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Dear Fred

I hope that you are well. I’ve just started working on a new book, so this might be the last you hear from me for a while. I thought I’d drop you a line to tell you about what’s been going on in the last few months round here.

At the **Barbican Arts Gallery**, I saw an experiment in generative music yesterday created by French artist Céleste Boursier-Mougenot. He set up electric guitars and cymbals horizontally so they could be used as bird tables, and then released zebra finches to fly around there. When the birds sat on a guitar string or chewed on it, it would make a sound through the amplifier. The birds seemed to be trying to thread straw through the guitar strings to make a nest, which made the strings chime. The birds also sang their own distinctive song as they flew around. I trod carefully for fear of squashing one of them, but they were pretty nimble and would probably fly off before any harm came to them.

I visited **Barcelona** for the first time last month. The weather was drizzly for the first few days, but the sun broke through when I had a few hours to do some sightseeing. I visited the Sagrada Familia cathedral, designed by Gaudi and still being built to his specification over 100 years later. It was an impressive sight, and going up the towers gave a great view of the cathedral’s spires and the city below. They say it’ll take another 30-odd years to complete the construction project. It’s amazing to think that there is a project with a vision that extends that far. There are conceivably people who could work most of their careers on that building and not see it finished, which sounds like something from centuries ago. Or that white paper I once worked on about financial services.

Oh, and I wanted to ask if you know how to spell onomatopoeia. But then Word fixed it for me when I spellchecked, so I didn’t need to any more. If you’ve got no idea where this letter came from, or who Fred is, it’s a sample document created for my book ‘Microsoft Office for the Older and Wiser’. Find out more at www.sean.co.uk

Best wishes

Sean McManus