

So why does a reader, no matter how sympathetic or how kindred a spirit, find one's attention flagging and enthusiasm dampened by tedium? Stuart Kelly is an addict, and he administers an overdose.

The first manifestation of his affliction hit early. While still a beginning reader, he felt compelled to possess complete sets of books: first the Mr. Men series of children's books, followed by Dr. Who novelizations, and, as he approached his teens, Agatha Christie in uniform-edition paperbacks. Progressing to the classics, he made his horrifying discovery that he could never own some complete sets, that 73 of Aeschylus's 80 plays were irretrievably lost.

Thus at the age of fifteen he started compiling a List of Lost Books. "This," he writes, "would be of the impossible and the unknowable, of books that I would never be able to find, let alone read." Eighteen years later his list grew into this book. He is still only 34. The list could continue into sequels ad infinitum. One must be grateful, for his sake, that he was able to bring the book to fruition, rather than allowing it to stray into a more and more complicated and less and less publishable *Key to All Lost Books*, like Mr. Casaubon's imaginary unwritten masterpiece.

As it is, he lists more than eighty authors and their lost, unfinished, unstarted or illegible books, working chronologically from Homer's *Expedition of Amphiarus* to Georges Perec's *Beds I Have Slept In*. But his obsession does not extend to uniformity of format, so the entries vary in length and are subject to attacks of digression. And there are too many of them.

Besides the more esoteric projected works, the likes of Widsith the Wide-Travelled, Ihara Saikaku and Franz Kafka, he includes most of the expected losses, like Shakespeare's rumoured unknown plays or the conclusion of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, but not, although he mentions Aristotle frequently in relation to other authors, the Comedy section of the *Poetics*. Perhaps he feels this has been adequately covered by Umberto Eco. He is oddly irritated by Coleridge's opium habit, which he blames more than the Person from Porlock for the allegedly incomplete poems. Yet he relishes the "drug-addled hallucinations" of William S. Burroughs. In short, Kelly exercises his right to pick favourites.

As will his readers. My own is the exciting tale of the loss after Dante's death of his as yet unpublished *Paradiso*. The frantic efforts of his sons to reconstruct it according to his compositional, numeric and cosmological rules will strike a chord, greatly magnified, in anyone who has inadvertently struck the "delete" button on their keyboard. Its miracu-

lous recovery is achieved under the guidance of Dante's ghost, like a celestial nerd. This is one of the few entries with a happy ending.

I truly lament the non-existence of *Literature and Export Trade*, by T.S. Eliot.

The Book of Lost Books is self-indulgent and opinionated, often funny and provocative. It comes handsomely bound and jacketed, and the witty iconic drawings by Andrzej Krauze, whose cartoons appear frequently in the *Guardian Weekly*, are worth the price on their own.

Phyllis Reeve lives on the eponymous island of Malcolm Lowry's unfinished novel October Ferry to Gabriola.

REVIEW

Penguin by Design: A Cover Story, 1935–2005

By Phil Baines (Penguin Books/Allen Lane, 2005, \$35). Reviewed by Peter Mitham

Paperbacks are workhorses, whether for the publishers who print them by the millions for mass-market distribution or for the reader needing a reliable but cheap copy of a text for study or leisure reading. Whatever the audience, they've made texts available that otherwise might have been more expensive than the reader considered reasonable.

My own collection of books, the best of which I consider aesthetically pleasing but functional rather than collectable, has many paperbacks. A worn copy of William Cobbett's *Rural Rides*, acquired in exchange for some books I no longer wanted, accompanied me through the Baltic states. Wickham Steed's wonderfully opinionated yet hugely instructive *The Press*, for all its unassuming presentation, was a benchmark in my education as a writer for newspapers. And, of course, there are the stacks of books from my student days, with their uniform black spines topped with a band of purple, yellow or red, indicating their place as classics of Greek and Roman, European or English literature. And all of them Penguins.

Graphic designer Phil Baines' history of Penguin Books goes a long way towards explaining how these books worked their way into my collection, claiming my affections as much for their appearance as their content. Baines chronicles the development of Penguin through the evolution of the covers of its books, a tack that highlights the market pressures influencing the business of twentieth-century publishing as well as the designers whose work gave Penguins a popular resonance. Their popular appeal helped the Penguin list set the

tone for quality paperback publishing from its inception in 1935.

Baines offers five chapters long on illustrations and short on text. The weltering array of covers reproduced in each offers a brief panorama of the hundreds of Penguin (and Puffin, Pelican, Kestrel, Ptarmigan, Peregrine and Peacock) titles released by the press that have become part of popular consciousness.

Those of us seduced by the order Jan Tschichold and his successor Hans Schmoller brought to the design of Penguin titles following the Second World War, an order latent in the earliest Penguin titles, have a feast for our eyes in the illustrations. Though Baines' text is wonderfully illuminative, packed with information regarding the circumstances of the covers' production, it's as hard to draw one's eyes from the illustrations as it is not to admire a run of Penguins on one's bookshelf. The difference being that *Penguin by Design* offers a greater run than any one bookshelf can hold. This works to provide a fluid visual narrative of the development of the covers' design.

Yet the illustrations don't stand alone. They reflect Baines' commentary and achieve the effect of which Penguin designer Germano Facetti believed them capable when he joined the press in the early 1960s. Describing the potential of well-designed covers, Facetti said they should resonate with a readership increasingly attuned to cinematic images, be "easily memorized, and...have—when books are displayed in large numbers—a cumulative effect."

The design of *Penguin by Design* tips the proverbial hat to that achievement, the front cover employing the tripartite grid and quartic from the original Penguins. The spines of dozens of Penguins make up each coloured band, illustrating the cumulative effect Facetti desired.

Baines' commentary is occasionally too straightforward, understandable given the depth of detail he presents in such a limited space. Indeed, his narrative does well to weave together enough salient details to make this as much of a tribute to seventy years of Penguin as an instructive encapsulation of what made its designs tick.

The least favourable aspect of the book is the use of light-orange type for the notes placed in the margins of the chapters. A clever device, the light colour could make the reference numbers, if not the text of the notes itself, difficult to read for those with weak eyes.

With the heart of the book being its illustrations, however, there is much else to draw the eyes, and the commentary that accompanies each page of

illustrations will ensure that this book is more than a nostalgic glance back at Penguin's history.

Peter Mitham is a journalist and the author of Robert W. Service: A Bibliography.

REVIEW

Library of Novelty

By Chris Ware (Pantheon, 2005, \$40).

Reviewed by Rollin Milroy

Despite the fact that none of his stories have been made into movies (and probably never will be), Chris Ware has become one of the most influential English-language comics artists in the last decade. Outside comicdom he probably is best known for the existential *Jimmy Corrigan* graphic novel (released by Pantheon in 2000 and into its sixth printing at last count) and as guest editor of *McSweeney's* comics issue, in 2004.

To get a sense of Ware's appeal as one of the few artists to reach readers beyond the comics ghetto, look at how his publisher indulged him on pages 4 and 5 of this new collection: a celestial chart which, reading late one night in a dimly lit library, I discovered is overprinted in

luminescent ink, creating a beautiful glow rising up from the pages. This exemplifies the success of *Library of Novelty*, which is one of craftsmanship and production. It is a beautiful book. Ware's drafting is meticulous, his pages dense with detail and rich colour. He does not



strive for an aesthetic outside comic conventions, but he has established a unique style within those conventions. Unlike the majority of people working in the field, Ware's visual storytelling is strong enough to tell engaging, extended stories without any words at all. And he has a sense of history for the graphic arts: one of the lesser strips in the collection, "The Letterer," culminates with the aging craftsman discovering on a bag of chips his handwork usurped by "insolent little computer hobbyists who don't know a gad-damned thing about ascenders and descenders!"

Reading the stories in this latest collection, however, it is quickly apparent that Ware's influence has been predominantly graphic (and rightly so); the stories he tells don't stray from the themes