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Author: Rowan Holmes

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Freie Universität Berlin
Global Histories: A Student Journal
Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut
Koserstraße 20
14195 Berlin

Contact information:

For more information, please consult our website www.globalhistories.com or contact the editor at: admin@globalhistories.com.

Microhistory Interrogates a Mystery: On Some Possible New Relations in the ‘Somerton Man’ or ‘Tamám Shud’ Case

ROWAN HOLMES

Rowan Holmes is an ageing amateur recluse who hides, as far as possible, in the Blue Mountains outside of Sydney, Australia. He is currently studying for a doctorate in experimental music and microhistorical studies are presently a side project. His hobby is snoozing on the couch in the company of his Siamese cats.

Microhistorical methods are used to examine evidence surrounding the ‘Somerton Man’ case, in which the body of a unknown man was found on a beach in Adelaide, South Australia, in December 1948. All identifying items had been removed from the man’s body, including the labels on his clothing. The case is connected with a strange code inscribed in the back page of a copy of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám which was found nearby. The man has never been identified or the code solved. The author looks into details of a series of strange deaths which occurred in Sydney, Australia, three years earlier, uncovering new material which suggests for the first time a possible connection between the two series of events. A recent identification of ‘Somerton Man’ as an errant Russian intelligence officer is discussed, together with the case’s possible presence in the context of Cold War atomic espionage. Lacunae prevent firm conclusions being reached.

Introduction

Carlo Ginzburg dates the first formal use of the word ‘microhistory’ to 1959. This use was by the American historian George Stewart, in his book *Pickett’s Charge: A Microhistory of the Final Charge at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863*, a detailed examination of a single action by a single Confederate unit at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Discussing *Pickett’s Charge*, Ginzburg warns that Stewart’s speculations on how the failure of this single charge might have stochastically cascaded all the way ‘upwards’ to macrohistorically changing the outcome of the Civil War “could wind up as a reflection upon Cleopatra’s nose.”¹

Ginzburg’s own work, *The Cheese and the Worms*, a study of a previously obscure victim of the Inquisition, is described by its author as “the minute analysis of a circumscribed documentation, tied to a person who was otherwise unknown.”² He emphasises “that the obstacles interfering with research in the form of lacu-

¹ Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It,” trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi, *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (Autumn, 1993): 12.

² *Ibid.*, 22.

nae or misrepresentation in the sources must become part of the account.”³ Thus, Ginzburg has unknowingly described (and circumscribed) the present document, which is a study of the microhistory around a man who was already dead and carefully denuded of an identity at the time that he came to the attention of the world. The death of ‘Somerton Man’ in 1948 became one of the most famous cold cases in Australian history. I became interested in the case as a consequence of postgraduate research into other matters extraneous to this study; I thought it might serve as an interesting canvas for the illustration of certain postulates within the creative arts. Investigating casually, I found that there was a great deal of ambiguity and seemingly ill-informed speculation about the case, especially on the Internet. I set out to apply historical principles, in the sense that I attempted to separate speculation from such hard facts as could be ascertained from the study of scattered and fragmentary surviving documentation, precisely as Ginzburg has said. I had no idea that what I would find would serve to deepen and broaden the mystery, and frankly I was expecting the very opposite to occur. This is what I have established so far.

Background

Tuesday, 30 November 1948 was the last day of spring in Australia. In the city of Adelaide in South Australia, the weather was unseasonably warm, reaching up to 24.6°C. Several suburbs away from the city centre, the suburb of Glenelg meets the Indian Ocean at St Vincent Gulf. A beach stretches north and south in front of an esplanade romantically entitled either ‘North’ or ‘South Esplanade’; it has always been a popular spot for a postprandial stroll or assignation. The beach and esplanade extend southwards to the locality of Somerton Park, where the beach takes the name of the suburb. Across the esplanade from what was then the Somerton Home for Crippled Children, a large Victorian house on the corner of Bickford Terrace, a set of steps runs down to the beach over a low seawall. An evening stroller, a jeweller named John Lyons, passed that point with his wife, heading southwards along the beach to their home. The couple’s attention was drawn to a well-dressed man who was lying on the sand beside the stairs, his head propped up by the seawall. The man was wearing a suit and tie and, unusually for the season, a knitted pullover. However, he was devoid of a hat, which was noteworthy in those days, particularly given his otherwise formal attire. This led the Lyons to presume that the man was drunk. As they joked about reporting him to the police, the man raised his right arm upwards until it fell flat again. The Lyons presumed that the man was hopelessly drunk and attempting to light a cigarette, and continued their stroll, after Lyons had noted the time to be 7pm.⁴

³ Ginzburg, “Microhistory,” 28.

⁴ These circumstances are set out in detail in the inquest papers; see Thomas Cleland, *Inquest into the death of a body located at Somerton Beach on 1.12.48*, report, City Coroner’s Office,

The same man—or presumably the same man, nobody saw the face clearly—was seen in the same place by another couple sitting on a bench on the Esplanade about half an hour later. The woman thought he might be dead; her boyfriend joked that the man would have to be dead drunk to be able to ignore the mosquitoes clustering about him. They moved on at around 8pm: the lights were already on along the Esplanade. The man was still there.

He was still there the next morning, as John Lyons discovered when he rose early for a swim prior to work. He and a friend noticed a couple of people illegally exercising horses on the beach, who were looking fixedly at the spot where Lyons had seen the man before. He went over and saw, presumably, the same man he had seen the night before in the same place. The man was dead, stiff and cold, and Lyons fetched a policeman, who found no marks of violence on the body and no signs of a struggle in the sand where it lay. An ambulance was called and the body was conveyed to the Royal Adelaide Hospital, where the death was confirmed by the doctor on duty.

After this examination, which revealed that the body had belonged to a middle-aged man perhaps around 45 years old, with hazel eyes and fair or reddish hair greying at the temples, the body was taken on to the City Mortuary, where it was prepared for storage. As part of this process the clothing was removed and searched for identification. It was here that the first of a sequence of increasingly strange enigmas was noted: despite the presence of a few quotidian items in the pockets of the dead man such as cigarettes, local bus and train tickets and a half-empty box of matches, neither wallet nor keys were found. Nor was there a ration card, then still necessary in Australia for some items. He might perhaps have been robbed as he lay dead or dying on the beach, but when his pullover and suit coat were examined further it was found that the maker's labels had also been removed.

An autopsy was then held at the Mortuary, which was inconclusive as to the cause of death; the condition of the body suggested poisoning, but on analysis of the stomach and other specimens no common poison could be found, a circumstance which astonished the doctor conducting the process. Word of the mysterious fatality spread to the Adelaide newspapers, and the first of many apparently false identifications took place as the autopsy was being conducted. In the months to come, over seventy such misidentifications would be made.

The police sent photographs and fingerprints of the dead man interstate and eventually overseas; no country would admit to possessing him. The body was embalmed in early January 1949, pending further enquiries.

On 14 January 1949, Adelaide detectives took possession of a suitcase left unclaimed at Adelaide Railway Station. It had been lodged there on 30 December and never called for. The suitcase—which had had all identifying labels removed—contained mostly clothing and work tools. Almost all the labels had been removed

Adelaide, South Australia (Spelling and punctuation as original throughout).

from the clothing as well, except for three items which were hard to treat in that way, as they each had marks bearing a variation on the name 'T. Keane' or 'Kean.' A special brand of thread found in the suitcase matched that used in repairs to the Australian-made trousers the man had been wearing. There was nothing of a personal nature, such as photographs or identity papers or letters, other than some unused airmail envelopes and a few coins of loose change.

An unlabelled jacket found in the suitcase was confirmed from its construction as having been made in America, as was an aluminium comb found on the body. Enquiries into 'T. Keane' led nowhere at the time. But I have found an interesting possibility which seems to have been overlooked by all previous authors on this case: in 1945 a Victorian newspaper reported on the expulsion of a railway shop steward in inner-city Melbourne from the left-leaning Australian Labor Party (ALP). The man, who had been secretary of the Newport branch of the ALP until he was expelled for alleged 'Communist sympathies,' was named Tom Keane.⁵ Nothing further is presently known of him; perhaps the obscurity of the newspaper story and the lack of further publicity prevented this possible link from becoming more widely known until newspaper archives became searchable by computer.

In early April 1949, an inquest was announced into the death of 'Somerton Man.' In the course of preparations for this procedure, a pathologist, John Burton Cleland, conducted a second autopsy on the body. Examining the man's clothing, Cleland discovered a small roll of paper in a fob pocket inside the waistband of the dead man's trousers. When unrolled, this contained two words in an 'oriental' typeface: "Tamám Shud." These words were eventually discovered to be the concluding phrase in the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, a selection of Persian poetry from the 11th Century CE. This book was in wide circulation in English-speaking countries at the time, in a somewhat selective translation by Edward FitzGerald which dated from the 1850s. Superficially interpreted, at least, the roughly one hundred quatrains exhort a hedonism which mocks the pretensions of organised religion, emphasising instead the value of living in the moment, given post-mortem uncertainty. The concluding words are generally taken to mean 'it is over' or 'it is finished.' This discovery naturally furthered the perception of Somerton Man as a suicide who had successfully sought to conceal his identity; however Cleland, a highly experienced practitioner who was Professor of Pathology at Adelaide University at the time, was unable to identify the poison which had been used.

In early May, it was announced that the embalmed body, which was showing signs of decay, was to be buried after a plaster cast had been made of the head and torso for identification purposes.⁶ The Adelaide *Advertiser* also reported on

⁵ "A.L.P. Expulsions," *Williamstown Chronicle*, no. 5048, 27 July 1945, 4, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/6746572>.

⁶ "To Make Cast of Beach Body," *Adelaide News* 53, no. 8030, 2 May 1949, 1, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/11115264>.

the discovery of the Tamám Shud slip, for what seems to have been the first time.⁷ The inquest opened on 17 June, three days after the body had been secretly buried in the West Terrace Cemetery. It was adjourned indefinitely—rather than closed—on 21 June, with coroner Thomas Cleland (a cousin of the pathologist) finding that the death was not accidental and was probably caused by a glucoside poison. Whether that poison was self-administered or not Cleland refused to determine.⁸

A month after the inquest, a story was published in the *Adelaide News* which stressed that the police were still looking for a copy of the *Rubáiyát* which might have once contained the slip of paper. Despite the fact that the article itself admitted that this was “a million to one chance,”⁹ a copy of the book was handed in to the Adelaide police the very next day, by a gentleman whose identity remains uncertain. He stated that the day before the body was discovered he had found the book in the back seat of his car, which was parked near Somerton Beach, and that he had forgotten about the incident until he had read the newspaper story.¹⁰

A torn portion in the last printed page of the book appeared to possibly match the slip in the dead man’s clothes, although if the slip had come from that book it had been trimmed down. One of the police officers noticed that the unprinted end page had been entirely torn out. Examining the inside back cover of the hard-backed book revealed some lines of writing which had presumably been created by the impression of handwriting on the page which had been removed. These faint impressions were traced over, revealing still another mystery. There were five lines of text, as follow:

W R G O A B A B D
 M L I A O I
 W T B I M P A N E T P
 M L I A B O A I A Q C
 I T T M T S A M S T G A B

These enigmatic entries were immediately assumed to be a code of some description. If they were, however, the whirlwind of amateur cryptography which was triggered by the publication of a photograph of the code on 23 July signally failed to solve it. In fact, it has never been adequately solved, even today, seventy years after the event.

Along with this code, a number—or some numbers (as with almost all the primary evidence in this case, accounts differ)—was (or were) found on the tracing.

⁷ “New Clues May Identify Somerton Body,” *Adelaide Advertiser* 91, no. 28, 257, 3 May 1949, 1, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/36364854/2654492>.

⁸ Cleland, *Inquest*, 3.

⁹ “Remote Book Clue in Mystery Death,” *Adelaide News* 53, no. 8,100, 22 July 1949, 1, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/11111689>.

¹⁰ “Book Found: Body Clue?” *Adelaide News* 53, no. 8,101, 23 July 1949, 1, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/11111709>.

It is uncontested that one of the numbers proved to be the telephone number of Jessica Ellen Harkness (1921-2007), a nurse who liked to call herself ‘Jestyn,’ who had been born and trained in Sydney and now worked at the Home for Crippled Children in front of which the body had been found. She lived nearby in Glenelg, and a detective called on her.

Jestyn denied all knowledge of Somerton Man, while readily agreeing that she had once owned a copy of the *Rubáiyát*. It could not, however, have been the one found in the car and from which the Tamám Shud slip had supposedly been torn, as she had given her copy to one Alfred ‘Alf’ Boxall, an army lieutenant, in Sydney in 1945. She was now, she said, married to someone else and had had no connection with Boxall since.

On Tuesday 26 July, Jestyn was taken to view the plaster bust of Somerton Man. Again, accounts differ significantly as to her reaction; one of the detectives working on the case, Lionel Leane, said that she nearly fainted. Everyone agrees that she denied knowing the man and insisted that, whoever it was, it was certainly not Boxall. This was confirmed the next day, when police in Sydney located Boxall, very much alive and queuing for his pay envelope in his workplace, a municipal tram depot where he was employed as a mechanic.

Boxall told a TV interviewer in 1978 that once the police established that he could not possibly be dead and in Adelaide, they lost interest in him. He was, however, pestered by reporters who accompanied the police, and he showed them Jestyn’s *Rubáiyát*, complete with an inscription by her, to get rid of them. According to Boxall, Jestyn was a casual acquaintance who had given him the popular ‘oriental’-themed book as a farewell present over drinks when he was being posted to the South East Asia area; she had said “you’re going . . . into palm trees or words to that effect, you might as well read about ‘em before you go and she gave me the book.”¹¹ In 1949, Boxall told the reporters what he told the police; he knew nothing whatsoever about Somerton Man, and the circumstance of the repeated *Rubáiyát* he ascribed to an amazing coincidence.¹²

¹¹ National Archives of Australia: Australian Broadcasting Commission, Head Office—Television Features Department; C673, INSIDE STORY PART 2, 117 (Spelling and punctuation as original throughout).

¹² He neglected to mention that much of his military service had been with a reconnaissance and commando unit, the 2/1st North Australia Observer Unit, known as the ‘Nackeroos.’ In fact, his service record shows that he was involved in operations in the Timor Sea during the Timor Campaign of 1942, alongside the Australian author Xavier Herbert (1901–1984), already famous for his 1938 novel *Capricornia*, partly a denunciation of the treatment of indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory, and Herbert’s brother David, who commanded Boxall’s company. Boxall was working as an instructor in small naval craft at an Army transport unit in Mosman when he was given the book. He was kept on army service, mostly as a ship’s engineer, until 1948. (National Archives of Australia: 2 Echelon, Army Headquarters; B883, *Second Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1939–1947*, NX83331, Boxall Alfred, Service Number – NX83331: Date of birth –16 Apr 1906: Place of birth - London England: Place of enlistment – Paddington NSW: Next of Kin – Boxall Susie.

Subsequently

This is almost the end of the conventional narrative: with Jestyn reticent, Boxall pleading total ignorance, and the ‘code’ apparently unsolvable despite many attempts official and otherwise, developments in the case died away to be replaced by decades of speculation. Naturally the case migrated onto the Internet, and it is still the subject of attention in the mass media. Recently, in 2013, the Australian current affairs TV program *60 Minutes* devoted a segment to an extended interview with Jestyn’s surviving family members, one of whom claims that Jestyn was a Russian agent who had a child by Somerton Man. The family is divided over calls to exhume the body for DNA testing, although a recent DNA test conducted on the putative ‘son’ of Somerton Man by Jestyn (now deceased himself) purported to show that Somerton Man was actually of American origin.¹³

Jestyn, Boxall and other, more minor participants in the case whose stories cannot be told here are all dead now. The case, with all its enigmas, lacunæ and contradictions, seems to belong to microhistory now, as firmly as that of Ginzburg’s ‘heretical’ and combusted miller, Menocchio. And yet, the case of Somerton Man may still be capable of yielding new and perhaps useful information. My research into a series of strange deaths which occurred in Sydney in 1945, at the same time that Jestyn was giving her *Rubáiyát* to Alf Boxall and involving still another copy of that book, point towards a possible connection between the two trails of events. As yet there is nothing definite, but by referring to primary documents such as inquest and army service records, I have been able to trace out a sequence of events which possibly both deepen the mystery and extend its reach in time and space. However, much of what I have found is open to various interpretations.

Ginzburg opens *The Cheese and the Worms* with an epigraph attributed to the French author Louis-Ferdinand Céline: “Tout ce qui est intéressant se passe dans l’ombre. On ne sait rien de la véritable histoire des hommes,”¹⁴ which roughly translates as ‘everything of interest happens in the shadows. Nothing is known of the true history of humanity.’ This is perhaps an instance of the conspiratorial thinking which led Céline to destroy his own literary reputation in the late 1930s through hysterical, paranoid anti-Semitism which led inexorably to charges of Nazi collaboration, post-war imprisonment and abiding disgrace. We should be careful to not follow Céline down a toxic rabbit-hole into delirium by attributing more to the scattered if suggestive events than the facts themselves permit. What we are about to learn is surely strange and shadowy enough without any attempts to ‘explain’ it on my part, even if I knew how to do so.

¹³ See: Lisa Zyga, *After Years of Forensic Investigation, Somerton Man’s Identity Remains a Mystery (Part 2: DNA, Isotopes, and Autopsy)*, Phys.org 2015, accessed 12 May 2017, https://phys.org/news/2015-06-years-forensic-somerton-identity-mystery_1.html.

¹⁴ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (London: Penguin, 1992), v.

Sydney, 1945

Monday 7 May 1945 was a momentous day world-around, being the day before the surrender of the German armed forces. Anticipatory celebrations were widespread away from the front lines, including in Sydney, the oldest and largest city in Australia. However, one Sydney resident, an old lady called Augusta 'Pakie' Macdougall, would not live to see news of the surrender the next day; at around 7pm on the wet, windy evening, she was struck by a truck coming from the Army post office, a warehouse in the suburb of Surry Hills. The truck was passing northwards along Elizabeth Street, alongside Hyde Park in the city's centre, when it struck Pakie as she was crossing the street by way of the tramlines which then ran down the middle of the broad carriageway. The driver of the truck stopped and fetched two policemen, one of whom questioned Pakie briefly before she fell into a coma from which she did not recover before she died in Sydney Hospital the next day.

Pakie Macdougall was a musician and a pioneering suffragette. She had been running a 'Bohemian' club in rooms at 219 Elizabeth Street for over fifteen years. The eponymic "Pakie's Club" was a well-known resort for leading Australian intellectuals and their crowd of hangers-on, and Pakie's kindness and tolerance were legendary among them. The club had been partly decorated by Walter Burley Griffin, American designer of the original plan for Australia's national capital Canberra, in association with his wife Marion Mahony Griffin.¹⁵

The inquest into her death was held in what might be considered a rather perfunctory manner at the long-since demolished City Coroner's Court at the Rocks in Sydney on 21 May 1945. Pakie's son, Robin Macdougall, gave evidence that his mother was not suicidal; he stated tersely that Pakie was not depressed and also that her hearing and vision were adequate. The driver of the lorry, Private Wilbur Judge, said that he was moving slowly and that Pakie started across the road after having stopped on the tramlines. He braked but skidded and struck her with fatal consequences. One of the attending policeman said that Judge told him at the scene that Pakie "jumped in front of"¹⁶ the truck, and that he saw no skid marks in the road, although this may have been because it was raining and the road was wet. The other policeman stated that before she lost consciousness, Pakie had said that she did not know what had happened, and that he was unable to find any direct eyewitnesses among the onlookers. The sergeant at the police station where the driver was interviewed said that Judge had told him that Pakie

¹⁵ After Burley Griffin's early death in India in 1937, Pakie briefly shared a house with Marion Mahony Griffin in the Griffin-planned suburb of Castlecrag in Sydney.

¹⁶ Reginald Cookson, *Inquest No 45-611*, report, City Coroner's Court, Sydney, 14 (Spelling and punctuation as original throughout).

“suddenly continued to walk in the path”¹⁷ of his truck, and that on inspecting the truck he could find no marks of the impact. Again, he could find no eyewitnesses.

A lawyer attending for the army managed to get the sergeant to agree that Judge had said in the station that Pakie had “jumped”¹⁸ in front of the truck. Perhaps the intention of the army was to imply that Pakie had committed suicide rather than being the victim of negligent driving by a soldier, but this discrepancy was not pursued by the coroner. One can legitimately wonder about this, in view of the peculiar circumstance that while three other traffic accidents in Sydney on that day were reported in major Sydney newspapers, the accident resulting in Pakie’s death—that of a minor local celebrity—went completely unmentioned, with the exception of later death and funeral notices placed in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, presumably by Robin Macdougall. In any case the coroner asked no further questions of anyone and reached a verdict of accidental death. Quite possibly it was, but the number of deaths which may have a bearing on our study had probably already increased by one as Coroner Cookson made his findings.

A few days after Pakie’s inquest had closed, on Sunday 3 June 1945, a picnicker at the North Shore suburb of Mosman across the harbour from the central business district was looking for firewood when he made a different and highly unpleasant discovery: the severely decomposed body of a man. It was lying in bushland near the shore of Taylor’s Bay, a large park across the point of Bradley’s Head from Taronga Park Zoo. Police were fetched, and what was left of the body was eventually identified as having once been Joseph Haim Saul Marshall, a former citizen of Malaya who was thirty-five years old.

‘George’ Marshall, as he preferred to be known, was from a wealthy and prominent family (one of his brothers, David Marshall, became the first Chief Minister of the newly-independent Singapore in 1955). He had emigrated to Australia in 1939 after a quarrel with his father. His early ambition to become an author had ended in failure when his self-published book of poetry, *Just You and I*, had been badly received when it came out in 1931. In Australia, where two of his brothers were in business, Marshall had alternated between subsiding on income from property and working for the government. He had also alternated residence between Sydney and Perth on the other side of the continent. He had recently returned to Sydney and resumed residence in a flat in the inner-city suburb of Potts Point. Now he was lying dead in the bush in Mosman with a copy of the *Rubáiyát* open on his chest.

Marshall’s inquest, again presided over by Cookson, opened on 18 July.¹⁹ Marshall’s brother Saul spoke of his younger brother’s history of suicide attempts; he had been briefly institutionalised in Perth in January 1945 after an unsuccessful

¹⁷ Cookson, *Inquest No 45-611*, 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹ Reginald Cookson, *Inquest No. MS.45/988*, report, 1945, City Coroner’s Court, Sydney (Spelling and punctuation as original throughout).

ful attempt. In the hospital he had received insulin ‘therapy,’ a now-discredited technique in which patients were placed, sometimes on a daily basis, in artificially-induced comas created by massive injections of insulin. During these comas electro-convulsive ‘shock treatment’ was sometimes applied as well. Patients were then brought back to consciousness by further massive injections of glucose; sometimes they did not emerge from the coma. If they did, brain damage was not an unknown consequence of the ‘treatment’.²⁰

After an adjournment lasting some days, the police spoke of finding the body, with its head supported by a rock under which a copy of a Sydney newspaper of 20 May had been placed. A bottle of water and a tin containing a residual amount of toxic barbituric acid were beside the body; the *Rubáiyát* was open and facing downwards on the chest, with either one or two quatrains (again, accounts differ) marked in pencil. There is no mention of a corresponding pencil having been found on the body; in fact the police said that they had only identified the body in late June after being contacted by Marshall’s former landlord, as—like Somerton Man—“there was nothing amongst the apparel of the deceased to identify him by.”²¹

Marshall’s landlord said that he had last seen his tenant on 18 May, and had contacted the police after hearing of the discovery of an unidentified body in Mosman. A former headmaster of Marshall’s, now retired in Sydney, spoke of his having stayed in touch with his pupil, who had “a first class philosophic mind,”²² and how although Marshall had a deep interest in the *Rubáiyát*, unlike Marshall’s brother Saul, the headmaster did not accept the suicide theory, believing that “the appeal would have been rather towards a living solution than towards unsolved ending.”²³ The headmaster last saw Marshall late on the night of Saturday 19 May, when he seemed “full of good spirits.”²⁴

Next on the stand was a young woman called Gweneth Dorothy Graham. She began by falsely stating that she was living with her parents in Rockdale in southern Sydney. She said that she had been “very friendly”²⁵ with Marshall for several years, but had not heard much from him since he moved to Perth. In April 1945,

²⁰ It may be significant that Saul Marshall spoke of his brother David having received head injuries in a childhood car accident, and that his knowledge of David Marshall’s 1945 suicide attempt came from a mutual friend who was alarmed to be asked by David Marshall to pass on certain papers to a third party, since he said he was going away to the country and might not return. As Cookson did not enquire further into these matters, we presently know nothing more.

²¹ Cookson, *Inquest No. MS.45/988*, 7. What are we to make of this account? Did Marshall underline the book to leave a final disdainful message to the world, add a newspaper to the site to establish the exact date of death, and then—as Somerton Man may have—dispose of the documents which would serve to readily identify him before taking poison? Did Marshall wish to be identified or did he not? To whom?

²² *Ibid.*, 11.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Cookson, *Inquest No. MS.45/988*, 12.

Marshall had returned to Sydney and they had seen each other regularly since. On 19 May they had dined together, on which occasion Marshall had told Graham that he had sent her a cheque for £200 (about thirty times the average weekly wage) to enable her to realise her long-expressed desire to establish her own hair-dressing salon. She tendered the note which eventually arrived with the cheque, and spoke of Marshall's "extremely temperamental"²⁶ and "domineering"²⁷ manner. She had not seen him since they parted in the street following their dinner, after she complained of a "head ache."²⁸

Cookson asked no further questions and quickly ruled Marshall's death a suicide. This decision was reached on 13 August, four days after the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. The Sydney scandal-sheet *Truth* naturally found the material irresistible, with the combination of poetry, exoticism (the 'dark' Marshall was from a Jewish family), implicit sex and suicide, and it made the events the subject of a story in its edition of Sunday 19 August. A few days later, 'Gwen' Graham was the subject of more newspaper reporting: on 26 August she joined Marshall in death.

Graham's inquest, once again presided over by Cookson, opened on 14 September, a fortnight after the official signing of Japan's surrender.²⁹ Her mother was the first to be called. She said that she had last seen her daughter alive on 21 August, at the hairdressing salon in Kings Cross where Graham had worked. Graham was "not happy on the day of the Inquest on Mr Marshall."³⁰ Contrary to her evidence at Marshall's inquest, Graham was not living with her parents but was cohabiting with a soldier called Helmut Hendon in Kings Cross, a suburb adjacent to Potts Point where Marshall had lived. Speaking of Marshall by another of his adopted names, Lorenzo, Graham's mother said that the last time she had spoken to her daughter she had been told that "Lorenzo told her to break from Hendon that he was evil,"³¹ and that Graham herself "had discovered that he was both evil and ruthless too."³²

Without asking any further questions of Graham's mother, Cookson proceeded to call Hendon to the stand. Private Helmut (or Hellmut or Hellmuth—all three variations are recorded) Hendon declared that Graham had been living in his flat since December 1944 and had known her since January that year. She stayed in the flat while he had been in the hospital and away on army business, and he lived there as well when he was on leave. She had told him in May of receiving the money from Marshall; she had sent the cheque back but when it was returned unclaimed she had paid the money into her own bank account. Hendon stated that

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Reginald Cookson, *Inquest No. 45/1132*, report, 1945, Department of the Attorney General and of Justice, Sydney (Spelling and punctuation as original throughout).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 3.

“the death of Marshall seemed to upset her,”³³ but that “she said ‘She understood that when a man had nothing to live for [he] would take his own life.’”³⁴

The rest of his evidence was as straightforward as anything can be said to be in this bizarre matter: according to Hendon the landlady of the block of flats where he lived was scandalised at the couple’s de facto status and on the night Graham died he had “suggested she leave the flat and go back and live at home,”³⁵ whereupon she went into the bathroom, ran a bath, got into it and slashed her wrists. When she did not respond to his eventual knocking at the door, he went into the room and found her “floating in the bath with her face down.”³⁶ He removed her from the water and fetched a doctor who lived in the building.

Cookson asked Hendon no further questions, and did not call the landlady or the doctor in question. He took perfunctory evidence from the police who found no marks of violence on the body other than the cuts to the wrists, and declared that unspecified “further enquiries” established that “there are no suspicious circumstances.”³⁷ And with that the case of the death of Gweneth Dorothy Graham was closed, as is, almost completely, the narrative portion of our present story.

Reflections; Connections?

Ginzburg says, astutely, that “any document, even the most anomalous, can be inserted into a series.”³⁸ He also points out that “in any society the conditions of access to the production of documentation are tied to a situation of power and thus create an inherent imbalance.”³⁹ We recall the fact that Pakie’s accident and death were seemingly not reported in the prosaic way that other, similar events were on the same day, and wonder, at least mildly, about the possible relations of power and documentation in this matter.

One of the original investigating detectives into the Somerton Man case, Lionel Leane, told the same Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) TV team which interviewed Alf Boxall in 1978 that while he was investigating the discovery of the body he had found a hypodermic syringe at the scene.⁴⁰ But Leane did not mention this during his evidence to the 1949 inquest and the ABC documentary omitted this portion of his interview. Why?⁴¹

³³ Cookson, *Inquest No. 45/1132*, 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁸ Ginzburg, “Microhistory”, 21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ NAA: C673, INSIDE STORY PART 2, 61.

⁴¹ Again, it is interesting to note that Leane took pains at the 1949 inquest to state that there was no evidence to support the suicide theory (Cleland, 28), and, in view of no puncture marks having been found on the body, to emphasise that “I think it is probably quite possible

The available life story of Helmut Hendon is an enigma in its own right, above and beyond his involvement in this case. He was born Heinz Hellmut Hönig in Berlin in 1909.⁴² His early life remains almost entirely opaque before his arrival in Australia as a stateless refugee in 1937, but he came from Spain, then enduring the agonies of civil war, and claimed to have been one of that nation's leading broadcasters. I have not yet been able to unearth any evidence to substantiate his claim, but nevertheless within six months of his arrival in Australia, after changing his name, he was giving lectures on international politics over ABC radio. How did he get onto the national broadcaster so quickly? Exactly what did he have to say on it? (He also lectured on international politics and radio broadcasting at Pakie's Club at least twice prior to WW2.) In 1943, he was apparently conscripted into the army, where he was placed in an 'Employment Company'—a special unarmed rear echelon unit for 'enemy aliens,' where they could be safely watched. Despite all his apparent gifts, he remained a private throughout his perhaps reluctant service, and his service record largely consists of episodes of hospitalisation for rheumatism and episodes of going absent without leave. One of these occurs from 6–7 May 1945, the morning of the day on which Pakie fatally encountered the army truck.⁴³

After the death of Dorothy Graham in his flat and his discharge from the army a few months later, Hendon attempted to become an actor and writer. When these efforts came to nothing, he married and went into business with a jewellery wholesaler. By the 1950s, he was prosperous enough to buy a house in Castlecrag, the exclusive North Shore suburb planned by Burley Griffin (and once inhabited by Pakie Macdougall). I can as yet find no record of his presumed death and burial, but he disappears from the Australian electoral record in the late 1960s. Alf Boxall died in retirement in Canberra in 1995, having added nothing further to his views on the case. 'Jestyn' Harkness eventually married the car dealer she had passed off to the Adelaide police as her husband, and as mentioned she died in 2007, again without adding anything more about the case to the public record.

Pakie's Club was taken over by Robin Macdougall and continued operating until its final closure in 1966, although without ever regaining its prewar status. Hendon's name appears sporadically in its guest-book (preserved in the National Library of Australia) until the early 1960s, as do those of contemporary intellectuals such as Xavier Herbert (Alf Boxall's World War II colleague) and Miles

to inject into the finger and leave no puncture mark." (Ibid., 37) By the time of the ABC interview in 1978, however, after his retirement, he inclined to the suicide theory.

⁴² See: National Archives of Australia, Department of the Interior [II], Central Office, A435, *Class 4 correspondence files relating to naturalisation, 26 Apr 1939–31 Dec 1950, 1944/4/2763*; Hendon Hellmut Horace – born 15 December 1909 – Stateless.

⁴³ National Archives of Australia, 2 Echelon, Army Headquarters, B884, *Citizen Military Forces Personnel Dossiers, 1939–1947, N463175, Hendon Hellmut Horace: Service Number – N463175: Date of birth – 15 Dec 1909: Place of birth – Berlin Germany: Place of enlistment – Paddington NSW: Next of Kin – Wagner Wolfgang.*

Franklin. The names of Boxall, Graham, Harkness and Marshall have never been identified in the book, although since it was apparently only used on special occasions this does not preclude their presence there.⁴⁴ In 1947 a ‘radio chess match’ was held between members of the long-established chess club at Pakie’s Club and players in Canada. The moves were transmitted by radio, using a special chess code called Gringmuth notation.⁴⁵ This code resembles the letter sequences found in the back of the Adelaide *Rubáiyát*; in fact, there is only one letter in the *Rubáiyát* code which does not appear in Gringmuth notation, although as a description of a chess match the *Rubáiyát* code is meaningless gibberish.

Does this have any significance? Perhaps. In fact, it might be the occasion for a certain juxtaposition of the microhistory of Somerton Man with broader global politics. One of the attendees at the chess match in Sydney in 1947 was Fyodor Nosov, the TASS correspondent in Sydney and an alleged asset of Soviet intelligence.⁴⁶ Nosov’s name would later figure in the famous ‘Petrov Affair,’ the sensational defection of two married Russian diplomatic staff in Australia in 1954, amid allegations of widespread Russian penetration of the Australian government.

In fact, an Australian weblog maintained by former intelligence agents has recently identified the Somerton Man as Pavel Ivanovich Fedosimov, the former deputy vice-consul in New York and the alleged NKVD *rezident* (roughly intelligence station chief) there until his recall to Russia in late July 1948, after which his movements are unknown.⁴⁷ This attribution may be more convincing than others: Fedosimov had been the handler for American atomic spies until the American “Venona” program of decryption of intercepted Russian radio communications began to close in on them at this time. South Australia in 1948 was not only the centre of the incipient British missile testing system but was also reputed to be the location of rich new deposits of uranium ore.⁴⁸ (It was also claimed to be the location of a Venona intercept station.⁴⁹) Fedosimov certainly would have had

⁴⁴ It is also perhaps notable that in explaining his movements before the death of Dorothy Graham, Hendon was careful to stipulate to the coroner, Cookson, that the day before her death he had visited “Paekies in Elizabeth Street” [*sic*], although what bearing this had on the situation he did not explain. Cookson, *Inquest No. 45/1132*, 5.

⁴⁵ “A Test Match Would Take 16 Hours,” *Sydney Sun and Guardian*, no. 2305, 15 June 1947, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/24816141>.

⁴⁶ His signature and that of his wife are present in the relevant (unnumbered) page of the preserved guest-book of Pakie’s Club; Pakies Club (Sydney, N.S.W.) & Franklin, Miles, 1879–1954 & Keesing, Nancy, 1923–1993 & Gilmore, Mary Dame, 1865–1962 & Herbert, Xavier, 1901–1984 et al. 1928, *Records.*, accessed May 10 2017, https://www.eleceng.adelaide.edu.au/personal/dabbott/wiki/index.php/Primary_source_material_on_the_Taman_Shud_Case.

⁴⁷ ‘Gordon332,’ “Somerton Man: The Trap: Important Update: Match for SMs Teeth? Updated 22nd January 15.40,” *Tamam Shud* (blog), 19 January 2017, accessed 14 May 2017, <http://tamamshud.blogspot.com.au/2017/01/somerton-man-trap.html#comment-form>.

⁴⁸ See, for instance: “Uranium Quest,” editorial, *Adelaide Advertiser* 91, no. 28076, 1 October 1948, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/2657124>.

⁴⁹ ‘Gordon332,’ “Somerton Man: Venona or Venom? Why Was He Killed?,” *Tamam Shud* (blog), 9 August 2014, accessed 1 August 2017, <http://tamamshud.blogspot.com.au/2014/07/somerton-man-venona-or-venom-why-was-he.html>.

pressing reasons to be in Adelaide in late 1948, but he is also said to have subsequently served as a delegate to a Russian delegation at a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency in the late 1950s. This is not a confirmed sighting, however, and research is proceeding.

The American source of some of the clothing and impedimenta of Somerton Man is also explained if they were being used by Fedosimov, himself recently in America, although of course this contradicts the American origin of the body alleged by DNA testing. This origin story is itself contestable, however, as it was conducted on samples from Somerton Man's alleged son by Jestyn rather than on the body of Somerton Man itself, exhumation for this purpose having been refused by the South Australian government.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, there are also problems with the conventional explanation of Fedosimov's supposed arrival in Adelaide. This assumes that he arrived undercover as a member of a Russian delegation to a United Nations economic conference which was being held outside Sydney in December 1948. According to surveillance material gathered by the embryonic Australian intelligence organisation ASIO, one man and one woman from the delegation apparently went missing during their aircraft's refueling stopover in Darwin in northern Australia the day before Somerton Man was first seen on the beach.⁵¹ It is just conceivable that, assuming the man was actually Fedosimov and headed for Adelaide, he managed to get there overnight (a feat of considerable difficulty!) and died on the beach the next day in pursuit of some opaque goal. However, if that was the case, then Fedosimov also managed to fit in a stop at an Australian haberdashery to acquire a pair of trousers which had been made in Victoria, and also acquired some thread to mend them as well as the time and need to do so.

Clearly, all of this is very much a subject in a state of considerable flux, with various intriguing leads still remaining to be followed, but in conclusion the patient reader may be asking what there is which actually formally connects Somerton Man to Pakie's Club, Pakie's Club to the Boxall-Jestyn nexus, and any of it at all to the unfortunate Marshall?

The candid answer must be nothing—yet. At least not directly. And yet Marshall's body, complete with *Rubáiyát*, arrived in the record at about the same time and almost around the corner from the pub in Mosman where another *Rubáiyát* was exchanged between acquaintances. The Adelaide *Rubáiyát* (long since lost) is said to be such a rare edition that a precise duplicate has never been located, leading some to speculate that it was a special one-off edition used for espionage purposes. Perhaps it was, but the same claim has been made about the Marshall *Rubáiyát*, whereas I located a copy of that edition in the rare books

⁵⁰ And, obviously, Jestyn may have had a son with someone else altogether who was an American.

⁵¹ See: National Archives of Australia, Attorney-General's Department, Central Office—Solicitor-General's Office, M1509, 1, *Subject file, alphabetical series (classified)*, Correspondence, Reports and Statements, 1948–1955, Lapstone, 28.

section of an American university library. One should not get carried away into conspiracy theories: for example, claims about the existence of ‘micro-writing’ in the Adelaide *Rubáiyát* code seem hard to sustain, given that they are being made on the basis of a heavily enlarged copy of a photograph of a tracing of some faint impressions made on a page which no longer exists.

Even so, it is at least a little odd that the Boxall *Rubáiyát*, which survived at least until Boxall showed it to the ABC in 1978, is a dual-language edition which was translated by a professor who is credited with having done unspecified intelligence work for the Australian army during the war.⁵² The second language is that of the late George Marshall’s home: Malay.

Is microhistory mocking its adherents with still another ultimately meaningless coincidence? Ginzburg says that obstacles to microhistorical research must become part of the account of that research, like lacunæ in the sources. If the purpose of history is the search for meaning in events which have already taken place, what is one to do if study suggests that the events being considered *have* no meaning? As I tried to work towards some sort of understanding of these events, the incompleteness of the record proved frustrating, but one thing seemed fairly clear; whatever was taking place could not be understood, if it was to be understood at all, outside of the larger geopolitical milieu in which it was embedded. A few general remarks on this broader context will therefore bring this text to a close, rather than a ‘conclusion.’

A Dead Man on the Beach—The Dance of Politics

The story of Somerton Man took place in the context of early Cold War Australia, amidst nuclear shadow-boxing which would require a book to fully clarify. At the time at which the man was found dead on the beach, the British government had been frozen out of nuclear weapons research by the Americans, breaching a wartime agreement made between Churchill and Roosevelt (but not honoured by Truman). The Australian government had been declared a security risk by the Americans in May 1948, due to Venona intercepts revealing a high-level leak in the Australian government. The Australian government was already lending support to the British weapons testing programs with personnel and territory, particularly the Anglo-Australian Long Range Weapons Establishment, or as it eventually became known the Woomera Rocket Range in South Australia. The Australian government apparently accepted that it would be denied access to any resulting technology. A major influence on the British Labour government’s decision to pursue their own nuclear capability was the wish to maintain prestige against the Americans as much as to deter the Russians. There was also a fear of a uranium

⁵² “Malayan Nursery Rhymes,” *The West Australian* 63, no. 19144, 22 November 1947, 5, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/page/3813505>.

shortage at the major source for both American and British uranium ore at the time, the Shinkolobwe mine in the Congo. And, as we have seen, South Australia was something of a crossroads for all these powerful interests. It is notable that when the official enquiries into the death of Somerton Man were finally closed by the same coroner in South Australia in 1958, the second inquest document consisted almost entirely of a carbon copy of the first document with some general closing remarks being added by Cleland. Despite the finding of the Adelaide *Rubáiyát* having been made just a month after the adjournment *sine die* (to some other day) of the first inquest, despite the discovery of the code in the book and the world-around publicity given to it, despite the involvement of Jestyn Harkness and Alf Boxall in the case, however peripherally—not a single one of these matters is even mentioned in the official document which is supposed to close the official deliberations on the case, created and signed off with an open verdict by the same official who presided over the first enquiry. Does this not strike the reader as a somewhat remarkable oversight under the circumstances?

Still, the atomic connection *in toto*—like the identification of Fedosimov—remains speculative, however plausible. Other theories have been suggested; many of them, which the interested reader can easily find for him- or herself. It is often claimed that the death of George Marshall and the other events in Sydney in 1945 are not related to the main case. While it is certainly still a possibility that all of these very strange events are unrelated and the thread of the *Rubáiyát* weaving through this cavalcade of death really is, as Boxall put it, an astonishing coincidence, I would suggest that I have offered some tentative evidence to the contrary.⁵³

Postscript—On (And Perhaps Somewhat Against) Method

We began this paper with some reflections on Carlo Ginzburg's warning about the futility of what one might call 'speculative microhistory,' specifically the notion expressed by the author of the microhistorical ur-text *Pickett's Charge* that the outcome of a decision to charge a single particular cavalry unit at the Battle of Gettysburg may have materially influenced the outcome of the entire American Civil War. In a very worthwhile sequence of reflections on this question, Jill Lapore points out (from an American perspective) that "there is no American school of microhistory, no mission statement ... and few if any self-professed practitioners," (this was in 2001), so that "we are left to define the genre by its examples, except that, if my suspicion is correct, no one agrees on what those ex-

⁵³ As an instance of one of various findings I have been forced to omit from this paper due to lack of space, why did the Sydney-based newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia, the *Tribune*, advertise the *Rubáiyát* for sale in late 1948 and early 1949 and at no other time in its decades-long history?

amples are.”⁵⁴ She then points out, a little subversively, that none of the “hitherto obscure people” (a term Lapore cites from a conference’s paper call) who have been the subject of microhistorical studies were actually particularly “obscure” or mundane in their own lives, including Ginzburg’s Menocchio; as Lapore points out, “these stories are epics.”⁵⁵ Instead, Lapore suggests, the subject of microhistory rests “not in its uniqueness, but in its exemplariness, in how that individual’s life serves as an allegory for broader issues affecting the culture as a whole.”⁵⁶ In his paper discussing the nature of microhistory, Ginzburg cites Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* as the origin of his (and Tolstoy’s) “conviction that a historical phenomenon can become comprehensible only by reconstructing the activities of *all* the persons who participated in it.”⁵⁷ I believe that applying just these principles to the Somerton Man case, coupled with the acceptance of incompleteness both in the sense of unanswered (and possibly unanswerable) questions and numerous lacunæ in sources, is precisely what distinguishes this study as microhistory rather than biography or conspiracy theory.

The Somerton Man case as it appears in the light of my research is, amongst other things, a story of individuals interacting through and participating in historical currents at least partly beyond their control. I was not consciously aware of conforming to ‘microhistorical’ principles while I was conducting my research, but the idealistic socialism of Pakie Macdougall, the energetic ambition of the “evil and ruthless” cosmopolitan Helmut Hendon, even the recurrence of the ‘*ersatz*-orientalism’ of the FitzGerald *Rubáiyát* itself (now so antiquated but still highly influential at that time), and especially the hints of atomic espionage which seem to be constantly at the periphery of the Adelaide part of the story all serve to illuminate, in their own small ways, the broader canvas of Australian and indeed global history at a time of deep and tumultuous transformation. Whether Somerton Man was in fact some species of ‘atomic spy’ or not, speculation about this possibility may help to emphasise the significance of contemporary atomic politics which, as we have seen, impelled the Australian prime minister, Ben Chifley, to give his reluctant consent to British oversight in the reform of Australian security services in 1948 to form the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). This was a decision on the part of a left-leaning Labor prime minister which puzzled contemporary observers and has only been interpreted in the context of Venona comparatively recently.⁵⁸

In this way, ‘microhistory’ might perhaps be usefully thought of as a different and ‘broader’ kind of ‘section’ through the ‘cone’ of history. The history of the

⁵⁴ Jill Lapore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 1 (June 2001): 129–144, 130.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵⁷ Ginzburg, “Microhistory,” 24.

⁵⁸ See: Frank Cain, “Venona in Australia and Its Long-Term Ramifications,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 2 (April 2000): 231–248, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/261205>.

‘Great Men’ who give the orders is a small perfect circle taken from at or near the apex; the history of the you-and-me who execute, resist and do most of the endurance of the consequences of these orders is a far broader elliptical section taken from much lower down. Both sections are useful to the description of the overall figure; neither is sufficient in itself. Is it possible that they might even be complimentary?

Acknowledgements and Dedication

*I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Ms Iris Jastram, Reference and Instruction Librarian at Gould Library, Carleton College, Minnesota, for her location of a copy of the ‘non-existent’ seventh Methuen edition of the Rubáiyát (the version found on Marshall) in the rare books section of that library. Thanks are also due to Mr Timothy Pwee, Senior Librarian, Content & Services at the National Library of Singapore, for his kindly making available a scan of Marshall’s own book *Just You and I* for my research. The help and encouragement of my old friend Matthew Kay, a fount of knowledge on subjects relating to historical Sydney, was invaluable and is deeply appreciated. The profound usefulness of the Trove service of digitised newspapers maintained by the National Library of Australia is self-evident throughout this paper, and the cuts recently proposed to its funding would have amounted to a depressing act of national self-lobotomization. Thanks are of course also due to the staff at the Government Records Depository at Kingswood, Sydney, for their provision of the inquest records for Pakie Macdougall and Gwen Graham. Two anonymous referees provided valuable advice and input which reshaped this work for the better in revision. The patient assistance of Alexandra Holmes (no relation) of Global Histories was also greatly helpful throughout the process.*

Finally, this paper is dedicated to the memory of my late brother Simon Holmes (1963–2017), who swam so uneasily in his own particular microhistorical current. May he be at peace now in whatever, if anything, lies beyond what Ambrose Bierce called “the part of immortality that we know about.”⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Ambrose Bierce, *The Enlarged Devil’s Dictionary*, ed. E. J. Hopkins (Middlesex: Penguin, 1983), 227.

[Global Histories]

A student journal

Supplement 1

Microhistory Interrogates a Mystery: On Some Possible New Relations in the 'Somerton Man' or 'Tamám Shud' Case

Author: Rowan Holmes

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Supplementary statement by the author:

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I have been asked to add some clarificatory remarks to my paper by Gordon Cramer, administrator of the 'Tamám Shud' blog mentioned in the text, and I am more than happy to do so. In the first place Mr Cramer asks me to point out that his own background is that of a police detective rather than an intelligence worker.

Secondly, I would like to correct a possible misapprehension regarding the potential presence of micro-writing within the letters of the still-unsolved code found in the back cover of the Rubáiyát associated with the dead man. On p. 154 of my article I stated my opinion that claims about the existence of this writing “seem hard to sustain” given their provenance in a heavily enlarged photograph of ink tracings of the code. The tracings were derived from inscription marks made on the back page of the book as the original code passage was written above it on a page which was then torn out of the book and has never been recovered.

Mr Cramer has discussed his views with me and I think it is only fair to pass them on to the audience. The particular technique of micro-writing which he feels was being used, the 'Ink H' method, was a known component of the repertoire of the WWII British covert operation, the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Details of this method of micro-writing can be found in the official operations manual of the SOE, recently released by the Imperial War Museum.

Mr Cramer believes that the special physical properties of this method would survive the technical limitations I have mentioned, and yield themselves to analysis of the sort that he has done. The reader will already have gathered that I respect the research of Mr Cramer in a general sense; for instance, I spend some time discussing his identification of 'Somerton Man' as Pavel Fedosimov, which my own research suggests is at least one of the best possibilities, and which should be made the subject of further research by those unfortunates taking an interest in this very strange case. I do not have the expertise to evaluate the specific claims of micro-writing, and I take note of various objections made by various parties, but at the same

time it should be said that it would at least be extremely difficult to prove that there is not micro-writing present in the code and possibly in other material connected to the case, as suggested by Mr Cramer. It is still an open question which awaits further research. The interested reader is referred to Mr Cramer's blog, an address for which is given in the main text.

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Freie Universität Berlin
Global Histories: A Student Journal
Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut
Koserstraße 20
14195 Berlin

Contact information:

For more information, please consult our website www.globalhistories.com or contact the editor at: admin@globalhistories.com.