

LISTS  
AND  
LABELS

COMPILED  
BY

J. L. HERRERA

## DEDICATED TO:

My mother-in-law  
Aida de Pastenes Coronado

## AND WITH THANKS TO:

Ellen Naef, Cheryl Perriman, Patrick Herrera, Isla MacGregor,  
Ken Carroll, Brenda Dudkowiak, Karen Tian, Julio Herrera, Louise Byrne  
and Chris and Janet at the Hobart Book Shop

## INTRODUCTION

One day I was browsing in a box of second-hand books and the majority of them seemed to be of the ‘101 Things to...Insert: Do, Read, Eat, See, Feel, Watch...Before You Die’ type. I gave up and went away. I don’t need anyone to tell me what to read. And as I don’t know whether I am going to die next week or in thirty years time it hardly seems relevant. If next week I would rather spend my time reading some old favourites. If in thirty years who knows what books I will feel passionate about in that time—or even just mildly curious about. And when it gets to 1001 Movies to Watch I begin to feel there wouldn’t be any life outside the watching ...

But the thing which jumped out at me was just how ubiquitous such books of lists have become. Is this the way of the future? I like to put things down neatly as a way of organizing a chaotic mind, things to be done before, things to be bought, things I said I would do and haven’t ... but that is everyday life, I don’t want that sort of bloodless logic to take over the wonderful anarchic way I go about my reading.

And yet someone who puts writers under their birthdays and then writes about them might be assumed to be a person of bloodless logic, mightn’t she, and all this bleating about chaos and anarchy mere red herrings or window dressing or an attempt to reinvent a certain type of personality. So this is a book, for me, with some unexpected choices..

Yes, people and birthdays are there but no, calm careful choices are not always my guiding principle. This is, occasionally, a book of blindfolds and pins. I am not sure if this method will take off. Your next holiday? Hand me that map and a pin! Ah ... North Korea ... yes, well ...

Yet as the book unfolded and those careless choices drew me this way and that I realized there was another aspect to it: that I also felt a secret delight when I felt I was bringing a forgotten writer back from wherever forgotten writers go ...

So may your reading, no matter how you choose it, always bring you excitement, joy, windows into new worlds, doors into new experiences, steps back, steps forward ...

J. L. Herrera  
Hobart 2019

I briefly mentioned Nikola Tesla in *A Vague Survey*. The other day I came upon Robert Lomas’ *The Man Who Invented the Twentieth Century: Nikola Tesla, Forgotten Genius of Electricity* which is well worth reading. And in *A Vague Survey* I looked at ancestors at the time of the Battle of the Boyne and thought I hadn’t done my sums very well! The number of male relatives would be at least 128 not 62!

## LISTS AND LABELS

January 1: Joe Orton

Maria Edgeworth

January 2: Isaac Asimov

Henry Kingsley

Queenie Sunderland

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English girl Queenie Sunderland wrote an attractive little memoir of her marriage to an Anzac, Ted Sunderland, in 1918, in *Bride of an Anzac*, and the decision to come half-way round the world to start a new life with him on a farm near Dubbo. She was 100 when she put down her memories which probably explains their shorthand nature. But behind their brevity and lack of depth are interesting little snippets about life in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. She met famous fliers like Charles Kingsford-Smith and famous cricketers like Don Bradman. But it is her little anecdotes which stay in the mind. She faced a severe drought when she arrived on the farm. They went to great trouble making supports for the cows too weak to stand up. "I tagged along and was given the job of holding a wheat bag while it was being cut open on one side and across the bottom. Fred had cut some stakes. I held the bag while the men fastened a stake securely in each corner. It looked like a wide canvas stretcher on long legs. The bag was placed underneath the cow and the stakes were driven into the ground until the animal was able to stand at its own normal height, supported by the sling."

And then she tells a stranger story. "I had only been in Australia a few weeks when I was privileged to see a sight of a lifetime. We were just about to commence our mid-day dinner on this particular occasion, when Fred jumped up and bid us to follow him very quietly out to the front verandah. Through the open door he had seen some big birds (like large cranes) land in the paddocks in front of us. The flock had formed into a ring and were dancing in and out with graceful and varied movements. They were Brolgas and seldom witnessed in their "coroboree" dance."

She ends with a little poem 'Three Centuries' in which she says,  
"The Anzacs came in 1916  
Gallipoli hero(e)s all  
I was destined to meet a special one  
He was big and handsome and tall

I'll admit he was a charmer  
He swept me off my feet  
Ten months later we married  
My trust in him was complete"

\* \* \* \* \*

Nina Murdoch's 'Warbride' was included in Jennifer Strauss's *Australian Love Poems*.  
There has been wrong done since the world began,  
That young men should go out and die in war,  
And lie face down in the dust for a brief span,  
And be not good to look at any more.

It is the old men with their crafty eyes  
And greedy fingers and their feeble lungs,

Make mischief in the world and are called wise,  
And bring war on us with their garrulous tongues.

It is the old men hid in secret rooms,  
Feign wisdom while they sign our peace away,  
And turn fair meadows into reeking tombs,  
And passionate bridegrooms into bloodied clay.

It is the old men should be sent to fight!  
The old men grown so wise they have forgot  
The touch of mouth on mouth in the still night,  
The tenderness that wedded lovers wot;

The dreams that dwell in the eyes of a young bride;  
The secret beauty of things said and done;  
The hope of children coming, and the pride  
Of little homes and gardens in the sun.

It is the old men that have nought to lose,  
And nought to pray for but their gasping breath,  
Should bear this ill of the world, and so choose  
Out of their beds to meet their master, Death.

This is the bitterest wrong the world wide,  
That young men on the battlefield should rot,  
And I be widowed who was scarce a bride,  
While prattling old men sit at ease and plot.

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When Mrs Patrick MacGill (Margaret Gibbons) wrote *An Anzac's Bride* she was writing a novel rather than a memoir and I wondered if she had made it a happy story of romance and contentment or a sad story of loss and regret. Her first novel was *The Rose of Glenconnel* of which the publisher said, "Mrs. Patrick MacGill in her first novel tells the story of Rose Moran who, at the age of twelve months, is left an orphan in the mining and lumber camp of Glenconnel in the Yukon. The rough men of the West decide to adopt her and she becomes known as the Rose of Glenconnel, growing up into a beautiful and fearless girl of the wilds. When she is sixteen Dick Bryce enters her life and precipitates her into a series of adventures and hair-breadth escapes from which she is extricated only by her own fearlessness."

The publisher brought her first book out as written by Mrs Patrick MacGill but her second as by Margaret Gibbons with her married name in brackets and on the spine. I suspect the publisher, Herbert Jenkins, hoped that her first book could ride on her husband's fame but that he eventually found she could stand alone as a novelist.

Patrick MacGill, an Irishman from Donegal, brought out his book *The Big Push* in 1916, a book of poems *Soldier Songs* in 1917 and an unexpected book *The Diggers* in 1919. He wrote other war books including *The Red Horizon* and an autobiography *Children of the Dead End*.

He dedicates *The Big Push* 'To Margaret'  
If we forget the Fairies,  
And tread upon their rings,  
God will perchance forget us,  
And think of other things.

When we forget you, Fairies,

Who guard our spirit's light:  
God will forget the morrow  
And Day forget the Night.

He went to the war with the London Irish Rifles as a stretcher-bearer but when someone asked what he had done in peacetime he said he dug drains, an occupation which earned him the title of the 'navvy poet'. His Irishness runs through the book.

Before I joined the Army  
I lived in Donegal,  
Where every night the Fairies,  
Would hold their carnival.

But now I'm out in Flanders  
Where men like wheat-ears fall,  
And it's Death and not the Fairies  
Who is holding carnival.

—"It was so very quiet lying there. The grasses nodded together, whispering to one another. To speak of the grasses whispering during the day is merely a sweet idea; but God! they do whisper at night. The ancients called the winds the Unseen Multitude; the grasses are long, tapering fingers laid on the lips of the winds. "Hush!" the night whispers. "Hush!" breathes the world. The grasses touch your ears, saying sleepily, "Hush! be quiet!"

—"Of those who are England's enemies I know, even now, very little. I cannot well pass judgment on a nation through seeing distorted lumps of clothing and mangled flesh pounded into the muddy floor of a trench, or strewn broadcast on the reverse slopes of a shell-scarred parapet. The enemy suffered as we did, yelled with pain when his wounds prompted him, forgot perhaps in the insane combat some of the nicer tenets of chivalry. After all, war is an approved licence for brotherly mutilation, its aims are sanctioned, only the means towards its end are disputed. It is a sad and sorry business from start to finish, from diplomacy that begets it to the Te Deums that rise to God in the thanksgiving for victory obtained."

—"The justice of the cause which endeavours to achieve its object by the murdering and maiming of mankind is apt to be doubted by a man who has come through a bayonet charge. The dead lying on the fields seem to ask, "Why has this been done to us? Why have you done it, brothers? What purpose has it served?" The battle-line is a secret world, a world of curses. The guilty secrecy of war is shrouded in lies, and shielded by bloodstained swords; to know it you must be one of those who wage it, a party to dark and mysterious orgies of carnage."

—"By night a ruined village has a certain character of its own, the demolition of war seems to give each broken wall a consciousness of dignity and worth; the moonlight ripples over the chimneys, and sheaves of shadow lurk in every nook and corner. But by day, with its broken jerry-built houses, the village has no relieving features, it is merely a heap of broken bricks, rubble and mud."

—"All around Loos lay the world of trenches, secret streets, sepulchral towns, houses whose chimneys scarcely reached the level of the earth, crooked alleys, bayonet curcled squares, and lonely graveyards where dead soldiers lay in the silent sleep that wakens to no réveillé."

—"The road to Maroc was very quiet and almost deserted; the nightly traffic had not yet begun, and the nightly cannonade was as yet merely fumbling for an opening. The wrecks of the previous days were still lying there; long-eared mules immobile in the shafts of shattered limbers, dead Highlanders with their white legs showing wan in the moonlight, boys in khaki with their faces pressed tightly against the cobblestones, broken wagons, discarded stretchers, and derelict mailbags with their rain-sodden parcels and letters from home."

—"We crossed the sandbagged paradoss. The level lay in front—grey, solitary, formless. It was very quiet, and in the silence of the fields where the whirlwind of the war had spent its

fury a few days ago there was a sense of eternal loneliness and sadness. The grey calm night toned the moods of my soul into one of voiceless sorrow, containing no element of unrest. My mood was well in keeping with my surroundings. In the distance I could see the broken chimney of Maroc coal-mine standing forlorn in the air. Behind, the Twin Towers of Loos quivered, grimly spectral.”

—“The dawn blushed in the east and grew redder and redder like a curtain of blood—and from Souchez to Ypres the poppy fields were the same red colour, a plain of blood. For miles and miles the barbed wire entanglements wound circuitously through the levels, brilliant with star-clusters of dew-drops hung from spike, barb and intricate traceries of gossamer. Out in front of my bay gleamed the Pleiades which had dropped from heaven during the night and clustered round a dark grey bulk of clothing by one of the entanglement props. I knew the dark grey bulk, it was He; for days and nights He had hung there, a huddled heap; the Futility of War.”.

It is a sad book but he writes with a light touch even, at times, some humour (such as the man who took out an apparent grenade in a tavern, when everyone else runs outside he calmly drinks their beers). He calls a rifle a ‘hipe’ and a German an ‘Alleymong’ and he uses ‘blurry’ and ‘blooming’ for their swear words. And says “Soldiers always speak of “we”; the individual is submerged in his regiment”. And he repeats the proverb: “Never see good in an enemy until you have defeated him.”

He isn’t a great poet but his poems are light and memorable and often touching.

We all have read our letters, but one’s  
untouched so far,  
An English maiden’s letter to her sweetheart  
at the War,  
And when we write in answer to tell her how  
he fell,  
What can we say to cheer her? Oh, what is  
now to cheer her?  
There’s nothing left to cheer her except the  
news to tell.

We’ll write to her to-morrow and this is what  
we’ll say,  
He breathed her name in dying; in peace he  
passed away—  
No words about his moaning, his anguish  
and his pain,  
When slowly, slowly, dying. God! Fifteen  
hours in dying!  
He lay a maimed thing dying, done upon  
the plain.

We often write to mothers, to sweethearts and  
to wives,  
And tell how those who loved them have given  
up their lives;  
If we’re not always truthful, our lies  
are always kind,  
Our letters lie to cheer them, to solace and to  
cheer them,  
Oh: anything to cheer them,—the women left

behind.

From 'The Letter'

Buzz-fly and gad-fly, dragon-fly and blue,  
When you're in the trenches come and visit you,  
They revel in your butter-dish and riot on your ham,  
Drill upon the army cheese and loot the army jam,  
From 'The Fly'

A candle stuck on the muddy floor  
Lights up the dug-out well,  
And I see in its flame the prancing sea  
And the mountains straight and tall;  
For my heart is more than often back  
By the hills of Donegal.  
From 'It's a Far, Far Cry'

The field was red with poppy flowers,  
Where mushroom meadows stand;  
It's only seven fairy hours  
From there to Fairyland.  
From 'In Fairyland'

Givenchy village lies a wreck, Givenchy  
Church is bare,  
No more the peasant maidens come to say  
their vespers there.  
The altar rails are wrenched apart, with rubble  
littered o'er,  
The sacred, broken sanctuary-lamp has smashed  
upon the floor;  
And mute upon the crucifix He looks upon it  
all—  
The great white Christ, the shrapnel-scarred,  
upon the eastern wall.  
From 'A Soldier's Prayer'

In *An Anzac's Bride* Margaret Gibbons has a young couple, Dick Haydon and Heather Winwood having a hasty marriage: "To have and to hold, from this day forth, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until Death us do part." The aged clergyman who was performing the wedding ceremony in the silent, almost empty little church, looked at the young couple before him with a sudden softening of his eyes and his lips quivered slightly as they formed the words of the most solemnly beautiful vow on earth.

"Then followed a hush which even the roar of City streets failed to penetrate, and the sunlight fell in broad gold bars across the faces of the kneeling couple. No organ pealed forth the "Wedding March," and no guests were assembled to wish the little war bride happiness and the brown-faced Anzac luck as they came quietly down the aisle, their lives linked together for all time." As they come out of the church with no friends or family to cheer them an old woman comes up and hands Heather several white roses and offers to tell her fortune. "Nineteen years are marked here, and the next year will be one of such misery that death will seem the only way

out—” but they dismiss her and take the train to Bexhill for a three-day honeymoon, and then they go to Southampton where the band is playing ‘Keep the Home Fires Burning’ and Dick is due to embark for France.

Heather has been left an orphan with the care of her younger crippled sister, Diamond, and her family has lost its money. She gets a job playing her violin in a hotel. “Dick had been through the hell-fire of Gallipoli, and was on seven days leave when he first met Heather.”

I had expected this Anzac to be Australian but Dick says, “By Heaven, we’ll be happy, kiddie, when the war is over. I’ll take you back to New Zealand with me, and you shall have everything that your dear little heart can wish for” and as he’d owned an orchard back home that “everything” may be a slight exaggeration.

In Southampton she sees a man she knows, the son of a friend of her father’s. This Douglas Farrell sends her a message to meet him by the sea that night to hear news of his father’s death. Innocently, she keeps the meeting and Farrell instead grabs her and starts kissing her—just as Dick comes up and sees them. He refuses to listen to her and leaves her, angry at what he sees as her unfaithfulness. Upset and alone she takes the train to London but Farrell follows her on board and again presses himself on her. There is a scuffle and the door flies open and she falls out but manages to grab a door handle and the escaping convict hiding in the next compartment saves her. This Robert Dacre (later called Arnold) asks her to leave the train with him so as not to excite suspicion. He takes her to a house where, to her surprise, she meets the old fortune-teller. She leaves Dacre and eventually returns to her little sister in London who has been hurt in a traffic accident. As she nurses the girl she pawns their belongings one by one and goes out one evening to try and busk near a theatre queue. The manager, impressed, offers her a small spot on the program but she sees Douglas Farrell sitting in the audience and panics and leaves. The girls in the reviews are sympathetic, particularly Elsie. “Some twenty girls, ranging in age from eighteen to about thirty, were busily occupied in “making up” for the second “house.” Some were applying the blue pencil to their eyelids, and others were darkening their eyebrows with kohl.”

“Glorious Charge of Anzacs—Splendid Advance on the Somme.” Newsboys were shouting themselves hoarse and pedestrians were besieging them for papers on every hand.” But Heather reads that her husband has died in France.

Dacre comes to London where he recognizes Farrell as the man who enticed his wife away. He bashes Farrell who then uses the theatre manager Abel Seymour to lure Heather with the promise of work and at the address there is also a fake clergyman and a fake doctor to tell Heather that Farrell is dying and he wants her to say she is his wife. It seems that Farrell’s father made a will in which he will only leave his money to Douglas if he marries Heather before he turns thirty, the father believing Heather will be a good influence on his wastrel son. Heather refuses and is kidnapped.

They take her to a sinister old stone building on Dartmoor to force her into the marriage. She is panic-stricken about her sister and her care. So Farrell brings Diamond to that house where she dies. The woman who brings Heather food helps her to get away and tells Farrell she saw Heather fall into the river and drown.

Heather is ill with a fever but Elsie, traveling with her troupe, helps Heather and eventually gets her back to London and takes her into her own home. Heather and Elsie plan to do a music and dance routine but it is hard to find a theatre willing to put them on. Heather goes to see a titled gentleman, who has lost a leg in France, who likes the idea of their turn but his mother refuses to have them in her concert. The son then persuades a theatre manager to take them on. But on the day they are to open their act Heather goes for a walk in a park, to ‘clear her head’ and finds a revolver on the ground. Abel Seymour comes up and she panics and shoots him and runs away believing she has murdered him. She flees back to Devon but has a fall and is taken in by some nuns at St. Dominic’s convent. She begins to think about becoming a nun herself but is invited to play for a hospital of wounded soldiers where she meets a man who has

lost an eye and who—you guessed it—proves to be her Dick. It was a man of a similar name who died. When he is well he comes to London where they discover that the other part of that will says if she doesn't marry Douglas Farrell she will inherit the money. Dick beats up Douglas Farrell who is then sentenced to 7 years jail.

Elsie marries the titled gentleman and Heather and Dick, reconciled and much richer, sail for New Zealand. "The sunny waters lay blue and lovely around them and the black Past was rapidly fading, as it does in the mind of youth."

It is very much 'The Perils of Pauline', full of coincidences, sentimental, contradictory as she is sometimes described as 'tall' and sometimes as 'little' but her hand is always 'little' and 'white', she either faints or sobs her heart out in every chapter, it is pure escapism and it is a relief to finally see her head off with her big bronzed Anzac (though I doubt if he was very bronzed after months in hospital), and yet it is lively and readable and I expect when it came out in 1918 many people wanted to read a story of romance and adventure which ends happily.

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And was she inspired by her husband's research for his book *The Diggers: The Australians in France?* This has an introduction by then prime minister, Billy Hughes, who dips his pen in hyperbole. "The imperishable deeds of Australia's glorious soldiers have carved for themselves a deep niche in the topmost towers of the Temple of the Immortals." And: "The war has made of Australia—a young community without traditions—a nation, acutely and proudly conscious of its nationality, its record in this war, and the great future which awaits it."

It is a relief to turn to MacGill's greater understanding. He certainly says, "Of her record in the war Australia may well be proud." But he sees them as men not superheroes. "And never was a battle so fierce. The Peninsula was terrible, Pozieres horrible, Polygon ghastly, but Villers-Bretonneux was sheer, undiluted hell." And "Broken walls, littered streets, charred roof-beams rising in tortured disarray over the piles of red brick rubbish, stumps of trees, rusty entanglements, battered barricades, pitted pavements, disbanded vehicles and derelict guns. This is Villers-Bretonneux, the village from which the Australians drove the Germans on the night of April 24-25."

Interestingly he says something of both their relationship with the Americans and with the French.

—"We passed through Lanotte-en-Santerre, a village in complete ruin like all other villages on the road eastwards from Amiens. The road to Hamel branches off here, and we were shown the place from a distance, Hamel, where the Australians fought side by side with the Americans and came to know the worth of the New Allies which had entered the war.

"The Australians often speak of the Americans. The former are very proud of the fact that the Yankees on their first attack were attached to the Diggers, and the soldiers of both countries fought shoulder to shoulder in the fight for Hamel." The Diggers though they described the Americans as 'great fighters' also said they were 'bad moppers-up'.

—"Wherever the Diggers go they seem to win the universal affection of women and children. An officer told me how these big men, rough in many ways, fiery in language and frank to the point of brutality at times, when they came to the ruined homes near Villers-Bretonneux, set themselves during lulls in the fighting to the kindly job of repairing the houses, salvaging the property, setting the religious pictures at correct angles on the walls and mending the broken shrines. They placed cradles and children's toys in the safety of the cellars so that these might be ready to hand when the little ones returned to their homes again."

He gives a lot of space to material aspects, the trenches, the equipment, the living spaces. "The Australian soldier may have more dash and energy in fighting than the Boche, the English soldier more pluck and resource, the Scot more stubbornness, but none of them can fashion better dug-outs than the German." And when the Australians captured a beautifully-engineered German gun they thought of having it shipped home as a souvenir but one soldier said, "It may be taken to Australia, but to what city? One place is jealous of another, and if Sydney gets the

gun, what is Melbourne going to say? For my own part, I think it would be wise to leave the gun where it is.”

But it wasn't all about war. “At this moment a man rose from a table near the door and commenced to recite a poem. All stopped their various pursuits to listen, for the Australians love poetry, especially when it recalls memories of the land they have left.” Of the poems recited that evening MacGill mentions ‘The Old Whim Horse’, ‘Out Back’, ‘Sheedy Was Dying’ and ‘Clancy of the Overflow’.

But ultimately it is a book about the pity, the horror, and the waste of war.

“In the afternoon of October 11, 1918, I found myself with a party travelling out from Amiens and taking the straight road that runs eastwards towards St. Quentin across the war harried fields of the Somme. We had just passed through a country where the harvest was gathered in, where the hay ricks and cornstacks stood high round the ancient farmhouses, and we were now in a country where Death had reaped its sad harvest for over four years, where all was ruin and decay—a spread of demolition and destruction. This was the battleground of the Somme.

“This department is level, very fertile and was at one time amongst the most cultivated districts of France. Cider was made there, poultry reared, and the locality was rich in all manner of farm produce. And it stood high in textile industries—wool, cotton, hemp, silk-spinning, and the weaving of velvet and carpets. In addition to these industries there were also large iron foundries, beetroot sugar factories, distilleries, breweries, employing prior to the war close on seventy thousand hands. But now, at the present moment, all these industries are obliterated, the rich pastures of the Somme are barren wastes, the factories and distilleries huddles of charred wood, twisted iron, and broken bricks. All homes and hamlets are destroyed, and for miles and miles ruin succeeds ruin, until the eye wearies and the heart is heavy at the sight of the horror which has been heaped on the once fair land of France.”

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January 3: J. R. Tolkien

‘Henry Handel’ Richardson

January 4: Michele Turner

January 5: Umberto Eco

January 6: Kahlil Gibran

January 7: Pavao Vitezovic

January 8: Wilkie Collins

Dennis Wheatley

January 9: Abercrombie Lascalles

Murat Bernard ‘Chic’ Young

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Every comic has both a writer and an artist (sometimes one and the same) behind it. For instance Dick Tracy, launched in 1931 was the brainchild of Chester Gould and Flash Gordon (1933) had Alex Raymond and the following year Al Capp began L’il Abner and Jerry Siegal and Joe Shuster launched the first Superman comic on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1938 which in turned spawned those other heroes whose names ended in ‘man’.

Comics:

Popeye — Elzie Crisler Segar. 1919.

Blondie — Chic Young 1930.

Dick Tracy — Chester Gould.. 1931.

Flash Gordon — Alex Raymond. 1933.

L’il Abner — Al Capp. 1934.

Superman — Jerry Siegal and Joe Shuster. 1938.

Chic Young launched Blondie in 1930. I always liked Blondie. It was well-drawn, funny, and it showed a woman as a calm and kindly presence whereas most comics of the time were

very much men's stories.

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When I came to mull over cartoons and cartoonists it seemed that we are far more likely to know the names of American cartoonists. Perhaps Leunig, Nicholson, Pickering, Polly, Kudelka and others have gone some way to change things. But how many people could name the artist behind an Aussie comic strip? Joliffe? Bancks? Cedric? So here is a forgotten cartoonist from our past, brought back from the dead.

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* says that David Souter was born in Scotland but ended up in Sydney where "In the 1880s Souter drew cartoons for the weekly *Tribune and News of the Week*. For forty years from 1895 he had at least one cartoon published in every edition of the *Bulletin* and had the distinction of naming his own modest price for a drawing. His graceful penwork showed the early influence of Art Nouveau, a style sinuous and flowing. The drawings were strong on the printed page with large black solid areas complementing fine, firm pen lines. His compositions and groupings were helped by the inclusion of the familiar Souter cat which reputedly originated as a result of the artist furbishing an inkblot on one of his drawings. Some of his cat studies are pictured in *Bush babs* (1933), a collection of nonsense rhymes he wrote for his children and later illustrated for publication. His cats were featured on Royal Doulton chinaware.

"Souter illustrated other books, including several for Ethel Turner, and co-edited *Art and Architecture* in 1904-11 (to which he contributed a series of articles on Australian painters); he was among the first to draw Australian posters and, with Norman Lindsay, to design bookplates. In September 1907 Souter's operetta, *The grey kimona* (1902), was staged in Adelaide by Clyde Meynell and John Gunn. Involved with Alfred Hill's Sydney Repertory Theatre Society, Souter produced two plays in 1914 and wrote librettos for light operas including Hill's *Rajah of Shivapore*. A selection of his full-page war cartoons for the *Stock Journal* were reprinted in 1915. Not least of his many triumphs were two comic strips, 'Sharkbait Sam' and 'Weary Willie and the Count de Main', drawn for the Sydney *Sunday Sun* in 1921: frame for frame, their inventiveness and composition were remarkable. By 1928 Souter was literary editor of *Country Life*.

"His *Bulletin* satire, in theme never other than domiciliary, was always sophisticated, often wise, with a knowing, gentle cynicism."

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So back to Chic Young. He was born in Chicago to an artistic family and had several cartoon strips, 'Beautiful Babs' and 'Dumb Dora', before launching 'Blondie' in 1930. Blondie was a lively young woman who acquires a husband, Dagwood Bumstead, several children, her husband's boss Mr Dithers (so that he and Dagwood can be at each other's throats) and a life in which she is the calm but often wry centre of their lives. The strip had a long life and gave us the Dagwood sandwich. And Chic was short for Chicken but in what respect his family and friends saw him as a Chicken I don't know. And Chic does sound much better than Chicken Young.

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January 10: Robinson Jeffers

January 11: Alan Paton

William James

Agnes Smith (Lewis)

Margaret Smith (Gibson)

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Janet Soskice in *Sisters of Sinai* wrote a fascinating account of the travels of these twin sisters, Agnes and Margaret, two tough-minded Scottish Presbyterians, and their search for ancient manuscripts at the monastery of St Catherine's in Sinai. One result of their discoveries

there was to raise questions about whether there is or ever was a definitive New Testament. The sisters did not doubt that this debate was good for the church.

Soskice writes, “Agnes and Margaret did not, in the end, have any difficulty with the idea of rival sects in the early Church. Agnes believed that God could of course have provided us with perfect copies of the Bible, but instead allowed human scribes to make their errors and their variants. Demonstrating her robust certitude in an age of gathering doubt, she argued that even our mistakes redound to the praise of God, ‘for the very variants which frighten the weak minded among us act as a stimulant to others, inciting them to search the Scripture more diligently to eliminate the mistakes of mere copyists, and to ascertain what it was that the Evangelists actually wrote’.

“As for the idea that every word of the King James Bible was as the Holy Spirit had dictated it – a view that commanded prominence in Britain in the early nineteenth century – ‘no one,’ wrote Agnes, ‘who has ever read two out of the 3829 extant MSS [of the New Testament] and has observed the many slight variations in the order of their words ... can continue to hold this theory for a single moment’. Most of these variants do not affect the substance. Agnes knew of thirteen manuscript alternatives for the phrase ‘Jesus answered and said unto him’:

Jesus answered, and said unto him,  
Jesus answering, said unto him,  
Jesus answered him, saying,  
Jesus said unto him,  
Jesus answered, saying,  
Jesus, answering, said,  
And Jesus said unto him,  
And Jesus said,  
Jesus said,  
Jesus answered, and said,  
And Jesus answering, said unto him,  
And Jesus answered him, saying,  
And Jesus answered, saying,

“Verbal inspiration (at least in the form that held that the Bible as it has come down to us is divinely inspired, down to the last word) had been, said Agnes, a ‘comfortable and convenient theory’, but its age had passed away.”

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I cannot honestly say that I, or indeed most people, give very much thought to the Sinai Peninsula. But perhaps we should? I have just been reading *Now They Call Me Infidel* by Nonie Darwish.

In 1952 King Farouk was deposed by Gamal Abdel Nasser who promoted the idea of unifying the Arab world. Her father Colonel Mustafa Hafez was sent to Gaza to be in charge of Egyptian Intelligence there. “When we arrived, the relatively small area of the Gaza Strip had begun to explode with population, poverty, and unemployment. The problems were compounded by an Egyptian military administration that did little for the infrastructure of Gaza. Arab politics got in the way of making life easier for the Palestinian refugees. The Arab world wanted to see the Palestinians live in intolerable conditions, pushed against Israel with no place to go, not even allowed to visit other Arab countries without a visa. The thinking was that the worse off the Palestinians were, the more pressure the world would bring to bear on Israel. Furthermore, Egypt discouraged and rejected the relocation of the Gaza refugees into the huge and relatively empty Sinai desert, which might have solved the problems of overcrowding.”

She says, “When, in 1948, the United Nations partitioned the British mandate of Palestine into two areas—one a Jewish homeland, the other a Palestinian entity—the Jews declared a state. The Palestinians did not. Instead, Arab countries from all sides invaded Israel to

“drive it into the sea.” That did not happen. During that war, Egypt took Gaza, and Jordan took the West Bank. But instead of helping Palestinians create a nation, Arab governments chose to keep Palestinians as refugees and use their areas as staging grounds for continuing the attacks and terror against Israel.”

Many years later she came on documents showing how the Egyptians wanted the Palestinians to take the risks and do the dying. “The Egyptian regime in Gaza—with support from the whole Arab world—shamed, blamed, bribed, bullied, and abused Palestinians into resisting and fighting Israel. Palestinians were made to feel that they needed to prove they were worthy of the respect of the Arab world. I once heard Egyptian visitors in our home criticize the Palestinians as being traitors to the Arab cause for having sold out to Israel because they didn’t show *enough* resistance.”

“In addition to being unable to cross the border into Israeli areas, Gaza residents were also prohibited from crossing into Egypt, even though at the time Gaza was technically part of Egypt. Trapped in this narrow strip under Nasser’s oppressive military regime, the people in Gaza revolted. The resulting violent confrontation with the Egyptian authorities in 1955 was called an intifada. Slogans were shouted and posted against Nasser and his Egyptian military dictatorship. Both the communists and Muslim Brotherhood now became totally illegal, and both groups began working together in underground cooperation against their common enemy.”

In this angry claustrophobic atmosphere Mustafa Hafez was ordered to create the ‘fedayeen’, young Palestinians who would be armed and would cross into Israel. He was killed by a parcel bomb, the family then returned to Cairo, the fedayeen kept up their low grade insurgency ... but eventually Egypt put together its plans for all-out invasion of Israel. Jordan would attack from the west, Syria from the north, and Egypt through Gaza. The campaign failed. And Israel took the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank from Jordan and Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. It didn’t improve anything in Gaza but the Israelis looked at Sinai with different eyes from the Egyptians who had regarded it as ‘waste ground’ with a few wandering Bedouin tribes and their animals. The Israelis built holiday resorts on the Mediterranean coast and the Red Sea. But then President Sadat, after Nasser died, met with the Israeli prime minister at Camp David and the Sinai was returned to Egypt in theory as a quid pro quo for recognition by Egypt and future peace. But this too didn’t help those in Gaza who now had a border with Egypt again but were still prevented from crossing it.

And there, roughly, the status quo has remained ever since with the people of Gaza hemmed in between Israel and Egypt and the people of the West Bank hemmed in between Jordan and Israel.

I know the ‘Two State Solution’ is still regularly talked about but I cannot help thinking that it isn’t much of a solution. Gaza, overpopulated and with few resources, seems hardly viable. And cut off from the West Bank with its different experiences and outlook, hardly seems to suggest two little strips working together in equality and harmony. So is there anything better on the table? It seems not.

So I would like to make my own suggestion. Why not re-incorporate the West Bank in to Jordan but as an autonomous region with control over everything except perhaps defence, foreign policy, and immigration. And why shouldn’t Egypt share some of the vastness of the Sinai Peninsula with the people of Gaza. Why shouldn’t *they* run holiday resorts on the Mediterranean?

And if the Greek monks of St Catherine’s monastery at Mt Sinai could be virtually self sufficient with their vegetable gardens, orchards and small flocks of sheep and goats, why shouldn’t new settlements of people from Gaza spring up? The monks have proved that the soils are fertile. All it would take would be some funding from the World Food Program and other bodies and some irrigation experts to choose and help develop the most likely areas. The Bedouins could still wander with their sheep and camels and goats. Sinai, several times the size

of Israel and many times the size of Gaza, could become a new Promised Land with wise plans and humane commitment and careful governance.

And having pondered that far I thought there might be another step worth pondering. The West Bank is very small, as is Gaza, but we tend to forget that Israel is also small—and that none of these countries are blest with either space or resources. But Israel suggests prosperity because it has been flooded with funds from ‘outside’. Billions of dollars in compensation for the Holocaust, large injections of Western support, including military support, and funds from Jewish communities around the world. But the first source is dwindling, the second depends on policies made in Western countries particularly the US, and the third requires the continued prosperity and support of the Jewish diaspora. Take them away and you have a small country largely dependent on agriculture and tourism. Agriculture depends on continuing inputs of water and fertilizers. And tourism depends on the incomes of people outside Israel, particularly Christians wanting to visit Bethlehem and Jerusalem. There is an irony in that the Palestinians need Israel to remain prosperous but that cannot be guaranteed.

So I come back to the Sinai Peninsula. If Egypt thinks it is ‘waste land’ then why not lease it to a Palestinian ‘consortium’ to look at ways in which it can heal and change and develop new opportunities ...

\* \* \* \* \*

Alongside the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s practical search for manuscripts, the scholarly comparisons and detailed studies of texts, went a renewed interest in Christian mysticism. Susan Howatch in *Glamorous Powers* (one of her series of very interesting ‘religious’ novels) adds this note, “Darrow’s religious thought is derived from the writings of WILLIAM RALPH INGE (1860-1954), one of the leading intellectuals in the Church of England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Educated at Eton and at Ling’s College, Cambridge, where he obtained a first in classics, he then taught at Eton before being ordained in 1888. Following his ordination he became a fellow of Hertford College, Oxford, where Idealist philosophy was in the ascendant, and it was there that he turned from pure scholarship to metaphysics.

“In 1895 he began to read the works of Plotinus, first of the philosophers now called Neoplatonists, and his encounter with Neoplatonism led him to make a special study of Christian Mysticism, the subject of his famous Bampton Lectures in 1899. Inge played a leading role in the twentieth-century revival of interest in mysticism. He believed that this human experience of the presence of God provided an indestructible religious truth which the current attacks on the institutional churches and the authority of the Bible could not touch; in his view the mystical experience of God, vouched for in similar manner amidst different religions at different times and in different places, represented a timeless witness to a reality which was not subject to passing fashions in theological or philosophical thought. Inge saw reality as the spiritual world, a kingdom of values which he equated with the Platonic doctrine of Ideas. When accused of being more of a Platonist than a Christian his response was that in his opinion the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation perfected and completed the philosophical system of his much-admired Plotinus.

“Inge was a successful, though strikingly individual churchman; using modern terminology one could say that although he operated ‘within the system’ he was not ‘an organization man’. In 1904 his great friend HERBERT HENSLEY HENSON, then rector of St Margaret’s Westminster and later to be Bishop of Durham, offered him the living of All Saints, Ennismore Gardens, and in accepting the offer Inge at last moved from Oxford to the capital (and from bachelorhood to matrimony). However in 1907 he returned to academic life; he became Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge where he remained until 1911. At that point he received his famous preferment: he was appointed Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral a post he held for twenty-three years. After his retirement he continued his writing, both scholarly and journalistic, and the fruits of a lifetime’s study of mysticism were displayed in his last book, *Mysticism in Religion*, published when he was eighty-eight.

“Inge was brought up in the High-Church tradition but gradually he detached himself not only from the Anglo-Catholics but from the Evangelicals, the two powerful opposing wings of the Church. He claimed to represent a third party within the church; he saw his ‘religion of the spirit’ as not only embodying the highest wisdom of the past but offering a profound spiritual relevance to the world of today and tomorrow. In *The Platonic Tradition In English Religious Thought* he wrote: ‘My contention is that besides the combative Catholic and Protestant elements in the Churches, there has always been a third element, with very honourable traditions which came to life again at the Renaissance, but really reaches back to the Greek fathers, to St Paul and St John, and further back still. The characteristics of this type of Christianity are – a spiritual religion based on a firm belief in absolute and eternal values as the most real things in the universe – a confidence that these values are knowable by man – a belief that they can nevertheless be known only by a whole-hearted consecration of the intellect, will and affections to the great quest – an entirely open mind towards the discoveries of science – a reverent and receptive attitude to the beauty, sublimity and wisdom of the creation, as a revelation of the mind and character of the creator – a complete indifference to the current valuations of the worldling.’ It is this religion of the spirit which I have tried to reflect in the character of Jon Darrow.”

Alongside the renewed interest to track down early versions of the Bible, to bring new linguistic insights to the various discoveries and versions, there also grew up this new interest in Christian mysticism. Was it inspired by the greater interest in psychic phenomena and their more careful study? Or was it to some extent a reaction to the more prosaic work in determining the meaning of words, the dates of fragments, the value of different translations?

With so many long-established things under question—

“It is now generally recognised that verse 7 of 1 John, ch. 5, is not part of the original Greek text. Erasmus omitted it from the first edition of the Greek New Testament, as he had no Greek manuscript containing it. He inserted it in his second edition when someone produced a Greek manuscript of the sixteenth century with it in. The verse came in from a Latin source of the fifth century, and it stood in all the English versions from Wyclif to the Authorised Version of 1611. Friends accepted it as Scripture, as did all their contemporaries. Isaac Penington cites it, not so much out of deference to the authority of Scripture, though he and other Friends protested their unity with the truth of the Scriptures, but rather as an example of a Scripture which had illuminated and been illuminated by his experience.”

*Christian faith and practice in the experience of the Society of Friends.*

—people understandably were looking for ways in which they could continue to make their lives meaningful, despite what any scholars might be saying or doing to the scriptures.

Thomas L. Thompson wrote in *The Bible in History*, “When we separate the Bible from history we are not getting rid of the Bible. It is where it has always been: playing among its stories and legends. History is a modern interest that the Bible rarely shares. It does use occasional tidbits of history here and there. It often refers to places, great figures and even some of the things that occurred in the past, and it occasionally seems to understand something of these episodes.”

That fear, that if we criticize, cast doubts, query the legitimacy of any verses or their translation, everything will come crashing down, simply isn’t true. If anything the *Bible* grows stronger with every effort to come to a greater understanding of what and why and when and how its many authors struggled to write it. I think the Smith sisters understood this very well.

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January 12: Dorothy Wall

January 13: Michael Bond

January 14: Pierre Loti

January 15: Molière

January 16: Robert Service

January 17: Ronald Firbank  
 Nevil Shute  
 January 18: A. A. Milne  
 Arthur Ransome  
 January 19: Edgar Allan Poe  
 January 20: Jean-Jacques Barthélemy  
 Raymond Roussel  
 January 21: Friedrich Karl von Savigny  
 January 22: Charles Morgan  
 Lord Byron  
 January 23: J. G. Farrell  
 January 24: Keith Douglas  
 January 25: Virginia Woolf  
 Robert Burns  
 January 26: Ugo Foscolo  
 January 27: Lewis Carroll  
 Caedmon (dates not known)

\* \* \* \* \*

Books dealing with Old English literature usually mention Caedmon in passing. But we don't know exactly when he was born or when he died. David Daiches in *A Critical History of English Literature* says "The Christianizing of the Anglo-Saxons had more far-reaching effects on their literature than the addition of Christian elements to heroic poems. By the eighth century the techniques of Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry were being applied to purely Christian themes, with the result that we have a substantial body of Anglo-Saxon religious poetry, representing a quite new development in English literature."

"Religious poetry seems to have flourished in northern England—Northumbria—throughout the eighth century, though most of it has survived only in West Saxon transcriptions of the late tenth century. Bede, the great English ecclesiastical historian and scholar who lived from 673 to 735, tells in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* how in a monastery of the abbess Hilda at Whitby a lowly lay brother named Cædmon suddenly and miraculously received the gift of song and "at once began to sing in praise of God the creator verses which he had never heard before." As the abbess Hilda died in 680, this puts the beginnings of Anglo-Saxon religious poetry before that date."

(Hilda presided over a community of both men and women.)

Bede devotes considerable attention to Caedmon, saying, "he had left the house in which the entertainment was being held and went out to the stable where it was his duty that night to look after the beasts. There when the time came he settled down to sleep. Suddenly in a dream he saw a man standing beside him who called him by name. 'Caedmon,' he said, 'sing me a song.' 'I don't know how to sing,' he replied. 'It is because I cannot sing that I left the feast and came here.' The man who addressed him then said: 'But you shall sing to me.' 'What should I sing about?' he replied. 'Sing about the Creation of all things,' the other answered. And Caedmon immediately began to sing verses in praise of God the Creator that he had never heard before, and their theme ran thus:

Praise we the Fashioner now of Heaven's fabric,  
 The majesty of his might and his mind's wisdom,  
 Work of the world-warden, worker of all wonders,  
 How he the Lord of Glory everlasting,  
 Wrought first for the race of men Heaven as a roof-tree,  
 Then made he Middle Earth to be their mansion.

"This is the general sense, but not the actual words that Caedmon sang in his dream; for verses, however masterly, cannot be translated literally from one language into another without

losing much of their beauty and dignity. When Caedmon awoke, he remembered everything he had sung in his dream, and soon added more verses in the same style to a song truly worthy of God.

“Early in the morning he went to his superior the reeve, and told him about this gift that he had received. The reeve took him before the abbess, who ordered him to give an account of his dream and repeat the verses in the presence of many learned men, so that a decision might be reached by common consent as to their quality and origin. All of them agreed that Caedmon’s gift had been given to him by our Lord. And they explained to him a passage of scriptural history or doctrine and asked him to render it into verse if he could. He promised to do this, and returned next morning with excellent verses as they had ordered him. The abbess was delighted that God had given such grace to the man, and advised him to abandon secular life and adopt the monastic state. And when she had admitted him into the Community as a brother, she ordered him to be instructed in the events of sacred history. So Caedmon stored up in his memory all that he learned, and like one of the clean animals chewing the cud, turned it into such melodious verse that his delightful renderings turned his instructors into auditors. He sang of the creation of the world, the origin of the human race, and the whole story of Genesis. He sang of Israel’s exodus from Egypt, the entry into the Promised Land, and many other events of scriptural history. He sang of the Lord’s Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the teaching of the Apostles. He also made poems on the terrors of the Last Judgement, the horrible pains of Hell, and the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven. In addition to these, he composed several others on the blessings and judgements of God, by which he sought to turn his hearers from delight in wickedness and to inspire them to love and do good. For Caedmon was a deeply religious man, who humbly submitted to regular discipline and hotly rebuked all who tried to follow another course. And so he crowned his life with a happy end.”

He was said to have minded the abbey’s pigs, to have been unable to read or write or sing but he had that dream and when he woke up he had the words of a hymn in his head which he was able to write down. This new Caedmon eventually became a monk and probably wrote more poetry on religious themes although we don’t know exactly what else he wrote.

Daiches says, “The only poem we have which is certainly by Cædmon is the nine-line poem quoted by Bede in his account of the poet’s first inspiration. Bede wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* in Latin (though it was translated into Anglo-Saxon under King Alfred), but fortunately in one of the manuscripts of the work the original Northumbrian text of the poem has been preserved:

Nu scylun hergan hefænricæs Uard,  
Metudæs mæcti end his modgidanc,  
uerc uuldurfadur, sue he uundra gihuæs,  
eci Dryctin, or astelidæ....

Now let us praise the guardian of Heaven’s kingdom,  
The Creator’s might and His purpose,  
The work of the Father of glory, as He of all wonders,  
Eternal Lord, established the beginning....

(The difference between Northumbrian and West Saxon can be seen at a glance if we put beside the Northumbrian version, quoted above, the following later West Saxon version:

No sculon herigean heofonrices Weard,  
Meotodes meahte ond his modgeþanc,  
weore wuldorfæder, swa he wundra gehwæs,  
ece Drihten or onstealde....)

This shows, clearly enough, the vocabulary of praise which the earlier scop had applied to his lord now being applied to God, and gives some indication of how the heroic style could be adapted to biblical subjects. Bede tells us that Cædmon went on to sing “about the creation of the world and the origin of mankind and the whole story of Genesis; about the exodus of Israel from Egypt and their entrance into the promised land; about many other stories from Holy Writ; about the incarnation, passion, and ascension into Heaven of the Lord; about the coming of the Holy Ghost and the teaching of the apostles.” There are Anglo-Saxon poems on many of these subjects, and for a long time these were held to be Cædmon’s. But the relative stiffness of the nine lines quoted by Bede seems to represent an earlier stage in the development of Anglo-Saxon religious poetry than that represented by such poems as *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel*, which show greater variety and ease of movement (though it is true that nine lines do not give much basis for comparison), and the poems once attributed to Cædmon are now thought to be later in date though still regarded as belonging to the “Caedmonian school.” ”

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January 28: Colette  
January 29: Germaine Greer  
January 30: Shirley Hazzard  
          Angela Thirkell  
January 31: Kenzaburo Oe  
February 1: Muriel Spark  
February 2: James Joyce  
February 3: Simone Weil  
February 4: Sheila Kaye-Smith  
          Esther Meynell (d)

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“The year 1925 saw the anonymous publication in London of a surprising book touted as the genuine work of Bach’s second wife. “Poor as I am, and forgotten,” read one passage in *The Little Chronicle of Magdalena Bach*, “living on the charity of the town of Leipzig, and old—I was fifty-seven years old, only eight years younger than he was when he died—I would not be other than I am now, if it was at the cost of never having known him, never having been his wife.” It painted a poignant, historically faithful, and highly romantic view of the Bach household. The book was very successful, going into multiple printings and translations. It was also a fake. The author turned out to be an English writer by the name of Esther Meynell. But even today the book can be found in libraries, is occasionally cited as an authentic work, and remains the stuff of gossip on Bach Internet chat sites.”

Eric Soblin in *The Cello Suites*.

Is fake the right word? It is, if the intention was to deceive the reading public. But not, if it was clear that this was an imagined life of Anna Magdalena Bach. One day I saw a copy of Esther Meynell’s *Quintet* in Vinnies and thought ‘I’ll get that next week’ but of course next week it was gone. So I asked in the library if they had anything of Esther Meynell’s.

She had written biographies of Samuel Pepys, William Morris, and Lady Hamilton. So a biography of Anna Magdalena Bach would not have raised eyebrows. But a biography would have turned into a biography of her husband; not least because we know little of her life and thoughts except as in her role of wife and mother and to some extent as a music teacher and transcriber. An imagined life puts her at the centre of her life.

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When I asked at the library they came up with Meynell’s *Portrait of William Morris*. This was interesting and she obviously admired many things about Morris, that he was much more than the designer of “cretonnes and wall papers”. Poet, writer, painter, designer, weaver, dyer, translator, printer (creating the famous Kelmscott Press), illuminator, calligrapher, collector of early books, and a socialist. She says of him “this outward exuberance was partly

childlike and partly a kind of armour to his inner sensitiveness. In *News from Nowhere* he said: “It is the childlike part of us that produces works of imagination.” Morris was one of the rare people who kept the child alive in him to “the ending of days”, in that he never lost his eagerness and his joy in things, his desire to experiment with a new craft.” He always had sufficient money to allow him to try new things and he set up the company which began as Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co; Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and Metals at 8 Red Lion Square in London which eventually became solely his company. Meynell mentions his fascination with Iceland which led to what she saw as his best poem ‘Sigurd the Volsang’. He said writing poetry was easy and he tossed off many small poems such as:

Lo, silken my garden  
And silken my sky,  
And silken my apple boughs  
Hanging on high;

All wrought by the worm  
In the peasant Carle’s cot  
On the mulberry leafage  
When summer was hot.

He took time from his work to help found the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, particularly to protect them from zealous Victorian restoration; to be concerned about Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria; and to embrace socialism. This put him at odds with his friends such as Edward Burne-Jones. But he believed that no one should live in poverty and that work should not be mere drudgery; “the true incentive to useful and happy labour is, and must be, pleasure in the work itself.” But how this might be achieved was far less clear to him and to other early socialists. He could clearly see the wrongs but was less clear on how to right them.

Meynell presents, very readably, an image of an always busy multi-talented man who found great pleasure in acquiring new skills and creating beautiful crafts. But she also sees in this ceaseless work a form of escape from deeper introspection and a more profound understanding of human emotions.

When she came to write this biography there was no shortage of records and there were people still alive, including his daughter May, who had known William Morris. But when she came to write a life of Anna Magdalena Bach she probably felt that it could only be an imagined life, touching on the few known aspects of that life but a work of the imagination nevertheless. Should she have made this clear to readers—or was she wise to leave that understanding unwritten?

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February 5: W. E. Johns  
February 6: Dermot Bolger  
February 7: Charles Dickens  
February 8: Jules Verne  
February 9: Brendan Behan  
February 10: Boris Pasternak  
February 11: Sidney Sheldon  
                  Antony Flew  
February 12: Charles Darwin

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“The ship *Southern Cross* left Boston on 10 June and arrived at San Francisco on 22 October, a passage of 134 days. They were 23 days off Cape Horn, and that was where passengers and crew saw an amazing auroral display on 2 September, thanks to a major solar storm. The storm was so violent that English astronomer, Richard Carrington, detected solar

flares on the Sun, the first time they were seen.

“Colourful auroras usually only seen in polar regions, were visible at Rome and Hawaii. These were admired, but then the damage began. The storm sent a plasma blob hurtling out of the Sun, much faster than any cannonball, reaching the Earth in just under 18 hours. One day, another blob will come our way, but the damage next time will be far worse.

“In 1859, telegraph wires suddenly shorted out across the US and Europe, causing fires in many places, but it was comparatively minor damage. A modern solar blast like that of 1859 will cost billions of dollars as phone lines, power lines and communications satellites and earth stations are fried. Even computers and home networks could be at risk.”

From *Mr Darwin's incredible shrinking World* by Peter Macinnis.

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“The ‘solar wind’, a hot exhalation of charged particles (reminiscent of the ‘wind from God’), blows out from the turbulent Sun and keeps up a constant barrage on the planets. Were it not for the protective envelope of Earth’s magnetic field, which deflects most of the solar wind, humankind could not withstand the onslaught. From time to time, especially during solar maximum, the steady solar wind is augmented by sudden blasts of higher-energy particles from solar flares on the Sun’s surface, or by gargantuan blobs of ejected solar gas. Such outbursts can disable our communications satellites and disrupt power grids, causing blackouts. In milder doses, particles of solar wind trickle into the upper atmosphere near the North and South Poles, initiating cascades of electrical charge that draw curtains of coloured lights across the sky – the so-called Northern and Southern Lights. Other planets also sprout colourful auroras in response to the solar wind, which billows on past Pluto all the way to the heliopause – the undiscovered boundary where the Sun’s influence ends.”

From *The Planets* by Dava Sobel.

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“There have been two massive CMEs (Coronal Mass Ejections) over the past two centuries. The 1859 Carrington Event irradiated Earth for nine days, causing the Northern Lights to dance in the skies as far south as Hawaii. On May 14, 1921, a GMD (Geomagnetic Disturbance) lit up northern skies as far south as Puerto Rico. Both flares disrupted telegraph communication around the world, causing some equipment to burst into flames.

But twentieth-century telegraph lines were more resilient than today’s electronics. Solar flares can bake the fragile circuitry that controls aircraft, banking, GPS, radio, TV broadcasts, iPods, and the Internet. As NASA solar physicist Lika Guhathakurta put it, “A similar storm today might knock us for a loop.” A National Academy of Sciences report estimates that a “century-class” solar storm could affect more than 100 million Americans and cause 20 times the damage as Hurricane Katrina (\$2 trillion) while “full recovery could take 4 to 10 years.” Physicist Michio Kaku has characterized the threat of a massive solar flare as “a potential Katrina from space.... We’d be thrown 100 years into the past.” ”

From *Nuclear Roulette* by Gar Smith.

You might be wondering what solar flares have to do with evolution. But it is almost a given (in both scientific and popular writings on evolution) that a mysterious burst of radiation reached the earth, caused mutations which proved helpful, and thus pushed on the process of evolution. Perhaps it did. But the most obvious source of radiation is the sun. And it isn’t clear that recorded bursts from the sun have been helpful to the process of evolution. Nor is it clear that mutations have been recorded in their wake. Perhaps we didn’t look in the right direction.

Dale Spender in *Nattering on the Net* said, “Memory is a dwindling asset. There’s no need to retain things in one’s head when it is stored on a disk. There is no need to be able to recall quotes when the computer has a search capacity and an electronic index.” I would beg to differ. Firstly, because memory needs to be used, expanded, nurtured, pushed, challenged, fed, if we want to retain healthy brains and the capacity to think clearly, logically, and in a sustained

way. And secondly, all our electronic devices are vulnerable. To breakdown, to being mislaid or stolen, to power cuts or failing batteries, to rising prices ... and to sunbursts ...

I know various people have written to suggest that we risk stymieing further evolution—simply because science is dedicated to removing anomalies. In *Our Stolen Future* by Theo Colborn, Dianne Dumanoski and John Peterson Myers the authors look primarily at the ways that many chemicals, including DDT, can mimic oestrogen and trick our cells in to taking them up, and thus feminize the masculine.

“All of us, worldwide, now contain industrial chemicals in our bodies unknown to our grandparents. A *National Geographic* advertisement by the American Plastics Council in 2000 celebrated plastic as the “sixth basic food group.” In fact, Americans now ingest an average of 5.8 milligrams a day of DEHP, a phthalate plasticizer used in everything from food wrappings to children’s toys, medical devices, and ubiquitous PVC products. DEHP is an endocrine disrupter, a gender bender whose adverse health effects are evident at parts per *trillion*. Such oestrogen-mimicking are associated with early puberty in girls, some as young as one year old. In infants and children, they produce measurable neurological deficits and changes in temperament, including laughing and smiling less, feeling more fearful, and becoming agitated under stress. As Dr. Theo Colborn has said, these chemicals can change the very character of human societies.”

Kenny Ausubel introducing *An Unreasonable Woman* by Diane Wilson, the brave woman who tackled the multinational companies which were polluting her beloved Lavaca Bay in Texas, says the title of this book comes from George Bernard Shaw’s “A reasonable woman adapts to the world. An unreasonable woman makes the world adapt to her.”

But in a world so saturated with chemicals and plastics it is sometimes difficult to determine who is unreasonable and who is reasonable. Reason would say that we want our children to be safe and healthy in a pristine environment. But there are no pristine environments left. Polar bears like polar penguins have DDT, plastic, oil, heavy metals and other nasties in their bodies, just as we do. If we are not eating, drinking, breathing it, we are absorbing things through our skins. So we are inevitably changing the course of human society and human evolution. But there is an obvious conflict and dilemma in there. Scientists are adding to the confusing burden our bodies carry while also soliciting funds to direct and control matters of evolution.

Darwin did not know how lucky he was to be able to walk among unsullied finches and make theories about their evolution. There may come a time when even the Galapagos finches are too contaminated with chemicals to tell us anything.

Michael Lewis in *Flash Boys* wrote, “I didn’t start out with much interest in the stock market—though, like most people, I enjoy watching it go boom and crash. When it crashed on October 19, 1987, I happened to be hovering around the fortieth floor of One New York Plaza, the stock market trading and sales department of my then employer, Salomon Brothers. *That* was interesting. If you ever needed proof that even Wall Street insiders have no idea what’s going to happen next on Wall Street, there it was. One moment all is well; the next, the value of the entire U.S. stock market has fallen 22.61 percent, and no one knows why. During the crash, some Wall Street brokers, to avoid the orders their customers wanted to place to sell stocks, simply declined to pick up their phones. It wasn’t the first time that Wall Street people had discredited themselves, but this time the authorities responded by changing the rules—making it easier for computers to do the jobs done by those imperfect people. The 1987 stock market crash set in motion a process—weak at first, stronger over the years—that has ended with computers entirely replacing the people.

“Over the past decade, the financial markets have changed too rapidly for our mental picture of them to remain true to life. The picture I’ll bet most people have of the markets is still

a picture a human being might have taken. In it, a ticker tape runs across the bottom of some cable TV screen, and alpha males in color-coded jackets stand in trading pits, hollering at each other. That picture is dated; the world it depicts is dead. Since about 2007, there have been no thick-necked guys in color-coded jackets standing in trading pits; or, if they are, they're pointless. There are still some human beings working on the floor of the New York Stock exchange and the various Chicago exchanges, but they no longer preside over any financial market or have a privileged view inside those markets. The U.S. stock market now trades inside black boxes, in heavily guarded buildings in New Jersey and Chicago. What goes on inside those black boxes is hard to say—the ticker tape that runs across the bottom of cable TV screens captures only the tiniest fraction of what occurs in the stock markets. The public reports of what happens inside the black boxes are fuzzy and unreliable—even an expert cannot say what exactly happens inside them, or when it happens, or why. The average investor has no hope of knowing, of course, even the little he needs to know. He logs on to his TD Ameritrade or E\*Trade or Schwab account, enters a ticker symbol of some stock, and clicks an icon that says “Buy”: Then what? He may think he knows what happens after he presses the key on his computer keyboard, but, trust me, he does not. If he did, he'd think twice before he pressed it.

“The world clings to its old mental picture of the stock market because it's comforting, because it's so hard to draw a picture of what has replaced it, and because the few people able to draw it for you have no interest in doing so.”

Apart from human interference, I don't know if those black boxes are bomb-proof though I am sure they are not glitch-proof ... and there are always sun flares ...

\* \* \* \* \*

February 13: Georges Simenon  
Judith Rodriguez  
Sir Joseph Banks  
February 14: Bruce Beaver  
February 15: Aidan De Brune (d)  
Bruce Dawe  
February 16: Peter Porter  
February 17: A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson  
Dorothy Canfield Fisher  
Mo Yan (Guan Moye)  
February 18: Toni Morrison  
February 19: Carson McCullers  
February 20: Mary Durack  
François Voltaire  
February 21: W. H. Auden  
February 22: Sean O'Faoláin  
Robert Baden-Powell  
February 23: Samuel Pepys  
February 24: George Moore  
Charles V  
February 25: Shiva Naipaul  
February 26: Victor Hugo  
Mabel Dodge Luhan  
February 27: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
February 28: Robin Klein  
February 29: Leap Year  
Howard Nemerov  
March 1: Lytton Strachey  
William Dean Howells

Henry Reynolds  
 March 2: Geoffrey Grigson  
 March 3: Arthur Machen  
         Manning Clark  
         Frank W. Boreham  
 March 4: Julia Cameron  
         Alan Sillitoe  
 March 5: Mem Fox  
 March 6: Elizabeth Barrett Browning  
 March 7: Ranulph Fiennes  
 March 8: Kenneth Grahame  
 March 9: David Garnett  
         Vita Sackville-West  
 March 10: Henry Watson Fowler  
 March 11: Rupert Murdoch  
 March 12: Jack Kerouac  
         Kylie Tennant  
 March 13: Hugh Walpole  
 March 14: Maxim Gorki  
 March 15: Elisee Reclus  
 March 16: Sully Prudhomme  
 March 17: Kate Greenaway  
 March 18: Wilfred Owen  
 March 19: Tobias George Smollett  
 March 20: David Malouf  
         Arthur Bayldon  
 March 21: Thomas Shapcott  
 March 22: James Patterson  
 March 23: John Bartram  
         Roger Martin du Gard

\* \* \* \* \*

If I am really looking for some of the world's best writing it would make sense to be looking to the various Nobel laureates. The other day I picked up a collection of three laureates, Boris Pasternak, Gabriela Mistral, and Roger Martin du Gard. I had never heard of French writer Martin du Gard.

He received his award in 1937 for his eight volume series *Les Thibault*; these were:

*Le Cahier gris,*  
*Le Pénitencier,*  
*La Belle Saison,*  
*La Consultation,*  
*La Sorellina,*  
*La Mort du père,*  
*L'Été* and  
*Épilogue.*

So that partly explains why I was not familiar with the writer or his writing. Some kind person first needed to translate his work.

But the book provided most of his earlier novel, *Jean Barois*. He was the son of a lawyer but sought to make his way as a writer. He was strongly influenced by Positivism which might help to explain why the 'hero' Jean Barois gradually rejects his Catholic upbringing. And in his

family the men become atheists while the women remain devoutly Catholic and deeply disturbed by their husbands' rejection of all they believe in. This leads Jean to abandon his wife and daughter and go to Paris where he helps found a free-thinking magazine called 'The Sower'. Of course there are still disagreements within this community. One disagreement is over the Dreyfus case. Some cannot believe that top military figures could forge letters and tell lies. Jean has no difficulty in believing in them as forgers. Dreyfus has been sent to Devil's Island and the book provides quite a detailed and interesting account of the second trial. Jean is pleased that their magazine is growing by leaps and bounds and he believes it will continue to grow in importance. But then he is riding in a cab and the horse bolts. As the cab crashes into another vehicle Barois believing he is about to die calls upon the Virgin Mary to save him. When he recovers he is horrified to remember that in such a moment he reverted to the superstitious beliefs of his childhood.

It is an odd book. It gives the impression Martin du Gard would much rather have written it as a play. He begins by setting the scene:

"The residence of Mme Barois at Buis-la-Dame, a small French country town some fifty miles north of Paris. The year is 1878.

"In Mme Barois' bedroom the curtains are drawn, and behind them the slats of the venetian blinds glimmer black and silver in the moonlight. The room is in darkness but for a pale sheen that floods the parquet, lighting up the hem of a woman's dress and a man's boot softly tapping the floor. There is the sound of two people breathing, two people watching, waiting ..."

And as each character is introduced we get a detailed description. For example. "Francois Cresteil d'Allize is a tall, slim man of twenty-eight. An exceptionally thin neck emphasizes the proud carriage of his head, a small head with a skull that bulges at the back. A short, triangular face, furrowed cheeks, a wrinkled forehead, gentle yet fervent eyes, a drooping brown moustache hiding a mouth with a disdainful curve, a vacillating, disillusioned smile. He has the commanding accent and bearing of a cavalry officer, and emphasizes his remarks with wide sweeps of his arms. Torn between the conservative principle of his upbringing and a passionate desire to emancipate his mind, he resigned his commission not long ago, cutting himself off from his family and breaking with the generations-old royalist and Catholic tradition of the House of Allize. Thus he has all the rankling bitterness of a recent escapee."

Despite his care in delineation the characters don't come alive because they are there to debate and question, not to live rounded lives.

“LUCÉ: ... Will you permit me to say quite frankly what I think?”

BAROIS: Why, certainly!

LUCÉ: I'm inclined to extend that reproach to all your group ... in particular to you.

BAROIS: Might I know why?

LUCÉ: In this your first number you've taken up an attitude that's forthright, courageous, but a shade—extremist, shall we say?

BAROIS: A fighting attitude.

LUCÉ: I'd approve of it wholeheartedly if it were merely combative. But it's *aggressive*. Don't you agree?

BAROIS: We're all of us enthusiastic, convinced of the truth of our ideas and ready to fight for them. I've no compunction about showing a certain—intolerance. ... I believe that any young, forceful theory of life is bound to be intolerant. A conviction which starts by admitting the possible legitimacy of convictions directly opposed to it is doomed to sterility. It has no driving force, no fixity of purpose.

LUCÉ: Yet surely what we should try to cultivate in men is a spirit of mutual forbearance; each of us has the right to be as he is, without his neighbor's forbidding him to be so, on the strength of his personal principles.

BAROIS: Yes, universal tolerance, freedom for all—it's admirable, in theory. But consider to what the smiling skepticism of the dilettante leads. Would the Church have the power it has in the social order of today, if—"

André Berne-Joffroy says of Martin du Gard, "It was as a novelist that Martin du Gard wished to succeed in life. The age of Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky had only just ended, and the novel was the major literary genre. Martin du Gard claimed Tolstoy as his model, but it has often been observed that in fact their novels have very little in common. Skeptical, organized, and coolly methodical, Martin du Gard could hardly produce the same impression of charm and mystical fervor as Tolstoy with his magnificent disorder. What Martin du Gard sought to emulate, perhaps, was Tolstoy's lack of affectation and his simplicity. Tolstoy's example also taught him not to be afraid of the commonplace, and was an enormous asset to a modern writer. But there was something more. Martin du Gard has explained that what he most envied in Tolstoy was the verisimilitude of his characters."

Perhaps this is something he too began to develop as he created the saga that made up his series of novels and led to his Nobel Prize.

\* \* \* \* \*

March 24: Olive Schreiner

March 25: Paul Scott

Mary Webb

Ann, Lady Fanshawe

March 26: A. E. Housman

March 27: Kenneth Slessor

March 28: Mario Vargas Llosa

March 29: Denton Welch

March 30: Sean O'Casey

David Henry Souter

March 31: Octavio Paz

April 1: Edgar Wallace

April 2: Kenneth Tynan

April 3: Reginald Hill

April 4: Robert Sherwood

April 5: Algernon Charles Swinburne

April 6: Frank Wilmot 'Furnley Maurice'

April 7: William Wordsworth

E. V. Timms

April 8: Ursula Curtiss

April 9: Cyril Pearl

April 10: William Hazlitt

\* \* \* \* \*

Bill Bryson wrote in *Notes from a Small Island*: "I took a cab to Hazlitt's Hotel on Frith Street. I like Hazlitt's because it's intentionally obscure – it doesn't even have a sign out front – which puts you in a rare position of strength with your cab driver. ... Hazlitt's is a nice hotel, but the thing I like about it is that it doesn't act like a hotel. It's been there for years, and the staff are friendly – always a novelty in a big city hotel – but they do manage to give the *slight* impression that they haven't been doing this for very long. ... It's called Hazlitt's because it was the home of the essayist, and all the bedrooms are named after his chums or women he shagged there or something. I confess that my mental note card for the old boy is a trifle sketchy. It reads:

Hazlitt (sp?), William (?), English (poss. Scottish?) essayist. Lived: before 1900. Most famous work: don't know. Quips, epigrams, bons mots: don't know. Other useful information: his house is now a hotel.

As always, I resolved to read up on Hazlitt some time to correct this gap in my knowledge and, as always, immediately forgot it.”

As he took it no further (and I am surprised the hotel was not plastered with little snippets about Hazlitt) I thought I might have a look myself. I knew Hazlitt wrote essays and that he had a long-running feud with a fellow writer, though I have forgotten who, but I could not answer Bryson’s questions.

In fact A. C. Grayling has written a biography of Hazlitt and given it the title *The Quarrel of the Age* and the sub-title *The Life and Times of William Hazlitt*. And he answers most of Bryson’s questions. Yes, he was English, son of a Unitarian minister also called William. Yes, he lived before 1900, in fact well before. He was a child of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Yes, he was best known for his essays, collected into books such *The Spirit of the Age* and *Table Talk*. Yes, he lived for a while in a house in Frith Street. And yes, he shagged a lot of women. In fact, his habit of going after women including prostitutes led to the ending of both his marriages. He divorced his first wife in the hope of marrying some one else—who decided she didn’t want to marry him. His second wife left him. So whether the rooms are named after the literary figures he knew or the women who were disappointed in him and he in them is something for a visitor to London to discover.

But what of his many often very public quarrels. I began to have the feeling that he quarreled with almost every one. With Wordsworth and Coleridge and Southey because he felt they had not stayed true to their radical ideas. But other people quarreled with him because they didn’t want things they had said and done in private made public in his essays.

Grayling obviously liked his subject enough to spend a great deal of time with him. But I must admit I didn’t share this liking. It is probably worth having a definitive biography as Hazlitt re-energised and re-popularised the essay as a productive and interesting literary form. But I would need to do much more reading in his essays to take that comment further.

He was not a comic writer but you might like his description of that “new-fangled dance” called ballet when he was in Paris. “The French Opera-dancers think it graceful to stand on one leg or on the points of their toes, or with one leg stretched out behind them, as if they were going to be shod, or to raise one foot at right angles with their bodies, and twirl themselves round like a *te-totum*, to see how long they can spin, and then stop short all of a sudden; or to skim along the ground, flat-footed, like a spider running along a cobweb, or to pop up and down like a pea on a tobacco-pipe, or to stick in their backs till another part projects out behind *comme des volails*, and to strut about like peacocks with infirm, vain-glorious steps, or to turn out their toes till their feet resemble apes, or to raise one foot about their heads, and turn swiftly round upon the other, till the petticoats of the female dancers (for I have been thinking of them) rise above their garters, and display a pair of spindleshanks, like the wooden ones of a wax-doll, just as shapeless and as tempting.”

\* \* \* \* \*

I suppose any old building in any old city runs the likelihood of having had someone interesting reside there. Robert Graves and Alan Hodge in *The Long Weekend*, looking at the London nightclub scene in the 1920s, say, “In 1921 she (Mrs. Kate Meyrick) had founded the famous ‘43’—at 43 Gerrard Street, where Dryden once lived. In her memoirs, *Secrets of the 43 Club* (1933), Mrs. Meyrick wrote: ‘I could picture the old poet so clearly sitting at his desk, with sheets of paper strewn around him and more lying about on the floor, his hand clasping his brow in the effort of thought. I could follow the shifting expressions of his long, mobile face with its noble forehead, its neat little Vandyke beard, and its frame of silky hair, once light brown, now transmuted by age into silver.’ Her visitors’ list was distinguished, for the times—Augustus John, Jacob Epstein, Joseph Conrad, J. B. Priestley, ‘June’, the actress, Carpentier, the boxer, and Jimmy White, the Lancashire millionaire, who one night brought six Daimlers full of show-

girls and ran a champagne party that cost £400. ‘Brilliant’ Chang’s dope-gang operated there—Chang himself was a member, and had a restaurant opposite. Mrs. Meyrick claims to have tried to stop Chang peddling in her clubs, but remained on friendly terms with him.”

What the ghost of Dryden thought as police raided the club and Mrs Meyrick later spent six months in Holloway Gaol can only be guessed at. But she bounced back, opening more clubs, though possibly in less historic premises. Perhaps Hazlitt was lucky to get a pleasantly modest little hotel.

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I also read *The Day-Star of Liberty: William Hazlitt’s Radical Style* by Tom Paulin who looked into the way he wrote his essays, sketches, and notes and placed them in the context of his era and his contemporaries, from Tom Paine to Sir Walter Scott, from Edmund Burke to William Wordsworth. Interesting as an over-view but I am afraid I just couldn’t get interested in William Hazlitt as either a writer or a man. This may be why Bill Bryson never got around to finding out the significance of William Hazlitt’s house-cum-hotel or ever filled in the gaps in that potted bio ...

\* \* \* \* \*

April 11: Bernard O’Dowd

April 12: Jack Hibberd

April 13: Seamus Heaney

Amanda Lohrey

April 14: Arnold Toynbee

April 15: Henry James

Émile Durkheim

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“Of all the domains in which I have traced the consequences of social capital, in none is the importance of social connectedness so well established as in the case of health and well-being. Scientific studies of the effects of social cohesion on physical and mental health can be traced to the seminal work of the nineteenth-century sociologist Émile Durkheim, *Suicide*. Self-destruction is not merely a personal tragedy, he found, but a sociologically predictable consequence of the degree to which one is integrated into society—rarer among married people, rarer in more tightly-knit religious communities, rarer in times of national unity, and more frequent when rapid social change disrupts the social fabric. Social connectedness matters to our lives in the most profound way.”

From *Bowling Alone* by Robert D. Putnam.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the profound ways in which social capital matters is for those who find themselves POWs. I had read years ago that Australian POWs on the Burma Railway survived in far greater numbers than Asians, including Indonesians and Malays, who ended up there. And the key ingredient was ‘organization’. Wilfred Burchett in *Passport* looked at the reasons Australian and British POWs coped better during the Korean War than American POWs. A Major Anderson “who was one of the very few Americans to do anything at all about their fellow-prisoners” believed that “a social sense, imparted by religion, would have helped to hold the men together, and above all would have reduced the high death rate” but Burchett does not believe this was a sufficient explanation. “Almost all the American POWs did belong to a religious group and like most Americans probably regularly attended church. Chaplains representing the main religions existed in every division and regiment. The real reason for this breakdown in ordinary norms of conduct, I believe, is in the American way of life itself and the rules that govern it. The real reason should be sought in the discrepancy between the moral principles taught in school and church and the ‘every man for himself’ code which is at the root of the extreme individualism of American society in action. Had the American POWs applied the precepts learned at school and church they would not have behaved as they did. But how can

religion serve when the ideal of ‘help thy neighbour’ learned on Sunday is translated in practice into ‘plunder thy neighbour’ for the other six days of the week?”

\* \* \* \* \*

I have just been reading *Durkheim* by Anthony Giddens in which he says of that famous book, “*The Rules* was followed in 1897 by *Suicide*, in which Durkheim undertook to demonstrate the usefulness of his notion of sociological method by applying it to a specific empirical subject-matter. He had previously published a statistical article on suicide, and had been working on the subject over a period of some ten years, concurrently with his other writings.”

Giddens says of the book that Durkheim worked from the proposition that “Every individual is born into a society which is already organized, and which thereby moulds his personal development” and so suicide “is a social fact, and has to be explained by means of other social facts.” “The suicide rate remains fairly stable in any given society from year to year (although occasionally there are sharp fluctuations and there are long-term trends that may be discerned in it). This stability affirms, according to Durkheim, that we are in the presence of a social fact.”

Durkheim used the idea of ‘social constraint’ and social cohesion to explain why there were more suicides in Protestant than Catholic communities, more suicides among unmarried rather than married people, and the more children in a family the less likelihood of parental suicide. And people working in agriculture were less likely to kill themselves than people working in commerce or industry. Although he was interested in psychology modern concerns such as depression and schizophrenia played little part in his thinking. Rather he looked to social factors such as economic instability, social disruption, changes in working conditions and the breakdown of moral obligations.

These are all important issues.

But his conclusions have since been queried. Giddens writes, “it seems appropriate to consider some of the failings of Durkheim’s theory of suicide” which he summarizes as “his dismissal of non-social influences on suicide; his reliance upon official suicide statistics in order to document his hypothesis and the form of his explanatory account of the causation of suicide.”

Obviously non-social factors like illness and alcoholism are important. And I would certainly endorse the query about statistics. Doctors put down things like heart failure, wasting, accidental death, and many other general terms because they either didn’t know what had happened or didn’t want to upset the family. Outside of cities autopsies were rare. Social cohesion in small villages could make honesty very difficult. Doctors either through incompetence or kindness could accidentally or deliberately miss key factors in a death. Suicides were sometimes assumed to be murders and vice versa. Trusting statistics is always risky. And the third query is also problematical, not least because Durkheim as a strong proponent of the idea of sociology was already subtly geared to the belief that the sociological method was the only method.

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April 16: Anatole France

April 17: Ian Hay

Isak Dinesen

Eliza Acton

April 18: Henry Clarence Kendall

April 19: Richard Hughes

April 20: Dinah Craik

April 21: Gilbert Frankau

April 22: Henry Fielding

April 23: William Shakespeare

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“The Guildhall—like most of the old buildings here—has many ancient relics to show, including the magnificent city insignia, and relics of the Battle of St. Vincent presented to the city by Lord Nelson; also (to come from the sublime to the ridiculous) here used to be shown the buskins worn by Will Kemp, the original Dogberry of *Much Ado About Nothing*—“Head Master of Morrice dancers, High Headborough of Leighs, and only tricker of your trill-lillies, and best bell-shangler, between Sion and Mount Surrey”—on his famous dance from London to Norwich in the year 1600. The story of that wonderful dance was set forth by the dancer himself in an entertaining pamphlet entitled *Kemp’s Nine Days’ Wonder*, towards the conclusion of which he says, “but now I return again to my jump, the measure of which is to be seen in the Guildhall at Norwich: where my buskins, that I then wore and danced in from London thither, stand, equally divided and nailed on the wall”.”

Walter Jerrold in *Norwich and the Broads*.

I am sure Will Kemp’s famous ‘dance’ soon became a story for the balladeers. It seems to lend itself to rhythm and rollicking rhyme. And indeed Alfred Noyes wrote in ‘The Companion of a Mile’:

“O, I knew him,—  
Will Kemp, the player, who danced from London town  
To Norwich in nine days and was proclaimed  
Freeman of Marchaunt Venturers and hedge-king  
Of English morrice-dancery for ever!  
His nine-day’s wonder through the country-side  
Was hawked by every ballad-monger.”

Noyes was famous for writing a poem about a highwayman but I wondered what else he might have written. The other day I came across two volumes of his poetry and his main focus it seemed was on the Elizabethan era. To introduce his poem ‘Blind Moone of London’ he writes “Dispersed through Shakespeare’s plays are innumerable little fragments of ballads, the entire copies of which could not be recovered. Many of them are of the most beautiful and pathetic simplicity.” Of course many ballads and ditties circulated without ever being written down while others were sold as a single sheet or incorporated into longer material such as plays. They were a kind of shared inheritance and I am sure the playwrights of the time often incorporated lines and verses which would have received an immediate response from their audience.

“Blind Moone of London  
He fiddled up and down,  
Thrice for an angel,  
And twice for a crown.  
He fiddled at the *Green Man*,  
He fiddled at the *Rose*;  
And where they have buried him  
Not a soul knows.

All his tunes are dead and gone, dead as yesterday.  
And his lanthorn flits no more  
Round the *Devil Tavern* door,  
Waiting till the gallants come, singing from the play;  
Waiting in the wet and cold!  
All his Whitsun tales are told.  
He is dead and gone, sirs, very far away.

He would not give a silver groat  
For good or evil weather.

He carried in his white cap  
A long red feather,  
He wore a long coat  
Of the Reading-tawny kind,  
And darned white hosen  
With a blue patch behind.

So—one night—he shuffled past, in his buckled shoon.  
We shall never see his face,  
Twisted to that queer grimace,  
Waiting in the wind and rain, till we called his tune;  
Very whimsical and white,  
Waiting on a blue Twelfth Night!  
He is grown too proud at last—old blind Moone.

Yet when May was at the door,  
And Moone was wont to sing,  
Many a maid and bachelor  
Whirled into the ring:  
Standing on a tilted wain  
He played so sweet and loud,  
The Mayor forgot his golden chain  
And jigged it with the crowd.

Old blind Moone, his fiddle scattered flowers along the street;  
Into the dust of Brookfield Fair  
Carried a shining primrose air,  
Crooning like a poor mad maid, O, very low and sweet,  
Drew us close, and held us bound,  
Then—to the tune of *Pedlar's Pound*,  
Caught us up, and whirled us round, a thousand frolic feet.

Master Shakespeare was his host,  
The tribe of Benjamin  
Used to call him Merlin's Ghost  
At the Mermaid Inn.  
He was only a crowder,  
Fiddling at the door.  
Death has made him prouder,—  
We shall not see him more.

Only—if you listen, please—through the master's themes,  
You shall hear a wizard strain,  
Blind and bright as wind and rain  
Shaken out of willow-trees, and shot with elfin gleams.  
*How should I your true love know?*  
Scraps and snatches—even so!  
That is old blind Moone again, fiddling in your dreams.

Once, when Will had called for sack

And bidden him up and play,  
Old blind Moone, he turned his back,  
Growled, and walked away,—  
Sailed into a thunder-cloud,  
Snapped his fiddle-string,  
And hobbled from *The Mermaid*  
Sulky as a king.

Only from the darkness now, steals the strain we knew:  
No one even knows his grave!  
Only here and there a stave,  
Out of all his hedgerow flock, be-drips the may with dew.  
And I know not what wild bird  
Carried us his parting word:—  
*Master Shakespeare needn't take the crowder's fiddle, too.*

Will has wealth and wealth to spare:  
Give him back his own.  
*At his head a grass-green turf,*  
*At his heels a stone.*  
See his little lanthorn-spark.  
Hear his ghostly tune,  
Glimmering past you, in the dark,  
Old blind Moone!

All the little crazy brooks, where love and sorrow run  
Crowned with sedge and singing wild,  
Like a sky-lark—or a child!—  
Old blind Moone he knew their springs, and played 'em every one;  
Stood there, in the darkness, blind,  
And sung them into Shakespeare's mind....

Old blind Moone of London, O now his songs are done,  
The light upon his lost white face, they say it was the sun!

The light upon his poor old face, they say it was the sun!"

It hints at an intriguing cross-fertilization but I don't know enough about Shakespeare or the popular ballads, songs, and riddles of his era to unpick what suggests a fascinating field of study. Perhaps someone else has done so?

And what of Noyes' other poems? When I came across a two-book set of his poems I thought I would answer my not-very-pressing question. The odd thing was that there was nothing else like that rollicking ballad among his many poems. I was at first disappointed. I did not really want to wade through historical dramas and slight poems about nature, I wanted to do some more rollicking. But then I thought 'Why should he go on writing poems about highwaymen or, indeed, any kind of ballad if he didn't want to?'

And some of his nature and landscape poems are attractive. Take for instance 'The Rock Pool' which begins—

Bright as a fallen fragment of the sky,  
Mid shell-encrusted rocks the sea-pool shone,



I certainly would not have picked up the significance of any of these, probably just putting it down to archaic conventions or different thought processes.

(David Daiches says of Nicholas Udall in *A Critical History of English Literature*: “Allegorical, biblical, and historical morality plays existed side by side in the middle of the sixteenth century. *Respublica*, perhaps by Nicholas Udall, was first performed in 1553; it mingles the older kind of religion with new political themes. A decade later, plays which handled biblical stories from a Protestant propagandist point of view (under the influence of Bale) seem to have been popular. At the same time classical influences were making themselves felt, providing new themes and a new sense of structure. Nicholas Udall, at one time headmaster of Eton and at the end of his life headmaster of Westminster, wrote *Ralph Roister Doister* about 1553, taking its theme from the *Miles Gloriosus* of the Roman playwright Plautus, thus bringing the braggart soldier for the first time into English drama. Roister Doister is the braggart who courts Dame Custance, a lady of some fortune already engaged to Gawin Goodluck. His servant Matthew Merrygreek is both the “parasite” of Latin comedy and the Vice of the morality plays. (The Vice in the moralities had long since developed into a clowning practical joker.) Roister Doister’s fatuous courtship, continually prompted but never really helped by Merrygreek, ends with his defeat at the hands of Dame Custance and her lively maids. Everything ends happily, with reconciliation all round. The plot is simple enough, but it does include a complication and a resolution and thus shows a firmer grasp on structure than had yet been displayed in an English comedy.”

And the DNB says Udall was born in Hampshire in 1505 and was sent to Winchester School and then to Oxford where he developed Lutheran sympathies. He began writing ballads, poems, pieces for pageants, and when he became principal of Eton he produced a Latin workbook for his students and translated Erasmus. He was sacked possibly for “unnatural crime” and became a clergyman which gave him more time to write. But *Ralph Roister Doister* is thought to have been written while he was at Eton. “The only extant play by Udall is ‘Ralph Roister Doister,’ a homely English comedy on the Latin model, which may have been originally written for performance by his pupils at Eton before 1541. A reference ... to a ballad-monger, Jack Raker, who is more than once mentioned by Skelton and is noticed in Udall’s play as a contemporary, and Ralph Roister Doister’s favourite form of oath, ‘by the armes of Caleys,’ suggests that the piece was originally composed in Henry VIII’s reign. It is in rhymed doggerel and is divided into five acts, each with numbered scenes ranging from four to eight. Besides songs which are interspersed through the text, four songs to be sung ‘by those which shall use this comedy’ are collected in an appendix. The story, which is crudely developed, deals with the unsuccessful efforts of the swaggering hero, Ralph Roister Doister, to win the hand of a wealthy widow, Dame Christian Custance. It is doubtful if the piece were printed in Udall’s lifetime.” And “ ‘Ralph Roister Doister’ enjoys the distinction of being the earliest English comedy known, and, in the capacity of its author, Udall is universally recognised as one of the most notable pioneers in the history of English dramatic literature.”)

But, in fact, people still play with grammar and word order. Take this exercise in *Grammar for Grown-Ups* by Katherine Fry and Rowena Kirton:

“An English lecturer wrote the words ‘A woman without her man is nothing’ on the blackboard and asked the students to punctuate it correctly.

All the men in the class wrote: ‘A woman, without her man, is nothing.’

All the women in the class wrote: ‘A woman: without her, man is nothing.’

... which is why punctuation is important.”

And perhaps more fun to play with than I had previously considered! Though I don’t think Shakespeare spent long hours, like Oscar Wilde, pondering over where to put a comma. Just as I don’t think he felt a need to ask whether the materials he was using as background for his ‘historical’ plays was actually correct.

Someone had taken several pages out of an old encyclopaedia and while I was going through it to see what its significance might be I came upon this entry: “Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1100-54), English chronicler best known for his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain). Based on Latin manuscripts, Welsh genealogies and oral tradition, it is primarily a fictional account but was accepted as a historical document until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It directly inspired Shakespeare’s great tragedy, *King Lear*, and also his late play, *Cymbeline*, and was translated into many languages.” Strictly speaking it was Holinshed who used Geoffrey’s book and Shakespeare then took it from Holinshed.

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April 24: Matthieu Joseph Bonaventure Orfila

April 25: Walter de la Mare

Eric Rolls

Anonymous

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Strictly speaking the writing done by enlisted men was not anonymous. It was credited to their service number. But except for close family it was anonymous so far as the reading public was concerned.

I found these poems in *Khaki and Green: With the Australian Army at Home and Overseas*, AWM 1943 and I can imagine people enjoying them. Perhaps it encouraged people in the belief that life in the army wasn’t too bad if the men had the time and the opportunity to sit down and toss off a few poems. But it might also have been light relief for the men facing mosquitoes, leeches, crocodiles, unrelenting humidity, weariness, enemy snipers ...

‘Song of the Censor’

We are the censors, official condensers,  
Calling the bluff and reducing the stuff,  
Using our might on the letters you write;  
We cut them up ... We cut them up.

You may have a code to reveal your abode,  
But no indications of hidden locations  
Can hope to evade our keen razor blade;  
We cut them up ... We cut them up.

Your suppressed desires light amorous fires  
And crosses are kisses for madams and misses,  
But we are above all feelings of love;  
We cut them up ... We cut them up.

Your verbal evasions, concealing occasions  
When connubial bliss has scored a near miss  
Are silly excuses which laughter induces;  
We cut them up ... We cut them up.

We cannot conceive your longings for leave;  
Your mad desperation through long separation  
And hopes for permission to visit your “Vision”;  
We cut them up ... We cut them up.

But the final laugh’s on the censor staff,  
For it nothing avails if the *incoming* mails



When the mind stabbed guesses at meaning  
And the corridors of thought led back,  
When from the giggling intimacy  
Of mutilation a pattern of reason  
Had to be woven and the hysterical  
Decibels of terror governed to sanity.

So men laughed...

Only...sometimes...the dying  
Was easier than the laughing.

'I Have Seen Men Laugh' by QX6905.

'Mike—The Malaria Mo-skeeter'  
In tropical regions, there's "mozzies" in legions  
But none causes havoc completer  
Than one little devil who's not on the level,  
It's Mike, the Malaria Mo-skeeter.

With no foe or ally is Mike ever pally,  
His aim is to be a world beater;  
For Tojo and Aussie's the same to this mozzie,  
To Mike, the Malaria Mo-skeeter.

The world's aviation has yet no creation  
Like Mike in his striped single-seater.  
Bad trouble is comin' when you hear the hummin'  
Of Mike, the Malaria Mo-skeeter.

He sure is a glutton and he won't eat mutton—  
No sir—nor is Mike a befeater.  
For Mike likes consumin' the blood of a human,  
Does Mike, the Malaria Mo-skeeter.

So please heed my warning, at sundown or dawning,  
Altho' you may dwell in a heater,  
Just keep yourself covered, lest you be discovered  
By Mike, the Malaria Mo-skeeter.

In time's smallest fraction you'll be out of action  
If once he injects his saltpetre.  
The world's greatest vermin is not Jap or German,  
It's Mike, the Malaria Mo-skeeter.

NX116478

It is odd that insects should lend themselves to poetry and to humour. But here is one by Bruce Dawe that I enjoyed ...

A black cloud lies over Millmerran,  
Eastward the eye can see  
Not a solitary sign of existence—  
O bring back Toowoomba to me!

A stranger came by here last Tuesday,

A fear-driven look in his eye.  
When I asked him from what he was fleeing,  
‘I flee, sir,’ he said, ‘from the fly!’

‘I’ve fought the Wandoan mosquito,  
Knee-deep in dead corpses I’ve stood,  
Mt Lamington leeches have left me  
Down to my last pint of blood.

‘I’ve been stung by the Mungallala bull-ant  
More times than I care to repeat,  
The Great Northern Tree-Crab has nipped me  
And practically severed both feet.

‘But these, I aver, are mere child’s play  
Compared to the flies you may meet  
In the wilds of the new Civic Centre,  
The back-blocks of Margaret Street.

‘At some city hotels I’ve seen them  
On pay-day in great droves appear,  
And stand there ten-deep on the bar-top  
To beat a slow man to his beer!

‘But what really makes a man ropeable,  
What makes a man really upset  
Is the way they say ‘Cheers!’ to each other  
Before quenching their thirst in your sweat!’  
‘Under a Cloud’ by Bruce Dawe

A later AWM publication *Stand Easy: After the Defeat of Japan, 1945* gave me some more poems—

No mail.  
The answer comes each day  
and you, quiet, turn away,  
knowing that that is that  
and nothing can be done.

You write.  
Letters into limbo,  
composing thoughts, feeling,  
black words on white paper,  
a man’s life in his own mind  
committed to actuality  
on foolscap and envelope,  
postage threepence.

You write.  
Letters posted into blankness  
south through the sky,  
taking you,

man living, man thinking, man feeling,  
in an air-mail envelope  
south to a silence  
that gives no response,  
just accepting, not commenting,  
void as the sky it cleaves.

You write.  
And a man gets lonely,  
lonely in the wide plains of his mind,  
his thoughts sapping, dimming,  
memories growing weak without sustenance,  
waiting, expectant,  
for the rejuvenating answer:  
some incident, word, caress,  
revived  
to keep his mind alive  
here in this life-swamp  
where there is but one answer  
to one question:  
No mail.

‘The Days Are Empty’ NX15943

Just an old pair of boots that are worn and thin,  
Broken and gone to the pack.  
Discoloured and wrinkled and down at the heels,  
Just as I brought them back.  
From the roads that are white in the setting sun  
And white in the rising moon,  
And the tracks that lead to a Timor beach  
Or the banks of a blue lagoon.

They carried me over the desert sand  
Where the ibis and emu play,  
And they took me over a winding trail  
Through the swamps of Francis Bay.  
And the Arafura Sea was blue  
As we marched through a cheering town,  
And they hurried me over the shell-scarred earth  
As the screaming bombs came down.

Now they’re worn and old but I keep them still,  
Away with my souvenirs,  
Polished and clean as they always were  
In my Active Service years.  
Discoloured and broken and wrinkled and old,  
They’ll carry my thoughts again  
Over and over the same old roads  
That were trod by the feet of MEN.

‘Boots, Troops, For the Use Of’ N101216



May 3: Niccolo Machiavelli

Jaron Lanier

May 4: William Hickling Prescott

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The records of the Athenaeum Library in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century show its most popular author as Sir Walter Scott, others were well-known such as Dickens, Washington Irving, Harriet Beecher Stowe, as well as heavyweights like Thackeray and Longfellow. There was also according to Peter Macinnis in *Mr Darwin's incredible shrinking World*, “ ‘Prescott the historian’ (probably William Hickling Prescott, who died in 1859),” and people I had never heard of. Who for example, was Mrs Hentz and what did she write to put her in as a best-selling author of her time?

“William Prescott (1796 – 1859); While joking with other students in the Harvard Commons, Prescott was hit in the eye by a hard crust of bread and blinded. This did not stop him from becoming a writer. Able to use only one eye for brief periods, he would sit in a darkened room and jot down notes with a special writing apparatus called a noctograph while his assistant read books and historical records aloud to him. The notes were then read back to him as he arranged them in his head before dictating his work in progress. Prescott trained himself to retain some 60 printed pages of notes (25,000 or so words) at a time. He wrote most of his great histories in this manner.”

From *American Literary Anecdotes* by Robert Hendrikson.

\*

Cullen Murphy wrote in *God's Jury: The Inquisition and the Making of the Modern World*, “To begin with, the notion of “the Inquisition” as a monolithic force with a directed intelligence—“an eye that never slumbered,” as the historian William H. Prescott once phrased it—is no longer tenable. Rather, it was an enterprise that varied in virulence and competence from place to place and era to era.”

He says the Inquisition Archives, partially opened in 1998, are presided over by “Monsignor Alejandro Cifres Giménez, fifty-one, a diminutive Spaniard from Valencia (the city where, as it happens, the Spanish Inquisition's last execution took place). Cifres is mild-mannered, genial, and competent. He sometimes displays a dry sense of humor. When I asked him whether the magazine I work for was being considered for papal condemnation, he said, “Not yet.” He listens to country-and-western music, has a CD player in his car, and once revealed that among his favorite movies is *Happy, Texas*, a comedy about convicts on the lam who disguise themselves as gay beauty-pageant coaches, which would probably have earned two thumbs down from the Papal Index. Cifres is not a historian. He is by training a theologian, and also a certified archivist and paleographer. He was brought to the Archivio to be an administrator, his superiors recognizing that the superannuated clerics who had long overseen the Inquisition's documents were not what an open archive demanded. Cifres obeyed the orders of his bishop and came to work at the Congregation, and directly for Josef Ratzinger.” And, “The Archivio consists essentially of two parts. One is the historical archive, the Stanza Storica, which contains the old files of the Congregations of the Inquisition, the Holy Office, and the Index. But the Congregation is also a living administrative entity — it does Church business and generates paperwork every day, which becomes part of the active archive.”

So clearly William Prescott writing in the mid-nineteenth century, did not have access to these archives. There were essentially three Inquisitions, the early inquisition against ‘heretical’ sects such as the Cathars, the Spanish Inquisition which was also exported to its colonies in the Americas, and the Roman Inquisition. In theory the Pope, the ‘eye that never slumbered’, was aware of what was being done in the church's name. In practice this simply wasn't so. Nor in the days of poor communications and powerful monarchs could it ever have been so.

“Sitting behind his desk, in Roman collar and black, short-sleeved clerical shirt, Cifres tried to convey a sense of how complicated his position is. To begin with, money is tight. In earlier times, the Inquisition could rely on a certain amount of revenue from confiscations (though not nearly as much, historians say, as has sometimes been alleged). Confiscation, happily, is no longer an option. Cifres had created a Friends of the Inquisition Archives program — Tabularii Amicorum Consociato, to give it the official name — to raise money from private donations. He also charges a modest fee for use of the Archivio. He did not mention plans for a gift shop.” Yes, I can see that it would take dedication to the idea of the value of archives to get people to donate.

The Index which banned books has understandably been given a bad name but Murphy points out that it wasn't all-powerful. Its personnel rarely spoke languages other than Latin and its descendants, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, etc. Books published in English, German, Dutch and more exotic languages usually went unmolested. And with the arrival of the printing press the numbers of books exploded but the number of censors remained largely unchanged. They simply couldn't read every new publication. They tended to look at high-profile publications—and I was surprised to learn that one of these high-profile writers was Graham Greene. I had thought that he was a ‘darling’ of the church, a well-known convert, but the little gnomes in Rome objected to his *The Power and the Glory*. Why? The two Vatican censors “found the book “paradoxical,” a work that troubled “the spirit of calm that should prevail in a Christian.” They noted the author’s “abnormal propensity toward...situations in which one kind of sexual immorality or another plays a role.” And they did not care for a sardonic remark by one character in the book: “It is good to see a priest with a conscience.” The censors considered putting the book on the Index (it had already been banned in Ireland), but in the end recommended that someone in authority, perhaps Cardinal Bernard Griffin, the archbishop of London, give Greene a dressing-down and a warning.” Another Vatican official disagreed saying, “great writers are the real pilots of much of mankind, and when the Lord, in his mercy, sends us one, even if he is a nuisance, let’s not make a Jonah of him; let’s not throw him to the fishes” but his letter came too late; Cardinal Griffin had already given Greene his ‘dressing-down’. “Griffin also preached from the pulpit about the failings of Catholic novelists. The matter was left at that, with no further condemnation. There survives in the record a somewhat toadying letter from Greene to Cardinal Giuseppe Pizzardo, the secretary of the Holy Office. “I wish to emphasize,” Greene wrote, “that, throughout my life as a Catholic, I have never ceased to feel deep sentiments of personal attachment to the Vicar of Christ, fostered in particular by admiration for the wisdom with which the Holy Father has constantly guided God’s Church.” ”

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A different writer, Peter Stanford, went looking in the Vatican archives in a different quest—to find the truth about Pope Joan—but the archives were little help. The Catholic Church does not admit to a female pope. Instead he trolled through a huge range of writings down the centuries. Most writers on Pope Joan were male until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then people like the feminist historian Joan Morris became interested. Stanford says her father was Plymouth Brethren before renouncing his faith and her aunt was Phyllis Morris “the woman credited as the model for Cruella de Ville in *101 Dalmations*” and that Joan Morris began by decorating churches but that “the greater part of her life was dedicated to investigating the role of women in the early church. She published one well-received book, *The Lady Was a Bishop* in 1973, examining in minute detail the quasi-episcopal role of some abbesses as late as the high medieval period.” Then she turned to the search for Pope Joan but was unable to prove her existence beyond all argument. Stanford found some of her papers in the “Fawcett Library at London’s Guildhall University, a neglected though fascinating collection of suffragist literature dating back to the early years of the twentieth century.”

Stanford in *The She-Pope* cleared away some misconceptions for me. I had thought that no one could come up through the church hierarchy as a woman without being found out. But in

fact there were no cardinals in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and men as young as eighteen had become Pope. Popes were ushered in either by family influence (all those mysterious ‘nephews’ perhaps) or by public acclaim. Even so in those Dark Age years privacy was not high on the agenda. Many people I feel sure knew Joan was a woman. So why would men have connived in her elevation, regardless of how pious, clever, or well-educated she was?

Stanford mentions something I hadn’t known. “The Rome that greeted Joan in the late 840s was still recovering from a brush with Islam. In 846 the Saracens had attacked Rome from the sea and looted the city at their leisure. Churches were stripped of their riches. The interlopers carried off the offerings of eastern and western rulers over a period of five centuries – statues, altar pieces, candelabra, gold and silver, paintings. The Saracens had targeted the suburb on the slopes of the Vatican Hill. Its focal point, the Basilica of Saint Peter, was ransacked for its lavish ornaments and the saint’s tomb attacked with its macabre contents scattered.” I have noticed that in unsettled times there is the habit of putting forward people to try and restore calm, prosperity, and safety who are either strong, competent, well-respected and capable—or people who will be a handy scapegoat if it proves impossible to swiftly restore people’s confidence, hope, and faith. Regardless of which kind Joan may have been I suspect that her colleagues were well aware of her sex but for the sake of the wider public she essentially became a man with all the male accoutrements of other Popes. She is said to have been found out because she had a baby in the street and that ‘the people’ stoned her to death. There is mystery in this in that some accounts say the new-born baby also died and others that he grew up to become a bishop. But was Pope Joan set upon because she and her colleagues had tried to deceive the ordinary people who respected, even revered, their religious leaders—and her deception was more blatant than that of many Popes with their secret mistresses and unacknowledged children?

I found this in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: “The first encyclopedia compiled entirely by a woman was the 12<sup>th</sup>-century *Hortus deliciarum (Garden of Delights)* by the Abbess of Herrad, who died in 1195. Handwritten, the manuscript is beautifully illustrated with 636 miniature drawings that were added especially to edify the nuns in her charge.”

Herrad of Langsberg was born in Alsace in 1130 and became abbess of the Abbey of Hohenburg. Then there was Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, and Bridget the Irishwoman who is thought to have become a bishop; these, and many other women wielded influence in the early church. And, after all, it takes as much skill and authority to run a convent as to run a monastery. Pope Joan is certainly possible.

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You may be wondering who that mysterious Mrs Hentz was. Caroline Lee Hentz wrote a best-seller, *The Planter’s Northern Bride*, in which the slaves are happy and slavery is a humane institution. She was a Southern writer and apparently wrote it to rebut the picture painted in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. It too became a best seller but it begs the question: did northern readers devour Stowe’s work while southern readers reveled in Hentz’s book—or was there an overlap of readers?

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And Prescott’s histories *were* ‘great histories’ and more so now that I know how hard it was for him to research and write them. My grandmother brought most of them with her to Australia in 1922. (Her mother sent her the 3 volumes of *The Conquest of Peru* in 1934 along with *Charles the Fifth*.) I wonder if she got tired of lugging them around country Queensland or whether she reveled in their drama and the sense of distant worlds, remote from a small dairy farm? Or whether she, like Prescott, was interested in Spanish history?

These twelve were:

*History of the Conquest of Peru* in 3 volumes

*History of the Conquest of Mexico* in 2 volumes

*History of the Reign of Phillip the Second* in 2 of the original 3 volumes

*History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella* in 3 volumes

*History of the Reign of Charles the Fifth* in 2 volumes but this unexpectedly was by William Robertson DD with Prescott writing an account of *The Emperor's Life after his Abdication*. So I wondered if Robertson died while writing or the two men had collaborated ...

But to my surprise I found that William Robertson was a Scot who never visited the Americas. He was minister at Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh and head of the University there. He also wrote a number of histories including *The History of Scotland* and *The History of America*. I like the confidence expressed in 'The'. But Spanish America was a particular interest of his and he saw himself as bringing its history to English-speaking readers. And in 1769 he brought out his 4 volumes of *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V, with a View of the Progress of Society in Europe*. This therefore was published before William Prescott was even a twinkle in his parents' eyes. So did Prescott feel that he needed to finish off the history begun by Robertson?

In fact, Prescott wrote in 1856, "The life of Charles V. subsequently to his abdication is disposed of by Dr. Robertson in some six or seven pages. It did not, in truth, come strictly within the author's plan, which proposed only a history of the reign of the emperor. But unfortunately these few pages contain many inaccuracies, and, among others, a very erroneous view of the interest which Charles, in his retirement, took in the concerns of the government. Yet it would be unjust to impute these inaccuracies to want of care in the historian, since he had no access to such authentic sources of information as would have enabled him to correct them. Such information was to be derived from documents in the archives of Simancas, consisting, among other things, of the original correspondence of the emperor and his household, and showing conclusively that the monarch, instead of remaining dead to the world in his retreat, took, not merely an interest, but a decided part, in the management of affairs. But in Robertson's day, Simancas was closed against the native as well as the foreigner; and it is not until within a few years that the scholar has been permitted to enter its dusty recesses, and draw thence materials to illustrate the national history. It is particularly rich in materials for the illustration of Charles V.'s life after his abdication." He goes on to say that the publishers asked him to write an account of the emperor's monastic life after his abdication "and I may express the hope that I have executed the task in such a manner as to satisfy any curiosity which, after perusing the narrative of the illustrious Scottish historian, they may naturally feel respecting the closing scenes in the life of the great emperor."

It was kind of Prescott to call Dr Robertson 'illustrious'. In fact Robertson begins his history of Charles with the Fall of Rome. He then wanders through ten centuries of European history and I was beginning to wonder if we would ever get to Charles. Finally, on page 151, he writes, "Charles V. was born at Ghent on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of February, in the year 1500. His father, Philip the Handsome, archduke of Austria, was the son of the emperor Maximilian, and of Mary, the only child of Charles the Bold, the last prince of the house of Burgundy. His mother Joanna, was the second daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon, and of Isabella queen of Castile."

But this did not mean that the focus was now on Charles. Robertson wanders away again into aspects of European history, the conflict between England and France, the life of Luther, the Ottoman Turks' takeover of Rhodes and their invasion of Eastern Europe, North African piracy in the Mediterranean ... and Charles is a kind of shadow who occasionally emerges to fight a war, and be seen as rigid and uncompromising, before disappearing again. It was not my idea of a good history and I think Robertson should have called his book *European History Occasionally Mentioning Charles V*.

So it is a pleasure to turn to William Prescott who keeps his key figure firmly in the foreground. He writes of Charles' decision to abdicate in favour of his son Philip II (he who married Queen Mary, daughter of Henry VIII) and retire to the monastery of St Jerome at Yuste, "How Charles came to choose this secluded spot in Estremadura as the place of his retreat is not very clear. There is no evidence that he had ever seen it." The order of St Jerome was a Spanish order His health was not good and the order made no claim to provide medical care although

they could provide some peace and tranquility. Though as he brought a retinue of one hundred and fifty to Spain “of whom somewhat more than a third were to remain with him at Yuste. Among the number were his major-domo, his physician, his secretaries, his chamberlains, and other functionaries, intimating that, though he had chosen a monastery as the place of his residence, he had no intention of leading the life of a monk.” And the monks must have felt that peace and tranquility were no longer an aspect of their monastery. Charles also brought with him his famous appetite for food and drink. “Unfortunately, his position enabled him too easily to obtain a dispensation from those fasts of the Church which might otherwise have stood him in good stead. In the end came the usual heavy reckoning for such indulgence. He was tormented with indigestion, bile, gout, and various other maladies that flesh—especially when high-fed and over-fed—is heir to. The gout was the most formidable of his foes. Its attacks were incessant. The man who had followed the chase without fatigue among the roughest passes of the Alpujarras, who had kept the saddle day and night in his campaigns, and had been esteemed one of the best jousts in Europe, was obliged at length, whenever he travelled, to be borne in a litter, like a poor cripple.”

He might be retired but he kept a close watch on European affairs, advising his son regularly, and regularly receiving visits from his sisters, Mary Queen Dowager of Hungary and Eleanor Queen Dowager of France, as well as other important figures. He had a place built for himself and his retinue at Yuste which was relatively simple, with relatively simple furnishings, only relative, adorned with paintings but without a library. “Charles had brought but a meagre array of books to adorn his shelves at Yuste. He was never a great reader. His life had been too busy to allow the leisure for it. It was his misfortune in his youth not to have acquired a fondness for books,—that best source of enjoyment in prosperity, as it is the unfailing solace in the hour of trouble. ... Charles’s whole library did not exceed thirty-one volumes. These were mostly of a religious character, as psalters, missals, breviaries, commentaries on the Scriptures, and the Meditations of St. Augustine. Of the Consolations of Boethius,—a work once so popular,—there were copies in three different languages. He had a few scientific works, among them the *Almagesta* of Ptolemy, which contained whatever was known, or rather not known, of astronomy in that day.” It is nice to think when I look over my little bookshelf that I have more books than the Emperor Charles V.

And it was here he died on the 21st of September in 1558. Among his possessions were his one-eyed horse, “an Indian cat, and a parrot possessed of wonderful gifts in the way of talking, great pets of Charles, with which he had been accustomed to amuse his leisure hours.” His body was eventually taken for burial in the Escorial when it was finished. Philip also took the monks’ treasured possession, Titian’s ‘*Last Judgment*’, which Charles had hung in their chapel. “The king replaced it by a faithful copy, to be hung over the high altar of the chapel, which several years later was embellished with some rich decorations by the hand of Herrera, the principal architect of the Escorial.”

And the monastery remained at Yuste until 1810 when some French soldiers burnt it down. Prescott writes, “Without, the touch of decay is on everything. The church still stands; but the delicately-carved wood-work of the choir, and the beautiful tiles that adorn the walls, have fallen from their places, or been torn away by the hand of violence. All around, the ground is covered with the wreck of former splendours,—with fallen columns and shattered arches; while the black and scathed walls of the older cloister still tower in gloomy grandeur above the scene of desolation. Yet even here kind Nature has been busy, as usual, in covering up the ravages of time and violence,—spreading over them her rich embroidery of wild-flowers, and clothing the ghastly skeleton in a robe of beauty.

“Yuste lives only in the memory of the past. Already her name begins to disappear from the map. But she will ever hold her place in history; and travellers from many a distant clime shall long repair to the memorable spot where, withdrawn from the turmoil of the world, lived and died the greatest monarch of the sixteenth century.”

\* \* \* \* \*

May 5: Karl Marx  
May 6: Sigmund Freud  
May 7: Robert Browning  
    Angela Carter  
May 8: Sloan Wilson  
May 9: Patricia Cornwell  
May 10: Olaf Stapledon  
    Jimmy (James Charles) Bancks  
May 11: Eric Burdon  
    Camilo José Cela  
May 12: Edward Lear  
May 13: Daphne du Maurier  
May 14: Richard Deacon  
    Peter Harris  
May 15: Edwin Muir  
    L. Frank Baum  
    Xavier Herbert  
    Ursula Graham Bower

\* \* \* \* \*

“Industrial society creates many myths of its own: the Wizard of Oz story was originally a parable about the American Populist movement of the 1890s – the scarecrow (a symbol for mid-western farmers) and the tin man (urban industrial workers) form an alliance with a cowardly lion who roars but can do little else (William Jennings Bryan, the 1896 Populist Presidential candidate); they travel down the yellow brick road that leads nowhere (the gold standard – the issue on which Bryan narrowly lost the election) to Emerald City (Washington) seeking favours from the Wizard of Oz (the President) who turns out to be nothing but a carnival balloonist (i.e. full of hot air) who can be exposed if confronted directly, as Dorothy or Everyman is first to see; meanwhile they are pursued by the Wicked Witch of the West (the increasingly powerful monopoly industrial corporations) who has enslaved the Munchkin people and put a spell on the tin woodsman, a once independent artisan who is now forced to work like a machine. Oz, by the way, is the abbreviation for ounce, the standard measure for gold. The message of this parable is a radical one which survives even in the ever-popular Hollywood version: the powers-that-be survive by deception; but with intelligence, courage and affection for each other, grassroots political movements can work.”

Keith Windschuttle in *The Media*.

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Brian Luke in *Brutal: Manhood and the Exploitation of Animals* writes, “In his novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Arthur Conan Doyle tells a story concerning a cruel nobleman named Hugo Baskerville. Hugo desired a neighboring woman who consistently avoided him. One night he and his companions kidnapped her and locked her in an upstairs room in Baskerville Hall. She escaped by climbing down the ivy on the outside wall:

Some little time later Hugo left his guests to carry food and drink—with other worse things, perchance—to his captive, and so found the cage empty and the bird escaped. Then, as it would seem, he became as one that hath a devil.... And while the revellers stood aghast at the fury of the man, one more wicked or, it may be, more drunken than the rest, cried out that they should put the hounds upon her. Whereat Hugo ran from the house, crying to his grooms that they should saddle his mare and unkennel the pack, and giving the hounds a kerchief of the maid’s, he swung them to the line, and so off full cry in the moonlight over the moor.

The woman ultimately died of fear and fatigue, and Hugo himself had his throat torn out by a mysterious large black beast, the “hound of the Baskervilles.”

In linking hunting with men’s predatory sexuality, Doyle’s imagination reflects reality. From the perspective of the man hunting with hounds, the chase is hot, charged with phallic sexuality:

(Of course Doyle did not use explicit sexual imagery so Luke turns to these words of Ortega y Gasset in *Meditations on Hunting*.)

The sudden immersion in the countryside has numbed and annulled him. ... But here they come, here comes the pack, and instantly the whole horizon is charged with a strange electricity; it begins to move, to stretch elastically. Suddenly the orgiastic element shoots forth, the dionysiac, which flows and boils in the depths of all hunting... There is a universal vibration. Things that before were inert and flaccid have suddenly grown nerves, and they gesticulate, announce, foretell. There it is, there’s the pack!”

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Reading books not as stories, as entertainment, but as allegories and symbols is always popular. In *John Sutherland The Literary Detective: 100 Puzzles in Classic Fiction* I came upon this re-reading of *Black Beauty*. He calls his piece ‘Is Black Beauty gelded?’ Well, most foals were unless they were thoroughbreds or specifically chosen for breeding. But he sees this as referring to the reason for controlling the sexual urges of horses. “As a treatise on what Carlyle called ‘servantship’, *Black Beauty* makes a plea on two fronts as to what ‘reasonable’ treatment by masters should be. It can be summed up as: don’t treat your horses like beasts, don’t treat your servants like slaves.” Sewell dwells on the way that horses don’t get to have relationships, aren’t family units to be respected, “But the insidious effects of ‘service’ on the human family members employed in middle-class houses clearly worried her, as it worried other *bien pensant* mistresses.”

Men servants could not be gelded like horses, although it was seemingly acceptable for wealthy young masters to rape and seduce and coerce female servants while male servants were expected to have will power. *Black Beauty* is a model of good (male) behaviour. “Is *Black Beauty* gelded? Yes (in so far as he is a four-legged servant) and no (in so far as he represents the two-legged class of servant). Self-control will answer.”

I am not sure that I would suggest that kind of reading to the children who still enjoy the story of *Black Beauty* ...

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And speaking of stories for children ...

Molly Caldwell Crosby wrote in *Asleep: The Forgotten Epidemic That Remains One of Medicine’s Greatest Mysteries* “Working with the Ministry of Health, the British physicians pulled old medical files, books, and published papers to search for information; they reviewed historical documents. Eventually, they traced cases of unexplained sleep as far back as 1657 in Copenhagen, 1658 and 1661 in England, and 1775 in London. In fact, those three epidemics of sleeping sickness during the seventeenth century may well have been the inspiration for one of our most famous fairy tales: “*Sleeping Beauty*,” published in 1697. Likewise, Washington Irving wrote “*Rip Van Winkle*” while he was living in England in 1819, and it, too, is the story of someone awakened after years of sleep. The mid-1800s in Germany, physicians reported, seemed particularly rife with paralysis or coma caused by fevers. It was around that time that Edgar Allan Poe wrote two of his most haunting tales. In both stories, a character falls in and out of a catatonic, “death-like” trance from which he cannot be awakened, and Poe plays on one of society’s greatest fears at the time. One short story was “*The Fall of the House of Usher*”; the other was suitably titled “*The Premature Burial*.” ” This mysterious illness was *encephalitis lethargica* where the brain swells and interferes with the sleep centre in the brain ... sufferers

may go to sleep for extended periods, weeks, months, longer, or they may not be able to get to sleep at all ...

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If stories encapsulate such details or allegorise them or steep the outward story in inward symbols, then writers are also influenced by the writers who have come before them. And sometimes make use of their ideas and symbols and ways of reading their world ...

“—novels often seem bound up with particular moments in the history of society. We are none the less concerned with a specific art: Proust read Flaubert; Flaubert read Balzac. The works of Stendahl, James Joyce, Kafka and Faulkner have been points of reference, if not models, for whole generations of writers.”

*Fictions: The Novel and Social Reality* by Michel Zekaffa.

But Kathryn Harkup in writing *Making the Monster: The Science Behind Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* looks at different influences of the time. The late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were a ferment of ideas and experimentation. Could body parts be transferred? Could electricity reanimate a dead body? We can't be exactly sure what books and papers she had read, what experiments she had seen, what ideas she had heard talked about. But her scientist and his creation undoubtedly drew upon the ideas and new discoveries swirling around.

It wasn't easy to get body parts in the years before people got around to donating their bodies to science. Hence the fears that many people had of their bodies being dug up after burial. I remember coming on the will of Sarah McCarty, the sister of a gr-gr-gr-gr-grandfather of mine. In it she stipulates that she is not to be buried until her body has started to decay. I assumed this was from fear of being buried alive but perhaps, too, it was to deter the body snatchers. They wanted their bodies 'fresh'.

Harkup writes, “However, not everyone was convinced by the promise of the new scientific movement and many continued to see alchemy as a viable method for investigating the unseen and the unusual, something that the Age of Reason did not offer. Late eighteenth-century supporters of alchemy criticised the ‘idolatry of reason’ and what they considered to be the excesses of the Enlightenment. This is in part what led to the Romantic movement and the anti-establishment reaction against a mechanical, all-powerful, rational world. It is this conflict of philosophical views that is played out so well in *Frankenstein*.”

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Some connections would never occur to me but people of the time undoubtedly read things in to particular bits of writing. For instance, I came upon Jonathon Swift's story ‘The Spider and the Bee’:

“Upon the highest corner of a large window there dwelt a certain spider, swollen up to the first magnitude by the destruction of infinite numbers of flies whose spoils lay scattered before the gates of his palace, like human bones before the cave of some giant. The avenues to his castle were hoarded with turnpikes and palisades, all after the modern way of fortification. After you had passed several courts you came to the centre, wherein you might behold the constable himself in his own lodgings, which had windows fronting to each avenue, and ports to sally out upon all occasions of prey or defence. In this mansion he had for some time dwelt in peace and plenty, without danger to his person by swallows from above, or to his palace by brooms from below: when it was the pleasure of fortune to conduct thither a wandering bee, to whose curiosity a broken pane in the glass had discovered itself, and in he went; where, expatiating awhile, he at last happened to alight upon one of the outward walls of the spider's citadel; which, yielding to the unequal weight, sunk down to the very foundation. Thrice he endeavoured to force his passage, and thrice the centre shook. The spider within, feeling the terrible convulsion, supposed at first that nature was approaching to her final dissolution; or else, that Beelzebub, with all his legions, was come to revenge the death of many thousands of his subjects (Beelzebub, in the Hebrew, signifies lord of flies) whom his enemy had slain and devoured. However, he at length valiantly resolved to issue forth and meet his fate. Meanwhile

the bee had acquitted himself of his toils, and, posted securely at some distance, was employed in cleansing his wings, and disengaging them from the rugged remnants of the cobweb. By this time the spider was adventured out, when, beholding the chasms, the ruins and dilapidations of his fortress, he was very near at his wits' end, he stormed and swore like a madman, and swelled till he was ready to burst. At length, casting his eye upon the bee and wisely gathering causes from events (for they knew each by sight), "A plague split you," said he, "for a giddy puppy, is it you, with a vengeance, that have made this litter here? could you not look before you? do you think I have nothing else to do but to mend and repair after you?"—"Good words, friend," said the bee (having now pruned himself, and being disposed to be droll): "I'll give you my hand and word to come near your kennel no more, I was never in such a confounded pickle since I was born."—"Sirrah," replied the spider, "if it were not for breaking an old custom in our family, never to stir abroad against an enemy, I should come and teach you better manners."—"I pray have patience," said the bee, "or you'll spend your substance, and, for aught I see, you may stand in need of it all, toward the repair of your house."—"Rogue, rogue," replied the spider, "yet methinks you should have more respect to a person whom all the world allows to be so much your betters."—"By my troth," said the bee, "the comparison will amount to a very good jest; and you will do me a favour to let me know the reasons that all the world is pleased to use in so hopeful a dispute." At this the spider having swelled himself into the size and posture of the disputant, began his argument in the true spirit of controversy, with resolution to be heartily scurrilous and angry; to urge on his own reasons without the least regard to the answers or objections of his opposite; and fully predetermined in his mind against all conviction.

"Not to disparage myself," said he, "by the comparison with such a rascal, what art thou but a vagabond without house or home, without stock or inheritance? born to no possession of your own, but a pair of wings and a drone-pipe. Your livelihood is a universal plunder upon nature; a freebooter over fields and gardens; and, for the sake of stealing, will rob a nettle as easily as a violet. Whereas I am a domestic animal, furnished with a native stock within myself. This large castle (to show my improvements in the mathematics) is all built with my own hands, and the materials extracted altogether out of my own person."

"I am glad," answered the bee, to hear you grant at least that I am come honestly by my wings and my voice; for them, it seems, I am obliged to Heaven alone for my flights and my music; and Providence would never have bestowed on me two such gifts, without designing them for the noblest ends. I visit indeed all the flowers and blossoms of the field and garden; but whatever I collect thence enriches myself, without the least injury to their beauty, their smell, or their taste. Now for you and your skill in architecture and other mathematics, I have little to say: in that building of yours there might, for aught I know, have been labour and method enough; but, by woful experience for us both, it is too plain the materials are naught; and I hope you will henceforth take warning, and consider duration and matter, as well as method and art. You boast indeed of being obliged to no other creature, but of drawing and spinning out all from yourself; that is to say, if we may judge of the liquor in the vessel by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and poison in your breast; and, though I would by no means lessen or disparage your genuine stock of either, yet I doubt you are somewhat obliged, for an increase of both, to a little foreign assistance. Your inherent portion of dirt does not fail of acquisitions, by sweepings exhaled from below; and one insect furnishes you with a share of poison to destroy another. So that, in shot, the question comes all to this; whether is the nobler being of the two, that which, by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all but flybane and a cobweb; or that which, by a universal range, with long search, much study, true judgment, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax."

Now I might, just might, have thought, seeing it was Swift, that there could be a social or political message in there. But Charles Knight in *Half Hours with the Best Authors* says of it, "The following extract will give some notion of the vein of the famous Dean of St. Patrick's.

But no adequate notion can be afforded by extracts. ‘Gulliver’s Travels,’ offensive as it is in many respects, may be in the hands of every reader for a shilling or two;—and there, and perhaps better even in ‘The Tale of a Tub,’ may be fitly learnt the great powers of Swift as a satirist, and his almost unequalled mastery of a clear, vigorous, and idiomatic style. ‘The Battle of the Books,’ from which our extract is taken, was one of Swift’s earlier performances. It had reference to the great contest which was then going on between the advocates of Ancient Learning and Modern Learning. The bee represents the Ancients—the spider the Moderns. Such contests are as harmless and as absurd as the more recent disputes amongst our French neighbours, about the comparative merits of the Classic and the Romantic schools. Real criticism can find enough to admire in whatever form genius works. The apologue of the Spider and the Bee was not unjustly applied, some dozen years ago, to a coterie of self-applauding writers, “furnished with a native stock,” who, despising accuracy and careful investigation, turned up their noses at those who were labouring to make knowledge the common possession of all.”

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Peter, Paul and Mary had a big hit with their song ‘Puff the Magic Dragon’ and I loved the idea of a song about a dragon but then people started to say it was really a disguised lyric about smoking marijuana. Puff-the-magic-drag-on and lovely hallucinatory pictures forming of dragons and seashores. But the other day I was listening to the song again. Now I am sure Peter, Paul and Mary smoked lots of skinny cigarettes but the song is about a little boy giving up the imaginary friends of his childhood. It is about growing up and the sadness in leaving this particular or indeed any joy of childhood behind.

A dragon lives for ever but not so little boys  
Painted wings and giant rings make way for other toys  
One grey night it happened. Jackie Paper came no more  
And Puff that mighty dragon, he ceased his fearless roar.

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May 16: Honoré de Balzac  
May 17: Dorothy Richardson  
May 18: Bertrand Russell  
May 19: Edward de Bono  
May 20: Margery Allingham  
May 21: Dorothy Hewett  
May 22: Arthur Conan Doyle  
May 23: Thomas Hood

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Thomas Hood was the son of a Scottish bookseller and he was sent to work in a London counting-house at thirteen but he was consumptive and so was sent to Dundee to recuperate. (Though I don’t know why Dundee was seen as healthy for consumptives.) He was dogged by ill health throughout his life but he became an assistant sub-editor at the ‘London Magazine’. He met many of the luminaries of his day and began to write his own pieces, articles, poems, a novelette, and later a novel in 3 volumes, *Tylney Hall*. His best known poem from this early period was ‘Epping Hunt’:

And by their side see Huggins ride,  
As fast as he could speed;  
For, like Mazeppa, he was quite  
At mercy of his steed.

No means he had, by timely check,  
The gallop to remit,  
For firm and fast, between his teeth,

The biter held the bit.

Trees raced along, all Essex fled  
Beneath him as he sate,—  
He never saw a country go  
At such a county rate!

“Hold hard! hold hard! you’ll lame the dogs:”  
Quoth Huggins, “So I do,—  
I’ve got the saddle well in hand,  
And hold as hard as you!”

Good Lord! to see him ride along,  
And throw his arms about,  
As if with stitches in the side,  
That he was drawing out!

And now he bounded up and down,  
Now like a jelly shook:  
Till bumped and galled—yet not where Gall  
For bumps did ever look!

And rowing with his legs the while,  
As tars are apt to ride;  
With every kick he gave a prick,  
Deep in the horse’s side!

But soon the horse was well avenged,  
For cruel smart of spurs,  
For, riding through a moor, he pitched  
His master in a furze!

Where sharper set than hunger is  
He squatted all forlorn;  
And like a bird was singing out  
While sitting on a thorn!

Right glad was he, as well might be,  
Such cushion to resign:  
“Possession is nine points,” but his  
Seemed more than ninety-nine.

Yet worse than all the prickly points  
That entered in his skin,  
His nag was running off the while  
The thorns were running in!

But his publisher seems to have gone bankrupt leaving him in a parlous position. Rather than declaring himself bankrupt the DNB says he “yielded up all his property to his creditors”. He went to Holland with his wife, Jane Reynolds, where he continued to write. “Much of his correspondence during this period is preserved in the ‘Memorials’ published by his children; its

gaiety and spirit are remarkable indeed for a consumptive patient almost worn out by continued attacks of exhausting illness.” He returned to London and wrote his best known poem ‘Song of the Shirt’ which was first published anonymously in *Punch* in 1843. The monument to him in the Kensal Green cemetery is inscribed ‘He sang the Song of the Shirt’.

“Work banishes those three great evils, boredom, vice, and poverty,” Voltaire says in *Candide*. I am not sure he would have clung to that idea if he had been inside some weaving mills and sweat shops.

Thomas Hood is best remembered for his poem about appalling working conditions in mid-nineteenth century England, ‘The Song of the Shirt’—

With fingers weary and worn,  
With eyelids heavy and red,  
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,  
Plying her needle and thread –  
Stitch! stitch! stitch!  
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,  
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch  
She sang the ‘Song of the Shirt’.

‘Work! work! work!  
While the cock is crowing aloof!  
And work – work – work,  
Till the stars shine through the roof!  
It’s O! to be a slave  
Along with the barbarous Turk,  
Where women has never a soul to save,  
If this is Christian work!

‘Work – work – work  
Till the brain begins to swim;  
Work – work – work  
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!  
Seam, and gusset, and band,  
Band, and gusset, and seam,  
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,  
And sew them on in a dream!

‘O! men, with sisters dear!  
O! men! With mothers and wives!  
It is not linen you’re wearing out,  
But human creatures’ lives!  
Stitch – stitch – stitch,  
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,  
Sewing at once, with a double thread,  
A shroud as well as a shirt.

‘But why do I talk of death?  
That phantom of grisly bone,  
I hardly fear his terrible shape,  
It seems so like my own—

It seems so like my own,  
Because of the fasts I keep,  
Oh! God! That bread should be so dear,  
And flesh and blood so cheap!

‘Work – work – work!  
My labour never flags;  
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,  
A crust of bread – and rags.  
That shattered roof – and this naked floor—  
A table – a broken chair—  
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank  
For sometimes falling there!

... And he ends it with:  
‘Oh but for one short hour!  
A respite however brief!  
No blessed leisure for love or hope,  
But only time for grief!  
A little weeping would ease my heart,  
But in their briny bed  
My tears must stop, for every drop  
Hinders needle and thread!’

With fingers weary and worn,  
With eyelids heavy and red,  
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,  
Plying her needle and thread—  
Stitch! stitch! stitch!  
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,  
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,  
Would that its tone could reach the rich!  
She sang the ‘Song of the Shirt’!

Did Hood visit such sweat shops himself or was he responding to things he had heard?

“As a poet in the more conventional and restricted sense he was graceful, delicate, and tender, but not very powerful. As a humorist he was exuberant and endowed with a perfectly exceptional faculty of playing upon words. “

Perhaps they had in mind his tongue-twister from his ‘Ode to Perry’:  
The poor dramatist, all fume and fret,  
Fuss, fidget, fancy, fever, funking, fright,  
Ferment, fault-fearing, faintness—more f’s yet:  
Flush’d, frigid, flurried, flinching, fitful, flat,—  
Add famish’d, fuddled, and fatigued, to that;  
Funeral, fate-foreboding—sits in doubt,  
Or rather doubt with hope, a wretched marriage,  
To see his play upon the stage come out.

This was undoubtedly a carefully chosen play on F-words but sometimes you come upon tongue-twisters that may not have been intended. Lillian Beckwith wrote in *Beautiful just!* “When I had browsed over the headlines I quickly scanned the text which was of little interest to the uninitiated except for a delightful sentence which I copied down in my notebook:

‘Forty fish filleters from Fraserburgh spent their Fair Fortnight visiting freezer factories...’

If only the freezer factories had been in Frankfurt, I thought, the sentence would have provided a tongue twister to rival ‘Peter Piper’.”

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“As a poet he is no unworthy disciple of Lamb and Hunt; as a humorist he resembles Barham, with less affluence of grotesque invention, but with a pathos to which Barham was a stranger. In his two most famous poems, the ‘Song of the Shirt’ and the ‘Bridge of Sighs,’ this pathos is almost detached from the humorous element in which it is commonly imbedded, and the result is two of the rarest achievements of contemporary verse—pieces equally attractive to the highest and the humblest, genuine *Volkslieder* of the nineteenth century.”

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May 24: Mary Grant Bruce

May 25: Raymond Carver

Edward Bulwer-Lytton (Lord Lytton)

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Nicolas Bentley mentioned Edward Bulwer-Lytton in his *A Choice of Ornaments* “I suppose that very few people read Lytton nowadays, and with good reason: his writings have become a bore. All the same, there is something in what he has to say about the want of originality in our architecture, particularly that of our public buildings. There are plenty of examples of our native genius from which to evolve a contemporary idiom suitable to public architecture, rather than go on making slavish imitations of continental styles. There is the Horse Guards, for instance, and Regent’s Park and Somerset House; there is Kenwood, and Sion House and Hampton Court, all within a stone’s throw of London, and many more besides. Yet it is depressing to see some of the effects that have been achieved through rigidity of mind, poverty of imagination and fear of public opinion.”

Bulwer-Lytton’s most famous book was *The Last Days of Pompeii*. I didn’t know if he meditated on the architecture of Pompeii before Mount Vesuvius destroyed it. Nor did I know if his books are ‘a bore’. But I thought I would see if he infused his account of those ‘Last Days’ with drama and pathos.

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According to the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* he has a slight connection to Australia. He never visited the country although he was secretary for the colonies 1858-9 and he included some Australian scenes in his 1849 novel *The Caxtons*. “The ‘philosophy of colonising’ which the heroes take with them to Australia includes the notion that British values must be transplanted to the new country lest it grow up to be ‘a strange motley chaos of struggling democracy, an uncouth livid giant, at which the Frankenstein may tremble’. At the same time, however, the novel implies that Australia should develop a new identity free of the evils which taint Britain’s past: Australia may thus be ‘destined ... from the sins and sorrows of a civilization struggling with its own elements of decay, to renew the youth of the world, and transmit the great soul of England through the cycles of Infinite Change!’ In depicting Pisabtratus Caxton’s recuperation of his fortunes in an Arcadian Australia, Bulwer-Lytton was informed by the work of Samuel Sidney and the idealisation of the colony often found in the ‘guidebook’ genre.”

*The Caxtons* was far harder to find than *The Last Days of Pompeii*.

It was said of him, “Lord Lytton popularized classical literature by giving it vivid drama, highly coloured effects, deliberate and sensational pathos—the Byronic prose, the Hugoic

shudder, the Dumas dagger, the Dickensian tear—all of which is certainly a potent brew” and “although the critics sneered, the public liked his witches’ cauldron of vivid drama, highly-coloured effects, deliberate and sensational pathos”.

His book is set in the period leading up to the explosion of Mt Vesuvius in 79 A.D. Pompeii lay in a fertile landscape with a pleasant climate and although there were occasional earthquakes and rumblings there was a complacency in its society of wealthy people living idle lives and taking several baths a day, looked after by slaves. “Round the walls of the portico were seats crowded with persons of all ranks; while others, as the regimen of the physician prescribed, were walking briskly to and fro the portico, stopping every now and then to gaze on the innumerable notices of shows, games, sales, exhibitions, which were painted or inscribed upon the walls. The general subject of conversation was, however, the spectacle announced in the amphitheatre; and each newcomer was fastened upon by a group eager to know if Pompeii had been so fortunate as to produce some monstrous criminal, some happy case of sacrilege or of murder, which would allow the ædiles to provide a man for the jaws of the lion: all other more common exhibitions seemed dull and tame, when compared with the possibility of this fortunate occurrence.”

“Had the earthquake but a few nights since no warning?” said Medon. “Has it not a voice? Did it not say to us all, ‘Prepare for death, the end of all things is at hand’?” But people had come through previous earthquakes and did not see this one as anything more portentous. People might sing songs of doom—

“Thou art welcome, Guest of gloom,  
From the far and fearful sea!  
When the last rose sheds its bloom,  
Our board shall be spread with thee!  
All hail, dark Guest!

Who hath so fair a plea  
Our welcome Guest to be,  
As thou, whose solemn hall  
At last shall feast us all  
In the dim and dismal coast?  
Long yet be *we* the Host!  
And thou, Dead Shadow, thou,  
All joyless though thy brow,

Thou—but our passing *Guest!*” but this did not dampen life or anticipation of forthcoming spectacles.

It was also a cosmopolitan society with Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Syrians and local people. Greek and Roman religions as well as the worship of Isis were being joined by newly-converted and still unwelcome Christians.

The main characters are Glaucus a wealthy young Greek, Ione a beautiful Greek woman, Arbaces an Egyptian and an Iago-type character, and the blind slave girl Nydia from Thessaly. Glaucus is in love with Ione as is Arbaces, while both Ione and Nydia are in love with Glaucus. But Arbaces manages to charge Glaucus with murder. Nydia knows this isn’t true but Arbaces has her locked away so she cannot take her knowledge anywhere. Glaucus and a Christian are condemned to be eaten by wild beasts after the usual gladiatorial contests in Pompeii’s amphitheatre.

“The awful night preceding the fierce joy of the amphitheatre rolled drearily away, and grayly broke forth the dawn of THE LAST DAY OF POMPEII! The air was uncommonly calm and sultry; a thin and dull mist gathered over the valleys and hollows of the broad Campanian fields. But yet it was remarked in surprise by the early fishermen that, despite the exceeding stillness of the atmosphere, the waves of the sea were agitated, and seemed, as it were, to run disturbedly back from the shore; while along the blue and stately Sarnus, whose ancient breadth

of channel the traveller now vainly seeks to discover, there crept a hoarse and sullen murmur, as it glided by the laughing plains and the gaudy villas of the wealthy citizens. Clear above the low mist rose the time-worn towers of the immemorial town, the red-tiled roofs of the bright streets, the solemn columns of many temples, and the statue-crowned portals of the Forum and the Arch of Triumph.”

Nydia manages to escape from her imprisonment and hurries to the amphitheatre, just in time to save Glaucus. “There was a dead, heart-sunken silence—through which there suddenly broke the roar of the lion, which was echoed back from within the building by the sharper and fiercer yells of its fellow-beast”. But now Glaucus, Nydia, and everyone else faces a more terrible threat—

“The cloud, which had scattered so deep a murkiness over the day, had now settled into a solid and impenetrable mass. ... as the blackness gathered did the lightnings around Vesuvius increase in their vivid and scorching glare. ... In the pauses of the showers you heard the rumbling of the earth beneath, and the groaning waves of the tortured sea; or, lower still, and audible but to the watch of intensest fear, the grinding and hissing murmur of the escaping gases through the chasms of the distant mountain. ... The ashes in many places were already knee-deep, and the boiling showers which came from the steaming breath of the volcano forced their way into the houses, bearing with them a strong and suffocating vapour. ... parties of fugitives encountered each other, some hurrying towards the sea, others flying from the sea back to the land; for the ocean had retreated rapidly from the shore—an utter darkness lay over it, and upon its groaning and tossing waves the storm of cinders and rock fell” and Glaucus saved from the lion rushes with Ione to what they hope will be safety. Some people sheltered in cellars but it was the ones who fled inland who mostly survived. Glaucus and Ione are among these fortunate ones. ‘A bore’? No. Old-fashioned in style? Yes.

While I was looking into some distant family connections I came across a man called Tim Bulwer-Long. The only person I had ever heard of with Bulwer in their name was of course Bulwer-Lytton. So I wondered if there was a connection. And indeed there was. Tim Bulwer-Long descended from a brother to Edward. But Edward then took his mother’s maiden name Lytton and added it to his father’s Bulwer.

The State Library was able to track down an edition of *The Caxtons: A Family Picture* in a mainland library for me. So this week I have been looking to see how he imagined Australia.

The Caxtons, Augustine and Kate, have a baby son. “But it so happened that my father was at that moment engaged in the important consideration whether the Iliad was written by one Homer—or was rather a collection of sundry ballads, done into Greek by divers hands, and finally selected, compiled, and reduced into a whole by a Committee of Taste, under that elegant old tyrant Pisistratus.” And so they call their son Pisistratus.

Augustine is a scholar who spends his time with his books, saving his inheritance and working on a book to be called *History of Human Error*. He has a brother Roland who has been in the army (and now has a cork leg) and who has spent his inheritance, perhaps unwisely, in buying back what was left of the ancestral Caxton home. Roland believes they descend from a Sir William Caxton killed at the Battle of Bosworth with Richard III while Augustine believes they descend from William Caxton the famous printer. The novel is peopled by imagined characters but William Caxton the printer certainly existed. He was born in Kent around 1422 and went as a Merchant Adventurer to Bruges and Cologne where he saw the potential of Gutenberg’s printing press. He brought the first such machine to England in 1476 and began to print books of history, religion, biography, as well as commissioned books. He died around 1491.

Young Pisistratus upon leaving school goes to work as a secretary to a Member of Parliament, Mr Trevanion, who believes his career has been held back because he can see ‘both

sides of the question'. But young Pisistratus falls in love with his employer's daughter and feels he must leave. His father has been talked into buying shares in his brother-in-law's venture to start a newspaper to be called *The Capitalist*. It is a failure and Augustine loses a lot of money and can no longer afford to send Pisistratus to Cambridge. The brother-in-law believes that if only they had called it *The Anti-Capitalist* it would have succeeded. Instead he ends up in the Fleet, unable to pay his debts without help but still certain he will come up with a wonderful idea to make money.

Pisistratus at a loose end in the wilds of Cumberland writes to Mr Trevanion for advice. The politician writes back to say "EMIGRATE!" and goes on to suggest Australia, saying, "Don't dream of emigrating if you want to make a million, or the tenth part of a million. Don't dream of emigrating, unless you can *enjoy* its hardships,—to *bear* them is not enough.

"Australia is the land for you, as you seem to surmise. Australia is the land for two classes of emigrants: 1stly, The man who has nothing but his wits, and plenty of them; 2ndly, The man who has a small capital, and who is contented to spend ten years in trebling it. I assume you belong to the latter class. Take out £3,000, and, before you are thirty years old, you may return with £10,000 or £12,000. If that satisfies you, think seriously of Australia."

He then has to win his parents over to the idea of emigration and prepare himself. This is a slow business. I was beginning to wonder if he was ever going to get there. Finally, on page 446 he boards his ship. Australia seems to agree with him. "And the lords of that palace are lords of the land, almost as far as you can see, and of those numberless flocks; and better still, of a health which an antediluvian might have envied, and of nerves so seasoned with horse-breaking, cattle-driving, fighting with wild blacks—chases from them and after them, for life and for death—that if any passion vex the breast of those kings of Bushland, fear at least is erased from the list."

His idea is that "Nature gives us all except the means to turn her into marketable account." So does he turn Australia to marketable account and come home with a modest fortune? Yes, and although he is said to have spent years there he is embarking for England on page 475, (so Australia only gets 30 pages out of 511 pages) and everything has done well for him. His sheep, his cattle, his land, his businesses, all have prospered and he is going home with more than Mr Trevanion had suggested to him. On board he thinks, "amongst my fellow passengers, how many there are returning home disgusted, disappointed, impoverished, ruined, throwing themselves again on those poor friends, who thought they had done with the luckless good-for-naughts for ever. For, don't let me deceive thee, reader, into supposing that every adventurer to Australia has the luck of Pisistratus."

He comes home and marries his cousin Blanche, daughter of his uncle Roland

It is a sentimental family picture saved from sickliness by the light, ironic undertone. The males believe "We come to men for philosophy—to women for consolation". Certainly Augustine's way of looking at the world is philosophical:

He meditates on his question to the nurse when she tells him he has a son: "what is a boy?"

"Now my father did not mean by that interrogatory to challenge philosophical inquiry, nor to demand of the honest but unenlightened woman who had just rushed into his study, a solution of that mystery, physiological and psychological, which has puzzled so many curious sages, and lies still involved in the question, "What is man?" For, as we need not look further than Dr. Johnson's Dictionary to know that a boy is "a male child"—*i.e.*, the male young of man; so he who would go to the depth of things, and know scientifically what is a boy, must be able to ascertain "what is a man." But, for aught I know, my father may have been satisfied with Buffon on that score, or he may have sided with Monboddó. He may have agreed with Bishop Berkeley—he may have contented himself with Professor Combe—he may have regarded the genus spiritually, like Zeno, or materially, like Epicurus. Grant that boy is the male young of man, and he would have had plenty of definitions to choose from. He might have said, "Man is a

stomach—*ergo*, boy a young male stomach. Man is a brain—boy a male young brain. Man is a bundle of habits—boy a male young bundle of habits. Man is a machine—boy a male young machine. Man is a tail-less monkey—boy a male young tail-less monkey. Man is a combination of gases—boy a male young combination of gases. Man is an appearance—boy a male young appearance,” &c., &c., and et cetera, *ad infinitum!*”

While his brother’s is very definitely not:

“Plague, pestilence, and fire seize William Caxton the printer, and his invention too!” cried my uncle barbarously. “When there were only a few books, at least they were good ones; and now they are so plentiful, all they do is confound the judgment, unsettle the reason, drive the good books out of cultivation, and draw a ploughshare of innovation over every ancient landmark; seduce the women, womanise the men, upset states, thrones, and churches; rear a race of chattering, conceited coxcombs, who can always find books in plenty to excuse them from doing their duty; make the poor discontented, the rich crotchety and whimsical, refine away the stout old virtues into quibbles and sentiments! All imagination formerly was expended in noble action, adventure, enterprise, high deeds, and aspirations; now a man can but be imaginative by feeding on the false excitement of passions he never felt, dangers he never shared; and he fritters away all there is of life to spare in him upon the fictitious love-sorrows of Bond Street and St. James’s. Sir, chivalry ceased when the press rose!”

But the women do have to do their share of consoling and comforting. And was the book boring? No, but it was certainly long-winded—and young Pisistratus remains a prig to the end.

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“Beneath the rule of men entirely great, the pen is mightier than the sword.”

Edward Bulwer-Lytton.

\* \* \* \* \*

May 26: Denis Florence Macarthy

May 27: Sidney Keyes

May 28: Ian Fleming

Devon Minchin

Patrick White

May 29: Pamela Hansford-Johnson

T. H. White

May 30: Julian Symons

May 31: Judith Wright

June 1: John Masefield

Caroline Lee Hentz

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At the beginning I mentioned picking books at random so I went in to the library, wandered along the fiction shelves, and chose five books with my eyes closed. They were:

*Night Street* by Kristel Thornell

*Sirius* by Jonathon Crown

*The Bones of the Yopasi* by Graham McNeill

A book which didn’t want to let anyone know its title but which I finally realized was *Can’t Fight Fate* by Lisa N. Edwards

*The Return of the Soldier* by Rebecca West. I had read this before but didn’t mind to read it again. But would I look for more by those writers? Probably not. But it is good to get out of a rut because it is so easy to keep reading in the same area, the same genre, a few favourite authors.

So do try it some time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of course lists of books I’ve been reading aren’t very interesting to anyone else. Yet there is a kind of compulsion to make lists. I picked up a book called *The Book of Lists* by David

Wallechinsky, Irving Wallace and Amy Wallace in an op-shop and they begin by saying, “The human animal differs from the lesser primates in his passion for lists of Ten Best,” wrote H. Allen Smith.

True. At least in our experience. We have always been inveterate listmakers.

In fact, we can't believe there lives a person with a soul so dead, who never to himself has said, “I think I'll make a list.” Everyone makes lists, whether they mean to or not. You make a list of New Year's resolutions, soon to be broken. You make up a shopping list, a laundry list, a party list. And if you are more thoughtful or competitive or crazy, at some time or other you graduate to making a list of the 10 best or worst movies you've seen or tennis players you've watched or military leaders you've read about.

Yes, everyone makes lists. The man or woman on the street. The Census Bureau. The pollster. The newspaper syndicates. The leading magazines. The president of the United States (remember Nixon's Enemies List?)

Lists are nothing new. They are as old as written history. Between 1792 and 1750 B.C., Hammurabi, king of Babylon, gave the world a list of 282 laws—a code of laws dealing with marriage, theft, slavery, and other civilized matters. Then, about 1200 B.C., Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, seeking a homeland. Atop Mount Sinai, “Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice,” and when Moses descended he had a list—the 10 Commandments, revered to this day by Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Moving towards more modern times, in 1601 Shakespeare gave us his play *Hamlet* in which Polonius offers his son Laertes a list of pragmatic rules to live by, including, “Beware of entrance to a quarrel...Neither a borrower, nor a lender be...This above all: to thine own self be true. And it must follow, as the night the day,/Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

Throughout history, well-known people have made out shopping lists or kept expense lists in ledgers. Relatively few shopping lists have survived, but expense ledgers have proved less perishable. Lord Byron had such a ledger kept for him while in Italy. In March, 1822, he had listed 15 charitable gifts he had made, ranging from “Charity to four people, three old men, and a lame woman—two Pauls” to “Borrowed from Fletcher to give to a poor boy—one Paul, one Crazie.”

In 1885, when Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* was introduced at the Savoy Theatre in London, Gilbert proved very list-conscious and offered the public a memorable one. Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner, had a list of “people whose loss will be a distinct gain to society at large.” Ko-Ko sings out, “As some day it may happen that a victim must be found,/I've got a little list—I've got a little list /Of society offenders who might well be under ground,/And who never would be missed—who never would be missed!” ” And then there was Senator Joseph McCarthy's famous list, “I have here in my hand a list of 205—a list of names that were known to the secretary of state as being members of the Communist party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping the policy in the State Department.” ” Except he didn't have a list, only a sheet of paper, and no one called his bluff.

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It is delightfully easy to pull books off library shelves at random (though the books themselves are sometimes hard going) but it is far harder to track down some books. Did I, for instance, want to track down *The Planter's Northern Bride* to see what turned it into a best-seller of its time? Probably not? It would surely be sentimental, unrealistic, patronizing ... you can add some more things it would likely be ... and I couldn't help thinking it would be more interesting if the young bride threw herself heart and soul into the emancipation of her husband's slaves ... but perhaps if it had sat alongside Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel we would all have heard of her and would speak of her in the same breath and her book would be required reading in schools and I would not be wondering why it became a best seller ...

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June 2: Thomas Hardy

Barbara Pym  
June 3: Cicero  
June 4: Percy Lubbock  
Elizabeth Jolley  
Barbara Baynton  
June 5: Pancho Villa  
Frederico Garcia Lorca  
June 6: Alexander Pushkin  
June 7: Elizabeth Bowen  
June 8: Tim Berners-Lee  
Francis Crick  
John W. Campbell  
June 9: E. M. Delafield  
Hugh Buggy  
June 10: Terence Rattigan  
Saul Bellow  
June 11: Anna Akhmatova  
June 12: Johanna Spyri  
June 13: Dorothy Sayers  
W. B. Yeats  
Mary Whitehouse

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Valerie Grove in her biography of John Mortimer, *A Voyage Round John Mortimer*, wrote, "John had an increasing respect for the courage of Mrs Whitehouse, resolutely present at every obscenity trial, like a *tricoteuse* beside the guillotine in revolutionary France, and saying her prayers in the corridor while the jury was out."

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"At the launching of the British Humanist Association (BHA) in 1963, its members – at the time of writing, well under 3,000 – committed themselves 'to survey and reform laws which are justified only or chiefly by Christian beliefs and particularly the laws relating to Sunday Observance, marriage, divorce, illegitimacy, homosexuality, abortion and sterilisation'. The in-breeding which characterizes organizations like the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), the BHA, the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA), the 'Gay Liberation' movement, the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE), the Euthanasia Society, the Paedophile movement, as well as the current campaign to reduce the age of consent and to remove the crime of incest from the Statute Book, shows a training in ideological warfare which should alert Christians to the fact that 'being good' is not an adequate programme for living in the seventies. To be 'wise as serpents' as well as 'gentle as doves' is basic to Christian survival in our secular age.

"The permissive lobby has been highly successful in achieving Parliamentary reform of abortion, divorce and homosexual law. It understands how to use the correspondence columns of even the smallest provincial newspaper, how to get access to radio and television, how to lobby Parliament. The humanists have infiltrated the Churches and social morality groups of all kinds. Nowhere has this been more clearly demonstrated in Britain than in the BHA campaign to repeal the clause of the 1944 Education Act which ensured the child's right to religious education in schools. First the BHA prepared (1975) a Parliamentary Bill designed to do just this. But at the same time, presumably as a second line of attack, since the chance that such a head-on attack on RE would be successful was slim, the humanists gained representation on various committees looking at the future of Religious Education. Their aim, in this setting, appears to have been so to crowd the RE syllabus with every kind of ideology – communism included – with world religions, 'life stances' (whatever that may mean), with cults and humanist dogma, that

Christianity would be crowded out and the children would come to see it as merely one alternative to ‘shintoism, Zoroastrianism, magic and the occult’.

“It is of no mean significance that the secular/humanist/Marxist philosophy makes the destruction of Christianity one of its main priorities. It understands its importance in relation to character and morale, to the standard of values and behaviour. In this regard it is indeed interesting to note the similarity between the official literature of the communists and the humanists. H. J. Blackham, President of the BHA, believes, according to his book on humanism, that ‘Humanism and Christianity simply will not mix’ and that humanists ‘must wish and work for a world without religion. Indeed they must.’ This is not so different from Lenin’s declaration in his book *Religion* that ‘we must combat religion – this is the ABC of all materialism and consequently Marxism’.

“There is a great deal of cross-fertilisation between the groups that make up the ‘humanist lobby’ and in this context it is interesting to note that Tony Smythe, then General Secretary of the NCCL, who barred my way out of the court at the end of the *Little Red School Book* trial – not much ‘civil liberty’ there! – is a trustee of The Albany Trust, a registered charity acting as a social service for homosexuals and other sexual minorities. He was also Field Director for the American Civil Liberties Union and is now Director of MIND which in October 1975 organised ‘a two-day workshop’ for and by sexual minorities including paedophiles, homosexuals and transvestites. The ‘workshop’ came to the conclusion that there was ‘outrage over paedophilia’ – though I think that their outrage was on behalf of the paedophiles, not the children!

“The ‘London Letter’ in the *Guardian* can hardly be described as inhibited when it comes to the support of ‘freedom fighters’ of all kinds, and it has, for instance, shown itself very sympathetic indeed to the homosexual lobby. But the news that CHE had given support to a new campaign – Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE) – drew scathing comment from the column’s editor, John Torode (28<sup>th</sup> August, 1975).

“Paedophilia (‘Sexual desire in an adult for a child’) is the latest abnormality on the list for ‘normalisation’. In reporting the launching of PIE Torode had described paedophiles as ‘child molesters’, but this brought angry protestations from ‘Libertarian’ readers who were concerned – of course – not at all with the children involved but with the ‘rights’ of the adult to have sex with ‘under age’ partners. Sticking to his guns, Torode replied, ‘It is hard to tell just what PIE means by “under age”, but the children pictured playing innocently at the seaside on the cover of this (PIE) pamphlet look perhaps ten years old. And nowhere is there any suggestion that “sexual acts” with kids half that age or even less would meet with the disapproval of those progressive persons who run PIE. So it is fair to assume that anything goes as far as PIE is concerned. Especially as the crusaders want “a blanket abolition of the age of consent laws which define mutual and loving relationships as assaults”,’ – *The Guardian* (5<sup>th</sup> September, 1975).

“That a protagonist for PIE can justify its activities by saying that paedophiles are child lovers ‘in the broadest sense who do not shirk from sexuality if it arises in a reciprocal relationship though it is often confined – in our culture anyway – to mutual masturbation’ and hope to be taken seriously is a message of how corrupted our society already is. It is also a demonstration, simply and distinctly, of the tactics of the permissive lobby.”

Mary Whitehouse in *Whatever happened to sex?*

This wasn’t just Mary Whitehouse with an axe to grind. Julie Bindel in *The Pimping of Prostitution* says, “One of the most vociferous groups in its support of ‘sex workers’ rights’ is the new queer movement. This rainbow alliance politics first emerged in the 1980s with the scandal involving the National Council of Civil Liberties when it supported the inclusion of the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE). There was much dissent and disagreement within the gay liberation movement (mostly from lesbians) at the time that PIE was looking to join hands

with those who were sexually ‘non-conformist’. Many gay men did not see that the lobbyists for the normalisation of child sexual abuse had misappropriated their legitimate fight for equality, protection and rights.” And, “Since the 1970s, the liberals and gay libertarians have striven to include all and sundry in the sexual liberation movement, and have argued for groups including ‘sex work’ and the PIE—the former being a category of male violence, and the latter a predatory sexual politic normalizing child rape.”

In *Betrayal: The Crisis in the Catholic Church* by 8 reporters on the *Boston Globe* they write of one paedophile priest, “Shanley’s public advocacy of homosexuality eventually attracted the attention of Vatican officials, one of whom wrote to (Bishop) Medeiros requesting an explanation. In his February 1979 reply to Cardinal Franjo Seper in Rome, Medeiros called Shanley “a troubled priest.” Two months later, Medeiros was alerted by a New York City lawyer that Shanley had been quoted making similar remarks in an interview about man-boy love with a publication called *Gaysweek*. The only action taken by Church officials was to remove Shanley from his street ministry and send him to a suburban parish.”

As investigators continue to try and unravel the reasons behind the crisis which has bankrupted dioceses in the USA and elsewhere the question of how many priests were influenced by the man-boy love movement does not seem to have been addressed. Yet it begs the question: how can publications openly espouse paedophilia and not be censured?

George Pell wrote in *Be Not Afraid* “Just personally I’d find it very difficult to imagine breakfast without all the morning papers. More seriously, what a diminished society ours would be without a free press.

“As always we often realize these things when we go away. I was travelling through China soon after the Tiananmen Square massacre with people who knew Chinese, but the Chinese press was useless for finding out what was happening. We relied on the BBC. I think it is not by chance that in that country they have massive problems of pollution, as they did everywhere in the Communist world, because there is no press to speak about these things. And there is no doubt too that a free press has helped us in the Church to face up to evils and difficulties within the Church and to purify ourselves, as was necessary.”

He may not be so supportive of a free press now. I don’t know. But Mary Whitehouse’s criticisms were openly expressed by someone whose private life seems to have been exemplary. I did not agree with everything she said but a lot of it made sense and I can’t help admiring her courage. She had nothing personal to gain from her crusade against the sexualization of children. Groups such as Collective Shout run campaigns to alert parents to the way that advertisers and corporations sexualize our children to make money. But she saw that the dangers went much deeper. You can after all ignore advertisements and refuse to buy certain products. Whereas to take sex into primary schools undermined the ability of parents to protect their children from this early sexualization. She couldn’t foresee the internet and its massive load of porn. But I think she would understand that where parents have been sexualized in their childhoods they are likely to be less concerned about the fact that now five-year-olds are already wallowing in pornography. ‘That’s life,’ they may say, ‘and children have to get used to it when they’re young. You can’t wrap them in cotton-wool.’

I think Mary Whitehouse would say tartly that protecting their children is a duty of parenthood and exposing them to sex and pornography so they can understand ‘real life’ does not constitute protection. She is gone now and no one has stepped up to take her place. That is a pity.

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June 14: Harriet Beecher Stowe  
Kathleen Raine

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Kathleen Raine introducing W. B. Yeats' *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland* wrote, "Round those same turf fires where so recently the old tales were told the same people now gather round the television set, more potent destroyer of tradition than the rantings of Knox, the armies of Cromwell, or the Compulsory Education bill; the last page of the Book of the People has been turned. The records of that book are the people themselves; with the death of an old woman a treasury of songs is silent; when "the Cuddy" of Barra died, not only his stories, but a formalized style of narration, old as the stories themselves, was lost. What is dying in Scotland may survive a little longer in Ireland's richer soil. Yet in the first decade of this century Douglas Hyde, greatest of Ireland's distinguished collectors of Gaelic traditional stories, wrote that it was his own experience that "the beliefs in the *Sidhe*-folk, and in other denizens of the invisible world is, in many places, rapidly dying." However, Captain D. A. MacManus (an intimate friend of Yeats's later years) in his book *The Middle Kingdom* (1959) speaks of what I myself had found in Scotland (even though my status was that of guest and visitor only) the abundance at that time of first-hand stories of the "other world" ... "Do not let anyone imagine that I have had to travel far and wide painstakingly collecting stories here and there, as if plucking rare and precious flowers. Not in the least; for these stories have come to me without strenuous searching on my part ... many of these tales I have known and lived with for years; others, which are more recent, I have come across without special effort and in the course of my daily life."

"The traditional culture of the Celtic countries is a rural culture; and it is well to remember, in this century when the city, or its mechanical extensions of mass-communication, reach into the remotest croft, to isles where even now the boat comes only once a week—that for countless centuries all culture was rural."

"The last trial for witchcraft in Ireland—there were never very many—is thus given in MacSkimin's *History of Carrickfergus*: "1711, March 31<sup>st</sup>, Janet Mean, of Braid-island; Janet Latimer, Irish-quarter, Carrickfergus; Janet Millar, Scotch-quarter, Carrickfergus; Margaret Mitchel, Kilroot; Catherine M'Calmond, Janet Liston, *alias* Seller, and Janet Carson, the four last from Island Magee, were tried here, in the county of Antrim Court, for witchcraft."

Their alleged crime was tormenting a young woman, called Mary Dunbar, about eighteen years of age, at the house of James Hattridge, Island Magee, and at other places to which she was removed. The circumstances sworn on the trial were as follows:

"The affected person being in the month of February, 1711, in the house of James Hattridge, Island Magee (which had been for some time believed to be haunted by evil spirits), found an apron on the parlour floor, that had been missing some time, tied with *five strange knots*, which she loosened.

"On the following day she was suddenly seized with a violent pain in her thigh, and afterwards fell into fits and ravings; and, on recovering, said she was tormented by several women, whose dress and personal appearance she minutely described. Shortly after, she was again seized with the like fits, and on recovering she accused five other women of tormenting her, describing them also. The accused persons being brought from different parts of the country, she appeared to suffer extreme fear and additional torture as they approached the house.

"It was also deposed that strange noises, as of whistling, scratching, etc., were heard in the house, and that a sulphureous smell was observed in the rooms; that stones, turf, and the like were thrown about the house, and the coverlets, etc., frequently taken off the beds and made up in the shape of a corpse; and that a bolster once walked out of a room into the kitchen with a night-gown about it! It likewise appeared in evidence that in some of her fits three strong men were scarcely able to hold her in the bed; that at times she vomited feathers, cotton yarn, pins, and buttons; and that on one occasion she slid off the bed and was laid on the floor, as if supported and drawn by an invincible power. The afflicted person was unable to give any evidence on the trial, being during that time dumb, but had no violent fit during its continuance."

“In defence of the accused, it appeared that they were mostly sober, industrious people, who attended public worship, could repeat the Lord’s Prayer, and had been known to pray both in public and private; and that some of them had lately received communion.

“Judge Upton charged the jury, and observed on the regular attendance of accused at public worship; remarking that he thought it improbable that real witches could so far retain the form of religion as to frequent the religious worship of God, both publicly and privately, which had been proved in favour of the accused. He concluded by giving his opinion “that the jury could not bring them in guilty upon the sole testimony of the afflicted person’s visionary images”. He was followed by Judge Macarthy, who differed from him in opinion “and thought the jury might, from the evidence, bring them in guilty”, which they accordingly did.

“The trial lasted from six o’clock in the morning till two in the afternoon; and the prisoners were sentenced to be imprisoned twelve months, and to stand four times in the pillory of Carrickfergus.

“Tradition says that the people were much exasperated against these unfortunate persons, who were severely pelted in the pillory with boiled cabbage stalks and the like, by which one of them had an eye beaten out.”

W. B. Yeats

Curiously England only had its last witchcraft trial in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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Lin Carter introducing William Morris’s *The Wood Beyond the World* says. “The book you hold in your hands is the first great fantasy novel ever written: the first of them all; all the others, Dunsany, Eddison, Pratt, Tolkien, Peake, Howard, *et al.*, are successors to this great original.

By *fantasy*, I mean the tale of quest, adventure or war set in an invented age and worldscape of the author’s own imagination. Of course there are other kinds of imaginative fiction loosely called fantasy: the horror story, for example, can be traced back to Horace Walpole who founded the gothic novel with his *Castle of Otranto* in 1764; the “lost race” yarn, a sub-school of adventure fiction, goes back to H. Rider Haggard and *She*; and Morris was preceded by various writers who wrote occult and mystical or Rosicrucian or Atlantean or Arthurian romances long before he set pen to paper. But fantasy, *as such*, begins with William Morris (1834-1897).

He was the first major writer to discover and explore the potentials of the story laid in a consciously made-up world where magic works, and gods and monsters, witches and dragons, co-exist in a carefully worked out context of surreality. The basic elements of this kind of epic or heroic fantasy have existed in literature for, literally, ages. When the Babylonian hero, Gilgamesh, slew the man-dragons to enter the Mountain of the Sun—when Herakles ventured to the Garden of the Hesperides—when Homer set Odysseus en route to the imaginary islands of Calypso and Circe the Enchantress—when the Medieval writers permitted Parsifal or Launcelot or Amadis of Gaul to stray beyond the map into regions of their own invention—the elements of heroic fantasy were established. Nevertheless, this kind of “fantasy” did not directly contravene known laws of the times. It was imaginative fiction, an extrapolation on a grand scale of what was believed to be reality. The later wild extravagances of the Italian and Iberian romancers, coupled with Cervantes’ bravura lampoon of the chivalric romances and Spenser’s chaotic *smorgasbord* of the whole school, resulted in the death of the fantastic story for a couple of centuries. Then William Morris came along to draw it forth, like Lazarus, from the tomb.”

*The Wood Beyond the World* is a pleasant little story but it points up, for me, the problems I have with fantasy. He uses archaic language: ‘fain’, ‘yea’, ‘meseemeth’, ‘didst thou’, ‘spake’, which suggests he has traveled back in time rather than traveled sideways into a new and mysterious world. He gives his hero a simple name, Walter, but no sense of embeddedness which comes with surnames. But his fantasy requires the English language which comes with a

whole set of links to this world. It doesn't matter whether it has sheep and roses and lions and trout as in William Morris or hobbits and stranger creatures in Tolkien; they are still living breathing earthbound creatures with human (or anthropomorphosised) emotions and characters.

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Anthony Lejeune introducing Dennis Wheatley's *To the Devil a Daughter* writes, "There are two distinct ways of writing a story about, or involving, the supernatural. One is shadowy, indirect, made up of hints, of things never quite seen, just glimpsed from the corner of your eye. Probably the most famous example of this kind is *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, the 1981 film version of which, called *The Innocents*, perfectly illustrated the chill of doubtful glimpses: but the grand master, certainly was M. R. James, many of whose truly frightening ghost stories were designed originally for telling to Cambridge choirboys on Christmas Eve.

"Dennis Wheatley was neither temperamentally nor stylistically drawn to such subtleties. His was the other approach, treating black magicians as villains like any other, only worse, and their supernatural weaponry as all too evident and substantial. Fighting them would be a strange conflict, requiring specialised counter-measures, but not in the least shadowy. It was a head-on clash of good against evil."

Writing about the supernatural is extraordinarily difficult. If the second approach, then it is usually hard to suspend your disbelief or the story ends up seeming just plain silly. If the first approach then the nuances often get missed, particularly on the first reading, and sometimes it becomes a 'cop-out' because the reader starts to believe that the writer cannot be more definite for fear of destroying the reader's belief in the story. Strange and inexplicable things *do* happen but writing books about them raises many difficult questions for the writer.

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The television is inside, and to that can be added internet, smart phones and all the latest technology—but there are also threats waiting outside.

Kevin Corcoran in *West of Ireland Walks* writes, "The magic of Ireland's wild west is haunting and unreal." The birds and the seals, the bogs and the wildflowers, the coastal heaths, the cliffs and golden sands. But he goes on to say, "Such a landscape is not only romantically charming but is a shining jewel in a world that is becoming increasingly polluted. The west of Ireland is very much an untouched landscape that seems far removed from the rush of modern-day life." Though not far enough removed. "But how safe is this wilderness? What does the future hold for our threatened and diminishing wild places? ... All too often a unique habitat or landscape falls victim to commercial exploitation, whether it be forestry, mining, urban and recreational development, tourism or agriculture, while simple environmental aesthetics fade quickly before the immediacy of jobs and economic progress. ... Pollution, tourist pressure, litter, habitat destruction, wildlife disturbance and extinction are all having a serious impact on the outdoors. How then do we take seriously our need to preserve the diminishing natural environment at a time when more and more people want to experience it? How do we reconcile our presence in it at the same time as we try to protect it from us?"

Those are very obvious threats but there is a more intangible one. Many of the world's most famous folk tales were written in places where the wild still existed as wild woods, mysterious unexplored places only ventured into by woodcutters, travelers, outcasts and outlaws, places which could be peopled by witches and goblins, by trolls and fairies, by bunyips and quinkans, by leprechauns and boggarts, but now this kind of fantasy and belief is no longer embedded in the mysterious otherworldly nature of the 'wild'. Perhaps with the loss of 'the wild' we increasingly need fantasy to provide us with a new 'wild'?

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I had thought Kathleen Raine was an Irish writer because of her devotion to the work of W. B. Yeats but not so. She was born in London and was as devoted to the work of William Blake as to Yeats. But it was the deeply mystical aspect to both men's poetry which seems to have drawn her and which she sought to create and infuse in her own poetry.

The times when she stepped out in to the hard realities of the world, such as her unhappy relationship with Gavin Maxwell, brought little comfort. Perhaps in her immersion in her poetic world she came much closer to Blake than the more worldly Yeats.

So I went looking for her poetry—which proved remarkably hard to find—and came across her book *Blake and the New Age* which was a book of essays on Blake following on from her *Blake and Tradition* which she revised as *Blake and Antiquity*. She says, “And what else is a New Age but a change of premises.” When she wrote that in the 1970s people had just begun to talk about a New Age, New Agers, and so on. Her thesis was that Blake though writing two hundred years ago still has something to say to this New Age. And when I thought on premises I wondered if she was thinking of ‘premise’ as in idea or theory or ‘premises’ as in dwelling or habitation and I thought both might be relevant. She places him in the Swedenborg tradition but also influenced by the newly translated material on India’s sacred traditions and beliefs, as well as Thomas Taylor’s new translations of Plato and Plotinus. And Blake in turn influenced Yeats. From Swedenborg Blake developed his belief in the idea of ‘the Divine Humanity’, a humanity infused with God, an understanding available to everyone not through reason but through his belief that “Imagination is Eternity”. She writes, “Blake is saying that everything that lives was holy because God incarnate in every human life: a great and simple affirmation; words incredible, indeed quite meaningless, to those under the domination of popular atheist humanism.” The simple divide being that humanism places humanity as the most important life because it is all there is and Blake places humanity as the most important life because it contains God incarnate.

And her own poems? I found one called ‘Highland Graveyard’ in *The Faber Book of Landscape Poetry* and I thought of her words “with the death of an old woman a treasury of songs is silent”:

Today a fine old face has gone under the soil;  
For generations past women hereabouts have borne  
Her same name and stamp of feature.  
Her brief identity was not her own  
But theirs who formed and sent her out  
To wear the proud bones of her clan, and live its story,  
Who now receive her back into the ground  
Worn features of ancestral mould.

A dry-stone wall bounds off the dislimned clay  
Of many an old face forgotten and young face gone  
From boundless nature, sea and sky.  
A wind-withered escalonia like a song  
Of ancient tenderness lives on  
Some woman’s living fingers set as shelter for the dead, to tell  
In evergreen unwritten leaves,  
In scent of leaves in western rain  
That one remembered who is herself forgotten.

Many songs they knew who now are silent  
Into their memories the dead are gone  
Who haunt the living in an ancient tongue  
Sung by old voices to the young,  
Telling of sea and isles, of boat and byre and glen;  
And from their music the living are reborn  
Into a remembered land,  
To call ancestral memories home

And all that ancient grief and love our own.

\* \* \* \* \*

June 15: Herbert Simon

Amy Clampitt

June 16: Adam Smith

June 17: Henry Lawson

June 18: Rosemary Dobson

John Douglas

June 19: Salman Rushdie

James I of England/James VI of Scotland

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I knew King James had written books on the evils of tobacco and the even greater evils of witches but then I discovered he also wrote poetry. So what was his poetry like? I came upon a piece in Charles Knight's *Half Hours with the Best Authors* and while I don't think he qualifies as a 'best author' it has its interest. And at least he was leaving poor old women alone. "James I. welcomes the May, as if Scotland had no cutting winds to shame his song of "Away, winter, away!"—

Now was there made, fast by the Toure's wall,  
A garden fair, and in the corners set  
Ane herber green, with wandes long and small  
Railed about; and so with trees set,  
Was all the place, and hawthorn hedges knet,  
That life was none walking there forby  
That might within scarce any wight espy

So thick the bewes and the leaves green  
Beshaded all the alleys that there were,  
And middes every herber might be seen  
The sharpe, greene, sweete juniper,  
Growing so fair with branches here and there,  
That, as it seemed to a life without,  
The bewes spread the herber all about.

And on the smale greene twistes sate  
The little sweete nightingale, and sung  
So loud and clear the hymnes consecrate  
Of love's use, now soft now loud among,  
That of the gardens and the walles rung  
Right out their song and on the couple next  
Of their sweet harmony; and lo the text:—

Worshippe, ye that lovers been, this May,  
For of your bliss the kalends are begun,  
And sing with us, Away, winter, away!  
Come, summer, come, the sweet season and sun;  
Awake, for shame! That have your heavens won,  
And amorously lift up your heavens won,  
Hark, Love, that list you to his mercy call.

\* \* \* \* \*

June 20: Xanana Gusmão

Vikram Seth

Margaret Scott

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“Other people closely associated with Fretilin reportedly executed on 7 December included Rosa Bonaparte Soares (Muki), Secretary of the *Organização Popular da Mulher de Timor* (People’s Organization of Timorese Women), the Timorese poet Borja da Costa, and the Australian journalist Roger East, who had set up an East Timor news agency with Fretilin encouragement after his arrival in Dili in early November 1975.”

*East Timor Violations of Human Rights*, Amnesty International. 1985.

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Jill Joliffé introducing Luís Cardoso’s memoir of growing up in East Timor, *The Crossing*, writes, “In December 1975, as Indonesian forces closed in on the East Timorese capital, I was asked to carry out of the territory a small manuscript of poems written by Francisco Borja da Costa, a contemporary of Luís Cardoso’s who had also studied in Lisbon. I reached Darwin with this precious parcel a few days before Indonesian paratroopers assaulted the capital. His work was saved, but he was not: he was publicly executed by an Indonesian firing squad just a few days after he handed the work to me.

His work represented the beginning of a new self-conscious phase of cultural revival, but it was also the beginning of Timor’s longest nightmare. During their 24-year struggle for liberation the Timorese always considered their culture as one of their weapons, and Indonesia’s failure to subjugate these courageous people was as much due to their profound sense of their own cultural identity as their unrelenting military resistance.”

She goes on to say and this also contains a prediction for the future. “The last Indonesian soldiers withdrew from Díli in September 1999, after the East Timorese population had voted overwhelmingly for independence in a UN-sponsored referendum a month earlier, and after a last round of unmatched brutality. From the ashes a new country is emerging. The healing process will take many years, and will be inseparable from cultural growth; from it, a new literature will emerge, whether in the Portuguese or Tetum language. As the first work to be published in English in the post-Indonesian era, *The Crossing* is in the vanguard of that cultural renaissance. Francisco Borja da Costa, a gentle friend whose only crime was to live in the world of ideas, set it in motion; twenty-five years later Luís Cardoso has continued his work, opening a small window onto that special mix of spirituality, interaction with nature and proud sense of identity which makes up the East Timorese universe.”

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On the 21 May 1998 President Suharto stepped down. “The spirit of hope among the people of East Timor managed to outlast President Suharto’s grip on office. In the months after the pilgrimage to Mount Ramelau in October 1997, Indonesia’s economy, hailed by its international backers earlier in the 1990s as a great success story, collapsed. By May 1998, when Suharto left office, the dollar value of Indonesia’s currency, the rupiah, had plunged 70 per cent since July 1997, making it impossible for most Indonesian businesses to repay loans from foreign banks or purchase necessary supplies from abroad. As a condition for a multibillion-dollar rescue operation by the International Monetary Fund, important governments that had long supported the Indonesian strongman with few if any reservations – most notably the USA – finally began to demand a dismantling of the system of Suharto family monopolies that exercised heavy control of important sectors of the economy. Suharto balked, apparently hoping that the desire for a stable ally by his longtime international partners would outweigh other considerations.

But it was already too late to save his regime, as the ensuing economic crisis threatened to cost many millions of jobs and place tens of millions of people into abject poverty. The crisis triggered massive demonstrations by students and others. Widespread rioting occurred, and hundreds of lives were lost. Indonesia’s most influential foreign friends evacuated their citizens, and there were days when it was uncertain if Jakarta’s airport would remain open. All of this

was beamed to television viewers worldwide. It became clear that the large-scale financial help needed to restart the Indonesian economy would not be forthcoming as long as Suharto remained in office. Suharto's support within the army eroded to the point where his position became untenable. His long reign as Indonesia's supreme leader had finally ended."

*From the Place of the Dead: Bishop Belo and the Struggle for East Timor* by Arnold S. Kohen.

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### A Fighter Who Fell

High on the mountain peaks of Timor  
The grass grows  
and warms the fractured bones  
Of a fighter who fell

Down on the grassy plains of Timor  
A flower shows  
And beautifies the bones  
Of a fighter who fell

This is the hopeful life that grows  
From life's release  
The life that every woman knows  
Who calls for peace  
With every waking breath  
But not the peace of death

Throughout the peaks and plains of Timor  
The life-blood flows  
And animates the bones  
Of the fighters who fell

Xanana Gusmão

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The best known poem by a Timorese is Francisco Borja da Costa's 'One Minute of Silence'.

Be silent  
mountains  
valleys and springs  
rivers and streams  
stony ways  
and grassy reaches,  
be silent

Be silent  
birds of the air  
and waves of the sea  
winds that blow  
on sands that flow  
in lands that no one owns  
be silent

Be silent

canes and bamboos  
bushes and eucalyptus  
palms and grasses  
endless verdure  
of tiny Timor,  
be silent

Be silent,  
your silence, our silence  
for one minute.  
It is a time for silence  
for the silenced time  
for the life times lost  
the lives given  
for the homeland  
for the nation  
for the people  
for our liberation  
be silent  
— one minute of silence ...

Although Xanana was not a memorable poet I think his statement he wrote under terrible conditions and wasn't permitted to finish reading in court when the Indonesians put him on trial in 1993 is a powerfully written indictment. This 26 page handwritten document was what he took into court to read but the judge stopped him after 3 pages saying it wasn't 'relevant'. Xanana later managed to smuggle it out of prison and it was translated and published as *A Travesty of Justice: Xanana's Defence*. Though there are some illegible words it remains an important document.

—“I am Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, leader of Maubere Resistance against the shameful and cowardly invasion of 7 December 1975 and the criminal and illegal occupation of East Timor for the last 17 years. On 22 December last year, in Denpasar, I signed a document in which I stated that in the eyes of international law I am still, like all Timorese, a Portuguese citizen and, in my own eyes, a citizen of East Timor. It is in these terms that I reject the competence of any Indonesian court to try me and even less a court set up by force of arms in my country, East Timor.”

—“The case of East Timor is the responsibility of the international community, a question of international law. It is a case which puts universal principles at stake, a case in which the UN provisions on decolonisation have been manipulated, a case in which Indonesia has flaunted its disrespect for the resolutions of the UN and which therefore constitutes a flagrant violation by Indonesia of the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the universal norms of law, peace and justice.”

—“Every Indonesian is bound to their nation and with their government's policy and any view they may have of the situation of East Timor is a product of their government's view, unless they listen to their own conscience and commit themselves to the universal standards of justice, liberty and law. For 17 years the history of East Timor, the other side of the coin, has been that of a great Indonesian farce – with what intelligence or success is not for me to say. This court claims to be trying me for crimes committed against the Indonesian state and illegal possessions of arms. I know everything has been arranged for me to be acquitted ... [original illegible].

Those who should be standing before the international court are:”

He then names the Indonesian Government for “17 years of crimes committed in East Timor”, the United States for giving “the green light to the invasions on 7 December 1975 and have granted military aid to, and political support for, the genocide carried out by Indonesia in East Timor”, Australia and other Western countries “for their policy of complicity with Indonesia” and the Portuguese Government “for their seriously irresponsible handling of the decolonisation of East Timor”.

—“The UN recognizes as legitimate all means of opposition to colonial regimes in any part of the world where a people’s liberation struggle is being fought. My struggle and the resistance of my people and of Falintil is to be seen in this context, standing above Indonesian law.”

Xanana Gusmão became an independent East Timor’s first President in 2002.

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June 21: Henry Tomlinson

Jean-Paul Sartre

June 22: Erich Maria Remarque

June 23: Winifred Holtby

June 24: Ambrose Bierce

June 25: George Orwell

Erskine Childers

June 26: Pearl S. Buck

Colin Wilson

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Australian writers rarely wrote about China. They went there in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to get tea, there were Australians there during the Boxer Rebellion, Cyril Pearl wrote *Morrison of Peking* but I cannot think of an Australian novel set in China until well in to the twentieth century. And the novels by writers such as Han Suyin were to a considerable extent westernized. Even now the novels written by Chinese writers and translated in to English are to some extent westernized. We hear of Chinese writers suffering various kinds of restrictions and the world being urged to pressure the Chinese government. But most of us would have difficulty in saying what they actually wrote. When Chinese writer Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2012 I was delighted for him but I could not tell you anything about his writing. And Chinese writers have had a variety of language problems long before they get translated into any other languages.

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China has agonised over the question of a national language. It is one of many countries facing the issue: how to create a national language and should other languages and dialects be lost in the process?

I must admit that I was under the vague impression that everyone could speak Mandarin even if they also spoke Cantonese or Hakka or something else. I also thought that the Chinese characters had the same meaning even when they expressed different dialects. In both cases I was wrong.

The early discussions over a national language eventually settled on Mandarin but should it be the northern version or the southern? The northern, spoken in Beijing (Peking) won out and that pronunciation became the accepted way to speak. This became the national standard known as *Putonghua*. But in fact Mandarin is not a Chinese word at all.

The speech of officialdom, though rarely spoken by ordinary people, was called *guanhua*. David Moser in *A Billion Voices* says, “However, when the Jesuits first came to China in the sixteenth century, *guanhua* was the first variety of Chinese they encountered, and they called it Mandarin, from the Portuguese *mandarim*, meaning ‘minister’ or ‘official’. The term ‘Mandarin’ expanded its meaning in the twentieth century, and has now become a common (albeit rather imprecise) term for modern standard Chinese, in most contexts basically

interchangeable with the term ‘Putonghua’. The term also has a specialised linguistic usage, referring to the group of Mandarin dialects spoken in regions throughout northern and central China.”

And should Chinese characters be done away with, in the interests of universal literacy, or should they exist alongside a simpler phonetic alphabet? And if so what kind of writing should be used? Should they turn to the Cyrillic alphabet or be seen to be influenced by the West or look at other Asian writing systems or create their own system? Chinese characters were a deep part of Chinese culture but the years spent in rote learning to become proficient kept literacy levels low and perhaps children could be learning other useful things in the time it took to learn thousands of complex characters? “China finally arrived at the Hanyu pinyin romanisation system ... The development of this method was due, in large part, to the efforts of Zhou Youguang. He lived in New York where he was a banker but returned to China in 1949 to help with its ‘modernisation’. It meant a large drop in salary but he was approached by Zhou Enlai—“The Party needed him to join in the language standardisation program to devise a new phonetic alphabet. Linguistics had always been a hobby of Zhou Youguang’s, but he never studied it formally. When Zhou protested that he was only an amateur, he was told, ‘Everyone is an amateur.’”

“Zhou at least had some predecessors for his work. The Wade-Giles method had existed for decades, and Zhao Yuanren had also devised a tonal spelling system called *Gwoyue Romatzyh* (*Guoyue luomazi* ‘National Language Romanisation’). Early on Zhou had also been influenced by China’s first romanisation method, developed by the Jesuit Matteo Ricci in collaboration with Michele Ruggieri as part of their 1584-88 Portuguese-Chinese dictionary, the first European-Chinese dictionary.”

It took him and his helpers three years to present the new system, *pinyin*, in 1958. “Once implemented, the method played a crucial role in increasing literacy rates, and making Chinese more accessible to Western media and scholarship.”

But then came the Cultural Revolution. Work to develop and promote and teach *pinyin* came to a standstill. The habit of putting *pinyin* under characters in newspapers was dropped. And Zhou was sent to the countryside ‘to learn from the masses’. But both *pinyin* and Zhou Youguang survived.

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Of course once the Communist Party was in firm control it could impose its views on the country and it does so in the case of TV and radio presenters having to keep to the required pronunciation. “The language requirements for Chinese TV and radio professionals are some of the most stringent in the world. Whereas in, say, the United States media environment, it is common to hear TV hosts with regional accents (think of Larry King’s trademark Brooklyn accent, or Bill Moyers’ folksy southern drawl), in China, such regional linguistic flavours are strongly discouraged.

“This means that for any official media professional with a microphone, the uttering of a non-standard pronunciation or faulty tone is subject to a fine. The exact amounts of these fines vary somewhat, depending on the media outlet and internal department rules, but they constitute an effective check on non-standard language use. The knowledge that somewhere in the bowels of China Central Television (CCTV) there exists a shadowy group of language monitors whose job it is to check for Putonghua violations is an annoying reality for all those who make a living talking on TV.”

Needless to say all regional languages and dialects within China are under threat. Their best hope of survival lies within the diaspora.

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The Portuguese also helped provide a name for another place of linguistic problems. Papua. Portuguese Governor of the Moluccas, Jorge de Meneses in 1526 landed in the Bird’s Head area of New Guinea and named it Ilhas dos Papuas. He had come across the Malay term

‘orang papuwah’ meaning man (orang) with frizzy hair (papuwah) when he visited the Malay peninsula on his journey eastwards. The two parts of New Guinea, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and West Papua (the Indonesian colony of Irian Jaya) both incorporate that descriptive word thanks to the Portuguese. Though as a West Papuan said to me when I asked how he would prefer it pronounced—pap-u-a, parp-oo-a, par-poo-a, etc—it didn’t matter because it wasn’t their word.

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If ordinary readers wanted an insight into China they were quite likely to turn to the novels of Pearl Buck. I still find Pearl Buck’s books about China worth reading. She brought with her an understanding and knowledge of Chinese society which takes her writing beyond that sense of an outsider trying to write sympathetically about the China where she spent many years, first as a child of missionary parents and then married to a teacher of agriculture. She grew up speaking Chinese fluently; though whether Mandarin or other dialects I cannot say. Equally importantly she gave much greater focus to the private lives of Chinese women, a world rarely entered by male writers.

One other western woman whose life became memorably entwined with the lives of Chinese women was Gladys Aylward. Alan Burgess in his book *The Small Woman* says of her, “An employment agency found her a position in the London household of Sir Francis Younghusband, the eminent author and explorer. It was ironical perhaps that, as she dusted the books in the library of his stately Belgravia residence, the man who first crossed the heart of Central Asia by transversing the Muztagh – the great mountain barrier between Kashmir and China – was not even conscious of her presence. Yet she was to cross human and geographical terrain as formidable as any he ever faced.” The little maid scurrying round with her broom and duster did things to make the lives of Chinese women better. Eminent explorers rarely do.

I was thinking of Pearl Buck because a friend gave me an article from a US magazine *Colonial Houses* about the home she and her second husband came to live in; “Bucks County, Pennsylvania, offers travelers scenes of bucolic beauty along with picturesque small towns such as New Hope on the Delaware river, Quakerstown in the rural north, and the county seat of Doylestown. Extending north from Philadelphia, it is one of Pennsylvania’s three original counties founded by William Penn in 1682.” Here in a 19<sup>th</sup> century stone house in Perkasio Pearl Buck came to live. “A National Historic Landmark, it is the centerpiece of 60-acre Green Hills Farm, for almost 40 years the home of the first American woman to win (in 1938) the Nobel Prize for Literature. It is now headquarters for the Pearl S. Buck Foundation, established by Buck in 1964 to help orphaned and abandoned Asian and Asian-American children overseas. Open to the public, the house is furnished as the author left it at her death in 1973, with a rich blend of Asian and Western furnishings and art.”

Her only daughter died from PKU syndrome and she and her second husband Richard Walsh adopted seven children. “Pearl Buck wrote 44 novels and short stories, 26 non-fiction books (including her autobiography *My Several Worlds*), and 20 books for children.”

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A friend of my son’s gave me Eileen Chang’s *Little Reunions*. Chang was born in Shanghai and was in Hong Kong when the Japanese invaded. She later went to the United States. She used the Wade-Giles system when she wrote her books. But *Little Reunions* was not published until after her death in 1995 by which time pinyin had superceded Wade-Giles.

The book is partly autobiographical in that the central character Julie Sheng is at a convent in Hong Kong when the Japanese arrive. And like Chang Julie becomes a writer. Although Chang writes, “The war in Europe had thwarted Julie’s plans to study abroad. Hong Kong was the only alternative. The exchange rate at the time was three Chinese dollars to one Hong Kong dollar. Julie thought it a waste of money, but by then the money had been spent so it was too late for regrets. The costliest part was the yearlong preparatory course, taught by

members of the joint student recruitment team of Oxford, Cambridge, and the University of London. It goes without saying that the tuition fees were exorbitant”.

Though it begins with the arrival of the Japanese it is not a war book.

—Did she hope for a surrender or for the Japanese troops to fight their way in?

*It's not our war. Is it worth sacrificing one's life for the colony of the British Crown?*

*Of course, that's just an excuse. It's our war if they're fighting the Japanese.*

*Nationalism is a common twentieth-century religion. Julie was not a believer.*

*Nationalism is just a process. We went through it in the Han and T'ang dynasties centuries ago.*

*That sounds like a cover for weakness. In international relations, talking about three or five thousand years of civilization means nothing—only power and a willingness to fight can win respect.*

*But what's there to say if you're dead? You have to be alive to achieve anything.*

Julie couldn't come to any conclusions, but fortunately her greatest skill was the ability to leave such things unresolved. Perhaps she would have an epiphany in old age. She believed *that* was the only reliable theory, based on her own experience, not parroting what others say.

*Just put it to one side. If chaos results, so be it. A theory based on reason may not always be reliable.*

—Julie had never ever believed in God, but after days of continuous bombing, she understood why, as they say, “There are no atheists in foxholes.” She suddenly raised her head and said silently to the ceiling, “You've really been very kind to me. Halting the final exam was good enough; there was no need to kill the teacher.”

—“The next day there was a huge boom at noon when bombs hit the Great World entertainment center on Avenue Edward VII. From the window Julie saw a convoy of army trucks pass by. A pile of artificial limbs poked out from under the dark-green tarpaulin on one truck as if intended for a department-store window display, except it was a jumble of limbs poking out from a chaotic pile of floral fabrics and gowns and trousers. Glistening rivulets of blood streamed down some of the limbs. She just caught a glimpse of it and would rather believe she had not seen anything.”

She has been brought up not to show curiosity. Her mother, Rachel, “trained Julie from a young age not to be the least bit curious about people close to her. Julie always reserved her curiosity for outsiders. The closer a person was to her, the more space Julie reserved for that person. It was like following the principles of Chinese painting—sufficient breathing space is essential—or like arranging layers of cotton padding to protect precious jewelry. If a letter wasn't addressed to her, she wouldn't even look at the envelope.” This keeps family secrets hidden but it also fosters a lack of empathy and closeness in personal relationships.

She has a rather dysfunctional family. Her mother has divorced her father who is an opium addict. But they are comfortably off, with servants. And Julie enjoys a surprising degree of freedom to choose and follow her own ambitions. But there is little love and sympathy for her to draw on as she struggles with the complexities of growing up in occupied Hong Kong.

Although she has a great many relatives, “Your second uncle is getting married,” Judy told her. “The eleventh daughter of the Keng family—Seventh Aunt's family made the introduction” which I sometimes found a little confusing, they are rarely happy or satisfied people. And Julie. Although she has received an education and a degree of freedom she doesn't find genuine happiness and fulfillment in her career or her relationships. In fact the men she meets are dismal prospects, mostly wanting a mistress rather than another wife, and at one stage she has an abortion. I wondered how typical this was of young Chinese women of that era. And older women perhaps had more reasons for their secret sorrows. “Women with bound feet often had sticklike legs, which would make their shoes look oversized.” The old might be passing away but it left women who would always carry the burden of that past.

She does try to find a way to escape the pressures of her family. “After the war ended she had started to work on a full-length novel. The manuscript was piled in a stack on her desk.” This brings her in some income but it does not free her from family pressures to marry or to remain within her large and complex family circle.

“Rain. It’s like living by a burbling stream,” Julie wrote in her notebook as her thirtieth birthday approached. “Hope it rains every day so I can believe your absence is due to the rain.”

On the night of her thirtieth birthday, Julie contemplated the moonlit balcony from her bed. The concrete balusters, like overturned stellae, lying in ruins, were bathed in blue moonlight. Moonlight of the late T’ang dynasty of a thousand years ago. But for Julie, thirty years already felt too long, weighing heavily on her heart like a tombstone.

There is one good thing about being older, Julie often thought—no more exams. And yet she never stopped dreaming about exams. Nightmares, always nightmares.”

The exams, though, are more than her disrupted school years. She examines herself and sees only faults. She is constantly being examined and gossiped about by family and colleagues. In the end her freedom to live an independent life is largely illusory.

\* \* \* \* \*

June 27: Lafcadio Hearn

June 28: Luigi Pirandello

June 29: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

June 30: Czeslaw Milosz

July 1: Dorothea MacKellar

Joseph Hall

July 2: Herman Hesse

July 3: Franz Kafka

July 4: Fay Zwicky

July 5: George Borrow

July 6: Bessie Head

Catherine Fanshawe (the DNB gives her the 10<sup>th</sup> as her birthday)

Frida Kahlo

\* \* \* \* \*

Nicholas Bentley wrote, “Anne Fanshawe’s *Memoirs* would be among my favourite bedside books if I had such a collection, but the trouble about bedside books is where to keep them.”

In her *Memoirs* she provides advice to her son:

“Endeavour to be innocent as a dove, but as wise as a serpent; and let this lesson direct you most in the greatest extremes of fortune. Hate idleness, and curb all passions; be true in all words and actions; unnecessarily deliver not your opinion; but when you do, let it be just, well-considered, and plain. Be charitable in all thought, word, and deed, and ever ready to forgive injuries done to yourself, and be more pleased to do good than to receive good.

“Be civil and obliging to all, dutiful where God and nature command you; but friend to one, and that friendship keep sacred, as the greatest tie upon earth, and be sure to ground it upon virtue; for no other is either happy or lasting.

“Endeavour always to be content in that estate of life which it hath pleased God to call you to, and think it a great fault not to employ your time either for the good of your soul, or improvement of your understanding, health, or estate; and as these are the most pleasant pastimes, so it will make you a cheerful old age, which is as necessary for you to design, as to make provision to support the infirmities which decay of strength brings: and it was never seen that a vicious youth terminated in a contented, cheerful old age, but perished out of countenance. Ever keep the best qualified persons’ company, out of whom you will find advantage, and reserve some hours daily to examine yourself and fortune; for if you embark yourself in perpetual conversation or recreation, you will certainly shipwreck your mind and fortune.

Remember the proverb—such as his company is, such is the man—and have glorious actions before your eyes, and think what shall be your portion in heaven, as well as what your desire on earth.

“Manage your fortune prudently, and forget not that you must give God an account hereafter, and upon all occasions.”

I wonder if her son took this to heart?

\*

A different Fanshawe, Catherine, is in *The Oxford Guide to Word Games* by Tony Augarde. It has charades, riddles, palindromes, mysterious things like rhopalics—and enigmas. He writes of one of the most famous, “It has often been attributed to Lord Byron but was actually written by Catherine Fanshawe about the year 1814. Her original version had as its first line ‘Twas in heaven pronounced, and twas muttered in hell’ but Horace Smith changed this to the more familiar form:

’Twas whisper’d in heaven, ’twas mutter’d in hell,  
And echo caught faintly the sound as it fell;  
On the confines of earth ’twas permitted to rest,  
And the depths of the ocean its presence confess’d;  
’Twill be found in the sphere, when ’tis riven asunder;  
’Tis seen in the lightning and heard in the thunder;  
’Twas allotted to man from his earliest breath,  
It assists at his birth, and attends him in death;  
Presides o’er his happiness, honour and health,  
Is the prop of his house, and the end of his wealth;  
In the heaps of the miser ’tis hoarded with care,  
But is sure to be lost in his prodigal heir;  
It begins every hope, every wish it must bound;  
It prays with the hermit, with monarchs is crown’d;  
Without it the soldier and seamen may roam,  
But woe to the wretch that expels it from home!  
In the whispers of conscience ’tis sure to be found,  
Nor e’en in the whirlwind of passion is drown’d;  
’Twill soften the heart, but, though deaf to the ear,  
’Twill make it acutely and constantly hear;  
But, in short, let it rest; like a beautiful flower,  
Oh! breathe on it softly, it dies in an hour.”

And the answer to this dramatic little poem? The letter ‘H’. And it can be found in Fanshawe’s *Literary Remains* which isn’t a very attractive name for a book but I suppose her relatives gathered up various bits of her writing. My question though was different. Was Catherine Fanshawe any relation to Anne Fanshawe? Were they perhaps a literary family, even perhaps mother and daughter? The answer is no, there was more than a century between them.

Anne Fanshawe had 6 sons and 8 daughters so it is a wonder she found the time to do any writing. Catherine Fanshawe was born 113 years later in 1738, never married, and lived all her life in a very strict and formal household with her sisters. The DNB says of her famous poem: “Her best known poem is the riddle on the letter H, which has often been attributed to Lord Byron, and has been included in at least two editions of his works. It originated in a conversation on the misuse of that letter when she was stopping with Mr. Hope at Deepdene, Surrey. She wrote it during the night, read the lines to the guests at breakfast next morning, and committed them to Mr. Hope’s album, now preserved at Bedgebury, near Cranbrook, Kent. The opening line originally ran,

'Twas in heaven pronounced, and 'twas muttered in hell;  
but the accepted reading, and the alteration is generally assigned to James Smith of the 'Rejected  
Addresses,' now is,

'Twas whispered in heaven, 'twas muttered in hell."

And I wonder if Mr Smith was Horace or James or perhaps even James Horace?

\* \* \* \* \*

July 7: Robert Heinlein  
July 8: Richard Aldington  
July 9: Mervyn Peake  
July 10: John Wyndham  
Kevin Gilbert  
Catherine Fanshawe  
July 11: Harold Bloom  
E. B. White  
July 12: Pablo Neruda (Ricardo Eliecer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto)  
Léon Bloy  
Ernest Edward ('Weary') Dunlop  
July 13: John Clare  
July 14: F. R. Leavis  
July 15: Iris Murdoch  
Judy Cassab (Kaszab)  
July 16: Christopher Koch  
July 17: 'Aidan de Brune' (Herbert Charles Cull)  
Christina Stead  
July 18: W. M. Thackeray  
July 19: A. J. Cronin  
July 20: Louisa Anne Meredith  
July 21: Arthur Mee  
July 22: Tom Robbins  
Betty Roland  
Nijole Sadunaite  
July 23: Coventry Patmore  
July 24: E. F. Benson  
Robert Graves  
July 25: Josephine Tey  
Herrad of Landsberg (d)  
July 26: Aldous Huxley  
July 27: Hilaire Belloc  
Rayner Heppenstall

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"The libel laws exist for the protection of rogues in high places." Rayner Heppenstall.

\*

Robert Pullan wrote in *Guilty Secrets*, "Amanda :Lohrey's highly praised political novel *The Reading Group*, published in 1988, contains a brief scene in which a 'new young Senator' is at dinner with friends. The Senator, described as pompous and a poseur, is in his late thirties, balding, with an 'ugly freckled scalp'. The woman next to him finds his lower lip 'fleshy, slack and repellent;' he has published a book of poetry.

He leans over and whispers in her ear, 'I fuck better than I write.'

And she laughs, despite herself. The candlelight in the courtyard flickers in a soft gush of air and the waiters bring in the earthenware platters laden with cheese.

He's caressing her knee with his fat thumb and she arches her neck and stiffens her thigh in resistance. He knows it, though he pretends not to notice.

He thought he had her there, with that one unexpected line.

Terry Aulich, an ALP Senator from Tasmania, identified himself as the fictional Senator. When he sought advice from Stuart Littlemore, the barrister and former journalist who presents the ABC Television 'Media Watch' programme, opined that the passage imputed Aulich to be 'sexually obnoxious, guilty of sexual harassment and possibly sexual assault and is a hypocrite'. Aulich was well-known in media circles as a supporter of affirmative action, Littlemore's opinion said, but he was 'portrayed as an importuning chauvinist'. Aulich demanded that Lohrey's publisher, Pan Books, pulp the 1500 copies left of the first print run and pay \$50,000 damages. The Pan publisher, James Fraser, quickly agreed to pulp the copies but in fact did not do so, and offered \$3000. After 12 months' negotiations Pan agreed to pay the Senator \$25,000. Including lawyers' fees the case cost Pan \$75,000. Lohrey, who knew Aulich when he and her husband were ministers in the ALP Tasmanian Government, said she was not conscious of basing the character on him (Aulich had self-published a book of poetry. Later, after he lost his ALP preselection for the Senate, he published a novel launched by Prime Minister Paul Keating.) The Australian Society of Authors said: '[Imaginative writers] may base scenes and characters on material which no longer remains in their consciousness, on people they have forgotten and memories they have suppressed. If the law asks them not to do this, and it does, it asks for censorship of the subconscious.' "

Terry Aulich did have freckles and had published a book of poems but if he had fat thumbs then I certainly had never noticed them; nor had I ever thought of him as pompous, so why did he feel this must be him? Do we see ourselves differently to the ways other people see us? And in demanding that this image of ourselves be respected are we actually suggesting to the world that we believe this fictional portrait is the true one?

Pullan also mentions Nigel Krauth supposedly defaming the Hydro Majestic Hotel in the Blue Mountains and Margaret McClusky being pressured to change the name of her book from *Entertaining Susan Sangster* to *Wedlock*. I remember Bob Ellis being pilloried over his portrayal of Abbott and Costello and their wives. And Pullan tells this astonishing story: "A fictional story published in the journal *Victorian Teacher* about an ill-fated school excursion to see the movie *Crocodile Dundee* led to the highest defamation award in Victorian history, \$150,000, in March 1992. In the story, a teacher, Jack Hall, is twenty-three minutes late at the train station for an excursion he is organising. Because he is late, a big group of eight-year-olds run riot. In the midst of the chaos, Jack Hall visits the TAB; he eventually loses three children. John Hall, a teacher of Preston, sued the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association and the Technical Teacher's Union, co-publishers of the journal, with a circulation of 25,000, and won his \$150,000."

The puzzle in there is why did John Hall think it portrayed and lampooned him? Was he in the habit of running late, visiting the TAB, or losing children?

\* \* \* \* \*

Raynor Heppenstall was a prolific writer but largely forgotten now.

He wrote what were seen as innovative novels as well as non-fiction including several interesting little introductions to little remembered French writers. The Library found me his brief books on Leon Bloy and Raymond Roussel. I had never heard of Surrealist writer Raymond Roussel yet he was an unusual man, an eccentric, probably homosexual, a man who traveled widely (and Heppenstall writes, "In Melbourne, he was enchanted by the plenitude of hansom cabs, as well as by the oysters and kangaroo soup") but the trouble was he would get

briefly off the ship, spend a short time ashore, then go on board again because he said he preferred his imagined worlds to reality. He began by writing verse in a “state of creative ecstasy” and fully believing that he was going to be a great writer. Though he wrote *La Doublure* in such a passion readers did not respond with an equal passion.

His plays too, though appealing to a few avant garde patrons, were not successful.

Of his eccentricities, Heppenstall notes that: “He would not, it seems, wear anything which had been washed even once. He never wore a collar more than once, so that, since he presumably changed often into evening clothes, he must have bought and thrown out some five hundred collars a year.”

And:

“A *roulotte*, caravan or house on wheels, which Roussel had had built to his specifications, had created something of a legend. There was, for instance, an illustrated article on it in *La Revue du Touring Club de France*. It was a luxurious vehicle, with bedroom, a dining room which could be converted into a studio, a bathroom with all the conveniences and a room for the chauffeur. It travelled twice round Europe.

Vitrac reports its owner as saying:

‘It is very agreeable, you stop where you want, you set off again when you want, a real land-yacht. And you’re alone.’

‘Alone?’ said Vitrac. ‘But, surely, people....’

‘Yes, that’s true, but you can avoid the villages. Mussolini, whom I went to see in Rome, said the same thing to me. I told him that he, at any rate, had no need of a vehicle like that to attract crowds. The Pope, too, wanted to see my car. But as he can’t leave the Vatican, and as, from reasons of propriety—I wonder why—my caravan couldn’t be driven in, he sent someone out to see me—a Nuncio, who went away filled with admiration.’”

This extreme fastidiousness and his preference for his own company made me wonder if his homosexuality was ever put into practice. And Heppenstall queries it from the point that Roussel often had attractive women in his writings. “This is the first of many counter-indications in Roussel’s work to M. Leiris’s firm statement that his taste was exclusively homosexual. It is, of course, possible that we should always suppose there to have been a Proust-like substitution of girl for boy or blending of girl and boy.”

“It is perhaps in *La Doublure* that we are most quickly led to think of Proust in connection with Roussel. As in *À l’Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleur*, the action takes place largely at the sea-side. Like Marcel’s Albertine, Gaspard’s Roberte leaves him. We do not, alas, know whether Roberte had any ‘original’ boy or girl. We do know that Proust read *La Doublure* in 1897.”

In ‘*Nouvelles Impressions d’Afrique*’ he takes his story to an imagined Africa. In ‘*L’Âme de Victor Hugo*’ he imagines himself in a dream looking over Victor Hugo’s shoulder and reading the poem he is writing.

But after his death he was almost forgotten until the 1950s. “I suggest, nevertheless, that interest in Raymond Roussel among the French young or any other category of buyers of books rose to no considerable height until the deservedly fashionable Alain Robbe-Grillet stated, in a casual aside, that Roussel had been a main influence upon his own work.”

Michel Foucault also brought out a book on Roussel and, “Since then, it is true, the only Anglo-Saxon contributions to the study of Roussel which I have been able to discover were my own and those of a young American-about-Paris, John Ashbery.”

There were problems with reprintings as Roussel’s nephew demanded that such reprints be pulped. And there was “rivalry” between competing French factions to ‘own’ and ‘interpret’ Roussel’s work.

Heppenstall says, “Sight is the privileged sense in Roussel, acute to the point of madness, stretching out to the infinite and yet of things purely imaginary. Another striking characteristic

of his images is their ‘*instantanéité*’, a word we can perhaps best translate in the context as snapshot quality.”

He liked Roussel’s work, and admired ‘*Nouvelles Impressions d’Afrique*’ but he sums his liking up as: “To me, it is part of the charm of Raymond Roussel that his writings are totally devoid of seriousness. They may obscurely reach the reader’s heart, but they do not set out to reveal the truth about that troublesome and unreliable organ, let alone to explain the position of man in society, any more than do the farces of P. G. Wodehouse or the ingenious contrivances of a writer of good detective stories.”

Heppenstall obviously had a deep interest in things French because as well as his books on Roussel and Bloy he wrote *French Crime in the Romantic Age*. In his study of Léon Bloy he depicts a man who created the genre of ‘Catholic novel’, a man interested in mysticism but also anti nearly everything. To Bloy the rich were “incurably evil”, he wanted the bourgeoisie to be wiped away, he praised poverty but dreamed of being wealthy, he delighted in the catastrophes which beset others, as he believed suffering fell upon those who had done something to deserve it. Heppenstall writes, “I approach Bloy now with fascination, painful nostalgia and a variety of other emotions among which I cannot fail to detect an element of distaste.” He saw Bloy as writing beautiful prose in his novels and journals but the subject matter was sometimes less easy to admire. “In *The Criterion* I attempted a synthesis between Bloy’s cult of poverty and the requirements of social revolution. In the same article, I sketched out the view elaborated ten years later in *The Double Image* that Christianity stands in radical opposition to the creative imagination and that a Christian writer of any power will necessarily tend towards a heresy. In Bloy I diagnosed Manichaeism of the usual kind and a Zoroastrian polarity of rich and poor, Christ personifying the one and some unnamed demi-urge the other.”

But the interest in this book is that as he explains how he came to be interested in Bloy he also tells the reader something of his own life. “In the late autumn of 1935, I embarked upon a religious conversion which eventually proved abortive. I had lost my faith in political revolution. My situation was that of a young provincial starving as manfully as he could in a London garret. This was in Kentish Town, and I shared it with George Orwell, ten years my senior. I had recently become estranged from Mr J. Middleton Murry, with whom I had been staying in Norfolk as a kind of secretary, but I enjoyed the friendships of Herbert Read and the encouragement of Eric Gill. My conversion began under the very best auspices. In no time at all I was at Campion Hall, receiving instruction from Father D’Arcy.

“In Oxford I read the letters of G. M. Hopkins and copied out what he says about the Greek gods as poetical machinery, as well as his beautiful distinction between the meanings of the word ‘mystery’ to non-Catholics (for whom it is an ‘interesting uncertainty’) and to Catholics (for whom it is ‘an incomprehensible certainty’). I read Traherne and St John of the Cross. I made some progress with a long poem. I encountered the intellectual difficulties which more successful converts somehow surmount. It was, I discovered, one thing to perceive what a blessing it is to be a Catholic, to wake in the night and hug oneself with pleasure at the thought that now everything will be different because one is going to be a Catholic and that presently one will wake in the night rejoicing that one is a Catholic already. It was quite another matter to believe, in any literal sense, what the church requires one to profess to believe, and, wriggle as I might, I did not see how I could bring myself to profess to believe certain things unless I had first contrived to make myself believe that I did. However, doubts of this kind are an accepted part of the routine.

“Leaving Campion Hall and returning to London, I continued to receive instruction from an older Jesuit at Farm Street and to read approved books.

“I was introduced to a number of young Catholics, of whom two who remain my friends were Bernard and Barbara Wall. After a quarrel of some violence, I parted company with George Orwell and went to live in Mortimer Market, off Tottenham Court Road, over a scissors grinder. Here, I ate far too little. Orwell had always had food, which he cooked with great skill.

“The Walls and their friends were torn between the claims of action and those of contemplation. One of the young men was proposing to enter a Trappist monastery. Another, a man of the purest genius of whom I no longer hear anything, Bernard Kelly, was a bank clerk who lived philoprogenitively in the suburbs. Their political hopes were pinned on the Jocistes (*‘Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne’*), and after mass on Sunday morning they sold *The Catholic Worker* outside churches. They had an extensive slang of their own, and this, for instance, they called ‘doing masses’. Bernard Wall edited a crusading quarterly called *Colosseum*. He and his wife, a grand-daughter of Alice Meynell, had travelled much abroad, and *Colosseum* was cosmopolitan in outlook.

“Among the writers, hitherto unknown to me, of whom it spoke was Léon Bloy. There were translated extracts from his *Exégèse des Lieux Communs*, and there was an article on him by Jacques Maritain, whose name I well knew, who was, it appeared, a convert and godson of Bloy’s and who stated that his godfather had written the greatest French prose since Bossuet. From Bernard Wall, I borrowed copies of *Le Désespéré*, the earlier and longer of Bloy’s two novels, and *Le Pèlerin de l’Absolu*, the sixth volume of his published journals.”

He explains that aborted conversion: “I was to have been received on New Year’s Day. After Christmas, Father D’Arcy being then in town, I signed a declaration of faith in Latin, adopted a baptismal name and arranged to present myself at Farm Street on the morning of January the 1<sup>st</sup>, for admission to the sacraments. After a sleepless night, I presented myself, but it was to say that I could not do this thing. There were too many doctrines I could not literally believe. I was also much travailed by a consideration which I have recently found stated, I would say, to perfection in the writings of Simone Weil, who refused baptism out of ‘love for that which is outside the visible church’. For the church is not truly Catholic. It leaves the pagan world of antiquity and the other religious cultures of to-day without meaning. I felt, too, that its meaning for those inside was too highly generalised. Although it teaches the uniqueness of each soul, it allots only three possible destinations to all souls, with, in some cases, a roundabout route by way of Purgatory.”

And of his quarrels: “That summer, I was for my own part immersed in nature. The news on the wireless was of Italian Catholics blasting their way through Abyssinia (Father D’Arcy had shown me an Abyssinian Madonna, brought to him, I seem to remember, by Evelyn Waugh). I cut down trees, shot rabbits, played piano duets with Hanley, attended the local *eisteddfod*, where, to his enormous pleasure, they made (John Cowper) Powys a bard, and wrote abortively at a novel. I was temporarily reconciled with Middleton Murry and lived at his Adelphi Centre for several months, during which I was also reconciled with George Orwell, who came down there to lecture, along with intellectual giants like Reinhold Niebuhr and men of subtle and compassionate mind like John Macmurray. I somehow found myself on the executive committee of the International Association for the Defence of Culture.”

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July 28: Malcolm Lowry

    Beatrix Potter

July 29: Booth Tarkington

    Don Marquis

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When someone urged me to read ‘Archy and Mehitabel’ nearly fifty years ago I didn’t manage to get very interested, but not long ago I heard it read aloud and immediately liked it. Perhaps some long poems are for reading in silence and some are for reading aloud.

I had the vague thought that the Mehitabel in ‘Archy and Mehitabel’ was a name he made up. But not so. Mehitabel, it seems, was popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and certainly in

the United States. Take this poem which appeared in *The Bulletin* by 'J.S.S.' called 'A Blue Mountain Tragedy':

Mehitabel de courcy James  
Had several dozen rustic flames,  
From early spring to fading fall  
She was a sister to them all;  
From fall to spring, through smile and pout,  
They squired the maiden week about.

Her conduct's cause we thus may trace—  
The James's were a mountain race;  
And all the summer, sad to tell,  
Their boarders squired Mehitabel—  
While several dozen mountaineers  
Sat round on fences, shedding tears.

Years passed. One eve in early May  
The maiden churchwards took her way,  
Expectant of the usual man:  
Forthwith that once-devoted clan  
Began with phrase most profuse  
Unitedly to make excuse.

Reggie and Ted were "going out";  
Jack suffered from incipient gout;  
Ralph had turned Quaker, Mike turned Jew—  
Something was queer with all the crew;  
Edgar, more youthful and more curt,  
Spoke out: "Miss James, we loathe a flirt!"

His bitter sneer, so undeserved,  
Left the shy maiden quite unnerved;  
She faltered, pined, went home to bed—  
And in the morning she was dead.  
The village mourned—"Farewell! Farewell!  
To much maligned Mehitabel!"

Now every bitter winter's night  
(Most of the rhymes for this are trite)  
Along the cemetery posts  
Sit several dozen grieving ghosts,  
And sneeze remorsefully—"Farewell!  
Mehit-ahit-ahhitabel!"

And also in Canada? "Camilla Jane," said Miss Rosetta without a moment's hesitation. "Jane after its mother, of course; and I have always thought Camilla the prettiest name in the world. Charlotte would be sure to give it some perfectly heathenish name. I wouldn't put it past her calling the poor innocent Mehitabel."

L. M. Montgomery in 'Jane's Baby' in *Further Chronicles of Avonlea*.

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So who was Don Marquis and what else did he write? Michael Sims in his biography of E. B. (Elwyn) White, *The Story of Charlotte's Web*, provides this interesting insight into Marquis: "Another of his favorites was Don Marquis, whose column "The Sun Dial" appeared in the *New York Sun*. Marquis was one of the liveliest and most literary of the columnists. Poet, satirist, author of stories and novels, Marquis had the kind of professional versatility that the practical but restless Elwyn instinctively admired. His column was regularly visited by an array of outrageous characters, including, by Elwyn's midteens, Hermoine and her Little Group of Serious Thinkers, a series of free verse parodies featuring a naïve young woman whose balloon-like brain wafted about on every faddish wind, especially the current popularity of Arthur Conan Doyle's favorite hobby, spiritualism. In spring 1916 Marquis introduced a new character who immediately caught Elwyn's attention. On March 29, Marquis opened "The Sun Dial" with gibes at contemporary news stories. Former associate Supreme Court justice Charles Evans Hughes was running against Woodrow Wilson, who was seeking a second term as president. Pancho Villa, a Mexican revolutionary, had just crossed the border and led a murderous attack on Columbus, New Mexico. There was a new outbreak of scarlet fever."

And what about Archy the little cockroach? "Then Marquis—or rather the often fictional first-person narrator of Marquis's column—described something he witnessed in his office:

We came into our room earlier than usual in the morning, and discovered a gigantic cockroach jumping about on the keys. He did not see us, and we watched him. He would climb painfully upon the framework of the machine and cast himself with all his force upon a key. Head downward, and his weight and the impact of the blow were just sufficient to operate the machine, one slow letter after another...Congratulating ourselves that we had left a sheet of paper in the machine the night before so that all this work had not been in vain, we made an examination, and this is what we found:

*expression is the need of my soul  
i was once a vers libre bard  
but i died and my soul went into the body of a cockroach  
it has given me a new outlook upon life  
i see things from the under side now...*

The cockroach, named Archy, went on to narrate the story of Freddy, a rat who had been a rival poet in their previous life. He was still jealous of Archy's talent and was one of many enemies that Archy now had to evade. Then Archy instructed Marquis, "...leave a piece of paper in your machine / every night you can call me archy." Elwyn admired the literate cockroach, who began to appear regularly with dispatches from the poverty-stricken and overlooked underside of urban life in the land of plenty. He embodied both Elwyn's ambitions as a writer and his sense of being small and insignificant, as well as his need to hide from people. And Elwyn joined Archy in hating rats. Elwyn liked most animals but he had always thought of rats as greedy, thieving villains. The first column mentioned a cat who, soon named Mehitabel, became Archy's foil and partner in literary crime. Claiming to be a reincarnation of Cleopatra, Mehitabel was everything that Elwyn was not—free, wild, uninhibited, brave, reckless, promiscuous. Marquis had taken the most common and disdained creatures of the city and had turned them into an urban Huck and Jim, casually working in Latin epigrams, critiques of capitalism, mockery of police, and asides such as Archy's remark that theology was his favorite sport. Elwyn watched and admired and longed to emulate."

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I wondered if Don Marquis was a pseudonym and indeed it was. He was born Donald Robert Perry in 1878 in Illinois. He wrote for both the *New York Sun* and the *New York Tribune* and brought out his first novel *The Old Soak* in 1921. He said it was "a kind of gol-danged

autobiography of what me and Old King Booze done before he went into the grave and took one of my feet with him.”

Though he wrote novels, plays, serious poems, and innumerable columns it is his cockroach and his cat which remain his best memorial.

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July 30: Emily Brontë

July 31: Primo Levi

J. K. Rowling

August 1: Herman Melville

August 2: Ethel M. Dell

Geoffrey Dutton

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There is a widespread belief that women and girls like to read male authors but men and boys wouldn't be seen dead reading a female author. But Sue Ebury in her biography of Ernest Edward Dunlop, *Weary*, remembered for the secret diaries he wrote about the POWs on the Thai-Burma Railway (*The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop*) writes, “Ernie Dunlop's obsession was reading. ‘I used to read night and day when I wasn't doing anything else.’ The bookshelves at Summerlea were better stocked than those in most houses in the district and he graduated from the moralistic nursery stories which his mother selected, through *Tales of Scottish Knights* and his early hero, *Deerfoot*, to Fennimore Cooper, Kingsley, Dickens, J. M. Ballantyne and Sir Walter Scott. Stodgier fare, such as the political speeches of Edmund Burke so admired by his father, and ‘improving’ popular religious works, was useful to conceal tomances by Marie Corelli and Ernie's particular favourite, Ethel M. Dell.”

Ethel M. Dell was, in her day, a modest version of the Barbara Cartland. Although she wrote light romances they were quite well written and interesting. And for their time quite racy. She was a shy modest quiet person in real life who never gave interviews. Her books, not her public persona, are her memorial. And if she wore pink she didn't make a thing of it.

Her books are now hard to find and I don't know what particular aspect of them Weary Dunlop liked. Perhaps as a teenage boy he too was looking for something a bit ‘racy’? But it started me thinking on this subject.

Esther Meynell in *Portrait of William Morris* wrote: “But it is equally odd to remember that at this time another book which he did know and love was Charlotte Yonge's *Heir of Redclyffe*—that pious, melancholy, Victorian novel seems on the face of it little likely to appeal to the medieval-minded Morris. But one of the things which is peculiarly appealing about him during the whole of his life is that he was never sophisticated, never “clever”, never afraid to like what he liked lest he be despised by “superior persons”. Not that he was the only one in his set to admire the *Heir of Redclyffe*—they all of them did—and one of them, Dixon, pronounced it long after his Oxford days as “unquestionably one of the finest books in the world”.”

Of course men don't hide their P. D. James or their Barbara Tuchman or their Kate Grenville when another man comes by. But I suspect most women would still find it difficult to get a man to read a Mills and Boon. I knew a university Vice-Chancellor who did not rest until he had bought every Georgette Heyer. But it might be asked whether he bought them for the romance or because he liked the details of Regency life? Would he have admitted to wallowing in the romance? Of course, you might like to point out that women rarely read Westerns.

So my question is: do boys and girls, men and women, understand each other better if they read across what they might have seen as a ‘divide’?

And Rayner Heppenstall suggests Dell's books were more than racy. “This is a public whose reading matter must first of all be respectable. It does not permit itself pornography or

any other kind of unpleasantness. Or rather, it does not permit itself what it recognises as pornography and unpleasantness. On the other hand, critics have detected a concealed pornographical (sadistical) element in the writings of such earlier favourites of the public as Ethel M. Dell.”

The belief that it was all right for the hero to behave abominably so long as he was handsome, tall, rich, and would end up saying ‘I love you’, disfigured many books in the romance genre. Racy? Sadistical? Or simply a fortunately discarded belief?

\* \* \* \* \*

August 3: P. D. James  
August 4: Tim Winton  
August 5: Ted Hughes  
August 6: John Middleton Murry  
August 7: Dean Farrar  
August 8: Frank Richards  
August 9: Philip Larkin  
August 10: Laurence Binyon  
August 11: Enid Blyton  
          Hugh MacDiarmid  
August 12: Radclyffe Hall  
August 13: A. A. (Arthur Angell) Phillips  
          Alfred Hitchcock

\* \* \* \* \*

“It is more fashionable to complain of our isolation than of our lack of it, and it is true that distance from world centres imposes grave disadvantages; but, in another sense, the lack of isolation inevitable to a young colonial off-shoot of a nation with a strong cultural tradition, seems to me a much graver disability. Our artists work in the intimidating shadow of the giant Anglo-Saxon communities. They are exposed to comparisons too unreasonable to be stimulating, tempted always to imitation, instead of the wise acceptance of ‘influences’, edged towards either an inhibiting humility or the raucous bravado of the consciously inferior. It is far harder to be unaffectedly Australian than, let us say, to be honestly Peruvian—the Spanish tradition gives background, but it does not overwhelm.”

‘Culture and Canberra’ in *The Cultural Cringe* by A. A. Phillips.

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The more I look back to Australian writers now dead and forgotten the more I realize what a lot of competent and interesting writers we have had. But what they were writing was rarely deemed literature. And therefore the literary figures of the age must be living somewhere else.

But it always comes back to that vexed question: where do you draw the line between literature and other kinds of writing? Dickens wrote serials for ‘the masses’ not highbrow academics but we now put his books into the spaces marked ‘Literature’ ...

And was Australian writing damaged by ‘the intimidating shadow of the giant Anglo-Saxon communities’? Of course plenty of books and articles have been written to say just that. But as I get old I find myself feeling less sure of that. Little English children had Beatrix Potter but little Australian kiddies had *The Magic Pudding* and the *Gumnut Babies*. Older English children had Richmal Crompton’s *William* but older Aussie kids had the *Billabong* books. By the time such children were grown up and looking for greater depths in their reading they were deeply imbued with the idea that Australia was a place with stories everywhere. Schools and academics then had to convince those same young Aussies that Australia was a cultural desert because it didn’t have Shakespeare, it had no famous historians writing about Ancient Rome, and its best novelists weren’t a patch on Ford Madox Ford or Virginia Woolf or Robert Graves, and rollicking along with C. J. Dennis wasn’t exactly what poetry was all about.

What this suggests is that a cultural cringe has to be learned and developed. We aren't born with a cultural cringe sitting on our baby shoulders.

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I was just reading A. A. Phillips story anthology *An Australian Muster* and in his introduction he writes, "Can the Australian tradition of character continue to live in the restricted and safe conditions of our modern town life?"

All the stories he has chosen are stories of the bush, of horsemen and bullockies and life far from the cities. He goes on to say, "I believe that it can. The pioneer has bequeathed us not only a continent, tamed for us to live in, but a Legend, established for us to live by. The standard of the 'Dinkum Aussie'—the Australian Legend—belongs to us all; it insensibly affects our actions and our outlook, however limited our town-living opportunities. After all, there were Australian townsmen a-plenty at Gallipoli, at Tobruk, at Kokoda. Many of them died; and the Australian Legend lived and grew through their fidelity to its spirit. It will grow and change further as our national life expands; it will, I hope, lose some of its sillier, noisier and narrower characteristics; but the Australian Legend is firmly and permanently based on the standards set for us by the pioneers of the Outback."

The Cultural Cringe developed as the Bush Tradition with its ballads and stories, its articles and its Bushman's Bible attributes faded. The Cultural Cringe belonged to the cities. You would not compare a Banjo Paterson ballad with its swaggie and its jumbuck with an English ballad any more than you would compare a Henry Lawson story of a woman in the Bush with a European story of a woman alone. But the new generation of writers who no longer took Bush life as their subject found themselves competing with the novelists of city life elsewhere. And so there grew up the feeling that the novelists elsewhere must somehow be more sophisticated, their lives and their writing more complex. Donald Horne said, "As A.A. Phillips said in *Australian Civilization*, a belief in easy achievement of happiness was basic in Australia, yet it had not become ingrained in people's temperaments like the joyousness of the Polynesian; cultural influences in Australia reflected the sense of dissatisfaction of European culture." So perhaps we also imbibed that notion from elsewhere—that great books have to be about dissatisfied people ...

Henry Lawson never heard anyone speaking of a cultural cringe but fifty years later we were being 'intimidated' by that 'giant shadow' ... or we thought we were ...

\* \* \* \* \*

August 14: John Galsworthy

August 15: Sir Walter Scott

August 16: Georgette Heyer

August 17: V. S. Naipaul

August 18: Nettie Palmer

Paul Wenz

August 19: Arthur Waley

August 20: Robert Herrick

August 21: Mudrooroo

Will Ogilvie

August 22: Ray Bradbury

August 23: Georges Cuvier

William Lane Craig

August 24: Max Beerbohm

Jorge Luis Borges

August 25: Thea Astley

John Dunmore Lang

August 26: John Buchan

Eleanor Dark

August 27: C. S. Forester

August 28: John Betjeman

Ivor Gurney

Johann von Goethe

August 29: John Locke

R. G. (Richard) Casey

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Richard Casey had a stint as Minister for External Territories in the Menzies government and later became Governor General. He was Australia's first ambassador to the United States with some of his letters from this time recorded in *A Delicate Mission*. And in 1955 he brought out a book he called *Friends and Neighbors*. And in case you're wondering, he didn't call it *Friends and Neighbours* because it was published in the US. In it he devotes a chapter to Dutch New Guinea.

Casey sets the scene: "In the early post-war years, when Indonesian independence was being consolidated, the future of Dutch New Guinea was not a matter that attracted much attention. It was not until the three-cornered talks which took place in Djakarta in May 1949 that the future of Dutch New Guinea came under much discussion. These discussions were between the Netherlands and the two Indonesian delegations, representing the Republican and Federalist elements. The Republican Indonesian delegation was based on Java, where President Soekarno's Government held control. The Federalist delegation came from the outer islands of Indonesia.

"Late in 1949, the same parties met again at a Round Table Conference to arrange for the transfer to Indonesia of sovereignty over the former Netherlands East Indies. At this conference, the question whether Dutch New Guinea should or should not be part of the territories to be transferred turned out to be one of the most contentious issues. The Netherlands delegation insisted that Dutch New Guinea should be excluded, while both the Indonesian delegations wanted it to be included—although some Indonesians, particularly in the Republican delegation, did not feel very strongly on the subject. This Round Table Conference was held under the auspices of the United Nations Commission for Indonesia, of which Australia was a member, and which was using its good offices to help the Dutch and Indonesians to reach agreement. In order to enable the conference to conclude successfully within the time limit which had been set for it (2<sup>nd</sup> November 1949), the United Nations Commission finally proposed a compromise. This was accepted by the parties and was finally expressed in a formula included as Article 2 in the Charter of the Transfer of Sovereignty. The essential part of this Article reads:

"it is decided ... that the status quo of the Residency of New Guinea shall be maintained, with the stipulation that within a year from the date of the transfer of sovereignty (i.e. 27<sup>th</sup> December 1949) to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia, the question of the political status of New Guinea be determined through negotiations between the Republic of the United States of Indonesia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands."

"In an exchange of letters with the Netherlands delegation, which became part of the records of the conference, the two Indonesian delegations agreed that the phrase "the status quo of the residency of New Guinea shall be maintained" meant "through its continuing under the Government of the Netherlands."

At further discussions in 1950 and 1952 the Indonesians continued to claim Dutch New Guinea. Their grounds were:

1. That Indonesia should incorporate all parts of the former Dutch colony of the Netherlands East Indies.
2. That the Sultanates of Ternate and Tidore in the Moluccas exercised some control over West New Guinea's coasts at various times. (Though the demands by the sultanates for tribute from coastal tribes and the taking of New Guinea natives into slavery is not something for Indonesia to be proud of and does not constitute sovereignty over West New Guinea.) As Gavin Souter says in *The*

*Unknown Land*, “The natives of the west coast had good reason to fear strangers: their experiences with Asian slavers (slave markets still flourished in Ternate, Timor, and the Aru Islands as late as 1874) and trigger-happy European sailors were often the cause of subsequent and seemingly unprovoked attacks.”) The Dutch through treaties permitted the sultanate to continue collecting tribute up until the 1870s, possibly because they had no objection or because they lacked the power to intervene. West New Guinea was a low priority until the Dutch Government voted sufficient money to set up permanent centres. Gavin Souter says “This extension of Batavia’s (Jakarta’s) power was opposed in the Dutch Parliament by the young and still weak Social Democratic Party on grounds of ethnic difference between Javanese and Papuans” but they were not listened to.

While Casey points out that:

1. Dutch New Guinea was specifically excluded under the Charter of the Transfer of Sovereignty and “the separate and distinct character of the Residency of New Guinea was recognized by the Dutch under the Netherlands East Indies Administration, so that it has never in fact been part of what is now Indonesia.”
2. “The population of Dutch New Guinea is quite different in ethnic origin, language and culture, from the peoples of the Indonesian islands. ... Dutch New Guinea has, in fact, far greater natural links with Australian New Guinea than it has with the Indonesian islands.”
3. “The Indonesians wish to incorporate West New Guinea, or West Irian as they call it, into the national territory of Indonesia. If this were done, a million people would be moved from the control of one nation into that of another, the second being essentially just as alien as the first.”

You may have noticed that in all these discussions there is not a mention of the West Papuans having a say in their own future, let alone being invited to attend a Round Table to discuss their rights and their aspirations..

This is a point that Casey takes up. “One of the first considerations must be the interests of the native inhabitants.”

He goes on: “It is the stated aim of the Dutch to create such conditions as will enable the inhabitants of West New Guinea eventually to decide their own future. This will mean a gradual change in their society and customs, encouragement of literacy and instruction in citizenship.

“The conditions I have mentioned will not be created over-night, as the native inhabitants of Dutch New Guinea now live in primitive tribal conditions. Meanwhile regular annual reports on conditions in West New Guinea are being submitted by the Dutch to the United Nations, which acts in this matter as guardian of the world’s conscience.

“If West New Guinea passed to Indonesia, it would be incorporated into their territory, and the native inhabitants would lose, once and for all, any opportunity of determining their own future.”

He turns to the issue of co-operation between Dutch New Guinea and Australian New Guinea. “We have now taken practical steps towards co-operation with the Netherlands administration in New Guinea, so that our two territories may help each other to meet the many social and economic problems which the two parts of New Guinea have in common.”

Dutch ministers visited Australia and “informed the Australian Government of their very considerable plans for the development of Dutch New Guinea and the promotion of the well-being and interests of its people, in accordance with the principles of Article 73 of the United Nations Charter with regard to non-self-governing peoples.

“Co-operation is to take place at the administrative level, between officers of the administrations of Dutch and Australian New Guinea. Because of the similarity of the peoples of the two territories, each administration will have experience of value to the other. Services, too,

may be improved by co-operation. For example, the Australian Government is assisting by establishing a regular air service between Australia and Dutch New Guinea. The possibility of improving sea transport and telecommunications is also under discussion—as well as other forms of administrative co-operation in meeting common problems of health, agriculture, education and social development generally.” Given that the 141<sup>st</sup> parallel dividing the island between the Netherlands and Australia cut through not only tribal territories but even through villages it was at times more than a ‘similarity’. They were effectively the same people.

Alas, such co-operation did not continue. Australian New Guinea became the independent nation of Papua New Guinea in 1975. West New Guinea became an Indonesian colony with a closed border. About 20,000 West Papuans have escaped across that border to live as refugees in PNG. ...

Casey said, “Because of its geographical position we must always take a close interest in the future of Dutch New Guinea. Our hope is to see it developed in the interests of its inhabitants under stable and effective government.” That close interest by Australian Governments has been reduced to a general attitude of appeasement: ‘we must not upset Indonesia’.

After WW2 the Dutch got serious about their responsibilities to the West Papuan people. Gavin Souter wrote, “By 1961 the “Papuanization” program was in full swing. Seventy-seven per cent of the lower and lower middle positions in the administrative service were held by Papuans: the number of Papuan junior high schools had been increased from one in 1957 to seven; three Papuans were enrolled in Dutch universities; and a New Guinea Council was established in April 1961 with sixteen elected members (thirteen of whom were Papuans) and twelve appointed members (ten Papuans). The Dutch had announced that no obstacle would be placed in the path of any Papuan organization seeking union of the Territory with Indonesia, but in view of the Administration’s past suppression of such activity and its current policy of self-determination there seemed little likelihood that this undertaking would have to be made good. The leading figures in the New Guinea Council and the newly established *Partai Nasional* (P.A.R.N.A.)—Marcus Kaisiepo, Nicolaas Jouwé, Herman Womsiwor, Frits Indey, Frits Kirihio and Elizier Bonay — were genuinely more interested in Papuan nationalism than Indonesian irredentism.”

Indonesia, unable to acquire Dutch New Guinea by legal means, turned to force. Their attempt to invade the territory, despite a miniscule Dutch military presence, was so inept that tribesmen with bows and arrows were able to capture Indonesian paratroopers. Souter wrote, “Holland flew 1,500 troops to New Guinea, bringing the strength of her forces to 7,500, and Indonesia made frequent infiltrations, not only by sea but by air-drop as well. During May, groups of up to 120 paratroopers dropped near Fak Fak, Kaimana, Teminabuan and Sorong. From the beginning of the New Guinea dispute in 1949 until its eventual settlement in 1962, Indonesia sent a total of 2,082 infiltrators to New Guinea – 1,197 by parachute and 885 by sea. Of this total, 173 were known to have died or to have been killed by Dutch forces or Papuans; 778 were taken prisoner; 926 reported after cease-fire; and 205 remained missing. For their part, the Dutch claimed to have lost only eight dead.”

That might have been the end of Indonesia’s attempt to acquire Dutch New Guinea by both peaceful and military means. But Indonesia had a friend in the White House.

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President John F. Kennedy has always had his admirers, perhaps less so now than in the 1960s, but people still talk nostalgically or say ‘where were you when he was shot?’. Thomas C. Reeves in *A Question of Character* is one of those who looked behind the myth and wrote, “Such volumes as the treacly “*Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye,*” by Kennedy intimates Kenneth P. O’Donnell and David F. Powers; Walt Rostow’s *The Diffusion of Power*; and Rose Kennedy’s autobiographical *Times to Remember* were among numerous books that eulogized the late president. Collectively such works may be said to be part of the Camelot School.

“Behind the scenes the late president’s widow and other family members actively supported much of this literature. They cooperated, for example, with the production of a lugubrious volume of photographs and quotations, edited by Joan Meyers, entitled *John Fitzgerald Kennedy...As We Remember Him*. Both Sorenson and Schesinger received assistance and won family approval of their publications.

“Long extremely sensitive about their public image, the Kennedys also took steps to suppress unflattering information about the late chief executive. In 1966 Jacqueline Kennedy pressured JFK’s pal Paul B. (“Red”) Fay, Jr., into cutting some two thousand words from his memoir *The Pleasure of His Company*. Later that year Mrs. Kennedy went to court to demand major deletions in William Manchester’s family-authorized *Death of a President*. With the aid of Senator Robert Kennedy, the president’s widow forced *Look* magazine to drop portions of a serialization of Manchester’s book. In an article published in *Look* in April 1967, Manchester likened his persecution by the Kennedys and their attorneys and private detectives to an encounter with Nazis.”

And it didn’t stop there. “The Kennedys also attempted to stop publication of *White House Nannie* by Maude Shaw, nurse for the Kennedy children. They tried to delete material from Evelyn Lincoln’s *My Twelve Years with John F. Kennedy*. And Jacqueline Kennedy urged Random House not to publish Jim Bishop’s *The Day Kennedy Was Shot*. (To this day, the Kennedys continue to grant interviews only to “approved” historians and journalists. Younger family members who fail to adhere to this principle are condemned for “treason.”)

“From the start Kennedy documents were zealously guarded by the family in an effort to ensure that the president’s image remains untarnished in public memory. Numerous collections at the Kennedy Library just outside Boston, have been sealed. In the oral histories and tape recordings now available, many key paragraphs and pages are censored (some allegedly for national security reasons). Some oral histories are blatantly partisan, such as the interview of Cardinal Cushing by Teddy Kennedy, and the lengthy exchange between Kennedy loyalists Walt Rostow and Richard Neustadt. At one point Neustadt said of JFK, “He was everybody’s dreamboat.” Rostow agreed. In the stunningly beautiful building at Columbia Point, constructed with private funds and given to the federal government in 1979, one can find little with which to challenge or even question the imagery of Camelot. Historian Stephen E. Ambrose has called the Kennedy Library “a scandal.” ”

I assume all this censoring and pressuring is about keeping the information about the president’s sleazy private life under wraps. If asked what was his favourite hobby he could have said in all sincerity “Adultery”. Still that horse has long since bolted. And my reason for saying President Kennedy did a terrible thing is quite different. When Kennedy pressured the Dutch to hand over West New Guinea to Indonesia, dismissing it as a million acres of “cannibal land” he effectively handed its people over to death, torture, dispossession and cultural and environmental destruction.

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Kennedy had been in the US Navy, he had been in the Pacific. Was he really so ignorant of what the Allies owed both the Dutch and the West Papuans in Dutch New Guinea?

Michael Wolff wrote in *The Man Who Owns the News*:

“Then, in a more worldly lesson about power and about the nature of the big time and the small time, (Rupert) Murdoch goes to the Kennedy White House. Murdoch stops in Washington after a trip to Cuba in 1961 with a Sydney *Daily Mirror* correspondent because Kennedy’s press secretary, Pierre Salinger, has promised the young publisher an audience with the president. In the Oval Office, Kennedy—“very, very charming, he showed us around his office, quite an experience, I was only thirty years old”—starts talking expansively about West Papua, a big story at that time in Australia. Indonesia wants to get control from the Dutch, who have held control since 1895. Kennedy says he’s sending his brother Bobby out there and he’s going to tell Indonesian president Sukarno that the United States is going to change its position.

“Murdoch intends to write the story himself, but the *Mirror*’s local stringer, a reporter at the *Washington Post*, realizing its import, alerts Salinger, who blows his top, insisting what Kennedy spoke of was off the record. Murdoch holds his ground until, flying to New York’s Idlewild Airport, his plane is met on the tarmac by Secret Service agents who hold everyone on board as Murdoch is directed to call the Australian ambassador. Murdoch will recall that the ambassador is “pissing his pants” about the story—and he tells Murdoch that Salinger has pledged that if Murdoch runs the story, he’ll never get another visa again.

“Murdoch, in the retelling, will break into hysterical laughter at this point, remembering his own sense of his place in the world, his sense of how far he had yet to travel, and his certain sense of when to fold. Hence he does come to *understand* that Kennedy’s talk *was* off the record, later allowing as how—more laughter—“this was one of my weaker efforts in journalism.” There will be no bitterness or resentment in the retelling, just enjoyment at the adventure and even gratitude for the lesson. The big time is different from the small time.”

The United States had been supportive of the Dutch plan to grant independence to the West Papuan people in ten years time. But Kennedy in his ‘about-face’ had decided to tell the Dutch to get out and hand the territory over to Indonesia. I had three comments:

‘And the West Papuan people didn’t even qualify as ‘small time’.’

‘So why was Kennedy so ashamed of his ‘about-face’ that it had to be kept secret?’

‘And to think that Rupert Murdoch could have changed history for the better...’

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Greg Poulgrain in *The Incubus of Intervention* to which he gives the subtitle ‘Conflicting Indonesia Strategies of John F. Kennedy and Allen Dulles’ says, “Dulles focused on the Indies before the Second World War, having ascertained that the potential of natural resources in the vast archipelago was, in fact, an ‘El Dorado’. ... Then in 1936, when a joint Dutch-US oil exploration company sponsored a three-man trek into the highlands of Netherlands New Guinea, they discovered a primary gold deposit. It was a mountain of copper and gold extruding from the alpine terrain, shrouded in mist and soon to be shrouded in secrecy. The analysis conducted later in the Netherlands revealed that the concentration of gold in the ore was twice that of the richest deposit then known, the Witwatersrand mine in South Africa. Jean Jacques Dozy, the Dutch geologist who made the discovery dubbed it the ‘Ertsberg’ (ore mountain). He drew a sketch of the surrounding scenery, including another distinctive formation only a short distance away which he dubbed ‘Grasberg’ (grass mountain). When mining began decades later, it proved to be five times as rich as the Ertsberg! The political ramifications of this ‘El Dorado’ have been unprecedented, extending to relations today between the company conducting the mining, Freeport McMoRan and the Indonesian government.

“Before the Second World War, all those who were aware of this discovery realised it would utterly change the future of the territory. The ultimate dilemma for the Dutch colonial government was that the man who was instrumental in forming the company which employed Jean Jacques Dozy in 1936 was, in 1961, the same person who was advising President Kennedy – DCI (Director of Central Intelligence) Dulles.”

Poulgrain says he interviewed Dozy in 1982. “We discussed how the 1936 discovery was deliberately concealed because the Second World War was about to erupt and the ‘El Dorado’ factor made Dutch sovereignty of the territory a crucial issue. Even though the territory had been marked ‘Dutch’ on maps for a century, colonial administration up to the Second World War covered only five per cent of Netherlands New Guinea” ... which helps to explain why there was no ‘liberation movement’ in West Papua; the Dutch had rarely interfered in people’s lives. Poulgrain also interviewed Dutch Foreign Minister, Joseph Luns, who became NATO Secretary-General. “Only after I presented official reports showing the actual gold concentration of Dozy’s discovery did Luns admit he had proposed joint US-Dutch exploitation of the huge gold deposit. Because the American response was negative, Luns explained, the Dutch were forced to vacate the territory and hand it over to Indonesia.”

It has sometimes been said that mineral wealth or oil reserves are a poisoned chalice particularly for small, poor or colonized countries ...

“The Dutch-Indonesia sovereignty dispute over the New Guinea territory was on President Kennedy’s desk at his first day in office. Did Allen Dulles advise Kennedy to hand over the territory to Indonesia? No – but he made sure any alternative decision had even less appeal. This he did by ramping up Cold War pressure to help achieve the exit of the Dutch in 1962. The massive arms deal that Indonesia had arranged from Moscow was a game changer, leading up to Kennedy’s intervention in the sovereignty dispute. It meant that if Kennedy opted to support the Dutch colonial presence in New Guinea, not only would the US face anti-colonial vituperation in the United Nations but also would be confronted by the Soviet Union backing Indonesia’s claim to the territory.”

It doesn’t seem to have occurred to either Kennedy or Dulles that the real players were the West Papuan people who owned the country and had the right not to be treated as pawns by Indonesia, the Netherlands, the USA or the Soviet Union.

The *Historical Dictionary of Multinational Peacekeeping* by Terry M. Mays gives a dry account of the handover of Dutch New Guinea to the Indonesians:

“UNITED NATIONS Security Force (UNSF). The Netherlands granted independence to Indonesia in 1949. However, a dispute remained over the sovereignty of West New Guinea, also known as West Irian. The two states brought the West Irian dispute to the United Nations in 1954. The debate continued without settlement until 1962 when Indonesia dispatched paratroopers to West Irian. All parties finally signed an agreement on August 15, 1962. The disputants agreed to allow the United Nations to assume the administration of West Irian until May, 1963. The global body would establish what became known as the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) to administer the area, maintain law and order and protect individual rights. At the same time, the Secretary-General developed the United Nations Security Force (UNSF) in order to provide security for UNTEA. Commanded by Major-General Said Uddin Khan of Pakistan, UNSF consisted of 1,500 peacekeepers from Pakistan, as well as American aircraft and crews and Canadian support personnel. The mission of UNSF included maintaining law and order and building a new local police force. The advance contingent of UNSF, including 340 personnel, arrived in West Irian on October 3, 1962, followed by the remainder of the peacekeepers on October 5. After the successful completion of the mission, UNSF personnel were replaced by Indonesian soldiers during April 1963. UNSF, along with UNTEA, officially departed West Irian on May 1, 1963. Indonesia and the Netherlands financed UNSF and UNTEA. Taxes collected by UNTEA during the administration of the territory by the United Nations were applied to the funds owed by the two states.”

(Major-General Said Uddin Khan. Khan, a Pakistani army officer, held the position as the only Force Commander assigned to the United Nations Security Force (UNSF) in West New Guinea during the October 1962 to April 1963 duration of the mission. Needless to say he didn’t speak Dutch or any Papuan language.)

“UNITED NATIONS TEMPORARY EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY (UNTEA). The Netherlands granted independence to Indonesia in 1949. However, a dispute remained over the sovereignty of West New Guinea, also known as West Irian. The two states brought the West Irian dispute to the United Nations in 1954. The debate continued without settlement until 1962, when Indonesia dispatched paratroopers to West Irian. All parties finally signed an agreement on August 15, 1962. The disputants agreed to allow the United Nations to assume the administration of West Irian until May, 1963. The global body would establish what became known as the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) to administer the area, maintain law and order, and protect individual rights. At the same time, the Secretary-General developed the United Nations Security Force (UNSF) in order to provide security for UNTEA.

(Despite the lack of reference to military observers, the Secretary-General appointed these personnel to assist UNTEA.)

Major-General Indar Jit Rikhye of India was selected to head the military observers assigned to UNTEA. Rikhye arrived in West Irian with 25 military observers from six states (Brazil, India, Ireland, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and Sweden). All of the observers were detached from duty with either the United Nations Emergency Force 1 (UNEF1) or the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and arrived within days of the signing of the original agreement. The observers assisted in the ceasefire and also helped resupply scattered Indonesian troops in the jungle. Collection of the Indonesian troops on West Irian was completed by September 21, 1962. Administrative transfer of West Irian to UNTEA occurred on October 1, 1962. The United Nations transferred administrative control of West Irian to Indonesia on May 1, 1963. The Netherlands and Indonesia split the costs for funding UNTEA taxes collected by UNTEA during the administration of the territory by the United Nations were applied to the funds owed by the two states.”

And throughout all this the West Papuan people remained invisible despite the UN passing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples only a couple of years before. Some people are only deemed worthy to remain ‘the colonized’.

As the Dutch moved out the Indonesians moved in, a classic case of one colonial power being replaced by another. There was the vague promise of a referendum in the future. But this proved to be anything but a referendum. Gavin Souter says, “On 19<sup>th</sup> May 1963 the Indonesian Minister for Information, Dr Ruslan Abdulgani, issued a directive to his staff ordering an “active and positive” propaganda campaign against the self-determination plebiscite. “We must eliminate the referendum,” he said, “or legal separation, which is wrapped in the terms of the right of self-determination. Our men now in West Irian have been given a firm duty in this matter. We must support them with all publications and radio, with oral, as well as written propaganda.” And President Suharto said bluntly in 1969 “There will be an act of self-determination, of free choice, in West Irian but if they vote against Indonesia or betray or harm the Indonesian people, this would be treason” and he had no intention of allowing a genuine opportunity for all adult West Papuans to vote. Rather a few hand-picked men, closely monitored by the Indonesian army would do as they were told. One thousand and twenty-five men and one woman, less than 1% of the adult population of West Papua actually ‘voted’. Indonesia had convinced the United Nations that it would be impossible to do it in any other way because of the inhospitable terrain and the primitive nature of the people and some Australian politicians even gave this nonsense their support despite, as John Ryan pointed out in *The Hot Land: Focus on New Guinea* that “In Papua/New Guinea the Australians had authorized the one man, one vote preferential system for the 1964 and 1968 general elections, and had performed it with considerable merit—in country equally difficult and among a higher population. If the one man, one vote system for routine general elections was good enough for Australian New Guinea, it was good enough for West Irian where the political stakes of the vote were immeasurably higher.”

But the most searing indictment of the referendum (and the best overview I have come across) comes in Brian May’s book *The Indonesian Tragedy* where he titles the chapter on the referendum ‘The United Nations Fiasco’. He begins it: “Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro and I were sitting on a log in front of his new unfenced bungalow, a few hundred metres up the timbered mountain that rises behind Jayapura, West Irian’s dilapidated little capital, which the Dutch had established on the coast, with the name of Hollandia. I had come across him by chance while walking down the road to Jayapura from an Indonesian Air Force hostel, where I was camping in one of the vacant rooms without permission. If I was a squatter, so in a sense were Sudjarwo and other Indonesian officials, for whose cars bulldozers had cut long, wide swathes in the bush, leaving fresh wounds of yellow clay, made sticky by the rains. For the Indonesians had not yet legally established absolute sovereignty over West Irian, and scores of thousands of Papuans had

made it clear by revolt, protest and flight that they wanted them to go. ... Sudharwo, who had been Ambassador to the Netherlands in 1965-67, was Special Assistant to the Foreign Minister. He had been given the formidable task of rigging the Act, with the help of many thousands of troops, and the much simpler one of hood-winking an obliging United Nations team, which was not unhappy to give the false impression that its presence would ensure fair play.”

A Bolivian diplomat, Ortiz Sanz, was put in charge but it was the Indonesian army which was busiest. “Ortiz Sanz ... reported to the United Nations that he was ready to leave for Indonesia as soon as he was appointed on 1 April 1968, but that the Indonesian government had asked him to postpone his departure. The Indonesians had good reasons for the delay: they had a revolt of Arfak tribesmen on their hands.” Other revolts flared up including a major rebellion in the Wissel Lakes area. “My inquiries in West Irian confirmed a press statement by the Governor, Frans Kasiempo, a Papuan, that the rebellion had the support of all the leaders of the 30,000 people in the Wissel Lakes area. Tribes that had been enemies for years were united in their hostility to the Indonesians. ... the main issue was obvious from the outset, when Papuans seized a Catholic mission wireless transmitter on 26 April; on that and the following day they broadcast an appeal to army headquarters in Nabire to withdraw the local garrison and let the people cho(o)se their own future, ‘free from Javanese pressure’. The Indonesian reply was to send in more troops.” And, “Villagers coming into Jayapura from neighbouring areas brought tales of looting, burning of houses, arrests and some shooting.”

May sums it up: “The picture that emerged from my inquiries in West Irian made nonsense of the soothing utterances of the United Nations office. Indonesian troops and officials were waging a widespread campaign of intimidation to force the Act of Free Choice in favour of the Republic. They were gaoling the educated and terrorizing the primitive, pursuing them even into Australian territory, where they caught up with some and shot them.”

“There was no mention in Ortiz Sanz’s statement of the blood that had been shed in West Irian since his arrival – enough to have precipitated a meeting of the Security Council if any of the powers had had an axe to grind.” But the West Papuans had no friends on the Security Council and few in the General Assembly. Even the Dutch had cravenly voted to support Indonesia’s position. The Indonesians had whittled Sanz’s staff down from fifty-five to sixteen, none of whom spoke any Papuan language. Nor did he have any transport and had to depend on the Indonesian Army for everything. He met few Papuans and never visited the most populous areas. I cannot help thinking that a committee of CWA ladies could have done better than the United Nations. They would at least have made an effort to meet with the women of West Papua, the half of the population who were treated as invisible by the UN team.

When the UN’s members got to vote whether to accept the referendum results or not, and despite the UN official in charge, Ortiz Sanz, saying that Indonesia “exercised at all times a tight political control over the population” most nations, including to its shame Australia, simply voted in favour of Indonesia. “But a small group of nations headed by Ghana refused to cooperate. Ghana proposed an amendment declaring that a fresh Act of Free Choice should be held by the end of 1975, ‘bearing in mind Article XVIII of the Agreement, which, *inter alia*, calls for an act of free choice in accordance with international practice’.” Not only might this have changed West Papua’s history, if it had received support, but it also might have changed East Timor’s. Would Indonesia have invaded East Timor in 1975 as it was trying to convince the world that its behaviour in West Papua was entirely peaceful?

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Julian Evans in *Semi-Invisible Man: the life of Norman Lewis* also points the finger at Eisenhower. “They reached Irian Jaya (West Papua) that evening, 22 January. This western half of New Guinea had been Dutch New Guinea for seventy years when, in 1969, it was annexed by Indonesia. It was an automatic candidate for self-determination — its people’s Melanesian cultural roots gave them nothing in common with their Indonesian neighbours — but again Eisenhower’s anti-Communism, covetously married to portents of large mineral, oil and gas

deposits, fortified Indonesian and US resolve to prevent independence. West Papua is the first instance we have of a UN interim administration. It did not portend well. An “Act of Free Choice” in 1969, with sixteen UN observers for a territory the size of Spain, produced a unanimous “vote” by 1026 Papuan representatives to integrate with Indonesia, at which the Papuans were detained and threatened violently until they assented. Some UN officers, notably U Thant’s deputy, knew the vote was a sham and raised no objection.” ... “a scene of lush peace belied by the military transports and hefty Indonesian garrison at ground level, there to suppress the long-standing OPM independence movement. At least 100,000 Papuans have died as a result of the occupation and violent repression” ... “The crew had got permission to film at the Freeport copper mine, 159 kilometres west of Wamena and 4000 metres above sea level. Freeport was a place to which very few outsiders had gained access — it was also a synthesis on a huge scale, amounting to an archetype, of Norman’s founding conflict: the confrontation between tribal people and the capitalist model. West Papua possesses the third largest reserve of copper and the largest reserve of gold on the planet. To this wilderness came Freeport McMoRan in 1967. No mine on earth moves as much rock each day as its Grasberg mine (production in the first years of this century was between 200,000 and 300,000 tonnes of ore a day.) At night from the coast the mine’s floodlights hang glowering amber in the sky, 4 kilometres up, but nothing seen from sea level can prepare the eye for the mine itself. The spectacular access road drives up through mountains without foothills, and where the blue peaks of the Jayawijaya range burst vertically out of freezing silken mists, Freeport’s engineers simply shaved the crest off one knife-edge ridge after another until the surface was wide enough for two 40-tonne trucks to pass. At Mile 68 is Tembagapura, the mine’s all-American township; at Mile 74 a cable tramway transports the visitor the last 1500 metres through the clouds to the Grasberg’s summit. Sliced like a boiled egg, the huge inverted cone at its centre is deepening year by year as the ore is blasted out and carried to the surface in a never-ending caravan of 200-tonne trucks. The OPM and local people have attacked the mine in retaliation for land expropriations. The army has retaliated, bombing, rocketing and strafing villages with US-supplied warplanes. In 1999 when I went up to the mine, Freeport was still sufficiently worried by OPM activity to send their explosives up in dummy convoys, with only one truck in the line loaded. For the highland Amungme tribe, on whose land the Grasberg stands, the mine was, and is, a cultural and spiritual cataclysm. The earth they walk on is their ancestral mother, the mountain her head: in the past, whenever someone died, they used to be taken to the Grasberg’s summit. The mine, in their belief system, is gouging out their mother’s brains before their eyes.”

Norman Lewis made two journeys to West Papua in the early 1990s and wrote a book, *An Empire of the East*, in 1993.

Indonesia wanted West New Guinea for various reasons: it vastly enlarged the size of Indonesia. It wiped out memories of their pathetic military campaign. It provided a huge increase in resources, minerals, oil, timber, land, and everything on it. It vastly increased their sea boundaries and marine resources. It would provide land for Java’s teeming landless populations. And in Sukarno’s view it was to be a stepping stone. He had maps printed with Dutch New Guinea now as West Irian and PNG was to be East Irian and Australia South Irian.

This might be seen as incipient megalomania. But the USA had no problem with feeding Sukarno’s ambitions. The US was well aware of the wealth of West Papua. Norman Lewis in *An Empire of the East* says of the huge American-owned Freeport mine, “There was no way of squeezing a road through mountain gorges up to the 700-foot pinnacle of almost solid copper discovered by Jean Dozy, a Dutchman, in 1936.” Instead their engineers cut off some mountain tops. And the waste from the mine could be also be cavalierly disposed of. As Matthew Benns in *Dirty Money* pointed out, “It (Rio Tinto) is a joint-venture partner in the Grasberg mine in Papua in New Guinea, one of the world’s largest copper and gold mines inside the area’s highest mountain. The mine is owned by a subsidiary of United States-based Freeport-McMoRan

Copper and Gold Inc” (i.e. PT Freeport Indonesia) “and the deal gives Rio a 40 per cent share of production and a say in how the mine is run. In 2008, the Norwegian Ministry of Finance announced that it was excluding investments in Rio Tinto from the government Pension Fund and would be selling all the shares it held. The Norwegians could not ethically contribute to the pollution and devastating environmental harm by a mine that has been described as the dirtiest in the world. Kristen Halvorsen, the minister of finance, said, ‘Exclusion of a company from the fund reflects our unwillingness to run an unacceptable risk of contributing to grossly unethical conduct. The Council on Ethics has concluded that Rio Tinto is directly involved, through its participation in the Grasberg mine in Indonesia, in the severe environmental damage caused by that mining operation. There are no indications to the effect that the company’s practises will be changed in future. The fund cannot hold ownership in such a company.’

“This was not a trifling protest by a minor shareholder. The Pension Fund manages wealth generated from Norway’s North Sea oil reserves, and was pulling \$1.1 billion of its money out of the Australian mining company. At the heart of its concerns was the 230,000 tonnes of tailings and waste rock that is dumped into the Ajkwa River every single day. The Pension Fund had divested its shares in Rio Tinto’s New Orleans-based partner, Freeport, two years earlier because of its refusal to alter dirty practices at the mine. Friends of the Earth said acid-mine drainage from the open-cut mine had poisoned the river systems with selenium and arsenic and that 70 per cent of all aquatic life was suffering chronic toxicity.

“It is a dirty mine, but not just from pollution. Freeport has consistently denied allegations of rape, torture and murder of people living near the mine by its security guards and the military. The Australian Council on Overseas Aid reported that in 1994 and 1995 the military, in cahoots with mine security staff, was responsible for the disappearance or death of 22 civilians. Another 15 were labelled guerillas and given the same treatment. An investigation by the *New York Times* into Rio’s joint-venture partner uncovered documents that showed Freeport paid members of the military and police \$20 million in the six years between 1998 and 2004 in return for security services. Draw your own conclusions.”

Christopher Hitchens in *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (Text 2001) has a chapter on East Timor. He also says Kissinger was on the board of Freeport McMoRan. He says their “enormous Grasberg mine in Irian Jaya stands accused of creating an environmental and social catastrophe. In October 1995 the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), a Federal body that exists to help US companies overseas, decided to cancel Freeport McMoRan’s investment insurance for political risk – the very element on which Kissinger had furnished soothing assurances in 1991, OPIC concluded that the Grasberg mine had “created and continues to pose unreasonable or major environmental, health or safety hazards with respect to the rivers that are being impacted by the tailings, the surrounding terrestrial ecosystem, and the local inhabitants.” The “local inhabitants” who came last on that list are the Amungme people, whose protests at the environmental rape, and at working conditions in the mine, were met by Indonesian regular soldiers at the service of Freeport McMoRan, and under the orders of Suharto. In March 1996, large-scale rioting nearly closed the mine at a cost of four deaths and many injuries.” I wonder if that insurance for political risk has been reinstated?

Freeport is said to provide around 20 per cent of Indonesia’s budget. This helps to explain the presence of up to 30,000 Indonesian soldiers in the territory. It has to be clung on to no matter what ... But in *The Race for What’s Left* Michael Klare writes, “The situation in Indonesia is even more dire. In 2005, Indonesia produced 1.1 million metric tons of copper ore, nearly as much as the United States, the world’s second leading producer after Chile. But production has fallen substantially since then, largely as a result of diminishing yields at Freeport-McMoRan’s giant Grasberg mine. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, Indonesia’s net output in 2008 was just 650,000 metric tons, down more than 40 percent in only three years. With the quality of ores in Grasberg continuing to decline, it is unlikely that Indonesia will be able to reverse this slide. A similar reduction in ore quality and net output has

also been recorded in other key copper-producing countries, including Australia, Canada, Mexico, and South Africa.” It is not wise to depend on one giant mine. Rising prices for copper and gold only partially offset the implications. And none of that income from the mine is being put aside to clean up the giant mess left behind.

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Richard Casey also said of Dutch New Guinea, “Its importance has been clearly demonstrated in two world wars, especially when the Japanese gravely threatened Australia by their landings in New Guinea.”

More than 12,000 Australians were in Dutch New Guinea in WW2. Many Australians don’t know this. Australia set up a radar station at Merauke (see *Echoes over the Pacific* by Ed Simmonds and Norm Smith), the Australian Navy, the RAAF, Commandos and support troops were all there. Around seven thousand Australians were on Noemfoor Island alone. Mark Johnston in *Whispering Death: Australian Airmen in the Pacific War* writes, “Noemfoor lies at the northern limit of Geelvink Bay, midway between the Vogelkop Peninsula and Biak.” It was here that Norman Barnes in *The RAAF and the Flying Squadrons* says, “Whilst based on Noemfoor, another proud chapter was written into the history books when the first Aboriginal fighter pilot was posted into the unit.” This was a man called Len Waters.

Johnston says, “200 to 400 Allied aircraft ... were pinning down 40,000 Japanese troops in Halmahera, Dutch New Guinea and the Celebes.”

Far larger was the American presence. It is a part of American wartime history, the U.S. engagement with West Papua, which is virtually unknown in Australia or, indeed, in America.. But Lieutenant-General Robert Eichelberger in his book *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* points out that Dutch New Guinea was a key part of the Allied defeat of Japan. And that the capture of the capital Hollandia (now Jayapura) began this vital process. “Hollandia became one of the great bases of the war. In the deep waters of Humboldt Bay a complete fleet could lie at anchor. Tremendous docks were constructed, and one hundred and thirty-five miles of pipeline were led over the hills to feed gasoline to the airfields. Where once I had seen only a few native villages and an expanse of primeval forest, a city of one hundred and forty thousand men took occupancy.”

And “Road construction had proceeded simultaneously, and this was a gigantic task. Sides of mountains were carved away, bridges and culverts were thrown across rivers and creeks, gravel and stone “fill” was poured into sago swamps to make highways as tall as Mississippi levees.” And later, “In the vicinity of Hollandia Town on Humboldt Bay we had laid aside a section for the Navy. Seabees—a Navy engineering group—landed and constructed a beautiful village there and an excellent pattern of roads.”

The Americans when they captured Hollandia found: “There was one humanitarian aspect of our surprise at Hollandia which has never ceased to give me satisfaction. When the Japanese garrison fled to the mountains and remote hinterland, where we were still hunting out and killing them many weeks later, they abandoned large numbers of East Indian military prisoners whom they had used as slave labor. These prisoners had been taken at Singapore. We also rescued, after a spirited chase of the Japanese units which had them in charge, about one hundred and twenty-five nuns and missionaries of many nations who were otherwise doomed to early death. They were Australian, Dutch, German, and American. They were starved and wraithlike; many were so weak from their prison life they could not walk.”

Eichelberger says Hollandia was also a vital supply base for the Japanese. “This is witnessed by the thousands of tons of supplies we captured. There were more than six hundred supply dumps.” Clothing, ammunition, food, saki and beer, hills of rice, medical supplies. “I believe Hollandia was the richest prize—supply-wise—taken during the Pacific War.”

The Allies took all the airfields along the north coast over the next couple of months. Then it was only a matter of leap-frogging from Hollandia and Noemfoor to Morotai Island and

then to the Philippines, by-passing all the Japanese in South East Asia and the Pacific. Dutch New Guinea was the key to this amazing route.

There were at least 38,000 Japanese in the Dutch territory. I don't know if any Japanese historians have taken this as their subject. Equally little known are the Dutch experiences in their wartime territory. Lloyd Rhys in *Jungle Pimpernel* tells the story of Dutch officer Jean Victor de Bruijn. The name was not bestowed on him by Rhys but rather the "Dutch war correspondent, van Sluys, was responsible for giving de Bruijn the name of "Jungle Pimpernel." In his article van Sluys gave an outline of de Bruijn's experiences in the central mountains, and told how:

"In the dark days of 1942 he [de Bruijn] heard one after another of the Netherlands Radio Stations close down as the Japanese wave of occupation engulfed more and more of the Netherlands Indies Archipelago. He switched his radio set over to the B.B.C. and San Francisco for news from the outside world, picturing for himself how the Japanese would be first brought to a standstill and then driven back with increasing speed.

"He completely disregarded the Japanese letters urging him to surrender and doggedly remained at his Post. *Like an elusive Jungle Pimpernel* he escaped the Japanese patrols which were sent out to catch him, and he continued to establish new Netherlands Indies Posts as nerve centres in his vast, wild, even partly explored districts of unlimited boundaries....In those rugged, wild tablelands he built an outpost for the Netherlands Empire amongst 100,000 Papuans still living in the Stone Age." To call snow-capped mountains 'tablelands' suggests van Sluys had never actually been to New Guinea. De Bruijn was both a patrol officer and an explorer, a surveyor and a census-taker, who learnt several local languages. He set up the 'Oaktree' group which harried the Japanese with their few weapons but was mainly an intelligence gathering operation. The semi-naked Papuans could walk into Japanese camps and be seen as unarmed and harmless, as their sharp eyes and good memories took in all aspects of these strange Oriental people. As well as 'Oaktree' for which de Bruijn was decorated, Captain van Eechoud trained and armed first his Mandatjan Brothers to do commando-intelligence work and then the broader Papuan Vrijwilligers Korps (PVK) provided with rifles in American air drops to harry the Japanese, the PVK being credited with killing 2,110 Japanese and taking 249 prisoner, while de Bruijn trained another group called 'Crayfish' to operate in the Geelvink Bay area. J. van Eechoud wrote two books about Dutch New Guinea, *With Machete and Compass Through New Guinea* and *Forgotten Earth: New Guinea*.

A Dutch farmer there, Maurits Kokkelink, in his book *We Fought in the Jungle: My Guerilla struggle in Dutch New Guinea in the Second World War* refers to the guerilla campaign fought beyond Manokwari and the help he and his small group of guerilla fighters in the Vogelkop region received from the local West Papuan villagers. He arrived in 1933 and on 12 April 1942 a large Japanese fleet anchored off the town but the military commander Willemsz Geeroms had prepared supply dumps in the jungle and immediately evacuated the town. Dutch New Guinea refused to surrender, the only Dutch territory to meet every Japanese demand with a firm No. For two years Kokkelink moved to and fro and when the Allies moved in he was asked to search for the internment camps where the Japanese had held women and children in the Vogelkop area and then to search for their hidden radar station. Some of the tribal people were hostile to anyone seeking to enter their territory, Dutch, Japanese or anything else. Others provided food and practical help, such as traversing rattan bridges over raging torrents. "I trembled with fear, because some of us were frightened of heights and were already biting their lips nervously. And no wonder when you saw the cursed river roaring deep below us. The two Papuans were invaluable. Tirelessly, imperturbably they carried the insecure to the other side, holding the most frightened men like children by the hand." And for relaying messages and communicating news. "The Papuan telephone is able to relay news just as quickly as our modern way. The messages are shouted from man to man. One word translates a whole sentence, but the same word with a different stress has a completely different meaning. Since only specific sounds

travel clearly over long distances their telephone vocabulary is limited, yet on occasion I saw them receive complicated news that was entirely intelligible and later proved to be completely reliable. Over long distances the Papuans use an exceptionally shaped shell or horn that creates a deep penetrating sound like a foghorn, and with a favourable wind can relay over distances of more than three kilometres. In rugged mountain terrain this is the equivalent of a day's walk. They also message with smoke signals, but this is more an SOS signal. We often laughed at the customs and needs of these 'cannibals', which many of them still were, but we made use of their barbaric methods, and our 'advanced' civilization learned a great deal from them in other things as well such as snakebite, illnesses, wounds, erecting bivouac, weather forecasting and botany."

"I spared my people by taking short marches, and giving the Papuans sentry duty at night. They enjoyed this task, were good at it, and didn't think it necessary to be relieved every two hours as our people required. During the night one hears hundreds of unfamiliar sounds in the jungle. We were always nervous and even occasionally raised false alarms. But the Papuans, with their sharp eyes and well-trained ears, weren't so easily fooled, and unfailingly differentiated between the sounds."

And then there was building and carrying. "With the help of Papuans the lieutenant built the airstrip, which required a week of work removing countless rocks and stones." (Lieutenant Rasak had sent out groups of Papuans and one of them stumbled upon the Quartermaster and Mellenberg on the Wepia River. "We had reached the point of knocking ourselves off when the Papuans arrived" the quartermaster said. "We weren't in any condition to move but they got a fishing *prau* and landed us here at Sansapor."

The small town of Manokwari was bombed by Japan, the US and Australia. There was not much left at war's end and unexploded bombs are still found there. And there was no compensation to help people rebuild their houses and food gardens.

Undoubtedly Richard Casey was better informed about this virtually forgotten campaign than most Australians and although he was looking at West New Guinea from an Australian perspective he could see that Australia's wishes for the island of New Guinea to eventually become free, independent, stable, with its people benefiting from their own resources, coincided with the needs and wishes of the people of New Guinea.

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August 30: Mary Shelley

Carmel Bird

August 31: Charmian Clift

September 1: Edgar Rice Burroughs

September 2: Eugene Field

John Le Gay Brereton

September 3: Will Dyson

September 4: Mary Renault

Sir Charles Dilke

September 5: Arthur Koestler

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"In 1948, a German art restorer named Dietrich Fey, engaged in reconstruction work on Lübeck's ancient St. Marien Church, stated that his workmen had discovered traces of old Gothic wall paintings dating back to the thirteenth century, under a coating of chalk on the church walls. The restoration of the paintings was entrusted to Fey's assistant, Lothar Malskat, who finished the job two years later. In 1950, Chancellor Adenauer presided over the ceremonies marking the completion of the restoration work in the presence of art experts from all parts of Europe. Their unanimous opinion, voiced by Chancellor Adenauer, was that the twenty-one thirteenth-century Gothic saints on the church walls were "a valuable treasure and a fabulous discovery of lost masterpieces."

“None of the experts on that or any later occasion expressed doubt as to the authenticity of the frescoes. It was Herr Malskat himself who, two years later, disclosed the fraud. He presented himself on his own initiative at Lübeck police headquarters, where he stated that the frescoes were entirely his own work, undertaken by order from his boss, Herr Fey, and asked to be tried for forgery. The leading German art experts, however, stuck to their opinion: the frescoes, they said, were no doubt genuine, and Herr Malskat was merely seeking cheap publicity. An official Board of Investigation was appointed which came to the conclusion that the restoration of the wall paintings was a hoax—but only after Herr Malskat had confessed that he had also manufactured hundreds of Rembrandts, Watteaus, Toulouse-Lautrecs, Picassos, Henri Rousseaus, Corots, Chagalls, Vlamincks, and other masters, and sold them as originals—some of which were actually found by the police in Herr Fey’s house. Without this evidence, it is doubtful whether the German experts would ever have admitted having been fooled.

“My point is not the fallibility of the experts. Herr Malskat’s exploit is merely the most recent of a number of similarly successful hoaxes and forgeries—of which the most fabulous were probably van Megeeren’s false Vermeers. The disturbing question which they raise is whether the Lübeck saints are less beautiful, and have ceased to be “a valuable treasure of masterpieces,” simply because they had been painted by Herr Malskat and not by somebody else?”

Arthur Koestler in an article ‘The Anatomy of Snobbery’ in *The Anchor Review* (1955).

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I enjoy watching ‘Fake or Fortune’ but it has always puzzled me why it is the signature on the painting rather than the painting itself which matters. I belong to those happy hordes who believe in ‘I know what I like’ rather than the pronouncements and arguments of the experts.

I have just been reading *I Was Vermeer* by Frank Wynne in which he chronicles the life of famous Dutch forger, Han van Meegeren. It started out as a fairly conventional life of painting and illustrating, then he learned about art restoration which gave him knowledge of the paints, canvases, wood, nails and so on used by the Old Masters, then he moved on to forging paintings. In particular he was fascinated by Vermeer and decided to create paintings to fit into the apparent gaps in the painter’s life. Several of his forgeries were accepted as genuine to much excitement and acclaim.

(The Antiques Roadshow’s *Guide to Fakes, Forgeries and Copies* says, “In order to artificially age the painting, and to make sure that it passed the alcohol test, he dipped his brush alternately in paint and a mixture of phenolformaldehyde and lilac oil. He then baked the painting in an oven.”)

But then he was charged with treason. He had supposedly sold a Vermeer to Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring. He could have avoided the charge by telling everyone it was a forgery. But that would put in jeopardy the other Vermeers he had forged and sold very profitably. He stayed silent. The strange thing was that when he finally decided to tell everyone that Göring’s painting was a fake he wasn’t believed.

He provided a great deal of background information but not everyone was convinced. When he came to court he was charged with obtaining money by deception and given a year in prison. Before he could serve his sentence he died. But the debate raged on. What was real and what was faked?

Wynne writes, “Forgery is art’s shadow-self, the vice without which virtue is impossible. For as long as mankind has coveted objects for their history, their beauty, their proximity to genius, the forger has been there with a mocking smirk ready to satisfy the demand. Art is the business of selling fetishes, sacred relics once touched by genius: what the forger offers the gullible buyer is not art, it is ‘authenticity’, something John Groom argues ‘is the abiding perversion of our times. It is indulged as a vice, worshipped as a fetish, embraced as a virtue ... Everything it touches turns to gold — or at least is burnished with a scrape of lustre — and in that sense it is the mark of genius, the Midas touch, the apotheosis of capitalism.’

“For an artist with a little talent and few scruples, forgery offers not only riches, but a clandestine celebrity. To know that one’s paintings hang in the Louvre, the Met, the Tate — even if no one else can ever know — is the finest revenge. Once in a gallery, there is little chance that the forger will be unmasked: as Théodore Rousseau pointed out, ‘We should all realise that we can only talk about the bad forgeries, the ones that have been detected; the good ones are still hanging on the walls.’ “

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The other day, while I was reading Robert Lacey’s *Sotheby’s*, I came upon a different issue in the art market. London became the centre of the world’s art market not least because so many young men on the Grand Tour came home laden with Continental paintings and sculptures and then the English were always ready to step in and buy when wars and invasions ravaged the Continent. But by the 1960s the supply of Old Masters was drying up and Sotheby’s turned to lesser artists. One of these was an artist called Boudin “a pre-Impressionist who had churned out sandy-coloured vistas of the dunes and beaches of his native Normandy”. A couple, the Higgonses, provided a stream of French paintings through runners and other dealers “who expected to be paid for their merchandise, up front, in cash.” To keep the paintings coming Mr and Mrs Higgons were receiving what were technically advances but they were in fact “a fund by which Sotheby’s bankrolled the couple’s purchases. Peter Wilson was gambling, risking the auction house’s capital as if he were a dealer and he concealed the full scope of the Higgons payments from his other partners and from Sotheby’s financial director, H.M. Robinow.” But when the art market started to slow both in New York and London these pictures ceased to sell.

“In normal circumstances, Sotheby’s would simply have returned the unsuccessful paintings to the seller with a bill for insurance and photographic expenses, but this was not possible with the unsold Higgons stock. The auction house was now saddled with an inventory of undistinguished paintings which took years to dispose of.” The loss wiped out profits “and when the full story came out in the open, experts outside the painting department were furious. Today it has become routine for the auction houses to pay advances to procure interesting stock for their sales but in the late 1960s the clandestine nature of the Higgons affair left a nasty taste and after a fierce boardroom row the only agreement was on the need to keep the details of the episode secret.”

The auction houses then pretended that their unsold paintings had found buyers and fake names were put down as the purchasers. But then an Andy Warhol painting was put up in New York and a genuine bidder offered \$55,000 but it was sold at \$60,000. When this sale was scrutinized it was found to be a fake bid. There were calls for greater transparency but “Sotheby’s New York subsidiary curtly omitted to list any items that it had had to buy in—because they had failed to meet their reserve. If you had not been at the auction, you might assume that the lots had never been offered.”

But in England fake buyers’ names continued to be listed and a journalist called Geraldine Keen felt that custom was not an excuse for dishonesty and she and her editor at *The Times* prepared to expose the practice. Sotheby’s and Christie’s then joined forces. “The two chairmen made a joint attack on Keen, deploying a mixture of flattery and menaces, which included the threat, on Wilson’s part, to ban *The Times* from Sotheby’s.”

But Geraldine Keen was not going to bow to their threats and went ahead with her article in *The Times*. It may not have stopped all the lying but it certainly shone some sharp light on a dishonest practice.

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Some fakes were less sophisticated but still fooled experts. Simon de Pury in *The Auctioneer* wrote, “In 2001 this colossus of art (the Knoedler Gallery in New York) closed suddenly and ignominiously when it was caught in a scandal selling—for millions—Pollocks, Diebenkorns, and Rothkos that had been forged by a Chinese craftsman in Queens who started out selling fakes on a street corner. He was only discovered when it turned out some of the paint

used didn't even exist when the artists were alive. One of my good friends, Domenico De Sole, the resurrector of Gucci and currently chairman of the board of Sotheby's, was caught by this ruse, having bought a fake Rothko from Knoedler, proof that even the most sophisticated collectors, with the resources for investigating provenance, could get fooled."

Nor was it only artwork which got forged and which fooled the experts. Peter Hinks in *Jewellery* wrote: "William Smith and Charles Eaton inhabited a different world; the riverside London of the nineteenth century. Both earned their living scavenging on the Thames foreshore, at low water, but the handsome prices obtained for lead pilgrim badges pointed out their true vocation. In one year they found and sold 1,100 such objects to one dealer alone. At last the truth was told. The 'finds' came not from the bed of the Thames but from a house in Rosemary Street, close to the Tower. The medallions were characterised by a jumble of meaningless letters around their circumference. Some of the most learned archaeologists had been taken in by two illiterate men."

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September 6: Barbara Hanrahan

September 7: C. J. Dennis

September 8: W. W. Jacobs

Siegfried Sassoon

September 9: Phyllis Whitney

September 10: Cyril Connolly

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Cyril Connolly in an article 'Impressions of Egypt' wrote of "One unrobbed tomb in the great necropolis of northern Saqqara" which has "originated a new school of archaeological mysticism". "Here for ten years from 1940, working by night and sleeping by day, M. Schwaller de Lubicz, an esoteric Alsatian philosopher, aided by his wife and step-daughter, toiled away measuring stones and angles, recording inscriptions, to evolve theories which were simultaneously generated by a brilliant French Egyptologist, M. Varye and his collaborating architect, M. Robichon. According to this little group the great Egyptian temples are not merely the dwelling places of the Gods, their priests and stores and altars, dwellings frequently destroyed or enlarged by egomaniac conquerors to suit their pride and prosperity—but "construction in evolution," symbolical of the whole relationship of the universe to man in this sacred country which was held to be a pattern of the sky. The plans were laid down in ages of transition by great sages like Imhotep (2950 B.C.) and Amenhotep to prefigure future astronomical changes as when the sun entered a new house of the zodiac after 2500 years, when the reigning Pharaoh would have to pull down the existing temples, re-erect them on a "secret library" of old foundations, re-orientate them to new axes, new materials, further courts. Thus the temple of Luxor contains the ancient idea of the Microcosm, of man's body as an image of the universe with every organ corresponding; it is shaped like a walking skeleton, the separated feet on a slant at the entrance, the knees by the colossi in the forecourt, and so right up to the skull in the Inner Sanctuary, with even ... glands represented. Esoteric messages to those worthy of them are conveyed by a number of subtle suggestions; we must read each stone as carefully as a page of *Finnegans Wake*, for every crack and seeming imperfection has a meaning. In the "knee court" the break in the blocks runs through the knees of the Pharaohin relief; the legs of the colossi are exaggerated and distorted, while other reliefs suggest a young prince sacrificing at the age of twelve, even as Jesus went at that age to the temple. Some stones are to be regarded as transparent, a blank space on one side being filled in by a corresponding drawing on the other, some inscriptions on one wall of a shrine correspond with drawings on the wall opposite. It becomes therefore the height of vandalism to remove even the smallest stone without detailed measurement and careful photography, for even unfinished sketches or lapidary lacunae intentionally illustrate imperfect or transitory aspects of the soul, "sunlight on a broken column." The patterns of flagstones in ramp or courtyard are particularly full of meaning and sometimes

include whole mosaics where can be seen, in the case of Luxor, the same wise tutelary head. These theories are put forward in M. de Lubicz's unobtainable *Le Temple dans L'Homme* and in even rarer and earlier pamphlets by M. Varye, while M. Robichon (who still works at Karnak) confines himself to collecting architectural evidence in models, photographs, and drawings. The movement was greeted with a storm of abuse" but the writings of M. Varye gained support from people like the poet Jean Cocteau. Varye believed "Egyptology was born and developed in an age of extreme rationalism. The ancient Egyptians have been regarded as a materialist people, yet is it possible that so great a people could have been so dully materialist, so devoid of philosophy, of speculation?" While the critics said, "Man in antiquity progressed only in proportion as he turned his back on myths of every origin in the light of Hellenic rationalism".

But there is no society, ancient Egyptian or otherwise, without myths. And most myths exist to preserve a kernel of truth or to provide a means of moral teaching.

And people have read all kinds of scientific and astronomical evolution in to pyramids while others have used them as a healing tool. If sitting inside a pyramid shape can help people's healing then that is worth doing but I am not sure that the mystical things people now read into the pyramids are the same things the ancient Egyptians read in to them.

Walter A. Fairservis in *The Ancient Kingdoms of the Nile* looked at the urgency to save some of these ancient treasures when Egypt decided to build a giant dam on the Nile and flood the Valley of the Kings. Some of its treasures were saved and some weren't. But in the rush to move some of the monuments something different was lost. The relations of each 'artifact' to another. In a world where artifacts are displayed in museums with no sense of context or relationship this may not seem to matter but it mattered to the ancient Egyptians.

It probably doesn't matter in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To have your picture taken with a camel and a pyramid in it and to look at some things taken from tombs and enshrined in glass cases in a Cairo museum is enough. But I think all ancient peoples were acutely aware of the relationship of everything to everything else.

And Fairservis points to a different kind of loss. The loss of history. The Nile was significantly higher five thousand plus years ago and the terraces along its course show the different heights it reached. They also yielded up quantities of Stone Age tools. Flints, flaked stones, primitive axe-heads. And much later came the Badarian culture followed by the Amratian and then the Gerzean. "It is unfortunate that we know so little about the Gerzean period. Much of the evidence may be buried under the mud of the Nile delta. A large percentage of our information has to come from remains in the Nile Valley, that is, Upper Egypt." This included increasingly sophisticated and beautiful pottery and increasingly complex funerary customs. And then we come to the beginning of definable dynasties in around 3200 BC.

And along the course of the river further up were mud-brick forts with thick walls and towers which contained later histories including scraps of ancient papyrus. "Of great future interest are the torn-up papyri found under the stairway of the so-called Commander's House which are apparently dispatches to Buhen from Egypt. The potential of the Buhen excavations because of the well-preserved ruins is enormous if these finds of papyri are in any way indicative of what is to come. One shudders to think what will be lost if these fortress towns are not thoroughly excavated before the final floods which extinguish them."

These histories faded in to insignificance when set beside magnificent temples carved into the rocks. But every building of grandeur starts far back with simple people finding ways to chip rock and carve wood and lash bundles of reeds together and weave cloth and paint pictures—and develop their own complex relationships with the mysteries of the world around them and the understanding that mystical relationships with the universe, seen and unseen, might also be an essential part of life.

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September 11: D. H. Lawrence  
September 12: Louis MacNeice

September 13: J. B. Priestley  
Miroslav Holub

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‘The Door’  
Go and open the door.  
Maybe outside there’s  
a tree, or a wood,  
a garden,  
or a magic city.

Go and open the door.  
Maybe a dog’s rummaging.  
Maybe you’ll see a face,  
or an eye,  
or the picture  
of a picture.

Go and open the door.  
If there’s a fog  
it will clear.

Go and open the door.  
Even if there’s only  
the darkness ticking,  
even if there’s only  
the hollow wind,  
even if  
nothing  
is there,  
go and open the door.

At least  
there’ll be  
a draught.

Miroslav Holub, translated by Ian Milner and George Theiner

John Ashbery asked in ‘What is Poetry?’  
Beautiful images? Trying to avoid  
Ideas, as in this poem? But we  
Go back to them as to a wife, leaving  
The mistress we desire? Now they  
Will have to believe it  
As we believed it. In school  
All the thought got combed out:  
What was left was like a field.  
Shut your eyes, and you can feel it for miles around.  
Now open them on a thin vertical path.  
It might give us—what?—some flowers soon?

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‘You know, my dear, don’t you, that a poet’s job is to deliver his message, not to explain  
it?’

From *Sparkenbroke* by Charles Morgan.

“There are not too many poems about what it is like to do a lot of fitting and turning, or the pleasures of washing-up.”

Margaret Scott in *Changing Countries*.

“The interfusion of object, thought and spirit is not however peculiar to the African mind. But the quality which separates such poems in this volume from the Surrealists — to take one example — is their avoidance of the Mallarmean extreme, the occidental indulgence which gives an autogenetic existence to the expression of the symbolic-mystical world of the creative imagination, severed arbitrarily from other realities.”

Wole Soyinka in *Poems of Black Africa*. Did you understand that comment? I am afraid it was too profound for me. But I will mull over it at intervals.

“I’ll zap past some constitutive stages like Aristotle’s counter-privileging of the visible over Plato’s transcendent; Horace’s “Epistle to the Pisos” (where the debate gets its name); Jacopo Mazzoni’s defence of Dante against Bulgarini in the sixteenth century; Lessing’s *Laocoön*, and stop before the post-Imagist refractions of the debate that reach into just about every corner of twentieth-century poetics.”

Philip Mead in ‘The Space of Poetry’. And this one, like Soyinka’s, was a bit beyond me too.

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Do these complex discussions about poetry enhance our enjoyment of Miroslav Holub’s ‘The Door’ or indeed any poem? Holub wrote “This is one sense of poetry. A little concoction of words against death. It’s almost the instinct against death crystallised.”

But his poetry is neither pompous nor precious. It has a relaxed almost laconic sense of irony. He brings in animals and insects, even germs, and sets them against a background of war.

“So much for accuracy.

And fish move in the water, and from the skies  
comes a rushing of wings while

Chronometers tick and cannon boom.”

from ‘Brief reflection on accuracy’

“Only the virus  
remained above it all.”

from ‘Distant Howling’

“She sat on a willow-trunk  
watching  
part of the battle of Crécy,  
the shouts,  
the gasps,  
the groans,  
the tramping and the tumbling.”

From ‘The Fly’

Someone wrote that Czechoslovakia (before and after its division into two nations) for a small country has produced more than its share of good writers. This is probably true.

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September 14: Eric Bentley

“Another overnight service linked Paris with Berlin and by the outbreak of the First World War, there were, in fact, a huge variety of “Orient” and other expresses or just assorted connecting carriages with similar names run by Nagelmackers’s company, allowing passengers to reach such far-flung cities as Copenhagen and Moscow, usually with a connecting service to part of the main *Orient Express* service. When the Simplon Tunnel opened in 1906, the *Direct Orient Express* was launched which went through Lausanne, Milan, Venice, Zagreb, Belgrade (where branches from Athens and Munich linked up with the train) and Sofia, taking fifty-three hours. Initially the *Orient Express* was only a weekly service, but as patronage built up daily services were operated on the western section between Paris and Vienna and twice-weekly further east.

“The literature on the *Orient Express*, with its intrigue and murders, suggests this was a train solely for the rich as there was only one class costing 300 francs for a single journey from Paris to Constantinople, around two weeks’ wages for a manual worker of the day. In fact, second- and third-class carriages attached to the train were used extensively for shorter journeys by poorer people travelling in cramped conditions, especially in the eastern countries. In the comfortable *couchettes*, there were indeed diplomats, affluent traders, aristocrats and royalty who were served attentively by a vast array of well-trained staff. The corps of sleeping car attendants had to be masters of various languages, shield their charges from all kinds of enervating frontier formalities, be prepared to administer to their medical needs, and, above all, be discreet. The stories such as prostitutes being hired for bored gentlemen and even bishops by telegraphing the station ahead and intrigues concerning spies and diplomats were undoubtedly true, but probably not as frequent as the novelists would have us believe. Certainly, there is no record of a murder on the *Orient Express*. Like Pullman, Nagelmackers set out detailed rules to maintain high standards, requiring the attendants to be smart at all times and on special occasions waiters were dressed in blue silk breeches and buckled shoes while the locomotive crew were expected to wear white coats, hardly a sensible choice of colour. The passengers, too, were expected to look their best with evening dress *de rigueur* for the seven-course dinner service.”

From *Blood, Iron & Gold* by Christian Wolmer.

Agatha Christie obviously liked trains. She set three of her novels on trains, and trains feature in a number of her other novels and short stories. Perhaps this is not surprising. Trains were a fact of life in the twentieth century. But I feel that she had an interest which went beyond the utilitarian. In *The ABC Murders* she says, “Small boys love trains better than small girls do.” Shaun Bythell in *The Diary of a Bookseller* agrees with this: “Today’s online orders include one of the most boring titles I have seen for a while: *British Transport Film Library Catalogue since 1966*. It includes such riveting films as ‘AC electric locomotive drivers’ procedures’, ‘Service for Southend’ and ‘Snowdrift at Bleathgill’. Despite the popular perception that books about trains are extremely dull (the reputation of trainspotters as banana-sandwich-eating, anorak-wearing bores is probably in part responsible for this), they are among the best-selling books in the shop. Invariably it is men who buy them, and more often than not they sport beards. They are generally among the most good-natured of the shop’s customers, possibly because they are delighted when they see the size of the railway section, which normally comprises about two thousand books.” But I suspect she put herself among that smaller numbers of girls who were interested in trains. In fact, Cathy Cook in *The Agatha Christie Miscellany* says, “The Orient Express had always held a special place in Agatha’s heart.” She took the Orient Express to Baghdad after the breakdown of her first marriage and spent part of her second honeymoon on the train. But, “The Orient Express was nearly the death of Agatha Christie. Shortly before writing her famous book, *Murder on the Orient Express*, she slipped on the icy platform and fell

under the stationary train in Calais. A railway porter quickly pulled her off the rails just before the train started to move.”

I am interested in trains too. I thought Railway Bookshops were where you bought something to read on your journey but when I went in to the one at Central Station in Sydney I found it was full of books about trains. I bought *Exploring Queensland's Railways—West and South of Toowoomba* by Brian Webber for my brother but as I read it prior to sending I realized it was not locomotives which interest me but rather the sense of journeying, the fascination of those old carriages with their pictures of Queensland and elaborate fittings, and the little forgotten sidings where the stationmaster or stationmistress had planted a pretty garden out the front and kept the siding in pristine order. It was the little siding of Baking Board on the western line which fascinated us as children. Why was it called Baking Board? And is the siding still there or has it gone the way of countless other small sidings?

Christie's best known mystery on a train is *Murder on the Orient Express* but she also had a train murder in *4.50 From Paddington* and *The Mystery of the Blue Train*. Wolmer writes, “A service linking Calais with the Mediterranean, the *Train Bleu*, soon followed, using William Mann's boudoir coaches and exploiting what a contemporary railway history suggested was “the most profitable bit of traffic in the world”. It proved immensely popular especially among the British for whom the train was largely designed.”

Although people have got murdered on buses and planes and ships, in fiction, it isn't hard to see why trains were so appealing. Their impersonality. Strangers. Small compartments with or without a corridor. Stops at stations. A mass of anonymous people rushing.

I remember when I was young being on a train in South-West Queensland. I had a compartment to myself. But during the night someone opened the door and threw a glass of water over me. Now if they had strangled me and left me lying on the seat and got off at the next station leaving me to be found dead at the terminus ... would my murder have ever been solved?

And, of course, other awful things happen to passengers according to that immortal poem ‘On the Queensland Railway Lines’ in their *Centenary Songbook*; it includes the warning,

“Pies and coffee, baths and showers  
Are supplied at Charters Towers;  
At Mackay the rule prevails  
Of restricting showers to males.”

And—

“Iron rations come in handy  
On the way to Dirranbandi;  
Passengers have died of hunger  
During halts at Garradunga.”

But—

“Let us toast, before we part.  
Those who travel, stout of heart,  
Drunk or sober, rain or shine,  
On a Queensland railway line.”

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September 16: Alfred Noyes

Wilfred Burchett

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In *Rebel Journalism: The Writings of Wilfred Burchett* ed George Burchett and Nick Shimmin, I came upon this excerpt from *This Monstrous War*, 1953.

“The chief Japanese germ warfare expert, General Shiro Oshii, was not available for trial at Khabarovsk. He was being sheltered by General MacArthur in Tokyo. MacArthur refused Soviet requests for his extradition and took it upon himself to deny that the Japanese had ever used germ warfare or contemplated using it. It was impossible not to connect up this chain of

events as soon as the charges were made that U.S. forces were dropping germ-infested insects on North Korea, the more so as Reuter had reported that General Shiro Oshii had arrived in South Korea at the end of December 1951.

“A little more research provided some more interesting links. The American embassy had received a report on Japanese germ warfare methods in the autumn of 1941. Within a few months germ warfare research had started in the United State. Confirmation of this was contained in the report submitted to the U.S. Secretary of War, Patterson, on 4 January 1946 by George Merck, former chairman of the Biological Warfare Committee of the U.S. Army Chemical Warfare Service. The report was made public at the time, but quickly withdrawn as its horrifying revelations were too much for the public stomach. But for those interested a summary of the report and other details of American and British bacterial warfare preparations was published in *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* for 2-9 February 1946.”

The Japanese had begun major development of biological warfare in 1936. It was seen as ‘the poor man’s weapon’, something which even small and resource-poor countries could develop, and which was much easier to hide than steelworks and oil tanks. I do not doubt that many countries, including our own, have stockpiles of potential biological material. More contentious is Burchett’s claim that the U.S. dropped contaminated insects over North Korea in the 1950s. Children described shining globes the size of baseballs dropping from planes. “From the report of the International Commission of scientists, it is obvious that what the children saw was what was named the ‘egg-shell’ bomb, made of calcareous material, porous enough to allow insects to breathe and which shatters into a thousand fragments on impact and would pass unnoticed by anyone looking for containers.”

Fleas, flies, mosquitoes, even rodents were said to be infected with bubonic plague, cholera, smallpox, and dropped via these containers developed by the Japanese in Manchuria. This might explain why there were ad hoc outbreaks which did not seem to follow a pattern of transmission. Normally plague would be carried from one village to the next. North-east China and North Korea responded not only with mass inoculations but with the largest insect eradication programs ever carried out. “After insect droppings one could see literally thousands of people with improvised gloves and masks, tweezers of two sticks used like chop-sticks, slowly moving over the field, picking up insects and dropping them into buckets to be burned in heaps. They were the ‘first-aid’ teams. Later would come truckloads of figures, cloaked in white except for where their trousers were tucked into black, knee-high rubber boots, equipped with anti-insect sprays.

“Every house was equipped with D.D.T. sprays and fly-swatters. Rat-holes in the ground and in walls were blocked up, even holes in trees which might have provided breeding places for mosquitoes were filled in with a kind of cement. Every propaganda medium, from newspapers and films to the primitive wall newspapers in the tiniest hamlet with their crude drawings of flies and insects, rallied the people to fight against the microbe war. Sanitation squads went from home to home, from office to office to ensure that anti-germ warfare measures were being rigorously applied. It was impossible to enter marketplaces, ride on buses or trains unless one could provide an up-to-date inoculation certificate. Regular checkpoints were set up on every road in Korea, where certificates were produced, and the vehicle sprayed with D.D.T., and the vehicle had to roll over a D.D.T.-soaked matting bed to ensure the tyres were also disinfected. Trains coming from Korea or the North-east were emptied of passengers at certain points, certificates produced, passengers and train sprayed. Goods trains were shunted into special tunnels where an ingenious system of pipes with holes in them quickly and effectively sprayed cargo and freight cars.”

Towns and villages across northern China and Korea effectively became insect-free. And where Burchett investigated at first-hand, and he gives more details in his autobiography *Passport*, I am willing to believe his assertions about biological warfare. People are unlikely to

pretend to seeing, or to forget, such a mass mobilization. But I cannot help wondering about the impact of such mass exposure to DDT ...

And American claims that they do not and never did deal in biological or chemical weapons were completely undermined by George Merck himself. Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman noted that he was the “former Chairman of the Biological Warfare Committee of the US Army Chemical Warfare Service. At the time he published the report—on the progress in research and development of germ warfare weapons and their potential—Merck was Director of the Fort Detrick bacteriological warfare centre in Maryland, USA, which had been set up under terms of strictest secrecy in 1943 following a report by a US War Department special committee that germ warfare was feasible. Detailed references to this is found in *Chemical and Biological Warfare—America’s Hidden Arsenal*, Seymour H. Hersh, Bobbs-Merrill Co., New York, 1968. The *Merck Report* was published in the March 1946 issue of the *Military Surgeon* and the October 1946 *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*. It was quickly withdrawn on security grounds.”

The American public could go about their lives reassured that there were no nasty biological or chemical weapons lurking anywhere but it didn’t make the weapons go away. In 1969 (July 19) the *New York Times* reported that twenty-four American soldiers had been hospitalized in Okinawa after an accident involving nerve gas secretly stored there. The *New York Times* reported that ‘the secret issuing of limited stocks of nerve gas munitions to forces deployed overseas has been standard US policy since the 1950s’ and Burchett pertinently asks, “If nerve gas was stored, despite official assurances to the contrary, then why not germ warfare materials?”

I picture those soldiers, bored with playing with their rifles and grenades, taking out a few of those secret canisters and saying, “Let’s have a little game of Russian Roulette with these!”

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And was Korea the only playground for experiments with biological warfare? In *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* by Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman I came upon this:

“Drew Fethersten and John Cummings, “Canadian Says U.S. Paid Him \$5,000 to Infect Cuban Poultry,” *Washington Post (Newsday)* (21 March 1977), p. A18: this report states that “The major details of the Canadian’s story have been confirmed by sources within and outside the American intelligence community.” Fethersten and Cummings, “CIA tied to Cuba’s ’71 pig fever outbreak,” *(Boston Globe (Newsday))* (9 January 1977): “With at least the tacit backing of Central Intelligence Agency officials, operatives linked to anti-Castro terrorists introduced African swine fever virus into Cuba in 1971. Six weeks later an outbreak of the disease forced the slaughter of 500,000 pigs to prevent a nationwide animal epidemic.” This “was the first and only time the disease has hit the Western Hemisphere” and “was labeled the ‘most alarming event’ of 1971 by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization.” All production of pork came to a halt for several months. “A U.S. intelligence source said in an interview that he was given the virus in a sealed, unmarked container” at Ft. Gulick, the U.S. Army and CIA base in the Panama Canal Zone.”

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“Passengers using one of the US’s busiest airports – Denver, Colorado – on 12 August 1981 could scarcely have realized that they came so near to 10,200 kilograms of nerve gas so powerful that two drops could kill. A massive airlift of this lethal substance was underway during a nationwide air traffic controllers’ strike and on an aircraft the malfunctioning oil pressure gauge of which delayed take-off for fifty-three minutes.

“Governments have a duty to protect their citizens, and dangerous research near densely populated cities flouts this duty. Congress, facing up to this danger, belatedly ordered the Pentagon to destroy or move 888 ‘weteye’ bombs because they were near Denver, and containers with material drained from leaking bombs were also moved.”

When I happened upon this story I thought, ‘Oh well, that’s America, no one would be so stupid here,’ but alas—

I came upon Geoff Plunkett’s book *Death by Mustard Gas* which has the subtitle *How Military Secrecy and Lost Weapons can Kill* and he writes, “It is ironic that the vast majority of Australians are completely unaware that 1,000,000 chemical weapons were landed on Australian soil during World War II. The idea that a man could have been gassed on a Sydney wharf by the same gas used as a weapon by the Germans in World War I sounds so fanciful as to be beyond belief.

“It would be even more difficult for Australians to believe that mustard gas remains on the Australian mainland, in her oceans and along her coastal fringes, having been incompletely destroyed, buried or simply lost more than 70 years ago. But mustard gas containers are being recovered even as this book goes to press. It was a discarded mustard gas container that killed an Australian resident as recently as 1964, almost 20 years after the end of World War II.”

The book details the arrival of the *Idomeneus* in 1943 from Britain carrying drums of mustard gas, leaking drums. The very dangerous combination of military secrecy and carelessness resulted in the death of one wharfie, Andrew Williams, the contamination of many more, along with damage done to members of the ship’s crew and RAAF personnel. The drums were eventually moved up to Glenbrook in the Blue Mountains. But the damage done to the men’s health was lifelong and the secrecy surrounding their exposure meant that doctors and hospitals did not know what they were dealing with. And there is that other question: having taken the drums up to Glenbrook how did the military powers actually envisage using their contents? Did they think it would only be a matter of time before Japanese troops arrived in Glenbrook?

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Jonas Jonasson in *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* unexpectedly provides this little snippet:

“Kim Il Sung was born in April 1912 to a Christian family on the outskirts of Pyongyang. That family, like all other Korean families, was under Japanese sovereignty. Over the years, the Japanese did more or less what they wanted with people from the colony. Hundreds of thousands of Korean girls and women were captured and used as sex slaves for needy Japanese imperial troops. Korean men were conscripted into the army to fight for the emperor who had among other things, forced them to adopt Japanese names and in other respects done his best to eradicate the Korean language and culture.

Kim Il Sung’s father was a quiet apothecary, but also sufficiently articulate in his criticism of the Japanese that the family one day found it wise to move northward to Chinese Mongolia.

But after Japanese troops arrived in 1931 it wasn’t all peace and quiet there either. Kim Il Sung’s father was dead by then, but his mother encouraged him to join the Chinese guerrillas, with the ambition of forcing the Japanese out of Manchuria—and eventually Korea.

Kim Il Sung made a career in the service of the Chinese, as a communist guerrilla. He gained a reputation for being a man of action, and brave too. He was appointed to the command of an entire division and he fought so fiercely against the Japanese that in the end only he himself and a few more in the division survived. That was in 1941, in the middle of the World War, and Kim Il Sung was forced to flee over the border to the Soviet Union.

But he made a career there too. He was soon a major in the Red Army and fought right up until 1945.

The end of the war meant that Japan had to hand back Korea. Kim Il Sung came back from exile, now as a national hero. All that remained was to build the state; there was no doubt that the people wanted Kim Il Sung as the Great Leader.

But the victors from the war, the Soviet Union and the United States, had divided Korea into spheres of interest. And in the United States, they felt that you couldn’t have a documented

communist as the head of the whole peninsula. So they flew in a head of state of their own, a Korean exile, and put him in the south. Kim Il Sung was expected to settle for the north, but that is exactly what he didn't do. Instead, he started the Korean War. If he could chase out the Japanese, then he could just as well chase out the Americans and their UN followers.

Kim Il Sung had served in the military in both China and the Soviet Union. And now he was fighting for his own cause. What he had learned during the dramatic journey was, among other things, not to depend upon anybody.

He made only one exception to that rule. And that exception had just been appointed as his second-in-command.

Anybody who wanted to have contact with Prime Minister Kim Il Sung, must first seek a meeting with his son.

Kim Jong Il.

—And you should always let your visitors wait at least seventy-two hours before you receive them. That is how you maintain your authority, my son, Kim Il Sung had instructed him.

—I think I understand, Father, Kim Jong Il lied, after which he sought out a dictionary and looked up the word he hadn't understood.”

Jonassen's book is fiction but this suggests he took considerable interest in Korea though just what sparked his interest I cannot say.

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And can any 'facts' about the Kim family be trusted? Paul Fischer wrote in *A Kim Jong-Il Production*, “No place holds more mystical power over the Korean people's consciousness than Mount Paekdu, densely forested and shrouded in mist, where the nation's great founder and first emperor, Tangun, descended from the skies more than five millennia ago. Tigers, leopards, bears, wolves, wild boar, and deer roam in the shadows of the birch and pine trees. It is here, according to Kim Jong-Il's official biography, in a humble log cabin tucked away under the snow-covered evergreen trees, that the Dear Leader was born on February 16, 1942.

“Kim's father, Comrade Great Leader Kim Il-Sung, had conducted the resistance against the Japanese oppressor for years and had made Paekdu the secret headquarters camp for the Korean Revolutionary Liberation Army. Among the partisans was a small group of female fighters, the bravest of these women, Kim Jong-Suk, had become the Great Leader's bodyguard and then his wife. At the height of winter, at the very end of a stormy, freezing February night, Kim Jong-Suk had huddled in the cold cabin, with nothing but a small fire for warmth, and given birth to the Dear Leader. The very instant that the infant slipped out of his mother's womb the thunderstorm relented and the skies fell quiet. The dark clouds parted and a double rainbow – the most vibrant double rainbow man's eyes had ever seen – shone overhead, bright in the pale dawn sky. A new star appeared in the heavens at that exact moment, to mark the day forevermore.

“The Dear Leader's birth had long been expected, foretold by a swallow, who had sung of how a prodigious general was coming who would rule all the world.”

Everyone rejoices. The boy has a resistance leader for a father, a grandfather who was imprisoned for his revolutionary activities, and a great-great-grandfather who attacked and burned the American warship *General Sherman* in 1866. And this amazing child is walking at three weeks old, talking at eight weeks, and at three he walks into a classroom and defaces a Japanese map – whereupon “the most violent typhoons and hurricanes lashed the real Japan, resulting in great destruction and many deaths.”

Korean children were required to learn all this by heart—the only trouble was—it was a fantasy. Apart from that poor swallow, Kim Jong-Il wasn't born in 1942, he wasn't born in Korea, he wasn't walking at three-weeks-old. And his ancestors did not burn any American ships. But Kim Jong-Il was undoubtedly there and he had the power to say anything he liked about himself and not have it queried.

And the way people present themselves to the world isn't the key issue. Fischer also writes, "The Venezuelan poet Ali Lameda, who traveled to Pyongyang to translate the collected works of Kim Il-Sung into Spanish, was arrested and convicted in 1968 — on no explicit charges and with no evidence — and then spent six years in Prison Number 6, which he knew as Suriwon Prison, after the nearest town. He wrote, "The conditions of the prison were appalling. No change of clothes in years, nor of food plates.... There are no rights for the prisoner, no visits, parcels or cigarettes or food or opportunity to read a book or newspaper, or write....Hunger was used as a control.... In my opinion, it is preferable to be beaten, as it is possible to grit one's teeth and withstand physical beating. To be continuously starving is worse." A guard told him six thousand or more men and women were held in the prison, "a huge circular place with an enormous courtyard," at any one time. Lameda could hear some of them wailing in other cells, and added grimly, "You can soon learn to distinguish whether a man is crying from fear, or pain or from madness, in such a place."

Dictators who treat their friends so terribly do not deserve friends ...

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"Acting as the Australian representative on the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea, Sir James was widely credited with convincing the difficult South Korean dictator, Syngman Rhee, to agree to a peace settlement during the Korean War. In the late 1960s, he was equally influential in sculpting Australian foreign policy, bringing a new appreciation of Asia and a positive stance on fledgling links with the United States to his five-year term as secretary of the department of external affairs." *The Age* 9/5/1987. James Plimsoll, who had been Governor of Tasmania, died the day before.

Was there a chance during or better still before the Korean War when a peace settlement might have been worked out—and was that possibility lost because of egos and jingoism?

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September 17: William Carlos Williams

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In *What It Used to Be Like* by Maryann Burk Carver she writes of her husband Raymond Carver and a student Nancy Parke: "Soon Nancy was calling Ray and talking to him for hours about the magazine. They were both on fire about the project, which was to be called *Selection*. Ray had the idea of writing to one of his heroes, the elderly William Carlos Williams, to ask him for an original poem.

Improbably Williams responded. He sent "Moon Shots," a poem about two old men discussing going to the moon. The signed manuscript was Ray's most prized possession. Well—at least until the day when poor Nancy sneezed wetly all over it."

\* \* \* \* \*

My friend Yvonne Stadler wrote *Peter, Anneliese and Mr Sumsemann fly to the moon*, in 2008, which was a translation of a German tale: "The German title of *Peter, Anneliese and Mr Sumsemann fly to the moon* is *Peterchens Mondfahrt* (Little Peter's moon-voyage), and as such is still read and performed in Germany today. Although in my translation I have tried to be true to the author, I have changed the title to better reflect the action of the story. Not only Peter, but his sister Anneliese and the five-legged beetle Mr Sumsemann flew to the moon. Perhaps the author merely wanted a pithy title, but in today's world, mention of the male adventurer only is an irritation.

"It is surprising that there is little information about the author, Gerdt von Bassewitz. He was born in 1878 and died in 1923 in Berlin. Wikipedia claims that the work had its premiere on 7 December 1912 at the State Theatre of Leipzig. We know that he was the son of a public servant, for a while was a lieutenant in the Prussian army, became an actor, then assistant-director at the State Theatre of Cologne, and lastly a free-lance playwright in Berlin.

“This lack of information is surprising for another reason – the von Bassewitz family belonged to the Prussian nobility. Yet all sources agree that the person Gerdt von Bassewitz has been forgotten, as have all his other plays.

“Some critics maintain that this story is unsuitable for modern children: good children are now considered sickly-sweet; today’s children want explanations not acceptance of the magic forces of nature; the fantasy is overwhelming; etc. Yet even the computer-age has not diminished the popularity of fantasy by both children and adults, and as this work has been described as a ‘firework of fantasy’ (*Feuerwerk der Fantasie*), I hope you will agree that even though the work is almost a century old, it is still worth translating.

“Translating verse is always a heartbreaking task – the rhythm and rhyme of the poetry is lost. For those proficient in German, or learning, I have left the original German with my verse translations.”

Real moons. Fantasy moons. The moon continues to fascinate us even though we know so much more about it now. Dry and barren it may be, rather than a place inhabited by marvelous creatures, but I am waiting with interest to see what a Chinese satellite will find on the unseen far side of the moon. If anything. The hope that some mysterious creature still lives there, munching on green cheese, dies hard.

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If I ever thought much about it then it was to see the crescent moon which features on the flags of some Islamic countries and is the name of the main Muslim charity, the Red Crescent, as some ancient symbol from the time of Mohammed. But not so. The other day I was browsing in Guy Cadogan Rothery’s *Concise Encyclopedia of Heraldry* and he writes, “Lunel, also from across the Channel, has four crescents in cross. It was by accident that the crescent became the Mahomedan cognizance, for it was adopted only after the capture of Constantinople, where they found the Byzantine crescent so largely used. It had been adopted by the Byzantine Emperors because it was the long recognized symbol of Keröessa, “the horned” daughter of the moon goddess Jö or Hera. It is possible that many of the crescents in our early heraldry may have been brought back by the crusaders.”

And the Muslim crescent came from the Christian Byzantine empire which took it from a pagan moon goddess?

As soon as I read that I began to think on the Moon Goddesses who were so prolific across the Mediterranean and the Middle East (and indeed worldwide). From Astarte to Diana they were decorated with crescent moons or were active at certain times of the Moon’s cycle. The crescent moon was very much a female and pagan symbol. Susan Bowes wrote in *Notions and Potions* of the Egyptian goddess Isis, “Whatever the truth, Horus grew up quickly and unerringly pursued Set in order to reap revenge for his father’s demise by castrating him. Isis became synonymous with the image of the devoted wife and mother, and was therefore adopted as the goddess of the moon and the emblem of the wise woman. The cow became her sacred emblem because it too nurtures and feeds mankind. The horns of the cow formed the base of her crown and represented the crescent moon, upon which sat the solar disk – symbol of the sun, thus combining the divine male and female principles.

An inscription is said to have been found on one of her statues stating:

*I, Isis, am all that has been*

*That is or shall be*

*No mortal man hath ever me unveiled.”*

I found myself wondering if all ‘moon goddesses’ had a similar genesis, that is, the crescent moon seen reflected in the shape of a cow’s horns. Probably not. Because peoples in the Americas who had never seen a cow still linked female deities to the moon. But certainly in Africa, the Mediterranean, up into Europe, and across the Middle East, the symbol of moon goddesses was often a crescent. The moon has declined in importance. But 5000 years ago its

cycle was a key part of people's lives. The goddesses came with many names but were usually linked to fertility of crops and animals and people.

She might seem to disappear with the rise of patriarchal religions. But she lived on in the symbol of the crescent moon. Rosalind Miles in *The Women's History of the World* says, "Of all religions, however, Islam most clearly reveals this hijacking process at work. From the crescent moon on its flag to the secret of its most sacred shrine, the Goddess is omnipresent, as Sir Richard Burton observed in his travels:

Al-Uzza, one aspect of the threefold Great Goddess of Arabia, was enshrined in the Ka'aba at Mecca, where she was served by ancient priestesses. She was the special deity and protector of women. Today the Ka'aba still survives and is the most holy place of Islam."

I am not sure that 'hijacking' is the right word. The desire for good crops, an increase in their livestock, and large families was something deeply ingrained, a survival mechanism if you like, and it is understandable that people were reluctant to completely turn their backs on the ancient source of fertility, prosperity, and fruitfulness ...

\*

And William Carlos Williams generously giving poems away? I wondered why his parents had called him Carlos. It turned out that he had an English father and a Puerto Rican mother. And as well as being a doctor he was a prolific poet. Right up to the time of his death he was still planning out his next book of poetry.

I have just been reading his book *Paterson* in which he chose a small American town and combined history, stories, legends and poems around it. Even if 'Moon Shots' came to a sticky end he seemed to like shooting towards the moon—

Your clothes (I said) quickly, while  
your beauty is attainable.

Put them on the chair (I said. Then in a fury, for which I am  
ashamed)

You smell as though you need  
a bath. Take off your clothes and purify  
yourself . .

And let me purify myself  
—to look at you  
to look at you (I said)

(Then, my anger rising) TAKE OFF YOUR  
CLOTHES! I didn't ask you  
to take off your skin . I said your  
cloths, your clothes. You smell  
like a whore. I ask you to bathe in my  
opinions, the astonishing virtue of your  
lost body (I said) .

—that you might  
send me hurtling to the moon  
. . let me look at you (I  
said, weeping)

\* \* \* \* \*

September 18: Dr Samuel Johnson  
September 19: William Golding

Penelope Mortimer  
 William Robertson  
 September 20: Upton Sinclair  
 September 21: H. G. Wells  
 September 22: Murray Bail  
         Alice Meynell  
 September 23: Baroness Orczy  
 September 24: F. Scott Fitzgerald  
 September 25: Jessica Anderson  
 September 26: T. S. Eliot  
 September 27: Louis Auchincloss  
 September 28: Ellis Peters  
         David Unaipon  
 September 29: Elizabeth Gaskell

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John Sutherland in *The Literary Detective* writes, “The Victorian reading public had an insatiable appetite for this kind of fiction. From the 1840s onward there was a regular annual supply of ‘novels of faith and doubt’, a survey of which is offered in Margaret Maison’s delightfully entitled *Search your Soul, Eustace!* (1961). The twentieth-century reader does not have much time for Eustace’s soul-searching. If there is one category of Victorian fiction which has died the death, it is novels of faith and doubt. Even the greatest of them, *Robert Elsmere* (to my personal regret), has been unable to hold its place in the Oxford World’s Classics catalogue.”

My first thought is that this kind of novel never made much headway in the Australian colonies. Possibly people were more worried about bushrangers, drought, bushfires, and other practical problems to give a lot of thought to faith and doubt or the state of their soul. But *Robert Elsmere*’s author, Mrs Humphrey Ward, was born in Hobart just five minutes walk away from where I am writing this. So I expect quite a few people here *did* read her famous book.

And they might also have had an inkling of the upsets caused by such novels. Sutherland says, “there were some notorious novels of religious doubt written alongside Elizabeth Gaskell’s. In 1849, five years before *North and South*, J. A. Froude published *The Nemesis of Faith*, ‘the most notorious religious novel of the century’, as it has been called.” It would not seem notorious now; questions of faith no longer seem to encourage passionate partisanship; at least not in highbrow circles. But it did then. The novel was publicly burned by William Sewell, a Fellow of Exeter college at Oxford, for its supposed blasphemy. Sewell had written a novel *Hawkstone, A Tale of and for England*, to refute the doubt in Newman’s novel *Loss and Gain, the Story of a Convert*. Newman, a Fellow of Oriel College, then went on to become a Catholic and a Cardinal. So perhaps his kinds of doubts were different to those of J. A. Froude and Elizabeth Gaskell.

Ian Hamilton in his biography of Matthew Arnold says, “At least one of Arnold’s friends was able to approach his *Poems* (1853) without damaging intent. One of the book’s most sympathetic reviewers was James Froude, shunned by Oxford on account of *The Nemesis of Faith* and now a professional historian and journalist. ‘I only half like him,’ Arnold had said of Froude a few years earlier, ‘he comes and hangs about people.’ ”

\* \* \* \* \*

So what of Eustace and his Soul? It was published in the United States as *The Victorian Vision; Studies in the religious novel*. Margaret Maison trawls widely through novels written as propaganda, as a manual for living a good life, to criticize other sects and faiths, to explore the complexities of faith and love, and as the century wound on, increasingly novels of faith and doubt. It is an interesting book, not least for the well-known authors she touches on like George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. And she writes with a wry pen and a degree of sympathy for the

efforts of otherwise undistinguished authors to look into the big questions which loomed so large in people's lives.

She says of Charlotte Yonge, author of *The Heir of Redclyffe*: "The Oxford Movement in particular seems to have brought forth a brood of maiden-lady novelists, of whom the best known are Miss Charlotte Yonge, Miss Elizabeth Sewell and Miss Felicia Skene. All three were devout, long-lived and literarily prolific spinsters of High Anglican persuasions who dedicated their lives to working and writing for the Church.

"Miss Yonge is by far the most famous of this trio. She spent her secluded and uneventful life (almost contemporaneous with that of Queen Victoria) in Otterbourne, Hampshire, the place of her birth; she began Sunday-School teaching at the age of seven and continued it for seventy-one years and she produced nearly two hundred books, although for many years she never wrote fiction in Lent.

"Her *début* as a novelist is interesting. Before she published her first story there was a family council held to decide whether or not to allow publication. "In consenting," her biographer tells us, "there was an understanding that she would not take the money herself for it, but that it would be used for some good work—it being thought unladylike to benefit by one's own writings." At first, too, she had to read every evening to her father all she had written during the day and he then made changes and criticisms. Later John Keble, her "Pope", censored her manuscripts, and under his influence she became the leading exponent of Oxford Movement principles in fiction.

"In her novels we see a striking advance in Tractarian fictional technique. The crudely belligerent propaganda novel has given way to the domestic novel of manners, the interest in ecclesiastical conflict has given way to interest in individual spiritual conflict and, in *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), Miss Yonge's masterpiece, the portrayal of priggish virtue has given way to the portrayal of romantic virtue, involving exciting and even sensational elements.

"For in *The Heir of Redclyffe* the religious, the romantic and the domestic are all most happily combined. The idea of a wild solitary figure coming from a doomed family in a grim old Gothic castle on the crags and being tamed by religious principles and cosy Victorian domestic influences was a new and attractive one, and this High Church Heathcliff, this Byron made virtuous, this new type of gentleman-saint with the passionate temper of a Brontëesque hero, the face of Sir Galahad and the conscience of a Hurrell Froude, conquered the Victorian public and drew tears even from readers not possessed of Anglican sympathies."

An aspect of her fiction (which may have appealed less to young male readers) was the importance of obedience. And this was a central aspect of her own life. "She remained dutiful and submissive all her life to the severe discipline imposed on her by stern parents. Her upbringing, as she herself admitted, was "old-fashioned" even for the Victorian age, and she seems to us today to have been the victim of unbearably rigid and repressive influences. But she never rebelled. "She was always very obedient," wrote one of her cousins, "and both her father and her mother were strict over her, which was what made us very sorry for her sometimes." Miss Yonge, however, felt in no need of compassion. She tells the story of how, as a child, accustomed to a daily diet of milk and dry crusts for both breakfast and supper, she denounced with righteous indignation a kindly housemaid who, out of "misplaced pity", brought up buttered slices of bread to the nursery (with the buttered sides turned down to escape the nurse's eye!). Even in her old age, too, she conformed to the rules and prohibitions (such as cottage-visiting) decreed by her parents sixty or seventy years before. Rules were rules, however harsh, and it was sheer wickedness to break them."

And this repression in her childhood probably damaged her in a different way; "there is about the whole of Miss Yonge's life and work a certain lack of development. She never seems to have completely grown up, and there is in her novels no fulfilment of the spiritual promise shown in her early masterpiece. Apart from this one glorious romance her fiction preaches

merely “Churchianity”, institutional and parochial rather than Christ-like, young-lady-like rather than adult.”

This was not a problem for J. A. Froude. Maison writes, “Two novels of the eighties stand out in protest against such an attitude (the influence of the German Rationalists)—Geraldine Jewsbury’s *Zoë* (1845) and J. A. Froude’s *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849), both novels of doubt, both partly autobiographical and both inspired to a certain extent by Carlyle. Geraldine Jewsbury was an eccentric and ardent spirit who attached herself passionately to Mrs. Carlyle, smoked cigarettes, proposed marriage to men by letter and wrote most daring and over-heated novels that were strictly taboo for the orthodox.”

“Froude’s hero resembles Miss Jewsbury’s in ruining his life through loss of orthodoxy, and Froude, too, is revolutionarily and shockingly sympathetic in his attitude to the whole process. Here again is the tale of the man who comes to be “without dogma” and then finds that “the most genuine emotion of his life” is love for a married woman. Its author, however, is no flamingly unconventional rebel standing completely outside the religious traditions of his time, but rather a man of strong and earnest theological and intellectual interests, whose voice could certainly command a hearing in orthodox circles. Froude not only introduced this immoral tale (taken from “French novels”, declared his enemies) into the theological fiction of the eighties, but invested it with profoundly autobiographical touches (his hero comes under Newman’s spell and then grows disillusioned with Tractarianism), so that the story of the hero’s downfall did not appear as a dreadful warning to doubters, an awful history of a sinner’s crime and punishment, but a sincere and moving confession of unbelief and the tragedies attendant on it. Small wonder, therefore, that this novel, marking a most dangerous departure from the tradition that “religious fiction must be didactic”, caused a sensation and a scandal and was publicly burned at Oxford by the zealous William Sewell, who loathed sceptics nearly as much as Jesuits.”

They might not be books you would go and track down but Maison’s book is a reminder of issues and beliefs which were deeply important to many people in the Victorian era.

\* \* \* \* \*

September 30: Truman Capote  
October 1: Louis Untermeyer  
    Leonie Kramer  
October 2: Roy Campbell  
    Graham Greene  
October 3: James Herriot  
October 4: Damon Runyon  
October 5: Vaclav Havel  
October 6: Val Biro  
October 7: Thomas Keneally  
October 8: John Cowper Powys  
October 9: Miguel Cervantes  
October 10: Ivo Andric  
    Hugh Miller  
October 11: Ethel Mannin  
October 12: James McAuley  
October 13: Guy Boothby  
October 14: Katherine Mansfield  
    Miles Franklin  
October 15: C. P. Snow  
    P. G. Wodehouse  
October 16: Edward Ardizzone  
October 17: Elinor Glyn

October 18: Heinrich von Kleist  
Thomas Love Peacock

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Peacock seems to have been one of those perpetual students, much preferring to spend his time reading the classics rather than working at the sort of secretarial jobs that were often the fate of young men of moderate education and moderate prospects. He managed to write a number of articles and novels including *Nightmare Abbey*, *Maid Marian*, *Headlong Hall* and *Crotchet Castle*. But writing novels unless you could come up with a Gothic masterpiece didn't pay the bills so he took a job with the East India Company and was succeeded in the job by John Stuart Mill. For a man with a dislike of working in an office he seems to have become a quite successful bureaucrat.

But his claim to fame was his friendship with the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. He was part of Shelley's group in England, and it is thought that Shelley subsidized some of his writing. John Williams in *Mary Shelley* said, "Peacock had first met Shelley in 1812. Privately educated, largely self-taught, he shared Shelley's atheistical views, and knew only too well what it was to be short of money. He swiftly took on the role of go-between, as Shelley attempted to avoid the imminent threat of debtors' prison. The couple were reduced to a life of clandestine meetings while, with Peacock's help, a loan was negotiated with the bookseller, Thomas Hookham." But it was when Shelley went to Italy ... according to the DNB, "The friends agreement for mutual correspondence produced Shelley's magnificent descriptive letters from Italy, which otherwise might never have been written." That is worth having as a memorial.

Christopher Fowler in *The Book of Forgotten Authors* says of his novels *Nightmare Abbey* and *Crotchet Castle*, "... his novels are rambling, vague and highly peculiar – so why should we remember him? Probably because the idea of the English aesthetic author has vanished, probably forever. *Nightmare Abbey* is what you might get if you removed the plot from *Gormenghast* and crossed the remains with Firbank's *The Flower Beneath the Foot*. It appeared in 1818, the same year as *Frankenstein*, with which it acts as a sort of bookend. The novel is so abstruse, and witty, and disconnected from everything, that it seems best to stumble from one page to the next and merely enjoy the juxtaposition of words. At one point a conversation about Dante turns into a complaint about readers, then writing and mermaids, and ends with a terrible song. There are discussions on ghosts and sea creatures, and the book doesn't so much end as stop. My paperback version is so old that some of the pages fell out, and it didn't feel entirely necessary to put them back in the right order.

"*Crotchet Castle*, written thirteen years later, functions as a companion piece to *Nightmare Abbey*, and is longer but no more enlightening. Both lapse into theatrical dialogue packed with aphorisms when Peacock can't be bothered to scene-set any more. His tales have no structure, wafer-thin characters, little human interest, and usually consist of people sitting around tables half-heartedly discussing the intellectual topics of the day, yet there's something here that can keep you reading. Peacock's books are a window to the past, and we feel we are eavesdropping on the kind of drunken, heady conversations English intellectuals must have had in pubs for centuries."

While I was wondering whether I wanted to seek out any of Peacock's novels to see for myself I came upon his poem 'The War Song of Dinas Vawr':

The mountain sheep are sweeter,  
But the valley sheep are fatter;  
We therefore deemed it meeter  
To carry off the latter.  
We made an expedition;  
We met a host and quelled it;  
We forced a strong position,  
And killed the men who held it.

On Dyfed's richest valley,  
Where herds of kine were browsing,  
We made a mighty sally,  
To furnish our carousing.  
Fierce warriors rushed to meet us;  
We met them, and o'ertrew them:  
They struggled hard to beat us;  
But we conquered them, and slew them.

As we drove our prize at leisure,  
The king marched forth to catch us:  
His rage surpassed all measure,  
But his people could not match us.  
He fled to his hall-pillars;  
And, ere our force we led off,  
Some sacked his house and cellars,  
While others cut his head off.

We there, in strife bewildering,  
Spilt blood enough to swim in:  
We orphaned many children,  
And widowed many women.  
The eagles and the ravens  
We glutted with our foemen;  
The heroes and the cravens,  
The spearmen and the bowmen.

We brought away from battle,  
And much their land bemoaned them,  
Two thousand head of cattle,  
And the head of him who owned them:  
Ednyfed, King of Dyfed,  
His head was borne before us;  
His wine and beasts supplied our feasts,  
And his overthrow, our chorus.

I thought, after that, I would leave Mr Peacock and his  
books to moulder in peace.

\* \* \* \* \*

October 19: John le Carré  
October 20: Samuel Taylor Coleridge  
October 21: Ursula Le Guin  
          Louis Stone  
October 22: Doris Lessing  
October 23: Robert Bridges  
October 24: Nairda Lyne  
October 25: Thomas Macauley  
October 26: John Romeril  
          Leon Trotsky  
October 27: Sylvia Plath  
          Dylan Thomas

October 28: Evelyn Waugh  
Erasmus  
October 29: Henry Green  
Desmond Bagley  
October 30: Geoff Dean  
October 31: Dick Francis  
November 1: Carlos Saavedria Lamas  
Philip Noel-Baker  
John Williamson  
November 2: Odysseus Elytis  
November 3: Martin Cruz Smith  
November 4: Joe Ackerley  
Eden Phillpotts  
November 5: Ella Wheeler-Wilcox

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I came upon a brief glance at her life in Ana Sampson's *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud ... and other poems you half-remember from school*: "Ella Wheeler was born to Wisconsin farmers and wrote to support her family. Her mildly steamy poems were hugely popular with readers, though critics sniffily included her in some anthologies of 'worst poems'. Both she and her husband were spiritualists (their only child died as a baby), and they promised each other that whoever 'passed over' first would return with messages for the survivor. During the First World War, she believed that her husband instructed her (from beyond the grave) to visit the Allied forces in France, which she duly did. She recited poems to the troops, and lectured them helpfully about venereal disease."

Well I'm glad someone was lecturing them as their commanding officers and chaplains seemed to be doing a pretty poor job. I read somewhere that at least 20,000 Anzacs caught venereal diseases and in a world where there was no fail-safe cure ... I just hope the troops were listening to Ms Wilcox ....

Sampson includes Ella's best known poem 'Solitude':

Laugh, and the world laughs with you,  
Weep, and you weep alone,  
For sad old earth must borrow its mirth,  
But has trouble enough of its own.  
Sing, and the hills will answer;  
Sigh, it is lost on the air,  
The echoes bound to a joyful sound,  
But shrink from voicing care.

Rejoice, and men will seek you;  
Grieve, and they turn and go.  
They want full measure of all your pleasure,  
But they do not need your woe.  
Be glad, and your friends are many,  
Be sad, and you lose them all;  
There are none to decline your nectared wine,  
But alone you must drink life's gall.

Feast, and your halls are crowded,  
Fast, and the world goes by.  
Succeed and give – and it helps you live,

But no man can help you die;  
There is room in the halls of pleasure  
For a large and lordly train,  
But one by one we must all file on  
Through the narrow aisles of pain.

Wise but certainly not steamy (unless I'm missing something) so what else did she write to earn that adjective?

This turned out to be a difficult question to answer. The *Oxford Book of American Poetry* and *The Treasury of American Poetry* do not mention her or include any of her poems. *Women Writers in the United States* says, "Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919), poet, novelist, author of over 40 volumes: *Poems of Passion*." (1876) And *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States* did not bother with an entry, merely saying in passing, "Ella Wheeler Wilcox's narrative *Three Women* (1897), written in predominantly rhyming anapestic tetrameter, also suggests the prosodic experimentation of long poems to be written by women. And her first long poem, *Maurine* (1888), introduced the new subject of an aggressive, independent, and intelligent woman artist who formed a contrast to a mother depicted as a passive and weak woman."

I finally tried *The Quotable Woman* and was pleased to find that they thought her quotable.

Keep on with your weary battle against triumphant might;  
No question is ever settled until it is settled right.

'Settle the Question Right'. Rudyard Kipling used that phrase 'No question is ever settled until it is settled right' but did he take it from her or she from him, or perhaps it had an earlier genesis?

We flatter those we scarcely know,  
We please the fleeting guest,  
And deal full many a thoughtless blow  
To those who love us best.

'Life Scars'

But with every deed you are sowing a seed,  
Though the harvest you may never see.

'You Never Can Tell'

It ever has been since time began,  
And ever will be, till time lose breath,  
That love is a mood—no more—to man,  
And love to a woman is life or death.

'Blind'

Let there be many windows to your soul,  
That all the glory of the world  
May beautify it.

'Progress'

Give us that grand word "woman" once again,  
And let's have done with "lady"; one's a term  
Full of fine force, strong, beautiful, and firm,  
Fit for the noblest use of tongue or pen;  
And one's a word for lackeys.

'Woman'

And you have been waiting for 'mildly steamy'?  
I love your lips when they're wet with wine  
And red with wicked desire.

‘I Love You’

\* \* \* \* \*

November 6: Barry Dickens  
November 7: Albert Camus  
November 8: Bram Stoker  
November 9: Ivan Turgenev  
November 10: Jose Hernandez  
November 11: Dostoyevsky  
November 12: Janette Turner Hospital  
November 13: Robert Louis Stevenson  
November 14: Robert Hichins  
                  Steele Rudd  
November 15: Charlotte Mew  
November 16: Michael Arlen  
November 17: Auberon Waugh  
November 18: Gwen Meredith  
                  C. E. W. Bean  
November 19: Mikhail Lomonosov  
                  Allen Tate  
November 20: Nadine Gordimer  
November 21: Arthur Quiller-Couch  
                  François Voltaire  
November 22: George Eliot  
November 23: Robert Barnard  
November 24: Laurence Sterne  
                  Dale Carnegie

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Dale Carnegie is remembered for *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and it continues to be reprinted. Today, when self-help books flood bookshops and op-shops, it is hard to imagine the excitement and success that met Dale Carnegie when he brought out *How to Win Friends and Influence People* in 1937. Here was a chatty readable manual which didn't preach but was full of anecdotes and ideas to help people succeed. And it probably helped that many of the anecdotes were about people readers had heard of.

Lowell Thomas says of Carnegie, "Dale Carnegie's own career, filled with sharp contrasts, was a striking example of what a person can accomplish when obsessed with an original idea and afire with enthusiasm.

"Born on a Missouri farm ten miles from a railway, he never saw a streetcar until he was twelve years old; yet by the time he was forty-six, he was familiar with the far-flung corners of the earth, everywhere from Hong Kong to Hammerfest ... This Missouri lad who had once picked strawberries and cut cockleburs for five cents an hour became the highly paid trainer of the executives of large corporations in the art of self-expression.

"This erstwhile cowboy who had once punched cattle and branded calves and ridden fences out in western South Dakota later went to London to put on shows under the patronage of the royal family"... "Young Carnegie had to struggle for an education, for hard luck was always battering away at the old farm in northwest Missouri with a flying tackle and a body slam." (Which may be why he often emphasized the lack of education in people who later succeeded.)

He eventually got to the State Teachers' College in Warrensburg, Missouri, where "Board and room could be had in town for a dollar a day, but young Carnegie couldn't afford it. So he stayed on the farm and commuted on horseback three miles to college each day. At home, he milked the cows, cut the wood, fed the hogs, and studied his Latin verbs by the light of a coal-oil lamp" and in a college of 600 students he saw that the students who had influence were

those good at sport and those who did well in debating and public-speaking. Not being athletic he turned to debating. When he left college it was to go on the road as a traveling salesman. He eventually left the western states for New York and offered the YMCA a course in public-speaking. It grew from there but he gradually realised that people also needed to learn how to deal with other people. Now we take Human Relations, Personnel Managers, and so on for granted. He wrote on public speaking, he did a biography of Abraham Lincoln and then he began to distill the ideas he had seen, read, tried out himself, into pamphlets, booklets, and finally a full-length book.

He draws on many examples:

—“Sigmund Freud said that everything you and I do springs from two motives: the sex urge and the desire to be great.

“John Dewey, one of America’s most profound philosophers, phrased it a bit differently. Dr. Dewey said that the deepest urge in human nature is “the desire to be important.”

—“Andrew Carnegie, the poverty-stricken Scotch lad who started to work at two cents an hour and finally gave away \$365 million, learned early in life that the only way to influence people is to talk in terms of what the other person wants. He attended school only four years; yet he learned how to handle people.”

—“When the Duke of Windsor was Prince of Wales, he was scheduled to tour South America, and before he started out on that tour he spent months studying Spanish so that he could make public talks in the language of the country, and the South Americans loved him for it.”

—Jim Farley “never saw the inside of a high school, but before he was forty-six years of age, four colleges had honored him with degrees and he had become chairman of the Democratic National Committee and Postmaster General of the United States.” He had a wonderful memory for people’s names and cultivated this ability. “Make no mistake about it. That ability helped Mr. Farley put Franklin D. Roosevelt in the White House when he managed Roosevelt’s campaign in 1932.”

—Isaac F. Marcossan, a journalist who interviewed hundreds of celebrities, declared that many people fail to make a favorable impression because they don’t listen attentively. “They have been so much concerned with what they are going to say next that they do not keep their ears open....Very important people have told me that they prefer good listeners to good talkers, but the ability to listen seems rarer than almost any other good trait.”

—“Philosophers have been speculating on the rules of human relationships for thousands of years, and out of all that speculation, there has evolved only one important precept. It is not new. It is as old as history. Zoroaster taught it to his followers in Persia twenty-five hundred years ago. Confucius preached it in China twenty-four centuries ago. Lao-tse, the founder of Taoism, taught it to his disciples in the Valley of the Han. Buddha preached it on the banks of the Holy Ganges five hundred years before Christ. The sacred books of Hinduism taught it a thousand years before that. Jesus taught it among the stony hills of Judea nineteen centuries ago. Jesus summed it up in one thought—probably the most important rule in the world: “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”

#### Six Ways to Make People Like You

1. Become genuinely interested in other people
2. Smile
3. Remember that a person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
4. Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves
5. Talk in terms of the other person’s interests
6. Make the other person feel important—and do it sincerely

Fundamental Techniques in Handling People

1. Don't criticize, condemn or complain
2. Give honest and sincere appreciation
3. Arouse in the other person an eager want

How to Win People to Your Way of Thinking

1. The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it
2. Show respect for the other person's opinions. Never say, "You're wrong."
3. If you are wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically
4. Begin in a friendly way
5. Get the other person saying "yes, yes" immediately
6. Let the other person do a great deal of the talking
7. Let the other person feel that the idea is his or hers
8. Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view
9. Be sympathetic with the other person's ideas and desires
10. Appeal to the nobler motives
11. Dramatize your ideas
12. Throw down a challenge

Be a Leader: How to Change People Without Giving Offense or Arousing Resentment

1. Begin with praise and honest appreciation
2. Call attention to people's mistakes indirectly
3. Talk about your own mistakes before criticizing the other person
4. Ask questions instead of giving direct orders
5. Let the other person save face
6. Praise the slightest improvement and praise every improvement. Be "hearty in your approbation and lavish in your praise."
7. Give the other person a fine reputation to live up to
8. Use encouragement. Make the fault seem easy to correct
9. Make the other person happy about doing the thing you suggest

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November 25: Lope de Vega

Jean de Bruijn

November 26: Charles Schultz

Ellen White

November 27: Anders Celsius

November 28: Nancy Mitford

Alexander Blok

November 29: C. S. Lewis

Louisa May Alcott

November 30: Jonathon Swift

Mark Twain

Thomas Arnold

December 1: Henry Williamson

December 2: Mary Elwyn Patchett

December 3: Joseph Conrad

December 4: Rainer Maria Rilke

December 5: Flora Thompson

December 6: Sylvia Townsend-Warner

Charles Frances Laseron

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Charles Laseron's famous book was *South with Mawson*. He wrote, "The idea of this book was born as long ago as 1935, when a chance meeting with Dr Johnnie Hunter led to a small reunion dinner. At this some five of us, all members of the 1911 Expedition, yarned and

reminisced of the days when we were young enthusiasts setting forth on a great adventure. There have been other and larger reunions since, and on such occasions the talk naturally veers to old comrades. As the years roll on our ranks are becoming thinned. Lieutenant Ninnis and Dr Xavier Mertz lost their lives during the expedition. Harrison went down with the *Endeavour* when she was lost with all hands in 1914 between Tasmania and Macquarie Island. Bobbie Bage or "Badget" as a captain in the Engineers was killed in the earlier days of a still greater adventure. He was killed on Gallipoli, and went calmly and knowingly to his death obeying what must have been a foolish and unnecessary order. Dr "Dad" McLean died of T.B. contracted on active service in France, where he splendidly earned the Military Cross for attending wounded under heavy fire. Les Blake was killed in France in 1918 just before the Armistice. Frank Wild died in Africa some years ago, and in the last few years Cecil Madigan, Archie Hoadley, and "Doc" Jones also have died. For the rest, most have settled down to ordinary civil avocations or retired, and it is only on those occasions when a few are gathered together that the pages are turned back, and we feel again something of the thrill that moved us when, with all our lives ahead, we had the anticipation of new facts to be discovered, new lands to be explored, and unknown adventures to be faced."

He was a Collector for the Technological Museum in Sydney but when he was chosen to go to the Antarctic he was sent to Mr Grant, the taxidermist at the Australian Museum to "take lessons in the art of skinning birds". Then came the business of collecting and loading supplies. "Day by day Johnnie Hunter and I rushed about the city in a hansom cab, from office to office, warehouse to warehouse, and from shipping company to wharf." So you know they will not have the clothes, the communications equipment, or the gadgets which make Antarctic life and travel safer and a little more comfortable now.

Two ships, the *Aurora* and the *Taroa*, set out from Hobart. A wireless station was set up on Macquarie Island then the *Taroa* returned home. The *Aurora* went on to set up two bases on Antarctica before returning home. He describes the waiting continent: "Antarctica is a continent bigger than Australia, but approximately the same shape. About the centre is the geographical South Pole, on a plateau over 10,000 feet above sea-level. The whole of the continent is intensely cold—so cold that, winter or summer, the temperature never rises to freezing point. As a result there is no rain, and the snow that falls accumulates through the ages, and has solidified into a vast ice-sheet that covers the whole land to a depth of thousands of feet. So thick is the ice-sheet that only the highest mountains remain unburied."

And, "The weight of the ice-cap is enormous, and as it accumulates in the centre it is squeezed outwards into an ever-moving flood of ice. The movement is slow, a few inches—a few feet—a year. Where the coast is steep the comparatively warm water laps at the base of the ice-sheet and it melts, or the tide breaks it away in small, irregular icebergs. But where the slope is gradual, as at the mouths of valleys, the ice-sheet will sometimes be pushed hundreds of miles from land, floating, but still attached to the shore ice." It is these huge floating ice-sheets which as they break away contribute to sea-level rise. But the thing which is equally worrisome is the weight of the ice-cap. If it melts will the land effectively 'spring up' and if so, will that cause the Earth to wobble?

The men including Laseron spent one winter in the hut they erected on the shores of Commonwealth Bay. Mawson spent two winters in the Antarctic. A replica of his hut was eventually erected in Hobart to give us all an idea of the hardships and the close proximity of life in an Antarctic winter.

"One phase of our expedition is indelibly impressed on my memory. When eighteen men are herded together in a space twenty-four feet square for over a year, in a climate so severe that the greater part of the time must be spent indoors, and when these limited quarters must serve for sleeping, cooking, eating, and for the purpose of many specialized callings, then indeed is the test of true comradeship. It was in these trying circumstances that the expedition can, I believe,

make an almost unique claim. During the whole of our stay in Antarctica there was not one serious quarrel, nor even any serious friction among our members. Yet we were no band of angels, only a typical group of young Australians, with one Swiss, one New Zealander, and two Englishmen, with the average variation of temperament.”

He suggests, “Various reasons may be given for this. We were certainly bound by a community of interest, with the object of the expedition’s success ever before our eyes. Then each man seemed aware of the danger, and was prepared to do his best to avoid it.” He also suggests an absence of social discrimination, Dr Mawson’s leadership, respect for each other’s skills, a sharing of all domestic duties, the “Australian spirit of chaff and leg-pull”. “But above all it was, I think, the individual influence of some of the men themselves that had a profound effect. Those who now survive will I am sure forgive me if I single out two for special mention. These were Bobbie Bage and “Dad” McLean. In all my life I have never met two stronger or more lovable characters. When associated with such men quarrelling seemed fantastic and incredibly stupid.”

Perhaps it was not always quite so amicable. It may be that Laserson was a kind and tolerant man or did not want to speak ill of any of his colleagues or that he had forgotten the small irritations of life lived at such close quarters when he came to write his account. One thing he certainly didn’t dwell on was the expedition’s cavalier attitude to the wildlife there. Emma McEwin in *The Many Lives of Douglas Mawson* writes, “When I think of how strict protective regulations are now in the Antarctic (according to the ‘General guidelines for visitors to the Antarctic’, visitors should ‘not use guns or explosives’, and should never be closer than five metres from wildlife), it is horrifying to think how Mawson and his men treated the animals. They would toboggan down slopes on the backs of penguins; creep up behind them, grab them by their wings and toss them into the sea; turn them into paté, black pudding, sausages, even ‘penguin in the hole’. In an attempt to jazz them up, they often gave the dishes elaborate names in a mixture of French and English with an Antarctic twist. For instance, roasted penguin was ‘Roast fillet of dux à L’Adélie.’ ”

Though Mawson and his team did become concerned about the wholesale slaughter of whales and Mawson proposed ‘controlled whaling’ rather than the open slather he had witnessed with “almost 30,000” blue whales killed “in 1930 alone”. And Emma McEwin writes, “As an early conservationist, Mawson advocated limiting commercial activity in order to protect the environment and to prevent the reduction or extinction of the native fauna. Fur seals had been hunted almost to extinction and king penguin populations were under threat. Partly due to his campaigning, sealing on Macquarie Island was banned after 1919 and the site was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1933.”

The weather was miserable, the food was plain and repetitive, but there were compensations. Laserson writes, “On clear dark nights the northern sky was often aflame with the aurora australis. Pale masses of greenish light flickered like distant lightning beyond the horizon, or else appeared like luminous clouds suspended in the heavens, waning one moment, then glowing brilliantly the next. Then curtains of fire would form. One above the other, from the northern horizon right to the zenith. Five or six curtains would be in sight at the same time—real curtains suspended across the sky as if on invisible wires, and winding in and out in intricate folds. Pale green above, below they were banded with yellow, heliotrope, and pink, while from end to end waves of intenser light raced in and out of the folds in a wild hide-and-seek, until the eye was dazzled by the rapidity of the motion. This would last for half an hour or so, and then the curtains would gradually fade and merge once again into uniform green nebulae, at last dying out altogether. The displays of aurora we witnessed were always in the north, reaching from the horizon to the zenith, but never beyond. We seemed, indeed, to be on the fringe of a well-defined auroral belt, encircling the magnetic pole. In support of this, at the second base, away to the west, they were always seen in the east. Again, in lower latitudes, such as Macquarie

Island and the south coast of Australia, though displays are not so common, they invariably appear in the south.

“That there is a definite connection between the aurora and the mysterious force known as terrestrial magnetism seems beyond doubt. Our base, situated so close to the magnetic pole, was an excellent point to observe these phenomena, and invariably, on the occasions of an auroral display the magnetic needle oscillated violently. Thus the careful records compiled by Webb, linking up with the work of magnetic stations throughout the world have a double value. Helping to throw some light on this as yet little known branch of physics, they constituted by no means the least valuable part of the scientific results of the expedition.”

Although Laseron was born in the USA his parents were English (though of German origin) and belonged to the Moravian sect. They came to Australia where his father was shot and wounded and suffered for the rest of his life, making life difficult for his family. But Laseron seems to have led an interesting and exciting life. He is not remembered in the way that Douglas Mawson or Frank Hurley are but he does have several plants named after him. That is small fame but lasts (probably) forever.

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December 7: Joyce Cary  
Noam Chomsky  
Willa Cather

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“The true measure of the moral level of a society is how it treats the most vulnerable people. Few are as vulnerable as those who have fled to Australia in terror and are locked away without charge, their terrible fate veiled in secrecy.

We may not be able to do much, beyond lamenting, about North Korean prisons. But we can do a great deal about severe human rights violations right within reach.”

Noam Chomsky has always pressured western societies to look close to home, at their own prisons, at the prisons in their colonies and satellite states. I mainly agree with this. If we don't care about human rights abuses in and close to Australia can we speak out about human rights abuses in North Korea? Of course we can but it doesn't mean that our voice will carry much moral authority. And when we look at things like North American slavery and African slavery then obviously North Americans have to wrestle with their own history of slavery not slip it on to the shoulders of those in Africa who enslaved and sold other human beings.

But this is a relative thing; if sanctions can get North Korea to dismantle its nuclear programs—then can sanctions improve North Korean prisons?

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December 8: James Thurber  
Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus)

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Agatha Christie in *The Labours of Hercules* has Dr Burton say to Poirot, “ ‘I gather that you've never had much time to study the Classics?’

‘That is so.’

‘Pity. Pity. You've missed a lot. Everyone should be made to study the Classics if I had my way.’

Poirot shrugged his shoulders.

‘*Eh bien*, I have got on very well without them.’

‘Got on! *Got on!* It's not a question of getting on. That's the wrong view altogether. The Classics aren't a ladder leading to quick success like a modern correspondence course.’ ”

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Outback storyteller Bill Harney said he read Horace on “the dunny behind the Borroloola pub”. The writings of Horace had penetrated the remote parts of the Northern Territory because as Harney said, during the long wet season, weeks without mail, and the sheer difficulty of

getting new reading matter, you needed good books to sustain you, not something you might read once and set aside. But there was a stranger reason. A member of the South Australian Police, Corporal Power, stationed far from libraries and newsagents had written to the Carnegie Trust in New York asking for a grant to set up a library in Borroloola. They very kindly agreed and sent off boxes of books. (I would be interested to know how they chose them. Did Power give any hint of what kinds of books would be most appreciated?) The books eventually reached Borroloola.

Bill Harney, for one, undoubtedly appreciated getting the books but slowly the library disappeared. People borrowed things and didn't bring them back. The termites ate them. Flood, fire, mould. I expect the books faced all the usual difficulties before libraries had any professional help. The last book to survive was said to be C. W. Russell's *Reminiscences of Early Queensland*.

I was surprised at how specific the details were for Horace. But when I thought I would list some of those names that come up, Roman historians, writers, poets, philosophers, lawmakers etc, to try to get an idea of who lived when I found that very few had the same precision as that given to Horace. This was an eye-opener because I always vaguely pictured them having coffee together and then wandering along to the Forum chatting about their writing ... and instead they stretch over more than two centuries of Roman history.

CICERO (Marcus Tullius Cicero) 106 BC – 43 BC.

CATO (Marcus Porcius Cato) 95 BC – 46 BC.

SALLUST (Gaius Sallustius Crispus) 86 BC – 35 BC.

VIRGIL (Publius Vergilius Maro) 70 BC – 19 BC.

LIVY (Titus Livius) 59 BC – 17 AD.

OVID (Publius Ovidius Naso) 20/3/43 BC - ?

SENECA (Lucius Annaeus Seneca) c. 4 BC – 65 AD.

PLUTARCH (Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus) c. 46 AD – c. 120 AD.

JUVENAL (Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis) 47 AD - ?

PLINY (Gaius Plinius Caecilius) 61 AD – 113 AD.

SUETONIUS (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus) 70 AD – 126 AD.

TACITUS (Publius Cornelius Tacitus) ? – 117 AD.

My husband is a great admirer of the writings of Seneca and he never quite forgave his mother for getting rid of his book of Seneca's writings. She, poor dear, apparently thought the Pinochet regime might see it as a subversive book and do something nasty to her, if not the household. Of course Pinochet was quite capable of seeing virtually anything as a subversive book—but could it be seen as subversive writing by anyone else? Seneca, born in Spain, came to Rome and was an official in Nero's court—until he fell foul of the increasingly demented Nero and was forced to commit suicide. Seneca was also a Stoic and is seen as not always living up to Stoic principles but equally that he 'spiritualized and humanized' those principles. We were brought up as stoics, not as a philosophy, but just as an expectation that we wouldn't grizzle and grumble even if we were tired, cold, hungry, embarrassed, worried, frightened or not feeling well. This may have had its benefits but perhaps too the small worries and fears of children which can loom so large never really got addressed because we kept them to ourselves. But I have never come across a book about the children of Stoics. Did they grow up to be Stoics too or did they go to the other extreme?

Seneca could say, "For the only safe harbour in this life's tossing, troubled sea is to refuse to be bothered about what the future will bring and to stand ready and confident, squaring the breast to take without skulking or flinching whatever fortune hurls at us." But I think that is a philosophy for adult life, not childhood.

People turn to Seneca for all kinds of reasons, and he is very readable, so this is just a taste.

—Philosophy calls for simple living, not for doing penance, and the simple way of life need not be a crude one.

—Our ancestors had a custom, observed right down as far as my own lifetime, of adding to the opening words of a letter: ‘I trust this finds you as it leaves me, in good health.’ We have good reason to say: ‘I trust this finds you in pursuit of wisdom.’ For this is precisely what is meant by good health.’

—Words need to be sown like seed. No matter how tiny a seed may be, when it lands in the right sort of ground it unfolds its strength and from being minute expands and grows to a massive size. Reason does the same; to the outward eye its dimensions may be insignificant, but with activity it starts developing. Although the words spoken are few, if the mind has taken them in as it should they gather strength and shoot upwards. Yes, precepts have the same features as seeds: they are of compact dimensions and they produce impressive results – given, as I say, the right sort of mind, to grasp at and assimilate them. The mind will then respond by being in its turn creative and will produce a yield exceeding what was put into it.

—‘Mouse is a syllable, and a mouse nibbles cheese; therefore, a syllable nibbles cheese.’ Suppose for the moment I can’t detect the fallacy in that. What danger am I placed in by such lack of insight? What serious consequences are there in it for me? What I have to fear, no doubt, is the possibility, one of these days, of my catching a syllable in a mousetrap or even having my cheese eaten up by a book if I’m not careful. Unless perhaps the following train of logic is a more acute one: ‘Mouse is a syllable, and a syllable does not nibble cheese; therefore, a mouse does not nibble cheese.’ What childish fatuities these are! Is this what we philosophers acquire wrinkles in our brows for? Is this what we let our beards grow long for? Is this what we teach with faces grave and pale?

—Nothing makes itself unpopular quite so quickly as a person’s grief. When it is fresh it attracts people to its side, finds someone to offer it consolation; but if it is perpetuated it becomes an object of ridicule – deservedly, too, for it is either feigned or foolish.

—Comforting thoughts (provided they are not of a discreditable kind) contribute to a person’s cure; anything which raises his spirits benefits him physically as well. It was my Stoic studies that really saved me. For the fact that I was able to leave my bed and was restored to health I give the credit to philosophy. I owe her – and it is the least of my obligations to her – my life. But my friends also made a considerable contribution to my return to health. I found a great deal of relief in their cheering remarks, in the hours they spent at my bedside, and in their conversations with me. There is nothing, my good Lucilius, quite like the devotion of one’s friends for supporting one in illness and restoring one to health, or for dispelling one’s anticipation and dread of death. I even came to feel that I could not really die when these were the people I would leave surviving me, or perhaps I should say I came to think I would continue to live because of them, if not among them; for it seemed to me that in death I would not be passing away but passing on my spirit to them. These things gave me the willingness to help my own recovery and to endure all the pain. It is quite pathetic, after all, if one has put the will to die behind one, to be without the will to live. (Among other things Seneca suffered from asthma.)

—Fired by this teaching I became a vegetarian, and by the time a year had gone by was finding it an enjoyable as well as an easy habit. I was beginning to feel that my mind was more active as a result of it – though I would not take my oath to you now that it really was. I suppose you want to know how I came to give up the practice. Well, my years as a young man coincided with the early part of Tiberius’ reign, when certain religious cults of foreign origin were being promoted, and among other things abstinence from certain kinds of animal food was regarded as evidence of adherence to such superstitions. So at the request of my father, who did not really fear my being prosecuted, but who detested philosophy, I resumed my normal habits.

—All vices are at odds with nature, all abandon the proper order of things. The whole object of luxurious living is the delight it takes in irregular ways and in not merely departing from the correct course but going to the farthest point away from it, and in eventually even

taking a stand diametrically opposed to it. Don't you think it's living unnaturally to drink without having eaten, taking liquor into an empty system and going on to dinner in a drunken state? Yet this is a failing which is common among young people, who cultivate their capacities to the point of drinking – swilling would be a better description of it – in naked groups the minute they're inside the doors of the public bath-house

—Truth will never pall on someone who explores the world of nature, wearied as a person will be by the spurious things. ... In the meantime cling tooth and nail to the following rule: not to give in to adversity, never to trust prosperity, and always take full note of fortune's habit of behaving just as she pleases, treating her as if she were actually going to do everything it is in her power to do. Whatever you have been expecting for some time comes as less of a shock.

—There is nothing small or cramped about wisdom. It is something calling for a lot of room to move. There are questions to be answered concerning physical as well as human matters, questions about the past and about the future, questions about things eternal and things ephemeral, questions about time itself. On this one subject of time just look how many questions there are. To start with, does it have an existence of its own? Next, does anything exist prior to time, independently of it? Did it begin with the universe, or did it exist even before then on the grounds that there was something in existence before the universe? There are countless questions about the soul alone – where it comes from, what its nature is, when it begins to exist, and how long it is in existence; whether it passes from one place to another, moving house, so to speak. On transfer to successive living creatures, taking on a different form with each, or is it no more than once in service and is then released to roam the universe; whether it is a corporeal substance or not; what it will do when it ceases to act through us, how it will employ its freedom once it has escaped its cage here; whether it will forget its past and become conscious of its real nature from the actual moment of its parting from the body and departure for its new home on high. Whatever the field of physical or moral sciences you deal with, you will be given no rest by the mass of things to be learnt or investigated. And to enable matters of this range and scale to find unrestricted hospitality in our minds, everything superfluous must be turned out. Virtue will not bring herself to enter the limited space we offer her; something of great size requires plenty of room. Let everything else be evicted, and your heart completely opened to her.

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The 'Twelve Tables' of 451 - 450 BC are said to be the earliest known collection of writings in Latin. Now Latin has a number of children: French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, but I suddenly found myself asking: who were Latin's parents? It cannot have come out of nowhere. So what earlier languages went in to its formation? In one place I found it given 'Italic' as a parent. Was that correct and what was Italic? In fact there is no absolute agreement. Various dialects were spoken throughout Italy and it was the dialect around the Tiber which gradually became Latin. It was a composite, with people finding hints of Etruscan, Greek, Celtic languages and Phoenician, with Greek predominating. And the pre-eminent place of Latin was a result of the growing military power of the Roman Empire. School children around the world, alongside the priests of the Roman Catholic Church, would not have needed to learn Latin if it had remained a provincial dialect along the banks of the Tiber ...

The development of literature in Latin is something Lord Macaulay mentions in his *Lays of Ancient Rome*: "The Latin literature which has come down to us is of later date than the commencement of the Second Punic War, and consists almost exclusively of works fashioned on Greek models. The Latin metres, heroic, elegiac, lyric, and dramatic, are of Greek origin. The best Latin epic poetry is the feeble echo of the Iliad and Odyssey. The best Latin eclogues are imitations of Theocritus. The plan of the most finished didactic poem in the Latin tongue was taken from Hesiod. The Latin tragedies are bad copies of the masterpieces of Sophocles and Euripides. The Latin comedies are free translations from Demophilus, Menander, and Apollodorus. The Latin philosophy was borrowed, without alteration, from the Portico and the

Academy; and the great Latin orators constantly proposed to themselves as patterns the speeches of Demosthenes and Lysias.

“But there was an earlier Latin literature, a literature truly Latin, which has wholly perished, which had, indeed, almost wholly perished long before those whom we are in the habit of regarding as the greatest Latin writers were born. That literature abounded with metrical romances, such as are found in every country where there is much curiosity and intelligence, but little reading and writing.” He suggests that in a society with few books these metrical compositions both provided pleasure and were easy to memorise.

“That the early Romans should have had ballad-poetry, and that this poetry should have perished, is therefore not strange. It would, on the contrary, have been strange if these things had not come to pass; and we should be justified in pronouncing them highly probable, even if we had no direct evidence on the subject. But we have direct evidence of unquestionable authority.

“Ennius, who flourished in the time of the Second Punic War, was regarded in the Augustan age as the father of Latin poetry. He was, in truth, the father of the second school of Latin poetry, the only school of which the works have descended to us. But from Ennius himself we learn that there were poets who stood to him in the same relation to which the author of the romance of Count Alarcos stood to Garcilaso, or the author of the ‘Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode’ to Lord Surrey. Ennius speaks of verses which the Fauns and the Bards were wont to chant in the old time, when none had yet studied the graces of speech, when none had yet climbed the peaks sacred to the Goddesses of Grecian song. ‘Where,’ Cicero mournfully asks, ‘are those old verses now?’”

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Seneca was known as a philosopher whereas the older Horace (65 – 8 BC) was best known as a poet. I came upon a poem of his in an anthology called *Garden Poems* which James Michie translates as ‘Conservation’:

Soon I foresee few acres for harrowing  
Left once the rich men’s villas have seized the land;  
Fishponds that outdo Lake Lucrinus  
Everywhere; bachelor plane-trees ousting

Vine-loving elms; thick myrtle-woods, violet-beds,  
All kinds of rare blooms tickling the sense of smell,  
Perfumes to drown those olive orchards  
Nursed in the past for a farmer’s profit;

Quaint garden-screens, too, woven of laurel-boughs  
To parry sunstroke. Romulus never urged  
This style of life; rough-bearded Cato  
Would have detested the modern fashions.

Small private wealth, large communal property –  
So ran the rule then. No one had porticoes  
Laid out with ten-foot builder’s measures,  
Catching the cool of the northern shadow,

No one in those days sneered at the turf by the  
Roadside; yet laws bade citizens beautify  
Townships at all men’s cost and quarry  
Glorious marble to roof the temples.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Kindness and benevolence should be extended to the creatures of every species.”

Plutarch.

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December 9: John Milton

December 10: William Plomer

Emily Dickinson

December 11: Naguib Mahfouz

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Ahmadou Kourouma (d)

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Leopold Labedz writing about Alexander Solzhenitsyn and his expulsion from the Union of Soviet Writers said, “In Tsarist Russia there was no special Imperial State Union of Writers, like the present Soviet one. Had there been, they would have had to expel from it such famous authors as Alexander Pushkin, ‘for immorality and for bringing dishonour on the state system’; Saltykov-Shchedrin, ‘for malicious attacks on the Russian civil service and the customs of society’; Anton Chekhov, ‘for continuous slander of Russian reality, especially in his essays about his journey to Sakhalin Island’; Lev Tolstoy, ‘for the dissemination of pacifist ideas foreign to the Russian people and weakening to the defensive capacity of the fatherland’.”

The problem was the nature of the union. “The Union of Soviet Writers is not a society of literary people for the defence of their own interests. It is a state institution. It is quite understandable that if such an organization expels someone, then it will be someone who refuses to carry out the rules of the game, even if this is the greatest of living Russian writers. We should be much more indignant that such an organization contains in its title the word ‘writers’.”

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Solzhenitsyn suffered in Russia but managed to leave and went in to exile in the United States. And then he managed to upset people by criticizing what he found in his new home. He cannot have made many new friends by writing, “It is with a strange feeling that those of us who came from the Soviet Union look upon the West of today. It is as though we were neither neighbours on the same planet, nor contemporaries – and yet we contemplate the West from what will be *your* future, or look back seventy years, to see our past suddenly repeating itself. And what we see is always the same, always the same as it was then: adults deferring to the opinion of their children; the younger generation carried away by shallow worthless ideas; professors scared of being unfashionable; journalists refusing to take responsibility for the words they squander so profusely; universal sympathy for revolutionary extremists; people with serious objections unable or unwilling to voice them; the majority passively obsessed by a feeling of doom; feeble governments; societies whose defensive reactions have become paralysed; spiritual confusion leading to political upheaval. What will happen as a result of all this lies ahead of us. But the time is near, and from bitter memory we can easily predict what these events will be.”

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We think that dissent was essential to see you on your way to a camp in Siberia. But this wasn’t necessarily so.

Nijole Sadunaite wrote in *Song of Siberia*, “In the cellars of the KGB—the interrogation solitary section—the old methods of torture used during interrogations as described in the *Gulag Archipelago* have been changed for a new kind. In the KGB cellars are hot cells and cold cells. They kept me, Vladas Lapienis, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas (1983) and many others in hot cells where one is constantly being stifled from lack of air and from heat, perspiring ceaselessly.” Others were kept in cold damp cells—and cold in Russia *is* cold.

And—

“Irina Mikhailovna Senik, born in 1926, was another Ukrainian woman serving her second term. The first time she was sentenced, like Oksana, when she was not quite twenty, to ten years of concentration camp and exile for an undetermined period. During interrogation, they

tortured her, burning her, breaking her bones and beating her, even though young Irina was just a student, not guilty of anything. Her father had been a military officer, so the occupants, having tortured him to death, tormented his whole family. What Irina and thousands of the best people suffered has been described in the *Gulag Archipelago*.”

Nijole was Lithuanian. Dr Thomas Bird introducing her book writes, “Nijole was two years old when Lithuania was absorbed by the union of Soviet Socialist Republics. She was three when some 38,000 Lithuanian leaders, intellectuals and peasants were packed into cattle-cars by the Russians on June 14-15, 1941, and deported to a living death in Siberia, the beginning of mass deportations over the next decade, in which one out of every ten Lithuanians were sent to Siberia.”

She had supported a condemned priest by sitting in court during his trial and helped with the underground newspaper *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*. She was charged with “violating paragraph 68 of the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian SSR—anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.” “On June 17, 1975, Judge Kudiriashov handed down the court’s decision: “For duplicating and disseminating the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, she is sentenced to three years loss of freedom, to be served in strict regime labor camps, and to three years of exile.” And exile meant Siberia, not the South of France. She was sent to Vilnius and then to Mordovia where she was expected to sew 110 pairs of gloves per day. Some of the women were there for everyday crimes, theft, assault, even murder, some were from the unhappily ‘absorbed’ republics, but saddest of all were the elderly women there for refusing to give up their worship in the Russian Orthodox Church. Some were in their sixties and seventies. The cold, the malnutrition, the loss of their families, all made them frail and vulnerable to illness and death yet they all stayed steadfast in their religious beliefs. Some of them were later exiled to Kazakhstan and died there.

“Right near us, a few hundred meters away, was the male political prisoners’ fifth zone. We used to correspond secretly with that concentration camp. As soon as they brought me to the camp in 1975, we found out that a chekist agent had seriously beaten the Ukrainian poet Vasily Semionovich Stusa, born in 1938, in revenge for the fact that they could not break his spirit. They threw him, battered and bloody, into a punishment cell, claiming that he was to blame for a fight. A torturer received a supplementary package.”

“Towards the end of my term, they took me away to exile without, of course, telling me where. My journey to Siberia lasted a whole month, with stopovers at transfer points in Potma, Chelyabinsk, Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk.” She was sent to Boguchany where she was ‘fortunate’ to be sent to clean in a school and then in a hospital. Even in the heart of misery she could still seek beauty. “I admired the beautiful Angara, about two kilometers wide at Boguchany, winding nobly among the forest-covered hills. The leaves, with their autumn coloring of yellow, green and red, reminded me of the Lithuanian tri-color. It was a sunny day. I thanked God for nature’s great beauty and for His love for us, who are so unworthy of it.”

(Solzhenitsyn got Lithuanian Catholics to make him a rosary, not for religious reasons but because when he had no paper he found the rosary a help in memorising his poems.)

But when she finally got home it was to face continuing problems. Her brother Jonas in revenge for her refusal to ‘bow down’ was sent to a psychiatric hospital, they tried to take away her co-operative apartment and she could not get a permit to work. But she was a courageous woman. She was soon back, hard at work, helping to produce and disseminate the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.

A different prisoner in the Gulag, and an extraordinarily brave one though in a different way to Nijole Sadanaite, was Slavomir Rawicz who in *The Long Walk* tells an amazing story. He was a Polish Army officer who was accused by the Russians of espionage (many such officers captured by the Russians in Poland were similarly accused) and sent to Siberia. He was sent by train to Irkutsk where “We stumbled out and a shrieking, whipping wind, and a sub-zero

temperature made us gulp and gasp and cling to the small shelter afforded by the trucks. In a few minutes ears became icy cold, noses purple-red and eyes streamed tears. We shivered, all of us, uncontrollably. It was the second week in December and Siberia was already fast bound in winter. We met it still clad only in a pair of trousers, canvas shoes and a thin cotton blouse.” They were forced to walk northwards for several months then taken by reindeer sled to Camp Number 303 “on the north side of the Lena River, which I estimate to have been between 200 and 300 miles south-west of the Northern Siberia capital, Yakutsk.” And there he set about hatching plans to escape and sounding out his fellow prisoners who included a Latvian, a Lithuanian, several Poles and an American. They left the camp by night and walked southwards, hiding in snow caves at times. And eventually crossing in to Mongolia where they met only kindness and hospitality. Crossing the Gobi they lost two of the group and two more died in the journey across Tibet, where again they met only kindness. Finally four of them managed to get to India where they ended up in a Calcutta hospital.

It made me wonder how many other escapes were successful ...

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Solzhenitsyn wrote in *The First Circle*, “A great writer is, so to speak, a second government in his country. And for that reason no regime has ever loved great writers, only minor ones.”

This had some relevance to Solzhenitsyn but it isn’t necessarily true. Minor writers can change things too. No one would suggest that Harriet Beecher Stowe was a great writer but she helped change the way many people regarded slavery.

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Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* became a kind of benchmark. Some people suffered more, some suffered less. But the West and later his own people had his book to explain to the world what was happening.

I have just been reading D. M. Thomas’s biography of Solzhenitsyn and I was interested to see how much he used family and friends, disguised, as his characters. He was born in to comfortable circumstances but it was all down hill with his widowed mother living and dying in poverty. Solzhenitsyn embraced the new Bolshevik order ardently and entered the Red Army where he rose to be a captain. But then he was accused of anti-Soviet activities. He had married but his wife Natasha now faced years apart and, perhaps understandably, finally decided on divorce and re-marriage to someone else. But he returned from ‘exile ’and they re-married. He, though, eventually found himself a new wife, divorced and re-married. It was devastating for his first wife. He had insisted he didn’t want children and she had reluctantly complied. Now she saw his new wife produce three children to him. She had given up her own career and her own friends to help him in his writing. Now she was fifty with little to look forward to but caring for elderly relatives. Of course great writers do not create more harmonious domestic lives than anyone else but it did seem very hard on her.

After his arrest he was sent first to work in a brick-works and later found himself in ‘perpetual exile’ teaching in a remote town in Kazakhstan. His exile did not prove permanent and he was eventually allowed to return to Moscow. And even in the most difficult circumstances he had planned, written notes, and begun his highly autobiographical novels.

His early support for the Revolution faded and died along the way. Thomas writes, “For millions of children in Russia at this time, there were no comforting icons or soft toys. Prof. Dr. W. W. Krysko recalls—toward the end of the twentieth century—a terrifying scene that greeted his ten-year-old self in the spring of 1920. As the snows melted in the field outside his father’s factory in Rostov, mounds of corpses and skeletons appeared. Thousands of bodies had been dumped there for eventual burial. There were horses’ carcasses too, whose rib cages became shelters for hundreds of wild dogs, wolves, jackals, and hyenas. And among them lived bands of equally wild children, orphaned or abandoned.

The whole of Russia was full of such children, the *bezprizdrnye*, the uncared-for. Lenin's wife, Krupskaya, estimated their number in 1923 as some eight million. A British journalist, Malcolm Muggeridge, describes them 'going about in packs, barely articulate or recognisably human, with pinched animal faces, tangled hair and empty eyes. I saw them in Moscow and Leningrad, clustered under bridges, lurking in railway stations, suddenly emerging like a pack of wild monkeys, then scattering and disappearing. Some were as young as three years old. All survived by thieving and scrounging; most boys and girls, were prostitutes. Eventually the state placed as many as could be caught in colonies, "children's republics." Socially and psychologically beyond rescue, these teeming victims of the Civil War became later a superb source of amoral manpower to run the camps of the Gulag Archipelago."

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Robert Eichelberger in *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* tells a story of a forgotten aspect of this chaotic time. "On August 15 (1918) General Graves sailed—not for Europe but for distant Vladivostok. I accompanied him as assistant chief of staff. By President Wilson's direct order, Graves had been made commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia. Some ten thousand American troops took part in the strange and unlikely military adventure of 1918-20, but to this day most of the public is unfamiliar with the historical details. Our intervention in the confused Russian situation was accomplished in cooperation with the Japanese, British, French, and Chinese. It is a complicated story from which the British and French emerge with no particular credit. The Japanese High Command, however, managed to achieve for itself a record of complete perfidy, of the blackest and most heinous double-dealing.

"President Wilson had announced in effect that the purpose of the mission was the protection of Siberian railroads and the prevention of anarchy, and that there was no intention of interfering with Russian internal affairs. It was soon clear to me (I was operations officer and later head of military intelligence) that the British and French had the clear-cut purpose of overthrowing the infant Soviet republic and had perpetuated various fictions to persuade President Wilson to commit American troops and American reputation to a dubious expedition. Various representatives of our own State Department urged that large forces of American soldiers be thrown into Siberia to assist the cause of Admiral Kolchak, the White Russian commander.

"Looking backward, I now feel that it would have been a blessing if the Soviet republic had been crushed in its cradle. The fact is, however, that President Wilson's orders to General Graves called upon him to bring economic relief to the Russian people and to maintain a position of neutrality between Russian factions—and Graves courageously and adamantly did so in the face of tremendous pressures. Support of Kolchak by the British and French proved to be a bankrupt and futile enterprise by late 1919. The peasants from Lake Baikal to Vladivostok had no particular interest in the Communists, but they developed an active hatred of the ancient czarist methods of the Whites, and the brutalities and cruelties of the Kalmikoffs, Semeonoffs, and Rosanoffs—the murderous wretches who were supported principally by the Japanese military."

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Solzhenitsyn's life back in Moscow did not run smoothly. He was again arrested and exiled but the 'Thaw' after Stalin's death and Khrushchev's rise took many such people back to civilian life. Thomas writes, " "The archipelago," he would later observe, "provided a unique, exceptional opportunity for our literature, and perhaps ...even for world literature. This unbelievable serfdom in the full flower of the twentieth century, in this one and only and not at all redeeming sense, opened to writers a fertile though fatal path....For the first time in history, such a multitude of sophisticated, mature, and cultivated people found themselves, not just in imagination, inside the pelt of slave, serf, logger, miner. And so for the first time in world history (on such a scale) the experience of the upper and the lower strata of society merged." " I suppose you could say all concentration camps tend to wipe out class distinctions.

He eventually got the magazine *Novy Mir* interested in serializing his novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* after it had received Khrushchev's approval. Published in book form outside the USSR it became a best-seller. He worked on his novels *Cancer Ward* and *In the First Circle* which were published outside the USSR and which won him the Nobel Prize in 1970 but it was information about the book he was writing, his opus *The Gulag Archipelago*, which hastened his forced departure from the Soviet Union; that and the fact the Soviet authorities objected to the Nobel Prize because his books criticised rather than praised the Soviet system.

Michael Scammell in *The Solzhenitsyn Files* wrote, "Solzhenitsyn not only succeeded in publishing all the novels, short stories, and plays the KGB sought to suppress, but he also brought out his unique, crushing chronicle of the monstrosities of Stalinist totalitarianism, *The Gulag Archipelago*, that the KGB strove so mightily to stop at any price. Indeed, as he himself observed after the fact, it was the KGB's relentless determination to obtain a copy of that book that triggered its early publication, thus contributing to the KGB's—and the regime's—demise."

But their 'relentless determination' had one unfortunate victim. "The documents provide valuable new information on this operation as well. It is known that KGB agents had worked on the case for many years and had achieved their breakthrough by brutally interrogating one of the book's typists, Elizaveta Voronyanskaya, until she divulged where a copy of the book was hidden. She committed suicide in despair over what she had done and was buried secretly and in great haste."

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" "Gulag" is an acronym for *Glavnoye upravleniye lagerei* (Main Administration of the Camps), and it appears that Solzhenitsyn was the first to use the word as an independent noun. After his introduction of that powerful metaphor of Gulag = country, he at once, still within the first page, further defines and enriches it by identifying that country as being in the form of an archipelago; an archipelago of which Kolyma was "the greatest and most famous island," its "pole of ferocity." "

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After he left the USSR he began a wandering life with his wife and children, Switzerland, France, England, Canada, eventually settling in the United States. But although he was feted and admired he was also criticised, he was accused of anti-Semitism, he was seen by some as an increasingly right-wing reactionary (though his main critics, left-wing liberals, had not suffered through the gulag), and his later work mostly fell flat. He found the West permissive, soft, lacking a moral compass. In his Western exile he produced a memoir *The Oak and the Calf* in which he criticised a number of the people who had helped him get his work translated and published.

And cut off from his sources of inspiration he struggled with his writing. With the fall of the Soviet Union he was given permission to come home. He had finally returned to the roots of his inspiration but it had probably come too late.

Nevertheless his opus was out there; a searing indictment of what had been done to ordinary people under the Soviet system.

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When I asked at the library for a copy of *The Gulag Archipelago* they came up with a copy but I was surprised to find that it was the version which Solzhenitsyn had abridged. Possibly he believed we, his readers in the West, were too busy or too lazy or could only take so much misery. Perhaps he was right to think that.

He begins it with:

"How do people get to this clandestine Archipelago? Hour by hour planes fly there, ships steer their course there, and trains thunder off to it—but all with nary a mark on them to tell of their destination. And at ticket windows or at travel bureaus for Soviet or foreign tourists the

employees would be astounded if you were to ask for a ticket to go there. They know nothing and they've never heard of the Archipelago as a whole or of any one of its innumerable islands.

Those who go to the Archipelago to administer it get there via the training schools of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Those who go there to be guards are conscripted via the military conscription centers.

And those who, like you and me, dear reader, go there to die, must get there solely and compulsorily via arrest.

Arrest! Need it be said that it is a breaking point in your life, a bolt of lightning which has scored a direct hit on you? That it is an unassimilable spiritual earthquake not every person can cope with, as a result of which people often slip into insanity?

The Universe has as many different centers as there are living beings in it. Each of us is a center of the Universe, and that Universe is shattered when they hiss at you: "*You are under arrest.*" "

The book is a great unrelenting torrent of awfulness and bizarre horror. The journey to the Archipelago begins with your arrest:

—The loneliness of the accused! That was one more factor in the success of unjust interrogation! The entire apparatus threw its full weight on one lonely and inhibited will. From the moment of his arrest and throughout the entire *shock* period of the interrogation the prisoner was, ideally, to be kept entirely alone.

—But it is impossible to picture any of our interrogators, right up to Abakumov and Beria, wanting to slip into a prisoner's skin even for one hour, or feeling compelled to sit and meditate in solitary confinement.

Their branch of service does not require them to be educated people of broad culture and broad views—and they are not. Their branch of service does not require them to think logically—and they do not. Their branch of service requires only that they carry out orders exactly and be impervious to suffering—and that is what they do and what they are. We who have passed through their hands feel suffocated when we think of that legion, which is stripped bare of universal human ideals.

—ASA —Anti-Soviet Agitation

KRD —Counter-Revolutionary Activity

KRTD —Counter-Revolutionary Trotskyite Activity (And that "T" made the life of a zek in a camp much harder.)

PSh —Suspicion of Espionage (Espionage that went beyond the bounds of suspicion was handed over to a tribunal.)

SVPSH —Contacts Leading (!) to Suspicion of Espionage

KRM —Counter-Revolutionary Thought

VAS —Dissemination of Anti-Soviet Sentiments

SOE —Socially Dangerous Element

SVE —Socially Harmful Element

PD —Criminal Activity (a favorite accusation against former camp inmates if there was nothing else to be used against them)

And then, finally, there was the very expansive category:

ChS —Member of a Family (of a person convicted under one of the foregoing "letter" categories)

—But perhaps the most abominable of all was that maw that swallowed up *the kids*.

The kids were not at all those besprizorniki or waifs in drab tatters who scurried hither and thither thieving and warming themselves at asphalt caldrons on the streets, without whom one could not picture the urban life of the twenties. ... But where did the young offenders come

from? They came from Article 12 of the criminal Code of 1926, which permitted children *from the age of twelve* to be sentenced for theft, assault, mutilation, and murder.

—The children, too, were destined for imprisonment: they, too, in their turn would be sent off to the promised land of the Archipelago, sometimes even at the same time as their parents. Take the eighth-grader Nina Peregud. On November, 1941, they came to arrest her father. There was a search. Suddenly Nina remembered that inside the stove lay a crumpled but not yet burned humorous rhyme. And it might have stayed there, but out of nervousness Nina decided to tear it up at once. She reached into the firebox, and the dozing policeman grabbed her. And this horrible sacrilege, in a schoolgirl's handwriting, was revealed to the eyes of the Chekists:

The stars in heaven are shining down  
And their light falls on the dew;  
Smolensk is already lost and gone  
And we're going to lose Moscow too.

And she expressed the desire:

We only wish they'd bomb the school,  
We're awfully tired of studies.

Naturally these full-grown men engaged in saving their Motherland deep in the rear of Tambov, these knights with hot hearts and clean hands, had to scotch such a mortal danger. Nina was arrested. Confiscated for her interrogation were her diaries from the sixth grade and a counterrevolutionary photograph: a snapshot of the destroyed Vavarinskaya Church. "What did your father talk about?" prided the knights with the hot hearts. Nina only sobbed. They sentenced her to five years of imprisonment and three years' deprivation of civil rights (even though she couldn't lose them since she didn't yet have them).

—Take, for instance, the Vasyugan tragedy. In 1930, 10,000 families (60,000-70,000 people, as families then went) passed through Tomsk and from there were driven farther, at first on foot, down the Tom although it was winter, then along the Ob, then upstream along the Vasyugan—still over the ice. ... They died off—every one of them.

—To what necklace will you add, to what category of exiles will you assign soldiers disabled in the Fatherland War, and exiled because of it? We know almost nothing about them. They were exiled to a certain northern island—exiled *because* they had consented to be mutilated in war for the glory of the Fatherland ... These luckless war heroes are held there on their unknown island, naturally without the right to correspond with the mainland (a very few letters break through, and this is how we know about it), and naturally on meager rations, because they cannot work hard enough to warrant generosity.

—Not "released," but "deprived of exile" would be the best description of these unfortunates. ... It's a vicious circle; no job without a residence permit, no residence unless you have a job. And without a job you have no bread card either. Former zeks did not know the rule that the MVD is required to find them work. And those who did know were afraid to apply in case they were *put back inside*....

You may be free, but your troubles are only beginning.

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"Your dearest wish is for our state structure and our ideological system never to change, to remain as they are for centuries. But history is not like that. Every system either finds a way to develop or else it collapses."

Solzhenitsyn's *Letter to Soviet Leaders* 1973.

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December 12: Louis Nowra  
Oliver La Farge  
December 13: Dulcie Deamer  
Heinrich Heine

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*The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* has entries for both Dulcie Deamer and Aidan de Brune but while Deamer's entry seems to be correct, de Brune's is not.

"Aidan de Brune 1879-?1944, born Montreal, Canada, was a journalist in London but wandered the world before coming to Australia. His many popular novels of mystery and adventure include *The Carson Loan Mystery* (1926), *The Dagger and Cord* (1927) and *The Shadow Crook* (1930). Involved in the establishment of the FAW in Sydney in 1928, de Brune also wrote *Fifty Years of Progress in Australia 1878-1928* (1929)."

"Dulcie Deamer 1890-1972, born Christchurch, NZ, actor, freelance journalist, dramatist and writer of fiction, was a well-known figure in Sydney bohemian and literary society in the 1920s and 1930s. She published a book of short stories, *In the Beginning: Six Studies of the Stone Age and Other Stories* (1909), the title story of which won a *Lone Hand* short fiction competition in 1907. Her novels include *The Suttee of Safa: A Hindoo Romance* (1913), *Revelation* (1921, set in Jerusalem during the life of Jesus), *The Street of the Gazelle* (1922), *The Devil's Saint* (1924), and *Holiday* (1940), which deals with the persecution of the early Christians. Her two volumes of poetry are *Messalina* (1932), the first section, 'Nine Women', comprising portraits of classical or historically significant women; and *The Silver Branch* (1948), elaborately phrased verses. Deamer also wrote plays performed in Sydney, including 'That by Which Men Live' (1936), 'Victory' (1938), *The Heart of a Woman*, *In the Mind of a Child* and *In the Soul of a Man* (the last three all published in the 1930s). She is represented in *Best Australian One-Act Plays* (1937) by *Easter*, a morality play dealing with death. Deamer's unpublished autobiography, 'The Golden Decade', is informative on the literary circles of Sydney in the 1920s and 1930s and she is a major figure in Peter Kirkpatrick's *The Sea Coast of Bohemia* (1992)"

The magazine of the Q'ld FAW 'Scope' had an article 'Deamer and Other Dreamers' by Rob Morris as he reviewed *The Sea Coast of Bohemia* by Peter Kirkpatrick.

"One of the most under-rated, stylish figures of the golden twenties was ex-New Zealand citizen and trouper Dulcie Deamer who appeared at the inaugural Artisans Ball of 1922 as a cave woman in leopard skin. Soon in a grand boozy ceremony she would be, by general agreement, declared "Queen of Bohemia". Deamer was magnetic. As a freelance journalist, her life may have appeared austere but in 1922-23 Dulcie Deamer was Boho royalty. The Queen lived for 1 pound a week in an old Victorian mansion in Kings Cross.

When Betty Matthais (ex-wobbley) established the café La Boheme she provided an oasis for *all the mad men in town* according to Ray Lindsay. At another beloved café, the Roma, Deamer *would do the splits*. She wrote, *closed within the magic cocoon of our self-spun myth, the complete absurd ritual of solemn fun went on for hours*.

Deamer was a contradiction: sexy and sometimes censorious, happiest when the centre of attention but serious about being left to her own energetic devices. She set trends, and she tickled Bohemia's particular *Black Bottom*. Like many of the more fascinating Bohos of the twenties, she was a hard working eccentric. She was world travelled but found Sydney of the twenties perfect. Hootingly, when a prominent historian (at an FAW dance no less) flirted with her on the dance floor, the Hula mad Dulcie whispered into his chastened 'shell-like', 'Write a play, write a play.'

Her autobiography *The Golden Decade* shows us the lives of a most disparate but generally amiable boho world. Dulcie lived until the sixties, and it is through her words that we can see just how profoundly Australian society changed after World War I. Deamer may have presented herself as just another dreamer in a cast of many but she was and she remains an outstanding representation of true and courageous individualism."

I came upon one of her stories unexpectedly in *Famous Detective Stories* for 1948; she called it 'The White Owl Murder' and it begins: "One of the weirdest, and yet most universal, of

uncivilised man's beliefs is the conviction that men and women who have learned the psychic "technique" can externalize a "double" of themselves in bird or animal shape, their ordinary flesh and blood bodies being in a state of trance or coma at the time.

"One encounters this belief in folk-lore stories all over the world; European peasants of today still half credit it; natives of Asia, Africa and America all tell apparently circumstantial stories of such powers and practices. Witches, wizards and witch-doctors are, of course, the folk who are held to be able to project such doubles. English witches only three hundred years ago were confessing that they took the shape of hares and cats, and whole country-sides never doubted that they did, and many witnesses came forward to testify to it.

"In Europe, from time immemorial, wizards were credited with assuming wolf form; India and the East Indies told, and still tell, terrible stories of "man-tigers," and the North American Indian knew of "man-wolves" and "man-bears." The murderous "human leopards" of West Africa today only imitate, with leopard skins and artificial iron claws, the supposedly genuine "shape-changing" of authentic wizards."

But in her story a 'witch-doctor' in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) was supposed to be able to take the shape of a large white owl. The plantation owner is called out because one of his workers supposedly shot a man. But when he gets there he finds a large owl lying dead with a bullet in it. Weeks later the planter learns that the 'witch-doctor' died thirty miles away on the same day in mysterious circumstances. That might merely be an odd coincidence. But when the man who shot the owl tries to go home with his wife and daughter all three of them are killed because the 'witch-doctor's' people believe he, by killing the owl, also killed their shaman by magic.

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I had always thought of Peyton Place as a thoroughly American place. But not so. Aidan De Brune in his 1927 Sydney novel *The Dagger and Cord* said "Peyton Place lay away from the new city railway and the proposed alterations to Circular Quay. But those improvements had been public property for some time and well advertised in the newspapers. Their effect would certainly be far-reaching on the value of all property in the city, but in the instance of Peyton Place the freeholder would benefit nearly entirely."

Lonely Hearts ads have been appearing in the papers but apparently sent from unoccupied addresses. The police get suspicious. Perhaps gangs are using it as a code. They go to a house in Peyton Place and find a dead woman there. Curiously the gang is an Italian one, a Mafia-style group called Sons of Freedom. This is a novel of mystery rather than a novel of scandal but I couldn't help wondering if Grace Metalious had ever come across it.

I pondered on who Aidan de Brune was and found an entry which said he was born in Montreal in Canada in around 1879 and roamed the world before coming to Australia. Perhaps he had enjoyed being a man of mystery writing novels of mystery but this bio wasn't correct. Dulcie Deamer wrote articles about ten well-known Australian writers and she included Aidan de Brune but said he was in fact an Englishman, born Herbert Charles Cull, who came to Australia and tinkered with various pseudonyms including de Brune Culle. I found him in Family Search born in London in 1874 to Charles James William and Sarah Ann Eveleigh and being baptized at St Martin-in-the-Fields. He tried Western Australia before fetching up in Sydney and making his name as a mystery writer of books such as *The Carson Loan Mystery* (1926), *The Dagger and the Cord* (1927) and *The Shadow Crook* (1930). He was involved in the establishment of the FAW in Sydney in 1928, he wrote articles on popular Australian writers such as Henry Lawson, as well as his *Fifty Years of Progress in Australia 1878-1928* in 1929.

So how did a genuinely popular writer fall into such deep obscurity? The other day I came upon an ad in a 1948 issue of *True Detective Stories* for a novel called *The Potato Man* by Devon Minchin. Devon Minchin proved to be father of politician Nick Minchin and a popular writer in his time. And then I picked up *Ancient Australia* by Charles Francis Laseron. The name meant nothing to me but in my search for something about him I found the man who joined

Mawson's Antarctic expedition as a taxidermist, geologist, naturalist, general scientific all-rounder, and who wrote the best-seller *South with Mawson*.

Forgotten writers, intriguing possible re-use of names—and once you start looking there are many curious connections to be found.

For example, the cartoon character Homer Simpson—did he have a much earlier genesis? Nathaniel West wrote a number of novels set in the Depression years in America and in *The Day of the Locust* he writes, “ ‘My name is Homer Simpson,’ the man gasped, then shifted uneasily and patted his perfectly dry forehead with a folded handkerchief.” Homer has come to Hollywood from Des Moines, Iowa, and is a sad and rather ineffectual character. But perhaps he has enjoyed a longer-than-expected life?

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The *New Literary History of Australia* (ed. Laurie Hergenhan) says of Dulcie, “Dulcie Deamer's plays of the 1930s show some interesting experimental aspects. In *The Heart of a Woman* the set of an oriental inn is used to represent a woman's heart, while beneath it is the crypt of the subconscious. But most of her work draws on traditional styles, such as the morality play, or else it has naturalistic dialogue and sets even when the play (*That by Which Men Live*) is a fable set twenty years in the future in an Australia where religion has been supplanted by reason.”

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So what of *The Golden Decade*? This has been published as *Queen of Bohemia* with an introduction by Peter Kirkpatrick, an epilogue by Dulcie's daughter Rosemary Goldie, and a record of the manuscript's history. Kirkpatrick writes that Dulcie Deamer “was a New Zealand-born writer, journalist, actor and irrepressible free spirit. Her novels, poetry and plays have now largely been forgotten, but the bohemian life she made for herself in Sydney from the early 1920s until the late 1960s has not. For nearly fifty years she lived as a freelance writer in a series of Kings Cross flats, gaining a reputation for unconventionality and for her indomitable *joie de vivre* (a favourite term) that expressed itself in a love of parties, dancing and fancy dress. Dulcie Deamer was, in short, famous for being Dulcie Deamer.

In 1925 she was crowned “Queen of Bohemia” in a carnival ceremony in a Haymarket cafe. Two years later in another mock coronation her dominion was widened to encompass the title “Empress of the Holy Bohemian Empire”.

These were hard acts to follow, yet Deamer was never one to live her life as an aftermath. She was writing almost to the end of her long life, and this, her autobiography, was her last major work. Deamer called her life story *The Golden Decade* to emphasise the period from 1923 in which she achieved independence and immersed herself in Sydney's lively bohemian subculture. Nineteen twenty-three marked her first Artists' Ball, when she wore what she calls “the never-to-be-dead-and-buried leopard skin”. In 1923 she also met the radical journalist Sam Rosa, Grand Master of a circle of bohemians and ratbags known as I Felici, Letterati, Conoscenti e Lunatici — The Happy, Literary, Wise and Mad.”

Dulcie writes of her early childhood in Christchurch where her father was a doctor. She had a sister Dorothy and they were both taught at home by their mother. Their father, though hopeless at making money, was an educated and progressive man. It was a happy if not always comfortable childhood. “Apart from wandering in the hills, having lessons and horse-riding, I was writing poetry, and a novel inspired by Prescott's *Conquest of Peru*. Sitting up o' nights in an ice-cold bedroom, with sacks of horse-feed stacked at one end, scribbling by the light of a kerosene lamp I reckoned my frozen feet sent blood to the head and helped.”

The family then moved to the North Island near Wellington and the young Dulcie entered a story about a Stone Age romance, ‘As It Was in the Beginning’ into a competition run by the *Lone Hand* magazine, a recent offshoot of *The Bulletin*. To her amazement she won it and it was published with illustrations by Norman Lindsay. She was sixteen at the time.

Her mother believed in girls being trained for a career and supported Dulcie in joining a small theatrical company, the Taylor-Harrington Dramatic Company, which toured New Zealand. And when she was seventeen she met and married a not-very-successful theatre manager, Albert Goldie, who had been born a Jew in America but had shed that part of his background while continuing to enjoy the traveling involved in his work for J. C. Williamson. Dulcie went to Sydney with him and toured country New South Wales before heading off to Asia. She was avid for any kind of new experience.

In Bombay she said: "Each lighted doorway exposed a tiny room with a double bed. Seated in a chair in each doorway, her feet not touching the ground, was a little dark-skinned girl.

"They're finished by the time they're fourteen," I was informed. "Only fit to be thrown on the rubbish heap." "

And she went to visit the execution ground in Canton with its scattered skulls and bones. Later she wrote, "The stronger the contrasts in life the better educated one becomes." Perhaps.

Then it was on to London then to New York and back to Sydney. Then to Los Angeles of which she says, "I didn't meet the smog-choked, car-clogged Los Angeles of today. This was a clean, white city of mid-winter orange blossom, strawberries, and crystal sunshine." She was in Portland when news of the Armistice came. "Not long afterwards I woke up at 4 a.m. on a November morning, bitter cold, and the darkness dense with fog. I woke because every church bell in the town was ringing, the sound fog-muffled, faint, sweet and unearthly. It was like the voice of angels.

I immediately knew what it meant — Armistice."

Back home, Albert eventually went off with a blonde. Dulcie's parents came from New Zealand to help as Albert had given her six children (two had died young) and Dulcie was making a sometimes precarious living as a freelance writer. She wrote, "Payment for literary contributions would be reckoned in shillings not pounds. ... Yet nothing could stop the scribblers — particularly the poets. Almost from its very beginning Australia has spawned poets, as though there was some link between its bright skies and those of Antique Greece." And having lots of fun. She certainly did wear a leopard skin 'dress' to an Artists' Ball although it wasn't as daring as sometimes suggested. (She said she "hired the hide and a barbaric dog-tooth necklace from a shop (no longer extant) that stocked curiosities, and had my always uncut hair, which is deplorably straight, waved for the first and only time in its existence. I also had a very brief one-piece garment of untearable material run-up to wear under the hide. So I wasn't nearly as half-naked as I looked.") And she took on difficult assignments such as dressing as a man to pretend she was a visiting Argentine vet touring the Homebush abattoir and staying a night, in her most tattered clothes, at the "All Night Refuge for Women" in Surry Hills where she realized that though she might live a sometimes hand-to-mouth existence it could not compare with the desperate poverty of these women.

She continued on her lively way meeting many well-known figures, Henry Lawson, (of whom she said "I saw a thin, shabby figure, with a drooping dark moustache, and great hollow, somber dark eyes, who looked as miserable as a wet dog") Banjo Patterson, Louis Esson, Roderic Quin, Christopher Brennan, Mary Gilmore, Randolph Bedford, Steele Rudd, Neville Cayley, Kenneth Slessor and many more. She became a committee member when the Fellowship of Australian Writers was set up in Sydney and she was the one who said, when they were trying to decide on a name, that Fellowship should be in there.

She says of 'her' Kings Cross in those days, "Today's Sydneysiders and the perpetual waves of tourist visitors who head for our now widely known night-life centre, our Montmartre, assume that the Cross has always been like that. Even the journalists who've interviewed me over and over again, ad nauseam, on the subject seem to have the same idea fixed immovably in their heads. During the last ten years or so, if a paper's short of copy, somebody hotfoots up to

me to enquire breathlessly concerning sin-spangled nights at the top of William Street thirty or forty years back.

I keep on telling them that around their birthdate sin-spangled nights were not more prevalent at the top of William Street than anywhere else, and that striptease shows were not imported until after the Second World War.” And, “Truth is stranger than fiction, and often much duller. They depart frustrated.

Well, not always. Sometimes a young journalist’s natural desire to keep his job prompts him to employ his imagination. As in a rather dreary publication dealing with the Cross’s “history” wherein I was reported to have stated that I had been present at “a thousand parties” in that rather circumscribed locality. If they had said “a dozen”, even that would probably have been stretching things, and only small get-togethers, anyhow, for the *real* parties I *did* attend over years were all downtown. The ridiculous statement attributed to me was on par with the leopard skin legend. I suppose we must have our own myths.” And Kings Cross itself “was wholly innocent of its present honky-tonk, razzle-dazzle facade. No girly striptease or imitation-girly homosexual joints. No displays of coloured neon lights. No restaurants tricked-out with various stage properties to persuade you that you’re dining in Sweden, Czechoslovakia or Japan. No murderous traffic tangle. No steel and plate glass skyscrapers as characterless as giant biscuit tins. Oh, yes, I freely confess that I liked it very, very much better as it was in the “earlies.”

She asks the question as to why this bohemian subculture grew up in the 1920s and she believed it was a consequence of the First World War when so many young Australians left the country for the first time. “And then our boys were coming home, some of them having been brushed, if only lightly, by the indigenous Continental *joie de vivre*, old as the Continent’s history, but not a part of our heritage; and this on top of the worldwide elation of victory. Yes, some of the boys must have been germ-carriers, *joie de vivre* germs adhering to their souls as burrs stick to one’s clothes outback.”

Although her style is unremarkable, and her early chapters are rather jerky, it is interesting and gives some insight into the Sydney of the 1920s, her Golden Decade, but I couldn’t help wondering all through it what was happening to her children while she was out enjoying herself.

Her daughter Rosemary says that she learned to “regard with tolerant understanding Dulcie’s way of life and her relationship — or lack of relationship — to her children. When Dulcie was interviewed by a popular magazine, and referred sentimentally to her six children, this became — not unkindly — something of a family joke.” “Two of Dulcie’s sons died in infancy: Sidney (second in line) and David (fourth). Between them came Anthony (Tony) for whom Dulcie had little sympathy when he was a child — although he was the handsome one of the family. His stammering — which he never really conquered — and his instability were probably not unrelated to the family situation.” The fifth son was Christopher “a sensitive and affectionate child. I think he suffered from Dulcie’s indifference.” He died in 1941 “off Tobruk”.

Rosemary Goldie thought perhaps the fact that Dulcie married so young and had six children in seven years played a part in her lack of interest in her children. Her widowed mother Mabel largely brought the children up even though she was poor and getting old and tired; in Rosemary’s words, “At fifty-three, she was already weary of life, but quite unable to leave Dulcie’s children to an uncertain future.” I think that is the dilemma. Dulcie Deamer undoubtedly was a free spirit, an independent-minded and very individual woman but she was also a mother and her freedom was at the expense of her children.

Still, Dulcie Deamer both as a writer and as a ‘free spirit’ in Twenties Sydney certainly deserves to be remembered.

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‘You know [Richard] Wagner said that whenever he got dull he went to Prague. “There I renew my youth,” he wrote, “in that magical and volcanic soil of Bohemia.” ’

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December 14: Tycho Brahe

December 15: Edna O'Brien

December 16: Noel Coward

Jane Austen

December 17: Erskine Caldwell

December 18: 'Saki' (H. H. Munro)

December 19: Jean Genet

Richard Leakey

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"In November 1909 Charles Doolittle Walcott discovered what Gould has called "the Holy Grail of paleontology"; namely, the Burgess Shale. Prospecting for fossils along the western slopes between Wapta Mountain and Mount Field in the southern part of British Columbia, Canada, Walcott happened upon what essentially was a marine Pompeii, or rather several Pompeiis compressed together like the leaves of a book. Repeatedly, shallow-water communities were entombed by sudden mudslides, burying and ultimately preserving glimpses of life a little more than half-a-billion years ago, soon after the Cambrian explosion. In a letter to a colleague at the time, Walcott noted that he had found "some very interesting things." He was right, but for a variety of reasons he did not recognize their full import."

From *The Sixth Extinction* by Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin. And Walcott probably did not recognize just how strange his finds would prove to be.

"Periodically during the next two decades of his busy life, Walcott studied the massive amount of fossil material he and his team lugged back to Washington, D.C. He drew carefully what he saw, and assigned each creature to an existing phylum. In other words, Walcott saw in the Burgess Shale an image of today's world, but in more primitive form. Like Darwin, he fully expected that further fossil discoveries would furnish appropriate ancestors of the Cambrian fauna, in a long evolutionary chain. And, again like Darwin, he envisaged life progressing in a gradual fashion, with no dramatic booms or busts. As Walcott saw it, the exquisitely preserved Burgess Shale fauna "essentially set the evolutionary scene for the rest of Earth history," as I said in the opening paragraph.

"The second phase of the story began in the late 1960s, when Henry Whittington, a paleontologist at Cambridge University, re-opened Walcott's excavation. "We camped at 7000 feet, and then climbed another 500 feet onto the ridge," Whittington recalled. "You are perched high above a sparkling green lake, and you look west toward the snow-clad Rockies. Best of all, you find the most wonderful fossils when splitting the rock." Those fossils included sponges, jellyfish, worms, molluscs, and many arthropods. Some were bottom dwellers, either fixed or mobile; some were swimmers or floaters. For the first time, creatures with calcified skeletons were present in the unfolding pages of life. About 20 percent of the 140 or so Burgess Shale species were skeletonized, even though they represented only 5 percent in terms of numbers of individuals. No matter their mode of life, all members of the Burgess bestiary were preserved as flattened ghostly images in their layers of shale, their external anatomy intact in virtually every detail.

"During the following decade Whittington recruited a small team of bright young researchers to help him study the wealth of material from the original and new excavations. Very soon, a pattern of discovery began to emerge: not only was it possible to identify creatures with modern descendants, just as Walcott had, but it was also clear that many of the Burgess Shale fauna had no descendants, contrary to Walcott's conclusion. For instance, Whittington and his colleagues could find representatives of the three types of living arthropod (spiders, insects, and lobsters and their relatives), and the favourite of all young fossil hunters, trilobites, a fourth form

of arthropod that became extinct at the end of the Permian, 250 million years ago. But there were many other types of arthropod, none of which survived beyond the Cambrian.”

(Given how prevalent trilobites as fossils are around the world it begs the question: why did they become extinct?)

“The more Whittington and his colleagues scrutinized the ancient fauna, the more those creatures looked foreign to them. Eventually, a list of about twenty species “defied all efforts to link them with known phyla,” recalled Whittington and Simon Conway Morris, one of his young colleagues. Known for good reason as *Problematica*, these bizarre creatures were built on no familiar body plan. They had burst onto the scene explosively in that brief period of “wild experimentation,” and had disappeared just as dramatically. Whittington and his colleagues were able to recognize this entirely unpredicted pattern because they had not blinkered themselves with a narrow Darwinian outlook, as Walcott had. Walcott had assumed that Cambrian life was but a stage in the progression towards modern life, and he made links between ancient and modern where none existed. As so often happens in science, Walcott saw in the evidence before him what he wanted to see.

“Whittington and his colleagues’ discovery that the Cambrian explosion had generated a riot of new body plans, the majority of which were rapidly lost, begged a major issue: What determined which would be the winners and which the losers? “We might ask two related questions,” noted Gould. “First, were the unique Burgess phyla doomed by inadequate design to their brief existence as failed experiments in the first flowering of animal life? Second, for living groups with Burgess representatives, would we have known, at this outset, which were destined for domination and which for peripheral status in the nooks and crannies of an unforgiving world?” These questions go to the heart of how we view the history of life.”

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“The theories of the unfortunate Johannes Bartholomew Beringer, a professor in the University at Wurzburg, were typical of his times. In 1726 he published a palaeontological work, *Lithographia Wurceburgensis*, in which he illustrated not only a number of true fossils but many fantastic forms, suns, moons, stars and even Hebraic letters. Actually these had been buried as a joke by his students, and the attention of the professor called to the spots, where he himself dug them up. The hoax was revealed when he found his own name so buried. After trying in vain to buy up and destroy his own work, he died, it is said, of a broken heart.”

Charles F. Laseron in *Ancient Australia*. Perhaps Beringer saw what he wanted to see but I wonder if any of us are immune from that propensity.

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“Evidence in favour of sudden changes was once known as saltationism (from the Latin *saltum*, a jump) but has reappeared as punctuationism.”

Gordon Rattray Taylor in *The Great Evolution Mystery*.

It always seemed so sensible and reasonable to believe, as Darwin did, that evolution was a matter of tiny changes happening gradually. This certainly happens. But we are now needing to incorporate the knowledge that evolution can proceed by jumps, by fits and starts, which do not seem to be closely linked to the environment or the climate. The idea that the gaps we couldn’t bridge or didn’t understand could somehow be bridged by a belief in God came to be called ‘the God of the Gaps’ and largely discredited. Now we are having to look seriously at a different kind of gap, the sort that evolution seems to leapfrog over ...

“While evolutionists are quick to explain the new features which do appear they carefully avoid the complementary question of why some features fail to appear or appear so rarely? Why, for instance, are electric organs only found in fishes? And why are luminous organs absent in all freshwater fishes? Again, why are the little motile hairs known as cilia absent in arthropods and nematodes (spiders and eelworms are instances) while they are present in a wide range of other creatures ranging from protozoans up to man? And why are the pigmented cells which effect colour changes in creatures like the chameleon and in fish never

found in warm-blooded animals? Surely it is just as advantageous for a warm-blooded animal to blend into its background as it is for a cold-blooded one?"

"And there are other things it does not explain. Just to take a preliminary example, consider the almost incredible behaviour of the planarian worm known because of its small mouth as *Microstomum*.

"There is a small creature known as *Hydra* which you may have met during biology lessons. It is about the length of a capital 'I' in this type and it clings to underwater plants. It consists of little more than a tube, with a mouth surrounded by waving arms which direct food into it and a foot by which it attaches itself. Its most engaging habit is to proceed by somersaulting. It bends its head over to the surface on which it is posed and then detaches its foot which it then puts down in a new position.

"Some species of *Hydra* develop stinging cells known as nematocysts. Each of these cells contains a coiled, poisoned hair which can be ejected with explosive force. Another sensory hair projects outside the cell and serves as a trigger, discharging the nematocyst as soon as it touches anything. These stinging cells are arranged in batteries on its surface.

"This is curious enough, but stranger by far is the way in which the planarian worm known as *Microstomum* has exploited this mechanism. It has developed a ploy which strikes at the heart of evolutionary theory and indeed defies explanation on any grounds yet available to science. This species varies its normal diet by eating the *Hydra* in question. But it does not digest the nematocysts or the immature cells which give rise to them. Somehow it passes them through its body and positions them on its surface – or skin, so to say – with the stinging points outwards. Then, when enemies approach, it discharges these nematocysts; and in one variety it does not even wait for the assailant to touch it – it discharges the poisoned darts at it like shells or rockets.

"When fully armed, *Microstomum* ceases to feed upon *Hydra* and returns to its usual diet. But after it has discharged its weapons it makes a new meal of *Hydra* in order to rearm itself. In order to carry out this extraordinary programme, three different kinds of tissue within *Microstomum* must cooperate: endoderm, parenchyma and epidermis, to be precise. How has it acquired this complex routine? How too has *Microstomum* learned to regulate its diet? All this in a creature which has no brain or nervous system. Yet it implies a memory and an inherited instinctive pattern."

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I have been reading a very interesting book called *Seven Deadly Colours: The genius of nature's palette and how it eluded Darwin* by Andrew Parker. Take his story about glow worms. "The tunnel bends, so that once well inside neither entrance nor exit is visible. But quickly one's eyes adjust to the darkness. Pupils widen to allow more light to reach the retina, making the eye more sensitive to low levels of light. Then, after a few minutes, there appears more to the darkness.

"From above and to the side, lights materialise. Minute, pinhead-sized lights against the pure black backdrop. Blue, glowing speckles. Thousands of them."

And coming up close ... "Now we see the blue light emerging from a teardrop-shaped object, unidentifiable at this stage."

The teardrop "is not solid but gelatinous; a sticky slime that glows." But there are no optical structures, no structural colour, no pigments. This transparent teardrop is mainly water. "So what is the source of the blue glow? The teardrop is beaming, but has no factory for light." And within the teardrop is a transparent solid. This thread is a transparent tube "which appears to bring with it blue light. But from where?"

The thread is about the width of a hair and it passes upwards through several more teardrops till it reaches a wider tube running in a different direction. It is hollow, it is transparent, and it too glows though it too "is not the source of the blue light." Travelling along

this tube you come to the creature itself which has four parallel rods inside it. The cells “are part of a kidney-like excretory system”. And inside each rod “are hundreds of minute, vessel-like tubules, branching to evenly infiltrate the entire rod.” These are filled with oxygen. This is the creature’s breathing system. But the source of the light lies in the cells inside the rods. These contain molecules of luciferin and luciferase and when a molecule of oxygen enters from the tubules “the oxygen molecule actually collides with the others and...there is a blinding flash of blue light.”

“Energy is supplied by adenosine triphosphate (ATP) molecules (the energy-laden molecules common to all living cells), which hold the energy obtained from the animal’s food. This energy fuelled the luciferin molecule to join with the luciferase molecule and form a molecular complex, which quickly reacted with the oxygen molecule to form an oxidized complex. This must have been highly unstable because immediately it broke down to form another molecule, known as an oxyluciferin, while the luciferase was released unaltered. During this decay, the energy that was absorbed to initiate the reaction was dumped, emitted as a package of...*light*.”

And that is only the beginning of a process which eventually sparkles in the dark; “the teardrop glows.”

And this little animal is “the larva of a fungus gnat (a small fly). The larva is worm-like, hence the common name ‘glow-worm’ (‘worm’ is a generic name for any worm-shaped animal and should not carry information on classification – this ‘worm’ bears no relation to an earthworm, for instance).”

And this small ‘worm’ produces these tiny transparent teardrops, each smaller “than a drop of water, and twenty or so are evenly arranged along a fine silken thread like that of a spider’s web. The thread is spun by the worm, which lives in a tube spun from the same silk on the roof of the cave. The worm intermittently secretes a clear, sticky fluid that drips slowly down the thread to form the beads or teardrops. The fluid acts as a strong glue to flying insects such as flies, including the adults of its own species, and anything snared in the glue becomes the worm’s prey. To lure its prey, however, it resorts to light. Bioluminescent light.”

This of course begs the question of how it can retain its transparency as it snares and absorbs its prey. And there is the much bigger question. A fungus gnat laying eggs and hatching out small larvae would not lay them in pitch-dark caves because it would require, according to Darwin, a great many generations for the larva to develop this complex system to allow them to live and flourish in the dark. Long before then the worms would have starved or the flies would have simply continued to lay their eggs on fungi and rotting wood.

So is this a classic example of punctuationism?

\* \* \* \* \*

December 20: Uri Geller

Robert Menzies

December 21: Nat Gould

Frank Moorhouse

First Crossword

\* \* \* \* \*

Words woo. The strings and strains  
of grammar’s rituals deserve  
an Attenborough’s reverent commentary.  
*See how the male constructs his phrase.*  
*Watch while the woman reads and smiles.*

Tim Thorne in ‘Land and Language’

The *Oxford Guide to Word Games* by Tony Augarde says “The man generally credited with inventing the crossword puzzle was a journalist named Arthur Wynne, who emigrated to

New York from Liverpool. His first crossword appeared in a Sunday newspaper, the *New York World*, on 21 December 1913. Wynne called it a 'word-cross'. The puzzle had the word 'FUN' near the top because it appeared on the 'Fun' page of the newspaper. The shape was anticipated by diamond puzzles ... Readers expressed their approval of the experiment, so Wynne devised further puzzles for the paper. By the middle of January, the name had changed from 'word-cross' to 'cross-word'. Readers began to contribute their own crosswords."

People had previously played with word squares and acrostics. Now they had something far more interesting. In 1921 Margaret Petheridge took over the crosswords at the *World* and brought in simple one number clues and a regular shape with interlocking words. And now "suddenly they became a craze, as the American publishers Simon and Schuster were to discover in 1924 when they published a book containing fifty crosswords, compiled by Margaret Petheridge ... The book came with a free Venus pencil and Venus eraser" and the book became a best-seller. "The crossword craze had begun, and crosswords replaced mah-jong as the most popular American game. D. St P. Barnard says: 'Two New York magistrates even went so far as to ration addicts who had neglected to support their families, to a maximum of two puzzles a day.' Doctors warned that crosswords could harm the eyesight and cause insomnia or neurosis. An American railway company put dictionaries in some carriages to help crossword-solvers. Libraries found that their dictionaries were getting excessive wear and tear from addicts of the new craze. American jazz performers recorded songs indicative of the crossword craze, including Josie Miles's 'Cross Word Papa (You Sure Do Puzzle Me)' in December 1924 and Bob Fuller's 'Crossword Puzzle Blues' in January 1925. The 1925 Broadway revue *Puzzles of 1925* included a scene in a 'Crossword Puzzle Sanatorium' for people who had been driven insane by their obsession." The craze then moved to Britain and further afield.

Scrabble, on the other hand, was much slower to catch on. It was invented by an unemployed architect, Alfred Mosher Butts, in New York in the 1930s. He first called it Lexiko and at first made cardboard sets to sell privately. A friend of Butts, James Brunot, changed the name but it wasn't until Macy's department store started selling it in 1952 that its popularity really took off.

Robert Graves and Alan Hodge in *The Long Weekend* say a different game reached London just before the crossword puzzle arrived. "A less strenuous craze was Mah-Jong (less strenuous than pogo-sticks), a Chinese game which, like ginger and the Pekinese, had once been a prerogative of exalted rank. It was played with chips and domino-like counters and had a terminology full of quaint chinoiseries. People excitedly called 'Pung', 'Ching', and 'Bong' when they completed particular sets, and talked mysteriously of the 'East Wind', the 'North Wind' and the 'Red and Green Dragons'. Mah-Jong came from the United States in 1923; by Christmas the West End stores were full of expensive sets, and several Mah-Jong hand-books were published. Instruction in the newspapers consisted of such advice as: 'Don't forget to say "mah-jong" very quietly and with a restrained air. The moral effect is doubled.' And: 'Don't either lie or speak the truth consistently.' "

I am not much good at either Scrabble or crosswords, perhaps because I am more interested in the odd ways that words come in to the language rather than trying to fit the right word in to the right space. (Or perhaps just not bright enough.) So here are some of the things I have collected over the years.

*Cassells' Dictionary* of word and phrase origins by Nigel Rees has: BCE. An abbreviation to be used in dating instead of BC (Before Christ). The initials stand for 'Before the Common Era'—a rather vague coinage which has, however, appealed principally to Jewish people because the unacceptable Christian element has been removed." But: "Hence, also CE, the abbreviation for 'Common Era'—originally and still an almost exclusively Jewish usage designed to remove the Christian element from dating, as in AD meaning '*Anno Domini*' [in the

year of Our Lord]. However, it has sometimes been taken to mean ‘Christian Era’, which surely defeats the object of the exercise.”

On a lighter note: I have never said anyone was ‘banjaxed’ but it gets a mention and means to be ‘banged about’ or ‘smashed’ and “was introduced into popular British speech by the broadcaster Terry Wogan in the early 1970s. Possibly from Dublin slang of the 1920s. When he wrote a book called *Banjaxed* (1979), Wogan supplied this definition of the verb: ‘To hornswoggle, corpse, knacker, rasher, caramelize, malfooster, malavogue, powfagg, keelhaul, macerate, decimate, pulverize, make rawmeish of. Hence *banjaxed*, reduced to the condition of a pig’s breakfast, and *banjating*, tearing a plaster from a hairy leg’.”

While the *Dictionary* says: Sturm und Drang, German for ‘storm and stress’ was a literary movement in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany, full of passion and drama, and which came from the title of a tragedy written by Maximilian von Klinger in 1776.

And would Tories be Tories if they looked at the genesis of Tory?

“Tory comes from Gaelic *tóraidhe*, or outlaw, in reference to the Jacobite desperadoes hiding in the Irish hills.”

From *Orwell’s Cough* by John Ross.

And ‘The Establishment’? Paddy Hayes in *Queen of Spies* wrote, “It is ironic that the modern use of the term ‘The Establishment’ came into being when the journalist Henry Fairlie penned an article in *The Spectator* magazine in 1955 in which he spoke of ‘The Establishment’ coming together to shield two of their own, Messrs Burgess and Maclean.”

From *Careless People* by Sarah Churchwell: “Speakeasy, cocktail and bootlegger were not prohibition terms, although they would become synonymous with the era. Cocktail was first recorded in 1803; Dickens uses it in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (‘He could drink more rum-toddy, mint-julep, gin-sling, and cocktail, than any private gentleman of his acquaintance’). The term bootleg was first recorded in 1889 and is supposed to have derived from the American Civil War, when soldiers secreted whisky flasks in the tops of their boots. The origins of ‘speakeasy’ are obscure; it might be Irish slang or American, a place to speak of quietly, or ‘easy’.”

‘My good sir,’ said the professor in remonstrance, ‘don’t you believe that criminology is a science?’

‘I’m not sure,’ replied Father Brown. ‘Do you believe that hagiology is a science?’

‘What’s that?’ asked the specialist sharply.

‘No, it’s not the study of hags, and has nothing to do with burning witches,’ said the priest, smiling. ‘It’s the study of holy things, saints and so on. You see, the Dark Ages tried to make a science about good people. But our own humane and enlightened age is only interested in a science about bad people. Yet I think our general experience is that every conceivable sort of man has been a saint. And I suspect you will find, too, that every conceivable sort of man has been a murderer.’

*The Secret of Father Brown* by G. K. Chesterton.

Yes, no one has yet been able to determine a potential or a genuine murderer by sight, by personality, by looking at childhoods or hobbies. But I was interested to learn that F. Tennyson Jesse in her book *Murder and Its Motives* which came out in 1924 lists six motives:

- Elimination
- Gain
- Revenge
- Jealousy
- Lust
- Conviction

I found myself pondering on this list. Does it cover everything? Conviction would seem to cover political motives. Lust would cover all kinds of sex killings. Elimination

would go to questions of safety and apparent freedom. Gain in all its varieties is self-evident. Revenge at times links to political motives and at other times to the personal. Jealousy seems very personal. All those jealous lovers and spouses. But nations can also be jealous. This seems to underpin some of Hitler's beliefs and actions. So would I add to the list? I think I would add one more: Curiosity ...

Dickens also comes up in relation to another word.

“Hereditary family blood feuds were ingrained upon the hearts of the people of Corsica – or so it seemed for many acclaimed and well-read French authors. From Honoré de Balzac's ‘The Vendetta’ of 1830 to Guy de Maupassant's ‘The Corsican Bandit’ of 1877, the idea of Corsica as a place where the vengeful killing was a way of life and death captured the popular imagination in France – and soon it swiftly caught hold in Britain.

Here, however, vendettas came to be regarded as something inherent not only to the people of Corsica but also to those of southern Italy and nearby islands. The emergence of the new expression into the English language owed much to the great Charles Dickens and his weekly literary magazine ‘All the Year Round’. In July 1860 he included an article on Sardinia in which he mentioned “the lingering influence of the deadly ‘vendetta’ – inherited blood feud – which has sacrificed whole families, and once depopulated an entire village for one girl”.

Derived from the Latin term ‘vindicta’, meaning vengeance, the word vendetta would soon be associated not only with bloody feuds in the Mediterranean but also with those in the back streets of Birmingham. In March 1890, the ‘Grand Theatre’ in Corporation Street put on the comic opera ‘Paola; or the Vendetta’. Set in eighteenth-century Corsica, its plot was woven around the tale of a centuries'-old violent hostility between two families. Strangely, just the next year, on June 11, the ‘Birmingham Daily Post’ reported on a vicious assault upon Thomas Reynolds by a George Gower, explaining that the victim appeared to be the subject “of some sort of vendetta”.

From *The Real Peaky Blinders: Billy Kimber, the Birmingham Gang and the Racecourse Wars of the 1920s* by Carl Chinn. ‘Peaky Blinders’ were gang members who were said to put razor blades in the peaks of their caps to use on their victims in an affray.

In *Supergrasses & Informers* by James Morton: “There is a variety of colourful words and definitions, both English and American, for informants, all denoting the opprobrium of society. None can be seen as a synonym for a hero. In alphabetical order they include *Bertie Smalls*, from the first of the modern British supergrasses; *canary* (from singing); *fink* (originally a police officer); *grass*, *nark* and the less derogatory term *nose* (both Victorian or earlier), *peacher*, *snitch*, *squawker*, *squeaker*, *squealer*, *stag* and *stoolie* and *supergrass* itself.

“The derivation of the usually British term *grass* is obscure. In America it usually means lettuce, the straight hair typical of Caucasians and marijuana. Here it most likely comes from the rhyming slang *grasshopper* = copper. Another version of its derivation is that grass whispers in a wind and the phrase was popular in the 1930s following Fred Fisher's song *Whispering Grass* popularised by The Inkspots. Recently I came across the phrase *in the grass* meaning to be on the run from the police or prison. Perhaps this is the real derivation of grass – the person who informs on a person on the run. It has some logic to it. A *nark*, often used as copper's nark, is Victorian and comes from the Romany *nak* meaning nose; in fact, in the eighteenth century a *nose* was a term for an informer. Copper itself comes from to cop or to catch, and dates from around 1700. In American slang, a *copper* can mean not only a police officer but also an informer. To *peach* derives from Shakespearian times, and one of the informers in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* was Polly Peachum. Although *snitch* dates back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is now more common in American slang than in British. Originally it referred to a cardsharp who, when his colleagues had refused to share their winnings with him,

went to tell the victim of the crooked game how it had been worked against him. In Scottish slang, *snitchers* were also handcuffs.

“*Squeaker* comes from the end of the seventeenth century and certainly lasted until the middle of this one, when Edgar Wallace wrote his successful novel *The Squeaker*. It has largely faded from use in the last seventy years.

“The American word *squealer* probably derives from the noise made by a pig, which is said to resemble that of an informant. Another version of the origin of the term is that an old-time thief was caught when villagers heard the squeals of a pig he was abducting. Certainly, the squealer or informant had been regarded on a par with the child molester in criminal and particularly prison society.”

*Squawker* originally meant a protester or a burglar alarm, *stag* an enemy, and *stoolie* or *stool pigeon* a man made use of by criminals but later a man turned by police.

After reading Morton’s list I felt sure I had somewhere come on a story called ‘Squeaker’s Mate’ but I couldn’t think where. Then I came upon it in a most unexpected place. It was a story by Australian writer Barbara Baynton.

Mr. A. Phillips introducing Barbara Baynton’s *Bush Studies* says, “Now it is true that on the stations and cattle-runs the men of Australia had achieved an un-peasant-like initiative and independence. It is further true that on that rock the Australian pride is ultimately based. But it is not true that there was no peasant element in Australian rural life. It was there in the selectors of the dry country, in the near descendants of the convicts, in the Irish immigrants. When the Australian writer found himself confronted by this survival, he reacted with satiric fury, because it denied the Australian’s proud vision of the sort of man he believed himself to be.”

Certainly a great deal of convict slang must have entered Australian English almost unnoticed. But was she using Squeaker in that way? I thought I needed to re-read the story.

The answer would seem to be no. Squeaker’s ‘mate’ is his wife but when she is disabled he brings another woman to his hut. However his wife and their dog do not tamely acquiesce in being supplanted. This Squeaker is a liar and a cheat, a rather weak and pathetic character, but it is hard to picture him passing on information to police. He might try to bully women but it is unlikely he would risk anything with other men ...

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*The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* by William H. Wilde, Joy Hooton, and Barry Andrews says, “Cockatoo is a word of Malay origin for a crested parrot, of which there are several varieties distinctive to Australia; but the word has two additional Australian usages and once had a third, meaning a convict from Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour, which is now obsolete. A cockatoo, firstly, is a sentinel keeping watch for people engaged in an unlawful activity, e.g. convicts in road gangs in the nineteenth century who wanted to sleep rather than work, and two-up players in the twentieth century seeking to avoid the police; the usage derives from the long-held belief that feeding cockatoos post a sentry to warn of approaching danger. The second meaning of cockatoo, a small farmer, emerged around 1850, was pejorative in the nineteenth century and probably derived from the small farmer’s practice, particularly after the Selection Acts, of settling or perching on parts of a squatter’s run. Other suggested derivations relate to the ‘scratching’ of the land by selectors, their departure to a new district after a few years, their (enforced) thrift and their meager harvests because of the ravages of the cockatoos themselves. A number of compounds have developed from cockatoo (which has also been used as a verb) or from the diminutive ‘cocky’ (commonly used from the 1880s): ‘stringybark cockatoo’ (the poorest small farmer of all, whose soil was so thin it could only nourish the stringybark gum tree), ‘cockatoo fence’ and ‘cockatoo gate’ (both improvised from rough materials), ‘cocky’s friend’ and ‘cocky’s string’ (fencing wire), ‘cocky’s joy’ (golden syrup, a popular Australian treacle), ‘boss cocky’ (someone usually assertive and enjoying the exercise of authority), and ‘cow cocky’ or ‘spud cocky’ (referring to the main source of income).”

And Brian Marriner in *Forensic Clues to Murder* writes, “When Newgate caught fire during the Great Fire of London in 1666, the convicts were transferred to the Clink Prison on the south side of the river. ‘Clink’ is still used as a synonym for prison.”

And:

“He (Allan Pinkerton) arrived in America in 1842, aged twenty-three, and was the first detective officer in the Chicago police force, before resigning in 1850 to found his own private detective agency, the famed Pinkertons, which was to have offices in every major US city. His logo, the wide-open eye with the motto ‘We Never Sleep’, gave rise to the expression ‘private eye’.”

Erle Stanley Gardner in an article in *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* says the creator of the ‘hard-boiled’ school of fiction was a man called Carroll John Daly with his detective Race Williams. Better known in those days was Dashiell Hammet who had been a Pinkerton detective and created his own detective, Mike Hammer. Gardner writes, “When Hammett started writing, there was a dictionary of the underworld which used the word “shamus” as a tag for a private detective. Hammett picked that word up, and it ran through all his stories. Every time one of his detectives would enter on the scene, someone would sneeringly refer to him as shamus. Since Hammett’s time a whole school of realistic writers have had their characters refer to the private detective as a shamus.

“Just where did that word come from? I have made it a point to try and find out, and I am completely baffled. The late Raymond Schindler, one of the world-famous private detectives, told me he had never heard the word. At my request he had asked private detectives whom he employed, and they had never heard it used. I asked the wardens of various penitentiaries, and they told me they had never encountered the word except in fiction. During the past eighteen years I have had quite a few contacts with the inmates of penitentiaries; I have asked them about “shamus” and whether they had ever heard it applied to a private detective. Not one of them ever had.

“Then one day I happened to be discussing the matter with a man who had worked for a Jewish haberdasher, and he told me he *had* heard the word used; it applied not to a private detective but to some sort of phony. No matter; thanks to Dashiell, the *Dictionary of American Underworld Lingo* lists “shamus” as a Jewish-American word meaning a policeman or a prison guard, and the *American Thesaurus of Slang* lists it as applying to a policeman, an informer, or a stool pigeon.

“It has been many years since Dashiell Hammett first put the word into circulation. Today the general reading public considers “shamus” a slang term customarily used by the underworld in describing the private detective. It assumes that the writer who uses it knows his way around.”

And he provides this little snippet about what is often called ‘snowdropping’ here; stealing clothes, particularly women’s underwear, from clotheslines. Hammett calls this “on the gooseberry lay” and Gardner says, “Had the editor known it, this meant simply that the character was making his living by stealing clothes from clotheslines, preferably on a Monday morning. The expression goes back to the old days of the tramp who from time to time needed a few pennies to buy food. He would wait until the housewife had put out her wash; then he would descend on the clothesline, pick up an armful of clothes, and scurry away to sell them.”

(People who couldn’t afford a proper clothesline laid their washed clothes over bushes.)

And Hammett used the word “gunsel” to refer to a hired gunman in one story. Gardner writes, “Actually, “gunsel,” or “gonzel,” is a very naughty word with no relation whatever to a bodyguard, a gunman, or a torpedo.” But as Hammett’s editor had passed it it ceased to be unmentionable and entered the language as a slang term for a gunman.

Ivy Alvarez in *The Everyday English Dictionary* which is very far from being everyday plays with some very unusual words, all words you can find if you look hard enough but not words to drop in to everyday conversations, not unless you don't mind friends and neighbours staring blankly at you.

*Zoophagous*

dog eats dog  
on a long red road  
in the rear vision mirror

And what about *wootz* or *runagate* or *querimonious* or *orbicular* or *nigrescent* or *illapse* or *diacoustics* or *aiguille*?

And speaking of words and zoos—here are two which need more attention than they usually get: Anthroponoses and Zoonoses. One refers to the diseases animals and birds can catch from humans. The other with what humans can catch from animals and birds. I was concerned when I heard of governments taking bestiality off their books as a crime; firstly, because no animal or bird can consent to sex with humans, and, secondly, because there are serious, even fatal, diseases which humans can catch from animals and birds and that sort of intimate contact helps the transfer of infection.

And on a lighter note: I always wondered how hard-working peasants in Bohemia, digging their potatoes and milking their cows, turned into those Bohemians in Montmartre attics with their long hair and negligent attitudes to ... many things. Is this the answer? Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout editing *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather* write, 'In the late nineteenth century, "Bohemianism" became a popular catchword for an impoverished, idealistic, unconventional, and artistic way of life following the publication of Henri Murger's novel *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* and many subsequent dramatizations, the most famous of which is probably Puccini's *La Bohème*. Cather had already distanced herself from Bohemianism in an article in the *Nebraska State Journal* months before writing the following letter: "For the business of an artist's life is not Bohemianism for or against, but ceaseless and unremitting labor." ' This sounds more like the life of those peasants in Bohemia.

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December 22: Edwin Arlington Robinson

December 23: Robert Bly

Clement Semmler  
(Carl Friedrich) Theodor Strehlow  
Marie Bjelke-Petersen

December 24: Mary Higgins Clark

Patrick MacGill

December 25: Rebecca West

December 26: Henry Miller

Thomas Gray  
Donald Horne

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Donald Horne in *Into the Open* wrote, "at the end of our travels I signed a contract, with a £200 advance, and on a Sunday afternoon late in December 1963, after lunch, as Julia slept and Myfanwy and I sat in deck chairs in our small terraced garden, I put a long, lined, foolscap writing pad on my knee, got out my felt pen and began writing a book about Australia."

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He suggests two influences on his decision to write *The Lucky Country*. "Pamphleteer, with its eighteenth-century sound, seems the word for Brian Penton, the *Daily Telegraph's* second editor, who, with his wanton, sidelong glances and menacing charm, in some ways bore

to mid-twentieth-century Sydney the relationship John Wilkes had to mid-eighteenth-century London: he would sound the trumpet of liberty and take on governments with vigour, but at the same time he was notorious for libertinage, quarrelsomeness and lack of scruple. In the 1930s Penton had shocked patriotic feeling by chiselling out two rough, tough novels on the cruelties of Australian pioneering life and in 1941 had written a ninety-page pamphlet *Think — Or Be Damned*, that he described as ‘ill-mannered, cantankerous, unpatriotic and destructive — a subversive note on national pride, patriotism, and other forms of respectable ostrichism’ in which he lammed into the philistinism of Australians, their deferential fear of authority, their looting of the land, their dispossession of Aboriginal society, their anxious White Australia Policy. It seemed such a fine thing to write in a way that might encourage people to be interested in Australia that, in 1945, when I was out of the army, I began to plan a book that would be more thorough than Penton’s — Penton was, after all, too angry, with an overuse of words like ‘gobbledegook’ and ‘jiggerypokery’ and far too journalistically superficial. This idea for explaining Australia to itself was carried out 20 years later when I wrote *The Lucky Country*.”

The other influence he mentions was Professor John Anderson; “the word that seems to describe this intellectual leader who had an answer to everything (usually ‘no’) and a strong charismatic power, although himself decrying authority, is *prophet* — for John Anderson, professor of philosophy at Sydney University when I was there, an intransigent believer in the exposure of all illusions and a prophet of the ideal of a life lived in a permanent protest, if on a good salary and with a comfortable suburban home; a Scot, driven so immovably by the criticisms he made of the views of others and the faith he expressed in views of his own that he attracted followers who, in following him, changed their lives. (And all of this was done through a personal intellectual force that was, in itself, a serious education.) However, *The Observer* wasn’t going to follow an Anderson line on discussion — because that, as distinguished from belief in freedom of speech — was restricted to triumphal affirmations that Anderson was always right. What had stayed most comfortably with me as an ‘ex-Andersonian’ was one particular Anderson lesson: this was the belief, not in any way obvious in the 1940s, that, as he would put it — using what was then a difficult word that later came into intellectual favour in the 1980s — society was ‘pluralist’, with different, often conflicting ‘ways of life’. I had learned from Anderson that there was not one single ‘Australia’, or one single anything. This was to leave me, as editor of *The Observer* (and, later, as author of *The Lucky Country*) more open to accepting surprises about Australia than was likely in people who believed that what ‘Australia’ was had long since been reduced to an essence, bottled and labelled. What had also stayed with me, in only one of the several contradictions that being an ‘Andersonian’ could produce, was that I went into my editorship of *The Observer* calling myself an ‘anarchist conservative’.”

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The *New Literary History of Australia* says, “Donald Horne’s *The Lucky Country* (1964) was the best-selling of the commentaries on contemporary Australia. For Horne, Australia was among the first modern suburban societies, in which ‘for several generations most of its men have been catching the 8.02, and messing around in their houses and gardens at the weekends’. His scorn was reserved for the various elites who disparaged or betrayed the values of middle Australia, including the writers, most of whom seemed unable to ‘come to grips with their own people’ as observable human beings. Instead they either caricatured them or idealised them impossibly, so that literature and the arts no longer expressed ‘the moods and attitudes of the community’. Other writers could be seen as sharing Horne’s perception that ‘the profusion of life doesn’t wither because people live in small brick houses with red tile roofs’.”

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It was a phrase which entered the language. Became a benchmark. The Lucky Country. People used it in all sorts of ways. The Decline of the Lucky Country. The Fate of the Lucky Country. The Changing of the Lucky Country. And the book I’ve just been reading: Paul Cleary’s *Too Much Luck*. Most countries do not think of themselves in terms of Luck or the lack

of it. But Donald Horne wrote *The Lucky Country* and we've spent the next fifty years pondering on Luck and Australia.

The curious thing is that though many people have heard the phrase it is quite hard to find anyone who has actually read Horne's book. I have just been reading Horne's satire *His Excellency's Pleasure*, in which he obviously had Sir John Kerr and the events of 1975 in mind. But although he wrote about Australia's political life with some zest I didn't find it funny. So did he bring a touch of satire to *The Lucky Country*? Curiously, when I asked at the library, they came up with *The Lucky Country Revisited*. In this he muses over his book, the society he wrote about (1950s Australia), and the changes he had noticed.

He says of his famous book:

—most of Australia's business sector—especially the areas of industrial capitalism and finance capitalism—has been no good.

This was one of the main themes in my book *The Lucky Country*. That book forecast in 1964 that Australia would slip down the prosperity scale, and it gave quite a precise reason for this when it said:

*Australia has had its material success because its ordinary people were educated and adaptable enough to work in modern ways; because they were eager to buy enough consumer goods to keep the whole show going; and because their masters, although not usually of high calibre, were skilled enough, with government protection, to decode the instructions they got from overseas. Now something more than that is needed.*

—In books and articles (including mine) prophets warned of these failures. But, very largely we were not heard. For me, there was the particular humiliation of the misuse of the phrase 'the lucky country'. I had invented it as a warning of trouble ahead, using it as an ironic comment on the second-ratedness of the Australian leaders of that time, but in the mining boom 'new nationalism' of the John Gorton era it became a phrase of congratulation, and insofar as it was still seen as having any sting, it was used not to criticize leaders but those whom they led. There have always, of course, been people who knew what I was getting at. But that a term intended to be a warning was transformed into a form of self-congratulation reflected a streak of profound silliness in whole sections of Australian scholars, media people and intellectuals in general.

—Yet most people who continued to use the phrase continued to misuse it. Two years after its invention in 1964, one editorial writer dismissed it as an 'old cliché'. A phrase that was intended as an ironic rebuke became an expression of the belief that Australia's luck was something Australians had earned as one of destiny's chosen people and therefore something they could rely on without further effort. Because of its providential nature, their luck would last.

—However, as the decade proceeded, there was change. *The Lucky Country* was one of the first of the new books 'about Australia' that, drawing on recent research, popularized the idea of the suburbanness of Australia.

—The doctrine of fraternity, still largely meaningless in most countries, had received some ideological attention in Australia. It was just possible to live in the Australia of the early 1960s without realizing this. Someone who didn't use public transport, didn't bump into people in the streets, or ask the way, or come into contact on anonymous terms with ordinary people might not have heard the word 'mate'.

But one of the most significant uses of 'mateship' was to define Australia as a male society. As late as the early 1960s all of the stereotypes of Australianness were still male, and mateship was one of them. In the narrower sense, 'mates' were men who had been thrown together by some emergency in an unfriendly environment and had become of one blood in facing it. In this sense its use was strongest in the unions and in the armed forces.

—Australia had become one of the few countries in the world—was it the only country?—in which one could get away with blaming on to the ordinary people the inadequacies

of the elites. In Britain people did not suggest that what was wrong with the prime minister or the universities or business was that the ordinary people were no good. French who were critical of de Gaulle did not excuse him by saying: ‘But what can you expect in a country like ours?’ The critics of a United States president did not suggest he was what he was because that was all such a lousy country as the United States deserved. But the state of almost anything in Australia—from the state of the novel to the state of the nation—could be seen not as a criticism of the lack of imagination or skill or courage or education of the country’s elites, but of all those innocent people in the suburban streets who had never intended to write a novel or to become prime minister.

This habit concealed the fact that, while many ordinary Australians, given their powerlessness, could have many fine characteristics, the elites in Australia were mostly second-rate.

*The Lucky Country* was an important reminder that Australia in the 1950s was an economic colony, derivative, always looking to other countries to turn our basic products, sold cheaply, into useful items—and a country that looked to other countries for ideas, technology, and leadership. I wonder if he would feel that basic premise has changed in the last sixty years?

He wrote in *The Lucky Country*: “The only really national festivals are Anzac Day, Christmas and New Year. Anzac Day is the Festival of the Ordinary Man; Christmas the Festival of Family; New Year the Festival of the Good Time. Other holidays are just days off – except for people of religious conviction.” You will notice that one thing has changed since he wrote that.

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December 27: Elizabeth Smart

December 28: Alasdair Gray

December 29: Vera Brittain

Edward Granville (‘Red Ted’) Theodore

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I knew the Packer family had a lot to do with founding *The Australian Women’s Weekly* but I was very surprised to find that ‘Red Ted’ also had a hand in it. The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* in their entry for publisher Robert Clyde Packer says, “He did not get on well with Denison (newspaper and magazine owner and publisher), who was infuriated when Associated Newspapers was committed by Packer to paying his son Frank and E. G. Theodore £86,000 not to publish an evening daily for three years, thus providing them with the capital to launch the *Australian Women’s Weekly*.” And the ADB has this to say about Theodore under the entry for Vance Palmer: “After the war Palmer had returned to writing fiction. In 1948 *Golconda* appeared—the first of a trilogy broadly inspired by the life of E. G. Theodore, novels which are among his best.”

“Keeping things under control was his speciality. “King Theodore I”, one wag had called him because of his command of the legislature in Queensland. He had abolished the Legislative Council; only the King and the Parliament itself could do that. The same writer in *Smith’s Weekly* had prophesied, “The only thing that will kill Theodore is Theodore himself”. Well, if hypertension and cardio-vascular disease are self-inflicted, he was right. Journalists never did let up on him. Even when he became a publisher himself and with Frank Packer founded *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, the jokers at *Smith’s Weekly* published a cartoon of him in a bra and slip, with the caption “Red Ted’s Pink Teddies”. Underneath it said, “Ah, well. You’d never have believed, when Ted first went into Parliament for Chillagoe as a full-blooded, two-fisted Labor bloke that he would have come at a Society Women’s Paper!”

Ross Fitzgerald in “Red Ted” *The Life of E. G. Theodore*.

He was born in South Australia to Romanian-born Vasile (Basil) Teodorescu and English-born Annie Tanner. They anglicized the name to Theodore. He left school at twelve but rather than stay on the family farm he took to the roads accepting any kind of work including work in West Australian mines. Strongly independent, he believed in making his own way. On his way to Broken Hill he “entered the property of Sir Sidney Kidman. Theodore offered to buy rations but Kidman, thinking him a swagman, berated him as a loafer and ordered him off the property.” In Broken Hill he encountered well-organised unions for the first time. He eventually went to North Queensland where the small scattered mines made it much harder for the men to organize themselves against exploitation. And the attempts at unionizing were pretty rough; “most bushworkers took a union ticket or a hiding”. But Theodore was a good clear-headed organizer of the scattered workers. And the skills he gained there took him in to parliament in Brisbane in 1909. There he became, first treasurer and then in 1919 Premier. He created helpful things such as labour exchanges but his biggest fight was to abolish the Upper House.

Though a Labor leader, Fitzgerald says he wasn’t a socialist. “His themes, though tending towards the encyclopedic, were clear: electoral fairness, worker safety and health, the need for an arbitration system to settle disputes quickly and with the least disruption, equitable workers’ compensation, breaking up the big estates to give the little man a fair go, and restriction of aliens in favour of whites. It was not a programme for a radical socialist revolution, nor a vision of splendid economic progress and development; it was an expression of protection, a materialist concern for the well-being of workers; it was, if anything, a continuation of the nineteenth century spirit of reformist reaction to the excesses of laissez-faire capitalism.”

In 1927 he entered Federal Parliament and rose to be treasurer. But then he was caught up in the Mungana Affair. The Queensland Government when he was in charge had agreed to buy the lease on a possibly exhausted mine at Mungana. Theodore was accused of various things from a conflict of interest to pocketing some of the money paid. The complicated case wound on, damaging his political career, even though he was eventually found innocent of any wrongdoing. Fitzgerald sees the lack of Theodore in charge of Australia’s financial affairs at the beginning of the Depression as a real pity. Because Theodore was practical, down-to-earth, had the ability to step outside orthodox banking ideas, was willing to stand up to both British and Australian banks, and believed deeply in the need to work to achieve full employment. The employed can buy goods and services. The unemployed can’t. Instead he was on the outer and eventually left politics. He had heard rumours of gold being found in Fiji and formed a syndicate which included the Packer family to do some exploration and mining there. So he had come to know what the Packers were doing and planning. A man called George Warnecke with his wife Nora Hilla did their own research into what they saw women looking for, prepared dummies, and took these ideas to Frank Packer who discussed it with his father, trusted friends and with contacts at an advertising agency. He showed the dummies to Theodore who was surprised and impressed and asked how much it would cost to produce. Packer estimated a circulation of 50,000 with editorial costs at £75 a week.

“On 10 June 1933, *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, printed on a newspaper black press, went on sale in New South Wales, for twopence. It was a brave move and at first publishing rivals hardly took the venture seriously. Not even Warnecke was prepared for what happened. The first issue rapidly sold out so they had to print more. It only stopped selling because the presses at Macdonnell House could not print more than 120,000 copies that week. The second week’s sale amounted to 160,000, shattering all records. In an overcrowded market, in the middle of a Depression, *The Australian Women’s Weekly* was one of the greatest successes in Australian publishing history. The front page offered an unusual combination of headlines. Up top was printed, “What Smart Sydney Women Are Wearing” and two thirds of the way down, “Equal Social Rights For Sexes”. By 1935 it had reached 200,000 a week. The combination of traditional women’s interests and more serious issues, what Theodore called “sound, liberal plain speaking”, (and which worried Packer as tending too much towards Labor ideas) was a

success. It wasn't all plain sailing though. Costs and circulation fluctuated. There were bids and swops pushed by other newspaper proprietors. Eventually they decided to form a company. "The new company, called Consolidated Press Limited, was capitalised at £750,000. Theodore was chairman and Frank Packer, managing director." Theodore had helped create and launch Australia's best-selling women's magazine but he himself went back to Fiji to oversee their mining ventures. *The Weekly* needed no more nursing.

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December 30: Rudyard Kipling  
Thomas Edward Spencer  
Stephen Leacock

\* \* \* \* \*

"When I shook hands with the Canadian writer Morley Callaghan in Toronto just before he died, I thought, 'This is the hand that knocked down Hemingway in the boxing ring in 1929.' For a while Callaghan, Hemingway and Fitzgerald were rated together as fine writers. Callaghan was a regular contributor to the *New Yorker*. But then Callaghan inexplicably fell from the pinnacle. He was so overlooked by the critics for much of his career that Edmund Wilson thought him 'the most unjustly neglected writer in the English language'."

Frank Moorhouse in *Martini*.

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Another Canadian writer, perhaps also unjustly neglected, was Stephen Leacock. Perhaps because many of his stories were comic rather than serious. If you write *Frenzied Fictions* you cannot be a serious writer. Perhaps too because he was an economist and economists are rarely seen as good writers. They may have something to say but you do not expect to sit in awe at their beautiful prose and lyrical descriptions. And yet—why shouldn't books on economics be well-written and why shouldn't good books also be funny books?

His father managed to be a failed farmer in England, South Africa, the US, and then Canada, before abandoning his wife and eleven children, perhaps the ultimate in failure. I would like to know more about that unfortunate wife and how she managed because Stephen and some of those other children managed to get a good education and achieve successful lives. Though he wrote histories and social commentaries it is his light humour which I enjoy. Though as these were collections of pieces he had written for newspapers and magazines they lack a unifying theme. He believed in progress by which he meant the growth of goodwill and kindness. His humour is never cruel though it does lampoon and ridicule.

And was Morley Callaghan really so neglected? Granted that he was not a precocious young novelist like F. Scott Fitzgerald or Ernest Hemingway, despite hanging round with them in Paris in the 1920s and knocking Hemingway down in a boxing bout—but then that may well have been a good thing. He had time to develop and mature. He tried novels, plays, and poetry. He wrote an account of his time with Fitzgerald and Hemingway in *That Summer in Paris*. He got involved with broadcasting in Canada. He received a number of important awards. His son also became a well-regarded writer. That doesn't quite add up to "unjustly neglected" writer.

But of course if you have hung around with headline-makers like Fitzgerald and Hemingway there is always the chance you are going to be overlooked. It doesn't mean their writing is better. It just means they have that talent for keeping themselves in the limelight. If people walk into a bookstore just after hearing of your latest antics and see your latest book they may well say 'Oh yes, there's that writer I was reading about only the other day'.

But hearing about someone's drinking bouts is not the same as admiring their books.

So I went to *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (ed. Eugene Benson and William Toye) to see what Canadians think of his work. This also includes his son Barry who wrote a memoir of his father he called *Barrel-house kings*. And he too complained of being neglected by Canadians though anthologized abroad. Perhaps all the family believed they should

receive more acknowledgment. Certainly Morley wrote a novel called *A fine and private place* which the *Companion* says was “the story of an unappreciated novelist that clearly has personal implications and is used to present a flattering self-analysis and a contemptuous dismissal of the characters who are blind to the worth of the novelist and clearly represent Callaghan’s critics.” This may not be the way to get people to appreciate you.

But the *Companion* suggests there was a different problem with Callaghan’s books: that “with his special talent for the shorter and more concise forms of fiction, he is not really equipped for the construction of larger fiction.”

It tends to be novels rather than collections of short stories which make a writer’s reputation. I’m not sure how you get around that particular problem. Maybe he should have written more novels, on the theme of practice making perfect rather than what was wrong with his critics ...

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December 31: Nicholas Sparks

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## THE END

### AFTERWORDS:

1.

I mentioned in *Book Ends* that John Wycliffe’s bones were dug up and burnt in an excess of zeal to brand him an heretic. I came upon this more detailed account by Thomas Fuller in Charles Knight’s compilation *Half Hours with the Best Authors*: “Burning of Wickliffe’s Body by Order of the Council of Constance.—Hitherto [A.D. 1428] the corpse of John Wickliffe had quietly slept in his grave about forty-one years after his death, till his body was reduced to bones, and his bones almost to dust. For though the earth in the chancel of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, where he was interred, hath not so quick a digestion with the earth of Aceldama, to consume flesh in twenty-four hours, yet such the appetite thereof, and all other English graves, to leave small reversion of a body after so many years. But now such the spleen of the Council of Constance, as they not only cursed his memory as dying an obstinate heretic, but ordered that the bones (with this charitable caution.—if it may be discerned from the bodies of other faithful people) be taken out of the ground, and thrown far off from any Christian burial. In obedience hereunto, Richard Fleming, Diocesan of Lutterworth, sent his officers (vultures with a quick sight scent at a dead carcass) to ungrave him. Accordingly to Lutterworth they came, Sumner, Commisary, Official, Chancellor, Proctors, Doctors, and their servants (so that the remnant of the body would not hold out a bone amongst so many hands), take what was left out of the grave and burnt them to ashes, and cast them into the Swift, a neighbouring brook, running hard by. Thus this brook has conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, then into the main ocean; and thus the ashes of Wickliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which is now dispersed all the world over.”

And his ‘crime’? Wanting English people to be able to have Bibles in their own tongue. Sadly the courage and example of Wycliffe and his followers were lost on successive generations of English officials who insisted their colonized people speak English or else ...

2.

I put Cyril Connolly's comments about English schools for boys into *A Long Way Home*. Later I found that Robert Graves in *Goodbye to All That* endorses Connolly's views. "In English preparatory and public schools, romance is necessarily homosexual. The opposite sex is despised and treated as something obscene. Many boys never recover from this perversion. For everyone born homosexual, at least ten permanent pseudo-homosexuals are made by the public school system: nine of these ten as honourable, chaste and sentimental as I was."

And Valerie Grove in her biography of John Mortimer, *A Voyage Round John Mortimer*, writes, "Both, John wrote, were 'just emerging from the chrysalis of schoolboy homosexuality'. He also makes the dogmatic statement that 'at Oxford after Dunkirk the fashion was to be homosexual.' This depended on the circles you chose to move in. Certain dons, known to be predatory homosexuals, did behave like relics from *Decline and Fall*; they talked of Firbank and Beardsley and posed as latter-day Brian Howards. John, in his memoirs, wrote: 'By day they lay naked in their rooms, listening to Puccini or to Verdi's Requiem.' (In other reminiscences he cited Charles Trenet rather than Puccini.) In his second year, he began to be adopted into the Christ Church aesthetes' milieu. The man he called 'Tommy Motte-Smith' was the egregiously camp and affected Freddy Hurdis-Jones, who fancied himself as Oscar Wilde, much given to florid aphorism, and was sent down for his debts. At Westminster School, the dandyish Hurdis-Jones had exploited the school's gay underworld, paying younger boys in tuck. He seemed destined for theatrical glory and played the title role in Peter Brook's London production of *Dr Faustus* in 1942. Brook too had been 'an enthusiastic homosexual' while at Oxford."

3.

With Britain teetering on the brink I thought readers might be interested in this letter Kenneth Tynan wrote to *The Times* which was published on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1971.

Sir—Is it fear of driving undecided Tories into the pro-Market lobby that the left in this country has thus far soft-pedalled the strongest single argument against our joining the EEC – namely, that entry will do enormous and possibly irreparable harm to the chances of socialism in Britain? (I mean, of course, genuine socialism, and not the sort of coalition-caretaker-capitalism which your editorials have been holding out as bait for hesitant leftists). Sir Tufton Beamish is one of the few Tories who have openly admitted that the tremendous threat it poses to the left is among the Market's most enticing features.

The EEC is a capitalist power block dedicated to the perpetuation of the postwar schism of Europe. Its face is set firmly against the Warsaw Pact countries, so much so that Dubcek's Czechoslovakia – the finest flower of European socialism since the war – would have stood no chance at all of being considered for admission to the EEC. The Market is essentially the economic arm of NATO, and it deplures any backsliding towards neutralism, let alone socialism and its dread concomitants, the public ownership of land and the means of production.

One sees why the Labour right are so eager for entry: it would mean that they would never again have to worry over-much about placating their left. Yet it is sad that a wing of the party so rich in historians should not have reflected that the Common Market in its fullest state of development will be the most blatant vulgarity since the Thousand Year Reich. Hitler's blueprint for the salvation of Europe was a vision in which the western powers – Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Spain and the Low Countries – led the world on a crusade against communism. He failed to realize his dream. The Market could come close to fulfilling it for him.

Not long ago the Swedes, after careful thought, withdrew their application for full membership on the grounds that it would be incompatible with their tradition of political neutrality. They are quite content with associate membership, which has all the economic advantages and none of the political fetters of full membership. Perhaps we should learn from their example. Recent history has spelled out a message we would be foolish to ignore. It is that small countries are flexible and capable of change, while large power groups (the USA, the

USSR) are musclebound dinosaurs, inherently conservative and equipped with enough repressive strength to resist any internal pressures for change.

A politically and economically unified western Europe would be a capitalist fortress in which this country would have lost its manoevrability and above all its freedom to choose the socialist path.

4.

I mentioned Compton Mackenzie's novel *Sinister Street* in *Book Ends* though I had not read the book. Rather it was seen as an important precursor and inspiration for James Joyce when he came to write *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The other day I came across *Sinister Street* in Vinnies and bought it. It is the story of Michael Fane as a child and young man.

The problem for me is that Fane just isn't very interesting. An anxious child brought up by a grim nanny in a grim but respectable house in London. A shy boy at a boys' school where the students walk arm-in-arm and it is a crime to mention a boy's first name. A lost soul who believes for a while that religion will answer his needs. A young man who drifts, not very interested in working, unable to find something he really cares about. It was almost a relief to leave Michael behind. The interest of the book is not its characters but the picture it paints of early 20<sup>th</sup> century life in London. But even this interest is hard to sustain. It is probably not surprising that the books it influenced are better known.

5.

I mentioned Oliver Goldsmith's statue outside Trinity College in Dublin. I just found that C. Day Lewis, who was related to the Goldsmith family, had written a poem on him.

He called it 'Goldsmith outside Trinity'.

There he stands, my ancestor, back turned  
On Trinity, with his friend Edmund Burke  
And others of the Anglo-Irish genius –  
Poet, naturalist, historian, hack.

The statue glosses over his uncouth figure,  
The pock-marked face, the clownish tongue and mien:  
It can say nothing of his unshakable charity,  
But does full justice to the lack of chin.

Little esteemed by the grave and grey-faced college,  
He fiddled his way through Europe, was enrolled  
Among the London literates: a deserted  
Village brought forth a citizen of the world.

His period and the Anglo-Irish reticence  
Kept sentiment unsicklied and unfurred:  
Good sense, plain style, a moralist could distinguish  
Fine shades from the ignoble to the absurd.

Dublin they flew, the wild geese of Irish culture.  
They fly it still: the curdled elegance,  
The dirt, the cod, new hucksters, old heroics,  
Look better viewed from a remoter stance.

Here from his shadow I note the buses grumbling  
On to Rathmines, Stillorgan, Terenure –  
Names he'd have known – and think of the arterial  
Through-way between us. I would like to be sure

Long-distance genes do more than merely connect us.  
But I, a provincial too, an expatriate son  
Of Ireland, have nothing of that compulsive gambler,  
Nothing of the inspired simpleton.

Yet, as if to an heirloom given a child and long  
Unvalued, I at last have returned to him  
With gratefuller recognition, get from his shadow  
A wordless welcome, a sense of being brought home.

6.

I looked at the debate which swirled around James Macpherson in *The Long Way Home*. I just came upon this in a note in *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, translated by Ann Dooley and Harry Roe in which they say: 'James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian* (London 1765). The first instalment, *Fragments*, appeared in 1760 and questions were raised almost from the outset about Macpherson's linguistic abilities and literary probity. Scholarly opinion now considers that Macpherson did indeed have access to authentic Gaelic manuscripts and that he consulted with survivors of the old Gaelic learned tradition in Scotland who furnished him with manuscript materials.'

The *Tales* are full of fighting and feasting, genealogies, and snippets about place names. The stories are interspersed with poems which sometimes touch on the newly-arrived Christian rituals, such as:

'The eight carnal faults that graze us to the ground,  
The eight choice hours drive them soon away.

'Prime against gluttony, Terce against rage,  
Pleasant, bright Sext keeps nagging lust at bay.

'Nones against greed, while we are on the earth.  
Pleasant, cheerful Vespers save me from despair.

'Compline against sorrow and unworthy grief.  
Stern, cold Nocturns combat unseemly pomp.

'Christ's merciful Matins against hard, sullen pride.  
That may save me, Jesus, from the body's sins.'

7. I mentioned Wilfrid Wilson Gibson in *A Long Way Home*. I just came upon the genesis of his eerie poem, which is quoted in a Dr Who story, in *Rambles in the Hebrides* by Roger Redfern which a friend lent me.

"A year and a week after the Flannan Isles light was first lit a strange happening occurred, later made famous in verse by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. At this time the keepers were James Ducat, principal keeper; Thomas Marshall, second assistant; and Donald McArthur, an occasional keeper who was doing the duty of the first assistant, he being on sick leave.

On the night of 15<sup>th</sup> December a vessel sailed close by the islands but noticed that there was no light coming from the lighthouse. Upon reaching port this was reported but no message was sent to the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses for some reason.

On 26<sup>th</sup> December the relief keeper, one Joseph Moore, was taken out to the Flannan Islands on board the lighthouse tender *Hesperus* to relieve one of those on the island. It was afternoon when the tender came close alongside Eilean Mòr. Surprisingly there was no sign of life on the island, no keepers coming out from the lighthouse. A rocket was fired but still no one appeared, so Joseph Moore was landed. He walked up to the lighthouse but there was no one there. He returned to the *Hesperus* and reported his findings to the master, a Captain Harvey. Three men, including Buoymaster MacDonald, volunteered to go ashore with Moore and keep the light in operation. All four then went ashore and the tender sailed away to report the facts.

Up at the lighthouse it was found that the log had been written in on 13<sup>th</sup> December but the data for the 14<sup>th</sup> was written on the slate, ready to be copied into the log. Also on the slate was the time of extinguishing the light on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> and details of barometer and thermometer readings and state of the wind at 9 a.m. on the 15<sup>th</sup>. I have seen it recorded that there was an uneaten meal on the living-room table, too.

The lamp was trimmed and ready for lighting in the late afternoon of the 15<sup>th</sup> so that it appears the men disappeared during that afternoon. What had happened?

We shall never know for there was never a trace of the three keepers and it is only possible to surmise. Some suggested that a great sea monster had visited the island and eaten them, others that some unseen force took them off. It is, however, generally accepted by the authorities that in view of the traces of very severe weather on the island during December 1900, it is likely that while they were securing or examining gear near sea level a great sea came up unexpectedly and swept them away. It is possible that at first only one man was swept away but an attempt was made by the others to save him and they, too, were carried off.

Today the Flannan Islands stand as if they had never been the location of one of the great sea mysteries of our time, small gneiss isles far out in the Atlantic and lit by the well-known light.”