

Impressum

Klaus Bung: Two Pilgrims in Santiago

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

In this bundle of letters, the mysterious author, who appears here under the guise of one James Gardiner, has ventured away from his hill. He travels in a Ford Sierra through several European countries to visit educational publishers and demonstrate a general purpose computer program (called **MEM: MEmemory Manager**) which he has developed and which he wants them to buy. It is based on language learning research spanning twenty years. The program is psychologically sophisticated and is designed to enable publishers to produce adjunct programs to be used in conjunction with their existing textbooks. It can be used to produce programs in any foreign language (a sophisticated authoring system aimed at publishers rather than teachers and end users).

James Gardiner does his research and development work on a shoestring. He cannot afford airoplanes or hotels. He sleeps in his car, in ditches, in tents, on campsites, on the beach, in the houses of friends. His clients must not know this. They must believe that he is already successful and rich. James may have slept underneath his car, washed and shaved at 4 a.m. this morning in the semi-darkness underneath the water pump of a still deserted filling station¹ but when he appears in the publisher's office he has to look spruce, his suit and shirt must not look creased and crumpled, and he must make them believe that he is staying at the local Hilton or Sheraton Hotel. It is sometimes difficult to stop a hospitable publisher from giving him a ride back to his "hotel" or wanting to phone him there.

James Gardiner has a sister who is a nun in a Cistercian Convent in Germany. Some years ago, before she became a nun, she did the ancient pilgrimage from the Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostella (Spain) on foot. James happens to come across the same places. Some of the letters are addressed to his sister. That explains the many references to, and jokes about, religious topics and prejudices. Some of the letters took on a life of their own and became so barbaric that James never dared to send them to his

1 petrol station, gasoline station

straight-laced sister. He does not fear God, but he fears his good sister. He trusts that God shares his sense of humour but he cannot be so sure with a nun. Sure, they have a sense of humour too, but it is much more meek (3M!) than God's.

First trip: Santiago: Letter to a nunnery:
Letter 1: 30 May 1992

Letter to Sister Maria Helena
Convent of Clairvaux, Fulda-East, Germany

Date: Saturday, 30 May 1992
(Week of Ascension Day)

Date: Saturday, 30 May 1992 (Week of Ascension Day)
Subject: By sheer coincidence
Enclosures: Picture postcard

Dear Helena!

A rainy day

There is a Galician proverb which says: It never rains in Santiago, except when it rains (i.e. "but then!").

I became aware of this on Wednesday morning this week, i.e. during the night at 1.45, the moment I started out in Lisbon in my car in the direction of Santiago. This shows how far the climate of Santiago extends. REM Illustration: Map: Lisbon, Porto, Valenca, Padron, Santiago, River Minho, Tui enREM

The west wind whipped the Atlantic clouds over the land, it rained cats and dogs, all night through and for the whole of the following day. I had to drive slowly because I could hardly see anything outside the car, and inside the windows were steaming up - even though I travelled alone. To top it all I became sleepy and therefore I spent the night, sleeping as much as possible, jammed in the driver's seat, in pouring rain, at the side of the road, 20 km north of Lisbon. At 5.30 it was still chucking it down, but it became light, one could see more, and I started driving again.

At eight o'clock I was in Valença on the river Minho (speak: Miño) at the Spanish border with the north of Portugal. Valença is on the Portuguese side of the river. On the other side is the Spanish border town whose name is Tui (named after the famous German youth tour operator TUI).

In Valença I decided to get out of the car, in spite of the rain, for it was, in spite of the rain, market day. In spite of umbrella and cagoule (waterproof jacket) I was soaking wet instantly. The wind destroyed my umbrella, but it was all worthwhile, if only because of the market, on which there were not only, as usual, vegetables, fruit, eggs, clothes, pottery and bread on sale, but also live hens and chicken.

Apart from the stalls with canvass covers there was also the market of the poorer traders, peasant women, who were standing along the road in a long line with or without umbrella, each of them only with one or two baskets of goods, e.g. cherries, or lettuce, waiting for buyers, of whom there were of course very few in this weather.

The most hopeless situation was that of the women at the end of that row, who were already one or two hundred yards away from the stalls and whom the buyers would only reach once they had passed the long row of competitors who were offering the same produce.

I stocked up with farm bread on the market and then went for a walk through the frontier town sitting on a mountain, with its imposing fortress towering over the river. It was well worth stopping here, if only as an inspiration to come again on another occasion when the sun is out, or to spend a few months here when in about eight years' time (Deo volente) I have to learn Portuguese for a project planned for Compulang Publishers.

I was dripping wet, when I sat down in the car again. I would have had to wring out my trousers (but that is not possible when the legs are inside), and did not know where to put the wet and broken umbrella and the wet cagoule - in brief, it was an awful mess.

So I drove on and gradually battled my way northwards through Spain with an average speed of 20 km/h. Perhaps that is the speed limit ordained by God for pilgrims, including people who do not want to be pilgrims. I put a different interpretation onto it and thought: "Perhaps it is not my destiny to pay my respects to the apóstol (sic!) on this occasion", and therefore seriously considered changing my route and driving away from the coast into the less rainy interior of the country.

Ante portas²

At four o'clock (post meridiem) I arrived in a little town 20 km south of Santiago. I decided to search for accommodation here and to solve my various problems, such as (in random order): dry my clothes, find a safe place for parking the car, buy provisions, get the computer printer repaired, make overdue phone calls, write and post business letters, etc, before my planned solemn entry into Santiago (Dominica in Palmis³).

I found good and cheap accommodation in a guesthouse (2000 pts per night = £11 = DM33) with safe parking (in Santiago I would have had to pay more money for less space and more thieves), since thieves prefer to stay in holy places (textbook example: Golgotha⁴).

2 Hannibal ante portas = Hannibal is outside the gates (of Rome)

3 Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, on which Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

I always try to stop in small towns outside big cities, park my car there, where there is more space and accommodation is cheaper, create a base camp there, and then make my grand entry by train on foot (or on donkey-back as the good Lord did).

The little town, by the way, is called Padrón.

I learned that by sheer luck I had arrived in the very week in which Santiago has its great annual fiesta (which always falls into, and continues for the whole of, Ascension Week).

These fiestas have given me a lot of trouble during this trip. In Madrid, two weeks ago, I had to cut short my stay because they celebrated the feast of the city patrón San Isidro⁵, in whose honour Madrid has fiesta for a whole week, and in a rather complicated way.

Throughout the week, government officials go home at 2 p.m. Other businesses work as normal. Every evening there are bullfights, and only on the saint's day itself⁶ (this year on a Friday) absolutely every shop and office in Madrid is closed. I certainly could not complete my business and had to depart prematurely for Portugal to arrive there at the appointed time.

The devil has determined that there is fiesta everywhere on Saturday and Sunday, and in addition every town has its fiesta exactly when I arrive. (And I am a teetotaller and vegetarian: what a waste of opportunity! Its enough make me turn cannibal - like all good Christians are!) When there is no fiesta, there is huelga (strike), and when no huelga, then siesta, and when no siesta, then it rains so that I cannot get out of the car with my papers and in my Sunday best. That means that in every week there remain only two working days in which I can do more than establish that something is, for some reason or other, impossible to do.

This is the reason why this very same Santiago whom I had come to visit writes in his famous letter devoted to good works:

"Well now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we are off to this or that town; we are going to spend a year there, trading, and make some dosh⁷.' You never know what will happen tomorrow: you are not more than a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears. Instead of this, you should say: 'If the Lord will and we are still alive, then we may do this or that'."⁸

4 When Jesus was crucified, he was surrounded by murderers, called Matthew 27:38, Mark 15:27, Luke 23:32 and John 19:18 (the numbers are their prison tags). Vladimir in Samuel Becket's play "Waiting for Godot", Act 1, is profoundly puzzled by this paradox.

5 I shall send you San Isidro's story in a separate letter, otherwise this one will become too long. See p 000 of this book.

6 15 May

7 British slang for 'money'

8 James 4:13-15

This has led to the expressions "God willing", "Deo volente!" (Latin), "Si Dios quiere!" (Spanish), "Inshallah!" (Arabic)⁹.

As National Saint of Spain, Santiago has providently taken care that the wisdom of this caution is daily confirmed by reality. Plan what you like, you can be sure it will not happen. Therefore the Preamble of my General Terms of Trade contains the sentence: "Subject to James¹⁰ 4:15 and if nothing has been agreed to the contrary, the following terms of trading apply."

After several days, I was still besieging Santiago's southern flank. By chance I passed an inconspicuous little church in

9 The Great Apóstol Matamoros (Flectamus genua!) has been influenced in this matter by his great opponent in the battle for the soul of Spain, the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him!), who makes the same point to his followers: "Do not say of anything: 'I will do it tomorrow', without adding: 'If Allah wills.'" (Koran 18:23). The Seven Sleepers sought refuge in their cave for a week but when they awoke, 300 years had passed (Koran 18). Owners of an orchard declared, "without adding any reservation", that they would pick its fruit next morning but when they woke up in the morning, a storm had destroyed all their fruit. (Koran 68:17-18)

These examples refer to the uncertainty of events in the future. But they also have their pendant when looking at the past. Here the question arises whether a success should be attributed to man's effort or to God. This is a major issue after the battle of Agincourt (Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 4.8) when the winner, King Henry V, finds that the French have lost ten thousand men whereas he has lost only twenty-nine.

"Was ever known so great and little loss
On one part and on th'other? Take it, God,
For it is none but thine."

...

And be it death proclaimed though our host
To boast of this or take that praise from God
Which is his only."

Nobody must even mention the comparative numbers of the dead, except

"with this acknowledgement,
That God fought for us."

...

Do we all holy rites:
Let there be sung 'Non nobis' and 'Te Deum'"

Holinshed describes how the order was carried out: "The king, gathering his army together, gave thanks to Almighty God for so happie a victorie, causing his prelates and chapleins to sing this psalme [Psalm 114 or 113, and 115 or 113], *In exitu Israel de Egypto*: and commaunded every man to kneele downe on the ground at this verse, *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam*. Which doone, he caused TE DEUM with certeine anthems to be soong, giving laud and praise to God, without boasting of his

Padrón. Since my feet were hurting, I entered innocently and sat down. The door of the sacristy opened, and a man with a simple face walked towards me and asked, *si quiere ver la piedra* (whether I wanted to see the stone). I did not quite understand his torrent of words but thought it would be simpler to say Yes.

He pitterpatternostered on mechanically, was only able to repeat one little ditty very fast, and was so programmed that, whenever one interrupted him, e.g. with 'Despacio' or 'Por favor' or 'Cómo' or 'Señor'¹¹, he jumped back by two sentences in his recital (as the needle of an old-fashioned gramophone jumps back into a previous groove) and then resumed forward recitation, using exactly the same words, with undiminished speed. If one interrupted him after every second word and did this about eight times, then one had him exactly at the beginning of his story. But the story itself was not circular, i.e. if one interrupted him twice after sentence 2, then he would not land at the end of the story but even then, always at the beginning.

This then was the individual which led me to the high altar and opened a hinged wooden panel underneath the altar slab. A light came on automatically, and there, underneath the altar, was the man-sized stone¹² which is shown on the enclosed postcard. REM Illustration of postcard endREM

When I saw the Latin inscription, I understood at last what had not been so clear in Spanish (it proves the degenerate nature of modern languages), namely: the ship with the relics of the apóstol, which did not have a crew at the time (since the Flying Dustman¹³ had gone ashore in Haifa) had been blown mysteriously by angels from Palestine to the Spanish coast¹⁴, namely to this very spot, and had been tied to this huge ice-age stone at the bank of the river.

By the indirect contact with the Saint the stone also became holy and people built the altar and the church above it. Sanctity

owne force or anie human power." In exitu Israel de Egypto = When Israel went out of Egypt. Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam = Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory". Te Deum: We praise you, O Lord.

10 St James (English) = Jacobus (Latin), Santiago (Spanish), Tiago (Portuguese), St Jacques (French), Giacomo (Italian), Jakob (German)

11 = Slowly, Excuse me please, How?, Sir

12 It is believed that this stone has given the town its name. Padrón is thought to be etymologically related to piedra = stone and not to the word patrón (patron) which also suggests itself.

13 My plucky spellchecker has been at work here.

14 The international press reported a near repetition of this miracle on 15 July 1997 when a British frigate found a yacht adrift in the Bermuda triangle which had been left in its moorings in the Canaries nine months earlier by its German owners. Its ghostly crew was nowhere to be seen. Nihil novi sub sole. (There is nothing new under the sun.)

differs from magnetism in that it can be transferred by touch to objects made of any material, not only of iron.

Which goes to show that it pays after all if one tries, full of ignorance like myself, to stalk to the apóstol, not on the official pilgrims' route, from the east, but through the little backdoor, from the south. I presume that you, coming from the east, have not seen the stone and therefore I am sending you this postcard as a substitute.

Taking the holy city by storm

After two days I managed to get, by phone, the address of a firm in Santiago which was prepared to repair my Canon-Printer and therefore I now decided to force my way into the holy town. I had difficulties in finding the printer shop in the street I had been given and therefore I approached two old men who were sitting on a wall and enjoying the sunshine: "Por dónde se va a la casa de Canón?"¹⁵. And the men answered: "Qué quiere, la casa de los canónigos?"¹⁶

This story led to much merriment when I told it at the Canon shop, since if there is one thing that is in plentiful supply in this holy city, it is canons of the clerical kind. Who, in Santiago, would think of guns or of a printer manufacturer when asked for "Canon"!

This reminds me of a linguistic incident that happened in Portugal. I do not know any Portuguese and tried to get by with Spanish, but I had a German-Portuguese tourist phrase book with me. This was defective in its treatment of the most important word in every language, namely the word for "toilet". (A traveller can survive for four weeks without food, for 24 hours without water, but in certain circumstances only five minutes without a toilet, and in Mexico not even that long.) My phrase book offered the word "retrete" for *toilet* (cf. English "retreat" = place of retreating, withdrawing, solitude, for spiritual exercises). I therefore asked in a pub where they had their "retrete" and they simply would not understand me. "Casa de mierda"¹⁷ would surely have been understood, but I did not want to say that as a guest in a wonderful foreign country. Then they told me to go to the "monasterio" on the nearby mountain. But I thought that was too far for me. Moreover I did not want to have a spiritual retreat. Well, in the end somebody puzzled out what was my problem and showed me the little cubicle. Later I asked for the reason for this misunderstanding. It was a fault of the phrase book. "retrete" means the "toilet basin", not the room in which it has been erected. The room is called: "casa da banho"¹⁸ (speak: baño).

15 Which is the way to the house (business, company) of Canon?

16 What do you want, the house of the canons? (A canon is a priest who is a member of the Cathedral Chapter).

17 shit house

18 euphemism: bathroom

My printer was repaired free of charge, and at last I stood on the cathedral square.

When I stood in front of the Pórtico de la Gloria¹⁹, a voice sounded from heaven (or at least from above) in good, even though old-fashioned German, with a slight Spanish accent:

"Spät kommt ihr - doch ihr kommt! Der weite Weg
mein lieber Freund, entschuldigt Euer Säumen." "You're late, but you have come at last, dear friend,
The distance great excuses your delay."

"Ich komme auch mit leeren Händen nicht",²⁰ And neither do I come with empty hands,

I answered glibly, entering into the spirit of the quotations game as far as I could. The voice resumed, in English blank verse now:

"What is your gift then, did you bring your sister?
Where is your sister Chhelena²¹, my friend?"

"Still harping on my sister,²²" I mumbled and gave him a piece of Kendal's mintcake, which was part of my emergency ration. I fended him off with the authority that Latin provides to any utterance however trivial or false:

Num custos sororis meae sum? Am I my sister's bloody [num] keeper?)²³

The conversation then continued less aggressively. The apóstol (sic!) said that he has not seen you for a long time, but he does remember you well, he is sending you his kind regards (literally he said "blessings" - well, that's the way saints talk) and wishes you all the best for the future. To transmit this message to you was the sole purpose of this letter but, when I write, everything proliferates in baroque or cancerous profusion, just as the interior of Santiago Cathedral.

19 The "Portal of Glory" is the carved stone gate just inside the cathedral depicting Christ in glory surrounded by the saints and the heavenly host. When the pilgrim faces and touches this Portal he has truly arrived. Every pilgrim respectfully touches its central column, and since it has been touched by so many millions of hands in the same spot over eight centuries or more, the shape of a human hand is deeply engraved in the soft sandstone. Pilgrims now lay their hands into the handprint of their predecessors. At the base of the column is the head of the cathedral architect and those pilgrims seeking wisdom will press their forehead against his.

20 The start of Schiller's play "Wallenstein. Die Piccolomini", 1.1

21 The German name Helena pronounced with a Spanish accent. What I wrote "Chh" is pronounced like "ch" in Scottish "loch".

22 Shakespeare, Hamlet, 2.2:186

23 Genesis 4:9

Let me conclude with a few words about the rest of this trip. It is a round-trip through Europe, taking about two months and a half, with the purpose of visiting as many publishers as possible, of demonstrating to them my language learning program MEM, and offering it to them for publication.

I left England a few weeks before Easter, and I am still on the road. This rapid change of so many places, languages and cultures is quite an experience. This is quite different from star-shaped travel, sometimes into one country, sometimes into another, but always returning to England between one trip and the next: one always puts, so to speak, the gear into neutral between trips.

I change my town every other day on average and seldom know where I will sleep in the evening.

You should look at a map if you want to participate in the mental challenge and potential of my route, to say nothing of its actual adventures:

England: Rossendale, London; then fast through France and Belgium;

Germany: Koblenz, Nuremberg;

Czechoslovakia²⁴: Pilsen, Olomouce (5 hours east of Prague), Prague;

Germany: Munich (Easter);

Austria: Innsbruck

Italy: Bologna, Turino, Milano;

Germany: Constance, Stuttgart, Hanover, Paderborn (famous through Saint Drewermann²⁵), Koblenz;

France: St Quentin, Paris, Blois (Loire), Bordeaux, Ascain (in the Pyrenees near Biarritz);

Spain: Madrid; Badajoz

Portugal: Lisbon, Coimbra, Porto;

Spain: Santiago.

Box: INSERT SMALL MAP OF EUROPE HERE

²⁴ As it then was; now Czech Republic, and Slovak Republic

²⁵ Eugen Drewermann, a turbulent priest who got himself into a lot of trouble with the Roman Catholic church or vice versa. For a summary of the affair, see Thomas Schweer (ed): "Drewermann und die Folgen. Vom Kleriker zum Ketzer? Stationen eines Konflikts." (Drewermann and the consequences. From cleric to heretic? Stages of a conflict.). Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, Munich, Germany, 1992

My trip will continue (subject to James 4:15) via León, Burgos, San Sebastián (and perhaps a few other short stops on the Camino²⁶): I am doing the Camino crabfashion, backwards. In forward motion it is too ordinary for me.

St Joseph on trial

I conclude with a terrible story which I found in the newspaper a few days ago. I do not know whether you lot behind your convent walls hear such things - perhaps you do, but only years later: therefore I am sending you the news right now, so that you can take precautions: it wouldn't do, would it, if you went on worshipping the losing party. The only question is: which is the losing party?

Presumably you know that during the last few years the reform-minded catholic church authorities have withdrawn the sanctity permit, the title of saint, or even the right to exist from various traditional saints (e.g. Saint Catherine). This fate is now hovering over the head of even Saint Joseph like a sword of Damocles, or more likely, a pigeon ready to shit. He has been accused of attempted murder, and there are at least three eye-witnesses, namely Dante, Orpheus and St Peter. Peter insists rock-like²⁷ on his statement and cannot be made to budgerigar.

26 Camino de Santiago, the famous old pilgrims' route to Santiago de Compostela

27 Nomen est omen: Names determine the character of a person. Nicknames, by contrast, describe the character of a person. Peter (who had been baptised Simon by his parents: Acts 15:14), being ignorant and unlearned (Acts 4:13), and nevertheless dumb and stubborn by nature, an ideal combination of characteristics for the first pope, was dubbed Kephas (John 1:42), which is Petros in Greek, Petrus in Latin, and Pete in English. Cf the common English cry of exasperation with anybody excessively stubborn: "For Pete's sake!". After his death he was made head of immigration control in the Kingdom of Heaven, since particularly tough, ruthless and uncomprehending people are needed in that position. One of his main tasks is to keep the Hindus out since they are black and are such devoted and indiscriminate lovers of God in all her shapes and sizes that they would simply swamp heaven if religious merit were all that is required to qualify for a British passport (which guarantees, of course, access to heaven). Therefore they have to be kept out on racial grounds. Peter he has given his name to such diverse products as petrol (rock oil), petrify, parsley (German "Petersilie", French "persil", Spanish "perejil", from Greek petro-selinon = stone celery). Hence also the famous pun traditionally ascribed to the otherwise humourless Jesus in order to justify the supreme authority of the popes: "Tu es Petrus

This is what happened: Peter was sitting together with Saint Joseph, both were smoking a pipe of tobacco and were discussing the Environment Conference in Brazil and the unstoppable destruction of the Brazilian rain forest and the increasing scarcity of raw material for carpenters.²⁸ A pigeon was flying past the heavenly window. Joseph's face flushes red with anger, he grabs a gun and, bang, bang, he shoots at the pigeon. Being a stupid proletarian, he missed, of course. He only grazed one of his wings. St Hubertus or St Eustace²⁹ would have made a better job of that, OK, the bleeding pigeon escaped. "Why did you do that?" asks Peter. "That's my own bloody business", says Joseph, "we have an old score to settle."

I don't quite know what to make of it, but where there is smoke, there must be fire. The Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Sainthood is now investigating to what extent these claims are true. An official decision is expected by the end of 1993. This case, St Joseph vs. Holy Ghost, is of tremendous importance for the church because it can only end in honest Joe being stripped of his title or the Holy Ghost being dethroned or banished from his dovecote. But how can the Church survive without either?

The first problem for the Church was to find a suitable judge: Alan Solomon (too busy murdering viruses³⁰), Jephthah (son of a bitch-and-a-pigeon himself³¹), Christ (specialist: *judicat vivos et mortuos*³²: but: *sedet ad dexteram Patris*³³ and wouldn't budge

(Pete), et super hanc petram (rock) aedificabo ecclesiam meam, ha, ha, ha!" (Matthew 16:18) (You are Pete, the rocker, and on this rock I shall build my church.) This hoary joke is now being exploited in a desperate attempt by the ageing church authorities to lure youngsters into the church by offering them what they most love, sex and racy music.

28 Joseph is a carpenter and card-carrying member of his trades-union.

29 Hunter saints. Churches or chapels dedicated to them are often found in forests used for hunting. You can see a picture of the exploits of St Eustache if you visit his church in the centre of Paris.

30 With Dr Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit

31 Judges 11:1

32 from the Creed: who judges the quick and the dead

33 from the Creed: he sits on the right hand of the Father

from his exalted position), Citragupta³⁴ (bloody foreigner), were proposed and rejected.

Nobody dared to come forward to be the judge in a trial where one of the parties was the Holy Ghost and where the judge had to lose out whatever his verdict. This would be a poison chalice.

In the end, the Holy Father himself was forcibly heaved into the judge's chair and shackled to it with strong rope. Such are the burdens of high office. But how can the Holy Father sit in judgement on the Holy Ghost!

Why was the decision so difficult that one could not even find a judge without using force?

The court has to decide how the Virgin Mary came to be pregnant. If the pigeon had been meddling with her, then Joseph had good cause to shoot at the pigeon (presuming, of course, it was the same pigeon who started all this mischief of human salvation.) If the pigeon was not involved, Joseph had no excuse for his intemperate behaviour in the porch of heaven. Therefore, in a way, this was a case of Joseph vs Pigeon: "Did you do it, or didn't you? Own up!"

Here is the court's dilemma: The truth does not really matter all that much. But what are the political consequences of making such a decision which, whatever the outcome, must leave everybody upset and dissatisfied?

Finding Joseph guilty means that the status of sainthood has to be withdrawn from him. We then lose yet another saint and an essential link in the chain of mediators between God and man: Through Joseph we access his girlfriend, Mary (she will listen to the requests which he makes on our behalf). Through Mary we gain

34 Citragupta (Garuda Puranas) is the president of the administrative city in which the bookkeepers of karma sit and note down man's every good, bad or indifferent action. Even the Christian world relies on his services (agreement on sharing information), much cheaper than American secretaries, in keeping the big book up-to-date, but yet another instance of exploitation of third world countries, coupled with xenophobia and racial prejudice:

Liber scriptus proferetur,
In quo totum continetur,
unde mundus judicetur.
(A handwritten book will be brought out,
in which everything is contained,
and from which the world will be judged.)
(From the Dies Irae (Requiem Mass)).

the ear of her son, Jesus. Through Jesus we are heard by his father, God.³⁵ But worse would follow: If Mary was pregnant, which nobody doubts (except G A Wells³⁶), and if the pigeon did not have a finger in the pie, then the baby cannot possibly have been the son of God. This spells the end of Christianity as we know it.

But if they find the pigeon guilty, they commit the "sin against the Holy Ghost", which is so serious that it cannot be forgiven (not even by the Holy Saviour) and so mysterious that nobody knows what it is³⁷.

This is, verily, a tragic dilemma.

Human standards of honour are incompatible with the divine.

St Joseph (fighting for human honour) is greatly upset that any one, especially a bloody pigeon, should have cuckolded him. The pigeon (fighting by the standards of divine honour) views things through Spinoza's lenses³⁸ *sub aeternitatis specie*³⁹ and does not give a coo about impregnating a first protesting⁴⁰ but then consenting⁴¹ virgin, especially if she is made of Pyrex-glass, i.e. unbreakable, and if that's what it takes to rescue mankind from eternal death.

The jury, poor buggers, do not know what to believe and what would be more expedient to believe. Genetic paternity tests have been considered. They do work across species but not, as A J Ayer⁴², one of the expert witnesses, argued, on metaphysical entities, such as Holy Ghosts.

35 1 Timothy 2:5. The problem that remains is: How do we gain access to St Joseph once he gets too grand and busy. We need yet another intercessor. Perhaps St James (= Sanctus Jacobus = Santiago) would do? In Christopher Marlowe's play "The Massacre at Paris", the Protestant Seroune, about to be killed, prays: "O Christ, my Saviour!". The Roman Catholic murderer Mountsorrell reprimands him:

"Christ, villain!

Why, darest thou to presume to call on Christ,
Without the intercession of some saint?

Sanctus Jacobus, he's my saint; pray to him."

36 G A Wells: "Did Jesus exist". Second edition, Pemberton, London 1986

37 Matthew 12:32, Mark 3:29, Luke 12:10

38 Baruch Spinoza, 1632-1677, Dutch philosopher, had to earn a living, and preserved his intellectual independence, by grinding lenses.

39 from the perspective of eternity: from Spinoza's "Ethics", 5:31

40 "The lady doth protest too much, methinks", commented the Archangel Gabriel. His words are recorded in Hamlet 3.2:225.

41 Ecce ancilla domini: Behold the handmaid of the Lord (Luke 1:38)

42 Author of "Language, truth and logic". Gollancz, London, 1936

Joseph was asked to explain why he had a grudge against the pigeon. He claimed that, on 25 March⁴³ 1 B.C., the pigeon had impregnated his fiancée, Mary. "A likely story", said the Pope scornfully, "surely there are simpler ways of explaining her condition! What about the American peace keeping force stationed in Bethlehem during that year?"

"But I have seen it with mine own eyes", stammered Joseph.

"You shouldn't have looked, you silly fool, one doesn't miss a slice off a cut cake. You are half-blind anyway. You would have had to look very closely."

"I did, and she wasn't a cut cake, Sir, I must protest", said Joseph, angry now.

"All right, all right", said the Pope, "please describe exactly what you think you saw."

Joseph grew excited at the memory and erupted into verse:

"A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.
How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?"⁴⁴

"All right, all right! Spare us the gory details", said the embarrassed célibataire, "Leave something to our imagination. Doesn't sound much like a pigeon to me. I have never seen a pigeon with dark webs, a bill, and great wings."

Joseph would not be put down:

"But gods so love the world⁴⁵ and therefore they,
Humbling their deities to love, have taken
The shapes of beasts upon them: Jupiter
Became a bull and bellow'd; the green Neptune
A Ram and bleated; and the holy pigeon
thus turned into a giant swan, I swear it."⁴⁶

I am sure it was a pigeon, Sir, I could hear him coo excitedly when the great moment came."

"How do we know you aren't half deaf as well as half-blind? And what do you know about great moments, you have never done it with your wife. Apart from that, you shot at the Holy Ghost. How do you know you shot at the right pigeon? You cannot just shoot any pigeon just because you think one pigeon has been messing with your girlfriend.

You must never shoot a pigeon (No matter whether you girlfriend is a virgin or not) because that is the sin against the Holy Ghost which

43 The pigeon had cleverly chosen the Feast of Annunciation to commit his outrage.

44 W B Yeats: Leda and the Swan

45 John 3:16

46 Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale, 4.4:25-30

cannot be forgiven. That's why we have clay pigeons in churches - for the use of all infidels, apostates and blasphemers who want to let off steam⁴⁷.

If you want to vent your spleen against God or the Church, you simply go clay pigeon shooting, or you join Tom Lehrer and poison the pigeons in the park; or you give them contraceptive grain to eat; then they cannot do any more harm to our virgins."

The hearing, at this point, became rather incoherent. Everybody present, lawyers and observers, started talking at the same time. Had the Holy Father approved of artificial birth control?

They asked him.

Yes, he had changed his mind. He used to be against contraceptives because, if the pigeons had practised this to protect the Virgin Mary, our saviour would never have been born.

But today, in 1997, one third of all English children are born bastards, which proves that there are far too many philoprogenitive (but not poly) pigeons about.

By the way, whom would you prefer to lose, whom would you sacrifice, in your pantheon of saints: St Joseph or St Ghost?

Like The Mousetrap⁴⁸, the case is expected to run and run. Joseph with his gun has opened a can of worms. Here stands he, he can do no other, God help him⁴⁹. And I will keep you posted on this case.

As soon as I get the news, I will inform you.

With this promise, I greet you and your sisters in the Lord, especially your Mother Abbess, and wish all of you, all the best (in other words "God's Blessing", but I am no saint and therefore I can not express myself in such posh terms.)

Mit herzlichen Grüßen
Dein Bruder, xxx

47 This is the origin of the popular sport of clay pigeon shooting. It is carried out in a spirit of philosophy and compassion. Before pressing the trigger the shooter calls to his victim: "Memento, Columbe, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris." (Remember, o Pigeon, that you are dust, and dust you shall become again).

48 Agatha Christie

49 Martin Luther's words at the end of his speech before the diet of Worms (1521), a disgusting punishment which emperor Charles V, Holy Roman emperor, had imposed on this well-known vegetarian.

Second trip: Santiago: Letter to a nunnery: Letter 2: before
Aranda:
1 August 1992

Second visit to Santiago.

Date: 1 August 1992

Dear Helena!

Through France

Two months ago, I sent you loving greetings of your old friend Santiago with a detailed travel report. On that occasion, I happened to stray into Santiago de Compostela through the backdoor. It had been an unplanned pilgrimage, much like an unplanned pregnancy, but I am not sure whether both should be avoided with equal diligence or inducing either is equally pleasurable. Anyway, I fell into the pious trap.

This year I paid my second visit to Santiago, again unplanned, at least by me, but perhaps well planned by destiny. Perhaps I am indeed guided by that star (stella) which shines over the compost, jointly making Compost-Stella a symbol of the world in its divine wholeness, comprising the lowest and the highest, the shit and the divine sparkles. Not only the star shines, but also the shit stinks, in his honour – omnia per maiorem Dei gloriam⁵⁰.

Let every thing that hath breath
praise the Lord.⁵¹

Nobody can deny that a compost heap breathes, and it breathes more out than in.

In his play Baal, Brecht has written an Ode to Compostela in which he lauds it as the place in which the divine (the stars) and the human (shit) are allowed to fuse, to be transcended, where the gap between heaven and earth is bridged:

Dies ist ein Ort, wo man zufrieden ist,
Daß drüber Sterne sind und drunter Mist.

This is a place where you can be content,
To see the stars above, below your excrement.

This time I was approaching from the north, I was driving south from Paris and my intention was to go to Porto (Portugal) on business and to meet some good friends there.

50 Everything for the greater glory of God

51 Psalm 150:6

REM Illustration: Map: Paris, Bordeaux, Biarritz, St-Jean-de-Luz, Hendaye, Irún, San Sebastián, Tolosa, Vitoria, Pancorba, Frómista, Portomarín, Santiago endREM

North of Bordeaux, just off the motorway, is an architectural "exhibition", called Futuroscope, which shows what modern architects can do with new materials and techniques. They seem to be free of all traditional constraints of physics, materials and forms.

You can see huge shiny buildings which grow out of the soil and into the sky at an angle of 45 degrees, defying the laws of gravity. There are buildings in the shape of spheres and prisms, pyramids, cylinders, etc. Some of them are half submerged in the soil. Unimaginable. When you are there, you think you are on Mars or in a Science Fiction world. But all these buildings are real and functional. They are made of concrete and glass, not of papier-mâché; they are not painted wooden façades as they might be on a film set.

I negotiated my way through or round Bordeaux and remembered Father who studied law here when he was young and perhaps then acquired his great love for French language, literature and culture in general, which was so strong that, perhaps in protest against the ever increasing dominance of English after the war, he refused to learn English for as long as he lived.

When he met my daughter Lisl, his then 17-year-old granddaughter, for the first time, she did not speak German because she had grown up in Trinidad and the USA. Her mother tongue was English and they therefore had no language in common. So one day they found themselves sitting on a hill overlooking the Benedictine Monastery of Maria Laach (near Koblenz, Germany). When he was a very young man, he had wanted to join that monastery but had been advised, after a period of trial, that he was temperamentally unsuited for the monastic life and would do better to serve God in the outside world by bringing up a God-fearing family and doing good in other ways. So there they sat, holding hands and conversing in Spanish (which she had learnt at school) and Latin (which he had retained from the time of his youth and through his attachment to the church), and each guessing the other's dialect as best each could. Children sometimes succeed in doing what their parents try but fail to do. So there you are now in a Cistercian convent, orbited by a blaspheming atheist brother, while Father never made it to be a Benedictine monk.

I drove for hours and hours through the vast flat forests of Les Landes, and imagined how nice it would be to find a lonely cottage somewhere here in the woods, settle down for a quiet stint of work, enjoy the silence far from the main road and smell the aroma of forest and pine trees, day and night. This would have been a suitable setting for a European Walden, call it "Walden Three".⁵²

52 Henry Thoreau (1817-1862) wrote the classic American back-to-nature book, "Walden; or Life in the Woods" (1854). The

Gradually the Pyrenees came into sight, and I aimed at that narrow passage between the Pyrenees and the sea. I passed the holiday resort of Biarritz and then stopped in St-Jean-de-Luz. I bought some baguettes at the baker's, fought my way through the throng of tourists and found myself in the village square part of which, the whole village being very high, gave a magnificent view over the Bay of Biscay. After some rest in the sunshine and an icecream or two (I am never satisfied with one), I continued my trip.

I came to the last petrol station on the French side of the border, Hendaye, and decided to have a proper rest here.

I never like rushing on my trips and especially take endless time over things which other people want to get over and done with as fast as possible. I bought petrol, made a phone call to the loving soul in England who accompanies me in her mind every inch of the way and is concerned with my safety and well-being. A guardian angel would in fact care less. I will not say that he couldn't care less. But I know that that beautiful soul couldn't care more. She cares so much.

I reorganised my car, whose boot was brimful with food, drink, suitcases, sleeping bag and computer. Crates with maps, books and computer accessories were piled up on the rear seat. Clothes, maps, and notebooks were flung on top of them. Drinks were sitting on the passenger seat. There was not a cubic inch to spare.

I emptied my car dustbin which my Distant Beloved⁵³ had invented by hanging a plastic carrier bag into the handle of the car door. I tucked away French money and telephone cards, and dug out my Spanish money and telephone cards. I looked at the map and noted down the route for the next few hours. I went into the motorway restaurant and had a pee and a coca cola - or the other way round. I got out my book and read a few pages. I find these unplanned halts in uninviting places so infinitely relaxing.

It feels good to know that you are in this dog hole, from which everybody is trying to get away as quickly as possible, and yet you are in no hurry. I could sit there for the next 24 or 72 hours, and still nobody would notice me, and it would not matter whether I entered Spain or Portugal tonight or tomorrow or in a week's time. That is heaven. There is only one worry, not to run out of money.

It is a good atmosphere for reading poetry, a play, a treatise on philosophy, or simply to think, to talk to yourself and take notes. Good bless the motorway restaurants! Nay, God blesses them.

behaviourist B F Skinner (1904-1990) took this as the starting point for his utopia "Walden Two" (1961).

53 Beethoven's song cycle: An die ferne Geliebte (To the Distant Beloved)

You can sit there and be bored. You leave, not because you are in a hurry to get somewhere else, but only when you are bored. That is true relaxation. After a couple of hours, I also was bored. I went to the water pump, drenched my upper body and my shirt in water to provide cooling for the next hour or so and started the car.

Hitch hikers

As I got in, two young people with rucksacks approached me. Could I give them a lift?

Sorry, impossible, you see how the luggage in the car is piled right up to the roof?

O please, I am sure we can squeeze in. We don't need much space, we don't need any comfort. Just across the border, to the petrol station on the Spanish side. It is so difficult to get away from here. We have been trying for the last four hours.

But what about your rucksacks? The only free seat is the front passenger seat. If one of you sits there and takes the rucksack in his lap, what about the other person and the second rucksack?

O, said the young man, I could sit on the back seat and take one of your boxes and my rucksack on my lap.

Really?

Long thought and silence.

I: But only to the other side of the border? OK, let's try. This is extraordinary.

So in they got. We took some of my luggage out from the rear seat, the boy got in, occupying a quarter seat, his girl-friend piled all the luggage on top of him until he was almost as invisible as Freia hidden by the Rhinegold.⁵⁴

54 In Wagner's opera "Rhinegold" (Scene 4) it has been agreed that the gods pay the giants as much gold as is necessary to make Freia invisible when it is piled up around her. The whole of the Rhinemaidens' treasure is needed to achieve this but there is still a tiny gap through which Freia's eye can be seen. Wotan has to yield the invaluable ring, his last possession, in order to stop the gap and keep his promise.

Fafner:
An Wotans Finger
glänzt von Gold noch ein Ring,
den gebt, die Ritze zu füllen!
On Wotan's finger
still gleams a golden ring;
give that to cover the gap.

That's why a wedding ring is sometimes called a "stop gap" but liberal shepherds (Hamlet 4.7:171) handle this with much grosser

The girl in front and the young chap almost disappeared underneath my luggage and theirs.

Would I ever be able to drive this load in any gear other than first? Were my tyres hard enough? The view from my inside mirror was entirely blocked by the pile of luggage. I had to rely on my side mirrors as if I were a lorry driver.

Slowly the car started rolling.

I normally do not take hitch-hikers. My mode of travel is too idiosyncratic. I want to be alone in my car to think. I never go to any place quickly and certainly. I only get there inshallah⁵⁵. I may want to stop on the way, perhaps for a long time: no hitch-hiker expects or likes that. I may decide to make a detour or change my destination. Well, for once I had made an exception, for a mile or two.

But the first step on a slippery slope is always the most dangerous? It can be fatal. Principiis obsta, sero medicina paratur.⁵⁶

Schrecklich ist die Verführung zur Güte!⁵⁷

Irresistible is the temptation to be charitable!

When we reached the filling station on the Spanish side of the border, at Irún, without my tyres bursting, I felt more kindly disposed towards them. It was already late afternoon, perhaps five o'clock. They did not mind where they were going, just anywhere south or west. Well, why should I not take them with me to wherever I might decide to spend the night? I made the offer, they accepted.

I had an idea of a spot that might suit all of us very well and that perhaps induced me to make the offer.

They needed to buy Spanish money at the border, so we made another stop, before we continued.

He was a German student of architecture, Hans, and she an Irish art student, Mary. He was from Leipzig and both were studying in Berlin. For both it was the first big journey into the large strange world. Where did they want to go? It did not matter, as far as possible, before hitting the sea. That meant Portugal. I was going to Portugal but did not want to saddle myself with their company all along the way. I like travelling alone, want time to think, and make sudden decisions without explaining them to anybody. So it was a good compromise that I should take them

methods.

55 Arabic: By the grace of God, If God will

56 Resist at the beginning: when you start preparing the medicine it will be too late. Ovid: Remedia amoris (Remedies against love) 91.

57 Brecht: The Caucasian Chalk Circle, End of Act 1

as far as I could that evening and set myself and them free tomorrow morning.

We continued fast on the motorway to San Sebastián, or is it Donostia, and then straight south to Tolosa, and then at last joined the N1 to take us to Vitoria, or is it Gasteiz. Here then for me was Spain at last, or is it Basque Country.

I love those dusty boring roads in northern Spain, running past dull transport cafes, industrial estates and nondescript villages, smelling of dust and lorry grease. I have passed these roads only twice, and yet their names and numbers already ring bells in my mind and bring up pleasant memories, reminding me of my last trip, of freedom, and adventure and discovery and longing ...

Fessa de la Montagna

I keep a log book in my car, in which I enter details of all trips over 100 miles, destination, state of mileage counter, and major towns en route. And some important notes for future trips, just in case. This log book contains an entry: "N1: San Sebastián to Vitoria, km 385: Fessa de la Montagna"⁵⁸, a huge crack in a mountain visible from the main road over a distance of several miles. I had found a clear mountain stream gushing out of the opening in the mountain and found the spot so beautiful that I was determined to make a brief stop at this exciting place again, and, thanks to the entry in my log book, I found it instantly. On my previous visit I had met a gypsy woman who had told me an extraordinary story about this gashing wound in the mountain. Her story seemed to combine elements of European and Indian folklore partly known to me, and it seemed strange to hear this tangle of legends from a Spanish gypsy. The story is lengthy and I must get on with this report. I will therefore send you the story of the Fessa in a separate letter.⁵⁹

We explored the site for a while, took a dip in the ice-cold stream, filled out bottles with fresh water, and since it was still not dark, set out again on the N1 in the direction of Portugal.

58 But what infernal act of cunning multilingual copulation between Spanish, Italian and French had taken place here in all innocence and ignorance! Spanish gives "fendedura" (slit, gap), Italian gives "fesso" and "fessura" (slit, gap), and French gives "fesse" (anus), frontal and dorsal vices all compounded into one. The earth did quake, and the rocks rent: Et verbum caro factum est: born from the desire of woman, the word has become flesh (John 1:13-14).

59 I did write down this story, for my own benefit, but did never post it as promised because I did not think it would have a good effect on the tranquillity of a convent. The story can be found in the chapter entitled "Madonna Putana".

Joining the Camino

While driving I found that my guests did not really know anything about Spain and about places that might be worth visiting (if not the whole country). In particular, they had never heard of Santiago de Compostela. I told them about it what I could: famous place of pilgrimage since the Middle Ages, the pilgrimage equal in rank and spiritual importance with Rome and Jerusalem, the various long-distance routes to Santiago from all parts of Europe, especially the established routes through France and Spain, the abundance of ancient churches, including many dedicated to Santiago, St James, Saint Jacques, St Jakobus, etc. along the route, hostelryes, works of art and whole towns that sprang up or grew in order to cater for the pilgrims⁶⁰, my own personal experience with Santiago earlier that year. I made their mouth water and they decided they would definitely go and see it, and as much as possible of the monuments along the route. How much I regretted I could not go as well, since I was really in a hurry to get to Portugal.

We drove past Vitoria (Gasteis) and continued on the N1 in the direction of Burgos.

60 In his poem "Mahomets Gesang" (Mohammed's Song) Goethe likens the birth of Islam to the appearance of a mountain spring. It turns into a stream, then a river, flowing through the desert making it fertile and leading to the springing up of towns and glorious cities, a whole culture, along its banks. The routes used by the pilgrims bound for Santiago were like just such a river creating the most beautiful monuments of religion and culture along its banks.

Kommt ihr alle! -
Und nun schwillt er
Herrlicher, ein ganz Geschlechte
Trägt den Fürsten hoch empor,
Und im rollenden Triumphe
Gibt er Ländern Namen, Städte
Werden unter seinem Fuß.

Unaufhaltsam rauscht er über,
Läßt der Türne Flammengipfel, [sic!]
Marmorhäuser, eine Schöpfung
Seiner Fülle, hinter sich.[to the tributaries]

Come ye all!
And now the river swells
more gloriously, a whole dynasty
carries the prince [the river] on its shoulders,
And in rolling triumph
he gives names to countries, cities
spring up under his foot.

Unstoppably he continues to flow,
Leaving behind him the flame-bathed
pinnacles of the spires, a creation
of his plenitude.

We were still driving when it got dark, and came to a small village which, unlike most others, clung tightly to the long distance road. On an impulse I decided to slip off the road, park the car, look at the village and find a bite to eat. My guests were happy with that.

In my logbook that village is entered as Pancorba, kilometre stone 302 on the N1 between Vitoria and Burgos. But when writing this letter I tried in vain to find it on the map. The nearest the map gives is a village called Pancorvo⁶¹. We walked through the little alleys of the village, past the *bares* (bars), smelled the smells of food coming out of them into the warm summer evening air, heard snatches of relaxed conversation and laughter, talked about this and that and noticed many posters advertising a local "Fiesta de Santiago" (yet another fiesta). I pointed out the name Santiago to my friends: You see how important he is here! Gradually it dawned on me that he might be the patron saint of the village church and hence a fiesta is held here in his honour. We went to the church in order to check on its name. Indeed it was a church of Santiago. It took a few more posters for me to realise that if there was a fiesta de Santiago here, then on the same day all churches of Santiago would have their great fiesta, including the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. I looked at the date. The fiesta was announced for Saturday, 25 July, today was the evening of the 23rd. I discussed it with my friends.

What a coincidence that I should again be on the route to Santiago, quite unintentionally, just two days before his great festival! This was an opportunity I should not miss. And I could kill two birds with one bullet: go there myself, and give a lift to my friends. Should I, could I? We wanted to see something on the way, use small roads, we had one day, could we make it?

I decided to try. My friends were happy.

I cannot remember where we slept that night. The following day we travelled on and stopped only in two or three places which I wanted to re-visit. They will be familiar to you since you have walked the route.

I remember the perfect beauty of the small church of San Martín de Frómista but also the story of the sympathetic saint who was

61 There are two accepted spellings of the name of this village: Pancorbo and Pancorvo. Mapmakers usually solve the problem by putting one spelling into the index and the other onto the map itself. There is a local story about the name which tells of a group of Christians hiding from Muslims, or Muslims hiding from Christians, in a cave, possibly for several hundred years (like the Seven Sleepers in the Koran, Surah 18; see also Gibbon: Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ch. 33) and being brought food by a raven (bread = pan; raven = cuervo in Spanish and corvo in Italian; so perhaps the raven came from Rome) as happened to the Prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:6).

born there, San Telmo, patron saint of sailors. As a young man he led a dissolute life (like Don Juan Tenorio, ossia il dissoluto punito⁶²) and then fell off a horse which did not give him (like Funés⁶³) infinite powers of memory but led to his conversion. I admire the economic thinking behind such lives: carpe diem⁶⁴, make hay while the moon shines, have fun while you can and convert to God when you are incapacitated. The other nice thing about San Telmo, to my mind, is that he was born in a place that is 70 miles away from the coast and yet managed to become chief of the sailors' trades union; an improbable achievement, just like that of ...NN ???, the Englishman who became a well-known and popular bullfighter in Spain. The celebration of St Telmo's fiesta is always a robust affair⁶⁵ - in honour of his dissolute life.

What intrigues me about San Telmo is that you can split up his name and title slightly differently, namely Sant Elmo, Saint Elmo. Elizabeth Hallam's "Saints"⁶⁶, says nothing about San Telmo (like my guide to the Camino de Santiago), but lists Saint Elmo (who died ca. 300 A.D.) as patron of the sailors. He was bishop of Formiae (Campagna, Italy). His Feast Day is 2 June. He is also associated with St Elmo's fire, a bluish electrical discharge visible on the tops of masts before and after a thunderstorm. The similarity of the name Formiae and Frómista / Fómista is striking. The Spanish expression for Saint Elmo's fire is "fuego de San Telmo", so it seems to be the same. Phonetically this is a case of shifting word boundary, such as the derivation of the English word "an orange" from Spanish "una naranja" > "unnaranja > unn aranja > an orange".

Saint Elmo is also known as Erasmus⁶⁷, and he is listed under this name in a French dictionary of saints⁶⁸. This book makes him bishop of Formiae, Italy, feast day: 2 June. One could suspect that Erasmus of Rotterdam was named after this saint, but the philosopher's birthday is given as 26 to 27 October 1465 or 1466, and we can therefore not link his birthday with the saint's feast day.

The other church to which I am attracted and which we visited again is the solitary fortress church San Nicolás in Portomarín, high above a water reservoir.

62 "or the punished whoremonger", subtitle of Mozart's "Don Giovanni"

63 Funés el Memorioso (Funés the Memory Freak), character in a short story by Jorge Luis Borges, who fell off his horse and thereby gained a super-power memory.

64 Harvest the day (Horace, Odes 1.11:7)

65 Some people say that he is the Flying Dustman after his redemption by Senta.

66 Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1994, p 89

67 Elizabeth Hallam: "Saints", p 89

68 Pierre Pierard: "Dictionnaire des prénoms et des saints". Larousse, Paris, 1974, p 72

We had much opportunity to talk on that day. I remember one observation about the irrational way in which arrows were placed on road signs. Should they point up or down when they told you to leave the current road but drive forward. What did my passengers think? They had never thought about the problem, but it became clear to them that there was one. Gradually I developed a theory about the ideal positioning of arrows on road signs, and then kept watching whether the real signs conformed with the ideal or not. Since arrows point the way to heaven (that's why God made them in the first place), and you are particularly interested in that route, I would like to send you the whole theory. But I need time to write it down. It was first mooted on this day, 24 July 1992, on my way to Santiago.

Later on during the same trip, the kindly Saint provided me with an opportunity to write it all down for you, and I will send it to you as a separate item: "The Route to Heaven or Hell is Plastered with Arrows". It must be of profound interest to you and your Sisters.

We tried our best to reach Santiago that evening, but it got dark. Driving was very difficult in the utter darkness on the narrow winding road. We were tired. We had to sleep. We stopped on a lay-by. We were in high territory and in a forest, still a few hours from Santiago, but I do not remember where. My friends erected their tent in the lay-by and went to sleep. I slept in the car as best I could. I woke them up at four in the morning (Saturday, 25 July, Fiesta de Santiago) and we continued our drive. At 8 a.m. we reached a parking lot on the outskirts of Santiago and parted, as agreed, because I did not want to have my exploration or experience of Santiago hindered by strangers.

I walked to the cathedral and got there before 9 o'clock, early enough to get a good seat for the high mass which would start at 10. I saw the people arrive in their best clothes. The grand portal was opened, one could hear military bands playing on the square outside the cathedral. King Juan Carlos and his wife arrived and entered the cathedral in slow procession. She was wearing a mantilla and appeared in the most severe, classical and dignified style of Spanish dress. The organ let rip, the mass started, the choir sang and the huge botafumeiro was swung. Its incense permeated the whole cathedral. Afterwards I mingled with the crowd on the cathedral square, watched the military parades and the speeches made from the balcony of the townhall opposite. I walked through the streets as I had done last year, and intended to continue my trip to Portugal, just a few hours south, in the afternoon.

1. Fidel Castro in Santiago

27 July 1992

At the time Fidel Castro was on a state visit to Madrid. When he heard that I, his deadly rival in matters spiritual, had already visited Santiago twice and the fame thereof had gone abroad into all that land and all men did marvel⁶⁹, while he had not been there even a single time, he decided that he could not allow my progress to go utterly unchecked.

His enemies were already spreading rumours that he was afraid to face the great Saint and the big guns (canónigos) of Santiago. He therefore changed his schedule and decided to spend the second day of his state visit here. "Vamos a Santiago a ver esto que el Señor nos ha anunciado." (Let us now go even unto Santiago and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us)⁷⁰, he said and all his entourage repeated it in fugato as if Bach⁷¹ was chasing them in person.

I heard of this abrupt decision on the television news while I was still in Santiago and decided to stay in order to witness the historical encounter of the two immortal men. I followed Castro into the Cathedral with a cassette recorder.

In Madrid Castro had worn a lounge suit. He arrived in Santiago in combat fatigue with jackboots. His jeep raced through the narrow streets of the town, which had been cleared by the police, and came to a screeching halt at the bottom of the cathedral steps. He jumped out and ascended taking two steps at a time. His 16-strong body guard could hardly keep pace with him, to say nothing of King Juan Carlos who had followed him in a limousine (up to the steps).

Castro swept through the Pórtico de la Gloria and spat contemptuously when he saw the pilgrims putting their hands into the five fingerprints now deeply engraved into the stone of its central pillar and young students seeking wisdom by touching the stone forehead of the ancient cathedral architect with theirs.

"Where is this there censer then?", he asked. The oversized botafumeiro⁷², for which Santiago is famous, was pointed out to him. It was parked, today, high in the vault above the transept.

69 Matthew 9:26 and Mark 5:20

70 Luke 2:15

71 Christmas Oratorio: Lasset uns nun gehen gen Bethlehem (Let us now go even unto Bethlehem)

72 The botafumeiro is a huge thurible (incense burner), as tall as a grown man and weighing 80 kg. It can be swung through the transept nave like a pendulum with an arc of 50 metres reaching almost the ceiling at either end when it is in full swing.

"Hell, why isn't it lit then? I can only smell clerical farts and moth balls, the only kind you lot have. What kind of a reception is this then?"

"Sorry, Sir", replied the Dean of the Cathedral, "the censer is only used on very high feast days of the church."

"Listen, mate," said Castro and slapped the machine gun which was dangling from his belt, "don't you try to mess with me. I am here today. For the first time in the history of this wreck. This is Reyes⁷³, this is Epiphany, and the kings of the earth shall tremble, and I shall break them with a rod of iron; I shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. For I, Fidel Castro, sit in the heavens and shall laugh: I shall have them in derision.⁷⁴ This is not only a feast, this is the beginning of a new era for this fucking church. It is already being advertised in all the vidrieras⁷⁵ of this bloody country. Have you never heard of the PC era: Post Castro? Now you send one of your monkeys up to lower this damn thing and get it lit for me before I shoot it down."

"But, señor, sorry, it is not so easy to do this. It takes eight men to lower, raise and swing this censer. Where can I get eight strong men so quickly?"

"Eight men? Men, did you say? You mean eunuchs, don't you! You ain't got no men in this place. They've got no brawn, in spite of eating flesh and drinking blood every day. Caníbales, (he mumbled), it is enough to turn you into a bloody vegetarian! Now you take my advice, change your supplier, go to a proper butcher, not a magician. Let them eat British beef and make proper men of them. Send them to my island and I will train them. For today, my crew will do it. Four of them will be more than enough. Jode!⁷⁶ Meanwhile I must go and say Hello to me old mate Matamoros⁷⁷ up there."

As usual a long queue of pilgrims were waiting at the side of the high altar to ascend the steps behind it to the platform on which the colossal golden apóstol stood, dignified and kindly, overlooking the altar and the huge cathedral, on which he had stood for centuries, giving darshan⁷⁸ to all those who come from all over the world hoping to be blessed by seeing and touching him and crying on his shoulder.

73 Reyes (Kings), Spanish name for the festival of Epiphany, at which Psalm 2 is traditionally recited.

74 Ps. 2

75 South American Spanish for 'shop windows'

76 Spanish: Fuck!

77 Matamoros = Muslim Killer, one of the traditional epithets of Santiago since legend has it that he appeared on horseback, swinging his sword, to help the reconquistadores in the battle against the Muslims.

78 Sanskrit: "sight", looking at a saint or a deity in order to pay respect and obtain blessing.

His shoulders are broad and have become broader over the centuries. Each of the pilgrims in the queue will stand behind the giant saint and gently put his hands on his shoulders, say a prayer and proceed to descend the steps on the other side of the platform. That is the custom.

Fidel was in a kindly mood. He was tempted to order his henchmen to fling the queuing pilgrims out of his way, but then thought better of it. He just took his machine gun and waved them aside.

That was enough to make them skirr away
like cockroaches in all directions.

In two bounds Castro was behind the Saint. He slapped him on the shoulders with such might, that the Saint went into his knees, the balls started ringing, his ears and his conch shells fell off, the altar shook, and the botafumeiro crashed down from the vault; the veil of the cathedral was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of their tombs in the cathedral⁷⁹ and danced a skeletal habanera.

"Hola, vieux pet, how have you been keeping, Commendatore. Do you remember me? I am Tenorio, but not Castrato, ja ja ja."⁸⁰

Castro was speaking Spanish and French, but the kindly Saint who was more used to being addressed in American than in French, mistook the French words for English, and felt very flattered at being called "pet".

He responded: "Yes, you old infidel. Quia viderunt oculi mei⁸¹, as they keep saying. My eyes have grown a bit weak over the years. I have waited many a century for this day. Man, am I pleased to see you! I am dear to you, I know, and you are dear to me. You have committed many sins in battle, but you have loved much. And much will be forgiven you⁸² - and you bloody well need it, you old sow! I have loved the Lord, and what did I get for it? To be surrounded by those pious farts for centuries. You have loved man (and yourself, if truth be told), and the Lord will reward you. Why don't you retire and let those you have blessed take over! Take it easy, man. You need some good days on earth, just in case there isn't anything on the other side. You have worked enough."

A big tear trickled into Fidel's beard at this friendly reception. And he touched the Saint's shoulders again, more

79 Matth. 27:52

80 vieux pet: French: old fart. Commendatore: The guest of stone in Mozart's "Don Giovanni". Tenorio: Surname of Don Juan in Zorilla's play "Don Juan Tenorio" (1844). ja ja ja: Spanish laughter: ha, ha, ha

81 Latin. From the Nunc dimittis. "Lord, now you let your servant depart in peace; for my eyes have seen your salvation". Luke 2:30. Daily sung during compline or evensong.

82 Luke 7:47

gently this time: "Thank you, old warrior, I will think about it."

"You know what, old chap, they are giving a big banquet for me in the Town Hall, a last supper if you pardon the expression, why don't you come and join me for dinner, and afterwards we will dance a minuet together: *Il chitarrino vi suonerò*⁸³. It's just across the square, so you can get there easily in spite of your long teeth and your heavy armour; or, if you like, I'll send a lowloader for you. Say Yes, mate, it'll give them a fright when you show up, so it's definitely worthwhile even if you don't like the food or don't understand the Galician conversation."

The Saint stood, said nothing and shook his head. Castro grew pale. He jumped down from the platform, grabbed the guitar of a young Italian pilgrim, struck a pose at the lowest altar step, looked up to the Saint and sang melodiously, accompanying himself:

Vieni alla mia cena, o mio tesoro.
Deh, vieni a consolar il pianto mio.
Se neghi a me di dar qualche ristoro,
davanti agli occhi tuoi morir vogl'io.⁸⁴

Please come to my dinner, o my darling.
Please, come and silence my sobs.
If you refuse to give me comfort,
I want to die in front of your very eyes.

The Saint smiled coyly and said: "All right, you clown. I'll come. You are irresistible."

Castro left the cathedral without having been fumigated and went on a walk-about tour of Santiago. The streets were packed – with tourists and pilgrims, most of whom were incensed about his disrespectful behaviour in the cathedral. There was only a small delegation of supporters from Cataluña and from his ancestral town of La Coruña.

When Fidel left the cathedral, his fans immediately gave him the clenched fist salute and shouted Fidel, Fidel. The outraged Christians misunderstood them, followed their lead, raised their fists and screamed Infidel, Infidel. Fidel Castro only heard the Fidel in all the mayhem, saw the sea of saluting fists and was delighted: "I did not know there were so many Socialists in this pious town", he said. "I think, Comrade", said an aide, "your performance in the cathedral has just converted them."

That evening in the Juan Sebastian Bar⁸⁵ I watched the local Television News, which showed how, and explained why, Castro had been hustled by the hostile crowd. The next morning I bought a Cuban newspaper, which showed the same crowd enthusiastically greeting Castro with raised fists and shouting his name. This

83 And I'll play the guitar for you (Mozart, Figaro 1.2).

84 Mozart: Don Giovanni, Canzonetta, Act 2, No 3

85 Famous pub in Santiago named after a celebrated German composer. Inevitably Hungarian exiles in Santiago opened a bar TOK just across the road.

shows quite clearly how much more informative and flexible our pictorial reporting is than the dull verbal news of olden days.

I must tell you here a few stories about misunderstandings which run along similar lines. They may not yet have managed to penetrate your convent walls. I must try to smuggle them in.

Gesture Politics: Three stories

1

The first story comes from the old French watercock I love so much.⁸⁶ A Persian gardener comes to his Prince and says: 'This morning I saw death. When she recognised me, she made a threatening gesture. I wished some miracle could transport me to Ispahan' (??? asked in French newsgroup; next try web!). The Prince lent him a carriage. When the gardener arrived in Ispahan, death was waiting for him at the city gates. The gardener plucked up some courage. 'Why did you threaten me when you saw me this morning?' She answered: 'I did not make a threatening gesture but a gesture of surprise. This morning I saw you far from Ispahan, and I had instructions to collect you in Ispahan tonight. Thank you for coming well in time.'

2

The second story is about the kind and auspicious Indian God Shiva (Mahadeva). He is the proverbial hippie. He preaches flower power and love to all and sundry. If you hit his right bottom, he offers his left cheek. It is his habit to roam the earth dressed like a tramp, with matted hair, and his body covered in ashes and dirt.⁸⁷ One night, as he was walking along a lonely road, two highwaymen attacked him. They could not expect him to have any money, and of course they did not know who he was. So their attack can only have been motivated by malice. When they saw him approach they broke off some branches⁸⁸ from a bilva tree⁸⁹ which was growing by the side of the road. With these branches they thrashed him thoroughly. Shiva, who cannot be killed like this, sat down in the road, allowed them to continue to beat him until their arms were tired and then gave them his blessing. The bilva tree is holy to him, and he therefore assumed that this was their peculiar form of worshipping him.⁹⁰ Now, dear Helena, I do like a stupid God like this much more than a smart one who boasts that he can read the hearts and minds of men⁹¹. Such a smart god then has to administer justice, that justice is too hard to bear for the offenders, but justice must be, so

86 Jean Cocteau, but I have been unable to pinpoint the book in which I read it.

87 Goethe relates one of his adventures in the ballad "Der Gott und die Bajadere" (The God and the Temple Dancer/Prostitute).

88 Obviously they were fascists.

89 also known as bel tree, or bael tree; botanical name: Aegle Marmelos

90 From: Sister Nivedita: "Cradle Tales of Hinduism", p 28 f. Published by Advaita Ashrama (Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre), 5 Dehi Entally Road, Calcutta 700 014, India. REM ??? KB find original source; it is not in the Shiva Puranas endREM

KB: (??? check Shiva Puranas...). or find source elsewhere!

91 "I test motives and thoughts and repay you as your deeds deserve" (Revelation 2:23). Ignorance is more blissful.

the smart god must send his own son, poor sod, has him beaten, tortured and crucified - only so that he, smart god, can have his revenge (call it justice if you like, or masochism if you prefer), and that the poor human perpetrators can get away scot-free. It could make a dog cry! What a complicated way of doing things! And all the result of reading people's hearts and minds. Wouldn't it be better to turn a blind eye or three and play plain stupid like Shiva!

Surely there is a sign in this for all who issue fartwas against blasphemers!

Let's have some kindness and common sense, even in religion. Shiva is not only auspicious, as his name says, but truly merciful, unlike his competitor, the petty tyrant, who rants and raves in his scripture against the idolaters and blasphemers whose hearts he himself has hardened, as he proudly proclaims, and then mechanically prattles on about being forgiving and merciful.

An Ancient Prayer to Shiva

O Lord, o mother, make me wary of the religion taught by all-knowing men. Make me wary of prophets, of zealots and reformers. Make me wary of new religions. O Shiva, make me a good idolater and blasphemer. Let me not commit the sin of pride, the sin of believing in one true god (with the small g that dishonours him), the invention of simple men of narrow minds. Let me believe in the Goddess Illat, and in Parvati, in Devi, and in The Mother, who encompasses all, and the many gods (with the small g that honours them) which sprang from her womb and manifest themselves in our minds, in our idols (Peace be upon them!), in the gods of our mothers, and in every part of the manifested world. Let us worship Her daughters, the swans exalted, and may they teach us love and lust, mercy and merriment.

3

The third story is that of the Monster Ravana, who was ruler of Sri Lanka in prehistoric times. Another Indian god, as great as Shiva, became man in order to rid the world of this unjust monster. The god was called Rama when he lived on earth. Ravana had ten heads: with one he cursed, with the second he lied, with the third he drank whisky, with the fourth he smoked pot, with the fifth he ate flesh, with the sixth he ate shit, with the seventh he farted, with the eighth he made political speeches, with the ninth he bit his staff, and with the tenth he puked in church. He was a thoroughly unsavoury fellow. By the Fig and by the Olive! Should he not have been dispatched to the deepest hell straight away and been given the fruits of the Zaqum tree⁹² to eat which are devils' heads, just like his own. Heads of a feather flock together! With these he should have crammed his belly and drunk scalding water. Surely he deserved it. But worse is to come. Randy Ravana abducted Rama's wife Sita, and Rama waged a war against him to get his beloved Sita back. The final battle lasted for ten days. Ravana was hopping mad, raced around the battle field shouting "Fuck Rama, kill Rama"⁹³, and other terrible things which only monsters and poets dare to say about God. Ravana's anatomy was such that, when you cut off one of his ten heads, it would immediately grow again⁹⁴. Nevertheless Rama could have killed him during the first five minutes of battle because he knew the

92 Koran, Sura 37

93 Blasphemous, but true!

94 Lorena Bobbit's husband wasn't so lucky. When his masthead had gone, it had gone for good.

one spot where Ravana was vulnerable. Ravana's Achilles' heel was in his belly. He had to take it out each time he wanted to run. Rama, being a true God, being great and far above party politics, swearing and blaspheming, just watched Ravana's antics with amusement. He played with him as a cat plays with a mouse. When Ravana blasphemed, Rama did not issue a fartwa against him, but encouraged him to be more inventive in his blasphemies, and even made some colourful suggestions, which Ravana gratefully took up (Copyright Rama, though). This trick with Ravana's heads was great fun for Rama. He threw his battle-axe at Ravana to cut off one of his heads (which was immediately replaced), but the severed head flew up into the sky like a balloon before slowly coming down. Rama threw his battle axe so quickly and so skilfully, that soon the sky was covered with severed heads⁹⁵, as if tons of balloons had been released into the sky. Ravana grew ever more furious and hateful of Rama. How could he kill him, and get the better of him! He was definitely ambitious, trying to win a battle with God himself⁹⁶. After several days Rama got bored with the game and decided to make an end of Ravana. He shot straight into his stomach, where Ravana's soul resided⁹⁷. This was the only way in which Ravana could be killed. Ravana's soul issued from his body, Ravana was dead, and Rama opened his divine mouth, breathing in Ravana's soul, thus uniting Ravana with himself and giving him ultimate liberation, or eternal heaven as your friends might say. Was Rama stupid? Did he not know that Ravana hated him? He did, but his logic was that you can worship God as a friend or as an enemy. If you want to worship him as an enemy, you have to be exceedingly hostile. You must hate him with all your heart, all your soul and all your powers⁹⁸. If you worship him as a friend you can be just lukewarm, as most people are. To worship him as an enemy requires more effort, you must hate God with total concentration. You must be totally absorbed in him, be it in love or in anger. If you achieve this total absorption, as Ravana did, then God will accept you, and you will be saved (liberated). Isn't that a very generous attitude of Rama - truly divine, you might say! Not like a petty tyrant or a super-judge.⁹⁹ If Ravana got away with it, then, thank Rama, there is still hope for blasphemers like me.

W B Yeats also perceived this: "Hatred of God may bring the soul to God."¹⁰⁰

I have a fourth story running along these lines, that of Putana trying to kill yet another of these kind gods which our world so

95 Iris Murdoch wrote a novel about the incident.

96 The only human being ever known to have succeeded in fighting God physically and getting the better of him was the Patriarch Jacob (Genesis 32:24-32) who was rewarded by the title "Israel", which means "He wrestles with God and prevails".

97 Many wives have discovered that their husbands are similarly constructed.

98 Matth. 22:37: "Love or hate God, but do it with all your heart, all your soul and all your powers." This is the original text, which has been suppressed in the tepid standard editions of the Bible. Tepidness, however, is not even a Christian virtue: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16)

99 This story can be found at the end of the Indian epic Ramayana.

100 Supernatural Songs, No 5: Ribh Considers Christian Love Insufficient.

badly needs, God Krishna. I will put it into my letter about the Fessa de la Montagna.

As you know, after the overthrow of the Soviet Empire, democracy and political correctness were also introduced in heaven. So when the next divine elections come around, I can give my vote to the god who has the most promising programme. I believe the candidates this year are Jahwe, God, Allah, Illat, Rama, Shiva, Krishna and Devi.¹⁰¹ I will give my votes to Rama, Shiva and Krishna (and next year I'll have Illat and Devi) – Thank-Rama we have proportional representation so that all three have a chance to benefit from my vote.

But let us return to Santiago de Compostela.

1.1.1 The banquet

Evening had come and Castro had already arrived in the banqueting hall on the first floor of the splendid ayuntamiento¹⁰².

The portals of the cathedral suddenly sprang open, and Matamoros himself was seen charging on a white horse across the cathedral square and up the steps of the ayuntamiento. The policeman at the entrance told him: "You have to park your pet outside." "Hell, if I will," said Matamoros, "I can take a White Horse anywhere¹⁰³." He rode past the policemen up the steps into the banqueting hall. The state guests grew pale at the sight. Santiago jumped off his horse, and said:

Fidel Castro, a cenar teco
m'invitasti, e son venuto.¹⁰⁴

Fidel Castro, you invited me to dine
with you and I have come.

That evening, I understand, he had his first good meal in seven hundred years. Poor sod of a saint! Verily, Fidel Castro fills the hungry with good things and the rich he sends empty away.¹⁰⁵

I had to leave Santiago that very evening and drove through the night in order not to be late for my appointments in Porto, but I can tell you, I would not have missed that day in Santiago for anything in the world. It is a great thing to be an eyewitness to such world shattering events.

1.1.2 Shell versus Santiago de Compostela

101 The Pope is not standing for election: he insists he has the post anyway.

102 Townhall

103 British advertising slogan (brand of whiskey)

104 (Mozart: Don Giovanni, Act 2, No 11, Scene 15)

105 Luke 1:53

Apart from the trial of St Joseph, of which I told you earlier in this letter, there is another matter that is keeping the legal minds here busy. Shell is suing the Chapter of Santiago Cathedral for infringement of copyright. They claim that the famous Santiago shell is its registered trademark. They demand a royalty for its use in churches all over Europe and on all the souvenirs with the shell which are sold in Santiago de Compostela.

REM Illustration: Show the shell of Santiago either on a statue, a painting, building or European signpost; and the Shell oil trademark next to it endREM

Shell have also offered to buy out the Cathedral of Santiago and many churches along the Camino de Santiago and turn them all into petrol stations. This makes a lot of sense. The trademark is already in position and the churches are situated along important routes.

The Chapter of Santiago argues that it was Shell who infringed Santiago's copyright. The smart advertising agency inventing Shell's symbol were aware of the Camino de Santiago and that the shell was associated with long-distance travel. The churches and monasteries were the resting and feeding places for the pilgrims travelling on foot, just as the filling stations are the resting and feeding places for cars.

Shell are not breaking new ground with these designs. To view churches as feeding stations (not only for the soul, or for humans, road-wary pilgrims or their pack animals or cars) is an ancient tradition. 600 years ago, when Sultan Bayezid I (1389-1403) became ruler of the Ottoman Empire after the battle of Kosovo (1389), he declared that "after conquering Hungary he would ride to Rome and would feed his horse with oats on the altar of St Peter's" (Kinross, p 66).¹⁰⁶

When they chose the name "Shell" and the logo for this company, they were playing on the association with pilgrim routes.

This makes a lot of sense to me. It would be nice if one could get evidence of it, say, find records of the discussions which took place when the name and the logo were first chosen. I must try to find a company history of Shell and see if it contains any relevant information.

You might say that this is far too clever an association to make for stupid materialist people like advertising copy writers.

This is a reputation which they do not deserve. I have found repeatedly that they display much erudition, to such a degree that hardly any member of the public can recognise "the joke". Quite a few allusions are so subtle that only the advertising

106 Kinross, Lord 1977: 'The Ottoman centuries. The rise and fall of the Turkish empire', p 66. Jonathan Cape, London

boys themselves can enjoy them. This is truly art for art's sake, like misericords and gargoyles.

Let me give you an example which proves my point.

Last year (1991), the British Government started an advertising campaign alerting British Businesses to the fact that the single European Market was soon to become a reality and that it was high time for them to start making preparations. The advertisement was introduced by a beautiful tune from a cantata and organ prelude by Bach. The cantus firmus (primary tune) of cantata and prelude, was one which is sung with appropriate text in English and German churches. If the advertising boys had used that tune, at least all regular church goers would have recognised it immediately, associated it with its text and seen the relevance of this text for the advertising campaign.

This, in itself, would have been erudite and clever enough, because at least it challenges and rewards those who go to church and know the hymn tunes and their texts.

But it wasn't clever enough for the advertising boys. They used another tune, which is not sung in church, and which normal church goers therefore cannot recognise, but which was invented by Bach as a counter-tune to the original hymn tune, and which he uses in the cantata and in the choral prelude. Everybody can feel that this tune is pretty, but it has no association with the text and its metre. This tune can only be recognised by the few people who know their Bach, music and text, very well and can make the jump from this secondary tune to the primary tune, and thence to the text of the primary tune.

REM Illustration: Musical notation of the two tunes, with text.
endREM

The choral in question is: "Sleepers wake, a voice is calling" or "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme". The connection with the advertisement is clear. Businessmen who are still asleep are told to get up, to "get their finger out" (of which and whose orifice?), get their businesses ready for the new opportunities which beckon with the arrival of the bridegroom (in the cantata) or of the single market (in European politics).

Since seeing this advertisement, if not earlier, I have stopped looking down, as so many people do, on the advertising boys. The fact that they help to sell material goods does not mean that they are not cultured.

It is therefore quite possible that there is more behind the Shell logo than meets the eye. One day I must investigate.