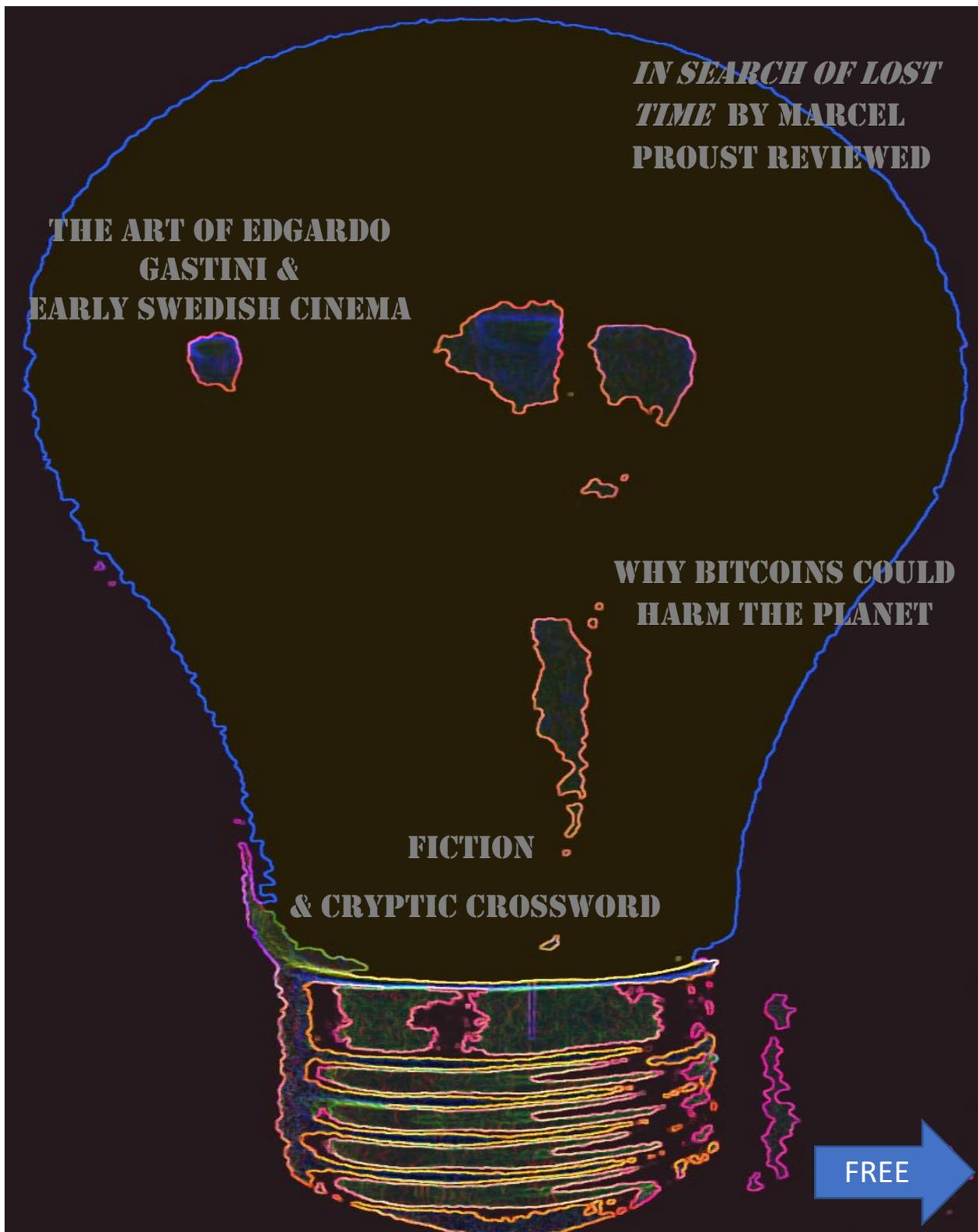


BULB MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2021 ISSUE #1



*IN SEARCH OF LOST
TIME* BY MARCEL
PROUST REVIEWED

THE ART OF EDGARDO
GASTINI &
EARLY SWEDISH CINEMA

WHY BITCOINS COULD
HARM THE PLANET

FICTION
& CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

FREE

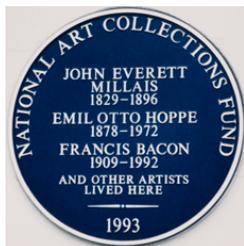
ART, CULTURE, SCIENCE & MORE

Welcome to the first issue of BULB Magazine. In the magazine we want to introduce interesting and thought-provoking content mainly focusing on art, culture and science. We are also interested in building a platform for discussion and debate. We are pleased to include writers and artists as contributors which allows us to feature original writing and artwork. Many thanks to all our contributors. More at – www.mylastboard.com Contact us at – mylastboard@outlook.com

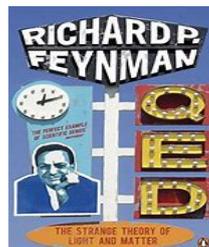
Cathy Bell (Editor)



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FEATURES

THE ART of EDGARDO GASTINI

Edgardo Gastini, who lives in Turin in Italy, started painting at the age of 21. He had his first solo exhibition in Stockholm in 1967 and since then he has had many exhibitions in Italy and abroad. In this first feature, BULB MAGAZINE would like to introduce Edgardo's artwork. He has kindly written a poetic and unique description of the deep exploration he has made into his personal creativity over several decades. Here is Edgardo's account of the processes involved in creating the artwork written in the artist's own words.

"There is not much time on search for another evolutive experiment like the one which has got spoilt owing to the ecologic catastrophe" ... Now we sound imagine a hypothetical witness of these happenings flying around with the flashing lightness of a kite surrounded by the dream of endless seas, spots of forests and glaciers. while sun penetrates the clouds revealing an unlimited horizon... what I'll meet at the end of my flight? Forever I'll try to reconcile eternal and transient concepts (the Being and Becoming in my work): WHAT AM I? I AM NOT THIS.....I AM NOT THAT... WELL, NOTHING BUT THIS VERY MOMENT'S BREATH OF THE WORLD. AND WHO ARE YOU? I'LL MEET YOUR LOOK ONE DAY.....THEN WE'LL KNOW THERE IS NO END TO THIS MOMENT.

FLASH BACK: In the beginning of my "journey "(1961-62) my creative bias followed a series of experiences connected with representative art, producing results which on One Direction exploded in the vibrating gestures of "1965 CRUCIFIXION" ... an on the other coagulated in peculiarly disfigured settings of 1967-68 iconic Pictosculptures. Then I kept on expressing myself with "cosmic visions " by a fan of explorations (the extreme was the lyrical minimalism of Elastic Modulus sewn on walls).

Then I reached my "Art of the Heart " by which I wished to express " the Cosmic Will of becoming humanlike" through visions expanding to utmost end and back to the Origin again and again. THE VISION: 1984-1994: an important feature of this fable-like of mine was a kind of western-eastern syncretism based upon the concept of " artistic prophecy" aiming at the creative use of EGO.

That tension in the beginning of the seventies hard given shape to an extremely rarefied feature, the above-mentioned wall-modulus, stressed by my temporale artname "eRgo" meant to emerge Cartesian reason and the Heart one. Before I had explored this essential score touch a series of expressionistic/symbolistic steps in the sixties: finally, I came to constellations of space-spots that became more and more tapered, giving shape to increasingly more frayed trace directly squeezed out of colour-cases; later on, they were related by the strings I began "to sew" canvases with. Finally, I got to the elastic modulus which consist of ribbons endowed with an inner aesthetic energy. In due time they revealed themselves as marks of the peculiar work done by "the Thinking Heart". House stretching-limit was broker by a "cosmic-like tear" in gelate seventies, giving birthday to the cycle of "post-deluge" works of the eighties:

Each work-course began by INTUITION: it urges the apparition of "space-time Becoming" which comes out of the timeless and unattainable dimension of "the Being" by virtue of the "Cosmic Tear." Then follows the SENTIMENT of Life. Figures, often human, come afloat mirrored in the ponds.... Later on through SENSATION should be perceived the meta-historical meaning of these figures. Mankind has overturned the games of "natural games" replacing them with those of "artificial ones" the resulting drama is enhanced by whirling flames (Dionysian side of such revolution) and beaming brightness (Apollonian side of it). In the end we get to the evidence of REASON: man has to plan creatively its own salvation, joining the Spirit of the Heart that has existed since the Big Bang, long before the separation between light and darkness; to show this indispensable expansion of consciousness I made superimpositions of canvases (symbolizing gradual approach to



space-time dimension) and set ribbon-like or wooden tensions, as to feature energetically the thinking Heart unceasing action. Those tensions derived from the elastic "modulus", were intended to link two layers of multi-signifying space-time scenes: when "elastic" energy goes out of the canvases onto walls or other surfaces, the outward stretch works as a connection between Destiny (the wall) and the happenings taking place in the dimension of "Becoming" I aimed at emphasizing the metamorphosis of "Soul Powers" (expressive motions "exorcizing" thoughts of fear and desire fighting in our mind); see for sample works like "Narcissus" (in which the central character finds himself within a sort of mirroring and stormy wheel of waters) or "Creation" (the Putto's winning Grace springs out flying over the re-emerging world). Each work was a step in the effort towards "AWARENESS" a witnessing meditation of the aforesaid Metamorphoses: as the scenes reach an excessive level of "pleasantness" flashing arrows of "Ratio" come out: history, hypocrisy is seen like a castle of cards swept away by the spontaneous "Hearth of Reality". AND NIGHTMARES WENT TO HEAVEN Since 1995 I've aimed at expressing themes in more and more concise ways using different kinds and shapes of mirroring surfaces (both hollow and convex) to improve the watcher's involvement. P.S. According to me painting has not to "explain" what is visible but reveal what is invisible (see with new eyes): the surface must vibrate, communicate euphoria and enthusiasm the artist has felt in conceiving and executing his work.



Images:

Above – Meta Historical Evolution (1992)

Left – Picto-Sculpture (1967)

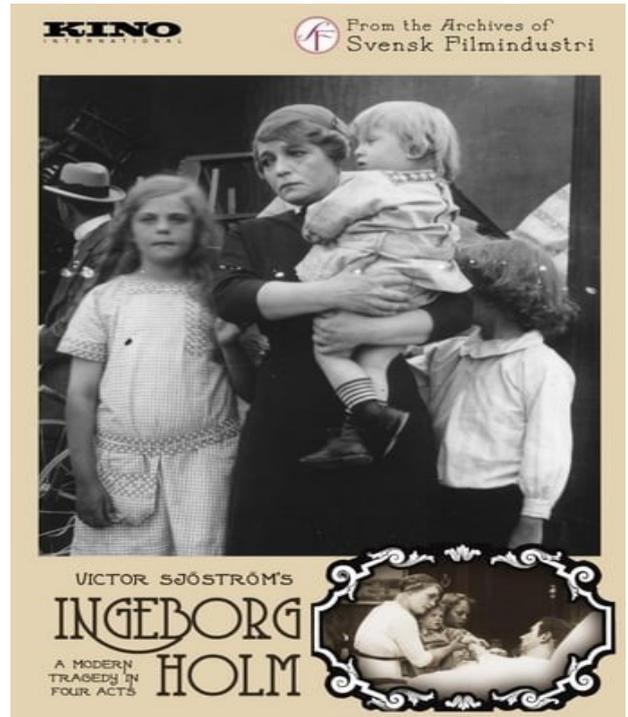
INGEBORG HOLM - THE REJECTION OF 'NORDIC NATIONAL ROMANTICISM'

Victor Sjöström's 1913 film *Ingeborg Holm* is a prime example of how film can influence wider society. Not only did this film positively alter public opinion on social security, but it became a catalyst for legal change in the form of the Swedish Poor Law Act of 1918.

Ingeborg Holm portrays the raw reality of poverty and death in early 1900's Sweden. Adapted from a play, the film follows a middle-class woman and her family who fall into a downward spiral of poverty due to the death of the father. In many ways, however, this film has a deeper meaning which can be read allegorically as Sjöström's attempt to disregard the ideas of National romanticism to portray a broken society masked by an idealistic view of Swedish culture.

Nordic Romanticism became the foundation and appeal of Scandinavian cinema during the silent film period of the 1910's, as highlighted by Kristin Thomson and David Bordwell, "Swedish films were characterised by their dependence on northern landscapes and by their use of local literature, costumes and customs." These elements succeeded in making Swedish cinema unique but also generated a romantic, idyllic view of the country, which disregarded the realities of social issues. In this idyllic image of Sweden, advances in gender equality meant that women did not require welfare. In reality however, this left women to suffer the consequences of poverty. This essay argues that Victor Sjöström's *Ingeborg Holm* managed to refute the notions of National Romanticism through film form and narrative, to generate national debate about social security and ultimately influence the 1918 Poor Law. Although this essay focuses on the final scene, it is important to reference the wider plot to analyse the allegorical nature of the narrative. The opening scene features the idealistic, progressive view of Sweden during the 1910s through the image of the Holm family. The Holms are the epitome of the ideal family, being middle-class, with perfect children and a beautiful countryside house, a home which quickly changes to a poorhouse. This location is significant in relation to the national romanticism we see Sjöström reject. As previously mentioned, Swedish films like *Trädgårdsmästaren* (The Gardener) and *The Outlaw and His Wife*, depended on picturesque northern landscapes. By setting *Ingeborg Holm* in a grimy poorhouse within a poverty-stricken city, he dismisses this romanticised version of the country to expose the reality of poverty and inequality. In addition to the location, the composition of the opening shot establishes the toddler as a key character throughout the narrative, and especially the final scene. Sjöström places the toddler at the forefront of the shot, beside his mother Ingeborg. Through this depth of staging, Jan Olsson argues, "The little boy, introduced on the thresh-hold of the diegesis, therefore turns into the very emblem of the family idyll." The toddler is innocent and even as he grows up in the final scene, is relatively ignorant of poverty. This composition could also foreshadow the vulnerability Ingeborg faces after her husband's death. Although in the eyes of the state she is perfectly capable to look after her children, in reality, she requires the state to take on the role of the caregiver. She is put in a position where she is just as powerless as her small children.

In Sweden during this time, laws were put in place which prevented welfare to promote equality between men and women. On the surface these changes proved that both genders were capable and independent, however in many cases such as Ingeborg's, it plunged families into poverty. This is highlighted by Kerstin Holmlund who explains that "mothers who were widowed or were the only able-bodied parent retained the legal responsibility to maintain their families." This meant that women who were assumed capable to work "could not reckon on any material or financial assistance from the Poor Relief." Again, we see the state projection the illusion of equality and progression by giving woman more responsibility. However, through Ingeborg's story, Sjöström unmasks the issues which are hidden by this illusion of national romanticism. The perfect family we see in the opening scene typifies the idyllic image of Sweden through national romanticism, a parallel to the way in which society was constructed and stereotypes which remain even today.



In the denouement of the narrative, we see the romantic view of Sweden become fragmented and questioned, a scene which Sjöström skilfully uses elements of cinematography and symbolism to elicit emotion from the audience.

Fundamentally, one of the most telling scenes of *Ingeborg Holm* which portrays Sjöström's rejection of National romanticism is the final scene where a grown-up Erick visits his mentally ill mother. The audience learn that Erick has carried a photograph of his mother since they were brutally separated in the poorhouse, a photograph which is symbolic in portraying the Ingeborg before her trauma. To Erick's knowledge, his mother has not changed from the smiling person in the photograph meaning he receives a shock in that his mother has been mentally ill for a long time and has visibly aged. As an outsider, Erick is completely unaware of the trauma she has gone through, therefore regards her as she is in the photograph – happy and healthy. The disparity between the photograph and reality revealed to Erick during his visit is symbolic and represents the international romanticised view of Sweden through film which concealed an entrenched trauma for people like Ingeborg. As explained by Ann-Kristin Wallengren and Charlotte Merton, this deception "contributed to the process of constructing a national identity, which to a large extent went hand in hand with the Swedish nation's dominant ideology." The constructed image of Sweden, just like the image of Ingeborg, stopped citizens from seeing the reality of poverty in their own country, which disregarded financial burdens and worries of widowed mothers and consequently prevented welfare.

The technical elements of this scene are powerful in expressing the emotion which changed national opinion and generated debate in Sweden about the future of social security. Sjöström's dynamic use of stage depth is evident during the final minutes of the film when Ingeborg enters from a door in the back left side of the shot. At this moment, both men have their backs turned away from the camera, which means that Ingeborg is the focal point of the shot. This is a technique that Sjöström used throughout the film, such as when the father dies, and reinforces the idea of idyllic image masking a distressing reality which I previously discussed.

(continued)

When the father dies, there are two events happening simultaneously, one of which is the father dying in the foreground and the other is the family happily eating and laughing in the background. Here the audience are being projected two different narratives, one of the ideal family and the other of death and decay. This becomes a parallel to Sjöström's rejection of national romanticism - now the decay is forefront, as it should be in terms of government legislation. In this final scene, the manager of the poorhouse and the nurse are in the background whilst Ingeborg and Erick remain at the front just as they were in the opening scene. This is significant as the characters who represent the state, and who have kept her trapped in poverty and madness have gone, the only one who even tries to help is her son. As an element which criticised the state for its negligence, the film, through techniques like staging depth, generated debate, and fuelled arguments for legal change in 1918.

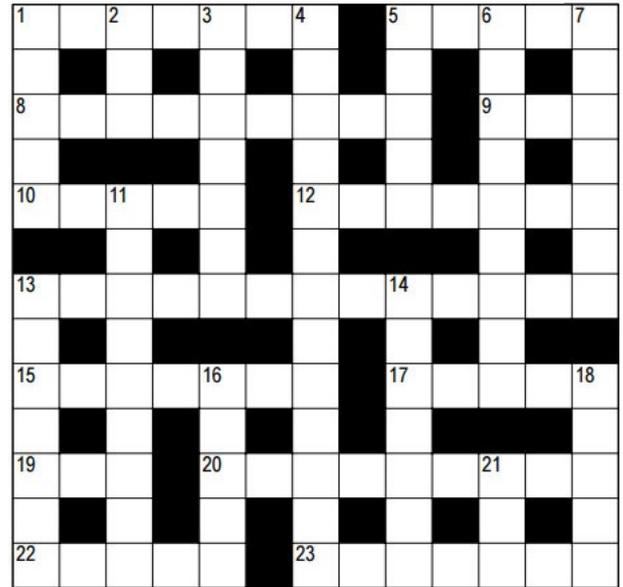
Featuring a very long static shot, with no close-ups or rhythmic editing, the scene is reduced to very simple, understated cinematography. This simplicity creates a physical barrier between the audience and characters, meaning instead of being put in the situation ourselves, we are watching the events unfold. In some ways Sjöström's decision to film the scene like this is emotionally more powerful as a raw, genuine story without compromising the overall aesthetic of the film. Again, this understated appearance rejects the idea of an image, therefore tying it back to the rejection of national romanticism.

Ingeborg's story is one which, through Sjöström's emotional use of cinematography and narrative unmasked issues of social security within Sweden which rejected the notion of Nordic Romanticism. Producing a film which was highly political which moved away from the picturesque landscapes and idyllic society of Sweden made Ingeborg Holm a film for change, whereby people were forced to look at the welfare issues this image created within the country. As an allegorical narrative, Ingeborg Holm becomes a metaphor for state negligence where women's struggles with poverty were hidden underneath progress in gender equality. Evident throughout the film, however especially prominent in the final scene, Sjöström employs techniques such as mise-en-scene and symbolism which allude to the contrast between image and reality, image being the foundation of National romanticism. Clearly, the story of Ingeborg brought to light some of the difficulties this image of progress brought for single or widowed mothers in their attempt to gain welfare. Inspired by this film, the Swedish government implemented the 1918 Poor Law Act, indicating that Ingeborg Holm not only changed views in society but also prompted necessary legal change.

Paloma Nicol



Cryptic Crossword



Clues Across:

1. English caviar leads to greed (7). 5. Annoyance (5). 8. Quack, quack (Bingo?) (6-3).
9. Don't forbid (3). 10. Horizontal wooden brace (5).
12. Person employed to keep highway in order (7). 13. Further afield (13).
15. Not moving and without Ray (7). 17. Croatian resort (5).
19. Imitates primate (3). 20. Reverses previous decision (9). 22. Lunar influenced rise and fall (5).
23. Man owes people money (7).

Clues Down:

1. Bill followed by man for artistic endeavour (5). 2. First in action come evening. Flyer? (3).
3. Number without parts (7). 4. Go into Highland town with males for beverage (13).
5. Permanent memory surrounded by vehicle assistance organisation (5).
6. Extractor of currency guarantee element (4,5).
7. Linear-T for means of identification (7). 11. How north feels towards south (9).
13. Again Stanton scores in little time (7). 14. Put dime in for contribution to overall process (7).
16. Golfing essentials (5). 18. Lawyer's workload taken on trip (5).

Solutions at bottom of page 18

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE ~

A.I. & QUANTUM COMPUTING

I first studied Artificial Intelligence (AI) around 25 years ago. My AI project, at the time, was detecting defects in die cast components using some of the main AI tools available at the time. These included: rule-based systems which used 'if-then' constructs to make decisions, i.e., if this is true then take this course of action, e.g., if the door is open then keep walking; neural networks (computer algorithms) which were used for pattern recognition, e.g., if you look around your room you can probably identify most, if not all, objects in the room. This may be despite only seeing parts of some of the objects. The reason you know that a partly hidden table is in fact a table is because you have seen many tables in your life and you have stored these images in your memory. In identifying the table as such you are dealing with probabilities i.e., identifying the object partly seen as a table is due to this particular outcome scoring the highest probability score in terms of all other possible solutions. Another AI tool is the knowledge base. Here, knowledge about the environment is collected and stored in a database, e.g., the locations of objects in a room.

So, what makes something intelligent? In my view there are two main things: the ability, when acting alone, to learn and the ability, also when acting alone, to make decisions. In fact, much of what we consider AI is simply copying human behaviour. So how does a machine learn? Machines learn by using what they discover about their environment, combined with information they are given by the manufacturer or user, to build models or databases which then, in some way, describes that environment and enables them to interact with the environment in a useful way. Key to this, is the need to store data and information; and a lot of it! This means that huge amounts of storage capacity are needed (I am not writing here about machines which can only do simple tasks i.e., 'dumb-machines') as well as quickness of response. Speed of response brings in another AI problem; that of 'search'. Search refers to the quest to find the best solution (see the 'Travelling Salesman' problem for an example of how difficult this can be) or at the very least an acceptable solution in a given time. The reality is humans do this all the time by gathering information using their senses and then, by a mixture of experience and reasoning, come up with a solution. Sometimes this is the best solution, but based on the complexity of the problem, often as not, it is simply an acceptable one. This is how we humans live and our ability to find the best solution to a problem e.g., should I take the number 27 or the number 35 bus home, is often what makes the difference between a good day and a bad day.

So, AI is here to stay and as machines become smarter, the need for greater storage capacity and faster response time will continue on an upwards trajectory. One solution to this is the quantum computer. Right now, a useable quantum computer is some way off, mainly due to its lack of stability and the fact that, at the moment, they only seem to be suitable for the few applications that standard computers don't do very well; in other words, the computers that we use at the moment, including the one I am using to type up this article, perform the vast majority of our everyday tasks very well and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

The main difference between a quantum computer and a standard computer is to do with their possible data values and how data is physically stored. In a standard computer basic data unit, '1's and '0's, are represented by a high voltage and a low voltage respectively whereas in a quantum computer the same data may be represented by the spin of an electron ('up' or 'down') or the polarization of a photon ('vertical' or 'horizontal'). In a standard computer the most basic piece of data, known as a bit, can be either '1' or '0'.

In a quantum computer, a qubit, can also be '1' or '0' but it can also be '1' and '0' at the same time. This phenomenon, where something can have two different values at the same time, is called quantum superposition. Another quantum phenomenon is entanglement. Entanglement is when a pair or group of particles interact in a way that each particle is unable to act independently, i.e., a transformation of one particle will be felt by all other particles in the group. This is true even when the particles, which make up the group, are in different locations and this is where the phenomena may become useful in that data may be able to be transformed (modified) en masse by simply applying a transformation to a single particle. One area of research, and where quantum computers may prove most useful is cryptography, and it is this application, most of all, that may yet drive the development of quantum computing to one day provide the necessary computing power needed to control our next generation of intelligent machines.



Finally, and in a week when the existence of a possible fifth force of nature has been suggested, (alongside gravity, electromagnetism, the strong nuclear force and the weak nuclear force), I believe it will be as a result of new discoveries in quantum mechanics that we will find solutions to our future technology needs; micro-electronic components which provides solutions to today's technology needs, exist only because of the discovery and then understanding of how sub-atomic particles, such as electrons, behave. In considering the microscopic rather than the macroscopic world to look for solutions, it is simply the case that to see what is really happening that we have to look closely at the smallest possible level (analogy: to see if it is windy outside look at a blade of grass rather than a large building). Another issue which may be preventing progress is the obsession we humans have with building everything in our image or else re-vamping what went before. AI seems to be based on how we learn and make decisions and quantum computers seem intent on using quantum versions of long-established logic gates in order to make decisions. This may be the way to go but sometimes, with something new, the approach has to be a different one and it is in the world of quantum mechanics that such new methods may show themselves. And then the next real jump forward can begin.



E. O. HOPPE AND THE MACKINTOSHES



Portrait photographs taken by an expert and talented photographer can speak to the viewer in much the same way as a painted likeness by a master can. Emile Otto Hoppe (1878-1972) was such a master of the camera, at one time he was the most famous living photographer in the world. Many of his sitters were famous too, these included politicians, artists, writers, scientists, dancers and royalty. His camera captured in black and white such figures as Rudyard Kipling, Albert Einstein, Benito Mussolini, Aldous Huxley, Anna Pavlova and Jacob Epstein to name but a few. In a book written by Hoppe himself (first published in 1945) he explains his attitude to business. As the son of a wealthy German banker he knew the world of finance well, even working as a banker himself before entering into the occupation of professional photographer. In the book Hoppe explains "I feel grateful to my parents for giving me a sound business training". He goes on to recall a young man asking his advice on becoming a photographer and holding forth at great length about art and technique. Hoppe listened and then replied "but do you know anything about book-keeping"? This side of Hoppe's character is illuminating and goes part-way to explaining why, in 1954 at the age of 76, he sold his entire body of photographic work to a London based commercial picture archive (the Mansell Collection). As a result, since Hoppe photographed other subjects such as landscapes, street-scenes and exotic travel, his work was lost to photo-historians as it was filed away under subject matter with millions of other stock pictures. Thus, it was no longer accessible by author and Hoppe's reputation and fame diminished because of this. It was not until 1994 that a photographic art curator retrieved the work from the archive and set about putting together the complete E.O. Hoppe collection.

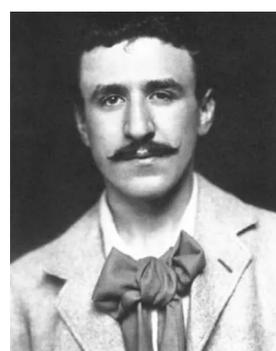
At the height of his career which began in around 1907 Hoppe occupied various homes and studios in London. His first studio was in Barons Court then in 1911 he moved to Baker Street. In 1913 he leased a property in Cromwell Place, a building of thirty-three rooms. This house had been the home and studio of the pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais and was later occupied by the artist Francis Bacon. However, in terms of interest regarding Charles Rennie Mackintosh, it is Hoppe's house at Little Hedgecourt near East Grinstead in West Sussex that is of note. There exists a document which indicates that Mackintosh was commissioned to design an addition to the house (incorporating a studio). This work is said to have not been carried out, however, Hoppe is said to have claimed that some work had been carried out to Mackintosh's plans. This claim has never been verified so there is no evidence to properly identify and attribute the work to Mackintosh. That aside, this is an interesting link between Hoppe and the Mackintoshes and possibly explains why the photographer captured Charles with his camera in 1920.

The document mentioned shows that the planning work Mackintosh completed for Hoppe dates to between 1919 and 1920, at this time Charles and Margaret would have been in their fifties (Margaret a little older).

Soon after Mackintosh worked on Hoppe's house in Sussex, he and Margaret moved to France. They settled in the small coastal town of Port Vendres in the Roussillon area of southern France. In recent years the couple have been celebrated in the area with three Interpretation Centres set up to chronicle their life's work and especially record their time living in the area. The black and white portraits that can be seen in the CRM Interpretation Centre in Port Vendres certainly show the couple in their later years and are unlike the younger images of the couple that are more familiar. Yet, this would have been the true likeness of them when they lived in Port Vendres. The photograph of Charles is attributed to Hoppe whereas Margaret's (which was her passport photo) is not. However, it seems possible that both photographs were taken by E.O. Hoppe.

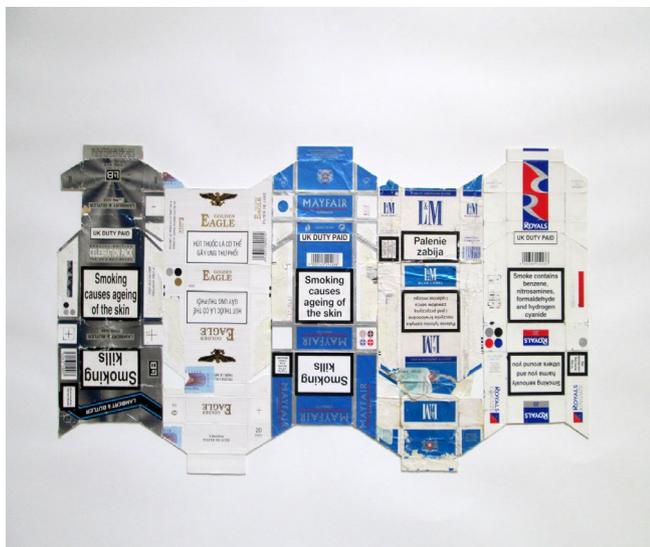
The documentation shows that on the 19th February 1920 Mackintosh received £6 from Hoppe as "being final payment to account for work proposed at East Grinstead". Remembering that the Mackintoshes were not too well-off at this time it is possible that the photograph of Charles at least by the celebrated photographer was taken in part-payment for the work Mackintosh did on the Sussex house. Charles and Margaret moved to southern France soon after this and, although there is no proof of this (the passport photo we know dates from 1929), it is possible that Margaret used the same photo when travelled to France several years earlier. This is only speculation, however, there is a noticeable similarity in the style and aesthetic of the photographs which suggest they might have both been taken by the same photographer.

And, what of the portraits themselves? Personally, I am attracted to them for the honesty they convey. What the viewer is seeing is two mature, characterful people, Charles clad in a heavy woollen cloak and hat, looks directly at the camera (and at the world). Yet, his facial expression gives little away, there is a sense of someone engaged in private thoughts. The dashing young man complete with dark hair and moustache has gone to be replaced by a mature, still handsome, man of the world. Margaret is similarly looking directly towards the camera but, unlike Charles, she is easier to read, her demeanour displays a mixture of fortitude and apprehension. Being situated in Port Vendres where Charles and Margaret spent their final years together these portraits take on a special significance. Both images (whoever was responsible for taking Margaret's) speak to us in a more immediate way – a way that other older images do not. Whereas the earlier images are rooted in the romantic past, these portraits belong in the modern age. Having said that, they still record the real life romantic love story of a couple who were united in creativity and devotion to each other.



ROBERT MCCUBBIN - SCULPTURES

Robert McCubbin is a Scottish artist/sculptor who makes mixed media sculptures from packaging and mostly throw-away materials. I first met him about seventeen years ago, I found his work interesting and different. Since then Robert has exhibited in several exhibitions I have organised. Shown below is a collage entitled MAP which is being shown at The Millipiani Gallery in Rome in May (digital exhibition).



Below, is the short piece I wrote about his art back in 2004 when we first met. Robert kindly agreed to answer some questions I put to him about his work today and other subjects of interest.

A selection of sculptures by the Stranraer based artist Robert McCubbin are currently on show in Livingston. McCubbin studied sculpture as a mature student at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen. The inspiration behind his work arises partly from an interest in art history, especially Modernism, he combines this interest with aspects of contemporary culture and technology. The Modernist influence comes through in his choice of geometric forms and strong primary colours. However, the work is eclectic and there is no real sense of any major dominating influence. His materials consist of things such as wallpaper, various plastics, cardboard boxes, household paints, aluminium drinks cans, used catalogues and polystyrene. In short, things that might be considered as everyday DIY items and disposable, throw-away rubbish. Added to these he sometimes incorporates "found objects" into the sculptures or a random (or carefully chosen?) page from a magazine. The pieces on show are all abstract and small in size. As McCubbin himself puts it, they are on a "human scale". They have a portable feel, almost inviting the viewer to pick them up and carry them around. The portability factor combined with the familiar, everyday materials make them come across as quite people friendly. Although he often re-uses material he is keen to point out that his work is not about recycling. He is more interested in the short shelf-life of things like packaging, for example. This unmistakable engagement with popular culture gives the work a Pop-Art feel which sits strangely comfortable with the restrained, geometric formality of the work. Also inspired by Julian Opie's sparse paintings of empty roads, it seems that McCubbin would like to focus straight ahead but is often distracted along the way by the visual spectacle that is day to day twenty-first century life.

Cathy Bell (21/9/04)

1. Looking at what I thought about your work in 2004, do you think my assessment came anywhere near your own perception?

- The assessment of my work noted above fitted well with my own perception and influences at the time, being connected to art-historical individuals and movements in art, with a strong reflection on Modernism being advanced and explored in an eclectic fashion.

2. Has your approach to your work changed at all since then, if so, in what way?

- My work has developed along my identified themes and has become much more focused on the direct use of collage in both 2-D and 3-D works, still utilising everyday materials but in a more selective manner. These changes reflect a more individualistic and developed working approach reflecting on late consumer society in the 21st Century.

3. I notice that you have recently included some photographic images into your work. I feel they are similar to your sculptures in what they represent but is there any other reason for this?

- Incorporating a documentary approach, via photographic imagery into my work, has augmented the process with these images sitting alongside my 'object-based' works as a form of conceptual foil to them, but not as a means to an end in their own right.

4. You have a piece in a digital show coming up in May in Rome. Can you tell us about the piece?

- The work accepted for the above show is a card collage entitled: 'MAP' (2009) and utilises several deconstructed cigarette cartons, reflecting on the demarcation of language and graphic emblem, set within Globalisation and late consumerism. Whereby modes of production and exchange have become blurred and overlap the goods and services of the mass-market place, and connection with the information age therein.

5. Do you think digital art is the way ahead? What do you think about non-fungible tokens in the art world, for example?

- The rise of digital art was an inevitable outcome of recent technological advances and has given rise to the democratization of art and what constitutes art in the 21st century. Digital art is everywhere now but I think it is an additional tool for artists and makers, but not one that will inevitably supplant other forms of art and that both can exist complimentary to each other. However, with it has come an additional language of its own and terms of reference, for example non-fungible tokens (NFT's) which in essence may provide a form of authenticity and stamp of approval and protection of it being a 'singular' art-work in its own right, in an otherwise global situation where unlimited duplication can occur at the touch of a button? However, the commodification of art continues apace, whether as digital or conventional format which raises again the question: who owns the art?

6. I mentioned in 2004 that you were influenced by Julian Opie. Is there any other artists that have significantly influenced your art?

- Several 'key' influences come to mind here ranging from the early 'Arte-Povera' group, Kurt Schwitters, Haim Steinbach, Ashley Bickerton and Tony Cragg but to name a few....

7. What does making art mean to you?

- It gives me a sense of purpose and meaning exploring my creative nature set within my area of interest. It provides outlets for positive outcomes both for me personally and for others to explore and enjoy and gives me immense pleasure to be able to do so.

8. Would you like to see a wider, more democratic dissemination of culture (and visual art in particular) in Scotland in the future? Or do you think that it is satisfactory as it is now?

- I would like to see fully advanced the provision and access to the arts in general and visual art in particular in Scotland, noting some positive moves towards this end, but much more needs done both in education, finance and the openness and democratisation/dissemination of the arts here.

9. A couple of fun questions – what is your favourite colour?

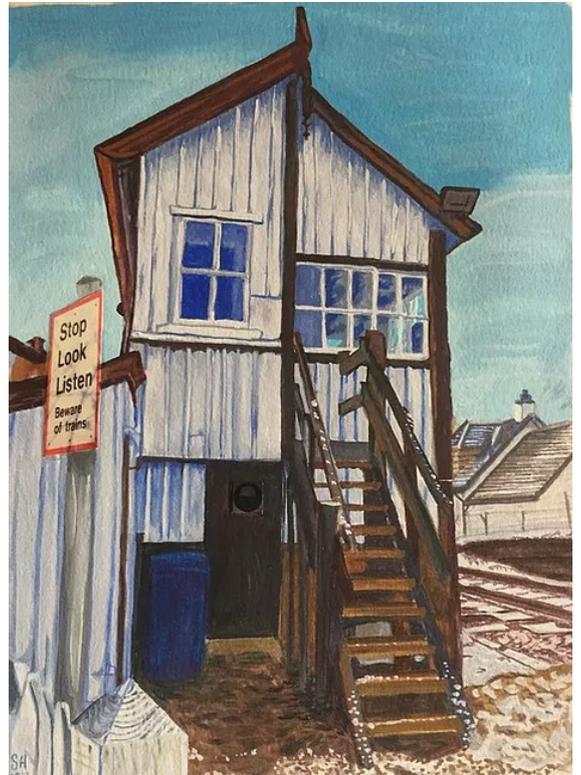
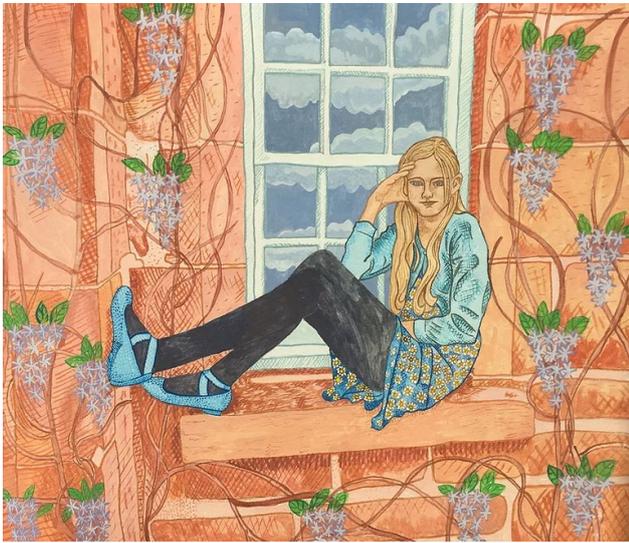
- I like Blue!

10. Who is your favourite artist?

- I have always admired Paul Cezanne!

GALLERY – SHELLEY HAIGH

Shelley Haigh studied Fine Art at Manchester School of Art, she graduated in 1999. Her beautiful watercolour paintings are filled with light, they evoke a tranquillity which is enhanced by her choice of subject. She often portrays her children which creates an intimate rapport, this transmits well to the viewer. Her choice of almost nostalgic, atmospheric buildings promote a sense of calm. Shelley now lives in Inverness with her husband and two children.



From top left (clockwise). Girl in the Window, Clachnaharry, Lentrans Petrol Station & '2'

FICTION

ELEMENTAL

EARTH

'Thorkell. Where's Hildir?'

They could be very persistent, these thrawn-faced women who minded everybody's business but their own, so I had to be brusque.

'She's gone,' I'd say. 'Now leave me alone.'

'But where Thorkell, where's she gone?'

'Away. Somewhere. I don't know. To another - or perhaps to Hell for all I know or care.'

They would twitter like birds and cry that they felt aggrieved for me.

'Surely she'll come back soon?' they would whine.

And then there were the sly women; the older ones. The ones who come to the door with raven's eyes, black, glinting, suspicious. Offering assistance; trying to look over my shoulder into the house.

'Your place needs a woman Thorkell; to cook, to clean. Are you looking after yourself?'

I would hold up my hand and say, 'Go away. I have no need of your help,' and close the door against their intrusive beaks, and return to sit by the window to nurse my anger, my unhappiness and pain.

I was relieved when at last I could go to the village and they avoided me; these creatures that went by in silence, glancing warily sideways, drawing their shawls tightly to their throats and hurrying on.

Likewise, the men in the inn kept their distance.

Their company was no loss.

It was a long time that passed before there was any chance of fishing. The island suffered from windstorms that would last for days, sometimes for weeks. There were black winter skies and violence in the sea. And this self-same wind, this howling devil, this moaning fiend, could perversely sleep at night; nights when moonrise crawled across the ice forming at the edges of sea-lochs and where sleet would sparkle against the heavens like falling stars. But the great expanse of heather and rough grazing that stretched inland would absorb the pale moonlight throughout these hours of darkness except where the bog water pools glistened like fallen tears.

Still, she didn't return; my Hildir, the daughter of Arling of Pow. Hildir, one who was so full of grace, full of kindness, with golden hair and amber eyes. She was a rare thing; as beautiful as a pale-yellow flower in meadow grass.

What man wouldn't have wanted her to be his? What woman wouldn't have been jealous?

But she chose me; fled from her home and family disapproval.

'She is a daughter of the earth,' her father railed. 'A princess. Of what use is a worthless fisherman in this world? How can a troublemaker and ill-bred boor like you provide and care for her? Hildir knows nothing of hunger, pain and disappointed but she will unless you bring her home.'

I clenched my fists. Stood my ground in silence. Old as he was, Arling of Pow was a man to be reckoned with.

'Don't threaten me with your stance,' he said. 'I should strike you and your brazen insolence down.'

'You are to be a grandfather,' I said.

He staggered backwards, as if my words had struck him physically,

AIR

Spring. Not that an outsider would know. They see little change between the seasons on this island; the signs are imperceptible to them, but one morning there was a streak of bone coloured light between sky and water. The ocean heaved a sigh beneath the clouds, the wind stopped its yowl and the prospect of fishing returned.

From my doorway I looked towards the shore and to the small stone building where my skiff had sheltered throughout the winter. It would be good to go to the fishing banks at last, to have my boat dance across the waves, experience the breeze on my face, and to feel alive again.

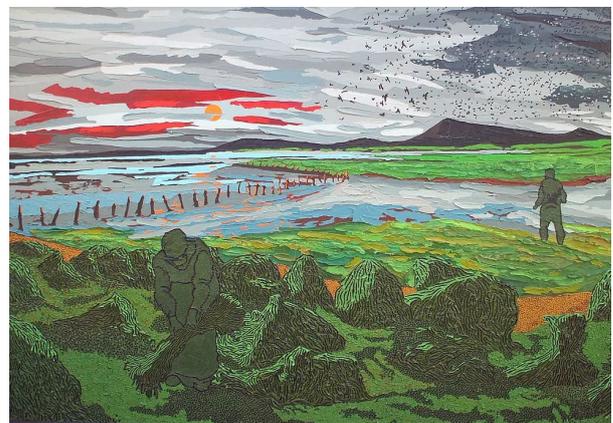
But just then, without warning, a draught of shining black-blue flashed past my head. I ducked and instinctively raised an arm in protection. A crow had flown into the cottage and settled on the kitchen table. It was stabbing the wooden surface aggressively with its bill, taking no notice of me, apparently entranced by the form of a dark knot in the timber. I also saw sinister shapes of cloud shadow sweeping across the grasslands; tasted brine in my mouth, and heard the single screech of a dying vole.

The fishing would have to wait for another day.

At first light the following morning Svienn Olafsson came to see me. A simple lad from the village, (there were those that said he was three-quarters daft), who I hadn't seen since Hildir had vanished and presumed that the others had poisoned his mind of me. He offered work in return for a share of any catch. I agreed if for nothing else but to ease my loneliness and, although no fisherman, he was strong, smiling and not one for idle chat or questioning. I remembered how his help had been welcomed when Hildir and I first started. She had wanted a small plot beside the cottage for vegetables, herbs and even flowers. These things were new to me; things to do with the land; digging, sowing, weeding, reaping. Tasks I couldn't do when my priority was the sea.

With Hildir's guidance Svienn proved to be a good worker. She was happy then and at the end of a day walking homewards from the shore I could hear her singing melodies that were as clear and sweet in the air as from any songbird.

But I had to send Svienn away when we lost the child.



Winter Harvest by Donald McKenzie (oil on canvas)

A few days later, when the signs were more favourable, Svienn and I dragged the skiff across rattling pebbles into the surf and jumped aboard. I raised the sail. It cracked and flapped loudly until the wind filled the canvas and the boat leaped forward. I saw fear on Svienn's face as he cowered in the prow; holding onto the gunwales with limpet hands as the skiff rose and fell against the incoming surf. But then, as the craft settled on its course, Svienn's broad smile reappeared and he stood up, turned fore and like a child he began shouting and hollering with whoops and roars.

Then I thought - perhaps a fisherman could be made of him after all.

FIRE

Our summer was exceptionally hot with an absence of rain. Growth was slow and the ground so parched that bog and mud shrank and cracked. In places the grass was dying; pale yellow patches appeared where the soil was thin above the rock. It crunched underfoot; dusty, with the aroma of dry hay. Water sources and other springs disappeared; burns became trickles.

Svienn told me that those with farms were fearful of failing crops. There was talk of bad omens; that the timing of the planting was wrong and the moon had been the wrong colour.

I allowed myself a smile and thought that perhaps even a worthless fisherman like me might be of some use after all.

(continued)

Our fishing days were long and we flourished. The villagers were not so shy of me then when their need was greater than their opinions. As autumn approached it became clear that the harvest would fail. The farmers looked for reasons. There was talk of witchery and the Devil's work or that it was the malevolent trows that lived underground that were the cause of the disaster. Svienn said that there had been whispers in the village. That the loss of the child and the disappearance of Hildr were the origins and that the trows had taken them into the hill on the moor. I couldn't believe the villagers were as foolish to think such nonsense.

Then, late summer, and seemingly without reason, the heather on the moor burst into flame. If the wind hadn't been westerly the village may have been lost. But this was not seen as good fortune. It was taken as another example of the blight that had settled over the community.

In the days that followed the superstitious old crones and their equally brainless menfolk were on the hill; those ones, the followers of the old ways that blamed the trows more than most. Trows loved fire they argued, trows left sickly changelings in place of stolen children, trows abducted new brides. What more evidence was needed? These misguided fools kept me awake for six nights as they wandered over the moorland banging pots and pails with wooden spoons in an effort to drive the imagined sprites away.

But on the seventh night, at twilight, doubt was put in my mind. All was silent for a change, the drummers hadn't yet started their cacophony, and as I looked across the moorland towards the rise, I imagined I saw a figure that suddenly crouched and scurried into a place where I knew a number of large rocks and boulders lay scattered in the heather. No one knew how long that ancient circle had been there but it was not to my surprise when trows were mentioned in connection to it or that it was said to be an entrance to another world.

Then I heard something, like a type of singing or a chant but then clearly and incredibly the moan became words.

*hi dal doodle, an'
tae hiddle doo-dee.*

Nonsense really but it was familiar.

'Of course,' I whispered in recognition. 'It's the chorus of a trow's song from a story my mother used to tell us.'

But, as I said, I didn't believe in trows so I made a torch and carrying a stout stick went to investigate.

WATER

At first, I couldn't really see anything apart from what was in my imagination. In the light of flickering flame and shadow the rocks constantly changed shape. I could hear strange rustlings and scrapings coming out of the darkness and still smell the strong reek of burnt heather and ash that lingered in the breeze. There was something else, a sensed presence that disturbed my reason; a feeling that something wicked was nearby.

I entered the circle of stones, into a vacuum of silence. And something else seemed odd, the ground remained untouched by the fire and the carpet of moss underfoot was still wet and soft. There was even a deep pool of peat-stained water to my left.

But then there was that noise again; like the scuff of a rat in a roof or the rub of a razor on a strop. I swept the torch through the air in an arc of roaring flame and raised my cudgel.

'Who's there,' I challenged. 'I'm no' feart o' ye.'

But I was.

I saw a flash of metal at the edge of the pool and drew closer. A piece of partially buried silver chain was lying on the moss. I pulled it free and on its pendant was the figure of St Andrew, the fisher of men and I realised it was the self-same necklace I had given to my Hildr.

I fell to my knees in shock and looked blankly into the pool.

In its depths I saw her.

Hildr.

She lay naked, as if asleep.

The trow must have struck me from behind. I felt a weight on my chest and I couldn't move.

I opened my eyes. The stars were racing across the vast darkness of the sky as if the universe was spinning at an astonishing speed. Then I realised I was underwater and saw the trow looking down at me, grinning, pointing to the dangling necklace.

But it wasn't a trow.

It was Svienn.

I felt Hildr's hand in mine as the first spots of autumn rain blurred the surface of the pool. I turned to look at her.

'I've returned,' she said.

'At last,' I said

Donald McKenzie

The pandemic and lockdown saw David Hutchison write the following piece about a solo rower attempting to cross the Atlantic Ocean in a home-made boat. Along the way the rower is joined by a friendly seagull whom he calls Soley. However, this is fiction meeting fact since David's brother Duncan did undertake the Atlantic crossing in 2018 before the pandemic struck. This re-imagining of the crossing from New York sees the rower team up with Soley who was, in fact, the one-legged pet seagull belonging to David's grandmother who lived on Shetland. The piece is written in the form of a screenplay.



SOLEY

FADE IN:

EXT. SEA - DAY

A beautiful day in the middle of the North Atlantic ocean. SOLEY the seagull flies across this vast emptiness of flat calm sea. She makes for a dot on the horizon.

As Soley comes closer the dot becomes the SLEIPNIR, a small wooden boat adapted for a single rower. She is built for all weathers, sixteen feet long hull with a deck of separated sealed compartments. A padded seat is connected to a metal track on the deck. From above, the deck is painted in a saltire.

EXT. DECK, BOAT - DAY

Soley lands on a carved figurehead of a horse on the front stem, above a storage locker built into the bow.

The seagull flies up and lands on the padded seat on wheels in the centre of the deck. Soley CRIES.

At the stern of the boat is the cabin, covered in homemade logs and solar panels. The hatch opens. Soley CRIES.

(continued)

DOUG, 50's, scraggy white beard, suntanned, bare chest, in shorts and Skecher sandals, sticks his head out of the hatch.

DOUG - Hey Soley. So you're back. *(The seagull SQUAWKS)* Sorry there's none of Dawn's cake left. Hold on.

Doug ducks back into the cabin. He rummages around and comes back out holding out a wee packet of raisins. He throws a couple to the seagull. Soley gobbles them down quickly. Soley SQUAWLS.

DOUG (CONT'D) - Afraid that's it.

A BEEPING sound goes off. Doug dives back into the cabin.

INT. CABIN - DAY

A very compact space. Navigation equipment and a sleeping berth. A video phone, charging off a solar powered battery, is the source of the beeping. Doug picks up the phone and presses a button. The screen lights up. Three video messages.

Doug clicks on the first message. It's his son CALUM, 21, back in their bedroom. He reads from something off screen.

CALUM (ON PHONE) - Rangers two, Celtic one; Ross County four, Dundee nil; Hearts nil Hibs nil.

DOUG - Way hey! Rangers good on yous!

CALUM - All's well here. Nicola S says well done on getting halfway. Catch you later dad.

DOUG - Nicola S? Who's that. No? *(Doug LAUGHS)*

He clicks on the second message. It's his father Walter, 70.

WALTER - Hi Doug. There's a storm coming in from the North West. Thirty six knots. Due four a.m. Looks like it'll last a few days. Keep safe. Bye for now.

DOUG - Thirty six knots, Dad? It was more like seventy six!

There is a TAPPING on the roof of the cabin. Doug unplugs the phone, picks up the wee box of raisins and climbs out of the hatch.

EXT. DECK, BOAT - DAY

Soley SQUAWKS and flies off the cabin roof onto the deck. Doug throws some more raisins to the seagull. He clicks the phone and records the seagull pecking at the raisins.

DOUG - Storm lasted three days. I'm fine. The seagull's back. Least I think she's the same one. I'm calling her Soley after Grandpa's pet seagull, you know the one with only one leg. Come on Soley. Smile for the camera.

Doug moves in closer as Soley gobbles the raisins up. Doug goes and sits in the padded seat. He clicks on the phone and reads the last message. It's his son.

CALUM (ON PHONE) - Hope you're okay Dad? Grandpa said the storm was a big one. Big news. All football cancelled. There's some weird plague going round and we're all in quarantine. *(beat)* Wait, Mum wants to speak to you.

Doug's wife MARGARET, 50's appears.

MARGARET - Hi darling. Hope you're safe. We tried a live call but not getting through. Perhaps it's the storm. We'll keep trying or you try us. Love you bye.

The phone pulls out to show Margaret and Calum waving. Screen goes blank.

DOUG *(under his breath)* - Shit!

He scrolls down on the screen and presses "Mags"

PHONE VOICE - Your call cannot be connected. Please try later.

He scrolls down on the screen and presses "Calum"

PHONE VOICE (CONT'D) - Your call cannot be connected. Please try later.

DOUG - Fuck!

He scrolls down on the screen and presses "Dad" The phone RINGS. The screen comes on. Doug's father appears. He looks very tired and is wearing a face mask. Noise of a SIREN in background.

WALTER - Oh you're okay.

DOUG - What's up? I can't get through to Mags or Calum.

WALTER - Me neither. Look Doug your ..*(The phone image freezes. Doug shakes the phone.)* Come on! He taps the screen.

PHONE VOICE - Your call cannot be connected. Please try later. *(He taps the screen again)* Your call cannot be connected. Please try later.

DOUG - Damn it.

He puts the phone in his pocket. He unties the oars from each side of the gunwales and rests them in the rollocks. He takes a tube of sun cream out of his pocket and covers his exposed skin. He puts on fingerless gloves. He checks the compass, built into the deck, at his feet. He dips the oars into the water, paddles the boat into the right direction and begins to row. After several strokes the mobile phone BEEPS. Doug quickly pulls the oars in. He takes out the phone and clicks on it.

WALTER (ON PHONE) - Got cut off. Your mother's ill. The ambulance's taken her away.

DOUG - What? What happened? Will she be okay?

WALTER - God I hope so. It's this virus thing. You know how she's on all at medication. They wouldn't let me go with her.

Walter wipes his eyes. Looks like he's going to cry.

DOUG - Dad?

WALTER - I don't know what to?

DOUG - Just keep it together Dad. *(beat)* Have you seen Mags and the kids. I can't get through

WALTER - The postie said the other side of the village is down. I can't go and check. We're in a lock down situation.

The phone screen freezes. Doug shakes the phone. He sighs. ON PHONE "Battery low." The seagull SQUAWKS.

DOUG - Oh shut up!

He pulls the oars in and goes into the cabin.

(continued)

INT. CABIN - DAY

Doug connects the phone to the battery. He lies back in the bed. The phone BEEPS. Doug quickly sits up and grabs the phone. He clicks the screen.

DOUG (ON PHONE) - Darling? Mags.

MARGARET - I was so worried . We've not been able to get Through to you for days.

DOUG - The storm knocked everything out.

MARGARET - Yes your father said it was going to be big one. We were watching your position on the map. Looks like you've gone back east eighty miles.

DOUG - Dad says mum's ill, gone off in the ambulance.

MARGARET - Oh no. Does she have it?

DOUG - What?

MARGARET - The virus. We've all been self-isolating for the past three days.

DOUG - Calum and Flo. Are they okay? You?

MARGARET - We're fine. I'm even...

The phone screen goes blank.

DOUG - Damn it!

He shakes the phone. He sighs, lies down on the bunk with the phone on his chest.

INTERCUT - INT. CABIN / INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

BEEPING on video phone. Doug wakes up. He clicks on the phone.

MARGARET - Hi darling. The signal's back on now. I've spoken with your father. Your mum is doing well.

DOUG - Phew! That's a relief. How's You. The brood?

MARGARET - We're all fine. Still can't go out anywhere. With all this practice I'm even beating them at Scrabble.

DOUG - Can I speak to them?

MARGARET - They're out with the dogs. I got your message. So that daft seagull is still following you?

DOUG - Yes I'm calling her Soley. Mind you it might be a he. How do you tell the sex of a seagull?

The phone BEEPS and the screen freezes on Mags's face. Doug kisses the screen.

FADE OUT.

DAVID HUTCHISON

REVIEWS

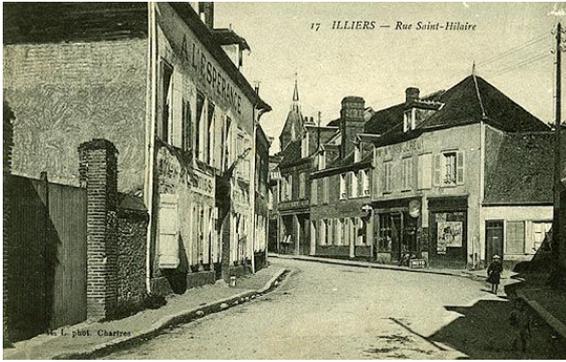
À LA RECHERCHE DU TEMP PERDU (IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME) BY MARCEL PROUST

À la Recherche du Temps Perdu - Marcel Proust's great novel - is semi-autobiographical and a record of the life of the French aristocracy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Having read the first three parts of the seven-part series and half way through the fourth, I thought I would try to put down my feelings on Proust, his writing, the world in which he appears to inhabit and the characters therein - no doubt based on real life people. The novel, in seven parts, is an account of French high society from the point of view of someone (Proust) who is part of it. My initial thoughts are that I don't especially like Proust, who acts as narrator throughout, or his many, often grandly titled, friends and acquaintances nor do I like the closed world in which they live their privileged yet regimented lives. Crucial to be a part of the inner circle of this high society is family history; this is not a time when 'commoners' were invited in. Politicians, civil servants, artists, writers, poets and rich industrialists are at times allowed in but only for either the amusement or usefulness of the inner circle. What I do enjoy, however, is the sheer beauty of the writing, the incredible, almost over-the-top descriptiveness of a view or a room, the history of the cast of characters and the undoubted literary and artistic knowledge of the writer. It is the case that, when you begin to read, that it can be heavy going and it does take time to get into the rhythm of the writer and that the pace slows even further with his use of language (have a dictionary to hand), the occasional segments which are left in the original French and not forgetting the inordinately long sentences, punctuated by masses of commas and semi-colons which you often have to re-read several times to make sense of. The reward for the reader is a real sense of the being there; of being able to picture exactly the view of church spires in Combray when approached from a certain direction; the boardwalk at Balbeck and the entrance to the Grand Hotel or else the appearance and manner of one of the main characters as they make a grand entrance.

"As I observed, as I noted the shape of their spires, the shifting of their lines, the sunlight on their surfaces, I felt that I was not reaching the full depth of my impression, that something was behind that motion, the brightness, something which they seemed at once to contain and conceal."

Proust was born in 1871, just at the beginning of the third republic, to a Jewish mother and epidemiologist father. This was a time, which is reflected in La Recherche, when the aristocracy were beginning to lose their influence and grip on French life. At the age of nine, Proust experienced his first asthmatic attack and it was this affliction that, in many ways, defined his entire life, leading him to an occupation that could be undertaken in an agreeable environment with little physical effort. Surprisingly, however, Proust served a year in the army in 1889, an experience that he used to good effect in many of the scenes with the narrator's friend and soldier Robert Saint-Loup. His poor health and closeness to his grandmother and mother in real life are very much in confirming that it is indeed a semi-autobiographical work, as these are constantly recurring themes in the novel. His support for Dreyfus is also a nod to his half-Jewishness.

The first volume, set around the village of Combray (a fictional location based on the village of Illiers near Chartres), centres around life in the countryside and is our first introduction to the bourgeois Charles Swann, a frequent dinner guest, and his love affair with the capricious Odette who he will later marry. The various members of the narrator's (let's call him Marcel) family and household and the aristocratic Guermantes family, of which the forementioned Robert Saint Loup is a part of, all make a first appearance as does his friend Bloch, who Marcel's father has little time for.



"Why, my poor son, that friend of yours is an idiot, my father had said to me when Bloch was gone."

At this point, the reader is very much aware of a journey beginning, from the starting point of the adolescent Marcel, a journey which sees him make his first exploratory steps into the world he will later inhabit. It is also clear that Marcel, even at such a young age, is extremely well read, with interests in the theatre, literature and the visual arts and there is no shortage of people in his immediate circle willing to discuss with him the finer points of the arts. The first volume also introduces the reader to something that has become one of Proust's most well-known concepts; that of the involuntary memory. Without any conscious thought, a memory, can immediately come to mind of some past event, by a taste (of the madeleine cake dipped in tea) or a smell, contrasting with other memories that have to be deliberately brought to mind by thought alone.

"And as soon as I had recognized the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated segment which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine."



The Swann family feature heavily in the first part of volume two, as Marcel experiences his first time in love, with the Swann's daughter Gilberte.

"I could not really say what the features of Gilberte's face were like, except those heavenly moments when she was there, displaying them to me. All I could remember was her smile."

M. de Norpois, a civil servant and friend of his father, is also introduced as a sort of mentor who is encouraging and discouraging in equal measure to the young Marcel, advising a career in the ministry whereas Marcel's ambition is to be a writer.

"I was devastated by what M. de Norpois had said about the piece..... I became once more acutely aware of my own intellectual poverty and of the fact that I had no gift for writing."

Periods of sickness continue and the reader is given the impression of Françoise, the housekeeper, almost replacing his mother at times. Also, in the second of the seven-volume series, Marcel takes us on holiday, with his grandmother, to the Normandy town of Balbec (based on the Normandy seaside town of Cabourg) and his stay at the Grand Hotel.

The presence of his grandmother gives some clues as to why Marcel appears to be so welcomed into aristocratic society as she passes the time with old friends who just happen to be princesses and duchesses. For Marcel, it is a time of artistic and sexual awakening, as he visits and befriends the famous artist Elstir and meets his mistress Albertine Simonet. The seaside location, and the presence of Albertine and her friends, brings a lightness and optimism to this part of the story which Marcel, at times, does his best to disparage; even once he has met Albertine and fallen in love with her he is reluctant to show her his true feelings, instead preferring to perpetuate that air of mystery that a person may possess when they are not yet well known to the other.

"I made little attempt to see Albertine. I pretended to prefer Andree".

The third part of the series is mainly back in Paris and, by this time, Marcel has become part of Paris society. The first part of the volume sees Marcel visit Robert Loup's regiment in Doncieres, where Marcel appears to enjoy the company of Robert and his friends. The Duchess Guermantes, who Marcel was previously obsessed with meeting, appears as the main character once back in Paris. Invitations to her parties are the most sought after by everyone in society and her wit is said to be second to none. The duchess, her husband and her brother-in-law, Baron de Charlus (Palamede), exudes snobbishness and intolerance with every word uttered and, with this, comes the first clue that Marcel is perhaps trying to undermine the world they inhabit, rather than being submissive to it. For my own part, I did not find the duchess witty but instead unkind and stupid. I know that many have written that the point about Le Recherche is to expose the obscene nature of the French aristocracy at this time, but, for me, it was not until the duchess began to open her mouth in this, the third volume, that this appeared to be so and despite her close friendship with Swann, who by this time is dying, her opinion of his wife, Odette (not of the same breeding as her other acquaintances), is both unkind and underhand in that Swann, who she regards as one of her dearest friends, is in no way aware of the duchesses feelings towards his wife.

"By the way," said Mme de Villeparisis to the Duchesse de Guermantes, "I'm expecting a woman any moment whom you don't wish to know. I thought I had better warn you to avoid any unpleasantness. But you needn't be afraid, I shall never have her here again, only I was obliged to let her come today. It's Swann's wife."

The main theme, to now, in the fourth part, has been sexuality. Baron de Charlus' homosexuality is prominent from the first page onwards and there are ongoing hints at Albertine's bi-sexuality. Once again, and for the last time, Balbec and the Grand Hotel is the centre of events. This time, his mother accompanies him as his grandmother has since died, however, memories of her, and their previous stay at Balbec, feature heavily as Marcel remembers fondly past times spent with her and looks on as his mother continues to grieve. Cottard, a doctor, deserves special mention as an example of someone from the middle classes who has managed to become part of the fringes of society and thereafter assume a wholly objectionable air of superiority over everyone not belonging to the group of people, he considers worthwhile and relevant; refusing on one occasion to treat a maid whom is bleeding to death for fear of getting blood on his evening dress. At the same time, he is happy to leave his bed in the middle of the night to treat a government minister who has a slight cold.

The reader is once again reminded of possibly the true purpose of much of the novel; exposing the selfishness and, in this volume the licentious behaviour, of the aristocracy and middle classes and their complete disregard for most of their fellow citizens; not that this was only the case in France at the time but instead it was still the norm all over Europe, not changing to any extent until after World War 1.

(continued)

Proust wrote his novel then for a number of reasons. First, to re-connect with his mother by remembering times and events when she was there and so, by simply recalling what she said, what she was wearing, a smell or a taste he is able to reach out to her and feel comforted by her presence and therefore, no longer alone. Proust also wants to re-awaken memories of his youth, when he was stronger, combined with the excitement of new experiences, of new friendships and thoughts of the great adventure ahead. Proust himself spent several years as part of Paris society and it is possible that what began as something which offered up so many opportunities, later on, as Proust matured, became something that he became to, at the very least, dislike. Political revolution was rife at this time and was already highlighting how badly the society that Proust had been part of had treated people. The World War was also a turning point for society across Europe and Proust may even have been able to hear the guns from the Western Front; in short, he knew he was living in a time when massive changes were taking place. Was this one of the reasons that after 1905 (the year of his mother's death) and, until his death in 1922 and during the period that he wrote his great novel, that he became a virtual recluse? Was he afraid that his world was disappearing? It is tempting to say that he was simply revealing something that was now out-dated and that he himself possibly, on reflection years later, wanted to distance himself from. Proust's novel, is then part autobiography where he yearns to return to past times by recalling past events and the people who have figured most in his life. It is also a comment on society, the inequality therein, and the changes taking place, possibly at a rate that Proust was uncomfortable with. Proust died in 1922 at the age of 51 years, with only the first three part of the novel published. The remaining parts were published in the next 5 years.

So where does the longest novel sit in rank of the greatest novels? The biggest problem with La Reserche is that it is not an easy read and because of that, possibly deliberately on the part of Proust, it excludes itself from being read by that many people. Its length is also a problem and I suspect that the number of readers for each volume goes down at quite a steep rate from the first volume, Swann's Way, onwards, so that few people ever reach the latter volumes and very, very few the last one. I have read War and Peace, the other novel people often think of in much the same way, and believe me it is a lot easier and quicker to read and whereas La Reserche doesn't really pack in that much variety of scene, whereas novels such as War and Peace, Anna Karenina and Crime and Punishment have a lot more going on; in fact the over-long scenes/chapters of La Reserche, where the reader often has to endure over a hundred pages of the same people in the same room talking, is another reason for putting it down and never picking it up again. A contrast with another French novel is Madame Bovary (1856) by Gustave Flaubert. Far shorter, beautifully written and a story which truly captivates the reader and a novel which Proust himself would have been sure to have read. So, was Proust writing in this highly descriptive style as a way of making a memory that much stronger so that on reading over his own work he was immediately transported back to a happier time? I also think that Proust has been very selective about the content of La Reserche in that it only contains the times and memories he wishes to recall. In this way, it becomes a means of therapy for the writer who is now alone, rarely going out and is content to live in the past when everyone was still there and the anticipation of new experiences gave him the energy that he now lacks.

So, there it is, my thoughts on Proust and his greatest work. There are lots of people that I have not mentioned but I have mentioned those I believe are, so far, most important to the overall narrative. Although I have been honest about some of the down sides, especially those sections that seem to go on for ever without that much happening, possibly in contrast to most other books the reader will have read, however, that it does not pander to the need to continuously have the reader on the edge of their seat with excitement is its strength. Instead, it is about a journey and it makes the reader feel part of that journey by moving along at a pace which is similar to that of real life.

The scent of a hawthorn bush, for example, does not come and go in the time it takes to read a sentence or two but lasts for as long as it takes the walker to pass by and is then consigned to memory, possibly, for ever more.

"The Meseglise way with its lilacs, hawthorns, its cornflowers, its poppies, its apple trees, the Guermites way with its river full of tadpoles, its water-lilies, its buttercups, formed for me for all time the contours of the countryside where I would like to live, where I demand above all else that I may go fishing, drift about in a boat, see ruins of Gothic fortifications and find among the wheatfields a church, like Saint-Andre-des-Champs, monumental, rustic and golden as a haystack; and the cornflowers, the hawthorns, the apple trees that I still happen, when travelling, to come upon in the fields, because they are situated at the same depth, on the level of my past, communicate immediately with my heart."



From top: Grand Hotel in Cabourg

Proust room in Grand Hotel (inset – M. Proust)

Rue-de-Rivoli, Paris 1900

QED (THE STRANGE THEORY OF LIGHT AND MATTER)

BY RICHARD FEYNMAN

Richard Feynman was one of the twentieth centuries greatest physicists. Born in New York in 1918, Feynman graduated from M.I.T. in 1939 with a bachelor's degree before moving to Princeton to complete his doctorate in 1942. During World War 2, Feynman worked at the Los Alamos laboratories in New Mexico before eventually taking a permanent professorship at the California Institute of Technology in 1959. Feynman shared the Nobel prize for physics in 1965 for his work on quantum electrodynamics (QED). The book was published in 1985; he died, after a long illness, in 1988.

Richard Feynman has always been regarded as a great teacher due to his enthusiasm and his ability to provide fairly simplistic explanations for what are anything but simplistic subjects. Unlike some teachers (and I have met many!), who stand up in front of their audience mainly to prove how clever they are and how stupid the audience is, Feynman wants his audience to understand so that they too can share in the wonder of physics and for this reason, this book, based on a series of four lectures, is eminently readable; even for those among us with only a little prior knowledge.

So, what's it about? It's about how light particles called photons interacts with matter, for example how light is reflected from a piece of glass or how light can be made to do something useful by way of a lens. Key to calculating just what the light does when it hits a structure, such as piece of glass, are little arrows, correctly known as "probability amplitudes," which are used to represent each individual event; such as photons going from the light source to the front layer of glass. The arrows are then combined to provide a final probability of say how much light is reflected back to a detector. Here is how it works (see diagram 1). Each event is timed by an imaginary stop watch, so when the light that is reflected back off the front surface of a piece of glass reaches the detector, the watch stops. For this event, the hand on the watch is reversed from around 8 o'clock to 2 o'clock, as shown. The length of the arrow is 0.2 which comes from the square root of the expected experimental front surface reflection probability, i.e. 0.04 or 4%. The second part is the reflection from the back surface of the glass. Due to the overall distance being slightly longer, the watch hand rotates a bit more, as shown. This time the arrow is drawn without reversing its direction; again, the length is 0.2. When the two arrows are combined by the "top-to-tail" method, the resultant arrow is found. Once the length of the resultant arrow is squared, the percentage of reflection, here around 5%, is known; in other words 5% of the photons that left the source have interacted with electrons in the glass; the rest went straight through. Feynman admits that this is a simplistic view of what actually happens; only applying to monochromatic light with no interference and mentions, on more than one occasion, that this technique of combining these, 'damned little arrows,' is something that undergraduate physics students take around four years to really get the hang of.

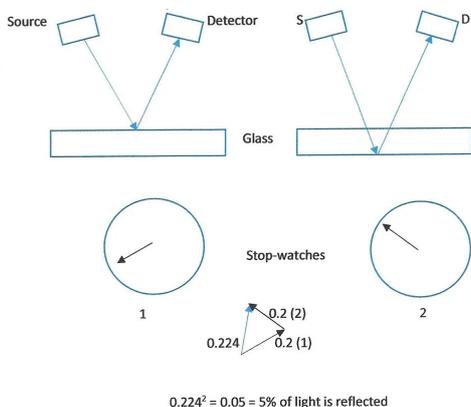


Diagram 1

In the second chapter, Feynman further extends his theory on the behaviour of photons. This time, the reflection of light from the surface of a mirror is investigated, beginning with an experiment that considers which parts of the mirror contribute most to how much light is reflected. Not surprisingly, the middle part of the mirror (see below) is where most light is reflected; where the angle of incidence is equal to the angle of reflection; however, according to quantum theory, there are millions of different routes that light can take between the source and detector, it is where the time is least, and the arrows point in much the same direction (in the middle of the mirror) that provides the major contribution to the final resultant probability arrow.

An interesting further extension of the experiment above is when most of the mirror above is cut away leaving, say just the three segments on the left (see diagram 2 lower sketch). The three arrows representing this part of the mirror go in a circle like shape so that the start and end are at the same place. This means that the final arrow is more or less zero and there is no reflection. If, however you now scrape away or cover the middle of the three segments, you once again have a decent sized resultant arrow; in other words, there is reflected light. So, there was no reflected light, you scrape away part of the mirror and now you have light! This is called a diffraction grating and it works differently for different colours so that the example above may work for red light but a different pattern diffracting grating will be needed for blue light.

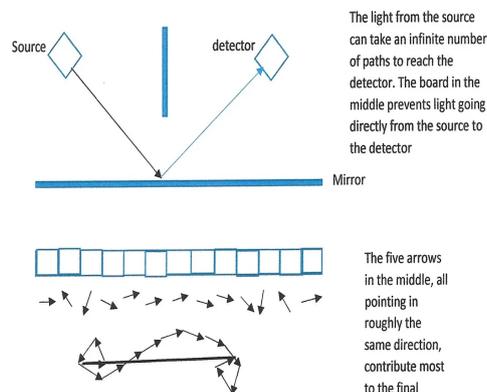


Diagram 2

Throughout the book you get a feel for the type of person Feynman was since after all these are lectures spoken by him. As a physicist and, like some other also do, he seems to consider the other sciences, such as chemistry and biology as subsets of physics, declaring that if you understand the interaction between light and electrons that that is pretty much all there is to these other two branches of science; a chemical reaction, for example, occurs due to changes in the position of electrons. In fact, all that is excluded from this understanding is gravity and nuclear phenomena. Continuing, Feynman, describes three basic rules that cover this:

1. Photons go from place to place
2. Electrons go from place to place
3. An electron emits or absorbs a photon

By now the way that light behaves is beginning to get more complicated, for example: it doesn't always appear to travel at the speed of light; it doesn't always go in neat straight lines; virtual electrons, with spin zero, don't really exist; and partial reflection is really scattering of light by electrons inside the glass. Also introduced at this point are the famous Feynman diagrams which are used to show the journey particles take in space-time (see below).

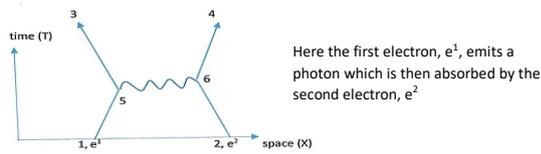


Diagram 3

Here the first electron, e^1 , emits a photon which is then absorbed by the second electron, e^2

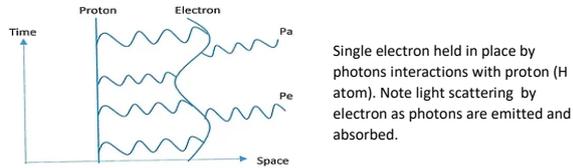


Diagram 4

Single electron held in place by photons interactions with proton (H atom). Note light scattering by electron as photons are emitted and absorbed.

The mathematical representation of diagram 3 is:

$$E(1 \text{ to } 5) * j * E(5 \text{ to } 3) * E(2 \text{ to } 6) * j * E(6 \text{ to } 4) * P(5 \text{ to } 6)$$

Notes: 1. Each event is multiplied because the electrons act at the same time; 2. The 'j' operator represents the coupling between an electron and a photon and has a value of -1 ; 3. Each event e.g. $E(1 \text{ to } 5)$, has an associated space and time shift $-(X_5 - X_1)$ and $(T_5 - T_1)$.

A further diagram, diagram 4, is used to show how electrons are kept in place around atomic nuclei by the interchange of photons between the electrons and protons.

Electrons that exchange fewer photons with protons are more easily dislodged from an atom and it is these electrons that are responsible for electrical current and chemical reactions.

Also in chapter 3, Feynman talks about polarisation, which to keep things simple, has previously been left out. Photons come in four distinct varieties, or polarisations, that are geometrically based on the three spacial dimensions (x, y, and z) and time. Photons that begin a journey, say from point A, with polarisation X, will still have the same polarisation when it reaches its destination, say at point B. For electrons things are a bit more complicated. Again the electron has four varieties (in fact all $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 spin particles have this number of varieties), however, this time the polarisation can change between the start and end of a journey, say by the electron absorbing a photon (which could be one the electron has just emitted), giving sixteen possible outcomes between the electrons polarisation at the start and end of a journey. That no electron with the same polarisation can be in the same place at the same time is an example of the exclusion principle – true for electrons and other fermions but not for photons.

In chapter 4, Feynman begins by discussing some of the mathematical difficulties associated with QED and some of the 'trickery' to get calculations to agree with experiments. Four quantities are mentioned; two, 'm' and 'e', representing the experimental mass and charge of the electron and 'n' and 'j', corresponding to the same two quantities and which are used for calculation. Calculating 'm' involves starting with an electron with no coupling, $E(A \text{ to } B)$, and then adding further terms for two couplings (an emission and absorption of a photon), four, eight and so on. A problem arises when two coupling points occur where one is directly on top of the other such that the distance between them is zero. This is where the mathematics 'blows up' and makes no sense. The solution was to give the distance a value; but a very small one! With this problem overcome, people could at last use QED to make accurate calculations, however, he does warn of anomalies at very small distances, possibly due to gravitational effects, such as probabilities over 100% and negative energy.

In the final part of chapter 4, Feynman looks at how the rest of the atom works, introducing the theory of QCD (quantum chromo-dynamics), along with an overview of the other main particles (remember this book was written in the early to mid-1980's).

In this theory, as opposed to earlier explanations of how electrons and protons interact by exchanging photons, for the atomic nucleus quarks now interact by exchanging gluons which they are able to emit as well as absorb. This exchange of gluons effectively hold the nucleus together. Quarks come in several varieties (which are sub-divided into so called colours - R, G, B – based on their polarisation) but only 'up' and 'down' quarks exist in the nucleus; the proton consisting of two up quarks and a down quark and the neutron with two down quarks and one up quark. Since an up quark has a charge of $\frac{2}{3}$ and a down quark has a charge of $-\frac{1}{3}$ then the total charge for the proton is $+1$ and zero for the neutron. Similar diagrams, from above, exist to show quark-gluon, or strong, interactions (see diagram 5).

As chapter 4 continues, other particles are introduced, such as the 'W' boson and neutrino. Feynman uses these two particles to explain beta decay whereby a neutron disintegrates into a proton (see diagram 6). This process involves a down quark changing to an up quark.

Feynman goes on to look at other particles and their interactions in a similar way to that above, introducing the reader to the muon or heavy electron (heavy because it is similar to the electron but with a mass around 200 times greater), the tau particle, different types of neutrino and the five varieties of quark which were known at the time; there is now a sixth quark as well as the Higgs Boson and two Z bosons in the list of elementary particles. He concludes with a short mention of gravity and the difficulties that physicists still have in including gravity in their theories.

So that's pretty much what I have taken from a first read through and it is fair to say that there is much, much more in this book than I have covered in this review but to cover it all would be futile, time consuming and probably not that successful; instead just read the book! There will be stuff that you know already but everyone will learn something new and, at the end of the day, as Feynman says, don't worry if there are things you simply don't get because neither does Feynman and neither does everyone else.

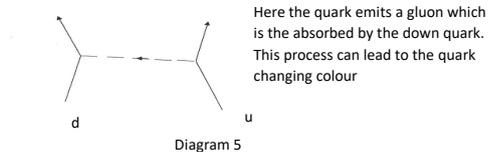


Diagram 5

Here the quark emits a gluon which is then absorbed by the down quark. This process can lead to the quark changing colour

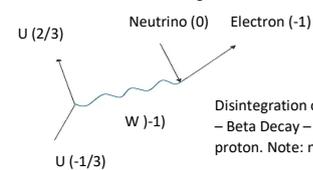
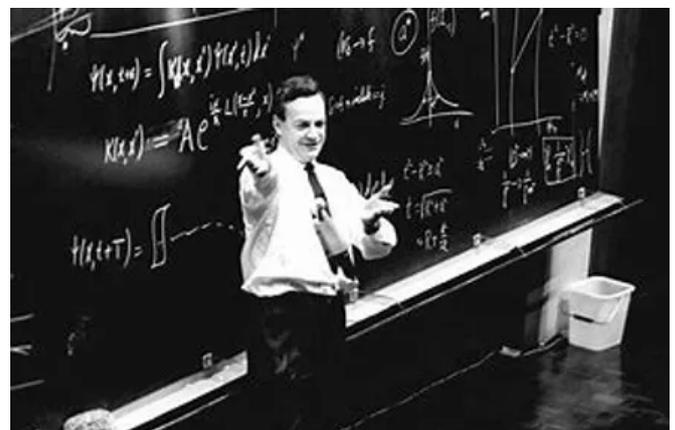


Diagram 6

Disintegration of down quark to up quark – Beta Decay – neutron becomes a proton. Note: neutrino is an anti-neutrino



PLATFORM

In PLATFORM we are introducing an arena where issues can be discussed and debated. These can be scientific, cultural, historical and/or arts related among other ideas. We are looking at these issues from local, national and international perspectives alike.

WHY DIGITAL CURRENCIES ARE BAD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Whilst scanning through the BBC's News Home Page an interesting headline caught my attention. The headline said that Elon Musk was no longer trading in Bitcoins due to their high mining costs and the detrimental effects the mining had on the environment. My understanding of what a Bitcoin is was immediately called into question and I couldn't quite put the two together; that is mining and something I thought only existed in a virtual world. So, I read on and finally understood what it all meant. To begin with, let's be clear on what a Bitcoin is. The first ideas behind a digital currency were in the 1990's but it wasn't until twenty years later that the main currency at the time, Bitcoin, started to come more and more into the public domain. The Bitcoin domain and protocol, the rules and software used to allow Bitcoin trading and to record ownership, was established in 2008 by a person or persons (there are a few names circulating on the internet but they are all believed to be pseudonyms) seeking a change to how business transactions are conducted. With only a few thousand transactions in the first few years, the number had grown to over 10 million by 2020. The value of a Bitcoin also increased, from virtually nothing in 2009 to between \$55,000 and \$60,000 by April 2021. The numbers of Bitcoins in circulation can grow by what is referred to as 'mining'. At first, it seems that the term is used to mean something else, something that doesn't really relate to mining as we know it, such as for coal, however, there is a connection. In order to mine or generate more Bitcoins, prospectors compete against each other to solve complex mathematical problems – the winner receiving the Bitcoins. The problem is this. In order to solve these mathematical problems, huge amounts of computational power, and therefore electricity, is required. And since most Bitcoin miners are in China (over 75%), the source of the electricity is the burning of vast amounts of coal in China's coal fired power stations. So, the mining of Bitcoins is, in effect, introducing thousands of tons of CO2 into the atmosphere. Musk finishes by saying that Bitcoins still have a future in business transactions but until they can resolve their environmental issues, his company (Tesla) will no longer be trading them.

WHY SUCH A LOW OPINION OF SCOTLAND?

The Scottish Elections in May 2021 showed that an overwhelming majority of Scottish people supported and voted for pro-independence and pro-referendum parties. I was one of those people.

The following Thursday after the elections, the BBC's debate programme Question Time devoted a question to whether Scotland should have another referendum. With social distancing in place, the viewer's panel appeared virtually on a screen wall, I believe they are a randomly selected group who appear every week on the programme. Everyone is entitled to their views, however, one of the faces on the screen proceeded to declare that her village might like to become independent too and put a rocket on the moon while they were at it. This, of course, implies that the idea of an independent Scotland is as ludicrous as a small English village gaining independence and sending a rocket to the moon! Shades of an 1950's Ealing comedy here and quite apt considering the mind set of some people who still live in the "good old days of the British Empire". Anyway, this remark

subsequently caused a wave of laughter to ripple across the screen wall with many (not all) of the participants laughing at what had been said. And, what was said was so insulting and disrespectful to those of us who believe that Scotland is perfectly capable of running its own country. Why is their opinion of Scotland so low?

NIDDRIE WOMAN

During the 1970's the artist John Latham was commissioned by the Scottish Office's Development Agency to reimagine the red shale oil bings in West Lothian as something other than a waste product from the process known as "retorting" gas from the shale. Although profitable in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the mines were eventually closed down by the 1960's. These gigantic bings, the leftovers from a defunct industry were thus regarded as eyesores for the most part and no value of any kind was placed upon them. That is until it was discovered that the unique environment of the bings are ideal for the development of plant biodiversity. Nowadays, therefore, they have become sites of interest for environmental research. Not only that, they have taken on a kind of iconic status as landmarks, the remnants of an industrial past. The Five Sisters near West Calder, for example, is now a protected industrial monument. John Latham was asked to use his considerable creative skill to find a fresh way to consider four enormous bings which dominate the landscape near the small towns of Broxburn and Winchburgh. For those not familiar with industrial landscape such as this it might come as an eyeopener just how magnificent this man-made, almost extra-terrestrial looking environment is.



For further information the article below will help to explain what happened when Latham came to West Lothian between 1975 and 1976.

[Waste to Monument: John Latham's Niddrie Woman: Art & Environment – Tate Papers | Tate](#)

From my point of view this is a "hidden" piece of public art when we have so many visible pieces of mediocre public art projects in West Lothian. This project was not given the publicity it deserved at the time nor has it been noted sufficiently today at a time when ideas about the environment are changing. John Latham chose to have his ashes scattered on the "Heart" of Niddrie Woman (the heart that was too large for the body). This says a lot about how Latham felt about the place and his perception that perhaps West Lothian is a place populated by big-hearted people.

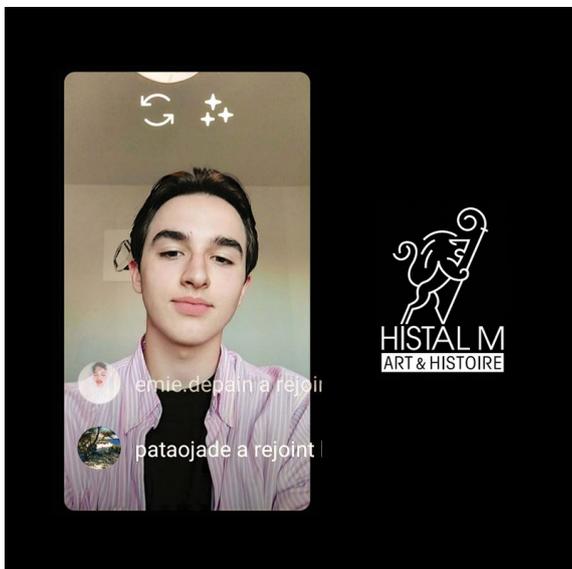
Crossword No. 1 Solutions.

11. attracted. 13. instant. 14. imputed. 16. irons 18. cases.
miner. 7. retinal.
Down: 1. acted. 2. ace. 3. integer. 4. entertainment. 5. aroma. 6. gold
15. station. 17. Foret. 19. ape. 20. overturns. 22. tides. 23. tedious.
13. international.
Across: 1. avarice. 5. anger. 8. twenty-two. 9. let. 10. dwang. 12. roadman

PLATFORM PLUS

MATIS LEGGIADRO

Matis Leggiadro is a student of History of Art, he lives in the southern French city of Albi. Matis is passionately concerned that art and culture should be for everyone on an equal basis and that it should be widely available for everyone. His belief in this concept led him to create the website Hista! M, this multi-media project includes a You-Tube channel, radio station, Instagram and various other projects such as exhibitions and conferences. In short, Hista! M is a platform dedicated to promoting democracy in art and, therefore, actively challenging the status quo – the challenge is to “do better”. This is one of the reasons why I have joined Matis’ team and why we collaborate on projects together, our aim is to bring these issues to public attention. I asked Matis a few questions in order to better understand his reasons for the creation of Hista! M and what his thoughts are on the situation in general.



CB You are studying History of Art, does this have any connection to why you created Hista! M?

ML Indeed I study the History of Art but this has no connection with the creation of Hista! M. I founded this media before studying the History of Art. On the other hand, it was thanks to the history courses of Guillaume Gras (historian and professor of modern history at the Champollion University of Albi) that I received at the college that the desire to found Hista! M came to me.

CB Can you explain what you are trying to achieve with Hista! M?

ML I have a very global vision of things. My goal is therefore to allow individuals to encounter art and history. I deeply believe that culture is fundamental to the future of our civilization because it is the proof of our humanity and our intelligence. History is the learning of the past that makes up our present and art is the human gaze on this world at a specific moment.

(continued)

The two are complementary. I want to allow very different audiences to discover these two major concepts. That’s why I am specifically interested in my territory: Albi. It is quite interesting to look at what is happening in our city because that is where our daily life is. Once this step is completed...the world becomes more accessible and it opens its doors to you.

CB You and I have similar aims, do you think it is helpful for us to share ideas and experiences?

ML Our ideas are indeed similar and I think it is very relevant to share them and to question our experiences. It’s a great way to enrich and stimulate each other. Creation doesn’t really have any limits because it comes from imagination and I think we create.

CB Also, do you think it is helpful for people in general to work together for the purpose of building a democratic platform for the arts?

ML That’s a very interesting question, and I think the answer is yes. I have the chance to work with other great people for an artistic media whose purpose is to allow young people to meet the arts: "8 Vestibule". I think there would be some hypocrisy with the idea of setting up a democratic platform by being alone.

CB What issues occur in France that spoil or set-back democratic access to the arts and culture?

ML The rather obvious problem in France is that most museums in the provinces are too exclusive. Sometimes you feel that if you are not a specialist you cannot understand, because nothing (or too little) is done for everyone to understand.

CB From what you know about where I live in Scotland – do you think there are also issues that need to be addressed?

ML I think, Cathy, that people in your area do not understand the urgency of the situation. There is a quote in French that says: "A force de sacrifier l'essentiel pour l'urgence, on finit par oublier l'urgence de l'essentiel." (Edgar Morin, La Méthode). If we translate the quote, it says: "By sacrificing the essential for the emergency, we end up forgetting the urgency of the essential." I think that’s what’s happening in Livingston.

CB What would you say to people of your age in Scotland regarding the situation - that is – do you have any advice for them based on your own experiences?

ML I’m going to talk to them directly and hope they’ll read this : Do you guys like music? I guess so. Why? I imagine that by listening to music you disconnect from life, you are in your world, as if liberated. You know why I tell you this? This is what art is for, to emancipate yourself, to open yourself to its world and sometimes to the world simply... and without it how to be fulfilled and happy in our society? Think about that, please. If I have any advice to give you, I’ll tell you : believe in yourself and your ideas !

CB Finally, you actively work with the Charles Rennie Mackintosh Association in Roussillon (France). Can you explain your thoughts about him (and his wife Margaret)?

ML What do I think about Mackintosh and Margaret? That’s a question I’m having a hard time answering. I have had an artistic crush and I think that this couple were deeply, artistically, visionary.

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