

**A  
Writer's  
Medley**

**A Calendar that Mentions Children  
A Calendar Down Under  
A Calendar for Poetry Lovers  
A Book of Forgotten Books**

**Compiled  
By  
J. L. HERRERA  
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# A CALENDAR THAT MENTIONS CHILDREN

## TO THE MEMORY OF:

My uncles who died as children: David and Alfred Clarke.

My brother who died as a baby: Duncan Cameron Clarke.

## WITH THANKS TO:

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## INTRODUCTION

My memories of the books from my childhood may not be a good guide to what children want to read now. But time surrounds them with the pleasant glow of memory, not least because there weren't a great many of them so each one tended to be read and re-read.

Now, when I practically have to climb over things even to enter a child's bedroom, not least because of the piles of lovely cheerful bright-coloured books, I wonder if any particular book stands out in a child's memory? Of course, children now are just as much at the whim of fashions as we were. If everyone was reading *Biggles* or *Milly-Molly-Mandy* then we wanted to be part of the 'movement'. No, I will re-phrase that because I doubt if boys ever went for *Milly-Molly-Mandy*. But you know what I mean. No one wanted to be on the outer.

It was a powerful incentive to want to learn to read.

Now that print has become less important, young people gobbling up their entertainment from many sources and some of them not requiring any ability to read, in a strange way it has made those books of yesteryear more precious. There was nothing 'throw away' about them. Books passed from one generation to the next, from one pair of hands to another, from one family to another, from one friend to another. That aspect of sharing was a powerful part of the experience. It didn't make the books necessarily better books. But they were more than books. I remember my mother and her two sisters had some of the L. M. Montgomery books as children and they had cut out and pasted inside the covers pictures of red-haired women. There was one beautiful picture of a woman in profile with wavy dark red hair and ever afterwards I thought of the adult Anne as that woman. Now when I see covers of the later Anne books decorated with a grinning urchin rather than a mature and attractive woman I feel disappointed.

Surely that was one of the benefits of the series books we had then—that we could follow someone growing up, just as we grew and changed and matured. It still happens at times, *Harry Potter* does grow up, but so many of the books I see children reading are 'caught in time' either because they belong to series like *Sweet Valley High* or *Goosebumps* or because they are books about children facing a particular problem. There are plenty of wonderful books for children around but there are also a lot of silly books where the author has apparently thought the addition of a few words like 'spew' and 'fart' will make children devotees for life.

There is, too, the interesting question: are books for children the same as books about children? A lot of adults write memoirs of their childhoods though these do not necessarily appeal to children. Yet as people like to say, 'At least they're reading' ... and reading remains one of the simplest, cheapest, and most absorbing pleasures still around ...

## A CALENDAR THAT MENTIONS CHILDREN

January 1: Maria Edgeworth

Jean Ure

J. D. Salinger

Jane Marcet

January 2: Isaac Asimov

Jean Little

January 3: J. R. R. Tolkien

January 4: Jacob Grimm

Desmond Digby

Bishop James Ussher

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People now laugh at Bishop Ussher trying to work out the age of the world from the Bible. John S. Fox in his quirky look at Bible genealogies says, “Among the early pioneers of Bible chronology, one of the most outstanding was Archbishop Ussher, a native of Ireland, whose dates are still found published authoritatively in the margin of most Bibles. He estimated a total of 4004 years from the creation of Adam to the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, but his total was *eight years too many*, as accepted almost generally by chronologists and scientists today, the true total being 3996 or  $6 \times 666$  years. It should be emphasised that it is *impossible* to frame a *perfect chronology* without a reconstruction of the Old Testament Calendars, all endeavouring to do so having fallen without exception into the same inevitable pitfalls which caused Archbishop Ussher and others to come short of perfect accuracy.”

As a child I was puzzled when I heard this because, although the Bible sometimes plays with numbers, nowhere does it say exactly when people were born, had children or died. Yes, we are given an age for Sarah and for Methusaleh but these are largely pointless. We can average out generations to 25 years as people still do. But there are still huge gaps. So how did Bishop Ussher bridge these gaps?

Curiously the Bible itself was not his only ‘tool’, he also looked at histories of Persia and so on, and was said to be fluent in Hebrew and Arabic. But the thing that interested me when I went looking was that he was an immensely learned man when it came to antiquities, writing *Discourse on the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish*, *Britannicarum ecclesiarum antiquitates*, *De Graeca Septuaginta verstone* as well as his famous *Annales veteris testamenti*, and the other thing that I couldn’t help thinking on was that for the good cleric, born in 1581, there simply were none of the materials that scientists now use. There were no geologists around to talk about ancient rocks. Paleontology had not yet been invented. Radiocarbon dating would have to wait for centuries. Genetics, biology, evolutionary theories would also have to wait hundreds more years. Astronomy, physics, chemistry, all existed, but they could offer little to help the struggling chronologists. Even changing the belief that the Sun revolved round the Earth to having the Earth revolve around the Sun could not tell people how old anything was.

Mike Pitts begins his book *Digging Up Britain* with: “When I began studying archaeology, humans were thought to have first reached Britain 200,000 years ago. We now know that people have been here for at least 850,000 years – and perhaps 950,000, depending on how we read the

evidence. Few archaeologists would be greatly surprised if new discoveries were to show that people have been in Britain for over a million years.”

All kinds of things have changed archaeology, from DNA to looking at the mineral content of bones, but most of all, radiocarbon dating. “There are three carbon isotopes. Most carbon has six protons and six neutrons, and is thus known as carbon-12, which makes up 99 per cent of all the carbon on Earth. Almost all the rest is carbon-13, which has an extra neutron. Carbon-12 and -13 are stable: they don’t spontaneously become something else. But there is another, relatively extremely rare carbon isotope, which is radioactive.

“Known as carbon-14, it has eight neutrons. It decays, turning into nitrogen-14 (with seven protons and seven neutrons) at a known rate over thousands of years. There is carbon in every living thing, with the proportion of isotopes reflecting their relative occurrence in the atmosphere. At death, an organism’s carbon-14 continues to decay, but is no longer replaced as it was during life. Any bits of preserved plant or animal (or human) excavated by archaeologists can be aged directly by finding out how much of the original carbon-14 is still there.”

Even so, I was a trifle sceptical. Pitts writes: “Various lines of evidence showed that people had been there (Norfolk) at least 850,000 and perhaps 950,000 years ago – it is not yet possible to say to which of two interglacial periods the finds date. An unidentified early human species had been using flint tools beside a large, slow-flowing river (an earlier and larger manifestation of the Thames) fringed by reed-swamp, alder carr, marsh and pools, and backed by forest, demonstrated not just by pollen but also by such remains as pine cones and leaves. As at Barnham, some four or five hundred thousand years later, their world was rich with fish and large mammals.”

Although Bishop Ussher has been used by people who wanted to set things in stone I am inclined to think, from what I know of his writing and research, that he would have found these new possibilities both challenging and exciting.

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January 5: Letitia Parr

January 6: Kahlil Gibran

William Charles Clapham

January 7: Gerald Durrell

January 8: Storm Jameson

January 9: Morris Gleitzman

January 10: Peter Barnes

January 11: Alan Paton

January 12: Dorothy Wall

Jack London

Eve Pownall

Charles Perrault

January 13: Michael Bond

A. B. Guthrie

January 14: Hugh Lofting

January 15: Mazo de la Roche

January 16: Robert Service

January 17: May Gibbs

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“There still seems to be a perception that Australian children in the first half of the twentieth century were not given the opportunity to understand their own country through reading, but rather that we were brought up on children’s books by British and European authors. This, at least in my case, was not true. Indeed I did read many English classics, but I also read with enormous pleasure

those Australian poems and stories that were readily available and that fed our imagination about Australian country and city life and the bush. For me, it began with May Gibbs, who peopled the landscape with fairytale figures every bit as fascinating as those of Hans Christian Andersen and the brothers Grimm.”

Leonie Kramer in *Broomstick*.

I think May Gibbs does have an important place in Australian children’s literature but I don’t think that is the right comparison. The Brothers Grimm were primarily collectors and recorders of folk and fairy tales rather than creative writers. Andersen sits in the middle. He re-wrote traditional tales but also created new ones such as ‘The Ugly Duckling’. May Gibbs was not a recorder of the folk tales of Aboriginal Australia or Colonial Australia. She was a creative writer and illustrator. Perhaps she used ideas she heard but her books were popular because they provided children with new ways of looking at the bush and its animals and flowers and reptiles and insects. And it was people like Randolph Caldecott and Beatrix Potter who influenced her.

Maureen Walsh in her biography *May Gibbs: Mother of the Gumnuts* writes, “At much the same time as Beatrix Potter and Kenneth Grahame were sharing their observations of the English countryside and giving character to the animals of field and hedgerow, a young artist on the other side of the world was looking at Australian animals and seeing their potential as story characters. But, more importantly, gradually evolving in her mind was a unique response to the Australian bushland that was to result in a rich national mythology.

“The artist was May Gibbs, her creation the bush world of the gumnuts Snugglepot and Cuddlepie, their cousins Bib and Bub and a host of other gumnut and other wildflower babies: a world of scribbly writing, koalas, possums, bull ants and beetles, kind old ladies, evil snakes and the horribly wicked, uncouth and cruel Banksia Men. Her unique vision so captured the hearts and imaginations of generations of Australians that today the bush babies—those little plump bare-bottomed figures with their gumnut hats or ragged-blossom skirts and their wide blue eyes—have become national symbols; gumnut words like ‘deadibones’ have entered the language; and for decades adults have remembered with a smile as they walked in the bush, the fearful respect with which they once regarded banksia trees. For children and adults alike May Gibbs brought magic as near as the bush was to their doorstep.”

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Gibbs was born in England but came first to South Australia then to Western Australia with her parents who were both talented artists. She returned to England to study art, came back to Australia, then back to England where she wrote for a suffragist magazine called *Common Cause* and brought out a children’s book called *About Us*. She also began doing illustrations for newspapers. Then she came to Sydney where, in 1916, she published her first book in the series which made her famous, *Gumnut Babies*. She went on illustrating magazines and newspapers, she did comic strips (‘Bib and Bub’ and ‘Tiggy Touchwood’) but it is her series of plump pink little gumnut babies which has remained as her legacy. She named her house ‘Nutcote’ for them (which she left to UNICEF when she died), her creations went on to stamps, as cross-stitch designs, as kitsch, and through the May Gibbs Children’s Literature Trust ([contact@maygibbs.org.au](mailto:contact@maygibbs.org.au)) ...

I think Australia has been lucky in its children’s authors. So it perhaps seems a little curmudgeonly to say that I didn’t like Snugglepot and Cuddlepie when I was young. I think there were two reasons. Going round flaunting a bare bottom was a very rude thing to do and I always felt embarrassed any time I dipped into a Gumnut story. (Now I wonder if May Gibbs had a thing about little pink bottoms?) And we all loved Norman Lindsay’s *The Magic Pudding*. It had such verve and rhythm and adventure that it made the Gumnut Babies seem uninteresting by comparison.

May Gibbs first experimented with Wattle Babies. (Dorothy Wall too began with a proto-Blinky Bill called Tommy in her first published book *Tommy Bear and the Zookies*.) After all, it

was now our national flower and had its own charm. Robert Holden and Jane Brummitt in *May Gibbs More Than A Fairy Tale* say, “Shortly before she departed, (for Australia) she experienced a highly poignant reminder of Australia—on 27 January, London celebrated Wattle Day for the first time. This anniversary, later called Australia Day, had been inaugurated only the year before in Australia. Overseas, the Australasian Section of the Royal Colonial Institute in London quickly followed this lead. So, too, did the great department store Selfridges, which filled its Oxford Street store with wattle blossom in a show of solidarity with Australasian banks and offices throughout the city.

”Everywhere, it seemed, people wore buttonholes proudly displaying sprigs of Australia’s national flower, which had been specially imported for the occasion. The unmistakable perfume and sight of these flowers, let alone the memories which they evoked, surely affected the thousands of Australians then in London. Only three years later, May would create her Wattle Blossom Babies, first on postcards, in 1916, and then in a series of five booklets, beginning in 1918.”

And even after she’d turned to her Gumnut Babies and made them a great success she continued to do other kinds of illustrations. The one she did which was used for baby health clinics in NSW has a stork delivering babies and the stork saying to a kookaburra, ‘I hardly like delivering the Goods Mrs Kookaburra them Humans is so Gum careless of ’em’. The interesting thing about this is that May Gibbs obviously had strong feelings about many things including Women’s Suffrage and Conservation, and here she is saying very clearly that Human Babies aren’t always looked after with love and care.

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The other Sydney children’s author bringing out books at the same time as May Gibbs was Dorothy Wall with her Blinky Bill books. May was lucky to have a family who provided her with education, opportunities, and encouragement but they also wanted her to get married. She wasn’t wild about the idea, writing,

Old Maid come off your dusty shelf these  
are the days of hope  
You still may tie the marriage knot there’s lots  
and lots of rope  
I’ve got some husbands coming on they won’t  
take long to grow  
To marry when you’re very old’s  
the fashion now you know.

But then she met James Ossoli Kelly and there was no more talk of Old Maidism.

Dorothy Wall was similarly independent and strong-minded but she divorced her husband and went back to New Zealand. She also was a talented artist (who had done illustrations for newspapers) and writer and supported herself through them but her Blinky Bill stories though also adventures differ from the Gumnut Babies. May Gibbs produced whimsy in the bush whereas Wall’s Blinky Bill was an animal version of Ginger Meggs, a little larrikin who constantly gets into mischief. Mrs Koala suggests calling her new baby Walter or Bluegum but Mr Koala says “Let’s call him ‘Blinky Bill’.” Unfortunately Mr Koala gets shot and mother and baby flee and meet up with another mother and baby, Mrs Grunty and Snubby, but whereas Snubby is a mummy’s boy Blinky cannot wait to go out and explore and have adventures. It is Mrs Grunty who says “Blinky needs a firm hand over him now that he has grown up: and who could you find better than Mrs Magpie to give him just the discipline that all young bears require?” Unsurprisingly Blinky runs away rather than go tamely to school—and gets into more scrapes. The stories are still fun, even if no modern child, reared on nature programs would believe in a Blinky eating a shelf of jam. The

sarcastic little jibes that Mrs Koala and Mrs Grunty give each other over their sons are amusing and some of the little portraits of the animals are a delight. “Great gum-trees standing erect, with the moon peeping through the leaves, out of a blue, blue sky. The grass and bracken a soft brown, fading away to grey, and right in front of you, only a few yards distant four grown-up lyre-birds and six little ones.

A dancing lesson was in progress and the ground was cleared for a little space, to give the dancers room to perform. That is what Blinky saw, as he gazed at the enchanting scene.

“Shh!” whispered Spikey. “Keep very quiet, and you’ll see wonderful things.”

The mothers and fathers were dancing in the daintiest way, stepping ever so lightly, and then running backwards and forwards, pirouetting, bowing, and hopping, while the little ones looked on, watching every movement, and occasionally giving a little squeak of delight.

“Come, children,” called Mrs Lyre-bird. “It is time you learned to dance.”

My children loved the Blinky Bill program which used puppets but it seems it now cannot be shown to today’s children because its key actor was charged with molesting children.

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When I was young the Milly-Molly-Mandy books were quite popular though I never managed to get very excited about the gentle little stories. The other day I saw *More Milly-Molly-Mandy* in an op-shop and thought I would see if the stories had got more exciting than my memory suggested. In fact, they hadn’t. Milly-Molly-Mandy lives in a white house with a thatched roof in an English village with her parents, her aunt and uncle and her grandparents. And she has little adventures with her friends Billy and Susan. I couldn’t get excited about the stories but one thing I’d forgotten was that Joyce Lankester Brisley was a very talented artist. And the other day I saw a book in an op-shop I remembered from my childhood. *Marigold in Godmother’s House*, and realised it too was by Brisley. And it too is a gentle little story. People may be firm (you go to bed when you’re told and you eat what’s put on your plate) but they are never nasty. I am not sure if this was what made the books sell but I think there is a moral there: books do not have to be violent or unpleasant to appeal to children. To a considerable extent we create children’s habits and preferences when it comes to their reading.

When I stopped to think about it I could see that many women who were skilled artists but found it hard to compete in a male-dominated world unless they had useful family connections or enough money to set up in a commercial studio or were prepared to do the endless anonymous illustrations needed by newspapers, magazines, cards, posters and advertisements, eventually turned to writing and illustrating their own children’s books. It was an interesting and challenging step but it was also a way to get themselves known. May Gibbs, Dorothy Wall, Brisley, Beatrix Potter and more. Even when their stories didn’t really grab their illustrations were a delight. And May Gibbs also encouraged children to take a greater interest in the bushland with its native creatures. She deserves to be remembered for her desire to understand and protect the environment as well as for her wonderful artwork.

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January 18: A. A. Milne  
Arthur Ransome  
Sally Morgan  
Rudyard Kipling (d)

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Christopher Koch in *Crossing the Gap* wrote, “We tend lately to think in Australia of ‘turning to Asia’ – as though this were a new adaptation. But there is a sense in which we have always been conscious of Asia, since we began as part of that Empire whose linchpin was India. India was always there for our imaginations to roam in; and for this we largely have Kipling to thank. *Kim*

alone, that gem among novels, can still tell us more about the Indian soul than any other English work except *A Passage to India*. That is not just my opinion of Kipling, but Nirad Chaudhuri's – and few Hindus are more critical of the British colonial mind than he is. It's interesting that Chaudhuri rejects the fashionable opinion that E. M. Forster truly respects and mirrors India while Kipling is a crass imperialist. Chaudhuri, in fact, deplores Forster's fundamental outlook as being condescending to Indians, whom, he says, Forster caricatures – a view, Chaudhuri says, that pleases only 'Indian toadies'. I was taken aback at this Hindu view of a writer I revere; but perhaps we ought to listen. And in contrast, this is what Chaudhuri has to say about Kipling – gently reminding us, at the same time, that his is the view of a 'Bengali Babu':

I would set down, as a matter of moral obligation, that I consider Kipling to be the only English writer who will have a permanent place in English literature with books on Indian themes, and who will also be read by everyone who not only wants to know about *British India*, but also *timeless India*.

And in his discussion of the Indo-European tradition and the significance of Krishna, he says this:

To those Western readers who wish to have the feel of this bucolic Krishna and yet cannot read the Krishna cycle in Sanskrit or Bengali I would recommend the few lines that Kipling has on him in his story 'The Bridge Builders'. I have not been able to understand how an Englishman...was able to get so near the essence of Vaishnava poetry.

Despite his imperial certainties – that hard shell he adopted to belong to the club – it becomes plainer with every biography and study of Kipling now appearing that his was a deeply troubled spirit, belonging nowhere in the end, because his inner life was truly Indian, not English. The account of his childhood in *Something of Myself* vividly shows why. The vital first six years of Kipling's life were spent in the care of an ayah in his parent's Bombay home, together with his sister; the nursery stories the ayah told them were Indian, and English was not even Kipling's first language:

In the afternoon heats before we took our sleep, she or Meeta would tell us stories and Indian nursery songs all unforgotten, and we were sent into the dining room after we had dressed, with the caution 'Speak English now to Papa and Mamma.' So one spoke 'English', haltingly translated out of the vernacular idiom that one thought and dreamed in.

The treatment of the characters in *Kim* is equally revealing. Although there is a dutiful respect shown towards such English authority-figures as Colonel Creighton, they have a remote, somewhat two-dimensional quality, while the Orientals are realised with a warmth and richness that makes them unforgettable, and with an essential respect that springs from Kipling's deep involvement with their culture, Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu: that culture and legendry which had enmeshed his childhood. The Tibetan Lama; Mahbub Ali the horse dealer; Hurree Babu the Bengali secret agent – all are lovingly comprehended in a way that the colder English characters are not. And Kipling's contempt for blundering European ignorance of a whole different world and structure of beliefs in India is constantly conveyed through Kim's excursions between the two worlds of his origins, as well as in such scenes as the one where the Russian agent attempts to buy the Lama's drawing of the Wheel of Life. The Russian sees 'no more than an unclean old man haggling over a dirty piece of paper', which he tries to seize – little realising that he is insulting a Buddhist intellectual and gifted artist who is also, in his own country, a wealthy abbot. Kim is full of such things, and the boy who is never sure whether he is English or Indian is plainly Kipling himself."

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I was reminded of this summing up when I came upon "*O Beloved Kids*": Rudyard Kipling's letters to his children, edited by Elliot L. Gilbert. Kipling had three children, Josephine who died from pneumonia at seven, John who died in the First World War at the age of eighteen

and Elsie who lived on keeping the family archives safe and private until her death. The letters are the letters of a Victorian (and then Edwardian) era father but in a way they are not. He expresses the views current in his world. But in a time when many such fathers had no idea how to relate to children other than to lecture or expect children's obedience and deference to parental wishes the letters shine with affection, whimsy, news, observations, kindness and encouragement, and are illustrated with amusing little sketches. So here is what he has to say when he went to Sweden to collect the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>. 1907.

Dear Babes—

We reached Stockholm this morning at 9.47 just after it got light. Stockholm is even more wonderful than Copenhagen. (I am writing with a Swedish pen and I don't know which way the beastly thing prefers to write. It won't write the proper way of pens.) Now I have found another pen which is even quaint. It is pointed and ornamented with a royal crown. But to continue the story of our journey. We left Copenhagen at 7 last night in a little steamer which crosses from Denmark to Sweden (I believe this pen is trying to write Swedish by itself.) Then we took a train – a queer corridor sleeper lighted by a gas that smelt most wonderful strong and bad. There was no food on the train but at about 8 o'clock a kind man we met got us a glassful of steaming hot coffee with two straws like you drink lemon squash out of! That coffee saved us! Also he gave us a delicious kind of sweet bread with pats of butter melting on it. I never had so delicious a meal but if you had seen Mummy sucking hot coffee out of a straw you would have laughed. Stockholm was hot and wet, with streaks of meltified snow. Solemn men in top hats of great glory received us at the station and escorted us to a carriage largely made of plate glass and silver mountings. The inside was pearl coloured silk. In this glorified bridal-coach Mummy and I sat and behaved beautifully. We reached a splendid hotel and were shown a suite of stately apartments and the important men in the top hats explained to us that owing to King Oscar's death all the ceremonies of the Nobel prize-giving would be cut down. There would be no banquets; no speeches; no large assemblies. At this news I looked properly grave and sad but I was *very* glad to escape from the speeches and the banquets. Then I was taken to call on the head of the Swedish Academy and then I went to call on the British Embassy and in a little time I am going to be taken to a meeting where a Nobel prize will be given me. It means a gold medal and a parchment certificate and to-morrow they give me a lot of money. All the flags here are at half-mast for King Oscar's death and the whole city looks mournful under these gloomy grey skies.

Mummy has done nothing but work hard all the day but she is going to the ceremony too. There will be only two ladies present. If the King had lived he would have given the prizes himself. There are three other men besides me getting prizes. Sir Rennell Rodd – young Rodd's father is the British Ambassador here. He is, you know, in England just now but he will have to come back for the King's funeral.

Stockholm is built on and about and round all sorts of canals and harbours crowded with all sorts of little steamers. Our windows look out on one broad canal where three ferry boats cut about every few minutes. It's a sort of Venice up in the north.

I can't think of anything more to tell you except to give you our dear dear love.

Ever your most affectionate parents.

Then he picks up his pen again later that day to write some more:

(Still Tuesday: still darker)

Dear People —

I continue my letter from where I stopped it at 3.25 p.m. Well, at that hour came the bridal carriage – Cinderella's glass coach I am going to call it – and Mummy and I and two professors piled in and drove through the dark shiny wet streets where all the lamps were reflected

on watery pavements and harbours and canals – so that moving steamers’ lights were mixed up with shop lights. Everyone in the streets seemed to be in black and the shops were full of black dresses. We stopped opposite the door of a place that looked like a theatre – with iron inner doors and stone staircases. It was the school of the Academy of Music. We went up stairs, after I had left my hat, coat *and* go-loses with a door-keeper and came into a room ... It was all bare and white with semi-circles of chairs whose seats tilted up with a spring when you weren’t sitting on ’em. Behind the platform about eight feet up were three white plaster busts of three great scientific men. (That is why I can’t understand their calling the place the Music-room. Perhaps it was the science lecture room after all.) Only the professors of the Swedish Academy were there – not fifty all told. The galleries were empty. Most of the chairs were empty and there was a general feeling of emptiness all about. You see on account of King Oscar’s death *all* the big public functions were stopped and all the professors were in deep mourning. The four Nobel prize winners sat in four chairs thus:-

Professor Nicholson	Professor Buchner,	The Chancellor	A French	JE!
from Chicago who had	a German who	of the Swedish	doctor who	
found out things	had done	Academy	had found out	
about light	something		things about	
	scientific		fever & sleeping	
			sickness	

I felt rather like a bad boy up to be caned. Different professors got up, went to the reading desk on the platform and talked to each man in his own lingo. The American got it in English: the German in German: the Frenchman in French: and me in English. It is an awful thing to sit still and look down your nose while a gentleman who talks English with difficulty pays you long compliments. As each oration was finished, the victim got up from his chair, the schoolmaster (I mean the Speaker) came down from the platform and shook hands with him. At the same moment a tall young man with a leather rosette in his buttonhole presented the victim with his diploma and gold medal. You have no notion how difficult it is to shake hands gracefully when one arm is full of a large smooth leather book on top of which is a slippery slidy red leather box – like a huge Tiffany jewel case. Try, with a blotter and the case of my silver key and see what happens. I felt like this:- (drawing of a man with many hands coming at him) playing a 15-30 puzzle! The air seemed full of friendly hands all rushing to clasp mine! I had made a bet with myself that Mummy should be the first person to look at the diploma and play with the medal. So I handed them both over to her. The diploma is a beautiful hand-painted book. The medal weighs about half a pound. It is pure gold and represents poetry listening to the voice of music! Never you dare say I can’t sing again. I thought it was a picture of Mowgli listening to a woman playing on a lyre. He has nothing on to boast of but he is sitting on a bath-towel and saying:- “Now where is the rest of my week’s wash. I have it all written out.” Seriously it is one of the most lovely pieces of work which I have ever seen.

That was all the ceremony. It took less than an hour and then we went into another room to get our money. I liked the American professor awfully! He was younger than I but the rest were pretty average old. Then we climbed into Cinderella’s coach again and came back to our hotel. That is the full account of all just *as* it happened. Everybody kept assuring me that if the King had not died the ceremonies would have been four or five hours long and there would have been banquets! I don’t want banquets. However a few professors are giving Mummy and me a quiet dinner in this hotel to-night and we dine out to-morrow night with the Secretary of the Academy. He has a white porcelain stove in his house eight feet high. I saw it when I went to call this morning. After that, on Thursday night *unberufen – unberufen – unberufen\** – we come home – home – home! (\*touch wood)

The only thing I don’t like about this part of the world is the dark. The sun begins here at 9 and stops at 2.30 and as we have had heavy grey skies, rain, mist, and snow ever since we started,

you can faintly guess how dark the days are ... Swedish grub is interesting but pickle-ish. They pickle pretty much everything they can catch before it goes bad. And they catch a lot of things. They have eels in jelly and pickled herring and lobster and crabs and raw ham and dried raw salmon – none of which will our Lady Mother let me eat. Isn't it a shame? To-morrow we hope to steal out and do some shoppings together.

Ever your loving  
Dad.

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January 19: Nina Bawden

Edgar Allan Poe

January 20: Richard le Gallienne

January 21: TEDDY BEARS

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Hunter Davies in his *Behind the scenes at the Museum of Baked Beans* writes of visiting a teddy bear museum: “One of the special displays is of Winnie-the-Pooh memorabilia, which he collected at various auctions. Of the many literary teddy bears, Winnie-the-Pooh, who featured in AA Milne’s stories, first published in 1926, is almost certainly the most famous. Milne wrote the stories for his son Christopher Robin, to whom he had given a bear on his first birthday. It had been bought at Harrods and was made by the English firm of Farnell. This was known as Edward Bear, as they decided to give it its Sunday-best name instead of run-of-the-mill Teddy (in England, Edwards have always been shortened to Teddy, but in the USA, Roosevelt got his nickname from a contraction of Theodore), but became known as Winnie-the-Pooh. Christopher Milne bought other soft toys at later birthdays till they had a whole family of animals – including Piglet, Eeyore and Tigger.

“The displays have some original 1920s Farnell teddies of the appropriate type, but not Christopher Robin’s actual teddy, the one that was the original Winnie-the-Pooh. That is today in the New York City Library. But the display includes the original ‘Hunny’ pot, made by Christopher himself and labelled ‘Pooh Bear’, and a letter from Christopher Robin aged six. There are other letters and telegrams from family and friends, in one of which Piglet is spelled Biglet, which appears to have been an alternative name used in the family.

“There is also a letter and drawing by Ernest Shepard, the artist who drew the original illustrations. In this letter, written in 1971, he explains that he based Winnie-the-Pooh on his own son’s teddy bear, who was known as Growler. ‘When the Second World War came, my son and his wife decided that they should go to Canada for safety. There in Montreal poor Growler was savaged by a dog and died’.”

The Teddy Bear Museum is in Witney in Oxfordshire.

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January 22: School Reading Books

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The other day I picked up a 1937 *Infant Reader* put out by the NSW Department of Education. They did not define ‘infant’ but in the days before kindergartens when most children began school at five or six I assume ‘infant’ meant Grade One and Grade Two. The book was a mix of prose and poetry, Tennyson, Rossetti, Aesop, Bible stories, nursery rhymes, and little country tales. I remember our reading books in Queensland also included ‘The Mouse and the Lion’ and ‘The Fox and the Grapes’ but it also included two Aboriginal stories which I don’t remember the Queensland Department of Education thinking to offer their young readers. And I wondered if this myth of ‘The Bunyip’ defined the way in which generations of children thought of bunyips?

“Long, long ago, some black men went fishing for eels. They came to a flat place. After the great rains it was all covered with water; but the great rains had not yet come, so they found only a set of pools.

They began to fish for the eels. All but Goondah had worms for bait. He had a piece of raw meat, and put it on the hook at the end of his fishing line.

For a long time they caught nothing, but at last Goondah felt something pulling hard at his line.

“Help!” he cried, “I have a mighty fish.”

They pulled, and pulled, and pulled at Goondah’s line.

At last there lay panting on the bank a monster with the head of a calf and the body of a seal. It was the cub of the dreaded Bunyip.

Then they heard a fierce howl, and the mother Bunyip rose on the water and came towards them.

“Let the cub go!” cried the men. But Goondah would not let it go.

He had told his sweetheart he would bring something home for her. So he flung the cub on to his back and they all ran for their camp.

They heard a low rushing sound behind them. They looked back and saw the mother Bunyip riding on the wall of water which was rushing after them.

Terrified, they ran with all their might. But just as they got to their camp the water was upon them.

Goondah dropped the little Bunyip, clasped his sweetheart, and cried: “I will climb with you to the top of the tall red gum, where no water can reach us.”

But as he spoke, he felt the water swirl about his feet. Looking down, he saw that they were feet no longer. He looked for the maiden at his side, but saw only a great black bird. He looked round at his friends, but they had all been turned into black swans.

Those swans never again became men, but at night black men used to hear them talk in words that were not swans’ words.

The little Bunyip was carried home by its mother, and the waters sank back into the pool.”

And there is another thought in there. Did six and seven-year-olds read this story with facility then and would they now?

Sometimes bunyips are presented as relatively friendly creatures but quite often they are there to frighten.

O came you up by the place of dread  
(West red, and the moon low down)  
Where no winds blow and the birds have fled  
And the gum stands dead and its arms gleam white,  
And the tribe sneak by with a stealthy tread  
In the ghostly light, in the ghostly light:  
Brave Worralang went one grey nightfall  
(A woi! woi!) where the grim rocks frown;  
He came no more to the camps at all  
(Skies dark, and the moon low down).

As we came up by the gully side  
(Deep dusk, and the moon low down)  
A dingo whined and a curlew cried  
And the reeds replied as in hushed affright

Where tall brave Worralang screamed and died  
In the ghostly light, in the ghostly light:  
For the Thing lurks there in the haunted place  
(A woi! woi!) where the pool is brown;  
Where lost ones vanish and leave no trace  
(Day dead, and the moon low down).

O go not by near the Bunyip's lair  
(Stars dim, and the moon low down)  
Or tip-toe past and beware, beware  
The dark pool snare and be set for flight,  
For things of terror have happened there  
In the ghostly light, in the ghostly light:  
And oft in panic we crouch and hark  
(A woi! woi!) where the dead men drown  
The monster's bellow across the dark  
(Stars gone, and the moon low down).

'The Bunyip' by James Devaney.

In one way I am happy to leave the Bunyip as an enduring mystery but it seems very likely it was a large lizard related to goannas and Komodo dragons which lived in swampy areas and gradually disappeared or declined in size as the country grew drier and food sources declined.

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January 23: J. G. Farrell  
January 24: Ethel Turner  
January 25: Russell Braddon  
Marjorie Darke  
January 26: Brian Garfield  
Mary Mapes Dodge  
January 27: Lewis Carroll

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I know the Alice books are treated as children's books, and they were written for a little girl, but I am not sure that they really are best suited for children. Certainly children enjoy the Mad Hatter's Tea Party and Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee. But I am not sure that children are interested in those queens. I didn't particularly like Alice when I was young simply because the Tenniel illustrations always struck me as so dark and gloomy and a little threatening.

I was thinking about Alice the other day when I came upon Saki's story 'The Westminster Alice' which was certainly not written for children. He begins it with this poem:

Alice, child with dreaming eyes,  
Noting things that come to pass  
Turvey-wise in Wonderland  
Backwards through a Looking-Glass.

Figures flit across thy dream,  
Muddle through and flicker out  
Some in cocksure blessedness,  
Some in Philosophic Doubt.

Some in brackets, some in sulks,

Some with latchkeys on the ramp,  
Living (in a sort of peace)  
In a Concentration Camp.

Party moves on either side,  
Checks and feints that don't deceive,  
Knights and Bishops, Pawns and all,  
In a game of Make-Believe.

Things that fall contrariwise,  
Difficult to understand  
Darkly through a Looking-Glass  
Turvey-wise in Wonderland.

He gives the chapters titles like 'Alice in Pall Mall', 'Alice and the Liberal Party', 'Alice at Lambeth', 'Alice Anywhere But in Downing Street', 'Alice Lunches at Westminster' and 'Alice in a Fog'. The characters are (largely forgotten) political figures: The White Queen = Mr Balfour, The Red Queen = Mr Joseph Chamberlain, The Caterpillar = Mr Speaker Gully, Humpty Dumpty = General Sir Redvers Buller, The White King = Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and so on.

The White Knight (The Marquess of Lansdowne) says, "Now, for instance, have you ever conducted a war in South Africa?"

Alice shook her head.

"I have," said the Knight, with a gentle complacency in his voice.

"And did you bring it to a successful conclusion?" asked Alice.

"Not exactly to a *conclusion*—not a *definite* conclusion, you know—nor entirely successful either. In fact, I believe it's going on still.... But you can't think how much forethought it took to get it properly started."

And the Mad Hatter makes the later jibe:

*Dwindle, dwindle, little war,  
How I wonder more and more,  
As about the veldt you hop  
When you really mean to stop.*

Clearly for a piece written around events in 1901 and the war in South Africa dragging on it would have resonated with many people. But other conversations, though they may have had a particular significance then, just come over now as amusing.

"The Dormouse awoke with a start, and began as though it had been awake all the time: "There was an old woman who lived in a shoe—"

"I know," said Alice, "she had so many children that she didn't know what to do."

"Nothing of the sort," said the Dormouse, "you lack the gift of imagination. She put most of them into Treasuries and Foreign Offices and Boards of Trade, and all sorts of unlikely places where they could learn things."

"What did they learn?" asked Alice.

"Painting in glowing colours, and attrition, and terminology (that's the science of knowing when things are over), and iteration (that's the same thing over again), and drawing—"

"What did they draw?"

"Salaries. And then there were classes for foreign languages. And such language!" (Here the March hare and the Hatter shut their eyes and took a big gulp from their tea-cups.) "However, I don't think anybody attended to them."

Alice is the wise child wandering in the labyrinth of this political spoof.

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January 28: Percy Trezise  
Sabine Baring-Gould  
January 29: Susan Coolidge  
Allan Baillie  
January 30: Angela Thirkell  
January 31: Zane Grey  
February 1: Muriel Spark  
February 2: Joyce Lankester Brisley  
February 3: James Michener  
February 4: Russell Hoban  
Susan Townsend  
February 5: Captain W. E. Johns  
Esther Paterson

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The famous novels of World War I are almost invariably stories of trench warfare. Think of *All Quiet on the Western Front* or *Her Privates We*. Or even *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. But it suddenly came to me that I could think of no famous novel of the war in the air—except for the Biggles books. And *Biggles Pioneer Air Fighter* does give a good introduction to what it was like flying little machines made of wood and wire and canvas.

Captain W. E. Johns in writing of ‘How Biggles Was “Born”’ says, “These stories of World War I were written about a character whose exploits—little suspected by me at the time—were to continue to the present day. They were written for a magazine of which I was the editor, and apart from the entertainment of the reader had the more serious purpose of presenting a picture of war flying as it was in its infancy.”

They weren’t written primarily to entertain boys. But once they were designated as adventure stories for boys they had to present a picture of clean-living men who if they swore, swore under their breath, and whose lives except for a bit of gambling and their ever-present cigarettes could be seen as lives for young men to aspire to. They were tough, resilient, loyal, honest, brave and innovative.

And they introduce young readers to famous characters such as The Red Baron.

“I’ve heard of that lot,” admitted the American. “Who are they?”

Wilkinson looked at him in surprise. “They are a big bunch of star pilots each with a string of victories to his credit. They hunt together, and are led by Manfred Richthofen, whose score stands at about seventy. With him he’s got his brother, Lothar—with about thirty victories. There’s Gussmann and Wolff and Weiss, all old hands at the game. There’s Karjust, who has only one arm, but shoots better than most men with two. Then there’s Lowenhardt, Reinhard, Udet and—but what does it matter? A man who hasn’t been over the line before meeting that bunch, has about as much chance as a rabbit in a wild-beast show,” he concluded.

*Biggles, Pioneer Air Fighter.*

As well as Biggles some real life Australian airmen faced The Red Baron. William Joy in *The Aviators* says, “Australia was forming her own squadrons. Several served on Europe’s Western Front, bombing enemy objectives, shooting their way through dog fights and even tangling with the famous Richthofen Circus. No. 2 Squadron’s first big action came in November, 1917, when, still virtually untried, they supported the tanks and infantry of General Byng in his bid to break the

German lines near Cambrai. Hunting in couples, 20 or 30 feet from the ground, through patches of thick fog, they flew up and down roads and trenches emptying their machine guns at pockets of German troops and dropping bombs on batteries. One pilot flew into a haystack and survived. Another, Lieutenant H. Taylor was shot down well inside the German lines. He joined an advanced British infantry patrol, led it forward, brought in a wounded man, then returned to his own base. ... "The star of No. 4 Squadron was Captain Arthur Harry Cobby, a former bank clerk, who shot down 32 enemy planes and 13 balloons. In March 1918, Cobby, carrying as mascot an aluminium figure of Charlie Chaplin, downed two of Richthofen's Circus in one dog fight."

And he says of several other well-known airmen, "Among those who served with the British Royal Flying Corps was Charles Kingsford Smith, who first had his baptism of fire as a despatch carrier on Gallipoli" where he had two toes shot off. And, "Australian airmen and their British comrades stepped up the blitz on railway depots, camps and troop formations from Nablus east to Amman and El Kutrani on the Hejaz Railway. In a special mission, Ross Smith flew Col. T. E. Lawrence – Lawrence of Arabia – from General Allenby's H.Q. to a secret rendezvous in the desert."

Terrible things happened in the air, just as much as in the trenches. I remember my feelings of horror when I learned that they did not have parachutes in the early planes. Nor did they have wireless to communicate. "One could not exaggerate the horror of seeing two machines collide head-on a few yards away, and words have yet to be coined to express that tightening of the heart-strings that comes of seeing one of your own side roaring down in a sheet of flame." And although Johns doesn't mince the horror of the war in the air some of his stranger stories stay in the mind. "Almost everybody has heard the story told by Boelcke, the German ace, of how he once found a British machine with a dead crew flying a ghostly course amid the clouds. On another occasion he shot down an F.E., which, spinning viciously, threw its observer out behind the German lines and the pilot behind the British lines. What of the R.E.B. that landed perfectly behind our lines with pilot and observer stiff and stark in their cockpits! The R.E.B. was not an easy machine to land at any time, as those who flew it will remember."

And although they are stories of action and adventure they have their more thoughtful moments. "It was a glorious morning. A few late stars still lingered in the sky; to the east the first gleam of dawn was lightening the horizon. He pointed his nose and cruised steadily in the direction of his encounter of the preceding day, climbing steadily and inhaling the fresh morning air. As he climbed, the rim of the sun, still visible to those below, crept up over the skyline and bathed the Camel in an orange glow. Around and below him the earth was a vast basin of indigo and deep purple shadows, stretching, it seemed, to eternity. He appeared to hang over the centre of it, an infinitesimal speck in a strange world in which no other living creature moved. The sense of utter loneliness and desolation, well known to pilots, oppressed him, and he was glad when six D.H.9s, which had crept up unseen from the void beneath, gleamed suddenly near him like jewels on velvet as the rays of the sun flashed on their varnished wings. He flew closer to them and waved to the observers leaning idly over their Scarff rings. The Nines held on their way and were soon lost in the mysterious distance. Biggles idly wondered how many of them would come back. The dome above him had turned pale-green, and then turquoise, not slowly, but quickly, as if hidden lights had been switched on by the master of a stage performance."

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February 6: Rudolf Erich von Raspe (exact dates not known)  
Eric Partridge

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*The Travels of Baron Munchausen* begins: “Some years before my beard announced approaching manhood, or, in other words, when I was neither man nor boy, but between both, I expressed in repeated conversations a strong desire of seeing the world, from which I was discouraged by my parents, though my father had been no inconsiderable explorer himself, as will appear before I have reached the end of my singular, and, I may add, interesting adventures. A cousin, by my mother’s side, took a liking to me, often said I was a fine forward youth, and was much inclined to gratify my curiosity. His eloquence had more effect than mine, for my father consented to my accompanying him in a voyage to the island of Ceylon, where his uncle had resided as governor many years.

“We sailed from Amsterdam with recommendations from their High Mightinesses the States of Holland. The only circumstance which happened on our voyage worth relating was the wonderful effects of a storm, which had torn up by the roots a great number of trees of enormous bulk and height, in an island where we lay at anchor to take in wood and water; some of these trees weighed many tons, yet they were carried by the wind so amazingly high, that they appeared like the feathers of small birds floating in the air, for they were at least five miles above the earth : however, as soon as the storm subsided they all fell perpendicularly into their respective places, and took root again, except the largest, which happened, when it was blown into the air, to have a man and his wife, a very honest old couple, upon its branches, gathering cucumbers (in this part of the globe that useful vegetable grows upon trees)” and so it begins with shades of Sinbad and a hint of Gulliver, the voyaging, the amazing things to be seen.

He touches on current people and events, Admiral Rodney, the new hot-air balloons, as well as figures from the past such as Shakespeare ‘a great deer-stealer’; he is imprisoned in Turkey, he travels to Russia, the Baltic states, North America, France, England, even the Moon, he has endless bizarre adventures, but it is a curiously impersonal narration.

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February 7: Charles Dickens  
Elizabeth Honey  
Laura Ingalls Wilder

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Valerie Browne Lester, a great-great-granddaughter of ‘Phiz’, wrote *PHIZ The Man Who Drew Dickens*. Phiz was actually Hablot Knight Browne, descendant of French Huguenots who came to London and changed their name Bruneau to Browne. Phiz was the son of a Browne daughter and a French cavalry officer Nicolas Hablot. Her parents took the child in as their own, fudging the birthdates of Phiz and their next baby to make it look as though he was their legitimate son. Despite this awkwardness and the fact his putative father William Loder Browne deserted the family, went to the US, changed his name and had another family, he still inherited the family’s artistic talent. He was apprenticed to an engraver but decided he preferred etching and eventually managed to make his living as a freelance illustrator.

Lester writes, “The actual moment when Hablot Knight Browne and Charles Dickens first met is a subject of vigorous debate, but it is generally believed the momentous encounter occurred when they joined forces on Dickens first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*.” But they were close neighbours and there is a mysterious play, obviously written by boys, called *The Stratagems of Rozanza, A Venetian Comedieta* by C.J.H. Dickens and illustrated by H. Knight. Was this a juvenile collaboration? No one seems to know. And why Phiz?

“After signing a mere two plates as N.E.M.O., Hablot Knight Browne became Phiz. It can be no coincidence that Dickens had just introduced a character called Fizkin into Pickwick. That, combined with the artist’s gift for etching ‘phizzes’ (faces) and the public craze for physiognomy, are all good reasons for the pseudonym, but Phiz himself remarks: ‘... I signed

myself as “Nemo” to my first etchings before adopting “Phiz” as my *Sobriquet*, to harmonise – I suppose – better with Dickens’ “Boz.”

“And, most certainly, Phiz and Boz chimed well together.”

Phiz illustrated books for many other writers including Charles Lever, Harrison Ainsworth, Anthony Trollope and Sheridan Le Fanu. He was a happy family man and loved animals (though he enjoyed hunting). “ ‘If he found the cat in his armchair,’ continues his daughter, ‘he would never disturb her, however tired he was, but would inconvenience himself for her sake, saying, “Let her be, poor pussy, she likes that chair.” ’ But gradually his style went out of fashion and his work dwindled.

“Occasionally Dickens wrote too close to reality when portraying some of his characters. One such was the dwarf, Miss Mowcher, whom he originally planned to portray as a malevolent character. The real dwarf was Mrs Seymour Hill, a manicurist and chiropodist. She had absolutely no trouble recognizing herself, and wrote immediately to Dickens, threatening legal action and declaring: ‘I have suffered long and much from my personal deformities but never before at the hands of a Man so highly gifted as Charles Dickens ... Now you have made my nights sleepless and my daily work tearful.’ Dickens was mortified, and quickly responded that, while the likeness had something to do with her, it was based far more on someone else. He promised to change the character so that the reader would remember her with affection, a promise that he kept. Mrs Hill was mollified. Phiz’s illustration, with its twinkling eyes and impressive feathered hat (merely a bonnet in Dickens’s description) did not upset Mrs Hill.”

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February 8: Jules Verne  
Vivienne Wallington  
John Grisham

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“Every street had a story, every building a memory. Those blessed with wonderful childhoods can drive the streets of their hometowns and happily roll back the years. The rest are pulled home by duty and leave as soon as possible.”

From *The Summons* by John Grisham

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February 9: Anthony Hope

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Tuppence Beresford in Agatha Christie’s *Postern of Fate* comes across some books she remembers from her childhood. “Of course I used to read those when I was about ten or eleven. I shouldn’t be surprised if I don’t come across *The Prisoner of Zenda*.” She sighed with enormous pleasure at the remembrance. ‘*The Prisoner of Zenda*. One’s first introduction, really, to the romantic novel. The romance of Princess Flavia. The King of Ruritania. Rudolph Rassendyll, some name like that, whom one dreamt of at night.’ ”

And later she has an old lady say: “ ‘Ah yes,’ said Mrs Griffin, ‘I quite understand that you must very much have enjoyed the prospect of being able to read certain old favorites again. *The Prisoner of Zenda*, perhaps. My grandmother used to read *The Prisoner of Zenda*, I believe. I read it once myself. Really very enjoyable. Romantic, you know. The first romantic book, I imagine, one is allowed to read. You know, novel reading was not encouraged. My mother and my grandmother never approved of reading anything like a novel in the mornings. A story book as it was called. You know, you could read history or something serious, but novels were only *pleasurable* and so to be read in the afternoon.’ ”

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February 10: Charles Lamb  
February 11: Mabel Esther Allen  
Jane Yolen  
February 12: Judy Blume  
February 13: Eleanor Farjeon  
February 14: Frederick Douglass  
February 15: Richard Parker  
I. G. Edmonds  
February 16: CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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Someone gave me a copy of the newsletter of the Victorian branch of the National Council of Women and it had this: "*Why don't we have more female scientists? Why are so few men nurses? The root of most gender imbalances starts early. By recognising/challenging these stereotypes we can lift the limits they place on children's aspirations, choices and outcomes.* Limit Lifting Program UK.

Deb and Pam quoted from research, one by a Phd student Sarah Mokrzycki at Victoria University, who analysed 100 best-selling picture books, identified by Dymocks in 2019. Female protagonists were seen in only 17% of the books, while 46% had male protagonists. Only seven books were female led in the top 50, compared to 26 male led books. Sarah found that the roles taken by the male characters ranged from farmers, chefs, scientists, builders to knights and more, whereas female characters were princesses, ballerinas, mothers, shop assistants, other stereotypical roles. These statistics were found in analysis of 100 best selling children's books, 2018 in the UK: male villains were 7 times more likely than female villains, female characters were less likely to speak, 59% of characters were male, with only two books having a main character who was also from an ethnic or black group." (I would have thought builders, farmers, knights etc are just as much stereotypical roles for boys?)

But this is misleading. Most real life villains *are* men. Making them women, the way so many crime dramas now do, is to my mind just silly. And the whole thing is misleading. Parents, grandparents, family friends, children themselves buy the things that appeal to them. If your child likes cats you look out for children's books which feature cats. You don't do a survey of percentages before you choose.

I didn't have a shelf of books when I was a kid. But I did have a handful of books with a female protagonist. L. M. Montgomery's books. Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* by Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Dot and the Kangaroo* by Ethel Pedley, *Cross Currents* by Eleanor Porter, the Ruby Ferguson 'Jill' books, one or two Pullein-Thompson books, and access to my brothers' books, *Biggles*, *Gimlet*, as well as a few animal books like *Black Beauty*. The little school library had the Katy books and *Little Women*. Did they influence me? I took practical ideas about horse care from them, I took the idea that you can find beauty anywhere even if you don't live in the Swiss Alps or some palatial mansion. But beyond that? And no one would suggest that Anne in *Anne of Green Gables* is seen and not heard.

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February 17: A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson  
Barry Humphries  
February 18: Toni Morrison  
Len Deighton  
February 19: Lee Harding  
February 20: Mary Durack  
Astra Lacis

February 21: Malcolm Saville  
February 22: Judith Worhy  
Percy Francis Westerman (d)  
February 23: Norman Lindsay  
Erich Kastner

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Barbara Ker Wilson in *The Illustrated Treasury of Australian Stories & Verse* says, “Norman Lindsay wrote and illustrated his famous picture book, *The Magic Pudding*, during the dark days of the First World War. In a discussion with a friend about what children enjoyed most in books, he said: ‘...if a kid was offered his choice between food and fairies as delectable reading matter, I was willing to bet he would plump for food.’ One evening, as a break from drawing war cartoons and designing recruitment posters, Lindsay began jotting down ‘some nonsense’ about a bear called Bunyip Bluegum and his uncle.”

And the book begins with that classic grip to the imagination: someone or in this case some creature, going out in search of adventure. Bunyip Bluegum decides to leave home because his Uncle Wattlebury’s whiskers take up too much room in their little house. He goes to see the poet Rumpus Bumpus ... “The fact is,” said Bunyip, “I have decided to see the world, and I cannot make up my mind whether to be a Traveller or a Swagman. Which would you advise?”

Then said the Poet—

“As you’ve no bags it’s plain to see  
A traveller you cannot be;  
And as a swag you haven’t either  
You cannot be a swagman neither.  
For travellers must carry bags,  
And swagmen have to hump their swags  
Like bottle-ohs or ragmen.  
As you have neither swag nor bag  
You must remain a simple wag,  
And not a swag- or bagman.”

“Dear me,” said Bunyip Bluegum, “I never thought of that. What must I do in order to see the world without carrying swags or bags?”

The Poet thought deeply, put on his eyeglass, and said impressively—

“Take my advice, don’t carry bags,  
For bags are just as bad as swags;  
They’re never made to measure.  
To see the world, your simple trick  
Is but to take a walking-stick—  
Assume an air of pleasure,  
And tell the people near and far  
You stroll about because you are  
A Gentleman of Leisure.”

Apart from the sense that adventure is waiting it has those two other important ingredients: plenty of time and a sense of being unencumbered. And a rollicking style carries it along. Oh, and lots of eating ...

An early Penguin promo for the book says: “*The Magic Pudding* is a funny book, a boys’ funny book in particular. In spite of the word ‘Magic’ in the title, there is nothing sissy about it. No fairies. Only a pudding. Sometimes it is a rich odoriferous steak and kidney pudding, sometimes

boiled ham roll or an apple dumpling. And how valuable that could be out on the Australian bush!"  
I am not sure that the writer of that had actually read the book!

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February 24: Wilhelm Grimm

February 25: Karl May

Helen Bannerman

Louisa Atkinson

February 26: Victor Hugo

February 27: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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I remember that we had bits of Longfellow's 'Hiawatha' in our reading books at primary school. And I was left with an image of the poet living in his little shack out in the woods somewhere with his canoe drawn up on the banks of a nearby stream. But although Longfellow did 'go bush' at times he lived very comfortably in between. *Houses of Great Americans* by the Home Library Publishing Company says, "When Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, poet and professor of modern languages at Harvard University, left his room at Mrs. Stearn's, mainly because he could not "endure boarding homes," he moved into "two large and beautiful rooms" in the Craigie house, Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he hoped to be "entirely my own master, and have my meals by myself and at my own hours." "I form to myself a vision of independence," he wrote to his father. What Longfellow could not possibly have envisioned at that moment was that he had moved into the Craigie house for the remaining forty-five years of his life, to live there with his wife and five children and to write some of his most memorable poems there. One day he would have the house named and preserved in his honor.

"Longfellow married Fanny Appleton in July 1843, and was given the Craigie house by his father-in-law that autumn, a much appreciated present. It reposed on five acres and the Charles River wound through the meadows in front. Longfellow planted an avenue of linden trees behind the house.

"What is the Longfellow House today and was once Mrs. Andrew Craigie's house, has a hold on the historical past that dates back to before the American Revolution. It was built in 1759 by Major John Vassall whose grandfather had built the house in Quincy that was bought later by John Adams.

"The house served as a hospital after the Battle of Bunker Hill, and still later, it housed Colonel John Glover's "amphibious regiment" of Marblehead fishermen, an event that has caused some people to consider Longfellow's house as the "first headquarters of the American navy." It is the events, however, of the time between July 1775 and March 1776, that provide Longfellow House with its most inspired historical moments. George Washington arrived in Cambridge to take command of the continental forces and made the John Vassall house his headquarters.

"Today, sitting atop a double terrace facing south, the imposing two-storied frame house displays an expansive hip roof containing four outstanding elements: a massive yellow chimney at either end, a white balustraded widow's walk, a white-trimmed pediment with delicate fanlight in the center of the front and flanking the pediment, two rather large dormers.

"The hallway runs through to the Blue Entry in back which connects with the ell. It and the front stair-case, as well as all the other first-floor rooms, have white-painted wainscoting. The parlor to the left of the hall has served history hospitably on many occasions, welcoming leaders of the Revolution as well as Prince Talleyrand and the Emperor of Brazil.

"Longfellow's study, directly across the hall from the parlor, was Washington's dining-room. The portraits on the wall include one of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Longfellow's classmate at Bowdoin, and one of Emerson by Eastman Johnson. The heavy ornate chair at the right of the

fireplace is made out of the wood of the “spreading chestnut tree” which Longfellow had referred to in his poem “The Village Blacksmith.” It was a gift in 1879 from the schoolchildren of Cambridge.”  
I expect it was a nice place for his kids to grow up in.

\* \* \* \* \*

February 28: Robin Klein  
                  John Tenniel  
February 29: E. F. Benson (d)  
March 1: F. Tennyson Jesse  
March 2: Sholom Aleichem  
March 3: Pamela Allen  
              Ronald Searle  
              Max Allan Collins

\* \* \* \* \*

Although I do not think of Ronald Searle as a children’s writer or artist he did create the school which is now forever associated with girls: St Trinian’s.

Wyndham Lewis wrote, “Observe those typical English Roses, the girls of St. Trinian’s, a nightmare synthesis of Roedean, Heathfield, and Wycombe Abbey, who have inspired Mr. Searle to a mirific sequence.” In fact there was a real St. Trinnean’s in Scotland but I don’t think it needed a particular school to inspire Ronald Searle to make cartoons of girls at school; it could be a kind of generic school. Except that it was far wilder and more anarchic than any real school.

For instance:

A drawing of a teacher facing the girls and saying “Hand up the girl who burnt down the East Wing last night?”

Or a drawing of a girl sitting alone at her desk writing lines “I must not smoke cigars during prayers. I must not smoke cigars during...”

Or three girls using a sub-machine gun and a teacher saying “Girls, girls!—A little less noise, please.”

Or a girl lying on the hockey field and another saying “But I only broke her leg, Miss.”

Or a group of girls looking at the sporting pages and one saying “Hard cheese, Maisie—your horse wasn’t placed.”

Or another group hanging a teacher from a tree and saying “Well, that’s O.K.—now for old ‘Stinks’.”

The place could be mistaken for an out-of-control borstal. But I came upon the curious suggestion that Ronald Searle drew much kinder pictures of St. Trinian’s before the Second World War then he was a POW in Changi during the war and when he finally came home his new cartoons were far darker and more dangerous.

Russell Davies in his biography *Ronald Searle* writes of Searle’s time in Scotland, “He could not help endearing himself, sometimes quite seriously, to the Kircudbright girls. ‘Most of my girl friends fell in love with Ron a little,’ Cécile remembered, ‘or a lot. I can remember the feeling of one-upmanship when I heard from him, or Matt, and was so pleased to look after some of his drawings when he left Kircudbright...’ The drawings, as always, covered the widest range of genres. One landscape, ‘River Dee at Kircudbright’, was accepted by the Royal Scottish Academy for exhibition in April. More dramatically, there was a new line in off-the-cuff cartoons, produced in the first instance specifically to amuse Cécile and Pat. The girls were pupils of a progressive academy, evacuated from Edinburgh to the west coast for the duration, that boasted the fine (if obscure) old Gaelic name of St Trinnean’s. To their great delight, Ronald made free with the traditions of this institution, not only Anglicising its spelling but representing it as a forcing house

for juvenile delinquency of a positively Soho raffishness. These inventions would eventually bring their creator great notoriety, and a certain amount of guilt as well, for though the real St Trinian's was closed in 1946, on the retirement of its founder and Head, Miss C. Fraser Lee, the reputation of St Trinian's continued to plague both her and her former pupils."

Searle then was sent to Singapore where he was captured by the Japanese and ended up working, and barely surviving, on the Burma Railway. But all through his years of captivity he continued to draw on whatever scraps of paper he could scrounge. When he finally got back to the UK he took up St Trinian's again but eventually found that people did not want him to give it up when he grew tired of it. Compared to his other contracts "The schoolgirls of St Trinian's were characteristically tougher to bump off. Their creator was partly responsible for the prolongation of his own misery, by giving way to a suggestion from D. B. Wyndham Lewis, alias 'Timothy Shy' of the *Chronicle*, who had been his collaborator for three post-war years on, of all things, the *Journal of the Hallé Concerts Society* ... Lewis proposed writing a narrative, a St Trinian's romance, and since this removed from Searle the burden of inventing yet more anarchistic ideas, he agreed. *The Terror of St Trinian's* became one of the 'publishing events' of 1952; no fewer than 45,000 copies were printed in the month of publication, and the fantasy spilled over into traffic-stopping life in a notorious stunt. A team of suitably costumed 'young ladies', not all of them young or ladies, led by the mettlesome *disease* Miss Hermoine Gingold, stove in one of the show-windows of Foyle's, the London bookshop, with hockey-sticks, in full view of a battery of press photographers and the newsreel camera of Pathé Pictorial. Miss Gingold's fit of delinquent rage was inspired, the publicity handout claimed, by the realisation that 'her deadly rival on the hockey pitch and in the Stinks Lab., Angela Menace, is revealed as the heroine' of the new book. 'As a reprisal she kidnapped Miss Desiree Umbrage, Head of the School, who bound and gagged, was balanced precariously on top of a taxi stolen for the raid.' The driver of the 'stolen' vehicle was the future Liberal Member of Parliament for the Isle of Ely, Sir Clement Freud. To Foyle's, the cost of the affair was said (by Miss Gingold) to be £120, a calculated loss which some newspaper commentators found rather shocking, especially when it was revealed that real crime had been consequent upon the fake: about twenty-five books were filched through the hole in the glass. 'Somebody worked very fast,' commented an assistant, probably from the thriller department."

Unfortunately, the success of the book made his publisher eager for a follow-up. So Searle resorted to ... "Much the most important book of the year from Searle's point of view was his own *Souls in Torment*, a Perpetua publication explicitly intended as a funeral rite for St Trinian's. No more permanent end than an atomic explosion could be imagined, so it was by this means that the school was wiped out, while a future Poet Laureate, Searle's friend C. Day Lewis, provided a suitably doomy dirge. Knowing in advance that this truncation of the girls' career would be perceived as a villainous act, Searle cast himself as the visiting 'Founder', wearing an undertaker's outfit and an expression of fastidious indifference. His eagerness to put an end to the series has helped nourish the theory that their boarding-school universe corresponded by direct analogy to life under the Japanese." This was repeated by many commentators but was rejected by Searle himself. Davies writes, "A St Trinian's girl, Searle explained to his brow-beaten applicant, 'would be sadistic, cunning, dissolute, crooked, sordid, lacking morals of any sort and capable of any excess. She would also be well-spoken, even well-mannered and polite. Sardonic, witty and very amusing. She would be good company. In short, typically human and, despite everything, endearing.' It is in this unusually detached view of what is 'typically human' that the lessons of wartime show." The loss of St Trinian's did not affect his busyness, (and it was later turned into a film but although Searle's cartoons made the girls dangerous it also made them funny whereas the girls in the film were just nasty) he was constantly at work on advertisements, illustrations, covers, cartoons, caricatures, posters ...

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March 4: Dr Seuss

March 5: Mem Fox

Marcie Muir

March 6: Lou Costello

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

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Costello of course teamed up with Bud Abbott to create the famous comedy team Abbott & Costello. But the comedy team I remember from my childhood was Clapham & Dwyer. We had them on a gramophone record which got played and played. But when I mentioned them to people no one had ever heard of them. Yet they were famous in their time. They presented material on BBC Radio in the 1920s and 1930s. Though they were briefly taken off air in 1935 for what was seen as an improper joke. A page was missing from their material so they ad libbed on air. "What is the difference between a champagne cork and a baby?" When Dwyer said he didn't know, Clapham said, "The champagne cork has the name of the maker on it." The BBC did not appreciate this. And the BBC banned them again in 1946 for another joke. "When I got into my hotel bedroom last night, I found a lady's nightdress on the bed, and I rang the bell." "What for – to ask them to take it away?" "No – to ask them to fill it."

Charlie Clapham and Bill Dwyer teamed up after the First World War to do comedy acts on stage and then on radio. They developed their 'Cockney Alphabet', they were in several small films. Now they are (nearly) forgotten but in the early days of radio they were stars.

The other day I watched an old film of Abbott and Costello doing their version of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and I felt a kind of nostalgia. I know there is a lot of criticism of the comedy of yesteryear, that it was sometimes racist, sexist, and other 'ists', but it was also usually gentle, leaving aside the Three Stooges. Now even the most politically correct of comedy seems so often to be loud, rude, determined to put someone down, and 'in your face'.

\* \* \* \* \*

March 7: Eilis Dillon

March 8: Kenneth Grahame

Mary Small

\* \* \* \* \*

Dixon Scott wrote a sequel to *The Wind in the Willows* which he called *A Fresh Wind in the Willows*. Sequels by different people are always fraught. Sometimes the sequels are just boring, sometimes they are good but different. Scott's sequel falls between these two. Now there are sequels for the Famous Five, Hercule Poirot, *Gone With the Wind*, *Rebecca* ... it seems that the demand for 'more' gradually builds until finally someone is found to write the sequel.

Scott's book is pleasant but I am not a fan of sequels to favourite books and usually avoid them. I think I would rather go back and re-read the original *Wind in the Willows* ...

\* \* \* \* \*

March 9: Stephen Axelsen

March 10: Henry Watson Fowler

March 11: Douglas Adams

March 12: Paul Buddee

David Armitage

Kylie Tennant

March 13: Noela Young

Charlotte Barton (chr. 1796)

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Charlotte Barton is credited with writing and publishing the first children's book in Australia. Born Charlotte Waring in London she came to Australia as a governess and married James Atkinson but he died leaving her with four children and his land and businesses to run. She then married George Barton who proved to be a violent drunkard. She left him but then had to fight for custody of her children as well as find a way to make a living. She appears to have been a very energetic and capable woman. Patricia Clarke in *Great Expectations: Emigrant Governesses in Colonial Australia* says of her book: "The first opportunity Australian children had to read stories set in their own country came with the publication in 1841 of *A Mother's Offering to Her Children* by Charlotte Barton, a former governess. The book comprises a series of instructional stories recounting adventurous, thrilling and intriguing events that had occurred in Australian history and information on natural formations, plants and animals. The book is in the format of a mother telling stories and answering the questions of four fictional children, closely based on Charlotte's own children, including the then delicate five-year-old Louisa Atkinson, who would become the first Australian-born woman novelist and a noted naturalist."

\* \* \* \* \*

March 14: Algernon Blackwood  
March 15: Hesba Brinsmead  
March 16: Donna Rawlins  
March 17: Penelope Lively  
Kate Greenaway

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Of course a lot of writers have written about their childhoods. It seems to be the thing to do as you get old, to remember it with either affection or horror, and perhaps too to mine it for ideas. Penelope Lively spent her childhood in Egypt and she writes in *Oleander, Jacaranda*, "I have tried to recover something of the anarchic vision of childhood – in so far as any of us can do such a thing – and use this as the vehicle for a reflection on the way in which children perceive. I believe that the experience of childhood is irretrievable. All that remains, for any of us, is a headful of brilliant frozen moments, already dangerously distorted by the wisdoms of maturity."

Her father worked in a bank there and she was an only child with a nanny. "Cairo was traffic-ridden, as now, but it was a less daunting traffic than the ceaseless roar of today. The population of Cairo was then just over 1 million, as compared with the 14 million of today. Bulaq Dakhrur, where we lived, was a mud village in open fields, with, just beyond it, three substantial European-owned houses surrounded by large gardens, one of which was ours." Bulaq el Dakhrur has now been absorbed into the sprawl of Cairo.

It was a happy childhood with visits to the beach and picnics and being taught at home. But then the war came. "By the end of 1941 there were over 140,000 British troops stationed in and around Cairo, and three-quarters of a million in the Middle East. To these were added the Australians, the New Zealanders, South Africans, a scattering of Canadians, Free French, Greeks, Poles – the streets of both Cairo and Alexandria were awash with soldiers, the Delta roads and the desert road from Cairo to Alexandria were jammed with army convoys. This invasion was received with mixed feelings. Those Egyptians whose memories reached back to the First World War and the excesses of some troops, especially the Australians, quailed. Indeed, so fervent were some of these memories that at the outset of the war all Australians were stationed in Palestine, at the insistence of the government. Egypt remained neutral, on the advice of the British government, and while Egyptians were glad to have the Italians kept at bay and ultimately disposed of most were clear that this was not, in the last resort, their war. But the fact remained that its arrival on Egypt's doorstep transformed the country. An army has to be serviced. From 1940 until British forces finally left North Africa much of the country's available resources were committed to the supply and

maintenance of this huge influx of population and its requirements, with all that that implies. Some grew fat on it; others suffered.”

At the end of the war she was sent to England and the misery of boarding school. But it was this Cairo she drew on. “When eventually I came to write a novel – *Moon Tiger* – part of which was concerned with the Libyan campaign and wartime Cairo, I found that this suspended vision lurked all the time behind the books that I read and the film and photographs at which I looked. Now, I saw the faces of very young men – boys waving from the backs of trucks, making the V-sign, driving tanks, humping equipment. But there was also that other, equally credible image of an inaccessible maturity. Both views informed the book, in the end.”

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March 18: William Hatfield

Betty Paterson

March 19: William Allingham

March 20: Dianne Bates

March 21: Margaret Mahy

Annette Macarthur-Onslow

March 22: Louis L’Amour

March 23: Walter McVitty

COMICS

\* \* \* \* \*

Jeremy Dauber in *American Comics* engages with the question of what is a comic. “Making images that imparted a message is an impulse as old as human civilization; juxtaposing them sequentially, so that the mind put them together to tell a story, is almost as old. Proponents and propagandists have dated sequential art making, and thus proto-comics, back to cave paintings; if that feels somewhat dubious, feel free, as some have, to substitute Egyptian tomb paintings, Greek book rolls, Roman tabulae, Mayan ceramic art, Mexican codices, Japanese woodblock booklets, or the eleventh-century Bayeux Tapestry depicting the Norman Conquest.

“That’s a contentious, and narrative-oriented definition: comics fans and scholars argue about where to draw the line, pun very much intended. Are comics *sequential*? That definition excludes all single-panel entrants, from political cartoons to *The Family Circus*. Are words necessary? Many great comics don’t have them. Perhaps we ultimately define comics as, in one critic’s words, “objects recognized by the comics world as comics,” ostensibly tautological and also correct. (There’s general consensus, for example, that children’s picture books aren’t comics, despite meeting the criteria set out in many of the definitions.) But juxtaposition of text and image have been crucial, if not strictly *essential*, to the history of sequential comic storytelling.”

Comics proliferated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. But questions started to be raised about their impact on children. “Educational authorities, parental groups, and cultural critics had certainly noticed the comic book explosion and weighed in on this technological development, this weaponizing of the comic strip many had made their peace with. A small selection of article titles from the war years: “Are Comics Bad for Children?”; “Need to Combat the Comics”; “How Much of a Menace Are Comics?”; “Comics Menace”; “The Case Against Comics”; “Are the Comics Harmful Reading for Children?” The criticisms were similar to those first anti-newspaper strip broadsides. In 1940, Sterling North thundered in the *Chicago Daily News* that comic books were aesthetically, physically, and morally poisonous: “Badly drawn, badly written, and badly printed...the effect of these pulp-paper nightmares is that of a violent stimulant. Their crude blacks and reds spoil the child’s natural sense of color; their hypodermic injection of sex and murder makes the child impatient with better, though quieter, stories.” The *News* reportedly received *twenty-five million* requests for reprints of the editorial to distribute in churches and schools

nationwide. In 1943, the Children's Book Committee of the Child Study Association criticized comic books for "violence of subject matter, the crudity and cheapness of format, the strain of young eyes, and the spoiling of taste for better reading." The fact that in 1941, comics had grossed four to six times what traditional children's book publishing had might have been relevant to their objections."

In effect that debate has never gone away. There were those who believed comics encouraged children to read, those who wanted better written more educational subject matter, and those who feared comics 'spoil' children for other kinds and more uplifting kinds of reading. There were critics who believed that comics with their emphasis on a single great 'leader' promoted fascism (though Mussolini banned all American comics except *Mickey Mouse* and Hitler called Superman a 'Jew'). Children's classics, then and since, have been produced in comic book form. There were comics, and are, with a good moral tone, but the questions about children's reading abilities and choices have stayed with us.

It was a different impact which Max Allan Collins took as the subject of his novel *Seduction of the Innocent*. Dauber writes "between 1950 and 1954, the industry saw no fewer than one hundred new horror titles; by 1954, more than forty horror comics came out each month, sometimes ten appearing on a single day." These included cannibalism, vampires, rape, incest, beheadings and mass murder, as well as traditional horror fare of crypts, corpses, and zombies. Max Allan Collins wrote crime novels and contributed a "hyper-violent private detective" called Ms Tree to Eclipse Comics and took over the writing of *Dick Tracy* after Chester Gould's death, but in this novel he deals with the fear that young people reading these horror comics would turn to crime and become juvenile delinquents.

In his novel, set against a background of sleaze and violence and Mafia involvement, he sets up Dr Werner Fredrick as his proponent of the view that horror comics were leading to juvenile crime. There *had* been a significant rise in juvenile crime during and after WW2, not only in the USA, but the reasons were complex including the simple fact that many young people were growing up with absent fathers. Collins has a character say of Frederick who has written a book he titles *Ravage the Lambs*, "He's a German, born in Cologne a little before the turn of the century, naturalized as an American in '29. Studied medicine in Germany and knew Freud. He makes it sound like they worked together, but I didn't get any confirmation of that". He goes on to say that as a psychiatrist Frederick has testified in court usually for the prosecution but occasionally for the defence "but after he testified for Albert Fish's defense team, he either got fired or just moved on, into private practice."

"Albert Fish," she said distantly. "There's a noteworthy case."

"Yeah. The Brooklyn Vampire. Child rapist, mass murderer, cannibal, perfect for the crime comic books. Interesting that the doc stuck up for Fish, but wants the comics killed."

Fish was executed but he probably *was* a mental case—though whether he mainly read violent comics ... Anyway, Collins has Frederick murdered in the middle of his anti-comics crusade. At the end of the book he has a note to say, "The murder victim, Dr. Werner Frederick, is a fictional character drawing heavily upon the very real Dr. Fredric Wertham, whose anti-comics crusade indeed earned him public death threats from comic-book artists, although none were carried out. Frederick is not intended to be the real Wertham, rather the *idea* of Wertham, among professionals and fans alike. It should be noted that Wertham made important contributions to the Civil Rights Movement that have been unfortunately if understandably overshadowed by his anti-comics zealotry."

Although films could be censored for 'indecenty' this did not apply to comic books which operated with a largely 'anything goes' attitude, despite the fact that their largest readership was

children. Dr Fredric Wertham wanted this changed. Dauber writes, “Given the arch-supervillainous role Wertham played in comics history, it should be said that he wasn’t just a talking head making a name as a moral scold. Wertham was an extremely interesting character: a German Jew who had emigrated to America in the ’20s, had corresponded with Freud (who told him not to write on psychiatry for the press), had worked with Clarence Darrow as one of the first psychiatrists to testify on behalf of impoverished Black defendants. His wife was a distinguished sculptor who exhibited at the Whitney, he was praised by Thomas Mann and Arthur Miller for his psychological acuity, and his clinical work to help Black youth in Harlem earned him the nickname “Dr. Quarter” (he insisted patients pay that small sum to encourage ownership and responsibility). His research was used in *Brown v. Board of Education* and appreciated by Thurgood Marshall, and he was one of the few who “constantly publicized the Nazi sympathies of physicians who supported Nazi racist policies” post-Nuremberg.”

But he did like the limelight. And he did like to publish lurid accounts of high profile murder trials. (Which may have been read by children.) “In July 1948, he presided over a medical symposium on the so-called “psychopathology of comic books,” providing an air of medical and scientific respectability to legal authorities’ possibly unconstitutional instincts. He’d shown his willingness to use the power of medical language two months earlier in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, writing, “You cannot understand present day juvenile delinquency if you do not take into account the pathogenic and pathoplastic influence of comic books, that is, the way in which they cause trouble or determine the form that trouble takes.” ”

But how to respond was far less clear. Banning comic books would simply make them more desirable. And who would do the censoring given the proliferation of titles available? In 1954 Wertham brought out his own book titled *Seduction of the Innocent* of which a critic said it claimed crime comics “were literally seducing young people...caught by the magnetic attraction of the covers, the big grabbing words, the drawings, the colours, the heroic swashbuckling characters, the sexual titillation. Not all, he conceded, would become delinquents—but some would. The comics were a factor, a weighty influence among others, in tipping some children over into crime. Or, if not that, into nightmares, into anxieties, into moral confusion. The influence, however, great or small, was *never* a good one.”

Those questions go on being asked. But the Americans, with 1 billion comic books being sold per year, set up the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency. This was pushed by Democrat Senator Estes Kefauver and chaired by Robert Hendrikson and they made it clear that they would focus only on crime and horror comics. They had to walk carefully so as not to be seen as promoting censorship but rather upholding freedom of speech, whilst trying to answer the key question: did reading violent comics promote juvenile crime?

Comics publishers, such as Bill Gaines, did not exactly cover themselves with ‘glory’.

**Herbert Beaser, Committee Investigator:** There would be no limit actually to what you’d put in the magazine?

**Gaines:** Only within the bounds of good taste.

**Sen. Estes Kefauver, D-Tenn:** Here is your May issue. This seems to be a man with a bloody ax holding a woman’s head up which has been severed from her body. Do you think that’s in good taste?

**Gaines:** Yes, sir, I do—for the cover of a horror comic. A cover in bad taste, for example, might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the blood could be seen dripping from it, and moving the body over a little further so that the neck of the body could be seen to be bloody.

**Kefauver:** You’ve got blood coming out of her mouth.

**Gaines:** A little.

**Kefauver:** And here's blood on the ax. I think most adults are shocked by that. Now here's a man with a woman in a boat and he's choking her to death with a crowbar. Is that in good taste?

**Gaines:** I think so."

There was no clear-cut answer to the key question but the publicity did help to scare the publishers of horror comics into a degree of self-censorship.

And here is an unexpected piece of information I took from Dauber's book. "Endemic racism relegated the Black experience in comics to the margins. Black newspapers, an estimated 2,700 of them by 1900, boasted their own syndicate, featuring strips with Black protagonists leading three-dimensional lives. (Pullman porters helped smuggle them across the Mason-Dixon Line, since early distributors refused to circulate them in the South.) Strips included 1911's *The Jolly Bean Eaters*, a *Mutt and Jeff*-type piece, the decades-long *Bungleton Green*, about a ne'er-do-well turned adventurer; gag strip *Amos Hokum*; *Ol' Hot*, a humorous look at the contemporary Black bourgeoisie; and romance feature *Milady Sepia*, among others. Ollie Harrington's *Dark Laughter*, premiering in 1935 in the Black paper the *Amsterdam News*, had gags, often with a bitter twist. ... The most famous Afro-American Continental Features Syndicate strip, from 1937 on, was Jackie Ormes's *Torchy Brown*, "an intelligent, self-reliant black career woman whose stories showed her fighting racism [and] sex discrimination" (and whose Patty-Jo doll, based on a different strip, was a "landmark" in postwar Black households)."

I was surprised by the number of Black newspapers but it also suggested that comics could be a source of empowerment.

I am not sure whether comics are seen as a form of empowerment or subversion in Communist China. I came across a book called *The Subplot: What China Is Reading and Why It Matters* by Megan Walsh. She writes, "Mao placed a blanket ban on all commercial genre fiction because, naturally, there was no crime in socialist China, no need for fantasy when society defers to science, and no use for romance when one loved the Party above all else." But was there still a need for humour? It is hard to imagine Mao reading comics or joke books. Now "China has become the biggest comic book market in the world, but it is dominated by Japanese manga, many of which have been blacklisted by the CCP in recent years on the grounds that they "include scenes of violence, pornography, terrorism and crimes against public morality". But despite the best efforts of the Communist Youth League to launch homegrown and state-friendly alternatives on its own online ACG Bilibili channel (the most notable being *The Leader*, about the life of Karl Marx), the Japanese manga industry is a juggernaut that can't be stopped."

But on-line and on the fringes is an underground comics scene. "It represents a small, liminal community of artists who have elevated the mundanities of everyday life to tragi-comic extremes. Populated with misshapen misfits, oddballs, slobs, lonely middle-aged men, undignified youths, and endearingly charmless concomformists, these comics are drawn and written in a style that is intentionally scratchy and slipshod. ... The earliest print editions of Special Comix, a limited-edition compilation series showcasing some of the most active and exciting comic artists, are much sought-after collector's items, alluring in their raw, almost anti-digital physicality. It's a cottage industry that adds a *samizdat* mystique to a countercultural scene that is more insolent than it is subversive."

Such as: "One of the figureheads of this alternative scene is Yan Cong, whose go-to protagonist is a chubby, unkempt, middle-aged man. In "Uniqlo Sperman," he plods naked into a clothing store and leaves the changing room wearing Tweetie Pie boxers, then flies off into the gray sky with a discount poster for a cape. The deadbeats in the majority of these comics are the opposites of the dutiful youngsters that used to throng propaganda posters."

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March 24: Olive Schreiner

March 25: CHICKENS. BANTAMS.

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“Finally, there is the Jungle Fowl from which our poultry have been developed. These are small birds of bantam size and are kept by a number of enthusiastic breeders and also in Zoological Gardens. However, whilst very interesting they tend to be on the wild side and their egg production is limited. True bantams they certainly are, but not to be recommended to replace normal, domesticated bantams.”

*True Bantams* by Joseph Batty.

\* \* \* \* \*

I know from personal experience that many children love chickens, bantams, ducklings, goslings, in fact anything fairly small in the poultry line ...

Stephen Green-Armytage wrote in *Extra Extraordinary Chickens*: “The first known major poultry show was staged in 1845 at London’s Regents Park Zoo.”

“Prior to about 1840, however, historical scholarship about chickens is not extensive. We can go back to around 3,000 B. C. for evidence of domesticated chickens in China. It is thought that their breeds may have originated in India, where, ironically, hard archeological evidence of chickens dates back only to 2,000 B. C. Chickens appear occasionally in the art and writing of ancient Greece. It is possible that Persian soldiers on military campaigns in India had brought back to their land, and that in turn conquering Greeks brought them west from Persia.”

“Even with all the interbreeding, identifying the wild ancestor of the domestic chicken seems to have been surprisingly easy. Nineteenth-century scientists and naturalists, including Charles Darwin, were aware of five ancient species of wild fowl in Southeast Asia that were possibilities. The Red Jungle Fowl seemed to be the strongest candidate. Fortunately, this bird still exists, although the specimens that are seen in the West may not have a totally uncontaminated hereditary link to the birds of five thousand years ago. Even those captured in the wild in Southeast Asia may incorporate occasional instances of “breeding back” with village chickens somewhere in their genetic history. In any event, recent DNA testing confirms that the Red Jungle Fowl is indeed the true Adam of present-day chickens.”

Chickens, bantams, ducklings make good pets for children. They are rarely vicious. They are easy to feed. They are lovely little balls of fluff and they grow up to be useful members of society. The only trouble is: adults come along when they are fully grown and want to turn them into roast dinners and chicken soup.

Faith in L. M. Montgomery’s *Rainbow Valley* has a rooster she calls Adam. ‘Faith was inclined to resent the fact that people laughed at her for petting a rooster. She liked the Blythes because they accepted it without question.

“A handsome rooster like Adam is just as nice a pet as a dog or cat, *I think*,” she said. “If he was a canary nobody would wonder. And I brought him up from a little, wee, yellow chicken. Mrs. Johnson at Maywater gave him to me. A weasel had killed all his brothers and sisters. I called him after her husband. I never liked dolls or cats. Cats are too sneaky and dolls are *dead*.”

But unfortunately ... ‘ “*I thought* there was something in the wind, though old Martha wouldn’t give me any satisfaction. But I felt sure she wouldn’t have been killing that rooster for nothing.”

“What rooster? What do you mean?” cried Faith, turning pale.

“*I don’t* know what rooster. I didn’t see it. When she took the butter Mrs. Elliott sent up she said she’d been out to the barn killing a rooster for dinner tomorrow.”

Faith sprang down from the pine.

“It’s Adam—we have no other rooster—she has killed Adam.”

“Now, don’t fly off the handle. Martha said the butcher at the Glen had no meat this week and she had to have something and the hens were all laying and too poor.”

“If she has killed Adam—” Faith began to run up the hill.

Mary shrugged her shoulders.

“She’ll go crazy now. She was so fond of that Adam. He ought to have been in the pot long ago—he’ll be as tough as sole leather. But *I* wouldn’t like to be in Martha’s shoes. Faith’s just white with rage; Una, you’d better go after her and try to pacify her.”

“When Una got home Faith was lying faced downwards on her bed, utterly refusing to be comforted. Aunt Martha had killed Adam. He was reposing on a platter in the pantry that very minute, trussed and dressed, encircled by his liver and heart and gizzard. Aunt Martha heeded Faith’s passion of grief and anger not a whit.

“We had to have something for the strange minister’s dinner,” she said. “You’re too big a girl to make such a fuss over an old rooster. You knew he had to be killed sometime.”

“I’ll tell father when he comes home what you’ve done,” sobbed Faith.

“Don’t you go bothering your poor father. He has troubles enough. And *I’m* housekeeper here.”

“Adam was *mine*—Mrs. Johnson gave him to me. You had no business to touch him,” stormed Faith.

“Don’t you get sassy now. The rooster’s killed and there’s an end of it. I ain’t going to set no strange minister down to a dinner of cold b’iled mutton. I was brought up to know better than that, if I have come down in the world.”

Needless to say Faith refuses to eat dinner. ‘Next day in school was a hard one for Faith. Mary Vance had told the tale of Adam, and all the scholars, except the Blythes, thought it quite a joke. The girls told Faith, between giggles, that it was too bad, and the boys wrote sardonic notes of condolence to her. Poor Faith went home from school feeling her very soul raw and smarting within her.’

Faith eventually pours out her grief ... ‘With a little sigh she sat down on the old pine beside her new friend and told her all about Adam and his cruel fate.

‘Rosemary did not laugh or feel like laughing. She understood and sympathized ...

‘Mr. Perry is a minister, but he should have been a *butcher*,’ said Faith bitterly. “He is so fond of carving things up. He *enjoyed* cutting poor Adam to pieces. He just sliced into him as if he were any common rooster.”

“Between you and me, Faith, *I* don’t like Mr. Perry very much myself,” said Rosemary, laughing a little—but at Mr. Perry, not at Adam, as Faith clearly understood. “I never did like him. I went to school with him—he was a Glen boy, you know—and he was a most detestable little prig even then. Oh, how we girls used to hate holding his fat, clammy hands in the ring-around games. But we must remember, dear, that he didn’t know that Adam had been a pet of yours. He thought he *was* just a common rooster. We must be just, even when we are terribly hurt.”

“I suppose so,” admitted Faith. “But why does everybody seem to think it funny that I should have loved Adam so much, Miss West? If it had been a horrid old cat nobody would have thought it queer. When Lottie Warren’s kitten had its legs cut off by the binder everybody was sorry for her. She cried two days in school and nobody laughed at her, not even Dan Reese. And all her chums went to the kitten’s funeral and helped her bury it—only they couldn’t bury its poor little paws with it, because they couldn’t find them. It was a horrid thing to have happen, of course, but I don’t think it was as dreadful as seeing your pet *eaten up*. Yet everybody laughs at *me*.”

“I think it is because the name ‘rooster’ seems rather a funny one,” said Rosemary gravely. “There *is* something in it that is comical. Now, ‘chicken’ is different. It doesn’t sound so funny to talk of loving a chicken.”

“Adam was the dearest little chicken, Miss West. He was just a little golden ball. He would run up to me and peck out of my hand. And he was handsome when he grew up, too—white as snow, with such a beautiful curving white tail, though Mary Vance said it was too short. He knew his name and always came when I called him—he was a very intelligent rooster. And Aunt Martha had no right to kill him. He was mine. It wasn’t fair, was it, Miss West?”

“No, it wasn’t,” said Rosemary decidedly. “Not a bit fair. I remember I had a pet hen when I was a little girl. She was such a pretty little thing—all golden brown and speckly. I loved her as much as I ever loved any pet. She was never killed—she died of old age. Mother wouldn’t have her killed because she was my pet.”

“If *my* mother had been living she wouldn’t have let Adam be killed,” said Faith. “For that matter, father wouldn’t have either, if he’d been home and known of it. I’m *sure* he wouldn’t, Miss West.”

\* \* \* \* \*

March 26: Robert Frost

March 27: Kenneth Slessor

March 28: Joyce Porter

March 29: Helen Yglesias

March 30: Anna Sewell

March 31: Andrew Lang

April 1: Jan Wahl

April 2: Hans Christian Andersen

Jennifer Rowe/Emily Rodda

Sue Townsend

April 3: Washington Irving

April 4: Dorothea Dix

William J. Long

April 5: Arthur Hailey

April 6: Graeme Base

Marcia Vaughan

April 7: Gabriela Mistral (Lucila Godoy)

\* \* \* \* \*

The Moral Bully, though he never swears,  
Nor kicks intruders down his entry stairs,  
Feels the same comfort while his acrid words  
Turn the sweet milk of kindness into curds,  
As the scarred ruffian of the pirate’s deck,  
When his long swivel rakes the staggering wreck!  
Oliver Wendell Holmes ‘The Moral Bully’

He drew a circle that shut me out—  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in!  
Edwin Markham ‘Outwitted’

Jorge Edwards writing a brief life of Chile's 1945 Nobel Laureate Gabriela Mistral, said, "The earliest bitter experience of her life happened in Vicuña, when she was still a child. Gabriela was in the care of the directress of the local school, a blind woman. The little girl served her as helper and guide, and among other duties she had the task of passing out the school supplies. When she was distributing these, the other pupils would snatch them from her, and she could not defend herself very energetically. In this way the supplies for a whole month were exhausted ahead of time. She was accused, and since she could not give a satisfactory explanation she was censured by the directress before the whole class. Some of the pupils ambushed her after school and pelted her with stones."

Her father had abandoned his family when she was a small child; her mother had a long struggle to survive. Both her parents were Basques so there was no big extended clan to support them. But she gained enough education to become a teacher in a small school.

Her poems are of the children she never had, the happy family she never had. Yet she has been called 'the Poet of Motherhood'. They are poems of longing and loss.

If he suffers within me I grow pale; grief overtakes me  
at his hidden pressure, and I could die from a single  
motion of this one I can not see.

But do not think that only while I carry him, will he be  
entangled within me. When he shall roam free on the  
highways, even though he is far away from me, the wind that  
lashes him will tear at my flesh, and his cry will be in my  
throat, too. My grief and my smile begin in your face, my  
son.

#### 'Eternal Grief'

It was predominantly her mother, almost illiterate herself, who was the rock on which Gabriela leant. She wrote of her mother:

Mi madre era pequeñita  
como la menta o la hierba;  
apenas echaba sombra  
sobre las cosas, apenas,  
y la Tierra la quería  
por sentísela ligera  
y porque le sonreía  
en la dicha y en la pena.

My mother was tiny,  
like mint or grass;  
she barely cast a shadow  
over things, barely,  
and the Earth loved her  
for her lightness  
and because she smiled  
in good fortune and in sorrow.

David Naimon did a book he called *Conversations on Writing* in which he interviewed science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin. He says to her: "Can you talk about your attraction to

translating Gabriela Mistral? You dedicate one of the poems in *Late in the Day* to her. What was it that you fell in love with?”

Le Guin replies: “It was not exactly love at first sight. I didn’t know very much Spanish when I started reading her. My friend Diana Bellessi in Argentina sent me some selected Mistral and said, “You have to read this,” so I labored into it with my Spanish dictionary and I just fell in love. I never read anything like Mistral. There isn’t anybody like Mistral, she’s very individual, and it’s an awful shame that Neruda—the other Chilean who got the Nobel—gets all the attention. But you know men tend to set the attention and you sort of struggle to keep the women in the eye of the men. Neruda is a very good poet but Mistral has a lot more to say to me than he does.”

\* \* \* \* \*

April 8: Tilly Armstrong  
April 9: Lesbia Harford  
April 10: Celia Syred  
April 11: R. Austin Freeman  
April 12: Alan Ayckbourn  
April 13: Bill Pronzini  
April 14: Arnold Toynbee  
April 15: Nanak  
April 16: Anatole France  
April 17: Isak Dinesen  
April 18: Henry Clarence Kendall  
April 19: Richard Hughes  
April 20: Russ Tyson

\* \* \* \* \*

When I was a child Russ Tyson had a morning show on the ABC in Queensland which always included a story for children. My mother always said what a nice man he must be. I don’t know if he was but I can understand why she believed that. Many years later I came across some of his books in which he collected inspiring snippets. He gave these collections names such as the *Philosopher’s Note Book*, the *Philosopher’s Scrap Book* and the *Australian Christmas Book*. He included poems (though not the authors) such as:

Mercy is Love being gracious.  
Eloquence is Love talking.  
Prophecy is Love foretelling.  
Faith is Love believing.  
Charity is Love acting.  
Sacrifice is Love offering itself.  
Patience is Love waiting.  
Endurance is Love abiding.  
Hope is Love expecting.  
Peace is Love resting.  
Prayer is Love communing.  
‘Love’s Several Aspects’

He also collected up comic pieces. In *The best of Russ Tyson* he included a piece called ‘The Dignified Grammarian’.

A dignified grammarian of habits most pedantic,  
Insisted on exactitude, and drove his poor wife frantic,

Till, goaded to it by despair, she said he was a pest,  
He made her feel so tired, she said, she'd LAY down for a rest.  
He raised his head and fixed her with an academic eye,  
And said, with chill, one syllable—the single comment, “LIE!”  
Her hand approached the carving knife; she threw it most emphatically,  
And now she's doing gaol for life, while he still lies grammatically.

\* \* \* \* \*

April 21: Alister MacLean  
April 22: Damien Broderick  
April 23: William Shakespeare  
Gladys Lister  
April 24: R. M. Ballantyne  
Margaret Wild  
Ken Herrera

\* \* \* \* \*

When my son Ken was little he wrote this poem he called ‘The Pirate’:  
His name was Bonecruncher,  
That much is true.  
He died at sixty,  
Without a clue.

Since then his ghost,  
Has come to haunt,  
The rooms of a farmhouse big  
And people there to daunt.

He looks like a cannibal,  
With a scar across his face.  
Instead of a cutlass,  
He has a black mace.

He has six pistols,  
Fitted in his buckle,  
And gold ear-rings,  
As hard as a knuckle.

Small children like pirates. In a way this is hard to understand. Pirates were cruel, greedy, dirty and rude. Henry Morgan who sacked Panama was given names like ‘Morgan the Monster’, ‘The Scourge of the Caribbean’, ‘Sacker of Old Panama’ and, eventually, ‘Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica’ in a classic case of putting the fox in charge of the hen coop. But in another way I can understand the attraction. Pirates appear to be the last word in freedom. They didn't get told when to go to bed or be reminded to do their homework or brush their hair or clean their shoes or eat their beans. Pirates could do what they liked.

Except of course they couldn't. You didn't get on the wrong side of Henry Morgan or Captain Kidd if you valued your life. Unless you were the head pirate you did what you were told.

I just came across an anthology called *Pirates: Classic Tales of Treasure, Mayhem, and High Seas Skullduggery* which includes stories by Daniel Defoe, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, Rafael Sabatini, James Fenimore Cooper (who had a story about Malay pirates) and

more. The editor, Tom McCarthy, looking at the enduring interest in pirates (so long as they aren't modern day pirates), says, "But viewed through the fog and distance of history, pirates are a downright—should I say it?—lovable gnarly group of miscreants. And pirate stories have long entertained and enthralled readers, generation after generation." Because of their apparent freedom, because of a secret identification "with the brigand in all of us who wants to get out", because they are "an almost picturesque figure", and something else. "Part of the general allure of pirates is that these characters embody the romance of the sea. The sea's very openness means independence. And that magic is what readers have looked for over the years."

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April 25: Walter de la Mare

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Book collector and publisher R. B. Russell in *Fifty Forgotten Books* wrote, "I remember buying a first edition of *On the Edge* by Walter de la Mare in about 1990, having read the marvellous 'Seaton's Aunt' in one of my cheap paperback anthologies. 'Seaton's Aunt' (1921) is a wonderfully creepy short story, not least because the reader doesn't quite know what to believe by the end. I've reread it several times over the years and it never fails to unsettle. Amongst aficionados of ghost stories de la Mare is considered one of the 'golden age' authors of such tales, but if he is popularly remembered today it is as a poet, and for his work for children, such as 'The Listeners'."

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,  
Knocking on the moonlit door;  
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses  
Of the forest's ferny floor:  
And a bird flew up out of the turret,  
Above the Traveller's head:  
And he smote upon the door again a second time;  
'Is there anybody there?' he said.  
But no one descended to the Traveller;  
No head from the leaf-fringed sill  
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,  
Where he stood perplexed and still.  
But only a host of phantom listeners  
That dwelt in the lone house then  
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight  
To that voice from the world of men:  
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,  
That goes down to the empty hall,  
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken  
By the lonely Traveller's call.  
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,  
Their stillness answering his cry,  
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,  
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;  
For he suddenly smote on the door, even  
Louder, and lifted his head:—  
'Tell them I came, and no one answered,  
That I kept my word,' he said.  
Never the least stir made the listeners,

Though every word he spake  
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house  
From the one man left awake:  
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,  
And the sound of iron on stone,  
And how the silence surged softly backward,  
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

‘The Listeners’ by Walter De La Mare. I can remember coming upon this poem when I was a child and it gave me lovely thrills up my young spine. But I haven’t tried it on any modern children.

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April 26: Morris West  
A. E. van Vogt  
April 27: C. Day Lewis  
April 28: Terry Pratchett  
Harper Lee  
April 29: Rafael Sabatini  
April 30: Nadia Wheatley  
Paul Jennings  
May 1: Giovanni Guareschi  
May 2: Alan Marshall  
Edith OE Somerville  
Dr (Benjamin) Spock  
Manfred von Richthofen ‘The Red Baron’

\* \* \* \* \*

Allan Jamieson, of the FAW NW in Burnie, told me, “My mother went to primary school with Alan Marshall; her father and Alan’s father co-owned the sole general store (“The Beehive Store”) in Noorat (population around 300) surrounded by good farming land.”

Marshall was born in Noorat in Victoria and his famous story of his childhood was *I Can Jump Puddles*. He says he changed a few things. “To give a picture of life at that time, I have gone beyond the facts to get at the truth. I have sometimes altered scenes, made composite characters when this was necessary, changed time sequences to help the continuity and introduced dialogue that those who shared my experiences of the horse-days may find confusing.” And he goes on to say, “I ask their pardon. A book of this nature demands a treatment that facts do not always supply; the truth it seeks to establish can only be revealed with the help of imagination.” This is interesting and rather curious because adults writing about their childhoods often apologise for their lapses of memory or understanding of the adult word or wonder if they have adequately captured what they thought and felt as a child. They rarely admit to allowing their imagination free rein.

Peter Fiennes in *Footnotes* writes of a very distant relative, Celia Fiennes, who rode round parts of Britain in 1698: “So we can hook up with Celia and make haste for the Welsh border, even though, as she complains, the miles are very ‘long’ in these parts. And they were – longer here in her day than around London, although perhaps shorter than they were in the North. The statute mile was only defined in 1593 and first included on a map in 1675. Very few people in 1698 knew how far they were travelling, or when they could expect to arrive. It sounds quite appealing.”

“Before the legal establishment of the statute mile of 1760 yards in 1593 various local or ‘customary’ miles were in use. Indeed, they remained in use for over a century afterwards; on

Robert Mordern's county maps, for instance, scales representing 'great', 'middle' and 'small' miles are included while on some European maps national scales featuring 'German' or 'Italian' distances are to be seen. The ultimate confusion to the map reader comes with Julien's map of France (1651) on which there are no less than twenty different scales of distance!"

From *Discovering Antique Maps* by Alan G. Hodgkiss.

This reminded me of an Alan Marshall short story in which a small boy grows up and finds that things which seemed so large in his childhood have now apparently shrunk. I can remember thinking many years after my childhood how short the distance really was that I had toiled along to get to the local store when I was young thinking it would never end. It was partly the fact of growing up and partly that modern cars compared to a child's legs devour the distance. I am sure many other people have had that kind of experience. Too, problems that loom so large to a child seem to shrink as experience and perspective develops.

So what of *I Can Jump Puddles*? It is a delightful book of a bygone horse-drawn age. But it also has moments that would not sit well with some modern readers, not least the boys out taking birds' eggs from the nests, the amount of fighting and bullying in the schoolyard, the punishments in school ('Mr Tucker was the head teacher. ... He terrified me as a tiger would. He had a cane and before he used it on a boy he would swish it twice through the air and then draw it through his closed hands as if to clean it.

'Now,' he would say, and his teeth would be smiling. ... Miss Pringle did not use a cane. She used a broad strap, split at the end into three narrow tails. ... She was calm when she strapped you but Mr Tucker was seized with a savage urgency when he felt called upon to flog a boy.') a wry look at the stratified society and its casual attitude to the land, the greed of some ('Prince always talking about going to Queensland. 'There's money to be made up there,' he used to say. 'They're opening up the land.'

'That's right,' father agreed with him. 'Kidman's opening up as much as he can get. He'll open up six foot of it for you after you've worked for him for forty years. Write and ask him for a job.') and their local doctor's admission that he had no idea how to treat a small boy suddenly struck down with polio.

It is also full of bush lore (such as the old bullocky explaining how his team worked) and the beauty the young boy found in the bush.

But most of all it is a story of struggle, courage and determination. 'My right leg, the one I called my 'bad' leg, was completely paralysed and swung uselessly from the hip, a thing of skin and bone, scarred and deformed. I called my left leg my 'good' leg. It was only partially paralysed and could bear my weight. For weeks I had been testing it while sitting on the edge of my bed.

'The curvature of my spine gave me a decided lean to the left but resting on the crutches pulled it temporarily straight, and my body lengthened so that, standing, I appeared taller than when sitting down.

'My stomach muscles were partially paralysed but my chest and arms were unaffected. In the years that were to follow I came to regard my legs as not worth much consideration. They angered me, though sometimes they seemed to live a sad life of their own apart from me and I felt sorry for them. My arms and chest were my pride and they were to develop out of all proportion to the rest of my body.

'I stood there uncertainly for a moment looking ahead towards where, a few yards away, a bare patch of ground was worn in the grass.

‘I will get there, I thought, and waited, not knowing exactly what muscles to call upon, conscious that the crutches beneath my armpits were hurting me and that I must move them forward and take my weight for a moment on my good leg if I wanted to walk.

‘The doctor had taken his hands away but he held them apart one each side of me, ready to grab me should I fall.

‘I lifted the crutches and swung them heavily forward, my shoulders jerking upwards to the sudden jar as my weight came down on the armpit rests once more. I swung my legs forward, my right leg dragging in the dirt like a broken wing. I paused, breathing deeply and looking at the bare patch of earth ahead of me.

‘Good!’ exclaimed the doctor as I made this first step. ‘Now again.’

‘I went through the same movements again, then three times more till at last I stood achingly upon the patch of earth. I had walked.’

\* \* \* \* \*

May 3: Norman Thelwell

Deirdre Hill

Ben Elton

May 4: Gillian Tindall

May 5: Michael Palin

May 6: Randall Jarrell

May 7: Robert Browning

William Henry Dwyer

May 8: David Attenborough

May 9: J. M. Barrie

Richard Adams

May 10: John Rowe Townsend

Jimmy (James Charles) Bancks

Monica Dickens

May 11: Chester Gould (d)

May 12: Edward Lear

May 13: George Finkel

S. A. Wakefield

May 14: Malise Ruthven

Monty Roberts

Eoin Colfer

May 15: Frank Baum

Bill Peach

May 16: Anonymous

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“The consumer blind spot that keeps the wounded worker out of sight is not new. In 1823, a children’s book meant to inform juveniles about how everyday products were made saw the need to educate on this subject. After describing the Staffordshire pottery trades, *Little Jack of All Trades, or, the Mechanical Arts considered in Prose and Verse Suited to the Capacities of Children* cautions its young readers to be cognizant of the health toll that this “pernicious” work takes on those employed in making beautiful china. Any admiration these objects inspire should be mixed with regret: “In viewing any article which contributes to our pleasure or domestic advantage, we should enquire of ourselves whether it has caused great inconvenience and painful confinement, or been the cause of shortening his life one moment.” ”

From *Fake Silk* by Paul David Blanc.

And what happened when sensitive children refused to eat their dinner off china plates because they couldn't bear the thought of people suffering to make them?

\* \* \* \* \*

May 17: David Burke

May 18: Rodney Ackland

May 19: Victoria Wood

Edward de Bono

May 20: Joan Dalglish

John Stuart Mill

Dorita Fairlie Bruce

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Gertrude Himmelfarb said of John Stuart Mill, (Jeremy) "Bentham, himself a bachelor, took a great interest in the education of his chief disciple's eldest son, especially since he was at this time engaged in drawing up an ideal course of education for a youth of the 'middling and higher ranks of life'. Although it was the father who supervised his son's daily education (the boy never attended any school or university), there is no doubt that both Bentham and James Mill looked upon the young boy as their heir-designate and that they intended to make of him the complete utilitarian – which is to say, the perfectly rational man."

So he read Greek by the time he was three, "had assimilated a considerable body of classical and historical literature before he was eight, and had mastered philosophy, political economy, mathematics, and the like by the ripe age of twelve".

I am so glad I was not anyone's 'heir-designate' for anything.

So I wondered if he looked at the liberty of children when he came to write his famous *On Liberty*? "It is in the case of children that misapplied notions of liberty are a real obstacle to the fulfilment by the State of its duties. One would almost think that a man's children were supposed to be literally, and not metaphorically, a part of himself, so jealous is opinion of the smallest interference of law with his absolute and exclusive control over them, more jealous than of almost any interference with his own freedom of action: so much less do the generality of mankind value liberty than power. Consider, for example, the case of education. Is it not almost a self-evident axiom that the State should require and compel the education, up to a certain standard, of every human being who is born its citizen? Yet who is there that is not afraid to recognize and assert this truth? Hardly anyone, indeed, will deny that it is one of the most sacred duties of the parents (or, as law and usage now stand, the father), after summoning a human being into the world, to give to that being an education fitting him to perform his part well in life towards others and towards himself. But while this is unanimously declared to be the father's duty, scarcely anybody, in this country, will bear to hear of obliging him to perform it. Instead of his being required to make any exertion or sacrifice for securing to his child, it is left to his choice to accept it or not when it is provided gratis! It still remains unrecognized that to bring a child into existence without a fair prospect of being able, not only to provide food for its body, but instruction and training for its mind is a moral crime, both against the unfortunate offspring and against society" but "A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another; and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the pre-dominant power in the government – whether this be a monarch, a priesthood, an aristocracy, or the majority of the existing generation – in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body."

"The instrument for enforcing the law could be no other than public examinations, extending to all children and beginning at an early age. An age might be fixed at which every child must be examined, to ascertain if he (or she) is able to read. If a child proves unable, the father, unless he

has some sufficient ground of excuse, might be subjected to a moderate fine, to be worked out, if necessary, by his labour, and the child might be put to school at his expense.”

“The laws which, in many countries on the Continent, forbid marriage unless the parties can show that they have the means of supporting a family do not exceed the legitimate powers of the State; and whether such laws be expedient or not ... they are not objectionable as violations of liberty.”

But this is about what might be called adult liberty in relation to children. So what liberties should be accorded to children? Mill does not define any such liberties, preferring instead to see children as needing care, instruction, and a chance to develop physically and mentally.

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May 21: LIMERICKS

\* \* \* \* \*

Said an envious erudite ermine:  
‘There’s one thing I cannot determine;  
When a girl wears my coat  
She’s a person of note;  
When I wear it I’m only called vermin.’  
Cyril Fletcher.

Limericks are usually funny but not always. Edward Lear wrote:  
There was a Young Person of Smyrna,  
Whose grandmother threatened to burn her;  
But she seized on the cat,  
And said, ‘Granny, burn that!  
You incongruous old woman of Smyrna!’

That would be more likely to give a sensitive cat-loving child nightmares so the parents would need to hurry on and read a cheerful Lear limerick. Such as:

There was an Old Man on the Border,  
Who lived in the utmost disorder;  
He danced with the Cat,  
And made Tea in his Hat,  
Which vexed all the folks on the Border.

Or:  
There was an Old Man with a beard,  
Who said, ‘It is just as I feared! –  
Two Owls and a Hen,  
Four Larks and a Wren,  
Have all built their nests in my beard!’

But many limericks, even if not bawdy, are anonymous. Perhaps their authors did not feel that tossing off a few limericks would add to their literary stature? So here are a couple of Anon’s efforts.

There was a young lady from Joppa  
Who came a Society cropper.  
She went to Ostend  
With a gentleman friend

And the rest of the story's improper.

There was an old man of Darjeeling  
Who travelled from London to Ealing.  
It said on the door,  
'Please don't spit on the floor,'  
So he carefully spat on the ceiling.

\* \* \* \* \*

May 22: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
Hal Gye

May 23: Margaret Wise Brown  
Scott O'Dell

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Scott O'Dell wrote a very popular children's book called *Island of the Blue Dolphins* which he based on a true story. Off the coast of California is a group called the Channel Islands which includes an island the Spaniards named San Nicolas (for St Nicholas). It had been inhabited anywhere between 2,000 and 10,000 years by a tribe which then got called the Nicoleños. But the versions of what happened then vary. O'Dell says that sea otter hunters from the Aleutian Islands on a Russian ship came, other versions say 'the Kodiak people from Alaska' or just sea otter hunters. Whoever they were they attacked the tribe there and massacred them. The remaining people were taken by ship to California to a Spanish Mission there, some versions say 'forcibly', and on the mainland they died from diseases to which they had no immunity. But one woman was left behind. Some versions say she went back for her child, others for a brother or young relative. But all versions say he died and she was left alone on the island. And there she remained alone for 18 years.

When a ship took her off in 1853 she was described as being healthy, fit, and content. But taken to the mainland where there was no one to communicate with her as there was no one left speaking her language she too died from a disease she had no immunity to. And no one knew her name. The Catholic priests christened her Juana Maria just before she died but as she had no shared language it is hard to know whether she knew what was happening. In the book O'Dell calls her Karana.

The book is an imagining of her life for those 18 years alone, giving her friends among the wild dogs, the birds, the dolphins, the otters, to whom she speaks as though to fellow human beings. She lived on fish and shellfish, with occasional stranded whales or seals, and herbs growing wild. She made herself clothes from skins and birds' feathers and built a shelter from whale bones.

However you look at it, she was a remarkable woman. Which makes her history and her loss all the more sad. She has gone down in history as 'the Lone Woman of San Nicolas'.

\* \* \* \* \*

May 24: Mary Grant Bruce

May 25: Len Evers

May 26: Jennifer Pringle-Jones

May 27: Julia Ward Howe

May 28: Nan Chauncy

Patrick White

\* \* \* \* \*

Craig Munro in *Literary Lion Tamers* wrote of P. R. Stephenson's efforts to set up a publishing company in Sydney. "Stephenson did manage to extract an investment of £200 from Eumenthol Jujubes millionaire G. Inglis Hudson, and further funds were provided by Sydney-based

Ruth and Victor White, who each invested £100 in the company. The injection of White capital was designed to secure publication of a poetry volume by their son, Patrick. Within a few days of the shares being issued, Stephenson organised a printing order – marked urgent – for *The Ploughman* by Patrick White. No fewer than three sets of galley proofs had to be ready within a week, for dispatch to White in England by the next mail steamer.

Later in life, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist often made dismissive remarks about his parents not having supported his decision to embark on a literary career. Yet his mother, Ruth, in particular, indulged and encouraged her son's early writing ambitions, having arranged publication of his first book, *Thirteen Poems*, when he was still a teenager. From Ruth, Stephenson received not only the handwritten copies of her son's *Ploughman* poems but also a novel manuscript, 'Finding Heaven'. Because of the delay in sea mail to England, and because White was away in Germany for the summer vacation, he did not return the *Ploughman* proofs till October. Stephenson must have encouraged him to rewrite 'Finding Heaven', and White replied from King's College, Cambridge:

I have not looked at [Finding Heaven] for some time and so could not say definitely whether it is possible to revise the book. Perhaps you could give me some idea of what you consider its greatest weaknesses. But I am really uncertain whether I could bring myself to revise it after all this time. I wrote it in a frame of mind with which I cannot altogether sympathise to-day ... Hoping the new [*Ploughman*] poems may be included and that you will give me a more detailed opinion of Finding Heaven.

Yours Faithfully, Patrick White.

By the time this letter reached his publisher, P.R. Stephenson & Co.'s mounting debts had stalled most projects, so Ruth White arranged for *The Ploughman* to be printed elsewhere in Sydney the following year."

I wonder if White's lack of gratitude had something to do with being embarrassed by his early poetic efforts? A lot of novelists begin by writing poetry but they do not all give their juvenile productions to the world.

\* \* \* \* \*

May 29: T. H. White

Mary Louise Molesworth

Andrew McLean

May 30: Cornelia Otis Skinner

May 31: Eve Masterman

Judith Wright

Helen Waddell

June 1: Joyce Nicholson

John Masefield

June 2: Thomas Hardy

June 3: Margaret Gatty

June 4: Mabel Lucie Attwell

June 5: Richard Scarry

Mrs Aeneas Gunn

Christy Brown

\* \* \* \* \*

From the *Oral History Handbook* by Beth M. Robertson: "Beth Robertson interviewing Jack McLeod at his Paradise home unit on 19 June 1986 for the Jubilee 150 project 'S.A. Speaks':

"John William (Jack) McLeod was born in 1904 in Gawler, South Australia. He was named for his father's brother, 'The Quiet Stockman' of *We of the Never-Never*. During Jack's childhood

his father, 'a real Scotchman', was a teamster for Theodore Ey, the Gawler chaff merchant, and infused Jack with a love of horses.

"The two and a half hour interview focuses on Jack McLeod's working life as a blacksmith and sand carter up to the Great Depression in the 1930s. It begins in 1917 when Jack's father became a teamster for the rail and general contractors Timms & Kidman. Jack, then aged 13, his parents and four younger brothers and sisters went first to live at Mount Pleasant and then to Monarto South. There Jack left school and began work 'nippering' for the navvies. The McLeod family then went with Timms to the Tod River Reservoir scheme on Eyre Peninsula where Jack learned the blacksmith trade. In 1922, with his father recuperating from an accident, Jack and his family returned to Gawler. Soon afterwards they bought a team of horses, and Jack and his father became sand carters, working the North Para River. The interview concludes at this stage of Mr McLeod's career, with a brief explanation of how, when the river sand was worked out in later years, he first managed a sand washing plant and then became a storeman in local stores. Mr McLeod married in 1934 and had one son.

"Mr McLeod was 81 years of age at the time of the interview. He speaks softly but confidently in a distinctive regional accent. Mr McLeod has a good memory for names, but is less confident about dates. These need to be confirmed from other sources. The quality of the recording is good, with very little extraneous noise apart from some faint traffic sounds and occasional noise from another room in his home unit.

"Highlights of the interview include Mr McLeod recounting stories told to him by his uncle 'The Quiet Stockmen' about life on Elsey Station, explanations of Jack's apprenticeship experiences, and detailed descriptions of the Gawler sand carting business. Another strength of the interview is Mr McLeod's memories of the horses he worked with at different stages of his life."

Ernestine Hill in *The Territory* says of McLeod: "At Pine Creek the boys were in drinking a mob of cattle, and they wanted to test Jack. They dragged a buck up to the yards and challenged him out. The youngster was nervous and shy. He refused to get up. Laughter was loud and hostile, and the boy blushed red."

"Jim came to the rescue", riding the wild horse, then saying, "And I'm not fit, me lads," he said, "to put this bloke's saddle on."

"It was not strictly true, but it assured Jack's future north of 28°. He was never thereafter out of a job, although their ways divided, and was soon on his way to immortality as horse-breaker at the Elsey, "the Quiet Stockman" of Mrs Aeneas Gunn."

Hill says of the Elsey: "Third station was the Elsey, 1880, formed by Abraham Wallace from Sturt's Meadows north of Broken Hill, eighteen months out with a six-horse dray, a wagon, a light buggy, a hundred and twenty horses and five men, G. Sutherland, G. H. Greathead, A. McIntyre (cook), A.S. Bartlett and J. H. Palmer. They bought two thousand seven hundred and twenty-eight cattle from Mount Cornish and Nive Downs on the Barcoo, and travelled them round the Gulf and Roper to Stanley Billabongs, where they built the first shack of Old Elsey, the Never Never of Mrs Aeneas Gunn."

"Aeneas Gunn, F.R.G.S., "the Maluka" of *We of the Never Never*, died at Elsey Station in 1903. In compliment to his wife's great book the Commonwealth Government has made an historic memorial park about that quiet bush grave that now is a tourist interest of the new Stuart Highway. Beyond the classic character portrayed by his wife as "the Maluka", little of Aeneas James Gunn is yet known. A great writer and historian was lost to Australia when his letters and diaries of exploration were thoughtlessly destroyed by a company winding up an estate. Worthless vouchers and receipts were carefully preserved, but Gunn's wealth of records was destroyed as personal and insignificant affairs. Stray passages of his graphic and poetic descriptive writing are still to be found

in odd corners. Here is a word-etching of a mangrove swamp of Victoria River, written on a bush trail after black cattle-killers:

It was an uncanny underworld, a vast shapeless vault of fantastic device of the gnarled and knotted trunks...slender buttresses fallen away in a long series of elliptical arches...a jungle cathedral conceived in delirium, and built by unseen, silent, thinking, feeling beings capable of action, the contorted boughs and branches stretching out hideous mud-stained arms to catch and hold one in their loathsome embraces.

The atmosphere was stifling and hot, the silence intense, broken only by the gasping of shell-fish in the mud or clinging to the trunks of the mangroves. So still it was that one could almost hear the moisture exuding from the ooze, the sap coursing in the veins of the trees.

No vista, no distance, no perspective, only the gnarled, knotted and twisted trunks, a tangle of boughs, branches and roots, roots, branches and boughs...above, a roof of leaden leaves, underfoot the noisome ooze of decaying leaves, roots, shells and mud.

And here is a human note, the death of Ebeemelloowooloomool, an “old man” of the Elsey:

The king is dead. Long live the king

Old Ebeemelloowooloomool, alias Goggle-eye, is dead, king of the Elsey tribe. In his place reigns Tchunbah, alias Billy Muck.

They were tired of the old man for a long time, and singing him dead—the aboriginal form of the curse of bell, book and candle in the dark ages. He was sung so that he might waste slowly to death. All food was sung so that it might not nourish him. His various organs were sung so that they could not perform their functions. The sun was sung so that it should not warm his wasted frame. The night was sung so that he should not sleep, the water that it might not quench his thirst. Other blackfellows were warned that if they gave him food and shelter, they would be sung dead.

In his extremity, Goggle-eye dragged himself to the station camp to get the aid of the wonderful white people who could conquer everything but death. But it was too late. The curse had done its work. The white man’s magic could only prolong for a few days a life fast ebbing away.

Mrs Gunn took the chance of being sung, and gave him porridge and arrowroot, stayed beside him and comforted him with tobacco, but at cockcrow this morning the king was dead. It was suspected that he had been the cunning organiser of many a cattle-raid, and was not above running the rule over a traveller’s swag.

The Maluka himself died at the Elsey soon after that little requiem was written, even there, in the wet season, beyond hope of medical aid.”

“The Fizzer, Henry Ventlia Peckham, will live in our school-books as a hero for all time—a mailman who gave his life for his mail. The story of his riding alone the Dry Downs, in ninety-mile stages to the broken wells with the mail to Anthony’s Lagoons, was told during his lifetime by Mrs Aeneas Gunn, in one of the finest chapters of the literature of Australia. His death is an epic she has not written.

“The Fizzer was haunted by fear that he would die of thirst, that death, in the dust of the downs, was drawing near. He had good reason. Once, with his horses lost, he crawled in on hands and knees to water. Stibe, the mailman before him, with a white man and a black woman, had dug his own grave out there. So he left the stark plains of his horror, after a brief period as manager at Auvergne, to ride the mail to Victoria River Downs. It was five hundred miles on packhorses from Katherine and back, calling at Willeroo and Delamere.

“On his first journey, April 1911, he arrived at the Victoria at the end of the wet. Mrs Townshend was seriously ill. A letter was posted in his canvas bags, calling for the Darwin doctor. Twelve miles out, he found the river in high flood at Campbell’s Creek crossing. His only companion was a little black-boy. He sent this boy riding back with a note, asking if any matter in the mail were urgent. If not, he would camp a few days and wait for the flood to go down. The answer came—the letter to the doctor for the sick woman was most urgent. That was enough for the Fizzer—he would swim. With the black-boy in the lead, they whipped the horses in. Two of the frightened packs doubled back in midstream. In heading them on, the Fizzer fell from the saddle and was tossed away in a drowning current.

“Save the mail!” he shouted to the black-boy. “Save the mail!”

The little fellow got the packs across, and rode up and down, calling... but the Fizzer was gone, so he hopped the horses, swam the river again, and rode back to the station. All night they searched, with fires lit on the bank and the blacks swimming. The floating bodies of horse and man were found next day.

“Save the mail!” The echoes are ringing still along the Victoria. They will ring on through history.

“The Fizzer’s grave has, regrettably, been removed to a Never Never memorial graveyard two hundred and fifty miles east, to right on the Stuart Highway. It belonged to Victoria River. For thirty years it was a landmark of a very lonely land. On the east bank near Campbell’s Creek, just above the crossing, fenced in from the cattle, was the gravestone carried by packhorses two thousand miles from Adelaide, a bas-relief in bronze of packhorses against a setting sun. The most conspicuous and the most carefully tended grave of the whole of the Australian outback, it was always painted a dazzling white, a labour of love by the bushmen, who every year carried a pot of paint in the saddle-bags from Katherine, so that no one might pass without knowing. Few of them knew him in life, but bagman, swagman, parson and poddy-dodger would doff their hats to a memory in the Land of Forget, as they took the turn-off by the Fizzer’s grave.”

(And I hope there is some memorial for that little lad who saved the mail.)

“Phoebe Wright had married Young Bob (Farrar)—her five children were born far out in the Limmen River bush. They lived on a few goats and a good garden—no drovers ever came through ... So Phoebe came driving the buggy with her children, a tall, shy woman in homemade dress and hat, passing the Elsey just in time for immortality. She lives as the Bush Mother in *We of the Never Never*, by Mrs Aeneas Gunn. If Mrs Gunn found her so reserved as to be almost grim, it was because in twelve years she had known no other white woman but old Mrs Farrar. In Darwin, with all five children she went to her first dance.”

The Elsey is now an Aboriginal cattle station but one thing has not changed: “An afternoon’s motor-run now from Elsey Station are the famous Red Lily Lagoons—Yaalput—a close weave of scarlet for three square miles, the glory of the Roper.”

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June 6: Violet Trefusis

June 7: R. D. Blackmore

Celia Fiennes

June 8: Ivan Southall

Charles Reade

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Ivan Southall grew up poor in Victoria, losing his father when he was a teenager, but he always knew he wanted to write. At first he thought he wanted to be a journalist but when he came

back from WW2 where he was a pilot stationed in Wales with Coastal Command he decided to try to make it as a freelance writer. He had some early success with his airman hero Simon Black and he wrote histories for other groups including his squadron history but he still needed to mow other people's lawns to keep food on the table for his young family.

His breakthrough book was *Hill's End* followed by a stream of books which did well. I remember a very exciting adventure story with some children lost in karst caves in New Guinea which I had vaguely thought was an Ivan Southall but when I read his biography it obviously wasn't. Leslie Rees perhaps? And people complained so many of his books were about a boy alone beset by troubles. They also at times said he was writing books about children for adult readers. This is a tricky question. What one child will enjoy is too sophisticated for another.

Stephany Evans Steggall in her biography of Southall, *The Loved and the Lost* says, "In a letter written in 1969 he declared that he did not write for children. 'I write books for myself that children may read. I was nobody until I realised this. Never write down; don't insult your readers or yourself. But be simple; to help your readers and to help yourself. And don't worry if you keep on writing flops that publishers send back quicker than a wink. If you've got it, you'll make it. And even after you've got it you'll fall flat on your face once in a while.' "

Unfortunately as he got older he could not find publishers for books they saw as too dense and complex for children and he gradually gave up writing, believing he had written the books he was meant to write.

\* \* \* \* \*

June 9: Sandra Laroche

Ida Rentoul Outhwaite

June 10: Maurice Sendak

June 11: Ann Frank

Violet Martin (Martin Ross)

June 12: Johanna Spyri

Charles Kingsley

Anne Frank

June 13: Heinrich Hoffman

Gordon Kirkpatrick (Slim Dusty)

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"Cautionary verse also employed blood and gore to point out the perils of misbehaviour. Accounts were told in rhyme of a boy who ran away from his nurse only to be eaten by a lion and a little girl who burned to death as a result of telling dreadful lies. Doctor Heinrich Hoffmann's poems were also a hit in English as well as their original German version. Apparently Doctor Hoffman was out Christmas shopping for his young son in 1844 and was dismayed by the lack of suitable literature. His only solution was to write a book himself. *Struwwelpeter* was billed as a collection of "merry stories and funny pictures." The definition of merry was obviously different in those days. After introducing the reader to a budding young psychopath, Frederick, whose pastimes included tearing the wings off flies and killing birds, we hear of yet another girl being burnt to ashes – this time because of playing with matches. Augustus was less of a miscreant, but he too met an early death because of failing to eat his soup. The goriest of them all is *The Story of Little Suck-a-Thumb*. Conrad had it coming to him. His mother had warned him time and time again that little boys who sucked their thumbs were in line for a visit from the "great tall tailor" and his "great sharp scissors." But would Conrad listen? His end was inevitable:

The door flew open, in he ran,  
The great, long, red-legged scissor man,  
Oh! Children, see! The tailor's come

And caught out little Suck-a-Thumb.  
Snip! Snap! Snip! The scissors go;  
And Conrad cries out “Oh! Oh! Oh!”  
Snip! Snap! Snip! They go so fast,  
That both his thumbs are off at last.

Among the ranks of Hoffmann’s characters, I suppose Conrad was one of the more fortunate. But while he did survive to tell the tale of his ordeal, mamma’s response was little more than, “I told you so.” ”

Dr Peter Marshall in *Sex, Nursery Rhymes & Other Evils: A Look at the Bizarre, Amusing, Sometimes Shocking Advice of Victorian Childcare Experts*.

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June 14: Harriet Beecher Stowe  
June 15: Toss Gascoigne  
June 16: Isobelle Carmody  
June 17: Henry Lawson

\* \* \* \* \*

Norman Lindsay in *Bohemians at The Bulletin* tells this curious story about Henry Lawson. “I have one last visual memory of Lawson to record, and it is a pleasing one. I came on it in George Street, and it presented him in the company of a very old Abo and his lubra. Henry was indulging an extravagant display of affection for them, shaking hands with them, patting them, giving them largesse from his pocket, and standing off to admire them, only to dart back and repeat the performance. He was also trying to talk with them, bending his ear to catch what words they may have uttered. I doubt he got much of those; the Abos would not know that only loud sounds could penetrate Henry’s defective ear-drums. They appeared to be rather bewildered by his ardent benevolence. He could not have enough of them. When he left them, it was only to turn in his tracks and dart back for another performance of handshaking and patting.

“It was easy to divine the motif of this outburst of nostalgic lyricism in Henry. The Abos were Australia absolute. That very Australia that he had extracted the material of his stories from, while damning it as an inferno of heat, dust, drought, flies, and the torments of thirst only to be quenched by a billy of lukewarm beer from a bush shanty ... where the pub keeper was a dirty scoundrel who lurked there to take poor shearers and bush workers down for their pay cheques, and then kick them out when they were suffering the horrors of a hangover.”

\* \* \* \* \*

June 18: Robyn Archer  
June 19: Patricia Wrightson  
Ethel Pedley  
June 20: David Cox  
Kurt Schwitters

\* \* \* \* \*

German writer Kurt Schwitters wrote and illustrated fairy tales. He called his form of art, influenced by the Dada movement (which didn’t want him as they said his art was not politically engaged), Merz. He said of it, “The word “Merz” had no meaning when I formed it. Now it has the meaning I have attached to it. The meaning of the concept “Merz” changes as the understanding of the person who continues to work with it changes.

Merz wants freedom from all fetters in order to shape things artistically. Freedom is not unrestraint, but rather the result of strict artistic discipline. Merz also means tolerance toward any kind of limitation for artistic reasons. Every artist must be permitted to compose a picture, even if it is just made out of blotting paper, provided that he knows how to create.”

But he wrote his fairy tales for adults, not children, and I am not sure that ‘fairy tales’ is the right designation. They rarely contain magic or magical beings. Rather they suggest folk tales and reminded me to some extent of the ‘trickster’ tales from the Americas.

Schwitters came to England to escape the Nazis and continued his art and writing. So here is his tale: ‘Once upon a Time There Was a Tiny Mouse’:

Once upon a time there was a tiny mouse. It heard that the woman who ruled the house had set the large cat to pursue the mouse’s siblings. The poor little mice sought shelter in all the corners of the house, but when one of them tried to find a better hiding place, the cat ate it and continued to eat one after the other. Soon it was the tiny smart mouse’s turn, and it remained in its hiding place until the cat fell asleep.

Now even in the breast of the tiniest mouse there are great feelings, at least for a while. And so the tiny mouse thought about revenge. All of a sudden the mouse had an idea: a growth serum. It knew where the woman stored the large bottle and drank a big swig of the serum.

When the cat awoke the next morning, a mouse was standing there, and it was much larger than itself. The cat ran away out of fright, but when the woman saw this, she caught the cat and said, “You’re too small if you run away from mice,” and she gave him an injection of the growth serum. In the evening the cat was as strong as a lion and played with the gigantic mouse. So the woman was happy, and said, “Good cat, now go and eat your mouse!”

However, the cat thought, “Who do you think you are, woman, giving me orders?! After all, I’m a lion!”

And with these words it sprung upon the woman and tore her apart. Then the cat sat down to have a meal with the gigantic mouse, and they both devoured the woman, for they had become very hungry from all that enormous growing.”

The story ends there but he could of course have added: “The countryside was then ravaged by a gigantic cat and a gigantic mouse with enormous appetites.”

Yes, not really tales for the young.

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June 21: Noreen Shelley

Janet McLean

Patricia Wrightson

June 22: H. Rider Haggard

June 23: Frank Dalby Davison

June 24: Anne Farrell

June 25: George Orwell

June 26: Pearl S. Buck

June 27: Helen Keller

Rex Dixon (Reginald Alec Martin) (d)

June 28: Jean-Jacques Rousseau

June 29: Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Lydia Pender

June 30: Mollie Hunter

July 1: Dorothea Mackellar

July 2: Hermann Hesse

July 3: Elfrida Vipont

Charlotte Perkins Gilman

July 4: Nathaniel Hawthorne

July 5: Agnes Nieuwenhuizen

Katherine Scholes

July 6: Elizabeth Durack  
July 7: Max Dann  
Robert Heinlein  
July 8: Jean de la Fontaine  
Captain (Charles) Gilson  
July 9: Barbara Cartland  
July 10: Frederick Marryat  
Mary O'Hara  
James Aldridge  
July 11: E. B. White

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“About the time of his birth at the end of the nineteenth century, nature writers were lining up on both sides of a controversial issue—how to respond emotionally to nature, especially to animals, while keeping a science-informed reality in mind. The two camps were represented by writers such as John Burroughs and John Muir, who advocated nature’s virtues in a lyrical way but did so within a rigorously factual approach, and William J. Long and Ernest Thompson Seton, who dramatized and fictionalized the natural world while claiming to be meticulously realistic. The question wasn’t about the role of personification in literature. No one argued that *Black Beauty* was a bad book because it portrayed animal characters from the inside, imbued with human thoughts and emotions. Such books were avowed fiction, even fantasy. The uproar was over narratives that tried to have it both ways, claiming to be realistic—presenting true-to-life animal behaviour—despite their outrageous tales of cunning, vice, and derring-do.”

Michael Sims in *The Story of Charlotte’s Web: E. B. White and the Birth of a Children’s Classic*.

That E. B. White was studying spiders before he wrote about them is easy to picture. But Herbert Mitgang shows an unknown White in *Dangerous Dossiers: Exposing the Secret War Against America’s Greatest Authors*: “After E. B. White died in October, 1985, I had a farfetched notion: to see if he—of all beloved American writers—had a file kept on him in Washington. Because of his children’s books, *Charlotte’s Web* and *Stuart Little*, his guide to clear and forceful writing, *Elements of Style*, and his bold editorial comments and essays in the *New Yorker* that are studied as models of independence and individuality, he was universally regarded as one of the most influential writers of our time. His honors included a Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Kennedy (which he later declined to accept in person from President Johnson in Washington). In the “Notes and Comments” column in the *New Yorker* in 1953 he had attacked Senator Joseph McCarthy and McCarthyism in this fashion:

“[A] very great majority of loyal Americans are deeply worried, not because they have a skeleton in their closet or because they disapprove of fact-finding in Congress, but because they see and feel in their daily lives the subtle change that has already been worked by a runaway loyalty-checking system in the hands of a few men who, to say it in a whisper, are not ideally equipped to handle the most delicate and dangerous job in the nation, that is, the questioning of values of one’s fellow citizens. A couple of these committeemen [Senator McCarthy was chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations] don’t know a fact from a bag of popcorn anyway.”

A year later, when Senator McCarthy was riding high on network television during his investigation of disloyalty in the army, White again wrote a “Talk of the Town” column, saying that the junior senator from Wisconsin had “succeeded only in making the country less secure” and in keeping the nation “in an uproar just when it should have a firm grasp on itself.” White’s daring words were read by newspaper editorial writers and television news commentators who did not have the courage, or the approval of their publishers and station owners, to be as boldly outspoken

as the *New Yorker* during the McCarthy era. What some future historians would call the “hidden hand” presidency of General Eisenhower also remained hidden from the American public and press at that time when it might have most counted.

During this period there were strong links between McCarthy and Hoover. Hoover’s disinherited heir apparent, William C. Sullivan, who had served in the FBI for thirty years, wrote him a bitter letter in 1971, saying that “you had us preparing material for McCarthy regularly, kept furnishing it to him while you denied publicly that we were helping him.” E. B. White proved prescient about the McCarthy-Hoover relationship. Undoubtedly noted by the FBI, McCarthy’s staff and senatorial committee members in Washington were these words by White:

“The twenty-years-of-treason junket, the use of the word ‘guilt’ in hearing rooms where nobody is on trial and where no judge sits, the Zwicker inquisition, the willingness to shatter an army to locate a dentist, the sly substitution of the name ‘Alger’ for the name ‘Adlai,’ the labelling of the majority of the press as ‘extreme Left Wing,’ the distortion of facts and figures, the challenge of the power of the White House, the use of the grand elision in the phrase ‘Fifth Amendment Communists,’ the queer notion that he, and he alone, is entitled to receive raw information that it is illegal for others to have in their possession, the steady attack on national confidence and national faith, as though confidence were evil and suspicion were good—the score is familiar and need not be recited in its long detail. Whatever else can be said for and against the senator, it has become obvious that he dislikes a great many things about our form of government. To disapprove of these well-loved principles and rules is not a crime, but neither is it a help in performing the duties of a committee chairman in the United States Senate.”

So did he have a file? “One of the two file-pages was devoted to: “Subject: White, Elwyn Brooks.” It was dated August 2, 1956. The category, checked against certain possible references in his file in the Records section, was listed as: “Main: Subv. References Only & Summaries.” No explanation was offered by the FBI about why the search was only confined to a “Subv.” (that is, subversive) file ... By his brief FBI dossier (assuming that this was all that did indeed exist on him, which I cannot say with certainty), even an E.B. White could not be, strictly speaking, considered altogether “clean.” ”

The other day when I was reading *Stuart Little* I noticed something interesting. White’s book begins: ‘When Mrs Frederick C. Little’s second son was born, everybody noticed that he was not much bigger than a mouse. The truth of the matter was, the baby looked very much like a mouse in every way. He was only about two inches high; and he had a mouse’s sharp nose, a mouse’s tail, a mouse’s whiskers, and the pleasant, shy manner of a mouse. Before he was many days old he was not only looking like a mouse but acting like one, too – wearing a grey hat and carrying a small cane. Mr and Mrs Little named him Stuart, and Mr Little made him a tiny bed out of four clothespins and a cigarette box.

Unlike most babies, Stuart could walk as soon as he was born. When he was a week old he could climb lamps by shinnying up the cord. Mrs Little saw right away that the infant clothes she had provided were unsuitable, and she set to work and made him a fine little blue worsted suit with patch pockets in which he could keep his handkerchief, his money, and his keys.’

But in the movie the Littles adopt Stuart in an ‘inter-species adoption’ which might have been less traumatic for Mrs Little. Their cat, Snowbell, is still annoyed at having to be kind to a mouse. In the book Stuart goes out into the world to find the friendly little bird, Margalo, Snowbell has frightened away. In the movie Stuart goes out to look for his biological parents.

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July 12: Henry David Thoreau  
July 13: Erno Rubik

July 14: Leon Garfield  
July 15: Gavin Maxwell  
Clement Clarke Moore  
Lawrie Ryan

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Although *Ring of Bright Water* is now thought of as a suitable book for children I am not sure it should be. Certainly children would enjoy the otter's antics but it is a sad book and it raises some complex dilemmas.

Douglas Botting in his biography of Maxwell, *Gavin Maxwell, a Life*, says of him, "By and large, Gavin wore his exalted status lightly—though he could make use of it if he chose to pull rank or impress. Though he was born an aristocrat, his political leanings at the time I first met him were towards the more radical left. But he *was* a snob of a particular kind. He could not abide fools and loathed the human pack and all herdlike behaviour. He was not a true loner, but he hated groups and could never have travelled on an expedition comprising more than two people." And, "He was, it seemed, a homosexual, though not entirely so, for he enjoyed female company and had loved several women in his time. This revelation was, however, obviously crucial to an understanding of his complex and rebellious nature and the alienation which characterised his life. 'You may not approve. But you'll have to accept me for what I am.' What he was, as I gradually discovered, was a troubled tempestuous man, a flawed genius whose obvious faults of character were redeemed by a rare generosity of spirit, an undimmed utopian vision of life and nature, and stoical courage that was undaunted even in the face of ultimate adversity." (And after reading his memoir of his childhood *The House of Elrig* I couldn't help wondering how much his experiences of school contributed to that 'troubled tempestuous' psyche.)

So how did his famous book come in to being? He tells the story of how he bought otters in Iraq and of their lives and fates. But how did it get its name? Botting writes: " 'I've come up with two possible titles,' Gavin told me after I'd finished reading the piece. 'One of them is based on an invocation Wilfred Thesiger taught me when we were in the Iraq marshes. Whenever the Arabian Bedouin see a raven, a bird of ill-omen, in the desert, they try and avert the omen by calling out: 'Raven, seek thy brother!' The other title is based on lines from a poem by a friend of mine, Kathleen Raine:

He has married me with a ring, a ring of bright water  
Whose ripples travel from the heart of the sea ...

Gavin said he was inclined to use the raven image for his title; what did I think? I told him I thought it was too harsh and too black for what he had in mind. But a ring of bright water was a beautiful and evocative image. 'It has to be *Ring of Bright Water*,' I said. 'All right, chum,' Gavin grunted. 'Anything you say, chum.' "

I am glad he took Botting's advice. And it is a lovely poem.

He has married me with a ring, a ring of bright water  
Whose ripples travel from the heart of the sea,  
He has married me with a ring of light, the glitter  
Broadcast on the swift river.  
He has married me with the sun's circle  
Too dazzling to see, traced in summer sky.  
He has crowned me with the wreath of white cloud  
That gathers on the snowy summit of the mountain,  
Ringed me round with the world-circling wind,



July 21: Arthur Mee

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Christopher Fowler in *The Book of Forgotten Authors* devotes a chapter to Arthur Mee and *The Children's Encyclopaedia* he brought out in 10 volumes. "There's the usual jingoism that peppers books of this period, but also much to enjoy, even if Mee's contributors had a skewed grasp of world history. Each chapter ends with 'Things To Make & Do', including dolls made from clothes pegs, ice made without a freezer, how to fasten a door that has no lock, making cases for hankies and gloves, and the Chinese method of building railways (I found each of these by allowing a volume to fall open at a double page). Want to mark your name on a fruit? Build an hour-glass? Keep a goat as a pet? Blow a brick over on a table? Here are some of the other bursting issues of the day that Mee chose to tackle:

What to Make from an Elder Branch

How to Find Toadstools

The Story of Gas

Keeping Ants as Pets

Our Wonderful Glands

Crocheting a Pot-Holder for Empire Day

How to Cultivate a Monastery Garden

Flames That Would Shivel Up The Earth

Things to Remember When Bathing

How George Eliot Lost Her Way in the World of Books

"The books are filled with the kind of questions asked by annoying children: Why do ship's masts taper to the top? Why don't fishes drown? How do fireworks get their colours? Unfortunately not all the answers are entirely accurate. To the question, 'Why do some people lose their hair?' Mee answers, 'Because we do not trust our hair to do its natural work. Women do not get as bald as men because their hats do not interfere with the ventilation of the scalp'."

"He cheerfully admitted that he knew nothing about children, and has been the subject of much revisionist scorn, but he encouraged the young to think and create out of curiosity and pleasure, instead of passively idolizing celebrity."

Donald Horne wrote of his childhood in *The Education of Young Donald*, "I could read and re-read *Cassell's Book of Knowledge* with its more than 2000 articles and 10,000 photographs and drawings. Sometimes I would supplement *Cassell's* with Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopaedia*, borrowed from the school library. I kept on returning to favourite bits and reading them again, passing from 'Caesar, the Man Who Crossed the Rubicon' to 'Strange Hats of Many Lands' to 'Brave and Thrifty Belgium' to 'Kinematograph, the Wonders of Moving Picture Land' to 'Marx, the Originator of the Modern Internationalist Socialist Movement' to 'Mighty Russia's Rise and Fall'. There did not seem much more to learn."

But Jonathon Sumption writing of 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain in *Law in a Time of Crisis* said, "We are, increasingly, a historically illiterate nation. Periodic opinion polls show that many of our fellow citizens have difficulty in saying in what century the Norman Conquest and even the Second World War occurred. A generation of children has been brought up on a remarkably narrow historical syllabus, essentially confined to the first half of the twentieth century which is probably the most uncharacteristic century of Europe's past and unquestionably the most uncharacteristic century of Germany's. It offers very little insight into the way that societies develop over time. The result is to distort our understanding not just of history but of humanity itself."

Is this because children no longer read Arthur Mee or there is no modern equivalent of Arthur Mee or children simply are not reading? And the same thoughts have relevance for

Australia. Only recently someone said to me ‘kids are not interested in what happened back beyond last week’.

“I subscribed to *The Children’s Newspaper* edited by Arthur Mee, famed in his time for educational publications. It was a real newspaper, packed with non-political information. Thanks to Arthur Mee, at ten I knew more about daily life in Baghdad than most British adults do today.”

Muriel Spark in *The Informed Air*.

The other day I picked up his *Arthur Mee’s Book of the Flag*. This is a whip through the British Empire in which, no matter what happens, the English always come as a blessing. He begins by saying, “Every one of us was born into a heritage of high renown. The world reels as we march to the middle of the Twentieth Century, but those who are young will see it like a rock again, and it will be the Island and the Empire that will save mankind.” He goes on to say, “There is nothing more wonderful than the thought of this speck on the map and all that mankind owes to it. If it is impossible for the human race to be defeated and enslaved, it is this Island that has made it so. All nations have added something to the glory of the world, but it is one small land that has led mankind to freedom and will not let it go. It has established liberty in every continent, and laid the foundations of a tranquil life for one-quarter of the peoples of the earth.” And, “We built up the freedom of the seas without which there can be no peace. At the cost of untold sacrifice we have maintained the British Fleet to guard the seas and police the world. We have abolished slavery wherever we have found it. We have sent out missionaries into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. We have been the most successful colonisers the world has known.” And, “Our country, our flag, our empire are worth living for. We have spread justice and truth and order and goodwill about the world and struck down tyranny everywhere. The liberty we have enjoyed has made it impossible for us to know what tyranny is. In a world filled with alarm, the Flag is the safety-valve of civilisation.”

For children brought up on this it must have come as a nasty shock to discover that the various countries of the British Empire didn’t see it like this and couldn’t wait to throw off the British yoke. But no matter what his subject, and his subjects are many and various but with a particular fondness for ‘great men’, he always writes with a lively pen and also, which was perhaps more important, a belief that children shared his view that everything about the world and its history was interesting. Take, for example, this piece in his *The Wonderful Journey*: “In the time of Pliny, who perished at Pompeii, they bathed every day before they sat down to eat; the last thing they did before dining was to bathe. We read of a villa belonging to a well-known Roman where the baths were of marble from Alexandria, with veins polished to look like a picture; the edges of the basin were set round with precious stones from Greece, interspersed with streaks of gold; the water ran from silver pipes and fell in beautiful cascades. The floors were inlaid with stones and precious gems, and everywhere were splendid colonnades and marble statues.

“All this was possible in the great building days of Rome, for Rome had slaves in numbers beyond counting. The traffic in slave-labour had reached an amazing scale in the great days of Pompeii, and craftsmanship of any kind had come to be considered degrading. One household had fourteen hundred slaves, and a citizen under Augustus left four thousand at his death. One famous man had an army of artisan slaves, among whom were hundreds of architects and masons. It is said that in Sicily, in a four-years war, the number of slaves who perished was a million.

“So splendid must have been this city, so terrible the foundations of its splendour, when Vesuvius flung out her fires one autumn night in the year 79. Two scholars, still famous men, were living near the stricken town, and one of them perished in the great eruption. They were Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger. The uncle was a soldier and scholar, and was the intimate friend of the

Emperor Vespasian; his nephew is famous for the charming letters he wrote to his friends, and a letter to the Roman historian Tacitus describes that terrible night in which he witnessed the destruction of Pompeii. It was a happy chance that Pliny the Younger should be there, for his letter tells us faithfully what happened on that night; but it was a sad chance that Pliny the Elder should be there, for he was doomed to perish. He was one of the immortals, the man who gave the world its first encyclopedia, the warrior-scholar who preserved vast stores of ancient knowledge which would otherwise have been for ever lost; the man who stands out as a towering world-figure in the interval between the fall of Alexandria as a seat of learning and the rise of our own Roger Bacon.

“On the night of the destruction of Pompeii, Pliny the Elder, who used to work all day for his emperor, go to bed for a few hours, rise at midnight and work till dawn for the benefit of humanity, was on this night awakened before his usual time, and, ill and old though he was, he put off in a boat to get a near view of what was happening, so that he might describe it for all time in his writings. He was admiral of the Roman fleet at Misenum, and had plenty of boatmen at his command. He was rowed out into the Bay of Naples, and landed at Stabiae to rescue a friend. There, in order to calm the fears of the people, he took a bath, ordered dinner, and actually lay down to rest, though the house in which he lay was gradually being covered with ashes and stones, and the building rocked with the shocks of earthquake. At last Pliny was persuaded to leave. Wearing pillows on their heads to protect them from the falling stones, he and his party went down to the seashore, where Pliny, choking with the volcano fumes, sank to the ground.” Pliny the Elder died there but his nephew “Pliny the Younger had been quietly at work at Misenum, writing for one of his uncle’s books; but at last he, too, was compelled to leave, taking his mother with him. They made their way on foot towards the sea in midnight darkness, amid the crash of burning buildings, the hail of lava and hot stones, and the weeping and wailing of terrified people. They saw the sea draw back as if repelled by the quaking of the earth; they saw fishes stranded on dry land; they saw the lava flowing after them. Fleeing from this terrible place, crouching in the shelter of buildings, stopping for a moment now and then to shake off the dust and ashes which were burying them alive, they saw the overwhelming of all the splendour that had one day been Pompeii, and Pliny wrote in his letter to Tacitus that “I believed I and the world were perishing together.”

As a child I was fascinated with volcanoes. I never came across Mee but this would have appealed to me if I had.

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July 22: Betty Roland

Alan Moorehead

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I had read several of Moorehead’s books, *The Fatal Impact*, *No Room in the Ark*, *The White Nile*, which were all interesting and very readable, but I knew nothing about his early life and writing. He was born in Melbourne in 1910 and set out for Europe in 1936 as a young journalist. Michael Heyward, introducing Moorehead’s last book, his memoir *A Late Education*, draws attention to his writings as a war correspondent, “With its 300,000 words or so, *African Trilogy* is a swashbuckling epic, a sort of masterpiece in spite of the fact that it was written at breakneck speed and published subject to military censorship. It gives a worm’s eye view of whizzing shells, brave attacks and terrified retreats, of heat, dust, weariness and death.”

But his first ‘excitement’ when he arrived in Europe was the Olympic Games in Berlin and he said of his visit: “In the summer of 1936 Germany for a few short weeks really was like a tourist poster. The sun shone, the flowers bloomed, every railroad station was bedecked with flags, and saluting policemen were ready to help the foreigner wherever he went. It was rather like being at some provincial fête where everyone smiles, everyone is eager to lend a hand with the refreshments, and goodwill overflows. ‘Look,’ the Germans seemed to be saying, ‘this is what we are really like.

Let us all enjoy ourselves.’ Then too they were so efficient. Multilingual officials boarded the trains coming into Berlin and arranged accommodation for those visitors who had not already booked. The hotels had filled long before Guy and I arrived, but we were provided with a good cheap room in an old lady’s apartment in the Sudwestkorso, and the old lady herself was the apotheosis of *gemütlich* German hospitality. And so we sallied out into the festival of brass bands and beer gardens and processions and milling crowds in the Olympic stadium. There was hardly a swastika to be seen on the streets.

“And yet the vague menace was there. You felt it lurking underneath all this heartiness and precise attention, and just once in a while it would emerge into the open in some small incident as when a policeman barked savagely at one of his own countrymen and drew his baton, or when Hitler, on the saluting stand at the stadium, refused to shake hands with the American Negro Jesse Owens who was the great champion of the games that year. One day when we were on the Unter den Linden a gust of nervous excitement suddenly took possession of the crowds. The people ran to the edge of the pavement, thrusting one another aside in an hysterical, almost frantic kind of way. Hitler was coming. We were talking to a German girl we had picked up and it was astonishing to see the shining-eyed look of ecstasy that overcame her face as the great man came riding by through a forest of outstretched arms. It was the look of a girl meeting her lover.

“And the virility of the Germans: this really was a little frightening. The main driveway up to the stadium was lined with statues of the young demigods and goddesses of the new Nazi age: great bull-like young men with truculent sexual parts and huge-bellied women carrying sheaves of wheat. There they stood flexing their muscles and gazing with calm animal strength away to the horizon. There was something mildly shocking about them. Those vast stone breasts did not charm the eye at all, they simply suggested that they were full of good milk. And those mountainous buttocks were an obvious makeweight for a gargantuan pregnancy, which would not be long delayed: one tigerish spring from the naked athlete standing opposite and the job would be done.

“But then we were all in a daze of body worship through these days. One afternoon Guy and I went out to the Olympischdorf, where the Germans had laid out a country club to accommodate the Olympic teams. We passed through heavy iron gates—only men allowed—and from then on we were surrounded by lakes and flowers and well-regimented forests of spruce and fir. The athletes lived in rustic log cabins among the woods, and there were enough cinder tracks, swimming pools and gymnasia to train themselves until they burst. Each team hoisted its national flag over the log cabin in which it was stabled—I say stabled because the whole thing was conducted like a model racing stud. Swarms of little men in white sweaters and sandshoes and with white towels over their shoulders frisked about the athletes every minute of the day, polishing their skins, kneading their muscles, feeding them special foods and leading them back to their wooden boxes at night. There was a preposterous earnestness about it all and the air reeked with the smell of liniment and human sweat. Let one of the young gods so much as trip over a step or complain of a sore toe on the racetrack and the trainers were round him in a second, tenderly inquiring where it hurt; and that look of maternal concern on their horny faces was something that went beyond caricature.

“Soothing music brooded over the valley, and everything possible was done to keep away the vulgarities of the outside world. The athlete’s mail was censored. No tradesman’s van was allowed inside these precincts, no crowds, no sudden alarming noises. Life went by in an idyllic dream of rusticity and simplicity until that electric moment when the athlete was taken off in a padded car to perform for a brief minute or two before the crowds; and then, directly his event was over, he was whisked back to compose himself and resume his dedicated austerity.”

Many writers, famous and not-so-famous, have written about their childhoods. I took this little piece from Ruth Sansom’s childhood memoir *Through the Eyes of a Child: Memories of a*

*Tasmanian Childhood* because she uses that strange phrase which I can remember hearing, though without any explanation, in my own childhood: ‘a wing-wam for a goose’s bridle’.

“You’d better not go, dear. The wind’s blowing so hard and it’s nearly five o’clock.”

“I want to go.”

“But you’re too little. The wind will blow you over.”

“It isn’t windy. Look, I’m standing up. I’m not falling over.”

“All right. Run along. And don’t forget – it’s hooks you have to buy. A packet of hooks.”

I stand still outside the gate.

“Go in, Mumma! Don’t watch!”

Now there’s no one at all. That noise is the wind – up there in the wires. It’s singing. I know that song. *A packet of hooks, a packet of hooks*. And nobody’s with me, only the wind.

There’s Mrs. Tilley behind the counter.

“Hullo, dear. What do you want?”

“A packet of tacks, please.”

“Have you come by yourself?”

“Yes.”

“Have you got any money?”

“Yes.”

I’m going home now. It’s getting late, and the wind is sad. Then Dadda’s voice.

“Hullo, my pet! What are you doing here?”

“I’ve been to the shop for Mumma.”

“And what did you buy?”

“A packet of tacks.”

“Tacks? I don’t think she wants tacks, I’ve got lots of tacks in the tool-shed.”

“Yes, she *does* want tacks.”

(Well, I think it was tacks).

I stand at my father’s bench, watching the plane skim off the white curls of wood and drop them on the floor.

“What are you making?” we ask for the twentieth time.

“So you’d like to know, would you?”

“Yes. What is it?”

“A wing-wam for a goose’s bridle.”

“Oh, *do* tell us what it is.”

“I’ve told you. A wing-wam. A wing-wam for a goose’s bridle.”

“But what IS it?”

I watch my father’s teasing face for a while, and then laugh. “I know what it is.”

“What?”

“A wing-wam for a goose’s bridle.”

We all laugh, and chant: “A wing-wam for a goose’s bridle!”

A wing-wam is something I’ve never seen – like Timbuctoo.

“What is far away over there?” I asked him one day.

“Oh, that is Timbuctoo.”

And I see in my mind a boy, bowling a hoop along a green sward in Timbuctoo.

“And what is that noise so far away?”

“That’s one of your Aunt Hilda’s roosters, way down in Hobart.”

Now I never hear a rooster crowing in the distance without saying to myself: “That’s one of Aunt Hilda’s, way down in Hobart.”

Timbuctoo represented a place impossibly remote and a wing-wam for a goose's bridle was meant to stifle a child's curious questions. They would go away and ponder on it rather than want to know something adults weren't ready to share, for all sorts of reasons, sometimes just to end a litany of questions when they were busy or preoccupied.

Then there are the myriad collections of interviews and recorded memories, quite a few of them pretty boring, but one I can definitely recommend is *In the Half Light: Reminiscences of growing up in Australia 1900-1970* by Jacqueline Kent. And the one thing that comes over from reading past childhoods was simply that children mostly had much harder lives 'back then'.

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July 23: Carol Odell

July 24: Jean Webster

E. F. (Fred) Benson

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"Among the enticing literary treats that I have either had, through pressure of work or absence of time, to forgo or which have never, as in this case, come within my reach, a novel called *Apples of Sodom*, ranks pretty high. It was the work of a woman, a Miss Mary Bramston, it was written about 1870, and she sold the world rights for £20. Somewhere there lurk, presumably, critical evaluations of the work ('Miss Bramston casts a bright and wholesome light on a dark corner of biblical history') but its chief interest lies in the fact that its authoress was at the same time, governess to the children of those unusually bizarre Benson parents. It isn't every day that the Master of Wellington College, later Archbishop of Canterbury, marries a basically homosexual bride half his age. And they then produce between them, in conditions that the sensitive will prefer not to dwell on, three highly gifted and queer sons, among them E.F. Benson to whom we owe the marvellous Miss Mapp and Lucia books, and much else. There was also a homicidal maniac daughter. Believers in predestination will enjoy picturing God arranging all that elaborate little tangle ... One does so wonder whether the oddities of the Benson background and the tendencies of her charges inspired or influenced to some extent the authoress of *Apples of Sodom*. Who, do you suppose, can be the main character? It can hardly be Mrs Lot of whom vivid details are really rather scarce and whom one sees as a somewhat shadowy and nervous figure, twitching a goodish bit and probably locking herself in a hidden recess while all that clamouring and banging was going on at their door ('Do see who that is, dear. Tell them we've got visitors. If you want me, I'm in the airing cupboard'), though she does of course in the end have her moment of glory as a Challenge to Cerebos. We know much more, rather too much in fact, about her husband and especially his last unfortunate days in that cave, though here his childless and incestuous daughters were much to blame and he, poor man, lying there in a drunken stupor, was literally more sinned against than sinning. None of these persons would, however, tempt the pen of a governess in the saintly public school household of a future archbishop, so the leading figure must have been somebody else. Or do you think that *Apples of Sodom* was in fact a 'modern' novel but with an, er, Sodom theme?"

Arthur Marshall in *Life's Rich Pageant*.

Children in remote areas still have governesses. I was one when I was sixteen for a year on a sheep property in South-West Queensland and I sometimes feel, looking back, those children deserved better. In those days no qualifications were required of a governess, just that she get her pupils through the set lessons and make sure they were reasonably competent in the three Rs. But somehow I don't think of modern governesses as writing religious novels. Of course there is no reason why they shouldn't. It is more that most publishers are not seeking religious novels.

And what of those ‘marvellous Miss Mapp and Lucia books’? Mrs Lucas ‘Lucia’ and Miss Elizabeth Mapp live in Benson’s imaginary town which he is said to have based on Rye of which he was mayor. They are middle-aged, affected, with modest social-climbing pretensions; they live in an atmosphere of bridge-playing, séances, passing fads such as Christian Science, yoga, even importing an Indian guru who turns out to be a ‘curry-cook’, they affect to promote art and theatre, (‘Olga sang the great scene to me years ago and I confess I did not do it justice. A little modern for my classical taste, but a very great work. Very. And her voice is still magnificent; perhaps a little sign of forcing in the top register, but then I am terribly critical.’) they are embarrassing (and embarrassed), sometimes funny, often malicious, convinced of their own superiority (‘tonight they had been harsh with each other over bridge, but to her they had been scrupulously polite, receiving all her criticisms of their play in meek silence. Perhaps they were beginning to perceive at last that she was a different class of player from them. As she caressed this vainglorious thought, she stopped to admire the chaste whiteness of the moonlight on the church tower, which seemed to point skywards as if towards her own serene superiority among the stars.’) presented in a satirical and wry manner—but the puzzle, to me, is that Benson was apparently so fond of them that he wrote six books about them. Was it because they appealed to so many readers that he felt they should have a long life? Or did he genuinely like them? Or was it that he felt a nostalgia for their *mileau* which was slowly disappearing with the faster pace of life, fewer servants, more people able to undermine their pretensions? I don’t know.

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July 25: Josephine Tey

July 26: Poppy Lopatniuk

Terry Denton

James Preston

Paul Gallico

July 27: Hilaire Belloc

‘Hesba Stretton’ (Sarah Smith)

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Margaret Maison in *The Victorian Vision* writes, “ ‘Hesba Stretton’ (Miss Sarah Smith) made her name with a typical Evangelical tale *Jessica’s First Prayer* (1866), which tells us of how the little daughter of a wicked actress (who pawns everything for gin) is rescued by a kindly coffee-stall owner. This sold a million and a half copies and followed in the Sherwood-Mortimer tradition of fantastic popularity at home and translations into dozens of foreign languages abroad.

But Miss Stretton’s later works, particularly her novels, are an improvement on this. Although all her stories have a definite moral (usually on the evils of money—debts, thefts, wills, forged cheques and misers’ hoards are a common feature of her novels), it is not too obtrusively pointed, and she has a pleasant style of writing and a kind of “pathetic simplicity” in her work that is particularly appealing. One of her best novels is *The King’s Servants* (1883), the story of an elderly workhouse couple, which is, curiously enough, popular in present-day Russia. Although she never touches either great heights or great depths in her novels, they rise above the unsympathetic elements of Victorian Evangelism and reach a level of admirable Christian simplicity. Humility, charity, kind hearts and simple faith—the virtues shine out brightly from the pages of her novels and render them pleasurable to readers in ages and countries far different from her own.”

I came upon her novel for children *Max Krömer: A Story of the Siege of Strasbourg* which, even with its Christian message is still a story of horror. Young Max and his sister Sylvie are sent to their grandmother in Strasbourg in Alsace in 1870 when their English mother dies and their father is away exploring in Africa. Young Max is at first excited by the sounds of soldiers and talk of glory

but he gradually comes to see how the people who suffer the most have the least to gain from war and he faces the knowledge of closely connected people—“Here were we, French citizens, with a French garrison and a French governor; when only a mile or so away was Germany. We spoke German too, and we had dear friends on the other side of the river; friends who were in the habit of coming to visit the people of Strasbourg, and whom they visited in turn.”—going to war, but more than that they are ‘brothers in Christ’. The houses are reduced to rubble, people shelter in the cellars, hungry desperate boys roam the streets, people are reduced to eating horses and donkeys if they can find them. “Every day saw the want, the famine, and the deaths grow greater.” Max and his family survive, stronger in faith, more compassionate and kind, and with hope in their future.

Hesba Stretton wrote books for little children such as *The Sweet Story of Old and Bede’s Charity* as well as books for older children such as *Fishers of Derby Haven* and *Alone in London*. She says she wrote *Max Krömer* to recognize the help being given to “the distressed peasantry of France”. “Last September in returning from Switzerland, I passed through the upper valley of the Rhine, of which Strasbourg is the crown and capital, at the very time when the city was enduring its fiercest ordeal of fire. “Weep not for me,” said our Lord to the daughters of Jerusalem, warning them of the approaching siege: “but weep for yourselves, and for your children.” At every stage I saw how children were involved in the keen sufferings of the war. In neutral Switzerland, were children spending their sunny play-time in picking lint for the wounded. At Basle, we met a troop of fugitives, bare-foot, bare-headed, and in tatters, half of whom were young children, just escaped from Strasbourg, who had been entombed in the cellars for days past. At Mannheim, the wife and little son of a distinguished French officer were waiting hour after hour for some tidings of him, who was wounded, a prisoner, and lost amidst the crowd of the other victims of the war. Thus vividly impressed with the great and sad share which falls to the lot of children, in all the misery produced by the crimes and mistakes of men, I wrote the story of Max Kromer, softening down, rather than heightening, the horrors of the siege of Strasbourg.”

She wrote a story of Christian suffering and redemption but she also managed to write a strong anti-war book. And she also reminds her readers that it is the intransigence of men who prolong the suffering of children.

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July 28: Beatrix Potter

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“CUSTOMER: Did Beatrix Potter ever write a book about dinosaurs?”

Jen Campbell’s *Weird Things Customers Say in Bookshops*.

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July 29: Booth Tarkington

Mary Milton

July 30: ‘Oliver Optic’

July 31: Lynne Reid Banks

J. K. Rowling

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“I think that boy who went to wizard school has had some minor success too. (Joking aside, not only does J.K. Rowling weave some wonderful jokes and comic observations into her Harry Potter books, but having kept faith in her work through countless initial rejections, she would deserve every penny of her success if it was only as an inspiration to anyone who’s toiling away with a pen or keyboard, believing in their work when nobody else does.)”

John Byrne in *Writing Comedy*.

Rowling was criticised for apparently making transphobic remarks but when I read what she had actually written I thought she was writing plain good sense. Yet this immediately brought her death threats and a demand for a boycott of her books. There has been a huge jump in young people, particularly girls, being diagnosed with the mental health problem now labeled gender dysphoria (which used to be called gender identity disorder) but instead of saying they have some confusion over their gender they come out and say that they have been ‘born in the wrong body’. This is a physical impossibility—and the image it conjures up of bodies hanging on a rack and someone taking the wrong one down in the way that you might by accident take the wrong coat off the rack, though amusing is also deeply worrying. Everything begins in our minds—identity, ideas, memories, beliefs, sexuality, personality, obsessions—and not least this erroneous belief which is impacting on the lives of young people. (That it is helped along by social media does not alter the fact that it is a belief not a physical condition.) Katherine Anne Porter wrote ‘Love is purely a creation of the human imagination. It is the most important example of how imagination continuously outruns the creature it inhabits.’ I am not sure that ‘imagination’ is quite the right word but, yes, love as we understand it is a human creation of the human mind. So is everything else we believe. This is separate to the question of whether what we believe is true or not.

It is also puzzling and worrying that people are now so thin-skinned that they react to anyone presenting ideas they don’t agree with by threatening physical violence. It seems to be taking us back to the times before we started to believe that universal education would help people organise their thoughts and argue coherently and to the point.

In the case of Rowling a dollop of jealousy probably also comes into it. If she was Mrs Joe Blow sounding off to a few neighbours it is much less likely she would be targeted. But she has sold a lot of books and made a lot of money—though I understand she gives a lot of her money away.

Andrew Doyle wrote in *Free Speech*: “When a group of well-known figures – including Margaret Atwood, Noam Chomsky, JK Rowling and Salman Rushdie – published an open letter in *Harper’s Magazine* decrying this new climate of intolerance, the backlash was intense. The relative privilege of the signatories was held up as confirmation that cancel culture is a myth, and that these rich celebrities were simply unaccustomed to having their views disputed. This, of course, is to miss the point spectacularly; it was precisely their financial security that enabled them to sign the letter in the first place.

“A particularly germane example is that of the writer JK Rowling, who has been subjected to an unrelenting campaign of mischaracterisation for expressing concerns about the possibility that gender self-identification might compromise women-only spaces such as domestic violence refuge centres. She has explicitly pledged her support for equal rights for trans people, but some have nonetheless interpreted her views as hostile. In particular, Rowling’s conviction that there is a biological basis to womanhood, one shared by the majority of the population as well as the scientific community, has angered activists. In spite of broad support from many trans individuals, a vocal minority have bombarded her with abuse of a sexually threatening nature.”

Douglas Murray in *The Madness of Crowds* takes up this point: “Then finally we all stumbled, baffled, into the most unchartered territory of all. This was the claim that there lived among us a considerable number of people who were in the wrong bodies and that as a consequence what certainties remained in our societies (including certainties rooted in science and language) needed to be utterly reframed. In some ways the debate around the trans question is the most suggestive of all. Although the newest of the rights questions also affects by far the fewest number of people, it is nevertheless fought over with an almost unequalled ferocity and rage. Women who have got on the wrong side of the issue have been hounded by people who used to be men. Parents who voice what was common belief until yesterday have their fitness to be parents questioned. In

the UK and elsewhere the police make calls on people who will not concede that men can be women (and vice versa).”

Doyle goes on: “Social media has a tendency to distort the truth, to amplify the loudest and most obnoxious marginal voices. Needless to say, those who are engaging in harassment, or burning copies of Rowling’s books and posting the footage online, are by no means representative of the trans community. At the same time, in the midst of the hysteria there has been little opportunity for sober discussion of the issues, and many people have been discouraged out of fear of reprisals. Cancel culture does not seek to criticise, but to punish, and leaves little scope for redemption. This is why the singer Nick Cave has described it as ‘mercy’s antithesis’.

“Like the other signatories to the *Harper’s* letter, Rowling has been held up as an example of the erroneousness of cancel culture. ‘JK Rowling isn’t being cancelled,’ claimed one journalist, ‘she’s just facing the consequences of her actions,’ a position that cuts close to sanctioning harassment. While it is true that Rowling’s agent and publisher have defended her right to free speech, it is doubtless the case that a less lucrative client would not have fared so well. In July 2020, children’s book author Gillian Philip was dropped by her publisher simply for supporting Rowling. Rather than disproving the reality of cancel culture, Rowling’s circumstances demonstrate that it is the least powerful who are the most vulnerable to its effects.”

(Another journalist Helen Lewis had her contract cancelled, Doyle says, for recording dialogue for Ubisoft when “the company was alerted to Lewis’s writings on gender identity – nuanced and compassionate, but not wholly in line with current intersectional trends – her voice was erased from the game and an apology was issued. This is how cancel culture works; it takes little more than a few tweets from activists before corporations relent to their demands. It is the heckler’s veto writ large. Lewis is the visible casualty of ‘cancellation’ in this instance, but the invisible casualties are those candidates whom Ubisoft veto in future for the crime of holding impure thoughts. As the company stated: ‘[We] will reinforce our background checks for partners in the future.’”)

I was just reading a book called *The Coddling of the American Mind* by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathon Haidt in which they chronicle the way visiting speakers and even university lecturers have been cancelled, fired, undermined, their reputations blackened, jobs closed to them, because their views are unacceptable to certain groups on university campuses.

The old idea that you can critique what people say or write and identify what you agree with, what you don’t agree with—and most importantly provide clear reasons for not agreeing—seems to be disappearing. This has serious ramifications. How can you get good science if people are afraid to speak out or are incapable of clarifying their reasons for disagreement and would rather turn to personal abuse? How can you get reasoned political debate if young people feel threatened by debate on ideas and ideologies? How can the literary merit of books be discussed if people are being encouraged to see words as hurtful or discomfiting rather than putting their own feelings aside and focusing on the text as a text?

Now we wonder why otherwise sensible people once believed that old women flew around on broomsticks. Thousands of people were treated for neurasthenia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but now the medical world says there never was any such disease. I remember an old lady with dementia who was convinced she was a rooster and made very convincing rooster noises. This evoked pity in the people around her. But as we see young people becoming convinced that if only they can be allowed to enter the dangerous Big Pharma world of puberty blockers, hormone treatments, radical surgery, they will come out of it happy and well-adjusted, it evokes deep concern. And those young people who find they have made a terrible mistake have no realistic way back unless they find out before they are fully on the treadmill. Once they have had surgery ... when I read of young people desperately begging health ‘professionals’ to help them regrow their penis or breasts ... I can only

ask: ‘How could any adult put a child in such a position?’ Because the whole process is marred by the medical and psychiatric professions doing harm to healthy bodies.

Even something as apparently innocuous as chest ‘binders’ to flatten a young woman’s breasts ... Abigail Shrier in *Irreversible Damage* writes, “It turns out that breasts—glandular tissue, fatty tissue, blood vessels, lymph vessels and lymph nodes, lobes, ducts, connective tissue, ligaments—are not really meant to be squashed flat all day long. Fractured or bruised ribs, punctured or collapsed lungs, shortness of breath, back pain, and deformation of the breast tissue are side effects.” And that is the beginning. “One of the major side effects of testosterone is vaginal atrophy—dryness, cracking, and recession. ... Testosterone thickens the blood. Transgender-identified women are given a dosage of testosterone ten to forty times greater than their body would normally bear to produce the changes they seek. There is some indication that biological women on these doses of testosterone may have nearly five times the risk of heart attack that women have, and two-and-a-half times that of men.” Among the other problems with large doses of testosterone are “muscle aches, painful cramping due to endometriosis, increased sweating, moodiness, and aggression. The long-term effects include heightened rates of diabetes, stroke, blood clots, cancer, and, as we’ve seen, heart disease.” Those problems may vary but “testosterone arrives like a Rumpelstiltskin to claim their fertility for good.” Then young women may move on to phalloplasty, the creation of an artificial penis. “One female-to-male trans adult told me about a nineteen-year-old friend whose phalloplasty resulted in gangrene and loss of the appendage. The friend is dispossessed of normal genitalia for either sex—and tethered to a catheter that empties into a urine bag, strapped to her leg.” It is not hard to find more horror stories perpetrated by a profession which supposedly is based on the commitment: First Do No Harm. As Shrier says, “All the institutions we’ve built to keep young people from making irreparable mistakes have failed them. The universities, the schools, the doctors, the therapists, and even the churches have been won over by a dogged ideology” and young people have predominantly been the victims.

I am not a Harry Potter fan but I am grateful to J. K. Rowling for urging everyone to look more closely at what is happening ...

J. K. Rowling also tried out adult fiction and screenwriting. I have just been reading her filmscript *The Crimes of Grindelwald* but I am afraid I couldn’t get interested in the various strange creatures which hurtle by. Her kind of fantasy wasn’t for me. But I noticed that she had published several mystery stories as Robert Galbraith so I went looking ... I brought *Troubled Blood* home from the library. But it took nearly fifty pages to get to the mystery. I was starting to wonder if I had stumbled into an ‘Aga saga’ instead of a mystery. She is clearly over-fond of back story. This doesn’t matter so much if a book contains characters which delight and fascinate. But in this case the protagonists Strike and Robin, and the cold case missing woman, Margot Bamborough, simply aren’t very interesting. Even the potential suspects aren’t very interesting. After 927 pages I had ceased to care who did what and why. I was just glad to reach THE END. A pity. I am always on the lookout for good mysteries but hers weren’t for me.

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August 1: Carter Brown

August 2: Nancy Phelan

August 3: Max Fatchen

Juliana Horatia Ewing (Mrs Gatty)

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“I remember with gratitude Mrs Gatty’s “Parables from Nature” where she told us – among a multitude of other wonders – of the humble caterpillar who seemed to die, but was a little later seen to burst his apparent coffin, develop wings as beautiful as flowers and soar away into the blue

sky! And then there are the mysteries of seeds and nuts and fruits and eggs, and of babies and mother-love. And sometimes when I look into the eyes of another mammal or a fellow human, life itself looks back at me.”

Edward Pape in ‘Of Faltering Faith and Fortifying Facts’.

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August 4: Tim Winton

August 5: Guy de Maupassant

August 6: ‘Rolf Boldrewood’

August 7: Dean Farrar

August 8: Marjorie Rawlings

Frank Richards

August 9: Tove Jansson

P. L. Travers

August 10: Laurence Binyon

August 11: Enid Blyton

Charlotte Yonge

Peter Pavay

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I don’t know that I would have liked Enid Blyton from what I have read of her private life but that doesn’t alter the fact that her books have given pleasure to countless numbers of children. One of the key ingredients was that ‘her’ children were given the freedom and independence to go off and do things and have adventures without adult interference. Robert Dessaix wrote in *What Days Are For*: “Enid Blyton, and *Five on Kirrin Island Again* in particular, shaped me in a way no other writer or book ever did, with the possible exception of Richmal Crompton and her William stories. William also lived in rural southern England amongst the comfortably-off, come to think of it, just like George and her cousins. To be honest, some wispy, childish part of me still fantasises about living in rural southern England amongst the comfortably-off. Shakespeare colours the consciousness of every educated Australian, that goes without saying. Shakespeare’s language, characters and themes are a background radiance from the time you reach high school until you die; and at university I discovered Nikolai Gogol – he infected me with his preposterous characters and outlandish language, he laughed at my dead soul; but Enid Blyton and Richmal Crompton moulded my day-to-day imagination in more profound ways than either Shakespeare or Gogol. This was mostly because of the age I was when I read them, I presume. (And why Mr Lowry had a much greater effect on who I grew up to be than any teacher I later had at high school, or even at university.) Is Harry Potter having the same effect on the young of today?”

“The Famous Five are often called right-wing racists. They might have been racists, I can’t remember, but there’s nothing right-wing about them in *Five on Kirrin Island Again*: the whole plot revolves around foiling the dastardly attempts of wicked men from ‘big business’ to destroy George’s father’s ingenious secret alternative to coal, coke and oil. Anyway, I forgive them their peccadilloes. I refuse to watch those cruel spoofs on their adventures, too – what are they called? *Five Go Mad in Dorset*, *Five Go Mad on Mescaline* and so on. The Famous Five were my friends.”

“I also learnt from Enid Blyton that fun always involves a dog.”

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August 12: Robert Southey

August 13: Allan Aldous

August 14: John Galsworthy

Ernest Thompson Seton  
August 15: Edith Nesbit  
Steve Biddulph  
Sir Walter Scott

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“For Americans the loathing of technology that would become a theme of late-twentieth-century life began with fears born amid the triumph of 1945. Among the books that had most influenced (Freeman) Dyson was a children’s tale called *The Magic City*, written in 1910 by Edith Nesbit. Among its lessons was a bittersweet one about technology. Her hero—a boy named Philip—learns that in the magic city, when one asks for a machine, he must keep using it forever. Given a choice between a horse and a bicycle, Philip wisely chooses the horse, at a time when few in England or America were failing to trade their horses for bicycles, motorcars, or tractors. Dyson remembered *The Magic City* when he learned about the atomic bomb—remembered that new technology, once acquired, is always with us.”

James Gleick in *Richard Feynman and modern physics*.

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August 16: Georgette Heyer  
August 17: Gene Stratton Porter  
V. S. Naipaul

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Patrick French in *The World Is What It Is*, his biography of V. S. Naipaul, wrote: “At Christmas 1941, the local school in the village at Petit Valley held a concert. The family walked through the tropical night to the school, which was full of lights and people singing songs. Vido was excited by the glamour of the occasion. ‘One of the songs had a little Negro boy, nattily dressed in a suit. Clearly his parents had dressed him up for this occasion. Whether he did a little dance or whether he just came out dressed in this way, he looked so cute in that suit. But he sang, “Oh, I’m a happy little nigger.” It was the most successful number of the evening. I remember people laughing till they almost cried with pleasure at the little boy. “Oh, I’m a happy little nigger and my name is John.”

The chorus was, “I can sleep on a cotton bale or roost up a tree, tell you what it is boys, nothing hurts me.” I think it goes: “I like cake, I like honey, I’m not the boy to refuse any money. Once I went a courting with my little black sioux” – or it might be, “my saucy black sioux” – “her brother Tom insulted me and peppered me too.” It was only years later that I understood what we’d heard. Clearly it’s written by an American white man, out of a kind of love for the little black boy, but within this love is complete contempt.’ The song would stick in Vido’s formidable memory, to be pondered over subsequent years, and used to show the way in which culture and meaning change in a different historical setting: the American south, a ‘panyol’ village in colonial Trinidad, the independent Caribbean. It resurfaced in 1967 in *The Mimic Men*, where Browne is humiliated to have been a ‘singer of coon songs’ as a child, and indirectly in *A Way in the World* in 1994, where Lebrun tells a similar story and concludes, ‘ “Every educated black man is eaten away quietly by a memory like that.” ’ This was how V.S. Naipaul’s fiction would work: a moment would be stored, remembered, examined and retold through the decades.”

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I don’t know if aspiring writers go to V. S. Naipaul for helpful hints. But if they do here are some of his suggestions:

1. Do not write long sentences. A sentence should not have more than 10 or 12 words.

2. Each sentence should make a clear statement. It should add to the statement that went before. A good paragraph is a series of clear, linked statements.

3. Do not use big words. If your computer tells you that your average word is more than five letters long, there is something wrong. The use of small words compels you to think about what you are writing. Even difficult ideas can be broken down into small words.

4. Never use words whose meaning you are not sure of. If you break this rule you should look for other work.

5. The beginner should avoid using adjectives, except those of colour, size and number. Use as few adverbs as possible.

6. Avoid the abstract. Always go for the concrete.

7. Every day, for six months at least, practise writing in this way. Small words; short, clear, concrete sentences. It may be awkward but it's training you in the use of language. It may even be getting rid of the bad language habits you picked up at the university. You may go beyond these rules after you have thoroughly understood and mastered them.

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Lots of little books were produced for young readers about the lives children lived in other countries. It was to some extent a romantic exercise: the books did not necessarily dwell on the long hours and hard and dangerous work children did. For instance, I have just been reading one of these little books Isobel Crombie wrote about Trinidad which came out in 1959. She writes, "Here is a picture of frangipani. It is pink and sweet scented. It is growing by the door where my mother is sitting.

My baby brother is sitting on her knee, and my sister is holding our pet green parrot.

They are listening to a story about animals that talk and behave as we do. We call these anansi stories."

And later on, "My mother is making a stew called pepper-pot with ochroes and coo-coo. When we catch a crab by the sea, my mother makes a delicious soup called calaloo.

In Trinidad we get up at five o'clock every morning. Our first meal is called tea, but with it we may drink green tea, cocoa, or sometimes coffee.

Our mid-day meal is called breakfast."

And, "Our school house is made of concrete and has an iron roof.

School begins at eight o'clock in the morning. Here we learn to read, to write and to do sums. We also have history and geography lessons, and gardening lessons in the school vegetable garden."

"Each year, two days before Lent, we go to the carnival at Port of Spain, which is our chief town.

The city is gay, and people put on fancy dress and wear masks over their faces. Prizes are given for the best fancy-dresses.

You should hear the noise when all the steel bands are playing! Calypsoes are sung and the music is gay and lively."

And at the end, "At night I go to bed in a hammock. As it is warm I do not need a blanket."

To a young reader it sounds like a life to be envied. An adult reader would possibly worry about children chewing on sugar cane, on the lack of calcium in their diet, would wonder what work they had to do before school, and then the thought of sitting in that little oven of a school. An adult might wonder if there was enough money to buy books let alone a treat at the carnival and at the end would worry about mosquitoes and malaria and yellow fever ...

It is always the question: what of the serious troubles of life should be put on children, if anything. And I am always inclined to think children should be spared as much as possible.

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One of the most popular stories for children in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was *The Story of Little Black Sambo* by Edinburgh schoolteacher Helen Bannerman. Strangely enough it deals with a little boy from South India who bravely confronts not one but *four* tigers and comes out the victor. But a few decades later this was seen as a terrible story, dripping with racism, and quite unsuitable for children.

“*The Story of Little Black Sambo*, published in 1899 by the British writer Helen Bannerman, was a standard children’s reader at Pleasant Grove. The illustrations of the dark Indian child caused derisive snickering among the whites, but the “pickaninny” slur—along with the unrestrained bandying about of the term “nigger”—repulsed the Little children, who were taught at home to disparage such putdowns of the black race.” (*The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X* by Les Payne.) It seems very unexpected that schoolchildren in the American Mid-West in the 1920s were reading a book set in 19<sup>th</sup> century India ...

But was it designed to be racist? I remember a story from my childhood about Epaminondas who I assumed was a little African boy. I suppose now greater minds than mine would see it as racist but that is not what I took from it as a child. He like other little boys was mischievous and did things his mother said no to; the only difference being that he was black. He was like a younger smaller version of Enid Blyton’s Snubby or Richmal Crompton’s William. Only much later I discovered that Sara Cone Bryant’s stories were actually set in the USA.

Little mischievous boys were usually drawn with sticking-out ears and freckles, knobbly knees and tousled hair. Epaminondas was saved from the ears like flaps and the freckles but was it racist? Children’s stories were meant to encourage readers to both laugh at the antics of the young characters and, at times, laugh with them. So the stories which disturbed me most as a child were the Little Iodine comic strips written by Jimmy Hatlo. It was hard to either laugh with her or at her because you knew that at the end of every little story of her mischief-making she would be put over her father’s knee and whacked till she screamed.

At times I think adults have the wrong books in their sights and they are assuming that children look at their little story books with the same critical eyes some adults bring to them. So what about Helen Bannerman? What was her intention when she wrote her book?

She was a Scotswoman who went to India with her doctor husband and she wrote *Little Black Sambo* for her daughters, making her young Indian hero extremely clever and extraordinarily brave. Because it was obviously popular with children she got it published in London where it became a bestseller. So what happened to turn its young hero from someone to be admired into something cringeworthy?

Study.com has this explanation: “In 1900 a US publisher named Frederick A. Stokes bought the rights to the book, changed the cover, reset the type, and published a US version. ‘Little Black Sambo’ was an immediate bestseller. Loose publishing laws of the time led to several pirated versions being printed. These books were not like the original and had several startling changes. The main character, Sambo, was often drawn as a boy from Africa or South America; he was also made to look dishonourable and unintelligent. Many people began looking at ‘Little Black Sambo’ as a racist depiction; at several points in its history it has been banned or boycotted.

“The name ‘Sambo’ even began to be linked as a racist slur. This was not the story Bannerman wrote or ever meant to portray.”

When Stokes realised what was happening and tried to make amends by printing ‘authorized’ in his copies it was too late, the pirated copies were all over the country.

So was it one of these pirated versions that Malcolm X read as a child?

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August 18: Brian Aldiss

August 19: Ogden Nash

August 20: Helen Barrett

August 21: Will Ogilvie

Christopher Robin Milne

August 22: Walter Stackpool

Ray Bradbury

August 23: Malvina Reynolds

August 24: Ruth Park

August 25: DID YOU WRITE IN YOUR BOOKS—

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Arnold Silcock in *Verse and Worse* included these comments from fly-leaves:

If you this precious volume bone

Jack Ketch will get you for his own.

Black is the raven

Black is the rook

But Blacker the Sinner

That pinches this book.

This book is mine

This boot another

Touch not the one

For fear of the other.

He what takes what isn't his'n

When he's cotched will go to prison.

Most of us used the time-honoured:

If this book should ever roam

Box its ears and send it home.

Many book owners have lamented—

I am a mild man, you'll agree,

But red my rage is,

When folks who borrow books from me

Turn down their pages.

Or when a chap a book I lend,

And find he's loaned it

Without permission to a friend—

As if *he* owned it.

But worst of all I hate those crooks

(May hell-fires burn them!)

Who beg the loan of cherished books

And don't return them.

My books are tendrils of myself

No shears can sever ...

May he who rapes one from its shelf  
Be damned forever.

Robert Service 'Book-Borrower'

And sometimes it is even dangerous to hand a book to a young person.

Child! do not throw this book about;  
Refrain from the unholy pleasure  
Of cutting all the pictures out!  
Preserve it as your chiefest treasure.

Child, have you never heard it said  
That you are heir to all the ages?  
Why, then, your hands were never made  
To tear these beautiful thick pages!

Your little hands were made to take  
The better things and leave the worse ones.  
They also may be used to shake  
The Massive Paws of Elder Persons.

And when your prayers complete the day,  
Darling, your little tiny hands  
Were also made, I think, to pray  
For men that lose their fairylands.

Hilaire Belloc  
\* \* \* \* \*

August 26: John Buchan  
August 27: Lady Antonia Fraser  
August 28: Bruno Bettelheim  
August 29: Gillian Rubinstein  
August 30: Mary Shelley  
August 31: Maria Montessori  
September 1: Edgar Rice Burroughs  
Arthur Upfield  
Enaiyatollah Akbari  
September 2: Eugene Field  
September 3: Alison Lurie  
Bernard O'Reilly

\* \* \* \* \*

I remember, years ago, reading a children's book called *Wild River* by Bernard O'Reilly in which pitchblende is found by some children in a bower bird's 'ring'. Those were the heady days when the Government was offering a large reward (£25,000) for anyone finding uranium.

William Joy in *The Aviators* tells the story of the search for a missing plane. "A similar crash shocked, then thrilled, all Australia in February 1937, when a Stinson air-liner with seven men on board vanished on a flight from Brisbane to Sydney. Again searchers were bedevilled by a multiplicity of reports which led experts to believe the Stinson had crashed in a Hawkesbury gorge or in Broken Bay, just north of Sydney. The search was abandoned after a week.

A young Queensland bushman, Bernard O'Reilly, however, remembering the sudden cyclone that lashed southern Queensland that day, had a hunch that the Stinson might not have got further than the rugged MacPherson Ranges, not far from his home and 400 miles from the area near Sydney on which the searchers concentrated. O'Reilly set off alone to cut his way through jungle mountain country to test his hunch. On the second day, nine days after the plane vanished and two after hope had been officially abandoned, he found the wreckage and beside it two survivors, one seriously injured the other weak from starvation. The coroner who conducted an investigation lashed the people whose false reports had led the searchers so far astray."

He had worked from more than a hunch. "O'Reilly got a map and drew a line from where he knew the plane had been sighted to Lismore. The line passed over four mountains cloaked in virtually unexplored jungle. He packed a kit bag and set out to search the northern slopes of the mountains to satisfy his hunch. This was nightmare country. At times he had to hack his way through masses of lawyer vines. He scrambled up slippery slopes, through rocky gorges and spent one night in dripping jungle. On the second morning he looked across a gorge to the fourth mountain on his map. In the vivid green six miles away, he saw a burnt-out smudge and made for it. Eight hours later he heard a faint coo-ee and, hurrying on, found the burnt-out wreckage of the Stinson. Beside it were two men, weak and famished after nine days on the mountainside. Proud's right leg was broken, the bone protruding from the flesh. The wound was fly-infested and gangrenous and the whole leg badly swollen. Binstead was weak from exposure, his hands and legs raw from foraging through thorny undergrowth for berries and water to keep him and his mate alive. It was a strange meeting. "What's the latest Test score?" asked one of them when the excitement had abated. O'Reilly was able to tell them that Bradman was 165 not out in the Test at Lords."

Undoubtedly Bradman was out by the time he reached the wreckage. But I had a different query. Was this the same Bernard O'Reilly who wrote books including *Green Mountains* and *Wild River*?

"One night Uncle Bill said to Nen and me if we would promise not to stare, he'd show us a man we had read about. He indicated the man sitting alone in the dining room and said he was the fellow whose Stinson plane had crashed in the New South Wales/Queensland border ranges. This had happened on 19 February 1937. A man called Bernard O'Reilly had found the plane nine days later and subsequently wrote a book about it."

Ann S. Griffin in *Out of the Bush: An Account of a Country Girlhood 1925-1947*. They were in Brisbane when this occurred. (Ann was my mother's first cousin.) I wondered if the man was Proud or Binstead.

Yes, indeed. O'Reilly wrote about finding the plane but he also wrote fiction for children including *Wild River*. In *Green Mountains* people were looking for the overdue plane just north of Sydney but young bushman Bernard O'Reilly was sure it had gone down much further north in the rugged McPherson Range. Acting on his own hunch he set out on a very tough trek through the thick jungle. He wrote, "The trip had not been just a matter of walking and scrambling over rough country, it had been a battle as tiring as if I had been forcing my way knee deep through rough surf. The morale effect too was depressing, as more and more the seeming hopelessness of my task became apparent to me. The cheerlessness of the dripping underbrush, the grey swirl of the clouds through the timber, the silence of the birds and the lack of human company, all combined to bring my spirits to the lowest ebb as I climbed that first range after lunch." But he was proved right. The plane *had* come down in the McPherson Range.

He writes of his childhood in the Blue Mountains

—“The year 1902 was a memorable one in the history of pastoralists. At that time my family lived in the Kanimbla Valley, New South Wales, and my brother Tom, still the finest chap I’ve ever known, told me many things about that dreadful winter. The ice, even at noon, blocked the ripples of the creek, and there were over sixty hard frosts in succession, frosts which killed big gum trees on Round Ridge and Blackfellow’s Hill. It was Australia’s worst year of drought, and the tall oaks which lined the creek banks like an avenue of Lombardy Poplars had to be lopped to provide feed for the starving sheep.

“The desperately needed rain came in September, 1903, just at the time I was born. Our home was a little slab house on Long Swamp Creek. Long Swamp Creek flows east from the Divide near Jenolan Caves, and is gravely misnamed, in that it is quite a short creek and has not sufficient marsh land to deserve the libel of being called a swamp.”

—“Let me here pay tribute to the wonderful pluck and spirit of the women of Australia’s bushland, who, as in the case of my own birth, far away from any medical or nursing assistance, went through such critical periods with no help but a neighbour’s, giving a like service in return.”

—“The War brought added hardship; there had been little enough money for necessities before, but with prices rocketing from fifty to a hundred per cent we went much of the time without meat and butter. Mother made all our clothes from cheap materials; she even kept the white calico flour and oatmeal bags, and after ripping open their seams and boiling out their trade lettering, made them up into shirts and underclothes for us. Boots and shoes were of course out of the question. Sometimes we had a cow and there would be milk for a while, but usually it finished by the cow being sold to pay a pressing grocery debt. Young, freshly trapped rabbits baked with seasoning, formed a large part of our diet — I would still rather have rabbit than chicken. At times, when vegetables were scarce, Mother boiled up ordinary vining nettles; they taste like spinach, and have a high food value. We had always been very poor so to us added hardship meant little or nothing; who would bother with butter when they could have Mother’s bread spread with dripping and sprinkled with pepper and salt or perhaps spread thickly with moist sugar. Show me the bare-footed bush lad who isn’t sorry for the poor boy who has to wear boots! We did not know we were poor. The most precious thing of all to a child is freedom, and in that we were millionaires; all that was best in Australia was ours, the bush land and our imagination made us kings of the world.”

And later when they moved north to the Lamington Plateau:

—“The track which they cut from Bethongabel to Wanungra traversed the most beautiful forest I have ever seen; it is entirely draped with long green moss and lichen, its tree ferns are loftier and nobler than any others on the range and its only large trees are the patriarchs of our forest, the ancient Antarctic Beeches (*Nothofagus moorei*). These are reputed to be thirty centuries old, and when you see them you find that estimate easy to believe. There is something venerable about them that makes you want to take off your hat and stand in silence. Centuries of erosion have bared their great, gnarled root systems and with decay have opened up mysterious grottoes, making it possible for people to walk under the tree proper, through hanging masses of delicate film fern and dewy glow-worm threads. The tree itself, deeply pitted with decay and studded with giant bracket fungus, is hung with long moss and grey “beard” lichen as a last touch to make the patriarchal figure complete. There is something about the atmosphere of a great Antarctic Beech; something which must be experienced to be appreciated. Even more than the sense of its eerie appearance is the feeling that you are standing beside a live thing which was alive ten centuries before the birth of Christ. ... The Beech owes its name to the discovery of some of its timber preserved in glacier ice on the Antarctic continent. There were obviously forests of it there prior to the last ice age, though of course no plant life save lichen survives on that continent today. There are a few small stands of *Nothofagus* in the world today, and their distribution is as mysterious as their appearance — all are

in forbidding mountain regions; the west coast of Tasmania, South Island of New Zealand, the rain forests of Patagonia and the loftiest ridge of the McPherson Range.”

O'Reilly followed *Green Mountains with Cullenbenbong* (1944), another grab bag of memories. In it he records wallaby drives, brumbies, droughts, fires, snowstorms, and this about the Aboriginal people in his childhood. “The blacks, as we remember them, used to wander around the local districts drifting from one small job to another. Their womenfolk were capable at washing or heavy house work, but seldom stayed long in one place; the men were hard workers spasmodically, but they lacked the gift of application. There was small inducement for them to be otherwise. White man took their lands and natural food, made them accept a new way of living, yet prepared no place for them in the new order. If black man became a drifting derelict it is to white man's shame.

“The older men—some of whom had been great men in a tribal sense—were mostly too feeble for work of any duration, but they found many little ways of earning tucker and “baccy.” They knew white man's little likes and preferences and they traded on them. Old Billy Russell, last king of the Burraborang blacks, who fairly often got over our way in his old age, never came empty handed. Sometimes he'd bring half a sugar bag of the highly-prized snow white pipe clay from over Megalong way—our pipe clays were a dirty cream colour and Billy knew that a woman loves snowy clay wash for her fireplace. That little gift was good for a week's tucker from Mother's precious store and a plug of black tobacco from Dad's shelf.

“When he was older and not well enough to carry weight he would bring a lovely bunch of waratahs from Medlow Gap country as he came over Black Dog. Waratahs didn't grow within many miles of Cullenbong, and how well that old man knew my family's weakest spot. Another time he came by the sandstone benches above Megalong and brought a huge bunch of the wiry Curly Cane that grows there. Curly Cane makes the best and most durable of all bush brooms, but none grew nearer than Megalong.

“Old Billy and Fanny Lynch came more frequently, but of course they seemed part of the family. Fanny was Grandmother's help long before Mother was born, and Billy as a youth worked for Grandfather, but when they became too old for regular work they too drifted with the restlessness of their kind.

“Dear old Fanny who loved Mother and had nursed her as a baby would come in shyly first and say, “I come to see if I can do something for you, Mizzes; Billy come along too, he been getting' some nesses.” Sure enough there'd be Billy partly hiding behind the shed and holding a huge cogie full of lovely white honey in the comb. There was no doubt that he'd been robbing some bees' “nesses.”

“That was quite a feat for an old man; the nest might have been forty feet up in a hollow limb. First Billy would find a stringybark tree with a big bump or cogie on it. Billy would cut the bark in a circle all round the cogie and then skillfully strip it off. That would give him a fine bark dish. This done he'd climb to the nest and sit straddled on the limb while he chopped it out, then, unminding of bees and stings, he'd scoop out the honey comb and drop it to Fanny, who'd catch it in the cogie.” O'Reilly says the government had provided the men with axes and blankets but they still preferred to sharpen them on the sandstone and repair them with kangaroo sinews.

And Fanny was a peerless story-teller. “She often spoke in a low voice of Gubba, a malignant spirit which hounded her tribe. She would look over her shoulder and roll the whites of her eyes as she spoke the dread name. Fanny had once seen Gubba. “Long time ago; a little grey feller.” She put her hand down to show how little, “littler than wombat; I see him beside me”—her eyes lit with terror—“and then he gone.” There could have been no doubt from Fanny's sincerity and terror that she had seen Gubba and that Gubba was something very horrible. Those people had sight and senses unclouded by centuries of civilization.

“Mother used to say that Fanny was the kindest creature ever born, and coming from a soft-spoken people it was natural that she should dislike anyone with a coarse or harsh-speaking voice. That was why she often spoke uncharitably of a woman who was once her mistress. “she had terrible voice that woman, jis like tearin’ brown Holland.”

He also tells how Billy would find bees’ nests, by dabbing honey on a bit of goose down to stick it on a bee then watch where the bee went. “With that miraculous eyesight which is black man’s chief asset he’d watch that spot of white until it disappeared over a distant ridge.” Then he would set more bees on the trail and follow.

“Perhaps they would stay a week, perhaps a month, or more, but sooner or later in spite of Mother’s entreaties they would wander aimlessly off to westward and the sunset of their tribe.”

Plenty of bushmen put pen to paper to see if they could write a bush ballad and O’Reilly obviously wrote from the heart when he penned ‘Things I Love’:

Often times I pause to ponder,  
What are these the things that most I love —  
Clover fields where cattle wander,  
Stars that blaze in velvet night above.

Restless heaving great green billows,  
Inky cliffs that hurl back snowy spray  
Feathery clouds along the skyline,  
Caught with roseate light of new born dawn.

Mystic, lofty, gloomy forests,  
Rolling hills of God’s eternal green,  
Distant, blue, serrated ranges,  
Mountain air all cutting, clear and keen.

Sultry nights with crashing thunder,  
Wind torn clouds that heralded the rain  
Lightning red that split the night asunder,  
Wind that shrieked like mastodons in pairs.

Lofty avenues of poplars,  
Old white house all rambling and cool,  
Sleek bay horses in the pasture,  
Pathway sloping to the swimming pool.

Stone-flagged, mellow old world garden.  
Lilacs blooming on a summer night,  
Birds of Paradise and golden Regents,  
Flocks of coloured cockatoos in flight.

Still blue pools and weeping willows.  
Laughing streams with opal tinted foam,  
Dragonflies that skim the surface,  
Blooms where scarlet honeyeaters roam.

Firelight gleam on friendly faces  
Little children smiling in their sleep,  
Solemn, echoing, vast cathedral,  
Sunbeams soft through coloured windows creep.

Christmas trees bowed down with presents,  
Little faces round, lit up with joy,  
Lovely deb. at her first party,  
Bold, yet shy, entrancing, brave and coy.

Orchids with exotic perfume,  
Crowding jungle night, with fragrance rare  
Lovely lady clad in silver,  
Moonlight sheening softly on her hair.

Waterfalls in dimlit gorges,  
Dewing fern and moss with gentle spray,  
Mopokes calling in the starlight,  
Valleys purple at the close of day.

The things I hate are noise and bustle,  
Strife and hatred, poverty and need  
I'd rather beauty, colour, Nature —  
Than all the world of luxury and greed.

I had thought that was a kind of one-off to end *Green Mountains* but no, he wrote a book of poems, *Songs From The Hills*. These are rollicking verses, their occasional recording of sorrows and difficulties offset by his obvious love of the natural world, birds, animals wild and tame, bushland flowers, creeks and mountains. He obviously cut down trees, for firewood, for fences and sheds and home, but his love of trees shines through.

A big Southwester's booming and it's setting for a freeze,  
And around me is the thunder of a thousand writhing trees;  
And there's firelight flashing redly through the forest and the dark,  
As I'm sitting in the galley by my log of ironbark;  
And I draw my warmth and comfort on this troubled night and cold  
From a tree that stored the fires of the dawns and dusks of old;  
Where flames rise pure and golden from a heart of ruby red  
I see again the embers of a sunset aeons dead;  
And all the warmth and colour of a hundred-thousand noons  
And the deadly blaze of lightnings in the purple of monsoons,  
The flash of colour magic from bird and leaf and flower  
Were nurtured in its bosom to be mine this splendid hour;  
Oh petty man and feeble with my futile hopes and fears,  
To crouch beside this Druid who has lived a thousand years,  
And suck the life he gives me from his glowing heart and old,  
The treasure of the ages, on this night of wind and cold.

'Log Fire'

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September 4: Joan Aiken

September 5: Frank Yerby  
September 6: Don Charlwood

Felix Salten (Siegfried Salzmänn)

\* \* \* \* \*

The *Book of Forgotten Authors* by Christopher Fowler says of Salten: “Felix Salten was a Jewish Hungarian-Austrian author whose books were banned by Hitler. He sold the film rights to his most famous work, *Bambi*, for \$1,000. Although he also wrote a sequel to his biggest hit, Disney used two of his unconnected further works for the basis of his films *Perri* and *The Shaggy Dog*. Before he began writing animal stories, Salten was the anonymous author of an erotic novel about a Viennese prostitute. That didn’t come out in the *Bambi* publicity.”

“The moment I offer this definition (that sf and fantasy ‘take place in worlds that have never existed or are not yet known’), however, I can think of many examples of stories that fit within these boundaries yet are not considered science fiction or fantasy by *anyone*. For instance, despite some romanticizing, Felix Salten’s wonderful novel *Bambi* is a brutally accurate account of the lives of deer. Yet because in his book the animals talk to each other, something that animals simply do not do, does *Bambi* become fantasy? Perhaps, after a fashion—but you’ll never find it in the fantasy section of the bookstore; you’ll never find it on any fantasy fan’s list of his fifty favourite fantasy novels. It doesn’t fall within the boundaries of the publishing category, the expectations of the community of readers and writers, or even the raw listing of what sf and fantasy writers have written.”

Orson Scott Card in *Writing Fantasy & Science Fiction*.

\* \* \* \* \*

September 7: C. J. Dennis

September 8: Eric Bentley

September 9: James Hilton

September 10: Thomas Roy

September 11: D. H. Lawrence

‘O. Henry’

September 12: Max Walker

September 13: Roald Dahl

September 14: Eric Bentley

September 15: James Fenimore Cooper

Agatha Christie

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Agatha Christie was obviously fond of the Harlequin characters as she drew on them in several stories such as the people who dress up as them to go to the Victory Ball and the story revolves around a pom pom taken from one costume ... but what exactly was the harlequinade?

In *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829-1929* Margaret Williams writes, “Mid-nineteenth century pantomime is very different from the traditional pantomime of early in the century, in the days of Joey Grimaldi at Drury Lane. The old pantomime had been in two parts, the first based on a nursery rhyme or children’s tale with the traditional characters of *commedia dell’arte* updated to boy and girl, father, old man, and a fairy godmother who rescued the lovers from the persecutions of the older generation. At this point a transformation scene took place, and the characters of the ‘opening’ became those of the harlequinade – Harlequin and Columbine, Clown and Pantaloon – dancing a chase sequence through the familiar streets of London (or of the city in which the pantomime was playing) until a ‘dark’ scene of maximum peril for the young pair miraculously changed into a glittering final spectacle.”

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J. B. Priestley wrote in *Literature and Western Man*. “Sixteen years after Molière’s death, his company was joined by another, moved into a new theatre, and became the Comédie Française. The only other company licensed to perform in Paris was the Comédie Italienne. Originally the Italian players had largely restricted themselves to the *Commedia dell’Arte*, in which there was a mere outline of a plot and the actors, often brilliant comedians, improvised the dialogue, usually as the kind of characters who have come down to us in the Harlequinade. It was probably the success of these characters, as played by the Italians, that helped to stereotype the casts in so many French classical comedies—the cunning valet and the sprightly artful maid, the Harlequin and Columbine types of young lovers, the foolish Pantaloon old characters. Before the end of the seventeenth century the Italian company had begun to produce French plays. Then it was suppressed for nearly twenty years, but finally returned as the King’s Italian Players. Young writers who disliked the Molière tradition at the Comédia Française took their plays to the Italian company.”

Sarah Bird Wright editing *Edith Wharton Abroad* wrote, “A fourth motif in Wharton’s fiction as well as her travel writing is her preoccupation with the commedia dell’arte, the ‘comedy of skill,’ the peripatetic Italian theater of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, which was based in part on improvisation and incorporated famous stock characters such as Arlecchino (or Harlequin), Arlecchina, Pulcinella, Corallina, Brighella, Pantalone, and Captain Spavento. Performances were given at all social levels, from the street to the halls of villas. Actors and actresses sometimes played a single role their entire lives. Although Wharton’s interest in the commedia dell’arte is most evident in her travel writing about Italy, it is also present in *A Motor-Flight Through France* and her historical novel *The Valley of Decision*. Wharton often imagines the players on stage, the ‘airy superstructure of their wit’ rounding out her depiction of physical scenes, such as the Lake of Iseo or the decrepit Farnese Theater at Parma.”

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September 16: Nan Hunt

Alfred Noyes

September 17: Mary Stewart

September 18: Samuel Johnson

September 19: Arthur Rackham

Libby Gleeson

Michael Noonan

William Golding

September 20: Stephen King

Ion L. Idriess

September 21: Hazel Edwards

H. G. Wells

Pencils

\* \* \* \* \*

Hunter Davies in *Behind the scenes at the Museum of Baked Beans* goes looking for unusual museums round Britain and goes to the pencil museum in Keswick in the north of England. Pencil making started here after the discovery of graphite—“Locally the graphite was known as ‘wad’, and when it was used for marking or writing it was known as a wad pencil. Originally, after the discovery by the shepherds, a piece of graphite, which is easy to cut and shape, was simply wrapped in a piece of sheepskin to be used for marking. The Italians are the ones first recorded as using Cumberland graphite encased in wood. During the Renaissance, graphite from Cumberland was

greatly prized all over Europe, by artists in the Low Countries and then in Italy, and was used by Michelangelo and other old masters when doing their drawings.

“Graphite was therefore very valuable, so much so that guards were kept on the mines and the miners were searched after they came off a shift. All the same, there was an illegal trade in lumps of black wad smuggled out of the mines, most of which centred around the bar of the George Hotel in Keswick. This illegal trade was known as the ‘black market’, a phrase that has passed into the language.

“So not only did Cumbrian graphite help the old masters – and many of our great lady novelists, who did much of their scribbling in pencil at the kitchen table – but it has had an influence on the English language. Quite an achievement for such a humble substance, which over the centuries has hardly changed its shape, its size, its purpose. Early pencil-making, using a wood casing, was for many years purely a cottage industry in the Keswick area. It was easy to do, using minimal tools and machines, and could be done in ordinary farmhouses – and in essence the manufacturing process is still much the same today.

“Most visitors to the pencil museum, if they have ever thought about the subject, if asked how the lead gets into a pencil, would probably say, er, isn’t it done by boring a little hole through a bit of wood, then shoving the lead through? In fact, a pencil consists of two halves stuck together. A piece of wood has a ridge made in it, the lead is inserted, then an identical piece of wood is stuck on top – but so well done, so skillfully, that you can’t see the joins, especially if the pencil is then varnished or painted. The shaping of the lead, the cutting of the wood, and the sticking together could therefore be done by almost anyone at home, using a saw and a chisel. But of course pretty slowly.”

So is the pencil doomed now that people do their writing and graphics on computers? Probably not. People still like to give their children pencils as they make less mess than biros and felt pens. And will graphite ever run out? “None of the graphite used in Cumberland pencils today comes from Cumberland – and it hasn’t for the last hundred years or more. The Borrowdale graphite mine ran out in about 1890, though the factory had enough supplies in stock to last till 1905. Since then, all their graphite has been imported. Today they get stocks of the quality they need from Sri Lanka, though China and Korea also produce graphite.”

And which of their pencils did he find most fascinating? “This is the Second World War secret pencil that contained a compass and a map and was given to RAF pilots in case they had to crash-land over Germany or were trying to escape from a POW camp. I can stare at it for ages, marvelling at the titchy but real compass that was hidden inside, along with the little map made of what looks like a silk material. Each map had a code, depending on which region of Germany you might happen to be wanting to escape from, with the best routes over the border into Holland or Belgium.

“They were created by a wartime boffin called Charles Fraser-Smith who was the real-life version of Q from the James Bond films. Officially he was employed in the clothing department of the Ministry of Supply, but unknown to even his own secretary and boss, he was secretly working for MI6, providing equipment for special ops agents who were going behind enemy lines.

“He started with counterfeit uniforms for them to wear when dropped into enemy territory, then moved on to other and more ingenious devices, such as a miniature camera hidden in a cigarette lighter, plus a shaving brush with a hollow handle to contain the film. He invented steel shoelaces which could be used as a garrotte – very handy for strangling baddies. He secreted torches and knives inside the heels of boots and the rims of hats – all devilishly ingenious.

“The order to make the special pencils reached the Cumberland Pencil Company in around 1942, but it was so secret that only a handful of the managers knew about it. They returned to the factory after all the workers had gone home and made the special pencils themselves.”

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September 22: Murray Bail  
Annie Rattray Rentoul  
September 23: Gary Crew  
Alan Villiers  
September 24: Barbara Ker Wilson  
September 25: Felicia Hemans  
September 26: T. S. Eliot

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T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* has been popular with children for many years. But is it still? I am not sure. And where did Eliot get his pollicle dogs and jellicle cats? A new edition says, "T. S. Eliot's playful cat poems have delighted readers and cat lovers around the world ever since they were first published in 1939. They were inspired by letters to his godchildren – for a four-year-old Tom Faber, Eliot wrote a splendid:

*Invitation to all pollicle dogs & jellicle cats to come to the birthday of Thomas Faber.*

Young Tom invented the words 'pollicle' (for 'poor little' dogs) and 'jellicle' (meaning 'dear little' cats) via mispronunciation and Eliot immortalized them in his whimsical verse, as always using his nom de plume, 'Old Possum'."

The Pekes and the Pollicles, everyone knows,  
Are proud and implacable passionate foes.  
It is always the same, wherever one goes.  
And the Pugs and the Poms, although most people say  
That they do not like fighting, will often display  
Every symptom of wanting to join in the fray.  
And they

Bark bark bark bark  
Bark bark BARK BARK

Until you can hear them all over the Park.

from 'Of the Awefull Battle of the Pekes and the Pollicles'

\* \* \* \* \*

September 27: John Marsden  
September 28: Kate Douglas Wiggin  
Ellis Peters  
September 29: Learning to Write

I came upon a little book called *Village Songs of Western India* translated by John Hoyland and it says:

When a child is learning to write,  
Pebbles are placed to guide him;  
But when he knoweth the letters' shapes,  
What need of pebbles?

I am not sure just how they used the pebbles.

The book also says:  
A child may forget his mother,  
He may scorn her love,  
Yet for that doth she cease to love him?

She taketh no thought for her weariness,  
She lifteth him up in her arms,  
She claspeth him close to herself:

She feeleth his woe as her own,  
She will give her life as his need to save him:  
When he calleth, at once she will answer,  
If danger come, she flingeth her life away for his sake:  
And art Thou, Lord, less loving than she?

And more generally:  
Show reverence to humanity,  
Because of God within humanity:

Even a vessel of clay is honoured,  
It is set on the head, to be born forth bravely,  
Because of the life-giving water therein:

Rough wooden jars are honoured,  
They are gladly received by the merchant,  
For in them lieth,  
The precious grain.

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- September 30: Michael Innes
- October 1: Christine Pullein-Thompson  
Diana Pullein-Thompson
- October 2: Graham Greene
- October 3: James Herriot
- October 4: Bill Scott  
Bruce Treloar  
Damon Runyon
- October 5: James G. Porter
- October 6: Val Biro  
Ann James  
Audrey Oldfield
- October 7: Clive James
- October 8: R. L. Stine
- October 9: Michael Dugan  
Miguel Cervantes (chr)
- October 10: R. K. Narayan
- October 11: Francois Mauriac
- October 12: Angela Rippon  
Richard Bernard Heldmann (Richard Marsh)
- October 13: Iona Opie  
Doug MacLeod  
Robert Ingpen

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Peter and Iona Opie collected children's rhymes for many years including some I remember from my childhood including:

Captain Cook chased a chook  
All around Australia.  
He lost his pants in the middle of France  
And found them in Australia.

And ...  
Charlie Chaplin went to France  
To teach the ladies how to dance.  
First he did the rhumba.  
Then he did the kicks,  
Then he did the samba,  
Then he did the splits!

Except in our skipping song it was Donald Duck and he did the fling. But was it children who made the changes to suit themselves or was it something they'd overheard or seen at the movies or got from visiting relatives or ...

\* \* \* \* \*

October 14: Miles Franklin  
Anne Rice

October 15: Pixie O'Harris

\* \* \* \* \*

Ruth Park wrote in her memoir *Fishing in the Styx*, "when I offered a personally conducted tour of Surry Hills and adjacent slums to those who maintained there were no such places, I had only one answer. This was from the beautiful little Welshwoman, Pixie O'Harris, who devoted most of her life to producing comforting artwork for children, especially sick children. Pixie did not simply inspect Surry Hills. She organised a vociferous group that over weeks and months harassed the City Council and the Housing Department into accelerating their sluggish slum-clearance programmes. Much of the public housing in the Surry Hills-Redfern area owes its genesis to Pixie O'Harris and her energetic friends."

Of course public housing can be a mixed blessing but Surry Hills is now seen as a desirable place to live. My question, though, was different. I had never thought of her as Welsh so was she born Pixie O'Harris or was that a pen-name? Yes, she was Welsh, born in Cardiff, and yes, Harris was the family name but Pixie was a nickname which she decided to use, calling herself Pixie O. Harris. But a typo by a publisher turned it into O'Harris and she decided to keep that from there on.

She wrote whimsical stories and children's books, but she is remembered more as an artist and illustrator. And one of the lovely things she did was make murals for hospitals. She thought that hospitals were grim and dreary places (she was there for the birth of her three daughters) so with her brother Olaf Harris she created murals on many hospital walls to cheer patients, particularly child patients. Unfortunately most hospitals eventually painted over her murals. But those she and her brother did for the Manning Base Hospital were done on boards and survived. Now you can go on to the hospital's Facebook page and see the lovely exhibition called 'The forgotten works of Pixie O'Harris'.

As well as her attractive artworks she wrote a variety of poems for children. Here are two:  
'I'm sick of the Zoo,' said the Grizzly Bear,  
'I'm going to Sydney to get some air.'  
So he hopped on a passing tram.  
The Conductor came up and he said, 'Where to?'

Said the Grizzly, 'It's nothing to do with you,  
 I'm a terrible bear, I am.'  
 The Inspector got on and said 'Look at that bear  
 Refusing completely to pay up his fare.  
 I think it's a case for the cops.'  
 Up rushed the police and the fire brigade,  
 And all of them looking a wee bit afraid,  
 For the bear was licking his chops.  
 He held up the traffic from Railway to Quay,  
 And the smile on his face was a picture to see  
 When the tram-driver started to cry.  
 Then up in his limousine drove the Lord Mayor,  
 'Get back to the Zoo, like a good little bear,'  
 But a growl was the only reply.  
 The Premier drove up, the Prime Minister came,  
 And the naughty bear thought it a wonderful game  
 When they pleaded with him on their knees.  
 The Governor arrived and said, 'How do you do?  
 I believe you're a Grizzly Bear from the Zoo.  
 Now won't you go back for me, please?'  
 Then all of a sudden the Grizzly grew shy,  
 When the Governor looked at him straight in the eye,  
 And said, 'Won't you go back—for me?'  
 The tram-driver gleefully started the tram,  
 And the naughty bear said, 'Disappointed I am,  
 But I hope they have fish for my tea.'  
 And I heard they had fish for his tea.

'Grizzly Bear'

Now, wouldn't it be funny  
 If the creatures in the Zoo,  
 Were all let out to walk about  
 And look at me and you?

And wouldn't it be funny  
 If they put us in the cages,  
 And Kangaroos and Cockatoos  
 Came guessing at our ages?

And wouldn't it be funny  
 If the Hip-O-Pot-amus  
 Said 'Don't go near, I really fear  
 They're very dangerous.'

'Wouldn't It Be Funny'

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October 16: Oscar Wilde  
 Edward Ardizzone  
 Robert Ardrey  
 October 17: Rodney McRae

Sumner Locke Elliot  
October 18: Nicholas Culpeper

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Mrs C. F. Leyer put together material from Nicholas Culpeper's *English Physician and Complete Herbal* and brought it up to modern times with continuing herbal usages. He was an astrologer as well as a doctor and herbalist. From an old Sussex family he descended from Thomas Culpeper and Elizabeth Wakehurst in Kent who had eighteen children. He had his share of sorrows because his first wife was killed by a bolt of lightning on her way to the wedding. He couldn't bring himself to go back to his studies in Cambridge and instead apprenticed himself to an apothecary which gave him a thorough knowledge of herbal medicine. But the College of Surgeons attacked him for his astrology and his translation of the Latin of the Pharmacopoea into English. He set himself up in Red Lion Street in Spitalfields in the East End of London where he treated the poor at no charge. But there was more sorrow as only one of his seven children survived. He died of tuberculosis in 1654, only thirty-eight years old, leaving his young widow Alice. She had some of his material published after his death but it is believed that other of his writings perished in the Great Fire of London.

I can remember when I was young reading somewhere that people made nettles into soup (and of course in 'The Wild Swans' nettles are spun into shirts) but I wasn't sure that I believed this. Surely people's tongues would be stung by the nettles?

Culpeper writes that nettles are under the dominion of Mars: "The juice of the leaves, taken two or three days together, stay bleeding at the mouth. The seed being drank is a remedy against the stinging of venomous creatures, the biting of mad dogs, the poisonous qualities of hemlock, henbane, nightshade, mandrake, or other such herbs that stupefy or dull the senses; as also the lethargy, especially to use it outwardly; to rub the forehead or temples in the lethargy, and the places stung or bitten with beasts, with a little salt. The root or leaves boiled, or the juice of either or both made into an electuary with honey is a safe and sure medicine to open the pipes and passages of the lungs, which is the cause of wheezing and shortness of breath."

Mrs Leyer says an infusion of the leaves are helpful for people suffering from gout, nettle rash, and TB and "Nettles make a wholesome pudding—boiled like spinach—and a good botanic beer, but they should be used when they are young in the spring." And yes, you can make nettle soup. Just use them as you would put in some silver beet or spinach. And no, cooked they won't sting your mouth.

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October 19: Edel Wignall  
Leigh Hunt  
October 20: Thomas Hughes  
October 21: Ernest Favenc  
Eleanor Spence  
October 22: Thomas Hughes  
October 23: Michael Crichton  
October 24: Nairda Lyne  
October 25: Valerie Krantz  
October 26: Christobel Mattingley  
October 27: Dylan Thomas  
October 28: Kornei Chukovsky (d)  
October 29: John Keats  
October 30: Morris Lurie  
October 31: Dick Francis

November 1: Elisabeth MacIntyre  
John Williamson

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OLD MAN EMU

Let me tell you of an interview with an old man emu.  
He's got a beak and feathers and things, but the poor old fella ain't got no wings.

CHORUS

Now I can't fly but I'm telling you I can run the pants off a kangaroo.

Well he was the model for the fifty cents,  
Oom ba da little da da da.  
The designer should've had more sense,  
Oom ba da little da da da.

I am not surprised John Williamson had a hit with 'Old Man Emu'; it has those key ingredients, humour and a catchy tune. And it came to me that it was a long time since I had heard a singer produce a song to this magical formula. Yet there were lots of funny songs around years ago. 'Donald, where's your troosers?', 'Life gets tejus', 'The Pommy Jackeroo', 'Tie Me Down, Sport', 'Six White Boomers', 'This Old Man' and many more. So why aren't singers writing or singing such lively funny things any more?

John Williamson was a keen environmentalist (well, he still is) and a co-founder of the Country Music Association of Australia. But I read that he was concerned at the direction country music was taking here, with the growing influence of American country music in Australia. Perhaps it was inevitable. We still seem to look to North America instead of believing we have something unique to offer ...

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November 2: Roger Lancelyn Green  
November 3: Karl Baedeker  
November 4: Colin Simpson  
November 5: Socrates (birthdate not known)

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Socrates is said to have complained: "Our youth loves luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority and disrespect for old people. Children nowadays are tyrants, they no longer rise when their elders enter the room, they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble their food and tyrannise their teachers." Dear me.

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November 6: Roger Vaughan Carr  
November 7: Leonard Cohen  
November 8: Bram Stoker  
Ben Bova  
Ruth Manley  
November 9: Children as Discoverers

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"I had long yearned to visit the Lascaux caves which are just a couple of hours from Bonnevaux in the beautiful Dordogne region. On 23 September 1940 they were discovered by two boys playing football. Their dog, called Robot, fell down a sinkhole and in rescuing him they slid down a steep slope to find themselves in a vast subterranean chamber. Then they noticed the powerful, silent images of animals, bison, horses, auroch, bulls, deer and a bear, on the walls of the

cave. The boys were the first to see them for 20,000 years. They ran to tell their schoolmaster who couldn't get down the hole but asked them to draw the images they had seen so he could show them to the experts.

“This event not only opened new horizons to Paleolithic Art but to the self-understanding of humanity itself. No longer could we think of our human ancestors, even up to 40,000 years ago, as stupid or what we usually mean by ‘primitive’. Their minds were more complex and sensitive than we imagined. Studying this earliest, enigmatic art convinced scholars that the images are not random but intelligently and beautifully composed and not merely magical but consciously symbolic. It changed the way we think about what ‘human’ means while intriguing us with an intimate, strangely familiar mystery that we will never be able to solve or prove.”

Laurence Freeman in the newsletter ‘Meditatio’. Of course we do not know for certain if the boys ‘were the first to see them in 20,000 years’.

“France’s most famous prehistoric cave paintings are to be found at the Grotte de Lascaux 2km southeast of Montignac. Discovered in 1940 by four teenage boys who were out searching for their lost dog, Lascaux contains a vast network of chambers and galleries adorned with some of the most extraordinary and complex prehistoric paintings ever found.

Far from the comparatively crude etchings of some of the Vezere’s other caves, Lascaux’s paintings are renowned for their astonishing artistry: the 600-strong menagerie of animal figures are depicted in Technicolor shades of red, black, yellow and brown, and range from reindeer, aurochs, mammoths and horses to a monumental 5.5m-long bull, the largest cave drawing ever found.”

*The Lonely Planet Guide to France.*

But the discoverer of Europe’s amazing cave paintings was a little Spanish girl, Maria Sanz de Sautuola. A dog had fallen down a crack on her father’s property into a cave. When the vegetation was cleared away her father began digging around the entrance and found a few stone tools and pottery fragments. Maria usually went with him. Dennis Brindell Fradin in *With a Little Luck* wrote: “On a summer day in 1879, the father and daughter were digging at their usual spot near the mouth of the cave. Once more Maria’s eyes wandered into the darkness. By now her curiosity must have outweighed her fear, for she finally asked if she could take a candle and go deeper into the cave by herself. Yes, her father said, but she must not stray too far.

“The eight-year-old girl began walking slowly through the passage. As weird shapes cast by her candle’s flame leaped out at her from the walls and ceiling, she felt the urge to run back to her father. But Maria’s curiosity spurred her on until she arrived in a kind of large hall.

“For a few moments Maria looked about the huge chamber. Then something above her head caught her attention. “*Toros! Toros!*” she shouted, for there, painted upon the ceiling, were pictures of what appeared to be bulls and other animals. In the flickering candlelight the animals seemed to be running along the ceiling as they stared down at her.

“Her father heard Maria’s shouts echoing through the cave. Although he couldn’t imagine why Maria was yelling about bulls, he immediately ran toward her daughter to protect her. He found Maria in the large chamber gazing not at real bulls but at lovely paintings. What she had called bulls were actually pictures of bison. Maria and her father counted paintings of fifteen bison, as well as pictures of three deer, two horses, three wild boars, and a wolf.”

Maria’s father believed they had been drawn by prehistoric people and invited archeologists to come and see the paintings. Professor Juan de Vilanova y Piera came and studied them and told Maria “She had discovered the world’s first known cave paintings made by ancient human beings. The paintings were made by Cro-Magnon people and were roughly 15,000 years old, the professor

correctly believed. The bison were a clue, for such animals hadn't lived in Spain for more than 12,000 years."

Not only were they the oldest known paintings but they also showed that Cro-Magnon people weren't just "club-wielding savages" but people with artistic skills and an "appreciation for beauty". "Because of its location in a meadow named *Altamira*, meaning "High View" in Spanish, the cavern became known as the Cave of Altamira. Journalists in Spain nicknamed Maria "the girl of Altamira." For a brief, joyful period, the Girl of Altamira and her father were hailed across their homeland."

But then French archeologists (who had refused to come and see for themselves) said the paintings were fakes, that they had been painted recently, and that Maria's father was a faker and a liar. Being publicly branded as a liar destroyed his belief in himself and the paintings and he died of what the family called an "enormous sorrow". Maria continued to try to persuade the French experts to come after Professor Vilanova died but met with rebuff after rebuff. She finally had a large metal gate made to seal the cave to protect the paintings and hid the key.

Maria at 24 years old married, and "About the time that Maria married, a group of boys discovered some cave paintings in France. Over the next few years additional cave art was found in Europe. Professor Cartailhac and the other French archeologists were forced to admit that prehistoric people resembled us much more than they had believed. They also remembered how, many years earlier, a man named Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola had written a pamphlet and followed them around, claiming that his daughter had discovered prehistoric cave paintings in northern Spain."

In 1902 Cartailhac and Breuil came to see Maria's paintings. "It was said that when he looked up at the ceiling, Professor Cartailhac dropped to his knees in shame and begged Maria to forgive him in her father's name. He knew he had wronged an honest man, for the paintings were similar to ancient cave art that had since been discovered in France. ... But it wasn't enough for Professor Cartailhac to apologize to her in the dark and lonely cave, Maria felt. He must put his apology in writing for all the world to see forever. Upon his return to France, Cartailhac wrote "My Mistake," an article in which he acknowledged that Maria Sanz de Sautuola had found the first known prehistoric cave paintings while excavating the Cave of Altamira with her father."

Perhaps Spain still holds other prehistoric treasures? "In March of 2008, a human jaw, dated at 1.2 million years old, was found in a limestone cave in the Sierra de Atapuerca, near the city of Burgos, making it the oldest discovery of human bones in Europe. Contrary to expert theory, holding that hominids, early precursors of human beings, entered Europe from the east, perhaps through the Caucasus region, the revelation suggested the possibility that they may have simultaneously entered Europe through the Iberian Peninsula from Africa. At the very least, it was proof that the Meseta had been the site of some of the continent's earliest visitors."

Michael Paterniti in *The Telling Room*.

A different but no less amazing discovery was made by a young lad, Muhammad Ahmed el-Hamed, in what is now Jordan. Dennis Fradin wrote, "Little is known about Muhammad's background. He was probably born around 1931 or 1932, but that is not known for certain because Bedouins did not keep records of births or celebrate birthdays. ... By the time of Muhammad's childhood his people were no longer completely nomadic. For about half of each year Muhammad lived with his people in a village, called Taamirah, a short way from Bethlehem. In his village he attended a school where he learned to read and write. Muhammad spent the other half of the year—usually from November until May—herding his goats through the countryside between Bethlehem

and the Dead Sea. His travels sometimes took him to the spot where the Essenes' Khirbat Qumran community existed long ago."

Muhammad told several versions of how and when he found the cave, somewhere between 1945 and 1947, and his first story included a missing goat. But he always said he threw stones into a narrow cave entrance and heard pottery break. "Once his eyes adjusted to the darkness, Muhammad saw ten tall jars along the walls of the cave. In one of the jars, he discovered several old scrolls with writing on them." This wasn't the treasure he was hoping to find but eventually he and his two cousins sold the scrolls to an antique dealer. They then changed hands several times. This tended to be clouded in secrecy, not least because it wasn't clear who actually owned the scrolls. They had been found in Jordan but were obviously Jewish scrolls.

"During this period biblical scholar John C. Trever was asked to determine how old the scrolls might be. In 1948 Dr. Trever, who was then working in Jerusalem, became the first American to examine and photograph the ancient documents. He and other biblical scholars came to a startling conclusion. The scrolls weren't just one century or even a few centuries old. They were approximately *two thousand years old*—making them the oldest biblical manuscripts ever discovered. Muhammad Ahmed el-Hamed had made what was hailed as one of the greatest discoveries of the twentieth century."

And:

"For the most part the British ruling class didn't mind the Boers having that poor land in the remote African interior, until ...

Until one day in 1867, a 15-year-old lad by the name of Erasmus Stephanus Jacobs is playing by the banks of the Orange River near Hopetown on his father's northern Cape farm, throwing *klippies*, stones of a particularly shiny nature, when a passing neighbour, Schalk van Niekerk, asks if he could borrow one of the play stones – a particularly shiny one. Quietly, Schalk is convinced that the stone's hardness, weight and shiny quality means it might be valuable and ... sure enough. Via a circuitous route, the rock in question comes to Acting Civil Commissioner Lourenzo Boyes at Colesberg who, noting that the stone is capable of cutting glass, pronounces: 'I believe it to be a diamond.' " And so the British wanted that 'poor land' too.

Peter FitzSimons in *Breaker Morant*.

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November 10: Oliver Goldsmith

November 11: Anna Katherine Green

November 12: 'John Oxenham'

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When I was young a schoolmate gave me a copy of Elsie J. Oxenham's *Jandy Mac Comes Back* for a birthday. I assume she chose it because it included horses and although I have forgotten the story I remember it had a wild and exciting ride across country in it. Much much later I read somewhere that her father John Oxenham was also a writer. This it turns out is only part of the family story.

Peter Haining put together an anthology *Murder on the Railways* and includes a story by John Oxenham. Haining gives a potted history of London's Underground railway network and says: "There could be no more ideal story to open this section than 'A Mystery of the Underground' by John Oxenham (1855-1941) as it literally terrified many of its readers and made hundreds refuse to use the subway system. Published as a serial in the popular weekly magazine *To-Day*, beginning on Saturday, 27 February 1897, the story 'gave Londoners the jitters and earned the author notoriety' according to one account of the extraordinary events which followed. The tale was written in the style of newspaper reporting at the time and from the opening paragraphs revealed a detailed

knowledge of the daily workings of the system. In terse sentences interspersed with seemingly genuine extracts from London papers, it described how a mysterious assassin was committing murders on the Underground every Tuesday night. Although *To-Day* was known to be edited by the humorist Jerome K. Jerome, the weekly episodes about the punctilious ‘serial killer’ were soon the talking-point of Londoners, quite a few of whom evidently believed it was true.

“Such indeed was the furore over the story – and so noticeably did the number of travellers drop each Tuesday evening – that after the publication of the fourth episode on 20 March, the underground authorities wrote a formal letter of protest to the magazine. Jerome K. Jerome, who had watched the circulation of his magazine soar during the past weeks, was naturally reluctant to stop such a popular serial, but before taking the final decision discussed the matter with the magazine’s business manager. William Alfred Dunkerley was a quietly-spoken, rather self-effacing former Manchester grocer who had joined the company because, he said, of his interest in print. And here the story of ‘A Mystery on the Underground’ takes an even stranger twist worthy of a classic mystery novel, for William Dunkerley was actually the author John Oxenham, though no one but he knew the fact. The episodes were, it seemed, being posted to the magazine from an address in Scotland by a writer who had insisted on anonymity. However, during their discussion Dunkerley persuaded Jerome that the serial was actually nearing its conclusion and, in any event, the locale of the events was about to switch dramatically from the subway to a boat bound for Australia. And so it did, with just three more instalments bringing events to a dramatic conclusion on 20 April.”

Did Jerome have any inklings? “It was not until two years later in 1898 when Dunkerley retired from the magazine that he at last revealed the truth about his subterfuge. Jerome, ever the humorist, was able to laugh at how he had been hoodwinked by his colleague just as the public had been fooled by his story of murder.”

And with the name John Oxenham known to the public he went on to write “over thirty novels as well as a number of books of poetry and works about religion.” Though none succeeded in scaring the public in the way that ‘A Mystery on the Underground’ had.

In fact two of his daughters wrote as Oxenham, Elsie Jeanette and Erica, and his son wrote as Roderic Dunkerley. And John Oxenham as well as his mysteries also wrote serious things like *High Altars: Visitation of Graves in France and Flanders*. Sad but not frightening.

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November 13: Robert Louis Stevenson

November 14: Steele Rudd

Jacob Abbott

November 15: Richmal Crompton

J. G. Ballard

November 16: Colin Thiele

Joan Phipson

November 17: Alison Lester

November 18: Gwen Meredith

November 19: Eleanor Porter

November 20: Chester Gould

November 21: François Voltaire

November 22: Mary White

November 23: Nigel Tranter

November 24: Frances Hodgson Burnett

November 25: Elsie J. Oxenham

J. J. Samuel  
Brenda Niall  
November 26: Sally Farrell Odgers  
Charles Schulz  
Simon French  
November 27: Lilith Norman  
Frank Clune  
November 28: Randolph Stow

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I had always thought of Randolph Stow as solely a writer for adults but not so. He wrote a children's book called *Midnite* about a bushranger. The young orphan has four animals to help him including a talking Siamese called Khat.

“ ‘Now,’ said Khat, when he had finished his dinner and was enjoying a saucer of tea, ‘What are your plans?’

‘I have no plans,’ said Midnite, looking sad.

‘If I were you,’ said Khat, ‘I should be a bushranger.’

‘Would you, really?’ said Midnite.

‘I should call myself Captain Midnight,’ said Khat, ‘which is a fine name for a bushranger, but I should spell it M-I-D-N-I-T-E.’

‘Why?’ asked Midnite.

‘Because that is more fierce and romantic,’ said Khat. ‘There is nothing romantic about good spelling.’

‘Well,’ said Midnite, ‘that is an interesting plan, but what does a bushranger do?’

‘He bushranges horses and cattle and sheep,’ said Khat, ‘and he holds up people’s coaches and takes their money and their watches. Or their lives,’ Khat added, ‘but money and watches are more usual.’ ”

It is like a parody of the typical bushranger story and very funny. At first the animals entice other animals away into their hidden valley then he starts holding up coaches in his bumbling way and finally becomes fierce and famous. Humour was not something I associated with Randolph Stow so *Midnite* came as a surprise.

Rachael Weaver in her article ‘Colonial adventure and citation in *Midnite*’ (in *Randolph Stow: Critical Essays*) suggests that adults can also find deeper meanings and allusions to colonial history and personalities in the story if they care to read it rather than simply pass it to young readers.

“*Midnite: The Story of a Wild Colonial Boy* occupies a paradoxical position in relation to Randolph Stow’s wider literary output as, perhaps, his best loved and least critically scrutinised work. Slim, exuberant and light-hearted, it was penned rapidly in the Australian autumn of 1966, according to biographer Suzanne Falkiner, ‘in the shed behind his mother’s house in Peppermint Grove’. More romantically (though perhaps less accurately) Julianne van Loon has noted that he wrote the book ‘while stowed away in a shack in Maine without gas or electricity’. In both cases, these stories of *Midnite*’s production seem to equate with the way it has been regarded: as a kind of pleasant holiday away from Stow’s more serious and therefore more important literary endeavours.”

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November 29: Louisa M. Alcott  
C. S. Lewis  
Madelaine L’Engle

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At the heart of Louisa May Alcott's writing is FAMILY. Families caring about their members, their happiness, their wellbeing, their moral welfare, the next generation. I had always seen this as a nineteenth century attitude to the family. People didn't have social welfare. So families gave support to each other in the hard times. You needed your family.

But behind this conventional attitude lay a very unconventional childhood for Alcott. I was intrigued to come on a book called *Fruitlands: The Alcott Family and Their Search for Utopia* by Richard Francis. I couldn't help thinking that although 'interesting' was certainly a suitable description of her family I would not have wanted Bronson Alcott for a father. Francis sets the background: "Fruitlands was one of a number of utopian communities that were being established in New England at that time. The year previously the Northampton Community for Association and Education had been set up about forty miles from the Fruitlands site on the western edge of Massachusetts; at about the same time the Hopedale Community was established about thirty-five miles to the southwest. These experiments, like Fruitlands itself, advocated abolitionism and temperance but ultimately were not simply a product of particular grievances or issues. They reflected large-scale political and social unease running through both Europe and America, giving rise to the Chartist movement in Britain, for example, and in due course manifesting itself in the repeal of the Corn Laws and, on the European mainland, the revolutions of 1848. The broad impulse behind the American experiments was a reaction to the industrial revolution and the rise of cities, with their consequent social injustice, poverty, and environmental deterioration—developments that had taken place later in the U.S.A. than on the other side of the Atlantic but which were making themselves felt by the 1840s."

There were other experiments, Ann Lee's Shaker community in Harvard village, and Brook Farm in West Roxbury, now subsumed into urban Boston. But they shared an interest in simplicity, a rural lifestyle, veganism including raw foods rather than cooking and trying to avoid any animal products from wearing leather to not putting manure on their fields, rights for women, educational experiments, refusing to pay taxes because the state was involved in various kinds of violence, and trying to avoid pollution and environmental degradation.

Bronson Alcott began with a school but eventually he lost his pupils and he turned to the idea of a utopian life on the land. He was born in Wolcott in Connecticut, left school at thirteen and continued to educate himself, not least by reading and re-reading John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. His wife Abigail May is a more shadowy figure in his story. "The Mays were a prominent local family ... Her father Joseph May had made—and lost—a large fortune as a merchant and subsequently devoted much of his life to charitable causes. On her mother's side Abigail, known as Abby or Abba, was related to Boston "aristocracy," like the Quincys—one of whom had just become the president of Harvard University—and the Sewalls. Abigail herself was the great-great-granddaughter of Samuel Sewall, one of the nine judges who presided over the Salem witch trials in 1692. He was the only one to apologize publicly for the miscarriage of justice, and was distinguished throughout his life by his hostility to slavery, and his advocacy of the rights of Native Americans."

Bronson knew many of the luminaries of his time, Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, but he seems to have made a mess of everything he tried, not least because he didn't pay his bills, he took advantage of other people's kindness, and there seems to have been an ongoing confusion behind all his ventures as to what he was trying to achieve and how. Not surprisingly some people saw him as a crank but even those who were sympathetic, like Emerson, were wary. Alcott wanted Emerson to give him (or at least let him use) the land he had bought at Walden Pond. But Emerson declined and instead let Henry David Thoreau live there and make the Pond famous. Of their children four daughters survived early childhood, Louisa May being the second. So I couldn't help wondering if ideas about utopias crept into her books.

Johann Pestalozzi, the Swiss writer on education, was a major influence on Bronson Alcott. Francis writes, “Pestalozzi had been born in 1746. He established a school in Burgdorf in 1799, and published an important book on education shortly afterward. He advocated relating the content of teaching to the pupil’s development, his most famous aphorism being “The role of an educator is to teach children, not subjects.” In 1805 he moved to Yverdon, on Lake Neuchatel, and over the next years his school there attracted attention from worthies and intellectuals from all over Europe.”

“Historically, the nineteenth century reformer of elementary education, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, posited the notion of ‘Weltanschauung’ (literally ‘world outlook’), as the determining factor of childhood behaviour, and the concomitant importance of helping children make sense of their environment. Our more commonly used term ‘world view’ connotes similar meaning. Human behaviour, then, tends to be consistent with world view.”

Kenneth A. Pudlas in *The Crumbling Walls of Certainty*.

A kind nurturing helpful education seems so much better than the traditional oppressive punishing rote-learning highly disciplined one. So the puzzle is that the giants of the past came out of the second kind of school. From Shakespeare to Beethoven, from Dickens to Einstein, there was no progressive gentle nurturing of imagination, initiative, and talent. I puzzled over this. The first kind of school should be producing the geniuses of any age. Of course ideas about nurturing *have* crept in and now influence our attitudes to Early Childhood Education so perhaps future geniuses ...

But I finally came up with the thought that the first kind of education encourages the flowering of children. But like some child prodigies they can’t, or sometimes won’t, go on into adulthood in that way. In effect they have done their flowering. They have had a wonderful time at school. The second kind of school has suppressed children’s imagination and initiative and curiosity in favour of discipline and rote. This, if it is going to flower, comes bursting out in adulthood. But it is underpinned by discipline and I think perhaps discipline is an essential part of genius.

Beethoven lived an apparently chaotic life but when he was working he demonstrated a high degree of discipline. Shakespeare didn’t write dozens of plays without discipline.

I don’t want to go back to a past where school was a terrifying place but as I see schools where students only seem to turn up when they feel like it I wonder if the giants of the future will give us another Beethoven or Shakespeare or whether there will always be an element of self-indulgence and self-promotion mixed in with their talents.

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So back to Louisa May Alcott herself.

I was interested to discover that she also wrote books for adults including *Moods*, *Work*, and *A Modern Mephistopheles*. I’m not sure that ‘Work’ as a title would appeal to me as a book buyer but I was curious as to what kind of work she had in mind. She was a remarkable woman. When she went nursing during the American Civil War, which she later portrayed in *Hospital Sketches*, she was given mercury to cure a bout of pneumonia. The poison, its insidious effects not understood then, resulted in a lifetime of poor health but she struggled to write, not only to pay her own way but that of her mother, father, two sisters, and later her niece. Liz Rosenberg in *Scribbles, Sorrows, and Russet Leather Boots* wrote, “Louisa wrote about her family, “They all wear rose-colored spectacles, and are lineal descendants of the inventor of aerial architecture.” She nicknamed the Alcotts “the Pathetic Family” and claimed they were “a hopeful race.” ”

But their hope did not pay for food or clothing and in between teaching and sewing for a living she began to write and send out stories. Rosenberg says, “To “do for herself,” Louisa kept churning out her dramatic tales—gothic horror, romance, and high adventure—using any time she could steal away from sewing and teaching. She told a friend, “Though my tales are silly, they are

not bad, and my sinners always have a good spot somewhere.” ... “In 1856, she announced she was producing nearly “a story a month.” Under the cover of one pseudonym and another, she explored the darker, seamy side of humanity.” She wrote about infidelity, murder, incest, drugs, madness ... though she also wrote about love and hope and these stories she did not mind to show to her family. Rosenberg says, “hers was an eclectic apprenticeship. Louisa honed her craft, writing essays, songs, poems, thrillers, sentimental romances, war stories, and fairy tales. No genre or plot was beneath her notice. She called herself a “thinking machine in full operation.” ”

Then she had an unexpected request. Thomas Niles had been assistant to the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. “Niles had seen the booming popularity of boys’ books by Oliver Optic, the pen name of a minister who produced more than a hundred best-selling books and a thousand stories for the young. The Oliver Optic books sold at the fantastic rate of a hundred thousand copies a year. Niles, working a few doors down from Optic’s publisher, decided that there must be a similar market for books written for girls. And he decided that Louisa Alcott was the right woman to write them.”

(Oliver Optic was one of the pen names of William Taylor Adams. He was a teacher of boys and a politician before he began his very productive career as a writer of adventure stories for boys and running *Oliver Optic’s Magazine for Boys and Girls*. He also wrote under the names Warren T. Ashton, Irving Brown, Clingham Hunter, Old Stager, Gale Winterton and Brooks McCormick. He wrote over 100 books for boys as well as two adult books, *The Way of the World* and *Living Too Fast*.)

Alcott was astonished by the success of *Little Women* and perhaps even more astonished that its sequels did equally well. *Good Wives*, *Little Men*, *Jo’s Boys*, *Eight Cousins*, *Aunt Jo’s Scrap-Bag*, *Under the Lilacs* and *Rose in Bloom* were all popular with young readers. Fame gave her money to help her family, her friends, and the poor. But it also brought new demands, for more books, for appearances, endless intrusions by autograph-hunters and unwanted visitors. Some of her ill health was undoubtedly also a result of stress and strain and overwork.

Joyce and Janssen in *I Used to Know That Literature* said, “Louisa May Alcott (1832-88) first began making money as a writer by publishing stories in magazines and newspapers—much like her fictional *Little Women* counterpart, Jo March—though none of the publication titles were so cuttingly named as March’s *Daily Volcano*. Alcott’s stories were as full of wily heroines, sexual intrigue, and pure evil as the era allowed. These tall tales were published anonymously, but dozens of stories are attributed to her now. “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment,” “Behind a Mask, or A Woman’s Power,” and “Betrayed by a Buckle,” among others, bear witness to the purplish prose that put food on her family’s table during their lean years. (Her transcendentalist-philosopher father had once returned from a long lecture tour with a mere dollar in earnings.) In her own words, Alcott was “the goose that laid the golden egg,” but she was curiously as contemptuous of her best-selling novels as she was of the thrillers, calling *Little Women* “moral pap for the young.”

Less well known is her fight for women’s rights. “Louisa was keen to win rights for women—meaningful work, self-expression, freedom, and the vote. She had proudly been the first woman in Concord to register for elections—long before they won the Constitutional right to vote.” And “Louisa gave help of other kinds. She offered solace, encouragement, and practical advice to young writers reaching out for help. ... To an aspiring nineteen-year-old, Louisa offered very practical advice. “Mind grammar, spelling, and punctuation, use short words, and express as briefly as you can your meaning.” She urged avoiding adjectives and foreign words to gussy things up—“The strongest, simplest words are best.” But she kept the important goals in sight. “Write, and print if

you can; if not, still write, and improve as you go on.... Work for twenty years, and then you may some day find that you have a style and place of your own.”

\* \* \* \* \*

November 30: L. M. Montgomery  
Mark Twain  
Angela Brazil  
Jonathon Swift  
Maria Sanz de Sautuola

\* \* \* \* \*

“A teacher lent me *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Road to Avonlea*: I nearly died of pleasure.”

Nuala O’Faolain in *Are You Somebody?*

\* \* \* \* \*

December 1: Henry Williamson  
December 2: Mary Elwyn Patchett  
December 3: Joseph Conrad  
December 4: Ron Brooks  
Ted Greenwood  
Jane Aiken Hodge  
December 5: Christina Rossetti  
Kaz Cooke  
December 6: Cliff Green  
December 7: Willa Cather

\* \* \* \* \*

Willa Cather wrote to an Egbert Samuel Oliver on that contentious subject: Can you teach Creative Writing? Except this was 1934 and it had not yet become contentious.

“Twenty-eight professors are writing books on “Creative Writing in College Courses.” I know that, because I have written answers to twenty-eight men, and with the twenty-eighth, I made a resolution that I would answer no more letters on that subject. You are twenty-nine, and you come too late.

“I think it is sheer nonsense to attempt to teach “Creative Writing” in colleges. If the college students were taught to write good, sound English sentences (sentences with unmistakable articulation) and to avoid hackneyed platitudinous, woman’s-club expressions, such as “colorful”, “the desire to create”, “worth while books”, “a writer universally acclaimed”—all those smug expressions which really mean nothing at all—then creative writing would take care of itself. Nothing whatever should be done to stimulate literary activity in America! [I]ts quality will never be improved by stimulation. I do wish the colleges taught people to write passably clear and correct English, however. More than half of the twenty-eight professors who have written to me within the last few months were quite unable to use “which” and “that” and “would” and “should” correctly—at least, they did not honor me by using them correctly in their letters of request. They made many other errors of the same sort, which a well-trained high school student avoids.”

\* \* \* \* \*

I was browsing in some American writing magazines and they were choc-a-bloc with ads for Creative Writing Courses. You could go to any part of the country and find a course. It sounds ideal for someone wanting to do some travelling. But do they achieve what they claim to do? A medical course expects to churn out doctors. A Creative Writing course churns out writers. But what is the criteria? Publication? Sales? Prizes? Or simply good writing?

I browse in How To books at times, there is always the possibility of finding some good advice, but that is not the same thing as doing a year or more at university. I am half-inclined to think that part of their value is simply that students have to write—and write—and write.

\* \* \* \* \*

“I’m doing nothing, and thinking about nothing but the weather. I’ve been reading a lot of Anatole France over because I happen to have a lot of his books up here. Speaking of cycles of taste, he’s despised in France now, you know. They shrug and say, “Oh yes, a virtuoso.”

*The Selected Letters of Willa Cather.* Edited by Andrew Jewell and Janis Stout.

This is curious when you think about it. Does a children’s writer ever get called a ‘virtuoso’, a ‘literary giant’, ‘brilliant’, ‘a book for the ages’ or any of the other terms which get tossed round in regard to adult books? I don’t think so. There is the vague idea that writing for children is ‘easier’. Easier than what? And if it is easier then it does not deserve the same kudos as *War and Peace*. And yet writing for children in a key sense *is* more important than writing for adults. No literature survives if it does not attract each new generation. First to learn the basics of reading and second to want to read its best books. (Or any books.) So it is curious that very few Creative Writing Courses are offered for Writing for Children. It isn’t really hard to see why. You are never going to win the Nobel Prize for Literature for *Peter Rabbit*.

\* \* \* \* \*

December 8: G. A. (George Alfred) Henty

James Thurber

December 9: Joel Chandler Harris

Jean de Brunhoff

\* \* \* \* \*

I came across this blurb: “Babar’s Yoga for Elephants, *published in 2002, is the latest Babar creation from Laurent de Brunhoff. The book covers many basic poses suitable for humans as well as elephants, including the Salute to the Sun, which will, as Babar explains, ‘help us all relax and draw strength from our inner elephant’.* While it was Laurent’s French artist father, Jean de Brunhoff, who invented Babar and wrote the first six books, it was Laurent who continued the tradition after his father’s death in 1937. Laurent has since written 30 Babar books, which have been translated in seventeen languages. Yoga for Elephants was written to teach his wife, Phyllis Rose, the basic yoga positions.” It is hard to picture elephants doing yoga.

I came on a Guide to *Writing for Children* which said of Babar: “It is worth looking through some of the books about Babar the Elephant (Jean de Brunhoff) which have become classics simply because the elephant’s life style and his country is a mirror reflection of what the urban child knows and understands. Babar’s friends, foes and attendants are a cross-section of European society. Babar’s hopes and aspirations are human. A complex national life (in this case French) becomes of absorbing interest because it is so factual, detailed and is peopled with characters who, though their occupations and class are like humans, yet are animals. The child, who would be bored with just such an urban society depicted in human terms, is fascinated to find that animals are “like” humans. He can identify with Babar and his friends because he himself, as a child, is “like” adults, but different.”

\* \* \* \* \*

December 10: George Macdonald

Rumer Godden

Ernest Shepard

\* \* \* \* \*

Shepard is of course famous for doing the illustrations for A. A. Milne's children's books including *Winnie-the-Pooh*. He was the son of an architect and an artist, married an artist and both his children became artists. He was a prolific book illustrator as well as drawing for *Punch*. But, curiously, he was not A. A. Milne's first choice as illustrator. It was only when Milne saw the illustrations Shepard did for several of Milne's children's poems before they were collected into a book that he decided he would be the right person to do Pooh, Piglet, Owl, Eeyore and all the others.

It is a curious thought: what if Arthur Rackham with his slightly mysterious curving swirling pictures or perhaps John Tenniel with his 'grotesque' black-and-white drawings or even Mabel Lucy Atwell with her plump little children with their rosy cheeks been chosen to illustrate *Winnie-the-Pooh*? Would we in some way look at the stories slightly differently? Because the illustrations in children's books *do* make more impact on young readers than illustrations in adult books do on older readers.

\* \* \* \* \*

December 11: Roland Harvey  
December 12: Margaret Horder  
December 13: Laurens van der Post  
December 14: Rosemary Sutcliffe  
December 15: J. M. Whitfield  
December 16: Arthur C. Clarke  
                  Jane Austen  
December 17: Alison Uttley  
December 18: 'Saki' H. H. Munro  
December 19: Eleanor Porter  
December 20: Bob Graham  
December 21: Robert Brown  
December 22: David Martin  
December 23: Carol Ann Duffy

\* \* \* \* \*

I bought a copy of *New & Collected Poems for Children* by Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, thinking it might be suitable for my 12-year-old granddaughter. But after reading it I thought, no, I don't think so. Her poems are of course accomplished—

She was eight. She was out late.  
She bounced a tennis ball homewards before her  
                                  in the last of the light.  
She'd been warned. She'd been told. It grew cold.  
She took a shortcut through a churchyard.  
She was a small child  
Making her way home. She was quite brave.  
She fell into an open grave.

It was deep. It was damp. It smelled strange.  
*Help*, she cried, *Help, it's Me!* She shouted  
                                  her own name.

Nobody came.  
The churchbells tolled sadly. Shame. Shame.

She froze. She had a blue nose.

She clapped her hands.  
She stamped her feet in soft, slip-away soil.  
She hugged herself. Her breath was a ghost  
floating up from the grave.  
Then she prayed.

But only the moon stared down  
with its callous face.  
Only the spiteful stars sniggered, far out in space.  
Only the gathering clouds  
threw down a clap of thunder  
like an ace.  
And her, she was eight, going on nine.  
She was late.

‘Late’

When a sudden mist swirled in from the sea  
to muffle and blindfold the town,  
those who were out – and I was one –  
hurried for home, hoods up, heads down.

Legend claimed that the Monster of Ghosty Bog  
would prowls through the salty fog, ravenous,  
in search of a kid to bite and gobble and chew.  
The townsfolk would find a little bone next day,

a sock or a shoe, a muddy toy ... no girl or boy  
was safe when the mist boiled in from the waves  
to poach the wriggling town. The Monster would pin  
you down! The Monster would suck your eyes

like boiled sweets! The Monster would leave your brains  
on the side of the street! Beware! Take care!  
Parents who let their child play out would soon come  
to grieve it. So legend had it. But no one believed it.

‘The Monster of Ghosty Bog’

\* \* \* \* \*

December 24: Noel Streatfield  
William Brighty Rands  
December 25: Christmas  
December 26: Shirley Shackleton  
December 27: Carl Zuckmayer  
December 28: Leslie Rees  
Max Hastings

\* \* \* \* \*

”In 1979 Walter was invited by Professor Harry Heseltine, then of the English Department at James Cook University, to present the Townsville Foundation Literary Award for that year. It had been won by Leslie Rees for his two-volume history, *The Making of Australian Drama* from the 1830s to the 1970s and *Australian Drama in the Seventies*, published by Angus & Robertson in

1973 and 1978 respectively. These works were the end product of a lifetime spent associated with plays for radio, television and the stage. In England, as a young man, Leslie was senior drama critic on the century-old weekly, the *Era*; later in Sydney he became Federal drama editor of the ABC. He had an important role in advising playwrights and was himself the author of plays and features. He was instrumental in founding the Playwrights' Advisory Board, wrote extensively as a drama critic and edited collections of plays for school use. The Playwrights' Advisory Board ceased operations in 1963, after 25 years of dedicated voluntary work.

*The Making of Australian Drama* is dedicated "to Coralie, who always sat at my right hand both within the theatre and without". Together Leslie and his wife wrote a number of travel books, and Leslie wrote over a score of works for children. The story of his life is told with flair and wisdom in *Hold Fast to Dreams*, brought out by the Alternative Publishing Co-operative in 1982."

Jean Stone in *The Passionate Bibliophile: The Story of Walter Stone*.

I went looking to see if Leslie Rees was the author of the exciting children's story set in PNG in which some children are lost in a maze of karst caves and found that no, he was instead the author of another exciting children's book about PNG called *Danger Patrol*. I remember this, too, from my childhood because of the exciting but scary part where a dormant volcano comes to life! So the mystery remains but I am sure I will someday either remember the author and title or come upon the book in a second-hand shop.

\* \* \* \* \*

December 29: Vera Brittain

December 30: Rudyard Kipling

Elyne Mitchell

Ronald Searle (d)

\* \* \* \* \*

Honor Auchinleck wrote *Elyne Mitchell: A Daughter Remembers* about her mother, her father, her life as a child up in the Victorian High Country and her mother's books, the best known being *The Silver Brumby*.

She writes, "At the time of their marriage, the only room that seemed to have been exclusively Dad's was his small, musty, book-lined study at the back of the house. Appropriately, he called it the 'Weasel Hole', and it would have been ideal for one person, or two people working closely together. When they moved into Toowong Hill after their honeymoon, Dad had a desk put in for Mum. It was no more than a polished wooden bench, a small concession to his shy but ambitious bride. A large crepe myrtle blocked the view from the only window; the Weasel Hole was a serious work room."

'Dad' was a Victorian MP who had been in Changi during WW2. 'Mum' was the daughter of General Sir Harry Chauvel of Australian Light Horse fame. Though they had four children it wasn't a terribly compatible marriage. And Elyne's passion to write was seen by some of her in-laws as neglect of her children and her home.

As well as her children's books she wrote books about the Australian Alps and about her father including *Chauvel Country* and *Light Horse to Damascus*. But her hopes to become known as a writer of novels for adults were less successful.

"A body of correspondence with Paul Hodder-Williams at Hodder & Stoughton Ltd indicates that Mum was worried that a proposed adult book would 'shock the children'. She was very concerned about how appropriate it would be for her elder children and their friends to read a book dealing with a family with some resemblance to ours, which she knew, if it were published, they would almost certainly do. Despite her tough, 'to hell with it' exterior, Mum minded criticism – explicit and implicit – very much. The book was not published. In the 1980s she wrote a ski

thriller and another novel based on Mitchell family history, but neither of these were published either.”

You could say there are two kinds of animal books: those in which the animals are part of human life. And those in which the animals live lives largely untouched by humans. The first would include books about pony club adventures, everything from *Black Beauty* to *Pocomoto, Pony Express Rider*. The second would include books like *Tarka the Otter* and Elyne Mitchell’s Silver Brumby books.

But you could also differentiate between books in which the animals remain animals and we do not enter their minds and books in which the animals have human thoughts and feelings. You could still put *Tarka the Otter* into the first category alongside things like *Ring of Bright Water* but the Silver Brumby books would belong in the second.

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December 31: The Unknown Author

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There are of course many unknown authors of children’s stories. But this is one which intrigued me. Allan Drummond in *The Willow Pattern Story* writes, “Despite its appearance, the willow pattern is not Chinese in origin. It was first designed and manufactured in England 200 years ago. Chinese porcelain was very fashionable at the time; and to compete, English manufacturers copied and adapted many Chinese designs. In about 1795, at the famous Spode pottery works, various Chinese design motifs were combined into a blue and white pattern that would appeal to popular taste. The Spode design was the first true willow pattern.

“Willow pattern pottery was very popular from the start, and the design was soon applied to a wide range of household items. Because there was no copyright law in nineteenth-century England, the Spode design was copied by as many as 100 other firms—often not too well. During the height of its popularity in the 1800s, the willow pattern was copied by manufacturers in other countries around the world. The willow pattern has survived all the changes of fashion for more than two centuries, and it is still manufactured and collected today.”

But “No one knows who told the first willow pattern story. There are many variations, and they appear to have started in England in the early 1800s as folk stories created to fit the different elements of the design. In 1849, a magazine called *The Family Friend* published “The Story of the Willow Pattern Plate.” This is the first known printed version of the tragic tale of Koong Shee and Chang; but the author of the story was not named, and the origin of the tale remains a mystery.”

So Drummond gives his version of the story: Koong Shee and her father live in a pagoda by a weeping willow tree and her father betrothes her to an old merchant and hides her away so she cannot see any other men. But she has fallen in love with her father’s servant Chang. The turtle doves in the pagoda garden carry messages between the lovers. But her father realises what has happened and exiles Chang and locks his daughter up. The old merchant visits with jewels and the wedding date is set. But Chang manages to get a message to her and she sends back a coded message in a coconut shell to say the wedding date is set.

Chang turns up at the wedding disguised as a boatman and manages to whisk her away. They believe they are safe and buy a little farm and apple orchard far away. But her father hunts everywhere for her. He lets her two turtledoves out of their cages and follows them. When he finds Koong Shee and Chang he has them brought back and throws them into the maze of dungeons under the pagoda.

“Gone forever were their days in the beautiful apple orchards. Never again would they smell the scent of peonies and camellias at night. Never more would they hear the sound of the birds in the garden nor the lapping of waves against a boat carried downriver by the tide.

Koong Shee and Chang died together in the great maze underground; and at the same time, the lonely, bitter mandarin died in the pagoda above.

At once the garden fell silent. The breeze stopped, and with this the leaves on the trees were stilled. The waters of the river ceased their movement as if frozen. The pagoda and its surroundings seemed to be bathed in thin, blue moonlight.... ”

So next time you are eating from a willow pattern plate ...

# **A CALENDAR DOWN UNDER OR ... UP ABOVE**

**TO THE MEMORY OF  
MARY BRICE**

**And with thanks to KEN CLARKE, MARGARET CLARKE, and ANDREW  
URBAN**

“I must say that I find television very educational. The minute somebody turns it on, I go to the library and read a book.”

**Groucho Marx**

## **INTRODUCTION**

I had thought of devoting a Calendar to Australian writers but then I realised I had already written about a great many. So would I be tilling already ploughed ground? Maybe. But it seemed to be an opportunity to write about writers and books which appealed to me while also giving some thought to forgotten, or nearly forgotten Australian writers. And here and there a writer from somewhere else has crept in. You can play Spot the Interloper if you like.

My guiding principal is always: does something interest me, rather than following a theme. Of course I sometimes come back later, sometimes years later, and wonder why something grabbed me. But then for books that stretch over years I come to each entry on different days and in different moods.

Australian writing has followed several understandable trajectories. And some, such as bush ballads, have fallen out of favour with many modern readers. But I still pick up old books of ballads and read them with pleasure.

And there is that problematic question: what precisely *is* Australian writing? If it is written by an Australian, such as Christopher Koch's *The Year of Living Dangerously*, is it Australian writing? If it is the experience of a young Australian overseas is it Australian writing? Is Shirley Hazzard after many years overseas still an Australian writer? Is E.W. Hornung with only two years in Australia an Australian writer? Does it need to have the sense it couldn't happen anywhere else? Does it need Australian slang, a sense that kangaroos are just over the horizon, references to events in the country's past—in other words, to be deeply rooted in some aspect of Australian experience—to be regarded as Australian writing? Then there are writers like Laurence Binyon who are English but his words are quoted at every military commemoration in Australia.

I am not sure the answer matters. If, indeed, there could ever be just one answer.

## **A CALENDAR DOWN UNDER**

### **January 1: Federation**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1901 six self-governing British colonies, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, peacefully agreed to unite as one nation. They each had their own parliament, set their own tariffs and customs regulations, ran their own immigration systems, issued their own stamps, organised their own defence, held their own elections, and had their own bureaucracies and judiciary. They could have decided to remain as self-governing entities until such time as they could achieve independence but instead they agreed to give up a variety of powers to a central government to be called the Commonwealth of Australia. We rarely stop to think of just how important this decision was. It made Australia the only continent which is also one nation.

People regularly complain that the Australian Constitution does not deal with individual rights. But it was an agreement to spell out what rights those six self-governing colonies would keep and what rights they would hand over. In a way this was a pity because insufficient thought was given to empowering the people who would actually live in this new nation. On the other hand if this had been a key aspect it might have taken many more years to get any kind of agreement.

To create a Bill of Rights does not seem like a major difficulty but people are divided on what actually should be enshrined. For instance, the U.N. Covenant on Human Rights enshrines the right to freedom of speech but Australia places various restrictions on this freedom. So should a Bill of Rights follow the U.N. model or enshrine our existing and possible further restrictions?

But I think that, with some reservations, our Founding Fathers did achieve something impressive.

### **January 2: Queenie Sunderland**

### **January 3: Henry Handel Richardson (Ethel Florence)**

**Warren Fahey**

**Blanche d'Alpuget**

**Robin Boyd**

Robin Boyd's famous book was *The Australian Ugliness* in which he deplored the lack of any sense of collective aesthetics. People just plonked their buildings down with no concern as to whether they blended with anything around them. And they used corrugated iron everywhere. I'm

not sure what he would think if he could come back and look at the concrete monstrosities which have now taken over our cities, creating wind tunnels, putting streets into permanent shadow, and turning our cities into monochromes of greys and tans. Would he throw up his hands in horror?

James Stevens Curl looks at the underlying thinking which has led to cities in which people live on sufferance in *Making Dystopia: The Strange Rise and Survival of Architectural Barbarism*. He chronicles the rise of Modernism which became an international movement dedicated to concrete, plain lines, flat roofs, devoid of the past, culture, or a sense of beauty. “(Alfred) Barr could not accept it was a ‘function’ of a building to please the architect’s client, as he looked down with patrician scorn on the ‘architectural taste of real estate speculators, renting agents, and mortgage brokers. As for ‘function’ in another sense, however, it might be suggested that buildings which let in water, that look shabby in no time at all, that are subject to solar-heat gain making parts of them uninhabitable (and, conversely, leak energy), that have poor sound-insulation (really only possible with mass or with lots of insulating material that would make the so-called ‘machine aesthetic’ impossible), that generally perform badly, and that have to be demolished two decades or less after they are built at vast expense (and therefore represent a huge loss as the capital expended will never be recouped), can hardly be called ‘functional’. Like much else concerned with Modernism, ‘function’ had very little to do with how a building performed, but was largely concerned with packaging for the sake of appearance in order to *suggest* the idea of ‘function’.”

“Indeed, it looks as though architectural interference with the urban fabric has not saved it at all, but is successfully killing it.”

“They ‘exacerbate rather than solve the main failings’ of Modern architecture, ‘and not only because they are energy-profligate, anti-urban, stand-alone buildings that fail to define urban space and defy relationship with other buildings and humans’.”

“When ‘biodiversity’, ‘sustainable development’, ‘ecosystem’, and other terms have been adopted by interests (selectively picking terms from science, paying lip-service to them, then misapplying them) which discount ‘beauty’ (a word that seems to have vanished from official discourse), and bureaucrats and committees increasingly avoid the awkward task of making aesthetic choices, being entirely at the mercy of Economism and afraid of being ‘judgemental’, the fact that technical solutions are not answers to cultural questions posits a grim future, one in which Dystopia will triumph.”

Hitler and Stalin both liked heavy monumental-style buildings, for which their taste has been roundly criticised, but in fact Modernism was throwing up many such heavy intimidating buildings featuring masses of concrete and not a lot of concern for the human beings who would live or work in them, in places *not* ruled by tyrants.

Curl contrasted two impacts of WW2.

“So something odd happened after 1945, when huge changes were made to the fabrics, layouts, and skylines of British towns and cities, involving massive destruction, social upheaval, and colossal waste of resources. What prompted such a phenomenon, and why was aesthetically unedifying ‘Modernism-on-the-cheap’ universally adopted? ‘Comprehensive redevelopment’ plans were approved throughout the United Kingdom, despite the awkward fact that the nature and extent of war-damage was limited compared with what had occurred in Continental Europe and Japan: indeed, ‘far more plans were produced than the number of seriously damaged towns would suggest’, ‘Comprehensive redevelopment’ often foundered when it came up against the harsh realities of economics: tens of thousands of perfectly sound houses were compulsorily acquired, stripped of their roof coverings (to deter ‘squatters’), boarded up, and left to rot, yet the ‘developments’ never happened. Decent houses that could have been enhanced were either pulled

down or blighted beyond redemption, impoverishing urban life, and representing a huge squandering of energy, capital, and scarce resources.”

“One of the worst professional crimes ever inflicted on humanity was the application of Utopian Modernism to the public housing-stock in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, which ‘dehumanised communities’, ‘spoiled landscapes’, and ‘ruined lives’, yet the architectural Establishment and the schools of architecture remained, and remain, in ‘total denial’. Thus Dystopia was imposed. The ditching of history has its consequences. In the 1970s Jenkins had witnessed the ‘clearance’ of the Hulme district of Manchester to make way for the Modernist Utopia designed by a team under Lewis Womersley: thousands of people ‘who had survived Hitler’s bombs ... saw their homes destroyed by their home-grown’ *Gauleiters* (area commanders), and were then transported to new settlements elsewhere. ‘The resulting slabs have since been demolished as uninhabitable.’ ”

“In some countries, however, especially in Poland, destroyed urban fabric was painstakingly reconstructed, as it was recognized that a restoration of nationhood required more than simple-minded Modernist panaceas that turned out to be nothing of the sort. The triumphant rebuilding of the Old Town of Warsaw, for example, much of which was carried out under the direction of Jan Zachwatowicz and others, including Stanisław Lorentz, was far, far more than just a scholarly exercise in what Modernists label ‘pastiche’: it was intimately connected with keeping alive a visible sense of national identity, threatened, as it had been, with complete obliteration under National-Socialist barbarism and Stalinist repression. Warsaw’s rebirth, and other wonderful works of what was called ‘The Polish School of Conservation’, including Gdańsk, Poznań, Toruń, and Wrocław, should be compared with what was done to war-damaged cities in the British Isles such as Belfast, Canterbury, Coventry, Liverpool, and London: the Polish contribution wins hands down on every possible front. This is because it was recognized that a country without old buildings had similarities to a person without a memory, and that in order to keep national identity, it was necessary to rebuild a visible reminder of a rich cultural past. Not only were large parts of historic town-centres painstakingly rebuilt to high standards of scholarship, craftsmanship, and detail, but badly-damaged urban fabric was restored, again with admirable skill. Poland, however, also acquired some particularly brutal examples of Modernist ‘architecture’, notably at Nowa Huta, the satellite town outside the great historic town of Kraków, created from the late 1940s in opposition to the ‘bourgeois’ inhabitants of Kraków, who were not over-enamoured of the Communist government.”

I think Robin Boyd would have agreed with Curl.

**January 4: Michele Turner**

**January 5: Veronica Brady**

**January 6: John C. Lilly**

**Vincent Serventy**

**January 7: Jean Devanny**

**Lolo Houbein**

**Sir (Wilmot) Hudson Fysh**

Fysh wrote his autobiography and called it *Qantas Rising* which is still well worth reading. Indeed I thought it would be a good idea for all Qantas executives to read it as they grasp for yet bigger payouts so as to be reminded of the long struggle, hardships, risks, sheer hard work and all done on ‘the smell of an oily rag’ to get the infant airline up and running.

But before he ever climbed aboard an aeroplane he had been with the Australians on Gallipoli. He was scathing about the way the campaign was run. “It must be recorded that the

Gallipoli campaign increasingly emerges as one of failure, monumental bungling and bad leadership, the lowest point of all having been reached in the Suvla Bay landing.

“If seasoned troops from Anzac or Helles had been used at Suvla Bay, and under competent top leadership, instead of badly supported unblooded troops without even proper orders during that fatal two days’ inaction which allowed the Turks to bring up opposing troops, the story would have been quite different and the awful unavailing sacrifice of Australian lives at Lone Pine and other places avoided.”

And the current belief that men went into battle singing things like ‘Waltzing Matilda’ or ‘Australia Fair’ is not correct. Rather he gives their rallying song as ‘Australia will be there’:

The Commonwealth of Australia is a link in Empire chain  
Which has been sorely tested, and stoutly stood the strain,  
Its wide open spaces will give a welcome true,  
To all who come and settle with friends both old and new.

CHORUS

Rally round the banner of your country,  
Take the field with brothers o’er the foam;  
On land or sea, wherever you be,  
Keep your eye on Germany.  
But England, home and beauty have no cause to fear;  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot?—  
No! No! No! No! No! Australia will be there...  
Australia will be there.

**January 8: Wilkie Collins**

**January 9: Robert Drewe**

**January 10: Arnold Zable**

**January 11: Alan Paton**

**January 12: Dorothy Wall**

**January 13: John Masterman**

**January 14: Daisy Gawoon Utemorrah  
Hendrik Van Loon**

**January 15: Kate Llewellyn**

**January 16: Nigel Dennis**

**January 17: May Gibbs**

**Ita Buttrose**

**January 18: Sally Morgan**

**January 19: Rex Ingamells**

**January 20: John Howard (d) (not John Howard the P.M.)**

“The state of prisons in the eighteenth century was a terrible indictment against the age; but it must be admitted that when John Howard the philanthropist, after travelling all over the country and inspecting gaols, laid the result of his inquiries before the House of Commons, instant steps were taken to remedy matters by the passing of two Acts of Parliament. This was in 1774; but although copies of these acts were printed at Howard’s expense and sent by him to the gaoler of every county gaol in England, the new laws were, for the most part, cleverly evaded.

“John Howard was the son of an upholsterer, who, when he died, left him comfortably off, and with a small property in Bedfordshire, of which county Howard became High Sheriff. It was while occupying this position that he made the discoveries which resulted in his becoming a prison

reformer. In his famous book, *The State of Prisons in England and Wales*, which was printed at the Eyre Press in Warrington, he told the world that he found amongst the Bedfordshire prisoners “some who by the verdict of juries were declared not guilty, some on whom the grand jury did not find such an appearance of guilt as subjected them to trial; and some whose prosecutors did not appear against them; after having been confined for months, dragged back to gaol, and locked up again till they should pay sundry fees to the gaoler, the clerk of assize, etc.”

“Profoundly shocked by this shameful practice, which arose from the gaoler having no salary, Howard applied to the justices of the county to pay a salary and abolish fees. The justices were quite willing to remove the grievance, but could not charge the county with the expense without a precedent. “I therefore rode into several neighbouring counties in search of a precedent,” says Howard, “but I soon learned that the same injustice was practiced in them, and looking into the prisons I beheld scenes of calamity which I grew daily more and more anxious to alleviate.” ... “The publication of his book, in 1777, in Warrington, where he had retired to write it, brought home to the whole nation the terrible conditions of the prisons and their unfortunate occupants.”

The prisons were usually dark and dirty, some without water for the prisoners, and with filthy straw for bedding or “Some lie upon rags,” says Howard, “others upon the bare floor.” Gaol-fever spread by the typhus-carrying louse and small-pox were rife, sometimes killing visitors and court officials as well as inmates. Warders often refused to go inside their own prisons because of the smell and the danger. “From his observations during 1773 and 1774, Howard was convinced that many more were destroyed by gaol-fever in the prisons than were put to death by all the public executions in the country.”

“Howard’s book shows us that the lot of the debtor was even harder than that of the convicted felon. In half of the county gaols debtors had not even bread, “although it is granted to the highwayman, the housebreaker and the murderer; and medical assistance, which is provided for the latter is withheld from the former. In many of these Gaols debtors who would work are not permitted to have any tools, lest they should furnish felons with them for escape or other mischief. I have often seen these prisoners eating their water-soup (bread boiled in mere water) and heard them say, ‘We are locked up and almost starved to death.’ ” If they could not come up with the money they remained and quite often died in gaol.

Howard died in 1790 while inspecting hospitals in Russia. He had traveled thousands of miles on horseback to inspect prisons, hospitals and bridewells, refusing all government assistance, and constantly trying to rouse concern for the state in which people owing as little as a couple of pounds or even shillings could be left literally to ‘rot in gaol’. There is a statue of him in St Paul’s Cathedral in London.

### **January 21: Ernestine Hill**

Ernestine Hill wrote a great deal about Aborigines in *The Territory*:

“His was the only race on earth that through thousands of years could be completely and ecstatically happy without alcoholic stimulants and adventitious aids. As Sir George Grey remarked, he is quicker in intelligence than the average English peasant. He has no head for mathematics—his counting was one, two, two-on, two-two, hand of five fingers, many—but he has a remarkable gift of tongues, and can speak five or six native languages, with English and Malay thrown in, at his own fireside. He has a ready and true sense of humour. His art, his music, his dancing will enrich the thought of the world.”

“The writing of aboriginal legends in Australia at the moment has become a literary vogue. Many books are produced of native lore, some gaily illustrated fairy tales for children, some in erudite scientific manner, some as popular romance. Among these are the valuable books of Mary

and Elizabeth Durack, of the Territory's own Bill Harney, author of *Taboo* and *Brimming Billabongs*, and of W. Linklater, author of *The Magic Snake*. Such as these know and understand the blacks, in the casual and friendly association of many years."

"Among the Territory tribes with whom I have made contact are Malaradharra, South Australian border to MacDonnell Ranges; Pitjantara, west of them from Musgrave Ranges to Ayers Rock; Arundta, Finke River and MacDonnell Ranges; Luritja, west of Arundta; Allowera, east of Arundta; Kaitish, Barrow Creek country; Warramulla, west, Landers River to Granites; Bingongana, Tanami and south of Wave Hill; Waggire, north-east of Barrow Creek to Alexandria; Warramunga, Tenant's Creek country; Pintubi, east of Tennant's Creek; Tjingilli, Newcastle Waters country; Agoquila, north-west of Newcastle Waters to Dry River; Yungman, Elsey River; Mungurai, upper Roper; Nullakan, mid-Roper; Mara-mara, salt-water Roper; Djauan, Katherine River; Wogguman, Dilik, upper Daly; Mulluk Mulluk, Brinken, mid-Daly; Marramaninjie, Anglomarie, Ponga Ponga, salt-water Daly; Marununga, from Daly River to Delissaville on coast; Waugite, Delissaville to Darwin; Larrakia, Darwin country; Woolna (Punmurlu), salt-water Adelaide River and Gulf; Minnachee, mid-Adelaide River; Mejeelie, East Alligator River; Kakadu, South Alligator River; Mala-ola, Wongo-ak, Melville and Bathurst islands; Uwaja, Port Essington; Yerrakool, King and Liverpool rivers; Arrarapi, Arnhem Land "sandstone" tribes to Goyder River; Ungurula, Arnhem Bay; Ritherunga, Boolman to Caledon Bay; Remburunga, Wilton and Mainoru rivers; Agrighula, around Pine Creek; Alloha, Limmen River; Anuella, Binbinga, Macarthur River; Karra-warra, Robinson River; Mudburra, Wadduman, Victoria River; Uranara, Toko Ranges, the pituri country blacks; Wonkorunda, Simpson Desert."

I would love to know more about what she meant by 'made contact'. So I turned to *Call of the Outback*, Marianne van Velzen's book about Ernestine Hill. Hill did indeed travel widely but she clearly only had very limited contact with most of the tribes she mentions. She often felt sorry for the Aborigines she met but by and large she saw them through the views of white Territorians.

"In time her words formed themselves into chapters, but the book's overall structure constantly shifted about, as though she was trying to build a mountain out of grains of sand. She had never been so insecure about her writing. Fretting that she might be making things too hard for her readers, she posted a few chapters to Beatrice Davis to see what she thought." Davis was very encouraging but as her book grew and grew her publisher urged her to make it into two books but she refused, saying all her material belonged in the one book. She prevailed and the book is still well worth reading.

"Ernestine wrote a short radio play for the ABC, her first attempt at a drama, and it aired at Christmas 1938. *Santa Claus of Christmas Creek* proved so popular that it was aired every Christmas thereafter for several years. The story is about Joe Hacket and his wife Janet, who live on an isolated station in the far north of Australia. Janet is the only white woman for hundreds of miles. The Hackets are hoping for a good Christmas, but everything depends on their orders arriving on time. On Christmas Eve, a prospector called Lorimer, whose wife has died and left him with an infant to care for, knocks at their door. He is followed a little later by old Dolly Pot Mick. As it is a Christmas story the packages everyone is waiting for arrive just in time and all ends well. It was an entertaining play and it was obvious that Ernestine had picked up ideas for the characters on her travels.

"The people at the ABC were so pleased with the play, they asked her to write a weekly page for women in their national magazine, the *ABC Weekly*."

**January 22: Francis Bacon**

**January 23: Charles Harpur**  
**January 24: Joyce NanKivell Loch**  
**Ethel Turner**  
**Helen Demidenko**  
**January 25: Russell Braddon**  
**January 26: Ruby Langford Ginibi**  
**January 27: Lala Fisher**  
**January 28: Tim Flannery**  
**January 29: Benjamin Glennie**  
**Germaine Greer**  
**January 30: Shirley Hazzard**  
**George Bass**  
**Angela Thirkell**

At school we did something called Social Studies which included a great many stories of men exploring various parts of Australia. Some of the stories were exciting; others just made the explorers sound like idiots. I rather liked the story of Bass and Flinders partly because they covered vast distances in a small boat and partly because they didn't see any need to shoot anyone along the way. Flinders has been written about in various ways but what of Bass?

Yet when it comes to stories of journeys in small boats the two which fascinate me are Ernest Shackleton's voyage in the 'James Caird' (which Tim Jarvis has recently recreated as a movie) and Alain Bombard's voyage across the Atlantic to prove that shipwrecked people could survive on sea water and sea creatures.

"To travel alone—I am not sure about that. Although freedom from the obligations of friendship are sometimes an advantage in travelling—but for most travellers solitude carries penalties of its own, among them ennui which may lead all too easily to self-reproach. When Dr Alain Bombard set out in 1952 from the Canaries to cross the Atlantic in a small rubber dinghy, he knew that solitude as complete and utter as any castaway had ever known would be one of the hazards against which no precautions could be taken. His journey took him sixty-five days, about two weeks longer than he had calculated, and all through his account of it there shines the clear light of his modesty, his passionate enthusiasm (the purpose of the trip being to prove scientific theories) his unfailing good-humour and his disinterested heroism. Except for a small radio, which eventually gave out, and about half a dozen books, among them Molière, Aeschylus, Montaigne, Rabelais and scores by Bach and Beethoven, he took no more than a man might expect to find himself with if he were suddenly to be cast adrift in an open boat. It was part of the experiment that the only food he would allow himself was to be whatever he could catch, and although he had with him a small stock of emergency rations, these remained in their sealed canisters throughout the voyage.

"Bombard left Las Palmas in his dinghy *L'Hérétique* on October 19: 'The evening was completely clear, the wind blew steadily from the north-north-east and the dinghy forged ahead at a good three and a half knots towards the Grand Canary ... I had decided against setting a westerly course straight away in order to avoid the Sargasso Sea which, with the Doldrums, was one of the two major dangers of which I had to steer clear.'

He had to try to repair his small sail, he was visited by sharks, whales, rays and more comfortingly, dolphins and petrels.

"On November 5, after being afloat eighteen days, Bombard's physical condition was beginning to cause him discomfort, though not yet serious anxiety. 'Things could be worse,' he

noted, ‘but I am starting to become obsessed with the idea of food...I am sick of eating raw fish, but even more tired of drinking its juice. If only it would rain for a change...’

Bombard had miscalculated, believing he was 100 miles from the end when he was actually still 600 miles out. “Bombard’s physical condition by this time was precarious and the discovery of the grave miscalculation he had made in his position came as a very severe shock. Nevertheless, after spending an hour or two aboard the cargo boat, and in spite of the captain’s earnest entreaties, he insisted on resuming his solitary journey and climbed unsteadily back into the dinghy. It was December 10. Not until twelve days later did he sight land, and on that day he beached *L’Hérétique* on the coast of Barbados.

“I sincerely hope that I shall never have to make a journey like Bombard’s, for if I were ever to be shipwrecked and cast adrift I should not have his invincible hope to sustain me, nor his patience, his philosophic bearing or his plain cold courage.”

Nicolas Bentley telling ‘The Bombard Story’ in *A Choice of Ornaments*.

So what of George Bass? He arrived as a surgeon in Australia from England on HMS ‘Reliance’ in 1795. This was a momentous voyage for him because he met Flinders on board, he brought a small boat the ‘Tom Thumb’ with him so that he could immediately begin exploring the waterways around the infant settlement at Sydney Cove, and he eventually married the captain’s sister Elizabeth Waterhouse.

His most famous voyage was the one he did with Flinders, though in a larger boat, to circumnavigate Tasmania and prove it was an island, not an extension of the mainland. This created panic in Sydney, Governor King realising that as an island it could not be seen as part of Captain Cook’s claim on George III’s behalf to eastern Australia, so he hurriedly arranged for Britain to claim Tasmania too, though again without consulting or even letting the indigenous people know what was planned. Of course, you could argue that Cook by doing his claiming while standing on a little dot now called Possession Island had only claimed Possession Island as a British territory.

It was Flinders who said that the strait separating Tasmania from the mainland should be named in honour of Bass. And since then Bass has been honoured with an electorate, a highway, and other odds and ends. It did not help him ... because in 1803 he set sail on the ‘Venus’ for Tahiti and the ‘Venus’ never arrived. The fate of Bass, the ship, and the crew remain a mystery.

### **January 31: Barney Roberts**

### **February 1: Frederick Spencer Burnell**

William Wilde in *Australian Poets & Their Works* mentions: “Burnell, F.S. Frederick Spencer. 1880-? Born Sydney, was special correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* with the New Guinea expedition in 1914 and compiled an illustrated account of that action, *How Australia Took German New Guinea* (1914) and an expanded version of the same, *Australia versus Germany: The Story of the Taking of German New Guinea* (1915). He also wrote several travel books and two volumes of verse, *Before Dawn and Other Poems* (1912) and *A Sallet of Songs* (1920).”

I had not previously heard of Burnell and the way that German New Guinea was occupied in WWI, then formally given after Germany had lost the war to Britain which then passed it to Australia to administer is not something most Australians are familiar with. Yet the attempt to take down Germany’s wireless communications in 1914 in their colony in New Guinea was Australia’s first ‘campaign’ of the war.

Burnell first wrote dispatches for the *Sydney Morning Herald* then brought out his illustrated booklet *How Australia Took German New Guinea* which begins “The capture of German New Guinea by the Australian squadron and the first Australian Expeditionary Force marks a distinct stage in Australian history. Australians had already fought side by side with their British comrades

in the Soudan, and in China during the “Boxer” disturbances, and in the South African War had earned a reputation for hard riding and hard fighting. But in all these cases the Australian troops were part of a much larger force and under the direct orders of British commanders. At Rabaul, and in New Guinea, they were not so. For the first time Australia was given work to do with her own men under her own officers, conveyed and helped by her own squadron; and the expedition thus marks, we may hope, the definite coherence of six colonies into a nation which sooner or later will be able to accept the responsibility for maintaining Imperial interests in the Pacific.”

He followed this with his 1915 book *Australia v. Germany*. The troops came under the command of Colonel Holmes, who like the other officers, was a veteran of the South African fighting but most of those under his command were volunteers with little or no military experience. So it was a race to train them sufficiently to embark on the P & O ship ‘Berrima’ only 13 days after the beginning of WWI in 1914. And there was “the example of New Zealand, whose Government had announced their intention of sending a force to seize the German Colony of Samoa, possibly had its effect upon the Commonwealth authorities. Nobody was surprised, at any rate, to learn a few days afterwards, that volunteers were being invited for a force which, it was announced with an intriguing vagueness, was intended to serve “in the tropics.” ” They sailed north, stopping to do further drill on Palm Island which had not yet become a virtual prison for Aboriginal people but rather where “a line of coconut palms and paw-paw trees, sheltering a whitewashed and leaf-thatched group of bungalows awaited the holiday-making or honeymooning folk who came every year to avoid the heat and burden of the summer months.”

In Port Moresby they were joined by several more ships including the ‘Sydney’ and two submarines. They then headed for Rabaul on New Britain (New Pomerania). “Just outside the bay lies Herbertshole, the former German capital; and somewhere in its neighbourhood there was known to be a wireless station which must be destroyed as soon as possible.” Two parties were landed at Herbertshole and also at Kaba Kaul to search for the wireless station which though surrounded by jungle did have “two huge poles towering into the night”. The Acting Governor Dr Haber had arranged to fortify the area and the Australians were involved in fire fights with “native sharp-shooters” in the palms. Seven Australians were killed including Lt. Commander Elwell, Captain Pockley and Petty Officer Williams but the station was captured and destroyed next day and Rabaul “surrendered on September 12 without serious resistance, and next day the British flag was hoisted there and possession taken of the island with due formalities.”

“The population had been previously warned of the ceremony about to take place, and whether reluctantly or not, every one was present, from the Burgomaster and other notables in spotless ducks, down to the natives looking highly picturesque with their red loin-clothes and rich black skins. Chinese smirked amiably in the crowd, urbane Japanese rubbed their hands with evident satisfaction, while not a few Japanese women were to be seen in full array of kimonos, bright obis, and butterfly-tinted paper parasols. Even a sprinkling of Malays, heavy-lipped and lustrous-eyed, watched with keen curiosity the progress of events.”

The proclamation read out in English was then presented in a pidgin which included: “All boys belongina all place, you savvy by feller Master he come now; he new feller Master, he strong feller, too much ... you look him new feller flag; you savvy him, he belong British, English; he more better than other feller ... he look out good along with you, he give you more money and more good feller kaikai.” But kaikai [food] was not very plentiful given the disruptions and the new arrivals were more concerned about getting the natives back to work, not paying them more, on the increasingly neglected plantations before production dropped. The troops however set sail for the New Guinea mainland and on the 24<sup>th</sup> September the capital of German New Guinea, Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen, surrendered. “New Britain was ours; Yap had been taken by the North China Squadron; the Japanese were reported to have seized Jaluit” while NZ had acquired Samoa. This

was a sizable new colonial territory composing Kaiser Wilhelmsland (German New Guinea), New Britain, New Ireland, the German Solomons, the Marianne, Ladrone and Caroline group of islands and around 4,000 Germans, some of whom were then sent to Sydney. The language and the flag might have changed but the new arrivals took over the existing systems: “All land, however, is by law supposed to belong to the natives and the would-be planter is therefore obliged, before starting a plantation, to obtain permission to buy land from the Government, from which he afterwards buys as much as he needs at from twenty to thirty marks per hectare.” There seems to be an irony in his ‘supposed’.

The first of Australia’s foreign campaigns also held an enduring mystery. “The exultation shared by everyone in the expedition at the successful termination to the Brigadier’s negotiations was clouded by a rumour regarding the *AE1*, which, at first made light of, darkened within the next forty-eight hours into the blackness of certainty. On the afternoon of September 15th, the same afternoon on which Colonel Holmes held his first conference with Dr. Haber, the submarine, which had been dispatched by Admiral Patey for patrol duty on the previous evening, was sighted off Gazelle Point, south of Kaba Kaul, heading in the direction of Rabaul. She was never seen again.”

“The tragedy of the *AE1*, is the first loss that the Australian Navy has sustained, and its magnitude seems all the grimmer for the atmosphere of mystery which surrounds it.” “A strange patch of oil floating on the quiet surface of the sea, a nameless schooner, with a gun-mounting from which the gun was missing, discovered on the coast in flames and sinking—these are the only clues we possess to the manner in which the *AE1* came to her end and they are by no means conclusive.”

Had the Germans sunk the submarine? Had it hit a coral reef? Was an engine or pump malfunction responsible? No one knew. It was not until 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017 that the submarine was finally found—lying 300 metres down and off the Duke of York Islands not far from Rabaul. She had clearly not been attacked, nor had she run into a reef but what had happened? More research the following year came to the tentative conclusion that because a ventilation valve in the hull was partly open water had been able to enter. But was this as a result of human error or of a malfunction? The fate of the *AE1* remains to some extent shrouded in mystery. Three officers and thirty-two crew were lost.

**February 2: Havelock Ellis**

**February 3: Simone Weil**

**February 4: George Ernest Morrison**

**Jean Bedford**

**February 5: Peter Lalor**

**February 6: Keith Waterhouse**

**February 7: Charles Dickens**

**Alexander Harris**

**Beverley Farmer**

**February 8: Martin Flanagan**

**Nigel Krauth**

**Elizabeth Harrower**

**February 9: John Woodcock Graves**

**Anthony Hope**

**February 10: Beth Yahp**

**February 11: Roy Fuller**

**February 12: Charles Darwin**  
**February 13: Judith Rodriguez**  
**February 14: Bruce Beaver**  
**February 15: Bruce Dawe**  
**February 16: Peter Porter**  
**Hal Porter**  
**February 17: A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson**  
**February 18: Toni Morrison**  
**February 19: Lee Harding**  
**Margaret Giordano**  
**February 20: Mary Gaunt**  
**Mary Durack**  
**February 21: Malcolm Saville**  
**February 22: John Shaw Neilson**  
**R. D. Fitzgerald**  
**February 23: Norman Lindsay**  
**February 24: Andrew Inglis Clark**  
**David Williamson**  
**February 25: Frank Slaughter**

Frank Slaughter was an American doctor and wrote 'hospital' novels, 'historical' novels, and 'Biblical' novels. Slaughter is an unfortunate name for a doctor. His novel *David*, an attempted recreation of the life of David, using the relevant chapters in the Bible is readable and interesting but I was curious to know what kind of medical novels he wrote. Were they medical thrillers in the style of Robin Cook or more in the nature of A. J. Cronin's saga of a young doctor in a Welsh community?

The other day I came across his novel *Daybreak* in an op-shop and bought it. This is effectively a horror novel. It is set in the terrible asylums of the US in the first half of the twentieth century where doctors regularly performed lobotomies on patients in the hope of returning them to 'usefulness'. The young hero Jim Corwin has performed dozens of these operations on patients diagnosed with schizophrenia. Slaughter writes, "The title of his paper, *The Techniques of Transorbital Lobotomy*, was impressive enough. The operation, once considered daring, was now a fairly routine affair, requiring only initiative and skill on the surgeon's part. It took advantage of the fact that the roof of the eye-sockets, the deep depressions in the skull that housed the eyeballs, was also a floor beneath the frontal lobes of the brain. Here, the bone was far thinner than the cranium itself and easily penetrated without trephining. Twenty years ago, surgeons in both Europe and America had conceived the idea of attacking the brain via this partition, to sever the so-called thalamo-frontal nerve tract radiations, a procedure vital to lobotomy. The operation was usually performed after two electric shocks, spaced to follow each other by minutes. The surgery was carried through swiftly in the coma that ensued.

The technique was simple, and would have seemed grisly only to the layman. A single instrument was used—a slender barb of steel resembling an icepick. Inserted beneath the upper eyelid, between the eyeball and the roof of the orbit (as the eye-socket was called), it entered the skull opposite the pupil and behind the frontal sinus. Driven into the brain at this precise point, the barb penetrated the frontal lobe from below—rather than from above, as in the Ziegler method. Moved in a carefully-delimited arc, it could sever the nerve-tissue of the thalamo-frontal tract on

either side in a single stroke. The objective was identical with the Ziegler method. However, because of the easier approach, the severance could be made with little additional damage to the brain itself.

This, at least, was the claim advanced by the champions of transorbital lobotomy. Jim's intensive study, and a series of carefully staged post-mortem operations, had convinced him that existing literature on the subject had not exaggerated. Like all trained surgeons, he would have preferred to work with full vision (the procedure, for all its safeguards, still seemed dangerously blind). The fact remained that the approach carried with it far less danger of haemorrhage or other post-operative complications. Besides, he was hopeful that this type of lobotomy would be less likely to reduce a patient to robot-level, an ever-present threat with the Ziegler method."

But a young woman he is attracted to is diagnosed as suffering from catatonic schizophrenia and therefore a candidate for lobotomy. He doesn't want to risk her being turned into a robot so he looks to possible medications and begins using drugs including what became known as Ritalin. He meets considerable opposition from within the system, not least because a patient might need to continue to take the medication throughout his or her life. Clearly doctors were not in thrall to the big pharmaceutical companies then. Corwin's ideas eventually prevail and drugs gradually take over from surgery for the treatment of mental illnesses.

Lobotomies were performed in Australia and New Zealand and perhaps the most famous case of a woman saved at the last minute from the surgery was NZ writer Janet Frame. But I couldn't help wondering if anyone has ever followed up on the patients who had this procedure in Australia and what their lives were like afterwards.

**February 26: John Sandes**

**Gabrielle Lord**

**February 27: Peter De Vries**

**February 28: Robin Klein**

**February 29: Liu Shaotang**

**March 1: Ian Mudie**

**Henry Reynolds**

**March 2: Janine Burke**

**March 3: Elizabeth Riddell**

**Frank W. Boreham**

**Manning Clark**

**March 4: Edward Dyson**

**Lindy (Alice Lynne) Chamberlain**

The disappearance of baby Azaria Chamberlain at Uluru brought out the best and the worst in the Australian public. Scurrilous ditties like this anonymous one circled (and I have no time for the people unwilling to put their names to their 'productions'):

Once a jolly pastor camped in a caravan,  
Under the shade of a kurrajong tree,  
And he sang and he prayed as he watched the baby's bottle boil,  
"You'll be a Seventh-day Adventist like me."

Seventh-day Adventist, Seventh-day Adventist,  
You'll be a Seventh-day Adventist like me."  
And he sang as he watched the baby's bottle boil,  
"You'll be a Seventh-day Adventist like me."

Down came Lindy to snatch up Azaria,  
She picked up the scissors and stabbed her with glee,  
And she smiled as she shoved the baby in a camera bag,  
“It’s fun being a Seventh-day Adventist like me.”

Out came a dingo mosing (sic) round the camp fire,  
Lindy winked at Michael and said, “It wasn’t me.”  
What happened to the baby you put in the camera bag,  
Give it to the dingo and you’ll get off scot free.

Give it to the dingo,  
Give it to the dingo,  
Give it to the dingo,  
And you’ll get off scot free.

Up jumped the dingo and ran past the camera bag,  
“You’ll never blame her murder on me.”  
And Azaria’s ghost may be heard as you pass by the kurrajong tree,  
“Mummy was the one who did away with me.”

But there were also people who wanted to help and suggested practical ways of doing so. Chamberlain’s lawyer Stuart Tipple in *The Dingo Took Over My Life* wrote, “In a letter to Dr Jim Cox, president of Avondale College, Jess Duthrie, of Burwood, Victoria, asked: “Have the Chamberlain family asked that a ‘time and motion’ study be considered for the time it would have taken to clean up fresh blood, remove bloodied clothing, dispose of a bleeding infant (*all with a six-year-old standing nearby and a four-year-old sleeping nearby*) all in campsite conditions? No re-enactment of the alleged killing has been done with a dummy child spurting sticky blood, in a similar car. Where were the flies which would have been buzzing around the smell of blood when the passenger got into their car that night? Flies can’t be deceived. Blood can’t be cleaned off easily in the best of conditions – let alone a campsite! If Mrs Chamberlain killed her baby, she not only needs an Oscar for acting, but she should be entered into the Olympics for speed and dexterity in changing mood, changing clothes in a small tent in a caravan park, with a couple of boys nearby, performed the alleged murder, cleaning up the blood in a hand towel, and returned to the bar BQ area to open a can of beans, with Aidan! In a caravan Park or camping ground, one can be disturbed by anyone. I’m only a normal housewife and mother of two, who also goes camping in small tents. Frankly, even if I’d been the murderous kind, I would have found it impossible to perform in those circumstances. Could you please pass on my suggestion of a re-enactment of the alleged crime to Michael and Lindy? It could prove their innocence.”

“That was, of course, pure common sense, which kept breaking through spasmodically but ineffectively during the saga.”

This resonated with me as I had done a timeline for the murder Sue Neill-Fraser was supposed to have carried out on a yacht on the night of Australia Day in 2009.

## **WHAT THE CROWN CLAIMED IN COURT SUE NEILL-FRASER DID**

**Around 11.30 p.m. 26 January 2009.** Crown witness John Hughes claimed to have sighted a 'female outline' in a dinghy between 11.30 and 12.00 pm. I have worked from his earliest time.

**11.35 p.m.** Reaches the 'Four Winds' and comes alongside.

**11.37 p.m.** Ties up the dinghy and turns off the motor.

**11.39 p.m.** Climbs the ladder and crosses the deck to the hatchway.

**11.40 p.m.** Climbs down the gangway in the dark. (No light was reported on the 'Four Winds' at any time that night.)

**11.42 p.m.** Looks for some kind of weapon. The Crown first showed a large knife to the jury then speculated a wrench or screwdriver or 'something' had been used.

**11.43 p.m.** Goes into the cabin to see if Bob Chappell is in bed.

**11.48 p.m.** The Crown asserts that she struck Chappell from behind with a wrench. If he was still in bed this would be simple but she would then have to drag him out of bed and across the floor to near the gangway, as the winch couldn't move him from inside the cabin, then tidy up the bed. If he had been woken by her arrival and got up and come out she then had to circle round behind him to fit the Crown's claim and hit him an unknown number of times. This would be difficult to do in the dark and equally difficult to do with a torch in one hand and a wrench in the other. The Crown did not hazard a guess as to how many blows were required to cause death.

**11.50 p.m.** Checks that he is in fact dead and not merely stunned. She would not want him to crawl away or even manage to reach some form of communication. Every year thousands of people do survive severe head trauma.

**11.52 p.m.** Moves his body to where she can use the winch to lift it.

**11.54 p.m.** Cleans the wrench very thoroughly and puts it away or alternatively cleans it so it will not leave any marks and places it ready to be disposed of.

**11.55 p.m.** Finds a hacksaw or large knife and goes into the toilet.

**11.58 p.m.** Cuts through the reinforced piping connected to the toilet.

**11.59 p.m.** Returns the knife or saw to its drawer or shelf or leaves it elsewhere as nothing was found by the toilet.

**12.02 a.m.** Goes to the seacock in the floor, kneels down and opens it.

**12.04 a.m.** Goes to the 15 kilo fire extinguisher behind the gangway and removes it from its bracket.

**12.06 a.m.** Finds a suitable rope in a locker downstairs or lying on the floor and ties the extinguisher very carefully to the body so it won't come loose.

**12.10 a.m.** Climbs up on deck and unwinds the winch rope and drops it down below.

**12.13 a.m.** Ties the body very carefully with the winch rope so that it won't slip out as it becomes airborne. The extinguisher may be already tied on or may have been taken up separately to be tied on later.

**12.15 a.m.** Climbs up on deck again and winds the winch.

**12.18 a.m.** Raises more than 80 kilos dead weight very slowly and carefully so that it doesn't swing out and leave marks on any surface.

**12.20 a.m.** Places the body on the deck and unties it from the winch.

**12.24 a.m.** Cuts a large rope and winds it backwards round the winch. The Crown doesn't claim she did this but it was clearly visible in the photos shown to the jury and the Crown claims there was no one else involved. This would make the winch ineffective, just slipping rather than lifting.

**12.25 a.m.** Goes back downstairs. The Crown claimed she put on latex gloves to clean up. She would also need to find a cloth. There may have been a pool of blood left on the floor from Chappell while she went up to activate the winch. She also had to remove her fingerprints from the toilet pipe, seacock, torch, and the winch handle. The Crown did not hazard a guess as to whether she did this before or after sabotaging the boat. (And to clean up a boat you are going to sink does

seem pointless.) The Crown's case did not allow her to remove any personal possessions such as money, papers, jewelry, family photos etc. Nor did the Crown engage with such questions as when was Chappell's wristwatch removed. He did not wear it to bed but it was not found on board. Nor did they resolve whether he had got into pyjamas.

**12.27 p.m.** Completes her clean-up. As neither gloves nor cloths with her DNA or Chappell's blood were found she must then have put them into a pocket, handbag or rubbish bag. (The gloves found on a stove top only contained Tim Chappell's DNA. The so-called 'vomit rags' the police took away have now disappeared.)

**12.28 a.m.** Collects a red jacket from a locker or shelf, puts it on and closes it firmly so it won't flap.

**12.29 p.m.** Climbs upstairs again.

**12.31 a.m.** As the winch could not lift the body in the direction of the dinghy and over the rail she would need to drag or carry more than 80 kilos across the deck.

**12.35 a.m.** It would be difficult to get this weight down the ladder into the dinghy without letting it drop or slip or hit the dinghy awkwardly. This would have required considerable strength, skill, and patience.

**12.37 a.m.** Climbs into the dinghy, unties the painter, and starts the motor.

**12.41 a.m.** Motors out past all the moored boats and makes sure she can't be seen from the Yacht Club or any of the yachts still showing lights (remembering this was Australia Day; it had also been the day of the Sandy Bay Regatta and coincided with Chinese New Year.).

**12.42 a.m.** Turns off the motor or leaves it idling.

**12.44 a.m.** Very carefully pushes the body and fire extinguisher overboard so as not to capsize the dinghy. Possibly throws the wrench overboard too.

**12.46 a.m.** Watches to make sure the body does in fact sink and nothing from his pockets etc floats to the surface. The Fire Department says that type of fire extinguisher would float. The Crown presented it to the jury as a way to sink a body.

**12.47 a.m.** Restarts the motor and turns the dinghy round.

**12.52 a.m.** Motors back towards the rowing sheds.

**12.53 a.m.** Turns off the motor and possibly uses her rag to remove any marks along the dinghy's edge. The Crown claims that forensic tests show the dinghy was awash with blood in the well. (Though serious head trauma does not necessarily produce *any* blood.) She would have needed to clean this claimed blood off her so as not to transfer any to her car or the jacket. She may have run the dinghy into the beach and later pushed it off again so that it could drift along to the rock embankment where it was found.

**12.55 a.m.** Jumps or wades to the shore and climbs the embankment.

**12.58 a.m.** Walks or runs along to Margaret Street off the Esplanade, takes off the red jacket, and hangs it on a fence.

**1.03 a.m.** Walks or runs back around to Marieville Esplanade to where the car is parked the other side of the rowing sheds.

**1.05 a.m.** Finds her car key, unlocks the door, gets in, starts the engine, closes the door, possibly puts on a seatbelt and drives up to Sandy Bay Road.

The yacht's EPIRB was supposedly found on the rocks behind the Maning Avenue beach the next day. The Crown suggested Bob Chappell may have thrown it overboard but the DPP's scenario of Bob Chappell killed in the well of the yacht and winched up cannot be reconciled with the suggestion he went up the steps to the pilot house, took it from its bracket, went out on deck and threw it overboard. Suggesting Susan Neill-Fraser did this adds yet more activities to her already

frantic schedule and reportedly the only fingerprints on it were of Mr Page who said he found it and smudged ones belonging to Bob Chappell.

**The trouble with this timeline is that the Crown asserts that she was caught on CCTV footage driving away along Sandy Bay Road at 12.25 a.m. This is at least 40 minutes earlier.**

I have predicated my timeline on a young fit person with good night vision and strong nerves, not a Senior with a bad back and according to witnesses indecisive and vague at times. But to try to key in factors of age and a minor disability raised too many imponderables so I stayed with my fit youth.

The Crown can claim that the CCTV footage (which doesn't show a driver or a number plate) was not her after all but as the jury was given the strong impression it was and possibly took it into consideration when they brought in their guilty verdict the Crown cannot now change its claim. The Crown can claim that she wasn't messing round with the red jacket but as this was also part of the Crown's evidence it cannot now be dropped. The Crown did not claim she re-wound the winch backwards but they claim she used the winch and the photos shown to the jury show the re-winding and the cut ropes and the Crown, without evidence, says she acted alone.

The Crown can claim she drove away and came back later but as such a scenario wasn't put to the jury it cannot now be put forward. And if she came back later to sabotage the boat then the Crown's own expert witness who said that water had been entering the yacht for 6 to 12 hours before it was found sinking (and it was reported as sinking to the Port Authorities at around 5 a.m. by another yacht) would need to change his evidence to fit the different scenario proposed. And it still would not get her away from the scene fast enough to fit the CCTV footage as I have only given her around 12 minutes to sabotage the boat.

The Crown could do a complete re-creation to prove a minute could be shaved from my timeline here and there but no re-creation will cut more than half-an-hour from my timeline and anything less is pointless. And a proper re-creation using a 56-year-old woman with a slipped disc in her back, in the dark, would add substantially to this timeline.

I had grave doubts about the Crown's case when I heard it in Court. Now that I have tried to fit the Crown's case into the time the Crown allowed the defendant it is obvious it can't be done.

The saddest irony in the Lindy Chamberlain conviction and imprisonment was that it wasn't the safeguards of the Australian legal system which got her out of jail but the tragic death of an English tourist David Brett who fell from Uluru, on Australia Day 1986. When his body was found the baby's missing matinee jacket was also found. It supported what the Chamberlains had always said: a dingo had snatched their baby from the tent and made off with her.

### **March 5: Mem Fox**

**Evan Whitton**

### **March 6: Free Speech**

"Research has shown that people's brains do not process the information they get from social media very critically. Social media content is agitating, provocative, addictive—perfect for state-sponsored psychological operations. Many of the features of social media work well in the service of international propaganda operations. Any user can establish a personal bot network or a farm of private harassment accounts on sites like Facebook and Twitter. In the hands of Russian political technologists, these social media platforms are transformed into psychological weapons of mass destruction."

This was Finnish journalist Jessikka Aro in *Putin's Trolls*, her account of the way troll factories in Russia hound anyone who dares criticise Vladimir Putin or Russia's invasion of Ukraine, or even people speaking out more generally on democracy and freedom of speech. They

can lose jobs, reputations, livelihoods, and even people like ambassadors and respected leaders have found their lives turned upside-down.

But I pondered on that idea that we do not bring a critical mind to social media and I think it might be because people ‘browse’ the internet, moving from one idea or concept or story to another, rather than the way they might intensively ‘study’ a book. And perhaps because people use search engines to seek out like-minded people whose views will reinforce rather than challenge their own.

She goes on to say, “As early as 1971, in his book *Information War and the Free Person*, Finnish academic and member of parliament Kullervo Rainio described a central technique of information warfare: the manipulation of the meaning of concepts, which leads to the distortion of people’s thought processes. Through methods of information warfare, the word *democracy*, for example, can be redefined to mean “socialist system.”

“The corruption of the meaning of the word *statesman* in Lithuanian was such an operation. The *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* defines a *statesman* as “a wise, skillful, and respected political leader.” But on the Lithuanian internet, *statesman*, or *valstybininkas*, was redefined to mean the opposite: a member of a sinister, clandestine, perverted, and corrupt elite conspiracy.” The corruption of the meaning of words is, of course, not confined to Lithuania. Think of those dictatorships which call themselves the Democratic Republic of—

“Tim Berners-Lee gifted us with a free internet to provide us with something that was universally held and owned without any large companies or governments having total control. But in reality this has just created a power vacuum, which has been quickly filled by platforms that benefit from monetising the information flow, regardless of its accuracy or consequences. Rather than a place to build a better understanding, in this new online world we find ourselves drawn to those who validate our existing position. Our view of ourselves and everyone else is focused through a narrow prism of what human identity is, which distorts our perspective of what commonality looks like. The virtual world allows us to be the villain and the hero simultaneously, with little to no recompense. This is a freedom that clashes with libertarian thinking, discouraging convergence and nuance in favour of conflict and cruelty. Our words are not intended to liberate but to galvanise, reinforce and build like-minded supporters.”

Emma Harvey and Edson Burton in ‘In a diverse society, is freedom of speech realisable?’ in *The Free Speech Wars* (ed. Charlotte Lydia Riley).

It is understandable that people jump up and down demanding that things be banned, legislated against, removed, denied venues, shouted down, but is it wise? Does it make people safer and happier? I personally find it offensive that people endlessly use the name of Jesus to swear with but I cannot (and would not if I could) stop people saying things like ‘Jesus f--- Christ’ and so on every day. Andrew Doyle in *Free Speech And Why It Matters* tells this story. “Let us consider a specific example of how good people have been instrumental in defending the speech rights of those with unpardonable views. In 1977, in the suburb of Skokie in Chicago, a group of neo-Nazis were banned from marching by the city council. On the face of it, the decision made sense, nearly half of Skokie’s population was Jewish, including hundreds of survivors of the Holocaust. The demonstration appeared to be no more than anti-Semitic provocation for its own sake.

“To the surprise of many, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) came to the defence of the neo-Nazis. While this seems counterintuitive, it was a true test of the organisation’s commitment to constitutional freedoms. The question was not whether the bigotry of neo-Nazis had any basis in truth, but rather to what extent free speech is an indivisible liberty. Is it for everyone, or exclusively for those who espouse morally justifiable ideals?

“The ACLU understood that to make exceptions for the neo-Nazis would be to dilute the principle, thereby setting a precedent that threatens the rights of all of us. A detailed account of the

case was written by Aryeh Neier, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who served as National Director of the ACLU from 1970-78. In his book, *Defending My Enemy* (1979), he explains that he ‘supported free speech for Nazis when they wanted to march in Skokie in order to defeat Nazis’. For Neier, the conservation of his adversary’s First Amendment rights was ‘the only way to protect a free society against the enemies of freedom’. The recent conception of ‘hate speech’ is, in effect, a kind of fudge that attempts to circumvent this moral quandary. We might label speech we despise to be ‘hateful’ and therefore not subject to constitutional protection, but we have merely redefined the terms in order to evade an uncomfortable moral obligation to defend its existence.”

But there is a more insidious way in which people’s freedoms are undermined. Shoshana Zuboff in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* writes: “In the rapture of the young firm’s achievements, Google’s founders, fans, and adoring press passed over in silence the startling vision of invasion and conquest concealed in these assertions.

“The six declarations laid the foundation for the wider project of surveillance capitalism and its original sin of dispossession. They must be defended at any cost because each declaration builds on the one before it. If one falls, they all fall:

- We claim human experience as raw material free for the taking. On the basis of this claim, we can ignore considerations of individuals’ rights, interests, awareness, or comprehension.
- On the basis of our claim, we assert the right to take an individual’s experience for translation into behavioral data.
- Our right to take, based on our claim of free raw material, confers the right to own behavioral data derived from human experience.
- Our rights to take and to own confer the right to know what the data disclose.
- Our rights to take, to own, and to know confer the right to decide how we use our knowledge.
- Our rights to take, to own, to know, and to decide confer our rights to the conditions that preserve our rights to take, to own, to know, and to decide.”

People are rightly concerned when their details are hacked so as to hold firms and departments to ransom but we would be naïve to assume that our personal data is not spread into unknowable and ungettable reaches whenever we leave an on-line trail.

Jim Aubrey included this poem in his collection *Between Darkness and Dawn*. It is a reminder that you can say a lot of things in that privileged free-for-all called parliament that you couldn’t say outside it and it only gets called ‘robust debate’.

Scumbag!  
Mad dog!  
Mr Speaker!  
Mr Speaker!  
The Honourable Gentlemen  
will withdraw their improper remarks.  
Degenerate Drunk!  
Pissed fool!  
Mr Speaker!  
Mr Speaker!  
The Honourable Gentlemen

will withdraw their improper remarks.  
Compulsive liar!  
Liar Liar  
pants on fire!  
Mr Speaker!  
Mr Speaker!  
The Honourable Gentlemen  
will withdraw their improper remarks.  
Policy wanker!  
Policy slut!  
Mr Speaker!  
Mr Speaker!  
The Honourable Gentlemen  
will withdraw their improper remarks.  
Jellyback!  
Captain Whackey!  
Moonface!  
Penguin arse!  
Pig ears!  
Chicken shit!  
Take a flying duck to the moon!  
Take a flying truck to the moon!  
Mother.....  
Mr Speaker!  
Mr Speaker!  
The Honourable Gentlemen  
will withdraw their improper remarks  
or they will be forced to retire  
with a lump sum payment  
and superannuation equivalent to  
the lifetime income of ten million  
impoverished Australian families.

‘Leading the Nation’, Canberra 1996.

The American Founding Fathers and the United Nations General Assembly specifically upheld freedom of speech. Adolf Hitler specifically denied it to the German people. But it is rarely that clear-cut. When António Salazar came to power in Portugal in the 1930s he placed some small restrictions on free speech. Many people felt it was an acceptable price to pay in return for stability and an end to political bickering. But ‘small restrictions’ tend to keep on expanding once the freedom to challenge them is removed. Amnesty International owes its foundation to the fact that a British lawyer Peter Benenson in 1961 read of two Portuguese students in the university town of Coimbra raising a glass to ‘liberty’ in a café. For that the Salazar government sentenced them to seven years in jail.

“The future of fiction depends very much upon what extent men can be educated to stand free speech in women.”

Virginia Woolf.

“The first casualty when war comes is truth.”

US Senator Hiram Johnson. 1917.

I would like children to be kept safe and allowed to be children, not small adults, but when I read of five-year-old boys accessing pornography it is hard to see how to protect children from adult material. We now have the strange situation that small children cannot be allowed to see someone doing a Nazi salute but can view endless quantities of graphic violence and explicit sex.

**March 7: Nance Donkin**

**March 8: 'Frank the Poet' (Frank McNamara)**

**March 9: Paul Wilson**

**March 10: Peter Temple**

**March 11: George Edwards**

**Rupert Murdoch**

**Nancy Cato**

**Jack Davis**

**Geoffrey Blainey**

**March 12: Kylie Tenant**

**March 13: Roy Bridges**

**March 14: Suzanne Falkiner**

**March 15: Hesba Brinsmead**

**March 16: Matthew Flinders**

**March 17: Olive Pink**

**March 18: Di Morrissey**

**March 19: Irving Wallace**

**March 20: Edward Gibbon Wakefield**

**David Malouf**

'Helping a Lame Dog Over the Stile'

"Dear Sir, I have a cousin who has a horrid and inveterate practice of beginning rhymes on various subjects which he never finishes. Not a verse is ever completed. I have done all I can to convince him of his folly. If a man cannot finish a verse, why does he begin it without a better knowledge of his ability and means?"

My cousin, three weeks ago, began what he calls '*Stanzas in praise of South Australia*'. Day after day I found these 'Stanzas' in the imperfect state I have mentioned. So I want to shame him out of this imbecility of purpose. I have finished off what he began as well as I could, and I now send it to you to fill up any unforeseen gaps in your valuable paper. I hardly need add, that the lines between the brackets are those only for which I am responsible. Yours W. Adelaide, July 1843.

Hail South Australia! blessed clime,

Thou lovely land of my adoption:

(I never meant to see the spot

If I had had the slightest option).

Hail charming plains of bounteous growth!

Where tufted vegetation smiles,

(Those dull atrocious endless flats,

And no plain less than thirteen miles).

Hail tuneful choristers of air!  
Who open wide your tiny throats.  
(There's not a bird on any tree  
Can twitter half-a-dozen notes).

Hail glorious gums of matchless height!  
Whose heads the very skies pervade;  
Whose tops and trunks yield vast supplies,  
(But not a particle of shade).

Hail far-famed *Torrens*, graceful stream!  
On whose sweet banks I often linger,  
Sooth'd by the murmur of thy waves,  
(And plumb the bottom with my finger).

Hail *June*, our grateful winter month!  
Which never bring'st us wintry rigours.  
And when *sweet February* comes  
(It finds us steaming like the niggers).

Hail balmy rains! in showers come down,  
To do both town and country good;  
(And give to each on reaching home  
The blessings of a ton of mud).

Hail land! where all the wants of life  
Flow in cheap streams of milk and honey;  
Where all are sure of daily bread  
(If they can fork out ready money).

Hail *South Australia!* once more hail!  
That man indeed is surely rash  
Who cannot live content in thee,  
Or wants for anything (but cash).

Observer 29.7.1843. So who was this old grump?  
And he wasn't alone. A Mr Jordan was sent to England to attract  
emigrants to come to Queensland in the 1850s, leading another anonymous poet to write:

Now Jordan's land of promise is the burden of my song.  
Perhaps you've heard him lecture, and blow about it strong;  
To hear him talk you'd think it was a heaven upon earth,  
But listen and I'll tell you now the plain unvarnished truth.

Here snakes and all vile reptiles crawl around you as you walk,  
But these you never hear about in Mr Jordan's talk;  
Mosquitoes, too, and sandflies, they will tease you all the night,  
And until you get quite colonized you'll be a pretty sight.

...

To sum it up in few short words, the place is only fit

For those who were sent out here, for from this they cannot flit.  
But any other men who come a living here to try  
Will vegetate a little while, and then lie down and die.

Material taken from *The Emigrant's Friend, or Authentic Guide to South Australia 1848*: “In 1848, when this booklet was published in London as a guide to prospective emigrants, 23,904 people left the United Kingdom for the Australian colonies and New Zealand. In 1847, with the failure of potato crops threatening famine in Ireland and growing political unrest at home, the British Government had once again encouraged emigration by offering free passage to candidates of ‘good character’. Immigration, particularly of the labouring classes, was intended to relieve the overburdened Mother Country and, incidentally, the colonies, which had acute labour shortages.

In 1848, the four Australian colonies—New South Wales, Van Diemen’s Land, Western Australia and South Australia—had a white population of about 400,000. Western Australia, with fewer than 5000 people was considered a failure. Nor did emigrants favour Van Diemen’s Land, then still the jail of the colonies. South Australia, however, was booming with the recent discoveries of precious metals. And New South Wales, the parent colony, was expanding steadily. It had the largest population and the biggest settlement, Sydney, founded in 1788. The Port Phillip district, now Victoria, started as a small settlement in 1834 and grew rapidly. But Melbourne was still only a village in 1848. This booklet does not mention Brisbane, which started as a penal settlement on Moreton Bay in 1824. A drought in the 1840s hindered Brisbane’s growth and in 1846 fewer than 1000 people lived there.

Organised settlement started in New Zealand in 1840 when Britain annexed the land, which had a European population of about 2000. The first Europeans in New Zealand were whalers and traders in local produce, especially timber and flax. By 1848 the European population had swollen to 20,000, with new settlements at Auckland, Nelson, New Plymouth, Port Nicholson (Wellington) and Otago (Dunedin); Christchurch was not founded until 1850. There was hard work for new colonists and the author of this booklet warned that the industrious small farmers of moderate expectations were the most suitable immigrants.”

Hannah Robert in *Paved with Good Intentions* looks at the ‘settlement’ of Port Phillip and South Australia, two non-penal states. Batman’s famous ‘purchase’ of huge areas of Aboriginal land for a few trinkets was in our Social Studies books at school. My puzzle was: how did the Aborigines know what Batman wanted when they didn’t share a language? Hannah Robert points out that Batman could not buy that land if the Aborigines didn’t own it. And they couldn’t own it if the Crown owned it while they did not officially exist as land owners or even land occupiers, under the doctrine of *terra nullius*. Which of course begs the question of how the Crown acquired it.

South Australia is often put forward as an example of enlightened and conflict-free colonization. Unfortunately the indigenous people lost their land just as surely as indigenous people elsewhere round Australia. The concern expressed in London about dispossession did not translate into anything but an ongoing land grab here.

“By clouding its origins in Aboriginal land ownership, the humanitarian project could be framed as charity, a largesse that colonisers, as taxpayers, could withdraw at will. Once colonisers attained of self government, the imaginary distinctions surrounding ‘protectors’ as a third position separate from colonisers dissolved and colonisers began subjecting this bureaucratic appointment to economic criticism—were they getting their money’s worth in ‘protection’ and in solving ‘the Aboriginal problem’?”

“The title of this book addresses the moral chasm between the stated intentions of colonisers and the catastrophic harm they caused to Aboriginal people. We cannot know their subjective intentions—all we have to work with are their words and deeds. Those deeds suggest that while some colonizers genuinely believed an improved system of colonization could benefit Aboriginal people, many more used the same rhetoric to advance their own interests, and few bothered to ask Aboriginal people themselves what they understood as ‘benefits’.”

So where does Edward Gibbon Wakefield come into this history? What I didn’t know was that the site of Adelaide for the centre of the new colony was NOT everyone’s choice. Ian Mudie in *River Boats* wrote, “Although Sturt considered that the Murray Mouth could not be navigated, his discovery of at least a thousand miles of waterway had led the Wakefield theorists to become certain that the area about Lake Alexandrina—through which the waters of the Murray flow to the sea—and Spencer Gulf and Gulf St. Vincent was the ideal site for the colony they were planning.

By the time the South Australian Act had been passed by the English Parliament, the sponsors of the new province were convinced that the wool from the greater part of New South Wales would be shipped by way of the Murray, “the Mississippi of New Holland.” By avoiding the long haul over the mountains to Sydney, this would shorten the voyage to Europe by at least a month.

When William Light, Surveyor-General for South Australia, arrived on the coast in 1836 he carried instructions to find a site for the capital as conveniently near the Murray as possible. Colonel Light, as was his friend Sturt, was a soldier not a sailor; he, too, thought the Mouth would not be navigable, and also that the nearby coast would not provide a suitable site for the establishment of a port. With this in mind he established the capital, Adelaide, on the shore of Gulf St. Vincent, nearly sixty miles across the ranges from the nearest point of the Murray.

Governor Hindmarsh was a sailor. As soon as he arrived he began arguing that Adelaide had been put in the wrong place. Ships, he pointed out, would have to travel sixty miles off their regular route in order to reach it, and the haul across the ranges from the great plains of the Murray would be both time-wasting and tedious. His attitude was, a modern historian, Dr. Douglas Pike, says, “encouraged by the South Australian Company officers and a few land jobbers.”

Squabbles immediately broke out. Light, forced by Hindmarsh to examine the shores of Encounter Bay and Lake Alexandrina for a possible alternative site for the capital, reported that the bay was unsuitable. And no ship, he said, could pass through the breakers of the Mouth to reach Lake Alexandrina—a statement that, in years to come, skippers of the little steamers of the Murray were to make appear ridiculous time and time again as they passed in and out of the Mouth.

Three of Hindmarsh’s supporters then tried to row out of the Mouth. The fact that their boat overturned and one of them was drowned was considered at the time to be sufficient evidence of the unsuitability of the Mouth as an entrance for vessels. The two survivors, however, reported that Victor Harbor, fifteen miles to the west of the Mouth, was the finest site they had seen for a capital. Suggestions were then made that a canal should be cut from the Goolwa Arm, a little above the Mouth, to Victor, and that the two points should be joined by a railway.

Light then sent two of *his* supporters to examine the Mouth and Victor. Their report—which appears inaccurate, possibly deliberately so—condemned the whole idea of a port near the Murray, and suggested that the river was not suitable for navigation. Hindmarsh, still unconvinced, unavailingly recommended the removal of the capital to Victor Harbor.

Although Hindmarsh’s almost immediate recall left Light and his party triumphant, they kept offering evidence of the wisdom of Light’s choice. Soon after the departure of Hindmarsh, Sturt arrived from New South Wales. It would be many years, he said, before it was time to

navigate the river he had explored in 1830. Joining in on the side of his friend Light, he examined the Mouth. He tried to cross the bar four times—and then reported that it was not safe to navigate.

Old hands still chuckle at the thought of this report. To them Sturt was a blunderer, and they sometimes refer to Light as “the Blight of the Murray.” Between the time Sturt examined the Mouth and the time he presented his report, the captain of a wrecked ship, coming from the Coorong, had taken a whaleboat in and out of the Mouth without any trouble and reported that it would not be difficult to navigate.”

Of course Emigrants’ Guides sang the praises of other states as well. Take for instance this one from 1823:

Godwin’s Emigrant’s Guide  
to  
Van Diemen’s Land,  
more properly called  
Tasmania,  
containing  
A Description  
of its climate, soil, and productions;  
A Form of Application  
for  
Free Grants Of Land;  
with a scale  
enabling persons in inland towns, to estimate the  
expense of a passage for any given number  
of men, women, or children,  
A list of the most necessary Articles to take out,  
and other information  
Useful to Emigrants

Anyone reading this might imagine Tasmania was paradise, abounding with fertile soils, plentiful timber, creeks and rivers abounding in fish, all kinds of birds including the now-extinct emu (of which they say “The flesh of the emu is like young beef, and is considered wholesome and nutritive”) and all of it just waiting to be given out to the new arrivals. Some of the first names handed out have changed—Pitt’s Island has become Bruny Island, Table Mountain then became (after Waterloo) Mount Wellington. And some of the services established put the modern services to shame; the ferry across the Derwent crossed “every hour punctually as the clock strikes, at 9d. each person.” But they skate over the fact that the island is predominantly a penal colony, that there are bushrangers in the hills, and as for the original inhabitants ... “Of the *Aborigines of the Country* it may be expected that something should be said; but they are so very few in number, and so timorous, that they need hardly be mentioned; two Englishmen with muskets might traverse the whole country in perfect safety, as they are unacquainted with the use of fire-arms. They felt the effects of them severely some years ago, perhaps through mistake rather than from any intention to do them mischief;—the officer on duty seeing several of them approaching one of the settlements with a green bough, (which is commonly the emblem of peace,) but not being quite sure of their friendly disposition, discharged a volley of grape and canister shot, which killed many, and wounded others; since this, few of them have ventured to visit any of the British settlers, and they always fly at their approach. Their skins are black, their hair woolly, and in their features and appearance they resemble the Negro; they mostly go naked, but some of them have a kangaroo skin

slung over their shoulders; they have no houses, and lead a wandering life, depending on hunting and fishing for sustenance, and are perpetually at war with each other.

The women are sometimes known to run away from their husbands, owing to the harshness and tyranny they exercise over them, and attach themselves to the English sailors, who are frequently collecting seals, (with which the coasts of this island abound!) and, they say they find their situation greatly improved by so connecting themselves with the sealing gangs, for their native husbands made them carry all their lumber, and perform all kinds of hard work. They have always proved faithful and affectionate to their new husbands, and seem extremely jealous of a rival; the children produced by an intercourse with the natives and Europeans are handsome, of a light copper colour, with rosy cheeks, large black eyes, and well-formed limbs.”

Quite a few new arrivals must have got quite a shock when they disembarked ...

And before they disembarked ... Andrew Hassam brought together some diary entries of shipboard life in *No Privacy for Writing*. One such diary had a curious life. “The preservation of the diary of Mary Maclean is owed to a rabbit, a dog and a stone. In 1961 Steven Cross was out hunting rabbits with his dog in the Hill End area of New South Wales, and as the dog disappeared into the undergrowth, in order to encourage the dog or the rabbit, he threw a stone into the scrub after it. The stone clattered against a hidden object, and when Steven Cross had followed the rabbit, the dog and the stone through a wall of brambles, he found, entirely hidden from the outside, a derelict house. Inside the house was a writing box; and inside the writing box was the diary of Mary Maclean.”

He goes on to say she was born at Port Askaig on the Scottish island of Islay in the 1840s. Her mother died, her brother sailed for Sydney, and she and her father moved to Glasgow. Her stepmother died and then her much-loved father. She went to work for a bootmaker for 11 shillings a week but obviously the idea of joining her brother in Australia became more attractive. Her brother paid her passage of £4 on the *Africana* which meant she had to share a bed and wash in salt water. But despite some rough weather and some rough people she wrote detailed entries on the voyage, deaths, accidents, ports of call, food and more, “Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> [January 1866] this is another Beautiful Day the Sea is rougher to Day But Still Beautiful thair is a good Brease of Wind and I am told that We are Sailing at the rate of 8 KH” but another day she is “Weary With Hunger and fatigued With the heat” and another day she speaks of cleaning but then “We have lost sight of the Albettras But Can See Cape hens and pigions the hens are Black the pigions are larger than ours and not So pretty.”

She married in Australia and had 4 sons and the family ran a mine at Hill End. “Mary died in Sydney in 1920, but her body was brought back to lie with her husband, William, in the family plot at Tambaroora cemetery. After her death, the house was locked up with all her furniture and effects, and although her sons continued to mine in the area until the 1950s, they lived elsewhere. Cheaper cars and the easing of petrol rationing after World War II made Hill End accessible to increasing numbers of trippers from Sydney, among them, apparently, members of the Sydney Group of artists, such as David Strachan, Russell Drysdale, and Donald Friend, and these groups pilfered the contents of many of the derelict houses, including the contents of Mary’s house. Either during this period, or earlier, Mary’s diary found its way from her house to the house in which it was discovered, though how it was transferred remains a mystery. Yet the fortuitous way in which it was preserved and ultimately saved from the ravages of white ant, bush fire and artist has left us today with the rare testimony of one of those hundreds of thousands of young unaccompanied working women who made the long voyage out under sail.”

**March 21: Thomas Shapcott**

**Frank Hardy**

**March 22: Frederick Johns**

**March 23: F. J. (Frederick Joseph) Thwaites**

**Charmian Clift**

“ ‘And what does it feel like to be a teen-age idol, Mr Lust?’ Thus, winningly, the lady reporter.

‘Well ... I dunno ... I mean it don’t make that much difference, really, I was idle before I was a teen-ager.’ Thus, perplexed, the oafish pop-singer.

This is part of a Peter Sellars’ sketch that used to make me laugh until I cried. But presently ... well, I dunno. Have you noticed how often, and how glibly, the word ‘idol’ is used in newspaper headlines and on newspaper billboards? And in connection with whom? T.V. idol. Screen Idol. Sports Idol. Teen-age Idol. Who on earth are we idolizing? And to what end? I know a number of people who work in the mass media—television and films and radio and journalism—and most of them are nice people and very hard-working, and some of them are detestable people but still hard-working, and I can’t think of a single one of them absolutely suitable to be set up as an object of worship, although most of them, at one time or another, have been referred to as such.

An idol, according to my dictionary, is an image of a god or a saint, or an object to which or through which worship is offered. Or, an idol is the image of a heathen god. Or ... (dictionaries are always rather fun, because they give you so many alternatives, and so ambiguous, like the Oracle of Delphi) ... an idol is a source of error, a fallacy, an insubstantial apparition, a phantom due to reflection, as in a mirror.”

Charmian Clift in a collection of her newspaper columns *The World of Charmian Clift*.

**March 24: Eliza Hamilton Dunlop (d)**

**Joseph Priestley (New Style)**

Harriet Martineau in her *Autobiography* wrote, “In ‘Briery Creek,’ I indulged my life-long sentiment of admiration and love of Dr. Priestley, by making him, under a thin disguise, the hero of my tale. I was staying at Lambton Castle when that number appeared; and I was extremely surprised by being asked by Lady Durham who Dr. Priestley was, and all that I could tell her about him. She had seen in the newspapers that my hero was the Doctor; and I found that she, the daughter of the Prime Minister, had never heard of the Birmingham riots! I was struck by this evidence of what fearful things may take place in a country, unknown to the families of the chief men in it.” And, “I have told how a Prime Minister’s daughter was for the first time informed of the Birmingham Church and King riots, when Dr. Priestley’s chapel, house and library were destroyed.”

F. W. Gibbs in his biography *Joseph Priestley* begins: “Today it is rare for a man, especially a scientist, to become famous in more than one field at once. Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), on the other hand, preferred to think of himself, not as an expert, but as something more exciting—an adventurer in science and in the universal search for truth. For many years he was a pioneer in education. He ran a school by himself, and wrote textbooks on several subjects. As a tutor in an academy, he earned a reputation for his wide knowledge of ancient and modern languages. He became a religious leader and, as a champion of freedom in all its forms, he was involved in politics and engrossed in questions of liberty. By many he was respected, admired, and even revered; by others he was scorned, feared, hated, and reviled.

“Priestley was one of those forthright characters who in their generation appear to some as enemies of society, because they are brave enough to follow the truth as they see it, wherever it may lead. The forces of law and order tend to regard such men as dangerous, for they release the forces of change. They appear even more dangerous if born into a restless age, and Priestley lived at

a time when the spirit of revolution led to upheavals both in America and in Europe. In spite of all this, he is now remembered chiefly for his work in chemistry and electricity. His discoveries were of great importance, a fact that is all the more surprising when the full range of his life's work is borne in mind. Indeed, we cannot hope to understand the one without knowing something of the other."

"The dissenting academies occupied an important place in eighteenth-century education, for the old universities of England did not freely admit any but members of the Anglican Church until 1872. Dissenters, it should be remembered, included not only nonconformist Protestants who could not conscientiously subscribe to the articles of the Anglican Church, but also Catholics, Jews, and Quakers, whose sons were normally debarred from preparing for the ministry or the professions in the universities." You will notice the mention of 'sons' as no women, not even Anglican women, could attend university. "Many of them, therefore, attended the academies, and several of those who could afford it completed their education in Scotland, for example in medicine or law at Edinburgh, or on the Continent. Both Anglicans and Dissenters had their strict adherents and their broad-minded latitudinarians; the dissenting academies reflected these differences, some imposing what amounted to religious tests of their own, whereas others were 'free', accepting Anglicans and others without discrimination. Some of the latter enjoyed an atmosphere of intellectual freedom unknown among the orthodox of all denominations.

"In this movement towards greater freedom Dr Isaac Watts, the hymn-writer, exerted a notable influence. Watts was the author of a catechism widely used among Dissenters, and he wrote textbooks that had a considerable vogue; but he was chiefly admired for his devotion to civil and religious liberty. His philosophy of education and his belief in the value of free thought and discussion on all subjects, including religion, greatly influenced Doddridge, at whose academy all sides of controversial questions were openly examined. These somewhat novel tendencies were carried over to Daventry under Caleb Ashworth, and it was this true freedom to study, think, and discuss that attracted Priestley, for he had already developed an intense distaste for dogma, from whatever source it came. This attitude seems to date from the time when he was refused admission to membership of the chapel attended by his aunt because he was unable to show due repentance for the sin of Adam and to give a sufficiently 'spiritual' account of his religious experiences."

It wasn't that Daventry had much in the way of resources. Gibbs speaks of its 'drabness' and 'restricted facilities'. But it enabled Priestley to learn Greek, mathematics, and chemistry. And it is perhaps a reminder that it is not facilities but the passion of students and the encouragement of teachers that promote learning.

He researched all kinds of things, air, water, electricity, but behind his curiosity and desire to discover was always a practical element. Why was some air noxious and other air invigorating. He found that some air contained a high level of methane. Why did iron rust in some situations. Why did things grow in some water and not in other water. After he died Sir Humphry Davy said of him, "Chemistry owes to him some of her most important instruments of research, and many of her most useful combinations; and no single person ever discovered so many new and curious substances."

So what happened in Birmingham that so damaged his life and led to him spending his last years in America? He promoted the need for reform in the Monarchy, the established Church, the State. And then came the French Revolution. Priestley saw himself as a republican though not a revolutionary. But it was easy for his opponents to make inflammatory claims about him, that he was at a dinner for Revolution in Birmingham, that he wanted to bring down the king. He wasn't at

the dinner but the mob which set out to burn the two chapels he preached at were organised and directed. But then the mob got out of hand. Priestley's house and library and laboratory were completely destroyed.

"Being inflamed by such false information, the mob, after demolishing the homes of Priestley and Russell, had gone on to destroy, burn, or plunder the home of John Ryland (formerly the house of John Baskerville at Easy Hill); Bordesley Hall and several houses belonging to John Taylor; Hutton's town and country houses; the mansion of George Humphrys, near Priestley's house at Sparkbrook; Moseley Hall and other property in the vicinity; a meeting-house and minister's house at Kingswood; a farm at Worstock, and another at Solihull; estates at Ladywood and Five Ways; and Withering's mansion, Edgbaston Hall."

People spoke of Priestley's quiet dignity in the face of his terrible loss. But it led directly to his decision to leave England and settle in the infant United States. As he was already an old man he found the change difficult but he struggled to re-establish his scientific life and his teaching. *The Times* had originally criticized Priestley but they discovered they had been fed false information about Priestley. He had not written or distributed the inflammatory leaflets attributed to him nor had he attended that Dinner for Revolution. They then in an about-face wrote: "Under these circumstances, the Doctor, we must acknowledge, has been cruelly treated, and we do most sincerely, with every man who admires Genius, lament the loss of his valuable philosophical apparatus—of his library and his manuscripts. Their destruction is irreparable ... "

Though Priestley had already published quite widely on his scientific experiments, his thoughts on religion and his ideas to improve education, all his unpublished notes and drafts, along with considerable correspondence and rare books were lost, along with the scientific apparatus he had often contrived himself.

I wonder if Martineau's focus was on Priestley the scientist or Priestley the family man or Priestley who lost his life's work? Or perhaps they are indivisible.

**March 25: Harry Butler**

**Gerald Murnane**

**March 26: Henry Somer Gullett**

**Barcroft Boake**

**Archibald Meston**

**March 27: Rosa Praed**

**Kenneth Slessor**

**March 28: St Teresa of Avila**

**March 29: Helen Yglesias**

**March 30: William Woolls**

**David Souter**

**March 31: Andrew Lang**

**April 1: Paul Hasluck**

*The Bulletin* 1882, 'Only a Blackfellow'. "Far away in the remote wild West of this Continent, another of that unhappy race which the whites have dispossessed of its hunting-grounds is to pay the penalty of death for having killed a station-hand who lured away the partner of his joys and sorrows.

On this subject *The Bulletin* says: 'Twas ever thus:

*O blackfellows, you look like men,*

*And should be, therefore, of our kin;*

*We give you rum and faith. What then?*

*You'll surely spare us a small gin.*

“Meanwhile that image, a naked Australian bushman, was sitting shivering among the offal of his oyster middens. For he had not yet learned how to cook a meal or build himself a house. More miserable than the beasts of the field. He was starving to death while all along the banks of the Seine the booksellers were growing rich turning out their voyages to the glamorous utopia of the Great Southern Continent.”

From *The Story of the Pacific* by Hendrik Van Loon 1940. (And to think that people pay big money for a plate of oysters!) But this is a reminder that the past was (and sometimes still is) written by people I wouldn't ask to do a 'garage sale' sign, they were so lacking in common sense, to put it politely.

“When we enter into international discussion and raise our voice, as we should raise it, in defence of human rights and the protection of human welfare, our very words are mocked by thousands of degraded and depressed people who crouch on rubbish beds throughout the whole of this continent.”

Paul Hasluck.

**April 2: Jennifer Rowe**

**Catherine Gaskin**

**April 3: William James Farrer**

**April 4: Glen Rounds**

**April 5: Arthur Hailey**

**April 6: Furnley Maurice**

**Graeme Base**

**April 7: Jennifer Maiden**

**April 8: Ursula Curtiss**

**April 9: Lesbia Harford**

**Cyril Pearl**

**April 10: Paul Theroux**

**April 11: Bernard O'Dowd**

**April 12: Charles Gavan Duffy**

**Jack Hibberd**

**April 13: Amanda Lohrey**

**Diana Gribble**

**April 14: Gordon Childe**

**April 15: Eva Figs**

**April 16: Marion Halligan**

**April 17: Isak Dinesen**

**April 18: Henry Clarence Kendall**

**April 19: Melville Post**

**April 20: Betty Cuthbert**

Betty Cuthbert called her autobiography *Golden Girl* and she records her amazing 3 gold medals at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956. She was unwell for the Rome Olympics but came back to win a gold medal in Tokyo in 1964. And then tragedy struck. While she was still only in her late

thirties she developed multiple sclerosis. She battled on, trying everything to find a cure without success, and increasingly dependent on her friends and her faith.

She wrote of Melbourne: “It was all over bar the shouting. My week had all but finished. For me there was just the Closing Ceremony. It was a very moving pageant, and I can still hear the strains of ‘Waltzing Matilda’ (with special Games’ words adapted by Australian poet William Tainsh) and ‘Will ye no’ come back again?’, sung as the athletes filed out of the stadium:

*Homeward, homeward, soon you will be going now;  
Momok wonargo ore go-yai,  
Joy of our meeting, pain of our parting,  
Shine in our eyes as we bid you goodbye.*

*Goodbye, Olympians; goodbye Olympians,  
(On comes the evening, west goes the day.)  
Roll up your swags and pack them full of memories,  
Fair be the wind as you speed on your way.*

I’ll never forget those two parting songs. They put the finishing touches to the week that I will always cherish as mine and mine alone.”

(The Aboriginal words meant ‘Farewell, brother. By and by come back’.)

What many people don’t know was that if the founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, had had his way no women would have competed in the Olympics. Peter Sweeney in *Edwin Flack: Lion of Athens* points out: “The move to give women the ‘heave-ho’ came from the host country – not once, not twice, but three times. The leader of the pack in regards to ousting women was none other than Pierre de Coubertin.

“ ‘The Baron’ viewed the modern games as a celebration of virile, male sport. His outlook obviously came from his upbringing. Female sport was virtually non-existent in France at the time.

“Women were seen as far ‘too delicate’ to contest sport, which wasn’t regarded as physically or socially acceptable to them.”

He obviously hadn’t met any of the tough women of Australia’s Outback.

“Apart from seeing sport as an ideal product of male endeavour, de Coubertin thought that to allow women into them would denigrate the Games.” He defined his Olympic Games as “the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism with internationalism as a base, loyalty as a means, art for its setting, and female applause as reward.”

And yet women had been there in an unofficial form right from the beginning. In 1896 a Greek woman, “Melpomene, had applied to contest the marathon. Naturally, due to the thoughts of the Olympic boss, her application was rejected.” But she ran behind the men finishing, it was said, in four and a half hours. Given that a number of the men didn’t even finish this was very impressive.

Women competed unofficially in Paris, London, and Stockholm. “At the Congress of Paris two years later (1914) there was a move to oust women from the Olympic Games arena. If it wasn’t for Flack, a big supporter of women’s causes, which was confirmed when he died in 1935, and the other Australian delegates, the move may have got up.” And the Australasian delegates would not have been there if it had not been for two British delegates Gordon Inglis and the Rev. de Courcy Laffan insisting they be invited. The USA supported France but Britain and Germany supported the Australasian delegates who carried the day.

“As Mr. Laffan pointed out, the purpose of the whole Olympic idea is the improvement of the bodily physique, and if so for men, why not also for women?”

Do we still see this as the purpose of the Games or has it become a celebration of elite sport watched by a lot of flabby ‘couch potatoes’?

Of course there were other arguments: Germany didn’t want boxing, the USA didn’t want yachting, soccer but not rugby was approved. Decisions were made about amateur status and what constituted a nation. But it was the formal admission of women which was the most important decision made.

At the 2000 Sydney Olympics to celebrate 100 years of women’s sport at the Olympics women brought the Olympic torch into the stadium including Shirley Strickland, Dawn Fraser, Cathy Freeman who lit the flame, and the indomitable Betty Cuthbert with Raelene Boyle pushing her wheelchair. The *Official Souvenir Book* of the Sydney Olympics said, “The suspense was palpable when Betty Cuthbert entered the stadium, the Olympic torch strapped to her wheelchair, pushed by Raelene Boyle.”

**April 21: J. S. Manifold**

**April 22: Damien Broderick**

**April 23: William Shakespeare**

**Professor David Wilson**

“John Reid, the technique’s namesake, built his reputation in part on a 1955 Nebraska murder case in which he elicited a confession from a young forester called Darrel Parker. Twenty-three years later, a death row inmate named Wesley Peery admitted he was the real killer. Parker was formally exonerated in 2012” wrote T. Christian Miller and Ken Armstrong in *Unbelievable*.

Professor David Wilson in *Signs of Murder*, his book about a Scottish miscarriage of justice, the case of George Beattie, wrote about John Reid:

“Often the person making this type of false confession – in a sort of flawed cost/benefit analysis – reasons that it will all work out fine in the end, as it is obvious that they are innocent and, in the meantime, they can just ‘confess’, leave the station and get on with their lives.

“It rarely works out that way, especially in the USA where detectives are trained to interview suspects in a particular manner called the Reid technique, which the recent Netflix series *Making a Murderer* has turned into a subject of popular debate.

“John Reid was a former police officer in Chicago who would later become a polygraph expert. He believed that he could get even the most recalcitrant suspect to confess, and not through the common tactic of the time of beating a confession out of the suspect but through a technique that he had developed alongside and informed by his own self-taught understanding of human psychology.

“Put very briefly, the Reid technique is accusatory rather than investigatory. Detectives confront a suspect with the details of the case and the evidence that they have against them at the start of their interviews. That evidence does not have to be genuine – American detectives are allowed to lie. They might state that they have found the suspect’s fingerprints or DNA at the scene of the crime, or that witnesses have identified the suspect as being the culprit. None of this needs to be true, and often isn’t. Detectives will also suggest more palatable reasons as to why the suspect committed the crime – even if they are in fact innocent. The suspect is offered excuses, such as ‘we know that you didn’t mean to do it’, or ‘you have put up with so much, it’s no wonder that you just snapped’. This is called ‘theme development’ within the technique and can go on for many hours until the interviewee cracks and signs a confession, even if that confession is for a crime they did not commit.”

In Australia detectives talked of a ‘brick’, of developing a brick wall around a suspect that they couldn’t knock down.

The Reid Technique in the UK was superseded by PEACE. Sandie Taylor in *Forensic Psychology* writes: “In the U.K., since the introduction of the PEACE model, there has been an emphasis on using ethical measures in the interviewing of suspects. Griffiths has stated: ‘any interview that probes a suspect’s account, and explores possible motives and defences, should be viewed as being just as effective as one that gains a confession’. So what is meant by PEACE? PEACE is an acronym for:

- P: planning and preparation: this is the process of getting ready for interviewing and can be summed up as ‘investigate then interview’ rather than ‘interview then investigate’.
- E: engage and explain: it is good practice not to have a stressed suspect, which is why it is important to first build a rapport. The interviewer has to use plain English and ensure the suspect understands the interview procedure and questions.
- A: account: a full account of the event is obtained from the suspect without any police interruption. Once details are obtained, the interviewer is allowed to challenge any inconsistencies.
- C: closure: the account is summarised and any points verified. The interviewer will inform the suspect of what will happen next in the criminal proceedings.
- E: evaluation: this is the end of the interview, and a time when the interviewer assesses and reflects on whether objectives were achieved.

“The PEACE approach has had mixed results. There is great variation in the way the PEACE interview is conducted, with some elements of the approach being omitted or ineffectively conducted. One major problem is the limited time devoted to training police officers in the use of the PEACE interview. There is a tendency among British police forces to allocate only five days towards learning interviewing skills, which breaks down to two days spent on learning the CI and three on the PEACE approach. Given the intricate nature of acquiring interviewing skills, more time should be allocated, which is what the Investigative Interviewing Strategy (introduced in 2003 by the Association of Chief Police Officers, ACPO) aimed to do. Police training interviewing and interrogation skills now lasts between one and three weeks and includes courses that can be residential, distance and workplace-based. The West Yorkshire police force now devotes three weeks of training to the PEACE approach.” They have also shifted “towards gradual disclosure of relevant evidence or information to the suspect, rather than the now outdated PEACE approach of doing so at the onset of the interview.” And “the gradual disclosure of evidence (GUE), which allows the interviewer to confront the suspect when the account they give is at odds with the evidence” because GUE has been found to “be more effective than either early or late disclosure of evidence.” This of course is partly aimed at discovering the truthfulness or otherwise of a suspect’s account. But I have another question: has the honesty and integrity of police officers in the UK improved?

Of course investigative techniques is only one area where problems enter. I have just been reading *Autopsy of a Crime Lab: Exposing the Flaws in Forensics* by Brandon L. Garrett. Although it is predominantly about the USA it resonated. The same sorts of problems have been identified in Australia.

Every aspect of crime solving is vulnerable to human error, human carelessness, human bias. Garrett writes, “The crime lab system needs quality control rules, like those that a clinical

laboratory must follow. ... At most labs, no one does. Aside from easy annual reviews, many labs do not have routine quality control checks of the actual casework.” “The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a worldwide federation of standard-setting groups, and it develops detailed requirements for quality controls, including in laboratories. When there are complaints, or errors occur, or there is nonconforming work, the ISO requires that a lab must “take action to control and correct” the problem or “address the consequences,” and do so “as applicable.” That language does not create clear responsibilities. When people may be in prison due to past errors or “nonconforming” work, then labs should have ethical obligations to do far more. They must notify all of the people potentially harmed and notify the courts.”

It can range from people deliberately falsifying reports to suit police, failure to complete tests, thefts particularly of drugs, inexperience, carelessness, contamination, mislabeling, confusion. “The problem of error in forensics begins at the crime scene.” Things touched with bare hands, things carried on shoes, items not sealed carefully, items not identified properly, “Gloves, in particular, have been shown to easily transfer low levels of DNA between objects.” And inside the lab things can be lost, destroyed, machines may not be installed, maintained or calibrated correctly. “Crime lab directors complain that almost everything they receive from crime scenes is improperly sealed, if not also poorly labeled, or even contaminated. The backlogs and time pressure in labs are real, but they are magnified by police submitting evidence that will not actually help to catch a culprit, because it is not useful, it is duplicative, or it is badly collected. Whereas quality control at the lab can be terribly inadequate, quality control in the field can be much worse. Often it is police agencies, not crime laboratories, that gather evidence at crime scenes ... We cannot depend on the outcomes in our labs or in our courtrooms if sound science and quality control are not in place at the crime scene.”

We have become complacent on so many fronts. For example, we simply accept the results of breathalyzer tests yet ... “Breath tests have all sorts of problems, including because different people release more alcohol into their breath than others. It can depend on how you breathe. For example, twenty seconds of rapid breathing or hyperventilation can decrease the amount of alcohol in one’s breath by 11 percent. A few deep breaths can decrease breath alcohol by 4 percent and holding one’s breath can increase it by 12 percent. Changes in a person’s body temperature also have a big impact on breath alcohol, as does breath temperature. Finally, lung volume makes a big difference. On average, women and older individuals have less lung volume and may typically show higher breath alcohol.”

It has been stated, for many decades, that every fingerprint is unique. But in fact no one knows that for certain because only a tiny fraction of the world’s fingers have actually been printed. I may share prints with people in Mali or PNG or North Korea or Finland. No one knows for sure. Other tests such as handwriting analysis, bitemarks, hair comparisons, facial recognition and many other ‘tools’ have been shown to be fallible. Now we are being urged to trust DNA but there are all sorts of problems inherent. Samples can be mixed, contaminated, mislabeled; there have been extraordinary mix-ups. And again we do not know for absolute certainty if every person’s, apart from identical twins’, DNA is unique.

Amit Katwala *In Tremors in the Blood* looks at the development of the polygraph. It had been noticed that when people lie it can change physical processes, breathing, heartbeat, sweating, flushing etc, but it was August Vollmer, John Larson, and Leonarde Keller in the USA who developed the machine which became known as the lie-detector. It was begun with the best of intentions, police regularly beat suspects into confessing to whatever they wanted to get solved, and Vollmer thought the machine could bring science rather than brute force to the solving of crimes. The problem is that it came to be treated as infallible when it wasn’t. All sorts of things could give a wrong result, not least the sheer stress of being tested in the first place. But the search for a way of

finding a reliable way of testing people's physical response goes on, looking at brain waves, eye movements, body movements, temperature, breathing rate, blood flow to different parts of the brain. Those sci-fi stories which use a 'mind probe' only show the hero able to block the action of the probe—not that the probe itself might only be minimally effective.

And under everything is a fundamental problem. The whole system, police, forensic labs, courts, is geared to finding a person guilty, NOT to assume them innocent and to clear their name. And when you have that underlying attitude then it subtly influences everything in our so-called justice system.

Alison Haynes in *Change* wrote about Stéphane Bourgoïn, a French author, bookshop owner, filmmaker, who wrote *The Black Book of Serial Killers*, *100 Years of Serial Killers*, *The Serial Killers are Among Us*, and *Who Killed the Black Dahlia?* He was obviously obsessed by serial killers and he found a ready market for his books even though they were repetitive and pedantically written. He claimed a serial killer had killed his wife Eileen. But when people started looking they found he had never had a wife Eileen and had not done most of the interviews with police and killers that he had claimed. He was clearly a plagiarist and a liar.

The interesting point she makes is that only about 1% of murders are done by serial killers. So why are we, the public, apparently fascinated by serial killers? And so great is this fascination that people still went on buying Bourgoïn's books after he'd been shown to be a fraud.

A different problem in our police services is shown up in the treatment dished out to women as shown in Leigh Straw's interesting book about Australia's first policewoman. She calls her book *Lillian Armfield* and subtitles it *How Australia's First Female Detective took on Tilly Devine and the Razor Gangs and Changed the Face of the Force*. Straw writes, "There will never be another Australian police officer like Lillian Armfield. Many women have followed her into the job but none have experienced it quite the same as Lillian did. Her policing career was of its time and shows us what it was like to police Sydney's underworlds in the early twentieth century. More than this, Lillian not only had to fight crime but also prove to the boys in blue that women could be there too. She was one of the first female police officers appointed in Australia – the first of two, in fact – and was the nation's first female police detective. Back when Lillian's work as a detective was not formally recognised by designation with the title 'detective', she paved the way for women to eventually become detectives in the Australian police forces. Lillian worked as a detective even without formal recognition for her work. There was no precedent so everything she did on the job was on her own initiative."

"The work of the Women's Police was crafted in a very specific manner. Female special constables were employed primarily to look after the welfare of girls and women. It was a considerable job with duties including: keeping children off the streets; working with schools to prevent truancy; reading the various daily newspapers 'to put detectives on the track of those who are apparently endeavouring to decoy young girls by advertisement or by any other means'; patrolling the railway stations and wharves looking for runaway or lost girls, as well as regular patrols around slum neighbourhoods looking for drunken women and neglected children. This was enough in itself but the Women's Police were also required to keep a watch over brothels and wine shops attracting vulnerable young women into their business, patrol public parks each evening and enforce 'the rules concerning pedestrian traffic'."

This was made harder because she was not allowed to arrest anyone, was not provided with a uniform let alone a weapon or a vehicle, had to sign an indemnity 'agreeing the police department was not responsible' for her safety and welfare and there was no compensation for 'injuries sustained on the job'. And if she wished to marry then she would face instant dismissal. Yet "Few

jobs were more difficult for women in the early twentieth century than working in the women's Police. It wasn't just that Lillian Armfield was a woman working in a male-dominated world; she worked around streets where girls and women were threatened by or directly involved in drug and human trafficking, prostitution, gang warfare, murder, abortions, kidnappings and rape." This was partly what kept her going, the way young women were turned into drug addicts to keep them in the sordid business of prostitution, and she was responsible for preventing the coercion into or helping hundreds of young women out of the trade.

"Unlike her male colleagues, Lillian did not go through the police academy. Her training ran concurrent with her first year on the job. She learned the law, became familiar with court proceedings, was taught finger-printing techniques and given some self-defence training."

Lillian was appointed in 1915 with Maude Rhodes who left the police several years later. South Australia followed suit the same year, Victoria in July 1917 and Tasmania and Western Australia later that year, but Queensland did not employ women till 1931 and the Northern Territory not till 1961. "Women were introduced into the federal police force in 1947."

It was a hard life though an interesting one. "Besides the runaway girls, fraudulent fortune-tellers and organized crime – enough in itself to keep anyone busy – Lillian policed a number of cases through the years that show the eclectic nature of policing work, including investigating vandalism of graves, jewel thefts, kidnappings and house-breakings."

Straw finishes up: "Lillian Armfield's story reminds us, and hopefully inspires our children to see, that one person can really make a difference to the world around them. Be fierce, push the boundaries, aim high, and know that change often comes from someone having the commitment and tenacity to lead by example. Lillian led an extraordinary life. She may not have always seen it that way herself, believing she was merely doing her job, but her example – her legacy – has left a lasting impression on Australian policing history and allowed so many other women to follow in her shoes."

**April 24: Marcus Clarke**

**April 25: Eric Rolls**

**April 26: Beatrice Clarke**

**Morris West**

**April 27: Helen Hodgman**

**Hugh Lunn**

**April 28: Anna Clarke**

**April 29: John Tranter**

**Rod McKuen**

**April 30: Paul Jennings**

**Dr Herb Evatt**

Dr Evatt is remembered as a barrister, diplomat, politician, cabinet minister and Leader of the Federal Opposition. He also loved books. He designed his own bookplate. He peppered both his legal and political writings and speeches with poetical quotations. So it is not surprising that he urged state school students in a speech to "Collect books at once. You can get very good books very cheaply. Get books about your own country; there are marvellous books written about Australia. There is a history of Australia which is impossible to more than touch on briefly in your school days. Get a little library, increase it, and if you have the choice between an amusement which you can do without and a book which you want to buy, occasionally give up the amusement.

"Books teach you the triumphs of the past, the mistakes of the past; they teach you about the ills of the present. Books do not isolate you from people, except during the time you are reading.

They are a comfort and a solace in distress, and unhappiness. For the boys it is necessary to have books; for the girls, it is equally important. Do not forget Australian writers, because I am trying to be one myself. (Laughter.) If you go into industry, remember that you want to understand something of what it is about. The only way to understand it is by reading good books, marking good books, by inwardly digesting good books, and by collecting and keeping them.

Do not think because you are leaving school your education is finished; in truth it is just beginning. You have to be educated citizens in a democracy, and if you are we shall, please God, make Australia into the greatest democracy on earth.”

As quoted in Gideon Haigh’s biography *The Brilliant Boy*. I wonder if the students took his words to heart.

**May 1: K. Langloh Parker**

**Stephen Dando-Collins**

**May 2: Alan Marshall**

**Jerome K. Jerome**

**Gavin Souter**

**H. M. (Henry Mackenzie) Green**

Jerome is remembered for his wryly humorous travel books, *Three Men in a Boat*, *Three Men in a Bummel*, but not, I don’t think, for his ghost stories. Indeed I didn’t know he’d ever written any until I came upon his *After Supper Ghost Stories*. He introduces them with:

‘It was Christmas Eve.

I begin this way, because it is the proper, orthodox, respectable way to begin, and I have been brought up in a proper, orthodox, respectable way, and taught to always do the proper, orthodox, respectable thing; and the habit clings to me.

Of course, as a mere matter of information it is quite unnecessary to mention the date at all. The experienced reader knows it was Christmas Eve, without my telling him. It always is Christmas Eve, in a ghost story.

Christmas Eve is the ghosts’ great gala night. On Christmas Eve they hold their annual fête. On Christmas Eve everybody in Ghostland who is anybody—or rather, speaking of ghosts, one should say, I suppose, every nobody who is any nobody—comes out to show himself or herself, to see and to be seen, to promenade about and display their winding sheets and grave-clothes to each other, to criticise one another’s style, and sneer at one another’s complexion.’

I had never heard of people telling ghost stories on Christmas Eve. But then this Australia. The sun stays up late, the evening is still warm, there are no fires inside while it is dark and snowing outside. It doesn’t really lend itself to ghosts. Better to tell ghost stories, if you want to tell ghost stories, in mid-July.

So what were Jerome’s ghost stories like? As you might guess they are wryly amusing and not in the least frightening. The poor melancholy ghost looking for his lost sweetheart who is fooled into weeping beside a fake tombstone; the man who pulls down his mill around him because he is convinced the ghost of a miser who once lived there is indicating the place he hid his golden hoard; the ghost who says he must be gone by cock’s-crow and the cocks can’t be persuaded to crow at a reasonable hour; the ghost of the man who determinedly rid the world of people who dared to make music in his vicinity ...

Of course we have some interesting books on real life hauntings but the ghost story as a staple of fiction has never really taken off here.

**May 3: Douglas Grant (birth date not known)**

John Ramsland wrote *The Legacy of Douglas Grant*. Grant was an Aboriginal boy whose tribe was massacred in North Queensland. He was found as a toddler by Robert Grant, a Scotsman

with an Australian Museum expedition, and adopted into the Grant family. A very talented man he went to World War I with the Australian forces and became a POW in Germany where he did much to help other prisoners.

Ramsland wrote: “Another article entitled ‘A Dark Australian Reared A White’ in the *Scone Advocate* allowed Grant to speak for himself (18 April 1941). Ironically, his health by this time was rapidly deteriorating.

His hope and aim:

is that Australian Aborigines be given the full rights of citizenship. Surely after 150 years the Government can see its way clear to uplift and emancipate the Australian Aborigines...They [the politicians] need someone to make them more aborigine-conscious, to remind them of their obligations.”

Sadly Douglas Grant didn’t live to see Aborigines become citizens in 1967 but the question must surely be: why did it take so long? After all Aborigines were *there*. They could be assimilated, as various governments hoped, but how can you assimilate people and yet keep them separate as non-citizens? It could be that politicians believed that if they were not citizens they then had no responsibility. But politicians don’t have responsibilities only towards citizens.

#### **May 4: Marele Day**

#### **May 5: Sir Douglas Mawson**

##### **T.A.G. Hungerford**

Mawson is remembered for his epic explorations in Antarctica. But he also influenced Australian policy—by insisting it wasn’t enough for Australia to plant flags, to send occasional expeditions, but rather that Australia needed to be clearly in ‘occupation’ if it wanted to keep its large slice of Antarctica. I was thinking of this while reading *Antarctic Engineer* by Dale Lorna Jacobsen. It is the memoir of John Russell who worked there as an engineer in the late 1940s and into the 1950s. Russell, an Englishman, was influenced by Sir Ernest Shackleton’s widow who said her husband didn’t want young men just looking for excitement and adventure; he wanted men with sound practical technical skills. These Russell set about gradually acquiring.

The book is interesting in that it shows that Australia’s Antarctic programs, post-WW2, were not the big money operations of the present day but a matter of scrimping and scrounging, asking for donated equipment, seeking out war surplus material, patching and mending, modifying, cannibalizing one item to fix another; in fact the whole program was achieved on a shoe-string. Did the men suffer because of the lack of amenities? Russell seemed to have no regrets. One of the things which shine through in his memories is the sort of comradeship that helped them through difficulties and dangers.

A friend is a friend through thick and thin  
And is still a friend when you have no “tin”  
A friend is a friend, girl or boy  
With her or him you share your joy  
A friend is a friend till the end of days  
To be met again on heaven’s highways.  
‘Friend’ by John Russell.

One of the strangest dangers faced by expeditioners is ‘white-out’. Jacobsen writes, “White-out was and is the terror of all movement – air, sea or land – because of its total disorientation of our senses: the New Zealand Antarctic Flight TE901 crash on the side of Mount Erebus on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1979 was primarily due to white-out.

“When land parties are involved in such conditions, the only sensible thing to do is to stop, make camp and wait for it to lift. White-out is the condition arising when thick white overcast cloud blots out the sun but still allows light to pass through the cloud; the light hits the ground snow-ice cover which is similar in density to the cloud. Light reflects from the surface and hits the underside of the cloud cover and is reflected back to the surface. Under this condition, light frequencies become distorted in a similar manner to blocked or jammed radio frequencies and cause severe disorientation to people; we cannot tell which is up or down, we cannot judge distance. A building which we can see may appear to be fifty feet away when it is only five feet, and vice versa. It is the distortion of light frequencies that causes problems.”

**May 6: Debra Adelaide**

**May 7: Evelyn Mordaunt**

**Peter Carey**

**May 8: Peter Corris**

**John Septimus Roe**

**May 9: Nene Gare**

**Barry Nicholls**

**Gavin Lyall**

**May 10: Olaf Stapledon**

**Ric Throssell**

I came upon Olaf Stapledon’s two volume *Last and First Men* and *Last Men in London* production of his sci fi writing. I had thought Stapledon was Australian but no, he was English. So why did I think he was Australian? I think I was confusing him with Olaf Ruhen. In these stories he looks back from the far future. This is always dangerous. The fictional future seen from hindsight is always wrong in parts. But interesting to see how someone in 1930 saw the future. So here are two of his comments.

“In the Far East, China, already half American, though largely Russian and wholly Eastern, patiently improved her rice lands, pushed forward her railways, organized her industries, and spoke fair to all the world. Long ago, during her attainment of unity and independence, China had learnt much from Bolshevism. And after the collapse of the Russian state it was in the East that Russian culture continued to live. Its mysticism influenced India. Its social ideal influenced China. Not indeed that China took over the theory, still less the practice of communism; but she learnt to entrust herself increasingly to a vigorous, devoted, and despotic party, and to feel in terms of the social whole rather than individualistically. Yet she was honeycombed with individualism, and in spite of her rulers she had precipitated a submerged and desperate class of wage slaves.”

“Subsequently it was Germany that spoke for Europe. And Germany was too serious an economic rival for America to be open to her influence. Moreover German criticism, though often emphatic, was too heavily pedantic, too little ironical, to pierce the hide of American complacency. Thus it was that America sank further and further into Americanism. Vast wealth and industry, and also brilliant invention, were concentrated on puerile ends. In particular the whole of American life was organized around the cult of the powerful individual, that phantom ideal which Europe herself had only begun to outgrow in her last phase. Those Americans who wholly failed to realize this ideal, who remained at the bottom of the social ladder, either consoled themselves with hopes for the future, or stole symbolical satisfaction by identifying themselves with some popular star, or gloated upon their American citizenship, and applauded the arrogant foreign policy of their government. Those who achieved power were satisfied so long as they could merely retain it, and advertise it uncritically in the conventionally self-assertive manner.”

Did Stapledon influence thinking on the future? It seems so. Keith Cooper in *The Contact Paradox* writes of Freeman Dyson's ideas. "Dyson imagined that if an advanced civilisation wished to harness the entire output of its star, then that civilisation could build a gigantic swarm of solar collectors – nothing more fancy than solar panels – surrounding the star to absorb all the energy it radiates. Over time the energy collectors and the devices they were powering would grow hot, just as your computer does when it's plugged in, and to avoid melting, the devices or objects drawing that power would have to radiate some of the excess heat away into space, making them appear to glow dimly in infrared light.

"This is the key to finding this technology, reckons Dyson. 'If there is a civilisation that has a very large output of energy, then there has to be some kind of infrared radiation that would be highly visible,' he tells me on the telephone from his office in Princeton, where he still goes to work every day, solving mathematical problems using pencil and paper, despite being in his nineties now.

"The concept has become universally known as a 'Dyson sphere', but Dyson wasn't the first to postulate their existence and he baulks at the notion that his name should be ubiquitous with the idea. An enthusiastic reader of science fiction, Dyson originally came across the concept of an array of solar collectors in Olaf Stapledon's 1937 science-fiction novel *Star Maker*, an idea that in turn was influenced somewhat by John Desmond Bernal's 1929 proposal of a habitat in space powered by solar energy, which the great Gerard O'Neill, who was also at Princeton alongside Dyson, riffed on in the seventies when he was busy popularising the notion of orbiting space colonies in his bestselling book, *The High Frontier*."

We do now have a very limited 'habitat in space powered by solar energy'. We call it the International Space Station.

**May 11: Lotte Pol**

**May 12: Frank Morton**

**May 13: Norma Klein**

**May 14: Steve Katz**

**May 15: Stephen Caffyn**

**Xavier Herbert**

**Candida Baker**

**David Foster**

**May 16: James Hardy Vaux**

**May 17: Dorothy Richardson**

**May 18: Zora Cross**

**May 19: Ho Chi Minh**

Colin A. Ross in *The CIA Doctors* suggests that history could have been very different. "In May, 1941 the Vietnamese, known at this time as the Annamites met in southern China, Chiang Kai-shek's territory, to set up a Vietnamese resistance organization. This organization was devoted to liberating Vietnam from Japanese occupation and establishing a free, democratic government aligned with the United States. The OSS supported the resistance fighters in Vietnam just like it did those in France.

"The leader of the Viet Minh, the name given to the resistance organization, was a man called Nguyen ai Qoc: this man was arrested and imprisoned by Tai Li's agents in August, 1942. He was not released until September, 1943, and then only because of a deal made with Chiang Kai-shek's government by a Chinese warlord. After his release Nguyen ai Qoc changed his name to Ho Chi Minh in order to avoid Tai Li's agents.

“For the last two years of the Second World War, Ho Chi Minh was the leader of the Vietnamese resistance against the Japanese. He created an extensive underground network in Tonkin, supplied intelligence to U.S. forces, and aided in the rescue of downed Flying Tiger pilots. He had full OSS support.

“Our allies, the French didn’t like Ho Chi Minh because if he succeeded in liberating Vietnam from the Japanese, and established a free democratic government, the French would not be able to take over at the end of the war. The deal that ended up getting made between the Americans, British, French and Russians was that the French could have South Vietnam back. This meant that Ho Chi Minh had to be transformed into a communist enemy of democracy.

“OSS support of Ho Chi Minh included an officer of the Chase Manhattan Bank who was parachuted into his camp, and an OSS medic named Paul Hoagland. Paul Hoagland saved Ho Chi Minh’s life with quinine and sulfa drugs, otherwise he would have died of a combination of malaria, dysentery and other tropical diseases. The OSS also trained 200 elite troops of Ho Chi Minh’s army commander, a man named Vo Nguyen Giap.

“On August 17, 1945 Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh took control of Hanoi from the Japanese. Ho Chi Minh was accompanied on his march into Hanoi by Paul Hoagland and the rest of the OSS Deer team that had parachuted into his camp. On that day, August 17, 1945, Ho Chi Minh broadcast the following message in English to OSS headquarters:

*National Liberation Committee on VML begs U.S. authorities to inform United Nations the following. We were fighting Japs on the side of the United Nations. Now Japs surrendered. We beg the United Nations to realize their solemn promise that all nationalities will be given democracy and independence. If United Nations forget their solemn promise and don’t give Indochina full independence, we will keep fighting until we get it.*

“On September 2, 1945 a band marched through Hanoi playing the Star Spangled Banner while OSS officer Colonel Archimedes Patti and Vo Nguyen Giap stood side by side, arms held in salute. The two men are shown in this stance in a photograph in Smith’s book on the OSS. Ho Chi Minh had declared that day Vietnam Independence Day, and he began his liberation speech with the words, “*All men are created equal.*”

“Ho Chi Minh, the hated Communist was originally a resistance fighter devoted to freedom and democracy, supported by William Donovan, the OSS and the American taxpayer in his fight against the Japanese. He was transformed into a Communist enemy because of the deal made between the British, Americans, French and Russians at the end of World War II. For several months after the end of the War, Donovan worked in Vietnam trying to rebuild the infrastructure, attract American capital to Vietnam, and establish a democracy lead by Ho Chi Minh. This effort was shut down for political reasons, and as a result the stage was set for American military involvement in Vietnam a decade later.”

He goes on to say, “If the work of the OSS in Vietnam had continued under the CIA and William Donovan’s leadership, there would have been no American casualties there in subsequent decades. Ho Chi Minh would have been leader of a democracy aligned with the United States.”

Hasan Di Tiro wrote in *Unfinished Diary*, “If the concept of ‘decolonisation à la Indonesia’ would have been applied to all other colonial territories in the world, there would have been only seven – instead of 51 – new states established in Africa after World War II, namely, one for each of the foreign colonies of Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Germany ... Decolonisation requires liquidation of all colonial empires with specific steps and procedures, but Indonesia exists on the principle of total territorial integrity of the colonial empire; and an empire is not liquidated if its territorial integrity is preserved. Thus Indonesia is still an un-liquidated and un-decolonised colonial empire with Java-men replacing Dutchmen as colonialists.”

(As quoted in *Indonesia's Secret War in Aceh* by John Martinkus.)

There was a push to combine Australia, New Zealand and Fiji into one entity in the late nineteenth century. Fortunately wisdom prevailed. And although people regularly grumble about the states versus the federal government I personally am glad we have strong states. A military coup in Canberra would simply see the states step up to the plate and flex their muscles again. But Indonesia, despite several of its politicians promoting a federal system there, pushed forward with its Java-centric centralized government. Could its history have been much more peaceful and happy if its regions had been given real freedom and power to run their own affairs?

Five hundred Australian lives, 50,000 American lives, and untold Vietnamese lives, misery and environmental destruction could have been saved in Vietnam by building on that initial goodwill.

I have just been reading T. J. English's *The Corporation* about Cuban exiles in the USA. Several thousand Cuban exiles were sent to invade Cuba in the disastrous Bay of Pigs operation but promised American support never eventuated. The exiles were captured, imprisoned, and eventually shipped back to the USA. To what extent their strong sense of betrayal by the Kennedy administration influenced their later development as a criminal underworld is problematic. It remains unclear whether they had anything to do with the assassination of JFK but they certainly were involved with the murder of the Chilean ambassador in Washington, the downing of a Cuban plane, illegal gambling, massive drug running, the corruption of the police force in Miami, and the killing of hundreds of people mostly fellow exiles. Could the US have saved itself this huge expense and misery by either saying Castro is an internal problem for Cuba or by saying they could understand his desire to see the end of the Batista dictatorship and its Mafia connections and extending a hand if not of friendship then of understanding? And are there lessons Australia might learn in how to not harden foreign leaders into implacable enemies?

**May 20: Kate Jennings**

**May 21: Dorothy Hewett**

**May 22: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**

**May 23: F. J. (Frederick Joseph) Thwaites**

**Georgiana Molloy**

**May 24: Mary Grant Bruce**

**May 25: Raymond Carver**

**May 26: Sarah De Araugo**

**May 27: (Samuel) Dashiell Hammett**

James Thurber, in *Thurber on Crime*, said of Dashiell Hammett: "One night nearly thirty years ago, in a legendary New York *boîte de nuit et des arts* called Tony's, I was taking part in a running literary gunfight that had begun with a derogatory or complimentary remark somebody made about something, when one of the participants, former Pinkerton man Dashiell Hammett, whose *The Maltese Falcon* had come out a couple of years before, suddenly startled all of us by announcing that his writing had been influenced by Henry James' novel *The Wings of the Dove*. Nothing surprises me any more, but I couldn't have been more surprised than if Humphrey Bogart, another frequenter of that old salon of wassail and debate, had proclaimed that his acting bore the deep impress of the histrionic art of Maude Adams.

"I was unable, in a recent reinvestigation, to find many feathers of "The Dove" in the claws of "The Falcon," but there are a few "faint, far" (as James used to say) resemblances. In both

novels, a fabulous fortune—jewels in “The Falcon,” inherited millions in “The Dove”—shapes the destinies of the disenchanted central characters; James’ designing woman Kate Croy, like Hammett’s pistol-packing babe Brigid O’Shaughnessy, loses her lover, although James’ Renunciation Scene is managed, as who should say, more exquisitely than Hammett’s, in which Sam Spade speaks those sweetly sorrowful parting words: “You angel! Well, if you get a break you’ll be out of San Quentin in twenty years and you can come back to me then.” Whereupon he turns her over to the cops for the murder of his partner, Miles Archer (a good old Henry James name, that).

“Some strong young literary excavator may one day dig up other parallels, but I suggest that he avoid trying to relate the character in “The Falcon” called Cairo to James’ early intention to use Cairo, instead of Venice, as the major setting of his novel. That is simply, as who should not say, one of those rococo coincidences.”

**May 28: Ian Fleming**

**Patrick White**

**Dorothy Green**

**Devon Minchin**

I came across a book called *Quantum of Solace: The Complete James Bond Short Stories*. I hadn’t known that Fleming wrote any short stories so I was curious. But now I understand why I had never heard of Fleming spoken of as a short story writer. They weren’t great stories and James Bond reduced to short story status rather than a full-blooded character still does quite a lot of killing but just isn’t very interesting.

I came away from it with the thought that Fleming had liked living in the Caribbean as he takes the time to dwell on its fishes, birds, and vegetation. But his take on cities such as Paris and Venice are not particularly complimentary.

“Sitting in Fouquet’s, waiting for his Americano, Bond smiled at his vehemence. He knew he was only playing at this fantasy for the satisfaction of launching a last kick at a town he had cordially disliked since the War. Since 1945, he had not had a happy day in Paris. It was not that the town had sold its body. Many towns have done that. It was its heart that was gone—pawned to the tourists, pawned to the Russians and Roumanians and Bulgars, pawned to the scum of the world who had gradually taken the town over. And, of course, pawned to the Germans. You could see it in the people’s eyes—sullen, envious, ashamed. Architecture? Bond glanced across the pavement at the shiny black ribbons of cars off which the sun glinted painfully. Everywhere it was the same as in the Champs-Elysees. There were only two hours in which you could even see the town—between five and seven in the morning. After seven it was engulfed in a thundering stream of black metal with which no beautiful buildings, no spacious tree-lined boulevards, could compete.”

‘From a View to a Kill’

“May and October are the best months in Venice. The sun is soft and the nights are cool. The glittering scene is kinder to the eyes and there is a freshness in the air that helps one to hammer out those long miles of stone and terrazzo and marble that are intolerable to the feet in summer. And there are fewer people. Although Venice is the one town in the world that can swallow up a hundred thousand tourists as easily as it can a thousand—hiding them down side-streets, using them for crowd scenes on the piazzas, stuffing them into the vaporetta—it is still better to share Venice with the minimum number of packaged tours and Lederhosen.”

But there is another world nearby. “From the jetty at Alberoni, on the Venice side of the Lido peninsula, there is a half mile dusty walk across the neck of land to the Bagni Alberoni facing the Adriatic. It is a curiously deserted world, this tip of the famous peninsula. A mile down the thin

neck of land the luxury real estate development has petered out in a scattering of cracked stucco villas and bankrupt housing projects, and here there is nothing but the tiny village of Alberoni, a sanatorium for students, a derelict experimental station belonging to the Italian Navy and some massive weed-choked gun emplacements from the last war. In the no man's land in the centre of this thin tongue of land is the Golf du Lido, whose brownish undulating fairways meander around the ruins of ancient fortifications. Not many people come to Venice to play golf, and the project is kept alive for its snob appeal by the grand hotels of the Lido. The golf course is surrounded by a high wire fence hung at intervals, as if it protected something of great value or secrecy, with threatening Vietatos and Prohibitos. Around this wired enclave, the scrub and sandhills have not even been cleared of mines, and amongst the rusting barbed wire are signs saying MINAS. PERICOLO DI MORTE beneath a roughly stenciled skull and crossbones. The whole area is strange and melancholy and in extraordinary contrast to the gay carnival world of Venice less than an hour away across the lagoons."

'Risico'

(I wonder how much it has changed since Fleming was there?)

And this is his definition of drunks: "Heavy drinkers veer towards an exaggeration of their basic temperaments, the classic four—Sanguine, Phlegmatic, Choleric and Melancholic. The Sanguine drunk goes gay to the point of hysteria and idiocy. The Phlegmatic sinks into the morass of sullen gloom. The Choleric is the fighting drunk of the cartoonists who spends much of his life in prison for smashing people and things, and the Melancholic succumbs to self-pity, mawkishness and tears."

'Octopussy'

**May 30: John Sligo**

**May 31: Peter Fleming**

**Judith Wright**

**Patsy Adam-Smith**

"One thing in this inventory, which covers all our supplies that I can remember (and the journey gave me a good memory for food), needs explaining: tsamba. Tsamba, known to travellers in North China and Mongolia as *tso mien*, is the staple food of Tibet. It is parched barley meal, and can be mistaken, even in a good light, for fine sawdust. You eat it in tea, with butter if you have got butter, or with melted mutton fat if you haven't got butter, or with neither if you have got neither. You fill your shallow wooden bowl with tea, then you let the butter melt in the tea (the butter is usually rancid and has a good cheesy flavour); then you put a handful of tsamba in. At first it floats; then, like a child's castle of sand, its foundations begin to be eaten by the liquid. You coax it with your fingers until it is more or less saturated and has become a paste; this you knead until you have a kind of doughy cake in your hand and the wooden bowl is empty and clean. Breakfast is ready.

"Tsamba has much to recommend it, and if I were a poet I would write an ode to the stuff. It is sustaining, digestible, and cheap. For nearly three months we had tsamba for breakfast and tsamba for lunch, and the diet was neither as unappetizing nor as monotonous as it sounds. One of the great virtues of tsamba is that you can vary the flavour and the consistency at will. You can make it into a cake or you can make it into a porridge; and either can be flavoured with sugar, salt, pepper, vinegar, or (on special occasions, for you only had one bottle) Worcester Sauce. And, as if that were not enough, you can make it with cocoa instead of with tea. I would not go so far as to say that you never get tired of tsamba, but you would get tired of anything else much quicker."

*News from Tartary* by Peter Fleming.

Explorers in 19<sup>th</sup> century Australia also lived on some pretty unappetising staples including flour, often infested with weevils, and salt meat.

**June 1: Colleen McCullough**

**June 2: Thomas Hardy**

**June 3: Flinders Petrie**

**Vivian Smith**

**June 4: Elizabeth Jolley**

**Barbara Stack**

**Barbara Baynton**

**June 5: Jeannie Taylor (Mrs Aeneas Gunn)**

**June 6: Isaiah Berlin**

**June 7: Sir Redmond Barry**

**E. W. Hornung**

Redmond Barry came to Australia in 1839. The ADB says of him:

“In the early years of Melbourne Barry became unofficial standing counsel for the Aborigines. He laboured as hard and as earnestly upon their cases, often capital matters, as he did on his other briefs, though he rarely, if ever, received a fee for such services. His interest in the Aborigines was general and lasted all his life. Though he accomplished for them little of practical value, his open-minded and unprejudiced approach was in advance of that of many even of the most liberal of his contemporaries.”

“His private benevolence was liberal, though discreetly bestowed. Irish famine relief, the building of new colonial churches both Protestant and Catholic, the needs of less fortunate relations in Ireland and the alleviation of personal distress in Melbourne all made inroads upon a fortune which, though never great, he did not seek to augment by speculation. Public labour left little time for private aggrandizement; at various periods of his life he trod uncomfortably near the edge of real financial difficulty and died a poor man.”

He was a key founder of the University of Melbourne and the State Library. But he never married his long-standing companion Mrs Eliza Barrow despite the fact they had four children, Nicholas, Eliza, George and Fred.

“Probably his most famous trial was that of Ned Kelly in 1880. Though the Kelly legend continues to excite attention, no substantial criticism of Barry’s conduct of that trial can be sustained.”

From *Violence and Police Culture*: (ed. Tony Coady) “By 1874, 82 per cent of the Victorian police were Irish, many former Irish police; this tendency towards Irish recruitment continued into the 1880s under Chief Secretary O’Shannassy’s recruiting policies and the predilections of Victoria’s Police Commissioner.” And “Chief Commissioner of the Victorian Police Charles Standish, at the request of Chief Secretary Sir John O’Shannassy, had drawn up two lists of applicants for future police employment: a ‘Special list’, favouring former police who had served with the Irish police forces; and a more general list for other applicants; the list’s existence caused a furore in the politico-religious bigotry and anti-Irish/Catholic sentiments of the era.”

Also from Victoria: This comes from the Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner Commemorative Committee in Melbourne; they were two of the Tasmanian Aborigines Robinson took to Victoria in the hope they would convince Victorian Aborigines that resistance was futile and that Christianity would usher in a happy alternative. Instead they ended up on trial for murder.

“They appeared before Judge Willis on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 1841. The five were defended by Redmond Barry – the standing Defence Counsel for Aborigines (as Chief Justice he sentenced Ned Kelly to hang 39 years later in 1880). He argued that as they were not naturalised citizens, half the jury should have been made up of people not subjects of the Queen.

“The only evidence to link the party of Aborigines with the murders was the confessions of the Aborigines themselves. Barry, the Defence Counsel, continued to question the legal basis of British authority over Aborigines. He claimed the evidence was dubious and circumstantial. Truganini turned Queen’s evidence and claimed the men had killed the sealers. Maulboyheenner implicated Tunnerminnerwait, Pyterruner, Planobeena and Tunnerminnerwait refused to shift the blame on the others. Later that night, the jury took only 30 minutes to find the two men guilty of murder; they acquitted the women. The jury made a very strong plea for clemency “*on account of general good character and the peculiar circumstances under which they were placed*”.”

Judge Willis ignored the plea and sent the two men to be hanged. This was botched so badly that the two men “twisted and writhed convulsively in a manner that horrified even the most hardened.” This may have been deliberate.

The thing that struck me was that Australian writers speak of Redmond Barry with a pen dipped in vitriol when it comes to Ned Kelly who undoubtedly was guilty of murder but ignore Barry’s valiant efforts on behalf of Aboriginal people who faced far more horrifying circumstances than the Kelly family ever did.

I have a very remote connection to the man because he descends from the Redmond Barry back in the late 1600s whose daughter Anne in Ireland married William Jephson, thus becoming my direct ancestors. Victoria’s Redmond Barry was a descendant of Barry’s second wife Jane Purdon while Anne was a daughter of the first wife Mary Boyle. The Barrys came to Ireland from Wales in the 1200s so the habit of calling them Anglo-Irish is incorrect.

I finally sat down and had a quick read of *Redmond Barry* by Ann Galbally. She says that in 1180 Robert de Barri gained 3 baronies in the kingdom of Cork by the good offices of his mother’s brother Robert Fitzstephen. The Catholic hibernacized Barrys spread all over Co Cork but in the time of Cromwell they converted to Protestantism to save their land and from then on threw in their lot with the more recently arrived Anglo-Irish families. Redmond Barry gave the son of his first marriage, James, to Mary Boyle (daughter of John Boyle of Castlelyons in north-east Co Cork; though the two castles there have long since disappeared) his property of Lisnagar and Rathcormac and his son McAdam Barry from his second marriage to Jane Purdon the property at Ballyclough. James was the brother of Anne Barry who married William Jephson. The family was also connected to the Pratts, Harts, and Wigrams. Redmond Barry who came to Melbourne in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a descendant of the second marriage to Jane Purdon. He had for many years a liaison with Louisa Barrow in Melbourne, a married Catholic woman. He provided comfortably for his children although he never publicly acknowledged them and apparently went through agonies of worry that people would find out—which they did. The irony is that because his son in Melbourne was illegitimate the McAdam Barrys’ line died out. It went then to his sister Letitia’s children. She had married the Rev. Robert Bury. Their grandson Maj. James Robert Bury took the additional surname of Barry in 1889.

“Barry’s sympathy with the indigenous people of Australia lasted well beyond his early appearances for them; in the 1860s he initiated work on a dictionary of Aboriginal dialects and commissioned sculptor Charles Summers to make a number of plaster busts of contemporary indigenous people for exhibition at the 1867 Paris Universal Exhibition.

“Barry’s distinction lay in the unparalleled contribution he was to make to his adopted

country in the form of cultural patronage. For thirty years or more he was the strongest and most enlightened force behind the establishment of Victoria's major public cultural institutions, the Public Library, the National Gallery, the Museum and the University of Melbourne. It could be said justly that he established a uniquely antipodean culture in Melbourne — intellectually rigorous, firmly British but with a strong thirst for knowledge about the Australian environment." He wanted people to have access to free libraries. He advocated the setting up of a Chair of Hebrew and Oriental Literature (though it did not happen until 1945). He worked assiduously, though usually unsuccessfully, for his Aboriginal clients. But he will always be remembered as the man who hanged Ned Kelly. Would another judge have been more lenient? I am inclined to doubt it. And would the legend have grown if Kelly had done a long prison stretch then gone home to a small farm to milk cows?

**June 6: Alan Seymour**

**June 7: Ernest Hornung**

**June 8: Ivan Southall**

**Gwen Harwood**

**June 9: Ida Rentoul Outhwaite**

**Hugh Buggy**

**Julian Burnside**

**June 10: Saul Bellow**

**June 11: Mrs Humphrey Ward**

**June 12: Harriet Martineau**

Harriet Martineau wrote in her *Autobiography*, "I had believed before, and I went on during my whole career of fiction-writing to be more and more thoroughly convinced, that the creating of a plot is a task above human faculties. It is indeed evidently the same power as that of prophecy: that is, if all human action is (as we know it to be) the inevitable result of antecedents, all the antecedents must be thoroughly comprehended in order to discover the inevitable catastrophe. A mind which can do this must be, in the nature of things, a prophetic mind, in the strictest sense; and no human mind is that. The only thing to be done, therefore, is to derive the plot from actual life, where the work is achieved for us: and, accordingly, it seems that every perfect plot in fiction is taken bodily from real life. The best we know are so derived. Shakespeare's are so: Scott's one perfect plot (the 'Bride of Lammermoor') is so; and if we could know where Boccaccio and other old narrators got theirs, we should certainly find that they took them from their predecessors, or from the life before their eyes. I say this from no mortification at my own utterly inability to make a plot. I should say the same, (after equal study of the subject) if I had never tried to write a tale. I see the inequality of this kind of power in contemporary writers; an inequality wholly independent of their merits in other respects; and I see that the writers (often inferior ones) who have the power of making the best plots do it by their greater facility in forming analogous narratives with those of actual experience. They may be, and often are, so inferior as writers of fiction to others who cannot make plots that one is tempted to wish that they and their superiors could be rolled into one, so as to make a perfect novelist or dramatist. For instance, Dickens cannot make a plot,—nor Bulwer,—nor Douglas Jerrold, nor perhaps Thackeray while Fanny Kemble's forgotten 'Francis the First,' written in her teens, contains mines of plot, sufficient to furnish a groundwork for a score of fine fictions. As for me, my incapacity in this direction is so absolute that I always worked under a sense of despair about it."

The National Council of Women (Tasmanian branch) had this in their newsletter, perhaps appropriately on the birthday of an early feminist, “Sunday 12 June 2022 marked 120 years since Australian women gained the right to vote in federal elections, following the passage of the *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902* (Franchise Act). The Act extended the franchise to ‘persons not under twenty-one years of age whether male or female, married or unmarried’. The Act also gave women the right to stand as candidates in federal elections. With its passage, Australia became the first country in the world to give most women both the right to vote and the right to run for parliament. New Zealand women had gained the right to vote in 1893, but not the right to stand as candidates.

However, the act also denied the right to vote to some groups, notable people of non-European backgrounds. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, both women and men, were excluded from the franchise, unless they were eligible to vote under state legislation in accordance with Section 41 of the Australian constitution. The Franchise Bill, introduced in April 1902 by the Vice President of the Executive Council, Senator Richard O’Connor, was debated extensively by the parliament and by the media. While the Bill had aimed to extend the franchise to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to those who were then referred to as ‘coloured people’ from overseas, it was amended to exclude ‘aboriginal natives of Australia, Asia, Africa or the Islands of the Pacific’ from being placed on the electoral roll, unless entitled under Section 41 of the Constitution. It would be another 60 years before all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were able to enroll and vote at federal elections, following the 1962 amendment of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (which replaced the Franchise Act).

By June 1902, women were already eligible to vote in two states: South Australia (since 1894), and Western Australia (since 1899). The New South Wales (NSW) Legislative Assembly followed in August 1902, then the Tasmanian House of Assembly in 1903, Queensland in 1905, and Victoria in 1908.

The first federal election at which women in Australia were able to exercise their rights to vote and to stand as candidates was held on 16 December 1903. Four women contested that election: Selina Anderson (later Siggins), who ran for the House of Representatives in NSW; and Senate candidates Vida Goldstein in Victoria (for whom the electoral division of Goldstein is named), and Nellie Martel and Mary Moore-Bentley (later Ling) in NSW. They were the first women nominated for election to any national parliament in what was then the British Empire. All four women ran as independent candidates. None were elected.”

“The first woman elected to an Australian state parliament, Edith Cowan, was elected to Western Australia’s Legislative Assembly in 1921. However, it was not until 1943, 40 years after the 1903 federal election, that the first women, Enid Lyons in the House of Representatives and Dorothy Tangney in the Senate, were elected to Australia’s federal parliament. Enid Lyons was also the first woman appointed to the ministry, becoming Vice President of the Executive Council in 1949. The first woman to administer a Commonwealth department was Annabelle Rankin, as Minister for Housing from 1966.” (Enid Lyons had 13 children. Edith Cowan has a university named for her. )

And it slowly grew. “The 100<sup>th</sup> woman in the House of Representatives, Terri Butler, entered parliament, 71 years after Enid Lyons. In 2018 the 100<sup>th</sup> woman in the Senate (and the first female Muslim senator), Mehreen Faruqi, entered parliament, 75 years after Dorothy Tangney.”

The effort of those first four women candidates seems to be a story in itself but although I have come across things written about Vida Goldstein it remains a story to be plotted and written ...

**June 13: Fanny Burney**

## **'Slim Dusty' (Gordon Kirkpatrick)**

**Keith Ewers**

I knew Christina Rossetti had breast cancer. I didn't know Fanny Burney did until I read Jenni Murray's *A History of Britain in 21 Women*. And whereas Rossetti died Burney survived the horrific operation without anaesthetic and lived more than 30 years after it. She wrote of her 1812 mastectomy to her sister Esther: "My dearest Esther – and all my dears to whom she communicates this doleful ditty, will rejoice to hear that this resolution once taken, was firmly adhered to, in defiance of a terror that surpasses all description, and the most torturing pain. Yet – when the dreadful steel was plunged into the breast – cutting through veins – arteries – flesh – nerves – I needed no injunctions not to restrain my cries. I began a scream that lasted unintermittingly during the whole time of the incision – and I almost marvel that it rings not in my Ears still! so excruciating was the agony. When the wound was made, and the instrument was withdrawn, the pain seemed undiminished, for the air that suddenly rushed into those delicate parts felt like a mass of minute but sharp and forked poniards, that were tearing at the edges of the wound – but when again I felt the instrument – describing a curve – cutting against the grain, if I may say, while the flesh resisted in a manner so forcible as to oppose and tire the hand of the operator, who was forced to change from the right to the left – then, indeed, I thought I must have expired." It is painful even to read her description.

She was paid 20 guineas for her first novel. "*Evelina*, the Cinderella story of a kind of orphan later revealed as an heiress, is a pretty archetypal tale, but it distinguishes itself in its social commentary. It was written in the form of letters and took the reader through the popular resorts of the period in London and Bristol; the characterisation was compelling and it was funny – it was particularly scathing about the vulgar nouveau riche."

She received £250 for her next novel. "Her second novel, *Cecilia: Memoirs of an Heiress*, proved equally successful and the first edition of two thousand copies sold out immediately. It showed a rather unflattering picture of life in high society, again with a humorous edge, and Cecilia's guardians, the snobbish Mr Delvile and his proud wife, were popular characters. Edmund Burke, Edward Gibbon and (Samuel) Johnson all declared themselves fans, with Burke complimenting her on her writing and declaring 'this is now the age for women'."

Nicolas Bentley also mentions Fanny Burney, in his *A Choice of Ornaments*. "I have never actually got as far as making a list of the books that I should like to keep beside me, but I know that along with Anne Fanshawe's *Memoirs* I should put the Diary of a very different sort of woman, Fanny Burney. In spite of her egoism, her hypochondria, and her attitude of long-sufference—and one way or another she had a good deal to put up with—her Diary is as entertaining, and in its way quite as acute, as any kept by some of her more gifted and better-informed contemporaries. For five years she lived at Court as Assistant Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte. It was during this period, in 1788, that the King began to show signs of madness. In what seems to have been one of his spells of mental twilight there occurred the incident, both alarming and pathetic, that Fanny here relates:

'What an adventure had I this morning! One that has occasioned me the severest personal terror I ever experienced in my life.

'Sir Lucas Pepys persisting that exercise and air were absolutely necessary to save me from illness, I have continued my walks, varying my gardens from Richmond to Kew, according to the accounts I received of the movements of the King...

‘This morning, when I received my intelligence of the King from Dr John Willis, I begged to know where I might walk in safety. “In Kew Gardens,” he said, “as the King would be in Richmond.”

‘ “Should any unfortunate circumstance,” I cried, “at any time, occasion my being seen by his Majesty, do not mention my name, but let me run off without call or notice”. This he promised...

‘Taking, therefore, the time I had most at command, I strolled into the gardens. I had proceeded, in my quick way, nearly half the round, when I suddenly perceived, through some trees, two or three figures. Relying on the instructions of Dr John, I concluded them to be workmen and gardeners; yet tried to look sharp and in so doing, as they were less shaded, I thought I saw the person of his Majesty!

‘Alarmed past all possible expression, I waited not to know more, but turning back, ran off with all my might. But what was my terror to hear myself pursued!—to hear the voice of the King himself loudly and hoarsely calling after me: “Miss Burney! Miss Burney!”

‘I protest I was ready to die. I knew not in what state he might be at the time; I only knew the orders to keep out of his way were universal; that the Queen would highly disapprove of any unauthorized meeting, and that the very action of my running away might deeply, in his present irritable state, offend him. Nevertheless, on I ran, too terrified to stop...

‘The steps still pursued me, and still the poor hoarse and altered voice rang in my ears—more and more footsteps resounded frightfully behind me—the attendants all running, to catch their eager master, and the voices of the two Doctor Willises loudly exhorting him not to heat himself so unmercifully...

‘Soon after, I heard other voices, shriller, though less nervous, call out: “Stop! stop! stop!”

‘I could by no means consent; I knew not what was purposed, but I recollected fully my agreement with Dr John that very morning, that I should decamp if surprised, and not be named...

‘On I flew; and such was my speed, so almost incredible to relate or recollect, that I fairly believe so one in the whole party could have overtaken me, if these words, from one of the attendants, had not reached me: “Doctor Willis begs you to stop!”

‘ “I cannot! I cannot!” I answered, still flying on, when he called out: “You must, ma’am; it hurts the King to run.”

‘Then, indeed, I stopped—in a state of fear really amounting to agony. I turned round, I saw the two Doctors had got the King between them, and three attendants of Dr Willis’s were hovering about. They all slackened their pace, as they saw me stand still; but such was the excess of my alarm, that I was wholly insensible to the effects of a race which, at any other time, would have required an hour’s recruit.”

The King asks her why she ran away. She has no answer to his question. But as he seems to be in his normal state and begins talking of normal things she finally relaxes a little. The King bumbles on telling her not to mind the Queen saying “Don’t let her cast you down! I know you have a hard time of it—but don’t mind her!” The doctors suggest that she leave them but the King won’t allow her to depart telling her he believes people are lying to him about his illness and complaining about various of his officers.

“ ‘He next talked to me a great deal of my dear father, and made a thousand enquiries concerning his History of Music. This brought him to his favourite theme, Handel...

‘Then he ran over most of his oratorios, attempting to sing the subjects of several airs and choruses, but so dreadfully hoarse that the sound was terrible.’ ”

He then tries to tell her something about Mrs Delany but can’t find it in his notebook. He promises to promote her father but the doctors finally manage to convince him it is time to go. He tells her again not to mind the Queen and the doctors then take him away. But as she is employed by

the Queen she cannot *not* mind her. She finally and no doubt exhausted goes on with her walk through the gardens. It suggests that young women at court walked a very difficult line.

So did the King remember his promise to promote Charles Burney? I have just been reading Burney's *Music, Men and Manners in France and Italy 1770*. Here are a few snippets from what was a travelogue laced with music.

"The singer next room to ours is I find the castrate Luini just come home very rich from Russia tho' he lost one night £10,000 of the money he had gained *per la sua virtù*. He is a native of Brescia—was welcomed home by a band of music at the inn, the night of his arrival, and by another the night before his and our departure, consisting of 2 violins, a mandoline, French horn, trumpet and violoncello—and tho' in the dark and by memory they played long concertos with solo parts for the mandoline. I was surprised at the memory of these performers—in that it was excellent *street* music and such as we are not accustomed to: but ours is not a climate for serenades. The famous Venetian dancer, la Colonna is likewise just arrived from Russia and in the same house. They are all going to Venice, where I hope both to hear and see them."

"He says that at the sacking and burning of Rome by the Duke of Bourbon 1527 all the music and memorials of the chapel previous to the time of Godimel, Palestrina's master, were destroyed—which occasions a chasm in the history of church music, not easy to supply."

"Within about a mile of Naples hills appear on each side, covered with olives, vines and houses, which afford a rich and most beautiful appearance. Ere we got to the gates we were stopt twice by custom officers merely to extort money from us, for they refused to examine our baggage. There is more of this scandalous open robbery allowed in the Kingdom of Naples, than anywhere else in Italy; it is tormenting strangers and disgusting them, without either use to the public or government"

"Mr Jamineau and Dr Cirillo both say it is absolutely forbidden to castrate boys in these music schools—that they chiefly come from Leccia in Puglia, but are first tried here or elsewhere as to the likelihood of voice and then taken out by their parents to be cut: but this is even forbidden under severe penalties unless with the consent of the boy, and there are instances of its being done even at the request of the boys themselves, as was the case of the ditto il Grassetto at Rome. But as to these previous trials of the voice, it is my opinion that this cruel operation is but too frequently performed without trial or at least without sufficient proofs of a dawning and improvable voice—otherwise there could never be found such numbers of them in every great town throughout Italy without any voice at all—or at least without one sufficient to compensate for the loss. Indeed all the *musici* in the churches at present are made up of the refuse of the opera houses, and it is a very rare thing to meet with a tolerable voice upon the establishment of any church in Italy. The virtuosi who sing in the churches occasionally on festivals only, are usually strangers paid by the time."

"The infinite number of fine things in this amazing collection made from the choicest things found in Herculaneum, Pompej and Stabia are not to be described" including "3 systums, 2 with 4 cross bars and one with 3. Crotoli—tambours de basque—sitinga with 7 pipes etc—but the most extraordinary of all is a species of trumpet found at Pompej, about 11 months ago. It is a good deal broken, but not so much as to make it difficult to conceive the entire form, it having the remains of 7 small bone or ivory pipes inserted in as many of brass all of the same length and diameter which surround the great tube, and seem all to terminate in one mouth-piece. Several of the small brazen pipes are broken, by which the ivory ones are laid bare, but it is natural to suppose that they were all blown at once and that the small ones were unisons to each other and octaves to the great one. It used to be slung over the shoulder by a chain, which chain is preserved and the place where it used to be fastened to the instrument is still visible. No such instrument as this has been found before either in ancient painting or sculpture, which makes me the more minute in speaking of it."

But he doesn't seem to have become a keeper of the King's music, possibly because by then he would've been in his sixties. The *Enc. Brit.* says he was 'appointed to positions in the king's musical establishment in 1767 and 1774' but that his 'final appointment was as organist at Chelsea Hospital from 1783.' Though the king did, in fact, grant him a pension.

His best known book was *General History of Music* which 'established him as the foremost writer on music in the country. It was not an antiquarian's history but a readable account. What most interested Burney—and his subscribers—was contemporary music; he was an enthusiastic champion of Hayden and devoted a long chapter to Italian opera in England. Burney warmed also to early music: nevertheless, it is principally for its insight into fashionable musical taste in 18th-century London that Burney's *History* is indispensable.'

And did anything his daughter Fanny wrote remain 'indispensable'? The *Enc. Brit.* says: "Though Fanny Burney's later novels and her mediocre plays are no longer read, *Evelina*, perennially young and fresh, remains a classic. Its plot was an innovation that prefigured the later work of Jane Austen. Fanny's journal letters have a social value equal to their literary interest."

**June 14: E. L. Grant Watson**

**June 15: Toss Gascoigne**

**Val Nichols**

**June 16: Isobelle Carmody**

**June 17: Henry Lawson**

**J. B. Stephens**

**Kerry Greenwood**

**June 18: George Essex Evans**

**Robyn Archer**

**Rosemary Dobson**

**June 19: Ethel Pedley**

**June 20: Magaret Scott**

**June 21: Clive Sansom**

**Jean-Paul Sartre**

**Chester Wilmot**

**June 22: Tom Howard**

**June 23: Frank Dalby Davidson**

**June 24: Albert Owen**

**June 25: Wendy Lowenstein**

**June 26: Pearl S. Buck**

**June 27: Helen Keller**

**June 28: Eric Ambler**

**June 29: Lusila Hosillo**

**June 30: Rose Brown**

**Ferdinand von Mueller**

**Beatrice Grimshaw**

**July 1: Dorothea Mackellar**

**July 2: King O'Malley**

**July 3: Franz Kafka**

**July 4: Helena Sumner Locke**

**Fay Zwicky**

**July 5: Katherine Scholes**

**Kevin Hart**

**July 6: Peter Singer**

**July 7: Max Dann**

**Sumner Locke**

**July 8: James Bonwick**

**Fergus Hume**

**July 9: Barbara Cartland**

**July 10: Jack Moses (d)**

**Kevin Gilbert**

Moses was a popular bush poet, reciting his work at 'smoke concerts' and bringing out two collections, *Beyond the city gates* in 1923 and *Nine miles from Gundagai* in 1938. It was his dog which became the dog sitting on a tucker box in the statue unveiled at Gundagai in 1932. In between writing poetry he sold whisky.

I wonder how he feels as he looks down and sees his dog remembered and himself forgotten?

**July 11: E. B. White**

**July 12: Edward 'Weary' Dunlop**

**Phillip Adams**

**July 13: J. L. Herrera**

**July 14: Natalia Ginzburg**

**July 15: Judy Cassab (Kaszab)**

**July 16: Dorothy Cottrell**

**Christopher Koch**

**David Campbell**

**July 17: Christina Stead**

**Aidan de Brune (Herbert Charles Cull)**

**July 18: Bernard Dowall O'Reilly**

**July 19: Victor Kelleher**

**July 20: Louisa Anne Meredith**

**July 21: Charles Hayward**

**A.D. Hope**

**July 22: Frederic Manning**

**Betty Roland**

**Alan Moorehead**

**July 23: Alex Buzo**

**Fotini Epanomitis**

**July 24: Lord Dunsany**

**July 25: Mary Vidal**

**Keith Suter**

**July 26: George Bernard Shaw**

**July 27: Junie Morosi**

**July 28: Malcolm Lowry**

**July 29: William Beebe**

**July 30: Anne Ridler**

**July 31: Primo Levi**

**August 1: Francis Nixon**

**Augustus Charles Gregory**

**August 2: Geoffrey Dutton**

**August 3: William Nicholas Willis**

“the wild Australian William Willis’s inspiredly salacious *White Slaves in a Piccadilly Flat*” wrote Julian Evans in *Semi invisible Man: the life of Norman Lewis*. I had no knowledge of Willis when I came upon this snippet. So why did he get described as ‘wild’?

He was born in Mudgee in NSW and started work at 9 years-old, trying many things from actor to hawker, politician to newspaper proprietor. The ADB says of him, “A rowdy, hard-drinking gad-fly and a racing crony of W. P. Crick, he repeatedly introduced bills to restrict cruelty to camels, to amend the Masters and Servants Act and to repeal the Agreement Validating Act; less determinedly, he tried to regulate hawkers, reduce the cost of litigation, amend the Sunday laws, introduce the totalizator and enfranchise women.” But none of his bills were enacted. “He founded *Truth* with George McNair but sold it to Crick and Norton.” (I was in my teens when I came across *Truth* and I remembered being amazed that *Truth* could find sex scandals all around the place when apparently most of us couldn’t. John Norton ran the paper till his death then his son Ezra took over, following much the same formula of sport, crime and sex. There was a Sydney version and a Melbourne version. Ezra sold it to Rupert Murdoch in 1958 and it limped along, finally closing in 1993.)

In 1903 he published *The Life of W. P. Crick*. He went to South Africa then to London where he published several books including *What Germany Wants* (1912) and *Bluey Grey* the same year as well as establishing the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. which brought out *White Slaves* in 1913. This, the white slave traffic, seems to have been something which drew him to research and write out of his concern, perhaps because he had a wife and six daughters, (and a son) and the subject whether ‘inspiredly salacious’ or not caught the public’s attention and sold strongly. But World War I came along and people’s attention was drawn elsewhere. At times he had done very well for himself but keeping money was not one of his talents and he was virtually penniless when he died in 1922.

**August 4: Henry Savery**

**Tim Winton**

**August 5: Guy de Maupassant**

**August 6: Marie Pitt**

**‘Rolf Boldrewood’**

**August 7: Dornford Yates**

**August 8: Hume Nisbet**

**August 9: P. L. Travers**

**August 10: Louis Esson**

**August 11: Geoffrey Trease**

**August 12: Sir Keith Murdoch**

**Bernard Archer**

**August 13: A. A. Phillips**

**Les Hiddens**

**August 14: Bryce Courtenay**

**Trevor Byard**

**August 15: Stieg Larsson**

**Garry Disher**

I came upon *The Expo Files* which were a collection of articles Stieg Larsson had written for the magazine *Expo*. Almost all of them were about Far Right groups in Sweden (except one to ridicule people who believe in astrology and one about his trip on the Trans Siberian railway) and I must admit that I got rather bored. Such groups have been linked to some assaults, an occasional murder, and general nastiness. But as they are riddled with in-fighting and confusion over what they actually stand for they did not strike me as major players in Sweden's political life; not least because they have only succeeded in gaining votes when they have muted their stance and public statements.

They can make Adolf Hitler their god but it is perhaps worth remembering that being anti-things, whether Jews, Muslims, immigrants in general, homosexuals, or disabled people, can only take you so far. People need something positive. Would people have continued to support Hitler if there hadn't been tangible economic benefits, jobs, cheap holidays, fitness camps, the promise of 'living room' in the east, to set alongside his anti-Jewish tirades?

**August 16: Dorothy Drain**

**Dame Mary Gilmore**

**Woman's Day (launched 16/8/1948)**

When I was young I remember Dorothy Drain often had poems in the *Women's Weekly*. I have forgotten the poems but I remember thinking I wouldn't really want the surname Drain. In fact she was a well-known journalist and editor and what I didn't realise until I came upon Jeannine Baker's *Australian Women War Reporters* a brave and multi-talented woman who had reported on both World War II and the Korean War. In fact the book is full of women I had never heard of: such as Agnes Macready, Edith Dickenson, Janet Mitchell, Adele Shelton-Smith, Dorothy Jenner, Connie Robertson, Alice Jackson and Lorraine Stumm; as well as several I'd come across in other fields, Louise Mack and Katharine Susannah Prichard. And they all faced varying degrees of discrimination, ridicule, and brick walls. Having influential relatives sometimes helped but it still needed a lot of determination to get past the entrenched view that women didn't belong in war zones. Their place was at home. Of course this overlooks the simple fact that women have always been in war zones, in the jungles of Malaysia and Vietnam, in the villages of New Guinea, in bombed-out French towns ... and that war fell more heavily on women because they also had the safety of the very young and the very old to mind out for.

Baker writes of Edith Dickenson's experiences in South Africa. "In February 1900 Dickenson left for South Africa as a 'lady war correspondent' for the *Advertiser* and the *Adelaide Chronicle*. The *Advertiser*, which already had four male war correspondents in South Africa, announced that Dickenson would be writing about 'matters from a woman's standpoint'. One newspaper described Dickenson as a 'remarkable woman', but could not resist linking her physical appearance to her unusual capabilities. Dickenson could 'ride, shoot, walk like a man, and would make an ideal leader of Amazons. Tall, robust, masculine, she quickly impresses one as a woman quite out of the common'."

She gradually began to criticise British actions. “The British had ‘made a desert, and they called it peace,’ she wrote in December 1901. ‘“Clearing the country” means destroying and blotting out all traces of civilisation, and leaving ruined homesteads, burnt crops, a state of things one can only realise when one sees the Transvaal as it is.’ At a time a time when ‘pestilence is in the air and the water’ she questioned the ‘want of practical common sense’ in the British army for failing to provide adequate food, comfort and provisions for the troops: ‘Just now enteric fever and dysentery are killing far more men in Natal than the bullets of the enemy’. She criticised the British for ignoring the advice and knowledge of the local people, praised the mobility and superior scouting skills of the Boers and black South Africans, and expressed a scepticism about how the Boers had often been characterised.”

Dickenson usually traveled alone, she witnessed some shocking sights, she criticised the strict censorship Lord Kitchener imposed, but it was her reporting on the camps which was probably her most important contribution. “Dickenson appears to have been the only Australian journalist to give a first-hand account of the conditions inside the concentration camps. For some months following their establishment, little was known in Britain about the camps. The few journalists left in South Africa after the fall of Pretoria was focused on covering the fighting, and showed little interest in the camps. English activist Emily Hobhouse visited the camps from January to June 1901, and subsequently publicly charged the British with acts of cruelty and barbarism in a series of letters. Hobhouse’s claims, and Britain’s repudiation of them, were widely reported in the Australian press, but few readers appeared to take any notice of the allegations. On the other hand, Craig Wilcox contends that many ‘middle-class consciences’ were troubled by the revelations. Australian-born Charles Bean, who was studying classics at Oxford, wrote to one newspaper that although he supported the government and understood the necessity for the camps, ‘statistics must mean something, and these are ghastly’. In October 1901, when Hobhouse attempted another visit to South Africa, she was refused permission to re-enter the camps and deported to England. This makes Dickenson’s reportage all the more significant.”

She was horrified by what she saw in the camps where Boer women and children were herded into dirty unsanitary conditions subject to epidemics of measles and with inadequate food or water. “Dickenson’s unflinching conclusion after visiting this first camp was ‘“Refuge camps” is a misnomer; they are really prisons’.”

“The Boer children, she reminded her readers, were not dissimilar from their own: ‘these children are taken from farms where they lead the free, healthy life of Australian bush children, with any amount of good milk, eggs, and meat. The change of diet alone, without the closeness and damp of the vile tents, would account for the mortality.’”

Baker asks: “Did Dickenson’s news stories have any impact outside her home state of South Australia? I am uncertain. The Australian press rarely made an impression in Britain, and Dickenson’s reports on the conditions in the concentration camps were not debated in the South Australian or federal parliaments or taken up by newspapers in other states. However, Dickenson was an important source for Hobhouse. The pair corresponded about conditions in the camps, and several of Dickenson’s newspaper reports were liberally quoted in Hobhouse’s book *The Brunt of the War and Where it Fell*, published in 1902.”

We remember Wilfred Burchett for being the first Western journalist to go to Hiroshima but I didn’t know that an Australian woman Lorraine Stumm saw the bombed cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima six weeks after the blasts. She wrote: “It was just a vast wilderness with heaps of rubble here and there – absolutely devastated. Dreadful sight ... And we just couldn’t believe that one bomb could possibly do so much terrible damage. It was as if you’d just wiped it out with a huge

hand – wiped everything in sight. Shocking thing. When I came back I wrote that it was the most terrible disaster the world had ever faced and who knew what the after effects would be.”

Baker wrote, “Soon after the flight, Stumm obtained what she called a ‘world scoop’, an interview with the first known European survivor of the bombing of Hiroshima, the Jesuit priest Father William Kleinsorge. Here again Stumm benefited from her contacts: she heard from Major George Caiger, an Australian intelligence officer on MacArthur’s staff, that Kleinsorge had been taken to a Tokyo hospital. Stumm agreed to share the exclusive with Lachie McDonald, a New Zealander representing the London *Daily Mail*, and they filed their stories concurrently.

“Over subsequent decades Stumm often proudly referred to her internationally significant scoop. But although she cabled her account of the interview with Kleinsorge to the *Daily Mirror* on 30 September 1945, it was never published in that newspaper. Stumm’s ostensible employer, the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, also did not publish her story, but printed an almost identical story by their leading journalist in Occupied Japan, Massey Stanley. What happened? If Stanley and Stumm had both interviewed Kleinsorge on the same day and written similar articles, it is probable that the *Daily Telegraph* editors would have chosen the version from a respected senior male journalist over one from Stumm. *Daily Telegraph* editor Brian Penton, who greatly admired Stanley, would also have been reluctant to humiliate him by printing an important scoop by a less-experienced woman journalist. Another possible scenario – although impossible to prove – is that the *Daily Telegraph* editors incorporated Stumm’s dispatch into Stanley’s article without acknowledging her contribution.

“Both Stumm’s original dispatch and Stanley’s published article contained potentially incendiary material. Kleinsorge’s vivid description of the horrific aftermath of the bombing underscored the fact that the bomb’s target was essentially civilian, and that the victims were overwhelmingly women and children.”

Baker wrote: “In her stories from Korea Drain did not submerge her personal anti-war views as she had done in the articles published in the *Weekly* during WWII. ‘War is no place for anybody, man or woman,’ she wrote, ‘and if humanity cannot find some more sensible way of settling its arguments it doesn’t deserve to survive.’ The conflict had already cost thousands of soldiers’ lives, she wrote in July 1951, but had achieved little, except ‘proof of the insane futility of war. When it is all over, millions of refugees, homeless and hungry, will need the help of the United Nations to resume life in their ravaged country.’”

We still haven’t come to terms with the fact that powerful people make war and ordinary people with little power try to help the refugees war creates.

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*Woman’s Day* was launched in the decade after *The Australian Women’s Weekly* but it too quickly became popular with women. And then both began to feel the cold winds of change and declining circulation. It followed a similar recipe for popularity but was always more ‘celebrity’ orientated. So here is one ‘celebrity’ they featured.

*Woman’s Day* put together *Murder & Mayhem in Hollywood After Dark* and said in ‘Hollywood & the Mob’, “Mobster Sam “Momo” Giancana’s legacy hangs like a bloody shadow over some of the darkest moments in America.

His behind-the-scenes control of the Teamsters gave him the power to shut down a studio at will. But it was his reputation as a savage killer that kept Tinseltown in fear.

Born in the teeming dwellings of Chicago’s meanest streets, Momo was believed to be responsible for three murders before he was 20.

After earning the respect of Al Capone, Momo became so powerful that some of Hollywood's brightest stars were drawn to him, hoping he would pull the strings that led to stardom.

Sports heroes like Joe DiMaggio and Rocky Graziano were his friends. Singer Phyllis McGuire was his long-time lover. And his brother Chuck Giancana later claimed Momo bankrolled the early careers of Ronald Reagan and Ed Sullivan.

His influence was so great that Momo's daughter Antoinette wrote in her book *Mafia Princess* she was treated like a superstar whenever she was in Hollywood.

It was Frank Sinatra who introduced John F Kennedy to Momo's bedmate Judith Campbell Exner, the party girl who went on to share the president's bed – and to share presidential pillow talk with the bloodthirsty mobster.”

‘Bing Cosby comes on, singing ‘White Christmas’, and Dad says, ‘Turn that up a bit, Ceal. That’s a good song, and Bing’s a decent family man. Not like some of those others in America.’

Later, the announcer says, ‘And here’s Frank Sinatra, singing his latest...’

Dad doesn’t wait for more.

‘Turn that thing off!’ he says, pointing at the wireless in its cabinet, standing in the corner. ‘I can’t *stand* that man! He’s been divorced. Twice!’

From *Cecilia* by Cecilia Inglis.

It is hard to see why Frank Sinatra remains popular in Australia when lesser crimes have seen public figures banished to outer darkness. Robert Gottlieb in a collection of his articles *Near-Death Experiences ... and Others* wrote, “What we discern about Sinatra—and it jibes with other accounts—is that he was a man with profound feelings of inferiority about everything but his music. He was a shrimp; he had scars and a damaged ear from a difficult birth; and he never got over his unlovely background. Hoboken was hardly “class,” and no concept was more important to this man who aspired so desperately to be accepted by what he saw as the elite: Fred Astaire, Humphrey Bogart, Bing Crosby, Edie Goetz (Louis B. Mayer’s daughter, and supposed doyenne of social Hollywood), the Kennedys. “Mr S. craved class like a junkie craves a needle.” But his social aspirations were undercut by his blatant weaknesses—an almost pathological anger and blasts of unforgiving coldness. Tommy Dorsey, Lauren Bacall, his godfather, and many others who had been faithful and loyal were brutally banished. He was a serial hater. “Everything about Mr. S had to do with paying debts and settling scores”—the Sinatra family needn’t have left Sicily.

“Sinatra pursued women voraciously, but did he ever really love anyone except Ava and Dolly? Certainly he cared as a friend for some of his occasional conquests—Marilyn, Judy Garland, Peggy Lee, Natalie Wood, Dinah Shore, and a hundred more—and he was generous and gallant to his bought women. After all, they gave him what he most wanted: control. He was fun, yet abusive; free from prejudice, yet consorting with and admiring some of the most repellent criminals of his day. And, of course, he was a very great singer.”

Dolly was his mother and I doubt that he loved Ava Gardner, given that he didn’t mind to bash her up. And I find him a very mediocre singer.

“It’s hard to feel sorry for Frank Sinatra, and yet he was crushed by two traumatic defeats. One was the loss of Ava. The other was being dropped by the Kennedys after Jack made it to the White House (with Sinatra’s crucial help). By then, Frank’s criminal connections were too rank for Bobby and for Ambassador Joe, and Frank in turn became the Falstaff figure, banished by the prince.”

**August 17: V. S. Naipaul**

**August 18: Daniel Deniehy**  
**Nettie Palmer**  
**August 19: Ogden Nash**  
**August 20: H. P. Lovecraft**  
**August 21: Will Ogilvie**  
**Mudrooroo (Colin Johnson)**  
**August 22: Maurice Gee**  
**Sir John Forrest**  
**August 23: Mudrooroo**  
**Constant Lambert**  
**August 24: Ruth Park**  
**David Ireland**  
**August 25: Thea Astley**  
**Shelton Lea**  
**John Dunmore Lang**  
**August 26: Eleanor Dark**  
**August 27: Don Bradman**  
**August 28: Vance Palmer**  
**A. G. Stephens**  
**August 29: Gillian Rubinstein**  
**Richard Casey**  
**August 30: Carmel Bird**  
**August 31: Charmian Clift**  
**September 1: Arthur Upfield**  
**Eve Langley**

I don't usually look through catalogues of book auctions but the other day I picked up an old catalogue for the auction of the collection of Dr Norman Wettenhall and among the collections was the archive he had collected on Arthur Upfield. The catalogue says, "An important family archive of one of Australia's most successful international authors and, certainly, our most eminent and successful writer of detective fiction. The archive includes prized professional and personal records and possessions, and most importantly, a highly significant body of original manuscript material, much unpublished. This is almost certainly the most extensive extant archive of the author's manuscripts."

Among the manuscripts were ones which had their names changed on publication. *Burning Water* became *Bushranger of the Skies* and *Blood on the Walls of China* became *The Death of a Swagman*. Also there were short stories, published and unpublished, part of an autobiography he'd titled *Tale of a Pommy*, a watercolour sketch of Bony looking like a darker version of Biggles, letters, photographs, family Bibles, his war medals, his typewriter and "MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES and related material concerning Upfield's marriage to Anne Douglas. ... The file comprises Upfield's [the] original hand-written certificate of marriage from St. Andrews Church of Scotland, Alexandria, Egypt, 3 November, 1915; the official marriage certificate issued by the British Consul General at Alexandria on the same day; a detailed file of domestic bills, accounts, tax papers, and other financial and medical records for the period 1936-7 recording Upfield's residence at the Mount Dandenong home with Anne and his son at that time; several letters to Anne

Upfield in 1957 concerning legal action against the Melbourne *Age* after Jessica Hawke had been described there as Upfield's wife. Upfield and Hawke seem to have intentionally obfuscated the details of his marriage, consistently implying that his marriage disintegrated upon his return to Australia after the war in 1919, thereby to some extent legitimising their relationship. However, the evidence throughout this archive indicates that Upfield established the Mount Dandenong household with Anne after leaving Perth in the mid-1930s and remained there with his family until the late 1930s and possibly the early 1940s. This misinformation was originally promulgated in Hawke's 'biography' of Upfield and has been repeated uncritically since."

I wondered why his son hadn't wanted the archive, or had he died? And the other problem seemed, to me, to be the breaking up of the collection. Sending one manuscript here and another one there seemed to undermine Dr Wettenhall's efforts to collect this important material into one archive.

**September 2: Hiram Johnson**

**John Le Gay Brereton**

**John Howard**

**Will Lawson**

**September 3: Will Dyson**

**Lennie Lower**

**Sir (Frank) Macfarlane Burnet**

**September 4: Mary Renault**

**September 5: Thomas Wilson**

**September 6: Barbara Hanrahan**

**William Lane**

**September 7: C. J. Dennis**

**September 8: Siegfried Sassoon**

**September 9: Phyllis Whitney**

**September 10: William McInnes**

**September 11: O. Henry**

**September 12: Michael Dransfield**

**Max Walker**

**September 13: J. B. Priestley**

**Saxby Pridmore**

**September 14: John Gould**

**September 15: Sara Henderson**

**September 16: Wilfrid Burchett**

**September 17: Sir Walter Murdoch**

**William Carlos Williams**

**John Creasey**

Somewhere else I put down William Carlos Williams as having a Puerto Rican mother. When I read *Boswell's Clap and Other Essays* by William B. Ober I found this wasn't correct. "He was born in 1883 in Rutherford, New Jersey, then a small town on the Erie Railroad, some eight miles southeast of Paterson, the county seat of Passaic County. His entire life centered around Rutherford; he grew up there, went to public school there, married a Rutherford girl, practiced medicine, reared his children, wrote his poems, plays, and novels, all in Rutherford. In an age of

great social mobility William Carlos Williams remained fixed and stable. We associate his name with a single town more than any American poet since the Concord school. His father was an Englishman who never became an American citizen. He was employed as an executive by a New York mercantile house and occasionally had to take prolonged business trips to South America. However, he established himself and his family in Rutherford, serving as the superintendent of the local Unitarian Sunday School for almost twenty years. His wife, the physician-poet's mother, was a Hurrard from Martinique, of mixed French and Spanish descent; her native tongue was Spanish, and she gave her first-born son the middle name Carlos in honor of her eldest brother. The Williamses were not affluent but able to live in comfort; they had enough to educate their two boys and for a certain amount of foreign travel."

(You might be wondering why anyone would give a book such an unattractive title? James Boswell was a notorious consorter with prostitutes and had endless bouts of venereal disease. Though we only have what he chose to record in his diary or in letters to friends it is clear that married and unmarried he regularly went to prostitutes and always blamed them for his infections, calling at least one of these unfortunate women a "low wretch". To what extent he spread infection isn't known. He had children but his wife had at least three miscarriages. He died as a result of his lifestyle. His wife died of TB so it isn't clear whether she too was infected; given that there was no fail-safe cure then. Ober writes, "Inevitably the question arises why Boswell, a man of good family, considerable education, adequate professional status, and prominent social connections should deliberately expose himself to the risk of gonorrhea, not only deliberately but even compulsively." As he also drank heavily and gambled he would probably now be seen as having an Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. I wonder what Dr Johnson knew of his habits and what he thought about them.)

I rather admire William Carlos Williams for the way he juggled medicine and literature. The world is seemingly full of people who say that if only they weren't so busy they could sit down and write a masterpiece. Whereas Williams wrote: "All afternoon would be spent in argument, we hugging our glasses of applejack. Reactivated, I'd go home to the eternally rewarding game of scribbling. Thought was never an isolated thing with me; it was a game of tests and balances, to be proved by the written word. Then would come the trial. The poem would be submitted to some random editor, or otherwise meet its fate in the world...."

When and where, after such forays, did I or could I write? Time meant nothing to me. I might be in the middle of some flu epidemic, the phone ringing day and night, madly, not a moment free. That made no difference. If the fit was on me...I would be like a woman at term; no matter what else was up, that demand had to be met.

Five minutes, ten minutes, can always be found. I had my typewriter in my office desk. All I needed was to pull up the leaf to which it was fastened and I was ready to go. I worked at top speed. If a patient came to the door while I was in the middle of a sentence, bang would go the machine—I was a physician. When the patient left, up would come the machine. My head developed a technic...Finally, after eleven at night, when the last patient had been put to bed, I could always find the time to bang out ten or twelve pages. In fact, I couldn't rest until I had freed my mind from the obsessions which had been tormenting me all day. Cleansed of that torment, having scribbled, I could rest."

**September 18: Samuel Johnson**

**September 19: Frank O'Connor (Michael Francis O'Donovan)**

“In the spring of 1955 the man most plainly and universally identified with the word genius died at Princeton Hospital. Most of his body was cremated, the ashes scattered, but not the brain. The hospital’s pathologist, Dr. Thomas S. Harvey, removed this last remnant to a jar of formaldehyde.

Harvey weighed it. A mediocre two and two-thirds pounds. One more negative datum to sabotage the notion that the brain’s size might account for the difference between ordinary and extraordinary mental ability—a notion that various nineteenth-century researchers had labored futilely to establish (claiming along the way to have demonstrated the superiority of men over women, white men over black men, and Germans over Frenchmen). The brain of the great mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss had been turned over to such scientists. It disappointed them. Now, with Einstein’s cerebrum on their hands, researchers proposed more subtle ways of searching for the secret of genius, measuring the density of surrounding blood vessels, the percentage of glial cells, the degree of neuronal branching. Decades passed. Microscope sections and photographic slides of Einstein’s brain circulated among a tight circle of anatomically, called neuropsychologists, unable to let go the idea that a delectable sign of the qualities that made Einstein famous might remain somewhere in these fragmentary trophies. By the 1980s this most famous of brains had been whittled down to small gray shreds preserved in the office of a pathologist retired to Wichita, Kansas—a sodden testament to the elusiveness of the quality called genius.”

James Gleick in *Genius: Richard Feynman and modern physics*.

It is a puzzle why people ever believed the size of a brain was crucial. After all, large people presumably have larger brains but there is no evidence that they are cleverer than small people, let alone brilliant child prodigies.

“And a question that has barely been asked ... Why, as the pool of available humans has risen from one hundred million to one billion to five billion, has the production of geniuses—Shakespeares, Newtons, Mozarts, Einsteins—seemingly choked off to nothing, genius itself coming to seem like the property of the past.”

Frank O’Connor wrote a number of short stories set in his native Cork, one of which he called ‘The Genius’. It is told by a small boy, Larry. “Some kids are cissies by nature but I was a cissy by conviction. Mother had told me about geniuses; I wanted to be one, and I could see for myself that fighting, as well as being sinful, was dangerous. The kids round the Barrack where I lived were always fighting. Mother said they were savages, that I needed proper friends, and that once I was old enough to go to school I would meet them.”

An old washerwoman, Miss Cooney, “thought there was only one thing a genius could be and that was a priest.” But he thinks he would rather be an explorer. “All I knew was that I intended to be famous and have a statue put up to me near that of Father Matthew, in Patrick Street. Father Matthew was called the Apostle of Temperance, but I didn’t think much of temperance. So far our town hadn’t a proper genius and I intended to supply the deficiency.”

His father says he wants the boy to “grow up a bit natural.” But “either Mother didn’t like children to be natural or she thought I was natural enough as I was. Women, of course, don’t object to geniuses half as much as men do. I suppose they find them a relief.”

At school he finds it easier to get along with the girls. “All the girls liked me and Mrs Dwyer talked to me by the hour. I saw nothing peculiar about this except a proper appreciation of geniuses.” But people only laugh when he says things he has found out but misunderstood or the silly things told to him by adults in the face of his relentless questioning. In the end he says, “I felt it was a poor, sad, lonesome thing being nothing but a genius.”

L. M. Montgomery in one of her books says that a ‘queer genius’ in rural Canada betokened not a brilliant mind but someone who was odd or eccentric. Young Larry defines a genius as

someone who doesn't share the ways of the children around him, who feels he must be different. So what exactly is a genius and do we have any in Australia? Michaelangelo defined genius as infinite patience. But I think women have been required to be endlessly patient down through the ages and it hasn't made them into geniuses. Then there are the people who have one brilliant idea but the rest of their lives is largely forgettable. And when you look at many of those defined as geniuses you can see how indebted they are to those who have gone before them. Shakespeare regularly rewrote plays that were already in existence. Mozart and Beethoven were immersed in a musical milieu. So to what extent does genius require that you do or say or write something which sets you completely apart from 'things' already in existence? As we come up to eight billion people on this little planet shouldn't there be an explosion of genius in the world?

The more I thought about it the more I found it hard both to define genius and to point to anyone as an undoubted genius. I began to think it might be better to say that we are all capable of a 'moment of genius' ...

**September 20: Patsy Adam-Smith (d)**

**Bob Bottom**

**Ion L. Idriess**

Patsy Adam-Smith gives this lovely memory of going dancing in *Goodbye Girlie*: "It was the dancing years. There were great tunes and even greater words to sing to. Even in such a small town as Penshurst where the majority were poor, there was a dance at least once a week in the Mechanics Institute hall, an orchestra played, and crowds of people came along. There was even a debutantes' ball in which I took my place, although I was too young to be with such a group. Dad thought I may not get the chance again to wear a long dress and told Mum he thought I should make my debut. And, he was quite right, the days of long dresses, balls and such like would be swept away during the six years when so many of the young men were away at the war."

I can remember my mother speaking of going to 'Bachelor and Spinster' balls in the 1930s and 1940s. For country people it was a matter of 'making your own fun' but such balls were also a way of meeting a possible partner.

"The dancing years were matched by the great songs of that time. We danced to 'Sweet Rosie O'Grady', swinging apart from our partners, joining again in the *Pride of Erin*; we slow-waltzed, fox-trotted, and did the quick step. We danced to the *Tennessee Waltz* and it was not only because it was a good tune that the boys went across the hall to the partner they had selected. In some mysterious manner we all managed to get the partner we wanted. We began very slowly: 'I was dancing that night to the *Tennessee Waltz*', the bodies swayed and got closer and closer. Our mothers must have near ruined their eyes trying to see what was happening; but that's what the dance was – a very slow, most seductive pattern of movement. Nothing that is danced today comes anywhere near a slow waltz to the tune of the *Tennessee Waltz*.

"And yet, we were perfectly safe, no matter what it was we were being kept safe for. It was a valuable opportunity for us young ones, with body very close to body, sweeping to the side, back a little, forward again, at all times in contact with your partner's body, and I've always wondered if perhaps it was a very good way to get to know men generally. ... There was a *Highland Schottische* which was fast and furious. We'd get more than a glow. The men would have a white handkerchief in case their hand sweated on the back of your dress, the music would be going at an enormous speed and getting faster and faster, and people whom we considered very old would leave the floor because they couldn't keep up ... There was the *Lancers* which, of course, is a very old dance but it lived on until the war years. It was a wild dance; there were four men and their partners in each set, all controlled by a Master of Ceremonies. Nearly everyone was on the floor. The MC would call 'Gentlemen, salute your partners!' and the man would bow to the woman and she would curtsy to

him and then we were off. You didn't stop moving, it was fast. One movement that was constantly repeated was the swinging. The skill of this was to go round and round as fast as possible, faster than anyone in the hall if you could, but never, as an old gentleman once said to me, 'never lose your feet'. And that was the skill of it. Sometimes there'd be great squeals of delight, a boy had swung his girl right off her feet, but the skill was to go faster and still keep your feet. It was a ballroom dance, not a square dance.

"The Waltz of the Cotillions was a most graceful thing. I can't imagine anyone doing this dance today but it was a waltz which was done while one was moving around all the time to other partners in the foursome. To see the whole floor of dancers doing this set piece was quite elegant. When the music was coming to the end, you curtsied, the men bowed, took your arm, and took you back to your seat.

"Near the end of the night a 'medley' was called which had many various dances with no break between. There was a wild Keel Row. The girls did a heel-toe action with their partner, going faster and faster, then there was the Three Hop Polka and the band would keep that going until there was scarcely a person left on the floor because it was so fast. Those who had become weary and stood back, now stepped forward when the music changed pace because it would be the last dance of the night – a waltz to the tune of 'Good Night Sweetheart' ('all my dreams are for you'), and the lights would be low and my Mother's eyes would be everywhere to see where I was – like every other mother in the small hall."

And another story from the past:

When I was young my brother was given a copy of Ion Idriess's *The Wild North*. In it was a story called 'Lizzie' which we all thought was screamingly funny. We used to roll around laughing. So the other day when I saw a copy in an op-shop I thought I would re-read it and see if I still find it funny. This can be a dangerous pastime. Sometimes stories loved in childhood no longer seem in adulthood funny, sad, exciting, touching ...

But 'Lizzie' still was funny. I still had a laugh over it. Idriess begins his story: "Being a passing incident in the lonely life of the men who patrol the Border Fences. The period—those earth-shaking days when that Wonder Job the Ford was fast penetrating the back country. The "Lizzie" in question was the very first to patrol the Border Fence between Queensland and the Northern Territory, to the dire prophecies of the lone riders, the snorting disgust of the horses, the contemptuous disdain of the camels.

"Alack-a-day! Little did we realize that "Lizzie" and her tribe had come to stay."

The story has three men: Billy Gordon, immensely proud of his new car, his partner on the Fence Button, and the dingo-poisoner Louey. Billy has just been in Birdsville getting well-tanked where the one pub had the petrified skull of a diprotodon as a doorstop. When he gets back to the camp he finds Louey there with a damaged leg and needing to be got to the A.I.M. Nursing Home in Birdsville. But instead they sit round talking and drinking and deciding that Louey will need to have his leg which feels "like a camel's hind leg with the dingoes chewin' into it" amputated. But when they talk of getting some tools to saw it off Louey starts yelling. So Billy pushes Louey into the car and jumps in telling Button not to wait to pull on his "trousis" which he had just washed. He holds them out to dry as Billy speeds off and hits a tree, tearing the trousers out of Button's hands; Louey being thrown around in the car, Button nearly through the windscreen, and "to Louey's anguished wails Lizzie flew on like a live thing to churn up and over and down the sandhills, to fly across the clay-pans, to clatter down the gullies and send the gravel flying across the stony creeks." On they go with poor Louey suffering horribly till the car runs out of petrol. Billy laughs "Who'd 'a' thought it! *Everything* must drink." He tips in the contents of his petrol can and roars off then realizes Button is missing. He goes back and finds him and bundles him back in, taking some large

meat ants with him which then manage to bite Billy and make the car swerve into a stump. They charge on till they get a flat tyre but Billy yells “a flat tyre don’t make no difference to *this* car.” But as he pushes Lizzie on “there came a rip, tear, and bust as spokes flew in all directions” but Billy yells “This car goes *without* wheels!”

Unfortunately she doesn’t, so, groaning, they get out to walk the thirty miles to Birdsville. Button wants Billy to lend him his shirt to use as stand-in trousers which Billy refuses. Louey groans and moans as he limps on, fully convinced a circling crow is waiting for him to die.

Finally, after their terrible groaning walk, they “came to the Diamantina and saw the dozen lone roofs of Birdsville just ahead. Billy wheeled round on his mates shouting, “Oh, you fools, you stupid flamin’ fools!”

They stood and gaped at him. The walk had been long and dry, the sun hot.

“You fools!” he hissed from clenched teeth. “You poor bloody fools!” He shook his fists at them, his eyes developing that maniacal glare.

“Take it steady, Billy,” advised Button soothingly. “We’ll soon be in Birdsville and shelter.”

“Birdsville, you idiots! Shelter! Why, there’s a spare wheel back there in the car!”

It took quite some time for the awful significance of this simple remark to sink in. When it did, Button sank down.

“This is the limit,” he moaned, “the fair—bloody—limit!”

“Why didn’t you remind me?” roared Billy.

“Remind you of what?”

“About the spare wheel in the car.”

“Well, that is the limit!” snapped Louey. “Your own car and you don’t know there’s a spare wheel in it!”

Lots of other funny stories could be told from the early days of motoring, I remember hearing of one man who always said ‘Giddyup’ to his car, but I found I still enjoyed the ‘funnybone’ humour in ‘Lizzie’ sixty years after first reading it.

**September 21: Hazel Edwards**

**September 22: Annie Rentoul**

**Flexmore Hudson**

**Murray Bail**

**Dale Spender**

**September 23: Alan Villiers**

**Gary Crew**

**Alison Alexander**

**September 24: Barbara Ker Wilson**

**September 25: Jessica Anderson**

**September 26: Joseph Furphy**

**September 27: Faith Bandler**

**John Marsden**

While I was tidying out some old papers I came across an article by Faith Bandler titled ‘Land Rights’. “Australia is unique. The land here was taken without treaty or compensation. There was never any argument about it – just the order to move over. It has always been assumed by the white settlers that the black people could go away, “over there” somewhere, while the legal right to settle could be contracted with the colonial Lands Department.

But the Aborigines always knew they owned the land. Precise knowledge of their tribal boundaries was handed down – in song – and trespassers were in danger of attack.

The official view is that the Aborigines cannot own Australian land at all. They can use it, with permission of the welfare officer, but the Crown is the sole owner. As the eastern colonies were settled by the Europeans, the Aborigines were put on reserve lands, pegged out by the Lands Department, and owned by the Crown. It came to be part of the natural way of things, that Aborigines did not own a thing – not a thing! – except personal property.

As Australian land law sees land rights, as soon as the new country was settled or conquered. British law itself was to take over. According to British law, Australia was settled peacefully. British law is therefore the only law for Aborigines.

We know this is absurd. For one thing, Australia was conquered brutally. The history is one of abuse, continuous horror, and callousness. Secondly, how could it be true that in the same moment that Governor Phillip raised a flag at Sydney Cove, and fired some guns, the Yirrkala people 2,000 miles away lost their right to land? It's too silly for words, but that's the law.

A better way to take the land – one sided perhaps, but less absurd – is provided by treaties. People could gain compensation. But it is very interesting to note that the only time a treaty was signed – between Batman and some Aboriginal men – the Crown refused to acknowledge it. The British owned the land; the Aborigines were legally the intruders, not the other way about.

The easy assumption that British migrants have better claim to Australian land than Aborigines is still having very destructive results. In order to avoid the European sharpshooters who were likely to kill a black man on sight, the Aborigines who survived worked for squatters without pay. In north Australia this labour was often compulsory. A native who ran away in the north-west was returned by force. It was not long before most white Australians tended to treat not only Aborigines but any black person with rigid contempt, as if they did not matter.

This is your kind of racism: Australia, you say, is a white man's country, and coloured people have no claim or right. On the Aboriginal side, the abrupt loss of land caused great disruption. With the uncertainty of the boundaries, hope and religion died; the family discipline went completely. If you are thinking that all this is in the past, best forgotten, look at Weipa, since the bauxite was found there in 1955; look at Oenpelli since miners prospected there in 1970, and ask yourselves, "Is there not a direct relationship between Aborigines suddenly losing their land and taking to drink?" For the social destruction of the people is still going on!"

And the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, of which she was General Secretary in the 1970s, had this policy on Land Rights:

1. Aboriginal ownership of existing Aboriginal reserves.
2. Recognition of Aboriginal ownership of traditional tribal land at present owned and leased by the Crown.
3. Aboriginal consent for, and benefit from, mining and other development on all Aboriginal land.
4. Establishment of an Aboriginal Land Claims Court, to facilitate the awarding of compensation to Aborigines wherever Aboriginal land is alienated.
5. Setting up of a National Aboriginal Lands Trust Fund to accept and allocate compensation or rent for all the land of Australia which has been alienated from the former Aboriginal owners.

**September 28: Tom Inglis Moore**

**David Unaipon**

**September 29: Cassandra Pybus**

**September 30: Ida West**

**Geoffrey Robertson**

**October 1: Leonie Kramer**

**October 2: Graham Greene**

**October 3: Gore Vidal**

**October 4: Justin D'Ath**

**October 5: Flann O'Brien**

**October 6: Thor Heyerdahl**

**October 7: Thomas Kenneally**

**Clive James**

**October 8: George Turner**

**October 9: Jill Ker Conway**

**Ithell Colquhoun**

**John Pilger**

**October 10: Louisa Mack**

**John O'Grady**

“Perhaps the most unlikely book-trade event of the postwar period was the appearance, in 1957, of *They're a Weird Mob*, a comic novel that eventually sold a million copies, making the small firm of Ure Smith into a highly profitable operation. As published, the novel's author was Italian migrant Nino Culotta, but this was later revealed to be a cover for John O'Grady, a pharmacist living in Samoa who'd contributed stories and poems to *The Bulletin*. O'Grady had also worked as a salesman and a builder's labourer, and he'd written *They're a Weird Mob* after making a ten-pound bet with his brother that his pseudonym would fool a publisher.

“To allay suspicion, the original *Weird Mob* manuscript was handwritten in an exercise book purchased from a newsagent. It was offered by 'Culotta' to A&R, where it was read by editor Colin Roderick, who recommended immediate publication. As was her practice, A&R's chief editor, Beatrice Davis, commissioned two readers' reports, and, on the basis of these, she rejected the novel. 'In spite of some very amusing incidents and a fine command of Australian slang,' she wrote, 'Nino's story would not, in our readers' opinion, make a successful book.' O'Grady later framed that letter of rejection and hung it on the wall above his writing desk.

“After A&R's rebuff John O'Grady Junior decided to look for another publisher for his father's manuscript. Scanning the Sydney Yellow Pages, he chose Ure Smith, not realising this small publishing company specialised in art and photography books and had never published fiction. For something to read at the hairdresser during her lunchbreak, Sam Ure Smith's secretary, Janet Brown, took the manuscript along with her and quickly realised its sales potential. She was soon proved right. The first printing of 6,000 hardbacks sold out within a few weeks, and it was reprinted eight times in quick succession, selling 74,000 copies. The printers could barely keep up with the accelerating demand, and within a year this figure had risen to 200,000. Ure Smith later encouraged O'Grady to write a series of sequels, but these failed to match the original novel's runaway sales.

“Literary historian David Carter has commented on the similarities between *They're a Weird Mob* and Steele Rudd's *On Our Selection*, both books being pitched at a popular market and both drawing on vernacular speech. Rudd's however, was authentic, whereas O'Grady's hoax used language that would now be regarded as racist stereotyping. Both approaches reached a mass market – with popular adaptations for stage, film, and radio – but *On Our Selection* was to enjoy a much longer life.”

Craig Munro in *Literary Lion Tamers*.

**October 11: Samuel Clarke**

**October 12: James McAulay**

**Peter Goldsworthy**

**Drusilla Modjeska**

**October 13: Patrick Hartigan**

**Guy Boothby**

**October 14: Miles Franklin**

**Kate Grenville**

**October 15: P. G. Wodehouse**

**Pixie O'Harris**

Nigel Cawthorne in *A Brief Guide to Jeeves and Wooster* wrote, "In 1903, Wodehouse published forty-seven stories and poems in *Punch* magazine alone. He also contributed to the *Daily Chronicle*, *Vanity Fair*, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, *Windsor Magazine* and *Royal Magazine*." In his 80s he was still writing a thousand words a day. This struck me strongly because I sometimes hear people saying they have written two short stories lately, as though they would like to be congratulated on the fact.

On the one hand I think people who work so hard at the trade of writing stories deserve to succeed. On the other hand, it is a reminder that in those days most magazines and newspapers took short stories, serials, or poems—and quite often all three. But gradually many of those openings closed. Newspapers became just news and ads. The short story magazines slowly disappeared, to be (partially) replaced by some literary magazines. Most women's magazines gave up including fiction and assumed we only wanted to read about celebrities.

Cawthorne writes, "In *Bring on the Girls*, Wodehouse suggests that Jeeves was based on the butler Eugene Robinson, whom Wodehouse once described as a 'walking *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'. However, Robinson worked at the house in Norfolk Street and Wodehouse did not move there until 1927, long after the birth of Jeeves. His fiction had long been peppered with valets and butlers. Indeed, Wodehouse tells of a perfect manservant called Jevons in the story 'Creature of Impulse', which appeared in the October 1914 issue of the *Strand Magazine*.

"In a letter written in 1960, Wodehouse explained the origin of the name Jeeves: 'I was watching a county match on the Cheltenham ground before the first war, and one of the Gloucester bowlers was called Jeeves. I suppose the name stuck, and I named Jeeves after him.' This is thought to be the Warwickshire bowler Percy Jeeves who died at the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

"Since then Jeeves has achieved the ultimate accolade: his own entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, where he is 'the perfect valet, used allusively'. 'Jeevesian' and 'Jeeves-like' also appear. Wooster also appears in the *OED*, but he is not in *Debrett's*."

**October 16: Ron Pretty**

**Daisy Bates**

**October 17: William Smith O'Brien**

**Les Murray**

**October 18: Charles Mudie**

**Sir Henry Wrixon**

Dorothy Auchterlonie Green in *Writer, Reader, Critic* said Australia had rarely produced fiction from inside government or big business. This remains largely true. Certainly any number of politicians have written their memoirs but they have not used the party room as a source of fiction. But, "We have in fact a remarkable model of our own in a man thoroughly conversant with the law, with politics and with the operations of the wealthy, who out of his inside knowledge and with deliberate critical intent wrote a novel dramatising the conflict in public affairs between honest

principles and expediency and sectional interests. The writer was Sir Henry Wrixon, Solicitor-General for Victoria in 1870-71 and Attorney-General in the Gillies-Deakin ministry in 1886. While he was a member of the Legislative Council in 1903 he published a novel entitled *Jacob Shumate, or The People's March, a voice from the ranks*; later he re-cast it and published it in 1912 two years after his retirement from over forty years of political life, under the title *Edward Fairlie Frankfort, or Politics among the People*. It is the revised version with which I am concerned here and it seems to me worthy of careful study by anyone setting out to write the kind of novel whose absence I have been deploring, if only because Wrixon demands inside knowledge as indispensable. His opening sentence reads:

In every phase of life's business, whether clerical, legal, theatrical or other, there is an inner world of which the public knows little, but which you would have to have knowledge of, if you would understand what is really taking place and how the effects which all see are being brought about. This especially applies to our democratic politics, in which government depends upon what the man in the street and his millions of brethren want and in what way they propose to get it ... As in other walks of life, so in the political, the only way to know about the inner side is to go inside yourself, or to learn from those who have been behind the scenes.

The observation remains true, in spite of the fact that since Wrixon wrote it down, those who have become powerful have found out how to make the man in the street and his millions of brethren want what their masters want them to want. That of course is a subject on its own, fit for a novelist's pen, and Wrixon himself was well aware of it, as his early chapters show."

You will probably have intuited that the novel would strike a modern reader as slow and rather turgid and long-winded but it has a modern-enough theme. "The first thing that would strike a contemporary Tasmanian is the pivot upon which the whole action of the novel turns: the problem of the positioning of a reservoir. Political careers rise and fall, the entire course of men's and women's personal lives is changed, over the question, not whether there should or should not be a dam, not where a dam ought to go, from an economic and technological point of view, but where it can be made to go by those who have axes to grind."

So what of Henry Wrixon? She writes, "Wrixon was born in Dublin in 1839; his father, a lawyer, brought his family to Victoria in 1850 and Henry was educated at Portland, then for a year at Melbourne University but finished his law studies in Dublin and was called to the Irish Bar. He returned to Victoria in 1863 and after four years at the Bar, entered politics in 1868 as a member of the Legislative Assembly, with radical ideas about land laws and the reform of the Legislative Council. Throughout his long career, Wrixon was admired for his sincerity and eloquence; according to Deakin he was 'lovable and entirely trustworthy ... animated by the sincerest and most unselfish desire to serve his country'. Wrixon's novel demonstrates only too clearly how far the last two qualities can be expected to take a man in modern politics. Immensely able as he was, especially in law, he never quite reached the top in politics, mainly because he refused to lobby and disliked dogmatism. His book leaves no doubt that he thoroughly understood the art of lobbying from the receiving end – deputations to ministers make up some of the most amusing and most pointed scenes in the book – and his portraits of men fanatically wedded to dogmas, such as Shumate the socialist and the two union leaders – are equally shrewd. But they are never unfair. Wrixon does not draw in black and white. His gift for showing the reasonable side of a case with which he does not agree is striking. He even finds an excuse for the slipperiness of politicians: how can you blame them, he asks, or any set of men, when you impose on them the responsibility of power and deny them the reality."

**October 19: John Le Carré (David Cornwell)**

"The whole point of the Secret Service is that it is secret."

Compton Mackenzie in *Water on the Brain* 1933.

Of course John Le Carré was not poking that kind of fun at the Secret Service. His spies were very serious people. He made his secret service everything from incompetent to devious to confused to callous, and sometimes witty, but not funny.

While I was reading Adam Sisman's biography *John le Carré* I came upon his real life disagreement with another famous writer, Salman Rushdie. Rushdie reviewed *The Russia House* for the *Observer* saying 'John le Carré wants to be taken very seriously indeed.' And going on to say 'Much of the trouble is, I'm afraid, literary. There is something unavoidably stick-figure-like about le Carré's attempts at characterization.'

Sisman writes, "By the time he reviewed *The Russia House* Rushdie was living in hiding, under police protection. Earlier in the year the Ayatollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of Iran, had declared his novel *The Satanic Verses* to be 'blasphemous against Islam', and issued a fatwa, calling for the death of Rushdie and his publishers. Iranian officials had offered a bounty for his death. The book had drawn mass protests in Muslim countries and fire-bombings of bookshops in the West: several people had died as a result.

"In a letter published in the *Guardian*, David suggested that Rushdie should have known better. 'Anybody who is familiar with Muslims, even if he has not had the advantage of Rushdie's background, knows that, even among the most relaxed, you make light of the Book at your peril.' He indicated that Rushdie had, 'perhaps inadvertently', provoked his own misfortune. 'His open letter to the Indian Government seemed to me to be of an almost colonial arrogance.' Free speech was always curtailed, David insisted. 'Nobody has a God-given right to insult a great religion and be published with impunity.' He argued that anyone who wanted to read *The Satanic Verses* had already been given ample opportunity to do so. To David, Rushdie's attitude was a mystery. 'How can a man whose novel, for whatever twisted reasons, has already been the cause of so much bloodshed, insist on risking more?' He failed to understand both why Rushdie had not withdrawn the book until a calmer time and why he was 'inviting further bloodshed' by insisting on its publication in paperback. 'It seems to me that he has nothing further to prove his own insensitivity.' David noted the 'elitism' of Rushdie's most vociferous defenders, who claimed 'great literary merit' for the book, even that it was 'a masterpiece'. He saw this as dangerous and self-defeating argument. 'Would the same people have leapt to the defence of a Ludlum or an Archer? Or are we to believe that those who write literature have a greater right to free speech than those who write pulp?' "

"On the first anniversary of the death sentence, Rushdie, from his hiding place, published an article in which he said that, without the freedom to offend, freedom of expression ceases to exist."

Jonathon Rauch in *Kindly Inquisitors*.

Now I believe no book, no matter how 'holy', 'sacred', the 'word of God' and so on, is immune from discussion, criticism, even poking fun. Every book is put down by fallible human beings. But I wonder if le Carré considered that he was damning Muslim 'irrationality' even while he seemed to support their right to be 'offended'? Of course the response *was* irrational. Why should young women working in bookshops, who had no control over the books ordered, be killed? What did their deaths achieve? How did their deaths represent a Muslim need to have the *Koran* respected? I found the book boring and couldn't work out just what the problem was—but then the Ayatollah never spelled out just which passages he was objecting to—so I do not think I would go out to demand that it be published in paperback. After all, good books are not published for all sorts of reasons and those reasons have nothing to do with religious leaders in Iran. And the 'feud' sputtered on with various people coming to the support of both Rushdie and le Carré without really influencing potential readers ...

Michael Smith in *The Secret Agent's Bedside Reader* says of Compton Mackenzie: "The original version of Compton Mackenzie's memoir *Greek Memories*, which dealt with his work for Cumming in Greece during 1916, was published in 1932 and immediately banned. The publishers Cassell were advised politely that they should withdraw it. It was an offer they could not refuse and, while a few review copies had been issued, from one of which this passage derives, contemporaneous court reports state that it was withdrawn on the morning of publication and not a single copy went on sale.

"*Greek Memories* named Cumming as 'C', the wartime chief of the British secret service. He had been dead for nine years by the time the book was published but revealing his name was still regarded as a heinous crime. Mackenzie reproduced parts of various secret documents in the text, named a number of other M16 officers who were still serving, some of them in this particular passage, and described the cover they used in foreign capitals. This was a red line for the authorities who declared: 'There is scarcely a page of *Greek Memories* which does not damage the foundation of secrecy upon which the secret service is built.'

"They hauled Mackenzie up before the courts where he was in fact dealt with quite lightly. He was fined £100 with a further £100 costs. He took his revenge with the satirical novel *Water on the Brain*, ridiculing the secret service MQ9(e) and its mysterious 'Chief', Colonel Nutting, known only as 'N', whose offices at Pomona Lodge were not yet 'officially' a lunatic asylum, but would eventually become one, full of typists 'feverishly' typing out reports 'that will never be read even in eternity'.

"A re-written version of *Greek Memories* with all the offending passages removed was published in 1939. Biteback has now republished the original unexpurgated version (in 2011), but officially it remains banned. You should not be reading this!"

So what did he say about 'C'?

"It is always possible to tell by the attitude of subordinates what is likely to be the attitude of the head man in any show, and my reception upstairs by various young lieutenants of the RNVR was ambiguous. There was that air of nervous anticipation with which schoolboys watch the attitude of a victim who has been sent for by the Head. Even pink-faced lady secretaries came fluttering one after another on some excuse into the room where I was waiting, presumably to take a quick glance at the man who had ventured to defy C for nine months. After about ten minutes of this embarrassed waiting a young man came in and announced that the Chief wished to see Captain Mackenzie immediately. I followed him into C's private room, tucked away under the roof, crowded with filing cupboards and shelves, and with the rest of the space almost entirely filled by C's big table. The dormer windows looked out across the plane-trees of the Embankment Gardens to the Thames, over which twilight was creeping. I saw on the other side of the table a pale clean-shaven man, the most striking features of whose face was a Punch-like chin, a small and beautifully fine bow of a mouth, and a pair of very bright eyes. He was dressed in the uniform of a naval captain."

Adam Sisman wrote, "David amused himself by looking up the file on Compton Mackenzie, who had served in British intelligence during the First World War: in it he found a letter from the head of the Secret Service, signed 'C' in green ink, fulminating that Mackenzie's *Greek Memories* (1932) had employed symbols of the Service, 'some of which are still in use!' – the symbol 'C' being one of these. Mackenzie had been convicted under the Official Secrets Act, and fined a token amount, while the book itself was suppressed."

"The great majority of double agents such as Blake, who must have fancied themselves serious historical actors, have ended up in the dustbin of history, their treasonous slog almost

pointless. They had barely any effect on geopolitics. What they did no longer matters much, except to their victims.

“Yet who they were still fascinates. Their tangled human stories continue to inspire books and movies. In part it’s because the double agent embodies the popular fantasy of living a double life: *I might look like a pen-pusher in a suit, but secretly I’m doing dastardly deeds for an enemy nation*. The feckless young loser who becomes a jihadi must experience the same thrill.”

*The Happy Traitor* by Simon Kuper.

Michael Jago wrote *The Man Who Was George Smiley: The Life of John Bingham*. John Bingham had an unimpressive student and journalistic career but then he joined MI5 and became an ‘agent runner’. He also began writing novels. His wife Madeleine wrote plays and his daughter Charlotte Bingham also became a writer. He was a quiet conservative rather unimpressive man who nevertheless was a talented writer and interrogator. When David Cornwall joined the Secret Service as a young man he got to know and admire Bingham. Jago writes, “This is reflected in a curious and engaging way. Highlighting the generational difference is the nickname that the novice writer awarded to his mentor: he dubbed him ‘le Carré’ (‘the Square’ in French). Yet, to emphasise the closeness between them and because intelligence officers were prohibited from publishing under their true names, he adopted Bingham’s first name and the nickname he had awarded him to form his own *nom de plume*, ‘John le Carré’. That name appeared for the first time on the cover of *Call for the Dead*.”

He took it a step further, basing his key character, George Smiley, on John Bingham. Bingham was at first flattered. But ... “There are several versions of how the friendship between the two was affected by the publication of *The Looking Glass War*. Naturally enough, the most graphic version is that told by le Carré. In the introduction to the 2000 Simon & Schuster editions of three of Bingham’s books, he accounts for the split plausibly.

“He describes himself, in Bingham’s eyes, as a literary apostate who had soiled the good name of the Security Service. Protests that he was merely engaged in a literary conceit, he argues, were ineffective in the face of Bingham’s sense of having been betrayed, along with the Security Service. He had become, he concludes, ‘a shit’ in Bingham’s eyes.

“He adduces, moreover, other differences. While Bingham was fundamentally an MI5 man and therefore, despite having performed work in collaboration with MI6, overwhelmingly concerned with hunting down communists in Britain, le Carré had, after only two years, transferred to the more glamorous MI6. He implies in his explanation of the rift that an MI5 man could scarcely comprehend the intricacies of Pure Intelligence. He paints Bingham as a good and fiercely loyal agent runner, devoted to his agents, and protests that he could never have cast Bingham in a role that involved the kind of cynical sacrifice of agents performed in *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* or *The Looking Glass War*. Such praise aside, he clearly believed that Bingham, mired in counter-espionage, had the luxury of a one-dimensional morality.

“In le Carre’s view, the war of 1939-45 had caused Bingham to adopt fixed positions, tenable while Britain was fighting the evils of Nazism, but impossible to maintain in the more nuanced battle between capitalism and communism. Le Carré, by contrast, was more alert to the demands of espionage in the 1960s with the greater subtlety of deception that it required.

“Le Carre’s explanation of the split is partly true, although he attributes the damage to the friendship to differences of ideology alone. Simon Clanmorris recalls that his father, embracing the ethic of his generation concerning the sacrosanctity of marriage, felt that le Carré was treating Ann, his wife, rather badly. Indeed, the couple divorced in 1971 after several years of disharmony. He also adduces a second more down-to-earth reason: that Madeleine was extremely and enduringly

envious of the enormous financial success of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. This is an understatement.”

John Bingham wrote ‘straight’ novels, detective stories including a true crime book, and spy novels. I asked at the Library and the one they came up with was *Five Roundabouts To Heaven*. This is between a straight novel and a murder story. Philip Bartels and Peter Harding are young men spending time in France to improve their French. Philip marries a fellow-student Beatrice. But eventually he falls in love with another woman, Lorna, but feels guilty at the idea of abandoning his wife. So he decides to kill her. But he introduces Lorna to Peter in the meantime and Peter who is unmarried wants her for himself. Peter discovers that Beatrice has a close relationship with another student from that long ago carefree time, John O’Brien, so she will not feel abandoned if Philip leaves. Peter chooses not to share this with Philip as it would then leave Philip free to marry Lorna without guilt. Philip puts the poison (which he has already tried out on their dog; Beatrice assuming the dog has died of old age) into Beatrice’s indigestion mixture and goes to see Lorna but she turns down his proposal of marriage. He hurries home to stop Beatrice taking the mixture but on the way he is in a serious accident and ends up in hospital. He confesses his plan to the police. But Beatrice who has been out to a movie hasn’t taken anything. He tells Peter where he has stored the poison. And Peter, for his own reasons and unaware that Lorna has turned Philip down, secretly tips it into a glass of water and gives it to him. Peter writes, “I won Lorna, and what I win I hold, and nothing, not even the shades of Philip Bartels, shall ever come between us: I was always a better man than Bartels, better at everything, including murder.” It wasn’t a book to encourage me to look for more of Bingham’s writing. But I was intrigued by the title. I thought at first it had some symbolic importance but no: it is Philip’s journey to Lorna’s home. “So he took the road out of London, the Kingston Bypass, and navigated the five traffic roundabouts which led to Thatchley, and recalled how he used to think of them, once, as the Five Roundabouts to Heaven.”

Michael Jago wrote: “By contrast, after two triumphs in 1965 and 1966, Bingham never regained the stature that his early books had conferred. Le Carré soared while Bingham strove to create an espionage novel as successful as *Spy*. The greatest irony is that it was to George Smiley, modeled largely on Bingham, that le Carré owed his success.”

**October 19: Nina (Madoline) Murdoch**

**Hilda Bridges**

**October 20: Jack Lindsay**

**October 21: Ernest Favenc**

**Eleanor Spence**

**Louis Stone**

**October 22: Paul Grano**

**October 23: Barron Field**

**Ludwig Leichhardt**

**October 24: Nairda Lyne**

**October 25: Alison Broinowski**

**October 26: John Romeril**

**Christobel Mattingley**

**October 27: Dylan Thomas**

**October 28: Jessie Couvreur ‘Tasma’**

**October 29: John O’Hara**

**October 30: Geoff Dean**

## **October 31: Les Darcy**

### **Catherine Helen Spence**

I came upon a mention of a book called *Riggermortis* by Frank Bruno apparently published in 1966 by Bizarre Books. Russell Ash and Brian Lake said of it, “Remarkably, this boxing novel is by an Australian ex-hobo-turned-journalist, and not by the British heavyweight champion, who was aged just five at the time of its publication. Mr Bruno the novelist is described as writing ‘hard-knuckled pages blazing with biff and stingo...’ But when I went looking the only copies I could find were put out by Robert Hale. And I wasn’t sure I wanted to read a book full of ‘biff and stingo’. It’s not that I am averse to reading anything about boxing. After all, Peter FitzSimons’ biography of Aussie boxer Les Darcy is interesting and quite moving.

And what of that ‘ex-hobo-turned-journalist’? What else did he write? The internet was more than willing to tell me everything about that British heavyweight Frank Bruno and a Professor Frank Bruno but didn’t want to know the man I was looking for. I did however find that ‘my’ Frank Bruno (1910 – 1967) had published several earlier books with Robert Hale including *Black Noon at Ngutu*, *Yellow Jack’s Island*, *The Hellbuster*, *The Black Pearl* and *Fury at Finnegan’s Folly*.

The State Library got me *Black Noon at Ngutu* (published 1960) on an inter-library loan. The blurb says “Here is the story, with a background of politics, gun-running and blunder, of one of the epics of early New Zealand history, the ambushing and rout of the Field Force punitive expedition at Te Ngutu-o-te-Manu, Taraniki.” So plenty of ‘biff and stingo’ but in 19<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand rather than the boxing ring. Bruno is not embarrassed to use purple prose in his descriptions or hyperbole in his action sequences but it is a lively page-turning read. The ‘hero’ is Sergeant Johnny O’Garvey. “He had seen some hole-in-a-corner wars around the rim of the world in his time, had Sergeant O’Garvey; but by God! never anything quite like this one in the wild colony of New Zealand.”

The British have first used the conventional warfare successful at Waterloo and the Crimea with limited success, they have turned to hardened professionals in “the wild country of the Ngati-Ruanui; the most ferocious fighters of a ferocious fighting race; now maddened with the bloody religion of Hau Hau” in Taraniki “where the ex-owners were trespassing with increasing belligerence and mulishly—even fanatically—refusing to accept the fact of legal confiscation by right of conquest” but the British have again blundered by offering to pay their soldiers in confiscated Maori land which they can only access by further fighting to remove the Maori owners; with the result that many of the militiamen have instead upped and gone to the goldfields. In theory the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi meant the Maoris gave sovereignty to Britain in return for being left in control of their land. In practice ... O’Garvey says, “The Military Settlers who have taken their discharge in disgust know too much about the true state of affairs to stay on their unsurveyed land and be murdered, so they’ve got rid of their grants for whatever they would fetch and gone” mostly to the gold diggings. Mr Dorricott, an Auckland merchant, asks: “Am I to take it,” Mr Dorricott frowned slightly, “that you do not approve of confiscating the land—most of it in a waste condition—of the defeated rebels? Really, for a professional soldier you hold some peculiar ideas with regard to the enemy!”

“As a professional soldier,” said Sergeant O’Garvey, “I consider the manner of it dangerous: clumsy and dangerous. It’s going to fuse all the fighting tribes together—you can appreciate their idea that all the white man wants is their land, however he gets it. As for it’s being only waste land, I know the Maori, he’ll fight to the death for it—his ‘mother’ he calls it. And as for the ethics of it, one way or another, as a simple professional soldier my opinion is wholly my own.”

The minister Mr Challoner says complacently that white men are needed “men who realise that it is a fair green country worth fighting for.” To which O’Garvey responds quietly,

“Titokowaru’s sentiments exactly, I guess”. (Titokowaru is chief of the Ruahines and a priest “skilled in all the old-time Maori lore”.) Nevertheless Sergeant O’Garvey accepts the job of trying to recruit enough men in Auckland for the next punitive expedition. Auckland is full of American whalers, drunkards, ex-cons and men fleeing crimes in Australia, failed goldminers, remittance men, and disillusioned veterans. “Symptomatic of the yeasty times, the long bar of The Greyhound Hotel—in common with the other hotels and grog shops of Auckland town—was a-roar with toss-potting gold-diggers and blasting-and-blinding bullock-drovers; with soldiers and sailors and tough Militiamen, with here and there a colonial Field Force trooper or Armed Constabulary: a multiphonous bedlam of boozy laughter and quarrelling; of cursing and singing; a smoke-hazy, beer-and-spirit fumed convulsed, discordance”; in effect an uneasy recruiting ground for men “with no bush sense and only elementary knowledge of their weapons” to go off to “Bloody little frontier wars, only the private concern of the penniless adventurer and the misfit and the commercially expendable; non-cogs in the wheel of growing Colonial commerce” which is initially sparked by an incident: “On the 19<sup>th</sup> June, 1868, three military settlers on the Te Rauna block were felling and sawing timber in the bush. True, they had received warnings from the local Maoris, who declared that the land and the timber were tribal property, and to keep out. But Cahill, Clark and Squires were men not easily frightened...and their bloodied, hacked corpses were later discovered by a patrol from the Waihi Redoubt.” The British have further exacerbated their situation by promoting trade with the Maoris, the empire being built on trade, ‘trade follows the flag’, which in practice means that some traders run guns to the Maori with impunity which are then used back against the British soldiers. The situation is further complicated by the British using *kupapas*, friendly Maori scouts, whose loyalties are not necessarily as pro-British as the British assume.

The love interest is provided by Miss Aurora Dorricott, daughter of one of those traders, who has been reared on Tennyson and plays the piano under “a very bad portrait of Queen Victoria resembling an unamused suet pudding” and her young swain Charlie Brennan rushes off to enlist in a romantic fervour to rival King Arthur only to find: “He considered himself, sodden and muddy and trigger-tense, blinding and blasting automatically with a wealth of searing execrations picked up latterly from his comrades-in-arms, oaths of whose existence he had been totally ignorant. ... fed on mouldy biscuits and half-rancid pickled pork—those god-sends to contractors in these red-handed little wars—with the even chance of a Hau Hau ambush at any moment.” And “The high barking war-yell of the Hau Haus” was something which “struck numbing terror into the hearts of some of the raw reinforcement bushfighters.”

Bruno doesn’t really explain what he means by the Hau Hau religion, not a “mere pagan superstition” of the Maori *tohungas* or “the power of the Pai-Marire” but rather something which seems closer to the ancient Jewish Zealots, something which “had made fanatical zealots out of the resentful dispossessed tribes; those tribes driven off their tribal lands for actively opposing what in a lot of quarters was regarded simply as the high-handed land hunger of the *pakeha*: the Empire-building speculator with his wits honed razor-keen; and the Colonial Government, laying about it sternly with, to the Maori, baffling new-made laws and a confiscation policy which enabled it, cheaply, to reward the fighting men with land grants—if they could hold the confiscated land granted.” “The iniquitous Waitara seizure and the bitter injustice done to the proud and touchy Ngati-Awa had never been forgotten.” “To the bushfighting irregular, quite apart from any question of ethics, the clumsy confiscation policy of the Government was heavy-handed and maladroit in that it simply debased the one time chivalrous warfare of the Maori warrior into the present guerilla campaigns of ruthless savagery.”

It is into this situation that O’Garvey takes his poorly-trained troops on a punitive expedition, further troubled by the difficult terrain in which “the main column wound slowly and awkwardly after them, plunging now into a world of damp and dripping green and freezing

blackness: a world of steep, sudden gullies and fast, angry creeks swollen with storm water: a world of hampering, tripping, clawing scrub and thick entangling networks of supple-jack vine: a sinister, malevolent world pressing about them, where the deep night shadows lay heavy, and filled the great quiet bush like soft black smoke.”

The papers trumpet “Disastrous Engagement” as their headlines on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1868. It is merchants planning to buy up more unwanted land grants cheaply who are the first to see there might be a silver lining to the military failure. Mr Dorricott says, “In all probability the land north of Patea will have to be abandoned to the natives. Some people are going to lose a great deal of money over this.” But he cheers up because “Land can be bought now for a mere song.” And his partner elaborates, “So that it might be—er—an act of charity, to purchase the land thus abandoned.” They may not be able to do anything with the land at the moment but it still has firm British titles imposed on it by those “close-fisted politicians” who had attempted to remove the Maori “on the cheap, and using saber-rattling ink from a safe distance.” The Government in granting land to veterans to try and get them to risk their lives in punitive campaigns has of necessity issued firm title. It is Mrs Dorricott who says, “Oh dear! Why cannot we live at peace with the natives?”

And Bruno brings both the hardened professional O’Garvey and the young romantic Brennan through. Brennan finds Miss Aurora has got engaged to someone else but he has grown and matured in both body and mind and she realises she has made a mistake but when she hopes to renew their romance he tells her has married a Maori girl. And Johnny O’Garvey, battered in body and tired of Colonial duplicities, marries his long-time Maori friend Kiti Kotero.

To what extent Bruno draws on real people and historical events someone more knowledgeable about NZ history will no doubt discern but he makes his ‘hard-knuckled’ story, not short of ‘biff and stingo’, interesting and realistic.

**November 1: Christopher Brennan**

**John Anderson**

**November 2: Jenny Pausacker**

**November 3: Thomas Heney**

**J. E. Macdonnell**

**Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal (Kath Walker)**

**November 4: Colin Simpson**

**November 5: Edwin Flack**

Peter Sweeney wrote *Edwin Flack: The Lion of Athens: Australia’s first Olympic Games Gold Medallist*. Flack was born in England but came to Victoria as a boy. At school in Melbourne he began his running career with considerable success. Then as a young man he trained as an accountant and went to London to work and to find opportunities to race. “Accountancy was the main reason Edwin Flack was in London – or that’s what Joseph Flack thought.

“However, the closer it got to April, 1896, the more time, effort and planning, Edwin Flack was putting into athletics. The modern-day Olympic Games were being launched in Athens and Flack wanted to be there.

“When he left Melbourne for London, going to the Olympics – preferably as a competitor, but at least as a spectator – was in the back of Flack’s mind. Now the subject had worked its way forward. It was occupying his total mind.

“It seemed the biggest hurdle Flack faced in making Athens was getting the ‘all-clear’ from two people – his father and his boss, Edwin Waterhouse.”

And with time off granted he set off across Europe by train and boat to Athens, paying his own way, and not sure what he would face there as the lone Australian. “Edwin Flack walked out of

his London home at 9.15am on Friday, March 27, 1896. He couldn't have known he would return to it a month later as a sporting legend." He traveled across France, Switzerland, Italy, arriving in Athens on the 31<sup>st</sup> March. He visited the still unfinished stadium with its marble seats and went sightseeing.

The games opened on the 6<sup>th</sup> April with Flack writing, "The opening ceremony was timed to take place at 3 o'clock but it was some time after 3.30 before the members of the Royal Family put in an appearance". People cheered, a specially-composed hymn was sung, the Crown Prince as President of the Games addressed the King who replied and the Games were officially open.

The revived Games were the brainchild of French Baron Pierre de Coubertin but he had great difficulty in getting countries interested. He wrote "The programme for the Congress was drawn up in such a way as to disguise its main object: the revival of the Olympic Games: it merely put forward questions on sport in general. I carefully refrained from mentioning such an ambitious project, afraid it might raise such a storm of contempt and scorn as to discourage beforehand those favourably disposed towards it. For whenever I had alluded to my plan at meetings in Oxford and New York etc I had always been sadly conscious that my audience considered it utopian and impracticable."

He wrote to the crowned heads of Europe, he pushed and cajoled and wrote endless letters. "Success came at the last moment, English, American, Swedish, Spanish, Italian, Belgic and Russian delegates arrived in numbers. The Greek representative, M. Vikelas, a habitual resident in Paris, had shared our hopes and fears from the beginning. We found even adherents where we had least expected them: Australia sent us her warmest wishes for success."

This is interesting as Australia did not yet formally exist.

"The idea of the revival of the Olympic Games came triumphantly to the front. Their re-establishment was unanimously decided upon. We proposed to fix the year 1900 for their first celebration, but it was thought advisable to advance that date to 1896 and at the proposition of M. Vikelas, Athens was chosen as the place for their inauguration. Their next celebration is to be in Paris in 1900, and then they are to be held after each interval of four years of every large capital of the world in turn. An International Committee of 14 members was formed to carry out the decisions of the Congress." It was also decided that a silver medal would be given for 1<sup>st</sup> prize and a bronze for 2<sup>nd</sup>. No 3<sup>rd</sup> prizes were given. The medals had the Acropolis, the Parthenon and the Propylaea on one side, and the head of Zeus on the other. Winners also got an olive branch from the grove at Olympia.

Flack shared a room with an English athlete, discus thrower George Robertson. They teamed up to play in the tennis doubles and Flack played in the singles being beaten by the Greeks while an Irishman teamed with a German to come out champion—and have the Union Jack raised over them!

Then Flack came out and won the 800 metres then the 1500 metres. "The biggest debating point down the years following the 'Flack-fest' in the 800m and 1500m was which flag was raised. An official account of the Games noted that the Australian flag was hoisted. How could that be? The Australian flag was another five years away from being flown for the first time.

"There have been suggestions that it was the Austrian flag. It's a more probable story, but probably one that is still off the mark. It seems likely that the flag which flew was the Union Jack." Or possibly the Greeks had created a flag to celebrate a man from the other end of the world.

Then Flack drove out of Athens to the town of Marathon for the start. The 26 mile run would end in Athens and there seems to be no agreement on how many competed but probably 17. Only four of them were not Greek, an American, a Frenchman, a Hungarian, and Flack. The Frenchman led, then Flack, but a young Greek Spiridon Louis (Loues) passed him at the 20 mile mark. Louis was "a short, slender shepherd from the hills" who had been part of the First Infantry

Regiment and urged to enter by his colonel “after witnessing the stamina he had displayed during endurance marches.”

When the audience in the stadium heard a Greek was leading the marathon the place exploded. “Jewellery, money and flowers were thrown at Louis with handkerchiefs and hats flung in the air. Doves were released. ... Crown Prince Constantine and his brother, Prince George, rushed down from the royal box and ran on either side of him to the finish. Prince Nicholas lifted Louis high in the air.” The first three to reach the stadium were all Greeks. It is hard to imagine that happening now! Spiridon “collected his prize in the stadium the following day – but soon after returned to his village.” And “This created many rumours and myths about him. It is believed the only gifts Louis accepted were a horse and cart to transport water around the village where he resided.” He had taken two hours and fifty-five minutes to run the Marathon. The Games were for amateurs but different nations defined amateur differently and the gifts offered were from the Greek spectators not the Games organizers. And it was the Greeks who became passionate about running, jumping and throwing things in the aftermath of the Games.

Although Flack had given up running at 23 miles the excitement was not over. He had invitations to lunches and dinners and picnics culminating with a lunch for all the foreign competitors with the King. He praised the Royal Family for their enthusiasm and kindness to all the athletes. And he found himself mobbed on the streets. “They tell me that I have become the Lion of Athens. I could not go down the street without having a small crowd of people following me on all sides.” And the athletes were farewelled with great pomp Then there was the chance to go sightseeing on the journey back to London. He was treated like a returning hero when he went in to the Price Waterhouse office but gradually he came down from the clouds to face again the ordinary work of an accountant.

He had an occasional run back in England but in 1898 he sailed home to Melbourne. He continued to work as an accountant and an auditor but eventually bought a dairy farm at Berwick and created a champion Friesian stud there. He maintained his interest in the Olympic movement, he took up golf, and when he died in 1935, as he had never married, he left his estate to his housekeeper and to many charities including help for homeless people and for medical research. The City of Berwick eventually put up a statue to commemorate their sporting hero.

**November 6: Barry Dickens**

**November 7: Helen Garner**

**November 8: Margaret Mitchell**

**November 9: Imre Kertész**

**November 10: Oliver Goldsmith**

**November 11: Kathy Lette**

**Jack Absalom**

**November 12: Janette Turner Hospital**

**Bill Hornadge**

**November 13: George V. Higgins**

**November 14: Arthur Hoey Davis (Steele Rudd)**

W. E. FitzHenry wrote an introduction to a reprint of Steele Rudd’s amazingly successful *On Our Selection* which had sold 150,000 copies by 1940: “The *Bulletin* of 6<sup>th</sup> April 1895, printed at the old office at 14 Pitt Street, Sydney, was, no doubt, considered by the literary staff as just an ordinary run-of-the-press issue. It contained the usual editorials and features of the day, cartoons by Livingston Hopkins and Tom Durkin, drawings by A. J. Fischer, Frank Mahony, and D. H. Souter,

verse by E. J. Brady and Arthur H. Adams. There was little, it seemed, to mark it apart from the issue of the week before.

“Yet that issue of close on sixty years ago, when J. F. Archibald was editor, James Edmond and Alex Montgomery his associates, and A. G. Stephens had still to start the famous Red Page, is not without a certain importance in the history of Australian literature. For on a back page, in the microscopic type of the period, appeared a short sketch called “Starting the Selection”. A simple record of the homely pathos and humour of life on a small Darling Downs selection, it was typical of the stories that were appearing in the *Bulletin* week by week.

“The main virtues of Bulletin stories of that period—that is, the eighties and nineties—were, to quote a *Southerly* article by Ken Lewis, “the general shortness of the stories, objectivity rather than subjectivity, unaffected use of colloquial language, strength of dialogue, preference for stories told in the third person, identification of the writer with the life he deals with, very little of the posing affected by earlier story-writers, avoidance of interpolated comment, greater realism, a political and social interest and awareness, relish of bush yarns and folk-lore, a wry humour, a genuine Australianity.”

“How well this story begins! Immediately one feels at one with the family in their journey to their new homestead:

It’s twenty years ago now since we settled on the Creek. Twenty years! I remember well the day we came from Stanthorpe, on Jerome’s dray—eight of us, and all the things—beds, tubs, a bucket, the two cedar chairs with the pine bottoms and backs that Dad put in them, some pint-pots and old Crib. It was a scorching hot day, too—talk about thirst! At every creek we came to we drank till it stopped running.”

“Arthur Hoey Davis (the Hoey comes from the name of a country bookseller) was born at Drayton, near Toowoomba, Queensland, on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1868. From the same Queensland district came that redoubtable critic, A. G. Stephens, the poet George Essex Evans, and J. J. Hilder, the water-colourist.” (And me.) “His father, Thomas Davis (originally Davies), had come from Wales, where he had served an apprenticeship as a blacksmith and farrier. He is said to have had a fine tenor voice, and would sing “The Rocky Road to Dublin” or “The Wind Among the Barley” at the drop of a hat. ... Steele Rudd’s mother was Mary Green, a colleen from outside Roscommon ... From all accounts Mrs Davis must have been a grand woman, one of the true “women of the West” of the old pioneering days.”

Steele Rudd was the eighth child of thirteen. He left school at 12 to work at odd jobs, then he became a clerk in Brisbane. “In his spare time the young man from Emu Creek took up rowing. This led to his contributing a column on rowing to the *Chronicle*, a now long-vanished Brisbane weekly. Finding that he required a pseudonym, he adopted that of “Steele Rudd”. The first name was suggested by the name of the English essayist, the second was a shortening of “rudder”, he wanted to bring into his name some part of a boat.” He also loved horses and eventually became a champion polo player.

He tried both fiction and poetry but it was his stories culled from personal experience on the farm which got him a large and enthusiastic readership. A collection of his stories sold exuberantly, a stage play was a hit, but he did not like the radio series made from his stories. “If one thing made him wild, however, it was a Dad-and-Dave wireless programme that ran some years ago. He objected strongly, too, when he heard the Rudd parents called “Dad and Mum”. “It is ‘Mother’, ‘Mother’, ‘Mother’!” he would shout, flushed in the face.”

Although the RSPCA might have had something to say about their treatment of animals the Rudd family faces every setback with wry humour. “Over the years all Australia was to become familiar with the Rudd family; with Dad (Murtagh Joseph), his wife (Ellen—always Mother in the stories, never Mum); Dan, the prodigal son who was always going off and coming back to loaf on the family and get some local girl into trouble; hard-working, dependable Dave; Joe, an irrepressible young bush scamp, if ever there was one; the twins, and the girls—Kate, Sarah (more often Sal than Sarah) and Norah—and the younger fry, various relatives, Cranky Jack, and the neighbours—the Dwyers, Andersons, Maloneys, and Donovans.”

FitzHenry wrote, “Steele Rudd has been described as “a tall, ruddy-faced man of mercurial temperament, kind of heart, fiery of temper, an excellent talker and a charming companion”. Stephens, commenting on a 1904 photograph of him, said, “He looks what he is, a shrewd, genial native of the bush.” The Bulletin remembered him at the time of his death as “a tall, gentle man who might, with his close-clipped moustache, have been a retired solicitor or army officer”. Miss Hamilton, describing her first meeting with him in 1917, depicts him as being “a tall, well-made, rather ruddy-faced man of middle-age, whose appearance was made distinctive by a pair of very dark, very melancholy-looking eyes.”

In a world where small selectors were struggling with drought, bad luck, understandable mistakes, lack of knowledge of the land and its nature, large families, low prices, and arguments over everything from fences to children, many people could identify with the Rudd family and no doubt had similar stories to tell.

**November 15: Sue Woolfe**

**November 16: Joan Phipson**

**Colin Thiele**

**November 17: Auberon Waugh**

**November 18: Gwen Meredith**

**C.E.W. Bean**

**Rodney Hall**

**November 19: William Yang**

**November 20: Alistair Cook**

**November 21: Ada Cambridge**

**Beryl Bainbridge**

**November 22: Jon Cleary**

**‘Mum Shirl’ (Colleen Shirley Perry)**

**November 23: Nigel Tranter**

**November 24: Laurence Sterne**

**November 25: Brenda Niall**

**Merlinda Bobis**

**November 26: Roderic Quinn**

**November 27: Frank Clune**

**November 28: Randolph Stow**

**Rosie Scott**

**November 29: José Yglesias**

**November 30: Mark Twain**

**December 1: Helen Simpson**

**December 2: Mary Elwyn Patchett**

**Tara June Winch**

**December 3: James Goodenough**

**Lillian Armfield**

**December 4: Lady Jane Franklin**

**Katharine Susannah Prichard**

**Rachael Treasure**

Rachel Treasure made her name in the genre of ‘rural romance’ with novels like *Jillaroo* and *The Farmer’s Wife* but the other day I came across her little book of ‘homespun’ wisdom *Don’t Fence Me In*. So here is a taste:

‘A bad attitude is like a flat tyre.

You won't go anywhere until you CHANGE IT.'

'It all begins with soil and it ends with soil and it begins again with soil.  
Why do we treat the soil the way we do?'

'In my time I've heard a lot of men chip women about our moodiness because of our female hormones.

Why don't we look at it the cowgirl way?

Ever wonder why in agricultural systems we castrate ninety per cent of the males?

There's this little hormone called TESTOSTERONE, which causes a whole world of trouble.

We keep the best-looking males and the best temperament to breed from so our herds are peaceful and productive.

I think there's something in that.'

'My GET UP AND GO got up and LEFT WITHOUT ME!'

'You can't stop TROUBLE visiting in life, but there's no need to offer it a CHAIR!'

When I was young no one spoke of cowgirls. A cowboy was the man who milked the housecow on a station. A man who milked cows on a dairy farm was more likely to be simply called a farm hand. Those who worked with stock on larger properties were jackeroos and jillaroos. But then something changed. King Ranch came to Australia bringing quarter horses and Santa Getrudis cattle and with them came an Americanization of country life and country competitions. Suddenly people were talking of 'cutting horses' rather than campdrafters, 'cowgirls' rather than jilleroos, kids started doing barrel races rather than bending races, and the old days of Herefords, Beef Shorthorns and Aberdeen Angus cattle in the paddocks saw the arrival of a whole range of new breeds.

Pat Smythe in *One Jump Ahead* tells of her time in Texas: "A car arrived at the fence, and a Mexican got out to say that he would take us to the ranch house. I was relieved to find that we had been noticed and we were quickly driven to the house, which was even larger than I had first imagined from the air.

"We found that my hosts, the Klebergs, would not be back from another division of the ranch until the next day, but we were made most welcome and dined off the best Santa Gertrudis beef. The history of this breed is most interesting.

"The cattle men were searching for an animal which would thrive in heat and resist disease, in spite of ticks and flies. The cattle they had to work with were Herefords and Durhams (Shorthorns) which came from the native Longhorns of Spanish origin. These cows were put to good beef bulls, bought at the American shows. Many of the bulls were English bred and imported for their excellent beef qualities. Then a new experiment was made with the Brahma (Zebu) cattle, with good milking qualities and extremely resistant to heat, diseases and pests.

"Bob Kleberg as a young man was allowed to experiment from certain breeds. From a cross of three-eighths Brahma cattle, the humped Indian breed that puts on only little meat, and five-eighths Shorthorn, with the meat producing qualities without the stamina to withstand drought and parasites, a bunch of calves was produced.

"From these calves, one young bull called Monkey had all the necessary qualities that they required. He thrived on poor grazing and put on quality meat, without being unduly worried by drought or parasites. What was more, he was a freak of breeding in that without fail he transmitted

his qualities to his offspring. Monkey was the foundation of the breed of Santa Gertrudis, named after the Spanish land grant that gave its name to the creek on which the main ranch house is built. The calves of this line could put on three pounds of weight a day with only the poor prairie grazing, and at the same time become good quality beef.”

The ranch as well as thoroughbreds bred quarter horses. “These were the basic blood for the cow ponies, used for working the cattle. A quarter horse originally got its name from being able to gallop a quarter of a mile faster than a thoroughbred. They were smaller but more strongly built, so that they could jump off the mark and be galloping flat out in a moment. Likewise they could stop and turn in a flash if necessary, which is ideal for their work with cattle. I loved their intelligent little heads and when I rode some of these quarter horses during the round-up, I found that they could think far more quickly than I could. They knew the work from generations of breeding for this job, and they could tell which way the cattle were going to turn and the best way to cut them away from the herd.”

Also there were collections of purebred cattle, Brahmans, Afrikander cattle, English Park cattle, white with darker markings which were descended from Spanish fighting bulls and, “The last lot of cattle we had to rout out of the drinking hole, and then when they came charging up through the bush, we ran for the car! They were the Texas Longhorns, the original wild cattle found roaming the prairie when Captain King first saw this land while riding through Corpus Christi on business trips from Brownsville to Austen. Eventually he bought great tracts of this ‘no-man’s-land’ and bandit country and he started ranching there in the middle of the last century.”

I don’t know if King Ranch had its indigenous peoples further back or whether it was seen as too dry to appeal to the great herds of bison and antelopes which provided the staple foods for the tribes ...

**December 5: Kaz Cooke**

**December 6: Charles Francis Laseron**

**December 7: Willa Cather**

I came upon an article by A. L. Rowse in *Enchanting Places* compiled by A. M. Rosenthal and Arthur Gelb which he called ‘Tracing Willa Cather’s Nebraska’. “Few Americans seem to realize what a treasure they have in Red Cloud, a veritable little *ville musee*. How many people know where it is, or have ever been there?

“And yet, as Mildred R. Bennett tells us in her excellent book *The World of Willa Cather*: ‘Red Cloud, Nebraska, has probably been described more often in literature than any other village its size.’ I think we should say ‘small town’ rather. The marvellous thing about it is that it has preserved itself utterly unspoiled, hardly changed since the early days of about a hundred years ago. For that we must be grateful to the public spirit, the local pride of its townspeople in their great writer – and, yes, to their artistic conscience, in a world that sees too much destruction going on around us.

“Here is a place with the charm unbroken, the spell still upon it that first drew me to it more than twenty years ago.”

“Red Cloud appears, under different names, in several of Willa Cather’s novels – in *My Antonia*, *A Lost Lady*, *Lucy Gayheart* and *The Song of the Lark* – and in various short stories. It should not need saying that she was one of the finest of American writers, and that most of her books are to be regarded as classics. But it does need saying that, in my view, Willa Cather gives a truer picture of Americans and American life than all the muckrakers of modern fiction. A picture of the true-hearted, old and rooted country life of America – where you can still leave your house door unlocked and rely on your neighbours.”

Though I suspect that even the people of Red Cloud now lock their doors. And have the golden arches come, along with a large concrete Walmart, while agribusiness creeps across the landscape? I hope not – because it was the land she loved.

Evening and the flat land,  
Rich and sombre and always silent;  
The miles of fresh-plowed soil,  
Heavy and black, full of strength and harshness;  
The growing wheat, the growing weeds,  
The toiling horses, the tired men;  
The long empty roads,  
Sullen fires of sunset, fading,  
The eternal, unresponsive sky.  
Against all this, Youth,  
Flaming like the wild roses,  
Singing like the larks over the plowed fields,  
Flashing like a star out of the twilight;  
Youth with its insupportable sweetness,  
Its fierce necessity,  
Its sharp desire,  
Singing and singing,  
Out of the lips of silence,  
Out of the earthy dusk.

‘Prairie Spring’

“Red Cloud is named for an Indian chief in what was Pawnee country. It began as a pioneering settlement alongside the Republican River, about 120 miles southwest from Lincoln, capital of the state, right down on the border with Kansas. The border here is made by the Great Divide one looks up to from the little town, between the streams on their way to the River Platte, famous route of the Oregon Trail.”

Her home is still there. “It was, and is, a pretty house on the corner of Third and Cedar streets ... Willa herself describes it in an early novel, *The Song of the Lark*: ‘They turned into another street and saw before them lighted windows, a low storey-and-a-half house, with a wing built on at the right and a kitchen addition at the back, everything a little on the slant – roofs, windows and doors.’ And somewhere in the story she describes how the snow would sift in between the chinks of the roof of her attic bedroom in those long Nebraska winters.”

“On subsequent visits to Lincoln I made the acquaintance of Willa’s youngest sister, Elsie, who showed me many of the family treasures, portraits, albums of photographs, china, the tea service we drank tea out of. (She gave me my copy of *A Lost Lady*.) Much of all this had now come to Red Cloud, and the Cather home looks today as Willa knew it: the family furniture in the front parlour, dining room and kitchen – where their maidservant lived, whom they brought with them from Virginia.

“For we must remember that Willa was Virginia-born, of good old stock that had been in Virginia for five or six generations. She came to Nebraska with the family at the age of nine. It was those impressionable years of growing up that entered into the lifeblood of her imagination. Only one of her novels, her last, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (1940), is about Virginia.”

But it was the railroad not Red Cloud which inspired her best-known novel. “Her brother Douglass worked on the railroad in Colorado. Willa several times visited him out there – unmarried, like herself, he was her favourite. And thus there came about the most popular of her books, *Death*

*Comes for the Archbishop* – about the missionary Bishop Lamy of Santa Fe – which became a best seller in Britain as well as in the United States.”

“All round in this old heart of the town are still the houses of the people she knew, still inhabited for me by her characters of them in her books, just as they were in life. At the back of the Royal Hotel is the site of the Boys’ Home Hotel, since demolished, of *My Antonia* – Willa’s own favourite, as was the original of Antonia, the spirited Czech girl with whom Willa was more than half in love. (She always thought of herself as a boy – and, for a writer, had the advantage of ambivalence, a doubled sensibility.)” I couldn’t help wondering if the townspeople knew they had become characters and, if so, how they felt about it.

“Not far is the Catherton cemetery, the first grave that of Aunt Aloerna (Aunt Vernie), who died a young woman of thirty-three on December 30, 1883, that first hard winter when they had to break the ground with an axe – as for Shimerda’s funeral in *My Antonia*. But in the Maytime all in Nebraska is beautiful: a gentle breeze in the cedars planted around the little wayside graveyard, open furrows beyond, meadowlarks singing sweet over the vast fields. I could wish that Willa were buried among her people here. But never mind, her memory is all around.”

(She is buried in the Old Burying Ground in Jaffrey in New Hampshire.)

Michael Keenan in *Wild Horses Don’t Swim* said of the inspiration to keep going on a hard trek through the Kimberleys—“With men it was usually a woman who kindled that inspiration. For me at that moment it was the famous author Willa Cather. I knew about her visit to the Anasazi ruins at Mesa Verde in the United States in 1915.

“Searching for inspiration to commence a writing career at the age of nearly forty, Willa Cather arrived at Colorado’s Mesa Verde in a horse-drawn wagon. A frontier national park at the time, it was dangerous to go off alone and look for the little-known cliff ruins. It was still dangerous – in 1997 a ten-year-old French boy wandered away from a group and was taken by a mountain lion. In almost one hundred years nothing had changed much at Mesa Verde, except the roads and the vehicles, and that was an astounding achievement on the part of the Colorado authorities.

“In 1915 Willa would have faced the same peril as the French boy when she separated from her guide. Climbing up trails in the moonlight it appeared she was spiritually moved by the sight of the full moon lighting up the cliff ruins now known as Swallows Nest. It didn’t appear that Willa was lost, or several coo-ees would have disclosed her position in the canyon. She went out on her own in the moonlight to look for something and she found it. Following the experiences of that night Willa Cather was inspired to write two novels, both of which touched on the mystery and sacred nature of the ancient Indian ruins. Further inspired with religious fervour she went on to write the highly acclaimed *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.”

I have just been reading *A Lost Lady* to re-acquaint myself with her writing. Mrs Forrester is the lost lady, an attractive gracious lady living with an older husband in a small town. A young man, Niel, admires her greatly. “An impulse of affection and guardianship drew Niel up the poplar-bordered road in the early light—though he did not go near the house itself, but at the second bridge cut round through the meadow and on to the marsh. The sky was burning with the soft pink and silver of a cloudless summer dawn. The heavy, bowed grasses splashed him to the knees. All over the marsh, snow-on-the-mountain, globed with dew, made cool sheets of silver, and the swamp milk-weed spread its flat, raspberry-coloured clusters. There was an almost religious purity about the fresh morning air, the tender sky, the grass and flowers with the sheen of early dew upon them.” He picks flowers for her and goes up to the house. “As he bent to place the flowers on the sill, he heard from within a woman’s soft laughter; impatient, indulgent, teasing, eager. Then another laugh, very different, a man’s. And it was fat and lazy—ended in something like a yawn.”

Niel doesn't know if this is merely a friend come to visit—or something more. But “This day saw the end of that admiration and loyalty that had been like a bloom on his existence. He could never recapture it. It was gone, like the morning freshness of the flowers.”

And things go wrong for her. Her husband has a fall from his horse, his bank fails leaving him with little but the house. Then he has a stroke. “But now that the Captain was helpless, everything changed. She could hold off the curious no longer. ... The Mrs. Beasleys and Molly Tuckers had their chance at last. They went in and out of Mrs. Forrester's kitchen as familiarly as they did out of one another's. They rummaged through the linen closet to find more sheets, pried about in the attic and cellar. They went over the house like ants, the house where they had never before got past the parlour; and they found they had been fooled all these years. There was nothing remarkable about the place at all!” Captain Forrester dies and Niel comes back from college to help her. But she has ceased to be the gracious slightly aloof woman he remembered and now invites young men to come to dinner at her house, inviting gossip. It is the final disillusionment for him. She sells the house, moves to California, re-marries and goes to Buenos Aires.

Though it is her story she is in a sense ungraspable. Which is the real woman or has she never really been herself?

“The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman.”

*O Pioneers!*

“We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it—for a little while.”

*O Pioneers!*

**December 8: James Thurber**

**December 9: Robert Hawke**

**December 10: Melvil Dewey**

**December 11: Naguib Mahfouz**

**December 12: Louis Nowra**

**William Baylebridge**

**December 13: Dulcie Deamer**

**December 14: Harold Stewart**

**December 15: Sneja Gunew**

**December 16: George Santayana**

Ira D. Cardiff in *The Wisdom of George Santayana* brought together quotes from various of Santayana's books. I had difficulties with some of Santayana's ideas; his vision of science as a way of understanding a mechanistic world; his hopes that the future would be atheistic and socialistic; a dismissive way of looking at the philosophical writings from the past. But the Spanish philosopher was famous in his time so I have chosen out some of his quotes for their interest or chance to disagree or at least ponder.

“All that is scientific or Darwinian in the theory of evolution is accordingly an application of mechanism, a proof that mechanism lies at the basis of life and morals.”

“A moral and truly transcendental critique of science, as of common sense, is never out of place, since all such a critique does is to assign to each conception or discovery its place and importance in the Life of Reason.”

“If psychology is a science, many things that books of psychology contain should be excluded from it. One is social imagination.”

“The fortunate instincts of a race destined to long life and rationality express themselves in significant poetry before they express themselves in science.”

“True science, then, was that which enabled a man to disentangle and attain his natural good; and such a science is also the art of life and the whole of virtue.’

“Wisdom and happiness consist in having recast natural energies in the furnace of experience.”

“The curse of modern philosophy is only that it has not drawn its inspiration from science; as the misfortune of science is that it has not yet saturated the mind of philosophers and recast the moral world.”

“Science is nothing but developed perception, interpreted intent, common sense rounded out and minutely articulated.”

“The young man who has not wept is a savage, and the old man who will not laugh is a fool.”

“If time bred nothing, eternity would have nothing to embalm.”

But he didn’t include perhaps his best-known aphorism: “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Australia is not noted for its plethora of philosophers. But one comes up in all kinds of memoirs. John Anderson, a Scotsman, who became Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney in 1927. For thirty years he was the ‘face’ of philosophy in Australia not least because Australia was far from the movements and ideas and trends in the philosophy ‘world’. He edited the *Australian Journal of Psychology and Philosophy* and published two books during his tenure, *Studies in Empirical Philosophy* and *Education and Politics*. Both by nature and by remoteness he is regarded as an independent ‘voice’ in the philosophical world. I found his beliefs described as ‘Australian realism’ and focused on logic and ethics. Of course it was all much more complex than that suggests but I will leave it others to choose out some pithy quotes from Anderson’s writings to share ...

**December 17: Angelika Fremd**

**December 18: G. B. Lancaster (Edith Joan Lyttleton)**

**December 19: Italo Svevo (Ettore Schmitz)**

**John Lang**

**December 20: Robert Menzies**

**December 21: Nat Gould**

**Frank Moorhouse**

In *Australia Under Surveillance* Frank Moorhouse writes: “A team from the Attorney-General’s Department and the Office of National Assessments was sent to the offices of the Melbourne publisher Black Inc. and ‘cleansed’ (the official term) computers of parts of a

manuscript of a book said to be sensitive to national security. The team then destroyed the hard disk onto which the material had been transferred.

“The book, *Axis of Deceit*, was written by Andrew Wilkie, a former analyst with the Office of National Assessments, who resigned in 2003 in opposition to Australian involvement in Iraq and what he considered the unethical behaviour of the Office of National Assessments.

“After this, at least four other people were visited by the government squad, which cleansed the computers of Wilkie’s brother David and sister Patricia, and those of filmmaker Carmel Travers and Professor Robert Manne, who commissioned Wilkie’s book for Black Inc.

“Professor Manne said in an interview that the manuscript appeared to him to be ‘pretty innocuous and that there was nothing which would be of interest to a security service or terrorist organisation’.

“Morry Schwartz, owner and publisher of Black Inc., said that he had already had the manuscript checked by an expert from the point of view of national security and some parts had been removed.” After a lot of carry-on a delegation from the Attorney-General’s office turned up at Black Inc., transferred material to a hard disk then destroyed it with a hammer. Everyone involved with the book was pressured to sign a confidentiality agreement, and Travers had a copy of her hard drive taken which also included “all the details of her private and business and financial life on it.”

“In an interview on the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), the author of the book, Andrew Wilkie, said: ‘I think a lot of it was just theatre meant to put pressure on people, almost to bully them. I think it was intended to send a very clear signal to the media, to the publishing industry, to me that they needed to be very, very careful about criticizing the government.

‘I think the government’s behaviour was intended very clearly to send a signal to my former colleagues that, you know, you don’t cross them, you don’t resign, you don’t speak out.’”

Moorhouse said of whistleblowing, “The most salutary case is that of Andrew Wilkie, mentioned earlier in relation to the ‘cleansing of computers’ when he published *Axis of Deceit*. He said he increasingly encountered ethical conflict between his duty as an intelligence officer and the attempts to suppress the truth by both politicians and executive staff at the Office of National Assessment. Wilkie is now an independent member of the House of Representatives.”

Andrew Wilkie is our Federal MP in Canberra. But what is the Office of National Assessments? It sounds like one of those names designed to mean nothing to the casual passerby. Perhaps a body to look at how well our schools are performing? But in fact it was set up as an intelligence organisation in 1977 linked to ASIO and providing material to the Prime Minister and Cabinet. It was ONA material which led Prime Minister Howard to claim that asylum seekers had thrown their children overboard in the ‘Tampa incident’. However when the advice ONA had given him was eventually made public it was found to have come not from an intelligence operation but from media releases put out by several government ministers. But it was ONA’s untrue claims about ‘weapons of mass destruction’ in Iraq which finally led to Andrew Wilkie resigning. Perhaps like Miss Marple we should not trust anybody to tell us the truth ‘and nothing but the truth’?

**December 22: David Martin**

**Yasmine Gooneratne**

**December 23: Nina Christesen**

**Marie Bjelke-Petersen**

**Theodor Strehlow**

**Ken Method**

**December 24: Matthew Arnold**

**December 25: Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan**

**Robert Walker**

**Ross Fitzgerald**

A. Norman Jeffares in *A Short History of Ireland's Writers* says of Owenson that she gained contemporary fame with *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) in which she adopted the device of having a young Englishman come to Ireland and meet an Irish girl, the Lady Glorvina, who instructs him about the past civilisation of Ireland and the present hardships of peasant life. He is vastly impressed by wild Irish scenery in the west and by the people he meets, peasants and the Prince of Inishmore alike. Of course, Glorvina, the Prince's daughter, impresses him most of all; she knows Irish, sings charmingly and plays the harp.

"The novel blends fashionable Ossianic elements, admiration for the paintings of Salvator Rosa and patriotic romanticism. Heady stuff, all of it, in those days: success encouraged Lady Morgan to write other novels, *O'Donnel* and *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys*. The latter echoes Grattan's idealism but blends it with a dash of republican nationalism in the person of Murrough O'Brien, a patriot who leaves Ireland after 1798 to become a general in the French Army."

I wonder if her novels would still appeal or would we be put off by the idea of 'instruction'?

**December 26: Vince Gattton Kelly**

**Shirley Shackleton**

**Donald Horne**

David Latta in his collection of early Australian crime fiction *Sand on the Gumshoe* says of Vince Kelly: "Formerly an editor with *Smith's Weekly* in Melbourne, he came to Sydney where he worked for *The Sun* newspaper and became something of a legend among the city's journalists.

"In a professional sense, he was far better known as a political commentator than as a writer of fiction. On his death in April 1976, many of the state's top politicians and civil servants, including the Premier, Sir Robert Askin, and a former Commissioner of Police, Norman Allan, publicly voiced their regrets while a special contingent of police escorted the funeral cortege."

He wrote both fiction and non-fiction, thrillers, mystery; "Kelly is well known as the author of 15 books, many dealing with crime cases or famous police." These include *The Shadow: The Amazing Exploits of Frank Fahy* (1954), *The Bogeyman: The Exploits of Sergeant C.J. Chuck*, *Australia's Most Unpopular Cop* (1956), *Rugged Angel: the Amazing Career of Policewoman Lillian Armfield* (1961) and *The Shark Arm Case* (1963). "He also edited a history of Woollahra Municipality and wrote a biography of the Governor-General, Sir William McKell." And I wondered if he ever criticised Askin and Allan for their blatant corruption? Probably not or he would not have got that 'special contingent of police'.

**December 27: Elizabeth Smart**

**December 28: Leslie Rees**

**Max Hastings**

**December 29: Gerard Windsor**

**December 30: Elyne Mitchell**

**Glenda Adams**

**Rudyard Kipling**

"Did I tell you that my old school-mate (Colonel Dunsterville) was here the other day for just the night? He was exactly the same as he had always been and we met just as though we had never separated. Although he is commanding the 20<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry, he says he feels exactly as young as ever he was and he finds it hard to keep a serious face when he blows up the young subalterns for being bad. He is going back to India in a little while, leaving his seven year old son behind him."

Rudyard Kipling writing to his son 28/9/1909.

Sarah Lindenmayer in *Debt of Honour: The gripping account of the Anzac who saved the Assyrians* from genocide in WWI has an Australian Captain Stanley Savige as her central hero and writes, “Today, Savige is acclaimed by the Assyrians as a national hero, but in Australia he remains virtually unknown.” I lent the book to several people and suggested we might invite Sarah Lindenmayer to speak to the FAW but they said they found it too confusing. This is true. It is partly that most of us know little about that region of the world and partly that it *was* a confusing campaign.

This area stretching across the mountains of southern Russia, Turkey, Persia (Iran) and Mesopotamia formed the ancient territory of Kurdistan but even more anciently it formed the Assyrian empire. Each change of power served to complicate the matter further. The Turks used the Kurds as their ‘shock troops’ and it isn’t clear to what extent the Kurds hoped this allegiance would bring them greater power and influence and land. In the end it only brought them opprobrium.

“Tribal clans—such as the Baluchis, Azeris, Kurds, Turki, Lashanis, Jangalis, Senjabis, Bakhtiaris, Kashqais—fought each other for political influence, while religious minorities—such as Jews, Cossacks, Armenians and Assyrians—struggled for status and security.”

The unruly and ill-determined borders which divided people’s loyalties further complicated things. “Persian institutions were corrupt and dysfunctional, having been usurped by foreign governments and armies for decades prior to the Great War. The Persian Government had little capacity to manage its unruly borders with India, Afghanistan, Russian Turkestan, Russian Azerbaijan and Mesopotamia. ... Added to these domestic pressures, the Turkish Army was on the warpath. Local sources claim that the Ottoman governor of Van, Cevdet Bey Pasha, gave orders for the killing of civilian minorities to commence in his province, which borders onto north west Persia. The Turkish infantry set to work burning and sacking houses and barns, violating women and girls and ruining crops, barns and irrigation works. Thirty Assyrian villages were decimated and approximately 20,000 civilians were murdered in the pogrom. Around 13,000 people fled in one direction onto the Salmas Plains, and in the other direction, scores of thousands more Assyrians and Armenians fled on foot to the Caspian seaports, hoping to squeeze onto Russian navy boats and merchant steamers.

“Similar atrocities were perpetrated in the Assyrian centres of Mardin and Diyarbakir. Another 30,000 or so destitute Assyrian refugees headed for Urmiah seeking refuge with European expatriates, church missions and consular houses.” As well as war, disease and starvation threatened and Kurdish forces burnt the library at Qudshanis “a treasure trove of ancient liturgical texts and vessels, embroidered vestments and heirlooms”. The followers of Jesus “founded the Church of Antioch in 37 A.D. and to this day it remains the mother church from which all the Aramean or Syriac Christian churches originated.”

Captain Stanley Savige had enlisted in Melbourne in early 1915 and been sent, first, to Gallipoli then to the Western Front, then at the beginning of 1918 “The War Cabinet finalised the selection of a total force of 370 men from across the entire British army, with 129 officers and 250 regimental sergeants. Captain Savige was one of 20 Australians selected.” Also 12 from New Zealand, 20 Canadians, 12 South Africans, and the rest British, made up ‘Dunsterforce’ under Major General Lionel Dunsterville, each man “distinguished in character and in combat” for a desperate mission in the remote mountains of northern Iran and western Turkey.

But this small force was not provided with sufficient equipment or supplies and they went into a region of famine “most likely caused by widespread crop failure over successive seasons, exacerbated by waves of invading and retreating Russians and Turks, who had sacked the villages and burned farms and fields.”

The struggle to evacuate the Assyrians safely, harried by Turks and Kurds, was an awesome responsibility. But eventually 60,000 Assyrians, sick, hungry, injured, frail, straggled in to Hamedan. Thousands more remained unaccounted for, dead or missing. And there was little organised humanitarian help available. The ending of the war brought a degree of relief but the Assyrians were denied the right to be represented at the Paris Peace Conference and denied the right to any kind of independent or even autonomous homeland. The ending of the Great War left them in limbo. And wherever they tried to find a place to settle across the Middle East they faced discrimination and sometimes massacre. Understandably they have seen no option but to leave Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and try to start new lives in the West.

“On first impressions, Captain Savige thought the general was a man of rare quality and felt more confident about the success of the mission. Lionel Charles Dunsterville was a shrewd, talented and lordly gentleman. Like his father and grandfather before him, who were both generals during the British Raj, he was a decorated officer. As a boy, he attended the United Services College where he became firm friends with Rudyard Kipling, who believed that Dunsterville was ‘destined for glory in the service of the Empire’. Later Kipling used Dunsterville as the model for his character Stalky in his novel, *Stalky & Co*, and the nickname stuck. It became a bestselling adventure story for boys, and Captain Savige found it amusing that the Stalky he had read about in children’s books was now his commanding officer, in charge of this prestigious mission.” He was sent to China then with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade on the Northwest Frontier of India. “He was fluent in German, Russian, French and Persian, and proficient in several Indian dialects. His diaries, personal papers and the official record of his experiences in Persia are an excellent insight into his remarkable character and career.” (*The Adventures of Dunsterforce*, 1920, *The Diaries of General Lionel Dunsterville, 1911-1922* and *Stalky’s Reminiscences* 1928. And Savige called his reminiscences *Stalky’s Forlorn Hope*, 1920.)

Elliot L. Gilbert said of Dunsterville: 1865-1946 “The original “Stalky” of *Stalky & Co.*, he published a memoir under the title *Stalky’s Reminiscences* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1928). In 1927 he became the first president of the Kipling Society.” *Stalky & Co.* is a boys’ adventure, set in a school in Devon and published in 1899 where the three boys who make up the group, Stalky, M’Turk and Beetle, sneak out of bounds to go poaching and bird-nesting, they act in amateur theatricals, they put live rats down the chimney of a master’s room and a dead cat underneath a dormitory, they are accused of ‘cribbing’ (‘Stalky does the mathematics, M’Turk the Latin, and Beetle attends to their English and French’) where they see themselves as helping each other rather than cheating, and they set out to tackle the school bullies, getting their chaplain on side, Beetle telling him, ‘If you want an authority on bullyin’, Padre, come to me. Corkscrews—brush-drill—keys—head-knucklin’—arm-twistin’—rockin’—Ag Ags—and all the rest of it’. When the boys are found smoking a cheroot outside the school they are caned, given 500 lines to write, and gated for a week.

The school is effectively a training ground for Sandhurst; ‘the last census showed that eighty per cent of the boys had been born abroad—in camp, cantonment, or upon the high seas; or that seventy-five per cent were sons of officers in one or other of the services—Willoughbys, Paulets, De Castros, Maynes, Randalls, after their kind—looking to follow their fathers’ profession.’ It might be thought that the school encouraged brutality so as to turn out tough young men, but most 19<sup>th</sup> century boys’ school were ablaze with bullying, ‘fagging’, and corporal punishment.

Many of the boys end up in India in various capacities. And at the end of the book some of them back in England reminisce about Stalky. ‘Stalky is a Sikh,’ said Tertius. ‘He takes his men to pray at the Durbar Sahib at Amritzar, regularly as clockwork, when he can.’ ‘Then Stalky jabbered

Pushtu and Punjabi in alternate streaks.’ He has clearly settled in to become a part of that world and his old friends praise him for his courage, his cunning, his popularity with his men. One of the men says, ‘India’s full of Stalkies—Cheltenham and Haileybury and Marlborough chaps—that we don’t know anything about, and the surprise will begin when there is really a big row on.’

I cannot say that I found any of the characters particularly likeable but Kipling obviously admired Dunsterville enough to turn him into his hero Stalky. Yet at the end of the day Stalky and all his ilk were there to hold the British Empire in place regardless of how they felt about any of the subject peoples or the wars against those same peoples.

The ‘big row’ could be seen as World War One, though Kipling probably had in mind something smaller and more localised; the sort of campaign where Dunsterville, Savige and the other men found themselves trying to carry out their orders which, in fact, were not about protecting the Assyrian and other refugees but about securing the oil wells at Baku on the Caspian Sea. Dunsterville realised this was an impossibility with his tiny ill-equipped force and strongly criticised the commanders-in-chief and expected to be court-martialled for this insubordination. But commonsense fortunately prevailed and he was eventually awarded the companion of the Star of India and retired with his reputation intact.

And what of Savige? Back home finally, he became interested in John Gellibrand’s Remembrance Club for ex-servicemen in Hobart. But someone said to him, “Have you fellows thought that the dying wish of any of our cobbers would be that we should look after his missus and kids?” Savige and several of his old army mates decided to form Legacy in 1923 to provide that help. Even if not many Australians remember Savige his good work continues on.

**December 31: Simon Wiesenthal**

# **A CALENDAR FOR POETRY LOVERS**

**TO THE MEMORY OF  
POPPY LOPATNIUK**

## **INTRODUCTION**

It came to me as I was putting *Reading Bugs and Book Worms* together that I so often find myself putting down lines of poetry. So I began to ponder on the idea of dedicating a calendar solely to poets.

But there was a problem. What constitutes a poet? Did it have to be people who are remembered specifically as poets? Lots of playwrights and novelists, even journalists, have tossed

off a bit of poetry as well. So did they then qualify as poets? And equally quite a few poets made a name for themselves in other spheres, as novelists, playwrights, travel writers ...

It is slightly misleading when someone says 'I love poetry' because they usually mean that they love a particular poem, a particular poet, or a particular kind of poetry such as bush ballads or lyric poetry. So without being didactic here are some bits and pieces about poets and poetry you might enjoy.

## **A CALENDAR FOR POETRY LOVERS**

- 1 January: Sandor Petofi  
Maria Edgeworth  
Joachim du Bellay (d)  
Olivier de La Marche  
Donagh MacDonagh (d)
- 2 January: Jenny Barnard
- 3 January: August Šenoa (birth date not known)  
Heinrich Gerstenberg
- 4 January: Casimiro de Abreu  
Anne Elder
- 5 January: Ngugi wa Thiong'o  
W. D. Snodgrass  
Stella Gibbons
- 6 January: Kahlil Gibran  
Carl Sandburg
- 7 January: Okot p'Bitek (birth date not known but born 1931)
- 8 January: Charles Tomlinson
- 9 January: Lascalles Abercrombie  
Hayyim Bialik
- 10 January: Vicente Huidobro  
J. Robinson Jeffers  
The poet called Anon.

\*

Many things including street ballads, sea shanties and nursery rhymes have often been anonymous. This says nothing about quality or excitement or beauty but is often because they had built on earlier words, perhaps adding a verse or changing the focus, but also because the further back you go the more likely poems are to be anonymous. I was thinking on this when I came upon an entry in the *Enc. Brit.* for the Exeter Book. They call it "the largest extant collection of Old English poetry. Copied *c.* 975, the manuscript was given to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric (died 1072). It begins with some long religious poems: the *Christ*, in three parts; two poems on St. Guthlac; the fragmentary "Azarius"; and the allegorical *Phoenix*. Following these are a number of shorter religious verses intermingled with poems of types the existence of which would have been unsuspected if this codex had not survived. All the extant Anglo-Saxon lyrics, or Elegies, as they are usually called—"The Wanderer," "The Seafarer," "The Wife's Lament," "The Husband's Message," and "The Ruin"—are found here. These are secular poems evoking a poignant sense of desolation and loneliness in their descriptions of the separation of lovers, the sorrows of exile, or the terrors and attractions of the sea, although some of them—*i.e.*, "The Wanderer" and "The

Seafarer”—also carry the weight of religious allegory. In addition, the Exeter Book preserves 95 “Riddles,” a genre that would otherwise have been represented by a solitary example.” Years ago I came across a book, *Anglo-Saxon Riddles*, where these and other ‘riddles’ had been collected up and published separately by John Porter.

“The remaining part of the Exeter Book includes “The Rhyming Poem,” which is the only example of its kind; the “Gnomic Verses”; “Widsith,” the heroic narrative of a fictitious bard; and the two “refrain poems.” “Deor” and “Wulf and Eadwacer.” The arrangement of the poems appears to be haphazard, and the book is believed to be copied from an earlier collection.” And the earlier collection was undoubtedly from an even earlier one and so on till people were probably re-writing the ideas from the Psalms to suit local needs and tastes.

\*

11 January: Raoul de Houdenc (dates not known)

Bayard Taylor

12 January: Bolesław Leśmian

Erik Gustaf Geijer

13 January: A. B. Guthrie

Edmund Spenser (d)

Anne Bradstreet

Friedrich Muller

14 January: Daisy Utemorrah

Osip Mandelstam

15 January: Thomas Crofton Croker

Nazim Hikmet

16 January: Laura Riding

Robert Service

Jules Supervielle

Conte Vittorio Alfieri

\*

Robert Service was known as ‘the Bard of the Yukon’ and people could recite his poems from *Songs of a Sourdough* such as ‘The Shooting of Dan McGrew’, ‘Call of the Wild’, ‘The Men That Don’t Fit In’, ‘The Cremation of Sam McGee’ and ‘The Spell of the Yukon’. But he also wrote novels, such as *The Poisoned Paradise*, *The Master of the Microbe* and *The House of Fear*, his autobiography *Ploughman of the Moon* and *Harper of Heaven*, and poems which had nothing to do with the Yukon. I was thinking of this when I came on his collection *Songs of a Sun Lover* so I wondered if after all that cold and misery and ice he was now reveling in some sun. (And he did indeed end up in Provence.)

But this is a medley: some Yukon poems, funny pieces, philosophy, reflections such as ‘My Typewriter’, poems about drifters, about crime, but not a lot of sun. ‘Riviera Honeymoon’ has sun (and tragedy) and perhaps this poem might qualify—

An olive fire’s a lovely thing;

Somehow it makes me think of Spring

As in my grate it over-spills

With dancing flames like daffodils.

They flirt and frolic, twist and twine,

The brassy fire-irons wink and shine....

Leap gold, you flamelets! Laugh and sing:

An olive fire’s a lovely thing.

An olive fire's a household shrine:  
A crusty loaf, a jug of wine,  
An apple and a chunk of cheese—  
Oh I could be content with these.  
But if my cruse of oil is there,  
To fry a fresh-caught fish, I swear  
I do not envy any king,  
As sitting by my hearth I sing:  
An olive fire's a lovely thing.

When old and worn, of life I tire:  
An olive fire's a lovely thing.

When old and worn, of life I tire,  
I'll sit before an olive fire,  
And watch the feather ash like snow  
As softly as a rose heart glow;  
The tawny roots will lose their hoard  
Of sunbeams centuries have stored,  
And flames like yellow chickens cheep,  
Till in my heart Peace is so deep:  
With hands prayer-clasped I sleep ... and sleep.

‘An Olive Fire’

—but I think his most interesting poems were his meditations on God.

*As home from church we two did plod,  
“Grandpa,” said Rosy, “What is God?”  
Seeking an answer to her mind,  
This is the best that I could find....*

God is the Iz-ness of the Is,  
The One-ness of our Cosmic Biz;  
The high, the low, the near, the far,  
The atom and the evening star;  
The lark, the shark, the cloud, the clod,  
The whole darned Universe—that's God.

Some deem that other gods there be,  
And to them humbly bend the knee;  
To Mumbo Jumbo and to Joss,  
To Bud and Allah—but the Boss  
Is mine... While there are suns and seas  
My timeless God shall dwell in these.

In every glowing leaf He lives;  
When roses die His life he gives;  
God is not outside and apart  
From Nature, but her very heart;  
No Architect (as I of verse)

He is Himself the Universe.

*Said Rosy-kins: "Grandpa, how odd  
Is your imagining of God.  
To me he's always just appeared  
A huge Grandfather with a beard.*

'Rosy-Kins'

God dwells in you; in pride and shame,  
In all you do to blight or bless;  
In all you are of praise or blame,  
In beauty or in ugliness.  
"Divine Creation"—What a fraud!  
God did not make you... *You make God.*

God lives in me, in all I feel  
Of love and hate, of joy and pain,  
Of grace and greed, of woe and weal,  
Of fear and cheer, of loss and gain:  
For good or evil I am He,  
Yea, saint or devil, One are we.

God fends and fights in each of us;  
His altars we, or bright or dim;  
So with no sacerdotal fuss  
But worthy act let's worship Him:  
Goodness is Godness—let us be  
Deserving of Divinity.

And of His presence be aware,  
And by our best His love express;  
A gentle word is like a prayer,  
A kindly act is holiness:  
Don't let God down; let Him prevail  
And write his AMEN to our tale.

'God's Battle-Ground'

Despite the interest of *Songs of a Sun Lover* he remains the quintessential poet of snow and blizzard, hardship, loneliness, alienation, drifters and drunkards.

\*

17 January: Douglas Hyde

18 January: A. A. Milne

Rubén Darío

19 January: Edgar Allan Poe

Per Daniel Atterbom

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (d)

\*

James Thurber in *Thurber on Crime* looked at Poe's famous poem 'The Raven' and thought he might play around with it. So ...

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,—  
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.  
“’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door;  
Only this, and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,  
“Sir,” said I, “or madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;  
But the fact is, I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,  
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,  
That I scarce was sure I heard you.”—Here I opened wide the door;  
Darkness there, and nothing more.

Open then I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,  
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore.  
Not the least obeisance made he; not an instant stopped or stayed he;  
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door,—  
Perched above a bust of Pallas, just above my chamber door,—  
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!  
By that heaven that bends above us,—by that God we both adore,  
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the distant Aidenn,  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden, whom the angels name Lenore,  
Clasp a fair and radiant maiden, whom the angels name Lenore!”  
Quoth the raven, “Nevermore!”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shrieked, upstarting,—  
“Get thee back into the tempest and the night’s Plutonian shore!  
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy should hath spoken!  
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!  
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”  
Quoth the raven, “Nevermore!”

And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon that is dreaming,  
And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted—*nevermore!*

My first impulse was to go and find Poe’s original. I wonder if it had  
the same effect on you?

\*

20 January: Ernesto Cardenal

Nathaniel Parker Willis

21 January: Jonker Noot (birth date not known)

22 January: Lord Byron

23 January: Derek Walcott

24 January: Keith Douglas  
Alicia Spottiswoode  
Edith Wharton  
Sigfrid Siwertz  
Karl von Holtei

\*

I had never thought of Edith Wharton as a poet but ... “Edith was also writing a great deal of verse, kneeling on the library rug and scribbling on paper that had been used to wrap parcels. She had moved on from quantities of dramatic and historical poetry (“Scene: A Venetian Palace”) to lyric poems, which she composed with “a lamentable facility.” In the fall of 1878, Lucretia Jones, who kept a notebook of her daughter’s poetic writings, made a selection from those written over the previous two years and had them privately printed in Newport by C. E. Hammett, Jr.

The twenty-nine items in *Verses* compare with *Fast and Loose* much as Edith Wharton’s later poetry would compare with her incomparably superior fiction. They reveal technical competence and verbal assurance, a fairly wide range of reading in English and German poetry, and an occasional vivid detail; but there is not much vitality or originality. The best, “Some Woman to Some Man,” is based vaguely on Browning’s “Any Wife to Any Husband” and has a dash of Browning’s conversational manner:

We might have loved each other after all,  
Have lived and learned together! Yet I doubt it.

Elsewhere, *Verses* reflects Edith’s sensitivity to physical nature, her interest in history (including ancient history), considerable reading in Browning, Swinburne, Tennyson, and Rossetti, and her limited religious feeling. She wrote a number of other poems in these years on religious subjects, including a lugubrious effort about a dead maiden near whose bed Christ appears, saying, “She is not dead but liveth.” It would take a much later and soul-shaking experience truly to awaken her religious consciousness (as distinguished from wayward interest) and stir such authentic poetic talent as she did possess.

Edith’s own copy of *Verses* carried the inscription:

Who wrote these verses, she this volume owns.  
Her unpoetic name is Edith Jones.

It is the only instance in the little book of Edith in a frivolous vein—as she so often was. Absent from *Verses*, perhaps regretfully, was a racy mock-tragic poem she composed at this time, called “Ye Romantic Ballad of Ye Portuguese Plum,” about a Spanish maid named Elvira, her poor but honest lover Don Luis Havapayne, and her wicked uncle who insists she marry a lustful Moor, thereby causing her to reel, faint, and sink to the floor.

The summer after *Verses* was published, Allen Thorndike Rice, a Newport neighbor and later editor of the *North American Review*, sent some of the poems to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, commenting that they were quite remarkable for a girl of sixteen who belonged “to a most estimable New York family” and who had been “brought up in fashionable surroundings little calculated to feed her taste for the Muses.” Longfellow passed them on with a friendly word to William Dean Howells at the *Atlantic Monthly*, and that great editor, always ready to encourage the literary young, chose one of them to publish. Two other occasional poems—one about the suicide of a child—appeared in the *New York World* the following year. It was a hopeful start, but Edith would publish nothing more for a decade.”

From *Edith Wharton* by R. W. B. Lewis.

It is sometimes problematic—that the parents who get their children’s first efforts published are not always doing them a favour.

\*

25 January: Robert Burns  
Arne Garborg

26 January: Venatius Fortunatus (birth date not known)

27 January: Lewis Carroll

28 January: Colette  
John Barclay

29 January: Romain Rolland

30 January: Jean-Antoine de Baif (birth date not known)

31 January: Aléxandros Soútsos (birth date not known)

1 February: Langston Hughes  
Hugo von Hofmannsthal  
Conradus Celtis

2 February: James Joyce  
Abdullah Hamid (Tarhan)

3 February: Gertrude Stein  
Grace Perry  
George Trakl  
Sidney Lanier

4 February: Gavin Ewart  
Jacques Prévert  
João Baptista Garrett  
Carl Michael Bellman  
Jean Aicard

5 February: Honorat de Bueil Racan  
Johan Ludvig Runeberg

6 February: Louis Dudek  
Ugo Foscolo

7 February: Hsi K'ang (birthdate not known)

8 February: Judson Jerome  
Elizabeth Bishop  
Francis Webb  
Theodore-Agrippa d'Aubigné

9 February: John Woodcock Graves  
Frans Mikael Franzen

10 February: Fleur Adcock  
Boris Pasternak  
Bertolt Brecht  
James Smith  
Aaron Hill

11 February: Jean de La Taille (birthdate not known)

12 February: George Meredith  
Kazimierz Tetmajer

13 February: Judith Rodriguez  
Sarojini Naidu (Chattopadhyay)  
Ricardo Güiraldes

14 February: Daniel Corkery  
Bruce Beaver  
A. Moses Klein

Johan Ludvig Helberg  
 15 February: Bruce Dawe  
 16 February: Peter Porter  
 17 February: A. B. Paterson  
           Eben Fardd (d)  
 18 February: Publius Annius Florus (birth date not known)  
           Adolf Frey  
 19 February: José Eustasio Rivera  
           Count Zygmunt Krasinski  
 20 February: Judah den Solomon Harizi (birth date not known)  
           Pieter Boutens  
 21 February: W. H. Auden

\*

“Poetry makes nothing happen.”  
           W. H. Auden

\*

22 February: James Russell Lowell  
           John Shaw Neilson  
           Edna St Vincent Millay  
           Henry Reed  
           William Barnes  
 23 February: Norman Lindsay  
 24 February: Arrigo Boito  
 25 February: Abu Tammam (birth date not known)  
 26 February: Giles Fletcher the Younger (birth date not known)  
           George Barker  
 27 February: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
           Lawrence Durrell  
           Angelina Weld Grimké  
 28 February: Stephen Spender  
           John Montague  
           Arthur Symons  
 29 February: Howard Nemerov  
           Kalavala Day (Finland)  
 1 March: Robert Lowell  
           William Dean Howells  
           Ian Mudie

\*

Ian Mudie was certainly a poet and remembered as a founder and member of the Jindyworobak Movement which sought to bring indigenous words, ideas, images, themes into Australian poetry. But the other day I came across his non-fiction book, *River Boats*. This is a history of the development of river boats plying the Murray River and, later, the Darling and Murrumbidgee. He chronicles the competition between Captain Randell in the *Mary Ann* and Captain Cadell in the *Lady Augusta* to be first up the Murray from South Australia. Sometimes one, sometimes the other drew ahead. Captain Randell was undoubtedly the winner but Captain Cadell seems to have done better in terms of government support.

Though Cadell’s white friends spoke well of him this doesn’t seem to have been the case with other men. “Cadell set out from Cuthero with an aboriginal, meaning to examine land along the

Anabranh, which leaves the Darling as an over-flow at Netley, 267 miles above Wentworth, and enters the Murray about twenty miles below the Darling Junction.

“The Darling was low at the time, and so the Anabranh was dry. When they reached it, Cadell refused to believe that the dry creek-bed the aboriginal pointed out to him was the stream he was looking for, and pushed on into waterless country. The aboriginal tried to clear out towards water, but Cadell caught him, chained him to his stirrup, and kept on, feeling sure that they would soon come to the Anabranh and be able to follow it down to the Murray and go on to Moorna, where he meant to join the *Lady Augusta* on her run down to Goolwa.

“When they ran out of food and water they killed Cadell’s horse and drank its blood and ate its flesh. Finally, after they had been lost for a week, they reached the Murray at Broken Cliff, over eighty miles in a direct line below Moorna.”

It gets worse. He was accused of failing to feed the Malays he was employing to cut sandalwood in Western Australia, and another “story tells of a crew of Croker Island aborigines that Cadell had promised to return to their home; when he broke his promise they threw the mate overboard and deserted.”

“He was charged with having grossly ill-treated some aborigines, who were said to have killed three white men in order to escape from another of his boats, but he was cleared of the charge. He does not, however, seem to have cleared himself of an accusation of kidnapping aborigines.” Perhaps unsurprisingly his violent death seems to have been shrouded in some mystery.

Captain Randell led a somewhat more peaceful life but it, too, had its excitements. “Randell’s voyage to Walgett opened the way for a passenger service on the Darling. ... On the voyage down the Darling, the *Gemini* carried a passenger who gave his name as the Rev. Mr. Christie, a Presbyterian missionary, but who was really no “knock-about parson” such as the one who travelled on the *Mary Ann*. He was, in fact, Frank Gardiner, the bushranger, in disguise.

“Gardiner had been captured in July, but had escaped, badly hurt, after a fight with two policemen. He had recovered, and in September had held up a hawker near Coonamble, and had taken from him, among other things, a Bible and some clerical clothing that were on their way to be delivered to a Walgett clergyman.

“Dressed in the stolen black, he turned up in Bourke under the name of Christie and shipped for South Australia in the *Gemini*, intending to clear out of the country from Port Adelaide.

“Unfortunately, Lindsay was not with Randell this voyage to keep a log, and Randell’s own log of the voyage was destroyed two years later in the burning of the *Bunyip*. What happened, therefore, aboard the *Gemini* on the way down can only be imagined. Randell usually carried a harmonium on his boats, and held prayers on board every evening, and services on a Sunday. “The Rev. Mr. Christie” was no doubt expected to choose the hymns each evening and to lead Randell and the crew in prayer. The result—and the sermons the apparently reverend gentleman preached each Sunday—must have puzzled Randell, the devout son of a devout Baptist father.

“In the end, instead of going overseas, Gardiner stayed a few months in Adelaide. He then went by steamer to Narrandera, where he changed his clerical cloth for stockmen’s clothes, stole a horse, and rode off towards the Weddin Mountains and his mistress, Kitty Brown.”

Mudie writes, “The day of the rivers—their day as a network of four thousand miles of inland waterways—is done. Soon the paddle-steamers will have disappeared from the Murray, the Darling, and the other rivers as completely as have the fire-carrying canoes of aboriginal fisherman.”

As roads and railways took over the carrying of wool and wheat and groceries the riverboats gradually disappeared. But not for ever. Now paddle-steamers ply the Murray carrying tourists.

Wail for them, wail for the lost totems,

for the tribes beaten under by the destroyer—  
rubbed out beneath the wheels of his desire  
for the profit that profits not your virility,  
Wail for them, burn wurleys of the dead,  
and where your tribal grounds held gypsum  
make of it mourning helmets for the widowed land.  
Wail, but let not your wailing be weakness,  
keep from it pity and self-pity,  
and the tears that are neither of men nor of women  
but of monsters created in you by alien gods.  
Wail, but let your wailing have anger,  
the strong lust of men and of women  
to kill the things that would destroy them.  
Have anger, strong anger that rends,  
anger that lifts spear, aye, and yam-stick,  
at the destroyers of totems, at murderers of our hearts,  
against those that would turn our land  
to patterned tameness of other gods.  
Have anger against those that,  
throwing our gods to darkness,  
breaking the tjuringas,  
tearing down totem-trees,  
slay all our wilderness.

‘Have Anger’ from *New Song In An Old Land*

These are my people, these the nationless  
caught between blackness and the undreamt dawn;  
these are my people, their stars unseen  
bright-burning in unfound Alcheringa.  
These are my people; how many years shall run  
before they drink the glory of the sun?

Last verse of ‘Glory of the Sun’

Red-green eroded hills, below the clouds,  
red washaway a wound across the plain;  
skeletal grey ghosts of trees that once  
were green but now will never leaf again.

Trees lopped for wires. Trees for a pittance  
more of pasture run. One totem-pole  
of yacca left. Men have combined to hold  
a bare and treeless land their unthought goal.

Seas pounding on the near-unhanging rocks;  
Wind with sea-wet scrub-laden airs  
from distant headland. Beauty and age are here,  
and loveliness destroyed. But no one cares.

‘Landscape’

Mudie, born 1911 in South Australia put together several poetry collections including *Corroboree to the Sun*, *This is Australia*, and *Their Seven Stars Unseen*.

\*

2 March: Sarojini Naidu (d)

3 March: Annie Keary

Edward Thomas

Thomas Otway

Rjunosuke Akutagawa

4 March: Dr Seuss

Bernardo Guimarães (birth date not known)

5 March: Mem Fox

Lady Augusta Gregory

6 March: Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Mabel Forrest

Jacques Jasmin

\*

The witch sits always in the shadow of the wall

And under her blue robe she hides her hands

That never man may see the things she does at all,

But my faint heart conceives and understands...

*She is weaving Seven spells...*

Making flowers out of clay and scenting them too sweet,

For her voice is as the sound of Nippur bells

*Blowing to the desert from the street.*

The witch sits in the shadow of the wall...

And (braided like a warrior's of the race)

The midnight of her tresses seems to fall

To blot the silver moonlight of her face...

Not a jewel does she carry on her amber throat and small,

Every tooth she has is even, sharp and white—

I can see them when she's laughing in the shadow of the wall

For she never once comes out into the light.

I have a Scythian lover, strong and tall,

And the witch has many lovers. I have one—

I am languishing with fear lest he should pass this wall

Coming in his chariot...out of Babylon.

'Kassaptu' (The Assyrian Witch)

Witches have survived but chaperones and hanging belong to the past.

'I am busy sorting the morning's post,'

Jonathon puts down his cup to say,

'They're hanging a man at the jail to-day,'

And he helps himself to the buttered toast.

Thro' the lattice window there comes the call,



an age when few writers could live solely from their pen. Her work has largely been forgotten yet I think she deserves to be remembered and her work is still well worth reading.

\*

- 7 March: Stevie Smith (d)
- 8 March: Caroline Leakey  
Juana de Ibarbourou
- 9 March: Sir Charles Sedley (born March but exact day not known)  
Vicente Garcia de la Huerta  
Sidney Godolphin (d)
- 10 March: Enid Moodie Heddle  
Pauline Johnson/Tekahionwake
- 11 March: Torquato Tasso  
Anastasius Grün
- 12 March: Irving Layton  
Count Eric Stenbock
- 13 March: Nāser-e Khosrow (birth date not known)  
George Seferis (Georgios Seferiadis)
- 14 March: Clement Marut
- 15 March: Lady Augusta Gregory  
Robert Nye  
Rita Joe (Bernard)
- 16 March: Sully Prudhomme  
Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft  
Gerbrand Bredero
- 17 March: Jean Ingelow
- 18 March: Wilfrid Owen  
Stéphane Mallarmé
- 19 March: William Allingham  
'Abd al-Ghani an-Nabulusi
- 20 March: Friedrich Hölderlin
- 21 March: Thomas Shapcott  
Elizabeth Riddell  
Lagos Kassák
- 22 March: Billy Collins
- 23 March: William Gqoba (birth date not known)
- 24 March: Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
Joel Barlow
- 25 March: Anne Bronte  
Turlough Carolan (d)  
Ichiyō Higuchi
- 26 March: Robert Frost  
Barcroft Boake  
A. E. Housman  
Dorothy Porter  
Patrick Lane  
F. W. Harvey  
Richard Church
- 27 March: Kenneth Slessor

28 March: Bohumil Hrabal  
           Angelos Sikelianos  
           Alexandre Heralano  
 29 March: Giambattista Giraldi (birth date not known)  
 30 March: Paul Verlaine  
           Milton Acorn  
           Frances Cornford  
 31 March: Edward Fitzgerald  
           Andrew Marvell  
           Marge Piercy  
 1 April: Silius Italicus (birth date not known)  
 2 April: Edward de Vere  
           Sir John Squire  
           Anatole Le Braz  
 3 April: George Herbert  
           William Alabaster (birth date not known)  
 4 April: Maya Angelou  
           C. Day Lewis  
           Edith Södergran  
           Rémy de Gourmont  
 5 April: Algernon Charles Swinburne  
 6 April: Furnley Maurice  
           Dan Andersson  
 7 April: William Wordsworth  
           Gabriela Mistral  
           Jennifer Maiden  
 8 April: Dhionisios Solomos  
           Hope Mirrlees  
           Phineas Fletcher (bap)  
 9 April: Charles Baudelaire  
           Janice Bostok  
           Lesbia Harford  
           Elias Lönnrot  
 10 April: John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester  
           Robert Faesi  
           Guillaume de Salluste Bartas (birth date not known)  
 11 April: Bernard O'Dowd  
           Jean Elliot  
           Manuel Quintana  
           Christopher Smart  
           Attila József  
 12 April: Jack Hibberd  
 13 April: Seamus Heaney  
 14 April: Bill Harney  
           James Branch Cabell  
 15 April: A. E. (George William Russell)  
           Bliss Carman  
 16 April: J. M. Synge

- Jan Luyken  
 Aphra Behn (d)  
 Kingsley Amis
- 17 April: Guillaume de Lorris (birth date not known)  
 18 April: Henry Clarence Kendall  
 Antero Quental
- 19 April: Sir David Lyndsay (birth date not known)  
 20 April: Farid od-Din ‘Attar (birth date not known)  
 21 April: Charlotte Brontë  
 J. S. Manifold  
 Muhammad Iqbal (d)
- 22 April: Louise Glück  
 Friedrich Bodenstedt  
 Mohammad Taqi Bahar (d)
- 23 April: William Shakespeare  
 Thomas Tickell (d)  
 Friedrich von Hagedorn

\*

Miranda Kaufmann in *Black Tudors* writes:

“Historians and literary critics have asserted that many African women worked as prostitutes in Tudor and early Stuart England. One has written that Africans were ‘used ... in three capacities: as household servants (the majority); as prostitutes or sexual conveniences for well-to-do Englishmen and Dutchmen; and as court entertainers’. Another claims that there were ‘several’ black courtesans in Clerkenwell during this period. The most-often cited example is a woman known as Lucy Negro, ‘tentatively identified’ as the Dark Lady of Shakespeare’s sonnets in 1933. Yet there are almost as many theories about who ‘Lucy Negro’ was as there are about the Dark Lady. Is there any truth in the idea that Shakespeare was enamoured of an African prostitute, and was her name Lucy Negro? How representative was the experience of Anne Cobbie, who worked in a brothel in 1620s Westminster, of the experiences of other African women in England at this time?”

And: “Ambiguous attitudes to skin colour also appear in poetry. In one of his Dark Lady sonnets Shakespeare proclaims ‘now is black beauty’s successive heir’ while in another he speaks of a ‘woman colour’d ill’. Some critics have argued these verses should be renamed the ‘black woman sonnets’. Not only are the Lady’s breasts ‘dun’, but ‘black wires grow on her head’ and her eyes are ‘raven black’. New evidence of African women living in Shakespeare’s London only strengthens this proposal.”

“On the stage, Cleopatra, who has a ‘tawny front’ like Cobbie and is ‘with Phoebus’s amorous pinches black’, is so desirable that Antony is tempted to leave Rome, and ultimately to die for her. As his friend Enobarbus comments: ‘Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale/her infinite variety. Other women cloy/the appetites they feed, but she makes hungry/where most she satisfies.’”

It has never been proved absolutely beyond doubt that ‘Lucy Negro’ existed but Cleopatra certainly did. She was Greek but did Shakespeare assume she was African?

\*

- 24 April: Robert Penn Warren  
 Nikolai Zabolotsky  
 Carl Spiteller

\*

Robert Penn Warren is remembered for his poetry and his novels but he began his writing career with a biography *John Brown The Making of a Martyr*. And as a Southerner, born in Guthrie, Kentucky, he was always interested in Southern ‘issues’ and Southern history. His most famous novel, *All the King’s Men*, is loosely based on Louisiana Governor Huey Long whom he calls Willie Stark in the novel. Joseph Blotner in his biography of Warren says of the book: “From the earliest reviews it was characterized as a political novel. An old and honorable form, the political novel had engaged the talents of some of the genre’s best practitioners. None, of course, would have wished their novels to be seen in a narrowed category, but actions could gain in power, intensity, and breadth of relevance when played out in that crucial area of history and human experience. The most perceptive reviewers saw *All the King’s Men* also as a brilliant novel with philosophical dimensions. Some used superlatives: “the finest American novel in more years than one would like to have to remember,” and “For sheer virtuosity, for the sustained drive of its prose, for the speed and evenness of its pacing, for its precision of language, its genius of colloquialism, I doubt indeed whether it can be matched in American fiction.” Predictably, there were complaints—about lack of crusading zeal, about melodrama, about coarse language. This latter objection might well have amused the author, like the kind of criticism that saw the book as a eulogy of Long. For others it lacked the militancy needed to fight men like Long.”

Others felt that “he did not do women well”; William Faulkner wrote, “The Starke [*sic*] thing is good solid sound writing but for my money Starke and the rest of them are second rate.” Others criticized the novel on the grounds of “complexity of plot and abundance of melodrama”. But none of this stopped the novel eventually selling three million copies or being set in American universities for study.

As it is coming up to my mother’s birthday here is his poem to his mother:

What were you thinking, a child, when you lay,  
At the whippoorwill hour, lost in the long grass,  
As sun, beyond the dark cedars, sank?  
You went to the house. The lamps were now lit.

What did you think when the evening dove mourned?  
Far off in those sober recesses of cedar?  
What relevance did your heart find in that sound?  
In lamplight, your father’s head bent at his book.

What did you think when the last saffron  
Of sunset faded beyond the dark cedars,  
And on noble blue now the evening star hung?  
You found it necessary to go to the house,

And found it necessary to live on,  
In your bravery and in your joyous secret,  
Into our present maniacal century,  
In which you gave me birth, and in

Which I, in the public and private mania,  
Have lived, but remember that once I,  
A child, in the grass of that same spot, lay  
And the whippoorwill called, beyond the dark cedars

‘What Were You Thinking, Dear Mother?’

Although *All the King's Men* is seen as a novel about Willie Stark-cum-Huey Long it is in fact Jack Burden's story. He calls himself 'office boy' to Stark but is more like a minder to the man he calls 'the Boss' in his big black Cadillac. Stark starts out rather pathetic but gradually gets tougher and nastier and finally gets shot. But the book was a struggle to get through. I just didn't find its characters very interesting or its backgrounds very vivid. If the real Huey Long had not been assassinated I don't think he would have thought he'd been libeled because I don't think he would have seen himself in the rather tedious figure of Willie Stark. By all accounts he had a pretty high opinion of himself. And I think the pundits were right. Warren was a better poet than novelist.

\*

- 25 April: Walter de la Mare  
Ted Kooser
- 26 April: Beatrice Clarke  
Robert Herrick  
Alice Cary
- 27 April: Cecil Day-Lewis  
Edwin Morgan
- 28 April: William Dunbar (birthdate unsure)  
William Soutar  
Marie-Joseph-Blaise du Chénier
- 29 April: Jehan Bodel (birth date not known)
- 30 April: John Crowe Ransom
- 1 May: Guido Gezelle
- 2 May: Novalis  
Charles Heavysege
- 3 May: May Sarton
- 4 May: Thomas Kinsella  
Charlotte Smith  
Richard Hovey
- 5 May: Ahmed Nedim (birth date not known)
- 6 May: Chris Wallace-Crabbe  
Douglas Stewart  
Richmond Lattimore  
Christian Morgenstern
- 7 May: Robert Browning  
Jenny Joseph  
Michael Rosen  
Ranbindranath Tagore  
Angela Carter  
Daniel Berzsenyi
- 8 May: Gary Snyder
- 9 May: John Wolcot  
Charles Simic

\*

Wolcot wrote:  
Enjoy thy stream, O harmless fish;  
And when an angler for his dish,

Through gluttony's vile sin,  
Attempts, a wretch, to pull thee *out*,  
God give thee strength, O gentle trout,  
To pull the raskall *in*!

'To a Fish of the Brooke'

Arnold Silcock wrote, "Peter Pindar was the pen-name of the celebrated writer of humorous verse John Wolcot (1738-1819), ... This fragment shows how he weighed up the weighty doctor, though it is only poetic justice to add that Peter Pindar himself poured out a 'turgid' flood, most of which appears to-day to be more ponderous than humorous."

So here is Pindar's piece 'Lines on Dr. Johnson':

I own I like not Johnson's turgid style,  
That gives an inch th'importance of a mile;  
Casts of manure a waggon-load around  
To raise a simple daisy from the ground;  
Uplifts the club of Hercules—for what?—  
To crush a butterfly or brain a gnat;  
Creatures a whirlwind from the earth to draw  
A goose's feather or exalt a straw;  
Sets wheels on wheels in motion—such a clatter:  
To force up one poor nipperkin of water;  
Bids ocean labour with tremendous roar,  
To heave a cockle-shell upon the shore.  
Alike in every theme his pompous art,  
Heaven's awful thunder, or a rumbling cart!

\*

10 May: Ssu-ma Hsiang-Ju (birth date not known)

11 May: Camilo José Cela

Jan Hendrik Leopold

12 May: Edward Lear

George Chapman (d)

Maria Konopnicka

Johannes Hauch

Massimo Bontempelli

13 May: J. B. Cameron

Flavien Ranaivo

Giuseppe Giusti

Earle Birney

14 May: Maria Irene Fornés

Mary E. Fullerton

Robert Finch

15 May: Alice Major

Edwin Muir

Melchiorre Cesarotti

16 May: Adrienne Rich

17 May: Alfonso Reyes

18 May: Omar Khayyam

Zora Cross

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“It is extraordinary how easily people believe reports often written by those not well versed in the true facts of their story. People have come up to me and said, ‘I see you are going to South Africa.’ With some surprise I have replied, ‘Am I? I did not know anything about it.’ Followed by the firm assurance, ‘Oh, yes, I read it in the paper!’ Perhaps one is expected to lead a life influenced by one’s destiny as told by the stars.

“Once something has appeared in a paper, be it false or inaccurate, it is difficult to rectify the harm. Even if the truth appears later, the original account has been absorbed by the reading public. The responsibility of those who write is summed up in the famous lines from *The Rubá’iyát of Omar Khayyám*:

The moving finger writes; and, having writ,  
 Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit  
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,  
 Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.”

Pat Smythe in *One Jump Ahead*

The ‘moving finger’ is a powerful image, widely used. It was quoted in *Dad’s Army*. It was used by Agatha Christie as a title for a book. But perhaps Omar Khayyam *didn’t* use that image? I recently bought a new translation of the *Ruba’iyat* and was puzzled to find that it wasn’t included. Instead they translate that *rubā* as:

The Pen of Destiny is made to write my record without me,  
 Why are its good and bad accounted to me  
 Yesterday without me, and today likewise with neither you nor me?  
 Tomorrow on what evidence shall I be summoned before the Judge?

The ‘Pen of Destiny’ is also a powerful image, suggesting something implacable, but I can’t see it as having quite the same impact.

He also uses Pen in:

Oh heart, since the world’s reality is illusion,  
 How long will you complain about this torment?  
 Resign your body to fate and put up with pain,  
 Because what the Pen has written for you it will not unwrite. (32)

And Destiny in a different context:

My rule of life is to drink and be merry,  
 To be free from belief and unbelief is my religion:  
 I asked the Bride of Destiny her bride-price,  
 ‘Your joyous heart,’ she said. (75)

“The *rubā’i*, pronounced *rubā’ī*, plural *rubā’īyāt*, is a two-lined stanza of Persian poetry, each ‘line of which is divided into two hemistichs making up four altogether, hence the name *rubā’i*, an Arabic word meaning ‘foursome’. The Persians also called this verse form *taraneh*, ‘snatch’, or, for a form very close to it, *dobaiti*, ‘two-liner’. The first, second and last of the four hemistichs must rhyme. The third need not rhyme with the other three ... This escape from a monorhymed pattern, coupled with the *rubā’i*’s shortness, no doubt partly accounted for its great popularity in north-east Persia in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the period of Khayyam and of many famous *rubā’i* which have survived. Persian poets had been following Arabic models in which long, monorhymed poems predominated. The rise of the *rubā’i* coincided with revulsion from lengthy and highly artificial panegyrics and narrative poems in a single rhyme. The *rubā’i*

demanded less from poets who had been constrained to make numerous lines end in the same rhyming letter.”

Peter Avery and John Heath-Stubbs write: “Until 1941 Omar Khayyam’s date of birth was unverified. Then Swami Govinda Tirtha published *The Nectar of Grace: Omar Khayyam’s Life and Works*. In it he established that Khayyam was born on 18 May 1048, a date ascertained on the basis of a horoscope for him contained in one of the earliest biographical notices of him, but long ignored by scholars. The Soviet Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Theoretical Astronomy found the calculations correct. Modern investigators have also agreed that the formerly disputed year of Khayyam’s death was 1131. These dates, 1048-1131, tell us that Khayyam lived when the Saljuq Turkish Sultans were extending and consolidating their power over Persia and when the effects of this power were particularly felt in Nishapur, Khayyam’s birthplace.” (Nishapur and its complex irrigation systems were severely damaged by the Seljuks and then the Mongols descended on it and reduced it to ruins after Khayyam’s death.)

And we also have a birthday for another famous Persian poet. In *Rumi, Hidden Music* Maryam Mafi and Azima Melita Kolin write, “Born Jalaludin Mohamad on 30 September 1207 in Balkh, a city in the Persian Empire, he was brought up a Sufi by his father and became a brilliant and respected jurist. Rumi was 37 when he met a highly advanced spiritual master in the form of the dervish, Shams.”

“No one will ever know what passed between them but the poetry in the *Divan* and *Masnavi* that flowed from Rumi are the only true testimony of the love they shared for the Divine.”

Though there was a century between Omar and Rumi they both wrote on many of the same topics: beauty, divinity, the self, gardens, music, the search for love beyond the earthly expression of love, even a fondness for wine, but I had the impression that Rumi took his searching more seriously.

- If this me is not I, then  
    who am I?  
If I am not the one who speaks, then  
    who does?  
If this me is only a robe, then  
    who is  
    the one I am covering?
  
- Those who think the heart is only in the chest  
    take two or three steps and are content.  
    The rosary, the prayer rug and repentance  
    are paths that they mistake for the destination.
  
- Love’s path is outside of  
    all religious sects.
  
- You are searching the world for treasure  
    but the real treasure is yourself.  
    If you are tempted by bread,  
    you will find only bread.  
    What you seek for  
    you become.
  
- Like a thief

reason sneaked in and sat among the lovers,  
eager to give them advice.  
They were unwilling to listen, so reason kissed their feet  
and went on its way.

— The true lover is the one who on your final day  
opens a thousand doors.

— Do not be flattered by reason,  
reason is only  
the child of the mind.  
But true friendship  
is born out of love and  
is the water of life.  
The footprints of the Friend  
are all over the world,  
follow them and walk into life.

— In his hands I become the design he weaves  
with golden thread,  
I become his living masterpiece.

— If you let God weave the verse, in your poem,  
people will read it forever.

— There is a thread from the heart to the lips  
where the secret of life is woven.  
Words tear the thread  
but in silence  
the secrets  
speak.

— Stop the noise and  
you will hear His voice  
in the silence.

— I must stop this talk now and let  
Love speak from its nest of silence.

— Why are you so afraid of silence,  
silence is the root of everything.  
If you spiral into its void,  
a hundred voices will thunder messages  
you long to hear.

— Sometimes he ties them with the cord of reason  
and sometimes he sets them free to dance.

— You whispered in my ears like early spring,  
‘I am the call of Love,  
can you hear me in the full grasses,  
in the scented winds?  
It is I who makes the garden smile.’

— Beyond this world and life we knew  
there is Someone watching over us.  
To know Him is not in our power.  
But once in a glimpse I saw  
that we are His shadow  
and our shadow is  
the world.

— You have woken up late,  
lost and perplexed,  
but don’t rush to your books  
looking for knowledge.  
Pick up the flute instead and  
let your heart play.

— Do you hear what the music is saying?  
‘Come follow me and you will find the way.  
Your mistakes can also lead you to the truth.  
When you ask, the answer will be given.’

I came across a quote from Rumi in a newsletter many years ago: ‘Come, come, whoever you are,

Wanderer, worshipper, lover of learning ... ’ and it has taken me another forty years to actually look for Rumi though I still think it was an image worth having back then with or without the poet to link it to ... But when I came upon it recently it was actually translated as:

Come, come, whoever you are  
Wonderer, worshipper, lover of learning.  
It doesn’t matter,  
Ours is not a caravan of despair.

Come even if you have broken your vow  
a thousand times.

Come, yet again, come, come.

Wonderer? Or wanderer?

Both resonate.

\*

19 May: Lorraine Hansberry

Mário de Sá-Carneiro

Alcuin (d)

20 May: Arthur Johnston (birth date not known)

21 May: Dorothy Hewett

Glen Tomasetti

John Peale Bishop

22 May: Sir John Beaumont (birth date not known)  
 23 May: Thomas Hood  
         Pär Lagerkvist  
 24 May: Aleksandr Sumarokov (birth date not known)  
 25 May: Ralph Waldo Emerson  
         Theodore Roethke  
 26 May: Denis Florence MacCarthy  
         Maxwell Bodenheim  
         August Kopisch  
 27 May: Julia Ward Howe  
 28 May: Thomas Moore  
         May Swenson  
         Antigone Kefala  
         Patrick White  
 29 May: G. K. Chesterton  
         Alfonsina Storni  
 30 May: Countee Cullen  
 31 May: Judith Wright  
         Walt Whitman  
         Saint John Perse  
         Konstantin Batyushkov

\*

Judith Wright is of course known as a poet but she did turn to prose to write her family history *The Generations of Men*. This is her record of the Wyndham, Mackenzie and Wright families in Australia. Her grandparents Albert and May Wright took land near Rockhampton and faced floods, droughts, mosquitoes, fever, sandflies, then came the dust storms “whipped up by the rasping wind from the bared country of the far west, where the sharp hoofs of millions of sheep had loosened the light soil, tearing up the thin cover of grass and roots that held it” and dingoes “now that the native game was dwindling yearly, with drought and the increasing occupation of the country, and since the great mobs of marsupials that had so troubled him a few years back had been starved out by the lack of grass” but they struggled on. They bought some poor country on the New England tableland in the hope they could sell the Dawson property but the Great Depression of the 1890s made land and stock virtually unsaleable. Albert died and May struggled on alone with her young family, eventually winning through to better times.

Judith Wright is also remembered for her passionate support for Aboriginal people and the need for a Treaty. Wright places this awakening of understanding on to her grandfather. When his wife and children go south he is alone on the Dawson station with an old Aboriginal man Paddy. “It surprised him a little, this sudden rearrangement of his perspective, so natural yet so long resisted. Somehow his mind was eased by it, the tension broken that had held him to his wheel. He was free now to feel the sun’s warmth, to look about him, to answer Paddy’s grin and exchange a few words, to slip back into companionable silence and pursue his new train of thought. Somehow he had escaped from the imprisoning circle which had for years made up his inner life—his debts, his responsibilities, the thousand details of his work. He could put them aside and follow wherever his thoughts might lead.

The track along which he rode ran through country still sparsely settled; the big land-owners held most of it for winter pastures, and it was still unfenced and as closely timbered as it had ever been. Only here and there a line of fencing showed; one or two new houses had been built lately, the earthen-floored slab shanties of the small settlers, with their big chimneys of clay and rough wood.

Before long, he supposed, free-selectors would begin to flood this part of the country; fences would net it everywhere, roads would be built. Another fifty years—could he come this way then—he might not know his road. Even Paddy, then, would not know his own country, its trees cut down, its birds and animals fast vanishing.

That would be partly Albert's own work—his and that of his sons, perhaps, and of his neighbours and their sons. They spent their lives, as his was spent, in destroying one way of life to make another. Yet, he thought—and the thought was new to him—none of them paused to wonder why; or what, in the end, they would make.

What was so important to them—what drove them, single-minded, panting in greed and eagerness, while their lives vanished in the labour? Would his sons, too, be driven in this whirlwind of destruction, and wake perhaps, as he was doing, to ask in the end what had consumed their lives? Money, security, prosperity—those three words had led him on as they led the others, clawing at his very sleep. They had built the cities that had grown so much larger and noisier during his lifetime: on his visits to such places, he felt nowadays discomfited and uneasy. Doubtless they would build cities larger still. Words of power, but not words of life, they had killed Paddy's people, driving them in hundreds over the cliffs of the tableland to die on the rocks below—for spearing cattle, for rebellion against the dominion of money and prosperity.

How else, under that dominion, could they have been treated? he wondered now. What other solution could there have been of the problem they had presented by their very existence? With the land his people needed they had lived in the closest of ties, the most stationary of balances; losing it, as sooner or later it was inevitable they must do, they had had only the alternatives of death or transformation in their very selves—to die, or to serve an idea utterly foreign to them, losing in that service all their own wisdom and traditions; and they had refused to serve.

Even Paddy, one of the survivors, one of the few who had achieved some kind of compromise, kept under his cheerful compliance a kind of obstinate pride of refusal. Deep in him, Albert sensed now a fatal wound that bled continually, a despair at the core, a negative in the end more mortal than the death so many of his tribe had met on the cliffs to the eastward.

Albert was reminded of the queer swarthy native cherry-trees that grew in these hills, always near a certain kind of big gum-tree. When the gum-tree was felled, it seemed as though some mysterious relationship had been abruptly broken; the native cherry began to droop and wither, and in a few months would be dead, though its roots were whole and it seemed to bear no wound. It was in that way that the blacks were dying; quietly, as though they had chosen death. He thought of the Nulalbin tribe, yearly diminishing, and of the incurable invisible sorrow that drove them to the townships and into the hands of the sly-grog sellers and the Chinese opium-dealers with whom they spent whatever money they could earn—seeking forgetfulness, seeking death.

Obscurely he found himself resenting this, as though it were an undeserved wrong done to his own people. Why should the blacks, with that soft obstinacy that was almost gaiety, thus invite their own murder? They refused the conditions his people had imposed; they preferred their own stubbornness. It was unfair, unfair, that such a choice should be given, such an invitation made. 'Kill us, for we can never accept you,' the blacks said; 'kill us, or forget your own ambitions.'

They had scarcely made even the show of resistance. Looking back, he could see how it had been necessary to the whites to magnify that resistance, to keep alive in their minds the memory of the few killings, the few hostilities, to imagine dangers that had never existed. Only in that way could they justify themselves for killing, keep their own self-respect. He thought of one man who had spent his life in laying strychnine baits of flour-cakes wherever he went, wiping out whole tribes, whole camps of blacks; insane, obsessed by a terror far beyond anything that the reality could have inspired, he had died warning the world against 'those treacherous devils'.

Albert began to understand that this was where the danger lay, the mortal wound that the blacks had known how to deal in return for their own dispossession. ‘You must understand us or you must kill us,’ they had said; and understanding would have meant—something beyond the powers of the white men, some renunciation impossible to be made. Not for many years, it seemed to him, could that wound be healed. It lay at the bottom of the hatred and contempt that so many men held for the blacks, and which, as he thought of it now, he had himself used as a refuge when it was necessary to condone some wrong or other, some injustice convenient to himself.

To forgive oneself—that was the hardest task. Until the white men could recognize and forgive that deep and festering consciousness of guilt in themselves, they would not forgive the blacks for setting it there. The murder would go on—open or concealed—until the blacks were all gone, the whites forever crippled.”

“A rumour has been going around for years that Judith Wright was once nominated for the governor-generalship of Australia and very nearly got it. It is high time the rumour was confirmed and the intended compliment given public expression. My great colleague deserves that.

In early 1973, I’m fairly sure it was, Dick Hall, who was then Gough Whitlam’s private secretary, asked me who should be Australia’s head of state. I immediately proposed Judith Wright, adding that the ‘constituency’ which might see itself as complimented by her appointment was a wide one: women, country people, conservationists, poets and artists generally. This in addition to Mrs Wright-McKinney’s distinguished personal achievements and qualities of character: how could a national treasure not be an ornament to the country’s highest office? I gather the suggestion went right to the top and was seriously considered, before the prime minister opted for Sir John Kerr.”

*The Quality of Sprawl* by Les Murray.

\*

- 1 June: John Masefield  
William Wilfred Campbell
- 2 June: Thomas Hardy  
Michael Dudley  
John Lehmann  
Nazim Hikmet (d)  
Karl Adolph Gjellerup
- 3 June: Vivian Smith  
Allen Ginsberg  
Freiherr von Liliencron
- 4 June: Maurice Shadbolt
- 5 June: Federico Garcia Lorca  
Allan Ahlberg
- 6 June: Khalil Hawi (d)  
Alexander Pushkin  
Jean Cayrol  
Sir Henry Newbolt

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Kim Ghattas in *Black Wave: Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Forty-Year Rivalry that Unraveled Culture, Religion, and Collective Memory in the Middle East* wrote of 1982 “at 10:30 on that evening of June 6, one of Lebanon’s greatest poets, Khalil Hawi, took a hunting rifle and shot himself in the head on his balcony in his home in West Beirut, near the sprawling green campus of the American University of Beirut, where he was a professor. In the cacophony of war, no one heard the shot. A Greek Orthodox Christian, born in 1919 in Shweir, a small village in the Lebanese

mountains, Hawi had written about love and desire but mostly about the yearning for political and cultural change in a region struggling to find a path out of setbacks and despair. The Arab renaissance, cultural and political, of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had faded into the distance. A reaction against the intellectual stagnation under the Ottoman Empire, a call for reform in the face of European military superiority, the renaissance, known as al-Nahda (the awakening), had produced endless literature and poetry, cinema and music, media, new approaches to education, as well as modernist thinkers, secular and religious scholars, including modernist Salafists like Muhammad Abduh. From Cairo, intellectual effervescence had moved to Beirut in the second half of the twentieth century. But no new, better order had emerged. There were many reasons why the period of enlightenment ultimately faltered, including colonial repression but also repeated American-instigated coups that helped bring strongmen to power across the Middle East. The political and cultural maturing of the region was thwarted. Hawi's generation of al-Nahda luminaries was still hoping to provide a bridge to the younger generation to find their way forward when he wrote, in his 1957 poem "The Bridge":

*They cross the bridge blithely in the morning  
My ribs are stretched out as a firm bridge for them  
From the caves of the East, from the swamps of the East  
To the New East  
My ribs are stretched out as a firm bridge for them.*

But on that June evening, with Israeli tanks rumbling toward Beirut, Hawi had either concluded he could not be that bridge or accepted that there was no New East. A deeply sensitive and brooding man, consumed by his poetry, he had embraced Arab nationalism and was crushed by its failures. From disappointed grand Arab dreams to the torment eating his own country, Hawi was growing old and somber. At sixty-two, his heavy shoulders could not carry the final affront that was the idleness and powerlessness of Arab leaders in the face of an Israeli invasion. "Where are the Arabs?" he had asked his colleagues that morning on the campus of the university. "Who shall remove the stain of shame from my forehead?" Hawi was found the next morning, on his balcony."

\*

7 June: Étienne Jodelle (birthdate not known)

8 June: Gwen Harwood

9 June: John Gillespie Magee

John Howard Payne

10 June: Sir Edwin Arnold

11 June: Ben Jonson

Anna Akhmatova

12 June: Theodulf of Orleans (birth date not known)

13 June: W. B. Yeats

Fernando Pessoa

Dorothy L. Sayers

\*

I noticed Richard Zenith's very large biography of Pessoa in the library and hesitated: did I want that much detail about Pessoa's life? Not really. He was often tedious and self-centred. But I was interested to find out how and why he created his multitude of heteronyms.

Pessoa said, "Pseudonymous works are by the author in his own person, except in the name he signs; heteronymous works are by the author outside his own person. They proceed from a full-fledged individual created by him, like the lines spoken by a character in a drama he might write."

Children create imaginary lives, friends, they put themselves in their favourite story books, they give their pets or their dolls human characteristics and human responses. Children whose personalities truly splinter have sometimes suffered serious abuse and this becomes a way of coping. While children with dull restricted lives can become so enamoured of their fantasy lives that the boundaries begin to blur. But none of these ideas seem to fit Pessoa. He lost his father and little brother to TB when he was young but in other ways his childhood was comfortable and interesting.

Zenith says that Pessoa explained his creation of imagined characters as his other selves from when he was five or six as a key influence of his uncle. “It was the irrepressible Uncle Cunha, however, who directly inspired and fostered Fernando’s imaginary universe. Besides inventing make-believe politicians, aristocrats, and military men, this elderly relative regaled his great-nephew with tales of international wars between humanized crickets, beetles, ants, and monkeys. Fernando did not just sit and listen; he helped invent the characters and their deeds.”

This must have been very beguiling for a young boy.

Zenith goes on to say, “Posterity was unkind to the memory of Manuel Gualdino da Cunha. João Gaspar Simões, in his biography from 1950, reported that this jovial fellow was well liked among all the relatives but practically illiterate, to the point of almost having to sign documents with an X. This thumbnail portrayal, the second half of which was completely erroneous, was offered to the biographer by Pessoa’s half sister, who never met Uncle Cunha but who heard all about him from Fernando. Perhaps Pessoa was responsible for leading her into error. He owed a lot to this great-uncle and may have wanted to conceal his debt. In 1914 Pessoa explained to a friend interested in his early literary influences that Aunt Maria, Cunha’s wife, was an intellectual and wrote poetry, but he never told anyone about how Uncle Cunha took him to the opera and introduced him to the behind-the-scenes world of journalism. When he later revealed that a Captain Thibeaut and a Chevalier de Pas had enlivened his solitary childhood, he neglected to mention that they were a part of a world of let’s pretend constructed with the help of his uncle. The crucial role of this man for the development of Pessoa and his para-universe of fictional personalities came to light only in the twenty-first century, when the poet’s niece, Manuela Nogueira, found and published some of Uncle Cunha’s letters to Fernando.”

\*

14 June: Kathleen Raine

15 June: Amy Clampitt

16 June: John Wesley

17 June: Henry Lawson

James Weldon Johnson

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I picked up a coverless falling-to-bits book and found it was Henry Lawson’s *Humorous Verses*. I was curious because I had never thought of Henry Lawson as a humorous writer. And he isn’t funny in the way that Banjo Paterson is funny.

The image of Henry Lawson as a shambling down-at-heel alcoholic drinking himself to death has evoked generations of pity. But there is another side to the story. Ruth Park in *Fishing in the Styx* writes of meeting Will Lawson and Bertha Lawson. She was delighted when they came to her door one day: ‘We knew you were here, and we want to know you,’ said the tall old gentleman, seventy-seven if he was a day. ‘I’m Will Lawson. And this,’ pointing to the dimpled butterball beside him, ‘is Mrs Lawson.’

Park told Will Lawson she loved his ballads and after a minute’s discussion of them his companion spoke up. ‘I’m not Mrs Will Lawson, you know,’ said the little lady. ‘I’m Mrs Henry Lawson.’

Both Ruth Park and her husband D'Arcy Niland were 'curious about this forgotten female half of Henry's brief, unhappy marriage.' They asked Bertha Lawson if they could make a documentary about that marriage and she eventually agreed.

Park writes, 'Bertha goes back a long way. She married Henry Lawson in 1896, and says she was nineteen. I don't believe it. Her mother would have stopped her, the girl being underage, and Mrs McNamara reading Henry like a book. Only later in the story do I find out that Henry wheedled a written consent from Bertha's mother with his usual convincing lies and false evidence that he'd taken 'the pledge'.' Other people, including George Robertson, founder of the publishing firm Angus & Robertson, also tried to talk her out of it. But she went ahead and married Henry Lawson. 'For Bertha, girl of a gaslit, hansom-cab Sydney, romantic, impressed by the tall, handsome and already famous writer, love was a natural thing. She knew he was a drunkard, but believed in female folly that with the care, support and adoration only she could give, he would cease being a drunkard.'

But the outcome was probably inevitable. 'Bertha's efforts to get Henry away from his boozy friends failed entirely. Henry always preferred his boozy friends to family, even his own children. The former, after all, never asked him to take responsibility for anything. The marriage broke up completely in 1903, his children then being five and three, another dead, and the twenty-six-year-old Bertha without any means of support. Much has been written by Henry's hagiographers of his wife's cruel hounding of him, and his frequent brief sojourns in Darlinghurst Gaol for defaulting on child maintenance. But it is difficult to see what else she could have done. When the children were older George Robertson gave her a job. She was the first woman book sales representative in Australia.'

Park then puts the conundrum: 'It is impossible to discern what indeed Henry Lawson wanted from women; it does not seem to have occurred to him that they wanted, needed, or indeed deserved anything from him. His remarks to George Robertson about 'the four women I was closely connected with' are revelatory. Firstly his mother, the indomitable Louisa, 'a selfish, indolent, mad-tempered woman insanely jealous of my literary success'. Then came Bertha, 'an insane Prussianised German by birth on both sides, by breeding and by nature'. Of Number Three we know nothing.

'She was possibly his dead infant sister about whom he maundered sentimentally, though it appears his daughter was not given the same attention. Finally he scarifies Isobel Byers, who looked after and supported him for years either as mistress or friend. Isobel is a combination of Louisa and Bertha. 'They all develop into the Brute. I ... was always soft and yielding or good natured and generous.'

Not mentioned in there is Dame Mary Gilmore. Various claims are made, even a novel was written to suggest she and Henry Lawson had an affair. But Park is sceptical. 'The dates are difficult to explain or adapt. And *Mary*? Plain, large, strong-minded, bossy, older than Henry? Exactly the kind of woman of whom he was most afraid and most vilified. My personal opinion is that the 'love affair' was one of Henry's little brags with which he successfully wounded his estranged wife. The tale possibly wounded Mary Gilmore also.'

'We both found Bertha very likeable. She was durable, humorous and kindly. My impression was that, when young, she had probably been a voluptuous little bundle. Still she gave off that indefinable fragrance that attracts men. But her long life had been entirely without scandal.' And it also ended happily. 'In Will Lawson, Bertha had achieved her simple but usually unattainable aim – she had succoured and reformed an alcoholic. Fifteen years or so previously she had found Will Lawson literally in a gutter, 'bust as an old paper bag,' as Will said. 'Sick as a dog.' With Bertha's help and affection he was able to get his health back and return to the writing he enjoyed.

‘Henry died in 1922, Bertha two years after we met her; Will lingered a little, and died in 1957. To the literary world, which had given Henry a State funeral, Bertha was nothing more than a memorandum, faint and half-erased, of a bygone age.’

Although Henry occasionally mentions horses they obviously didn’t play the same role in his life as they did in other writers of that era like Adam Lindsay Gordon or Banjo Paterson—or indeed Will Lawson. It is probably unproveable but I wonder if Henry would have become a drunk if he had loved a horse.

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- 18 June: Rosemary Dobson  
George Essex Evans  
Anna Maria Lenngren  
Raymond Radiguet
- 19 June: King James VI/I  
José Rizal
- 20 June: Vikram Seth  
Anna Letitia Barbauld  
Margaret Scott  
Eliza Hamilton Dunlop (d)  
Nicholas Rowe
- 21 June: Clive Sansom
- 22 June: Anne Spencer Morrow Lindbergh  
St Paulinus of Nela  
Ida Graf von Hahn Hahn
- 23 June: Richard Bach  
Anna Akhmatova
- 24 June: Yves Bonnefoy  
Edward Taylor (d)
- 25 June: Richard Flecknoe (birth date not known)
- 26 June: Pedro Albinovanus (birth date not known)
- 27 June: Lafcadio Hearn  
Everhardus Potgieter  
Efua Sutherland  
Vernon Watkins
- 28 June: Luigi Pirandello  
Giovanni Della Casa  
'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad
- 29 June: Lydia Pender  
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry  
Giacomo Leopardi
- 30 June: Czeslaw Milosz  
Thomas Lovell Beddoes
- 1 July: Dorothea Mackellar

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The ‘sunburnt country’ is squarely in our minds and we combine drought with ‘flooding rains’ without having to stop and think. But what else did Dorothea MacKellar put into her famous poem ‘My Country’?

The love of field and coppice,

Of green and shaded lanes,  
Of ordered woods and gardens  
Is running in your veins;  
Strong love of grey-blue distance,  
Brown streams and soft dim skies—  
I know but cannot share it,  
My love is otherwise.

I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of rugged mountain ranges,  
Of drought and flooding rains.  
I love her far horizons,  
I love her jewel-sea,  
Her beauty and her terror—  
The wide brown land for me!

The stark white ring-barked forests,  
All tragic to the moon,  
The sapphire-misted mountains,  
The hot gold hush of noon.  
Green tangle of the brushes,  
Where lithe lianas coil,  
And orchids deck the tree-tops  
And ferns the warm dark soil.

Love of my heart, my country!  
Her pitiless blue sky,  
Where sick at heart around us,  
We see the cattle die—  
But then the grey clouds gather,  
And we can bless again  
The drumming of an army,  
The steady, soaking rain.

Love of my heart, my country!  
Land of the Rainbow Gold,  
For flood and fire and famine,  
She pays us back threefold;  
Over the thirsty paddocks,  
Watch, after many days,  
The filming veil of greenness  
That thickens as we gaze.

An opal-hearted country,  
A willful, lavish land—  
All you who have not loved her,  
You will not understand—

Though earth holds many splendours,  
Wherever I may die,  
I know to what brown country  
My homing thoughts will fly.

And thinking of flooding rains and the damage they can do I came across this interesting snippet:

From *The UnDutchables* by Colin White and Laurie Boucke: “Having pondered for centuries the problem of how to find more land to build more houses on, Dutch ditch designers have recently reversed course: Waves of waterbourne houses (*drijvende woningen*) and roads are planned and appearing in ponded areas around the country in an attempt to perfect the idea of the floating, flood-resistant city. Fleets of greenhouses are also being launched. ... the new houses:

“...are built of timber and concrete. The hollow concrete pontoons that serve as foundations will be able to rise, guided up a pair of 15-foot concrete piles, when the flood waters come. The clapboard superstructure, meanwhile, is light and boatlike. Flexible pipes and ducts are designed to ensure that water, gas and electricity supplies, and sewage disposal function even when the houses rise a whole stor(e)y. Boats can be moored alongside. Inside, the houses are bright, breezy, split-level, unselfconsciously modern and understandably popular.”

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2 July: Herman Hesse

3 July: Grace Perry (d)

4 July: Stephen Collins Foster

Fay Zwicky

Sumner Locke

5 July: Jean Cocteau

Dwight Goddard

6 July: Catherine Fanshawe (also given the 10<sup>th</sup>)

Delmira Agustini (d)

7 July: John Kells Ingram

8 July: Jean de la Fontaine

Walter Hasenclever

9 July: Robert Shaaban (birthdate not known)

John Heath-Stubbs

10 July: Edmund Clerihew Bentley

Frederick Marryat

Jack Moses (d)

Nicolas Guillén

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I came upon a booklet called *Slightly Foxed* at the Moonah Book Exchange and it had an article by Antony Wood about Bentley. He begins by saying, “One of the literary forms that has always given me most pleasure, in between the serious stuff, has been the clerihew, named after its inventor Edmund Clerihew Bentley (1875-1956). Bentley was chief leader writer for the *Daily Telegraph* from 1912 to 1934. In 1905, a decade before he produced another of his inventions, the modern detective novel, with *Trent’s Last Case*, he published a slim volume entitled *Biography for Beginners*, which opens, under the heading ‘Introductory Remarks’, with this four-liner:

The Art of Biography  
Is different from Geography.  
Geography is about Maps,  
But Biography is about Chaps.

The clerihew, as this form came to be known, is about some famous figure of history or public life, with its first line consisting of that person's name:

Sir Christopher Wren  
Said, 'I am going to dine with some men.  
If anybody calls  
Say I am designing St Paul's.'

His book contained forty clerihews and illustrations by G. K. Chesterton. And in 1951 he brought out *Clerihews Complete* with over a hundred.

"The clerihew is chaste and, to be quite honest, essentially *intellectual*, whereas the limerick is a thing of the street, and often very rude. And the metrical distinction between the two is obvious. Every native English-speaker has the rhythm of the limerick in his or her blood, completely regular and predictable, but every one of Bentley's clerihews finds a different way of having two or sometimes three stresses per line. The form 'consists of two metrically awkward couplets', as the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* severely has it. Sometimes the name may conclude the first couplet, as in one of my very favourites:

Few Romans were as tony as  
The elegant Petronius.  
None who dressed snappier  
Appeared on the Via Appia.

Sometimes the master takes a plethora of syllables in the second couplet to the utmost limit (though here with poetic effect):

I regard Zinghis Khan  
As rather an over-rated man.  
What, after all, could be easier  
Than conquering from the Pacific to Silesia?"

The curious thing is that Bentley had given his notebook full of the clerihews he had written at school to a friend, Maurice Solomon, so when he brought out his first book he re-wrote them from memory. Or he re-wrote some. The notebook re-surfaced in 1954 when Solomon's widow donated it to the St Paul's School Library. The notebook was eventually published as a facsimile edition and contained some which hadn't previously been published including:

It was not Napoleon  
Who founded the Ashmolean.  
He never had the chance,  
Living mostly in France.  
And:  
It looked bad when the Duke of Fife  
Left off using a knife.  
But people began to talk  
When he left off using a fork.

The books of clerihews were very popular, Bentley saying they appealed to 'connoisseurs of idiocy', so other people understandably tried their hand at a cherihew or two. His friend E. W. Fordham produced:

Miss Mae West  
Was one of the best.  
I would rather not  
Say the best what.

And his son Nicholas Bentley wrote:  
Mr Cecil B. de Mille

Sorely against his will,  
Was persuaded to leave Moses  
Out of the Wars of the Roses.

Clerihew was obviously a Bentley family name but what was its original meaning? In fact it came into the family from his mother's side. But Blacks' *The Surnames of Scotland* says of it: "An Aberdeenshire surname. William Clerihew of Kegge was convicted of profanation of the Lord's Day, etc., in 1644". I wondered what the 'etc' referred to. I came upon the suggestion that its origin was via a Norman from the French town of Caileau who became a clerk in Britain (Latin = clericus) and combined the two words. It came in many spellings including Clerihev, Clarihew, Clariehew, Clarihue, Clerichue and Clerihewe. But it is now forever associated with E. C. Bentley and a small poem.

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- 11 July: Robert Greene (bap)  
Luis Carlos López
- 12 July: Pablo Neruda  
Stefan George
- 13 July: John Clare  
J. L. Herrera  
Moira O'Neill (Agnes Shakespeare Higginson)
- 14 July: Ramon Llull (birthdate not known)
- 15 July: Clement Clarke Moore
- 16 July: William Brown (birth date not known)
- 17 July: Isaac Watts  
Oscar Levertin
- 18 July: Seyyid Nesimi (birth date not known)  
Elizabeth Jennings
- 19 July: Gottfried Keller  
Vladimir Mayakovsky
- 20 July: Louisa Anne Meredith  
Francisco Petrarck
- 21 July: A. D. Hope  
Hart Crane  
Muhammad Hafiz Ibrahim (d)
- 22 July: Emma Lazarus  
Stephen Vincent Benét
- 23 July: Coventry Patmore
- 24 July: Robert Graves
- 25 July: Elias Canetti  
Hjálmar Jónsson (d)
- 26 July: George Bernard Shaw  
Winthrop Mackworth Praed
- 27 July: Hilaire Belloc  
Giosuè Carducci  
Thomas Campbell
- 28 July: John Ashbery  
Józef Ignacy Kraszewski
- 29 July: Don Marquis

Eunice Tietjens  
 30 July: Emily Bronte  
 Nahum Tate (d)  
 31 July: Primo Levi  
 Thomas Russell (d)  
 1 August: Julio Herrera y Reissig  
 Carolyn Marie Souaid  
 Francis Reginald Scott  
 Francis Scott Key  
 2 August: Ernest Dowson  
 3 August: Rupert Brooke  
 Diane Wakoski  
 Seán Dunne  
 Henry Bunner  
 4 August: Walter Pater  
 Percy Bysshe Shelley  
 Gaspar Nuñez de Arce  
 Liao Yiwu  
 Knut Hamsun  
 Patrick Anderson  
 5 August: Guy de Maupassant  
 Ted Hughes  
 Maurice de Guérin (or the 4<sup>th</sup>)  
 Conrad Aiken

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Guy de Maupassant is better-known as a short story writer than a poet—or a travel writer. Julian Barnes in *The Man in the Red Coat* has this to say about Maupassant: “On 8 December 1881 Guy de Maupassant, his judgement clearly uncorrupted by his visits to Swinburne’s Sadean cottage, wrote in the literary periodical *Gil Blas*:

The English are a great nation, a true nation, balanced about life, firmly planted in reality. They are a nation of gentlemen, of commercially irreproachable merchants, a healthy, strong and honourable nation. They are in addition nowadays, a nation of philosophers; the greatest thinkers of the century live amongst them; they are a nation devoted to progress and to hard work.

But the English gentleman does not fight; that’s to say, he doesn’t fight duels, and regards this activity with the greatest of disdain. He judges life to be worthy of respect; also of value to his country ... He understands courage differently from us. He only allows courage that is useful – to his country, and to his fellow citizens. He possesses an eminently practical turn of mind.”

Needless to say he was not well-acquainted with the English! Rather he was writing about the futility of dueling. According to Barnes he went on: “Honour! Oh, you poor old word from another time, what a clown they have turned you into!” And he also says that dueling “is the safeguard of the suspect: the dubious, the shady and the compromised attempt by means of it to buy themselves a cut-price new virginity.” And in France, “There exists a mad mental condition – quarrelsome, flippant, whirling and emptily sonorous – which circulates from the Madeleine to the Bastille, and which could be called The Mentality of the Boulevards. And it has spread from there throughout the whole of France. It is to reason and true thought what phylloxera is to the vine.”

Of course you only have to read Georgette Heyer to know that the English had been rather keen on duelling in the past.

Maupassant also writes:

“There is one kind of duel which I can accept, and that is the industrial duel, the duel for publicity, the duel between journalists. When a newspaper’s circulation begins to dip, one of the editors gets to work and writes a scathing article in which he insults one or other of his colleagues. The other answers back. The public’s attention is caught; they watch as if they’re in a wrestling booth at a fair. And a duel takes place, which is talked about in fashionable society.

This procedure has one excellent thing in its favour: it will dispense with the requirement that editors should know how to write French. All they will need is to be good at duelling.”

Curiously Maupassant had been a second at a duel between a journalist and an editor. We might think of duels on the footie field but it’s a bit hard to picture the editor of *The Australian* fighting a duel with a journalist from *The Age!*

In 1886 Maupassant came back to England with a letter of introduction to Henry James suggesting James introduce him to Burne-Jones and Rossetti. “James also showed him the Earl’s Court Exhibition, and introduced him over dinner to George du Maurier and Edmund Gosse. Next, Maupassant stayed at Waddesdon as the guest of Ferdinand de Rothschild, then visited Oxford, and returned to London, where he was taken to Madame Tussaud’s and a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta at the Savoy Theatre.

“At which point he ran away. He pronounced himself charmed and grateful, but left the next morning with the excuse: ‘I am too cold; the city is too cold; I am leaving for Paris. Au revoir!’ Naturally, it had rained a lot. And naturally, being a Frenchman, he found that, ‘The women here haven’t the charm of ours – I mean, the women of France. People claim that only their appearance is severe, but when one confines oneself to appearances – and such has been my case – one has the right to ask that they be a little less forbidding.’

He never returned.”

No, and it was just as well that women did not challenge men to duels.

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6 August: Alfred Lord Tennyson  
John Middleton Murry  
Paul Claudel

7 August: Martin Espada

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Amy Goodman in *The Exception to the Rulers* has this story about poetry in the US: “In April 1997, NPR (National Public Radio) called poet Martin Espada and asked him to write a poem to commemorate National Poetry Month. The poem would air on *All Things Considered*. Espada, an acclaimed poet and a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, was pleased to take the assignment. While traveling in Philadelphia, he read an article about a development in Abu-Jamal’s case: an “unnamed prostitute” had come forward with important new information. (Abu-Jamal was in prison for murder but continued to protest his innocence.) Espada was intrigued. So he wrote “Another Nameless Prostitute Says the Man Is Innocent,” a poem about Abu-Jamal’s case, then faxed it in to NPR.

Suddenly Espada was poet non grata. NPR would not return his calls.

Espada could not understand what happened. He had read poems on *All Things Considered* before. NPR had pursued him to get this poem and he felt he had sent them a very good one. It was done the way NPR wanted it: as poetry, but also addressing news of the day. Finally he reached an NPR editor and asked what was going on.

We won't be airing it, came the reply.

"But you asked me for a poem," Espada protested.

Yes, but we can't do this poem, the editor replied, because it deals with Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Espada quickly figured out what was happening. "NPR is refusing to air this poem because of its political content?"

Yes, was the reply from *All Things Considered* producer Diantha Parker. According to Dennis Bernstein of Pacifica's KPFA, Parker said Espada should have known better.

Kathy Scott, NPR's communications director, told *The Boston Globe*, "NPR has already been criticized for not running the commentaries. Obviously, Mr. Espada thinks Mumia is innocent. In our way of thinking, this was a way to throw that back in our face."

NPR was now attempting to muzzle both Mumia Abu-Jamal and Martin Espada. Both refused to be silenced. Espada came on *Democracy Now!* to talk about his case. *The Progressive* magazine published his poem, and it circulated widely on the Internet.

"If I didn't speak out, then I would be governed by the same fear that governs NPR, and that would be wrong," said Espada. "All a writer wants is to be judged on the merit of his work. They censored my piece for political reasons."

Journalists are not entertainers. We are reporters. We go to places that are unpopular. We broadcast voices that are controversial. We are not here to win popularity contests. We are here to cover the issues critical to a democratic society. We have to pressure the media, to shame the media into going into these forgotten places where so many are sent to waste away in silence.

Here is the poem that NPR didn't want you to hear:

#### ANOTHER NAMELESS PROSTITUTE SAYS THE MAN IS INNOCENT

—for Mumia Abu-Jamal, Philadelphia, Pa./Camden, N.J., April 1997

By Martin Espada

The board-blinded windows knew what happened;  
the pavement sleepers of Philadelphia, groaning  
in their ghost-infested sleep, knew what happened;  
every black man blessed  
with the gashed eyebrow of nightsticks  
knew what happened;  
even Walt Whitman knew what happened,  
poet a century dead, keeping vigil  
from the tomb on the other side of the bridge.

More than fifteen years ago,  
The cataract stare of the cruiser's headlights,  
the impossible angle of the bullet,  
the tributaries and lakes of blood,  
Officer Faulkner dead, suspect Mumia shot in the chest,  
the witnesses who saw a gunman  
running away, his heart and feet thudding.

The nameless prostitutes know,  
hunched at the curb, their bare legs chilled.  
Their faces squinted to see that night,

rouged with fading bruises. Now the faces fade.  
Perhaps an eyewitness putrifies eyes open in a bed of soil,  
or floats in the warm gulf stream of her addiction,  
or hides from the fanged whispers of the police  
in the tomb of Walt Whitman,  
where the granite door is open  
and fugitive slaves may rest.

Mumia: the Panther beret, the thinking dreadlocks,  
dissident words that swarmed the microphone like a hive,  
sharing meals with people named Africa,  
calling out their names even after the police bombardment  
that charred their black bodies.  
So the governor has signed the death warrant.  
The executioner's needle would flush the poison  
down into Mumia's writing hand  
so the fingers curl like a burned spider;  
his calm questioning mouth would grow numb,  
and everywhere radios sputter to silence, in his memory.

The veiled prostitutes are gone, gone to the segregated balcony of whores.  
But the newspaper reports that another nameless prostitute  
says the man is innocent, that she will testify at the next hearing.  
Beyond the courthouse, a multitude of witnesses chants, prays,  
shouts for his prison to collapse, a shack in a hurricane.

Mumia, if the last nameless prostitute  
becomes an unraveling turban of steam,  
if the judges' robes become clouds of ink  
swirling like octopus deception,  
if the shroud becomes your Amish quilt,  
if your dreadlocks are snipped during autopsy,  
then drift above the ruined RCA factory  
that once birthed radios  
to the tomb of Walt Whitman,  
where the granite door is open  
and fugitive slaves may rest.

Interesting? Worthwhile? 'Very good'? It is a curious thing: how much  
attention would have been paid to his poem if it had not become mired in controversy? Would it  
have influenced the case of Abu-Jamal?

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8 August: Sara Teasdale

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Over the downs there were birds flying,  
Far off glittered the sea,  
And toward the north the weald of Sussex  
Lay like a kingdom under me.

I was happier than the larks  
That nest on the downs and sing to the sky –  
Over the downs the birds flying  
Were not so happy as I.

It was not you, though you were near,  
Though you were good to hear and see,  
It was not earth, it was not heaven,  
It was myself that sang in me.  
‘On the South Downs’

Strephon kissed me in the spring,  
Robin in the fall,  
But Colin only looked at me  
And never kissed at all.

Strephon’s kiss was lost in jest,  
Robin’s lost in play,  
But the kiss in Colin’s eyes  
Haunts me night and day.  
‘The Look’

I knew nothing about Sara Teasdale except that she had been a friend of Vachel Lindsay and some of her poetry had been published after her early death. In fact her short life included a failed marriage and her eventual suicide in 1933 after a bout of pneumonia but it also included the publication of seven volumes of poetry which critics ‘damned with faint praise’. Was it this which led her to believe that she was a failure? Did she actually feel she was a failure? She brought out *Sonnets at Duse*, *Helen of Troy* then *Rivers to the Sea* which the *New York Times Book Review* summed up as “a little volume of joyous and unstudied song”, which in my unsophisticated view sounds like a compliment rather than a criticism. And just getting them to review a small book of poetry seems like a success in itself.

Some of her work was published after her death and posterity has also looked at her body of work, sometimes seeing it as sweet and sentimental and sometimes as a deep insight into a woman’s life and emotions. Posterity, too, seems to regard her most important poem as her anti-war ‘Then Will Come Soft Rains’:

(War Time)

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,  
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pools singing at night,  
And wild plum trees in tremulous white,

Robins will wear their feathery fire  
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;

And not one will know of the war, not one  
Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree  
If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,  
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

\*

9 August: John Dryden

Philip Larkin

Izaak Walton

10 August: Laurence Binyon

11 August: Hugh MacDiarmid

Louise Bogan

12 August: Robert Southey

Philip Stanhope Worsley

Duncan Campbell Scott

13 August: Ridgwell Cullum

Rhyll McMaster

14 August: John Galsworthy

Yitzak Orpaz (d)

Letitia Landon

15 August: Sir Walter Scott

Jules Laforgue

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Sir Walter Scott was a poet and an author but it sometimes gets overlooked that he was also a lawyer and he practiced in the Scottish legal system. “Although it shares *some* institutions with England, such as the House of Lords (when sitting as a court) and the Supreme Court, the Scottish legal system is different in its character and its institutions, including the courts.” This is Bruce Durie writing in *Scottish Genealogy*. “Scots law had feudal law (dealing with land and immoveable property and their inheritance), Roman law (for moveable property) and canon law (for ecclesiastical matters). Later, there was statute or enacted law.

“Statute law comes from a body with legislative powers, such as royal proclamations or orders, Acts of Parliament (either the old Scots Parliament, the UK Parliament or the new, devolved Scottish Parliament), European Community Treaties or European legislation when adopted into local laws, local authority by-laws etc.

“Common law derives its authority from judgment in the courts and is based on the Scots legal tradition. It relies on precedent and was initially derived from Roman law (as codified under the Emperor Justinian), canon law (the law of the Church), the writings and considerations of eminent legal scholars such as Lord Stair, Erskine and Bell, Hume, and Alison (the ‘institutional’ writers), and from feudal land tenure.

“Both common and statute law have equal authority and often deal with the same subjects, but enacted law can override common law.

“Scottish lawyers are either solicitors (in older times called ‘writers’) who deal with clients, or advocates (equivalent to English barristers) who argue cases ‘at the bar’, i.e. in court. Recently, some solicitors – called solicitor-advocates – have been able to argue cases before a judge. Judges may be appointed either from the ranks of solicitors or advocates.”

And Durie has this to say about that Scottish verdict which intrigues people elsewhere. “A particular and much-cherished feature of Scots criminal law is the possibility of one of three verdicts – ‘guilty’, ‘not guilty’ and ‘not proven’, the latter being controversial for 300 years. In 1827

Sir Walter Scott, who was a lawyer and a sheriff as well as an author, described it as ‘that bastard verdict, not proven’. It means that the judge or jury feel that there is a case, but the prosecution has not made it well enough. The original verdicts in Scots law were ‘culpable and convict’ or ‘cleanse’. The terms ‘guilty’ and ‘not guilty’ were introduced by Oliver Cromwell during the Usurpation (1653-8), when English judges were imposed on Scotland. After the Restoration of the Monarchy with Charles II (1660), Scottish judges reverting to pronouncing whether the facts in an indictment were ‘proven’ or ‘not proven’. The verdict of ‘not guilty’ was reintroduced in 1723.”

It must be a tricky business being a lawyer in Scotland. I wondered whether ‘not proven’ got around the problems with double jeopardy but did it leave people in a kind of limbo?

\*

16 August: Charles Bukowski  
Dame Mary Gilmore  
Dorothy Drain

\*

I enjoy those little vignettes which make a famous person from the past come alive. Ruth Park in *Fishing in the Styx* wrote, “There I was, rhapsodising over the coffee, when a woman of distinction entered. She was very old, large, with a craggy face, and a hat the dog had brought home. She was accompanied by a slight, small young man, dark and sardonic.

‘I know him!’ I hissed. ‘That’s Douglas Stewart. He’s a poet, and he’s from New Zealand.’

‘And I know her,’ whispered D’Arcy. ‘That’s Dame Mary Gilmore, and she’s from Australia.’

‘Why was she made a Dame?’

‘She writes. Poems. Journalism. Memoirs.’

She was unlike anyone else, drawing all eyes, tall, of monumental build still, though she was in her late seventies. Her face was alert, lively and rustic. She could never have been a beauty. She reminded me of Eleanor Roosevelt, and like Mrs Roosevelt, had a pair of wondrous eyes, dark auburn brown, as her hair was in her youth. In every respect she gave an impression of power.

‘She’s like a pioneer woman,’ I said, ‘who hewed out a home in some place no one has ever heard of.’

And indeed, when at last I became a friend of Dame Mary, almost her first words to me were, ‘One day when I was cutting down a tree in Patagonia...’

As we watched, she fished in a bag that was half shopping basket and half brief case, and came up with a pot of jam, which she gave to Mr Stewart. I thought this mystery delightful. I noticed then that she was not drinking coffee, but had asked for hot water for a small teapot which had also come forth from the carryall. As I learned later, she always drank mate.

This powerful figure was in no way the little mouse person she appeared to be in her nineties, though interiorly she was no mouse. However, that is the period of her life that most living people remember.

She lived at 99 Darlington Road, King’s Cross, and was there for all the years I knew her, which were fourteen. But she wrote to me for years before that.”

\*

17 August: Wilfrid Scawen Blunt  
Ted Hughes  
Charlotte L. Forten Grimké  
Louisa Lawson

\*

Charlotte L. Forten Grimké wrote:  
In the earnest path of duty,

With the high hopes and hearts sincere,  
We, to useful lives aspiring,  
Daily meet to labor here.

No vain dreams of earthly glory  
Urge us onward to explore  
Far-extending realms of knowledge,  
With their rich and varied store;

But, with hope of aiding others,  
Gladly we perform our part;  
Nor forget, the mind, while storing,  
We must educate the heart, -

Teach it hatred of oppression,  
Truest love of God and man;  
Thus our high and holy calling  
May accomplish His great plan.

Not the great and gifted only  
He appoints to do his will.  
But each one, however lowly,  
Has a mission to fulfil.

Knowing this, toil we unwearied,  
With true hearts and purpose high; -  
We would win a wreath immortal  
Whose bright flowers ne'er fade and die.  
‘Poem’

“Sarah and Angelina Grimké, daughters of a South Carolina slaveholding family, began to address large mixed public audiences, in itself an outrageously daring act, and in the course of their speeches on the rights of slaves they found themselves claiming rights for women, too. The two slaveries became linked: the negro and the woman were both in need of freedom from unjust and unnecessary servitude. Sarah Grimké wrote a series of articles on the Province of Women in which she said: “I ask no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claims to equality .All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on the ground which God has designed us to occupy.” She said that to her it was perfectly clear that “whatsoever it is morally right for a man to do it is morally right for a woman to do.” It was not so clear to Congress. At that time Congress was considering depriving women of one of the few political rights they had in America – the right to petition. The numbers of petitions brought forward by the Anti-Slavery societies were so vast that in 1834 a measure was introduced in the House of Representatives forbidding the presentation of any more and it took ex-president John Quincy Adams to defend this right. “Why does it follow,” he asked, “that women are fitted for nothing but the cares of domestic life?...The mere departure of women from the duties of the domestic circle far from being a reproach to her is a virtue of the highest order.” Even more outspoken was his reply to the assertion that women had no right to petition because they had no right to vote. “Is it so clear,” he asked, “that they have no such right as this last?”

Margaret Forster wrote this in *Significant Sisters*. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* also gives Sarah and Angelina a shared entry: “Their independent thinking was strengthened in their 20s when they joined the Society of Friends (Quakers) in Philadelphia, and they both subsequently moved North and became active in the anti-slavery movement. In 1835 Angelina wrote a letter of approval to Abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison, who promptly published it in his newspaper, *The Liberator*. The following year she composed an impassioned 36-page pamphlet, “An Appeal to the Christian Women of the South,” in which she urged her Southern sisters to use moral suasion to help overthrow the oppressive institution. A few months later Sarah made a similar plea in “An Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States.” These eloquent appeals were welcomed by anti-slavery agitators in the free states, but South Carolina officials burned copies of them and threatened the authors with imprisonment should they ever return home. At the same time, the sisters attested their sincerity by freeing the slaves whom they had persuaded their mother to apportion to them as their part of the family estate.” The *Britannica* also says “the sisters became pioneers in the women’s rights movement and were largely responsible for linking it to the anti-slavery crusade.” American slavery, because it was so tightly linked to ‘field work’, had a use-by date inherent in it, as the use of machinery on farms gradually developed. One machine could do the work of many slaves and did not need to be fed and housed and kept in order. But in the early years of the Industrial Revolution this kind of massive change could not be foreseen. Would anything have been different if those who clung savagely to their ‘rights’ as slave owners could have looked into a future of huge machines in their cotton and sugar cane fields?

So where did Charlotte come in this family? She was born Charlotte Forten and married Francis James Grimké who was a nephew of Sarah and Angelina. Charlotte, like her aunts by marriage, became deeply involved in the Anti-Slavery Movement. While Sarah and Angelina were white she was black, born into a free and comfortably off family in Philadelphia but her father sent her to a school in Massachusetts as it was an integrated school. She became a teacher, later teaching abandoned slaves during the Civil War, and a poet tutored by John Greenleaf Whittier and published in Garrison’s paper *The Liberator*. Though much of her writing was impassioned polemics she also wrote poetry on gentler subjects, nature, love, people she admired. She was a remarkable woman, a founder of the National Association of Colored Women, and a passionate defender of the right of black men and women to a good education. But it is for her *Diaries* which covered so many momentous years and events that she is chiefly remembered now. Her husband had a white father and a slave mother, and as a Presbyterian minister also played an important role in changing the lives of ex-slaves.

Charlotte’s niece by marriage, Angelina, named in honour of her great-aunt, also had one black and one white parent and she too wrote poetry; including this touching memorial to her aunt by marriage:

‘To Keep the Memory of Charlotte Forten Grimké’:  
 Still there are wonders of the dark and day:  
     The muted shrilling of shy things at night,  
     So small beneath the stars and moon;  
 The peace, dream-frail, but perfect while the light  
     Lies softly on the leaves at noon.  
     These are, and these will be  
     Until eternity;  
 But she who loved them well has gone away.

Each dawn, while yet the east is veiled grey,

The birds about her window wane and sing;  
And far away, each day, some lark  
I know is singing where the grasses swing;  
Some robin calls and calls at dark.  
These are, and there will be  
Until eternity;  
But she who loved them well has gone away.

The wild flowers that she loved down green ways to stray;  
Her roses lift their wistful buds at dawn,  
But not for eyes that loved them best;  
Only her little pansies are all gone,  
Some lying softly on her breast.  
And flowers will bud and be  
Until eternity;  
But she who loved them well has gone away.

Where has she gone? And who is there to say?  
But this we know: her gentle spirit moves  
And is where beauty never wanes,  
Perchance by other streams, mid other groves;  
And to us there, ah! she remains  
A lovely memory  
Until eternity;  
She came, she loved, and then she went away.

\*

18 August: Carolina Nairne

Nettie Palmer  
Marko Marulic

19 August: Ogden Nash

Arthur Waley  
Marquis de Santilana  
Pierre-Jean de Béranger

20 August: Emily Bronte

Robert Herrick  
Barbara Anne Cameron  
Salvatore Quasimodo  
Saul Tchernichowsky  
Edgar Guest

21 August: Will Ogilvie

John William Burgon

22 August: Dorothy Parker

Leo Kennedy  
Gustaf Froding  
Vasile Alecsandri (d)

23 August: Malvina Reynolds

W. E. Henley  
Edgar Lee Masters

24 August: Robert Herrick (chr)  
           Jorge Luis Borges  
 25 August: Shelton Lea  
           Henrik Hertz  
 26 August: Guillaume Apollinaire  
           Henry Mackenzie  
           Jules Romains  
           Elizabeth Friedman  
 27 August: Lu Yu (birth date not known)  
 28 August: Sir John Betjeman  
           Johann von Goethe  
           Ivor Gurney  
 29 August: Maurice Maeterlinck  
           Oliver Wendell Homes  
 30 August: Mary Shelley  
 31 August: Felix Savard  
           Edwin Dubose Heyward  
           Théophile Gautier  
 1 September: Moses ibn Ezra (birth date not known)  
           Blaise Cendrars  
 2 September: Eugene Field  
 3 September: Will Dyson  
           Bernard O'Reilly  
 4 September: Juliusz Slowacki  
           Phoebe Cary  
           Antonin Artaud  
 5 September: Sir Walter Raleigh  
           Nicanor Parra  
           Victor Daley  
           Tommaso Campanella  
 6 September: Sir John Suckling (birth date not known)  
 7 September: C. J. Dennis  
           Edith Sitwell  
           Camilo Pessanha  
           Molly Holden  
           Willem Bilderdijk  
 8 September: Siegfried Sassoon  
           Frédéric Mistral  
           Eduard Môrike  
 9 September: Edith Sitwell  
           Ivan Kotlyarevsky  
           Clemens Brentano  
 10 September: H. D. (Hilda Doolittle)  
           Mary Oliver  
           Franz Werfel  
           Bertel Gripenberg  
           Jeppe Aakjaer  
 11 September: D. H. Lawrence

12 September: Michael Dransfield  
Louis MacNeice  
Sophus Claussen  
Cino da Pistoia (birth date not known)  
\*

Louis MacNeice wrote *The Strings Are False* which he intended to be his autobiography but never finished. He did however give quite a lot of space to his schooldays which included his time at Marlborough College where he had several later well-known public figures sharing his classes.

“Down the passage from Graham’s study was a door with an inscription above it –

*Here thou, Great Anna, whom three realms obey,  
Dost sometimes counsel take and sometimes tea*

—and inside sat John Betjeman writing nonsense on his typewriter or polishing his leather books with boot-polish. John Betjeman at that time looked like a will-o’-the-wisp with Latin blood in it. His face was the colour of peasoup and his eyes were soupy too and his mouth was always twisting sideways in a mocking smile and he had a slight twist in his speech which added a tang to his mimicries, syncopating the original just as a slightly rippling sheet of water jazzes the things reflected in it. He was a brilliant mimic but also a mine of useless information and a triumphant misfit. I felt ill at ease with him, not understanding his passion for minor poetry and misbegotten ornament, not knowing how many grains of salt to take with each of his pronouncements.”

And then there was Anthony Blunt with whom he later went to Spain: “In my own house the dominant intellectual was Anthony Blunt, who had a precocious knowledge of art and an habitual contempt for conservative authorities. He was very tall and very thin and drooping, with deadly sharp elbows and the ribs of a famished saint; he had cold blue eyes, a cutaway mouth and a wave of soft brown hair falling over his forehead. His features were far from classical but he had at times a pre-Raphaelite beauty; when he was annoyed he pouted and stuck out his lip, his good looks vanished and sulkiness was all. He had specialised in mathematics, but outraged the masters of the Modern Side by putting most of his energies into a society of his own to which he read papers on Cubism. He truculently admitted that he preferred Things to People. He considered it very low to talk politics.”

And when he got to Oxford he became friends with Stephen Spender. “Take the case of Stephen Spender who was now living in a chic apartment with a colour scheme out of *Vogue*, a huge vulcanite writing-desk and over the fireplace an abstract picture by Wyndham Lewis. Very comfortable and elegant but not quite big enough for Stephen; his enormous craggy apostolic flaring face seemed liable to burst the walls. Stephen in the early thirties had written a book of literary criticism, *The Destructive Element*, the text for the sermon being taken from Henry James: ‘In the destructive element immerse; that is the way.’ The thesis of the book was that James, like Pt., was a herald of the Revolution; not being born at the right moment, all such writers could do was immerse in the destructive element. But now the right moment had come. Stephen followed this up with a book called *Forward from Liberalism*, chosen by the Left Book Club, and so under the aegis of Mr. Gollancz dumped upon thousands and thousands of men of good will for whom the Left Book Club was Church. Yes, S argued (accepting the dialectic), liberalism had played its part; once the vanguard, was now reaction; the man of good will today must acknowledge the Third International. His book, however, offended many in all parties. The Right did not like it, the Liberals did not like it, and the Comrades—many of them—could not help noticing that S., who wanted to be at home with Stalin, was much more at his ease with J. S. Mill.”

John Hilton said of that Blunt – MacNeice friendship that “Anthony’s and Louis’s temperaments were strikingly different. If one had to attempt brief descriptive labels one might say that Anthony was then an austere hedonist living for disciplined gratification of the senses, with an eye for social esteem and seeking anchorage in system and scholarly detail. While Louis was a ribald seer, an anarchic and mocking seeker after the deep springs of action and faith or at least hope or at least a mythology which would keep hope alive in a world always transient and mostly trivial, sordid or brutal; though often ludicrous, sometimes brave and occasionally tender. He was not looking so much for anchorage; but his need for ballast was met by a rubble of fragments of ancient structures—Arthurian legends, Icelandic sagas, Norse and Greek myths, runes, chanted fragments of Pope ... Sir Thomas Browne ... nursery rhymes and songs ... ” And to this he adds Latin and the New Testament ... “Louis and Anthony were both sons of clergymen but, looking back, it would seem that the father’s faith had perhaps sunk more deeply towards the roots of the son in Louis’s case, though this was not very apparent on the surface.”

Louis MacNeice was long dead before Anthony Blunt was ‘outed’ as a Soviet spy. I could not help wondering if MacNeice ever had any inklings of Blunt’s secret activities.

\*

- 13 September: Roald Dahl  
Dante Alighieri (d)
- 14 September: Norman Talbot
- 15 September: Agatha Christie  
Manuel Bocage
- 16 September: Alfred Noyes  
Andrew Sant
- 17 September: William Carlos Williams  
Abílio Junqueiro
- 18 September: Russell Thornton  
Justinus Kerner  
Samuel Johnson
- 19 September: Sinleqeunnini (birthdate not known)
- 20 September: Stevie Smith
- 21 September: Leonard Cohen  
Ludovico Cigoli

\* \* \* \* \*

Leonard Cohen was sometimes compared to Bob Dylan as a singer of anti-war songs with a faintly religious air. Strictly speaking he spoke much of his material against an interesting backing group and with a very deep husky voice. They weren’t the sort of songs that like Dylan’s ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’ young people in droves sang along with. In fact I doubt if many young people back a generation or two ever memorized the words to any of his songs. But the other day I came across one of his books and bought it. His *Book of Mercy* is an intriguing collection of prose poems and meditations. So in case you haven’t come on his writing, as opposed to his singing, here is a sample:

“You who pour mercy into hell, sole authority in the highest and the lowest worlds, let your anger disperse the mist in this aimless place, where even my sins fall short of the mark. Let me be with you again, absolute companion, let me study your ways which are just beyond the hope of evil. Seize my heart out of its fantasy, direct my heart from the fiction of secrecy, you who know the secrets of every heart, whose mercy is to be the secret of longing. Let every heart declare its secret, let every song disclose your love, let us bring to you the sorrows of our freedom. Blessed are you, who opens a gate in every moment, to enter in truth or tarry in hell. Let me be with you again, let me put this away, you who wait beside me, who have broken down your world to gather hearts.

Blessed is your name, blessed is the confession of your name. Kindle the darkness of my calling, let me cry to the one who judges the heart in justice and mercy. Arouse my heart again with the limitless breath you breathe into me, arouse the secret from obscurity.”

(28)

“Help me in the rain, help me in the darkness, help me at my aimless table. Bend me down to the rain, and let the darkness speak to my heart. Blessed are you who speaks from the darkness, who gives a form to desolation. You draw back the heart that is spilled in the world, you establish the borders of pain. Your mercy you make known to those who know your name, and your healing is discovered beneath the lifted cry. The ruins signal your power; by your hand it is broken down, and all things crack that your throne be restored to the heart. You have written your name on the chaos. The eyes that roll down the darkness, you have rolled them back to the skull. Let each man be sheltered in the fortress of your name, and let each one see the others from the towers of your law. Create the world again, and stand us up, as you did before, on the foundation of your light.”

(46)

“I lost my way, I forgot to call on your name. The raw heart beat against the world, and the tears were for my lost victory. But you are here. You have always been here. The word is all forgetting, and the heart is a rage of directions, but your name unifies the heart, and the world is lifted into its place. Blessed is the one who waits in the traveller’s heart for his turning.”

(50)

Leonard Cohen has a curious connection to two well-known Australian writers. Sylvie Simmons in her biography of Cohen *I’m Your Man* writes, “As soon as he set eyes on Hydra, in the distance, before the ferry even entered the port, Leonard liked it. ... The place appeared to have been organised according to some ancient ideal of harmony, symmetry and simplicity. The island had just one real town which was named, simply, Hydra Town. Its inhabitants had come to a tacit decision that just two basic colours would suffice – blue (the sea and the sky) and white (the houses, the sails and the seagulls circling over the fishing boats). ‘I really did feel I’d come home,’ Leonard said later. ‘I felt the village life was familiar, although I’d had no experience with village life.’ ... The village chiefs of the expat community were George Johnston and Charmian Clift. Johnston, forty-eight years old, was a handsome Australian journalist who had been a war correspondent during World War II. Charmian, thirty-seven, also a journalist, was his attractive second wife. Both had written books and wanted to devote themselves to writing full-time. Since they had two children (a third arrived later), it necessitated finding a place to live where life was cheap but congenial. In 1954 they discovered Hydra. The Johnstons were great self-mythologisers and natural leaders. They held court at Katsikas’, a grocery store on the waterfront whose back room, with perfect Hydran simplicity, doubled as a small café and bar. ... Leonard met George and Charmian almost as soon as he arrived. He was not the first young man they had seen walking from the port, carrying a suitcase and a guitar, but they took to him immediately, and he to them. Like Irving and Aviva Layton, the Johnstons were colourful, charismatic and anti-bourgeois. They had also been doing for years what Leonard had wanted to do, which was live as a writer without the necessity of taking regular work. The Johnstons had very little money but on Hydra they could get by on it, even with three children to provide for. Yet the life they were living was by no means impoverished. They lunched on sardines fresh off the boat, washed down with retsina – which old man Katsikas let them put on a tab – and seemed to glow in the warmth and sun. Leonard accepted their invitation to stay the night. The next day they helped him rent one of the many empty houses on the hill, and donated a bed, chair and table and some pots and pans.”

“Among the other residents were Anthony Kingsmill, a British painter, raconteur, drinker and bon vivant, to whom Leonard became close; Gordon Merrick, a former Broadway actor and reporter

whose first novel *The Strumpet Wind*, about a gay American spy, was published in 1947; Dr Sheldon Cholst, an American poet, artist, radical and psychiatrist, who set his flag somewhere between Timothy Leary and R. D. Laing; and a young Swedish author named Göran Tunström, who was writing his first novel, and who was the model for the character Lorenzo in Axel Jensen's 1961 novel *Jocim* (although many still believe Lorenzo was based on Leonard)."

Leonard came and went at intervals while the Johnstons stayed on until 1964 when they, "the first to show Leonard the possibility of leading such a life, decided to leave Hydra and move back to Australia. Johnston's latest book, *My Brother Jack*, was a bestseller – something that all the expat writers were hoping for to solve their financial problems. But Johnston, in his fifties now, was suffering from tuberculosis. He wanted to go home for medical treatment and to capitalise on his success."

And a little footnote: "Leonard was responsible for the title, according to Aviva Layton. 'George said, "I just don't know what to call it," Leonard said, "What's it about?" he said, "My brother Jack," Leonard said, "There you are." '

\*

22 September: Danny Abse

Alice Meynell

Lady Anne Blunt

Snorri Sturluson (d)

23 September: Jaroslav Seifert

24 September: Eavan Boland

Cyprian Norwid

Ramón de Campoamor y Campoosorio

25 September: C. K. Scott Moncrieff

Felicia Hemans

André Breton

John Ceiriog Hughes

Samuel Butler

26 September: T. S. Eliot

Mary Hannay Foott

Guillaume Apollinaire

27 September: Frederick T. Macartney

28 September: David Unaipon

29 September: Mary Macleod (birth date not known)

Kondraty Ryleyev

30 September: 'Captain Hamish Blair'

Jalaludin Mohamed 'Rumi' (Jelaluddin Balkhi)

\* \* \* \* \*

Some anonymous doggerel went the rounds in Darwin in the 1930s and was popular with servicemen stationed there in the Second World War and got repeated in several war books. It sounded the sort of thing some one in Darwin would write.

The bloody town's a bloody cuss,  
No bloody trams, no bloody bus,  
Nobody cares for bloody us,  
So bloody, bloody, bloody.

The bloody roads are bloody bad,  
The bloody folks are bloody mad,

They even say “You bloody cad!”  
So bloody, bloody, bloody.

But many years later I found this in Arnold Silcock’s *Verse and Worse* which was published in 1952—

This bloody town’s a bloody cuss—  
No bloody trains, no bloody bus,  
And no one cares for bloody us—  
In bloody Orkney.

The bloody roads are bloody bad,  
The bloody folks are bloody mad,  
They’d make the brightest bloody sad,  
In bloody Orkney.

All bloody clouds, and bloody rains,  
No bloody kerbs, no bloody drains,  
The Council’s got no bloody brains.  
In bloody Orkney.

Everything’s so bloody dear,  
A bloody bob, for bloody beer,  
And is it good?—no bloody fear,  
In bloody Orkney.

The bloody ‘flicks’ are bloody old,  
The bloody seats are bloody cold,  
You can’t get in for bloody gold  
In bloody Orkney.

The bloody dances make you smile  
The bloody band is bloody vile,  
It only cramps your bloody style,  
In bloody Orkney.

No bloody sport, no bloody games,  
No bloody fun, the bloody dames  
Won’t even give their bloody names  
In bloody Orkney.

Best bloody place is bloody bed,  
With bloody ice on bloody head,  
You might as well be bloody dead,  
In bloody Orkney.  
Captain Hamish Blair.

—so I immediately wondered if Blair had been in Darwin and heard the locals or whether the Orkney verses came first. When I went looking I found that Hamish Blair was the pseudonym of

Andrew James Fraser Blair who went to India in the 1890s and became editor of a newspaper called *The Empire*. But the thing is—he came back to the UK and died in 1935.

So if he genuinely wrote the verses, which is by no means certain, then his verses must have pre-dated the Darwin version. But I suspect it was the sort of complaint that men sent unwillingly to ‘outposts of empire’ repeated in the pub. It is quite possible that Blair heard it in India or it was sent in by a contributor to his newspaper. And some other unknown person rejigged it when they found themselves unwillingly posted to the Orkneys in WW2. And did Silcock believe it was Blair who brought it home to the UK?

\*

- 1 October: Louis Untermeyer  
Clare Harner
- 2 October: Roy Campbell  
Wallace Stevens  
Wilfrid Wilson Gibson  
Andreas Gryphius
- 3 October: Han-Shan (birthdate not known)
- 4 October: Anne Hébert (birth date not known)  
Frans Gunnar Bengtsson
- 5 October: Pedro de Oña (birth date not known)  
John Addington Symonds
- 6 October: Melvyn Bragg
- 7 October: John Marston (bap)  
James Whitcomb Riley (‘Hoosier’ Riley)  
Wilhelm Müller
- 8 October: John Cowper Powys  
Neile Graham  
Alicia Cockburn
- 9 October: Leonardo Padura  
Mario Andrade
- 10 October: Ivo Andric  
Thomas Gwynn Jones  
David Gascoyne
- 11 October: Francois Mauriac  
al-Akhtal (birth date not known)
- 12 October: James McAuley
- 13 October: ‘John O’Brien’ (Patrick Joseph Hartigan)  
Ahmad Shauqi (d)  
Ahmad Shawqi
- 14 October: Reginald Arkell  
e.e. cummings  
Erik Johan Stagnelius

\*

I remember from my childhood a poem which I thought was by Will Ogilvie and which I thought went “Henry! Henry! The bees! The bees, are swarming in the apple trees!” but my brother found the book among my mother’s things and sent it on to me and I found I had mis-remembered the poem, the author, and the book.

It actually came in Reginald Arkell’s *Green Fingers Again* and goes:  
“Emily! Mary! The bees—the bees—

Have started to swarm in the apple trees.

“Dorothy! Marjorie! Mary Ann!  
Run for Henry, the handyman!

“Close the windows and shut them fast—”  
But when old Henry arrived at last;

And when old Henry observed they bees  
Buzzing about in them apple trees:

“Not me,” said Henry, the handy man;  
As he took to his heels and away he ran.

‘The Swarm’

Most of his poems were like this. Gently humorous.

The gardener—that son of toil—  
Unlike a kettle on the boil,  
Or something in the oven cooking—  
Will only work when you are looking.

‘What a Libel!’

The gardener’s boys had worked from dawn,  
Pulling the plantains on the lawn.  
Each root seemed longer than the last,  
And one was saying, as I passed:  
“Orstralia! That’s the country, Joe,  
Where all these plantains start to grow.”

‘Geography’

She stood beneath the trees and smiled:  
“Darling, of course, we’ll keep it wild.  
It would be wrong to interfere.  
Nature must still be mistress here.

“Darling, I’ve *always* had in mind  
A wilderness, where we shall find  
The first wild blossoms of the Spring—  
Darling, we mustn’t touch a *thing*.”

Whereat, she donned her gardening kit,  
And, when we’d “cleared things up a bit,”  
Our Wilderness had grown so tame,  
That foxgloves hung their heads in shame.

‘Wilderness’

The teacher stroked his curly head;  
“Poor little Londoner,” she said.  
“How this must thrill him to the core;  
He hasn’t seen a flower before.

“Come, little Londoner, with me,

And we shall see what we shall see:  
A crocus and a snowdrop white;  
A bluebell and an aconite.

“Come, little Londoner; we two  
Will pick a posy strange and new;  
We’ll climb the everlasting hills  
And dance among the daffodils.”

The urchin shook his curly head:  
“Someone’s been kidding you,” he said,  
“The flowers we find in Piccadilly,  
Would knock your blinking bluebells silly.”  
‘Evacuee’

And, occasionally, in more serious vein:  
The world is dead  
Strangled in winter’s icy group:  
And, overhead,  
Like the sails of a great, ghost ship  
Snow-clouds come crowding...  
*But, through those skeletons that once were trees,  
He hears the drowsy hum of tired bees.*

Skeleton trees,  
Set in a ghostly world of white:  
And tired bees  
In that sweet, soft Australian night,  
Drowsily humming.  
*So, for one exile, half a world away,  
The golden wattle gilds a Christmas Day.*  
‘Australian Soldier’

Reginald Arkell 1882 - 1959, born in England, made no pretence of being  
more than a purveyor of light verse, light fiction, light comedy, writing:

One poet’s song goes blazing by  
Like Neon lights against the sky,  
And glittering phrases dance and gleam  
Around the rhythm of his dream...

Another poet, you will find,  
Writes verses of a homelier kind;  
Telling how Miss Lætitia Brown  
Planted her parsnips upside down;  
How peaches, apricots and pears  
All have their little love-affairs,  
And how a lady was so pure  
She couldn’t say the word manure...

One bears the torch—

One trims the humble wick:  
You pay your penny,  
And you take your pick.

And in the serendipitous way that things happen I'd just finished that book when I found Arkell's —*And a Green Thumb* in an op-shop. So here are a couple more:

*In any garden,  
You will find  
A message, meet  
For all mankind:*

If men would rise  
As early as the lark,  
And go to bed  
As soon as it was dark ...

If men would sit  
Upon a branch each day,  
And sing to you—  
From half a mile away ...

If men would be  
As temperate as the rose;  
One drink a day—  
Out of a garden hose ...

*Of course, I'm talking  
Through my hat.  
Men couldn't be  
As nice as that.*  
'Object Lesson'

Like poppies in the golden corn,  
The poet's race is run:  
Each strives in vain to reach the ear;  
The poppy, from the sun,  
Borrows more radiance than gold—  
A poet's much the same, I'm told.

But still this difference appears,  
When everything is said:  
The poet's leaves, one often fears,  
Are very seldom read;  
The poppy borrows from the sun—  
A poet will from anyone.  
'Poppy and Poet'

\*

15 October: Virgil

Mikhail Lermontov  
Alberto Lista  
16 October: Oscar Wilde  
Cleanth Brooks  
Albrecht von Haller  
Cecco D'Ascoli (d)  
17 October: Les Murray  
Sir John Morris-Jones  
18 October: Thomas Love Peacock  
19 October: Adam Lindsay Gordon  
Leigh Hunt  
Miguel Asturias

\*

Adam Lindsay Gordon is credited with that calumny that Australian birds are songless and Australian flowers scentless. This is odd. After all he did not live in the centre of Sydney or down by the docks. He spent years in the bush. He could not have avoided hearing magpies and butcher birds singing. Nor could he have ridden past a wattle in bloom without smelling the rich fragrance. No one has ever suggested he was either deaf or had no sense of smell. So I think something else is behind such a statement.

He suffered severely from depression, so severely that he eventually took his own life. Did he rather feel that life had become such a grey grim business that he was deaf to its beauty, its birdsong, its fragrance, its colours? What he had once enjoyed had closed and shut him away in a world without anything capable of lifting him from his sense of bleak despair? Or was he quoting someone else with the plan to refute such a statement?

\*

20 October: Arthur Rimbaud  
Giovanni Rucellai  
21: October: Samuel Taylor Coleridge  
Alphonse de Lamartine  
22 October: James Truslow Adams  
Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle  
23 October: Robert Bridges  
Douglas Dunn  
24 October: Denise Levertov  
August Platen-Hallermunde

\*

“Insofar as poetry has a social function, it is to awaken sleepers by means other than shock.”  
Denise Levertov.

\*

25 October: Geoffrey Chaucer (d)  
John Berryman  
Jean Charbonneau (d)  
26 October: Andrew Motion  
Caedmon (birth date not known)  
27 October: Sylvia Plath  
Dylan Thomas  
James Macpherson  
28 October: Judith Thurman

Takuboku Ishikawa

29 October: John Keats

\*

After my friend Poppy Lopatniuk died her daughter gave me some of her books. One of these was a massive tome, 900+ pages, *Poetical Works of Keats & Shelley*. She was about fourteen at the time it was given to her as a school prize in 1941, donated by the Launceston Gas Company. Did she rush to read such pieces as ‘Otho the Great’ or ‘Prometheus Unbound’ or was it placed prominently on a shelf for visitors to admire? But the thing which immediately struck me was that *no one* would donate such a prize to a schoolchild now. This is understandable and yet—are we short-changing our young people by assuming they couldn’t read/wouldn’t want to read/or would be annoyed or disappointed if given such a prize?

\*

30 October: Paul Valéry

Ezra Pound

31 October: John Evelyn

Christopher Anstey

1 November: Christopher Brennan

Johan Grieg

Sakutaro Hagiwara

Georg Philipp Harsdörfer

2 November: Odysseus Elytis

3 November: Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal (Kath Walker)

William Cullen Bryant

Andréas Kálvos (d)

4 November: Guillaume de Machaut (birth date not known)

Eduard Bagritsky

5 November: James Elroy Flecker

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Gig Ryan

6 November: Cibber Colley

Vuk Stefanovic Kardžić

Johannes Jørgensen

7: November: Cecilia Miereles

8 November: Fred Cogswell

Keith Sinclair

Teofilio Folengo

Sadkichi Hartmann

9 November: Roger McGough

Mark Akenside

10 November: Karl Shapiro

Oliver Goldsmith

Friedrich Schiller

José Hernández

Patrick Henry Pearse

Olaf Bull

11 November: Hallgrimur Pétursson (birth date not known)

Bernardo Tasso

12 November: Amelia Opie

13 November: Robert Louis Stevenson  
Esaias Tegnér  
14 November: Norman MacCaig  
Kanik Orhan Veli  
15: November: William Cowper  
Charlotte Mew  
16 November: Karel Mácha  
Aleksandr Blok  
17 November: Petko Rachev Slaveykov  
18 November: Margaret Atwood  
Johannes Ewald  
Robyn Mathison

\*

I had never heard Margaret Atwood referred to as a poet so when I saw her book *The Circle Game* in the library I was curious. And when I opened it up and saw a whole list of her poetry books, another fourteen of them, I wondered why no one seemed to have ever mentioned them. Were they something she tossed off as light relief and didn't expect readers to take them seriously? It seems not.

But they are curious—in that she uses brackets, and brackets within brackets, all through her poems. Suzanne Buffam, introducing the book, writes, “Atwood, as readers of this book will quickly see for themselves, is a philosopher of the parenthetical.” I can remember a publisher warning writers against the use of brackets and ever since then I have used them very sparingly. But Atwood is very famous so I am sure no publisher would intimate to her that brackets are a sign of poor writing. And the way she uses them *is* interesting. Just a taste ...

(and in front of me the man  
standing in a white room  
three flights up, a razor  
(or is the evening  
a razor) poised in his hand  
considering  
what it is for)

from ‘Evening Trainstation, Before Departure’

(a wasp comes,  
drawn by the piece of sandwich  
left on the nearby beach  
(how carefully you do  
such details);  
one of the children flinches  
but won't let go)

from ‘The Circle Game’

but they will be surprised  
(we can't see them yet;  
we know they must be  
coming, because they always come  
several minutes too late)

(they won't be able  
to tell how long

we were cast away, or why,  
or, from these  
gnawed bones,  
which was the survivor)

at the two skeletons  
from 'The Explorers'

\*

- 19 November: Joanne Kyger  
Thomas Shadwell (d)  
Allen Tate
- 20 November: Thomas Chatterton
- 21 November: Mahmud Shabestari (birth date not known)  
James Hogg (d)
- 22 November: George Gissing
- 23 November: Billie Livingston  
Christopher Logue  
James Thomson
- 24 November: Bjarni Vigfússon Thorarensen (exact date not known)
- 25 November: Lope de Vega  
Gary Hyland  
Harvey Granville-Barker
- 26 November: William Cowper
- 27 November: Luis Bérnardo Honwana (exact date in November not known)  
Fanny Kemble
- 28 November: William Blake  
Randolph Stow
- 29 November: W. S. Gilbert  
Andres Bello
- 30 November: Sir Philip Sydney  
Thomas Arnold  
Jonathon Swift  
Louise-Victorine Ackermann
- 1 December: Samuel Mqhayi  
Peggy Pond Church

\*

While I was reading a fascinating book called *The Woman Who Smashed Codes* by Jason Fagone, about code-breakers Elizebeth and William Friedman, I came upon this endnote: "All her life, Elizebeth wrote and typed copies of her favorite poems and kept them, including "Patterns" by Amy Lowell, about a young woman whose lover is killed in the First World War, and "Ultimatum for Man," a 1940 poem by Peggy Pond Church, a pacifist poet and schoolteacher in New Mexico whose land was taken by the government to build the Los Alamos facility for nuclear-weapons research."

I had not heard of Church so I went looking for her poems and bought her book *Familiar Journey*.

Peter Dechert wrote, "Peggy's father, Ashley Pond Jr., started a guest ranch on the Pajarito Plateau about 1912; in 1917 he founded what was at first a sort of recuperation facility, largely for boys from the east who had become ill; this facility had developed into the Ranch School twenty-

two years before I arrived in 1939. Thus, as a youngster, Peggy spent formative years in the mesa and mountain country on the Plateau; she quickly grew to love it. And she explored it thoroughly both then and later, on horseback, on foot, climbing—and no doubt sometimes falling.”

She married Fermor Church who came to teach at the school. Together they had three sons. But, in the words of Geoff Gorman, “In 1942 Peggy Pond Church found herself at the center of two worlds changing. The Old West outpost of Los Alamos where she had grown up was suddenly taken over by the United States government for the Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb. Her coming down from the mesas and canyons of the formerly unknown village on Pajarito Plateau was a journey that took the rest of her life.”

“Although Los Alamos was a small town, it saw more and more visitors as the 1940s approach[ed]. One sojourner, Edith Warner, eventually became a permanent resident. She lived several miles south of the town alongside the Rio Grande, in the small house that served as a train station and later as a teahouse serving many of the scientists and their families during the war years ... “It was Edith Warner in her little house by the bridge on the road to Los Alamos who saw it all happen,” Church wrote, referring to the changes brought by the government scientists, in “The House at Otowi Bridge,” which has become a Southwestern classic.

“These changes were visited suddenly on the remote village of fewer than 200 inhabitants. In December 1942, a year after the United States entered World War II, Church and her family were informed that the school and their homes were being taken over by the government in order to carry out a highly secret wartime project. Only 2 ½ years later, the Manhattan Project, under the direction of J. Robert Oppenheimer, would succeed with the world’s first nuclear explosion at Trinity, a site in southern New Mexico. Weeks later atomic bombs would be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.

“At the time, because her husband was a physics teacher Church suspected the nature of the scientific work being carried out by the government. But for her, immediately, it was an expulsion from paradise. And it forced her and her family to move to Taos, then to California, and finally again to Taos ... In 1960 the family settled in Santa Fe.

“The knowledge of what Los Alamos had turned into haunted Church for the rest of her life, her sister commented. Church first expressed her outrage at the bomb in “Ultimatum for Man,” a book of poetry published in 1946. However, as the years passed her outlook mellowed. After writing “The House at Otowi Bridge,” she turned to writing about life, love and fate, often expressing her themes by drawing images from nature.”

Dechert said of her poetry: “Reading Peggy’s poems today, we realize that we are immediately, even intimately, in touch with Peggy herself. In a very real sense, Peggy’s poems were, and still are, Peggy. We discover Peggy through them. They were created out of her convictions, convictions that she was able to translate into meaningful words, phrases, sentences: entities. Created, too, out of her emotions. She had no hesitation when it came to tackling difficult subjects, nor any fear of facing her subject matter head-on. And once she had made her poem, no reader could doubt that he had been spoken to by a real person, wholly involved.” He goes on to say, “She often saw totality. The poems in the second part of *Familiar Journey* are superb, to choose just one set of examples from amongst them all. And through these transparent poems, we see Peggy herself, a lyric poet of subtle nobility.”

What does a woman think of  
sitting at her window in the quiet hour,  
the sad hour of evening, the hour of the yellow  
leaves falling,



bread into wine,  
wine into god,  
everything at last into love.

‘Alchemy’

Back and forth on the same road  
and the same hills.  
I and the seasons going back and forth  
on the same road; the orchards blossoming,  
ripening their fruit, and the harvest gathered.  
A new house is built and an old one  
crumbles. In the late nights  
one window is sometimes lighted.  
Who watches in silence  
while an old man dies or a child is being born?  
I and the stars go past  
again and again on the same road.

The dark nights and the bright ones,  
the summer days  
with the clouds blossoming above the mountains,  
tremendous flowers, white, and sheathed in purple  
like the flowers of yucca;  
and the meadow larks  
with a song as cool as the fields of green alfalfa;  
the cottonwood tree  
at the curve of the ditch near Pojuaque  
where the old men sit all day  
and the young girls at night with their lovers,  
the old tree that remembers  
more than the oldest man in that village remembers  
and that dies slowly now, withdrawing its shadow  
a little every year.

And the luminous valley  
where nothing grows but color,  
blues, lavenders, violets,  
and all the shades of rose seen in a sunset;  
the long bluff like a wave,  
a wave the color of a cloud at sunset,  
a wave that never breaks,  
transfixed forever at the moment of its breaking,  
and the sharp spires like the bending crest of the wave;  
the hills that go naked always to the sun,  
naked to starlight,  
clothing themselves in no shadow,  
the remnants of ancient valleys,  
fragments of canyon walls the wind and weather  
have not destroyed yet,

secret valleys  
only the sun and the wind know.

I going back and forth on the same road  
as if it were another body that contained me:  
and the great storms, the afternoons of sunlight,  
the dark nights,  
the mountains that are a flame on one horizon,  
and the mountains like a blue, an incandescent shadow  
rimming the west;

Familiar journey,  
and the years of a life,  
the happenings of a life  
along this road like remembered hills,  
like the valleys.

‘Familiar Journey’

\*

2 December: Fernando de Herrera (birthdate not known)

Namik Kemal

3 December: Ludvig Holberg

4 December: Rainer Maria Rilke

Alexander Hume (d)

\*

A young poet sent some of his verses to Rainer Maria Rilke and asked him whether he thought they were any good and whether he should go on writing. Rilke replied:

“You ask me whether your verses are good ... You have asked others before. You send them to magazines. You compare them with other poems, and you are disturbed when certain editors reject your efforts. Now ... I beg of you to give up all that. You are looking outward and that above all you should not do now. Nobody can counsel and help you. Nobody. There is only one single way. Go into yourself. Search for the reason that bids you write; find out whether it is spreading out its roots in the deepest places of your heart, acknowledge to yourself whether you would have to die if it were denied you to write. This above all — ask yourself in the stillest hour of your night: *must* I write? Delve into yourself for a deep answer. And if this should be affirmative, if you may meet this earnest question with a strong and simple ‘*I must*’, then build your life according to this necessity; your life even into its most indifferent and slightest hour must be a sign of this urge and a testimony to it ...

Perhaps it will turn out that you are called upon to be an artist. Then take that destiny upon you and bear it, its burden and its greatness, without ever asking what recompense might come from outside. For the creator must be a world for himself and find everything in himself and in Nature to whom he has attached himself.”

“To Rilke himself the *Sonnets to Orpheus* were “perhaps the most mysterious...in the way they came up and entrusted themselves to me, the most enigmatic dictation I have ever held through and achieved; the whole first part was written down in a single breathless act of obedience, between the 2nd and 5th of February, without one word being doubtful or having to be changed. And this at a time when I had prepared myself for another big work and was already busy with that too. How

should one not increase in reverence and infinite gratitude over such experiences in one's own existence?" "

M. D. Herter Norton introducing the *Sonnets*.

When words come pouring forth, not needing to be doubted or changed, it is easy to believe in a 'calling'. It is when each word seems like a boulder to be pushed uphill that doubts about a 'calling' start to creep in. Yet it is rarely easy to distinguish one kind of end result from another.

So here is just one of those Sonnets:

Euch, die ihr nie mein Gefühl verliesst,  
grüss ich, antikische Sarkophage,  
die das fröhliche Wasser römischer Tage  
als ein wandelndes Lied durchfließt.

Oder jene so offenen, wie das Aug  
eines frohen erwachenden Hirten,  
—innen voll Stille und Bienensaug—  
denen entzückte Falter entschwirren;

alle, die man dem Zweifel entreißt,  
grüss ich, die wiedergeöffneten Munde,  
die schon wussten, was schweigen heißt.

Wissen wirs, Freunde, wissen wirs nicht?  
Beides bildet die zögernde Stunde  
in dem menschlichen Angesicht.

You, who have never left my feeling,  
I greet, antique sarcophagi,  
whom the happy waters of Roman days  
flow through as a wandering song.

Or those so open, like the eyes  
of a happy awakening shepherd,  
—full of stillness within and bee-balm—  
whence flittered enchanted butterflies;

all those whom one wrests from doubt  
I greet, the mouths once again opened  
that already knew what silence means.

Do we know it, friends, do we not know it?  
These two mold the hesitant hour  
in the countenance of man.

(Sonnet 10)

\*

5 December: Christina Rossetti

6 December: Evelyn Underhill

R. H. Barham

Sylvia Townsend Warner

Birger Sjöberg

Alfred Joyce Kilmer  
 7 December: Willa Cather  
 Judah Gordon  
 8 December: Padraic Colum  
 Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus)  
 Delmore Schwartz  
 Björnstjerne Björnson  
 Lady Anne Barnard  
 9 December: John Milton  
 Sa'di (Mosharret od-din) (d)

\*

Edith Sitwell in *The English Eccentrics* writes what she says is, “the history of the bones of one John Milton, who was paid the sum of £20 for the poem *Paradise Lost*, who was ‘not in affluence, expired in an emaciated state, in a cold month’, or, alternatively, it may be the history of the bones of the youngest Miss Smith.” Milton was buried in St Giles, Cripplegate, but supposed relics from his tomb later circulated. Cowper wrote a poem when shown what was said to be one of Milton’s rib bones ‘*On the late indecent Liberties taken with the remains of the great Milton*’ in which he wrote:

Who then but must conceive disdain,  
 Hearing the deed unblest,  
 Of wretches who have dared profane  
 His dread sepulchral rest?

Ill fare the hands that heaved the stones  
 Where Milton’s ashes lay,  
 That trembled not to grasp his bones  
 And steal his dust away!

Leigh Hunt had what he believed was a lock of Milton’s hair and wrote sonnets to it. But how did people come by these relics? By rifling his tomb. Milton was buried in 1674 but when the church was later being renovated what was believed to be Milton’s coffin was disinterred and opened. It had no plaque but people began to take bits; locks of his hair were cut, a rib removed, other bones were taken out then thrown back, teeth were taken (at least a hundred of Milton’s supposed teeth were later sold), the grave-digger Elizabeth Grant charged people sixpence to come and look at Milton in his coffin (and those who refused to pay sneaked in through the windows). After tearing his shroud to pieces and removing his “lower jaw, ribs, and right hand” the coffin was re-interred.

But there was strong evidence to show that the coffin rifled was that of a Miss Smith, her family traditionally being buried there. The teeth taken were white and small, the locks of hair dark with no sign of grey, the body having been placed there much more recently. So it was obviously a completely mistaken identification. But the whole story is depressing that a tomb could be treated with such disrespect, regardless of who lay there, and that people could hand round a rib bone as a conversation piece. Milton eventually got a bust but poor Miss Smith does not seem to have got anything and who knows what happened to her teeth and ribs and hair?

\*

10 December: George Macdonald  
 William Plomer  
 Nikolay Nekrason

Tatyana Mamonova  
 Battista Guarini  
 11 December: Birago Diop  
 Girolamo Benivieni (birth date not known)  
 12 December: Oliver La Farge  
 Mary Russell Mitford  
 Anna Seward  
 Nikolay Karamzin  
 13 December: Heinrich Heine  
 Dulcie Deamer  
 Kenneth Patchen  
 Valery Bryusov  
 14 December: Justus Moser  
 Jan van Hout  
 15 December: Lady Anne Blunt (d)  
 Philips van Marnix  
 Klaus Rifjberg  
 Thomas Kingo  
 Hans Carossa

\*

John Costello wrote *Mask of Treachery* about Soviet spy Sir Anthony Blunt. There were three Blunt boys, Wilfrid, Christopher, and Anthony, and their mother who had been Hilda Masters “was a second cousin of the Earl of Strathmore, whose daughter, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, became the consort of King George VI and mother of Queen Elizabeth II.”

Costello also writes, “Burke’s Landed Gentry, the indispensable guide to England’s leading families, listed the Reverend Blunt and his heirs until 1922. But then they were dropped because their closest aristocratic relative was judged “politically and morally unsound.” He was the Victorian poet, diplomat, and adventurer Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. A kind of latter-day Lord Byron, Scawen Blunt had devoted his life to writing passionate verse and martyring his popularity to a campaign for Irish, Indian, and Egyptian independence. But it was his seductions of titled ladies that really scandalized Victorian society. According to Wilfrid, his parents never once mentioned the family’s second cousin whose name he bore.”

(It was the Queen Mother’s cousin Sir Anthony Blunt who was ‘outed’ as a Soviet spy. But more nearly related to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt was another scandalous figure, Lord Alfred ‘Bosie’ Douglas, who had cavorted with Oscar Wilde.)

“Cairo and the trip up the Nile were equally classic. They lunched with Lord Kitchener, danced at Lord Cromer’s, went to see *Aida* at the opera and watched a review of the Black Watch on the polo grounds. There are long lists of other English visitors and descriptions of *toilettes*, but now and then Victoria made observations that were fresh and intelligent; not very original, but she was beginning to be struck by things and by people that the girl of four years before would not have mentioned. She even embarked on politics and described how exciting it was when the eighteen-year-old Khedive chose a minister of whom the British Government did not approve. The next day the Khedive caved in and the crisis was over, so the Sackville-Wests were able to fulfil an engagement to go into the desert to visit the Blunts. This was a long and exhausting day, but Victoria describes it with more gusto than she does any expedition undertaken during the three-month trip. It was interesting that she did so. The Blunts were the first intellectuals to have appealed to her, and very different from the English she had met in Cairo. Wilfrid Blunt was an anti-

imperialist, almost unique for his race and his class. Very pro-Arab, he was a famous traveller, writer, and scholar.”

From *Lady Sackville* by Susan Mary Alsop.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt was born into a comfortable family in Sussex. Elizabeth Longford wrote a biography she called *A Pilgrimage of Passion* though passion was distinctly lacking during his mediocre school days and life as a minor diplomat. It was during his posting to Portugal that he began more seriously to write poetry under the encouragement of Edward, Bulwer Lytton's son, who said of him: “It is a thousand pities for B. is a very dear and very lovable creature – but as wild as a hawk, being reckless and rather selfish, and I fear he is born to get himself into trouble by pleasing himself too unconditionally on every occasion.” His family and relatives urged him to marry thinking it would settle him down so he married Lady Anne while he was in love with someone else; she being a step up both socially and financially.

I actually found Wilfrid's wife Lady Anne more interesting. She was a daughter of brilliant mathematician Ada Lovelace King and granddaughter of Lord Byron and Annabella Millbanke and she had traveled widely in Europe and the Middle East before (and after) her marriage. She spoke French, German, Italian, Spanish and Arabic. She was also said to be “a skilled violinist and a gifted artist”. But it was her knowledge of horses which brought her into my life as a child. My aunt had a book about the Crabbet Park Arabians and I liked looking at the pictures of the beautiful horses. Lady Anne traveled widely in the Middle East, sometimes with and sometimes without her husband, seeking out the purest bloodlines, the horses with the best conformation and temperament, to buy. Unfortunately her husband's plans and wishes sometimes prevailed leading to some unfortunate results as he knew less about horses and his belief her horses should live a life similar to their life “in the desert” might have sounded romantic but, allegedly, led to the death of some wonderful horses from neglect, starvation, and exposure.

Of their four children only a daughter Judith survived and like Henry VIII Wilfrid wasn't backward in letting his wife know he would have preferred a son. “I never neglected her, not only through a duty of affection but through my desire of a son and heir, always a strong instinct in me and made stronger now by the mere prospect of my becoming the head of our house in Sussex.” This made him encourage Judith to behave like a boy in her childhood.

But it was his constant womanising which finally got too much for Lady Anne. Though she pretended not to notice she was deeply hurt. It was not so much the women themselves but the fact that he was spending her money on them. When he moved his young mistress Dorothy into their home, calling her his niece rather than risk a divorce, she finally left him and Crabbet Park and went to live on the Arabian stud she had established in Egypt, dying there in 1917. Blunt had shared his infidelities with the young Judith not only shocking her but turning her into a fierce partisan of her mother. He compounded the estrangement by pressuring Judith into marriage with a man she didn't love.

A great many modern Arab bloodlines owe their origin to the horses Lady Anne chose with such care. But even if she had done nothing to establish the Arab horse as a distinct and beautiful breed she would still deserve to be remembered for her travels in remote places, sometimes as a lone woman, and always under the difficulties that came with being a woman in the Victorian era, and which led to her books *The Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates* and *A Pilgrimage to Nejd*. Her daughter wrote *The Authentic Arabian* but I think it was a later book *The Crabbet Park Arabian Stud* by R. Archer, C. Pearson and C. Covey which my aunt had.

Longford wrote, “Blunt thought in terms of secrets. He published a *Secret History of Egypt*, and referred to his other historical works, on Gordon in Khartoum, Ireland and India as ‘my secret histories’. By this he meant that they revealed secrets which had been kept from the public but ought to be known.

“His personal memoirs were ‘secret’ in a different sense. Too valuable to be destroyed, he knew they were too hot for immediate publication. He never considered the story of his life as a paradigm of virtue or success. But it was the truth about eighty years of social history, through the eyes of a brilliant eccentric.”

His lines: ‘Their poets who write big of the ‘White Burden’. Trash!

The White Man’s Burden, Lord, is the burden of his cash’ (in ‘Satan Absolved: a Victorian Mystery’) was widely quoted. He turned to prose to write *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* in which he recounts the behind-the-scenes manoueuvering of the British Government in a country that was nominally under Ottoman rule but also subject to French influence (and more so with the French building the Suez Canal) but whether he was always correct I cannot say. He draws heavily on documents and correspondence of the time and he finishes his book with: “What the future may bring to Egypt I know not. She has grown rich under English tutelage, and though I do not consider riches synonymous with the well being of a nation, they have been in Egypt of at least this value, that they have enabled the native Nile population so far to hold its own against foreign intrusion as owner of the soil. While this is, the Nation will remain alive, and the day may yet come for the fellah race when self-government will be restored to them, and the armed struggle of 1882 will appear to them in its true light as the beginning of their national life, and one, as such, glorious in their annals.”

It is hard to know how effective he was as an ‘activist’ on liberation issues. He wanted his liberation heroes to be ‘pure’ in their motivations, he was confused in his political allegiances (looking to Tories, Liberals, even socialists to help him find a seat in Parliament to press for Home Rule in Ireland but failing to get a seat), he was at times bedeviled by caring for the poor en masse but not actually wanting to mix with them. He wrote, “I find myself falling in to the same ways in politics that I did in love. The Arabs were my first love and I loved them passionately, but it was of no avail....Since then I have wandered from love to love. Ardent for a while and then weary and always failing a little of my happiness.” But he did undoubtedly help to raise issues in the public sphere.

His poetry always came a poor third behind his love life and his public espousal of causes which may explain why he is rarely mentioned in the same breath as the nineteenth-century heavyweights. His best-known poem is probably his long saga ‘The Wind and the Whirlwind’ written while he was having a short affair with Lady Gregory and published in 1883. It begins:

I have a thing to say. But how to say it?  
I have a cause to plead. But to what ears?  
How shall I move a world by lamentation—  
A world which heeded not a Nation’s tears?

How shall I speak of justice to the aggressor,—  
Of rights to Kings whose rights include all wrong,—  
Of truth to Statecraft, true but in deceiving,—  
Of peace to Prelates, pity to the Strong?

Where shall I find a hearing? In high places?  
The voice of havock drowns the voice of good.  
On the throne’s steps? The elders of the nation

Rise in their ranks and call aloud for blood.

Where? In the street? Alas for the world's reason!  
Not Peers not Priests alone this deed have done.  
The clothes of these high Hebrews stoning Stephen  
Were held by all of us,—ay every one.

Yet none the less I speak. Nay, here by Heaven  
This task at least a poet best may do,—  
To stand alone against the mighty many,  
To force a hearing for the weak and few.

with: Egypt was the main focus of the poem but he ranges quite widely. He ends it

Therefore I do not grieve. Oh hear me, Egypt!  
Even in death thou art not wholly dead.  
And hear me, England! Nay. Thou needs must hear me.  
I had a thing to say. And it is said.

\*

16 December: Noel Coward

George Santayana  
Louis-Honoré Frechette

17 December: John Greenleaf Whittier

Ignacy Krasicki

18 December: Francis Thompson

Charles Wesley

19 December: F. S. Flint

Matteo Maria Boiardo (d)  
Manuel Breton de los Herreros

20 December: Gérald-Félix Tchicaya U Tam'si (birth date not known)

21 December: Heinrich Böll

Ludwig Hölty  
Gustave Kahn

22 December: Edward Arlington Robinson

Kenneth Rexroth  
Filippo Marinetti  
Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera

23 December: Robert Bly

Harriet Monroe  
Martin Opitz

24 December: Matthew Arnold

George Crabbe  
Juan Ramón Jiménez

25 December: Christmas

Christian Hofmann Hofmannswaldau  
Lady Grizel Baillie

\*

“Christmas, they say, should be white, with the holly growing

Scarlet and green against the sleeping garden,  
And the snow falling, falling, mantling the eaves and wrapping  
Each hearth in its magic circle of home.

So they dreamed of home, the expatriates, lonely, not knowing  
That they carried in their hearts not snow, nor robins, nor holly,  
But the age old wish for belonging.

Ours is a golden Christmas, cicadas shrilling,  
Golden and blue, with the long waves rolling, rolling,  
The still grey trees of the bush in the noonday silence,  
The blistered roads of the city, the blue hydrangea  
Bright in the sun around the suburban portals.

And this is the dream that our children's children will carry,  
For Christmas lives in the heart, and this is our own.  
'Christmas, they say' by Dorothy Drain.

\*

26 December: Thomas Gray  
Mao Tse-Tung  
Ernst Moritz Arndt

27 December: Charles Olson  
Mirza Ghalib

28 December: John Gower (birth date not known)

29 December: Antoine Saint-Amant (d)

30 December: Rudyard Kipling  
Nizami (birth date not known)

31 December: Norreys Jephson O'Connor  
Horace Smith  
William Gifford (d)

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# A BOOK OF FORGOTTEN BOOKS

# INTRODUCTION

Lost, forgotten, unfinished, re-used, burnt, banned, cannibalised, set aside, I suspect many writers have something in one or more of these categories. The lost manuscript, something accidentally wiped, something set aside and not returned to, something unfinished at death or when dementia intervenes. And then the literary world is suddenly set ablaze with claims that a Shakespearian sonnet has been discovered in an attic or Jane Austen gave a family friend a short story and it has mouldered for centuries among some estate papers or Henry Lawson had a secret love child who left several ballads in with a box of apparent junk. The hopes are endless.

I always have mixed feelings when something is brought out and published. Was the reason it wasn't published in an author's lifetime simply because they didn't want it published? It needed more work, they had lost interest, there were inaccuracies, they simply didn't believe it was good enough ...

Someone else finished Jane Austen's incomplete novel *Sanditon*, likewise Charles Dickens' *Edwin Drood*, whereas J.G. Farrell's unfinished novel *The Hill Station* was published as is. Other unfinished or set aside works have been found in writer's leavings and left as part of their archive. Perhaps it explains why some writers have asked that everything be burnt, such as Kafka, after their death. But I always feel that that shifts the burden to someone else who may not want everything burnt. If you would be embarrassed to have something published after your death, or even read, now is surely the time to burn or recycle it.

At times a book which made a big splash in one decade is completely forgotten in the next. Readers in different times and places simply aren't interested. Maybe a book was beautifully written but is now seen as 'old-fashioned' or overly sentimental or too dependent on coincidences. Though, curiously, it seems no book gets set aside because it was 'too violent' for current readers.

## A BOOK OF FORGOTTEN BOOKS

### A IS FOR ANON:

Griff Rhys Jones introducing British readers' favourite poems, *The Nation's Favourite Poems*, writes, "Outside the competition, the unexpected poetry success of the year from *The Bookworm's* point of view was an anonymous work which featured in a piece on war poetry. 'Do not Stand at my Grave and Weep' was left in an envelope for his parents by Steven Cummins, a soldier killed on active service in Northern Ireland, to be opened in the event of his death. It provoked an extraordinary response. The requests for copies started coming in almost immediately and over the following weeks the demand rose to a total of some thirty thousand. It was thought at first that the soldier himself had written it, but this was not the case. Claims were made for nineteenth century magazines and the prayers of Navaho Indian priests, but in the end its origins remain a mystery. In some respects it became the nation's favourite poem by proxy and, despite it being outside the competition, we have decided to include it here, in prime, first past the post, poll position."

DO NOT STAND AT MY GRAVE AND WEEP

— \* —

Do not stand at my grave and weep;  
I am not there. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
I am not there. I did not die.

I thought of Christina Rossetti and I thought of Pauline Johnson. Then I thought 'the book came out in 1986 so maybe since then something has gone up on the internet'. So I went to have a look. And sure enough several authors are posited. But the poet is undoubtedly Clare Harner who published it as a poem 'Immortality' in 1934 in an American magazine called *The Gypsy*. So I hope she will now be given the recognition she deserves.

### **A IS FOR ARCHIMEDES:**

Stephen Hawking wrote in *God Created the Integers* (and I will say up front that the only parts I understood were the biographical details he gives) about Archimedes (287-212 B.C.), "Archimedes is best remembered for jumping out of his bath and running naked through the streets shouting, "Eureka! Eureka!" ("I have found it!"), when he discovered how to distinguish a genuine gold crown from a counterfeit crown." Witold Rybczynski in *One Good Turn* elaborates: "The most famous story told about Archimedes concerns his solution of the so-called wreath problem. Hieron, the king of Syracuse, commissioned a gold wreath as an offering to the gods. He provided gold to the jeweler, who in due time delivered the finished wreath. Hieron suspected that the gold had been diluted with silver, but could not prove it. The wreath was a consecrated object and could not be tampered with, so a chemical assay was out of the question. Since the goldsmith refused to confess, the king turned to Archimedes. The mathematician pondered the matter and devised a simple experiment. He weighed the wreath, and immersed similar weights of silver and gold in a vessel of water, measuring how much water each displaced. He discovered that silver displaces more water than gold (the specific gravity of silver is almost half that of gold). Since the immersed wreath caused more water to overflow than the equivalent weight of gold, he deduced the presence of silver and proved that the wreath was indeed impure. According to legend, the idea for the water experiment came to Archimedes as he was plunging himself into a tub in a public bath. Seeing the water overflowing triggered something in his mind. "Transported with joy, he jumped out of the tub and rushed home naked," writes Vitruvius, "crying out in a loud voice, '*Heurēka! Heurēka!*' [I've found it! I've found it!]." "

Hawkings goes on, "Less well known is that he devised a test to distinguish the greatest mathematician of antiquity, himself, from imposters. In the Greek world of mathematics, it was common for mathematicians to send out announcements of their newly discovered mathematical theorems without accompanying proofs. When Archimedes suspected others of claiming his results as their own, he inserted into his own announcements two or three propositions that required all of his mathematical talent to demonstrate to be false. When the imposters claimed the false statements as their own newly discovered truths, he exposed them by sending counterexamples.

"We know little of Archimedes' life. The Roman general Marcellus wrote that one of his soldiers killed Archimedes in 212 B.C. during the Second Punic War. Tradition says that he worked at geometry until the very end of his life in his seventy-fifth year, which would place his birth in 287 B.C. Archimedes' father was an astronomer named Phidias who lived and worked in the Greek

city of Syracuse on the island of Sicily. Their family may have been related to the royal house of Syracuse. Archimedes was on intimate terms with King Hieron II.

“Although, like Euclid, we know very little of Archimedes’ life, the comparison ends there. Although Euclid was a compiler who may have achieved little if any new mathematical results on his own, Archimedes was a pioneer, many centuries ahead of his time in both mathematics and engineering. In fact, Archimedes was best known in antiquity for his engineering accomplishments on behalf of the royal house of Syracuse.

“When King Hieron challenged him to move a great weight with a small force, Archimedes conceived the idea of the compound pulley and showed how he could easily pull in to shore a three-masted ship that 100 men could only pull in with much difficulty. According to the ancient Roman biographer Plutarch, it is in connection with this story that Archimedes uttered his famous remark, “Give me a place to stand on, and I will move the earth.”

“Plutarch and other ancient commentators such as Polybius and Livy mention the fantastic ballistic war engines Archimedes devised for the defense of Syracuse against the Roman army led by the general Marcellus.”

“Archimedes could completely immerse himself in a problem and stay unaware of his surroundings. ... His habit of ignoring his surroundings would end up costing him his life. Archimedes’ engineering accomplishments building war engines made him a prime target of the Roman army that invaded Sicily in 287 B.C., during the Second Punic War. Legend records that the Roman soldier found Archimedes drawing figures in the sand. The soldier commanded Archimedes to stop what he was doing and leave immediately. Archimedes asked for more time to work out a problem in the sand. Enraged, the soldier ruined Archimedes’s figures in the sand and ran him through with his sword!”

So how does he connect to lost works? Of course many manuscripts from the ancient world were lost. Sometimes they are mentioned or quoted from in other scholars’ works, sometimes we have fragments. “*The Method* has the most interesting history of all of Archimedes known works. For many centuries, it was only known by an obscure reference made by the tenth-century encyclopediast Suidas, who mentioned a commentary written by Theodosius of Bithynia about a century after Archimedes’ death. Mathematicians were tantalized by the prospect of finding a universal method for finding their results. Descartes, in fact, suspected Archimedes of suppressing *The Method* so that no one else would be able to benefit from it.

“In 1899, the Greek scholar Papadapulos Kerameus reported the discovery of a mathematical palimpsest he had found in a library in Istanbul, Turkey. A palimpsest is an ancient document that has had its original contents washed off so that new contents could be written on it. Upon reading the few lines of the manuscript published by Kerameus, the Danish classics scholar Johan Ludvig Heiberg recognized characteristic Archimedean traits. He suspected that the underlying manuscript must be a work of Archimedes. Heiberg must have been amazed when he examined the palimpsest firsthand. Kerameus had found the long lost treatise, *The Method*, which begins, “Archimedes to Eratosthenes greeting.” The presence of other Archimedean works in the palimpsest only confirmed its authorship.”

Curiously, it is not about finding mathematical proofs but rather about finding mechanical proofs including the principle of the lever. Archimedes had titled it *The Method of Archimedes Treating of Mechanical Problems*.

“The Kerameus-Heiberg palimpsest was originally written in the tenth century. In the thirteenth century, a monk had washed away the original ink so that he could write a book of devotional prayers. The monk must have had no idea of what he had washed away. Nor could he have imagined the palimpsest’s future value. In 1998, Christie’s auction house sold it for two million dollars!”

## **B IS FOR BROUGHTON:**

I had not heard of the The First Novel Library until I came upon a reprint of Rhoda Broughton's novel *Not Wisely, But Too Well*. Other first novels in their program were *Barry Lyndon* by William Thackeray, *Falkland* by Edward Bulwer Lytton and *The Gilded Age* by Mark Twain. Francis King, introducing Broughton's *Not Wisely, But Too Well*, writes: "In 1893 Helen C. Black published her volume of biographical sketches *Notable Women Authors of the Day*. It is a fact perhaps humbling to the notable women writers of the present that of the twenty-six authors of whom she treats, only two—Jean Ingelow and Rhoda Broughton—will be known to any but the most devoted admirer of the Victorian novel. Of these two, the former is remembered not as a novelist but as a gifted, if narrowly limited, poet; and mention of the latter usually evokes no more than the comment 'Ah, yes—*Cometh Up as a Flower* and *Not Wisely, But Too Well*.' Where now is Rosa Nouchette Carey, who declared to Mrs Black: 'My ambition has ever been to try to do good by my books and to write books which any mother can give a girl to read'? Where Lady Duffis Hardy and her daughter Iza, who had the attribute rare in novelists and particularly in women novelists of 'always having a good word to say of everyone'? Where Augusta de Grasse Stevens, who confessed to Mrs Black that her first literary effort had been a sermon on the text 'God is Love'? All these Iris Murdochs, Muriel Sparks and Edna O'Briens of their day have vanished."

Although *Not Wisely, But Too Well* was the first novel Broughton wrote it wasn't the first to be published. Publishers wanted it turned into a three-decker novel, as was the fashion then, and Broughton initially refused, believing it would spoil the story. But she finally gave in and added to the story of a young woman, Kate Chester, who is unlucky in love, falling for a cad, and unable to move on, accept him for the scoundrel he is, and meet a better man. She ends up thinking she might become a nun but her newly married sister persuades her to come and live with them. And the sad thing is: Broughton was quite right, it did spoil the story. Now the reader has to wade through endless waffle, digressions, philosophising, irrelevant details, and the story is lost for long stretches.

Just a taste of one long digression:

"There is a bench running round that rich-dowered room, and on this bench Kate sat down and made herself comfortable, establishing herself in full view of the noblest, most grandly-composed group that ever entered into the heaven-raised imagination of a sculptor to create or his fingers to execute—the Laocoon. What the Australian aborigines—flat-nosed, dwindle-limbed—are to us, such are we to those colourless, lifeless, motionless wonders. Generation after generation of short-spanned living creatures has ripened and rotted, they looking calmly on, superior in their unwithering amaranthine bloom—generation after generation has gaped open-mouthed, awed by their solemn presence—generation after generation will so gaze and stare until the world is overrun with a new deluge of barbarians from the far West, or till it comes to its final ending. That happy man, to whose deathless glory it was granted to fashion the Laocoon, must have had in his mind to excite the envy and shame of puny, feeble after-ages, long after he and his chisel should be dust together; showing them what manner of men there were in the old time, in blue-skied templed Hellas. But then, again, one feels inclined—perhaps from aversion to acknowledge that we have degenerated—to doubt whether those god-faces and Titan-frames could have been copied from any mere flesh-and-blood creature that, while in life, drudged away on the earth and had material blood flowing in his veins. Could such stainless triumphant beauty and might have been ever found in our world, where perfection in anything is proverbially unattainable? Rather must it have been some divine *afflatus* breathed into the fashioner's soul, speaking to him of a flawlessness of outward build such as had never been patent to his bodily eyes. Assuredly the gods must have revealed themselves to him in visions of the night, and even after they vanished have haunted him ceaselessly, driving

him to reproduce in the plastic clay those features and limbs of immortal majesty which before had been graven on the tables of his soul. And yet despite all my reasoning to the contrary, I feel that the father and sons in the Laocoon are men and not gods. In their suffering we recognize their humanity.” And so on.

### **C IS FOR CORY, ANNIE SOPHIE:**

Cathy Newman wrote a book she titled *Bloody Brilliant Women* and subtitled *The Pioneers, Revolutionaries and Geniuses Your History Teacher Forgot to Mention*. This borders on hyperbole, many of the women she mentions achieved something by sheer persistence, but I am sure it encouraged readers to take her book from a library or bookshop shelf. She writes, “Sexually liberated women were rather more sympathetically drawn in the popular novels of the day. One of the most widely read was *Anna Lombard* (1901) by ‘Victoria Cross’ – a *nom de plume* used by Annie Sophie Cory, the Indian-born daughter of a British army colonel.

“It was the *Fifty Shades of Grey* of its day, selling an estimated six million copies, running through more than thirty editions and remaining in print until 1930, after which it mysteriously vanished from the nation’s book shops and shelves. On publication it was denounced by critics as ‘disgusting’ (*Athenaeum*) and ‘thoroughly impure’ (*Academy*) because its eponymous New Woman heroine, while engaged to be married to an assistant commissioner in the Indian Civil Service called Gerald Ethridge, sleeps with and then marries her servant Gaida.

“Gerald finds himself in a quandary. Should he abandon Anna or persist with the engagement in the hope that she will come to her senses and overcome the physical obsession for which, Gerald concedes with extraordinary post-feminist empathy, she is ‘no more to be held responsible than she would have been for any physical malady’?

“Adultery, interracial sex, infanticide ... Cory took every Victorian taboo she could think of and moulded a bestselling novel out of them, complete with prose which cleverly (or not so cleverly, depending on your viewpoint) displaces onto the natural world the sex it would have been illegal for her to describe: ‘The purple sky above was throbbing, beating, palpitating ... What a night for the registration or the consummation of vows!’

“Just as intriguing was Cory’s switching of gender roles – so that it is Anna who is the sexual adventurer and Gerald who nurtures and abstains. One contemporary reviewer who appreciated this was the journalist W.T. Stead, friend of Annie Besant, who wrote: ‘Never before in English fiction can I remember so clearly cut a representation of an embodiment in a woman of what, alas!, is common enough in a man’”.

I don’t think Newman was suggesting that Cory was a genius or even that history teachers should have brought her in to their lectures. She goes on, “The cultural reign of the New Woman was long – from the early 1890s to 1911, though establishment newspapers tired of her early: ‘Shall we never have done with the New Woman?’ asked *The Times*” although going by more recent bestsellers it seems that adultery, if not the New Woman, has never gone out of fashion.

### **D IS FOR DICK, PHILIP K:**

I had always thought of Dick as a sci-fi writer, a very good one, but the other day I came across his mainstream novel *Puttering about in a Small Land*. A Californian couple are sending their son to a new school and the book explores their lives and those of several other people involved with the school. Then I came upon his *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland* mainly about a shady used-car dealer in California. But Dick only published one of his ‘straight’ novels, *Confessions of a Crap Artist*, in his lifetime. Was this because he didn’t think they were good enough, in which case

he might not have wanted them published after his death, or because he preferred to be thought of as a sci-fi writer?

Certainly he is a much better sci-fi writer than straight novelist. His sci-fi novels, though written more than forty years ago still have a freshness about them. And he certainly had a talent for coming up with intriguing titles. *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* And more.

## **K IS FOR KEROUAC, JACK:**

Kerouac started out writing what you might call a 'straight' novel, about some men in the navy during the Second World War, which he called *The Sea is My Brother*. It is a forgettable book. But then he discovered through his own travels and up-and-down life that the restless post-war generation wanted restless stories and he made his name with books such as *On the Road*.

In an article 'The Vanishing American Hobo' he wrote: "The American hobo has a hard time hoboing nowadays due to the increase in police surveillance of highways, railroad yards, sea shores, river bottoms, embankments and the thousand-and-one hiding holes of industrial night.— In California, the pack rat, the original old type who goes walking from town to town with supplies and bedding on his back, the 'Homeless Brother,' has practically vanished, along with the ancient gold-panning desert rat who used to walk with hope in his heart through struggling Western towns that are now so prosperous they don't want old bums any more.— 'Man don't want no pack rats here even though they founded California' said an old man hiding with a can of beans and an Indian fire in a river bottom outside Riverside California in 1955. — Great sinister tax-paid police cars (1960 models with humorless searchlights) are likely to bear down at any moment on the hobo in his idealistic lope to freedom and the hills of holy silence and holy privacy. — There's nothing nobler than to put up with a few inconveniences like snakes and dust for the sake of absolute freedom.

"I myself was a hobo but only of sorts, as you see, because I knew someday my literary efforts would be rewarded by social protection — I was not a real hobo with no hope ever except that secret eternal hope you get sleeping in empty boxcars flying up the Salinas Valley in hot January sunshine full of Golden Eternity toward San Jose where mean-looking old bo's'll look at you from surly lips and offer you something to eat and a drink too — down by the tracks or in the Guadalupe Creekbottom."

Thousands of men took to the roads in the Depression years and for some of them it became a way of life they were reluctant to give up. But the generation which took to the road in the 50s and 60s was very different. They often had cars or hitch-hiked rather than walking and they found places to stay in communes or with other like-minded people and because they were not true vagrants there was not the same push to move them on or keep them out of sight.

The young people who criss-crossed the country in post-war USA were not hoboes. They usually had homes—even if they could not wait to leave those homes behind in search of the excitements of the road.

Then I came upon *The Unknown Kerouac: Rare, Unpublished & Newly Translated Writings* put together by Todd Tietchen and Jean-Christophe Cloutier in which they gather up early articles, journals, scraps of poetry and his writings in French. Did his ideas about life, travel, experience, family, America, change over the years? All his writings are semi-autobiographical and a vein of nihilism, melancholy, even self-pity runs through his work. The feeling I took away from the book was that he never really knew what he was looking for and he didn't find it, perhaps he couldn't find it because he didn't know where to look.

“I already knew that most of the world was populated by morons, America just like the rest. I saw them all spitting in each other’s faces from one pole to the other. They called it life, they called it “the economy,” worse than everything they called it “necessity” and in the papers they wrote solemn editorials about it. Everything in the damned world was acceptable save for the tears of the heart; those didn’t pay, you couldn’t sell ’em, you couldn’t buy ’em. And they were all I knew, that and the dreams of the beautiful green country stretching itself from one ocean to another around the sun and around the stars of the immortal night.”

from *The Night Is My Woman*.

## **L IS FOR LEE, HARPER LEE:**

There was a lot of publicity surrounding the publication of Harper Lee’s ‘lost’ novel. It had long been assumed that her one novel was the well-known *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. But a sequel was found in her papers after she died. In *Go Set a Watchman* young ‘Scout’ Finch has been living in New York but comes home to Maycomb, Alabama, as her father Atticus is increasingly disabled.

The blurb says, ‘Written in the mid-1950s, *Go Set a Watchman* is a profoundly affecting work of art that is both wonderfully evocative of another era and relevant to our own times. It not only confirms the enduring brilliance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but also serves as its essential companion, adding depth, context, and new meaning to an American classic.’

I’m afraid I didn’t see it in this shining light. I was curious, yes, but not convinced that it added to Harper Lee’s reputation. Jean Louise ‘Scout’ Finch discovers that her father believes in slow change, that he had gone to Klan meetings to find out who in the town joined, and that he believes that assimilating the schools will bring standards down. She, having just come from New York, is aflame with ideas of equality. It leads to argument and upset. Her uncle says to her as she wants to flee back to New York, ‘“Every man’s island, Jean Louise, every man’s watchman, is his conscience. There is no such thing as a collective conscience.”’

This was news, coming from him. But let him talk, he would find his way to the nineteenth century somehow.

“...now you, Miss, born with your own conscience, somewhere along the line fastened it like a barnacle onto your father’s. As you grew up, when you were grown, totally unknown to yourself, you confused your father with God. You never saw him as a man with a man’s heart, and a man’s failings—I’ll grant you it may have been hard to see, he makes so few mistakes, but he makes ’em like all of us. You were an emotional cripple, leaning on him, getting the answers from him, assuming that your answers would always be his answers.” ’

It is about growing up, growing away, finding your own answers and ideals and beliefs. But for all that, I would have been content to think of Harper Lee as a one book writer.

## **M IS FOR MACHEN, ARTHUR MACHEN:**

I couldn’t resist buying a book called *Fifty Forgotten Books* by R. B. Russell. And one of his forgotten writers is Arthur Machen. He writes, “I shall always be thankful to Mr Brookes for introducing me to the writings of Arthur Machen. I was talking pretentiously of existentialism one afternoon, probably trying to make comparisons between Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* and Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, when he handed me a copy of *The Hill of Dreams*. I assumed Machen was another existentialist, but the book was so much better written than anything I had previously read. I still find the opening lines incredibly powerful, forty years later:

There was a glow in the sky as if great furnace doors were opened.

But all the afternoon his eyes had looked on glamour; he had strayed in fairyland. The holidays were nearly done, and Lucien Taylor had gone out resolved to lose himself, to discover strange hills and prospects that he had never seen before. The air was still, breathless, exhausted after heavy rain, and the clouds looked as if they had been moulded of lead. No breeze blew upon the hill, and down in the well of the valley not a dry leaf stirred, not a bough shook in all the dark January woods.

“When I went back to Brighton two weeks later, it was to hunt for more Machen, but I was sorely disappointed. Machen’s books were hard to find at the time.”

“I ‘appreciated’ *The Hill of Dreams* when I first read it. I thought of it as a book about a young man who strives to write great literature, even at the expense of his love life, and who descends into madness. Lucien Taylor leaving the countryside, and his beloved Annie, for the suburbs of London seemed an exile from a land of dream, fantasy and wonder, in a harsh, soul-destroying city. I knew very little about Machen, but later discovered that he had been born Arthur Llewellyn Jones on 3 March 1863 in Caerleon, Gwent, and that he was best known for his horror fiction, which was described as usually of a mystical cast. *The Great God Pan* (1894) is considered a classic horror story of the decadent 1890s, and it led me to read Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Machen’s other work is sometimes difficult to classify, such as the exquisite ‘The White People’ (1904), an apparent stream-of-consciousness report from a young girl who has strayed into fairyland. What makes Machen’s writing beguiling is that when he ‘lifts the veil’ to show readers what is just beyond our everyday perceptions, the results can be so strange that it is difficult to know if they are glorious or horrific. The discovery of Machen was to have a major influence not just on my reading, but on my career as a publisher. It also helped me make some of the most important friendships of my life.” A blurb for *The Great God Pan* (republished by Penguin) says “hailed by Stephen King as one of the best horror stories ever written”.

From there on, Russell was always on the lookout for more of Machen’s writings and he republished *The Hill of Dreams* in 1998 as well as being a founder of the Friends of Arthur Machen. But it didn’t seem very likely any of his books would be lying round old bookshops in Hobart. I could look for anthologies. I could look for that reprint ...

## **M IS FOR MITCHELL, MARGARET MITCHELL:**

*Gone With the Wind* was a best seller right from the beginning. Muriel Spark in *The Informed Air* wrote, “Within six weeks of publication in America *Gone with the Wind* had sold 326,000 copies. ... The book contains 400,000 words. It took seven years to write. When the English edition appeared in 1936, already surrounded by glamorous statistics, the *Observer* reviewer cattily submitted that it was somewhere between two and three pounds in weight.

“Perhaps because I read, and thoroughly enjoyed, *Gone with the Wind* in my teens I incline to think it appeals to the eternal teenager. It has an inspired (or at least unpremeditated) emotional immaturity, which is a requisite of every best-seller, and is sometimes a minor ingredient of great art. When I saw the film some years later on the quivering screen of a Central African bioscope I was less impressed. The passage of years, if it improves our taste, corrupts our joy. Reading those solemn pages again a few weeks ago I hardly recognised the book, and noted the repetitive tedium, the soporific padding, the callow ethic.

“What I found most dreary was the fact that nothing whatsoever is left to the reader’s dimmest intelligence. Every time a point of remote subtlety arises it is followed by a detailed explanation. Not a character opens his mouth to speak but a protracted gloss appears in the next

paragraph. It is very disconcerting, when you have quite grasped a situation (and the situations are all simple), to find it being plugged home lest you should have made any mistake.

“All the same, the book remains an impressive one because it sweeps on and on, over and above its defects. Large gestures have a fascination. On its appearance in 1936 the cautious critics of these shores were, on the whole, surprised that such a big and best-seller could be so entertaining. The book was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1937. The author, Miss Margaret Mitchell, was killed by a drunken motorist in 1949. *Gone with the Wind* was her only book.”

But time eventually proved Spark wrong. Margaret Mitchell *had* written another book. Debra Freer wrote, “In 1916, Margaret Mitchell began writing a passionate story about a strong-willed woman who places her honor above her life. It is a tale of unrequited love, of a man who desires this woman with all his heart but who can never obtain her. He is not Rhett Butler, she is not Scarlett O’Hara, and this is not *Gone With the Wind*. It is *Lost Laysen*, a story of love and honor on a South Pacific island, which Margaret Mitchell wrote in longhand in two blue composition books in the summer of her sixteenth year.

“The tale of *Lost Laysen’s* discovery is itself a bittersweet story of doomed love and time-honored secrets, of an enduring gift from a world-renowned writer to a man whom history had almost forgotten. The man’s name was Henry Love Angel. Margaret Mitchell made him a gift of *Lost Laysen*, and both Mitchell and Angel took the secret of this remarkable present to their graves.

“What makes this present so remarkable? To begin with, Margaret Mitchell requested that her writings and personal papers be destroyed after her death. Letters, journals, manuscripts (including most of the original pages from *Gone With the Wind*), in fact, almost everything that she ever wrote was systematically incinerated, and for sixty years millions of her fans have had to resign themselves to the fact that Margaret Mitchell wrote only one novel.”

I always wonder why people want everything burnt. What are they ashamed of coming to light and why do writers put that burden on their friends or family? In this case she had given her childhood friend Henry Love Angel the exercise book as well as sharing letters and photos. He died before her and his son wasn’t interested in the material—until many years later he heard that there was a museum in Atlanta dedicated to Mitchell and *Gone With the Wind*.

So what of *Lost Laysen*? “There were only a few who remembered several notices in the papers of the disappearance, fifteen years ago, of Laysen, a volcanic island of the Tongas group. It had been a large island peopled mostly by Japanese, Chinese and a few white.” But not, it seemed, by any Tongans.

Bill Duncan, a rough and tough Irishman, tells the story from when he was the first mate on the ‘Caliban’, which no doubt suggested that the young American missionary Courtenay Ross might be compared to Miranda of ‘The Tempest’. Her American admirer Douglas Steele follows her to the islands. Duncan says the ship was crewed by a crew of sixteen “Japs, Chinks, Kanakas and half breeds”. I wondered what she meant by ‘half breeds’ but later on Duncan introduces the reader to the book’s villain Juan Mardo; “He was a half breed—Jap and Spanish—possessing the devil’s own dark beauty.” All the men seem to fancy Miss Ross, but it is a world full of violence and threats. I wondered when Miss Ross would start bringing some Christianity to the men but in fact she has come to start a school. She says, “At first I couldn’t get any of those little Japs or Chinks to come to me. I tried awfully hard, but it wasn’t any use, their parents wouldn’t let them. Then along came Juan Mardo and said he could bring them and he did—I’ve more kids than I can manage.”

Unfortunately Mardo seeking to kiss her brings both Steele and Duncan out determined to kill Mardo. The island of Laysen is destroyed in a huge volcanic explosion. But a small boat is found by the ‘Caliban’. On board, they find Steele, Ross, and Mardo all dead. There has obviously been some serious knife-fighting but it seems that Miss Ross has stabbed herself rather than risk being ‘ravished’ by Juan Mardo. Mitchell finishes her novella: “Somewhere in the South Pacific lies

a little white boat with a queer crew—an arch-fiend and his two imps, a man who was a man—and a woman who placed her honor far—far higher than her life.”

Was the novella worth publishing on its merits? No. Was it worth publishing as a curiosity from a teenage girl who went on to write a best-seller? Yes, quite possibly.

I can remember writing and illustrating a ‘book’ when I was about twelve. I called it *The Adventures of Checkers*. Checkers was a horse. But unfortunately it got lost somewhere. Perhaps that was just as well. If I suddenly become famous I am not sure I would want it resurrected as a curious piece of juvenilia. But I would enjoy going back to see what I was up to all those years ago.

## **M IS FOR MUSKETT, ALICE, ALIAS ‘JANE LAKER’:**

I had never heard of Jane Laker until I came across this story in an essay by Dorothy Green in *Writer, Reader, Critic*: “it is not unknown for credit to be given to a woman for an idea put forward by a man. A case in point is Virginia Woolf’s campaign for ‘a room of one’s own’. No doubt it is an idea that has occurred to many people, male and female, at various times in history, but Virginia Woolf turned it into a feminist slogan. It appears however in a novel written by Henry Kingsley in 1869 in which he says: ‘I should think from what I have observed that almost the first ambition of every clever woman was to have a room of her own, where she was mistress and could do as she pleased.’

“The passage is quoted in an interesting novel by possibly the first of our deliberately feminist writers, who used the pseudonym ‘Jane Laker’. It is odd that she has not attracted the attention of Australian feminists but her strong romantic strain would put them off. She is mentioned with affection by one of our male literary historians. Jane drew up a list of Rights for Women, with which I have some sympathy. She demanded that:

1. Every woman be taught a Trade, Craft or Profession.
2. That every woman be allowed everyday Happiness, or one big Ecstasy.
3. That every woman be given a Room, a Refuge, that She can Call her Own.
4. That every woman should have, at some time in her life a sweetheart, a Jack to her Jill!
5. That every woman should receive proper payment for work honestly done.

“She admitted wistfully that items two and four were not amenable to legislation. She also admitted that her friend Maud might have a point when she accused her of not being a feminist at all, because ‘a true and proper feminist despises men and wants to sweep them away altogether as superfluous – and you know quite well, Jane, that you like men!’ Nevertheless, Jane is the kind of wholly human, independent free soul whom Rilke foresaw and she is fortunate to find in the end a man to match.”

Jane Laker’s real name was Alice Muskett and she wrote a novel *Among the Reeds* set in 1913’s Sydney but it was not published until 1933. I found it described as a ‘Lost Feminist Novel’ and I wondered if it would be possible to find a copy.

## **P IS FOR PORTER, JANE AND ANNA MARIA:**

This is a case of forgotten authors and forgotten books. Jane and Maria were English sisters, not well educated, of modest background, who published a string of novels at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Maria brought out *Artless Tales* in 1793 when she was only fourteen. But it was Jane’s historical novel *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803) which put them on the map. They both published a string of historical novels, they did journalistic work, they tried playwriting. Maria also wrote *Tales of Pity on Fishing, Shooting, and Hunting, Intended to Inculcate in the Mind of Youth, Sentiments of Humanity Toward the Brute Creation*. They also co-authored several books, edited, and wrote copious letters to each other.

Devoney Looser in *Sister Novelists: The Trailblazing Porter Sisters, who paved the way for Austen and the Brontës* wrote: “*Thaddeus of Warsaw* follows the adventures of fictional war hero Thaddeus Sobieski, a Polish nobleman who survives a devastating loss in battle to the invading Russians. Thaddeus immigrates to England, in nameless poverty, to try to put his life back together. Although there was no such person as this Sobieski, Jane did take a real surname from Polish history and transformed famous people into fictional characters. She placed them in actual circumstances of war in the 1790s, narrating the battles in gruesome detail. Then she told dramatic stories of her noble Polish hero as a mistreated, penniless refugee in English society. She wove fictional domestic scenes together with real political events. She presented morally uplifting outcomes.

“Jane was doing something new in fiction. Many previously published novels incorporated real people as characters or used real events as the jumping-off point for fictional stories. They’d appeared for at least a century, from Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) to Sophia Lee’s *The Recess* (1783-85). What was new about *Thaddeus of Warsaw* was its mingling of climactic historical events with the conventions of biographies, romantic tales, and probable domestic novels. Jane innovated when she “introduced the fundamental form of the historical novel to British readers,” and “placed her protagonists in the midst of military upheaval,” as a recent critic puts it.”

“*Thaddeus of Warsaw* has a plot so intricate that providing a summary is difficult. It would have been an easier story for readers to follow while Russia’s brutal aggressions on Polish soil remained fresh memories.” People in Britain had heard of the hero of Polish resistance, General Tadeusz (or Thaddeus) Kościuszko, so “Jane decided Poland’s fight against Russia was the right canvas for her, perhaps with the recognition that any story about a power-hungry nation’s bullying would have brought special satisfaction to British readers during the Napoleonic Wars. As the narrator described the hero’s thinking early in the novel, “He well knew the difference between a defender of his own country and the invader of another’s.”

Jane and Maria never married and they struggled to pay their way all their lives, not only to keep themselves but also their widowed mother and to pay off their profligate brothers’ debts. And as they were gradually superseded and forgotten their literary remains were dispersed and sold or put away and forgotten. Looser ends by saying, “It shouldn’t be controversial to say that Jane and Anna Maria Porter were among the most important fiction writers of the nineteenth century. They were the pioneers of the method of writing historical fiction that Sir Walter Scott would ultimately be credited with having invented. The Porter sisters, not Scott, were the first bestselling authors of that then-emerging genre, which we no longer call “historical romance,” “historical tale,” or “biographical romance” but refer to by the weightier-sounding masculine label, the “historical novel.”

“The simple fact that Jane and Maria published twenty-six books, separately and together, should itself have earned them a more prominent place in literary history. In quantity, their output makes them among the most productive sister novelists in literary history. Jane’s bestsellers sold millions of copies. Children were named after her novels’ characters. Towns were named after some of the heroes the sisters created and helped keep in the public eye. The three Brontë sisters would eventually outdo the Porters in literary impact and numbers of copies sold, but the success of Jane and Maria in marketing themselves as sister novelists unquestionably paved the way for the Brontës” and “It wasn’t only in their brilliant, innovative historical fiction that they’d documented various interesting times. They also left us the gift of their own razor-sharp, funny, and heart-rending portraits of the nineteenth-century woman writer of genius. The sisters preserved—or perhaps just couldn’t bring themselves to destroy—their moving, honest, and still-unpublished letters to each other, so lovingly exchanged across their remarkable lives.”

## **T IS FOR THOMPSON, HUNTER S.:**

David Streitfeld introducing some of Thompson's interviews wrote, "I once spent many agonizing minutes watching Hunter Thompson, who liked to boast that he could use the English language as both a musical instrument and a political weapon, trying to sign his name.

"This was in late 1990, in a hotel room in New York City. A publicist asked him to autograph his latest book before she left, a little souvenir of hours spent trying to get the writer to do the most basic things, like get out of bed. Hunter would start writing, get distracted, pause, gather his wits, stare at his hand as if it were an alien life form, throw something. I thought, *Signed books by this guy must be really scarce.*

"A few decades later, with Gonzo nostalgia in full swing, eBay was auctioning a signed copy of *Generation of Swine* or *Songs of the Doomed* nearly every day, usually with just the scribbled letters "HST." Collectors sometimes bid hundreds of dollars. Most of the autographs must be fake, but probably a few are real. At this point, who can tell the difference?"

Of course a faked signature is different to a faked book.

## **V IS FOR VERNE, JULES:**

A great many people have read or heard of or seen the films made from Verne's novels like *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* or *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. But Verne also wrote a number of novels which have largely been forgotten. The other day I came upon his *Propeller Island* which I had never heard of. It was published in French as *L'Ile à hélice* which was then published as *The Floating Island* and later as *Propeller Island*.

In it four French musicians are visiting California where their carriage has an accident. They set out to walk to the nearest small town but instead find themselves in a large and wealthy city where no city is marked on their map. They have been lured on to what proves to be an artificial island moored just off the coast. "Standard Island was an island driven by screws. Milliard City was its capital—so called because it was the town of the millionaires, a Gouldian, Vanderbiltian, Rothschildian city.

"An artificial island; there was nothing extraordinary in the idea; it was not beyond the power of man to make. But that was not sufficient. The purpose for which this island was intended demanded that it should be navigable, and therefore it had to float." It was made of steel and put together in segments. "Of oval form, it measured about four and a half miles long and three broad, and its circuit was about eleven miles." Everyone on it is rich, there is no poverty, but there is dissension between the two main families, the Tankerdens and the Coverleys, and there is a degree of boredom which encourages the people of Standard Island to wander the Pacific. Their first stop is Hawaii. "It really was Oahu, and the town was Honolulu. What changes since the great English navigator discovered this group! Missionaries had excelled each other in devotion and zeal. Not only had the native language disappeared before the Anglo-Saxon tongue, but the archipelago contained Americans, Chinese, and even Portuguese, brought by the vessels plying between the Sandwich Islands and the Azores. Aborigines were there, however, and enough of them to satisfy our four artists, although the natives had been decimated by leprosy, a malady of Chinese origin. But they hardly looked like eaters of human flesh."

This desire, to meet with cannibals, seems to be the spur to their voyaging. They go to Tahiti, Samoa, they get caught in a volcanic cloud and collide with a British ship which sinks and they are required to pay compensation. They finally come upon their desired cannibals in the New Hebrides, which results in small scale warfare. Verne has his Standard Islanders also quite anti-British; one of them saying of Martinique, "Hitherto there had never been any serpents there, and yet, after the

Anglo-Saxons had gone the island of Martinique was infested with them. Before taking their leave, the English had thrown reptiles by the hundred on the island they were leaving, and the venomous creatures had multiplied, to the great detriment of the French settlers.” Standard Island finally comes to grief in a cyclone and begins to break apart.

The book has been seen as Verne’s attempt to write a Utopia novel, set in a wealthy, technologically advanced future, but to me it seemed more like him enjoying the chance to write another ‘travel’ book. You can of course read various things into it. The Tankerdens and the Coverleys might be the Montagues and the Capulets, the island might be a backhanded paeon to America’s robber barons, the lack of genuine excitement whilst being filled with culture and prosperity might indicate his fears of a machine-powered future. It has been suggested that in his King and Queen of Malecarlie who live on the island he was expressing sympathy for the Emperor Pedro II of Brazil who abdicated in 1889. “The King was well informed in scientific matters, a great admirer of art, and passionately fond of music. A learned man and a philosopher, he was in no way blind to the future of European sovereignties, and he had always been ready to leave his kingdom as soon as his people no longer wanted him. ... By mutual agreement the contract between His Majesty and his subjects was broken. The King became a man, his subjects became citizens, and he left without any more fuss than if he had been a tourist taking his ticket at the railway station, leaving his government to be replaced by another.” Was this the way Verne hoped those ‘European sovereignties’ would end?

But however you like to read the story it cannot be claimed as Verne’s most imaginative or best written book.

## **W IS FOR WHITMAN, WALT WHITMAN:**

Zachary Turpin introducing Whitman’s novel *Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* wrote, “Many mysteries surround Whitman’s life and work. Whether he suppressed some of his pulpier publications is not one of them. In the early twentieth century, finding lost writings by Whitman in whatever form—ghostwritten, published unsigned, handwritten in manuscripts or margins—was practically a cottage industry. Enterprising scholar-collectors recovered reams of anonymous journalism and bales of manuscript, plus early poems, short stories, letters, and not a few reviews of *Leaves* ghosted by the poet himself. But there is little surprise in this.” Whitman had worked as a journalist on a variety of papers. He had undoubtedly tossed off things to fill spaces. There was a big market for short stories, serials, doggerel, articles, reviews and all the staples of 19<sup>th</sup> century papers. And while Whitman “wished his early fictions had “quietly dropp’d in oblivion” (he) had, in fact, succeeded in submerging some of them himself—writings of which, since the moment of their publication, no one has been aware. This book is one of them.” Because, “Until 2016, *Jack Engle* was not merely missing but utterly forgotten—serialized, anonymously, in the pages of the *Sunday Dispatch*, one of countless New York newspapers that flourished and faded in the mid-1800s. Virtually no one has laid eyes on this story in a century and a half, certainly no one who knew what it was. Nor is *Jack Engle* the first Whitmanian secret to come to light. In 2015, readers were reintroduced to “Manly Health and Training,” the poet’s enthusiastically unrigorous health-and-wellness guide, which had been serialized and shut away in the *New York Atlas*. As far as anyone is aware, Whitman never spoke of it after its publication, and *Jack Engle* appears to have been published in similar secrecy. Indeed, if the poet’s manuscripts tell us anything, even more books may be out there, waiting in the oblivion where he left them.”

“Plenty of American authors have left books in the dark. Writers from Ben Franklin to Stephen King have concealed themselves behind a good old-fashioned pen name. Often these hid nothing whatsoever, but occasionally they did. In the 1860s, A. M. Barnard published a dozen or so

sexy, blood-soaked, gender-bending novels, potboilers with titles like *Behind a Mask*, *The Abbot's Ghost*, and *A Long Fatal Love Chase*. This would be otherwise unremarkable if two scholars, Madeleine Stern and Leona Rostenberg, hadn't discovered that "Barnard" was none other than Louisa May Alcott, the creator of such beloved works as *Little Women* (1868) and *Little Men* (1871)." Alcott, like Whitman, was motivated by the need for money.

Whitman's story is set in a New York of gambling, poverty, revival meetings, and unwanted children. Jack is an orphan and there is a mystery about his background. He goes to work for a rascally lawyer, Covert, who has done something dishonest with a young orphan girl Martha's money. After various shenanigans, Jack says, "With everything promising fair for a life of health and comfort—though no one can tell what the future may bring forth; with blessings on my lot, and on those who have stood my friends when I most needed them; with good humor toward all the world, a heart full of satisfaction, and pockets that do not flutter from lightness".

It has its curiosity value but I had the feeling that Whitman would have vetoed its publication if he had been asked. In fact, I would say that of quite a few 'forgotten' books, that the authors probably would have preferred that they not be resurrected. But the combination of a famous name and a 'lost' work is the perfect and perhaps inevitable combination to draw our curiosity ...

**THE END**