A VAGUE SURVEY OF SOME INFLUENTIAL WRITING

Compiled by J. L. Herrera

DEDICATED TO:

Lance and Lucyna ‘Nina’ Clarke

AND WITH THANKS TO:

Cheryl Perriman, Rose Brown, Ken Herrera,
Betty Bamford, Ellen Naef, Grant Finlay,
Marie-France Sagot, Ken Carroll, Global Learning Centre.

INTRODUCTION

When the idea for this book first came to me I was tempted to dismiss it. Important books were things like Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital* or the writings of Isaac Newton. Important, yes, but not really things I wanted to sit down and struggle with. Not the sort of light and easy reading I prefer.

But then I began to think on the books and writings that perhaps had limited fame but still managed to influence people. Might they not be more interesting? Surely there were quirky things out there that would be fun to dig up? Or things forgotten now but influential in their moment?

So, very slowly, I began to take note of things other people mentioned as being influential to someone somewhere down through the centuries. It makes no claims to being a comprehensive list but it was fun to put together and I hope it might be interesting to read.

And influence is a curious, even at times an alarming thing. Would history have been different if someone hadn’t written or published or read a certain book? It was a thought which was both exhilarating and worrying. Because—what are we now reading and being influenced by?

So here is a book which I hope will be utterly without influence.

J. L. Herrera
Hobart 2017

I was tempted to write about the many climate and environmental crises facing us but the sad thing was I couldn’t think of a book which had influenced people enough to change their ways. So here is a cry from the heart published 50 years ago, in 1967: “What is going to check our Rake’s Progress – our expansionary exuberance – is the carrying capacity of the earth’s atmosphere, the exhaustion of the regenerative powers of its soil, the frailty of its ozone mantle, the extinction of life in its oceans.”

E. J. Mishan in *The Costs of Economic Growth*.

A VAGUE SURVEY OF SOME INFLUENTIAL WRITING

January 1: Maria Edgeworth
January 2: Isaac Asimov
January 3: J. R. R. Tolkien
January 4: Jacob Grimm
January 5: Umberto Eco
January 6: Kahlil Gibran
January 7: Nikola Tesla (d)

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Keith Tutt in *The Scientist, the Madman, the Thief and their Lightbulb* looks at some of the people who have hoped to discover clean cheap energy from such sources as cold fusion, radiant energy, vacuum energy, gravity, magnetism, the energies both within the earth and in space, and one of the most interesting was Nikola Tesla who came up with Alternating Current (AC). Born in Croatia he was a child prodigy with a photographic memory and super hearing and a passion for invention. He was born in a thunderstorm to a priest father and a weaver mother but he rejected his father's wish that he study theology and asked to be allowed to study engineering. He emigrated to the United States where he took out dozens of patents. But he was often unlucky and overlooked. Tutt writes, "Many of Tesla's discoveries and inventions are often mistakenly attributed to better-known names. While most lay people still believe that Marconi perfected the transmission and reception of radio waves, there is no longer reason to believe this: in June 1943 the US Supreme Court ruled that Tesla's patents predated Marconi's claims on the prize of radio. Popular history is, though, still slow to catch up. Errors committed in print can take many years to correct. The just do not always get to write the history books, and even during his lifetime Tesla became an object of ridicule and derision for his 'outlandish ideas'.

"There were times when he may have contributed to this — for instance when he agreed with Lord Kelvin in 1902 that Mars was trying to make contact with America. (It is now believed he may have been the first person to have measured — without realizing its origin — the pulsing of distant stars.) However, Kelvin and Tesla also agreed on a further, more prophetic point: that the world's non-renewable resources — such as coal and oil — should be conserved and that wind and solar power should be developed."

"Eventually on 7 January 1943 Tesla ended his days, alone and poor, in a shabby New York hotel where only a few pet pigeons shared his thoughts."

If people, then, did not take very much notice of Tesla—has that changed in the half century since he put forward his 'outlandish ideas'?

My impression is that his ideas are being re-evaluated. But was he a misunderstood genius? A mad scientist? A crackpot? A man with good ideas but extremely difficult to deal with? Did he have some condition, such as autism or aspergers, which made him better with figures or technical ideas than people? Was he awkward, antisocial, belligerent, impatient, chaotic, in his relationships with people? Some of his statements might suggest this:

"I don't care that they stole *my* idea …

I care that they don't have *any of their own*."

"I have by every thought and act of mine, demonstrated, and do so daily, to my absolute satisfaction that I am an automaton endowed with the power of movement, which merely responds to external stimuli."

"That is the trouble with many inventors: they lack patience. They lack the willingness to work a thing out slowly and clearly and sharply in their mind, so that they can actually 'feel it work.' "

Implying that others are thieves and morons, telling people they are little better than wind-up toys—if these were a representative sample of his statements then I am not surprised that he neither made friends nor got the Establishment on side … And his long-running quarrel over electric currents, what was called the War of the Currents, with Thomas Edison, probably didn't help. Edison believed in DC, Direct Current, and Tesla in AC, Alternating Current, and Edison was the darling of the Establishment in a way that Tesla never was. But AC was accepted and became a part of our lives.

He would not be the first brilliant scientist who failed to get his ideas accepted. And the fact that he died alone suggests that he had not developed romances or friendships to sustain him through his last years. But Richard Galland in *The Nikola Tesla Puzzle Collection* says, "Tesla could often be seen feeding the pigeons, which he referred to as "my only friends". His fondness for one pigeon in particular bordered on romantic affection." And Tesla himself said, "I loved that pigeon as a man loves a woman, and she loved me. As long as I had her, there was a purpose to my life."

Still, difficult or not, it shouldn't stop us recognizing him as the 'Father of Radio'.

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January 8: Wilkie Collins
January 9: Simone de Beauvoir
January 10: Paul Bennett
January 11: Alan Paton
William James
January 12: Jack London
Charles Perrault
Edmund Burke
Johann Pestalozzi
January 13: A. B. Guthrie
January 14: J. F. (John Feltham) Archibald

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"In 1880 journalists John Haynes and John Feltham Archibald founded *The Bulletin*, a political and literary weekly journal which soon became known for its strongly nationalistic ideals. The slogan 'Australia for the Australians' appeared on its cover, to be replaced by 'Australia for the White Man' in 1908 and until 1960. By the 1890s The Bulletin was promoted as 'the premier literary journal', and editor J. F. Archibald encouraged contributors to write in a no-nonsense way using distinctively Australian subject matter. Bush ballads and poetry and stories of the pioneering life predominated. Banjo Paterson, Henry Lawson, Steele Rudd and Harry (Breaker) Morant were among the early published writers. They represented colonial life in realistic, romantic and comic modes through the characters of the drover, the horseman, the selector and the swagman. The famous Red Page of literary contributions was created by critic A. G. Stephens and was known for its fiery irreverence."

I can't remember from where I copied that but it is a good introduction to what was once a staple of reading in Australia.

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J. F. Archibald founded *The Bulletin* with John Haynes and made, so we mostly believe, an enduring Australian paper which influenced people everywhere around the continent. Is this so? I have just been reading Sylvia Lawson's interesting *The Archibald Paradox*. *The Bulletin* actually started under the auspices of the Catholic Church's own printing interests. This didn't last long. But the new paper was unclear just where to position itself for some time, perhaps for all time. It was anti-Chinese, anti-hanging, anti-monarchist

and to some extent anti-British (and pro-Boer), anti-suffrage for much of its early life and by extension rather misogynist. It eventually put aside its republicanism in favour of Federation.

Some of the paradoxes were of Archibald's own making. He promoted the idea that his name was Jules François Archibald and that he was of French Jewish extraction. He put this name on his will and on his marriage form where he scrupulously avoided putting down his father's name. Joseph Patrick Archibald would not persuade anyone he was a Frenchman or a Jew. Of course J. F. could call himself anything he wanted but the fake background was rather more problematical. His father was a policeman in Warrnambool and the family had some difficulty with his apparent desire to avoid people looking at the connection. It seems to have come from his desire to be seen as a cosmopolitan man rather than the kid who went to work in regional Victoria at 15 as a compositor.

Lawson writes, "The paradoxical process can be tracked in Archibald, whose first allegiances were to his jumbled images of European cosmopolitanism and insurgency … The *Bulletin's* republicanism and nationalism worked as inspiriting argument for a time; but nationalism supervened. It was expressed strongly, through the late 1880s, especially, as viciously chauvinistic racism—directed especially, but not only, against the Chinese. In this the editor, with all his compassionate, world-raging perspectives, was not alone; but he was responsible."

The jibes at blackfellows were common. "The Australian aborigine is a doomed man. … The poor inebriated wretch struts along George-street, imitating, with the pantomime ability which is one of his few mental gifts, the deliberate gait of the policeman who once wore the rags which cover his back, or the stilted walk of the volunteer who has given him a cast-off hat. … When the Palmer goldfield was opened the blacks were at first by no means hostile, and some white men gave them bread; but they commenced to spear horses, and then the white man gave them lead. Since then there has been open war between the races, and there is hardly a man in North Queensland whose motto is not 'see a nigger and "pot" him.' The blacks have been murdered by thousands, and whether on the Palmer, Hodgkinson, Gilbert, Etheridge, or Coen fields, to say nothing of the pastoral districts, the white settlers' policy has been one of extermination. … This is not fiction, but is the statement of one who not three years ago saw in a Queensland scrub the unburied corpses of men, women and children who had been murdered by the officers of 'justice' and left for the crows … And what is happening in Queensland now once happened every day in New South Wales. It is too late to talk of preserving the aboriginal race. It is and always was Utopian to try and Christianise it. Rum and European clothes have ruined the people who half a century ago were temperate and naked." In a way this was more damaging than 'funny' cartoons because it promoted a sense of apathy and helplessness among decent people.

A. G. Stephens when he joined the *Bulletin* was more concerned about its literary quality than the subjects it fulminated upon or used as the butt of its wit and lampooning. "Stephens, for his part, saw a dazzling chance: to develop literary criticism, indeed literary life, in and for Australia, in a uniquely powerful framework." But he was possibly hoping for something he was never going to get. "It is hard in Australia to get even a nodding acquaintance with recent foreign literature other than English, for the books never reach us. Is there a single Australian who could pass an examination in Huysmans, Maeterlinck, or Verhaeren?" I am not sure what response that question would get now. I suspect most of us would say "Does it matter?"—after we'd said "Who were they?" The *Bulletin* once said "a country is, to a great extent, what its newspapers make it" but I am not sure that newspapers are the ideal vehicle for either making us more aware of social issues or more sensitive to good language. We are more likely to do a quick browse then put the paper to other purposes. When I was young we used newspapers as toilet paper.

As Graham McInnes wrote in *The Road to Gundagai*: "In the far corner, tastefully screened by a trellis of wisteria, was the lavatory, or the 'dunny' as Dad used to call it. I was

astonished to observe, on first using it, that one's wants were provided for by a swatch of neatly cut squares from the Hobart *Mercury* stuck on a nail in the wall. I spoke of this to Mother who made two points. First, we were lucky to have arrived after the installation of 'the flush'; less than six months ago we should have enjoyed the services of the 'night man' and therefore I was not to complain. Secondly, she too had noticed the pieces of newspaper and was going to ask Mamà to have them replaced by a roll of toilet paper. In the meantime I was to use tissue paper from the chest of drawers because, she said, printer's ink contained antimony and frequent applications of antimony (especially from department store advertisements) were harmful to little boys' backsides."

Now I've heard people say they would be sorry to see newspapers disappear because they need them for lighting the fire, lining shelves or keeping weeds down in the garden. But was the *Bulletin* something more? Lawson says, "Archibald's *Bulletin* offered its readers a mythic city-state of their own, where they could walk as something better than colonials. … If the paper was 'the Bushman's Bible'—so it was called from 1890—this was not because it flattered or consoled the provinces, nor simply because it reflected outback lives and so heartened those who lived them; but rather because it brought the city and the globe to their doorsteps, and made them neighbours in print with the most famous of the wicked, the dazzling and the powerful. The people of the bush, and indeed of the back lane and factory also, were given back to themselves as citizens of the world. Their experience was validated, their places named as centres of event, so that readers and reader-writers, the Australians of at least one generation were rescued from the second-rateness of exile."

Archibald declined into what sounds very much like bi-polar disorder but the *Bulletin* went on. His colleague John Haynes died and then Archibald himself but no one seems to doubt that he influenced Australia in paradoxical ways. He left enough money to endow the Archibald Prize for portraiture. And he is memorialized in Sydney's Archibald fountain although fountains are out-of-fashion as many people now can't distinguish between a fountain and a litter bin. And as Lawson says, "the *Bulletin* was an agent of influence for better and worse. For a time it pursued the Chinese ferociously, and in the longer term helped clear the ground for the White Australia policy. It kept the Aboriginal people invisible, out of print; even if negatively, it connived in their dispossession and extreme marginality. It also ran strong polemics over a decade for an independent, republican Australia. When that cause seemed to have no purchase, the *Bulletin* let it go, and argued hard instead for the federation of the colonies. It both derided and glorified women, sometimes opposing feminist causes, then changing its editorial mind; and many women, no less gifted, no less hell-bent on attaining print than their brothers, found their voices in its pages. The representation of gender in that archive is far more complex and contradictory—and therefore far more interesting—than some feminist historians have allowed."

And perhaps more importantly it got a nation, town and country, reading …

As Christopher Koch said, "There can be few more provincial people than young Tasmanians. We were cut off from the society on the mainland where real writers lived; we'd never met a writer. But we read our favourites each week in the old Sydney *Bulletin* — then the one important platform for Australian writers: Douglas Stewart, Judith Wright, Roland Robinson, John Blight, David Campbell, David Rowbotham. All of them were important to us, and showed us that Australia could be interpreted and transfigured."

… even if they weren't reading Huysmans, Maeterlinck and Verhaeren …

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January 15: Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin)
January 16: Susan Sontag
Robert Service
January 17: Anton Chekhov
January 18: A. A. Milne

Baron Montesquieu

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The other day I came upon a book called *The Holiday Round* which was a collection of sketches and short pieces A. A. Milne had written in the early 20th century for *Punch*. The pieces are light and witty—"I'm a three-bottle man. I can go on and on and on. And after all these years I have the most sensitive palate of any man living. For instance, I can distinguish between Scarborough and Llandudno quite easily with my eyes shut. Speaking as an expert, I may say that there is nothing to beat a small Cromer and seltzer; though some prefer a Ventnor and dash. Ilfracombe with a slice of lemon is popular, but hardly appeals to the fastidious." —readable and funny with some delightful little throwaway lines—"We went very quietly. There were only wasps on the tennis lawn, but one does not want to disturb the little fellows."—but they were ephemeral.

We would not remember A. A. Milne if he had remained a witty writer for *Punch*.

We would not remember A. A. Milne if he had remained a writer of light and pleasant plays such as *Belinda*.

We would not remember A. A. Milne if he'd given his attention solely to his mysteries. They were popular in the Golden Age and ones like *The Red House Mystery* are still quite interesting but they didn't make him a giant among the writers of Detective Fiction.

We probably would not remember A. A. Milne for his children's verses in *Now We Are Six* even though they are attractive in a sentimental and gentle way.

But he wrote *Winnie-the-Pooh* and so heffalumps, tiggers, A Bear of Very Little Brain, Eeyore, Trespassers W, stoutness exercises and Christopher Robin became part of the childhood of millions of children.

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January 19: Isidore-Auguste-Marie-François-Xavier Comte
Edgar Allen Poe
Josiah Strong
January 20: Richard le Gallienne
January 21: Emma Gad
Richard Palmer Blackmur
January 22: August Strindberg
Lord Byron
Francis Bacon
January 23: Derek Walcott
January 24: Edith Wharton
E.T.A. Hoffmann

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'Herder had been the forerunner, collecting folk songs from many lands under the eloquent title *Voices of the People*. He even referred to folktales as "the mother tongue of the people." The *Brothers Grimm* and others began to collect folk songs and fairy tales in Heidelberg. You must know of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*.'

'Oh sure, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Rumpelstiltskin, The Frog Prince, Hansel and Gretel …'

'And many more. In Norway we had *Asbjørnsen and Moe*, who travelled around the country collecting "folks' own tales." It was like harvesting a juicy fruit that was suddenly discovered to be both good and nourishing. And it was urgent—the fruit had already begun to fall. Folk songs were collected; the Norwegian language began to be studied scientifically. The old myths and sagas from heathen times were rediscovered, and composers all over Europe began to incorporate folk melodies into their compositions in an attempt to bridge the gap between folk music and art music.'

'What's art music?'

‘Art music is music composed by a particular person, like Beethoven. Folk music was not written by any particular person, it came from the people. That’s why we don’t know exactly when the various folk melodies date from. We distinguish in the same way between folktales and art tales.’

‘So art tales are…?’

‘They are tales written by an author, like *Hans Christian Andersen*. The fairy tale genre was passionately cultivated by the Romantics. One of the German masters of the genre was *E.T.A. Hoffman*.’

‘I’ve heard of *The Tales of Hoffman*.’

‘The fairy tale was the absolute literary ideal of the Romantics—in the same way that the absolute art form of the Baroque period was the theater. It gave the poet full scope to explore his own creativity.’

‘He could play God to a fictional universe.’

Sophie’s World by Jostein Gaarder

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In children’s piano books many years ago was a little piece called ‘Tales from Hoffman’. Who Hoffman was or what his Tales were no one thought to explain to small children stumbling over their notes. I have just been to see a film of *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*, Offenbach’s grand opera using the Tales but also incorporating Hoffman as a character within his own writing. So I assume that little piano piece was a simple version of the key theme running through Offenbach’s dramatic opera.

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So what of Hoffmann and were his Tales folktales or art tales? Or both? Though he was christened Ernst Theodor Wilhelm he later called himself Amadeus instead of Wilhelm as he admired Mozart, and that is the way his name has survived for two centuries since then. R. J. Hollingdale says of him, “Hoffmann was a two-sided, schizophrenic kind of man; by day a decent citizen and a lawyer, by night a fantasist with a strong penchant for the freakish and weird. Temperamentally he was an anarchic humorist, and this affected his daytime side: his final experience with the Prussian state and legal system in which he earned his living was an official inquiry into allegations that he had abused his membership of a judicial commission to satirize the commission’s proceedings. He took care of the split between bourgeois and artist by indulgence in what were in his day called ‘habits of intemperance’; when he was forty-six these in turn took care of him. He was laden with talent: his earliest ambition was to be a graphic artist and painter; he then attempted to exist as a composer and critic of music; and it was only in his thirties that he turned himself into a writer of fiction and became – with four novels and about fifty stories, most of them of novella length – among the best-known and most admired and influential authors of his time.”

The sense of a split personality, a Jekyll-and-Hyde character, underpins many of his stories, particularly his story of the goldsmith who creates and sells exquisite work by day and goes out and murders at night to get his pieces back. But many of his stories and his opera *Undine* depend on this sense of the unearthly. Perhaps the best known is ‘The Sandman’ which inspired the Offenbach opera. Nathaniel is obsessed with the strange and evil figure Coppelius but his young friend Clara tells him Coppelius is not real. We are not quite sure whether to believe her, to see Coppelius as a demon possessing the young man, or simply to see him as a repulsive person only too happy to ruin otherwise happy lives. Coppelius sells him a telescope with which he sees a beautiful woman sitting in a house opposite. He begins to ignore and forget Clara in his fascination with the beautiful figure of Olympia, not realizing that Olympia is an automaton, and the shock of discovering this sends him mad. It can be likened to the ideas behind *Frankenstein* and the belief that as machines grow cleverer and more sophisticated it will become harder to tell what is real and what is make-believe, what is machine and what is creature. Now the automatons from the late

eighteenth century are fascinating but we would not mistake them for the real thing, even if we can't tell the real from the make-believe on screen, but I can see how they fascinated and intrigued and sometimes seduced people two hundred years ago.

And what of my question? His Tales are seen now as Gothics and I don't think they should be called either folk or art. Hoffmann used real stories in fictional ways but he also played around in that gap between settled dependable 'bourgeois' I-will-believe-it-when-I-see-it, and the strange and fanciful 'artist' there-are-more-things-in-heaven-and-earth persona. Quite possibly he never felt completely at home anywhere not least because he was probably seduced by these many layers of complexity asking to be explored …

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January 25: Robert Burns
January 26: Australia Day/Invasion Day

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"At the same time, many blacks developed a militant radicalism which rejected the whole white middle-class view of reality, as shown in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*. Neither their culture nor their radicalism were identical with that of the new generation. But lack of self-knowledge was one of the most important issues for blacks. Cruse, in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, shows that even the most advanced and well-educated blacks lacked a sense of black identity and pursued a white identity and white goals. From Fanon to Cleaver, recent black writers have shown the same thing. How did blacks begin to encourage a search for identity among their ranks? One step was to raise questions about the existing 'Negro identity', to show that it had an Uncle Tom quality, that it was humiliating and artificial, that it produced, under a black skin, an ersatz white man. At the same time, blacks were made conscious of their own African heritage, their own culture, their own pride. The story can be told in hair styles, from the 'con-king' that Malcolm X describes, an effort to make his hair look 'white', to the nondescript short haircut, to the 'natural' or 'Afro' that is uniquely black. Today the black search for self is well under way.

"When the black man began his search for self, he first became intensely aware of his status as a 'nigger'. Eldridge Cleaver says, 'Of course I'd always known that I was black, but I'd never really stopped to take stock of what I was involved in.' It is even more true that the white worker has never seen what his true position is in American society. He too is a 'nigger', and the discrimination against him is as deliberate, as systematic, as devastating in its consequences as that (historically) for so long against his black brother."

The Greening of America by Charles A. Reich.

Black journalist Carl Rowan, speaking of Stokely Carmichael, Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver said, "Their well of bitterness runs a bit deeper than that of the average black. Their cup of hope is considerably emptier than is that of the average black. Their rage has produced some irrationalities that lead them to believe their own rhetoric of violence and sometimes engage in acts of self-destruction. But I guarantee you that in every ghetto of this city, every black man believes some of what Stokely Carmichael has to say."

It developed as a movement called Negritude which embraced black Africa, the Caribbean, the United States. Then there was Black Power, Black Panthers, 'Black is Beautiful'; now it is African American. This may be more polite, sometimes more correct, but it also seems to lack the all-embracing quality that Negritude potentially contained. Now the descendants of slaves who arrive in the USA from a Spanish-speaking country are subsumed as Hispanic. Yet the countries of the Caribbean and Central America took in millions of transported Africans. Hispanics in the USA are all assumed to have arrived there by choice but African-Americans within the USA were forcibly brought. I wonder how Black Hispanics feel. It isn't my business to tell people what they should call themselves but I cannot help feeling that African-American is a limiting designation and in some ways it seems like a capitulation to White America because it has a respectability (on White terms) in

it. Black Power had nothing polite about it.

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In *Between Two Nations*, edited by R. J. May, June Verrier writes, "Whether, or to what degree, the Australian government pursued a policy of administrative cooperation with the Dutch in order to lay the foundations for the emergence of a Melanesian Federation remains debatable. Suffice it to recall that the 1957 joint statement declared that it was designed to leave the way open, if the inhabitants of the island one day so chose, for a united New Guinea. More important for this discussion is that the nature of both Dutch and Australian policies had the effect, if not always the intention, of creating both a nationalist identity in West New Guinea and a feeling for a united New Guinea, both of which were to be at the base of the border problem which developed with Indonesia's administration of the Territory from 1962 and which, in one form or another, continues to this day."

And Jens Bjerre writing in 1964 in *Savage New Guinea*, said "Another problem to be faced in the future is New Guinea's geographical-political position. In this connection it is interesting to note a plan which is often discussed in the Civil Servants' Club in Madang. It is a plan, proposed by the Australian Labour Party, for the whole of New Guinea to be regarded as one unit instead of being divided into territories whose boundaries were drawn more or less arbitrarily by the old imperialist powers. It is proposed that under the auspices of the United Nations a joint agreement should be entered into by the states concerned with the aim of preserving peace in the whole area, while the United Nations should offer economic support for the development of the new united New Guinea. In the long run it is no doubt a solution of this kind will best serve the interests of the native population. The 141st line of longitude cannot continue to be the boundary which, willy-nilly, cuts the island artificially into two halves. In Madang I had opportunities to talk with the natives' local organisations. They too demonstrated a very positive attitude—and a rather cautious optimism concerning the future."

Jens Bjerre wrote just after the Indonesian take over of Dutch New Guinea. Not only did he have an unrealistic view of Indonesian colonialism but he seems to have done more talking with the Melanesian people of New Guinea and 'the natives; local organisations' than the whole of the United Nations' team managed in a decade in the colony the UN was busily giving to Indonesia. The UN clearly regarded 'the natives' as being unimportant, irrelevant, or invisible.

Race and national identity often coalesce at the time of independence. The people of Papua and New Guinea came together to form the independent nation of PNG in 1975 and their Melanesian-ness became a part of their cultural identity rather than an essential part of their national identity. But in countries where this process hasn't occurred, Aboriginal Australia and West Papua (West New Guinea) immediately come to mind, race becomes the vital identifier. Aboriginal Australians have difficulty identifying as Australians because this was imposed on them by outsiders. West Papuans rarely identify as Indonesians, they are more likely to cling to their Melanesian identity because Indonesian-ness has been imposed from outside. It is neither an integral part of their struggle for independence nor an integral part of their culture, way of life, and world view.

How easily we fall into the trap of believing that because we feel comfortable identifying as something and do not need to call up race to buttress our identity that everyone else should come at it in the same way.

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"I imagined at the time that I was writing the stories of individuals, but I understand now that I was historicizing the process of separation. The sum of the 'lazy and useless' domestic servants and alcoholic violent men was more than thousands of difficult, futile or wasted lives. It was the by-product of a concerted attempt by the state to put an end to indigenality. At last I understood the life histories not only as human tragedies, but also the

context in which these things were allowed, no, were intended, to happen.

"I wrote 'The Stolen Generations' in 1980 at the request of the Family and Children's Service Agency in Sydney. My original title was 'The Lost Generations'. My partner Jay Arthur thought the title a little euphemistic and suggested 'The Stolen Generations'. So it became. She is the author of the phrase, not I. 'The Stolen Generations', (1980):

> In view of the inadequate provision as regards housing, food and care of the children of ……., on the Aboriginal reserve at ……., would you kindly charge the children as neglected and commit them to the care of this Board'— Letter from Aboriginal Welfare Board to Police Sergeant, at a mid-Western town in New South Wales, 1958.

White people have never been able to leave Aborigines alone. Children particularly have suffered. Missionaries, teachers, government officials, have believed that the best way to make black people behave like white was to get hold of the children who had not yet learned Aboriginal lifeways. They thought that children's minds were like a kind of blackboard on which the European secrets could be written. This is about what happened to those children who were taken away from their parents from reserves or the bush by government legislation, and put in the care of the whites. It is the story of the attempt to 'breed out' the Aboriginal race. It is the story of attempted genocide.

Genocide does not simply mean the extermination of people by violence but may include any means at all. At the height of the policy of separating Aboriginal people from their parents the Aborigines Welfare Board meant to do just that. The 1921 Report of the Board stated that 'the continuation of this policy of dissociating the children from camp life must eventually solve the Aboriginal problem'.

'The Aboriginal problem' meant Aboriginal people who could not, or chose not, to live as white people wanted them to do. The 1926 Report put the Board's intentions even more clearly: when children were placed in a 'first class private home', the superior standard of life would 'pave the way for the absorption of these people into the general population'. At the same time, Aboriginal adults, who could not be sent away were driven from reserves or from the outskirts of country towns. Adult Aboriginal resistance proved too strong for the Board, for those adults either came back after a time, or went to live outside another town. But the children could not return until they were eighteen. Some were taken so young that they did not remember where they had come from or even who their parents were. Many of these children did not, and could not, return to their families."

A Rape of the Soul so Profound by Peter Read.

Jack Davis introducing Duncan Graham's *Dying Inside* wrote, "I remember my father telling me that as a twelve-year-old stock-boy he had to hold his boss's horse while the boss entered the Roebourne police station to officially obtain a licence. This gave him permission to shoot blacks on his property. The cost of the licence was one shilling. In plain words, a licence to kill.

"Is there a parallel between that and Aboriginal deaths in custody? Some people will remember the furore and unnecessary traumas inflicted upon the so-called escapee Lionel Brockman and his son in the early 1970s. They ran from the police and cut a track through fences to elude police in an attempt to be with the family. Once again civilians came to the rescue. Arming themselves, they again joined in a hunt for a black fellow some 50 years after the massacre at Oombulgurri.

"Aborigines have always been oral historians. Some incidents of white and Aboriginal collisions in Australia have been passed down in the oral tradition and have been horrific. One such incident is the time when an Aboriginal prisoner was being led to prison at the end of a rope tied around his neck, the other end being tied to the saddle of his captor. The guard,

wanting to reach his destination before nightfall, began to trot his horse. For some demoniac reason he kicked his horse into a canter, and then a gallop. His hapless prisoner stumbled, fell and, upon striking the tangled limbs of a fallen tree, his head was wrenched from his shoulders.

"There are many incidents like this one. They are too numerous to relate and unbearable in the enormity of their sheer cold-bloodedness. This is one of the reasons why present-day grassroots Aborigines, urban or tribal, find it safer to partly reject white society than to accept it fully.

"The long drawn-out 200 years of brutality are apparent in the present-day deaths-in-custody syndrome. No one is taking the blame. It is safer and easier to blame the victim. But the power lies entirely with the government. No one can change the government's attitude but the voting public."

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Turkish writer Taner Akçam wrote *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* to show that there *were* documents which point to Turkey making deliberate decisions at government level. "This policy had two main components: the first was to disperse and relocate non-Turkish Muslims, such as Kurds and Arabs, among the Turkish majority with the purpose of their assimilation. The second component involved expelling non-Muslim, non-Turkish people from Anatolia, which resulted in the removal of two million people in all, essentially the region's entire Christian population. While Armenians as well as Assyrians were targeted by special measures aimed at their annihilation, Greeks were also expelled. In total, almost one third of the Anatolian population was either relocated or killed. What is crucial is that this ethnic cleansing and homogenization paved the way for today's Republic of Turkey.

"This view is unacceptable in Turkey. Indeed, because of the long-standing Turkish policy of denial, the very term "genocide" has become contested—sacred to Armenians, taboo to Turks. Both sides attach supreme importance to the question of whether or not "genocide" should be used. I have used the term in line with the United Nations definition adopted in 1948. Accordingly, genocide includes the partial or complete destruction of an ethnic, national, racial, or religious group, whether in periods of peace or war. The definition covers various means of destruction, be it killing members of a particular group, exposing them to grave physical or emotional harm, inflicting such physical damage that ends the group's continued existence, preventing the group's members from giving birth, or forcibly removing their children and merging them with other communities. Under the terms of the UN definition, and in light of all the documentary evidence we cannot but call the acts against the Armenians genocide."

The one saving grace the book contains in regard to Turkish responsibility is that there were Turks who refused to participate in the killing, who even tried to stop others or disobey orders—and were themselves sometimes killed for their honourable efforts.

And it brought back to me that evergreen question: did white Australia deliberately set out to commit genocide. A great deal of effort has gone in to saying there is no government document to 'prove' that there was ever a deliberate policy. But in fact there was. Forced relocations, forced removals of children, the forced segregation of men and women, the deliberate denial of the opportunity to use language, carry out religious and cultural ceremonies, all of these policies, promulgated by state and federal governments add up to the UN definition of genocide. So isn't it about time we accept this?

Taner Akçam may be in grave danger from Turkish vigilantes. But Australians can speak the truth without fear of the gunmen at the door …

*

"Any regular Western visitor to the developing world will be familiar with that awkward moment when a local resident raises, with a passion and level of forensic detail that

reveals this is still an open wound, some injustice perpetrated long ago by the colonial master. Baffled, the traveller registers that the forgotten massacre or broken treaty, which he has only just discovered, is the keystone on which an entire community's identity has been built. 'Gosh, why are they still harping on about that?' he thinks. 'Why can't they just move on? We have.' It is a version of the 'Why do they hate us so?' question a shocked America asked in the wake of September 11."

Michela Wrong in *I Didn't Do It For You*

This immediately resonated with me. How many times do we hear people saying around January 26th: "Why can't they just move on? We have."? The fact that she was writing about Eritrea doesn't remove the relevance for Australia.

Every January I send a letter to the paper about January 26th and *The Mercury* does usually publish it. This year I wrote:

Many nations choose the date of their independence or liberation as their National Day. Australia is unusual in that it celebrates an invasion date. A number of countries celebrate the departure of their colonial masters. Australia celebrates the arrival of its colonial masters.

Not only is this odd but it is also hypocritical. If any other nation should choose to sail in and begin unloading their unwanted convicts, without so much as a 'Do you mind?', on our beaches, backyards, national parks or farm paddocks we would immediately call the police who would probably call out the military. We certainly wouldn't say 'How wonderful! Let's make this our National Day!'

Surely we have sufficient sensitivity and common sense to choose a more appropriate date on which to celebrate our nationhood?

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"I suppose if it wasn't school holidays, and Australia Day fell in term time, they would each of them be involved in parades of some sort, or assemblies, and the breaking out of flags and speeches from headmasters and prominent citizens about our glorious heritage and founding fathers and all that. Or maybe not. It's awfully difficult to make our founding fathers out to be anything else than … shall we say … reluctant?"

Charmian Clift in her column on 'Australia Day'.

But I suspect the real reason that politicians won't countenance change is simply that they would find themselves embroiled in endless argument over what date would be more appropriate. So I have a simple suggestion. We have Harmony Week and Refugee Week and Volunteers Week and so on—so why not Australia Week? It could begin in May on Sorry Day with a sombre day of mourning, regret, apology, a humble time of looking back on past mistakes, past arrogances, past cruelties … then there would be a week of varying activities. Then it would end in a day of celebrating the best things about being an Australian.

Beaches would not figure prominently but then—why should they?

* * * * *

January 27: Lewis Carroll
January 28: Beatrice Davis
January 29: Germaine Greer
Thomas Paine
January 30: Angela Thirkell
Shirley Hazzard
January 31: Norman Mailer
Zane Grey
February 1: Muriel Spark
February 2: Hannah More
James Joyce
February 3: Simone Weil

Gertrude Stein
Felix Mendelssohn
Walter Bagehot
February 4: Rabelais
Dietrich Bonhoeffer
February 5: Dwight L. Moody
W. E. Johns
February 6: Eric Partridge
February 7: Charles Dickens
Sir Thomas More
February 8: John Ruskin
Jules Verne
Martin Buber

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W. H. D. Rouse introducing Ruskin's lectures titled 'Sesame and Lilies' says, "His influence in matters of art has been very great, particularly in the Gothic revival of the nineteenth century. In other respects it was unhappily small, although indirectly he influenced the thoughts and aspirations of the best men, and will continue to do so. He remains one of the most noble and lovable figures of the nineteenth century."

I am willing to grant his influence, although I doubt if those lectures influenced many younger artists seduced by changing tastes and new ideas, but 'noble and lovable'?

Jonathan Schell in *The Unconquerable World* said this about Gandhi, "In 1894, having completed the legal business for which he had come, he had decided to leave South Africa, and a farewell dinner was held in his honor. That day, he had noticed an article in the *Natal Mercury* reporting that the British colony of Natal was about to pass a bill to disenfranchise Indians. His colleagues at dinner implored him to stay to fight the ordinance, and on the spur of the moment he decided he would. A decade later, he read John Ruskin's *Unto This Last* during a twenty-four-hour train ride from Johannesburg to Durban. The book recommended a life of austerity, material simplicity, and self-control. "I arose with the dawn," he wrote later, "ready to reduce these principles to practice." The result was Phoenix Farm, the first of several experimental communities he was to found."

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"In 1899 things were going badly for Proust. He was twenty-eight, he had done nothing with his life, he was still living at home, he had never earned any money, he was always ill and worst of all, he had been trying to write a novel for the last four years and it was showing few signs of working out. In the autumn of that year, he went on holiday to the French alps, to the spa town of Évian, and it was here that he read and fell in love with the works of John Ruskin, the English art critic renowned for his writings on Venice, Turner, the Italian Renaissance, Gothic architecture and Alpine landscapes.

"Proust's encounter with Ruskin exemplified the benefits of reading. 'The universe suddenly regained infinite value in my eyes,' explained Proust subsequently; because the universe had had such value in Ruskin's eyes, and because he had been a genius at transmuting his impressions into words. Ruskin had expressed things which Proust might have felt himself, but could not have articulated on his own; in Ruskin, he found experiences which he had never been more than semi-conscious of, raised and beautifully assembled in language.

"Ruskin sensitized Proust to the visible world, to architecture, art and nature. Here is Ruskin awakening his readers' senses to a few of the many things going on in an ordinary

mountain stream:

> If it meets a rock three or four feet above the level of its bed, it will often neither part nor foam, nor express any concern about the matter, but clear it in a smooth dome of water, without apparent exertion, the whole surface of the surge being drawn into parallel lines by its extreme velocity, so that the whole river has the appearance of a deep and raging sea, with only this difference, that torrent-waves always break backwards, and sea-waves forwards. Thus, then, in the water which has gained an impetus, we have the most exquisite arrangements of curved lines, perpetually changing from convex to concave, and vice versa, following every swell and hollow of the bed with their modulating grace, and all in unison of motion, presenting perhaps the most beautiful series of inorganic forms which nature can possibly produce.

"Aside from landscape, Ruskin helped Proust to discover the beauty of the great cathedrals of northern France. When he returned to Paris after his holiday, Proust travelled to Bourges and to Chartres, to Amiens and Rouen."

Alain de Botton in *How Proust Can Change Your Life*.

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"One of the most popular books in the Kuala Lumpur Book Club — facetiously known as the Dump of Secondhand Books — was John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*. The volume contained what may be Ruskin's most famous lecture, 'Of Queen's Gardens'. The lecture — a key Victorian document and hugely influential — defined the ideal woman as a creature both sweet and passive, obedient and gentle, pliant and self-deprecating. The title refers to Ruskin's view that a home run by a woman conscious of her responsibilities is more than just a dwelling place; it becomes a place of enchantment, a garden graced by a queen.

In 1911 in Malaya, women were still expected to conform to the Ruskin paradigm: a person who didn't seek to realize herself, but was content to be her husband's instrument — his subject, even. Always aware of the duty she bore him, she ministered to his needs and deferred to his better judgement. If called upon to do so, she was ready 'to suffer and be still' — the words Sarah Stickney Ellis used in 1845 to describe a woman's highest duty. But a life of self-renunciation was not enough; she had also to be pure. Purity was a woman's greatest asset. Take it away and she promptly became a brute. It was a woman's job to civilize men, to raise them up. (Here, her task was analogous to that of Malaya's empire-builders.) She had to be 'the angel in the home', a moral touchstone to whom others turned for guidance. It was on this account that the so-called fallen woman inspired such horror. A woman who strayed from the path of virtue didn't just jeopardize her own life, she jeopardized the lives of those who most depended on her: her husband, whose shame now made him the object of scorn; and her offspring, who would ever bear the taint of their mother's sin."

From *Murder on the Verandah: Love and betrayal in British Malaya* by Eric Lawlor.

"Cookery means the knowledge of Medea and of Circe and of Helen and of the Queen of Sheba. It means the knowledge of all herbs and fruits and balms and spices, and all that is healing and sweet in the fields and groves and savory in meats. It means carefulness and inventiveness and willingness and readiness of appliances. It means the economy of your grandmothers and the science of the modern chemist; it means much testing and no wasting; it means English thoroughness and French art and Arabian hospitality; and, in fine, it means that you are to be perfectly and always ladies—loaf givers." John Ruskin.

"Last century, John Ruskin made the accusation that 'There is not a war in the world, no, nor an injustice, but that you women are answerable for it not in that you have provoked,

but in that you have not hindered. There is no suffering, no misery in the earth, but the guilt of it lies lastly with you.' Did his anger at mature, educated and intelligent women stem from the impotence which cost him his marriage to Euphemia Chalmers Gray or was it a symptom of that rage? And was it his inability to accept adult women as his equals that led him to dream of and pursue young girls in his old age? How many other men before and since find the idea of women's equality a threat to their sexuality as well as their pride and their economic dominance? Is Ruskin's voice still being heard in the writings of those who suggest that rape and other acts of violence against women in and outside the home would stop if only women confined their activities to the kitchen, the nursery and the bedroom?"

Janine Haines in *Suffrage to Sufferance 100 years of women in politics*.

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Edith Morley in her Fabian article on Ruskin (in *Writers and Rebels*) 'John Ruskin and Social Ethics', begins with, "Ruskin not only denied that he was a Socialist: he asserted that the Socialist ideal of human equality was unattainable and undesirable. He even wrote of 'liberty and equality', that he detested the one, and denied the possibility of the other … He proclaimed himself a 'violent Tory of the old school', and an 'Illiberal', and it is certain that, for a clear exposition of Socialistic doctrine, we must look elsewhere than in the volumes of Ruskin. Moreover, economists tell us that many of his theories are unsound, and that his attempts to work them out in detail are as unpractical as the ill-starred Guild of St. George."

So it comes as a surprise to find that he had many good ideas and some of them are now taken for granted. She writes, "His belief that all children should be taught to draw, as a means of training eye and hand and mind; his pioneer work in founding the Art for Schools Association; and his sympathy with the education of women, are other instances of his practical wisdom. Similarly, he suggested reforms in education, which are founded on the assumption that every child has the right to be properly housed, clothed, fed, trained, and taught until it reaches years of discretion, are for the most part now generally accepted, at any rate in theory. Ruskin was, for example, the pioneer of technical education in England" and he agitated for better accommodation for the poor, old age pensions, bodies to set standards of prices and workmanship, and training for the unemployed. "Indeed, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that almost every modern measure of social improvement may, either directly or indirectly, trace its origin to the precepts and example of John Ruskin. Thus, nothing can be more fallacious that to regard him as merely capricious and fanciful in matters of practice, or to forget his proposals for definite schemes of social regeneration, because he blinds us with the lightening of his zeal, or deafens us with his moral fulminations."

We would still link morality to a variety of changes and reforms in social life but I suspect the sticking point for many people would be his ideas about morality in art and taste. And when he says, "there is no wealth but life—life including all its powers of love, of joy and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings," I suspect many people would agree with the pursuit of happiness but would not see nobleness of purpose or conduct to be a major element in the national life.

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"The Art Nouveau style was made possible by a number of outstanding writers on aesthetics during the 19th century, notably John Ruskin and William Morris in Britain, and Léon de Laborde and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in France. What all these writers had in common was a rejection of the crass materialism which had reached its peak in many of the exhibits that were on display at the 1851 Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London's Hyde Park. The long-forgotten truth that art should be in harmony with the age which produces it was rediscovered around 1850 by these men.

"John Ruskin was especially responsible for a number of advances in the field of aesthetics: he rejected the distinction between the so-called major and minor arts. Consequently, interior decoration, which had formerly been entirely in the hands of artisans,

now took on the dimensions of a major social and artistic mission to be accomplished. According to Ruskin, the decorative arts should once again assume the central position in artistic concerns they had occupied at the time of the Renaissance."

Art Nouveau Glass and Ceramics: Centuries of Style.

This delightful little book goes on to say, "It was also Ruskin who called upon architects to draw their inspiration from nature. This concept was to be central to the movements in the decorative arts at the end of the nineteenth century. The translation of the 'secrets' of nature into design are evident in the works of Art Nouveau architects like Victor Horta in Belgium and Hector Guimard in Paris, in the glass of Gallé, the Daum Brothers, Lalique and Tiffany, and in the ceramics of Chaplet, Carriers and Delahérches."

To be both an inspiration to Mahatma Gandhi, Marcel Proust, and René Lalique *and* to generations of British misogynists seems quite a feat.

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February 9: Brendan Behan
February 10: Boris Pasternak
February 11: Patrick Leigh Fermor
Hans-Georg Gadamer
Solomon Gladden
February 12: Charles Darwin
February 13: Georges Simenon
February 14: Frederick Douglass
February 15: Susan B. Anthony
Alfred North Whitehead
Jeremy Bentham
February 16: Peter Porter
Charles Taze Russell
February 17: Banjo Paterson
February 18: Toni Morrison
February 19: Carson McCullers
February 20: François Voltaire
February 21: John Rawls
February 22: Sean O'Faolain
Arthur Schopenhauer
February 23: Samuel Pepys
W. E. B. Du Bois
February 24: David Williamson
February 25: Anthony Burgess
February 26: Victor Hugo
February 27: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
February 28: Michel de Montaigne

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"Having created a new genre by writing in this way, Montaigne created *essais*: his new term for it. Today, the word 'essay' falls with a dull thud. It reminds many people of the exercises imposed at school or college to test knowledge of the reading list: reworkings of other writers' arguments with a boring introduction and a facile conclusion stuck into each end like two forks in a corn-cob. Discourses of that sort existed in Montaigne's day, but *essais* did not. *Essayer*, in French, means simply to *try*. To essay something is to test or taste it, or give it a whirl. One seventeenth-century Montaignist defined it as firing a pistol to see if it shoots straight, or trying out a horse to see if it handles well. On the whole, Montaigne discovered that the pistol shot all over the place and the horse galloped out of control, but this did not bother him. He was delighted to see his work come out so unpredictably.

"He may never have planned to create a one-man literary revolution, but in retrospect he knew what he had done. 'It is the only book in the world of its kind,' he wrote, 'a book with a wild and eccentric plan.' Or, as more often seemed the case, with no plan at all. The *Essays* was not written in neat order, from beginning to end. It grew by slow encrustation, like a coral reef, from 1572 to 1592. The only thing that eventually stopped it was Montaigne's death."

From *How to Live* by Sarah Bakewell.

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S. J. Curtis and M. E. A. Boultwood wrote in *A Short History of Educational Ideas* of Montaigne that he "was equally critical of the old and the new in education. He realized that the danger of the new learning was its tendency to turn the individual into a pedant, and in his *Essay on Pedantry* he wrote: "We are for ever asking, 'Does he know Greek or Latin? Can he write verse or prose?' But the important point is if he has grown better and wiser; and that point lags behind"." "The key note of Montaigne's views is his conviction that education should be concerned with the whole man. "It is not a mind, it is not a body we are educating, it is a man; we must not cut him in half; and, as Plato says, we must not cultivate one without the other, we must develop them equally, like a pair of horses harnessed to the same pole"."

He believed life for the scholar should be a tough one with no comforts so as to prepare the scholar for the hardships of life but he also criticized the tough schools of his era. "Instead of inviting children to learning, we really accustom them to horror and cruelty. Let me have no more violence and driving; in my opinion there is nothing else which so brutalizes and dulls a high-mettled nature—How far more seemly that their classroom should be decently strewn with flowers and leaves than with blood-stained birchen rods"." Wisdom rather than learning should be the aim of schooling; something we are as far away from as in Montaigne's time. Does anyone leave school believing they have grown in wisdom?

"Montaigne's *Essays* were widely read, both in his own country and in England, and many of his ideas were developed by Locke and Rousseau."

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Saul Frampton wrote a book about Montaigne to which he gave the intriguing title, *When I Am Playing with My Cat, How Do I Know She Is Not Playing with Me?* He writes, "Whereas Descartes' division of mind and body separates him from other bodies and other people, Montaigne sees his own relationship to his body as opening a gateway to 'the universal pattern of the human', and as a consequence society at large. Self-knowledge thus leads us into ourselves, but then out of ourselves into others: we need to get to know ourselves before we can understand our fellow man – a logical paradox from a modern perspective, but not for Montaigne.

"Montaigne's essays thus bring with them an acceptance of variation and difference, but a difference built around our similarities in the first place. He sees travel as a way 'to rub and polish our brains through contact with others' and writes in Italian when in Italy and in French when he returns to France. He collects Brazilian love songs from the New World, making him perhaps the first fan of world music. He admires the Turks' provision of hospitals for animals and wonders whether elephants have a religion. In short, Montaigne's scepticism arrives at sympathy rather than certainty, seeing our most obstinate beliefs as simply grounded in habit. And with this Montaigne's essays grow out of their stoical adolescence – their obsession with battlefields and military tactics – and instead begin to explore the mindset of friends and enemies, animals and cannibals, Catholics, Protestants and Jews – even asking himself: 'When I am playing with my cat, how do I know she is not playing with me?'"

The three benefits I think we might take from Montaigne's example are:

1) So many people refer back to Montaigne when they sit down to write a personal essay, as though he has given them permission to sprawl all about with ideas,

opinions, experiences, without being bound by petty rules and restrictions. It isn't true that Montaigne adhered to *no* rules or discipline but he is a good example to look to for this kind of freedom. In fact, Austrian author Stefan Zweig discerned what he called the eight freedoms in Montaigne:

Be free from vanity and pride.
Be free from belief, disbelief, convictions and parties.
Be free from habit.
Be free from ambition and greed.
Be free from family and surroundings.
Be free from fanaticism.
Be free from fate: be master of your own life.
Be free from death: life depends on the will of others, but death on our own will.

The traditional restrictions of a cohesive beginning, middle, and conclusion seem an easier taskmaster.

2) He writes sympathetically about animals, particularly horses, but seeming to find all creatures interesting. "And the thinking that emerges as Montaigne clops along is a new inquisitiveness about the capacities of animals, but one that stands in stark contrast to the general intellectual trajectory of the age."

3) Curiosity. This may sound strange—that anyone should need Montaigne's permission to be curious, given that we are often told that curiosity is the driver of discovery and invention—but in fact people were discouraged from being curious, from asking questions, from probing and wondering. As a child we were regularly told 'Curiosity killed the cat'. Adults didn't want children asking embarrassing questions about sex or death or money or adult relationships but it had the effect of dampening down children's sense of curiosity. Montaigne stood this stricture on its head. Everything, sex, bowel movements, blood, pain, cannibalism, they were all there for the querying as a subject for an Essay … Though it is true that he probably saw curiosity as an appropriate attitude for adults rather than children …

Frampton writes, "Montaigne's reputation grew rapidly over the following years. Before he died he was visited by Anthony Bacon, whose younger brother Francis went on to imitate Montaigne in his own *Essays* of 1597. Montaigne's *Essays* were translated into Italian in 1590, English in 1603, Dutch in 1692, and German in 1753; and later into many other languages including Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Arabic and Greek. And readers and writers since then have found Montaigne the most fascinating and congenial of authors: Orson Welles describing him as 'the greatest writer of any time, anywhere'.

"But perhaps the most sympathetic reader of Montaigne was Shakespeare, who quotes, almost verbatim, from John Florio's 1603 translation of Montaigne's description of the 'golden age' in 'Of Cannbals' in Gonzalo's address in *The Tempest*:

It is a nation, would I answer Plato,
that hath no kind of Trafficke,
no knowledge of Letters,
no intelligence of numbers,
no name of magistrate, nor of politike superiorities;
no use of service, of riches, or of povertie;
no contracts, no successions, no partitions,
no occupation but idle …
And were I king on't, what would I do? …

Florio, 1603

I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;

Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all …

The Tempest, (II, I, 148-155)

"The influence here seems incontrovertible, yet the wider depth of Shakespeare's debt to Montaigne is more difficult to discern. Some see *The Tempest* as the tip of a submerged iceberg of Montaignean influence. And one could see the whole of Shakespeare's tragic trajectory as an illustration of Montaigne's insistence on the paradoxical limitations of man's reason" … Something to think about …

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February 29: Howard Nemerov
March 1: Robert Lowell
March 2: Geoffrey Grigson
March 3: Arthur Machen
March 4: Dr Seuss
March 5: Gerard Mercator

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When I first started on family history a great many people seemed to have fathers described as mercators. I thought 'what a lot of mapmakers there must have been around'. I thought it might also include surveyors and similar. It wasn't until a while later that I discovered that a mercator means a merchant! But it still seems a very natural mistake to make.

"Maps codify the miracle of existence. And the man who wrote the codes for the maps we use today was Gerard Mercator, a cobbler's boy born five hundred years ago on a muddy floodplain in northern Europe. In his time, Mercator was 'the prince of modern geographers', his depictions of the planet and its regions unsurpassed in accuracy, clarity and consistency. More recently, he was crowned by the American scholar Robert W. Karrow as 'the first modern, scientific cartographer'. Mercator was a humble man with a universal vision. Where his contemporaries had adopted a piecemeal approach to cartography, Mercator sought to wrap the world in overlapping, uniform maps. Along the way, he erected a number of historic milestones. He participated in the naming and mapping of America, and he devised a new method – a 'projection' – of converting the sperical world into a two-dimensional map. He constructed the two most important globes of the sixteenth century, and the title of his pioneering 'modern geography', the *Atlas*, became the standard term for a book of maps."

This is Nicholas Crane introducing *Mercator The Man Who Mapped The Planet*.

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March 6: Gabriel Garcia Marquez
March 7: Mochtar Lubis
John Herschel
March 8: Kenneth Grahame
March 9: Vita Sackville-West
Brendan Behan
Alice Walker
March 10: Charles Lamb
Boris Pasternak
Bertolt Brecht
March 11: Ezra Jack Keats
March 12: Bishop George Berkeley
Jack Kerouac

March 13: Hugh Walpole
March 14: Maxim Gorky (or the 16th)

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"As 1918 wore on the destructive effect of Lenin's exhortation to 'Loot the looters' became apparent. Desperate to preserve their collections for some kind of posterity, the owners of private houses turned them over to the state, hoping that they would be declared museums. In this time of famine, however, public ownership was no guarantee of immunity. Local soviets might act in the name of 'the people' at any time and confiscate assets in defiance of central government. Icons were stripped of their gold – and vases were used as chamber pots. Even the writer Maxim Gorky, Lenin's muse and confidant, was appalled: 'They rob and sell churches and museums, they sell cannons and rifles, they pilfer army warehouses, they rob the palaces of former grand dukes; everything which can be plundered is plundered, everything which can be sold is sold.' Later he would reflect sadly on the proletariat's 'malicious desire to ruin objects of rare beauty … In the course of two revolutions and one war I observed hundreds of instances of this dark vindictive urge to smash, cripple, ridicule and defame the beautiful.' "

Fabergé's Eggs by Tony Faber.

So in what way was Gorky Lenin's 'muse and confidant'?

Gorky was seen as Russia's most popular 'proletarian' writer in the early 20th century. But he didn't just influence people by his writing. His home was not only a centre for activism but was in fact a bomb-making workshop. Helen Rappaport in *Conspirator: Lenin in Exile* paints a picture in which Maxim Gorky has an aviary in one room and bombs in another whilst also providing Lenin with an outlet for his ideas, funds for his planning (not least the royalties from Gorky's famous novel *Mother*), a network of sympathetic people, an outlet for his ideas through Gorky's magazine *Novaya Zhizn'* (*New Life*)—and Lenin seduced Gorky by his personality, by his tunnel vision, by his steely resolve; as Rappaport says, "Gorky was captivated by him, seduced by Lenin's bullish physicality as a speaker and his passionate exhortations to his 'comrades'. Lenin's greatness for him, as for so many others during those three weeks in May, lay in his direct manner. He had the ability to breathe life and logic into the most complex of political questions, treating them 'so simply, no striving after eloquent phrases … but every word uttered distinctly, and its meaning marvellously plain'."

Gorky had been imprisoned under Tzarism. He was not an unworldly dreamer. He could see that things were very wrong in Russia. And yet there is the feeling that in his desire to promote much-needed change and in his personal liking for Lenin he ceased to be a 'muse and confidant' and became more of an acolyte and finally a rather sad and disillusioned man.

Henri Troyat in his biography *Gorky* paints a picture of Gorky's childhood full of death, loss, violence, poverty, abuse, and fear. He went out to work at eleven-years-old. All his siblings died. His grandfather terrified him. The one saving grace was his grandmother who was kind and loving and inspired him to find magic in her story-telling. And also the good fortune that brought influential books into an otherwise grim childhood.

He has been criticized for supporting Lenin and the Bolsheviks. He has been criticized for becoming disillusioned with Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution. After reading Troyat's book I can understand both impulses better. He wanted a world in which the poor, the workers, the unwanted would have stability, order, and hope in their lives, and he could see that tyranny was unlikely to give way without violence. But having lived through a childhood in which he had been beaten unconscious by his grandfather he recoiled from violence for its own sake or entrenched as a way of life or to put new tyrants into power.

In 1917 he wrote, "Lenin, Trotsky, and their fellow travellers have already been poisoned by the slimy venom of power. It can be seen in their shameful attitude toward freedom of speech, individual freedom, and all the rights for which democracy has struggled." He spent another long period in exile but returned to Russia as a tired man in poor

health. He acquiesced in Stalin's rule although he did not have any personal liking for him in the way he had had for Lenin. And he died there probably from a chest infection while on a boat on his beloved Volga …

I was left with the impression of a fiery and passionate man who genuinely wanted a better future for the Russian proletariat (and this is why he regarded Tolstoy as 'insincere'; that Tolstoy was playing a role rather than working for real change) but who found, as many others have before and since, that promoting revolution is akin to grasping a tiger by its tail … the tiger may spring forward in graceful leaps and bounds … it may also turn around and bite you …

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March 15: Sergio Vieira de Mello

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Samantha Power in her book about de Mello, *Chasing the Flame*, writes of a man who began as a student of philosophy and never lost his interest. "One day Salvatore Lombardo, the Italian UNHCR official, entered the dusty UN office in Battambang to find his boss Vieira de Mello sprawled out on the couch reading Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* in French. "Sergio, what the hell are you doing?" Lombardo asked. Vieira de Mello replied without raising his eyes from the text: "This is the only kind of reading I can do that enables me to actually escape this place." Kant was fresh in his mind because he had recently delivered his lecture at the Geneva International Peace Research Institute. He brought the paper to Cambodia and excitedly shared it with Bos (Mieke Bos, his Dutch assistant), who made a valiant effort to navigate his prose but could never follow the argument. "No matter how I tried, I would either fall asleep after two pages, or put it down in frustration at my inability to understand it," she recalls. He pretended as though it didn't matter but she noticed that he kept leaving it lying around their hotel room in the not-so-subtle hope that she might get a second wind."

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One day I was in the library and thought of borrowing a book called *The Literacy Wars* but then I noticed that there were a number of books looking more broadly at the problems in education so I borrowed two: *The War for Children's Minds* by Stephen Law and *Endangered Minds* by Jane M. Healy. The first is about the perennial question: what should we teach our children and how should we teach it.

"Enlightenment is also about daring to think for yourself on *moral* issues. A key figure here is Immanuel Kant, perhaps the greatest of all the Enlightenment philosophers. Kant locates the responsibility for making moral judgements, not in some external authority or tradition, but in the individual. Individuals should dare to apply their own powers of reason and make their *own* moral judgement rather than defer to some external authority (such as their imam, rabbi or the Pope).

"In fact, Kant didn't just believe that each individual should make their own judgement, he also thought that pure reason, applied independently of any external authority or tradition, can provide the individual with a firm moral foundation. Kant thought that, when it comes to determining right and wrong, *reason is all you need* (clearly, this is a much stronger, and rather more controversial, claim than the claim that individuals ought to think for themselves and make their own judgements).

"In 1784, Kant wrote a short magazine article entitled 'What is Enlightenment?'. Kant, not normally known for his brevity, came up with one of the most quoted characterizations of Enlightenment:

[Enlightenment is the] emergence of man from his self-imposed infancy. Infancy is the inability to use one's reason without the guidance of another. It is self-imposed, when it depends on a deficiency, not of reason, but of the resolve and courage to use it without

external guidance. Thus the watchword of enlightenment is: *Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use one's own reason!"

From *The War for Children's Minds* by Stephen Law.

With all due respects to Kant I do not believe there is such a thing as pure reason. People's minds are not like gold from which the impurities can be removed. What comes out of our minds depends what we put into them—and from Day One we are storing experiences, memories, emotions, thoughts, dreams, fears, joys, the trivial and the sublime. And, probably, the most influential: the attitudes, ideas, and behaviour of parents and family members.

"Let us put our minds together and see what kind of life we can make for our children", Sitting Bull once said. He may have been more concerned for land and culture but this idea leads on to Healy's thesis: that we are endangering our children's ability to think in a sustained and rational way, that teachers are seeing more and more children with increasingly short attention spans and only able to think in an episodic rather than a sustained and deep way, and that children are being given a culture which is essentially superficial and trivial. When I read that up to 50% of children in some US schools are on Ritalin or similar drugs for Attention Deficit it does raise important questions. And Healy is not alone in her concern. *50 literature ideas you really need to know* by John Sutherland mentions in passing, "Arnold Schwarzenegger may, in future histories of the book, find himself alongside Gutenberg. It was the Governor of California who decreed that henceforth textbooks in schools should be replaced by e-books, on which material could be downloaded. It was economically rational. But increasingly psychologists were speculating that these new access systems were not merely changing the ways in which young brains received information; they might be changing those young brains physiologically. In the British House of Lords, in February 2009, Lady Greenfield, professor of synaptic pharmacology at Lincoln College, Oxford, warned that web-based networking was creating a culture 'devoid of cohesive narrative and long-term significance. As a consequence, the mid-21st century mind might almost be infantalised, characterised by short attention spans, sensationalism, inability to empathise and a shaky sense of identity."

Regardless of whether reasoning is independent or guided and influenced any kind of reason requires a degree of concentration.

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Adrian Johns in *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* certainly looks at Kant's response to the question 'What is Enlightenment?' People speaking or writing in the public realm should not be censored—unless they were speaking in a public capacity (such as a government functionary) rather than as a private person. Johns writes, "Only in withdrawal from one's professional post, therefore — perhaps in a secluded study — could one really exercise "public" reason. Public reason was therefore produced in (what we would call) private. In public, an author spoke "in his own person." The interaction of such public utterances was what Kant identified as enlightenment."

But Kant followed this with a much less well known essay 'On the wrongfulness of the unauthorized publication of books'. Johns says of it, "The question Kant now addressed arose directly from his conclusion that public reason was a matter of each author writing "in his own person." What if the mediating agents of print appropriated that person — as, in a piratical world, they so often did? Kant observed that a bookseller who undertook to produce an edition must have an obligation to do so faithfully. This fidelity, he added, was facilitated by the provision of exclusive rights. Yet, he conceded, decades of attempts to outlaw reprinting by adducing some kind of property had failed. They would always fail, Kant now claimed, because the author's property, if it existed at all, was inalienable — it was an inseparable extension of the creative self. In any case, a real property right would kill

publishing itself, for the simple reason that no purchaser would ever accept liability for his or her copy becoming the basis for a reprint. Instead, Kant returned to his idea that a true author exercised a freedom to speak in his own person. He reasserted this principle, remarking that a book was not merely a passive container of meaning, but a vehicle for a dynamic process of communication. The publisher was properly comparable to an "instrument" for this process — something like a speaking trumpet. It followed that what was wrong with unauthorized reprinting was nothing to do with property. What made it an offense was that it mixed authorship up with mediation. In effect, it was a form of ventriloquism: the pirate hijacked another person's voice. Worse, pirates therefore obligated authors, rather than vice versa — they made them answerable for meanings transmitted without their consent. (Under the reactionary Frederick William II, censorship was once again in the ascendant, and Kant himself fell afoul of the police at just this point.) It was this violation of the author's identity that made piracy potentially fatal to the very idea of a public sphere, and hence to enlightenment itself. The fact that reprinting dispersed learning more widely, cheaply, and accessibly was true but beside the point. Such knowledge would no longer be *public*, because authors would no longer be *private*."

Curtis and Boultwood in *A Short History of Educational Ideas* write that "Kant differed in almost every respect from Rousseau as regards character, temperament, and habits, but in the *Pädagogik* (Kant's small book on education *über Pädagogik*), he not only refers to Rousseau, but adopts many of his ideas. Thus he employs the term "education according to nature", but he has in mind the rational nature of man and he emphasizes that in bringing up a child it is essential to treat him as a child and not as an adult in miniature.

"Man, according to Kant, is the only creature who needs education. The animals are provided with instincts and therefore do not need any formal process of education though he acknowledges that young birds learn their characteristic songs from their mothers. Education includes nurture, discipline, moral training with a view to the formation of character, and instruction."

So what exactly did Immanuel Kant mean by 'pure reason'? Was it wholly dependent on the human mind or was it something out there waiting to be discovered like the laws of physics? Is it something we can aspire to find and explore or is it like other states such as pure 'detachment'?

I came upon a mystery called *Critique of Criminal Reason* by Michael Gregorio which is set in Königsberg in 1804 in which a magistrate Hanno Stiffeniis is called to investigate several brutal murders and finds Immanuel Kant mixed up in the business. This has become a fashion, to create mysteries with famous people caught up in them, but in this case there is an awkwardness and artificiality in the writing. Kant never seems to belong in the investigation. You could say that in an age before forensic tools were readily available and where assumptions and superstitions were rife some pure reason could be valuable. You could also say that criminal reason is often very different from what we would see as reason, logic, even common sense. The real life case of a man who murdered his wife because she hadn't done the 'right' thing with his boiled egg might be a reminder that murders are done for peculiar reasons and a dose of Pure Reason in everyone's life might not be a bad thing but that brings us back to the simple fact that no one bases their lives and their actions purely on Reason.

So I have just been reading (or struggling with) Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason*. He deals not only with Pure Reason but Pure Thoughts, Pure Intuitions, Pure Suggestions, Pure Understanding, Pure Cognitions—but in my struggle I have realized three things:

a. There are two different books, *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Critique of Pure Reason*; in fact *Practical Reason* was a kind of sequel, followed by *Critique of Judgment* then *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*, b. I was very

naïve to think that I could hope to understand him after a brief read through; a bit like handing the book to Philosophy students in their first week and asking them to sit down and précis Kant's ideas, because many of Kant's colleagues, students, and fellow academics complained that they couldn't understand his reasoning, and c. he is using 'pure' in a different way to the concept I had in mind.

James Miller in *The Philosophical Life* says of Kant: "The man widely regarded as the greatest philosopher of modern times was, in the sour estimate of one close friend, a "little schoolmaster." A professor by trade, Immanuel Kant was a small man with a frail body and a capacious mind; his forehead was broad, his gaze penetrating. He had a talent for conceptual gymnastics and had labored long and hard to refine two notions that were largely of his own invention: the autonomy of the will and the limits of pure reason. A paragon of self-renunciation, Kant never married and almost never traveled, rarely leaving the city of his birth, Königsberg, in East Prussia. Instead, Kant let his mind roam freely, keeping his imagination in check through a stern sense of moral duty and an equally stern sense of intellectual probity."

He lectured at the university there on a wide range of topics: logic, metaphysics, anthropology, physical geography, moral philosophy, natural law, natural religion, theoretical physics, mathematics, pedagogy, mechanical science, mineralogy, a course "under the title Philosophical Encyclopedia, and possibly even pyrotechnics." His father was a harness-maker and the family belonged to Pietism, a strict form of Lutheranism. Kant comes across as small, a bit prissy, a hypochondriac, rather austere, a lifelong bachelor, a quiet thoughtful intelligent but in some ways not perhaps a very interesting man.

And Miller points out that Kant is saying of Pure Reason no matter how we come at it, through experience, through study, through the senses, through the writings of other great philosophers, we can never answer some questions through the application of Pure Reason. Unlike Hobbes and Descartes with a mechanistic view of human life Kant understood that humans were animals and no matter how sternly they reined in their emotions, imaginations, the experience of their senses, they would still ponder, mediate, and debate the great questions, such as whether the soul existed, through faculties other than reason.

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March 16: Sully Prudhomme
James Madison
March 17: Paul Green
Kate Greenaway
March 18: Wilfred Owen
Stéphane Mallarmé

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I had been under the impression that Claude Debussy was inspired to create his music 'L'Après-midi d'un Faune' after seeing some deer drowsing under trees. I don't know where I got that idea from (the cover of a record perhaps?) but in fact he was inspired by Stéphane Mallarmé's poem,.'L'Après-midi d'un Faune' which isn't about big deer and little deer at all.

An Eclogue

The Faun
I would perpetuate these nymphs.
So clear,
Their skin's light bloom, it eddies in the air
Heavy with tufts of sleep.
Did I love a dream?
My doubt, a heap of ancient night, has come

To rest in many a subtle branch, which, still
The very woods, proves me, alas! the fool
Crowning myself with roses, perfect flaw.
Think, now …
what if these girls you carp at so
Figure a longing of your fabled senses!
O faun, illusion leaks from the blue eyes,
Cold as a spring in tears, of the most chaste:
But would you call the other's sighs a contrast
Like a warm noonday zephyr in your fleece!
No! through the still and swooning weariness,
Its hot hands round the cool dawn's gasping throat,
No water whispers that my flute has not
Poured on the tune-drenched grove; the only wind
Ready to breathe before it blows the sound
Out of the two pipes in an arid shower,
Is, on the skyline that no wrinkles stir,
The breath, contrived and visible and even,
Of inspiration, going back to heaven.

Sicilian edges of unruffled fens
Robbed by my vanity that vies with suns,
Unspeaking under sparks for flowers, TELL
'*That I cut hollow reeds made tractable*
'By talent here; when, on the bluegreen gold
'Of distant grasslands offering vines to cold
'Fountains, a beast's reposing whiteness ripples:
'That with the slow prelude that warms the fipples
'This flock of swans, no! naiads take to the air
'Or dives…'
Limp, all burns in the tawny hour
Not marking by what art slipped quite away
Excessive rut of one who would pitch A:
Then shall I wake to my first flaming heat,
Erect, alone, awash with ancient light,
Lilies! and one of you for guilelessness.

That sweet nothing noised by their lips, the kiss,
Aside, vouching for treacheries in private,
My breast, untested, witnesses a bite
From some mysterious, majestic tooth;
But, pah! the initiate of such a myth
Is the huge twin rush, played beneath blue skies:
Which, taking on itself the cheek's unease,
In a long solo dreams that we distract
Beauty nearby with fancies that conflict
Between itself and our too trusting song;
And, loud as love having its changes rung,
Of blowing out from humdrum dreams of bare
Back or flank followed by my covert stare
A line of resonant monotony.

Try therefore, instrument of flights, O sly
Syrinx, to bloom by lakes for me once more!
Proud of my murmurs, I'll talk by the hour
Of goddesses; and using painted idols,
Shall from their shadow still make off with girdles:
So, having sucked the brightness from the grapes,
To banish a regret my laughter keeps
At bay, I lift the cluster to the sky
Empty, and puffing up its clear skins, dry
For drunkenness, look through it till day dies.

Nymphs, let us refill various MEMORIES.
'My eye, piercing the rushes, stuck immortal
'Necks as each drowns its burning in the swell
'Shrieking with rage against the forest's heaven;
'And the resplendent bath of hair is gone
'Into the brightnesses, the thrills, O jewels!
'I run; when, at my feet, a sleeper falls
'(Bruised by the twofold woe of being strangers)
'Into another's lone arms full of dangers;
'I snatch them, still entwined, and fly to that
'Clump of roses the flighty shadows hate,
'Which shrivels every perfume in the sun
'When we may revel like the day that's done.'
O wrath of virgins, I adore you, mad
Bliss of the sacred, naked, slippery load
Dodging my lip on fire that drinks, as lightning
Flickers! what makes the flesh in secret frightening:
Up from the harsh one's feet to the shy one's heart,
Seeing at once an innocence depart,
Wet with wild tears or some less sad secretion.
'My crime is to have parted, in elation
'From conquering those treacherous fears, the tangled
'Tuft of kisses the gods kept so well mingled:
'Hardly was I about to hide a flushed
'Laugh in one girl's glad creases (holding hushed
'With a mere finger, that her feathered whiteness
'Might catch the fever of her sister's brightness,
'The little one, free from all guilt or lying:)
'When from my arms, loosed by some sort of dying,
That quarry, evermore ungrateful, stole
'Away, heedless of sobs I reeled with still.'

Ah well! others will tug to happiness
My forehead's horns, lashing them with a tress:
You know, my passion, that now ripe all these
Purple pomegranates burst and hum with bees;
Our blood, enthralled to be a prisoner,
Flows for the timeless swarm of all desire.
When this wood glows with ashes and with gold,

In the spent leaves wild carnival is held:
Etna! on you, whom Venus haunts and plants
On your lava her heels in guileless dance,
When a sad lull booms or the flame dies out.
I rein the queen!
O certain doom…
No, but
The soul devoid of words and this dull body
Yield late to the proud silence of midday:
No more to do but sleep oblivious
Of blasphemy, on the parched sand – what bliss
To lap the effective star of wine!

You two,
Farewell; I'll see the shade that now is you.

Mallarmé was probably the most popular French poet of his time so it isn't surprising that his poems inspired music. But it is a curious question: how does the written word inspire music? There seems to be a vital intermediary. The visual imagination. The mind's eye and perhaps the mind's ear …

Some words just sit on the page. Do what you will they just go on sitting there.

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I came upon an intriguing suggestion in David Brooks' *The Sons of Clovis*. In it he suggests, convincingly, that James McAuley and Harold Stewart did not create their Ern Malley hoax in a bored afternoon and that they were both deeply influenced by the French Symbolists such as Mallarmé. I have always wondered about that one afternoon business; sometimes a poem, good, bad or indifferent, does pour out but very rarely does a whole suite of poems no matter how nonsensical come to fruition in a couple of hours.

The influence of the French poets on McAuley and Stewart is more complex.

Born in 1842 in Paris Mallarmé became a schoolteacher. But he started writing poetry in his teens. Brooks says "He began writing poetry early under the spell of Victor Hugo, who bestrode mid-century French poetry like the proverbial Colossus, then at the age of nineteen Mallarmé discovered Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*, which led to a new beginning." He goes on to say, "As an English teacher and eventually the author of *Les Mots anglais* (1877), an eccentric account of the strange correspondences and etymologies of English words, Mallarmé was also, with Paul Verlaine, the acknowledged leader of what has come to be known as the *Symboliste* movement – and, arguably, Valéry notwithstanding, the last of it, its apotheosis and its end, someone who ran it into an inevitable conceptual brick wall. He was regarded as the most 'difficult' of poets – he once told an editor to whom he had promised a poem and who had been waiting a long time for it that, yes, he had almost finished it, but needed more time, since it wasn't yet *hard* enough. Proust once wrote of him, 'How unfortunate that so gifted a man should become insane every time he takes up the pen', and Degas, according to another story, once came out of a lecture of Mallarmé's tearing his hair in exasperation."

But how do we know that Mallarmé was a significant influence on McAuley and Stewart? Well, McAuley wrote his thesis on "the poetics of Symbolism, in which Mallarmé figures significantly" and Stewart copied and translated several poems by Mallarmé and got his translations published. And in that thesis, "McAuley wrote admiringly of Mallarmé's masterpiece, *L'après-midi d'un faune*, and we should not be surprised to find … clear allusions to that poem in 'the naked and trespassing / Nymph of the lake' and 'Among the water-lilies / A splash – white foam in the dark!' of 'Night-Piece', and the 'pond-lilies' and

‘A splash – the silver nymph / Was a foam flake in the night’ of ‘Night-piece (Alternate Version)’.” And the nymphs may represent the swans which also turn up in the Ern Malley poems but if you are interested in these complex correspondences you will need David Brooks’ book to do justice to them.

And there is a further curious link. Two writers in France set out to parody the Symbolists’ style and work. Calling themselves Adoré Floupette they brought out *Les Déliquescences*, a small book which appeared in 1885. The unknown poet was initially accepted as a new and interesting voice. But there was no Floupette. Instead there was Gabriel Vicaire and Henri Beauclair. And they too claimed (later) to have written their poems in a night. But there was a key difference. They did not set out to hurt or humiliate Mallarmé and the other Symbolist poets. It was a send-up but to some extent an admiring one. So if McAuley and Stewart were ‘doing a Floupette’ it does raise a number of curious questions.

If they were not intent on ridiculing Mallarmé and the Symbolists—then were they trying to emulate them? Or did they believe that a ‘conceptual brick wall’ could only damage Australian poetry? Or did they wonder if any editors and readers would make the connections? Was this perhaps a way to show up what they might have regarded as the essential philistinism of the Australian poetry world? Or was this personal? That they wanted to make Max Harris look foolish? Had he turned down some of their more conventional poems and they said ‘Right, mate—’ I’m sure you can come up with more questions …

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March 19: Tobias George Smollett
March 20: David Malouf
March 21: Thomas Shapcott
March 22: Nicholas Monsarrat
March 23: Josef Capek
March 24: Olive Schreiner
Malcolm Muggeridge
March 25: Anne Brontë
March 26: Robert Frost
A. E. Housman
Paul Erdös
March 27: Kenneth Slessor
Patty Smith Hill
March 28: Mario Vargas Llosa
St Teresa of Avila
March 29: Marcel Aymé
Isaac Mayer Wise
March 30: Sean O’Casey
Paul Verlaine
March 31: René Descartes
Octavio Paz
Gogol

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“Hobbes, as we know, chiefly by the publication in 1651 of his *Leviathan* had become the foremost English champion of atomism and mechanism, reducing all things to matter in motion. Opponents, who rose by the score to refute him, had little success, partly because they met him on his own grounds and fought with weapons of Hobbes’s choice; while Hobbes, sitting within the security of his tight little system, from which all strictly human experience was excluded, could outchop logic with any competitor. But Hobbes was formidable partly because the intellectual climate favored the dogmatists and systemmakers who had already made the brilliant discovery that you can hope to find a simple, inclusive

formula to describe nature and man—*if* you assume that man is a machine. Strip man of his history, strip him of civilization, strip him of his critical and creative powers, of his imagination and his aspiration, and your formula may apply even to him.

"Hobbes was formidable, as I intimated, because he was in the swim. He was soon reinforced by an abler, more subtle mind—that of Spinoza, whose *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was published in 1670. That Spinoza's work threatened religion seemed apparent at once to theologians; among others, to Richard Simon, whose *Critical History* Dryden was reading just before or during the days when he was composing *Religio Laici*. But religion was not the circumference of Spinoza's intention or influence. James Tyrrell, who was a lawyer, historian, and personal friend of John Locke, placed Spinoza and Hobbes in the same tub: both sages maintaining that man's actions and thoughts are bound up in an inexorable chain of determinism, which obliterates the power of choice and, therefore, the human distinction between good and evil."

Edward N. Hooker in *Dryden: A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. Bernard N. Schilling.

"And so Descartes proceeded, describing the 'imaginary' world, its laws, its phenomena, and the presence in it of human beings – considered, according to the 'imaginary' hypothesis, as a composition of body and soul, in which the body is 'nothing but a statue or machine made of earth.' He gives a full account of the workings of the body – the digestion, the circulation of blood, respiration, the workings of the 'animal spirits' which flow through the 'cavities of the brain' and the nerves to work the muscles. He draws an analogy with the moving, music-playing and even speaking water-powered statues in the royal gardens of St Germain in Paris: 'Similarly you may have observed in the grottoes and fountains in the royal gardens that the mere force with which the water is driven as it emerges from its source is sufficient to move various machines, and even to make them play certain instruments or utter certain words depending on the various arrangements of the pipes through which the water is conducted.'

'Indeed,' he continues, 'one may compare the nerves of the machine I am describing [i.e. the human body] with the pipes in the works in these fountains … When a *rational soul* is present in this machine it will have its principal seat in the brain, and reside there like a fountain-keeper who must be stationed at the tanks to which the fountain's pipes return if he wants to produce, or prevent, or change their movements in some way.'

This part of Descartes' account was based on close anatomical studies. Only human beings have souls, in his view, so it follows that non-human animal bodies are *merely* machines, devoid of emotion and sensation, and operating simply by stimulus and response. Accordingly, his anatomical studies included vivisection. 'If you cut off the end of the heart of a living dog,' he wrote, 'and insert your finger through the incision into one of the concavities, you will clearly feel that every time the heart shortens, it presses your finger, and stops pressing it every time it lengthens.' He had what he took to be empirical grounds for thinking that animals were simply stimulus-response mechanisms; in what is the first known observation of the conditioned reflex, he told Mersenne that if you whip a dog repeatedly when a violin is playing, after half a dozen or so times the dog will whimper and cower merely at the sound of the violin.

There is no point in denying that Descartes' vivisection and ill-treatment of animals is disgraceful. If this smacks of hindsight, courtesy of our more sensitive and sentimental contemporary attitudes to animals, then so be it. It is hard to understand how any intelligent person could fail to recognise the vivid presence of emotion and sensation in animals, especially the dogs and horses they had most dealings with, or to ask themselves what the point would be for animals to display exact behavioural analogues of human pain and emotion if they lacked the conscious qualia of these things within."

From *Descartes* by A. C. Grayling.

"The examples of Kant, Nietzsche and Althusser, with their descents into madness or dementia at the last, are untypical of the general run of philosophers, who tend to live long and enjoy an alert old age, as exemplified by Thomas Hobbes and Bertrand Russell. Hobbes sang every evening into his nineties, convinced that it cleared the lungs. Russell, by contrast, smoked a pipe into his nineties, convinced of nothing but the folly of mankind." "Descartes is studied in universities today for his philosophical (not his scientific) views, where 'philosophy' has its present meaning as the collective label for metaphysics, epistemology (theory of knowledge), and ethics – and their various spin-offs. It is a sometimes confusing fact that in Descartes' day 'philosophy' meant what is now called natural science, and the term 'metaphysics' was used to denote what we now mean by 'philosophy'."

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"The history of the universe is, in effect, a huge and ongoing quantum computation. The universe is a quantum computer." Professor Seth Lloyd.

"A long time ago, the Great Programmer wrote a program that runs all possible universes on His Big Computer." Jürgen Schmidhuber

"In 2006 Seth Lloyd, the designer of the first feasible quantum computer, took the idea of a digital universe one step further, elevating it from a question of *What if?* to the statement of *It is*. Based on his research in the new field of digital physics, he leaves little doubt as to where he stands in this emerging view of reality. "The history of the universe is, in effect, a huge and ongoing quantum computation," he asserts. Just in case there's any uncertainty in our minds about precisely what Lloyd is saying here, he clarifies his findings. Rather than suggesting that the universe may be *like* a quantum computer, he blasts us into the most radical description of reality to emerge in the last 2,000 years, stating: "The universe *is* a quantum computer [my emphasis]." From Lloyd's perspective, everything that exists is the output of the universe's computer, "as the computation proceeds, reality unfolds," he explains."

The Spontaneous Healing of Belief by Gregg Braden.

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Descartes was a mathematician before he was a philosopher. He was interested in algebra, geometry, optics. But when he moved in to more debatable areas such as cosmology and philosophy he found it expedient to move from Catholic France to Protestant Holland. Even so, he decided not to publish his own view of the heavens *Le Monde*, (*The World)*, in the wake of Galileo's difficulties with the Catholic hierarchy. James Miller in *The Philosophical Life* thinks he was being over-cautious. "He considered revising Le Monde in an effort to avoid offending the censors but rejected the idea, since Galileo's teaching was "such an integral part of my treatise that I couldn't remove it without making the whole work defective. But for all that, I wouldn't want to publish a discourse which had a single word that the Church disapproved of; so I prefer to suppress it rather than publish it in a mutilated form."

"The vehemence of Descartes's reaction is revealing. The Netherlands was beyond the reach of papal authority, and France itself had no Inquisition. Descartes could probably have published and distributed *Le Monde* in Amsterdam and Paris without incident" so was he using the excuse of Church censure as a way to step back from ideas he had doubts about or writing he didn't think was good enough?

Margaret D. Wilson introducing *The Essential Descartes* says his fame eventually resulted in an invitation from Queen Christina of Sweden to come and reside there. It might have been good for philosophy but not for his health. "In the fall of 1649 Queen Christina of Sweden persuaded Descartes to take up residence at her court in Stockholm. There he suffered greatly from the severe climate and from the demands of court life, among them the requirement of rising at five in the morning to discuss philosophy with the queen. Within a few months he contracted pneumonia. He died in Stockholm in February, 1650."

But what do we remember of Descartes now? His promotion of a mechanistic model of 'life, the universe and everything'. And his famous saying: I think therefore I am. A great many people since then have pondered on this. Even me. Because if you cease to think, as in sleep, as in deep meditation, as in a coma … does the essential you cease to exist. You are no longer the 'I' that you have created over your lifetime. The 'I' requires continual thought.

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April 1: Sophie Germain
Abbé Prevost
April 2: Hans Christian Andersen
Maria Sybilla Merian
April 3: Ben Hammersley
George Herbert

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"Despite the official history, and the rather good film, the roots of Facebook aren't in Harvard, or even in Silicon Valley. They are instead to be found in the writings of the Hungarian author Frigyes Karinthy. In 1929, Karinthy wrote a short story, 'Láncszemek', in which he propounded the idea that everyone on the planet was connected to everyone else by no more than six degrees of separation. That phrase then became the title of a play by John Guare, propounding the same theory: that we are all connected by short chains of acquaintance. I'm connected to you, dear reader, because I know someone who knows someone who knows someone who knows you.

While the idea was subject to experiments, with varying success, its veracity doesn't really matter. Simply the idea that we might be able to contact – be friends with – anyone on the planet through a series of introductions or personal connections is very pleasing. Our interconnectedness is important to us, especially when we consider our specialist field or the industry in which we work.

There are many ways to measure this sort of interconnectedness. A popular early website, The Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon, lead to actors having a Bacon Number, which was calculated by counting the number of links between film roles that join them to the actor Kevin Bacon. Likewise, mathematicians can work out their Erdös Number, based on authorship of academic papers that eventually link them to the Hungarian mathematician Paul Erdös. In both of these measurements the lower the score the better. For the truly connected there is also the Erdös-Bacon number, given to those who have both kinds of score. For example, Natalie Portman, the actress, having starred in a film with Kevin Bacon, scoring 1, and co-authored a mathematical paper that gave her an Erdös score of 5, therefore has an Erdös-Bacon score of 6."

Ben Hammersley in *Now for Then, How to face the Digital Future without fear*.

"There has been more angst about the slow death of the old media than about any other sector that has felt the creative, destructive power of the Internet." And "Local newspapers were the first to sink under the strain." True. But a little while ago I was going to mention *The Pittsworth Sentinel* in a story I was writing. Then I thought 'I'd better not, I'm sure it has died many years ago.' It was the little local paper for Pittsworth on the Darling Downs and my aunts were friendly with the family which owned it. To my surprise, I found it was still going. This gave me a moment of unexpected delight. So many things from my childhood have gone, died, faded, been forgotten … Some I have no reason to regret their passing but others I think back on with a sense of loss …

Family History also uses the Six Degrees of Separation idea. It, of course, is not exact but it does give an idea of interconnectedness and people regularly come up with the most unusual and unexpected connections. It is one of the reasons family history is such a popular

hobby. I don't usually look for sixth cousins. It has a sense of impossible remoteness but after reading Ben Hammersley's piece I thought: who might be out there as a sixth cousin? So, very briefly, I went looking for a sixth cousin who would intrigue me. Of course I might not intrigue that said sixth cousin … but they needn't know about it …

I thought I would look at the Mounteney family. They lived in London. Richard Mounteney married Anne Backwell in 1669 and had a son Richard (whose daughter Thomasine came to Ireland and continued the family there becoming my gr-gr-gr-gr grandmother) and a daughter Anne who married John Lely. So I thought I would follow Anne's descendants. Or some of them. But I was immediately seduced and taken backwards, rather than forwards—because John Lely was son of the famous Dutch portrait painter Sir Peter Lely who painted the Stuart kings, as well as Cromwell (who said to him "use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me and not flatter me at all. Remark all these roughness, pimples, warts and everything as you see me. Otherwise I'll never pay a farthing for it"), and Anne was the niece of Edward Backwell, described as the father of British banking. He and his brother John, Anne's father, were goldsmiths and what were called 'goldsmith's notes' became the forerunner of our banknotes. They lent to the various kings though they had difficulty getting loans repaid at times. They weren't the first people to lend money at interest but Edward's ledgers are now seen as 'national treasures' in Britain for the way he set it up effectively as a mini-banking business. And Samuel Pepys refers to both the Backwells and Lelys in his famous diary.

I brought myself back to the question in hand: John and Anne having a son Peter who married Frances Mapletoft, the Mapletofts also having some interesting connections to poets, clergy, and scientists, but then I carried on down the years till I ended up with a family called Fergusson on a farm in Leicestershire. But unfortunately, I realized as I counted up, this was more than Six Degrees of Separation. So back to the drawing board.

Richard, Anne's brother, married an Anne Cary, so what about her siblings? Her family, too, were interesting, having been involved with the dubious settlement of Virginia in North America. Anne's sister Elizabeth became a Lady-in-Waiting, and Anne and Elizabeth had a brother with the odd name of Callow Cary. But it was no good looking at that family. I needed to move forward a generation.

One of Thomasine's siblings perhaps?

While I was muddling round I found someone had been doing a similar exercise. Thomasine's granddaughter married a man called Edward Marlborough Fitzgerald—and someone had worked out, I don't know how reliably, that he enjoyed 21 degrees of separation from Kevin Bacon, 26 degrees for Debi Hoag (I'm not sure of her significance), 20 degrees for Leo Tolstoy and 13 degrees for Queen Elizabeth.

Both Thomasine and her brother Edward lived as children in South Shields, their father being a customs officer, and Edward stayed there and I found him having five children. This family, unlike that of his sister, largely stayed put in South Shields into the 19th century. So I thought that offered interesting possibilities. And Thomasine's sister Anna Maria married and remained in London and also had five children.

But then I thought I would quickly follow one of Thomasine's grandchildren, that might be easier, while I muddled round in the 1700s at my leisure. Thomasine's granddaughter Julia married Archibald Kennedy so I thought that would simplify things as he was the Earl of Cassilis (and his grandson came to Toowoomba in 1924 and met up with my great aunt; though he was actually traveling around Australia not to meet distant cousins but as Grand Master of the Scottish Royal Arch Masons); they had a daughter Constance who married Lionel Grimston Fawkes, who, yes, belonged to the same family as Guy Fawkes, and they had a daughter Lois who married George Kerby. But then Lionel and Constance packed up in 1924 and moved from England to Mayne Island near Vancouver in Canada. Lionel retired from the military and used his talents to both paint and to collect art, including several

Turners. This was all very interesting. But when I set it all out I realized any descendants would only be my Fifth Cousins. Fascinating as the exercise is it is also trickier than I had expected. So excuse me while I hare off down another intriguing pathway. And if you are ever bored give the exercise a try. You never know in what fascinating directions it will take you …

I don't know if you remember the little bit in Dorothy Sayers' *Gaudy Night*, her mystery set in Oxford: "Harriet grinned at Betty Armstrong, hearing the familiar academic wrangle begin. Before ten minutes had passed, somebody had introduced the word "values." An hour later they were still at it. Finally the Bursar was heard to quote:

"God made the integers; all else is the work of man."

"Oh, bother!" cried the Dean. "Do let's keep mathematics out of it. And physics. I cannot cope with them."

"Who mentioned Planck's constant a little time ago?"

"I did, and I'm sorry for it. I call it a revolting little object."

The Dean's emphatic tones reduced everybody to laughter, and, midnight striking, the party broke up."

It was obviously a quote but I had no idea who made it, someone like Einstein I assumed, but the other day quite unexpectedly I came upon this in *Fermat's Last Theorem* by Simon Singh: "The concept of an irrational number was a tremendous break-through. Mathematicians were looking beyond the whole numbers and fractions around them, and discovering, or perhaps inventing, new ones. The nineteenth-century mathematician Leopold Kronecker said, 'God made the integers; all the rest is the work of man.'"

I do not pretend to understand anything about theorems but I am interested in the dedicated lives many mathematicians lead struggling to resolve the most esoteric of problems. After all, no one can say the world was worse off because it took three centuries to solve the puzzle Pierre de Fermat in the 17th century said he had solved but died without passing his solution on to anyone else.

The mathematician Paul Erdös was a fascinating figure. Strange. Difficult. But interesting. The people in Singh's book were also interesting in themselves. And there is another sense in which mathematics and mathematicians are interesting and important. Singh says, "The science fiction writer and futurologist Arthur C. Clarke wrote that if an eminent professor states that something is undoubtedly true, then it is likely to be proved false the next day. Scientific proof is inevitably fickle and shoddy. On the other hand mathematical proof is absolute and devoid of doubt. Pythagoras died confident in the knowledge that his theorem, which was true in 500 BC, would remain true for eternity."

In a world where few things can be trusted to be true and to remain true there is a degree of comfort in the words "true for eternity". Paul Erdös was Hungarian. Frigyes Karinthy was Hungarian but was he a mathematician? And is there something about being Hungarian which encourages a joy in mathematics? The answer to the first question is no. He was a writer with a fascination with science fiction and writers like H. G. Wells and Jonathon Swift. He even, and this might suggest either an additional fascination with fantasy or a special kind of love for children, translated *Winnie-the-Pooh* into Hungarian. He also wrote about brain tumours (or removal of same) in *Journey Round My Skull*. Both his sons, Gábor and Ferenc, became writers. But was it his interest in sci-fi possibilities such as artificial intelligence and robots which drew him to the Six Degrees or was he interested in family history, perhaps running the Karinthy family back into mysterious degrees of connection?

And as to the second question—Stephen Fry in *The Liar* has a character say, "That coloured cube that everyone is playing with at the moment is Hungarian, of course. I suspect that it is the advantage of speaking a language understood by so few that has turned the Magyars into such experts in numbers and shapes and dimensions. There is even a Hungarian

mathematician at the moment who is close to achieving what was once thought to be the impossible. He is on the brink of squaring the circle. Or is it circling the square? Whichever."—well, you might like to bring it up next time you're chatting with a Hungarian.

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Six Degrees of Separation? I think that is often possible. And ideally with far better record-keeping now we should be able to follow many curious trails. When I spread out into fourth cousins, fifth cousins, sixth cousins, I feel I have moved far from home. But I am not absolutely sure I always want this sense of inter-connectedness that is constantly being touted and praised. Sometimes it is nice to be the little island without a ferry and too small for anyone to want to build a bridge …

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April 4: Dorothea Dix
April 5: Booker T. Washington
April 6: Ram Dass
April 7: William Wordsworth
Gabriela Mistral
William Channing
April 8: Tilly Armstrong
Edmund Husserl
April 9: Charles Baudelaire
April 10: Joseph Pulitzer
A. E.
April 11: Bernard O'Dowd
April 12: Alan Ayckbourn
April 13: Seamus Heaney
Samuel Beckett
Thomas Jefferson
April 14: Arnold Toynbee
Horace Bushnell
April 15: Thomas Szasz
Henry James
Émile Durkheim
Nanak

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Thomas S. Szasz wrote *The Myth of Mental Illness*. I picked up the book in an op-shop because of its title and later put it out on a stall, not thinking it would resonate with casual passers-by but a woman immediately leapt on it and said 'he writes wonderful stuff!' Szasz begins his provocatively titled book with, "I became increasingly impressed by the vague, capricious, and generally unsatisfactory character of the widely used concept of mental illness and its corollaries, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. It seemed to me that although the notion of mental illness made good *historical* sense—stemming as it does from the historical identity of medicine and psychiatry—it made no *rational* sense. Although mental illness might have been a useful concept in the nineteenth century, today it is scientifically worthless and socially harmful."

"The need to re-examine the problem of mental illness is both timely and pressing. There is confusion, dissatisfaction, and tension in our society concerning psychiatric, psychological, and social issues. Mental illness is said to be the nation's number one health problem. The statistics marshaled to prove this contention are impressive: more than a half-million hospital beds for mental patients, and 17 million persons allegedly suffering from some degree of mental illness."

He was writing about the USA more than 50 years ago.

He is more concerned with diagnosis than treatment: “in modern medicine new diseases were *discovered*, in modern psychiatry they were *invented*. Paresis was *proved* to be a disease; hysteria was *declared* to be one.”

“So-called functional illnesses were thus placed in the same category as structural illnesses by means of the criterion of voluntary falsification. Accordingly, hysteria, neurasthenia, depression, paranoia, and so forth were regarded as diseases that *happened* to people. Mentally sick persons did not “will” their pathological behaviour and were therefore considered “not responsible” for it. These mental diseases were then contrasted with malingering, which was the voluntary imitation of illness. Finally, psychiatrists have asserted that malingering, too, is a form of mental illness. This presents us with the logical absurdity of a disease which, even when it is deliberately counterfeited, is still a disease.”

I know a psychologist who insists we should not describe anyone as a schizophrenic but rather as a normal person who has occasional schizophrenic episodes in the same way that normal people can have epileptic fits or suffer from cancer or influenza. But there is a key difference when it comes to treatment. Epilepsy, cancer, and influenza are not curable, so far as we know, by people simply lying on a couch and talking. “A psychiatry based on and using the methods of communication analysis has actually much in common with the disciplines concerned with the study of languages and communicative behaviour, such as symbolic logic, semiotic, semantics, and philosophy. Nevertheless, so-called psychiatric problems continue to be cast in the traditional framework of medicine.”

Now we know that diseases, tumours, traumas, malformations, imbalances can occur in the brain, just as they can occur in your liver or your stomach. But I don’t think this is what people mean when we hear that one-in-four Australians will suffer a mental illness during their lifetime and that we are facing a medical and funding crisis.

If a woman has a variety of debilitating aches and pains, because she has dangerous neighbours, faces domestic violence, continually struggles with poverty, discrimination, or unemployment—and she is helped to move somewhere where she feels comfortable and safe and her health improves then surely she is facing a problem in her circumstances rather than an illness in her body. But if she is treated as mentally ill and given medication rather than practical help to change her circumstances then she is going to be included in what we are constantly told is a crisis situation.

I cannot help thinking that the relative ease of writing a prescription is getting in the way of genuine and long term change. Of course many debilitating physical problems are linked to childhood traumas and stresses—but are they *mental illnesses* … or are they physical illnesses triggered not by bacteria and viruses but by unresolved anxieties and fears?

Thomas Szasz helped to found the Citizens Commission for Human Rights in the USA. Although he was a psychiatrist he could see the potential for psychiatry to abuse and undermine people’s human rights. Once someone was committed to an institution as an involuntary patient there was no effective way out. Because, like people wrongfully imprisoned, the onus is on you to prove you shouldn’t be there. How, in fact, do you prove you are sane?

* * * * *

“DSM-IV-TR is an 886-page textbook published by the American Psychiatric Association that sells for $99. It sits on the shelves of psychiatry offices all over the world and lists every known mental disorder. There are currently 374 known mental disorders. I bought the book soon after I returned from my coffee with Deborah and leafed through it, searching for disorders that might compel the sufferer to try and achieve a position of power and influence over others. Surprisingly, this being such a vast book packed with so many disorders, including esoteric ones like Frotteurism (‘rubbing against a non-consenting person in a public transportation vehicle while usually fantasizing an exclusive, caring relationship with the victim, most acts of frottage occur when the person is aged 12-15, after which there

is a gradual decline in frequency') there was nothing at all in there about psychopaths. Maybe there had been some backstage schism in the psychopath defining world? The closest I could find was Narcissistic Personality Disorder, sufferers of which have 'a grandiose sense of self-importance and entitlement', are 'preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success', and are 'exploitative', 'lack empathy' and require 'excessive admiration', and Antisocial Personality Disorder, which compels sufferers to be 'frequently deceitful and manipulative in order to gain personal profit or pleasure (e.g., to obtain money, sex or power)'."

"I knew from seeing stricken loved ones that many of the disorders listed – depression and schizophrenia and obsessive compulsive disorder and so on – are genuine and overwhelming and devastating. But as *Harpers*' L. J. Davis, reviewing the DSM, once wrote, 'It may very well be that the frotteurist is a helpless victim in the clutches of his obsession, but it's equally possible that he's simply a bored creep looking for a cheap thrill.' "

("Sex addiction is a controversial psychiatric disorder. Some psychiatrists consider it an excuse for bad behaviour, a disguise for infidelity. Others believe it ought to be included in the forthcoming edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders*, along with other addictions, like gambling."

Hilary Bonney in *The Double Life of Herman Rockefeller*.

We heard a great deal about Bill Clinton's sex addiction when he was in the White House and carrying on with young interns but since he left the presidency no one seems to have mentioned his apparent addiction. Clearly many addictions require the simple material aspect of availability whether of attractive young interns or pokie machines …)

"I'd always wondered why there had been no mention of psychopaths in the DSM. It turned out, Spitzer told me, that there had indeed been a backstage schism – between Bob Hare and a sociologist named Lee Robins. She believed clinicians couldn't reliably measure personality traits like empathy. She proposed dropping them from the DSM checklist and only going for overt symptoms. Bob vehemently disagreed, the DSM committee sided with Lee Robins, and Psychopathy was abandoned for Antisocial Personality Disorder.

'Robert Hare is probably quite annoyed with us,' Spitzer said.

'I think so,' I said. 'I think he feels you plagiarized his criteria without crediting him.'

(I later heard that Bob Hare might get his credit after all. A member of the DSM-V steering committee, David Shaffer, told me they were thinking of changing the name of Antisocial Personality Disorder – it sounds so damning – and someone suggested calling it Hare Syndrome. They're mulling it.)"

The Psychopath Test by Jon Ronson.

John White in *The Masks of Melancholy* gives a different view on the *DSM*. "One of the most rigorous searches for clear definitions (of depression) is a recent effort on the part of the American Psychiatric Association who have put out a manual known as *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III* (DSM III). While it has ardent advocates and indignant opponents, it seems clearly the most comprehensive attempt yet to standardize the terminology used in all forms of mental illness, personality and behavior problems and to delineate with extreme care the precise boundaries separating different conditions. I have no doubt that the boundaries are going to get pushed around. But at least the Americans have made a valiant attempt to cope with the Tower of Babel confusion. Two research teams on opposite sides of the world can be reasonably sure that they understand what each other is saying if both use standard terms, such as those DSM III proposes."

This sounds very sensible but there is a different problem. Is everyone reading from the same book? Dr Brendan Prosser in *ADHD who's failing who?* says, "Currently there's no simple test to prove a child has ADHD – instead, doctors use a checklist of behaviours to diagnose the disorder. There are two versions of this checklist. The one used in Europe and the UK is from the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) *International Classification of*

Diseases (ICD-10); while the other – used in Australia, New Zealand and the US – is from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or *DSM-IV*.

"The main difference between the two checklists is that under the WHO version, a child's behaviour needs to be more extreme to qualify for a diagnosis – this results in fewer children being diagnosed. The *DSM-IV* looks for six or more behaviours (from their checklist) that have lasted for six or more months at an abnormal level. To qualify for a diagnosis of ADHD, some of these behaviours need to have appeared before the age of seven. They also must be causing problems in at least two different areas of his or her life (e.g. home and school)."

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"Who are these modern American multiple murderers? They refuse to meet our expectations. I have already suggested that very few of them are insane or delusional in any observable or scientific sense. They are most commonly white, male, and from the working class or lower middle class. Most important, in their thoughts and behaviour they are among the most *class-conscious* people in America, obsessed with every nuance of status, class, and power. This sensitivity expresses itself variously among different types of multiple murderers. Among serial murderers, their truncated sense of self and identity (only partly a reflection of disordered childhoods) pushes them toward finding their identity and their personal fulfilment in the killings, and all their ambitions in the international celebrity that attends their capture. This contrasts strikingly with mass murderers like Essex, Huberty, and Starkweather, who are much more likely to come from relatively solid familial situations but find themselves unable to maintain the social position they covet: The gap between their expectations and their achievements is so wide that they can only vent their rage upon the hated group in one brief suicidal purple explosion. Huberty felt himself too annulled to yearn for the public spotlight that so bedazzled Berkowitz and Bundy. Yet both serial and mass murderers are overwhelmed with a profound sense of alienation and frustration stemming from their feelings that no matter how fierce their ambitions may be (and they are often among the most ambitious of men), no matter what they might do, they cannot achieve the place in society to which they aspire. They aim high, these multiple murderers: They have not, like Durkheim's contented man, accepted their station in life. Sometimes, as with Bundy and perhaps Wilder, they *do* achieve the position they covet, but their uncertain social origins and the stress of upward mobility render them unable to feel at ease with themselves while sitting upon this lofty throne. In such a milieu, a sense of vengeful personal mission can begin to incubate."

Hunting Humans by Elliott Leyton.

Ray Moynihan in *Sex Lies and Pharmaceuticals* writes, "Applauded for producing medicines that extend life and ameliorate suffering, drug companies no longer simply sell drugs; they increasingly sell the diseases that go with them."

But the damage society and culture does is less straightforward. Mary Pipher in *Reviving Ophelia* writes, "After I speak at high schools, girls approach me to say that they have been raped, or they want to run away from home, or that they have a friend who is anorexic or alcoholic. At first all this trauma surprised me. Now I expect it.

"Psychology has a long history of ignoring girls this age. Until recently adolescent girls haven't been studied by academics, and they have long baffled therapists. Because they are secretive with adults and full of contradictions, they are difficult to study. So much is happening internally that's not communicated on the surface.

"Simone de Beauvoir believed adolescence is when girls realize that men have the power and that their only power comes from consenting to become submissive adored objects. They do not suffer from the penis envy Freud postulated, but from power envy."

It is still true that most of the jobs on offer involve service; from shops to prostitution, from teaching to nursing, from social work to child care; but it is not the jobs perhaps but the continuing expectations …

"Margaret Mead believed that the ideal culture is one in which there is a place for every human gift. By her standards, our Western Culture is far from ideal for women. So many gifts are unused and unappreciated. So many voices are stilled. Stendhal wrote: "All geniuses born women are lost to the public good." "

She defines three areas of concern. "One is their developmental level. Everything is changing—body shape, hormones, skin and hair. Calmness is replaced by anxiety. Their way of thinking is changing. Far below the surface they are struggling with the most basic of human questions: What is my place in the universe, what is my meaning?

"Second, American culture has always smacked girls on the head in early adolescence. This is when they move into a broader culture that is rife with girl-hurting "isms," such as sexism, capitalism, and lookism, which is the evaluation of a person solely on the basis of appearance.

"Third, American girls are expected to distance from parents just at the time when they most need their support. As they struggle with countless new pressures, they must relinquish the protection and closeness they've felt with their families in childhood. They turn to their none-too-constant peers for support."

She goes on to say, "Generally parents are more protective of their daughters than is corporate America. Parents aren't trying to make money off their daughters by selling them designer jeans or cigarettes, they just want them to be well adjusted. They don't see their daughters as sex objects or consumers but as real people with talents and interests. But daughters turn away from their parents as they enter the new land. They befriend their peers, who are their fellow inhabitants of the strange country and who share a common language and set of customs. They often embrace the junk values of mass culture."

Girls get taken, or sent, to GPs and therapists. They get diagnosed with a range of disorders. They get defined and medicated. But are these teenage girls mentally ill—or do they live in a culture which is disordered and ill?

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Dr Paul Brown wrote in Kevin Moylan's *One Flew Over the Kookaburra's Nest*: "Today the jury is out about the future of many other things which have originated in America. The new president will seek the end of an era of deception and exploitation. Will his mission extend to the Cinderella of the medical sciences, namely psychiatry and its diagnostic handmaiden, the DSM? Most probably not; with few exceptions, notably the de-institutionalisation of the mentally ill, mental health issues have long been low on the political agenda in America.

"De-institutionalisation was a disaster, not only in the USA but worldwide. The consequences in the developed world were two fold; in the absence of effective community psychiatry the seriously mentally ill were either shifted to the prison system or discharged onto the streets. This situation persists."

(And Pete Earley in *Crazy: A Father's Search Through America's Mental Health Madness* points out that the treatment of mentally ill inmates in American prisons neither saves money nor provides them with better treatment; all it basically does is require that they commit a crime and damage someone else's life, before the prison system takes them in and puts them in a psychiatric wing where they can be mistreated with impunity. It isn't that de-institutionalism of itself was wrong. Many of the institutions were pretty terrible. It was that adequate alternatives were not put in place. He writes, "On October 31, 1963, Kennedy signed a national mental health law that authorized Congress to spend up to *$3 billion* in the coming decades to construct a national network of community mental health centers. These neighborhood clinics would replace the giant state hospitals and make it possible for even the

most disturbed psychotics to live normal lives in their own hometowns … Tragically, deinstitutionalization turned out to be an unplanned social disaster. In most states, patients were discharged without any effort being made to link them to community services—if, in fact, there were any. President Kennedy's promise of $3 billion to create a safety net turned out to be a cruel lie. Congress turned its attention to other problems, primarily the Vietnam War and Watergate. In the coming years, mental health ended up going hungry when the federal pie was gobbled up. Congress never got around to financing community mental health centers." These patients started to appear as homeless people on the streets and indigestible inmates in an unprepared prison system. And Australia followed the US down the same road.)

He goes on to say, "Two-thirds of psychiatric disorders including depression are primarily stress related; in the residual one third of core psychiatric disorders, stress is secondary, but no less symptomatic and in no less need of treatment, thus, stress in regard to the schizophrenias' may be primary in the acute phase or secondary to the core disorder. The latter have been disguised by a panoply of diagnostic terms including reactive psychoses, hysterical psychoses and even prison psychoses.

"What of PTSD? Is it more than just an attempt by society, the legal profession and psychiatrists to medicalise problems whose solutions are more often material, judicial or spiritual rather than medical? There are many individuals who suffer from psychiatric conditions but who is most capable to define their suffering and most proficient to alleviate their suffering?"

An interesting question.

"The medical profession and in this case, its psychiatric hand-maiden have not done so well, they relieved the religious and lay orders of that burden without improving the lot of the mentally ill. Perhaps the solution is somewhere in between? A re-sacralised psychiatry in which medical people work hand in hand with those for whom the moral and spiritual issues takes priority over the material and the mental. A caring mind, compassionate soul, and procuring natural justice may be more therapeutically valuable than any quick-fix antidepressant – no one knows this better than Mr Moylan."

I had a book sitting on my pile of books to go to a stall called *Happiness is a Choice* by Frank Minirth and Paul Meier. Although it sounds rather old-fashioned now, it came out in 1978, everyone who noticed it there said they thought happiness *is* a choice—'to some degree'. I would agree. To some extent we can make ourselves happy or depressed by our own choice. Clearly there are people suffering in Syria who are less depressed than other people suffering in Syria and it does not seem to be integral to the degree of suffering. People in Hitler's camps, even when they faced the same guards and the same food and the same miseries, coped in differing ways. It is that 'to some degree' which is endlessly problematical.

The other day I came upon two interesting books: one called *All We Have to Fear* by Allan Horwitz and Jerome Wakefield. I picked it up primarily because of its subtitle *Psychiatry's Transformation of Natural Anxieties into Mental Disorders*. And the other an omnibus of three of the Reverend Norman Vincent Peale's books. They both look at depression but from very different angles.

Horwitz and Wakefield give this background to the *DSM*. "Because public mental hospitals were required to account for the diagnoses of their patients, initial psychiatric classificatory manuals emphasized the kinds of conditions that patients in these institutions displayed. The first such manual in the United States, the *Statistical Manual for the Use of Hospitals for Mental Disorders*, was issued in 1918 by the American Medico-Psychological Association (which became the American Psychiatric Association in 1921) and went through ten editions before being superseded by the first *DSM* in 1952. Among its twenty-two

principal groups, just one dealt with all of the psychoneuroses, including anxiety, the rest being reserved for the more severe conditions typically seen among institutionalized patients. Descriptions of the various anxiety disorders in this manual were short and cursory and indicated uncertainty over diagnostic descriptions.

"The *DSM-I*, which replaced the *Statistical Manual* in 1952, reflected the movement of psychiatric practice from state mental hospitals to outpatient treatment and thus paid more attention to the psychoneuroses. It also responded to the finding of military psychiatrists that almost all of the stress-related conditions they handled during World War II were incommensurate with the psychiatric nomenclature of the time. The *DSM-I* split diagnoses that were not the result of organic impairments between psychotic disorders that "exhibit gross distortion or falsification of external reality" and psychoneurotic disorders that included a variety of diagnoses including anxiety, phobia, and obsessive-compulsive, depressive, dissociative, and conversion conditions. However, like earlier manuals, it provided only perfunctory definitions of each disorder."

In 1980 it had reached its third regeneration, this time "presenting a symptom-based diagnostic system with necessary and sufficient criteria for the diagnosis of each disorder." And "Because they would be grounded in observable symptoms, the new diagnoses would enhance reliability and be more suitable for cumulative research across theoretical paradigms. Because it did not favor any particular clinical orientation, this diagnostic system was also politically valuable in securing the acceptance of the new manual by psychiatrists and other mental health professionals aligned with a variety of theoretical persuasions."

I suspect there was another aspect at work. They renamed Gender Identity Disorder as Gender Dysphoria because it removes the 'stigma' of having a disorder. I notice you will now not be told you have a *risk* of having a Down Syndrome child but a *chance*. Risk has become another word to be quietly dropped. Now I am glad that we have ceased describing children as 'subnormal' but if I have a risk or a disorder, if I have cancer or a week to live, I want to be told. I want the blunt truth so I can get stuck into responding and dealing with it. Wrapping it up in words that don't seem to mean much is not going to make me feel better.

I took three things from the book:

1. That some of our deep and apparently pointless fears may have played a part in evolution, that they long ago helped us survive, such as fear of snakes and fear of strangers. And we keep adding to the stresses and fears people carry around. Being anxious about things, nuclear war, global warning, financial instability and all the rest is completely understandable. "Treating individuals can be justifiable when they want help in mastering fears and anxieties that inhibit them from optimal social functioning, but this does not necessarily involve correcting a dysfunction. Many of our multitude of fears are not products of brains that have gone wrong; instead they are unfortunate aspects of our nature as humans. We retain both our humanity and our broadest range of therapeutic options when we recognize that much of our anxiousness is natural and not a sign of mental disorder."

2. That the number and variety of phobias, anxieties, disorders grows by the year and as they are increasingly placed under the umbrella of mental illness we obviously have a crisis on our hands and anyone querying this is going to get short shrift. "At present, advocates of widespread trauma occupy the moral high ground. They associate narrow boundaries with victim-blaming and broad ones with support for the traumatized. At the extreme, scholars who questioned the broad boundaries of PTSD diagnoses, such as psychologist Elizabeth Loftus and literary critic Elaine Showalter, have received death threats. While the moral valence of PTSD has shifted away from its skeptics toward its advocates, the ongoing controversies it creates have deep roots that go well beyond any narrow scientific dispute."

3. We, that is the Western world, are facing huge health bills for the physically ill. We are now being told we should also be spending huge amounts on mental illness. There would

seem to be good sense in looking for simpler safer cheaper ways of helping people with their fears and phobias, their anxieties and their disorders.

One of the suggestions Peale makes is simply to go and sit in church. It doesn't matter if you don't listen to the sermon or join in church activities. Just sitting regularly in a sacred place can help. He tells the story of a profoundly depressed man whose business had failed, his son had been killed in the war and then his wife had died. He tried things which might 'cheer him up' but nothing seemed to help. One Sunday morning he went into Peale's church in New York. "You can never foretell what great things may happen when you go to church. The very place is filled with mysterious powers which, if properly contacted, have the potential of revolutionizing your life. Actually, one should always enter the electric atmosphere of a church with a sense of excitement and expectancy. And the more you expect, the more you will receive.

This man told me afterward that he remembered nothing said or done in church that morning. So profound was his depression that apparently he could not concentrate sufficiently to listen with the conscious mind, but his subconscious, which is ever alert, picked up something that proved profoundly recreative. The healing atmosphere surrounding him penetrated deeply into his consciousness. All of a sudden, and without warning, the dazed condition which had affected him for months passed, and he experienced an exhilarating sense of illumination.

"It was," he said, "as if a high-powered light suddenly flashed on all around me. I had a feeling of lightness, as though I was being lifted into another realm of existence. I seemed to feel new waves of life passing over me, around me, and through my very being."

He struggled for words to give expression to an experience which, perhaps, is inexpressible. "Heavy weights," he said, "seemed to be lifted, and a feeling of immense relief overcame me. I became wondrously peaceful." " Of course not everyone experiences such a dramatic sense of change. And Peale's simple mantra 'Think joy not gloom' is easier said than done. But his writing is always hopeful, warm, and positive. And walking into a church and sitting down quietly costs nothing.

He tells this story in his 1948 book *A Guide to Confident Living*: "On an early morning train running from Cedar Rapids to Chicago, I happened to meet the famous Negro singer, Roland Hayes. He occupied the seat across from me in the parlor car. We had what was for me, at least, one of the most stimulating conversational experiences in my life. The talk turned to religion, the consuming interest of Mr. Hayes. Without question, he is not only one of the truly great singers of our time, but one of our noblest spiritual geniuses as well. He has sung before presidents and kings, and before acclaiming audiences in many lands, but he remains a simple, unaffected disciple of the King of Kings.

He told me that it is his custom as he begins a program to stand quietly for a minute by the piano as the vast audience waits. He closes his eyes and prays saying, "Lord, as I sing, please blot Roland Hayes out. Let the people see only Thee."

"I believe," he explained, "that when I do that sincerely, I become a channel through which God's spirit flows to move and lift the hearers." Critics have long been impressed by the deeply spiritual quality of Mr. Hayes' artistry. Undoubtedly it is accounted for in part at least by his devout attitude. Singing, to him, is primarily a method by which people may be lifted spiritually.

Roland Hayes told me a story that morning on that rushing train that will live with me forever as an illustration of the power of the spirit over any force in this world.

In a certain town late at night, he was set upon by four policemen who manhandled him without the slightest justification. Their attitude was brutal, bordering on the sadistic, and they gave full expression to their hatred not for him alone but for his race. Here was one lone

and defenceless Negro at the mercy of four white men unrepresentative of, and a disgrace to, the white race.

"Didn't you get angry and fight them back?" I asked.

"How could I?" he replied. "I was no match physically for even one of them. But I *was* a match for them in another way and so was able to overcome them. I brought to bear a power that no evil can stand against."

"What did you do?" I asked with intense interest.

"I retired into God-consciousness," he replied. "I just prayed for the spirit of Christ to flow through me into the hearts of these misguided men. As I thus exercised spiritual thought-power, suddenly I looked down upon them in compassion and pity. One policeman raised his pistol with the intent of hitting me with its butt. While his arm was raised a curious and bewildered expression overcame his face. Slowly his poised arm dropped. He had been stopped by the tremendous power of the spirit, by God-consciousness."

Later Mr. Hayes was invited back to that town by the Christian-in-spirit members of that community. He returned as guest of honor at a great tribute meeting. Messages came from the President of the United States and other distinguished citizens.

As the train on which we rode roared through a snowstorm, I sat awestruck before the spiritual power of this man, for his story was told with a complete absence of self. At times his voice was so low I could scarcely catch his words. I, who try to preach Christianity, sat as a very imperfect student in the presence of a master of the spiritual life.

Roland Hayes had discovered and demonstrated a spiritual method that proved extremely practical. By long practice he had become a master at it and therefore was able to summon the energies of his mind in a crisis. Not being practical, perhaps we would fumble this skill at first. But if you will discipline and train your mind, seeking constantly to bring it into harmony with the mind of Christ, you, too, in your hour of difficulty will be able to summon a power against which nothing can stand."

* * * * *

As I read through a range of books, trying to decide if we are really facing the mental health crisis we are regularly warned about, two things struck me. Firstly, that the division between physical and mental illness may lead to very obvious things being overlooked. Treating problems in people's heads when their digestion is poor, they are constantly constipated, their diet is clogged with sugar, they spend their days sitting, their addictions are getting in the way, they live stressful and noisy lives, may be a realistic use of limited funds—but we are whole people, our minds do not live separately in little boxes. And secondly, we cannot realistically say how many people in our society are mentally ill because there is no single reliable way of determining who is and who isn't mentally ill …

Being kind and helpful and patient and supportive may, after all, matter more than the 'statistics' which regularly get bandied around, usually allied to huge amounts of money …

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April 16: J. M. Synge
Anatole France
April 17: Isak Dinesen
April 18: Henry Clarence Kendall
Menachem Schneerson
David Ricardo
April 19: Richard Hughes
April 20: Dinah Craik
April 21: Charlotte Brontë
April 22: Vladimir Nabokov

* * * * *

"It wasn't yet ten o'clock and George was still at the open-air vegetable market at place

Maubert. Ablimit told me we'd open the store when he returned, so I went back to my room, found the light, and pulled a book from a shelf. It was *Lolita*, and the more I read, the more astounded I was that I hadn't come across this novel before. Reporting gross acts of pedophilia are a must for any city newspaper, so I'd long been versed in nonfictional accounts of child sexual abuse. On dozens of occasions, I'd sat through an accused man's courtroom testimony or interviewed the mother of the victim, but not until Nabokov had I heard the sickness described in such loving terms."

Jeremy Mercer in *Books, Baguettes & Bedbugs: The Left Bank World of Shakespeare & Co*.

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Peter Ackroyd's *The Collection* is a bundle of reviews and essays and in reviewing Nabokov's *Look at the Harlequins!* he excoriates his writing. "Mr Nabokov clearly thinks of himself as a very good, if not a great writer; having been praised by sycophantic American reviewers, and having been read by a small percentage of the American middle classes, he has come to the blinding conclusion that the important thing about Nabokov's writings is Nabokov himself. This is the common strategy of second-rate writers, and in *Look at the Harlequins!* Nabokov has forestalled the judgement of whatever thin cultural history is written of our time and has composed his own literary history. This is the novel to end all of Nabokov's novels – or at least one hopes so."

Not content with that he ends his review with, "He has mastered all the technical tricks of the novel, and he has invented a few of his own, but the heart of the matter has consistently eluded him. So he is forced to recapitulate the themes and the appearances of his earlier fiction, a fiction composed of fancies rather than imagination, and will never develop its substance. As grand-aunt Baroness Bredow puts it to the narrator of this latest effort: 'Trees are harlequins, words are harlequins,' which is fine for a baroness but not for a novelist. Nabokov's prose is self-indulgent without being self-conscious, with that sweet and soft texture which is an infallible sign of something slightly 'off', Nabokov says of another émigré writer that he employs 'pretty prose and borrowed poetry'. And that is exactly what is wrong with his own weak and derivative prose. When a novel strives too hard to become literature, it falls into literariness. Nabokov's words are hollow and external, and he lays them on with a very flat trowel. All that is left is a solemn persona playing with himself and that – of course – leads to blindness."

*

"*Lolita* stirred a lot of controversy when it was published and Nabokov spent quite a bit of time insisting that his own knowledge of nymphets was purely scholarly, unlike the fictional Humbert Humbert, who molested young girls. In *Lolita*, Nabokov committed one of the toughest acts of the fiction writer: staying true to the humanness of a reprehensible character. Humbert Humbert is as disgusting and deplorable a character as any ever written and it would be easy to cast him in a light that shows him as only horrid. Yet Nabokov allows him some appealing traits: decided charm, dazzling intelligence, a sense of shame for his weakness, and, ultimately, a genuine love for Lolita."

Brandi Reissenweber in *Writing Fiction*.

"Suddenly the older man leaned his huge bulk forward on the iron railing and peered into the street. Two young girls were passing, giggling brightly and swaying in the way best suited to set off their sinuous charms. The Judge watched them out of sight and then turned to Gavin.

'Temptin', ain't they?' he drawled.

Gavin laughed. 'Well, I guess that was nature's general intention.'

'You just bet it was,' agreed the Judge. 'An' whether you've thought of this much or not, it ain't the *male* that's the real seducer. It's the young female with her little breasts

bobbin' an' her little hindies swingin' an' her face like dawn breakin' in the sky. Whether she knows it or not, *she's* the one …'

'That launches the ships and burns the towers. I know. And offers the apple,' Gavin added grinning, 'if we care to change the classical allusion.' "

From *Many a Green Isle* by Agnes Sligh Turnbull.

"Some critics have likened Carroll to Humbert Humbert, the narrator of Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita*. Both were indeed attracted to what Nabokov called nymphets, but their motives were quite different. Lewis Carroll's little girls may have appealed to him precisely because he felt sexually secure with them. There was a tendency in Victorian England, reflected in much of its literature and art, to idealize the beauty and virginal purity of little girls. This surely made it easier for Carroll to take for granted that his fondness for them was on a high spiritual plane. Carroll was a devout Anglican, and no scholar has suggested that he was conscious of anything but the noblest intentions, nor is there a hint of impropriety in the recollections of his many child-friends.

"Although *Lolita* has many allusions to Edgar Allen Poe, who shared Humbert's sexual preferences, it contains no references to Carroll. Nabokov spoke in an interview about Carroll's "pathetic affinity" with Humbert, adding that "some odd scruple prevented me from alluding in *Lolita* to his wretched perversion and to those ambiguous photographs he took in dim rooms."

"Nabokov was a great admirer of the *Alice* books. In his youth he translated *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into Russian—"not the first translation," he once remarked, "but the best." He wrote one novel about a chess player (*The Defense*) and another with a playing-card motif (*King, Queen, Knave*). Critics have also noticed the similarity of the endings of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading*."

Martin Gardner introducing his *The Annotated Alice*; Lewis Carroll's two Alice books with added notes and background.

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"In the town of Tucuman I could not help noticing the many exceedingly pretty and well-dressed girls, but once in the open, on my way towards the Bolivian border, I found the type to be much darker and showing a very strong strain of Indian blood. Girls of eleven and twelve years are fully developed, and mothers of that age are not uncommon."

Tschiffely's Ride by A. F. Tschiffely.

I had a very unpleasant teacher in primary school who disliked girls and seemed to believe they were all little Eves in disguise. I remember one day a group of us girls were making 'bunny ears' with our hankies. This teacher called me over and demanded to know what we were doing and where we were putting these 'ears'. Very embarrassed I showed him that as well as on our heads we were putting them on our little flat chests. He immediately started going on and on at me, that this was 'dirty' and 'disgusting' and that I should be ashamed of myself. I wished I could sink through the ground. But now I find myself wondering why he regarded anything to do with little girls having some harmless fun as being 'dirty' and 'disgusting'. The problem was his. Not ours. But he tried to make us ashamed of being girls.

One day he said he had heard on the news that a little seven-year-old girl in Bolivia had just had a baby and he seemed to find in this proof that little girls seduce and run riot. I don't think I fully understood at ten or eleven that some adult male had abused and raped this child. (Perhaps she wasn't seven but I doubt if it would have been treated as 'news' if she was thirteen or fourteen.) But the story horrified me for a different reason. She would not be able to play any more. A baby would take up all her time. I think the thing I understood, perhaps imperfectly, and which troubled me deeply was that she had been robbed of her childhood.

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"The importance of home to a writer reappears in the most interesting literary article Amis wrote in the immediate post-Princeton period, his attack on Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* in a review of 6 November 1959 in the *Spectator*. It also plays a part in Amis's gathering suspicion of all American writing, not just modernist American writing. *Lolita*, Amis declares, is both 'bad as a work of art' and 'morally bad — though certainly not obscene or pornographic'. What makes it bad as art is its obtrusive style. For Amis, 'style, personal style, a distinguished style, usually turns out in practice to mean a high idiosyncratic noise level in the writing, with plenty of rumble and wow from imagery, syntax and diction'. The sort of people who value style in this sense are 'people of oldster age group or literary training', those with a 'hankering for "experiment" ', who level 'snorting accusations of literary gracelessness' against younger novelists (himself, for instance). Their counterparts in the world of ideas yearn 'for uplift, or rich man's Billy Graham, which masquerades as reasoned antipathy to modern British philosophy'. Amis quotes several passages from *Lolita* and then comments that 'no extract…could do justice to the sustained din of pun, allusion, neologism, alliteration, *cynghanedd*, apostrophe, parenthesis, rhetorical question, French, Latin, "anent," "perchance," "would fain." "for the nonce" — here is style and no mistake. As for the argument that it is Humbert's style not Nabokov's to which he is objecting — that style here is 'characterisation' — 'what of Nabokov's last novel, *Pnin*, which is not written in the first person and sounds the same?'

"The English of *Lolita* is 'émigré's euphuism', which Amis sees as 'a natural consequence of Nabokov's having had to abandon his natural idiom'. As Nabokov himself puts it, he was forced to give up his 'untrammelled, rich and infinitely docile Russian tongue for a second-rate brand of English, devoid of any of those apparatuses — the baffling mirror, the black velvet backdrop, the implied associations and traditions — which the native illusionist, fractails flying, can magically use to transcend the heritage in his own way.' Here is Nabokov's problem, and the problem with Nabokov, enacted 'with characteristic tricksy indirection'. The émigré's only recourse is 'the laborious confection of equivalent apparatuses in the adoptive language: the whole farrago of imagery, archaism, etc., which cannot strike even the most finely tuned foreign ear as it strikes that of the native speaker'. That Nabokov was a better writer before he went to America is suggested to Amis by a story of 1948 entitled 'Colette', in which 'the germ of *Lolita* is clearly discernible' (though Amis fails to mention that early or Russian Nabokov, 'fractails flying', is hardly untricksy). His tragedy 'has been his separation from Europe, the source of his natural subject-matter as well as his natural language'."

Zachary Leader in *The Life of Kingsley Amis*.

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It is curious that these writers are primarily excoriating the writing not the subject matter; they are suggesting that Nabokov simply didn't write a very good book. Even more curious was the fact that I had believed that reviewers at the time *Lolita* came out were primarily concerned with the subject matter, not the style, but the Kingsley Amis material would seem to suggest that wasn't the case. But then Amis was unlikely to have been shocked by the portrayal of statutory rape. Since then Nabokov's book has grown in popularity even though we have become much more aware that little girls don't wake up one morning and decide to seduce much older men—unless they've already been abused and sexualized and come to the belief that sex is the only power they might have over adult men.

But the key question is: did Nabokov's book influence anyone into believing that young girls are 'hot for sex' and are perfectly capable of seducing older men? Listening to Archbishop Peter Hollingsworth talking about a fifteen-year-girl and a much older clergyman and that she had seduced him I had the strange feeling that I was listening to Humbert Humbert and his readers transferred into clerical garb. And how many other predatory men convinced themselves they were doing nothing wrong because *Lolita* demonstrated very

clearly that young girls liked and wanted sex with older men?

Gail Dines in an essay titled 'The New Lolita: Pornography and the Sexualization of Childhood' in *Big Porn Inc: Exposing the harms of the global pornography industry* begins with a story. "In 2008, Miley Cyrus was photographed for *Vanity Fair* wearing a bed hairdo, a provocative gaze, and not much else. She was 15 years old. Even though these photos caused a stir at the time, just a year later — when she appeared in *Elle* sprawled across a table wearing S&M gear — barely a voice of protest was heard. These images, together with the thousands of others that bombard us daily, are part of what media scholars call 'image-based culture' a term used to describe a society in which images have replaced the spoken or written word as the major form of communication. From billboards to 24-hour television, the staple of this image-based culture is the youthful, sexualized female body. Advertisements, movies, TV shows, music videos, and pornography are just some of the ways in which this image is delivered to us, and as we become more desensitized to such depictions, the producers need to ramp up the degree to which the female body is sexualized as a way to get our attention. This has led to an increasingly pornographic media landscape, where the codes and conventions that inform pornography filter down to such a level that the images we now see in mainstream media are almost on a par with those that were found in softcore porn just a decade ago."

Although real children are abused in the porn world (you may remember the furore over child abuse pictures from the Balkans where the site had received 11 million 'hits' in 3 days; hard to believe that there are that many people, mostly men, willing to view child abuse as entertainment) Dines is writing about Pseudo Child Porn where women are made to look younger than eighteen. Shaved pubic hair, small breasts, props such as hair ribbons, teeth braces, and fluffy toys. "It is not unusual to see a female porn performer wearing a school uniform, sucking a lollipop, and hugging a teddy bear while she masturbates with a dildo."

It is all make-believe. But then *Lolita* is make-believe too.

Or is it?

Dines writes, "The obvious question here is: what effect could these sites have on the viewers? Once they click on these sites, users are bombarded – through images and words – with an internally consistent ideology that legitimizes, condones, and celebrates a sexual desire for children. The norms and values that circulate in society and define adult-child sex as deviant and abusive are wholly absent in PCP, and in their place is a cornucopia of sites that deliver the message (to the viewer's brain, via the penis), that sex with children is hot fun for all.

"There is a wealth of research within media studies that shows that people construct their notions of reality from the media they consume, and the more consistent and coherent the message, the more people believe it to be true. Thus, the images of girls in PCP do not exist within a social vacuum, but rather are produced and consumed within a society where the dominant pop culture images are of childified women and hypersexualized, youthful female bodies. Encoded within all of these images is an ideology that encourages the sexual objectification of the female body, an ideology that is internalized by both males and females, and has become so widespread that it normalizes the sexual use and abuse of females. This does not mean that all men who masturbate to PCP will rape a child, or even be sexually attracted to a child. What it does mean, however, is that on a cultural level, when we sexualize the female child, we chip away at the norms that define children as off limits to male sexual use."

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Ted Morgan in his biography of William S. Burroughs tells the story of Maurice Girodias and his Olympia Press. "Every week, the Ministry of Interior published lists of banned books in the *Journal Officiel*, and then the *Mondaine* would come around to the bookstores with the list and seize the books. All Olympia Press books were automatically

banned, but fortunately there was a bureaucratic gap of about six months between the publication of a new Olympia title and its banning as obscene, and it was within this gap that Girodias managed to sell most of his books." Although he kept being given prison sentences he kept appealing and so managed to stay out of jail. And as American sailors and other visitors to France were his biggest customers his books left the country rather than hanging around to corrupt French morals with his d.b.s. (dirty books); "It was not, however, censorship that finished Girodias, but love of literature. His real trouble began when he deviated from the uncomplicated prurience of d.b.s to publish books with a high literary quality. In 1954, he brought out Samuel Beckett's *Watt*, ten years after it had been rejected by every other publisher, and he also published three other important Beckett novels in English: *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnameable*. In 1955, an agent sent him *Lolita*, which had been turned down by a number of American publishers. Girodias loved it, for it seemed to him an apparently effortless transposition of the rich Russian literary tradition into modern American fiction. He wasn't worried about possible obscenity—the book would simply be banned as all his books were. Nabokov, however, *was* worried about what he called Lolitigation, and didn't want to be identified as a professor at Cornell, which he then was.

"When *Lolita* appeared in September 1955, nothing much happened, except that Girodias was inundated with angry letters from his loyal clientele, who having bought the book on the basis of a blurb, accused him of betraying his sacred trust. What were these nonarousing and incomprehensible books by Beckett and Nabokov? "Why are you publishing junk like that?" irate aficionados of porn wanted to know. "Stick to the tried and true." "You're giving yourself a bad name." "Trash like this is a sheer waste of time." "Any more like the last one and you can strike my name from the list." Many such complaints did Girodias receive.

"Then, around December, Graham Greene said in the *Times Literary Supplement* that *Lolita* was one of the three best books of the year. When other London newspapers accused him of promoting pornography, the book became a *succès de scandale*. As it happened, there was a clause in his contract with Nabokov that gave Girodias 17.5 percent on all American sales, even though he was pretty sure that there would be no American sales, since he expected the book to be stopped at customs. The Customs Service was then the most active agent of federal censorship in America, deciding by fiat which books would be allowed into the country and which would be seized. If they were seized, which Olympia Press books usually were, they were denied the chance of obtaining an American copyright. But this time, Girodias knew not why, when he sent a copy of *Lolita* through the U.S. Customs, and wrote to ask what had happened, he received a reply that the book had been examined and found acceptable for American readers. What a bonanza, and what a fluke!" With his copyright he was then able to sell the book to Putnam's which brought it out in 1958.

But the puzzle in there was why Nabokov took his book to a publisher of pornography, what Malcolm Bradbury called "a less than wholesome Parisian publisher", if he didn't want it thought to be pornography and why he didn't want people to know he was the author and what he did for a living. Was he ashamed of his book? I can understand people writing exposés of corruption or underworld activities being chary of having their names and addresses bruted about but Nabokov had chosen to write and publish *Lolita* presumably because he liked the story and thought it had literary value, not because he needed to expose companies dumping toxic waste or trafficking in children …

Robert Roper in *Nabokov in America* says, "The publication of *Lolita*, like its composition, was long and tormenting. At times it seemed unlikely to be accomplished. Nabokov acted as his own agent, as Wilson had taught him to. Viking rejected it first, an editor warning that publication under a pseudonym, Nabokov's initial plan for the book, would invite prosecution, reluctance to affix an author's real name suggesting awareness of pornographic content. Simon & Schuster rejected it next, editor Wallace Brockway blaming

the decision on prudish colleagues. In October ’54, J. (James) Laughlin, bold avant-gardist not afraid to challenge obscenity statutes, said no for New Directions. Farrar, Straus & Young declined out of fear of a court battle they could not win. Jason Epstein, of Doubleday, had been tipped to the book by Wilson, who was given a manuscript in late ’54; like Pascal Covici, the Viking editor, and like Brockway, and like Roger Straus of Farrar, Straus, Epstein esteemed Nabokov’s writing but was unable to persuade his colleagues to publish the new book, and in a memo he expressed some literary reservations but also a feeling that *Lolita* was somehow and not in a trivial way, brilliant.

“Laughlin and Covici thought it might have a better chance overseas. Nabokov therefore sent it to Doussia Ergaz, his agent in Paris, and started looking around for an American agent to do what he had been unable to—he was willing to part with 25 percent of earnings, he told Brockway.

“This complicated process, which did lead eventually to a foreign first publisher (Olympia Press) and finally to an American one (Putnam’s), seems in retrospect fated to have worked out.” If he didn’t mind to signal ‘pornographic content’ by using a well-known publisher of pornography *and* hiding himself away from any public recognition …

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April 23: William Shakespeare
April 24: Robert Penn Warren
April 25: Walter de la Mare
April 26: Morris West
Thomas Reid
Ludwig Wittgenstein
April 27: Mary Wollstonecraft
April 28: Hans Richter
April 29: Egon Erwin Kisch
Rafael Sabatini
April 30: John Crowe Ransom
Alice B. Toklas
May 1: Joseph Heller
Giovanni Guareschi
May 2: Alan Marshall

* * * * *

“One evening I ordered steak and fried onions. The proprietor brought the laden plate to me, sliding it across the marble table top, then holding out his hand for the money.

One always paid before eating. So many men had robbed him by eating first then showing their empty pockets that he refused to supply a meal unless it was paid for in advance. I paid him then began eating.

The knife was sharp. The proprietor believed that customers who found their steaks easy to cut would never regard them as tough. He kept his knives extremely sharp. Even so the steak seemed to resist with more than average obstinacy the sawing of my knife.

I sat chewing the first mouthful while gazing straight ahead of me, my thoughts centring on the movements of my jaws which after a few minutes began to tire.

I took the piece of steak from my mouth with my fingers and looked at it. It was a fibrous, grey ball of juiceless matter that my fingers found difficulty in breaking. I returned the shredded remains to my mouth and resumed chewing, but after a while I took it from my mouth again and placed it on the edge of my plate, unable to reduce it to a size and consistency I could swallow.

I told myself that I had received nourishment from its juices and that the fibre could not add more to this contribution, but after half an hour when with aching jaws I gazed at a dozen pallid lumps of chewed meat encircling the onions and selvage on my plate I felt cheated.

Where was the energy I needed? I sat drooping in my chair.

The onions had grown cold and a layer of congealed fat like thin, grey ice covered them. Through this shield there projected strands of flaccid onion that curved over and lay inert upon it.

I pushed the plate away in distaste and sat looking at it with features twisted into an expression of revulsion.

A man who had been sitting alone at a table against the wall came over and touched my shoulder. He was not a young man nor was he old. He had sunken cheeks and tired eyes and his eyes looked into mine slowly and deeply, offering for my inspection in this space of complete honesty the suffering of all men who had experienced poverty and hunger.

'Do you want that, mate?' he asked, pointing at the plate.

'No,' I said. 'I've finished.'

'Can I have it?'

'Yes.'

He took the food away to his table and began eating it. He ate all the chewed lumps of meat I had taken from my mouth, all the stiffened onion, the fat …

When he had finished he lifted the plate to his face and licked it."

From *In Mine Own Heart* by Alan Marshall.

"Rummaging through the few books owned by the tenant of this apartment (where I also found the blank notebook I'm using to write this), I turned up a novel. The setting is English-aristocratic, with sentences like: 'She cast a fleeting glance at her untouched meal, then rose and left the table.' Ten lines later I found myself magnetically drawn back to that sentence. I must have read it a dozen times before I caught myself scratching my nails across the print, as if the untouched meal – which had just been described in detail – was really there and I could physically scrape it out of the book. A sure sign of insanity. Onset of mild delusions brought on by lack of food. I'm sorry I don't have Hamsun's *Hunger* to read up on the subject. Of course, I couldn't read it even if I hadn't been bombed out, since somebody snatched my copy right out of my shopping bag over two years ago in the U-bahn. It had a raffia cover; evidently the pickpocket mistook it for a ration-card holder. Poor man! He must have been a very disappointed thief! I'm sure Hamsun would enjoy hearing that story."

A Woman in Berlin. The Anonymous author is thought to be Marta Hiller.

Charmian Clift wrote in her article 'Babylon Versus the Corner Store': "But the corner store was much more than the place where the children ran messages after school. It was also the corner parliament, where the men sat on the step after work in their grey flannel three-button undershirts discussing Jack Lang and the dole system and the country's economy and the Tombstone Flat cricket team and whether the bream were biting around the rocks under Jacob's Ladder. And the owner of the store, in a black baize apron, always took part in these discussions while he patted bulk butter into half-pounds with a wooden paddle and bagged sugar: there were great sacks and bags piled up everywhere and wonderful scoops and ladles that were always highly polished and big glass jars filled with aniseed balls and liquorice twists and striped satin lollies and for a penny any child could buy a whole bag of broken biscuits.

"When tobacco rationing was strict and my father was dying the owner of the corner store always managed to crib a bit or sneak a bit or juggle a bit from other customers so that my father was never without his plug of chewing tobacco or my mother without her ready-rubbed for the dreadful cigarettes she rolled with lamentable inexpertise. That man must have been owed thousands of pounds during the Depression but nobody ever heard him carry on about it and as far as I know he never cut off supplies from any family in our neighbourhood and through all that terrible time there were sweets for the children and biscuits and the

telephone was available for emergencies and the step for political and philosophical discussions and he always made a special order for the particular ripely rotten cheese my father perversely favoured.

"I understand that this sort of attitude is probably completely uneconomic and it would have served that man right if he had gone broke, but in fact he didn't go broke even if he didn't make a fortune either and I think on the whole his customers honoured their debts—or at least paid what they could when they could—and the corner store was as much a part of our lives as the quarry whistle or the Daylight Express or the men coming home at five o'clock all plastery with metal dust."

* * * * *

Many people have found inspiration in Marshall's *I Can Jump Puddles* but it is his books of life in the Depression in Melbourne which I return to because it is little vignettes like that café scene which remind us of the desperate measures people were reduced to and the long slow death of the boot factories in *How Beautiful Are Thy Feet* is a saga in itself. I do feel sympathetic towards people 'doing it tough' now but I wonder if anyone is doing it tough enough to even consider eating someone else's chewed gristle?

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May 3: Dodie Smith
May 4: Thomas Kinsella
Horace Mann
May 5: Karl Marx
Søren Kierkegaard
T. A. G. Hungerford

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"The tyrant dies and his rule ends, the martyr dies and his rule begins."
Søren Kierkegaard

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"His friend and pupil Maurice Drury has reported that Wittgenstein regarded Kierkegaard as the most important thinker of the nineteenth century."

"His belief that intellectual, and especially academic activities did not represent "real" or humanly useful work extended, of course, to his own philosophizing. Those students who were sufficiently close for him to be able to influence their personal decisions, he strongly discouraged from taking up academic philosophy as a career: that would, in itself, show that they had misunderstood the point of his teaching. Instead, he urged them to take up medicine, like Drury, or at least—if they had to be academics—to go into some serious field, such as physics, like W. H. Watson. If he himself went on doing philosophy, that, he would have said, was because he was "not fit for anything else"—in any event, he was "not harming anyone besides himself." Somebody had to scrub out the Augean stables of the intellectual world, and it just happened to be him who had been fated to perform this task of intellectual sanitation."

Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin in *Wittgenstein's Vienna*. They also note "Drury and Watson were only two particularly notable examples of brilliant young philosophers who were powerfully discouraged by Wittgenstein from pursuing the subject professionally; this was still Wittgenstein's orally expressed attitude from 1946 on."

But what might it have been about Kierkegaard that influenced Wittgenstein? And is a thinker a philosopher? Yes. Philosophy implies thought. And Kierkegaard struggled all his life with the problem of how to bring a sense of responsibility, freedom, "how to become a Christian in Christendom" to all the troubles and uncertainties of every day life. The way to live life wasn't something you simply inherited. It was something you brought great thought to. His ideas were deeply influenced by his desire to live a Christian life but not everyone

who followed in the train of his view of 'existentialism' saw a need to steep it in Kierkegaard's Christian values. Nor did they see it as being primarily a non-academic way forward. Before it became a philosophy it was a profound effort at self-examination. I think that people like Wittgenstein *did* see it in terms of rigorous self-examination. But I am not sure that that would still be seen as the fundamental aspect of existentialism.

And the two men who are most likely to be seen as influenced by Kierkegaard are not Wittgenstein but Jean-Paul Sartre and Friedrich Nietzsche. Julian Baggini and Jeremy Stangroom in *Great Thinkers A-Z* say, "At the core of his work is the rejection of systematized, logical thought as an adequate guide to life and meaning." "Kierkegaard's point is that no matter how rigorous your logical system, there will always be gaps. As these gaps are logical gaps, it is futile to try to bridge them with logic. Instead, they can only be breached by a leap of faith. What characterizes a leap of faith is the absolute uncertainty that underlies it. Faith takes us beyond that which can be demonstrated. That is why a leap of faith is undertaken in 'fear and trembling'." This phrase became the title of one of Kierkegaard's books. He divided life into three spheres: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. The first two are incomplete. "Only Christianity, which paradoxically combined the temporal and the infinite in the God-man Jesus Christ, bridges this gap. But because it is paradoxical, embracing Christianity requires leaving rationality behind and taking a bold leap of faith."

I am not sure that Sartre, Nietzsche or Wittgenstein saw Christianity as the way to cross those gaps. Nor in fact did the Lutheran Church in Denmark. Jonathan Rée and J. O. Urmson in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy* say, "When he died at the age of forty-two Kierkegaard had become a target of ridicule and public anger, the former through a feud he had himself provoked with a satirical weekly almost ten years earlier, the latter through his savage attack, in the last two years of his life, on the State Church, its dignitaries, and the naturalized form of Christianity he referred to as 'Christendom'."

From his writings grew the existential movement, emphasizing "the limits of logic and the centrality of personal choice." But this too had its critics who understandably saw it as a green light for an "anything goes" attitude. But not if you live within an aesthetical, ethical and religious framework. Kierkegaard was not as simple, gentle and humble as I had pictured but Baggini says, "Kierkegaard's complex, poetic work rewards careful reading. But perhaps at its core, the moral of Kierkegaard's philosophy can be summed up in the single sentence of Kierkegaard scholar Michael Collins: 'Human existence requires real "passion" as well as thought.' "

Wittgenstein quite likely saw it as a way of living life, rather than of teaching in an academy, and passion within an aesthetical, ethical, and religious framework does seem a good way to live life.

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May 6: Sigmund Freud
May 7: Robert Browning
David Hume
May 8: J. Meade Falkner
May 9: Alan Bennett

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"It suits governments to make treachery the crime of crimes, but the world is smaller than it was and to conceal information can be as culpable as to betray it. As I write evidence is emerging of a nuclear accident at Windscale in 1957, the full extent of which was hidden from the public. Were the politicians and civil servants responsible for this less culpable than our Cambridge villains? Because for the spies it can at least be said that they were risking their own skins whereas the politicians were risking someone else's.

Of course Blunt and Burgess and co. had the advantage of us in that they still had illusions. They had somewhere to turn. The trouble with treachery nowadays is that if one

does want to betray one's country there is no one satisfactory to betray it to. If there were, more people would be doing it."

Alan Bennett wrote that in 1989. He is now better-known as the kind man who allowed 'The Lady in the Van' to park in his garden for fifteen years … But he raises a curious question: can you only betray your country TO someone or something? Or did the kinds of cover-ups that occurred in Britain at Windscale or in Australia at Maralinga and in many other countries involve a betrayal which existed without needing a second party?

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"In a day when the successful monarchies were being fashioned into efficient centralized despotisms, when the weakest of the Valois could flout and bilk his Estates General at the moment of his greatest weakness, she (Elizabeth I) had to govern, all her life, through a constitution which the political theorists of the Continent would have described, had they known the words, as an absurd feudal anachronism. All her life her sovereign power was doubtful and circumscribed, and her normal revenue less than that which Philip II was supposed to draw from his single duchy of Milan. She never had any standing army except a handful of ornamental guards, or any police beyond what was furnished by her practically independent local magistrates; and though in the years of her greatest danger her Secretary Sir Francis Walsingham built up for her protection what some historians have described with awe as 'an omnipresent network of spies', this impressive system of counter-espionage dwindles on inspection to a few underpaid agents of varying ability whose efforts were supplemented by casual informers and correlated by a single clerk who also handled much of Walsingham's ordinary correspondence – a system hardly larger or more efficient, except for the intelligence of its direction and the zeal of its volunteer aids, than that which every first-rate ambassador was expected to maintain for his own information, one which the governments of Florence or Venice would have smiled at as inadequate for the police of a single city."

The Defeat of the Spanish Armada by Garrett Mattingly.

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Beverley Nichols in *Cry Havoc* wrote in 1933 that it is "to the interest of any government that its own armament firms are kept as large, as alive, and as up to date as possible, and …

Armament firms can only do so by developing a large and regular peace-time export trade.

Now do you see what this implies? In case you do not, let us say, do you see what it does *not* imply? It certainly does not imply that any government in its senses … (I use the phrase 'in its senses' mindful of the fact that I am writing of a lunatic world …) will attempt to dissuade any armament firm from exporting arms to any country whatever. The more they export, the better the government concerned is pleased, because it means that their own firms are keeping their plants up to date, employing skilled workmen, and generally keeping up the high standard of their organizations, to which the government will have to turn when the hour comes. Thus we have the astonishing paradox of governments welcoming the fact that the whole world is being plastered with guns, etc., which have been exported from their own countries. They are apparently oblivious of the fact that these guns may one day explode in their own imbecile faces.

Now – that is untrue. They don't explode in the faces of the governments, but in the faces of the men who have to obey the governments. It is not unduly rhetorical to say that every time the English or the American or the French government signs a licence for the export of arms to a foreign country it is smashing, with its ugly fist, the young bodies of its own finest citizens. In case this sounds bitter, let me quote a speech which Mr. Hugh Dalton made in the House of Commons not long ago. He was speaking on the Naval Estimates, and was explaining how many Australian and British troops had been mowed down by British

guns in the Dardanelles. In a moving passage, he cried:

'*British armament firms have been supplying the Turkish artillery with shells which were fired into the Australian, New Zealand and British troops as they were scrambling up Anzac Cove and Cape Helles. Did it matter to the directors of these armament firms, so long as they did business and expanded the defence expenditure of Turkey, that their weapons mashed up into bloody pulp all the morning glory that was the flower of Anzac, the youth of Australia and New Zealand, yes and the youth of our own country?*'

Apparently, it did not matter then, and it does not matter now. Neither to the armament firms, nor to the governments. For the licence is virtually a matter of form. A matter of form! It is a delicate way of describing the export of death."

Yes, anonymous little men in dark overcoats, no matter how clever, no matter how well written about, have never been able to compete with the razzamatazz of the big government-backed trade delegation or arms bazaar …

* * * * *

Barry J. Blake in *Secret Language* writes of ciphers and codes. One of the simplest ways of making codes was via a square. "One square that has figured prominently over the centuries in discussions of word patterns is the **sator square** and it brings together the palindrome, the acrostic, and the anagram. … The words are Latin and they form a palindrome: SATOR AREPO TENET OPERA ROTAS. When aligned in a square, they form a multiple acrostic so that words can be read vertically as well as horizontally. Starting in the top left-hand square one can read down the first column (the initials), then the second column, then the third, and so on. … The oldest known example of a sator square is one excavated from the ruins of Herculaneum, which, along with Pompeii, was destroyed by an eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. Other examples have been found from various parts of Europe including Scandinavia and Britain dating from the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. There are sator squares in the Runic alphabet and in the Hebrew alphabet. It would appear to be just an ingenious novelty, but it has been treated as having supernatural powers and has been used, mainly as a text in an amulet, to ward off or heal the bite of a rabid dog or snake, and to cure fever or toothache. Among the Pennsylvania Dutch it was used to ward off cattle disease. Some grimoires (handbooks of magic) recommend writing the words of the square in blood and immersing them in holy water for use in amulets. Along with various Christian prayers, the sator square was also placed on the abdomen of a woman about to give birth".

*

"Today in the courts an unemployed labourer was found guilty of running up and down Downing St at two o'clock in the morning shouting 'All the government is barmy!' He was given a two pound fine for being drunk and disorderly and a ten-year gaol sentence for revealing a state secret."

More of The Two Ronnies compiled by Peter Vincent.

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May 10: Karl Barth
May 11: Stanley Elkin
May 12: Edward Lear
May 13: Daphne du Maurier
May 14: Malise Ruthven
May 15: Edwin Muir
May 16: Sigmund Freud
May 17: Dorothy Richardson
May 18: Bertrand Russell
May 19: Edward de Bono
Richard Mason
Malcolm X (Malcolm Little)

Johann Gottlieb Fichte

* * * * *

Richard Mason wrote his best seller *The World of Suzie Wong* in the 1950s. In it, a young Englishman in Hong Kong falls in love with a Chinese prostitute called Suzie Wong. It is a lively little story which ends reasonably happily. Suzie's troubles are not violence from her customers or nasty sexually-transmitted diseases but her infection with TB. And by the 1950s TB was curable. But the book had an unfortunate impact: it seemed to suggest that the lives of poor Asian women servicing, mostly, American sailors wasn't a bad one.

Years later a journalist went looking and found a Suzie Wong living in Hong Kong. He didn't claim her as Mason's inspiration which was probably just as well as this Suzie, bloated and ill, was dying. Her life as a prostitute in Hong Kong had not brought her wealth, fame, comfort, or any care for her in her tragedy by any of her transient customers.

Mason's book gave readers the idea that the men seeking out prostitutes were decent clean-cut young men who only sought out paid sex because they were far away from home and lonely. But decent clean-cut young men don't seek out anonymous transactions in fly-by-night hotels and then walk away from all responsibility … Mason's intention may have been to tell the world that at least one woman was saved from a sordid future but I suspect a number of his readers saw in it that search for the exotic and the different—and the one in which cashed-up foreigners basically held the cards. Poor girls were not going to pick and choose.

When politicians and commentators suddenly began praising 'Asian values' I found myself thinking back to *Suzie Wong*. Was she one of the values, she and the masses of poor and marginalized girls like her, and what part did those politicians and commentators really think such girls played in the concept of 'Asian values'?

*

Louise Brown wrote in *Sex Slaves*, "Asia is commonly portrayed as the home of wholesome family values and conservative sexual morality. This would be hilarious if its impact upon women, and particularly prostituted women, was not so devastating. A fashionable debate emerged a few years ago about the importance of 'Asian values' in the success of South-East and East Asian economies. Although this debate was never wholly convincing, especially as Asia is so diverse, a core set of values was identified as 'Asian'. These included the attachment of an individual to his or her family; respect for authority; the importance of education and thrift; deference to established social structures; and adherence to conservative social and sexual codes. While studying the Asian sex industry I began to think that some important things might have been missing from this list. Perhaps we also need to add hypocrisy and men's contempt for women."

She goes on to say, "In most Asian societies sex and the family are two almost wholly separate facets of a man's life."

"The prostitutes that these men enjoy are stigmatised women. This is especially true in South Asia. Time after time sex workers refer to themselves as being 'outside society'. And they are right – they are despised outcasts. Yet, paradoxically, far from being outside society they are at its very core. They are not peripheral to the social system because they are vital to its functioning. We can learn a lot about the structure of a society from analysing prostitution. In the Asian case, we might have good cause to think that family values and prostitution are just opposite sides of exactly the same coin."

Derek Sharron in *My Name Lon You Like Me?* writes, "Asian "family values" in rural Thailand are hypocritical as they relate to women. We are not valuable enough to educate, yet we are expected to become primary income earners – responsible for the basic needs and welfare of our families. If we earn good money, regardless of the method, we have overridden the stigma of its source, which in my case, and the cases of anywhere between 500,000 and 800,000, was prostitution. Although our earnings can offset our

humiliation, our emotional suffering will eventually cause us to hemorrhage. I have never met one woman who has fully-recovered from her past as a participant in the "Sex-for-sale" trade." And, " "*Asian Values*" lead Thai people into the same "Follow the herd" mentality that both our grandparents and their grandparents lived. It is one of the many reasons why we have not progressed financially or culturally. Our values are the consequences of Confucian teachings that emphasize authority and deference to it: *"Stay in your place*." The men who run Asia perpetuate the Confucian philosophy that keeps the wealthy in power, while keeping the rest of us poor and powerless."

We tend to see western paedophiles as the problem but John Curtis in *The Grey Man: My Undercover War Against the Child Sex Trade in Asia* writes, "in all the years since those first rescues I have never encountered foreign paedophiles in any of the brothels and seedy hotels where I've conducted operations; with the occasional exception, other Grey Man teams have generally had the same experience. I certainly don't want to downplay the threat of foreigners to the safety of children in Asia, but everything I've observed tells me that on balance the majority of abuse against children in places such as Thailand and Cambodia — perhaps as high as 75 per cent — is perpetrated by local men." And, "As we'd found in Thailand, it seemed the problem of child trafficking and prostitution was not solely there to feed the lusts of western sex tourists and expats. Wealthy Asian investors doing business in Cambodia were in the market for children; so too were well-off Cambodian men, who believed that sleeping with a virgin child was both a sign of status and a means of enhancing their personal esteem and power — they also believed they were less likely to contract AIDS." And, "I tasked one of our more methodical volunteers, a girl with an army background, to do some research on south Asia and the stats she turned up were staggering. Somewhere between 5000 and 12,000 kids are trafficked from Nepal to India each year to work in the sex trade or as virtual slave labourers. There are currently an estimated 200,000 Nepalese women and children working in Indian brothels, and the vast majority of their customers are Indian rather than foreign sex tourists."

And what fuels the trade? Apart from repulsive men? "Around the world, women are oppressed to varying degrees. In Thailand their acceptance of their fate and low status usually begins at an early age with the cultural programming that children have a duty to support their parents, whatever it takes. In the absence of social security and pensions, some would argue that this is necessary for the parents' survival. However, the traditional way of life also makes it easy for traffickers, in much the same way that it does in parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East where trafficking is also prevalent. I often found that, at best, women in Thailand were treated as second-class citizens; at worst they were viewed as a necessary filth. As one Thai proverb says, 'to have a daughter is like having a toilet in your front yard'. Theravada Buddhism holds sway in Thailand and Burma; in their belief system, being born female or being forced into slavery are viewed as obvious evidence of past misdeeds. Girls are taught that they must accept and endure their fate in order to accrue positive karma with the hope of a happier incarnation in the future. Since only monks can attain Nirvana (enlightenment), the best a woman can do in this life is to build up enough good karma to be reborn as a man. That way they, too, can become monks and climb the ladder towards liberation from all suffering. People traffickers in Asia must give thanks to Buddhism daily, although I doubt it was ever the Buddha's intent to oppress women."

At least that term 'Asian values' since the financial meltdown of 1998 seems to have faded away. But prostitution in Asia is not only thriving but being exported with great lavishness to other nations. And at its heart remains that terrible indictment: it holds women in contempt. The only little light on the Asian horizon is South Korea which is considering the Nordic approach of prosecuting the men who buy sex rather than the women who sell.

Perhaps one day someone will be able to write a new version of *The World of Suzie Wong* in which Asian women are fully equal and there are no Suzie Wongs to merely invite

pity …

* * * * *

While I was pondering on Suzie and the massive use of women's bodies I remembered back to my 'meeting' with Suzie in 1972 and it brought back quite different memories which are perhaps worth recording. I wrote this little article about my trip on the Arbiru.

'O ARBIRU'

The scene at the quayside in Dili was the bustling one of departure. Piles of luggage, people calling, "Adeus, go with God", late passengers hurrying, last minute things to be taken on board. But this was no luxury liner. The little blue-painted vessel 'O Arbiru' was smaller than a Manly ferry even though her destination was Singapore, seven days away. She was also, although I didn't know it then, named for a hero. Arbiru was the local title of a young Portuguese man who had single-handedly held off an attack during the tribal wars of the nineteenth century—and in the easygoing inter-marrying ways of things then both Timorese and Portuguese were disposed to remember him for this courageous feat.

My shoe-string holiday in East Timor was ending. There were other places to visit and I had been brought up on John Charles Thomas' famous song about "Roaming free as the breeze, I can do as I please—Open road, Open sky—" I went on board and found my cabin which had two bunks. There was no sign of anyone but a suitcase lay open and beside it a book, 'A Noite das Facas Longas' (The Night of the Long Knives), which made me wonder about my cabin-mate. She proved to be the wife of the harbour-master, an elegant woman called Maria who had lived for twenty years in Timor. She was on one of her occasional shopping expeditions to Singapore.

Our ship sailed out through the gap in the coral reef, past the island of Atauro, and I went on deck to enjoy the breeze and the sight of the land slowly slipping below the horizon. It was late October, the dry season, and the hills were brown and shrouded in dust haze.

On the top deck were three young men from Taiwan who had come to Timor on a fishing trawler which had met with a slight accident on a reef. They had taken over the weather-beaten chairs up here, leaving the lower deck for the Portuguese and a Timorese girl going to study in Portugal. Even at mealtimes this separation was maintained. From a galley barely big enough to turn around in came both Portuguese and Chinese meals three times a day.

I divided my time between both decks but as I had not brought a chair with me I had to go scrounging, eventually discovering a very ancient deckchair which threatened to fold up each time I sat down. But I had come prepared for the seven days with seven paperbacks. Each morning I read my quota (the only one I remember now is 'The World of Suzie Wong'), in the afternoon I chatted with the other passengers or watched islands slide past on the deep blue-green sea. Sometimes there were gaily-coloured fishing craft, sometimes there were drab cargo boats.

One of the passengers was an elderly Portuguese lady who seemed to have only one tooth and who sat all day crocheting an exquisite tablecloth. Then there was the prosperous couple who ran a smallgoods factory in Dili; he was Luso-Chinese and had been a newspaperman in Hong Kong where, no doubt, he'd garnered his horrifying stories of famine in China, his wife was Czech and favoured dazzlingly bright sun-dresses and enormous hats.

The captain was as captains should be—large, bluff and hearty—and his sweet and soft-spoken Timorese wife moved about and chatted with the passengers. With them was their dog which had been hit by a car and was swathed in bandages. I never found out whether they thought the sea voyage would do him good or whether they just couldn't bear to leave him behind.

The food was good and plentiful and I knew it was fresh as I saw the chickens being

slaughtered one by one. Rice in large quantities came with every meal and there was also bacalhau, the famous dried salted cod from off the coasts of Newfoundland and of which it is said the Portuguese have 365 ways of cooking it.

After our first stiflingly hot night my cabin-mate decided to sleep up on deck with several of her compatriots. I stayed below but left the cabin door open to catch a small draught from the port-hole. On the second night I woke up to the horrible feeling of hands fumbling over me. I jerked awake and a dim shape slipped out the door. Should I keep the door shut from now on? But the heat won and the next night I slept with one leg dangling over the edge of the bed and resting gently against the half-open door. The door pushed against my leg. I kicked with all the strength I could manage. And the intruder, a large Chinese seaman, was caught off balance and fell over the door sill with a crash. There was some confusion after that as cabin doors opened and the people on deck woke up. But I wasn't troubled for the rest of the voyage.

As we came closer to Singapore many seabirds came round the vessel, all unknown to me but some of them beautiful with a greenish sheen and long graceful wings. The captain who had perhaps not read 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' shot several.

On the eighth day we came into Singapore Harbour. Just as well, I thought, as I was out of reading matter and no one else had anything in English except the charts of our threading route through Singapore's many islands. The other women, a-buzz with excitement, could barely wait to get through Customs and head for the shops. I said goodbye, looked back a little wistfully at 'O Arbiru' dwarfed by its new surroundings, and set out for a friend's flat, taking with me a large bag of coffee-beans and some hand-woven cloth from Timor.

It was nearly six months later, and I was in Hong Kong staying with guitarist Tony Carpio, his Macanese wife Olivia and their three children, Kathy, Rita, and Junior, when I saw a tiny paragraph in the *South China Morning Post*. The Arbiru, it said, had gone down in a typhoon off the coast of Flores on the 25th April, 1973, whilst on a charter voyage to Bangkok. I wrote to Timor to try to find out more. Twenty-four people had drowned including the captain and his wife Rosentina. One Timorese seaman, Paulo do Rosario, survived.

Tiny Timor, so little known to the wider world in those days, was in mourning. But money and condolences flooded in—from Australia, from Portugal, from Angola and Mozambique. In two weeks $8,000 had been raised for the bereaved families. Years later, after the Indonesian invasion, when war-induced famine took more than 60,000 lives in the late seventies I was given to understand by the Australian government that East Timor was too remote and difficult of access for any help to be sent.

Poor Timor—where once the loss of a small ship and twenty-four lives seemed a huge tragedy—but the legend of the young man who held out in his mountain redoubt against great odds has become a symbol, for me, of a small nation struggling against its huge neighbour to retain its dignity, its sense of self, its belief in the future.

* * * * *

May 20: Gardner Fox
John Stuart Mill
May 21: Plato
May 22: Arthur Conan Doyle
Ram Mohun Roy
May 23: Pär Lagerkvist
Girolamo Savonarola (d)
May 24: Mary Grant Bruce
May 25: Ralph Waldo Emerson
May 26: Denis Florence Macarthy
May 27: Julia Ward Howe

May 28: Patrick White
May 29: André Brink
Oswald Spengler
May 30: Countee Cullen
Alfred Austin
Mikhail Bakunin
May 31: Walt Whitman
June 1: Carl von Clausewitz
Brigham Young

* * * * *

Billions, perhaps trillions, of words have been written about war. I am not sure what this says about the human race. But one of the most famous in the West is Carl von Clausewitz's *On War*.

The victories of mind,
Are won for all mankind,
But war wastes what it wins,
Ends worse than it begins,
And is a game of woes,
Which nations always lose:
Though tyrant tyrant kill,
The slayer liveth still.
Ebenezer Elliott

If any question why we died,
Tell them, because our fathers lied.
Rudyard Kipling

It is a very odd thing when you think about it. All wars begin in the *mind* but all wars are directed at *bodies*.

It is also very odd that we direct our firepower at things which cannot respond. Buildings. Roads. Railways. Certainly they are manmade. But trees. Fertile farmland. Beaches. Rivers. Did war make greater sense before men had maps, surveys, strategies, tanks and missiles …

* * * * *

Sun-Tzu Ping-Fa's *The Essential Art of War* was brought to the West by, among others, Ralph and Mei-chün Lee Sawyer. And they say of Sun-Tzu's book written around 2,500 years ago, that "rather than having vanished and become forgotten, the *Art of War's* impact not only continues undiminished, but continues to expand and penetrate every conceivable realm of human endeavour. Its renewed vitality is visible not just in the martial sphere, where the worldwide revolution in military affairs has prompted the People's Republic of China (PRC) to re-examine its concepts and principles as an integral part of their ongoing search for a new military doctrine with unique Chinese characteristics, but also in the domains of business, personal relations, social interaction, the stock market, and the minutiae of everyday life. However, it's not the enigmatic, often opaque classical text that is read and pondered, but an astounding variety of contemporary modern-language versions." So it is curious to learn that we do not actually know if Sun-Tzu was one person or a group, one sage or many sages adding more over the years, even teachers collecting up scraps of wisdom to collate and pass on.

Not only is the book looked at and re-interpreted and commented upon from every possible perspective including that of Taoism and Buddhism, modern Western business managers, marriage 'guidance', popular culture in films, TV, but even, "Numerous colourful

comic-book versions have also appeared, some cheap, pithy productions printed on execrable paper that yet sell hundreds of thousands, others finely detailed multivolume episodic tales intended primarily for Sun-Tzu aficionados."

Nor is its influence confined to China or Westerners wanting to do business there. "Sun-Tzu's thinking similarly pervades Japanese and, to a lesser extent, Korean and Singaporean popular culture; and for centuries the *Art of War* has heavily impacted traditional military practices and science in Vietnam, Japan, and Korea." Even the U.S. military has got around to studying Sun-Tzu.

People take all kinds things from Sun-Tzu. So here are three that nations believing war should be a way of life might like to take on board:

"All warfare is based on deception." And deception is a two-edged sword.

"If you expose the army to a prolonged campaign, the state's resources will be inadequate."

"No country has ever profited from protracted warfare."

* * * * *

But it was von Clausewitz's treatise *On War* which deeply influenced the way European nations saw, and fought their wars, and it perhaps has 'unique European characteristics'.

When I asked at the library for it I was surprised to discover that it is in fact nine books which have been reprinted as three volumes. I wasn't sure that I wanted to tackle that amount but I girded up something, not perhaps my loins, and the first thing to say is that it is not a book of philosophical reflections about war. It is basically a military handbook. Von Clausewitz calls his books: On the Nature of War, On the Theory of War, Of Strategy in General, The Combat, Military Forces, Defence, The Attack, Plan of War, Summary. He placed each manuscript in a packet as he finished it but he was still working on his opus when he died and his widow Marie opened the packets, put the material together and got it published. He had a suitably military background. He began as an ensign, later studied at the military academy under General Scharnhorst and later became Chief of Staff under Field-Marshal Count Gneisenau, (two names which might resonate as the Germans called 20th century battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau).

He begins his book with that famous statement, "War is only a continuation of State policy by other means." This is arguable but perhaps the more surprising thing is the detached, impersonal, almost bloodless tone of his writing on the bloodiest activity humankind has dreamed up. He defines State policy as "the intelligence of the personified State."

He says there are two kinds of wars: "1) overthrow of the enemy, and 2) merely to make some conquests on the frontiers of his country." That 'merely' is an understated way of describing the policy of the Land Grab. He goes on to say, "War is nothing but a duel on an extensive scale" and "Two motives lead men to war: instinctive hostility and hostile intention" and the second is far commoner. And "the final decision of a whole War is not always to be regarded as absolute" and "the objective nature of war makes it a calculation of probabilities" including the way in which spying and intelligence reports are to be sifted: again on the balance of probability, ie. the most likely event is most likely to be the correct information. Perhaps this saved some generals from believing bizarre reports but it didn't necessarily inject any common sense into this aspect of planning and waging war.

He says an understanding of three things is vital, the three being, Soldiers, Terrain, and Allies. He also points out that the best plans can be undone by, Chance, Accidents, and Good Luck (or Bad Luck, depending on where you stand). Under terrain also come things like time of day and weather. It also explains why he says "the defensive is the stronger form of making War"; partly because people are more passionate, show greater courage and are willing to take greater risks to defend their own land. They also have a far more detailed

knowledge of their mountains, forests, swamps, roads, rivers, than someone who may only have studied maps or sent out spies. He goes into details about fighting on different kinds of terrain, the pros and cons, and this underpins his belief that of the three branches, infantry, artillery, and cavalry, the infantry is the most useful because it is the most flexible. It won't get bogged down so easily, it won't need tons of fodder to be carried, and can manoeuvre more adroitly in rocky or swampy ground. He also says, "The superiority which we have attributed to the defensive form of War consists:

(1) In the use of ground.
(2) In the possession of a prepared theatre of War.
(3) In the support of the people.
(4) In the advantage of the state of expectancy."

And this would also include his belief in "an economy of force" ie. "the less one can make suffice the better". This has nothing, or very little to do with ideas about just and unjust wars, he doesn't discuss the ethics of strategies; his ideas about morals are strictly organizational such as the impact of surprise attacks or the value of experience. "All War supposes human weakness, and against that it is directed" and "War is the province of physical exertion and suffering" and "When great personal courage is united to high intelligence, then the command must naturally be nearest to perfection." Soldiers need to be brave, tough, well-trained, and obedient. Theirs not to reason why …

He discusses in detail Plans for War, Strategies of War, Tactics of War, Weapons of War and what can be learned from the History of War. He goes back to Hannibal and Frederick the Great. He writes, "Spain attains to unity under Ferdinand the Catholic; through accidental marriage connections, under Charles V, suddenly arose the great Spanish monarchy, composed of Spain, Burgundy, Germany, and Italy united. What this colossus wanted in unity and internal political cohesion, it made up for by gold, and its standing Army came for the first time into collision with the standing Army of France. After Charles's abdication, the great Spanish colossus split into two parts, Spain and Austria. The latter strengthened by the acquisition of Bohemia and Hungary, now appears on the scene as a great power, towing the German Confederation like a small vessel behind her." But the wars he looks most closely at are those of Napoleon. I know people always say it was the Russian weather which defeated Napoleon but he points out that when Napoleon could neither get the Russian army to surrender nor Tsar Alexander to sue for peace he had no choice but to retreat and one key aspect of this was that he had no fresh reserves; *all* his men and horses were tired, hungry and cold. It is a classic case for the greater value of the defensive war.

Von Clausewitz was carefully studied in Europe's military academies because the great land armies which surged to and fro across Europe were the armies he was writing for. Some of his details became obsolete—eg. when he says, "Every attack becomes weaker as it progresses"—is a reminder that men and horses get tired whereas tanks and armoured cars do not. But the underlying thinking remained. He pointed out that the armies were often similar in size and battles left similar numbers of dead and wounded on both sides. His belief was that victory went to one side not necessarily because it was more powerful but because one side was hungrier for victory and its leaders more desperate for glory and renown. But the ideas underlying his opus were ultimately limited. When Continental leaders, from Napoleon to Hitler, crept away from the idea of an invasion of Britain they were being good pupils of von Clausewitz. He pointed out that it was relatively easy to attack across a river but much harder to either be re-supplied or retreat. Nor could he envisage what we would now call 'low grade insurgency' or the kind of combat where the combatants were not clearly identified. He does however agree with Sun Tzu in that long-drawn-out wars of attrition rarely succeed.

It is all about winning wars rather than achieving peace. And yet he provides a blueprint for peace. Firstly he believed that an equilibrium between military forces was a disincentive to go to war and secondly that wars of aggression were rarely a good idea. If

everyone agreed they would only fight wars of defence then war would fade away.

European ideas about war and Chinese ideas came face-to-face in World War I when 135,000 Chinese men "were sent to France and Belgium between 1916 and 1922 to help the Allied war effort. They loaded cargoes, dug trenches, filled sandbags, repaired tanks and artillery; they laid railway lines, repaired roads, built ports and aerodromes; they removed animal carcasses and ammunition from the battlefield, collected the bodies of the dead and built the graves to bury them."

Mark O'Neill in *The Chinese Labour Corps* records these words by one such Chinese labourer, Yuan Chun, "taken from the moving letter he sent to Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany in an appeal to bring the bloody conflict of World War One to an end."

'The war in Europe is a matter that does not concern us, the Chinese people. We Chinese came to Europe as neutrals, to make a paltry living … a virtuous ruler's name will be remembered for 10,000 generations, so why not halt your troops and select an auspicious location to build a palace of peace?'

* * * * *

June 2: Thomas Hardy
June 3: Cicero
June 4: Elizabeth Jolley
Charles Fox Parham
June 5: Socrates
Federico García Lorca
John Maynard Keynes
Adam Smith
June 6: Alexander Pushkin
June 7: Elizabeth Bowen
June 8: Ernst Enno
Marguerite Yourcenar
Gustavo Gutiérrez
June 9: Marcia Davenport
June 10: Saul Bellow
June 11: Anna Akhmatova
Mordecai Kaplan
June 12: Johanna Spyri
June 13: William Butler Yeats

* * * * *

Paul Muldoon said of W. B. Yeats in 'The End of the Poem', "It's always worth remembering that we're dealing here with a man who was ignorant of which side his ancestors had fought on at the Battle of the Boyne, as is evidenced by an early version of the "Introductory Rhymes" to his 1914 volume *Responsibilities*, when he names James II as the "bad master" of his "old fathers." " But was it so simple or was W. B. Yeats aware of the difficulties in pinning down the views of dozens of ancestors?

* * * * *

I had thought, perhaps naively, that the Catholic Church in Ireland set up institutions to care for orphans and unwanted children out of a sense of Christian duty and raised the money for their maintenance themselves. But as I was reading Michael McCarthy's 1903 book *Priests and People in Ireland*, which I am sure briefly made him *persona non grata* with his fellow Catholics I discovered this belief was completely wrong.

"In the town of Sligo there is a female industrial school, containing 149 inmates—vagrant, destitute children. The total cost of "maintenance and management" of this school, which belongs to the Sisters of Mercy, was £3057 for the year 1900; the net cost for each

child being £20, 3s. 5d per annum.

"Must there not be a profit in this for the clerical organisation, when such children can be maintained for less than £9 in Wexford Workhouse?"

The Workhouse doesn't sound the best alternative. But providing a few shillings a week to widowed mothers or unemployed fathers to keep the family together and better cared for would surely have been a far better and far cheaper alternative? Because there was money to be made out of poor children the religious orders had a vested interest in acquiring as many children as possible—regardless of whether those children would be loved and cared for in their institutions. And given the way that thousands of families pushed thousands of young men and women into the church without a vocation and without the skills and sympathy to work with the most marginalized of children it is clear that even less-than-ideal homes were probably better for children than a childhood of institutionalization which often left them easy prey for sadists and pedophiles …

"The industrial school at Newtownforbes is conducted by the Sisters of Mercy, and at it there are 113 "vagrant" girls maintained out of the rates at the cost of £2788, 6s. 11½d. per annum, being equal to a pension of £23, 18s. 4d. per girl, which is rather higher than a well-to-do county Longford farmer would be willing to pay for the education of his daughter."

"In 1900 the Dublin Christian Brothers had 882 vagrant boys under their charge at Artane and Carriglea, and they received from the State £16,372, 16s. 11d. for their maintenance, or an average of about £20 per boy per annum. It stands to reason that if those boys were distributed as apprentices to local tradesmen, it would be much better for the community, better for the boys, and better for the tradesmen, than to have them herded up in the barracks of Artane, working under the direction of a religious order."

The poorest and most vulnerable children, paid for by the State, made money for the church. And the church was not held accountable for those children's health, happiness, or training. In the rare cases where children managed to make a complaint they were either disbelieved or punished for telling lies. Artane in Dublin has been shown to be a place of physical and sexual abuse where its boys worked without pay but left the school without any marketable qualifications. And the seeds of the many tragedies that things like the Ryan Commission (The Irish Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse convened by Justice Sean Ryan) have fumbled over in the belated effort to bring justice to thousands of abused children were planted in the moment when the church discovered it could make money out of little children.

"They (the Sisters of Charity) also conduct a Magdalene Penitentiary at Donnybrook, in which they do a large laundry business, and get the free labour of a hundred penitents. The bedroom doors of the poor penitents are locked at night, and they are bound to stay in that penitentiary at the hard work of laundry for the best years of their lives; and should they ever leave it, they find themselves in a world in which they are more helpless than they were on the day of their birth.

"Why do the proprietors of these penitentiaries fear inspection if all is right within their walls? Should they not rather court it? I visited one of those penitentiaries, and saw the poor Magdalenes in chapel; and a more distressing sight I never saw. They were dressed as outcasts, and *they looked outcasts*. And a more melancholy existence I could not imagine than theirs; changing from the soapsuds in the steam laundry to the confession-box, or the chapel, which is the only recreation they get. Far, indeed, would it seem to have been from His thoughts to have condemned the original Magdalene to such a life as the poor galley-slaves in these penitentiaries lead."

"The Nuns' Magdalen Asylums do not decrease female immorality. They are devoted to lucrative laundry work, which must enhance the wealth of the religious. And they appear to draw only a sufficient supply of recruits from the immoral reservation to maintain their staffs!"

I came upon a book called *Kathy's Story* by Kathy O'Beirne which has the sub-title *Inside the hell of Ireland's notorious Magdalen Sisters' Laundries* and which Aodhan Madden introduces with these words, "When I began investigating the abuses that were perpetrated against young girls in the dreadful Magdalen laundries for *Irish Crime* magazine, I had no idea of the horrors that would unfold. I had to ask myself: how was it possible for such widespread abuse to remain hidden for so long? Was it a matter of see no evil, hear no evil – that peculiarly Irish attitude which permits the unspeakable to live comfortably alongside the ordinary? There were Magdalen asylums in most large towns and cities in Ireland. These grim places could be found right in the heart of the community. It seems now that the community just looked the other way.

"For much of the twentieth century, Ireland was a fearful, priest-ridden place where those unfortunates who transgressed the strict moral codes were punished most severely. We had our own brand of Taliban theocracy. Young girls could be imprisoned in filthy hospitals or in Magdalen asylums even, as I have discovered, if they were the victims of sexual abuse. They had to be locked away to protect the guilty. Thousands of girls lived out their miserable lives in such places and then when they died their bodies were dumped into mass graves."

O'Beirne presents a horrifying world of de-personalization, terror, powerlessness, physical, mental and sexual abuse, girls denied education, given large doses of drugs like largactil and ketamine, and denied contact with the outside world. "The nun now led me over to what looked like a large shed. When she opened the door, the noise of clanking, churning machinery was overwhelming and there were clouds of steam swirling about. The place stank of chemicals, detergent and sweat, and it was hotter than anything I'd ever experienced before. This was the first sight I got of a Magdalen laundry. I was 12 years old and I had just been delivered to hell." "The nuns considered the Maggies, as the girls were known, to be literally the scum of the earth, sinners who would never earn redemption and fallen women heading – after what for most was a lifetime of filthy, back-breaking menial work – straight for the burning fires of hell. Although, as one of the older women said, the Devil himself could not have thought up a better hell than the Magdalen laundry." O'Beirne made an escape but was picked up on the streets for petty theft and sent to Mountjoy prison for 3 months before being returned to the Sisters; "life in prison was a hundred times better than life in the Magdalen laundries." The last of these laundries, where children slaved for nothing but poor food and cold dormitory beds, was closed in 1996.

The thing which shocked me was that Michael McCarthy drew attention to the evil of the laundries in 1903 yet Kathy O'Beirne was effectively imprisoned in one in the 1970s! Had no one ever rung alarm bells in the intervening 70 years? Did hospitals and schools never ask who was washing their bed linens? Did ratepayers never query how their rates were being spent? Did no one ever ask questions about child labour?

McCarthy says, "The Convent of Mercy at Wexford is a profit-making institution, receiving £2063 of public money yearly for 105 vagrant children in its industrial school. The nuns in this letter, propose to employ the poorhouse children at the lucrative employment of laundry and "cookery, &c. &c.," to quote the Superioress's expressive abbreviations. They ask the guardians to provide an outfit. They expect the labour of the children free, and, in addition, to get a pension of £9 per annum for each child out of the rates."

I, too, might write &c and &c and &c … But it seems too mild a response …

*

"Revisionist historians have had something of a field day in Ireland over the last fifty-odd years, and achieved considerable adjustment of the ways in which past events are perceived. In their conscientious hands, many myths are deprived of their force, truisms tampered with, and scrupulousness reasserted, all to the great benefit of scholarship and awareness in the country."

The Oxford Book of Ireland edited by Patricia Craig.

Revisionism in Ireland is not a particularly welcome word so I was interested to see that one brave group brought it to bear on that most fraught of subjects, the Famine. George Boyce and Alan O'Day produced a book of essays called *The Making of Modern Irish History* and one of the essays, 'Revisionism and Irish History: The Great Famine' is by Mary Daly who writes, "The Irish Famine constituted the most severe episode of food shortage in nineteenth-century Europe. Food imports for the years 1846-50 exceeded exports by a ratio of three to one." This goes against the common view. One thing she looked at was the numbers of cattle being shipped out of Dublin in the Famine years and whether their retention could have made any real difference. Her answer is a cautious no. And apart from the question of numbers it is important to remember that these were mostly not big fat Hereford bullocks. Many were small Kerry and Jersey cows at the end of a milking life going to English glue factories and tanneries. And if the Irish administration *had* stepped in and prevented exports or forcibly required all the animals to be slaughtered in Ireland the meat might well have improved the diet of poor people in Dublin and the neighbouring counties but it would not have reached the most desperate people simply because there was no refrigeration available and roads, administration, and distribution systems were woefully inadequate. Ormerod Greenwood in *Quaker Encounters* notes, "A small part of the American aid came in cash, but the greater part consisted of 101 shipments of nearly 10,000 tons of food and supplies, and this created a series of problems. It had to be landed at accessible points, to be checked and safely stored in suitable places; for there were no depots and it was anxious work taking large consignments of food on slow wagons through starving populations. … The food was needed on the west coast, but its seas were stormy, its shores rocky and badly charted, its harbours scanty and unprovided with quays or unloading facilities or railheads, and no regular service of ships. So many of the early American shipments came by regular routes into Liverpool, whence they were trans-shipped by specially charted steamers". This, of course, is only the shipments distributed through the Quakers (of which there were around 3,000 in Ireland then); vastly larger amounts arrived through other channels. But they all faced the same problems when it came to remote communities in the west of Ireland …

Absentee Protestant English landlords have received a large dollop of the blame, and often rightly so, but it should not be forgotten that Irish and indeed Catholic landlords were not necessarily better. I came upon this *pre-Famine* report in *The Times* of London, from 1822 about desperate people living near Knock, "The poor, wholly destitute, having exhausted the cresses, nettles, and wild herbs of the fields" and I couldn't help wondering why this didn't ring alarm bells. And their landlord in this case was neither an absentee nor an Englishman …

Nor was the Catholic Church a shining example of a church marshalling its resources to save its congregations from hunger and destitution. Famine caused by the potato blight spread wherever potatoes were used as a staple food in Europe. Some were fortunate, for instance a report on the small community at Kilmallie in the Scottish Highlands, noted that although their potatoes were affected potatoes had only recently become part of their diet, not their staple food. But across Belgium, Germany, Poland, people starved.

I had picked up *The Great Composers* series to read about Great Composers but I also came upon this: "In 1845 the potato blight struck Europe: it appeared simultaneously across a vast area. From Galway to Trieste, from Portugal to Poland the stench of rotting potatoes drifted across the fields. Numerous rural areas in Germany were totally dependent on potatoes for food, and no one could explain or cure this disastrous disease. Gangs of looters began to attack food convoys on the road. Soldiers were called in to keep order on the streets of Cologne. In Berlin, farm wagons were attacked and plundered. The word 'communism' started to appear in newspapers all over Germany, and there were real fears that public order was disintegrating, fears that were intensified by the revolutionary fervour of 1848.

"By now the poorer people were also leaving for America. The transport system was

better, the fares were cheaper and the travel companies were larger and more efficient. Above all, there was active public and official encouragement. On balance, the state preferred an exodus to the New World to a hungry mob howling at the door.

"The potato blight caused a massive migration in 1847, which was followed by a short pause as prices fell. But in the 1850s a further series of bad harvests triggered off an even larger wave of emigration. Between 1852 and 1854 over half a million people left Germany: one and a half per cent of the population. There were more single people, more poor people, more desperate people. For the first time the vast agricultural estates of east Prussia experienced emigration on a large scale. There were cases of entire villages uprooting and travelling in a mass to the Mid-West of America."

*

I am sure Friedrich Engels cared deeply about the plight of the poor, his anger and his passion still leap off the page, but he had a curiously ambivalent attitude to the Irish poor who flooded into the newly industrialized towns of England. His masterpiece *The Condition of the Working Class in England* was first published in 1845. He notes the many thousands of Irish poor seeking work; "the Englishman who is still somewhat civilized, needs more than the Irishman who goes in rags, eats potatoes, and sleeps in a pigsty. But that does not hinder the Irishman's competing with the Englishman, and gradually forcing the rate of wages, and with it the Englishman's level of civilization down to the Irishman's level."

He notes that, "Although in Great Britain 32,000,000 acres of land are cultivated, and in Ireland but 14,000,000; although Great Britain produces agricultural products to the value of £150,000,000, and Ireland of but £36,000,000, there are in Ireland 75,000 agricultural proletarians *more* than in the neighbouring island. How great the competition for land in Ireland must be is evident from this extraordinary disproportion, especially when one reflects that the labourers in Great Britain are living in the utmost distress." In other words a great pool of cheap unskilled labour waiting …

He says, "The rapid expansion of English industry could not have taken place if England had not possessed in the numerous and impoverished population of Ireland a reserve at command. … It has been calculated that more than a million have already immigrated, and not far from 50,000 still come every year, nearly all of whom enter the industrial districts, especially the great cities, and there form the lowest class of the population. Thus there are in London, 120,000; in Manchester, 40,000; in Liverpool, 34,000; Bristol, 24,000; Glasgow, 40,000; Edinburgh, 29,000, poor Irish people. These people having grown up almost without civilization, accustomed from youth to every sort of privation, rough, intemperate, and improvident, bring all their brutal habits with them among a class of the English population which has, in truth, little inducement to cultivate education and morality." He goes on to paint a picture of people coming across on packed boats paying 4 pennies for the journey and willing to live under the most extreme poverty and squalor; "Whenever a district is distinguished for especial filth and especial ruinousness, the explorer may safely count upon meeting chiefly those Celtic faces" and they have "discovered the minimum of necessities of life, and are now making the English workers acquainted with it. Filth and drunkenness, too, they have brought with them." The Irishman deposits "all garbage and filth before his house door here, as he was accustomed to do at home, and so accumulates the pools and dirt-heaps which disfigure the working-people's quarters and poison the air." He keeps his pigs in his house and burns any furniture the house might have. "And since the poor devil must have one enjoyment, and society has shut him out of all others, he betakes himself to the drinking of spirits. Drink is the only thing worth having … so he revels in drink to the point of the most bestial drunkenness." He takes the most unskilled of occupations and "the pressure of this race has done much to depress wages and lower the working class." With a fifth to a quarter of the working population in the big cities "no one can wonder if the life, habits, intelligence, moral status—in short, the whole character of the working class assimilates a great part of the

Irish characteristics. On the contrary, it is easy to understand how the degrading position of the English workers, engendered by our modern history, and its immediate consequences, has been still more degraded by the presence of Irish competition."

But this was Engels who wanted a way out of this morass, rather than merely to write a detached chronicle of wrongs, and he goes on to say that although the Irish have made things much worse for English workers it has also "thereby deepened the chasm between workers and bourgeoisie, and hastened the approaching crisis." The Irish because they were primarily part of the growing proletariat in England, rather than the growing middle class, could not help but change its nature and bring to it a passion not for organization but for revolt.

And into this volatile situation which might have seen either revolution in England or massive anti-Irish riots—or both—instead was thrust the disaster of the Famine.

*

While I was thinking about research and revision I came upon a copy of *Familia*, the Ulster Genealogical Review, which looked at three books which seemed relevant.

To and from Ireland: Planned Migration Schemes c. 1600-2000, a collection of essays edited by Patrick Duffy. "And in the pre-famine era (1814-1844) roughly one half-million Protestants and an equal (and steadily increasing) number of Catholics left Ireland for North America. During this 'long eighteenth century,' official British opinions of Irish emigration changed radically, from mercantilist opposition to grudging acceptance and even eager encouragement. In the same period, however, élite attitudes toward the state's 'managerial' role changed equally radically, from interventionist to classic liberal doctrines of *laissez faire*. Thus, ironically at the very moment when the British government had acquired both the means and the incentive to relieve Irish poverty (or prevent famine) through tax-supported migration schemes, with one brief exception (in 1821-23) the state abdicated responsibility for assisting emigration to Irish landlords, to colonial governments and land companies, and, primarily, to the private kinship networks of letters and prepaid passages that had become increasingly prevalent after the transatlantic servant trade began to decline in the late 1700s.

"As Patrick Duffy contends, by the 1820s-30s the Malthusian notion that 'overpopulation' (especially of Ireland's Catholics) restricted economic, social, and moral 'progress' had become 'fashionable,' and a few Irish landlords had begun to assist tenant migration as part of broader plans to 'modernise' their estates. As Duffy and Thomas Power point out, … it was the combination of the Irish Poor Law (1838) and the Great Famine (1845-52) – the latter by collapsing estate income, the former by imposing high poor rates on the most impoverished estates – that inspired landlords to aid roughly 100,000 people (*c.* 6-8% of all Famine emigrants) to go overseas, principally to British North America. Only a few of Ireland's wealthiest proprietors, especially those with English estates, could afford the costs of assisted mass migration. According to Power, for example, in the first half of 1847 alone Lord Palmerston spent £5,600 to aid over 1,600 people to leave one of his County Sligo estates. The impact of such schemes in certain localities was enormous: Palmerston sent nearly 4,300 overseas, and his Sligo neighbour, Gore-Booth, shipped another 1,200; likewise, 5,800 people were assisted to emigrate from the Wandesforde estate in north Kilkenny; nearly 6,000 from the Fitzwilliam properties in Wicklow; another 5,000 from the Shirley and Bath estates in Monaghan; some 3,360 out of the Lansdowne estate in Kerry; and so forth. According to Power, most evidence suggests that assisted emigrants were happy to leave, and their remittances enabled roughly double their numbers to depart soon afterward. And, as Power points out, Palmerston could have emulated the majority of his peers and simply evicted his dependents, throwing them out on the road to starve or fend for themselves. Yet Duffy reminds readers also to attend to the 'subaltern voices' of the dispossessed, and he cautions that assisted migration was ultimately an estate-management tool and, for landlords and their agents, the welfare of emigrant tenants (most of whom received only their passage costs and arrived destitute if not disease-ridden) was merely 'a happy coincidence.' "

(Reviewer: Kerby A. Miller)

Sending Out Ireland's Poor: Assisted Emigration to North America in the Nineteenth Century by Gerard Moran: "Gerard Moran's book describes the range of schemes that were developed post-1815 offering assisted transatlantic fares to tenants on landed estates or paupers who found themselves in workhouses. In this regard, the extent of government participation in assisted emigrant schemes, at least to colonies, principally Canada and Australia, is perhaps the most significant development to arise from the story of assisted passage schemes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As far as the effectiveness of the government-authorised schemes in helping to reduce the enormous social pressures of an over-populated and famine ridden Ireland is concerned, David Fitzpatrick has pointed out elsewhere that in the thirty years preceding 1845, when one million are estimated to have emigrated, the passages of some 32,000 emigrants were assisted, a ratio of 3.2 per cent. In the subsequent period 1846-52, when manifestly assisted emigration might have been one already-tried means of providing some respite from the ravages of the Great Famine, only 16,000 of those estimated to have emigrated received some state-sponsored assistance, a ratio of something like one per cent.

"Nonetheless, the numbers are in themselves not-insignificant and, in this context, Gerard Moran's detailed consideration of the schemes that assisted emigrants to leave for North America is both timely and welcome, providing not only a chronicle of the respective schemes in which these 'forgotten emigrants of the nineteenth century' found their way to a new world but painting in the conditions on the estates and in the workhouses from which they were escaping, Moran's consideration of the issue of landlord-assisted emigration from their Irish estates is particularly thorough and confidently handled. On the issue of 'how many?', however, uncertainty persists. Moran's view is that 'While Kerby Miller, Oliver MacDonagh, S.H. Cousens, and David Fitzpatrick vary in their estimates of between 50,000 and 80,000 … it would appear that these figures are an underestimation. Donald MacKay estimates that the figure is nearer 100,000 and this is perhaps a more accurate reflexion'." (Reviewer: Trevor Parkhill)

(The numbers on some estates were huge; for example, the Shirley estate in Co. Monaghan was estimated to have 20,500 tenants on 26,000 acres by 1845; given that those tenants mostly had children and that Co Monaghan was not as flat or as fertile as some of the south-eastern counties the estate must have existed on a knife-edge even before the potato blight struck.)

And *Ships from Ireland to Early America 1625-1850 Vol. II* by David Dobson. He estimates that 10,000 people a year were leaving Belfast before the American Revolution but most shipping manifests rarely break down the passenger numbers into male-female, ages, families, backgrounds. But he mentions Marianne Wokeck's research into the movement of indentured servants. "Wokeck's work has contributed significantly to the ongoing revision of the understanding of emigration from Ireland and immigration into Colonial and revolutionary America. Not only does her research provide a salutary European context for the radical movement of population from Ireland, particularly the Scotch-Irish of the northern half of the island, during these formative decades in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but her research on the indentured servants' trade and their role in perpetuating the dynamics of the emigration movement has without doubt been among the most meaningful research to have emerged in the last twenty years." (Reviewer: Trevor Parkhill)

But in all the talk of study, research, and revision, and the more speculative 'what ifs' there is one aspect I have never seen discussed and that is the role of the British Empire. I came upon this quote in Hugh Brody's *Inishkillane*, " 'Wasn't it a great thought Columbus had,' said a man to me once as we lay gazing out over the Atlantic, 'to find out America? For if there wasn't America, the Island wouldn't stand a week.' " If there had been no colonies and ex-colonies, if Britain had been content with its one colony of Ireland, if the US, Canada,

Australia, New Zealand, had been colonized by other powers, or had remained undiscovered and left to the peaceful enjoyment of their indigenous peoples, where would the Irish have gone? The obvious answer is—to England. So it raises the question—were the politicians in Westminster so casual and unresponsive simply because they had become so used to believing that the colonies and ex-colonies would always soak up the 'unwanted', the poor, the felonious, and ultimately the hungry?

And if North America had become French, for example, how would it have felt about taking in Germany's poor?

* * * * *

Is it fair to ask why William Butler Yeats did not know what all his ancestors were up to at the Battle of the Boyne? W. B. Yeats was born in 1865 and taking a generation to be 20 to 30 years he can be assumed to have had at least 60 direct ancestors alive at the time of the Battle in 1690. You can take away 30 as being female but it still raises the question: is it realistic for anyone to know where 30 of their ancestors were in 1690 and what they were all doing?

I am younger than Yeats so I can claim at least 60 male ancestors around in 1690. But despite years of research I could not tell you what they were all up to then. The Jephsons, Crosses, Mills, Baldwins, Kingsmills, were probably sympathetic to King Billy. The Butlers, Fitzgeralds, Bagenals, Barnewalls, Colcloughs, Hubands etc were sympathetic to King James—or at least sympathetic to James Butler, the Duke of Ormonde, but when James II treated him with 'studied disrespect' not least because of his call for a free parliament, it created something of a crisis in loyalties for some of them. Though James was a Stuart the Highlanders, Camerons, Stewarts, MacDonalds, Kennedys, MacMartins were largely uninvolved in James's Irish disasters and were increasingly disillusioned with the Stuarts anyway. And Lowlanders like the Hendrys and Johnstons were probably tepid in their support for both James and Billy. The Coynes, Standishes, Clarkes, Masons, and others probably only had the vaguest idea of what was going on, being mostly poor and often illiterate in those days. Some, Martins, Lockwoods, Jenkins, Mittons, Fifes, Warings, Coxes and more, were not involved and probably did not feel great loyalty to either the Scottish James or the Dutch Billy. The Mounteneys and Carys were prepared to do business with changing rulers but I cannot say they felt great loyalty and affection towards any of their monarchs. Those in the Caribbean like Heyligers, Raapzaats, Salomonzs, Rijskwaerts, probably felt a degree of loyalty to King Billy but very likely knew little of what was going on in Ireland. French ancestors like the Seranes and Brousses would probably have supported the Catholic James. Some I have not been able to trace back far enough like the Allmans and Hammonds and Edwards and Tylers and Eatons and Taylors and Dillons and St Johns and Bridges to know where they were or what they were doing. Some like the Quaker Fades and Willcocks would have been reluctant to take up arms. Some like the Barrys had varying attitudes. Some like the Smiths who were originally O'Gowans gave me pause when I came upon this in Burke's *General Armory*: "James Smith was descended from Hugh O'Gowan of Ballygowan, and it appears that the name O'Gowan (Gabhan, "a blacksmith") was anglicised after the Battle of the Boyne, in which Capt. James O'Gowan was killed on the side of James II, and his son Philip Smith, *alias* O'Gowan, outlawed … There is a family tradition that the Chief of the O'Gowans commanded at a battle which was fought at night by the light of torches" but I don't think this is our branch of that family. Some like the Ryves and Thomases possibly had not yet arrived in Ireland and it is not certain what attitude a Welsh family like the Thomases would have taken to this conflict … and at the end of this little excursion I realize I cannot say exactly where people stood because very few people in 1690 were truly informed and truly free to follow their own independent carefully-considered beliefs about how they would like to be governed.

Nor was it a clear-cut Catholic-Protestant struggle. James Connolly wrote in *The Re-*

Conquest of Ireland, "King James II of England, being insecure upon his throne, sought alliance with the French Monarch.

"When, therefore, the war took place in Ireland, King William fought, aided by the arms, men, and treasuries of his allies in the league of Augsburg, and part of his expenses at the Battle of the Boyne was paid for by His Holiness, the Pope. Moreover, when news of King William's victory reached Rome a *Te Deum* was sung in celebration of his victory over the Irish adherents of King James and King Louis. Similar celebrations were also held at the great catholic capitals of Madrid and Brussels."

I do not blame Yeats in the least for fudging this question. And however you look at it neither monarch showed much sign of caring about the ordinary people of Ireland …

* * * * *

June 14: Harriet Beecher Stowe
June 15: Amy Clampitt
June 16: John Wesley
Adam Smith
June 17: Henry Lawson
John Wesley
June 18: George Essex Evans
June 19: Ethel Pedley
Blaise Pascal
June 20: Vikram Seth
June 21: Jean-Paul Sartre
Reinhold Neibuhr
June 22: Erich Maria Remarque
June 23: Frank Dalby Davidson
June 24: Ambrose Bierce
Johann Gutenberg

* * * * *

When Blake Morrison wrote a novel he called *The Justification of Johann Gutenberg* he admitted quite frankly, "Gutenberg himself remains a shadowy figure. The date of his birth is uncertain. None of his printed works bears his name. No portrait of him was done in his lifetime (later paintings and statues show him with a beard, but it is now thought unlikely he had one). The little that scholars do know they have deduced from a handful of legal documents (concerning business disputes, loans, annuities, interest defaults, wine-tax payments and a breach of promise suit) and from the forty-nine surviving copies of his Bible. For much of this novel, I have had to make things up."

But we do know he created beautiful books which have lasted 600 years. Morrison has Gutenberg say, "Words are my only children – the only heirs I can trust to preserve my name. I have given my life to seeding them, raising them, hardening them, straightening them, watching them grow. Now, in return, while there is time, I ask their help. One final kindness, that is all. A favour owed to me and to these ghosts I here address you my readers, my brothers and sisters in tribulation, the unseen visitors of time to come.

"I would like it to be known what I have done. Come, words, and stake my claim for me."

We don't know the year, the month, or the day when Gutenberg was born in the German city of Mainz. But you can't have an anniversary without a year to date it from. And you can't have a celebration without a day to celebrate it on. So people in Mainz gave him a birthday: 24th June 1400. We don't know what he looked like as nobody ever painted him, or described him, but I think we can assume he was neither very tall or very short, neither exceedingly handsome or remarkably ugly or someone might have remarked on the fact. He was probably an average man in most ways. Just one thing stood out: he was a meticulous

and determined craftsman.

Other times and places had produced wood blocks for printing, metal and porcelain for stamps and seals, baked clay to keep and pass on records. But his idea was moveable type. Punched letters and symbols which could be fitted into a frame and taken out again and re-used for something different. It sounds simple but Chinese paper was too soft and European paper too hard so he solved this problem by damping the paper slightly. The letters required great skill in their manufacture but as a goldsmith he was used to doing careful precise work. Getting the ink right, the pressure of the press … there were many problems to solve.

He was not a lone genius in an attic. He worked with other men who had useful skills or money to invest. Nor was he working on his printing press for the good of humanity. John Man in his *The Gutenberg Revolution* writes, "If printing was one of the foundations for the modern world, then – I had supposed – Gutenberg had to be a selfless genius, in the vanguard of modernity, dedicated to improving the world, eager to bring to it the benefits of new knowledge.

"Not a bit. The truth, it now seems to me, is the precise opposite of my preconceptions. Gutenberg's aim, I believe, was that of a businessman striving to be the first to cash in on the continent-wide market offered by the Catholic Church. It was as an early capitalist that he was a modernist. But that aim could be fulfilled only if he could do something thoroughly reactionary, and unify a divided Christendom. It is one of history's greater ironies that he achieved exactly the reverse of his intentions. Having succeeded at last, with an astounding display of brilliance and perseverance, he almost lost everything to his partners and colleagues, only by the skin of his teeth avoiding poverty and obscurity. And having produced one of the greatest of Christian publications, he ushered in a revolution – the Reformation – that blew Christian unity apart for ever."

He began by printing 'indulgences'. Whenever the Catholic Church needed money its people could buy a piece of paper with their name entered which for a small sum would guarantee them forgiveness of their sins and the chance to bypass purgatory. Instead of these being laboriously written by hand they could now be printed in their thousands. It was indulgences which infuriated Martin Luther and led to his famous criticism, his 'protest', against the Catholic Church and his eventual departure and creation of a new church, the beginning of the Protestant Revolution.

Gutenberg was not a writer, other than some letters, orders, records, writs, but rather the man who wanted to turn the words of others into a beautiful and useful artifact. His first major project was what we now call the Gutenberg Bible. And in so doing, as Man says, "The result, of course, was a new world of communication. Suddenly, in a historical eye-blink, scribes were redundant. One year, it took a month or two to produce a single copy of a book; the next, you could have 500 copies in a week (500 was an average print run in the early days). Distribution was still by foot or hoof, but that didn't matter. A copied book just sits there, waiting for readers, one by one; a successful printed book is a stone dropped in water, its message rippling outwards to hundreds, thousands, millions.

"Hardly an aspect of life remained untouched. If rulers could bind their subjects better, with taxes and standardised laws, subjects now had a lever with which to organise revolts. Scholars could compare findings, stand on each other's shoulders and make better and faster sense of the universe. Gutenberg's invention made the soil from which sprang modern history, science, popular literature, the emergence of the nation-state, so much of everything by which we define modernity."

* * * * *

June 25: George Orwell
Frigyes Karinthy
June 26: Pearl Buck
Colin Wilson

June 27: Lafcadio Hearn
Mildred J. Hill

* * * * *

Dorothy Sayers wrote in her Oxford novel *Gaudy Night*, 'A punt went past, full of silent, sun-stupified people, with a plop and a tinkle alternately as the pole entered and left the water; then a noisy party with a gramophone bawling "Love in Bloom"; then a young man in spectacles, by himself in a canoe, and paddling as though for dear life; then another punt, paddled at a funeral pace by a whispering man and a girl; then a hot and energetic party of girls in an outrigger; then another canoe, driven swiftly by two Canadian undergraduates kneeling to their work; then a very small canoe, punted dangerously by a giggling girl in a bathing-dress, with a jeering young man crouched in the bows, costumed, and obviously prepared, for the inevitable plunge; then a very sedate and fully-clothed party in a punt—mixed undergraduates being polite to a female don; then a bunch of both sexes and all ages in an inrigger with another gramophone whining "Love in Bloom" … And here was Miss Harriet Vane, gone suddenly sympathetic, afraid to move for fear of waking him and savagely resenting the approach of a boatload of idiots whose gramophone was playing (for a change) "Love in Bloom."

I assumed that she had created the title merely for comic effect but no—at the other end of the world Alan Marshall in Melbourne was writing of the slow decline of a Collingwood boot factory in *How Beautiful Are Thy Feet*: "You should see the swell line that lives over at Annie's place," said a little girl, busily knitting. She constantly hummed "Love in Bloom." The girls called her "Bloom."

"'Im! I know 'im," said the girl in the jumper, scornfully. "I met 'im at a dance. 'E's a couple of left legs; a real lead boot. 'E trod all over me."

"He's good looking, anyway. I don't care if they can't dance," said "Bloom" decidedly."

So 'Love in Bloom' was obviously a Depression-era song which got around. So what made it so popular? A catchy tune? Words to cheer listeners up?

Another ditty I have pondered on appears in James Joyce's *Ulysses*:

O, the poor little fellow
Hi-hi-hi-hi-his legs they were yellow
He was plump, fat and heavy and brisk as a snake
But some bloody savage
To graize his white cabbage
He murdered Nell Flaherty's duckloving drake.

But an earlier version appears in Somerville and Ross's *The Irish R.M.* where the RM (Resident Magistrate) takes a visitor to a cottage in the west of Ireland. "Someone named Paddy was called upon to sing the song about Ned Flaherty's drake.

"Sing up, Paddy boy, for the gentleman! Arrah, what ails ye, Paddy! Don't be ashamed at all!"

"'tis a lovely song, your honour, sir!" (this to my brother-in-law).

"Is it an ancient song?" I heard Maxwell inquire with serious eagerness.

"It is, your honour; 'twas himself made it up lasht year, and he sings it beautiful! Oh! Paddy's a perfect modulator!" "

So Paddy bashfully gets up and sings:

The poor little fella',
His legs they were yella',
His bosom was blue, he could swim like a hake;
But some wicked savage,
To grease his white cabbage,
Murdered Ned Flaherty's beautiful dhrake!

So the curious question is: was it an old ditty which first Somerville and Ross and then Joyce adapted to their own ends—or did Somerville and Ross create it and Joyce later took it for his own purposes in *Ulysses?*

*

A filly foaled near New York in 1845 called Flora Temple (by Bogus Hunter from Madame Temple) is, according to Barry and Alan Wood in *At the Track*, the star of a song we still sing. She raced not as a flat racer, despite her breeding, but in harness. Ninety-five wins, twelve seconds and one third out of 110 starts. She was the first horse to trot a mile in less than 2 minutes and 20 seconds, and died after a long and busy life in 1877.

You still can't place her?

As a foal she had her tail docked, an unpleasant habit now banned in most countries, and this 'bob-tailed nag' did some of her racing on impromptu dirt courses on the outskirts of towns where poor labourers lived in shanties. These were called camp towns.

So we put together Camptowns, a bob-tailed nag, the famous little mare Flora Temple, and add in the song-writing genius of Stephen Collins Foster and we get that evergreen favourite 'Camptown Races':

The Camptown ladies sing this song,
Doo-da, Doo-da,
The Camptown racetrack's five mile long,
Oh de doo-da day Or as we sang it when I was young in the mistaken belief it was a 'Negro' song: De Camptown ladies sing dis song …

*

"The role of the piano in Australian history was not confined to its usefulness as a barometer of class consciousness. It was not a passive partner in the making of the Australian legend but an active participant, as an examination of the origins of 'Waltzing Matilda' will reveal.

The story began in Victoria in 1865 when Alice Macpherson played the piano for the bushranger, Morgan, the night before he was shot. Shortly afterwards, the Macphersons escaped from the selection Acts and took up a new property, Oondooroo, in Queensland. In 1895 'Banjo' Paterson holidayed there and heard a tale that provided him with the theme for his ballad. But, argues John Manifold, 'nothing might have come of it if fate had not thrown a piano and singer in his way'. With the assistance of Alice Macpherson's daughter, Christina, Paterson produced the work that has come as close as any other to being a national anthem. Yet, despite its theme, it was written around a squatter's piano, where, Manifold tells us, 'A Thousand Miles Away', 'The Freehold on the Plain' and 'the Eumerella Shore' were probably also written.

"While it is true, as Russel Ward pointed out, that 'Waltzing Matilda' epitomises his mythical Australian's attitude to authority, it became 'the most popular of Australian folk-songs' only because it received the imprimatur of Thomas Wood, a pianoforte examiner from the Trinity College of Music. Wood's visit took place in 1932. Before then, 'Waltzing Matilda' had been considered impolite. But what, asks Covell, 'could be more respectable than an English music examiner?'

"Thus we are forced to ask: what kind of nationalism is it that must await the visit of an English music examiner before its anthem can become accepted? And what kind of radicalism is it that gives such a prominent place to pianos?"

A New Britannia by Humphrey McQueen.

At first glance it seems a very pertinent question. But then I thought on radicalism elsewhere and it always seems, sooner or later, to depend on guns. Perhaps pianos *are* better after all.

* * * * *

But surely the most popular song ever penned is that one which thousands of people

round the world are singing right this moment as they celebrate someone's birthday? And yet it had a very modest genesis.

I came upon this listing for Patty Smith Hill in *American Literary Anecdotes* by Robert Hendrikson: "Patty Hill and her sister Mildred J. Hill, two kindergarten and Sunday school teachers, wrote a book entitled *Song Stories for the Sunday School*. One of the songs had the lyrics "Good morning to you, good morning to you, good morning dear children, good morning to you." Later the sisters kept the same melody and changed the words to "Happy birthday to you, Happy birthday to you …" Today heirs of the Hill sisters get their share of the over one million dollars in royalties that the song, copyrighted in 1935, brings in every year, and "Happy Birthday To You" is one of the two most popular songs in the English language (the other being Robert Burns "Auld Lang Syne")."

I assume royalties were paid when it was used at public functions, such as Marilyn Monroe singing it for JFK, though I've never come across anyone even aware that royalties might be required of them when they sang it at a party … have we all unwittingly been cheating the copyright holders … except that 1935 would suggest that the family have long since let the little jingle wing free …

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June 28: Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Luigi Pirandello
June 29: Antoine de Saint-Exupery
June 30: Czeslaw Milosz
July 1: Dorothea MacKellar
George Sand
July 2: Hermann Hesse
Thomas Cranmer
July 3: Franz Kafka
July 4: Fay Zwicky
July 5: George Borrow
July 6: Bessie Head
Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso)
July 7: John Kells Ingram
Lion Feuchtwanger
July 8: Fergus Hume
July 9: Ann Radcliffe
Barbara Cartland
July 10: Marcel Proust
Nikola Tesla
John Calvin
July 11: E. B. White
July 12: Pablo Neruda
Henry David Thoreau
July 13: John Clare
Erno Rubik
July 14: F. R. Leavis

* * * * *

Ilana Snyder in *The Literacy Wars* writing about different approaches to teaching kids to read says, "Even Matthew Arnold, the poet and cultural critic, whose ideas are closely associated with the cultural heritage approach, criticised rote learning (ie memorising without understanding) for exactly this reason. As an inspector of schools, he observed that children could pass examinations in reading and writing without really knowing how to read and write. However, Arnold was not opposed to a transmission model of instruction, sometimes

referred to these days as ‘the sage on the stage’ as distinct from ‘the guides on the side’ in a constructivist model of teaching and learning. Arnold believed that lectures to students by experts would ensure that the treasures of the literary culture would be passed from one generation to the next.

“Matthew Arnold was the advocate of a new culture that would pursue perfection through knowledge and understanding of ‘the best that has been thought and said in the world’. He attacked the taste and manners of nineteenth century English society, particularly those of the ‘vulgar’ middle class. Arnold believed that intellectual life is best served by objective criticism that is free from personal, political and practical considerations, and his aim was to promote knowledge of high culture in the community. Largely due to his influence, by the turn of the century English shifted from a subject focused on the mechanical acquisition of literacy skills to one centred on cultural heritage and the humanist concern with morality, as expressed through literature. Arnold’s critical and theoretical writings were then developed and given new forms by F. R. Leavis and the New Critics.”

She goes on to say, “Leavis’ influence, which privileged an exclusive body of literature, remained powerful in English departments in universities and in English curricula in secondary schools until the 1960s.”

*

“I only met Leavis once and that was fortunately a brief encounter. During my tour of ‘the red brick universities’, I came in the course of my progress to York, where I was delighted to be met at the station and taken to the university by David and Philippa Moodie, two young colleagues whom I had known and liked in Australia. On the way they explained that their students were in the middle of studying Pope’s *Dunciad* and that as a matter of interest they had arranged for me to talk about and read from my own satire on modern critics *Dunciad Minor*, ‘particularly’, David added, ‘your attack on F. R. Leavis.’ I felt no twinge of warning until we reached the English department common room where I was introduced to Brockbank, the professor. He immediately turned to a small figure I had noticed on the sofa who leaped to his feet. ‘Oh Hope’, said Brockbank. ‘You’ve met Leavis before, of course.’

“I hadn’t, but at once saw the appalling treachery of my young friends. They had deliberately arranged a confrontation between the two of us. The passages where I made elaborate and contemptuous fun of Leavis’s revision of the canon of English literature—particularly his dismissal of Scott and Fielding and his idolising of D. H. Lawrence—sprang to my mind. Leavis was certain to object furiously. It would have been a ding-dong row and I was to be the victim. We shook hands in the common room and Leavis’s first words were, ‘I’m so much looking forward to hearing you read tomorrow.’ ‘Are you indeed?’ I thought. ‘Well, I’m not.’

“Then an extraordinary thing happened. We had still an hour to dinner. Drinks were handed round. I sat on the sofa beside Leavis and Brockbank sat opposite him and we listened to him as he talked for the whole hour. And it was quite fascinating. Leavis, who had retired long before and was now reaching the end of his course, seemed to have lost control of connected thinking about literature. He went from subject to subject apparently at random, with Brockbank and me prompting when he paused which he rarely did. He quoted at length and with ease an unexpected illumination of texts he was speaking about. He never drifted into controversy and seemed to be wandering among writers he enjoyed. I was completely charmed and not a little surprised. He did not join us at dinner and I spent a troubled night. There seemed no way out of an embarrassing meeting next day. I could not change the topic that had been chosen for me because the passages for discussion had already been copied and distributed to the students. I would just have to face it. Before breakfast I went down to the common room to read the papers, and there was Leavis sitting on the sofa as before. I thought, I had better tell him now rather than let it break on him in the classroom, when he may well think the arrangement was mine.

"As soon as he saw me he jumped up saying, 'Oh, Hope, I'm terribly sorry but I won't be able to come to your reading. I've just had word that Queenie is really quite ill and I have to go back at once. The taxi has just arrived.' He left and my relief can be imagined.

"I had never had much regard for Queenie Leavis as a critic. She was a Leavisite, a breed I detested for their arrogance and narrow-mindedness. Leavis could be arrogant and narrow-minded too, at times—I think particularly of his perverse estimate of Milton and Spenser—but he could rise far above his arrogance and perversity. On this one occasion, though, my gratitude to Queenie was boundless. It was only later that I learned that Leavis's 'quite ill' meant that she was dying.

"My last 'red brick' was University College, London. When I arrived I found that the lecture I was to give clashed with one that Leavis was to give on Wordsworth. Hardly anyone came to my talk. They all went to hear Leavis. But the students came to see me before they did and apologised saying they had been advised to hear Leavis because the subject was on their course. Mine was not, though I can't remember what it was about: Australian literature, I think. The young men said they had arranged an informal party for me after Leavis had gone.

"Stephen Spender was one of the few who came to hear me. I had met him before in Australia and afterwards I told him of my encounter in York. 'You were lucky', he said. 'He's a very unforgiving man and can be extremely nasty, as I know.' 'What do you mean?' I asked. 'It was some years ago when Leavis was still in Cambridge. I had been invited to address a student literary group and was met on the station at Cambridge by a number of the students, very embarrassed, who said, 'We are afraid your talk is off, Mr Spender.' 'Oh', I said, 'why?' 'Dr Leavis has forbidden it. His words were "Spender shall not speak in Cambridge!" 'Well', I said, 'I know you meet in Downing College where Leavis resides, but could we not arrange to meet somewhere else? Cambridge is a big place.' 'No', they said, 'not big enough and Dr Leavis will get to hear of it and has threatened us, if we do.' 'What is the threat then?' 'He has made it quite clear that he will do his best to see we fail in our exams.' 'So', said Spender, 'I went back by the next train.'

"I knew enough of the feuding between scholars in the older universities and the way they took it out on their students to see what was meant. I was outraged at Spender's quiet acceptance of Leavis's fantastically high-handed behaviour but no doubt he was right.

"After my lecture, the students entertained me as they had promised. I asked them what the Wordsworth lecture had been like. They confirmed the impression of Leavis that I gathered in York. 'Well', said one of them, 'it was wonderful. He mentioned Wordsworth in his first sentence and again in his conclusion. Otherwise the subject was not raised. It would be difficult for the rest to say what subjects were *not* raised. We got the impression that he had led us by winding paths through the whole world of literature, leaping from topic to topic. It was not really coherent, though, and we enjoyed it immensely.'

"These impressions seemed to be of two very different men. I do not pretend to distinguish between them or to say which was the 'real' Leavis. It seems better to set them down side by side and leave it at that."

A. D. Hope in *Chance Encounters*.

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George V. Higgins in *On Writing* says of Leavis's American counterpart, "Edmund Wilson wrote a great deal. Most of his writing can be safely cited as explaining and eminently justifying his reputation as the leading American literary critic of this century. He had: a sharp mind; a generally foul disposition; no patience whatsoever for any kind of shilly-shallying, mushy thinking, or wishy-washy whining; and utter disdain, verging on contempt, for any hurt his harsh words might cause. In other words he was born to be a literary critic, there being in his lifetime (1895-1972) few attractive employment opportunities in the U.S. for professional torturers."

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"Of the poem ('Ode to the West Wind') Shelley writes, 'This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.'

"The poem was severely criticized by F. R. Leavis in *Revaluation,* Chatto and Windus. Desmond King-Hele, in his *Shelley, his Thought and Work*, Macmillan, writes: 'An admired critic, F. R. Leavis, completely misinterpreted the lines because he failed to distinguish between the fractostratus and cirrus clouds.' The stanza being discussed in detail was Stanza II, and the best introduction to this stanza is to read the article on 'Clouds' in a good encyclopedia, preferably one with pictures."

A Reader's Guide to The Poet's Pen by A. K. Thomson.

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The name Leavis pops up still. But has his influence, like that of Edmund Wilson, on what constitutes 'good' literature waned? And perhaps more importantly—do we actually *need* literary critics to tell us what deserves to be read and what we should be ashamed to be seen reading on the bus …

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July 15: Iris Murdoch
Jacques Derrida
July 16: Christopher Koch
Mary Baker Eddy
July 17: Christina Stead
July 18: Clifford Odets
July 19: Gottfried Keller
A. J. Cronin
July 20: Louisa Anne Meredith
July 21: Ernest Hemingway
July 22: Tom Robbins
July 23: Raymond Chandler
July 24: E. F. Benson
Robert Graves
July 25: Josephine Tey
July 26: Aldous Huxley
July 27: Hilaire Belloc
July 28: Beatrix Potter
July 29: Booth Tarkington
July 30: Emily Brontë
July 31: Primo Levi
August 1: Herman Melville
August 2: Ernest Dowson
Geoffrey Dutton
August 3: Rupert Brooke
P. D. James
August 4: Knut Hamsun
August 5: Guy de Maupassant
James Hal Cone
August 6: Jon Middleton Murry
Matthew Davenport Hill

August 7: Dean Farrar
August 8: Marjorie Rawlings
August 9: John Dryden
Izaak Walton
Jean Piaget
August 10: Laurence Binyon
August 11: Enid Blyton
August 12: Robert Southey
August 13: Fidel Castro
August 14: John Galsworthy
August 15: Thomas De Quincey
Sri Aurobindo

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"Of the pleasures and pains of opium much has been written. The ecstasies and horrors of De Quincey and the *paradis artificiels* of Baudelaire are preserved and interpreted with an art which makes them immortal, and the world knows well the beauty, the terror and the mystery of those obscure realms into which the inspired dreamer is transported. But much as has been told, no man has yet dared intimate the *nature* of the phantasms thus unfolded to the mind, or hint at the *direction* of the unheard-of roads along whose ornate and exotic course the partaker of the drug is so irresistibly borne. De Quincey was drawn back into Asia, that teeming land of nebulous shadows whose hideous antiquity is so impressive that 'the vast age of the race and name overpowers the sense of youth in the individual,' but farther than that he dared not go. Those who have gone farther seldom returned, and even when they have, they have been either silent or quite mad. I took opium but once – in the year of the plague, when doctors sought to deaden the agonies they could not cure. There was an overdose – my physician was worn out with horror and exertion – and I traveled very far indeed. In the end I returned and lived, but my nights are filled with strange memories, nor have I ever permitted a doctor to give me opium again."

H. P. Lovecraft in his story 'The Crawling Chaos' written with Winifred Virginia Jackson.

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"John's patience grew thin, and he called up more mercenaries, this time from Wales, but after the rebels had occupied London William Marshall and the Archbishop of Canterbury rode back and forth between king and rebels to effect a meeting and a truce. This eventually worked in the form of an agreed safe passage for all concerned to a wide Thames-side meadow called Runnymede.

"The meeting began on a glorious June day, and some say a thousand people attended. The twenty-five barons' or signatories' self-appointed task was to gain the king's agreement, seal and subsequent adherence to their charter of rights. Peace, it was hoped by the neutralists, would be the result. John hoped merely to gain time by affixing his seal and then ignoring it. The barons, believing he would either refuse to sign or sign and then renege, were ready for battle to follow.

"The charter, possibly the work of the archbishop himself and his legal advisers, formed a legal and constitutional document which bound the king and all his successors to fully respect the liberties of his subjects, as stated in the charter's sixty-three clauses. These included forty-nine specific grievances. Once the full text had been prepared in the Royal Chancery and sealed with the Royal Seal, copies of this Magna Carta were sent out all over the land."

Ranulph Fiennes in *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*.

He goes on to say four of the originals survive: two in the British Library and one each in Salisbury and Lincoln. He says, "Cynics like to point out that the barons were actually only

wanting an agreement to preserve their own baronial rights and to hell with the serfs."

I am sure that is true. But everything starts somewhere. The barons did not know their limited requests would lead on to the American Bill of Rights. They did not know that their charter would still be referred to eight hundred years later. How could they? Melvyn Bragg wrote in *12 Books That Changed The World*, "It has sixty-three clauses, sometimes called chapters, and inside the thicket of references strictly related to its own time it embodies one of the great ideas in the world – that government and society, liberties and rights, can be organised around a document and made to hold not by an individual, a despot, an emperor, or even a benevolent king, but by a piece of writing." And, "If there is one written text which through its long legal testing and its powerful mythic influence has shaped the world that free men and women aspire to, then it is Magna Carta."

Those twenty-five at Runnymede were:
Richard, Earl of Clare
William de Fors, Count of Aumale
Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Gloucester
Saer de Quincey, Earl of Winchester
Henry de Bohun, Earl of Hereford
Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk
Richard de Vere, Earl of Oxford
William Marshall, Junior
Robert Fitzwalter
Gilbert de Clare
Eustace de Vescey
Hugh Bigod
William de Mowbray
The Mayor of London
William deLanvallei
Robert de Ros
John de Lacy, Constable of Chester
Richard de Percy
John FitzRobert
William Malet
Geoffrey de Say
Roger de Montbegon
William of Huntingfield
Richard de Munfichet
William d'Aubigne of Belvoir. Spellings of their names vary a little.

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"It began, appropriately enough, outdoors—in a June-green meadow called Runnymede alongside the River Thames. The English barons who gathered there in 1215 forced King John to accept a lengthy list of concessions which came to be known, in the Latin in which it was written, as *Magna Carta*. Although the barons hardly thought of it in such terms, they were in fact dealing with ethical dynamite that revolutionaries five centuries later would call "natural rights." The tendency of this concept to take on expanded meaning is one of the most exciting characteristics of the liberal tradition. Whether this tradition should expand to include nonhuman interests—perhaps even nature as a whole—is the proposition under examination in the present volume.

"While it is easy to overstate and modernize the significance of *Magna Carta*, there are some reasons for regarding it as the cornerstone of liberty in Anglo-American culture. Set forth in this document for the first time was the idea that a certain segment of society, in this

case some twenty-five barons possessed rights by virtue of their existence, independent of the will of England's king. Clause thirty-nine, for example, prohibited imprisonment or banishment except in accordance with law and as a result of the judgment of one's peers. *Magna Carta* placed other limitations on the royal power to tax property and confiscate land without the consent of the Great Council. The concept of natural rights, and even some of the charter's wording, later figured in the making of the American government. Of course the barons at Runnymede would have been appalled at such extension of their principles. They had no conception of the rights of anyone save a male in the upper crust of English nobility. But time was on the side of ethical expansion."

The Rights of Nature by Roderick Nash.

I can remember saying to Peter Jones that some of the barons suffered for their stand and he responded that that was nonsense because King John died soon after signing. But that wasn't correct. I thought he died two years later, and kings have managed to fit a lot of nastiness into two years, but when I went to check I found I wasn't quite right. John was born 24th December 1166 and died 19th October 1216. So he died 16 months after signing—or, strictly speaking, as he may not have been terribly literate, fixing his seal. And kings can and did fit a lot of nastiness into 16 months.

I found that I had barons, King John, and several of his advisers all in the family tree. I do not think that King John was 'bad' or 'evil' but just one of many rulers who have stubbornly refused to devolve, share, reduce or otherwise change the dynamics of their situation. His advisers, most of whom were born in France, have been given some of the blame and it is certainly doubtful if they were well tuned to the mood in England.

But it was certainly King John who set about the barons in a spiteful attempt to show them he still had the power to make their lives very uncomfortable. Take for instance Saher de Quency, Earl of Winchester. *The Complete Peerage* says, "he was with the confederate barons against the King at Stamford; and in June 1215 he was one of the 25 men chosen to enforce obedience to Magna Carta. With the other baronial leaders, he was excommunicated by the Pope, Dec. 1215; and early in 1216 he went, with Robert Fitzwalter, to invite Prince Louis to England. His lands were therefore seized by the Crown and later granted to William Marshal, s. of the Earl of Pembroke."

Excommunication might not seem a terrible event to people now but back then it was seen by many people as their passport to hell. It took courage not to be deterred …

And the book goes on to say, "Matthew Paris says, under 1213, that Saher was especially hated by the King. He was ordered, 23 Oct. 1214, to restore the castles of Canfield and Hedingham to Robert de Vere, 23 June 1215, at Runnymede, to hand over Fotheringhay Castle, of which he had the custody, to David, Earl of Huntingdon."

And the question of allegiances was made so much more complicated because some of these men had lands in both France and England, and they had mostly (or their fathers) been caught up in the wars between Stephen and Matilda. John, grandson of Matilda, had no love for those who had supported Stephen.

Robert Morrison in *The English Opium Eater*, a biography of Thomas De Quincey queries whether he did in fact descend from Saher de Quency because the family had been calling themselves plain Quincey for some generations and it was his mother who took back the De. I think this is probably a red herring. Many Norman families wavered between De This and Plain That. One generation would drop the De because it was a nuisance, confusing, or they wanted to be seen as more English than French. Another generation would bring it back because they thought it had more style, more class, that it hinted at something aristocratic. Some combined the two; De Leon became Dillon, De Burgh mostly became Burke but one branch of the family clung to De Burgh. There is a surname in English, Quince, referring to the fruit, but those who used Quincey or Quencey or Quincy were, I am sure, linking back to the De Quencey family originally Norman French, hailing from the town

of that name in France. And I have found it spelled Quincy, Quincey, Quency, Quencey …

De Quincey said of his long love affair with opium which he began taking initially for toothache: 'It is so long since I first took opium, that if it had been a trifling incident in my life, I might have forgotten its date: but cardinal events are not to be forgotten; and from circumstances connected with it, I remember that it must be referred to the autumn of 1804. During that season I was in London, having come thither for the first time since my entrance at college. And my introduction to opium arose in the following way. From an early age I had been accustomed to wash my head in cold water at least once a day: being suddenly seized with tooth-ache, I attributed it to some relaxation caused by an accidental intermission of that practice; jumped out of bed; plunged my head into a basin of cold water; and with hair thus wetted went to sleep. The next morning, as I need hardly say, I awoke with excruciating rheumatic pains of the head and face, from which I had hardly any respite for about twenty days.' A friend recommended opium, which could be bought over the counter. 'I do by no means deny that some truths have been delivered to the world in regard to opium: thus it has been repeatedly affirmed by the learned, that opium is a dusky brown in colour; and this, take notice, I grant: secondly, that it is rather dear; which also I grant: for in my time, East-India opium has been three guineas a pound, and Turkey eight: and, thirdly, that if you eat a good deal of it, most probably you must—do what is particularly disagreeable to any man of regular habits, viz. die.'

Jennifer Kloester in *Georgette Heyer's Regency World* says of it, "One of the most commonly used remedies during the Regency was laudanum. Also known as 'tincture of opium', it was made by mixing opium, alcohol and distilled water and was taken by men and women as a medication during illness, to calm their nerves or to help them sleep … Freely available in the form of pills, lozenges, liniments, plasters, wines, vinegars and mixtures with reassuring names like 'Godfrey's Cordial' and 'Mrs Winslow's Soothing Syrup', for many Regency women and men laudanum was a source of comfort and a release from the afflictions of nerves, boredom or unhappiness. It was also addictive" … but strangely enough it seems rarely to have caused death in adults, though it must have been a contributing factor in many accidents. Given the huge numbers of people taking it it would be interesting to know how often it was put down as a cause of death. The habit of dosing small children was far more dangerous …

Friedrich Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* wrote, "As our German peasants are cupped or bled at certain seasons, so do the English working people now consume patent medicines to their own injury and the great profit of the manufacturer. One of the most injurious of these patent medicines is a drink prepared with opiates, chiefly laudanum, under the name Godfrey's Cordial. Women who work at home, and have their own and other people's children to take care of, give them this drink to keep them quiet, and, as many believe, to strengthen them. They often begin to give this medicine to newly-born children, and continue, without knowing the effects of this 'heart's-ease', until the children die. The less susceptible the child's system to the action of the opium, the greater the quantities administered. When the cordial ceases to act, laudanum alone is given, often to the extent of fifteen to twenty drops at a dose. The Coroner of Nottingham testified before a Parliamentary Commission that one apothecary had, according to his own statement, used thirteen hundred-weight of laudanum in one year in the preparation of Godfrey's cordial. The effects upon the children so treated may be readily imagined. They are pale, feeble, wilted, and usually die before completing the second year. The use of this cordial is very extensive in all great towns and industrial districts in the kingdom."

De Quency goes on to say, 'I used often … after I had taken opium, to wander forth, without much regarding the direction or the distance, to all the markets, and other parts of London, to which the poor resort on a Saturday night, for laying out their wages.'; he spoke of it giving him the profoundest of reveries, the 'divinest state', a sense of mysticism,

something that brought his inner conflicts and tensions into harmony, what he called ‘infinite activities, infinite repose’; he spoke of life’s experiences melting into each other ‘as in some sunny, glorifying haze’. He also had nightmares. But as he had suffered in this way before taking opium it is hard to disentangle the impact. He gradually realized he was addicted. He managed at times to cut back but then it would increase again. ‘It will occur to you often to ask, why did I not release myself from the horrors of opium, by leaving it off, or diminishing it? To this I must answer briefly: it might be supposed that I yielded to the fascination of opium too easily; it cannot be supposed that any man can be charmed by its terrors. The reader may be sure, therefore, that I made attempts innumerable to reduce the quantity. I add, that those who witnessed the agonies of those attempts, and not myself, were the first to beg me to desist.’

But the amazing thing is perhaps that he continued an active life, he married, he had children, he continued to write and publish. But his life, inner and outer, always had a chaotic aspect. He lurched from poverty to brief affluence whenever he sold some writing and then back to poverty. The tolerant kindness and sympathy of his wife deserves its own story. He would undoubtedly have achieved more without opium in his life but would his completed writings have been better, different, more or less profound, more down-to-earth and less mystical …

And why was his book so popular? He is articulate, educated, at times lyrical, but it is also declamatory, self-indulgent, confused, even chaotic. Virginia Woolf said of it, “He is diffuse and redundant; he is aloof and dreamy and in bondage to the old pruderies and conventions. At the same time he was capable of being transfixed by the mysterious solemnity of certain emotions; of realising how one moment may transcend in value fifty years. He was able to devote to their analysis a skill which the professed analysts of the human heart—the Scotts, the Jane Austens, the Byrons—did not then possess.”

But, given that thousands of people were similarly encouraged to take opium for their aches and pains, and similarly became addicted, and probably blamed themselves for their inability to fight free, they probably saw it as a personal weakness, a lack of moral strength, a self-indulgence, a sense that they deserved their own misery, his book’s chronicle of how easy it was to get addicted, how tempting to continue on, and how difficult to end the love affair with opium must have resonated with many thousands of readers. Not his writing but his subject matter probably drew those readers.

Peter Ackroyd in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* trails this interesting side story: “ ‘There is one other curious and chance connection between murder and the Romantic Movement. De Quincey’s *Confessions* were first published anonymously, and one of those who falsely laid claim to their composition was Thomas Griffiths Wainewright. Wainewright was a critic and journalist of great refinement; he was one of the few men of his time, for example, to recognise the genius of the obscure William Blake. He even praised Blake’s last epic poem, *Jerusalem*, when all of his contemporaries considered it the work of a madman who had located Jerusalem itself in, of all places, Oxford Street! Wainewright was also a vociferous admirer of Wordsworth and the other “Lake Poets”, but he has one further distinction which was celebrated by Charles Dickens in “Hunted down” and by Bulwer-Lytton in *Lucretia*. Wainewright was an accomplished and malevolent murderer, a secret poisoner who dispatched members of his own family before turning his attention to chance acquaintances. He read poetry by day, and poisoned by night.’ ” Ackroyd’s story is fiction but it sounds the sort of claim Wainewright would make. And unlike the poor who robbed or murdered and got hanged for their pains Wainewright was merely transported to Tasmania. And did Wainewright want to claim the *Confessions* as his own so that he could claim some form of ‘diminished responsibility’?

But the other interesting thing I found when I tracked down a list of those twenty-five

keepers of the charter was that they weren't all barons, some were plain misters. They were rarely earls, none were dukes, there were certainly no princes there. In fact they were a far more mixed group than that constantly reiterated phrase 'the barons at Runnymede' would suggest. It did take considerable courage to demand that the king sign. They were all to some degree vulnerable. The one thing which probably stiffened their resolve, apart from the king's behaviour, was that they were often related in intricate ways.

The extraordinary thing about the Magna Carta was that it was the *barons* who brought him to account. Not dukes, not other kings, not Popes or other powerful figures. The barons were not at the top of the pecking order; they were vulnerable to the king's decisions. The importance is surely that people with less power made the brave attempt to make the more powerful accountable.

So what of those twenty-five men who put their lives and their property at risk? It would be an interesting exercise to follow the fortunes of all twenty-five in the aftermath of the signing. I have just looked at the one Thomas claimed as an ancestor: Saher (or Saer) De Quency, Earl of Winchester. But one day I might come back to look at some of the others.

* * * * *

Thomas De Quincey's most famous book influenced many people. Robert Morrison writes, "by the early 1840s the impact of De Quincey's writings, and especially of his *Confessions*, was remarkably extensive. In 1828, the French poet and playwright Alfred de Musset produced *L'Anglais, manguer d'opium*, a free translation of the *Confessions*. Just eighteen years old when the work was published, Musset followed the broad outline of De Quincey's tale, but omitted several passages, summarized others, and inserted a great deal." Hector Berlioz drew on De Quincey in his *Symphonie Fantastique*, Théophile Gautier brought out 'La Pipe d'Opium', Honoré de Balzac 'L'opium' while in Russia Nikolai Gogol drew on De Quincey, via Musset, for his 'The Nevsky Prospect'.

And in America Edgar Allan Poe was an admirer of De Quincey and placed opium addicts in several of his famous stories.

But Morrison points out that not all the influence was safely literary. Branwell Brontë, fascinated by De Quincey's book, followed its author into the opium addiction which contributed to his death.

And I can see an irony in De Quincey's life. He lived a chaotic eccentric existence, constantly needing to be rescued from poverty and debt by his mother, rarely managing to send articles, reviews or stories on time, seen as a notorious figure, living on the fringes of respectable society, so it comes as a surprise to learn that he was a deeply conservative supporter of the status quo, of the empire, of everything British, probably no more racist than any of his compatriots but certainly not the reformer or the radical I had half expected to find. And certainly not the man to take a decision which would make him deeply unpopular with authority or even with his peers …

Whereas that much earlier De Quency was sufficiently radical to risk his position and property to become a signatory to Magna Carta …

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August 16: Georgette Heyer
August 17: V. S. Naipaul
Marcus Garvey
August 18: Nettie Palmer
August 19: Frank McCourt
August 20: Robert Herrick
Pierre de Fermat
Paul Tillich
August 21: Will Ogilvie
August 22: Ray Bradbury

August 23: Geoffrey Faber
August 24: William Wilberforce

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Rowan Williams wrote a preface to *The Wilberforce Connection* by Clifford Hill:

"During the millennium year, there were several requests for people in public life to nominate the greatest Britons of the last 1.000 years. When I received such a request, I must say that I had not a moment's hesitation: William Wilberforce was my answer, because I couldn't think of any one Briton of the last millennium who has so changed the lives of so many for the better. It took Christianity a shamefully long time to fully wake up to the evils of slavery (though it is often forgotten how much people like John Wesley too hated it); but when Christian believers had finally recognised its incompatibility with the gospel, there was no holding back the energy and passion with which they pursued slavery to its abolition."

Curiously, a previous Archbishop of Canterbury wrote a preface to *Wilberforce: The Nation's Conscience* by Patrick Cormack. It seems to bear out the idea that Wilberforce remains a much admired figure in Britain.

Hill writes, "William Wilberforce, the redoubtable slavery abolitionist, is one who has suffered at the hands of some historians. His strong Christian faith does not sit easily in 21st-century culture. He himself was not an aristocrat and refused such honours, but nevertheless he moved easily in the highest social circles, which does not endear him to today's radicals any more than it did to those of his own day. Although he was born into a rich family his generous philanthropy and self-sacrificial lifestyle are sometimes overlooked as contributory factors in leaving him so impoverished towards the end of his life that his friends had to help him to find a place to live. Among the many different views of the work of Wilberforce and his Christian friends in the abolition of slavery is that which says that they were really irrelevant because the forces of change in the economy would soon have accomplished the abolition.

"The 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the year 2007 has generated a renewed interest in seeking the historical facts of the abolition campaign. This has resulted in attention being given to Wilberforce and the Clapham group of politicians, churchmen, lawyers, merchants and bankers with whom he was closely associated in the reform movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Wilberforce is today being seen by some who are deeply concerned about the moral and spiritual condition of 21st-century Britain, not simply as an interesting historical character, but rather as an icon of his age. He is being widely quoted in Christian magazines, on websites and in a variety of articles with enthusiastic eulogies that almost beatify him. Even his methods – changing the mindset of Parliament to achieve his political goals – are being studied by politicians for their relevance today.

"But what are the facts? Was Wilberforce a saint or a hypocrite? Did the Clapham Sect have any real influence in changing Britain in the pre-Victorian period? Did the Clapham Saints in Parliament exercise decisive reforming zeal or were they simply men of their times with a prime interest in maintaining the privileges of the rich and powerful, as some historians have maintained?"

(The Clapham sect included such people as John Venn, Zachary Macaulay father of Thomas Babington Macaulay, James Stephen, and Hannah More.)

"Wilberforce and other evangelicals linked with Clapham wanted to reach the poor, but they too believed that moral and spiritual reformation had to begin with the leaders of the nation. The only book that Wilberforce wrote showed in its title that his perspective was similar to that of More and Gisborne: *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country Contrasted with Real*

Christianity. He wrote this in 1797 more than ten years after his experience of conversion so that he had had plenty of time to formulate his beliefs."

"Wilberforce is best remembered for the abolition of slavery, but this was only the second of his twin objectives. His first objective was to change the moral climate of his generation. In fact the former would have been impossible without the latter. He had to change the values, both social and moral, of his fellow parliamentarians in order to achieve a majority vote for the abolition of slavery and in order to do this he had to convince the nation that slavery was a national sin. The Clapham Community realised that attempts at mere political reform without changing the hearts and minds of people at the same time were futile. It is here that Wilberforce's twin objectives were essentially two parts of a single whole."

The slave trade, according to Melvin Bragg in *12 Books That Changed the World*, "worked as a triangular system. Ships from Bristol and other English ports would take goods to Africa where they would be sold, the money used to buy slaves, up to sixty thousand a year, who would be transported to America or the West Indies, the ships protected by the Royal Navy. The slaves would be sold and the money used to bring back luxury goods, among them sugar, coffee, rum and tobacco." And the money it generated for the English economy … "In one year alone £17 million came into Liverpool … Fine houses were built in the slave-trading cities, fine churches erected, along with public buildings and monuments which still remain."

It was this massive overlap of vested interests William Wilberforce stood up to tackle in the House of Commons in May of 1789. His merchant family in Hull had money but had no aristocratic or powerful political connections. He was not an impressive man. James Boswell described him as looking like 'a shrimp'. Cormack says he was only about five foot tall with a frail physique, weak eyes, and a quiet personality. Nor was he an impressive orator. But he spoke for four hours trying to persuade the British Government to ban the trading in slaves. He tried to bring moral force to his arguments but he was not immediately successful. It took another eighteen years before Britain finally acted.

What he had was passion. And persistence.

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Robert West Howard in *Hoofbeats of Destiny* wrote, "just as Tom Paine's pamphlets had bellowed smoldering resentment to blazing revolt in 1776, a Maine professor's wife fuelled Abolition. Harriet Beecher was a preacher's daughter, ardently spreading good works of temperance and suffrage as she followed her father from Connecticut to Cincinatti. There she married Calvin Ellis Stowe, Professor of Sacred Literature at Papa's theological seminary. The Stowes joined the groups smuggling slaves north to Canada. Dr. Stowe transferred east to Bowdoin College, Maine. Despite six childbirths, housekeeping and temperance lectures, Mrs. Stowe seethed her indignations against slavery into a melodramatic novel. *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lowly* appeared serially in *The National Era*, an Abolitionist magazine, between June 5, 1851, and April 1, 1852, and was promptly published in two volumes by a Boston house. It sold three hundred thousand copies the first year. In 1853, Little Eva flapped cheesecloth wings up to the catwalks of a score of theaters; even Methodists by-passed Wesleyan dictum against play-going to join in hissing Simon Legree."

"Both Venn and Hannah More were criticised in their day for their commitment to offering education to the children of the poor. The current fear was that this would lead to revolution, and that it was not right to educate children above their station in life. The work of the Clapham Group was seen in their day to be revolutionary. After more than 30 years of organising schools, Hannah More looked back to the early days when she and her sisters began their work. In a letter to William Wilberforce in 1823 from Barley Wood, her home in

the Mendip Hills, she wrote,

> When I set up our schools I was considered by the farmers, and even by their betters, as the greatest enemy of their country. "We shan't have a boy to plough or a wench to dress a shoulder of mutton," was the general cry … But how the tide is turned!

She went on to express some anxiety concerning current trends in education.

> Our poor are now to be made scholars and philosophers. I am not the champion of ignorance, but I own I am alarmed at the violence of the contrast. The poor must not only read English but ancient history, and even the sciences are to be laid open to them.

Her real concern, however, was not so much about the social revolution that this extension of education to the working classes presaged, but the effect she feared it would have upon moral standards in the nation. In the same letter Hannah More wrote,

> In many schools, I am assured, writing and accounts are taught on Sundays. This is a regular apprenticeship to sin. He who is taught arithmetic on a Sunday when a boy, will, when a man, open his shop on a Sunday.

It can hardly be denied that this was a prophetic observation!"

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"To Macaulay, after, as an undergraduate in Cambridge, he shed his father's Toryism and fervent Evangelical Christianity, Whiggism was the foundation of his creed, though as always such a capacious term needs elaboration. Though he moved as a young man in the circle of the followers of Fox, he admired Burke and despised the republic theoreticians of the seventeenth century as impractical and arrogant would-be oligarchs, as he did their later counterparts in the French Revolution. His own Whiggism was bourgeois, incorporating enthusiasm for material progress and combining zeal for reform with veneration for England's long constitutional past."

John Burrow introducing Macaulay's *History of England*.

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William Wilberforce seems sometimes like a lone voice but in fact he had supporters inside and outside parliament. People like Thomas Clarkson, Quakers, Evangelical Anglicans, and ordinary people as they got to know of what was being done in their name.

Cormack also writes, "his causes were essentially philanthropic. He continued to argue for a humanising of the penal code, he campaigned against the Game Laws and for the chimney boys, and against flogging in the Army. On the very eve of his departure from Parliament he was busying himself in new projects, taking an active interest in the founding of the National Gallery and of the Trustee Savings Bank, and of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals."

His campaign against slavery suggests a radical, even a revolutionary, but this would be misleading. He was afraid of revolution. His approach was humane. Things were better prevented. People were better appealed to via their moral nature. He wanted change and innovation and care. He didn't want society turned upside-down. He didn't achieve any overnight successes but he did achieve much not least because he was not perceived as a threat to the England he served. This is not to disparage the profoundly important changes he championed. But he belongs in the great tradition of people who saw a particular wrong and worked to change it, not in the tradition of people who envisaged an old society being overturned and a, hopefully, better new society being created.

And his name also lives on in the William Wilberforce Trust (www.williamwilberforcetrust.org.uk) which helps trafficked women get their lives

restored and empowered.

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August 25: Thea Astley

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Jacqueline Kent wrote in *A Certain Style, Beatrice Davis, a literary life*:

"In 1949 a young journalist named Tom (T.A.G.) Hungerford, who had been in Japan with the occupation forces, brought to A&R the massive manuscript of his first novel *Sowers of the Wind*, a large part of which dealt with Australian soldiers in brothels. Beatrice was not at all fazed by the material: she liked the book immediately and accepted the manuscript, though she said A&R could not publish it that year. She suggested that Hungerford enter it in the *Sydney Morning Herald's* competition for an unpublished novel. He did, and was astonished when it won second prize."

(Michael Crouch in a biography of Hungerford, *The Literary Larrikin*, says, "Hungerford was always grateful to Davis for her help and encouragement. She had told him that their publication program was full for that year, 1949, but advised him to submit *Sowers of the Wind* for the *Sydney Morning Herald* Literary Award, which, much to his surprise, he won.")

First or second?

I suspect publishers would rush into print a novel manuscript which had just won a major prize. Second is promising but doesn't get potential readers waiting eagerly …

"A win in a major literary competition, a good-looking and talented young author and the book's subject should have propelled *Sowers of the Wind* rapidly into print. However, Beatrice now said she thought the book was 'awkward'. This *volte-face* after her initial enthusiasm does suggest that she was following the cautious company line, and also confirms the view that she was sometimes influenced by pressure from Cousins and his colleagues. She couldn't make a decision about publication immediately, she told Hungerford: did he have another novel? As it happened he did: *The Ridge and the River*, the story of an army patrol on Bougainville. Beatrice accepted that too.

Even though she had given him no definite answer about the publication date of *Sowers*, Beatrice was – rather unfairly – proprietorial about it. Clem Christesen, who was scouting for Heinemann in London, wanted to read it and Hungerford referred the request to Beatrice. She said he should do what he thought best, though having accepted *The Ridge and the River* the company certainly considered him an A&R author, despite the delay over *Sowers*. Beatrice's charm and skill in persuading authors to remain with A&R, sometimes against their own best interests, grew more practised with the passing years. She convinced Hungerford to sever any connection with Heinemann.

The Ridge and the River went calmly through the editorial process, though at one point Beatrice asked Hungerford whether he would 'clean it up a bit', as a matter of taste. When Hungerford challenged her, she sent him an alphabetical list, which began: 'A is for arsehole, B is for balls, C is for cunt …' and so on down the alphabet. Hungerford, highly amused, agreed to cut out most of these, though on the grounds of authenticity he jibbed at 'P for piss off'.

When it appeared in 1951, *The Ridge and the River* was widely praised for its unsentimentality and frankness – six years after the war it was evidently easier to accept what soldiers were really like – and Tom Hungerford was considered a writer to watch. And still A&R hung on to *Sowers of the Wind*. The next Hungerford novel they published was *Riverslake* (1953), dealing critically with the conditions faced by postwar immigrants. In 1954 A&R decided that Hungerford's reputation was now sufficiently robust to survive the publication of his first book, and *Sowers* sidled on to the market. But by then its time had passed. Several books about the occupation of Japan had now been published, and *Sowers* sank almost without trace."

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"It was a bookless house – like most Australian houses of its kind: in Marina's bedroom alone stood a small bookcase containing school and Sunday school prizes. Laura was very fond of reading, and as she dressed that morning had cast longing looks at these volumes, had evenly slyly fingered the glass doors. But they were locked. Breakfast over, she approached Marina on the subject. The latter produced the key, but only after some haggling, for her idea of books was to keep the gilt on their covers untarnished."

Henry Handel Richardson in *The Getting of Wisdom*.

Not only did writers rail against the people who never read anything but bush verse or comic strips, and who would never under any circumstances pick up anything vaguely literary—but then there was 'the bookless house'. They weren't always bookless. I can remember going into a house which had a lovely set of red-leather-bound classics, Homer and so on, but they were just there for show. No one ever took one out except to dust it.

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Beatrice Davis is especially remembered for her nurturing of women writers—but the same sense of constraint still came in to play. She was an editor with a long-established male-dominated firm with ideas on what they could and could not publish, what they could and could not sell, so that the relative freedom she managed to develop and the way in which she used this freedom to find new authors remains impressive, even if she could not see to it that they were paid what they were worth.

Noel Henriksen writing of Christopher Koch in *Island and Otherland* says, "The elegant and autocratic Miss Davis was Koch's editor" (for his *The Year of Living Dangerously*). "She could be acidic and acerbic, he found, but their association was congenial: her editing, he says, was impeccable, and he considers that she was 'the finest editor I've ever had: the sort they don't make any more." I've always thought this was his best book but how much did it owe to Beatrice Davis—or would it have been a best-seller even without her? That is the question that hangs over editors: that they are expected to wave some sort of magic wand …

Karen Lamb in *Thea Astley: Inventing Her Own Weather* says of their relationship, when Astley sent the manuscript of her first novel to 'the Editor' at A&R, "She could hardly have known from these first steps how blessed her foray into the world of literary publishing was to be. *Girl with a Monkey* attracted the attention of renowned literary editor Beatrice Davis, who exerted a strong editorial influence over the publishing house Angus & Robertson. The firm had originally established itself as a huge outlet for bookselling as well as a publisher of local titles. It was known for publishing many early Australian authors of the early 1900s. By the late 1930s the firm had opened offices in London, in a bid to expand internationally. This tended to concentrate decision-making overseas, and in 1956 A&R was still struggling with the conditions of an Anglicised book culture: management was inclined to dismiss Australian literature as a poor sales proposition. Davis persisted in a belief that the 'auld firm', as it was affectionately known, should publish quality fiction.

"In fact, she was eager to expand the list. She knew she could only break through these negative ideas if she could find 'fiction writers with imagination' and she was not blind to problems: too often, she felt, 'Australian novelists were documentary rather than creative writers', Davis suspected this new author was one of those commended in the *Herald* competition but she couldn't guess that she was about to find exactly the kind of imaginative fiction she'd been looking for. Publishing a first novel was always a big decision in-house, so Davis waited until after the readers' reports were in before writing to Astley. She delicately deleted the readers' references to 'obscure wordiness', perhaps already assuming a protective role towards this potential new author.

"Six weeks can be a long time for an author to wait in such circumstances but that was how long it took before the letter from A&R arrived at Dorset Street. Certain phrases lit up

the page ‘quality of the writing’, ‘evocative and individual’. Then came the crash: ‘rather too slight’ for publication. It was disappointing but when Astley read down to the last statement she was transfixed: ‘I think you could become a very good novelist indeed.’

“Davis had suggested a meeting. Surely this was better; almost, than publication? A week later Astley made her way into the A&R offices at 89 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Once there she found a petite, carefully groomed and very reserved Davis, working from a tiny and most unglamorous attic-sized space.

“To say the two women got on extremely well is an understatement. They were *simpatico* despite a fifteen-year age difference (Davis was then in her late forties). In no time they were exchanging likes and dislikes: their similar university studies in English and French, their shared ironic sense of humour and, even more compelling, their passion for music bordering on devotion. Both women played the piano with skill; each regretted she had not been able to pursue a career in music. Astley observed Davis’s constant smoking and thought it a great signature of personal style, forming an extension of natural expressiveness. More than twenty years later, when Davis was leaving A&R, Astley would write a tribute to her editor’s skill and their time spent together; and how ‘she has, indirectly, and simply by being Beatrice, taught me … much about living’.”

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August 26: Eleanor Dark
August 27: Theodore Dreiser
Georg Wilhelm Hegel
August 28: Johann von Goethe
T. Henry Moray
Elizabeth Ann Seton

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Thomas Reed Whissen in *Classic Cult Fiction* says, “it is Goethe’s *Werther* that is the first real cult book. It has all the elements that have since come to characterize cult literature, and it has them in generous amounts. In fact, it set the standard for judging what constitutes a cult book; most cult books since then can be easily measured against its contents. As time passed, of course, other cult books arose that spoke to new audiences about new concerns, and in the process some components of cult literature became subdued while others became exaggerated, but the common denominator that connects all cult literature is its debt to Romanticism.

“Regardless of plot or setting, characters or time periods, symbols or themes, all cult books have elements of romantic hope and longing as well as romantic disillusion and melancholy. They dream of a different, usually better, world—or they warn against the direction they see the world heading. Entertainment, amusement, diversion, distraction—these are not their goals. They expect, they invite, they demand response. For this reason, they usually have few neutral readers. One either rejects them as trivial or boring or falls under their spell and becomes a cult follower.”

Whissen goes on to say, “Cult fiction is a natural outgrowth of Romanticism, that revolutionary movement in art and thought that dethroned reason and objectivity in favour of emotion and intuition. Romanticism erupted first in Germany in the late eighteenth century, fuelled by the philosophy of Emmanuel Kant, whose *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) argued that the senses, not reason, were the conduit to the understanding of the essence of experience.

“However, already in 1774, seven years before the publication of Kant’s landmark treatise, young Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the man who was to become the Shakespeare of Germany, had laid bare his heart in a highly emotional little book called *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Never before in Western literature had a work of fiction inflamed an audience in quite the way this book did. Its effect on its readers was so extraordinary that the

book defied categorization.

"To describe *Werther* as a tale of unrequited love, overflowing with anguish and heartache and tragedy fails to distinguish it from countless similar books, none of which had the effect of visibly altering the behaviour of their readers, of becoming the book by which their readers ordered their lives, of actually tempting their readers to commit suicide. An alarming number of *Werther* enthusiasts did just that. And not just in Germany, or even Europe. Indeed the *Werther* cult spread all the way to China, where Werther dolls dressed in yellow coats and blue pants became a fad. Even Napoleon became a cult follower. It is said that he read the novel half a dozen times and even carried it into battle with him."

I can't help wondering just what it was comfortably-off Chinese took from the book and was the doll popular with children, which seems rather hard to believe unless it was merely seen as a pretty doll … or did it appeal to young men who would otherwise not be seen dead holding a doll?

The Young Werther loses out. Lotte, perhaps understandably, prefers to marry Albert and Werther indulges in a long orgy of self-pity culminating in suicide, shooting himself with Lotte's husband's pistol. Hard for Lotte to live with but perhaps a relief to know she won't ever have to see him again. Whissen says, "Werther's claim, then, that he is one of a few noble souls allowed to shed their blood for someone they love seems a less convincing reason for his suicide than the fear that anything less would be anticlimactic after all his grandstanding. But all that aside, the idea of sacrificing oneself by an act of magnificent blasphemy after exhausting every possible emotion and doing one's utmost to frustrate fate is intoxicatingly seductive to cult followers."

Too seductive? Ella Berthoud and Susan Elderkin in *The Novel Cure* write, "Literature is teeming with similarly tormented, foolish types, dying to die for the love of someone who never asked for it in the first place. And it's not a pretty sight. The worst of the bunch is Werther in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, the sensitive soul whose hopeless love of the peasant girl Lottie – already happily engaged to someone else when they meet – drives him to take his own life in despair. He even has the audacity to arrange for Lotte to send him the pistol that will be the instrument of his death. What cheek! Following this novel's first publication in 1774, sensitive, artistic types from Ostend to Naples began dressing in the signature outfit of young Werther and some killed themselves in copycat suicides with a pistol and an open book. It became known as the Werther effect. Goethe was quick to denounce the overblown emotions of the Romantic Movement – known as *Sturm und Drang* ('storm and stress') – from which his novel had sprung."

Peter Watson in *The German Genius* says, "*Werther* was almost immediately translated into every major European language, but the cult of the book went much wider. In Vienna there was a Werther fireworks display and in London there was Werther wallpaper. Meissen porcelain was designed, showing Werther scenes, and in Paris perfumières sold Eau de Werther. In Italy there was a Werther opera. Napoleon took the French translation with him on his Egyptian adventure in 1798 and, Hulse says, "when he met the author in 1808 he told him he had read the book seven times" (though he also added some criticisms).

"Not everyone shared the rapture. There were those who thought the novel risked sparking a suicide epidemic, but the fear of a wave of *Liebestode* seems to have been exaggerated. In Leipzig, nevertheless, the book was banned, as it was in Denmark. Elsewhere the book was derided, one critic suggesting sarcastically that "The smell of pancake is a more powerful reason for remaining in this world than all young Werther's supposedly lofty conclusions are for quitting it." Now that the dust has settled, *Werther* has come to be regarded as "the first great tragic novel, a work of exhilarating style and insight." "

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Ralph Waldo Emerson in *English Traits* writes of meeting William Wordsworth whom

he describes as “a plain, elderly, white-haired man, not prepossessing, and disfigured by green goggles.” I assume he means some kind of tinted spectacles as Wordsworth suffered from inflamed eyes. “I inquired if he had read Carlyle’s critical articles and translations. He said he thought him sometimes insane. He proceeded to abuse Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister heartily. It was full of all manner of fornication. It was like the crossing of flies in the air. He had never gone further than the first part; so disgusted was he that he threw the book across the room. I deprecated this wrath, and said what I could for the better parts of the book; and he courteously promised to look at it again.”

I had never thought of Goethe as *bawdy* but then Wordsworth as an old man was not notable for his easygoing tolerance; not least his refusal to allow his daughter to marry the man she wanted because he didn’t think a port wine merchant was good enough for his daughter. After seven years he gave in and let Dora marry but by then she was dying. Possibly he had an uneasy attitude to sexuality, particularly as it might manifest in his children’s lives.

Or perhaps Goethe’s books *were* full of fornication and I just hadn’t seen them in this light?

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If the young Werther was tempting readers towards suicide Goethe also influenced people in other directions. J. Cuthbert Hadden in *Master Musicians* wrote, “it is a fact that as a composer Schubert was as prolific when he was toiling away in his father’s school as at any period of his life. It was then that he wrote some of his finest songs, and there were also dramatic works, masses, symphonies, and miscellaneous pieces in sufficient number to have served as the life work of any ordinary artist. It was now that he composed the song which first made his name famous—the “Erl King.” Schubert had a perfect passion for German poetry, and set Schiller and Goethe with a prodigality truly marvellous. Somebody once said of him that if he had lived longer he would have set the whole of German literature to music.

“The story of the “Erl King” is worth telling. Seated one afternoon in his little room, Schubert found himself deep in the study of a volume of Goethe. He came to the “Erl King,” and as he read, every line of the words seemed to flow into strange unearthly music. The rushing sound of the wind and the terrors of the enchanted forest were instantly changed for him into realities, and seizing a pen he dashed down the song, as we have it now, in less time than an expert would take to make a “fair” copy of it.” … “The “Erl King” was sung for the first time in public in February 1819. Schubert had been trying to get a publisher for it, but the publishers would not look at it. The accompaniment was too difficult, they said, and the composer was almost unknown. At length the song was printed by subscription and published on commission. A hundred copies were subscribed for beforehand, and in nine months 800 copies were sold.” Franz Schubert was on his way to fame.

Young Werther in his first letters to his friend William sounds perfectly pleasant and sensible, a sort of Jonathon Harker character, but he sees Lotte surrounded by her little brothers and sisters and is enchanted. Her mother has died and she has taken over the care of the household. But she is already engaged to Albert. Werther, far from trying to persuade her to break her engagement, takes up the position of star-crossed lover. She marries Albert who is at first kind and friendly towards him but eventually becomes far less sanguine about Werther’s visits. In the end he asks Werther only to visit occasionally. Perhaps Werther truly did love Lotte but her achievement of happiness and peace of mind do not seem to be his motivating desires. But neither does he ever plot and plan, or even vaguely hope for Albert’s demise and Lotte’s freedom. Instead his increasingly self-indulgent letters show that Werther is in love with self-pity.

“Here, Lotte … see, it does not make me shudder to grasp the cold and terrible cup from which I shall drink the transport of death. You hand it to me, and I do not hesitate. All!

All of it! Thus all the wishes and hopes I had of life are fulfilled … to knock so coldly, so rigidly, on the brazen gates of death.

That I was granted the good fortune to die for you, Lotte, to sacrifice myself for you … I would die courageously, joyously, if only I could re-establish the repose and bliss of your existence. But oh, it has been granted to only a few noble men to shed their life's blood for those they love and, by their death, kindle a new life for their friends."

Poor Lotte!

The only excuse that can be made for Werther and his selfish behaviour is that he *is* young.

And what of the 'open book'? "He had drunk only one glass of the wine. *Emilia Galotti* lay open on his lectern."

This was a drama by German writer Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Did it also wallow in pity and suicide or was it a story of a woman who sensibly said 'Take a journey to the other side of the world and you will soon forget me' …

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August 29: John Locke
August 30: Mary Shelley
August 31: Charmian Clift
Maria Montessori
September 1: Edgar Rice Burroughs
September 2: Eugene Field
September 3: Will Dyson
September 4: Mary Renault
Richard Congreve
September 5: Arthur Koestler

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People still, occasionally, refer to Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* but nobody mentions his *The Thirteenth Tribe*. Why? One is fiction, true, and the other fact. But is it because it is a book full of indigestible and unwanted facts? He begins his book, "About the time when Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the West, the eastern confines of Europe between the Caucasus and the Volga were ruled by a Jewish state known as the Khazar Empire. At the peak of its power, from the seventh to the tenth centuries AD, it played a significant part in shaping the destinies of mediaeval, and consequently of modern Europe. The Byzantine Emperor and historian, Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913-959), must have been well aware of this when he recorded in his treatise on court protocol that letters to the Pope in Rome, and similarly those to the Emperor of the West, had a gold seal worth two solidi attached to them, whereas messages to the King of the Khazars displayed a seal worth three solidi. This was not flattery, but *Realpolitik*. 'In the period with which we are concerned,' wrote Bury, 'it is probable that the Khan of the Khazars was of little less importance in view of the imperial foreign policy than Charles the Great and his successors.'

"The country of the Khazars, a people of Turkish stock, occupied a strategic key position at the vital gateway between the Black Sea and the Caspian, where the great eastern powers of the period confronted each other. It acted as a buffer protecting Byzantium against invasions by the lusty barbarian tribesmen of the northern steppes – Bulgars, Magyars, Pechenegs, etc. – and, later, the Vikings and the Russians. But equally, or even more important both from the point of view of Byzantine diplomacy and of European history, is the fact that the Khazar armies effectively blocked the Arab avalanche in its most devastating early stages, and thus prevented the Muslim conquest of Eastern Europe. Professor Dunlop of Columbia University, a leading authority on the history of the Khazars, has given a concise summary of this decisive yet virtually unknown episode:

The Khazar country …lay across the natural line of advance of the Arabs. Within a few years of the death of Muhammad (AD 632) the armies of the Caliphate, sweeping northwards through the wreckage of two empires and carrying all before them, reached the great mountain barrier of the Caucasus. This barrier once passed, the road lay open to the lands of eastern Europe. As it was, on the line of the Caucasus the Arabs met the forces of an organized military power which effectively prevented them from extending their conquests in this direction. The wars of the Arabs and the Khazars, which lasted more than a hundred years, though little known, have thus considerable historical importance. The Franks of Charles Martel on the field of Tours turned the tide of Arab invasion. At about the same time, the threat to Europe in the east was hardly less acute…The victorious Muslims were met and held by the forces of the Khazar kingdom…It can…scarcely be doubted that but for the existence of the Khazars in the region north of the Caucasus, Byzantium, the bulwark of European civilization in the east, would have found itself outflanked by the Arabs, and the history of Christendom and Islam might well have been very different from what we know."

Koestler goes on to say, "What is in dispute is the fate of the Jewish Khazars after the destruction of their empire, in the twelfth or thirteenth century. On this problem the sources are scant, but various late mediaeval Khazar settlements are mentioned in the Crimea, in the Ukraine, in Hungary, Poland and Lithuania. The general picture that emerges from these fragmentary pieces of information is that of a migration of Khazar tribes and communities into those regions of Eastern Europe – mainly Russia and Poland – where, at the dawn of the Modern Age, the greatest concentrations of Jews were found. This has led several historians to conjecture that a substantial part, and perhaps the majority, of eastern Jews – and hence of world Jewry – might be of Khazar, and not of Semitic origin."

"The far-reaching implications of this hypothesis may explain the great caution exercised by historians in approaching this subject – if they do not avoid it altogether. Thus in the 1973 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* the article 'Khazars' is signed by Dunlop, but there is a separate section dealing with 'Khazar Jews after the Fall of the Kingdom', signed by the editors and written with the obvious intent to avoid upsetting believers in the dogma of the Chosen Race:

The Turkish-speaking Karaites [a fundamentalist Jewish sect] of the Crimea, Poland, and elsewhere have affirmed a connection with the Khazars, which is perhaps confirmed by evidence from folklore and anthropology as well as language. There seems to be a considerable amount of evidence attesting to the continued presence in Europe of descendants of the Khazars.

"How important, in quantitative terms, is that 'presence' of the Caucasian sons of Japheth in the tents of Shem? One of the most radical propounders of the hypothesis concerning the Khazar origins of Jewry is the Professor of Mediaeval Jewish History at Tel Aviv University, A. N. Poliak. His book *Khazaria* (in Hebrew) was published in 1944 in Tel Aviv, and a second edition in 1951. In his introduction he writes that the facts demand –

a new approach, both to the problem of the relations between the Khazar Jewry and other Jewish communities, and to the question of how far we can go in regarding this [Khazar] Jewry as the nucleus of the large Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe … The descendants of this settlement – those who stayed where they were, those who emigrated to the United States and to other countries, and those who went to Israel – constitute now the large majority of world Jewry."

Koestler goes on to say, "If so, this would mean that their ancestors came not from the Jordan but from the Volga, not from Canaan but from the Caucasus, once believed to be the cradle of the Aryan race; and that genetically they are more closely related to the Hun, Uigur and Magyar tribes than to the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Should this turn out to be the case, then the term 'anti-Semitism' would become void of meaning, based on a misapprehension shared by both the killers and their victims."

Would this explain a huge mystery at the heart of Eastern Europe? That its Jews appeared to have no great migration stories, no links to any of the twelve tribes, no links to any place in the ancient world of Israel and its surrounding communities? The people of the Pacific link themselves across centuries and vast tracts of oceans in their pre-literate days, keeping alive histories and genealogies covering three and four hundred years. But neither in terms of folk-telling nor in links to Biblical stories are there great stories of crossing huge land masses … nor of returning to ancestral homes round Jerusalem or Jericho. Despite the massive disruption visited on Israel by the Assyrians people kept links to tribes and places. Jerusalem was the heart of faith, in the way that Rome or Canterbury or Mecca is for other people but people do not usually plan to live there unless they have ancestral links …

Perhaps that is the most amazing thing in this story: that people who had converted probably from paganism did not convert to Christianity when there seemed to be some very good reasons for doing so to keep themselves safe. They remained firm in their faith to the end. Even if they weren't Jews by blood or history they were undoubtedly Jews by faith. And that, to me, seems more impressive.

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"Pilgrimage, penitential travel to a place imbued with particular holiness, where prayers were especially effective, was a well-established part of Christianity by the eleventh century. Hundreds of local sites, the emerging shrine of St James in Spain and above all Rome and Jerusalem, were the focus of innumerable personal and group journeys. The Holy Land remained a popular destination even after it was overrun by the Muslims in the seventh century, not least because of a shared reverence for many of the holy sites. This seemed to change in 1009, when the Holy Sepulchre was desecrated by the Fatimid Caliph Hakim of Egypt. But this proved to be only a temporary setback, even though Hakim subsequently descended into madness and began persecuting his fellow-Muslims. Rebuilding was quickly begun by Hakim's Christian mother, and interest in the Holy Land was fuelled by the millennium of the resurrection in 1033. Count Fulk Nerra of Anjou returned from one of his four pilgrimages with a piece of rubble from the Holy Sepulchre, and other pilgrims brought other relics, further stimulating interest. These pilgrims gained personal benefits. As well as a strong belief in the forgiveness obtained, there could be more tangible results. Fulk's notorious temper was noticeably improved for a while after his return.

"In the 1070s, the situation became more confused when Turkish tribes spread into Anatolia and Syria, defeating the Byzantine army and pushing the Christian border back almost to the Bosphorus, and capturing Jerusalem from the Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt."

Katherine Lack in *Conqueror's Son: Duke Robert Curthose, Thwarted King*.

Barbara Mertz in *Temples, Tombs and Hieroglyphs* says Hyksos comes from two Egyptian words meaning "Rulers of Foreign Countries". Whoever they were they settled in and became thoroughly 'Egyptianized' but that was not the same as having their occupation and rule accepted. She says "Some of these people had Semitic names." But Semitic names were not necessarily Hebrew names. A number of languages, used from Ethiopia into south-west Asia, are classified as Semitic. "Asiatics—men of Semitic speech—in ancient Egypt; here Biblical scholars pricked up their ears. The connection of the Hebrews with Egypt has been the subject of long and wearisome discussion among historians; few Egyptian records even mention Israel, and none of them are particularly informative about that nation or the people who founded it. There is no Egyptian reference to Moses, nor to Joseph; no text contains even a faint echo of the long captivity, which began with the enslavement of the Hebrews by a pharaoh who knew not Joseph and ended with the miracles of the Exodus. It is no wonder that the theories about the Hebrews in Egypt vary considerably. One school of thought would place the Exodus in the fifteenth century B.C., another in the thirteenth; a third version contends that there was no single, large exodus of enslaved peoples, but a series of

small exodi, so to speak, which were coalesced by Jewish tradition and historians into a single event."

Slaves? Or Pilgrims? Robert Bauval and Graham Hancock wrote in *Keeper of Genesis*, "Abul-Hol, the Arabic name for the great Sphinx of Egypt, is supposed by most translators to mean 'father of Terror'.

"An alternative etymology, however, has been proposed by the Egyptologist Selim Hassan. During the extensive excavations that he undertook on the Giza plateau in the 1930s and '40s he uncovered evidence that a colony of foreigners – 'Cananites' – had resided in this part of Lower Egypt in the early second millennium BC. They were from the sacred city of Harran (located in the south of modern Turkey near its border with Syria) and they may perhaps have been pilgrims. At any rate artefacts and commemorative stelae prove that they lived in the immediate vicinity of the Sphinx – worshipping it as a god under the name *Hwl*.

"In the Ancient Egyptian language, *bw* means 'place'. Hassan therefore reasonably proposes that Abul-Hol, 'is simply a corruption of *bw Hwl*, "the Place of *Hwl*", and does not at all mean "Father of Terror", as is generally supposed'.

"When speaking of the Sphinx, the Ancient Egyptians frequently made use of the Harranian derivation *Hwl*, but they also knew it by many other names: *Hu*, for example, and *Hor-em-Akhet* – which means 'Horus in the Horizon'. In addition, for reasons that have never been fully understood, the Sphinx was often referred to as *Seshep-ankh Atum*, 'the living image of *Atum*,' after *Atum-Re* the self-created sun-god, the first and original deity of the ancient Egyptian pantheon. Indeed, the very name 'Sphinx' that has haunted the collective subconscious of the Western world since classical times, turns out to be no more than a corruption – through Greek – of *Sheshep-ankh*."

But there are two modern puzzles there. Why haven't fundamentalist Muslims blown up the Sphinx? After all, it very obviously has the head of a man and they have itchy fingers when it comes to detonating things.

And more importantly—these Canaanites. Who were they? How big was their community? And more importantly—did people from all over make pilgrimages to Egypt to stare in wonder, to worship, to marvel, to learn. And if people from what is now northern Syria and southern Turkey were making that long pilgrimage—well, was the story of Joseph in Egypt originally a story of pilgrimage? And was it later re-cast, not only to move worship away from the Egyptian gods but also because in a time when it was unwise to criticize the Babylonians to their faces the whole story of exile and loss and dislocation could simply be re-cast with the Egyptians in the role of villains?

Archeologists have looked for signs of the Exodus in Sinai—without luck. Historians have looked for signs of the exodus in Egyptian histories—also without luck, though this hasn't stopped them thrusting the story into the least well-documented eras. A connection of my grandmother's, Henry Chichester Hart, wrote a book, *The Flora of Sinai*, which interested me from the point that we are given an image of howling desert when in fact Sinai, unlike the Sahara or the Atacama deserts, is not a wilderness of sand and rock. And the Sahara and North Africa is known to have been considerably greener 3,000 years ago. So it seems very likely the Sinai Peninsula also was wetter and greener …

So if the Children of Israel did not leave their physical footprint on Sinai or their troubled documentation in Egyptian history—I thought it was probably time to go back to the *Bible* and look at the story with fresh eyes.

God tells Abraham "to go to a country I am going to show you" which proves to be Canaan. "But there was a famine in Canaan" so Abraham goes down to Egypt. We are not told how long it takes him to cross the Sinai peninsula but presumably a few weeks. He tells the Pharaoh that Sarah is his sister not his wife. The Pharaoh is annoyed when he finds he has

been lied to and tells Abraham to leave. It isn't explained how a wandering herder gets to meet the ruler but Abraham is described as "a very rich man, with sheep, goats and cattle, as well as silver and gold". Abraham goes north again to Canaan, presumably crossing the Sinai in a few weeks. Sarah at a great age finally has a son, Isaac, and then dies but not before Abraham has told the same lie, to King Abimelech of the Philistines. Abraham when challenged tells the king Sarah is both his wife and his half-sister. Abimelech very forgivingly gives Abraham "sheep, cattle, and slaves". Abraham then marries Keturah and has six more sons. He gives them presents but sends them away "to the land of the East" and leaves his lands and his flocks to Isaac who, faced with another famine, turns to the Philistines for help. Isaac then goes to "northern Mesopotamia" where Abraham's brother Nahor lives. Nahor has eight sons and Isaac marries Nahor's granddaughter Rebecca. But when he does the same thing to the Philistine king, saying Rebecca is his sister, he is asked to leave. He and Rebecca have two sons, Esau who marries two Hittite women and, later, Mahalath later called Basemath, granddaughter of Abraham, and a further wife Timna, and Jacob who marries the two daughters of Laban, son of Nahor and nephew of Abraham. The oldest daughter Leah has Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. Then Jacob has sons Dan and Naphtali with Rachel's slave Bilhah. Then he has sons Gad and Asher with Leah's slave Zilpah. Then Leah has two more sons Issachar and Zebulun, and a daughter Dinah. And finally Rachel has Joseph and Benjamin. And Jacob became very wealthy with "many flocks, slaves, camels, and donkeys". Rachel even steals her father's "household gods"; then Jacob and all his large family crossed "the River Euphrates and started for the hill country of Gilead". To do so he must cross the land of his brother Esau in Canaan so he gives him "two hundred female goats and twenty males, two hundred female sheep and twenty males, thirty milk camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten males." Esau has a very large family so no doubt he made good use of Jacob's gift. Jacob eventually settles in Shechem in Canaan. But Dinah is raped and Jacob's sons wreak vengeance: "They took the flocks, the cattle, the donkeys, and everything else in the city and in the fields. They took everything of value, captured the women and children, and carried off everything in the houses". Unsurprisingly Jacob hurriedly moves all his family to Bethel, though still in Canaan.

One day Jacob sends some of his sons, including Joseph, to check on their flocks near Shechem. He has given the 17-year-old Joseph a nice coat which apparently makes his older brothers jealous. As they have just pillaged Shechem it is hard to see why Joseph's coat matters. They could buy themselves dozens of coats if they really wanted to have one the same. They meet some Ishmaelite and some Midianite traders (it isn't clear whether they are the same group; Ishmael was a son of Abraham, Midian was a son of Abraham's brother Nahor) and sell Joseph for twenty pieces of silver. The traders with their camels take Joseph to Egypt though we are not told how long they take to cross the Sinai, presumably a few weeks, and the brothers kill a kid, splash the blood on the coat and take it home to Jacob, saying Joseph has been killed by a wild animal. Jacob is very upset "My son Joseph has been torn to pieces!" and doesn't notice that the 'wild animal' has not clawed the coat to bits in the process of killing Joseph.

Joseph is sold to an officer of the Pharaoh called Potiphar. Back home his brother Judah marries a Canaanite girl. Despite not speaking or reading Egyptian, Joseph does very well for himself—until Potiphar's wife fancies him and doesn't like being rejected. Joseph ends up in prison. Two years later he is let out to interpret the two strange dreams the Pharaoh has had. In one seven fat cows are devoured by seven thin cows, in the other seven thin ears of corn devour seven fat ones. I think corn is a generic term here for grain rather than the maize we would picture. Joseph says there will be seven good years then seven bad years. This is all very intriguing but it doesn't set well with Egypt. Canaan may be plagued by famine every so often but Egypt inundated by the Nile every year, and never in recorded

history has the Nile run dry, is virtually immune to famine. Anyway Joseph, now thirty, is made governor "over all Egypt" with a ring, a fine linen robe and a chariot to ride around in. He is also given an Egyptian wife, Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, a priest in Heliopolis. (I had thought Heliopolis was a later Greek city but no; there was the ancient city of Heliopolis and the modern city a few kilometres away and subsumed into Cairo.) Joseph has two sons Manasseh and Ephraim.

Because "there was famine in the land of Canaan" Jacob asks his ten sons to go down to Egypt to buy grain. We aren't told how long they take to get there but presumably a few weeks. Joseph recognizes them but they don't know him. He accuses them of being spies but if one of them remains as a hostage and the others go home and bring back Benjamin he will believe them. They and their donkeys head back across the Sinai, presumably taking a few weeks, and tell their father in Canaan what has happened. "The famine in Canaan got worse" so Jacob tells his sons they can take Benjamin but must also take gifts "a little resin, a little honey, spices, pistachio nuts, and almonds" so it is not the sort of famine we see in Africa with skin-and-bone people and dead animals. They cross the Sinai again, presumably in a few weeks, and I do feel sorry for those donkeys who have now walked many hundreds of miles on starvation rations. In Egypt Joseph makes himself known to them, after some shenigans with a hidden cup in Benjamin's luggage, and finally the Pharaoh tells Joseph to bring his father and the rest of his family to Egypt where they will be given "the best land" and Joseph is to provide them with "wagons" for the wives and small children. Again they cross the Sinai, presumably in a few weeks, and Jacob and all the family in Canaan pack up "They took their livestock and all the possessions they had acquired in Canaan" and "The total number of the direct descendants of Jacob who went to Egypt was sixty-six, not including his sons' wives, Two sons were born to Joseph in Egypt, bringing to seventy the total number of Jacob's family who went there." So off they go across the Sinai in those wagons and with all their flocks and herds and we aren't told how long it takes them to get from Canaan to Egypt but presumably a few weeks. The Pharaoh agrees to give them pasture for their livestock "in the region of Goshen" which is further described as "the best of the land near the city of Rameses". But the famine is so severe even in Egypt that "Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for the king. Every Egyptian was forced to sell his land, because the famine was so severe; and all the land became the king's property. Joseph made slaves of the people from one end of Egypt to the other." Jacob after seventeen years in Egypt dies and asks that his body be returned to Canaan. Joseph and many Egyptian officials cross the Sinai with the embalmed body, presumably in a few weeks, lay Jacob to rest with Leah and Rachel near Mamre in Canaan. Then Joseph and the Egyptian officials recross the Sinai, presumably in a few weeks, and eventually Joseph dies in Egypt at the age of 110. Ephraim by then has children and grandchildren and Manasseh has a son Machir.

Genesis ends on this hopeful note. But Exodus begins on a far more grim note.

Huge amounts of time, energy, paper and ink, have been expended on trying to pin down the 'Pharaoh of the Oppression'. The main candidates seem to be the Hyksos Dynasty (which controlled the Delta region for a little over a hundred years and ended in around 1560 BC; these foreign princes are now thought to have come from Crete), Rameses II (somewhere between 1300 and 1215 BC), and Merneptah (who ruled for about 10 years after the death of Rameses II). More time, energy, ink and paper have gone into trying to create a time-line for Abraham and his descendants. None of these seem to be 'pinnable' but I wondered if there might be a clue in Isaac's relations with the Philistine king. When did the Philistines arrive and is there any record of them having a King Abimelech? This is a whole world of conjecture and muddle. The Philistines are thought to have come from Aegean Islands such as Crete and gradually formed small settlements round the coasts of the Levant and Egypt. Dates vary widely but those which grew from small fishing villages to sizeable towns in Canaan are thought to have developed between about 1200 to 1000 BC. The Pharaoh

Rameses III who was assassinated in 1155 BC had a long conflict with Philistines on the northern coast of Egypt. It is also conjectured that there may have been several kings by the name of Abimelech with some scholars wondering if Abimelech was a title rather than a personal name. The difficulty in these possibilities is that they come too late for the generally accepted dates for Isaac.

We are told the Israelites have become so numerous that the Egyptians are afraid "they might join our enemies in order to fight against us, and might escape from the country" so "the Egyptians put slave-drivers over them to crush their spirits with hard labour" then, puzzlingly, the "Israelites built the cities of Pithom and Rameses" but the city of Rameses was already there when Joseph's father and brothers arrive. It wasn't a city of great halls and tombs but every ruler probably added new buildings. But how nomadic herders constantly moving their flocks to the best pastures in Goshen all managed to be enslaved and whether they would be any good at building large stone buildings is another puzzle. Then the Pharaoh tells the two midwives Shiprah and Puah to kill the boys Hebrew women have, though as it is the girls who have all the babies this seems pointless and anyway the midwives disobey so the Pharaoh says all the first-born sons are to be thrown into the Nile. As the Israelites seem to have huge numbers of sons this too seems rather pointless as a way of curbing population growth. But it is curious that the midwives get names while the Pharaoh doesn't.

We are told that Moses' parents are from the tribe of Levi and after hiding him for three months his mother puts him in a basket and into the Nile. Given that the Nile was full of crocodiles, hippopotami, as well as leeches, mosquitoes, bilharzia and all the rest this was a leap of faith. Then the Pharaoh's daughter comes down to the river to bathe. This too is dubious. Reeds need a muddy bed to grow in. Poor people without wells had no choice but to drink, wash, water their animals, and defecate in the Nile. But a princess could have clean water drawn up from a well and put in a bath secluded from prying eyes. The princess finds him, asks Moses' sister Miriam who has come forward to offer her mother as a wet-nurse to go and fetch her. The princess eventually adopts him and moves him in to her palace.

We are later told that Moses has a brother Aaron as well as a sister Miriam so presumably the princess has watched over them with some care or Aaron mught also have found himself in the Nile. Moses grows up and sees an Egyptian kill an Israelite. In turn he kills the Egyptian and buries his body. Curiously it is two fellow Israelites who betray Moses and he flees to "the land of Midian". We don't know exactly where this is but as Midian lived with his family in northern Mesopotamia we can assume it is somewhere north-west of Canaan. How Moses gets there we aren't told but possibly on foot. So it must have taken a couple of months to cross the Sinai and head north-west. Here he helps the daughters of Jethro, a Midianite priest, who eventually gives him his daughter Zipporah as a wife and they have a son Gershom. But then "One day while Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, he led the flock across the desert and came to Sinai the holy mountain" where he saw a burning bush. God calls to him and tells him to go back to Egypt and ask the Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave. And then he says a very strange thing: "I will make the Egyptians respect you so that when my people leave, they will not go empty-handed. Every Israelite woman will go to her Egyptian neighbours and to any Egyptian woman living in her house and will ask for clothing and for gold and silver jewellery. The Israelites will put these things on their sons and daughters and carry away the wealth of the Egyptians." This makes it sound like a wealthy suburban street with commodious houses owned by Israelites in which some Egyptians also live—rather than the sort of miserable hovels, sheds, barracks or attics in which slaves usually get housed. God tells him he will have the help of his brother Aaron "the Levite" so Moses rounds up his sheep again and takes them home, though we aren't told how far away his home is, and tells Jethro he wants to go to Egypt to visit his family. Jethro agrees so Moses takes his wife and sons and a donkey and sets out across the Sinai, presumably taking a few weeks, and half

way across Aaron comes to meet him and journey back to Egypt. There they gather up all the Israelite leaders so they were obviously not confined to chain gangs or that sort of grim slavery. Moses and Aaron then go to the Pharaoh to ask him to release their people. The Pharaoh is very annoyed and says "You people have become more numerous than the Egyptians and now you want to stop working." The Pharoah makes life harder for the Israelites but God says he must go back to see the Pharaoh and that he will give the land of Cannan to them "the land in which they had lived as foreigners" but as Canaan by now must be largely filled with Esau's descendants how foreign is foreign? Later we are told it is Edom which is filled with Esau's descendants because 11 of the Edomite tribes come from Esau and his various wives.

Then we have a slight diversion. We are told that Levi, third son of Jacob and Leah, had three sons Gershon, Kohath and Merari. Kohath had four sons, one of whom Amram "married his father's sister Jochebed, who bore him Aaron and Moses". We are told that Levi lived to 137, Kohath to 133 and Amram 137. Apart from the fact that this is more than twice the age at which most Egyptians died and that slaves rarely live long lives, there is a lovely symmetry in it. We don't know how old Levi was when he arrived in Egypt but possibly about forty and we don't know how old he was when he had Kohath, nor do we know how old Kohath was when he had Amram nor how old Amram was when he had Moses but as Miriam was a well-grown, articulate and confident little girl by then we can assume that Amram was at least in his thirties. So that by about 307 years after Levi arrived in Egypt, along with about 70 relatives, the Israelites have become "more numerous than the Egyptians".

Aaron and Moses cannot convince the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. It is hard to see why not. Apart from eating him out of house and home they only seem to be making some mud bricks, useful but not vitally important. The Pharaoh is not impressed when Aaron's stick turns into a snake. So we then come to the famous Ten Plagues.

1. The Nile is to be turned into blood, "the fish will die, and the river will stink so much that the Egyptians will not be able to drink from it". This begs the question of where the Israelites got their water. But this doesn't work as the Egyptians dig along the riverbanks for water.
2. Then come frogs but again the Pharaoh is not impressed.
3. Then come gnats but as people there must have been used to clouds of mosquitoes this doesn't work.
4. Then there are the flies. But for people surrounded by animals and without flush toilets and garbage disposal I am not surprised that flies don't work.
5. Then terrible diseases afflict the animals of the Egyptians and they all die. But "not one of the animals of the Israelites died". So these oppressed people were still free enough and wealthy enough to have more than the occasional scrawny donkey? Anyway despite a land littered with dead "horses, donkeys, cattle, sheep, and goats" the Pharaoh is not moved.
6. Then come boils. These became "open sores on the people and the animals" though we've just been told the animals were all dead anyway. We are not told whether the Pharaoh gets boils but he isn't moved.
7. Then comes a gigantic hailstorm. "All over Egypt the hail struck down everything in the open, including all the people and all the animals." My heart bleeds for those poor animals. Only the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived was spared. Though if they were contained in this one small area on the eastern side of the Nile it hardly makes them seem much of a threat.
8. Now comes a swarm of locusts and "not a green thing was left on any tree or plant in all the land of Egypt". But this too doesn't work.
9. So darkness is spread all over Egypt except where the Israelites were living.

The Pharaoh seems to relent slightly because he says “your women and children may go with you. But your sheep, goats, and cattle must stay here”. But Moses says “No, we will take our animals with us” so the Pharaoh again says no.

10. So God decides to kill not only all the first-born Egyptian sons but the “first-born of all the cattle will die also”. But God tells Moses that on “the tenth day of this month each man must choose either a lamb or a young goat for his household. If his family is too small to eat a whole animal, he and his next-door neighbour may share an animal, in proportion to the number of people and the amount that each person can eat. You may choose either a sheep or a goat, but it must be a one-year-old male without any defects”. There are more instructions on cooking and preparing to travel. This is the first mention of the Passover feast. Some blood is to be smeared “on the door-posts and above the doors of the houses” so that when God sweeps through the land “killing every first-born male, both human and animal” he will know which houses to spare. Presumably the animals are out in yards or fields so we are not told how they are to be differentiated. So when the Egyptians are facing this massacre God says to Moses and Aaron “Get out, you and your Israelites! Leave the country; go and worship the Lord, as you asked. Take your sheep, goats, and cattle, and leave.” We are then told that the “Israelites set out on foot from Rameses for Sukkoth. There were about six hundred thousand men, not counting women and children. A large number of other people and many sheep, goats, and cattle also went with them.” I am not sure what “other people” means. But then it says “The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years” which begs the question of how oppressed, beaten, underfed, weary people could have increased from around 70 to more than 1,000,000 people in that time. The city of Rameses is thought to be the area of ruined buildings between Qantir and Avaris which is being excavated.

From Sukkoth they go to Etham, Moses carrying the body of Joseph, and we are also told that “The Israelites were armed for battle”; they go on and camp at Pi Hahiroth. The Pharaoh gets his army ready including 600 horse-drawn chariots. I am surprised he could find any horses able to put one foot after the other. They pursue the Israelites, who cannot have been moving very fast anyway with children, old people, sheep and belongings. But God puts a pillar of smoke between them and the pursuing Egyptian army and then divides the waters so they pass through safely. The Egyptians all get drowned. As horses are good swimmers this must have been a huge wave that struck them. Modern scholars place their route through the marshlands between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, the area now cut through by the Suez Canal. They go on through Shur to Marah and then to Elim which had “twelve springs and seventy palm-trees”. On they go through the desert of Sin and here God sends great numbers of quails and manna which was “like a small white seed”. We can only assume they had eaten all their sheep and goats and cattle by then because the “Israelites ate manna for the next forty years”. They then go to Rephidim where the Amalekites attack them. What the Amalekites were doing in the desert isn’t explained but Moses and Aaron defeat them by holding their arms in the air while Joshua engages them in battle on the ground. As they go on to Mount Sinai Moses’ father-in-law comes to meet them, bringing Zipporah and the two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, with him. We are told they went down to Egypt with Moses so at some stage they must have gone home again. Jethro tells his son-in-law “You should teach them (ie. the Israelites) God’s commands and explain to them how they should live and what they should do”. Jethro then goes home, presumably leaving his daughter and grandsons in the desert. Then “on the first day of the third month after they had left Egypt” they reach the foot of Mount Sinai. There is some argument as to exactly which mountain *is* Mount Sinai. As the area contains a range going up 2,285 metres or a bit higher than Mount Wellington though they were not climbing from sea-level, it may or may not mean the highest point of the massif. But here God speaks to Moses telling him everyone must wash their clothes. So clearly it was a fertile spot with lots of water. Then in great thunder and lightning, smoke and

fire on the mountain God gives Moses the Ten Commandments. He then goes on with detailed instructions on how to treat slaves, prepare offerings, cook food, leave land fallow. He then tells Moses to come up the mountain with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy other men. Moses then leaves them part way up and goes on up to the summit where he remains forty days and forty nights.

While he is there God gives him the most minutely-detailed of instructions, beginning with "Tell the Israelites to make an offering to me. Receive whatever offerings any man wishes to give. These offerings are to be: gold, silver, and bronze; fine linen; blue, purple, and red wool; cloth made of goats' hair; rams' skin dyed red; fine leather; acacia wood; oil for lamps; spices for the anointing oil" and so it goes on. The Tent to mark God's presence is to have "a curtain of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool. Embroider it with figures of winged creatures" and so on. We are not told how God communicates with Moses but perhaps he hears voices in his head and memorizes everything he hears, from the altars and lamps to the priests' garments. He is told how to anoint Aaron, what to do with all the bits of the sacrificed animals, how to levy taxes, how to make incense and so on. Then God gives Moses two stone tablets "on which God himself had written the commandments". But while Moses is away up the mountain people begin to believe he has deserted them. So Aaron says to them, "Take off the gold earrings which your wives, your sons, and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me." He then melts them all down, pours the gold into a mould, and makes a gold bull. This seems to be a long and tricky operation but it is dismissed in one sentence. And would people who had gone through thick and thin give up their gold jewellery so easily? Then people are ordered to bring "some animals" to burn as sacrifices. But would people need manna if they still had livestock?

Moses comes down but he is angry to see the golden bull and people singing and dancing. So he throws the tablets on the ground and they break. Then he takes "the bull which they had made, melted it, ground it into fine powder, and mixed it with water. Then he made the people of Israel drink it." He then orders the Levites to kill those who disobeyed him and they kill around three thousand men. Moses then goes up the mountain again. God tells Moses to get on with the journey, sends a disease on to the people who made Aaron make the golden bull, and says that He will not be with them for the rest of the journey. "When the people heard this, they began to mourn and did not wear jewellery any more". They go on with their journey and everywhere they stop Moses sets up the sacred Tent so somewhere they have found the acacia wood and fine linen and gold-plated cross-bars and frames required. God has also provided two new stone tablets with the Commandments written on them. God also gives Moses instructions about when they reach the land of the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, including the instruction "Do not make and worship gods of metal". People are asked to bring offerings to make the priestly garments, including, "decorative pins, earrings, rings, necklaces, and all kinds of gold jewellery". It begs the question of how fleeing slaves managed to carry away what begins to sound like King Solomon's Mines. And "All the gold that had been dedicated to the Lord for the sacred Tent weighed a thousand kilogrammes", the silver weighed 3,430 kilogrammes, and 2,425 kilogrammes of bronze. And this is before we get to all the precious stones. "So on the first day of the first month of the second year after they left Egypt, the Tent of the Lord's presence was set up." That brings us to the end of Exodus and we begin Leviticus which goes into the extraordinarily detailed commands God gives Moses on how to present burnt-offerings and what will happen to anyone who transgresses the myriad of rules. I do not advise vegetarians and vegans to read this chapter as it contains endless details such as "The animal for this offering is to be killed on the north side of the altar, where the animals for the burnt offerings are killed, and its blood is to be thrown against all four sides of the altar. All its fat shall be removed and offered on the altar: the fat tail, the fat covering the internal organs, the kidneys and the fat on them, and the best part of the liver."

It isn't clear where they find the innumerable animals required for the sacrifices, Sinai must by now just about be picked clean of vegetation. But God goes on with His detailed commands: when people are unclean, what to do with lepers, how to treat mildewed articles, "Do not have sexual intercourse with any of your relatives", something the Israelites have clearly been doing for a long time, how to treat slaves, not to hold grudges or use false measures, not to let their daughters be used as temple prostitutes, how to observe the Passover, be kind to the poor, and despite the Commandment against killing it is acceptable to take a life for a life, and a detailed list of clean and unclean animals is given. Moses must have had a remarkable memory to pass the long list of instructions on to a group of miserable people in the desert and get them to take careful notes.

In Numbers we are told that on "the first day of the second month in the second year after the people of Israel left Egypt" the Lord tells Moses and Aaron to take a census. They come up with these numbers, remembering these are only fit men of twenty and older, in each tribe: Reuben 46,500, Simeon 59,300, Gad 45,650, Judah 74,600, Issachar 54,400, Zebulun 57,400, Ephraim 40,500, Manasseh 32,200, Benjamin 35,400, Dan 62,700, Asher 41,500, Naphtali 53,400 which they add up to 603,550 which would take six Flemingtons just to fit them in. Moses and Aaron tell people God wants them to make camp under the banner of his own group. Moses then enrolls them all. It isn't explained how he does this. Scribes with parchments, clay tablets, or perhaps by memorizing them all? God also tells them to "expel from the camp everyone with a dreaded skin disease or a bodily discharge" and it is not clear what happens to these unfortunate people driven out into the desert. More strangely He tells Moses that anyone who becomes a "Nazarite" must not eat or drink grapes or raisins and must not cut his hair. I thought Nazarites came from around Nazareth so I must be wrong. More rules follow, on adultery, on purification, and Moses is told to make "two trumpets of hammered silver" for bringing people together. And the people set up or broke camp according to a fiery cloud that sometimes hovered over the sacred Tent. "On the twentieth day of the second month in the second year after the people left Egypt, the cloud over the Tent of the Lord's presence lifted, and the Israelites started on their journey out of the Sinai Desert. They came first to Paran. Moses tells his brother-in-law Hobab, son of Jethro, "We are about to start out for the place which the Lord said he would give us" but Hobab prefers to go home. We aren't told how he came to be there but I think he was wise to leave. The people were starting to get fed up with Moses after more than two years in the desert and they crave meat. God sends them quails to eat.

We are then told that Moses has married "a Cushite woman" and his brother and sister are critical of him (is this because Zipporah has died?) but Miriam is stricken with a skin disease and they remain in Hazeroth until she recovers. Moses then sends twelve spies to Canaan and after forty days they return to Moses who is now in Kadesh. The Canaanites, we are told, live from the Mediterranean coast to the Jordan River. And the first little incursion the Israelites make is defeated and they are chased back to Hormah. There is also a rebellion against Moses which is put down and an epidemic breaks out killing 14,700 people, probably because they have not followed all the rules God has given. Miriam dies at Kadesh and they go, still complaining, to Meribah. Moses now wants to pass through the land of Edom saying "We and our cattle will not leave the road and we will not drink from your wells." But the Edomites still refuse. Which is understandable given the great throng Moses is leading. They then go to Mount Hor where Aaron dies at the age of 123 "on the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year after the Israelites had left Egypt". They go on to Oboth, then the Valley of Zered, then to the River Arnon, which divides the Amorites from the Moabites, then to a place called Wells, then to Mattanah, then to Nahaliel, then to Bamoth and then into the territory of the Moabites below Mount Pisgah. But the Amorites have taken over much of the territory of the Moabites and in a battle between Amorites and Israelites the Israelites are victorious and settle in. They then move on and defeat King Og of Bashan and "killed Og, his

sons, and all his people". They then move on, eyeing off the rest of the land of the Moabites as well as the land of Jethro, the Midianite. The Moabites and the Midianites consult Balaam whose donkey is given the power of speech. But the Israelites destroy the Midianites, capture their women (and the Israelite soldiers get 16,000 Midianite virgins) and plunder everything they have and I can only hope that Moses' father-in-law did not live to experience this betrayal of his kindness.

Moses then takes another census which comes up with 601,730 adult men. The land around them is parceled out by lot to the twelve tribes. Moses then reiterates long details on how to do almost everything but particularly their religious festivals. The tribes of Reuben and Gad want to settle on the land they have just 'acquired' but Moses is cross with them for not wanting to go forward. "The Lord was angry with the people and made them wander in the wilderness for forty years" because of their sinfulness and now the next generation is being equally sinful. But they are still to get the land of Canaan, waiting there across the Jordan.

Then comes the book of Deuteronomy which repeats, embellishes, and occasionally contradicts instructions already given in Exodus and Numbers. He reminds them to love God with all their heart and soul but spends more time dwelling on disobedience.

Finally, probably worn out, Moses climbs to the top of Mount Pisgah and at the age of 120 he dies. God buries him "in a valley of Moab, opposite the town of Bethpeor". This suggests he was nearly 80 when he left Egypt.

Joshua takes control and his dreams of empire are far grander than those of Moses: from the desert in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north to the River Euphrates in the east and the Mediterranean in the west. Joshua sets upon Jericho, then across the land in an orgy of massacre, destruction, rape and pillage, 'ethnic cleansing' which makes this, to me, the most disturbing book in the *Bible*. It is a relief to know he couldn't defeat the Jebusites in Jerusalem and had to learn to co-exist. It is also a relief to know that a) there is no unassailable proof that Joshua ever existed and b) archeologists have not been able to find uncontested evidence for his sacked cities and massacred populations.

The *Bible* then moves into the books of dynasties, wars, quarrels, marriages, problems of succession and so on. The Books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, Ruth etc. I had always assumed they were replete with references to Moses, the exodus, slavery in Egypt, the Passover and so on. It came as a surprise to me that this isn't so. There is not a single mention of the Passover, the most important festival of the Jewish people, until we get to the 2nd book of Chronicles and this book was written *after* the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon in about 525 BC. This is an important marker for several other Books. The Psalms are said to have been begun in the 9th century BC but they contain the famous No 137 "By the waters of Babylon" and the Book of Isiah said to have been written in the 8th century BC turns Cyrus into an instrument of God's purpose so it too was written (or partly written) after 525 BC.

We know that Jerusalem was ransacked by Nebuchadnezzar who carted off many Jewish captives to Babylon. We know that Babylon was captured by the Persian king, Cyrus, and that he enabled all the Jewish exiles who wanted to go home to have the freedom and the means to do so and that he rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. The campaigns of the Assyrians and the Persians are quite well documented. But is it possible that the Books of Moses were *written* in Babylon, cobbling together, all the bits and pieces handed down, adding in new material, including folk tales and old traditions? The books, to me, have the sense of many 'hands' being involved in their creation. I thought that

1. People in exile need stories of hope, victory, overcoming the odds, to continue on bravely. And that is a major part of the Exodus story.
2. But people in exile, particularly if the exile is not one of torture and murder (and except for the stories in the Book of Daniel Babylon treated the exiles relatively kindly), the real danger may have been the seduction of assimilation into a wealthy city which offered

more opportunities than Jerusalem ever had. The Books of Moses hammer two themes: the need for obedience to one God and their identity as Israelites. The Persians were essentially monotheists. Were their beliefs seductive to these exiles? Is this why so much emphasis is placed on numbers, tribes, family trees, succession?

3. And there is then the feeling that coming home to wrecked and rubbled buildings, or land taken over by strangers, made rebuilding lives a major challenge. They needed to have a powerful belief in themselves, in their destiny, in the image of God watching over them.

4. Many people have assumed that the numbers crossing the Sinai are symbolic. The golden calf is also seen as a symbol (though the suggestion that it portends the end of matriarchy and the beginning of patriarchy isn't convincing; neither Egypt nor Israel were matriarchies; but if the golden calf is an imported symbol from a different culture then it may have this meaning). But once you start seeing things as symbolic—where do you draw the line? Are the Ten Plagues symbolic? Is Moses a symbol? Are those 40 years symbolic? Is Egypt a symbol?

5. There is a mention of 'Israel' on a column in Egypt but people have looked in vain for more evidence. We are told that Joseph is given an Egyptian name. It is possible his brothers and their children were given Egyptian names. And were Israelites subsumed under a broader umbrella such as 'Canaanites' or 'foreigners' and therefore aren't findable?

Many societies have their epics. Homer's *Odyssey*, the *Ramayana*, *Beowulf*, the *Kalevala*, the tales of King Arthur and Prince Igor, and they all probably contain some real events and real people, but we can rarely identify all of these people or disentangle the web of fact and fiction in which their lives and actions lie. We are inclined to just treat them as 'entertainment' but although they certainly entertained I don't think this was their usual purpose. They were created to give comfort and hope in hard times, they created a blueprint for courage, determination, resourcefulness, and stoicism, they wove together a variety of race memories which people didn't want to lose, they helped create a sense of identity and oneness (and it is interesting that a number of the epics were created by people living in foreign lands or who had been dispossesed; for example, Homer was a Greek living in Asia Minor rather than a Greek living in Greece), and they helped codify religious and cultural beliefs. As the stories were repeated they gradually grew into sagas rather than small events lived separately. As we now might say, 'they became a cohesive narrative'.

I have just dipped a timid little toe into a very large and very deep pool. Along the way I read two interesting books, *In the Steps of Moses the Lawgiver* by Louis Golding and *Walking the Bible* by Bruce Feiler. And I think I will give the last word to Bruce Feiler who says that "the Bible may or may not be true, it may or may not be historical, but it is undoubtedly still alive." Yes, it is.

* * * * *

"But what would I do in Palestine? Physical laborers were needed there, not a young man who was trying to write stories and in Yiddish besides. I had met several youths and girls who had gone to the Land of Israel and had come back disillusioned and sick with malaria. They told frightening stories about the privation, the unhealthy climate, the bureaucracy of the English as well as the Jewish officials, the exploitation by the contractors who did the hiring, and the dangers posed by the Arabs. In those days, Yiddish was an anathema in Palestine. Hebraist fanatics invaded meetings in institutions where Yiddish was spoken."

Isaac Bashevis Singer in *A Young Man in Search of Love*.

At first glance this is a puzzle. Was Yiddish seen in the way that we might regard Pidgin English? Arthur Koestler looks at the studies done on Yiddish to try to

determine its origins. People vaguely thought it had arisen around the Rhine but instead of 'loan words' of French or Dutch origin mixed into the German they found words of Slavic origin, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian … It didn't resolve the question of how and where and when the language had developed. But it did suggest that German was seen as a useful language for people in Eastern Europe to learn if they wanted to better themselves. But did it have older origins? The Khazar language is related to Turkish but tucked away in remote parts of the Khazar kingdom which lay across the northern reaches of the Black Sea, north of Armenia, right across into Central Asia were Goth communities whose language was related to German. Did many Khazars arrive in Hungary and Poland already with a knowledge of a form of German?

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September 6: Robert Pirsig
John Dalton
September 7: C. J. Dennis
September 8: Siegfried Sassoon
September 9: Phyllis Whitney
James Hilton
September 10: Stephen Jay Gould
Cyril Connolly
Charles Sanders Peirce
September 11: O. Henry
September 12: H. L. Mencken
September 13: Roald Dahl
September 14: Baron von Humboldt
September 15: James Fenimore Cooper
Agatha Christie
September 16: Wilfrid Burchett
September 17: William Carlos Williams
September 18: Samuel Johnson

* * * * *

"To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition." Was Dr Johnson happy at home?

Henry Hitchings subtitles his book *Dr Johnson's Dictionary* with *The Extraordinary Story of the Book that Defined the World*. It was not that there hadn't been any dictionaries before Dr Johnson came along—and there were certainly plenty afterwards—but it aimed to achieve a broadness and completeness that no previous dictionary had managed.

Hitchings writes, "The authority of Johnson's work has coloured every dictionary of English that has since been compiled. In the second half of the eighteenth century, and for most of the nineteenth, it enjoyed totemic status in both Britain and America. When British speakers of English refer today to 'the dictionary', they imply the *Oxford English Dictionary*, while Americans incline towards *Webster's*. But for 150 years 'the dictionary' meant Johnson's *Dictionary*. To quote the editor of the Supplement to the *OED*, 'In the whole tradition of English language and literature the *only* dictionary compiled by a writer of the first rank is that of Dr Johnson.' Unlike other dictionaries, Johnson's is a work of literature.

"Its influence has been especially profound among writers. As a young man Robert Browning read both its folio volumes in their entirety in order to 'qualify' himself for a career as an author. He was not the first to use them in this way. The eighteenth-century historian William Robertson read the *Dictionary* twice, while Henry Thomas Buckle, the reviled author of a once celebrated *History of Civilization in England*, worked through it diligently in order to enlarge his vocabulary, and Thomas Jefferson treated it as an anthology of

quotations. In the 1930s, Samuel Beckett could add his name to the roll of revisionary users, gleaning from its pages a crop of strange terms – 'increpation', 'inosculation', 'to snite'."

Virtually all the big names of 19th century letters turned to it: Keats and Shelley and Byron through to Matthew Arnold and Oscar Wilde. It made its mark in the United States where, when there is a query over anything in the Declaration of Independence, Dr Johnson is consulted because his was the dictionary used by the Founding Fathers. It was used by scientists even though it obviously does not include many of the scientific terms we now use without thinking.

But its breadth gave Johnson a great many questions to which there were no easy answers. Should it try to standardise spelling? Should it include technical terms? Should it aim to improve people's morals? Should it include slang or rude words? He went forward on three fronts: a description of sorts for each word, an example of usage, and something about its origins.

He got into various kinds of muddles. He made mistakes including the famous one of describing a horse's pastern as its knee; an odd mistake for a man surrounded by horses to make. He put in archaic and virtually unused words and left out more modern words. Sometimes he had to admit that he didn't know how a word came into the language. He puzzled over how many loan words he should include and with the British empire expanding into India and elsewhere this was bringing in new and unfamiliar words. He leaned heavily on the works of Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Browne and several ecclesiastics.

His problem may have been that he always had to be right. Whenever he dined with friends he always had to have the final word. Leonard Wibberley writing about Oliver Goldsmith in *The Good-Natured Man* says, "Again when they were talking about writing fables, probably in reference to writing children's books, Goldsmith brought up the problem of getting animals to talk in character and little fishes to talk like little fishes, Johnson shook with laughter at the thought, but Goldsmith turned on him and said, "Why, Dr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you think, for if *you* were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like *whales*." He epitomized Johnson's monopoly of conversation at The Club by saying that he had turned what was intended to be a republic into a monarchy. When Johnson pooh-poohed the idea of there being a third theater in London, holding two (which put a tremendous restriction on the production of plays) enough, the Goldsmith soap bubble turned for a moment into roundshot. "Ay, ay," he said, "this is nothing to you, who can now shelter yourself behind the corner of a pension." Johnson, stunned by the rebuke, was silent. He was receiving three hundred pounds a year from the government and didn't have to struggle to get a play produced to earn his living."

Johnson did say Goldsmith "stands in the first class" as poet, comic writer, and historian. Goldsmith said of Johnson, "No man alive has a more tender heart. He has nothing of the bear but his skin." But the fact remains that Johnson's desire to be always the one in the right wasn't necessarily the best thing when it came to getting words and descriptions correct.

Hitchings says it was predominantly the brainchild of a bookseller called Robert Dodsley. "In short, Dodsley embodied the remarkable power of the big eighteenth-century booksellers. Without the support of booksellers, a project on this scale could not be accomplished. Johnson recognized this: the prospect of undertaking a large work under Dodsley's aegis was overwhelmingly attractive. Accordingly, he committed himself to the job, signing the contract over breakfast at the Golden Anchor near Holborn Bar, on 18 June 1746. He was to be paid 1,500 guineas (£1,575), in instalments."

This sounds a lot of money but he had to live on it for the three years he estimated it would take him (it actually took seven), he had to pay his six and sometimes seven assistants, and he had to buy those books he needed to consult and couldn't borrow—and people weren't always keen to lend when their books came back full of underlinings and with their

spines broken …

But the joy of Hitchings' book is not so much the nuts-and-bolts of the project but the felicities he chooses out from its pages. He writes, "One trait which occasionally surfaces in Johnson's work is a capacity for dismissing things he does not understand or cannot be bothered to research. For example, he defines a 'sonata' merely as 'a tune'—a typical gesture from a man who admitted he was 'very insensitive to the power of music' and once remarked, of a violin solo, 'Difficult do you call it [?] … I wish it were impossible.'"

He defines 'soup' as a 'strong decoction of flesh for the table' and 'lunch' as 'as much food as one's hand can hold' (perhaps an early example of lunch on the run!). A 'garret' is 'a room on the highest floor of a house' but a 'cockloft' is 'the room over the garret'. A 'reptile' is 'an animal that creeps upon many feet' which suggests a centipede but not a snake. An 'adder' is a 'serpent, a viper, a poisonous reptile, perhaps of any species' and a 'tarantula' is 'an insect whose bite is only cured by music' and equally oddly he says that an 'elephant' is an animal that 'in copulation the female receives the male lying upon her back' …

Important as the dictionary was I almost feel I want to run out and find a copy merely to enjoy Johnson's eccentric, mysterious, and sometimes very funny definitions.

Paul Johnson includes Dr Johnson in his book of *Humorists*, saying, "It stretches credulity to write of Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) as a comic. Most people would think of him as the antithesis: solemn, even sententious, severe, judgmental, strongly opposed to frivolity in manners, censoring jokes on a wide range of subjects—religion, the clergy, especially bishops, sinfulness, and, above all, death. There were four reasons why, on the face of it, comedy had little part in his life. First, he was by nature somber, suffering throughout his life from what he called "a vile melancholy." Second, his health was poor for, though he was immensely strong and lived to the age of seventy-five with his chief faculties intact, he was a victim of numerous ailments, causing at times pain, distress, and even incapacity, spasms, twinges, aches, and convulsions, daily reminders of mortality. Third, he was painfully aware both of his capacities and of the psychological weaknesses which prevented him from making full use of them. To him, this was sinful, and he saw his life as a permanent sin. Diary entries and prayers, especially on great feasts of the church when he reviewed his life (and his birthdays), show his despair at curbing his faults and doing energetically what he ought to do. His actual achievements he saw as minor, and he was forever conscious of remissness, perpetual sloth, and failure. Finally, he had a fear of death which amounted to an obsession, and a terror of hell at times amounting almost to mania. There were dark and deep corners in his personality he dreaded to explore."

It was Johnson the amusing conversationalist that Paul Johnson presents, not Johnson the provider of amusing descriptions of words in his dictionary. And some of his amusing sayings have passed into history though I'm not sure modern users of them would necessarily see them as comic:

'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.'

'No man but a blockhead ever wrote but for money.'

'When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life.'

'Depend on it, when a man knows he is going to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.'

'Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well. But you are surprised to find it all done at all.'

* * * * *

This too is not funny but it is perhaps worth remembering in a world where many friendships are fleeting affairs on the internet … "If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life, he will soon find himself alone. A man, Sir, should keep his friendship in *constant repair*."

Samuel Johnson

There is Dr Johnson of the memorable *bon mot* but the other day I came upon Dr Johnson endorsing a reprint of Nicholas Culpepper's famous 17th century herbal with these words "Culpepper, the man that first ranged the woods and climbed the mountains in search of medicinal and salutary herbs, has undoubtedly merited the gratitude of posterity." I wondered if this encouraged people to buy the reprint?

It is an interesting book. Written before botanical classifications had been accepted he depends largely on the common names of plants and some of his remedies left me wondering. Did people actually suffer from worms in their ears back then or did 'worms' refer to lice or something else? Were the remedies for poisonous bites any help? And what of the "juice of celandine, field daisies, and ground-ivy clarified, and a little fine sugar dissolved therein, and dropped into the eyes, is a sovereign remedy for all pains, redness, and watering of them; as also for the pin and web, skins and film growing over the sight", in other words did this help people with cataracts?

But it is interesting to know that willow bark was already seen as an important remedy, long before it ended up in your packet of aspirin: "Both the leaves, bark, and the seed, are used to stanch bleeding of wounds, and at mouth and nose, spitting of blood in man or woman, to stay vomiting, and provocations thereunto, if the decoction of them in wine be drank. It helps also to stay thin, hot, sharp salt distillations from the head upon the lungs, causing a consumption. The leaves bruised with some pepper, and drank in wine, helps much the wind-colic. The leaves bruised and boiled in wine, and drank, stays the heat of lust in man or woman, and quite extinguishes it, if it be long used; the seed is also of the same effect. Water that is gathered from the Willow, when it flowers, the bark being slit, and a vessel fitting to receive it, is very good for redness and dimness of sight, or films that grow over the eyes, staying the rheums that fall into them; it provokes urine, being stopped, if it be drank; and clears the face and skin from spots and discolourings. Galen says, the flowers have an admirable faculty in drying up humours, being a medicine without any sharpness or corrosion; you may boil them in white wine, and drink as much as you will, so you drink not yourself drunk. The bark works the same effect, if used in the same manner; and the tree has always a bark upon it, though not always flowers; the burnt ashes of the bark, being mixed with vinegar, takes away warts, corns, and superfluous flesh, being applied at the place. The decoction of the leaves or bark in wine, takes away scurf and dandrif by washing the place with it. It is a fine cool tree, the boughs of which are very convenient to be placed in the chamber of one sick of a fever.

In the fifty-third volume of the Philosophical Transactions, page 195, we have an account, given by Mr. Stone, of the great efficacy of the bark of this tree, in the cure of intermitting fevers. He gathered the bark in summer, when it was full of sap, and having dried it by a gentle heat, gave a drachm of it in powder every four hours betwixt the fits.

While the Peruvian bark remained at its usual moderate price, it was hardly worth while to seek for a substitute, but since the consumption of the article is become nearly equal to the supply of it, from South America, we must expect to find it dearer, and very much adulterated, every year, and consequently the white Willow bark is likely to become an object worthy the attention of the faculty; and should its success, upon the more enlarged scale of practice, prove equal to Mr. Stone's experiments, the world will be much indebted to that gentleman for his communication."

And there was one other aspect of Culpepper's beliefs which set me thinking: his idea that for every infection, every disease, every infirmity there was a remedy growing along the roadside or in bogs, along the seashore or cultivated land or wild places. We just needed to seek. It didn't requite great wealth or great skill but rather observation, experimentation, and a belief that the humble weeds and garden plants all around us held vital cures.

And I wonder if Dr Johnson turned to Culpepper for help in his various times of infirmity?

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September 19: William Golding
Arthur Rackham
September 20: Upton Sinclair
September 21: H. G. Wells
September 22: Murray Bail
September 23: Baroness Orczy
September 24: F. Scott Fitzgerald
September 25: Jessica Anderson
September 26: T. S. Eliot
September 27: Louis Auchincloss
September 28: George Johnston Allman
Prosper Mérimée

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"In his six-volume *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-42), the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1847) presented the intellectual history of humanity in three stages. In the primitive theological phase, people had seen gods as the ultimate causes of events; then these supernatural beings had been transformed into metaphysical abstractions; and in the final and most advanced, 'positivist' or scientific phase, the mind no longer dwelt on the inner essences of things, which could not be tested empirically, but focused only on facts. Western culture was now about to enter this third, positivist phase. There was no way back. We could not regress into the theological or metaphysical consolations of the past but were compelled by the inexorable laws of history to move forward into the age of science."

Karen Armstrong. *The Case For God*.

* * * * *

George Johnston Allman was my great-great-grandfather so I naturally went looking for him on the 1901 Irish Census. There was one small puzzle there. For religion he put down 'Church of Humanity'. At first I thought this was a way of saying he had no religious allegiance but regarded himself as a humanitarian. But then I discovered that this was in fact the church the Positivists set up.

John Gray wrote in *Gray's Anatomy*:."The positivists believed that all societies across the globe will gradually discard their traditional attachments … because of the need for rational, scientific and experimental modes of thought which a modern industrial economy involves. This is an old faith, widespread in the nineteenth century, that there must be a step-by-step convergence on liberal values, on 'our values'." (Stuart Hampshire.)

"The founder of Positivism was Count Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). Saint-Simon used to instruct his valet to waken him each morning with the words 'Remember, monsieur le comte, that you have great things to do.' Perhaps, as a result, he had an eventful life. At the age of seventeen he was commissioned into the army and served with the French forces in the American War of Independence. Later in his military career he was taken prisoner and interned in Jamaica, after which he conceived the first of many grandiose schemes – a plan for a canal linking the Atlantic and the Pacific" and he did well out of the French Revolution despite having a title. "Saint-Simon was an adventurer. He was also the first modern socialist." He saw market capitalism as "anarchic, wasteful and chronically unstable." Gray goes on to say, "His critique of capitalism was hugely influential. But more influential still was his vision of the future of humanity, which at the close of the twentieth century re-emerged in the utopian project of a universal free market."

"Progress in society is a by-product of progress in science. As knowledge advances, so does humanity."

"Marx knew little of the work of Comte, whom he read only in the late 1860s and then dismissed; but the influence on him of Saint-Simon was profound. With the growth of

knowledge and the continuing expansion of production, Saint-Simon believed, the state will wither away. Marx followed Saint-Simon in this conviction, which became the core of his conception of Communism."

And Comte had been Saint-Simon's secretary from 1817 to 1824. But to determine the exact nature of the two men's influence is not easy. Christian von Dehsen putting together *Lives & Legacies* says, "Auguste Comte's theory of the law of three stages led to the development of philosophical positivism and the discipline of sociology" which influenced such varying figures "as the novelist George Eliot, the philosopher John Stuart Mill, the psychologist Claude Bernard, and the historian Hippolyte Taine" and his concepts of focusing on only those things which could be verified by "objective evidence" was developed further after his death. "Herbert Spencer applied them to Darwinism in the *Principles of Sociology*. Karl Marx analyzed economic relationships from a political and sociological perspective. The modern study of sociology was founded by Émile Durkheim, who studied society using empirical evidence, and by Max Weber, a theorist." But none of this unravels how much of Comte's ideas were essentially Saint-Simon's ideas and how much of his work involved new insights …

John Gray says the Positivists aimed at creating a new church rather than a philosophy or an economic model. Auguste Comte was the main mover. The Deity would be replaced by Humanity. "Soon the Positivist cult acquired all the paraphernalia of the Church – hymns, altars, priests in their vestments and its own calendar, with the months named after Archimedes, Gutenberg, Descartes and other rationalist saints."

"The Positivist religion – 'Catholicism minus Christianity', as T. J. Huxley called it – was eminently ridiculous. It was extremely influential. Temples of Humanity sprang up not only in Paris but also in London, where a chapel was founded in Lamb's Conduit Street, and in Liverpool. The Positivist Church was notably successful in Latin America. In Brazil, where Comte's slogan 'Order and Progress' is part of the national flag, there are active Positivist temples to this day. In France, Comtean ideas of rule by a technocratic elite had a lasting influence in the Ecole Polytechnique. Through his deep impact on John Stuart Mill, with whom he maintained a long correspondence, Comte was instrumental in identifying liberalism with secular humanism – or, as Mill and Comte termed it, the Religion of Humanity."

According to *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy* "On the one hand, there is the Religion of Humanity, with details for the worship of the Great Being (symbolized by the female form) in chapels containing the busts of the benefactors of mankind. … On the other hand, Comte had pondered seriously the ritual and ideology of a society from which religious beliefs and institutions had been eliminated. He saw that in the absence of unifying sentiments a scientific society might degenerate."

* * * * *

One of Allman's closest friends was John Kells Ingram who wrote unremarkable though popular poetry, and which he mostly published anonymously—

Unhappy Erin, what a lot was thine!
Half-conquered by a greedy robber band;
Ill governed with now lax, now ruthless hand;
Misled by zealots, wresting laws divine
To sanction every dark or mad design;
Lured by false lights of pseudo-patriot league
Through crooked paths of faction and intrigue;
And drugged with selfish flattery's poisoned wine.
Yet, reading all thy mournful history,
Thy children, with a mystic faith sublime,
Turn to the future, confident that Fate,

Become at last thy friend, reserves for thee,
To be thy portion in the coming time,
They know not what—but surely something great.
Sonnets and Other Poems 1900.

—but he was also an academic, an administrator, and an economist. So to what extent was his opus, *A History of Political Economy*, influential? And the equally interesting question: what influences were at work on him as he wrote it? Professor Richard Ely introducing a reprint says, "Dr Ingram was first of all a follower of Auguste Comte, but as an economist he was most in sympathy with the German historical school, Roscher, Knies, Schmoller and others associated with them in Germany and elsewhere. So far as he differed with these men the difference may be said to be due primarily to the fact just mentioned, namely that first of all he was a follower of Comte and an adherent of the Religion of Humanity as enunciated by the Comtean Positivists."

He also founded the magazine *Hermathena* in which Allman began publishing his papers on geometry which he eventually collected up and published as *Greek Geometry: From Thales to Euclid*. I do not pretend to understand geometry but his style is so readable that he makes his Greeks seem like someone you might run into in the street or the classroom.

I was always convinced that women had no talent for mathematics, not least because that is what my mother believed; whether she, in her turn, had been encouraged to believe that I do not know but it seems very likely. While I was reading Keith Devlin's *The Maths Gene* I suddenly realized there had been a quite different problem at work in my schooldays. In primary school we did arithmetic, sums, fractions, mental arithmetic, and I don't think there were marked differences between girls and boys or within the groupings. After all, we could all see the usefulness in being able to work out what we needed to pay for things and how we might divide a cake or a bag of oranges between x number of children. But when we got to high school we were suddenly faced with Maths A which included algebra and logarithms, and Maths B which included geometry and trigonometry. But nobody explained that these subjects looked at the world in very different ways and asked very different questions. They weren't simply advanced courses in fractions or multiplication. I kept waiting for them to relate to the arithmetical knowledge I already had—and when they refused to do so I was completely at sea.

Devlin writes, "The word *geometry* comes from the Greek *geo metros*, meaning earth measurement. Geometry was first developed by the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, and Chinese to determine land boundaries, construct buildings, and plot the stars for navigation. The geometry most people over the age of thirty remember from their high school days is a refined version of the subject developed largely by the ancient Greeks between 650 and 250 BC.

"In geometry we study patterns of shape. Not any kind of shape, but regular shapes, such as triangles, squares, rectangles, parallelograms, pentagons, hexagons, circles, ellipses, and, in three dimensions, tetrahedral, cubes, octahedral, spheres, ellipsoids, and the like. We see examples of these shapes in the world around us – the circular appearance of the sun and the moon" and so on. "Geometry studies these shapes in the abstract, removed from any particular real-world example." And "Many of the basic theorems of geometry were collected by the ancient Greek mathematician Euclid in his famous book *Elements*, written around 350 BC."

But is that of sufficient importance for modern students to take geometry? Devlin says yes and gives this explanation: "Exposure to formal mathematical thinking is important for at least two reasons. First, a citizen in today's mathematically based world should have at least a general sense of one of the major contributors to society. Second, a survey carried out by the United States Department of Education in 1997 (The Riley Report) showed that students who completed high school geometry performed markedly better in gaining entry to college and

did better when at college than those students who had not taken such a course, *regardless of the subjects studied at college*. As the survey organizers pointed out, the major factor was not how well the students do in such a course. Merely completing it gives them a tremendous advantage in all their other courses."

He links mathematical ability to our ability to understand and use other abstract symbols such as letters and musical notation. They are all symbols, not the thing itself, and we can use and develop and manipulate them to enrich our lives and enhance our brains. He also gives some interesting sidelights on how mathematics might help us see patterns where we traditionally weren't sure if they existed, such as the coat patterns of a tiger. "The idea of applying mathematics to study the form of living things was put forward by the great British thinker D'Arcy Thompson in his book *On Growth and Form*, first published in 1917. In the 1950s, the English mathematician Alan Turing took up Thompson's suggestion, proposing a specific mechanism for applying mathematics to study the coat patterns of animals. He called this new field 'morphogenesis.' "

C. F. D'Arcy wrote in *The Adventures of a Bishop*, "It was in this period that some of us formed a small society for the discussion of literary subjects, or indeed of any questions at all which excited our interest at the time. Sometimes we were able to get men of real standing to join us in our talks. Once we had Dr. Mahaffy, another time Professor Atkinson, the great philologist and linguist, on a third occasion Dr. Ingram honoured us by attending – a man whom we all regarded with special reverence on account of his vast learning and complete honesty and independence of mind. The world in general, knowing but little of these great qualities, remembers him best as the author of the striking lyric, dear to the hearts of all Irish Nationalists, "Who fears to speak of ninety-eight?"

"Our subject on the occasion of Dr. Ingram's visit was the literary value of the old Gaelic epic cycles. It was introduced by a paper by William Colgan, who, along with other linguistic attainments, had a considerable knowledge of the Irish language. He contended strongly for the ancient national poetry, putting forward the proposition that, for Irishmen, these cycles of heroic legend might well take the place occupied by Homer and Virgil in a liberal education. Why should Irishmen look to the antiquities of Greece and Rome, for their first introduction to the splendours of a human dawn, instead of to the equally glorious literature of the early age of their own land?

"Dr. Ingram listened to this plea with evident interest and sympathy, but, having said a few kind words of appreciation, he went on to point out the impossibility of any other early literature, no matter how interesting, taking the place of Homer and of the other great writings of Greek antiquity. For, as he showed us, the classical literature of Greece and Italy is in the main stream of human thought. It must ever possess a unique value, because through it have come to us the influences which have shaped the best elements in our intellectual heritage. He convinced us all. For my part, I have never forgotten the vivid insight which that evening's thought gave me into the importance of following the main stream of human thought and history from its dim beginnings in the prehistoric world."

Interestingly, Dr Ingram was a very close friend of George Johnston Allman and William Colgan became Allman's son-in-law. William's parents both died when he was a child, as did his three younger siblings. His five older brothers and sisters, then in their teens, lived together all their lives, never marrying, and they banded together to find the wherewithal to send William to university and to become a Church of Ireland minister. Whether this was the best thing for him I am not sure. But he took a remote Irish-speaking parish in Galway where, I suspect, the principal attraction was not its Irish speakers but the wilderness of hills and moors and bogs which lay behind the village. And here he met and married Allman's daughter Constance.

Allman was deeply interested in natural history, he enjoyed hill-climbing, he had an interesting collection of sea shells, his daughter Bessie married Dr William Hart, a founder of

the Natural History Museum in Derry and author of books on such things as edible fungi. But there was a deep chasm between his thinking and that of William Colgan. It was not unlike the tension between the promoters of Parks and Gardens and those passionate to keep and explore Wilderness. I am sure Allman looked forward to supper in front of the fire when he came home from a day's ramble whereas Colgan thought nothing of camping out in wind and rain and mist to explore remote hillsides and unvisited tarns.

Allman's niece became Professor D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's stepmother and I suspect that collection of sea shells played its part in encouraging Thompson to ponder interestingly on their mathematical precision and beauty when he came to write *On Growth and Form*.

But however interesting William Colgan may have found his father-in-law's sea shells I suspect he would have preferred them left on the seashore. And there was another profound difference between them. William's religion seems to have owed more to linguistics and mysticism and history than the watchwords of the Positivists, order, method, progress, scientific experimentation and implementation, a mathematical rather than a transcendental view of life. It may explain why the two men do not appear to have been close. And I cannot help thinking that life cannot always have been easy for Constance …

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"The Philosophic origins of the New Novel can be found (like most things French) in Descartes, whose dualism was the reflection of a split between the subjective and the objective, between the irrational and the rational, between the physical and the metaphysical. In the last century Auguste Comte, accepting this dualism, conceived of a logical empiricism which would emphasize the "purely" objective at the expense of the subjective or metaphysical. An optimist who believed in human progress, Comte saw history as an evolution toward a better society. For him the age of religion and metaphysics ended with the French Revolution. Since that time the human race was living in what he termed "the age of science," and he was confident that the methods of the positive sciences would enrich and transform human life. At last things were coming into their own. But not until the twentieth century did the methods of science entirely overwhelm the arts of the traditional humanists. To the scientific-minded, all things, including human personality, must in time yield their secrets to orderly experiment. Meanwhile, only that which is verifiable is to be taken seriously; emotive meaning must yield to cognitive meaning. Since the opacity of human character has so far defeated all objective attempts at illumination, the New Novelists prefer, as much as possible, to replace the human with objects closely observed and simple gestures noted but not explained."

Gore Vidal in an essay 'French Letters', 1967.

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Yet Comte busied himself with all the trappings of religion in which to enclose his "age of science". And if there are 'positive sciences' then what are 'negative sciences'?

Raj Patel in *Stuffed & Starved* writes, "The animus behind soy's cultivation in Brazil is a religious idea with origins at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one that has left its mark at the heart of the Brazilian flag.

"The slogan on the Brazilian flag reads 'Order and Progress', and it has been the official national banner since 1889. It was chosen by Brazil's national architects because it was the slogan of one of the most successful nineteenth-century religions – positivism. The new creed offered a path to the future, and the psychic tools to achieve a non-denominational, atheist and egalitarian order, through 'the great religion of humanity'. The founder of positivism, Auguste Comte, distilled his thoughts in the maelstrom of post-revolutionary France. He had come to accept that monarchy was a bad idea, and that it was for the best that there were to be no more French kings. The future, though, could be more than merely republican. One day, if people chose wisely, all religions would fade into altruism, private

property would be abolished, and all would live in equality. This he derived from an epochal study of history from the earliest tribes to the pinnacle of contemporary civilization – early nineteenth-century France. He deduced that European society had passed through its 'theological' stage, in which gods were presumed to be the causes of all things, to its 'metaphysical stage' and could potentially reach its 'scientific' endpoint. Yet all was not well. Private property stunted the growth of pan-human bonhomie, promoting instead the vices of individualism, avarice and poverty. The solution, Comte argued, wasn't anything as revolutionary or precipitous as the dismantling of private property, but rather its stewardship in the hands of those in society most capable of its judicious and progressive use: bankers. Guided by positivist ideals, bankers could shape a society of the highest form, one in which altruism, equality and justice would reign. For progress to be true and unwavering, bankers would provide the requisite order. *Ordem e progresso*."

Bankers certainly had power, then and now, but I am less certain of their idealism. They were, after all, employed to make and keep banks profitable rather than serve suffering humanity. Patel goes on to say, "This is more than historical trivia. It describes rather well the order of things in what is today known as the 'development' industry. Bankers, and their consultants, certainly provide order, with an unshakeable faith that their actions are, in the long term, to everyone's benefit, and with a strong stake in managing private property in the short term. The grammar of 'development' is also an important one to note, with its teleology and open invitation to intervene in those 'less developed' countries. It also describes rather well the mechanics of the Brazilian government's national development programme, the one that incubated the soy industry."

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Keith Bosley introducing the poetry of Mallarmé writes, that on the one side in 19th century France were those who believed in 'art for art's sake' "embodying Man's highest aspirations" while on the other side "the emphasis was not on Man but on People, to whom art was a mirror, a document, not an esoteric pastime: this was Positivism – or Realism or Naturalism – the art of socially committed novelists like Zola and Maupassant and the composer Charpentier, who wrote the enormously popular 'musical novel' *Louise* about the love-life of a milliner."

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The Oxford History of Western Philosophy edited by Anthony Kenny says: "In the sixth and last book of his *System of Logic* Mill, at that time much under the influence of Comte, had addressed himself to 'the logic of the moral sciences'. The obstinate backwardness of the social sciences as compared with their counterparts in the field of non-human nature had been a persisting and irksome hindrance to the programme of the Enlightenment. Rational knowledge of man and society was needed for social progress, but where was it to be found? Drawing heavily on Comte, but with large infusions of his own cautiousness, Mill maintained that such a science is possible, but can be only slowly and tentatively approximated to. What one billiard ball will do to another when it hits it depends on few factors: the shape, weight, hardness, and smooth surface of the balls. Their position on impact, and the speed at which the first is moving. Things are very different in the human and social domain. The enormously greater complexity of human agents, and the consequentially much greater variety of circumstances determining their reactions, rule out a comparable rigour and certainty in the sciences of society.

"Hitherto the demand for reason in political life had been either for the criticism of institutions by self-evident principles of political right, conceived on the analogy of geometry, or for the commonsensical tracing of the commonsensically pleasant or painful consequences to which they lead. In the nineteenth century the idea of applying science to politics emerged in various forms. For Saint-Simon, applied technological science was the indispensable motor of progress. It appeared to follow that the management of the new,

progressive, industrial societies should be in the hands of scientists and the leaders of industry. The Baconian idea of science as important most of all for the services it could give to the 'relief of man's estate' was the object of his more or less religious veneration. His inclusion in the tradition of socialism is due to his insistence that society must endeavour to improve the physical and moral condition of its poorest members. For this purpose he argued that there is no right to inherited wealth. In the interests of peace he proposed a European parliament and imagined, as Comte and Spencer were to do later, that industrialism and militarism were essentially exclusive of each other.

"Much of what he believed reappears in the voluminous writings of Auguste Comte, who was for a time his secretary. His famous law of the three stages enlarges on Saint-Simon's military-industrial contrast. The first, theological, age is military; the last, scientific, age is industrial; the intervening, metaphysical, age is one of transition. Believing in the possibility of a real, physics-like science of society, Comte goes beyond Saint-Simon's technology, which will merely solve the problem of poverty. Comte's social science, grasping the laws of social cohesion in its statics and of social change in its dynamics, will transform man's capacity to improve society and himself. The Saint-Simonian conclusion is drawn that government must be by an elite, expert in Comtian science. Although social change and progress is governed by law, it is not all that strict: men can influence the rate of change, even if not its direction. Comte follows Saint-Simon also in holding that, since science has undermined traditional Christianity, a new religion (of 'fraternal love' in Saint-Simon's case, of humanity in Comte's) must discharge its valuable moralizing functions in its place. Comte was, like Hegel and Marx, a pre-Darwinian evolutionist, even if the evolutionary process they perceived was not biological and did not operate by natural selection. Comte died two years before Darwin's *Origin of Species* came out."

Positivism also became popular in Russia. Boris Jakim translating Vladimir Solovyov's *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* notes that "Positivism was the dominant intellectual current in Russia in the 1870s, but, as Aleksei Losev points out … this decade also witnessed a reaction against positivism among academic philosophers." Solovyov's book is part of this reaction. He says the Comtean idea of theology, metaphysics and positive science as three successive stages with positive science (or 'positive philosophy' as Comte called it, 'The fundamental character of positive philosophy consists in the fact that it considers all phenomena as subordinate to immutable natural laws, the precise discovery of which and the reduction of which to the smallest possible number constitutes the goal of all our efforts') the end, whereas Solovyov believed the "universal synthesis of theology, philosophical metaphysics, and positive science is the necessary culmination of the philosophical development, a logical and historical necessity."

It was not that Solovyov was against scientific research and debate but he saw its limitations. "The principle of positivism is external experience. True knowledge, knowledge in the strict sense of the word, is for positivism a knowledge that comes from external experience, and consequently a knowledge in which that which is known is an *external object* for the knower. Therefore, when, from the point of view of positivism it is said that the absolute is unknowable, this only means that it is not an object of external experience. And this is completely true, for, by its very concept, independent reality cannot be an external object, for every external object as such is only a representation, conditioned by the representing consciousness. Thus, the basic assertion of positivism reduces to the indisputable and important truth that *independent reality cannot be given in external experience*. Moreover, as we have seen, and as positivism justly insists, independent reality is also not given in *a priori* knowledge. It is given neither in abstract-rational knowledge (Wolff's dogmatism) nor in speculative-dialectical knowledge (Hegel's idealism). But if it is known neither in *a priori* thinking nor in external experience and at the same time cannot be unknowable, it is absolutely necessary to accept that it is known in *inner experience*, for there

is as yet no other source of knowledge besides these three. Positivism asserts, however, that in inner experience, just as in external experience, we know only *phenomena*, not the entity in itself. This is completely true, and we only need to add what we have said a number of times, namely that such an entity, which abides exclusively in itself and is absolutely separate from all phenomena, outside of all phenomena, does not exist at all and cannot exist, just as there is no phenomenon and can be no phenomenon without the absolutely independent entity whose phenomenon it is."

This would seem to suggest that physical 'things' and the laws ruling them were the focus of Positivism but that more nebulous 'things' like emotions and thoughts were not.

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How Positivism actually played out in people's lives I am not sure. My gr-gr-grandfather attended the Church of Ireland, partly for his wife's sake, partly because it was expected of him as Professor of Mathematics at what was then Queen's College (now University College) in Galway. But when he was forced to retire at the set age of sixty-five and his wife had died he felt himself free to become more involved with Positivism. He had traveled to France as a young man to meet Comte. He kept up close contact with a number of Positivist friends. But whether he actually carried out any form of worship I do not know. And like his father and many of his friends, such as Ingram, he saw immense possibilities in statistics and belonged to the Dublin Statistical Society. It is not that there was no disagreement and dissension among Positivists in Ireland, their leader Henry Dix Hutton, wrote books such as *Comte, the man and the founder; personal recollections* and *Humanity the true object of worship faith and service* as well as more prosaic books on conveyancing and land titles but some Positivists, including Allman, seem to have been drawn to the different views or different emphasis taken by English Positivist leader Richard Congreve who was a doctor but also wrote books such as *The Catechism of the Positivist Religion* and *Human Catholicism* and eventually moved away from the mainstream English Positivists to a more religious view of life.

Allman is remembered for his *Greek Geometry from Thales to Euclid* which came out in the magazine *Hermathenia*, founded by Ingram and still going, in a number of parts in the 1870s and was eventually published in book form. I do not know what modern geometricians think of it but I found it both fascinating and accessible. For someone who has difficulty in telling one kind of angle from another he makes the gradual development of knowledge and ideas sound intensely interesting. It is easy to forget that people did not always know and agree on the properties of things which now seem basic like cones and triangles and cubes. Yet he makes those Greeks puzzling over shapes and properties and relationships more than 2,000 years ago seem real. I could almost picture Euclid and others pondering over their calculations, arguing with colleagues, trying to persuade their students that these were fascinating new ways of looking at the world around them …

Even if Allman is not particularly remembered, Thales and Euclid remain for ever linked to the concept of geometry. But I think Allman, who was a naturally kind and sympathetic man, did believe in 'humanity', that it held boundless possibilities for good … I am just not convinced that humanity can (or should) be divorced from its more emotional, complex, unverifiable, mystical, irrational, visionary aspects …

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September 29: Elizabeth Gaskell
September 30: Truman Capote
October 1: Louis Untermeyer
October 2: Graham Greene
Mahatma Gandhi
October 3: James Herriot
Henry Dix Hutton

October 4: Damon Runyon
Walter Rauschenbusch
October 5: Václav Havel
Denis Diderot
October 6: Val Biro
Marie de Gournay
October 7: Thomas Kenneally
Desmond Tutu
October 8: John Cowper Powys
October 9: Miguel de Cervantes
Sayyid Qutb

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Brother Andrew and Al Janssen wrote a book they called *Secret Believers* in which they tell the story of Sayyid Qutb. Born in Egypt in 1906 he had "memorised the Quran as a boy, but he had grown up with a restlessness that caused him to ponder the meaning of life and death. He was curious, with a mystical bent that motivated him to write several volumes of poetry as a young man. He was also a moralist and, as such, tended to shy away from western influences. He published a comparative study of the Quran and the New Testament in which he argued that European society was little affected by Christian thinking while Egyptian thought and law were greatly affected by the Quran and Islamic law."

He accepted "the influence of western sciences while rejecting" Western cultural influences. (Yes, I have noticed that a great many non-Western people cannot do without their cars and phones and painless surgery but do not look at how they came about …) And he went off to America to study. It does not seem to have been a happy experience as he returned home "with powerful impressions of America filled with violent games like football, primitive music, severe racial discrimination and obsessions with sex. And this was before the social revolution of the 1960s" and he "became an activist, increasingly dedicated to the study of the Quran. Egypt was emerging from the shackles of British rule and trying to recover from its army's humiliating loss to the newly formed country of Israel in 1948. A group called the Muslim Brotherhood was calling for economic reforms and redistribution of land to counter the increasing western influences in the country. Sayyid used his considerable writing skills to express the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood during the period when Egypt was going through political convulsions with the dethronement of their king and the rise to power of President Gamal Abd al-Nasser. Along with other radical thinkers, he was imprisoned in 1954, and during the next ten years, he poured his literary skills into writing several books. Most notable was a tract, completed in 1964, in which he declared that humanity was on the brink of annihilation unless there was surrender to Islam. He issued a call to jihad – not a defensive struggle, but a vast offensive that would bring first the Arab people and eventually all the world under the rule of Islam. His thoughts were considered so dangerous that he was executed in August 1966.

"That little book called *Milestones* has become the manifesto of radical Islam, as powerful as Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was to the rise of Nazism, or the writings of Karl Marx to Communism. Virtually every extremist group, from Hezbollah to Hamas to Al-Qaeda, points to this book and its author, Sayyid Qutb, as the man who developed the philosophy of modern jihad.

"I have often said that we are the Bible to unbelievers. Would things have been different if Sayyid Qutb had become friends with just one man who demonstrated the reality of a Christian life submitted to Jesus Christ? It could have happened in Egypt. It could have happened in America. The tragedy is that apparently he never experienced the real love of Jesus.

"When Qutb visited the United States, few Muslims came to the West. Today there are

millions of Muslims living in Europe and North America, and they present us with a challenge."

If Donald Trump had been US president then Qutb would likely have remained in Egypt or looked elsewhere. I think many people would use this as a reason to not want Trump. But that would miss the point. The very tolerant people who are constantly urging us to be nice to Muslims are the same people who would applaud the sexual revolution and see themselves as having a 'right' to view pornography, have nudist beaches, promote same-sex marriage and so on. Being nice to Sayyid Qutb would not have changed anything (and I am sure many Americans *were* polite and helpful rather than rude or abusive) because he was coolly viewing a culture but without any kind of transformative experience that was more than culture … As Mark Bradley writes in *Too Many to Jail*, "Now the "Christian" West has given the final proof to all decent Muslims that its depraved, dissolute, and degenerate societies will soon be pounded by Allah's wrath: some Western governments have legalized homosexual "marriage"." Islam may change. The West may change. But kindly tolerant people out on the streets urging us all to be more welcoming, more tolerant, more inclusive, are glossing over this fundamental problem …

(Since writing that Donald Trump *has* become the US President. Food for thought …)

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"At the heart of all arguments about Empire is of course 'Suez' — in itself an evasive shorthand which ducks away from something more accurate like 'the invasion of part of Egypt fuelled by hatred for Nasser, in secret collusion with France and Israel. And based on anti-democratic lying to the entire world'. This extraordinary episode raises in one of its most pressing forms the degree to which we are either victims of history or can, through quarter-way intelligent statesmanship, move on. Anthony Eden, because he was so mired in his own myth of himself as one of the very slightly creditable figures in the late 1930s on the appeasement issue, thought that the charismatic General Nasser, Egypt's new leader, was the new Mussolini or even Hitler — a figure who through flirting with the Russians and through anti-British actions was tipping the world in a disturbing direction. In Eden's view it was the job of Britain, with its historic ties to Egypt, and its still vigorous role as America's proxy throughout much of the Middle East, to bring him down.

"From our own perspective this seems mad — Nasser was part of an effective global paroxysm or shudder against direct European control: certainly a legitimate nationalist with history in his sails. Watching film of Nasser at the time of the crisis I feel my entire sexual framework suddenly wobble like jelly — I'm just glad I wasn't living in Cairo in the mid-1950s to have my heart broken (to be honest he is the only nationalist leader it is possible to have vigorous sexual feelings about, setting aside of course Archbishop Makarios). Eden on the other hand oddly failed to succumb and appeared to have been in the grip of a sort of psychosis provoked by humiliation after British humiliation around the world and the sense that Egypt's actions in nationalizing the Suez Canal — Egypt the cradle of British self-esteem's rebuilding around the Battle of El Alamein, the Suez Canal the perfect symbol of Britain's continuing greatness — was the last straw. In this he had strong support.

"Newspaper cartoons, particularly on the right, are a helpful shorthand for ideas that everyone can lazily agree to or laugh along with. Having spent too much time mired in the nasty world of *Daily Express* cartoons this is painfully clear: through the work of Leslie Illingworth the era's entire oddness is laid out. Illingworth's world of stupid black men, brutish union members and excitable foreign crowds is a very unattractive one: the Mau-Mau rebels are a black snake wrapped around a white baby to be shot by a white settler's pistol; the Iranians nationalizing Anglo-Iranian Oil (now BP) are a deranged mob (this was another enormous imperial humiliation I've failed to mention!); the Chinese are slit-eyed nonhumans. Everyone gets a go in the world of the *Express*. Nothing is worse, though, than the special cartoon published on the occasion of Eden's becoming premier. He is shown as a figure of

frowning rectitude framed by all the people out to get him — disgusting Cypriots, bald, vicious Khrushchev and so on — and of course Khrushchev's stooge Nasser, invariably shown in cartoon after cartoon as an oily wog grinning and snarling. During the crisis one Illingworth cartoon shows 'Suez' as a baby being held by the international community, with its baby toy flung on the floor a little golliwog, clearly Nasser. The *Express* was at the heart of popular support for the conservatives and, given that its readers were to be disappointed over and over again (the terrorists, scroungers and fifth-columnists basically won), it is in its way as useful a shorthand as the Bond books for the rich stew that filled many patriots' heads during this period.

"And so, feeling backed by broad popular and cabinet support, Eden did a secret deal and then stoutly lied about it — with France, who wished to shut down what she saw as Egypt's role in promoting Algerian terrorism and with Israel, who wished to damage her most formidable enemy. The trick — for Israel to invade and for France and Britain to then follow to protect their interests in the canal and pretend to be there to separate the warring parties — was pathetically transparent, reminiscent of something from *Just William* rather than from a specifically dangerous period in the Cold War with an American election in the offing and a wary and anxious new Soviet leadership looking for a rumble."

The Man Who Saved Britain by Simon Winder

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Rupert Shortt wrote in *Christianophobia*, "The future of Egypt is pivotal to interfaith harmony in the Middle East, because about 10 million people are Christians of one stripe or another. Most of these are Copts – part of the Oriental Orthodox family that includes the Syrian, Armenian, and Ethiopian traditions. The country was a more tolerant place a hundred years ago than today. Muslims of both sexes were widely involved in culture and education. But from the 1970s onwards, Egypt began to be influenced by the Salafist Wahhabi ideology deriving from Saudi Arabia. Alaa al-Aswany, the journalist and author of the bestselling novel *The Yacoubian Building*, has ascribed the rise of Salafism in Egypt to a chain of causes. With the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973, Salafists suddenly acquired the finance to export their ideas around the world. Millions of Egyptians sought employment in the Gulf States, where they came under the influence of extremists. In time, Wahhabi sympathisers infiltrated Egypt's security forces as well: unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, the country's largest organisation, Wahhabis did not menace the state directly. They are nevertheless widely seen as heralds of theocracy. As well as opposing music, theatre, and general education, or insisting that women wear the burqa – jettisoned by earlier generations many decades ago – the Wahhabis deny that Christians can be full citizens. Rather they see the Copts as *dhimmis* (protected non-Muslims) occupying a subordinate role."

Sayyid Qutb had no time for Nasser. Nasser was a secular Muslim. Nasser had no intention of making Egypt into a theocracy like Saudi Arabia. Qutb wanted Nasser out, possibly as much as some in the West did, but it was Nasser who brought Qutb down, having him executed in 1966. The Muslim Brotherhood lives on but how influential is it? It might be better to ask: how influential was it, considering it is seen as the foundation, the inspiration, the seed for dozens of organizations since then; in fact, virtually every organization which has given Western leaders sleepless nights since then, from Al-Qaeda to Lasker Jihad, from ISIS to Boko Haram, pays lip service to its founding credo.

And it is also worth pondering on other issues, although I am not sure jihadists do a lot of pondering. When the Muslim Brotherhood was elected to govern Egypt they didn't last long and I suspect one of the things which brought them into conflict with their own society was that they were frightening off the tourists—and without tourists Egypt depends on massive injections of American aid. With few natural resources tourism and aid, both deriving principally from the West, loom large. And the tourists come to see pre-Islamic Egypt, pyramids and carvings and murals and 'treasures', the sort of things the Muslim

Brotherhood and Al-Qaeda and others regard with contempt and sometimes destroy …

And jihad has fallen most heavily on conservative Christian groups, in Nigeria, in Iraq, in West Papua, in Pakistan, (rather than secular Westerners), and on other Muslim groups such as the Kurds. We in the decadent West have had 9/11, the London bombings, Bali nightclubs, but they have killed only a fraction of those targeted by jihadist Islam.

And this problem, the tension between jihadist Islam, moderate Islam, and Islamic states which have tried to separate religion and politics, shows no sign of being resolved in any of the nations where this three-way tug-of-war is going on. Being kind and expressing tolerance has its own rewards but it isn't going to resolve the big problems besetting Islam and predominantly Muslim societies. Ultimately they have to resolve those problems themselves.

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October 10: R. K. Narayan

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"Forty to fifty years ago, when Indian writers were not so well considered, the writer R. K. Narayan was a comfort and example to those of us (I include my father and myself) who wished to write. Narayan wrote in English about Indian life. This is actually a difficult thing to do, and Narayan solved the problems by appearing to ignore them. He wrote lightly, directly, with little social explanation. His English was so personal and easy, so without English social associations, that there was no feeling of oddity; he always appeared to be writing from within his own culture.

"He wrote about people in a small town in South India: small people, big talk, small doings. That was where he began; that was where he was fifty years later. To some extent that reflected Narayan's own life. He never moved far from his origins. When I met him in London in 1961—he had been travelling, and was about to go back to India—he told me he needed to be back home, to do his walks (with an umbrella for the sun) and to be among his characters.

"He truly possessed his world. It was complete and always there, waiting for him; and it was far enough away from the centre of things for outside disturbances to die down before they could get to it. Even the independence movement, in the heated 1930s and 1940s, was far away, and the British presence was marked mainly by the names of buildings and places. This was an India that appeared to mock the vainglorious and went on in its own way."

V. S. Naipaul in *Literary Occasions*.

But for all that Narayan inspired Naipaul when he needed inspiration and showed that anywhere, no matter how seemingly unimportant, can be a book he came eventually to see that Narayan had a different kind of limitation. "In Narayan's books, when the history is known, there is less the life of a wise and eternal Hindu India than a celebration of the redeeming British peace.

"So in India the borrowed form of the English or European novel, even when it has learned to deal well with the externals of things, can sometimes miss their terrible essence."

*

'Miss Read', pseudonym for English writer, Dora Saint, also took village life as her subject. She wrote books such as *Village Christmas* and *Village Diary* and the one I'm reading at the moment, *A Peaceful Retirement*, in which she has just retired from a lifetime of teaching and finds herself beset by elderly men who envisage marriage and women friends who can't understand her reluctance.

"Time and time again, I have explained to my old friend that I am really quite happy as a spinster, but Amy simply cannot believe it.

'But you must be so lonely,' she protested one day. 'You come home from school to an empty house, so quiet you can hear the clock tick, no human voice! It must be almost frightening.'

‘I don’t,’ I told her. ‘I find it absolute bliss after the fuss and bustle of school. And I may not come back to human voices, but Tibby keeps up a pretty strong yowling until I put down her dinner plate.’

Amy was not impressed, and her attempts to provide me with a husband have continued unabated over the years.

This question of loneliness interests me. I remember when I made the move from Fairacre school house to my present home which dear Dolly Clare left me, that I had a brief moment when I wondered if I should really be at ease on my own.

At the school house I had been much nearer my neighbours, and in any case, the children and their parents were much in evidence around me. Certainly, at holiday times I had found the place much quieter, but this had pleased me.

After the move to Beech Green, and my passing doubts about loneliness, I found my new surroundings entirely satisfactory, and when I informed Amy that I was really and honestly not *lonely*, it was the plain truth.

I think perhaps those of us who have lived in a solitary state are lucky in that they have filled their time with a diversity of interests and friends. It is the married couples who suffer far more when their partner goes, for they have shared a life together, and it is shattered by the loss of half one’s existence. Life for the one who is left can never be quite the same again.

I feel it would be heartless to share this thought with Amy. She is positive that she is the lucky one to be married, and I am to be pitied.

But I wonder … ”

*

A friend had cut a poem from the *Sydney Morning Herald* back in 1991 called ‘Bad Day At Coogee’ which begins:

For sixty-five days Raymond Carver
prowled his house in Port Angeles
finding poems everywhere. The mail,
the ashtray, the coffee at his elbow.
One, two, sometimes three a day.
They just kept coming. I felt on fire,
he said. I’ve never had a period
in my life that remotely resembles that time.

This sense that stories, poems, articles, essays, books are everywhere is a curiously liberating one. Just as Narayan found all he needed in his small fictitious Indian town so anyone can find stories anywhere. In solitary confinement, in a dull lesson, in a ho-hum relationship, in the wasteland of old warehouses and superceded factories, in endless stretches of scrub or grass … the imagination is not necessarily more stirred into life by Venetian palaces or Alps on the skyline, by teeming streets or the tragic drama of war …

But are small subjects as influential as large ones?

*

Caterpillars are those small primitive things you see chewing on leaves, sometimes to the dismay of gardeners and orchardists—aren’t they? Common and Waterhouse in *Butterflies of Australia* begin their description of a caterpillar: “Head The head is a rounded sclerotized capsule bearing six primitive visual organs on each side, known as stemmata or ocelli, and a pair of small three-segmented antennae furnished with sensilla. In front there is an inverted Y-shaped thickening, and the triangular area between the two arms of the Y is the frontoclypeus, often called simply the frons. The labrum is a hinged plate attached to the lower margin of the frontoclypeus above the mouth. At the sides of the mouth there are a pair of strong dentate mandibles and a pair of maxillae, and beneath it a hinged plate, the labium. Both the maxilla and the labium carry paired palpi, provided with additional sensory organs, and there is also a midventral spinneret which produces a silken thread. The head is also

provided with tactile hairs or primary setae, and is sometimes covered with dense secondary setae." This is just the beginning of the marvel which is a caterpillar. There are legs with suction caps. There is a digestive system which takes just the right amount of the right kind of food. There is a means to excrete. There are skin patterns to camouflage or frighten … And in a few days time this tiny creature will spin a remarkable and perfect cocoon, maybe silver, maybe golden silk, maybe an amazing paper-like waterproof substance—and inside it will swiftly turn this caterpillar into a creature that can fly, that may have wings of iridescent beauty, which will exchange a diet of leaves for a diet of nectar, that will mate and lay eggs on an appropriate leaf …

Take for instance dragon flies. Very pretty hovering over a summer pool, you might say, but did you know that—"One example of the way in which the same goal can be reached from different beginnings is the development of a dragonfly egg after half has been destroyed. The posterior part of the egg normally gives rise to the posterior part of the embryo, but if the anterior part of the egg is destroyed, it gives rise to a small but complete embryo. Likewise, in regeneration, a complete organism can be restored from a part: think, for example, of the way that cuttings from a willow tree can each give rise to a new tree. If a flatworm is cut into pieces, each piece can regenerate a new flatworm."

(Rupert Sheldrake in *The Science Delusion*)

Primitive? The more I think about butterflies, moths, mosquitoes, even ordinary house flies—the more in awe I become. And I did not know this fascinating fact until I read *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* by Michael Denton: "The first stage of metamorphosis, shortly following the formation of the pupa, involves what amounts to the virtual dissolution of all the organ systems of the larvae into a veritable soup of fragmented cells and tissues. This dissolution phase is quickly followed by an assembly phase during which all the organ systems – muscular, nervous and alimentary – of the adult insect are built up from special embryonic cells which occur either in specific places in the pupa, known as imaginal buds or discs, or scattered widely in the disintegrating tissues of the larva. Detailed comparative studies of the processes of organ formation in different insect species have revealed that the ways in which the adult organ systems are formed during metamorphosis are bewilderingly diverse in different species." And just how do those embryonic cells organize 'soup of grub' into an iridescent and beautiful butterfly which flits up from that broken chrysallis to find the nectar it needs?

Caterpillars do occasionally get written about: for children as in *The Hungry Caterpillar*, for adults in gardening books, for scientists as in experiments to breed, change, sterilize or in some way do something to caterpillars. But for most of us they rarely impinge on our lives. And yet caterpillars, in fact that whole amazing sequence, egg > caterpillar > chrysallis > moth/butterfly etc > egg … is of such extraordinary complexity and beauty that I never cease to marvel …

For a long time people were not sure just how the sequence worked. Silkworms, of course, were carefully bred for the silk trade but were they like all other insects or a special case? A remarkable artist and thinker called Maria Sybilla Merian set to work back in the 1690s to study insects. Her meticulous drawings and paintings were based on close observation of insects; something, strangely, which had rarely happened before then.

So talented and observant was German-born Ms Merian that the Dutch government sent her and her younger daughter Dorothea to their colony in South America, Surinam, to study, research, and record. She eventually caught malaria and had to return home. But her meticulous care still excites the admiration of people like Sir David Attenborough. And me.

My problem is that I cannot read the German of her famous *Der Raupen wunderbare Verwandelung* but her beautiful illustrations are their own insight and delight …

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October 11: François Mauriac

October 12: James McAuley
October 13: Guy Boothby
October 14: Miles Franklin
Hannah Arendt
October 15: Virgil
Michel Foucault
Friedrich Nietzsche
October 16: Noah Webster
Oscar Wilde
J. B. Bury
October 17: Les Murray
October 18: Charles Mudie
Pierre Choderlos de Laclos
October 19: John le Carré
October 20: Samuel Taylor Coleridge
John Dewey
October 21: Ursula Le Guin
October 22: Thomas Hughes
October 23: Robert Bridges
Gore Vidal
October 24: Nairda Lyne
October 25: Thomas Babington Macaulay
October 26: Pat Conroy
October 27: Dylan Thomas
October 28: Erasmus
October 29: John Keats
James Boswell
October 30: Geoff Dean
Paul Valery
October 31: Dick Francis
Catherine Helen Spence
November 1: Nicholas Boileau
November 2: Odysseus Elytis
November 3: Karl Baedeker
Martin Cruz Smith
November 4: Eden Phillpotts
November 5: Ella Wheeler-Wilcox
November 6: Raymond Postgate
November 7: Albert Camus
November 8: Bram Stoker
November 9: Ivan Turgenev
November 10: Martin Luther
José Hernandez
David Einhorn
Friedrich Schiller

* * * * *

I knew Friedrich Schiller wrote poetry but until I came upon John Allen's *Great Moments in the Theatre* I didn't know he had started out as a playwright. "The young Frederick Schiller is an excellent example of what happens when you try to discipline the human spirit. For he had not only suffered from the disciplinary measures of the Duke but had endured the strictest régime at home from his father, who was an army surgeon and had

brought the parade ground into every detail of family life. Is it surprising that Schiller answered his father and the Duke by writing one of the most lustily revolutionary plays of all time?"

His father sent him to study medicine but he spent a lot of his time working on a play he called *The Robbers*. The prevailing literary movement known as *Sturm und Drang* exactly suited his idea for a melodrama. "The hero of the movement was none other than William Shakespeare, whose colourful, full-blooded plays, rich in movement and high drama, were enormously to the taste of German audiences and very well played by the leading German actors."

His play, with a Robin Hood type of theme, was a great success—though not with the Duke who "forbade him to write anything further for the stage." Schiller managed to escape to Mannheim but although he wrote a number of plays, particularly on historical subjects, he could not recreate that first dramatic impact. He began to write poetry, prose, essays, reviews, letters. He is described as "tall and gangly and had bright red hair" but perhaps more importantly he is described as "temperamental, stubborn, and uncompromising" which probably didn't help his career. Playwrights, working with all the people needed to make a play a success, need to be able to accommodate suggestions and criticisms. His desire to make a sensation on the stage is understandable but did not necessarily make a play work.

In the more private realm of writing poetry he brought a sense of delicacy, restraint and sensitivity to his writing. "*The Robbers* will give you a very good idea of Schiller's work as a dramatist. But to understand Schiller the poet and the man you should read, for instance, the marvellous poem which Beethoven set to music in the final movement of his Ninth Symphony, the *Ode to Joy*. Schiller may have had a very unhappy life—he died at the age of forty-six—but he had an intense vision of the brotherhood of man—and of the happiness which is brought by such brotherhood. Schiller the poet saw deeper than Schiller the dramatist."

T. J. Reed in a short study *Schiller* says he lacked the light touch needed for comedy, perhaps not least because Kant and Goethe were two important influences on him, but believed an ability to play, rather than treat life as a serious moral business, is essential to becoming fully human. Reed goes on to say, "Finally—and most famously, because Beethoven took the young Schiller's words and built them into the climactic choral movement of his last symphony—what may beyond all human earnestness and effort is the condition of joy. Not, it is true, a self-indulgent emotion, nor the kind of sublime but still individual sentiment that Wordsworth felt in nature's lonely places, but a generous elation which grows out of the forms of happiness people experience in their separate lives and carries them beyond individuality and social convention into loving community. When he wrote his ode 'To Joy' in 1785, Schiller had been lifted out of despair by the enthusiastic appreciation of a group of young people in Leipzig whom he had never met. It was a moment, rare in his life, when reality seemed briefly less resistant to his efforts, and human warmth and solidarity seemed the norm."

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November 11: Feodor Dostoyevsky
November 12: Janette Turner Hospital
November 13: Robert Louis Stevenson
St Augustine
November 14: Steele Rudd
November 15: Andrew Marvell
William Cowper
November 16: Michael Arlen
November 17: Auberon Waugh
Baha'Allah (Mirza Hosein Ali Nuri)

November 18: Margaret Atwood
Rodney Hall
November 19: Charles I

* * * * *

"Charles briefly returned to Scotland in 1641 to appease the Covenanters, who were named thus after the signing of the National Covenant. Although a temporary peace was agreed, Charles had handled this situation very badly and paid a very heavy price for his religious arrogance towards the Scots. The prayer book in effect cost Charles his head in 1649 as it triggered a disastrous series of events. He was forced to summon his English parliament in 1640 to pay for the Bishop's Wars, after a personal rule lasting eleven years, and this led to Civil War in his British kingdoms. The Covenanters fought against Charles in the English and Scottish Civil Wars of 1642-46. They even held him as their prisoner at Newcastle in 1646, before handing him over to parliamentary forces. Other non-Covenanting Scots fought for the king, though loyalties often shifted according to political expediency. For instance, the 1647-48 Engagers included moderate Covenanters who fought against English parliamentary forces to restore the king's freedom. Charles appeared ready to do anything to regain power after being imprisoned by his enemies, but these plans came to nought.

Queen Henrietta Maria left England for France with her new daughter in July 1644. Princess Mary was by then married and living in Holland. Prince Charles escaped to France in 1646, followed by Prince James in 1648. This left in England only Princess Elizabeth and Prince Henry, who shared their father's captivity and witnessed his last speeches. It was with good reason, therefore, that Charles wrote to his queen saying that 'there was never man so alone as I.'

In his final days Charles showed remarkable dignity and composure. He refused to recognise the kangaroo court that put him on trial in January 1649. His subsequent execution outside the magnificent Banqueting Hall in Whitehall on 30 January stunned onlookers. He went from 'a corruptible to an incorruptible crown', leaving England as a republic. The Scots were shocked by this blatant regicide by a handful of Englishmen and quickly hailed the absentee Prince Charles as their new king, Charles II. This act brought a ferocious reaction from the English government that led to further warfare and bloodshed in Scotland. Charles, for all his faults, was never as cruel to the Scottish people as Oliver Cromwell's forces were to be."

The Kings and Queens of Scotland by Richard Oram.

* * * * *

It was not the content of *The Book of Common Prayer* so much as the way that Charles I was determined to impose it on the Scots. And it was not so much the content but rather that Charles I with crass insensitivity was determined to have every church in Scotland reading from an English-inspired book written in English. It does not even seem to have occurred to him that the Scots might have been amenable to his Book if he provided copies translated into Gaelic for the Highlands and Islands and copies re-written in Lowland Scots for Edinburgh and the Borders. Or even if he had given all congregations, including Catholic and Non-Conformist, the chance to study and evaluate the Book before making their own decisions. But no, Charles I was a pig-headed fool and he charged ahead with his demand that they use the Book or else …

The Book of Common Prayer has much that is beautiful in it still—even if it is rarely used these days—but it also has much which no longer seems appropriate … and looking at it from the difficult position of a putative Scot of the 17th century it could be said that there was much even then that would not have appealed.

The other day I found a little book called *The Beauty of the Book of Common Prayer* by G. E. Pallant-Sidaway. He says of it, "The Book of Common Prayer is a poetic work as well as being an expression of doctrine typically English." Did the Scots see it as 'typically

English'? He also says, "Because the Church of England was established by law, its Prayer Book had to receive Parliamentary sanction." Could Charles not see that this might create problems for his Scottish subjects? And yet there are ideas and beliefs in it that I'm sure the Scots would have found inspiring—if it had not been forced upon them. Take this, for instance:

That it may please Thee to strengthen such as do stand; and to comfort and help the weak-hearted; and to raise up them that fall; and finally to beat down Satan under our feet;

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please Thee to succour, help, and comfort, all that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation;

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please Thee to preserve all that travel by land and water, all women labouring with child, all sick persons, and young children, and shew pity upon all prisoners and captives;

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please Thee to defend, and provide for, the fatherless children, and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed;

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please Thee to have mercy on all men;

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please Thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts;

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord.

Bishop Cranmer paid a high price for his work on it—being burnt at the stake by Queen Mary—but I don't think this was enough to convince the Scots that this made it a very special book. And the Stuart kings had not come to our abhorrence of burning people at stakes. Charles was not foisting it on his Scottish subjects because of the profound belief that a Book steeped in the blood of martyrs deserved a courteous reading at the very least.

Christian von Dehsen's *Lives & Legacies* says "When King Edward VI ascended the throne in 1547, Cranmer was able to implement reforms in teaching and practice that brought the Church of England closer to the Reformation churches on the European continent. One of his most significant acts was compiling the *Book of Common Prayer*, first issued in 1549. In 1552 he produced a second *Book of Common Prayer*. This book included a list of 42 articles of belief (later reduced to 39), which became the doctrinal statements of the early Church of England and echoed some of the theological principles of the European Reformation." It is not hard to see why Cranmer and his new Church of England was anathema to Queen Mary when she succeeded Edward on the throne. Cranmer had tried to do a difficult balancing act: to give a sense of continuity with all that had gone before, to place the monarch at the head of the new church, to give the Bible a stronger place in the church, to emphasize a sense of spirituality and grace rather than just a lot of rules to be followed, yet to couch it in language which opened the way to new insights from the Reformation. But Queen Mary was having none of this, it was to be obedience to Rome, and Cranmer was burnt at the stake on the 21st March in 1556. But his book lived on at the centre of Anglican worship well in to the twentieth century. "The prayer book, with its dignified, graceful language, had a lasting influence on the English language and literature." That was part of its problem in Scotland. It was not only the vanguard of the new English religion, it was a way to push the English language itself into every remote part of Scotland via the pulpit of every church.

"The clergy not wanting to look the part has something to do with the dismantling of the Book of Common Prayer. Anxious not to sound like parsons they can hardly be blamed

for not wanting to look like them either."

From *Talking Heads* by Alan Bennett.

So what actually is in *The Book of Common Prayer?*

It sets out readings, lessons, prayers, for every Sunday of the year as well as other significant occasions. It provides an order of service for life events including baptism, marriage, and burial. It has prayers for 'those in peril on the sea' and other awful things including drought and famine.

It is not particularly 'women-friendly'. For instance a woman coming in after the birth of a child had a special service which included:

Minister. O Lord, save this woman thy servant.

Answer. Who putteth her trust in thee.

Minister. Be thou to her a strong tower.

Answer. From the face of her enemy.

Minister. Lord, hear our prayer.

Answer. And let our cry come unto thee.

Now if I had been though a long and difficult delivery, was worried about the health of my baby, worried about having enough milk, about keeping baby warm and dry, I am not sure that someone talking about the 'face' of my 'enemy' would be very comforting or uplifting.

It is nice to read:

'O all ye Green Things upon the Earth, bless ye the Lord:' and 'O the Whales, and all that move in the Waters, bless ye the Lord:' But it wasn't enough to save the environment or the whales.

Yet in a world where language has a stripped down careless feel to it there are moments when reading these lines provides a sense of the grandeur that language can bestow on the everyday. Sadly Charles I was too arrogant to consult the Scots and too limited to remember that every language contains its own grandeur.

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November 20: Nadine Gordimer
November 21: François Voltaire
Arthur Quiller-Couch
November 22: George Eliot
George Gissing
November 23: Nigel Tranter
November 24: Benedict Spinoza
November 25: Elsie J. Oxenham
Harvey Granville-Barker
November 26: Charles Schulz
Ellen Gould White
November 27: James Agee
November 28: William Blake
Friedrich Engels
November 29: Louisa May Alcott

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Kathleen Burk in *Troublemaker,* a life of historian A. J. P. Taylor, writes, "He could read before he was four and, he says, '*Pilgrim's Progress* was my favourite from the start. I read it again and again in an edition produced by the SPCK [Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge] and knew it almost by heart except that I skipped the theological conversations.' Fortunately for the young Taylor, action and talk alternated: for example, Christian flees the City of Destruction, chased by Obstinate and Pliable. Obstinate decides to go back, but 'Christian and Pliable went talking over the plain; and thus they began their

discourse.' Taylor could then skip the next two-and-a-half pages, until Christian tumbles into the Slough of Despond and the story resumes.

"It is perhaps a mark of his radical heritage that he was introduced to this book at such a young age, since it was the classic radical text. As E.P. Thompson wrote in *The Making of the English Working Class*, 'it is above all in Bunyan that we find the slumbering Radicalism which was preserved through the 18th century and which breaks out again and again in the 19th. *Pilgrim's Progress* is, with [Tom Paine's] *Rights of Man,* one of the two foundation texts of the English working-class movement: Bunyan and Paine, with Cobbett and Owen, contributed most to the stock of ideas and attitudes, which make up the raw material of the movement from 1790-1850. Many thousands of youths found in *Pilgrim's Progress* their first adventure story, and would have agreed with Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, that it was their "book of books".

"To our eyes it appears a curious book for a young child to read and reread: the seventeenth-century language is archaic and the theme is so obviously didactically religious. Yet it had a widespread popularity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries way beyond the radical English household. In the American Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women,* for example, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy play at Pilgrim's Progress, leaving the City of Destruction in the cellar, fighting their way up the stairs armed with swords of righteousness and emerging into the Celestial City in the attic. It is also worth remembering that the range and availability of books for children were very much less than now: one of the best-selling children's books of the entire nineteenth century was called *Jessica's Last Prayer*, again very didactic (from which the percipient child could deduce that the good die young). In *The Pilgrims Progress*, at least, there was fighting and excitement along with the religion."

It is interesting to know that people used it as a radical text. It was seen as a book for adults. Most children were either illiterate or if they could read rarely owned a book of their own in the seventeenth century. It was only gradually that it began to be seen as a book for children. Emily in L. M. Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon* says she much preferred Christian's adventures to Christiana's but then Christian traveled alone, Christiana was encumbered with four children, yet she still comes through as a strong and sensible woman.

Yet 'adventures' isn't quite the right word. The book falls between the medieval morality play and the more modern novel of morals and moralizing. Places are called Delectable Mountains, Slough of Despond, Valley of Humiliation, Doubting Castle, Celestial City and so on. People are called Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Mr. Backslider, Lord Time-Server, Mr. Standfast, Giant Despair, and so on and they don't have any sort of developed character. They exist instead as temptations and distractions or as help and encouragement.

It was given out as a School and Sunday School prize when I was young and we had excerpts from it in our reading books with Christian plugging on steadily, on the symbolic 'narrow path', and other people falling by the wayside and I really don't think there was anything radical about the Queensland Education Department in the 1950s … or if there was it went undetected by most of its students ...

My own impression, though this is later, (as a child it was just a book that most children in books seemed to read) was that it was a Puritan answer to the earlier Catholic Morality Plays, lively, picturesque in its language and its images, but primarily designed to encourage people to live better lives. As adults grew more sophisticated and had access to a much greater range of reading and as children's behaviour began to loom much larger I suspect people such as administrators and curriculum designers in Education Departments saw it as a painless way to encourage better conduct in school children. Did it? It is hard to say. And now that educationists do not see a need to expose children to the classics of the past its possible impact on modern children can not be even guessed at.

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"Cronin was a great admirer of John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* from a

prison cell, and Wilkie Collins, who, wracked with pain, still managed to write."

Alan Davies in *A. J. Cronin*.

Bunyan wrote it while he was in prison and he may have found comfort in the composing and writing of a book which is ultimately about the triumph of good and the reward of virtue.

Vera Britten in her biography *In the Footsteps of John Bunyan* says he was a tinker, his father was a tinker, and both his wives, Mary and Elizabeth, were kind and understanding but uneducated. Like many people of his time he drew deeply on the Bible for ideals of conduct and faith. But it was Mary who brought him a gift which helped him immeasurably when he came to write about faith and the struggle to be a true Christian.

"Mary's father had left her two devotional books, which represented the only dowry that she brought to John. One, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*, a small square-shaped book bound in sepia-coloured vellum, had been published in 1601 by Arthur Dent, "Preacher of the Word of God" at Shoebury in Essex. In his "Epistle to the Reader" he described this work, which had reached its twenty-fourth edition by 1637, as "my little Sermon of Repentance", and assured his readers that "this book medleth not at all with any controversies in the Church, or anything in the State Eccliasticall, but onely entreth into a controversie with Sathan and sin".

"The "Little Sermon" amounted to 423 pages of substantial discourse, "set forth Dialogue-wise for the better understanding of the simple". The simple were not, however, let down too lightly, for the dialogue, ranging widely over such topics as original sin, worldly corruption, Salvation and Damnation, was carried on between four "Interlocutors"—Theologus, a Divine; Philagathus, an Honest Man; Asunetus, an Ignorant Man; and Antilegon, a Caviller.

"Thirty years afterwards, when John was writing *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, the influence of this technique upon his subject and style showed how much more deeply it had impressed him than he realized at the time.

"The second book which John and Mary sometimes read together, *The Practice of Piety*, had become as popular with devout readers as the first. Published in 1612 by Lewis Bayly, later Bishop of Bangor, it was another small, thick book, in gold-embossed brown leather, written for the purpose of "directing a Christian how to walke, that hee may please God". Two hundred and fifty-four pages of involved "Meditations" followed, modestly described by their author as "A plaine Description of the Essence and Attributes of God, out of the holy Scripture"."

Brittain says of *Mr. Badman*, "With *Mr. Badman* he returned to the contemporary Puritan world of sin, judgment, and punishment; guilt was guilt, for which he sought neither motive nor explanation. In fact he did give the explanation, which his modern readers can recognize though he did not; he described in detail that over-pious up-bringing against which, in the terminology of today, Mr. Badman "reacted". Apparently it never occurred to John—perhaps in that century it could not have occurred to him—that excess of piety defeats its own ends.

"Yet even here the open-minded John Bunyan who belonged to eternity put in, despite the seventeenth-century John Bunyan, an occasional appearance. It was the affectionate and forgiving parent of a young and sometimes rebellious family who made Mr. Wiseman describe with approval the attempts of Mr. Badman's father to help his erring son. And it was the deep insight of religious genius which conferred on Mr. Badman the gaudy prosperity of successful vice" yet "John knew that the real victim of suffering is the person who inflicts it; that the true punishment of sin lies in what it does to the sinner."

He was a prolific author; many short pieces, tracts and sermons, but also lengthy books including *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), *The Life and Death of Mr.*

Badman (1680), *The Holy War* (1682) and, of course, *The Pilgrim's Progress* which came out in two parts in 1678 and 1685. Brittain says of the more often overlooked second part that it "sprang from the essence of John's own life, combined with detailed observation, recollections of the books that he had read, and statements of his dreams for humanity and himself. The story of Christiana, her children, and her young companion Mercy, named after the daughter of John's old friend William Dell, was a moral rather than a theological tale. It also resembled a modern picaresque novel even more closely than its dramatic but less discursive predecessor."

* * * * *

In the 19th century alongside popular books like *Tom Sawyer*, *Treasure Island* and *Little Women* was a best seller called *Helen's Babies* by John Habberton. But who now remembers *Helen's Babies*? The other books get reprinted and reprinted but not this one. Why?

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Graham McInnes in *The Road to Gundagai* wrote about his mother, the novelist Angela Thirkell, and her second husband, Australian digger George Thirkell.

" 'Well Thirk,' she said, addressing the soldier, 'these are the "Helen's Babies" I was telling you about.'

'Budge and Toddie, eh?' said Thirk.

'You'll have to put up with them,' said mother laughingly. 'Boys, go and get that disgusting mess off under the tap and then come and say hello to Thirk.' "

*

"Amy, and all the other well-intentioned friends, took it for granted that I should long for a plethora of people and excitements. As I climbed into bed I was reminded of a remark of Toddy's in *Helen's Babies*.

Does anyone these days read that remarkable book published at the turn of the century, describing the traumas of a bachelor uncle left in charge of his two young nephews?

The conversation has turned to presents. Budge, the elder boy, wants everything from a goat-carriage to a catapult. Toddy, aged three, says he only wants a chocolate cigar.

'Nothing else?' asks his indulgent uncle. 'Why only a chocolate cigar?'

'Can't be bothered with lots of things,' is the sagacious reply.

I decide that I have a lot in common with Toddy, as I turn my face into the pillow."

From *A Peaceful Retirement* by Miss Read (Dora Saint).

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For men suddenly confronted with the new status of stepfather *Helen's Babies* must have given then both terror and comfort. So what might a man poised to become a stepfather now read? A careful book on the joys and difficulties of blended families perhaps.

Helen's Babies starts with Harry Burton, "salesman of white goods, bachelor, aged twenty-eight", receiving a letter from his sister Helen who writes to invite him, "I admit that I am not wholly disinterested in inviting you. The truth is, Tom and I are invited to spend a fortnight with my old schoolmate, Alice Wayne, who, you know, is the dearest girl in the world, though you *didn't* obey me and marry her before Frank Wayne appeared. Well, we're dying to go, for Alice and Frank live in splendid style; but as they haven't included our children in the invitation, and have no children of their own, we must leave Budge and Toddie at home. I've no doubt they'll be perfectly safe, for my girl is a jewel, and devoted to the children, but I would feel a great deal easier if there was a man in the house. Besides, there's the silver, and burglars are less likely to break into a house where there's a savage-looking man. (Never mind about thanking me for the compliment.) If *you'll* only come up my mind will be completely at rest. The children won't give you the slightest trouble; they're the best children in the world—everybody says so."

Of course the children are not little angels but little monsters. But although very

naughty, and a good example of the late nineteenth century ideas about giving children greater freedom, they are not beyond redemption. Harry survives by a mixture of bribing them with candy and darker wishes: "Madly determined to put both boys into chairs, tie them, and clap adhesive plaster over their mouths, I rushed out upon the piazza."

. They both help and hinder Harry in his courtship of young Alice Mayton, but he relinquishes them to their returning parents with the utmost relief.

. I can understand why it has fallen from its initial popularity. Unlike books of child heroes like *Tom Sawyer* the children in it are incidental to Harry's struggles to cope. It is an adult book which was defined and sold as a children's book and so it fell between stools and was largely forgotten.

* * * * *

It seemed to be time to re-read *Pilgrim's Progress* … and the thing that struck me, re-reading it, was that despite the archaic language it is still very readable. Perhaps that was an essential part of Bunyan's gift.

* * * * *

November 30: Jonathon Swift
Mark Twain
John Bunyan (bap)
December 1: Max Stout
Henry Williamson
December 2: Mary Elwyn Patchett
December 3: Joseph Conrad
Sir Rowland Hill

* * * * *

"The din, occasionally interrupted by a street serenade, the trampling of cattle, or the music of a guard's horn, now called the *penny* trumpet, in compliment to Rowland Hill, and some *penny* wise and pound foolish legislators, who have, as the wags say, found a *penny*cea for all evils, in converting the General Post Office into a general *penny*tentiary."

Lord William Lennox in 'On Coaching' in *The Horse-Lovers' Anthology*.

The penny post, the idea of Rowland Hill, spread worldwide. It led to the easier writing and sending of letters. It led to countless children collecting stamps. Stamps and letters are crucial elements in countless romantic novels, mysteries, whodunits, comedies. Stamps have occasionally been worth more than diamonds and rubies.

I remember a man coming round the farms when I was young trying to sell his stamp collection. I wondered why he would come round. Most farmers didn't have money to spare and not a lot of use for a stamp collection. I don't know if he found a buyer for his wonderful collection but there always seems to be something sad in the memory. Why did he need to sell? Was he desperate?

I came upon a story in Hélène Cixous' collection of essays *Stigmata* which also made me sad. "I received my first stigmata at the age of three exactly in the Garden. Here is the scene. It takes place in my native town, Oran in Algeria, in 1940 during the war. As a doctor, my father is mobilized suddenly he is a lieutenant of war on the front. This necessary misfortune has an advantage: the terrestrial paradise opens before me in the form of the Cercle Militaire, a superb garden reserved for the class of officers. This garden is enclosed with bars rising to the sky and burrowing into the earth which separates humanity into two camps: the admitted and the non-admissable." But although she is inside the garden she is not welcomed by the other children. "Until the day I hear these hard angels speaking amongst themselves of an object of desire. This species wants: stamps. Stamps! Now I understand! What I must give to enter at last into the inside of the Cercle Militaire, to pass the invisible customs is: Stamps.

"In an instant I get up, I step forward and I make my declaration. I'll bring you stamps. My house is full of stamps. Do we not have an immense family that Hitler is disseminating across the earth and in the airs? Those who have managed to escape Germany write from the four corners of the universe. I have all sorts of stamps, South Africa, Australia, USA, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, I know the entire world.

"From high in the little sky a big six-year-old spits on my head: Liar! The word is sharpened, it falls on my brow and makes a gash. I vacillate. Liar! Says the voice of flint. You have no stamps. Because: all Jews are liars.

"The crust that stands for the earth retracts from beneath my feet and I grab onto the cord of a swing, pierced by all these unknown words. Jew? Liar? I hear the hate and the verdict. I am hurled down for the first time and bound in a double bind.

"With my head lowered I leave the Paradise Cage and all the way home I wring myself torturing my soul around the question: will I bring the stamps or nor? Everything is of a blinding clarity: if I bring the stamps to obtain my visa, I grovel to the pack, I dishonour myself and my people. I obtain an abominable permit. If I do not bring the stamps I am the proof that all Jews are liars, I dishonour my people and myself."

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"The shortest and favourite trip was to Bellerive immediately across the harbour. It was from here that the sketch was made for the famous twopenny Tasmanian purple stamp and it was exciting to see the view gradually compose itself as the ferry steamed away from Hobart. About half way across the Harbour, Mount Wellington began to pull free from the town and its surrounding hills."

Graham McInnes in *The Road to Gundagai*. The same view was put on the one penny red.

*

Agatha Christie in a short Miss Marple story 'Strange Jest' has an 1851 blue two cent stamp as the key to the treasure. The odd thing was that 'two cent' which only hit me when I re-read the story with stamps on my mind. Two cent. Not two penny. It is a reminder of how quickly the idea of postage stamps spread around the world in the wake of Rowland Hill's revolutionary idea.

So how did he come up with what now seems such a simple sensible idea?

This morning I got two secondhand books which gave me an entré into other bits of postal history. A delightful book called *Art Nouveau Postcards* by Alain Weill told me something I had not known; that " "Correspondence cards", as they were called then, were first introduced in Austria on October 1st, 1869. In the years that followed they made their appearance in many other countries: July 1st, 1870 in Germany; in 1871 in England, Belgium and Switzerland; then in Russia and in France in 1872; in the United States and in Spain in 1873; in Italy in 1874, the year the Bern Postal Treaty admitted them in international service." The first cards had no pictures, they were purely a quick and simply way to correspond, but gradually photographs and art work began to appear. The numbers sent were huge. In Germany in 1899 88 million were produced. All kinds of pictures began to appear: mildly political, mildly bawdy, caricatures and cartoons, landscapes, reproductions, religious pictures, romantic and sentimental pictures, pictures by popular artists and pictures by nobodies. But like stamps and posters they gave access to a wide range of art in miniature to ordinary people who could not afford to walk into a gallery or commission a painting. Weill says, "The end of the 19th century was the golden age of the poster but, less well known, it was also the golden age of the postcard. Many major poster artists designed beautiful decorative postcards during this period. Mucha in France, Combaz in Belgium, Kirchner in Austria, Hohenstein in Italy, Hassal in England, and many others have left us dozens of little masterpieces."

And from a little booklet called *Cambridge Characters* by Irene Lister: The husband of suffrage campaigner Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Henry Fawcett, was an interesting man in his own right and deeply supportive of women's rights. He was for a time Liberal MP for Brighton and was involved in the founding of Newnham College (a women's college at Cambridge). But in 1880 he became Postmaster General and he is credited with five important postal initiatives. "He worked to establish the parcel post, introduced postal orders, sixpenny telegrams, the banking of small sums of money by means of postage stamps, and the giving of increased facilities for life insurance and annuities." He had wanted it called 'parcels post' but eventually gave way and let it be called 'parcel post'; and he oversaw the new title of 'postman' rather than the old 'letter carrier'. He appointed women, he took a personal interest in all his employees, he was concerned for their health and wellbeing, he seems to have been a man any business would be proud to call boss, and I wonder if he hadn't died relatively young, in 1884, whether he could have influenced the British Government to be far more proactive in giving its women the vote. I know we like to think women did it themselves, but of course men were involved, both for and against, and Henry Fawcett as a firm supporter deserves to be remembered.

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I remember a friend of mine finding an old book used by the Post Office in Tasmania, I think in the Thirties, and he used to read out snippets. Some of them seemed very funny—such as the elaborate instructions given to employees on how to use, save, coil and store string. Yet that kind of care and saving now seems rather touching. The other day I came upon a book called *A History of the Post Office in Tasmania* put out by the Post Office. The early days were pretty rambunctious. "The early mail was mostly of an official nature because the first permanent settlement in Southern Tasmania, by John Bowen at Risdon Cove in 1803 and David Collins at Sullivans Cove in the following year, together with the northern settlements at Port Dalrymple and George Town, were little more than military outposts, which were hurriedly established to thwart an anticipated French occupation of the island. Private arrangements were usually made for the carriage of letters, which were despatched with the captains of whaling and sealing ships operating in Bass Strait and in waters to the south. That the captains were often paid 'in kind' is shown by an early order from Governor King to Collins which authorises the payment of thirty empty salt meat casks for the carriage of despatches to King's Island, which, as J. B. Walker remarks in his paper on 'The French in Van Diemen's Land', was 'surely as odd a postage as ever was paid!'

"There were also undoubtedly 'odd' methods of collecting and delivering letters, one example of which is contained in a letter dated 19th May, 1804 from Mr Robert Campbell to Governor King. Campbell outlined plans for the delivery of a cargo of cattle to Van Diemen's Land. For final landing instructions to reach the ship, the letter contains the amusing, but no doubt practical suggestion … 'the master of which is to stop and despatch a boat on shore at Elephant Bay on King's Island, where a letter in a Bottle will be suspended from one of the rafters …!'

"Bowen's pioneering party numbered forty-nine, of whom only seven were adult free settlers, but as the settlements gradually expanded and the amount of mail increased, Lt Governor Collins appears to have attempted to organise more reliable methods of collecting and transporting the all important letters. His General and Garrison Orders dated 19th July, 1806 contains the following instruction, 'Such persons as may be desirous of sending letters to England may leave them at the Governor's Office the whole of next week'. Early arrangements for the incoming mail were far from satisfactory. It seems that on the arrival of a ship, people stampeded on board to collect letters and it soon became apparent that impersonations were occurring." It is hard to imagine people so desperate for news that they would take any mail to satisfy their craving. A receipt system was set up to deal with this. And from this grew 'post offices' and eventually a system whereby the receiver of a letter

paid for its transmission. But people would simply look at the letter then refuse to accept it. Obviously the sender was still alive and that was news in itself. "Such irregularities were effectively curbed in 1853 when Tasmania's interesting philatelic history was begun with the introduction of postage stamps and the franking system. Money orders were added in 1865 and postal notes in 1889. Post Offices became savings banks in 1889. In the beginning there were one penny blue stamps and four penny red stamps. These were issued as Van Diemen's Land stamps but on New Year's Day in 1856 the colony became Tasmania and sixpenny and shilling stamps were brought out. The last Tasmanian stamps before Federation subsumed them all under Australia came out in 1899 picturing "The snow clad slopes and summit of Mount Wellington and shows a portion of the Mountain Lake and bordering gum trees in the foreground."

This snippet of history came on a Postcard: "Pictorial journalism dates back to 1842 when the Illustrated London News commenced publication. The public showed an immediate interest in illustrated news stories, although the technique depended entirely on artists at the time. However, photography was to develop quickly and by 1890 the camera was able to record news events as and when they occurred. Pictorial news magazines, such as Picture Post, flourished well into the 1950s when television brought even more instant news to the screen. Nevertheless, the momentous news events of the 20th century are best recalled by the news photographers whose work has been preserved in the various archives from which this collection is derived."

I like postcards although I gave most of mine away, just keeping the ones my grandmother brought to Australia from Ireland. The history of Tasmania's post office says, "Postcards were introduced into Tasmania in 1881 and were a popular item as, until recent times, they were carried at a lower rate of postage. The Postal Guide of 1891 states firmly that 'should a Post Card be observed to bear upon it anything of an obscene, libellous or otherwise obviously objectionable nature, it may be detained or destroyed'. Originally introduced as an advertising experiment by the printers Walch and Sons, the postcards of the late nineteenth century progressed to varying degrees of ornate splendour and many are now collectors' items. Tinsel decoration on some of them became the subject of one of the earliest trade union industrial actions. The mail sorters contended that the tinsel could cause injury to their hands! Their claim was upheld and the cards were banned." And were those 'obscene' cards saucy seaside pictures or did they mean that someone in the Post Office read all the messages on the back of the cards?

*

"South Australia was the first community to give the secret ballot for political elections. It had dispensed with Grand Juries. It had not required a member of either House to stand a new election if he accepted ministerial office. Every elected man was eligible for office. South Australia had been founded by doctrinaires, and occasionally a cheap sneer had been levelled at it on that account; but, to my mind, that was better than the haphazard way in which other colonies grew. When I visited Sir Rowland Hill he was recognized as the great post office reformer. To me he was also one of the founders of our province, and the first pioneer of quota representation. When I met Matthew Davenport Hill I respected him, because he tried to keep delinquent boys out of gaol, and promoted the establishment of reform schools; but I also was grateful to him for suggesting to his brother the park lands which surround Adelaide, and give us both beauty and health. To Colonel Light, who laid out the city so well, we owe the many open spaces and squares; but he did not originate the idea of the park lands. Much of the work of Mr Davenport Hill and of his brother Frederick I took up later with their neice (*sic*) (Miss C. E. Clark), and their ideas have been probably more thoroughly carried out in South Australia than anywhere else" … according to Catherine Helen Spence in her autobiography. South Australia was also the first Australian colony to

give (white) women the vote. But the thing which intrigued me was that connection of Rowland Hill with South Australia.

Though neither Rowland Hill nor his brother Matthew Davenport Hill ever came to South Australia they did influence it. From the point of South Australia's indigenous people this was not for the best but in comparison to other colonies they helped bring a breadth and openness of mind to the idea of colonization. They and the whole family were interested in both reform of ideas, such as the way schools were run, to the inventing of things to make life better. Matthew while MP for Hull promoted a bill for the colonization of South Australia and Rowland "took part in an association for colonising South Australia, and in 1835 he was appointed secretary to the South Australia commission. It was while holding this appointment that in his out-of-office hours he planned his scheme of penny postage. During the previous century the rates for postage had been steadily raised till on a letter from London to Edinburgh 1*s*. 4½*d*. was paid." MPs and public figures could get their letters franked as one of their perks; "the wealthier classes were to a great extent freed from this burden, which pressed all the more heavily on the poor." (DNB) For instance an Irish labourer wanting to send a letter home would have to pay around a fifth of his weekly income to send it.

It wasn't that the penny postage idea was immediately accepted. He had to fight for it. But he pointed out that whether a letter was delivered locally or hundreds of miles away it was the work of handling at either end which made the expense, not the carriage, and he brought out a book *Post Office Reform: its Importance and Practicability* to promote his ideas and get them accepted. By the time he retired the number of letters sent had risen from 76 million to 642 million.

Nick Barratt in his *Encyclopedia of Genealogy* says Charles I established the Post Office in 1635. The General Post Office was set up between 1656 and 1660 but it was lost in the great Fire of London in 1666. Gradually the postal network grew. But it was the "introduction of the world's first adhesive postage stamps, the Penny Black and the Two Pence Blue, in 1840," which gave the postal system such a boost; that and the rise in adult literacy. It now seems such a sensible simple idea that, like so many sensible simple ideas, you wonder why no one came up with it earlier. (And was 'pence' misread as 'cents'?)

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The simple stamp will soon be an endangered artifact. Indeed post offices may eventually disappear in the on-line charge. I like going into post offices. Though I am not happy to see the postal service get slower and slower. I can remember getting a letter to and from Brussels in a week 20 years ago. Now a letter I just sent to Switzerland took 3 weeks to get there. I wonder if it was having a little holiday along the way. It isn't that the internet will necessarily give us a better service. I have just been reading Andrew Keen's *The Internet Is Not The Answer*. Apart from problems such as piracy, porn, cyber-bullying. surveillance, loss of privacy, he also says it is leading to a more unequal society, that the much vaunted egalitarianism isn't in the figures. He notes that Internet companies like Facebook, Yahoo, Amazon, and Google "exist to create wealth—vast quantities of it—for their founders and shareholders. Their imperative is to grow and achieve dominance in their chosen markets—as well as in others which they now deem to be within their reach. They are as hostile to trade unions, taxation, and regulation as John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie ever were in their day. The only difference is that the new titans employ far fewer people, enjoy higher margins and are less harassed by governments than their predecessors." He also says "The pace of change in our libertarian age is bewilderingly fast—so fast, indeed, that most of us, while enjoying the Internet's convenience, remain nervous about this "belief system's" violent impact on society. "Without their permission," entrepreneurs like Alexis Ohanian crow about a disruptive economy in which a couple of smart kids in a dorm room can wreck an entire industry employing hundreds of thousands of people. With *our*

permission, I say. As we all step into this brave new digital world, our challenge is to shape our networking tools before they shape us."

It is an interesting point: permission. I didn't give anyone permission to change from analog to digital which resulted in trouble and expense for me, certainly didn't make my life any better, and saw hundreds and thousands of TVs thrown into landfill as a toxic gift to our children. I haven't given permission for the mobile phone network to dump the 2 gigabyte service which will make my little phone obsolete and leave me with the option of buying another phone or giving up on having a mobile phone. Get any group of people together and ask whether they are happy with the NBN network and you will hear a chorus of complaints and grumbles. We have been so seduced by the constant talk of 'ease' and 'convenience' that we are not objectively weighing the upside and the downside of everything. And when we have dismantled our postal service and space junk or terrorists knock out our access to the Internet … will we mourn the passing of the postman and the letter? Keen goes on to quote one critical observer: "Imagine that it's 1913 and the post office, the phone company, the public library, printing houses, the U.S. Geological Survey mapping operations, movie houses, and all atlases are largely controlled by a secretive corporation unaccountable to the public," Rebecca Solnit writes in an article about Google's new monopolistic power. "Jump a century and see that in the online world that's more or less where we are."

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I collect stamps from the Falkland Islands in a very small way and I will be very sorry to see stamps disappear. They are small works of art. They encapsulate something of a country's history, landscape, flora and fauna, sporting and cultural heroes, as well as some of those quirky little aspects of the past that seem to be worth remembering.

* * * * *

December 4: Rainer Maria Rilke
Thomas Carlyle
December 5: Christina Rosetti
December 6: Gunnar Myrdal
Dion Fortune
December 7: Willa Cather
St Columba
December 8: Padraic Colum
James Thurber

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James Thurber wrote of himself in his introduction to the *Selected Letters of James Thurber*: "The effect of Thurber's letters on his generation was about the same as the effect of anybody's letters on any generation; that is to say, nil. It is only when a man's letters are published after his death that they have any effect and this effect is usually only on literary critics. Nobody else ever reads a volume of letters and anybody who says he does is a liar. A person may pick up a volume of correspondence now and then and read a letter here and there, but he never gets any connected idea of what the man is trying to say and soon abandons the book for the poems of John Greenleaf Whittier. This is largely because every man whose letters have ever been published was in the habit of writing every third one to a Mrs. Cameron or a Mrs. Winslow or a Miss Betch, the confidante of a lifetime, with whom he shared any number of gaily obscure little secrets. These letters all read like this: "Dear Puttums: I love what you say about Mooey! It's so devastatingly true! B—— dropped in yesterday (Icky was out at the time) and gave some sort of report on Neddy but I am afraid I didn't listen (*ut ediendam aut debendo!*). He and Liddy are in Venice, I think I gathered, or Newport. What in the world do you suppose came over Buppa that Great Night? ? ? You, of course, were as splendidly consequent as ever (*in loco sporenti abadabba est*) — but I was deeply disappointed in Sig's reaction. All he can think of, poor fellow, is Margery's 'flight.'

Remind me to tell you some day what Pet said about the Ordeal." These particular letters are sometimes further obscured by a series of explanatory editorial footnotes, such as "Probably Harry Boynton or his brother Norton," "A neighbor at Bar Harbor," "The late Edward J. Belcher," "Also sometimes lovingly referred to as Butty, a niece-in-law by his first marriage." In the end, as I say, one lays the book aside for "Snow-Bound" in order to get a feeling of reality before going to bed."

Still, I think I can say without fear of contradiction that Thurber's letters were more entertaining than mine.

John Man in *The Gutenberg Revolution* has this to say about Pope Pius II: "Humanist, libertine, scholar, novelist and traveller, Piccolomini was an Italian counterpart of Nicholas of Cusa, of whom he was almost an exact contemporary and good friend. He was the eldest of eighteen children of a Sienese landowner, who liked to trace his ancestry back to Romulus, and so named his eldest Arneas, the legendary author of Rome's greatness. Aeneas – Enea, as he was in Italian – started lower than Nicholas, had a wilder early career, but, being Italian, which always helped in the Church, rose higher. His local priest taught him to write, which got him off the family estate and into Siena as a student, and then a secretarial appointment to a local bishop. At the Council of Basel he was secretary to several different prelates; he toured England and Scotland as a secret agent; and became secretary to the anti-Pope, Felix V – not a good career move, because Felix was the last of the anti-Popes. Piccolomini's fortunes began to turn in 1442, when the German king, Frederick III, headhunted him away from Felix, bringing him on to the side of the Roman Pope.

"Along the way, Piccolomini had dabbled in literature, writing a novel in Latin based on a love affair of his court mentor, the imperial chancellor Kaspar Schlick. *The History of Two Lovers* is one of the earliest of proper novels, much longer than the short stories of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. It is also the earliest 'epistolary' novel, the form perfected by Richardson in *Pamela* and Laclos in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* 300 years later. Apart from its lit. crit. significance, it actually worked. Funny, romantic, sexy and smart, it was a bestseller for two centuries in all major European languages. The last translation into English was in 1929, so it's not well known nowadays, but publishers please note: it would still work today if someone translated it properly. Piccolomini would not approve, because after becoming Pope he disavowed it, without breaking the habit of writing. He became the only Pope, ever, to write his autobiography."

* * * * *

Malcolm Bradbury wrote a novel he called *Unsent Letters*. This title resonated with me because I sometimes come on letters I have forgotten to post, letters I meant to send but find in with other papers, letters half written in my pad, letters I began but couldn't decide how to go on, letters where I meant to get stamps and forgot, letters written in a rage and not sent because I calmed down …

Bradbury's book is witty and funny but they are imaginary letters to imaginary correspondents. "Anyway, here they are, my unsent literary letters. They may be less poetic than Keats's, less philosophical than Nietzsche's, less analytical than Freud's, less aesthetic than Virginia Woolf's, though I will claim they are jollier than Kafka's. They are, after all, all-purpose letters, designed to answer the questions and resolve the quandaries of those who wonder about literary existence these days. I think they probably answer any possible question you might care to put to me, should it ever cross your mind to drop me a line." He says that in his life as a Professor of English he gets all kinds of letters, which he no doubt responds to politely or gets his secretary to respond to politely, but these are the sorts of responses he would much prefer to send to letters from German students wanting information on the 'campus novel', letters from sci fi aficionados who have got him mixed up with Ray Bradbury, letters from young Indians wanting to get into research programs, letters asking

about the pros and cons of collaboration or how to write for the screen, large or small …

He didn't invent the 'campus novel' (I don't know who did) but he is certainly associated with the species, so here is a little bit of what he writes to that German enquirer: "I hope all this will explain why, as a writer, I am not always enthusiastic about being called a 'university' or 'campus' novelist. At the same time, as a literary critic, I do have to admit there is some truth in it here and there. I must also acknowledge that the 'university novel' does show some signs of being a commonplace form, especially in Britain – perhaps because the British novel has always been about places that are rather difficult to get into. We can even trace back a history of sorts, back to the sentimental Oxbridge romances of the nineteenth century, which you can, and doubtless will, compare with *Wilhelm Meister* and the *Bildungsroman*. These are tales about young men's education in pastoral surroundings, part of an Oxbridge myth that grows a mite more ironic in the twentieth-century novels of Forster, Waugh and Aldous Huxley. Perhaps what makes the story more interesting was when it crossed over with the fiction of the academically excluded, like Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and the novels of D. H. Lawrence. Certainly it was after the Butler Education Act of 1944, which admitted cartloads of pimply social refugees to various academic destinations, that the whole affair took on pace. Many of the new books were set not in glowing Oxbridge but in 'redbrick' universities, which are frequently converted lunatic asylums or extended public lavatories, and in time the 'new' universities, 1960s architectural wonders built in green fields by Finnish architects driven mad by the remarkable plastic properties of concrete. You may possibly find some trace of all this in my own works.

"Since then, the university novel, like universities themselves, has appeared to undergo a period of expansion. In fact the books began to acquire what you and I would call 'intertextuality', which of course is quite different from plagiarism. For example, a newish book by this young man Howard Jacobson, whose cognomen somehow seems to have come your way, refers I suppose very comically to an institution called 'Bradbury Lodge' – where, he implies, most British novels that are not about India are set. And I suppose that in theory one would have to say that where there is intertextuality, there is very probably a genre – or so my old professor told me, before he discarded Structuralism entirely, and took up hang-gliding instead."

Letters too will become an endangered species, or so people keep saying, because few people bother to keep emails and even fewer people bother to send wonderful messages by text. Does it matter? We are in the middle of a communications revolution we are constantly told. But like all revolutions it has its downside. I will be very sorry if people give up sending love letters, newsy letters, funny quirky letters, letters with little sketches, letters that are worth keeping for generations, vitally important letters that change the world …

Has a letter changed the world?

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December 9: John Milton
December 10: Ada Lovelace
William Plomer

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Lynn Santa Lucia in *First & Only Women* introduced me to several interesting women I had never heard of:

Gabrielle Émilie Le Tonnelier De Breteuil, Marquise Du Châtelet. 1706 – 1749 was a mathematician and physicist of the Enlightenment whose translation and critique of Isaac Newton's *Principia Mathematica* became, and remains, a defining work. Excluded from many of the forums where scientists of the day discussed their ideas, Gabrielle was largely self-taught. She frequently disguised herself as a man to attend the Parisian coffee houses where the great minds of the age mingled. In 1737 the first of her many works, *Dissertation*

sur la nature et la propagation du feu, was published by the French Academy of Sciences.

Maria Gaetani Agnesi 1718 – 1799 was an Italian mathematician, and the first woman to be appointed as a university professor—although it is not certain that she accepted the post. Her greatest work, *Instituzioni Analitiche ad uso Della Giovantù Italiana* (*Analytical Institutions for the Use of Italian Youth*) began as a book to help teach her brothers calculus, but became a universal text, published in many languages.

Amalie Emmy Noether. 1882 – 1935 was a celebrated German mathematician. She revolutionised the fields of algebra and physics, and was described by Albert Einstein as 'the most significant creative mathematical genius thus far produced since the higher education of women began'. When Nazi Germany ordered in 1933 that all Jews be dismissed from their university positions, Noether took up a position at Bryn Mawr in the United States.

Ada Lovelace 1815 – 1852 daughter of poet Lord Byron, was raised as a mathematician and scientist and became the world's first computer programmer, in 1833, working with inventor Charles Babbage on his calculating 'analytical engine'. A software language developed by the US Department of Defense over one hundred years after her death was named 'Ada' in her honour.

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Benjamin Woolley begins his book *The Bride of Science: Romance, Reason and Byron's Daughter* with, "Since the 1980s, the world's most powerful war machine has been controlled by a programming language called Ada. When America went to war, its weapons were to be discharged in her name. The story that links this nineteenth-century English aristocrat with the US military is, as her father Lord Byron put it, stranger than fiction.

"Ada Lovelace was the daughter of one of the world's first true celebrities, a man whose poetry was read and likeness seen by everyone – except by her, for she was not allowed to see his likeness in its full romantic glory until she reached her twentieth year. She was brought up by her clever but embittered mother, Annabella, Lady Byron, whose aim, Byron protested in lines addressed to his daughter, was to 'drain my blood from out thy being', to make her everything he was not – mathematical, methodical, moral, scientific. And Annabella's efforts apparently succeeded. Ada rejected poetry in favour of mathematics, art in favour of science. She worked with some of the most interesting and important scientists of the day, figures like Andrew Crosse, a researcher into electrical power who was said to be a model for Mary Shelley's Dr Frankenstein, and Charles Babbage, the inventor of calculating engines. It was the latter collaboration that provided the connection with computers, as in 1843 she wrote a paper about Babbage's most ambitious invention, the Analytical Engine. This paper contains the first published example of what could be called a computer program – written over a century before the emergence of the technology needed to run it. It was in honour of this achievement that the US Department of Defense decided in 1980 to name the standard programming language it had adopted for its military systems 'Ada'."

Ada married William King, Lord Lovelace, and had a family. She wrote several books. But she was Byron's daughter and her world, and her mother, never let her truly be herself.

Simon Singh in *Fermat's Last Theorem* says, "Over the centuries women have been discouraged from studying mathematics, but despite the discrimination there have been several female mathematicians who fought against the establishment and indelibly forged their names in the annals of mathematics. The first woman known to have made an impact on the subject was Theano in the sixth century BC, who began as one of Pythagoras' students before becoming one of his foremost disciples and eventually marrying him. Pythagoras is

known as the ‘feminist philosopher’ because he actively encouraged women scholars, Theano being just one of the twenty-eight sisters in the Pythagorean Brotherhood.

In later centuries the likes of Socrates and Plato would continue to invite women into their schools, but it was not until the fourth century AD that a woman mathematician founded her own influential school. Hypatia, the daughter of a mathematics professor at the University of Alexandria, was famous for giving the most popular discourses in the known world and for being the greatest of problem-solvers. Mathematicians who had been stuck for months on a particular problem would write to her seeking a solution, and Hypatia rarely disappointed her admirers. She was obsessed by mathematics and the process of logical proof, and when asked why she never married she replied that she was wedded to the truth. Ultimately her devotion to the cause of rationalism caused her downfall, when Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria, began to oppress philosophers, scientists and mathematicians, whom he called heretics.”

Hypatia was killed in a very horrible way. And, “Soon after the death of Hypatia mathematics entered a period of stagnation and it was not until after the Renaissance that another woman made her name as a mathematician. Maria Agnesi was born in Milan in 1718 and, like Hypatia, was the daughter of a mathematician. She was acknowledged to be one of the finest mathematicians in Europe, particularly famous for her treatises on the tangents to curves. In Italian, curves were called *versiera*, a word derived from the Latin *vertere*, ‘to turn’, but it was also an abbreviation for *avversiera*, or ‘wife of the Devil’. A curve studied by Agnesi (*versiera Agnesi*) was mistranslated into English as the ‘witch of Agnesi’, and in time the mathematician herself was referred to by the same title.”

But the academies would not give her a research post; a situation which continued into the twentieth century “when Emmy Noether, described by Einstein as ‘the most significant creative mathematical genius thus far produced since the higher education of women began’, was denied a lectureship at the University of Göttingen” on the grounds of her gender.

“Of all the European countries France displayed the most chauvinistic attitude towards educated women, declaring that mathematics was unsuitable for women and beyond their mental capacity. Although the salons of Paris dominated the mathematical world for most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, only one woman managed to escape the constraints of French society and establish herself as a great number theorist. Sophie Germain revolutionized the study of Fermat’s Last Theorem and made a contribution greater than any of the men who had gone before her.” She managed to get into the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris by using the documents of a male student who had moved away from Paris. She intercepted everything intended for him and returned the completed papers. But he had been a poor student and she was a brilliant one and the tutor Joseph-Louis Lagrange finally began to investigate. He was at first astonished but then delighted and willing to help her in her career.

Fascinating, though often sad, as these histories are, it doesn’t solve a fundamental problem for me. I can write about mathematicians’ *lives* but I cannot write about their work in the way I might write about a breakthrough in astronomy or medicine—at least in so far as a lay person can understand them. I cannot pretend to even make a stab at describing number theory or tangents, let alone anybody’s last theorem.

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December 11: Naguib Mahfouz
Alexander Solshenitsyn
December 12: Louis Nowra
William Lloyd Garrison
December 13: Heinrich Heine
December 14: Nostrodamus
Leonardo Boff
December 15: Edna O’Brien

December 16: Jane Austen
December 17: Sir Humphry Davy

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Davy's last book, written as he was dying in 1829, was *Consolations in Travel; or, the Last Days of a Philosopher*. In it he wrote, "It is, I think, impossible to consider the organic remains found in any of the earlier secondary strata, the lias-limestone and its congenerous formations for instance, without being convinced that the beings, whose organs they formed, belonged to an order of things entirely different from the present. Gigantic vegetables, more nearly allied to the palms of the equatorial countries than to any other plants, can only be imagined to have lived in a very high temperature; and the immense reptiles, the megalosauri with paddles instead of legs and clothed in mail, in size equal or even superior to the whale; and the great amphibia, plethiosauri, with bodies like turtles, but furnished with necks longer than their bodies, probably to enable them to feed on vegetables growing in the shallows of the primitive ocean, seem to show a state in which low lands or extensive shores rose above an immense calm sea, and when there were no great mountain chains to produce inequalities of temperature, tempests, or storms. Were the surface of the earth now to be carried down into the depths of the ocean, or were some great revolution of the waters to cover the existing land, and it was again to be elevated by fire, covered with consolidated depositions of sand or mud, how entirely different would it be in its characters from any of the secondary strata. Its great features would undoubtedly be the works of man—hewn stones, and statues of bronze and marble, and tools of iron—and human remains would be more common than those of animals on the greatest part of the surface; the columns of Pæstum or of Agrigentum, or the immense iron and granite bridges of the Thames, would offer a striking contrast to the bones of the crocodiles or sauri in the older rocks, or even to those of the mammoth or elephas primogenius in the diluvial strata. And whoever dwells upon this subject must be convinced that the present order of things, and the comparatively recent existence of man as the master of the globe, is as certain as the destruction of a former and a different order and the extinction of a number of living forms which have now no types in being, and which have left their remains wonderful monuments of the revolutions of Nature."

Now Sir Humphry Davy was both a Christian and an Englishman. He believed in the superiority of both. But he believed equally in science as a way to understand and better the world. He is now remembered for the Davy safety lamp for miners.

He was born in Cornwall and had aspirations to become a poet when he was young but he knew a saddler called Robert Dunkin who carried out experiments in electrical currents and got Davy interested in science and he eventually became an assistant in a laboratory. He was interested in a great many things, from batteries to volcanoes, from iodine to chlorine, but he was also interested in finding answers to practical problems, such as improving safety in coal mines to how to protect ships' hulls from borers and barnacles.

But the thing which struck me so strongly as I browsed in writings from the first half of the nineteenth century was that the supposed shock which met Darwin's ideas which, after all, are not remarkably further along from Davy's musings thirty years earlier needs to be explained away. A whole range of sciences from geology to zoology to botany were pondering on similar questions. People were digging up and recreating fossils with great enthusiasm and a sense of wonder.

Yet we still get told that Darwin and Natural Selection burst on to the scene like a thunder-clap. Is this an exaggeration? Or have researchers looked very narrowly at the responses? Or is it an exercise in showing how narrow, closed, and bigoted Church minds were?

As I pondered on this I thought there is a key thing which has not been taken into consideration. Between the time of Humphry Davy and the time of Darwin England had gone through the massive change which saw out the rackety Georgian era and saw in the prudish

and prudent Victorian era. I very much doubt if George IV or William IV really cared very much what their subjects believed so long as they got to do what they wanted, and spend what they wanted, and enjoy themselves as they wanted. As they were both serial fornicators and adulterers calling up the place of the Church in their society at regular intervals was not something they did much. In fact the only churchmen they were interested in were the ones who were prepared to tolerate their behaviour and remain silent or discreetly look the other way. The Church might be a moral force but it had a struggle to make this simple fact known to the kings who ostensibly sat as its Supreme Heads.

But then Britain and the Church got Queen Victoria …

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December 18: 'Saki' H. H. Munro
Charles Wesley
Phoebe Worrall Palmer
December 19: Jean Genet
December 20: Zoë Fairbairns
December 21: Jean Baptiste Racine
December 22: Edwin Arlington Robinson
December 23: Robert Bly
Joseph Smith
December 24: Matthew Arnold
Mary Higgins Clark
December 25: Noël Greig
Michael Sadleir
Christmas

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Tom Wright wrote in *Surprised by Hope*, "A remarkable example arrived in the mail not long ago: a book, apparently a best-seller, by Maria Shriver, the wife of Arnold Schwarzenegger and niece of John F. Kennedy, called *What's Heaven?* The book is aimed at children, and has lots of large pictures of fluffy clouds in blue skies. Each page of text has one sentence in extra large type, making the basic message of the book crystal clear. Heaven, says Shriver, is somewhere you believe in … it's a beautiful place where you can sit on soft clouds and talk to other people who are there. At night you can sit next to the stars, which are the brightest of anywhere in the universe … If you're good throughout your life, then you get to go to heaven … when your life is finished here on earth, God sends angels down to take you up to Heaven to be with him … [And grandma is] alive in me … Most important, she taught me to believe in myself … She's in a safe place, with the stars, with God and the angels … she is watching over us from up there …

'I want you to know' [says the heroine to her great-Grandma] 'that even though you are no longer here, your spirit will always be alive in me.' "

Wright goes on to say, "This is undoubtedly more or less exactly what millions of people in the western world have come to believe, to accept as truth and to teach to their children. The book was sent to me by a friend who works with grieving children, and who described this as 'one of the worst books for children' and said, 'I hope you find this awful book helpful in what not to say'! It is indeed a prime example of that genre. The truth of what the Bible teaches is very, very different at several levels."

Wright is objecting to it as not being supported by scripture. I have a different problem with this idea of sitting and talking and that is simply—how many children want to sit and talk? The elderly, yes, perhaps, And perhaps in the days when little children were exhausted and sick and dirty in mines and factories the image of fluffy clouds and clean air and rest *did* have considerable appeal. But now many children would see it not as something beautiful to look forward to but as something utterly boring …

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December 26: Thomas Gray
Henry Miller
December 27: Elizabeth Smart
December 28: Leslie Rees
December 29: Vera Brittain
December 30: Rudyard Kipling

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"And a woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a Smoke."
'The Betrothed'
"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet"
'The Ballad of East and West'
"*For the colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady*
Are sisters under their skins!"
'The Ladies'
"For the female of the species is more deadly than the male."
'The Female of the Species'

Kipling may be out of favour but many of his quotations live a vigorous underground life.

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December 31: 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'/Charles Stuart, 'The Young Pretender'

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Robert Burns brought many memorable phrases into our everday usage: 'A Man's a Man for a' that', 'The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley', 'Scots Wha Hae', "My Heart's in the Highlands', 'My Luve is like a red, red rose', 'Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad'. And some of his lines obviously influenced later poets. The slang term 'gringo' is said to have come from American soldiers singing Burns' 'Green Grow the Rashes, O' when they invaded Mexico. His lines,

It's up yon heathery mountain,
An' down yon scroggie glen,
We daur na gang a milking,
For Charlie and his men

became for Irish poet, William Allingham:

Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting,
For fear o' little men.

(And Burns, in his turn, may have been inspired by John Clare's

We'll down the green meadow and up the lone glen
And down the woodside far away from all men,

—or John Clare may have been inspired by Burns. I'm not sure which was written first or how familiar they were with each other's work. And they both may have drawn on an earlier folk ballad …)

But I was curious to notice that he wrote a number of pieces about the prince, the Stuarts, even the prince's daughter in 'The Bonie Lass of Albanie'. For example, he wrote a 'Birthday Ode' for the prince 'for 31st December 1787' which begins,

Afar the illustrious Exile roams,
Whom kingdoms on this day should hail;
An inmate in the casual shed,
On transient pity's bounty fed,
Haunted by busy memory's bitter tale!

Beasts of the forest have their savage homes,
  But he, who should imperial purple wear,
Owns not the lap of earth where rests his royal head!
  His wretched refuge, dark despair,
While ravening wrongs and woes pursue,
And distant far the faithful few
  Who would his sorrows share.

Though his best-known song for the prince was the most colloquial:
‘Charlie, He’s My Darling’, which begins,
’Twas on a Monday morning,
  Right early in the year,
That Charlie came to our town,
  The young Chevalier.

Of course Burns lived after the disasters the prince visited on Scotland and it is unclear to what extent he ever thought of himself as more than someone gathering up the traditions and stories from the past. I do not think he was a Jacobite. I can see the attraction of the young and handsome prince, of his link to glories that were rarely glorious, but I can also see that Burns was very unlikely to have responded to that kind of glamour. There is an essentially down-to-earth quality about Burns and his poems.

* * * * *

And as the old year creeps away and we prepare with fireworks, parties, rivers of alcohol, and a lot of noise and good cheer to see out the old year and welcome the new, hundreds, thousands, perhaps even millions of people will find themselves singing Burns’ most famous song, ‘Auld Lang Syne’.

Which when you think about it is very strange. Why do we want to rush forward into the future? What is wrong with the present? Why do we sing an old Scottish song which Burns took more than 200 years ago and tweaked into its current form? Why do we sing a song of which most of us don’t even know what many of the words mean?

THE END

Afterword: I briefly mentioned Queen Marie of Romania in *The Ultimate Birthday Book.* Recently I came upon an interesting snippet about her in Lesley Blanch's biography *Pierre Loti*. "The Queen had been born a German princess, Elizabeth of Wied. She was unhappy in her marriage to the stern King Carol I and, having lost her only child, was a frustrated mother. She solaced herself by various artistic pursuits, was an amateur pianist of merit, illuminated vellum missals for the church, wrote Romanian fairy tales, poetry and other pieces which were published under the pseudonym of Carmen Sylva, by which she became widely known. She overflowed with grace, was full of sentiment and generosity, and was gullible to the point of silliness. In the turreted castle, her rooms were hung with dark velvet, and there she gave readings of her own works as well as those of other poets, and played the organ with emotion, her ladies clustered round devotionally. She was also an inveterate poseur affecting vaporous white robes often woven with silver which, with her aureole of prematurely silver hair, gave her the air of some incorporeal being, or so beholders told her. 'Silver locks,' she wrote in her *Pensées*, 'are the spray which covers the ocean after a tempest.' … The Queen had just translated *Pêcheur d'Islande* into German and proudly displayed the manuscript: she cherished hopes of being elected to the French Academy and Loti was encouraging. It was Carmen Sylva, entranced by his memories of childhood, who first urged him to write them down, and this he came to do, in the beautiful *Roman d'un Enfant*, which is dedicated to the Queen."

And I briefly mentioned the Magdalen Islands in *Round the World in Eighty Places* as a place of ancient wrecks and pleasant holidaying now. Canadian writer Farley Mowat in *Sea of Slaughter* mentions another aspect of the islands. "In 1972, I investigated a raid on a major breeding colony of double-crested cormorants on the Magdalen Islands. Five men armed with .22 rifles had spent a morning shooting adults off their nests in a spruce grove, leaving the ground littered with parental corpses. What seemed far worse was the multitude of dead and dying young, both in the nests and on the ground—victims of starvation consequent upon the deaths of their parents." The Islanders had already done their best to extirpate their walruses, seals, and many other shore birds.

Of course Australia is hardly a shining example of care but I will cross the Magdalens off my list of Must See places. After all, if the only species left on its beaches is the human one, I might as well stay home and look at humans on beaches here. In fact Mowat's book is a sad indictment of human beings. He writes, "In 1975 my wife and I moved to Cape Breton to another home beside the sounding sea. Now, however, the sea was sounding a somber and warning note. For some years past I had been bothered by the uneasy impression that the once familiar richness and diversity of animate life I had known in the oceanic world and on its landward verges were diminishing. There was a perceptible reduction in the numbers of seals, seabirds, lobsters, whales, porpoises, foxes, otters, salmon, and many other such whose presence I had come to take for granted. For a time I tried to persuade myself that this was a transient and perhaps cyclic phenomenon. But when I consulted my own notes made in these maritimes over a span of three decades, I found grim confirmation for my intimation of unease. During those thirty years the apparent numbers of almost all the larger kinds of animals, and many of the smaller ones, had radically decreased.

"Deeply perturbed, I canvassed the memories of fishermen and woodsmen neighbours, some of whom had lived as many as ninety years. Even if their recollections were gilded by the mists of memory and by the age-old duty to tell a good yarn, their accounts convinced me that there had been a mass decline in both the volume and diversity of non-human life, and that it was still going on.

"Questing further afield for understanding, I found that the Atlantic seaboard was not alone in suffering an intolerable depletion of animate life. Alarmed naturalists and scientists the world over were reporting an almost universal diminution of non-human life at what

many of them suspected was an accelerating rate. The secretary of the Smithsonian Institution was said to have remarked that if the current trend continued, there would be few wild creatures "bigger than a breadbox" left alive by the middle of the twenty-first century except those maintained by us for our own selfish purposes."

I was recently reading an article which said as global warming changes the acidity of the oceans it will diminish many species but cause an explosion in jellyfish numbers. So instead of eating canned tunafish people can eat canned jellyfish …

And on a slightly more cheerful note: After I had finished writing *The Long Way Home* I came upon a book about Charles Schulz and Snoopy, *Good* Grief, by Rheta Grimsley Johnson. I realized I was incorrect in thinking both his parents were German; his mother was Norwegian. Johnson presents a picture of a serious rather austere man who doesn't drink, smoke, or swear (the most he allows himself is the exclamation 'Good grief!') who doesn't like traveling and suffers from depression. He wasn't particularly successful at school but discovered he liked drawing and as a young man he took some of his cartoons to a syndicate in Chicago, United Feature Syndicate, which gave him a contract on a 50-50 basis. They also wanted his strip called 'Peanuts' which he didn't like but accepted.

The syndicate did very well out of his hard work, dedication, and imagination but so did he. Eventually. Johnson says, "For forty years Charles Schulz has given the world daily installments of history's most successful comic strip. It runs in over two thousand newspapers, appears in sixty-eight countries, and has been translated into twenty-six languages, including Latin.

"There also have been one thousand books, thirty television specials, and four feature films. Paperback collections of the strip have sold more than three hundred million copies. The play *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* remains one of the most widely produced musicals in America."

But behind the success is a long battle with depression. "He is well read, quietly religious, firm yet kindly. He chooses his words carefully and talks much the way his comic-strip characters talk." This probably explains quite a lot about his comic creations. They are never rude, nasty, or violent, just a bit mean or critical at times, but neither are they regularly side-splittingly funny. More a kind of quietly amused take on the little ups and downs of life as seen through the eyes of a group of children, a bird, and a dog.