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Editorial

The Gulf Tourguide map that was given us when we hired a car to drive from New York to Boston last September had a special section: Tourguide Facts: Places of Interest and, under New Hampshire, was this entry:

N. Salem. Mystery Hill Internationally famous archaeological mystery

And then we remembered correspondence between Frank Glynn and Tom Lethbridge in the thirties and photographs passed on to us of what purported to be pre-Columbian megalithic monuments in New England.

We drove to Mystery Hill so soon as we decently could leave the better-known famous archaeologists of Harvard. It lies some 65 km. north of Boston and is 40 km. from the sea. As we nervously approached it, we saw a great notice saying 'Welcome to Mystery Hill—the American Stonehenge', and on arrival were presented with a pamphlet describing it thus:

12-acre settlement of megalithic structures, huts, dolmens, carefully built walls, intricate underground drainage systems, carvings, rockbasins and bowls: several underground caverns. Centered by a grooved slab, with supporting table, called the sacrificial stone.

The tea and souvenir shop which issued tickets for admission, and which we approached with mounting trepidation, had notice boards with cuttings from various journals. One by Dorothy Patten, in the *Haverhill Gazette* for 31 July 1967, described Mystery Hill as:

... the largest unsolved complex of man-made stone structures ever found in the United States... How far back in the centuries do these date? What are they and who built them? Are they the products of the Bronze Age? The Phoenicians? Irish Culdee Monks? Vikings? Indians? Or the eccentricities of Colonial farmer Jonathan Pattee who occupied the site from 1826-1848?

We went round the site with interest and spent another whole day there with Paul Johnstone of BBC Chronicle, who was making a film of this strange complex of buildings. Pattee's Hill is 800 m. high and the stone complex covers three quarters of an acre (0.30 ha.) on the top of the hill. At first sight it looks like a cross between a large neglected rockery, disused farm out-buildings, and the ruins of a folly, all with ghost memories of Cornish fogous, Grimspound, French souterrains, and Sardinian cappane. In our judgement it certainly bears no morphological or constructional resemblance to the great megalithic monuments of prehistoric Western Europe, apart from, of course, the coincidental resemblances that occur when dry stone walling is used in a building for construction and large stone slabs for trabeate roofing. The pigsties of Pembrokeshire and the clapper bridges of Dartmoor are as much 'megaliths' in the proper archaeological sense of the word, as are some of the odd buildings at Mystery Hill.

The site has been known to natives of the area for more than a hundred years as Pattee's Caves. Jonathan Pattee was a French Huguenot farmer who lived there for a while. In 1936 the site was bought by a prosperous gentleman, a retired insurance executive, from Hartford, Connecticut, named William B. Goodwin. He brought the site to the attention of archaeologists and himself dug large portions of it, with, apparently, little care or attention. He decided, on the results of his diggings, that it was a settlement of Irish Culdee monks.

In 1939 Goodwin persuaded Dr Hugh Hencken of Harvard to visit the site. Hencken was unable to agree that the site was of Irish origin, and thought it colonial: he published his views in an article entitled 'The "Irish Monastery" at North Salem, New Hampshire' in the New England Quarterly, XII, September 1939. His learning and argument however did not convince Goodwin who believed the site an Irish monastery until his death in 1950; and, in 1946, published a book entitled The Ruins of Great Ireland in New England. In 1955 the Early Sites Foundation of New England authorized and financed an expedition to dig the site: the excavators were Junius Bird of the American Museum of Natural History and Gary Viscelius of Yale. After six weeks' digging the Bird-Viscelius expedition decided that there was nothing earlier than revolutionary days and Jonathan Pattee. One member of the expedition, Frank Glynn of Clinton, Connecticut, and subsequently President of the Connecticut Archaeological Society, did not agree with these findings and continued to excavate on his own for many years. Glynn alleged that he could point to forty-eight similarities between Mystery Hill and the Bronze Age of the Old World: he believed the site to be the most westerly extension of the European megalith builders, and he dated the site to between 3000 and 500 BC.

The site is now owned by Robert Stone of Derry, an engineer with Western Electric, and President of the New England Antiquities Research Association (founded in 1964). New excavations have been proceeding at Mystery Hill for the last six years under the direction of James P. Whittall Jr: Stone and Whittall are convinced that they are dealing with something much earlier than Pattee, and, while they agree that such evidence does not date the site, were very excited by the C14 dating of charcoal found between walling stones of one of the buildings. This gave a date of 3475 \pm 210 BP or 1525 BC: the dating was determined in the Geochron Laboratories at Cambridge, Mass. (reference GX.2310).

This date shows that the site had an early occupation; but we share Hencken's views that the visible structures of the present day are

unlikely to be earlier than the 17th century. A colleague summed up his views recently by saying that it was a classic example of 'how archaeology is used to take the great American public for the proverbial ride' and how right he was! The real interest of Mystery Hill is not that it is a great archaeological mystery, but that it is built up as such. The great American public want mystery and they passionately want proof of the settlement of their country in pre-Columbian times.

The bookstall at Mystery Hill sold copies of NEARA—the quarterly Newsletter of the New England Antiquities Research Association; and C. M. Boland's They all discovered America. We devoured Boland avidly. His book, described as 'an absorbing, imaginative account of the explorers who came to America before Columbus', was first published in 1961, and is now a paperback to be found everywhere. When Boland's book first came out the San Francisco News-Call Bulletin said 'Americans should read this book to learn just how long their native land has been there', and the Indianapolis Star declared that 'If Christopher Columbus had known half as much about the discovery of America as the author of this book, he never would have taken the trouble.' Boland has nineteen pre-Columbus discoverers of America: these include Phoenicians, Romans, the Chinese Hoei-shin (and where indeed did he get to?), St Brendan, Irish Culdee monks, Vikings from Bjarni Herjulfsson to Bishop Eric Gnupsson, Quetzalcoatl, Prince Madoc, Paul Knutson, Prince Henry and the brothers Zeno, and Joaz Vaz Cortereal. Every conceivable dubious find or known forgery is dragged into service by Boland, from alleged Phoenician inscriptions through the Dighton Rock on Assonet Neck, Rhode Island, the Minnesota Stone, the Newport Tower (of course) and the Beardmore finds of 1931. There is a photograph of a carving of an alleged Phoenician ship revealed when the waters of Lake Assawompsett in Massachusetts were lowered, and of Mr Albert Wheeler holding aloft a fragment of a suspected (by whom and why?) Viking ship found on his property in Massachusetts. And as he finished writing this amazing collection of credibilities and nonsense. Boland was able to trumpet abroad the announcement of the authentication of a Roman head of the 2nd century AD found in Calixtlahuaca in Mexico 'under three sealed and undisturbed floors, found in 1940, but announced by Dr Heine-Geldern in the International Congress of Americanists in Vienna in July 1960'. Boland coins a useful and amusing phrase: 'the NEBC principle', which means the model of thought that insisted there could be no Europeans in America before Columbus, and this model of thought is to be recorded and described in the same way as we are describing, from Boland and Gordon and others, the reverse model which we may encapsulate in a similarly useful and perhaps amusing phrase: 'the MEBC principle', which means many Europeans (and Mediterraneans and Orientals and others) in America before Columbus.

The NEARA newsletters are, unhappily, the same sort of MEBC stuff that one reads in Boland: they are full of oddities, quiddities and lunacies; they are credulous and querulous. Here are men trying hard—oh, so hard and often so honestly-to invent a past, but who often remain unconvinced of their own myth. All the current lunacies are ventilated in the NEARA newsletters, the Landsverk-Monge theory of ciphers and dates hidden in runic inscriptions, balancing rocks, astronomical alignments, bogus 'dolmens' at Martha's Vineyard, Madoc's stone forts in southern Illinois, the Paraíba Stone, the Newport Tower, the Dighton Rock, the Roman (?) inscriptions in Maine, and the second-century AD Hebrew and Roman coins from Kentucky.

We returned to Cambridge, Mass., dejected and disappointed by this sortie into the maverick archaeology of New England. As we had left the little museum-cum-café-cumsouvenir shop, the headline of an article in the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune for 11 June 1965 caught our eye: 'Antiquity Researchers Probe Secrets of Mystery Hill', but it gave us no comfort. A shelf in the Harvard Coop displayed five books, four of them new, discussing in various ways the problems of pre-Columbian America.

- 1. Collectors' luck: giant steps into prehistory by Betty Bugbee Cusack. Stonehaven, Mass.: the G.R. Barnstead Printing Company, 1968. \$5.
- 2. Before Columbus by Cyrus H. Gordon: New York: Crown Publishers, 1971. \$15.
- 3. The Quest for America (ed. Geoffrey Ashe). New York: Praeger, 1971. \$15.
- 4. Man across the sea: problems of pre-Columbian contacts (edited by Carroll L. Riley, J. Charles Kelley, Campbell W. Pennington and Robert L. Rands). Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1971. \$12.50.
- 5. The European discovery of America: vol. 1: The northern voyages AD 500 to 1600 by Samuel Eliot Morison. London: Oxford University Press, 1971. £7.00.

The last three books are of great importance and will receive special and serious consideration in a future number of this journal. The Bugbee Cusack and Cyrus Gordon books are autre chose, and must be summarily dismissed here.

Mrs Bugbee Cusack's book is a scissors-andpaste affair of cuttings about prehistory in America that have interested her. It begins with a photograph of a piece of metamorphic rock 300 to 400 million years old, found by the author at Cape Cod in 1966, and ends with a photocopy of her husband's deposit of \$50 with Thomas Cook and Son 'for trip to Moon if and when trip is feasible: refundable on request' and dated 11 July 1961. In between these unusual items we are treated to all sorts of curious things from Irish monks, Vikings and Mystery Hill to an account of how herring gulls navigate in fog, runic (??) inscriptions from Maine and Massachusetts, and a delicious titbit, namely that in 1695 the town of Sandwich (which, incidentally, has in addition to its reputation for glass, the lovely spire on its Congregational Church designed by Christopher Wren), passed an order that 'every unmarried man in the Township yearly should kill six blackbirds, or three crows, while he remained single, and then should not marry until he obeyed and fulfilled that order to the letter'.

Mrs Bugbee Cusack is frivolous and futile: she is, encapsulated in a book, the uninformed

conversation one hears in the cocktail hour either side of the Atlantic. She was not expecting to be taken seriously, and we respect her expectations: hers is a jeu d'esprit of enthusiasm and lunacy. Not so Cyrus H. Gordon who is a professional scholar and teacher, Head of the Department of Mediterranean Studies at Brandeis University in Boston. The publishers' blurb describes him as 'an internationally respected scholar...the author of some thirteen books' and his book as 'a revolutionary treatise by one of the world's most eminent scholars'. Robert Graves, the distinguished poet, who, even in the moments when he feels most inspired by his imaginary White Goddess, could hardly be called a person knowledgeable about the ancient history of western Europe and pre-Columbian contacts with America, writes: 'Romantic novelists and amateur historians have so often tried to sell us news of pre-Columbian traffic across the Atlantic, long before the days of Leif Ericsson, that when at last it comes, irrefutably substantiated and dated by one of the world's most dependable scholars, the shock makes us gasp. Professor Gordon is the newsbringer.'

Turning eagerly to Before Columbus, knowing Gordon's reputation, and rather warily brushing aside publishers' blurb and Graves's extravaganza, we read the book. What is it? Just a load of concentrated and dangerous rubbish. What has happened to Professor Gordon? He believes that the portraits illustrated and described by Alexander von Wuthenau (see Antiquity, 1971, 229) are of European and African and Asiatic types (but what does he, a Semitic scholar, mean by referring to a Semitic type? He must know better than most of us that Semitic is a linguistic and ethnic, not racial, term); and he alleges that the Greeks knew America. 'To sum up,' he says (p. 49), 'Greek classics independently and repeatedly attest transatlantic contacts between the Mediterranean and America.' He suggests that 'we visualize the founders of ancient astronomy as setting up bases in the Near East, Middle America and the West Pacific' (p. 172). He sees 'the megalithic monuments of the Bronze Age mariners' as 'tangible reminders of a world civilization, with highly developed science and technologies'. He believes in the Paraíba inscription, the Metcalf stone, the Bat Creek Hebrew Inscription, the Roman Head from Calixtlahuaca, the 2nd century AD Hebrew and Roman coins from Louisville, Clay City and Hopkinsville, and thinks that Mexico 'rich in silver and other metal ores is a possible identification for Tarshish'.

This is not the lunatic fringe of archaeology: this is not the world of the New Diffusionists, Black Horses, Atlantis, Pyramidiots, straighttrackers and the rest of them, the world which every student of antiquity recognizes, with an embarrassed smile, as a danger only to those whose weak and muddled heads prefer the comforts of unreason to the difficult facts of archaeology. This is dangerous stuff because it is set out as scholarship by a professional scholar. This is poisoned chocolate: attractive from the outside, decked out in good wrappings -but, beware: the filling is bitter-sweet, this is false-centre archaeology. The fantastic Before Columbus must, alas, be placed on one's shelves alongside Elliot Smith, Perry and Raglan. It contains sentences very reminiscent of the hyper-diffusionists, such as, 'If high independently invented civilizations have existed, they were not on this planet' (p. 35). We are reminded of what Samuel Johnson said of Monboddo:

It is a pity to see Lord Monboddo publish such notions as he has done: a man of sense and so much elegant learning. There would be little in a fool doing it; we should only laugh; but when a wise man does it we are sorry. Other people have strange notions, but they conceal them. If they have tails, they hide them: Lord Monboddo is as jealous of his tail as a squirrel.

The Paraíba inscription is Gordon's tail and he dedicates his book to Jules Piccus, now a Professor of Hispanic Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, who told Gordon that he had acquired a scrapbook 'for a small sum at a rummage sale in Providence, R.I.': this scrapbook contained a new copy of the text of the inscription found by slaves of Joaquim Alves da Costa, on 11 September 1872, on his plantation at Pouso Alto near Paraíba in Brazil.

Ernest Renan, at the time the leading authority on Canaanite epigraphy, but whom Gordon castigates as a person 'whose knowledge and reputation were exceeded only by his pedantry', declared the inscription to be a fake. Gordon believes it to be true and provides a fresh translation from the text in the scrapbook (the original stone having vanished), and finds that it records a crossing from Canaan to Brazil in 534-531 BC. It is this translation, his conviction of the authenticity of the stone, and its general implications, if authentic, that started Gordon off on writing this unhappy book.

Unhappy because it is frankly and outrageously partisan. The possibility of transatlantic voyages in pre-Viking and pre-Brendan times is denied these days only by a few. It is the archaeological or other proof that such voyages did indeed take place that interests us all. What evidence there is needs careful weighing: every alleged find from Paraíba to Bat Creek studied with care and both sides of each argument fairly presented. This is what Gordon does not do. He says, 'If I have learned anything throughout nearly half a century of study it is to keep an open mind and to avoid confusing majority opinion with truth' (p. 79). What an admirable sentiment, but what a pity that Gordon should now have closed his mind so that he confuses minority opinion with truth. We are reminded of Elliot Smith's phrase in his 1928 Huxley Memorial Lecture: 'The set attitude of mind of a scholar may become almost indistinguishable from a delusion.' Once after a lecture in California we were asked by an anxiously interested lady, a kind of Mrs Betty Bugbee Cusack, why scholars like Lowie and Dixon and Wauchope would have no truck with Egyptians and lost tribes in America, nothing to do with Atlantis and Mu. 'Can't we believe what we read in books?' she cried in despair (and with what joy she will seize on Before Columbus). Perhaps her best answer is contained in two sentences on page 38 of Gordon's book: 'Ignorance is a curable disease', and 'Not everything written as history is true.'

The death of T. C. Lethbridge in the early autumn of last year took away from us a man

who had been a colourful, stimulating, provocative and often controversial figure in British archaeology; a man who could very properly be described, in Cyrus Gordon's phrase, as one who throughout his life kept an open mind and avoided confusing majority opinion with truth. Tom Lethbridge was one of the last of that invaluable band of dilettante scholars and skilled devoted amateurs of whom we have had so many in Britain. The long list begins, if we exclude the antiquaries of the 17th and 18th centuries, with men such as John Frere and William Pengelly, and continues through Lubbock, Greenwell, Pitt-Rivers, Williams Freeman, Alexander Keiller, the Curwens and many another to the present day-indeed the present day represented by two of the Trustees of ANTIQUITY: Elsie Clifford and I. D. Margary.

Perhaps, for a short while, Tom Lethbridge was a semi-professional: he taught Anglo-Saxon archaeology in Cambridge for many years and was Honorary Curator of Anglo-Saxon antiquities in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. But even so, during those years one never thought of him as a member of the establishment: he stood outside, viewing scholars and crackpots with the same critical detachment and amusement, to the benefit of both and the advancement of archaeological scholarship. Much of his writing had a freshness and an eager restless sense of enquiry: we particularly remember Boats and boatmen (1952), Coastwise craft (1952) and Herdsmen and hermits: Celtic seafarers in the Northern Seas (1950), this last book described by Sam Morison as 'a chatty book by an imaginative archaeologist'. That was the essence of Tom Lethbridge: he was an imaginative archaeologist. Sometimes, not unnaturally, as with the discoveries of hill figures he was convinced he had made on the Gog Magog Hills near Cambridge, it seemed to many that he was too imaginative. Others warmly supported him. The Wandlebury figures or non-figures are unimportant in an assessment of Lethbridge's work: he showed us all that without informed imagination, the interpretation of archaeology could be deadly dull. This is perhaps why he and Cyril Fox were such close friends from their Cambridge days together in the twenties: both wanted to make the past of man alive.

The generation of young men and women who came under Lethbridge's influence at Cambridge in the twenties and thirties will never forget his enthusiastic reconnaissances and excavations, and his stimulating, wide-ranging and mind-blowing conversation, both in the field at picnics (the while Dr Palmer was experimenting dangerously with his home-made mixture of cyder and beer which invariably broke the bottles into which this lethal mixture was put, or Dr Lucas was announcing that all the manifestations in the fens were due to 'the great wind of the Resurrection'), or at those gargantuan high teas (four fried eggs and six rashers of bacon as the first course) at his house outside Cambridge curiously enough, as we now recall, named Mount Blow. Certainly the writer of these words will not forget.

Professor Christopher Hawkes, who knew Lethbridge well, wrote appreciatively of his work in *The Times* for 6 October 1971 and *The Times* and Professor Hawkes have allowed us to quote the following sentences:

To your notice of Tom Lethbridge, I should like to add two essentials: the strength and honesty of his character as a man, and the singleness of purpose that united all his work, as experimental testing of what he found by observation. He liked to respect the work of others; yet he preferred to test that too. . . . His wellobserved drawings had their part in all he wrote; and his exploring of ancient dwellings, such as the 'wheel house' at Kilpheder and round Cambridge of Anglo-Saxon and earlier graves and cemeteries, not only assembled facts in an array for which research will long be grateful, but made them reveal the lives that people had lived. His archaeology stretched back into the past directly from the present, from the people and the places he knew familiarly: it could start 'from your empty cartridge left smoking on the ground'.

The present writer well remembers the effect that Lethbridge had on him. Coming from an intensive academic sixth-form education to the Cambridge Tripos in Archaeology and Anthropology, he found the study of man's past academic and very learned: it was full of artifacts and taxonomy, of typology and cross-dating. The tub was there but Diogenes was missing. Lethbridge showed us Diogenes and brought ordinary man and the ordinary everyday doings of farmers and sailors into what had sometimes seemed from Montelius onwards as no more than a study of tool types and houseplans. He was a practical, sensible, down-to-earth countryman. He would have appreciated the following passage from Sam Morison's book, to which we have already referred:

Modern sailors are so dependent on the mariner's compass that they find it difficult to imagine how any ship could find her destination across a broad ocean without one. But the Polynesians did so in a wider ocean than the Atlantic and simple seafaring folk to this day do it. Fishermen used to sail from Newfoundland to Labrador without a compass. And as a sojourner on the rocky coast of Maine, I have heard a lobsterman say 'I don't need no compass to find my gang o' traps in a fog, or to git home, neither.' Ensel Davis, a mariner and lobster fisherman of Otter Creek, Maine, who died recently at a great age, was asked how he found his way home through fog without a compass. 'By the ocean swells' he said, 'they always run south to north.' 'But supposing there is no swell?' 'There always is one, even in the calmest day, if you know how to look for it.'

Lethbridge, like Cyril Fox, took us out from our studies and museum cases, to see how life was lived in Fenland farms, in Scottish crofts, and by fishermen and sailors everywhere. They have gone, but the breath of fresh country and sea air they blew through academic archaeology, remains.

And speaking of fresh sea air and swells, these words are being hammered out on the Purser's typewriter aboard the t.s. Bremen (mark V, formerly the French Pasteur, and now making her last transatlantic crossing, at least under the North German Lloyd flag) in mid-Atlantic in mid-December in conditions described on the ship's notice board as sehr hohe see and phenomenal. Looking out to sea from the comparative comfort of the bar, a glass of Steinhager (as privately prescribed in his

wisdom by the President of the Prehistoric Society) clutched firmly in our hands, observing the sixty-foot waves outside, and the passengers, glasses and ship's unanchored furniture within sliding from side to side with the confused regularity of the motions of the high seas, one is filled again with wonder, delight and admiration for those who, long before the compass and stabilizers, crossed the Atlantic in pre-Columbian days. We lift our glass to St Brendan, and keep a look out for friendly whales. How nice it would be to meet some modern Jasconius!

Readers will be interested in the dates of two exhibitions of special importance which will be mounted in London this year. The first is the exhibition of fifty of the finest pieces of Tutankhamun's treasure: this will open in the British Museum on 20 March and will be there for six months; Sir John Wolfenden, Director of the Museum, has declared that this is the most splendid exhibition the Museum has ever staged. The treasures are so valuable that they are not being insured: they will be covered by an indemnity for 'many million of pounds' by the British Government. This exhibition commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of the treasure by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon in 1922. The second exhibition is called Chaucer's London: The Mirror of all England and will be mounted in the London Museum from 1 April to 31 August (weekdays 10 to 6, Sundays 2 to 6). It will contain a rare wealth of medieval material assembled from all over the British Isles. Among those contributing to the exhibition are the Guildhall Museum, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Public Record Office, Westminster Abbey, the Glasgow City Museum, the Liverpool Museum, Exeter University Library, Winchester College, St Albans Abbey, and many private collectors.

To Dr Elisabeth Munksgaard, of the National Museum, Copenhagen, writes in a letter dated 16 June 1971:

Inspired by the satirical masterpiece mentioned in the June 1971 issue of ANTIQUITY I should very much like to draw your attention (and that

of the readers, too) to the most amusing archaeological satire I have ever had the privilege to read. I refer to the German publication by Hans Traxler, Die Wahrheit über Hänsel und Gretel. Die Dokumentation des Märchen der Brüder Grimm. Eine glaubwürdige Parodie (Bärmeier & Nikel, Frankfurt/Main, 1963; pocket edition by Heyne Verlag, Munich, 1967).

This excellent book is not only very wicked; it is also uproariously funny. I shall not go through the contents in detail thus spoiling the mirth of future readers—but only mention the hilarious idea of an amateur archaeologist setting out to find and excavate the witch's house (taking the contents of the fairy tale as gospel truth). The satire and wickedness is very subtle throughout as the description of reasoning and conclusions, C14 tests, dendrochronology, chemical analyses, and anthropological determinations comes so near to sober truth that it sends cold shivers down one's spine. An awful warning to us all and a very clever lesson in curbing too vivid imaginations.

There is only one drawback concerning this nasty masterpiece (which is also amply illustrated with the most gorgeous photographs)—it is out of print. May this letter inspire the publishers to issue a new edition!

This exquisite publication has done much to restore one's faith in the German nation which has always been justly stigmatized as having no sense of humour whatsoever. But Mr Traxler has certainly done more for his country than a host of politicians could ever hope to attain.

If any reader of ANTIQUITY should know of other archaeological satires, maybe the editor would undertake to publish the titles to enlighten all of us who can't resist "The lighter side of archaeology" (cf. Antiquity, x1, 1937, 80 ff.). How about a column headlined, "Though this be method, yet there is madness in it'? (May the great poet forgive me!)

Finally an apology to author and reviewer of I vetri romani del Museo di Aquileia (Pubblicazioni dell' Associazione Nazionale per Aquileia): M. C. Calvi and Dr D. B. Harden. The correct title is as above and needs amending in our December 1971 issue p. 307 and in Contents and Index of the same number. P. 307, l. 47, col. 2, for grazed read grozed and p. 308, l. 2, col. 1 for Clavi read Calvi. We are sorry about these careless errors: transatlantic editing and production has its problems!