

**ELF**

**HT2006**

## A Nomad's Life

*A review of a book by Richard Grant*

Richard Grant is an Englishman who has spent his adult life wandering the wilds of America. His book, *Ghost Riders: Travels with American Nomads*, is as much a personal statement as an impersonal investigation: he hopes that by interviewing tramps and bullriders, RV retirees and New Age travellers, and by tracing the figure of the American nomad back to ecstatic poets and taciturn frontiersmen, taking in the wandering indigenous tribes of recent and remote history, he may come to a better understanding and a stronger justification of his own inability to stay in the same place for more than a few weeks at a time. The book, like its subject, has a tendency to ramble; there are places one would like it to go and it never does, but its diversions always end up somewhere interesting.

The urge to roam can be explained in terms of conscious and subconscious stimuli. On the one hand, there is a great history of human nomadism, which may, as Bruce Chatwin argued, have left its traces in the modern psyche—why are babies lulled to sleep by being rocked, if not because it reproduces the effect of being carried by a tribe on the move? On the other, citizens of what have conventionally been regarded as the world's more civilised societies have seen superior virtues in the noble life of the nomad.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the white frontiersmen adopted Indian customs, some going so far as to scalp their enemies. They grew their hair long and greased it with bear tallow, and dressed in deerskin moccasins, linen hunting shirts and breechclouts, a type of trouser that 'left their upper thighs, hips and a portion of their buttocks uncovered'. Such practices (with the exception of the scalping) can be seen in a corrupted form today, in the heritage get-togethers such as Rendezvous Days, where everyone dresses in deerskin and laments the passing of a better time.

This theme of corruption suffuses *Ghost Riders*—the idea of there having been a golden age, then silver, from there into bronze, and finally into the plastic age in which we live. The Native Americans had their lands taken, were corralled into reservations, and received the whisky bottle as their compensation.

For the ideal American nomad, the author has to look back into history. The prototype was Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, a conquistador whose incursion into Florida in 1528 ended in disaster and who survived for almost ten years thereafter, being enslaved by the Indians, escaping and trading with them, and finally being hailed by them as a god. When he returned to Spain he was shocked by the brutality of his compatriots, and could not bear the feel of shoes on his feet, of clothes next to his skin, or of sleeping in a bed. A few years later he succeeded in being chosen for an arduous expedition to Paraguay.

The Odysseus Syndrome (whose sufferer is so scarred or strengthened by his travels that it becomes impossible for him to rest) was also experienced by the mountain man, Joe Walker. He led an unprecedented trek across the Great Plains to California in 1833, and when he got there was offered 30,000 acres of free land by the Spanish governor. He turned it down, preferring the life of a wanderer.

Grant's book is not without flaws. Some of the glorifications of freedom and of the beauty of the wilderness come across as embarrassing, and have been done better by others. The decision to limit the scope to North America is a little frustrating. But Richard Grant's clear-sightedness regarding the less admirable customs of the Indians and his awareness of the selfishness of the solitary life strengthen the force of his eulogies. In our sedentary, possessionist age, *Ghost Riders* seems salutary and inspiring.

*Thomas Hndgkinsm, Literary Review*

**1 What is implied about Richard Grant's book in the opening paragraph?**

- A Its underlying motivation is subjective rather than factual
- B It is too restricted in time and scope to attract non-specialist readers
- C Its overall perspective remains something of a mystery
- D It provides clear evidence of the author's limitations as a travel writer

**2 Which of the following statements in connection with nomads is best in agreement with the text?**

- A They have consistently been treated like social outcasts
- B A life of constant wandering has little appeal to most modern people
- C Their way of life has often been idealised by other people
- D A nomadic existence usually promotes a healthier environment

**3 What is the reviewer's basic attitude to the "heritage get-togethers" referred to?**

- A Nostalgic
- B Quite enthusiastic
- C Sentimental
- D Mildly ironic

**4 What are we told about Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca and Joe Walker?**

- A They both became celebrities in their own lifetime
- B Both of them suffered severe hardships at the hands of the Indians
- C They were both critical of Spain's treatment of the native population
- D Both of them refused to conform to the conventional life of their countrymen

**5 How can the reviewer's opinion of Richard Grant's book best be summarised?**

- A Due to Grant's rigid commitment to a nomadic lifestyle, it is hard to take his ideas seriously
- B Despite the book's shortcomings, Grant's basic message is worth considering for modern people
- C The book's narrow perspective helps the reader to focus on Grant's general line of argument
- D Grant's book is far too ego-centred and one-sided to hold the reader's attention for long

*Please turn over*

## E-mail Relations

We assume that the opportunity to edit our written words means we put our best foot forward. However, a recent study indicates that communicating via e-mail alone can doom a relationship.

Janice Nadler, a social psychologist and Northwestern University law professor, paired Northwestern law students with those from Duke University and asked each pair to agree on the purchase of a car. Researchers instructed each team to bargain entirely through e-mail, but half the subjects were secretly told to precede the negotiation with a brief getting-to-know-you chat on the phone. The results were dramatic: Negotiators who first chatted by phone were more than four times likelier to reach an agreement than those who used only e-mail. In the study, subjects who never spoke were not only more likely to hit an impasse but they often felt resentful and angry about the negotiation.

While all sorts of online exchanges can be misunderstood, social scientists say that faceless strangers are especially likely to run into problems. "Through that initial phone call, people become real," says Susan Barnes, a professor of communication at Rochester Institute of Technology in New York. Simply foregoing common pleasantries can make a message come across as rude-especially if communicators don't know each other. A rushed e-mail may give the impression that the exchange is unimportant. And, because first impressions set the tone for subsequent interaction, Barnes says, the exchange can quickly go downhill.

Nadler says the missing element in electronic communication is rapport, that insync state that's easier to establish in person or by phone. Facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice—all these social cues are missing in e-mail (and snukey-face "emoticons" can do only so much to replace

them). But because messages travel almost instantly, people act as if they're in a face-to-face conversation, says David Falcone, a psychology professor at La Salle University in Philadelphia. Because of this illusion of proximity, we're duped into thinking we can communicate about touchy subjects, such as disagreements or criticisms, and that the tone of our writing will be perceived correctly.

Furthermore, says Nadler, just because we can send a message anytime doesn't mean someone is there to receive it. Yet people often fear a delayed reply is a potential blow-off.

And when we feel slighted, we are more apt to throw a fit via e-mail than we would by phone. "The anonymity of e-mail leads to rudeness," says Susan Barnes, adding we may not feel accountable, especially if we've never actually spoken to the other person. Even if we mean well, the lack of second-by-second feedback, by which we constantly adjust our words in conversation, can cause us to go on blithely composing messages that will rub the recipient the wrong way. John Suler, a psychologist at New Jersey's Rider University who specializes in cyberspace behavior, believes that talking first on the phone might set expectations at an appropriate level—an effect that then carries over into the e-mail relationship.

The less we know someone, the more likely we are to engage in what therapists call transference, the tendency to project our desires or fears onto another person. Without social cues, says David Falcone, these tendencies can run wild, causing us to interpret messages in ways that are "overly self-affirming and, potentially, extremely inaccurate." John Suler adds that in the negotiation study, the initial phone call may have served as a transference antidote, "making the partners more real to each other.

*Marina Krakovsky, Psychology Today*

**6 What is suggested in the opening paragraph?**

- A There is no basic difference between e-mail and other forms of written communication
- B The written word is generally less polished than face-to-face oral interaction
- C The notion that writing promotes more polite communication is not quite accurate
- D E-mail messages are often used to give too much personal information

**7 What was the specific purpose of Janice Nadler's research?**

- A To improve students' sensitivity to the legal aspects of e-mail business
- B To compare negotiation by phone with bargaining via e-mail
- C To investigate the nature of long-term e-mail business relations
- D To study the effects of a prior phone call on e-mail bargaining

**8 What, according to Nadler and David Falcone, is the general reason why some e-mail contacts go wrong?**

- A People tend to forget that e-mail is a more limited medium than ordinary talk
- B Many e-mail communicators think tough language will improve their status
- C The speed and practicality of e-mail may result in unnecessary messages
- D E-mails are too complex for their factual content to be interpreted correctly

**9 What specific aspect of e-mail is taken up by Susan Barnes?**

- A Recipients' reluctance to see how the wording of e-mails affects them
- B The failure of e-mail senders to make clear the intended meaning of mails
- C Recipients' tendency to misunderstand hidden insults in e-mail messages
- D The irresponsible refusal of some e-mail senders to state their full names

**10 What, if any, is the connection between e-mail and "transference"?**

- A Efficient e-mail exchange is made difficult by the lack of transference
- B Transference and e-mail use similar kinds of psychological language
- C E-mail appears to promote an excessive degree of transference
- D Transference is particularly common in business negotiations via e-mail

*Please turn over*

*And here are some shorter texts:*

### **Online Education**

The market for online education can be divided in three: schools, universities and business training. Since universities are where much of the early development of the Internet took place, they might have been expected to have pushed its potential furthest. But, by and large, they have concentrated on using it as a means of extending their geographical reach. On site, their record has been more patchy.

#### **11 What are we told here?**

- A Universities have been slow to take an active interest in the Internet
- B The Internet has helped to widen uptake areas for university courses
- C It is not self-evident that the Internet has great educational potential
- D Schools and business training have been left behind in the Internet race

### **A Famous Fiddle**

Stradivarius could have made the world's most famous violin, known as the Messiah. A photo of the £10 million fiddle had suggested the wood from which the violin was made was growing long after the Italian craftsman had died in 1737, making it a clever fake. However, Henri Grissino-Mayer of the University of Tennessee and his team of dendrochronologists have told the Violin Society of America convention that tree rings show the wood was hewn at least 50 years before Stradivarius died.

#### **12 What can be concluded from this text?**

- A The age of the violin is evidence that Stradivarius made it
- B There is still no absolute proof that the violin was made by Stradivarius
- C The wood of the violin proves that it is a genuine Stradivarius
- D It is more unlikely than ever that the violin is a real Stradivarius

### **British Deer**

Deer were once the exclusive preserve of wealthy landowners who kept them in their deer parks for hunting. Woe betide the poor commoner who was caught taking one: the punishments were brutal. Now that we riff-raff have access to deer and punishments for taking them are nowhere near as drastic, we don't. We now have different ideas about Britain's natural environment, including a more conservationist approach to hunting.

#### **13 What is suggested about deer in this text?**

- A In Britain deer have been hunted for meat almost to extinction
- B Only rich country people are allowed to breed deer in special areas
- C Deer now run a smaller risk than earlier of being shot illegally
- D Too little attention is being paid to the protection of British deer

## **Mental Health**

Research among more than a thousand 15- to 21-year-olds in Britain has found that 86% knew someone who had experienced a mental health problem. More than half knew someone who had self-harmed and as many as 76% of 18-year-olds knew someone who had been depressed. Of those surveyed, however, 97% said they knew little about mental health issues. More than 61% felt that their peers were likely to be dismissive of people who were mentally ill. The findings coincide with the launch of a government campaign in England to tackle stigma among young people about mental health.

### **14 What is implied here about young people?**

- A They tend to have a negative view of mental health problems
- B They have a supportive attitude towards friends who are depressed
- C They seem to know very few people with mental health problems
- D They are more tolerant of suicide among friends than earlier

## **Chinese Versus English**

Students at secondary schools in Hong Kong that opted to switch from teaching in Chinese to English in the last two years of schooling say their graduation results have suffered. The policy, introduced in 1998, forced 223 secondary schools to adopt Chinese instruction at junior level but allowed them to opt to teach in English for the last two years. Twelve schools decided to make the switch. Now students and parents claim the switch to English at such a late stage in their education has held students back. According to government analysis, the percentage of students with five or more passes in graduation exams dropped in Chinese-medium schools that switched to English. But the pass rate increased for schools that continued to teach older students in Chinese.

### **15 What are we told here about Hong Kong schools?**

- A Teaching in Chinese had been widespread even before 1998
- B Only a minority of them chose English as their teaching language for older students
- C Many of them preferred more teaching in English throughout school
- D Chinese and English have been used as teaching languages to an equal extent after 1998

### **16 What is the most reasonable conclusion to be drawn from the text?**

- A Using only Chinese as the language of instruction for Hong Kong students is a dubious policy
- B Teaching English as a foreign language has no future in Hong Kong
- C Introducing English instruction to Hong Kong students at late school stage is a questionable approach
- D Teaching in Chinese or English is hardly a big issue in Hong Kong

*Please turn over*

*In the following text there are gaps which indicate that something has been left out. Study the four alternatives that correspond to each gap and decide which one best fits the gap. Then mark your choice on your answer sheet.*

## **Computers**

Many people swear they could not live without their computers. Every office, every shop, every factory claims to rely on them. Nobody seems to resent this degree of reliance and there are those who .....**17**..... that errors are so few and far between that they can be ignored.

- 17 A deny**
- B maintain**
- C reveal**
- D question**

That is seriously wrong. There is nothing whimsical about the fact that computers are not completely reliable. It should be seen as one of the crucial truths of our time. When we have adjusted our philosophy and our attitude to life accordingly, we will be in a position to benefit.

- 18 A until**
- B before**
- C only**
- D even**

I well remember - when I was first shown an ordinary pocket calculator - being amazed by its ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide the most complicated numbers. In 19 out of 20 applications it produced the correct answer in fractions of a second, but .....**18**.....then I noticed that the twentieth answer was liable to be wildly wrong. There was no human error. The errors were produced by the machine.

- 19 A errors**
- B chance**
- C accuracy**
- D calculations**

It would be absurd to pretend that computers and calculating machines have minds of their own. As I keep saying, their propensity to .....**19**..... is not something to be whimsical about. It is a serious fact of life, and anybody who assumes otherwise is living in a fool's paradise. A madman will go on trying to produce the perfect computer which will never go wrong, never be vulnerable to sabotage and contain all human wisdom. A saner course, I would suggest, might be to accept that machines make these errors and learn to live with them. If the bank's computer erroneously pays an extra £20,000 into your account, keep the money and refuse to give it back. If the same computer erroneously removes £20,000 from your account, take your banker to court and publicise his behaviour in every available newspaper. Believe nothing a comput- er tells you, .....**20**..... it is to your advantage.

- 20 A however**
- B though**
- C unless**
- D whereas**

Auhermn Wough, TheSuttclcrvTelegraph

**That is the end of the English test. If you have time left, go back and check your answers.**