

Mishima Girl

The Book About To be Read

Roger Connah 2026

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Is it enough to write a book which will is always about to be read? Has such a destination enough authority to stop immediately and not continue to go on. But in this moment of a world dismantling itself, is there reason for disabling professions or practices that might have disappeared long ago; or for overthrowing movements that nonetheless have still survived. Who advises against will mention Simone Weil or Ivan Illich.

They talk about a book always about to be read, and a space that they will create unlike any other. Some tell us to quit the world, quit everything, when they have already entered a world that had nothing in relation to what went before.

The words can be used to live life as owls on a dinner service, but did they ever return/ The return journey is suggested in another way. Try and use the rock texture, try and frame the age, for the words in the distance. But it was not read like that, even though this informed adolescence for ever.

Has misunderstanding ever been as attractive as this moment? Do we really wish to tackle flaws in our judgement, or mistakes in our numbers? As if clearing these, we are left with less noise. Carver, she said, I can't put him down. I'd searched the shelves when she asked if I had any. I knew I did but it took a little time to locate them. She's still in the middle of them. How many books have been put down on completion? Or *en passant*? Snuffed out? She stayed for two weeks. Finished Carver and left.

He had been charged with the diagram of life. *Homo Diagrammaticus!* You don't need that book to live words. Or to think you are still alive, he said. Lightheaded is all the state you need. The friendly lines take their own journey, their own free from. The trustworthy is harder to discover.

Thank you (God of Written Things) for most of the day left unclaimed, for the flow chart left undisturbed. For the divine words which always slip away. It is not the tears of the God but the words that make their way into the other book. We've misplaced the theory of the mind but someone has sent out a search party. The journey is not as clear as it seems.

The word-diviner. A dark melancholy situates us somewhere within inside another philosopher where the spectacle remains our only seduction. I could not catch the rest of the sentence nor could let the new thinker finish with the wrong words. Why is Michel de Montaigne book (*essais*) called 'essays' in English, is it not a form of wishful thinking?

Are we so stubborn that we need the guide to take us into the wrong territory? And why do we allow language to make these trespasses for us when Montaigne told us how he distrusted all maps? Do we resist the test, the attempts to remove those pedestals of expected lucidities? The attempts we make may hold the thoughts from the last century unmoved, and unmoving we are now content with the briefest text message.

We no longer celebrate the uncertainties of dreams forever travelling beyond wishful thinking. There was a moment, a brief moment, we are not sure how extensive, when the twentieth century thought it was going forward, it was progressing. The destination was optimistic, critical thinking was wishfully abrupt. Under the most abused concept – *modernism* - progress, hygiene and democracy was expected to produce future compassion. Future societies alarmed the goodness of all people.

Books no longer start with the clearest statement we can make. We no longer believe in the authority of contents and narratives, written out by the authority that is writing itself. What life writers have lived, what scribes, hacks, inventors we are about to become, have nothing solid to offer. Is it not more important today to continue opening the books and let the words fly out.

Nothing can heal the skin of the single page turner. The God of Written Things has become the dark raven for someone else's unreason. To use words is a recognition to think we are still alive. We take the long path to exit, to reach pre-figuration. We receive an invitation to understand the glitches that annihilate us in the returning world.

We watch the spectacles that have already happened without wishing they could finish or be replayed. They no longer fit our history which has now been interred, bound up in the diagram it has become. What is it to re-read, to let the ungodly words free amongst the sinners, and re-design history for the unreal world? A history that has gone from a nervous disorder in the early teenage years, to a neuro diversity ruining everyone else's life but our own. And then there's illegibility. When did we perfect it?

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There have always been fictions. He calls her Mishima Girl. He tells her about separateness, (ab)normality, outsider-hood, and social/family exile. He tells her prejudice is never far away He participated amongst the art world and drowned long ago. He couldn't stand the pretence he told her. He then told her of his Indian life, his 'India Within' he called it. His whole life had been one of pretending to belong, socialise and be part of any community. He has invented all this, as he prefers to say to the Mishima Girl.

Most of his utterances cannot be called writing. His life could have nothing but fiction to present to her. He recommends some essential reading about prejudice and ignorance but there is no essential reading today. He still calls her Mishima Girl as they remain fictions to each other. What did she know about the Soviet shadow, about Lenin's stain? Did his century even exist?

But it rains, from the early years of acid exiled in the shadow, along the border. Exile always ran the wire, tempted transgression and disappearance. He always blundered into normality without ever achieving the status awarded to it. She began to trace and write out his life but with what success he cannot say.

You have become more than secondary literature. She was right. She had been caught for a period in his invention called the B Team. She was telling him how to write an online publication proposal. She said it was important to understand your credentials, why you are qualified, why you are the right person for this book. It's important, she said to measure the data, to measure your digital footprint, to demonstrate your profile, and how many eyes might actually see what you write and acknowledge your existence. I think she meant Carver.

She went on like this for longer than he cared. He lost interest. He told Mishima Girl about this. This wasn't the fiction he was qualified to write; this wasn't the life that would excite publishers. He left her developing ideas for others in her stable. Convinced he would not be her little cowboy he was happy with The B team. Mishima Girl laughed.

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The B-Team. These were names he kept coming across in the shadows of a literature lived 192 miles from St Petersburg. Literature had become, in the words written in this century about the last, darkly iconic. He read her the names: Beckett, Boltanski, Beuys, Borges, Bond, Brecht, Bloch, Broch, Baudrillard, Barthes, Barth, Buber, Brautigan, Bellow, Bellini, Bataille, Butor, Busi, Buzatti, Brodsky, Bordat, Boucrot, Beckermann, Bergman, Bloom, Blanchot, Banks, Berger, Blonski, Baird, Berman, Bunuel, Barnes, Bachelard, Baker, Bullock, Breton, Baudelaire, Bewes, Berry, Bhaskar, Bunge, Beder, Boyle, Benjamin, Berlin, Buk, Bateson, Bartok, Barrault, Barragan, Balthus,

There was no pause: Balla, Brod, Behrens, Bell, Benjamin, Benveniste, Bernanos, Barbage, Babel, Bardot, Boccioni, Baxter, Bazin, Beauvoir, Berg, Bergson, Berio, Bernal, Bresson, Berryman, Besant, Bishop, Bohr, Boll, Bomberg, Bonnard, Boulez, Bourdieu, Boyd, Brancusi, Brando, Braque, Braudel, Brueur, Brook, Brubeck, Brown, Bruner, Bukharin, Bulgarov, Burke

The God of Written Things had to stop: Burroughs, Brahms, Britten,
Bava, Burch, Bouvier, Bouvard, Bontzek, Bazin, Belazs, Bergas,
Baudrot, Bounore, Barthelme, Bonnet, Berzour, Bely, Bacall, Bogart,
Bene, Beguin, Berard, Baty, Benoit, Berardi, Bernhardt, Bory,
Bougeois, Bourdeaux, Barbellion, and Belbo in Umberto Eco
Foucault's Pendulum:

“In his office! This time Belbo lost self-control. To the extent, that is,
that he could lose it. He waited for Agliè to leave, then muttered through
clenched teeth: “*Ma gavte la nata.*” Lorenza, still showing her pleasure
at the invitation, asked Belbo what that meant. “It’s Turin dialect. It
means, literally, “Be so kind as to remove the cork.’ A pompous, self-
important overweening individual is thought to hold himself the way he
does because of a cork stuck in his sphincter ani, which prevents his
vaporific dignity from being dispersed. The removal of the cork causes
the individual to deflate, a process usually accompanied by a shrill
whistle and the reduction of an outer envelope to a poor fleshless
phantom of its former self.”

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She asked him about the India within. What did he mean? Travelling rough is not dissimilar to leap-frogging. One might stay in one's apartment and read, for example, Eric Newby, he told her. *Slowly down the Ganges* goes even slower from a bedsit apartment. Or with some imagination one finds oneself on Dal Lake. The opportunity to rough out a script called 'Mr.& Mrs Eric Newby for an hour' offers itself. She didn't understand what he was saying. But she listened.

Take a shikara on Srinagar's Dal Lake. Head towards the floating gardens. It is not essential that your boatman be called Aziz or your house-servant be called Mohammad. But if you happen to be in a houseboat called Alaska, run by a company called California, these reminders of Islam are as good as any. Srinagar is the capital of Kashmir. It is an understatement to say that Srinagar is a little confusing. Cultural suicide is everywhere. Political suicide may not be far behind.

Ancient Hindu traces are suppressed in favour of the growing fundamentalism. But brochures usually ignore political indelicacies, preferring their own type of suicide. 'The Himalayas gird Kashmir' so runs the brochure, 'and by the side of it, its most enchanting jewel, Dal lake'. If you could dial-a-light as quickly as you could dial-a-cliché, then you'd be back for more. It is, simply. staggeringly beautiful.

She looks at him, this Mishima Girl with a landscape and language so far away from this. It is, simply 'girded' by the Himalayas? Yes, and the light is, simply, breathtaking. But it will take just half an hour in Srinagar to realise that you must take any rhetoric with mint sauce. Imagine yourselves as honeymooners or Mr.& Mrs Newby. He had lost her now. He was back in the last century. Mishima Girl was rumbling the clickbait for memes to run by her study of prejudice.

They set off. Aziz delicately holds out a hand for the newlyweds. he pushes off. They recline on foam mattress bliss. But how quickly will they suspect the jewel? Dal Lake is far from the quiet, reclusive spot it must have been for the British. The story goes that not being able to own property and land, the British invented the houseboat. Twelve foot wide and canyons deep, floating palaces, casinolands!

They are that little bit of everywhere else in the world. The houseboat names tell it all. Alaska. New Mexico. Hollywood. Miss England. Miss India (once The Duke of Windsor but obviously de-frocked). And the houseboat name to beat all houseboat names, 'The New Neil Armstrong'. Born-again, where the old Neil Armstrong went is your guess.

Travelling in a shikara with Aziz dipping into unknown waters involves that art of looking leisurely. Supine, it is like sitting inside a telescope without ever having to look up or out. Aziz squats as if he has squatted from birth, in a Kashmiri pose as he guides the shikara skilfully through the maze of 'Full Spring Seated' shikaras that dart out into the lake from any and every direction.

They pass likely and unlikely shikaras called *Sun of Kashmir*, *Heaven Tiger*, *Speedy Gonzola*, *Water Taxi*, *Happy Champion* and *Very Nice with Deluxc Full Spring Seats*. Language games in India, he told her, often keep the traveller going. When omelettes get abbreviated to *Amlet*, the game is on. Solecisms are everywhere. *Cleopatra* passes in regal oblivion, the occupants of the shikara hidden behind curtains. *The Happy Champion* encircles them, beneath its name it has that essential message: *Welcome Smiling Workers*.

The hidden Marxist code brings a smile to Mishima Girl. Yes, she is still here, surrounded by cola-laden shikara hustlers. She just hopes that Aziz senses the irritation and recognises that you go only for the real thing. She skirts the floating bar and heads towards the destination, the floating gardens. By now everyone needs to escape this infested part of the lake. One motorboat passes with disdain, *Boeing 747*.

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Mishima Girl needs a pause. Two Kashmiris dive into the lake, Kashmiri-style, holding nose and belly flop. They emerge and begin spouting water like baby whales. Aziz skirts them and the 'floating gardens' begin where the New Neil Armstrong ends. From here on stench and watermelons. He tells Mishima Girl to recall the delta, *el tigre* on La Plata. Mishima Girl thinks of watermelons, red kidney beans and squash as more smiling craft pass. A shopping shikara with Tibetan Art is called '*Cheap John- For smiling Arts and crafts*'. *Cheap John* looked so cheap that some tourists don't even photograph it anymore.

Everything is smiling and Mishina Girl still hopes that Marxism has got something to do with it. On into the undergrowth, crouching beneath overhanging trees, motorboat remains, shikara shards, bracken and aeroplane parts everywhere. A smiling shikara-full of young girls giggle as the boat pulls alongside the tailors; *Quickdone*. By now Mishima Girl is making urgent signals to get out of the India within. It's not the mythology she wants.

A young boy passes in his own lotus-laden shikara as if from a nightmare tourist choreography. He will espy Mishima Girl as the newly wed she might be and immediately drops a lotus in the boat. The request for money comes only a fraction later. With an accurate lob into the passing shikara Mishima Girl hurls it back. She had become this fiction.

This should have been enough., a Mishima Girl from the last century longs for the Rough Guide to escape the noise and hassle of the revolution to come. On the 'superbly relaxing' quay fronting *HB Alaska*, Mishima Girl waits with 32 Japanese tourists exclaiming in Asahi-lager English how great and pollution-free, hassle-free living on Dal Lake could be. She cannot hide her confusion as she is asked to draw all the curtains and all the shutters over the windows on the houseboat balcony. 'But we have a lot of smiling fun here' Mishima Girl says to the tourists. Why? There is only one answer; Mishima Girl wants some privacy, some smiling privacy! It's her wedding night. It's her immersion. (Roger Connah 1986/2026)