

## From the Back Verandah

You've read about the de-ranked murderer W.C. Minor who from prison made a significant contribution to the *OED* (*A Word in Your Pink Shell-like*, Issue 14, July 1999). Now meet a suspected (though unproven) strychnine poisoner who in his day was a well-regarded painter and art critic — the Englishman Thomas Griffiths Wain[e]wright (1794-1847).

He exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy and contributed to several literary periodicals. As his career developed, he was introduced to literary celebrities like Dickens, Wordsworth, Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey and Blake.

It wasn't long, however, before his glamorous and expensive lifestyle led him into financial difficulties, and he was driven to turn his artistic talents to the counterfeiting of signatures. Indeed, it was forgery and not the alleged murder of three relatives that convicted him. In 1837 he was sentenced to transportation for life to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania).

At first he was made to toil at road-building on a chain-gang, but eventually he was permitted to work as a hospital orderly and because of his talent even to take up painting again.

He died of a stroke, still a convict, in the hospital in Hobart Town.

Fortunately for art historians, from time to time Wainwright had been authorised to paint elegant portraits of well-to-do Vandemonian citizens. These are generally thought to be his most accomplished work as an artist, though some critics have found fault with them for their uniformity.

Robertson Davies, eminent Canadian man of letters (1913-1995), in his essay *Painting, Fiction and Faking*, offers this comment:

Today, in Australia, to have a portrait of an ancestor painted by Wainwright confers a wholly understandable distinction. But if he had not been a gentleman-crook one wonders if it would be so.

— Fizzgig

# BIKWIL

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## Open Your Log-books

Short for *weblog*, a *blog* is an increasingly popular type of Web site that contains periodic entries — a sort of online diary. Some blogs are the creation of single authors, while others have multiple authors. Many let visitors leave public comments, which often lead to a community centered on the blog. Others are non-interactive.

Most blogs are personal, where the “bloggers” (usually young, educated, affluent males) record their ideas and opinions on a regular basis, for all the world to read. Others have a more philosophical tone, still others a blinkered political message.

Some commentators praise the trend as “Grassroots Journalism”. Maybe, but few blogs show good spelling or grammar, let alone polished writing or literary merit. And

as usual with the Net, dangers lurk — hoaxes, other forms of misinformation, bias . . .

Here’s an extract (chosen completely at random, you understand) from a blog called *Semicolon* [ <http://semicolon.reachcoop.org/> ]:

While searching for something else, I forget what, I serendipitously stumbled upon this bimonthly Australian magazine/newsletter, *Bikwil*, subtitled The Home of Quiet Enthusiasms . . . *Bikwil* includes poetry, fiction, essays, a section called “Quintessential Quirky Quotes” and various and other sundry rather quiet and quirky contributions. (The editor seems to be fond of q’s, and it’s catching.)

As to whether *Bikwil* should start its own blog remains to be seen. I’m in two quasi-quandaries about it.

Would any readers care to venture an opinion?

## Colophon

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*Back Issues Are Still Available*

Organized crime in America takes in over forty billion dollars a year and spends very little on office supplies.

Woody Allen

Diplomacy is the art of saying "Nice Doggie!" till you can find a rock.

Wynn Catlin

## Quintessential Quirky Quotes

Once you can accept the universe as matter expanding into nothing that is something, wearing stripes with plaid comes easy.

Albert Einstein

How many people here have telekenetic powers? Raise my hand.

Emo Phillips

We've all heard that a million monkeys banging on a million typewriters will eventually reproduce the entire works of Shakespeare. Now, thanks to the Internet, we know this is not true.

Robert Wilensky

but it is [what] we have to do to revitalise the profession and make it more meaningful.

Even so, there is lingering unease. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Google's venture

. . . could herald the beginning of the commercialization of libraries, which have long been trusted as an independent resource for knowledge without the obvious trappings of marketing or goals of profit.

Of course, this Virtual Library undertaking of Google's is hardly unique. You'll be quite familiar with the work of Project Gutenberg<sup>3,4</sup>, in all its manifestations. And there are other similar Internet projects running, many of them under the auspices of non-profit organisations. These include the Internet Archive<sup>5</sup> and the University of Pennsylvania's Online Books Page<sup>6</sup>.

Additionally, the Library of Congress<sup>7</sup> has had for a while now an agreement with The Internet Archive and libraries in the U.S. and overseas to create an Internet digital archive of one million books.

By the way, its public float on the stock market earlier in 2004 naturally brought Google a gigantic funds increase, and at the time people began to wonder why the company had chosen to spend a lot of it on increasing its disk storage and processing power from a mere 10,000 linked servers to something like 80,000.

Now they know.

In fact, I read somewhere that *in toto* they've spent in the region of \$250 million on computer hardware.

— TR

### Internet sites referred to above:

1. <http://scholar.google.com/scholar/about.html#about>
2. [http://www.google.com/press/pressrel/print\\_library.html](http://www.google.com/press/pressrel/print_library.html)
3. <http://www.gutenberg.org/>
4. <http://www.gutenberg.net.au/>
5. <http://www.archive.org/texts>
6. <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/>
7. <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA490132?display=NewsNews&industry=News&industryid=1986&verticalid=151>

## Letter to Clancy

Andrew Barton ("Banjo") Paterson was one of Australia's great poets. He wrote the words to *Waltzing Matilda* (our alternative national anthem).

Two of his best-loved poems include reference to a character called Clancy of the Overflow. In *The Man from Snowy River* his role is as one of the riders who set out to bring back to property near Mansfield a valuable young

stallion which has "joined the wild bush horses". In the eponymous *Clancy of the Overflow*, Paterson compares his own desk-bound lawyer's existence with that of the shearer/drover Clancy and laments his lack of the freedom Clancy enjoys on "the sunlit plains extended and at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars".

The poem starts

I had written him a letter which I had, for want of better  
Knowledge, sent to where I met him down the Lachlan, years ago,  
He was shearing when I knew him, so I sent the letter to him,  
Just "on spec", addressed as follows, "Clancy, of The Overflow".

And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected,  
(And I think the same was written with a thumb-nail dipped in tar)  
'Twas his shearing mate who wrote it, and verbatim I will quote it:  
"Clancy's gone to Queensland droving, and we don't know where he are."

I had always wondered what Paterson would have said in the original letter to Clancy.

The following supposition presents a somewhat less flattering

view of the iconic Clancy; but I fancy it's one which a lot of Australians might quietly recognise and admire.

— Leon Bannister

*Sydney*

*July 28 1893*

*Dear Clancy,*

*Since you have not seen fit to acknowledge mine of the 3rd inst., I will renew this correspondence, trusting in Her Majesty's most excellent postal service to deliver it, as before, to The Overflow. I hope that when you learn what I have to tell you it will strengthen your resolve to stay away.*

*A clever ruse that — the crude handwriting of a shearer; but I was not deceived. Oh no. I know you for the blackguard you are and, should the need arise, I will not hesitate to see you are brought to justice, or what passes for it in these colonies. But I digress. Let me draw you to the purpose of my first letter requesting you to contact me.*

*Recall, if you will, the events of the evening of March 10th 1890, in the bar of the public house in Omeo, wherein we partook of sustenance and conviviality with the local folk, culminating in a hand or two of cards. I am sure it will not have slipped your mind — inebriated though you were — that you enjoyed considerable good fortune that night and succeeded in winning from a wretched miner the title to his claim at Benambra. You will, of course, also recall our agreement, by which you were enabled to play that night with my money on the understanding that your winnings would be shared with me. To that effect I took charge of the title deeds to the poor, miserable fellow's barren diggings and, indeed, I have them before me as I write.*

*Also before me is a report from The Office of the Government Assayer in Melbourne informing me that the latest samples taken from our mine show evidence of an extremely rich vein of gold-bearing quartz. I am certain that you will be delighted with these tidings; but before you begin*

as omniscient as we've come to expect, those Google people might have appreciated that their announcement harks back to something we published here, exactly six years ago this month:

The decades-old dream of access to the world's library catalogues from home is now surely, but slowly, coming true.

I emphasised at the time that this promising message referred

. . . to catalogues, not to the collections that catalogues describe and index. That was the other dream: to do away with books, and is quite a separate issue, the less said about which the better.

Well, guess what? Google doesn't see it that way.

Not that it wants to wipe out the printed book. It just envisages a future when you won't have to deny yourself access to a particular book or periodical because you can't physically get to the sole library that houses it.

And the way it intends to achieve this is through a very ambitious scanning effort. On the initial project Google is working with Harvard, Stanford, the Universities of Michigan and Oxford and the New York Public Library to digitize tens of thousands of pages a day at each library.

As the press release says,

[Google] over time will integrate this content into the Google index, to make it searchable for users worldwide.

Some of the librarians involved expect that the pilot project will take ten years or more. And that's just for starters.

On the not inconsequential matter of copyright, Google will set your mind at rest when you read

Both parties will work conservatively within the laws . . . For copyrighted works, Google [will] scan in the entire text, but make only short excerpts available online.

For works in the public domain the full text will be available online.

Great care will be taken with the books, though Google executives aren't saying much what exactly the scanning technology will entail.

Contrary to the views of some sceptics, the five libraries were not reluctant when Google approached them to collaborate. Keen, more like it. For example, a librarian at the Uni of Michigan, John Wilkin, had this to say:

Some people will worry that this is the beginning of the end of libraries,

## Web

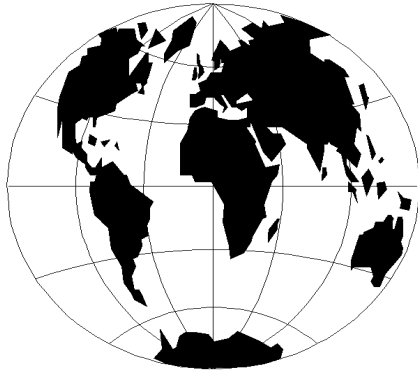
There's no stopping Google, is there?

In 2004, for example, in addition to Google's launch on the stock market, there came two major announcements from everyone's favourite search engine.

First let's look at Google Scholar<sup>1</sup>, a new way of searching for those on the prowl for information of an academic nature. Google describes it (Nov. 18) as follows:

Google Scholar enables you to search specifically for scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, preprints, abstracts and technical reports from all broad areas of research. Use Google Scholar to find articles from a wide variety of academic publishers, professional societies, preprint repositories and universities, as well as scholarly articles available across the web.

Just as with Google Web Search, Google Scholar orders your search results by how relevant they are to your query, so the most useful references should appear at the top of the page. This relevance ranking takes into account the full text of each



## Line

article as well as the article's author, the publication in which the article appeared and how often it has been cited in scholarly literature. Google Scholar also automatically analyzes and extracts citations and

presents them as separate results, even if the documents they refer to are not online. This means your search results may include citations of older works and seminal articles that appear only in books or other offline publications.

This service is not yet in full production, but response from university circles and the like during its beta testing stage has been positive.

From what I've seen, however, by Google standards the coverage is quite modest so far. On the other hand, it's early days: let's wait and see. No doubt they're working hard to improve the product and extend its coverage.

Google's other recent press release<sup>2</sup> (Dec. 14) also has a strong connection with academe — and an overwhelmingly flimsier one with *Bikwil*. Had they been really

*celebrating, let me assure you that if you so much as show your face in Sydney I will tender to the police an affidavit which I have prepared, the salient details of which are as follows:*

*Firstly, that your name is not Clancy, but Brannigan. Secondly, that you arrived in Australia as first mate aboard the Yankee man o' war, Shenandoah, and that on anchoring off Williamstown, in the colony of Victoria, on December 16th, 1887 you did desert ship by swimming ashore under cover of darkness and took refuge in the home of an associate of mine, Mr. James Carrington QC, whose kindness to strangers and hospitality you rewarded by molesting his fifteen year old daughter. Further, that after you were ejected from his home, Mr Carrington discovered the absence of several pieces of fine silverware (which you doubtless sold to finance your expedition to the goldfields).*

*Thereafter you were next sighted in Ballarat, where you were imprisoned on a charge of murdering a man with a belaying pin. Following your escape from the lock-up you disappeared for a time; but news soon reached me of a man of your description duffing cattle in Western Queensland. My informants also report that you were run off several sheep stations in the Riverina after disputes over the number of sheep you claimed to have shorn. There is also an allegation of theft of a very valuable colt from a property in the Mansfield district, a charge you attempted to slip by bringing the beast back after a wild ride. The colt was lame and had to be destroyed. There is more; but I think you will follow my drift.*

*Therefore, sir, I bid you good day and good riddance and leave you to enjoy in solitude your sunlit plains extended and at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting bloody stars.*

*I am yours sincerely,*

*A.B. Paterson, LLB*

## Mary Bennet

19

I slept very little that night — so full of incident, of pain and pleasure both, had the day been, and so imperative the need to reflect upon it all. But the thought to which my tired mind kept returning — the regret that in the end swallowed up all else — was that I had not said goodbye to George and that I would now in all likelihood never see him again.

I blamed Elizabeth. Had she not thrown herself at Mr Coates I reasoned, Mrs Alardyce would never have engaged herself to Mr Purvis and George would not now be leaving Netherfield. I blamed her conduct — rash, deceitful and immodest — to my way of thinking, it merited punishment but I did not see why I should have to suffer by it.

I blamed Mr Coates too — although not near so much as

did everybody else. Shortly before breakfast that morning, a letter had come from him to my father containing not merely an apology, but also (as I later learnt) a request for permission to pay his addresses to Elizabeth. He wrote that he was prepared to wait, to leave the country if necessary, assuring my father of the seriousness of his intentions and his undying love &c. It was all too late of course — or far too soon — and he must have known that his suit was hopeless. My childish understanding of his crime was necessarily partial and imperfect, but at no time did I think of Jasper Coates as a hypocrite, still less a libertine, and his installing two mistresses under his roof I now impute more to convenience — a lack of resolution and misplaced kindness — than to corrupt habits.

Elizabeth judged him however — almost as severely as

and man. Watch as the picador, his cape a kaleidoscope of colour, teases the bull into the full extent of its rage, for the bull's final engagement with the matador. Writers, film stars and philosophers have all rejoiced over the eternal drama played out in the bull-rings of Spain.

Do-gooders and animal rights exponents who say bull-fighting is barbaric are missing the point. The great beast is elevated by his conflict with one, whom the Bible says, is only a little lower than God. If you are in doubt read Ernest Hemingway.

Other rites have been allowed to wither away. For instance, the practice of Hara-Kari. Whole generations of Japanese have grown up without any one of them personally experiencing this. You can blame Western Cultural Imperialism and karaoke for this tragic loss.

We must not sit on our hands while such things happen. *It is not enough to preserve current rituals, we must revive ones that are, at this point in time, extinct.*

To achieve this end I am proposing tradeoffs: Japanese follow their tradition of whaling as long

as they reinstitute their ritual of Hara-Kari. The Spanish search out Torquemada's descendants to do for mankind what they are doing for the bull. The British reinstate the chastity belt. The BBC dramas on Aunty make one wonder if this is an impossible ask. Let them instead reintroduce the ancient practice of the pillory.

And we must not forget our own backyard. Australia must restore the lash as a trade-off for the dogma that it is mandatory for 'real' men to shoot anything that moves.

Finally, our politicians must do their part. At any cost, they must immediately reinstitute the Divine Right of Kings to ensure that the British monarchy persists into the third millennium. Any treatment of Republicans must stop. Immediately.

This will excite the Monarchists into a frenzy, reduce the Republicans to anarchy, put us streets ahead of the British and reap their eternal gratitude when we lead the charge backwards into the third millennium.

— Eileen Marshall

## Cultural Trade-Offs

I deplore the cant of xenophobic do-gooders. A nation's repository of sacred customs must be revered. Without them a people are without dreams and succeeding generations are left to flounder in normlessness.

We must support, not threaten, praxis — especially our own. Who of us does not hold in high regard those hunters who gather together to shoot wild fowl — the birds are doing nothing useful.

Watch how manfully these devotees maintain their stance in the face of animal liberationists, a band of fearsome desperadoes if ever I saw one.

Let us revere the British in their persistence in the hunt, a ritual that has kept generations of the 'better' classes occupied when nothing else could. What a sight it is. Hundreds in pursuit of one creature. Surely this pageant is worth any little inconvenience to the fox. Let us not forget the sacrifice of the fair sex — submerging their sensibilities in pursuit of a greater good. Watch as they follow, nay lead, their men to glory.

They are surely riding to a different drum.

Go further afield. To the Orient.

The attempts to stop Japan from hunting the whale shows a callous indifference to another nation's ethos. One knows only too well how resonant memories of such quests can be. Just ask Captain Ahab.

Hunting the whale has long been a core part of the Japanese cultural imperative, vital to the development of their collective unconscious. The mere fact that they are combining tradition with scientific enquiry illustrates the purity of their motives. The claim that their only interest in whales is sushi, has been cooked up by the conservationists. When they exceed some arbitrary bureaucratic quota, they should be praised not damned: they have the courage to stand resolute.

Bull-fighting is another cultural institution that attracts opprobrium from the narrow-minded. How misunderstood is this drama between the animal

she judged herself, and as she would later come to judge Lydia. For a while her fondness for jokes entirely deserted her: a silent censoriousness made itself felt, and even when her old playfulness returned, it was not the same. Her manner might mask it, but she made far fewer allowances for human frailty. Ultimately, this intolerance coupled with her implicit belief in her own powers of observation would lead to her undoing. She would come to approve Mr Wickham on sight and condemn Mr Darcy on the evidence of mere hearsay. (Had Darcy not resembled Mr Coates, I suspect it might have gone less hard with him.)

But once again I am running ahead of myself. Long before Mr Coates' letter to my father arrived that morning, Elizabeth had left for London. I knew nothing of this until Lydia informed me in an aggrieved tone that Aunt and the two little Gardiner girls had left the house at a very early hour — and that Elizabeth and Jane had accompanied them.

"Nobody told us they were going," said she. "We heard

them creeping about and Gil getting out the boxes — and then we heard the carriage."

"Nobody said goodbye to us," said Kitty.

"Did you know of it, Mary?" said Lydia, sharp-eyed.

"No indeed, I promise you —"

"Mama has shut herself up in her room," said Kitty. "And Gil says that on no account are we to bother her —"

"But I *shall* bother her," declared Lydia. "I mean to find out why they have all run away."

She did not find out however, for Papa, placing no dependence on his wife's discretion, had arranged for both Kitty and Lydia to leave Longbourn, and later that same morning Uncle Philips came in his carriage to collect them. They were to go first to the Philipses and thence to Uncle's widowed sister, a Mrs Jervis, who lived in a very retired way at King's Langley. As for myself, Papa deemed it wisest that I remain at home, although until Mama had recovered from her present nervous

prostration he had arranged for me to spend the chief part of every day at Lucas Lodge. "You will take your lessons with Maria Lucas," said he. "Charlotte has kindly agreed to supervise your studies. Mr Knowles will doubtless welcome the opportunity of a holiday."

I knew by his manner of speaking that it had all been settled and it would be useless for me to protest. But to be deprived of Mr Knowles at a time when I most needed his counsel, I felt to be most cruel. Papa had given me permission to write to him however, and after Lydia and Kitty had left, I spent the rest of the morning composing a letter, confiding a small part of my present suffering — I could not relate the whole without exposing Elizabeth — and asking that he point me towards such texts, either prose or verse, as might best offer solace.

He wrote back immediately — I still have the letter — quoting Mr William Cowper's beautiful lines:

God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill  
He treasures up his bright  
designs  
And works his sovereign will.

"I am certain the Almighty has bright designs for Mary Bennet," the letter continued.

"And in the meantime, the challenge for her is to accept the loss of George's companionship with a smiling face and to remember that there is one Friend who will never forsake her. — Mother joins me in praying for your happiness, dear Mary."

And so began an interlude which, after the first pain of missing George subsided, was not unpleasant. In Charlotte Lucas, I was fortunate to find a teacher who was both intelligent and good humoured — a wise old head on young shoulders as the saying goes, for Charlotte at the age of one and twenty was burdened with many domestic cares quite apart from her teaching load. I soon began to know and respect her ways. I admired her patience in dealing with her family's numerous claims. She was constantly being called away to superintend baking and jam-making or to settle some silly

"'The humour of the form lies'," says *Britannica*, in cries of breathtaking advocacy, 'in its purposefully flat-footed inadequacy'."

Whatever his intention  
Edmund Clerihew Bentley's invention  
gains his and its name  
a place in the hall of literary fame.

Gosh!  
I'm awash  
with words about a word  
and form so delightfully absurd!

Clerihew,  
long may you  
live and thrive  
to keep fun and laughter alive.

— Bet Briggs



Detective novelist E.C. Bentley  
when asked “Who dunnit?” gently  
said, “Find the clue  
in the form of my clerihew.”

“Your clerihew? Please explain.”

“Two rhyming couplets make a quatrain  
rather wayward in metre and rhyme,  
which is hardly a crime.

“Without plots or traps  
its subject is just about chaps  
and some lasses, too:  
It’s a veritable comic *Who’s Who!*

“Let it be known  
its name is my own,  
and Mother, too,  
before marriage, was a Clerihew.

“Many writers try their hardest at one.  
My best friend Chesterton,  
my son, Nicolas, too  
have penned quite a few.

argument between her younger brothers and sisters. And her father’s fatuous remarks and oft repeated anecdotes must have tried her patience, but rarely did an impatient word escape her. (This early training in tolerating fools was undoubtedly put to good use when she became the wife of Mr Collins.)

My friendship with Maria Lucas dates from this time. I had always regarded Maria as something of a scatterbrain — I am sure that she for her part saw me as a boring little blue-stocking — but now, sharing our lessons as we did, we could not avoid knowing each other better and forming a fairer estimate of each other’s abilities. And without the distraction of my elder sisters’ company, for Jane and Elizabeth were objects of great awe to Maria, I found her to be sensible and sweet-natured. She was but six months younger than myself yet touchingly deferential and grateful for any help I could give, especially on matters musical. I soon became most sincerely attached to her.

In the meantime I kept up my correspondence with Mr Knowles and since both Mama

and Papa were dilatory in such matters I also corresponded with my sisters. My letters must have made dull reading however. Life at both Longbourn and Lucas Lodge was very quiet, and apart from a severe snow-storm in the last week of November I had little to report. (Several roof tiles directly above my attic room were dislodged in the storm thus rendering my room uninhabitable, and as I did not wish my precious things — my piano-forte especially — to be stored in Lydia and Kitty’s apartment, I moved instead into Elizabeth’s room. I mention this now because the arrangement was later to place an intolerable strain on Elizabeth’s and my relationship.)

The one exciting piece of news — Mr Coates’ departure from Netherfield — I was forbidden to write about, as Papa had banned any mention of “that worthless fellow and his Italian comic opera”. It was Maria Lucas who told me that he had finally gone. He had written to Sir William saying that urgent business called him to London. I did wonder at the time whether he had gone to seek out Elizabeth, but on hearing that Nonna had accompanied him and that the

two of them had taken a house in Half Moon Street, I concluded that Mr Coates — ever a slave to convenience — had given up all serious thought of my sister and that Nonna Renata was once more his mistress — if indeed she had ever ceased to be so.

A second, more surprising, instance of revived passion — of a return to lukewarm conjugal felicity at least — was that of my own parents. The absence of their daughters seemed to promote a better understanding between them, certainly on my father's side. When I returned home after my lessons at Lucas Lodge I would frequently find them seated together on the drawing room sofa, my father reading a newspaper while my mother dozed or played with her bracelets. My father even condescended to share the odd piece of news with her, usually gossip about the royal family which he affected to scorn but which she delighted in. Prefacing his offering with a "this might interest you, my dear", I once heard him inform her without the least hint of sarcasm that the Queen's preferred luncheon was a simple dish of chicken broth — chicken broth being Mama's favourite

nerve restorative. But this too was something I could not write of to my sisters.

Their letters to me were equally dull. Kitty and Lydia wrote very short letters at very long intervals, and even though Jane and Elizabeth wrote regularly and at length, for the most part they detailed their activities without mentioning their thoughts or feelings. Elizabeth's letters were especially dull; impersonal accounts of engagements, visits to the theatre or books she was presently reading — mere lists of titles for my father's benefit, such as Mrs Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson* and Mr Boswell's *Life*, for she had temporarily foresworn novels and poetry.

But Elizabeth also corresponded with Charlotte. And now once again I am obliged to confess something of which I am ashamed, for I actually *copied* a page of one such letter. Charlotte had accidentally dropped it when called away to settle some domestic dispute and on picking it up, I at once recognized Elizabeth's hand. Maria was busy at the other end of the schoolroom putting together a map of the

## Hurrah for the Clerihew

The year 2005 marks the 100th anniversary of the launching of the clerihew into the literary landscape. Like a comic comet it appeared in 1905 in a publication named *Biography for Beginners*, by "E. Clerihew", with illustrations by G.K.C.

(Now that's enough intriguing stuff for any literary sleuth, no matter how long in the tooth!)

What we know is, "E. Clerihew" is Edmund Clerihew Bentley (1875 – 1956) the inventor of the form. G. K.C. is short for Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874 – 1936). He was Bentley's contemporary, collaborator, best friend and no mean poet himself. He described the clerihew as "the severe and stately form of free verse . . .", and wrote a clerihew or two as well, twenty-two little gems, in fact, which can be found in *G.K.*

*Chesterton Collected Nonsense and Light Verse*, selected and arranged by Marie Smith and published in 1987.

In July 2004 *Bikwil's* Harlish Goop introduced his readers to the clerihew and its inventor and treated us to a dozen fine examples of it, seven by Bentley, three by W.H. Auden and one each by Louis Untermeyer and J.A. Lindon. He also invited readers "to attempt an original clerihew or two".

Thanks to Harlish's encouraging words in my "pink shell-like", I've been affected ever since with Clerihew Mania. Oh, what a feeling! The urge to write them is great, as is the challenge, for, as Harlish said, "it's not as easy as it seems". However, I'm fast becoming a clerihewmaniac and in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the form and its inventor I've concocted the following:

as meaning “to contain”, and *constitute* as mean “to form”, “to make up”, “to compose”.

As for *consist of* versus *constitute*, he quotes word-lover Maurice H. Weesen’s *Words Confused and Misused* (1932?):

A whole *consists of* parts; the parts *constitute* the whole.

Sir Ernest Gowers, in his *Complete Plain Words* (1948+)

	Parts/Whole	Abstract/Concrete	All/Some
compose	parts	—	—
comprise (a)	parts	—	all
comprise (b)	whole	—	—
consist in	whole	abstract	—
consist of	whole	concrete	—
constitute	parts	—	—
include	parts	—	some

Finally, here’s something startling yours truly learned only while researching this topic. On top of everything else, *consist* can be a noun.

Surely not

Yes, it’s true, but only if you’re talking about trains.

In a railway context *a consist* refers to a collection of rail cars

differentiates between *comprise* and *include*:

The difference between *comprise* and *include* is that *comprise* is better when all the components are enumerated and *include* when only some of them are.

Perhaps all the above can be summarised in a table.

Try this:

coupled together to make-up a train for service.

So, where to from here?

Well, with your gentle encouragement, I may as well keep my eyes peeled for any other English worth shuddering at. I suppose there must be some somewhere.

— Harlish Goop

rivers of Europe, and almost before I knew what I was about, I began to read:

A sort of madness seized me — I can describe it in no other way — I could not rest until I knew if he intended to quit the country. Even now all these weeks later I cannot think of my conduct without amazement, for I had ample time to consider what I was about during the three-mile walk to Netherfield. It is this more than anything that disgusts me — that in the grip of strong feeling, I should lose all self-command. It was his discretion which saved me, for I was utterly careless of discovery. (I have spoken of this to Jane, but such is her sisterly partiality she cannot credit the extent of my folly. My aunt understands me better. “You have had such a lesson,” said she, “as will stand you in good stead the rest of your life.”)

In truth Charlotte, the scales did not fall from my eyes until Mrs R made her shocking disclosure — for he had already told me of his relations with Mrs A. There followed the edifying spectacle of Mrs A and Mrs R screaming abuse at each other with Mrs A having to be forcibly restrained after her mother emptied a glass of wine over her. As if this were not enough, we were then obliged to endure a further hour of purgatory for there was no escaping Mary’s Mozart. I bore up quite wonderfully until the end —

The page itself ended here, and on hearing Charlotte’s

returning footsteps, I hurriedly concealed it inside my book, but upon her almost immediately being called away again, I once more took it out. A second reading did nothing to improve my feelings towards the writer. On an impulse I seized a sheet of paper and went to work immediately, copying it all out fair before replacing the original on Charlotte’s desk.

At the time I felt no shame. I wished to preserve some proof of Elizabeth’s folly, a tangible reminder that behind the screen of propriety there lurked a very different creature. And in one respect I am not sorry for what I did, for afterwards it was as if the entire episode had never happened. Papa’s ban on any reference to Mr Coates persisted long after all my sisters had returned home, and Mama — although regularly lamenting that Netherfield continued to stand empty — spoke only of the previous inhabitants as “that dreadful foreign family with whom Mary was wondrous thick”.

— Jennifer Paynter

## A Word in Your Pink Shell-like

Readers should be aware by now that I have done my utmost to eschew exegetical pedantry in this column — not to mention periphrastic pomposity. So we wouldn't want my self-discipline to weaken at this late stage in our linguistics game, would we?

And yet . . . and yet . . .

There comes a time when all good logophiles must struggle to their aching feet and answer the barely audible call of civilisation. A call, I might add, that is receding faster as we speak.

I bet that just one look at the following list will have you deducing what's in the wind here:

compose  
comprise  
consist  
constitute.

Yes, I know I'm not the first to bemoan the misuse of these words (and I sure won't be the last), but I can restrain myself no longer.

Stand by a for a short rant.

I'll begin with the swelling miasma shrouding *consist* and *comprise*. This misunderstanding ranks second only to that of one of my other personal pet peeves: *imply* (speaker) versus *infer* (listener).

The current situation is mainly the result of the mistaken formation of *comprise of* on the analogy of *consist of*. So on a certain Web site we meet

Which modern day countries did the Roman Empire *comprise of*?

Likewise at another site:

Our panel of translators *comprise of* at least 5 translators for each language.

A third site provides an exceptional mixture:

A TFFO Premiership squad shall *consist of* 18 players and must *comprise of* 2 goalkeepers, 3 full-backs, 3 centre-backs, 6 midfielders and 4 strikers.

A Champions League squad shall *consist of* 18 players and must *comprise of* 2 goalkeepers, 6 defenders, 6 midfielders and 4 strikers.

A Championship squad shall *consist of* 18 players and must *comprise* 2 goalkeepers, 6 defenders, 6 midfielders and 4 strikers.

(This particular game ended with a final goal score of *consist of*: 3 out of 3 and *comprise*: 1 out of 3.)

The easiest way to preserve the correct usage is to remember that *consist of* means “be composed of” and the preposition-less *comprise* means “contain”.

Mind you, Pam Peters in her *Cambridge Australian English Style Guide* (ISBN: 0 521 57634 2, paperback) points out that a “mirror-image” meaning of *comprise* now exists. It occurs when a sentence begins with the parts rather than the whole:

The meaning of 'comprise' . . . depends on whatever the writer makes its subject.

Her examples make it clear:

The book comprises three sections.

and

Three sections comprise the book.

Now, a question for the language antiquarians among us. Is

there still a place in modern English for *consist in*?

Short answer: only in very formal writing. According to Peters, the distinction between *consist in* and *comprise in* arose only in the 19th century. She gives these examples:

His argument consists in casting aspersions at all previous work in the field

and

The kit consists of scissors, thread and sewing cards.

As her examples show, the difference is one of conceptual versus tangible. So we use *consist in* when pinpointing

. . . the (usually abstract) principle of which underlies something

and *consist of* when specifying

. . . the several (usually physical) components of something.

Next, let me write a few words on *constitute* in relation to *comprise* and *consist*.

Like others before him (and after), Eric Partridge (*Usage and Abusage* (1947+), sees *comprise*