

Thinking about the words we looked at last week - in connection with Benn's thoughts - I came across this in the New Yorker:

5 **"Authoritarian rule always entails corruption.** *With Donald Trump in office, watch your wallet.* "

I would also like to return to the subject of (politicians') surgeries : I remember Anke holding surgeries in my school. Perhaps she could tell us a bit - just so that we know in future.

10

National Gallery revamp :

What reasons do they give in the article for needing influencers:

- to make the gallery more appealing to young people (\$6)

- image is that collections are seen as stuffy and boring

15 - collections should be seen to be relevant

- do you know any influencers? Watch YouTube? (What comes up at the side?)

.....

Which galleries do you go to?

20 Why do you go there? Where do you get the information from that it could be worth your while? What is the average age of the people in museums you visit (tho others are, of course working when pensioners can go).

What kind of advertising is done by galleries in Berlin?

25 I was surprised how much was offer online!

What kind of advertising reaches you?

I heard that the tickets for the Vermeer exhibition in Amsterdam last year were sold out in days. Did you go?

30 Now it is the turn of Van Gogh? (National Gallery first - with or without influencers.) Film showing 'more' than the exhibition? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bm9xTF02LOI>

What kinds of entertainment have replaced going to museums?

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35 What do we hope for from 'culture' - including reading?

Now to the subject of reading: Why is reading still so controversial? Why ban books at all? (Look at the levels of the texts.)(Books considered bad for women in 19th c.)

40 I would (also) like to discuss how topical books can/should be for us to appreciate them. (BOOKER tonight) **If younger people don't read paper books what do they do instead?**

Second question about books: How can you explain that the sales of dystopian books have gone up so much since Trump was elected`?

In fact books about :

45 democracy, dystopia, tyranny, feminism and far-right politics!

Which (of these) do you know? (Handmaid's Tale, 1984. We read Animal Farm....)

Other kinds of books: Comfort read? Romance? Happy End?

50 Ali Smith set out to write four contemporary novels, 'state of the nation' novels. This is a well-known term in British literature. In German (lit)?
"A full-on State of the Nation novel is the kind of social panorama that takes in many levels of society and shows up social issues, a fiction that exposes social exploitation, like Dickens, or describes "The Way We Live Now," like Trollope's satire on corruption in
55 Victorian Britain.
A lot of fiction has a very narrow focus on the personal lives of the comfortably off, so fiction doesn't really have to be a "panorama" to get called "State of the Nation" – it can just present some view of people who worry about how to pay the bills as well as how to live their emotional lives." (The Morning Star August 22 2022)

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OR 'a story of a society under stress' (Guardian 9.3.11)

Disc.

("Introduction: State of the Nation. Wed 21 Jan 2009 Guardian

65 What brings together *Midnight's Children*, *Middlemarch* and *The Corrections*? We think they can all be called state-of-the-nation novels. ..., they address social questions or political changes - they think about the way we live now. Much has been said about how this type of fiction is dead in the UK: how this country can offer nothing to compete with, say, the later novels of Philip Roth. And it's true that America in its pomp has produced a series of truly grand social novels, just as imperial Britain produced the hefty, confident books we think of as originating the form - Dickens, Gaskell, Trollope".)

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Ali Smith says: The novel form is ever-evolving, ever-communal, ever-revolutionary. What can we assume she means - does this apply to books you have read (pleasure?)?

75 She wrote four contemporary novels in four years, meaning she started the project before June 2016.

80 While you are reading the article 'Before Brexit ' etc

- How does she explain how long ago it seems that she first had the idea to write the four seasons? (lines 8 - 14)

- Comment re line 18 and later: there is a very famous poem by Keats called 'Autumn' but it is quite difficult. None of these really convey the musicality I have in mind.

85 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zr1qiKoMyQ8> this version is overloaded : text, moving pictures and music!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lZwSqdKwDw> also undramatic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3r84QUZFU> very US and down to earth

90 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pk_b-gpsyHU possibly the recording that pleases me best if I close my eyes :-)

95 - By line 22 Ali Smith has started jumping around. In theory this article is about how she wrote four novels, named after the seasons, one in every year. In practice you also get to know her and her associative way of thinking while she is telling the one story.

- So she leads you through her insomnia and being the youngest child, shows you that she likes telling stories.....

100 . In line 100 she returns to her supposed subject.

- Which books, painting, pieces of music do you know that treat four seasons? (Starting with Vivaldi?) (line 122)

105 - line 150 Sir Thomas More (1478 - 1535) wrote the first and possibly most famous Utopia (1516) (and not available in England in his lifetime - cf dystopias and book-banning). What he says seems to be topical in 2024.

110 - line 178 Angela Carter (“an English novelist, short story writer, poet, and journalist, known for her feminist, magical realism, and picaresque works “ 1940 – 1992 wikip). Have you read any of her books?

- lines 185 - 8 mock-up - the dictionary offers words like ‘Attrappe’. Nothing really helpful. I wonder what you think of when you hear the name of David Hockney?

115

- line 193 Then and now. (1st August 2020) The fourth book (Summer) is just being published.

- What are the books about ?

120 “Time, art, thought, history, language; who gets to speak and who doesn’t; people real and fictional and how their stories are and aren’t told; division, loss; protest, activism, resistance; generosity, the story of unexpected and extended family. Human coldness, human warmth, human work.

Leaves. Bare branches. Frost. Buds. Leaves again.”