

The changing patterns of life have in recent days opened up – for many of us – new possibilities for how we employ our time. With less written in our calendars and more time at home we are drawn by the need for innovation and fresh perspective. I happen to live in a house with a lot of books and I recalled a book by English author Susan Hill, *Howards End is on the Landing*. She tells the story of how she went looking for a particular book and in the process stumbled on many works read long ago – and some not read at all. Hill’s vast collection were not neatly ordered so searching was a common practice. She found the book she was looking for but the process took her well beyond a simple task completed. It led to a decision to give a year to reading books in her possession and discover them afresh or for the first time. At the end of her narrative Hill provides a list she calls The Final Forty. The Bible and The Book of Common Prayer (1662) are at the top of the list – Dickens, Hardy, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, Henry James, Edith Wharton, P.G. Woodhouse Dostoevsky and T.S. Eliot show up on the list. (By the way – *Howards End* is a novel by E.M. Forster)

During this time of “keep-safe-stay-home” I have embarked on a similar though less ambitious journey to revisit and rediscover

works collected over many years. I should note that on my bookshelves you find primarily none fiction – though there is balance in our overall collection with plenty of fiction and fantasy that my wife Marion reads and re-reads. And these works are common fare for conversation about characters and ideas.

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Bruno Capolongo – 36"×36" acrylic on shattered and mounted panel. Collection of Tri-Art Inc.

Whispering Dragon

In “Whispering Dragon” I adapt Kintsugi – the Japanese art of mending broken pottery – to easel painting. With Kintsugi cracks and voids are embellished and filled with gold so that rather than disguising breakage, it is accented. In doing so there is an acceptance of the imperfect, of chaos, of entropy – of life as it is! However, is it brokenness that is celebrated in these veins of gold? No. In a time when many have struggled with fear and uncertainty this symbolism of healing and renewal strikes

a chord because those cracks and voids are filled with gold, through which we see redemption. We must all slay the dragons that loom in our lives, remembering that trials come to all, and that each in turn must gather up the pieces of life in strong hope that all things can be made new. In this spirit, and in an act of faith, I start many of my Kintsugi paintings with chaos, shattering the very panels, then gathering the pieces. And so I begin. See more @brunocapolongo

The changing patterns

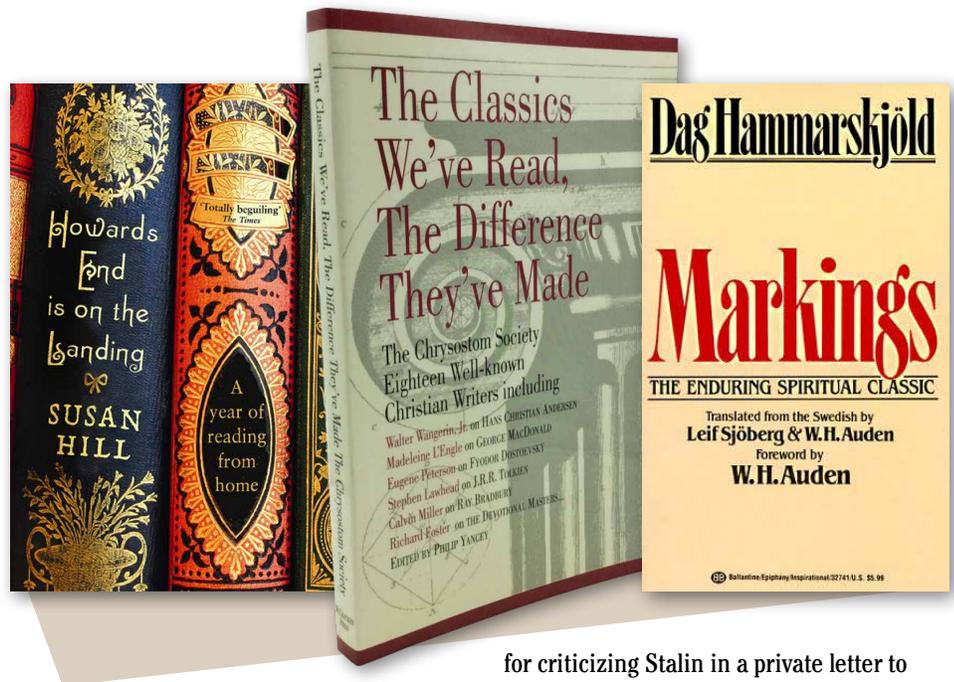
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What lines our personal bookshelves discloses much about our interests, but more importantly provides glimpses into one's history – a resource for memories and the evolution of one's thinking. Books well-read can have a transforming influence on the reader. Some may speak into a particular moment or circumstance of life while others become like old friends, an ongoing resource for instruction, inspiration and the nurturing of heart and mind.

Markings, by Dag Hammarskjöld, I bought not long after it was published in 1964. Hammarskjöld served for five years as Secretary General of the United Nations until his death in a plane crash in Zambia in 1961. *Markings* consists of material found in private papers after his death including a letter giving permission to publish it. It was translated by Leif Sjöberg – to whom he wrote the letter and W.H. Auden – the renowned poet - who writes an informative and insightful Foreword. The book is a collection of “markings” in a personal diary of “negotiations with myself and with God”. It consists of brief statements, poems, aphorisms, quotes and reflections. I can't recall how I stumbled on to this book or what moved me to buy it. But I know I carried the small paperback edition with me over many months and read and reread its challenging and at times cryptic comments. Hammarskjöld takes up a “mystical” version of the faith – but not escapist. One line I still remember: “The road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action.” This book was for me a rich and invigorating resource that could provoke thought, action and transformation. The recent revisit has been a delight and a challenge.

What makes loneliness an anguish
Is not that I have no one to share my burden
But this:
I have only my own burden to bear. (pg 85)

The Classics We've Read, The Difference They've Made, edited by Philip Yancey is a volume I have valued greatly and gleaned much from its eighteen well-known Christian writers. The chapter by Walter Wangerin Jr. *Hans Christian Andersen: Shaping the Child's Universe* notes how children meet the problems of the world with their imaginations (often lost in adult life) and how the fairy tale honours and feeds the imagination. He tells how the child may view “real world” problems through the windows of the fairy tale allowing



the problems to shrink to a child sized proportion and enabling the child to triumph and be a survivor in an otherwise confusing world.

Eugene Peterson faced a crisis in which he needed to reinvigorate his experience of God and passion. Both were essential for him as a pastor and a writer and both were diminished by current cultural patterns and influences. Characters in the writings of Fyodor Dostoevsky “furnished my imagination with living images”. He notes how in *The Idiot* Prince Myshkin “strikes everyone who meets him as simple and naïve. He gives the impression of not knowing how the world works . . . innocent of the real world. An idiot.” What Peterson learns from Prince Myshkin is that unlike others, he has no personal agenda – his own needs don't clog up relationships. Being in the company of the Prince has little to do with morality – doing or saying what is right. It has to do with beauty and goodness. These cannot be known in abstraction, for they only occur in living, loving persons. They cannot be observed only encountered. The Prince provides the encounter” both in the story and in the life of Peterson. (pp.24-25)

Karen Burton Mains takes up the theme of *A Moral Vision* in writing about Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. As a young twenty-two year old living in a world that was good and beautiful – she entered into the dark and difficult world of 20th century Russia where she learned that she would not be complete or useful until she understood suffering. Solzhenitsyn served “an eight year term at hard labour

for criticizing Stalin in a private letter to friends.” The writings of Solzhenitsyn provided some guidance for her. His book *The Gulag Archipelago* was a work of moral force that won him the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970. In his Nobel acceptance speech read in his absence – he wrote, “The writer must be a truth-teller. Live not by lies! In the struggle against lies art has always won and always will. . . . Lies can stand up against much in the world, but not against art. . . one word of truth outweighs the world.” In that same speech Solzhenitsyn contrasts two kinds of artists: the one who imagines himself as the creator of an independent spiritual world. . . . And a second kind who “acknowledges a higher power above him and joyfully works as a common apprentice under God's heaven” . . . Solzhenitsyn identifies with the latter. Mains finds firm footing in this author's work, strength of resolve and a capacity to sustain resistance against falsehood and evil.

The author Anthony Trollope (1815 – 1882) is highly revered in our home. Marion has in hand forty five of his novels and a considerable number of secondary sources on the man and his writing. Among the latter I recently stumbled on *The Gentleman in Trollope: Individuality and Moral Conduct*, by Shirley Robin Letwin. I have long thought that though a “gentleman” may have many admirable qualities there was little to disclose depth of character or to inspire full trust. The first few chapters of this book have supported my inclination to hesitate. For the gentleman there is a morality to be followed – though it is more a matter of social

Stephen Leacock: Literary Artist, Humorist and Humanist*

2019 signaled the 150th year since Stephen Leacock was born, the 100th year since his evocative political missive, *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice*, was published and the 75th year since Leacock died. 2019 was, indeed, a year to remember and reflect upon the life and prolific literary output of, perhaps, one of Canada's finest and greatest literary giants.

It is significant to note that Leacock had a deep and historic grounding in the Christian Tradition (Anglican) and much of his life he embodied a full and wide ranging Anglican vision that embraced religion, politics, economics, culture, public education, literary criticism, history, arts and culture. The exquisite merging, in Leacock's writings and many public lectures (often packed), of a winsome humour, catholic humanist vision and extensive literary output certainly positions Leacock as one of the most substantive Canadian public intellectuals of the first half of the 20th century.

Leacock married Beatrix (Trix) Hamilton in 1900, Trix, herself, being trained in the arts and theatre at one of the best schools in Boston. In fact, Leacock and Trix were married at the Actors' church in New York,



"The Little Church Around the Corner". Trix was related to Henry Pellatt who built the Italian castle in Toronto, Casa Loma. The Leacock home both in Orillia and Montreal (where Leacock taught at

McGill in political science from 1901-1936) was a hub of creative activity and hospitality, a definite cultural salon of sorts. Leacock was, in short, immersed at the highest level of academic, cultural and literary life in Canada.

Most know Leacock as the pre-eminent Canadian Humorist and the Leacock Medal for Humour is one of the most distinguished in Canada. Robertson Davies has lauded Leacock many times (himself winning the Leacock award) and Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* and the more absorbing *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* are Canadian icons and classics not to miss, the latter a subtle blend of Twain, Swift and Dickens (Leacock wrote

convention than deeply held conviction. It does not rest on anything given or fixed but instead on the constraints of civilization. The book is a sustained investigation into the social history of the gentlemen especially in the late 19th century. The few chapters I read brought to mind a chapter in another work I read some decades ago. *Nature, History and Existentialism* by Karl Lowith edited by Arnold Levison 1966. Lowith was a philosopher of Christian persuasion who explored the historical interplay of ideas. I took this volume from the shelf and went directly to the essay titled: *Can there be a Christian Gentleman?* The argument made is that most cultures link morals with manners and the author notes that: "It is the privilege but also the predicament of Christian ethics that it's extreme standards of love, humility and self-surrender cannot be standardized and adequately embodied in habits and manners." (p.205) The gentleman he notes, "is not a creation of Christianity but

of civilization, even if civilization simulates the virtues of Christianity". (p.207) Lowith's essay is an exercise in discernment – seeking to bring clarity where lines are often blurred. Here he concludes that the terms – gentleman and Christian – refer to two quite different identities and practices.

Creative and thoughtful writing are works by and for the imagination. This turn to books at hand has provided fresh awareness of treasures within easy reach and prompts me to keep digging.

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a tome on Dickens). There have been four biographies of Leacock: Curry (1959), Legate (1970), Moritz (2002) and the most recent by Margaret MacMillan (2009) in the *Extraordinary Canadians* series edited by John Ralston Saul. *The Letters of Stephen Leacock* (selected and edited by David Staines) is a bounty worth many an ample read.

There can be no doubt that Stephen and Beatrix Leacock, in their time, incarnated a vision of faith that was deeply and profoundly literary and artistic but also broadly humanist with a kindly Canadian touch of humour in which insight on the human condition was generously revealed.

Ron Dart, Abbotsford, BC, Professor of Political Philosophy, University of the Fraser Valley

*This brief piece was written for an earlier newsletter which was not published.

Bob Morris

March 27, 1940 – April 22, 2020

"Bob" was best known for his leadership in the world of Mission. A Canadian Missionary Statesman I would say. His extensive service in the international work of Interserve spanned five decades. In his later years he was Director of the Tyndale's TIM Centre. He would often be found preaching in local pulpits or speaking at conferences around the globe. To his last days he was a mentor to many who shared a vision for mission. His first wife pre-deceased him more than two decades ago. He and his second wife Carol shared an interest in mission

Bob possessed a gentle, patient and irenic spirit. He was an exceptional listener, ever eager to learn and an inspiring conversation partner. I am grateful for our many wide-ranging discussions over the years. He took great joy in his experience of the arts. We were privileged to have him serve on the IMAGO Board since 2015 and along with his wife Carol on the IMAGO Corporation. His commitment and generosity were expressed when he attended the December Board meeting while in the midst of treatment for his illness. His engaging and positive spirit were in evidence. We along with so many others will miss him greatly.

No June IMAGO Evening

For nearly twenty years IMAGO has hosted an arts showcase in June. It has been a time to celebrate the arts and the Christian artists who are part of the IMAGO network. The events were always characterized by artistic diversity.

There will be no June IMAGO Evening in 2020. Plans have been put on hold and our hope is that things will improve so that we may once again have the joy of gathering in person.

Crossings – Postponed till 2022

For nearly eighteen months IMAGO has been doing groundwork and preparation to host an arts event focused on the Scriptural Stations of the Cross. Many connections have been made with individuals, institutions and churches and the response to the project has been universally positive. Our project is called “Crossings”.

Crossings will profile a narrative that counters the prevailing cultural narrative of consumerism, technology and self-centred individualism. This project offers a unique opportunity to bring a central episode in

the story of Jesus to the attention of a wide public through creative engagement of the visual arts.

Scheduled for Lent of 2021, the Steering Committee made the decision to postpone the event to 2022 – from Ash Wednesday March 3 to Easter Saturday April 14.

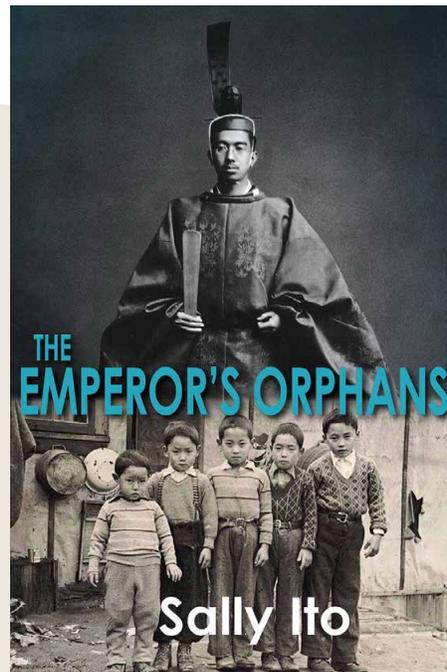
We believe the project is important and will be increasingly meaningful in the wake of our current situation. A web page with updates will soon be available on line.

The Emperor's Orphans is, in part, a metaphor for Japanese who are positioned between cultures – born or raised somewhere other than Japan, but still drawn deeply to their ancestral roots. In telling her story Winnipeg author Sally Ito combines the perspectives of branches of the family which chose very different paths.

First we have the stories she was told by her great aunt Kay, who spent World War II in an internment camp in the interior of British Columbia and thereafter settled on the Prairies. Second, through the meticulous diaries and records kept by her maternal grandfather, Toshiro, for his descendants; he stayed in Japan, but visited Canada. The third perspective is author Ito's, who from her childhood begged for stories and treasured her grandfather's printed records, even before she was able to read them in Japanese. She went on to research branches of the family and always took a deep interest in the land, both in Japan and in Canada.

We are treated to exciting accounts of Ito's great-grandfather Saichi recklessly fishing out of Richmond in the 1890s (he would make of point of going out during storms, so there would be less competition) and how he built a small fortune. She describes a visit to the what remains of aunt Kay's lovely and fecund farm in Surrey – lost during WWII – along with stories of a visit to Slocan and Lemon Creek where the older generation were interned.

We read how her parents sojourned in the Northwest Territories (her father worked



as a radio operator), of her family home in Sherwood Park, near Edmonton, and of her attachment to her aunt Kay's farm in Opal, Alberta. Woven into all these glimpses of Canadian homesteads are trips back to Japan, and the land and houses and family of the relatives who stayed in, returned to and visited the home country, Japan.

Reading *The Emperor's Orphans* felt like an odd mirror to my own life: growing up in Japan as the child of missionary parents, and even in adulthood feeling the pull toward Japanese culture. Ito's appreciation of the daily beauties of Japanese culture is my own.

Last fall we hired my former Japanese flower arranging teacher to guide us so we could decorate for my daughter's wedding to a second-generation Japanese-Canadian. The groom had also taken lessons and joined in. Last year I hired a professional kimono maker and teacher to help me sew a kimono for my eldest grand-daughter. My closest friends are Japanese-Canadians. I taught Japanese in a public high school in BC for 25 years.

Japan does not let us go. I also sometimes feel that crushing sense of 'duty' – and, like many of Sally's ancestors, have generally fought it.

Ito's last chapter on the search for her grandfather Saichi's land is at times painfully detailed, but it reminded me of the crucial point in my father's work in Japan. He was trying to buy land; the legalities were so convoluted that he began to see it as a crisis in his ministry. He could get the land and do violence to his conscience, but then he might as well give up on his ministry – how could he ever encourage people to trust God with the difficult things in life?

It was heart-warming to see Ito choose to give up her branch of the family's right to Saichi's land for what could be seen as a generous, and greater purpose – to support someone who had, out of the sense of duty to his ancestors, taken on a familial burden.

Sally Ito does not spare herself or her relations. *The Emperor's Orphans* is an honest, inside look at a courageous family.

Margaret Ritchie, Vancouver, BC