Hereditary Penguinism

An account of the civilisation and manners of the Penguin race
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Hopping Penguin

Magellanic Penguin, Valdes Peninsula, Argentina. Hopping as a method of locomotion is one of the few cases where one foot is better than two.

Photo: David AlexanianArgentina.blogspot.com.au

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First published as Ile des Pingouins (Penguin Island) by Anatole France, 1908, English translation by E.W. Evans 1909.

Serialised on Radio 2SER Sydney 1981.

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a sensible reader in possession of a good book must be in want of a Penguin.¹

Wouldn’t that be nice! If it was true, we could just stop here. People who want Penguins can have Penguins. Why read about Penguins when you can just go outside, choose one, and take it back home, feed it pilchards and have a jolly² time. Who needs words when you can have the real thing? It would save an awful lot of research and writing, not to mention the authors’ reputation.

Penguins to the left of us, Penguins to the right. Penguins in front and Penguins behind. It’s raining Penguins! Even if there was something else, something other than Penguins, who could want for anything more?

¹ Appearing before you, unfolding magically as your eyes traverse the words of this page. Even this one. And this one. And this one. You get the point.
² If a little fishy and smelly.
Oh it’s you, is it? We know your type. You are not naturally Penguinophiles. You are not true believers. You've felt your neck feathers tingle and the feathers on the backs of your flaps stand up. You are sure you have caught a fleeting glimpse of something “not Penguin” out of the corner of your beady little eye, just out of sight, behind that tree, or hovering just above you. Admit it, you want something more.

You’ve come to the right place. Hallelujah! That $4.95 you spent on this eBook was worth it after all.

Not only do we provide solid proof there is more to life than Penguins, we question their very existence. You guessed it. Not only is there more to life than Penguins, there aren’t even any Penguins! They are bogus. Stuff of myth and legend, that’s all. A cleverly perpetrated hoax, pulling the fluff over everyone’s eyes.

It may come as a something of a surprise we are advancing the “Penguins don’t exist” theory inside a history of Penguins. We are not fools, you know. You can’t just come out and say these things. How far are you going to get walking up to a Penguin and saying,

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3 Or indeed less.
4 That’s buyer remorse taken care of.
“Oh, by the way, you don’t exist.” A beak in the eye, that’s what you’ll cop for your troubles.

So it’s subtly subtly\(^5\) for the moment. We’ve written this detailed historical account of Penguins and their doings, laced with plenty of references, citations, and we confess, quite a few passages of text copied verbatim from other authors, as a sort of purloined letter, hiding in plain sight.

We admit we have, on the face of it, made the case for the opposition, the Penguin believers. How else could we escape detection? Do you think we want to be exposed as unbelievers, hung upside down by our flippers and flogged to death with soggy baitfish?

And here it is, a true and faithful, rigorously researched, meticulously referenced, peer-reviewed account of, “Hereditary Penguinism: An account of the civilisation and manners of the Penguin race”.

But look a little closer and you will soon find our account of the Penguins, like the very existence of Penguins themselves, lacks both credibility on one hand and evidence on the other.\(^6\)

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5 Taskforce.

6 Of all the truths in this book, this may be one of the least misleading ones.
We are not alone in this, we can assure you. In fact all of the hundreds of thousands of detailed accounts of Penguins and penguinism, hereditary or otherwise, have been produced with one goal in mind, and that is to disprove their existence.

It just goes to prove what we always have suspected, historians are cowards.

Not only cowards, but graspingly opportunistic, unprincipled charlatans who have been madly copying each other’s works in a mad rush to get in on what we call the “Penguin racket”.

OK, then, you ask, how are we different?

This is where science comes in. We didn’t just dash this off you know.

First of all, we amassed all the existing Penguin data. Recognising immediately it was in entirely inappropriate formats – published and unpublished books, manuscripts, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, fairy tales, radio broadcasts, sitcoms and television news – we had to transcribe it all onto index cards. This took quite some time. To avoid confusion between the index cards and the source material, we then had the source
material destroyed. It was a lovely big bonfire and burned for years, a pleasant interlude during which we sat around warming our chest feathers, playing spin the bottle and pinochle7. Then it was back to work.

We soon realised the sheer volume of data, stored in filing cabinets in buildings in a city we built for this purpose, was going to be rather impractical. We decided to choose a select few bits of data to represent the whole. A perfectly reasonable procedure, its efficacy proven (again and again) by the existence of fractals.

Of course, to obtain a representative sample, we couldn’t simply chose any old card, we had to choose cards at random. To make this process all fair and above board, we realised we first had to randomise the order of the cards.

To do this we created a rather large, randomly-generated sequence of numbers with a random number generator, one of several which just happened to be lying nearby.

We know before it was randomised, the first number in the sequence was one, but we don’t know what the

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7 Pronounced, would you believe, pee-knuckle

CERTAINLY NOT A PENGUIN

PHOTO OF BURGESS MEREDITH AS THE PENGUIN FROM THE TELEVISION PROGRAM BATMAN, 19 JANUARY 1966, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.
last number was, all we know it was so big that even divided by the biggest number you could think of would still be much too big to be written down here.

The funny thing was, the random number generator produced a sequence of numbers whose randomness did not respect probability. It started with the aforementioned “one”, then came the number “two”, then “three” and so on, just as if you were counting from one to 100, or in this case one to a number so big... (see above). The improbability of this happening convinced us the result was indeed random.

This saved us a lot of time, because the existing cards were already numbered in this way, consecutively, from one to whatever. This meant they were already random and didn’t need to be randomised. Yay!

Reassured by this neat accounting trick, we then decided to choose the first 23 index cards, in complete confidence they were utterly random, despite being ordered one to 23, as a representative sample and therefore the same as all the others.

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8 You were probably expecting this, but we weren’t.
And there they were, in the first drawer in the first cabinet of the first warehouse of the first block of the warehouse-city, where we happened to be standing at the time.9

Were it not for this stroke of good fortune we may have been forced to search through all the cards for any old numbers, a task surely requiring years to accomplish. In this case we almost certainly would not have written this book (though anything is possible).

All well and good. We now had the 23 representative facts standing like 23 synecdoches for the whole shebang.10

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9 Why 23? Why not?
10 But maybe not. Unfortunately, the small wooden box containing the first 23 index cards (upon which, as we explained earlier, we based our entire account) seems to have been misplaced. It was on the bedside table but it isn’t there now. And so you have it. Beginning with an immense, labyrinthine and tangled mass of material, only barely able to be consolidated, sorted, indexed and randomised, we now had nothing. We admit this casts doubt on our narrative – and as a consequence, on the very existence of Penguins. Yet if Penguins do not exist, why do we all believe in them so?

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PENGUINS AND HUMANS

Penguin agents often went undercover to obtain intelligence for their ultimate enslavement of humans. Photo: Charles Green with a penguin, 1914. Scanned from “The Endurance” by Caroline Alexander. ISBN 074754123X.
With these 23 facts, we were able to demonstrate the existence of Penguins as incontrovertibly true, and furthermore, since the time Penguins enslaved humans and boiled our planet (thereby committing suicide through lack of suitable ice floes on which to sit while presiding over the simmering soup, whose lumps of mammal, vegetable and dumpling were theirs to command) there has been only agreement regarding the actual existence of Penguins. Disbelief has not been an option.

Really? No-one doubted penguinism, even late at night in the shed on a mouldy mattress reading “Catcher in the Rye” by candle light?

Just for the hell of it, as a thought experiment, we decided to take a contrary view.

Instead of believing this horrible fate which led to the end of civilisation as we knew it and the annihilation of all human life, including ourselves, we chose the opposite – disbelief. In other words, as we reasoned,

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11 Oops.
12 Not only existence, but even this fairy story of enslavement and suicide by double boiler, which stretches credulity for even the most gullible.
13 As you do.
if we exist, it automatically followed the Penguins did not.

Crazy? Maybe. But this line of thinking may not be so far fetched as it first appears. And here’s why.

Fossil evidence\textsuperscript{14}, due principally to a lack of geology, most of it being underwater, was scant\textsuperscript{15}.

Libraries, apparently once teeming with Penguin vainglory, did not survive immersion.

Microfilm, much too small to read,\textsuperscript{16} was recycled to make gigantic polyurethane bags in a futile Penguin attempt to scoop up all the waste plastic in the Pacific gyre\textsuperscript{17}.

Magnetic tapes were erased, purely by accident\textsuperscript{18}, and all the compact discs were used up in dressing a gigantic Christmas Tree erected and then burned at the end of the world to celebrate humanity’s passing.

\textsuperscript{14} Don’t forget we had destroyed this earlier, so any further existence must have been planted there by penguins.
\textsuperscript{15} There were other reasons for this scantitude, as we have explained.
\textsuperscript{16} Whoever thought up that idea?
\textsuperscript{17} Only making it worse, of course.
\textsuperscript{18} Or by intelligent design?
So, when one actually takes a look, the case for Penguins begins to look a bit shakey.

So what happened to bring them into existence?

Before we answer that question, let’s consider these truths, which we hold to be self evident.¹⁹

Prior to observation, facts may exist.²⁰ Therefore even if they have never been seen, heard, spoken to or poked in the eye by, just because we haven’t personally “known a Penguin” doesn’t mean they couldn’t possibly exist, at least somewhere, perhaps on an Island, running around naked, eating fish and laying eggs and talking about the meaning of life.

We admit this, but surely, in order for facts to be known, they must related by one or several witnesses. Witnesses? OK, we’ll accept this on principle, but with two caveats, a) who are these fucking so-called witnesses and where do they live? and b) eye witness accounts have been found to be so unreliable, they more often represent anything but the truth.

¹⁹ Readers wishing to get on with the narrative and skip this disconsolate and unsatisfying philosophical dirge presented in light grey text and almost impossible to read anyway, can skip to the next part, where the writing become legible again.

²⁰ This is known as the philosophical domain of the ignorant.
Once the foregoing is realised and manifestly understood, a further undeniable truism emerges as a consequence:

Fiction is more true than reality.

In other words, when confronted by a complete lack of evidence for well-known events, the historian must improvise, taking refuge in the comforting embrace of fiction, where anything can happen, and usually does. From fiction comes storytelling, and from stories, the truth. If we were to deny the truth, we might as well give up now.

Having written this book, presenting the facts as we found them, and leaving out anything that didn’t quite fit with our theories, we hereby absolve ourselves of the need to answer the question of Penguin existence. It’s

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21 The preceding statements are rhetorical, of course, and come directly from Cicero’s celebrated speech, “On Penguin logic and the use of false syllogisms in everyday life.

22 This may be all very well, but you need to know which truth exactly, and whether this truth is within or outside the confines of your knowledge. In other words is the truth known, unknown or unknowable?

23 What is reality anyway, other than a collection of stories made up by other people? Do you really know anything? You say you know your neighbourhood like the back of your hand. How well do you know the back of your hand? Have you really studied it? Do you know how many hairs or freckles it has? Do you know its chemical composition, or refractive index? Is that a wart over there near the base of your little finger? We thought so.
really up to you to decide this for yourselves. You can weigh the evidence, be persuaded by the arguments, or remain unconvinced (although by even reading this book, given the topic is in fact Penguins, you’d have to admit by doing so you are lending credence to the whole “Penguin Existence” thing.)

The “concept” of Penguins, however, is a cracker. It must be, eitherwise it wouldn’t have created so many books, films, muttered conversations, political complaints and bedside manners.

What could be the harm in that? Such mental constructs do not threaten anyone with material evidence, or claims of human enslavement.

Or do they?

Surely the concept of Penguins must have some kernel of truth in material reality, or would not the concept have wandered, morphed and evolved into something else?

If an insubstantial phantasm, would it not have drifted into the concept of, for example, Donkeys? Werewolves? Fish? Birds?
Penguins, conceptually, seem to have somehow acquired the right to remain Penguins. This suggests more than an idle daydream.

Another question of this account of Penguins, undoubtedly more germane (or in fact French) might be: “Is this history genuine?”

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24 No doubt this will cause some embarrassment to those arguing there is a dearth of historical substance in the Penguin race. As an aside, it is often said: “the difference between a Penguin and placid air is not scaly”... a statement which at first seems confusing, but can be readily understood if one remembers the term “scaly” in this sense refers to scalar dimensions. As such this statement is merely a truism, as the amount and size of placid air occupied by a Penguin is exactly equivalent to the Penguin itself, although whether their air is placid or agitated depends on the nature of the penguin, of course. As a consequence of this observation, even though nothing from this history could interest artists, the following logical statements can be made: A work one cannot recognise presents “confusion as art”, a rather shabby cultural reference at best, yet works one can recognise are mere illusions of memory and thus even less satisfying ad furthermore those to whom history is taught learn to fear ancient narratives and thus avoid any serious study of the past, resulting in a lack of credible research upon which to base speculations.

25 Our notes are extremely difficult to read at this point. We are not sure if the intention of the phrase “placid air” was meant to signify atmosphere, mood, or disposition. We could have been referring to the apparent peace-loving nature of this bellicose race, an appearance belied by the ululating savagery visited upon humans in the wars preceding the Enslavement.

26 What have artists got to do with this, or anything? These ragamuffin misfits are no concern of ours. You shouldn’t even have mentioned them. Oh well, it’s done now.

27 This teaches you two things: a) Penguins should never have been allowed into art college, and b) art teachers should stay away from philosophy and stick to mineral water.

28 This explains everything!

29 In an advocacy reminiscent of the devil.

30 The French are not germane here.
Why of course!

As a history it might very well be completely wrong, counterfactual, fake, false, forged, phony, spurious, sham, ersatz and not what it is cracked up to be but this does not mean it is not genuine, or in fact any different from any other history you might pick up down at your local library.

This history indisputably exists, even if Penguins do not. We can prove this with a simple experiment.

*Hello!*

Did you hear that? Yes, you did. Or sort of. You saw the word *Hello!* and in some strange way said it to yourself in that feathery head of yours. Anyway, seeing and hearing aside, it’s quite enough to prove this book exists, and you exist. We are very glad to have established this, as we were beginning to worry about you.31

Are you keeping up? You better keep your wits about you, here comes a whopper.

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31 And there you see the quadreternity of dualities inherent in notions such as word vs page, page vs chapter, chapter vs book, and book vs library. You can’t have one without the other. If you want to go and punch the brick wall of a library with your bare fist, in the belief it is an illusion, be our guest.
The real question behind all of this is whether on not we (the authors) wrote this book, or whether it is... the work of... Penguins! Ooooh! Scary!

Don’t worry, we have an answer for this too.

We propose it is simply logical any Penguin-penned history would fluff up Penguins and flatter them in a fanciful puff-piece of good government and family values. Surely no Penguins would go to the trouble of making a history of their race and fill it with despicable slurs, accusations, denunciations, insinuations, gripes, squawks and recriminations.³²

Aha! In this account, on more than one occasion, we find the discourse slipping into the perjorative, surely evidence of its authenticity, if not its generosity.

Let’s move on. Existence (of the object you now hold in your hands, be it case-bound hand-tooled fine Sulawesi leather with uncut rag pages or your big sister’s hand-me-down iPad with a cracked screen and a nearly dead battery) now settled, we next address the question of “authenticity”.

³² Life itself is a perfectly adequate and time-honoured method for this task.
It has been suggested (in more than one place and not only at night) that our history has been copied, word for word, from other sources.

To this we say: “So what?” These other so-called sources were themselves copied from previous sources, and those from sources which preceded them, leading back inexorably to an original account, all traces of which have unfortunately lost, but which, in corresponding word for word with ours, suggest it may have been plagiarised from the one you now hold in your hands, which by virtue of this logic, must be the first and only true account, from which all others have been copied.

Yes, but who wrote it? 

(Let us leave this question aside and move on to some necessary housekeeping before we begin the narrative proper.)

33 By the way, there is a chapter in this account of Penguins which deals with “The Idea in France”. It is clearly a misplaced chapter, having no place here, and can be ignored.
Even though there is a great deal that is unexpected, insightful or revealing in this account, it is perfectly safe to read, slowly or fast, from the front to back or back to front, upside down if you are a school teacher, or with X-ray vision if you are thus endowed.

No shocks, no disruptions, no tricky business, no fluff-pulling over eyes, what we present here is a harmless, and admittedly, rather boring account of the end of civilisation during the tyrannical reign of the Penguins followed, as night follows day, by their eventual disappearance due to the lack of a simple thermometer.

Are we ready? Let us begin.

“NIGEL, PhOEBE, DWAYNE, CYNTHIA, MARK AND JOSH... YOU’RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET OUT AND PUSH.”


34 Unless you know absolutely everything about Penguins, in which case it will all be old hat. However, finding such a “tabula steata” in this day and age would be a rare find indeed.

35 That’s what this is about, you know.
strange wind, thickly-gloved, came into the room\textsuperscript{1} and a Penguin, with certain fixed expressions\textsuperscript{2} and trailing a lit fire, entered, hobbling slightly because of the repressed gyrations his face\textsuperscript{3}.

His name was Gilbert\textsuperscript{4}. He was tall (without being short) and resembled a mammalian dumpling. As a disguise\textsuperscript{5}, his Penguin suit left a lot to be desired, causing howls of laughter wherever he went\textsuperscript{6}.

\textsuperscript{1} So far none of this makes any sense at all... Or does it? That’s the problem with you people, always wanting things dumbed down by the lowest common abominator. It’s obvious someone opened the door, warm air rushed out, sucking in cold air, brrr, and the Penguin (not the wind of course) who came into the room was thickly gloved, not literally, but you can plainly see a Penguin’s flippers are already feathered, maybe terminated by the possible existence of hands, but palpably gloved and about as useful as oven mitts. How would you have said it? “Gilbert the Penguin came into the room carrying a candle?” We admit this is straight to the point and commendably brief, but a tad prosaic don’t you think?

\textsuperscript{2} Wait a minute. Are we supposed to believe this one, the so called “Gilbert” has more than one fixed expression? How could it be fixed if it changes?

\textsuperscript{3} We admit it’s a bit fanciful to suggest the hobbling gait of Penguins (courtesy of feet maladapted for terrestrial travel) is really caused by willful repression of facial contortions, resulting in fixed expressions, translating into uncoordinated movements at the other end of the body. Wouldn’t a more plausible explanation be that Penguins are simply crap at walking and the expressions of Penguins are naturally fixed?

\textsuperscript{4} A rather unlikely name for a Penguin, wouldn’t you say?

\textsuperscript{5} If you are wondering whether this is a real or fake Penguin, may we refer you to the preceding front matter which discusses this topic at length.

\textsuperscript{6} Don’t you laugh, he’s feeling bad enough as it is.

“THE ONLY GOOD PENGUIN IS AN EXTINCT PENGUIN”

So says Icadypetes salasi, an extinct Tropical Penguin species from the late Eocene period 36 million years ago. Image: Nobu Tamura CC BY 3.0 after a pencil drawing by Clarke, 2007
Telegraph wires left shadows in oily residues separating Gilbert from the text. Boys played sport in the sun on a nearby field. No boats were in dock. The surface of the snot-green water was luminous with bright eyes.

Gilbert made a start at the translations, stabbing the words with his inadequate Spanish, badly in need of sharpening. The snow beneath his hat, full of dry kitchens, emphasised the stillness being erased.

A woman carrying a cloth and holding glasses of bacon, slender without being wide, adjusted her weight with an air of anti-gravity. Her eyes were optical instruments capable of transmitting representations (of the arrangements, hues, luminance and saturation...)

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7 Text? Are you kidding? This isn’t one of those sorts of books, is it? Self reflexive crap about the fifth wall or some such garbage?
8 This is the first event which seems capable of happening. But as it already happened in Ulysses by James Joyce, it’s more than a little out of place here, unless it’s here simply for the sake of arbitrary background noise.
9 If you can call an absence an event. (You can’t.)
10 Misplaced Joycean Homerism, if ever we saw one.
11 With his beak, more like.
12 Oh yes it sounds intriguing and adventurish, but they’re just words, you know.
13 Huh?
14 Oh just admit it, you’re in love with her.
15 A fire began above the city, where buildings glimpsed an endless embroidery of quilted sky. A surprised visitor (behind a shaft of thought) lost concentration and began fumbling in the dark. There was no bomb, no plane, no distant events or nearby coral polyps on the ill-mannered table of time.
of photons) to her brain, which was wrinkled like several thousand metres of high-tensile cloth shoved into a small, bony bag.\textsuperscript{16} Her feathers were placed precisely in military formation, never overlapping, except along their lengths. Her feet, clad in pictures of shoes, were normally lively but had today been quelled by the administration of a claw hammer.\textsuperscript{17}

In his blurry surprise Gilbert\textsuperscript{18} realised he had spilled some water, drowning three beetles in the gaps between the floorboards\textsuperscript{19}. Shifting his weight from a chair, he now stood on them\textsuperscript{20}. His tongue twisted as it removed itself from his mouth in distaste. Listening for a moment he stopped as soon as it approached repetition.

The opening door, rapidly forgotten, admitted a fire-extinguisher of wet boots\textsuperscript{21}. Too preoccupied to ask

\textsuperscript{16} Arguably correct, if we are just describing reality.
\textsuperscript{17} It’s more than love. You are besotted. How would you like being vomited on, little Miss Prince Charming?
\textsuperscript{18} This is the same Gilbert you met previously, with all his atoms exchanged for literary ones.
\textsuperscript{19} Poor beetles!
\textsuperscript{20} We warned you.
\textsuperscript{21} These things either have a voice or are mute. You may choose. You prefer natural selection. One thing you can be sure of: no denial raised gazing or surprise, because to speak was a completely startled hall of Miros while another scrap of his face was bright pink, muffled and bandaged by someone else’s inscrutable nerves.
her retreating feet some harrowing questions of family fidelity, he glanced suspiciously at the window.

A room of white muslin obscured the air. In the accident about to happen she supposed he was smoking a corncob crevasse stuffed with gendarmes, but in fact he seemed disappointed. The window blind, even though it could not see, lent a comfortably red animation to his facial feathers.

Some monks were trappist, but he was not so set in his ways, being fluid to the point of incontinence. Eyeing her quietly from behind his impenetrable bite he was careful to make sure nothing more in the parlour happened until four o’clock, during which he was quite still in the growing darkness.

Black velvet hyenas ran up to the ceiling where they seemed to feel safe. Four o’clock mustered courage and entered the room. The snow was falling faster. Deep drifts were banking up against the face.

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22 Is this some sort of “love story”?
23 His diagram was not to be drawn so easily.
24 So nice to see our old fiends again.
25 It’s about time.
26 We may have forgotten to mention this before.
In Gilbert’s mind\textsuperscript{27} his thoughts were so tiny he couldn’t hold them in his hour hand without burning the worried mice which lived between his fingers. As far as a story was concerned it was impossible to tell.

\textbf{AN INTERROBANG}


\textsuperscript{27} This was an instrumental rather than vocal performance.
In this section we will deal with:

- a family of sacred ages and external truths
- a perfume departed from this world, and
- a forge of cultivated novices.

“COMPOSING SHOULDERS” SURELY
NOTHING TO DO WITH PENGUINS

We have to admit here our notes, having suffering many revisions (often late at night in the presence of alcoholic beverages, penguin children, large green cigarettes, bailiffs, scissors, erasers, glue and magic powder) had deteriorated over the years and were in rather poor condition. It is therefore hard to determine if the phrase “composing shoulders” was in fact used. On the other hand as a phrase it does have a certain mysterious appeal, especially if repeated often enough. Try it yourself, you are sure you’ll soon fall in love with it and start using it all over the place, as you do. “Composing shoulders.” It’s pretty good actually. Do you think an interrobang would add a certain “je-ne-sais-quoi”?

28 Part of the first part, or “The Beginnings” (so to speak).
Ok, here’s the skinny.

The following material presents itself as a series of trusims with mystifications. While it introduces the main players in this drama, their motivations and ambitions, failings and graces, nostrils, eyebrows and other parts of the anatomy expressive in some creatures, but, as we have seen, not in Penguins, it doesn’t tell us very much.

It should be noted at this point there is little in the way of sound or fury in this idiotic tale, it is a modest and unassuming sort of narrative, truthful up to a point, and rambling off in all directions thereafter. It moves at a petty pace, and if you a very slow reader, will last you at least till the last syllable of recorded time, and probably longer (which being in the future hasn’t yet been recorded, but leaving this aside it will keep you occupied at least long enough to keep you out of the bookshops and save you a lot of time and money, if you happen to be in the habit of purchasing your reading material.)

The differences between this account and Macbeth, which superstitious people refer to as “the Scottish play” are few and far-sighted, needing extra strong
spectacles, which as we have explained, it entirely lacks.

Just to take example from Macbeth, who was shorn\(^{29}\) of his first name when he was untimely plucked from his pram\(^{30}\), said: “All our yesterdays have lighted fools.”

If Macbeth can say this and get away with it, we feel more than entitled to respond with an equivalent statement\(^{31}\), “Life is accustomed to looking out for oncoming weather in the form of monstrous clouds and waves, representing the divine blood of the venerable Mael (also shorn) who had already passed life to reach wisdom, only to continue living, walking in a vessel similar to a mortar made of strong pilgrims, who this day visited the shores of Penguin Island, blown off the golf course by a wayward four wood, meeting there the pagans\(^{32}\) who still peopled\(^{33}\) the “Island of the Perpetually-buffeted Winds,” living there in complete harmony with nature (with the exception of some

\(^{29}\) Don’t even think about it.

\(^{30}\) This is why Macbeth was so insanely ambitious, needing to steal someone else’s name to cover his nakedness, and why he killed Duncan in order to steal his name, which was “King”.

\(^{31}\) If this seems unnecessarily opaque, the short version is: this is when the Holy Mael turn up, not a good day, as it turned out.

\(^{32}\) Penguins.

\(^{33}\) penguined.
unfortunate species of fish they were accustomed to eating), appearing before these innocent naive and charmingly inept people\textsuperscript{34} as a holy man risen to god-like status by the hidden beauty of a loaded musket.”

Not only is this statement Shakespearian and therefore venerated by all, it is also true, because this (pretty much) is exactly what happened\textsuperscript{35}. This bloke Mael, who had got lost one afternoon traversing a water hazard rather than take a penalty drop, fetched up on the beach of this island inhabited by beautiful, free-living, happy and entirely naked people\textsuperscript{36}, living in harmony with nature except for the fish we mentioned before.

Mael, despite his poor eyesight which had never properly recovered from his transitory death on the previous page, was deeply offended by all this free-living harmony and happy nudity, and being armed to the teeth with molars, mandibles and the jawbone of an ass, pulled out his musket, stuffed it full of Five Pound notes, gunpowder, treason and shot, and began firing on the crowd shouting, “Fucking hippy long-hair

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\textsuperscript{34} Penguins
\textsuperscript{35} Told you so.
\textsuperscript{36} Penguins

\textbf{Has anyone seen my monocle?}

\textit{The monocle, a single lens with a wire ring to which is attached a string or wire, the other end of which is connected to the wearer’s clothing for safety to prevent accidentally loss, is particularly inappropriate for life forms practising nudity.}
heathen pagans, rock chicks, dope-addled fornicators, masturbators, egg layers, music lovers and peaceniks!” in an effort to show them the mercy and wisdom of his ways and demonstrate by way of example how a cultured gentleman might comport himself in situations requiring diplomacy.

Unfortunately, due to his poor eyesight, Mael (who later styled himself as the “Holy Mael” or the “Venerable Mael” was unable to tell a Penguin from an elephant seal, the later being several times larger than a Penguin and directly in the line of fire.

The particular elephant seal being strafed (over time, allowing for the laborious process of reloading, tamping, recharging and firing) was quite enjoying the attention as it rather resembled a premium class body scrub, dislodging barnacles from its hide, relieving the epidermis from these crustaceous marine encumbrances.

The remaining nudists paid no attention to the man with the musket, and neither shall we, for now we turn our attention to the happy people who lived here.

37 Penguins.
38 Penguins.
39 Penguins.
on the Island, without a care or a shred of clothing. How did they come to be here, far from the reach of civilisation (until now) and free from the oppression of such sanctimonious fools as the Holy Mael and his kind, who would rather see you dead than undressed?

Which brings us to the leader of these people, Babus Moer, and his perilous journey to the promised land.

“COME HERE AND SCRATCH MY BACK, CUMMERBATCH, THESE BARNACLES ARE MAKING ME ITCH!”

KING PENGUINS AND SOUTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL AT SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND. PHOTOGRAPHED BY BROCKEN INAGLORY IN JANUARY, 1999.
The History

Part of the first part: The Beginnings (so to speak)

It must be said at this point that everything preceding it has been a preamble in one way or another, and this is where this book really starts. It also has to be confessed that everything from here on is obfuscation, falsehoods, red herrings, decits, conceits and misdirection. On the other hand we will do our best to explain things very clearly.

It is all very simple. There are two main characters, the Holy, or Venerable or just “Mael”, and another being referred to simply as “Babus Moer”, neither of which are Penguins, but both of whom claim to have either discovered (or created) the Penguins. Their evidence for this is a single history, which you are now reading. It seems, therefore, they are both claiming authorship for this book.
This is so absurd a proposition we can dismiss it out of hand, because, as you very well know, we wrote this book. In fact we are writing it now, at the instant these words appear, which of course must have happened well before now, because a lot of time has to pass while the rest of the book is written, then while it makes its way through the internecine chaplaincy of the publishing industry, to a bookshop, and then into your shopping bag and finally open at this page illuminated by a keroseen lantern hung from a reindeer’s antler mounted on the wall of your hut, while icy gales howl outside. But in the sense that we are reading these words as we write them, it is right now.

Neither Mael nor Babus Moer can have written our book, nor we theirs, precisely because ours is the only Penguin history in existence, and while Mael and Moer are in our book, and might be referred to as authors, or historians (for the sake of concocting a credible history with a genuine basis in fact, rather than being accused of just making the whole thing up) they can be considered convenient, nothing more. A couple of pegs to hang a patchwork duffel coat on, that’s all.

One can’t help noticing the page opposite has no footnotes. Can this be right?
But before we sketch these two characters onto this ever-changing canvas of pixels, let’s just clear up a few details.

It has been suggested the Venerable Mael and Babus Moer were infinitively split at birth and represent two sides of the one being, doomed to be in eternal opposition, rather in the manner of Darwin vs Paley\(^{40}\) or Pinker vs the Nurturists. As plausible as this may seem, it isn’t. It simply doesn’t correspond to any facts or even make sense. For one thing Mael rode a motorcycle\(^{41}\) and Babus Moer did not. Furthermore (no homophobia intended) Babus Moer has no one-word anagrams. Unfortunately for this distinction, neither does Holy Mael. On the other hand “Llama Be Veneer” is an anagram for Venerable Mael, which surely must count for something. And so is “Blame Raven Lee”, an intoxicating prospect, to say the least.

\(^{40}\) or his devil spawn Louis Agassiz

\(^{41}\) This will be revealed in the following pages, which we have already read, but you haven’t. Sorry about that.