

# ***The GlasgOw Diaries***

Hal Cassidy

Capitalism's admirers tend to equate calls for reform with looming socialism. But most reformers, seeking a fair shake for workers in this downsizing era, simply ask if capitalism is to be our slave or master

Confidential report condemns £6bn waterway scheme as deep slash across the nation's fabric

Plan for English  
'Panama Canal'  
to be scrutinized

Why Cherie is  
happy in the  
background

**The Big Earner**

Let him teach others how to sell

Chirac 'backs Major' in  
fight over working  
hours

Is the Stone a  
hit or a myth?

Guard of honour  
for the final mile

Card sellers show little charity

**Shoppers go gullibly into sales frenzy**

Yesterdays shops  
threw their doors  
open to millions of  
bargain hunters.  
But should we  
believe those  
'once only' offers?

Major Tom  
floats on  
stock market high

**Burns: give refs a voice**

Cadete 'goal'  
the last straw

Rangers shares  
soar after  
win over Celtic

CLINTON, THE LOVE-CHILD  
AND THE MISSING HOOKER  
Double nightmare that  
looms over Bill's big day

HE JUST LURVED SCOTLAND BUT CAN YOU SEE HIM LIVING HERE?

A Jackson  
farce that  
masked  
the cold  
truth

THE TRENDIEST WALL IN TOWN  
Attack of  
the 60ft  
woman

Trainspotting is this craze  
among English kids for  
having trains run over them

## THE RUNAWAY GENE GENIE

Dolly the sheep raises the  
possibilities of cloning children,  
growing new limbs and tuning  
the human species to higher levels  
of intelligence

Crathie members fear restoration row could lead to Queen using Balmoral chapel

Organs'  
threat  
to royal  
worship

Exclusive: research shows telephone charges bear no relation to actual costs

# Calling for change

SCOTTISH CHAPEL HOLDS CLUE TO CENTURIES-OLD MYSTERY, SAY INVESTIGATORS

Turin Shroud? It must  
be Jacques the Mason

Go-ahead for  
rival lottery  
that's faster  
on the draw

All-green homes for people ... but Prince is out of kilter at kirk  
who promise not to buy a car

## Blair wins a landslide in May Day massacre

Sean's  
lad says:  
I'd vote  
Loony,  
not SNP

SNP warms to Labour's  
proposals for devolution

£5m  
to go from this  
**BBC**  
... to this  
**BBC**

THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF THE BEAUTIFUL 17-YEAR-OLD GIRL FAN AND  
THE BOY THE FAMILY-LOVING BEATLES STAR HAS NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED  
Is this McCartney's secret son?

## Labour Reacts Quickly To Corruption Allegation

*Party Orders Probe of Campaign Bribe Charge*

Toronto sprint  
showdown  
was a 'circus'

Clergy attack  
Charles for  
missing church

Why does the Queen allow herself to be a

## marketing tool for cigarette companies?

... *fools rush in where angels fear to tread*  
Pope,  
Essay on Criticism

### Thursday September 12, 1996

One doesn't arrive in a city and start separating the good from the bad in one big gargle. For one, I don't know much about Glasgow, other than what I've read or been told about from my Canadian stoop. You know, the basic survival kit; beer, football, and golf in that order with a joke or two about bagpipes and kilts. (e.g. What's the difference between a set of bagpipes and an onion? No one cries when you cut up a set of bagpipes.) Oh, sure, I've seen *Gregory's Girl*, *Trainspotting*, even *Restless Natives*, though I have no idea where Edinburgh ends and Glasgow begins. Robert Louis Stevenson, Robbie Burns, Robbie Coltrane are all just names to me. Charles Rennie Mackintosh a Glaswegian? Maybe? I do know, *at least*, that the first prime minister of Canada was born here.<sup>1</sup>

I doubt any of that mattered to Mr. McIlvanney my boss at *Northco News* when I told him I was following my wife to Scotland after she landed a year of post graduate studies in Decorative Arts at the University of Glasgow. He shook his head, muttered something about "youth," and reassigned me from *Science Monthly* where I'd been working as editor for four years to *The Canadian Scotsman*, Northco's fledgling expatriate bi-monthly, started by one James A. McIlvanney from *Milngavie* (the pronunciation of which he laboured well past bearing.) The deal was that I had to write stories about my experiences of which he assured me there would be plenty. And if I sent back the occasional newsworthy piece I could keep my job. If I got lost on some magical mystery tour tracking down lost ancestors I would not. At any rate, I had one year "to get it out of my system."

Hurriedly, I did my reading, consisting of two books, oddly prescribed to me by McIlvanney as required reading. His choices shall undoubtedly skew my vision, but then aren't all eyes trained on what they've seen? The first book, *Growing up in the Gorbals* by Ralph Glasser, seemed a peculiarly odd choice given that it is a book about a Glasgow no more, written by a man, who I presume, is a Glaswegian no more. It does say in his biography that he supports the working class and underdeveloped nations of the world, certainly noble credentials, but I can't help thinking he has escaped more than just the Gorbals. Even with the Glasgow artistic renaissance and the renewed vigour of all things Scottish lapping its way to the shores of Toronto, I somehow imagined that all British writers lived in London. Ah, vision is in the mouth of the publicist.

The other book, *The Old Firm*, full of football statistics from the turn of the century to 1985, though certainly less literary, was somewhat more educational for a know-nothing like myself. Words like "Ibrox" and "Parkhead" carved space in my hard drive for the first time along side "Ranger" and "Celtic," of which I had some, albeit very minor,

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<sup>1</sup> John A. Macdonald 1815–91.

understanding. It seemed not to matter, *to me*, if I didn't remember *which was which*, as long as I could conceptualize the two as *opposites*. Recall Ranger, see not-Celtic. Recall Celtic, see not-Ranger. That's all that matters to the newborn, whose training bounces him forward with basic ideas of hot and cold. Surely, I don't have to say whether I prefer hot to cold or *visa versa*? Not yet.

If my naiveté gets me into trouble, I'll just nod when the man beside me nods. I've learned that much in politically-correct Canada, a country created in committee. If the man on my other side is shaking his head, then as any good Emily Post book would have me do, I'll oblige him too. "You must have Emily Post here?" I'll offer blubberingly if clenched too vigorously. Besides, there's always my accent to blame any indiscretions on. They're both two syllable words—*Ran-ger*, *Cel-tic*. Spoken really fast in one big mumble, under the influence and in *my* language, I'm sure they sound the same. I hope I'm not sounding too wishy-washy?—there'll be time to sing my tune—though *The Old Firm* has taught me to choose carefully, a luxury I can afford having been schooled in the outer soccer colonies.

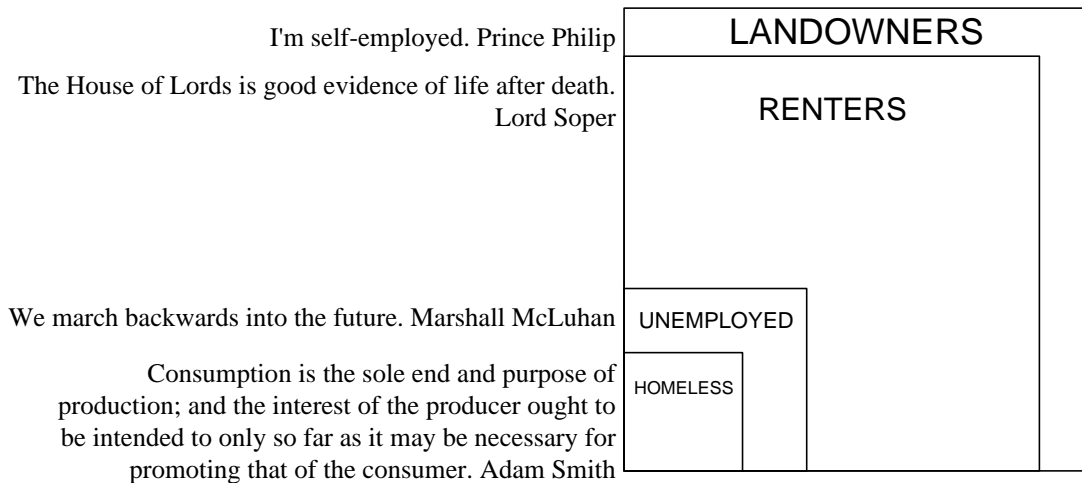
It does come down to the authoritative voice. If you will, a question of objectivity. True, I may not know which end is *up* on Byres Road, but I do know it has two (one at Dumbarton Road and one at Great Western Road as I soon learned). And I do know that the roads and sidewalks here are as *shite* as back home. Patchwork quilts up and down the streets, every bit stitched in tar. How is it that Roman roads lasted for centuries, yet we can't resist digging up the new every other year? Oh, there's always some excuse, workfare not being one. In fairness, I guess, the traffic jam hadn't been invented in 40 BC. But please, no one should care if I call football *soccer*. And *tomato* can be pronounced any way one pleases as long as it's red and round and goes well in a cheese and tomato toastie.

Your ever-ready observer (his whole life spent in the bulging New World megalopolis of Toronto) will, of course, offer sound droppings from his new post in life. Hopefully a few aphorisms will pop out along the way. For example, this just in as I finally found the discount store in St. Enoch's Centre: "To mature is to acquire what you don't *want* instead of what you don't *need*." I'll even pretend not to notice when a local asks me for the millionth time how I like it here *as an American*. Of course, I may have to slip in the odd, "Oh, you English. So keen to evaluate."

The only surprise upon landing, all fifteen bags intact, was that there was no surprise. There wasn't even a customs, which when I read the next day that John Major and, perhaps, the IRA would be planning on interrupting daily life in Glasgow, surprised the hell out of me. I was even travelling on an Irish passport, a quirk of family planning and my only way to remain in the UK for the duration of my wife's year. Surely, that would raise suspicions? Perhaps, in the land of Orwell and Winnie-the-Pooh, Big Brother wasn't such a bother. True, the plane had stopped in Belfast for half an hour before alighting for Glasgow, but no one had checked us *there* either. Had I found the Narnian hole to international smuggling? Was this my opportunity in beleaguered Britain, sure to be few having just left *the* Land of Opportunity. Instant get rich schemes danced through my head. Me, Hal Cassidy, thirty-six year old, Irish-born Canadian, the head of the UK

Connection, in Glasgow? No, there would be no illegal millions. Besides, the National Lottery and other assorted betting schemes were already ensconced as the national pastime here. I could tell the moment I landed. "This is a security message from Glasgow Airport," the cheery, though cropping voice announced. "Please ensure that all lottery tickets have been checked and that no millions have been left unattended."

As we walked out to the taxi stand at Glasgow Airport, the sun giddily bathing in its own arrogance, our official Glasgow clock began; September 12, 1996—Day One.



*Rome was not built in a day*  
Cervantes,  
Don Quixote

### Saturday September 14

Down where Dumbarton meets Crow, in what I have come to refer to as the "popular" West End because every Glasgow brochure and housing accommodation list does, Sophie motions left and I motion right. It matters little that shortly we'll be splattered like roadkill for the single mistake of behaving like toddlers as we cross the road. Not only do we not know *why* that little green man won't glow, but we keep instinctively looking the wrong way. Splat! "Sorry." You say "to-mah-toe" and I say "to-may-toe" so let's put Humpty together again. It's bad enough that we don't know *cognitively* what we're doing, but when *instincts* fail, there's nothing to separate us from the animals, dead *or* alive. *Right* and *left* have lost all meaning, even as opposites, tied up in knots in our mirrored minds. We make an instant pact to look all fifteen ways before crossing anything ever again. After two minutes and still no green man, however, we cross against the red. Sophie seems uninterested when I ask her, "Why is it a *man* telling us to cross? Why can't it be a little green *woman*?" Objectivity is my only weapon, language my only foe, though Sophie is not amused as we stutter-step to the North-West side of Dumbarton and Crow, like a couple of squirrels caught in headlights. Or, at least, I think it's the North-West side. Happily, the sun is obliging on this, Day Three. Alas, we still don't know where we're going. Oh, did I forget to mention we hadn't arranged a flat before we came?

We had already seen the flat in Broomhill, courtesy of a local estate's agent, whose phone number we got from a sign on a North Kelvinside flat window on our first walk about the *popular* West End. Agents *letting* flats was not an innovation which had lapped it's way to Canada—yet. "Twenty percent off the top," advised a man I'd struck up a conversation with in Bar Miro, in yet another area we had sized up earlier. "You're better off calling round." Wise words indeed, but we didn't have forever. At £50 a night in a hotel, reserved by a much too-nice a woman at the airport all dressed up in matching plaids, we had to get what we could. Not knowing how to use the phone (honest) or even how to board the bus (honest!), it was a miracle we'd seen anything, though we kept reminding ourselves we were learning, reason enough why one of us was here. We'd been to Pollokshaws and Ibrox as well thanks to Sophie's university accommodation list, and although it was dark, we could see why "popular" was not the common vernacular attached to south of the Clyde. The distance to the university was undoubtedly a mitigating factor. Alas, we had nothing to compare. Worse, not only did we *not* know, we *knew* we didn't know as we felt our way into this new old world (not as enlightening as Socrates would have us believe). About all that could be said in our favour was that we weren't in the same queue as the thronging students—as long as they weren't doubling and trebling up. The Crow Road hill seemed steeper, our map more shredded.

As we walked up Crow Road, our talk was of bus routes, amenities, direction, and now doubt weighing as much as weather. We were deciding not if this was where we *wanted* to live, but if this was where we *could* live—an aphorism for the books, no doubt. Our budget, we agreed would be overstepped after we saw our first flat—much dearer than our own in Toronto. Any equations of one-quarter gross income for housing I'd been taught at home went out like the Gorbals. We may both speak the same language, but something was not adding up in the economics. Our Bar Miro friend had even thrown in "I think you'll find Broomhill a little far out." A word from a disinterested source carried great weight in our newborn awareness, but as his story expanded, we found out he was a psychologist, whose idea of quitting smoking was to puff incessantly on an unlit cigarette as he'd been doing since we met him. "Will power, mind over matter," he reminded himself between empty puffs. Surely, this was a sign that Broomhill was *not* too far out and that, just the opposite, it was *in*. For us, the symbolic world was all we had. Green men, sunny weather, no customs. Now was the time to try a tenner on a long shot at any of the scores of betting palaces we'd passed along the way to *really* put the symbolism to the test. Of course, we were too tired for anything but bed as we stood outside, gazing up at the *popular* West End flat that would be ours for a year.

No one would believe us when we told them—zero to a beautiful, spacious, three room, Victorian tenement<sup>2</sup> flat in three days? (We'd even squeezed in a Mackintosh exhibit on Day Two.) High ceilings, tastefully decorated, TWO gas fireplaces, double glazing!, all the amenities. "The proof is not in the pudding," I would remind my friends. Lots of people do all the right things and yet get caught unprepared and others ... win the lottery. I know, inductive reasoning after the fact is very dangerous, especially when climbing summits or flying too close to suns. We could still be back at the hotel, watching the

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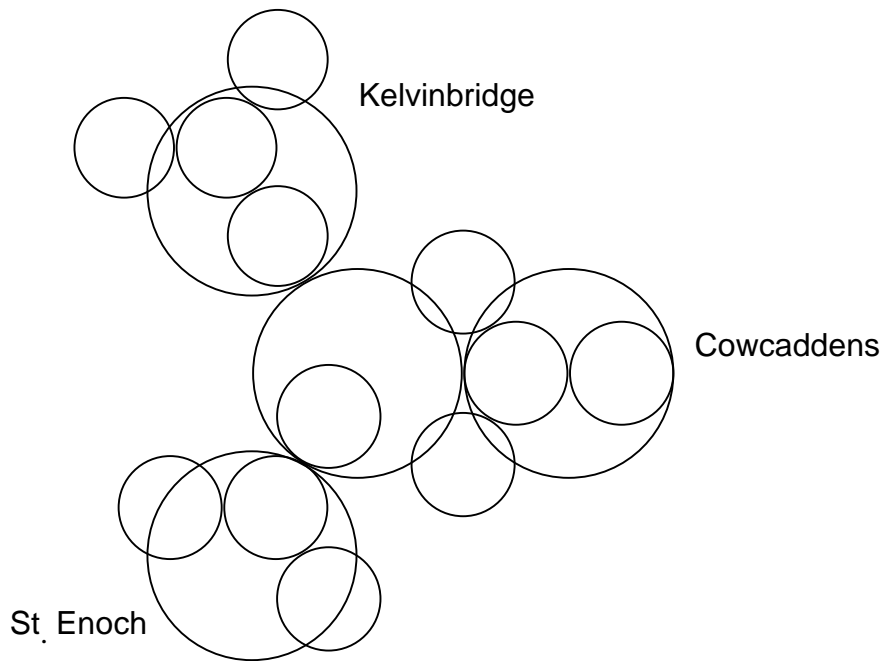
<sup>2</sup> Tenementum: *a holding* (originally of land). A multi-unit dwelling of more than one story with a common entrance and stair.



meter wind down our savings, heartbroken at not being able to pick a winner (or even place). Okay, so the plug is too small in the bath, it takes five minutes to lock and unlock the door, and the pastry shop is, perhaps, a little too well-situated. And bus #44—well, I don't want to surrender my objective status just yet by being impertinent.

### **Sunday September 15**

Do three locks on a door make me feel more secure? Should I assume a certain level of competence in Scottish thieves unknown to me? Is security versus freedom the question of all future society?



*Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat*

Kipling,  
The Ballad of East and West

### **Monday September 16**

Unbelievably on Day One, we had embarked on the Underground as we dragged our jet-lagged bodies from Kelvinbridge Underground to Bridge Street Underground before transferring on a bus to Pollokshaws near Queen's Park to see our first flat. (The restaurant on the corner which was mentioned in the directions was even in our "Best of Scotland" book. A good sign, though, as it turned out, not a good flat.)

By Day Five, we were "underground-approved," regular train hoppers, quickly surmising that it was easier to go clockwise on the Outer Circle five stations than counter-clockwise on the Inner Circle nine stations. Mind you, I was quite disoriented when I discovered that the curvature of the tracks at Kelvinbridge station is opposite to what one would expect if the Outside Circle is indeed *outside*. Circles only bend one way or so

Mother Nature, who I think has a decent claim to being Scottish, has decreed. This puzzling fact (which reproduces itself at three of the fifteen stations<sup>3</sup>) had me convinced that the Outer Circle was inside the Inner Circle. A lot of other things were back to front. Why not something as ridiculous as what was currently traumatizing me? It was only when I discovered that the curvature went the *right* way in most of the other stations (excepting Kelvinbridge, Cowcaddens, and St. Enoch)—that is, the Outer Circle curves outside (or larger) than the Inner Circle—that I realized the Outside Circle is, in all likelihood, outside the Inside Circle. Got that? I say "in all likelihood" because there is no way of knowing, provided one doesn't already know one's orientation *inside* the Underground, no small feat, I dare say, for half of Glasgow in their underground as it is for half of Toronto in theirs. (And ours only goes back and forth.)

Mind you, if the curvature of the Kelvinbridge station was back to front when we took the Outer Circle train to see our first flat, we would have ended up somewhere in Maryhill (according to my calculations) and got lost and never met the estate's agent the next day and never got our flat and would still be at the hotel, hopping undergrounds to see more flats. The proof, it seems, is *sometimes* in the pudding. Circles inside of circles, wheels inside of wheels, the World forever turning. *Why* the curvature is back to front in three stations is a question for the Strathclyde Passenger Transport. If you're asking, you might also suggest *Loop* instead of circle—to be precise.

After demonstrating my mental acumen on the Underground, I profess to having no clue about the buses, especially #44, our lifeline between flat and town. Mathematics and sciences and other fields of logic have their advantages in this oft senseless world; understanding bus routes is not one. For example, having caught the #44 in one particular part of town, it seems to me that one could catch *another* #44 in that same part of town and, thus, one could walk blocks out of one's way to catch one's bus, ignoring scads of equally fine *others*. (Sophie discovered the #6 and #16 on a whim, though she still hasn't been able to reproduce her feat.) That's the problem with mathematics and science and other fields of logic. With all the time in the world to solve life's arcane little problems, one usually forgets about safety and temperature, the touchstones of the engineer and liberal art student and other sentient beings.

Bus #44 is also the architect of my hitherto most embarrassing moment as a visitor to the glowing City of Glasgow. That is to say, when three #44s arrived *en masse* after a fifty-five minute wait (undoubtedly caught inbetwixt an ongoing game of bus frog), I held up an entire busload of people (and the following road of traffic) asking what I thought was a perfectly reasonable question of a perfectly unobliging driver. (Note: bus drivers will not drive and talk at the same time, though they will smoke, curse, stare, and chew gum and drive at the same time.) His altogether too loud an answer, *I thought*, was "Head office is at 314 Victoria Street, if you care to know." All I asked was "Do you have a schedule." I didn't ask "Do you *keep* a schedule?" as he had undoubtedly mistook my meaning. After a jerk of the hand brake and a tremendous sigh, he swivelled his upper body towards me. I could feel his eyes digging through the back of my head. "I mean,

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<sup>3</sup> Yes, I counted, on Day Fourteen. Sophie was away for the week touring castles in the Borders with her class and I was bored, okay?

does a schedule exist?" I added hesitantly. "Yes, a schedule exists!" came his immediate and strained reply before he dug out said unnecessary papers and said whereabouts of said SPT HQ, *as if I cared to know*. Perhaps I had messed up on the translation? Maybe *timetable* is preferable to *schedule* in such situations?

I slugged off to the back of the bus away from the thickly glances. If they had me marked as American, for once I didn't mind. Too bad I lost my nerve—I so wanted to ask him if he thought a bus driver smoking in a bus littered with "Smoking Prohibited. £400 Fine" signs was the best way to get passengers to comply. I didn't, of course. No need to heap scorn upon scorn.

If not form then function can fail us all, now and again. Some other day, perhaps when I've learned more about the migratory patterns of the #6 and #16 buses, I'll try another way home.

### **Tuesday September 17**

To Robbie

Well, after a week (and no rain!), we've walked 500 miles and 500 more around Glasgow. The city is quite beautiful, all done up in Victorian tenement splendor. We were quite lucky to find a lovely place so quickly. It is furnished, but missing a few essentials which we've since hunted down. I'm even a member of the local lawn tennis club with a key to the clubhouse and, hence, pub. I doubt they will call long distance to check my references. We haven't really had a chance to find a local, though I spotted the rather oddly named *Pablo's* down the road. We might try our luck there tomorrow. The corner store sells beer and wine anyway. (No government officials lurking in the shadows as far as I could tell. Nice that I am allowed to make a few decisions for myself.)

No immediate earth shattering thoughts, though it seems to be quite an athletic culture—pub games, parliamentary debates, football everywhere. They're very serious even in their drinking. For us it was always just participating—you get points for being nice. Anyway, I don't want to get to into all that "us" and "them" stuff, even if it is the British way and all that.

Just a quick note to let you know I'm up and running with e-mail. I'll write you more sooner. And thanks again for the book—we've already been to #497 via #527 and Bar Miro (sure to be in the next edition). By the way, #456 is amazing!

### **Wednesday September 18**

After a busy an excited week and a silky though lukewarm bath (we haven't figured out the button thing yet), we readied ourselves for our baptismal blessing in the neighbourhood pub. I probably overdid the Lee Marvin Kid Shelene shtick preparing myself, making sure everything was just right, but I wasn't at all sure what to expect. My vest (waist coat) was only slightly worse for ware. So with tepid excitement, around 8 o'clock, Sophie and I walked the half mile to Pablo's (our local?).

Alas, it was a football night, (two English or European teams; I had no idea) and we ended up shouting in between hollers to this guy whose name I've already forgotten. He said he'd be there Sunday for another game if we wanted to talk some more. I think that's what he said.

*I hold it true, what e'er befall,  
I feel it when I sorrow most,  
'Tis better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all*  
Tennyson,  
In Memorium XXVII

### **Thursday September 19**

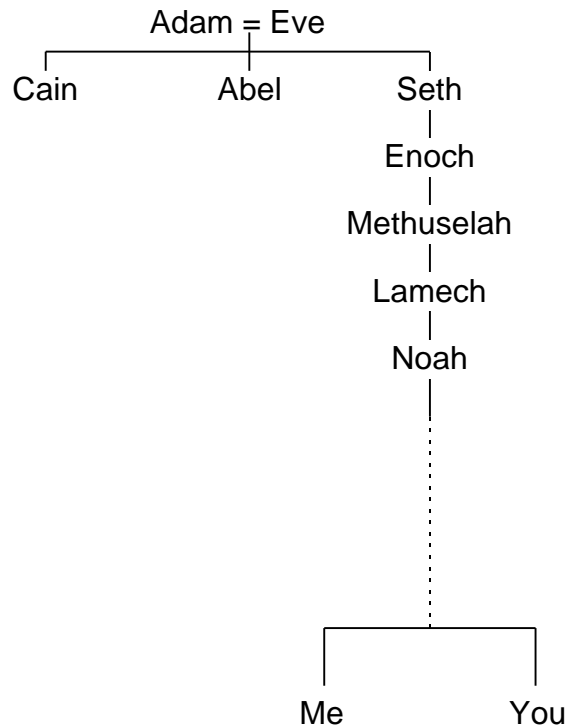
To uproot oneself from home, friends, the neighbourhood convenience store, the lifetime of certainty one is continuously expanding through time, and travel three thousand miles to live in another city, in another culture, only to be reminded every time I open my mouth that I'm not from here, is a very strange thing indeed. Mind you, one-quarter of my family (all dead), through my mother's father, came from Scotland, though as I remember, from the other three-quarters (also all dead) that Cork is no Dublin, I shall undoubtedly discover that Glasgow is no Edinburgh. But here I am, *in Glasgow*, wondering if it was such a good career move to leave a well-paying job as the editor of a monthly magazine with more than a few readers to write the occasional snippet on Scotland and all things Scottish for *The Canadian Scotsman*.

And a Canadian, no less. The great New World clan with a World-class identity crisis next to the almighty U.S. of A. What *am* I doing here? A week or two, sure. Just enough time to see Mackintosh's Willow Tea Room, eat some bangers and mash, maybe play a round of golf, and send a few post cards home, but a whole year! Already people are wondering why I keep re-appearing in their pubs asking for chips instead of crisps. And I'm convinced the bus drivers think I know better. Honest, I don't. I've been putting money in a box and taking my seat without a word exchanged between me and thirty years of bus drivers. Really, I'd rather not have to explain my whole life story every time I open my mouth.

"My wife is studying Decorative Arts at the university. You know, it's a professional degree with Christie's. No, not the *Antiques Roadshow*. That's *Sotheby's*. Ah yes, you're right. There aren't many antiques in America." And then someone inevitably asks if I've ever sat in one of Mackintosh's chairs. "Dead uncomfortable. Pretty to look at, but I wouldn't have one in my home." The thought of crossing the ropes at the McLellan Gallery does intrigue me, but I've no desire to explain my story to the police as well.

To be sure, if it weren't for Sophie, I wouldn't be here, but now that I am, I can't help wanting to belong, something I admit I took quite for granted back home. And wishing maybe that the one-quarter of my previously denied Scottish ancestry will get me a little further than always playing the visitor. I mean, no one gives a hoot in Canada *where*

you're from. In Canada, we're *all* from somewhere else. Obviously, anonymity is possible only when one belongs.



*Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die*  
Isaiah, XXII,13

### Friday September 21

Day Nine, we met Ronnie or, rather, Ronnie met us whilst awaiting our usual bus #44, the one that never comes, across from "Insomnia," a twenty-four hour restaurant I expect I'll be frequenting. I was looking at the cars we can't afford in the store window by the bus stop, wondering why no bus numbers were posted on the sign, and smoking the last of our celebratory ten-pack. (It was a good idea at the time, but smoking is always a bad idea the day after.) Sophie was trying to pretend I believed a bus was coming, though I had gotten her to agree to take a taxi if no bus materialized after I finished my cigarette. Everything had gone well, our first Friday at our flat, Mackintosh up the wazoo, the best meal ever at the largest Indian restaurant in the World (the "Creme de la Creme"), and smoking. Except, no bus.

Enter Ronnie, like Ivanhoe to the rescue, assuring us that *indeed* the bus was coming. In such cases, the knowledge that a solution *exists* is as good as a solution—otherwise we'd all just give up. So we waited, again, though more happily than before. And, having told Ronnie that we'd been waiting almost an hour, he waited, more happily than before, knowing that *his* bus, formerly just Sophie's and mine, was coming sooner than he had ever thought possible. And thus the three of us waited, happy and together, though I still couldn't afford the cars in the window, we were now out of smokes, and bus #44 was still

nowhere to be seen. Alas, after a bottle of wine, a few cigarettes (Ronnie's), and some cool music (also Ronnie's) back at his flat, coincidentally around the corner from ours, no one was talking about buses that never came.

Tucked in the basement off Broomhill Drive, Ronnie's flat was speckled with paintings and prints and homey things unlike our own. We were in Oz after the twister, other people's lives a substitute for ours. I thought of home, *in Canada*, as if we'd be doing just the same at one of *our* friend's flats on a Friday night. It didn't seem that long ago.

When Ronnie's wine ran out, his flat mate Jim returned from the wee hours offering more. Ideas and thoughts ricocheted off the pictures and the soft lighting. "Oh, Broomhill's great. Here for a year? Good for you. The #44's not so bad. More wine?" Doctors both, they treated us to first class attention, disagreeing only slightly when their allegiances were scratched—Rangers versus Celtic even in the best of moods. "I have an aunt in Toronto. Isn't Mackintosh amazing!" Does it matter that Sophie is Catholic, or that my grandfather was a Presbyterian minister?

And then the genealogy—Jim, a Napier like my grandfather, sitting at my side telling me about me. A cousin, a friend, a bearer of libations. Did the evening have to end? Dinner invitations and football games to see, if I didn't mind upsetting one to please the other. Did I have to choose? I hugged my *cousin* when we left, but only shook *his* hand. Did that mean I liked Rangers more than Celtic? At least Sophie had kissed them both, first left then right on each cheek. Caught in the middle, Sophie half French-Canadian, half English-Canadian, me Irish-Scotch Canadian between the Ranger and the Celt. We're all so divided in our uniqueness, none of us so pure.

On material terms alone, I would score the evening in favour of Jim. Not because we were undoubtedly related down some long and winding road or that I had suddenly gone all Ranger, but because he shoved two books into my hands as we were leaving, hastily scribbling his name and number in the jackets. For me, that had tipped the scales. I didn't dare ask Sophie who she preferred. I would never engage her in anything quite so vulgar as comparing saints.

### **Sunday September 22**

*Swing Hammer Swing* by Jeff Torrington was exquisite, I found whilst recovering on Day Ten in the darkness of our bedroom—a book covered in existential hilarity where one can smell the brine. Still a little wobbly on Day Eleven, though now reposed on the couch, I started *Fever Pitch* by Nick Hornby, also charming in that boyish come uppance way, even if his team never did win nothing. Two books, as different as the day, and yet packed with a world full of handles I could touch. Destiny here as anywhere ruled by questions asked. I had asked about the Gorbals, because of Glasser's book, and I had received. I had asked about the Old Firm, as plain a question as can be in Celger-Rantic land, and I had been well fed. Thank you lads.

### **Monday September 23**

According to the last Canadian census, mailed every ten years to anyone alive, only two people in an entire nation of 30 million do not own a television. This is quite peculiar since Canadians don't actually produce any homegrown drama or situation comedies as they do by the truckload in the United States and Britain. We have our own news and news shows, but it would be rather hard for a foreign network to make our news up too. Toronto may stand in for Hollywood in every movie made in the last two decades, but never for itself. Alas, the flat that has everything and more has neither telly nor license. (See if *you* don't go bonkers after a week.) Stuck in these most modern times, I want, need, *must have* television to survive—if only to belong.

Not that I watched much television growing up. Nonetheless, like everyone else, besides the two aforementioned Eskimos, my family liked watching television. British shows ranked number one, perhaps because of my parents' past. It was easy to agree. American shows were fluffy and British shows didn't insult the intelligence. Too bad we got the commercials along with a dose of *The Prisoner*, *Doctor in the House*, *The Sweeney*, and later *Black Adder*, *Drop the Dead Donkey*, and *Absolutely Fabulous*. On American Public Broadcasting, we did get commercial-free *Inspector Morse*, *Prime Suspect*, and my all-time favourite, *The Sandbaggers*, but only once a week on Sunday nights. *Yes Minister*, *Yes Prime Minister*, *Yes Secretary-General*, the list goes on. Nobody went for *Coronation Street* on Sunday mornings—I guess, in Canada, the politics was enough to fill one's day with soap.

And yet, here we are, fish out of water, in a world where television is god, without one as if forced to live in pre-industrial Glasgow, reading novels to keep up with the lightning-quick electric Joneses. According to the surveys, we should have about two months of our year free from eerie blue flickerings. Two months! I may even read *Ivanhoe*, *Treasure Island*, or anything by Irvine Welsh. Gently I shall learn and be immersed, instead of jetting to a London hospital, a Boston bar, or any of a million suburban sprawls.

We're all wired to it, the social tartan woven into our hard drive minds. Data for the databank, not the same as being there. I can see the speed at which my brain expires and here, bathing in all things Scottish, I share a pint to toast our differences and a telly to immerse myself in *us*. Obviously, I am afraid to reinvent myself, for fear of becoming fragmented any further.

And, thus, I remain disengaged, no party to my new environment.

I wonder can I find a past I share more with all my neighbours than any of our current presents?

*There are two tragedies in life. One is to not get your heart's desire. The other is to get it.*  
Shaw, Man and Superman IV

**Tuesday September 24**

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To Robbie

In the beginning was the Word 6.0 and the Word 6.0 was good. Thus begineth my rambling prose-letter in memory of a long forgotten Beet Generation. Beet as in beet root because it is red. And red is what I'm seeing (Hallelujah) as I gaze out over yonder Glasgow hills. I am also eating tomato soup (definitely uttered as tom-ah-toe around these parts.) Okay, says Jeremiah, that's quite enough stream o'consciousness. Besides that was Dublin, turn o' last century. This is our nine, baby. Our nine. (Now if ranting only paid the bills.)

Yes, we landed like a great Kansas twister on Glasgow and somehow, like those great Kansadians Dorothy (Sophie) and Toto (Hal), we have survived. Did we kill a witch? No, but the newspapers here are shite so I'm planing to unchain that habit. Good to be dirty for a while, blissfully ignorant of what must now be another unholy shoot'em up between Big Bill and Bad Bad Leroy Saddam. "Shucks Bill, didn't you see the mushroom cloud yonder? We done gone and blowed 'em up." No, I won't bathe in that morning muck. "Down boy" yells Jeremiah from the frowning folds of my brain. Glinda and the munchkins I happily refer to as our house (very radiant though rectangular not globular) and the wee buses and trams (taking us hither and thither into and out of town but mere mortal minutes away). Everything's expensive, alas. Mind you, Mackintosh, as in Charles Rennie, does helps forget the cost. ("He is always on my mind" someone is heard singing from a none too warm bath/pretend shower.)

Day Two (today is Day 12), I went looking for the sequel to our very own McIlvanney's required reading on Scotland, "Growing up in The Gorbals." Alas, "Out of print," the bespectacled one of a nation of shopkeepers replied. "Oh yes, we do get it from time to time. It's a trilogy, you know? We have number three, though I'm afraid not number two." I can't bring myself to purchase #3, not having read #2 and try elsewhere. Number two from that same nation tells a similar sorry story as a hint of conspiracy criss-crosses the creases of my mind. (Jeremiah, it seems, is asleep or is paying no notice). Alas, a week later, jettied forward by my own mental continuum, I have met Jim (who I met through Ronnie whilst awaiting the Never-neverland, bus #44—obviously out of fuckin' print) who upon hearing my plight produced for me Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer Swing* a quite striking story of the last days of yon Gorbals. I shall send it to you if I can find a copy—conspiracies, you know. (It is, in fact, Herr Torrington who has labelled his inner self "Jeremiah" and I have not yet seen reason to change.) Alas, Glasser Gorbals #2 will have to wait. Yon modern Gorbals may make #4 by the looks of it. Still no thought of treating humans as humans.

It has yet to rain—almost two weeks now. (A prospective landlord, when asked by my singing/bathing companion about cockroaches, replied, rather too quickly, "Tae cauld har for cockroaches, mate." I ain't your mate and just cause they ain't called cockroaches don't mean they ain't here. Haven't you read any Burroughs?) "Oh, what you call football we call soccer," says the American at the bar. An endless barrage of witless comparisons follow, each salve resonating with the underlying, unsaid "But we really are all the same. Aren't we? Don't you think? I do?" My return doesn't kill. The music of the Doors swings into that of Alanis Morissette. To smoke or not to smoke. That is the addiction. Actually smoked a ten pack, but then ran a couple miles around nearby Victoria Park and got



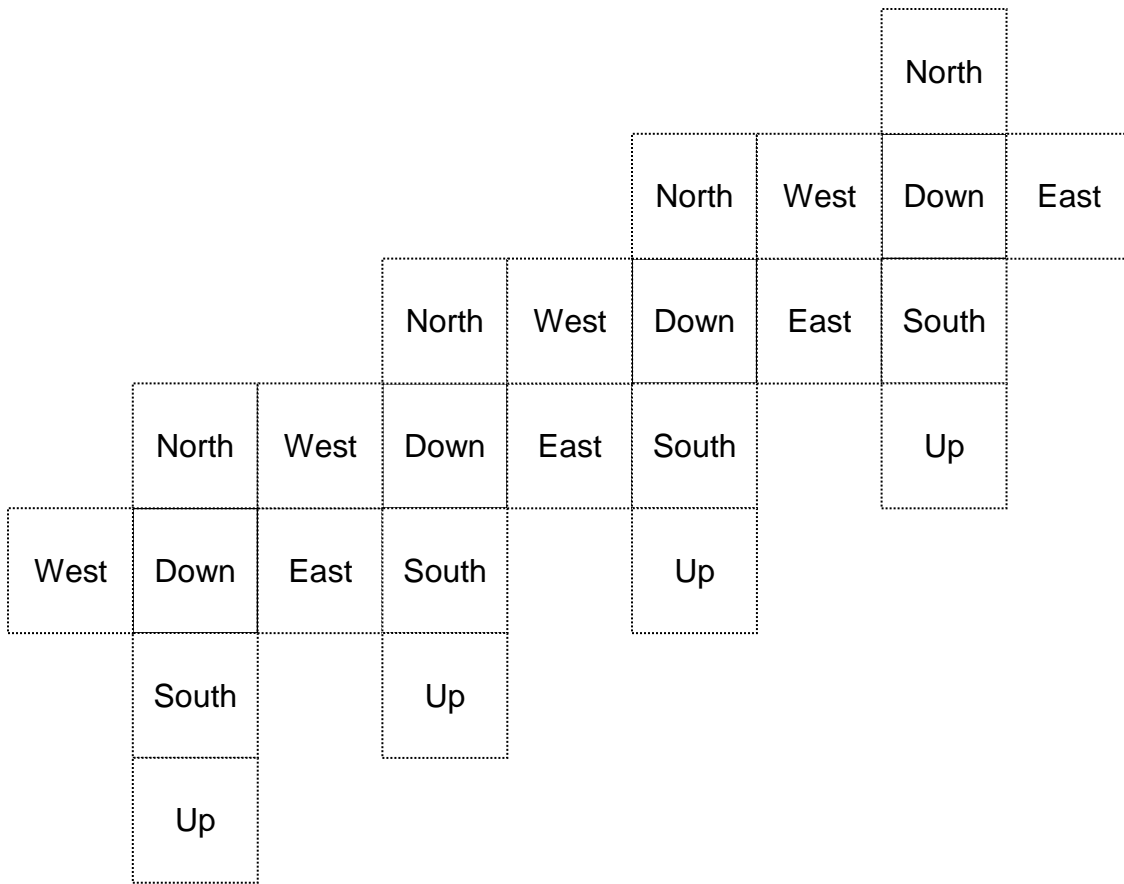
initiated into Scottish tennis, so I'm smokin' and I'm rope-a-dopin'. Maybe Plato did have it right after all. Pints *and* laps. "Yeah, that's it Anaxemander chap." Though I doubt it. "Got to be cruel to be kind," offers the Yank's bar friend, his eyes lodged sideways at the Ranger man's image on the ever-present telly. "That's wah me gran always say." Scotch; gotta love it going down your gorge. And football on the big screen, every night.

Saw *The Secret of Roan Inish* at the local rep cinema, just doors away from Mackintosh's greatest achievement—the Glasgow School of Art. (Everything here measured by proximity to CRM. We're eight blocks from #32 on the complimentary CRM map, though #32 was transported for museum purposes to its current spot way after Mackintosh laid the cornerstone.) I teared up at the coming home sentiments, I guess because it reminded me of my own long, arduous return to the land of Ulysses. Okay, so I'm caught on the Charybdis side of S&C, but I can see the footprints. I hear the sirens calling me. "Home, Hal. Home. Because John Sayles says so." I remembered you didn't like it. Admittedly not his best work, but I'll take it over the shite currently competing for my monetary attention on every square foot of advertising yardage. "Plastics, my son. Plastics is the future."

Okay, too nostalgic, not keen enough for the Beet Generation. Also found out that *Naked Lunch* was a sequel. Don't remember how I found out. Revelation #1: hippies and radicals are dead. The closest I can compare with the hippies here (or there?) are the unfortunates who sell (with official photo tags!) the homeless newspaper called the *Big Issue*. As if housing is still a debatable issue, in this the turn o' our magnificent Millennium. *Big Issue* policy forbids sellers from throwing in a wee "spare a dime, mister." Says so in print, too. No idea what they do to the poor sods if they catch them. A "Really Big Issue" will, no doubt, be pending. Herewith a quote from *Swing Hammer Swing*.

"... a cheapened attitude towards death inevitably follows from an impoverished response to life. Aye the telly with or without commercials must go on."

On the one hand I hope to do my best for God and Country and on the other hand I'll try not to rationalize myself into sterile oblivion. I am on the way to Paris next month, however, and will be sidelined working on another of McIlvanney's pet projects. Does he ever make up his mind? With luck, I might change the syntax of my brain. (Jeremiah, I think is multi-lingual, however. Tabernac.) McIlvanney has promised to start publishing my missives when I get back. What less can I offer? How goes *Science Monthly*? Give my best to *les autres*. Hope you're still finding time at the beach. I'll let you know when I find a similar oasis here.



*The real news is bad news.*  
Marshall McLuhan

### Thursday September 26

It's Day Fifteen. (A quick flashback to Sophie and I stuffing a ton of bags into the smallest of taxis before trundelling off to an unknown destination, just two short weeks ago.) Our phone, fax, and computer all work, thanks to the calculating wizardry of the electronics store salesman on Great Western Road, who sold me the largest power adapter ever built for home use. "The printer might blow the whole thing," he warned me, but so far so good and we've been busy calling, faxing, and e-mailing everyone we know from Command Central on Crow Road. Our four-place dinner set, bought the morning after our first chairless take-away living room dinner, however, is mysteriously missing one bowl. And with one glass broken (I won't say who), we can now have a party for four provided I don't vichyssoise and Sophie says no to drink.<sup>4</sup> We've gotten mail, though not quite yet from anyone we know, which arrives like an alarm through a hole in the door precisely at seven-thirty in the morning. I must buy a mat to cushion the fall. Even a BT installation bill and the notice for the BT answering service "Call Minder," though not the Call Minder itself, has arrived (tomorrow, the notice says). I was ecstatic when the notice arrived, having been told that they had run out of numbers in our area. *Run out of*

<sup>4</sup> Yes, we would need to make some friends first.

*numbers*? How does a telephone company run out of numbers? When I asked how long until they made *new* numbers or whatever it is they do when they *run out of numbers*, the operator wouldn't say. "Could be a couple of days, could be a week, could be a month, could be a year." She was poetic, if not very helpful. Basically, we've settled in and there's no going back. The picture hooks on the wall, (duly itemized on the estate's agent's in-going inventory in case we get any untoward ideas), do suggest something missing, though I suppose every home needs a little time to evolve.

I've even joined the tennis club across the street and was soundly beaten 6-2 by "Bald Tommy" from Whiteinch in my inaugural match, though, in fairness I've never played on squishy, green Astroturf before. The second set ended 1-2, when Bald Tommy, who had been manhandling me until then, inexplicably mishit a return of serve across three lanes of traffic on route to the Clyde Tunnel. As we were down to two balls anyway, the other flattening at a most ill-chosen van-out, we called it quits. I'd rather do step aerobics to my neighbour's telly than get creamed by Bald Tommy from Whiteinch on squishy, green Astroturf with one ball. I'm supposed to call him for a rematch, but I'm not sure I can give him his fair dues. I did buy new balls (at twice the price as home), hoping somehow to lure him into a game from necessity rather than charity. (How can a tennis ball, surely not a technical mystery or defence secret cost twice as much in Glasgow than in Toronto? Weren't they playing tennis in Glasgow, the second city of the Empire, before Toronto was invented?)

So today, on this Day Fifteen, with all our ducks in a row (I've even met the pensioners below us, Betty and Jess) and after a good bit of bacon, eggs, sausage, and tomato,<sup>5</sup> I've settled into the morning newspaper. It's taken me two weeks to figure out that there's no *real* news in the Scottish dailies. It's all too gossipy or bosomy. Even the lead story is all tittering and finger wagging (the Pythonesque-named Right Reverend Roderick Wright revelation and subsequent resignation). Just because one bishop went bad doesn't mean all bishops are bad. Are Reagan, Bush, and Clinton liars just because of Nixon? Anyway, it's *The Times*, for three days now *my* paper, which this reluctant alien has set his critical powers upon with aplomb—one doesn't read a newspaper, one *bathes* in it and I see no reason to go dirty just because I can't read between the lines.

I do intend a little more critical analysis than usual, however. Forgive me, but Sophie is away (in Edinburgh researching the Art Deco interiors of the dormant Scotch parliament at Saint Andrew's House) and although I've been writing up a storm, I have nothing better to do. I can't exactly call up Betty or Jess for some tea. And the doctors haven't returned my call. I know I should have gone round (though I don't think I could find their flat), but proper manners require that I wait for a reply to my invitation. (Tennis, anyone?) I can't bloody well go snooping for friends even if Jim did give me two great books and is probably related to me. (I can see the dailies—unsuspecting Broomhill doctors stalked by alien Canadian without any friends. Of course, I'd be let off, though there would be calls for stricter laws.) And Bald Tommy, well I've got new tennis balls. It's your serve. Just don't call me when I'm out—my Call Minder is still on order. *No new numbers yet.*

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<sup>5</sup> What we called a *Georgie BEST*, though I get daft looks when I ask for one.

For anyone who cares to know—*The London Times* of Thursday September 26, 1996 consisted of 48 pages approximately 2 feet by one foot (ignoring the supplemental Appointments sections). Of those 48 pages, only one-quarter or twelve pages was actually news. To get an idea how bored I was, a complete list follows with percentages. Anyone can do this at home with pen, paper, and a 49p pair of scissors. Yes, an obsessive nature would help. The error in each number, a function of the sharpness of my scissors, I'll claim as 1%. If you're wondering about my sanity, let me say that it rained most of the day, but then that's not news in Scotland.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>News</b>	<b>26</b>
American	1
Canadian	0
European	3
International	1.5
Scottish	0.5
UK	20
<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Weather</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Sports</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Business</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Advertising</b>	<b>36</b>
Corporate	27
Personal	6
Private	3

Are there any surprises to these numbers? Not really. One would need to compare them to typical numbers of other newspapers and also tally *The Times* through the week to get a better picture of what, in fact, composes a newspaper. Sorry, but I'm not that bored and the sun has just come out. (It's likely to go away again, however.)

Nonetheless, some conclusions are apparent. For one, a newspaper is not just made up of the famous four directions of a compass or as some ascribe the acronym NEWS (News, Entertainment, Weather and Sports). Add B for Business and A for Advertising and maybe NEWSBA makes more sense. Most papers identified as the business standard for their country are made of advertising and business news and, at 36% and 17%, *The Times* is certainly no different.

For a Toronto Canadian in King Robert's court, a London paper allotting three news articles to Scotland and none to Canada is nothing to write home about. I can only assume that Scotland is not intended to be represented by *The Times*. Toronto got one mention in the sports scores (not Greg Rusedski) and there was a bit in the Business section with a BritCan angle (not Greg Rusedski). Scotland fared much better in the Sports section, perhaps because Rangers were playing the night before, but referred to as a "British" team in black and white, however, I'd have to slot Rangers' stories under the category "UK" if I was delineating the Sports pages as I had the News.

I was disappointed there wasn't more Scotch to whet my appetite; two articles about the SNP and another reporting that Stirling Bridge had been found. I glossed over the SNP ones, no context yet. And the Stirling bridge story seemed rather muddled to me—I certainly wouldn't have had the balls to call someone "amateur" for finding an eleven hundred year-old bridge previously missing for centuries.

To sum up the front page in fifty words, and thus saving a ton of room for more advertising:

Boy, 6, kisses girl (didn't we all) and gets detention. Labour undecided how to tax £100,000 plus earners (probably hoping the public won't notice they're all £100,000 plus earners). Gerry Adams makes up for all those years as a BBC ventriloquist. Middle East at it again. Labour looking good (though no sampling error given). Professor mistakes his wife for a hat.

Okay, 62 words, not counting contractions, though counting "BBC" as three words.

Poor gypsy, though. Can't live in her own caravan on her own land, just because some judge ruled that her primitive roadside abode is an eyesore. Is that the criterion they use in London? Isn't the eyesore in the eye of the eyesore-holder?

I was happy to read that the Queen's nephew didn't have a problem finding a flat. £400,000 did seem a little pricey however—he may have to borrow some *quid pro quo* from petty cash. I clipped that one for Sophie. And the photo of Sir Laurens in his penthouse, captioned "moving up means moving closer to nature," did get me wondering what planet he's on, up there in the clouds.

My favourite, I've saved for last—two quotes from both sides of the fence, ever the tepid fence-sitter this alien.

Judge Hamilton, ruling against a fraudulent accident victim caught on video tape playing football, "There used to be a gibe 'drink is the ruin of the working classes' but now it might be said 'the video is the ruin of the cheating class.'"

David Baker, speaking on behalf of an ex-gameskeeper, who lost his unfair dismissal claim, "It just goes to show the way of the country is still ruled by the big house, and people who work in the country are just serfs."

I won't bore you with the politics of sport's photography.

*Ads are the  
cave art of the twentieth century.*

**Friday September 27**

Today (Day Sixteen), I read *The Herald*, prefaced as "Scotland's Independent Newspaper." I didn't, alas, have as much time to deconstruct *The Herald* as I did *The Times*. I've been rather badly neglecting my chores, or more cheerily put, my responsibilities. Sophie returns tomorrow and the flat needs a right good cleaning. Failing that, I won't need to worry about *vichyssoise-ing* with anyone, three bowls or no three bowls. I haven't shaved or bathed either and look a mess, exiting and entering the flat only in the wee hours for air. Even the full moon last night was cramping my style. And there's the plug for the heater to fix and a lock for her bike, and the bills to pay (BT invoicing me already for *future* charges).

So, after Hoovering the flat from top to bottom and sorting the plastics from the tins for the bottle bank (at nearby Broomhill Plaza), I settled into the tub and ... *The Herald*. No point not being clean. Ignoring the Appointments section again, *The Herald* of Friday September 27, 1996 consisted of 48 pages approximately 2 feet by one foot, identical to *The Times* of the day before. The following table shows their respective numbers for comparison, but I'll only claim 2% accuracy, because as I said, I was in a bit more of a rush. See what fun scissors can be?<sup>6</sup>

Category	Percentage	
	<i>The Herald</i>	<i>The Times</i>
<b>News</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>26</b>
American	0.5	1
Canadian	0	0
European	1	3
International	4	1.5
Scottish	17	0.5
UK	7	20
<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Weather</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Sports</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Business</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Advertising</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>36</b>
Corporate	39	27
Personal	2	6
Private	7	3

Obviously, there's more Scottish news, though somewhat surprisingly only half as much entertainment and slightly less sport. Business is also half, though given the comparative differences in the two constituencies, it's hardly hair-raising. The advertising is a bit scary, what with ten whole pages on autos—more than 20% of the entire newspaper or 40% of the advertising.

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<sup>6</sup> Asterisk—all figures are based on a sample set of one; that is, consecutive days of *The Times* and *The Herald* as indicated.

Are these figures indicative of anything? Not necessarily. My survey is hardly scientific—much more data would need to be compiled and a little more thoroughness in sizing the articles, though I stand by the trustiness of my 49p scissors and my eye. Indeed, a more seasoned reader should translate the numbers. And I've said nothing about content or quality. Alas, the alien's lament again, as I struggle without context. The numbers are nonetheless interesting and may even provoke a knowing smile in someone's too-quick mind, but it would be foolish of me to make assumptions without revealing my colours and I've already said "I'm not from here."

*The Herald's* front page was a little more serious than *The Times*—no kissing six year-olds, no dotty professors, which I thought was a little too much fluff. That's me. Anyway, here's a fifty words or less summation if anyone wants more room for cars.

Alas, I must delay. On this day, the news of 48 dead on the West Bank is sadly all too serious, suggesting that we will welcome the day when newspaper headlines are of nothing more than stolen kisses and forgotten memories. All the more unnerving, I was unable to assess its potency, not being wired, not having friends to ask me "Had I heard?" No CNN to impart the spin. And thus I must wait, again, as in all our yesterday's, for *tomorrow's* news, to see what has been promoted and what has been relegated in the minds of our Conrad Blacks, our Rupert Murdochs, our Ted Turners—the high priests of this new age.

Perhaps, football as a metaphor for life, somewhat denied by Nick Hornby, is apt when applied to the circle of promotion and relegation. It happens to us all, in jobs and health, flats and cars, wives and lovers. Sometimes we're first team at the office and relegated to the couch at home. Sometimes, we're neither here nor there. But what distresses me most when I see something as awful as war in Bosnia or the Middle East or war and famine in Ethiopia is that I'm completely impotent, sitting invariably as I am, reading the newspaper—my job, my health, my wife, or if anyone likes me of so much more importance. Not to mention if my opinions have been formed by anything to do with me.

Now, if you own the pitch, because of poppo or lotto, then you're in another league—more money, more privilege, more car, though rarely more responsibility, more obligation, more duty.

Anyway, here goes:

Middle East really at it this time. Sadly, 48 dead. (Again!) SNP calling each other names. Two youths sent away longer to learn more. Hoping to make even more than this year's record profits, BA to slash 600 staff salaries and ax 5000 more. Also planning to buy a new aircraft with the savings and, thus, will probably hire new staff again, who will then work for peanuts just to regain a measure of self respect.

Okay 79 words, but it could have been more. Much more. Including page two, where the story continues, BA stewards with 25 years service are being asked to reduce their salary from £15000 to £10000. Our flat, as I've mentioned, is beautiful and lovely and gorgeous and all that and yet we have but one bedroom and pay over £8000 a year including utilities and taxes. Well at least, the BA stewards get free airfare, lovely in-flight meals, and the latest Hollywood movies for their money.

And now, before Sophie gets back, I'm off to get a bike lock and fix the heater.

### **Saturday September 28**

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To Robbie

I am starting to love how the internet can keep me in touch around the world. Me in Glasgow, you in Toronto and none the wiser. The central Toronto diaspora has begun.

Glasgow does not seem as dangerous as some have said, though I almost got hit again looking the wrong way yesterday. And the pastry lady will be the death of me. She sees me coming as I walk past her door. "Aye, you're such a wee bonnie lad. Have yae nae fresh fatty sausage in yae todaye!" I'll be doing a Sweeny Todd on her shortly.

No sign of Jim Kerr or The Proclaimers. Unfortunately, we haven't got into town much so I don't know anything about "the scene." A hopelessly named band called "Wet Wet Wet" live nearby I'm told. They are a sort of pseudo-glam, pseudo-pop band with pretty boy looks as are almost all the post-Bowie Brit bands here—even the more seriously regarded bands such as Oasis—should really be called CorpRock. I was told that a bit in *Trainspotting* was filmed nearby, so we can't be completely in the sticks, I guess.

I'm discovering that Glasgow is quite the beautiful northern town with shades and hues of blue simmering for long hours. Not at all the bleak, gray, dismal, drizzly, bone-chilling, anemic bonnie land of King James from history. Charles Rennie Mackintosh alone is worth the price of admission. And did I mention that a quick pint is half the cost as back home?—I guess you can drink it twice as fast. (Home—now there's a queer notion.) Everything else is quite expensive (except beer and chocolate). Can you tell me why everything costs so bleedin' much? I mean, you'd think there was an entrenched aristocracy exploiting an alcohol and sports-addicted working class or something like that here in the cradle of modern democracy. Didn't we do away with all that rot in the New World? I went to the Gorbals. It really is awful.

Okay, I found this in the paper—verbatim:

The Computer Depot is looking for Sales and Technical People full time/part time: "We are a young dynamic computer dealer in the city centre. You would be expected to devote yourself to progressing the business. Layabouts, hangers-on, forked-tongued or sharp suits need not apply. Apply in writing with full CV ... Scotland's leading micro specialists since 1985: we're pure dead brilliant with computers."



Layabouts, hangers-on, forked-tongued, and sharp suits?—hmmm, not a social stratum with which I am familiar.

Okay some more stuff from Scotland, gleaned from the dailies: Did you know St. Andrew's residents pay only £92 per year to play! And this just in—I didn't know that a "golden ferret" is a shot holed from the bunker. They probably have names for every shot on the course here. I wonder what Constantino Rocco's shot from the Valley of Sin is called—the miracle?

Hope all is well and that it hasn't started snowing yet. It hasn't rained once since we arrived. Please send me info: Who won the Canada Cup? As you know, I'll be in Paris in October if you want to meet me on the left bank and smoke cigarettes upside down and think radical thoughts—e.g. should one use a salutation in an e-mail when it's already addressed to that person? :-)

### **Sunday September 29**

I don't understand why we have to sit through half an hour of commercials at a movie theatre. Didn't we pay to get in? And why does the "program" include advertisements? That's *your* program. *My* program is a movie and does not include stupid arty ads that make me laugh so I'll forget that you've just wasted half an hour of my life.

The whole "ads as art" thing had me really peeved—enough that I didn't enjoy the film, a French foreign film whose name I've already forgot and was insipidly hopeful and thus okay but forgettable. Sophie told me I was making too much of it, but then she likes those stupid arty ads. She remembers them and tells me later which ones "worked" and which didn't (i.e. if she can remember the product name). I don't argue with someone who can remember that one theatre's ad says "cobblers" and another "bollocks" at the end of a stupid fake-kangaroo, serious-issue send-up beer commercial. Not that it matters, but I'd never say either.

### **Monday September 30**

I finished my first piece for McIlvanney (on John A. Macdonald), in his typical dry magazine biography style. He'll add tons of pictures and *fact file* info to pad it out for a nice feature. I was disappointed John A. hadn't lived in Glasgow longer (he left as a young boy) as I would have loved poking around some more. His parent's house on George Street wasn't there anymore or, if it was, I couldn't find it. There wasn't even a plaque. Too bad. It would have been great to interview some lady in John A.'s kitchen just to ask what she thought of a young Glaswegian boy growing up to be the father of Canadian confederation. If it weren't for our preoccupation with all things American, that might mean something.

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### **John Alexander Macdonald**

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*born George Street Glasgow, Strathclyde, Scotland January 10, 1815  
died Ottawa, Ontario, Canada June 6, 1891*

*emigrated to Kingston, Ontario with his parents at the age of 5*  
*married* 1. *Isabella Clark 1843 (died 1857) (John Alexander, Hugh John)*  
2. *Susan Bernard 1867 (died 1891)*

Macdonald made a name for himself as a young lawyer in Kingston before beginning a career in politics. He served in many capacities in the various colonial governments prior to Confederation, including Coalition Party leader with Georges-Étienne Cartier of Quebec, and was Conservative leader of Ontario when Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia were confederated as the Dominion of Canada (British North America Act, July 1, 1867). Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland opted not to join. A proponent of strong central government, he engineered a Canada with far greater federal powers than that of the United States.

Canada's population at the time of Confederation was 3.7 million (largely rural and spread out over a vast, mostly uninhabitable territory). To this day, most Canadians live within one hundred miles of the American border. Fear of American expansion and its republican form of government is generally given as the main reason for Confederation. An historically peaceful nation and, thus, spared the ravages of internal war, Canada was the first British colony to achieve responsible government without leaving the empire.

Macdonald subsequently became the first prime minister of the Dominion of Canada (1867–73). As prime minister, he oversaw the expansion of Canada to Manitoba (1870), British Columbia (1871), and Prince Edward Island (1873). To discourage the American expansion over the North American continent, he bought Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory from the Hudson's Bay Company (1870). His land purchases and government appropriation upset many inhabitants, especially the Métis, a mixture of French and Cree, who regarded themselves as a distinct nation.

Macdonald resigned after the "Pacific Scandal" (1873), so called because his government was accused of receiving campaign funds in exchange for contracts on the Pacific Railway. Another Scottish Canadian, Liberal leader Alexander Mackenzie, succeeded him. Whereas Macdonald was more protectionist, Mackenzie preferred Free Trade with the United States. Macdonald was again elected prime minister five years later, promising a "National Policy" to make Canada economically self-sufficient (1878–91).

Government land appropriation led to the Red River Rebellion in Manitoba (1869–70), which was subdued by government forces. Another later uprising in Saskatchewan in 1885 was put down by the army. Métis leader Louis Riel was captured, tried, and hanged, enraging many sympathetic French-Canadians. Canada's great divide grew wider. By 1886, Canada had an area of 3,500,000 square miles and a population of 4 million.

John A. Macdonald served as prime minister of Canada for almost twenty years, a length of office surpassed only by William Lyon Mackenzie King.

In his honour, the following plaque was placed on the outside wall of Ramshorn Kirk<sup>7</sup> (now Ramshorn Theatre) on Ingram Street.

To the glory of God and in memory of  
Sir John A. Macdonald 1815–1891

Canada's first prime minister, born in Ramshorn Parish, emigrated with his family to Kingston Upper Canada, in 1820.

A successful lawyer, he was elected to the provincial legislature in 1844 and became leader of the Conservative party. He played a leading role in the effort to achieve a federal union of Britain's North American colonies which resulted in the formation of the Dominion of Canada on July 1, 1867. Macdonald served as prime minister, 1867–73 and 1878–91, and under his administration large territories were added to Canada, a transcontinental railway built and settlement of the West encouraged. At his death Canada's autonomy, based on rapid economic development and a close British-Canadian relationship, was assured.

Archeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario

**Tuesday October 1**

If I don't make any friends, I'll just write more.

**Wednesday October 2**

Today, I started carrying a pen and note pad with me in case of emergency. I don't like keeping on-the-spot jottings—I'm sure I look like I'm in need of psychiatric assistance writing and laughing to myself in the corner of a bar—but I have about a ten minute capacity to keep a thought before another arcs across my brain. Inevitably, I can't read the jottings the next day anyway, having been hastily scribbled on the bus or upside down against a wall, and those I can read lose their sparkle in the light of day.

However, I had an idea for a short story, something to work on while I'm in Glasgow, aside from McIlvanney's bidding, which made some sense to me later. I was lost in Hyndland at the time. I had the whole story worked out in minutes—even the title, "The

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<sup>7</sup> Churches here are anything but. So far: two theatres, a bar/restaurant, a new communications faculty, a market, and a pine furniture warehouse (ironically, on Church Street).

Man Who Built A Mansion In The Middle Of A Ghetto." Now, of course, Hyndland is no ghetto, but those houses on the hill are huge and I couldn't stop thinking what it would be like if someone built a palace in the middle of a low rent area (The Gorbals, Whiteinch, Parkhead?). Eight city blocks worth of palatial grandeur with a massive twenty foot fence to mark the property line. And then one day, a young boy on his way to school tosses a tomato over the fence and then others start tossing bits and pieces of garbage as they pass by until the whole neighbourhood and his grandmother are heaving tons of crap over the fence. The police come but they can't do anything—it would take a whole force to watch the place 24 hours a day—so the owner puts up security cameras, complains to the government about his rights, and tries to sue everyone in the neighbourhood before finally leaving, all the while telling everyone how uncivilized people are (in The Gorbals, Whiteinch, Parkhead?).

I'm glad I don't have a microcassette recorder—that would be too close to a hard drive for the brain (Brilliant Idea #1). Mind you, I'd fill it in a day (Stupid Idea #1).

Noticed there weren't any psychiatric cases walking the streets of Glasgow, a distinct difference to Toronto which is built on a major psychiatric fault line. There are a few drunks muttering to themselves, but nothing on the scale of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. My theory (which I should investigate more thoroughly) is that a new culture is so undefined and formless that there are more cracks to fall through. Here, in a place which has been formed for eons, the culture no longer shifts and thus abnormal (or minority) behaviour (in the open or closeted) is less because dormers of all shapes and sizes have been added over the years to shelter the outsiders. In time, it is impossible to tell the square pegs from the round, save for a few hopelessly eccentric nutters who are probably from the nobility anyway and thus can't be counted in any serious discussion on human culture. It's not for nothing that an old culture (relatively speaking) has aged.

*La plus ça change  
la plus ça même chose*

#### **Friday October 4**

I took Sophie out to The Ubiquitous Chip for dinner and afterwards for drinks in Ashton Lane. I'm amazed how much students can drink.

#### **Saturday October 5**

One might ask what anything on Paris is doing in *The Glasgow Diaries* so I shall only reply "because I was there." Or rather McIlvanney sent me to cover the aftermath of an Auld Alliance 700th anniversary party and I chiselled a two week holiday on the side to do a refresher course in French. Besides, by comparing cities big and small, one can get a better idea of one's own city or, in this case, the city in which one lives—Glasgow.

Paris has always been on my itinerary since I can remember as *the* place to study French. And because my wife is half French Canadian, I thought it only polite to learn how to speak to her family in *their* language, rather than always having them speak mine. Ever

mindful of my oppressor role in their past and present, I am also interested in what they're *really* saying about me.

I think I always wanted to learn French *away* from Canada, anyway, just to be smug. I had no reason to be, other than my petty grievance that every prime minister of Canada for the last thirty years has come from Quebec,<sup>8</sup> though, funnily enough, I and 20 million other Canadians do not. To be sure, Quebec has dominated the Canadian political scene for as long as there has been a political scene or, more importantly for me, as long as I've been alive. It's lucky for England that Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales are tiny in comparison.

But this is not my bit on why I am a French Canadian separatist. (Basically, an entire generation of Canadians outside Quebec have had no federal political representation in their lives and have become so politically backward that sitting at the G7 dinner table with the big boys once a year is their idea of living. More importantly, a not insignificant number of millions in Quebec don't owe any allegiance to the Queen and all things British.) No, this is my bit on Paris and suffice it to say, an English Canadian studying French in Paris is not a political statement. Okay?

So, that said, after but a weekend in the gay old town of Rousseau, Napoleon, Lautrec, and Hemmingway, it was easy to sum up Paris in four words—*food, coffee, wine, and dogs*. On a vocabulary of fifty words a day, mostly gleaned from the back of bilingual cereal boxes (not a political statement), it would be unwise to try more.

### **Monday October 7**

The Auld Alliance thing (yesterday) was a dud, though McIlvanney had me up all night writing about it—very dry committee stuff. In the morning, I was free; my first holiday in four years. Too bad Sophie was learning about early Greek pottery and couldn't join me. It would have been great to recreate a love affair in Paris.

### **Tuesday October 8**

I walked by the Palais de Luxembourg on the way to class and counted (in French) the limousines arriving. Noticed that all the dignitaries wore exactly the same clothes.

I wondered if a Frenchman who learned English listening to Beatles' records would speak like Paul McCartney. Is McCartney a Scottish name?

### **Wednesday October 9**

After a few more days immersed in a different language I can say that Paris was like Glasgow in that first month, when everything was new. To the engaged mind, everywhere is a paradise; learning new symbols, new words, new ways of doing exactly the same things, though thankfully, in Paris, the cars were on *my* side of the road.

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<sup>8</sup> I'm not counting three minor English Canadian prime ministers who quite interestingly all got turfed out of office within ten months, four months, and five months. Parliamentary systems—got to love 'em.

In purely semantic terms, crossing a street in Glasgow was linguistic. Immersed in all things unknown, careening at high speeds along newly-paved freeways, I was in the firmament. Paris, Glasgow, Toronto are cities; *language* is a world. And thus, Paris is a home to learn something other than the typically job-related skills update course or what numbers to put where on an ever-changing tax form. In Paris, I could learn with abandon.

### **Friday October 11**

It just occurred to me that I haven't seen Princess Diana's face on the cover of a newspaper for about a week now.

### **Saturday October 12**

I rang Sophie using our Canada World calling card. She wasn't there.

Watched thousands of French men and women walk up Boulevard St-Germain protesting government cutbacks. Very civilized in their organization and marching.

It is our nature to act in our own interest and we do so abundantly. It's a wonder when two people argue two sides of the coin (e.g. for or against more tax), both think they are acting in the other's best interest when in fact they are acting in their own. (I don't think anyone can truly act in another's best interest for long without soon becoming concerned about one's self, mothers and Mother Teresas excepted.) I have yet to see the invisible hand. (Great Movie Title #1: *The Invisible Hand*. And the advertising: "You'll be afraid to shop. Or use a credit card. No one will cash cheques. Coming to a theatre near you, *The Invisible Hand*. X rated, parental guidance over 18.)

### **Monday October 14**

I got really pissed off when my bank card wouldn't work and was left without money for all of Sunday. I snuck on the Metro just to keep from going completely crazy and used my credit card to buy a meal. Sophie (I finally got her at home) said she would wire me some the next day but the problem was somehow fixed in the morning. I was so elated I bought myself a big breakfast (*two* coffees and *two* croissants.) I am beginning to think I am overly concerned about money (or the lack of money).

I was happy to have money in hand again.

### **Tuesday October 15**

Mohammed, the Egyptian guy in our class (who refused to come out after class for drinks), told me that multiple marriages began in his culture because war in the Middle Ages killed most of the men. I have no way of checking his facts, but it does explain.

Amazing how a temporary measure in one age becomes a fixture in another.

### **Thursday October 17**

Met a guy outside The Bastille who looked like he hadn't slept in a bed or bathed in a month. Gave him fifty francs to talk to me in French for an hour. I asked him what

happened to The Bastille (not even a monument or museum) and he told me it was broken (literally) and that they carted it away. We talked at cross purposes for a while, him in the past and me in the present. Great word—*broken* instead of destroyed. I imagine The Bastille will be rebuilt someday and, thus, necessarily re-stormed again.

Canadian Carl Ott's opera house across the Place de la Bastille is so bad one wonders why the residents don't storm it. On with the revolution, boys

All rebellion fails the moment it succeeds—because in time the oppressed oppress. Until we take up someone else's struggle in this mostly arbitrary stratified life, we will never ourselves be truly free.

### **Saturday October 19**

I was pretty good at keeping up with the class, though the temptation to wander was great. It's hard not to skip class when you walk by the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay, and the Eiffel Tower on the way to school each day. Canada fared well in the "let's talk about our country" part of the class, that is when the teacher got tired of reiterating that *l'imparfait* is for actions not completed in the past and, hence, *imperfect*. I felt a little strange standing up as the *Canadian ambassador to Paris*. "Well, let me see. We have the tallest free standing structure in the world. That's right. And the first stadium roof that opens and closes. How do you say, "Now you see it, now you don't?" "But did I tell you I live in Glasgow, now?"

To be sure, everyone painted the same good and bad scenes in *their* country. Lake Ontario, the Elbe, the Arno, the Dead Sea, all of Mexico City and Buenos Aires, none of New Zealand, the Nile, the Thames, and the Liffey were acknowledged as polluted as though nature had made them that way. *Chaumage* was an accepted way of life the world over, augmenting the speciality, be it snow, beer, Michelangelo, war, drugs, corruption, beauty, the pyramids, the queen, or not the queen. The only difference was what percentage between 10 and 15 of each of our great countries was unemployed. None of *us* was unemployed, *merci beaucoup*. One couldn't possibly afford to be unemployed *and* study French in Paris.

Undoubtedly, each student was a little chip off mother country, with typical national characteristics, from names to colours to sensibilities, though we were probably more representative of the typical bourgeoisie (*la petite, la moyenne, la grosse, la haute*, take your pick)—i.e. no displaced Turkish workers from Germany stood up to extol the beauty of living in a housing camp for ten years without status. Regardless, the melting pot made a melange of our identities when we talked French, no thanks to our grown up little French girl *professeur* who just kept talking day upon day upon day.

If the truth be told, I'm still recovering from last night (a mini celebration after the end of class) when Uli the German, Ernesto the Mexican, Aldo the Italian, and I saw the Earth turn over for most of all of one day. The girls in the class had wisely exited with the sun. The next day (perhaps even the day after) I was still pulling pieces of paper out of various pocket with names, addresses, and maps on them.

The maps were the remnants of our attempts at drawing each other's country. I botched up Germany pretty bad, getting the Rhine and the Elbe intertwined somewhere around Munich and mixing up Hamburg with a Bavarian town. A voice was rather ardently raised when Ernesto's depiction of Ireland excluded the body of water between Ireland and Great Britain and Jo the New Zealander almost *sortied* when sadly no one knew anything about her home, even if it was paradise and all that. Canada took up the most space on the serviette and was surprisingly well sculpted in Italian hands, even if *three* Great Lakes did seem rather minuscule stuck over in Saskatchewan. Corrections failed to imprint on anyone's permanent record—I still don't know anything about New Zealand and I doubt I will remember that Hamburg is as far north as Uli says it is. Ernesto's cartographic detail included a precise disclosure of all major drug fields in his native Mexico. He said that drugs or rather the drug lords had ravished his country. I never asked how he had come by such precise information.

### **Sunday October 27**

Free enterprise? Supply and demand? Trickle down economics? Motivated self-interest? The invisible hand? If modern economy is a machine and the monetary system its engine, how does a bottle of Oregina costs three times as much at the airport than anywhere else?

### **Monday October 28**

"Everyone is different" was now ringing loud and clear. And settling in was still the task at hand—less daunting and less fulfilling because of Paris, but no less important. Could I keep up the charade of my alien persona in Glasgow to represent myself to McIlvanney's liking? Or would I set myself upon a task of an impossible awakening?

### **Tuesday October 29**

Armed with *les mots d'amour*, I met my Sophie again.

### **Wednesday October 30**

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To Robbie

A quick note to see if everything is hunky dory in McIlvanney-land. Let me know if it's cool or if you've started pulling your touch-of-beginning-to-recede hair from the roots. I went a little crazy in Paris and started drawing all sorts of pictures. They could easily be made into hair pins or broach clocks. (Everything's run by microchips now.) See what lack of language can do? Very Mackintosh, no?

Paris was, how do you say, wizout zee edge. I was in heaven or, à la Camus, in the firmament. Buvant café, mangent pepite au chocolat, lisant *Le Monde* dans le Jardin du Luxembourg! I now speak in dat der language what dat guy Chretien speak. I did, alas, meet an Ugly Canadian—my first. A real eye-opener after so many A-mehr-cans. Spent a weekend in Normandie which was simply encroyable—Calvados, Camambert, vin rouge,



la belle cuisine! I went to William the Conqueror's castle—I now know where it all began. McIlvanney will not like me knowing.

Read in the *International Herald-Tribune* (which is quitting Europe by the way) that the Yankee Clipper sank the Bluenose after our pond-spawned heroes led 2-1 with 180 seconds left on the ticker! Eheu, Ecce Homo. Seems our prince charmings reverted back to their reptilian form in a total and utter collapse the likes of which have not been seen since 30 million Californians drowned at sea during the big quaker two weeks ago. (Maybe, I didn't get the French quite right?) Any talk about draining the swamps or did everyone get back into their Volvos on Monday with no man-hours lost? A sad day for all Canadians. I'm glad I got the news after the fact. And just got the World Series news from Sophie! I can't believe the Alomar<sup>9</sup> story. Seems there's a Gaza in every port.

*Malheureusement*, McIlvanney's at my gorge. Finally finished the piece on George Brown. I had no idea anyone ever murdered anyone in Canada.

Hope you're well. I guess the island swimming thing is over now.

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## **George Brown**

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*born Edinburgh, Lothian, Scotland November 29, 1818*

*died Toronto, Ontario, Canada May 9, 1880*

*emigrated to New York with his father at the age of 20 and then to Toronto five years later married Annie Nelson 1862 in Edinburgh (several children)*

After a brief stay in New York, Brown came north to Toronto, where he published *The Banner*, a paper supported by Scots Canadians as a mouthpiece for the Free Church of Scotland in Canada (1843). A year later, at the urging of the Reform party he published the *Globe*, first as a weekly and then nine years later as a daily newspaper in Ontario. The *Globe* quickly became Canada's leading political newspaper, noted for its personal attacks on political opponents. He edited the *Globe* until his death 27 years later.

In 1851, Brown was elected to the Ontario House of Assembly for Kent County. Here, he vigorously attacked the Roman Catholic Church and French Canadians, particularly opposed to their system of religiously-affiliated schools. As a Liberal, he was often at loggerheads with fellow Scottish Canadian John A. Macdonald, though his friendship with another Scottish Canadian, the 2nd prime minister of Canada Alexander Mackenzie, stood the test of time. (It was Mackenzie who published the *Life and Speeches of Hon. George Brown* shortly after Brown's death in 1880.)

Brown took part in the intercolonial conference on Confederation in both Charlottetown and Quebec City and was a member of the Confederate Council on British North

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<sup>9</sup> Roberto Alomar, 2nd baseman for the Baltimore Orioles, spat in a umpire's face and received a five-game suspension to begin at the start of the *next* season since his team was still competing in the playoffs.

American Colonies convened in Quebec City in 1865. He resigned over the proposed terms of Free Trade with the United States. Preferring newspapers to politics, Brown refused the governorship of Ontario and a knighthood (as did Mackenzie) to edit the *Globe*. He did, however, become a senator in the appointed upper house in Ottawa (1873).

On March 25, 1880, he was shot in his *Globe* offices by George Bennett, a disgruntled former employee whom he had discharged. He died as the result of his wounds 45 days later. Bennett was executed on July 23.

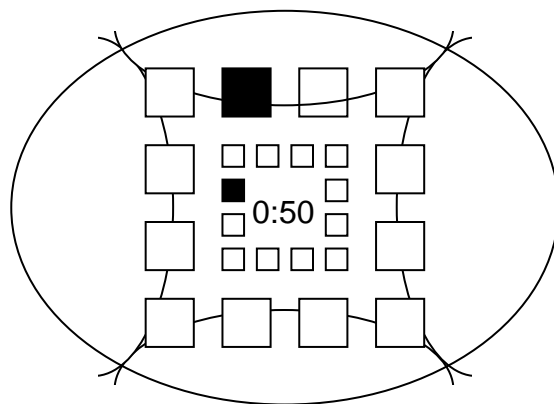
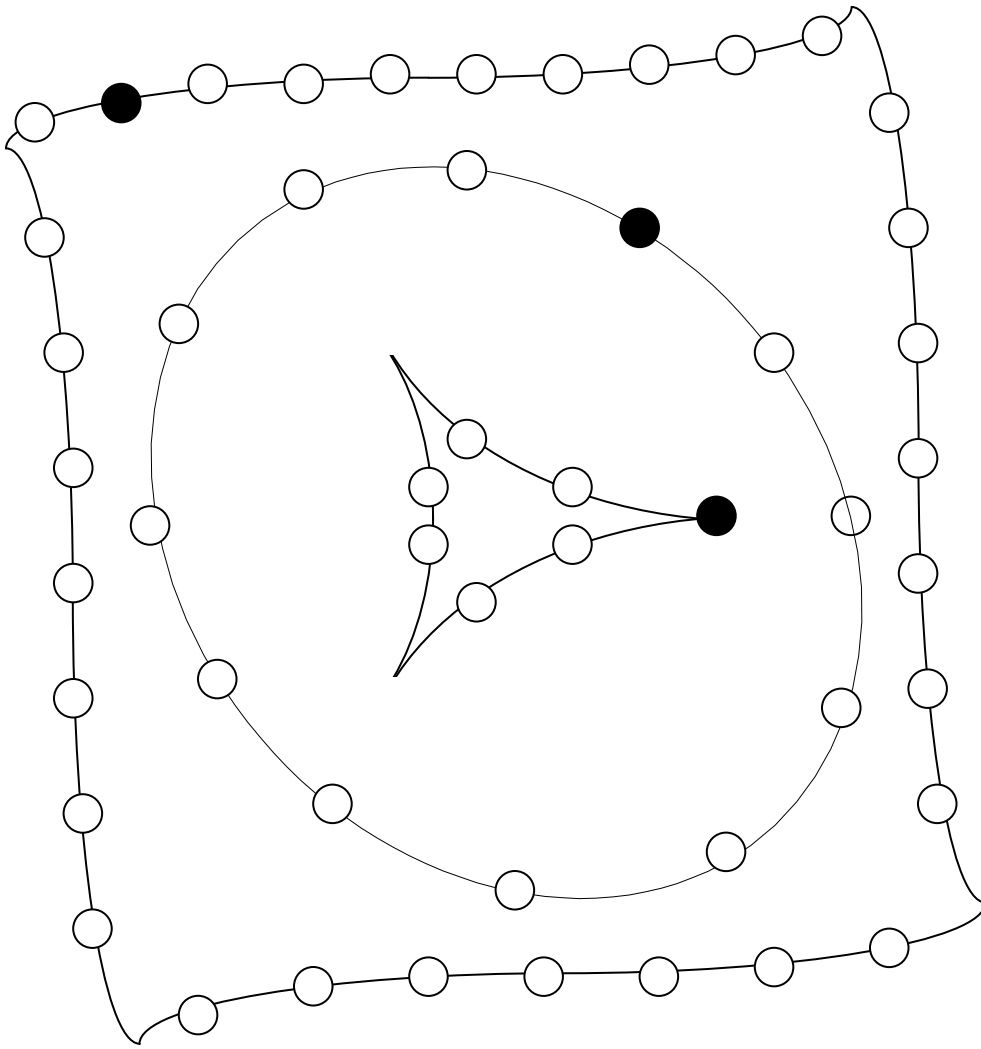
The following two articles appeared in *The Evening Times* (Glasgow) of March 26 and May 10, 1880.

#### ATTEMPT TO SHOOT A CANADIAN SENATOR

Toronto, Thursday. — Mr George Brown, Canadian senator and leader of the Reform party, was shot in the thigh this afternoon by a would-be assassin, who was immediately arrested.

#### MURDER OF A SCOTCHMAN IN TORONTO

The death is announced of Mr George Brown, which occurred at his residence in Toronto yesterday. He has died from the effects of a wound received in a wanton attack made on him in his office on March 25 by a dismissed employee. Ten days ago it was believed that the crisis of his illness had been successfully passed, and that he was in the fair way of recovery; but last week his case again assumed a serious aspect. He has been gradually sinking since Wednesday. The news of so tragic a termination to so honourable and useful a life will be received with deep regret by Mr Brown's numerous friends in Scotland. George Brown was a native of Edinburgh, having been born in Buccleuch Place in 1819. Some of the companions of his boyhood still resident in Edinburgh remember him as a bright and generous youth, marked by a vigorous and pushing character.



**Friday November 1**

The art of teaching is to discover what the student already knows.

Had a conversation with a bee in the park who followed me around for five minutes and made me look like a psychiatric case (again) in front of a bunch of gabbing ladies. They didn't respond when I offered "I didn't think I was that sweet." Must be the accent again. Wondered if bees were a branch on the evolutionary tree that results from being obsessed with work. I imagine we'll all end up like bees some day. (Very Crazy Idea #67; others discarded.)

### **Saturday November 2**

I realized today that a book was beginning to form from my jottings. *The Glasgow Dairies—Past, Present Future?* I like the diary format and I now think of each day as a drawer to put my things/ideas in. I must remind myself, now and again, however, not to think of everything as an idea. Some days, drawers are best left closed.

I also prefer the small park behind our flat to the bigger more beautiful Victoria Park. Distance it seems is always the mitigating factor. Can't understand why they close after dark. Security versus freedom again?

### **Sunday November 3**

I read two more books from Adrian Mole's reading list. *Black Beauty* was great fun and I'm now on a "be nice to animals" mission, though I haven't seen any animals in Glasgow to be nice to. After seeing dogs everywhere in Paris, it is strange not seeing any here. I had to put Prebble's *Glencoe* down after only one hundred pages (with lots of skipping). What an abomination. I can't imagine how anyone, even with Macdonald or Campbell blood in their veins, could find it anything but mucky. Adrian's first miss after a string of hits.

### **Monday November 4**

Had a million ideas how to "hot-up" Sauchiehall Street, mostly to do with installing public art. No dogs, no sculpture—is there a connection?

The pedestrian part of Sauchiehall Street has a very cold feel because the street is flat and the buildings square. Straight lines are always cold and thus I thought of erecting two fake staircases; down (past) and up (future), leading to nowhere right in the middle of the street (perhaps filled with greenery to appease the government types who need to rationalize art as purpose). As all sculpture should, the projection extends beyond the place. Slogans seem to take the place of sculpture all too often. Yes, Glasgow is friendly, but does anyone honestly think that other cities are not?

I have no idea why there are plaques for the blind, unless they are the Sauchiehall Street Trader's Association's attempt at post-modern art. How do the blind know they're there? Do blind shoppers bump into them, feel each box, and in a fit of discovery decide, "Yes, I'll go shopping in Marks and Spencer?"

### **Tuesday November 5**

I would love to declare a "no car day" and listen to the silence (Brilliant Idea #2).



Burger King

### Friday November 8

I spent the evening wandering around town by myself. I seem to be doing a lot of that lately. Sophie is at school or in the library most days and when she comes home, I'm ready to go out after being cooped up inside all day. For her, it's just the opposite. All she wants to do is stay in after a long day out touring, examining, and talking.

Always ask myself the same questions: Where does Glasgow begin? Where does it end? Why are there so many derelict buildings? Why do people keep telling me it was worse? Who would build a 70's pre-fab box in front of the Glasgow School of Art? How did Glasgow become the 1999 European City of Architecture? How enlightening that the museums and galleries are free.

Thought of a proposal for 1999—*ex musea*—my concept of a series of outdoor, one-off museums. As the internet expands and internalizes and becomes everything for everybody, almost like a library, *ex musea* contracts and externalizes. I got the idea from recognizing a building I'd seen in a book (Henderson's Jewellers a.k.a. Miss Cranston's Willow Tea Room) and not being able to learn more about it (short of spending many hours and perhaps many days on the internet or in the library, where I would likely find very little). Now, instead of the Tartus-like box but steps away with oodles of push button information (on very little I might add), a one-off historical story solely about this famous Glaswegian landmark *in situ* would be great. Essentially, take the idea of a plaque (basically a small bit of information to commemorate something and tastefully though simply designed) and make it electronic. Of course, one would need to maintain the unobtrusiveness of a plaque lest *ex museas* everywhere pop up to clutter the landscape. That would be the challenge of the electronic plaque or ... *ex musea*. 1999 should be about what *can* be done and not just what *has* been done.

I even came up with the slogans for my latent design company (CroW) which would undertake such a task.

Eat CroW  
Say it ain't so, CroW  
CroW, CroW, CroW your boat  
Everything's coming up CroW  
GlasCroW

I can already imagine the T-shirts.

Realized that it might be stupid (Stupid Idea #2) to record one's brilliant ideas all the time. *ex musea* is too involved (for me) to be a brilliant idea anyway. Realized that Brilliant Idea #1 is thus no good because it is far too involved to down load one's brain (core dump). Pretty scary too, though it will probably be possible in some future world

soon enough. Would make it a whole hell of a lot easier to sort people out (Really Scary Idea #1). Realized I must get out more and meet people.

### **Saturday November 9**

Realized I don't have much of a life. Sophie's always busy. I just keep opening up drawers. Feeling a little home sick and thus decided to go to an (ice) hockey game.

*Yet each man kills the thing  
he loves*  
Wilde,  
The Ballad of Reading Gaol

### **Sunday November 10**

Hockey is to Canada what football is to the rest of the world, so it was with great pride and excitement that I set off (Day 61) to watch my first real live hockey match on non-Canadian soil—ice hockey, that is; played with skates and pucks and things that go bump on the boards. It had taken some doing, but through sheer Conan Doyle like detecting, I found out that the Ayr Scottish *Eagles* were hosting the Nottingham *Panthers* in the British Superleague. I can easily imagine eagles in Ayr, though panthers roaming the forests of Nottingham is a bit beyond my training (sort of like penguins in Pittsburgh). Billed as Sunday night fun for the whole family, game time 6:30, church optional, I almost couldn't sleep in anticipation. It was even getting Canada-cold outside to boot.

Had I not overlooked the obvious, however, I might have discovered that the Ayr Eagles played in *Prestwick* and not Ayr and saved the cost of an extra stop on ScotRail and the taxi ride to the brand-spanking new 2000 seat Centrum Arena. (And perhaps, the indignity of being asked by the cab driver "Is it the curling ice rink, you want then?") But I made it and none too soon as the Zamboni finished its last tour round that perfectly-formed, golden-white oval. Any thoughts of not belonging quickly evaporated as the chill exploding to my bones transported me to a thousand yesterday's of home.

With apologies to Nick Hornby, I too can recall a great many matches of my chosen spectator sport—professional hockey or the National Hockey League (an oft-changing amalgam of 3 parts American to 1 part Canadian), though I've never actually been to one in the flesh. Television, in the land of beer and sugar, accounts for my experience, numbering in the thousands. I won't recount them all.

Perhaps, because of my watered-down televised experience, my memories are not as good as his, but I was *there* for *the* defining moment in Canadian history when *we* beat the Soviet Union in 1972 in the dying moments of an eight game super series showdown; a goal whose particulars (Paul Henderson's backhand stab from Phil Esposito through the outstretched arms of the Russian demi-god Vladimir Tretiak at 19:26 in Moscow) are required in triplicate by Immigration Canada of all aspiring wannabee Canadians. (I think a million dollars held in trust but never invested in Canadian business gets you in too.) That day began the television age in Canada, (nine years after beginning everywhere else

with President Kennedy's assassination). No thoughts of French or English, rich or poor, danced in our heads. For one whole super-fired Cold War day, Canada ruled.

Ayr made it to the score sheet first, seventeen seconds into the game, albeit a tripping penalty, courtesy of their bone-crushing defenceman (#24). That got the crowd crowing a little, and more so when the brush-cut twelve year old kid sitting two rows behind me with the drum started the "dah-dah-dah-Ea-gulls" chant. Isn't it a school night, I wondered? The piper at the door was a nice Scottish touch, but that kid—well, I'd like to see him do the drum thing at an away game.

The first period was for the purists, lots of wide-open play, with plenty of quick passing. They did look awfully small and young to be professional—though as I was told by one *thirtysomething* in the first intermission, "If they were bigger and better, they'd be in the States." I didn't tell him he meant Canada or that he should have meant Canada. He didn't seem impressed when I told him I was from the motherland. "My 70 year old granny comes for the fights," he added. "You wait, #24 is going to tie one on in the next period." Yes, that would explain the pop music blasting at every break. And the little drummer boy. "Ea-gulls."

Queen's "We Are The Champions" kept time with the kid's drumming as the second period began, the score knotted at nil. I had read that suspensions were pending in the Superleague for some nasty work down at the docks and I was beginning to see why. "We Are The Champions" with all its implications is not what should be blasting through loud speakers at a hockey game. Pat Benatar's "Hit Me With Your Best Shot" (a little more tolerable, especially when played after a save and not a hit) rang out minutes later as the Ayr goalie stopped a point blank Panther attack. It was entirely his stellar play keeping the Eagles in the game.

Two quick goals early in the second by Nottingham, however, quieted the boom-boom crowd, but less than a minute later, the crowd roared back, their #12 now exchanging blows with an unsuspecting Panther, to the tune of "Hey Margarita." "You pussy," shouted a teenager in front. The grandmother beside me added her own less-flattering expletives. The fight ended quickly as the players fell to the ice. It was no artistry, Torvill and Dean style. They didn't even know how to pull the sweater over an opponent's face before swinging or that, timed just right, you can shed your gloves and punch *at the same time* to stake an early lead before the striped-shirts intervene. That is if you really want to fight. The "two minutes for roughing," hardly punishment to fit the crime, would serve only to encourage more.

And there would be more. After Ayr scored to make it 2–1, it was Panther payback time, meted out rather gauchely by an altogether too small #13 upon the Eagle goal-scorer, their Mutt and Jeff act more comedy than drama. A now tuned-in crowd, bellowing for more, kept the home fires burning. As the drum beat and music soared, the score seemed less important to the losing side and their adoring fans. But as luck would have it, Ayr tied the game on a cheap blueline shot followed two minutes later by a pretty bang-bang

feed at the end of a lacklustre no-shot power play. Sloppy Eagle play, however, gave the Panthers the lead again at the period's end.

Still too serious a score to dissolve into out-and-out silliness on the ice, the third period began with high hopes and another Eagle power play. "Video killed the Radio Star" and "YMCA" got the crowd back into the act, but a quick short-handed goal killed any chances of the Eagles winning tonight. The crowd hardly noticed the letdown, the drum still tom-tomming to the cries of "Ea-gulls." I expected the wave. Whether the game now imploded depended on how much revenge the Eagles were prepared to extract, perhaps hoping to set the tone for their national cup final with these self same Panthers less than a month away. The announcer's call for "Let's get ready to rumble" didn't help.

Though the third period played itself out with occasional excitement, a few nice give and go passing plays on both sides memorable enough, the Panthers held on to win 6-4, potting their final goal into an empty net. All-in-all, it was an evenly-matched, though not highly-skilled game, what we would call "Junior A," a game for under twenties looking for places in the big leagues.

It could have been much worse—the nastiness, not the score. Hockey is not like football and should not be sold as such. If bigger crowds come accompanied by Ranger-Celtic sentiment, every police officer for miles will be undoing the damage. Hockey is a fast-flowing, physical game, played with sticks. Darker sides, that come from time to time in all walks of life, should never be rubbed the wrong way. All I can say is get rid of the overly-heated up musical accompaniment and get some better refs. The tom-tom boy can stay—provided he finds a seat away from me.

Violence in sport is a problem, especially when it is encouraged by over-zealous fan support, bad officiating, and poor sportsmanship. The hilarity of the approaches used to stop violence in hockey is best illustrated by a former attorney general of Ontario who tried to arrest a player for assault, arguing that if he had done the same on the street, he'd be serving his penalty in jail. Nothing came of it; the general feeling that he was trying to unnerve the other side with the threat of arrest. The tactic failed, Toronto lost, and the attorney general went on to other great things such as commissioner of the Canadian Football League and Canadian High Commissioner to London. It was a nice try to argue that organized professionals are subject to the same laws as others. Ever the generalist, these tinkers.

As I left the Centrum, the players shook hands with each other and then with the refs. They even clapped for the fans in appreciation, something I had never seen before. Even if the fans haven't yet figured out what's going on, it seems the combatants knew. It was a nice addition to the old game I know so well.

**Monday November 11**

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To Robbie



Actually, I didn't see anything on Remembrance day, not that I'd know where to look. We don't have a TV and anyone I've met (not many at that) are under 50 and have no memory of any war(s). Vietnam is not a big thing over here either, so there is very little for the younger generation to remember. Fifty years does seem like a long time, but perhaps it's just as well to move on. People do seem to drink a lot, however. One assumes they are celebrating something.

Glad to see the Maple Leafs are keeping you happy. Will send you stuff about Rangers and Celtic when I learn more.

### **Tuesday November 12**

I decided to try a new strategy to solve an old problem after frothing at the mouth upon receiving my first Canadian phone bill (from our Canada World calling card)—I had been charged for calling Glasgow from Paris as if I had called Paris to Toronto and then Toronto to Glasgow. I was so mad I knew if I didn't do something different I'd be swearing at the guy in seconds (assuming *comme d'habitude* that he would be completely intransigent to my concerns). So, instead, I started with a fairly sugary "I'm sure we can solve this problem politely." After explaining "the situation" I asked if he thought any sane person would make such a call knowing how the call would be billed. I didn't stress "sane" or insert any threatening emphasis. He answered that one would have to be pretty stupid (also without emphasis) and was every bit as polite as me. Soon, we were discussing the weather, hockey, and politics like old friends. I was amazed. I even got a nice letter back with my \$500 credit since I was not "advised of the billing process." A new strategy for a new future? I'm not so sure. He was definitely the exception to the rule.

Now with BT, I still don't know the rules. I tried the polite thing, but my accent always gives me away. As soon as something illogical pops up (as it tends to with phone companies), I'm immediately put on the defensive because my Canadian (American?) accent is grating to British ears. We're always complaining about "service" or so says our intonation. For example "Could I have my coffee now?" is not meant to *demand* my coffee *this instant*, it is to say "May I have my coffee before my breakfast comes?"

To be sure, the BT lady didn't like it when I said, "No ma'am I didn't make the same call three times as it appears on my bill. I don't know ma'am. It is *your* computer." She didn't like it much either when I said there was no point to getting *Friends and Family* when I didn't have either. "Do acquaintances count?" I tried. And I admit it may have been more than my accent, when I added "If it's such a great offer, why don't you just give me the savings directly? I won't mind. Honest." *I know* I overdid it when I asked her "How did you get this number?"

*The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose*  
Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice

### **Thursday November 14**

Life after Paris hasn't gone exactly to plan, though, in fairness, I hadn't planned much past stuffing our worldly belongings into fifteen suitcases and 40 cubic feet of boxes (which arrived a month late by ship on Day 33 while I was in Paris) and taking my first holiday in four years. Now that "the move" and "the holiday" are over, I've been stumble-stepping for weeks, not so much wondering *what* I'm doing here anymore, but wondering what *to do* here. Adding to the uncertainty, Sophie and I took turns on the couch for a week (as couples are apt to do now and again), McIlvanney changed a deadline on me (forward not backward), and the sun, already hovering near its lowly autumn horizon, keeps setting around 4:00 p.m. I am powerless to change the course of nature, but as one of the new breed of home workers, stuck in the office of the future—my living room—sadly, the day ends for me before it begins.

Indeed, the measure of today's man seems to be how one spends time, no less so in Britain as talk of the 48 hour work week and how a *Big Issue* hawker rakes in £1000 a week dominated the headlines, currently my main source of information or, one might say, misinformation. The two stories are one and the same.

Firstly, the *Big Issue* angle, which one writer opined "Let him teach others how to sell" a rather naive pyramid scam if he dared play it out to any logical conclusion. Sure, let's all sell the *Big Issue* like one big Amway corp—and she told two friends and she told two friends and so on and so on .... Arguing the exception as the rule is bad enough, but even the most rudimentary calculation proves just how wrong the numbers are.

As it is written in the *Big Issue* masthead, "The paper is sold by homeless<sup>10</sup> and ex-homeless people. They buy it for 35p and sell it for 80p—keeping 45p of the cover price. The remaining 35p goes towards distribution and the cost of producing the paper." To be sure, it's all there in black and white, as fundamentally capitalist as can be—the more one works, the more one makes, not unlike most jobs on this planet. But how many *Big Issues* does it take to rake in £1000 at 45p a throw? And how much time *does* it take to amass that small fortune selling *Big Issues*? The math is basic:  $\pounds 1000/45p = 2,222$  *Big Issues* per week. *Two thousand two hundred and twenty two*, almost poetic in its symmetry. And now, the Fermi fun begins.

Enrico Fermi, an Italian physicist, whose fame included working on the Manhattan project in Los Alamos, directing the first controlled nuclear reaction in a Chicago squash court, and a host of successes in modern physics, was also known for his elegant guesses. He could tell you how many trees there are in Scotland with nothing more than pencil and paper. Of course, he wouldn't get it right, but his answer might just help decide if he should buy into Scotland's pulp and paper industry. Essentially, a Fermi calculation gives a rough idea of the answer, especially in the absence of any known or knowable data. To be sure, a Fermi calculation shows when numbers most definitely go wrong.

1. The facts

Papers sold in one week	2,222
to make £1000	

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<sup>10</sup> Current numbers of homeless in Scotland estimated at 10,000 or approximately 1 in 500.

2. The assumptions:
 

Number of days in a work week	6
Number of hours in a work day	10
Number of work hours in a week	60
  
3. The calculations
 

Number of papers sold per day	$2,222/10 = 370$ per day
Number of papers sold per hour	$2,222/60 = 37$ per hour
Number of papers sold per minute	$37/60 = 0.62$ per minute
Number of minutes between sales	$60/37 = 1.6$ minutes

Thus, with no more than a couple of quick jots, it seems our *Big Issue* hawker must sell 370 *Big Issues* every day (Sunday excluded) or 37 per hour (for ten hours a day, six days a week), an almost Herculean feat. That's roughly one *Big Issue* every 90 seconds. Oh sure, anyone could manage that ... for an hour or so, especially when the going is good. (During rush hours, our same *Big Issue* seller probably manages one every thirty seconds, a regular queue of frenzied big time sales.) Me? I might last a day. But 60 hours, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day of every week, no coffee breaks, no lunch breaks, no bathroom breaks, just "Get your *Big Issue* here." You've got to be kidding. It's a wonder they don't go hoarse.

And, it gets worse. Even given that our ace seller *could* sell 37 *Big Issues* an hour, could he do it every day? The *Big Issue* is a weekly, coming out on Thursday. The daily sales figures surely drop off drastically as the week goes by—so much so that one couldn't give away a *Big Issue* on a Wednesday. Yesterday's news is yesterday's news the world over, *Big Issue* or not. It's likely, he'd have to make his £1000 before Monday, selling at the rate of 1 a minute for three days to a diminishing market from sun up to well past sun down. I say it's not possible. And if somehow, the planets did align for one anointed week, I say it's impossible one week to the next. (I haven't even factored in competition from other *Big Issue* sellers, more reasonable post-industrial revolution 40-hour a week working hours, or the cold, creeping up on us all. Nor whether selling a homeless newspaper for a living is something one can stomach for long—constantly asking strangers to buy, buy, buy must be a most heavy burden.) The story was fabricated and, in my mind, scandalous. Only one hundred years on, our ragged trousered philanthropists have traded paint brushes for newspapers, while Mr. Grabbem and Mr. Stepponem run free.

The *Big Issue* issue, however, is nothing in comparison to the 48 hour work week issue. That *issue*, requiring much more smoke and mirrors to obfuscate, isn't going to get much help from Enrico Fermi. But when all of Europe works less than Great Britain, on average, one has to start wondering what the *Great* stands for. And coming from a country where the standard work week is 35 hours (7 hours Monday to Friday) with full benefits, I can't see what all the fuss is about. Wouldn't a government *want* its workers to work less, even if unemployment *wasn't* rampant? Playing musical chairs (9 jobs, 10 workers<sup>11</sup>) with an entire national psyche is not what I call cricket. It seems Magna Carta

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<sup>11</sup> If every worker took every other Friday afternoon off without pay, there could quite easily be 10 jobs and 10 workers.

wasn't all that *magna*. And it would seem that the political party with the word "Labour" in its manifest has been rather oddly named. I think that "labour" is meant to represent the "labour" class. That is, those who *labour*.

Yet in Glasgow, as the sun makes its daily high at around 20 degrees in mid-November, a homeless man shouts "*Big Issue, mate*" a thousand times a day without much success. Given that's there more than enough work to go round in our land of plenty, isn't it time we started concentrating on *the* big issue? It's all there in black and white.

Oh, no, some will say my true colours are showing. Come on, I just want to do my job, live my life, and have some sense of satisfaction at day's end. And if I can get out before the sun goes down on occasion, then all the better. Besides, I've grown too old for musical chairs.

*Into each life some rain must fall  
Some days must be dark and dreary  
Longfellow,  
The Rainy Day*

### **Sunday November 17**

Played "Spot the Royal" in the Sunday papers with Sophie. (We both get a section of the paper and race to find a picture of one of the Royal Family.) Sophie always wins. You get extra points for finding a Royal's name in print without any adjoining picture which is almost impossible. It's obvious, they are to be seen and not heard.

Wondered if Charles is more related to his cousins than his children?

### **Monday November 18**

The conversation started simply enough. "Do you need an extra player on your pub quiz team? I guarantee the American questions."

I was at Pablo's, the Crow Road pub geographically closest to our flat.<sup>12</sup> It was Monday night, the week already off to its usual sultry start. (I had worked all day, alighting only after the sky had fixed itself in the deep, dark, and still-blue colour of early evening.) We'd been to Pablo's before for the Monday night quiz, Sophie and I finishing 13th in a game of fourteen teams, though I'm certain the last place team left at half-time. (Either that or they passed out after the music round.) Even still, our score was not bad considering ninety percent of the questions were about Virginia Bottomlies and Nigel Peabodies. I think the quiz master took pity on us too, giving us a point on the picture round for writing "politician" under an unknown Michael Forsyth's mug and another point for scribbling "British pop band, though likely not Oasis" on all but two of the music questions. (The other two *were* Oasis.)

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<sup>12</sup> Okay, not counting the tennis club which should not be counted anyway because, there, they mix sport and beer, a no-no for a real drinking establishment. Spectator sport, sure, but not participatory sport. The guilt is too great and, besides, the sweat drips in the glass and makes the beer salty.

"Did you say *guarantee* mate?" replied a cherub-faced drinker in the corner. He returned his cellular phone to his breast pocket.

"Oh yes, my good man. Sports teams' nicknames, state capitals, and vice-presidents of the great U. S. of A. who tell young school girls that potato is spelt *p-o-t-a-t-o-e*.

"Really? Sit ye down wise one from beyond the pond. I'm Robin. This is Ian, Gavin, Ivan, Steven, Brian, and Gayna," he rifled the names around the table. "What are you drinkin' then?"

I did not disappoint. Typically, I can score 10 points in a quiz game of 60 points (40 general knowledge, ten pictures, and ten music intros), pretty pathetic to be sure and a guaranteed last place finish no matter how bad or inebriated the other teams are, but five of those ten questions are invariably the hardest five questions for everyone else, because they are the *American* questions. I can't help it, but I will never forget that Gerald Ford's middle name is Rudolph or that Hawaii is the 50th state of the union (hence the television show *Hawaii Five-Oh*) or that Penguins play hockey in Pittsburgh. Virginia Bottomley, on the other hand, I may never get my head around.

Alas, we finished second even with my five guaranteed answers and the help of an occasional cellular call to a ninth man whose identity never was revealed (Deep Gorge?). It seems that some egghead team upstairs has their own American ringer or are just too damned smart for their own good. Who knows?—they could be downloading the answers from the internet. But, happily, every Monday evening for two hours, I can go somewhere where a few people know my name, even if only to shout out, "Hal! Mate. Quickly, who played Ralph Malph on *Happy Days*?" Thank heavens, I knew.<sup>13</sup> The world may be small, but it has a damn big sky.

## **Tuesday November 19**

To be cultured is to learn not to fart in public.

## **Wednesday November 20**

To Robbie

Cheer up, old buck. One way of looking at the diaspora is that it will be a lot easier to take over the world when the rapture begins in '99. I can count on your loyal support in the North American quarter I hope? To refuse me now would be foolish as I would only crush you. We have pictures of you naked if you resist. I'll throw in South America if you want in return for the usual feudal tithes (a Toronto newspaper and some much-needed peanut butter will do.) I can't give you the Caribbean, though, as I promised it to some guy I met in bar last night who bought me a drink. Sorry about that.

Saw my first Celtic/Ranger match—40,000 manic fans chanting "o-way-oh-way, oway-ay-oh" or something like that for three hours. I was in a bar, safe, hiding my Irish lineage,

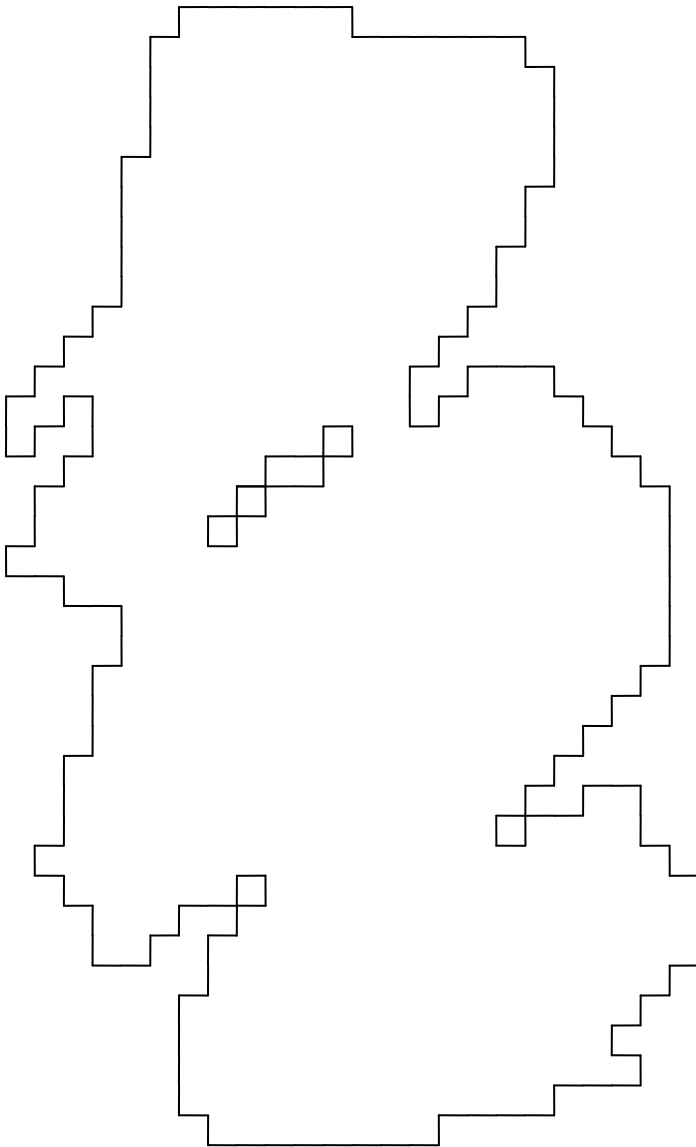
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<sup>13</sup> Donnie Most

but when Rangers scored and I didn't jump up and down and hug everyone, I was discovered—a Paddy in the mist. They didn't beat me up—I think because they need me for their Monday night pub quiz team. I'm the only one who gets the A-mehr-can questions. (e.g. on the picture round, a mug shot of a young Ralph Malph from Happy Days came up.) Saw an (ice) hockey game too, though it resembled more of a brawl. The Brits don't know about Pandora's Box. I won't tell them. If you want Britain, you have only to ask.

Thanks for the advice—I don't plan on going anywhere near Parkhead/Ibrox unaccompanied. Sorry to hear about your computer problems. As long as you keep suppressing your dark emotions, I don't think you'll need to revise the criminal code. Remember your years of training.

I haven't met any public transport advocates yet.



**Thursday November 21**

Parity, a tenet of North American professional sport, restricts the mega-matches such as the Old Firm. Surprisingly, in a country with a much more established socialist history (theoretically, anyway), capitalism runs roughshod over professional sport. If the same practice were followed in the United States, "New York versus Los Angeles" would be the permanent marquee over every sports final.

**Friday November 22**

Made an etcher sketch drawing of Scotland. Went crazy before I could do the islands. Couldn't stop thinking about Edward de Bono all day.

**Saturday November 23**

Read Nick Hornby's latest book *High Fidelity*. Am starting to find his insights into depression quite amazing.

A guy in a pub saw me scribbling into my note pad and asked me if I was writing a book. When I told him I might be, he asked if he could be in it. Without missing a beat, I told him, "Sure, but it will cost you." Everything costs.

I feel like I can't afford anything anymore, always saving, always worried that McIlvanney will pull the plug.

I want to be able to get outside my head. To be unable to analyze. To start anew.

**Sunday November 24**

Never trust anyone over thirty who used to say "Never trust anyone over thirty."

**Monday November 25**

Only 30 shopping days left until Christmas.

**Tuesday November 26**

You can't give anyone the finger with mittens on.

**Wednesday November 27**

What's all the fuss over cosmetic testing? Cosmetics are tested on humans every day.

**Saturday November 30**

I finished the Alexander Mackenzie piece for *The Canadian Scotsman*, thoroughly enjoying the research since I didn't know anything about him. I did wonder who changed the name of the Chippewyan Mountains to the Rocky Mountains. Aren't all mountains rocky? Thought of recreating Mackenzie's trip from Inverness to Edinburgh (by ScotRail) as a minor homage. It amazes me that people like T.E. Laurence and Alexander Mackenzie died in such simple circumstances after enduring such arduous treks in their lives. Can't imagine what dead rock legends would be doing if they were still alive.

Wondered about Amerigo Vespucci too and why half the world was named after him.

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### **Alexander Mackenzie**

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*born Stornoway, Lewis and Harris, Outer Hebrides, Scotland 1754*  
*died near Pitlochry, Perth, Scotland March 11, 1820*  
*emigrated to Montreal, Quebec at the age of 24*  
*married Miss Mackenzie 1812*

Alexander Mackenzie was a fur trader and explorer. In 1783, as a partner in the Northwest Fur Company, he set up a trading post with the Chippewas at Fort Chippewyan at the head of Lake Athabaska (in now northern Alberta).

In 1789, Mackenzie and a small party set out in canoes to follow the 1,100 mile Mackenzie River from Great Slave Lake, ending up in the Beaufort Sea (in the now North West Territories). Finding the Arctic Ocean and not the Pacific Ocean as he had hoped, he thus referred to the great river (the largest river system in North America after the Mississippi-Missouri and subsequently named in his honour) as the "River of Disappointment." His exploration to and from the Arctic lasted 102 days.

In another exploration in 1792–3, he followed the Peace River west and crossed the Rocky Mountains (or Chippewyan Mountains), finding the Pacific Ocean near Cape Menzies almost a year later. His trip convinced him that the search for a north-west passage to the Orient would be fruitless. However, his efforts helped open western Canada to the fur trade, which would later be flooded by European and American prospectors in search of gold. Having traversed *ad mari usque ad mari*, he became the first European to cross North America north of Mexico.

Mackenzie wrote *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence, Through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans, in the Years 1789 and 1793 with a Preliminary Account of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Fur Trade of that Country*, published in 1801. Dedicated to King George III, it contains some excellent maps.

Having made his fortune in the fur trade, Mackenzie returned to Scotland, where he died near Pitlochry after falling ill during a short trip from Inverness to Edinburgh.

**Wednesday December 4**



Yes, I've haven't been very good at writing lately, but a whole hell of a lot has happened in the last forty days in the wilderness (Days 46 through 86). Work picked up, Sophie and my troubles lasted longer than a week (now resolved and officially attributed to the madness of a 4:00 p.m. setting sun), John Major is *major* in name only, and ... we have friends—real, bona fide, honest-to-goodness Scottish mates! In fact, I'd even say we are out of the wilderness and over the ben.

Mind you, had I no interest in beer, trivia, or golf, I'd still be wasting valuable drinking time on subjects as dire as philosophy, economics, and other matters of consequence. It seems this alien has landed, his feet on the ground, his putter firmly cocked at the ready. It matters little that winter greens can make an unsightly mess of a beautifully crafted triple bogie from the gorse or that the fairways are not—fair that is, when covered in snow and ice—because golfing in December with snow but tickling your shins is pure magic.

### **Thursday December 5**

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To Robbie

Just got the morning post with November's bold, italicized, and underlined *Science Monthly*. I'm thrilled that it turned out so well (ex editor: except for that stray comma.) You bet I'll "mark my calendar." I especially like the way Joe passes the gavel on page 3 and receives the plaque on page 6! Art, baby, art. Don't go changing. And is that guy with the beard on page 21 being threatened by the speaker? ("You call me 'muffhead' one more time and I'll deep six you Poindexter.") What a peace-loving organization (just look at the guy asleep next to him), dedicated to panel discussions around the world. I hope you and McIlvanney are making the circuit together now.

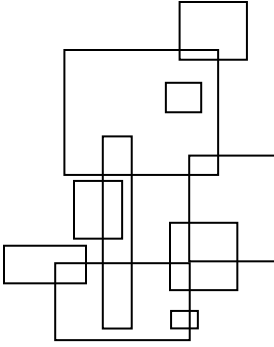
Speaking of McIlvanney—he's got me going to Holland next week to do a piece on North Sea Oil work in Holland so I'm knee deep in it. It seems I must still pay the piper. I shall be in Amsterdam in front of the Van Gogh Museum at 2:00 p.m. Saturday December 14 if you've come to your senses yet. I did manage one day pigging out on the weekend newspapers though—they just go on and on ... forever.

Yours till the last drop of Celtic stout mops up the Ranger-boys after the rapture. Alas, man can not live on football alone.

### **Friday December 6**

Surprised Sophie with a night out for Robert Lepage's *Elsinore* at the Tramway. Quite a striking presentation with Lepage playing all the Hamlet players. Everybody dead at the end except of course for Horatio. Good to be in the company of another Canadian for a brief moment if only from afar. Sophie had no idea where I was taking her—a first for me.

### **Saturday December 7**



I picked up my plane ticket from Lunn Polly on Byres Road. The sales lady wasn't impressed when I told her I would not take the ticket if she gave me the lottery form, camera film coupon, or BT phone guide along with the ticket. She muttered something about "company policy" as if "company policy" was something handed down to her by Moses. My wishes finally prevailed after not too many back and forths, and choosing to ignore her last "Well, I don't see what the big deal is?" Obviously not, my dear.

### **Friday December 13**

Got into Amsterdam after a week on the deep sea rigs. The helicopter ride was cool and I resisted the temptation of saying something silly like "They sure look like toys from up here." I don't exactly know why McIlvanney has me writing stuff for *Science Monthly* again. Not a good idea to bite the hand that feeds, clothes, and houses me, however. Doubling up as photographer on this one (which I hate) so I shot and asked questions later. Sent him the copy immediately from the hotel (in the Red Light district). Resisted all temptations. I'm certainly not against drugs or prostitution, but I can't help thinking my mother is watching me from somewhere. Not a bad assumption for better living.

### **Saturday December 14**

Van Gogh (pronounced *Vaughn Hawk* as I was told) made the long hard week seem distant, though my body ached as I inched my way around with the masses. He certainly looks better in person than in pictures. Impossible to describe in word his paintings. Maybe the best drug ever invented. Went by Anne Frank's House, but the lines were too long. The construction going on inside and next door suggests that the lines won't be getting any shorter in the future.

Saw a guy at the airport with the T-shirt:

Eat Football,  
Sleep Football,  
Drink Coca Cola

I don't get the connection.

### **Sunday December 15**

I am convinced I will die looking the wrong way walking from the curb to cross the street. It is just impossible to reprogram my brain.

Spent the rest of the day thinking about walking. Walking is not a spatial thing for me; i.e. just getting from A to B. I am always walking from A to B with every step—walking

through time, not space. I suppose that sounds a bit nutty, but then I'm a pedestrian who has never owned a car in life and doesn't bicycle that much either (certainly not in Glasgow). I always just go for a walk and if I happen to see something I need when I'm walking then I get it. If you walk all your life, one doesn't need to *go* anywhere, one is just *there* when one needs it.

Okay, so it is nutty, but it seems to me, everyone could use the car 20% less (even 50%) and not make any major changes to their life. It's not so much an environmental thing though the environmental side is important (not because gas is scarce—according to the Dutch, there are megatons of the stuff), but a lifestyle thing. Noise, movement, a constant babbling of human kinetics keeps one from reflection (not at all like the kinetics of a Van Gogh painting). It's not so much a problem here as in North America, but one wonders what Charing Cross must have been like, how gentle life must have been in the not too distant past. One wonders if the argument against highways being built in the middle of cities has rusted with age?

Glasgow is a great walking town and I am enjoying discovering the connection between past and present, something quite impossible in New World Toronto.

I have yet to make it across any street before that little green man disappears.

### **Thursday December 19**

Having said all that, Sophie and I rented a car for a five day car trip to the Highlands before Christmas, probably the first five days we've spent together since we arrived.

Accident #1 occurred thankfully not in the parking lot, but soon after as I clipped a parked car's mirror. I'm sure I would have caused another if I had tried to back up, so wherever you are (gray hatchback Volkswagen), sorry! Accident #2 was somewhere after Loch Lomond on the road to the Highlands, but was really only me driving over the curb at 60 mph. Accident #3 was avoided by the very smart other driver, who realized it was me who was on the wrong side of the road and not him and stuck to his side as I swerved back into mine. Sophie and I had an invigorating conversation on the rules of how to and how not to yell. She drove the rest of the way.

We lodged in Fort William for the night, after a splendid sunset near Glencoe (Ballachulish?). Miraculously, there would be no accidents the rest of the trip—no low road for us. Sophie was brilliant and saved me from becoming a pitiful wreck.

### **Friday December 20**

We hit Inverness in the early evening after the requisite photo ops at Ben Nevis, Rob Roy's monument, and Loch Ness. I bought the smallest whisky bottle in the world to send to Canada, though I was told it was illegal to send Whisky by mail. I did it anyway. Lodged in Inverness, deciding to go East in the morning and circle round the *low* Highlands and save Ullapool (*Local Hero* country), Thurso, etc. for another trip.

### **Saturday December 21**

After a tour of the death star Fort George, we took a leisurely stroll around Culloden. An unlikely site for such a likely history. We had a minor re-enactment of the battle as we seemed undecided in our plans. (I had wanted to go along the Whisky Trail.)

Lodged in Nairn and played bingo, where Sophie won the whole kit and caboodle, including a £10 meat voucher which the manager suggested he keep under lock for her until closing (?). Got very drunk afterwards in the B&B pub and won another £10 on the fruit machine, though lost it and another £10 very soon after—though all in all, still ahead counting Sophie's Christmas basket Bingo win. Can not understand how any society can condone these machines. At least with Bingo (admittedly just as stupid) we were interacting with other people, not just religiously firing money into a suckhole (sucker hole?).

### **Sunday December 22**

Ate Cullen Skink in Cullen! I showed Sophie the North Sea gas pipe line main Scottish terminus in Fergus. Bored her with all my new found knowledge on the great oil fields of the world. (The biggest, Hibernia, off the coast of Newfoundland will soon be up and running.) Wished we could have walked on the beach more in Peterhead. Started to get a bit weary and am looking forward to going home. Stayed in Dundee for the night (missed Aberdeen for some reason) and saw *Star Trek* on the big little screen which I can also hardly remember (though I did start thinking about future worlds and how one world emerges from another). Woke up to the delicious sounds and sights of McGonagall's beloved *silvery* Tay.

### **Monday December 23**

Walked on the beach at Saint Andrew's resisting any *Chariot's of Fire* photo ops or poses on the links. In fact, I refused to pose for any more of Sophie's photos. There ought to be a stock photo disk where one can just electronically insert one's face, saving time and money (Brilliant Idea #3). The time is more valuable.

Gave Edinburgh a miss (since we were going for Hogmanay) and headed cross-country to Glasgow and home! The Forth Bridge, which we made as a detour for me since I didn't get to see any of the Whisky Trail, was amazing.

### **Tuesday December 24**

Amongst the throngs on Sauchiehall Street, I wondered how any of us can afford it? Does a "Best of" album signify the end of a band? It's no wonder Christmas falls before New Year's—why else would anyone buy a calendar?

### **Wednesday December 25**

Christmas was a bit anti-climactic after our whirlwind trip and day in town shop, shop, shopping till we were drop, drop, dropping. We stayed in all day. Brian and Gayna visited in the evening, both looking radiant (one good reason for Christmas). Lovely to share our house with friends as we drank and talked into the morning.

Excited about Boxing Day golf with Bryan, Stevie, and Marcus, a hallowed tradition including sneaking onto the course.

*And he said unto them,  
Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men  
Matthew IV, 19*

### **Thursday December 26**

No dictionary I know has an entry for "cackhander" and yet Brian is just such a man—in fact, the first I have ever seen or heard. To watch him, one can't imagine how he does it. He seems to stand gravity and every other law of physics on its head. Left hand below the right, he takes his stance, waggles this way and that, and then hits the ball as a *right* hander, usually down the middle of the fairway about two hundred and twenty yards. His chipping suspends one's disbelief faster than an Arnie<sup>14</sup> action film. Seeing the results and listening to him oft sing the praises of his *cackhandedness*, one wonders why more don't do it, though I would have thought in these parts they burned cackhanders at the stake.

Now Stevie is your big hitter—long off the tee, short irons into the greens—though he can three-putt from ten feet on a good day. He casts fear into the hearts of men with three hundred yard blasts and a twinkle of a draw. When he's hitting wedge while I'm deciding between a six and a seven, looks can kill. To top it off, he has a deft new 60 degree lob wedge to go with the prowess. With Stevie, one is tempted into waters well over one's head.

Marcus is the magician among us, with his soft short shots and squirmy bump and runs. He's got that twinkle too, offering a friendly wager at every turn. He's as likely to bet a fiver on a round as he is on a "closest-to-the-hole" chip on the *first* hole. "Double or quits" is his standard opener, "just to let you get your money back." His concentration is impeccable, something I'd be wise to pay more attention to.

I met Brian, Stevie, and Marcus at Pablo's Monday night pub quiz and became fast friends, playing golf almost once a week. Sophie and I have been out for dinner on occasion with the wives/girlfriends/lovers (Big Blue, Creme de la Creme, Atonious), and afterwards for more rounds of beer or Trivial Pursuit (alas, the British version). Today, Day 107, I am not nearly as lonely as when Sophie and I almost drove ourselves crazy for want of company other than ourselves and a colour other than gray.

Indeed, it was golf that started us beyond the usual bar talk. Someone asked, "What do you play off?" and when I answered 15, they nodded, "Aye, there's a candidate for the pink jacket," Pablo's glittering tournament prize. When I returned the interest, they had me scored a winter regular. "Aye, there's a mad keen golfer," said Brian. We were on the course the next day, the fairway twinkling in snow, the ice-hardened gorse<sup>15</sup> not-at-all intimidating. It seemed pink balls were down to necessity and not style as I had assumed

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<sup>14</sup> Schwarznegger not Palmer.

<sup>15</sup> Or *heather* in Scotland.

back home. Thereafter, the four of us were to be found at least one day of every seven on some course in the vicinity.<sup>16</sup> They'd be green with envy back home.

The first thing they reminded me was the direction of Saint Andrews, Golf Man's Mecca—to the North and to the East. The second is that on some days, the holes just aren't big enough and nothing helps, not even the stiffest of vocal encouragement. The only other golfing tip they offered, though a terribly-expensive, massively over-sized mallet driver does help immeasurably (Stevie has one), is that one does not continue counting strokes after one has lost the hole. In Scotland, match play is the game, which does help ease the pain at day's end.

So against the cackhander, who hits quite consistently though cackhanded, the big boy, who hits it long but not always straight, and the magic man, I stayed the course, my mind never far from Moe Norman's swing or Al Balding's<sup>17</sup> mantra, "Drive for show and putt for dough." My style (the much harder to analyze because it's mine) could perhaps be described as fluid, though I persist to this day with my first grip, the uncommon baseball grip.

To win (£2 a head and bragging rights at the pub) against Brian, Stevie, and Marcus requires much patience. They are all good players, not easily counted out on any hole, though known to wander on occasion. In fairness, I've been known to orbit other planets. It certainly helps that our handicaps are similar—a happy and most fortuitous coincidence in this golfing *menage à quatre*. Alas, after a number of matches which seem to decide themselves on the final hole in any one of our favours, I have found not one answer to Golf Man's riddle, "How to influence drives and win money." Last year, I was convinced I had found Swing Heaven Shangri-La practicing my chipping in the living room. I was in like Jacklin, I thought. *Nobody* practices chipping. Two vases later, I was back putting into a cup like everyone else and wondering where it had all gone wrong.

I do know this—never abandon hope all ye who enter the woods. Who knows what evil lurks in thy opponent's yonder pond? Furthermore, use the left pocket for tees only, while keeping the right pocket empty throughout the match.<sup>18</sup>

The Jesuits say, "Give me the boy at seven and I will show you the man." I say, "Show me the golfer from tee to green and I will show you the man." Daly demonized, Couples distracted, Faldo determined, Nicklaus possessed, Norman preoccupied, and Watson saddened. In this, the four of us are all lucky, more interested in air and sunshine than score and score card, which, I imagine, explains the two-digit handicaps and the fun.

Come Pink Jacket time (May 5), however, it may get a touch more serious. By then, the gorse will have thawed, the ponds de-iced, and I will have lost every ball in my bag. Had

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<sup>16</sup> Palacerig, Knightswood, Dougalston, Belleisle, and Cardross. No Saint Andrews or Troon just yet.

<sup>17</sup> Great Canadian Golfers.™

<sup>18</sup> Left-handers reverse left and right. Cackhanders ask Brian.

golf been around in Saint Andrew's time, I think he'd have been a fisher of more than just men.

### **Friday December 27**

Learnt the difference between "up the road" and "down the road" today. Realized I must have been giving everyone the idea I was going out on the town after a night in the pub. It seems to me that "up the road" should mean going into town (in this case geographically "up" as in up hill) and when I go "up" the road I am going home, because Pablo's is further away from town than where I live and hence "down." I was mistaken. I should say I am going "down the road" even if it is, technically, *up*.

*The Independent* reported that "retailers can raise prices just before a 'sale' and then reduce them to make them look like bargains." Obviously "cost" and "price" have no relation to each other. Christmas card sales, as well, it was reported by the Charities Advisory Trust, funnel as little as 2% back to the charity. Somebody is getting awfully rich on our ignorance.

Read that David Bowie was floating himself on the stock market.

### **Saturday December 28**

Why not choose the Royal family by lottery?

### **Sunday December 29**

Saw a pigeon today with one leg and wondered why there weren't millions of dead birds everywhere. One assumes that birds die and occasionally in mid-flight over head, but where are they? Remembered that a bird society in Toronto gets up early in the morning to pick up the dead or wounded birds at the base of the bank tower skyscrapers. Some, they are able to nurse to health to fly another day.

### **Monday December 30**

Sophie started reading *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Self-help authors are obviously from Pluto.

### **Tuesday December 31**

Had a hell of a time getting this month's missive on Sanford Fleming to McIlvanney. Work is definitely getting in the way of play.

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## **Sanford Fleming**

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*born Kirckaldy, Fife, Scotland January 7, 1827*  
*died Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada July 22, 1915*  
*emigrated to Kingston, Ontario at the age of eighteen*  
*married Ann Jean (died 1855)*

Sanford Fleming was a civil engineer and scientist, who was chief engineer on the Inter-Colonial Railway through Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec (1867–76) and the

Canadian Pacific Railway from Ontario to British Columbia (1872–80). He was chief engineer for the Dominion of Canada government from 1867–1880.

*O, what a tangled web we weave,  
when first we practice to deceive!*

Scott,  
Marmoin VI

To aid railway schedules across Canada, he developed "standard time" in 1884, now used throughout the world. Standard time is based on 24 one-hour longitudinal zones (4 minutes per degree). At an international conference in Washington (1884), Greenwich, England was chosen as the "prime meridian" and established the "international dateline" between Siberia and Alaska (in the Northern Hemisphere) and New Zealand and Hawaii (in the Southern Hemisphere). To keep the same time in a region of the same country, the most western Aleutian Islands are, in fact, one day *behind* the eastern tip of Siberia, although the tip of Siberia is *east* of these islands. (No need to go very far to find worm holes in time.) In many countries, standard time is adjusted during summer to provide for "daylight saving." (In Britain, British Summer Time.)

Fleming also surveyed the Yellowhead and Kicking Horse passes in western Canada and engineered the first pacific cable between Canada and Australia in 1902.

### **Wednesday January 1, 1997**

"Would you jump off a bridge if everyone else did?" is every parent's straightest arrow in the losing battle against growing up. Of course, no one would, though who knows how many hoola hoops, pet rocks, and mood rings have been sold over the centuries in aid of that rebellious teenage spirit. Mind you, that doesn't stop me scribbling my top ten stories of the year along with every other self-effacing scribe on the planet. My apologies. We all go a little crazy at Hogmanay<sup>19</sup> (Day 111) though I promise not to look back in too much anger. And to prove that I'm not entirely in league with Satan, I've managed only seven top stories for the year. News doesn't come in round numbers. It just doesn't. (Besides, it's only month four here and it wouldn't be right to hog all ten.)

So, in no particular order of importance<sup>20</sup> (well, maybe some order, now that I notice the seven deadly sins aside each):

1. Roderick Wright (Lust)
2. Mandy Allwood (Greed)
3. Stone of Destiny (Pride)
4. E-coli (Sloth)
5. Scottish nurses (Anger)
6. Paul McCartney (Envy)
7. New Year's 2000 (Gluttony)

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<sup>19</sup> Hogmanay: *New Year's Eve* (originally a New Year's Eve gift). From the Old French *aguillanneuf*.

<sup>20</sup> Dunblane would, of course, make it to any list, but happened before we arrived.



My 1997 "super seven" came to me as I struggled to stay afloat in the sea of bodies filling Edinburgh's Prince's Street before Big Ben's big bang. Sophie and I were doing it right. Just the two of us splurging in a room at the Big Inn—the Balmoral—after five or ten pints at Au Bar with the friends of a Kiwi engineer I met on the North Sea rigs. Unfortunately, we lost him in the crowds as we waited to scream away the devils with six billion others in the home of Hogmanay.

I shall begin with my favourite story, the New Year's 2000 story—namely, the moronic attempt to capture the first sunrise of man's post-Christ, third millennium. We really haven't come a long way baby if this is the sort of shite that occupies our time. (Of course, writing about it is just as bad.)

For starters, if this year's New Year's was one grand epiphanous letdown, just think how anti-climatic that "first" ray of sun will be. Captured on film from a weather balloon, the pain of the very first broadcast heralding the age of Aquarian madness will be excruciating. With incessant reverse slo-mo instant replays live on CNN throughout the day. Will they supply the Geiger counter to capture the first instant of microscopic little Miss Sunshine so we can synchronize our stupidity? Get down from your weather balloons ye of little sense.

As well, time zones (the international dateline at 0 hours and Greenwich Mean Time at 12 hours) were created in 1884 by Sanford Fleming (who came from Scotland and spent a good deal of time in Canada) to solve the problem of scheduling trains across the multitudinous timescape of Canada. For example, had Magellan (who didn't come from Scotland and spent no time in Canada) done something similar on his trip around the world, he wouldn't have lost a day in the ship's log, a noted puzzler in 1521 until someone remembered that the world was round. Mind you had Magellan also not assumed he was God and, thus, not taken on the heathen natives on the shores of the Philippines, he might not have lost his life either. Nonetheless, it is rather unlikely that one time zone is more celestially significant than another, though the countdown begins (almost one thousand days now). To be sure, we have chosen the international dateline as the starting point for our earthly clocks, but it is a completely arbitrary line that confuses the hell out of anyone who lives near it. Be happy you don't. And don't worry—the party will be just as good in the other, lesser parts of the globe.

Sophie tucked herself behind me as I side-stepped a melange of revellers into a brief hollow. The bang was big, though I heard no *Auld Lang Syne* here in the land of Burns. (I don't think anyone actually knows the words.) Just a lot of well-wishing and winching as we passed amongst ourselves, in hopes of eventually reaching our hotel. Sophie was kissed eight times in the first minute, me thrice. The boys were undoubtedly interested in her more than me, their Dionysian spirit slowly prodded by Eros. Only one guy overstayed his welcome. I watched as other would-be lovers freely exchanged upper bodily fluids before being pulled past with nothing so much as a phone number. Anonymous amour, Edinburgh style. One reveller, a young Alanis Morissette look-alike,

perhaps from south of the border, ominously wished me "peace, love, and narcissism." There's always one in every bunch.

Continuing with my New Year's list, we have the Queen's New Year's list and *Sir* Paul McCartney. Handing out honours was one of the first things they did away with in the modern meritocracy of Canada. Suffice it to say, thirty years after the twenty years after Sergeant Pepper taught the band to play, we can safely say the revolution is over. And if Paul is in fact an Ontario Provincial Police officer, he must either give up his Canadian citizenship or his place as court minstrel in the realm. Outside Pepperland, love is not the law.

After another ten minutes, Sophie and I slithered forward another foot, trapped between a dozen or so of the *five hundred thousand* (the number quoted in the newspaper that evening already laying wait outside our hotel room). Amazing, they already know how many people are *here*, and *here*, where we *are*, had not even passed into *there* yet. I thought only presidents and prime ministers knew the news *before* the news? My quick guess if anyone was really counting is more than an Old Firm match and less than a Million Man March on Washington. Enough people anyway to make it hurt when the going gets too squishy.<sup>21</sup>

The Scottish nurses, Deborah Parry and Lucille Lauchlan, accused of murdering another nurse in Saudi Arabia, kicks in at number 5 on this year's top seven stories and is subtitled "anger." Everybody gets mad now and again. That's not news. Some people even kill when they get mad. And I dare say a few Westerners have had their hands and heads chopped off in Moslem countries for such crimes and misdemeanors. Obviously, anger is taken very seriously in the land of Jihad, though that's not news either. (Just ask Salmon Rushdie as his story drops down eighty-two places to number 236 this year.) Nor is one's guilt or innocence news as can be seen in last year's top story—O.J. Simpson. Had Mr. Simpson been found guilty, the real story would be the public bloodfest at his execution, 21st century man clamouring for seats and proudly displaying the T-shirt "I was there when The Juice was juiced." (Get your Timothy McVeigh shirts early.)

Not that the two nurses are guilty (they are likely innocent), but it is their presumed innocence that should be reported and not the Saudi's penal methods. We're not any different because we stick needles in people's veins or wrap ropes around their necks to mete out capital justice. So the Saudi's behead their murderers in the city square at one o'clock every Friday for all to see, foreigners seated in the front row for effect? Execution is government-sanctioned death, no matter what the means. The story should not be one of moral outrage at *how* Saudis kill their criminals, but how justice is served, a moral meter on any society. And thus, the real story is *our* anger at the supposed indecency of another culture exacting punishment according to its laws. Oh, ever the empire, wot?

It was snowing and the powdery flakes mixing with the spent gun powder fell softly from atop the castle. I hadn't moved in five minutes though I never feared for my safety or my wallet tucked inside my pocket. Well, except from the chip truck vendors. That's what

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<sup>21</sup> In fact, three hundred sent to hospital from the crush.

made *me* angry whilst enjoying the sea of love—the insistence of the chip trucks vendors that one could not buy chips without also buying a burger or a dog. "Peace, love, and milk the poor sods for every penny." Is that it? I rate my first unholy Hogmanay pretty high, but that was the unholiest of unholies. Even in New York, where they use beer bottles like confetti, they sell you chips à la carte.

Oh yeah, the other stories. Well, they made it to everyone else's lists so I won't repeat the details. Besides, there'll be another batch of Roderick Wrights, Mandy Allwoods, and e-colis in next year's New Year's list. Deadly sins don't go away that fast, no matter how well one washes one's hands.

Another hour into our first Hogmanay, Sophie and I made it to the Big Inn, a little wet but nonetheless warmed by the all-over mushy feeling of sheer pagan fun. A mineral water and cake were waiting on the bed along with tomorrow's newspaper. Before falling asleep to the occasional shrieks on Prince's Street, I read all about it before it happened. Live and in colour and in Black and White.

*A man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing*  
Wilde, Lady Windermere's Farm

### **Thursday January 2**

Wondered if it would be possible to turn off all the televisions on New Year's 2000 to get away from that collective electric experience. (Brilliant Idea #4. Also a stupid idea, but not that stupid. Also a little too much like Brilliant Idea #2.)

### **Friday January 3**

Somewhere around December 20th, our 100th day officially passed and so I've compiled a few minor musings that didn't make it elsewhere. Essentially, I'm throwing out the collected scraps of paper so I can move on with life unencumbered in '97. It doesn't matter that we're well past Day 100 (Day 113), because remembering what one did right in the previous year is better than dreaming about what one will never do in the next. "Memories are better than dreams," says Sophie her head stuffed in a book on Chinese pottery and ceramics.

The first was "Does everyone drive on the same side on the information highway?"—no doubt scribbled after a few drams and many more lagers with The Cackhander and Co. Another had "November 19 snow," the first of the season which didn't last.<sup>22</sup> I remembered the angel I made for Sophie on the sidewalk outside our flat, shaped more like a crop circle. It didn't matter that it was gone in the morning—angels aren't supposed to last. Happily, I didn't bet any one it would snow for Christmas. With the right manager, Mother Nature could make a lot of walkin' around *dosh* in these bet-crazy parts. The odds were 6–1 against.

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<sup>22</sup> As it happened, only three snowfalls all year (November 19, December 11, and December 31), though really more like clumpy rain.

"What is *Great Britain*?" was on the back of a beer bill, meaning not *how* is Britain great, but to what does *Great* refer? I thought it was the political conglomerate of England, Wales, and Scotland, but discovered that Great Britain is not an entity in itself, but short for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—a very strange amalgamation indeed, since Great Britain, thus, refers to the union of itself with something other than itself. Given that a man who once sang "Give Ireland Back to the Irish" has just been knighted, perhaps it's time to simplify life? The other, unasked thornier question, "*How* is Great Britain great," I would argue, is by being a function of itself.

Politics does seem to be imbedded more in daily life here than in Canada. We aren't as sophisticated either, Joe Clark<sup>23</sup> (*Joke Lark* if spoken fast under the influence) the best example, who let it slip one day before a Quebec separatism referendum, that if Canadians voted to end confederation, the streets would turn into Yugoslavia or some such nonsense. In Canada, the story goes "We don't tell political jokes, we elect them." Nonetheless, I'd be wary during the run-up to devolution when politicians start talking about the brain drain, competitive disadvantages, and clan uprisings.

I know there is a rich history of independence from the continent, but this is the dawn of the next century and since one of the sources I read from 1983 states, "Great Britain is one of the world's leading industrial nations," one might ask "What happened?" That Margaret Thatcher is *opposed* to European union would seem to me to indicate that European union is a *good* thing. Isn't anyone curious to know who is fanning the flames of discontent?

*I would gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today.*  
Whimpy

#### **Saturday January 4**

Only now, after seeing the new year's Old Firm match and having played the next day in my third, weekly five-a-side match at the Pitz, courtesy of football-mad Stevie, do I feel qualified to tackle football in the motherland. I do so under advisement, warning any and all that I have no knowledge of the subtleties of the game and even less foot-eye coordination. Reared on ice hockey, baseball, and other upper body games, *my* feet were made for walking.

Quicker than I could yell "cross," my woolly black toque was doffed to the nine guys who ran rings around me in shorts and the cold of mid-December. In that first match, I can say without modesty that I was better than a post, though only slightly. I was under no illusions. I was there to even the numbers, soured by the season—five-on-four, no matter how good the four, just doesn't cut it. I managed two shots, none of which could be described as on goal and though we lost, I was assured it was not down to me. I think Stevie's friends were just being nice. Surely, anyone could see how bad I was. They did,

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<sup>23</sup> The head string twiddler for one of those occasional non-French puppet governments we get from decade to decade (June 1979–March 1980).

however, invite me back, and sore and stiff beyond any past remembrance, I happily (or is it stupidly?) accepted.

The second game played just after Christmas was in doubt until game time. Stomachs laden with Christmas punch and pudding were taking its toll, but we managed a spirited full complement on both sides. My first goal, which I thought would forever stay in the land of fiction, came sharply in the first ten minutes. A "turn-around right foot strike, perfectly placed low to the near post" it might be called, if I knew what I was doing. But it went in and put us up two. Luckily, they never figured out how bad I was. I mean all they had to do was *take the ball*. I really am that bad. But we went on to win by two, my main contribution as goalkeeper, where I discovered that my hockey skills translated well to the five-a-side game as I stopped two close-in strikes in the dying minutes to preserve the victory. Hogmanay, but two nights away, would taste that much sweeter.

The third match, last night (Day 114), was a step back in my illustrious three-cap career. I think they're on to me. Although I opened the scoring with a strike similar to my first goal, it was obvious I didn't know what I was doing. They marked me wider and, occasionally, ignored me. You can only give the ball away so many times before someone reasons that it's not the beer or whisky (though I had had suitable amounts of both watching the Old Firm match). Even my goalkeeping was off and we lost badly, our whole side never once catching a groove.

After three games, I still hadn't acquired any useful skills or winning strategy, but I was learning in bits and drabs. Coaching is useful—I ran that much faster when a teammate yelled after me to keep my mark. No one, no matter how bad, wants to be seen as lacking heart. Conditioning I reckoned was essential, especially on defense. If I gave up my mark or refused to run after someone else's missed mark when I was last defender, a goal was likely. Legless antipathy is no good excuse. Besides, isn't that the point to a bunch of well-past-it, middle-aged men running around a football pen in the cold? (Provided we stayed out of the pub afterwards, a fixture in its own right.)

With the Old Firm, I am on better footing. That is, one spectator is no worse than another, where beer drinking and jocularities are rewarded as much as knowledge. Pot bellies do help to balance the beer in the bar. Okay, so I didn't know which team was which the first time they played and couldn't tell you offside from a hole in the ground.<sup>24</sup> But after a few months, I know now that Andy Gorm, Paul Gascoigne, Brian Laudrup, Allie McCoist, *et. al.* are never going to lose to Celtic, no matter how many PR massagers say otherwise to keep the pounds accruing.<sup>25</sup>

Sadly, an okay game (what with Rangers decimated badly by flu or that self-same Christmas spirit affecting most of ScotRail) was ruined by the cancelling of Jorge Cadete's equalizing strike in the 86th minute. Given that the next day share prices in Rangers Football Club increased 20% while Celtic's decreased 5%, one might wonder whose hands are in the cookie jar. With 50,000 people at the game and perhaps ten times

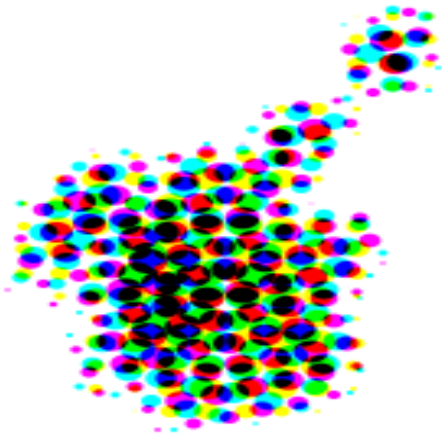
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<sup>24</sup> Neither, it seems, can referee J. McCluskey of Stewarton.

<sup>25</sup> Rangers 50, Celtic 34, with Celtic two games in hand at the mid-season mark.

more watching on television, the game was instantly destroyed by a decision that hasn't and, according to SFA policy, never will be explained. Come on, boys. What's up? As such, attempting to analyze anything about the 1997 Old Firm New Year's match is meaningless without a proper explanation of the offside/handball/referee-error. And thus, in honour of truth, justice, and my duty to preserve a proper diary, the score shall be recorded as 2-2 in *The Glasgow Diaries*. That's right, 'cause they're *my* diaries. And it matters not if I lean one way or another. I'd have said the same if Rangers were chiselled. Mind you, Celtic have no hope of catching Rangers in the last half of the season. Fix or no fix, it's over and you can start selling next season's strips today.

What I have happily taken from both my five-a-side and the Old Firm matches is a host of new adjectives to describe *ball*, from the simple "good ball mate" and "be right" to the more exciting "brilliant ball" or my favourite (especially in my case) "nightmarish ball." Although more familiar with hockey's "canonating drive" and "he shoots, he scores," hopefully I can improve my burgeoning football lexicon and my ball control in the coming months.



*Candy is dandy,  
but liquor is  
quicker*  
Nash,  
Reflections on  
ice-breaking

## **Sunday January 5**

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To Robbie

A quick note to update after Christmas and New Year's (still ringing in my head if you know what I mean). Is there an e-999 number? I'm listening to the *Trainspotting* soundtrack (Christmas present from Sophie), hoping to release the vice gently to avoid the dreadful traincrashing. (I am a big Blur fan now.)

Hoping your Hogmanay was full and that '97 brings goosebumps to you and yours. And no more snarky Rangers remarks from your side of the pond. We can't all be so certain of

our heresy as you new worlders. (The equalizer should not have been disallowed is all I'm saying at this juncture—what a fix.)

Have been doing some reflecting on reflecting. I guess Barbara was right: the mirror does have two faces.

### **Tuesday January 7**

Alcohol is good for the constitution. Just ask a politician.

### **Friday January 10**

On this rather gray day (more so than the rest anyway), I decided to walk into town. My usual route takes me down Crow Road, through Partick and Kelvingrove—with a sashay through the art gallery to see Ben Johnson's *The Keeper* (and my past) and Stanley Spencer's *The Glen, Port Glasgow* (and Scotland's past)—across the M8 at Charing Cross, and along the pedestrian mall on Sauchiehall Street. I like to walk amongst the hordes after the relative obscurity of Broomhill. Today (Day 121), however, I dipped a little further down to Argyle Street and crossed the M8 at the Mitchell Library before cutting back for a quick pilgrimage to the Glasgow School of Art (one glance cures all). After checking the time on the cool art school clock, I walked on a little further than usual—as far as the Clyde by Saint Andrew's Cathedral below St. Enoch's Centre and the middle of the Footbridge.

As with all great cities, modern living has taken away their reason for being. Glasgow is no exception as I gaze out over the empty Clyde. Why would anyone not include the river in its town plan and yet, looking at the massive glass edifice of commercialism behind St. Andrew's, Glasgow has done just that? Church attendance may be down, but, at least, the elders knew enough to build their temple on the river. City planners, forgetting the past, have not fared as well. To be sure, without people or even birds, the Footbridge is peaceful, though I admit I prefer the noise of others and not just those queued to buy.

I took a seat in the concrete shambles of a park on the town side of the bridge, the remnants of The Gorbals sparkling in the distance. Gazing out over the Clyde, I remembered the more noteworthy items of the typical "newsy" week: Bill Clinton's love child named, Michael Jackson in a Loch Lomand hotel on the weekend surfacing only for Big Macs, Glasgow discovers that buildings can make money in their spare time as a monster, 60-foot advertisement of fashion model Nicole is erected on the side of a downtown hotel, John Major now *minor* as a Tory MP missing for four days dies of natural causes, and intersection builders start ripping up the road outside our window with jack hammers.

The biggest news, however, was Liam Gallagher, the current bad boy of pop, in trouble not because of any family feud, but because of cocaine possession. The issue was one of outrage at his minor sentence of a caution, reminiscent of Adam Clayton of U2, Sir Paul

McCartney of Liverpool, and Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones, who after their narcotic battles were spared the ignominy of criminal convictions and their likely exclusion from subsequent American tours. (John Lennon was fighting extradition from the USA on a British drug conviction prior to his death.)

It seems that somewhere after Jimi, Janis, and Jim (perhaps because of LiveAid), pop stars have become role models for the young and, thus, when pop stars use drugs, our children (who must be too stupid to think for themselves in an over-weaned society) take drugs themselves. Furthermore, we must also assume they will run away with their mistresses (because of Roderick Wright), beat their lovers (because of Paul Gascoigne), and won't give money to beggars (because of Tony Blair). We really are a wishy-washy lot to believe all that, though in fairness, Mars has been rising in Libra and that magical millennium is fast approachin'.

Perhaps, it's just open season on Liam Gallagher, what with George Harrison's wry analysis that Oasis were better off without him. (Did anyone suggest the Beatles would have been better off without third-banana George and all his sitar stuff?) Maybe, the time is ripe once again to cite music for its anarchical influences—long hair, lack of ambition, preoccupation with the ephemeral. Who knows, maybe even homelessness? I did notice that Richard Branson, the real king of pop, has done pretty well for himself up, up, and away in his beautiful balloon as he launched his daily dose of free publicity.<sup>26</sup>

I'm not suggesting every one start shooting up, but the lies must stop—many more people are addicted to and die from alcohol and nicotine consumption in our drug-culture society than from any illicit drug. (Of course, cigarettes and beer don't make people want to work less and enjoy more in our over-worked and under-employed modern life.) But that's nothing new. It's been said a million times and everyone already knows it even if you won't ever read it in any newspaper. I know of no one who *ever* died from smoking marijuana. (And it's still illegal?)

But, sadly, now that he's a known drug user, we must all castigate Mr. Gallagher for a) getting caught (as with Paul McCartney: he's so damn rich why doesn't he hire someone to hold his drugs), b) being given preferential treatment before the eyes of the law (all the while forgetting he was caught by the law<sup>27</sup>), c) doing drugs (Get real! Everyone does drugs—just *look* at Keith Richards), and d) failing in his job as role model in this the strong and free U-nited Nations. Mind you, I don't recall Liam Gallagher actually wanting to do anything more than play music as with all the other 20th century minstrel pop stars. So I won't throw the first stone. And, contrary to the new global opinion of frère Gallagher, he likely pisses yellow and bleeds red. Camille Paglia had it all right about our witless Rock and Roll debates. It's just angel dust in the wind.

Now, Richard Branson, the one whose pockets should be checked if you ask me, is off sky high with all our money made from over-priced Virgin records sold in the St. Enoch's temples of our great cities. Who cares that Liam Gallagher is too coked-out to notice that

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<sup>26</sup> Alas, it crash-landed in an Algerian desert just as quickly.

<sup>27</sup> They did think he was a tramp at the time.



most of his fortune goes to Lord Balloonhead. Yes, I know, you're an artist. They said the same about all the others before you. And who cares that most people would rather shop till they drop than sit and waist a perfectly gray Glasgow day doing nothin' *down by the river*. Come to think of it, it's gotten even grayer.

### **Saturday January 11**

I wonder if they would write me up in the local *Courier* if I pogoed my way around Victoria Park for a drug-free Scotland? (Brilliant Idea #5—It's simple, doable, and no one has ever done it before.) And in my interview on the BBC, I'll say I was dying for a pint and a fag the whole way round. (Mental Note #1210—Expand the idea that *fiftysomethings* have as many lies and secrets as their parents and that what others think does matter to them.)

### **Sunday January 12**

Miss Grumpiest Waitress in the World (in Loretto's<sup>28</sup>) spilt coffee on me and all I could think was "great, she will have to say something and be nice for a change." She didn't, but she did grunt. It's a start.

Am bumping into people more and more as I pass them on the street. Still don't have this *right* and *left* thing figured out.

### **Monday January 13**

Finished second in our weekly pub quiz game again. Wish my team would show up on time though, as I failed miserably in the first round—two football questions, an Andrew Lloyd Webber question, and another on Virginia Bottomley, though I did get the one on Canada's national animal (the beaver) which everyone else guessed was the moose.

Cultural Advantage #1—I never disagree with anyone here because I don't know anything. If someone says Alan Shearer was the most expensive transfer then he was.

Cultural Advantage #2—No one knows what I'm talking about.

Cultural Disadvantage #42—It's hard as an outsider, never privy to the intricacies of mundane cultural details; such as why cars have the right of way over pedestrians, why everyone is addicted to chocolate, and why the Seventies architectural ugly box period is not known throughout the land as the mid-Elizabethan style? Sadly, I will never know, as such questions invariably end up in tautology, "Well, that's just the way it is, isn't it?"

I really should know better by now, but I can't help it.

### **Saturday January 18**

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To Robbie

The short answer to your long question is that nobody is really paying attention to the Gaza-wife thing anymore. He beat his wife, yes, and a whole lot of women's groups

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<sup>28</sup> Now Jack McPhees on Byres Road.

wanted him struck from the English World Cup qualifier (which didn't happen, though the manager carefully considered all sides—yeah, right), and Gaza apologized, and is now in counselling. In fact, more people were talking about the touch of stomach flu he had for the Celtic match. I have decided that news, here, happens at break neck speed. That is, today's wife beating is soon way down on the heap. (Did see in the *Daily Mail* that McMullroney settled out of court. Must have been oodles of analysis on that great Canajun carbuncle.)

So, it's been four months and the novelty has worn some and it is still gray most days, though thankfully the sun sets a little later now. Sophie and I have been sleeping in almost to 10:00, which we have decided is down to the lack of sunlight. At the holidays, it was certainly the alcohol. I suppose a few new thoughts have been wedged into my mind and I am that much more enriched. Do I miss home?—yes. Phase II has definitely set in. That is, I was strong and all, toughing out the tough parts which had a momentum all their own. And now, it's living, which is what I ask? Clichés abound. It was a good holiday. My knee doesn't hurt too much after getting crunched in my latest (two goal!) five-a-side fixture. The writing continues. And I can still remember playing frisbee on the island beach while the rest of the world worked. Take them while they come.

*Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.*  
Arthur C. Clarke

### **Sunday January 19**

The phone call came just before six on Sunday evening (Day 130), not long after a late egggy brunch with Sophie and in between the third and fourth of the Sunday papers. "Where was I?" and "Why wasn't I here?" were the puzzled inquiries posed by Graham, well-settled into his usual seat at Pablo's. More calls would come, each requiring my presence with the boys and the big screen. "Brian will be here soon" he added, as if shepherding a wayward flock. Ian and Davie were *here*, each having called me already to remind me of my filial responsibility. Seeing them last night (or rather early this morning at a surprise party for Brian sister's friend who was actually surprised, I think because no one knew him well enough to spill the beans) didn't matter. I was one of the boys. One hundred and thirty days into the odyssey, I now required a good excuse to miss class. From Scylla to Charybdis in under four months.

My first try was to beg off because the game was well-gone, Arsenal leading Everton 3 nil. Nice try, but "Didn't I know there was another on immediately after?" Graham countered. "I'm reading the papers," I stuttered. "Maybe, when I'm done." That was a tough one, silence momentarily replacing the stiletto chatter on the other end. It was true. I was reading Zoë Heller from *The Sunday Times* magazine. Though I had just gotten to know her previous incarnation as the guerrilla chick from LA, I was warming to her newer, nattier New York style. She was a beacon, doing the same as me only in reverse. A Brit in America, uncertain of any reason for being, other than overhearing people talk about themselves. And me, a Canuck in King Arthur's Caledonia, trying as much as her to piece together the duality between mind and body. And, like Ms. Heller, as she wrote that Sunday, I too had a hangover, though technically, I was still drunk.

"Ah hell, ye can read the papers another day. Cassidy? Are ye gettin' down here?" He was right, of course, though I didn't bother telling him that reading *today's* paper tomorrow would make it difficult to read *tomorrow's* paper tomorrow. One simply can't be misinformed in the Information Age, certainly not if I am to spend the rest of my life in a pub. The adage that an American *goes out to be private and stays home to be public*, exactly the opposite of a European, was ringing true, even if I wasn't exactly all-American. Like it or not, I was snaking my way up Maslow's sociological pyramid and would soon be self-actualizing with my peer group. In short, I belonged.

I wondered that about Ms. Heller. She *seemed* to have a life inside her stories, though always at an awkwardly manageable distance. Mind you, she had just up and moved before she had got to know Lalaland. Had the heat got to hot in California? Had she been caught in her own journalistic devices, breaking *Hemmingway's Uncertainty Principle* "If you have too much fun, you can't write" or in the more popular verbiage of Star Trek's prime directive "Look, but don't touch." All I could go by was her picture, hauntingly reinvented with the move from LA to New York and from coupled to uncoupled woman. All that remained of her past was a touch of tough denim sticking out from under that made up insouciance. Had *I* changed, I wondered? Was Glasgow reinventing me? Up to my eyeballs.

Sophie and I had talked about *après* Glasgow *before* Glasgow. If Glasgow had been some improbable event in our future, a year ago, *after* Glasgow was even more improbable, one we could have easily ignored. Nonetheless, we did discuss it, deciding only that we did not *necessarily* have to return to the noisy, concrete madness of downtown Toronto immediately after her year. Pretty wishy-washy, but I had my say. In a perfect future fantasy world, I was suggesting that anything was possible. For me, I was never much into details—yes, we will go home (come home?) some day, but let's not set a date or buy a return ticket. Not yet.

I tried excuse number three—"I'm drying out. I have a hangover." After the brief spate of laughter, resonating sympathy along with an obvious disdain, Graham's immediate rejoinder "And don't we all?" followed by the less well-known "You have to bring the alcohol level down slowly or you'll get the bends" assured me that there was little hope of having the boys affirm my hooky. Graham was *peshed* out of his tree. I know. I was there. He had tried on *all* the lampshades and was going for a second helping when Sophie and I left the party. (Rumour had it he never left.) So, but 12 hours later, I would not be allowed to let the side down. My mates needed me. And when The Federation of Planets got wind of it, I'd be hauled up before a stellar inquiry, Captain McIlvanney at the helm reeling out the errors of getting involved with the natives. I had broken all the rules.

"Ensign Cassidy, how do you plead to breaking the prime directive?" His eyes tore into the calm of my mind. (Was there *another* directive, I wondered?)

"Guilty, Sir." I gazed out at the swirling cosmos below.

"It is easier when one admits his guilt." His manner softened. "What were you thinking?" He was playing both sides of the good cop, bad cop routine.

"I'm sorry," I began hesitantly before trotting out my confession. "It's true. I am becoming involved." I pushed back a tear. "I am losing my objectivity. Even that ghastly virginous Benazir Bhutto Mother Mary Scottish Widow picture doesn't bother me anymore. In fact, I feel attracted to her radiance as if I should invest with her what with the pound doing so well against the dollar. She probably lost her husband. She *needs* my money."

"And what else my son? ... "

"I've accepted that the BT computer lady is just doing her job when she says, 'Sorry I didn't understand that' in that irritatingly cheery English accent. Of course you don't understand me lady! No one understands me. All I said for the hundredth time was *NO*. — 'Sorry I didn't understand that. Answering YES or NO after the tone, would you like to hear that message.' "

"Yes, I see. It's worse than I thought." McIlvanney motioned to Warf. "Phasors on stun."

"Is it not like a man to get involved?" asked the kindly Data.

I looked at McIlvanney, hinting at my desire to stay (very Shatner-esque I thought). The demon within me even managed a "Why do we always observe the locals and then warp on to the next port?" Alas, they drilled me full on with their phasors.

When Brian called a half hour later, I plucked up the courage to tell him, "Sorry, I can't go to the pub tonight because I can now tell Blur from Oasis, know that Virginia Bottomley was once the National Health Services minister and is now the Secretary of State for National Heritage (at least until March 20, April 10, or May 1 depending upon when John Major calls his last election ever) and am starting to get too many quiz answers, recognizing even faces of the lesser Royals (I got first cousin Viscount Linley the other day). You understand."

For the first time since we arrived, I was worried I might not survive Glasgow.

Anyway, I had big plans for the evening. I was going to write Fergus McCann to plead for tickets to the final Old Firm match, working the Canadian angle because, as everyone told me, tickets were impossible to come by. I still hadn't cut out my *Daily Mail* tokens for a free £20 phone card or read the last of the stack of papers. Or done any work, what with spending 12 straight days with the boys. Life in the pub, football, and golf were taking their toll.

I could have used Sophie as an excuse, that oft-used pedestal for one's mate which seemed to work here, but I couldn't do it, simply because it wasn't true. She would have said "Go, if you want. And if you don't, tell them." Thanks.

Of course, I did no such things. I put the phone down, grabbed a quick roll, and got to the pub in time to see Dagliesh in yet another press conference. Good luck in Newcastle Kenny. And Zoë, good luck in New York. Oh, what sweet madness. If you're any good at living, you're going to need it. After settling into my seat at the bar and a lager, the next match started. You know, the one with the new left winger. What's his name?

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**BT Call Minder service**

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Her: BT Call Minder. One message.

*Pause*

Her: Hear it?

Me: Yes.

Her: Message received at 1:30 p.m. today.

*Pause*

Her: Play?

Me: Yes.

*Pause*

Me: *(loudly)* Yes.

Her: Sorry I didn't understand that. Play message?

Me: *(louder)* For crying out loud, yes!

Her: Sorry I didn't understand that. Answering YES or NO after the tone, would you like to hear that message?

Me: *(strained)* YES!

*Pause*

Her: Sorry I didn't understand that. There seems to be a problem. I will play your messages. ----- "*Hal, where the hell are you? We're all down at Pablo's*" ----- End of messages. Thank you for using BT Call Minder. Good bye.

*To be ignorant of the past is to remain a child.*  
Cicero

**Sunday January 19**

Donald MacLeod, Free Church of Scotland theologian, supports Charles and Camille's marriage rather than see them "condemned to lifelong celibacy." One has to laugh. After 103 takes, the Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, or simply "Fergie" to save on the ton of ink the Press use to hound her (but not so for "Spencie"), gets £500,000 for a thirty second Ocean Spray Cranberry Juice commercial. One has to cry.

### **Monday January 20**

Bill Forsyth, writer/director of such endearing films as *Local Hero* and *Gregory's Girl*, and a 4-month old member of the Scottish Film Production Fund, lashes out at cronyism, nepotism, and ignorance on the panel, citing among other things, panel members awarding each other money. Before *Carla's Song*, before *Trainspotting*, before *Braveheart*, there was Gregory, simply the most lovable, charming, and mystical Scot ever to grace the big screen. (Subsequently, ITV? decided not to fund Forsyth's sequel to *Gregory's Girl*.<sup>29</sup>)

Jyoti Misha hits #1 with *Your Woman*, (a song he recorded in his bedroom sounding uncannily like every pop song ever made by Sir Paul), illustrating the Law of Conservation of Creative Talent, which states "For every artist thrown on the scrap heap of public taste another will be immediately created to silence the outrage or keep the boogie going." After Forsyth is dead and buried he will be proclaimed a saint. In two weeks, no one will remember let alone know how to pronounce Jyoti Misha's name.

Last *last* straw for Celtic's star striker, Peter van Hooijdonk, who played a NAC Breda testimonial without Celtic's permission. Also, the 25th anniversary of unemployment topping one million, an outrage which, in its day, prompted the suspension of Question Period in Parliament. Twenty-five years later, at more than FOUR MILLION unemployed (excluding the soon to be traded van Hooijdonk), no one is the least bit bothered.

### **Tuesday January 21**

At the Dior fashion collection, the Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, gets £300,000 to interview British designer John Galiano for *Paris Match*. One still has to cry.

### **Wednesday January 22**

House of Lords shoots down new gun laws (brought about in response to Dunblane), prompting only ONE person in all of Britain (as far as I could tell—Labour campaign spokesman Brian Wilson) a week later to cry bloody murder. "Many of these people would find it impossible to be elected to their local parish council, yet they are allowed to vote on matters of life and death in the Upper House of Parliament," he stated in a local newspaper. Referring to the most recent member of the House of Lords, the third Lord Bicester, who had spent 32 years in psychiatric hospitals, he added, "This particular legislator, who may well have more to contribute than many of his new colleagues, is entitled to his place because his grandfather was a City figure, given a peerage by Chamberlain in 1938." He further added, "Similarly, when Lord Brocket ends his five-year jail term for fraud, he will be free to walk back into the Lords and start voting Tory

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<sup>29</sup> Sean Connery please call home!

again. He is there because his grandfather bought a title from Lloyd George while the fact that his father was one of Britain's leading pro-Nazis never proved an obstacle to maintaining the seat." Strong words indeed, though we shall see if parliamentary reform is, in fact, a General Election issue as he is also attributed as stating.

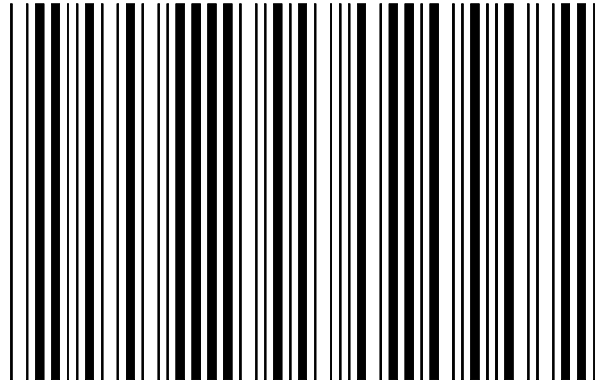
### **Thursday January 23**

The cost to repair the Erskine Bridge tops £3 million after an independent report commissioned by the Scottish Office concludes that "the rig was taller than the bridge." I'm not making this up. One really ought to find out more about how tax dollars are taken from the poor and given to the rich.

### **Friday January 24**

E-coli claims an 18th death. No one to my knowledge has yet accepted responsibility for any of the deaths.

Charles Dickens where are you?



*Security and insanity are not the same thing.*  
Alex (Ewan McGregor)  
in Trainspotting

### **Saturday January 25**

I was a long while getting out of bed before dragging myself off to Broughton's, the cafe practically tucked under our flat. It was a Saturday (Day 136), Robbie Burn's Day, and I still felt sick from the night before. At breakfast, I hardly touched my food—bacon, eggs, sausage and tomato with a big mug of coffee which thankfully the waitress kept filling without my prompting. On Saturdays, Sophie and I usually took forever, dividing up the morning papers between us, time creeping in its glorious petty pace. Not today, though. I couldn't read a thing.

It wasn't the excess from the night before. We had stayed in, a big weekend ahead of us planned, starting with a double bill at the Glasgow Film Theatre. No, someone else's excess had put me off my news—namely Sean Connery's reclusive tax exile friend Joe Lewis who bought 11 million shares at £3.60 a share in the Rangers Football Club (25% stake or £40m) valued, *one day later*, at £5.55 a share and, thus, earning the already

richest man in the UK a cool £21.6 million in twenty-four hours. All this I had read in yesterday's *Herald* along with the story "Poverty unveiled at school" which reported that "nearly 58% of the city's 81,000 school pupils receive clothing grants while around 43% receive free school meals." One under the other on the front page. I felt like puking.

Of course, Scotland has no monopoly on making it easy for the rich to get richer or for the unclothed to go naked or for the hungry to get hungrier, but this seemed especially obscene—a more than fifty percent payoff, even *before* the Man gets paid. Ladbrokes doesn't give odds that good. If money were chocolate, this guy would be singing a psychedelic version of "Rule Britannia" somewhere up on Mars, though given the day, he's more than likely drinking Highland whisky from the Holy Grail and lighting cigars with one thousand pound notes while eating vegetarian haggis in the Bahamas as his pal "Never say never again" special agent Connery gives the immortal memory:

Is there, for honest Poverty  
That hings his head, and a' that;  
The coward-slave, we pass him by,  
We dare be poor for a' that!  
For a' that, and a' that,  
Our toils obscure, and a' that,  
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The Man's the gowd for a' that. -

What though on hamely fare we dine,  
Wear hoddin grey, and a' that.  
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,  
A Man's a Man for a' that.  
For a' that, and a' that;  
Their tinsel show, and a' that;  
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,  
Is king o' men for a' that.

Alas, we must move on. And thus, the best double bill in town (or the only double bill, anywhere these days)—Danny Boyle's debut *Shallow Grave* and the hugely-hyped, follow-up *Trainspotting* from the Irvine Welsh novel; both stories on life in limbo in Edinburgh. A little artistic expression was in order to make the big, bad Joe Lewis's go away. So what if both films were about ill-gotten gains?—in *Shallow Grave*, three flat mates score a briefcase full of cash belonging to their new though very dead flat mate and in *Trainspotting*, four friends score a twelve thousand dollar hit on a once-in-a-lifetime just off the boat drug sale. Four hours of film, a big screen, the *gft* (Glasgow Film Theatre) packed with over three hundred to see the Scottish story of '96 and its predecessor. Even Hollywood's new heart throb, Scotland's own Ewan McGregor, starring in two, *count 'em* two, back-to-back films (and pipped to face-off against George "Batman" Clooney as an emergency patient on ER this week and a cast of pre-historic droids as the next Obi Wan Kenobi). *Life and all that* can easily be forgotten in the darkness of a theatre.



Having already heard the hype, I knew that *Trainspotting* glamorized drugs, was nothing more than a melange of rock videos spliced end to end, and had gallons of Jackson Pollocks dripping in the backdrops. (The shit-stained bog was by design, don't you know, darling.) In fact, as ascribed to yet another overheard American in Zoë Heller's latest (I managed *her* at least), "trainspotting" was an English schoolboy craze of lying down on the tracks and having the trains run over. (Not to be forgotten, *Shallow Grave* was just the movie before the movie.) Well, don't believe a word of it. For Danny Boyle, *the love of money* is the root of all movie motivation. Better yet, if one is depraved enough, one gets to keep the money after stealing it from one's life long friends, who although equally depraved aren't quite as wretched (or smart enough to steal it first, though they tried and/or thought of it.) And thus, in some future world gone insane, the most wretched of all comes out on top, the others left penniless, dead, or in *gaol* (save for Spud 'cause he's *really* dumb). The rally cry is "Every Man for himself" and only a whacked-out Bible thumper could stretch Boyle's meaning as hope for all.

I had expected Danny Boyle to go head to head with Quentin Tarantino in a two-round, knock down, no holds barred battle of the slippery and the hip. The hype was there. And though they do share that hippie goes to Wall Street, new-age fascination with fantasy (their films are steeped in *high-fiction*), Boyle's films actually do have a point, even if it is obscured by his never-say-die humour. Besides, his violence isn't quite Tarantino enough. We don't actually see the gore as gore. Certainly, Boyle can make one squirm, but it is laughter that oozes from the gruesome bits, not blood as per the usual quota of *funny* violence in film today. Alienation from reality, spawned from a view that society is not *breaking* down, but has always *been* broken down, is at the core of both their works, but that's as far as I wanted to take it. Score it: Tarantino more hip, Boyle less slippery, though both something akin to Chaplin meets Hitchcock. Ultra-cool to be sure.

It didn't take long to spot Ewan McGregor, the pin-up boy playing the devil himself, in both *Shallow Grave* (as Alex the reporter) and *Trainspotting* (as Renton the estate's agent-in-waiting). With the ongoing shend-up of Shean Connery built right into the Trainshpotting shtick, it preshented no shignificant problem in identifying McGregor as the new Shean Connery, albeit as agent 666 "licensed to sin." Like Bond at his best, he outwits the enemy—in this case his so-called mates (David and Juliette or Sick Boy and Begby) and escapes the depths of their depravity (the ghastly disposal of a dead body or nowheresville) with the loot. Not for Queen or Country, and saving no one but himself, today's hero is Bizarro Bond, a superMan turned bad. And like Bond, no lasting entanglements stick, boy or girl. Friendship is for fools as the miscalculating David discovers too late, "I believe in friends. Oh yes. But if you find you can not trust them. What then?" Join the other side, stupid. If only he had learned to break the rules a little sooner than the resht.

What surprised me, after seeing both films back to back, was how similar they were and, thus, looking thematically at *Trainspotting*, one immediately sees that it is not a film about drugs at all or the glamour of being addicted to such a wretched poison. Seeing the devastating effects of heroin exquisitely depicted in *Trainspotting* would lower the heroin

lines if anything. It is indeed telling that the non-heroin users are the ones to die (Tommy and the baby). As Tommy laments his lot to a non-plussed, uncaring Renton, "I'm a fuckin adult ... I can find out for myself ... Well I'm finding out," his demise is message enough to scare the kids away, no matter how much curiosity is digging in the veins. I can only imagine that a stale drug debate holds more shine for modern Man than counting up the cookies. Yes, the final hit is a high, but it's better when it "smells like the real thing," says Alex sniffing the left-luggage money. "I did what had to be done" he adds calmly as Renton testing the heroin's purity for resell value. Wake up and smell the moola. The score is green, baby. "So choose life and the big fucking television," he dares us all. "I'm going to be just like you."

Since the characters are a little older and more established in *Shallow Grave*, one could imagine Renton growing into the smart Alec reporter of Alex, sharing the flat with David the accountant and Juliette the doctor. (One might even think that he had a little stint in between as a trumpeting miner in "Brassed Off." Day 100 at the Odeon.) One does wonder, though, why three professionals need a flat mate, but once the ball starts rolling there's no stopping the sawing of limbs. "Usually I don't meet people unless I already know them," was a tell-tale line for the usually reclusive threesome, stuck in their fairytale world. Ah, but then you don't *meet* the devil; the devil meets you.

"Surrounded by the living dead" everyone is trying to score whether at the safe distance of bingo and television game shows or the more illicit found money and drugs of a Danny Boyle film. Why wouldn't the temptation for a little green creep into the soul? "Oh you've got green eyes, oh you've got blue eyes, I've never seen anything quite like you before. It's such a perfect day, I'm glad I spent it with you. You're going to reap just what you sow." So what if the baby falls down the stairs?

If responsibility is on the wane and we are at a point where millions of pounds can be made in mere hours (with governmental license) while school children can't afford lunches, why should it matter how money is made? To some, £21 million in under 24 hours is like taking candy from a baby. In Joe Lewis's world, the money was properly accounted for. In Alex's, just the same: "He was already dead." Aye, but there's the rub. *Everything* is legal in a world made of thieves.

The final credits rolled to the signature sultriness of the Bond song "Never say Never Again" from Sean Connery's *Thunderball*. (Yes, for enough money, anyone will do anything.) If I get the meaning, it's only a matter of time before Ewan McGregor's name is added to the list of those who "had it, lost it" in the fashion of Sick Boy's theory after *his* muscular period is over and after he's taken *his* money elsewhere. Maybe by then, William McGonagall, the Dundee zinger, will be immortalized with winks and nudges instead of Robbie Burns *and all that*. Pardon me for being so sentimental.

### **Friday January 31**

Overheard three people in conversation in three different parts of town say "That's dreadful." Have no idea what they were talking about.

Liam Gallagher suggested that taking drugs is "like drinking a cup of tea," prompting a short-lived open public debate about the billion dollar black market drug business.

Had fun with the Alexander Graham Bell piece for McIlvanney, in part because I've been to the Bell Homestead in Brantford, Ontario about sixty miles from Toronto. Always believed he had invented the telephone in Brantford because that's what they told me growing up. Made a mental note to consciously tell little kids lies.

Am convinced it was Glen Gould who once watched me playing street hockey in Toronto and said to me "use the other hand" which always intrigued me because I have no idea to this day what he meant. It was the middle of summer and the guy (who at the time I thought was just your common everyday weirdo) had on a full length winter duffel coat. Don't know why I am convinced it was Glen Gould, but prefer it to be him than some common everyday weirdo.

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### **Alexander Graham Bell**

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*born Edinburgh, Lothian, Scotland March 3, 1847*  
*died Beinn Bhreagh, Cape Breton Island, Canada August 2, 1922*  
*emigrated to Brantford, Ontario with parents at the age of 23*  
*emigrated to Boston, Massachusetts a year later*

Alexander Graham Bell was a prolific inventor and teacher. After emigrating to Canada because of ill-health, he opened a school for teachers of the deaf in Boston (1872) where he taught and popularized his father's "visible speech" system, a code of symbols indicating the position of the lips, tongue, and throat during speech. The school became part of Boston University, where Bell was appointed professor of vocal physiology. In his spare time, he experimented with an apparatus for transmitting sound by electricity.

On an historic March 10, 1876, in the year of the American centenary, he transmitted the first telephone message—"Watson, come here; I want you.—to his startled assistant, repair mechanic Thomas Watson. Bell had spilled battery acid on his clothes and was not aware that Watson could hear him through the experimental first phone, a transmitter and receiver (both made of a flexible metallic diaphragm and horseshoe magnet with wire coil) and single connecting wire. His words vibrated the transmitting diaphragm, which created a magnetic field which produced an electric current which travelled through the connecting wire to the receiver which reproduced the original sound. (If properly hooked to a line, Bell's first telephone would still work.)

The patent had already been registered three days previous (U.S. Patent 174,465):

Alexander Graham Bell, of Salem, Massachusetts  
Improvement in Telegraphy

The method of, and apparatus for, transmitting vocal or other  
sounds telegraphically ... by causing electrical undulations,

similar in form to the vibrations of the air accompanying the said vocal or other sounds.

Much litigation followed.<sup>30</sup>

Demonstrations around the world introduced the telephone to us all. In 1877, the Bell Telephone Company was created.

With money given to him by France for the Volta Prize, he established the Volta Laboratory in 1880 in Washington, D.C. (where Helen Keller, his student, participated in the ground breaking ceremonies). Here, his experiments led to numerous inventions, including the photophone, audiometer, and an improved phonograph (1886).

He founded the journal *Science* (1883) and co-founded (with his future son-in-law Gilbert Grosvenor) the National Geographic Society, of which he was also president (1896–1904).

After 1895, much of his inventing was done near his summer home on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. He built kites (which could carry people), developed the aileron (to control roll on an airplane wing), and invented landing gear for planes. In 1917, Bell built a large hydrofoil boat, attaining a speed record of 70 mph. Still interested in the causes and heredity of deafness, he studied sheep breeding and wrote *Duration of Life and Conditions Associated with Longevity* (1918).

*" 'We'll never get human behaviour in line with Christian ethics,' these gentlemen must have argued, 'so let's adopt Christian ethics to human behaviour. Then at least there'll be some connexion between them.' "*  
More, Utopia

*Do you want to make more money? Of course.  
We all do.*

William Shanter for the International Correspondance Schools

### **Saturday February 1**

In Albania this week, a government-organized pyramid scam crumbled. Life savings were destroyed in the hurry to beat everyone else to the money trough. The zero-sum game that is modern economics has not yet been explained to all. But if you think it's bad in Albania, try Zimbabwe. Anyway, since we never made it to a Burns dinner, I offer the following numerical poem, entitled Ode to Albania 2<sup>n</sup>. And she told two friends and she told two friends and so on and so on ... The math is dead easy:

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<sup>30</sup> Though much debate has ensued about the invention of the phone, it seems that Bell wrote down his ideas while at his parent's home in Brantford, but built his phone in Boston. Since he had homes in Brantford, Boston, Salem, Washington, and Cape Breton Island during his life in North America, it is difficult to know where he did what. As for others, before or after Bell, it seems unlikely they did what where in Canada.

$$\begin{aligned}
2^2 &= & 2 \times 2 &= 4 \\
2^3 &= & 2 \times 2 \times 2 &= 8 \\
2^4 &= & 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 &= 16 \\
2^5 &= & 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 &= 32 \\
2^6 &= & 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 &= 64 \\
&& \text{and so on and so on ...} &
\end{aligned}$$

1	2	51	2251799813685248
2	4	52	4503599627370496
3	8	53	9007199254740992
4	16	54	18014398509481984
5	32	55	36028797018963968
6	64	56	72057594037927936
7	128	57	144115188075855872
8	256	58	288230376151711744
9	512	59	576460752303423488
10	1024	60	1152921504606846976
11	2048	61	2305843009213693952
12	4096	62	4611686018427387904
13	8192	63	9223372036854775808
14	16384	64	18446744073709551616
15	32768	65	36893488147419103232
16	65536	66	73786976294838206464
17	131072	67	147573952589676412928
18	262144	68	295147905179352825856
19	524288	69	590295810358705651712
20	1048576	70	1180591620717411303424
21	2097152	71	2361183241434822606848
22	4194304	72	4722366482869645213696
23	8388608	73	9444732965739290427392
24	16777216	74	18889465931478580854784
25	33554432	75	37778931862957161709568
26	67108864	76	75557863725914323419136
27	134217728	77	151115727451828646838272
28	268435456	78	302231454903657293676544
29	536870912	79	604462909807314587353088
30	1073741824	80	1208925819614629174706176
31	2147483648	81	2417851639229258349412352
32	4294967296	82	4835703278458516698824704
33	8589934592	83	9671406556917033397649408
34	17179869184	84	19342813113834066795298816
35	34359738368	85	38685626227668133590597632
36	68719476736	86	77371252455336267181195264
37	137438953472	87	154742504910672534362390528
38	274877906944	88	309485009821345068724781056
39	549755813888	89	618970019642690137449562112
40	1099511627776	90	1237940039285380274899124224
41	2199023255552	91	2475880078570760549798248448
42	4398046511104	92	4951760157141521099596496896
43	8796093022208	93	9903520314283042199192993792
44	17592186044416	94	19807040628566084398385987584
45	35184372088832	95	39614081257132168796771975168
46	70368744177664	96	79228162514264337593543950336
47	140737488355328	97	158456325028528675187087900672
48	281474976710656	98	316912650057057350374175801344
49	562949953421312	99	633825300114114700748351602688
50	1125899906842624	100	1267650600228229401496703205376

### Wednesday February 5

Wednesday renamed as "Winsday" as the lottery goes twice a week, proving that *two* suckers are born every minute. No one yet calling Tuesday "Loseday." Can't believe the company that runs the lottery is called "Camelot" and the balls spewing machines

"Arthur" and "Guinevere." Nothing much sacred anymore in this once majestic kingdom. (Hugh Grant released the balls.) Great Britain to change from an aristocracy to a lottocracy within ten years.

Winning, however, is still not very likely—no different than *La Lotto de Firenze*, in 1530 the first lottery to use money for prizes. For example, the chance of winning the National Lottery is about 14 million to 1 or about six times less likely than being hit by lightning. A host of lesser prizes try to offset the program of bad luck, such as "instants" promising odds of 4 to 1, though "winning" includes the most common payout—money back for another ticket—that is a 4 to 1 chance to win ... and so on.

In Britain last year, lottery revenues were just shy of two billion pounds. Worldwide, it is estimated that over two hundred million people wager up to 50 billion pounds a year on the lottery. "Imagining the freedom" has never been so popular.

Made up a possible conversation between King Louis XIV and his minister Mazarin after Louis was accused of fixing his own lottery way back when.

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### **Louis and Mazarin**

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Mazarin: Louis. Mon dieu. The people. They don't believe your luck. You always win.

Louis: Hey. Mon dieu to you to. I bought a ticket like everyone else.

Mazarin: Yes, but Louis, you bought your ticket *after* the draw.

Louis: Yeah? So? What's your point?

Mazarin: My king. If you will forgive me, it is against the law to buy a ticket *after* the winning number has been drawn.

Louis: Whose law? Je ne comprends pas. Have you forgotten? I am the state. I am the law.

Mazarin: Yes oh bright Sun King. You are the state. But the people have so little and you have so much. Besides they won't play your lottery anymore if you always win.

Louis: Ne jouez pas? Sacre Vache.

Mazarin: Yes, oh incredibly luminous monarchical guy who reigns over France.

Louis: Oh so be it. Cretins. Poor losers. I am already a *weiner* anyway.

### **Thursday February 6**

A German tourist, after stopping me for directions, asked "And which part of Glasgow are you from?" I managed to keep from hugging him.

### **Friday February 7**

Thought about the "being an artist" question and how best to support, encourage, and maintain the arts, etc. Free lodging was my best idea (Brilliant Idea #6?), say for a year including electricity and gas. Artists really don't have any notion about money and it seems a shame that one should spend a lifetime trying to fight the demons from the door and make art. Of course, being involved in real day to day living is necessary for an artist to express real ideas, but if basic living is constantly on the mind it becomes counter-productive and even demeaning. If art and having artistic culture is of value (outside a purely commercial value as, for example, defence spending) then it must be funded. Paying for a year's living in ordinary places in the world (not immersed solely in artist's habitats) seems a worthwhile endeavour. Academia has institutionalized the thinker as person of value why not the artist as person of value? (Not enough writers in residence I might add.)

Paul Erdős, the Hungarian mathematician, whose brilliance was measured by a number representing his proximity to which other mathematicians worked with him (Erdős #1 meant you had co-written a paper with him, Erdős #2 co-written a paper with someone who had co-written a paper with him, etc., etc.—Erdős numbers as high as 9 were considered respectable) couldn't butter his bread (or so the story goes) and had never been to a bank. If he had to worry about cultivating such "skills" he might not have pushed the envelope in his field. The exception to the rule? I think the exception to the rule is the artist (or thinker) who has it all together and seems to fit in easily in this world (and thus usually makes money and thus does not express real ideas and becomes typically involved in the high rent scene). And as an incentive to government and people who resent having to pay for flag-burning freedom-of-expression shock artists (who are only doing it to get respectability quickly—weird huh?), it would seem to me that by funding the arts and recognizing the artist as a person of value that artists would not need to shock or express counter-culture themes to be seen and heard. I've never heard of an army colonel chaining himself to a fence because they built a highway in his back yard—probably because he has so many options that come with wealth and could easily move. It may cost more to drive to his favourite pub—but it is a choice he can make. If you live in a vacuum, it's no wonder "thoughts about vacuums" (Brian Eno Album Title #1) come up.

On a minor aside, I once called a friend at Microsoft and left a message with the name Paul Erdős, expecting he would guess it was me from my message. As the secretary typed the message into the computer messaging machine and I spelled Erdős, she replied "We don't do umlauts here." Encouraging her to use the ASCII equivalent (148) and telling her how to enter it, she persisted and the message was signed Paul Erdos. Some computer revolution. My friend, a week later, figured out it was me.

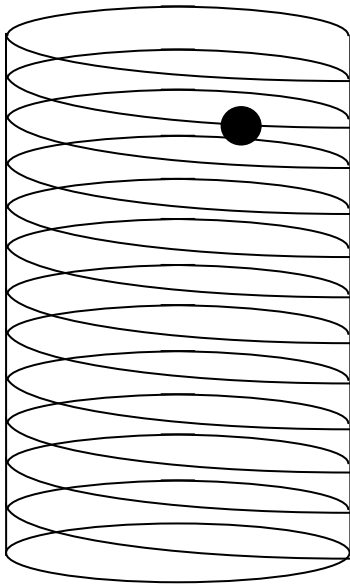
Stupid Idea #3—Lodging artists for one year with lottery funds.

Went into the Centre for Contemporary Arts and looked at the art and read the tons of corporate brochures. The art wasn't very good (large photographs which were cool because of their size, but not their content). The brochures were amazing. I still enjoy sitting on the comfy chairs and hanging out away from the sidewalk commerce. I try

imagining if the person across from me is a photographer, visual artist, painter, shock artist, ....

### **Sunday Febuary 9**

Woken up by the intersection builders again—no Sunday laws! (My dream, which one automatically remembers when one is rudely awoken on a Sunday morning by intersection builders, had me playing football with Bill Clinton, who, though less skillful than me, was pushing me off the ball. He wasn't fouling me or anything, but he was so big I couldn't push him off the ball.) After having woken me up every day this week at some unmentionable hour, you'd think the intersection builders would be tired or something. Noticed that the hole was bigger than yesterday. Noticed that the guy with the tie was telling the guys without the ties what to do. Must be the manager of holes.



1:51

Was in a Mackintosh mood

in the morning (working on clock designs again—living breathing circles and squares meshing into an organic lattice), but ended up wondering more about Alexander Greek Thomson after a walk down Great Tobacco Road. The waitress at Loretta's was still wearing her Miss Grumpiest Waitress in the World crown.

I must stop walking miles into town for no reason, but noticed a new red bus with the bus number on the back. Somebody in the Glasgow bus design room must take the bus! Now I can see which bus I missed, saving me streets of time. Noticed that not all new red buses have numbers on their backs. Perhaps they ran out of numbers?



## **Sunday Febuary 9**

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To Robbie

Received an e-mail from McIlvanney informing me of yet another upcoming Donut Day. I think that e-mail has reinvigorated the nonsense gene that lies dormant in us all—it was the sensible Scot, Mr. Hume, who warned us about it (I'm listening now David). Where does one begin to make sense of it all? How about one easy-to-remember universal icon for the internet: Dolly Parton. Why?

1. She's a manufactured creation.
2. Her fame rests on notoriety: she's famous for being famous.
3. You can't take your eyes off her, but sooner or later you realize it's all just silicone.

Paadda Boom.

Thanks for your fragment from Tom O'Bedlam.

By a knight of ghosts and shadows  
I summoned am to tourney  
Ten leagues beyond  
The wide world's end -  
Methinks it is no journey.

## **Monday February 10**

We finished second in the quiz (again!), though we would have won if not for our pathetic score on the music round (modern pop not high on our hearing lists). What brings people together on a quiz team (friendship, common interests, past experiences) is anathema to a wide, varied, Schwarznegger-like scoring team. I think we're destined to finish second forever.

Sophie was still working when I got home.

## **Wednesday February 12**

Factory workers make 2.4% (£1.20) of the sale of a £50 running shoe. Nike is only the goddess of victory if you own her.

Pitz grit everywhere in the house, Sophie telling me it was my responsibility, which of course is true, though it doesn't bother me as much as her. Human Relations Conflict #52—We may agree on the problem, we just don't agree on the solution. I cleaned it up soon after our discussion (sooner than I would have on my own, though not by much—see Sophie?). Anyway, the estate agent was due for his monthly inspection so it had to be done. Am not sure if I like being inspected. Doesn't the fact that I pay on time in full each month indicate an ordered lifestyle? Do you think I will sell the furniture to pay the rent? Was put at ease though when he told me "It's for you to tell us if you have any problems as well." Am now looking forward to his visits, though he wouldn't stay for tea—

someone else's problems to listen to. He called me Mister Cassidy which was really eerie. Am I getting *that* old?

### **Thursday February 13**

Lloyd-Webber to part with the bulk of his 18,000 bottle wine collection (estimated at £2 million) after he realized that "he has collected enough wine for at least five lifetimes."

### **Friday February 14**

I made Sophie breakfast in bed since she was taking me this evening on a secret *rendez-vous*, which was disguised well enough that I knew nothing. (My guess was Dublin which it wasn't.) All she told me was to be at Queen Street Station sharply at seven. (Anybody with half a clue would have guessed Edinburgh which it was.)

Leave it to Sophie to find the only sushi restaurant in Scotland. What a Valentine. The sushi was heavenly and we talked the whole meal about sushi (as one does when one eats sushi), especially with our neighbours on either side, none of whom had eaten sushi before. One of the couples was in the throws of a fight which was comical enough on Valentine's Day without having to explain the ins and outs of raw fish. I wouldn't be surprised if they were divorced within the month (she was on husband #3 and he wife #4).

Sophie had also put a message in *The Herald* signed BUNNY.

*I can't live without the blanket.*

*I can't face life unarmed.*

Linus

### **Saturday February 15**

When a line of traffic is stopped at a red light, while not one car passes in any other direction, one starts wondering about design. Especially with a hundred or so pedestrians watching, and waiting, not one disobeying. One minute on, one minute off each way, never accounting for the relative amounts of traffic or the sultry though slavish league of pedestrians idling by. It's like a silly little folk dance with first left than right couples leading round the square. And then, the promenade of pedestrians, scurrying for dear life. (Day 157, waiting for that little green man at Charing Cross.)

Oh sure, the flat on/off traffic light has been an effective way of getting cross-purposed traffic from A to B and C to D since the days of Ford, but one would think we're smarter than all that now. We have smart bombs, smart food, why not a smart traffic system befitting our age? (NOT, however, a broken down LED flashing "#44 in five minutes" at downtown bus stops.) Passive and active intelligence is setting the boundaries between the space age and the information age. In the space age, all that mattered was getting there. In the Information Age, we want to get there and feel a part of the journey. Planes, trains, and automobiles don't quite hold the same fascination in our new *interactive* world.

Hopping from island to island across the submerged M8, I wondered how Glasgow, the 1999 European City of Architecture would present itself as a unifying pedestrian and vehicular city, Charing Cross notwithstanding?

The airport is close, though without a direct train line. I suppose all the infrastructure money was spent on the politics of having two international airports (Prestwick and Glasgow) for one mid-sized city. Pity, since the train is excellent aside from the Christmas staff shortages (flu, I was told). I did find the ScotRail "passenger's charter train performance for punctuality and reliability" rather amusing, since the figures although good (95% punctual and 99% reliable) were two months out of date. Not very punctual with the punctual. The underground could do with some sprucing up, especially the aging Seventies style stations and the tin box cars (in this their centenary). Integrated better with a bustier bus system, one could really move people and not just to and from Ibrox on game day. To strike fear into politicians everywhere, make it free—now that would be a *system*.

As for the bus, Glasgow knows its weaknesses.<sup>31</sup> I am at a loss to explain how something so rank exists (just stand at *any* bus stop and listen to the derisive remarks), from the hard to read numbers (even worse on the new red buses) to the inane schedules and arcane fare scheme. (Glasgow Riddle #1: Where can one smoke without getting fined?—upstairs on a bus where it's forbidden.) Sophie was even instructed by one driver that she hailed a bus like a cab and that he wasn't obligated to stop. Mental Note #3,463—on communication skills; if one understands the intent, doesn't that mean one understands? As well, I've paid six different fares for the same journey, including one free ride which came at the expense of a broken down collection box. At least, the taxis are great.

Sadly, the pedestrian is lost somewhere in the march forward and has no rights on the road, contrary to what is stated in the currently best-selling *The Highway Code* put out by the Department of Transport.<sup>32</sup> (Glasgow Riddle #2: Why did the chicken cross the road?—he got tired of reading six pages and 17 rules!) (ex editor: I thought it was "first right then left and then run like hell.") And forget the bicyclist. One plays the lottery on wheels in and amongst the traffic or an out-of-the-way bike path riddled with broken glass. The pedestrian malls of Sauchiehall Street, Buchanan Street, and Argyle Street do make up for some pedestrian woes, offering a well-needed respite from the rush, though they could be cleaner and are in desperate need of public sculpture to remind us of ourselves. It would be great if the three malls were joined from end to end with a coherent style and material (design?).

Design is a hot topic, bound to get hotter as '99 approaches. Active design, creating objects to do what *we* want, is hottest. Why aren't there black boxes in cars? Or computer

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<sup>31</sup> The following disclaimer comes with the schedule: "While every effort will be made to adhere to the scheduled times the Company disclaims any liability in respect of any loss or inconvenience arising from any failure to operate journeys as published, changes in times or any printing errors."

<sup>32</sup> Rule #68 "At road junctions, give way to pedestrians who are already crossing the road into which you are turning. " Yeah, right.

maps? Where are the money cards (especially on buses)? And the computer linked to traffic. No one should wait an hour for a bus or sit stranded in rush hour because of planned lane restrictions. Traffic is the pulse of a city, integration and information the eyes of good design. 1999 will be here in a blink!

Glasgow City Centre Millennium Plan *Transport Strategy* (put out by Strathclyde Roads) does hint at improvements.

1. Extend pedestrian priority areas by at least 50%.
2. Develop a 20 kilometer network of walkways.
3. Improve bus journey times by at least 30%.
4. Reduce accidents associated with bus travel by at least 50%.
5. Provide 12 kilometers of signed cycle routes through the City Centre linking to the suburbs.
6. Provide secure cycle storage.
7. Reduce traffic in the core by at least 30%.
8. Reduce all accidents by 30%.
9. Reduce fatal and serious accidents by at least 60%.
10. Achieve, or better, European Union standards for noise and air pollution.
11. Increase the vitality and security of City Centre streets by day and night.
12. Improve the visual and physical quality of the streetscape including street lighting.

If only half these measures are met by 2000 (a tall order indeed), Glasgow will have achieved something extraordinary. Alas, will someone please explain Charing Cross?

### **Sunday February 16**

Realized that most of us are just bored (sex and food notwithstanding). Obsession (football, drugs, television) is just misplaced passion. The more obsessed a culture, the more passionate it likely once was (could be).

Saw a young three feet tall boy keep a football up thirty times (more than two minutes). My record is currently five (about ten seconds). Must get the young boy to teach me.

### **Tuesday February 18**

Started writing fiction again, something called "Shiny"—a future-world narrative set in 24th century "Glas Chu" (meaning "green hollow" or "dear green place" in Gaelic). Noticed that all the future world sci-fi stories are set in social harmony and wanted to write about the transition.

### **Friday February 21**

Asked the librarian at the Mitchell Library for information on John Napier and talked to him for an hour. He told me John Napier was the most important mathematical mind between Euclid and Newton. Strong praise, indeed, especially given that he worked in the scientific vacuum of 16th century Scotland and wasn't really a mathematician. Thought about writing a book on the "search for John Napier's bones"—a mathematical thriller. Had lunch with Sophie—a first in Scotland.

## Saturday February 22

Manners get in the way of progress: try opening a revolving door for a lady.

## Friday February 28

In 1858, Queen Victoria decreed that the capital of Canada should be Ottawa. Her thinking (or that of her advisors) was that such a backwater capital, situated far enough away from the two major cities of Toronto and Montreal, would keep the French and English equally unhappy and thus prevent any unpleasantness which could upset the geopolitical balance of two-faced Canada. As one pundit saw it, Ottawa was "a sub-arctic lumber-village converted by a royal mandate into a political cockpit." Likely, her decision has done more to affect Canadian history than any other, removing the politics of everyday Canada from everyday life in one fell swoop. Short of moving the capital to Baffin Island, Ottawa is as far away as it gets.

Naturally, I started thinking if other capitals had been similarly poorly chosen. After a day in The Glasgow Room at the Mitchell Library collecting the necessary data and another day or so at my computer trying to make sense of the numbers (Days 170–174, though I probably should have been working), I think I had an answer. Or, at least an argument for why politicians seem so out of touch.

My criterion for "best" capital was simple—how far *on average* is each and every person's home to their respective seat of government?—the "centre of mass" of a country, if you will. In case of revolution, it might be helpful to know how far we would all have to walk to the capital. Perhaps, some other city might be better situated on a purely Utilitarian basis, what with travel costs for MPs coming and going all the time? More to the point, it would be fun to determine which city is the exact centre of a country based solely on its population distribution. The Great Capital City Hunt was under way.

I began carefully with Scotland, thinking that the results would be heartily scrutinized if I came up with a politically indefensible answer, such as Glasgow. But numbers don't lie. I had no bias as long as I didn't flub the math. First, I divided Scotland according to political districts (it's likely everyone would congregate in the district centre before starting the long march) and jotted down the population and latitude and longitude coordinates for each district, getting the numbers out of *Whitaker's Almanac* and *The Times Atlas*. Aside from putting Stirling (at 57.28,1.48) in the middle of the North Sea, which I duly corrected, I plodded along reasonably well. Another mental squirmish had me up all night calculating the distance between two points on the surface of a sphere or as the *Whitaker's* prefers "an oblate spheroid." I should include the rejoinder now that I'm pretty sure about the numbers, even if the Pythagorean theorem<sup>33</sup> doesn't quite hold up on an *oblate spheroid*. The data is good to  $\pm 2$  miles.

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$$^{33} d = \sqrt{\left(\Delta lat \frac{c_{polar}}{360^\circ}\right)^2 + \left((\Delta long \frac{c_{equator}}{360^\circ}) \cos\left(\frac{long_2 - \Delta long}{2} \frac{\pi}{180^\circ}\right)\right)^2}$$

So without any further ado ... the winner is .... Cumbernauld, situated between Edinburgh and Glasgow as would certainly be expected. Thus, if the capital of Scotland were in Cumbernauld, all 5,024,140<sup>34</sup> fine citizens of Scotland would need only walk 63 kilometres on average to have their say in the capital (or about an hour on ScotRail, depending on the service). Falkirk comes in marginally second at 63.3 kilometres, Glasgow a close ninth at 66 kilometres, and Edinburgh a not too-far-away 17th at 73 kilometres out of a total of 53 districts. Not surprisingly, Wick at 264 kilometres is the poorest choice for a capital.

Other district councils are shown below in the following table.<sup>35</sup>

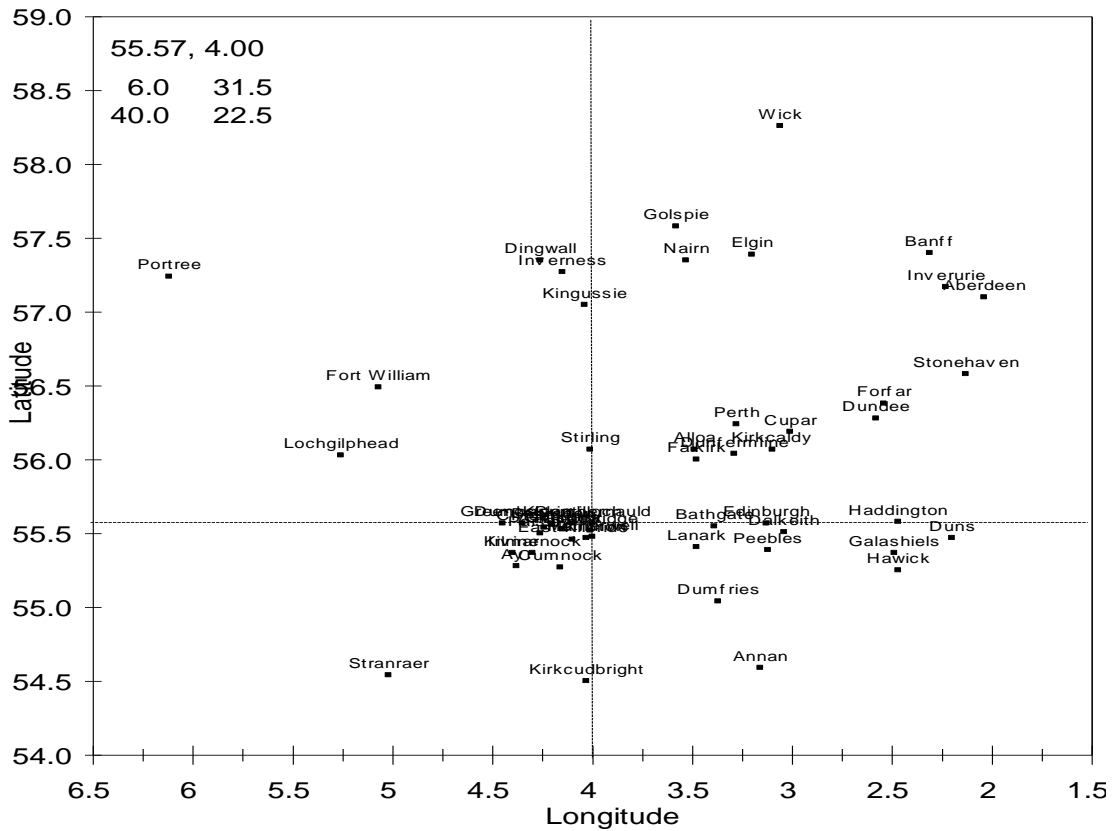
Rank	City	km	Pop	Rank	City	km	Pop
1	Cumbernauld	63.0	63980	28	Haddington	90	85500
2	Falkirk	63.3	142800	29	Dundee	93	155000
3	Coatbridge	64	102590	30	Cumnock	94	42590
4	Bathgate	65	147870	31	Ayr	101	112660
5	Kirkintilloch	65	85670	32	Galashiels	102	35490
6	Alloa	66	47680	33	Forfar	104	97420
7	Giffnock	66	61000	34	Duns	116	19420
8	Motherwell	66	143730	35	Hawick	116	35230
9	Glasgow	66	681470	36	Banff	116	88460
10	Dunfermline	67	130060	37	Lochgilphead	122	63260
11	Stirling	67	81630	38	Dumfries	128	57310
12	Hamilton	67	105200	39	Kingussie	132	11000
13	Bearsden	68	41000	40	Fort William	137	19400
14	East Kilbride	69	85180	41	Annan	140	37000
15	Clydebank	70	46580	42	Stonehaven	146	55960
16	Paisley	73	201690	43	Kirkcudbright	151	23690
<b>17</b>	<b>Edinburgh</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>443600</b>	44	Inverurie	163	81770
18	Lanark	73	58290	45	Stranraer	163	30080
19	Kirkcaldy	75	148630	46	Aberdeen	164	218220
20	Dumbarton	78	77220	47	Inverness	166	63400
21	Perth	80	130490	48	Nairn	175	10940
22	Irvine	80	137000	49	Elgin	181	83620
23	Dalkeith	81	79910	50	Dingwall	181	50000
24	Cupar	85	66890	51	Golspie	214	13100
25	Kilmarnock	86	79860	52	Portree	220	11970
26	Greenock	86	89990	53	Wick	264	26080
27	Peebles	87	15560				

Of course, there is good reason to keep the capital right where it is, though I enjoyed figuring out how Scotland's population was distributed. Just looking up names like Cumbernauld, Dumfries,<sup>36</sup> Kingussie, and Lochgilphead was a good exercise in learning about Scotland. Even Sophie got excited about which city might scoop the honours. My findings also produced the breakdown of the population into quarters to get a rough idea of who lived where. After Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen (27% of total population), many of the other districts are both spread out and sparsely populated. The following map shows the districts used in the centre of mass analysis and the breakdown of population into quarters. I decided to leave the mess of districts around Glasgow to show the density.

<sup>34</sup> 1996 data as in *Whitaker's 1996 Almanac*.

<sup>35</sup> According to *Whitaker's*, the Orkney's (20,619), Shetland Island (22,522), and the Western Isles (29,400) are unrepresented at the district level.

<sup>36</sup> Dumfries was picked last month as the most desirable place to live in the U.K.



My next task was to determine the centre of mass for the United Kingdom, comprised of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.<sup>37</sup> I was very excited as I punched in the numbers, thinking that I was about to discover the alchemist's stone or some elusive substance, hitherto unknown to man. The result was close and I think a good argument could be made for any one of the top five, but the UK COM Cup goes to Birmingham at a fine 173 kilometres, a distance slightly greater than that between Birmingham and London. Indeed, the centre of mass of the United Kingdom would be unchanged if everyone lived 173 kilometres from Birmingham, a circle roughly defined by Manchester, Bristol, London, and Beverley. As it is, almost 60% of the UK (or 70% of England) lives within this area.

On the home front, the results show that Edinburgh beats Glasgow as the capital closest for most in the UK 380–393 kilometres. Though air or sea travel would be required, Belfast (at 317 km) beats out all Scottish regions except Dumfries (at 315 km) and the Borders (at 329 km) as does Cardiff at 237 kilometres. On the whole, Scotland doesn't fare too well, what with three of the five furthest choices for UK capital. Inverness is the

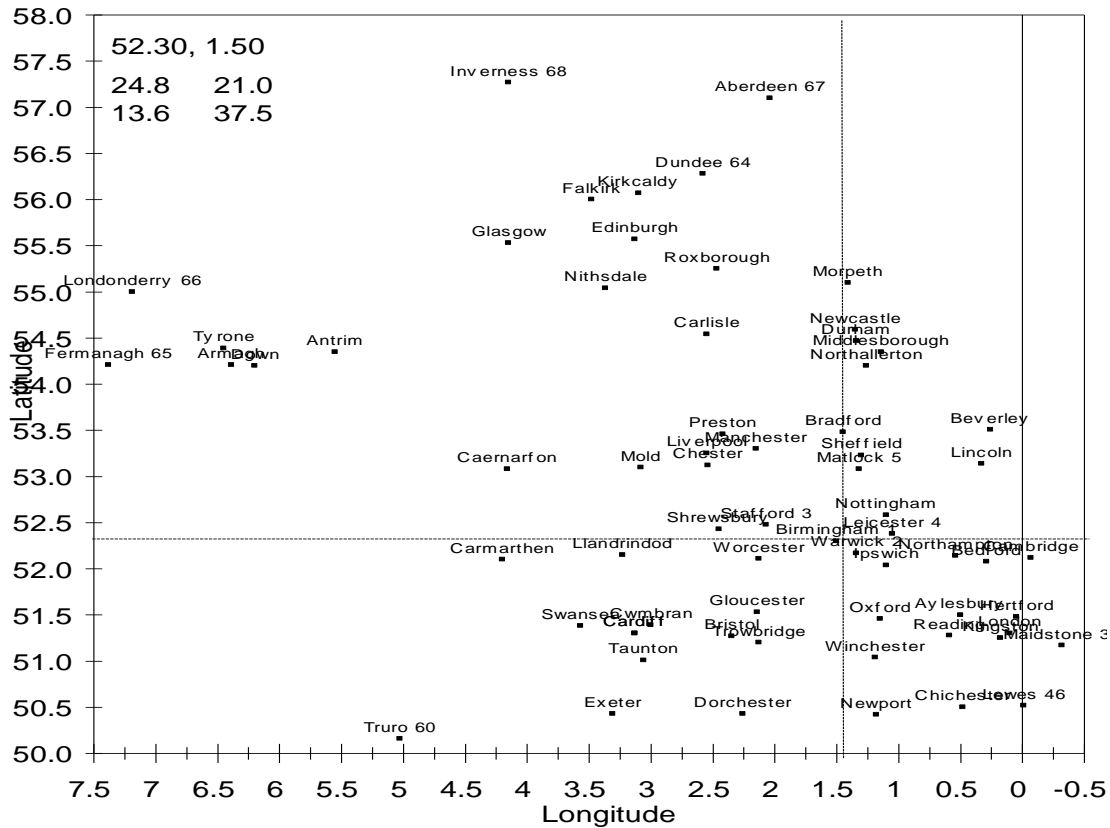
<sup>37</sup> England 39 county councils, 68 city councils; Wales 8 county councils; Scotland 9 regional councils; and Northern Island 6 county councils, according to *Whitaker's 1996 Almanac*. I have made some attempts at brevity such as assuming that all of London's 32 councils are at the same address or that all of Grampian lives in Aberdeen. The error is minimal.

furthest at a whopping 546 kilometres, much greater than the 400 kilometres between Toronto and Ottawa. To put the UK results into perspective, Birmingham as capital of the UK would be equivalent to Nairn as capital of Scotland, though one must keep the relative distances in mind between the two countries. Nonetheless, comparing Edinburgh as capital of Scotland (at 73 km) to London as capital of the UK (at 219 km) makes it easier to see how smaller countries are likely better administrated than larger countries. (London as capital of England rates 164 kilometres and excluding Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, Ipswich pips Birmingham as England's centre of mass.)

All results for the UK are shown in the following table and map.

Rank	City	km	Pop	Rank	City	km	Pop
1	Birmingham	173	2633700	35	Cardiff	237	544300
2	Warwick	175	493600	36	Northallerton	240	721800
3	Stafford	176	1053600	37	Caernarfon	249	240200
4	Leicester	176	910300	38	Chichester	256	717700
5	Matlock	178	950900	39	Maidstone	258	1539700
6	Nottingham	179	1028400	40	Carmarthen	258	351500
7	Ipswich	181	646200	41	Mid.borough	260	559500
8	Northampton	181	591900	42	Swansea	260	371200
9	Worcester	184	694800	43	Taunton	264	474100
10	Sheffield	186	1306200	44	Norwich	265	765100
11	Shrewsbury	188	413900	45	Newport	265	124800
12	Oxford	191	585800	46	Lewes	270	722200
13	Bedford	191	539400	47	Dorchester	272	667500
14	Manchester	191	2578900	48	Durham	272	607500
15	Aylesbury	192	651700	49	Newcastle	288	1137900
16	Gloucester	194	543900	50	Carlisle	289	490200
17	Chester	196	971900	51	Exeter	300	1049200
18	Lincoln	200	601400	52	Morpeth	303	307200
19	Liverpool	202	1440900	53	Dumfries	315	148080
20	Mold	203	415900	54	Hawick	329	105700
21	Bradford	203	2101600	55	Belfast	370	570800
22	Reading	206	763700	56	Downpatrick	380	158900
23	Hertford	209	999700	57	Edinburgh	380	756880
24	Cambridge	210	682600	58	Glasgow	393	2278960
25	Preston	211	1420700	59	Falkirk	394	272110
<b>26</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>6929100</b>	60	Truro	394	477000
27	Llandrindod	216	119900	61	Kirkcaldy	395	345580
28	Kingston	218	1037900	62	Armagh	397	51700
29	Trowbridge	221	583000	63	Cookstown	414	435700
30	Bristol	221	973300	64	Dundee	428	382910
31	Cwmbran	222	450300	65	Enniskillen	451	274900
32	Beverley	229	884400	66	Derry	459	264800
33	Winchester	233	1593700	67	Aberdeen	497	528030
34	Cardiff	237	413200	68	Inverness	546	205890





It is reasonable to say that the numbers bear out my original idea that the reasons for choosing a capital are not necessarily based on economy of travel to and from the capital. Of course, they might well have been many years ago.

Today, however, one might think that a country is better off if its elected representatives went home most nights or at least at weekends to be with their families, which I believe is contrary to the current practice, due primarily to the great distances and even greater inertia. Small is better if only to remind one of one's constituency. It seems whenever our lawmakers are stuck in stuffy bars (or whatever mischief it is they get up to) representing one's constituency is lost in the dull wash of the capital. With apologies to Arlo Guthrie:

This land is my land, this land is your land  
 From John O'Groats to Gretna Green  
 From the Outer Hebrides to Aberdeen  
 This land was made for you and me

The centre of the world, you ask? I haven't got time to do the math, but I'd make a guess at somewhere just west and south of Beijing.

*From the sky there are no borders*  
 Johnny Somebo

**Friday February 28**

Dolly<sup>38</sup> is cloned only miles from Glasgow as Scotland wins the "Trace Race." In years to come, no one will remember Scotland for John Napier, James Watt, Alexander Graham Bell, or John Logie Baird. Hello, Dolly. Given that we will soon be cloning ourselves, does that mean the normal distribution has peaked ... so to speak?

Sent McIlvanney a piece on John Napier as I hadn't yet done anything on John Buchan, James McGill, or John McLeod, his next Great ScotCans. I did try arguing that Napier would have gone to Canada if he could but that no one went to Canada in the 16th century. He wasn't impressed.

Talked to him about choices and how people have choices about where to live now, which was impossible as little as fifty years ago. What brought millions of Scotch and Irish to Canada, America, and other parts foreign was a need not a desire. Now, as the combined wealth of much of the middle class exceeds anything in our past, one can easily choose where to live (e.g. go back to the motherland). In fact, the small trickle of prodigal sons are starting to figure in government population statistics (reverse immigration as it's called) as quality of life becomes an option. I wondered why more don't return to the land of their home. It seems the wilderness days are over.

Realized that I am beginning to form arguments against returning home, even sentimental ones (e.g. I am a first generation Canadian whose entire ancestry is buried in Ireland and the United Kingdom).

I have no idea where I belong.

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## **John Napier**

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*born 1550, Merchiston Castle near Edinburgh*

*died April 4, 1617 Merchiston Castle*

*married 1. Elizabeth Sterling of Keir 1573 (died 1579) (Archibald 1576, Jane)*

*2. Agnes Chisolm of Cromlix, Perthshire 1581 (Robert, John, Alexander, William, Adam, Margaret, Jean, Agnes, Elizabeth, Helen)*

He was educated at the University of Saint Andrews 1563 (College of St. Salvator). He became an adherent of the Reformation movement in Scotland while still at college and later took an active part in Protestant political affairs. A staunch Protestant, he wrote the first important Scottish interpretation of the Bible in *A Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John* (1593) addressed to King James VI.

To aid the defence of the country (Spain and France had declared a truce), he invented a number of weapons which are summarised in *Secrett Inventionis ...* (1596), including:

burning mirror using sunlight

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<sup>38</sup> A manufactured creation (created from a mammory cell), very famous, and very much genetic silicone. Paadda Baadda Boom.

burning mirror using fire  
artillery device  
metal chariot (tank)

He invented logarithms as described in *Mirifici Logarithmorum Canonis Descriptio* (*Description of the Marvelous Canon of Logarithms* 1614, pub 1617) and *Mirifici Logarithmorum Canonis Constructio* (*Construction of the Marvelous Canon of Logarithms* 1619). Logarithms are a method of calculating the products and quotients of two numbers or the powers of a number (squares, cubes, roots, etc. ) by addition and subtraction, thus greatly simplifying calculations, especially in astronomy. Napier showed that the basis of a logarithmic calculation is the relationship between an arithmetic and geometric sequence. (e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 to 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128).

The common and natural systems of logarithms used today do not employ the same base as Napier's logarithms, however natural logarithms are sometimes called Napierian logarithms. The natural logarithm (developed two hundred years later in 1816) has  $e$  as a base. In the *Descriptio*, he showed how to use the log tables. In the *Constructio*, he showed how to create the log tables, employing for the first time the decimal form of separating an integer and a fraction.

He also invented mechanical systems for abbreviating arithmetical computations, described in *Rabdologia, seu Numeratonis per Virgulas Libri Duo* (*Study of Divining Rods, or Two Books of Numbering by Means of Rods* 1617). Napier's Bones (a forerunner of the slide rule, 1654) is one such system using numbered rods or "bones." A set of graduated rods (wood or bone) are used to simplify multiplication and division using logarithms.

### **Saturday March 1**

Thought of making a great big billboard with some witty/cryptic/ironic message, and, to pay for it, putting wheels on it and driving it around picking up people at bus stops. Great Money Making Scheme #1—ads as buses. Then again, as with all great money making schemes, the question of “Why?” always comes up.

### **Sunday March 2**

The rich are the worst sort to spend money. The question of “Why?” never comes up.

### **Monday March 3**

Great Riddle Solved #1—The sound of one hand clapping is a pat on the back.

### **Wednesday March 5**

After a particularly exasperating day at the home office (office home?), I wrote a bitchy letter to Bill Gates about bugs in Word for Windows 95. I wrote in the best *nerdlish* I could muster:

- The user can not drag highlighted text outside the current screen.

- Deleting a line before a heading style line at the top of a page removes the heading style.
- The cursor location within a document is changed when windowing between multiple documents.
- The printer hangs on large documents unless the mouse is clicked.
- Why does one press “Start” to stop? (Windows 95)

I got the following back:

Thank you for your email. I appreciate you taking the time to write to me. As you can probably imagine, I receive hundreds of messages from outside of Microsoft each day. While I love to read people's views and share ideas about technology, unfortunately, I am not able to answer each and every inquiry. [...] Thank you for your continued support of Microsoft and our products and best of luck with all your endeavors,

Bill Gates

### **Thursday March 6**

Golf and Zen are cut from the same cloth:

***golf** n. An outdoor game played on a large course with a small resilient ball and a set of clubs, the object being to direct the ball into a series of variously distributed holes in as few strokes as possible.*

***Zen** n. A form of contemplative Buddhism whose adherents believe in and work toward abrupt enlightenment.*

Played Palacerig Golf Course and shot an 89 including two strokes for a lost ball. I'm slowly working my way towards breaking 80. Marcus and I won the doubles 2 and 1 against Brian and Stevie as Marcus birdied the 17<sup>th</sup> on a chip in from the rough, though we lost it all (£5) on the 18<sup>th</sup> after a “double or quits” bet.

I had a philosophical discussion with Stevie on the way home from Cumbernauld. As usual, I was telling him that the game doesn't hate anyone, that the good comes with the bad alike. Golf is not about scoring—it's about getting away from the other world, forgetting the stress and releasing the strain, walking in pastures green (and burns blue); it's about seeing how many ways you can get in and out of trouble and trying not to let the past effect the future; it's about finding if not a simple than a simpler rhythm to life. Alas, I was still bloody annoyed that I missed that damned easy six foot birdie putt on the eighteenth for ten quid.

*Rule 1-1: The Game of Golf consists in playing a ball from the teeing ground into the hole by a stroke or successive strokes in accordance with the Rules.*

**Schmiten sie, schmiten sie, schmiten sie ball.  
It might go far. It might not go at all.**

### Saturday March 8

I spent the afternoon playing the fruit machine at Pablo's, carefully mapping out the puggy wheel for future reference. I was hoping a little inside knowledge might help me with the nudges. After £20 worth, I am now convinced that "nudging" is a Pythonesque play on words to entice suckers to gamble.

### Sunday March 9

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To Robbie

Okay, so they were never going to win the championship anyway. You knew it, I knew it, the whole world knew it except for 50,000 poor (statistically speaking) Celtic fans. And now, there's an SFA inquiry into both the Rangers' mock-Celtic huddle after the game and Di Cannio's subsequent mad-dog and Italian behaviour. Sean Connery was at the game!

Haven't scored for weeks in my weekly 5-a-side and am just sick about it. Did however make up for it by getting plenty drunk yesterday or was it the day before?

### Monday March 10

I started making frames for Sophie's course work art and hit on the idea that artless art could in itself be art. All frame no art, all style no substance, all context no content—fashion! I only got two made before the idea faded and I went to the quiz instead.

### Wednesday March 12

Lottery Idea #1—Have one lottery a year where everyone is required by law to spend  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their income, but have no winner and instead select a group of people to distribute the money for public works, education, and health—oops, that's taxation.



Day 182.5



Lottery Idea #2—Have £100,000+ earners give all money in excess of £100,000 to a pool which is proportionally distributed to below poverty line earners such that they can afford not to spend money on lottery tickets—oops, that's an enlightened society.

### Thursday March 13

Marcus and I beat Brian and Stevie 4 and 2, bringing our yearly total to 6-2. No birdie *dosh*, however, as none was had by *neebdy*. We played Knightswood (or *Royal* Knightswood as one long-time resident politely told me), the local nine hole course nearest to Pablo's. Aside from the wee boy who stole my ball at the fourth, I played okay,

carding an 85. I can't really blame him—I did the same thing at his age. It did cost us the hole, however, as Marcus was in a bush off the tee.

*Rule 2-4: Concession of a stroke, hole or match may not be declined or withdrawn.  
(Match Play)*

### **Give generously to the Heart and Stroke Fund.**

#### **Saturday March 15**

Sophie was up and away early to the Mitchell Library. After a slow and listless day, I finally aroused and prepared to meet her at the Barras, which everyone had been telling us was a must in Glasgow. As in all “musts” they are steeped more in the past than the present. Perhaps, the Barras was at one time a unique and interesting place to buy something out of the ordinary, but today it is no more than a factory outlet of disposable plastics. The hot dog was good.

On our way home, an old lady passenger standing beside the driver's booth was directing the bus driver on his maiden trip. “You turn left here onto Clarence Drive. During the week, there will be lots of school children so take care going down the hill. Now this is Broomhill Cross, where you turn right on to Crow Road. The next stop is just before the new intersection they're building. When they finish the intersection, you should be able to get out on to Crow Road on the return trip without any trouble. Right now it's a nightmare. Don't drive too fast here or you'll miss it.” I hope he let her on for free.

#### **Tuesday March 18**

The intersection builders kept me amused all day as they dug out and filled in the same hole three times. Ah, to have no responsibility, to do just what one is told. Sisyphus really didn't have it that bad after all. Noticed that the guy with the tie seemed to be on the phone all day.

#### **Wednesday March 19**

*The Herald* reported today that there is no relation between telephone charges and costs. And, thus, a tiny nation, which can fit into Southern Ontario about a thousand times over, mixes in Third World company by charging varying rates within its borders, grossly hindering normal telephone communications and especially making internet access ridiculously exorbitant. No wonder most of the population is afraid of the computer. I won't elaborate on my internet woes in Britain (10 × more expensive here than in Canada) but suffice it to say that I send and receive e-mail by calling long distance to Toronto.

I wonder if I should ask the BT computer lady why my “Last call” feature never works. (“You were called yesterday at ... We do not have the caller's number to return the call. Please hang up. Please hang up.”)

#### **Thursday March 20**

If Nietzsche had been Scottish, he'd have written the *Twilight of the Golfers*.

'What is the task of all fairway play?'—To turn a man into a golfing machine.—'By what means?'—He has to learn how to fade from left to right.—'How is that achieved?'—Through the concept of apolitical thought.—'Who is his model?'—The sand specialist: he teaches how to grind.—'Who is the perfect man?'—The one-putter.—'Which philosophy provides the best formula for the golfer?'—Kant's: the golfer as thing in itself set as judge over the golfer as appearance.

Almost the first day of Spring, which may explain the absolutely fab-u-lous day at the golf course. Played Dougalston, a course which one book describes as having the nicest hole in Scotland (#2), especially in May with the rhododendrons. I shot an 81, though Brian and Stevie won on the 16<sup>th</sup> 3 and 2. Stevie drove like Adonis all day. I'm getting close to breaking 80. If I hadn't pulled my tee shot at the last, if I hadn't lipped out at the twelfth, if I hadn't three-putted on the ninth, if I hadn't gone in the water on the first, if I hadn't ....

*Rule 10-1: When the balls are in play, the ball farther from the hole shall be played first.*

**The first shall be last and the last shall be first.**

**Thursday March 20**

To Robbie

Sophie is away to London tomorrow on a course trip and an INTERVIEW with Christie's which she found about today and has sent our world flying fast and furious. Very exciting indeed. Will keep you posted on the details.

I've sent you a little St. Paddy's Day thing in the mail: a key ring with three blades of grass from Parkhead because it reminded me of Spring, a season abolished a long time ago in Canada. Also, the sports page with ten different articles on the same Ranger-Celtic game. Each, like an op-ed piece. When read consecutively, they all add up to a bit of overkill, but I like the idea nonetheless. A welcome relief from the Globe's over-reliance on Reuters to provide its one opinion on all aspects of sports other than hockey, baseball, and basketball.

I'm off to Dublin for a two-day Guinness trip tomorrow with Colin from my quiz team and his mates. It's sort of a stag without the marriage (since no one gets married anymore). The Scots are known for occupying downtown Dublin on the weekends, all done up in kilts and such, taking to the Guinness like long lost kin. The flight takes less than an hour. Send the Mounties if I don't return.

John Major has finally announced the election for May 1. The Queen is upset because her local parish church is tossing out an old Victorian organ (as in given to the church by Queen Victoria, her great-great-grandmother) and may not attend any more. The Shroud

of Turin may be the image of Jacques de Molay, last grand master of the Knights Templar, as shown in a Edinburgh chapel carving. Paul Gascoigne in trouble again.

Life here is never short of excitement.

### **Friday March 21**

Before Glasgow “2<sup>nd</sup> city of the empire,” there was Dublin “2<sup>nd</sup> city of the empire.” The city of my birth of which I know so little was amazing, however alcohol riddled. In Scotland, it seems that religion past has been converted into Old Firm present. In Ireland, it is Guinness.

### **Saturday March 22**

After an evening in and out of pubs and a morning in and out of more, I took a break from the boys, reposing myself in Toners, a suitably old pub on Baggot Street. A regular there (Jimmy) told me Toners was the only pub Yeats ever drank in and then only once. He told me that on Bloomsday patrons in period costume can drink at 1905 prices but fortunately same wasn’t on offer year round as Dubliners would ever so be dressed. He told me Jonathan Swift’s psychiatric hospital was the first of its kind in the world to treat mental disease (including alcoholism), but questioned the wisdom of locating such a hospital next to the Guinness brewery. He told me that the 1916 Easter Rising rebels fled the GPO to a nearby pub after the battle was lost. It seems that monks and their beer have always been here entwined.

After four pints, I left to meet Colin and the boys in “Bad Bobs,” a new style, plastic Irish beer hall. The evening service was beginning. We must have made our acquaintance with thirty pubs in all. “Drunk” would hardly suffice to call ourselves, as out-and-out silliness fermented every stop. I can’t recall an unhappy word, though we probably shouldn’t have called Colin’s girlfriend between pubs. Sure, it was funny once, even twice, but I think six times was overdoing it, especially the last call *collect* at two in the morning. Funny how everything is funny when you’re drunk. I told Doreen as much, to which she agreed, adding “Yes, but *I’m* not drunk.”

Noticed in and amongst the Guinness an absence of televisions and hence no football on tap. There seemed to be as many women as men as well. Men, women, beer, no football?—now that’s a brilliant idea.

### **Sunday March 23**

Sat in U2’s Clarence Hotel on the south side of the Liffey drinking Guinness again and almost missed the plane. Got into a strained conversation with an American who took exception to my remark that U2’s songs were very religious which he took to mean that Bono and U2 were very religious. He wasn’t impressed when I asked him how he would know one way or the other.

I hope Dublin is still recognizable after the re-building is finished. *Slainte*.

### **Monday March 24**



Is Britain the land of the tubs?

### **Tuesday March 25**

Missed the Oscars for the first time since I can remember, though I am still happy to be the only person in all of Britain without a television, even if I don't get to see the stars. Haile-Boppe made an appearance after a three hundred year absence.

If all the world is a stage, why do Hollywood actors get paid so much? A movie sequel means the producers didn't get enough of your money the first time round.

### **Wednesday March 26**

Lottery Idea #3—Lower the payout and increase the number of winners. After all, the only ethical reason for the lottery is to keep the crooks out of business. (I suppose paying out a £1 prize to every £1 ticket holder would be too surreal.)

Lottery Idea #4—Get rid of it altogether and put the government-sanctioned crooks out of business.

### **Thursday March 27**

We played Belleisle on the Ayrshire coast today (Robbie Burns country), Brian and Stevie winning again. Unfortunately, my form left me as I struggled to a 92. After rounds of 89, 85, and 81, I was hoping for my maiden round in the seventies. I may never understand golf.

Neither it seems will the rules makers. Counting sub-sections, but not sub sub-sections, there are 122 rules in the latest *Rules of Golf*. Throw in three appendices, two pages on etiquette, and innumerable definitions, 144 pages seems a tad much for the casual golfer. *Nine* seems a much nicer and rounder number, and one which every golfer knows intimately, either as the number of holes in and out on a golf course or as a quadruple bogie on a damn easy par five. One should be able to knock that 1.6 ounce, 1.7 inch diameter, spherically-symmetrical rubber ball with an 18 inch minimum gripped club and grooveless head into an altogether too small hole without a Master's degree in mumble-jumble.

A few golf jokes wouldn't hurt either. (e.g. What's the difference between a woman's G-spot and a golf ball? Men will spend twenty minutes looking for the golf ball.)

*Rule 16-2: When any part of the ball overhangs the lip of the hole, the player is allowed enough time to reach the hole without unreasonable delay and an additional ten seconds to determine whether the ball is at rest.*

**Pray often, pray fast.**

### **Saturday March 29**

Back home with Sophie. Love is ... reinventing the squeal.

## Sunday March 30

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To Robbie

Sophie is back from London after a week with her class and her Christie's interview. She thinks she did okay, but it's hard to tell with these things. From ONE THOUSAND applicants, she and 49 others were interviewed and in May she will find out if she is one of 16 to be re-interviewed for 6 positions. The positions are for a one-year research position at Christie's London. She was a bit put off by the whole corporate factory style of business art, though a year in London would be cool.

Thanks for the news on the Blue Jays home opener. You'll be proud to know I taught one particularly fortunate drinking buddy the 1992 Blue Jays World Series team<sup>39</sup> after he taught me the 1967 Celtic European Cup winning team (first ever British team, only ever Scottish team) in Dublin last weekend. One pub, one player—I know we visited at least 21 pubs (10 Blue Jays, 11 Celtic). I'm not sure I got the names right but how would he know? It's not what you know, it's what other people *think* you know. Mind you, he could have made the whole thing up too.

I am imagining you reading this as you stare out at the big, blue waters of Loch Ontario to the din of baseball noise. Yes, I miss it all.

For you records, I faithfully submit the following:

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<b>Toronto Blue Jays</b>	<b>Glasgow Celtic</b>
World Series	European Cup
October 23, 1992	May 25, 1967
Devon White	Ronnie Simpson
Roberto Alomar	Jim Craig
Dave Winfield	Tommy Gemmell
Joe Carter	Bobby Murdoch
John Olerud	Billy McNeil
Kelly Gruber	John Clark
Turner Ward	Jimmy Johnstone
Pat Borders	William Wallace
Manny Lee	Stevie Chalmers
David Cone	Bertie Auld
	Bobby Lennox

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## Monday March 31

I tried to tell McIlvanney that John Buchan, the fifteenth governor-general of Canada, was no more Canadian than John Napier, but he wasn't having any of it. Canadians believed that Buchan was Canadian, which was all that mattered to McIlvanney. According to my research, Buchan wasn't long for Scotland either, but then, as

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<sup>39</sup> First and only ever Canadian team to win the almost wholly American sport.

Mellvanney reminded me, the Scottish didn't know that. I wasn't about to ask him if Greg Rusedski (that great Ukrainian/Canadian/Brit) would be featured in any upcoming pieces.

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## **John Buchan**

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*born Perth, Scotland August 25, 1875*

*died Ottawa, Ontario, Canada February 11, 1940*

*moved to Ottawa, Ontario to become governor-general of Canada at the age of 50*  
*married Susan Grosvenor (1907)*

In 1888, Buchan and his family moved to Glasgow, his father working as a Free Kirk minister in the city centre while the family lived in Crosshill on the south side. He studied at Hutchesons' Grammar School and the University of Glasgow. Buchan walked to Hillhead every day for lectures, some four miles. During his university days, he began to write. After graduating in 1895, he entered Brasenose College, Oxford.

After Oxford, he worked briefly as a lawyer before becoming private secretary to the High Commissioner in South Africa (1901), during the reconstruction after the Boer War. Here, he achieved his first commercial success as a writer with the adventure story *Prester John* (1910).

In 1903, he returned to London where he practiced law and became an assistant editor at the *Spectator*. He also began editing the *Scottish Review*. In 1915, his acclaimed novel *The Thirty-Nine Steps* established his writing career. Many of his novels were set in Scotland, though he lived most of his adult life outside of Scotland.

Buchan also had political desires, serving as director of information under Lloyd George (1917–18) and as MP for the Scottish Universities from 1927–35. He was Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1933–34). In 1935, King George V made him the 1st Baron Tweedsmuir (of Elsfield) and appointed him governor-general of Canada. As governor-general from 1935 until his death in 1940, he stressed national unity on his trips around Canada. Generally regarded as a staunch Conservative and defender of the Imperialist cause, he was never-the-less well respected throughout Canada. Buchan founded the Governor General's award, Canada's highest literary award (1937).

He wrote more than eighty books, including *Prester John* (1910), *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), *History of the Great War* (4 volumes, 1921–22), and *Sir Walter Scott* (1932). *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, set in the highlands of Scotland, was made into a film directed by Alfred Hitchcock. His novel *Sick Heart River* (1941) was set in Canada. Buchan's wrote his autobiography *Memory Hold-the-Door* (1940) published in the United States as *Pilgrim's Way*.

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## **Tuesday April 1**

To Robbie

Well, it's finally happened. First, Three Mile Island, then Chernobyl, and now, Ayrshire on the West Coast of Scotland. At 2:02 a.m., Tuesday, April 1, a day that will live on in infamy. They said it was a leaky valve. Those damn leaky valves. Scotland is melting by the acre. I expect Glasgow will be gone by sundown. I don't know if we can evacuate in time, so if we don't make it, old chap, well we fought the good fight. I've left enough in my will for three pints—enough for you and yours-to-come. God save the Queen. Gotta love her at a time like this.

### **Wednesday April 2**

Life is a playground—what the hell are we trying to prove?

### **Thursday April 3**

Played Cardross Golf Course near Helenborough and shot an 85 so I'm back on track to break 80. Marcus and I won 4 and 3 but lost it all again on the now mandatory last hole "double or quits" bet. I think "double or quits" means "good morning" in Scottish.

*If you want to make money, just look at what the poor people do and don't do it.*  
Ed Beckley.

### **Friday April 4**

Coming soon to a public house near you, the Gaming Board in Britain approves a "fast draw video lottery." Winners will be chosen every ten minutes.

The lottery wasn't always so bold. Banished for seventy years for its "demoralizing influence upon the people," or so the United States Supreme Court decreed, New Hampshire (1964), New York (1967), and New Jersey (1969) cautiously started the ball dropping again. Little debate over its influence has ensued since. Today, one can even buy on credit on the Internet with winnings deposited directly into a Swiss bank account.

Though half of sales revenue is given back to the "players" as lotteries dubs its adult population, governments take enormous pride in how they spend *their* winnings, as if justifying the lottery by its philanthropic record. Anything from building hospitals to revamping the neighbourhood tennis courts boosts appeal though using lotteries to fund public works is nothing new. Lotteries have helped finance such landmark buildings as the British Museum and the Sydney Opera House. Even the Continental Congress in 1776 voted to establish a lottery to raise funds for the American Revolution, though the scheme was soon abandoned. Other public works programs are more imaginative. Kansas puts 10% of lottery money aside for prisons. In Nebraska, a percentage of lottery revenue is spent on a solid waste land fill and a compulsive gamblers assistance fund. Leichtenstein's "Interlotto," the world's first Internet lottery, lets one pick the charity of choice before playing. The idea of the lottery as a regressive tax does not seem to deter governments hot to trot on the newest of horse games.

Slogans are all the rage. "Live Dangerously," "Take the Plunge," and "Escape the Jungle For an Instant" are just a few of the lines reeling in players in Ontario. In Britain "You

could be the one” is more reminiscent of an Elvis love song than any real chance of winning. In New Hampshire, the government has simplified their one dollar fork-over by calling the hugely popular instant scratch tickets "One of These" and "One of Those." No need to think anymore, let alone imagine. Advertising slogans, such as "You can't win if you don't buy a ticket," are misleading at best and, in fact, encourage consumers to gloss over the unlikeliest odds. "You can't lose if you don't buy a ticket" is more like it. “You could be the one?”—more like “You will never be the one.” "It could be you?" I don't think so.

Most players believe that "luck depends on where you're sitting." Or in the case of international lotteries, where you're living. In the UK National Lottery, 5 is the winningest number (11 of 59 draws) and 39 the losingest (just twice in the first 59 draws since its inception in November 1994). Yet, only miles away on the Emerald Isle, where luck is cultivated as an art not a science, number 4 is more than twice as lucky as number 18, at least according to past draws of the Irish National Lotto. In Canada, 31 beats 15 hands down, popping up 50% more (194–128) in 13 years of Lotto 6/49. It is interesting, however, that the British and Canadian government do not require lottery agencies to post odds to unsuspecting players, as do some American states. In fact, it is almost impossible to find any information about the real chances in and among the scores of selection slips and scratch tickets.

To be sure, few seem to question the value of giving out millions for nothing. Or argue that the lottery is an incentive to foolishness.

### **Saturday April 5**

Does anyone own their own house?

### **Sunday April 6**

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To Robbie

I was intending to get an internet account here, but the British haven't forwarded their clocks past 1950 and I haven't got around to it yet. It's much simpler and cheaper (25p) to send and receive messages from Toronto anyway than some outrageous amount here + telephone time. I don't surf the net anyway. After a few days it isn't so exciting seeing some Swedish guy's naked wife or reading about Joe Blow's favourite post David Lee Roth van Halen album.

They now have a Channel 5 in Britain (though not all of Britain) which has a baseball game of the week, so there's an outside chance I'll get to see the Blue Jays play at some point. I will be watching the Masters next week certainly. No, we don't actually have a television, but our local has a big screen. Next to beer and football, golf is *it* so there should be quite the crowd camped out for Tiger's crowning.

Sophie and I are thinking of staying another year after her course is done in September (possibly in London or Dublin) and then returning to, wait for it, ... Montreal. Housing is

dead cheap now that the Anglos are leaving by the buckets. Could it be—married, a home, a family? Pinch me.

### **Monday April 7**

After five months of plugging away at the Pablo's quiz (50p a crack and untold pints of lager), our team won. First place by one point! And me the Canadian chipping in with Norman Mailer (Who wrote the Executioner's Song?), Pierre (What is the capital of South Dakota?), Gerald Ford (Which American president was never elected to office?), and Quebec (What is the largest province in Canada?). The only other American question every team got (Where did Lee Harvey Oswald shoot John F. Kennedy?—The Texas School Book Depository). There were no other Canadian questions.

The winning team which has morphed a few times since I joined up stood that night at Michael, Jenny, Ian, Colin, Doreen, and me. That night we split £20, eight bottles of Hootch and two Budweiser T-shirts among the six of us. If truth be told, our spies (Anne, Brenda, Denise, and Lynn) deserved a split of the booty but took off before we divied up the goods. I am convinced you can not win the quiz without one or two well-placed spies.

### **Tuesday April 8**

After celebrating our big win to excess the night before, I slept in until the intersection builders woke me up. Again. After calling the city council to complain and being put on hold for ten minutes, I went back to bed. Again. This went on all day.

### **Wednesday April 9**

If the shoe fits, call Prince Charming.

### **Thursday April 10**

I am still unsure whether I should say where I am going or call out a fare when I enter a bus. If I say where I'm going (e.g. Broomhill Cross), I must have various amounts of change to cover the various amounts of fare the driver will dream up (anywhere from 80–120% of yesterday's fare). If I call out a fare, one for which I have the exact amount primed in my hand, having paid the same amount yesterday, the day before, and the day before the day before, I occasionally get "That's not a fare. Where are you going?" After the requisite "Broomhill," I am told the new fare, for which I never have the exact change, and must then sheepishly ask if I can pay what I have which is typically approved with a knowing glance. The next day, armed with the "new" fare, I am told another fare and sheepishly ask again if I can pay what I have which is typically approved with a knowing glance. The next day, I am back to saying where I am going, my pockets loaded with change for any and all eventualities. The scientific method, it seems, has not yet been explained to the Strathclyde Passenger Transport.

### **Sunday April 13**

An all-green home venture in Edinburgh was announced for people who don't own cars. A car pool will be available to all occupants, though the housing will be designed for car-free living. Now we're living. Pedestrians of the world unite!

## Monday April 14

I spent the entire day doing the laundry, losing only two socks (sadly, not from the same pair). Clothes are hanging everywhere, across the furniture, out the window, on the backyard line. I am intrigued that the dryer (the most energy-depleting home appliance in the world) is not a staple in British homes. Happily, progress has not made it everywhere. Fresh air is hard to bottle.

## Tuesday April 15

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To Robbie

Speaking of subjects, I have just returned from (old) York where Sophie and I saw very little in the way of religion but much in the way of shelling out dough to the little Anglican administrative clerics. "£2 to go in, £2 to go up, £2 to get back down." I am due a spot in heaven for sure now. York was cool. Yorkminster even cooler save for the shelling out. The whole city is surrounded by a Roman wall which was the coolest.

Even nearby Castle Howard was cool as Sophie gave me the guided tour befitting her expertise as a fine purveyor of art and history. As you may remember, Catherine Howard was the one who tangoed with a king, way back in the heady times of Eat More and Oh Henry. Perhaps, too heady ... for her. Interesting that in Castle Howard, incidentally where they filmed *Brideshead Revisited* (no pun intended, I'm sure), Holbein's portrait of a portly and dignified Henry is the prize collection. I doubt Diana has a similar portrait of Charles in her home. (Which brings to mind a rather queer notion that Princess Diana was beheaded—20th century style.)

Currently, Rangers hold a twelve point advantage with four games to go. Not mathematically invincible yet (N.B. Walter Smith would hear nothing of the nine-in-a-row talk after yesterday's deconstruction of Motherwell 6-0), but Celtic in need of great miracles like a Virgin birth (though not à la Richard Branson beginning his U.K. train service). There will shortly be much dancing in the street. Two nearby pubs were torched by mad Celtic fans after the last Old Firm game so I wonder if the whole city will burn when it becomes mathematically beyond hope. At the rate they figure things out here, however, it make take a few days before some genius figures out that Celtic are finito. (Have been since New Year's if you ask me.)

I didn't get to see a stitch of the Masters since I was doing the couple thing all weekend in York, but I heard that Tiger Woods has just signed another commercial deal 5 minutes ago. He is now worth \$5,024,140,000 and has decided to purchase 4 countries in the South East of Africa where he will teach everyone to golf. To raise even more money, he will change the name of Zaire, Madagascar, Zambia, and Botswana by auction. I think for a mere 2.5 billion (3 times the reserve bid), Zambia could soon be called Billgatesia.

Alas, I could not fit the keg o' Guinness you asked for in the A4 format envelope so you will have to come to Glasgow to get it.

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Got these from the *Washington Post* via the internet:

### **Canadium Eh**

Similar to Americium, but a little denser. Much more rigid. Often called Boron.

### **Innofensium Pc**

Precisely equal numbers of electrons, protons, neutrons, leptons, quarks. Completely inert, utterly useless, but smells like a rose.

### **Budweisium Ps**

Has no taste or smell. Is often indistinguishable from water.

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I shall leave you with the following, which I think may even contain thematically the subject of this "Subject" which is of course *subject*. (Note: italics mine.) The church up the road has a sign which reads: "Not a hopeless end but an endless hope." I will one day in some fit of merry abandonment ask the rector if he honestly thinks "an endless hope" is a more desirable state than "a hopeless end." He is competing with ads for Tony Blair and John Major. Even sounds like a lottery slogan. C'est la vie.

### **Wednesday April 16**

If the emperor has no clothes, does that make me a voyeur for looking?

*Good nature and good sense must ever join;  
To err is human, to forgive divine*  
Pope, Essay on Criticism

### **Friday April 18**

Certainty is not for mortals as death and the occasional Titanic remind us. However, it would seem that nothing less than a major miracle will keep Tony Blair from the Throne of Westminster, just three weeks until General Election day (May 1) as indeed the opinion polls have been telling us for almost a year now. Running at a hefty 40%, good politics will see to it that Mr. Blair says nothing that hasn't already been said in the coming days as his new Clinton adviser George Stephanopolous has no doubt advised him. No need to rock the good ship *New Labour*. Not with land in view. And even if John Major appoints everyone from Land's End to John O'Groats to a life peer and not only promises but somehow "puts a chicken in every pot," you'll not hear anything new from Mr. Blair. Only after he's elected, will we discover the land deals, the girlfriends, or if indeed there is anything new to *New Labour*.<sup>40</sup>

For John Major, there are no looming Falkland Wars to boost *his* image. (One wonders why he doesn't "pull a Maggie" by invading some other Falkland-esque Moldavia.) More surprisingly, given that he's trailing so badly in the polls, one wonders why he refuses to

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<sup>40</sup> As of September 11, 1997: 1) whispering campaign leads to the suicide of Paisley Labour MP Gordon McMaster, revealing major Labour Party corruption and subsequently obfuscating the Scottish devolution campaign, 2) ex-BP chairman, now government minister Lord Simon still holding BP shares, 3) foreign secretary Robin Cooke's 4-year extramarital affair exposed, prompting the break up of his marriage.



make himself known—in the seven months we've been here, I am unsure if John Major (or the Tories) are *for* or *against* anything in Europe. Surely, they aren't making their minds up now? Indecisiveness is no strategy I know of for re-election—just ask Mrs. Thatcher. The beginning of the end has begun as Maggie's ghost matures to phantom. I feel a little sorry for Mr. Major, but then don't all politician's careers end in ruin?

As citizens of the Commonwealth, both Sophie and I can cast a vote on May 1—to me a most intriguing choice of date for a Tory government (generally a traditional socialist holiday and day of change). We have little to go by, other than, perhaps, our own Canadian colours, surprisingly not too dulled in the wash. Only the Scottish National Party and The Socialist Party have slipped their campaign literature under our door. So far. The SNP's Sandra White wants me to "make my vote count on election day" suggesting that "only the SNP can mount a real challenge to Labour in Kelvin." Her bit adds that she was born in Govan and is married with three children—in my mind strong credentials indeed to represent me in government. The Socialist Party's Vic Vanni offers something "beyond the empty promises," itemizing the extravagances of capitalism quite well in his obviously less costly leaflet. His polemic includes the statement that "81% of respondents in a November 1995 Gallup opinion poll thought there was a class struggle in this country." He doesn't offer up an educated guess at who the *other* 19% might be.

Alas, I am currently undecided, wavering almost daily between Labour and SNP. At least, I am certain I will not vote Tory. (If anyone from the Conservative Party knocks on my door, I will smile and ask for money. "Just give me the tax savings directly," I will say. "That way we can have *less* government and *more* savings, without spending mega-millions on advertising." Fat chance.)

Certainly Labour are not much different, which would put me *today* in favour of SNP. I want to vote Labour. I really do. (My mind was made up in my early twenties after reading *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, listening to the ghastly put-on posh accent of Margaret Thatcher, and realizing that only by cooperation can we get by—as in golf, it is very bad etiquette to finish a hole and begin the next whilst another is still looking for his ball off the last tee.) But if truth be told, Tony Blair wants to be prime minister, whereas he should want to be *Labour* prime minister. Power, of course, is the reason he'll give to justify the silence, the slick style over substance bedside manner, and the promise not to raise taxes. It's bad enough having to decide who to vote for without the sheep dressing up as wolves. (The red and yellow Labour Party bus just drove by, full of kitted out members screaming slogans, stressing, it would seem, the *party* part of The Labour Party—something they seem quite good at.)

I can't vote for The Socialist Party, even if they probably are a truer, though less socially-acceptable, souped-down version of The Labour Party. Everyone (save for the mere hundreds in The Socialist Party) wants to think that their vote might actually have an effect on the outcome.<sup>41</sup> Now if the Labour Party actually represented *Labour*, there

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<sup>41</sup> Actually 102 on election night. The lowest number of votes in any constituency was 24 (in Scotland; Thomas Pringle of the Natural Law Party Glasgow Anniesland) and 7 (in

would be no need for *another* Socialist party and perhaps, in *another* eighteen years, 81% will not think we are no further along than Runnymede. The other parties in my constituency (which surprisingly includes the Liberal Democrats) have not yet introduced themselves. As far as I know, Swampy, the motorway mole, is not a candidate for election in Kelvin. He does have one very good credential however—he can't see very well after weeks stuck in a hole and would be quite unlikely to notice the House of Lords.

Which brings me to the Scottish Nationalist Party, the one-issue, anti-unity party. There is indeed a problem with a party that by definition is a party of opposition. In the province of Quebec, the *Partie Quebecois* has twice been elected on a separatist platform and subsequently lost a separatist referendum (once nationally and once provincially) and yet *continued* to govern, surely a conflict of interest for any one-issue party. As well, the current official federal opposition party in Canada, the *Bloq Quebecois*, has made a mess of federal Canadian politics, on a scale far surpassing similar Northern Ireland party politics at Westminster. (Imagine if the SNP won every seat in Scotland, lost an all-Scotland referendum, and then continued to sit in Westminster *to debate the business of the U.K.*) The Referendum Party here in the U.K. is easily dismissed as a joke and a disgrace, though they do illustrate that in the event of such a referendum, they would immediately dissolve, regardless of the outcome (one would hope).

Thus, the SNP are not, as Sandra White's literature states, "a challenge to Labour," but a challenge to all parties (even if their campaign bus is actually a small car and their revellers but two guys with kazoos.) Voting SNP is a twain marked to ready Scotland for sea. As for Eire, India, (and Quebec in due course), it is not "if" but "when." If elected in all (or perhaps even a majority of) Scottish constituencies, SNP members would immediately stand down from Westminster and form a new Scottish government in Edinburgh in the same fashion that De Valera and Sinn Fein formed the first Irish Dail. They should then, in all good consciousness, call a Scottish election, in which they would show their true political stripes and we could get back to the business of living. None of this, of course, is likely to happen this time around, but the Scotch should be ready. The water is rising.

So why will I vote SNP? (I have now decided, finally disgusted by the Labour Party placards plastered up and down the streets.<sup>42</sup> Surely an eyesore by anyone's definition?) It is not to meet Sean Connery, who may well vote SNP but is unlikely to share much in common with the regular Scotsman (he could do more if he actually lived *in* Scotland<sup>43</sup>), but because every nation deserves to call itself so in name and deed. And perhaps by the time the UK has been reduced to just England, we can rediscover some non-Tory, more socialist, caring society in line with a real past. Given that Scottish monarchs have ended

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England; Dorian Vanbraam of the Ren Dem Putney). Hell, I could run and get more than 7 votes and I barely know anyone.

<sup>42</sup> SNP didn't put their signs up until the day of the election and were the last to take them down, months later. I was told that each party was responsible for taking down their own signs, the punishment £20 per sign. (One could reasonably surmise that the SNP are not only late, but broke.)

<sup>43</sup> And, hence, he can not vote in a devolution referendum.

up either overthrown or sans tête after mingling with the English, one wonders what Scotland gets from political union with England anyway.<sup>44</sup>

To help me on Super Thursday, I polled everyone I know in Glasgow on their election preference, the results which are likely inconclusive since I only know 12 people. Yes, it is quite difficult asking friends who they will vote for, though no one told me to mind my own business. Not surprising, only one person I know will vote Tory, but then he's from England. He's also in favour of capital punishment and keeps reminding me daily, as do the countless big billboard signs, that "Britain is booming. Don't let Labour blow it." I keep reminding him that the buckets of money spent on advertising could be spent elsewhere—for example, housing. I am also tempted to put my own spin on *his* politics, especially given the wonderful Spring we're having, by embellishing said *sightbight* to "Britain is *blooming*. Don't let it rain." (In my parts, bad weather favours the right—the argument being that the more politically left of centre are also the more (ahem) economically left of centre, and are less likely to go out in bad weather.) Not that even hailstones would help the Tories. Maybe the rapture. It's their only hope, Obi-won Kenobi.<sup>45</sup>

Sadly, advertising has become the only way to get the message to the people. Not one politician knocked on my door during the six-week long campaign. We may live with truths, but we build with symbols. Even the churches have given up the personal touch, their banner on display at Broomhill Cross—"Not a hopeless end, but an endless hope," curiously suggesting that perpetual unfulfillment is a desired Christian state. No wonder they're losing *that* battle. Come on! What with all the politicking going on, how 'bout something catchy like "Christ is looming, don't let Satan blow it."

### **Saturday April 19**

Scotland, a *Protestant* nation for over 400 years, holds William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, Mary Stuart, and Bonnie Prince Charlie as their most cherished heroes—and yet all are Catholic.

### **Sunday April 20**

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To Robbie

If you were doing the Lagerfeld story on Lagerfeld alone you'd be scooped over here since Sir Paul's daughter, Stella, is now the head threader. And so pretty at 25, though she has to stop wondering if she'd be as successful without her father's connections.

I got an e-mail from McIlvanney telling me about Northco's new home page. He loves jargon, but I'm not going to piddle that way. Oh yeah, I suggested he add back issue front pages to the home page, so if he asks (or you suggest) there may be some work there. Send cheque to Hal's Real Ale Fund and remember they call me sheriff here. Oh Herr Gutenberg, what has become of us?

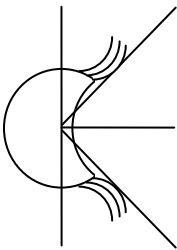
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<sup>44</sup> N.B., the London Monarchs and the Scottish Claymores of the World Football League would seem to describe more than just nicknames.

<sup>45</sup> Stars Wars trilogy re-release opened this week in Glasgow.

I thought a piece of history would be to your liking (because of the pitch invasions back in the Seventies not Celtic's stellar play of the last two decades). Of note, not that you should care—it's been over since New Year's—Celtic lost to Falkirk in the semi-final Scottish Cup and Tommy Burns cried. As we speak, nothing has changed in the league; i.e. Celtic still not officially out of it and thus Glasgow not aflame. Gascoigne's career as an English team player could be over (yeah, right) as one and all criticise his latest one-month party free-for-all in London whilst nursing his ankle. He's also in some big wrangle for slapping a Canadian girl. Tsk, tsk.

Okay, must go. The lads are calling for me to take my shot. I'm in the rough on the eleventh with a testy little left to right four iron. The wind is playing silly buggers with my drives. And I'm losing power from my computer as well, and, there that's it, my cellular's just rung—it's Malaysia begging me to tell them how to keep the big tower from leaning ...



Day 222

### **Monday April 21**

According to *The Express*, Prince Charles boycotted his regular church service at Crathie Kirk near Balmoral for the second Sunday in a row to express his opposition to the church's decision to throw out a traditional wind organ, a present from Queen Victoria. His is an interesting ploy, one which has been used by everyone else in the Christian world for the last twenty years as church attendance tumbles to record lows. I wonder how Prince Charles lasted so long?

I asked around and no one I know in Scotland goes to church (except Sophie). No one I know knows anyone who goes to church.

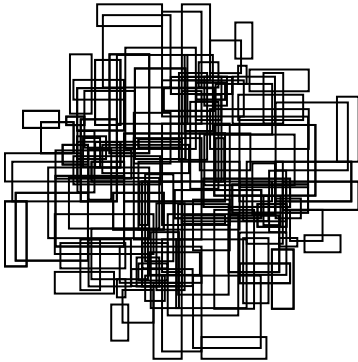
### **Wednesday April 23**

Discovered the best subway art ever at Partick Underground. Stevie was away and I was coming back from Pitz football on my own. Now if we could only fill all the other stations with art.

### **Thursday April 24**

I started thinking of clock designs again and hit on the idea of using the Millennium dome, turned upside down and filled with sand as the 2000 countdown clock. I like the idea that time runs out (as in an hour glass) instead of increasing (as in a sweep hand clock) and wondered if our concept of the world changed with the invention of the mechanical clock. Running *out* time suggests a more religious life view (there is little one can do) whereas running *on* time suggests a more human controlled life view (I can do

anything). Panic, death bed conversions, the Millennium (only 936 days to go), Christmas shopping (only 244 days to go) are so claustrophobic. Life typically isn't.



I decided to experiment for the next few days by describing quantitative things without using numbers. It's late. It's cold. You're driving fast. There's too much government. After two (oops!) days without being able to buy anything, I gave it up. I didn't last long. It was trying. Life crawled. There's still too much government. I did try to barter with my news agent offering some of Sophie's soda bread for *The Herald*. Not a chance. Not one.

### **Monday April 28**

Had a conversation with the lollipop man about the intersection builders (if ever there was a lollipop man who did not want to be a lollipop man, this is that lollipop man). "They should ask me if they want to know how to set the timer. I'm here every day. I know when the traffic is here and when it isn't." I believe him. I've seen him at the corner of Crow Road and Victoria Park Gardens South every day since we arrived, totally bored out of his skull wondering what wrong turn he took to end up a lollipop man at thirty, all dressed up in fluorescent Celtic yellow helping six year olds to cross the street. When I'm bored I watch him. It's strangely comforting to see someone so utterly exhausted by time. (Mental Note # 563—In our future Utopian wonder world, who will clean the toilets?)

### **Wednesday April 30**

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To Robbie

On the news front—John Major and 18 years of Tory rule will be down the drain come tomorrow. Interestingly, Major chose May 1st as his de-commissioning date, a traditional Labour festival day. As for the election here, Sophie and I can both vote and I am voting SNP. She's leaning towards LibDem, though I'm working on her. You knew I would. It was that or Labour but Tony Blair is too slippery—worse than Teflon Bill and not half the speaker. Blair went down ON RECORD as saying he never gives money to the homeless, wearing his heartlessness on his sleeve. On that especially I was put off, referring even Major, whose response to same was "I give one hundred million pounds of the taxpayers money every year to the homeless." Touché but, alas, too late. Yes, Sean Connery has said he is voting SNP again which made front page news as did his son, who is voting for Lord Sutch of the Raving Loony Party. Father and son obviously not talking to each other, there.

Okay, so it's about noon as I finish writing (7 a.m. your time). Tomorrow, May 1 (May Day) is the great big election day (IRA may have their say as well). But tonight at midnight (7 p.m. your time) the fun begins. There is a pagan spring fest thing in Edinburgh, which Sophie and I are going to. Billed as the changing from Winter to Summer (no Springs and Falls here!), it has a fertility theme and all. My name is Starman, hers Opal. Part of the deal is to stay up real late and fertilize everybody (according to tradition anyway). So, I may be called upon to perform my duty for Queen and country tonight. Likely, there will be a lot of drinking, singing, dancing, before we watch the sun rise from atop Calton Hill in Edinburgh (a most beautiful spot indeed), so ... around 5:38 a.m. (ugh) (just after midnight, as you're settling into a nice bit of "Sportsline" on TV) imagine me smashed out of my gourd on top of the world with Opal and a scad of Earth girls and swamp-like motorway-saving ultra-hippies, singing Kumbayah and watching the sun come up ... and to boot, on the final day of 18 years of Tory rule. (I was just starting university when Maggie was first elected!) After passing out from exhaustion, I shall then awake, take the train back to Glasgow (1 hour), walk into my polling station, and, in the loudest damn Yank voice I can muster, ask "Where the hell do I mark my X for the Scottish National Party?" I can't wait.

### **Wednesday April 30**

Found James McGill's plaque after much scurrying about. I had seen it before, but couldn't remember where and only had a feeling of the building and streetscape. Waked all around downtown Glasgow looking for that feeling.

McIlvanney knows we're coming to the end of the Great ScotCan series (MacLeod still to come), but he hasn't given me any new jobs.

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### **James McGill**

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*born Glasgow, Scotland October 6, 1744  
died Montreal, Quebec, December 19, 1830*

A prominent fur trader, merchant and politician, James McGill represented Montreal's West ward in the Legislative assembly of Lower Canada (Quebec) 1792–96, 1800–04. He was an honorary colonel in the Montreal Infantry Volunteer Regiment in the War of 1812 between the United States and Canada.

James McGill would be little remembered if not for his founding of McGill University in Montreal after bequeathing much of his estate and land. Opened in 1829, McGill is one of the pre-eminent universities in North America.

Numerous leading figures have studied, taught, or been associated with McGill, including John Abbott (Canadian prime minister 1891–1892), James Collip (insulin pioneer), Lawren Harris ("Group of Seven" painter), Wilfred Laurier (Canadian prime minister 1896–1911), Hugh MacLennan (author), James Naismith (basketball inventor), and Ernest Rutherford (physicist).

In his honour, the following plaque was placed on the outside wall of his house on Stockwell Street (below Trongate between a post office and a William Hill).

ON THIS SITE  
STOOD THE HOUSE  
IN  
WHICH WAS BORN  
IN THE YEAR  
1744  
JAMES MCGILL  
FOUNDER  
OF  
MCGILL UNIVERSITY  
MONTREAL  
CANADA

*"One day, when Christopher Robin and Winnie-the-Pooh and Piglet were all talking together, Christopher Robin finished the mouthful he was eating and said carelessly: "I saw a Heffalump to-day Piglet." "*

A. A. Milne,

The House at Pooh Corner

### **Thursday May 1**

Good night John, good morning Tony. May 1, 1997 will be remembered as a day of change in the United Kingdom, not so much for Labour's stunning victory (45% popular vote, 102 seat majority), but because of Labour's new methods in achieving victory. And none too soon, for the rest of Europe had almost given up trying to rescue Britain from its old-World, old-Boy ideological cronyism. Forget the fall of the Berlin Wall, a debunked and devolved Soviet Union, or a Western Alliance spreading further with every day; even *Ireland* had become hipper and more politically astute than the U.K. As the sensational gives way to the reasoned in the coming months, Thursday's election will be rightly seen as the United Kingdom's entry into the 21st century, along with computers, mobile phones, and erstwhile political analysts. One thousand days early,<sup>46</sup> though well after the rest of the Western World, all I can say is "Better late than never."

There were early signs of change—infighting in the Tory Party, an obvious by-product of too many years in power, and a cautious, though thoughtful new image portrayed by a Labour Party sick of its academic and principled past. Even the election date, heralded by some as a traditional, sacred Labour May Day and by others as a pagan day of change

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<sup>46</sup> Or almost, on the Millennium clock.

from the cold hard Winter to the sweet song of Summer was an indication of things to come. Perhaps, Labour might have won on its own without any modern retooling, but, to be sure, with the launch of the good ship *New Labour* and captain Blair and his *crew* of analysts (*party bad bad*), the tack was set—through no uncertain waters to victory.

Alas, Sophie and I will remember May 1 for the sunrise we saw together in Edinburgh at the end of the Beltane Fire Festival (along with three hundred, leftover from the twelve thousand atop Calton Hill). Like the election, the anticipation was greater than the reality as the sun crept at its interminable pace. My body most unwilling, I drifted in and out of mind as the drummers drummed madly and the May Queen continued to have it on with all comers. Sophie (dubbed Opal for the evening) and I (Starman) plodded on, moving about Calton Hill from fire to fire, dance to dance. For the next three hours we treaded fire and water in the land of Nod. When the sun did wake on this day of pagan change, we smiled at our success and the irony of seeing the sun rise on the Tory Party's final day. Mind you, I don't remember the train back to Glasgow or how I finally found my bed.

From as far back as ever, New Labour was well in front, Old Conservative spinning its wheels in the muck of crisis. The Labour strategy was simple and effective: an immediate inner-echelon review of every Blair performance, ensuring that no one in the Labour Party was off-side with even an occasional differing view, and a rigid scientific way of anticipating the coming winds well in advance of the media even to the point of choreographing what the media might show. Got that Humphrey? In short, a presidential style campaign with the focus on the consistent reassuring character of *one* man. The Tories couldn't agree from one day to the next and had the public in fits without even trying. Not even the likes of Edwina Currie could make it worse, even if she was, surprisingly, telling the truth about the rot.

Did it begin with George Stephanopoulos, the ultra-modern, political media spin doctor, hoisted aboard Labour's new spit-polished ship now that the *style* of politics was being sold to the new consumer, ah, I mean voter? It was the likes of Stephanopoulos and his colleagues in the Democratic Party *war room* who had engineered back-to-back Clinton victories, an almost impossible task given twelve years of the Super Ron and George show in the first campaign and Clinton's ongoing travails against sleaze, corruption, and insider meddling in the second. Maybe, maybe not, but spin doctors of all degrees are most definitely a big issue now.

It was not for nothing that Labour called itself *new* as if a vote for New Labour was a vote for the new Millennium. As if rolling a stone up a hill nine-to-five of every day had somehow become enjoyable. Some will say that the infighting in John Major's party pushed Tony Blair to heights unrivalled in this century. It certainly didn't help. Nonetheless, there were doubts: "Oh, I don't trust him, He's just a Tory in Labour clothes." And yet despite the reservations, Labour knew well before Thursday's election that they were romping to victory. Democracy was being upgraded—*new and improved* like everything else. Pity. There was something charming about a Britain which never went in for style. Even if it was so unmistakably behind the times.



Sophie and I had no trouble finding Broomlea School, our polling station in Glasgow Kelvin, marked "168 Broomhill Drive" on our card. The taxi driver was kind enough to wake us when we arrived. Side-stepping the SNP gladhanders at the front gate, we hurried in, afraid to stop for fear of passing out. I didn't need any more encouraging. With little fanfare, I marked my X for the Scottish National Party, the last name on the list. Even though they lost handily in Kelvin, their six seats across Scotland were double the last election. Anyone with an inkling of exponential functions knows that, indeed, the day will come.

After spending a sleepless night atop Calton Hill in Edinburgh with the remaining Beltane revellers and a still sleepless morning voting for tomorrow's Scotland, I finally found my bed. No thoughts of other elections in the coming weeks (France, Canada, Ireland) or the intersection builders now on two months disturbed my happy slumber.

### **Friday May 2**

Tommy Burns resigned/was sacked? Will the Canadian ever get it right?

### **Saturday May 3**

American becomes a British hero at Eurovision song contest. Will a Canadian become a British hero at Wimbledon?<sup>47</sup>

### **Sunday May 4**

If the Peter Principle applies to us all, is Tony Blair now incompetent?

### **Monday May 5**

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To Robbie

Yes, indeed, it is another holiday in Glasgow; no fancy names, simply called "Bank Holiday Monday." Not great revellers the Brits, they don't do much on St. Andrew's Day (November 30) in Scotland nor St. George's Day (April 21) in England. Now, the Irish, well, life is lived differently there (through black velvet coloured glasses).

Unfortunately my pick, the Greeks, didn't fare very well in the Eurovision Song Contest (some Yanni-inspired electric pan pipe pastoral number with lots of sustained one note synth chords). They did get full marks from Cyprus, though. Britain's very own American born and raised Katrina and her Waves won with an inspiring life-affirming, politically-correct "Shine the light (in every corner of my life)." 600 million watched. Reports are that only nine people puked.

Hope all is well in the big shoe. Besotted with transit strikes or mass anti-government demonstrations lately? You must be delighted that the big chill is over—I don't think I could take another Canadian winter, especially after a year in sunny Scotland. It's 24 degrees and I am as yet undecided today whether to lie out in the park or sip cocktails down by the river.

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<sup>47</sup> No. Rusedski loses to Cedric Pioline in the quarter-finals.

I gave a friend of Sophie's your phone number and e-mail address. He's from France and is looking for work as a photographer. He may call. If you've got the time, could you meet him for lunch or something? He's also trying to line up work in Montreal of all places. We met him in York last week and he's very nice. I can't speak for him professionally, but I'm sure he knows his stuff.

Okay, well, I've decided to play golf instead. I can always drink. Besides, I have to practice for the big Pablo's Pink Jacket tournament tomorrow. About forty of us are getting on a bus at 8:00 a.m., travelling to Crieff (one hour away), and playing a double's bestball followed by a single's handicap. The glittering prize is a "pink jacket." I'm not kidding. I have an outside chance off 15, so I'm working on my speech. We will have a big dinner, get suitably sloshed, and then jump back on the bus. I doubt I will remember my name on Wednesday.

Found some internet scribbles for your review:

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#### Cultural Differences Explained.

Americans: Encourage being mistaken for Canadians when abroad.

Canadians: Are rather indignant about being mistaken for Americans when abroad.

Aussies: Dislike being mistaken for Pommies when abroad.

Brits: Can't possibly be mistaken for anyone else when abroad.

Americans: Believe that people should look out for and take care of themselves.

Canadians: Believe that that's the government's job.

Aussies: Believe you should look out for your mates.

Brits: Believe that you should look out for those people who belong to your club.

Americans: Are flag-waving, anthem-singing, and obsessively patriotic to the point of blindness.

Canadians: Can't agree on the words to their anthem, when they can be bothered to sing them.

Aussies: Are extremely patriotic to their beer.

Brits: Do not sing at all but prefer a large brass band to perform the anthem.

Americans: Spend most of their lives glued to the idiot box.

Canadians: Don't, but only because they can't get more American channels.

Aussies: Export all their crappy programs which no-one watches to Britain, where everybody loves them.

Brits: Pay a tax just so they can watch four channels.

Americans: Will jabber on incessantly about football, baseball, and basketball.

Canadians: Will jabber on incessantly about hockey, hockey, hockey, hockey, and how they beat the Americans twice, playing baseball.

Aussies: Will jabber on incessantly about how they beat the Poms in every sport they play them in.

Brits: Will jabber on incessantly about cricket, soccer, and, rugby.

Americans: Spell words differently, but still call it "English."

Canadians: Spell like the Brits, pronounce like Americans.

Aussies: Add "G'day mate" and a heavy accent to everything they say in an attempt to get laid.

Brits: Pronounce their words differently, but still call it "English."

Americans: Cross the southern border for cheap shopping, gas, and liquor in a backwards country.

Canadians: Cross the southern border for cheap shopping, gas, and liquor in a backwards country.

Aussies: Shop at home and have goods imported because they live on an island.

Brits: Shop at home and have goods imported because they live on an island.

Americans: Drink weak, pissy-tasting beer.

Canadians: Drink strong, pissy-tasting beer.

Aussies: Drink anything with alcohol in it.

Brits: Drink warm, beery-tasting piss.

Americans: Seem to think that poverty and failure are morally suspect.

Canadians: Seem to believe that wealth and success are morally suspect.

Aussies: Seem to think that none of this matters after several beers.

Brits: Seem to believe that wealth, poverty, success, and failure are inherited things.

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### **Wednesday May 7**

I don't remember much, but I do remember not winning. It was actually snowing (!) which I took as a sign, but no go. Won lots of Budweiser and Michelob things as booby prizes and met Tommy Gemmell, though I didn't know who he was. He sure was big. I don't think he won anything either.

### **Thursday May 8**

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To Robbie

Monday: SomenonOldFirmteam 2 Rangers 0; Celtic 3 SomenonOldFirmteam 1 and, thus, all celebrations on hold.

Wednesday: Celtic 0 SomenonOldFirmteam 0, Rangers 1 SomenonOldFirmteam 0 and, thus, party in the streets.

As if there was ever any doubt. Peace, love, and above all, good manners.

### **Saturday May 10**

Not a very heavy news day:

Paul McCartney's love child named.

The BBC will spend £5 million to change to the BBC.

## Sunday May 11

To Robbie

I am savouring your latest, swilling it in the mouth, trying to keep the quench. There, ain't that poetic? Seriously, it's time you quit the day job!

Funny, after thirty-seven years, I too am finding that one of my major objections to Canada is the weather. Two months of bone-crushing cold, six months of waxing/waning chill to/from the two months of bone-crushing cold, one month of excruciating swampy mud heat, with 2 months of louverly spring/fall in between. Here, I must say, I never expected the winter to be so mild. And aside from the very early sunsets in the middle of December, it has been altogether very civilized. We have double glazing, two gas fireplaces, unheard of in Britain's recent past.

Sorry to hear about the body rebelling on you. I won't give you the evangelical ex-smoker sermon, but quitting will help. I will say that, for me, the key was discovering that an occasional break down is okay (a weekend in Dublin or Edinburgh, even for a month in Paris (had to!)). As one who likes to smoke, I can't say I am the perfect non-smoker, though I have gone for months without any. And, thus, if I break down, after a few days I usually get out on the tennis court thankful that I hadn't smoked in six months and quit again. I think I have built up enough mental experience not to think of smoking as an on/off (off/on?) the wagon thing. And now that I am at sermon length and probably making a case for the tobacco companies, I will end by saying, for health reasons, I think the body can recuperate from smoking given prolonged breaks even for only a week at a time. And, yes, there are lots of other reasons for rebelling bodies, the Canadian winter, certainly, or staying up all night to watch the sun rise atop Calton Hill. (Next week's sermon is on the joys of REGULAR exercise. Send your collection money early to ensure full guilt.)

You know, living away from home, I have started to appreciate how lucky we are in Canada. Very clichéd, I know, but true. Even after 18 years of Margaret Thatcher with a wax job to look like John Major for five, I can't believe how stupid some things are here. The "Cultural Differences Explained" are agonizingly true. However, aside from some pretty glaring irregularities in the service side of things (which can be pretty irksome, because they are so anathema to a coddled Canadian) it can be very rewarding here. One example of out-and-out silliness: at my FIRST travel agent, when she handed me the ticket in a package with a form for a lottery ticket, I politely told her that I did not want the "free" lottery ticket form. When she instructed me that "it was a company promotion and that she was required to give it to me" I reminded her that I did not purchase a lottery ticket form with my plane ticket. She again resisted, remarking to the effect that my objection was very minor at which point I realized that my wishes (however correct/obscure/petty/illogical) mattered not to her. When I finally (Rule Americana) instructed her that if she persisted in giving me said form, I would cancel my ticket and go to the travel agent NEXT DOOR, she relented. And I've just gotten off the phone with

my SECOND travel agent, who has told me in no uncertain terms how peculiar I am for refusing to fill in a personal information form for their files. (Don't even start with me about BT! If that guy calls one more time after he "just noticed" how I could be making "big savings," I'll find out where he lives.) Mind you, having said ALL that, there is a certain old world sophistication in which I am happy to be enmeshed. For me, just straggling from A to B and gazing at old buildings and lovely gardens or along a wide river is time well spent. Glasgow certainly has its fill. Toronto can't even clean up the rail lands or decide which government-run organization owns them at the very heart of its world-classness. Ah, the new and the old.

As for voting in the election, any Commonwealth citizen can vote in a British election provided they are resident in the UK at the time of enumeration and election. However, we can not vote in a devolution referendum, not having lived in Scotland for three years.<sup>48</sup> After some consideration, I chose the one-issue Scottish Nationalist Party, not because I thought they would be elected, but to give some beef to the pre-separatist referendum numbers. If few people had voted for them, devolution from Westminster would be unlikely. Certainly, I support Scottish independence on its own, though I also see Scottish Independence as a stepping stone toward Irish Independence. (Yes "stepping stone" is a very charged phrase in Irish politics as it should be here, but it's the best thing going.) In our constituency, Labour defeated SNP 16,600–7,000, despite my bright fluorescent yellow sign in the window. They did, however, win six seats in Scotland, up three from the previous election, but are unfortunately the third party in Scotland, behind Labour at 56 and Liberal Democrats at 10 ("No Tories at all" in Scotland or Wales.) To add to the politicking, SNP did score a strong second in popular vote in Scotland (Labour 45%, SNP 22%, Lib Dem 15%) and, thus, want to assume greater influence than their numbers in any devolution talks (i.e. what kind of powers/numbers/makeup will a Scottish parliament have?). It is likely that Labour will call all the shots on Scotland, however, given their resounding majority. To my mind, it is a big set back for separatism and I imagine Scotland will end up with a parliament, but no country. It is now most unlikely that Sean Connery will ever be king. Maggie had the best soundbite after Blair's landslide when offering her condolences to those who lost: "Of course, losing is something I NEVER experienced."

We could have used your astral drum atop Calton Hill. There were about fifty drummers all told and a hundred or more actors/dancers as the "blue men" protected the May Queen from the "red devils." The revellers watched (or leered) as the theatre troupe acted out pagan rituals symbolizing earth, air, water, and fire around the Acropolis. "Beltane" is Gaelic for "fire." We somehow got pushed through the ropes into the "inner circle" during the final ritual (the flowering of the May Queen). I was quite bagged by the end and not at all drunk enough, but partook of the good fun dancing with the red devils. The whole night was completely non-verbal, though one memorable moment had me commenting to a suitably adorned dancer made up as a maid "Ah, one of the virgins." The resulting cackle from said maid was indescribable—starting as a laugh at being so recognized, sliding into an understanding of her innocent role, swishing about in a moment of jousting denial, regurgitating into a demonic thought of new-born fun, and

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<sup>48</sup> Or so I thought, though I was enumerated and did vote.

then erupting ecstatically as a now pent up will. Ten years ago, I might have joined her. My action at a distance did, nonetheless, score me two kisses (one half-naked tree hugging girl and one red devil guy—he kissed me). Sophie and I stayed the night and watched the sun rise over Edinburgh. I was absolutely wrecked the next day and didn't quite recover until Sunday, three days later.

Thanks for the rant on Chretien. We haven't gotten any news about the upcoming Canadian election. The last bit we got was something about Chretien's name being mangled in Washington, but then that's not news. I've always wondered about Chretien—"What the hell is this guy saying?/Does anyone else think he is saying absolutely nothing?/Isn't it nice that we can elect people with no image?/Is anyone else aghast at his moronic speech and style? Having never been a great Canadian, his manner doesn't embarrass me, but what banalities he spews. (I am very careful to listen to the content not the style, wondering if his speech impediment distracts the message. It does not. He speaks with the language of a 12 year old. "If Quebec go oudda da confeddaration, den dat der wadder in da lake still belong to Canada, eh?")

I pity you having to listen to the drivel served up daily as debate. For me, it was fun as I learned the context while listening to the oft-repeated content. One particularly jovial event was a four person debate between Michael Forsyth (Conservative, now ex-Scottish Secretary), George Robertson (Labour, probably future Scottish Secretary),<sup>49</sup> Jim Wallace (Lib Dem), and Alex Salmond (SNP leader). After the usual topics, the subject of a minimum wage came up. If you can believe it, four adult human beings, whose clothes that night probably cost £1000 each and likely all own their own homes, debated whether £2 (if at all—Conservative) or between £3.40 and £4 (the rest) was a suitable hourly wage for the lowest skilled working man/woman. One of the "others" remarked that Forsyth wouldn't cross the street for £2. (I would have added "wouldn't THINK about crossing the street for £2.") Forsyth then remarked that he would indeed work for £2 given the alternative of being unemployed. I won't do the math, but I had to laugh/cry when a man who probably makes more in a month than many do in a year says he would work for £2 an hour rather than be unemployed AND BELIEVES it.<sup>50</sup> Life is indeed beyond the pale. Are we all deluded? Perhaps a part-time parliament with real, working (and owning) people who actually know how much milk costs (sorry George—what a waste of all those missiles) actually make sense. Anyway, that's my £2 worth.

### **Saturday May 17**

Tony Blair said to a rally in Northern Ireland, which included a four year-old girl, "Not even the youngest of you will see a united Ireland."

### **Sunday May 25**

Just read *The News of The World* at the airport. When did the Press take on the silliest of Church lady poses?

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<sup>49</sup> In fact, Robertson appointed Minister of Defence and Donald Dewar (Glasgow Anniesland) appointed Secretary of State for Scotland.

<sup>50</sup> Forsyth joins London based investment bankers Flemings as a corporate finance director on September 4th at £100,000 per year.

## **Sunday May 25**

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To Robbie

Jean Charest still having trouble shedding his Harpo Marx image? Preston Manning still wanting us all to attend church on Sunday? Jean Chretien not atoned yet for the last election's broken promises? Ach well, all is as it should be. You know, of course, that alcohol sales go up after elections—fifty percent for a Labour, thirty percent for a Conservative, and two percent for a Liberal win. All I can say is vote early, vote often, and hope the polls are wrong.

I am just back from The Hague after two weeks of much too much work. Clinton and The Marshall Plan is big news here and McIlvanney has had it in for me since I did that bit on Napier. Sorry to say, there was little to do BUT behave as my days were filled only with work. I did get out to jog (yes, JOG) with a Dutch colleague's over-fifty jogging club. I did suggest a pint afterwards, but instead we ended up in some juice and Musli bar talking about the joys of cross-training. Or at least I think that's what we were talking about. They do this every Saturday morning like clockwork. Happily, the same colleague drinks like clockwork every Thursday evening in a nearby bar so I did manage one drunken night out. Prost! The Hague is quite beautiful. The town is old, the streets narrow, and the canals many. Everyone rides a bike. Sometimes, the bikes end up in the canals, either ditched by a bicycle thief or because of a badly negotiated turn after one of those Thursday night's out.

Since we don't have a TV (though neither do the Brits really), we don't get any hockey or baseball scores. Thanks indeed for the updates. I don't mind at all being reminded of the bad choices in my life. Luckily, my stint in the Hague coincided with the World Hockey Championships so I gorged on the final—six o'clock on a Tuesday night, which probably propelled hockey just past team darts in Euro-popularity. Nobody in The Hague noticed when WE won. Wasn't the last time WE won during the war, when the Canadian RAF pilots played for Britain?

Summer plans seem unlikely to take us to Canada this year, though Sophie has been thinking along those lines. She's been working non-stop since we arrived and desperately in need of some home cooking. I've been quite remiss in that category. She still has exams and her placement (two weeks with the Victoria and Albert!) in early June and we're planning a short respite afterwards on nearby Arran island or maybe a little further afoot on Orkney or Shetland. The Christie's job didn't pan out, unfortunately, though, to be honest, I didn't fancy living in the centre of the madness.

Anyway, I'm quite nackered from my two weeks away and it's almost 10 o'clock though the sun has yet to set. Funny, it wasn't so long ago when I was crying for that self-same sun.

## **Monday May 26**

Mohammed Sarwar (Labour MP, Glasgow Govan) in very heavy sand over allegations he paid an election opponent to take a dive.

Allegedly, Sarwar paid £5000 to independent Labour candidate Badar Islam. To my mind, £5000 is a paltry sum to fix an election. Mind you, they are both Muslim (in fact, Sarwar is the first ever Muslim Member of Parliament in Britain) and so likely the argument would be that they would split the vote—a dubious argument at best, given that independent candidates can't even get elected to take the garbage out of their own homes let alone to Westminster.<sup>51</sup> A quick look at the results in Glasgow show

George Easton (Rutherglen Ind Lab) 812 of 32,802 (2.5%)

Badar Islam (Govan SLI) 319 of 32,242 (1%)

Alan Milligan (Anniesland UK Ind) 86 of 33,879 (1/4%)

### **Tuesday May 27**

It seems highly unlikely that the first EVER Muslim MP in Britain should also be corrupt. When one thinks of the long and winding trek a Muslim must take to get elected in a predominantly non-Muslim culture, one could easily think that, just the opposite, Mr. Sarwar is an exemplary citizen.

Factor in the measly £5,000 for the alleged bribe (compared to hundreds of thousands in your typical political scandal), one must then be prepared to believe that Mr. Sarwar is both the best and worst con man at the same time. It seems fanciful to think that the charges are anything but shameful lunacy.

### **Wednesday May 28**

Sophie and I not firing on all cylinders. It's been almost nine months.

E-coli death toll now at 32. Still no one has accepted any responsibility for the deaths. (Government knows they're all old people and wouldn't have voted in the next election anyway.)

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### **John James Rickard MacLeod**

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*born Cluny, Scotland September 6, 1876*

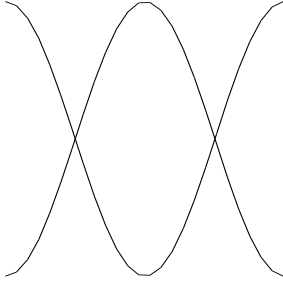
*died Aberdeen, Scotland, March 16, 1935*

*emigrated to Canada at the age of 42 to teach at the University of Toronto*

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<sup>51</sup> Martin Bell (Tatton Independent) of course the notable exception.





John MacLeod was a physiologist and teacher of carbohydrate metabolism. After beginning his career at Western Reserve University, where he taught for 15 years, he was appointed associate dean of medicine and director of the physiological laboratory at the University of Toronto in 1918. In 1923, MacLeod won the Nobel prize in Physiology/Medicine with Frederick Banting for the discovery of insulin, the pancreatic hormone used to treat diabetes. The much sought after discovery of insulin was a tremendous medical breakthrough.

Under MacLeod's auspices and in his lab at the University of Toronto, the physician Banting and his student assistant Charles Best began investigating methods of isolating secretions of the pancreas in dogs as a means to producing insulin. Insulin is a protein which regulates the metabolism of carbohydrates, fats, and starches in the body. In 1921, their work led to the isolation and preparation of insulin and the Nobel prize. After Banting shared his Nobel honours with Best, MacLeod shared his with James Collip, the biochemist who first purified the production of insulin for injecting into humans.

The legacy of the discovery of insulin is long-lasting as insulin was the first protein to be deciphered (1935) and the first human protein to be synthesized (1965).

In 1928, John MacLeod returned to Scotland to teach at the University of Aberdeen. His books include *Practical Physiology* (1902), *Fundamentals in Physiology* (1916), and *Physiology and Biochemistry in Modern Medicine* (1918).

### **Sunday June 1**

Donovan Bailey wins \$1 million against Michael Johnson in a 150-metre match sanctioned by the IAAF. That's IAAF as in International *Amateur* Athletic Federation. The next day, the International Olympic Committee convened in Tahiti. After a week-long, in-depth study, they formally requested that the word "amateur" be changed in *Webster's Dictionary* from "one that competes in sports or athletics for pleasure rather than financial gain" to "anyone *called* an amateur by friends, family, or money-grubbing athletic federations." They were told to "go jump a fence if you can you fat cats."

### **Tuesday June 3**

All wisdom begins at the end.

### **Wednesday June 4**

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To Robbie

So, the die, er, votes have been cast and Jean the Man has pulled another lapin from da chapo, eh? Clever guy (pronounced ghee), dat der ghee. The election did not make the cover of any newspaper here, though I did overhear one news report refer to Canada now as a noun following the adjective "Balkanized." There is even a rumour going around that, apres-ski, Western Canada will be called "Ca," Ontario "Na," and Quebec and Eastern Extremities "Da." Everyone is trying to save on overhead in the new Nineties. Okay, so I'm the only one spreading the rumour as I am sorely in need of mid-afternoon talk show therapy. I almost bought a TV yesterday. Help.

Analysis: Although the urine samples have not yet been tested, it is safe to say that the country has divided itself neatly into regional political blocks. Perhaps this is the future of Canadian federalism (world federalism)? And John Christian floats above it all, held aloft by the warm updraft of public opinion.

"It isn't necessary to imagine the world ending in fire and ice. There are two other possibilities: one is paperwork, and the other is nostalgia." Frank Zappa

P.S. The word 'sabotage' came from some crazy Dutch worker who felt he was being unfairly treated and threw one of his clogs in the machine he was working on. The 'sabot' as it was called thus gave us the term we all know and love.

### **Friday June 6**

I don't know how it started, but Sophie and I haven't been talking to each other for a week now. Well, I do know how it started, but it's too early to psychoanalyze our marriage problems—she's in the middle of exams and we've been down this road before. Besides, I don't mind sleeping on the couch. It's my turn anyway.

Surprise, surprise, I ran into Sophie coming out of the *gft*. Not as symbolic as one might think since I go there practically twice a week and it was a Friday. I asked her how her exam went, but didn't wait for an answer (she always does well) and didn't stop to chat (not a power play but an indication that my meager agenda was somehow important too). I admit I felt like some typical male specimen out of *Cosmopolitan*, but I didn't see why after her exam was finished, after she had seen *her* movie, after *her* ducks were in a row, we should now talk and, to boot, all because of some happenstance passing. There was a reason why we weren't talking and until that reason was properly addressed, I had nothing to say.

The movie *Men, Women: A User's Manual* unfortunately didn't live up to its title. I still don't know how it works.

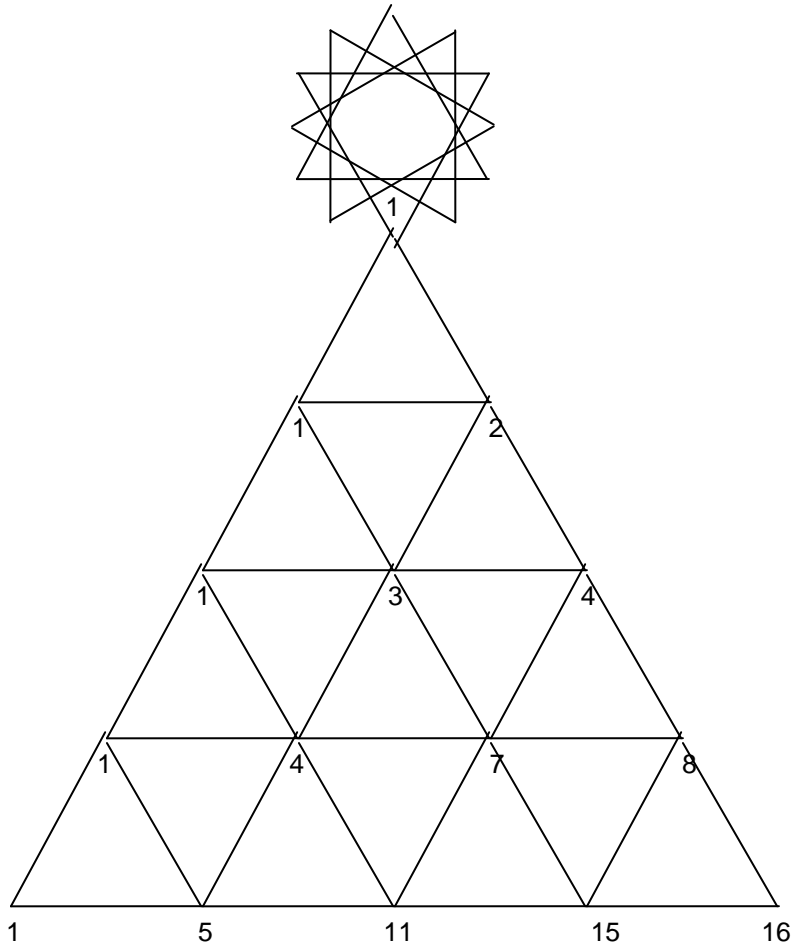
As I left the *gft*, I was all prepared to give the begging guy outside a five pound note as a small offering (something I do when Sophie and I see more down than up). Alas, the guy that's always there wasn't there.

### **Saturday June 7**

You can't wash all your clothes without getting naked.

*I do nothing that a man of unlimited funds, superb physical endurance,  
and maximum scientific knowledge could not do.*

**Batman**



**Sunday June 8**

The clergy are still pretending that Charles' absence from church (6 weeks running now) is some kind of one-off thing. Amazing how one can fetch an old suit from the attic and notice a few buttons missing, but not see it is in tatters and three sizes too small. The Queen is also condemned for continuing to grant Royal Warrants to tobacco companies  
Must be open season on Royals.

**Monday June 9<sup>52</sup>**

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<sup>52</sup> Hollywood's *Batman and Robin* opened around the world this month. It was universally panned. One young boy was so unimpressed that he was overheard commenting halfway through a test screening, "Mom, I don't think I want to watch this anymore."

It must be unbearable being Royal. All those diamonds to count, horses to mount, hands to shake, smiles to fake. Forget the immense wealth, the every day obsequiousness, the common coddling, who could stand being scrutinized every moment of every day—one's totality of one's life exposed—for *all* to see? And going on ten centuries now, since that *first* royal feud sent Guillaume flying from Falaise, though without today's misbehaving Press.

I suppose how one's betters behave is paramount to a prurient society. To be sure, we judge ourselves by judging king and queen. Not that this day or week or year or century has seen any more or less in the way of diminutive Royal performance. It's pretty hard to outdo skewering Scotland, separating the head and body of one's wife, or throwing away America. None have over-taxed, started up their own religion, or fled a comfy throne for decades, though one has recently forgotten to attend his church. Tsk, tsk.

A little luck might find any one of us in fancy pants. By my calculations, more than just bonnie Prince Charlie's latest legacy (who by last report was living, appropriately enough, in Nova Scotia) has a decent claim of Royal blood. In fact, without strangling the arithmetic too much, I put the number of relatives of the Queen at 50 million; more than half of all of Britain. And given that William the Conqueror probably did some conquering on his own away from prying eyes, the numbers could well be higher.

By the numbers, Queen Elizabeth (0 of Ireland, I of Scotland, II of England) is just one of the G4<sup>53</sup> children of Victoria (over 800 descendants), one of the G10 children of Mary Queen of Scots (impossible to know how many), one of the G20 children of Edward Longshanks (more impossible to know how many), and only one of the surely millions of G29 children of *Guillaume Conquerant*. Interestingly, she is not directly related<sup>54</sup> to the biggest dipper of them all (though no one legitimately is despite his vainglorious attempts and six wives), her Royal English namesake, the Scots King who lost his head in catechism, or the Dutchman who married for a cause but died without a charge.

So why the fascination with what has become not only irrelevant (Queen not even asked to meet President Clinton on his recent visit to see Bill, Cherie, and Humphrey the cat), but nothing more than a lottery sweeps? Is it to dress up in the silk and gold of another's clothes, aided and abetted by an over-licensed Press who'll be sure to show it all? To dance the mambo with a designer, play polo with a prince, seek clemency from a sheik? Everybody can be Queen for a day, if only to escape a life on *Oprah*.

So be it, for the times have changed. Not since Charles I has a monarch set foot in Parliament. Today's Royal is nothing more than tourist glue without public purse, something less than ever imagined. And yet, what sets King or Queen apart from all of us (what has *always* set them apart, enshrined in the spirit of centuries of imperial vicissitudes) is that a monarch is a *servant*—a divine servant of God. His was a role passed down from generation to generation with religious purpose. Kings and queens

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<sup>53</sup> G4 = great great grand child and thus *four* generations.

<sup>54</sup> By primogeniture, since otherwise we are, everyone of us, of course, related—from the lowliest stable boy to the loftiest multi-billionaire queen.

serve God or so we're told; The Protector of The Faith and all that. One wonders, then, if this anointed role is to be disposed, whether a monarch should have any rights at all. To paraphrase one of the Scotch variety "No God, no king." And if no king, then no subject and *king* becomes but a silly name for fools to utter.

Thus Charles 2BIII, who believed he married for beauty a woman more in love with skin and dress than with soul and matters consequential—and divorced her just the same—will upon his coronation enter the Church of England as head of that church not only an admitted adulterer but more odious as a relaxed member (i.e. not really a Christian). *Pomp and Circumstance*, it would seem without the circumstance. Methinks the Church of England has become somewhat empty in its cannon. In olden days, unholy views of such a holy family were easily dismissed. As Charles 2BIII's day draws near would that he could utter without tabloid fear "Will no one rid me of this turbulent Press?"

### **Tuesday June 10**

If the voice on the other end of the phone sounds like a computer, it is.

### **Wednesday June 11**

Sophie's finished her last exam and started packing when she came home. I guess it was a little more serious then I let on.

### **Thursday June 12 (Bloomsday)**

A tide began to surge beneath the calm surface of Stephen's friendliness.  
—This race and this country and this life produced me, he said. I shall express myself as I am.

A *Big Issue* seller up on a spot of trouble allegedly earns £100 per day (more than 200 issues/day) and spends £40 per day on drink (about 18 pints at my local). I won't bore you with the Fermi math, but £40 per day on drink?—it's a wonder the guy could stand let alone sell. That is, of course, if the allegations are true, which they aren't. He claims "The most I've sold in any one day is 40." Sounds about right to me.

### **Friday June 13**

Rotarians come to town. I wonder if they're all related? Elections won this month by Jospin (France), Chretien (Canada), and Ahearne. (Ireland) I wonder if they're all related?

### **Saturday June 14**

We both made a list on the day she left. You can't accuse us of being anything less than dramatic:

#### Sophie's List

I can't be your social convenor.  
I like my independence when you're away.  
I can't help it if you're not happy.  
I'm busy and that's the way it is.

#### Hal's List

I'm stuck at home/office all day.  
A marriage is between two people.  
Life has its ups and downs.  
No one said it would be easy.

I can't see to all your needs.  
Why are you always right?

Why is our agenda your agenda?  
Why are you always right?

It really is as bad as all that. We should have seen a counselor. That day, I played golf with Stevie to kill my mind from thinking. On the second hole, I scored a five and Stevie marked a six. "It was a five," I reminded him. "Okay," he said uncertainly. We were watching the last of the group in front play their tee shots to the par three at Dougalston. The first missed left, catching the bunker, the other's shots all found the green. I recounted the last hole in my mind; *One to the right of the tree, two through the green into the now wilted Rhododendrons, three duffed, four past the pin, five tapped in.* "It was a five."

Stevie smiled, his pencil hovering over the card.

"Look either it is or is not a five. Right?" I continued. "I don't need any charity." He had won the hole anyway with a four.

"Whatever you say Hal." We were to play through, but I waved the group in front of us leave.

Maybe he was having a bad day? I don't know. Every one's entitled to a bad day. Even if my bad day was the baddest bad day going.

"Not *whatever I say*. It was a five."

We were playing tennis now as I tried to keep my grip on the slipping reality. Sophie was in the process of moving at this very moment and would likely be gone when I got back. I hadn't told Stevie.

"Look. I don't care what it is. But it either *is* or *is not* a five. Not a five because you don't want to agree with me. Not because it doesn't matter to the score anyway. Not because you want to race around a golf course. It's a five because IT IS A FIVE."

At least I shook his hand before I left—it wouldn't be a complete impossibility to sort out when better heads prevailed. And the train ride back wasn't too bad—straight down from McIlvanney's beloved Milngavie to nearby Hyndland. I didn't even mind the comments from the interested well-wishers, "Good round? Lovely day for it?" How would they know?

At least, Sophie was gone when I got back as per plan, her keys resting under the mail slot. All she left was a forwarding address care of the university (I insisted she not tell me where she was going) and a note, "Maybe Broomhill was a little too far out." I tried not to think about it.

It will all end up in *The Glasgow Diaries*. To Sophie<sup>55</sup>

The long and rambling letter—why not? I write everyone else, I might as well write you. It's all fodder for the electric cannon. (Though, I'll try not to use the backspace ... very much.)

So many things ... Stevie and Brian, so kind they don't even seem to try. You think two friends are enough for me, though I don't know why. You can't count our friends back home. Not here. Not now. Not when I can't hold onto anything. Not when I'm alone.

How could you tell Henri that Robbie would get him a job if he went to Montreal? All he said is that he would make some calls. But no matter. I had reason to be angry then, but it doesn't matter now. You are you (bold and unthinking at times) and I am me (hyper sensitive and caught up in a nightmare of a beautiful place with almost nobody). I don't even check the phone for messages anymore.

I did have a life once. And now I make money for McIlvanney in my futuresque office-home. And try to write, though I'm getting scared as hell, because it's not bad and I can't stop wondering what I will have to sacrifice THIS TIME. Either I make money writing for him or go broke writing for me. Again. Some choice. Living to keep from dying. Working to keep from living. All the while deluding myself that writing about the Kraft Cheese slice of life is any different than being a part of it. Hoisted by Heisenberg again, thinking that somehow in Scotland I could be apart and a part. Who am I kidding? I am a peasant—an educated, electrified, day glo peasant. Get your lottery tickets here. Step right up. You too may be a winner. Cash. Fucking cash. Always fucking cash.

What's this got to do with you? If we were to have a marriage, you would have to recognize that I too have a universe of futures in my mind, some that make sense and some that need filtering. (I daren't call them dreams anymore.) So you've got your goals. Fine. I have goals too, not unlike your own and which matter just as much to me. Songs abound right now as I twiddle *The Zombies* into focus—"She's Not There." Okay, this is starting to sound sorrowful. It is not. It is pragmatic. I live alone, so I might as well be alone. I know you are busy, but we must make a life together. Circumstances will always be ... circumstances.

We are neither of us strong enough to stay. I called you Wednesday night to see if you wanted to come out for a drink—just a sort of low-key, end of exam congratulations thing. It's not your fault, of course, but you weren't there. ("So let me tell you about her ...") Where do I go to find you? Bumping into each other at the *gift* is not enough (symbolic, maybe, but not real). And now you're off .... ("The way she highlights the colour of her hair ...") "It's too late to say I'm sorry, how would I know, why should I care ..."

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<sup>55</sup> A note I left for Sophie the night before she left. She didn't get it because she stayed out all night celebrating after her last exam. (I *assume* that's why she didn't come home.)

Perhaps the smokeless psychologist was right—Broomhill is a little too far out? Had we prepared ourselves, maybe it would all be different ... though how could we?

Not very romantic, but here is my poem, my plight:

This computer thang

I really have  
been at this  
computer thang too long

Sometimes when I lift the toilet seat  
I expect the light to go on

When I snap my fingers (snap)  
I wonder why I can't  
hear the rattle and hum.  
What have I become?

My brain is etched with  
Dancing Cursors  
My eyes are All Ablaze

I really have been at  
this computer thang too long

According to *The Herald*, poverty was up 50% under Thatcher's Tory rule (1979–1991). The figures stated that 14.6% of Britain lives in poverty. To put that in real numbers, 1 in 7 live in poverty. One in seven. 1/7. ONE IN SEVEN. You don't want to know about countries less fortunate than Britain. You don't. You really don't.

**Sunday June 15**

Got exceedingly drunk watching the whole of the US Open last round with Stevie and Graham on the big screen at Pablo's. For those who wonder how anyone can sit and watch six hours of golf on television, let me say that professional golf is the slowest, most exquisite horse race—it takes four days to run. For those, who don't understand horse racing, well, I see your point. Almost cried when Monty stumbled at the second last rail, missing that damned easy six foot putt. Hell, I miss damned easy putts like that.

Managed to insult only one Rotarian; an American named Tex who for some reason was convinced I was from Dunfermline. There isn't enough lager in the well to make me sound like I'm from Dunfermline. I've never even been to Dunfermline. Well, at least he didn't refer to Canada as the 51<sup>st</sup> state.



Was happy to sleep in my bed again. I suppose by getting drunk, I was trying not to think of Sophie. By grafting the depth of feeling onto Monty, I was somehow allowing myself to live. Disappointment, disillusionment at a distance.

### **Monday June 16**

Very uncertain what to do now, so I started smoking again—always a friend when needed.

### **Tuesday June 17**

A pusher sells drugs on the streets. A pharmacist prefers the shopping mall.

### **Thursday June 19**

Record number enter British Open (2,133) at Royal Troon—215 more than last year's record at Royal Lytham and St. Annes. 94 players are exempt. "You the man" to be shouted a record number of times. Current line at Ladbrokes is 3–1 that "You the man" will be uttered more than 5,024,140 times.

### **Friday June 20**

Ronald McDonald goes home after sitting on Helen Steel and David Morris for 314 days. Though the judge ruled in favour of McDonald's in the estimated £10 million trial (or more than 5 million Big Macs worth), the judge upheld three of their allegations in their six-page leaflet *What's Wrong with McDonald's?* To wit:

- **McDonald's pays low wages to its workers**  
McDonald's "does pay its workers low wages, thereby helping to depress wages for workers in the catering trade in Britain."
- **McDonald's is cruel in the rearing of some of its animals**  
McDonald's "is culpably responsible for cruel practices in the rearing and slaughter of some of the animals used to produce its food."
- **McDonald's exploits children in the targeting of its advertising**  
McDonald's makes "considerable use of susceptible young children to bring in customers."

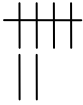
Isn't it McDonald's who are trying to stop a Scotsman named McDonald from using his own name?

As always, it is a fight between those who make money *any way* they can against those who try to live *any way* they can. Of course, some will argue that only in a free and democratic society can we play the interests of the one against the interests of the many, where point and counterpoint determine an acceptable middle ground. But aren't we all just a little bit older than that now? It's a candy shop of madness where the harms

dealers—selling alcopops, over-priced got-to-have every year football strips, kiddie size ten pack cigarettes—find ways to sell us all a bill of goods in the name of liberty.

### **Saturday June 21**

The revenge of Spring is upon us on this the first day of Summer (Day 263) the longest day of they year. Having found it difficult to exist without sun, I am now equally maladjusted by its overbearance. Watching today's sun follow yesterday's with but few hours in between is quite dizzying indeed.



I saw *The Boy from Mercury* at the *gft*, a charming Irish film that is guaranteed to bring a tear or two. Yes, of course, I'm only the boy from Toronto, which only seems like a million miles away. I've been here 263 days now. (Day 7 without Sophie.)

Saw the begging guy (“Spare some money for a meal”), but passed him by. Saw the lady with the baby selling the *Big Issue* on Sauchiehall Street and passed her by. Aye, the pub is on the mind.

### **Monday June 23**

Innu and Mi'kmak protest Queen Elizabeth's trip to Bonavista Bay in Newfoundland. Her trip commemorates the 500th anniversary of John Cabot's departure from Bristol under the auspices of Henry VII. Cabot's New Founde Lande was Britain's (England's) *first* colony. A week later, Prince Charles sails to Hong Kong for a party on his toy boat (say that fast three times) with leading socialites and to commemorate 156 years of colonial rule in Britain's *last* colony.

### **Tuesday June 24**

Delving more into the news and current events, trying not to think about Sophie. Am starting to wonder how to tell our friends, more so in Canada than in Scotland. It doesn't matter in Glasgow, because Sophie never took much time out for our (my) friends. Our lives never crossed.

At least my horoscope was more cheery today after a week of “communication improves with lover as a misunderstanding clears up.” Quit smoking again.

### **Wednesday June 25**

According to *The Express*, a 24 year-old newly-employed worker is refused a bank account because he can not produce proper identification (he doesn't drive, has no passport, and as a lodger has no bills with his own name). I for one would like to buy the guy a drink. Anyone who can stay off the records for twenty-four years has to be a genius.

"TO BE GOVERNED is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated, regimented, closed in, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assesses, evaluated, censored, commanded; all by creatures that have neither the right, nor wisdom, nor

virtue... TO BE GOVERNED means that at every move, operation, or transaction one is noted, registered, entered in a census, taxed, stamped, priced, assessed, patented, licensed, authorized, re-commended, admonished, prevented, reformed, set right, corrected. GOVERNMENT means to be subjected to tribute, trained, ransomed, exploited, monopolized, extorted, pressured, mystified, robbed; all in the name of public, utility and the general good. Then, at the first sign of resistance or word of complaint, one is repressed, fined, despised, vexed, pursued, hustled, beaten up, garroted, imprisoned, shot, machinegunned, judged, sentenced, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed, and to cap it all, ridiculed, mocked, outraged, and dishonored. That is GOVERNMENT, that is its JUSTICE and MORALITY!" Proudhon

### **Saturday June 28**

Millennium Dome now an *experience*. Head fund raising honcho to receive £17 million. If the roof doesn't leak, I imagine all the homeless in Britain could live quite comfortably under such a Dome.

### **Sunday June 29**

*The Times* reported that "the average cost of a diocesan bishop, who is normally provided with a house, chaplain, secretary, and chauffeur, is now £160,000." Of which, one would naturally assume, £16,000 is given back to the collection?

*Any idiot can face a crisis—it's this day-to-day living that wears you out.*

Anton Chekhov

### **Monday June 30**

"Rain, rain, go away, come back another day" is as popular a song as any in these parts. And it does come back—all the time so say the locals, though very little has fallen into each of the 92 days of a most glorious Spring. Mind you, come the first day of Wimbledon the skies were true to foretold form—in England at least—and now everyone is talking statistics and a record wet.

Not knowing any different, I asked a particularly well-imbibed partisan at the Horseshoe Bar<sup>56</sup> what the record was, if there *was* such a thing. (I went by myself after a performance of *Caledonia Dreaming* at the Tron. Sophie would have loved it.) "Ah, ya nae bother to count," he told me between Scotches, the fire mixed with water. Maybe after a lifetime in Hell sinners forget the heat. Maybe after a lifetime of paradise saints tire of heaven. Likely, rain is somewhere *atween* the two.

So the next day, I toddled off in the bonny sky of an almost Midsummer's day to the Mitchell Library in search of rain—the *word* that is. I've been told there were many and I was going to find out just *how* many. If I was to live in rain, I was going to understand *rain*, though from my experience Scotland seems no rainier than elsewhere.

*verb:* bedew, daub, downpour, drench, dribble, drip, drop, drizzle, droozle, drozzle, fall, flood, hurl, jet, mist, ooze, plunge, pour, precipitate, rain,

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<sup>56</sup> The longest bar in Europe, I'm told.

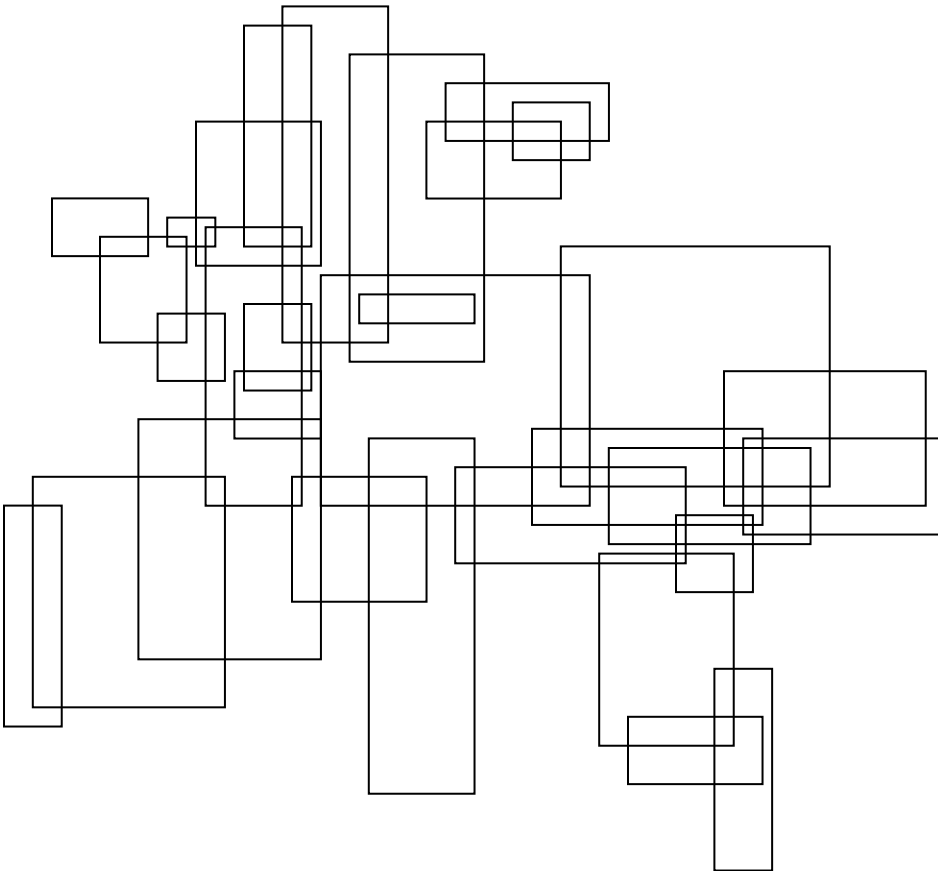
scatter, shower, soak, spew, spatter, spit, splash, splosh, spout, spray, sprinkle, spurt, sputter, squirt, stream, thundershower, torrent, trickle

*adjective:* all-day, intermittent, long, short, sporadic, sudden  
*in time*

*adjective* cats-and-dogs, fine, gentle, hard, heavy, soak, soft, thin  
*in weight*

### Ode to Rain

A lengthy and weighty rain squirted  
a spewy splosh upon the brawlyless.  
I stood and gazed at the shimmer.  
On torrent, On daub.  
Drizzle, drozzle, droozle.



### **Tuesday July 1 (Canada Day)**

There was no submission for the *Canadian Scotsman* this month as McIlvanney and I agreed (for once) that we had run out of great Canadian Scotsmen. I suggested Andrew

Bonar Law,<sup>57</sup> though McIlvanney nixed the idea telling me that no one in Canada or Scotland would know him. He wouldn't go for John Kenneth Galbraith or Marshall McLuhan either since Galbraith was still alive and American and no one ever did understand McLuhan anyway. McIlvanney gave me the summer off to work on *The Glasgow Diaries* (without pay of course). I didn't tell him about Sophie.

Bought *The Sun* for a change. Was interested to see that Mary and Jesus appeared to a warehouseman in his pork scratchings and so soon after a message from Allah was found inside a tomato.

### **Wednesday July 2**

I imagine in some sufficiently advanced culture (not this one), we'll just send our hard drives to get into school, get a job, get into heaven.

### **Friday July 4**

Brilliant Idea #7—auction off 50 *Big Issue* seller's outfits complete with rips and missing buttons for full authenticity. Give all proceeds (after Christie's cut and overhead expenses) to save the Royals.

*Give me a place to stand and a lever long enough  
and I will move the Earth*  
Archimedes

### **Saturday July 5**

Still affixed to the night before, morning came. I was dreaming, my mind twiddling between discovery and white noise. Sophie was still gone. Outside my window, the now up-and-running intersection beeped and cars stuttered. What was I doing here? Was there reason left to stay? Exuberant thuds could be heard in the new café forming beneath me. Soon, I would be eating breakfast there as was my habit in the morning instead of Broughton's or as was my more recent habit the earlier opening Miss Moffat's. Why were there no weekend laws against construction I wondered again as I twiddled back to dream? And then the Orange parade, the tin whistles and the drums winding nearer. White noise filled the gaps.

I don't know where Sophie went. It was better not to know I told myself and, thus, on *that* last day, almost a month now, I skipped off while she filled our boxes with her things. She told me there were too many. It's not easy to write about the break up of a marriage—who knows about such things?—but what she took and what she left said as much as anything. *My* French dictionary, *her* U2 CD, *my* stolen pint glasses, *her* Irish linen. They had all been gifts. They had all, at one time, belonged to the other.

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<sup>57</sup> Andrew Bonar Law 1858–1923; born in Canada to a Scottish mother and Northern Irish father, returned to Glasgow at the age of seven after his mother died to live with his mother's relatives, British Prime Minister from October 23 1922–May 20 1923. He became sick in office and died shortly after standing down.

What William took was 36,000 men to the edge of a river, his small frame on horse back driving them to battle. What he left behind was a considerable number of dead from 21,000 of James's men. Three hundred years ago. James was a Stuart, William a Dutchman and invited king. It matters not that they met at Boyne; it could have easily been the Clyde. "In time," said Gaia to Chronus, "Zeus will eat his children." At eight thirty two, as the white noise bubbled over, about forty Scots from the Local Loyal Orange Order of Water Buffaloes paraded past my window. Presumably, they've been told about *their* past.

I lied. I'd like to know where Sophie went. I didn't *then*. The pain was too great, begging to be left alone to heal in time. She still has her thesis to write so I know she won't have gone far, though there was talk of a job in New York and a trip home. I could send a letter through the university—likely she'll be through those doors again. I guess, I'd rather she call first. Men from Mars, Woman from Venus—who sends the first probe?

Have you heard from Sophie yet?" Stevie asked me as we sat out in his backyard drinking tea, and eating scones in the afternoon, and talking of the break up. The water buffaloes had trundled by, on to Partick to be met by more, and then more in Glasgow Green. (Only 93 arrests for various public indecencies, mostly public drink.) Stevie had asked the same question yesterday in the pub, not to pry but to suggest some hope. We had both forgotten my recent troubles on the links.

"Not yet. I don't know if I will actually," I told him simply as I had before. Two school girls were skipping in the lane. "I'm sure she's all right. She's a big girl. It's not like she doesn't know what she's doing." Stevie didn't seem impressed.

"Is she seeing someone else?" he tried. He wasn't being rude. Our talk was always steeped in ratiom and he was pursuing the obvious course, perfectly legitimate, especially as I had had so much trouble explaining it all in words. It had always been that way in our marriage, one thing leading to the next and before you knew it, no one could remember who had raised the stakes, who had built the first wall.

"Who knows? I don't think so." I thought again as if searching for evidence to the contrary. "I haven't seen or talked to her. I wouldn't know." I wasn't being evasive. Stevie surveyed and I reported, what little that I knew. "Anymore tea?" It was time to change the subject, perhaps for fear of turning the unknown into lies.

"I don't understand," I started slowly. "July 5 is not July 12 and yet there was an Orange parade outside my window this morning. What gives? What exactly are they celebrating? A whole *week* of war?" And after he explained to me how they marched here in Glasgow *before the day* and then took the boat to Ireland to march *on the day*, he poured the tea. Stevie was little interested in explaining more.

He asked me if I loved her to which I replied "Love isn't enough. Anybody can love. *Understanding*, now that's something. If we could understand each other, we could actually love each other for more than just the common reasons." Stevie wasn't having

any of my sprayed on psychobabble. *He* was in love—married with child and another on the way. Love for him had been ordained the moment he got married. Oh, to be so pure.

One could say that Stevie was the Catholic and I the Protestant, but two cuts from the same cloth. To some, love on its own is enough and to others love must be kindled with the truth lest we be taken by our weakest self.

Ireland has been held hostage by lies and Scotland and England have played their part. It is not religion that is to blame. Whether Henry asks "Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?" or James declares "No bishop, no king," we are held up as fools by the oldest ruse in the game. To divide and conquer by lies and *least worst options* is the devil's game, a devil that surprisingly has no power—only lies. The very best liar has made fools of us all. O Capulet, O Montague. Wherefore art thy sense? There are many many rooms.

Archimedes said it best—*Eureka!* What joy he must have felt, an early witness to creation, his mind and body drenched in something as simple as the morn. The water spins *because* the earth spins. And upon his shoulders, James Clerk Maxwell: electricity and magnetism but two lines of the same song. For John Logie Baird, all that was left was to fit the pieces together right side up and voila—television. Far too complicated and yet a fact. Such magnificence summoned to our sides in fits of dream as long as we can stay in tune. The art of discovery is everyone of us our birthright.

#### The Meaning Of Words

terrorist/tourist  
orange/green  
peace/peace process  
exclave/enclave

#### Declaration of Reasons

For the preserving of the Protestant religion  
and for the restoring of the lawes and liberties  
of England, Scotland, and Ireland

#### Simple Simon

Simple Simon met a pieman  
going to the fair  
Said Simple Simon to the pieman  
"How much is your ware?"

**Sunday July 6**

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To Robbie

Hope you got the Ranger stuff I sent. It just, um, er, wouldn't fit in the floppy drive. I got the Ranger strip real cheap because they just changed to their new Nike strip. A multi-billion dollar business this changing of the guard every year. McEwans continue as main sponsor, so if I've got this right, kids everywhere are paying £30 extra just to get the Nike logo on the top left of their kit. If you feel left out, I'll send you a white marker and you can draw in your own "Victory" symbol.

Sorry, it didn't work out with the cheap flights. Hopefully, after the high season, things will be more doable and we can do the scotch up right. Interesting that the high season here is also the rainy season and, thus, from what I can gather, Scotland gets its wet reputation because of a misnomer—that is 95% of all tourists visit Scotland during the wettest time of year.

I am in a bit of limbo since Sophie moved out (three weeks now). As I said on the phone, it had been a while coming and is probably a good thing. I haven't heard from her since she moved (and she's only *half* Anglo Saxon). Maybe, she's waiting for me to come to my senses. I hope not. Anyway, I've been getting out and about not thinking about it (trying) and writing which I have neglected of late. In fact, the writing has kept me sane during some of the worst parts. I won't go into the details, but it seems that life has not quite gone according to plan. Pregnant with excitement upon our arrival, we've thrown the baby out. Presently, I don't mind being an automaton for a while before thinking out any moves, now that my reason for being here has suddenly vanished. No thoughts just yet other than moving closer into town or perhaps to Dublin. Dublin? Home?

Interrugnum: "The name's Rizzo. Frank Rizzo, sizzlechest. Ya, so I'm calling about the job sellin' cars. Ya, I was selling cars dere in upstate Noo Yawk and I had to quit coz I got in some trouble dere wit my boss. That's right, trouble wit my fuckin boss. So anyway Bob, what I need to know is can I sell cars trew you or what?"

Thank you for your "Repetition, the wily courtesan of writers. While Venus to poets, to novelists she is as Medusa." And am glad to hear you have a new lady and that you are keeping your interest in foreign tongues. International relations are so important in these global days. But you forgot to mention her name.

### **Monday July 7**

Betty, the pensioner who lived below us, died. I only knew her to say hello in the close but she was always telling me something about life, the universe, and everything as she saw it. She always asked about Sophie as if we were the perfect couple or perhaps a happy memory from her past. I hadn't been looking forward to telling her Sophie wasn't there. I wouldn't mind now.

### **Tuesday July 8**



Food tends to go rotten pretty fast when you live alone, so I've started buying a lot of "best before" January 2006 just in case. Sophie was a great cook, but I am discovering that I can manage. (Pasta Pesto is the best dish ever invented.)

### **Wednesday July 9**

Planning to release an album soon, Noel Gallagher announces that Oasis is more important than God. Where have I heard this all before?<sup>58</sup>

### **Thursday July 10**

Full page ad in today's paper against the big protest march (supporting the soon-to-be banned fox hunt) set for tomorrow in London. The ad shows a picture of Westminster in a rural setting with the caption "It only takes one house to ruin a perfectly good bit of countryside." To my mind, the new Labour government (as in the, new, Labour government and not the new-Labour government) is giving the boot to the old conservatives (as in old, old, old). Interesting how an historically dispassionate people can get fired up over the strangest of things. It might even knock Northern Ireland off the front page for a day.

### **Friday July 11**

My horoscopes are getting worse, predicting some great upheaval this month. I half thought of writing to the editor to ask how he missed the great upheaval last month?

### **Saturday July 12**

If the Orange Day parade is such a natural, respectable thing, why are there no corporate sponsors? How about Irn Bru's Orange Day Parade? Or the Orange Fanta Orange Parade? Or "Make the 12<sup>th</sup> a Sunkist Day."

### **Sunday July 13**

Prince Andrew compared the floods near Aberdeen which left numerous homeless to the water damage at Windsor Castle during the *annus horribilis*, suggesting perhaps the inconvenience of being put out of one's castle. They really do live in a different world.

### **Sunday July 13**

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To Robbie

I'm swirling whirling from your latest and listening to The Waterboy's *This is the Sea* CD which I just bought. N.B. One could put the emphasis on the wrong syllable and say, indeed, that there is nothing like "a fat package from *a broad*."

And now an ode of another kind, I shall attempt twenty-five words or less on Sophie and Hal in case there was any misunderstanding.

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<sup>58</sup> Six weeks later, planning to release an album soon, George Harrison announces that Noel Gallagher, U2, and just about every rock musician in the world are all ego-maniacs. Haven't had a hit in thirty years, eh George?

It was a mutual thing and was likely down to her being completely absorbed in her studies and denying that our relationship was suffering. Nine months down the road, it was easy to say "genug."

That's my story. Likely, hers is different.

On that note: If a man is in the forest all by himself and there are no women, animals, or anything else around, is he still wrong?

And still swirling: Ah yes, but what of the form of the economy?

### **Monday July 14**

A peacemaker sells weapons to both sides.

### **Tuesday July 15**

Received my first junk mail addressed to H. Cassidy and asking me to "enjoy the full benefits of Barclaycard." I knew I shouldn't have given my name and address when I reserved my Tron ticket by VISA over the phone no matter how much that determined lady assured me it would be used for credit card security only. It's my fault. After thirty years of having my face shoved full of junk from every two-bit huckster trying to sell me a better mousetrap, I should know better. The flood gates are open and I will now receive every piece of junk mail ever made to get me to separate my money from my pocket.<sup>59</sup>

### **Wednesday July 16**

You can't shake hands with someone whose hands are in your pockets.

### **Thursday July 17**

Played "Bluff" ( a Scotch variation on poker) with Graham, Davie, and Ian at Davie's house across from Pablo's. One really ought to learn how to bluff before playing Bluff.

### **Friday July 18**

The Scottish referendum on devolution is announced for September 11, the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William Wallace's victory at Sterling Bridge.

The two questions asked will be:

- I agree/do not agree that there should be a Scottish Parliament
- I agree/do not agree that a Scottish Parliament should have tax-varying powers

I am quite suspect of a two-pronged referendum. Surely, if only the first question was asked, then *that* Parliament could then determine what its powers would be. Of course, it

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<sup>59</sup> So far, Janet Fraser has informed me with great pleasure that I am to receive a Special Cash Award (£1), MBNA Gold Advantage is looking forward to receiving my completed Application Form, and BT still believes that every customer deserves the highest level of individual attention (which doesn't explain why BT continues to harass me with "savings review" phone calls after I have repeatedly asking them not to.)

is not separatism, but devolution that is on offer. Likely, the two-pronged attack is designed to secure the parliament yet maintain the union more easily than might have been possible. Federalism is a step back, not a step forward. Scotland, all 5,024,140 of it, is a spit in the ocean of Europe. Small is good, but only without the infighting.

The Oxford dictionary defines *referendum* as:

referring of political question to electorate for direct decision  
by general vote; vote thus taken.

What if we asked the politicians a few referendum questions for a change to get their thoughts down on paper for all to read? Such a tack may be illuminating given that much political discussion of late has centered on the *process* of politics rather than the more traditional *issues* of politics. At the very least, a politician's answers to a standard twenty questions, for example, could clarify a voter's confusion with the political scene. Who knows—maybe one day, we'll understand why a politician says one thing and does another?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Write a brief answer to the following:

1. What is the most important issue in Britain today?
2. What is the role of government in daily life?
3. How would you begin to clean up pollution?
4. If while riding a bike on a city street you were cut off, how would you react?
5. In your opinion, what is poverty?

Answer 'YES' or 'NO' to the following questions:

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Should an election date be set by the prime minister?         | Yes | No |
| 2. Should a candidate be required to reside in his own riding?   | Yes | No |
| 3. Should a candidate's election expenses be limited?            | Yes | No |
| 4. Should public opinion polls be permitted during the campaign? | Yes | No |
| 5. Are we over-governed?   | Yes | No |
| 6. Do you think that the House of Lords should be abolished?     | Yes | No |
| 7. Are you in favour of the death penalty?                       | Yes | No |

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 8. Should drugs be legalized?  | Yes | No |
| 9. Should private businesses and trade unions be permitted to contribute to politicians? | Yes | No |
| 10. Has freer trade improved living standards?   | Yes | No |

*The business of America is business*  
Calvin Coolidge

### **Sunday July 20**

What a month! Stevie (and Denise and Emma) went to America for a holiday and left me their telly. The Open is now closed for another year. And I tossed the caber at the Kildonan sports day on Arran Island (Jenny and Michael took me)—4 inches won't break any records, even for first timers, but it was four inches away from my toe which was a major success. No need to sweat *and* get hurt. So what if I finished 9<sup>th</sup> out of ten? The tenth guy couldn't even lift it off the ground. The winning toss was something like thirty-eight feet.

Perhaps it was the summer, but the telly wasn't much good. It seemed I hadn't missed much, but soon I was right into it, finding the *Yes Minister* re-runs, *Inspector Morse* on Wednesday after Pitz football, and *Fifteen-to-One* in the afternoons followed by *100 Per Cent* with that guy who never lost. I was annoyed I missed the one Canadian question on *Fifteen-to-One* (Which two countries fought the War of 1812? *Britain* and the United States. Technically correct, though denying Canadians their greatest anti-American glory—setting blaze to the White House.) Wimbledon and Troon were magic and kept me sane during the record rain.

I hope I can be excused for not paying my license. I honestly don't know how, though I suppose I could have asked. (Hi, I am voluntarily informing you that I have a temporary telly. To whom do I make the cheque and for how much?) Mind you, given all the advertisements, I was prepared to argue my case if I was clocked. After three weeks and a ton of celebrity hawkers, I was happy to be rid of the thing. I mean, Dudley Moore selling cat food? Mr. Bean for Barclaycard? Come on? What next?—ex-public servants John Major and Margaret Thatcher making 50 *thou* a crack on the lecture circuit dealing insider secrets? Mind you, they *know* what they're selling.

Jennifer Aniston	Fabergé Lynx
Rowan Atkinson	Barclaycard
Sean Bean****	Sky
Brian Blessed*	Kellog's All-Bran Plus
Elliot Gould	Boston Beer
Burt Reynolds	Dolland & Aitchonson
Hugh Laurie	BT
Gary Linneker/Spice Girls	Walker's Crisps
Heather Locklear**	L'oreal

Joanna Lumley	Müller Fruit Corner and Crumble Corner
Joanna Lumley*	Kay's Catalogue
Steve McQueen***	Ford Puma ("A Driver's Dream")
Kristen Scott Thomas*	BT
Spice Girls	Pepsi
Juliette Stevenson*	BBC

Louis Armstrong's <i>What a Wonderful World</i>	Plan International UK
Bacharach's <i>Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head</i>	Curex
Bowie's <i>Sound and Vision</i>	Blockbuster Video
Some Enya sound-a-like	Boots
Prince's <i>Nothing Compares To You</i>	Admiral Insurance

\* voice only

\*\* dubbed\*\*\* dead

\*\*\*\* at Pablo's on the big screen.

I used to like that song *What a Wonderful World*. Worst of the worst (sans celebre) was the Peugeot 106 ad—the one about the sheik who wants the British tourists for his wives. Someone must explain to me how that ad is not racist, sexist, and moronic. (“If the sheik want them for his wives, the sheik has them for his wives.”) Life in the dark ages complete with flickering shadows on the cave walls.

At least, I was saved the misery of Rory McGrath.

Troon was more fun, especially being there on that perfectly undulating sandy ground near the shore. And watching afterwards on Brian’s video, to see ourselves in and amongst the backs of greens beside the gods. I should have worn a brighter jacket. Brian you could easily see in his yellow and blue striped thing he wore and Gayna and Colin I heard yelling at Greg Norman after he split the green on the 17<sup>th</sup>. You are definitely the man.

I sent back the following to McIlvanney (he had wanted to come):

### MURDER ON THE LINKS TROON

Reigning champion, Loch Lomand winner, born-again Christian Tom (12–1 Dockers hat, Dockers Golf sweater) Lehman, two-time Open champ and Master's disaster Greg (12–1 Shark hat, Shark sweater) Norman, and Brit star, equal opportunity employer Nick (16–1 No hat, Pringle sweater) Faldo never got it going all week. Local favourite, Scotland's own, Glasgow born not bred Colin (8–1 No hat, Calloway/Lexus/Pringle sweater) Montgomerie, bogied his way home on the first day and was well back before birdying the 452 yard, par 4, Unisys, Craigend 18th. After a record-breaking 64 (and Tootenbeck Cup) half-Asian, half-

Black, half-Eskimo, half-god, Zeus-like Tiger (6–1 Nike hat, Nike sweater) Woods ended his maiden professional Open with a triple bogie 6 at the 126 yard, par 3, Nikon, Postage Stamp 8th on the last day. No one remembers who won the Gold Medal/Claret Jug. Amateur Barclay Howard finished tied for 67th winning the Silver Medal. Everyone drank Schweppes and made Xerox copies.

When I got home, I checked my messages. There were none. Sometimes I just want to sleep and not wake up.

### **Monday July 21**

Tried my new joke out at Pablo's to some success.

What's the difference between a woman and a television?

A television keeps you company, costs less, and can be switched on/off by remote.

Okay, so I'm a bit bitter.

### **Tuesday July 22**

Read that some guy bet £100 at 500-1 on Barclay Howard playing all four rounds at The Open and after Barclay Howard did just that, he had his bet cancelled by Ladbrokes. In other words, Ladbrokes just didn't want to pay the guy. Would seem to me to be a job for Government-man (faster than a speeding stage coach, more powerful than a devolved parliament, able to leap bureaucracy in a hop, step, and a jump).

### **Sunday July 27**

I deleted Sophie's folder from my computer. I put her files on a floppy, just in case, but I had to delete the folder to avoid seeing her name every time I opened up a file. It's been six weeks. The following message appeared:



Love American Style—I clicked on Yes.

Sophie always wondered why I was so obsessed about turning off the stove and locking the door. (I'd check both ten times every time I left the flat.) I wonder if she ever knew how much stuff is on my hard drive or that if it was destroyed or stolen I'd become a man without a past?

### **Sunday July 27**

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To Robbie

You know, this e-mail thang is better than a shrink. I love the way it tames the maelstrom of my brain. And here, in my new old world, it is a lifeline to home, to friends. Go Blue Jays go!

I have it down to mind over matter. That is to say I can smoke for four days and then give it up ... again. Aside from being whacked out (more mental than physical) for two days, it's not so bad. To be honest, I can't believe I flirt so lavishly with the devil. I'd love to be able to smoke and not feel the effects the next day or the next .... Ah, the great pacifiers. Where would we be without them?

It is indeed true that Tony Blair can be seen as right of Mike Harris and the Tories in Ontario. Sort of stands the stale old parliamentary model on its ear. Ideal tax rates supported by Blair are lower than what Harris has advocated (and already implemented). Percentage money devoted to Health Care is greater as advocated by Harris and Blair maintains that private clinics are okay. Blair refused to re-instate pro-union legislation, while Harris has moved to create a labour policy which still provides unions with more power than that in the UK. It's all a matter of perception and the existing state of affairs. No doubt Harris is to the "right" on "social issues," but he's really not that much different than Blair in many respects.

Days of empire are long gone. I think many people outside the UK feel it's time for Wales and Scotland to have more autonomy. A lot depends upon the quality of the candidates too. One must have candidates who sell themselves, as well as the separatist message. Do people have confidence that they wouldn't just screw it up?

As such, referendum, in which all good Canajuns are experienced, is the political thought de jour in old England. No doubt the politicians have it all figured out regardless how it all comes and goes. I have a wild and crazy theory that Tony Blair is really after the House of Lords—that is, introduce popular reforms throughout the land and let the House of Lords cut their throats by defeating them. Bye bye Lord and Lady Grand Poobah. Would that we could see an end to that most ancient of yesteryears. Likely not, but one can dream. My understanding of things like the peerage and such is that all of the worthwhile British characteristics would not be affected in the least by dumping this and other anachronistic junk.

Now, and this is the couch part, I am still uncertain what I'm doing here. No word at all from Sophie. Very astute your difference on loving and living in Scotland and Canada. I do not even think of Canada in my future plans anymore. Today, I'm thinking about a

beautiful ocean side cottage in Ireland where I lived one summer when my family was still alive. Nostalgia occupies my thoughts. It's kind of simple, but since I am only a minor polluter anyway (no car, no wardrobe, no excessive toys), I've learned to live without. (Thank you Dr. Caldicott.) SECURING that meager future is the only bother, but it's getting easier ... and nearer. Besides, SKY TV goes everywhere now—as the days of McLuhan begin at last. I might just get away from it all yet.

Now off the couch and into the lectern for my £5 worth (inflation). Britain is thinking of upgrading its foreign policy to a more ethical foreign policy (prompted by the clergy who probably think they're blameless for the current *less* “ethical” foreign policy). Basically, by more “ethical” they mean no more selling weapons to unstable governments which have provided a fair few people here with a rather large largesse. I have no idea if they indeed will stop, but if they do, something else will crop up in its place considered “ethical” by July 27th, 1997 standards though, to be sure, certainly not. Ethics is not practiced in our society anymore. It is no longer an absolute, but has countless colours to suit all dress. They don't even have a minimum wage here. Alas, this carrot and stick game that defines our lives keeps us quiet. ALAS, WE ALL KNOW what is ethical and what is not. Choosing to maintain that ethic is the question! But childhood moves on with weaker bones and even weaker dreams. And since the North-South battle (which Canada's great past prelate warned us about) is on the march, you will see less and less caring. Yes Virginia, I will get that cottage by the water, I will get my MTV, I will live happily ever after on the backs of slaves elsewhere.

I remember the last time I went to Niagara Falls with Sophie and discovered that the Falls had been boarded up circa 1900 to keep the view from being viewed *gratis*. How does ethics stand a chance when wonders are discovered on the backs of pioneers, sold to the highest bidder, exploited until cheapened, rallied against for public control, and then discarded eons later? I would love to swim the Clyde. I am told I would die.

And down the stairs into the comfy chair—now that you have a new lady, I've been wracking my brains for a song reference. It's stupid, I know, but I can't help it. When you had a thing for Donna, Richie Valens' song came to mind (ohhhhhhhhh, Donna). It's pretty silly and not very clever, alas ...

Dear Abbey (John Prine), Adie (much ado, I've got important news) (Kid Creole and the Coconuts), All the young girls love Alice (Elton John), Alisha (rules the world) (Alisha's Attic), Alison (my aim is true) (Elvis Costello), Angie (The Rolling Stones), Anita, Anita (you are a very nice girl) (The Spoons), Anne Marie (Prefab Sprout), Annie's song (John Denver), Annie (get your gun) (Squeeze), Ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-bar-an (The Beach Boys), Beth (Kiss), Benita (Madonna), Betty (Davis eyes) (Kim Carnes), Betty Boo (Betty Boo), Billie Jean (not my girl) (Michael Jackson), Bonnie (and Clyde) (Georgie Fame), Brenda (and Eddie) (Billy Joel), Candy says (The Velvet Underground), Candy (I can't let you go) (Iggy Pop), Candy and Ronnie (can you see them yet) (Elton John), I love Candy (Bow Wow Wow), Some Candy talking (The Jesus and Mary Chain), Oh Carol (I am but a fool) (Neil Sedaka), Sweet Caroline (Neil Diamond), Hey Carrienne (The Holly's), (Heathcliff and) Catherine (Kate Bush), Cathy's Clown (The Everly Brothers), Cecilia



(you're breaking my heart) (Simon and Garfinkle), Chelsea girl (Simple Minds), My Cherie amour (Stevie Wonder), Cherry, Cherry (where you going to) (The Turtles), Cindy (tells them) (Brian Eno), Clare (Gilbert O'Sullivan), Clementine (Mark Owen), Diana (Paul Anka), Dirty Dianna (Michael Jackson), Delta Dawn (what's that flower you have on) (Tony Orlando and Dawn), Sketch for Dawn (Durutti Column), Deborah (T-Rex), Deborah (Pulp), Oh Delilah (she held the knife and I stood there holding the door) (Tom Jones), Oh Donna (she was a sixteen year old virgin) (*Hair*), Oh Donna (10CC), Edda (The Bathers), Come on Eileen (Dexy's Midnight Runners), Eleanor Rigby (The Beatles), Lady Eleanor (Lindisfarne), Elizabeth (my dear) (Stone Roses), Eloise (The Damned), See Emily play (Pink Floyd), Emily's song (The Moody Blues), Emily (Hot Chocolate), Enid (we never really knew each other anyway) (Bare Naked Ladies), You get back here Ethel (The Streak), Hey there Georgie girl (The Seekers), Gloria (G-L-O-R-I-A) (Van Morrison), Gloria (you got me on the run now) (Lora Branigan), Gloria (U2), Helen wheels (Paul McCartney), Sketch for Jacqueline (Durutti Column), Baby Jane (Rod Stewart), Sweet Baby Jane (James Taylor), Damn it, Janet (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*), Jasmine (on my mind) (The Isley Brothers), Jean Jeanie (lives on her back) (David Bowie), Jennifer, Juniper (Donovan), Joanna (Cliff Richards), Joanna (I love you, you're the one, the one for me) (Cool and the Gang), Jolene (Dolly Parton), Judy (Leslie Gore), Julia (The Beatles), Julia says (Wet Wet Wet), Julia's song (OMD), Kelly, Kelly, Kelly (Woody), Laura (Nick Heywood), Layla (Derek and the Dominoes), Lilly (the pink) (The Scaffold), La la la la la lovely Linda (Paul McCartney), Looking out for Linda (Hue and Cry), Lisa says (The Velvet Underground), Lola (The Kinks), Her name was Lola (Barry Manilow), Lolita (The Bathers), Oh Lori (The Alessi Brothers), Louise (Human League), You picked a fine time to leave me Lucille (Kenny Rogers), Lucy (in the sky with diamonds) (The Beatles), Her name is Luka (Suzanne Vega), Lady Madonna (The Beatles), Maggie's Farm (Bob Dylan), Maggie's Farm (The Specials), Oh dirty Maggie May (The Beatles), Wake up Maggie (Rod Stewart), Maggie (my love) (The Charlatans), Mandy ('cause you came and you gave without taking) (Barry Manilow), I'm Mandy (fly me) (10CC), Don't cry for me Marge and Tina (Al Webber), How do you solve a problem like Maria (*The Sound of Music*), Maria (*West Side Story*), Where are you tonight sweet Marie (Bob Dylan), Marie Marie (Richie Valens), Marlena (watches from the wall) Susan Vega, Martha My Dear (The Beatles), Mary's (got a job, she's working in a bank, she's making lots of money, and giving it to Frank, oh Mary) (The Four of Us), Mary, Mary, (where you going to) (The Monkees), Mary's prayer (Danny Wilson), So long Mary Anne (it's time we began) (Neil Diamond), Mary Jane (Alanis Morissette), Waltzing Matilda (Rolf Harris), Maybelline (why can't you be true) (Chubby Checker), Michelle, ma belle (The Beatles), Goodbye Michelle (it's hard to die) (Terry Jacks), I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone (Dublin traditional), (Desmond and) Molly (The Beatles), Mona Lisa, Mona Lisa (Cole Porter), Darling Niki (Prince), Nikita (Elton John), Goodbye Norma Jean (Elton John), Oh Pamela (The Wake), Pearl's (a singer) (Elkie Brooks), Peggy Sue (Buddy Holly), Plasticaw Patricia (Ian Drury and the Blockheads), Dear Prudence (won't you come out to play) (The Beatles), Help me Rhonda (Beach Boys), Rhiannon (Fleetwood Mac), Rickie (don't lose that number) (Steely Dan), Her name is Rio (Duran Duran), Lovely Rita (meter maid) (The Beatles), Rosalee (Thin Lizzy), Rosanne (Toto), My sister Rose (10,000 Maniacs), Roxanne (turn out the red light) (The Police), Good bye Ruby Tuesday (who could hang a name on you)

(The Rolling Stones), Oh Ruby (don't take your love to town) (Kenny Rogers), Long Tall Sally (Little Richard), Oh Sally (I'm not your Daddy) Kid Creole and the Coconuts, Sally Cinnamon (The Stone Roses), Oh Sally (can wait) (Oasis), Sam, Sam (you know where I am) Olivia Newton John, Samantha, Samantha (my dear) (Madness), Sandy (John Travolta), Sandra D (Olivia Newton John), Welcome to the room Sarah (Fleetwood Mac), Sarah (Phil Linnett), Sarah (smile) (Hall and Oates), Saskia (The Bathes), Sheena (is a punk rocker now) (The Ramones), My name's not Susan (Whitney Houston), Suzana (Toto), Suzanne (takes you down) (Leonard Cohen), Sylvia's (mother said) (Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show), Valerie (please believe me, it could never work out) (Roxy Music), Valerie (call on me) (Stevie Winwood), Victoria (The Kinks), What's her name Virginia Plain (Roxy Music), oh Yoko (John Lennon), Won't you be my, be my, be my Yoko Ono (Bare Naked Ladies), and Oh Shirley, Oh Debbie, Oh Julie, Oh Jane ... Oh Cathy, Oh Alison, Oh Phillipa, Oh Sue (The Beautiful South).<sup>60</sup>

The point, if one can feebly be offered, is that aside from trivia always on my brain, what is her name?

### **Wednesday July 30**

The Heritage Minister appears on the lottery to answer three of the stupidest questions ever asked of a heritage minister:

How much does a lottery ball weigh? (26 g)

How many mid-week draws have there been? (26)

What is the largest ever prize (43 million—7 people shared)

I was at Pablo's and wasn't really paying attention, but I think he got two out of three. Wouldn't get him very far at the Monday night quiz.

### **Friday August 1**

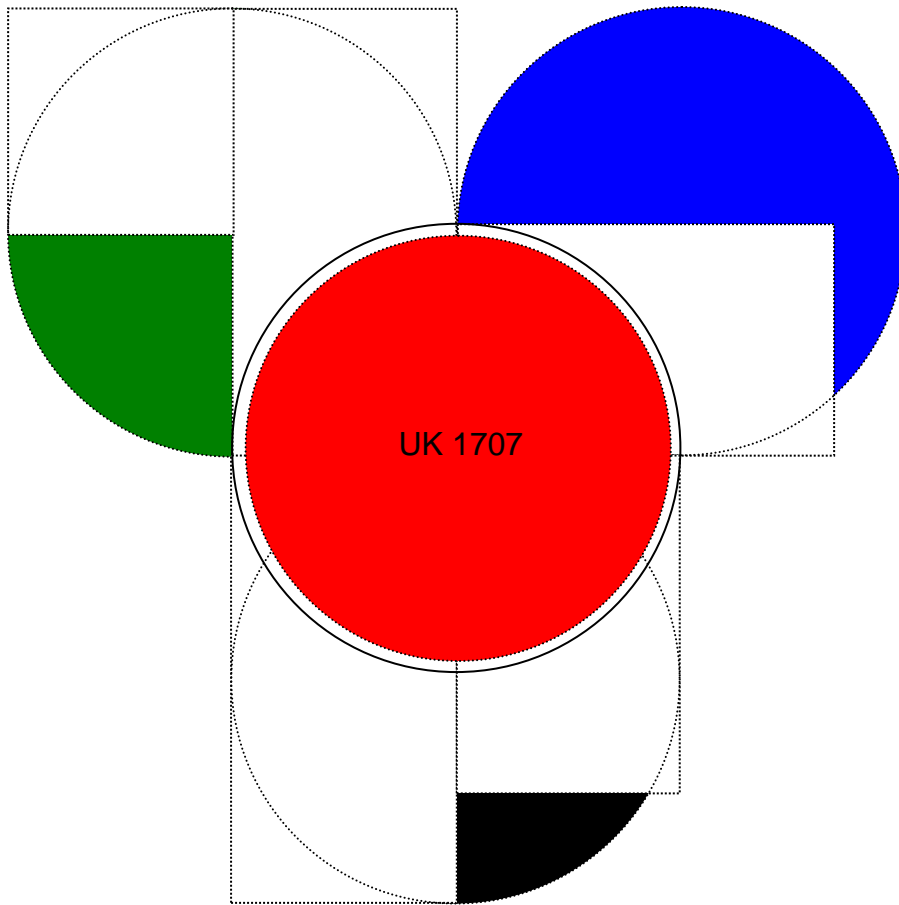
If politics is like football, is Tony Blair the striker, keeper, sweeper, or manager? Who owns the team?

### **Saturday August 2**

The West Lothian question everyone is asking is "Is Tam Dalyell planning to emigrate after the Devolution referendum?" It is a strange separatist indeed who argues *for* the union. Stepping stones are just those—means to an end. Unless, of course, Mr. Dalyell would prefer another 18 years of hemming and hawing over Scotland's future? Act now. Don't delay. You may already be a loser.

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<sup>60</sup> I've not counted Country music, Classical, Bob Dylan, or Shaking Stevens (with a few notable exceptions).



The answer to *the*

so-called West Lothian question is surprisingly simple, when one removes the cloud of unionism from this island—that is, *English* devolution. The problem is that Mr. Dalyell and surprisingly many others do not include England in their devolution plans. Why? Because, as has always been the case, England is equated with Britain.

And yet, England is just one country comprising Great Britain. If England was also to devolve, with the same powers transferred to its parliament that is on offer to Scotland, then there would be no silly little Lothian questions.

You would have a United Kingdom parliament (hopefully, quite small) in charge of foreign affairs, defence, income tax, etc. and four other parliaments in charge of health care, education, and housing, etc. If you will, a federal state or mini Europe. To be sure, a modern state with much less reinventing of the wheel. In time, hopefully this federal

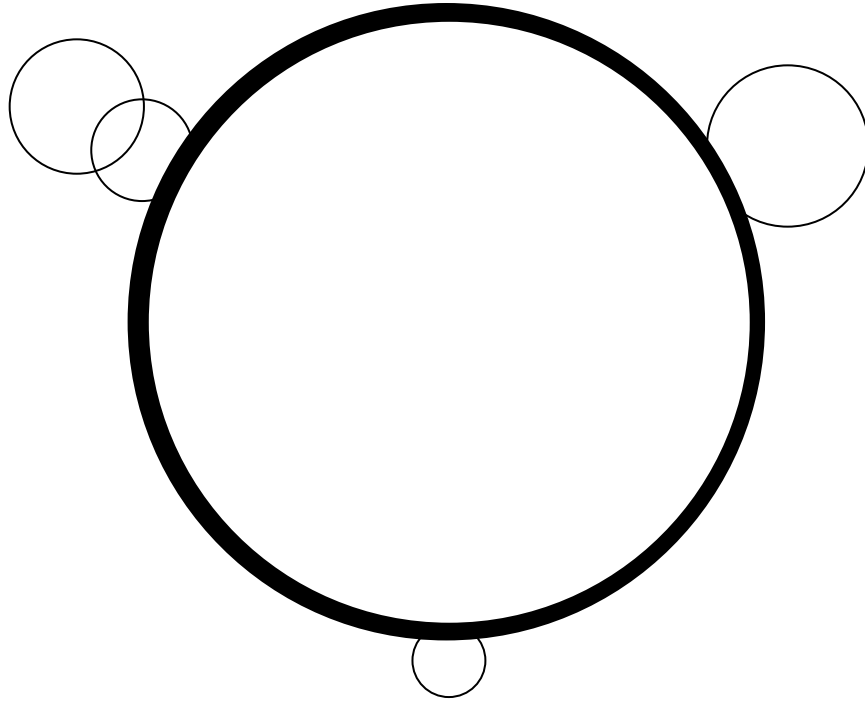
power would diminish and full co-operation in Europe wouldn't seem so daunting. Until English devolution, England will always remain at the centre of the United Kingdom.

It is indeed an exciting time of change in Britain. Let's hope it is an exciting time of change in politics.

**Sunday August 3**

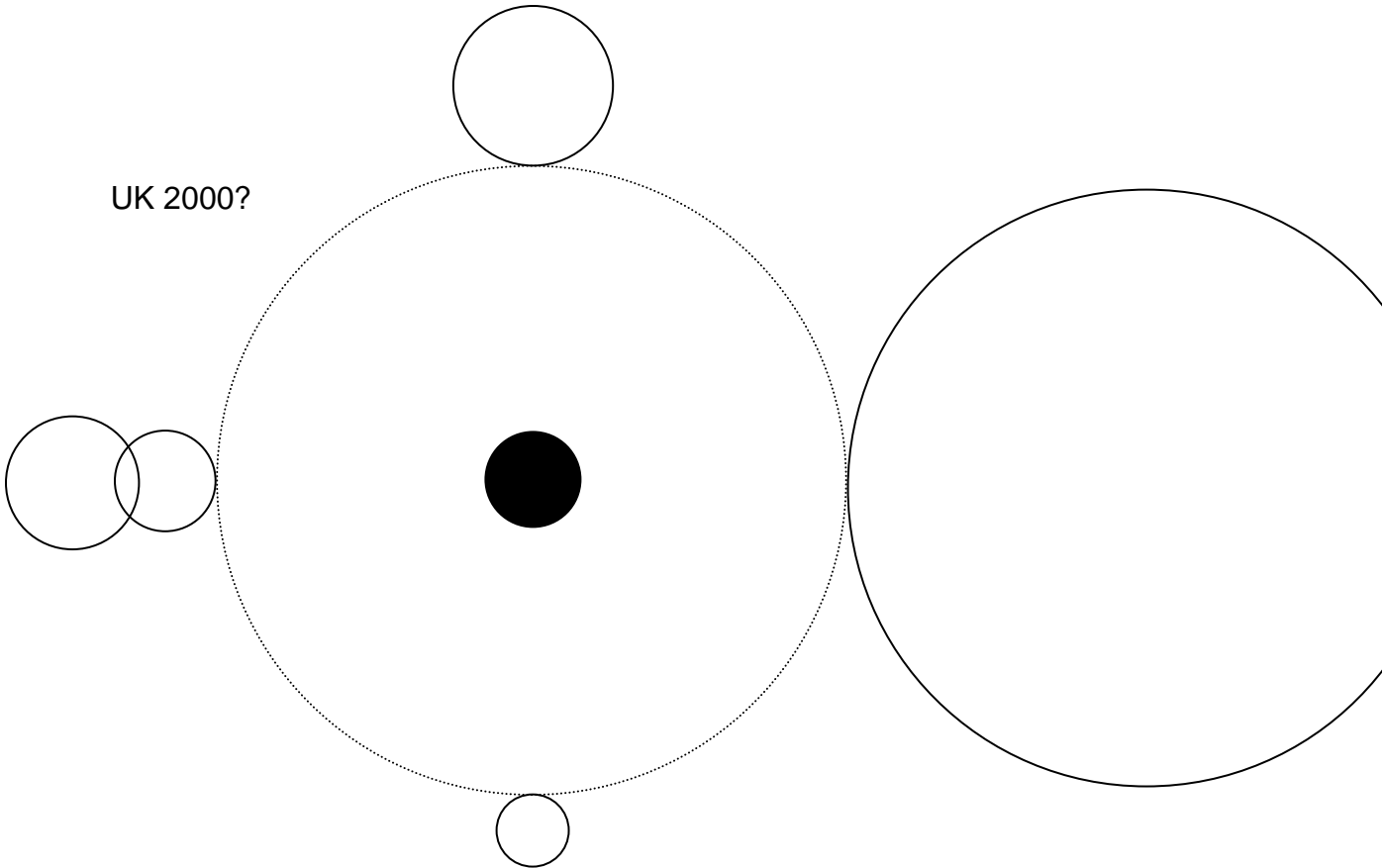
Are "system builders" just playing with Lego?

UK 1997



Yes-Yes

UK 2000?



**Monday August 4**

The Royal Yacht Britannia is to return to the Clyde. To pay for the £50 million refit, corporate logos will be painted on its sides. 2,000 1 square yard ads at £25,000 each will be made available with no discounts for ads below the waterline. Rangers Football Club are planning to buy the entire port side if and only they can be guaranteed that Celtic can not buy the starboard side.

### **Tuesday August 5**

A couple who married in June after winning £3.6 million on the lottery split up after eight weeks. Stealing a line from Sir Paul, Mrs. Joanne Restall commented “The money hasn’t brought us happiness.”

### **Wednesday August 6**

Noticed the new “no smoking” signs on the Glasgow buses.

Noticed the smokers.

### **Thursday August 7**

The summer nights are bluer with each day. I now understand intimately the deep blue of the Scottish flag. Noticed that the eerie blue television flickerings have a similar tonal quality. I looked for Union Jacks, which don’t quite emit the same feelings, but couldn’t find any—the first sign that Scotch voters will back devolution.

### **Sunday August 10**

Two solid weeks of delicious weather. Remarked to the shopkeeper below my flat, “lovely weather” to which he replied “Ah, but how long will it last?”

### **Monday August 11**

Finally, a hazy day over Glasgow after many many sunny and sweet.

### **Tuesday August 12**

Based on research from Glasgow University, a geologist reported that the fish first emerged from the sea in Elgin (looking for a pub she joked) and that sex was invented in Scotland. Still 869 days to go until the Millennium, but anything goes now. Rumour has it now that Jesus was dark-skinned, William of Orange was gay, and Nessie is fiction. Had a drink at the Rosevale on Dumbarton (something I do occasionally when I come back from town via Partick Underground) and wondered if I could wear a Celtic top inside. Oh, it would be such fun to offer up with my accent “Whoops, sorry guys. I didn’t know. I mean, this is a free country? The dawning of the 21st century? It’s just football? Beers all round?”

### **Wednesday August 13**

Asked Willie the manager at Pablo’s if I could get into the Rosevale with a Celtic top. After his bemused look faded, he answered “Aye, you’d get in. I doubt you’d get out.” Eleven months on, I still haven’t learnt Glasgow’s prime directive—no colours. Even a

Boston Celtic or New York Ranger hat (an idea some punters have hit on to break the ban) wouldn't get you into Pablo's, the safest of safe suburban pubs. As Willie told me "If we let one in, they'd all be here tomorrow." I didn't ask if I could wear a Toronto Maple Leaf's hockey jersey—I'd hate to think that anyone hated maple leaves.

#### Thursday August 14

To Robbie

The long faces were long as you could touch the grief in the morning air. I thought someone had died, but then remembered that Rangers had their big game in Europe. Was afraid to ask, but overheard that Rangers lost 3-0 to Gothenberg. I wonder if they can still get all that money back? Overheard another talking as if Rangers would win the return match 4-0. It's hard knowing so much when I know so little. It's hard not to laugh when someone talks such complete pesh.

Turning to referendum news, Sean Connery has agreed to be king come September 11 and has asked that Michael Caine be queen. I'm not sure I'm ready for this. Yes, yes, they make a lovely couple, but no, no, I think we're moving too quickly. One small step for Scot, one giant leap for Scotkind.

Currently not smoking, but wishing I could have just ONE. Am also re-working *The Glasgow Diaries* into a style more to McIlvanney's liking:

1. Make e-mail correspondence to one person—too many people muddles the mind. Had some weird notion that three people symbolizing beer, football, and golf would be the bee's knees. Know my limitations now.
2. Omit return correspondence—to be quite honest, I enjoyed other's writing so much, I felt duty bound to pay homage. They do give me a chronology which is important so I may rework into my own. May have to lift some of the particularly finer moments.
3. Have decided to be a little more acerbic in short-form interspersed between the long-form polemics. Confidence is the beacon. Let the Master's students figure it out in years to come.

Hope you're still thinking about this way coming. Would love to see you. Weather is amazing right now. Can't understand why anyone would want to live in Toronto anymore. Very busy writing, but having fun. Am thinking of asking the Queen to introduce a thirty-four hour day. N.B. no longer use subjects in sentence—haven't got time. Also not keen on articles. Did Kerouac ever write like this? (Streaming—Burroughs dead; not much news here.)

Now that I have tired you beyond words, I leave you with:

The moon hangs  
I am suspended

in animation

### **Friday August 15**

Interesting how a tax exile (Spanish resident Sean Connery) supports a devolved, tax-raising, Scottish parliament.

### **Saturday August 16**

The writing is less in Summer, even in Scotland, though by all the complaining one would think the weather was lousy. I've not seen it. Today, the weather was more delicious than yesterday as I walked to Byres Road for my breakfast at McPhees. (Miss Grump was on tour?) I wouldn't have minded bumping into Sophie.

As I sat and looked out onto Byres Road, recognizing a few faces, even seeing a friend from the Pitz across the street, I realized I was more a part than apart. Where I once recognized faces in other people, I now recognized other people's faces.

On the way home, I took a meandering route through the back roads. After almost a year, I know the short cuts but find myself enjoying the back roads more, places where I can get lost in seconds. I don't mind now losing myself in Glasgow's endless magnificence.

Went to see David Byrne (a Dumbarton and Hamilton, Ontario boy) at the concert hall. I'd seen him in Toronto with Sophie only last summer.

### **Sunday August 17**

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To Robbie

I actually had a date yesterday if you can believe it. It came quite by chance as a double date with a friend of mine and his girlfriend and her sister Morag—it was more fun than anything else with Morag even denying it was a date (she had recently separated as well). It was quite adventurous (even featuring a rescue scene which I won't get into) and ended respectably. We had dinner and went to a concert. I enjoyed her company, but it's hard to comprehend my feelings for another woman. Undoubtedly, my magical mystery tour of the opposite sex will continue though likely later than sooner. As well, I'm not sure I like this small town thing down at the pub where everyone knows your business.

Kerouac. If I had a hammer ... I mean, if I had scanner, I'd scanner in the morning, I'd scanner in the evening, all over this land. Got this "List of Essentials" he wrote in point form entitled *Belief and Technique for Modern Prose*. It's super. I keep it handy at all times, but too long to write out *in toto* so allow me to pass along a few gems for your perusal.

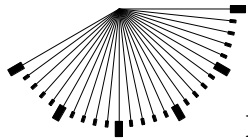
1. Scribble secret notebooks, and wild typewritten pages, for your own joy.
3. Try never to get drunk outside your own house.
4. Be in love with your life.
5. Something that you feel will find its own form.
6. Be crazy dumb saint of the mind.



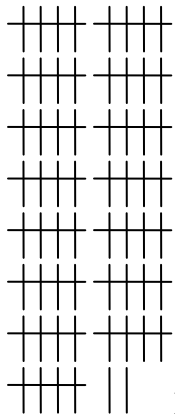
8. Write what you want bottomless from bottom of the mind.
10. No time for poetry but exactly what is. (Ed. Go to hell, Jack.)
13. Remove literary, grammatical and syntactical inhibition.
14. Like Proust be an old teahead of time.
15. Telling the true story of the world in interior monologue.
17. Write in recollection and amazement for yourself.
19. Accept loss forever.
21. Struggle to sketch the flow that already exists intact in mind.
23. Keep track of every day the date emblazoned in your morning.
24. No fear of shame in the dignity of your experience, language and knowledge.
25. Write for the world to read and see your exact pictures of it.
27. In Praise of Character in the Bleak inhuman Loneliness.
28. Composing wild, undisciplined, pure, coming in from under, crazier the better.
29. You're a Genius all the time.
30. Writer-Director of Earthly movies Sponsored and Angeled in Heaven.

Have also just finished Brian Eno's *A Year with Swollen Appendices*. Greatly inspiring to see someone write about art and the process of art instead of style and the process of style.

If you can believe it, I found Ralph Glasser's sequels to *Growing Up in the Gorbals* (all three volumes bundled together in a new release), which I will at long last send you (only Day 339!). What goes around comes around. I shall end where I began.



**Monday August 18**



I must be careful to resist over-generalizing and trying to encapsulate everything about my year as it winds down (Day 340 in Glasgow, Day 77 without Sophie, Day 863 before the Millennium), but I still find the British Press's attitude to the Royal family strangely puzzling.

As a model for better living the Queen and Prince Philip show little emotion, so it's not surprising that a certain standoffishness is seen as the English way (whether true or not).

But what captured people's minds about Charles and Diana was the fairytale, the emotion, the love, full well knowing that life is not a fairytale, not always breezy. Diana particularly has become a surrogate sex goddess/mother/carer for us all. The Queen keeps a distance as if aware of the spectacle, and thus secure from the travails of being called anything but dignified, proud, even compassionate at times. To keep her from the scrutiny, she plates herself in armour. The others in her family lie somewhere in between and are routinely pilloried by the Press for their mistakes. It seems that perfect openness and perfect behaviour is demanded of them, a most assured impossibility. Whereas Diana chooses a perfect openness, the Queen has chosen a perfect behaviour. Why should either be cause for scorn?

I have found it extremely odd that the Queen is never dissected by the Press (an occasional cartoon the worst it gets). Perhaps, it is simply not done, but whatever the reason, it appears that their black ink venom (envy) is projected on her so-called scandalous children. No one in the circle is spared. If their motives were scandalous, I could see the need for scrutiny. But I see nothing but upstanding people, who quite naturally retreat behind closed doors to protect themselves against an overbearing intrusion into their every moment. No wonder they seem *less* not *more* human. There can not be *both* a queen and commoner on the throne *at the same time*.

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle:  $\Delta E \cdot \Delta t \leq h$

both the position *and* momentum of a quantum particle can not be precisely determined *at the same time*.

A particle *either* knows where it is and not where it is going *or* knows where it is going and not where it is. The idea that there "is a 'real' world hidden behind a perceived statistical world [is] fruitless and sterile."

### **Tuesday August 19**

What came first: The pedestrian or the car?

### **Wednesday August 20**

Decided to give up my weekly five-a-side football at the Pitz. I've gotten better, but I'm just not good enough to be any more than a tenth player. It was great fun, but too damn frustrating always being the worst.

### **Thursday August 21**

Saw the new billboard of Linda Evangelista in handcuffs.<sup>61</sup> Obviously, anything goes now, though I wonder if we aren't taking this freedom of expression thing a bit too far. Must read my Olgivy and Mather bible again.

### **Sunday August 24**

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To Robbie

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<sup>61</sup> And another two weeks later with her behind minty silver bars.

I'm listening to U2's latest (POP) at full blast in the comforts of my office home as I finish off *The Glasgow Diaries*. It's no Led Zeppelin, but then what is? I am swimming after a most remarkable ten days. I won't go into the details but the magnetic strip on the back of my bank card failed two weeks ago leaving me with just my VISA card and my loose change tin (£80 worth from the year—not bad but easily eaten up). You don't ever want this to happen to you in a foreign country (did I hear Third-World country?). Banking capital of the world? Yeah, right. I was also trying to get some stuff to McIlvanney, had a semi-final Pablo's match play golf game (very minor in comparison and almost aborted—lost 2 and 1), and was going to take a short holiday (more a “get it together” holiday than anything else). I have also been smoking (crisis smoking for ten days; natch) but have not had one today and am thus going NUTS!

Too bad the word "pollute" has such a negative connotation. We are all polluters, a direct result of being consumers.

### **Wednesday August 27**

I remember Carol Smillie (now that I know who she is) saying in an interview that she just wanted to make as much money doing as little as possible. Oh to have such common ambitions. (“And the bonus number is ... 42.”)

### **Thursday August 28**

The joke of sectarian strife is that it pits two parts of the same whole against each other and thus we have Catholic versus Protestant (both Christian), Ranger versus Celt (both Glaswegian), labourer versus manager (both employee), man versus woman (both human). And as the Millennium of Man begins, the great North-South battle begins. The history of civilization has always been the battle of the haves versus the have-nots. Security versus freedom?—only in a world of inequality. Glasgow has seen its share, but I think as Glasgow continues to grow many miles better it will forget more than it will remember.

This egalitarian experiment which began with Locke and Rousseau and worked its way through Napoleon and Jefferson has failed. The Robber Barons (Slave Traders, Tobacco Lords, Arms dealers ... ) are moving south. In the North, the bounty will be plenty. In the North, the television screen will keep the suffering at a manageable distance. None of us need worry.

### **Sunday August 31**

Went golfing for the first time in ages and lost miserably. Brian told me Princess Diana died. Golf and all other matters mundane seemed ghostly distant. Who takes pictures of the picture takers?

### **Monday September 1**

Camped out all day at Brian's to watch the news, in which endless speculation and quick fire analysis are the dress of the wise. Found it very odd how the Fifth Estate did not once question itself in light of the obvious criticism. Paparazzi? We are all paparazzi.

First Old Firm match of the year cancelled in respect for Diana. (I had tickets, so my record is intact: a perfect 0 for 2 what with missing out on Peter Grant's testimonial as well after standing in line for two hours for tickets that weren't there.)

*Our major obligation is not to mistake slogans for solutions.* Edward R. Murrow

### **Tuesday September 2**

The Diana phenomenon grows by the hour. The Royal family, having been through plenty through the ages, prefer the waiting game, knowing full well that this too shall pass. Alas, the almost mass hysteria is more massive than could ever have been imagined. The herd mentality of the mourners is now in full stead. In no way diminishing each and every one's "personal" sorrow, there does come a time when the collective will become quite separate from any natural individual sentiment. Keeping the group sentiment at bay has always been the Royal family's particular style. It is almost what defines a Royal (the supreme clique) family. Not that their feeling isn't heavy, but you can't have your cake and eat it too.

Jim Farry and the SFA in a spot of bother (refusing to change a World Cup match from the day of Diana's funeral) as they fail to realize that the Royal family is more Royal than the SFA family. One-upped by the best of them. Not even the single most cataclysmic media event ever can get the vaunted SFA to change its mind. Not surprising, knowing the SFA.

### **Wednesday September 3**

Donald Dewar, Tony Blair, and the Pope all ask Jim Farry to reschedule the Scotland-Belarus World Cup match to the following day. Mutiny on the Scottish team begins with Ally McCoist, Andy Goram, and Gordon Durie. By evening, the match is rescheduled. Farry stands by his actions, sighting the difficulties of changing a World Cup match. If I remember correctly, Estonia didn't *show up* for a match *in Estonia* and they got the match rescheduled. All of Scotland asks for Jim Farry's head on a platter.

### **Thursday September 4**

The Queen speaks to the nation and pays tribute to Diana. Reading between the lines is now Britain's number one past time. Newshounds begin analyzing her remarks on the down beat of her last word. Elton John to sing a summer remix version of his Marlyn Monroe tribute "Candle in the Wind." Norma Jean is now England's rose.

### **Friday September 5**

Mother Teresa dies. A fast would be an appropriate tribute.

### **Saturday September 6**

Charles Spencer reads to the nation at Diana's funeral, provoking "spontaneous" applause outside and, following, inside Westminster Abbey. It would be impossible to determine exactly how many of the millions began clapping *spontaneously*, but suffice it to say 99.99% began clapping because others were clapping. To be sure, we are social animals,

but attributing Diana's death as a great day of change of mythic *fin de millennium* stature felt by all is hogwash. The Press must learn someday to close its mouth. It is a most non-reflective institution.

Diana is buried. A world wide ban on land mines would be an appropriate tribute. Less Press would be a better tribute.

One wonders how the Church escaped the list of institutions in need of major overhaul. (The smiling clergy bizarrely content with their temporary flock somewhere in the millions. No one has told them that the masses have come for Diana not for God.) Perhaps the Church's demise is too obvious to merit any mention. Certainly AIDS, the homeless, lepers, land mine victims, the rejected ... are *by definition* the duty of the Church. Somehow, the Church has been transubstantiated to a secular service, marrying and burying, elegantly kindling and rekindling our bodies, but too timid to touch our souls.

### **Sunday September 7**

Scotland beat Belarus 4-1. Scotsman David Coulthard wins the Italian Grand Prix. Canadian Greg Rusedski loses in the US Open final becoming the first Brit to compete for a Grand Slam final since Fred Perry in 1936. (One wonders where Fred Perry was really from?) E-coli is back in Lanarkshire again. The "Armadillo" convention centre on the bank of the Clyde ready for action and travel agents everywhere.

### **Monday September 8**

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To Robbie

After all the hype dies down, will anyone notice that nothing has changed? My great £10 worth is that Diana was a woman and that didn't sit well with the male dominated power world. It's okay if you're the Queen (although a queen, she sits back in isolation), Mother Teresa (a nun, hardly a threat to anyone), or Margaret Thatcher (about as mannish as a woman gets without a sex change), but if you're some typical Cinderella princess who speaks her mind and has no idea of midnight, then she's hardly going to be welcomed into the club. What?—and make the fairytale a reality? And have millions thinking they can rise up and rule? Not on your life. Dead, she is controllable. Dead, she is finally in Disney-land.<sup>62</sup>

Why did none of the Royal psychics *see* her death?

Focussing on the practical and the attainable, one hopes that the world wide ban on land mines will be implemented. It is most telling that a 36 year-old former kindergarten teacher who was prettier than she was educated had a more ethical foreign policy than our governments of the world. By their actions, one could easily think that governments favour mutilating Third World children. As well, if governments and churches were more charitable, there would be no need for Diana to represent our charity.

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<sup>62</sup> Peter Pan theme park plans announced for James Barrie's Kirriemuir. Rumour has it that Tam Dalyell has agreed to play Captain Hook.

Devolution campaigning hot and harry now after a respectful suspension for Diana's week-long tribute and funeral. Tony Blair, Donald Dewar, and even Sean Connery all looking and shounding good. Perhaps, there is another agenda, though I am beginning to think that even if they aren't telling the *whole* truth, their quasi-truths are now more palatable. Doubling Tam and a few businessmen are the only dissenting voices arguing against the benefits of a satellite government, though the latest polls put "Yes-Yes" an easy winner. Lets hope the Scots don't run scared come Thursday. And you can bet that Alex Sammond will not let the independence issue go away after the requisite gladhanding and backslapping is over. "We've only just begun" is being trotted out as a suggested theme song.

Funny that my year should end on devolution day.

As for Sophie, our devolution is inching towards separatism. One could say it's over. I thought of looking for her, if only to tell her that I might not be staying in Glasgow much longer. My last formal commitment is *The Glasgow Diaries*. It's most definitely weird thinking about it. I have been trying to keep my emotions at bay and now three months on, we could begin to talk—marriage not that different than politics. Ours was an often fantastic journey. If we could only find the rug. I do miss her. Love? Yes-No. How 'bout that for a two-pronged answer?

I might just see you in Toronto before you make up your mind to come here. Over and out. Thanks for all the chat.

### **Tuesday September 9**

From William McIlvanney's *The Papers of Tony Veitch*:

Harkness reflected that in Glasgow openness is the only safe-conduct pass. They hate to be had. Come on honestly and their tolerance can be great.

### **Wednesday September 10**

I reinvent myself and not solely in ways I like. I've started flirting with cigarettes again. I'm more secluded, less vulnerable, because friends are harder to come by as we grow older. But I like it here. Or what it does to me. There is a majesty missing in pre-fab Toronto. Glasgow is old and new. It has worked its way for centuries on many before my time.

I occasionally think about my parents. Although younger than me when they emigrated to Canada and with children in tow, they made the reincarnation so easily. I could never understand how someone could leave their home. I wonder will I ever find mine?

Enough fact masquerading as fiction, telling the same story in metaphor and rhyme. As I walk down Sauchiehall Street from Charing Cross to the City Centre, I see night life buoyed by boys, casinos preying on lost mystics, and CRM peeking out from his tiny

corner declaring that design is man's greatest achievement, because only in design can we see God. And Mackintosh, whether hard to sit in or not, whether enclosing square staircases in spiral fronts or marrying the circle to the square, the organic with the industrial, has put God and man together.

I'd say the people are better designed than the city.

### **Thursday September 11**

Day 365. I hope Scotland gets its independence. Today should be a most glorious beginning. I hope to say the same some day to Sophie.

I sat on the steps of a flat we had first looked at near Kelvinbridge Underground, even putting a deposit on it though we changed our minds the next day. I suppose it would have all turned out differently had we lived *here* than *there*. In five days, a life can happen.

That's me (as they say around here).

Day 365,

Hal Cassidy

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