

The History Worker

Jenny Drai



Black
Lawrence
Press

CONTENTS

<i>reader, a frame</i>	I
<i>First Glance</i>	6
<i>Hearst Castle Lullaby</i>	9
<i>The History of Character</i>	12
<i>The History Worker</i>	19
<i>Hearst Castle Lullaby II</i>	20
<i>Hearst Castle Notebook I [San Luis Obispo Mission Aside]</i>	21
<i>Chumash Highway Daydream</i>	22
<i>Hearst Castle Notebook II</i>	26
<i>The History Worker</i>	27
<i>by the book [1]</i>	28
<i>by the book [2]</i>	31
<i>The Discovery of America</i>	32
<i>Other Countried [for C]</i>	37
<i>The History Worker</i>	39
<i>The Objection of History</i>	40
<i>by the book [3]</i>	42
<i>by the book [4]</i>	44
<i>by the book [5]</i>	47
<i>The History Worker</i>	48
<i>Close the Book. Listen.</i>	58
 <i>Acknowledgments</i>	 59

reader, a frame

George Hearst lived from 1820 to 1891 and struck it rich on silver mining. His only child, the newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst (W.R.H.), lived from 1863 to 1951. Moorish stars have eight points and decorate many of the medieval Spanish ceilings of W.R.H.'s Hearst Castle, now a California state park. (As a rule, the building contains artifacts—everything from furniture to fireplaces—obtained from the grand old houses of Europe, purchased after WWI when Europeans needed cash to rebuild.) Hearst Castle stands on land originally purchased by George Hearst in 1863. In its heyday, the castle included a zoo.

The Chumash are the people native to San Luis Obispo County in California, where Hearst Castle is located.

Bleuets is French for blueberries and is often printed on the grocery store label of that food product.

A *fata morgana* is a mirage of the appearance of water (although this usually refers to a vision of water in the desert).

The Plantagenet dynasty takes its name from the Latin for the common broom plant. (I was raised on stories of English history, not tales from this country's western expansion, and the personage

of the historical Richard III was my first introduction to what might be termed ‘the complexities of human character,’ a theme I would return to as I considered various character assessments of George and W.R. Hearst.)

Hearst Castle includes two magnificent swimming pools, the outdoor Neptune pool and an indoor pool modeled after a Roman bath.

Deadwood aired for three seasons on HBO from 2004 to 2006 and includes a highly unflattering characterization of George Hearst. In that television program, Al Swearengen is the name of the fictionalized real-life saloon owner who carries out a murder at Hearst’s behest and Seth Bullock is the town sheriff, also a real-life character, albeit in the series something of a tortured soul.

Legend has it that Richard III fought bravely until his end at Bosworth Field where Shakespeare has him cry, “A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!”

Marion Davies, a silver screen comedienne in her own right and the girlfriend of W.R.H., lived from 1897 to 1961. Upon his death, she returned to his family the sizable share in his company that he had left her.

Richard III is the hero of several novels. Anne Neville was his wife.

Titus Flavius Josephus is the name of a Jewish historian who was born roughly in year 37 of the Christian era and who wrote of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth by the occupying Romans. As a young child in parochial school, I first turned to my father's set of the 11-volume *The Story of Civilization* (Volume II, *Caesar and Christ*) to bridge religious insistence with some notion of historical possibility.

The Story of Civilization covers western history for the layperson and was published between 1935 and 1975, written by Will and Ariel Durant.

Indian casinos, like all casinos, include slot machines. Tribes pay revenue on what they earn from gaming and have to negotiate with states to open casinos.

In discussing whether or not alien life forms visiting our planet would be friendly, Steven Hawking has said, "If aliens ever visit us, I think the outcome would be much as when Christopher Columbus first landed in America, which didn't turn out very well for the Native Americans." (Huffington Post, updated 3/23/11.)

Columbus arrived in the Americas on October 12, 1492.

The Vikings arrived in the Americas as early as the 900s (and referred to the native people as 'Skraelings'—in modern Icelandic this word means 'barbarian' or 'foreigner.')

The *Star Trek* franchise presents an idealized and mostly enlightened view of a possible future in which Earthlings interact with alien life forms from other planets. *Falling Skies* aired from 2011 to 2015 and presents a decidedly bleaker view of what might happen if aliens came to Earth. The show makes repeated allusions to the American Revolution and in the end, with the help of some friendly aliens, the citizens of Earth defeat their alien overlords. *V*, (where “V” is for “Visitors”) has been broadcast in many iterations over the years and involves reptilian aliens in human skin suits.

The “Trail of Tears” refers to the forced relocation of certain Native tribes in 1838 from their ancestral lands to Indian Territory.

Arad, from where my paternal grandfather’s family emigrated, is a city in Romania. My mother’s family comes from various regions in Germany. Prussia is in northeast Germany, Swabia in the south.

The Romanian Revolution took place in December of 1989 and resulted in the overthrow and death by firing squad of the Communist despot Nicolae Ceaușescu (referred to as Nicolae Caligula in the poem) and his wife Elena. Cluj is a city in Romania.

On the day after 9/11, the headline of the French newspaper *Le Monde* translated as “We Are All Americans Now.”

Poulet is French for chicken.

Edward was the son of Richard III and Anne Neville. He died young, predeceasing his parents. The Woodville faction refers to the family of Elizabeth Woodville, the wife of Richard's older brother Edward IV, the father of the two princes in the tower.

The opening paragraphs of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, usually dated to the early 1200s, include a description of the moral character of man as mixed as the plumage of a magpie. A magpie has both black and white feathers.

Centurion is a 2010 film that depicts the Roman occupation of Britain. The film portrays native Britons defending their homeland and attempts to explain the fabled disappearance of Rome's ninth legion.

The artifact, this mind, pushes through.

[2.]

shell bead money ‘discovery’
Conquistadores and smallpox
 the blazing state
 golden sun bleaching
those loping swaying
windswept grasses
the land as palimpsest
[descriptions written over their own blood]
[Tears for Fears at the Chumash Casino]
George Hearst’s head of acreage
 cattle grazing
William Randolph’s ‘I would like
to build a little something’
have built have bitten
 off the alphabet of Amazing to record
a previous place’s tyranny of provenance

[3.]

hadn't thought of breakfast

all these books

toast not egg

later was hungry wanted porridge

served in vaulted rooms

the container of a deceased man's intellect

the vault is air in the predilection of memory

all sealed up and let out yes, please I touch

museum artifact alarm-wired carpet

not with fingers but with two blue

eyes is written

therein being reversal

revision dearth alteration

gilt-books

pages lining a study

wanted porridge in that study with *bleuets*

stirred into warm oat

Hearst Castle Lullaby

[1.]

had swum
had toweled off
like reading love
under an oaken tree
songs of Provençal
then squabbling because the chicken
breasts had not been thawed
of their ice raiment

[3.]

the cold blue surface
had swum had toweled off
[saying 'that' already]
to dismantle what's personal
magnified dismantled broken through
[lost glass that one could gather precipitous]
above beyond below
 cavernous prepositions

*and then I
closed my eyes, lay
me down*