



THE POOR PRINT



The Frustrations of a Fallible Mind

Lucy Mellor

Unimaginable complexity; the norm in a society consumed by technology most of us don't understand. Taken most for granted though, is the human form; familiar as anything, and yet no-one has quite figured us out. Criticism of the self comes far too easily, but we are all a microcosm of the universe itself, a million different processes happening in our cells every day. Copy *War and Peace* 300 times without a single mistake? This happens every time our cells divide and our DNA is copied.

Not surprising then, that we aren't entirely infallible. But no process is quite as rubbish as our memory. It matters not so much when a day is mundane. I'm glad that our minds aren't filled with every insignificant detail of everything that has ever happened, or ever will happen, to us.

But the times you really want to remember. The nights you get into bed and spend just a couple of minutes before you go to sleep thinking about the wonder of that day, and the joy you can still feel. Then you wake up in the morning and it's gone, a shadow of its former self if anything remains at all.

Of the 7078 days I have lived at the time of writing, I am confident that more than a handful of these were happy, and good things happened, but they're out of reach, locked in a box on a high shelf my five foot self cannot grasp. Occasionally a box falls off the shelf, triggered by a word, or image, or the smell of a summer evening which was only spent on a balcony overlooking Funchal harbour, playing cards with my grandparents for arbitrary trophies like the moon and the stars.

Actively trying to commit an event to memory can help, but is often futile. The desire to remember

morphs into frustration at the inability of the mind to perform such a task, stronger than any previous awe one might have had for an entity performing an inordinate number of miracles at any one time.

Memory is the foremost area whereby the brain lets us down, evolution not caught up with our wishes to recall the coolness of an ice cream from a funfair in mid-June, no obvious aid to our survival. Survival of a sense of identity certainly, but not a priority for a being whose main purpose is to exist until the next day.

There is a lingering sadness that once happy times may never be relived, a lurking feeling that life is passing by quicker than can be

dutifully jotted down in the mind's notebook. Sometimes I wish there was a camera on my forehead, so that at any time I might scroll back through footage and experience it again, but in the crisp quality captured by video cameras and not through the hazy smog of a memory blurred at the edges by time and lack of attention.

The dissatisfaction is exacerbated by being a fault in myself, an area in which I am lacking but am unable to compensate for, save for taking photographs at every opportunity. The only conclusion is acceptance of this flaw in biology and the living of life anyway; I could train my memory to be better, but it is laborious, and besides, there are memories of good times to be made and forgotten. ■

Dissertation on Roast Goose

Jacob Warn

On St. George's Day at Oriel College, Oxford, it is customary to feast on Roast Goose – fat Isaac Bird!

Indignant, I beat off the carnally-laden arms of our servers. Give me something blander, my appetite and I demand. My appetite, four years after forsaking the excess of Animal Meats is blanched, defrined, and become less discerning on my Sabine Fare of nuts and wooden mushrooms; the rearing head of Vegetarian *Taste* trodden low by canine diners' venous remarks.

Canine Teeth are, by-the-bye, one of the Meat-Eater's gravy-stock biological weapons against Lotus-Eaters. We are dentally-designed, they deign to declare, to tear sweet hunks of proteinous flesh; to dog-eat roasted game.

Nay, I cry, thumping down on the table. My eyes, through the fizzing decanters of water, gorging

and guttering madly. What meaneth you by meat (quoth I), dost thou refer to Pulled Pork, Plucked Poultry and Burnt Beef, all species of your Animal Kingdom? Fair Kingdom this ruled over with such callousness - how far from mellifluous Arcadia and Edenic Bliss where naught was eaten but what Earth did grow herself! Consult your Dictionaries - fools! - your Thesauruses and Etymologists. Find you writ therein such circumscribed semantic bounds? Meat meets with no such meaning. Meat is but food, the stuff we chew.

Try, I do contest, to tear the Portobello Mushroom sans Canine tusk; attempt the Tender Asparagus without tautening its tendrils on these magnificent members of the oral orifice. Thou shalt not succeed, I warrant. Yet this besides, is meat not justly that name giv'n to all of Nature's comestible crop? To the sylvan nut and risen loaf? Callest not th'exotic coconut's white innards *Flesh*? You see, the Fools that call themselves Meat-Eaters are non other than Nut-Eaters, eaters of the very Planteous Substances they decry as our diet!

Reign in these infallibilities I ought – lest Meaty Mouth catch the Trickling Tears brought on by this Right Righteousness. Yet hold I won't, but follow hard-on with more. For as I spy the Goosen repast of my neighbours, a smell divine wafts to my wettened nostrils and so assaults the brain I cannot help but plead, beg, wish to steal with scythe and pitch a forkful of the stuff. *Edax me facit!*!

With supercilious stare, my company inquire why I - the *Vegetarian* - profane a Green Creed thus. Tush (I reply), judge me not till I've had this bite. And raising forth a fork heaped with this gravy-drenched goose, I plunge Neptune's Trident, flecked with sea of oinoscent sauce cascading, into the blissful aboccalyptic abyss. This cataract of quintessence! of Sublimity it tastes! Such food that buds such Sensation! Gluttony come! Sweet Murder, ye too! Flavour unbeknownst to man ere 8pm! O Cook! adulterer of men, where be your hands, that so have braised and burnished this big bird! Thus these four years have

this as their reward; the reward of Porphyric abstinence! Tender; thick; yet I confess much much too swiftly torn by well-designed dentals. And as my throat like turkey bold swells proudly, so too do those throats owning to my wretched friends bulge big with whelps of glee.

Demanding a pound of flesh for my hypocrisy, they scoff and scorn my Principles. How can you claim the Noble Title of *Vegetarian*, O Worm, base Creature of Our Breed? From exalted Pretension, thou joinst us at a Customary Fare. Ye, who railed so long of abstinence pure, to protect and preserve *Natura's* Realm, your meaty cake belies a bloody belly.

Yet I, made strong on tender loin, rise tall, profess the Creed and reassure my Policy. Thrusting a licked finger in boasting breasts shout, Be ye numbskulls and nitwits still? That so forthrightly and forthrighteously accuseth me of inconstancy when all you here doth daily slaughter fair and fragile Nature's breed? I taste this once - an annual treat - and think

yourselfs vindicated sweet? Call you the Christian *Pagan* when he does minutely lapse in sin? No! It is the trial and the test - the long race of repentance to salvation that doth win eternity! And how much greater than this religiophile, am I, who thinks not of my own Salvation, but of yours and your dear children. How ill will they then live, when all these geese are gone and the Whole Earth becometh Dust? (Not pre-creative dust of God, but famished, fainted dust of over-fished and over-farmed land?) This feather on a pile - this drop among the seas - what signifies your Hypotheses? 'Tis groundless like the Land you decreate with your Habitual Munchings and Misguided Murders. If I from infrequent vice do virtue gain and strong reaffirmation retain of my non-absolutist Creed, then you, diurnally, do debase and direfully degrade our Planetary Orb and do no absolution take of Nature's Soul. Call me not Cad for One Small Bite of Goose. Think yourselves Doomed for Tying still the Noose. ■

Operation Recovery

John Webb

Jhave to say that this is an abridged article as I have sold the full story to the Oxford Mail (World Edition) which will appear shortly under the banner headline 'I Beat Hernia'. It is based loosely on a two thousand year-old tale about medical matters by that renowned Roman scholar and social commentator Bennyus Hilum (google - Benny Hill).

After five hours I was wheeled in to see the anaesthetist and was immediately rendered unconscious. Whilst in this state I be-

gan to have experiences some- Banbury, Oxfordshire. Well, it what similar to those of Major seemed pretty much like Heaven Tom (see David Bowie). I was to me.

floating effortlessly in a state of unbridled euphoria towards the Gates of Heaven. However, unlike said Major, I was then subjected to an attempted in-the-nick -of-time rescue by Luke Skywalker.

My immediate thought was this: why does he always do last-minute rescues? Why does he not get organised and set off earlier? Anyway - I avoided the rescue and proceeded through the Gates. At this point I regained consciousness and discovered that Heaven was, in fact, Bed 7, Day-care Unit, The Horton Hospital,

Banbury, Oxfordshire. Well, it what similar to those of Major seemed pretty much like Heaven Tom (see David Bowie). I was to me.

I must admit that, as I was being prepared for my return, I found some instructions rather confusing. When I asked how long it would be before I could drive again, I was told to do so only if I could do an emergency stop. As I have been driving for 54 years (not continuously) I know that these stops are notoriously difficult to perform unless you are actually driving! The reply to my seeking an answer as to how far I should walk to regain fitness was to go as far as I thought I was able. If I am doing a there-and-back walk how the hell will I

know at what point I should turn round?

There were various booklets to read regarding recovery and what and what not to do. I was mightily cheered by the news that I could resume sexual activity when it was "comfortable". On mentioning this to my wife I received a distinctly uncomfortable "no bl**dy chance, you old b**st*rd" look from her.

Anyway, all seems to be progressing well apart from my nether regions looking rather black. Unfortunately there has been no discernible increase in dimensions! I would like to say to my colleagues that I'm sorry not to be at work, but I can't bring myself to! ■

CONTRIBUTE TO THE POOR PRINT

The Poor Print welcomes your response to the print edition. If you have something to say, email thepoorprint@oriel.ox.ac.uk and we can publish your comments online. Alternatively, connect with us on Twitter: [@PoorPrint](https://twitter.com/PoorPrint)

We are also accepting pieces for the final edition of this academic year, to be published on Friday of 8th week.

Please submit your article to: thepoorprint@oriel.ox.ac.uk

Issue 12 - GOODBYE
5th June

SLOW TRAVEL: Paradise in the Pacific

Tobias Thornes

I'm going in search of an island. It's no ordinary island. You won't find it on any map; it can't be seen from space. Yet it's the size of Texas. The only way to reach it is by sea, but you won't see it coming. You'll only know you've reached it when it already surrounds you. This is an

'Rubbish'

Aidan Chivers

in my head
are two fossilised lips
and a ripped-up card
and a sky that's bright, and blue, and black –
a blade of grass, shining off your cheek
floating, dancing in the dizzy heat
of a hundred lazy, washed-out summers...
there's an angry complaint
and a cidery kiss
two burning lungs
five sharpened nails
and a dishevelled mass of playful hair –
a grassy prayer
and a rocky love-you
a smile
a tear
and the hiss of a yes
with the gleam of sweat down the back of a neck
two shadows on a step
in a big, wide world.
it's rubbish to you
but here I am

aethereal island, one that didn't exist a century ago. An island composed of spent dreams and ugly remnants: the refuse of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the flotsam and jetsam of the wreckage of the modern world. A whirlpool of waste; a giant reef of rubbish.

Getting there, it's going to be a long journey – that I know for certain. The 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch', as my destination has come to be known since its not entirely unexpected discovery by a trans-Pacific sailor in 1999, lies at the nucleus of a swirling gyre of congregating ocean currents in the vast open ocean between Hawaii and Japan, which drags debris of all kinds from the coasts of Asia and North America into its poisoned plastic heart. Not many boats cross these waters – nearly four thousand miles separate the two archipelagos – and given that the huge tourist ocean liners that occasionally make the crossing are scarcely less harmful to the environment than aeroplanes, I'm seeking out a smaller ship that will take even longer than usual to traverse the distance. In 2008, a Japanese sailor managed this task on a boat powered entirely by waves. The journey lasted nearly one hundred days, but without any greenhouse gas emissions at all.

My slow travel across the Pacific will be slightly faster, but by the slightly murkier means of a new solar- and sail-powered ship. When the sun shines and the wind blows, these renewable resources will replace our dirty diesel generator to propel us across the waves. I've crossed from Korea to Japan, that other Asian centre of innovation, to join a fishing expedition with a difference, trawling for trash rather than trout from the deeps. It's another irony to me that Japan, this crucible of science and research, this somewhat socialist society apparently content with economic stability rather than groping for growth, and the proponent and progenitor of rubbish-raking renewable transport, has facilitated and encouraged the production of so much of the cast-off clutter we're trying to collect.

Where have all those billions of gadgets – from computers to cameras, 'Walkmans' to wireless telephones – that Japanese companies have created and Japanese factories have proudly forged for half a century ended up? How much needless electronic waste has been piled up on land and at sea in the drive to produce ever smaller, fast-

er, 'better' devices and simply throw away and replace their perfectly workable but redundant predecessors? So many amazing feats of technology, taken for granted then tossed away.

Shanghai, Seoul, Tokyo – all look the same to me, despite their respective countries' very different histories, cultures and social systems. All of them have been colonised by a capitalist consumerism alien to their surroundings in space and time. It's these putrid palaces of human pride that best epitomise the out-with-the-old culture that is ravishing our world's resources and plasticising our own environment.

It's a magical morning when I board the boat. With a gleaming sun and a healthy wind we're set for a sustainable start to our voyage. Yet there's no denying that I go with dread and fear. Ahead of us spans a stupefying stretch of swirling sea; once we're hundreds of miles from shore, there'll be no turning back. And watching the enchanting islands of Japan receding into the distance, a land-lover like myself cannot help but foster pangs of regret. Alas, the thoughts I flounder to find to distract myself from the long voyage ahead are far from comforting. Though this ocean flaunts serenity today, peering into its silvery ripples I can't avoid musing on the wild waves that whipped up these waters into a force of such destruction that fateful March day in 2011. And who knows what noxious nuclear nasties now lurk beneath the surface, the remnants of a toxic soup concocted in that nightmare collision between the sloshing sea and an ill-prepared nuclear power station?

Not all human waste is visible, and it's what can't be seen that has the most frightful effects. Invisible particulates that line our lungs are the cruellest consequence of city air pollution; radiation poisoning may only make itself known days, weeks or years after exposure, in painful, grisly ways. Think of poor Marie Curie, who became so radioactive the cookery books she merely touched are still too dangerous to handle today. When at long last we reach our island of rubbish, it becomes clear that the same is true here. There are a few larger items bobbing here and there – fishing nets that can catch and kill passing marine mammals, though there's nobody here to haul them in; bottle-top buoys and trashed toys flushed from rivers and beaches and swept out to sea. But most plastics soon disintegrate under the

triple assault of salty spray, searing sun and unseen microorganisms, breaking into smaller and smaller pieces and leaching toxins into the blue.

So it is that we're surrounded by mostly unidentifiable remnants suffusing the surface, and hence the analogy of the semi-submerged island. It's difficult to believe just how vast this agglomeration is – mile after mile, hour after hour we plough our way through, picking up what pieces we can with a specially-designed scoop. But what we gather is all too literally a mere drop in the ocean. In fact, the most worrying thing of all is that the garbage patch isn't visible growing any bigger, even as the industrialised world pumps out more and more waste. All that rubbish must be going somewhere, but we can't see it.

Now we think we know the dirty truth. The pieces are becoming so small that they form an invisible plastic plankton, outnumbering real plankton in some parts of the ocean. These toxic trinkets are swallowed by plankton-eating fish, and slowly make their way up the food-chain. Pictures of sea-birds whose stomachs are stopped by indigestible pieces of their poisonous plastic feasts are the most horrifyingly visible evidence of the damage done by marine pollution. But the plastics and heavy metals that we dump may be wreaking still greater damage in a more insidious form, and if you eat fish they're probably already infiltrating your own dinner-plate.

Flushing away our needlessly-produced, deadly toxic rubbish 'out of sight, out of mind' is really just another way in which humanity is slowly undermining our own survival. Again I stare down into the murky water, this time thinking of the dumped crates of computers, wrecked ships and scuttled nuclear submarines that reportedly line the ocean floor, rotting away. When will the unseen sludge oozing from this detritus begin to seep all too unstoppably into our lives? Will these spectres from a careless past come back to haunt humanity's future? Or can we clean up our societies and clear up the time-capsules of calamity we've already planted before it's too late? I fear that only time will tell.■

Notes of Superiority, with Aromas of Arrogance

D.S.

"That's rubbish!" they exclaim, whilst sipping on only the very best craft beer that Manchester's Northern Quarter has to offer. Oasis' Wonderwall has just been voted Best British Single by listeners of Radio X. "Way too mainstream" agrees another. "I only listen to Indie™ bands. Once they get over 1000 followers on social media I stop listening." A moment of silent nods of agreement, gazes lowered in respect of Alternative Commandment Number Three.

"There used to be a Banksy round here." The mason jar of freshly roasted Arabica coffee is lowered as quickly as possible without spilling any. "Banksy? Ugh. He sold his soul to the very corporations he was protesting against. You want to be getting into grassroots graffiti. Protests of the people. Denouncing all power struc-

tures on a brick wall really makes people stop and think, you know?"

"It's not that I think I'm better than people who aren't vegan, it's just that, I kind of am." A look of fevered excitement that someone finally Gets It. "Yeah, it's like, milk is actually so bad for your body, but the government releases propaganda that it's good for you because it gets such large subsidies from dairy farmers." Rapid nodding. "We should just like, get rid of the government altogether." A brief pause to snort a couple of lines of cocaine.

Of all the kinds of (much exaggerated) hipster snobbery that irk me, music is the worst. Some things genuinely are better than others. Maybe you have the right to privately be a bit snobby that you've worked really hard to own your own house whilst your mate from school is doing as little as possible and still living at their mum and dad's. But given that every human ear receives vibrations slightly differently, the idea that you're

better than someone else for the music you like is laughable. Popular music is so because lots of people like it. That you don't like it doesn't make you special.

Love Will Tear Us Apart by Joy Division is their most famous song for a reason; it struck a chord with people – anyone who's ever been through a breakup, particularly a long term relationship, can understand that song. It doesn't mean it's their best; it's not even my personal favourite, but stop belittling people who've only ever listened to that one song.

Some people don't have time to listen to a band's entire back catalogue, and singles exist for a reason: the people who love it can go and listen to the artist's other work, and those who don't can just enjoy the single whilst it's on the radio.

That's why the phrase 'good music taste' is a misnomer. When someone says so-and-so has good music taste, what they really mean is that they

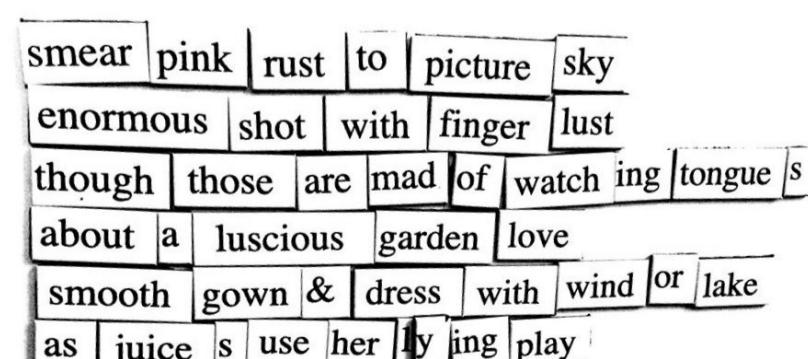
have similar music taste to me. That doesn't make it good or bad. If music wasn't subjective there wouldn't be as many genres as there are in the first place. 'Good music taste' however, pales in comparison to 'overrated'. This is thrown around by people who

think they're quirky for not liking what a large proportion of the population like, seemingly ignorant of the fact that they're therefore in the minority.

For example, to say that The Beatles are overrated completely misses the point. They were so wildly

liked because of what they represented: the new youth culture, the concept of 'teenager' for the first time, a breaking away from parents and rules. Culture today wouldn't be the same without them. And the reason so many people liked them is because there wasn't anything else for young people at the time anyway – so whether they're overrated or not is irrelevant.

There'll always be people who think they're better than everyone else for one reason or another, so the only thing left to say to music snobs is to enjoy life in your pretentious bubble, and Don't Look Back in Anger.■



Jenny Potter