

# Daily Express

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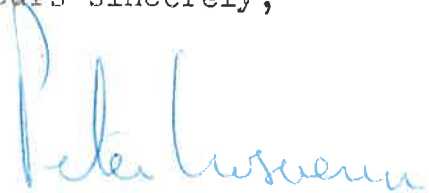
4th December, 1972.

Dear Peter,

I have been asked to forward to you the enclosed lengthy letter. I have done so.

Many thanks for Booker's hospitality. Whoever else you may exploit, it is certainly not the literary journalist.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Grosvenor

Peter Smith, Esq.,  
Booker McConnell Ltd.,  
Bucklersbury House,  
83 Cannon Street,  
London, E.C.4.

November  
24th 1972

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Dear Sir, The Booker Literary Award.

I was pretty shocked over the behaviour of the recent recipient.

I have a suggestion to make, one which would be received with more grace!

There is a great gap in the state of books being published, namely an up to date philology: covering the field of English (Latin) French/ Spanish/ Italian. Any larger field would be self-defeating, although I could be talked into including ~~Spanish~~ Portuguese. This is a project which would need five years.

The point of such a project would be to simplify the approach to learning of language: about which this country, supposed to have the finest educational system in the world, has been totally useless. Many years ago, at a top school in Wincmore Hill, I could write the kind of French that Madame de Sevigny whom I worked as alternate head secretary in London, Paris, Marseille, Aden, told me ~~so~~ bluntly: I gained at this school the only credit in twenty schools for spoken French; in fact, my effort was pathetic. I only learnt to speak fluently by staying in France au pair, which is pretty grim, & can only be faced when very young.

Perhaps you will take it that my English is excellent: that my Latin was very good: my French was excellent: my linguaphone taped course for Italian & Spanish evoked not the usual 'Very Good' from the tutors, but a variety of superlative praise: I'm trying to convey that I have been living in the fascinating world of words for generations before I was born. I taught English, or tried to, to the higher age groups for some years: finally, sick of time-wasting endless marking, I launched into the world of Nuffield spoken French - a system, one of 3, contrived by an enormous number of experts, based on listening to taped conversations... I found that, after endless efforts on my part to adapt it - by introducing the element of fun, I was getting fantastic results with eight year olds. This, in an English school, was quite exceptional - I simply soul-dozed the Head: but it will take at least a quarter of a century for the frozen minds of heads of schools even to realise the NECESSITY FOR & THE IMMENSE PLEASURE of speaking other tongues. The schools are as dumb as...

With the approaching leisure of  
the evening groups, & amongst the  
retired who can afford it, adults are seeking  
to learn languages they were either not taught at  
all, or not really taught anyhow: thanks to  
Sound Radio & television, thanks to the availability  
of taped courses, they can in fact acquire a  
good basic knowledge to make travel that more  
fun, to make reading at home an enormous pleasure:  
since there is no hobby, or type of self-induced  
'work' which doesn't need working at, this gives the  
whole lie to the boredom of retirement: you never  
can state, I know Italian: it is a permanent  
process: as a matter of interest, I now find it more  
fun to get out my copy of Dante than an Agatha  
Christie (who has 'unwound' me for years - I owe her  
an enormous debt.)  
Language, except Latin, is not a dead thing: it  
a gloriously changing, live, affair - probably more so  
in English than any other, although Frenchmen might  
~~truly~~ claim their tongue was equally fluid. The  
poorer the country, the less the vocabulary, the  
less its fluidity. Thus Spanish is far less 'cumbrous'  
than Italian, Italian less than French: it really  
is, for example, astounding that it is easier for an  
English person to read Dante after a 50-lesson  
course in linguaphone than it is for him to understand  
Shakespeare. Nevertheless, despite the greater nearness  
of Italian to French, & the greater approximation of  
Spanish to English, they all link together, so that it  
is possible, after varying efforts of potential linguists  
to study these separate tongues, to enrich the  
whole process by having the basic idioms of each  
spread out over a wide page, so that one can  
grasp the samenesses & the so often very slight  
differences almost at a glance. layout is of  
the first importance. Only the B.B.C. in  
this admirable publications, have begun to  
grasp its significance. Without a good layout,  
only the grimly determined can still press on:  
with a good, scientific approach, the whole thing  
becomes attractive.

Now, not only am I able to do this, but  
I am about to have the time. Within the  
past few weeks, I have been learning to live with the  
fact that my husband will have to spend the rest

3. This at once raises financial problems; like continuing to keep up the gas for visiting, like keeping this ancient house heated: I am in fact 63, & only the very young can write books in icy gannets. Yet while the brain works more slowly now, the thought processes are more rational. In the sphere of words, after a lifetime of reading, (not much Agatha Christie! but the whole wealth of literature), I am infinitely more knowledgeable than the days when, from poverty, I read law in French wherever possible (International Law, Swiss procedure, Forensic medicine).

I am an unpublished writer in search of a sponsor. What I seek to write is a work which first of a series crying out to be written, which will offer a more blessed public endless opportunities for continuing pleasure. Although, even with endless available money, I am unable to satisfy my craving to spend long periods in Italy, Spain etc. to improve my own SPOKEN languages, this does not militate against the research project I propose - in a country unexposed anywhere for educational facilities, the kind of book I envisage can be written here. To do it adequately - & by adequately, I mean, not a deeply asoteric boring tome, but an enchanting book ~~to~~ to look at, simple to handle in the way paper backs are (expensive books, not expensive, can be discarded when tattered, bought new again - no student wants to lug about heavy unwieldy books): with the basic idioms of every day language clearly visible, the slight differences leaping to the eye through modern visual aids, interspersed with gay line drawings: small lists of MUST literature of each country at the end (one question I must have answered soon is whether Onetday in the life of Ivan Denisovich has been translated into all of the proposed languages - but of course, the main object, for a student to know what books in the original are available...

This idea of a book on philology for the masses! has been fermenting for some time. But in the course of writing this, I think the Latin must go. Too many have messed it, for it to have any punch.

Will you help?

I think your group, because of the early Mr. Berge, needs a cosmetic face lift: it seems as unfair to blame the group for past history as it is to blame me for the troubles in Ireland. I think that not only should you consider offering me, an unwilling O.A.P. such an award, but also offer one to the best research scheme suggested to you by some national from the sugar-area who, through personal incapacity or the incapacity of a spouse/relative, has been unable to continue this work. I also feel that over the centuries, & still today, women have not had & still are not having, their fair chance to do their own thing; as a result of this, they tend to give up: it really is time to bend a little inflexibly in this direction by providing such an incentive.

\* IF you should do this gorgeousthing for me, say, by providing \$5000 for a 5-year project, you would also release me from the intolerable position I now find myself in; my latest talk with the medics means that they seem to think it may be possible for my husband to return here at some time in the future: in the meantime, on a state pension for one person, I have to continue to run a car to visit him - in the country, impossible without a car. In actual fact, the demands of his utter helplessness which also leads to constant incontinence, are beyond any one person, of whatever age. Yet, he's going to be condemned to such an existence for many years to come... This project can keep me not only completely sane, but deeply satisfied, as well as having a real aim to help the bewildered retireds. I myself, when I gave up work I could do well but which sent me round the bend, had a year of near horror, trying to adjust to so limited a life, hampered by poverty, illness, lack of social life.

Help!

Jos. Allpander.

(Mrs.)

\* IF you can, could my name not be  
bookish?