

A Timeline of Ted Kaczynski's Literary Interests & Influences

2025

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Introduction

Some of Ted's literary reading includes:

- Albert Camus — The Stranger
- Aldous Huxley — Brave New World
- Alexandra Orme — Comes the Comrade!
- Angel Flores — Spanish Stories
- Armando Palacio Valdes — Maximina
- Armando Palacio Valdes — Riverita
- Arthur Kursler — Darkness at Noon
- Audie Murphy – To Hell and Back
- Benvenuto Cellini – The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini
- Carlos Garcia Gual — Orwell:1984 Reflexiones desde 1984 [Reflections since 1984]
- Cesar Barja — Libros y Autores Cldsicos [Classic Books and Authors]
- Charles Dickens — A Tale of Two Cities
- Charles Dickens — David Copperfield
- Charles Dickens — Hard Times
- Charles Macomb Flandrau — Viva Mexico
- Colin Turnbull — The Forest People
- Daniel Defoe — The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe
- Dostoyevski — Crime and Punishment
- E=m.c2 — The Myth of Erk

- Edward Abbey — The Monkey Wrench Gang
- Francisco Quevedo — To a Nose
- Frank Norris — The Octopus: A Story of California, Doubleday
- Fyodor Dostoevsky — Brothers Karamazov
- Geir Kjetsaa — Fyodor Dostoyevsky: A Writer's Life
- George Eliot — Silas Marner
- George Orwell — 1984
- George Orwell — Homage to Catalonia
- George Orwell — Nineteen Eighty-Four
- Horacio Quiroga — El conductor rápido [The Fast Driver]
- Horacio Quiroga — Las moscas [The Flies]
- Horacio Quiroga — Juan Darién
- Horacio Quiroga — Nuestro primer cigarrillo [Our First Cigarette]
- Horacio Quiroga — El potro salvaje [The Wild Colt]
- James Cooper — The Deerslayer
- James Cooper — The Last of the Mohicans
- James Cooper — The Leatherstocking Tales
- James Pearl — Companion to Caesar
- Jan Chryzostom Pasek – Memoirs of Jan Chryzostom Z Goslawic Pasek
- John Barbour – The Bruce
- John Steinbeck — Of Mice and Men
- Jonathan Swift – The Poems of Jonathan Swift
- Jorge Ibarquengoitia — Los Relampagos De Agosto [The Lightning of August]
- Jose Agustin — Tragicomedia Mexicana [Mexican Tragicomedy]
- Joseph Bedier — The Romance of Tristan and Iseult

- Joseph Campbell — The Power of Myth
- Joseph Conrad — Great Short Works of Joseph Conrad
- Joseph Conrad — The Nigger of the Narcissus
- Joseph Conrad — The Secret Agent
- Joseph Conrad — The Shadow-Line
- Joseph Conrad — Three Short Novels: Heart of Darkness, Youth & Typhoon
- Joseph Conrad — Victory
- Joseph Conrad — Nostromo
- Joseph Pearl — Companion to Vergil
- Juan Davalos — The Fort of Tacquil
- Juan Valera — Comendador Mendoza
- Juan Valera — Pepita Jimenez
- Leo Tolstoy — The Cossacks and The Raid
- M. Diaz Rodriguez — Peregrina y otros relatos [Pilgrim and other stories]
- Margaret Sanborn – Mark Twain: The Bachelor Years
- Mark Twain — Life on the Mississippi
- Miguel Cervantes — Don Quijote
- O. Henry — The Pocket Book of O. Henry Stories
- Ovid — Metamorphoses
- Pedro Calderon de la Barca — La Vida es Suefio [Life is a Dream]
- Ralph Waldo Emerson — Self-Reliance and Other Essays
- Richard Dillion — The Hatchet Man
- Richard Lattimore — The Revelation of John
- Robert Louis Stevenson — Treasure Island
- Rolfe Humphries – The Satires of Juvenal

- Samuel Butler — The Notebooks of Samuel Butler
- Snorri Sturluson – The Prose Edda
- Thomas Hardy — Far from the Madding Crowd
- Vicente Blasco Ibáñez — Arroz y Tartana [Rice and Tartan]
- Vicente Blasco Ibáñez — Siete cuentos [Seven Stories]
- Victor Hugo — Les Miserables Vol. I
- Victor Hugo — Les Miserables Vol. II
- W. Somerset Maugham — The Razor's Edge
- W. Somerset Maugham — Stories of the East
- Willa Cather — Sapphira and the Slave Girl
- William Shakespeare — The Merchant of Venice
- William Shakespeare — As You Like It
- William Shakespeare — Julius Caesar

1950s

~1955

Daniel Defoe

Quoting an interview with Ted:

BVD: You said that when you were in your early teens you had dreams of going to live in an uninhabited place. Do you recall anything that led you to have those dreams? Something you saw or experienced?

TJK: Certainly things I read led me in that direction. Robinson Crusoe, for one thing. And then when I was maybe 11 or 12, somewhere in around there, I read some anthropology books about Neanderthal man and speculations about the way they lived and so forth. I became very interested in reading about that stuff and at some point asked myself why I wanted to read more about this material. At some point it dawned on me that what I really wanted was not to read more about these things but to actually live that way.¹

Although in prison Ted lost interest in the kind of introspection that reading fiction books offers, there is a 2011 letter Ted sent that showed the lingering importance he put in Robinson Crusoe:

My focus is almost exclusively on a practical problem (to put it succinctly), how to get rid of the technoindustrial system before it gets rid of us. I can't find much time to spend on such issues as the value of solitude, privacy, or wilderness, except to the extent that these issues are relevant to the practical problem. (They are relevant to a point; teaching people the value of solitude or of wilderness, for example, helps to alienate them from the values of the technoindustrial system ...)

... As for Thoreau, he's okay, but I've never had any particular admiration for him. You'll find much better nature writing (in my opinion) in Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Desert Year* (top-notch!). I can also recommend highly a book by Tom Neale, *Alone on My Island* (the title is not a figure of speech). Of great interest is Alexander Selkirk, who was the inspiration for Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. An account of Selkirk's adventures was published back

¹ Joy Richards Interview with Ted Kaczynski

in the 18th century, and it exists in a modern (like, mid-twentieth century) reprint.²

² Ted Kaczynski's Letter Correspondence With Julie Ault

1960s

~1960

Joseph Conrad

Quoting a letter from Ted to Dave in 1984:

Lately I've been re-reading some of Conrad's novels for about the dozenth time. I must say that I thoroughly approve of your taste in selecting him as your favorite author — he used to be your favorite and I assume he still is. The more one re-reads his books the more one appreciates them. I don't know of any other author who can match him for powers of description. He has a magical ability to conjure up mental images — images that capture the imagination — whether he is describing scenery, or a personality, or a situation, or whatever you please.

However, I notice that the Spanish words and phrases scattered through *Nostromo* are full of error. ...

By the way, I guess I have you to thank for introducing me, or re-introducing me, to the writing of Conrad. My first introduction to his work occurred when I was too young, and I didn't like it because it was too slow-moving. I didn't get re-introduced to Conrad until I read some of his books that you had in your apartment there in Great Falls.¹

Quoting Ted's Journal in 1972:

... in the evenings there hasn't been much to do, so I took to reading Joseph Conrad's "The Arrow of Gold," a copy of which has been lying around here. This is supposed to have been his last complete book, and one of his inferior works. But for some reason I felt very refreshed after reading the story — invigorated, and my spirits buoyed up. I still feel that way. This is a little peculiar, since I don't actually consider the story to have been a good one. In fact I found much of it irritating. I rather disliked the hero and heroine, and the actions of some of the characters seemed highly improbable. While I have no particular objection to romanticism in literature, some of this stuff was really just too lush (Dona Rita is repeatedly described as "having something in her of the women of all time"; phrases like "sublime passion"

¹ Ted Kaczynski's Correspondence with his Brother David

appeared; and a lot of similar stuff — awful hogwash). As with many of Conrad stories, I found it too long winded and therefore skipped some of the more tiresome passages. Nevertheless, the story struck a responding chord in me, though I didn't feel this until I had finished reading it. It's hard to say just what it was, but despite the annoying character of the story (which induced me to insert some sarcastic notes in the margins), there was something there. Perhaps it stirred memories of an adolescent crush — but I do not ordinarily find that refreshing. More likely, I think it was that the story managed to convey an image of a generalized romance — I don't mean specifically erotic romance (although the romance in the story was erotic), but simply romance in general. And somehow (for me) this romance came through refreshing and clean, despite the presence of a good deal of slushy nonsense. Consider the title “The Arrow of Gold”, and the actual arrow of gold that appeared in the story. Now that is a title enough symbol, certainly, but Conrad nevertheless has made it stick in my imagination and evoke a certain response.

Perhaps I reacted to the story as I did largely because, before taking up *The Arrow of Gold*, I had been reading to a certain extent in current magazines and newspapers. As usual, I found much of that material sordid and disgusting, and full of propagandistic devices. It may have been the contrast that made *The Arrow of Gold* seem so refreshing. In any case, I certainly did find it both refreshing and invigorating.²

Writing to encourage someone to become a revolutionary, Ted wrote:

[A]s a professional revolutionary you will enjoy certain special advantages. Inter alia, you will gain the honorable title of “comrade”. Just imagine how impressed girls will be when you are introduced to them as “Comrade McBurnett”. You should read Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent*, wherein Comrade Ossipon's success with the ladies will open your eyes to certain possibilities in this direction.³

In one of the last letters he wrote to his mother before he was arrested, he showed he understood the revolutionary characters in his favorite novels were not written to be admired, yet I think Ted seemed to take a perverse pride in identifying with the villains in the conflict of wits, arguing that they should have been written with more depth. Perhaps he just dismissed the redemptive part of books where the character realises they were on the wrong track:

² Ted Kaczynski's *Salt Lake City Journal* (1972)

³ Ted Kaczynski (Author) & Kelli Grant (Curator). Ted Kaczynski, math tutor [Letter]. Yahoo News. Original link. Archived link.

If you haven't read Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent*, I can recommend it to you very strongly. The central character of the novel is a woman who in childhood suffered abuse from a drunken father that is very reminiscent of the kind of thing that you depict in your history. I think you would strongly identify with this woman and greatly appreciate the novel. The critics consider *The Secret Agent* to be one of Conrad's greatest works, and I agree with them. The revolutionaries depicted in the novel are mere caricatures but the central figures – Mr. Verloc and his 3 dependents – are a brilliant triumph of the novelist's.⁴

Finally, here's a long, long quote from forensic linguist, Donald Foster:

The Secret Agent— possibly Ted's favorite novel (he professes to have read it at least a dozen times) is of special interest, for it features a bomb-making terrorist known only as "the Professor." Resentful to the bone, the Professor is a man whose only belief is that people have treated him "with revolting injustice." A nihilist, he is the most dangerous member of a terrorist group that calls itself "FP" (for "Future of the Proletariat"). He dwells alone in a "cramped hermitage" suited to "the perfect anarchist," devoting his solitary study to the construction of bombs. *The Secret Agent* closes with "the incorruptible Professor" standing alone, "averting his eyes from the odious multitude of mankind," still "training for the task of an inevitable future... His thoughts caressed the images of ruin and destruction."

In his activities as the Unabomber, as also in his writings from 1976 to 1996, Ted Kaczynski cultivated a likeness between himself and Conrad's bomb-making Professor—as in a shared preoccupation with finding the perfect detonator (a theme of the Unabom documents) and even in such personal details as taking a smug pride in an unkempt appearance. (Writing to his brother, Kaczynski brags of wearing the same clothes "until they rot off my body," like Conrad's Professor, and with similar phrasing.) Ted endorses the Professor's view that most people have been too thoroughly "brainwashed" to use violent force against a system that restricts their personal freedom. Ted Kaczynski wrote many times about this "problem"—the reluctance of "oversocialized" individuals to steal or kill—as if nonviolent compliance with the system were a personal failing to be overcome. "Anarchists" and "adequate terrorists," in the parlance employed by Ted Kaczynski and Conrad's Professor, are those individuals with the conscious resolve to make society pay, with pain or death, for its assault on personal autonomy.

⁴ Ted Kaczynski. *The Letters Between Ted Kaczynski and his Mother Wanda* [Letter]. The Ted K Archive. Archived link.

With his characteristic irony, Conrad in *The Secret Agent* has a diplomat remark that science and mathematics must be bombed to shake modern society from its complacency:

The sacrosanct fetish of today is science... Is it not part of these institutions which must be swept away before the FP comes along? ... Artists—art critics and such like—people of no account. Nobody minds what they say... Since bombs are your means of expression, it would be really telling if one could throw a bomb into pure mathematics. (*Secret Agent*, Doubleday, 1951, pp. 38–41)

The Unabomber calls his fictional organization “FC” for “Freedom (dub’), not “FP” (for “Future of the Proletariat”), but he seems otherwise to take his targeting cues from Conrad’s novel:

[T]he system needs scientists, mathematicians and engineers. It can’t function without them. ... We would not want anyone to think that we have any desire to hurt professors who study archaeology, history, literature or harmless stuff like that. The people we are out to get are the scientists and engineers ...

A writer as well as a reader of fiction, Kaczynski sometimes reshapes his favorite fictional narratives into stories of his own, most often as a domestic allegory. Long before his arrest as the Unabomber, Ted advised his mother and brother to read *The Secret Agent*, like he seems to have felt that his family could not understand him without reading Conrad. And he may be right. But there is more to Ted’s interest in *The Secret Agent* than his apparent identification with a bomb-making professor. Kaczynski also associates his parents and his brother David with fictional characters. The pathos in Conrad’s novel centers on a “loving, innocent, harmless” boy named Stevie, and on Winnie, his maternal elder sister. In his notes on *The Secret Agent* Kaczynski compares his mother Wanda to Winnie and his brother David to Stevie. But Stevie in Conrad’s novel is killed when Winnie’s husband, Mr. Verloc (Stevie’s surrogate father), botches a bombing attack on the “idol of science.” Science survives. Stevie is exploded instead—reduced to bloody fragments. Ted in his scattered remarks on *The Secret Agent* seems a little unsettled by this lack of symmetry, unsure whether he can save the innocent brother whom Conrad explodes—but he takes the position that his brother David is a lost cause if he remains tolerant of science and technology or retains his faith in the fundamental goodness of human society.

In *The Secret Agent* there is also a fellow named Lombroso, a phrenologist who figures in the novel as a representative of pseudo-science. Kaczynski

seems to borrow this figure for one of his own stories, calling him “Lord Daddy Lombrosis.” Basing his story on a dream he had one night, Ted writes of a strange battle between himself and the “cult” of “Lord Daddy Lombrosis”: three henchmen, “substitutes” for Lombrosis, visit the Kaczynski house in order to tighten their intellectual and emotional hold on David: “As each one came in, I confronted him, defied him, and killed him. The last and most sinister of the three I tore to pieces with my bare hands.” David cries out, who will come next — Satan? But when Lombrosis appears, he bears a “kindly, paternal, dignified expression on his face; and he looked like a man whom one would respect.” After killing the three substitutes, Ted finds himself unable to kill the Lord Daddy: “I felt awed by him and thought, ‘This is God!’ Yet in my heart I defied him.” Ted acknowledges that Lombrosis really wishes to be kind, both to him and to his brother—“but the price that he demanded was submission.” Ted stands defiantly between Lombrosis and his younger brother, protecting him from the intruder’s influence—for there can be no freedom of thought, no personal autonomy, either for himself or for his brother David, until Lombrosis is overthrown.

When Lombrosis perceives himself rejected by the two boys, he turns away sadly, walks out of the house, and off into the snow. For David’s sake, not his own, Ted relents, and calls for Lombrosis to return:

I ran after him, begging him not to leave like this, not to leave my little brother without hope... I threw myself at his feet and cried, “No, don’t leave my brother without hope, give him another chance!” and I started to say, “and me too,” but I caught myself and said, “No! Not me! I will never give in!”... But the footprints just kept going off through the snow. And then I woke up with a terrible sense of fear and foreboding. It was a remarkable and very frightening dream...

Ted’s “Lord Daddy Lombrosis” story was written at about the time that his father died of lung cancer back in Lombard. Ted denies that Lombrosis is a symbolic stand-in for his dad. Instead, writes Ted, Lombrosis is “Technological Society,” the representatives of which must be vanquished. (Kaczynski, case doc. T-120, n.d. 1991?) But Ted was never entirely sure, even as a child, who his real enemies were. He knew only that he was very unhappy, and that someone ought to suffer for it.

Ted Kaczynski hurt many innocent people. He has deserved his punishment. And he deserves pity. The Unabom killings were the work of a desperately unhappy man, one whose vast learning brought him no interconnectedness with other human beings. In his desultory correspondence with an elderly

Mexican ranch hand, Kaczynski wrote that he wished he had been able to have a wife and children like other men—but he acknowledged that he lacked a capacity to love. The picture that emerges from Ted’s writings is that of a disturbed and lonely soul who never had a successful, mutually supportive relationship with anyone—a person so deeply introverted that he could barely endure to communicate with his own family—and finally, not even with them, not even with David, not even by mail.

Ted Kaczynski’s imprisonment did not begin with his 1997 guilty plea, nor with his 1996 arrest, nor with his 1971 exile to a one-room cabin in Montana. Nor did it begin with that bitterly remembered incident when fellow students playfully shut him in a school locker. Troubled since childhood, unable to connect with other people, often taking offense and unwilling to forgive, Ted Kaczynski’s entire life has been spent in solitary confinement, a lost soul having nothing but his books, and words, to go on.⁵

⁵ Donald Foster. The Fictions of Ted Kaczynski [Essay]. *Vassar Quarterly*, Volume 95, Number 1, December 1998. December 1998. Pages 14–16. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

~1969

Aldous Huxley

Quoting Ted's Journal:

... Aldous Huxley commented that the classic cry of Patrick Henry that he wanted either liberty or death now sounds melodramatic. Instead today, Huxley contended, we are more apt to demand, "Give me television and hamburgers but don't bother me with the responsibilities of liberty."

It is worth noting that Mr. Huxley's prophetic book, *Brave New World*, ... has been banned from several U.S. schools. Also among the banned is George Orwell's *1984*, ... When the U.S. Commissioner of Education was asked about the banning of these two classics ... he declined to comment because he said he had never heard of either of the books! ... a haunting comment made to me by Representative Robert Kastenmeier of Wisconsin, who has led several battles for individual rights on the floor of Congress. He said: "Basically I am not hopeful about the pressures that will in time make our country something of a police state... I sense a losing game."

... Lest the gloomy prognostications above be regarded as merely the ravings of a fevered imagination, I call attention to the fact that a number of highly respectable people share my worries. For example, see Aldous Huxley's important book "*Brave New World Revisited*".¹

George Orwell

In his cabin Ted had a book that was a collection of essays on Orwell's *1984* that "deal with the tensions between satire and utopia, between warning and threat, between indignation, parody and the writer's personal experiences, and have in common the fact that they were written from the Spain of 1984 by Orwell's admirers."

Ted mentioned Orwell's writing style in a letter to his brother Dave in 1989:

¹ Ted Kaczynski's 1969 Journal

I re-read your story (“the Congurerer’s Stone”) and got a fresh impression of it. I found that, the second time around, those metaphors and similes that I objected to went down much more smoothly. I still think a more sparse and unadorned style* would be more suitable for this material, but I find most of those figures of speech less objectionable than I did the first time around.

In any case it’s a damn good story, both as to the material provided by Juan and as to your re-telling of it, and I repeat my suggestion that you should make a collection of these stories for publication. If you don’t have enough material for even a slim volume you might try to find a magazine that is oriented toward Southwestern folklore ...

* It’s really unfair of you to call this a “reportorial style”. Consider Maugham’s “the Razor’s Edge”, Orwell’s “1984”, or Hemingway’s work. Unadorned, straight-forward writing; but whether or not you like those works, you could hardly say the writing is mere “reportorial”.²

In 1992, Ted also asked for an interlibrary loan of ‘Homage to Barcelona’, misremembering the name of the book ‘Homage to Catalonia’.

² Ted Kaczynski’s Correspondence with his Brother David, Jul 25, 1989, T-66. Original source: <harbor.klnpa.org/california/islandora/object/cali%3A1125> [dead]

1980s

1982

Horacio Quiroga

Quoting a letter from Ted to Dave in 1982:

THE FLIES: REPLICA OF THE DEAD MAN ...

What I liked about this story was the way the author lifts, at the end, the dark cloud of despair and death to show us hope and renewal. To me it was very effective; I don't know if you will react to it the same way.

The theme – death of a man as a source of life to lower organisms; symbolically, renewal of life in general – is one that I've encountered before; though for all I know Quiroga may have been the first to use it, since he wrote some time ago (he died in 1937). But in any case I think he handles it more effectively than I've seen it handled before.¹

Quoting forensic linguist, Donald Foster:

[L]iterary texts had an arguably pernicious effect on the Unabomber's imagination during his seventeen-year campaign of terror. An avid reader, Kaczynski's study included a wide variety of English, American, and Spanish fiction—and he often commented afterward on those stories and novels that especially moved or amused him. One such is Horacio Quiroga's "Juan Darien," a story that Ted subsequently translated into English. Juan Darien is a studious boy, cruelly ridiculed at school for his rough hair and shyness—but he is actually a tiger bearing a human shape. Taunted once too often, the tiger-boy renounces his sympathy for humanity. Taking his revenge on a cat-tamer, Juan catches the man in his teeth, carries him to a cane-brake, and sets him on fire. The cat-tamer begs pardon for his offenses, but it is too late. As the canes burn, the tiger that was Juan Darien stands by with other tigers, gazing at the colorful flames until the man is reduced to a blackened corpse.²

¹ Ted Kaczynski's Correspondence with his Brother David

² Donald Foster. The Fictions of Ted Kaczynski [Essay]. *Vassar Quarterly*, Volume 95, Number 1, December 1998. December 1998. Pages 14–16. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

Three years after his imprisonment, Ted wrote a fable called “Ship of Fools” which “stole the plot and most of the details from ‘El Conductor del Rapido,’ a parable by his favourite Spanish author, Horacio Quiroga.”³

In Ted’s story,

whining passengers fail to notice, while variously demanding fair play for animals, for women, for homosexuals, for racial minorities, that their insane captain is steering them toward an iceberg. “All this is just awful!” cries a leftish college professor, wringing his hands at the crew’s indifference. “It’s immoral! It’s racism, sexism, speciesism, homophobia, and exploitation of the working class! It’s discrimination!” But when a cabin boy urges the passengers to revolt, “the professor elevated his nose and said sternly, ‘I don’t believe in violence. It’s immoral.’

“The ship kept sailing north, and after a while it was crushed between two icebergs and everyone drowned. THE END.”

The moral of Kaczynski’s story is that the captains of our technological society have gone quite mad. The Unabomber was that prescient cabin boy whose attempted mutiny was thwarted by the momentum of modern technology and by the stupidity of liberals.⁴

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

~1983

Colin Turnbull

In 1983 Ted recommended the book *The Forest People* by Colin Turnbull, telling his brother Dave; “I think you will consider it well worth reading.” Quoting a critique of the book:

The Forest People is a book written in 1961 for a popular audience about the Mbuti hunter gatherers of the Ituri rainforest in central africa. The Mbuti are one of those immediate return, hyper-egalitarian, gender-egalitarian societies – and even as hyper-egalitarian societies go, they’re one of the most hyper-egalitarian, where women hunt together with men and even older children often can make decisions that trump the will of the adults if it’s something that will affect the future of the group, when todays kids will be tomorrow’s adults. ... the message was that human equality and freedom are possible and that we have a lot to learn about these things from societies like the Mbuti.

And because Turnbull was trying to get that message across, and because the book was written for popular consumption and because it was 1961, the Forest People reads a bit like a fairy tale. And it doesn’t exactly ignore the various problems or difficulties of Mbuti life at the time, but it does portray Mbuti society a bit like a happy harmonious smurf village.

So because of the romanticization, and also I guess because the Mbuti are a pygmy people, who are an average of 4’11” tall – a modern reader, might feel like the Forest People is infantilizing the Mbuti. ... hippie professors and others ... glommed onto it as an example of our inherent Rousseauian smurfy good nature, polluted by civilization ...¹

¹ What Really Causes Seasonal Social and Political Structures? The Dawn of Everything Chapter

~1985

Edward Abbey

Quoting from an interview with Ted:

TED: I read Edward Abbey in mid-eighties and that was one of the things that gave me the idea that, ‘yeah, there are other people out there that have the same attitudes that I do.’ I read *The Monkeywrench Gang*, I think it was...

THERESA: Did you ever think of yourself as an ‘Earth Firster’?

TED: Not really. As a sort of a satellite, sympathizer’s too weak a word, but sort of ‘Earth First!er Satellite’? ... I didn’t want to subscribe to the *Earth First! Journal* because I didn’t want to call attention to myself. If something happened to some logging equipment, I didn’t want them to know who to look for. But, I did pick up a copy of the journal and I saw a lot that I liked.¹

¹ Theresa Kintz. Theresa Kintzs’ Interview with Ted Kaczynski [Written Interview]. The Ted K Archive. retrieved on December 16, 2014. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

1985

Juan Valera

Quoting a letter from Ted to Dave in 1985:

Brother, I am glad to know that you have learned so much Spanish, as you wrote me in your last letter. Why don't you write me anything in Spanish for training? Well, I'll give you a book, *El Comendados Mendoza*, by the distinguished Spanish writer Juan Valeza. I regret that it is an abbreviated version, for students. It does have, however, some advantages: there is a vocabulary at the end of the book, and notes at the bottom of the pages. ...¹

Quoting a letter from Ted to Dave in 1987:

I just received your birthday present. You made an excellent choice: you have taken into consideration my preference for classical works. I didn't read anything in Spanish that I haven't read before.

I enjoyed reading *Pepita Jimenez*. I thank you. I do not know if you read the book before sending it to me, if not, let me tell you that deals with an old and exploited theme, erotic love, but it is a good story. Its composition is perfect, but not so in the last part of the book (like I explain later on) and I think that the human psychology I well presented. The author presented the [CROSSED OUT TEXT] of a youngster that is preparing to become a Priest and that falls in love with a beautiful young female, whom also falls in love with him. Valera shows us how the young man is able to fool himself and the false pretexts that the young man uses to convince himself that he is not in love with the woman; also he is able to mix the concepts of egoism and vanity with a true sentiment of religion which makes him yawn to be a Priest. In one specific passage, the young woman confesses to the "vicar Priest", who is her confessor, that she has fallen in love with the young man: it is presented in a very peculiar way the mix of desire and vanity that moves her. Of course, the author realizes the complexity of the human motives, but does not discards the human nature nor presents them

¹ Ted Kaczynski's Correspondence with his Brother David

as foul, like so many authors do now a days. To the contrary, he seems to be to humble to fool his kin. In his novel they are presented with love-but without shadowing their imperfections.

The ending of the book is not as good as the rest of the book.

The author gives, in an epilogue, the principal acts within the lives of the youngsters after their marriage, and this part of the book is quite lame. But I suppose that this were the ways in the past; Fielding, Thackeray, Dickens, etc. did the same thing. More serious would be an insult, and the following duel that is introduced in the story by the author. This episode does not fit in the story; it has no relationship, and it does not necessary. It also tends to disrupt the character that the author has develop in the young man. I believe that Valera brought this episode in the novel, because almost all the action (if you can call it action) in the novel is psychological and the author thought that many of his readers needed some physical or violent action or thought that some of his readers would consider his hero as gay, this might have made him compelled to make more of a man out of his character; from here this episode seems to grow artificially from The rest of the story.

It is interesting to point out two things within the writings of Valera that we could feel are undetectable. In “Comendador Mendoza”, Valera makes a young man of 18 or 20 years, to fall in love with another man of 50 years of age. In “Pepita Jimenez”, and also in “Comendador Mendoza”, if I do remember well, some of the characters talk about dying for love. To us it seems a little difficult that a young woman falls in love with an old man or that someone might die for love. But in Valera’s writing it would be difficult not to believe something like this, when we consider a real life episode of Valera himself when he was 61 years old! He had a love adventure with a young woman [CROSSED OUT TEXT], who committed suicide when Valera left her.

This I learned reading the biographical data in the beginning of the book.

In the same prologue, Valera did not believe in the pedagogical value of the novels, and that they should not be used to “test theses”; for “dissertations and specialized books” should be written. He also said that “the object of art is to create beauty”, and that after writing *Pepita Jimenez*, “my purpose was to limit myself in writing something to entertain”.

In majority, Indeed to agree with that; but a matured taste finds more fun in works that represent true human psychology, it’s [CROSSED OUT TEXT] developments and it’s changes, and then to bored the external and physical action. And so, indirectly, I believe the novel has some pedagogical

function, because it tells us of certain things of the human mind and makes us think about *our personal psychic*.²

² Ted Kaczynski's Correspondence with his Brother David

1986

Armando Palacio Valdes

Quoting a letter from Ted to Dave in 1986:

I'm reading a work — “Maximina” — by a Spanish author, Armando Palacio Valdes — that I really like; at least, as far as I have read it; I still haven't read even half of it. Before, I read the novel *Riverita* by the same author. This writer has an excellent sense of humor; but his mood — as well as the rest of his writings — is always calm and relaxed. The author never loses his dignity.¹

¹ Ted Kaczynski's Correspondence with his Brother David

1990s

1992

Vicente Blasco Ibáñez

Ted read a book by this author called ‘Rice and Tartan’, plus a book of seven of his short stories.

Ted may have first heard of this author from the book ‘Villa and Zapata’:

General interpretative works on the Mexican Revolution tend to stress that its status as true ‘revolution’ — involving major socio-economic change — has been overdone... The ultimate in scepticism comes in Vicente Blasco Ibanez’s *Mexico in Revolution* (New York 1920).¹

Or, Ted may have simply ordered the book from a catalogue of Spanish literature:

I’m glad to hear you’re progressing with Spanish. [UNINTELLIGBLE] enjoy exploring the literature. Maybe when we visit Mexico I can find a book store in Ojuaga or someplace and get some Mexican books. I have a catalog from the publishing company [UNINTELLIGBLE] of Madrid. They publish a “Coleccion Austral” which is a series of relatively inexpensive paperback editions of old and [UNINTELLIGBLE]. They have some interesting titles. I’ve ordered books from them a couple of times, and enjoyed many of the books. Some time if you’re interested I can send you the catalog on loan if you want to order some books. Only trouble is, they give no information about the books except author and title, so often you don’t know exactly what kind of book you’re buying and have to trust to luck as it were.²

In 1992, he requested an interlibrary loan of a book by Ibáñez called ‘Arroz y Tartana’ (Rice and Tartan).

After his arrest, a compilation of 7 of Ibáñez’s stories was also found in his cabin called ‘Siete cuentos de Vicente Blasco Ibáñez’.

The editor of this compilation wrote an interesting essay on ‘Latin American Literature in the United States’ & a book called ‘Por Los Siglos: An Anthology of Hispanic Readings’.

¹ Villa and Zapata by Frank McLynn

² Ted Kaczynski’s Correspondence with his Brother David

The Ted K Archive

A Timeline of Ted Kaczynski's Literary Interests & Influences
2025

This is a work in progress wiki page. For a great article on this subject check out:
The Fictions of Ted Kaczynski by Donald Foster.

www.thetedkarchive.com