

Dear Sir/Madam,

A conversation with Paul will quickly leap you beyond the mundane. Whether it be the marvels of classical architecture, or the pitfalls of mismatched Doric and Corinthian orders; the sensicalness of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear's nonsense poetry, or the greatness of Oscar Wilde's witticisms; the sparkling maps, battles, and histories of his own Ostroco world, or the adventurous oeuvres of C. S. Lewis, P. G. Wodehouse, and Arthur Conan Doyle, Paul will take you through them with opinions, criticism, and, perhaps most strongly, a desire to hear what you think.

Every literary recommendation I have offered to Paul has come alive, before meeting a very genuine, sensitive personal critique. He has dramatised the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins before remarking on Hopkins' amusing parochialisms. He has taken me through stories by Doyle while noting the popular mechanisms that prevent detective novels from becoming truly literary texts. We have performed the Importance of Being Earnest and An Ideal Husband, while Paul discusses the social flippancy offered by one versus the political critique offered by the other. As a tutor, it is a delight to teach Paul. Indeed, Doyle and Wilde were not new to him.

Paul's capacity for prolonged, attentive, and rigorous creation is exemplified in his Ostroco project, which has been active for three years. Each field - that range from studies of flags, to mythical creatures, to economics, monarchy, and cartography - is fleshed out with an abundance of artistic sketches and textual explorations. He delves into his imagined world with thousands of words, producing centuries of constantly changing and unpredictable history. Inspired by his own extensive knowledge of Russian, British, and French history, he has pushed Ostroco to become an original world while maintaining essential, realistic structures. Borders shift, monarchs are killed, economies rise and fall, and new languages are born. There is only one thing that only goes up in Ostroco, and that is the currency.

A highpoint of my work with Paul was the creation of an Ostrokian version of Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem, The Jabberwocky, that we named The Glumphoshnaak. It was a magical collision of poetic structures, scrupulous imaginative work, and study of Carroll's poem. As a part of a series of mythical legends of Ostroco, named the Forgotten Tales, Paul created a story in which a knight slays Paul's own, Ostrokian monster. From there, we toyed with language, twisting and turning it while envisioning the true sense of the scenes, to create 'nonsense'. We edited and re-edited to create rhythm, pace, rhyme, and sense from words that have never been used in the English language. The Glumphoshnaak was completed in two, intensive, four-hour sessions, with Paul driving the revisions until he was satisfied. The final piece is a testament to Paul's imaginative ability and commitment to create something new, and something of a very high standard, to which he holds all of his work.

Paul edited his second novel, The Diamond of the Chess Player, for one to two hours everyday between September to January, and this determined and considered effort exemplifies how Paul approaches everything that he enjoys. One can see this, and the extent of Paul's reading, in the language of the novel. Complex clauses and subclauses are perforated with Victorian colloquialisms, in a highly stylised use of dialogue and straight prose that is acutely in line with the period in which the text is set. It is a feat of editing; punctuated and worded with accuracy and intention, that maintains the pace, imagination, and fluidity of Paul's original concept. Professor Eilfort - a Victorian eccentric-cum-detective who is terrified of pigeons - is alive. Characters abound, each individually defined in their fashions, language, and behaviour. They roam through the real streets of Paris that are realised by Paul's fastidious study of the city, its architecture, titles, and environs.

It has been a joy to teach Paul. He converses about the arts with a rare ease, happiness, and excitement. He offers perspectives and possibilities to subjects he has only just been introduced to. The natural intelligence and industry that goes into his work lets it speak for itself.



Yours sincerely
Polly Allingham
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