

CANTERBURY ROTARY BOOK CLUB

NOTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 9TH NOVEMBER 2017

CHEZ COLIN AND JENNIFER

1. PRESENT; Richard, Judith, Viv, Gill, Georges, Jennifer, Colin, Alan, Tony, Neil, Brian
2. APOLOGIES: Caroline
3. BOOK: "Mort" by Terry Pratchett. A fantasy , and one of the author's Discworld series in which the world is flat and rests on 4 enormous turtles. Mort , who is considered pretty incompetent by his farmer father , is taken to a hiring fair, and , just as midnight is about to strike, is apprenticed to a strange man, assumed by the father to be an undertaker, but who is in fact Death. Te follows a series of adventures to which Mort is transported on Death's flying horse,Binky, the chief being Mort's intervention to prevent the predestined assassination of Princess Keli, which is not what Death is supposed to do, and leads to 2 parallel and inconsistent realities with many very imaginative (and often incomprehensible) consequences. Finally , the biographies , which Death keeps of everyone, re-write themselves to permit Keli to live with her wizard, and Mort marries Death's fat adoptive daughter and retires as a duke. Georges quoted the back cover of the book , describing it as holding up a mirror to show different realities. He wondered if the book was a satire on attitudes to death, and felt the town of Morepork was probably based on the back streets of london. Tony found the figure of Death himself was fantastic, pictured Brian Blessed playing the role, and loved the way at the wedding reception, Death used his bony finger instead of a cocktail stick to pick up a sausage. Jennifer liked the way Death spoke in capital letters, and had problems in understanding how crops were harvested the year before their seeds were sown, and the dire consequences of forgetting to sow the seeds the next year. Richard had been travelling in Bhutan, and thought the idea of the elephant standing in the middle of the sea was quite plausible and compared it to a Disney theme park. Judith had not previously heard of Pratchett, but enjoyed reading the book , comparing it to Watership Down - both a different sort of reality. Neil and Colin both thought the book rather lost on them - would prefer going for some reality - Neil compared it to watching synchronised swimming (which he doesn't like either) - it was a well written book, but he just didn't like it (though, manfully, he'd struggled through to the end. Viv said you have to learn to think like a child and suspend disbelief to get the best from it. Tony had looked forward to it, death being a taboo subject, but science fiction is not his cup of tea, though there were clever and amusing bits. Richard liked the plausible detail, but Alan could not see the ideology - for example the hourglass system was hard to understand, but he'd enjoyed the author's distinctive style , rather as he enjoyed P G Wodehouse. Richard did not feel this book quite as good as the author's "Colour of Magic"Georges enjoyed some of the imagery, quoting quite a long piece about "history gently unravelling like an old sweater". Viv had read several of the series, but did not consider them as good as the Dark Materials series by Pullman. About half of us were in the wanting more reality camp, and the rest enjoyed the fantasy - but it provided 45 minutes of very animated discussion , so we felt it a successful read.
4. OTHER READS: Alan - produced a carrier bag full of reads his determined family had wished on him for his birthday - "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" - Roy - a great book for those interested in India without the intensity of "Inglorious Empire". "Prisoners of Geography - 10 maps that tell you everything you need to know about global politics" - very interesting but still wip and a bit of a struggle to read."Breaking News" - autobiography of his brother in law Jeremy Thompson who made his name reporting the Moors murders and went on to all sorts of other things. Alan mentioned that the author only received 10 free copies - but whether he'd benefitted from this bounty was not clear.Tony - Ishiguro "an Artist in a Floating World" -winner of 1986 Whitbread prize about a well respected artist in Japan found to have feet of clay; Julian Barnes "History in 10.5 chapters" - a spoof on Noah and the problems of getting a woodworm in the ark. David Lodge - "History of the British Museum - very bright - Alan Bennett - Diaries -very

dull. Colin - "One Day" - David Nicholls about 2 people who have feeling for each other meeting on the same day in each year for 20 years - a very human story. Jennifer - Victoria Hislop "Catres Postales" adventures in Greece marked by postcards - couldn't get into it (neither could I). James Naughtie - "Paris Spring" - spy novel, and about to embark on Val McDermott - Cross & Burn. Neil - John Grisham - Grey Mountain - enjoyed, "Forgotten Highlander" ? about man captured in Singapore - thought provoking, Lee Child - "Midnight Line" - superb. Gill - "Noise of Time" Julian Barnes. Viv had finished off his biography of Margaret Thatcher - a conviction politician; "The Boy who felt no pain" - George Marion - old fashioned but stylish yarn and great story. Colin "Imperium" Robert Harris excellent. Judith - Edith Wharton "Summer", "Cider with Rosie" Laurie Lee - she saw some parallels with C J Sansum "dissolution"; Lee Child "Die Trying" Richard - had read some left over books from his psychology course and "The Secret Life of trees" Brian "Equator" Miguel Tavares - translated from Portuguese about a man sent on an impossible mission to establish facts about suspected slavery persisting in a colony - a good basis for a story rather spoiled by cliches; Rosie Tremaine "The Long Road Home" about a Polish migrant; in UK in mid 1990s; metaphysical poetry of John Donne and George Herbert - The Metaphysical Poets - Helen Gardner and "Music at Midnight" - biography of Herbert - John Drury - well worth trying to understand and historically interesting

5. THINGS DONE: Richard - trip to Bhutan with 5 ladies including meeting religious hierarchy and visiting 2 schools set up by the charity formed by Emma Slade. Judith - wine tasting holiday in Bordeaux including 3 nights in Rochefort and visit to rope making factory. Saw a reconstruction of Lafayette's ship "Hermione", brought back toile courtesy of plans from the UK as we had cap/turd her sister ship and drawn it Weekend in London - saw 42nd street, Witness for the Prosecution, and a comedy about a bank robbery. Also visits to Nat Portrait Gallery, V & A, Imp War Museum, Henry Blofeld and Graham Swan (Pheew). Viv - Tenebrae in the cathedral - absolutely brilliant, unaccompanied, the whole audience standing to applaud. Also other Festival events - Rich Hall, a raunchy cabaret in the spiegel tent and 2 talks. Gill - 2 weeks in Spain, War Horse, Brilliant Ballet Black at Marlowe and old film "Is there anyone there" with Michael Caine which is great but did not please everyone in the audience. Had enjoyed TV "Pride of Britain" series. Georges had enjoyed making some soup with his grandchildren. Neil had had excellent walking hol in Majorca - 8/10 miles daily, punctuated by orange juice & cake capped off by jumping in pool when gigot back. Also Deal theatre for "Eagles" Jennifer and Colin had been to a wedding in a former monastic barn near Alfriston in Derbyshire surrounded by a moat one defended by medieval archers, to poole to see their son, and to a film about Christopher Robin, interesting and well acted, but he'd had a sad life really and hated A A Milne. They had enjoyed the Rotary trip to the bronze age boat at Dover, saw Banksy. Also went to see the tapestry in the cathedral Chapter House (still on view) and to a concert at Stelling Minnis to commemorate the great storm of 1987. Tony - Così fan Tutte - Glyndebourne at the Marlowe - entrancing. Visited Durham & there also saw C Robin and Victoria and Abdul - rather sad. "Beguiled", produced by Clint Eastwood and about the Civil war was good, not so a talk by Dan Cruickshank about the Huguenots, which was disjointed with far too much hand waving, but Jenny Murray was very good, as was The Planets by the Philharmonia. Alan had had a frustrating time with the Festival. Having bought tickets for "Grease" out of a sense of loyalty to a young man who was singing in it, he gave them away when he discovered the young man had laryngitis, and bought more tickets for what turned out as an indifferent Chopin evening, and then learned that Grease had been very good. Coli fan Tutte, "Hamlet" - a Brett Dean opera, Hamlet's moods lending themselves to the opera, Tenebrae - he, too was blown away by it. Ballet to music composed by Joby Elliott.
- Brian - trip to Rome, mostly crowds, but interesting Picasso exhibition relating to his years in Rome and work with Diaghilev, Stravinsky, Sati and Ballet Russe. "Death of Stalin" - good farce and "God's own country", a shocking but interesting film about life on a Pennine hill farm
6. DONM - Thursday 1st Feb 7.30pm chez Colin and Jennifeer. Book "The Keeper of small things" Ruth Hogarth - local author