Chapter 4: Books

> What we become depends on what we read after all of the professors have finished with us. The greatest university of all is a collection of books.
>
> Thomas Carlyle, "The Hero as Man of Letters"[1]

> A man's library is a sort of harem.
>
> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Books"[2]

> You teach a child to read, and he or her will be able to pass a literacy test.
>
> George W. Bush

A. Introduction

A lot has changed in my life since I was three years old. Work, family, religion, health, politics, love – a lot of important things have varied in form and importance. Amid all this change, books have been the one constant in my life. From the time I first learned to read they have been at or near the center of what is most important to me. Of all the places I have been in the world, the place I feel most at home outside my own house is a library, and I have turned my house into a kind of library too.

Books are where I have learned almost all of what I know. There have been times when I had a girlfriend or a job and times when I didn't, happy times and unhappy times, but since I learned to read there has never been a time when I didn't have a book going and several more waiting. I never leave my house without carrying a book with me. I once said, sort of in jest, that other people have children, but I have reference books. Although there is a melancholy tinge to that statement, I have come to realize it is not a jest but something deeply true about who I am.[3] Although there are bad books, just as there are bad people, as a group books and especially reference books will never let you down.

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1 In *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841).

2 In *Society and Solitude* (1870).

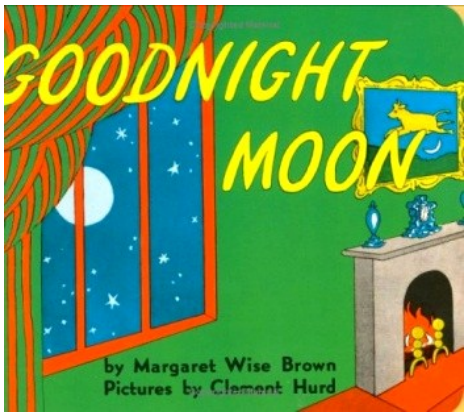
3 George Meunsterberger, in his psychoanalytic book *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (1994), argues that the attention of the collector is displaced from people to objects. "I must emphasize the affective involvement," he says, "for it is evident that the owner achieves through these possessions what are essentially reparative emotions that he dares rarely (if ever) develop in interpersonal relationships." I don't think that's evident at all.

Whatever else happens, with reference books you know where you are. And if you don't know where you are, you can look it up.

I taught myself to read sometime between the ages of three and four – call it 1948. I remember sitting in the bathroom at 1136 Fifth Avenue staring at a low four-legged wooden stool intended for a small child to stand on so he could reach the toilet and sink. A short rhyme had been painted on this stool. It said: "Beside the bunny place your feet. Wash hands and face, be clean and neat." I used it to learn to read. I knew what it said because it had been read to me. I knew that it said it. I had already learned the alphabet song. And I sat there staring at it until I broke the code and figured it out, like the Rosetta Stone. I remember asking my parents to explain the vowel thing to me – how I heard about vowels at that age I have no idea. From then on I could read. I had been read to as a child and there were lots of books around and I was given children's books, and while no one overtly encouraged me to read, books were part of my environment.[4] And anyway, I didn't need any encouragement.

I read fluently as a small child and remember with satisfaction the time, early in first grade, when the teacher arranged us all in a circle and said she was going to teach us to read. I said I already knew how to read. She didn't believe me, I think, so she gave me a book to read aloud from, which I did with no trouble at all. Then she gave me a third grade science textbook and sent me off to read on my own, and I learned that day from the book that the sun has nine planets, which is now (2009) no longer considered true.

B. Childhood



Most of what I read as a small child I now forget. No doubt at first I read books intended for very young children. I remember the magical *Goodnight Moon*, by Margaret Wise Brown (1947) – maybe this was read to me at first, but I also remember reading it myself. Also her *Muffin in the City* (1947) and *Muffin in the Country* (1948), about the wanderings of a Scottish terrier. Another I remember well was *Madeline* (1934) by Ludwig Bemelmans, about a young girl in Paris – there were nuns in that book.

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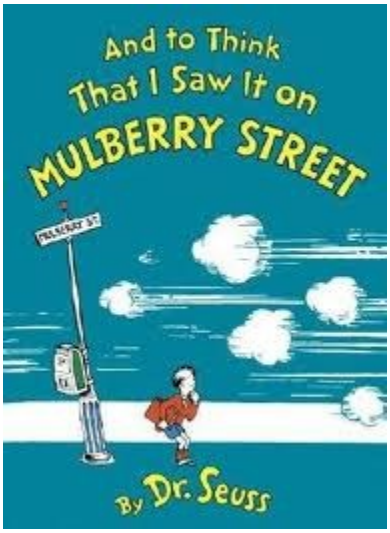
[4] "I like books. I was born and bred among them, and have the easy feeling, when I get in their presence, that a stable-boy has among horses." Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* (1858).

I read lots of the Little Golden Picture Books. Dr. Seuss was a big favorite, too – I started with *And To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (1937), his first book, and was very pleased by *McElligot's Pool* (1947), *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins* (1938), *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* (1948), and others. This was long before his didactic *Cat in the Hat* period. Dr. Seuss' books were in a particular large thin format, and the Golden Books were also in a uniform size and had uniform features on the covers. I think it was from these that I first got the important idea that books could form sets.



Another group I was very fond of – by association I place them around the third and fourth grades, 1953-54 – were the Oz books. There were something like 50 of these. The first ones were by L. Frank Baum, but other authors took up where he left off – the most prolific of these was Ruth Plumly Thompson. The Oz books set out a whole world, and I tried hard to draw a map of Oz that would include all the features described in the books. Of course it was beyond my capacity at age 9 – but it foreshadowed, I think, my fondness for using maps to understand the world.

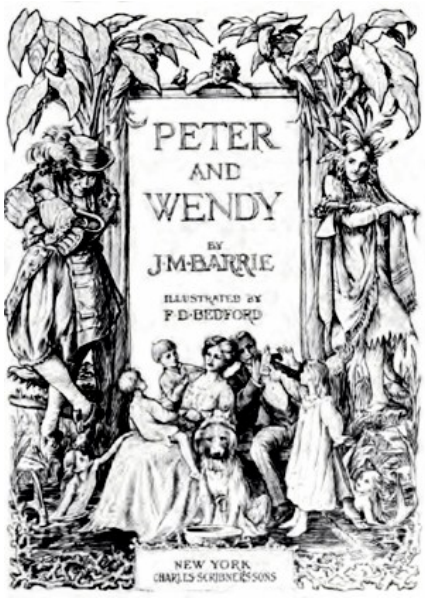
- I have since found a map of Oz (see Document 4-1). Wikipedia gives *Tik-Tok of Oz* (1914) as its source. But I had read *Tik-Tok of Oz* and don't remember having seen this map at all. If I had, I wouldn't have tried so hard to create one myself.[5]

Other important childhood books, most of them read many times, included:

- *Peter Pan*, by James Barrie, originally *Peter and Wendy* (1911), which I must have read at least 50 times. The story, and the character of Peter, a boy who had won his freedom, resonated powerfully with me (see Chapter 7). I could never understand why the boys obeyed Wendy in the end and agreed to go back to

[5] In his book *Strange Maps* (2009), Frank Jacobs says that after Thompson took over the Oz books, they "were often front- or endpapered with maps of Oz, which got more elaborate later on in the series." He also points out that west is shown to the right in maps of Oz, perhaps to reflect its "confusing" nature.

subjection. I saw Mary Martin perform the role on Broadway in 1954. The book holds up very well on a recent rereading.



- *Winnie-the-Pooh*, by A. A. Milne (1926) and its sequel *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928). I loved these, especially the endpaper map of Pooh's neighborhood, by E. H. Shepard (see Document 4-2). In those days (harrumph) we read the books rather than watch videos, which of course didn't exist, and the Disney animated videos of these wonderful stories are the thinnest pap. I never cared much as a child for the two companion poetry books *Now We are Six* and *When We Were Very Young*, except that they were companion volumes in a uniform edition.

- *The Wind in the Willows*, by Kenneth Grahame (1908), illustrated by Arthur Rackham (below). I have loved this book all my life, since I first read it in the Crillon Hotel in Paris in 1952. It is one of the most nearly perfect books ever written and is as rewarding today as it ever was, for adults as well as children.

- *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll (1865), and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), both illustrated by John Tenniel. These books were completely involving to me when I first read them. I also enjoyed Walt Disney's 1951 animated version.

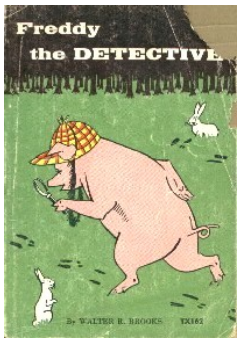
- *Mary Poppins*, by P. L. Travers (1934), and the three sequels published up to 1952 (the last four sequels, published 1962-88, came after my time). These were fascinating stories, and writing about them now inspires me to reread at least the first one. I never saw the movie with Julie Andrews.

- *The Just-So Stories*, by Rudyard Kipling (1902). "How the Elephant Got His Trunk," and so on. Also *The Jungle Book* (1894), but not *Kim*, because of the

stilted dialogue (disappointing from Kipling, who showed in his short stories that he knew how to write real dialogue when he felt like it).

- *Uncle Wiggly's Adventures*, by Frank Garis (1912), and its many sequels. Another set. The fascinating exploits of wise old Uncle Wiggly Longears (a rabbit, but what a rabbit!) and his animal friends, including villains like the Skeezix. Each chapter ended with a promise to continue if some particular fantastic thing did not happen.
- *The Story of Dr. Doolittle*, by Hugh Lofting (1920) (left), and its 14 sequels. This was a set, and very charming indeed. I remember making lists of the books and arranging them by time, characters, etc. Eddie Murphy was badly miscast in the 1998 movie; I never saw the 1967 version with Rex Harrison.

- *Freddy the Detective*, by Walter R. Brooks (1932), and others of the 26 books in this series. Freddy has gone far out of fashion, but I remember these as among the most interesting of all my childhood books. The characters were animals in a farm in upstate New York, and they could not only talk but talk intelligently. All the characters had sharply drawn personalities, the plots were involving and the relations between the talking animals and people not only on the farm but in the wider world were ingeniously and respectfully handled. Looking it up now on Wikipedia, I see that Adam Hochschild, writing in *The New York Times Book Review*, described the series as "the moral center of [his] childhood universe." I wouldn't go that far, but they were very important books to me. I reread a few in 2008 and they are still satisfying. Perhaps the respectful way the people treated the animals said something to me about how I wished adults treated children – children are chronically disrespected, and I felt that acutely.



- *Our Island Story*, by H. E. Marshall (1905). A history of England written for children. My Aunt Louise gave me her own childhood copy of the American edition (published in New York in 1920, when she was eight). I still have it, falling apart though it is. It says something about my early life that this was thought to be a suitable present, as indeed it was, with its fascinating sequence of kings. Later I also read Charles Dickens' *A Child's History of England* (1851-3), which led me in time to *1066 and All That*, by W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman (1930), and from that to the real history of England, a subject I'm still studying.
    - Somehow I missed *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), Kipling's classic English history book for children, and didn't read it until my 50s.

- Swashbuckling melodramas by Alexandre Dumas *père*, including *The Three Musketeers* (1844) and its sequel *Twenty Years After* (1845). I also liked *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844) and *The Man in the Iron Mask* (1848). Similar to these, but set in England, was *When Knighthood Was In Flower* (1898), by the American Charles Major, which I read after seeing an adaptation on the television show "Disneyland" in 1956. Also *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, by Emmuska Orczy (1905), set in the French Revolution, as was Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).

- The "Landmark" books (right), a series on individual American history topics written for older children, and the companion "World Landmark" series, on topics in world history. This was where I went to learn about a particular historical subject, such as Lewis & Clark or the Civil War or Napoleon, in more depth than an encyclopedia article could give me. Some of them were by quite distinguished authors, such as Van Wyck Mason, C. S. Forester, Quentin Reynolds, Harold Lamb and Thomas Costain. I read dozens of them (my parents were always happy to provide new ones) and learned a great deal of history from these books.[6] I formed the habit with them, which I still follow, of finding and reading not just an article but an accessible book on any historical topic that interests me.

- A children's prose retelling of the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, in separate volumes, by an author whose name I now forget. I cannot identify these volumes on the Internet. They were my introduction to Homer's great poems, which I have now read many times in translation.

- *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, by Victor Hugo (1831), most important to me for its enthralling descriptions of medieval Paris. These fueled a fascination both for the time and the place, neither of which has ever abated.

- *Stuart Little*, by E. B. White (1945). Adventures of a mouse who lived in a human family. Some of the book was set at the model boat pond in Central Park, near the 70th Street house – I knew the place very well.

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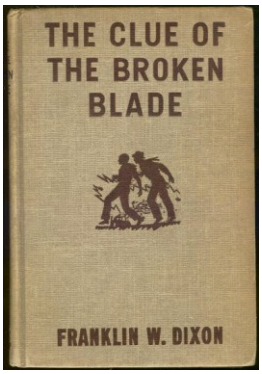
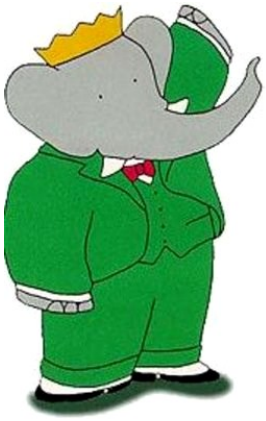
[6] For a list of Landmark and World Landmark titles, giving a good insight into my childhood historical reading, see www.readingwell.com/landmark.html.

- *I'll Cry Tomorrow*, by Lillian Roth (1954). *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*, by Jean Kerr (1957). And later, in the same vein as Kerr, *Up the Down Staircase*, by Bel Kaufman (1965).
- The Hardy Boys books, by Franklin W. Dixon (58 books from 1927). These were juvenile mysteries, the boys' counterpart of Nancy Drew. The boys drove a "roadster" and acted quite independently, and their father, the famous detective Fenton Hardy, treated them like real people. This was deeply appealing to me, resenting as I did what I saw as the lack of such treatment in my own life (again see Chapter 7). I read through dozens of these.

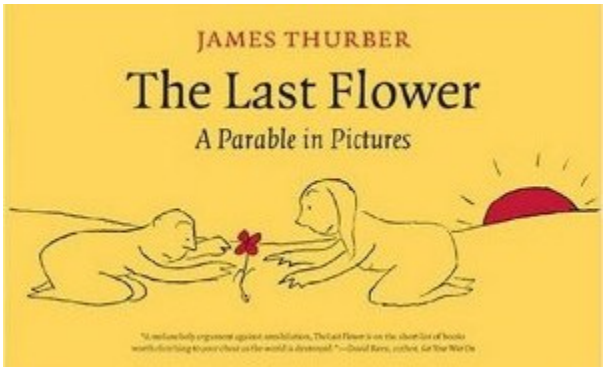


- *Richard Halliburton's Book of Marvels*. This combined two books, published in the 1930s. Chapters on fascinating places all over the world, like Jerusalem and Lhasa, with pictures. My father had been fond of these books, the first of which was published in 1937 when he was 21, and he gave me a copy which I read eagerly.
- My mother had some poetry books I read around in, including the 4000-page *Home Book of Verse*, edited by Burton Stevenson (1912), and *The New Poetry*, edited by Harriet Monroe (1917).
- I could go on like this forever. Other important childhood books included:
    - *My Father's Dragon* (1948) and its sequel *Elmer and the Dragon* (1950), by Ruth Stiles Gannett.
    - *The Story of Babar*, by Jean de Brunhoff (1931) and sequels. The charming elephant king (right) and his family.



    - *Robin Hood* (I forget which version I read).
    - *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Kidnapped* (1886), by Robert Louis Stevenson.
    - The collected super-sentimental short stories of Oscar Wilde. I tried writing in this form. It was not as easy as it looked.
    - *The Story of Ferdinand*, by Munro Leaf (1933), about the pacific bull who didn't want to fight but preferred smelling flowers. Munro Leaf also wrote *Manners Can Be Fun* (1936), which I found and enjoyed at the Sherry-Netherland apartment of my great-aunt Florrie, she of the monocle and walnut-size diamond ring.

- *The Last Flower* (1939) (below), a cartoon anti-war fable by James Thurber. I can't mention him without including *The Thurber Carnival* (1945) an anthology of his humorous *New Yorker* pieces I liked a lot.



- The books of the great P. G. Wodehouse (1881-1975). My father introduced me to these also – maybe he got to know them in his youth in England – and I became a devoted fan. I collected dozens of them in their delightfully uniform green Herbert Jenkins bindings. I know I was into them at an early age because Wodehouse lived on Long Island, and as a child spending a summer in Westchester County I remember writing to him. I am still a huge Wodehouse fan and reread his books regularly.
- *Antiquamania*, by Kenneth L. Roberts (1928). This is a little-known book of humorous pieces about antique collecting, which my parents had because they were antique collectors themselves. I thought it was very funny even though I didn't have the background for a lot of it. Some of the best pieces in this book, for example, were about collecting old American glass bottles. I had never even heard of this hobby before, and my parents didn't have any examples, but by the time I had absorbed *Antiquamania* I knew a fair amount about American glass, and who Stiegel was.[7] This is a paradigm of how I used books to learn about the world. I still have this book.

Cartoons give a good insight into how I grew to know the world by reading my father's books. Of these one of the most important to me was an anthology of cartoons from *The New Yorker* during the period 1925-1950. I knew *The New Yorker* because we subscribed – I studied the cartoons in this collection until I understood them. For example, there was one showing two coal miners at work underground – one looks up and says "My God, here comes Mrs. Roosevelt!" People old enough to have followed the news during Roosevelt's administration got that one right away – I had to figure it out.[8] But when I'd done it, I'd learned something. I did this with countless cartoons.

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7 Henry William Stiegel (1729-1785) emigrated from Germany to Manheim, Pennsylvania, where he became the premier American glassmaker of his time.

8 It was an allusion to Mrs. Roosevelt's policy of going everywhere and meeting everyone, acting as her husband's "eyes and ears" and learning first-hand about conditions in America.

Other such books I learned from in the same way, besides enjoying for their own sake, were collections of cartoons from *Punch*, the British humor weekly to which we also subscribed (I assume this was a taste my father acquired in his youth in England), some wartime cartoons in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly* (1945), and *The Sad Sack* (1944), featuring the immortal (or so he should have been) G.I. character (left), by George Baker.

In the same way, but reaching further back, was *Cartoon Cavalcade* (1943), edited by Thomas Craven, which collected American cartoons back to the turn of the century, and *The American Past* (1947), by Roger Butterfield, which was not all cartoons but contained many of them going back to 1775, as well as pictures and blocks of text, and a section of full-page full-color 19th century political cartoons by Thomas Nast and others. For example, what were the Mulligan Letters, and who was James G. Blaine? I had to learn this to understand one of the cartoons, which I can still picture in my mind.[9] I still have both of these books.

I learned a lot about life outside Manhattan from the panel cartoons of H. T. Webster – creator of "Life's Darkest Moment," "The Timid Soul" (Casper Milquetoast) and others – a collection I was very fond of was *The Best of H. T. Webster* (1953). Also "Our Boarding House," by Gene Ahern, starring the great Major Hoople and featured in many collections, and "They'll Do It Every Time," by Jimmy Hatlo. All these were part of my early education. For more about comic strips and panels see Chapter 31.J.

Not quite the same kind of book, but also important to me, was *As You Pass By* (1952), by Kenneth Holcomb Dunshee, a fireman-themed history of New York City including many evocative reconstructions of old New York scenes and even some maps. This was

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[9] James G. Blaine (1830-1893), United States Senator and twice Secretary of State, was a prominent statesman of the post-war period. He was the Republican candidate for President in 1884, but lost to Grover Cleveland. Cleveland's partisans called him "Blaine, the continental liar from the State of Maine." The Mulligan Letters documented his part in a railroad scandal. Bernard Gillam's cartoon *Phryne Before the Chicago Tribunal*, in the satirical magazine *Puck*, showed Blaine being stripped before the Republican convention by the publisher of the New York *Tribune*, revealing his corruptions (including the Mulligan Letters) tattooed on his body. I attach the cartoon as Document 4-3. It was a take-off on a then-famous painting, *Phryne before the Areopagus* (1861), by Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), which depicted the trial of a famous Athenian courtesan. Accused of profaning the Eleusinian mysteries, Phyrne was acquitted when her lawyer (her lover, the orator Hypereides) uncovered her breasts (in some versions more) to show the tribunal just how beautiful they were. Are these the breasts of a blasphemer? See what a boy can learn from an old cartoon?

in my father's library, who knows why, and it fed my growing interest in New York City history. I still have it.

Four American humorists mattered hugely to me.

- Robert Benchley (1889-1945). He wrote short funny pieces for *The New Yorker* and the old *Vanity Fair*, and was a charter member of the Algonquin Round Table.[10] I thought he was the funniest man ever and gobbled up his collections – for example *A Chip Off the Old Benchley* (1949) – all of them charmingly illustrated by the great Gluyas Williams (see his drawing of Benchley, right). For many years my writing style channeled Benchley – letters I wrote in college sound a lot like him, only not nearly as funny. One of his collections was titled *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, or David Copperfield*. What's not to like about a man like that? Plus I was born on his birthday, September 15.
- Will Cuppy (1884-1949). Another of my father's favorites. He wrote books about animals both living (*How to Attract the Wombat*, 1949) and extinct (*How to Become Extinct*, 1941), about historical figures (*The Decline and Fall of Practically Everybody*, 1950), and other similar titles. These were takeoffs on legitimate reference books, I now realize, complete with deadpan ironic footnotes. At the time, however, I didn't know this and learned to write school papers much in his style, including the footnotes. There is still a lot of Cuppy in my writing today, and some footnotes in my legal memoranda (when the paper was not intended for publication or filing in court), and indeed some in this very memoir, could have been written by Cuppy.
- George Ade (1866-1944) – among my favorites were *Fables in Slang* (1899), *People You Know* (1903), and *True Bills* (1904). I learned about this author from the brilliant radio monologist Jean Shepherd (1921-1999), whose program on WOR in New York was seminal for me and many others of my generation. Shepherd read Ade's fables on the air, and they were so funny I looked them up and got hooked. They were important to me not only for that reason but because

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[10] An informal luncheon group of the most notable wits of 1920s New York. They met at the Algonquin Hotel on West 44th Street and called themselves the Vicious Circle. Members included Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woollcott, Heywood Broun, George S. Kaufman, Harold Ross, and others.

they used the conventions and colloquialisms of an earlier generation than the humorists of my father's time. It was like being bilingual to wallow in Ade's turn-of-the-century slang. I wrote some things in his style too.

- Damon Runyon (1884-1946), whose comic stories about Broadway characters, always written in the present tense, left a deep impression. I read them over and over in *The Damon Runyon Omnibus* (1944), which gathered three earlier collections: *Guys and Dolls*, *Money From Home*, and *Blue Plate Special*.

Also important to me, although not quite as much as these three, were some other humorists.

- Ogden Nash (1902-1971), a marvelously innovative comic poet noted for his outrageous disregard of conventional scansion. One collection of his I knew well was *I'm a Stranger Here Myself* (1938).[11]
- The incomparable S. J. Perelman (1904-1979), whose *feuilletons*, as he called them, were written in a uniquely dazzling manic style unexampled before or since. Woody Allen, in his *New Yorker* pieces, tries to duplicate them but fails. I was very familiar with the pieces in the Modern Library anthology *The Most of S. J. Perelman* (1947), which was one of my Uncle Roy's favorite books.
- There was also Lewis and Faye Copeland's *Ten Thousand Jokes, Toasts and Stories* (1956). I read the covers off that book. Unsophisticated, to put it mildly, but so was I in 1956. Remembering it, I went onto the Bookfinder website and ordered a copy for one cent (plus $3.99 shipping).
- I also ate up comic novels by writers like Peter de Vries and Max Shulman, and the more miscellaneous humorous works of H. Allen Smith.

- This seems like a good place to mention the *Pogo* books, by Walt Kelly. These were cartoon books, mostly longish stories in cartoon panels, in deep-fried Southern dialect, about Pogo Possum (left) and Albert the Alligator and others who lived in the Okeefenokee Swamp in Florida. Kelly was a humorist and a satirist as well as a superb cartoonist and a writer of nonsense verse at least equal to the great Edward Lear. Many of these books were highly political, including attacks on Joseph McCarthy and on

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[11] Here's a sample ("The Termite," from *Good Intentions* (1942)) – pretty good even though it scans.

> A primal termite knocked on wood
> And tasted it, and found it good!
> And that is why your Cousin May
> Fell through the parlor floor today.

hypocritical churchmen. I collected them all and even translated one into Latin, taping hinged panels with the Latin over the English balloon-text. An example: *Redde eam feliscempiscem, Pogo, ante me te tundere* ("Chonk back that catfish chile, Pogo, afore I whops you.").

If I mention Walt Kelly I have to mention Jules Feiffer also – his weekly panel in the alternative newspaper *The Village Voice* and his cartoon books, such as the epochal *Sick, Sick, Sick* (1958), were very meaningful to me. (Self-portrait, right).

I have always loved reference books – here are some of the most important from my childhood and adolescence.

- A *Colliers World Atlas*, given to me by my Aunt Louise. Not the best atlas ever made, I now know, but the first of many.
- *Shepard's Historical Atlas* (8th edition, 1956). My first one of these. I studied it so hard the covers fell off and I had to have it rebound. For more about atlases see Chapter 5.
- *Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia* (15 volumes; one of the editions from the 1950s). A good encyclopedia for children and highly influential in my life. It is probably from this work, among others, that I perfected the very useful habit of looking it up when I wanted to know something.
- *Encyclopedia Britannica* (14th edition). We got this when I outgrew Compton's. I studied it hour after hour.
    - It is a sign of the times that I found a set a few years ago, very cheap, and bought it, but never use it because of the Internet. For recondite topics the Internet doesn't reach, I sometimes do use the Eleventh Edition (1911). But the 14th just sits there neglected. "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!" 2 Samuel 1:25.
- *The Columbia-Lippincott Gazetteer of the World* (1952). A huge book, identifying just about every place in the world. A gift from my father at my request, Christmas 1957. A magnificent reference work which I still use occasionally, although it is now out of date, and most of what the Gazetteer would tell me Wikipedia now tells me faster.
- *Scott's Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* (annual). I studied my 1950s edition of this work ceaselessly (two volumes in those days, now up to seven). Stamps were another way into geography and history and many other things, and I learned a lot from Scott. For more on this see Chapters 3B.7, 5 and 29.A. This was probably the first *advanced*, *technical* reference book I really *used*.
- *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* (annual). Endlessly fascinating. Here again the Internet has made this kind of annual reference work largely obsolete,

but there is something about having all those lists and charts in one browsable volume that the Internet has not replaced, and I still use it sometimes. I used to get a new one every year.[12]

- *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, edited by Christopher Morley and Louella D. Everett (1937). I spent many hours with this book.
- *The Reader's Encyclopedia*, by William Rose Benét (3d edition, 1955), a gift from my father in 1961 and still in use, the boards held on with tape.
- *Encyclopedia of World History*, by William L. Langer (1952 edition). All of world history arranged in outline form. One of the best reference books ever written. I still consult it all the time, and buy copies to give away.
- *Etiquette*, by Emily Post (1937 edition). I used to read pretty deeply in this book.
- *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (1962 edition), which I still have and still use.
- *Book of Saints* (probably the 1947 ed.), published by the English Benedictines. At around age 12 I brought my father to a Catholic bookshop on Lexington Avenue where I had seen this book and asked him to buy it for me. I wonder now what he thought. I loved this book as it was essentially a huge list, with short statements about each saint, not a hagiography like Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

Five books formed the foundation of my heraldic studies: *Boutell's Heraldry*, revised by S. T. Aveling (8th edition, 1898), *A Heraldic Vademecum*, by John B. O. Richards (1936), *Simple Heraldry*, by Iain Moncrieffe and Dan Pottinger (1953), *Flags of Maritime Nations*, the U.S. Navy's official flag book (1899 edition), and *Ribbons and Medals*, by H. Tapprell Dorling (1956 edition). For more about these, see Chapter 6.A.

C. Adolescence

After I entered adolescence I moved away from many of the books of my childhood. Some I was too old for, and others (like the cartoon books) I knew well enough already not to get much more from them at the time. Here are some books which were especially important to me in my adolescence

- *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J. D. Salinger (1951). The seminal novel for my generation (boys anyway). Also *Franny & Zooey* (1961). *The Catcher in the Rye* was important to the events of Chapter 8.

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[12] The *World Almanac* was sponsored in each city by a local newspaper – mine had the imprint of the now-vanished *New York World-Telegram*.

- *Ulysses*, by James Joyce (1922). I didn't get it all the first time but I kept at it. I learned a great lesson from Joyce – you can write anything you can think. This and the other great lesson, from Hemingway (keep it simple), formed my writing style after I emerged from the influence of Robert Benchley, even though as this sentence shows my style now is not really all that simple. But I can keep it simple if I have to or want to, which has been a great help in legal writing. There's a lot of Anthony Burgess in my present writing style – he was a disciple of Joyce.
- *The Prince*, by Niccolò Machiavelli (1513, first published 1532). What a discovery! The man told it like it was! Reading Machiavelli in high school confirmed the pitiless *Realpolitik* I had figured out on my own from the politics of my family (see Chapters 7 and 8). It started me on a course of study I followed through hard-nosed Columbia political science to the unsentimental view of politics I hold to this day. An A+ paper on *The Prince*, handed in at the beginning of my first semester at Walden (1961), won me the respect of the faculty and much favored treatment (see Chapter 9).
- *Look Homeward, Angel*, by Thomas Wolfe (1929). Enraptured, I raced through it and its sequel *Of Time and the River* (1935), and the reworkings of the same material in *The Web and the Rock* (1939) and *its* sequel *You Can't Go Home Again* (1940). By the time I finished the fourth fat volume I was quite a bit less enraptured than I had been on discovering the first. But these books were important to me anyway, as was the project of reading through all four of them.
    - In a scene toward the end of *Look Homeward*, the lead character's brother gives him a watch engraved with a date in 1912, and asks what people will think reading this inscription in 50 years. In 1962 I read this passage on the 50th anniversary of the date in the book. Heavy!
- *This Side of Paradise*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1920), his first novel, about Princeton. I also liked his short stories.
- *The Circus of Dr. Lao*, by Charles Finney (1935). An amazingly unconventional work of imagination and a hard book to describe.
- *Meyer Berger's New York* (1960), a collection of his "About New York" columns for the *New York Times*. Deeply fascinating.
- *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair (1906). A gritty muckraking tale of the Chicago meat-packing houses. Read at an impressionable age, it is still with me.
- *Auntie Mame*, by Patrick Dennis (1955). A very funny book, and I liked the unashamedly Bohemian lifestyle she represented.
- *May This House Be Safe From Tigers*, by Alexander King (1960). This now-forgotten wit and raconteur became briefly famous on late-night television as a regular on the Jack Paar Show.

- *Fancies and Goodnights*, by John Collier (1951). Weirdly imaginative short stories. I found this book in my father's library and read it more than once.
- *Only in America*, by Harry Golden (1958). Essays from *The Carolina Israelite*. Also *For Two Cents Plain* (1959).
- *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, by Shepherd Mead (1962). The book, not the musical. Hilarious.
- *Act One*, by Moss Hart (1960). I'm not sure just why this charming autobiography was so important to me, but it was.
- *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1948) by George Orwell. I was fascinated by these books long before I had the historical perspective to understand fully what they were about. Also *Brave New World*, by Aldous Huxley (1932).
- *A Short History of the United States*, by Allen Nevins and Henry Steele Commager (1943). This was the course textbook in my 11th grade history course at Walden, and I scarfed it right up. I read it several times, tutored other students from it, got a foundation in American history from it, and still recommend it as a terrific introduction to the subject.
- *Three Men in a Boat*, by Jerome K. Jerome (1889), an English comic novel. The full title is *Three Men in a Boat, To Say Nothing of the Dog*, which should give you some idea.
- *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, by Truman Capote (1958). Don't judge it by the movie.
- *The Caine Mutiny* (1951) by Herman Wouk. I liked a lot of his books, including *Marjorie Morningstar* (1955), which I now see as a tedious story of a Jewish girl's endless ambivalence about her maidenhead, but in those days the maidenheads of Jewish girls were of special interest to me.
- *The Fume of Poppies*, by Jonathan Kozol (1958). A love story.
- *Peter Abelard*, by Helen Waddell (1933). A love story, with castration.
- *The Red Badge of Courage*, by Stephen Crane (1895). A terrifying novel of the Civil War.
- *Hiroshima*, by John Hersey (1946). A classic piece of engaged reporting.
- *Catch-22*, by Joseph Heller (1962). Still one of my favorite books – I reread it from time to time.
- *The Once and Future King*, by T. H. White (1958). A superb retelling of the King Arthur legend, based on Malory – I reread this one too every few years.
- *Miss Lonelyhearts*, by Nathanael West (1933). A comic novel, very dark.

- *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) and *Roughing It* (1872), by Mark Twain. I read some of his other books too, including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) and *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882). Somehow I didn't get to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), his most important book, until many years later. But I read a number of Twain's shorter pieces in *The Portable Mark Twain* (1956), including for example the still hilarious "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses" and "The Awful German Language."
- *Peyton Place*, by Grace Metalious (1956). A scandalous success at the time. I wonder how it would read today – I must go back to it and find out. While on sexy novels, I can't forget the much arousing *Lolita*, by Vladimir Nabakov (1955).
- John O'Hara's novels and stories, especially *Appointment in Samarra* (1934), *BUtterfield 8* (1935), and *Ten North Fredrick* (1955). He is still one of my favorite authors and one of the greatest (and most underestimated) American writers. I often take his books to read on travels abroad, as you can't get more American than John O'Hara.
- The detective stories of Rex Stout (about Nero Wolfe), for example *Fer-de-Lance* (1934), and S.S. Van Dine (about Philo Vance), for example *The Canary Murder Case* (1927). Ogden Nash once wrote that "Philo Vance/Needs a kick in the pance." I didn't read many other detective stories, but the characters of these two detectives appealed to me. I had a weakness for Mickey Spillane, too, especially *I, the Jury* (1947) and *Kiss Me Deadly* (1952).

I read a lot of poetry during this time. My favorites included:

- *Collected Sonnets* and *Collected Lyrics*, by Edna St Vincent Millay – these were paperback compilations published by Washington Square Press. She wrote some of the very best sonnets ever.
- Various collections of poems by E. E. Cummings. It is a mark of my present maturity that I capitalize his name.
- *Gasoline* (1958) and *The Happy Birthday of Death* (1960) by Gregory Corso.
- *Howl*, by Allen Ginsberg (1956), and other poems of his.
- A collection of poems by Ezra Pound, the title of which I now forget. It included some of the Cantos. I was very impressed by his using lots of different languages in his poetry.
- *The Home Book of Modern Verse*, already mentioned.
- *The Viking Book of Poetry of the English-Speaking World* (1958).
- *Modern Verse in English 1900-1950*, edited by David Cecil and Allen Tate (1958).

I could go on and on. Somebody stop me.

D. College

When I got to college I continued to read very widely – more widely than I should have, in fact, because I often read to avoid the assigned reading. But when I goofed off and cut classes, I was not spending the time at the West End (the local student bar), or smoking dope, or in bed with someone, although I now see that my time would have much better spent if I had been, but in the library or at home reading something that had not been assigned. For example, I read straight through a six-volume history of the British Empire I found in the stacks – it had nothing to do with my coursework, but it interested me, perhaps more than if it *had* been assigned.

Beginning in 1964 I had my own apartment for the first time, at 414 West 120th Street, and I began collecting books in a serious way – not deliberately as a collector, but following my interests. My father established a charge account for me at a bookstore called Paperback Forum, right across Broadway from the campus, and I bought heavily. I even made a beginner's attempt at systematizing the collection, writing sequential numbers on the spines in white ink, which I now know is not the way to go at all.

Among the books most important to me in college were:

- *The Phenomenon of Man*, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1955), an evolutionary but mystical speculation on the future of humanity by a French Jesuit paleontologist. A college girlfriend introduced me to this book – I still have the copy she gave me.
- *Finnegans Wake*, by James Joyce (1939). I studied this fascinating but almost impenetrable book in the Columbia course on the subject by Professor William York Tindall, which I liked so much I audited it a second time after passing it the first time. I never did that with any other course in my long university career. Tindall could read aloud from this book so it sounded like it made sense. My precious annotated copy has vanished.
- *The Gothic Image*, by Emile Mâle (1899). Also from a course. A fascinating study of Gothic architecture and iconography, very influential in my education, although now out of favor.
- *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*, by William Riordan (1905), more or less a transcription of "very plain talks on very practical politics" by a turn-of-the-century Tammany ward boss. Encountered in my political science studies and much enjoyed and admired.
- *Presidential Power*, by Richard Neustadt (1960). Typical of my political science studies and one of the best books on the subject.

- *Hadrian the Seventh*, by Baron Corvo (1904), a remarkable novel about an imaginary 20th century English pope. Also *The Shoes of the Fisherman* (1962), by Morris West, a somewhat less remarkable novel about an imaginary 20th century Russian pope.
    - I have a weakness for Catholic novels, especially about priests and the hierarchy. I could mention, for example, *The Cardinal* (1950), by Henry Morton Robinson, *Morte d'Urban* (1962) and *Lions, Harts, Leaping Does* (1963) by J. F. Powers, the Don Camillo books by Giovanni Guareschi, *The Cardinal Sins* (1981) by Andrew Greeley, *The Power and the Glory* (1940) by Graham Greene, *The Nun's Story* (1956) by Kathryn Hulme, and many many others.
- *The Territorial Imperative*, by Robert Ardrey (1966), my first experience with applying ethological perspectives to human behavior, a practice which continues to show me a lot about people. Chapter 33 of this memoir applies this perspective to my own love life. Also his *African Genesis* (1961), and *On Aggression*, by Konrad Lorenz (1966). Ardrey is out of favor now, but I learned a lot from him.
- *On Escalation* (1965), by the creepy theorist of nuclear war Herman Kahn.
- *Naked Lunch*, by William S. Burroughs (1959). A nightmare of a book.
- C. S. Lewis' so-called *Space Trilogy*, including *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945).
- Lots and lots and lots and lots of others.
- I read a great many plays at this time, in connection with my course work and otherwise. Among my favorites were *The Iceman Cometh*, by Eugene O'Neill (1939) and *Six Characters In Search of an Author*, by Luigi Pirandello (1921).

E. Maturity

Listing the books that were important to me after college doesn't seem as interesting, because (except for the religious books read after my LSD experiences, see Chapter 18.C) they were not as formative. I ought to mention some authors, though, (alphabetically, but *excluding* those mentioned earlier in this chapter), including but by no means limited to Louis Auchincloss, James Baldwin, T. C. Boyle, Richard Brautigan, Lionel Casson, Raymond Chandler, Joseph Conrad, James Gould Cozzens, Robertson Davies, Richard Dawkins, Theodore Dreiser, Alfred Duggan, C. S. Forester, John Galsworthy, Robert Graves, Hermann Hesse, Aldous Huxley, Garrison Keillor, Jack Kerouac, Timothy Leary, David Lodge, Somerset Maugham, Herman Melville, Nicholas Monsarrat, V. S. Naipaul, R. K. Narayan, Patrick O'Brian, Plutarch, Mary Renault, Tom Sharpe, Irwin Shaw, George Shipway, John Steinbeck, Suetonius, Hunter Thompson, Anthony Trollope, John Updike, Gore Vidal, Kurt Vonnegut, Robert Penn Warren, Alan

Watts, Evelyn Waugh, Edith Wharton, Tom (not Thomas) Wolfe, Xenophon and Howard Zinn. And of course many dozens of others. This is not an exhaustive list, just a guide to my taste.

Most of my books, which I carried around for years, had to be abandoned when I moved to Taiwan in 1975. The books I have now, my second library, are arranged in the following collections.

1. My heraldic library. There are thousands of titles in this collection, many of them very beautiful and some rather rare. Almost 40 languages are represented, of which I can read (more or less, with a dictionary) only six: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. I can't read a newspaper in all these languages, but a heraldic text is something else because I know the vocabulary so well. See Chapter 6 (there's also a picture of the collection there). The ones I can't read, at least I can look at the pictures. Subcollections include flags, awards (meaning orders, decorations and medals), insignia, signs and symbols, iconography, and auxiliary studies like coins, regalia and palaces.

2. Atlases. I have at this writing about 850 specialized atlases. My favorites are historical atlases – by this term I mean not *old* atlases, which are generally unsatisfactory as reference books, but 20th and 21st century atlases illustrating history. But I have specialized atlases of many other kinds. The catalogue of atlases will be included with the Supplements. For more on atlases, see Chapter 5. I have pretty much stopped buying atlases, and regard this collection as more or less completed. This is one reference area where the Internet is not an adequate substitute for the real thing.

   

   Here's a view of a part of my atlas collection. It is like a distillation of all that is fascinating about the second-hand bookshops of my dreams.

   Hear my anguished cry in an e-mail from 2001, to a friend not of my Faith.

   > How could you throw out your only atlas? A 1978 atlas is not worthless. Not all that much has changed since 1978, and anyway it was better than no atlas at all. How can you live without an atlas? Without 600 atlases, well, I can

see that, it's not for everyone, maybe. But without even *one* atlas? How can you look things up?

An e-mail from 2002.

My eBay purchases have started coming in and I am swimming in atlases – just the way I like it. Care for an atlas of the Great Barrier Reef? How about an atlas of shipping and railroad traffic maps circa 1914? How about an atlas of the Ottoman Empire c. 1912, showing all the subdivisions? So what that (1) it's in Turkish (2) from before they switched to the Latin alphabet? It might come in handy someday. No, really I think *nuts* is putting it too strongly.

Having 850 specialized atlases reminds me the story of the woman who liked pancakes. She went to a psychiatrist.

P:	Why are you here?
W:	Well, doctor, I don't think I need to be here. But my son insisted I come, just because I like pancakes.
P:	There's nothing wrong with that. Lots of people like pancakes. I like them myself.
W:	You do? You must come out to my house, then – I have trunks full of them.

3. Reference books. I have well over 100 specialized dictionaries on all sorts of subjects, and hundreds of other reference books on many topics, including especially history. Subcollections include historical subjects, decoration and patterns, writing systems, "eastern" religions, monotheistic religions, the Indian princely states, guidebooks, and languages. Originally I collected reference books so I could answer any question that came up. With the Internet a lot of these books became obsolete as a source of quick answers, although they contain more information than is easily accessible on line. But I love them anyway, and still occasionally buy especially juicy ones when I come across them.

    - Your tales of the changing relationships among these women are interesting, but seem like a travelogue from some distant planet I have never visited myself. It is the difference, I guess, between a life centered on family and a life centered on reference books. Reference books never hold cards close to the vest, never act stand-offish, never have to be coaxed toward trust and intimacy, never require ten phone calls of negotiation. They just sit there on the shelf, bulging with interesting information, mutely hoping to be consulted but never nagging if they're not. There is never a need to chart progress in one's relationship with them. On balance they are at least as good as people for companionship,

even if you can't have sex with them and they don't laugh at your jokes. You can't have everything. (Why not?)

- I have been through the house-cleaning process and threw out (or recycled to charities) 1800 pounds of stuff, including five or six boxes of perfectly good books I had finished with for one reason or another. But *reference* books are something else again. If you give away a reference book it may happen that you want to know the answer to something and *it won't be there! Gevalt!* I will probably be the only *sadhu* sitting naked by the Ganges, his only possessions a deerskin mat (although why vegetarian *sadhus* use deerskin mats is beyond me – maybe Naugahyde), a begging bowl, and 100 specialized dictionaries. For those moments when zen does after all have something to say.[13]

My friend had given her copy of Lewis & Short's magisterial Latin dictionary to her college library – she could always look at it there, she said. I could hardly believe it.

As far as I am concerned, any reference book that is no longer right at hand when a question arises has been discarded. Sure, the college library was a good place for it, but suppose you wake up one night with a question about a medieval variant of an irregular deponent? Are you going to go to the college library at 3:30 AM in your bathrobe in the rain to look it up? No, you want both Lewis and Short right handy, where you can keep an eye on them. Ordinary reading books are something else again, but for reference books a home library should be like a roach motel – easy to get in, but no way out.[14] I realize this may be a minority view, but it wouldn't be the first time. "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She crieth at the gates …" Proverbs 8:1, 3.

3. "Books to read." These include all kinds of books, fiction and non-fiction, bought at second hand, usually paperbacks which are easier than hardbacks to hold and carry around. I buy them whenever I see something offered cheaply that I might someday want to read. Then when I need something to read I see what I have on hand. It might take me 20 years to feel in the mood for a particular title – but so what? They are cheap enough to buy and store indefinitely.

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13 Future researchers: *Naugahyde* is a brand of artificial leather, used for upholstery.

14 Future researchers: *Roach Motel* is a patented cockroach trap.

- Virginia Woolf wrote: "Second hand books are wild books, homeless books; they have come together in vast flocks of variegated feather, and have a charm which the domesticated volumes of the library lack."[15]

And so what again if a book (an old perfect-bound paperback whose glue has dried out) falls apart on reading, as old paperbacks often do? They are not a permanent collection. When I'm done with them I discard them if they have fallen apart, or if not give them away or donate them to the San Francisco State University Library bookstore. I do keep one bookcase full of books by authors like Steinbeck and Burgess and Forester whom I particularly love and whose books I know I will reread.

- As part of my program of economies when I retired, I pretty much stopped buying books in this category, and used libraries when I wanted a specific title (I have borrowing privileges at four of them).[16] Or I read from my backlog of hundreds of titles sitting on my shelves waiting to be read.[17] I wonder if I will even live long enough to get through them all.

For more on how these collections were formed, see Chapter 29.B. For more on libraries, see Chapter 20.A. For more on my taste in books, see Chapter 31.A. For more on collecting in general, see Chapter 29.

I still read a lot almost every day, and expect to keep doing so as long as I have my wits and my eyesight. I read in swings – fiction for a while, then history for a while, then other non-fiction, then back to fiction. I still always have a book with me whenever I leave my house. Here's something I wrote in an e-mail to a college friend in January 2003:

> I may have been maladroit in how I used the resources [at college], but I was devoted to educating myself from infancy, many years before I ever got to Columbia, and I never stopped while I was there, and haven't stopped since, and never will stop while I have breath and eyesight.

One thing I have learned is never to have more than one book going at a time. It is fine to abandon a book if it's not interesting, or is too heavy going, but if it *is* interesting it's

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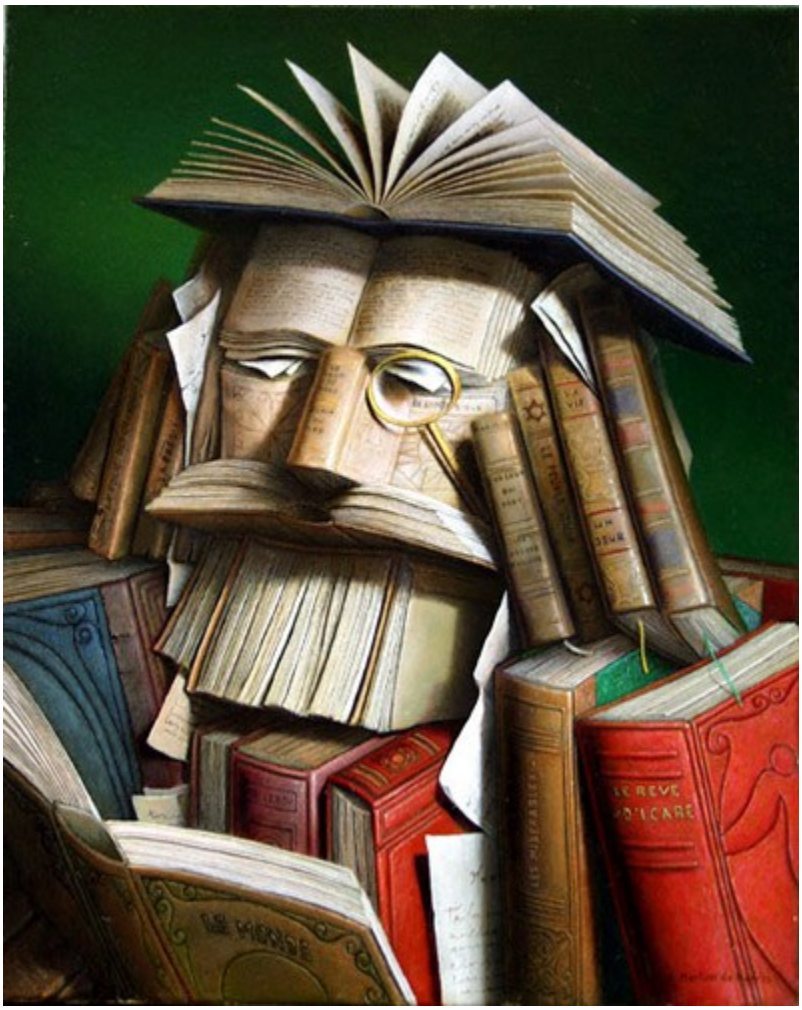
15 From "Street Haunting: A London Adventure" (1927).

16 San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco State University, Mechanics' Institute, and Jewish Community Library.

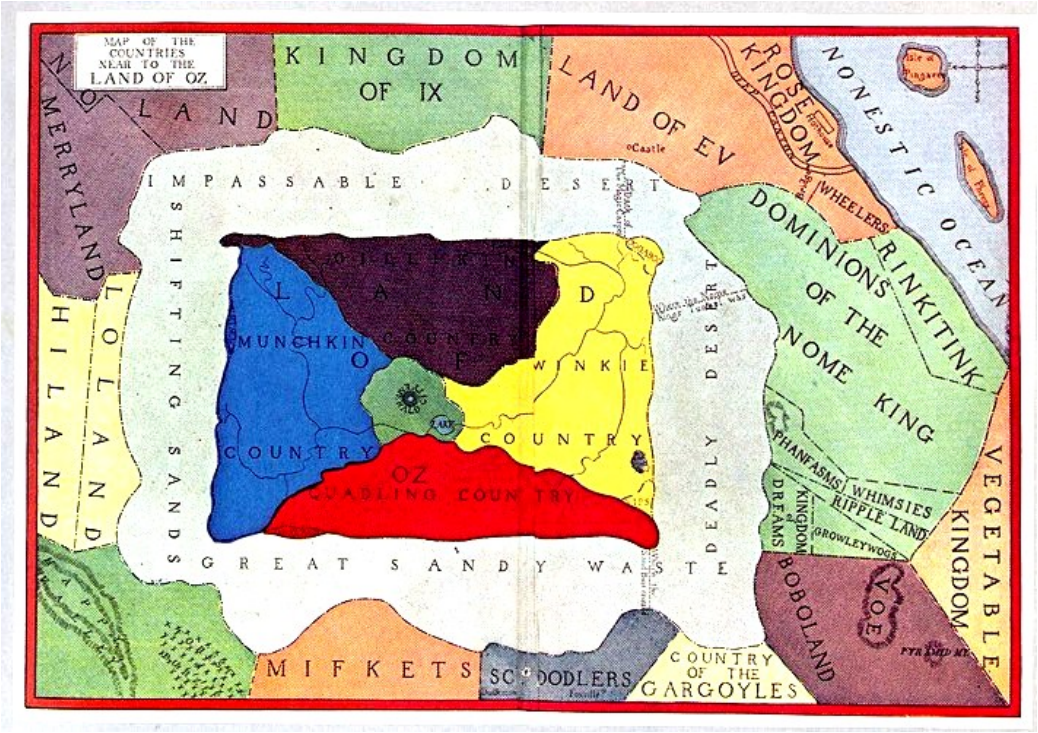
17 Although recently I started buying again. I love to do it, it is cheap enough, and I find I can afford it after all.

important to stick with it until it's done and not get distracted by another one. If you weaken about this, you end up with a dozen books started and none finished, and the attention you pay even the ones you finish is so scattered and fractured it is hard to get anything out of them. If another book is just so alluring I can't wait, I let myself read the preface and introduction. But not a word more!

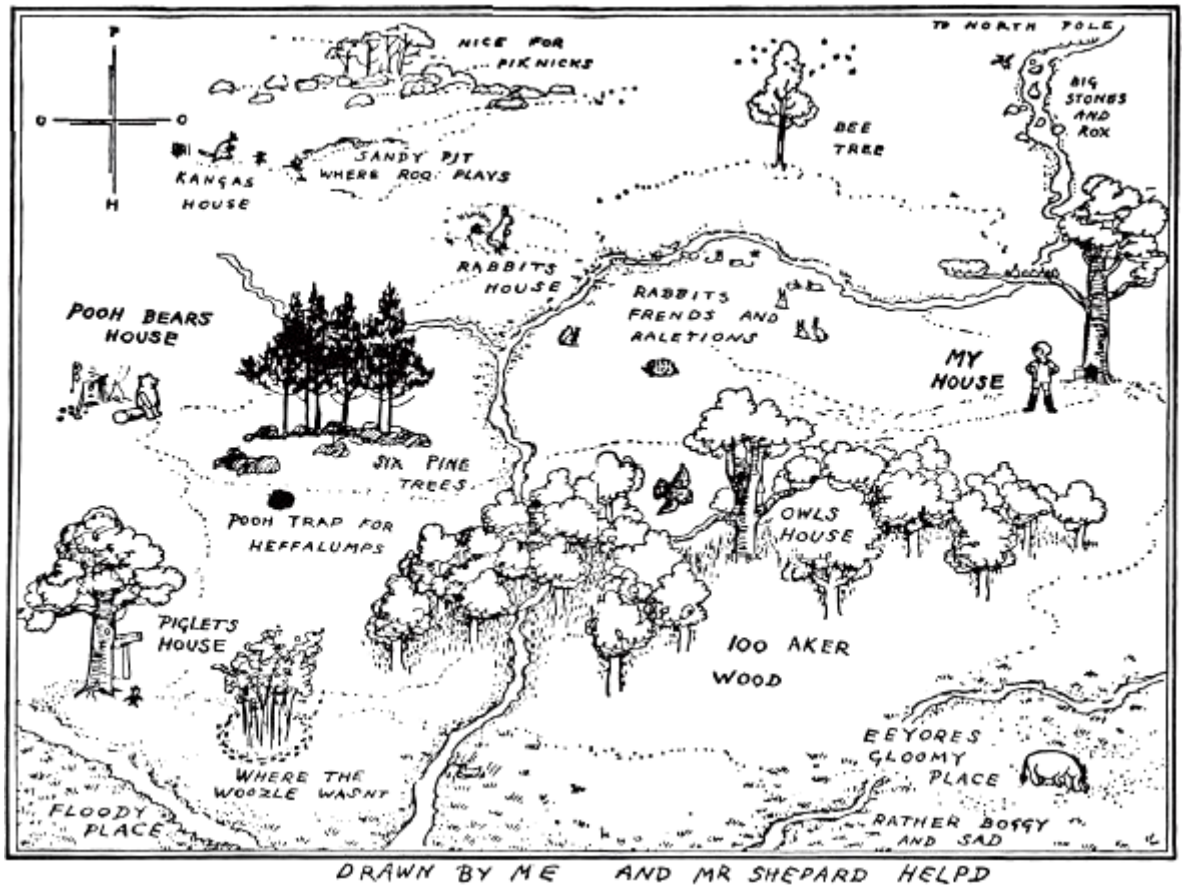


Tailpiece: *The Philosopher*, by André Martins deBarros

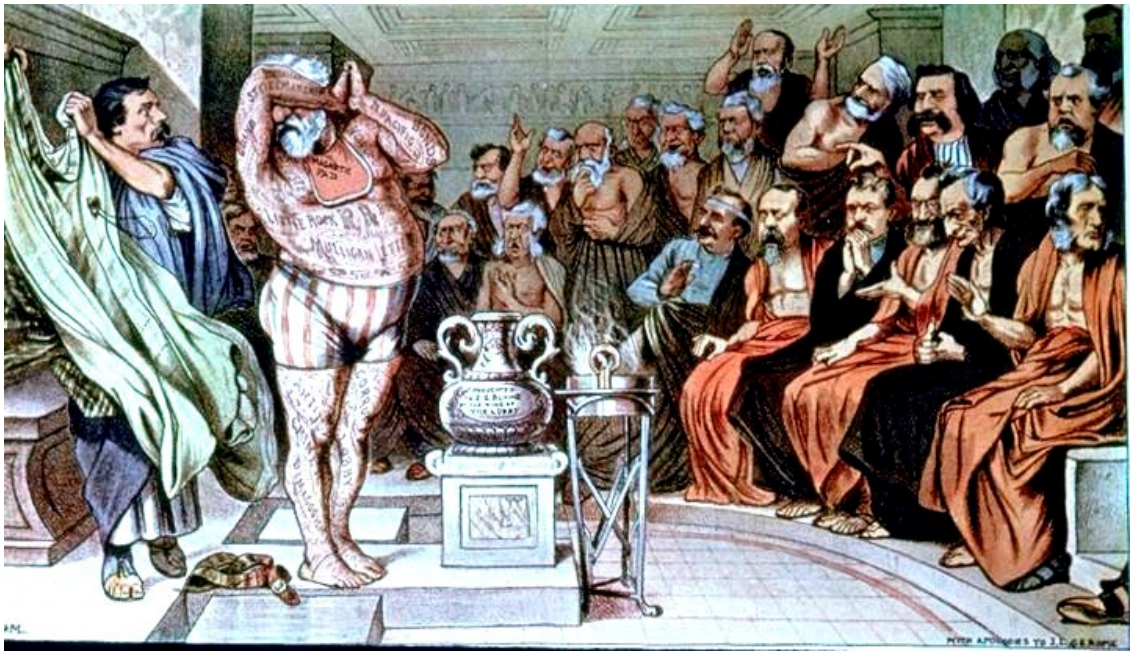
Document 4-1: Map of Oz



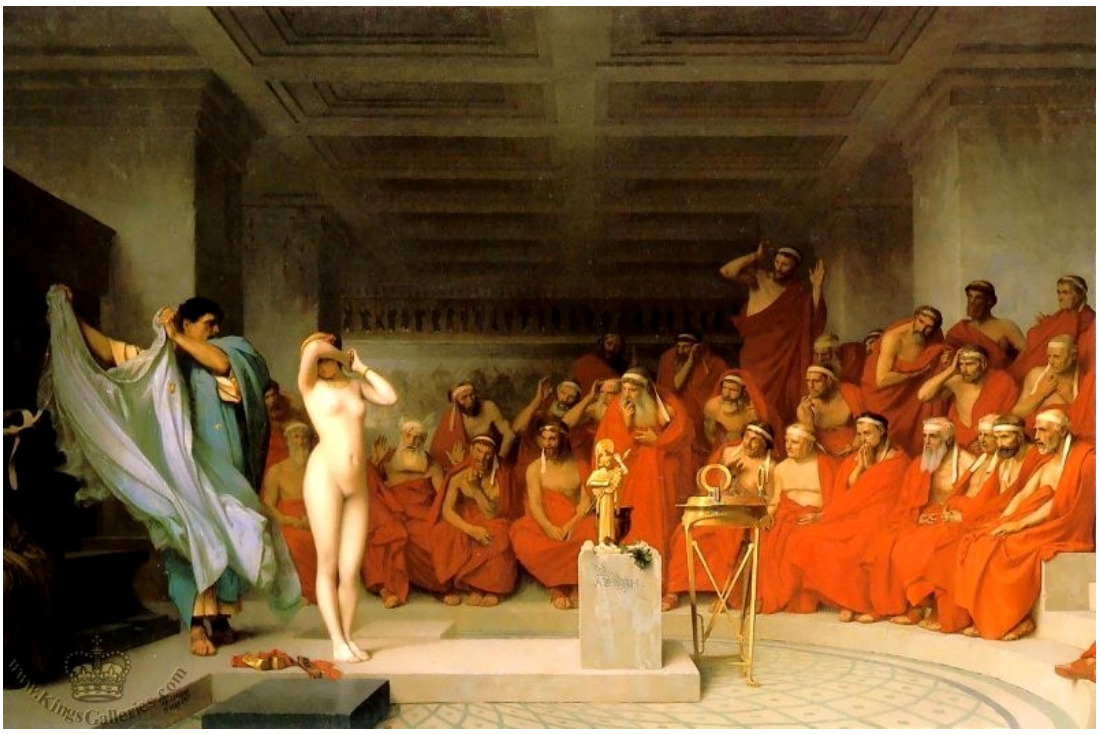
Document 4-2: Map of Pooh's Neighborhood



Document 4-3: Cartoon by Gillam and inspiration by Gérôme



Phryne Before the Chicago Tribunal (1884), by Bernard Gillam



Phryne before the Areopagus (1861), by Jean-Léon Gérôme