

Two, Venice 1540-1600 (National
a tribute not just to the volume
marvellous though that is, but to the
series of scholarly and superbly pro-
talogues, which has no equal in any
t gallery. Standing in front of the
with these volumes adds a whole
ension of pleasure to the experience.

D. J. TAYLOR

ome reason most roads in 2009
ed to lead back to the British 1950s.
ays assembled in Zachary Leader's
The Movement Reconsidered
never quite bore out the claim made
acter in Malcolm Bradbury's *Eating*
Wrong that "There is no movement
made up by the Literary Editor of the
", then they did a very good job of
just how nuanced the relationships
a group of writers as diverse as
Amis, D. J. Enright and Thom
uld be. There was a great deal of
n display, too, in David Kynaston's
Britain, 1951-1957 (Bloomsbury),
d instalment in what promises to be
oth history of the period 1945-79.
y Kynaston diagnosed a "frozen
n which many of the old pre-war
atural certainties prevailed, but with
ck'n'roll and the end of deference
to blow them away.

chunks of the Kynaston thesis were
ated by rereads of two books written
the premiership of Anthony Eden:
Mogart's *The Uses of Literacy* (Pen-
ose instinctive puritanism doesn't
the least over-stated half a century
Roger Longrigg's *A High-Pitched*
ber), an adland novel from 1956,
ke Anthony Powell's early fiction,
a startling amount of melancholy
spectacle of young people out enjoy-
elves in pre-swinging London.

MICHEL TOURNIER

day thousands of people in London,
York and Paris take the same Metro
the day before. They recognize
er, just as they recognize the seats
advertisements in the carriages, but
n't been introduced to each other,
m dictates that they don't talk to
r. In Delphine de Vigan's captivat-
Les Heures souterraines (J. C. Lat-
examines the "liaison" between two
Mathilde and Thibault, who endure
routine. It's an ambitious project
danger of going nowhere. Miracu-
e reader is seduced and follows
s "adventures" during these mute
more familiar encounters. I sense
readers who are familiar with such
es will be interested in this novel.



The Netherlands vs France, European Championships, Anfield, 1996; from *Dreams and Goals: The World Cup and world football 1990-2010* by Alistair Berg (288pp. Dewi Lewis Media. £30. 978 1 905928 06 4)

Personally I'm one of them and I wouldn't say that I was "gripped" by this book, but I read it with considerable pleasure. Of course we see the metro exits, the street, the apartment, but everything is rooted in the underground network. Mathilde and Thibault enter into a relationship built on the profound reality of its origins. It's a strange literary gambit and Vigan pulls it off.

ANGUS TRUMBLE

This year I was so fascinated by Natasha Wimmer's fine translation of *2666* by Roberto Bolaño (Picador), that straight away I read it again. Bolaño's populous quest narrative converges on a landscape of lurid crime surrounding the Mexican border city of Santa Teresa (Ciudad Juárez). Built in five colossal semi-autonomous parts, the work more resembles a melancholy wreath of novels, brimming with incident and fable – a remarkable achievement. By contrast, *Drawing Babar: Early drafts and watercolors* by Christine Nelson with an essay by Adam Gopnik (Morgan Library) is an exquisite homage to the creative processes of Jean de Brunhoff, whose *Histoire de Babar, le petit éléphant* first appeared in 1931, and Laurent de Brunhoff, who took up his father's project in 1946 and gave us little Arthur in his parachute. Despite its dull title, *Playing with Pictures: The art of Victorian photocollage* by Elizabeth Siegel et al (Art Institute of Chicago/Yale) shows us how English ladies patiently cut up portrait photographs and, with the aid of watercolours, pickled their friends and family in bottles; cast them as apes, frogs, ducks, or boiled eggs; sat them on toadstools; stitched them to fans and luggage, then let them get tangled in spiders' webs. This fine exhibition catalogue opens a pre-Freudian window you hardly knew existed.

MARINA WARNER

In 1555, the Danish artist Melchior Lorck travelled to the Sublime Porte as part of the Habsburg Emperor's embassy to the Sultan (the same expedition, as it happens, which brought back the tulip); his brief was to report on the Turks. Lorck was an admirer of Dürer but with a stronger tendency to fancy and drollery, and he made terrific portraits of Suleyman the Magnificent, a vast, detailed,

magical "Prospect of Constantinople", and dozens of detailed studies showing fantastic caparisons of camels, towering plumed head-dresses of janissaries, and different social groups' costumes. He has only remained so little known because, while the catalogue raisonné was being compiled, almost nothing of his work was published. *Melchior Lorck*, fully illustrated in four volumes with a fifth to come, has at last appeared, the splendid creation of Erik Fischer (with Ernst Jonas Bencard and Mikael Bøgh Rasmussen and Marco Juliano), published by the Royal Library Copenhagen. *The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the making of Castilian culture* (Yale) creates a composite close-up of a part of Spain usually associated with rock-solid Catholic oppression and authority, and shows how the communities lived with and even thrived on religious and cultural entanglements; *convivencia* is the term at issue, explored here subtly and richly by three authors, Jerrilynn D. Dodds, María Rosa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale, who each bring a different expertise to bear.

On another note, Molly M. Mahood, a botanist herself and a very fine close reader, in *The Poet as Botanist* (Cambridge), enthrallingly unfolds how poets of flowers – from Clare to Les Murray, Wordsworth to Michael Longley – have seen, felt and responded to their subjects in the shifting light of scientific theories. And finally, the poetry of Mourid Barghouti has been superbly translated from the Arabic by Radwa Ashour, the Egyptian novelist and scholar of English literature, as *Midnight and Other Poems* (Arc Editions); these exhilarating and passionate lyrics oppose song to death, loss and destruction.

EDMUND WHITE

Roberto Bolaño's *2666* (Picador) was my favourite book of the year, though in some ways it falls short of the same author's *The Savage Detectives*. What both books share is a romantic fascination with literary people. The first section of *2666* is about four literary scholars – three men and one woman, each person from a different country – all devoted to studying the same contemporary but utterly mysterious German novelist. The three men end up having sexual alliances with the woman, and the erotic game of musical chairs they play is both touching and

DAVID WOOTT

My book of the year is *The Thesaurus of the Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford) – the first thesaurus in any language. Two volumes, weighing in at 13lbs, cover the whole history, not just of the language, but of everything we do. Finding your way around is a challenge – 02.03 for philosophy and religion. And of course the delight are constantly distracted – from hedonism, from tenderness to want to know (as I did last week) like accurate, accuracy, precise a first began to be used in relation to what? It is a seventeenth-century word they felt embarrassed. It is only in the eighteenth century that people began to talk to each other, but in the seventeenth century *embarras* was used as a French word for a "confusing French word", said Dryden. They felt abashed. I hadn't realized the concept (1575) predates idea (1600). Empiricism (1716) predated empiricism. Historical novelists, historians of language scholars will find these volumes readable, and will soon wonder how the loved words managed without them. *OED*, are available online.

RONALD WRIGLEY

Love in the madness of war – a man's love for his slain ancestor – is David Malouf's theme in *The Hiding Place* (Chatto), the outstanding novel of the year. Returning to the Classics, Malouf explored in *An Imaginary Life* Ovid's exile from Rome. Malouf returns on an episode in the *Iliad* when he retrieves Hector's body from Achilles. Malouf has been towing his victim behind him in scenes foreshadowing Mogart's father. Malouf's poetic yet muscular writing is wonderful, and the bond between the man and the carter Somax is a deeply human connection of lives both noble and ordinary. The Bronze Age – or any other.

In nonfiction, Brian Brett's *Traces of a Rebel History of Rural Life* (Greiner) delighted me with its writing, as did from this Canadian poet. Declaring himself "both theory and worms", Brett spent years on a British Columbian island, living on a single day, which begins with him naked in the foredawn dark, feeding his livestock from a puma. Such moments to ponder the fraught symbiosis between plants and man. One man's life in an earthy world we are madly game