

5-15-05

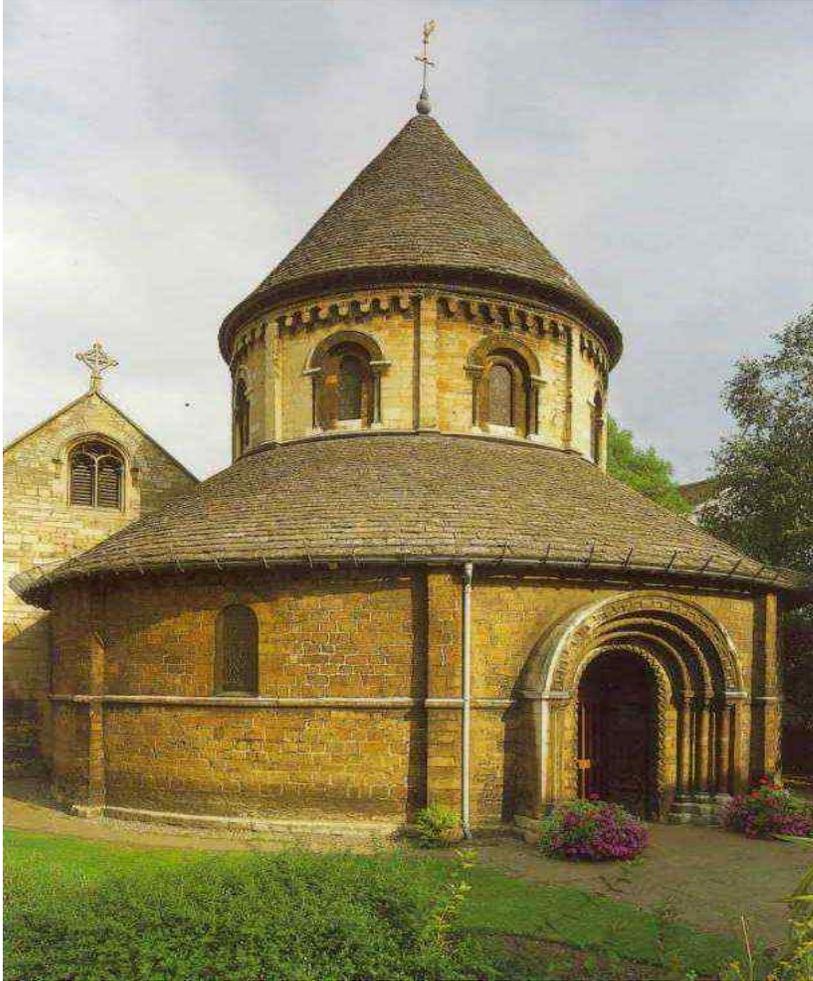
Dear Oisin,

I arrived in England just today. Since I'm missing you so terribly, I thought I'd write you a letter. In fact, I will try to write to you whenever the missing gets unbearable and the little hole in my heart feels like it's growing bigger.

I was just now thinking about the time I left Korea to come study in America. The whole first year, I had a hole in my heart that grew bigger and bigger. We didn't have email in those days, so every day I looked anxiously into the mailbox for letters from Korea. Haraboji used to write especially long letters in those days, filled with thoughts about, life, education, philosophy, history, etc.

I don't think they made the hole go away. In fact, it's funny to think that I can't quite remember what happened to that hole. Well, I have another one now, even bigger than that one.

After I arrived in the apartment today I went for a short walk into town where most of the university is. I don't think I told you, but the university I'm visiting is named Cambridge, and it's one of the oldest in the world. There are so many ancient buildings around I think you would have been very pleased. One of the medieval churches in town has a very beautiful image of Jesus, more plain and humble than usual, in stained glass. I'll try to find a postcard with that image and send it to you. Of course it's just one panel out of many in that one church, so it may be hard to find.



Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Cambridge

Another thing you would have liked is the narrow river going right through the university. It winds very quietly around the old buildings and under the pretty bridges. On the water, many of the students ride small, flat boats called 'punts.' Maybe some day, we can hire one and float down the river, looking out at the quiet lawns and gardens of the town.



Punt on the river Cam, passing under the bridge of sighs

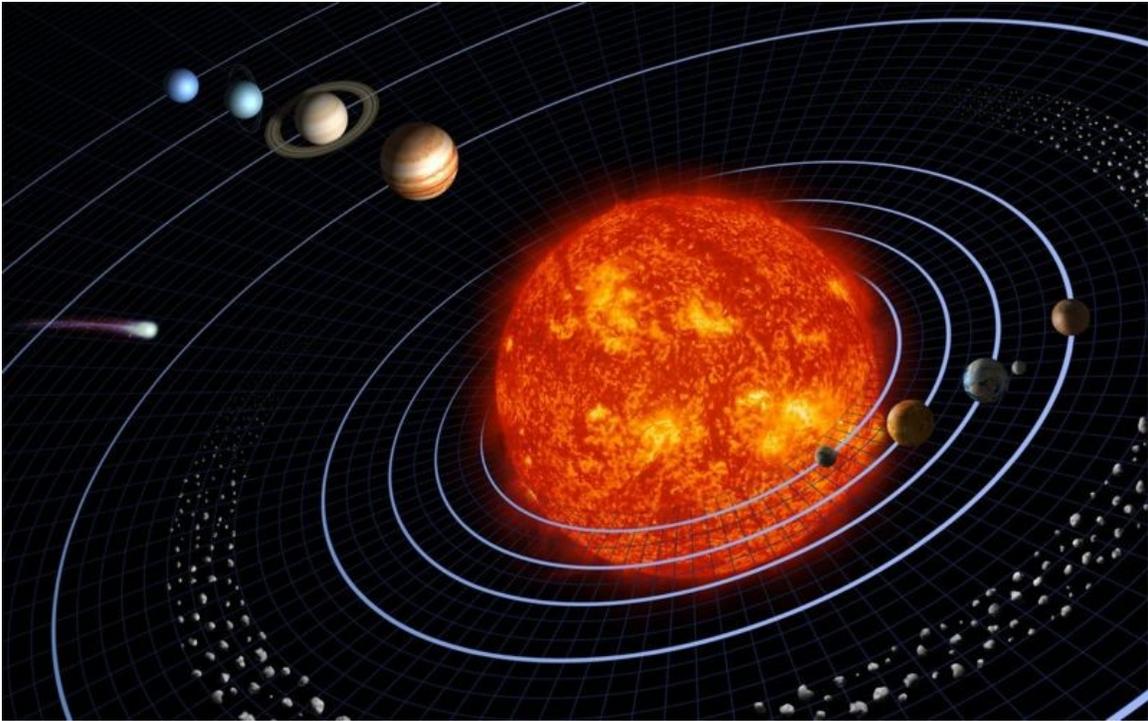
Attached to my flat (that is what they call apartments in England) is a backyard with a very green lawn. It usually rains much more here than in Arizona, so the grass is much greener. There is also a second floor to the flat and the main bedroom looks out into the backyard. Of course I rented this sort of a place thinking we were all coming together, so it feels especially empty.

The mathematics institute here is named after Mr. Isaac Newton.



Isaac Newton Institute

He studied in Cambridge when he was young (I think around the time of Louis XIV) and discovered the Law of Gravity. This law tells you exactly how the moon goes around the earth and how the earth and other planets go around the sun. It also tells you things like how fast a spaceship needs to fly in order to escape from the earth. The main device he used to figure these things out is called the Calculus, and we still teach this in every university. Some people like to say that Mr. Newton was the greatest scientist since Archimedes. (And then they say the greatest after that was Mr. Einstein who, in fact, found out that Newton was not exactly right!!)



Solar system

Well, even with a hole in my heart, I'll try to work hard here and figure out some things. Of course, they won't be as important as the discoveries of Archimedes or Newton, but still, when I figure them out, I do kind of feel like running around naked shouting Eureka.

As I was walking back from town, dusk started to set in. (Remember how late the sun used to set in summer in France?) I walked along a road that passed by a little graveyard. Of course it was covered with beautiful green lawn. On the other side of the road was a row of cottages, some in brick, some in brownstone, but all of them with pretty little gardens surrounded by hedges or low stone walls. The light, the air, and the sky were so quiet I was reminded of that poem we were practicing.

It is a beauteous evening calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a nun.
Breathless with adoration, the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquility;

The gentleness of heaven brood o'er the sea;
O listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder--everlastingly.

Dear Child, dear girl, that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine;
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worship'st at the temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

Come to think of it, William Wordsworth, who wrote that poem, also went to school here in Cambridge. (Actually, he didn't like it all that much. He was one of those people, sometimes referred to as 'Romantics', who thought that philosophy needs to be learned from the trees and the birds and the flowers, not from books. Of course, we know that philosophy needs to be learned from *everything*.)

I haven't slept now for over thirty hours since leaving Arizona, so I had better go to bed. Maybe we can try again to meet in our dreams and have a water fight.

Give Niall an especially big hug and share this letter with him. Be good to mommy.

Mr. D.



Evening sky in Cambridge