

Editorial

I WAS TAKEN ABACK—*WAY* ABACK—by an interview I read several months ago with the Canadian writer Yann Martel. You might be aware that he's the author of *The Life of Pi*, the novel that won the 2002 Man Booker prize and sold what must have been quintillions of copies. Reviewers were, on the whole, crazy about that book, agreeing that it was a ripping good yarn but at the same time it made you think. For some reason that made me suspect the yarn-generated thought would be low-wattage, and it didn't help when Martel announced that his book was designed to cause readers to believe in God. That I found the 'philosophy' in the book shallow and annoyingly new-agey puts me, no doubt, in a small minority.

Anyway, a couple of years after the runaway success of his book, Martel was whining, in the interview, about the suffering his wealth and fame have brought. It seems that now there are high expectations he's not sure he can meet. His work in progress—which he was having trouble writing—deals indirectly with inmates of Nazi concentration camps, and he allowed that if those people could get used to their plight, then he supposed he could get used to his. This comparison of his suffering to theirs is not just self-involved celebrity prattle. It's reprehensible.

Well, never mind this comparison. What was of interest to me (after I calmed down) was that Martel was complaining about the mega-success that multitudes of his fellow authors dream about, work very hard for, and have almost no chance of getting. I thought of the hundred or more writers of fiction and poetry whose works—mostly very good, frequently really excellent—I have to turn down for each issue of this journal. They have only a tiny chance of publication when they submit their work to the lottery of journal selection; and if they beat the odds, they win publication without payment in a journal with a funny name and a minuscule fraction of Martel's readership. I have sympathy for these authors, not for Martel.

But I should be more tolerant, and try to find what's reasonable and true and revealing in whatever anyone says, even Martel, right? Right? Okay. No doubt he's having some trouble writing his new novel. He's probably too self-conscious and afraid that the new one will bomb, and this will be all the

worse because of comparisons people will make with *Pi*. Cyril Connelly is frequently quoted as saying “Of all the enemies of literature, success is the most insidious,” and this could have some sort of truth to it.

What we have here may be an instance of a general and deeply peculiar phenomenon: getting what you want very often doesn't make you happy. This is one of several paradoxes of happiness, and—at last, I get to the contents of this issue—our first essay considers what happiness is, and how we might get it. These are questions non-philosophers suppose must be in the centre of the discipline, but they're hardly ever talked about in academia. Our second philosophical essay discusses another rare but valuable topic: the nature of anger, and its evaluation. Our third essay, this time by a literary scholar, not a philosopher, has an equally interesting concern: the idea of privacy, and how it's manifested in some literature. We're sure you'll find all three enlightening.

And following these articles are the fiction and poetry that we chose from hundreds of submissions. With so many excellent ones to choose from, it came down, in the end, simply to what we enjoyed the most; and we enjoyed all of these a great deal. We expect you will too.

R.M.