

## THE WEAVER FISH

ROBERT EDESON

### ABOUT THE BOOK

The reader should have no doubt that this account is not a story but a history, and to suggest otherwise (as some critics seem to have done) is offensive and hurtful to actual persons who have suffered through these events. I will not contribute to this misrepresentation. My research notes, interview records and supporting documentation are being collated for publication and will appear in due course in appropriate academic forums.

– Dr A B C Darian

*The Weaver Fish* is a gripping adventure story. When Cambridge linguist Edvard Tøssentern disappears off the radar during a balloon trip, he appears to have vanished into thin air. His disappearance triggers an extraordinary set of events that will throw his colleagues at the research station into the path of an international crime ring.

Set on the island nation of Ferendes in the South China Sea, this book's witty scientific, linguistic and mathematical games will make you question all that you know, or think you know, about weaver fish, giant condors, the tornado-proof Reckles® Texan hat, and much much more.

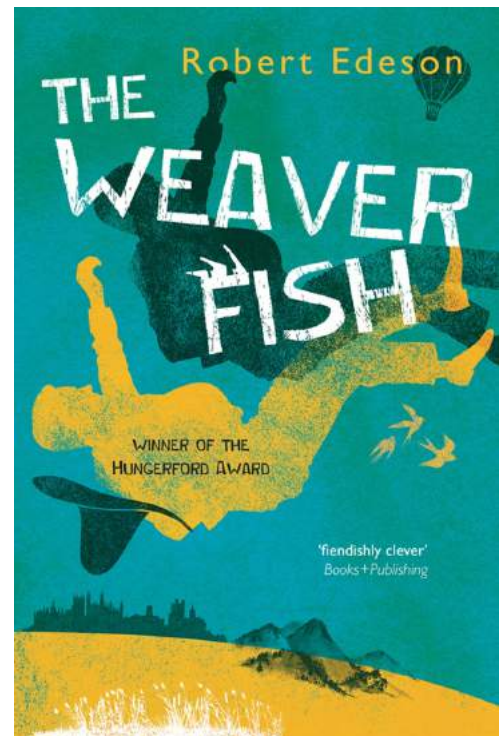
### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Edeson was born in Perth, Western Australia, and educated at Christ Church Grammar School, the University of Western Australia and the University of Cambridge. He has been a consultant anaesthetist and researcher, publishing in the neuroscience, biophysical and mathematical literatures. He is the author of the Richard Worse trilogy: *The Weaver Fish* (winner of the T.A.G. Hungerford Award – now the City of Fremantle Hungerford Award – in 2012), *Bad to Worse* and *The Worsener's Tale*. These three marvellous mysteries may be read as standalone titles

### INTRODUCTION

We provide here a selection of extracts from the forthcoming companion text *The Weaver Fish Compendium* by Alison Pilcrow (UITA Press). Entries have been abridged, and edited to include some reader EXERCISES. **Boldface** in the text indicates a cross-reference.

The examination paper was compiled by Alison Pilcrow with the assistance of Magdalena Letterby. Libraire Satroit and Acridaria Music are gratefully acknowledged for permitting copyright material to be reproduced.



Above: An image of the elusive author, at a stretch

## INTERVIEW WITH LORD ENRIGHT BY ALISON PILCROW

Alison Pilcrow: LORD ENRIGHT, THANK YOU FOR MAKING YOURSELF AVAILABLE TO TALK TO UITA. AS AN HISTORIAN YOURSELF, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS DR DARIAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP IN THIS WORK?

Lord Enright: Look, before I answer that, can I say that I don't blame Darian one bit for taking the position you describe. Any writer, particularly in an academic field like history, will be sensitive to misguided criticism, especially boneheaded misinterpretation as seems to have happened here.

WELL, WE'RE NOT, I THINK, FULLY INFORMED OF THAT COMMENTARY AT THIS POINT. DO YOU KNOW THAT DR DARIAN HAS BEEN MISTREATED BY CRITICS, OR BEEN PROFESSIONALLY DAMAGED SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF *THE WEAVER FISH*?

Before I answer that, let me tell you that I had a similar experience with *Arch and Lintel*. Anyone would think we deliberately set out to cause offence, whereas the real offence lies with previous historians promulgating falsehood, and then acolytes defending it. With that Arc de Triomphe business, I had to prove, brick by mortar by single brick, that the sequence of construction could only have been as I described.

I RECALL THAT CONTROVERSY. LORD ENRIGHT, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MAIN THEME OF DR DARIAN'S BOOK? APART FROM THE HISTORIAN'S MOTIVATION TO DOCUMENT, ARE THERE IDENTIFIABLE PREOCCUPATIONS? IS THERE A MESSAGE TO READERS?

Before coming to that, I think we need to understand something of the undercurrents here, the subtleties, the pain in the text.

THERE'S PAIN IN THE TEXT?

Let me finish, Alison. We're discussing here a work of scholarship, an academic history, worthy of some prize or other if only it were taken seriously. And yet what do we have? Three psychiatrists in the mix. All women. Lacking villainy entirely. That has to be a cry for help. It's about pain, Alison.

BUT THEY'RE ALL REAL. THEY'RE ACTUAL INDIVIDUALS, THROWN TOGETHER BY EVENTS. BY CHANCE.

Of course they are. We all know that. I'm just saying everyone seems to be a psychiatrist. Or a mathematician. Or a poet.

BUT THERE ARE LINGUISTS AS WELL; ENGINEERS, CLASSICISTS, BANKERS, A GARDENER—.

You're missing the point, Alison, with respect.

I'M SORRY. COULD YOU EXPLAIN THAT POINT FOR OUR READERS, LORD ENRIGHT?

Well, it relates to the theme, clearly. Convalescence.

CONVALESCENCE?

Convalescence. Quest. Recovery. Recovery from post-traumatic depression. Recovery of identity. The quest for the former self. That's what it is, Alison. It looks like a quest for the weaver fish, but that's a nonsense reading. That misses the symbolism entirely. It's about entering the memory like an art gallery and being able to choose what you like rather than what you dislike. That's why there are three psychiatrists, I daresay. Tøssentern had a terrible time, Alison.

YES, THAT IS VERY CLEAR FROM THE BOOK. WOULD YOU IDENTIFY ANY OTHER THEMES THAT ARE LINKED TO THE HISTORY, AS TOLD?

I don't think we should jump to conclusions about this. Darian is the one to explain exactly what he hoped to achieve, if anything, beyond a straightforward account of that dreadful business in the Ferendes.

IT'S A FAR MORE COMPLEX WORK, ISN'T IT? MORE THAN A CATALOGUE OF FACTS.

Everything is more than something less than it is, Alison. But before we debate that, readers should be clear about the theme here.

YOU SAID IT WAS CONVALESCENCE.

Well, that's more secondary. What we might call the primary theme is the unconscious.

THE UNCONSCIOUS IS THE PRIMARY THEME?

Of course it is, Alison. All that Tøssentern dream theory—where was that leading? The unconscious. Then there was meditation, introspection, silence, interiors, and so on. And convalescence: you know that's all in the mind. Darian's concrete, but he can be manipulative, as many historians are. And that weaver fish business at the end. I'm not sure, in all honesty, if that isn't the unconscious somehow and Darian's just being clever. That's why he needed three psychiatrists, Alison. I'm sure of it.

LORD ENRIGHT, I WANT TO COME BACK TO DARIAN THE HISTORIAN, TO GET A SENSE OF WHAT HIS ACHIEVEMENT IS IN THIS BOOK.

Well, it's a little early to make a mature judgement, I think. These things become clearer over time as other scholars re-examine the evidence, discover new sources—witnesses, press reports, diaries—bring different perspectives, and so on. Darian's probably got it right, but the facts always need checking, with respect.

ACCORDING TO HERODOTUS, AND I QUOTE, DARIAN 'SETS A NEW STANDARD IN HISTORICAL ACCURACY'. IS THAT A PRECIPITATE JUDGEMENT, THEN, IN YOUR VIEW?

Herodotus said that?

YES.

I find that difficult to believe, Alison. Although, strictly, it is ambiguous. I'm not sure that I would welcome such a comment.

RETURNING TO THE TEXT, IF WE MAY, SOME HAVE POINTED OUT A DEGREE OF CRYPTIC CONTENT IN THIS WORK. DO YOU AGREE, AND CAN YOU ELUCIDATE FOR OUR READERS WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN?

Cryptic? There's nothing cryptic, Alison. As I said, Darian's a concrete thinker. Literal, transparent, humourless and concrete, like all good historians. I think that's why his professional colleagues find this work a little disturbing. His personality, his gifts as an historian, seem at odds with the theme he's taken up.

THE UNCONSCIOUS? BEING DISTURBED ISN'T SO SURPRISING, IS IT? MOST PEOPLE ARE A LITTLE WARY OF THAT SUBJECT, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE FOLLIES OF FREUD AND JUNG.

What are you talking about, Alison? Why do you bring up the unconscious? Not everything is about seduction, you know. The issue here, I'm saying, is a paradox of author and text. How someone like Darian could possibly be interested in conflation.

CONFLATION?

His central theme is conflation, Alison. Obviously.

CONFLATION?

You read that *zothecula* business. And the cant thing: what was he leading us into there? Then he used the Leonardo passage about word and silence being the same. And all that talk about Bending—did that make sense to you? I never met Bending, so I can't in fairness give an opinion. Nevertheless, conflation looks very much like an obsession, in my view.

WHAT HAS CONFLATION TO DO WITH TØSSENTERN'S QUEST, AND THE WEAVER FISH?

Well, everything, clearly. But before going into that I think we have to agree that it does confuse the theme somewhat.

CONFLATION CONFUSES CONFLATION?

I'm not sure what you're getting at. The theme. The principal theme. Language.

LANGUAGE IS THE PRINCIPAL THEME?

Of course it is. And understandably. After all, Tøssentern is a linguist, and the whole sorry business with the balloon and so on came out of that research place in the Ferendes. All the same, I think Darian overdoes it a little, don't you? The language? He's a rather decorative writer, in my taste. A little too serif.

YOU'RE SAYING THAT DARIAN'S WRITING STYLE IS NOT SUITED TO THE ACADEMIC PROJECT HE'S UNDERTAKEN IN THIS BOOK?

Well, I think that's unfair, Alison. We're looking at a masterpiece here. Everyone can see that. I'm simply saying that Darian's language, his words as it were, strung together as they are, using grammar and syntax and so on, with semantics thrown in, detracts from the theme.

LANGUAGE DETRACTS FROM LANGUAGE?

I don't know how you can say that, Alison. What I'm arguing is that Darian's language detracts from the overall theme. Faith.

FAITH IS THE OVERALL THEME?

Of course it is. I said there were undercurrents. Underneath everything here is religion. Look at all that belief business. It was like an advertisement for going to heaven. There's a profound piety throughout this document, and it belongs to Darian. He was nearly ordained once, you know. Until all that business with the abbess.

I DIDN'T KNOW.

The Lord is just beneath the surface, on every page. Read it again, Alison, and you'll see what I'm saying. I mean, how many times does he mention conscience?

I SHALL CERTAINLY READ IT ANEW.

Did you notice how, in the epigraph, Leonardo di Boccardo seems to outwit God, whereas by the epilogue, God well and truly outwits Leonardo? When Darian asked for my translations, I had no idea he would fashion them into some kind of proselytizing bookends. Those quotes were chosen with great deliberateness, I would suggest. There was a conversion going on, as I say, beneath the surface, from beginning to end. All that silence business, that was praying, Alison. It's concerning, in an academic work. It detracts from the rigour, I

would submit.

LORD ENRIGHT, I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT DR DARIAN'S IDENTITY. YOU KNOW HIM PERSONALLY AND, OF COURSE, HE AND I HAVE HAD EXTENSIVE ELECTRONIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGHOUT THE EDITING PROCESS. BUT THERE REMAINS A PUZZLING POLYMORPHISM, IF I CAN USE THAT TERM, WHICH IS REVEALED IN HIS AUTHOR'S NOTE AND, I THINK, IN SOME TEXTUAL CLUES. IS THERE SOMETHING INCONSISTENT HERE? IS THERE A THEME OF AUTHORIAL PLASTICITY AND, LINKED TO THAT PERHAPS, SOME OBJECTIVE OF READER DISQUIET?

Goodness, Alison. Not everything has to be a theme, you know. No, no. That's just Darian being silly. I note that he's used a pseudonym on the cover but that's normal practice whenever there are concerns about critical reception.

LORD ENRIGHT, UNFORTUNATELY WE ARE RUNNING OUT OF TIME, AND I THANK YOU AGAIN FOR SHARING YOUR INSIGHTS. ARE THERE ANY CLOSING REMARKS YOU MIGHT HAVE FOR OUR READERS?

I can only encourage them to read this work with great concentration, to immerse themselves in its uncompromising, might I say austere, authenticity—

IT DOES HAVE THAT QUALITY, THAT AUSTERITY, DOESN'T IT? THERE'S NONE OF THE ADVENTURISM, THE POLITICAL CONFECTION, THE STRUCTURAL DECEIT, THAT WE HAVE COME TO EXPECT IN A MODERN ACADEMIC TEXT. THIS IS NOT THE USUAL, SHALL WE SAY, HISTORY AS PARODY, IS IT?

Well, needless to say, Alison, everything is less than something more than it is. Darian's is a work of integrity and impeccable scholarship. It is essentially a book of evidence in that respect. But returning to your question, readers should not forget that they can go to primary sources as their curiosity dictates, or if they wish for a more expansive account of things. Altogether, it's not a difficult read, and I would hope that everyone enjoys the journey. Above all, readers should not lose touch with this book's admirable theme.

FAITH?

No, no. I'm referring to the meta-theme.

THERE'S A META-THEME?

Credulity, Alison. Credulity. How else can you explain three psychiatrists?

---

## POETRY

There are two poets quoted in the text: Vissy Mofo (Captain Hate), who contributed personally to Darian's research (WF266), and the more widely known Erico Satroit, whom we meet only in poetic voice. This writer cannot say whether the two ever met, but there are strands of commonality, both philosophical and, to some extent, technical, in their work.

Satroit is famous for expressing two canonical principles, which relate to purpose and aesthetic, respectively. Regarding the first, he asserts that the reason we have poetry—its single purpose—is seduction. All his work needs to be read with this postulate in mind. With 'A Suitor's Reverie' (WF95), for example, he has no interest in a masculine reading; his audience is women. Indeed, the poem is a gift to women, and as they read he would have them thinking not of its suitor, but of Satroit. Once this is understood, it becomes obvious that Satroit was never writing for men. That simple truth, he would say (and this writer agrees), was not a matter of limitation, but of purpose.

(A purpose, by the way, that would find Satroit no more writing about peonies or wading birds or wheat fields than he would a capstan lathe. Poetry is flight from the banal, as is seduction.)

And for Satroit that purpose had an existential seriousness. Interviewed for *La Tortuga*, he was asked: *Why is there poetry?*

The beautiful attract the beautiful, and the unbeautiful the unbeautiful. For that reason, seduction is possible, and poetry exists.

*But why should there be poetry? Why should there be poets?*

Poetry is immortality. Poetry is eternity. Why should there be eternity?

Well. Perhaps. It is true that Satroit is still in print, but the overlord of that eternity is a publisher.

We often see Satroit enter and leave his poems effortlessly, like an unremarked house guest. He is a portage man bringing wryness, distance and display, sometimes illicit and always observant. Here is Satroit in the voice of the celebrant–seducer (from ‘The Betrothal’, see WF254):

Will you teach this man to be a poet,  
to temper word with madness finely?

There is nothing ‘lawful, wedded’ about this ceremony and, a moment later, he is commentating from outside:

He knowingly stirs the alchemical fire  
invisibly fusing his art and desire.

The effect is a scheming, slightly off-putting sentiment similar to that coming from the meditation in ‘The Guardianship of the Holy Land’ (WF95). But its meaning should not be misread. There is no genuine darkness, no malice here. Seduction is not a contest for Satroit, and poetry is not power. In consequence, there is a refreshing absence of gender self-consciousness, and of shame.

The argument to support this can be found in both Satroit’s work and his life. When he writes in the feminine voice, the sensitivities that we might call dangerous are indistinguishable from the male. Moreover, while the purpose of poetry was as stated, the intentionality was theoretic, lacking in realized premeditation, and was itself an object of poetic interrogation. (Much of the humour in Satroit comes from contradictions here.) Finally, perversely and audaciously, he confused his critics by declaring for art: the purpose of seduction was the poetry that came of it. As for his life, that was a journey, he once said (in his memoir *Damascene*), in search of a woman who would write for him as he would write for her.

We can only really appreciate Satroit’s work, and understand love poetry at all, if we accept that a poem’s genius is not of the present. No man or woman is writing *in flagrante*. The imagery, the conviction, the language, the breathing, are not live on the page but conceptions from the past. Writing is an act of deliverance. Writing is an artful retelling. In short, seduction is not imagined: it is remembered.

This is what Vissy Mofo was meaning when he stated (WF109) that the proper tense of poetry is the past erotic. Similarly, in another work, ‘Tyrian Purple’ from *Black Levant*, Satroit refers to

... the long passion  
that ends in shocking intimacy.

In context, these lines are only ambiguously sexual, but it could hardly be clearer why poetic ideals of seduction and the erotic are necessarily situated in the past.

But for us, outside the poetry, there is a larger discourse to embrace. A poet is never a single being, and a poem is never a single text. Every poem is both fragmentation and cohesion, and a good writer does not strive to conceal the fact. Those fragments are the poem's antecedents, and the poem's antecedents are the poet's past. For Satroit, there is a watchful algebraist. For Vissy Mofo it is the classicist:

Sixty winters doin' time  
Eatin' rhythm, drinkin' rhyme  
Pomegranate don't cross dat line  
Happy birthday Proserpine  
Serve her spelt and Doctor Quine  
And seki fruit made into wine.

(From 'Hey Deborah' in *Captain Hate World Hood Tour*.) More obviously, of course, the same influence is found in 'Z-words in Latin' (WF115).

[Incidentally, the past, in this sense of the poet's past and our investment in memory, is what drives Tøssentern's illness (WF91), which is a form of fragmentation, and his recovery. He recognizes this himself at the end of a therapy session (WF100):

And the word I've lost; I need to go back, to remember it.

Tøssentern's miracle, we are led to believe, is that the word, which is also his private benediction and key to letting go of *Abel*, comes back to him not by ordinary recall but by revisitation (WF254).]

It has been mentioned already that Satroit and Vissy Mofo share philosophical similarities. One of these might be described as a sort of indexical delinquency, particularly in the role of poet as observer and commentator. Both writers, occasionally, seem to inhabit their poet like an imposter, instilling a voice that is worldly and satirical, but ultimately fraudulent. This is evident in the lines quoted from 'The Betrothal', above. In 'Hey Deborah' we find:

Lady Lune is out of Fed  
Sentence was was sentence said  
Shot live lyrics through da head  
Don't look up, keep playin' dead  
Don't destroy my rapper cred.

We have to wonder just how safe would Vissy Mofo be when visiting the hood after that.

Satroit's aesthetic principle set him apart from contemporaries. Also, as mentioned, an algebraist, he observed;

There exist only two forms of expression combining precision, brevity and beauty. These are mathematics and poetry.

The popular debate as to which of these, as a language, might be superior to the other, and how to make and test that choice (see **Succinctness**), began with Satroit. For him, though, this was not a serious question; the mathematical model and the literary metaphor were equivalent metonymies, even when he was sometimes playful in relating the two (see, for example, WF95).

But this was an aesthetic equivalence, and not difficult for either mathematician or poet to assimilate. (Indeed, no one has more successfully, in this writer's opinion, synthesized a compound aesthetic by reacting the

symbolic with the sensual.) Satroit's struggle was never with beauty, even if his poet's idea of seduction changed in clarity and complexity over time. His struggle was with purpose.

Biographers always tend to identify tragic themes. In Satroit's case, all agree that while his mathematician self understood and accepted the purpose of poetry, his poet self was forever seeking the reason for mathematics. Although Satroit found no peace in this enquiry, those who study his evolving work can see an inevitability emerging, not apparent to the poet himself. The inevitability is this: Satroit would have discovered, given time, that the purpose of mathematics is also seduction.

## CREATION MYTHS

In this writer's view, these are rarely taken seriously, but should be. Darian has reason to mention four: Queen Rep'husela and the emergence of the Ferendes (WF54); the birth of the Cycladic peoples (WF107); Verita, apostrophized into being on an isolated signpost (WF192); and the even more extraordinary coming to life of Millicent Ropey (WF189). In a quintessentially Australian tradition, Millicent was conceived, gestated and born on the front seat of a Commodore sedan. International readers with an interest in cultural studies and comparative ethnology should look into the corresponding goings-on in the front seat of a Citroën (WF117).

EXERCISE: Who said 'The purpose of a Citroën is seduction'?

## MATHEMATICS

Of 500 index entries in *The Weaver Fish*, more than forty allude to mathematical persons, terms, or entities. Readers might entertain themselves in discovering these and providing explanation where this is not obvious. A small selection is here singled out for discussion, and reader EXERCISES. The grading of difficulty is scaled for non-mathematicians. Those with an engineering or mathematics background will find nothing unfamiliar, and nothing original.

(1) [Elementary] The *conic sections* (studied by Archimedes, and others), being the ellipse (of which the circle is a special case), the parabola and the hyperbola, share adjectival forms with other words (ellipsis, parable and hyperbole). How have these ambiguities presented in the text? (Incidentally, insofar as the circle is a special case of the ellipse, the ellipse, conversely, can be viewed as a circle distorted by the property of *eccentricity*—much as an Englishman can be viewed as a German with eccentricity.)

(2) [Elementary] Darian alludes to 'chain rule' in several different senses. Identify four and explain these.

(3) [Intermediate] Anna Camenes (WF112) uses the term 'eigenvalue problem' facetiously. What is the correct sense of this term? Use the equation

$$Av = \lambda v$$

to begin your answer.

(4) [Advanced] [The gamma function (WF94)] Given that (for  $x$  real,  $x \neq$  zero or the negative integers):

$$\Gamma(x) = \int_0^{\infty} t^{(x-1)} e^{-t} dt,$$

show that  $x\Gamma(x) = \Gamma(x + 1)$  (using integration by parts) and hence, by matching recurrence properties, that  $n! = \Gamma(n + 1)$ . Evaluate  $\Gamma(1)$  to show that  $0! = 1$ .



Evaluate  $\Gamma(\frac{1}{2})$ . Thus prove that the length of the side of a square equal in area to the unit circle is  $(-\frac{1}{2})!$  What would Princess Peripherea have made of that? (Answer: *Can't.*)

(5) [Advanced] Darian has indexed 'convolution' to WF158:

Its meaning was convolved with everything that had gone before.

The convolution of two continuous functions  $x(t)$  and  $h(t)$  is

$$y(t) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} x(\tau) h(t - \tau) d\tau.$$

Why has the mathematical concept of convolution been employed by Darian in this instance? What insight does it bring to our understanding of events in everyday life? (Use a signal processing model to illustrate your answer.)

It is well known that the operation of convolution in the time domain corresponds to multiplication in the Laplace domain, a vast simplification (providing transforms and inverse transforms are available). That is, for the case above and using obvious notation:

$$Y(s) = X(s) H(s).$$

Discuss Laplace transformation as a method of analogical reasoning. What, more generally, is the prevalence and importance of analogical reasoning? (Give other examples.) Could we be rational beings without it? Would invention exist? In what sense are two languages analogical? If analogical relations are symmetric, are absolutes possible?

(6) [Advanced] The (Dirac) delta function  $\delta(t)$  is defined by the integral

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \delta(t) dt = 1,$$

being everywhere zero except at  $t = 0$ . Why has it been indexed as it has? How has the delta function entered into your answer to the previous question?

## BIOLOGY OF THE FERENDES

The writer has no special expertise in this subject, and advises readers with an interest to use online resources or seek out the references that Dr Darian will make available. In the meantime, two group EXERCISES are suggested that will get book club members outside for a fun expedition.

(1) If you are not a resident of the Ferendes, visit your local academic herbarium or botanical garden and ask if you can be shown seki vines. Touch the leaf and hold it up to the light. What do you see? If you are very lucky the vine may be fruiting. Feel the weight and skin texture of the fruit (do not pluck it!), and enjoy its scent. Observe its colouration near the stem (WF48). Make pencil drawings of the leaf and, if possible the fruit, along with nature notes, using the blank page (WF271) provided in your copy of *The Weaver Fish*.

(2) When outside over the coming weeks, train yourself to look upwards and count the number of birds in each distinct flock that you see. If necessary, photograph them for later study. Record the results on page 271, along with their factorizations. Share data with others in your reading group. How often are these flock counts 3-divisible? Do you live on a swint migration geodesic? How precisely does the phenomenon of thriving in swints relate to that of *ménage à trois* commonly found in sophisticated book club populations?

## JULIUS CAESAR

As far as we know, Julius Caesar's *lacta alea est* is the first literary hoax in history, just as his Rubicon crossing (WF120) began a continuing military tradition of self-mythologizing.

These and other discoveries have led to a collapse of trust in late pre-Christian Roman sources. In a recent paper in *Redux*, a most conservatively refereed journal, Milton Noyes (WF120) first questions whether Caesar's alleged 55 BC visit to Britain was a fiction designed to impress the Senate. He argues that events of that year could easily have been fabricated from facts ascertained shortly thereafter, specifically in the invasion of 54 BC, for which the record is more recent and reliable.

Noyes' suggestion is not radical. Writing less than a hundred years after Caesar, St Ignorius documented the arrival of Christianity. But he was also a secular historian, and his account of the Roman Empire was not equalled in accuracy and lucidity until the time of Gibbon. We have testament to his industry and scholarship in the chapters on the Syllabines (WF119), on whom he is the classical authority (he wrote a commentary on *Cisalpinus*). From this we know that he was quite able to research and describe, with detachment and rigour, events of many centuries earlier.

And yet, not once in the *Gospel* (WF88) is there mention of a CAIVS IVLIVS CAESAR, despite that alleged history being so much closer to its author's time. This fact has always disturbed historians, but no one, including Gibbon, has ventured the obvious inference: that Caesar was not a significant figure, undeserving even of a footnote in an essentially contemporary, and comprehensive, historical text.

Noyes has changed that, and with bravura. His argument in a second *Redux* article, presented with all the cogency and dispassion expected of modern criticism, begins by systematically displaying what he terms the veridical porosity of the *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*. There follows an even more damning analysis of the *C. de Bello Civili*, demonstrating that both are works not of history but (in the modern idiom) of historical fiction. Noyes concludes that their putative author and central actor is a character of fantasy created to inspire the Roman people, glorify the Republic, and terrify the enemies of empire with a military and political demigod.

It follows that a modern reappraisal of these works, and indeed of all the written exploits of 'Julius Caesar', is as much a task for literary scholars as students of military and civil history. The immediate problem is to determine who originated the character and wrote his story, and how they projected this fiction so credibly that Caesar acquired the presence of a national figmentation (WF190) which, as we will see, influenced true historical events and brought about the end of the Republic.

According to Noyes, the foremost candidate as Caesar's creator is the gifted Roman dramatist known to contemporaries by his Greek cognomen, Kubos (meaning six-faced, presumably a reference to dramatic artistry). Widely travelled in Gaul, Germania, Hispania, Britain and Egypt, Kubos needed only to insert his fictitious hero into actual places and historical situations to provide a grand, plausible narrative.

With rhetorical skills rivalling those of Cicero, and a mastery of open theatre surpassing the Greek tragedians, Kubos would stage wholly convincing public performances in the Forum, in the Senate, or in regional cities and military camps across the empire. These acquired realism from their topicality and seeming spontaneity, and radiated such naturalism and immediacy that the existence of Caesar entered the normative. More than that, a living, visible signifier of the heroic dictator-general would become a cultural and political imperative, a need most ably filled, Noyes believes, by Kubos himself in the role. So persuasive was the actor, and so total his immersion into character, that Kubos would soon be met with acclamation and hailed as 'Caesar' wherever he appeared.

A larger question is what motivated Kubos beyond a dramatist's instinct for entertainment. There is evidence in the writings of Cicero and many others, and in events themselves, that for Kubos the persona of Caesar functioned as an instrument of ambitions that were more political than thespian. If true, this might explain why he chose to portray Caesar's death as a callous murder, staged provocatively and flamboyantly in the Theatre of Pompey, with actors in the roles of named senators whom Kubos clearly held in political contempt.

This was an act of astounding audacity (comparable with his character's fictitious 'crossing the Rubicon', which amounted to a declaration of war on Rome). So popular and revered had Caesar become in the Roman imagination, and so incarnate his presence on the national stage, this portrayal of his death and the treachery depicted were met with real grief and anger, and recrimination against those who were represented as perpetrators.

Whether this outcome suited its author's ends, we cannot judge, as records attest that Kubos withdrew from public life around that time. Perhaps the emotive power of his brief, dramatic scene, and its effect on the populace, surprised even him. Perhaps he underestimated the Roman need for a superman, a symbol of invincibility, in their midst. Perhaps he fled in fear of prosecution for inciting civil disorder, or tort of defamation. What we do know is that, given all the outrage, the rawness of feeling, and the turmoil it caused, the event might well have been the actual murder of an actual hero. Such is the power of great theatre to draw an audience into the simulacrum, and leave them unwitting actors in its consequential world.

Noyes' research has an intriguing, and urgent, implication: a new and more sophisticated reading of Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar' is indicated, to determine whether its author was writing inside the simulacrum, or outside of it. In other words, did Shakespeare believe he was depicting the last days of an historical figure, or did he know he was simply adapting (some might say plagiarizing) a prior work of Kubos for the Elizabethan stage?

## PARSAN GAP

Nicholas Misgivingston's discovery (WF156) that every language is identifiable from the stochastic properties of its Parsan gaps is fundamental. The direction of research is now to determine whether the gaps carry information not only about the language they belong to, but also the sense of the speech of which they are an integral part.

Misgivingston's hypothesis is that the gaps, which are very rich statistically (see *Stochastic Signatures of the Parsan Gap*), do encode meaning essentially equivalent to that more obviously conveyed by the words they apparently serve to separate. Indeed, there is a suggestion that in Ferent languages the bandwidth of gaps exceeds, in theory, the capacity of vocabulary, and is already exploited subliminally by native speakers. (Perhaps this explains why that language group was thought to be at risk of extinction, when in fact it was simply a case of silence becoming more functionally dominant.)

Human hearing has a sensitivity, in frequency and interval terms, in the upper microsecond range. This is more than sufficient, with properly directed learning, to detect, analyze and recognize the statistics of gaps. (Those with a musically trained ear are likely to acquire this skill more readily.) Misgivingston envisages a universal language (*lingua Parsa*) which exploits this semantic content in the silence. Then, spoken words, foreign or otherwise, will come to be recognized as arbitrary tokens of partitioning that simply serve to define the gaps.

There is an evolutionary current here, long evident to students of language cladistics. Linguists and anthropologists recognize that the human race is entering an inevitable phase of linguistic re-convergence. (Indeed, Tøssentern's LDI programme (WF35) was set up in response to this.) Expected to be a crude argot of English and acronym, it comes as a surprise that the Parsan gap, latent for so long in the speech of every culture, will be the basis of this universal language.

For those not persuaded by an evolutionary paradigm, there is the biblical:

The chatterers shall fall silent, and the tea house deserted.

(From *Iconoclastes*, WF88.) Readers could well interpret events at Mr Felicity's, 'The restaurant had fallen silent ...' (WF248) as an evocation of those apostolic words.

Intriguingly, we might also speculate whether it was a deeper insight into Parsan silence, rather than music, that was Tøssentern's 'apotheosis of human communication' (WF99). The connection between silence, music and meaning is also evident at 'hymnal' (WF101).

It is fitting to reflect on the fate of the Syllabines. They who 'suffered in silence' (WF120) the invasion of Latin will have ancestral reign over the last empire of language where, in turn,

... the Roman listens in wonderment.

(WF256). According to Lord Enright, there aren't many pleasures in an historian's work. But when one comes, irony is the best.

**EXERCISE** In your book club conversations, did you pay attention to Parsan gaps? What meanings did you ascribe to them? (Remember that the least talkative may be saying the most and with the greatest eloquence: WF112.)

## ARCHITECTURE

As Darian documents events, people and places, it is natural that he mention buildings along the way. But he pays little attention to the built object, the physicality or aesthetic of design. Indeed, Anna's conception of her house is so insubstantial that it 'might have vanished, as from a conversation' (WF113). It does in fact vanish, into synecdoche, as 'Chaucer Road' (WF39; 49; 240). So too does Clement House, as 'Mingle Lane' (WF103; 242; 253).

Perhaps Darian is simply not interested in description. Whatever the reason, architecture for the author is an abstraction. It is a means for partitioning space (rather as words partition silence; see **Parsan Gap**). In particular, architecture functions to make for us an inside and an outside.

The importance of this simple, undemanding precept is also in the abstract: in themes of separation, privacy, curiosity, anxiety, conflict, and paradox. To be reminded of this, the reader need look no further than the history of Oriel Gardens (Chapter 2), and Anna Camenes' musings at the start and finish of Chapter 3.

The greater abstraction, though, is the idea of metaphoric power in the built form, and this is apparent throughout the book. For example, it presents, unsurprisingly, in discussions about Fitrina's fountain (WF239), and in the recurring motif of the greenhouse (WF87; 112; 240).

There are refinements. One is the obvious connection between the notion of interior and the mental, perhaps noumenal, world. This is evident in Anna Camenes' thoughts (WF112), and Edvard Tøssentern's 'inner picture world of adversities' (WF91).

Another will be familiar to anyone who has experienced a sense of unease, or some unexplained reaction such as contemplativeness, sadness, or repulsion, about a particular place. This is the *genius loci*, and Darian brings it to the reader in the Passible Tracts (WF101), for example. But there is a connected thematic vehicle as well, more existential and more poetic. It is the *trace humaine* (WF60: the 'visit to Edvard'; 76; 242). This is memory belonging to the place; it is about death, and its presence is never anything but melancholy.

In discussing a partition in functional terms, such as interior and exterior, it is important to remember its means. This is always a boundary of some kind, often physical and well defined, like steel (WF24) or aircraft alloy (WF32). (Perhaps the simplest, and most literal, structure is the *solidus* separating two numerals in a fraction; see WF120 for examples.)

But it may instead be liminal, like a building's façade imbued with human expression (WF19), or the human face itself, the 'vener' (WF112) concealing privacy, and madness. Here also are included those boundaries that are implicit, and never crossed so much as transgressed, as occurs with Satroit (see **Poetry**), who flits between the subjective and objective like a miscreant verb.

And strangely, between the definitely physical and the definitely liminal, there can be found the indefinite, a layer that is liquid, ambiguous and magical. It is the only paradox in architecture, and it will be discussed in the entry for **Glass**.

EXERCISE: Who said 'The purpose of architecture is seduction'?

## **AMBER LAKE**

This (WF101) is a literal translation from what is known as *blot* Norse (WF102). It probably signifies a body of water having amber washed upon its shore, which is not unusual. Equally, it could refer to a lake composed of amber, a dramatic and extravagantly beautiful image.

## EXAMINATION PAPER (time allowed: 1 hour)

- (1) Who is 'a Portage man', and why? (Index)
- (2) There are two index entries referencing a particular philosopher with no mention of that person's name. What are they and who is it?
- (3) Why is it that 'all angles are in radians'? (WF5) Give at least three reasons.
- (4) What is Tyrian purple? How is it related to indigo?
- (5) What is the Tristan chord?
- (6) What is sonata form?
- (7) Why is the Sistine Chapel so called? What is Tenebrae?
- (8) What are the meanings of 'martingale'?
- (9) What is a catenary?
- (10) What is the meaning of the term 'sample space'?
- (11) What is transitivity?
- (12) Why is 'syllogism' indexed as it is?
- (13) Explain the index entry 'ayeless in Parsa'.
- (14) How did Worse calculate 'five and a half seconds'? (WF123) (Equation and full workings please.)
- (15) There is a spoonerism. What is it?
- (16) What is entropy?
- (17) What is a (Galton) quincunx?
- (18) Noyes' analysis of Syllabine arithmetic has been explained (WF121). But what is noise analysis?
- (19) Explain Milton Noyes' ambivalence (WF120).
- (20) Explain how Leonardo di Boccardo's downfall was a raven call (WF256).

Send your answer sheet for marking to:

A B C Darian  
Poste Restante  
Madregalo Kardia 10001  
Republic of Ferendes