards based entirely on faith. The belief of a spiritual person in a larger force can only be accepted on faith. The atheist's conviction that no realm exists beyond ordinary experience is unprovable and so also a matter of faith. It is a catch-22 whereby an ardent atheist or strict objectivist cannot really claim to be rational.

"To be consistent, both the ardent atheist and the strict objectivist, those who believe that all mental states can be reduced to physical states of the brain, must end like Roger Sperry or Jacques Monod, both Nobel Prize-winning atheistic scientists who wish to create a value system based on science. It is not difficult to create such a value system, but it is one I would fear.

"MacIntyre, the moral philosopher who wrote *Whose Truth, Whose Virtue*, cautioned that

those who espouse “objective” view-points always think that their own arguments are the most rational, logical, and convincing. “My civilization, my culture, my method, and my values are better than yours,” they say.

“The behaviourist B.F. Skinner offers an example of extreme faith in objectivity. “In every walk of life,” he says, “from international affairs to the care of a baby, we shall continue to be inept until a scientific analysis clarifies the advantages of a more effective technology. In the behaviouristic view, man can now control his own destiny because he knows what must be done and how to do it.” What this really means is that B.F. Skinner “knows what must be done and how to do it.” Like everyone who believes in objectivity, he is sure that he knows what is best for the rest of us.

“The flaw in worshipping objectivity is this: it is possible to have an objective view of anything, but only from your own subjective point of view. You cannot have a subjective evaluation of a species other than yourself, for instance. Hence, you cannot know what it is like to be a bat, or a whale, or anything other than yourself. Every subjective experience is connected with a single point of view. The error of non-spiritual persons who place reason and objectivity above all else (as their gods, you might say) is in trying to develop an objective view from nowhere, a view sitting out in space, but the more we think about it, the more we see that it is impossible to have a view from nowhere, without beginning with a view from somewhere. That somewhere is yourself. It is difficult to imagine what the *objective* character of an experience would be like. “After all,” asks philosopher Thomas Nagel, “what would be left of what it was like to be a bat if one removed the viewpoint of the bat?”

“A crucial principle that I hope has become clear is that objectivity is impossible without prior subjective experience on which to build. If the subjective character of any experience is comprehensible only from one point of view, then any shift to objectivity — that is, a detachment from your own specific view point *only takes you further away from* the quality of that experience.” (Richard E. Cytowic in *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*)

“Many laboratory researchers produce their medical data by experimenting on animals. Apart from poisoning their subjects with extreme doses of the drug in question, these ‘scientists’ drive them screeching mad by use of electric shocks, starvation, and various mental torments. I make no apologies for expressing my emphatic abhorrence of such activities. Nor am I alone in regarding these works as the cruellest form of bullying (doing to another what you wouldn’t dare have done to yourself). The exercise is also bogus scientifically, because the information produced is irrelevant to human beings. Animal species are not only different from our own species in terms of their physical structure and chemical functioning, they are different from each other: a cat is not a monkey and a monkey is not a mouse. The sterile laboratory setting also confounds the outcome. Most people do not live in metal cages on a pelleted diet, devoid of any comfort.” (*Street Drugs* by Andrew Tyler)

I think it was Howard Fleming, after being shown over a wonderful sterile laboratory in Chicago, who praised it but said he could not have discovered penicillin in it.

The problem is: we assume that ‘pure science’ is disinterested. Of course it isn’t. What to study? How? Where? Who by? How to set up experiments? What it is hoped they will prove or disprove. Even such things as the reputations of the people who have gone before. What Einstein said comes with a little fence around it and a sign that says ‘Sacred Site’. What Mrs Joe Blow ‘proved’ is very likely to have been done in a slipshod poorly designed way and therefore is probably wrong. Yet good scientists fake results. Unknowns grasp essential or radical new ways of looking at things. It is hard to think of a scientific fact which has not been in some way challenged, re-worked, or simply seen not as a final result but as a signpost on a journey. When genes were discovered they were thought to enclose everything we needed to know about variations in the structure of life. Now that is claimed for DNA. I suspect that beyond DNA come yet more tiny intricate worlds to be unravelled. The other day I was wondering how DNA might incorporate what we sometimes think of as ‘learned behaviours’. All kinds of wonderful and mysterious things are described as instinct because they have been

shown to exist even where species have been denied the opportunity to learn them. But how does DNA encode instinct? And, equally importantly, *does* it encode instinct?

I was pondering in this general area one day when I came upon the simple statement “Bees originally evolved from a primitive type of wasp”. It sounds perfectly reasonable. And the primitive type of wasp evolved from ... Yes, evolution exists, evolution is a proven fact. But in fact we don’t know that the above statement is true. It is debatable if it can actually be proven true. Why should a wasp evolve into a bee rather than into a new kind of wasp? Why did a wasp evolve before a bee? Perhaps wasps evolved from a primitive kind of bee? We accept such statements all the time not because they have been proved but because they sound reasonable.

But I sometimes wonder if we are asking ‘evolution’ as an idea to carry more than it should. When Juan Luis Arsuaga wrote in *The Neanderthal’s Necklace*, “We are unique and alone now in the world. There is no other animal species that truly resembles our own. A physical and mental chasm separates us from all other living creatures. There is no other bipedal mammal. No other mammal controls and uses fires, writes books, travels in space, paints portraits, or prays. This is not a question of degree. It is all or nothing; there is no semi-bipedal animal, none that makes only small fires, writes only short sentences, builds only rudimentary spaceships, draws just a little bit, or prays just occasionally” he defined a problem for every evolutionist.

This links up to something which has always puzzled me. If the environment is the major determining factor in the development of species then why do not all species exist along a continuum? I call this the Doctrine of Gaps. All giraffes are clearly giraffes. There are no giraffes with much shorter necks to live off scrub. There are no giraffes with different patterns to live among different vegetation patterns. All roses are clearly roses. All horses are clearly horses. There are no proto-penguins. Yet the environment shades gradually from one type of vegetation and climate and soil into another. Another thing which puzzles me is what I call the Doctrine of Size. Tall women tend to marry tall men, yet their children do not continue getting taller and taller. There is some form of cut-off which appears to keep species in manageable sizes. Where this seems to fail and creatures become too large to adapt to sudden changes then they appear to be doomed. But what allows them to get bigger and bigger ... or conversely why do most species appear to have this damper ... and is it to do with DNA or the environment ...

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“—in the early 1990s the American police acknowledged they had spent some \$13 million on psychics in the fight against terrorism, police forces worldwide have generally had a love-hate, often unacknowledged relationship with them. There is little doubt that on occasions they have proved extremely useful in finding missing people or bodies.” (James Morton in *Catching the Killers*.) But the problems are complex. The psychics given the tapes supposedly made and sent by The Yorkshire Ripper came up with information that appeared to have no relevance to Peter Sutcliffe when he was finally apprehended. They were criticised for not helping to stop his murder spree sooner. But the tapes are now thought to be a hoax which led police down a cul-de-sac. But if they were a hoax then the information the psychics provided might still have been relevant in tracking the person or persons who deliberately set out to hoodwink the police. Instead the matter appears to have been dropped and any other help they might have provided was seen as a waste of time.

But there are two good reasons for being very wary about ‘psychic phenomena’. One, it can be dangerous. “I am not superstitious in the sense of feeling that attempts to contact the dead bring ill-luck; but I do believe—and increasingly since engaging in investigations of hauntings—that there is some inexplicable energy which can operate within a terrestrial framework, yet independently of chronological time. Since nothing is known about this force or its laws, it seems extremely foolish to begin or continue tampering with it at the present stage of ignorance. The kind of casual ‘spirit-raising’ or ‘table-turning’ which are indulged in as a light-hearted party game are as sensible as throwing stones at a live bomb or grabbing a

bare electric wire with a wet hand.” (Joan Forman *Haunted East Anglia*)

And two, it can be a hoax. James Randi in *Flim-Flam* gives a check list to run through before you give your time, your money, or your name to anything of that nature. Some of his points include (1) It is claimed that the subject does not seek money or fame, and thus no motive to deceive exists. (17) We are told that subjects do not do well when persons with “negative vibrations” are nearby. (19) It is argued that too many controls on an experiment cause negative results. And (14) It is said that the subject cannot produce phenomenon on command or on a regular basis, since such abilities are ephemeral or sporadic.

Mediums and other people had claimed to be able to see auras down through the centuries; in 1911 an electrician called Kilner at St Thomas’ hospital in London suggested it might be possible to explain it and even photograph it; in the 1940s a husband and wife team, Semyon and Valentina Kirlian, did just this. Once it was seen to be a genuine and easily reproducible set of phenomena scientists accepted that it existed and set about studying it. The scientific explanation given by the *World Book Encyclopaedia* is: ‘The electromagnetic field causes gas molecules surrounding an object to accelerate and become ionized (electrically charged). It also frees and accelerates electrons and positive ions from the object’s surface. The charged particles collide with neutral molecules and atoms, creating more electrons and ions. After a sufficient amount of positive ions has built up, the electrons and ions recombine and emit red, violet, and ultraviolet light. These emissions show up as discharges of light in the photographs.’

But not everything from the realm of the mysterious is so relatively easily studied. Time-lapse photography is being used to prove, or disprove, the presence of ghosts in apparently haunted locations. But I am still waiting to see a scientist take off his socks and shoes and run barefoot on hot coals to prove that it is impossible and that Fijian fire-walkers are faking it. William Barrett said “The skeptical naysayer can be as uncritical as the most rampant believer — a fact which some of our contemporaries now seem to forget.” But I can see how complex the whole question of research is. M.L. Johnson Abercrombie wrote “How to tell students what to look for without telling them what to see is the dilemma of teaching.” It is also the dilemma in any kind of scientific research into unusual phenomena; any suggestion as to what you are looking for immediately influences your mind to see or hear or feel things in a way attuned to the suggestion.

Sometimes, of course, the skeptical naysayer resorts to outright dishonesty. That too is not a one-sided problem. Ruth Cranston wrote in *The Mystery of Lourdes*: “One of the worst frauds against Lourdes was perpetuated by Zola, who, by his own confession, in his novel *Lourdes* deliberately altered the facts in accounts of three cures and made their story come out to suit himself—i.e. in death, not health as actually occurred.

‘My characters are my own,’ Zola grandly wrote to Dr Boissarie. ‘I shall do whatever I like with them.’

But they were *not* his characters. They were living persons whose stories he had purloined and abused, only using enough of the truth to leave no doubt as to *who* they were, but changing the ends of the stories so as to make the conclusions entirely false. When his ruse became known, he secretly visited the cured persons and offered them comfortable sums of money to leave Paris and live in a foreign country. They indignantly refused.”

This sense of the mysterious being sporadic and unexpected I think creates the biggest hurdle to properly planned and monitored trials. Surveys of people who have had an unexplained experience bring out the unexpected, random, and non-repeated nature of the event. If we are dealing with phenomena over which we cannot exercise real control can we expect to repeat the event? I can only think of two small events in my own life for which I have no explanation. One happened in 1972. I was doing something very boring, like ironing, when suddenly I felt a bright light sort of ‘explode’ in my head and I clearly heard a word in my mind. The word meant nothing to me but I wrote it down somewhere thinking it might connect with something. Time passed and no explanation was forthcoming. I had a cold at the time but



obviously it was not incapacitating. Then in 1991 I had another peculiar experience. The Biro I was using, one of those clear plastic ones with a plastic tube inside, ran out of ink and I expected it to give up writing. Instead it kept going. I thought there must be a tiny bit of ink in the nib part. Several times I took the inner tube out and looked at it carefully and it appeared to be totally empty. Yet the pen kept writing for another six months. I assume there is a sensible explanation. I just don't know what it is. But it is the unexpectedness of such experiences and the fact that neither has ever repeated itself which precludes proper investigation. How do you set up a scientific trial for a word in your head?

Dr Edie Devers in *After-Death Communications* looks at the things people have reported after losing someone close: 'Like my father, my sister was a hardened skeptic. If you couldn't prove something through quantitative science, it didn't exist. Years of undergraduate studies in behaviour psychology and a master's degree from Harvard University taught her to think like a detective. She ferreted out the "truth" with the tenacity of a pit bull. Mention a double-blind, placebo-controlled study and you had something to say, but slip in an assumption and you'd best prepare to defend yourself.

Then our mother died, and all that changed.

As my sister explains it, two years after our mother's death, she awoke abruptly to an inexplicable light. It shimmered and danced outside her window. At first, it reminded her of a strange fluorescent plankton she had once seen in the night waters off the coast of Florida. She couldn't identify what she was looking at until something even stranger happened.

Within this shimmering light pattern, my sister sensed a message, something she could only describe as a thought form. It said, "I'm doing fine. And so are you." It didn't need to say more. My sister knew in that instant it was our mother, and she had come to say goodbye again." This experience was a life-changing one. But how do you study such an experience?

Hereward Carrington in *Your Psychic Powers and How to Develop Them* says "Take any musical composer or any artist who paints, and seat him at a table with instructions to compose a sonata or paint a wonderful picture, within half-an-hour! Suppose that during all the time the work is in progress, noise and flurry is constantly going on in the same room, the desk at which the artist works is being shaken, children are continually running in and out of the room, etc. Do you think that, under such conditions, a masterpiece in either music or art could be produced? Could a poet compose a sonnet under such conditions? Certainly he could not! The exercise of mediumistic power is assuredly as delicate, as subtle, as refined, as easily disturbed as any of these productions of the genius of man. How absurd, therefore, to pretend or contend that mediums should be able to exercise their powers, whenever they want them, under any conditions! And to contend, further, that if they fail to do so they are therefore frauds and humbugs!"

That is part of the dilemma of research; things are more likely to happen to people in moments of solitude, just as wonderful ideas are more likely to strike in such moments. Isaac Newton could set up experiments to study gravity but that sudden sense of the momentous is effectively beyond study ...

I used to know an elderly lady called Daisy Roberts who wrote a little book called *Fifty Questions*: 'In 1946 I was 54 years old. My husband Oswald Digby Roberts, F.I.C., had died five years before. He was a research chemist, working in the laboratories of the Imperial Institute in London. On the religious side he was a member of the Plymouth Brethren. My background was keenly Church of England, but after enthusiastic support of the 1914-18 "war to end war," like most church people, I was horrified to realise that Christians had been fighting and killing each other." She also said "It had bothered me increasingly for many months that we never expected any sign of intelligence from the Heaven to which we prayed, and that we seemed to take for granted that a vague uplift and an ancient holy book were all we could know of a Great Power who directed our ends, and presumably listened to and understood us. I felt we were entitled to demand some explanation of the tragic muddles of the world, and the reason for our existence. ... Then one day I found a pencil I was holding was

wriggling and when I held it against the flyleaf of a book, for I had no paper by me, it wrote—automatic writing, a thing of which I had never heard.”

But she could see there were two separate questions in this strange experience: one was the writing itself, the feeling of having her hand moved, and the other, as she put it, “Are spirit communications always reliable? Why should they be? Surely we should submit everything to “the scrutiny of reasonableness”?”

I have since read a number of books which purport to be the result of automatic writing and I have found them interesting and sometimes very moving, such as in this little bit from *A Living Dead Man* by Elsa Barker:

“And what is God?” I asked; “and where is God?”

He smiled. I never saw a smile like his, as he answered:

“God is everywhere. God *is*.”

“What is He?” I persisted; and again he repeated, but with a different emphasis:

“*God is*.”

What do you mean?” I asked.

“God *is*, *God is*,” he said.

I do not know how his meaning was conveyed to me, perhaps by sympathy; but it suddenly flashed into my mind that when he said, “God *is*,” he expressed the completest realisation of God which is possible to the spirit; and when he said, “*God is*,” he meant me to understand that there was no being, nothing that is, except God.”

But I think we should never forget that we have no way of knowing what is moving the pen or pencil. Daisy believed it was her dead husband who was communicating with her, other people have seen it as saints, friends, strangers, and even God. But there is also the possibility that it is our unconscious mind which moves the pen and answers from its own hidden store of experience some of the questions we most often ask ourselves. As Sri Aurobindo says in *The Problem of Rebirth*: ‘We know, for instance, that in the phenomena, say, of automatic writing or of communication from the dead, it is disputed whether the phenomena proceed from outside, from disembodied minds, or from within, from the subliminal consciousness, or whether the communication is actual and immediate from the released personality and is the uprising to the surface of a telepathic impression which came from the mind of the then living man but has remained submerged in our subliminal mentality. The same kind of doubts might be opposed to the evidence of reincarnate memory.’

Similarly there is no simple way to test the idea of precognition. No one says ‘today I think I will glimpse tomorrow’. J. W. Dunne in *An Experiment with Time* says simply, ‘It has been rather surprising to discover how many persons there are who, while willing to concede that we habitually observe events before they occur, suppose that such prevision may be treated as a minor logical difficulty, to be met by some trifling readjustment in one or another of our sciences or by the addition of a dash of transcendentalism to our metaphysics. It may well be emphasized that no tinkering or doctoring of that kind could avail in the smallest degree.

‘If prevision be a fact, it is a fact which destroys absolutely the entire basis of all our past opinions of the universe.’

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Frank Morley in *The Great North Road* said, “There is nothing new in the idea that specific roadways may be studied as having affected the growth and form of specific civilizations. There is a respectably reading science called hodology (*hodos* being the Greek word for road). As a science it derives from D’Arcy Thompson, as D’Arcy Thompson derived it from Goethe what Goethe derived from Aristotle. D’Arcy Thompson’s best-known contribution was a book called *Growth and Form*. It was a study of the ways in which physical forces were to be observed as affecting the specific forms assumed in the process of growth of a great variety of things. A merit of the book was that Professor D’Arcy Thompson was preoccupied with things which were reasonably simple. He was preoccupied with many and delightful organic forms of life: with the manner of growth in flowers and shells, in fir-cones

and guillemots eggs and spiders webs, in many types of concretions, spirals, agglutinated skeletons and the branching of blood vessels. *Growth and Form* was and remains a wonderfully alert and stimulating book, an eye-opener to the science of ‘morphology’: the study of the inter-relations of growth and form, and the part which physical forces play in this complex interaction.”

Thompson’s father was a great friend and a connection by marriage to my great-great-grandfather George Johnston Allman who was a mathematician. George was also a great collector of seashells. And his father was the botanist William Allman who was a follower and admirer of the great Scottish botanist Robert Brown, who sailed with Joseph Banks and organised his library and climbed to the top of Mt Wellington when he visited Hobart in 1804, and who was the first to urge a natural presentation of the science of botany. Like the ‘chain of life’ there is a subtle and often fascinating ‘chain of influence’. I like to think of Thompson holding those seashells in his hands and finding inspiration in their beautiful colours and shapes and convolutions.

‘Obviously, the crisis of the economy and the crisis of the environment are very closely linked. But the second is making us rethink rather more deeply than the first. The first, we might say, (following Fritz Schumacher), is making us rethink economics ‘as if people mattered’, which is something we have believed all along. The second is asking us to consider whether the belief that people matter is not part of the problem. I put it controversially to suggest how radical the questioning is. The point is that, in making us important, we in the west have nearly always made other living creatures less important, and sometimes of no importance whatever — except of course in so far as they might be useful to us human beings. This belief in the exclusive value of human beings has undoubtedly helped to fire the drive towards economic expansion which has characterized our western society over the last 500 years. And since this apparently unstoppable expansion is now causing a serious global crisis, it is inevitable that we should question this deep assumption about the unique value of human beings. To put it simply, we are learning through the crisis that if we don’t value the earth for itself, rather than as simply a resource for us, we shall continue blindly to use it up, until we finally ‘use up’ the basis of our own existence. It is a new version of the old paradox that, to care for ourselves we have to care for others too, whereas if we care for ourselves exclusively we shall not finally succeed. The belief in the unique and exclusive value of human beings is sometimes called anthropocentrism (putting humans at the centre), and many ecologists are now saying that the most important thing we have to do in this ecological crisis is to get rid of, or to ‘transcend’, this anthropocentric viewpoint.’ From *The End of Words*, by Rex Ambler

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When news of Darwin’s book on evolution reached Australia it was a shock but the newspapers noted that it was a shock to the English speaking world. More particularly it was a shock to England. They also noted that the book had not raised much stir in France. It has become an accepted and deeply-held belief that *The Origin of Species* turned the world upside down. This isn’t true.

So the question needs to be asked why it made such an impact in England but scarcely raised eyebrows in the rest of Europe.

I came upon an elderly (1874) book called *Responsibility in Mental Disease* by Henry Maudsley in which he says ‘The fact that where foxes are much persecuted the young ones show themselves much more cunning and distrustful from the first than old foxes in places where they are not persecuted, was thought by one learned author an absolute demonstration that animals had language; but F. Cuvier explained it by the hereditary transmission of acquired instincts. For other examples of the transmission of acquired faculties see the elaborate *Traité Philosophique et Physiologique de L’Hérédité Naturelle*, by Dr. Prosper Lucas, 1847. But these scattered observations have now found their place, and have been supplemented, by many others, in Mr. Darwin’s exposition of his great law of evolution.’

As no one has yet shown how knowledge can be passed on via genes or DNA, despite all

those experiments which give rats the minced up brains of rats who found their way through mazes and so on, it might still be simpler to accept the idea that animals *do* have language ... even if it doesn't require sounds and words ...

But that little piece is a reminder that ideas about evolution were being widely discussed in France before the advent of Darwin and Wallace. The most prominent evolutionist in France was Lamarque (Lamarck). And if it hadn't been for his desire to prove evolution through the finding of fossil records of changes, an always difficult and fraught problem, we would probably talk about Lamarckism rather than Darwinism.

This doesn't explain why England wasn't having the same sorts of conversations and discussions and debates as France. Deborah Cadbury in *The Dinosaur Hunters* provides much of the answer. It wasn't that there had been no remarkable discoveries of fossils in England. One of the most extraordinary finders of fossils was Mary Anning who had a small shop in Lyme Regis on the south coast of England where she hunted through the nearby cliffs for odd things to sell to tourists. She brought such creatures as the ichthyosaurus, the plesiosaurus, and the pterodactylus 'on to the market'; Cadbury says of her, 'She became a familiar figure on the shoreline, variously portrayed in her long skirts and shawl, clogs, poke-bonnet or hat, a lone figure endlessly toiling at her mysterious task against vast skies and shifting tides. Such was her dedication, Anna Pinney wrote, that she continued 'to support her mother and brother in bitter poverty, even when she was so ill that she was brought fainting from the beach'.' But as railways, canals, quarries for building, piers, roads, and mines slashed into the land more and more fossilized creatures began to surface. Geologists had been debating the age of the world since the eighteenth century. Abraham Werner in Germany had posited a universal ocean from which the world had arisen more than a million years ago and a Scot James Hutton brought out a book suggesting the earth was unimaginably old; 'there is no vestige of a beginning and no prospect of an end.' Charles Lyell is better known but although he accepted the world was much older than the Bible would suggest he held to a moment of Creation and a slow change by erosion and movement ever since. Yet it is said of his great work of 1830 *Principles of Geology* 'This classic work greatly influenced Darwin in developing his theory of evolution.'

But it was the fossils found in the rocks, rather than the rocks themselves, which excited so much interest, rivalry, and debate. When and where had these strange creatures existed? How had hyenas got to Derbyshire? Was this the result of Noah's Flood?

In France Georges Cuvier (who coined the terms mastodon and megatherium) was seen as the grand man of the natural world. He held to a view of Creation, although he was a skilled anatomist and open to some new ideas on Creation; he wasn't willing to accept the ideas of his main rival, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. 'According to Lamarck species were not necessarily extinct at all. They had developed by 'transmutation' into other forms of life.

'Lamarck's thinking stemmed from eighteenth-century beliefs that all living things were linked by imperceptible transitions; nature was a continuous 'Chain of Being', ... Lamarck believed that as organisms in this 'scale of being' strove for perfection they would transform themselves while adapting to their environment. Changing circumstances led to new responses from animals, which eventually became habitual. Organs could change permanently by frequent use or habits, allowing for the progression of animal forms into ever more complex types, *without* any special creation from God. This is what he meant by the 'transmutation' of species. In his *Philosophie Zoologique* published in 1809 he outlined a thesis in which humble creatures could 'generate' into higher forms of life.'

Lamarck faced difficulties in getting his work published and his ideas accepted. He also faced insurmountable problems in finding the 'connecting' evidence he needed in the fossil records which only came to the surface in ad hoc and haphazard ways. But he had one advantage in his struggle to get his ideas accepted, his disciple Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, who carried on and developed his ideas despite the hostility of Cuvier and the French scientific 'establishment'.

In England ideas were in the air; a book came out in 1843 called *Vestiges of the Natural*

*History of Creation* by an anonymous author who was in fact a Scottish journalist Robert Chambers. This floated ideas which also suggested a continuous development from the simplest forms to the most complex. But the British debate had been taken over by a man called Richard Owen. By coining the word dinosaur he effectively undermined the various discoveries which had been named and classified in different ways; now they all seemed to come under his umbrella and, by inference, to be his discoveries. Owen is a complex character. Ambitious, clever, ruthless, opportunistic, jealous, greedy for both fame and material reward. When Darwin's book came out in 1859 Owen was seen as the man standing opposite, the Creationist rather than the Evolutionist. In fact he wasn't. His own beliefs were never fully defined possibly because he had put so much of his energy into bolstering his position rather than defining his beliefs. But what he had effectively done was stymie any open debate on the origins of the fossils which were now on public show. Where did they fit into the scheme of things? He had closed down that side of the discussion and focussed on housing and preparing and being lauded for the way he organised public display of these fascinating fossil bones and he made sure that his names and his backgrounds for these creatures were the ones publicly accepted. But the debate on any 'scale of being' had dwindled away.

Darwin and the younger men like Thomas Huxley had effectively done their thinking outside the Owen-dominated world of the natural sciences. So *The Origin of Species* burst on a largely unprepared public in England. Other people had turned up curious things in railway cuttings and chalk pits. But they found themselves running into a brick wall. Its name was Richard Owen and he had manoeuvred himself into a powerful position in the Royal Society where he could undermine, dampen, censor, even destroy the ideas and reputations of others. So powerful was his increasingly conservative position that in the end it largely stifled discussion. But Charles Darwin was fortunate in that he was a generation after Owen. He could gather younger disaffected men to support him. But the damage that Owen had done was to effectively prevent any wider debate in the non-scientific community. Ordinary people had no idea of scientific misgivings and conflict behind the closed doors of the most powerful scientific body in England. So the idea of evolution brought dismay in England and tepid interest in France.

There had been some curious questions raised by geologists, such as Charles Lyell, as well as amateur rock hounds, but these had existed almost in a parallel universe of ideas, rarely affecting or influencing the wider body of science, not least because geology, known as undergroundology, had not yet become widely accepted as a science in its own right. But it is curious that the man described as the 'Father of Australian Geology', the Reverend William Branwhite Clarke had already been pondering on questions of evolution and the age of the earth by his explorations of Australian rock formations and the possible origins of the Australian Aborigines. His conclusions were still vague but he had ceased to believe that the earth was a mere stripling of a few thousand years old. And his own calm acceptance of *The Origin of Species* probably influenced many people to feel that their world had not been destroyed at the stroke of a pen.

But the European world had been coming via a different route to a variant view of the world from the orthodox Christian view and their route had been via the world of plants. There would have been no book referring to *The Origin of Species* if Swedish scientist Carl von Linné or Linnaeus had not created a hierarchy which he named as family, species, genus, etc. He brought the idea of small groupings inside larger groupings inside much larger groupings into everyday conversation and provided an excellent new tool for botanists to begin describing the huge and confusing world of plants all around them. He was born in 1703 and began his study of plants initially to accept or reject the idea that plants had sexuality. Today we think nothing of the idea that plants are male and female and that they cross-fertilise ... but this was a radical idea in the early eighteenth century. His initial classification of plants was on the basis of their sex organs, their stamens and pistils, but he found this did not work very well. Although plants had common names and sometimes Latin descriptions of their appearance or

usefulness there was no general classification of plants. His genius was in the care and precision he brought to his own system of classification. He did not believe in evolution, believing that things were largely static rather than ever-changing, so there is an irony in the fact that he gave not only evolution but plant-breeding the essential tools both used to create changes and to define the changes that had occurred naturally.

The two things that every eighteenth century medical student needed to study were medicine, naturally, and botany.

And one of the most lively-minded, innovative, and knowledgeable botanists was Goethe.

People do still read and study and praise and analyse and quote Goethe's poetry and novels. But I would like to suggest that we remember him for his thoughtful contribution to the theories of evolution through his love and knowledge of plants. He is the epitome of the eighteenth century figure in which the natural, the spiritual, and the creative, came together in ways that strengthened and emboldened the mind and the outlook.

Nicholas Boyle in his two volume biography of Goethe wrote, "Around 1780, partly as a result of the geological studies necessitated by his work for the Mines Commission, Goethe began to acquire an interest in matters of natural science which was to prove lifelong. With the one important exception of optics, his involvement with all the sciences that were most to concern him—geology, anatomy, and botany—has its roots in these early Weimar years. Because these interests so graphically exemplify the many-sidedness of his mind, because at so many points they reflect principles important in understanding his poetry, and because Goethe was a suggestive influence on nineteenth-century biological science, particularly in Germany, it is necessary to be clear ... his actual achievements in these areas cannot be called substantial."

Goethe's book *Metamorphosis of Plants* was written as a form of opposition to Linneaus' work; not because he was saying the Swedish botanist's classifications were wrong but rather that by focussing on the differences between plants (going by the number of sepals or the arrangement of petals) we miss the essential unity of the plant world and indeed of all life forms. I found the chapter on Goethe's ideas in *The Secret Life of Plants* fascinating: "To break away from this taxonomania, to put life and love and sex back into the plant world, took real poetic genius. In September of 1786, eight years after the death of Linneaus, a tall, handsome man of thirty-seven, extremely attractive to women, who had been spending his holidays in Karlsbad taking the waters and strolling with the ladies in the woods on long botanical expeditions, suddenly rebelled against the whole system. "Secretly and stealthily" he abandoned mistress and friends to go south toward the Alps. Incognito, with only his servant aware that they were heading for *das Land wo die Citronen bluehen*, the traveler in real life privy councilor and director of mines for the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar, was delighted at the beauty and variety of the southern vegetation beyond the Brenner Pass. This secret trip to Italy, the culmination of years of longing, was to constitute a climax in the life of Germany's greatest poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe."

His sense of a vision of life in which seen and unseen forces transformed and evolved life forms continually informs all his writings. From Naples he wrote to his friend Johann von Herder, "I must tell you confidentially that I am very close to the Secret of the creation of plants and that it is the simplest thing one could imagine. The archetypal plant will be the strangest creature in the world, which nature herself ought to envy me. With this model and the key to it, one can invent plants endlessly which must be consistent—that is, if they did not exist, yet they could exist, and not some artistic or poetic shadows and appearances but possessing inner truth and inevitability. The same law can be applied to every living thing."

His sense of the archetypal plant was as a principle and a life force rather than a specific form. He defined six stages in the growth of every plant; and two forces, expansion and contraction, caused by the fertility of the soil, the amount of rain and so on, working on each plant at each stage, and through their interaction causing infinitesimal changes in form; it was a

wonderfully sympathetic view of life in which there is no definitive points of life and death but rather the state of ‘dying into being’. Later he took it further seeing in all plant life two tendencies—to grow vertically and to grow spirally—of which he said the spiral tendency, which conceals itself during the development of the plant but predominates during blossoming and fruiting, was female, while the struggle to sustain itself and grow upwards was male. “When we see that the vertical system is definitely male and the spiral definitely female, we will be able to conceive of all vegetation as androgynous from the root up. In the course of the transformation of growth the two systems are separated, and take opposite courses to be reunited on a higher level,” he wrote. The two tendencies in plants, the pull to grow downwards into earth and dampness and the push to grow upwards into light and air were part of the metamorphosis which held in it the constant ability to transform and adapt. At a deeper level his belief in a spiritual sense of the male and female in every part of life gave a depth and sympathy to all his writings.

This Goethe, the man of eternal questing curiosity, is remembered in a genus of plants, the Goethea, and a mineral, goethite, but these names owed more to his status as famous man of letters than his scientific work. Yet he deserves to be remembered for his intense interest in the natural world, for coining the word ‘morphology’, for suggesting the setting up of weather stations among other ideas, and for promoting a profound sense of the ‘oneness of life’ ... it is a vision we need more than ever ...

\* \* \* \* \*

Goethe wrote some wonderful poetry, and some very pedestrian lines, but other poets also wrote to and about him; such as these lines by Elizabeth Barret Browning as ‘Stanzas to Bettine, The Friend of Goethe’:

Our Goethe’s friend, Bettine,  
Hadst thou the second sight—  
Upturning worship and delight,  
So lovingly and sheenly,  
Toward his face, as women will!  
The childhood ’neath thine eyelid still? ...

Not one of her most inspiring effusions but a reminder that women found both the man and the writing attractive.

\* \* \* \* \*

And what of Goethe’s *Faust*? It is still quoted, remembered, used as an inspiration, and yet in a curious way it is mildly disappointing. Because his Faust is a creature of the Enlightenment. He is too logical, too calm, too willing to discuss his motives and ideas. The real Faust was a man of the dying medieval world where superstition and magic were still a profound and powerful part of the mind baggage of students and clergy. To the real Faust the devil was more than an interesting idea to be discussed and debated. He was an integral part of life ... and death.

Goethe’s Faust says:  
I have, alas, studied philosophy,  
Jurisprudence and medicine, too,  
And, worst of all, theology  
With keen endeavor, through and through—  
And here I am, for all my lore,  
The wretched fool I was before.  
Called Master of Arts, and Doctor to boot,  
For ten years almost I confute  
And up and down, wherever it goes,  
I drag my students by the nose—  
And see that for all our science and art  
We can know nothing. It burns my heart.

Of course, I am smarter than all the shysters,  
The doctors, and teachers, and scribes, and Christers;  
No scruple nor doubt could make me ill,  
I am not afraid of the Devil or hell—

Cynical, laconic, pedantic, even mildly humorous—but this Faust is not really a figure who fears or provokes fear. Perhaps Goethe could not create a figure who belongs in the shadows and the nether regions of the mind because his own enjoyment of life, its beauty and wonder and infinite creativity, was inimical to someone who would deliberately close himself off from that joy?

\* \* \* \* \*

August 29<sup>th</sup> : Gillian Rubinstein  
                  John Locke  
August 30<sup>th</sup> : Carmel Bird  
                  Mary Shelley  
August 31<sup>st</sup> : Charmian Clift  
September 1<sup>st</sup> : Edgar Rice Burroughs  
September 2<sup>nd</sup> : D. K. Broster  
                  Eugene Field  
                  John Le-Gay Brereton  
September 3<sup>rd</sup> : Will Dyson

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‘As Will Dyson suggested, Australia may some day, like Germany, Russia, or America, need the sympathy of the world; and such sympathy is not given to a country that has remained intellectually suburban, derivative and unresponsive.’ I wonder what Nettie Palmer would say of Australia now?

Will Dyson was a firm socialist and this underpins all his best cartoons. In style he is not unlike Norman Lindsay but where Lindsay went galloping rightwards Dyson remained firmly on the left. Large capitalists feature in many of his cartoons (what he called ‘Survival of the Fattest’) with their waistcoats stretched over their massive stomachs. At the time of the suffragettes he has a skinny ragged little girl saying to her mother, “Mummer, why don’t they forcibly feed us?” And his cartoon of the Big Four (Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Orlando and Woodrow Wilson) leaving the hall at Versailles with Clemenceau saying, “Curious! I seem to hear a child weeping!” was seen as powerfully prescient. His war illustrations are conventional but strong and sympathetic to the soldiers and underpinned by his belief the misery and horror was the outcome of rampant capitalism.

He came from a talented family—his brother Edward was born on the gold diggings near Ballarat and became a miner before becoming a radical journalist and writing stories such as the still-anthologised ‘A Golden Shanty’ and poems which he collected into *Rhymes from the Mines, and other Lines*—and he married into another talented family, the Lindsays, as did his sister Jean.

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I was reading a very old anthology of Australian poets, which included Will’s brother Ted Dyson and his poem ‘The Old Whim Horse’ but what particularly intrigued me was the information in it that Henry Parkes had been a prolific poet. He brought out four books of poetry, *Stolen Moments*, *Murmurs of the Stream*, *The Beauteous Terrorist & other poems*, and *Fragmentary Thoughts*, as well as uncollected poems and a variety of other writings.

Robert Travers in his biography of Parkes says, “As a poet he perpetrated some of the most execrable verse ever to raise a smirk in *The Bulletin* office while, as a businessman, he went spectacularly bankrupt on several occasions. Yet his doggerel found a publisher and his finances were restored by public subscription. Sir Charles Dilke, the English cabinet minister



whose own parliamentary ambitions had been shipwrecked on the reefs of scandal, observed somewhat ruefully: ‘His debts, his poetry, are powerless to sink him’.”

He was opportunistic, contradictory, chaotic, pedantic, pragmatic, but he was also optimistic, at times very kind, idealistic, and visionary. Vance Palmer said of him, “he was never happier, never more himself, than when making a speech at the opening of some school or School of Arts. All his simple humanity came out as he told over and over again the story of his early struggles, his resolve to become acquainted with the best that had been thought and written in the world: insisted that light could be brought to any humble bush home by a shelf of books, beauty by a garden in front of the door. There was never any suggestion of talking from a height. His homely humour, his uncertain aspirates, were guarantees that, in spite of little struggles for office, for place and precedence, he would always remain a man of the people”. He went massively bankrupt twice, he placed himself in some very peculiar situations, his judgement was often woefully awry, but I felt that the good he did probably outweighed his many mistakes and deceits. He genuinely cared about expanding the franchise, about providing opportunities for destitute children (including the purchase of a sail-training ship for abandoned boys), he spoke against Chinese immigration but pressed for the Chinese at Lambing Flat to be recompensed for their losses, he was never a true republican but he promoted a more egalitarian society under the idea of ‘a fair field and no favours’, he favoured the abolition of the death penalty but didn’t object to it being used against the deranged man who took a pot shot at Prince Alfred, he used his newspaper the *Empire* as a means of providing a wide and interesting range of information to readers, he was voted in to the NSW parliament by a wide range of people (in a wide range of electorates!), he was an affectionate husband and father and encouraged his daughter’s writing ambitions, but perhaps we owe him most for his promotion of a scheme of universal education against the bitter dissent of the Catholic bishops. He is remembered as ‘the Father of Federation’, this farm boy from Warwickshire who went out to work at eight years old.

He is not remembered as a poet.

Our home is in the wild bush far,  
Of peaceful spots the boonest;  
Where the kangaroo and emu are,  
Which flee the white man soonest.

This probably explains why.

And I went back and read Ted Dyson’s piece later with greater pleasure ... although it has a melancholy very different from Parkes’ ebullient nature and writing.

...

All the hands have gone, for the rich reef paid out,  
And the company waits till the calls come in;  
But the old grey horse, like the claim, is played out,  
And no market’s near for his bone and skin.  
So they let him live, and they left him grazing  
By the creek, and oft in the evening dim  
I have seen him stand on the rises, gazing  
At the ruined brace and the rotting whim. ...

\* \* \* \* \*

Will Dyson’s wife was Ruby Lindsay and his sister Jean married Lionel Lindsay. Their brother Daryl Lindsay married Joan Weigall, best known for writing *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, but I was intrigued to find that she was related to Emma Hamilton, wife of a Tasmanian governor and a patroness of literature in the state. The Lady Hamilton Literary Society which she founded still exists in Tasmania.

Ruby Lindsay tends to be overlooked in the Lindsay pantheon; she was the seventh of ten children and much quieter and shyer than her Bohemian brothers. Her brother Daryl wrote in

his memoir *The Leafy Tree* of her wedding to cartoonist Will Dyson: “She got stage fright, bolted through the house into the backyard and picking up her skirts, scaled the adjoining fence into the churchyard. Pink in the face, she made her entry through the vestry. And what is more, the ceremony over, she took to her heels at the church door and was chased back to the house by an hilarious bridegroom, to be greeted by cheers and laughter over the champagne in the old drawing room.”

But the tragedy waiting for her when she and Will went to London where he became an official war artist during World War One came just after the war when she went to Ireland to visit relatives. “It was her first holiday for some years and she was as light-hearted as a schoolgirl and captivated all the Irish Lindsays. The plague of pneumonic influenza was sweeping through Europe ... In Dublin Ruby picked up a germ and arrived back in London with a temperature and died four days later.” She was thirty-two. It is useless to speculate how her career as an artist, which she had fought hard to achieve as a woman in a man’s world, might have developed.

Joanna Mendelssohn in an interesting but less than flattering portrait of the family in *Letters & Liars* has little to say about Ruby but most of it is kind:

‘Do you remember Ruby?’ I asked Bingo (Lionel’s daughter Jean) one day. She was showing me family photographs and there was little Bingo, dressed in a sheet as a child from classical Greece, trailing behind Ruby, also clad in a sheet, looking as beautiful as a goddess.

‘How could I forget? She was so beautiful that I used to follow her everywhere. It must have been quite embarrassing for her and uncle Bill, you know.’

‘Why?’

‘Well, they’d just come up to Sydney because they were newly engaged and of course they wanted to be alone, but I was always there. And of course just after they were married they left for England and I never saw her again because she died.’

‘What was Bill like?’

‘He was wonderful, uncle Bill. I don’t know why Norman said he was bitter, except that he loved Ruby so much and he mourned her when she died. It was so sad to lose her like that.’

Will Dyson wrote of Ruby, ‘She was doing such beautiful work — just hinting at a new development — she was a natural painter and we had plans for living so that she could paint landscapes all through the summer — for which she yearned ... I think we loved each other more at the end than ever and had made elaborate plans to fit a new consciousness of this ... ’

Dyson died in 1938.

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- September 4<sup>th</sup> : Mary Renault  
Chateaubriand
- September 5<sup>th</sup> : Arthur Koestler
- September 6<sup>th</sup> : Richard Hull
- September 7<sup>th</sup> : C. J. Dennis
- September 8<sup>th</sup> : Siegfried Sassoon
- September 9<sup>th</sup> : Phyllis Whitney  
James Hilton
- September 10<sup>th</sup> : Peter Lovesey  
Stephen Jay Gould
- September 11<sup>th</sup> : O. Henry
- September 12<sup>th</sup> : Kevin Brophy  
H. L. Mencken  
Alfred A. Knopf
- September 13<sup>th</sup> : Roald Dahl

September 14<sup>th</sup> : Eric Bentley  
 Baron von Humboldt

September 15<sup>th</sup> : Agatha Christie  
 James Fennimore Cooper

September 16<sup>th</sup> : Wilfrid Burchett

September 17<sup>th</sup> : William Carlos Williams

September 18<sup>th</sup> : Dr Samuel Johnson

September 19<sup>th</sup> : William Golding  
 Arthur Rackham

September 20<sup>th</sup> : Upton Sinclair

September 21<sup>st</sup> : H. G. Wells

September 22<sup>nd</sup> : Murray Bail

September 23<sup>rd</sup> : Baroness Orczy

September 24<sup>th</sup> : F. Scott Fitzgerald

September 25<sup>th</sup> : Jessica Anderson

September 26<sup>th</sup> : T. S. Eliot

September 27<sup>th</sup> : John Marsden  
 Faith Bandler  
 Louis Auchincloss

September 28<sup>th</sup> : Ellis Peters

September 29<sup>th</sup> : Elizabeth Gaskell

September 30<sup>th</sup> : Truman Capote

October 1<sup>st</sup> : Louis Untermeyer

October 2<sup>nd</sup> : Graham Greene

October 3<sup>rd</sup> : A. F. E. Horniman  
 James Herriot  
 Thomas Wolfe

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“ ... one would never have known that a great war was coming, and when news reached New York in 1773 that a group of prominent Bostonians, dressed up as Mohawk Indians, had boarded East India Company ships at Griffin’s Wharf and thrown 342 chests of tea from the London firm of Davison & Newman valued at £10,000 into Boston Harbor, it was treated by New Yorkers as a great joke. It was labeled, derisively, the Boston Tea Party. After all, who cared about tea? New Yorkers were not tea drinkers and much preferred hot chocolate or spiced cider, or a tot of Madeira.” (*America’s Secret Aristocracy* by Stephen Birmingham)

“There is a legend about the origin of tea. It is said that a South Indian sage named Bodhidharma journeyed into China in about the sixth century to meditate. He used to meditate before a blank wall. During one of his meditational periods he became annoyed with himself because he felt drowsy—so annoyed that he cut off his eyelids, so that he would never fall asleep again, and threw them away. They supposedly took root on the spot and became a plant which until that time was unknown—tea—and the leaves of the plant were useful in keeping one awake.

The tea plant did originate in South China and the sage Bodhidharma developed the philosophy of Zen, whose followers even today sip tea as they meditate.”

(*Don’t Fall Off The Mountain*, Shirley MacLaine)

More interesting to me at the moment is the daughter of one of the great tea families.

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I came upon this simple statement: ‘The following year (1903) an English heiress named Miss Horniman agreed to subsidise the society and refurbish a building for it. Accordingly, in late 1904 the Abbey Theatre opened on central Dublin’s Abbey Street. Lady Gregory, W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge were the first directors.’

I wondered who Miss Horniman was and why every mention of her is so casual and uninformative.

W. G. Rogers in *Ladies Bountiful* says, “Travel from the British Isles all over the continent or touch down at almost any spot on the globe and British tea will have preceded you. The sun may have set on part of Her Majesty’s empire but never on the cup that cheers. Not, of course, that it always cheers, for instead of being served in a piping-hot pot it may come in a fast-cooling cup with a sodden, mousy little bag tied by a string to an illustrated tag. On it you often see a tiny box outlined fuzzily in red and the words “Hornimans Tea,” plus the information “Also in Tins and Packets.” It’s good tea. Even if it were not, your duty is to drink with extra-special relish out of gratitude to the Horniman money that once conferred a major boon on the theater in England and Ireland and indirectly served it well in the United States.

“William Butler Yeats, poet, playwright, and philosopher, indulged a variety of beliefs about the supernatural. For a while he fancied the notions of Madame Blavatsky, who was his personal friend. He was a theosophist. He consulted mediums from London to Dublin to Chicago—as if spirits might more easily penetrate American air than English or English air than Irish. In London he was beguiled by the Order of the Golden Dawn. This congregation rapt in the unearthly included Annie Horniman, of the family of tea merchants in Manchester. She was Yeats’s secretary for about five years. Mindful of her wealth, he figured optimistically that she might support his and Lady Gregory’s bold project for a National Irish Theater. Ireland, however, did not matter to her at all, nor did any Irish theater or Lady Gregory much; Yeats was her interest, or Yeats’ plays, and she was prepared to invest her fortune to make them known. She financed a London production of his *The Land o’ Heart’s Desire*. Though some of her money wound up in the coffers of the Golden Dawn, most of it was consecrated to that other strange world of make-believe, the theater.

“Her father was F.T. Horniman M.P., whose modest pursuit of culture went only so far as the collection of the curious. Thin, tall, and dark, she wore not dresses but robes, heavy and stiff, of tapestry-like material, buckled, somber in color, the costume for stage rather than street, and she loaded herself with opals. Not liked by either the Irish or the English, she admitted she was hard to get along with. Her tart, uncomplimentary description of herself as “a middle-aged, middle-class, suburban, dissenting spinster” resembled too much the phrases she did not hesitate to apply, to their annoyance, to others. Furthermore, it was accurate. Instead of shunning controversy, she was prone to start it. Disapproving of the male sex, she nagged and harried it by pointing out how little it accomplished compared to what she could do. In mocking salute to the lords of creation she opened her speeches always: “Gentlemen and ladies.”

“When she was a child, the theater was severely forbidden her. What wonders do parents perversely achieve! The theater became the dearest concern of her life, and she provided the money for the Abbey.

“Her work with the Dublin Company and Yeats began near the turn of the century. No doubt the moving spirit was Lady Gregory, of Coole — Yeats’s mistress, James Joyce glibly asserted, and she did indeed coddle him, though she may have been no more intimate with him than Miss Horniman was. The Irish actors, unprofessional, laboring for no money at all and so far for little glory, still performed in barren halls. Obviously a center for headquarters was required. Coming munificently to the rescue, Miss Horniman offered to buy two adjacent buildings at Marlborough Street and Abbey Street. For the remodeling, Joseph Holloway was architect, while Willie Fay advised on technical matters, in so far as the officious Miss Horniman did not handle both jobs herself.

“The initial Abbey project cost thirteen hundred pounds. After its historic opening in

December 1904, Miss Horniman assumed more and more of the costs, paying actors some overdue salaries and making up for some of the losses suffered on tour. Twelve, fifteen, or, according to one figure, twenty thousand Horniman pounds were sunk eventually in the Abbey.

“To be sure she interfered outside her proper province. She demanded changes in production. She designed and sewed costumes, and not very well either. Her ideas about the place and function of the theater were sometimes formidably unshakeable. She was stubborn and difficult as well as dedicated. Her blunt criticisms left scars. A woman then in her forties, she had a mind of her own and felt entitled to speak it since she was paying the piper.

“At the end she proposed turning the property over to the directors, including Yeats and Lady Gregory, for a nominal thousand pounds—in effect, another outright gift. Due to an unfortunate misunderstanding involving Abbey manager Lennox Robinson, she broke off negotiations angrily and left Lady Gregory the ungracious job of hustling for fresh funds. Whether in fact Miss Horniman hoped to quash the Dublin venture, she was impatient to launch another. Her benefactions were transferred to Manchester, from which, after all, her income derived, in order to found the Gaiety Theater.

“If contemporaries grumbled about her, did posterity do her justice and laud her generosity? She was subjected to one scathing attack by Jack Kahane, of the famous Obelisk Press—which published many fine experimental writers and sent every one of them a bill. “I despise Miss Horniman,” Kahane wrote, “the ugly bedizened spinster in whose veins ran tea ... for having begun a fine scheme, set alight a blaze of endeavor, and then wrecked it, doused it for I know not what stupid, spoiled rich woman’s whim. Bad cess to her.”

“That was a minority judgment. Thanks to her, Manchester could boast of sheltering Britain’s first variety theater. Her support of Shaw’s Arms and the Man amounted to a significant boost for the modern stage. Because of her experience with the Abbey she has been classed with Lilian Baylis for her unique work in theater management; and Lilian Baylis modeled her Old Vic on Miss Horniman’s Gaiety. St John Ervine said that she “did more to raise the quality of the English theater than any other person of her time,” and she was elevated to the rank of Companion of Honour. She died in 1937. Her portrait hung in the Abbey.”

And all this on those cups of tea!

Except that the people who grew and picked the tea did not share in the riches at the other end. Someone gave me a leaflet called ‘Tea The gift of the POOR to the RICH’. I wonder: how would Annie Horniman have responded to such a leaflet?

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I used to be vaguely under the impression that tea roses were developed in Edwardian times with the idea of creating blooms which would grace the tea table in amongst the silver teapots and delicate china cups and saucers. I don’t know where I got that idea and it isn’t the true explanation.

My aunt happened to ask me for the correct name for an old-fashioned purple rose we had in the garden so I went browsing in books of old roses. This is a fascinating pastime. It makes me want to rush out and fill the yard with time-honoured damasks and rare moss roses. More to the point I came upon this explanation, in *Heirloom Roses* by Rayford Clayton Reddell. “From crosses made between Bourbon and Noisette roses and a couple of the original stud roses from China, the Tea rose was born. Like man, the first one was named ‘Adam’.

“From ‘Adam’ onward, it was easy to see that a whole new world of roses was about to reveal itself. These Tea roses weren’t the ticket to rose utopia, however; although the blooms were beautiful and lovingly formed, their bushes were weak and many varieties had deadly reaction to cold. But they were deliciously fragrant, redolent of a scent also dubbed Tea. For the many people who complain that Tea roses don’t smell like tea at all, it should be noted that that wasn’t how the name was born. The “tea” derives from the fact that the scent of these roses was similar to that of the wood used to make the crates that once held tea leaves during shipment from the Far East.”

My mother was particularly good at ‘telling’ the tea leaves. I am sure we did not take her

seriously or watch out for those mysterious parcels which were always arriving, or about to arrive, in abundance. But she made it funny and mysterious and exciting. And after all what else can you do with your leftover tea leaves except clean your carpets, dye your eggs, make your soil more acid, or stir up some delicious ‘barm-bracks’ for tea?

I came upon this delightful little contribution by a fourteen-year-old girl in Aberdeen to Peter and Iona Opie’s *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*. ‘Fortune-telling by tea leaves is always popular. Leaves in the shape of a heart means future happiness. If there are dots round the side it means money. If two hearts appear there will be a marriage. Leaves in the shape of a letter means good news is coming. If a married person finds a shape of a flower it indicates that children will bring happiness. A sign of roads means happy days ahead. A ring at the bottom of the cup means separation.’ And I imagine a very large bulky-looking leaf is a mysterious parcel coming soon for you. In the meantime—enjoy your tea.

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- October 4<sup>th</sup> : Damon Runyon  
October 5<sup>th</sup> : Vaclav Havel  
October 6<sup>th</sup> : Val Biro  
                  Johann Ebel  
October 7<sup>th</sup> : Thomas Kenneally  
October 8<sup>th</sup> : John Cowper Powys  
October 9<sup>th</sup> : Jill Ker Conway  
                  Miguel de Cervantes  
October 10<sup>th</sup> : Ivo Andric  
October 11<sup>th</sup> : François Mauriac  
October 12<sup>th</sup> : James McAuley  
                  Edward VI  
October 13<sup>th</sup> : Guy Boothby  
October 14<sup>th</sup> : Miles Franklin  
October 15<sup>th</sup> : Manuel da Fonseca  
                  Virgil  
                  C. P. Snow  
October 16<sup>th</sup> : Daisy Bates  
                  Noah Webster  
                  Oscar Wilde  
October 17<sup>th</sup> : Les Murray  
                  William Smith O’Brien

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I might not ever have read the journals of William Smith O’Brien if it had not been for an odd association. I discovered that my great grandfather, Edmund Huband Smith, had gone to ‘St Columba’s College’ before going on to Trinity College Dublin. I knew he had been born in Co. Tyrone and at first assumed that the college was in the north of Ireland but as the family moved back to Dublin after a number of years there I wasn’t sure. The idea came to me to browse through the alumni records and see if other students who had attended the same college were predominantly from the north or south. It seemed very unlikely that a student from Cork or Limerick would have been sent to Tyrone. While I was browsing I came upon an Edward O’Brien, son of William Smith O’Brien. Was his father ‘our’ W. S. O’Brien? I borrowed three books from the library, his jail journals *To Solitude Consigned 1849-1853*, a book of his family letters, and Richard Davis’ *Revolutionary Imperialist*.

I found him interesting although hard to warm to; his writing comes from a well-stocked mind. He wrote observations on a wide variety of things, including the penal system and his

many thoughts about Ireland. He tried his hand at poetry. He even drew up a Constitution for Australia. I found that, yes, the College was at Stachallan near Dublin and someone has been kind enough to write a history of it. But perhaps most interesting among his comments were his thoughts on Tasmania's Aboriginal people. He wrote 'The fate of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Tasmania excites our interest and compassion—ought we not to add, our indignation? It appears to be a law, to the operation of which there are but few exceptions, that where savage tribes are brought into contact with the usurpations of what are called civilized communities, the native race gradually perishes through vices, diseases, or cruelties incidental to such contact. The conquest of Southern America and its adjacent islands by the Spaniards, as also the settlement of North America by British Colonists, furnishes painful illustrations of this general law : but perhaps in the annals of mankind there is no page more dark than that which records the extinction of the Aborigines of Tasmania. That the inter-mixture and vicinity of the natives became, in the progress of settlement, incompatible with the security of the colonists, is a plea urged to justify their extermination—but who can excuse the wrongs and barbarities which provoked to deeds of savage retaliation these untutored children of the woods? That they were amenable to influences, and susceptible to attachments founded upon gratitude for kindness, is sufficiently proved by the success of the efforts made by Mr. Robinson to conciliate them, even after they had been exasperated by protracted ill-treatment.'

Today we would see George Augustus Robinson as part of the problem. We would also be inclined to think that the 'savage tribes' were those who brought 'vices, diseases and cruelties'. But O'Brien always tempered his sympathy with the view that 'native races' did not have the right to control large areas of land while the nations of Europe were bursting at the seams with poor but honest peasants. The simple yet very obvious question never seems to have occurred to him: why did the indigenous peoples of Australia, the Americas, New Zealand and elsewhere remain as small populations limiting themselves to the capacity of their land to feed them while the Europeans seemed to have stepped on to a terrible treadmill where they constantly ran the danger of starving. He had seen at first hand some of the horrors of the Irish Famine but he never seems to have pondered on how Tasmania's Aboriginal people had maintained a stable population for thousands of years.

To his credit he did not speak of the Aborigines as dismissively as Winston Churchill spoke of the Palestinians: 'I do not agree that the dog in the manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time. I do not admit that right. I do not admit, for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America, or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race, a more world-wise race, to put it that way, has come in and taken their place.'

His belief that nomadism must constantly give way to agriculture may even have seemed reasonable in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. But there was still only so much land off which the nomads and herders could be driven.

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The debate on the writing of Aboriginal-European history appears to be about the need for greater accuracy and responsibility but there are a great many confusions within it. It is being called a revisionist debate but revisionism is what began thirty-plus years ago when the comfortable assumption that Australia was peacefully discovered, peacefully explored, and peacefully settled began to be challenged. Yet less comfortable information has always been available. Captain Cook's journals, for instance, provide in his own words the information that his crew shot at indigenous people, killing several and wounding others who quite likely also died. The horror that this revisionist debate engendered came through the collection of large amounts of widely scattered material into compact narratives which made it much harder for us to cling to the peaceful settlement view. Australia was invaded, its occupied lands were stolen, its people were massacred. No part of Australia can stand outside the horror of the collected and published information. No wonder we are making heavy weather of reconciliation. Our

comfort zones have been under attack from every direction.

The current challenge to the revisionist view revolves around two difficult areas: the conflict between oral and written sources, and the way in which written sources should be interpreted and used.

The claim that because no authorisation or discussion of genocide has been found in written sources is in itself a source of further conflict. Governor Sorrell wrote lengthy reports back to London, hundreds of pages long, yet makes no mention at all of indigenous people. Should we take that as evidence that relations between white and black were peaceful and harmonious and therefore not worth mentioning—or should we be extremely suspicious and wonder why Sorrell felt it would be more diplomatic to say nothing about a highly damaging and traumatic issue? That no written authorisation has been found raises the question as to whether people wrote exact reports of what they knew to be happening, it raises questions as to whether people in authority actually knew what was happening everywhere throughout the colonies, and it raises questions as to what people felt should be committed to paper. Who, after all, writes an exact account of their day-to-day activities in a diary, in a letter, or in a news report? And people living in remoter areas were frequently ill-at-ease with the written word anyway. When Anthony Trollope wrote home to his family “Of the Australian black we may certainly say that he has to go. That he should perish without unnecessary suffering should be the aim of all who are concerned in the matter” it might be thought that he had defined his attitude in solitary pondering on the issue but it seems far more likely he was simply repeating attitudes he heard widely discussed everywhere he went. The Reverend John West wrote of the Tasmanians, “their appearance is offensive, their proximity obstructive, their presence renders everything insecure. Thus the muskets of the soldier, and those of the bandits, are equally useful; they clear the land of a detested incubus.” It is doubtful that he killed anyone himself but it would be hard not to accept that he was advocating genocide.

The numbers of Aborigines in Tasmania, and Australia-wide, remains a figure of debate. How can you decide how many people died if you do not know how many people were living here when the British arrived? Where figures are known the situation is grim; eg:

‘The coming of the white man and his stock marked the rapid demise of the Aborigines. In 1845 there were about 3000 in the vicinity of Bourke, by 1863 that number had dwindled to 1000 and by 1884 there were only 25 men, 35 women, 10 boys and 10 girls left. There had been a decrease to an extent scarcely short of annihilation ... owing in part to the diseases that accompany the white man’ (*The Dark People of Bourke* by Max Kamien) If these numbers were living on the arid plains around Bourke we can assume that the kinder wetter more fertile lands, beaches, rivers, and seas round Tasmania were supporting a much higher population.

So the question remains: what happened to everyone?

Genocide as a description is rarely defined. In the nineteenth century it was used either to describe the total extermination of a population or to define the loss of a viable community by the loss of childbearing members of that community, the failure to bring children to healthy maturity as a replacement population, and the breakdown of the transfer of language, religion and culture. Its twentieth century definition is that which is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948 which says “The purpose of the Convention is to prevent and punish genocide whether committed in time of war or in time of peace. The convention defines genocide as the commitment of certain acts with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such. The acts constituting genocide are killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures to prevent birth, and the forcible transfer of children.” It goes on to say “Not only genocide itself but also conspiracy or incitement to commit it, as well as attempts to commit genocide and complicity in the crime, are punishable under the Convention.” Every newspaper which described Aborigines as ‘sub-human’ or which printed cartoons designed to encourage this belief could be said to be inciting people towards the belief that “he has to go”.



If we speak of genocide it is important that we are clear on which definition is being used. All three definitions can be used, with justification, to describe the Tasmanian situation.

Newspapers in the nineteenth century were poorly resourced and under close government control. Reporting as a profession was dependant on who was available and what information individuals, clergy, landowners, bureaucrats, explorers, and government officials chose to make available. Transport and communications were poor. Anyone who has worked on nineteenth-century family history comes upon the imponderables of families who had a marriage solemnised and three children baptised when a priest or minister happened to come into the district. Deaths, particularly of infants, often were not officially reported or registered. So how should we regard the vexed question of Aboriginal deaths, including the loss of children when women were injured, traumatized, or killed?

The debate has largely focused on written materials in the public domain. But large amounts of material remain in private ownership. My own family were reluctant to publish my great-grandfather's diaries, of his long driving trips to take cattle to the Palmer River goldfields—for the extraordinary reason that he had attracted a young Aboriginal man to come with him as his offsider by providing him with a supply of tobacco. That he also paid him 'white man's wages' of thirty shillings a week plus tucker did not alter the 'shame' of the tobacco question for several strongly anti-smoking relatives. It seems likely that other interesting materials remain unpublished for equally imponderable reasons. And it may be that owners of material may be reluctant to place controversial materials into the public arena at a time when they could be used to bolster a particular position among historians rather than simply being seen as part of the quest to add to our knowledge of the past.

Yet the current debate, although reduced unfortunately to personalities and nit-picking (I have heard it called the Battle of the Footnotes), is still valuable. We cannot place a culture of exactitude on the past because it was transmitted, both orally and written, by people who had not been trained and who had not the means (or the wish in most cases) to carry out rigorous forensic and judicial investigations into reports of massacres, woundings, epidemics, poisonings, kidnappings, starvation, or abuse. The past must inevitably be an approximate idea. But that is no excuse for slipshod reproductions or errors in transcription. When it comes to the manner gaps in our knowledge are plumbed we must begin to be more open to means beyond the oral and the written and look to everything—from the evidence of the landscape, paleobotany, paleoanthropology, and all their related disciplines, even curious abilities such as psychometry are being used overseas to bring the past back to life. The current debate remains narrow. I hope we can use it as a foundation stone to broaden and enhance our understanding of the past so that reconciliation is built on the strongest, most honest, and durable foundations possible.

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What weight should we give to written evidence? What weight should we give to oral evidence? If I say to someone, "My dad was in a bad car accident last week" it's very unlikely they would be crass enough to say, "Oh, I didn't see anything in the paper—are you *sure* he was?" We accept the things people say and we accept the things people write at about the same level of belief; knowing written things can be an honest mistake, an attempt to mislead, a failure to collect all the evidence; knowing the things people say may not have been thought through carefully, may be said to impress, may become confused or exaggerated over time ... In the wake of the September 11 attacks a huge death toll was posited which gradually came down as people were found to have escaped, to have not been in the office then ... In the wake of the Dili massacre Indonesia stated that 19 people had died and 91 were injured but this number rose dramatically as information seeped out. Even so, with both attacks there is no absolute right number. Both the final death tolls are based on 'best evidence' not a certain knowledge that they are the final truth. In the case of the death tolls for Aboriginal people we must go with 'best evidence' remembering to give due weight to each kind of evidence. Thus:

"The grotesque extremes of climate—convulsive cyclones, apocalyptic floods and

droughts—seem to be the meteorological correlative of the greed, brutal homicides, nonchalant racism, suspicion and betrayal that boils away there. There are dead bodies everywhere, not least the 1869 massacre of an estimated 300 Aborigines in the so-called Goulbolba dispersal.”

(George Alexander reviewing Ross Gibson’s *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland*.)

‘I met a white man some weeks later, a man whose father had worked for Jardine. I mentioned the punitive expeditions and shootings which were a feature of Jardine’s administration in the Torres Strait Islands and the cape.

“Shoot them,” he exclaimed. “My dad told me they dragged the bodies away with horses!””

(*These Were My Tribesmen* by Alan Marshall.)

“The Kamilaroi Nation suffered some of the worst documented atrocities in colonial history. It was the clans to the north, in the Gwydir River basin, who were slaughtered. Major James Nunn provided a figure of forty warriors killed at the battle of Waterloo Creek in 1838, but an eyewitness reported three hundred men, women and children slaughtered. Four months later twenty-eight unarmed Kamilaroi people were murdered at Myall Creek.”

(*Wild Horses Don’t Swim* by Michael Keenan.)

“It was here, Duncan told me, that a tragedy had occurred in the early days when the blacks were still actively resentful of the white man’s encroachment on their hunting grounds. When a stockman’s son disappeared one day while looking for cattle the father, jumping to conclusions and assuming that the blacks had speared him, called a vengeance party. This was led by the late Sergeant Palmer, who rode out with black trackers and several white settlers from Fitzroy Crossing. They caught a large number of tribesmen crossing the open plain, chased after them into the hills and rode in on each side of them. They shot every man and boy they could find. Later—too late—the body of the stockman’s son was found. He had died of thirst.

The bones of the aborigines remained bleaching in the sun on Skeleton Hill for many years, and the place became a well-known landmark. One day, not too many years ago, the whitened bones disappeared. They had been taken away by the local tribe and buried in caves, no one knows just where.

We rode slowly past Skeleton Hill, the three of us, that afternoon. Watty, the old man of the tribe, was the only one who spoke. “The old people,” he said, and he spoke with surprising gentleness, “they still remember ... ”

(*Cape York to Kimberley* by George Farwell.)

“The last large-scale massacre, of 31 Aborigines, occurred at Alice Springs in 1928.”

(*Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond.)

‘Many Aborigines ... were driven into a swamp, and mounted police rode round and round, and shot them off indiscriminately until they were all destroyed ... men, women and children ... Forty-five heads were collected and boiled down for the sake of the skulls.’

(John Maynard quoting from Neil Gunson’s collection of the writings of the Rev. L. E. Threlkeld who ran a mission at Lake Macquarie.)

Hilary McPhee in *Other People’s Words* gives the story of ‘Benalla’s secret’ of April 1838. ‘The accounts that were sent north in the next few weeks describe an attack by as many as three hundred and as few as twenty Pangerang warriors, in which eight of the shepherds were killed and stock scattered. Faithfulls’ retaliations went on for many weeks, large numbers of Pangerang men, women and children were killed and their bodies ‘burnt on the spot to hide their unlawful act’.

‘The Victorian tribes were so broken down during the early gold discoveries that when I commenced a critical investigation of their social and local organisation and customs, I found that the tribal customs had almost died out, together with many of the tribes themselves.’

(*The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* by A. W. Howitt. 1904.)

‘Despite the early attempts at protectionism, the pattern elsewhere of violence and dispossession of Indigenous people repeated itself in South Australia. Matthew Moorhouse,

Protector from 1839 until 1856, himself presided over a massacre of 30 Indigenous people in 1841. In 1856 the office of protector was abolished and by 1860 35 of the 42 reserves set aside for Aborigines had been leased to settlers.’

(*Bringing Them Home*, National Enquiry.)

‘In 1804 a hunting party estimated at 300 including women and children, was observed driving kangaroo at Risdon near Hobart. Some of Lieut. Bowen’s party at Risdon ... became involved in an unfortunate incident which resulted in the death of a number of aborigines (this has been referred to as the Risdon Massacre).’

(Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery booklet, 1960.)

‘A respectable colonist, lately deceased in Melbourne, naming many instances of cruelty to the Natives, assured me that he knew of two men who had boasted of killing thirty at one time. Mr. Backhouse relates that one party, out after the Blacks, killed thirty in capturing eleven, Quamby’s Bluff an eastern spur of the great central highlands of the island curling up with its crest as if torn by violence from the Tier, was so called from a poor hunted creature there falling upon his knees, and shrieking out, “Quamby, Quamby—mercy, mercy.” A gentleman, many years a magistrate in these colonies, mentioned to me the death of a shepherd of his near the Macquarie River. Soon after a company of soldiers went in pursuit of the supposed murderers. Falling in with a tribe around their night fires, in a gully at the back of the river, they shot indiscriminately at the group. Many were slain, but no Government inquiry was made into the well-known circumstance. An eye-witness of a similar night attack has this description: “One man was shot; he sprang up, turned round like a whipping top, and fell dead. The party then went up to the fires, found a great number of waddies and spears, and an infant sprawling on the ground, which one of the party pitched into the fire.” ’

(*The Last of the Tasmanians* by James Bonwick.)

‘The earliest written record of the interaction of Brisbane Valley Aborigines with European permanent settlers is the correspondence of Dr Stephen Simpson, Commissioner for Crown Lands at Moreton Bay from 1842 and public servant until 1855. That history was one of constant violence. Very serious allegations about the premeditated murder of Aborigines on the Mackenzie Brothers’ Kilcoy station were brought to his attention soon after his appointment in May 1842. Simpson first heard about the Aboriginal massacre on Kilcoy Station from escaped convicts, David Bracewell and James Davis who came back from Wide Bay with Petrie, Wriotsley, Russell, and Joliffe after their expedition there in early 1842. Bracewell reported that the Inwarrah and Tombarah tribes from the Bunya area informed a meeting of tribes in the Wide Bay area that at least thirty blacks of the Woonganbarah tribe died from the effects of eating food given to them on a station.’

(*History of the Shire of Esk*.)

We might like to remember that oral histories depend on survivors; some acts of destruction were designed to leave no survivors. We might weight these reports differently according to reliability and information but the fact remains that they add up to an appalling indictment of Australia’s ‘peaceful settlement’. Or as Caroline Leakey put it in her 1859 novel *The Broad Arrow*: ‘They were confined in Oyster Cove, and supported by Government; and all consists of but twenty-three ... They bequeath us a legacy for which we shall have to answer when God makes inquisition for blood ... Thoughtful readers of Tasmanian history must tremble to think how and where the retributive stroke shall fall on England or her dependencies.’

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There is a rule of thumb which suggests that where an oral record and a written record exist the written one is likely to be more reliable. But I had an odd experience not long ago. Family word-of-mouth said my great-grandmother had been born in London and that she had come to Australia after her marriage to a clergyman. They went to live in the Hunter River district of NSW. But when I sent away for my grandmother’s birth certificate I had a large surprise. On it via her father had been recorded the information that her mother was born in

‘Morpeth NSW’ and it gave her age as being 10 years younger than that on her marriage certificate. This was a turn up for the books! We had had no idea that her family had any connection to Australia before her arrival as a married woman. I looked through shipping records for the time. We wondered if her father might have spent time in the military. Perhaps her parents had come out to look at business opportunities? Along the way I picked up lots of interesting details about the cedar wood trade, the early white settlement in the area and so on, but nary a mention of her or her family. It was a puzzle. In the end I sent away for a birth certificate for her older sister. When it came it said their mother was born in London and her age tallied with the one on her marriage certificate. Well! My great-grandfather provided the information for both records—but why had he got one so wrong? Had something dramatic happened there recently? Was he distracted, worried, careless, absent-minded? Did he make all sorts of dreadful mistakes in parish records? Or had someone else transcribed it wrongly later or overlapped two different birth entries? Who knows. But it is a cautionary tale. Official records can be wrong—even where someone has no reason to want to fudge or falsify them. In this case we wanted to know all about her family and kept looking. But what if she had been peripheral to our search? I might simply have recorded that information as being correct and moved on, leaving it to be taken up by someone else and repeated as gospel truth ...

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Malthus’s 1798 piece, ‘Essay on the Principle of Population’, has been described as “one of the most influential economic treatises ever written”; he actually wrote it to repudiate some of the optimistic forecasts of William Godwin. Godwin was impressed by it and called Malthus “the most daring and gigantic of all innovators” but Carlyle was merely depressed by it and called the new discipline the “dismal science”. In one respect Malthus was right. The world has seen an explosion of population which constantly runs the risk of outgrowing its food supply. Technology, trade and transport have helped keep the human race in front, despite some terrible hiccups, but technology, trade, and transport are themselves vulnerable: to numbers, to changes in demography, to climate change, to epidemics, to rising sea levels, to declining non-renewable resources ... the knife-edge will continue so long as the world is being asked to carry populations that depend on technology, trade, and transport, rather than the natural comfortable carrying capacity of each area of land.

William Smith O’Brien felt sympathy for indigenous peoples but he also felt that they should not be allowed to possess large areas of open land when populations in Europe were starving. He never asked the fundamental question, nor did anyone else, as to why Europe’s populations had grown so fast and were now so vulnerable. The figures for late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe are truly astounding. George D. Moffett in *Critical Masses* says “It took eighteen centuries from the time of Christ for the earth to reach its first one billion inhabitants but only *one* century to reach its second and only one *decade* to reach its latest billion.” Populations doubled in fifty years or less; many things have been targeted; younger marriages, longer lives, better medical care, more hospitals, improvements in hygiene, emigration ... but underlying all of this was the Judeo-Christian belief that God wanted people to have a lot of children; that they should ‘have dominion’, ‘increase and multiply’, be a quiverfull, that they were blessings, and the numbers were irrelevant, there was no sense of an ideal family size. Alongside this idea that it would be wrong to prevent births was a high degree of ignorance on how to actually prevent conception or gestation. As people moved away from a profound knowledge of plants and herbal lore they lost their intimate knowledge of which plants might be useful. There are herbs that were, and still are used such as catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) and pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*) but people crowding into the new industrial towns or on to smaller and smaller strips of land or who saw their once wild commons with their range of wild herbs enclosed and ploughed lost that connection. When they emigrated (or were transported) they took with them the knowledge of how to prevent smallpox but not how to prevent birth. So they in effect exported the phenomenon of exploding birth rates. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Java and Madura had around six million people; after a century of Dutch rule their population

had quadrupled. The same was happening all around the world. The only populations which were declining were those of indigenous people who had always maintained a rigorous attitude to the ratio of people to land.

There were open spaces in Australia not least because Aboriginal people had always kept their numbers to what the land could provide without being flogged to death during droughts.

But the Judeo-Christian idea that people were God in miniature supplanted the Aboriginal idea that it was the earth itself which was the manifestation of God. And the land has entered on a perhaps irreversible phase of suffering.

Even now there is a reluctance to re-think this idea of population. The Catholic Church continues to promote large families officially. In the words of Dr Andre Hellegers "I cannot believe that salvation is based on contraception by temperature and damnation is based on rubber" yet many Catholics in Third World countries are afraid of the consequences to their souls if they go against the church's official view. And they are immensely vulnerable. The huge population of the Philippines both depends on other countries to take in its surplus as 'guest workers' while at home its forests, wetlands, coral reefs, and bio-diversity are disappearing.

"Long before I fled to the bush I was told that she once published a paper in a medical journal about the leaves of a certain bush utilized effectively by tribal women to prevent pregnancy. She held that the practice of contraception dates back before Christianity and has often been mentioned in the myths of tribal creation. Poor old Alba, she told the truth and lost her veil for revealing the secrets of *Iharang* bush; the tribal women have known the plant since the Ice Age." (*Gabo Djara* by B. Wongar.)

"... because of their knowledge of the abortive qualities of herbs and the like, illegitimate children were extremely rare." (*My Crowded Solitude* by Jack McLaren.)

These are two Australian links but a knowledge of natural contraception wasn't linked to Aboriginal people only. I have come upon similar comments about contraception in New Guinea. And R. C. Cambrie and A. A. Brewis in *Anti-fertility Plants of the Pacific* note that all Pacific Islanders were forced by necessity on small islands with limited space and resources to practise birth control; when the Christian missionaries banned infanticide people turned to abortion, both physical and herbal, to keep populations in stasis with the land. The authors note that 565 species from 125 plant families worldwide have been identified as having abortifacient, contraceptive or sterilising properties. Science is slowly determining their efficacy, or otherwise ...

But Malthus had a curious impact on religious attitudes to people; he encouraged a kind of fatalism. If populations were going to rise exponentially (and this appeared to be a God-given law unless they threw the Bible away) then it also needed to be accepted that famine and death would periodically stalk those populations. There was no obvious escape from that apparent treadmill of population growth and occasional disaster. It would be necessary to constantly find 'new Egypts' with potential well-stocked granaries. We know now that there are much simpler ways to escape the treadmill but the churches have been reluctant to endorse that escape. More adherents mean power and influence on earth. More adherents mean more souls moving into the next life. But I do not believe that power and influence should ever be connected to religion and I do not believe souls have a religion. The soul is our individual link to God. It has many 'properties' but religion is not one of them.

Malthus cannot be blamed for the tragedies that happened when people-orientated cultures met nature-orientated cultures and usually destroyed them. But he helped give the process part of its sense of inevitability. We are constantly reminded that we need nature and the earth but no one has ever been able to mount a sufficiently good case for the opposite to convince me. It should be a humbling concept but the destruction of nature-orientated cultures continues apace. Nettle and Romaine say in *Vanishing Voices*: "The extinction of languages is part of the larger picture of worldwide near total ecosystem collapse. Our research shows quite striking correlations between areas of biodiversity and areas of highest linguistic diversity,

allowing us to talk about a common repository of what we will call “biolinguistic diversity”: the rich spectrum of life encompassing all the earth’s species of plants and animals along with human cultures and their languages. The greatest biolinguistic diversity is found in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples, who represent around 4 percent of the world’s population, but speak at least 60 percent of the world’s languages” and inside those languages were embedded intimate details of the relationship of people, plants, and earth.

When the nature-orientated cultures have all gone or been reduced to total impotence it will be people cultures left to struggle against the earth. And I know which will ultimately win. The arrogant may inherit many things but not the earth.

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Given the numbers of people who were transported to Australia as convicts, their age range, their variety of backgrounds and crimes (or alleged crimes) ‘convict literature’ is remarkably scarce. There are the jail journals of people like William Smith O’Brien. There are some letters and diaries and short stories and poems, mostly little known; there are books *about* convict life such as *For the Term of His Natural Life* and *The Broad Arrow*. Laurie R. King put together *Unnatural Lives; Studies in Australian Fiction about the Convicts from James Tucker to Patrick White*. Histories and essays have been written such as Robert Hughes’ *The Fatal Shore* and the work of Manning Clark. But it isn’t a lot to represent the lives of so many thousands of people.

It might be thought that people like Smith O’Brien, educated and articulate, were the exception rather than the rule. But the evidence suggests that the majority of convicts were literate, even if many did not write with comfort. And the younger ones received some education here.

I was curious to come on several comments in Canadian books to suggest ...

‘John was a remittance man. In the beginning England sent her younger sons of great families to Canada, and her criminals to Australia, and judging by some of the results our cousin had an unfair advantage over us.’ (Aleta Day, Frances Beynon, 1919.)

‘And many of those United Empire Loyalists—from whom, Walter Stewart has written, one out of six English-speaking Canadians is descended—were either obdurate reactionaries or—pace Mrs. C.M. Day—refugees from justice, men without fixed principles, or designing and unscrupulous adventurers. Mind you, we didn’t even get the top-of-the-line conmen and thieves or whores. Those were shipped to Van Diemen’s Land in shackles, culturally enriching Australia, not us.’ (Oh Canada! Oh Quebec! Mordechai Richler)

Nor, given that a number of convicts were innocent of the crime for which they were transported, were there the sort of impassioned stories such as Henri Charriere’s *Papillon* to claim that innocence.

Michael Kurland wrote ‘A 1987 report by the *Stanford Law Review* asserts that from 1900 to 1985 at least twenty-seven of those people executed in the United States were innocent of the crimes for which they were convicted, and an article by John Horgan in the July 1990 *Scientific American* states that at least twenty-seven people sentenced to death in the past eighteen years alone have later been found innocent by a higher court.’ It is very unlikely that British justice in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was more exact than the terrible miscarriage of justice which kept a young man, Stephen Downing, in jail for thirty years, according to *Town Without Pity* by Don Hale, in late twentieth century Britain.

Yet even if convicts did not pour their hearts out in literary effusions, such as Henry Savery’s *Quintus Servinton* which was the exception rather than the rule, they did write a variety of things: manuals, reports, ledgers, letters, beautiful inscriptions on tombs and public buildings ... and, to enrich us gastronomically, recipes. ‘When Bessie Baldwin came to London in 1837 she was 19. Nothing is known about her parents or early childhood, but it is known she came from Kent ... (she) was fortunate enough to find employment with pastrycook and baker, Thos. Edenwell, who, it seems, had his bakery hard by the House of Commons in Westminster, and was a self-styled “Pastrycook to the Honourable Members.” In October 1839

Bessie Baldwin was charged in the Old Bailey with “riotous behaviour.” According to the evidence it would seem that she was one of the early women’s liberationists. She had demanded a pay rise of one penny a week from her employer to bring her wages up to five pence a week. Edenwell, who seems to have been a cheapskate of considerable note, refused this modest request. Bessie Baldwin set about wrecking his shop including, to quote from the evidence, “assaulting the said Thos. Edenwell by striking him with a rabbit pie, and then beating him about the head with the pie dish.” For this little escapade, she was sentenced to transportation to the Colony of Van Diemen’s Land for seven years.

On December 14<sup>th</sup> 1839, she was embarked with 182 other women and 24 children on the 427 ton barque ‘Gilbert Henderson’ under Captain J. Tweedie. When the ‘Gilbert Henderson’ arrived in Hobart on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1840, Bessie Baldwin was immediately removed to the Female Factory, a house of correction for females at the Cascades, Degrave St, in South Hobart.’

On board she had beaten the Surgeon, a rakish and unpleasant man who believed the female convicts were there for his pleasure, with a candlestick, cutting his head open. The captain took her part and she wasn’t punished. But neither did she settle in meekly at the Factory. She is said to have been a ringleader of the famous ‘welcome’ to the vice-regal party when 300 female convicts turned their backs on the visitors, raised their skirts and slapped their bare buttocks.

It didn’t do her any good but neither was she punished this time, probably because the authorities preferred not to draw attention to the matter. In 1842 the Governor, Sir John Franklin, needed an assistant pastrycook at Government House and Bessie was chosen. At last she had some comfort, some respect, and some opportunity in life. He eventually pardoned her. More importantly she began writing down her recipes for posterity.

(from *The Tasmanian Convict Recipe Book*)

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October 18<sup>th</sup>: Heinrich von Kleist

Charles Mudie

October 19<sup>th</sup>: John le Carré

Thomas Browne

October 20<sup>th</sup>: Frederic Dannay

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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William Barclay in his *The Gospel of Matthew* writes on Coleridge: ‘Coleridge is the supreme tragedy of indiscipline. Never did so great a mind produce so little. He left Cambridge University to join the army; he left the army because, in spite of all his erudition, he could not rub down a horse; he returned to Oxford and left without a degree. He began a paper called *The Watchman* which lived for ten numbers and then died. It has been said of him: “He lost himself in visions of work to be done that always remained to be done. Coleridge had every poetic gift but one—the gift of sustained and concentrated effort.” In his head and in his mind he had all kinds of books, as he said, himself, “completed save for transcription.” “I am on the eve,” he says, “of sending to the press two octavo volumes.” But the books were never composed, outside Coleridge’s mind, because he would not face the discipline of sitting down to write them out. No one ever reached any eminence, and no one having reached it ever maintained it, without discipline.”

This might be said of many of us but it does seem particularly applicable to Coleridge. He wrote many poems but except for ‘The Ancient Mariner’, ‘Kubla Khan’ and perhaps ‘Christabel’ his work is not remembered, let alone regularly anthologised, quoted or loved. It isn’t hard to see why. He was capable, he knew his trade, but his rolling periods become tedious.

On stern Blencartha’s perilous height

The winds are tyrannous and strong;

And flashing forth unsteady light  
From stern Blencartha's skiey height;  
As loud the torrents throng!

(from 'A Thought Suggested by a View')

This Sycamore, oft musical with bees, —  
Such tents the Patriarchs loved! O long unharmed  
May all its aged boughs o'er-canopy  
The small round basin, which this jutting stone  
Keeps pure from falling leaves!

(from 'Inscription for a Fountain on a Heath')

O great Bard!

Ere yet that last strain dying awed the air,  
With stedfast eye I viewed thee in the choir  
Of ever-enduring men. The truly great  
Have all one age, and from one visible space  
Shed influence! They, both in power and act,  
Are permanent, and Time is not with them,  
Save as it worketh for them, they in it.

(from 'To William Wordsworth')

I found myself thinking it was just as well that he wrote 'The Ancient Mariner' otherwise we wouldn't remember or wouldn't care about the man from Porlock interrupting him while he was writing 'Kubla Khan'. After all, every writer gets interrupted now and then but the interrupters rarely get remembered, let alone scarified. (Strangely enough I had the opposite problem once: I was in the middle of a novella when a woman rang from the State Library in Queensland to ask me for a phone number so she could contact Fretilin. I was in another time and place and I thought blankly 'Fretilin? What does she mean?' I realised too late I should simply have asked her to ring back in five minutes while I got my thoughts in order. As it was she probably thought she was talking to an imbecile—and I suspect the information I gave her was wrong.) But as I was reading up a little on Coleridge I began to feel that he was a man who was always going to write tomorrow; that 'Kubla Khan' came flowing non-stop from his pen must have struck him as a great piece of luck and anyone who stemmed its flow as truly maddening. He could of course have refused to answer the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is his unfortunate wife who usually gets scarified by (mainly male) critics for being unsympathetic and nagging. But I must say I feel great sympathy for her. First she had to put up with her husband sitting round talking about utopia, pantheonism, brotherly love and all the rest of it, while she struggled in a small cottage to wash, clean, cook, and mind the children without money, help, facilities or sympathy—

As Georgette Heyer puts it in *The Quiet Gentleman*, speaking of the Pantisocrats, "They were a society of whom the most prominent members were Mr. Coleridge, and Mr. Southey, and my Papa. They formed the intention of emigrating to the banks of the Susquehanna, but, fortunately, neither Mrs. Southey nor Mama considered the scheme practicable, so it was abandoned. I daresay you may have noticed that persons of large intellect have not the least common-sense. In this instance, it was intended that there should be no servants, but everyone should devote himself—or herself as the case might be—for two hours each day to the performance of the necessary domestic duties, after which the rest of the day was to have been occupied in literary pursuits. But, of course, Mama and Mrs. Southey readily perceived that although the gentlemen might adhere to the two-hour rule, it would be quite impossible for the ladies to do so. In fact, Mama was of the opinion that although the gentlemen might be induced, if strongly adjured, to draw water, and to chop the necessary wood, they would certainly have done no more. And no one," continued Miss Morville, with considerable acumen, "could have placed the least reliance on their *continued* performance of such



household tasks, for, you know, if they had been engaged in philosophical discussion they would have forgotten all about them.”

—then she faced the even more terrible business of living with an opium addict and all the wastage of funds, broken promises, deceits, mood changes and sloth that that brought with it in an era when addiction wasn't fully recognised, let alone understood. Helen Garner gave a good insight into what it is like to live with an addict in *Monkey Grip* but her heroine could at least move on. Mrs Coleridge was caught in an awful marriage and had five children to think about. Yet the critics imply that it is her fault that Coleridge didn't write more and didn't write better.

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Coleridge was the youngest of the ten children of a Devon clergyman, the Reverend Coleridge of Ottery St Mary's; he says of his father 'Towards the latter end of September, 1781, my father went to Plymouth with my brother Francis, who was to go as a midshipman under Admiral Graves, who was a friend of my father's. My father settled my brother, and returned October 4, 1781. He arrived at Exeter about six o'clock, and was pressed to take a bed there at the Harts', but he refused, and, to avoid their entreaties, he told them, that he had never been superstitious, but that the night before he had had a dream which had made a deep impression. He dreamt that Death had appeared to him as he is commonly painted, and touched him with his dart. Well, he returned home, and all his family, I excepted, were up. He told my mother his dream; but he was in high health and good spirits, and there was a bowl of punch made, and my father gave a long and particular account of his travel, and that he had placed Frank under a religious captain, &c. At length he went to bed, very well and in high spirits. A short time after he had lain down he complained of a pain in his bowels. My mother got him some peppermint water, and, after a pause, he said, 'I am much better now, my dear!' and lay down again. In a minute my mother heard a noise in his throat, and spoke to him, but he did not answer; and she spoke repeatedly in vain. Her shriek awaked me, and I said, 'papa is dead!' I did not know of my father's return, but I knew that he was expected. How I came to think of his death I cannot tell; but so it was. Dead he was. Some said it was the gout in the heart; — probably it was a fit of apoplexy. He was an Israelite without guile, simple, generous, and taking some Scripture texts in their literal sense, he was conscientiously indifferent to the good and evil of this world.'

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Coleridge, as well as his poems, wrote widely on other writers including Wordsworth, Johnson, Spenser, and Shakespeare; he was a popular lecturer on writers and writing. But his lectures read now rather heavily and pedantically which suggests that his popularity had more to do with his style, his delivery, his voice, his asides, his expressiveness ... rather than the content. This suggests that Coleridge as a man who attracted an audience was always going to be tempted to talk rather than write. And talking is the one great skill which leaves no record. Yet he did leave one beautiful thing, the lines, 'He prayeth best who loveth best/ All things both great and small;/ For the dear God who loveth us,/ He made and loveth all.' Or she ...

Coleridge Cottage in Somerset where he wrote 'The Ancient Mariner' is open to the public.

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- October 21<sup>st</sup>: Ursula Le Guin
- October 22<sup>nd</sup>: Doris Lessing
- October 23<sup>rd</sup>: Robert Bridges  
Gore Vidal
- October 24<sup>th</sup>: Nairda Lyne  
Sarah J. B. Hale
- October 25<sup>th</sup>: Thomas Macauley
- October 26<sup>th</sup>: John Romeril
- October 27<sup>th</sup>: Graciliano Ramos

Dylan Thomas  
 October 28<sup>th</sup>: Tasma  
                   Desiderius Erasmus  
 October 29<sup>th</sup>: Desmond Bagley  
                   John Keats  
                   James Boswell  
 October 30<sup>th</sup>: Geoff Dean  
                   Paul Valéry  
 October 31<sup>st</sup>: Dick Francis  
 November 1<sup>st</sup>: Nicholas Boileau  
                   Christopher Brennan  
 November 2<sup>nd</sup>: Odysseus Elytis  
 November 3<sup>rd</sup>: Martin Cruz Smith  
                   Karl Baedeker  
 November 4<sup>th</sup>: Eden Phillpotts  
 November 5<sup>th</sup>: Ella Wheeler-Wilcox  
                   Will Durant  
 November 6<sup>th</sup>: Barry Dickens  
 November 7<sup>th</sup>: Albert Camus  
 November 8<sup>th</sup>: Bram Stoker  
 November 9<sup>th</sup>: Ivan Turgenev  
 November 10<sup>th</sup>: José Hernández  
                   Martin Luther  
 November 11<sup>th</sup>: Dostoyevsky  
 November 12<sup>th</sup>: Janette Turner Hospital  
                   Amelia Opie

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Neil Postman in *The Disappearance of Childhood* says “Peter and Iona Opie, the great English historians of children’s games, have identified hundreds of traditional children’s games almost none of which are presently played with any regularity by American children. Even Hide-and-Seek, which was played in Periclean Athens more than two thousand years ago, has now almost completely disappeared from the repertoire of self-organised children’s amusements. Children’s games, in a phrase, are an endangered species.”

He says, “*The Boke of Chyl dren* by Thomas Phaire, published in 1544, is generally considered to be the first book on pediatrics written by an Englishman. (An Italian, Paolo Bagellardo, published an earlier one in 1498.) In his book, Phaire recommends the use of teething rings, and provides a comprehensive list of “grievous and perilous diseases” of children, including “apostume of the brayne” (probably meningitis), terrible dreams, itching, blood-shot eyes, colic and rumbling of the stomach.” Books on children’s health became popular. Books for children had to wait another two centuries before they became fairly accessible. And books about children’s interests took nearly two more centuries to become commonplace. Today there are books about children’s games, children’s sports, recipes for children, activities for children, children’s rhymes and limericks ...

But the Opies remain pre-eminent as the collectors of childhood pastimes. They saw themselves as being in the grand tradition of collectors of folklore, doing for children what people like Sir James Frazer did for the wider adult world. When they brought out *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* in the 1950s they were broadening and updating the tradition of books like *London Street Games* by Norman Douglas and the earlier work of Lady Gomme. But they also saw what they were doing as part of the great ongoing chronicle of childhood. They wrote, “It may be, of course, that the information recorded here will seem trifling to some. But to us the unexpected quantity and variety of the traditions which have been collected, and of the street and playground games which are being described in companion

volumes, do seem to show that children today are storing up for themselves just as lively memories as any of those with which we are now regaled by the old folk. In a way, this book contains information which would not ordinarily have been written down for another fifty years, for it is made up of what will be the childhood recollections of the older generation after A.D. 2000. Having now spent some length of time watching the rising generation, the first in the nuclear age, we cannot but feel that it is a virile generation. The modern school-child, when out of sight and on his own, appears to be rich in language, well-versed in custom, a respecter of the details of his own code, and a practising authority on traditional self-amusements. And a generation which cares for the traditions and entertainment which have been passed down to it is not one which is less good than its predecessors.”

I am not sure that children now care particularly about the traditions and entertainment passed down. Nor is the idea of self-amusement given much promotion.

What has happened? It is partly that children have become a large and useful market as consumers of everything from toys, books, videos, computer games, clothes and equipment—so the idea of making up your own stories and games becomes an optional extra. It doesn't mean that children's vivid imaginations and fertile ideas have disappeared. But they face a lot of competition. It is partly that modern adults are more likely to want to 'organise' children, for games, sports, exercises and skills, rather than allowing children a greater degree of autonomy—which may seem strange when placed against complaints about a modern lack of discipline. But I think the two things are different. And curiously I think the concept of multiculturalism has also undermined the sense of passing on traditions of entertainment.

In a schoolyard where children came to some extent from the same tradition their entertainments reflected this. I can remember the skipping songs which were passed around. Our mothers and grandmothers had some different ones but they still skipped and they still sang while they skipped. But in a school where a vast variety of attitudes to girls' play will be in evidence it is hard for children to enfold those differing traditions into a happy and cohesive whole. It becomes easier to focus on something which is common to everyone, a popular TV program, a new brand of doll, feelings about teachers and boys, a book most people are reading, the food in the canteen ... but these are interests rather than activities ...

I felt depressed after reading *The Disappearance of Childhood*. I don't want childhood to disappear, to be replaced by consumerhood or mini-adulthood. But I think children are not passive receivers of a prevailing ideology which stuffs them with information and knowledge but are instead always on the lookout for the deliciously subversive type of fun which is not promoted by adults, sold by adults, or organised by adults.

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While I was thinking on this unusual name I came upon an old biography of Amelia Opie by Cecilia Brightwell. I wondered if she might be an ancestor. But no. She was an only child, born in India in 1769 where her mother died, and she had no children. Her father became a doctor in Norwich in England but he seems to have led a lively life and she met many of the well-known people of her day, Madame de Stael, Lord Byron, Baron Humboldt, Thomas Fowell Buxton, William Wilberforce, the Kemble family, Mrs Siddons, William Godwin, Baron Cuvier, and her especial friends, the Gurney family. Her husband was quite a well-known painter, though perhaps a disappointed one. It is hard to know whether it was his death or whether she had gradually been moving towards Quakerism through her friendship with the Gurneys, including their best-known daughter Elizabeth Fry.

Her writing was extremely popular in the nineteenth century where its mixture of the edifying and the sentimental exactly suited many readers' tastes. She brought out various books, *Lays for the Dead*, *Father and Daughter*, *Adeline Mowbray* (a novel which dealt with illegitimacy), *Poems*, *Lying in all its Branches*, *Tales of Real Life*, and they all found a ready audience; *Father and Daughter* forming the basis of the Italian opera, 'Agnese' by Paer, and many people writing to tell her that her moral tales had improved their lives. Today her lines don't grip and yet they are certainly no worse than those of other minor poets and hymn-

writers.

May I for shelter seek, like thee—  
Shelter which can all fears remove,  
And to my Rock of refuge flee,  
A dying Saviour's pardoning love.

(from 'Lines Written on the Seashore')

And near that wilderness of waters then  
Another eye than mine a vigil kept;  
But I, alone, seem'd waking—Thus, methought,  
As life advances, one by one, we mark  
Our dearest friends and relatives expire.  
No eye of love remains to cheer our age,  
And we are left alone.

(from 'Sketches of St. Michael's Mount')

and she struggled valiantly with what she regarded as 'slave speech' in her 1802 poem 'The Negro Boy's Tale':

'O missa! Long, how long me feel  
Upon mine arms her lass embrace!  
Vile in de dark, dark ship I dwell,  
Long burn her tear upon my face.

'How glad me vas she did not see  
De heavy chain my body bear;  
Nor close, how close ve crowded be,  
Nor feel how bad, how sick de air! ... etc.

Robert Southey said of her, "I have another woman in my mind's eye—one who has been the liveliest of the lively, the gayest of the gay; admired for her talents by those who knew her only in her writings, and esteemed for her worth by those who were acquainted with her in the relations of private life; one who, having grown up in the laxest sect of semi-Christians (she had been brought up a Unitarian), felt the necessity of vital religion, while attending upon her father, with dutiful affection, during the long and painful infirmities of his old age; and who has now joined a sect, among whose members she first found the lively faith for which her soul thirsted,—not losing, in the change, her warmth of heart and cheerfulness of spirit, nor gaining by it any increase of sincerity and frankness; for with these nature had endued her; and society, even that of the great, had not corrupted them. The resolution, the activity, the genius, the benevolence, which are required for such a work, are to be found in her; and were she present in person, as she is in imagination, I would say to her, ... 'Thou art the woman!'"

In fact I felt a certain sense of affinity as she struggled to balance her religious life (as she put it, "My practice every night is, to examine all my actions, and sift all my motives during the day, in all that I have said or done. I make sad discoveries, by that means, of my own sinfulness; but I am truly thankful that this power has been given me, and lay my head on my pillow with much gratitude") her imaginative writing life, her sense of public duty which led her into the various avenues of promoting schools, prison visiting (through the British Prison Society of Ladies), aiding the sick and the poor, anti-slavery, and the other concerns of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Quaker, her love of travel which took her to France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Scotland and various parts of England, and her own love of meeting people and keeping up many satisfying friendships.

She has been criticised by feminists such as Dale Spender for allowing her religion to get in the way of her writing; suggesting 'the later writings of Amelia Opie have little appeal or merit'. But although to put your writing life ahead of your spiritual life may be seen as natural and sensible in the 20<sup>th</sup> century I am sure she would not have agreed. Nor should daring or

radical novels on social issues automatically be deemed as more important than writing which is written to promote a moral or spiritual view of life. She would probably be puzzled that we could even consider putting the things of the spirit a poor second. Even so, I don't think she always found her juggling act an easy one.

\* \* \* \* \*

November 13<sup>th</sup>: Robert Louis Stevenson  
Edward III (1312)

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'Richard de Bury has become justly renowned as a lover of books. When bishop of Durham, his Episcopal visitations took the form of a furious rooting about in damp monastic crypts to rescue mouldering manuscripts. On his ambassadorial missions he browsed at large all over Europe. He was corruptible only with books. 'No one can serve books and mammon,' he declared. In 1345, the year of his death, there appeared his *Philobiblon*, a treatise on the care of books and on rules for the use of a library he intended to found. He inveighed mock-seriously against the natural enemies of books, then so precious and so painfully constructed; the 'whimpering child' who traced over the gilded letters with sticky fingers; 'that two-footed beast', the housewife, who 'spying them in their corner with no defence but the webs woven around them by spiders now defunct, seized them with frowning brow and bitter words'; and those 'shameless youths' who use straws as markers and so break the back, or scribble in the margins 'whatsoever frivolous stuff may happen to run to the moment in their heads'. He left his collection to the then-projected Durham College at Oxford, of which university he was a distinguished son. But his grand bequest did no materialize; he had spent so much on his books that they had to be sold to pay his debts.'

Bury had been tutor to the young Edward III. Michael Packe says of him 'He was humanist and progressive. Like his friend Petrarch a rediscoverer of the classics, he sympathized with William of Occam and the Nominalists, the avant-garde philosophers of the day. But, a true man of his times, he had other abilities besides scholarship, and Edward, while avoiding his inducements to the higher learning, typically made the best use of them on his accession, both in overseas diplomacy and at home, showering him with prebendaries and sinecures, and appointing him in time to the highest offices, Chancellor and Treasurer. For his part, Bury, finding Mortimer no more admirable than the Despensers, devoted himself wholly to the service of his young king.'

(*Edward III* by Michael Packe)

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William Blake is remembered for his metaphysical poetry but he also wrote a short play *King Edward the Third* which seems to me rather out of character for him:

O Thou, to whose fury the nations are  
But as dust, maintain thy servant's right!  
Without thine aid, the twisted mail, and spear  
And forged helm, and shield of seven times beaten brass,  
Are idle trophies of the vanquisher.  
When confusion rages, when the field is in a flame,  
When the cries of blood tear horror from heav'n,  
And yelling death runs up and down the ranks,  
Let Liberty, the charter'd right of Englishmen  
Won by our fathers in many a glorious field,  
Enerve my soldiers; let Liberty  
Blaze in each countenance, and fire the battle.  
The enemy fights in chains, invisible chains but heavy;  
Their minds are fetter'd; then how can they be free?  
But perhaps he felt all the better for getting a bit of jingoism off his chest ...

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The great literary figure of Edward III's reign is of course Geoffrey Chaucer. It has been said, 'Chaucer has tales, Gower has legends, Langland has homilies' (Michael Schmidt) but 'tales' seems too light a word to encompass Chaucer's work. I think he *was* more concerned about his story and his characters than about the literary qualities or his form and structure. But language was more than his tool to present a lively tale. His decision to write in the vernacular and yet appeal to the people with money and influence meant that he had to choose each word with infinite care. We may think we do this every time we sit down to write. But our minds are so at home in the one language that the words almost run on before our pen or mouse ... We may agonise over the clarity of our meaning but we rarely need to agonise over the meaning of our words ...

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I remember meeting a man in East Timor in the early 1970s who ran a radio program there called 'Virgula'. He explained its name as meaning a pause; a little time out for people to listen to some pleasant music.

In fact a virgula, or in Latin virgule, was the forerunner of our comma. It originally looked more like a forward slash and was put in to tell readers where to take a breath as they read aloud.

Although I sprinkle commas with gay abandon I can't honestly say I spend much time thinking about their use, their history, or their physical appearance.

All this changed the week my friend Madge lent me her copy of Lynne Truss's *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*. Strangely enough, the next day I noticed Loreto Todd's *Guide to Punctuation* on the Sale trolley at the Glenorchy Library for 10c. 'Oh well,' I thought, 'here goes, I can probably do with some clarity in my punctuating; there is a time for generosity in such insertions but too much of a good thing ... etc etc.'

The word comma comes from the Greek *komma* meaning 'clause, segment of sentence' and it was recorded in English in 1554. "In 1582, Richard Mulcaster's '*The First Part of the Elementarie*' (an early English grammar) described the comma as "a small crooked point, which in writing followeth some small branch of the sentence, & in reading warneth vs to rest there, & to help our breth a little"." (Truss) But the Greek dramatists such as Euripides and Aristophanes used symbols in their plays to help the actors. So the idea was a very old one. The first producer of a grammar, Aelius Donatus, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD based his system on the Greek custom. St Jerome was a student of Donatus and he adapted the rules during his production of the Vulgate as a clear and supposedly unambiguous Latin version of the Bible.

Another monk Alcuin (Ealhwine) in the 8<sup>th</sup> century was an adviser to Charlemagne and adapted and extended the system. Some of his marks were to do with pitch rather than pause, to help the monks as they chanted. But his work was probably an incentive for other people to introduce new symbols such as the hyphen in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, then the colon, and to spread the use of the virgule. But getting everyone from monks to merchants to lawyers to use consistent punctuation was quite another matter ... and still is.

Chaucer wrote in *Troilus and Criseyde*:

And for there is so gret diversite  
In English and in writing of oure tonge,  
So preye I God than non miswryte the,  
Nemysmetre for defaute of tonge.

A Venetian printer (and his grandson) Aldus Manutius (1450 – 1515) began to make the virgule smaller and more like a modern comma. As Todd says "when, by 1660, the dash, exclamation mark and quotation marks had been added, our modern system was virtually in place."

But a vital change had occurred in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Two things came together. The art of the printer and the growing ability of the populace to read for themselves, to themselves, even about themselves. Punctuation changed too. As Truss says, "Most significantly of all, however, they ignored the old marks that had aided the reader-aloud. Books were now for reading and

understanding, not intoning. Moving your lips was becoming a no-no. Within the seventy years it took for Aldus Manutius the Elder to be replaced by Aldus Manutius the Younger, things changed so drastically that in 1566 Aldus Manutius the Younger was able to state that the main object of punctuation was the clarification of syntax. Forget all that stuff about the spiritual value to the reader of working out the meaning for himself; forget as well the humility of those copyists of old. I'm sure people did question whether Italian printers were quite the right people to legislate on the meaning of everything; but on the other hand, *resistance was obviously useless against a family that could invent italics.*"

Why commas, pauses, breaths, rather than other exciting punctuation marks? I find semi-colons very seductive and there is something macho about brackets and I go weak at the knees at the sight of a page with lots of dashes. But this week I have been listening to readings of Chaucer on tape and it is quite fascinating to hear his lines read aloud. Fascinating and a little disconcerting. Because for all those moments when it might merely be someone not quite at home in the language or determinedly exaggerating each syllable and ending there are also those moments when I think I am not hearing anything remotely familiar. It might be German or Danish or someone convinced that all words should come from deep within the throat.

Chaucer wrote to be read aloud. But he also saw the changes coming and knew that more people would read to themselves. Poetry would be both a private and a public pleasure as the Plantagenet world gave way to the new dynasties of York and Lancaster.

What anguish his little pauses must have given him.

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Brian Stone introducing his translation of the medieval story *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* writes, 'One refinement of the poet's has had to go by default: there is no way of indicating in modern English the difference between the formal 'ye' and informal 'thou' of the original, a matter about which the poet was precise. Dr Day writes: 'The singular was used in prayer. Otherwise "ye" is used to superiors, who in turn say "thou", as in the talk between Arthur and Gawain, Gawain and the porter, and Gawain and the servant. But when Gawain says that at all risks he must keep his promise, the servant shows his contempt by using the singular. Between equals the plural is used for politeness, on ceremonial occasions, but in his uncouthness the green knight "thou's" Arthur, and the King answers him in the same way. For host and guest the plural is the correct form ... When the Green Knight has disclosed himself to be Gawain's host, he on the whole continues to use the singular, dropping into the more ceremonious plural when he utters his mild rebuke. Gawain, overwhelmed by his discovery of the plot, uses the singular, almost the only mistake he makes in the whole poem. To the Lady of the castle he speaks in the plural (as does Arthur to Guinevere). She is less consistent. In the first interview she twice interpolates a tentative "thou" ... in the second she uses "thou" without any pretext, and in the third she boldly begins with it. But only once ... is she able to inveigle him into saying "thou" to her.'

Casey Miller and Kate Swift in *Words and Women* write, "The use of *they* as a singular pronoun slips out in response to a healthy democratic instinct to include women where general references are made to people. An egalitarian impulse was also involved in the extension of another word — you — from the plural to the singular. *Ye* and *you* in Old English were plural pronouns only, the singular forms being *thou* and *thee*. In the late thirteenth century *you* began to be used as the 'polite' singular in addressing someone of superior social status or age. Jespersen reports that the habit originated with the Roman emperors, 'who desired to be addressed as beings worth more than a single ordinary man', and spread to other European languages in the Middle Ages. The respectful singular *you* soon came to be used by the English gentry when speaking to one another thus marking a recognition of equality. *Thou* was used, with some inconsistency, both in the form of address for God and between intimates, on the one hand, and for peasants, servants and children, on the other. In the latter usage, *thou* marked the socially inferior rank of the person spoken to.

"When the Quakers, who wished to emphasize the natural equality of all human beings,

began to use *thou* and *thee* for everyone, they did not foresee that standard English was moving the other way. In response to the revolutionary spirit of the eighteenth century, the respectful and democratic *you* was extended downwards to the masses, and all English-speaking people were able thereafter to address one another as equals. *They* as a singular illustrates once again that in spite of studied efforts to hold it back, our remarkably sensitive tongue is capable of responding to its speakers' longing for equality."

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As I was browsing in *The Superior Person's little Book of Words* by Peter Bowler I came on this entry under 'genealogy': 'The tracing of descent from ancestors; alternatively, a particular account of such a tracing for a specific individual or family. In the English-speaking world, all those who take up this pursuit announce sooner or later that they can trace their descent back to Edward III. This should surprise no one with a rudimentary knowledge of mathematics; there are probably one or two well-bred basset hounds who could also trace their descent back to Edward III. What is really surprising is that Edward III seems to be regarded as some kind of ultimate antecedent beyond whom the genealogist does not venture, even though anyone descended from Edward III is also descended from his father Edward II, and so on. The author can guess only that the prudery of the late Victorian age (when genealogy became a family pastime) chose to draw a veil before the memory of Edward II in view of the sybaritic Plantagenet's bisexual reputation and appalling death'.

I plead guilty to making this claim. I have found Edward III twice definitely and once tentatively in the family tree. So far. I feel a certain sense of sympathy for Edward II. He was a gentler man than his father Edward I known as 'the Hammer of the Scots' and his son Edward III. But if you take him on board you have to take his wife Isabella of France who rejoiced in the epithet of the 'she-deviless' or the 'she-wolf'. She may have been carried along on the plans of powerful English men, she may not have been wild about sodomy, she may have been a Maria Callas in temperament. But however you choose to see her, you also find yourself taking on board her father who suppressed the Knights Templars, her grandfather who tried to exterminate the Albigenians, not to mention nicer sadder people like her ancestress Anne, daughter of Jaroslav the Wise, founder of Kiev, and if you push it back far enough you come upon Charlemagne and his family ... whilst, if you follow Edward I you come upon his grandfather John reluctantly signing Magna Carta and his great-grandfather setting in train the death of Thomas á Becket, and if you keep going you come to William the Conqueror cheerfully laying waste large spaces of England and who would be in the dock at The Hague if he'd lived a thousand years later and if you run back a few more generations you come to some Viking adventurers who weren't big on mercy and hadn't acquired any table manners ... or you can take Edward's wife, Eleanor of Castile, and run backwards for eight generations until you come to the very warlike El Cid (Rodrigo de Vivar) and his horse Simplon ... or you can turn north and take on board Edward's great-great-great-great-grandfather Malcolm who killed Macbeth—or his wife who runs backward through those Saxon kings like Ethelred the Unready until you come to Alfred the Great and the smell of burnt cakes ... It is really your choice what you do with your discoveries because, whatever you do and wherever you go you will come upon a swag of people who terrify the pants off you, lift you up in momentary inspiration and pleasure, or make your toes curl with embarrassment ... And wherever you stop ... well, I hope you enjoy the view ...

And I cannot feel that it makes any difference who you find as you bumble around the past. Genghis Khan or Mrs Nice. They are still going to get swamped in the sheer numbers of ancestors we all have. You may not have ever thought to do any sums. The other night I started jotting figures down. Two parents, four grandparents, eight great grandparents ... by the time you get back to Columbus you will have at least 8,192 in that remove ... William the Conqueror, you will have at least 8,265,728 ... by the time you get back to the time of Christ you will be burdened by 1,109,407,751,913,984 ancestors in that remove ... by then you have acquired 5,137,637,007,866,724 direct ancestors, not taking in uncles, aunts, nephews, or third



cousins twice removed ...

By the time you get back to Adam and Eve stepping out of Eden you are reaching the trillions. Of course they aren't all different people. The same people will appear over and over again. By the time we get back to 'Lucy' and the early hominids they will in fact appear in each family tree several trillion times. I cannot guarantee my maths, I did my sums on the back of a circular while I was having a cup of tea, but however you run them up they are almost mind-boggling. And they raise interesting thoughts about the development of species. Because that intense inbreeding at the start of the human race, or any other healthy adaptable species, suggests a kind of 'setting' of particular characteristics. If there was a flaw, if a population was too scattered and outbred with other not-quite-human ... the whole thing fascinates me because I don't think we have fully taken on board the intensity of those early intimate relationships ...

Our links to Edward III come through both his son Thomas, and his better-known son John of Gaunt with his third wife Katherine Swynford.

Martha Rofheart in her novel *Cry 'God for Harry'* writes: 'King Richard's own poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, came to us at Kenilworth, too; his dead wife, Philippa, had been Lady Kat's sister, and they three had been close for many years. I have heard said that his Criseyde, in *Troilus and Criseyde*, was modeled on my Lady Kat; in those years, when as Katherine Swynford, she lived in flagrant concubinage with my Grandfather Gaunt. I hardly credit this, though, for his Criseyde is false and meanly small, though beautiful. I cannot think that men of genius draw wholly on real life for their creations, for where, then, would be their gift? Surely the Arthur the bards sing has never lived but in their divers songs!

'He was a merry little man, this Master Chaucer, though saddened, too, at times, by all the ugly things of life. He must have been quite old then, for the Lady Kat swears he was above thirty years when she first met him, so long ago. But he had no sign of age about him, save deep lines at the corners of his eyes and a small paunch under his monkish robes. He affected a monk look—long, girdled robes, but in velvets and brocades, and often a little skull-cap, too. Sometimes he wore a kind of full bonnet, which he said was Scots; I never saw him bareheaded, but I think he was totally bald. Sometimes the headgear would slip in a high wind, but never did I see a trace of hair beneath.

'The king had given him a small manor house in London, but it had been burned along with so many others, in the great commons' rebellion, and was never replaced. So now he had no holding of his own, though King Richard had granted him ten pounds a year for life; he spent his years now in visits to those manors where he was welcome, and to the king's court, too. Many, my tutor, Uncle Henry, among them, thought Master Chaucer's work of no great account, for it was in the vulgar tongue, but Richard held him to be a poet of great sweetness and understanding. My Grandfather Gaunt left me, when he died, many manuscripts from Geoffrey's pen, for he, too, was one of Chaucer's patrons. Among them is a eulogy upon the death of his first wife, Blanche of Lancaster, who would have been my grandmother. It is a lovely and moving piece of work; one would swear that the poet had loved the lady dearly. But then that is the cunning gift of these gifted people, that semblance of feeling that is truer than the feeling itself. I would rather have had that gift than a throne. A thing no one will believe.'

John of Gaunt knew Chaucer very well. They were in fact brothers-in-law. They both married daughters of the bumptious French herald Paon de Roet. Chaucer married Philippa and John finally married Katherine after carrying on a long affair with her which resulted in four children. Even though Chaucer was quite handy with a pen we know almost nothing of his wife or family, except for his son Thomas.

There is good evidence to suggest that Edward III raped the Countess of Salisbury but when it comes to the allegations of rape against Chaucer the case is much less clearcut. Three documents turned up in 1873 which appear to suggest that Chaucer raped a woman called Cecily Champain and reached an out-of-court settlement with her and two London tradesmen. But it isn't clear whether it involves rape, sexual assault, abduction, blackmail, breach of promise, a discarded mistress, an elaborate scam, even another Geoffrey Chaucer. Because

there was no trial those questions probably cannot be answered—unless more documents come to light. The assumption that Chaucer must be guilty because he seems to have paid Cecily to avoid the matter becoming public knowledge is specious I think; any man whose position depended on patronage, goodwill, and years of hard work to achieve a respected place in society for himself is not going to risk a court case in which, even if cleared without charge, will leave a stain and promote unpleasant gossip. And Chaucer was partly dependent on the position of his wife as sister-in-law to John of Gaunt and the doors that had opened. To be portrayed very publicly as a philanderer or, worse, a rapist risked bringing that house of cards down. So we come back to the shadowy figure of Philippa Chaucer and how she might have felt about her husband ...

John of Gaunt appears as a less attractive character, both in Shakespeare and in history, although he is described as having olive-skin and golden hair, but I don't suppose he was really more devious or Machiavellian than the other Plantagenet children. His London home, the Savoy palace, was destroyed in the Peasant's Revolt but his northern stronghold, Lancaster Castle, still stands.

Caroline Hillier in *A Journey to the Heart of England* wrote, 'At the top of the hill is the ruined castle, mainly built by John of Gaunt, Shakespeare's 'time honoured Lancaster'. Here he bred warhorses, held his magnificent and cosmopolitan court, was the patron of minstrels, of Chaucer. Here his second wife Constantia laid out the Queen's Garden of vineyard and arbours, wild geranium, lilies, mallow, sorrel and columbine. Here later, the unlucky Mary, Queen of Scots, Rousard's 'belle et plus que belle et agréable Aurore', spent years of her imprisonment, her plight in the rheumatically castle only alleviated by hawking on Hanbury Hill, hunting in Needwood Forest, 'sixteen dishes at both courses', and casks of Burton ale, in which her letters were also smuggled during the Babington plot. 'I am in a walled enclosure on top of a hill, exposed to all the winds and inclemencies of heaven. Within the enclosure there is a very old hunting lodge, built of timber and cracked in all parts ... the sun can never shine upon it ... nor any fresh air come to it.'

And Elfrida Vipont Foulds in *The Birthplace of Quakerism* says of it, 'Lancaster Castle was founded by Roger de Poitou in the reign of William I on the site of a Roman Castrum, and though it was largely rebuilt in later years it retains its Norman keep. The main gateway was added by John of Gaunt, whose name is always associated with Lancaster—'Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster'. On one of his visits to Lancaster, his horse is said to have cast a shoe, and the curious may find it embedded in the paving of the cross road by Penny Street. John of Gaunt, a son of Edward III, was created Duke of Lancaster in 1362; the title now belongs to the reigning monarch, and in the duchy the loyal toast is still to 'The Queen, Duke of Lancaster'. Parts of the Castle, including some of the grimmest dungeons, are now shown to visitors. Many of the Early Friends were imprisoned in Lancaster Castle; Elisabeth Brockbank, in her paper on 'The Story of Quakerism in the Lancaster District' prepared for the Friends Historical Society, reckoned that 'almost every Friend in the district spent at least weeks, if not months or years, in its dark and filthy gaols.' There were occasions when an entire meeting, assembled for worship in some farmhouse or barn, would be dragged away to Lancaster by the constables and all its members imprisoned. The Quarterly Meeting kept the prisoners supplied with fuel and candles, and such Lancaster Friends as still enjoyed their freedom were kept busy ministering to their needs. George Fox was tried three times at Lancaster Castle; in 1652, when he was acquitted and allowed to preach in the open court; in 1660, at the Restoration, when he was accused of plotting against the King and imprisoned for some months, being subsequently and unconditionally released after Margaret Fell had appealed personally to the King himself; and in 1663, after which came his severe imprisonments at Lancaster and Scarborough which lasted until 1666 and undermined his health. The smoky tower described by George Fox in his Journal no longer stands. Margaret Fell was tried and imprisoned at Lancaster three times, in 1664, after which she was a prisoner for four years; 1670-1, and 1683. It was on the first occasion that she received the dreaded

sentence of praemunire and faced her Judge with the heroic answer: ‘Although I am out of the King’s Protection, yet I am not out of the protection of the Almighty God.’

I hope Philippa and Katherine found the upstairs more comfortable as they sat and chatted or embroidered; perhaps they sat and read Geoffrey’s lines about women and wondered if he had modelled them on any women of his acquaintance ...

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As well as attacking the Savoy Palace Wat Tyler and his Peasants attacked several monasteries.

‘According to the poll tax records for 1381 there were 25,883 regular and secular clergy, and in addition, 1,952 who had taken inferior orders as deacons and acolytes. Ignoring Durham, for which there are no figures, England and Wales supported a total of 30,350 clerics, one for every 65 of the population. Today, with a population twenty times as large, clergymen of all denominations number only about 40,000. As I have already said, a third of the gross national income went to the church, and Wycliffe considered this not only economically but ecclesiastically indefensible.

... The Hereford visitation of 1397 is crowded with evidence. In only 44 of 281 parishes does the report state that all is well. In many of the others the priest is charged with immorality. He is a fornicator, an adulterer. He has stolen women away from their husbands. At Weston it is reported that he is absent for weeks on end, and no services are held. At Cowarne the chancel is in ruins, the windows are broken and the roof leaks. At Werley the rector pastures horses and ducks in the churchyard. In Colwall the chaplain has forged a will and made himself beneficiary of a parishioner’s estate. The vicar of Eardisley is a common usurer; he is also thought to be sleeping with the maid-servants. The rector of Wentnor frequents the local tavern day and night. In North Lydbury the vicar has committed adultery with one Johanna Staltogh. At Clun the chaplain has refused the sacraments to a dying man, is living with a married woman and has two children by her. The chaplain of Kilpeck is actually a heretic. He conjures up familiar spirits. In Shelsley the priest, a certain Richard Steere, copulates in the church itself.’

*England in the Age of Chaucer* by William Woods.

Jocelin of Brakelond wrote of the monastic life, ‘The supreme duty of monks is to be silent and shut their eyes to the transgressions of their superiors and sometimes we are condemned for disobedience either to imprisonment or exile.’

Nor was this corruption and laxity confined to medieval England. John MacLeod in his book on the Stuarts says of Scotland: ‘What nothing can deny is the appalling state of the un-reformed Church in Scotland. One need not resort to contemporary Protestant tracts. T.C. Smout says bluntly of this period: ‘Scotland had been a catholic country with peculiarly close links to Rome for five hundred years ... the Scottish Church had long been remarkable for the depth of its corruption.’ Examples abound: he cites them. An incumbent priest at Linlithglow, in 1456, was obliged to declare that he would ‘neither pawn the books, plate and vestment of the town kirk nor maintain for his enjoyment “a continual concubine”’. It does not sound somehow as if his sponsors would have had much objection to his enjoyment of an occasional concubine.’

These are parish priests but many monastic houses, convents and abbeys, had if anything a worse reputation for licentiousness. By the mid-sixteenth century, with the exception of the carthusian order (deliberately imported by James I in a desperate effort to lend holy men some respectability in his realm) Scots monasteries had ‘long since ceased to be the vehicles for spirituality. They had become nothing more than property-owning corporations.’ There abounded men best described as secular clerics, who had won — or bribed to obtain — abbotships, so winning the revenues of the relevant monastic lands. Nor had the royal house set an example. James V, in 1532, had taken advantage of Rome’s struggle with Henry VIII to win, from the Pope, titles of titular abbot for his three illegitimate baby sons, thus securing each land wealth for life.

‘Friars roamed the land, begging for a living, hugely resented by the unordained poor. Most monks were lazy, many illiterate, though, by and large, their lives were less scandalous than those of their abbots. The lewdness of Scots nuns — not that there were many of them — was notorious; Rome, in 1556, was sufficiently concerned to commission a graphic report of their prostitutions. Most nuns could not write their own names. Discipline had so collapsed in Scots orders that few nuns even bothered to live within a convent’s walls. Nor was the regular parish priesthood much more respectable; great damage had been wrought by the Scots crown winning, from the 1300s onwards, power of patronage over the Scots bishoprics. No Pope dared oppose a King of Scots in filling a diocese. So Scotland soon had plenty of wicked placemen bishops. Along with abbots and other prelates, they made merry, and lived most well, on the revenues of their spiritual office. Monies due to parish priests, for their own support, never reached them.

‘As a result the priests, denied any alternative for survival, preyed rapaciously on the poor people of Scotland. Some won or haggled their way to possession of several livings at once. Some started businesses. Some screwed every last penny out of parishioners for the most elementary ecclesiastical services; commonly, a priest demanded a cow as price for conducting a service of burial. Nobody, in this mean culture of religion, spent much money on buildings, many of which slid into deplorable disrepair. And there were untold abuses of power, high and low; many a recorded instance of priests saying mass half-drunk, priests scarcely able to read; priests begetting bastard children. A Jesuit, no less, woefully reported to Rome in 1562 that the Catholic clergy of Scotland were ‘extremely licentious and scandalous’. Cardinal Beaton himself exemplified the state of affairs. He held three rich livings at the same time, and had fathered — and openly supported — twenty illegitimate children.’

The corruption and laxity at parish level pales when compared to the corruption and laxity at the top.

Yet I had always seen the dissolution of the monasteries as a regrettable act—until I came upon this mention in *Choral Music* edited by Arthur Jacobs. ‘The most important single event in the first half of the sixteenth century, as regards music, politics, and social life in England, was the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1539-40. Thousands of choristers were turned out of the friaries and monasteries, and obliged to look for other work in what must have seemed to them an alien world. ‘The loss to music’, so the text books tell us, ‘was incalculable.’ Nothing could be further from the truth. Forcibly scattered throughout the country, the church musicians with their knowledge and discipline were directly responsible for the flowering of secular music in the succeeding Elizabethan age.’

Although it would not be correct to draw direct parallels with other skills such as painting and literature, yet the renewed presence of talented educated literate people within their communities immeasurably helped the process of spreading literacy and creativity; it also encouraged the spread of simplicity. People needing to make a living did not have the endless hours to while away which the monasteries had provided. They did not produce beautiful illuminated manuscripts or elaborate but impenetrable choral worship—but they helped to produce the climate in which secular art, literature, architecture, and ideas could find a safer foothold.

I still think the way it was done was deplorable and the fact that rich cronies of Henry VIII, rather than the many poor in his realm, were the main beneficiaries is not admirable. But once I started to look at it from the angle of what was disseminated into the community at the time of the dissolution I also began to wonder if we should turn the whole question on its head and suggest that it was the *rise* of the monasteries which was the real tragedy. I was thinking of this when I was reading Susan Reynolds’ *Fiefs and Vassals*. She says that “Most of what is known about fiefs and benefices before the twelfth century comes from records that were made in great churches in order to safeguard their property. When bishops or abbots made grants of their land to nobles and less free men—or when kings did it for them—the conditions varied according to circumstances and the status of the parties, but one point was nearly always made,

or should have been made if the bishop or abbot was doing his job conscientiously. The fundamental and ultimate rights of the church to the land were not to be impaired. As a means to this end a fixed term was often imposed on the beneficiary's rights. A bishop or abbot might on occasion grant his church's property to a kinsman without fixing a term, but the usual rule was that church property should not be granted for more than a fixed number of lives or a fixed term of years. That did not apply to church property that was held by peasants: the custom of allowing more or less unfree peasants to inherit their land in practice did not pose the same threat as allowing free men to do so, and consequently the rules that were elaborated in canon law generally ignored peasant property." ... "My argument is that a large part of the rules of fiefholding as historians of feudalism understand them seems to derive, not from social norms of the lay nobility in the earlier middle ages, but from the practices that the clergy devised to protect the property of the church." ... "One estimate of church property by the mid eighth century puts it as high as a third of the cultivated land of Frankish Gaul."

Tony McAleavy in *Life in a Medieval Abbey* wrote, "There is virtually no evidence of women from a poor background becoming nuns. One major barrier to poor men and women joining a monastery was the expectation that novices would bring with them money or land as a gift when joining. This expectation is revealed in many medieval wills" so the foundations constantly acquired wealth and land, often at the expense of people who could make better use of the land or who had greater need for it. With minor variations this aspect of the church as the major landowner across medieval Europe was a key aspect to discontent.

The increasingly separate worlds of the medieval monastery became rather like black holes: a lot went in but very little came out to lighten and inspire and ease the grim lives led by the peasants who provided much of the means on which the monks and nuns lived. It has been said that the monks were often the source of medical care in their area; this is not so. They cared for their own but women in childbirth went to their local midwife, just as peasants who were sick or wounded went to a local herbalist or bone-setter. The monks gave out alms, usually a couple of times a year, but a loaf of bread twice a year did not offset the amount that local people gave both to their parish church and their local monasteries. Monks did a lot of copying but they rarely shared their knowledge with people outside their walls, who struggled to survive in a world of ignorance and fear and superstition.

Because monks usually became exempt from military service it placed a greater burden on secular society. And because those chosen tended to be the better off who could bring money with them into their institution it became a double burden on the poorest in society.

What went on in such institutions would provide a scandalous book; the Knights Templars were not the only institution to maintain a brothel in London for the use of their celibate members. Physical and sexual abuse of the children who were taken into monasteries doesn't bear thinking about; because, once in, it was very hard to leave and unless they were very fortunate there was no one to listen and no one to protect them ...

When the peasants rose they understandably destroyed some of the most obvious and accessible symbols of oppression, such as the Savoy Palace. Yet had they more determinedly focused on symbols of ecclesiastical oppression and greed it might have sent a clear message to Rome ... it might even have made the Reformation less bitter, less violent, and less divisive ...

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Here is Tommaso del Garbo's much publicised way of dealing with the bubonic plague: "Notaries, confessors, relations and doctors who visit the plague victims on entering their houses should open the windows so that the air is renewed [i.e. the corrupt air], and wash their hands with vinegar and rose water and also their faces, especially around their mouth and nostrils. It is also a good idea before entering the room to place in your mouth several cloves and eat two slices of bread soaked in the best wine and then drink the rest of the wine. Then when leaving the room you should douse yourself and your pulses with vinegar and rose water and touch your nose frequently with a sponge soaked in vinegar. Take care not to stay too close to the patient."

Derek Pearsall in his life of Chaucer wrote, ‘the Black Death of 1348-9 was altogether exceptional, and in terms of loss of life it may well have been the greatest natural catastrophe ever to strike Europe and Asia. The plague first came ashore in England in June 1348, probably at Melcombe (now part of Weymouth) in Dorset, spread from there and from other South Coast ports during the late summer and early autumn, and then after a brief lull burst with full fury in the early months of 1349, striking London as early as January. Of England’s total estimated population of 4-5 million, probably 1.5-2 million died, most of them in the next eight months.’ This is the equivalent of losing around seven million Australians in eight months. The mind boggles. And yet it isn’t the same. Simply because people had little conception of themselves as a nation and a population. People saw what happened in their town or village. They mostly remained unaware of its impact elsewhere. And the plague, unlike war, did not leave debilitated wounded damaged people in its wake. If you caught it you either died or recovered. Once it had passed people mourned the loss of loved ones and spread out into the gaps left by that loss. They weren’t constantly asked to confront the walking wounded. Perhaps this helps to explain why such a huge loss of life made so little impact on the literature of the age ...

Edward and all those who lived through his reign, the glories, the tragedies, the ordinary lives with their changes, large and small, did not know it but their medieval world was dying around them. The feudal world was giving way to the first glimmerings of the modern.

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November 14<sup>th</sup>: Steele Rudd  
November 15<sup>th</sup>: William Cowper  
                  Andrew Marvell  
November 16<sup>th</sup>: Michael Arlen  
                  George S. Kaufman  
November 17<sup>th</sup>: Auberon Waugh  
November 18<sup>th</sup>: Gwen Meredith  
                  George Gallup  
November 19<sup>th</sup>: William Yang  
November 20<sup>th</sup>: Nadine Gordimer  
November 21<sup>st</sup>: François Voltaire  
                  Ada Cambridge  
November 22<sup>nd</sup>: George Eliot  
                  Jon Cleary

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A friend and I swap books; we look out for things the other wants when we’re browsing in op-shops and library sale tables and second-hand bookshops; between us we are quite effective in finding obscure and out-of-print titles as well as modern things. Among her modern collection is Jon Cleary’s Scobie Malone series and the one of his which stayed in my mind and which we both felt was one of his best was a novel called *Dilemma*. But we both felt that Cleary set up an excellent problem—the man who is guilty of a murder and who has effectively got away with it finds himself called upon to prosecute another man for the same murder—he brought in the ethical dilemmas which create systemic corruption, he created a gripping read ... and then, disappointingly, he reverted to the old formula of a ‘pistol in the library’ type ending ...

Of course it does happen. Judge Yeldham comes to mind. But I have noticed that writers, even excellent writers in the police procedural and legal thriller areas shy away from following through the implications of some of the dilemmas they create on the page. Is this because they need good relations with the police or the legal system in case they run into a sticky plotting or procedural problem and need advice? Is this because they think they will not be believed if they get down into the murks of corruption and confusion? Do they feel they would be poaching on the preserve of writers in the true crime genre? Or is it simply that the rules and expectations in these genres place limits on where writers feel they can go?

So it may be unsurprising that some of the strangest cases dealing with police, courts, and the law have been written by journalists. You might enjoy this little taste.

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“Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible. He is a kind of confidence man, preying on people’s vanity, ignorance, or loneliness, gaining their trust and betraying them without remorse. Like the credulous widow who wakes up one day to find the charming young man and all her savings gone, so the consenting subject of a piece of nonfiction writing learns—when the article or book appears—*his* hard lesson. Journalists justify their treachery in various ways according to their temperaments. The more pompous talk about freedom of speech and “the public’s right to know”; the least talented talk about Art; the seemliest murmur about earning a living.

The catastrophe suffered by the subject is no simple matter of an unflattering likeness or a misrepresentation of his views; what pains him, what rankles and sometimes drives him to extremes of vengefulness, is the deception that has been practiced on him. On reading the article or book in question, he has to face the fact that the journalist—who seemed so friendly and sympathetic, so keen to understand him fully, so remarkably attuned to his vision of things—never had the slightest intention of collaborating with him on his story but always intended to write a story of his own. The disparity between what seems to be the intention of an interview as it is taking place and what it actually turns out to have been in aid of always comes as a shock to the subject. His situation resembles that of the subject of Stanley Milgram’s famous psychological experiment (conducted at Yale in the early sixties), who was tricked into believing that he was participating in a study of the effect of punishment on learning and memory when in fact what was being studied was his own capacity for cruelty under the pressure of authority. In an ingenious fake laboratory setup, the “naïve subject”—a volunteer who had answered an advertisement in a New Haven newspaper—was told to give an increasingly painful electric shock to a person, presumably another volunteer, in response to every wrong answer to a test question. In *Obedience to Authority*, his book about the experiment, Milgram writes of his surprise at the large number of subjects who obeyed the experimenter, and kept on pulling the lever even though the receiver of the shocks was screaming with pain—or, rather, with simulated pain, since the whole thing was rigged: the electrical apparatus to which the victim was strapped was a stage prop, and the victim himself was an actor. Milgram’s idea had been to see how ordinary Americans would behave when put in a situation roughly comparable to that of the ordinary Germans who were ordered to participate actively in the destruction of the Jews of Europe. The results were not encouraging. Although a few subjects refused to go on with the experiment at the first sign of distress from the victim, most subjects docilely continued giving shock after shock. However, Milgram’s chilling findings are not the point. The point lies in the structure of the situation: the deliberately induced delusion, followed by a moment of shattering revelation. The dizzying shift of perspective experienced by the subject of the Milgram experiment when he was “debriefed,” or “dehoaxed,” as Milgram calls it, is comparable to the dislocation felt by the subject of the piece of writing when he first reads it. The subject of the piece of writing has not suffered the tension and anxiety endured by the subject of the “Eichmann experiment” (as it has been called)—on the contrary, he has been on a sort of narcissist’s holiday during the period of interviews—but when the moment of peripeteia comes, he is confronted with the same mortifying spectacle of himself flunking a test of character he did not know he was taking.

However, unlike the reader of *Obedience to Authority*, with whom Milgram shares the technical details of the deception, the reader of a work of journalism can only imagine how the writer (got) the subject to make such a spectacle of himself. The subject, for his part, is not likely to supply the answer. After his dehoaxing, he tends to pick himself up and walk away from the debacle, relegating his relationship with the journalist to the rubbish heap of love

affairs that ended badly and are best pushed out of consciousness. Occasionally, a subject will have become so enmeshed with the journalist that he cannot let go of him, and long after the galling book has been remaindered the relationship is maintained through the interminable lawsuit that the subject launches to keep the writer bound to him. Yet even here the journalist's perfidy is not exposed, for the lawyer who takes the subject's case translates his story of seduction and betrayal into one or several of the conventional narratives of libel law, such as defamation of character or false statement of facts or reckless disregard of the truth."

So writes Janet Malcolm in *The Journalist and the Murderer*, the strange story of a journalist, Joe McGinniss, who wrote the 'inside' story of the arrest, trial and conviction of Jeffrey MacDonald, accused of the 1970 killing of his pregnant wife and two children, and the lawsuit MacDonald took out against McGinniss in 1984 for fraud and breach of contract. McGinniss began by believing MacDonald innocent but gradually came to believe he was guilty as charged *but* he could not say so if he wanted to keep MacDonald openly talking with him while he finished writing his book.

It is a strange book because of the feeling of standing always on shifting sand. Did MacDonald kill his family. Did McGinniss betray his trust. Did MacDonald deserve his sentence. Did McGinniss deserve to pay out \$300,000 in damages to a convicted murderer. I came away from the book with no clear final resolution of these questions.

The only thing that was clear was that lawyers benefitted at every twist and turn.

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In 1958 Edgar Lustgarten wrote of an English case in 'Lord Chief Justice Hewart and the case of William Cooper Hobbs':

'The qualities that make an attractive personality or a persuasive advocate do not necessarily make a good trial judge. Some of the best judges have been totally insignificant at the Bar and in ordinary life. Some of the worst have excelled as counsel and fascinated as men.

A comparatively recent Lord Chief Justice—Lord Hewart, who held that office from 1922 to 1940—must be included in this latter category. As a personality, Hewart radiated charm. It was my privilege to be acquainted with him, and I can testify to the effortless ascendancy he established over social gatherings, large and small, by his agreeable manners, erudition, fluency and wit.

As an advocate he allied great technical skill to these natural advantages. His merit was reflected in a lucrative private practice, and in the distinction he achieved as a Law Officer of the Crown.

But, ironically enough, with his elevation to the Bench, Hewart's stature started to diminish—and continued to diminish as time passed. He could not accomplish the transformation of himself from a competitive player into an impartial referee.

He adopted a side early—often in the opening minutes of a case—and thereafter could seldom resist taking a kick at the ball whenever it was near enough for him to do so. This highly unjudicial trait was rendered more injurious by those very gifts—of speech, of style, of colour—that served him so well in non-judicial spheres.

A specially glaring instance occurred in 1928 during a libel action brought by William Cooper Hobbs.

Hobbs was a professional villain of the deepest dye (his own counsel, that sturdy Irish character, Serjeant Sullivan, later described him—variously, but consistently—as "this brute", "this beast", "this horrible character", "that loathsome and repellent individual", and "the greatest scoundrel with whom I have come in contact in my life").

Naturally, as a cheat and crook, Hobbs preferred to work in the obscure shadows, but his dominating role in the biggest blackmailing coup for generations—the fleecing of a rajah, pseudonymously known as "I. A."—had given him widespread notoriety, and within the Law Courts made his name a household word. It is a fair assumption that, when his suit came up for trial before the Lord Chief Justice and a jury, the former at least knew Hobbs's record with precision.



That, however, cannot excuse what followed.

The libel of which Hobbs complained was, in my opinion, glaring. During the aftermath of the I. A. sensation, a provincial newspaper had published a “biography” which purported to present a truthful picture of the numerous criminal episodes in Hobbs’s life.

It might have been thought almost an impossibility to say anything bad about Hobbs that wasn’t true, but this newspaper triumphantly succeeded. It imputed to him a murder and an attempt at murder; neither imputation could be substantiated, and Hobbs’s claim to redress was therefore irresistible—save upon the premise that such an evildoer had forfeited his common law rights as a subject of the Crown.

That, in effect, was what the defendant newspaper contended. It did not—dare not—say: We are going to prove you are so infamous a character that even defamatory lies cannot cause you any damage. The formidable talents of Norman Birkett were engaged to conduct this defence and—particularly—to cross-examine Hobbs.

From the very first moment Hewart took pains to make it clear that he wanted—and was resolved to get—a verdict for the defendants. He displayed a pronounced restiveness during Sullivan’s opening. He greeted the plaintiff with a hostile scowl when he took the oath. He commented acidly on Hobbs’s replies to his own counsel; and, when it was Norman Birkett’s turn to question him, the judge assisted—if that be the aptest word—with a whole series of snarling indications that he didn’t believe a single word the witness said.

On the third day, matters suddenly came to a head.

The court assembled as usual at ten-thirty. Hobbs—still under cross-examination—waited to be called back once again into the box. But when Hewart took his seat, he unexpectedly addressed Serjeant Sullivan.

“Do you intend to offer any evidence other than that of Mr. Hobbs himself?” he said.

“I was proposing,” Sullivan replied, with complete propriety, “to consider that at the end of the cross-examination.”

“I am asking you,” said Hewart, “to consider it now.”

Sullivan betrayed astonishment—as well he might—and the Lord Chief Justice rather belatedly condescended to explain: “I have received an intimation from the jury that they are unanimously agreed they have heard enough.”

If a judge acts upon an “intimation” from a jury, that intimation should be disclosed to counsel. Hewart did not disclose it. He merely asked the jury whether they were prepared to find for the defendants.

“Yes,” the foreman said.

“Before that result is arrived at,” Sullivan observed, “I should insist, my lord, upon addressing the jury.”

The Sergeant was entirely within his rights; he could insist on completing his case before the court could take a verdict. But the Lord Chief Justice reddened angrily.

“You would insist? That is a strange phrase to use.”

“My lord, I conceive I am *entitled* to address the jury.”

“Please do not use the word ‘insist’,” growled Hewart, and he sat openly fuming with impatience while Sullivan exercised his right and made his speech.

That speech lasted three-quarters of an hour. In the special circumstances, it should have been followed by a summing-up from the judge making quite clear what the issues were the jury had to decide.

Nothing of the kind.

As Sullivan sat down, Hewart, with the air of a man whose tolerance and self-restraint have been tested to the limits, turned to those he treated as his fellow-sufferers.

“At ten-thirty you intimated you were prepared to find a verdict for the defendants. It is now nearly eleven-thirty. Are you still of the same opinion?”

It was left to the Court of Appeal (where Sullivan promptly took his undeniable grievance) to restore the deserved reputation of our courts for giving everyone—even the devil—his due.

This they did, however, handsomely.

“The worst of criminals,” said Lord Justice Scrutton who presided, “is entitled to a fair hearing. Without expressing any opinion whether Hobbs would ultimately be proved to be of such a character, I say he is entitled to be presumed innocent till proved guilty by a trial *according to the rules of law*. I regret to say I do not think Hobbs has had such a trial. He is entitled to justice. I hope he will get it.”

Some may think that Hobbs got rather more than justice. The action was finally settled for a substantial sum. But while one may deplore the enrichment of a rogue, one can only rejoice in the power of the English law to protect the lowest against injustice from the highest.’

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*Dugan v. Mirror Newspapers Ltd* involved a claim for damages brought by Darcy Dugan who had been convicted in 1950 on a charge of feloniously wounding with intent to murder and given a sentence of death which was later commuted to penal servitude for life. After many years in prison he was eventually released on parole. However, in 1970 whilst still at large on parole, he was charged with and convicted of assault and robbery for which he was sentenced to fourteen years’ imprisonment with hard labour. He was thus returned to prison to serve out both the 1950 and 1970 sentences together. During this second period of imprisonment he issued a writ against Mirror Newspapers Ltd seeking damages for defamation arising out of the publication of various articles about him in the Sydney *Daily Mirror*. The newspaper’s response to this was to argue that Dugan’s 1950 conviction meant that he was “attainted”. This ancient expression meant in effect that he was to be treated as legally dead—entirely shut off from bringing any civil action, though not immune from being sued himself. The Supreme Court of NSW decided, both at an original hearing and in a subsequent appeal, that the newspaper’s response was a complete answer to Dugan’s claim and that he could not sue for any wrong done to him whilst he was serving the sentence of penal servitude for life. He took his case to the High Court of Australia but that Court, by a majority of four-to-one, upheld the newspaper’s claim.

The issue raised in *Dugan’s* case was a narrow one, namely, whether the judge-made rule of law applicable in England in 1788 and 1828, being the crucial dates for the introduction of its rules in NSW, remained operative in NSW in 1978. The majority were clearly of the view that the rule applied in England in 1788 and 1828 and so there could be no doubt about its applicability in 1978. Therefore on and from 10 June 1950, when he had been “attainted”, Dugan, in the words of Mr Justice Jacobs, remained “one of that ever diminishing group of persons in NSW who, by reason of having been sentenced to death and thereby attainted, cannot bring a civil action while the attainder remains”. The fundamental premise of the majority decision is that the common law is rigid, that the rule now is as it has always been and that the judges are debarred from re-working the rule which their predecessors unashamedly made and fashioned to accord with the then prevailing customary and related social standards. Of the majority judges only Mr Justice Jacobs mentions the significant fact that the death penalty was abolished in New South Wales in 1955. This in itself would have afforded sufficient justification for the court to have reconsidered a rule which is based on an anachronism and has only the narrowest, if any, application. Had Dugan not been sentenced to death in 1950 he would not have suffered attainder and probably would not have been shut off from the courts even though he had been convicted of a felony, although the majority on the High Court did not rule out the possibility that this would be the result of a conviction for any felony whatever the penalty attached to it.

What possible current social purpose can this rule serve? For anyone interested in the contemporary justification of it the majority judgments are of no assistance. They merely accept as axiomatic the utility of a principle rightly or wrongly regarded as desirable in eighteenth-century England. No amount of appeal to the logical dictates of the common law can dispose of the fact that judges with law-making powers and responsibilities deliberately *chose* not to do away with a shameful rule. The majority decision is not a neutral position. If,

for example, the common law in NSW now is as it has always been and, in particular, as the common law of England was in 1788 and 1828, what is the explanation of the embarrassing everyday examples of common law rules which quite clearly now exist but certainly did not exist in 1788 or 1828?’

*The Legal Mystique*, by Michael Sexton and Laurence W. Maher

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Bob Bottom wrote in *Shadow of Shame*, ‘Whether Australians like to acknowledge it or not, elements among Italian migrants have been involved in organised crime from its beginnings in Australia. ... Things were a little less sophisticated in 1928, when the most dreaded of the earliest mafia bosses, Vincenzo Dagostino, arrived in Brisbane from Milan and set about making a name for himself as an extortionist.’ His gang, calling themselves the Black Hand, set themselves up on the canefields of North Queensland with its significant migrant population. ‘When victims failed to meet extortion demands, their cane was destroyed, their stock slaughtered, or their water supplies poisoned. If the victim still refused to pay, then very likely his home would be bombed or his women and children beaten up. As a last resort, Dagostino and his gang murdered. Throughout the late 1920s and into the 1930s, 11 people were to be murdered and others mutilated and maimed in Queensland ...’ Queensland police may well have been implicated in some of the extortion rackets but by using public outrage and these murders to imply that they would lead to lynch mobs they managed to shift some of their problems southwards. A number of murders of Italians occurred in Sydney and the Melbourne Market Murders came later in Victoria.

Post-war migration boosted both the numbers of mafiosi entering Australia and the numbers of people who could be preyed upon. Money would be loaned by their compatriots to enable new arrivals to start market gardens, orchards, or small businesses; once into the web, people found there was no simple way out. The gangsters expanded into prostitution, sly grog, people smuggling, and eventually narcotics. World War II saw many Italian men interned which put a break on Black Hand rackets but by the 1960s it was estimated that there were 500 members in NSW and 1,000 elsewhere in Australia. The Vietnam War with its massive American influx changed and expanded the nature and the fortunes of the mafia.

Of course Australia had its home-grown gangsters and terrorists. The larrikin gangs of the late nineteenth century, known as ‘the Push’ in Sydney, men like John Wren and Squizzy Taylor in Melbourne, the razor gangs of the 1930s which gave the inner Sydney suburb of Darlinghurst the unenviable title of ‘Razorhurst’—all these terrified suburbs, country towns and small communities. But they were fundamentally different to the Italian gangsters. They tended to rise in times of depression and high unemployment and fade away in the better times. The empires built by men like Wren largely died with them. They didn’t have a life which was independent of individuals. The mafia, on the other hand, benefited from the long-ingrained fears of its target population, from the traditional code of silence, and, curiously, from its traditional outward involvement in church and community. These people, it was frequently claimed, were church-going, community pillars; they couldn’t possibly be standover men! It must have been terrifying for ordinary members of the small Italian communities in the 20s and 30s; not only to see their faith abused by men like Dagostino, Caletti, Femio, Speranzo, Mammone, Muratore and Italiano, but to have to sit beside them in church and remain silent.

This was murder, extortion, and drug-dealing for gain. As Mark Aarons points out in *Sanctuary* it was the Croatian community which implicated Australia in the export of terrorism for political ends. The open door policy for migrants in the immediate post-war period brought in hundreds of thousands of hard-working law-abiding people—and a small number of extremely unpleasant characters. In the 1960s it was learned that young Croatian men were training as militias in the Blue Mountains; the Yugoslav embassy in Sydney was wrecked, a bomb was set off in Martin Place in downtown Sydney, and then these young men were provided with the means to go to Yugoslavia where the planned revolt in Croatia failed and they were imprisoned.

Australian politicians manage to infuse their voices with a tone of justified outrage these days when they talk of people-smuggling, bomb-making, and the 'export of terrorism'. But there was both police and political knowledge of both the activities of Italian mafia elements and of the Croatian militias. Undoubtedly there was a growth in the level of police corruption. But the overall picture is one of official complacency and a very limited need-to-know. So long as Italians were gunning down Italians or Croats were limiting their violence to Serbs the whole nasty business could be played down.

Bob Bottom in researching the death of Donald McKay provides a clear picture of the way that illegal activities (in this case marijuana growing) lead to police corruption, the entry of organised crime and the preparedness to wipe out anyone who asks questions and raises issues. Police from lowly constables and sergeants in Griffiths, such as Ellis, Borthwick and Robins, right up to the NSW Police Commissioner Fred Hanson were known to be corrupt—but it went beyond individuals. "When Ellis, Borthwick and Robins were finally sentenced to prison terms, none of them served long in jail, thanks to NSW government authorities who allowed them early release. Ellis served 11 months of a six-year sentence, Robins five months of a four-year term and Borthwick four months of a three-year term." Illegal drugs, illegal casinos, illegal prostitution, all helped to corrupt the system from the Premier down.

So how many people has the Mafia killed in Australia? The first Mafia killing in Griffiths is thought to be that of local godfather Rocco Tremarchi in 1932. The Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence counts 22 deaths. But this doesn't include disappearances or early cases. The number is probably at least 50 and could be more.

Once things are dropped into the shadowy world beyond the law organised crime moves in. Desperate Jews fleeing Nazi Germany sought out anyone prepared to help; desperate Afghanis were equally willing to pay anyone prepared to smuggle them to somewhere safe. The answer is to provide easy accessible information and support. Bringing drugs out into the open takes people away from the clutches of criminals. It doesn't remove all the problems. We still have to do the research on the good and bad effects, we still have to educate our children, we still have to provide health, counselling and support services, we still have to provide product testing, agricultural extension services, processing facilities that meet all health and workplace standards ... and the ethical dilemmas as to whether governments should make money from taxing prostitution, recreational drugs, gambling and so on, never become any easier ...

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When is a crime not a crime?

'There are, of course, people involved in pilfering who are as dishonest as any professional criminal — a rather grey distinction is that the pilferer does not have to thieve to earn his living while the professional does. This distinction is much more than simply an academic nicety because it leaves people free to commit what by any yardstick is a crime, while at the same time salving their consciences with the reassurance that as everybody else is doing the same thing, it cannot be very wrong.

Most people have a double standard about this kind of crime and it has seldom been better illustrated than in a story told by a member of a jury after a trial. The jury members were asked to complete their claims forms for expenses which they had incurred, and they talked among themselves about the items which they should inflate, such as car mileage, and even whether it was worth the risk claiming that they had lost their normal weekly wage because of jury service. After the expenses had been paid, most of them compared the amount of money which they had obtained over and above what they had actually spent. One man called it his 'spending money' and the amounts varied between \$6 and \$50.

None of them thought to condemn what had been done or to report it to a court official or to one of the policemen on duty; yet only a short time before, these same people had found a youth guilty of stealing items valued at less than \$5 and had all agreed that the judge's sentence of nine months in jail was very appropriate.'

(*White Collar Crime in Australia* by Timothy Hall)

And when is a crime not punishable?

I knew that there were the Nuremberg and some lesser trials, denazification programs, many ad hoc revenge killings, that the Russians carried out a considerable number of shootings of Nazi officials without the bother of trials, but until I read Michael Elkins book *Forged in Fury* I didn't know about a secret organisation called DIN. He writes, 'There is a Hebrew phrase, a fighting slogan going back to biblical times: *Dahm Y'Israel Nokeam*—'The blood of Israel will take vengeance'. In the first months of 1945, in Germany, Wald and Becker, Judah Klein, Benno the Messenger and Hannah Baum and fifty others left the people they had till then led. They took this fighting slogan for their own and formed the secret organization which came to be known, to those who knew of it at all, by the first letter of each word; the Hebrew letters *daled, yod, nun*; the letters that spell out another Hebrew word; *DIN*, which means 'judgment'.'

They carried out a number of individual killings, they seriously planned the mass extermination of up to a million Germans via a poisoned water supply (but gave up the idea), and killed hundreds of SS men being held in a German camp via the medium of poisoned bread. At the end of his book Elkins writes, 'I began this book long years ago.

I put it often aside, and there were reasons for so doing; all the things, personal and public, that can happen to a man and can serve as excuses for work undone.

But the real reason was that I felt, and feel, unequal to the burden laid upon me by those of whose lives I have written: to report, and in some measure to explain; to try—somehow, someway—to move the damned unmoving world.

The men and women of DIN have grown older. The years impose their inescapable imperatives. Time and events and the swing of the world bring their own urgencies. And who, aware of this and given choice, would say to his children, 'You must continue what I have done,' when what he has done has been so bitter in the doing?

Thus DIN's bleak crusade has ended. But the memory of the Jewish agony in Europe endures and will go echoing through the ages because justice was not done.

And this separates Jew from non-Jew.

The people of Israel today will not entrust any measure of their survival to the non-Jewish world, and what is contained in this book is part of the reason.

And one thing more.

Men denied justice will themselves take however much of it they can and in whatever manner open to them. All men. The Jews not least.'

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The question of punishment of war crimes is at the heart of Gary Jonathon Bass's book *Stay the Hand of Vengeance*. He writes, "The Constantinople War Crimes Trials, had they not fallen apart, would have been remembered as comparable only to Nuremberg and Tokyo. In April 1919, an Ottoman court—created under massive British pressure—had before it some of the most important leaders from the wartime Ottoman government: men who had once held the mighty titles of minister of foreign affairs, minister of justice (two of them), party secretary-general, and even grand vizier. They were there to stand trial for war crimes and for the 1915 genocide of about a million Armenians. The Constantinople tribunal also held trials for the deportation and slaughter of Armenians from Yozgat and Trebizond. British and Ottoman jails were crammed with cabinet ministers, provincial governors, senior military officers, and other major war crimes suspects. Out of the eight Ottoman leaders who drew up the decree taking the empire into war against the Allies, fully five of them—the grand vizier, the *shaikh ul-Islam* (the top religious official), the president of the council of state, and the ministers of justice and public instruction—wound up in custody.

And yet the tribunal has been completely forgotten in the West, except among some Armenian communities. Constantinople is the Nuremberg that failed. What Constantinople shows, most of all, is that the enormous political difficulties of mounting prosecutions against foreign war criminals can be so great that a tribunal can *crumble*. With the collapse of the

Ottoman Empire came the collapse of the tribunal. There is as much to learn from failure as from success.”

The reasons it failed are many. There was confusion over the legal process—including the confusion over individual and state responsibility—and legal aims. The treatment of British POWs got mixed in with responsibility for war and for genocide. The British depended on Turkish officials to do much of the research and to capture and imprison suspects. The first trials were conducted on Turkish soil in an atmosphere of backlash against both the British and the Turkish governments. One man Kemal Bey, lieutenant governor of Yozgat, was executed for the massacre of local Armenian communities—but his body was released and his funeral formed the basis for a massive outpouring of anger which turned him from a thug into a martyr. By the time the British actually occupied Constantinople in 1920 the Turks had had two years to comb through their archives and remove all compromising documents and orders (and the British were further hampered by language difficulties and their dependence on a small number of Turkish officials, some of whom hoped to use the trials to remove people they saw as unstable and antagonistic to their own rule). There was a lack of clarity in the indictments, including the intrusion of anti-Muslim sentiments, though the attempt at justice did enable the Russian foreign minister Sergei Sazonov to coin the term ‘crimes against humanity’ in the effort to avoid anything which would look like Christian bias. Depending on the Turks themselves to identify lower ranking suspects, to capture the wanted people, and to imprison them in Turkey, heightened the mood of backlash—and meant that dozens of prisoners were helped to escape from prison. Belatedly the British moved a few prisoners to Malta but had difficulty getting documents, witnesses, and trials set up there; opening themselves to the charge of imprisoning people without trial. And the trials are a reminder of the importance of commitment and lobbying. Only one country, Britain, had what might be termed a pro-Armenian lobby (which dated back to relief efforts during the 1890s Turkish massacres of Armenians); though the USA had what could be termed a one-man lobby, Henry Morgenthau, American Ambassador to Turkey, who wrote ‘I earnestly beg the Department to give this matter urgent and exhaustive consideration with a view to reaching a conclusion which may possibly have the effect of checking this Government [Turkey] and certainly provide opportunity for efficient relief which now is not permitted. It is difficult for me to restrain myself from doing something to stop this attempt to exterminate a race, but I realize that I am here as Ambassador and must abide by the principles of non-interference with the internal affairs of another country’. (11/8/1915) War Crimes Trials are slow, difficult, and do allow perpetrators sometimes to escape on technicalities. Above everything they require a deep and powerful commitment to the cause of justice.

Bass writes of the consequences of the failure of that tribunal: “First, the forgetting of the Constantinople trials has been closely linked to the forgetting of the Armenian genocide. Unlike Germany, which made a relatively clean break with its dark past, Atatürk’s Republic has never confronted the deeds of 1915 or distanced itself adequately from them. Tansu Ciller, a recent prime minister of Turkey, was typical when asked if Turkey had done enough to address the Armenian genocide. “In the history of every nation, there’s war or strife, and controversial incidents like this,” Ciller says. “Turkey is no better or no worse than any nation. It is a two-sided story that took place at a time of war. This is not to excuse massacre on both sides.”

Of course it is. Or, rather, it is to excuse massacre on the Turkish side. Nor are these apologetics limited to Turkish leaders. A standard history of the Ottoman Empire, published by Cambridge University Press, denies that the Armenians were deliberately killed. The evidence from high-level testimony and from a more complete search of the Ottoman archives, had Britain been able to get such documents as stipulated in the Treaty of Sèvres, would have made it harder for subsequent Turkish governments to deny or minimize Turkish culpability. Trials can help bring out truth.

Second, Britain walked away, but the Armenians did not. In 1919, de Robeck had warned

that if the punishment of the Young Turks was ignored, “it may safely be predicted that the question of retribution for the deportations and massacres will be an element of venomous trouble in the life of each of the countries concerned.” He was right.

Some Young Turks proved themselves to be almost as disruptive under Atatürk’s Republic as they had been before. Ali Ihsan Pasha—the highest-ranked Turkish soldier who had languished to the end at Malta, having been accused of Armenian atrocities—was immediately given command of a Turkish division in Anatolia, to fight Greece. In 1926, Ahmed Shukri Bey and Nazim were hanged for trying to overthrow Atatürk.

Talaat, Enver, and many of the other top Young Turks had fled to Germany in 1918. The Allies had never managed to get ahold of them for trial. Having been failed by both Ottoman and British justice, some Armenians now took matters in their own hands. The guerrilla wing of the Armenian Dashnak party hunted down the Young Turks relentlessly across Europe and Central Asia, in their “Operation Nemesis.” One group tracked down and killed Djemal, former navy minister, in Tiflis in July 1922. Said Halim, the former grand vizier, had outlasted both Ottoman and British jailers, only to be killed by an Armenian assassination cell in Rome in December 1921. Enver managed to escape these cells, but died in battle with Bolsheviks in Bukhara in August 1922. Behaeddin Shakir was shot by an Armenian in Berlin in April 1922. And on March 14, 1921, Talaat himself was killed on a street in Berlin, shot once through the neck and brain by Soghomon Tehlirian, an Armenian from Turkey who had lost his family in Talaat’s deportations.”

It is not hard to draw conclusions. Wronged people want justice, recompense, and truth. They very rarely get all three.

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Books for writers always stress the need for stories to contain conflict. I have mixed feelings about this. I am drawn to books which are about dilemmas. They do not need to be obvious or profound. Quite trivial dilemmas can contain the heart of a powerful story.

But the dilemma which is at the heart of Ariel Dorfman’s *Death and the Maiden* is both trivial and profound. Someone involved in the Pinochet regime knocks on a door. His car has broken down.

While I was thinking back over this as being one of my most memorable uses of dilemma in a play I happened to notice that Dorfman had done a set of short stories called *My House is on Fire*. Here too he uses dilemmas and fears and political shadow-boxing as the heart of his stories, such as one woven round the question of censorship (which is sometimes funny in a painful way: ‘He accepted for publication a collection of poetry, replacing the word *lion* with *sheep* four times. *Approved with changes*, he wrote on the appropriate page. The book would have to go back to the printer, the pager and the linotypist. That should serve as a warning to the publisher. As for the reader, he would end up confused, unable to read any hidden political meaning into a text that seemed so incoherent.’); in another a young man is to be sent as an army guard to a prison camp where the family believes a relative is being held; and the sailors from the Chilean sail-training ship, the *Esmeralda*, find the American prostitutes have gone on strike when they come calling in a third story. The translation annoyed me slightly—the whole thing came out sounding like an American version of Chilean angst rather than something that could not be anything but Chilean—but I found the stories well worth reading even though I didn’t feel they had the power that Dorfman brought to his play.

He says he decided to write the play: “My country was at the time (and still is now as I write this) living an uneasy transition to democracy, with Pinochet no longer the President but still in command of the Armed Forces, still able to threaten another coup if people became unruly or, more specifically, if attempts were made to punish the human rights’ violations of the outgoing regime. And an order to avoid chaos and constant confrontation, the new government had to find a way of not alienating Pinochet supporters who continued occupying significant areas of power in the Judiciary, the Senate, the Town Councils—and particularly the economy. In the area of human rights, our democratically elected President, Patricio

Aylwin, responded to this quandary by naming a Commission—called the Rittig Commission after the eighty-year-old lawyer who headed it—that would investigate the crimes of the dictatorship that had ended in death or its presumption, but which would neither name the perpetrators nor judge them. This was an important step towards healing a sick country: the truth of the terror unleashed upon us that we had always known in a private and fragmented fashion would finally receive public recognition, established forever as official history, recreating a community fractured by divisions and hatred that we wished to leave behind. On the other hand, justice would not be done and the traumatic experience of hundreds of thousands of other victims, those who had survived, would not even be addressed. Aylwin was steering a prudent but valiant course between those who wanted past terror totally buried and those who wanted it totally revealed.”

He wrote his play in 1991. The woman who opens the door, Paulina Salas, says: “The Justices? The same Justices who never intervened to save one life in seventeen years of dictatorship? Who never accepted a single *habeas corpus* ever? The Justices who said that nobody had been kidnapped; that if some poor woman’s husband was missing it was because he was tired of her and had found another woman? What did you call them? Justices? Justices? Justices?”

The play is still painful to read or see, not least because the underlying losses and disappearances remain unresolved; but it also still strikes a painful nerve because it is a reminder that corruption of the police, of the whole system of justice, wherever it happens, whatever language it speaks, strikes at the heart of a nation and undermines people’s sense of safety and security. Life seems not worth living if all sense of fairness and truth and justice is chucked out the window. Chris Masters wrote in *Inside Story*, “I have seen enough to know Australia is an appallingly corrupt country, with none of the excuses that help explain corruption in the Third World. Here we are corrupt not because we are hungry, but because we are greedy.” I believe unacknowledged and unresolved corruption, cheating, and double-dealing in Australia is far more terrifying than anything a few Muslim hot-heads are ever likely to dream up. We need to feel we can trust the people who hold our fate and the fate of our children and still-to-be-born generations in thrall.

Later in the play Roberto says: “In this country everything finally comes out into the open. Their children, their grandchildren, is it true that you did this, you did what they’re accusing you of, and they’ll have to lie. They’ll say it’s slander, it’s a communist conspiracy, some such nonsense, but the truth will be written all over them, and their children, their very own children, will feel sorrow for them, disgust and sorrow. It’s not like putting them in gaol, but ... ”

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- November 23<sup>rd</sup>: Robert Barnard
- November 24<sup>th</sup>: Laurence Sterne  
Benedict Spinoza  
William F. Buckley
- November 25<sup>th</sup>: Brenda Niall
- November 26<sup>th</sup>: Charles Shultz  
Charles W. Goddard  
Aurel Stein
- November 27<sup>th</sup>: Charles Austin Beard
- November 28<sup>th</sup>: Randolph Stow  
William Blake
- November 29<sup>th</sup>: C. S. Lewis  
Louisa May Alcott
- November 30<sup>th</sup>: Jonathon Swift  
Mark Twain
- December 1<sup>st</sup>: Max Stout



Princess Anna Commena  
 December 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mary Elwyn Patchett  
 December 3<sup>rd</sup>: Joseph Conrad  
 December 4<sup>th</sup>: Rainer Maria Rilke  
 Thomas Carlyle  
 December 5<sup>th</sup>: Christina Rossetti  
 James Lee Burke  
 December 6<sup>th</sup>: Evelyn Underhill  
 Gunnar Myrdal  
 Richard Harris Barham/Thomas Ingoldsby  
 John Solomon Rarey  
 December 7<sup>th</sup>: Willa Cather  
 December 8<sup>th</sup>: Padraic Colum  
 James Thurber  
 December 9<sup>th</sup>: John Milton  
 Joel Chandler Harris  
 James Hogg (baptised)

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I came upon this piece in a *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1818; 'Lines Written after reading the Poems of the Ettrick Shepherd'

With harp of Celt, and eye of fire,  
 The Swan of Ettrick strikes the lyre;  
 A simple Mountain Shepherd, *he*  
 Grac'd with rare powers of Minstrelsy:  
 Illustrating what Horace writ—  
 "Poeta nascitur non fit."  
 Rude Son of Song—thy Runic rhyme  
 Shall travel, unhurt, the touch of Time!  
 Thy name, in after-ages, be  
 The boast of Bibliography!  
 When Rizzio breathes the melting story  
 Of hapless Lorn, and fair Glen-Era;  
 When Farquhar—in terrific form—  
 Poutrays the spirit of the storm;  
 Or Ila's virgin charms allure  
 The royal Mador of the Moor;  
 The passions, roused at thy command,  
 Confers the powerful Master-hand.  
 Oft, o'er thy page, with rapt regard,  
 Shall hang entrance'd the embryo Bard;  
 Pronounce thee Nature's *genuine* child—  
 The gifted "Nurseling of the Wild."

(D. Cabanel)

It makes me feel there's hope for me yet—and the Ettrick Shepherd was, of course, James Hogg.

I am always intrigued by the fact that so many poets were inspired to write 'Lines' after reading or contemplating something; next time I am stuck in front of a blank page I will go out and contemplate a Japanese vase—or a sink full of unwashed dishes—and, with luck, inspiration will immediately well up.

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The biographers of Robert Burns stress how fortunate he was to have the services of an excellent tutor, John Murdoch, when he was a boy on an Ayrshire farm; some of them also imply that the Scottish education system left the world panting in its wake.

‘On the afternoon of 9 November 1809 Thomas Carlyle arrived in Edinburgh for the first time. He had walked twenty miles that day, a third of his journey from his home in Annandale. He was fifteen and about to enroll at the University. That the son of a stonemason should do so was a mark of the difference between Scotland and England, where the two Universities were almost entirely reserved for the sons of gentlemen and the well-to-do; Scotland was the land of ‘the Democratic Intellect’.’

Allan Massie in *Edinburgh*.

We-e-ll ye-es ... This image of Scotland as a place where learning was admired and encouraged is an enduring one and, up to a point, a true one. But the picture becomes far less rosy when the fate of its intelligent women is looked at. Sophia Jex-Blake is a clear case in point.

She wrote, ‘My thoughts naturally turned to Scotland, to which so much credit is always given for its enlightened views respecting education, and where the universities boast of their freedom from ecclesiastical and other trammels’. But her long saga to be accepted as a medical student by Edinburgh University is anything but enlightened; and the hundreds of male students who rioted outside Surgeon’s Hall and the lecturers who refused her permission to attend their lectures and demonstrations are a reminder that universities are not necessarily in the vanguard of social change. She eventually graduated in medicine at the university in Berne and it was the College of Physicians in Dublin which, in 1877, was the first institution in the British Isles to confer upon women the legal right to practise medicine.

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‘The *Edinburgh Review* spawned imitators and rivals. The most vigorous of these was *Blackwood’s*, founded in 1817, by the already prosperous bookseller and publisher William Blackwood, the Scottish agent for Byron’s publisher, John Murray. The previous year Blackwood had moved his business from South Bridge to 17 Princes Street, where he founded what one of the contributors to his *Maga*, Scott’s son-in-law, John Gibson Lockhart, called ‘the only great lounging book-shop in the New Town’. Lockhart remarks that ‘the prejudice in favour of sticking by the Old Town was so strong among gentlemen of the trade that when the bookseller intimated his purpose of removing to the New, his ruin was immediately prophesied by not a few of his sagacious brethren.’ He defied their doubts, to good effect.

‘His magazine was intended from the first to be a Tory competitor for the *Edinburgh Review*. It began badly, and Blackwood soon got rid of the editors he had appointed, replacing them with Lockhart and John Wilson, two young men distinguished for their sense of their own superiority, their intolerance, their high spirits and combative natures. Wilson, the son of a Paisley manufacturer, a graduate (like Lockhart) of Oxford, was an admirer and undistinguished imitator of the Lake Poets. They recruited James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, a remarkable self-educated mixture of genius and gaucherie, and took the town by storm with the *Chaldee Manuscript*, a satirical picture, written in the language of the Old Testament, of the leading political and literary figures of the day, the Whigs being attacked with considerable scurrility and the Tories praised for their intelligence. A Highland lady, Mrs Grant of Laggan, reported that the city was ‘in an uproar about *Blackwood’s Magazine*, which contains in a very irreverent and unjustifiable form, a good deal of wit and cunning satire.’

‘The centerpiece of the magazine soon became the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, conversations between the principal contributors reputedly taking place in Ambrose’s Tavern in Picardy Place. No doubt they were to some extent versions of real conversations; no doubt various writers contributed bits to them, and rewrote what others had sketched; but they soon became principally the work of Wilson, though the main figure in the dialogues was usually a caricatured version of Hogg. They are hard to read now, and much of the wit has faded or seems forced and mechanical, but as a device for offering free-ranging commentary on the

political, social and literary affairs of the day, the form was admirable. The *Noctes* were vigorous, pungent, intellectual and challenging.’ (Alan Massie.)

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“Have you ever seen this book?” said he, and put Smith’s “Sean Dana” into my hand.

“Oh yes,” said I, “and have gone through it. It contains poems in the Gaelic language by Oisín and others, collected in the Highlands. I went through it a long time ago with great attention. Some of the poems are wonderfully beautiful.”

“They are so,” said the old clerk. “I too have gone through the book; it was presented to me a great many years ago by a lady to whom I gave some lessons in the Welsh language. I went through it with the assistance of a Gaelic grammar and dictionary, which she also presented to me, and I was struck with the high tone of the poetry.”

“This collection is valuable indeed,” said I; “it contains poems, which not only possess the highest merit, but serve to confirm the authenticity of the poems of Ossian, published by Macpherson, so often called in question. All the pieces here attributed to Ossian are written in the same metre, tone, and spirit, as those attributed to him in the other collection, so if Macpherson’s Ossianic poems which he said were collected by him in the Highlands are forgeries, Smith’s Ossianic poems, which, according to his account, were also collected in the Highlands, must be also forged, to have been imitated from those published by the other. Now as it is well known that Smith did not possess sufficient poetic power to produce any imitation of Macpherson’s Ossian, with a tenth part of the merit which the ‘Sean Dana’ possess, and that even if he had possessed it, his principles would not have allowed him to attempt to deceive the world by imposing forgeries upon it as the authentic poems of another, he being a highly respectable clergyman, the necessary conclusion is that the Ossianic poems which both published are genuine, and collected in the manner in which both stated they were.”

After a little more discourse about Ossian, the old gentleman asked me if there was any good modern Gaelic poetry. “None very modern,” said I: “the last great poets of the Gael were Macintyre and Buchanan, who flourished about the middle of the last century. The first sang of love and Highland scenery; the latter was a religious poet. The best piece of Macintyre is an ode to Ben Dourain, or the Hill of the Water-dogs—a mountain in the Highlands. The masterpiece of Buchanan is his *La Britteanas* or Day of Judgment, which is equal in merit, or nearly so, to the *Cywydd y Farn* or Judgment Day of your own immortal Gronwy Owen. Singular that the two best pieces on the day of Judgment should have been written in two Celtic dialects, and much about the same time; but such is the fact.”

George Borrow in *Wild Wales*.

Is that what this little piece, ‘The Bagman’s Dog’ in *The Ingoldsby Legends*, refers to? That sense of lingering doubt about what should be described as a hoax and what should be more correctly seen as simply the gathering of long-established oral traditions and putting them in a more coherent narrative?

“Now had I the pen of old Ossian or Homer

(Though each of those names some pronounce a misnomer,

And say the first person was call’d James McPherson,

While as to the second, they stoutly declare

He was no one knows who, and born no one knows where”.

Peter Ackroyd in his biography of William Blake has this to say about Macpherson’s collection: ‘His reverence for the past also emerged in his passion for the works of ‘Ossian’ and of Chatterton. The prose poems of Ossian were supposed to be the work of an ancient bard, a son of Finn from Scottish antiquity, when in fact they were the imaginative productions of an eighteenth-century clergyman named James Macpherson; there was a prolonged debate about their authenticity before Blake himself came across them, but he never entertained doubts of any kind. A man who declares, ‘Ages are All Equal. But Genius is Always Above The Age’, is hardly likely to be concerned if a poem was written in the third century or the seventeenth century, as long as it became the agent of spiritual perception. In Ossian’s work he discovered

an extraordinary landscape of heaths and ghosts, of dreams and yews and misty hills. The themes were of battles lost and won, of youth destroyed and betrayed, all conveyed in the sublime cadence of presumed antiquity: ‘Our youth is like the dream of the hunter on the hill of the heath ... Her steps were the music of songs. He was the stolen sigh of her soul ... The horn of Fingal was heard; the sons of woody Albion returned ... No words came forth: they seize their spears. Each soul is rolled into itself ... But thou thyself shall fail, one night, and leave thy blue path in heaven.’ The ending of ‘Oithona’, a prose poem from which Blake borrowed for one of his own short epics, has genuine power: ‘The brightness of the face of God returned. But his sigh rose, at times, in the midst of friends; like blasts that shake their unfrequent wings after the stormy winds are laid!’ A shadowy image of Blake’s own epics emerges in ‘Fingal’: ‘His face is like the beam of the setting moon. His robes are of the clouds of the hills. His eyes are two decaying flames.’ Ossian’s ‘Songs of Selma’ would also have influenced a young poet already steeped in the Bible and in antiquarian lore: ‘Star of descending night! fair is thy light in the west! thou liftest thy unshorn head from thy cloud: thy steps are stately on the hill.’ It is wonderfully sonorous, with a grandeur that inspired men as diverse as Goethe and Napoleon; it affected Blake profoundly, and the cadences of the Ossian prose poems effortlessly entered his own imaginative repertoire.’

This sense of the Scottish Highlands as an inexhaustible reservoir of the inspiring, the macabre, the whimsical, the ancient, the magical, was still drawing collectors to collect fifty years later, such as John Francis Campbell with his four volume *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, and poets to versify, sometimes slightly tongue-in-cheek, such as William Collins in ‘An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands’ ...

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James Hogg is remembered by the title of ‘the Ettrick Shepherd’, a description that suggests gentle pastoral poems and ballads. Yet he is now, probably, best remembered for his horror novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, first published in 1824 and described as a “macabre tale of a psychopath that anticipates the modern psychological thriller”. The local laird George Colwan, a boisterous boozy gentleman, has married a woman brought up in the extremes of Calvinism. He accepts his first-born as his own son and names him George but his second-born he rejects as being the son of the clergyman the Reverend Mr Wringham who he believes has turned his wife into a puritanical and religious bigot. Mr Wringham has defined eight kinds of faith and has taken the doctrine of predestination as far as it will go, believing that he can do as he wishes, he is one of the ‘naturally justified’ and will go to heaven. In this strange atmosphere of fanaticism and rejection young Robert grows up. He is a curious mixture of the stalker and the spoilsport and his object is his older brother George. Wherever George goes and whenever he is enjoying himself with other gay young blades up pops Robert with the sole purpose of spoiling his fun and provoking him into some form of retaliation.

The book is written in three parts. The first relates the story of George and Robert which ends in George’s murder and the efforts of a woman, Mrs Logan, to have Robert named as the murderer. The second part deals with a memoir, purportedly written by Robert, detailing his childhood, the way he has been brought up in an atmosphere of extreme predestination and what he calls the ‘*infallibility of the elect*’ which draws on the strange idea in Revelations that only 144,000 people will get into heaven; and in his own spiritual pride at believing he is one of the elect he invites in the shadowy figure and finally constant companion of the proudest of them all, Satan. The third part briefly deals with the clumsy later attempts at excavation and research into the grave of an apparent suicide, believed to be Robert, where an uncorrupted body, still dressed in out-of-date clothes, is unearthed.

Hogg wrote his book in 1824 so it might be seen as a precursor to the work of Edgar Allan Poe and a successor to such works as William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* and Robert Burns’ ‘Holy Willie’s Prayer’. (Earwaker and Becker in *Scene of the Crimes* say of *Caleb Williams*: ‘Often cited as one of the founders of the crime genre, anarchist William Godwin

(1756-1836) was a preacher at Lowestoft on the east coast and a minister further south in inland Stowmarket until he was expelled from Suffolk in 1780 over a theological dispute. His thrilling novel *Caleb Williams* (1794) depicts largely a political landscape, but through its detection, psychology and pursuit foreshadows the modern crime novel.’) It predates police, forensic science, detectives and detective stories. Poe and his English and French successors as well as people like Fitz-James O’Brien in the US can be seen to be writing on the cusp of the early psychological thriller (and its close and melodramatic cousin, the gothic) and the first attempts at detective fiction. Advances in forensic, medical, and psychiatric detection took the novel down the Golden Age path of neat cause-and-effect and nicely tied-up-endings. The latest books in a sense have come full circle, containing some of the ambiguity which Hogg uses so well. His book is about motives and criminality rather than evidence and detection. For this reason it remains both impressive and ‘modern’ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He explores the damage a dysfunctional family and religious fanaticism can do. Robert, brought up to believe in the superiority of his religious beliefs and the likely damnation of his easy-living brother, nevertheless faces a position of inferiority knowing his brother will inherit everything as first son; he also sees his brother as good-looking and popular and his own jealousy undoubtedly drives him to try and spoil any fun his brother might be having in life. Yet Hogg clearly understood that Robert’s upbringing both damages others and himself. He delves deeply into what is now glibly called ‘the dark side’ of the psyche with its violence and confused motivations yet there is also a sense of understanding and even compassion for Robert’s mental anguish. It is this which gives the novel its power.

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‘The literary sensation of the year 1848 was a book entitled *The Night Side of Nature* by Catherine Crowe. Mrs Crowe was an Edinburgh housewife, who had already achieved a modest success with novels like *Susan Hopley* and *Lily Dawson*. *The Night Side of Nature* — subtitled ‘Ghosts and Ghost Seers’ — made her a celebrity, and went on to become one of the most influential books of the nineteenth century.

‘Regrettably, Mrs Crowe did not enjoy her success for long. In 1859, she produced a treatise called ‘Spiritualism and the Age We Live In’ — which, according to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, evinced ‘a morbid and despondent turn of mind’, and soon after this she went insane — a fate her contemporaries must have felt she had invited by her interest in such macabre subjects. She recovered, but wrote little between then and her death in 1876. *The Night Side of Nature* remained as popular as ever, and was still on sale on railway bookstalls (price two shillings) at the turn of the century.

‘The author of the piece in the *Dictionary of National Biography* was clearly not a believer in ghosts and ghost seers; for while he admits that the book is ‘one of the best collections of supernatural stories in our language’, he then attacks Mrs Crowe for being ‘extremely credulous and uncritical’. The reproach is unfair; the book would not have become so influential if it had been merely a collection of ghost stories. What the Victorians liked about it was its air of sturdy common sense, and its attempts to treat the phenomena with detachment. It would be more than thirty years before scientific investigators approached the supernatural in a spirit of systematic research. But Mrs Crowe did her best, citing letters and documents and offering names of witnesses and dates.

‘The book that inspired *The Night Side of Nature* was another nineteenth-century bestseller called *The Seeress of Prevorst*, by Justinus Kerner, and Catherine Crowe had published her own translation from the German only three years earlier. It was the first full-length study of a clairvoyant in literary history. The seeress of Prevorst was a peasant woman called Friederike Hauffe, who had been seeing strange visions and conversing with invisible spirits since childhood. At the age of nineteen, Friederike had married a cousin and had a baby; then she went into post-natal depression, and developed symptoms of hysteria. Every evening she fell into a trance and saw spirits of the dead. Kerner, a wealthy doctor and amateur poet, was summoned to try to cure her.

‘Understandably, he treated her visions as delusions. But he was fascinated by one claim that was undoubtedly genuine. Friederike could read with her stomach. She would lie on a bed, and an open book would be placed, face down, on her naked midriff. And, with her eyes closed, she would read as easily as if it was in front of her face. She also claimed to be able to see into the human body, and possessed a knowledge of the nervous system that was extraordinary for a peasant.

‘Kerner changed his mind about her visions after a strange experience. She told him that she was being haunted by a man with a squint, and Kerner recognized the description of a man who had died a few years earlier. The dead man, said Friederike, was suffering from a guilty conscience because he had embezzled some money and another man had been blamed. Now the embezzler wanted to clear the innocent man’s name, for the sake of his widow. The proof, he said, resided in a chest of documents, which would be found in the room of a certain official. The ‘spirit’ had shown her the official sitting in his room, with the chest open on the table; her description was so good that Kerner recognized a judge called Heyd. The judge had to admit the accuracy of Friederike’s account of his room, and both he and Kerner were staggered when the document was found exactly where she said it would be — she even knew that it had been filed in the wrong place.

‘From now on, Kerner took Friederike seriously, and made a note of her basic ideas. She told him that we are surrounded by invisible spirits, and to prove it, persuaded them to make rapping noises, throw gravel, and make a stool rise up into the air. A book opened itself; a candle was extinguished by invisible fingers; and something tugged off Friederike’s boots as she lay on the bed. Kerner himself saw a ‘spirit’, which he described as looking like a grey pillar of cloud surmounted by a head.

‘Friederike spoke a strange unknown language, which she claimed to be the original language of the inner life — scholars later found that it resembled Coptic. She talked about various complicated cycles of human existence — sun-circles and life-circles. And — most significant — she declared that man consists of four parts: body, ‘nerve aura’, soul and spirit, the nerve aura being an ‘ethereal body’ which carries on the vital processes when we are asleep or in trance; all this corresponds precisely to the views of Steiner ...

‘These spirit manifestations did her health no good, and she died at the age of twenty-nine, in 1829, the same year that Kerner published his book *The Seeress of Prevorst*. It caused a sensation. Kerner was a respectable literary man, a friend of poets and philosophers, as well as an eminent physician, so it could not be dismissed as lies or fantasy. The well-known theologian David Strauss had also witnessed many of the things described in the book, and vouched for their truth. Strauss’s ‘destructive’ *Life of Jesus* would soon be causing a national scandal, but even this hardly compared with the European scandal caused by *The Seeress of Prevorst*. The nineteenth century was the age of rationalism triumphant. Scientists would come to terms with David Strauss’s scepticism — but not with Friederike’s invisible spirits. The doctors of Paris and Vienna had destroyed the career of Dr Franz Mesmer by denouncing ‘mesmerism’ and hypnosis as a fraud. They refused even to look at the evidence for telepathy or clairvoyance. It was easier to believe that *The Seeress of Prevorst* was a hoax than to ask what it all meant. The tremendous popular success of the book only deepened their conviction that it was some kind of imposture.

‘All this helps to explain why it took Kerner’s book almost two decades to reach England. Britain, after all, was the original home of scepticism. David Hume had dismissed miracles by asking which was more likely: that witnesses should tell lies, or that the laws of nature should be violated? The English were proud of their tradition of bold thinking; they liked to point out that, unlike the French and Italians and Bavarians, they had no reason to fear being sent to the stake if they called the pope a liar. The British medical profession entirely approved of the decision of their French colleagues to denounce Mesmer as a charlatan; when a nonconformist doctor named John Elliotson declared that he took mesmerism seriously, an eminent surgeon named Sir Benjamin Brodie stated in print that it was ‘a debasing superstition,

a miserable amalgam of faith and fear.’

‘But Catherine Crowe published her translation of *The Seeress of Prevorst* in 1845, and came to no harm — after all, she was a woman, and a novelist at that. The book excited as much attention as it had in German. And it convinced Mrs Crowe of the reality of the ‘supernatural’. She had so far been a disciple of the famous Edinburgh doctor George Combe, Britain’s most famous exponent of phrenology — the doctrine that a man’s character can be read through the bumps on his skull — and Combe was a determined sceptic about ghosts and such matters. Kerner — and Friederike — made her a convert. It now came to her as a revelation that the ‘scientific spirit’ had gone too far. ‘Because, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, credulity outran reason and discretion, the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by a natural reaction, flung itself into an opposite extreme.’ And the nineteenth century had carried this attitude to the point of absurdity; in fact, it had become a new kind of superstition, refusing to face facts that contradicted its dogmas.

‘Mrs Crowe was not particularly credulous. She set about unearthing her own facts, and found that they seemed to fit together into a logical pattern. Almost everything she wrote about would later be studied more systematically by parapsychologists, and carefully documented in scientific archives: dreaming of the future, death-bed visions, premonitions of disaster, ‘phantasms’ of the living and of the dead, poltergeists, spontaneous psychokinesis, even possession. She reproaches contemporary scientists for insisting that the supernatural can be explained in terms of hysteria or nervous derangement, and points out, quite fairly, that they ‘arrange the facts to their theory, not their theory to the facts’. What is now needed, she says, is investigation. ‘And by *investigation* I do not mean the hasty, captious, angry notice of an unwelcome fact ... but the slow, modest, painstaking examination that is content to wait upon nature, and humbly follow out her disclosures, however opposed to preconceived theories or mortifying to human pride.’ Here, she seems to be echoing a famous remark by Thomas Henry Huxley about the duty of the scientist: ‘Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing.’ It is interesting to discover that Huxley wrote this sentence in 1860, more than a decade after *The Night Side of Nature* was published; Huxley may, in fact, be echoing Mrs Crowe.

‘Her aim, she readily admits, is to see whether the evidence proves that some part of man can survive his death. The first step in this direction — and it was later followed by most of her eminent successors, such as Myers and Tyrrell — was to try to show that man possesses powers that cannot be explained by science.’

Colin Wilson in *Afterlife*

My great-aunt Isabel was said to have second sight. My mother told the story of her husband talking to a friend on the telephone and asking him to put some money on a horse, which I will call Mr X, for him. Just then his wife came to the door and said “Mr X fell dead at the start.” He turned back to his telephone conversation with his friend and said, “Cancel that one.” *Mr X did fall dead at the start of his race.* I recently discovered that she was in fact a seventh child of a seventh child and both her parents were Camerons, a Highland clan. And yet she seemed a very unlikely person to have unusual powers. She was a down-to-earth countrywoman with a rather gruff uncompromising manner and a bandy-legged walk. Her strange ability seemed to come to her at unexpected moments. It wasn’t something she could call up herself.

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“ ... it used to be deduced, notably by Sir Walter Scott, that the beautiful and melancholy ballad of the *Queen’s Maries* with its haunting refrain:

*Last night the Queen had four Maries*

*Tonight there’ll be but three*

*There’s Mary Seton and Mary Beaton*

*And Mary Carmichael and me.*

applied to the court of Mary Stuart, despite the fact that the Maries of the ballad were

named Mary Beaton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael and 'me' (Mary Hamilton) whereas Queen Mary's last two maids were of course named Mary Fleming and Mary Livingston. The ballad has subsequently been traced to a scandal at the court of Peter the Great in early eighteenth-century Russia, where one of his wife Catherine's maids of honour of Scottish origin, Mary Hamilton, was executed for the murder of an illegitimate child, after having had a love affair with the Tsar Peter. The ballad, which Child dated between 1719 and 1764, evidently made use of the well-known fact that Queen Mary in the sixteenth century had employed four girls named Mary to serve her, and grafted it on to the tragedy of Mary Hamilton in Russia."

... "While still in France, Mary had already formed the most unfavourable impression of Knox, and she told Throckmorton that she believed him to be the most dangerous man in her kingdom. Now she determined to grasp the nettle. She sent for Knox to come to Holyrood, and here took place the first of those dramatic interviews, which as recounted by Knox himself in his *History*, have a positively Biblical flavour.

"Knox was now a man of forty-seven; having been rescued from 'the puddle of papistry', as he put it, by George Wishart in the 1540s; he had joined the murderers of Cardinal Beaton in the castle of St. Andrews, and after its fall, had done a spell in the galleys. On release he went to England, and from there, on the accession of Mary Tudor, to the Continent where his travels brought him finally to Geneva, where he became a disciple of Calvin. He returned temporarily to Scotland in 1555: the strength of his character and the force of his convictions enabled him to win over many of the greater men to Protestantism by his evangelism when the lesser men had long been interested in it. His main contribution to the Scottish Reformation had thus been made before Mary Stuart's arrival in Scotland, and indeed before the death of Mary of Guise, but his personality ensured that he remained a potent force on the Scottish scene, and it was an unlucky hazard for Mary Stuart that he happened to be living in Edinburgh, the first year of her residence there, to act as a demoniac chorus for all her actions, which good or bad, he presented in the most malevolent light.

"Knox's character was compounded of many contradictions. He saw himself as a heaven-sent preacher, whereas in fact he was a bold earthly revolutionary, who openly preached violence, and notoriously considered the death of an unjust ruler absolutely justified. He was a good summarizer of the accepted truth; but he was a savage hater, and obstinate defender of a position once he had adopted it. Lord Eustace Percy in his life of Knox made a sympathetic examination of the reformer's true nature and decided that his real spiritual bent was that of the mystic who was compelled by events to adopt the role of preacher and interpreter: 'In the whole sweep of the Old Testament and the New, what first caught his ear was a voice which almost passes the range of human hearing; neither the words of God to man, nor the words of man to God, but a fragment of the huge soliloquy of God himself.' Knox was an egoist, but his egoism led him to be a cunning politician and excellent lawyer, with an eye to the essentials in any argument. He was not born to the nobility, yet he was immensely brave in his confrontations with the nobles and the queen: as Morton said at his tomb: 'Here lies one who never feared the face of man.' His virtues included a ferocious, rather coarse sense of humour, seen in his writings, very different from Mary's own light ironic sense of humour, it is true, but something which might have enabled them to strike better accord if circumstances had been different; he was also genuinely patriotic when few men even knew the meaning of the word. Above all, he loved to dominate, as with so many egoists, and it was this need for domination which doomed his relations with Mary from the start. Scotland, and especially Edinburgh, was his stage; he the great preacher, the victor of the Scottish Reformation, was not going to surrender the front of the stage to the young queen, newly come from France. In his imagination he saw even his first encounter with her as a battle, from which he must emerge victorious if the whole Scottish Reformation was not to be imperilled. Knox thus braced himself for the meeting, like an ancient Catholic saint about to wrestle with the devil, not a mature Protestant politician about to meet a young girl who had so far shown herself to be remarkably tolerant in both word and deed. In short, Knox, in his preconceived notions about



Mary, was quite as determinedly misguided, if not in such a romantic spirit, as many of her partisans have been since.

“Mary’s very sex was against her in Knox’s opinion: whereas in the sixteenth century it was theoretically considered to be against the natural law for women to rule men, nevertheless most people were content to regard an actual woman ruler as a necessary evil which might have to be endured from time to time. Knox, however, went much further than his contemporaries and in his *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, published in 1558 against Mary Tudor, declared roundly that to promote any woman — those ‘weak, frail, impatient feeble and foolish creatures’ — to any form of rule was the ‘subversion of good order, of all equity and justice’, as well as being contrary to God and repugnant to nature. Now on 4th September he was confronted in a personal interview with one of these feeble and foolish creatures sitting on the throne of his own country of Scotland.

“Lord James was also present at the interview, but tactfully stayed in the background. Mary began by attacking Knox for raising her subjects against her mother and herself, and also for writing *The Monstrous Regiment*. Knox conceded the point about her sex, and said that if she behaved well, and the realm was not brought to disaster by her femininity, he personally would not disallow her rule, on those grounds alone. When Mary struggled with him over the religious issue, however, she found him much less accommodating. Finally Knox agreed to tolerate her for the time being — his phrase, which owed little to courtly flattery, was ‘to be as well content to live under your Grace as Paul was to live under Nero’ — provided that she did not defile her hands by dipping them in the blood of the saints of God. But he still firmly asserted the rights of the subject to rise up against the unworthy ruler, who opposed God’s word. Mary was quite clever enough to see the dangers in this, and quite bold enough to say so: ‘Well then,’ she exclaimed, ‘I perceive that my subjects shall obey you, and not me; and shall do what they list and not what I command; and so must I be subject to them and not they to me.’ When Knox replied that this subjection to God, as represented by his Church, would carry her to everlasting glory, Mary pointed out: ‘Yea ... but ye are not the Kirk that I will nurse. I will defend the Kirk of Rome, for, I think, it is the true Kirk of God,’ But Knox refused to admit Mary’s ability to judge on such matters: ‘Conscience requireth knowledge,’ he said, ‘And I fear right knowledge ye have none.’ Mary said quickly: ‘But I have both heard and read.’

“The result of this interview was an impasse in terms of human relations. Knox has been accused of speaking churlishly to the queen: he certainly spoke to her in a manner to which she was scarcely accustomed from her life in France, but she on the other hand seems to have been stimulated rather than otherwise by his abruptness. It is true that she relapsed into tears at one moment: but Randolph thought they were tears of anger rather than grief. All her life Mary Stuart had a feminine ability to give herself suddenly up to tears when her sensibilities were affronted; she seems to have used it as a useful method of relieving her feelings; it never prevented her actions from being extremely hard-headed once she had recovered her composure. Knox himself quickly realized that Mary was far from being a feeble puppet, which her career in France might have led him to expect. He told his friends: ‘If there be not in her a proud mind, a crafty wit and an indurate heart against God and his truth, my judgement faileth me.’ In the same vein, he reported to Cecil in London that on communication with her he had spied such craft as he had not found in such an age.”

*Mary Queen of Scots* (Antonia Fraser)

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Carola Oman in a biography of Sir Walter Scott titled *The Wizard of the North* says that, “Mrs Grant of Laggan, in 1820 and 1821, referred to Scott as “the Wizard” and “the Wizard of Abbotsford”. Anne Scott also used the expression. *The Literary Gazette* of July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1821, appears to have been the first to use the full title, followed in 1831 by *The Border Magazine*.”

I suppose everyone has heard of the ‘wizard’ but who was Mrs Grant?

Angus MacVicar in *Rocks in My Scotch* gives a sympathetic portrait of her.

“There is one other Scottish lady for whom I have always had a great deal of sympathy and affection. For one thing, her maiden name was MacVicar, though her family and mine—as far as I know—were not connected. For another, she was a writer and published books not because she felt inspired, with a message for the world, but because, like me, she was poor and badly needed the money. She was Mrs Grant of Laggan, whose *Letters from the Mountains* became famous in her own day.

“Anne MacVicar was a soldier’s daughter and spent most of her childhood in New York, where her father’s regiment was stationed. As a girl her taste in reading was catholic: the Old Testament, which she read from end to end at the age of six; the rough and ready poems of Blind Harry and other bawdy Scottish minstrels; Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, which she knew by heart before she was eight. I wonder what modern educationists would think of that lot.

“In 1768 her father’s health forced him back to Scotland, where he was appointed barrack-master at Fort Augustus. It was here that Anne met the Rev. James Grant when he became chaplain to the garrison. They fell in love at first sight. In 1779, soon after the Rev. James was inducted to the parish of Laggan, they were married.

“Mrs. Grant had learnt to speak Dutch in New York. Now she set about learning Gaelic, in order to help her husband in the parish. She also kept up a regular correspondence with friends across the world and wrote numerous poems and songs, perhaps the most famous of which is ‘Oh where, tell me where is my Highland laddie gone?’ How she found time to do all this balks my imagination, because in the meantime she was presenting her husband with twelve children.

“Then the scourge of those unhealthy days struck the family. Four of her children died of consumption; and finally her husband died, too, of the same disease. She was left a homeless and penniless widow with eight children to keep.

“For a while she tried farming, living in a cottage lent to her by the Duke of Gordon. But this was a failure, and once more freezing poverty came limping round the corner.

“As a last resort somebody suggested that she should publish her poems, and friends gathered round to finance the project. When the book came out the *Edinburgh Review*, seldom flattering, described her verses as having ‘beauty, tenderness and delicacy’, and a first edition of 3000 copies quickly sold out. Mrs. Grant was back in business.

“She went to live in Stirling, but her family’s troubles were still pressing. And tragic. One by one her children died, with the exception of her youngest son; and it was to pay doctors’ bills that she collected some of her letters to her friends and made a book of them. In this she was encouraged by Wordsworth and Mrs Hemans, amongst others, and in 1806 *Letters from the Mountains* was published. It was an immediate success, in this country and in America, and other books followed.

“Eventually Mrs Grant went to live in Edinburgh. As a young woman she had been tall, slender and good-looking. Now she fell downstairs and broke her leg, and as she grew older, without much exercise, she became heavy and stiff. But she made a joke of her stoutness and played hostess to many literary lions, among them Sir Walter Scott.

“‘I think Mr. Scott’s appearance very unpromising and commonplace,’ she wrote, demonstrating feminine honesty of a high order. ‘Yet though no gleam of genius animates his countenance, much of it appears in his conversation, which is rich, easy, various and animated.’

“And what did Sir Walter think of Mrs Grant? ‘She is proud as a Highlandwoman, vain as a poetess, but she merits regard by her firmness and elasticity of mind with which she has borne a succession of great domestic calamities.’

“I don’t suppose many people today have read *Letters from the Mountains*. I think it is a book of great charm, written by one who not only loved nature and humanity but also possessed a rare gift for portraying Scottish life and character. When its author, in her old age, applied for a pension, her friends organized a supporting petition. In this they described her writings as ‘addressing themselves to the national pride of the Scottish people and breathing at

once a spirit of patriotism and of that candour which renders patriotism unselfish and liberal’.

“Mrs. Grant lived to the age of eighty-four. She died on 7 November 1838 and was buried in St Cuthbert’s churchyard in Edinburgh.

“Where did she find the courage to challenge the stormy world and sail determinedly through it? ‘I read a chapter of the Bible every day,’ she said. ‘It helps me to face sorrow and triumph with equal fortitude.’

“Anne Grant, as one MacVicar to another, as one writer to another, I salute you.”

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According to the *Orygynale Cronykil* of Scotland 1420-24 there was “gret plenty, abounding baith on land and sea”. (Wyntoun of Macbeth.) I came upon this mention of the *Orygynale Cronykil* and wondered what it was and who Wyntoun was. *The Battlefields of Scotland* gives this little snippet: “Andrew de Wyntoun was a Canon-regular of St. Andrews, and was appointed Prior of the monastery of St. Serf on the island in Loch Leven. As early as 1395 Wyntoun is mentioned in the Chartulary of St. Andrews as Prior of this island. There is a copy of the *Cronykil*, transcribed probably about 1440, among the Cottonian MSS.” I hope the plenty was real and not merely the world according to his little island in the loch. Since then I’ve found a little more about Andrew of Wyntoun. He was born around 1350 and died around 1423. His Chronicle is one of the first long examples of writing in Middle Scots; he wrote it for Sir John Wemyss of Leuchars in Fife and it eventually came to nine books, covering history from Creation to 1420; originally written in octosyllabic couplets, which strikes me as an extremely difficult way to write history. He drew on monastic and church records as well as secular records. It is valuable for the way it saved information that might otherwise have been lost and we still use it for its information on people such as Robert the Bruce. And, more intriguingly, “The *Orygynale Cronykil* is the original source for the encounter between Macbeth and the weird sisters that appears in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.”

This is another little snippet I got from *The Battlefields* ...

“On his return from this expedition King Edward carried with him the famous Stone of Destiny from Scone; also three coffers containing the Scottish records and the Black Rood of Scotland. Edward’s idea, doubtless, in taking the stone was to evade the ancient prophecy which said that a Scot should rule wherever the Stone of Destiny should be.

“It was the visible sign of the monarchy of Scotland, and when it was removed the monarchy seemed removed with it. The great king was not exempt from the superstition of the age, and he may have indulged in dreams of the future with regard to the Stone of Destiny. The prophecy was fulfilled, not exactly in the sense Edward attached to it, when James VI; a purely Scottish prince, ascended the throne of England. This Stone of Destiny is one of the most interesting relics of the past in existence. Legendary lore associates it with the pillow of the patriarch Jacob at Luz; also with the stone placed on the famous hill of Tara whereon a long succession of Irish kings were crowned; said to have been taken to Scotland by Fergus, first King of Scots in Scotland; and about 834 it was carried from Dunstaffl Dunstaffnage — an early residence of the Scottish kings — by Kenneth II to Scone in Perthshire. Mr. Skene in his Coronation Stone comes to the conclusion that “The Irish kings were inaugurated on the Lia Fail, which never was anywhere but at Tara, the *sedes principalis* of Ireland, and the kings of Scotland afterwards of the Scottish kingdom, were inaugurated on this stone (the Stone of Destiny), which was never anywhere but at Scone, the *sedes principales* both of the Pictish and of the Scottish kingdoms.”

Except that there are doubts about what Edward I carted off in the first place. There is considerable reason to believe that he simply carted off *a* stone, not *the* stone. And that the real stone has spent centuries in hiding.

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December 10<sup>th</sup>: Emily Dickinson

December 11<sup>th</sup>: Alexander Solzhenitsyn  
Naguib Mahfouz

December 12<sup>th</sup>: Louis Nowra  
December 13<sup>th</sup>: Heinrich Heine  
December 14<sup>th</sup>: Michael Cook  
                  Michael de Nostradamus  
December 15<sup>th</sup>: Edna O'Brien  
December 16<sup>th</sup>: Jane Austen  
December 17<sup>th</sup>: Erskine Caldwell  
                  John Greenleaf Whittier

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In the nineteenth century, people spoke of John Greenleaf Whittier in the same breath as they mentioned Longfellow and Emerson; today Whittier is largely forgotten except for a couple of still-popular hymns, the ballad ‘Barbara Freitchie’ (‘Shoot if you must this old gray head/But spare your country’s flag,’ she said.) and a couple of his ‘slave poems’ like ‘Sold Daughter’. In his time his most popular poem was the long piece ‘Snow Bound’.

But he is still interesting as someone who used poetry very effectively in the service of a cause he was passionate about, the abolition of slavery, and as someone who frequently made a living from his poetry. These two aspects set at bay the modern idea that poetry is nice but irrelevant, and that no one can make a living out of poetry—but they also help to explain why his reputation didn’t last. As Thomas D. Hamm says of him in *The Quakers in America*: ‘The best-known Quaker in the nineteenth-century United States was ... a poet, who, Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost note, became one of the most popular authors in the United States through his “Subordination of his art to religious purposes, his moralism, and his sentimentality”—qualities that do not endear him to literary critics today.’ Yet, it might be argued, that the two 19<sup>th</sup> century American poets still widely read, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, are read not because they eschewed morals or sentiment but because they were innovative in form or lived lives that intrigue modern readers.

Whittier was born on a farm near Haverhill in Massachusetts in 1807 and had minimal schooling. Probably the most influential book of his childhood was (after the Bible) a copy of the poems of Robert Burns. His life was largely divided between farmwork and some newspaper work, first on the *New England Weekly Review*, and later for the abolitionist papers. But the farm was sold in 1840 and he lived after that solely by his pen. He served one term in the Massachusetts legislature and was a founder of the Republican Party—which is perhaps a reminder that the Republicans have strayed far from that vision he embodied of tolerance, equality, respect, the dignity of every person, peaceful coexistence, simplicity, and honesty.

He seems to have been drawn into the abolitionist cause by William Lloyd Garrison and in 1833 he became one of the founders of the American Anti-Slavery Society and published at his own expense a small booklet ‘Justice and Expediency’ aimed at the New Englanders who smugly took the position that they had no responsibility for slavery; ‘Why are we thus willing to believe a lie? New England not responsible! Bound by the United States constitution to protect the slave holder in his sins, and yet not responsible! Palliating the evil, hiding the evil, voting for the evil, do we not participate in it? Members of one confederacy, children of one family, the curse and the shame, this sin against our brother, and the sin against our God,—all the iniquity of slavery which is revealed to man, and all which crieth in the ear, or is manifested in the eye of Jehovah, will assuredly be visited upon all our people.’

He followed this with a string of poems, mostly published in the newspapers of the time, or as small leaflets. A Professor Thayer of Harvard told a teacher, ‘Tell your boys and girls, that however much they admire and love Whittier, they cannot know what a fire and passion of enthusiasm he kindled in the hearts of the little company of Anti-slavery boys and girls of my time, when they read his early poems.’

Wilfrid Whitten said of it, “While it lasted the fight was incredibly fierce. “To be shunned and spat upon by society, mobbed in public, and injured in one’s business—this was what it was to be an abolitionist.” Abolitionism meant “self-renunciation and social

martyrdom.” Garrison himself was dragged through Boston with a rope round his body and with difficulty was saved from death. Elijah P. Lovejoy was killed while defending his printing press, Marius Robinson was tarred and feathered in Ohio, Amos Dresser got a flogging at Nashville for no fault, Whittier himself was beaten in the street, had his office in Philadelphia burned down by a raging mob, and barely escaped with his life from a house in Concord, from the windows of which could be seen the murderous gleam of rifles in the moonlit street.”

But alongside the poems he wrote for ‘the cause’ were dozens written to provide an income; poems for agricultural fairs, to launch public buildings, at election times, to commemorate births and marriages, obituaries, poems for ephemeral occasions and forgotten people. It is these which in bulk make hard reading now yet they all show care and love in their creation and a deep underlying religious and poetic sense.

The abolitionist movement had considerable success; perhaps if it had had more success sooner it might’ve prevented the Civil War in 1861. Yet I also felt at times that the Civil War wasn’t ‘necessary’ anyway; it came as slave-holding, both in the moral and economic sense, was declining. It was the slave-owners who were now on the defensive. The ending of the slave trade from Africa meant a constant decline in slave numbers. The spread of the Industrial Revolution offered the likelihood that machines would soon come to replace human muscles on the farms and plantations. And the irony is that if the cotton manufacturers had placed a boycott on slave-produced cotton, rather than suffering such a restriction because of the North’s blockade during the war, the whole system would have come crumbling down—without a shot being fired and without the misery and loss of years of war. In its aftermath, Whittier felt able to write more of the sort of poetry he had always longed to write, pastoral, lyrical, dealing with everything from history and legend to the deeper questions of life. In 1857 he had become one of the ‘founding fathers’ of ‘The Atlantic Monthly’.

I found a *National Geographic* article on the Underground Railroad which described Whittier as “Remembered for bucolic verse, the Quaker poet gave powerful voice to the abolition movement. He early joined the Republican party, founded partly to halt the spread of slavery.” I think it is true to say he gave ‘powerful voice’ in poems like ‘The Slave Ships’, ‘The Slaves of Martinique’, ‘The Christian Slave’, ‘The Branded Hand’, ‘The Hunters of Men’, ‘Clerical Oppressors’ and ‘The Farewell’ and I found his anti-slavery poems among his best. Those who decry poems with a ‘message’ forget that writers often write best on the things they are most passionate about.

He never married and his namesake is an educational institution, Whittier College. I think that is how he would have wanted it.

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Of course Whittier wasn’t the only nineteenth century poet to use his poetry to influence people in a cause he felt passionately about. Take the situation of children. Elizabeth Barrett Browning is more likely to be remembered for her elopement with Robert Browning but her poem, ‘The Cry of the Children’—

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,  
Ere the sorrow comes with years?  
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,  
And *that* cannot stop their tears.  
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,  
The young birds are chirping in the nest,  
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,  
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
They are weeping bitterly!  
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,  
In the country of the free.

\* \* \*

“For oh,” say the children, “we are weary  
And we cannot run or leap;  
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely  
To drop down in them and sleep.  
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,  
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;  
And underneath our heavy eyelids drooping  
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.  
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring  
Through the coal-dark, underground;  
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron  
In the factories, round and round.

“For all day the wheels are droning, turning;  
Their wind comes in our faces,  
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,  
And the walls turn in their places:  
Turns the sky in the high window, blank and reeling,  
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,  
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling:  
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.  
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,  
And sometimes we could pray,  
‘O ye wheels’ (breaking out in a mad moaning)  
‘Stop! be silent for to-day!’”

Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing  
For a moment, mouth to mouth!  
Let them touch each other’s hands, in a fresh wreathing  
Of their tender human youth!  
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion  
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:  
Let them prove their living souls against the notion  
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!  
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,  
Grinding life down from its mark;  
And the children’s souls, which God is calling sunward,  
Spin on blindly in the dark.

\* \* \*

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,  
And their look is dread to see,  
For they mind you of their angels in high places,  
With eyes turned on Deity.  
“How long,” they say, “how long, O cruel nation,  
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child’s heart,—  
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,  
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?  
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,  
And your purple shows your path!

But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper  
Than the strong man in his wrath."

—deeply influenced people to care about the horrors of child labour.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You ought to run across a lot of pleasant families in your travels; can't you bully some of them into adopting children? Boys by preference. We've got an awful lot of extra boys, and nobody wants them. Talk about anti-feminism! It's nothing to the anti-masculism that exists in the breasts of adopting parents. I could place out a thousand dimpled little girls with yellow hair, but a good live boy from nine to thirteen is a drug in the market. There seems to be a general feeling that they track in dirt and scratch up mahogany furniture.

"Shouldn't you think that men's clubs might like to adopt boys, as a sort of mascot? The boy could be boarded in a nice respectable family, and drawn out by the different members on Saturday afternoons. They could take him to ball-games and the circus, and then return him when they had had enough, just as you do with a library book. It would be very valuable training for the bachelors. People are for ever talking about the desirability of training girls for motherhood. Why not institute a course of training in fatherhood and get the best men's clubs to take it up?"

So wrote Jean Webster tongue-in-cheek in *Dear Enemy* in 1914. She, Mark Twain's great-niece, also wrote from a passionately-held belief. Her stories such as *Daddy-Long-Legs* are now seen as light and amusing and romantic—but she wrote them to press home a serious message in a society fascinated by eugenics and apathetic about the needs of the poor and orphaned and disadvantaged and in which serious articles were written to prove that the children of prostitutes would naturally and understandably turn out mentally defective. Running through all her writing is the powerful message: give the least in society the same advantages as the rich and powerful and they will prove to have intelligence, skill, wit, and creative abilities.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bill Bryson in *Mother Tongue* said, "Noah Webster (1758-1843) was by all accounts a severe, correct, humorless, religious, temperate man who was not easily liked, even by other severe, religious, temperate, humorless people."

Another doyen of English usage was Henry Fowler of Fowler's *Modern English Usage* fame. Although he could rise to work that was deemed 'witty' his life and work was also marked by a serious demeanour. It seems to be a characteristic of those who tell us what things mean and how we should use them. A naturally schoolmasterly mien and bent probably; after all, what *pleasure* to have people agonising over where to put a word or how to use it correctly—instead of just getting on with their article or speech. It must give a sense of power—and power rarely comes with a real sense-of-humour.

'If I can aspire to expertise in anything I suppose it is in split infinitives' was Henry's response to Robert Bridges, when he sought advice about a troublesome sentence, but there was a warning: 'it must be borne in mind that I am a heterodox expert, something like a nonconformist Doctor of Divinity.' Henry went on to explain his own position and the current general attitude to this controversial subject, ending in true schoolmasterly fashion with the possibilities arranged in a class-list.

My notion is that, in your sentence, 'to fully apprehend' ought in 1923 to be the normal thing to say; it isn't yet the normal thing, of course, and centuries ago it neither was nor ought it to have been. Secondly, that nothing should induce me to write 'fully to apprehend' instead, that having nothing to recommend it except that it saves the pusillanimous from infinitive-splitting. Thirdly, that 'to apprehend beauty fully' is, on the other hand, different in effect from 'to fully' &c., laying a much heavier stress on fully, whether it is better or worse than the 'to fully' form depends on whether apprehension and feeling are an antithesis sufficient in itself, so that fully is of no great importance and can be allowed to hide under the wing of apprehend, or whether full apprehension and not partial is the point, in which case all the emphasis that can be got by putting fully late and apart is desirable. Class-list accordingly:

a, to apprehend beauty fully; b, to fully apprehend beauty; c, fully to apprehend beauty.

Henry's entry on this subject prepared for *Modern English Usage* was presented at that time as a Treatise on 'The Split Infinitive'. In it he divided the English-speaking word into five groups, reflecting their attitude to his difficult topic. The first was made up of the majority who neither knew nor cared what a split infinitive was; they were, Henry felt, 'a happy folk to be envied by most of the minority classes'. The next group consisted of those who did not know, but did care very much; 'bogy-haunted creatures' Henry called them. They 'would as soon be caught putting their knives in their mouths as splitting an infinitive but have hazy notions of what constitutes that deplorable breach of etiquette'. This group would avoid placing an adverb between the word 'be' and a passive participle, believing 'to be really understood' to be a split infinitive. 'Those who know and condemn' made the third group, mostly undetected because they avoided the sin, combining 'with acceptance of conventional rules a reasonable dexterity'. Only those unable to manipulate their work with this ease were discovered; 'it does not add to a writer's readableness', Henry declared, 'if readers are pulled up now and again to wonder—Why this distortion? Ah, to be sure a non-split die-hard!' He had many examples of cumbersome sentences, which should have been completely remodeled by writers determined to resist the temptation of using a split infinitive; 'Both Germany and England have done ill in not combining to forbid flatly hostilities', for instance. The fourth group, who knew what a split infinitive was and approved, were also difficult to recognize; a splitter might be a member of the first group happily splitting infinitives without a thought or from this group 'deliberately rejecting the trammels of convention and announcing that he means to do as he will with his own infinitives'. In the final group were those who 'know and distinguish'; they felt that although a split infinitive was not desirable in itself it was 'preferable to either of two things, to real ambiguity, and to patent artificiality.'

'After all this Henry wondered whether he had revealed his own opinion with 'indecent plainness'. He finished his article with a split infinitive, described by an anonymous reviewer as 'deafening', but Henry nevertheless italicized it in case his readers should have difficulty spotting it; 'It's main idea is *to* historically, even while events are maturing, to divinely—from the Divine point of view—*impeach* the European system ... ' To this he added his piece on the position of adverbs, feeling the absurdity of concentrating only on the split infinitive and ignoring similar problems. The article drew differing opinions; one critic wrote, 'on the whole, "Don't split your infinitives" is so sound a maxim that it would be regrettable if this witty pamphlet has the effect of discrediting it.' Others were more approving; 'all the super-Dreadnoughts of prose do it sooner or later.'

*The Warden of English: The Life of H.W. Fowler*, Jenny McMorris.

Noah Webster came from a family distantly related to the Whittiers. He brought out his *American Spelling Book* in 1783 (which has now sold in excess of 100,000,000 copies) and followed it with a grammar (believing that grammar should always be the servant of language) and a reader. But his opus was his two volume *American Dictionary of the English Language* which came out in 1828. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* said of him "Webster was instrumental in giving American English a dignity and vitality of its own. Both his speller and dictionary reflected his principle that spelling, grammar, and usage should be based upon the living, spoken language rather than on artificial rules". In him that stern New England morality and rectitude which is offset by talent and wit in the writings of people like Henry James and Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman and Nathaniel Hawthorne found full rein. Even so, I came away feeling a sense of liking for him and I can always find both gratitude and admiration for dictionary-makers. It always strikes me as a thankless task. And I find myself thinking, what if we couldn't simply go to the bookshelf and pull out a large book and hunt up the word which is putting us through agonies—should we write summings-up or summing-ups, should we write culs-de-sac or cul-de-sacs; should we spell the word jewelry, jewelery, jewellery, jewelery or perhaps even jewlry ...



So here's three cheers for Noah and his ilk!

\* \* \* \* \*

For near her stood the little boy  
Her childhood favor singled;  
His cap pulled low upon a face  
Where pride and shame were mingled.

Pushing with restless feet the snow  
To right and left, he lingered; —  
As restlessly her tiny hands  
The blue-checked apron fingered.

He saw her lift her eyes; he felt  
The soft hand's light caressing,  
And heard the tremble of her voice,  
As if a fault confessing.

'I'm sorry that I spelt the word;  
I hate to go above you,  
Because,' — the brown eyes lower fell, —  
'Because, you see, I love you!'

This extract from Whittier's poem is a reminder of the way that women were encouraged to play down any intelligence they might have inherited or developed simply because intelligence in women was seen as a threat to men. By designating it as 'unwomanly', 'unfeminine', 'unladylike', something which would make a husband harder to attain, it made it seem easier for men to believe that their intellect was stronger. When I was young people still talked of girls who beat boys at school as being a transient phenomenon. Girls, it was felt, developed sooner, then faded. Boys were slower but once they reached their full development their intelligence remained. This is the idea that Dorothy Sayers presents in *Gaudy Night*—"I suppose," thought Harriet, "she had one of those small, summery brains, that flower early and run to seed"—But brains, girls' or boys', are not like plants. They aren't mighty enduring oaks or annuals run to seed and falling back to earth. The success of girls at university level has put paid to that idea. But it did a lot of damage in its time. It brought frustration, fear, regret, a sense of failure and pointlessness. Even now it is possible to hear women apologising for not being good with numbers or scientific ideas. It is true that some people aren't. I am not. But then I might have had confidence if I had not heard my mother apologising for not being good at maths in a way that implied women could not be expected to be good with numbers. Many boys aren't good. The success of girls hasn't taken anything *away* from boys.

I think what has happened is that the whole world of employment has changed; years ago, boys who were not academic found employment on the family farm or the family corner store, they got work on the roads and railways, in factories, and shearing sheds ... But now, those avenues are disappearing. The non-academic boy is being kept at school because society doesn't know what to do with him—with the result that he disrupts the classroom, takes up the lion's share of the unfortunate teacher's time and attention, and spoils things for the boys and girls who do want to achieve academic success. Surely we can come up with innovative outdoor, mechanical, technical, artistic, or sporting avenues for such boys? Where boys fail we need to look at our system from different angles rather than simply demand that more money is spent on boys.

Nicholas Waterman in 'I Got to Go to School' understood very well the reluctance of millions of boys:

Most all great men, so I have read, has been the ones 'at got

The least amount o' learnin' by a flickerin' pitch-pine knot,  
An' many a darin' boy like me grows up to be a fool,  
An' never 'mounts to nothin', 'cause he's got to go to school.

...

What good is 'rithmetic an' things, exceptin' jest for girls,  
Er them there Fauntleroy's 'at wears their hair in twisted curls?  
An' if my name is never seen on hist'ry's page, why you'll  
Remember 'at it's all because I got to go to school.

Boys and girls can excel in the schoolroom. But many boys and girls would still rather spend their youth outside the classroom. We need more imaginative ways of incorporating learning into activities that don't involve desks, blackboards, textbooks, computers, classrooms and classes. We need ways which incorporate the whole extraordinary curiosity of children and the mystery that is the world around them ...

Whittier wrote in 'An old man's thought of school':

And these I see, these sparkling eyes,  
These stores of mystic meaning, these young lives,  
Building, equipping like a fleet of ships, immortal ships,  
Soon to sail out over the measureless seas,  
On the soul's voyage.

Only a lot of boys and girls?  
Only the tiresome spelling, writing, ciphering classes?  
Only a public school?

Every school no matter how poorly resourced has the whole world of wonder and curiosity and human potential at its fingertips. These things exist beyond what is spent on computers and playground equipment. Because a school is at heart a collection of human lives ...

\* \* \* \* \*

December 18<sup>th</sup>: 'Saki'  
Christopher Fry  
Charles Wesley  
December 19<sup>th</sup>: Jean Genet  
December 20<sup>th</sup>: Uri Geller  
John Wilson Croker  
December 21<sup>st</sup>: Nat Gould  
Frank Moorhouse  
Jean Baptiste Racine  
December 22<sup>nd</sup>: Yasmine Gooneratne  
Edwin Arlington Robinson  
December 23<sup>rd</sup>: Robert Bly  
December 24<sup>th</sup>: Matthew Arnold  
Mary Higgins Clark  
December 25<sup>th</sup>: Paul Berry  
December 26<sup>th</sup>: Henry Miller  
Thomas Gray  
December 27<sup>th</sup>: Elizabeth Smart  
December 28<sup>th</sup>: Alasdair Gray  
December 29<sup>th</sup>: Dobrica Cosic  
December 30<sup>th</sup>: Rudyard Kipling  
Stephen Leacock  
December 31<sup>st</sup>: Simon Wiesenthal

## Hermann Boerhaave

\* \* \* \* \*

Hermann Boerhaave is remembered as perhaps the first great diagnostician. Though this honour is sometimes given to his predecessor Franciscus Sylvius he certainly codified and expanded and developed his work. Students flocked to Leyden in the Netherlands to hear him teach and to follow him on his rounds. I was curious to see that he used aphorisms as part of his way of getting his students to remember, both in his teaching and in his writing. He produced long-lived books such as *Institutiones Medicae*, *Aphorismide Cognoscendis et Curandis Morbis*, (*Aphorisms on the Recognition and Treatment of Disease*) and *Elementa Chemiae*. I rather like the idea of the eminent doctor trailing round the wards, his students repeating after him, ‘Feed a cold, starve a fever’, ‘If your feet are cold, put on your hat’, ‘Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise’ or whatever his more profound versions were ...

He was a professor of botany (and Director of the Botanic Gardens in Leyden) and medicine and also a professor of chemistry but like many of his colleagues he was more enamoured of mineral rather than herbal lore and probably gave his patients mercury, arsenic, antimony, and the other terrifying things that doctors in those days handed out so casually. But I hope there was room in his arsenal somewhere for the wisdom of old women. I hope he urged his students to put their own desire for prosperity and fame aside and say often, ‘An apple a day keeps the doctor away’.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The Arab physician whose influence on the course of Western medicine was to be decisive — Ibn Said, known in the West as Avicenna (980-1037) — was himself a devoted disciple of the prodigy from Pergamom (ie. Galen).

“A phenomenally gifted youth, who had memorized the whole of the Koran by the age of ten, Avicenna was already a well-known, successful and highly respected practitioner in the city of Baghdad by the time he was seventeen years old. As well as remarkable mental powers, however, Avicenna — like Galen — gave evidence of a certain inflexibility of mind and a passion for order and system, for facts tidily arranged and phenomena neatly classified. He took over where Galen left off. His great million-word *As-Qanum*, the *Canon of Medicine*, has been described by a modern historian as

‘the final codification of Graeco-Arabic medicine, so closely interwoven that no single item could be subtracted without damaging the whole ... To contemporary medical science it gave the appearance of almost mathematical accuracy, and this it was that made the medical world regard the *Canon* as an oracle from which it was impossible to dissent ... ’”

(Barbara Griggs, *New Green Pharmacy*)

He, via the returning Crusaders, brought new medicinal herbs, new ideas, new classifications to the West, but two other aspects of Arab medicine were less helpful: the strong emphases on astrology and alchemy. If the conjunction of the planets was to blame for disease outbreaks then it was very hard for anyone to suggest that the causes might lie closer to home. And the possibility of brewing up mysterious mineral compounds in a laboratory, though attractive, encouraged the idea that the efficacy of a preparation could be linked to its expense. It also helped usher in the massive centuries-long and largely-uncontrolled use of substances such as mercury which probably killed or incapacitated more people than it ever cured.

Victor Robinson in *Victory over Pain* said “Ibn Sina, known to the western world as Avicenna, was the dominant figure of the Arabian school of medicine. His *Canon of Medicine* codified all available medical knowledge; translated into Latin, it became the authoritative medical textbook of Europe for six centuries. In Islam it is still considered infallible.”

I was interested to see that Avicenna divided pain into 15 categories: boring, compressing, corrosive, dull, fatigue, heavy, incisive, irritant, itching, pricking, relaxing, stabbing, tearing, tension, and throbbing.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was also curious to learn that the Hippocratic Oath actually began with: 'I swear by Apollo the Physician, by Aesculpius, by Hygeia and Panacea and by all the Gods and Goddesses that, to the best of my power and judgment, I will faithfully observe this oath and obligation.' And underlying this ancient commitment was a problem which was not recognised. 'A. W. Verrall, the great classical scholar, said that one of the chief diseases from which ancient civilization died was a low view of woman.' (William Barclay) It has taken the world a long time to begin to understand the simple fact that undernourished ignorant diffident overlooked women had children who reflected their own disadvantage, children who did not start life with the physical and mental advantages they needed and deserved and who, in turn, helped perpetuate the problems. And the Greeks were just as culpable as less 'progressive' civilisations.

I came upon this roll-call of ancient names in medicine and found it helpful:

Asculapius/Aesculapius, the name of the mythical founder of medicine.

Deiscorides/Dioscorides, a Greek physician of the second century A.D.

Rufus, a Greek physician of the second century A.D. He lived at Ephesus.

Ypocras/Hippocrates of Cos. b. 460 B.C., the greatest physician of antiquity. Many works were attributed to him. He introduced the doctrine of four humours.

Haly/Alhazen, a Persian physician of the eleventh century A.D., wrote a commentary on Galen.

Galien/Galen, a famous Greek physician of the second century A.D. He wrote many works which were, in the ninth century, translated into Arabic.

Serapion, an Arab physician of the eleventh century A.D. who took the name of a famous Greek of Alexandria.

Razis/Rhazes of Cordova, an Arab physician of the tenth century.

Avicen/Avicenna, a Persian physician named Ibn Sine (980 – 1037). He wrote the *Canon Medicinae*, a famous text-book of medicine.

Averrois/Averroes, a Moorish philosopher and physician named Ibn Rashd (1126 – 1198). He wrote a medical book, *Colliget*, which was translated into Latin.

Damascien, said to be an Arabian physician of the ninth century.

Constantyn/Constantius Afer, a Benedictine monk of the twelfth century. One of the founders of the medical school of Salerno, Italy.

Bernard/Bernard Gordon, Professor of Medicine at Montpellier, in the South of France, during Chaucer's lifetime.

Gatesden/John Gatesden of Merton College, Oxford, d. 1361. Physician to Edward II.

Gilbertyn/Gilbertus Anglicus/Gilbert English, who wrote a *Compendium Medicinae* late in the thirteenth century.

Interesting and important as they all were they had very little impact on the vast majority of people living in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East ... simply because most people could not afford doctors. If they had problems they went to the people they knew who had skill with herbs or setting bones or delivering children or dealing with common complaints. And it is debatable whether they were worse off getting some pounded garlic or an infusion of peppermint instead of crushed rubies in wine or allowing the unhygienic doctors to cut and bleed.

\*

'The pippin, which we hold of kernel fruits the king;  
The apple orange; then the savoury russetan;  
The permian, which to France long ere to us 'twas known,  
Which careful fruiterers now have denien'd our own;  
The renat, which though at first it from the pippen came,  
Grown through its pureness nice, assumes that curious name;  
The sweeting, for whose sake the schoolboys oft make war,  
The wilding, costard, then the well-known pomewater,

And sundry other fruits of good yet several taste,  
And have their sundry names in sundry counties placed.’ (Michael Drayton)

‘From early times the apple was regarded as holy or magical and in some districts was thought unsuitable to eat. Ideally the fruit should be blessed by rain on St Peter’s Day, or St Swithin’s Day. Blossom appearing in autumn foretold the death of a member of the owner’s family especially if the flowers and fruit were on the same branch. An alternative death omen was an apple left to over-winter on the tree after the fruit had been picked. However in some parts of Britain it was considered unlucky to remove all the apples — some should be left for the birds or, in earlier times, as a gift for the fairies and spirits. It is said that if the sun shines through the trees on Christmas morning, although some sources say Easter, it is a sign of a good crop and a prosperous year for the owner. An ancient ceremony to ensure a good apple crop, known as apple-wassailing, was celebrated on Twelfth Night or New Year’s Eve. People would assemble in the orchard at dusk, armed with guns, kettles, pans and cider. One tree was chosen and everybody drank to it. Cider was poured over the roots and a piece of cider-soaked toast fastened to it. Guns were discharged through the topmost branches to rouse the sleeping tree spirits and drive away the demons. Extra noise was generated by the beating of trays, pans and kettles. A great deal of singing, shouting and dancing accompanied these rites.

... Superstitions associated with the medicinal virtues of the apple are very familiar. Apples were recommended for melancholy disorders, and an unusual cure for warts required the fruit to be halved and each portion rubbed on the wart; the halves were tied together again and then buried — as the fruit rotted away the wart would disappear. Eating a large apple at midnight on Halloween would prevent one having a cold for a year. John Gerard (1545-1612), the herbalist, refers to a cosmetic ointment consisting of apple pulp, swine’s grease and rosewater, known as pomatum, as being very popular.’

Apple blossom is the birthday flower for 31 December, signifying preference. In the language of the flowers it means ‘He prefers you’, and ‘Fame called him great and good’.

From *Plant Lore*, Joseph Addison.

\* \* \* \* \*

Robert Bly writes in *Iron John*, ‘Paris had a golden apple to bestow, and we recall that he was asked to choose among Hera, Athene, and Aphrodite. The apple associates with immortality, and we know that some young men, when about to be sacrificed in the Greek ritual of Adonis, were given a golden apple as a passport to paradise. The word *paradise* means walled space in ancient Persian, and the Celts imagined paradise to be an apple orchard in the West where death is. This correlates with all sorts of details in old European life. For example, it is the apple that is bobbed for at Halloween, when the dead return to this world. Ritual banquets used to begin with the egg of the East, and end with the apple of the West. One more delicious detail about the apple is this: if one slices an apple transversely, one will see in the dark pips the sacred pentangle with its five points. That is the secret sign for the Holy Woman or Sophia. The apple is the earth; and the pentangle is its secret configuration. So Sophia is, in such thought, the soul of the earth.’

\*

#### Dancing Fruit

(1)

Love is the ripe fruit of an old tree.

Death is the ripe fruit of an old tree.

They should ever dance together, these two,

Around the autumn bonfire of the brain.

Love and death are the sole fruit. In due

Course they fall. The word “pain”

Is reserved for the feel of the fallen fruit

That we see, each in the other’s eye.

They should ever dance together, these two,  
Around the autumn bonfire in the brain.

(11)

Not out of Surrey season. In the leaf-fall  
Pass precisely. I see the apples dance  
Out my window. In the light. They all  
Fall before my eyes. A surreptitious glance.  
I see love and death, as the ripe fruit  
Of the old tree. They should ever dance  
Together, these two, because they suit  
Each other, circling that word "pain"  
Which lights the autumn bonfire in the brain.' (Max Harris)

I brought up a seedling apple. It has lovely red streaked apples on it. Tart yet sweet. I have been debating on a name for it. This is a wonderful pastime. My tree. My name. I sometimes have the same feeling when I'm choosing a title for a book. My book. My name. Immortality.

"To see a play performed by small children with a few footlights arranged on the floor in imitation of a theatre, is to feel that all that the saints have said about children is true. How exquisite are their voices, that are all music without the harshness of experience! To listen to them is like listening to the first birds. To see them is to be back in a world of apple-trees in flower. There is comedy in the contrast between them and the grave parts they play and the grave speeches they utter as abbesses, poets, and harpers. But the very mimicry of our grown-up world, which begins by moving us, ends by filling us with bitter-sweet regret that the lives of men and women, after all, are not enacted in voices so sweet and by creatures so fair as these. The feeling may not be a deep one, and may be only for the moment; but for the time at least, we wish with a pang that life could always have remained like this, that nobody would ever grow up or die ... "

from 'The Shy Fathers' by Robert Lynd.

... or say goodbye ...

\* \* \* \* \*

The End

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