

CHRISTMAS PUDDING

2012

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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 characterises 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 English 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, acknowledging Norwich's superior recipe.



After some time the desire to learn how to read properly grew very strong in me. I was angry myself for wanting to read books. Girls did not read. How could I? What a peculiar situation I had placed myself in. What was I to do? ... People used to despise women of learning. How unfortunate those women were, they said. They were no better than animals *Rassundari Devi (1810-?)*

No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting. *Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1772)*

“That perfect tranquility of life, which is nowhere to be found but in retreat, a faithful friend and a good library.” *Aphra Behn*

Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know *Sir Philip Sidney*

I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of any thing than of a book! - When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library.” - *Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice*

“What were you doing behind the curtain?” he asked. “I was reading.” *Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre*

CHRISTMAS PUDDING 2012

This year's *CP* again has no main "theme" – a few highlights, however. *CP 2002* was devoted to poetry by women. I have been struck recently by the fascination that artists have found over the centuries in women reading¹ – ten years on, therefore, I am returning to the general issue of women's literacy and the specific issue of poems by women, and have included several such paintings as an accompaniment to the text. I have also received further interesting examples of fraud, forgery and plagiarism. Finally, I thought it was time to devote a section to sport in poetry.



T T T T

I will be coming back to John Betjeman (1906-1984) in the context of sport poetry, but here now is his *Christmas* – Betjeman knows unerringly to say things the way they are, in the language of speech, with a tinge of almost unspoken nostalgia for a Britain that is fast disappearing.

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The Tortoise stove is lit again
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain
In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hookers Green.

The holly in the windy hedge
And round the Manor House the yew
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,
The altar, font and arch and pew,
So that the villagers can say
'The church looks nice' on Christmas Day.

Provincial Public Houses blaze,
Corporation tramcars clang,
On lighted tenements I gaze,
Where paper decorations hang,
And bunting in the red Town Hall
Says "Merry Christmas to you all."

And London shops on Christmas Eve
Are strung with silver bells and flowers
As hurrying clerks the City leave
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
And marbled clouds go scudding by

¹ See <http://readingandart.blogspot.ch/>

The many-steepled London sky.
And girls in slacks remember Dad,
And oafish louts remember Mum,
And sleepless children's hearts are glad.
And Christmas-morning bells say "Come!"
Even to shining ones who dwell
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me ?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissueed fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

T T T T

How women became readers

The following are extracts from Joan Acocella's review of *The Woman Reader* by Belinda Jack, that appeared in *The New Yorker* of 15 October 2012.

In the history of women, there is probably no matter, apart from contraception, more important than literacy. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, access to power required knowledge of the world. This could not be gained without reading and writing, skills that were granted to men long before they were to women. Deprived of them, women were condemned to stay home with the livestock, or, if they were lucky, with the servants. (Alternatively, they may have been the servants.) Compared with men, they led mediocre lives.

It was in the fourth millennium B.C., in Mesopotamia, that people began writing and reading. Jack can't tell us much about this innovation, or its early development - not much is known - except to say that for a long time few people, and very few women, were literate. That includes the citizens of two cultures that we regard as foundations of our own: ancient Greece and Rome. Around 480 B.C., when Aeschylus was staging plays, five per cent of Greeks (men and women), at the most, could read.

In the chaos that came after the fall of Rome, reading and writing survived almost exclusively in religious retreats. The Church saved Latin, and literacy. Also, by stressing the inner life - the soul, speaking to God - it preserved the fragile idea that reading (a sacred text, of course) was an elevating experience. An important moment in the history of literacy is the passage in St. Augustine's *Confessions* when he sees his mentor, Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, reading without moving his lips: "His heart searched out the sense, but his voice and tongue were at rest." A new idea of reading was taking hold. Before, that word usually involved not just moving your lips but actually speaking: reading some text, such as a sermon or an edict, to an audience. Now people had started reading alone, which meant that they could go at their own pace and compare the text with their knowledge of the world. As a rule, the only people who could do this - the only ones who had access to a private room, and were able and entitled to read - were the nobility and, of course, monks and nuns, but they were often highborn. Many medieval convents had two classes of nuns, the "laboring nuns," who peeled the vegetables and mopped the floors, and the "church nuns," who, because they came from upper-class families, were given time to read and discuss.

In the eighth century, Charlemagne, eager that his subjects seem like more than a collection of louts, decreed that all churches in the Frankish kingdom had to have schools, for girls as well as boys. And, in time, more books were written in the vernacular, which meant that more girls were able to read. (The girls might, with effort, have learned to decipher their mother tongue, but they were far less likely than boys to know Latin.) On the other hand, vernacular literature was frequently scorned by men, because it tended to be sentimental and realistic: ballads and lays - that is, verse stories - about love and friendship and animals and magic potions. Some of these were written by women, as were some vernacular holy texts. Hildegard of Bingen, the twelfth-century German abbess, poet, and composer, was a learned person, and corresponded with highly placed churchmen, but since, in her letters, she described elaborate visions—she heard voices, saw white lights and black abysses—her correspondents often made fun of her behind her back. Until the late eighteenth century, a female writer who had bold ideas, especially ideas that might be socially disruptive, was widely regarded as foolish or insane. Conversely, a book by a woman which seemed to make sense was sometimes said to have been penned, secretly, by a man.

In the Renaissance, there were, again, more books in the vernacular, more books by women, and just more books. In the mid-fifteenth century, the Dominican convent of St. Catherine, in Nuremberg, had forty-six volumes. By the end of the century, it had more than five hundred. The religious were still ahead of the game, but with the expansion of vernacular literature, especially romantic stories, many more women outside the Church were reading. This included merchant-class wives and daughters. (They needed to know letters and numbers in order to help in the shop.) Servants, too, were reading. In some quarters, there were strong objections to women's putting their noses into books, but this was probably not the majority view, as long as the text was a holy one. In

Renaissance paintings of the Annunciation, we begin, consistently, to find the Virgin Mary interrupted by the Archangel Gabriel as she is reading, a circumstance certainly not mentioned in the Gospel of St. Luke, which is the main source for this story. (Mary herself says she is a woman of “low estate.”)

....The real action begins with the Reformation, or a little before, with Gutenberg. In the history of women’s reading, the fact that Gutenberg’s machine made books more available is almost a minor matter compared with the impact that printing had on Western culture as a whole. The Reformation, Jack tells us, is sometimes known as “the daughter of Gutenberg.” The easier it was for people to get hold of books, the more readily they could find out about the duties Martin Luther had placed before them - above all, private, unmediated thinking. People were supposed to ask questions about their lives, and, apart from the peasantry, no social group had better reason to do so than women.

More and more of them began to spend time with books. In France and elsewhere, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, publishers started producing small, relatively inexpensive editions, which women could afford and conceal from their husbands. Eventually, a number of men gave up on the idea of forbidding women to read and began publishing books that would at least have a good influence on them. In 1766, James Fordyce, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, exhorted ladies to be gentle and to do what men told them to, in his *Sermons to Young Women*. In Sheridan’s *The Rivals* (1775), the heroine, Lydia Languish, suddenly hears her elders coming to visit her in her boudoir. “Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books,” she says to her maid. “Quick, quick - Fling *Peregrine Pickle* under the toilet - throw *Roderick Random* into the closet....cram Ovid behind the bolster.” Fordyce’s *Sermons*, she tells Lucy, should be laid open on the table.

What was it that men feared about women’s reading? A big worry was that it was something they could do alone, without anyone to guide their thinking.

T T T T

Women’s struggle for literacy

In *CP 2002* I quoted extensively from *Women Writing in India - Volume I: 600 BC to the present*, edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, The Feminist Press N.Y. 1991. One of the most moving sections of this anthology is the description by **Rassundari Devi** (1810-?) of how she learned to read.²

I was so immersed in the sea of housework that I was not conscious of what I was going through day and night. After some time the desire to learn how to read properly grew very strong in me. I was angry myself for wanting to read books. Girls did not read. How could I? What a peculiar situation I had placed myself in. What was I to do? ... People used to despise women of learning. How unfortunate

² The editors state: “In this collection, the readers can witness the centuries of oppression, as told by the women in their own words. Rassundari Devi (19th century Bengal) wrote of her own life - weeping as child bride, bearing and raising eleven children, running a household on an empty stomach at times, and secretly learning to read behind her kitchen stove.”

those women were, they said. They were no better than animals In fact older women used to show a great deal of displeasure if they saw a piece of paper in the hands of a woman. So that ruled out my chances of getting any education. But somehow I could not accept this. I was very keen to learn the alphabet. When I was a child I used to sit in the classroom and listen to the chanting of the students. Could I remember any of that? By and by I recalled the thirty letters with all their vowel combinations. I could recognise the letters, but was still not able to write them. What was I to do? Actually one cannot learn without a teacher. Besides, I was a woman, and a married one at that, and was not supposed to talk to anyone.

.... One day I dreamt that I was reading the *Chaitanya Rhagavata*. When I woke up I felt enthralled. I closed my eyes to go over the scene. It seemed that I was already in possession of something precious. My body and my mind swelled with satisfaction. It was so strange! I had never seen the book yet I had been reading it in my dream. For an illiterate person like me, it would have been absolutely impossible to read such a difficult book. Anyhow I was pleased that I was able to perform this impossible feat at least in a dream. My life was blessed! God had at last listened to my constant appeals and had given me the ability to read in my dream ...

Our home contained several books. Perhaps the *Chaitanya Rhagavata* is one of them, I thought to myself. But what did it matter to me after all? An illiterate woman like me wouldn't even recognise the book. So I prayed to God again, saying, "You are the friend of the poor; allow me to recognise the book. You must let me have that book, You are the only one whom I can approach." That was how I prayed to God silently.

How strange are the ways of God and the effects of his kindness! He heard my prayers and set out to grant me my wish. My eldest son was then eight. I was working in the kitchen one day when my husband came in and said to him, "Bipin, I am leaving my *Chaisanya Bhagavata* here. Please bring it over when I ask you to." Saying that he put the book down there and went back to the outer house.

I listened from the kitchen. No words can express the delight I felt when I heard his words. I was filled with happiness and rushed to the spot to find the book there. Pleased with myself, I said to God, "You have granted my wish," and I picked the book up. In those days books were made differently

When the book was brought into the room I detached one sheet and hid it. But I was afraid lest it were found. That would be a disgrace. I might even be rebuked. It was not easy to face criticism or rebuke. I was very sensitive about those things. Those days were not like present ones. We were completely under the control of men. And I was particularly nervous. I was at a loss with that sheet. Where should I keep it so that nobody would find it? But if they did, what would they say? Finally I decided to put it in some place where I would be present most of the time and nobody else was likely to go. The *khori (elevated stove)* in the kitchen was the only hiding place I could think of. Housework kept me busy the whole day. There was no time even to look at it. In the evening the cooking continued until it was very late. By the time I was free, the children had awakened. Some demanded to be taken to the toilet, some were hungry, some wanted to be picked up, some started

crying, so I had to attend to their demands. Then I felt sleepy myself - so where was the time for my education? I did not see any way out. ... I kept the sheet in my left hand while I did the cooking and glanced at it through the sari, which was drawn over my face. But a mere glance was not enough, because I could not identify the letters.

I decided to steal one of the palm leaves on which my eldest son used to practice his handwriting. One look at the leaf, another at the sheet, a comparison with the letters I already knew, and, finally, a verification with the speech of others - that was the process I adopted some time. Furtively I would take out the sheet and put it back promptly before anybody could see it.... Oh, the trouble I had to take to read. In spite of all that, I did not learn to write. One needs a lot of things if one is to write: paper, pen, ink, ink pot and so on. You have to set everything before you. And I was a woman, the daughter-in-law of the family. I was not supposed to read or write. It was generally accepted as a grave offence. And if they saw me with all the writing paraphernalia, what would they say? I was always afraid of criticism. So I gave up the idea of writing and concentrated on reading. I never thought I would be able to read. It seemed an impossible task in my situation. The little that I have learned was possible because God guided me.” (*Translated by Enakshi Chatterjee*)

T T T T

On Books

Emily Dickinson (1830-86)

A precious -- mouldering pleasure -- 'tis --
To meet an Antique Book --
In just the Dress his Century wore --
A privilege -- I think --



His venerable Hand to take --
And warming in our own --
A passage back -- or two -- to make --
To Times when he -- was young --
His quaint opinions -- to inspect --
His thought to ascertain
On Themes concern our mutual mind --
The Literature of Man --
What interested Scholars -- most --
What Competitions ran --
When Plato -- was a Certainty --
And Sophocles -- a Man --
When Sappho -- was a living Girl --
And Beatrice wore
The Gown that Dante -- deified --
Facts Centuries before
He traverses -- familiar --
As One should come to Town --
And tell you all your Dreams -- were true --

He lived -- where Dreams were born --
His presence is Enchantment --
You beg him not to go --
Old Volumes shake their Vellum Heads
And tantalize -- just so --

There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away
Nor any Coursers like a Page
Of prancing Poetry --
This Traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of Toll --
How frugal is the Chariot
That bears the Human soul.

St. Thomas Aquinas: Hominem unius libri timeo.

Heinrich Heine: dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen.

Mark Twain: The man who doesn't read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them.

Groucho Marx: Outside of a dog a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read.

William Hazlitt: Books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own.

Oscar Wilde: It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it.

Lord Chesterfield: I knew a gentleman who was so good a manager of his time that he would not even lose that small portion of it which the calls of nature obliged him to pass in the necessary-house; but gradually went through all the Latin poets in those moments.

Winston Churchill: If you cannot read all your books, at any rate handle, or, as it were, fondle them--peer into them, let them fall open where they will, read from the first sentence that arrests the eye, set them back on their shelves with your own hands, arrange them on your own plan so that if you do not know what is in them, you will at least know where they are. Let them be your friends; let them at any rate be your acquaintances.

Germaine Greer: A library is a place where you can lose your innocence without losing your virginity.

Groucho Marx: I must say that I find television very educational. The minute somebody turns it on, I go to the library and read a book.

W. Somerset Maugham: To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all of the miseries of life.

George W. Bush: One of the great things about books is sometimes there are some fantastic pictures.

T T T T

Women's Poetry

Anne Carson recently published English translations of fragments of poetry written by **Sappho** (active 6th century BC), of which the following (Fragment 31):



He seems to me equal to gods that man
whoever he is who opposite you
sits and listens close
to your sweet speaking
and lovely laughing – oh it
puts the heart in my chest on wings
for when I look at you, even a moment, no
speaking
is left in me
no: tongue breaks and thin
fire is racing under skin
and in eyes no sight and drumming
fills ears
and cold sweat holds me and shaking
grips me all, greener than grass
I am and dead – or almost

I seem to me.

But all is to be dared, because even a person of poverty

Women Writing in India, to which I referred earlier, includes translations of some very early poetry by Indian women, among which the following remarkable examples:

Akkamahadevi (12th century)

Sri Akkamahadevi, a great woman saint, was initiated at the age of 10 into Shiva worship by an unknown guru. She fell in love with Shiva, whose form at the Udatadi temple was *Chennamallikarjuna* - Lord of the white jasmine.

Till the fruit is ripe inside
the skin will not fall off.
I'd a feeling it would hurt you
if I displayed the body's seals of love.
O brother, don't tease me
needlessly. I'm given entire
into the hands of my lord
white as jasmine. (*Translation A.K. Ramanujan*)

Brother, you've come
drawn by the beauty
of these billowing breasts,
this brimming youth.
I'm no woman, brother, no whore.
Every time you've looked at me,
Who have you taken me for?

All men other than Chennamallikarjuna
Are faces to be shunned, see, brother. (*Translation Susan Daniel*)

Mirabai (ca. 1498-1565) was born in Chaukari village in Rajasthan. Her father was Ratan Singh, a descendent of Rao Rathor, the founder of Jodhpur. She was a great saint and devotee of Sri Krishna.

I am pale with longing for my beloved;
People believe I am ill.
Seizing on every possible pretext,
I try to meet him “by accident”.

They have sent for a country doctor;
He grabs my arm and prods it;
How can he diagnose my pain?
It's in my heart I am afflicted.

Go home, country doctor,
Don't address me by my name;
It's the name of God that has wounded me,
Don't force your medicines on me.

The sweetness of his lips is a pot of nectar,
That's the only curd for which I crave;
Mira's Lord is Giridhar Naagar. [Krishna]
He will feed me nectar again and again. (*Translation Nita Ramaiya*)

Atukuri Molla (1440–1530) was a famous Telugu poetess, author of the Telugu-language Ramayana. She was born in a potters' family in Kadapa.

As honey sweetens
the mouth readily
a poem should makes sense
right away.

Obscure sounds and sense
are no better than
the dumb and deaf conversing. (*Translation B.V.L. Narayanarow*)

Christine de Pisan (1363-1430) can be regarded as Europe's first professional woman writer and, by many as Europe's first feminist. Married at the age of 15, she was widowed 10 years later and turned to writing to earn a living for herself and her three children. She wrote entirely in her adoptive tongue of Middle French.

Dure chose est a soustenir
Quant cuer pleure et la bouche chante.
Et de faire dueil se tenir,
Dure chose est a soustenir.
Faire le fault qui soustenir



Veult honneur qui mesdisans hante,
Dure chose est a soustenir.

T T T T

Dog Latin

Over the centuries, authors with a knowledge of the classics have had fun creating spurious Latin texts in a form known as *Dog Latin*.³ The ones I remember from school are:

Brutus ad sum iam forte/ Caesar aderat/ Brutus sic in omnibus/ Caesar sic in at.⁴
Brutus et erat forti/ Caesar et sum iam/ Brutus sic in omnibus/ Caesar sic intram.⁵

Jonathan Swift, the author of *Gulliver's Travels* wrote a number of verses in *Dog Latin*

Love Song

A Pud inis almi de si re,
Mimis tres Ine ver require,
Alo veri find it a gestis,
His miseri ne ver at restis.

Moll

Mollis abuti,
Has an acuti,
No lasso finis,
Molli divinis.

To my mistress

O mi de armis tres,
Imi nadis tres,
Cantu disco ver
Meas alo ver?

Other applications of Dog Latin mix correct Latin with English words for humorous effect or attempt to update Latin by providing equivalents for modern items. Writers and filmmakers also often employ dog Latin (or Dog Greek) when in need of names for characters, places or objects. The names of spells in the Harry Potter books are well-known examples. Similarly, fans of the Road Runner and Coyote cartoons will remember the fake 'scientific' names given at the opening of each cartoon (e.g. *Carnivorous Vulgaris* and *Accelerati Incredibus*).

Dog Latin is used with considerable wit in René Goscinny's text of the *Astérix et Obélix* series, illustrated by Albert Uderzo - principally in the names of Roman

³ See http://wikipedia.atpedia.com/en/articles/d/o/g/Dog_Latin_3014.html. Dog Latin is unrelated to Pig Latin, a language game of alterations played in English. To form the Pig Latin form of an English word the first consonant (or consonant cluster) is moved to the end of the word and an *ay* is affixed (for example, *pig* yields *igpay* and *computer* yields *omputeray* or *truancy* yields *uancytray*). The objective is to conceal the meaning of the words from others not familiar with the rules.

⁴ Brutus 'ad some jam for tea, Caesar 'ad a rat; Brutus sick in omnibus, Caesar sick in 'at.

⁵ Brutus et (ate) a rat for tea, Caesar et some jam; Brutus sick in omnibus, Caesar sick in tram.

characters. The authors of the English equivalents deserve congratulations for some masterpieces: Crismus Bonus; Encyclopedia Britannicus; and the celebrated duo, Sendervictorius and Appianglorius.

Can you decipher the following Dog Latin poem:

O sibile, si ergo,
Fortibus es in ero.
O Nobile,
Demis trux,
Vatis enim?
Causan dux.⁶

Another similar literary artifice is known as ‘macaronic’ from the Italian ‘maccaronico’ (Neapolitan dialect meaning ‘coarse dumpling’), a synthetic language invented in the 15th century for humorous poetry. Macaronic verse combines the vernacular with Latin words.

In dulci jubilo,
Let us our homage show!
Our heart’s joy reclineth
In praesepio;
And like a bright star shineth
Matris in gremio.
Alpha es et O!

Motor Bus – A.D. Godley (1856-1925)⁷

What is this that roareth thus?
Can it be a Motor Bus?
Yes, the smell and hideous hum
Indicant Motorem Bum!
Implet in the Corn and High
Terror me Motoris Bi:
Bo Motori clamitabo
Ne Motore caedar a Bo---
Dative be or Ablative
So thou only let us live:---
Whither shall thy victims flee?
Spare us, spare us, Motor Be!
Thus I sang; and still anigh
Came in hordes Motores Bi,

⁶ “Oh, see, Billy, see ’ere go forty buses in a row. Oh, no, Billy, them is trucks! What is in ’em? Cows an’ ducks.”

⁷ Alfred Denis Godley (1856-1925) was a classical scholar and author of humorous poems. From 1910 to 1920 he was Public Orator at the University of Oxford, a post that involved composing citations in Latin for the recipients of honorary degrees. One of these was for Thomas Hardy who received an Honorary D. Litt. in 1920, and whose treatment of rural themes Godley compared to Virgil.

Et complebat omne forum
Copia Motorum Borum.
How shall wretches live like us
Cincti Bis Motoribus?
Domine, defende nos
Contra hos Motores Bos!

Malum Opus - J.A. Morgan (1845-1928)

Prope ripam fluvii solus
A senex silently sat;
Super capitem ecce his wig,
Et wig super, ecce his hat.

Blew Zephyrus alte, acerbus,
Dum elderly gentleman sat;
Et a capite took up quite torve
Et in rivum projecit his hat.

Tunc soft maledixit the old man,
Tunc stooped from the bank where he sat
Et cum scipio poked in the water,
Conatus servare his hat.

Blew Zephyrus alte, acerbus,
The moment it saw him at that;
Et whisked his novum scratch wig,
In flumen, along with his hat.

Ab imo pectore damnavit
In coeruleus eye dolor sat;
Tunc despairingly threw in his cane
Nare cum his wig and his hat.

L'envoi

Contra bonos mores, don't swear,
It is wicked, you know (verbum sat),
Si this tale habet no other moral,
Mehercle! You're gratus to that!

T T T T

More plagiarism

According to *Der Spiegel* of 15 October 2012 : "German Education Minister Annette Schavan might soon become the second cabinet member in two years to lose her doctorate and her job. A university report leaked to SPIEGEL accuses Schavan of a 'plagiaristic approach.' A close confidant of Chancellor Merkel, Schavan has denied the charges.

The chances that Chancellor Angela Merkel might lose yet another cabinet member to plagiarism accusations appear to be rising. Education Minister Annette Schavan, whose Ph.D. dissertation has long been a favored target of plagiarism-hunting web activists, now faces much more consequential allegations.

SPIEGEL has obtained a new report written by a senior official at the university where Schavan obtained her doctorate. The report is the product of months of research into the minister's dissertation to determine if in fact she bent or broke the rules of academia. And its verdict is damning: 'Not only because of a pattern recurring throughout the work, but also because of specific features found in a significant plurality of sections (in the work), it can be stated that there was a clear intention to deceive,' the report reads.

In other words, Annette Schavan, a close confidant of Merkel and a well-respected member of her government, could be in trouble. And it wouldn't be the first time the chancellor lost a minister to plagiarism accusations. In March of 2011, Defense Minister Karl-Theodor von Guttenberg was forced to step down after it became clear that he had copied large sections of his dissertation.

Schavan's transgressions, by all accounts, aren't nearly as severe as those committed by Guttenberg. Whereas the defense minister copied outright huge sections covering almost half of his 475 page dissertation -- intentionally plagiarizing, as his university later determined -- Schavan appears to have at least made an attempt at slightly changing the verbiage she borrowed.

Still, the report, written by University of Düsseldorf Professor Stefan Rohrbacher, determines that Schavan often took extensive analysis from secondary sources to make it seem as though she had read the primary sources mentioned in her text. A significant number of passages, Rohrbacher writes, 'show the characteristics of a plagiaristic approach.'

Schavan, for her part, had long remained silent about the accusations facing her. She has consistently cited the ongoing analysis of her dissertation being undertaken by the university and has declined to comment on alleged examples of plagiarism in her dissertation posted online by anonymous web activists."

T T T T

Christine Lagarde on Greece

Another woman much in the news recently is Christine Lagarde, head of the IMF. She is as unafraid of the politically incorrect as Angela Merkel, & the extract below from an interview in *The Guardian* of 25 May 2012.

.... some say Lagarde's approach to the eurozone is less draconian than the IMF's traditional policy towards developing world economies. Is it easier to impose harsh demands upon small economies, but much harder to tell difficult truths to the big ones – particularly fellow Europeans? "No," she says firmly. "No, it's not harder. No. Because it's the mission of the fund, and it's my job to say the truth, whoever it is across the table. And I tell you something: it's sometimes harder to tell the government of low-income countries, where people live on \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000 per capita per year, to actually strengthen the budget and reduce the deficit. Because I know what it means in terms of welfare programmes and support for the poor. It has much bigger ramifications."

So when she studies the Greek balance sheet and demands measures she knows may mean women won't have access to a midwife when they give birth, and patients won't get life-saving drugs, and the elderly will die alone for lack of care –

does she block all of that out and just look at the sums?

“No, I think more of the little kids from a school in a little village in Niger who get teaching two hours a day, sharing one chair for three of them, and who are very keen to get an education. I have them in my mind all the time. Because I think they need even more help than the people in Athens.” She breaks off for a pointedly meaningful pause, before leaning forward.

“Do you know what? As far as Athens is concerned, I also think about all those people who are trying to escape tax all the time. All these people in Greece who are trying to escape tax.”

T T T T

Pass the Port

Little Sameer was failing maths. His parents tried everything. Tutors, mentors, special learning centres - nothing helped. As a last resort, someone suggested a Catholic school. ‘Those nuns are tough,’ they said. Sameer was enrolled at St. Mary’s.

After school on the first day, Sameer ran through the door and straight to his room, without even kissing his mother hello. He started studying furiously, books and papers spread out all over his room. Right after dinner he ran upstairs without mentioning TV, and hit the books harder than before.

His parents were amazed. This behaviour continued for weeks, until report card day arrived. Sameer quietly laid the envelope on the table, and went to his room. With great trepidation, his mother opened the report. Sameer had an A in maths! She ran up to his room, threw her arms around him and asked, ‘Sameer beta, how did this happen? Was it the nuns?’ ‘No!’ said Sameer.

‘On the first day of school when I saw that guy nailed to the plus sign, I knew they weren’t fooling around!’

T T T T

More Women’s Poetry

The 16th, 17th and 18th centuries saw the rise of a number of remarkable women of letters, most of whom I included in *CP 2002*. Here are a few more of their poems.

Louise Labé (ca. 1524-1566) was born into a wealthy family of rope-makers in Lyon, the cultural centre of France at the time. She was renowned for her beauty but also for her prowess in letters, lute playing, fencing and riding, the latter of which were then almost exclusively male occupations.

Luth, compagnon de ma calamité,
De mes soupirs témoin irréprochable,
De mes ennuis contrôleur véritable,
Tu as souvent avec moi lamenté ;

Et tant le pleur piteux t’a molesté
Que, commençant quelque son délectable,
Tu le rendais tout soudain lamentable,
Feignant le ton que plein avais chanté.

Et si tu veux efforcer au contraire,
 Tu te détends et si me contrains taire :
 Mais me voyant tendrement soupirer,
 Donnant faveur à ma tant triste plainte,
 En mes ennuis me plaie suis contrainte
 Et d'un doux mal douce fin espérer.

Je vis, je meurs: je me brûle et me noie,
 J'ai chaud extrême en endurant froidure;
 La vie m'est et trop molle et trop dure,
 J'ai grands ennuis entremêlés de joie.

Tout en un coup je ris et je larmoie,
 Et en plaisir maint grief tourment j'endure,
 Mon bien s'en va, et à jamais il dure,
 Tout en un coup je sèche et je verdoie.

Ainsi Amour inconstamment me mène
 Et, quand je pense avoir plus de douleur,
 Sans y penser je me trouve hors de peine.

Puis, quand je crois ma joie être certaine,
 Et être en haut de mon désiré heur,
 Il me remet en mon premier malheur.



Lucy Hutchinson (1620-1675) is one of the most important women writers of the seventeenth century. She translated Lucretius and Virgil, wrote several Christian tracts (she became a Baptist in 1646) and an autobiography. This is her translation of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* 5.1429-34.

But mankind labouring still in vain
 Consumes his age, with fruitless care and pain.
 Because no bound to his desires he knows,
 Nor the just height to which true pleasure grows.
 This by degrees doth human life engage
 In deeps, where war and tumult rage.

[Ergo hominum genus in cassum, frustrâque laborat
 Semper, & in curis consumit inanibus ævum:
 Nimirum, quia non cognovit, quæ sit habendi
 Finis, & omnino quoad crescat vera voluptas:
 Idque minutatim vitam prouexit in altum;
 Et belli magnos commouit funditus æstus.]

Lucy Hutchison also wrote a long poem, in places sounding remarkably similar to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, entitled *Meditations on the Creation, As recorded in the First Chapter of Genesis*, from which an extract follows:

My ravished soul, a pious ardour fires,
 To sing those mystic wonders it admires,
 Contemplating the Rise of every thing

That, with Time's birth, flowed from the eternal spring:
And the no less stupendous Providence
By which discording Natures ever since
Have kept up universal Harmony

Lady Mary Wroth (1587?-1651?) was the first Englishwoman to write a complete sonnet sequence as well as an original work of prose fiction.



In this strange Labyrinth how shall I turn,
Ways are on all sides while the way I miss:
If to the right hand, there, in love I burn,
Let me go forward, therein danger is.
If to the left, suspicion hinders bliss;
Let me turn back, shame cries I ought return:
Nor faint, though crosses my fortunes kiss,
Stand still is harder, although sure to mourn.
Thus let me take the right, or left-hand way,
Go forward, or stand still, or back retire:
I must these doubts endure without allay
Or help, but travel find for my best hire.
Yet that which most my troubled sense doth move,
Is to leave all, and take the thread of Love.

Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea (1661-1720) was another multi-talented author, yet only one collection of her work appeared in her lifetime. Nearly a century after her death her poetry had been almost forgotten, until William Wordsworth praised her nature poetry in an essay included in his *Lyrical Ballads*

Did I, my lines intend for public view,
How many censures, would their faults pursue,
Some would, because such words they do affect,
Cry they're insipid, empty, uncorrect.
And many have attained, dull and untaught,
The name of wit only by finding fault.
True judges might condemn their want of wit,
And all might say, they're by a woman writ... (From *The Introduction*)

On myself

Good Heaven, I thank thee, since it was designed
I should be framed, but of the weaker kind,
That yet, my soul is rescued from the love
Of all those trifles which their passions move.
Pleasures, and praise, and plenty have with me
But their just value. If allowed they be,
Freely and thankfully as much I taste
As will not reason or religion waste.
If they're denied, I on myself can live,
And slight those aids unequal chance does give.
When in the sun, my wings can be displayed,
And in retirement, I can bless the shade.

Aphra Behn (1640-1689), one of the most influential dramatists of the late seventeenth century, was also a celebrated poet and novelist. Her contemporary reputation was founded primarily on her 'scandalous' plays and verse, which she claimed would not have been criticized for impropriety had a man written them. The following extract from *The Disappointment* is an example of the erotic poetry that led to her reputation for scandal:

One day the Amorous Lisander,
By an impatient Passion sway'd,
Surprised fair Cloris, that loved Maid,
Who could defend her self no longer ;
All things did with his Love conspire,
The gilded Planet of the Day,
In his gay Chariot, drawn by Fire,
Was now descending to the Sea,
And left no Light to guide the World,
But what from Cloris' brighter Eyes was hurled.

In a lone Thicket, made for Love,
Silent as yielding Maids Consent,
She with a charming Languishment
Permits his force, yet gently strove ?
Her Hands his Bosom softly meet,
But not to put him back designed,
Rather to draw him on inclined,
Whilst he lay trembling at her feet;
Resistance 'tis to late to show,
She wants the power to say -- Ah! what do you do?



Katherine Philips (1632-1664) was the first Englishwoman to enjoy widespread public acclaim as a poet during her lifetime, being seen as a respectable antidote to Aphra Behn, her contemporary, who was considered by many amongst the great and good as immoral and coarse, less for her poetry than for her private life. Philips's poetry is refined, and perhaps for that reason she became the best-known female poet of her generation, winning praise from Dryden.

To One persuading a Lady to Marriage

Forbear, bold youth ; all's heaven here,
And what you do aver
To others courtship may appear,
'Tis sacrilege to her.
She is a public deity ;
And were't not very odd
She should dispose herself to be
A petty household god ?
First make the sun in private shine
And bid the world adieu,
That so he may his beams confine

In compliment to you:
But if of that you do despair,
Think how you did amiss
To strive to fix her beams which are
More bright and large than his.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) is today remembered mainly for her letters from Turkey, as wife to the British ambassador, but she wrote some fine sonnets and other verse. She is also remembered for her pioneering of smallpox inoculation, that she encountered in Turkey.

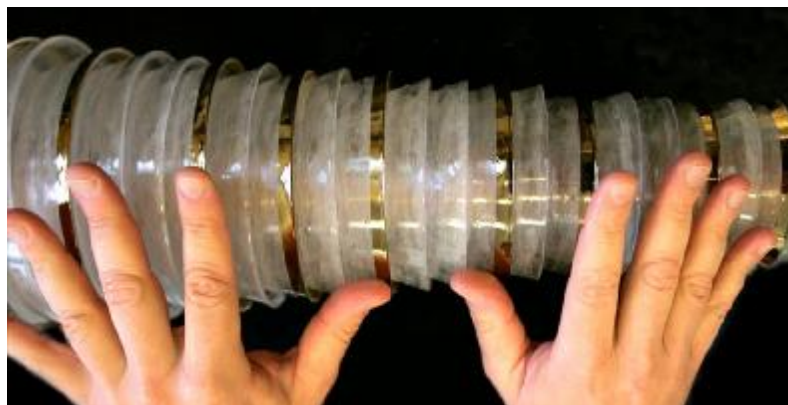


An Answer to a Lady, Who Advised Lady Montagu to Retire
You little know the heart that you advise:
I view this various scene with equal eyes;
In crowded courts I find myself alone,
And pay my worship to a nobler throne.
Long since the value of this world I know;
Pitied the folly, and despis'd the show;
Well as I can, my tedious part I bear,
And wait dismissal without pain or fear.
Seldom I mark mankind's detested ways,
Not hearing censure or affecting praise;
And unconcern'd my future fate I trust
To that sole Being, merciful and just!

T T T T

Glass harmonica

Do you know what a glass harmonica is? I found out this year at the Musée Unterlinden in Colmar.



According to Wikipedia,⁸ the glass harmonica “is a type of musical instrument that uses a series of glass bowls or goblets graduated in size to produce musical tones by means of friction (instruments of this type are known as friction idiophones).”

Because its sounding portion is made of glass, the glass harmonica is a crystallophone. The phenomenon of rubbing a wet finger around the rim of a wine goblet to produce tones is documented back to Renaissance times; Galileo

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glass_harmonica

considered the phenomenon (in his *Two New Sciences*), as did Athanasius Kircher.

The Irish musician Richard Poekrich is typically credited as the first to play an instrument composed of glass vessels by rubbing his fingers around the rims. Beginning in the 1740s, he performed in London on a set of upright goblets filled with varying amounts of water. His career was cut short by a fire in his room, which killed him and destroyed his apparatus. A friend of Benjamin Franklin and a fellow of the Royal Society, Edward Delaval, extended the experiments of Pockrich, contriving a set of glasses better tuned and easier to play. During the same decade, Christoph Willibald Gluck also attracted attention playing a similar instrument in England.

The Colmar museum warns visitors: “Mais cet instrument est aussi accusé de provoquer des troubles nerveux et même mortels, des scènes de ménage, des accouchements prématurés et des convulsions chez les animaux. Un décret de police l’interdit dans certains états allemands pour nuisance à la santé et à l’ordre public. Ces faits alimentés par rumeur contribuent à sa disparition dans les années 1830.”

T T T T

Guardian April Fools’ Day Pranks

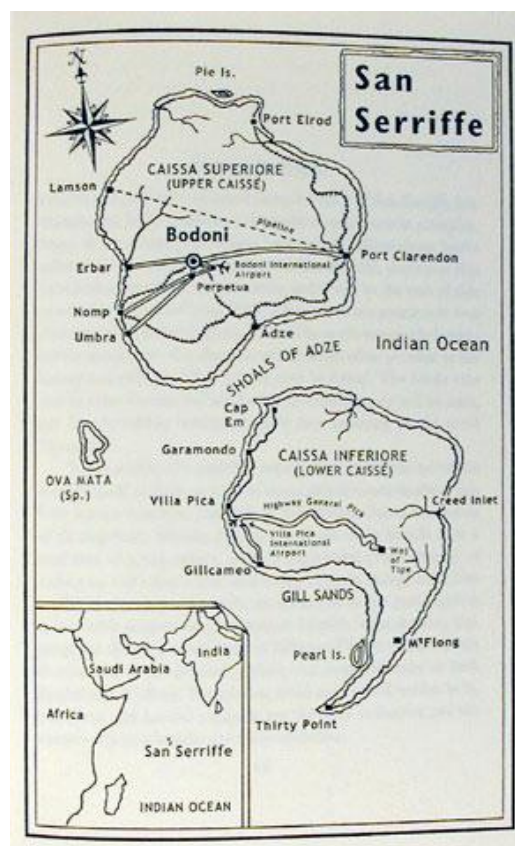
The Guardian has a long tradition of spoofs on April Fools Day. On 1 April 2012, the paper published an overview.⁹

If you believed everything we published on April 1, you’d think that there really was an island called San Serriffe, we were printing a rival to Hello (called Ciao!) and that we were going to publish exclusively on Twitter.

From television revealing that spaghetti grows in trees to pictures of the Loch Ness monster, the tradition of April Fools’ Day stories in the media has a long and bizarre history.

Newspaper hoaxes first began to appear in the early 19th century, mainly in America. One of the very first was a series of New York Sun articles in 1835 about life on the moon, supposedly reprinted from the Edinburgh Journal of Science. Another involved the Boston Post announcing that at a cavern of gold and jewels had been found on Boston common, leading to hundreds of readers setting out in the rain in search of the treasure.

British publications were rather less inclined towards to such frolics but after the BBC’s spaghetti harvest hoax of 1957,¹⁰ Fleet Street began to lighten up and carry



⁹ For a compilation of all Guardian and Observer April Fools stories going back to 1974, see www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/apr/01/guardian-april-fools-list/

¹⁰ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27ugSKW4-QQ>

more daring jokes.

The spoof though, by which all others are measured is the Guardian's 1977 San Serriffe travel guide in a seven-page travel supplement to a non-existent island which was described throughout using an obscure vocabulary composed entirely of printing terms. The success of this hoax is widely credited with inspiring the British media's enthusiasm for April the first jokes in subsequent years.

T T T T

Fakery, Trendiness and Poetry

I am indebted to Michael Parkany for the following article by Jack Anderson from the *International Herald Tribune* of 9-10 December 1989.

NEW YORK —The very idea of fakery sets critics trembling. What if the book they are reading, the score they are hearing or the dance they are watching is not some kind of creative innovation, but a hoax?

And should the thought then occur that the hoax may be a deliberate attempt by an artistic malcontent to make both new trends and their critical admirers seem foolish, my trembling may increase a thousandfold.

I started thinking about fakery on a recent trip to Australia, when I found a book about an art to which I am devoted: poetry. In 1987, Allen & Unwin, a Sydney publishing firm, issued *The Poems of Ern Malley*. The volume contains 16 short poems; the remainder of its 101 pages consists of commentary by Max Harris, a poet, critic and editor, and Joanna Murray-Smith, a literary historian. It's a book that might fascinate lovers – or haters – of any art, for it tells the story of a remarkable hoax.

In the early 1940s, Harris was an editor of *Angry Penguins*, a magazine published in Adelaide, that favored avant-garde art and literature. In poetry, Harris particularly admired writing that was imagistically rich, or even Surrealistic.

One day in 1944, the mail brought him a letter from a woman in Sydney named Ethel Malley, who said that her brother, Ern Malley, had just died of a rare thyroid disease at the age of 26.

The Malleys, she wrote, were uneducated working-class folk, and Ern had eked out a living as a mechanic and insurance salesman. A reclusive lad, he was known to have owned only one book, Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*. Nevertheless, after his death, his sister found some poems by him. Here they were: Did Harris think they had any value?

Hindsight now tells us that Harris should have been suspicious. An impoverished genius struck down in his youth like Mozart or Keats - Ern Malley sounds almost too good to be true. But Harris trusted the sister, read the poems and was so impressed with Ern that he published him in the next issue of *Angry Penguins*, hailing Ern Malley as one of Australia's greatest writers.

Then the truth came out. Neither Ern Malley nor his sister had ever existed. Both were the brainchildren of two poets, James McAuley and Harold Stewart, who believed that an infatuation with trendiness had caused some Australian intel-

lectuals to lose their aesthetic discrimination. Determined to write verse that would sound imposing but be absolutely meaningless, they had collaboratively concocted all of Ern Malley's poems in a single afternoon. The modernists had been hoaxed, and literary conservatives chortled.

The hoaxers sought to produce verse that would be rhetorically overwritten and emotionally overwrought—and the poems do seem terribly pretentious today. They are studded with fancy words of debatable appropriateness. One, for instance, refers to 'the umbelliferous dark,' or umbrellalike dark. There are many passages of vague rantings and ravings, including:

You have hawked in your throat and spat
Outrage upon the velocipede of thriftless
Mechanical men posting themselves that
Built you a gibbet in the vile morass
Which now you must dangle on, alas.

Yet those poems were something more than good hoaxes. Their perpetrators did manage to invent some striking phrases. They compare an evening sky to 'a lake of roses.' Speaking of poetic imagery, they declare, "All must be synchronized, the jagged / Quartz of vision with the asphalt of human speech."

Ern Malley is capable of grim humor when, looking forward to his own approaching death, he speaks of man's "Inalienable right to be sad / At his own funeral." And there is a touch of solemn melancholy beauty in the statement that "I am still / The black swan of trespass on alien waters."

Curiously, two writers working together can occasionally produce material of greater creative vitality than either might produce alone – consider, for example, the successful theatrical collaborations from Beaumont and Fletcher to Kaufman and Hart.

The Ern Malley case could have led to an investigation of the psychology of creativity. Instead, it took an unforeseen nasty turn. Members of the South Australian police force pronounced the poems indecent, and *Angry Penguins* found itself involved in an obscenity trial.

One policeman testified in court that, even though no actual 'dirty' words were used in them, the poems did contain sexual innuendoes. Commenting on a poem about people in a park at night, he said: "I have found that people who go into parks at night go there for immoral purposes. My experience as a police officer might, under certain circumstances, tinge my appreciation of poetry."

At the time, South Australian obscenity laws, were broad and vague, and they did not permit a work to be defended on the ground that it possessed redeeming social or artistic merit. Any crank could have charged the plays of Shakespeare or the Bible itself with obscenity. Yet, even then, the police testimony was widely held to be absurd. Nevertheless, the judge apparently found it convincing enough to fine Harris the equivalent of \$16.

Ultimately, however, Ern Malley triumphed. Australians, who love good yarns, still delight in telling the story of Ern Malley, and new editions of 'his' poems are occa-

sionally published. Ern Malley has become a part of Australian history and cultural mythology.

T T T T

Modern living

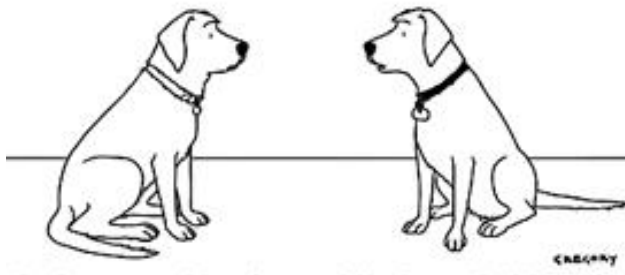
Last year I included a few cartoons on the mobile phone, that essential accompaniment to our daily lives. Here are a few more reflections on living with modern technology (*The New Yorker*).



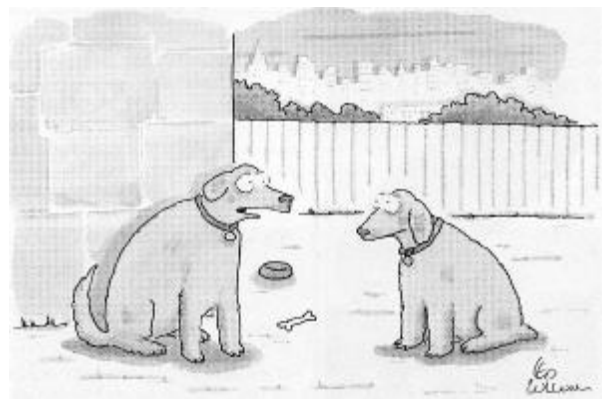
No comment



A bunch of friends are coming over to stare at their phones



I had my own blog for a while, but I decided to go back to pointless, incessant barking



That's the problem with e-mail - no one to bite



I used to call people, then I got into e-mailing and now I just ignore everyone

Women's Poetry again

The poems of 19th century authors, male and female, tend to be marred by excessive sentimentality. Some rise above it.

Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859) - *Dors-tu ?*

Et toi ! dors-tu quand la nuit est si belle,
Quand l'eau me cherche et me fuit comme toi ;
Quand je te donne un coeur longtemps rebelle ?
Dors-tu, ma vie ! ou rêves-tu de moi ?

Démêles-tu, dans ton âme confuse,
Les doux secrets qui brûlent entre nous ?
Ces longs secrets dont l'amour nous accuse,
Viens-tu les rompre en songe à mes genoux ?

As-tu livré ta voix tendre et hardie
Aux fraîches voix qui font trembler les fleurs ?
Non ! c'est du soir la vague mélodie ;
Ton souffle encor n'a pas séché mes pleurs !

Garde toujours ce douloureux empire
Sur notre amour qui cherche à nous trahir :
Mais garde aussi son mal dont je soupire ;
Son mal est doux, bien qu'il fasse mourir !

Maria Lovell (1803-77)

So what is love? If thou wouldst know
The human heart alone can tell:
Two minds with but a single thought,
Two hearts that beat as one.

And whence comes Love? Like morning bright
Love comes without thy call.
And how dies Love? A spirit bright,
Love never dies at all.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forebore---
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine



Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

Elisa Mercoeur (1809-1835) - *Rêverie*



Qu'importe qu'en un jour on dépense une vie,
Si l'on doit en aimant épuiser tout son coeur,
Et doucement penché sur la coupe remplie,
Si l'on doit y goûter le nectar du bonheur.

Est-il besoin toujours qu'on achève l'année?
Le souffle d'aujourd'hui flétrit la fleur d'hier;
Je ne veux pas de rose inodore et fanée;
C'est assez d'un printemps, je ne veux pas d'hiver.

Une heure vaut un siècle alors qu'elle est passée;
Mais l'ombre n'est jamais une soeur du matin.
Je veux me reposer avant d'être lassée;
Je ne veux qu'essayer quelques pas du chemin.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

**She rose to His Requirement -- dropt
The Playthings of Her Life
To take the honorable Work
Of Woman, and of Wife --**

If ought She missed in Her new Day,
Of Amplitude, or Awe --
Or first Prospective -- Or the Gold
In using, wear away,

It lay unmentioned -- as the Sea
Develops Pearl, and Weed,
But only to Himself -- be known
The Fathoms they abide --

**Exultation is the going
Of an inland soul to sea,
Past the houses -- past the headlands --
Into deep Eternity --**

Bred as we, among the mountains,
Can the sailor understand
The divine intoxication
Of the first league out from land

Ondine Valmore (1821-1853) - *Automne*

Vois ce fruit, chaque jour plus tiède et plus vermeil,
Se gonfler doucement aux regards du soleil!
Sa sève, à chaque instant plus riche et plus féconde,
L'emplit, on le dirait, de volupté profonde.

Sous les feux d'un soleil invisible et puissant,
Notre coeur est semblable à ce fruit mûrissant.
De sucs plus abondants chaque jour il enivre,
Et, maintenant mûri, il est heureux de vivre.

L'automne vient: le fruit se vide et va tomber,
Mais sa gaine est vivante et demande à germer.
L'âge arrive, le coeur se referme en silence,
Mais, pour l'été promis, il garde sa semence.

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) - *Uphill*

Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
They will not keep you waiting at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea, beds for all who come.



T T T T

A very successful fake

The following article, by Kenneth Langbell, originally appeared in the *Bangkok Post*; it is a fabrication but is nevertheless one of those most frequently referenced as genuine - a masterpiece of humour.

Mr. Kropp, the pupil and artistic successor to Straube and Ramin, had chosen the title 'An Evening with Bach' for his performance. Indeed from the very outset, it was an evening the social members of Bangkok would not soon forget, the men in tuxedos and white dinner jackets and the ladies resplendent in floor-length evening gowns with more than one orchid corsage crowning a Lemey or Delmonte original.

. . . A hush fell over the room as Mr Kropp appeared from the right of the stage, attired in black formal evening-wear with a small white poppy in his lapel. With sparse, sandy hair, a sallow complexion and a deceptively frail looking frame, the man who has repopularized Johann Sebastian Bach approached the Baldwin concert grand, bowed to the audience and placed himself upon the stool.

It might be appropriate to insert at this juncture that many pianists, including Mr Kropp, prefer a bench, maintaining that on a screw-type stool they sometimes find

themselves turning sideways during a particularly expressive strain. There was a slight delay, in fact, as Mr Kropp left the stage briefly, apparently in search of a bench, but returned when informed that there was none.

The evening opened with the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, the 'raging storm' as described by Schweitzer, which, even when adapted for piano, gives us an idea of what the young Bach, whose ideas were close to those of Buxtehude, meant by virtuosity; bold melodic figures, surging dynamics, forceful accents and impassioned modulations which not infrequently confounded the church congregations, according to contemporaries, who were alarmed by the intensity of Bach's expressive power.

As I have mentioned on several other occasions, the Baldwin concert grand, while basically a fine instrument, needs constant attention, particularly in a climate such as Bangkok. This is even more true when the instrument is as old as the one provided in the Chamber Music Room of the Erawan Hotel. In this humidity the felts which separate the white keys from the black tend to swell, causing an occasional key to stick, which apparently was the case last evening with the D in the second octave.

During the 'raging storm' Mr Kropp must be complimented for putting up with the awkward D. However, by the time the 'storm' was past and he had gotten into the Prelude and Fugue in D Major, in which the second octave plays a major role, Mr Kropp's patience was wearing thin.

Some who attended the performance later questioned whether the awkward key justified some of the language which was heard coming from the stage during softer passages of the fugue. However, one member of the audience, who had sent his children out of the room by the midway point of the fugue, had a valid point when he commented over the music and extemporaneous remarks of Mr Kropp that the workman who greased the stool might have done better to use some of the grease on the second octave D key. Indeed, Mr Kropp's stool had more than enough grease, and during one passage in which the music and lyrics both were particularly violent Mr Kropp was turned completely around. Whereas before his remarks had been aimed largely at the piano and were therefore somewhat muted, to his surprise and that of those in the Chamber Music Room he found himself addressing himself directly to the audience.

But such things do happen, and the person who began to laugh deserves to be severely reprimanded for this undignified behaviour. Unfortunately, laughter is contagious, and by the time it had subsided and the audience had regained its composure Mr Kropp appeared to be somewhat shaken. Nevertheless, he swivelled himself back into position facing the piano and, leaving the D Major Fugue unfinished, commenced on the Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor, whose character is virtually that of a dramatic poem which, in a four-part polyphonic setting, reminds us of the Bach of the Passions.

Why the concert grand piano's G key in the third octave chose that particular time to begin sticking I hesitate to guess. However, it is certainly safe to say that Mr Kropp himself did nothing to help matters when he began using his feet to kick the

lower portion of the piano instead of operate the pedals as is generally done.

Possibly it was this jarring, or the un-Bach-like hammering to which the sticking keyboard was being subjected. Something caused the right front leg of the piano to buckle slightly inward, leaving the entire instrument listing at approximately a 35-degree angle from that which is normal. A gasp went up from the audience, for if the piano had actually fallen several of Mr Kropp's toes, if not both his feet, would surely have been broken.

It was with a sigh of relief, therefore, that the audience saw Mr Kropp slowly rise from his stool and leave the stage. A few men in the back of the room began clapping, and when Mr Kropp reappeared a moment later it seemed he was responding to the ovation. Apparently, however, he had left to get the red-handled fire axe which was hung back stage in case of fire, for that was what he had in his hand.

My first reaction at seeing Mr Kropp begin to chop at the left leg of the grand piano was that he was attempting to make it tilt at the same angle as the right leg and thereby correct the list. However, when the weakened legs finally collapsed altogether with a great crash and Mr Kropp continued to chop, it became obvious to all that he had no intention of going on with the concert.

The ushers, who had heard the snapping of piano wires and splintering of sounding board from the dining room, came rushing in and, with the help of the hotel manager, two Indian watchmen and a passing police corporal, finally succeeded in disarming Mr Kropp and dragging him off the stage.



The consensus of those who witnessed Mr Kropp's performance is that it will be a long time before Bangkok concert-goers are again treated to such a spectacular evening.

T T T T

Still more women's poetry

Lizette Wordsworth Reese (1856-1935) - *Spicewood*

The spicewood burns along the gray, spent sky,
In moist unchimneyed places, in a wind,
That whips it all before, and all behind,
Into one thick, rude flame, now low, now high,
It is the first, the homeliest thing of all--
At sight of it, that lad that by it fares,
Whistles afresh his foolish, town-caught airs--
A thing so honey-colored, and so tall!
It is as though the young Year, ere he pass,
To the white riot of the cherry tree,
Would fain accustom us, or here, or there,



To his new sudden ways with bough and grass,
So starts with what is humble, plain to see,
And all familiar as a cup, a chair.

Anna de Noailles (1876-1933) - *La Vie Profonde*



Etre dans la nature ainsi qu'un arbre humain,
Etendre ses désirs comme un profond feuillage,
Et sentir, par la nuit paisible et par l'orage,
La sève universelle affluer dans ses mains !

Vivre, avoir les rayons du soleil sur la face,
Boire le sel ardent des embruns et des pleurs,
Et goûter chaudement la joie et la douleur
Qui font une buée humaine dans l'espace !

Sentir, dans son coeur vif, l'air, le feu et le sang
Tourbillonner ainsi que le vent sur la terre ;
- S'élever au réel et pencher au mystère,
Etre le jour qui monte et l'ombre qui descend.

Comme du pourpre soir aux couleurs de cerise,
Laisser du coeur vermeil couler la flamme et l'eau,
Et comme l'aube claire appuyée au coteau
Avoir l'âme qui rêve, au bord du monde assise...

Offrande

Mes livres je les fis pour vous, ô jeunes hommes,
Et j'ai laissé dedans,
Comme font les enfants qui mordent dans des pommes,
La marque de mes dents.
J'ai laissé mes deux mains sur la page étalées,
Et la tête en avant
J'ai pleuré, comme pleure au milieu de l'allée
Un orage crevant.
Je vous laisse, dans l'ombre amère de ce livre,
Mon regard et mon front,
Et mon âme toujours ardente et toujours ivre
Où vos mains traîneront.
Je vous laisse le clair soleil de mon visage,
Ses millions de rais,
Et mon coeur faible et doux, qui eut tant de courage
Pour ce qu'il désirait.
Je vous laisse ce coeur et toute son histoire,
Et sa douceur de lin,
Et l'aube de ma joue, et la nuit bleue et noire
Dont mes cheveux sont pleins.
Voyez comme vers vous, en robe misérable,
Mon Destin est venu,
Les plus humbles errants, sur les plus tristes sables,

N'ont pas les pieds si nus.
 -- Et je vous laisse, avec son feuillage et ses roses,
 Le chaud jardin verni
 Dont je parlais toujours; -- et mon chagrin sans cause,
 Qui n'est jamais fini...

Renée Vivien (1877-1909)



Ta royale jeunesse a la mélancolie
 Du Nord où le brouillard efface les couleurs,
 Tu mêles la discorde et le désir aux pleurs,
 Grave comme Hamlet, pâle comme Ophélie.

Tu passes, dans l'éclair d'une belle folie,
 Comme elle, prodiguant les chansons et les fleurs,
 Comme lui, sous l'orgueil dérobant tes douleurs,
 Sans que la fixité de ton regard oublie.

Souris, amante blonde, ou rêve, sombre amant,
 Ton être double attire, ainsi qu'un double aimant,
 Et ta chair brûle avec l'ardeur froide d'un cierge.

Mon coeur déconcerté se trouble quand je vois
 Ton front pensif de prince et tes yeux bleus de vierge,
 Tantôt l'Un, tantôt l'Autre, et les Deux à la fois.

Sarah Teasdale (1884-1933) - *A Winter Night*

My window-pane is starred with frost,
 The world is bitter cold to-night,
 The moon is cruel, and the wind
 Is like a two-edged sword to smite.

God pity all the homeless ones,
 The beggars pacing to and fro,
 God pity all the poor tonight
 Who walk the lamp-lit streets of snow.

My room is like a bit of June,
 Warm and close-curtained fold on fold,
 But somewhere, like a homeless child,
 My heart is crying in the cold.

Gifts

I gave my first love laughter,
 I gave my second tears,
 I gave my third love silence
 Through all the years.

My first love gave me singing,
 My second eyes to see,
 But oh, it was my third love
 Who gave my soul to me.

Elinor Wylie (1885-1928) - *Beauty*

Say not of beauty she is good,
Or aught but beautiful,
Or sleek to doves' wings of the wood
Her wild wings of a gull.
Call her not wicked; that word's touch
Consumes her like a curse;
But love her not too much, too much,
For that is even worse.
O, she is neither good nor bad,
But innocent and wild!
Enshrine her and she dies, who had
The hard heart of a child.



Les Lauriers Sont Coupés

Ah, love, within the shadow of the wood
The laurels are cut down; some other brows
May bear the classic wreath which Fame allows
And find the burden honorable and good.
Have we not passed the laurels as they stood--
Soft in the veil with which Spring endows
The wintry glitter of their woven boughs--
Nor stopped to break the branches while we could?
Ah, love, for other brows they are cut down.
Thornless and scentless are their stems and flowers,
And cold as death their twisted coronal.
Sweeter to us the sharpness of this crown;
Sweeter the wildest roses which are ours;
Sweeter the petals, even when they fall.

Muriel Stuart (1889-1967) - *The Seed Shop*

Here in a quiet and dusty room they lie,
Faded as crumbled stone or shifting sand,
Forlorn as ashes, shrivelled, scentless, dry--
Meadows and gardens running through my hand.
Dead that shall quicken at the call of Spring,
Sleepers to stir beneath June's magic kiss,
Though birds pass over, unremembering,
And no bee seek here roses that were his.
In this brown husk a dale of hawthorn dreams,
A cedar in this narrow cell is thrust
That will drink deeply of a century's streams,
These lilies shall make summer on my dust.
Here in their safe and simple house of death,
Sealed in their shells a million roses leap;
Here I can blow a garden with my breath,
And in my hand a forest lies asleep.

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

Not in a silver casket cool with pearls
Or rich with red corundum or with blue,



Locked, and the key withheld, as other girls
Have given their loves, I give my love to you;
Not in a lovers'-knot, not in a ring
Worked in such fashion, and the legend plain -
Semper fidelis, where a secret spring
Kennels a drop of mischief for the brain:
Love in the open hand, no thing but that,
Ungemmed, unhidden, wishing not to hurt,
As one should bring you cowslips in a hat
Swung from the hand, or apples in her skirt,
I bring you, calling out as children do:
"Look what I have! - And these are all for you."

Never, never may the fruit be plucked from the bough
And gathered into barrels.
He that would eat of love must eat it where it hangs.
Though the branches bend like reeds,
Though the ripe fruit splash in the grass or wrinkle on the tree,
He that would eat of love may bear away with him
Only what his belly can hold,
Nothing in the apron,
Nothing in the pockets.
Never, never may the fruit be gathered from the bough
And harvested in barrels.
The winter of love is a cellar of empty bins,
In an orchard soft with rot.

Else Lasker-Schüler (1869-1945) - *Trieb*

Es treiben mich brennende Lebensgewalten,
Gefühle, die ich nicht zügeln kann,
Und Gedanken, die sich zur Form gestalten,
Fallen mich wie Wölfe an!

Ich irre durch duftende Sonnentage...
Und die Nacht erschüttert von meinem Schrei.
Meine Lust stöhnt wie eine Marterklage
Und reisst sich von ihrer Fessel frei.

Und schwebt auf zitternden, schimmernden Schwingen
Dem sonn'gen Thal in den jungen Schoss,
Und lässt sich von jedem Mai'nhauch bezwingen
Und giebt der Natur sich willenlos.

I am driven by burning energies of life,
Feelings I cannot control,
And thoughts taking form
Attack me like wolves.

I wander through sweet-smelling days of sunshine...
And my cries trouble my nights.
My desire groans like a martyr's complaint
And breaks free from its bonds.

And soars on trembling, shimmering wings
Into the young lap of the sunlit valley,
And surrenders to every breath of May
And offers itself to nature as one devoid of will.

Charlotte Mew (1869-1928) - *A Farewell*

Remember me and smile, as smiling too,
I have remembered things that went their way--

The dolls with which I grew too wise to play--
Or over-wise--kissed, as children do,
And so dismissed them; yes, even as you
Have done with this poor piece of painted clay--
Not wantonly, but wisely, shall we say?
As one who, haply, tunes his heart anew.

Only I wish her eyes may not be blue,
The eyes of a new angel. Ah! she may
Miss something that I found,--perhaps the clue
To those long silences of yours, which grew
Into one word. And should she not be gay,
Poor lady! Well, she too must have her day.

T T T T

Pass the Port again¹¹

A man walked into a restaurant with a full-grown ostrich behind him. As he sits down, the waitress comes over and asks for their orders.

The man says, "I'll have a hamburger, fries and a coke," and turns to the ostrich, "What's yours?" "I'll have the same," says the ostrich.

A short time later the waitress returns with the order. "That will be \$12.40 please," and the man reaches into his pocket and pulls out the exact change for payment.

The next day, the man and the ostrich come again and the man says, "I'll have a hamburger, fries and a coke," and the ostrich says, "I'll have the same."

Once again the man reaches into his pocket and pays with exact change.

This becomes a routine until late one evening, the two enter again. "The usual?" asks the waitress. "No, this is Friday night, so I will have a steak, baked potato and salad," says the man. "Same for me," says the ostrich.

A short time later the waitress comes with the order and says, "That will be \$24.62." Once again the man pulls exact change out of his pocket and places it on the table.

The waitress can't hold back her curiosity any longer. Excuse me, sir. How do you manage to always come up with the exact change out of your pocket every time?"

"Well," says the man, "several years ago I was cleaning the attic and I found an old lamp. When I rubbed it a Genie appeared and offered me two wishes. My first wish was that if I ever had to pay for anything, I would just put my hand in my pocket and the right amount of money would always be there."

"That's brilliant!" says the waitress. "Most people would wish for a million dollars or something, but you'll always be as rich as you want for as long as you live!"

"That's right. Whether it's a gallon of milk or a Rolls Royce, the exact money is always there," says the man.

The waitress asks, "One other thing, sir, what's with the ostrich?"

¹¹ With thanks to Bernd Dreesman

The man sighs, pauses, and answers, "My second wish was for a tall chick with long legs who agrees with everything I say."

T T T T

Even more women's poetry

Florabela Espanca (1894–1930)

Ser poeta é ser mais alto, é ser maior
Do que os homens! Morder como quem beija!
É ser mendigo e dar como quem seja
Rei do Reino de Aquém e de Além Dor!

É ter de mil desejos o esplendor
E não saber sequer que se deseja!
É ter cá dentro um astro que flameja,
É ter garras e asas de condor!

É ter fome, é ter sede de Infinito!
Por elmo, as manhãs de oiro e de cetim...
É condensar o mundo num só grito!

E é amar-te, assim, perdidamente...
É seres alma, e sangue, e vida em mim
E dizê-lo cantando a toda a gente!

Languidez

Tardes da minha terra, doce encanto,
Tardes duma pureza de açucenas,
Tardes de sonho, as tardes de novenas,
Tardes de Portugal, as tardes d'Anto,
Como eu vos quero e amo! Tanto! Tanto!...
Horas benditas, leves como penas,
Horas de fumo e cinza, horas serenas,
Minhas horas de dor em que eu sou santo!

Fecho as pálpebras roxas, quase pretas,
Que poisam sobre duas violetas,
Asas leves cansadas de voar...

E a minha boca tem uns beijos mudos...
E as minhas mãos, uns pálidos veludos,
Traçam gestos de sonho pelo ar...

To be a poet is to be taller, to be greater
Than mankind! To bite as one who kisses!
It is to be a beggar and give freely as if one were
King of the Kingdom of Here and Beyond Pain!

It is to have the splendour of a thousand wishes
And not even to know what you desire!
It is to have inside you a blazing star,
It is to have the talons and wings of a condor!

It is to be hungry, it is to be thirsty for the Infinite!
To have a helmet on mornings of gold and satin...
It is to compress the world in a single cry!

And it is to love you like this, hopelessly...
It is to be soul and blood and life within me
And to tell it, singing, to the whole world!

Languidness

Afternoons of my land, sweet charm,
Afternoons of the purity of lilies,
Afternoons of dream, evenings that last weeks,
Portugal afternoons, evenings of Anto,
How I desire and love you! So much! So much! ...
Blessed hours, light as feathers,
Hours of smoke and ash, hours serene,
My hours of pain from which I shall be sanctified!

My purple eyelids, almost black,
I close over two violets,
Gossamer wings tired of flying ...

And my mouth is like silent kisses ...
And my hands, a pale velvet,
Make dream-like movements in the air ...

Louise Bogan (1897-1970) - *The Crows*

The woman who has grown old
And knows desire must die,
Yet turns to love again,
Hears the crow's cry.

She is a stem long hardened,
A weed that no scythe mows.
The heart's laughter will be to her
The crying of the crows,

Who slide in the air with the same voice



Over what yields not, and what yields,
Alike in spring, and when there is only bitter
Winter-burning in the fields.

Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979) - *One Art*

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

---Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.



Mascha Kaleko (1907-1975) - *Weil du nicht da bist*

Weil du nicht da bist, sitze ich und schreibe
All meine Einsamkeit auf dies Papier.
Ein Fliederzweig schlägt an die Fensterscheibe.
Die Maiennacht ruft laut. Doch nicht nach mir.

Weil du nicht bist, ist der Bäume Blühen,
Der Rosen Duft vergebliches Bemühen,
Der Nachtigallen Liebesmelodie
Nur in Musik gesetzte Ironie.

Weil du nicht da bist, flücht ich mich ins Dunkel.
Aus fremden Augen starrt die Stadt mich an
Mit grellem Licht und lärmendem Gefunkel,
Dem ich nicht folgen, nicht entgehen kann.

Hier unterm Dach sitz ich beim Lampenschirm;
Den Herbst im Herzen, Winter im Gemüt.
November singt in mir sein graues Lied.
"Weil du nicht da bist" flüstert es im Zimmer.

"Weil du nicht da bist" rufen Wand und Schränke,
Verstaubte Noten über dem Klavier.

Und wenn ich endlich nicht mehr an dich denke,
Die Dinge um mich reden nur von dir.

Weil du nicht da bist, blättere ich in Briefen
Und weck vergilbte Träume, die schon schliefen.
Mein Lachen, Liebster, ist dir nachgereist.
Weil du nicht da bist, ist mein Herz verwaist.

Interview mit mir selbst

Ich bin vor nicht zu langer Zeit geboren
In einer kleinen klatschbeflissenen Stadt
Die eine Kirche, zwei bis drei Doktoren
Und eine grosse Irrenanstalt hat.

Audrey Wurdemann (1911-1960) - Text

Behold this brief hexagonal,
The honey and the honey-cell,
A tower of wax; - a touch, and see
These walls that could sustain a bee
Clinging with clawed and furry feet
Now bend and break and spill their sweet.

Behold, my dear, the dream we saw,
The thing we built without a flaw,
The amber and the agate rime,
The interstitial beat of time,
The microcosmos of our wit,
The sweetness that we sucked from it,
The honeycomb, the holy land
Broken and bleeding in my hand.

Christine Lavant (1915-1973)

Die Nacht geht fremd an mir vorbei
in Mondlicht und in Finsternis,
der Wind, der mich vom Aste riss,
liess mich verdrossen wieder frei
und gab mir keinen Namen.
Ein Stein mit Feuersamen
erzählt mir viel von einem Stern
und dass er selbst den grossen Herrn
in seinem Innern hätte.
Da steh ich auf und glätte
ehrfürchtig jeden Bug an mir
und bitt' den Stein: Lass mich bei dir
ein wenig wärmer werden!
Er aber sagt: Wärm dich allein!
und brennt verzückt in sich hinein
und ist nicht mehr auf Erden.
So geht es mir mit jedem Ding,



es mag mich niemand haben,
und selbst der Baum, an dem ich hing,
trägt lieber Kräh' und Raben.



Du Schutzpatron der Irren,
ich weiss nicht, wie du heisst,
nicht, welcher Schrei dich preist
und ob du auch das Klirren
des Herzsprungs noch erträgst.
Herr Helfer, dir erwägst
wohl heimlich schon die Flucht
und schleichst dich unversucht
aus meinem Händeringen?
Weisst du, wie Engel singen,
wenn man das Schläfenbein
als Hammer oder Stein
benutzt, um auszubrechen
aus seiner Einzelhaft?
Kennst du die Bilderkraft
am Scheitel und das Sprechen
am Rippenknoten-Ort?
Wie weit bist du schon fort

aus meiner Fingerwiege,
du fremder Schutzpatron?
Der Mond, der Hundesohn,
verhöhnt mich, wie ich liege,
verkrümmt und angespannt,
durchfrozen und verbrannt.

Maxine Kumin (*1925) - *Woodchucks*

Gassing the woodchucks didn't turn out right.
The knockout bomb from the Feed and Grain Exchange
was featured as merciful, quick at the bone
and the case we had against them was airtight,
both exits shoehorned shut with puddingstone,
but they had a sub-sub-basement out of range.

Next morning they turned up again, no worse
for the cyanide than we for our cigarettes
and state-store Scotch, all of us up to scratch.
They brought down the marigolds as a matter of course
and then took over the vegetable patch
nipping the broccoli shoots, beheading the carrots.

The food from our mouths, I said, righteously thrilling
to the feel of the .22, the bullets' neat noses.
I, a lapsed pacifist fallen from grace
puffed with Darwinian pieties for killing,
now drew a bead on the little woodchuck's face.

He died down in the everbearing roses.

Ten minutes later I dropped the mother. She
flipfopped in the air and fell, her needle teeth
still hooked in a leaf of early Swiss chard.

Another baby next. O one-two-three
the murderer inside me rose up hard,
the hawkeye killer came on stage forthwith.

There's one chuck left. Old wily fellow, he keeps
me cocked and ready day after day after day.

All night I hunt his humped-up form. I dream
I sight along the barrel in my sleep.

If only they'd all consented to die unseen
gassed underground the quiet Nazi way.

Purgatory

And suppose the darlings get to Mantua,
suppose they cheat the crypt, what next? Begin
with him, unshaven. Though not, I grant you, a
displeasing cockerel, there's egg yolk on his chin.
His seedy robe's aflap, he's got the rheum.

Poor dear, the cooking lard has smoked her eye.

Another Montague is in the womb
although the first babe's bottom's not yet dry.

She scrolls a weekly letter to her Nurse
who dares to send a smock through Balthasar,
and once a month, his father posts a purse.

News from Verona? Always news of war.

Such sour years it takes to right this wrong!

The fifth act runs unconscionably long.

C.E. Laine (*1968) - *Prelude to a eulogy*

when my hair turns silver and the menstrual
moon's absent red tide leaves my skin pale as milk,
you will find me in the folds of age.

I will not regret my biography, nor will I
argue the riparian rights of my lost flow.

I won't pen my own obituary, or ask
to be interred with anything not suited to dust.
But I will leave my poems here, with you.

Road Crucible

She is driving
clad in low-slung
sleek grey steel
and black leather
topless - auburn hair



dancing in road-wind
 left hand on the wheel
 right tossing gears
 on hairpins
 illusion of control
 - of unison
 worse than lines of coke
 crushed on a mirror
 is this addiction
 to the tarmac
 a freedom
 fleeting as the colours
 that streak in the periphery
 of tunnel vision



T T T T

Warnung an alle Mitarbeiter¹²

In unserem Unternehmen konnten bereits einige Terroristen identifiziert und gefasst werden. Es handelt sich dabei um die harmlosen Mitläufer Bin Da, Bin Spät, Bin Müde, Bin Kaffeetrinken, Bin Rauchen und Bin Essen.

Die Mitarbeiter Bin Pinkeln und Bin im Lager konnten ebenfalls ermittelt werden. Sie werden als harmlos eingestuft und sind unter Quarantäne gestellt worden. Auch die äusserst gefährliche Terroristin Bin Schwanger konnte dingfest gemacht werden.

Nur der Topterrorist Bin Arbeiten konnte bis jetzt trotz intensiver Suche in unserer Firma nicht gefunden werden. ACHTUNG: Bin Arbeiten verbreitet äusserst gefährbringendes Gedankengut! Er versucht sogar die Terroristengruppe Bin Faul zu unterwandern und zur Umkehr von ihrem Fundamentalglauben zu bewegen. Bin beim Kunden gilt auch als nicht fassbar. *Ihr Sicherheitsbeauftragter - Bin Wachsam*

T T T T

Pass the Port one more time

A Prussian [*Hungarian/Genevois your choice*] and a Bavarian [*Pole/Fribourgeois*] are travelling together in a train. Each takes out his packed lunch.

The Bavarian stops eating his leberwurst and asks the Prussian: "I see you are eating herrings and that you cut off their heads but don't throw them away. Why is that?" "Aha," says the Prussian, "I will share a secret with you. In Prussia we give the herrings' heads to our children because they improve their intelligence – I keep these for my family when I get home."

"Oh," said the Bavarian, "that is really fascinating – may I try it?"

"Well," replied the Prussian, "I was keeping these for my family but I will sell them to you for 3 marks."

¹² With thanks to Helga Hoppe.

The deal was concluded and the Bavarian began eating the herrings' heads. After the second one he became thoughtful. "Just a minute," he said, "you charged me three marks – I can buy a kilo of herrings for that. Give me my money back."

"You see," said the Prussian, "It's working already."

T T T T

Poetry and sport

I had the privilege to play a small part in the preparation of an anthology of football poems published in connection with the 2004 UEFA European Cup, and started then collecting poems on various aspects of sport.

Poetry on sport is hard to find in anthologies currently in print, perhaps because of the contempt that some poets have expressed for "the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals."¹³ As can be seen from the selection below, however, there are some excellent poems on the subject, both serious and humorous.

From the Maitland Folio manuscript 1582:

Brissit brawnys and brokin banes,
Stryf, discord and wastie wanis,
Cruiket in eild, syne halt withal,
This are the bewteis of the fute-ball.
(Translation: Twisted muscle and broken bones,
Strife, discord and broken homes,
Old players stoop, their bodies stall,
These are the beauties of football.)

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)

Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
But as for me, alas! I may no more.
The vain travail hath worried me so sore,
I am of them that furthest come behind.
Yet may I by no means, my worried mind
Draw from the deer; but as she fleeth afore
Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,
Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I, may spend his time in vain;
And graven in diamonds in letters plain
There is written, her fair neck round about,
"*Noli me tangere* for Caesar's I am,

¹³ See Article by N.C. Craig Sharp <http://bjsm.bmj.com/content/34/6/471.full#xref-ref-2-1>. The quotation is from Rudyard Kipling's *The Islanders*, written towards the end of the Boer War. In it Kipling denounces the poor training given to British troops and official policies ill-adapted to the need to prepare for the coming European war which he foresaw. At the time he wrote, the "flannelled fools" were touring Australia in the 1901-02 Ashes series. Meanwhile, poorly-equipped British and Australian soldiers were losing their lives in South Africa.

And wild to hold, though I seem tame.”

Lord Byron (1788-1824) - *Written After Swimming from Sestos to Abydos*

If, in the month of dark December,
Leander, who was nightly wont
(What maid will not the tale remember?)
To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!

If, when the wintry tempest roared,
He sped to Hero, nothing loath,
And thus of old thy current poured,
Fair Venus! how I pity both!

For me, degenerate modern wretch,
Though in the genial month of May,
My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,
And think I've done a feat today.

But since he crossed the rapid tide,
According to the doubtful story,
To woo and Lord knows what beside,
And swam for Love, as I for Glory;

'Twere hard to say who fared the best;
Sad mortals thus the gods still plague you!
He lost his labour, I my jest;
For he was drowned, and I've the ague.

Henry Newbolt (1862-1938) - *Vitai Lampada*

There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night
Ten to make and the match to win
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play, and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat.
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his captain's hand on his shoulder smote
“Play up! Play up! And play the game!”

The sand of the desert is sodden red -
Red with the wreck of a square that broke
The gatling's jammed and the colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed its banks,
And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks -
“Play up! Play up! And play the game!”

This is the word that year by year,
While in her place the school is set,
Every one of her sons must hear,
And none that hears it dare forget.

This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling fling to the host behind -
“Play up! Play up! And play the game!”

Peter Meinke (*1932) - *To an Athlete Turned Poet* - for James Dickey¹⁴

Fifteen years ago and twenty
he'd crouch linebacker going tackler
steel stomach flexing for
contact contact cracking
through man after man weekend hero
washing the cheers down
with unbought beer
and now his stomach's soft his books
press out his veins as he walks
and no one looks
but deep in his bone stadium
the roar of the crowd wells
as he shows them again
crossing line after line
on cracking fingers heart red-
dogging with rage and joy over the broken backs
of words words words

From **Stanley Matthews** - *Alan Ross (1922-2001)*

. . . Now gathers speed, nursing the ball as he cruises,
Eyes judging distance, noting the gaps, the spaces
Vital for colleagues to move to, slowing a trace;
As from Vivaldi to Dibdin, pausing,
and leisurely, swings
To the left upright, his centre, - on hips
His hands, observing the goalkeeper spring,
heads rising vainly to the ball's curve
Just as it's plucked from them; and dispassionately
Back to his mark he trots, whistling through closed lips.

From **Watching gymnasts** - *Robert Francis (1901-1987)*

Competing not so much with one another
As with perfection,
They follow follow as voices in a fugue
A severe music.
How flower-light they toss themselves, how light
They toss and fall,
And flower-light, precise and arabesque
Let their praise be.

¹⁴ After his famous sporting career, James Dickey (1923-1997) won the National Book Award and served as US Poet Laureate.

From **Basketball** - *Stephen Vincent*

. . . You never came to see me
spread my warm fingers like the edges of stars
round the ball as I went like a smooth fox
down the court, my tennis shoes squeaking faster
than a grasshopper through clover. At sixteen
I travelled fast, father.

From **The skier** - *Robert Francis*

He swings down like the flourish of a pen
Signing a signature in white on white.
On incandescent feet he falls
Unfalling, trailing white foam, white fire.

Diver - *Robert Francis*

Diver go down
Down through the green
Inverted dawn
To the dark unseen
To the never day..
Deep beneath deep.

From **High Diver** - *Robert Francis*

How deep is his duplicity who in a flash
Passes from resting bird to flying bird to fish.

Who momentarily is sculpture, then all motion,
Speed and splash, then climbs again to contemplation.

He is the archer who himself is bow and arrow.
He is the upper-under-world commuting here.

The Pitcher - *Robert Francis*

His art is eccentricity, his aim
How not to hit the mark he seems to aim at,

His passion how to avoid the obvious,
His technique how to vary the avoidance.

The others throw to be comprehended. He
Throws to be a moment misunderstood.

Yet not too much. Not errant, arrant, wild,
But every seeming aberration willed.

Not to, yet still, still to communicate
Making the batter understand too late.

Sky diver - *Adrien Stoutenberg (1916-1982)*

Grotesque, jumping out
like a clothed frog, helmet and glasses,
arms and legs wading the sky,

feet flapping before the cloth flower opens.

Essay on Athletics - Walker Gibson

One praises where one can the scenes of Sport,
The field and diamond, ring, rink, cage and court,
The fancy skater's whirl, the vaulter's leap,
The swimmer frantic in his tepid deep.
Exertion is the end of manly arts -
But let's remain where each one starts,
And squat buck naked in the fetid gloom
To sing the praises of the locker room.
For here among the sweatshirts, cast-off socks,
Discarded jerseys, inelastic jocks,
The music of a banging metal door
And football shoes upon a wooden floor
Remind us to reflect how Life's a Game,
And all the world is Eton ... What is Fame?
And after these pursuits, for several hours,
We can repair like athletes to the showers
(A towel knotted where the two ends join
Suffices to protect the modest groin),
And there among the soft and steamy clouds
Our ears hear cheers of non-existent crowds;
Our eyes see tapes not broken, balls uncaught,
Stroke oars unpulled and idle, fights not fought.
The cinder path lies fallow, all its soot
Uncrunched by any stride of our spiked foot.
It is the static state of Sport we'd praise,
Like polo ponies who've been let to graze,
Or sailboats stored indoors, without their masts,
Or skiers, waxing skis, in plaster casts.
Who knows where shortstops spend their rainy days?
It is the static state of sport we'd praise.
And so it is that we beg leave to dally
Where all is preparation or finale;
Where all the exercise this refuge grants
Is pulling off, or on, a pair of pants;
And where the long green lockers, row on row,
Are all we know and all we need to know.

Winter trees - Conrad Diekman (a parody of one of the poems I like least)

I think that I shall never ski
Again against so stout a tree,
A tree whose rugged bark is pressed
In bas-relief upon my chest.

T T T T

Dress Code

I have recently been involved in drafting a dress code for my Golf Club. The resulting guidance was well received.



No!



Yes!

Illustrations by
Albany Wiseman

In the course of my research I discovered some interesting examples, from one of which (<http://ayyyy.com/reader-question-dress-codes/>) I quote:

To keep it simple, I will rely on some highly effective visual aids. A bathing costume alone would be construed as “smut casual”. But add some accessories, pockets and boots and presto, it’s “smart casual”! Now, “semi-formal” is a little bit more upmarket and usually there’s a dress involved. It can be short or long or short with a little bit of long thrown in.



Smart casual

Semi-formal

More sport

Der Ball - Rainer Maria Rilke, 31.7.1907, Paris

Du Runder, der das Warme aus zwei Händen
im Fliegen, oben, fortgibt, sorglos wie
sein Eigenes; was in den Gegenständen
nicht bleiben kann, zu unbeschwert für sie,
zu wenig Ding und doch noch Ding genug,
um nicht aus allem draussen Aufgereihten
unsichtbar plötzlich in uns einzugleiten:
das glitt in dich, du zwischen Fall und Flug
noch Unentschlossener: der, wenn er steigt,
als hätte er ihn mit hinaufgehoben,
den Wurf entführt und freilässt -, und sich neigt
und einhält und den Spielenden von oben
auf einmal eine neue Stelle zeigt,
sie ordnend wie zu einer Tanzfigur,
um dann, erwartet und erwünscht von allen,
rasch, einfach, kunstlos, ganz Natur,
dem Becher hoher Hände zuzufallen.

Old Pro's Lament - Paul Petrie (*1928)

Each year the court expands,
the net moves back, the ball
hums by—with more spin.

I use my second serve,
lob deeper, slice more,
stay away from the net, and fail
to win.

As any fool can tell,
it is time
to play the game purely
for the game's sake—to applaud
the puff of white chalk,
shake hands
and grin.

Others retire
into the warm corners of memory,
invent new rules, new games,
and win.

Under the hot lances
of the shower, I play each point over,
and over,
and over
again.

Wisdom is the natural business
of old men—
to let the body go,
the rafters, moth-eaten and decayed,
cave in.

But nightly in dreams I see
an old man
playing in an empty court
under the dim floodlights of the moon
with a racket gone in the strings—
no net, no ball, no game—
and still playing
to win!

From **Blues for Benny Kid Paret** - *Dave Smith (*1942)*
.... and blood growing wings to fly up in your eyes,
and there, there the punches no one feels grow weak,
as the wall looms, break through the best prayer you had
to dump you dizzied and dreaming in the green grass . . .

Billiards - *Walker Gibson*
Late of the jungle, wild and dim,
Sliced from the elephant's ivory limb,
Painted, polished, here these spheres
Rehearse their civilized careers ---
Trapped in a geometric toil,
Exhibit impact and recoil
Politely, in a farce of force.
And let's have no absurd remorse,
But praise the complicated plan
That organizes beast and man
In patterns so superbly styled
Late of the jungle, dim and wild.

Cousin Caroline - *Roger McGough (*1937)*
. . . in the winter
of 1968 with a
bandaged knee
ran the 100
yards in 10.3;
But her best time
was in the dressing room afterwards.

First lesson - *Philip Booth (1925-2007)*
Lie back, daughter, let your head
be tipped in the cup of my hand.
. . .when you tire on the long thrash
to your island, lie up, and survive,
As you float now, where I held you

and let go, remember, when fear
cramps your heart what I told you:
lie gently and wide to the light-year
stars, lie back, and the sea will hold you.

A Subaltern's Love Song - *John Betjeman*

Miss J. Hunter Dunn, Miss J. Hunter Dunn,
Furnish'd and burnish'd by Aldershot sun,
What strenuous singles we played after tea,
We in the tournament, you against me!

Love-thirty, love-forty, oh! weakness of joy,
The speed of a swallow, the grace of a boy,
With carefulest carelessness, gaily you won
I am weak from your loveliness Joan Hunter Dunn.

Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn,
How mad I am, sad I am, glad that you won.
The warm-handled racket is back in its press,
But my shock-headed victor, she loves me no less.

Her father's euonymus shines as we walk,
And swing past the summer-house, buried in talk,
And cool the verandah that welcomes us in
To the six-o'clock news and a lime-juice and gin.

The scent of the conifers, sound of the bath,
The view from my bedroom of moss-dappled path,
As I struggle with double-end evening tie,
For we dance at the golf club, my victor and I.

On the floor of her bedroom lie blazer and shorts
And the cream-coloured walls are be-trophied with sports,
And westering, questioning settles the sun
On your low-leaded window, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn.

The Hillman is waiting, the light's in the hall,
The pictures of Egypt are bright on the wall,
My sweet, I am standing beside the oak stair
And there on the landing's the light on your hair.

By roads 'not adopted', by woodland ways,
She drove to the club in the late summer haze,
Into nine-o'clock Camberley, heavy with bells
And mushroomy, pine-woody, evergreen smells.

Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn,
I can hear from the car-park the dance has begun.
Oh! full Surrey twilight! importunate band!
Oh! strongly adorable tennis girl's hand!

Around us are Rovers and Austins afar,
Above us, the intimate roof of my car,
And here on my right is the girl of my choice,

With the tilt of her nose and the chime of her voice,
And the scent of her wrap, and the words never said,
And the ominous, ominous dancing ahead.
We sat in the car-park till twenty to one
And now I'm engaged to Miss Joan Hunter Dunn.

Seaside Golf - *John Betjeman*

How straight it flew, how long it flew,
It clear'd the rutty track
And soaring, disappeared from view
Beyond the bunker's back -
A glorious, sailing, bounding drive
That made me glad I was alive.

And down the fairway, far along
It glowed a lonely white;
I played an iron sure and strong
And clipp'd it out of sight,
And spite of grassy banks between
I knew I'd find it on the green.

And so I did. It lay content
Two paces from the pin;
A steady putt and then it went
Oh, most surely in.
The very turf rejoiced to see
That quite unprecedented three.

Ah! Seaweed smells from sandy caves
And thyme and mist in whiffs,
In-coming tide, Atlantic waves
Slapping the sunny cliffs,
Lark song and sea sounds in the air
And splendour, splendour everywhere.

From Fussball - *Joachim Ringelnatz (1883-1934)*

Der Fussballwahn ist eine Krank-
heit, aber selten, Gott sei Dank.
Ich kenne wen, der litt akut
An Fussballwahn und Fussballwut.
Sowie er einen Gegenstand
In Kugelform und ähnlich fand,
So trat er zu und stiess mit Kraft
Ihn in die bunte Nachbarschaft.
Ob es ein Schwalbennest, ein Tiegel,
Ein Käse, Globus oder Igel,
Ein Krug, ein Schmuckwerk am Altar,
Ein Kegelball, ein Kissen war,
Und wem der Gegenstand gehörte,
Das war etwas, was ihn nicht störte.

Nächtliches Stadion - Günter Grass (*1927)

Langsam ging der Fussball am Himmel auf.
Nun sah man, dass die Tribüne besetzt war.
Einsam stand der Dichter im Tor,
doch der Schiedsrichter pfiff: Abseits.

T T T T

Eva Strittmatter

Eva Strittmatter, who died last year, is one of my favourite poets in the German language. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* published the following obituary.

Klassische Einfachheit - Die Lyrikerin Eva Strittmatter: Sie wollte immer mehr sein als die Ehefrau eines berühmten Schriftstellers. Und als Lyrikerin ist Eva Strittmatter, der Frau des Romanautors Erwin Strittmatter, das auch gelungen. In der Nacht zum 4. Januar starb sie nach längerer Krankheit im Alter von 80 Jahren in Berlin. Neben Gedichten schrieb Eva Strittmatter auch Prosa für Erwachsene und Kinder. Ihre Gedichtbände tragen Titel wie «Ich mach ein Lied aus Stille» (1973) oder «Mondschnee liegt auf den Wiesen» (1975). Naturbeschreibungen, Gefühle und menschliche Haltungen waren ihre Themen. Ihr letzter Gedichtband, «Wildbirnenbaum», erschien 2009 im Aufbau-Verlag.

Im Osten Deutschlands erreichten Strittmatters Gedichtbände Auflagen von mehr als zwei Millionen Exemplaren. Die fast klassische Einfachheit ihrer Sprache wurde auch im Westen gelobt. Sie stehe in der Tradition etwa des frühen Heine oder einer Droste-Hülshoff, hiess es. Seit dem Tod ihres Mannes, der 1994 81-jährig starb, war die Mutter von vier Söhnen auch die Verwalterin von Erwin Strittmatters Werk und ordnete den Nachlass. Einblicke in die Schreibwerkstatt und die persönlichen Beziehungen des Schriftstellerehepaares geben die von ihr in drei Bänden veröffentlichten «Briefe aus Schulzenhof». Schulzenhof in Dollgow im Land Brandenburg, wohin sich die Strittmatters Anfang der fünfziger Jahre aus Berlin auf ihr bäuerliches Grundstück zurückzogen, blieb nach dem Tod des Lebensgefährten ihr Zuhause.

Atem grün

Die Wege hab ich mit Spuren bestickt.
Die Landschaft mit Gedichten durchsticht.
Auf alles hab ich mit Augen geblickt.
Wie die Mäherin Gras hab ich Worte gesichelt.
Im Tau der Frühe sanken sie hin,
Noch eben beim Leben, schon Duft von Vergehen.
Der Gräser Vergängnis, der Worte Beginn,
So immer wieder wird auferstehen
Das Grün der Gräser, das Kieferngrün,
Das Grün der Erlen, das Grün der Tannen.
Doch nur durch Glücksrausch, niemals Bemühn,
Geschiehs, den Duft in Worte zu bannen,
Der welkendem Gras in Schwaden entsteigt.
Der grüne Atem aus brünstigem Leben,
Vom Mittagsschrillen der Grillen durchgeigt,

Lässt Himmel und Erde in Lüsten erbeben.



Widmung

Ich würde gerne etwas sagen,
Was dir gerecht wird und genügt.
Du hast mich, wie ich bin, ertragen
Und mir, was fehlte, zugefügt.
Es ist nicht leicht, mit mir zu leben.
Und oft war ich dir ungerecht.
Und nie hab ich mich ganz ergeben.
Du hattest auf ein Ganzes Recht.
Doch ich hab viel für mich behalten.
Und dich liess ich mit dir allein.
Und du halfst mir, mich zu gestalten
Und: gegen dich mir treu zu sein.

T T T T

A last glass of port

Il y avait une fois une brave Alsacienne, nommée Sara, ou plutôt Sorlé. Elle était un peu schlemihl (godiche). Mais comme elle avait toutes les vertus, elle fut, après sa mort, admise au paradis. Dès son entrée, les séraphins lui jouèrent leurs plus beaux morceaux. Mais Sorlé pleurait. On la mena sur la prairie toute maillée d'étoiles, où les bienheureux dansaient de célestes tangos, Sorlé pleurait toujours. A la fin, on se mit à jaser: "Le paradis serait-il surfait?" Et, comme il y a partout des langues moins bonnes que celles que vend Mme Lévy, ce qui devait arriver arriva: Le Seigneur lui-même eut vent de la chose. Il manda Sorlé et lui dit: "Qu'as-tu donc à pleurer dans le séjour de ma splendeur? Mets-toi à ma place, Sorlé, c'est vexant!" Et Sorlé lui répondit: "Je sais bien, roi du monde, je manque aux usages; mais c'est plus fort que moi. J'ai eu, de mon vivant, un trop grand chagrin." "Lequel?" "J'avais un seul garçon, et il s'est fait chrétien." "Le mien aussi, schlemihl," répondit Dieu, "et je ne pleure pas."

Edmond Fleg *Anthologie Juive* (quoted in Pierre-Antoine Bernheim *Histoire des Paradis*, Perrin 1999).

T T T T

Fang Lizhi

On 6 April, Fang Lizhi, the courageous Chinese human rights activist and distinguished professor of astrophysics, died in his exile home in Tucson. An obituary by Perry Link in the *New York Review of Books* noted that "his wry wit was a constant joy to friends as well as a stiletto in political debate" and recalled watching a Western journalist interview him during the student protests in spring 1989:

"When the interview was over the reporter asked if there were a way he could ask follow-up questions, if necessary. Fang said 'sure,' and gave the reporter his telephone number.

'We've heard that your phone is tapped,' the reporter said. 'Is it?' 'I assume so.' Fang grinned. 'Doesn't that bother you?' the reporter asked. 'No,' said Fang, 'for years I've been trying to get them to listen to me. If this is how they want to do it, then fine!'"

T T T T

Back to the USSR¹⁵



¹⁵ With thanks to Peter Burgess.

T T T T

Dorothy Parker

Partial comfort

Whose love is given over well
Shall look on Helen's face in hell,
Whilst they whose love is thin and wise
May view John Knox in paradise.

Words of Comfort to be Scratched on a Mirror

Helen of Troy had a wandering glance;
Sappho's restriction was only the sky;
Ninon was ever the chatter of France;
But oh, what a good girl am I.

Alexandre Dumas and his Son

Although I work, and seldom cease,
At Dumas père and Dumas fils,
Alas, I cannot make me care
For Dumas fils and Dumas père.

T T T T

Can you read this?

7H15 M3554G3
53RV35 70 PR0V3
HOW OUR M1ND5 C4N
DO 4M4Z1NG 7H1NG5!
1MPR3551V3 7H1NG5!
IN 7H3 B3G1NN1NG
17 WA5 H4RD BU7
NOW, ON 7H15 LIN3
YOUR MIND IS
R34D1NG 17
4U70M471C4LLY
W17H0U7 3V3N
7H1NK1NG 4B0U7 17

T T T T

Quickies¹⁶

One day, a man came home and was greeted by his wife dressed in a very sexy nightie. "Tie me up," she purred, and you can do anything you want." So he tied her up and went golfing.

A woman came home, screeching her car into the driveway, and ran into the house. She slammed the door and shouted at the top of her lungs, "Honey, pack your bags. I won the lottery!" The husband said, "Oh my God! What should I pack, beach stuff or mountain stuff?" "Doesn't matter," she said. "Just get out."

¹⁶ With thanks to Philipp Ruperti. The woman in the second story may just perhaps be the same as in the first.

A Polish immigrant to the US had to take an eye sight test for a driver's license. The optician showed him a card with the letters C Z W I X N O S T A C Z. "Can you read this?" the optician asked. "Read it?" the Pole replied, "I know the guy."

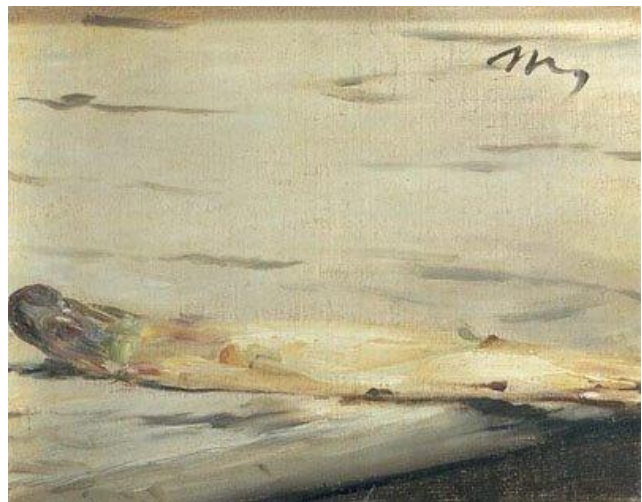
Mother Superior called all the nuns together and said to them, "I must tell you all something. We have a case of gonorrhoea in the convent." "Thank God," said an elderly nun at the back. "I'm so tired of Chardonnay."

An exasperated father once sat down with his teenage daughter. He had decided it was time to lay down the law. "There are two words", he began, "that I never again want to hear used in this household. One is 'gross' and the other is 'awesome'." "Sure, Dad," his daughter replied. "What are they?"

T T T T

The Hare with Amber Eyes

Charles [Ephrussi] bought a picture of some asparagus from Manet, one of his extraordinary still lifes, where a lemon or rose is lambent in the dark. It was a bundle of twenty stalks bound in straw. Manet wanted 800 francs for it, a substantial sum, and Charles, thrilled, sent 1,000. A week later Charles received a small canvas signed with a simple M in return. It was a single asparagus stalk laid across a table with an accompanying note: 'This seems to have slipped from the bundle.' (p. 75)



T T T T

Note - The paintings of women reading included in this edition:

Frontispiece: *Annunciation* by Simone Martini and Lippo Menni - ca.1333

p. 1: Tomb of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Fontevraud Abbey - 13th century

p. 6: Jan Vermeer, *Clio, the Muse of history* - ca. 1666

p. 8: Mural from Pompei (the 'Sappho' mural) - end 1st century AD

p. 9: *Livre de la Cité des Dames* - ca. 1405

p. 15: Gustav Adolph Hennig, *Young woman reading* - 1828

p. 16: Donatien Nonotte (1708-1785), *Portrait de Madame Nonotte*

p. 17: Pierre-Antoine Baudouin, *La lecture* - ca.1760

p. 18: Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *La Lectrice* - 1776

p. 23: Camille Corot, *Liseuse couronnée de fleurs* ou *La muse de virgile* - 1845

- p. 24: Claude Monet, *Lectrice sur un pré de fleurs* - 1872
- p. 25: Anselm Feuerbach, *Paolo e Francesca* - 1864
- p. 27: Charles Burton Barber, *Blonde and Brunette Pug*- 1879;
- p. 28: Charles Perugini, *In the Orangerie*- ca. 1865
- p. 29: Ramon Casas y Carbo, *Après le bal* - 1895
- p. 30: Albert Anker (1831-1910), *Rose and Bertha Gugger*
- p. 31: Alexander Deineka *Woman Reading*- 1934
- p. 33: W.B. Tholen, *The Arntzenius sisters* - 1895
- p. 34: Edward Hopper, *Compartment C, Car 293* - 1938
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- p. 50: Edward Cucuel (1875-1954), *The novel*