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More on Gebser from Stephen Hanan

Hello Alan, A week ago I purchased, and received, Jean Gebser's *Ever Present Origin*. It set off a flurry of internal realisations and reconstitutions which the notes below attempt to sum up. I was alerted to the book by yourself in the last newsletter. Here are my notes, my 6 August entry in my personal *Mindset Training* monthly journal.

The mind itself is going through an accelerated understanding now that it has grasped the core underlying reality, that its consciousness of itself is situated within itself.

The mind has the ability and the capacity now to sit within itself on a central foundation. Gebser's identification of the ever-present origin, a single point within the mind, as a mind state in and of itself, original mind and original feeling, that which is felt directly, and received directly, can be put into practice by the individual mind. It has been given intellectual approval by the mind. The mind immediately recognises it as a breakthrough centralising conception, and as soon as it goes there, everything else starts to fall into line.

The shift represents a break from structuralism. Structuralism led it to this point, and now it is no longer necessary as a filter, a bridge, a protection, because everything on the outside has been

subsumed to the inside. The dissociated mind is no longer “thinking” in projected and dissociated ways but has crossed over and is now receiving its thinking from its internal aspects and transmissions from its own mind, its brain, its being nature, its feeling nature. All this is now open to it.

In direction the flow of transmission has turned around.

The mind is no longer split, with parts of it unconscious to the other, or in the middle, the dissociated state. Like a telescope going in and out of focus it is now able, itself, to move towards, be in, that central spot. That central spot moves around in its new world. Everything is in there now, and it can move to many vantage points itself, and this leads to a greater tolerance of external aspects and minds, which unlike internal aspects, are separate things in and of themselves (unless enmeshed, entangled, co-dependent which with people is usually the case).

So, individuation and independence of mind become important things to the mind if it is going to expand, deepen, and develop its abilities and capacities.

What I am struck with is that “spirit” and the spiritual traditions no longer seem important now that I am here. These things are crucial and hoped for cross-over points for those who study and embrace the idea of an integral mind and worldview (Wilber, Gebser), an integral Yoga (Aurobindo), integrated social life and governance, and universalism more generally (I include myself here of course).

Why is that? I think they are subsumed within a higher power within, the god conception, which when found in the mind is intensely materialistic, and so these religious and spiritual forms disappear or dissolve into their earthly representations and no longer need a separate projected existence to sustain them.

Therefore, the god conception, materialised and individualised, becomes the field of the mind itself, and redemption of all its parts occurs within the mind, which allows unity and centralising to take place, and a more stable foundation for central existence in the mind itself. This emerging central conception takes into itself the separate knowledges and conceptions of the brain, the being and energetic system, the body itself and its feeling nature, and makes them one, and in so doing, also incorporates into itself all knowledge, traditions, enquiries and the like flowing from the previously separated state that these parts of us found themselves in, that is all human knowledge. All this is now available to it.

Gebser introduces the conception of structures of mind consciousness. Moreover, he identifies definite evolutionary categories of these structures, from the archaic to the integral (in the process of formation). I would add to this that these structures of mind consciousness are the ways and methods that the human mind and the human brain uses in its eternal quest to know itself, and know itself better, in a deeper, wider way, and in more detail, ever going into things, deeper and deeper.

Thus, these structures of mind consciousness are produced by the brain and held in place by the mind and self (also a social self). Wilber’s holons within holons perspective is important here as

in this process nothing is necessarily lost. This however is an abstract or theoretical view or way of looking at it. In real life the law of combined and uneven development applies. All structures of mind consciousness were, and remain, important, and their place in things is dependent on many other different inputs.

From outside the mind the dissociated self tries to establish all sorts of rules, prohibitions, set and fixed patterns, which it hopes will corral unruly reality into something more manageable, leading to “happiness” and contentment. It has become estranged from its own internal source of life, and wants to use that internal force, that internal life energy, for its own separate ends. Thus, the rules spoken of above.

The dissociated self takes the internal realisations, recognitions and the like that have been experienced by others who have experienced these realisations, recognitions and the like, and attempts to apply them from the outside. This does not work. It ends up in moralism, political “correctness”, symbolism, posturing, virtue-signalling, all signs that it remains outside its own central power and intelligence.

“Spirit” remains but is no longer a separate thing but is returned to its material expressions in the human being, its energy and its natures, and as an overall expression, the inner nature, and is a synonym for them, the inner human nature of the particular human being involved.

Stephen Haran

Three Questions and an Answer from Alan Mann

On the 25th of July 2022 I was overtaken by ‘answer’ as I walked along Archer Street after posting a letter, it was a bright sunny morning. The answer came, as it usually does, as a sense of understanding rather than some verbal explanation. And the reason for that, of course, is that it is beyond words and can only come as this overwhelming feeling of understanding

The Questions

I decided to chart my journey on the basis of three key questions that have sustained my interest in NOWletter matters over the past forty years. Here they are:

Are you not drawn to some great thing? Thomas Traherne 17th Cent. Poet, cleric.

Everyone who has crossed paths with the NOWletter will have experienced a sense that things are not quite right, or that there is something missing or overlooked. This usually results in seeking out people who claim to have the answer to this question, adopting a ‘path’, attending satsangs, and trying out various meditation techniques. I subscribed to some of these options and, in particular, the teachings of J. Krishnamurti, who amongst many other hints to his listeners put the next question.

Is there a field which is uncontaminated by the known?

Jiddu Krishnamurti Contemporary Indian sage.

My answer to his question was “I don’t know”. However, I had at the time some experiences which, although they didn’t provide an answer to the question, indicated that he was on to something and furthermore that the ‘something’ was what I was seeking. I listened to Krishnamurti for years and he regularly came up with observations which I subsequently realised were from a perspective which no longer suffered from the perennial problem of ‘the not quite right’.

What’s wrong with right now? Bob Adamson - Retired Australian sailor

Bob’s question can be interpreted as a challenge to anyone who is unable to see that there is nothing wrong with ‘right now’. On the other hand, it can be taken to mean that there is something wrong and what could that be? I think that both to answer ‘yes’ and to answer ‘no’ are correct. But then I have to explain how it can be both right and wrong.

The Answer

To be and not to be—that is the answer.

Douglas Harding — Architect-Philosopher

In the mid-eighties I read ‘The Mind’s Eye’ a book by Hofstadter and Dennett. It included an article entitled ‘*On having no Head*’ by Douglas Harding. The two authors of the book dismissed it as childishly solipsistic. However, although I didn’t really ‘get it’ Harding’s message resonated. In 1991 he came to Australia. I attended a lecture he gave in Sydney. At his talk Harding ran us through one of his experiments, the pointing finger experiment. In doing the experiment, and relying strictly on what is directly experienced, the answer to the three questions becomes apparent.

Comment

So, what is the answer? The answer lies in experience and not in words, so I have to be it. The experiments reveal the overlooked aspect, that what I’m looking for is what I’m looking out of, and paradoxically, what I’m almost always overlooking. This aware space is ‘self-free yet me includes’. It is not a matter of finding something missing but of rediscovering something ever-present but which I almost continually overlook.

I came across a very helpful version of this when listening to Arthur C Brooks in a Sam Harris interview.

The Indians talk about Atman, and the best way of thinking about this in the Western tradition is that there is a difference between I and me so the ‘I’ is an observer of the world ‘me’ is an understanding of myself reflected through what Sam Harris thinks of me right now and most people are all ‘me’ and no ‘I’. Atman is the ultimate I, the Hindus believe that only Atman can be in communion with Brahman which is the godhead — you can only really have a full communion with the universality of the true nature of things when you’re just observing as opposed to understanding yourself in the reflection of what everybody else thinks.

I was particularly interested in this explanation as my initial investigation of this subject was prompted by a question about Atman and Brahman. The I -Me duality pops up almost everywhere you look. For example Nisargadatta’s “Wisdom tells me I am nothing, Love tells me I am

everything. Between the two my life swings". I think that unless this fundamental duality of being is realised all talk of non-duality is pointless.

Alan Mann

The Diagram

A friend asks - does your model, your understanding of the inner process, have a place for the Self, and the self, and how would you precisely describe it both experientially, and objectively?

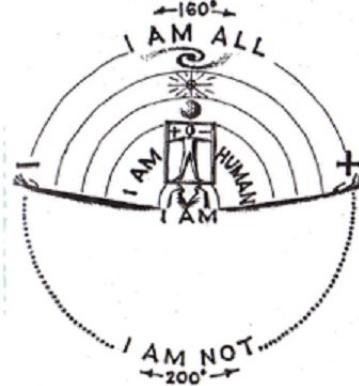


Diagram No. 34

There are so many ways of speaking about this. Douglas Harding has written a lot about it but, in my opinion, his key contribution is his discovery of a means of directly experiencing what the traditions, gurus, some philosophers are trying to convey in words. This is his diagram, a drawing, we could consider it a halfway house between the saying of 'what is' and the seeing of 'what is'.

The diagram shows that the self is included in the SELF. I recall Harding saying on one occasion, in response to someone who had just claimed there is no self, *Oh surely not! I'm very fond of little Douglas*. The Harding revelation doesn't exclude the individual but redefines it as an aspect of the undivided rather than as an individual entity. A shift of identity. That I think, is Gebser's aperspectival. Harding does not deny the everyday duality of the two perspectives which he describes as third person perspective (The individual) and first-person perspective (The undivided).

One of my favourite quotations is Fa Chang's "There is just this — and nothing else". Sounds almost as absurd as headlessness but worth unpicking.

Alan Mann

Dark Secrets of World War II - Trisha English, WA

After the defeat of Germany in World War II a collection of eminent historians such as A.J.P. Taylor, Alan Bullock, Hugh Trevor Roper and William L. Shirer set about researching and publishing their views about the causes of the war, the course of the war itself, and how it impacted the world as a whole. These authors were witnesses to the rise and fall of Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany after World War 1 and their accounts became the foundation stone on which later interpretations were formulated.

But as time passed, more and more documents came to light which revealed the complexity and difficulty of accounting for the war in a straight forward narrative. Nazi Germany had many dark secrets which were not immediately accessible to the general reader. Some of these facts were off limits because they remained classified material held by the victorious Allies. Some of them were dismissed as fanciful and not real history, such as the occult influences which permeated the upper echelons of the Third Reich. One of the difficulties was that many scholars were not comfortable interpreting the material and some felt that the material did not stand up to historical scrutiny.

The well-worn path of interpretation included many causes of World War II such as the Versailles Treaty which was vindictive and punitive in the extreme. It was designed to make Germany pay for World War 1 economically, socially and politically. It brings to mind the comment of the famous essayist Francis Bacon who wrote: "Revenge harmeth the doer...". Such a view must have appealed to the great economist Maynard Keynes, because he thought that the representatives of the victorious nations at Versailles were a bunch of posturing dopes. Certainly Woodrow Wilson gave this impression.

Other causes included the breakdown of society and the Great Depression. Germany suffered greatly as a result of the Depression and inflation was so out of control that millions were out of work, angry and depressed without hope of rescue and with no future. Hitler was the answer. He was strong and determined, and his rise to power was gradual and within the limits of German precedents. Even though he served time in a German prison, where he wrote his manifesto *Mein Kampf* the capitalist forces preferred his vision of the future to that of the communists. He promised the German people that he would restore Germany to greatness.

At this particular time in history technology was in its infancy. Wireless had only been recently invented and became the single source of information along with newspapers. The media was not all pervasive as it is today. Authoritarian rulers knew instinctively, then, as now, that if you want to control the people, you have to control the media. This is demonstrated today in countries like Russia, China and North Korea, as well as many other countries, where information is restricted and heavily censored.

In Nazi Germany, the rise of outstanding orators, like Hitler and Goebbels, were able to dominate the political scene. They were able to fashion public opinion to an incredible degree. Even today, the famous Nazi propaganda film of Leni Riefenstahl, "Triumph of the Will" still stirs the emotions of those who watch it. Though now outdated, it is still available on the internet. Mind you, to the modern generation it may compare unfavourably to Star Wars, but nevertheless it remains important to others who claim that history has a tendency to repeat itself if the past is not understood.

Today, Hitler is regarded by many as a raving nutcase - a right wing fanatic who blamed the misfortunes of the German people on the Jews who he characterised as rich and successful, powerful and devious. Envy is part of human consciousness, or so it seems. Racial hatred and discrimination can hide itself in many narratives past and present. Winston Churchill is a good example. He regarded Hitler as beneath contempt, and even in public speeches would refer to him as "corporal Hitler", reminding people that he was not a commissioned officer but an upstart not worthy of any recognition especially by people of the ruling class in Britain of which Churchill

was a prominent, if egotistical, representative. This elitist tendency in Churchill can be seen in his treatment of Gandhi as a half naked *kafir* and the Indian people as not competent to rule themselves. In many ways it can be seen that Churchill's contempt for perceived lesser beings, was similar to Hitler's contempt for the Jews.

As time goes by, and as more and more documents and information enters the public domain, historians have turned their attention to other contributing factors that account for the rise of the Third Reich. This has given ascent to the strident views of academics who either support the occult influences in the Nazi Party, or dismiss them entirely as "pseudo science" and not worthy of genuine study and investigation. Michael Fitzgerald puts it this way:

"When the Third Reich was no more than a smouldering ruin, the Allied conquerors took a number of statements from Nazi Party members and discovered many documents about the way in which a range of occult notions had come to dominate the thinking of the most powerful leaders within Germany. They were so astonished by what they discovered that the evidence was deliberately suppressed at the Nuremberg Trials for fear that it would allow the defence lawyers to plead insanity on behalf of their clients".

The purpose of this article is to give a brief overview of some of these dark influences, and to suggest further reading matter for people who might be interested in understanding one of the most dynamic and extraordinary happenings of the 20th century.

From the age of about 19 until he became German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler was influenced by many people who had connections with occult beliefs. This is not surprising, when one considers that occult beliefs were widely accepted by many distinguished people who were disillusioned with orthodoxy. In this context the word occult simply refers to secret teachings.

In England for example, the Theosophical Society, under the leadership of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, proclaimed that Madame Blavatsky's prediction of a World Messiah had come true with the discovery of J. Krishnamurti, a young Indian boy. In Germany, occult belief was also alive and well in such organisations as Anthroposophy, founded by Rudolf Steiner who broke away from the Theosophical group when it proclaimed an Indian World Messiah had been found. Steiner was a mystic, a Christian believer who was reported to be clairvoyant, and such a proclamation was not to be countenanced. This was also a period when Gurdjieff and Ouspensky rose to prominence although Gurdjieff had a special relationship with Steiner and adopted many of his spiritual ideas, Ouspensky went his own way.

During this period between the end of World War 1 and 1933 Hitler counted among his friends many who had strong connections with occult groups such as the Thule Society, the Armanen Order and the Vril Society. According to some writers, Gottfried Feder, Dietrich Eckart and Alfred Rosenberg proved decisive in transforming Hitler into the future leader of Germany. Eckart for example believed he was in contact with secret chiefs, mysterious beings who were thought to reside in Tibet. These chiefs bear a remarkable resemblance to Blavatsky's "Masters" who were regarded as the spiritual beings who guided the Theosophists, and controlled Krishnamurti's destiny. Throughout his life, Krishnamurti held ambiguous views about these Masters. Hitler and Krishnamurti held one thing in common, and that was the way they approached public speaking.

Hitler raged and shouted, Krishnamurti was quiet and forceful, but they both utilised the technique of pausing until the audience gave them undivided attention. Both were regarded by their followers as divinely chosen for a unique mission in life.

It was Alfred Rosenberg, who was regarded as the Nazi Party Ideologist. He was obsessed with anti-Semitism, anti-Communism, anti-Capitalism, anti-Freemasonry and anti-Christianity. However, it was Eckart who invited Hitler to join the Vril Society, and it was out of the occult beliefs of the Vril society that Hitler began to develop into the confident powerful speaker he became. Later members of the society included Hess, Goering and Himmler. It was Himmler who was perhaps most influenced by the claims of the Vril society concerning Atlantis and the origins of the Aryan race which was destined to rule the world.

Vril power is said to be akin to Indian *prana*, meaning life force, which could be controlled and directed as a kind of magnetism to acquire spiritual enlightenment. According to Michael Fitzgerald, “the adoption by Hitler of the ancient swastika has an extensive history. It was used at least 5,000 years before Adolf Hitler designed the Nazi flag. The word swastika comes from the Sanskrit svastika, which means “good fortune” or “well-being.” The motif (a hooked cross) appears to have first been used in Neolithic Eurasia, perhaps representing the movement of the sun through the sky. To this day it is a sacred symbol in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Odinism. It is a common sight on temples and houses in India.”

The Thule Society influences can be found in the very beginnings of Nazism. Many members of the Vril Society were also members of the Thule Society. It was an amalgamation of occultists whose beliefs centred on the coming of a “German Messiah” who would restore Germany to its former glory after the humiliating defeat in World War 1. Adolf Hitler fitted the bill in every respect. Himmler was perhaps the most ardent follower of the occult, and he established its headquarters in Wewelsburg castle. Heinrich Himmler’s Ahnenerbe was an SS department devoted to researching the alleged Aryan origins of the German people but mainstream historians are ambivalent as to its influence on the Nazi Party as a whole. Nevertheless, Hugh Trevor-Roper and Alan Bullock, serious major historians, were convinced that occult ideas and practices played a significant part in the beliefs of the Third Reich.

Unhappily, Hitler and his inner circle, believed in the superiority of the German Race and would use any racial theory to support their claims. Hitler’s hatred of the Jews was not his conviction alone. Germans had a long history of anti-Semitism and it did not take long for them to accept Hitler’s views that Jews should be exterminated in order to preserve the purity of the race. Furthermore, the Nazi belief in “race science” led to selective breeding programmes and the practice of “eugenics”- the murder of inferior beings including the physically and mentally impaired. Only the white races were considered to be “the fittest” in the first place and capable of acquiring qualities such as courage, competitiveness and self-assertion. Inferior types tended to be altruistic, and also biologically undesirable because they fostered compassion and compromise. Perhaps this explains in part how Germans could police the concentration camps without being overwhelmed by the agonising destruction of human life.

Apparently, Hitler was not the only one to dabble in occult belief. Fitzgerald (p.228) claims that Winston Churchill was involved with occultism to a greater degree than is generally known. He

writes that “Churchill was a Druid who was initiated into the Albion Lodge of the Ancient Order of Druids at Blenheim on 15th April 1908. According to Dennis Wheatley (who worked for British Intelligence during the war) Churchill was also a member of the *illuminati*, perhaps the most famous secret society of all time”. If this statement is true, then it only goes to show that belief systems operate in everyone, and no one can really know for certain the extent that beliefs in general determine human behaviour.

It is only in very recent days that the full extent of the negotiations between Pope Pius XII and the Germans has been revealed. Staunch Catholics argue that the Pope’s actions during the War were to safeguard the Church at any price. Apparently, there is evidence that the Pope did save a few Jews from extermination, but the Vatican also established the so-called “rat lines” by which many prominent Nazis evaded justice by escaping to countries such as Argentina.

It is not really possible to do justice to this topic in such a condensed form, but people who might like to take some of the ideas further could find value in Julian Strube’s “Nazism and the Occult” in Christopher Partridge, ed., *The Occult World* (Routledge, 2015 pp 336-47,) and Michael Fitzgerald “*The Nazis and the Supernatural*” Arcturus Publishing Ltd. 2020. I found the book *The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*, by Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad, especially the early chapters, to be of great value in understanding the authoritarian personality. There are numerous documentaries on Hitler and the Third Reich available on YouTube which reveal beyond any doubt or scepticism the adoration of the German people for their Fuhrer - at least while he embodied what they believed to be a pathway to peace and prosperity.

Similarly, there are documentaries about Winston Churchill which demonstrate his skill in marshalling the forces of the British Empire to defeat totalitarian regimes which threatened to overwhelm the free world at the time. The breadth and depth of occult influences on Churchill and Hitler may never be known, but occult knowledge seems to make people feel important and exceptional and capable of achieving extraordinary outcomes.

Trisha English

August Happenings

1. From Brentyn Ramm’s latest paper.

Abstract: Douglas Harding developed a unique first-person experimental approach for investigating consciousness that is still relatively unknown in academia. In this paper, I present a critical dialogue between Harding, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty on the phenomenology of the body and intersubjectivity. Like Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Harding observes that from the first-person perspective, I cannot see my own head. He points out that visually speaking nothing gets in the way of others. I am radically open to others and the world. Neither does my somatic experience establish a boundary between me and the world. Rather, to experience these sensations as part of a bounded, shaped thing (a body), already involves bringing in the perspectives of others. The reader is guided through a series of Harding’s first-person experiments to test these phenomenological claims for themselves. For Sartre, the other’s subjectivity is known through The Look, which makes me into a mere object for them. Merleau-Ponty criticised Sartre for making intersubjective relations primarily ones of conflict. Rather he held that the intentionality of my body is primordially interconnected with that of others’ bodies. We are already situated in a shared

social world. For Harding, like Sartre, my consciousness is a form of nothingness; however, in contrast to Sartre, it does not negate the world, but is absolutely united with it. Confrontation is a delusion that comes from imagining that I am behind a face. Rather in lived personal relationships, I become the other. I conclude by arguing that for Harding all self-awareness is a form of other-awareness, and vice versa.

Brentyn Ramm

Keywords: phenomenology; the body; the self; others; intersubjectivity; Douglas Harding; Jean-Paul Sartre; Maurice Merleau-Ponty

The complete article at: <https://daily-philosophy.com/brentyn-ramm-pure-awareness/>

2. Joan Tollifson & Sam Harris

I listened to Sam Harris's conversation with Joan Tollifson . Sam seemed to be pressing Joan for acknowledgement of pure consciousness as a necessary or worthwhile aim. Joan doesn't seem to be interested in that and sees it as a distraction from the necessary action. I understood her to be pointing to everyday consciousness, whether self-centred or self-free, apprehension of whatever is actually happening being the necessary response or what is required. Their exchange made me realise how important to realise the duality of life before getting caught up in a concept of non-duality. [Waking Up - The Pathless Path](#)

3. From Mal Mitchell

Recently thinking in terms of need for 'transapocalyptic' perspective, I looked the word up to see how others might have used it and came across this very resonant article by Alex Steffen: The Transapocalyptic Now - Recommended. [The Transapocalyptic Now - by Alex Steffen \(substack.com\)](#)

4. From Shawn Nevins

Shawn wrote to advise that the ABC interview of Wren-Lewis with Caroline Jones was posted to YouTube a few months ago. He suggested I add a notice of its availability to the Wren-Lewis references on the Capacitie website. I will do so. In the meantime, here is the link: <https://youtu.be/TDHsi-HOjQU>

Shawn also mentioned an interesting website which I have yet to explore and which includes his work: [Spiritual Teachers, Books, Movies, Articles and Inspiration](#)

5. From Jim Clatfelter

Jim has combined his 'poems as a PDF document to which I will add to the Harding page of Capacitie. Here is an extract from his introduction and a direct link, by way of this logo.



500 Poems by Jim
Clatfelter.pdf

555 Poems by Jim Clafelter —These poems were written between 1998 and 2022 as contributions to two different Internet conferences set up to discuss the writings and the headless seeing experiments of Douglas Harding. I find Harding's work to integrate seamlessly with the way of seeing and living expressed in Laozi's *Daodejing*. The poems will speak for themselves, but I think a brief accounting of the two haiku on the cover page might show how the poems are tied together.

The Events Manager, a story by Margot Mann

Lisa finished the last page of “Spanner in the Works”, tossed the Kindle on the floor and leaned back so that her head rested on the sofa. She had now read all the Emma Cassidy mysteries available and would have to wait three months before the next one in the series, “Up Against a Brick Wall” was released. She combed her long hair with her fingers and gazed out of the picture window. The grass needed mowing and yellow dandelion heads waved in the breeze but Lisa didn't register any of this because she was thinking about Emma Cassidy, the Events Manager and sometime detective in “Spanner in the Works” and the way she could handle any situation. That was her job as an Events Manager of course, but she even kept her cool when one of the guests vomited into a Waterford crystal bowl at a wedding reception she was managing. Lisa shuddered slightly at the memory of all the guests who became ill after eating passionfruit icecream laced with ground-up slug pellets. Emma knew straight away that someone was trying to sabotage her business.

Whoever it was, they were no match for Emma. She had earned the admiration of the wedding party by cleaning up all the mess herself and she had then gone on to discover who was responsible for the poisoning. Lisa was disappointed that Emma didn't get back together with her ex, Nelson Weingold, who was still in love with her, but she loved the way you could tell if the writer liked a character by the way they were dressed and the kinds of cars they drove. Emma herself drove an old Toyota which was always breaking down at crucial times. As well as helping the plot, this showed that Emma was a down-to-earth person with no airs and graces, who always did the right thing. Some of the rich people in the story wore a lot of gold jewellery and chiffon sheaths which followed the slim curves of their bodies and Lisa knew at once that they were suspicious characters - or at best untrustworthy. She didn't like Emma's current boyfriend, Brad, but had to admit he was good to Emma. He picked her up every time her car broke down or she ran out of petrol on a lonely stretch of road, but he wasn't nearly as good looking as Nelson Weingold.

Lisa sighed and wondered what problems Emma Cassidy, Events Manager, would be solving in the next novel in the series. She gazed out the window with unseeing eyes and wished that her life was as exciting as Emma's.

Jed was Lisa's boyfriend. He had promised he would drop by when he finished his mowing jobs, later in the afternoon. Whenever she thought of Jed she saw Nelson Weingold in her mind's eye - tall and dark with mysterious eyes. She and Jed had been going out together since high school, and as Lisa often told her friends, she knew him like the back of her hand. He was gentle and polite and worked for a landscape gardening company full time, including most weekends. She had to

admit she got sick of him talking about the tropical plants nursery he wanted to set up and lately he had been working longer weekend hours than usual. When Lisa complained that this cut down the time they could spend together, he had brushed her comments aside saying "think of the money we're saving." She supposed he would get over his tropical plants obsession and they would get married eventually but, as her parents pointed out whenever she showed signs of wanting to move out, there was plenty of time after they saved some money. Lisa secretly preferred living at home where everything was done for her, to moving into the kind of run-down premises that she and Jed could afford at this stage. She sighed again and let her mind drift down a familiar path as she imagined herself discussing wedding plans with Events Manager Emma Cassidy. Jed did not appear in any of these fantasies, although sometimes Nelson Weingold hovered in the background. Lisa remembered that Emma and Nelson had broken up because Emma spent too much time working, and she resolved not to pester Jed about spending more time together.

Jed spun the steering wheel of his shiny black pick-up with a practiced hand and put his foot on the accelerator. The vehicle instantly responded. Only one more lawn to mow, albeit a big one. The Browning's property stretched some way along the river bank and Jed always enjoyed sitting on the commercial mower and carefully winding his way around the trees and picnic tables. Mr. Browning usually met him back at the house with a bottle of beer. On rare occasions they even had a chat and drank beer together. Jed liked Mr. Browning, he didn't give himself airs just because he owned the most expensive property in town and he seemed interested when Jed talked about his ambition to set up a special botanical nursery for rare tropical plants.

He parked the pick-up in the shade near the shed which housed the various pieces of machinery required to maintain the Browning's property, and sent Lisa a quick text. The afternoon sun was casting shadows across the grass and a light breeze moved the leaves of old-established gums as Jed climbed onto the mower, clipped on his ear-protectors and started the motor. He loved days like this when he floated along, 'in the zone', automatically moving the machine unerringly around trees, flowerbeds and outdoor furniture while his mind roamed freely. Lisa wanted a big wedding with lots of bridesmaids and fancy food. She reads too many of those Emma Cassidy books, he thought glumly, swiftly turning the mower to avoid a large fallen branch. As the mower turned, Jed was tipped from his seat and struck his head against the trunk of a tree. He was killed instantly.

Everyone said Jed's funeral was beautiful – even Lisa had to agree that the celebrant was sympathetic and understanding. She reminded her of Emma Cassidy.

Margot Mann