

# **GENIUS WITHOUT GENIUS:**

**The Autobiography of John Franklin**

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“We’ve done a lot of work, a lot of study, on P. D. Q. Bach, just about the only study that has been done on P. D. Q. Bach, or is likely to be done on P. D. Q. Bach, and ...I think that it’s time, and only fitting, that we should go through his life. After all, he did.” — Schickele, Peter, *P. D. Q. Bach Strikes Back*, Book-of-the-Month Records, Camp Hill, Penna. 17012, 1981, Side 1.

*Sales Instructor*: Currently we are giving away a set of electroplated teaspoons with every four packets of Detto [soap flakes] purchased.

*Windrush*: Excuse me, sir, but has the firm considered the alternative?

*S.I.*: What...alternative?

*W.*: It just occurred to me, sir: sell the teaspoons and give away the Detto!

*S.I.*: Tell me: what is your name?

*W.*: Windrush, sir.

*S.I.*: Windrush...Well, Mr. Windrush, with your approach, I see not only no future for you, but no future for *us*. You’d better go, Mr. Windrush. You are *not* the detergent type.

— *I’m All Right, Jack* (1959)

“People who are happy about their lives and work don’t usually write about them. It’s the people who are unhappy who write.” — Holt, John, *Instead of Education*, Dell Publishing Co., N.Y., 1976, p.99.

“Submit to being called a neurotic. You belong to that splendid and pitiable family which is the salt of the earth. All the greatest things we know have come to us from neurotics.” — Dr. du Boulbon, in Proust, Marcel, *The Guermantes Way*, Part I, tr. C. K. Scott Moncrieff, The Modern Library, N.Y., 1925, p. 418.

“...there was a day that extinguished the last eyes to see Christ; the battle of Junin and the love of Helen died with the death of a man. What will die with me when I die, what pathetic or fragile form will the world lose? The voice of Macedonio Fernández, the image of a red horse in a vacant lot at Serrano and Charcas, a bar of sulphur in the drawer of a mahogany desk?” — Borges, Jorge Luis, “The Witness”, in *Labyrinths*, New Directions Publishing Corp., N.Y., 1964, p. 243.

“There lies behind everything, and you can believe this or not as you wish, a certain quality which we may call grief. It’s always there, just under the surface, just behind the façade, sometimes very nearly exposed, so that you can dimly see the shape of it as you can see sometimes through the surface of an ornamental pond on a still day, the dark, gross, inhuman outline of a carp gliding slowly past; when you realize suddenly that the carp were always there below the surface, even while the water sparkled in the sunshine, and while you patronized the quaint ducks and the supercilious swans. It bides its time, this quality. And if you do catch a glimpse of it, you may pretend not to notice or you may turn suddenly away and romp with your children in the grass,

laughing for no reason. The name of this quality is grief.” — Saunders, James, *Next Time I’ll Sing to You*, quoted in Stoppard, Tom, “Pragmatic Theater”, *The New York Review of Books*, Sept. 23, 1999, p. 10.

“...all this was given to you and, with it,  
the ancient nourishment of heroes —  
treachery, defeat, humiliation.”

— Borges, Jorge Luis, “Matthew 25:30”

“I believe life to be best portrayed as comedy.” — Mortimer, John, *The Best of Rumpole*, Penguin Books, N.Y., 1993, p. 1.

“Why would anyone want to read the autobiography of John Franklin?” — frequent reply to the author’s revealing he was writing this book.

“These fragments I have shored against my ruins” — Eliot, T. S., “The Waste Land”

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