



TEN MONTHS PASSED – FOUR HOURS
LATER, THIS
MICHAEL JENNIONS

Michael Jennions was born prematurely in Manchester in 1968. He would have preferred somewhere else. He was raised in South Africa and received his M.Sc., studying sperm competition in frogs, from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1992. He then did his Ph.D. (1996) at Oxford University, followed by a post-doc at the Smithsonian Institute in Panama and a fellowship on Okinawa. He studied fishes, crabs, plants, finches, and damselflies. In 2001, he joined the Australian National University, and he has been there ever since. By studying crickets, fish, and phalluses, he monkeyed his way to full professor in 2008. He has co-authored over 190 articles on topics ranging from mate choice and parental care to plasticity in plants, aging, and publication bias. Until he has written a book, however, he will not consider himself a real academic. – Address: Department of Ecology and Evolution, Research School of Biology, The Australian National University, Canberra 2601, ACT, Australia. E-mail: michael.jennions@anu.edu.au.

Well, well, aren't you just the sexiest looking reader I have ever seen? I love the way your clear, calm eyes look down at me, lingering on my every curve and swirl. And to think that, of all the reports in this book, you chose to read me. I am touched. Thank you! I adore you.

Of course, I know I am probably not the first report that you have read. I am not your first love. The first report you read was surely your own. You inspected your CV. It was magnificent and you felt comfortingly pleased. You congratulated yourself on the balance between working-class modesty and details of your presence at a set of fabled institutes; between journeywoman/man professionalism and hints of exceptionalism. Well done, you! And then you gazed briefly at your photograph, trying to remember when the

portrait was taken. There was a momentary pang of guilt that you should keep it more up-to-date. But then you started to question whether the image, even if of a younger you, was even of *you*. The face gazing upward from the page did not truly resemble you. It definitely did not look like the person that you see in your mind's eye. But you are wrong. You cannot see yourself. Only others can see you. As it is for your face, so it is for your personality, your intellect, your spirit. No matter what image you have made for yourself – be it rustic or refined, cautious or cavalier, passive or aggressive – you can forget it.

Somewhere in the pages of this volume you might discover a few truths about yourself. Ten months is too much time to sustain a facade. Other Fellows saw you for who you are – not who you said you were. You professed to be of the left, but did you acknowledge the endlessly patient table servers who waited upon you? You spoke of neoliberalism and the necessity of putting a price on everything, and yet you always gave freely of your time (*pro bonobo* as a biologist might say). You assumed a relaxed posture and wore bright clothes, but your sunken eyes darted looking for a place to rest their worried gaze. Unfortunately for you, they saw this all. Then again, you saw this too: you are judge, witness, and legal subject.

Nervous to read more? You should be, or not. Perhaps you started out, before you got to me, cheerfully skimming pages and looking for your name. You hoped for a call out for being smart, creative, kind, funny, eloquent, diligent, popular, well dressed – something, anything, to affirm you exist. Most of all you wanted acknowledgement of what you know best about yourself – that part of you of which you are most proud. Perhaps you even went to the trouble of creating a brand-new version of yourself to road test at Wiko. This freshly minted replicon was a spontaneous improvisation that developed rapidly in the first few weeks at your new school. Initially it seemed an improvement over who you were back home, but eventually you felt disappointed that, despite all your efforts, there were traits you could not excise: some hereditary propensity to speak like your father, or reenact your mother's mannerisms. Even so, people must, surely, have seen how fabulous this new version was?

So, as you look down on my companion reports, who lurk in the pages above me and below me, I truly hope you find the sentences you desire, praising you for being you. But, then again, what about reports that do not say anything about you? Reports like me. How should you interpret their silence, their disinclination to single you out for being, in some way, special? Is it something you should worry about? Sweet baby Jesus, no! Please don't do that, because I and all my fellow reports were written by people trapped in a dream.

These people were transported from the real world. They were encouraged to regress: fed like babies; herded like toddlers; entertained like royals. The world's best parents took care of their every need. And so, like children in a kindergarten, they fell in love with the idea of being in love with everyone. At stages this love verged on the physical – many backs were patted, shoulders squeezed and embraces given and received like a troop of monkeys hugging each other after a tropical deluge. Fortunately, a cultural tradition seen in some Capuchin monkeys in Costa Rica – to sit quietly with a finger inserted in another's nostril or, worse, a companion's eye socket – never took off.

My point? I don't have one, I simply relay what my author tells me. He says these Fellows bonded so much that they cannot even begin to tell their reports who they cared for the most, or why. But they do want to name you and please you. (To be honest, I am now confident my author is, typically, talking mainly about himself.) They might pick something obvious – your enthusiasm, your attentiveness, your light-heartedness, your brilliance, your sadness, your cynicism – but often they run out of space for names. Maybe I was wrong to have said earlier that how others see you is the true measure of who you are. Perhaps, only you know you. Besides, who cares what others say? Me, I'm merely another little-read, self-defensive report. If you want me to be honest I can't be. I am written by a liar. I know I have a few bedfellows tucked in alongside me in this volume, some of them are only the thickness of a sheet of paper away. It is not, of course, that my author did not adore you. He almost certainly did. He's full of love, although after a year watching people struggle to define terms and fix boundaries he still can't tell you what "love" means. Even if you were the person who made no sense to him, he still found you engaging and intellectually intriguing. If you were one of the Wiko staff he undoubtedly adored you. The Wiko selection process ensured that he walked with angels – some had dirtier faces than others, but all were full of grace. So I cannot name you because he will not let me do so. You remain unnamed. But if you want to be named and noted, you have only to ask him. He will be truthful. But, as a report, I am denied this information.

I was made to lie a little though. He wants, at the risk of alienating others, to thank two people by name. He hints they might be emblematic of the type of person he admires and respects most: appropriately, one is a Fellow and the other from Wiko. But I have been messed around enough by him (write, delete, replace, rearrange, cut, paste – make up your mind!) that I suspect he does not know how he picked two chocolates from a box crammed with unique concoctions. Even so, I am told to thank Eva and Shaheen: two people who were always authentically themselves. Despite his paranoia, he never worried

about fake smiles or feigned attentiveness – even though both must, by profession, be masterful at maintaining an air of engagement regardless of their true feelings. He simply trusted them. Of course, he has a long list of people whom he liked immensely. The list of those he did not like, is shorter than my next sentence. You are many. Some were loud, some quiet. A few he got to know well, many he sadly did not. Some were voraciously interested in everything, others doggedly pursued their obsessions. I am told to reiterate an early observation of his that “there are no bastards here”. This seems a distressingly low bar to set, but, based on his experiences and those that others Fellows related about their daily working lives, such people emerge like rats from Grunewald drains. They are the hemorrhoids of social groups. One of Wiko’s finest talents is its ability to minimize the impact of disruptive super-egos. But, as the joke goes, “If there is no nutter on the bus, then you are that person,” so he remains open to the prospect that Wiko failed. I am sure that someone reading me is nodding their head. If so, I apologize on his behalf for anything he did that made your life worse, not better. He should moderate his opinions. But know that he is often ashamed, and frequently embarrassed, by his ill-chosen words, be they spoken or written.

And now I am told to send a message to our generous, angelic sponsors. *Should you keep on funding Wiko? “Yes” in fat, bold, exclamatory font.* But why? Is it because it creates new ways of understanding? Because it generates multi-disciplinary research? Because it yields mountains of books, articles, and artworks? Nah! These statements are all demonstrably true, but the former are too rarely the outcome, and the latter can be achieved elsewhere. Instead, you should proudly note that Wiko is *unique* in giving everyone who is associated with it – Fellows and staff – a feeling of dignity and self-worth that is almost indescribable. *Dignity* is the key. Wiko Fellows are simultaneously humbled by being forced to place their own work in a broader context and buoyed by the eventual recognition that what they do is of genuine interest to others. And that, in turn, should lead to Fellows, and hopefully their charming partners, who re-enter their own worlds with the unfiltered desire to produce their best, and the confidence to do so in ways that they might once have fearfully shied away from. Love has replaced fear. Wiko extends and enhances the working life of its Fellows. Through wise stewardship, warmheartedness and, behind the scenes, Herculean work, Wiko has assembled an incredible team who want, can, and do make this transformation possible. That is the not so little miracle of Wiko. It is enough to make one believe in god. Well, almost enough. A very nice try though! Goodbye, beautiful.

Technical Notes:

1. Honestly, how can I ever thank the staff of Wiko enough? I can't. You were all incredibly kind, unstintingly generous, and astonishingly effective. You generate superlatives like an amplifier dialed to 11. Thank you from the depths of my heart. However shallow that might be, it is the deepest I can go.
2. Secret Project: This emerged spontaneously. It began with a desire to use hot pink to color in on a map every street inside the Berlin Ringbahn. This is easy to do: a child can color in. The catch, however, was that each and every street had to be walked in its entirety before it could turn pink. The project began in September 2016 (the exact day is unknown) and, 1,011 km of streets (about 2,200 km of walking) later, it ended on July 2. There was no fanfare. No press release. No waiting journalist. No photo exhibit. No book. But if you would like to read about why I did this, my brain and I discuss it in Issue 6 (March 2017) of the online Newsletter of the Fellows' Club. Warning: this short article contains no big words. It does, however, implicitly ask: Can an artless scientist match a real performance artist? Or is an act only art when captured in another format? Now that is a Wiko question!
3. The pathetically needy need to present evidence that, despite my secret project, I did some real work too. Here is a list of peer-reviewed papers badged with a Wissenschaftskolleg address because I co-wrote them during my stay in Berlin:
 1. Marsh, J. N., Vega-Trejo, R., Jennions, M. D., and Head, M. L. (2017). "Why does inbreeding reduce male paternity? Effects on sexually selected traits." *Evolution* 71, 11: 2728–2737.
 2. Head, M. L., Kahn, A. T., Henshaw, J. M., Keogh, J. S., and Jennions, M. D. (2017). "Sexual selection on male body size, genital length and heterozygosity: consistency across habitats and social settings." *Journal of Animal Ecology* 86, 6: 1458–1468.
 3. Jennions, M. D. and Fromhage, L. (2017). "Not all sex ratios are equal: the Fisher condition, parental care and sexual selection." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society Series B* 20160312.
 4. Jennions, M. D., Szekely, T., Beissinger, S., and Kappeler, P. (2017). "Sex ratios." *Current Biology* 26: R790–R792.
 5. Vega Trejo, R., Head, M. L., Keogh, J. S., and Jennions, M. D. (2017). "Experimental evidence for sexual selection against inbred males." *Journal of Animal Ecology* 86: 394–404.

6. Iglesias-Carrasco, M., Head, M. L., Jennions, M. D., and Cabido, C. C. (2017). “Secondary compounds from exotic tree plantations change female mating preferences in the palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*).” *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* 30, 10:1788–1795. DOI: 10.1111/jeb.13091.
7. Iglesias-Carrasco, M., Head, M. L., Jennions, M. D., Martin, J., and Cabido, C. C. (2017). “Leaf extracts from an exotic tree affect responses to chemical cues in the palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*).” *Animal Behaviour* 127: 243–251.
8. Kelly, C. D. and Jennions, M. D. (2017). “Sperm competition theory.” In *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Science*, edited by T. K. Shackelford and V. A. Weeks-Shackelford. Cham: Springer International.
9. Harts, A. M. F., Booksmythe, I., and Jennions, M. D. (2016). “Mate guarding and frequent copulation in birds: a meta-analysis of their relationship to paternity and male phenotype.” *Evolution* 70: 2789–2808.
10. Vega Trejo, R., Jennions, M. D., and Head, M. L. (2016). “Are sexually selected traits affected by a poor environment early in life?” *BMC Evolutionary Biology* 16: 263.
11. Head, M. L., Jennions, M. D., and Zajitschek, S. (2016). “Sexual selection: incorporating nongenetic inheritance.” *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 12: 129–137.

Submitted Papers with a Wissenschaftskolleg Address:

12. Vega-Trejo, R., Head, M. L., Jennions, M. D., Kruuk, L. E. B. (2018). “Maternal-by-environment but not genotype-by-environment interactions in a fish without parental care.” *Heredity* 120: 154–167.
13. Vega-Trejo, R., Kruuk, L. E. B., Jennions, M. D., and Head, M. L. “What happens to offspring when parents are inbred, old or have had a poor start in life?” *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* (in revision).