

# **CHRISTMAS PUDDING**

**2003**

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Robert Middleton

*Christmas Pudding* is an anthology devoted essentially to aspects of the use of language, particularly in poetry but also in wit and humour. Poetry is a vehicle for sharing ideas and emotions and, as such, is a mark of our civilisation and collective intelligence: it also promotes an understanding of the nature and importance of language, man's highest natural attribute. I am concerned that few people read poetry today and that the contemporary dominance of the visual media poses a threat to our command (and even understanding) of language and to a decline in writing skills.

I was deeply influenced by the teaching and literary criticism of Yvor Winters at Stanford University in the early 1960s, by his rigorous insistence on the distinction between connotation and denotation in poetry and by his moral crusade against the decline of reason as a precept in art and literature (and life) since the end of the eighteenth century. The accompanying relaxation of content and meaning - and subsequent abandonment of form - that characterise verse for the last two hundred years is, at least in part, responsible for a breakdown in communication between writer and reader: today, 'anything goes' - much verse is obscure and, if it were not divided into lines, would be indistinguishable from prose. I share Winters' view that the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century was a golden age for poetry and that the poets of this age developed a "timeless" medium for poetic expression characterised by the clear communication of ideas and emotion, using words not only for their sound, rhythm and imagery but also to convey meaning. I recognise, however, that the poetry of this period may not be easily accessible to the general reader as a result of unfamiliar contemporary poetic conventions and shifts in the meaning of words. I also dissent from Winters' rather pessimistic view that not much of comparable quality has been produced since. While drawing on poetry of the "golden age", *Christmas Pudding* aims to identify those later poems that, in my opinion, meet Winters' strict criteria.

In addition to the desire to entertain and amuse, *Christmas Pudding* has thus a serious intent: I aim to include poems that use language in a rational and comprehensible way, that have a clear meaning with a minimum of decoration and cliché and that express feelings we can share. My choice is intended to show that poetry can be (I would even say, should be) a means of communication between normal rational people.

The inspiration for *Christmas Pudding* is *Christmas Crackers*, an anthology of wisdom, wit and linguistic surprise collected by the distinguished scholar John Julius Norwich. I have tried to emulate his mixture of humour and erudition, although a significant part of my raw material is drawn from the more mundane spheres of e-mail and the Internet. My title seems to me apposite: a Christmas pudding is full of varied, interesting and sometimes surprising ingredients, is well-rounded, requires a considerable amount of stirring in its preparation, is still good a long time after the first serving and is not heavy if enjoyed sparingly. Moreover, a pudding is the least pretentious of dishes and acknowledges Norwich's superior recipe.



Gustav Klimt 1862-1918  
*Adam and Eve*

Baiser souvent n'est-ce pas grand plaisir ?  
Dites ouy, vous aultres amoureux ;  
Car du baiser provient le désir  
De mettre en un ce qui estoit en deux.  
L'un est trop bon, mais l'autre vault trop mieux :  
Car de baiser sans avoir jouyssance,  
C'est un plaisir de fragile assurance ;  
Mais tous les deux alliez d'un accord  
Donnent au cœur si grande esjouyssance,  
Que tel plaisir met oubly à la mort.  
*Clément Marot 1495-1544*

*Hamlet.* Lady, shall I lie in your lap?  
*Ophelia.* No, my lord.  
*Hamlet.* I mean, my head in your lap.  
*Ophelia.* Ay, my lord.  
*Hamlet.* Did you think I meant country matters?  
*William Shakespeare 1564-1616*  
*Hamlet III,ii*

Die Wollust bleibet doch der Zucker dieser Zeit  
Was kan uns mehr denn sie den Lebenslauf  
versüssen?  
Sie lasset trinckbar Gold in unsre Kehle fließen  
Und öffnet uns den Schatz beperlter Liebligkeith;  
In Tuberosen kan sie Schnee und Eiss verkehren  
Und durch das ganze Jahr die FrühlingsZeit  
gewehren .  
*Christian Hoffmann von Hoffmannswaldau 1616-1679*

I feel obliged to mention Martin Luther,  
And behind him the long line of Church Fathers  
Who draped their prurience like a dirty cloth  
About the naked majesty of God.  
*Amy Lowell 1874-1925*

## CHRISTMAS PUDDING 2003

Christmas carol singing is one of the great pleasures of the Christmas season. In addition to the carols that “everyone” knows, there is a wealth of lesser known carols that merit discovery. The following in particular is well worth adding to the family repertoire<sup>1</sup>.

<p><i>Waking time</i></p> <p>Neighbour, what was the sound, I pray, That did awake me as I lay, And to their doorways brought the people? Every one heard it like a chime Pealing for joy within a steeple: ‘Get up, good folk! Get up, good folk, ‘Tis waking-time!’</p> <p>Nay then, young Martin, know you not That it is this our native spot Sweet Love has chosen for his dwelling? In every quarter rumours hum, Rumours of news beyond all telling: ‘Wake up, good folk! Wake up, good folk, for Christ is come.’</p> <p>Neighbours, and is it really true True that the babe so small and new Is lying even now among us? What can we lay upon his knees - He whose arrival angels sung us, What can we give, What can we give the child to please?</p> <p>Dickon shall bring a ball of silk, Peter his son a pot of milk, And Tom a sparrow and a linnet.</p>	<p>Robin a cheese, and Ralph the half Part of a cake with cherries in it, And jolly Jack, And jolly Jack a little calf.</p> <p>I think this child will come to be Some sort of workman such as we, So he shall have my tools and chattels, My well-set saw, my plane, my drill, My hammer that so merry rattles, And planks of wood, And planks of wood to work at will.</p> <p>When we have made our offerings, Saying to him the little things Whereof all babies born are witting, Then we will take our leave and go, Bidding goodnight in manner fitting - Hush, hush, wee lamb, Hush, hush, wee lamb, dream sweetly so.</p> <p>And in a stable though he lies, We in our hearts will soon devise Such mansions as can never shame him There we will house and hold him dear, And through the world to all proclaim him: ‘Wake up, good folk! Wake up, good folk, for Christ is here.’</p>
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T T T T

This year’s *Christmas Pudding* deals with the very delicate issue of erotic poetry: delicate not because of any prudery – as noted in the preface, in today’s

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<sup>1</sup> With thanks to choirmaster David Gore. Regrettably, this sprightly carol – based on “Voisin, d’où venait ce grand bruit?” from the *Grand Bible des Noëls Angevins*, 1766 – is no longer included in the New Oxford Book of Carols and risks disappearing from the canon. (E-mail me for the music.)

emancipated world “anything goes”, even in poetry; delicate, however, because of the very fine dividing line between poetry that extols the pleasures of the body and verse that simply describes physical acts and parts of the anatomy. The one can be Olympian - the other is mostly crude and often boring. Delicate too, because the anthologist must decide where to draw that dividing line, which may not be in the same place as it would be for another. Finally, delicate also because so much poetry is written by men, whose views on and attitudes to physical love are not always identical to those of women.

Much less can that have any place  
At which a virgin hides her face,  
Such dross the fire must purge away; 'tis just  
The Author blush, there where the reader must.  
*Abraham Cowley 1618-67 “On Wit”*

I have one other difficulty, namely that Western society seems more willing to tolerate scenes of violence in the media than of physical love. By the time children are ten they will have seen on television many hundreds of murders and other acts of violence between humans. Are “sex” scenes deemed to be less representative of contemporary *mores*? Can we really be suggesting to our children that the violence is totally acceptable under our code of ethics while physical love is not? Films of sometimes extreme violence on French TV receive the code -12, yet when there is the least hint of sex in a film, the TV “guardians of morality” label it -16.

Nevertheless, the decision is taken and, because there is much of quality in poetry dealing with physical love, I have plunged in where angels – and several mortals – fear to tread.

Connoisseurs of erotic verse may miss the work of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1648-1680). For me, his work falls on the other side of my dividing line but, as a tribute to his wit and as an indication that what he wrote may not necessarily have shocked the female society of his times, I give below an extract from the *Elegy on the Earl of Rochester* by Anne Wharton (1659-1685):

He was what no man ever was before;  
Nor can indulgent nature give us more,  
For to make him she exhausted all her store.

One of the finest epitaphs imaginable.

I have divided the chosen poems into somewhat arbitrary groups, according to their context.

T T T T

## Between waking and dreaming

“I’ve often been chased by women – but never while I’m awake.” *Bob Hope*

**Hafiz (d. c. 1390) : Ode 44**

Last night, as half asleep I dreaming lay,  
Half naked came she in her little shift,  
With tilted glass, and verses on her lips;  
Narcissus-eyes all shining for the fray,  
Filled full of frolic to her wine-red lips,  
Warm as a dewy rose, sudden she slips  
Into my bed – just in her little shift.

Said she, half naked, half asleep, half heard,  
With a soft sigh betwixt each lazy word,  
‘Oh my old lover, do you sleep or wake!’  
And instant I sat upright for her sake,  
And drank whatever wine she poured for me –  
Wine of the tavern, or vintage it might be  
Of Heaven’s own vine: he surely were a churl  
Who refused wine poured out by such a girl,  
A double traitor he to wine and love.  
Go to, thou puritan! the gods above  
Ordained this wine for us, but not for thee;  
Drunkards we are by a divine decree,  
Yea, by the special privilege of heaven  
Foredoomed to drink and foreordained forgiven.

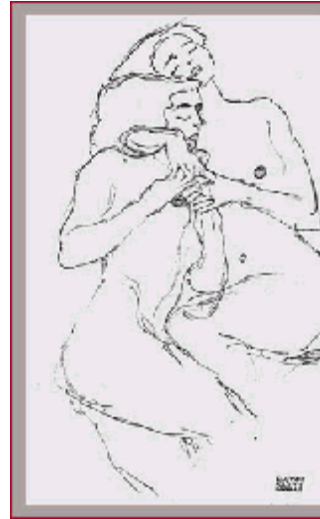
Ah! Hafiz, you are not the only man  
Who promised penitence and broke down after;  
For who can keep so hard a promise, man,  
With wine and woman brimming o’er with laughter!  
O knotted locks, filled like a flower with scent,  
How have you ravished this poor penitent.  
*Translation Richard Le Gallienne (1866-1947)*

**Urbain Chevreau (1613-1710)**

**J**e dormais d’un profond et paisible sommeil  
Quand Philis, en dormant, m’apparut toute nue,  
Comparable, en son teint délicat et vermeil,  
A celle qui du jour annonce la venue.  
Jamais plaisir au mien ne peut être pareil  
Et jamais passion ne fut mieux reconnue,  
Puisque je l’embrassais et que, sans mon réveil,  
J’étais prêt de forcer toute sa retenue.

Ici je vous appelle à mon soulagement,  
 Astres, qui présidez au bonheur d'un amant,  
 Et je t'invoque aussi, ô Père du mensonge.  
 Faites, si vous pouvez me donner du secours,  
 Que je voie en effet ce que je vis en songe  
 Ou faites, pour le moins, que je dorme toujours.

**Aphra Behn (1640-89) : *The Dream - From A Voyage to the Isle of Love***



All trembling in my arms Aminta lay,  
 Defending of the bliss I strove to take;  
 Raising my rapture by her kind delay,  
 Her force so charming was and weak.  
 The soft resistance did betray the grant,  
 While I pressed on the heaven of my desires;  
 Her rising breasts with nimbler motions pant;  
 Her dying eyes assume new fires.  
 Now to the height of languishment she grows,  
 And still her looks new charms put on;  
 – Now the last mystery of Love she knows,  
 We sigh, and kiss: I waked, and all was done.

`Twas but a dream, yet by my heart I knew,  
 Which still was panting, part of it was true:  
 Oh how I strove the rest to have believed;  
 Ashamed and angry to be undeceived!

**Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1684-1763)**

**B**etween your sheets you soundly sleep  
 Nor dream of vigils that we lovers keep  
 While all the night, I waking sigh your name,  
 The tender sound does every nerve inflame,  
 Imagination shows me all your charms,  
 The plenteous silken hair, and waxen arms,  
 The well-turned neck, and snowy rising breast  
 And all the beauties that supinely rest  
 between your sheets.

Ah Lindamira, could you see my heart,  
 How fond, how true, how free from fraudulent art,  
 The warmest glances poorly do explain  
 The eager wish, the melting throbbing pain  
 Which through my very blood and soul I feel,  
 Which you cannot believe or I reveal,  
 Which every metaphor must render less  
 And yet (methinks) which I could well express  
 between your sheets.

**Johann Peter Uz (1720-1796) : *Ein Traum***

<p>O Traum, der mich entzückt!  Vom schönsten Traum berückt,  Lag, sorglos hingestreckt,  Ich, durch's Gebüsch verdeckt,  Das einen Teich, der silbern floss,  Im schattenvollen Tal umschloss.</p>	<p>Oh dream, enchanting me!  Entranced by the finest dream  Lay I, without a care,  Well hidden by a bush  That grew around a silver pool  In a valley's cool and pleasing shade.</p>
<p>Da sah ich durch die Sträucher  Mein Mädchen bei dem Teiche:  Das hatte sich zum Baden  Der Kleider meist entladen,  Bis auf ein untreu weiss Gewand,  Das keinem Lüftchen widerstand.</p>	<p>Through the branches there I spied  My girl who by the pool,  About to bathe, had taken off  Most of her clothes, save one  Unruly garment pure, so light  It withstood not the softest breeze.</p>
<p>Nun hob mit Jugendfeuer  Die schöne Brust sich freier:  Mein Blick blieb lüstern stehen  Bei diesen regen Höhen,  Wo Zephyr unter Lilien blies,  Und sich die Wollust küssen liess.</p>	<p>Now rises with a youthful zest  Her bosom fair and free:  My eyes, filled with desire,  Stare at these dizzy heights,  Where Zephyr blows among the lilies  And kisses of desire are placed.</p>
<p>Sie fing nun an, o Freuden!  Sich vollends auszukleiden:  Ach! aber eh's geschiehet,  Erwach' ich, und sie fliehet.  O schlief ich doch von neuem ein!  Nun wird sie wohl im Wasser sein.</p>	<p>And now – Oh joy! – she is about  To take off all her clothes:  But then – before it happens –  I awake and she escapes.  Please let me sleep again;  Now she must be in the water.</p>

**Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909) - *Love and Sleep***

Lying asleep between the strokes of night  
I saw my love lean over my sad bed,  
Pale as the duskiest lily's leaf or head,  
Smooth-skinned and dark, with bare throat made to bite,  
Too wan for blushing and to warm for white,  
But perfect-coloured without white and red.  
And her lips opened amorously, and said -  
I wist not what, saving one word - Delight.  
And all her face was honey to my mouth,  
And all her body pasture to mine eyes;  
The long lithe arms and hotter hands than fire,  
The quivering flanks, hair smelling of the south,  
The bright light feet, the splendid supple thighs  
And glittering eyelids of my soul's desire.



**Pierre Louys (1870-1925) - *La chevelure***

Il m'a dit: "Cette nuit, j'ai rêvé.  
J'avais ta chevelure autour de mon cou.  
J'avais tes cheveux comme un collier noir  
Autour de ma nuque et sur ma poitrine.

Je les caressais, et c'étaient les miens;  
Et nous étions liés pour toujours ainsi,  
Par la même chevelure, la bouche sur la bouche,  
Ainsi que deux lauriers n'ont souvent qu'une racine.

Et peu à peu, il m'a semblé.  
Tant nos membres étaient confondus,  
Que je devenais toi-même,  
Ou que tu entraies en moi comme mon songe."

Quand il eut achevé,  
Il mit doucement ses mains sur mes épaules,  
Et il me regarda d'un regard si tendre,  
Que je baissai les yeux avec un frisson.

T T T T

### **Wit and Wisdom**

*Mae West*<sup>2</sup>

Give a man a free hand and he'll run it all over you.  
Love conquers all things except poverty and toothache.  
Save a boyfriend for a rainy day - and another, in case it doesn't rain.  
Sex is emotion in motion.  
I believe in censorship. I made a fortune out of it.  
I used to be Snow White, but I drifted.  
I generally avoid temptation unless I can't resist it.  
When choosing between two evils, I always like to try the one I've never tried before.  
When I'm good, I'm very good. But when I'm bad I'm better.  
To err is human, but it feels divine.  
Say what you want about long dresses, but they cover a multitude of shins.  
Good sex is like good bridge. If you don't have a good partner, you'd better have a good hand.  
Anything worth doing is worth doing slowly.  
A hard man is good to find.  
Too much of a good thing can be wonderful.  
Virtue has its own reward, but no sale at the box office.  
Poor Mary Ann! She gave the guy an inch and now he thinks he's a ruler.  
When women go wrong, men go right after them.  
I only like two kinds of men: domestic and imported.  
I feel like a million tonight, but one at a time.  
Ten men waiting for me at the door? Send one of them home – I'm tired.

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<sup>2</sup> Mae West must be counted one of the best female wits of all time (or she had a first class scriptwriter - or both). Cf <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/m/a129837.html>

I have climbed the ladder of success – wrong by wrong.  
 Marriage is a great institution, but I'm not ready for an institution yet.  
 Every man I meet wants to protect me – I can't figure out from what.  
 Boy, am I exhausted. I went on a double date last night and the other girl didn't turn up.  
 Few men know how to kiss well. Fortunately, I've always had time to teach them.  
 I don't like all-in wrestling – if it's all-in, why wrestle?  
 Men aren't attracted by my mind. They're attracted by what I don't mind. *Gypsy Rose Lee*  
 I like to wake up feeling a new man. *Jean Harlow*  
 A man is only as old as the woman he feels. *Groucho Marx*  
 I know nothing about sex because I was always married. *Zsa Zsa Gabor*  
 The only place men want depth in a woman is in her décolleté. *Zsa Zsa Gabor*  
 What's the matter darling, don't you recognise me with my clothes on? *Tallulah Bankhead*  
 I'll come to your room at five o'clock. If I'm late, start without me. *Tallulah Bankhead*  
 Contraceptives should be used on all conceivable occasions. *Spike Milligan*  
 Some people object to the fan dancer, others to the fan. *Anonymous*  
 Love is a matter of chemistry; Sex is a matter of physics. *G.M. Mark*  
 Sex without love is a pretty empty experience. But as empty experiences go, it's a pretty good experience. *Woody Allen*  
 I thought men like that shot themselves. *King George V*  
 A lady is a woman who never shows her underwear unintentionally. *Lilian Day*  
 What a blonde – she was enough to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window. *Raymond Chandler*  
 You may break Lent with looking on her. *John Cleveland (1613-1658)* From *The Senses' Festival*  
 Oh Lord, give me chastity, but do not give it yet. *St. Augustine*  
 Good girls go to heaven – bad girls go everywhere. *Ronnie Dunn/Terry McBride/Shawn Camp (BMI) – sung by Meat Loaf*

T T T T

### Love in the afternoon (and early evening)

#### SEX AT NOON TAXES<sup>3</sup>

**Ovid (43 BC-18 AD) : *Elegy 5***

In summer's heat and mid-time of the day  
 To rest my limbs upon a bed I lay,  
 One window shut, the other open stood,  
 Which gave such light, as twinkles in a wood,  
 Like twilight glimpse at setting of the sun,  
 Or night being past, and not yet day begun.  
 Such light to shamefast maidens must be shown,  
 Where they must sport, and seem to be unknown.  
 Then came Corinna in a long loose gown,  
 Her white neck hid with tresses hanging down:  
 Resembling fair Semiramis going to bed  
 Or Lais of a thousand wooers sped.

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<sup>3</sup> My favourite palindrome.

I snatched her gown, being thin, the harm was small,  
Yet strived she to be covered there withal.  
And striving thus, as one that would be cast,  
Betrayed herself, and yielded at the last.  
Stark naked as she stood before mine eye,  
Not one wen in her body could I spy.  
What arms and shoulders did I touch and see,  
How apt her breasts were to be pressed by me?  
How smooth a belly under her waist saw I?  
How large a leg, and what a lusty thigh?  
To leave the rest, all liked me passing well,  
I clinged her naked body, down she fell,  
Judge you the rest, being tired, she bade me kiss,  
Jove send me more such afternoons as this.  
*Translated by Christopher Marlowe*

**Félix Arvers (1806-1850) - La ressemblance**  
Sur tes riches tapis, sur ton divan qui laisse  
Au milieu des parfums respirer la mollesse,  
En ce voluptueux séjour,  
Où loin de tous les yeux, loin des bruits de la terre,  
Les voiles enlacés semblent, pour un mystère,  
Eteindre les rayons du jour,

Ne t'enorgueillis pas, courtisane rieuse,  
Si, pour toutes tes soeurs ma bouche sérieuse  
Te sourit aussi doucement,  
Si, pour toi seule ici, moins glacée et moins lente,  
Ma main sur ton sein nu s'égare, si brûlante  
Qu'on me prendrait pour un amant.

Ce n'est point que mon coeur soumis à ton empire,  
Au charme décevant que ton regard inspire  
Incapable de résister,  
A cet appât trompeur se soit laissé surprendre  
Et ressente un amour que tu ne peux comprendre,  
Mon pauvre enfant! ni mériter.

Non: ces rires, ces pleurs, ces baisers, ces morsures,  
Ce cou, ces bras meurtris d'amoureuses blessures,  
Ces transports, cet oeil enflammé;  
Ce n'est point un aveu, ce n'est point un hommage  
Au moins: c'est que tes traits me rappellent l'image  
D'une autre femme que j'aimai.

Elle avait ton parler, elle avait ton sourire,  
Cet air doux et rêveur qui ne peut se décrire.  
Et semble implorer un soutien;  
Et de l'illusion comprends-tu la puissance?

On dirait que son oeil, tout voilé d'innocence,  
Lançait des feux comme le tien.

Allons: regarde-moi de ce regard si tendre,  
Parle-moi, touche-moi, qu'il me semble l'entendre  
Et la sentir à mes côtés.  
Prolonge mon erreur: que cette voix touchante  
Me rende des accents si connus et me chante  
Tous les airs qu'elle m'a chantés!

Hâtons-nous, hâtons-nous! Insensé qui d'un songe  
Quand le jour a chassé le rapide mensonge,  
Espère encor le ressaisir!  
Qu'à mes baisers de feu ta bouche s'abandonne,  
Viens, que chacun de nous trompe l'autre et lui donne  
Toi le bonheur, moi le plaisir!

**Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) - *Chanson d'après-midi***



Quoique tes sourcils méchants  
Te donnent un air étrange  
Qui n'est pas celui d'un ange,  
Sorcière aux yeux alléchants,

Je t'adore, ô ma frivole,  
Ma terrible passion!  
Avec la dévotion  
Du prêtre pour son idole.

Le désert et la forêt  
Embaument tes tresses rudes,  
Ta tête a les attitudes  
De l'énigme et du secret.

Sur ta chair le parfum rôde  
Comme autour d'un encensoir;  
Tu charmes comme le soir,  
Nymphé ténébreuse et chaude.

Ah ! les philtres les plus forts  
Ne valent pas ta paresse,  
Et tu connais la caresse  
Qui fait revivre les morts!

Tes hanches sont amoureuses  
De ton dos et de tes seins,  
Et tu ravis les coussins  
Par tes poses langoureuses.

Quelquefois, pour apaiser  
 Ta rage mystérieuse,  
 Tu prodigues, sérieuse,  
 La morsure et le baiser;

Tu me déchires, ma brune,  
 Avec un rire moqueur,  
 Et puis tu mets sur mon coeur  
 Ton oeil doux comme la lune.

Sous tes souliers de satin,  
 Sous tes charmants pieds de soie,  
 Moi, je mets ma grande joie,  
 Mon génie et mon destin,

Mon âme par toi guérie,  
 Par toi, lumière et couleur!  
 Explosion de chaleur  
 Dans ma noire Sibérie!

T T T T

#### Some useful medical definitions<sup>4</sup>

<i>Benign</i>	What you be after you be eight.
<i>Bacteria</i>	Back door to cafeteria.
<i>Barium</i>	What doctors do when patients die.
<i>Caesarean Section</i>	A neighborhood in Rome.
<i>Catscan</i>	Searching for Kitty.
<i>Cauterize</i>	Made eye contact with her.
<i>Colic</i>	A sheep dog.
<i>Cona</i>	A punctuation mark.
<i>D&amp;C</i>	Where Washington is.
<i>Dilate</i>	To live long.
<i>Enema</i>	Not a friend.
<i>Fester</i>	Quicker than someone else.
<i>Fibula</i>	A small lie.
<i>G.I.Series</i>	World Series of military baseball.
<i>Hangnail</i>	What you hang your coat on.
<i>Impotent</i>	Distinguished, well known.
<i>Labour Pain</i>	Getting hurt at work.
<i>Medical Staff</i>	A Doctor's rod.
<i>Morbid</i>	A higher offer than I bid.
<i>Nitrates</i>	Cheaper than day rates.
<i>Node</i>	I knew it.
<i>Outpatient</i>	A person who has fainted.

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<sup>4</sup> With thanks to Amir Ali

<i>Pap Smear:</i>	A fatherhood test.
<i>Pelvis:</i>	Second cousin to Elvis.
<i>Post Operative</i>	A letter carrier.
<i>Recovery Room:</i>	Place to do upholstery.
<i>Return:</i>	Damn near killed him.
<i>Secretion:</i>	Hiding something
<i>Seizure:</i>	Roman emperor.
<i>Tablet:</i>	A small table.
<i>Terminal Illness:</i>	Getting sick at the airport.
<i>Tumour:</i>	More than one.
<i>Urine:</i>	Opposite of mine.
<i>Varicose:</i>	Near by/close by.

T T T T

### Gobfrey Shrdlu's column<sup>5</sup>

Girls Ready to Wear Clothing.

Strip Clubs Shock – Magistrates ready to act on indecent shows.

Vacancies exist for two female physiotherapists, preferably with some experience. Varied work embracing in-patients and out-patients in Dundee and Angus.

The President shall supervise the officers and members of the Committee in the carrying out of their cuties.

E. Cramer Ltd require beamer, presser and girl for stripping.

Something new which no motorist should be without – the self-grip wench.

The Nebraska Legislature was asked to enact a law providing annulment of marriages of all couples who do not have one or more children by Representative Hines, Democrat of Omaha, who is a bachelor.

George ... had charge of the entertainment during the past year. His birth-provoking antics were always the life of the party and he will be greatly missed.

She grew redder and her cheeks seemed to swell under her tight black blouse.

When a Suffolk fisher lad sets his heart upon a maiden he does not beat about the bust.

For a limited time, Walkers Ltd. extends the opportunity for business women to take advantage of our professional golf instructor at nominal fees.

The Ladies' Benevolent Association held its regular monthly meeting on Monday evening. Mr. Watts made a motion that he would take care of any ladies present who wished to discard any clothing.

I am bringing a party of sixteen Scouts to camp near .... during August and wonder if you could spare sufficient Guides so that I can give one to each boy before he goes to camp.

A heavy pall of lust covered the upper two thirds of Texas last night and was expected to drift south-east over the state by morning.

The greatest objection to the schemes of both the Socialists and the Liberals was that they involved increases in the cost of loving.

The bride was attended by two bridesmaids. Both were nearly attired in fawn georgette.

<sup>5</sup> See *Christmas Pudding 1999*, where I referred to the collections of typographical errors published by Dennis Parsons and to his fictional character Gobfrey, whose surname comes from the first row of type in the typesetter's box of lead characters – some, it is said, are the work of his wife Lousie.

Arrangements for tea at the Church Bazaar were in the hands of Mrs. ... the daughter of the archdeacon and a lady member of the congregation.  
The success of the conference has been in great measure due to the women shorthand writers who have been working all out in brief shifts.  
It is proposed to re-align the road to cut out a dangerous double bed which has been the scene of numerous serious accidents in recent years.  
The speaker told of his adventure with a perilous bra constrictor.  
Her dark hair is attractively set, and she has a fine fair skin, which, she admits ruefully, comes out 'in a mass of freckles' at the first hint of sin.  
Police say the 7-inch picture, depicting a declining nude, had been stolen some time ago.  
The report said the drugs might cause girth defects if administered to pregnant women.  
Sexi-detached houses and bungalows for sale.  
Visiting hours in women's colleges should be made equal to those in men's colleges - there is little conceivable reason for prohibiting men visitors in women's rooms.  
Men compromise only 1.5% of the South's nursing students.  
Midfield play became erotic.  
The Countess of ... who was with a merry party wore nothing to indicate that she was a holder of four Scottish titles.  
*And, to conclude, my absolute favourite from "The Tanganyika Standard":*  
26.10: R.D. Smith has one sewing machine for sale. Phone .... after 7pm and ask for Mrs. Kelly who lives with him cheap.  
27.10: R.D. Smith informs us he has had several annoying telephone calls because of an incorrect ad in yesterday's paper. It should have read: R.D. Smith has one sewing machine for sale. Cheap. Phone ..... after 7pm and ask for Mrs. Kelly who loves with him.  
28.10: R.D. Smith. We regret an error in R.D. Smith's classified advertisement yesterday. It should have read: R.D. Smith has one Sewing Machine for sale. Cheap. Phone .... and ask for Mrs. Kelly who lives with him after 7pm.

T T T T

## The body beautiful

### Song Of Solomon (5)

I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.  
I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.  
I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?  
My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.  
I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.

His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

**Vidyapati (Indian 15<sup>th</sup> century)**

*Twin Hills*

Her hair dense as darkness.

Her face rich as the full moon:

Unbelievable contrasts

Couched in a seat of love.

Her eyes rival lotuses.

Seeing that girl today,

My eager heart

Is driven by desire.

Innocence and beauty

Adore her fair skin.

Her gold necklace

Is lightning

On the twin hills of

Her breasts ....

*Translated by Deben Bhattacharya*



**Atukuri Molla (India early 16<sup>th</sup> century)**

**A**re they lotuses

or the arrows of Cupid?

Difficult to say  
of her eyes.

Are they sweet chirpings of birds  
or of celestial women?

Difficult to say  
of her words.



Is it the moon  
or the looking glass?  
Difficult to say  
of her face.

Are they golden pots  
or a pair of *chakravaka* birds?  
Difficult to say  
of her breasts.

Is it a flow of sapphires  
or a flock of bees?  
Difficult to say  
of her hair.

Is it a sand dune  
or a dais for Love God's wedding?  
Difficult to say  
of her thighs.

People got confused  
as they watched  
elegant her.  
*Translated by B. V. L. Narayanarow*



Much 17<sup>th</sup> century erotic poetry catalogues the beauties of the (female) object of desire, beginning chastely but progressively getting to the more interesting parts. Such catalogues are rather boring, but I include extracts from one of the wittiest as an illustration of the technique. For an example of the more boring type of catalogue, see *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* by Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86)

**John Donne (1572-1631) - *Elegy XVIII***

Whoever loves, if he do not propose  
The right true end of love, he's one that goes  
To sea for nothing but to make him sick.

...

Can men more injure women than to say  
They love them for that, by which they're not they?  
Makes virtue woman? must I cool my blood  
Till I both be, and find one wise and good?  
May barren angels love so. But if we  
Make love to woman, virtue is not she,  
As beauty is not, nor wealth. He that strays thus  
From her to hers is more adulterous  
Than if he took her maid. Search every sphere  
And firmament, our Cupid is not there.  
He's an infernal God, and underground  
With Pluto dwells, where gold and fire abound.

...

So we her airs contemplate, words and heart,  
And virtues, but we love the centric part.

Nor is the soul more worthy, or more fit  
For love, than this, as infinite as it.  
But in attaining this desired place  
How much they err, that set out at the face?

...

There, in a creek where chosen pearls do swell,  
The remora, her cleaving tongue, doth dwell.  
These and the glorious promontory, her chin,  
O'erpast, and the straight Hellespont between  
The Sestos and Abydos of her breasts,  
Not of two lovers, but two loves, the nests,  
Succeeds a boundless sea, but yet thine eye  
Some island moles may scattered there descry;  
And sailing towards her India, in that way  
Shall at her fair Atlantic navel stay.  
Though thence the current be thy pilot made,  
Yet, ere thou be where thou wouldst be embay'd,  
Thou shalt upon another forest set,  
Where many shipwreck, and no further get.  
When thou art there, consider what this chase  
Misspent by thy beginning at the face.

Rather set out below; practise my art;  
Some symmetry the foot hath with that part  
Which thou dost seek, and is thy map for that,  
Lovely enough to stop, but not stay at.  
Least subject to disguise and change it is;  
Men say the devil never can change his;  
It is the emblem that hath figured

Firmness; 'tis the first part that comes to bed.

...

Rich Nature in women wisely made  
Two purses, and their mouths aversely laid.  
They then which to the lower tribute owe,  
That way which that exchequer looks must go;  
He which doth not, his error is as great,  
As who by clyster gives the stomach meat.

**Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) - *Le serpent qui danse***



Que j'aime voir, chère indolente,  
De ton corps si beau,  
Comme une étoffe vacillante,  
Miroiter la peau!

Sur ta chevelure profonde  
Aux âcres parfums,  
Mer odorante et vagabonde  
Aux flots bleus et bruns,

Comme un navire qui s'éveille  
Au vent du matin,  
Mon âme rêveuse appareille  
Pour un ciel lointain.

Tes yeux où rien ne se révèle  
De doux ni d'amer,  
Sont deux bijoux froids où se mêle  
L'or avec le fer.

A te voir marcher en cadence,  
Belle d'abandon,  
On dirait un serpent qui danse  
Au bout d'un bâton .

Sous le fardeau de ta paresse  
Ta tête d'enfant  
Se balance avec la mollesse  
D'un jeune éléphant,

Et ton corps se penche et s'allonge  
Comme un fin vaisseau  
Qui roule bord sur bord et plonge  
Ses vergues dans l'eau.

Comme un flot grossi par la fonte  
Des glaciers grondants,  
Quand l'eau de ta bouche remonte  
Au bord de tes dents,

Je crois boire un vin de Bohême,  
Amer et vainqueur,  
Un ciel liquide qui parsème  
D'étoiles mon coeur!

**Marie Nizet (1859-1922) - *La bouche***

Ni sa pensée, en vol vers moi par tant de lieues,  
Ni le rayon qui court sur son front de  
lumière,  
Ni sa beauté de jeune dieu qui la première  
Me tenta, ni ses yeux - ces deux caresses  
bleues;

Ni son cou ni ses bras, ni rien de ce qu'on  
touche,  
Ni rien de ce qu'on voit de lui ne vaut sa  
bouche  
Où l'on meurt de plaisir et qui s'acharne à  
mordre,

Sa bouche de fraîcheur, de délices, de  
flamme,  
Fleur de volupté, de luxure et de désordre,  
Qui vous vide le coeur et vous boit jusqu'à  
l'âme...

**Marguerite Burnat-Provins (1872-1952)**

*From "Le Livre pour toi"*

J'ai regardé ton corps debout, simple et altier  
comme un pilier d'ivoire, ambré comme un  
rayon de miel.

Je l'ai regardé, les mains croisés sur mes  
genoux, sans l'effleurer, dans la  
contemplation fervente de sa splendeur, et je  
l'ai aimé avec mon âme plus passionnément.

Je me sens presque craintive, dominée par ce  
rythme qui chante à mes sens une mystérieuse musique; je m'exalte  
silencieusement devant ce poème de grâce virile, d'élégance hautaine, de  
victorieuse jeunesse.

Ô Sylvius, dis-moi que tu me donnes toute ta beauté. Dis-moi qu'elle est mienne,  
ta tête rayonnante imprégnée du soleil, dis-moi que tu m'abandonnes ta poitrine  
large où je m'étende pour sommeiller, tes hanches étroites et dures, tes genoux  
de marbre, tes bras qui pourraient m'écraser et tes mains si chères, où mon baiser  
lent se dépose au creux des paumes caressantes.

J'ai regardé tes lèvres fières qui plient sous les miennes, tes dents où mes dents se  
sont heurtées illuminent ton sourire, ta langue chaude m'endort, et quand je  
m'éveille de mon vertige, c'est pour revoir ton corps.



**David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930)**

*Gloire de Dijon*

When she rises in the morning  
I linger to watch her;  
She spreads the bath-cloth underneath the  
window  
And the sunbeams catch her  
Glistening white on the shoulders,  
While down her sides the mellow  
Golden shadow glows as  
She stoops to the sponge, and her swung  
breasts  
Sway like full-blown yellow  
Gloire de Dijon roses.

She drips herself with water, and her  
shoulders  
Glisten as silver, they crumple up  
Like wet and falling roses, and I listen  
For the sluicing of their rain-dishevelled  
petals.  
In the window full of sunlight  
Concentrates her golden shadow  
Fold on fold, until it glows as  
Mellow as the glory roses.



T T T T

**Pass the Port**

A man called home at noon one day and the maid answered. When the man asked to speak to his wife, the maid replied, “She’s upstairs in the bedroom entertaining her boyfriend.” After sputtering and fuming for a minute, the man asked the maid if she would like to earn \$10,000 for a few minutes’ work. She said “Of course. What do I have to do?” He answered, “Take my shotgun from the closet and shoot both of them.”

The maid put the phone down. He heard footsteps proceeding upstairs, then two shots rang out. The maid picked up the phone and said, “OK, it’s done. What shall I do with the bodies?” The man said, “Take them out back and throw them into the pool.”

“What pool?” the maid asked. After a moment of silence, the man said, “Is this 555 3724?”

An Irish priest and a rabbi found themselves sharing a compartment on a train. After a while, the priest opened a conversation by saying, “I know that in your religion, you’re

not supposed to eat pork.. Have you actually ever tasted it?" The rabbi said, "I must tell the truth. Yes, I have, on the odd occasion."

Then the rabbi asked, "In your religion, too, I know you're supposed to be celibate ..."  
The priest replied, "Yes, I know what you're going ask and I have succumbed once or twice."

There was silence for a while. Then the rabbi peeped around the newspaper he was reading and said, "Better than pork, isn't it?"

T T T T

## Simply Sensual

**Louise Labé (1524-1566)**

**B**aïse m'encor, rebaise-moi et baise;  
Donne m'en un de tes plus savoureux,  
Donne m'en un de tes plus amoureux:  
Je t'en rendrai quatre plus chauds que braise.

Las! te plains-tu? Ça, que ce mal j'apaise,  
En t'en donnant dix autres doucereux.  
Ainsi, mêlant nos baisers tant heureux,  
Jouïssons-nous l'un de l'autre à notre aise.

Lors double vie à chacun en suivra.  
Chacun en soi et son ami vivra.  
Permits m'Amour penser quelque folie:

Toujours suis mal, vivant discrètement,  
Et ne me puis donner contentement  
Si hors de moi ne fais quelque saillie.



**Pierre Ronsard (1524-1585) – From Ode à sa maistresse**

Ah je meurs, ah baise moi,  
Ah maistresse approche toi,  
Tu fuis come fan qui tremble,  
Au moins soufre que ma main  
S'esbate un peu dans ton sein,  
Ou plus bas si bon te semble.

**Sir John Harington (1561-1612) - The Author To His Wife, Of A Woman's Eloquence**

My Mall, I mark that when you reach to prove me  
To buy a velvet gown, or some rich border,

Thou call'st me good sweet heart, thou swear'st to love me,  
Thy locks, thy lips, thy looks, speak all in order,  
Thou think'st, and right thou think'st, that these do move me,  
That all these severally thy suit do further:  
But shall I tell thee what most thy suit advances?  
Thy fair smooth words? no, no, thy fair smooth haunches.

**Marie-Catherine-Hortense de Villegieu (1632-1683) - *Jouissance***

Aujourd'hui dans tes bras j'ai demeuré pâmé,  
Aujourd'hui, cher Tirsis, ton amoureuse ardeur  
Triomphe impunément de toute ma pudeur  
Et je cède aux transports dont mon âme est charmée.

Ta flamme et ton respect m'ont enfin désarmée;  
Dans nos embrassements, je mets tout mon bonheur  
Et je ne connais plus de vertu ni d'honneur  
Puisque j'aime Tirsis et que j'en suis aimée.

Ô vous, faibles esprits, qui ne connaissez pas  
Les plaisirs les plus doux que l'on goûte ici-bas,  
Apprenez les transports dont mon âme est ravie!

Une douce langueur m'ôte le sentiment,  
Je meurs entre les bras de mon fidèle Amant,  
Et c'est dans cette mort que je trouve la vie.

**Aphra Behn (1640-89) - *The Willing Mistress***

Amyntas led me to a grove,  
Where all the trees did shade us;  
The sun itself, though it had strove,  
It could not have betray'd us:  
The place secured from human eyes,  
No other fear allows,  
But when the winds that gently rise,  
Do kiss the yielding boughs.  
Down there we sat upon the moss,  
And did begin to play  
A thousand amorous tricks, to pass  
The heat of all the day.  
A many kisses he did give:  
And I returned the same  
Which made me willing to receive  
That which I dare not name.  
His charming eyes no aid required  
To tell their softening tale;  
On her that was already fired,  
'Twas easy to prevail.  
He did but kiss and clasp me round,  
Whilst those his thoughts expressed:



And laid me gently on the ground;  
Ah who can guess the rest?

**Johann Christian Günther (1695-1723) - *Auf Einen Kusz***

Ich weis, geliebtes Kind,  
Dass meine Treu im Küssen,  
Dass meine sanfte Bissen  
Dir ganz zuwider sind.  
Doch warum wiltu mich nicht brünstig  
küssen lassen?  
Ich soll bey dir was mehr als Mund und  
Lippen fassen.

I know, lovely child,  
That my persistent kissing  
And my gentle bites  
Are hateful to you.  
But why won't you let me kiss you  
passionately?  
Perhaps I should go further than just  
your mouth and lips.

**Muddupalani (ca 1730-1790)<sup>6</sup> - From "*Appeasing Radhika*"**

Move on her lips  
the tip if your tongue;  
do not scare her  
by biting hard.  
Place on her cheeks  
a gentle kiss:  
do not scratch her  
with your sharp nails.  
Hold her nipple  
with your fingertips;  
do not scare her  
by holding it tight.  
Make love  
Gradually;  
do not scare her  
by being aggressive.  
I am a fool  
to tell you all this.  
When you meet her  
and wage your war of love  
would you care to recall  
my "do's and don'ts",  
Honey?

**I**f I ask her not to kiss me,  
stroking on my cheeks  
she presses my lips hard  
against hers.



<sup>6</sup> Translated by B.V.L. Narayanarow. Muddupalani was a court poetess and a concubine of the Marathi King Pratapasimha.



If I ask her not to touch me,  
stabbing me with her firm breasts  
she hugs me.

If I ask her not to get too close  
for it is not decorous,  
she swears at me loudly.

If I tell her of my vow not  
to have a woman in my bed,  
she hops on  
and begins the game of love.

Appreciative,  
she lets me drink from her lips,  
fondles me, talks on,  
making love again and again.  
How could I stay away  
from her company?

**Victor Hugo (1802-1885) - *Adolescence***

J'allais au Luxembourg rêver, ô temps lointain,  
Dès l'aurore, et j'étais moi-même le matin.  
Les nids dialoguaient tout bas, et les allées  
Désertes étaient d'ombre et de soleil mêlées;  
J'étais pensif, j'étais profond, j'étais niais.  
Comme je regardais, comme j'épiais!  
Qui? La Vénus, l'Hébé, la nymphe chasserresse.  
Je sentais du printemps l'invisible caresse.  
Je guettais l'inconnu. J'errais. Quel curieux  
Que Chérubin en qui s'éveille Des Grieux!  
O femme! mystère! être ignoré qu'on encense!  
Parfois j'étais obscène à force d'innocence.  
Mon regard violait la vague nudité  
Des déesses, debout sous les feuilles d'été;  
Je contemplais de loin ces rondeurs peu vêtues,  
Et j'étais amoureux de toutes les statues;  
Et j'en ai mis plus d'une en colère, je crois.  
Les audaces dans l'ombre égalent les effrois,  
Et, hardi comme un page et tremblant comme un lièvre,  
Oubliant latin, grec, algèbre, ayant la fièvre  
Qui résiste aux Bezouts et brave les Restauds,  
Je restais là stupide au bas des piédestaux,  
Comme si j'attendais que le vent sous quelque arbre  
Soulevât les jupons d'une Diane en marbre.

**e.e.cummings 1894-1962**

<p><b>m</b>ay i feel said he          (i'll squeal said she          just once said he)          it's fun said she</p> <p>(may i touch said he          how much said she          a lot said he)          why not said she</p> <p>(let's go said he          not too far said she          what's too far said he          where you are said she)</p> <p>may i stay said he          (which way said she          like this said he          if you kiss said she</p>	<p>may i move said he          is it love said she)          if you're willing said he          (but you're killing said she</p> <p>but it's life said he          but your wife said she          now said he)          ow said she</p> <p>(tiptop said he          don't stop said she          oh no said he)          go slow said she</p> <p>(cccome? said he          ummm said she)          you're divine! said he          (you are Mine said she)</p>
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**Marie Nizet (1859-1922) - *La torche***

Je vous aime, mon corps, qui fûtes son désir,  
 Son champ de jouissance et son jardin d'extase  
 Où se retrouve encor le goût de son plaisir  
 Comme un rare parfum dans un précieux vase.

Je vous aime, mes yeux, qui restiez éblouis  
 Dans l'émerveillement qu'il traînait à sa suite  
 Et qui gardez au fond de vous, comme en deux puits,  
 Le reflet persistant de sa beauté détruite. [...]

Je vous aime, mon coeur, qui scandiez à grands coups  
 Le rythme exaspéré des amoureuses fièvres,  
 Et mes pieds nus noués aux siens et mes genoux  
 Rivés à ses genoux et ma peau sous ses lèvres...

Je vous aime ma chair, qui faisiez à sa chair  
 Un tabernacle ardent de volupté parfaite  
 Et qui preniez de lui le meilleur, le plus cher,  
 Toujours rassasiée et jamais satisfaite.

Et je t'aime, ô mon âme avide, toi qui pars  
 - Nouvelle Isis - tentant la recherche éperdue  
 Des atomes dissous, des effluves épars  
 De son être où toi-même as soif d'être perdue.

Je suis le temple vide où tout culte a cessé  
Sur l'inutile autel déserté par l'idole;  
Je suis le feu qui danse à l'âtre délaissé,  
Le brasier qui n'échauffe rien, la torche folle...

Et ce besoin d'aimer qui n'a plus son emploi  
Dans la mort, à présent retombe sur moi-même.  
Et puisque, ô mon amour, vous êtes tout en moi  
Résorbé, c'est bien vous que j'aime si je m'aime.

T T T T

### **An Official Correspondence: 1916<sup>7</sup>**

*January 1st. Foreign Office (FO) to Cairo* - 101. Greek Prime Minister wishes to import grain. Can you do this?

*January 4th. Cairo to FO* - 416. Your 101 not understood. Where does he want to import? Is it into Egypt?

*January 8th. FO to Cairo* - 103. Greek Prime Minister wishes to import grain into Greece. Can you do this?

*January 11th. Cairo to FO* - 420. Your 103. We have done it several times.

*January 12th. FO to Cairo* - 108. Regret copy mislaid. What is gist of my 103? If possible, repeat.

*January 14th. Cairo to FO* - Regret copy to your 103 mislaid here. Believe it concerned Greek Prime Minister.

*January 16th. FO to Cairo* - 108. Greek Prime Minister wishes to import grain into Greece. Can you do this?

*January 19th. Cairo to FO* - 428. Your 108. We have imported grain into Greece several times. It was believed to go to the German Army.

*January 22nd. FO to Cairo* - 112. Your 428. If you import grain to Greek Prime Minister, can you suggest measures to prevent its reaching the German Army? Would Prime Minister's personal guarantee be sufficient?

*January 24th. Cairo to FO* - 430. Your 112. Which Prime Minister's guarantee do you suggest? Prefer M. Briand, if still in office.

*January 27th. FO to Cairo* - 114. Your 430. We alluded to Greek Prime Minister. Please let me have your views as soon as possible, as matter is urgent and delay to be avoided.

*February 8th. Cairo to FO* - 435. Your 114. To avoid delay, suggest the personal guarantee in writing of Greek Prime Minister countersigned by British Consul at Piraeus, with documentary assent of British Government and approval of Director General Customs Administration, Alexandria.

*February 10th. FO to Cairo* - 118. Your 435. Have agreed to accept joint and several guarantee of King of Greece, Archimandrite and Greek Prime Minister, countersigned by leading British merchant at Piraeus, Mr Carl Sonnenschein. How much can you send?

*February 13th. Cairo to FO* - 440. Your 118. Will reply as soon as possible, but some delay inevitable, as uncertain what Department of the Egyptian Government deals with these questions. Have so far unsuccessfully inquired of Main Drainage, Public Instruction, War Office, Agriculture, Public Works and Wakf. Will wire again later.

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<sup>7</sup> With thanks to Eleni Esch. From *The Leisure of an Egyptian Official* by Lord Edward Cecil (cf <http://www.btinternet.com/~britishempire/empire/library/leisure.htm>)

*March 23rd. Cairo to FO* - 150. Regret delay answering your 118. Matter very complicated. Your 487. Naval authorities object export of seed, as many seeds contain oil suitable for submarines. Can you arrange with Admiralty.

*March 26th. FO to Cairo* - 495. Your 150. Have arranged with Admiralty. Seed will be escorted by two destroyers.

*March 28th. FO to Cairo* - 499. My 495. Have ascertained seed question less important than at first considered. Greek Prime Minister has written explaining seed is needed for his favourite parrot, who is of great age and delicate. Two pounds of selected will be sufficient. Please obtain and send. Admiralty consider escort unnecessary under circumstances.

*March 31st. Cairo to FO* - 161. Your 499. Am obtaining seed at once. Can you inform me of approximate size of parrot, as understand from inquiries that there is a direct relation between size of birds and size of food seeds.

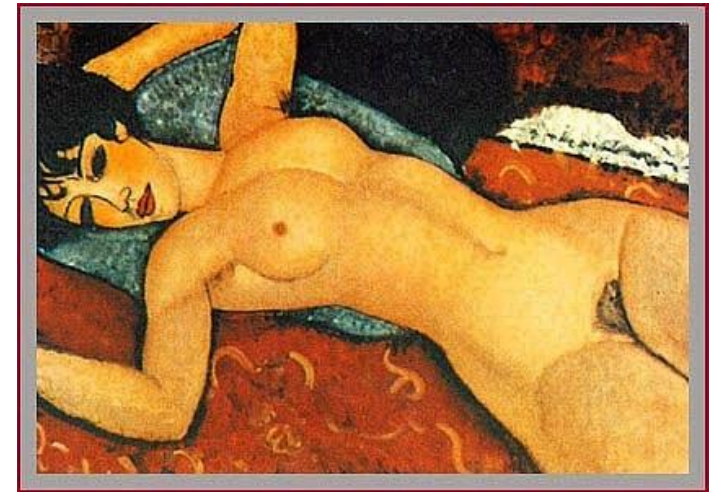
*April 7th. FO to Cairo* - 506. Your 161. Stop seed.

*April 8th. Cairo to FO* - 165. Your 506. Seed stopped

*April 12th. FO to Cairo* - 510. Your 165. As information has reached me that the Greek Prime Minister's parrot died last week of indigestion, no further action in matter is necessary.

T T T T

### Luxe, Calme et Volupté<sup>8</sup>



Bhartrhari (5<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>9</sup>

If the forest of her hair  
Calls you to explore the land,

<sup>8</sup> "Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme et volupté." From *L'invitation au voyage* by Charles Baudelaire

<sup>9</sup> This and the next are from *Poems from the Sanskrit*, Penguin 1968, translated by John Brough.

And her breasts, those mountains fair,  
Tempt that mountaineer your hand –  
Stop! Before it is too late:  
Love, the brigand, lies in wait.

**Anonymous** (*probably 5<sup>th</sup> century*)

**W**hile describing to her best friend  
Her adventures with her lover,  
She realised she was talking to her husband,  
And added, “And then I woke up”.

**Pierre Louys** (1870-1925) *Les Nymphes*

Oui, des lèvres aussi, des lèvres savoureuses  
Mais d'une chair plus tendre et plus fragile encor  
Des rêves de chair rose à l'ombre des poils d'or  
Qui palpitent légers sous les mains amoureuses.

Des fleurs aussi, des fleurs molles, des fleurs de nuit,  
Pétales délicats alourdis de rosée  
Qui fléchissent pliés sous la fleur épuisée  
Et pleurent le désir, goutte à goutte, sans bruit.

O lèvres, versez-moi les divines salives  
La volupté du sang, la vapeur des gencives  
Et les frémissements enflammés du baiser.

O fleurs troublantes, fleurs mystiques, fleurs divines  
Balancez vers mon coeur sans jamais l'apaiser  
L'encens mystérieux des senteurs féminines.

**Ghazal of Tavakkul** *From the Pushtu (Afghan, 19th century)*<sup>10</sup>

Today I saw Laila's breasts, the hills of a fair city  
From which my heart might leap to heaven.  
Her breasts are a garden of white roses  
Having two drifted hills of fallen rose leaves.  
Her breasts are a garden where doves are singing  
And doves are moaning with arrows because of her.  
All her body is a flower and her face is Shalibagh;  
She has fruits of beautiful colours and the doves abide there.  
Over the garden of her breasts she combs the gold rain of her hair...  
You have killed Tavakkul, the faithful pupil of Abdel Qadir Gilani.

**Cécile Sauvage** (1883-1927) *Le vallon*

Pourquoi crains-tu, fille farouche  
De me voir nue entre les fleurs?  
Mets une rose sur ta bouche

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<sup>10</sup> From *Eastern Love Poems*, translated by Powys Mathers, Folio Society 1953

Et ris avec moins de rougeur.  
 Ne sais-tu pas comme ta robe  
 Est transparente autour de toi  
 Et que d'un clair regard je vois  
 Ta sveltesse qui se dérobe?  
 Triste fantôme de pudeur,  
 Que n'es-tu nue avec la fleur  
 D'un lis blanc dans ta chevelure,  
 Un doigt sur ta mamelle pure.

**Max Dauthendey (1867-1918)**

<p><b>D</b>eine Küsse, deine Brüste, deine Arme          Pressen noch lüstewarm meinen Leib.          Dein Blut, dein Fleisch          Ruht noch lüstewarm an mir.          Meine Schritte schallen,          Meine Schritte fallen härter von Stein zu          Stein,          Die Erde nimmt mich in ihre Mitte,          Verwundert fällt es mir ein:          Wir lagen draussen im Weltenraum,          Wir beide allein.</p> <p><b>I</b>ch liege im Kaiserkleide,          Mich krönt die goldene Liebe.          Ich liege auf Lagern von Seide,          Auf Purpur und Hermelin.</p> <p>Um meinen Hals deine Arme          Schlingen ein glühend Geschmeide,          Auf meiner Stirn deine Küsse          Scheinen wie edele Steine.</p> <p>Meine flammende Krone,          Sie ist der Sonne gleich,          Ich bin Kaiser der Sonne,          Dein Leib ist mein Kaiserreich.</p>	<p><b>Y</b>our kisses, your breasts, your arms          Press my body with the warmth of desire.          Your blood, your flesh          Rests against me with the warmth of desire.          My footsteps echo,          My footsteps fall harder from stone to          stone,          The earth takes me to its centre,          With surprise I remember:          We were lying out there in space,          Just the two of us.</p> <p><b>I</b> am lying in imperial robes,          Crowned by golden love.          I am lying on satin sheets,          On purple and on ermine.</p> <p>Round my neck your arms          Hold me in a glowing band,          On my brow your kisses          Glisten like precious stones.</p> <p>My crown of flames          Is like the sun,          I am the Sun Emperor          Your body is my empire.</p>
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**e.e.cummings (1894-1962)**

i like my body when it is with your  
 body. it is so quite a new thing.  
 muscles better and nerves more.  
 i like your body. i like what it does,  
 i like its hows. i like to feel the spine  
 of your body and its bones, and the trembling  
 firm smoothness and which i will

again and again and again  
 kiss, i like kissing this and that of you,  
 i like, slowly stroking the shocking fuzz  
 of your electric fur, and what-is-it comes  
 over parting flesh....And eyes big love-crumbs,

and possibly I like the thrill

of under me you so quite new

**Denise Miège (1936-) - From *Incantation***

Je t'enlise, je t'enrobe, je te love, je te veux,  
 je te vise, te bombarde, et je te prends d'assaut.  
 Je ne te laisse pas le temps, je t'invite,  
 je t'emperle, je t'envoûte, je t'attends.  
 J'ai tellement envie de toi.  
 Je t'envahis, je t'environne, je suis partout à la fois.  
 Je suis de tous les départs  
 que tu prendras au hasard  
 pour ne plus m'entendre te répéter que je t'aime  
 t'enlise, te veux, t'attends,  
 te vise, te prends, te laisse,  
 t'embobine à chaque pas, te frise, te lisse, te lèche,  
 t'use et ruse, charme et louvoie.  
 Et du plus loin que tu sois,  
 je suis ta dernière demeure  
 et tu chemine vers moi.

**Klabund (Alfred Henschke) (1890-1928) - *Wir im Welteninnen***

Pflanze auf meine Lenden Deiner Liebesküsse Raserei: Sieh: mein Schrei Brüllt wie eine Fackel auf zu Weltenbränden.	Plant on my loins The frenzy of your kisses of love: Look: my cry Roars like a burning torch and ignites the world.
Lass die Sterne bleich ins Nichts verrinnen, Lass die Erde sich in Asche modern, Wir im Welteninnen Werden wie die Hölle ewig lodern.	Let the pale stars drain to emptiness, Let the earth smoulder in its embers, We, on the inside of the world, Will glow forever like the fire of hell.

T T T T

On 15 November 2002, Hu Jintao replaced Jiang Zemin as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. US playwright Jim Sherman wrote the following piece to commemorate this event.

*We take you now to the Oval Office*

*George Bush:* Condoleeza! Nice to see you. What's happening?

*Condi:* Sir, I have the report here about the new leader of China.

*George:* Great. Lay it on me.

*Condi:* Hu is the new leader of China.

*George:* That's what I want to know.

*Condi:* That's what I'm telling you.

*George:* That's what I'm asking you. Who is the new leader of China?

*Condi:* Yes.

*George:* I mean the fellow's name.

*Condi:* Hu.

*George:* The guy in China.

*Condi:* Hu.

*George:* The new leader of China.

*Condi:* Hu.

*George:* The Chinaman!

*Condi:* Hu is leading China.

*George:* Now whaddya' asking me for?

*Condi:* I'm telling you Hu is leading China.

*George:* Well, I'm asking you. Who is leading China?

*Condi:* That's the man's name.

*George:* That's who's name?

*Condi:* Yes.

*George:* Will you or will you not tell me the name of the new leader of China?

*Condi:* Yes, sir.

*George:* Yassir? Yassir Arafat is in China? I thought he was in the Middle East.

*Condi:* That's correct.

*George:* Then who is in China?

*Condi:* Yes, sir.

*George:* Yassir is in China?

*Condi:* No, sir.

*George:* Then who is?

*Condi:* Yes, sir.

*George:* Yassir?

*Condi:* No, sir.

*George:* Look, Condi. I need to know the name of the new leader of China. Get me the Secretary General of the U.N. on the phone.

*Condi:* Kofi?

*George:* No, thanks.

*Condi:* You want Kofi?

*George:* No.

*Condi:* You don't want Kofi.

*George:* No. But now that you mention it, I could use a glass of milk. And then get me the U.N.

*Condi:* Yes, sir.

*George:* Not Yassir! The guy at the U.N.

*Condi:* Kofi?

*George:* Milk! Will you please make the call?

*Condi:* And call who?



*George:* Who is the guy at the U.N?

*Condi:* Hu is the guy in China.

*George:* Will you stay out of China?!

*Condi:* Yes, sir.

*George:* And stay out of the Middle East! Just get me the guy at the U.N.

*Condi:* Kofi.

*George:* All right! With cream and two sugars. Now get on the phone.

*Condi picks up the phone.*

*Condi:* Rice here.

*George:* Rice? Good idea. And a couple of egg rolls, too. Maybe we should send some to the guy in China. And the Middle East. Can you get Chinese food in the Middle East?

T T T T

### Gaudy Nights<sup>11</sup>

**Liu Yung (990-1050) - *Before Lowering the Perfumed Curtain***

Before lowering the perfumed curtain to express her love,  
She knits her eyebrows, worried that the night is too short.

She urges the young lover to go to bed  
First, so as to warm up the mandarin-duck quilt.

A moment later she puts down her unfinished needlework  
And removes her silk shirt to indulge in passion without end.

Let me keep the lamp before the curtain  
That I may look at her lovely face from time to time!

*Translation James J. Y. Liu*

**Paul Scarron (1610-1660)**

**M**a belle, si tu voulais,  
nous dormirions ensemble,  
Dans un grand lit carré  
couvert de taies blanches;  
Aux quatre coins du lit,  
un bouquet de pervenches.  
Dans le mitan du lit,  
la rivière est profonde;  
Tous les chevaux du roi  
y viennent boire ensemble.  
Et là, nous dormirions  
jusqu'à la fin des temps.

---

<sup>11</sup>

“ ..... Come,  
Let's have one other gaudy night: call to me  
All my sad captains; fill our bowls once more;  
Let's mock the midnight bell.”  
*William Shakespeare - Antony and Cleopatra:*

**Emily Dickinson (1830-86)**

**W**ild Nights -- Wild Nights!  
Were I with thee  
Wild Nights should be  
Our luxury!

Futile -- the Winds --  
To a Heart in port --  
Done with the Compass --  
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden --  
Ah, the Sea!  
Might I but moor -- Tonight --  
In Thee!

**Tarigonda Venkamamba (ca 1800-86)**

From *Vishnuparjatanu (The Divine Flower of Vishnu)*

Gently he lifts me up  
Wipes the stream of tears from my eyes  
Trails his fingers softly through my twisted hair  
Braids my tresses and decks them with flowers  
Gently requests I change my crumpled clothes  
Into a flowered raiment of his choice  
And adorns me with trinkets of gold and silver.  
On my forehead he places the  
Vermilion mark of fidelity and artfully  
Darkens my reddened eyes with *kajal*  
And on my breasts with his own hands  
Playfully rubs a sandal salve to  
Cool my burning flesh:  
Slowly guides me to his chamber  
And cajoles me with appeals to “let me know”  
The secret reason for my sulk  
(As if he didn’t know)  
And I, like a fool, tell him  
About the flower that he  
Gave Rukmini, the other one.  
Whereupon he laughs lightly,  
“oh that,” he says sweetly,  
“To poor Rukmini I have given  
A single petal of the Parijat.  
To you I’ll present the whole  
Tree if you wish.  
And now come into my arms  
I cannot tarry much longer.”  
And so again, fool that I am,  
I believe the charming rogue

And suffocate him with my kisses.  
And as I lie in love-drugged sleep,  
He leaves me, as is his wont,  
For another bed.  
Tell me, my dear, where Tarigonda's Lord is now.  
Find him, my dear, the beloved libertine,  
And bring him back into my arms.

**George Gordon Lord Byron (1788-1824)**

**S**o we'll go no more a-roving  
So late into the night,  
Though the heart still be as loving,  
And the moon still be as bright.  
For the sword outwears its sheath,  
And the soul outwears the breast,  
And the heart must pause to breathe,  
And love itself have rest.  
Though the night was made for loving,  
And the day returns too soon,  
Yet we'll go no more a-roving  
By the light of the moon.

**Robert Browning (1812-89): Now**

Out of your whole life give but a moment!  
All of your life that has gone before,  
All to come after it, -- so you ignore,  
So you make perfect the present, -- condense,  
In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,  
Thought and feeling and soul and sense --  
Merged in a moment which give me at last  
You around me for once, you beneath me, above me --  
Me -- sure that despite of time future, time past, --  
This tick of your life-time's one moment you love me!  
How long such suspension may linger? Ah, Sweet --  
The moment eternal -- just that and no more --  
When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core  
While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut and lips meet!

**Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) - *Les promesses d'un visage***

J'aime, ô pâle beauté, tes sourcils surbaissés,  
D'où semblent couler des ténèbres,  
Tes yeux, quoique très noirs, m'inspirent des pensers  
Qui ne sont pas du tout funèbres.

Tes yeux, qui sont d'accord avec tes noirs cheveux,  
Avec ta crinière élastique,  
Tes yeux, languissamment, me disent: " Si tu veux,  
Amant de la muse plastique,

Suivre l'espoir qu'en toi nous avons excité,  
 Et tous les goûts que tu professes,  
 Tu pourras constater notre véracité  
 Depuis le nombril jusqu'aux fesses;

Tu trouveras au bout de deux beaux seins bien lourds,  
 Deux larges médailles de bronze,  
 Et sous un ventre uni, doux comme du velours,  
 Bistré comme la peau d'un bonze,

Une riche toison qui, vraiment, est la soeur  
 De cette énorme chevelure,  
 Souple et frisée, et qui t'égale en épaisseur,  
 Nuit sans étoiles, Nuit obscure!"

**Else Lasker-Schüler 1869-1945 : *Ein Liebeslied***

Komm zu mir in der Nacht - wir schlafen engverschlungen. Müde bin ich sehr, vom Wachen einsam. Ein fremder Vogel hat in dunkler Frühe schon gesungen, Als noch mein Traum mit sich und mir gerungen.	Come to me in the night – we will sleep in a close embrace. I am so tired and alone from being awake. A strange bird has already sung in the early dark, While my dream was still struggling with me and itself.
Es öffnen Blumen sich vor allen Quellen Und färben sich mit deiner Augen Immortellen...	Flowers are opening by every spring And take the colour of your immortal eyes...
Komm zu mir in der Nacht auf Siebensternenschuhen Und Liebe eingehüllt spät in mein Zelt. Es steigen Monde aus verstaubten Himmelstruhen. Wir wollen wie zwei seltene Tiere liebesruhen Im hohen Rohre hinter dieser Welt.	Come to me in the night on shoes of the seven stars Come late to my tent in robes of love. Moons are rising from heaven's dusty coffers. Our wish is to lie united in love like two rare animals In the high space behind this world.

**Francis Thompson (1859-1907): *Arab Love-Song***

The hunched camels of the night  
 Trouble the bright  
 And silver waters of the moon.  
 The Maiden of the Morn will soon  
 Through Heaven stray and sing,  
 Star gathering.  
 Now while the dark about our loves is strewn,  
 Light of my dark, blood of my heart, O come!  
 And night will catch her breath up, and be dumb.  
 Leave thy father, leave thy mother

and thy brother;  
 Leave the black tents of thy tribe apart!  
 Am I not thy father and thy brother,  
 And thy mother?  
 And thou - what needest with thy tribe's black tents  
 Who hast the red pavilion of my heart?

**Fleur Adcock (1934):** *A note on Propertius 1.5*

Among the Roman love-poets, possession  
 Is a rare theme. The locked and flower-hung door,  
 The shivering lover, are allowed. To more  
 Buoyant moods, the canons of expression  
 Gave grudging sanction. Do we, then, assume,  
 Finding Propertius tear-sodden and jealous,  
 That Cynthia was inexorably callous?  
 Plenty of moonlight entered that high room  
 Whose doors had met his Alexandrine battles;  
 And she, so gay a lutanist, was known  
 To stitch and doze a night away, alone,  
 Until the poet tumbled in with apples  
 For penitence and for her head his wreath,  
 Brought from a party, of wine-scented roses –  
 (The garland's aptness lying, one supposes,  
 Less in the flowers than in the thorns beneath:  
 Her waking could, he knew, provide his verses  
 With less idyllic themes.) Onto her bed  
 He rolled the round fruit, and adorned her head;  
 Then gently roused her sleeping mouth to curses.  
 Here the conventions reassert their power:  
 The apples fall and bruise, the roses wither,  
 Touched by a sallowed moon. But there were other  
 Luminous nights – (even the cactus flower  
 Glows briefly golden, fed by spiny flesh) –  
 And once, as he acknowledged, all was singing:  
 The moonlight musical, the darkness clinging,  
 And she compliant to his every wish.

T T T T

In 1881, **Ambrose Bierce** (1842-ca 1914), an American journalist and short-story writer, began publication of what subsequently became known as *The Devil's Dictionary*. In 1906 a large part of it was published under the title *The Cynic's Word Book*, a name which – as Bierce wryly points out – “the author had not the power to reject nor the happiness to approve”. Bierce continues: “This more reverent title had previously been forced upon him by the religious scruples of the last newspaper in which a part of the work had appeared, with the natural consequence that when it came out in covers the country already had been flooded by its imitators with a score of ‘cynic’ books - *The Cynic's This*, *The Cynic's That*, and *The Cynic's t'Other*. Most of these books were merely stupid,

though some of them added the distinction of silliness. Among them, they brought the word 'cynic' into disfavor so deep that any book bearing it was discredited in advance of publication.

"Meantime, too, some of the enterprising humorists of the country had helped themselves to such parts of the work as served their needs, and many of its definitions, anecdotes, phrases and so forth, had become more or less current in popular speech. This explanation is made, not with any pride of priority in trifles, but in simple denial of possible charges of plagiarism, which is no trifle. In merely resuming his own the author hopes to be held guiltless by those to whom the work is addressed - enlightened souls who prefer dry wines to sweet, sense to sentiment, wit to humor and clean English to slang.

"A conspicuous, and it is hoped not unpleasing, feature of the book is its abundant illustrative quotations from eminent poets, chief of whom is that learned and ingenious cleric, Father Gassalasca Jape, S.J., whose lines bear his initials. To Father Jape's kindly encouragement and assistance the author of the prose text is greatly indebted."

My edition (Dover Publications, Inc. New York, 1993) summarises the work as follows: "These biting definitions display *Bitter Bierre's* skill as an epigrammatist and wit, as well as his knack for a variety of verse forms (and ability to match outlandish pseudonyms). Seldom has "The Devil's Dictionary" been matched for its relentless causticity, particularly in matters of religion and romance, two of the author's favorite subjects."

Here are a few of his gems – chosen (almost) at random:

**Aborigines, n** Persons of little worth found cumbering the soil of a newly discovered country. They soon cease to cumber; they fertilize.

**Economy, n** Purchasing the barrel of whiskey that you do not need for the price of the cow that you cannot afford.

**Egotist, n** A person of low taste, more interested in himself than in me.

**Heaven, n** A place where the wicked cease from troubling you with talk of their personal affairs and the good listen with attention while you expound your own.

**Helpmate, n** A wife, or bitter half.

"Now why is your wife called a helpmate, Pat?"

Says the priest. "Since the time o' yer wooin'

She's never assisted in what ye were at –

For it's naught ye are ever doin'."

"That's true of yer Riverence," Patrick replies,

And no sign of contrition evinces;

"But, bedad, it's a fact which the word implies,

For she helps to mate the expinses!" (*Marley Wottle*)

**Labor, *n*** One of the processes by which A acquires property for B.

**Lawyer, *n*** One skilled in circumvention of the law.

**Lead, *n*** A heavy blue-gray metal much used in giving stability to light lovers – particularly to those who love not wisely but other men's wives. Lead is also of great service as a counterpoise to an argument of such weight that it turns the scale of debate the wrong way. An interesting fact in the chemistry of international controversy is that at the point of contact of two patriotisms lead is precipitated in great quantities.

**Nectar, *n*** A drink served at banquets of the Olympian deities. The secret of its preparation is lost, but the modern Kentuckians believe that they come pretty close to a knowledge of its chief ingredient.

“Juno drank a cup of nectar,  
But the draught did not affect her.  
Juno drank a cup of rye –  
Then she bade herself goodbye.” (*J.G.*)

**Non-combatant, *n*** A dead Quaker.

**Phonograph, *n*** An irritating toy that restores life to dead noises.

**Piano, *n*** A parlor utensil for subduing the impenitent visitor. It is operated by depressing the keys of the machine and the spirits of the audience.

**Pleonasm, *n*** An army of words escorting a corporal of thought.

**Rebel, *n*** A proponent of a new misrule who has failed to establish it.

**Saint, *n*** A dead sinner revised and edited.

**Scriptures, *n*** The sacred books of our holy religion, as distinguished from the false and profane writings on which all other faiths are based.

**Twice, *adv.*** Once too often.

**Ugliness, *n*** A gift of the gods to certain women, entailing virtue without humility.

**Unction, *n*** An oiling, or greasing. The rite of extreme unction consists in touching with oil consecrated by a bishop several parts of the body of one engaged in dying. Marbury relates that after the rite had been administered to a certain wicked English nobleman it was discovered that the oil had not been properly consecrated and no other could be obtained. When informed of this the sick man said in anger: “Then I’ll be damned if I die!” “My son”, said the priest, “that is what we fear.”

**Vote, *n*** The instrument of a freeman's power to make a fool of himself and a wreck of his country.

**Wine, *n*** Fermented grape-juice known to the Women's Christian Union as “liquor, sometimes as “rum”. Wine, madame, is God's next best gift to man.

**Wit, *n*** The salt with which the American humorist spoils his intellectual cookery by leaving it out.

**Witch, *n*** 1) An ugly and repulsive old woman, in a wicked league with the devil. 2) A beautiful and attractive young woman, in wickedness a league beyond the devil.

**Year, *n*** A period of three hundred and sixty-five disappointments.

**Zigzag, *v.t.*** To move forward uncertainly, from side to side, as one carrying the white man's burden. (From *zed*, *z*, and *jag* and Icelandic word of unknown meaning:

“He zedjagged so uncomen wyde  
Thet none coude pas on eyder syde;  
So, to com saufly thruh, I been  
Constreynet for to doodge betwene.” (*Mumwele*)

T T T T

***Carpe Diem***



**Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585)**

***Ode à Cassandre***

Mignonne, allons voir si la rose  
Qui ce matin avait déclose  
Sa robe de pourpre au soleil,  
A point perdu cette vèprée,  
Les plis de sa robe pourprée,  
Et son teint au vôtre pareil.

Las! Voyez comme en peu d'espace,  
Mignonne, elle a dessus la place,  
Las, las ces beautés laissées choir!  
O vraiment marâtre Nature,  
Puisqu'une telle fleur ne dure  
Que du matin jusques au soir!

Donc, si vous me croyez, mignonne,  
Tandis que votre âge fleuronne  
En sa plus verte nouveauté,  
Cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse:  
Comme à cette fleur, la vieillesse  
Fera ternir votre beauté.

**Robert Herrick (1591-1634): *To The Virgins, To Make Much Of Time***

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Old time is still a-flying:  
And this same flower that smiles to-day  
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,  
The higher he's a-getting,  
The sooner will his race be run,  
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,  
When youth and blood are warmer;  
But being spent, the worse, and worst  
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,  
And while ye may go marry:  
For having lost but once your prime  
You may for ever tarry.



**Thomas Carew (?1594-1640): *Song Persuasions to enjoy***

If the quick spirits in your eye  
Now languish and anon must die;  
If every sweet and every grace  
Must fly from that forsaken face;  
Then, Celia, let us reap our joys  
Ere time such goodly fruit destroys.

Or, if that golden fleece must grow  
For ever free from aged snow;  
If those bright suns must know no shade,  
Nor your fresh beauties ever fade;  
Then fear not, Celia, to bestow  
What, still being gathered, still must grow.  
Thus, either Time his sickle brings  
In vain, or else in vain his wings.

**Martin Lluelyn (1616-1682): *Epithalamium to Mistress M.A.***

Rise from your virgin sheets, that be  
(Fie on them!) a mere nunnery.  
Who solitary winters leads  
Turns bracelets to religious beads.  
The virgin that at Hymen sticks  
Should sell her gems for th' crucifix;  
For she's a nun, the sages tell,  
That lies alone, though in no cell.  
She midst her liberties confined,  
Her body's cloister to her mind.  
Be they immured whose looks are wore  
Pale as the relics they adore.  
Where cheeks the rose and lily paint,  
A bridegroom is the only saint.  
Then as fair roses, to each other laid,  
Unite their blushes and are garlands made,  
So you, who when you are asunder only shun  
One star, will shine a constellation.

**Andrew Marvell (1621-78): *To His Coy Mistress***

Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, lady, were no crime.  
We would sit down and think which way  
To walk, and pass our long love's day;  
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide  
Of Humber would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood;  
And you should, if you please, refuse  
Till the conversion of the Jews.  
My vegetable love should grow

Vaster than empires, and more slow.  
An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirty thousand to the rest;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart.  
For, lady, you deserve this state,  
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found,  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song; then worms shall try  
That long preserv'd virginity,  
And your quaint honour turn to dust,  
And into ashes all my lust.  
The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none I think do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing soul transpires  
At every pore with instant fires,  
Now let us sport us while we may;  
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,  
Rather at once our time devour,  
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd power.  
Let us roll all our strength, and all  
Our sweetness, up into one ball;  
And tear our pleasures with rough strife  
Thorough the iron gates of life.  
Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

T T T T

### **Pass the port again**

**I**nto a Dublin pub comes Paddy Murphy, looking like he's been run over by a train. His arm is in a sling, his nose is broken, his face is cut and bruised and he's walking with a limp. "What happened to you?" asks Sean, the bartender.

"Jamie McConnough and me had a fight," says Paddy.

“That little fella McConnough,” says Sean, “he couldn't do that to you, he must have had something in his hand.”

“That he did,” says Paddy, “a shovel is what he had, and a terrible lickin' he gave me with it.”

“Well,” says Sean, “You should have defended yourself, didn't you have something in your hand?”

“That I did,” said Paddy, “Mrs. McConnough's left breast; and a thing of beauty it was, but useless in a fight.”

**A**n electrical engineer, a mechanical engineer and a civil engineer were having a discussion about what kind of engineer God was. The electrical engineer insisted God was an electrical engineer because the brain, the most important part of the body, employs electrical impulses.

The mechanical engineer insisted that God was a mechanical engineer because of the design of the world's best pump, the heart.

The civil engineer just laughed and said that she knew for a fact that God was a civil engineer. “After all”, she said, “who else but a civil engineer would put a wastewater system through a recreation zone?”

T T T T

## Delicacy

**Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859) - *Les roses de Saadi***

J'ai voulu ce matin te rapporter des roses;  
Mais j'en avais tant pris dans mes ceintures closes  
Que les noeuds trop serrés n'ont pu les contenir.  
Les noeuds ont éclaté. Les roses envolées  
Dans le vent, à la mer s'en sont toutes allées.  
Elles ont suivi l'eau pour ne plus revenir;

La vague en a paru rouge et comme enflammée.  
Ce soir, ma robe encore en est tout embaumée...

**Francis Jammes (1838-1938)**

**C'**est aujourd'hui la fête de Virginie ...  
Tu étais nue sous ta robe de mousseline.  
Tu mangeais de gros fruits au goût de Mozambique  
et la mer salée couvrait les crabes creux et gris.

Ta chair était pareille à celle des cocos  
Les marchands te portaient des pagnes couleur d'air  
et des mouchoirs de tête à carreaux jaune clair.

Labourdonnais signait des papiers d'amiraux.

Tu es morte et tu vis, ô ma petite amie,  
amie de Bernardin, ce vieux sculpteur de cannes  
et tu mourus en robe blanche, une médaille  
à ton cou pur, dans la *Passe de l'Agonie*

**Renée Vivien (1877-1909) - *Vêue***  
Ta robe participe à ton être enchanté,  
Ô ma très chère!... Elle est un peu de ta beauté.



La respirer, c'est ton odeur que l'on dérobe.  
Ton coeur intime vit dans les plis de ta robe.

L'odeur de nos baisers anciens est dans ses  
plis...  
Elle se ressouvient de nos divins oublis.

En mon être secret je suis presque jalouse  
De l'étoffe qui suit ton corps et qui l'épouse.

J'ose te l'avouer, en un soir hasardeux  
Où l'on s'exprime enfin... Nous t'aimons  
toutes deux.

D'avoir été si près de ta douceur suprême,  
Ta robe est ma rivale, et cependant je  
l'aime...

Tu n'aimes déjà plus ta robe de jadis,  
Soyeuse et longue comme un irréel iris.

Mais moi je l'aime et je la veux et je la garde.  
Pour moi, le passé reste et l'autrefois s'attarde.

J'adore ces chers plis du voile transparent  
Qui n'enveloppe plus ton corps indifférent.

Garde-moi, parfumée ainsi qu'une momie,  
Ta robe des beaux jours passés, Ô mon amie!

**Ivan Goll (1891-1950) - (aus: *Malaiische Lieder* 1935)**

In meiner Achseln Tal  
Wächst die rote Vanille  
Im Osten meiner Hüfte der süsse Anis  
O destilliere  
Aus meiner Haut die Namen des Frühlings

In the valley of my armpits  
Grows the red vanilla  
In the East of my hips sweet aniseed  
Oh distil  
From my skin the name of Spring

**Octavio Paz (1914-1998)**

<p><i>Las Novias</i>  Tendidos en la yerba  una muchacha y un muchacho.  Comen naranjas, cambian besos  como las olas cambian sus espumas.</p> <p>Tendidos en la playa  una muchacha y un muchacho.  Comen limones, cambian besos  como las nubes cambian sus espumas.</p> <p>Tendidos bajo tierra  una muchacha y un muchacho.  No dicen nada, no se besan,  cambian silencio por silencio.</p> <p><i>Das Cuerpos</i>  Dos cuerpos frente a frente  son a veces dos olas  y la noche es océano.</p> <p>Dos cuerpos frente a frente  son a veces dos piedras  y la noche desierto.</p> <p>Dos cuerpos frente a frente  son a veces raíces  en la noche enlazadas.</p> <p>Dos cuerpos frente a frente  son a veces navajas  y la noche relámpago.</p> <p>Dos cuerpos frente a frente  son dos astros que caen  en un cielo vacío.</p>	<p><i>Fiancés</i>  Lying in the grass  a girl and a boy  are eating oranges, exchanging kisses  like the waves exchanging their foam.</p> <p>Lying on the beach  a girl and a boy  are eating lemons, exchanging kisses  like the clouds exchanging their foam.</p> <p>Lying beneath the earth  a girl and a boy  are not talking, are not kissing,  are exchanging silence for silence.</p> <p><i>Two bodies</i>  Two bodies face to face  may be two waves  and the night an ocean.</p> <p>Two bodies face to face  may be two stones  and the night a desert.</p> <p>Two bodies face to face  may be roots  twined in the night.</p> <p>Two bodies face to face  may be blades  and the night a flash.</p> <p>Two bodies face to face  are two stars falling  in an empty sky.</p>
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*The Sound Of Her Name*

My heart leaps at the sound of her name,  
I see her face in every sunrise.  
Her beauty burns me like a flame,  
I caress her body with my eyes.

**Erich Fried (1921-1988) - *Nachtgedicht***

Dich bedecken nicht mit Küssen nur einfach mit deiner Decke (die dir von der Schulter geglitten ist) dass du im Schlaf nicht frierst	Let me cover you not with kisses just simply with your blanket (that has slipped from your shoulder) so that you don't freeze in your sleep
Später wenn du erwacht bist das Fenster zumachen und dich umarmen und dich bedecken mit Küssen und dich entdecken	Later when you are awake let me close the window and embrace you and cover you with kisses and discover you

T T T T

**An embarrassing Christmas experience**

Lord Franks, while British Ambassador to Washington, was phoned by a local radio station and asked what he would like for Christmas. He thought about it and gave his answer.

The next day the radio station announced: "We've been running a poll on what foreign ambassadors hope for Christmas. The French Ambassador said: I earnestly desire that next year should be a year of peace in the world. The Russian Ambassador hoped for a year of justice for all men. The German Ambassador said he wanted to see a greater sharing of wealth among nations. And the British Ambassador said he would like a box of crystallised fruit."

T T T T

**Witty**

**John Hoskins (1566-1638)**

**H**ere lies, the Lord have mercy on her,  
One of Her Majesty's maids of honour:  
She was both young, slender and pretty,  
She died a maid, the more the pity.

**John Donne (1572-1631) - *The Damp***

When I am dead, and doctors know not why,  
And my friends' curiosity  
Will have me cut up to survey each part,  
When they shall find your picture in my heart,  
You think a sudden damp of love  
Will through all their senses move,  
And work on them as me, and so prefer  
Your murder to the name of massacre,

Poor victories; but if you dare be brave,  
And pleasure in your conquest have,  
First kill th' enormous giant, your Disdain;  
And let th' enchantress Honour, next be slain;  
And like a Goth and Vandal rise,  
Deface records and histories  
Of your own arts and triumphs over men,  
And without such advantage kill me then,  
For I could muster up, as well as you,  
My giants, and my witches too,  
Which are vast Constancy and Secretness;  
But these I neither look for nor profess;  
Kill me as woman, let me die  
As a mere man; do you but try  
Your passive valour, and you shall find then,  
Naked you have odds enough of any man.

**John Gay (1685-1732)**

***To a Young Lady with some Lampreys***

With loves 'twas of old the fashion  
By presents to convey their passion;  
No matter what the gift they sent,  
The Lady saw that love was meant.  
Fair Atalanta, as a favour,  
Took the boar's head her Hero gave her;  
Nor could the bristly thing affront her,  
'Twas a fit present from a hunter.  
When Squires send woodcocks to the dame,  
It serves to show their absent flame:  
Some by snip of woven hair,  
In posied lockets bribe the fair;  
How many mercenary matches  
Have sprung from Di'mond rings and watches!  
But hold – a ring, a watch, a locket,  
Would drain at one a Poet's pocket;  
He should send songs that cost him nought,  
Nor ev'n he prodigal of thought.  
Why send Lampreys? fye, for shame!  
'Twill set a virgin's blood on flame.  
This to fifteen a proper gift!

It might lend sixty-five a lift.  
 I know your maiden aunt will scold,  
 And think my present somewhat bold.  
 I see her lift her hands and eyes.  
     'What eat it, Niece? eat *Spanish* flies!  
 'Lamprey's a most immodest diet:  
 'You'll neither wake nor sleep in quiet.  
 'Should I tonight eat Sago cream,  
 'Twould make me blush to tell my dream;  
 'If I eat Lobster, 'tis so warming,  
 'That every man I see looks charming;  
 'Wherefore had not the filthy fellow  
 'Laid *Rochester* upon your pillow?  
 'I vow and swear, I think this present  
 Had been as modest and as decent.  
     'Who has her virtue in her power?  
 'Each day has its unguarded hour;  
 'Always in danger of undoing,  
 'A prawn, a shrimp may prove our ruin!  
     'The shepherdess who lives on salad,  
 'To cool her youth, controls her palate;  
 'Should *Dian's* maids turn liqu'rish livers,  
 'And of huge lampreys rob the rivers,  
 Then all beside each glade and Visto,  
 'You'd see nymphs lying like *Calista*  
     'The man who meant to heat your blood,  
 'Needs not himself such vicious food –  
     In this, I own, your Aunt is clear,  
 I sent you what I well might spare:  
 For when I see you, (without joking)  
 Your eyes, lips, breasts, are so provoking,  
 They set my heart more cock-a-hoop,  
 Than could whole seas of craw-fish soup.

#### Anonymous

**B**e quiet, Sir! Begone, I say!  
 Lord bless us! How you romp and tear!  
 There!  
 I swear!  
 Now you left my bosom bare!  
 I do not like such boisterous play,  
 So take that saucy hand away -  
 Why now, you're ruder than before!  
 Nay, I'll be hanged if I comply -  
 Fie!  
 I'll cry!  
 Oh - I can't bear it - I shall die!  
 I vow I'll never see you more!  
 But - are you sure you've shut the door?



**Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)**

**I**, being born a woman and distressed  
By all the needs and notions of my kind,  
Am urged by your propinquity to find  
Your person fair, and feel a certain zest  
To bear your body's weight upon my breast:  
So subtly is the fume of life designed,  
To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind,  
And leave me once again undone, possessed.  
Think not for this, however, the poor treason  
Of my stout blood against my staggering brain,  
I shall remember you with love, or season  
My scorn with pity, -- let me make it plain:  
I find this frenzy insufficient reason  
For conversation when we meet again.

**Dorothy Parker (1893-1967): Interview**

The ladies men admire, I've heard,  
Would shudder at a wicked word.  
Their candle gives a single light;  
They'd rather stay at home at night.  
They do not keep awake till three,  
Nor read erotic poetry.  
They never sanction the impure,  
Nor recognise an overture.  
They shrink from powders and from paints.  
So far, I have had no complaints.

**Gisela Meussling (1935-) - In Unterhosen**

drei rote rosen er gleich darauf in unterhosen ich lass ihn laufen rosen kann ich mir selber kaufen	three red roses – and there he was just in his underwear I sent him home if I want roses I can buy my own
--	--

**Theobald Röhling (?-?) - Interpunktion**

Was ist die Liebe? Sprich! Ein Fragezeichen sicherlich. Vielleicht auch ein Gedankenstrich, Der an dem schönsten Punkte sich Erhebt und wunderbarlich Ausrufungszeichen wird für dich.	What is love? Tell me! A question mark of course. Perhaps too a dash That at its apogee Rises and miraculously Becomes an exclamation mark for you.
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Lynn Peters (?.?)

I suspect  
There would be more poems  
About sex  
If it rhymed with more than  
Pecks  
Necks  
Erects and ejects.

This begins to sound promising.  
I may write one.

<p>Sweeten my days, Brighten my nights. Take me to plays, Show me the sights.</p> <p>Dinner at ten, Just tête-à-tête. Dance with me then, I don't care how late.</p> <p>We'll walk to your flat As dawn's on the way.</p>	<p>I may wake the cat But say I can stay.</p> <p>Put the key in the door, Tiptoe inside. Leave your dress on the floor With my clothes beside.</p> <p>No time to lose, Light in the head, Off with your shoes And let's go to breakfast.</p>
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T T T T

For fans of Monty Python and his flying circus I include the following contribution by John Cleese to the debate on US foreign policy.

Bitter after being snubbed for membership in the "Axis of Evil", Libya, China and Syria today announced that they had formed the "Axis of Just as Evil", which they said would be more evil than that stupid Iran-Iraq-North Korea axis President Bush warned of in his State of the Union address. Axis of Evil members, however, immediately dismissed the new Axis as having, for starters, a really dumb name. "Right. They are just as evil - in their dreams!" declared North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il. "Everybody knows we're the best evils...best at being evil... we're the best." Diplomats from Syria denied they were jealous over being excluded, although they conceded they did ask if they could join the Axis of Evil. "They told us it was full," said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. "An axis can't have more than three countries", explained Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "This is not my rule, it's tradition. In World War II you had Germany, Italy, and Japan in the evil Axis. So, you can only have three, and a secret handshake. Ours is wickedly cool."

International reaction to Bush's Axis of Evil declaration was swift, as within minutes, France surrendered. Elsewhere, peer-conscious nations rushed to gain triumvirate status in what has become a game of geopolitical chairs. Cuba, Sudan and Serbia announced

that they had formed the "Axis of Somewhat Evil", forcing Somalia to join with Uganda and Myanmar in the "Axis of Occasionally Evil", while Bulgaria, Indonesia and Russia established the "Axis of Not So Much Evil Really as Just Generally Disagreeable."

With the criteria suddenly expanded and all the desirable clubs filling up, Sierra Leone, El Salvador, and Rwanda applied to be called the "Axis of Countries That Aren't the Worst But Certainly Won't Be Asked to Host the Olympics."

Canada, Mexico and Australia formed the "Axis of Nations That Are Actually Quite Nice, But Secretly Have Some Nasty Thoughts About America", while Scotland, New Zealand and Spain established the "Axis of Countries That Want Sheep to Wear Lipstick."

"That's not a threat, really, just something we like to do", said Scottish Executive First Minister Jack McConnell. While wondering if the other nations of the world weren't perhaps making fun of him, a cautious Bush granted approval for most axes, although he rejected the establishment of the "Axis of Countries Whose Names End in 'Guay'", accusing one of its members of filing a false application. Officials from Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chadguay denied the charges.

Israel, meanwhile, insisted it didn't want to join any Axis, but privately, world leaders said that's only because no one asked them.

T T T T

### Alba<sup>12</sup> – waking and parting

**John Donne (1572-1631) - *Break Of Day***

'Tis true, 'tis day; what though it be?  
O, wilt thou therefore rise from me?  
Why should we rise because 'tis light?  
Did we lie down because 'twas night?  
Love, which in spite of darkness brought us hither,  
Should in despite of light keep us together.

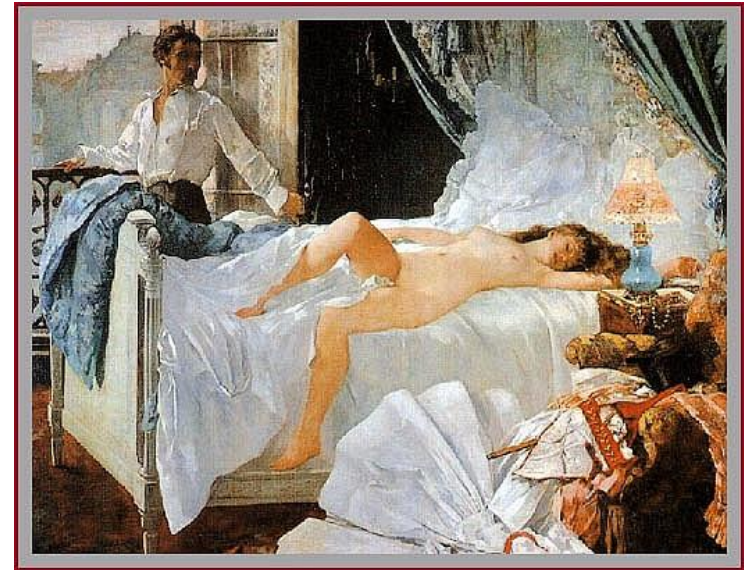
Light hath no tongue, but is all eye;  
If it could speak as well as spy,  
This were the worst that it could say,  
That being well I fain would stay,  
And that I loved my heart and honour so  
That I would not from him, that had them, go.

Must business thee from hence remove?  
O! that's the worst disease of love,  
The poor, the foul, the false, love can

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<sup>12</sup> Alba (O. Fr. aubade) was a medieval poem that took for its setting the morning after a night of love between a troubadour and his married lady. It reflects the emotions of parting and the pleasures of the previous night. <http://www.cs.uwindsor.ca/units/english/PPP/Medieval/content.htm>

Admit, but not the busied man.  
 He which hath business, and makes love, doth do  
 Such wrong, as when a married man doth woo.



**Ernst Stadler (1883-1941)**

***In der Frühe***

Die Silhouette deines Leibes  
 steht in der Frühe dunkel vor dem trüben Licht  
 der zugehangnen Jalousien. Ich fühl, im Bette liegend,  
 hostiengleich mir zugewendet dein Gesicht.  
 Da du aus meinen Armen dich gelöst,  
 hat dein geflüstert "ich muss fort"  
 nur an die fernsten Tore meines Traums gereicht.

Nun seh ich, wie durch Schleier, deine Hand,  
 wie sie mit leichtem Griff das weiße Hemd,  
 die Brüste nieder streicht ...  
 die Strümpfe ... nun den Rock ... das Haar gerafft ...  
 schon bist du fremd,  
 für Tag und Welt geschmückt ...

Ich öffne leis die Türe ... küsse dich ...  
 du nickst, schon fern, ein Lebewohl ...  
 und bist entrückt.  
 Ich höre, schon im Bette wieder,  
 wie dein sachter Schritt  
 im Treppenhaus verklingt.

***Early morning***

In the early morning the silhouette of your body  
 stands dark against the faint light  
 seeping through the closed shades. Lying in bed,  
 I sense your face as a communion offering.  
 You release yourself from my embrace  
 and your whisper "I have to go"  
 reaches just to the farthest edges of my dream.

Now I see your hand, as though through veils,  
 as, in easy strokes, it smooths your white blouse  
 over your breasts ... your stockings ...  
 now your skirt ... you straighten your hair ...  
 already you are unfamiliar,  
 dressed for the day and the world.

I open the door softly ... kiss you ...  
 you nod goodbye, already on your way ...  
 and gone.  
 Already back in bed, I hear  
 your soft step  
 in the stairway.

**Ezra Pound (1875-1972) - *Alba* ['Dawn Song']**

**A**s cool as the pale wet leaves  
of lily-of-the-valley  
She lay beside me in the dawn.

**D**awn enters with little feet  
like a gilded Pavlova,  
And I am near my desire.  
Nor has life in it aught better  
Than this hour of clear coolness,  
the hour of waking together.

T T T T

An article in the *Financial Times* in 1986 reported the following translation problems.

A delegation from Quebec was visiting Shanghai. The mayor of Montreal, Jean Drapeau, made a point during an official luncheon by saying 'Il faut battre le fer quand il est chaud'. This was translated as 'You must beat your brother when he is drunk' (Il faut battre le frère quand il est chaud<sup>13</sup>). At a banquet hosted by Shanghai's mayor, Drapeau's wife commented, during a lull in the conversation, 'On dirait qu'il y a un ange qui passe'. The interpreter took this as an expression of boredom and translated it as 'It seems as though a year has passed' (On dirait qu'il y un an qui passe). The courteous Chinese host responded that time was elastic and that though the visit by the Canadian couple was long, it seemed to him as though it had only taken a moment.

T T T T

### **Veiled meaning**

**Sir Thomas Wyatt (?1503-1542)**

**A** Lady gave me a gift she had not,  
And I received her gift which I took not,  
She gave it me willingly, and yet she would not,  
And I received it, albeit, I could not,  
If she give it me, I force not,  
And if she take it again she cares not.  
Conster what this is and tell not,  
For I am fast sworne I may not.

**Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (1554-1628) - *Sonnet LVI* (extract)**

He that lets his Cynthia lie,  
Naked on a bed of play,  
To say prayers ere she die,  
Teacheth time to run away.  
Let no love-desiring heart  
In the stars go seek his fate:

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<sup>13</sup> French Canadian slang for 'drunk'.

Love is only nature's art;  
Wonder hinders love and hate.  
None can well behold with eyes  
But what underneath him lies.

**William Shakespeare - *Sonnet CLI***

Love is too young to know what conscience is;  
Yet who knows not conscience is born of love?  
Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,  
Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove:  
For, thou betraying me, I do betray  
My nobler part to my gross body's treason;  
My soul doth tell my body that he may  
Triumph in love; flesh stays no father reason;  
But, rising at thy name, doth point out thee  
As his triumphant prize. Proud of this pride,  
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,  
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.  
No want of conscience hold it that I call  
Her 'love' for whose dear love I rise and fall.

**Jean Dominique (Marie Closset) (1873-1952)**

**J'**ai donné ma douceur, je ne l'ai pas gardée,  
Me voici seul avec mon âme nue  
Comme une chambre vide où l'ombre s'est accrue  
D'un reflet d'occident, pâle, sur la croisée...

Et j'ai donné mes fleurs. La chambre est toute nue  
Et frissonne sans joie de la douceur perdue,  
Des parfums oubliés, des choses entendues  
Que ne rediront plus mes lèvres étonnées.

Il ne faut pas en croire mes lèvres désolées,  
J'avais tant de douceur... J'ai voulu la donner!  
Je ne sais pas pourquoi, l'ombre s'étant accrue,  
Et mes fleurs souriant toutes vers la croisée,  
Je les ai prises là et je les ai données  
À quelqu'un qui sortait et qui venait d'entrer.

J'ai donné ma douceur; ne la demandez pas:  
Ma tristesse est encore ici, l'autre est là-bas,  
Où s'en vont les colombes qu'on a dépareillées!  
Ne la demandez pas. Et quand vous entrerez  
Dans la chambre déserte où je n'ai plus de fleurs,  
Approchez-vous de moi avec *votre* douceur...  
Et puis!... N'en croyez pas mes lèvres désolées.

T T T T

In *Christmas Pudding 2001* I described the events of September 11 as a challenge to all civilised values – and expressed, at the same time, my hope that our response might serve to uphold those values. This hope has been cruelly disappointed. I have struggled to find an explanation for the collapse of the coalition of nations determined to prevent a recurrence of similar acts of barbarity. We cannot change the fact that we live today in a unipolar world. This is, however, a temporary phenomenon: for those nations that will become world powers in the future, we – if we are citizens of the sole remaining world power or the former world powers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – through the behaviour we adopt in our approach to international relations, have a heavy responsibility: we are offering them a model, suggesting the way in which they might exercise their new responsibilities when they begin to play their full role on the world stage. Our behaviour in 2003 has not offered a model that promises the survival of human civilisation. My recommended reading this year (I include no cds or wine) is intended to help others understand what has happened, as it has helped me. The titles mostly speak for themselves: I quote, however, a representative sample of the content to whet appetites. For a healthy challenge to establishment propaganda and “spin”, I also strongly recommend the websites [www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org) and [www.accuracy.org](http://www.accuracy.org)

*Blowback – the Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, Chalmers Johnson. TimeWarner, 2002: “Blowback was written during 1998 and 1999. My intention was to warn my fellow Americans about the nature and conduct of U.S. foreign policy over the previous half-century, focusing particularly on the decade after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. The book appeared in the early spring of 2000. I argued that many aspects of what the American government had done abroad virtually invited retaliatory attacks from nations and peoples who had been victimized. I did not predict the events of September 11, 2001 – Saudi Arabian and Egyptian hijackers diving airliners into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in the suburbs of Washington DC. But I did clearly state that acts of this sort were coming and should be anticipated: World politics in the twenty-first century will in all likelihood be driven primarily by blowback from the second half of the twentieth century – that is, from the unintended consequences of the Cold War and the crucial American decision to maintain a Cold War posture in a post-Cold War world .”

*Kampf dem Terror – Kampf dem Islam*, Peter Scholl-Latour, Propyläen, 2002<sup>14</sup>: “... die heiligsten Prinzipien der im Atlantikpakt vereinten Nationen – Demokratie, Meinungsfreiheit, politischer Pluralismus und Toleranz – werden [in Zentralasien] von den zuverlässigsten und begünstigten Partnern der “Freien Welt” mit Füßen getreten. Die islamistischen Propagandisten können zu Recht darauf verweisen, dass die Hegemonie der USA sich eines Geflechts von Lügen und Heuchelei bediente, dass jeder Potentat – unter der Voraussetzung, dass er den wirtschaftlichen und strategischen Interessen der Supermacht entsprach und sich in die weltweite Front gegen den “Terrorismus” einreichte – mit Wohlwollen, Schonung, ja mit aktiver Konsolidierung seines Regimes belohnt wird.”

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<sup>14</sup> With thanks to Jürgen Schaefer.

*Manufacturing Consent – the political economy of the mass media*, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, Pantheon Books, 2002: “The technical structure of the media virtually compels adherence to conventional thoughts; nothing else can be expressed between two commercials, or in seven hundred words, without the appearance of absurdity that is difficult to avoid when one is challenging familiar doctrine with no opportunity to develop facts or arguments. In this respect the US media are rather different from those in most other industrial democracies, and the consequences are noticeable in the narrowness of articulated opinion and analysis.”<sup>15</sup>

*Rogue States*, Noam Chomsky, South End Press, Cambridge MA, 2000. Chomsky makes devastating use of quotes from official publications and memoirs: here is former UN Ambassador Daniel Moynihan on the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975: “The United States wished things to turn out as they did, and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. The task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable measure of success.”

*Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace – How We Got To Be So Hated*, Gore Vidal, Nation Books, New York, 2002: Vidal uses searing sarcasm as a rapier: “Fifty years ago, Harry Truman replaced the old republic with a national-security state whose sole purpose is to wage perpetual wars, hot, cold, and tepid. Exact date of replacement? February 27, 1947. Place: White House Cabinet Room. Cast: Truman, Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, a handful of congressional leaders. Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg told Truman that he could have his militarized economy only if he first “scared the hell out of the American people” that the Russians were coming. Truman obliged. The perpetual war began. Representative government of, by, and for the people is now a faded memory. Only corporate America enjoys representation by the Congresses and presidents that it pays for in an arrangement where no one is entirely accountable because those who have bought the government also own the media. Now, with the revolt of the Praetorian Guard at the Pentagon, we are entering a new and dangerous phase. Although we regularly stigmatize other societies as rogue states, we ourselves have become the largest rogue state of all. We honor no treaties. We spurn international courts. We strike unilaterally wherever we choose. We give orders to the United Nations but do not pay our dues. We complain of terrorism, yet our empire is now the greatest terrorist of all.”

*The Clash of Fundamentalisms*, Tariq Ali, Verso, London, 2002: the author challenges “the simplistic argument that ‘they hate us, because they’re jealous of our freedoms and our wealth’.” “We have to understand the despair, but also the lethal exaltation, that drives

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<sup>15</sup> Under the headline “CNN International Takes a wider view than U.S. Programs”, an article in *The Wall Street Journal* of April 11-13, 2003 states quite plainly that “viewers outside the US see a far more global view of the current [Iraq] conflict .... with more acknowledgement of the opposition toward American policy around the world”. The President of CNNI seeks to explain this as the most natural thing in the world: “Expatriate Americans are only 1.5% of our audience. The other 98.5% of our audience require us to be relevant to their lives”: in other words, as he explains later, US viewers do not want (must not be allowed?) to know that “the war was deeply unpopular in most of the world.” CNNI “aspired to cover this conflict by putting unpopular, unpalatable views on the air”. For a moment I was taken aback by the boldness of this courageous purveyor of truth: then I asked myself, unpalatable to whom?



people to sacrifice their own lives. If Western politicians remain ignorant of the causes and carry on as before, there will be repetitions. ... To fight tyranny and oppression by using tyrannical and oppressive means, to combat a single-minded and ruthless fanaticism by becoming equally fanatical and ruthless, will not further the cause of justice or bring about a meaningful democracy. It can only prolong the cycle of violence."

*Globalization and its Discontents*, Joseph Stiglitz, Allen Lane, London, 2002: "Part of the problem lies with the international economic institutions, with the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, which help to set the rules of the game. They have done so in ways that, all too often, have served the interests of the more advanced developed countries – and particular interests within those countries – rather than those of the developing world. But it is not just that they have served those interests; too often, they have approached globalization from particular narrow mind-sets, shaped by a particular vision of the economy and society."

*Stupid White Men – and other sorry excuses for the state of the nation*, Michael Moore, Penguin, 2002 – read how his book, now a bestseller and an icon of political iconoclasm, almost fell a victim to current political correctness. See his website [www.michaelmoore.com](http://www.michaelmoore.com).

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#### Answers to 2002 Oddities

a) Catherine the Great translated *The Merry Wives of Windsor* into Russian, under the title *A Pretty Basketful of Linen*. Though only one of her plays was a success beyond court circles, she wrote fourteen comedies, nine opera texts, seven short plays, and several other non-dramatic works. (cf <http://www.theatrehistory.com/russian/bates003.html>)

b) I quote from <http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/4098/fidelio3.html>: "There are four overtures available to the producer of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*. The one composed first and played at the premiere in 1805 is now known as Leonora No. 2. Leonora No. 3 was composed for the March 1806 revision. This one was somewhat simplified for a projected but unrealized performance in Prague the same year; the manuscript was lost until 1832; and, when it was found, it was assumed to be the first one Beethoven wrote for the opera. It is therefore called, or mis-called, Leonora No. 1. The fourth overture, written for the 1814 performance, is called the Fidelio Overture. It is the one usually used nowadays before Act I and introduces the pleasant opening scene far more appropriately than any of the Leonora overtures would."

c) If an irresistible force met an immovable object, an unimaginable event would occur.

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#### Pictures:

Page 4: Klimt, <i>Freundinnen</i> , 1913	Page 9: Klimt, <i>Dancer</i>
Page 13: Chola bronze, India, <i>Parvati</i>	Page 14: Ingres, <i>Grande Odalisque</i> 1814
Page 16: Klimt, <i>Water Serpents I</i> , 1904-7	Page 17: Michelangelo, <i>David</i>
Page 18: Mucha, <i>Dance</i> , 1898	Page 19: Klimt, <i>Fulfillment</i> , 1905-9
Page 21: Figures from Khajurao, Madhya Pradesh, India	
Page 25: Modigliani <i>Nudo disteso</i> 1917	Page 37: Klimt, <i>The three ages of woman</i> , 1905
Page 41: Klimt, <i>Freundinnen</i> , 1916-17	Page 49: Gervex, <i>Rolla</i> , 1878