A Bruce Chatwin bibliography

It may seem obvious to the point of banality to observe that Bruce Chatwin was a voracious reader, yet there have been few significant writers of the last century whose breadth and diversity of reference could match Chatwin's. He was referred to by John Updike as the 'demon researcher' (128) for good reason; Elizabeth Chatwin recalls once finding 50 books by his bedside whilst tidying, all of which were being read simultaneously: '[H]e could never go past a book store', she comments. 'It was just a total fascination' (2010). His wide-ranging reading habits bred a seemingly inexhaustible knowledge base; Salman Rushdie has referred to him as 'probably the most knowledgeable person amongst my contemporaries that I ever met' (*Footsteps*). His references sometimes eluded his friends, however; Redmond O'Hanlon recalled an early morning conversation with Bruce in which Bunin¹ was mentioned; after Chatwin had rung off, O'Hanlon began 'wondering who or what Bunin was: with Bruce you could never be sure. The new Stravinsky from Albania? The nickname of the last slave in Central Mali? A lighthouse-keeper from Patagonia? Scroll 238B from a cave in the Negev? Or just the émigré King of Tomsk who'd dropped in for tea?' (103).

Bruce's library remains more or less intact at his home in Oxfordshire, though some significant volumes were given away to friends. It is a sizable collection; taking up two long walls of floor-to-ceiling shelving in his study, as well as various bookcases dotted around the house. The most common writers are European, particularly Russian: Turgenev, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Bunin, Gogol and, of course, Osip Mandelstam. The French are also well represented, often in the original language (Chatwin had intended to learn Russian in the period of remission ultimately given over to the writing of *Utz*); the works of Balzac, Proust, Maupassant (whose short stories are particularly well thumbed), Racine and Flaubert are all in evidence. There is relatively little modern fiction on the shelves (though Borges and Italo Calvino are both strong presences), and very little from the United Kingdom – D.H. Lawrence being the obvious exception. There is also a substantial amount of poetry; Ezra Pound's *Cantos* appear in various editions, as do the poems of the Alexandrian poet C.P. Cavafy. Also

evident on the shelves are T.S. Eliot and, a perpetual favourite, Matsuo Basho.

What follows, however, is not intended as a definitive record of Chatwin's reading – which would constitute a monumental task. Nor is it intended as a record of his favourite works; Nicholas Shakespeare's 'A Chatwin Reading List' (2000: 579–80) in his biography is an excellent starting point for those interested in his preferences. Rather, this bibliography is intended to provide a guide to some of the books which directly influenced Chatwin's literary output, either on the level of style or subject. It is, by its nature, selective, though the section relating to *The Nomadic Alternative* is intended as more extensive, given that work's lack of public availability, and its influence upon Chatwin's later output.

The Nomadic Alternative

- An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul*, Mountstuart Elphinstone
The Anarchists, James Joll
The Anatomy of Melancholy, Robert Burton
Anima Poetae: From the unpublished notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Samuel Taylor Coleridge
Aranda Traditions, Theodor Strehlow
The Art of War, Sun Tzu
Beowulf
The Buddha's Philosophy, George Francis Allen
Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India: Their History and Their Contribution to Indian Culture, Sukumar Dutt
Bushmen and other non-Bantu peoples of Angola, António de Almeida
Che Guevara: A Biography, Daniel James
Clouds, Aristophanes
Collected Poems, C.P. Cavafy
The Dhammapada
A Discourse on Inequality, Jean-Jacques Rousseau
The Divine Comedy, Dante Alighieri
Essay on the Inequality of Human Races, Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau
Ethnological Studies among the north-west-central Queensland aborigines, Walter Edmund Roth
The Evolution of Man and Society, C.D. Darlington
The Flowers of Evil, Charles Baudelaire
Germania, Cornelius Tacitus
The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890, James Mooney
The Ghost in the Machine, Arthur Koestler
The Ghost of Abel: A Revelation in the Visions of Jehovah, William Blake
Gilgamesh
Inner Asian Frontiers of China, Owen Lattimore

- In Search of Lost Time*, Marcel Proust
Intimate Journals, Charles Baudelaire
Ishi in Two Worlds: A Biography of the Last Wild Indian in North America, Theodora Kroeber
Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-West and Western Australia during the years 1837, 38, and 39, Sir George Grey
Journal Up the Straits, October 11, 1856 – May 5, 1857, Herman Melville
Ladder of Paradise, Saint John Climacus
Leaves of Grass, Walt Whitman
Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes
Man the Hunter, ed. Richard B. Lee and Irven Devore
Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant, Martin Buber
Muqaddimah, Ibn Khaldun
Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution, Petr Kropotkin
Pensées, Blaise Pascal
Personal Narrative of a Year's Journey Through Central and Eastern Arabia (1862–63), William Palgrave
The Phenomenon of Man, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
The Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan
The Poems of St John of the Cross, St John of the Cross
Poetic Essay on Living in the Mountains, Hsieh Ling-yün
Politics, Aristotle
Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity, Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas
The Pursuit Of The Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages, Norman Cohn
The Road, Jack London
Le Roman de la Rose, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun
The Savage Mind, Claude Lévi-Strauss
Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph, T.E. Lawrence
The Spiritual Meadow, John Moschos
Statism and Anarchy, Mikhail Bakunin
Tao Tè Ching, Lao Tzu
A Thousand Years of the Tartars, Edward Harper Parker
Travels in Arabia Deserta, Charles Montagu Doughty
Urne Burial, Thomas Browne
Walden, Henry David Thoreau
The Wandering Scholars of the Middle Ages, Helen Waddell
Wayward Servants: The Two Worlds of the African Pygmies, Colin Turnbull
Wonders of the Invisible World, Cotton Mather
Works and Days, Hesiod
The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon

In Patagonia

Idle Days in Patagonia, W.H. Hudson

In Our Time, Ernest Hemingway

Journey to Armenia, Osip Mandelstam

Magellan's Voyage: A Narrative Account of the First Circumnavigation, Antonio Pigafetta

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, Edgar Allen Poe

Uttermost Part of the Earth, E. Lucas Bridges

The Voyage of the Beagle, Charles Darwin

The Wilds of Patagonia: A Narrative of the Swedish Expedition to Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and the Falkland Islands in 1907–1909, Carl Skottsberg

The Viceroy of Ouidah

Almayer's Folly, Joseph Conrad

Bahia and the West African Trade 1549–1851, Pierre Verger

Bajazet, Jean Racine

Dahomey as It Is: Being a Narrative of Eight Months' Residence in That Country, J.A. Skertchly

Eugénie Grandet, Honoré de Balzac

A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome, Richard Burton

Salambo, Gustave Flaubert

On the Black Hill

Collected Poems, Dylan Thomas

The Double: A St Petersburg Poem, Fyodor Dostoyevsky

The Fox in the Attic, Richard Hughes

Gone to Earth, Mary Webb

Kilvert's Diary, 1870–1879: Selections from the Diary of the Rev. Francis Kilvert, Francis Kilvert

Madame Bovary, Gustave Flaubert

The Nose, Nikolai Gogol

Poems, Dafydd ap Gwilym

A Shropshire Lad, A.E. Housman

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson

Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry, Kenneth Jackson

Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Thomas Hardy

Welsh Rural Life in Photographs, Elfyn Scourfield

*The Songlines**Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger*Dialogues*, Plato*The Hunters or the Hunted?*, Charles Kimberlin Brain*Jacques the Fatalist*, Denis Diderot*Kangaroo*, D.H. Lawrence*Metamorphoses*, Ovid*On Aggression*, Konrad Lorenz*Songs of Central Australia*, Theodor Strehlow*Utz**Fictions*, Jorge Luis Borges*The Golem*, Gustav Meyrink*Illuminations*, Walter Benjamin*The Magic Mountain*, Thomas Mann*Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka*Prague Tales*, Jan Neruda

NOTE

- 1 Ivan Bunin, 1870–1953, was a Nobel Prize-winning Russian writer of poems, short stories and novellas. His story collection *Dark Avenues* was a particular favourite of Chatwin's.