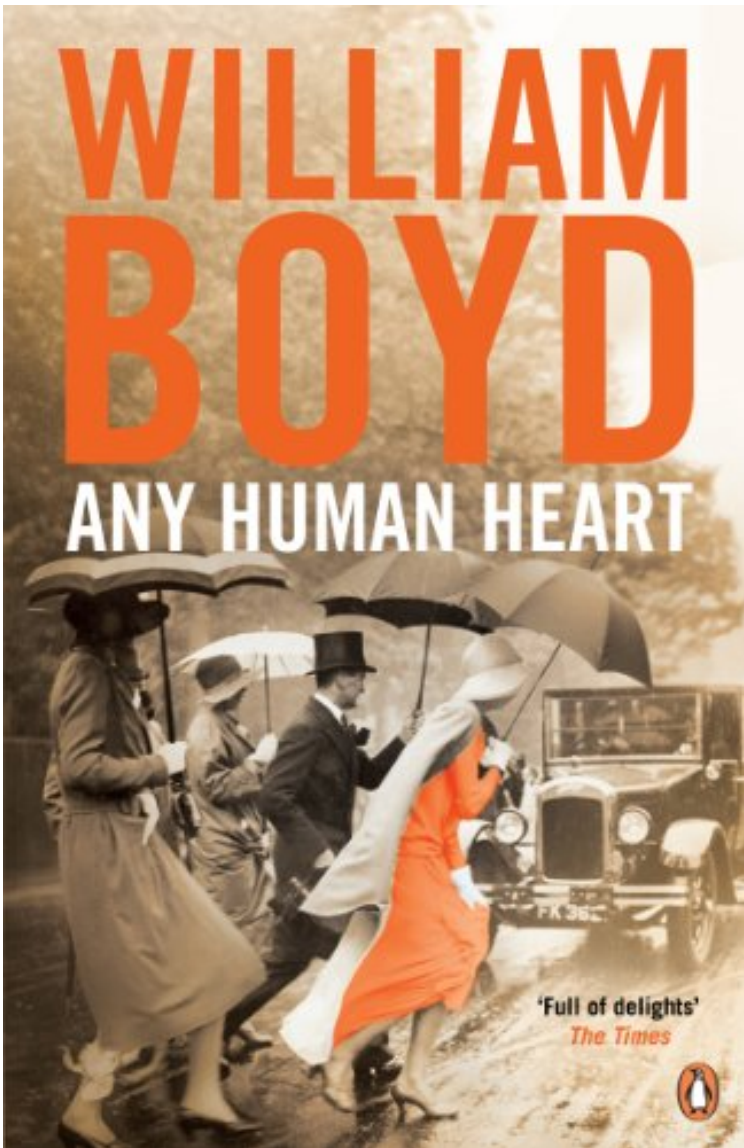


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Any Human Heart



Par William Boyd
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAny Human Heart is William's Boyd's classic, bestselling novel - now a major Channel 4 dramaEvery life is both ordinary and extraordinary, but Logan Mountstuart's - lived from the beginning to the end of the twentieth century - contains more than its fair share of both. As a writer who finds inspiration with Hemingway in Paris and Virginia Woolf in London, as a spy recruited by Ian Fleming and betrayed in the war and as an art-dealer in '60s New York, Logan mixes with the movers and shakers of his times. But as a son, friend, lover and husband, he makes the same mistakes we all do in our search for happiness. Here, then, is the story of a life lived to the full - and a journey deep into a very human heart.Any Human Heart will be enjoyed by readers of Sebastian Faulks, Nick Hornby and Hilary Mantel, as well as

lovers of the finest British and historical fiction around the world. It was recently adapted for a major Channel 4 four-part drama series scripted by William Boyd and starring Kim Cattrall, Gillian Anderson, Jim Broadbent and Tom Hollander. 'Astonishing, touching, extremely funny. A brilliant evocation of a past era and an immensely readable story' Sunday Telegraph 'Superb, wonderful, enjoyable' Guardian 'A terrific journey through the twentieth century. Thoroughly entertaining and enjoyable' Jeremy Paxman.com

Logan Gonzago Mountstuart, writer, was born in 1906, and died of a heart attack on October 5, 1991, aged 85. William Boyd's novel *Any Human Heart* is his disjointed autobiography, a massive tome chronicling "my personal rollercoaster"--or rather, "not so much a rollercoaster", but a yo-yo, "a jerking spinning toy in the hands of a maladroit child." From his early childhood in Montevideo, son of an English corned beef executive and his Uruguayan secretary, through his years at a Norfolk public school and Oxford, Mountstuart traces his haphazard development as a writer. Early and easy success is succeeded by a long half-century of mediocrity, disappointments and setbacks, both personal and professional, leading him to multiple failed marriages, internment, alcoholism and abject poverty. Mountstuart's sorry tale is also the story of a British way of life in inexorable decline, as his journey takes in the Bloomsbury set, the General Strike, the Spanish Civil War, 1930s Americans in Paris, wartime espionage, New York avant garde art, even the Baader-Meinhof gang--all with a stellar supporting cast. The most sustained and best moment comes mid-book, as Mountstuart gets caught up in one of Britain's murkier wartime secrets, in the company of the here truly despicable Duke and Duchess of Windsor. Elsewhere author William Boyd occasionally misplaces his tongue too obviously in his cheek--the Wall Street Crash is trailed with truly crashing inelegance--but overall *Any Human Heart* is a witty, inventive and ultimately moving novel. Boyd succeeds in conjuring not only a compelling 20th century but also, in the hapless Logan Mountstuart, an anti-hero who achieves something approaching passive greatness. --Alan Stewart, .co.uk

Extrait Webmaster's Note: Footnotes have been inserted in appropriate places. In the actual text, they appear at the bottom of the page, as usual.

PREAMBLE TO THESE JOURNALS "Yo, Logan," I wrote. "Yo, Logan Mountstuart, vivo en la Villa Flores, Avenida de Brasil, Montevideo, Uruguay, America del Sur, El Mundo, El Sistema Solar, El Universo." These were the first words I wrote--or to be more precise, this is the earliest record of my writing and the beginning of my writing life--words that were inscribed on the flyleaf of an indigo pocket diary for the year 1912 (which I still possess and whose pages are otherwise void). I was six years old. It intrigues me now* to reflect that my first written words were in a language not my own. My lost fluency in Spanish is probably my greatest regret about my otherwise perfectly happy childhood. The serviceable, error-dotted, grammatically unsophisticated Spanish that I speak today is the poorest of poor cousins to that instinctive colloquial jabber that spilled out of me for the first nine years of my life. Curious how these early linguistic abilities are so fragile, how unthinkingly and easily the brain lets them go. I was a bilingual child in the true sense, namely that the Spanish I spoke was indistinguishable from that of a Uruguayan.* This preamble was probably written in 1987 (see p. 464).

Uruguay, my native land, is held as fleetingly in my head as the demotic Spanish I once unconsciously spoke. I retain an image of a wide brown river with trees clustered on the far bank as dense as broccoli florets. On this river, there is a narrow boat with a single person sitting in the stern. A small outboard motor scratches a dwindling, creamy wake on the turbid surface of the river as the boat moves downstream, the ripples of its progress causing the reeds at the water's edge to sway and nod and then grow still again as the boat passes on. Am I the person in the boat or am I the observer on the bank? Is this the view of a stretch of the Ro Negro where I used to fish as a child? Or is it a vision of the individual soul's journey through time, a passage as transient as a boat's wake on flowing water? I can't claim it as my first reliable, datable memory, alas. That award goes to the sight of my tutor Roderick Poole's short and stubby circumcised penis, observed by my covertly curious eyes as he emerged naked from the Atlantic surf at Punta del Este, where we two had gone for a summer picnic one June day in 1914. I was eight years old and Roderick Poole had come to Montevideo from England to prepare me for St. Alfred's, my English prep school. Always swim naked when you can, Logan, was the advice he gave to me that day, and I have tried to adhere to it ever since. Anyway, Roderick was circumcised and I was not--which explains why I was paying such close attention, I suppose, but doesn't account for that particular day of all others being the one that sticks in my mind. Up until that precise moment the distant past of my earlier years is all vague swirling images, unfixed by time and place. I wish I could offer up something more telling, more poetic, something more thematically pertinent to the life that was to follow, but I can't--and I must be honest, here of all places. The first pages of the lifelong, though intermittent, journal that I began to keep from the age of fifteen are missing. No great loss and, doubtless, like the avowals that begin almost all intimate journals, mine too

would have commenced with the familiar determination to be wholly and unshakeably truthful. I would have sworn an oath to absolute candour and asserted my refusal to feel shame over any revelations which that candour would have encouraged. Why do we urge ourselves on in this way, us journal-keepers? Do we fear the constant threat of backslide in us, the urge to tinker and cover up? Are there aspects of our lives--things we do, feel and think--that we daren't confess, even to ourselves, even in the absolute privacy of our private record? Anyway, I'm sure I vowed to tell the truth, the whole truth, etc., etc., and I think these pages will bear me out in that endeavour. I have sometimes behaved well and I have sometimes behaved less than well--but I have resisted all attempts to present myself in a better light. There are no excisions designed to conceal errors of judgement ("The Japanese would never dare to attack the USA unprovoked"); no additions aimed at conferring an unearned sagacity ("I don't like the cut of that Herr Hitler's jib"); and no sly insertions to indicate canny prescience ("If only there were some way to harness safely the power in the atom")--for that is not the purpose of keeping a journal. We keep a journal to entrap that collection of selves that forms us, the individual human being. Think of our progress through time as one of those handy images that illustrate the Ascent of Man. You know the type: diagrams that begin with the shaggy ape and his ground-grazing knuckles, moving on through slowly straightening and depilating hominids, until we reach the clean-shaven Caucasian nudist proudly clutching the haft of his stone axe or spear. All the intervening orders assume a form of inevitable progression towards this brawny ideal. But our human lives aren't like that, and a true journal presents us with the more riotous and disorganized reality. The various stages of development are there, but they are jumbled up, counterposed and repeated randomly. The selves jostle for prominence in these pages: the mono-browed Neanderthal shoulders aside axe-wielding Homo sapiens; the neurasthenic intellectual trips up the bedaubed aborigine. It doesn't make sense; the logical, perceived progression never takes place. The true journal intime understands this fact and doesn't try to posit any order or hierarchy, doesn't try to judge or analyze: I am all these different people--all these different people are me. Every life is both ordinary and extraordinary--it is the respective proportions of those two categories that make that life appear interesting or humdrum. I was born on the 27th February 1906 in Montevideo, Uruguay, the sea-girt city on its bay in that small country wedged between beefy Argentina and broiling Brazil. The "Switzerland of South America" it is sometimes dubbed and the land-locked associations of that comparison are apt, for, despite their country's long coastline--the republic is surrounded on three sides by water: the Atlantic, the vast estuary of the Ro Plata and the broad Ro Uruguay--the Uruguayans themselves are defiantly non-seafaring, a fact that has always warmed my heart, divided as it is between seadog Briton and landlubberly Uruguayan. My nature, true to its genetic heritage, is resolutely divided: I love the sea, but I love it viewed from a beach--my feet must always be planted on the strand. My father's name was Francis Mountstuart (b. 1871). My mother's was Mercedes de Sols. She claimed to be descended from the first European, Juan Daz de Sols, who set his foot on Uruguayan soil early in the sixteenth century. An unfortunate move on his part as he and most of his band of explorers were swiftly killed by Charrua Indians. No matter: my mother's preposterous boast is unverifiable. My parents met because my mother, who spoke good English, became my father's secretary. My father was the general manager of Foley Cardogin's Fresh Meat Company's processing plant in Uruguay. Foley's Finest Corned Beef is their most famous brand ("Foley's Finest": we have all, we British, eaten Foley's corned beef at some stage in our lives), but the bulk of their business was in the exporting of frozen beef carcasses to Europe from their huge frigorifico--a slaughterhouse and massive freezing unit combined--on the coast a few miles west of Montevideo. Foley's was not the biggest frigorifico in Uruguay at the turn of the twentieth century (that honour went to Lemco's at Fray Bentos), but it was very profitable--thanks to the diligence and perseverance of Francis Mountstuart. My father was thirty-three years old when he married my mother in 1904 (she was ten years younger than he) in Montevideo's pretty cathedral. Two years later I was born, their only child, named Logan Gonzago after my respective grandfathers (neither of whom was alive to meet his grandson). I stir the memory soup in my head, hoping gobbets of Uruguay will float to the surface. I can see the frigorifico--a vast white factory with its stone jetty and towering chimney stack. I can hear the lowing of a thousand cattle waiting to be slaughtered, butchered, cleaned and frozen. But I didn't like the frigorifico and its chill aura of mass-produced death*--it made me frightened--I preferred our house and its dense and leafy grounds, a big villa on the chic and swanky Avenida de Brasil in Montevideo's new town. I remember a lemon tree in our garden and lobes of lemon-coloured light on a stone terrace. And there was a lead fountain set in a brick wall, with water spouting from a putto's mouth. A putto who looked, I now remember, just like the daughter of Jacob Pauser, the manager of the Foley estancia, 30,000 acres of the Banda Oriental, the purple-flowered flatlands where the beef herds

roamed. What was this girl's name? Let's call her Esmerelda. Little Esmerelda Pauser--you can be my first love.* 80,000 cattle a year were slaughtered at the Foley frigorifico and numberless sheep. We spoke English in the house and from the age of six I went to a church school run by monoglot nuns on the Playa Trienta y Tres. I could read English but barely write by the time Roderick Poole arrived in 1913 (fresh from Oxford with a pass degree in Greats) to take my slipshod education by the scruff of its neck and make me fit for St. Alfred's School, Warwick, Warwickshire, England. I had no real concept of what England was like, my whole world was Montevideo and Uruguay. Lincoln, Shropshire, Hampshire, Romney Marsh and Southdown--breeds of sheep routinely slaughtered in my father's frigorifico were what my country meant to me. One more memory. After my lessons with Roderick we would go sea-bathing a Pocitos (where Roderick had to keep his bathing suit on) and would take the number 15 or 22 tram to reach the resort. Our treat was to order sorbets and have them served to us in the gardens of the Grand Hotel--gardens full of flowers: stock, lilac, orange, myrtle and mimosa--and then rattle home in the tender dusk to find my mother in the kitchen shouting at the cook, my father on the terrace smoking his quotidian cigar. The Mountstuart family home was in Birmingham, where my father had been born and raised and where the head office of Foley Cardogin's Fresh Meat Co. was to be found. In 1914 Foley's decided to concentrate on its meat-processing factories in Australia, New Zealand and Rhodesia, and the Uruguayan business was sold to an Argentine firm, the Compaa Sansinena de Carnes Congeladas. My father was promoted to managing director and summoned home to Birmingham. We sailed for Liverpool on the SS Zenobia in the company of 2,000 frozen carcasses of Pollen Angus. The First World War began a week after we made landfall. Did I weep when I looked back at my beautiful city beneath its small, fort-topped, conic hill and we left the yellow waters of the Ro Plata behind? Probably not: I was sharing a cabin with Roderick Poole and he was teaching me to play gin rummy. The city of Birmingham became my new home. I swapped the eucalyptus groves of Coln, the grass seas of the campo and the endless yellow waters of the Ro Plata for a handsome, Victorian, redbrick villa in Edgbaston. My mother was delighted to be in Europe and revelled in her new role as the managing director's wife. I was sent as a boarder to St. Alfred's (where I briefly acquired the nickname "Dago"--I was a dark, dark-eyed boy) and at the age of thirteen I moved on to Abbeyhurst College (usually known as Abbey)--an eminent boys' boarding school, though not quite of the first rank--to complete my secondary education. It is here in 1923, when I was seventeen years old, that the first of my journals, and the story of my life, begins. THE SCHOOL JOURNAL 1923 10 December 1923 We--the five Roman Catholics--were walking back from the bus stop up the drive to school, fresh from Mass, when Barrowsmith and four or five of his Neanderthals started chanting "Papist dogs" and "Fenian traitors" at us. Two of the junior sprats began weeping, so I stood up to Barrowsmith and said: "So tell us what religion you are, Barrowboy." "Church of England, of course, you dunce," he said. "Then count yourself very fortunate," said I, "that one religion at least will accept someone as physically repulsive as you are." Everyone laughed, even Barrowsmith's simian crew, and I shepherded my little flock together and we regained the purlieu of school without further incident. Scabius and Leeping* declared I had done work of sub-magnificent standard and that the encounter and exchange were droll enough to deserve entry in our Livre d'Or. I argued that I should have a starred sub-magnificent because of the potential risk of physical injury from Barrowsmith and his lackeys, but Scabius and Leeping both voted against. The swine! Little Montague, one of the blubbers, was the witness, and Scabius and Leeping both handed over the honorarium (two cigarettes each for a sub-magnificent) with goodly cheer.* Peter Scabius, LMS's closest friend from his schooldays, along with Benjamin Leeping. When we brewed up after second prep I hatched a plan for the Martinmas term. It was no good, I said, just waiting for the various categories of magnificents to happen--we had to initiate them ourselves. I proposed that we should each be presented with a challenge: that two of us, in turn, should think up a task for the third and that the endeavour would be documented (and witnessed as far as possible) in the Livre d'Or. Only in this way, I averred, could the ghastly rigours of next term be survived, and, after that, we were on the home stretch: summer term was always more agreeable and could take care of itself. There were the School Certificate and scholarship exams and then we'd be free--and of course we hoped Oxford would be waiting (for me and Scabius, at least--Leeping said he had no intention of wasting three years--of what was bound to be a short life--at university). Scabius suggested the raising of a fund to privately print and publish a deluxe limited edition of the Livre d'Or if only to preserve the iniquities of Abbey for all time. "Or as a terrible warning for our offspring," added Leeping. This was unanimously agreed and we each deposited one penny into the new "publishing fund," Leeping already pondering weight and weave of paper types, embossed leather binding and the like.* In the dormitory that night I pleased myself with delectable visions of Lucy.

No. 127 of the term.* As far as is known, the Livre d'Or was never printed. No trace of the manuscript survives.