

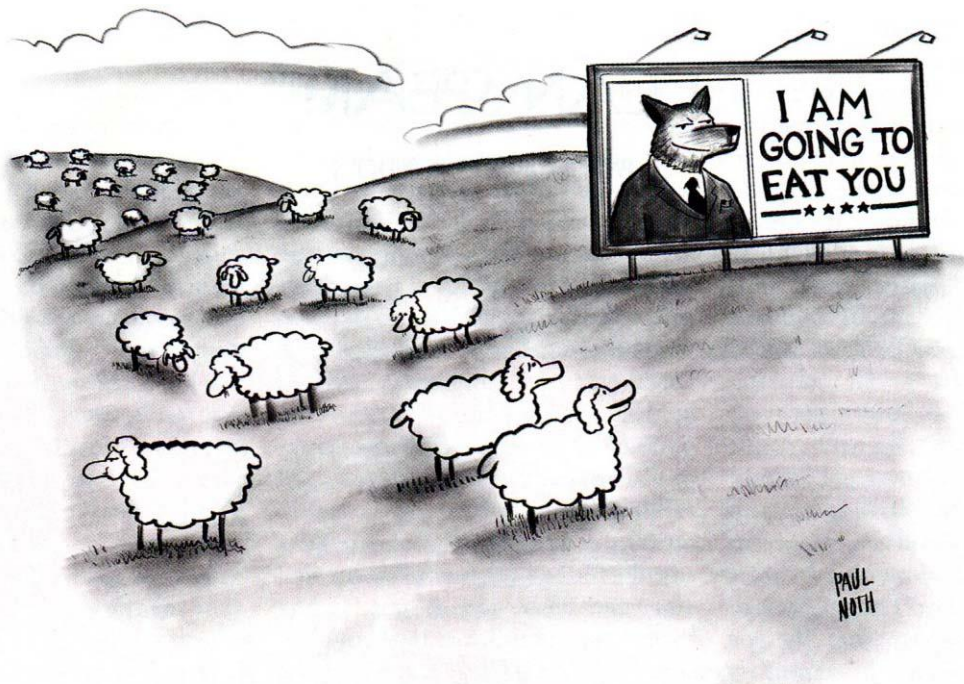
CHRISTMAS PUDDING 2024



Robert Middleton

‘As democracy is perfected, the office of president represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. We move toward a lofty ideal. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart’s desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.’

H.L. Mencken (*Baltimore Evening Sun*, 26 July 1920).



“He tells it like it is.”

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.

After studying under Graham Storey in Cambridge, I was deeply influenced by the 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 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 poetry and that several 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 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. Until 2011, *Christmas Pudding* drew heavily on poetry of the 'golden age'; since then, I include much modern and contemporary verse that, in my opinion, meets Winters' strict criteria. If I no longer insist on form, my criterion remains nevertheless quality of language and content - and, a new ingredient, wit.

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



Nostalgia, the vice of the aged. We watch so many old movies our memories come in monochrome. (Angela Carter)

When you are old and grey and full of sleep, and nodding by the fire,
take down this book and slowly read, and dream of the soft look
your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep. (W.B. Yeats)

Le souvenir des choses passées n'est pas nécessairement le souvenir
des choses telles qu'elles étaient. (Marcel Proust)

Die immer nur das Vergangene loben, sitzen eben rückwärts auf dem
rollenden Wagen der Zeit, sie sehen nur, was bereits vorüber ist.
(Berthold Auerbach)

Why is nostalgia like grammar? We find the present tense and the past
perfect.

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Cartoons from *The New Yorker*

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All previous editions of Christmas Pudding can be found on

<https://pamirs.org/christmas-pudding/>

CHRISTMAS PUDDING 2024

I celebrated my 85th birthday this year with a jazz group (two of the “Fats Boys”, Thomas Winteler and Brenno Boccadoro.¹). The name of the group is, of course, a tribute to Fats Waller (1904-1943), the American jazz pianist, composer and singer. Thomas plays in the style of Johnny Dodds and Brenno plays in the Harlem stride style of Fats Waller: they brought back memories of his most famous song, *Ain't Misbehavin'*.²

No one to talk with
All by myself
No one to walk with
But I'm happy on the shelf

Ain't misbehavin'
I'm savin' my love for you
For you, for you, for you

I know for certain
The one I love
I'm through with flirtin'
It's just you I'm thinkin' of

Ain't misbehavin' ...

Like Jack Horner
In the corner
Don't go nowhere
What do I care
Your kisses
Are worth waitin' for
Believe me

¹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJGbWp1LQyQ&list=PL0psTjy1iBlkTplAsMfDRhwLvtPUyCGHC&index=6>

²<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSNPpssruFY>

I don't stay out late
Got no place to go
I'm home about 8
Just me and my radio

Ain't misbehavin' ...

I don't stay out late
Got no place to go
I'm home about 8
Just me and my radio

Ain't misbehavin' ...

They were kind enough to play one of my favourite jazz numbers “Melancholy”,³ that I chose for my school jazz band. (The least accomplished musician, I was allowed to choose the tunes.)



³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-Q0VYFJ5z0>

Notice the imaginative use of cadet corps material.

All of which brought back other memories of the songs of the 1920s and 30s, songs that had catchy and witty lyrics, easy to sing along with, hum and dance to. Not all of them merit the name “poetry” but all are good verse and certainly stand comparison with the works of Bob Dylan, Nobel prize winner for literature (see CP 2017). Even if the lyrics may not always be inspirational, the combination of words and music can make a song poetic.



Hence the theme of this Christmas Pudding: **Nostalgia**. I have included a selection of my favourites, some of which are indelibly linked to persons and events. (**N.B. Click on the links in the electronic version to listen to the songs.**)



Seasonally appropriate

White Christmas (Irving Berlin 1942)⁴

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Where the treetops glisten
And children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days be merry and bright

⁴ Scene from the eponymous 1954 film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhycoU01e70>

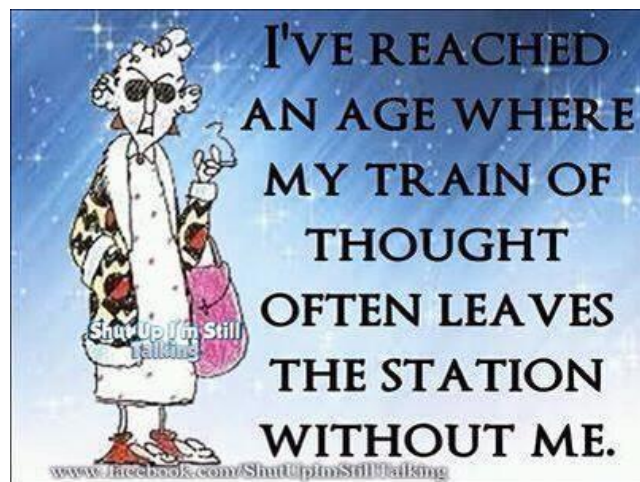
And may all your Christmases be white

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Where the treetops glisten
And children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

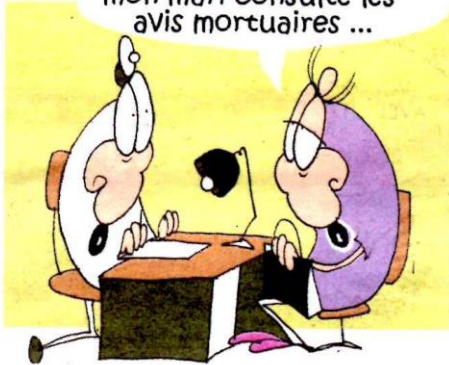
I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days be merry and bright
And may all your Christmases be white



As time goes by ⁵



Vous voyez, Docteur, tous les matins
mon mari consulte les
avis mortuaires ...



Et quand il voit
qu'il n'est pas dedans...



il ouvre une bouteille
pour fêter ça...



⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiG_7tauZJA

Cole Porter

Anything Goes⁶

In olden days, a glimpse of stocking
Was looked on as something shocking.
But now, God knows, anything goes.

Good authors too who once knew better words
Now only use four-letter words
Writing prose. Anything goes.

If driving fast cars you like,
If low bars you like,
If old hymns you like,
If bare limbs you like,
If Mae West you like,
Or me undressed you like,
Why, nobody will oppose.

When ev'ry night the set that's smart is in-
truding at nudist parties in studios. Anything goes.

When Missus Ned McLean⁷ (God bless her)
Can get Russian reds to "yes" her,
Then I suppose, anything goes.

When Rockefeller still can hoard en-

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxCjpEc66Dw>

⁷ Evalyn McLean (née Walsh; 1886-1947) was an American mining heiress and socialite, famous for being an owner of the 45-carat (9.0 g) *Hope Diamond* (<https://www.si.edu/spotlight/hope-diamond/history>). McLean and her husband Ned made a highly publicised journey to Russia, shortly after the October Revolution, in an effort to get her husband Ned's uncle, George Bakhmeteff, reinstated as the Russian ambassador to the US. An American diplomat, William Bullitt, had to talk McLean out of flaunting the Hope Diamond on the streets of Moscow as a symbol of the superiority of capitalism.

ough money to let Max Gordon⁸
Produce his shows, anything goes.

I get a kick out of you⁹

I get no kick from champagne
Mere alcohol doesn't thrill me at all
So tell me why should it be true
That I get a kick out of you

[Original: Some get a kick from cocaine]
Censored version: Some like the perfume from Spain
I'm sure that if I took even one sniff
That would bore me terrifically too
Yet I get a kick out of you ...

I get no kick in a plane
Flying too high
With some guy in the sky is my idea of nothing to do
Yet I get a kick out of you

I love Paris¹⁰

I love Paris in the spring time
I love Paris in the fall
I love Paris in the summer when it sizzles
I love Paris in the winter when it drizzles

⁸ Max Gordon (1892-1978) was an American theatre and film producer, staging ten shows in 25 years, beginning in 1931 with Adele and Fred Astaire's last joint performance in the musical *The Bandwagon*. In 1934 he approached John D. Rockefeller about an investment in the Radio City Theatre in the Rockefeller Center NY. The Theatre was not covering its rent as a picture house, and the Rockefeller interests saw this as an opportunity to restore prestige to Radio City. Structural revisions were necessary and the Rockefeller interests took on the restructuring at a cost of \$150,000.

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3SgtQvLMs8>

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSvf7lyWV20>

I love Paris every moment
Every moment of the year
I love Paris, why oh why do I love Paris
Because my love is here

Night and day¹¹

Like the beat beat beat of the tom-tom
When the jungle shadows fall
Like the tick tick tock of the stately clock
As it stands against the wall
Like the drip drip drip of the raindrops
When the summer shower is through
So a voice within me keeps repeating you, you, you

Night and day, you are the one
Only you beneath the moon and under the sun
Whether near to me or far
It's no matter darling where you are
I think of you
Night and day

Day and night, why is it so
That this longing for you follows wherever I go
In the roaring traffic's boom
In the silence of my lonely room
I think of you
Night and day

Night and day
Under the hide of me
There's an oh such a hungry yearning burning inside of me
And its torment won't be through
'til you let me spend my life making love to you
Day and night, night and day

¹¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEM_63_P0CY

Begin the Beguine¹²

When they begin the beguine
it brings back the sound of music so tender,
it brings back a night of tropical splendor,
it brings back a memory ever green.
I'm with you once more under the stars,
and down by the shore an orchestra's playing
and even the palms seem to be swaying

When they begin the beguine.
To live it again is past all endeavor,
except when that tune clutches my heart,
and there we are, swearing to love forever,
and promising never, never to part.
What moments divine, what rapture serene,
till clouds came along to disperse the joys we had tasted,
and now when I hear people curse the chance that was
wasted,
I know but too well what they mean;

So don't let them begin the beguine
let the love that was once a fire remain an ember;
let it sleep like the dead desire I only remember
when they begin the beguine.

Oh yes, let them begin the beguine, make them play
till the stars that were there before return above you,

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTT-sCqVH9g>

I love the quote from Alec Wilder in the Wikipedia entry: "In his book *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators 1900–1950*, musicologist and composer Alec Wilder, described "Begin the Beguine" as

a maverick, it is an unprecedented experiment and one which, to this day, after hearing it hundreds of times, I cannot sing or whistle or play from start to finish without the printed music ... about the sixtieth measure I find myself muttering another title, 'End the Beguine'.

till you whisper to me once more,
"Darling, I love you!"
and we suddenly know, what heaven we're in,
when they begin the beguine.



“**How Watson Learned the Trick**” is a Sherlock Holmes parody written by Arthur Conan Doyle in 1924. Conan Doyle was one of several authors commissioned to provide books for the library of Queen Mary's Dolls' House¹³; others included J. M. Barrie, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling and W. Somerset Maugham. Conan Doyle was provided with a book approximately 1.5" x 1.25" (3.75 cm x 3.15 cm) into which he wrote the 503-word story of *How Watson Learned the Trick* by hand, taking up 34 pages. The original manuscript is still part of the Dolls' House library.

The story was published in the souvenir book, *The Book of the Queen's Dolls' House Library* (1924), and in the *New York Times* on 24 August 1924.

Watson had been watching his companion intently ever since he had sat down to the breakfast table. Holmes happened to look up and catch his eye.

'Well, Watson, what are you thinking about?' he asked. 'About you.'

'Me?' 'Yes, Holmes, I was thinking how superficial are these tricks of yours, and how wonderful it is that the public should continue to show interest in them.'

'I quite agree,' said Holmes. 'In fact, I have a recollection that I have myself made a similar remark.'

'Your methods,' said Watson severely, 'are really easily acquired.'

¹³ As CP readers may remember (CP 2014) my immigrant great-grandfather Krüger contributed furniture to the Queen's dolls' house.

'No doubt,' Holmes answered with a smile. 'Perhaps you will yourself give an example of this method of reasoning.'

'With pleasure,' said Watson. 'I am able to say that you were greatly preoccupied when you got up this morning.'

'Excellent!' said Holmes. 'How could you possibly know that?'

'Because you are usually a very tidy man and yet you have forgotten to shave.'

'Dear me! How very clever!' said Holmes, 'I had no idea, Watson, that you were so apt a pupil. Has your eagle eye detected anything more?'

'Yes, Holmes. You have a client named Barlow, and you have not been successful in his case.' 'Dear me, how could you know that?'

'I saw the name outside his envelope. When you opened it you gave a groan and thrust it into your pocket with a frown on your face.' 'Admirable! You are indeed observant. Any other points?' 'I fear, Holmes, that you have taken to financial speculation.' 'How could you tell that, Watson?'

'You opened the paper, turned to the financial page, and gave a loud exclamation of interest.'

'Well, that is very clever of you Watson. Any more?'

'Yes, Holmes, you have put on your black coat, instead of your dressing gown, which proves that you are expecting some important visitor at once.'

'Anything more?'

'I have no doubt that I could find other points. Holmes, but I only give you these few, in order to show you that there are other people in the world who can be as clever as you.'

'And some not so clever,' said Holmes. 'I admit that they are few, but I am afraid, my dear Watson, that I must count you among

them.' 'What do you mean, Holmes?'

'Well, my dear fellow, I fear your deductions have not been so happy as I should have wished.' 'You mean that I was mistaken.'

'Just a little that way, I fear. Let us take the points in their order: I did not shave because I have sent my razor to be sharpened. I put on my coat because I have, worse luck, an early meeting with my dentist. His name is Barlow, and the letter was to confirm the appointment. The cricket page is beside the financial one, and I turned to it to find if Surrey was holding its own against Kent. But go on, Watson, go on! It's a very superficial trick, and no doubt you will soon acquire it.'



A Little Port?

A man and his wife were playing a round of golf. At the first tee, the wife asked the husband: "Darling, if I died, would you marry again?"

The husband, who was just addressing the ball, was visibly irritated: "Maybe I would, maybe I wouldn't – let's talk about it some other time. Let me concentrate on my drive."

Just as the husband was preparing his approach shot, the wife asked "If you did marry again, would you bring her to live in our house?"

The husband, even more irritated: "Maybe I would, maybe I wouldn't, but please let me concentrate on my approach shot."

On the green, the husband was just lining up his putt, when the wife asked: "If you did marry again, would you bring her to play golf here?"

The husband missed his putt: "Maybe I would, maybe I wouldn't, but look what you're doing to my concentration."

As they were walking over to the second tee, the wife came back to the subject: "If you did bring her to play golf here, I hope you wouldn't let her use my clubs."

The husband: "No dear, she's left-handed."



Love during the Belle Époque

Extract from Leonard Slater *ALY*, W.H. Allen London 1966 p.11

With competition so keen, a French financier was bragging to his friends about his conquests one day in the pavement cafe of the Hotel de Paris. Just then a large and handsome woman walked out the door and entered a luxurious carriage. "I slept with her the day before yesterday," boasted the financier. "But," exclaimed his friend, "she is the Queen of Rumania." "You don't say," the imperturbable financier replied. "She never told me."

For years, La Belle Epoque's choicest gossip revolved around Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, who during the long reign of his forbidding mother, Queen Victoria, used the Riviera as his bedding ground. It was there that he began his celebrated affair with Lily Langtry, and it was to the Cote d'Azur that he returned after his coronation as Edward VII, calling himself Baron Renfrew, as incognito as Big Ben, to rekindle old flames. Naturally, these liaisons, short and long, sincere love and passing fancy, sometimes led to healthy, squalling accidents. There was more than one by-blow of a Riviera winter. An apocryphal story tells of two women meeting in a narrow corridor of the Hotel de Paris. Neither would turn aside to let the other pass. "Excuse me," said one, shoving forward, "but I am a princess." The other stood her ground. "And I, madame, would be one too, if my father had married my mother."

The Riviera was that kind of place during La Belle Epoque, that intermission between wars and revolutions, when everything

seemed to have been invented, written, sung, decided, discarded, and parcelled out and the balance of power swayed as gently and as deceptively as a hammock. (Sometimes hammocks fall, as this one did in 1914.) Nowhere else was the setting so perfect—the golden sunlight, the golden mimosa, the golden coins glinting beneath the Casino chandeliers. And so the very rich came. So did the very powerful who were, more often than not, the very same people. The very talented who could amuse the very rich came, and so did the new rich seeking their place in the sun. And so also came young men seeking wealth or power, or both, and young women seeking romance.



More AI – “From Black Nazis to female Popes and American Indian Vikings: How AI went ‘woke’” (*MSN The Telegraph*)

Eight years ago, Google came under fire after an artificial intelligence (AI) tool mistakenly labelled pictures of black people as “gorillas” in its photo app. Now its AI tools have been accused of racial bias once again after its *Gemini* bot generated ethnically diverse yet utterly implausible images of historical figures.

In a post on Twitter, Debarghya Das, a former Google engineer, said: “It’s embarrassingly hard to get Google Gemini to acknowledge that white people exist.”





The botched image generation has prompted accusations that Google's focus on diversity has prompted its programme into a "woke" re-writing of history. It has also exposed how biases can quickly run out of control in AI systems and the problem of getting them to deliver accurate information.

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Jerome Kern

A fine romance¹⁴

A fine romance, with no kisses
A fine romance, my friend this is
We should be like a couple of hot tomatoes
But you're as cold as yesterday's mashed potatoes

A fine romance, you won't nestle
A fine romance, you won't wrestle
I might as well play bridge
With my old maid aunts
I haven't got a chance
This is a fine romance

¹⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TE_2oat3sNA

A fine romance, my good fellow
You take romance, I'll take jello
You're calmer than the seals
In the Arctic Ocean
At least they flap their fins
To express emotion

A fine romance with no quarrels
With no insults and all morals
I've never mussed the crease
In your blue serge pants
I never get the chance
This is a fine romance

A fine romance, with no kisses
A fine romance, my friend this is
We two should be like clams in a dish of chowder
But we just fizz like parts of a Seidlitz powder

A fine romance, with no clinches
A fine romance, with no pinches
You're just as hard to land as the Ile de France!
I haven't got a chance, this is a fine romance

I won't dance, don't ask me¹⁵

I won't dance, don't ask me
I won't dance, don't ask me
I won't dance, Madame, with you
My heart won't let my feet do the things they should do

Say, you know what? You're lovely
You know what? You're lovely, but oh what you do to me
I'm like an ocean wave that's bumped on the shore

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CTR3d2Ly80>. Fred Astaire had more talents than just ballroom dancing.

I feel so absolutely stumped on the floor

When you dance you're charming and you're gentle
Specially when you do the Continental¹⁶

But this feeling isn't purely mental
For heaven rest us, I'm not asbestos

And that's why : I won't dance, why should I?
I won't dance, how could I? I won't dance
Merci beaucoup, I know that music leads the way to
romance

And if I hold you in my arms I won't dance

The way you look tonight¹⁷

Some day, when I'm awfully low
When the world is cold
I will feel a glow just thinking of you
And the way you look tonight

Yes, you're lovely, with your smile so warm
And your cheeks so soft
There is nothing for me but to love you
And the way you look tonight

With each word your tenderness grows
Tearin' my fears apart
And that laugh that wrinkles your nose
Touches my foolish heart

Lovely, never never change

¹⁶ “The Continental” (https://youtu.be/yz7_e8ClwzA) is a dance introduced by Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire in the 1934 film *The Gay Divorcee*. As several politicians have since remarked: “Sure he was great, but don’t forget Ginger Rogers did everything he did backwards...and in high heels!”

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65awefGF2L4>

Keep that breathless charm
Darling you please arrange it? 'Cause I love you
Just the way you look tonight



Irving Berlin

Cheek to cheek¹⁸

Heaven, I'm in Heaven
And my heart beats so that I can hardly speak
And I seem to find the happiness I seek
When we're out together, dancing cheek to cheek

Heaven, I'm in Heaven
And the cares that hung around me through the week
Seem to vanish like a gambler's lucky streak
When we're out together, dancing cheek to cheek

Oh, I love to climb a mountain
And to reach the highest peak
But it doesn't thrill me half as much
As dancing cheek to cheek

Oh, I love to go out fishing
In a river or a creek
But I don't enjoy it half as much
As dancing cheek to cheek

Oh, dance with me
I want my arms about you
The charm about you
Will carry me through to

Heaven, I'm in Heaven
And my heart beats so that I can hardly speak

¹⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1u2G16fq_Y

And I seem to find the happiness I seek
When we're out together, dancing cheek to cheek



Anything goes (gone)

Beer can artwork accidentally thrown in bin by staff member at Dutch museum (The Guardian 8.10.2024)

A Dutch museum has recovered an artwork that looks like two empty beer cans after a staff member accidentally threw it in the rubbish bin thinking it was trash. The work, entitled *All The Good Times We Spent Together* by French



artist Alexandre Lavet, appears on first glance to be two discarded and dented beer tins. However, a closer look shows they are in fact meticulously hand-painted with acrylics and “required a lot of time and effort to create”, according to the museum.

But their artistic value was lost on a mechanic, who saw them displayed in a lift and chucked them in the bin. Curator Elisah van den Bergh returned from a short break and noticed that the cans had vanished. She recovered them from a bin bag just in the nick of time as they were about to be thrown out.

The incident is the latest in a long line of unfortunate things to happen to artworks in galleries and museums.¹⁹



¹⁹ In 2019, an artist ate a banana that had been taped to a wall as part of an installation by the Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan at Art Basel Miami Beach, claiming his act was ‘performance art’. Its replacement sold a few days ago for the record price of \$5.2 million – truly “anything goes”

Isle of Capri²⁰

Isle of Capri was written by Wilhelm Grosz, with lyrics by Jimmy Kennedy. Published in 1934, it reached number one for seven weeks in early 1935.

'Twas on the Isle of Capri that I found her
Beneath the shade of an old walnut tree.
Oh, I can still see the flowers blooming 'round her
Where we met on the Isle of Capri
She was as sweet as a rose at the dawning
But somehow fate hadn't meant it for me

And though I sailed with the tide in the morning
Still my heart's in the Isle of Capri

Summertime was nearly over
Blue Italian sky above
I said, "Lady, I'm a rover
Can you spare a sweet word of love?"

She whispered softly "It's best not to linger"
And then as I kissed her hand I could see
She wore a plain golden ring on her finger
'Twas goodbye on the Isle of Capri.



Fernand Dupuy : L'Albine ou la mésange qui zinzinule

Tu le sais, bien sûr depuis longtemps, le coq chante, cocorico, la poule caquète, le chien aboie, quand le cheval hennit et que beugle le bœuf et meugle la vache, l'hirondelle gazouille, la colombe roucoule et le pinson ramage. Les moineaux piaillent, le faisan et l'oie criailent quand le dindon glousse. La grenouille coasse mais le corbeau croasse et la pie jacasse. Et le chat comme le tigre miaule,

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YhDhxxvTT5c>

l'éléphant barrit, l'âne braie, mais le cerf rait. Le mouton bêle évidemment et bourdonne l'abeille. La biche brame, quand le loup hurle.

Tu sais, bien sûr, tous ces cris-là mais sais-tu ? Sais-tu ? Que le canard nasille – les canards nasillardent ! Que le bouc ou la chèvre chevrote. Que le hibou hulule, mais que la chouette, elle, chuinte ; Que le paon braille, que l'aigle trompète.

Sais-tu ? Que si la tourterelle roucoule, le ramier caracoule ; et que la bécasse croule, que la perdrix cacabe, que la cigogne craquète ; et que si le corbeau croasse, la corneille corbine ; et que le lapin glapit quand le lièvre vagit.

L'alouette grisoie, Tu ne le savais pas. Et peut-être ne sais-tu pas davantage que le pivert picasse. C'est excusable ! Ou que le sanglier grommelle, que le chameau blatère et que c'est à cause du chameau que l'on déblatère !

Tu ne sais pas non plus peut-être que la huppe pupule. Et je ne sais pas non plus si on l'appelle en Limousin la pépue parce qu'elle pupule ou parce qu'elle fait son nid avec de la chose qui pue.

Qu'importe ! Mais c'est joli : la huppe pupule ! Et encore sais-tu ? Sais-tu que la souris, la petite souris grise, devine ... La petite souris grise chicote. Avoue qu'il serait dommage d'ignorer que la souris chicote, et plus dommage encore de ne pas savoir, de ne pas savoir que le geai, que le geai cajole ! Sais-tu que la mésange zinzinule ! Comme la fauvette d'ailleurs.



What's in a name? Did you know?

Why is the toilet is called the “crapper”? It all started with U.S. soldiers stationed in England during WWI. The toilets in England at the time were predominately made by the company “Thomas

Crapper & Co Ltd”, with the company’s name appearing on the toilets. The soldiers took to calling toilets “The Crapper” and brought that slang term for the toilet back with them to the United States.

Thomas Crapper did not invent the toilet, but he did develop the ballcock, an improved tank-filling mechanism still used in toilets today.

Why is a trash can (dustbin in England) called “poubelle” in French-speaking countries? Eugène Poubelle, prefect of the Seine (i.e. chief administrator of Paris), promulgated an ordinance in 1884 that all apartments should have trash cans.

Of course, everybody knows that vacuum cleaners can be referred to as Hoovers, thanks to the development of the product by the Hoover Company. Founded in 1908 by William Henry Hoover, the company quickly became a household name synonymous with vacuum cleaners due to their superior quality and cutting-edge technology.

What you don’t know is that the second name of my daughter’s French bulldog is “Hoover” because of his skill (and speed) at picking up whatever you drop on the floor.



More Nostalgia

Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt²¹

Ein rätselhafter Schimmer

Ein "je ne sais-pas-quoi"

Liegt in den Augen immer

Bei einer schönen Frau

Doch wenn sich meine Augen

Bei einem vis-à-vis

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiHU763najk>

Ganz tief in seine saugen
Was sprechen dann sie?:

Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß
Auf Liebe eingestellt
Denn das ist meine Welt
Und sonst gar nichts
Das ist, was soll ich machen
Meine Natur
Ich kann halt lieben nur
Und sonst gar nichts

Männer umschwirr'n mich
Wie Motten um das Licht
Und wenn sie verbrennen
Ja dafür kann ich nicht

Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß
Auf Liebe eingestellt
Ich kann halt lieben nur
Und sonst gar nichts

Was bebt in meinen Händen
In ihrem heißen Druck?
Sie möchten sich verschwenden
Sie haben nie genug
Ihr werdet mir verzeihen
Ihr müßt' es halt versteh'n
Es lockt mich stets von neuem
Ich find' es so schön!

The last verse of the German text was not translated in the following version for English-speaking audiences, considered too risqué. I am not planning to translate it – use DeepL, if you are curious.

Falling in love again²²

Falling in love again
Never wanted to
What am I to do?
I can't help it

Love's always been my game
Play it how I may
I was made that way
I can't help it

Men cluster to me
Like moths around a flame
And if their wings burn
I know I'm not to blame

Falling in love again
Never wanted to
What am I to do?
I just can't help it

George Gershwin: Summertime²³

Summertime,
And the livin' is easy

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky7FAtZDVp4> Composed by Friedrich Hollaender and sung by Marlene Dietrich in the 1930 film *Der blaue Engel*. See also https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlene_Dietrich „Durch die Szene wurde sie zum Sexsymbol und ihre langen Beine zu ihrem Markenzeichen. In Hollywood angekommen, begann die bis dahin eher drall wirkende Dietrich mit ihrer Verwandlung zur Femme fatale. Sie nahm etwa 30 Pfund ab, ließ sich die feinste Garderobe schneiden und perfektionierte ihr Make-up; ihre hohen, dünngezupften Augenbrauen zog sie mit schwarzem Kajal nach, trug mehrere Schichten Lidschatten auf, um ihre Augen größer wirken zu lassen und schminkte sich einen herzförmigen Kussmund. Für die Betonung ihrer hohen Wangenknochen ließ sie sich vier Backenzähne ziehen.“

²³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_3SlvYzIbw

Fish are jumpin'
And the cotton is high

Your daddy's rich
And your mamma's good lookin'
So hush little baby
Don't you cry

One of these mornings
You're going to rise up singing
Then you'll spread your wings
And you'll fly to the sky

But till that morning
There's a'nothing can harm you
With daddy and mamma standing by

“Après-concert” is often as enjoyable as the concert itself. Our favourite soprano²⁴ came home with friends after a concert Heidi organised and sang *Summertime* for us with Julien Quentin²⁵ on piano and your faithful servant on drums.



How Portugal's 1974 Eurovision entry toppled the country's fascist regime - Alex Fernandes, *The Guardian* 21 Apr 2024

Fifty years ago, a remarkable chain of events set in motion by the broadcast of a series of songs led to the fall of a dictatorship.

In musical terms, Portugal's entry for the final of the Eurovision song contest on 6 April 1974 was not what you would typically call a success.

E Depois do Adeus (And After the Goodbye), performed by Paulo de Carvalho, with lyrics by José Niza, came joint last with Norway,

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xyfyh6yY4Hc>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJc2ioNjK2Q>

Germany and Switzerland, narrowly avoiding an embarrassing nul points and only slightly redeemed by the fact that the winning song that year was nothing less catchy than Abba's *Waterloo*.

But while De Carvalho would not go on to enjoy chart-topping glory like his better-known Swedish counterparts, *E Depois do Adeus* left a different kind of legacy – just a few weeks later, it changed the course of history.

By 1974, the situation within the Portuguese military had reached breaking point. Portugal was in its 13th year of fighting a colonial war on three African fronts, forcing the authoritarian, ultra-nationalist Estado Novo regime to sink increasingly untenable levels of manpower into maintaining control.

As the war dragged on, the Portuguese military's flailing attempts to top up its officer pool were met with a backlash from its junior staff officers, who started organising among themselves.

The internal opposition quickly grew into a sophisticated, organised and politicised force: the Movement of Captains. A large number of these officers agreed that the war had to end – something that could only be achieved politically.

Moreover, the Portuguese armed forces had to be brought into line with the will of the people, which required a transition to democracy. By April, plans to topple the regime were well under way, coordinated by Maj Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. ...

“There's this plan of operations, which was distributed [among movement officers] by hand, or even at times by word of mouth – but then it was necessary, close to the start of the operation, to say across the country: ‘This plan is going ahead... there's no turning back.’”

The challenge, Contreiras recalls 50 years later, was to “transmit a signal that could be heard across the country that confirmed the operation”. He adds: “The communication systems of the three

military branches – army, navy and air force – weren't interconnected, so we couldn't use them. That's when I remembered something I'd read in this book.”

On a trip to Spain, Contreiras had been given a copy of *The White Book on the Change of Government in Chile*, edited by Augusto Pinochet, which detailed that country's recent military coup. It described a military warning system that involved playing a string of pre-agreed pop songs through civilian radio stations.

If the movement could convince a radio station that covered mainland Portugal to play a specific song at a prearranged time, that could be the signal to start the whole operation.

With the planned date for the coup fast approaching, Carvalho suggested that the announcer choose something else – “some banality” that would not raise any eyebrows. That choice was *E Depois do Adeus*. ...

At 10.55pm on 24 April 1974, the voice of João Paulo Diniz crackled out to greater Lisbon, introducing Paulo de Carvalho and *E Depois do Adeus*.



More recent Nostalgia

And a few more recent, but by now almost as nostalgic – 1967, 1973 and 1976 respectively!

Procol Harum - A Whiter Shade of Pale²⁶

We skipped the light fandango
Turned cartwheels 'cross the floor
I was feeling kind of seasick
But the crowd called out for more
The room was humming harder
As the ceiling flew away

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0vCwGUZe1I>

When we called out for another drink
The waiter brought a tray

And so it was that later
As the miller told his tale
That her face, at first just ghostly
Turned a whiter shade of pale

She said, "There is no reason
And the truth is plain to see"
But I wandered through my playing cards
And would not let her be
One of sixteen vestal virgins
Who were leaving for the coast
And although my eyes were open
They might just as well have been closed

And so it was that later
As the miller told his tale
That her face, at first just ghostly
Turned a whiter shade of pale

The Eagles - Hotel California²⁷

On a dark desert highway
Cool wind in my hair
Warm smell of colitas
Rising up through the air
Up ahead in the distance
I saw a shimmering light
My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim
I had to stop for the night

There she stood in the doorway
I heard the mission bell
And I was thinking to myself

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BciS5krYL80>

This could be heaven or this could be hell
Then she lit up a candle
And she showed me the way
There were voices down the corridor
I thought I heard them say

Welcome to the Hotel California
Such a lovely place (such a lovely place)
Such a lovely face
Plenty of room at the Hotel California
Any time of year (any time of year)
You can find it here

Her mind is 'Tiffany-twisted
She got the Mercedes-Benz, uh
She got a lot of pretty, pretty boys
That she calls friends
How they danced in the courtyard
Sweet summer sweat
Some dance to remember
Some dance to forget

So I called up the captain
"Please bring me my wine"
He said, "We haven't had that spirit here since 1969"
And still those voices are calling from far away
Wake you up in the middle of the night
Just to hear them say

Welcome to the Hotel California
Such a lovely place (such a lovely place)
Such a lovely face
They're livin' it up at the Hotel California
What a nice surprise (what a nice surprise)
Bring your alibis

Mirrors on the ceiling
The pink champagne on ice
And she said, "We are all just prisoners here
Of our own device"
And in the master's chambers
They gathered for the feast
They stab it with their steely knives
But they just can't kill the beast

Last thing I remember
I was running for the door
I had to find the passage back
To the place I was before
"Relax," said the night man
"We are programmed to receive
You can check out any time you like
But you can never leave"

Elton John - Candle In The Wind²⁸

Goodbye Norma Jeane
Though I never knew you at all
You had the grace to hold yourself
While those around you crawled
They crawled out of the woodwork
And they whispered into your brain
They set you on the treadmill
And they made you change your name

And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a candle in the wind
Never knowing who to cling to
When the rain set in

²⁸ Doubly nostalgic: written first in memory of Marilyn Monroe (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYU3F8uUGiw>), a second version was sung by Elton John at Princess Diana's funeral in 1997.

And I would've liked to know you
But I was just a kid
Your candle burned out long before
Your legend ever did

Loneliness was tough
The toughest role you ever played
Hollywood created a superstar
And pain was the price you paid
Even when you died
Oh the press still hounded you
All the papers had to say
Was that Marilyn was found in the nude

And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a candle in the wind
Never knowing who to cling to
When the rain set in
And I would've liked to know you
But I was just a kid
Your candle burned out long before
Your legend ever did



Everyone in Japan will be called Sato by 2531 unless marriage law changed, says professor *The Guardian* 2 Apr 2024

Japanese citizens will all have the same family name in 500 years' time unless married couples are permitted to use separate surnames, a new study has suggested as part of a campaign to update a civil code dating back to the late 1800s.

The study, led by Hiroshi Yoshida, a professor of economy at Tohoku University, projected that if Japan continues to insist that couples select a single surname, every single Japanese person will be known as "Sato-san" by 2531.

Yoshida conceded that his projections were based on several assumptions, but said the idea was to use numbers to explain the present system's potential effects on Japanese society to draw attention to the issue.

“If everyone becomes Sato, we may have to be addressed by our first names or by numbers,” he said, according to the Mainichi. “I don’t think that would be a good world to live in.”

Sato already tops the list of Japanese surnames, accounting for 1.5% of the total population, according to a March 2023 survey, with Suzuki a close second.

Some social media users wrongly assumed the study, first reported on Monday but published in March, was an April fools’ day prank, but Yoshida said he wanted it to give people pause for thought.

A nation of Satos “will not only be inconvenient but also undermine individual dignity,” he said, according to the Asahi Shimbun, adding that the trend would also lead to the loss of family and regional heritage.

According to Yoshida’s calculations, the proportion of Japanese named Sato increased 1.0083 times from 2022 to 2023. Assuming the rate remains constant and there is no change to the law on surnames, around half of the Japanese population will have that name in 2446, rising to 100% in 2531.

Couples in Japan have to choose which surname to share when they marry, but in 95% of cases, it is the woman who changes her name.

However, the picture would be different if Japan’s government submitted to growing pressure to allow married couples to use separate surnames.

The study contained an alternative scenario extrapolated from a 2022 survey by the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, in which 39.3% of 1,000 employees aged 20 to 59 said they wanted to share

a surname even if they had the option of using separate ones.

Under those circumstances, Yoshida, whose study was commissioned by the Think Name Project and other organisations that want to legalise the opportunity to select your surname, projected that by 2531, only 7.96% of the Japanese population would be named Sato, the Mainichi Shimbun reported.

Groups calling for a change in the law on married surnames hope their campaign will receive a boost from the prospect that Suzukis, Watanabes and, indeed, people called Yoshida – the 11th most common surname – could one day disappear.

While the government has allowed maiden names to appear alongside married names on passports, driving licences and residence certificates, Japan remains the only country in the world that requires spouses to use the same name.

Conservative members of the ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP) say changing the law would “undermine” family unity and cause confusion among children.



Not to forget ... The Beatles

Eleanor Rigby²⁹ (1966)

Picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has
been

Lives in a dream

Waits at the window

Wearing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door

Who is it for?

All the lonely people

Where do they all come from?

All the lonely people

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuS5NuXRb5Y>

Where do they all belong?

Father McKenzie

Writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear

No one comes near

Look at him working

Darning his socks in the night when there's nobody there

What does he care? ...

Eleanor Rigby

Died in the church and was buried along with her name

Nobody came

Father McKenzie

Wiping the dirt from his hands as he walks from the grave

No one was saved

Penny Lane³⁰ (1967)

In Penny Lane, there is a barber showing photographs

Of every head he's had the pleasure to know

And all the people that come and go

Stop and say hello

On the corner is a banker with a motor car

The little children laugh at him behind his back

And the banker never wears a mac

In the pouring rain, very strange

Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes

There beneath the blue suburban skies

I sit and meanwhile back

In Penny Lane there is a fireman with an hourglass

And in his pocket is a portrait of the Queen

He likes to keep his fire engine clean

³⁰ Penny Lane is a street in in the Mossley Hill suburb of Liverpool.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-rB0pHI9fU>

It's a clean machine

Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes
A four of fish and finger pies
In summer, meanwhile back
Behind the shelter in the middle of the roundabout
The pretty nurse is selling poppies from a tray
And though she feels as if she's in a play
She is anyway

In Penny Lane, the barber shaves another customer
We see the banker sitting waiting for a trim
And then the fireman rushes in
From the pouring rain, very strange

Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes
There beneath the blue suburban skies
I sit and meanwhile back
Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes
There beneath the blue suburban skies
Penny Lane



Malcolm Bradbury, Preface to *To the Hermitage*

This is (I suppose) a story. It draws a great deal on history; but as history is the lies the present tells in order to make sense of the past, I have improved it where necessary. I have altered the places where facts, data, info, seem dull or inaccurate. I have quietly corrected errors in the calendar, adjusted flaws in world geography, now and then budged the border of a country, or changed the constitution of a nation. A wee postmodern Haussman, I have elegantly replanned some of the world's greatest cities, moving buildings to better sites, redesigning architecture, opening fresh views and fine urban prospects, redirecting the traffic. I've put statues in more splendid locations, usefully reorganized art

galleries, cleaned, transferred or rehung famous paintings, staged entire new plays and operas. I have revised or edited some of our great books, and republished them. I have altered monuments, defaced icons, changed the street signs, occupied the railway station. In all this I have behaved just as history does itself, when it plots the world's advancing story in the great Book of Destiny above.

I have also taken the chance to introduce people who never met in life, but certainly should have. I have changed their lives and careers, allowed them fresh qualities, novel opportunities, new loves. To my chief character - Denis Diderot, the most pleasing of all the philosophers, though alas now generally remembered only as a Parisian district or a Metro stop - I have been particularly-kind. Diderot suspected himself that it was his fate to be a transient figure, a toy of Posterity: that strange form of collective memory that remembers and forgets, buries and retrieves, celebrates and defaces, constructs and deconstructs. He knew history was the future's complaint against the present; but that past, present and future eternally interfere and interface with each other.



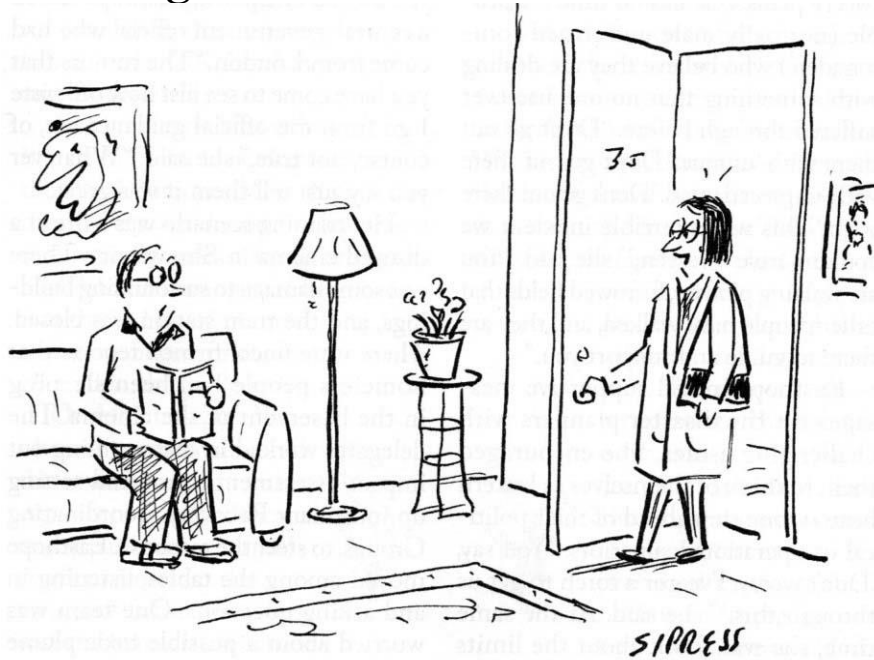
Some more port?

An old man lived alone in Mississippi. He wanted to plough his garden, but it was very hard work. His only son, who would have gladly helped, was in state prison for having robbed a bank. The old man wrote a letter to his son and mentioned his predicament.

Shortly, he received this reply, "Dad, please don't dig up the garden, that's where I buried the money from the robbery." At daybreak the next morning, a dozen state troopers showed up and dug up the entire garden, without finding the money.

Confused, the old man wrote another note to his son telling him what happened, and asked what to do next. His son's reply was, "Now plant your garden, Dad. It's the best I could do at this time."

Love and Marriage³¹



"The doctor says my hearing's fine, but he wants to check out your mumble."

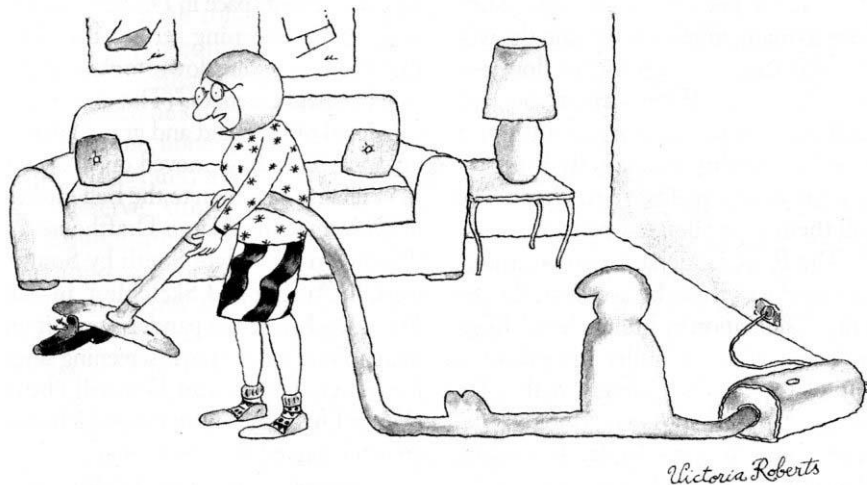


"Were we expecting a baby?"

³¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRDBvKGc1fE>



"This is probably where we'll part."



Victoria Roberts

"Howard?"



"You're not the carefree woman I married"



We're having the Petersons over for dinner – do you think you could run down to the store and stay there for a few hours.”



“OK, I’ll tell it, but you jump in and correct me every few seconds.”



“Oh no – I left all the windows open.”



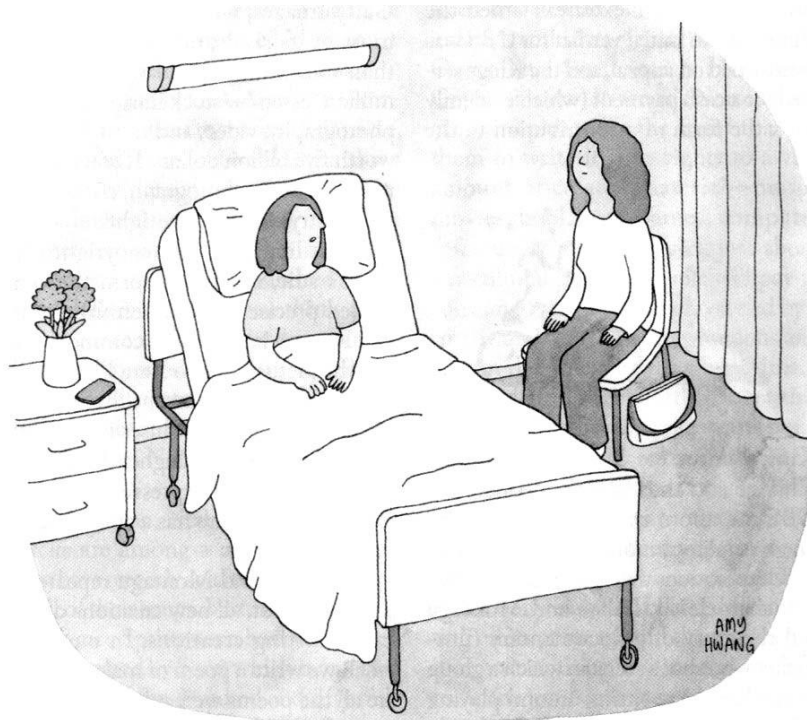
“You do meet my needs – but I’m looking for someone who anticipates my needs.”



“Of course I love you. If I didn’t, we wouldn’t have all this damn furniture.”



“I do like you. You don’t like you.”



“My entire life flashed before my eyes, and I was folding laundry half the time.”



The ampersand, also known as the *and* sign, is the logogram **&**, representing the conjunction "and". It originated as a ligature of the letters of the word *et* (Latin for "and").

“Ampersand: the sign &; the name being a corruption of 'and per se = and'; i.e. '& by itself = and'. The sign derives from the scribes' ligature for the Latin: *et*; in certain italic versions, the letters *e* and *t* are clearly distinguishable.” ³²

Traditionally in English, when spelling aloud, any letter that could also be used as a word in itself ("A", "I", and "O") was referred to by the Latin expression *per se* ('by itself'), as in "per se A" or "A per se A". The character &, when used by itself as opposed to more extended forms such as &c., was similarly referred to as "and per se and". This last phrase was routinely slurred to "ampersand", and the term had entered common English usage by 1837.

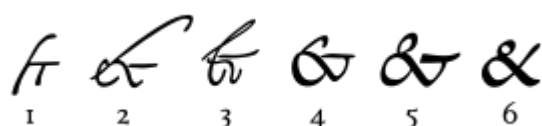
³² Geoffrey Glaister, *Glossary of the Book*

L'esperluette ou *esperluète* (nom féminin), également appelée *éperluette*, *perluette*, *perluète*, « et » commercial ou « et » américain - en anglais : *ampersand*, désigne le logogramme **&**. Elle résulte de la ligature des lettres de la conjonction de coordination « et » et possède la même signification.

Son inventeur serait Tiron, secrétaire de Cicéron, également auteur de la première méthode de sténographie décrite, les notes tironiennes, mais on ne retrouve ce signe typographique dans aucun de ses manuscrits. On cite aussi Alde Manuce, un imprimeur-libraire installé à Venise qui, outre cette création, a révolutionné l'imprimerie par le format qu'il a donné à ses livres, en particulier l'in-octavo, plus petit, moins cher et plus maniable que les in-quarto ou in-folio.


 Esperluettes droite et italique.

L'esperluette résulte de la ligature du e et du t, héritée de l'époque mérovingienne. À l'origine, cette graphie ligaturée était plus ou moins systématiquement utilisée par les copistes médiévaux, qui utilisaient de nombreuses autres abréviations. En l'occurrence, on trouve l'esperluette fréquemment employée pour les termes *et* (&), etc. (&c.). Alors que le plus souvent, dans les manuscrits européens, seuls ces deux termes étaient abrégés à l'aide de &, les scribes anglais s'en servaient aussi pour n'importe quelle séquence -et- : *deberet* pouvait être écrit *deber&*.



Évolution de l'esperluette au cours
de l'histoire de l'écriture.



And Simon and Garfunkel: The Sound of Silence³³ (1964)

Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence

In restless dreams I walked alone
Narrow streets of cobblestone
'Neath the halo of a streetlamp
I turned my collar to the cold and damp
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light
That split the night
And touched the sound of silence

And in the naked light I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more
People talking without speaking
People hearing without listening
People writing songs that voices never share
No one dare
Disturb the sound of silence

"Fools" said I, "You do not know
Silence like a cancer grow
Hear my words that I might teach you
Take my arms that I might reach you"
But my words like silent raindrops fell
And echoed in the wells of silence

And the people bowed and prayed
To the neon god they made

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ukmjBSQY-c>

And the sign flashed out its warning
In the words that it was forming
And the sign said "The words of the prophets
Are written on subway walls
And tenement halls
And whispered in the sounds of silence"

I am a rock³⁴ (1964)

A winter's day
In a deep and dark December

I am alone
Gazing from my window to the streets below
On a freshly fallen silent shroud of snow
I am a rock I am an island

I've built walls
A fortress deep and mighty
That none may penetrate
I have no need of friendship, friendship causes pain
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain
I am a rock I am an island

Don't talk of love
Well I've heard the word before
It's sleeping in my memory
I won't disturb the slumber of feelings that have died
If I never loved I never would have cried
I am a rock I am an island

I have my books
And my poetry to protect me
I am shielded in my armor
Hiding in my room safe within my womb
I touch no one and no one touches me

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKlSVNxLB-A>

I am a rock I am an island

And a rock feels no pain
And an island never cries

Bridge over Troubled Water³⁵ (1968)

When you're weary
Feeling small
When tears are in your eyes
I'll dry them all

I'm on your side
Oh, when times get rough
And friends just can't be found
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
When you're down and out
When you're on the street
When evening falls so hard
I will comfort you

I'll take your part
Oh, when darkness comes
And pain is all around
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Sail on, silver girl, sail on by
Your time has come to shine
All your dreams are on their way

See how they shine

³⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4G-YQA_bsOU

Oh, if you need a friend
I'm sailing right behind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind



Did you ever wonder?

What's the meaning of the phrase 'Ne'er cast a clout till May be out'?³⁶

Since at least the early 15th century 'clout' has been used variously to mean 'a blow to the head', 'a clod of earth or (clotted) cream' or 'a fragment of cloth, or clothing'. It is the last of these that is meant in 'cast a clout'. This was spelled variously spelled as clowt, clowte, cloot, clute. Here's an early example, from the Early English Miscellanies in Prose and Verse, circa 1485: "He had not left an holle clowt, Wherwith to hyde hys body abowte."

So, 'ne'er cast a clout...' simply means 'never discard your [warm winter] clothing...'. The 'till May be out' part is where the doubt lies. On the face of it this means 'until the month of May is ended'.

There is another interpretation. In England, in May, you can't miss the Hawthorn. It is an extremely common tree in the English countryside, especially in hedges. As many as 200,000 miles of hawthorn hedge were planted in the Parliamentary Enclosure period, between 1750 and 1850. The name 'Haw' derives from 'hage', the Old English for 'hedge'.

The May tree gives its beautiful display of flowers in late April/early May. The blossom itself is called May. 'Till May is out' could mean, 'until the hawthorn is out [in bloom]'.

³⁶ <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/till-may-is-out.html>



Cat Stevens: ³⁷

Moon Shadow (1970) ³⁸

Oh, I'm bein' followed by a moonshadow, moonshadow,
moonshadow

Leapin and hoppin' on a moonshadow, moonshadow,
moonshadow

And if I ever lose my hands, lose my plough, lose my land,
Oh if I ever lose my hands, Oh if... I won't have to work no
more.

And if I ever lose my eyes, if my colours all run dry,
Yes if I ever lose my eyes, Oh if... I won't have to cry no more.

Yes I'm bein' followed by a moonshadow, ...

And if I ever lose my legs, I won't moan, and I won't beg,
Yes if I ever lose my legs, Oh if... I won't have to walk no more.
And if I ever lose my mouth, all my teeth, north and south,
Yes if I ever lose my mouth, Oh if... I won't have to talk...

Did it take long to find me? I asked the faithful light.
Did it take long to find me? And are you gonna stay the night?

I'm bein' followed by a moonshadow, ...

How can I tell you³⁹ (1971)

How can I tell you that I love you?
I love you, but I can't think of right words to say
And I long to tell you that I'm always thinking of you
I'm always thinking of you, but my words just blow away

³⁷ Steven Demetre Georgiou (*21 July 1948), composed and sang under the stage name Cat Stevens; converted to Islam in 1977; now Yusuf Islam.

³⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CurxfHDNIv0>

³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZikqhqTRQI>

Just blow away

It always ends up to one thing, honey
And I can't think of right words to say
Oh, oh, oh, oh

Wherever I am, girl, I'm always walking with you
I'm always walking with you, but I look and you're not there
And whoever I'm with, I'm always, always talking to you
I'm always talking to you, and I'm sad that you can't hear
Sad that you can't hear

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Animate Inanimate





❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Frank Sinatra: You make me feel so young (1956)⁴⁰

You make me feel so young
You make me feel as though spring has sprung
And every time I see you grin
I'm such a happy individual

The moment that you speak
I want to go play hide and seek
I wanna go and bounce the moon
Just like a toy balloon

You and I are just like a couple of tots
Running across a meadow
Pickin' up lots of forget-me-nots

You make me feel so young
You make me feel there are songs to be sung
Bells to be rung
And a wonderful fling to be flung

⁴⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XuL5xSVL7s>

And even when I'm old and gray
I'm gonna feel the way I do today
'Cause you make me feel so young



Could you stand any more port?

An old golfer was on his deathbed. He called his wife to his bedside and said: “My dearest, I asked you many years ago never to look in the top drawer of my bedside table, the one I always keep locked. Before I die, I want to tell you why, but please, first, I must know whether you ever did open that drawer.”

“Darling,” said the wife, “I cannot tell a lie: I did once look in the drawer, but I promise that I left it exactly as I found it.”

“What did you find in there?” asked the husband.

“There were three golf balls and six thousand francs.”

“Then I must explain why” said the husband. “You see, every time I was unfaithful to you, I would put a golf ball in the drawer”

“But darling,” said the wife, interrupting him, “please say no more. I forgive you – only three times in fifty years of marriage, how could I not forgive you. But I’m still puzzled by the six thousand francs.”

“Well,” said the husband, “when the drawer got too full, I used to sell off the golf balls.”



Good news but watch your language

(The Guardian, 6 June 2023)

Apple has announced it will upgrade its autocorrect feature that annoyingly corrects one of the most common expletives to “ducking”.

“In those moments where you just want to type a ducking word, well, the keyboard will learn it, too,” said Craig Federighi, Apple’s software chief at the company’s annual Worldwide Developers Conference in Cupertino on Monday.

TechCrunch reported that iOS 17 will feature an upgraded autocorrect powered by AI. Over time, the AI model will learn to predict words and phrases that the iPhone user repeats, including swear words.



This is the last of the port

The vicar was playing golf with the lady Chairman of the parish council. At the first hole he missed an easy putt. Unable to contain his frustration, he let fly: “[D]ucking hell! – missed it.” The lady looked appropriately shocked, but decided to ignore the expletive.

At the third hole, the same thing happened: “[D]ucking hell! Missed again,” he said. This was too much for the lady, who made her displeasure quite plain. “Sorry,” said the vicar, “if I swear again, may God send a thunderbolt to strike me dead.”

At the ninth hole, the vicar was putting for birdie, but lipped out. “[D]ucking hell!”

Just then the sky darkened, and distant thunder could be heard: the clouds parted, lightning flashed – and the lady Chairman dropped dead. The vicar looked up in terror. Just before the clouds came together again, he heard a voice: “[D]ucking hell!! Missed!”



Watch your language

Complainte amoureuse - Alphonse Allais (1854-1905)

Oui, dès l’instant que je vous vis,
Beauté féroce, vous me plûtes ;
De l’amour qu’en vos yeux je pris,
Sur-le-champ vous vous aperçûtes ;

Mais de quel air froid vous reçûtes
Tous les soins que pour vous je pris !
Combien de soupirs je rendis !
De quelle cruauté vous fûtes !
Et quel profond dédain vous eûtes
Pour les vœux que je vous offris !
En vain je priai, je gémis :
Dans votre dureté vous sûtes
Mépriser tout ce que je fis.
Même un jour je vous écrivis
Un billet tendre que vous lûtes,
Et je ne sais comment vous pûtes
De sang-froid voir ce que j'y mis.
Ah! fallait-il que je vous visse,
Fallait-il que vous me plussiez,
Qu'ingénument je vous le disse,
Qu'avec orgueil vous vous tussiez !
Fallait-il que je vous aimasse,
Que vous me désespérassiez,
Et qu'en vain je m'opiniâtasse,
Et que je vous idolâtrasse
Pour que vous m'assassinassiez !



Odds and Ends

How do you know that the boss's secretary is blonde? From the Tippex marks on the computer screen.

Überschrift in der Lokalzeitung: "Treffen sich zwei Jäger. Beide tot."

Klein Erna hat ja nun einen neuen Freund. Frau Kripigans, die Nachbarin, fragt: „Ist das was Ernstes?“ „Nee“, sagt Mutter Pumeier, „das ist rein platonisch.“ „Platonisch, was ist das?“ „Das wissen Sie nicht?“, wundert sich Frau Pumeier, „platonisch ist, wenn sie kein Geld dafür nehmen tut.“

Why do the French eat snails? They don't like fast food. [*Thank you Evelyn*]



One night, in an incident that could have been straight out of Evelyn Waugh, a Belgian soldier shot at a correspondent for *Time*, and then apologized, saying, “In the dark, I thought you were an African.” (Review of *A Dangerous Man*, *The New Yorker*, 6.11.2023)



The Bank of England does what it can, the Federal Reserve does what it must – and the Swiss National Bank does what it wants [drop of interest rates March 2024]

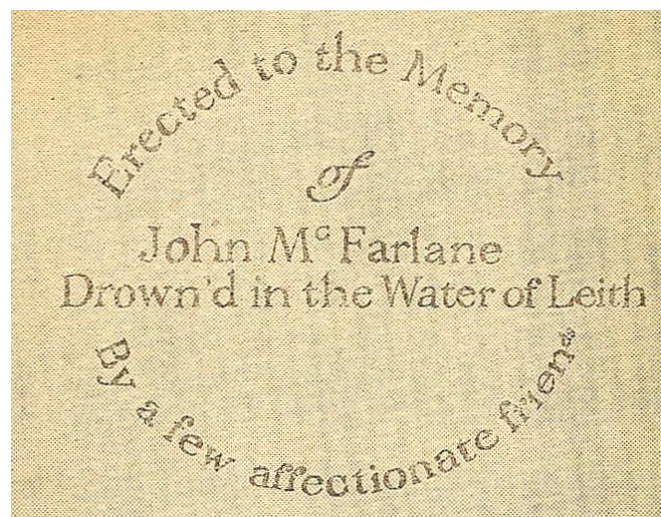
Susumaniello: An excellent wine from Salentino, Italy. According to folk etymology, the name indicates the productiveness of the medium ripening vine, with which you could pack a donkey: the phrase "Susu lu somariellu!" means "Run donkey!" in the local Salentino dialect.

Religion offers a compass but not a map. (Article on Mitt Romney, *The Believer*)

“The guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win.” (Henry Kissinger) [Pity he didn’t think of this in Vietnam]



“Is that your *iPhone* in your pocket or are you just glad to see me?”



"I told my wife she should embrace her mistakes. She gave me a hug."

If you eat a bean,
Know before you start
That every little bean

Makes a little fart.
What this means:
Avoid big beans!⁴¹



The best lack all conviction, The worst are full of passionate intensity. W.B. Yeats *The Second Coming*

At an interfaith event, Rabbi Levy refuses a ham sandwich. Monsignore Salvini jokes: "Dear Rabbi, how long do we have to wait until you eat pork?" "At your wedding feast, Monsignore."

A moment of tension in Vatican.
If the bishop moves forward the
queen can take him.



⁴¹ For the big and little farts across the road.