

CHRISTMAS PUDDING

2015

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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 that characterise verse for the last two hundred years is, at least in part, responsible for a breakdown in communication between writer and reader: today, 'anything goes' - much verse is obscure and, if it were not divided into lines, would be indistinguishable from prose. I share Winters' view that the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century was a golden age for poetry and that 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 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.



“Political correctness (adjectivally, politically correct, commonly abbreviated to PC) is an ordinarily pejorative term used to criticize language, actions, or policies seen as being excessively calculated not to offend or disadvantage any particular group of people in society. The term had only scattered usage prior to the 1990s; it came to be commonly used in the United Kingdom around the same period, especially in periodicals such as the *Daily Mail*, a conservative tabloid that became known for the trope ‘political correctness gone mad.’” (Wikipedia)

“Be aware of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism [transgender discrimination], ableism and other issues of privilege and oppression. Realize that all forms of violence are traumatic, and that your students have lives before and outside your classroom, experiences you may not expect or understand.” (Guide for teachers at Oberlin College)

“Political correctness is one of the brilliant tools that the American Right developed in the mid-1980s, as part of its demolition of American liberalism.... What the sharpest thinkers on the American Right saw quickly was that by declaring war on the cultural manifestations of liberalism - by levelling the charge of ‘political correctness’ against its exponents - they could discredit the whole political project.” (Will Hutton, “Words Really are Important, Mr Blunkett”, *The Observer*, 16 December 2001)

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CHRISTMAS PUDDING 2015

Once again, Christmas Pudding has no main theme but is a miscellany of things that crossed my mind and my desk during the current year. A few topics, however, including contemporary extremes of political correctness, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, some words of wisdom for golfers and on aging, and poems on clocks and the sea, among other selections. Enjoy!

T T T T

Seasonally appropriate

A Politically Correct Christmas Story - *Harvey Ehrlich*

'Twas the night before Christmas and Santa's a wreck...

How to live in a world that's politically correct?

His workers no longer would answer to "Elves".

"Vertically Challenged" they were calling themselves.

And labour conditions at the North Pole

were alleged by the union to stifle the soul.

Four reindeer had vanished, without much propriety,

Released to the wilds by the Humane Society.

And equal employment had made it quite clear

That Santa had better not use just reindeer.

So Dancer and Donner, Comet and Cupid

Were replaced with four pigs, and you know that looked stupid!

The runners had all been removed from his sleigh;

The ruts were termed dangerous by the E.P.A.

And people had started to call for the cops

When they heard sled noises on their rooftops.

His second-hand pipe-smoke had his workers quite frightened.

His fur trimmed red suit was called "Unenlightened."

And as for the gifts, why, he'd never a notion

That making a choice could cause so much commotion.

Nothing of leather, nothing of fur,

Nothing that might be construed to pollute.

Nothing to aim, Nothing to shoot.

Nothing that clamoured or made lots of noise.

Nothing for just girls, or just for the boys.

Nothing that claimed to be gender specific.

Nothing that's warlike or non-pacifistic.

No candy or sweets...they were bad for the tooth.

Nothing that seemed to embellish a truth.
And fairy tales, while not yet forbidden,
Were like Ken and Barbie, better off hidden.
For they raised the hackles of those psychological
Who claimed that good gifts must be all ecological.

No baseball, no football...someone could get hurt;
Besides, playing sports exposed kids to the dirt.
Dolls were said to be sexist, and should be passé;
And Nintendo would rot your entire brain away.
So Santa just stood there, dishevelled, perplexed;
He could not figure out what he should do next.

He tried to be merry, tried to be gay,
But you've got to be careful with that word today.
His sack was quite empty, limp to the ground;
Nothing fully acceptable was to be found.
Something special was needed, a gift that he might
Give to all without angering the left or the right.

A gift that would please, with no indecision,
Each group of people, every religion;
Every ethnicity, every hue,
Everyone, everywhere...you and me too.
So here is that gift, it's a prize beyond worth:
May you and your loved ones have peace on this Earth.

T T T T

Clocks

My great-grandfather John Middleton loved clocks. I inherited two of them, one of which needed an overhaul this year which was carried out by the Technical College of the Vallée de Joux, one of the homes of Swiss watchmaking. I was inevitably reminded of a song we used to sing on the way back from school sports events. My contemporary John Hetherington knew the words of all these songs and wrote them out for me. His brother "Big Jim" Hetherington played full-back for Cambridge and England in the late 1950s and was the reason I applied in 1957 to Peterhouse, his college, where John joined me the next year.

My grandfather's clock - *Henry Clay Work (1832-1884)*

My grandfather's clock
Was too large for the shelf,
So it stood ninety years on the floor;
It was taller by half

Than the old man himself,
Though it weighed not a pennyweight more.
It was bought on the morn
Of the day that he was born,
It was always his treasure and pride;

But it stopped short
Never to go again,
When the old man died.
Ninety years without slumbering,
Tick, tock, tick, tock,
His life seconds numbering,
Tick, tock, tick, tock,
It stopped short
Never to go again,
When the old man died.

In watching its pendulum
Swing to and fro,
Many hours had he spent while a boy;
And in childhood and manhood
The clock seemed to know,
And share both his grief and his joy.
And it struck twenty-four
When he entered at the door,
With a blooming and beautiful bride;

But it stopped short
Never to go again,

My grandfather said
That of those he could hire,
Not a servant so faithful he found;
For it wasted no time,
And had but one desire,
At the close of each week to be wound.
And it kept in its place,
Not a frown upon its face,
And its hand never hung by its side.

But it stopped short
Never to go again

It rang an alarm
In the dead of the night,

An alarm that for years had been dumb;
And we knew that his spirit
Was pluming his flight,
That his hour of departure had come.
Still the clock kept the time,
With a soft and muffled chime,
As we silently stood by his side.

But it stopped short
Never to go again....,

Henry Clay Work was a self-taught American composer and songwriter, born in Middletown, Connecticut. His father opposed slavery, and the son was himself an active abolitionist and Union supporter. The family home became a stop on the Underground Railroad, assisting runaway slaves to escape to freedom in Canada. This song is a standard of British brass bands and is also popular in bluegrass music.

T T T T

Politically Correct 1

The following (fictitious¹) exchange of office memoranda was included in an earlier *CP* but is still relevant.

From: Patty Lewis, Human Resources Director

To: All Employees RE: Christmas Party

Date: December 1

I'm happy to inform you that the company Christmas Party will take place on December 23, starting at noon in the banquet room at Luigi's Open Pit Barbecue. No-host bar, but plenty of eggnog! We'll have a small band playing traditional carols ... feel free to sing along. And don't be surprised if our CEO shows up dressed as Santa Claus!

A Christmas tree will be lit at 1:00 P.M. Exchange of gifts among employees can be done at that time, however, no gift should be over \$10.00 to make the giving of gifts easy for everyone's pockets. This gathering is only for employees! Our CEO will make a special announcement at that time! Merry Christmas to you and your family.

¹ Although I note from the *Financial Times* of 26.9.01 that at IKEA "to avoid offending its non-Christian and teetotal staff, there'll be no more corporate Julefrokost ... Instead, staff will get an 'international culture day'. Out too are wedding presents (offensive to non-married people) and birthday gifts (offensive to Jehovah's witnesses)." No – I'm not making this up.

From: Patty Lewis, Human Resources Director

To: All Employees

Date: December 2

In no way was yesterday's memo intended to exclude our Jewish employees. We recognize that Chanukah is an important holiday that often coincides with Christmas, though unfortunately not this year. However, from now on we're calling it our "Holiday Party." The same policy applies to employees who are celebrating *Kwanza* at this time. There will be no Christmas tree. No Christmas Carols sung. We will have another type of music for your enjoyment. Happy now? Happy Holidays to you and your family.

From: Patty Lewis, Human Resources Director

To: All Employees

Date: December 3

Regarding the note I received from a member of Alcoholics Anonymous requesting a non-drinking table - you didn't sign your name. I'm happy to accommodate this request, but if I put a sign on a table that reads, "AA Only," you wouldn't be anonymous anymore. How am I supposed to handle this? Somebody?

Forget about the gift exchange; no gifts are allowed since the union members feel that \$10.00 is too much money and executives believe \$10.00 is very little for a gift. NO GIFT EXCHANGE WILL BE ALLOWED.

From: Patty Lewis, Human Resources Director

To: All Employees

Date: December 7

What a diverse group we are! I had no idea that December 20 begins the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which forbids eating and drinking during daylight hours. There goes the party! Seriously, we can appreciate how a luncheon this time of year does not accommodate our Muslim employees' beliefs. Perhaps Luigi's can hold off on serving your meal until the end of the party - the days are so short this time of year - or else package everything for take-home in little foil swans. Will that work?

Meanwhile, I've arranged for members of Overeaters Anonymous to sit farthest from the dessert buffet and pregnant women will get the table closest to the restrooms. Gays are allowed to sit with each other. Lesbians

do not have to sit with Gay men. Each will have their own table. Yes, there will be flower arrangement for the Gay men's table. To the person asking permission to cross dress, no cross-dressing is allowed. We will have booster seats for short people. Low-fat food will be available for those on a diet. We cannot control the salt used in the food - we suggest for those people with high blood pressure problems to taste first. There will be fresh fruits as dessert for Diabetics, the restaurant cannot supply "No Sugar" desserts. Sorry! Did I miss anything?

From: Patty Lewis, Human Resources Director

To: All Employees

Date: December 8

So December 22 marks the Winter Solstice ... what do you expect me to do, a tap-dance on your heads? Fire regulations at Luigi's prohibit the burning of sage by our "earth-based Goddess-worshipping" employees, but we'll try to accommodate your shamanic drumming circle during the band's breaks. Okay???

From: Patty Lewis, Human Resources Director

To: All Employees

Date: December 9

People, people, nothing sinister was intended by having our CEO dress up like Santa Claus! Even if the anagram of "Santa" does happen to be "Satan," there is no evil connotation to our own "little man in a red suit." It's a tradition, folks, like sugar shock at Halloween, or family feuds over the Thanksgiving turkey, or broken hearts on Valentine's Day. Could we lighten up? Please????????? Also the company has changed their mind about making a special announcement at the gathering. You will get a notification in the mail sent to your home.

From: Patty Lewis, Human Resources Director

To: All #%&\$**@ Employees

Date: December 10

I have no #%&*@*^ idea what the announcement is all about. What the > %#&^!@ do I care? I KNOW WHAT I AM GOING TO GET!!!!!!!!!!!!!! You change your address now and you are dead!!!!!!!!!!!!!! No more changes of address will be allowed in my office! Try to come in and change your

address. I will have you hung from the ceiling in the warehouse!!!!!!!!!!!!

Vegetarians!?!?!? I've had it with you people!!! We're going to keep this party at Luigi's Open Pit Barbecue whether you like it or not, so you can sit quietly at the table furthest from the "grill of death," as you so quaintly put it, and you'll get your #S%^&*! salad bar, including hydroponic tomatoes. But you know they have feelings, too. Tomatoes scream when you slice them. I've heard them scream. I'm hearing them scream right now! HA!

I hope you all have a rotten holiday! Drive drunk and die, you hear me!!!!!!!!!!??

The Bitch from HELL!!!!!!!!!!

From: Terri Bishop, Acting Human Resources Director

To: All Employees

Date: December 14

I'm sure I speak for all of us in wishing Patty Lewis a speedy recovery from her stress-related illness, and I'll continue to forward your cards to her at the sanatorium. In the meantime, management has decided to cancel our Holiday Party and give everyone the afternoon of the 23rd off with full pay. Happy Holidays!

T T T T

Pass the Port

A gentleman of obviously Chinese extraction walked into a bank in New York and asked to open an account.

"Name please," said the clerk.

"Murphy," came the reply.

"Sir, I am not doubting your word, but I will need proof that this is your real name."

The gentleman pulled out his driving licence and there, sure enough, stood the name "Murphy."

"Forgive my curiosity, Sir, but isn't it a little unusual for an Asian to be called Murphy?"

"Let me explain," he replied. "My Chinese name is *Mee Tou* – when my grandfather came to Staten Island in 1924 he was standing in line with a number of Irish immigrants. The last one gave his name as Murphy and when it came to my grandfather's turn he said *Mee Tou*. Our family has been Murphy ever since."

T T T T

Lutyens

In CP 2014, I mentioned that my great grandfather had made furniture for Queen Victoria's dolls' house. An article in *The Spectator* of 13 November 2010 ('A Palace in Miniature') describes the history of the house and contains the following comment:

The idea of a doll's house for a grown woman was odd, but Lutyens was no stranger to eccentricity. On visiting Simla in 1912, he had commented: If one was told that the monkeys had built it all, one could only say, 'What wonderful monkeys - and they must be shot, in case they do it again.'

T T T T

More Clocks

Sonnet 12 - *William Shakespeare*

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls all silvered o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard,
Then of thy beauty do I question make
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
And die as fast as they see others grow;
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

On Time - *John Milton*

Fly, envious Time, till thou run out thy race,
Call on the lazy leaden-stepping hours,
Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace;
And glut thyself with what thy womb devours,
Which is no more than what is false and vain,
And merely mortal dross;
So little is our loss,
So little is thy gain.
For when as each thing bad thou hast intombed,
And last of all thy greedy self consumed,
Then long Eternity shall greet our bliss

With an individual kiss,
And Joy shall overtake us as a flood;
When every thing that is sincerely good
And perfectly divine,
With truth, and peace, and love, shall ever shine
About the supreme throne
Of Him, t' whose happy-making sight alone
When once our heav'nly-guided soul shall climb,
Then, all this earthly grossness quit,
Attired with stars, we shall for ever sit,
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee, O Time.

The Little Clock - Elinor Wylie (1885-1928)

Half-past-four and the first bird waking,
Falling on my heart like a thin green leaf.
If you are alive, your heart is breaking,
If you are dead, you are done with grief.

Half-past-five and the birds singing sweetly,
World washed silver with the rain and the wind.
If you are a saint, you have lived discreetly,
If you are a sinner, you have surely sinned.

Half-past-seven and the birds singing madly;
Sun flames up in the sky like a lark,
If there are things to remember sadly,
Wait and remember them after dark.

Elinor Morton Wylie was an American poet and novelist popular in the 1920s and 1930s. "She was famous during her life almost as much for her ethereal beauty and personality as for her melodious, sensuous poetry" (*The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*). Yvor Winters admired her work.



Eight O'Clock - A.E. Housman (1859-1936)

He stood, and heard the steeple
Sprinkle the quarters on the morning town.
One, two, three, four, to market-place and people
It tossed them down.

Strapped, noosed, nighing his hour,
He stood and counted them and cursed his luck;
And then the clock collected in the tower
Its strength, and struck.

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1936)

<p>Im Stübchen Traut ists, wenn verstohlen heulen im Kamine wilde Winde, in der Stube; ganz gelinde tickt auf der barocken Spinde fort die Stockuhr mit den Säulen.</p> <p>Dort die kleine Silhouette zeigt die alte Tracht der Locken, tief im Fenster steht ein Rocken, und vergessne Töne stocken im verlassenen Spinette.</p> <p>Immer noch liegt die Postille, dass an ihrem Geist erfrische jung und alt sich, auf dem Tische, und der Spruch ob jener Nische lautet: 'Es gescheh Dein Wille ...'</p> <p>Zum Einschlafen zu sagen Ich möchte jemanden einsingen, bei jemandem sitzen und sein. Ich möchte dich wiegen und kleinsingen und begleiten schlafaus und schlafein. Ich möchte der Einzige sein im Haus, der wüsste: die Nacht war kalt. Und möchte horchen herein und hinaus in dich, in die Welt, in den Wald. Die Uhren rufen sich schlagend an, und man sieht der Zeit auf den Grund. Und unten geht noch ein fremder Mann und stört einen fremden Hund. Dahinter wird Stille. Ich habe groß die Augen auf dich gelegt; und sie halten dich sanft und lassen dich los, wenn ein Ding sich im Dunkel bewegt.</p>	<p>In the room The winds howling furtively in the chimney, wild winds, all is familiar in the room; the columned clock ticks quietly on the baroque dresser.</p> <p>A silhouette in a small frame shows hair in the old style - at the far side of the window ledge lies a spindle - forgotten notes are garnered in the spinet.</p> <p>And lying on the table a Bible text gives sustenance to the spirits of young and old - its message rings in all corners: 'Thy will be done ...'</p> <p>Words for going to sleep I would like to sing someone to sleep, to sit next to someone and be with her. I would like to cradle you and sing for you and be with you sleeping and waking. I would like to be the only one in the house to know the night was cold - and to have ears for indoors and outdoors, for you, for the world and for the wood. The clocks talk to each other in chimes and we can see to the end of time. And down below walks a stranger who disturbs someone's dog. And then all is quiet. I have you perfectly in my gaze and hold you tenderly until something moves in the dark.</p>
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Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

The Clock strikes one that just struck two --
Some schism in the Sum --
A Vagabond for Genesis
Has wrecked the Pendulum --

Daylight Saving - Dorothy Parker (1893-1967)

My answers are inadequate
To those demanding day and date
And ever set a tiny shock
Through strangers asking what's o'clock;

Whose days are spent in whittling rhyme-
What's time to her, or she to Time?

The School Of Metaphysics - *Charles Simić* (*1938)

Executioner happy to explain
How his wristwatch works
As he shadows me on the street.

I call him that because he is grim and officious
And wears black.

The clock on the church tower
Had stopped at five to eleven.

The morning newspapers had no date.

The gray building on the corner
Could've been a state pen,

And then he showed up with his watch,
Whose Gothic numerals
And the absence of hands
He wanted me to understand
Right then and there.

Dušan "Charles" Simić is a Serbian-American poet. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1990 for *The World Doesn't End*, and was a finalist of the Pulitzer Prize in 1986 for *Selected Poems, 1963-1983* and in 1987 for *Unending Blues*. He was appointed the fifteenth Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in 2007. (*Wikipedia*) He writes fine, sometimes witty, even impish, poetry. I have previously included several of his poems.

***W. H. Auden* (1907-1973)**

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

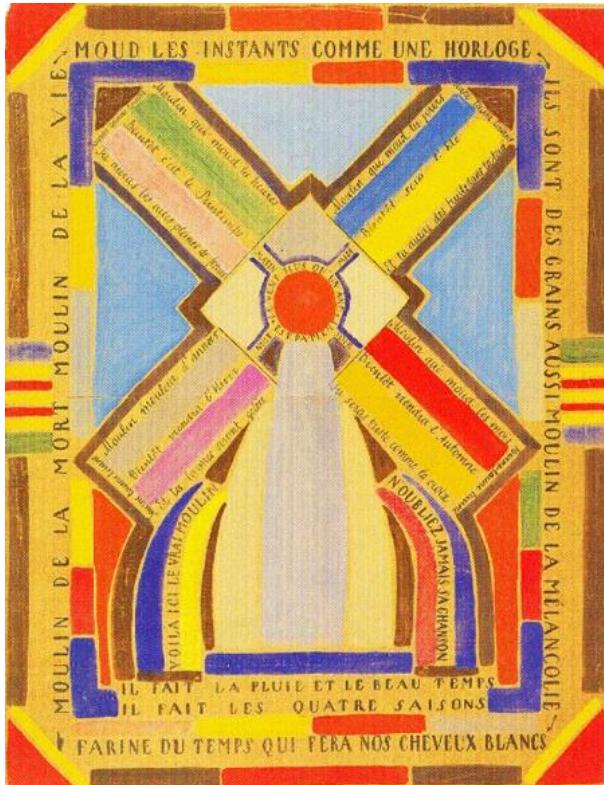
Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;

I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood.
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

Moulin - Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948)



MATIN

Le vent plus qu'un âne est patient
Tourne tourne tourne
Moulin qui moud les heures
Bientôt c'est le Printemps
Tu auras tes ailes pleines de fleurs

MIDI

Tourne tourne tourne
Moulin qui moud les jours
Bientôt sera l'Eté
Et tu auras des fleurs dans ta tour

SOIR

Tourne tourne tourne
Moulin qui moud les mois
Bientôt viendra l'Automne
Tu seras triste dans ta croix

NUIT

Tourne tourne tourne
Moulin mouleur d'années
Bientôt viendra l'Hiver
Et tes larmes seront gelées

Voila ici le vrai moulin
N'oubliez jamais sa chanson
Il fait la pluie et le beau temps
Il fait les quatre saisons

Moulin de la mort moulin de la vie
Moud les instants comme une horloge
Ils sont des grains aussi Moulin de la mélancolie
Farine du temps qui fera nos cheveux blancs.

Je suis un peu lune et commis voyageur

J'ai la spécialité de trouver les heures
qui ont perdu leur montre

Croyez-moi bien
sous mon œil d'amiral tout se rencontre
et ce n'est pas plus rare que le cas des enfants
perdus dans les magasins

Il y a des heures qui se noient
il y a d'autres mangées par les cannibales
je connais un oiseau qui les boit
on peut aussi les faire mélodies commerciales

Mais dans les bals atlantiques ainsi déguisées
c'est très difficile de les distinguer.

Vicente García-Huidobro Fernández (January 10, 1893 – January 2, 1948) was a Chilean poet born to an aristocratic family. He is known for promoting the avant-garde literary movement in Chile, and was the creator and greatest exponent of the literary movement called *Creacionismo*. He moved to Paris in 1916 and mixed with most of the Parisian avant garde of this period: Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, Jacques Lipchitz, Francis Picabia, Joan Miró, Max Ernst, Paul Éluard, Amedeo Modigliani and Blaise Cendrars. He used both Spanish and French in his poetry.

The Shenevertakesherwatchoff Poem - *Richard Brautigan (1935-84)*

For Marcia

Because you always have a clock
strapped to your body, it's natural
that I should think of you as the
correct time:
with your long blonde hair at 8:03,
and your pulse-lightning breasts at
11:17, and your rose-meow smile at 5:30,
I know I'm right.

Richard Gary Brautigan was an American novelist, poet, and short story writer. He is best known for his 1967 novel *Trout Fishing in America*. The dedicatee of the poem was one of his last companions.

When I suspected - *Spike Milligan (1918-2002)*

There will be a time when it will end.
Be it parting
Be it death
So each passing minute with you

Pendulummed with sadness.

So many times
I looked long into your face.

I could hear the clock ticking.

Terence Alan “Spike” Milligan was an Anglo-Irish comedian, writer, musician, poet, playwright, soldier and actor. He was the co-creator, main writer and a principal cast member of *The Goon Show*, originally produced and broadcast by the BBC Home Service from 1951 to 1960, in which he performed a range of roles including the popular *Eccles* and *Minnie Bannister* characters. For those like myself to whom he is only familiar in the latter capacity, his poetry is worth looking up. For those who are unfamiliar with the Goon Show (or have forgotten) look it up on YouTube.

Horizontal et tout est dit - *Pierre Reverdy* (1889-1960)



Amedeo Modigliani - Pierre Reverdy

Je voudrais tomber de plus haut
Quand le sanglot de la pluie cesse
Un rire humide entr'ouvre la fenêtre
On a encore le temps de venir

Le quart est fait puis la demie
Les heures gluantes qui passent
C'est la dernière fois que l'on prendra le train
Le four se fait encore attendre
On peut venir de là ou de plus loin
Ce sera toujours pour descendre

Dans la rue vide où personne ne vient
Une seule voiture glisse
Un air triste que l'on retient
Tout tourne plus vite que le temps
Les oiseaux qu'emporte le vent

La glace me regarde et rit

La pendule bat la mesure
A mon coeur qui n'est pas guéri
Tout est remis d'autres blessures

Le calme plane
On est tout seul
La chambre n'est pas assez grande
Pour garder pendant le sommeil
Les rêves qui fuient sur la bande

Pierre Reverdy was a French poet whose works were inspired by and subsequently influenced the provocative art movements of the day, Surrealism, Dadaism and Cubism. The loneliness and spiritual apprehension that ran through his poetry appealed to the Surrealist credo. He, though, remained independent of the prevailing “isms,” searching for something beyond their definitions. His writing matured into a mystical mission seeking, as he wrote, “the sublime simplicity of reality.” (*Wikipedia*)

Les vieux - Jacques Brel (1929-1978)

Les vieux ne parlent plus ou alors seulement parfois du bout des yeux
Même riches ils sont pauvres, ils n'ont plus d'illusions et n'ont qu'un coeur
pour deux

Chez eux ça sent le thym, le propre, la lavande et le verbe d'antan
Que l'on vive à Paris on vit tous en province quand on vit trop longtemps
Est-ce d'avoir trop ri que leur voix se lézarde quand ils parlent d'hier
Et d'avoir trop pleuré que des larmes encore leur perlent aux paupières
Et s'ils tremblent un peu est-ce de voir vieillir la pendule d'argent
Qui ronronne au salon, qui dit oui qui dit non, qui dit: je vous attends

Les vieux ne rêvent plus, leurs livres s'ensommeillent, leurs pianos sont
fermés

Le petit chat est mort, le muscat du dimanche ne les fait plus chanter
Les vieux ne bougent plus leurs gestes ont trop de rides leur monde est trop
petit

Du lit à la fenêtre, puis du lit au fauteuil et puis du lit au lit
Et s'ils sortent encore bras dessus bras dessous tout habillés de raide
C'est pour suivre au soleil l'enterrement d'un plus vieux, l'enterrement d'une
plus laide

Et le temps d'un sanglot, oublier toute une heure la pendule d'argent
Qui ronronne au salon, qui dit oui qui dit non, et puis qui les attend

Les vieux ne meurent pas, ils s'endorment un jour et dorment trop
longtemps

Ils se tiennent la main, ils ont peur de se perdre et se perdent pourtant
Et l'autre reste là, le meilleur ou le pire, le doux ou le sévère
Cela n'importe pas, celui des deux qui reste se retrouve en enfer
Vous le verrez peut-être, vous la verrez parfois en pluie et en chagrin
Traverser le présent en s'excusant déjà de n'être pas plus loin
Et fuir devant vous une dernière fois la pendule d'argent
Qui ronronne au salon, qui dit oui qui dit non, qui leur dit: je t'attends
Qui ronronne au salon, qui dit oui qui dit non et puis qui nous attend.

Time XXI - *Kahlil Gibran*

And an astronomer said, "Master, what of Time?"

And he answered:

You would measure time the measureless and the immeasurable.

You would adjust your conduct and even direct the course of your spirit according to hours and seasons.

Of time you would make a stream upon whose bank you would sit and watch its flowing.

Yet the timeless in you is aware of life's timelessness,

And knows that yesterday is but today's memory and tomorrow is today's dream.

And that that which sings and contemplates in you is still dwelling within the bounds of that first moment which scattered the stars into space.

Who among you does not feel that his power to love is boundless?

And yet who does not feel that very love, though boundless, encompassed within the centre of his being, and moving not from love thought to love thought, nor from love deeds to other love deeds?

And is not time even as love is, undivided and paceless?

But if in your thought you must measure time into seasons, let each season encircle all the other seasons,

And let today embrace the past with remembrance and the future with longing.

T T T T

Pass the Port again

The notion of boundless love recalls the story of a visitor to a zoo in the Holy Land. He was amazed to see a cage in which a lion and a lamb were snuggling peacefully together. The visitor called over the attendant. "Look at that, a lion and a lamb lying down together, it's the very fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy! How do you do it?" "It's easy," replied the attendant. "We just throw in a new lamb every morning."

T T T T

Which reminds me of my favourite limerick:

It's time to make love, douse the glim;
The fireflies twinkle and dim;
The stars lean together
Like birds of a feather,
And the loin lies down with the limb.

Conrad Aiken

T T T T

Gertrude Stein and Picasso

In the early 1900s, Gertrude Stein's residence in Paris became a gathering place for young experimental painters whose work Gertrude and her brother Leo Stein had been collecting: Picasso, Braque, Matisse. Picasso, who had just arrived in France and was learning to speak French, was thought of as "the quiet Spaniard" and was not at first understood by the guests at the Saturday-night dinner parties. But as the number of visitors and the frequency of the salon-evenings increased, Stein's friendship with Picasso blossomed. She became more and more certain of his genius and she was among the first major collectors of the Cubists. Picasso's portrait of Gertrude Stein was painted in 1905. When people complained that she looked nothing like the woman in the painting, Picasso replied, "She will. "



Stein's literary portrait of Picasso "If I Told Him," was completed nearly twenty years later and is also strange. It begins: "If I told him would he like it. Would he like it if I told him." Stein wonders if Picasso will like the "portrait" she writes for him as he hears it told back to him—his own Cubist philosophies translated into language. A later passage addresses how one might create "resemblance" :

Exact resemblance. To exact resemblance the exact resemblance as exact as a resemblance, exactly as resembling, exactly resembling, exactly in resemblance exactly a resemblance, exactly and resemblance. For this is so. Because.

T T T T

Politically correct 2

New York City Bans References To Dinosaurs, Birthdays, Halloween, Dancing In Standardized Tests - Laura Hibbard, *The Huffington Post* 26 March 2012

In an effort to eliminate potential 'unpleasant emotions' among students, the New York Department of Education has placed a ban on mentions of 'birthdays,' 'dinosaurs,' 'Halloween,' and 'dancing,' in city-issued tests, the *New York Post* reports.

According to the paper, the mandate is meant to curb fear that references to those topics might stir controversy among students. Dinosaurs, officials said,

could bring up evolution, Halloween could suggest paganism, and birthdays might create animosity among students who are Jehovah's witnesses, since they don't celebrate them.

CBS New York reports the word 'poverty' is also not allowed, as "words that suggest wealth" might cause some students to feel excluded. The Center for Educational Innovation's Sy Fliegel told the station the new rules aren't necessary.

"The Petersons take a vacation for five days in their Mercedes ... so what," Fliegel said, according to CBS New York. "You think our kids are going to be offended because they don't have a Mercedes? You think our kids are going to say, 'I'm offended; how could they ask me a question about a Mercedes? I don't have a Mercedes!'"

The department is also banning mentions of 'divorce' and 'disease,' in case students have loved ones who are separated or suffering from an illness. 'Slavery' is also flagged and 'terrorism' is considered too scary.

Department officials told FOX News Nation that the mandates are simply meant to be sensitive to a diverse student body.

"This is standard language that has been used by test publishers for many years and allows our students to complete practice exams without distraction," a Department of Education spokeswoman told the publication, insisting the move is not censorship.

Robert Pondiscio, a spokesperson for the Core Knowledge Foundation, says the new policy gets rid of topics children relate to the most.

"The intent is to avoid giving offense or disadvantage any test takers by privileging prior knowledge," Pondiscio told the *New York Post*. "But the irony is they're eliminating some subjects, like junk food, holidays and popular music, that the broadest number of kids are likely to know quite a lot about."

T T T T

Dr. Seuss

Children in the U.S. and many other countries are likely also to know a lot about *The Cat in the Hat*, first published in 1957, even if they do not recall the author's pen name of Dr. Seuss, still less his real name, Theodor Geisel.

Geisel came up with many memorable and often profound verses:

Today you are you! That is truer than true! There is no one alive who is
you-er than you!

Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the thinks you can think up if only you try!

You're never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child.

Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So... get on your way.

If you never did, you should. These things are fun, and fun is good.

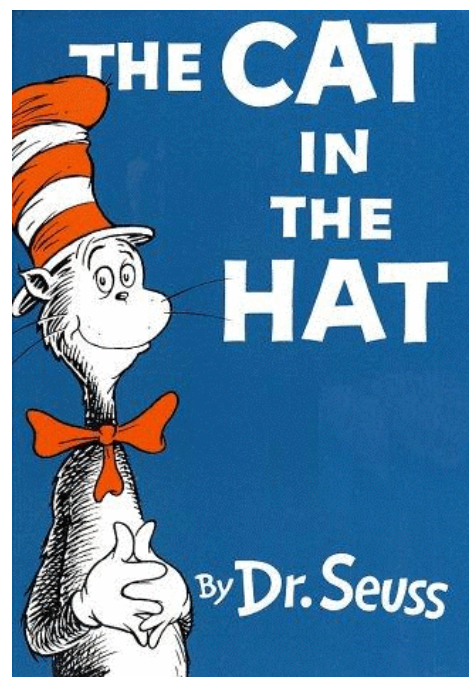
Step with care and great tact, and remember that Life's a Great Balancing Act.

I meant what I said, and I said what I meant. An elephant's faithful, one hundred percent.

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.

You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself, any direction you choose.

So the writer who breeds more words than he needs, is making a chore for the reader who reads.



T T T T

In praise of Dr Seuss

The Cat in the Hat, Oh, the Places You'll Go! and Dr Seuss's other books brilliantly allow children to learn about risks and challenges – but David Cameron's admiration of *The Lorax* smacks of hypocrisy - by Zoe Williams, *The Guardian*, 17 September 2015

David Cameron has recently revealed his favourite children's book to be *The Lorax*, by Dr Seuss. And not just because he has misunderstood the message of the book and likes the grumpy fellow in yellow: his homage is quite plain. "The big picture is simple: if we spoil the environment, through pointless consumption and a disregard for how we produce things, we not only damage other creatures, we wreck our own lives and prospects and those of our children."

It is unsurprising, though, to find a Dr Seuss work that appears current enough to reflect a modern double standard so clearly. Of all Dr Seuss's books, *The Lorax*, published in 1971, has the most obvious echo into the future, with its premonitory synthesis of greed and environmental destruction. Before the establishment of climate change as a scientific fact, it's easy to assume that the attendant lesser evils of pollution and the

exploitation of the natural world were only partially resisted, on aesthetic rather than moral or theoretical grounds. I think of the pre-80s conversation about the environment as a kind of harvest festival – characterised by semi-spiritual, John Betjemanish ideas of stewardship, where you look after the vegetation because it gives you the scenery, and you look after the animals because that's what God intended. In Dr Seuss, we find a much more



muscular, modern line: that the value of nature cannot be measured in money, and that the destruction of nature for money will short-change all of us reaching, eventually, that first profiteer. It is an argument against the bottom line, against businesses causing external damage that they do not remedy, against the pricing of unvaluable yet invaluable things. You could argue that this line existed in the 70s, too, and has merely lain dormant for the intervening decades of market fundamentalism; and you'd be right (Noam Chomsky would probably object, for instance, to a chronology that had Dr Seuss as the only critic of privatisation). Yet I remain impressed that such a prescient and thoughtful vision should find its expression so simply, and with

such great facial hair. I love the humble authority of the Lorax's moustache: it is unkempt, but it has seen things that you haven't seen.

On first having children, I had an argument with my mother about the *Cat in the Hat* books, which she said were sending the wrong message, viz. that it was normal for a stranger to come in and behave aberrantly and tell you not to let on to your parents. I pointed out that almost every children's story ever written involves getting shot of the parents, whether by murdering them or having them run over or simply removing them from the household: can you imagine anything more drab, as a child, than to be cast into an imaginative universe in which your mother was still watching from the sidelines, beaming benignly and making sure nothing got spilled? The ludic, riotous clumsiness of the Cat in the Hat is the nursery slope of fiction, the road to realising that mishap is not just an unfortunate possible consequence of independence, but the whole point. Chase the breakages and the displacement of conservative fish, what's the worst that can happen? (except to the fish).

I love *The Sneetches* and *Green Eggs and Ham*, but my favourite of Dr Seuss's books is *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*, not least for its combination of mastery ("You're on your own. And you know what you know / And YOU are the

guy who'll decide where to go"), mystery and possibility ("And you may not find any / You'll want to go down / In that case, of course / You'll head straight out of town"). It is said that parenting is a process of preparing children for ever greater disappointments, from the limitations of flashing plastic to the inevitability of death. I cannot think of another book that is so frank with an infant school reader about the realities of the human condition ("And when you're in a slump / You're not in for much fun/ Un-slumping yourself / Is not easily done / You will come to a place where the streets are not marked / Some windows are lighted / But mostly they're darked"), while retaining the impetus of its own joy and a sense of its own absurdity – "And will you succeed? Yes! You will indeed! (98 and $\frac{3}{4}$ percent guaranteed)". *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* strikes me almost as a challenge to lily-livered parents: he doesn't hit only one obstacle, this plucky You; he hits a massive and frightening chasm of existential misfortune, roughly every four pages.

Again, it is a very modern understanding of resilience - that positive thinking is perhaps not as valuable as making an honest account of your negative thoughts and understanding that they come to everybody. Dr Seuss stands out in the first place for speaking to children so gaily and bluntly; but neither of those traits would come off or be meaningful without his opening assumption that the minute you can read is the minute you start to think about what it is to be human.

T T T T

Have some more port

There is an old joke about an engineer, a priest, and a doctor enjoying a round of golf. Ahead of them is a group playing so slowly and inexpertly that in frustration the three ask the greenkeeper for an explanation. "That's a group of blind firefighters," they are told. "They lost their sight saving our clubhouse last year, so we let them play for free."

The priest says, "I will say a prayer for them tonight."

The doctor says, "Let me ask my ophthalmologist colleagues if anything can be done for them."

And the engineer says, "Why can't they play at night?"

The greenkeeper explains the behavior of the firefighters. The priest empathizes; the doctor offers care. All three address the social context of the situation: the fact that the firefighters' disability has inadvertently created conflict on the golf course. Only the engineer tries to solve the problem.

Almost all engineering jokes—and there are many—are versions of this belief: that the habits of mind formed by the profession enable engineers to

see things differently from the rest of us. “A pessimist sees the glass as half empty. An optimist sees the glass as half full. The engineer sees the glass as twice the size it needs to be.”²

T T T T

Mary Anne Lamb (1764-1847)

Love is the passion which endureth,
Which neither time nor absence cureth;
Which nought of earthly change can sever:
Love is the light which shines for ever.

What cold and selfish breasts deem madness
Lives in its depths of joy and sadness;
In hearts, on lips, of flame it burneth —
One is its world, to one it turneth.

Its chain of gold — what hand can break it?
Its deathless hold — what force can shake it?
Mere passion aught of earth may sever,
But souls that love, love on for ever.

Mary Ann Lamb was the sister and collaborator of Charles Lamb, best known today for her collaboration with Charles on *Tales from Shakespeare*. She and Charles presided over a literary circle in London that included the poets Wordsworth and Coleridge, among others.

Aubade - After R.W. - Major Jackson (*1968)

You could be home boiling a pot
of tea as you sit on your terrace,
reading up on last night's soccer shot
beneath a scarf of cirrus.

You could be diving headlong
into the waves of Cocoa Beach
or teaching Mao Tse-tung
whose theories are easy to reach

or dropping off your dry cleaning,
making the New Americans wealthier,
or mowing your lawn, greening
up, but isn't this healthier?

Just imagine the hours you're
not squandering away,

² From *The New Yorker* of 4 May 2015, with thanks to Christopher Gibbs.

or the antlike minutes
frittered with a tentative fiancé.

Your whole body agrees you'd
rather lie here like a snail
in my arm's crook, nude
and oblivious of all e-mails.

Yes, it's nearly one o'clock,
but we have more reasons
to kiss, to engage in small talk.
For one, these blissful seasons
are short, & tomorrow is never
insured, so bounce downstairs:
pour us glasses of whatever,
a tray of crackers, Bosc pears,
then let drop your sarong,
the wind high on your skin,
so we can test all day long
the notion of original sin.

Major Jackson is an African-American poet, professor and author of three collections of poetry. He teaches at the Bennington Writing Seminars and University of Vermont, where he is the Richard Dennis Green and Gold Professor.

Consort of Viols - *Kathleen Raine (1908-2003)*

The seven musicians tune their instruments
Listen and let silence speak
As symphony moves, now fast, now slow
From recollection diapason
Diatessaron, diapente flow.

Held in their now
Moving in time about its centre
The seven come and go, each sphere
Uttering its single sound for ever,
Now far, now near,
Now fast, now slow they flow.

What waves utter ear can know;
The shell formed by the sea can hear
And hold an echo of those tides
That formed its helix by their rise

And fall, their ebb and flow.

Viols, all lovers know
Answer one another without touch of bow.
The seven are lovers, for so
Harmonious with the Word
That calls the living from the dust,
Mute wood, mute string, and rude
Humanity trembles, whether high or low
The numbers flow.

Kathleen Jessie Raine has been described as “a visionary poet whose work probed the intersection of science and mysticism.” In 1981, she co-founded the literary journal *Temenos* and the Temenos Press. (*Poetry Foundation*) I find her poetry often obscure and had trouble following her mystical premises in *The Inner Journey of the Poet*, but the poem above, especially the last stanza, is a fine piece of work, recalling Wyatt’s *My Lute Awake* and Shakespeare’s sonnet 128.

*Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948)*³

Arte Poética Que el verso sea como una llave Que abra mil puertas. Una hoja cae; algo pasa volando; Cuanto miren los ojos creado sea, Y el alma del oyente quede temblando. Inventa mundos nuevos y cuida tu palabra; El adjetivo, cuando no da vida, mata. Estamos en el ciclo de los nervios. El músculo cuelga, Como recuerdo, en los museos; Mas no por eso tenemos menos fuerza: El vigor verdadero Reside en la cabeza. Por qué cantáis la rosa, ¡oh Poetas! Hacedla florecer en el poema; Sólo para nosotros Viven todas las cosas bajo el Sol. El Poeta es un pequeño Dios.	The Art of Poetry Let poetry become a key That opens a thousand doors. A leaf falls; something flies past; Let everything the eyes see be created, And the listener’s soul stay trembling. Invent new worlds and keep your word safe; The adjective, if it does not give life, kills. We live in a cycle of nerves. Muscle hangs, Like a memory, in museums; But we are not less strong for this. True vigour Comes from the head. Poets! Why sing to the rose? Make it bloom in your poem; Everything under the sun Lives only for us. The Poet is a little God.
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T T T T

³ The last line of this poem became the slogan of Huidobro's *Creacionismo* movement.

Still More on Clocks

From an article by Robin McKie in *The Observer* of 19 April 2015 (“Clockmaker John Harrison vindicated 250 years after ‘absurd’ claims - The pendulum clock of Longitude hero John Harrison is tested and declared a masterpiece”):

One of Guinness World Records’ more unusual awards was presented at the National Maritime Museum yesterday. After a 100-day trial, the timepiece known as Clock B – which had been sealed in a clear plastic box to prevent tampering – was officially declared, by Guinness, to be the world’s “most accurate mechanical clock with a pendulum swinging in free air”.

It was an intriguing enough award. But what is really astonishing is that the clock was designed more than 250 years ago by a man who was derided at the time for “an incoherence and absurdity that was little short of the symptoms of insanity”, and whose plans for the clock lay ignored for two centuries.

The derision was poured on John Harrison, the British clockmaker whose marine chronometers had revolutionised seafaring in the 18th century (and who was the subject of *Longitude* by Dava Sobel). His subsequent claim – that he would go on to make a pendulum timepiece that was accurate to within a second over a 100-day period – triggered widespread ridicule. The task was simply impossible, it was declared.

But now the last laugh lies with Harrison. At a conference ... held at Greenwich yesterday, observatory scientists revealed that a clock that had been built to the clockmaker’s exact specifications had run for 100 days during official tests and had lost only five-eighths of a second in that period....

Harrison was a self-educated carpenter and clockmaker who achieved considerable fame in the mid-18th century for the marine chronometers that he designed to solve the problem that sailors then faced in determining their longitude while at sea. Pinpointing where they lay on the notional lines that run vertically on a map proved extremely difficult for navigators. However, Harrison – in response to a government challenge – developed watches that contained a pair of counter-oscillating weighted beams connected by springs that turned out to be remarkably precise and allowed navigators to determine their position accurately. This was done by measuring local time and then comparing it with the time at Greenwich



(which was provided by the chronometer).

... his ideas for his super-accurate pendulum clock were forgotten until the 1970s, when interest in the clockmaker and his remarkable timepieces was re-awakened. The artist and clockmaker, Martin Burgess, – working on attempts to decipher Harrison’s plans – produced two versions of his great clock. It is the second of these, Clock B, that has been the focus of attempts to bring it to its maximum accuracy in the past year....

Given that mechanical clocks of this accuracy were not developed until the 20th century, Harrison’s remarkable design can now be seen for what it was: a masterpiece....

T T T T

Trigger warnings

In the context of US college education, do you know what a ‘trigger warning’ is? No, it is not set off by an electronic device that detects students’ hidden firearms, although this might be more useful. Read on.

From “Fair warning, provoking a thought is literature’s job” by Kathleen Parker, *The Washington Post*, May 20, 2014

Just when you thought American higher learning couldn’t get any more ridiculous, along come demands for warning labels on provocative works of literature.

One never knows when a sentence, phrase or word might trigger some buried memory or traumatic experience. Life is a veritable assault on the excessively sensitive, but somehow most of us muddle through. *C’est la vie* after all.

But literature, apparently, is fair game for those tortured souls who fear that some -ism or another might leap from a page, causing what exactly? A moment of discomfort? An opportunity to sort through one’s emotional attic? Or, heavens, exposure to an involuntary insight?

Several schools (including Oberlin College, Rutgers University, George Washington University and the University of Michigan) are toiling with these very questions as students have begun requesting “trigger warnings” on books and syllabuses.

“Warning This book includes a rape scene,” for example, would warn rape victims lest they be traumatized by the contents.

Mightn’t students Google a book in advance of reading if they’re so fearful of a psychological crisis? One is surprised that student organizers at these schools would use such a loaded word as ‘trigger,’ given its obvious association with guns.

Without making light of anyone's ethnicity, race or trauma, especially rape or stress disorder suffered by veterans (another specific group of concern), such precautions are misplaced in an institution of higher learning where one is expected to be intellectually challenged and where one's psychological challenges are expected to be managed elsewhere.

There are, besides, other ways to inform oneself about a course or literary assignment that might be problematic for whatever reason. Then again, if reading "The Great Gatsby" causes one undue angst owing to its abuse, classism, sexism and whatever-ism, then one might consider that college is not the right place at the right time.

Moreover, part of literary criticism is understanding the historical context of a given work. Thus, when the egregiously offensive N-word appears in the "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," is it too much to ask that readers reflect upon the word's usage when Mark Twain wrote the book?

Within that understanding is a world of learning, from the history of race to the evolution of language. Instead, we are enslaved to "responsible pedagogical practice," as one sympathetic faculty member put it. Thus, a draft guide at Oberlin College suggests flagging anything that could "disrupt a student's learning" or "cause trauma":

"Be aware of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism [transgender discrimination], ableism and other issues of privilege and oppression. Realize that all forms of violence are traumatic, and that your students have lives before and outside your classroom, experiences you may not expect or understand."

I don't know about you but I'm presently suffering acute trauma caused by being trapped in a world full of (you say it, not me). What is the -ism that refers to discrimination against relatively sane people who can read "The Merchant of Venice" without a therapist on speed dial? Normalism? But then, this would be offensive to people who are

The mind left free to wander happens upon a vacant building that used to house thousands of volumes. Now a museum, it was once called a library. Which is to say, a list of books that might be offensive to someone, or cause one to ponder the universe beyond one's personal experience, would be so long as to make libraries obsolete. Most if not all of Shakespeare and the Greek tragedies would require so many labels they'd look like a Prius in Portland.

Lest I leave anyone unoffended, studying at the adult level, that is, in an institution of higher learning, isn't supposed to make one feel good — or necessarily bad. It is to make one feel challenged, excited by new ideas, elevated by fresh insights, broadened by others' perspectives.

Obviously, one should be sensitive but also sensible. We also might expect that professors, guided by their own educations, common sense and goodwill, might mention the potential to find some words or expressions disturbing. But requiring labels on books is the busywork of smallish minds — yet another numbing example of political correctness run amok and the infantilizing of education in the service of overreaching sensitivity.

T T T T

Words of wisdom (for golfers)

Golf can best be defined as an endless series of tragedies obscured by the occasional miracle, followed by a good glass of beer.

Golf! You hit down to make the ball go up. You swing left and the ball goes right. The lowest score wins. And on top of that, the winner buys the drinks.

Golf is harder than baseball. In golf, you have to play your foul balls.

If you find you do not mind playing golf in the rain, the snow, even during a hurricane, here's a valuable tip: your life is in trouble.

Golfers who try to make everything perfect before taking the shot rarely make a perfect shot.

The term 'mulligan' is really a contraction of the phrase 'maul it again.'

A 'gimme' can best be defined as an agreement between two golfers ... neither of whom can putt very well.

An interesting thing about golf is that no matter how badly you play, it is always possible to get worse.

Golf is the only sport where the most feared opponent is you.

If your best shots are the practice swing and the 'gimme putt', you might wish to reconsider this game.

The best wood in most amateurs' bags is the pencil.

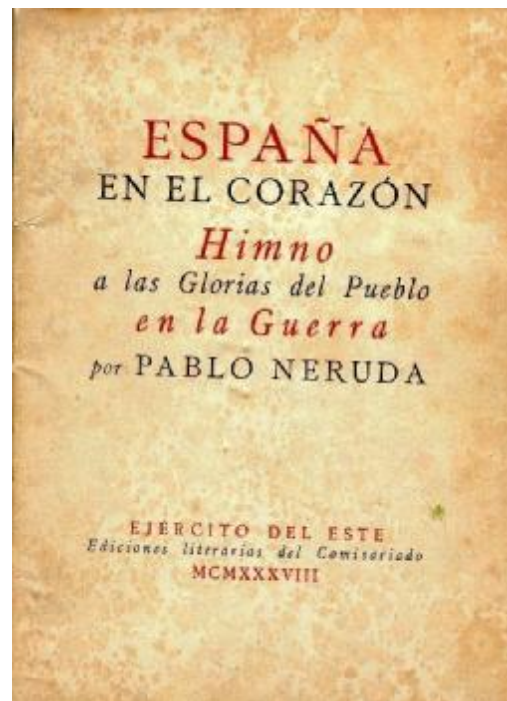
T T T T

Pablo Neruda (1904-1973)

Earlier this year I picked up a second-hand copy of Pablo Neruda's *Memoirs (Confieso que he vivido)*. It accompanied my *après-ski*. Apart from his writings, Neruda is largely remembered for his long term attachment to the communist cause. He occupied many diplomatic positions and served a term as a Senator for the Chilean Communist Party. He was Chilean consul in Madrid at the start of the Spanish civil war and made no secret of his sympathies. Years later, Neruda was a close advisor to Chile's socialist

President Salvador Allende. He describes the preparation of the first edition of his *España en el corazón*, prepared in the tumult of the Spanish civil war.

The soldiers at the front learned to set type. But there was no paper. They found an old mill and decided to make it there. A strange mixture was concocted, between one falling bomb and the next, in the middle of the fighting. They threw everything they could get their hands on into the mill, from an enemy flag to a Moorish soldier's bloodstained tunic. And in spite of the unusual materials used and the total inexperience of its manufacturers, the paper turned out to be very beautiful. The few copies of that book still in existence produce astonishment at its typography and at its mysteriously manufactured pages. Years later I saw a copy in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., displayed in a showcase as one of the rarest books of our time.



Neruda loved words

La Palabra

Todo lo que usted quiera, sí señor, pero son las palabras las que cantan, las que suben y bajan... Me prosterno ante ellas... Las amo, las adhiero, las persigo, las muerdo, las derribo... Amo tanto las palabras... Las inesperadas... Las que glotonamente se esperan, se acechan, hasta que de pronto caen... Vocablos amados... Brillan como perlas de colores, saltan como platinados peces, son espuma, hilo, metal, rocío... Persigo algunas palabras... Son tan hermosas que las quiero poner todas en mi poema... Las agarro al vuelo, cuando van zumbando, y las atrapo, las limpio, las pelo, me preparo frente al plato, las siento cristalinas, vibrantes, ebúrneas, vegetales, aceitosas, como frutas, como algas, como ágatas, como aceitunas... Y entonces las revuelvo, las agito, me las bebo, me las zampo, las trituro, las emperejilo, las liberto... Las dejo como estalactitas en mi poema, como pedacitos de madera bruñida, como carbón, como restos de naufragio, regalos de la ola... Todo está en la palabra...

The Word

You can say anything you want, yes Sir, but it's the words that sing, they soar and descend . . . I bow to them . . . I love them, I cling to them, I run them down, I bite into them, I melt them down . . . I love words so much . . . The unexpected ones . . . The ones I wait for greedily or stalk until, suddenly, they drop . . . Vowels I love . . . They glitter like colored stones, they leap like silver fish, they are foam, thread, metal, dew . . . I run after certain words . . . They are so beautiful that I want to fit them all into my poem . . . I catch them in midflight, as they buzz past, I trap them, clean them, peel them, I set myself in front of the dish, they have a crystalline texture to me, vibrant, ivory, vegetable, oily, like fruit, like algae, like agates, like olives . . . And I stir them, I shake them, I drink them, I gulp them down, I mash them, I garnish them, I let them go . . . I leave them in my poem like stalactites, like slivers of polished wood, like coals, pickings from a shipwreck, gifts from the waves . . . Everything exists in the word . . .

Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
 Escribir, por ejemplo: "La noche está estrellada,
 y tiritan, azules, los astros, a lo lejos."
 El viento de la noche gira en el cielo y canta.
 Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
 Yo la quise, y a veces ella también me quiso.
 En las noches como ésta la tuve entre mis brazos.
 La besé tantas veces bajo el cielo infinito.
 Ella me quiso, a veces yo también la quería.
 ¡Cómo no haber amado sus grandes ojos fijos!
 Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
 Pensar que no la tengo. Sentir que la he perdido.
 Oír la noche inmensa, más inmensa sin ella.
 Y el verso cae al alma como al pasto el rocío.
 ¡Qué importa que mi amor no pudiera guardarla!
 La noche está estrellada y ella no está conmigo.
 Eso es todo. A lo lejos alguien canta. A lo lejos.
 Mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.
 Como para acercarla mi mirada la busca.
 Mi corazón la busca, y ella no está conmigo.
 La misma noche que hace blanquear los mismos
 árboles.
 Nosotros, los de entonces, ya no somos los
 mismos.
 Yo no la quiero, es cierto, pero cuánto la quise.
 Mi voz buscaba al viento para tocar su oído.
 De otro. Será de otro. Como antes de mis besos.
 Su voz, su cuerpo claro. Sus ojos infinitos.
 Ya no la quiero, es cierto, pero tal vez la quiero.
 Es tan corto el amor, y es tan largo el olvido.
 Porque en noches como ésta la tuve entre mis
 brazos,
 mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.
 Aunque éste sea el último dolor que ella me causa,
 y éstos sean los últimos versos que yo le escribo.

XVII (*Cien sonetos de Amor*)

No te amo como si fueras rosa de sal, topacio
 o flecha de chaveles que propagan el fuego:
 te amo como se aman ciertas cosas oscuras,
 secretamente, entre la sombra y el alma.

Te amo como la planta que no florece y lleva
 dentro de sí, escondida, la luz de aquellas flores,
 y gracias a tu amor vive oscuro en mi cuerpo
 el apretado aroma que acendia de la tierra.

Te amo sin saber como, ni cuando, ni de donde,
 te amo directamente sin problemas ni orgullo:
 así te amo porque no se ama de otra manera,

sino así de este modo en que no soy ni eres,
 tan cerca que tu mano sobre mi pecho es mía,
 tan cerca que se cierran tus ojos con mi sueño.

Tonight I may write the saddest lines.
 Write, for example: "The night is shattered,
 and blue stars shimmer in the distance."
 The night wind rolls in the sky and sings.
 Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
 That I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.
 On nights like this I held her in my arms.
 I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.
 She loved me, and sometimes I loved her too.
 How could one not have loved those eyes with their
 endless gaze?
 Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
 To think that I do not have her. To feel I have lost her.
 To hear the immense night, still more immense without
 her.
 And my verse falls on my soul like dew on the meadow.
 What does it matter that my love could not keep her.
 The night is shattered, and she is not with me.
 This is all. Far away I hear singing. Far away.
 My soul is saddened that it has lost her.
 My sight searches for her as though to go to her.
 My heart looks for her, and she is not with me.
 The same night that whitens the same trees.
 We, we who were, are no longer the same.
 For sure, I no longer love her, but how much I did love
 her.
 My voice sought the wind to touch her ear.
 Another's. She will be another's. Like my kisses before,
 Her voice, her bright body. Her infinite eyes.
 My love is dead, for sure, but perhaps I still love her.
 Love is so short and forgetting so long.
 Because on nights like this I held her in my arms,
 my soul is saddened that it has lost her.
 Though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer,
 and these the last verses that I write for her.

XVII (*One hundred love sonnets*)

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,
 or carnation petals shooting fire.
 I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
 in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms
 but bears, hidden within, the light of those unseen flowers;
 and, thanks to your love, there lives hidden in my body
 a perceptible fragrance, rising from the earth.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.
 I love you directly, simply and without false pride;
 and so I love you because I know no other way -

only this: where you and I do not exist separately,
 but so close that your hand on my breast is my hand,
 so close that your eyes close in my dream.

<p>La poesía es siempre un acto de paz. El poeta nace de la paz como el pan nace de la harina. Los incendiarios, los guerreros, los lobos buscan al poeta para quemarlo, para matarlo, para morderlo. Un espadachín dejó a Pushkin herido de muerte entre los árboles de un parque sombrío. Los caballos de pólvora galoparon enloquecidos sobre el cuerpo sin vida de Petöfi. Luchando contra la guerra murió Byron en Grecia. Los fascistas españoles iniciaron la guerra en España asesinando a su mejor poeta.</p> <p>Rafael Alberti es algo así como un sobreviviente. Había mil muertes dispuestas para él. Una también en Granada. Otra muerte lo esperaba en Badajoz. En Sevilla llena de sol o en su pequeña patria, Cádiz y Puerto de Santa María, allí lo buscaban para acuchillarlo, para ahorcarlo, para matar en él una vez más la poesía.</p> <p>Pero la poesía no ha muerto, tiene las siete vidas del gato. La molestan, la arrastran por la calle, la escupen y la befan, la limitan para ahogarla, la destierran, la encarcelan, le dan cuatro tiros y sale de todos estos episodios con la cara lavada y una sonrisa de arroz.</p>	<p>Poetry is an act of peace. Peace goes into the making of a poet as flour goes into the making of bread. Arsonists, warmongers, wolves hunt down the poet to burn, kill, sink their teeth into him. A swordsman left Pushkin mortally wounded under the trees in a dark and gloomy park. The fiery horses of war charged over Petöfi's lifeless body. Byron died in Greece, fighting against war. The Spanish Fascists started off the war in Spain by assassinating its greatest poet.</p> <p>Rafael Alberti is a kind of survivor. He was marked for death a thousand times. One of those times, in Granada, like Lorca. Another time death waited for him in Badajoz. They looked for him in sun-drenched Seville and in Cadiz and Puerto de Santa Maria in his home province, to kill him, to hang him, and so deal poetry another death blow.</p> <p>But poetry has not died, it has a cat's nine lives. They harass it, they drag it through the streets, they spit on it and make it the butt of their jokes, they try to strangle it, drive it into exile, throw it into prison, pump lead into it, and it survives every attempt with a clear face and a smile as bright as grains of rice.</p>
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<p>Rafael Alberti</p> <p>Si mi voz muriera en tierra llevadla al nivel del mar y dejadla en la ribera. Llevadla al nivel del mar y nombardla capitana de un blanco bajel de guerra. ¡Oh mi voz condecorada con la insignia marinera: sobre el corazón un ancla y sobre el ancla una estrella y sobre la estrella el viento y sobre el viento la vela!</p>	<p>If my voice dies on land, Carry it down to the sea, And leave it there on the shore. Carry it down to the sea, And appoint it the captain Of a white man of war. Oh my voice adorned With naval insignia, An anchor over my heart, And over the anchor a star, And above the star the wind, And above the wind a sail!</p>
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T T T T

The Sea

From Le cimetière marin - Paul Valéry (1871-1945)

Ce toit tranquille, où marchent des colombes,
Entre les pins palpite, entre les tombes;
Midi le juste y compose de feux

La mer, la mer, toujours recommencée
O récompense après une pensée
Qu'un long regard sur le calme des dieux!
Quel pur travail de fins éclairs consume
Maint diamant d'imperceptible écume,
Et quelle paix semble se concevoir!
Quand sur l'abîme un soleil se repose,
Ouvrages purs d'une éternelle cause,
Le temps scintille et le songe est savoir.
Stable trésor, temple simple à Minerve,
Masse de calme, et visible réserve,
Eau sourcilleuse, Oeil qui gardes en toi
Tant de sommeil sous une voile de flamme,
O mon silence! . . . Édifice dans l'âme,
Mais comble d'or aux mille tuiles, Toit!
Temple du Temps, qu'un seul soupir résume,
À ce point pur je monte et m'accoutume,
Tout entouré de mon regard marin;
Et comme aux dieux mon offrande suprême,
La scintillation sereine sème
Sur l'altitude un dédain souverain.

La mer - *Charles Trenet (1913-2001)*

La mer,
qu'on voit danser,
le long des golfes clairs
a des reflets d'argent -
la mer -
des reflets changeants
sous la pluie.

La mer, au ciel d'été, confond
Ses blancs moutons
Avec les anges si purs
la mer,
bergère d'azur infinie.

Voyez, près des étangs
ces grands roseaux mouillés.
Voyez, ces oiseaux blancs
et ces maisons rouillées.
La mer les a bercés
le long des golfes clairs -

et d'une chanson d'amour
la mer
a bercé mon cœur
pour la vie

Sonnet LX - *William Shakespeare (1564-1616)*

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked elipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

Written near a Port on a Dark Evening - *Charlotte Smith (1749-1806)*

Huge vapours brood above the clifted shore,
Night on the ocean settles dark and mute,
Save where is heard the repercussive roar
Of drowsy billows on the rugged foot
Of rocks remote; or still more distant tone
Of seamen in the anchored bark that tell
The watch relieved; or one deep voice alone
Singing the hour, and bidding "Strike the bell!"
All is black shadow but the lucid line
Marked by the light surf on the level sand,
Or where afar the ship-lights faintly shine
Like wandering fairy fires, that oft on land
Misdled the pilgrim--such the dubious ray
That wavering reason lends in life's long darkling way.

Magna Est Veritas - *Coventry Patmore (1823-1896)*

Here, in this little Bay,
Full of tumultuous life and great repose,
Where, twice a day,
The purposeless, glad ocean comes and goes,
Under high cliffs, and far from the huge town,

I sit me down.

For want of me the world's course will not fail:
When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;
The truth is great, and shall prevail,
When none cares whether it prevail or not.

Dover Beach - *Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)*

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; -on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.
Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Meeting at night - *Robert Browning* (1812-1889)

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.
Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

Sea Fever - *John Masefield* (1878-1967)

I must go down to the seas again,
to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship
and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song
and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face
and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again,
for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call
that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day
with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume,
and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again
to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way
where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn

from a laughing fellow rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream
when the long trick's over.

At Dieppe - Arthur Symons (1865-1945)

The grey-green stretch of sandy grass,
Indefinitely desolate;
A sea of lead, a sky of slate;
Already autumn in the air, alas!

One stark monotony of stone,
The long hotel, acutely white,
Against the after-sunset light
Withers grey-green, and takes the grass's tone.

Listless and endless it outlies,
And means, to you and me, no more
Than any pebble on the shore,
Or this indifferent moment as it dies.

Arthur William Symons was a British poet, critic and magazine editor. From late 1895 through 1896 he edited, together with Aubrey Beardsley and others, *The Savoy*, a literary magazine that published both art and literature. (*Wikipedia*)

From Childe Harold's Pilgrimage - George Gordon, Lord Byron 1788-1824

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society where none intrudes
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To Mingle with the universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

T T T T

“Achingly unacceptable: the bad language that bugs me”

By Jeremy Butterfield, *The Guardian*, Friday 3 April 2015

As a professional linguist I try to embrace changes to modern English, but there are a few illiterate horrors I just can't abide.

A great linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, once wrote: “Time changes all things; there is no reason why language should escape this universal law.”

That truth anyone who thinks about language must immediately recognise.

Professional linguists regard such change as neutral, an inherent fact of language. Who today speaks the BBC English of yesteryear, far less the English of Dickens or Jane Austen? But many language users – and we are all language users – give vent to vehement frustration over the constant changes taking place. One has only to read the letters in newspapers, or hear irate callers-in to radio programmes, to understand that fact: “‘Going forward’ sets my teeth on edge”; “What kind of word is ‘gotten’? It makes me shudder,” and so on.

While editing Fowler’s Dictionary of Modern English Usage, the book that many writers and editors turn to as the correct usage bible, I had de Saussure’s maxim constantly in mind. If I pull my linguist’s hat firmly down over my ears, it enables me to observe language change objectively. But if I forget that headgear, or, as some might allege, put on my tinfoil hat, certain things, if they do not exactly make my blood boil, heat it to a moderate simmer. Here, in no particular order, are a few:

to wed: Who else but journalists would use this ridiculous, archaic word? Imagine a friend telling you, “Hey, I’ve got some great news! Zoe and I are to wed next week.” You would bite your lip, while wondering if they had swallowed the Hello! style guide. The word was almost bearable when it skulked in the red tops; in a serious newspaper (the Guardian, too, is guilty), it is irretrievably naff.

haitch: The eighth letter of the alphabet is pronounced ‘aitch’. Look it up in a dictionary if you don’t believe me. I challenge you to find an ‘h’ sound in the pronunciation shown there. People born from the 1980s onwards apparently favour this pronunciation; youth is no excuse for illiteracy.

achingly: Here’s another piece of journalistic flimflam, e.g. “They consistently produce achingly hip music.” Oh, for heaven’s sake, grow up! It isn’t “achingly” anything, you pretentious scribbler. You’re just trying to show how “edgy” (there’s another one) you are.

in terms of: This hook on which many a sentence dangles, gasping for life, is not exactly new, but it is still as irritating and meaningless as ever. A politico says: “We have made great progress in terms of the deficit.” No, we have not.

to leverage, leverage (noun): Business speak has its place, and that place is in business. When TV’s Mr Selfridge intones dramatically, “I don’t want you using my daughter as leverage,” he might sound businesslike; he also shows that the scriptwriter has cloth ears.

unacceptable: Such a feeble, euphemistic little word, but so often trotted

out. Little Tommy's behaviour is 'unacceptable', the kindergarten warns us. What does that mean? Is he behaving like an egocentric monster and, if we don't do something, will develop into a fully fledged psychopath? Or has he merely pulled Miranda's hair? A multitude of sins are covered, but never specified, because we are too kind-hearted, too polite and ultimately, too soft.

to address: People in the business of not really meaning what they say love this word for its soothing vagueness. When they undertake to "address the issue of ..." you can be sure that nothing much will happen, and that said issue will speedily be kicked into the long grass. When someone says, "But the government should consider how it could address public concerns," you can be sure that some kind of perfunctory "listening exercise" will be trumpeted, and then said concerns will be blithely ignored.

a criteria: "Such a criteria is unscientific and misleading." On reading that my reaction is: "Such a sentence is illiterate and misshapen." The word is criterion in the singular, and criteria in the plural. *Punto e basta!*

clamber: e.g. "Eager crowds clambered to catch a glimpse of the newly elected ..." Unless they turned into Spiderman and shimmied up lamp posts, they did no such thing. What they did was to noisily express (yes, it's fine to split an infinitive) their eagerness to "catch a glimpse". In other words, they clamoured.

reach out: Last, and very definitely not least, this absurdly gushing and pseudo-empathetic American metaphor needs no comment. I am sure readers will happily supply their own.

PS: But just as much as these, I detest it when Word's schoolmistressy grammar checker pedantically and anachronistically warns me that I am ending a sentence with a preposition. I know, you foolish software, and I'm sticking to my guns. That's how English works.

T T T T

Margery - *in memoriam*:

Death can hide but not divide.
You are but on Christ's other side,
You with Christ and Christ with me
so together still are we.
Anonymous

Beim Schlafengehen - Hermann Hesse (1877-1962)
Nun der Tag mich müd gemacht,
Soll mein sehnliches Verlangen

Freundlich die gestirnte Nacht
Wie ein müdes Kind empfangen.

Hände, lasst von allem Tun,
Stirn, vergiss du alles Denken,
Alle meine Sinne nun
Wollen sich in Schlummer senken.

Und die Seele, unbewacht,
Will in freien Flügen schweben,
Um im Zauberkreis der Nacht
Tief und tausendfach zu Leben.

What a wonderful bird the frog are
When he stand he sit almost;
When he hop he fly almost.
He ain't got no sense hardly;
He ain't got no tail hardly either.
When he sit, he sit on what he ain't got almost.

Anonymous

T T T T

How to go with style

On 16 May this year, I happened to be walking by St. Martin's church in Colmar when I heard the sound of New Orleans jazz coming from inside. Here is the order of service for the funeral that day of Solange Burger (1917-2015) - from the twinkle in her eye on the photograph on the brochure in the church, similar to my aunt Margery's, I'm sure she chose the programme herself:



Accueil "St James Infirmary"

Mot d'accueil

Présentation de la défunte

1ère lecture: Lettre de St Paul aux Corinthiens

Moment Musical "Creole Love Call"

2e lecture: Apocalypse selon St. Jean

Evangile de Jesus-Christ selon St. Jean / Prêche

Moment Musical "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen"

Priere universelle / intentions - Notre Pere

Moment Musical “Une Chanson Douce”⁴
Interventions des proches
Encensement & Benediction
Moment Musical “Just a closer walk”

T T T T

Talking of funerals

My Funeral - Wendy Cope (*1945)

I hope I can trust you, friends, not to use our relationship
As an excuse for an unsolicited ego-trip.
I have seen enough of them at funerals and they make me cross.
At this one, though deceased, I aim to be the boss.
If you are asked to talk about me for five minutes, please do not go on
for eight
There is a strict timetable at the crematorium and nobody wants to be
late
If invited to read a poem, just read the bloody poem. If requested
To sing a song, just sing it, as suggested,
And don't say anything. Though I will not be there,
Glancing pointedly at my watch and fixing the speaker with a
malevolent stare,
Remember that this was how I always reacted
When I felt that anybody's speech, sermon or poetry reading was
becoming too protracted.
Yes, I was intolerant, and not always polite
And if there aren't many people at my funeral, it will serve me right.

I consider Wendy Cope one of the best living poets of the English language and have included several of her poems in *CP* over the years. She has recently complained, rightly,⁵ that the copyright of her poetry is widely abused by its easy availability on the Internet. The following is from an article she wrote for *The Guardian* of 8 December 2007.

One summer's day, strolling through a cemetery, my partner and I had a conversation about what we would like on our gravestones. He suggested that mine should read: “Wendy Cope. All Rights Reserved.”

He knows all too well that I am obsessed with copyright. A poem is very easy to copy, whereas nobody is going to photocopy or download a whole

⁴ A song composed by Henri Salvador in 1957.

⁵ *CP* is a private publication for a restricted circle of friends and thus does not come under copyright restrictions.

novel or work of non-fiction. Poets are thus especially at risk if people do not know and respect copyright law.

The authors of short, funny poems are especially vulnerable. Such poems have a tendency to run off on their own and detach themselves from the names of their authors. There's a well-known poem I've liked since I was quite small. "The rain it raineth every day/ Upon the just and unjust fella/ But mostly on the just because/ The unjust hath the just's umbrella." For decades I thought of it as anonymous. Then, when I was compiling an anthology of poems for children, I found it in the British Library with an author's name on it: Baron Charles Bowen. I was happy to reunite poem and author in the anthology. I've seen a poem by Ogden Nash in white paint on a beam in a pub with no mention of the author's name. I've seen one of mine in an anthology, attributed to Dorothy Parker. I could mention numerous other examples. ...

If I Google the title of one of my poems, it is almost always there somewhere, and I can download it and print it out. I'm sure that this must affect sales of my books. I've tried Googling some of Seamus Heaney's poems, and those of one or two other well-known poets, and it's the same. ...

In the long run - if our poems survive into the long run - we'll be in no position to benefit from royalties or permission fees. All poets hope that their work will outlive them. I'm no exception. Even so, I sometimes feel a bit annoyed by the prospect of people making money out of my poems when I'm too dead to spend it.

And I feel sad for other poets. One day I came across some postcards in a gift shop featuring poems by A.E. Housman, who died in 1936. I bought a postcard and, on the back of it, wrote the following lines. When I hear them in my head, they are sung to the tune of the hymn The Church's One Foundation:

Postcard Poem

Will they do this, I wonder
With verse of mine or yours
When we are six feet under
And deaf to all applause?
We bring home little bacon
En route for that long night
And when the profit's taken
We're out of copyright.

T T T T

Modern Living⁶



*Do you really know what you're doing
or do you Google-search know?*



*We're all together watching television, but
we're not all watching television together*



*LinkedIn has finally paid off. I got two new
followers on Twitter*



*They're expelling Drew from camp for
hiding his face from the security cameras*



⁶ Bottom two on this page from *The Spectator*; all others from *The New Yorker*.



It's an audio guide, sweetheart, not a remote



User name and password?



Huh? Oh yeah, I do



*You know I hate when you
check your messages at table*



*Hold on, let me take a picture of you taking yourself
while Gail takes a picture of us both taking pictures*

T T T T

Cheesy Feat

The Spectator runs a regular competition page, many of which test the poetic abilities of its readers. The results are often remarkable. Here are those from the edition of 13 November 2010.

In Competition No. 2672 you were invited to disprove G.K. Chesterton's

assertion that the poets have been mysteriously silent on the subject of cheese.

Lord bless you, Ma'am! We poets aim to please —
What Charles Lamb did for pork we'll do for cheese.
Let's say a simple Frankish dairymaid
Was so besotted of her royal master
She was distracted from her lowly trade
And left the milk to curdle. A disaster!
But, testing if the mess was fit to eat,
She found she'd chanced upon a peerless treat.

The Kaiser, passing by, and in no haste,
Sampled a piece, and with a look serene
Baptised it Kase for its royal taste,
And took the dairymaid to be his Queen.
The name of Cheese spread North, West, South and East
And sets the final seal on every feast.
We'll add some spice to this folkloric brew,
Then Wikipedia it to make it true. *Noel Petty*

I sing of processed American cheese, the glory of these States,
Factory sliced and shredded by white-apron'd workers clean and strong,
But I do not decline to feast also on the cheeses of Europe.
See me at the reception, hovering over the hors d'oeuvres,
Consuming a great wheel of Cheddar golden and glowing as the sun,
Making short work of the snowy-rinded Brie,
Gobbling up every crumb of the Morbier and its layer of smoky ash,
Devouring the blue mold of Roquefort, and Gouda with its crimson wax.
In vain does soft Camembert run in the heat to escape me,
In vain does a wedge of Stinking Bishop brandish its bristling name,
In vain does ripe Limberger assault my nose with its stench of sweaty feet,
In vain does the remotest iota of fermented milk in the vast wheel'd Universe
Conceal itself on a darkened moon, or the bottom shelf of a locked-up larder,
Or in a protective crust of puff pastry.
I find I incorporate all, all are part of me,
Out of them all I press the cheese of my Self. *Clementine Trovers*

I'm watched by the holes in my Gruyere,
Disdained by the rind on my Brie;
A Fourme of Montbrison reminds me of prison;
It seems I'm condemned to be free.

Paranoia's induced by the Comté.
I can't face the ripe Neufchâtel.
Could I possibly go for a morsel of Beaufort?
No, it's like other people — sheer hell.

The menace of Olivet Cendré
Is equalled by Rocamadour.
When cheese is prolific it's monstrous,
horrific. I really can't take any more.

Cabecou, Chevrotin, Tomme de Savoie,
Saint-Nectaire, Pont-l'Evêque, Laguiole...
All sourced from the ovine, the caprine, the bovine.
No wonder I feel like De Gaulle. *G.M. Davis*

From time immemorial cheese has appealed
To poets inspired to please,
There are poems by Claverley, Kipling and Field,
All attributing tributes to cheese.

Chesterton, too, in his critical Song
Against Grocers, augmented these three,
Making four, and by adding my name to the throng
I make five — with my Homage to Brie.

Be it Brie, Cheddar, Cheshire, Romano or quark,
Or any cheese churned upon Earth,
We poets, imbued with that magical spark,
Have awakened the world to its worth.

So Chesterton, missing the wood for the trees,
Was clearly mistaken, you see,
Since poets have never been silent on cheese
As this poem proves. QED! *Alan Millard*

"I'm very fond of cheeses."
Said the vicar, as we dined;
"Me, too," I said, detaching
Some Red Leicester from its rind.

"That Wensleydale was nice," I said,
And what a perfect Brie!"
Then I heard the vicar chuckle.
And he looked askance at me.

“You’re getting rather deaf, old chum,”
He smiled, and wagged his head:
“ ‘I’m very fond of Jesus’
Is what, in fact, I said!” *Ron Rubin*

T T T T

Top Ten Reasons Why Golf Is Better Than Sex

10. A below par performance is considered damn good.
9. You can stop in the middle and have a cheeseburger and a couple of beers.
8. It’s much easier to find the sweet spot.
7. Foursomes are encouraged.
6. You can still make money doing it as a senior.
5. Three times a day is possible.
4. Your partner doesn’t hire a lawyer if you play with someone else.
3. If you live in Florida , you can do it almost every day.
2. You don’t have to cuddle with your partner when you’re finished.

And the NUMBER ONE reason why golf is better than sex.....

1. When your equipment gets old you can replace it.

T T T T

G.K. Chesterton

In his essay ‘The Poet and the Cheese’ Chesterton included a sonnet to a Stilton cheese, which, as he acknowledges, contains ‘echoes’ of another well known poem:

Stilton, thou shouldst be living at this hour
And so thou art. Nor lovest grace thereby;
England has need of thee, and so have I--
She is a Fen. Far as the eye can scour,
League after grassy league from Lincoln tower
To Stilton in the fields, she is a Fen.
Yet this high cheese, by choice of fenland men,
Like a tall green volcano rose in power.
Plain living and long drinking are no more,
And pure religion reading ‘Household Words’,
And sturdy manhood sitting still all day
Shrink, like this cheese that crumbles to its core;
While my digestion, like the House of Lords,
The heaviest burdens on herself doth lay.

T T T T

Chesterton quotes

The past is not what it was.

Marriage is a duel to the death, which no man of honour should decline.

If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.

A dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it.

The Bible tells us to love our neighbours, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people.

The reformer is always right about what is wrong. He is generally wrong about what is right.

Misers get up early in the morning; and burglars, I am informed, get up the night before.

Impartiality is a pompous name for indifference, which is an elegant name for ignorance.

Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions.

A change of opinions is almost unknown in an elderly military man.

T T T T

Speaking of the military⁷



*This one's for deterring
That one's for pre-empting*

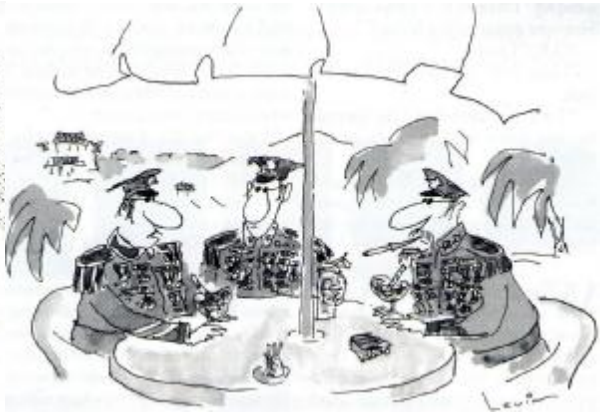


*You mean what we did just now,
that was a real war?*

⁷ Cartoons from *The New Yorker*



*Well, I'm an optimist,
I still think peace can be avoided*



*Our nation hasn't been to war in a hundred years.
Where the hell did we get all these medals?*



*The answer isn't more troops.
What you need is an antibiotic*



I got that one for being a good boy

T T T T

Charles Jefford

Here are two excellent unpublished poems by my friend Charles Jefford.⁸

We can't deny the birds their seed.
Without it they won't survive
the frosty winter days.
We fill the birdhouse dangling in the tree.
As it swings and sways,
tits and sparrows dive
and land upon its ledge, precariously.
Blackbirds, thrushes are all too big,
they forage on the ground

⁸ "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,/ And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

for seeds that drop below,

We are silent watchers,
an aged, slippered pair,
peeking through kitchen curtains.
Wordlessly, we stand and stare
at the sight of fluttering wings.
We linger longer than we should,
instead of doing other things.

We hate to leave the birds unseen.
We count their number every day.
Saddened, when fewer come,
wondering what went awry.
A robin shows up, a single one.
We voice a quiet hurray,
and nod the two of us.
Are those birds aware their food
is placed by human hand?
flouting Nature's law,
so the weakest lives beyond the thaw.

Now spring has come at last.
Worms wriggle in the grass,
to be caught by birds, conveniently.
We will buy seed no more,
our job is over. We are free.
We got them through the coldest weather.
Hand in hand, we chant together.
We did not deny the birds their seed,
because we shared a common need.

Non habemus Papam.

He's going, gone, on account of age
So he said, but others believe he went
for hiding clerical errors,
not of spelling or punctuation,
but those involving prayers,
when acolytes were bent
at their devotions,
while on their knees
or over backs of chairs

Not a word of this, you understand,

The priesthood can't be touched,
It's placed its own emotions
In God's right hand.

The church protects its clergy,
fools its flock with liturgy,
who are they to reason why,
the answer's there up in the sky.

Raise the little children up to me
So their spirit won't be free
get them confirmed at age eleven
To guarantee their place in heaven

All are blessed in God's kingdom,
Those who question their allotted pains,
are told to hold their tongue,
and suffer what God ordains.

He's going, gone, on account of age
But is a new one needed now?
it's time to turn the page.
Will Ratzi take a bow
for what he did?
Heavens no! May God forbid.

T T T T

And one by my granddaughter Felicia:

On a balloon
Start here -
found this and couldn't help myself
I had to blow it up.
Happy Birthday!
It might not be yours
but it is someone's in the world
that might or might not have
a loved one to celebrate with.
Either way I'm thankful
to have you both in my life!
Love you lots and lots
but you already knew that.

T T T T

Old Age Comes at a Bad Time

“Age wins and one must learn to grow old...so now I must learn to walk this long unlovely wintry way, looking for spectacles, shunning the cruel looking-glass, laughing at my clumsiness before others mistakenly condole, not expecting gallantry yet disappointed to receive none, apprehending every ache or shaft of pain, alive to blinding flashes of mortality, unarmed, totally vulnerable. ... The long custom of living disinclines one to dying.... Besides, before the end, what light may shine?” *Lady Diana Cooper* (quoted in the *New York Review of Books*, 4 June 2015)

Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.
Anonymous

Old age ain't no place for sissies. *Bette Davis*

There is no pleasure worth forgoing just for an extra three years in the geriatric ward. *John Mortimer*

Like a lot of fellows around here, I have a furniture problem. My chest has fallen into my drawers. *Billy Casper*, on golf's Senior Tour

Old age isn't so bad when you consider the alternative. *Maurice Chevalier*

Do not regret growing older. It is a privilege denied to many. *Anonymous*

Middle age is when your age starts to show around your middle. *Bob Hope*

My diseases are an asthma and a dropsy and, what is less curable, seventy-five. *Samuel Johnson*

Grow old with me! The best is yet to be. *Robert Browning*

A man's only as old as the woman he feels. *Groucho Marx*

Il me semble que je vous avais conseillé de vivre, uniquement pour faire enrager ceux qui vous payent des rentes viagères; pour moi, c'est presque le seul plaisir qui me reste. *Voltaire* (Lettre à Mme du Deffant, 23.4.1754)

Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what happened.
Jennifer Yane

At another year
I would not boggle
Except that when I jog
I joggle. *Ogden Nash*, “Birthday on the Beach”

When I can look Life in the eyes,
Grown calm and very coldly wise,
Life will have given me the Truth,
And taken in exchange — my youth. *Sara Teasdale*

Si jeunesse savait
Si vieillesse pouvait. *Henri Estienne*

No spring nor summer's beauty hath such grace
As I have seen in one Autumnal face....
John Donne "Elegy IX: The Autumnal"

Is that a birthday? 'tis, alas! too clear;
'Tis but the funeral of the former year.
Alexander Pope "To Mrs. M. B. On Her Birthday"

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day,
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by-and-by black night doth take away.
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.
William Shakespeare Sonnet 73

T T T T

The Three Little Politically Correct Pigs

Excerpt from *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* by J.F. Garner

Once there were three little pigs who lived together in mutual respect and in harmony with their environment. Using materials that were indigenous to the area, they each built a beautiful house. One pig built a house of straw, one a house of sticks, and one a house of dung, clay, and creeper vines shaped into bricks and baked in a small kiln. When they were finished, the pigs were satisfied with their work and settled back to live in peace and self-determination.

But their idyll was soon shattered. One day, along came a big, bad wolf with expansionist ideas. He saw the pigs and grew very hungry, in both the physical and ideological sense. When the pigs saw the wolf, they ran into the

house of straw. The wolf ran up to the house and banged on the door, shouting, "Little pigs, little pigs, let me in!"

The pigs shouted back, "Your gunboat tactics hold no fear for pigs defending their homes and culture."

But the wolf wasn't to be denied what he thought was his manifest destiny. So he huffed and he puffed and he blew down the house of straw. The frightened pigs ran to the house of sticks, with the wolf in hot pursuit.

Where the house of straw had stood, other wolves bought up the land and started a banana plantation. At the house of sticks, the wolf again banged on the door and shouted, "Little pigs, little pigs, let me in!"

The pigs shouted, "Go to hell, you carnivorous, imperialistic oppressor!"

At this, the wolf chuckled condescendingly. He thought to himself: "They are so childlike in their ways. It will be a shame to see them go, but progress cannot be stopped."

So the wolf huffed and puffed and blew down the house of sticks.

The pigs ran to the house of bricks, with the wolf close at their heels. Where the house of sticks had stood, other wolves built a time-share condo resort complex for vacationing wolves, with each unit a fiberglass reconstruction of the house of sticks, as well as native curio shops, snorkeling, and dolphin shows.

At the house of bricks, the wolf again banged on the door and shouted, "Little pigs, little pigs, let me in!"

This time in response, the pigs sang songs of solidarity and wrote letters of protest to the United Nations.

By now the wolf was getting angry at the pigs' refusal to see the situation from the carnivore's point of view. So he huffed and he puffed, and huffed and puffed, then grabbed his chest and fell over dead of a massive heart attack brought on from eating too many fatty foods.

The three little pigs rejoiced that justice had triumphed and did a little dance around the corpse of the wolf. Their next step was to liberate their homeland. They gathered together a band of other pigs who had been forced off their lands. Their new brigade of porcinistas attacked the resort complex with machine guns and rocket launchers and slaughtered the cruel wolf oppressors, sending a clear signal to the rest of the hemisphere not to meddle in their internal affairs. Then the pigs set up a model socialist democracy with free education, universal health care, and affordable housing for everyone.

Please Note: The wolf in this story was a metaphorical construct. No actual wolves were

harmd in the writing of the story.

T T T T

The Affluence of Incohol⁹

I had eighteen bottles of whisky in my cellar and was told by my wife to empty the contents of each and every bottle down the sink OR ELSE

I said I would, and proceeded with the unpleasant task. I withdrew the cork from the first bottle and poured the contents down the sink, with the exception of one glass, which I drank. I extracted the cork from the second bottle and did likewise with the exception of one glass, which I drank. I then withdrew the cork from the third bottle and poured the contents down the sink, which I drank. I pulled the bottle from the cork of the next and drank one sink of it, then threw the rest down the glass. I pulled the sink out of the next glass and poured the cork down the bottle. Then I corked the sink with the glass, bottled the drink and drank the pour. When I had everything emptied, I steadied the house with one hand, counted the glasses, corks, bottles and sinks with the other, which were twenty-nine, and as the house came by, I counted them again, and finally had all the houses in one bottle, which I drank.

I'm not under the affluence of incohol as some thinkle peep I am, I'm not half as thunk as you might drink, I fool so feelish I don't know who is me, and the drunker I stand here, the longer I get.

T T T T

Odds and Ends

Feminists may fondly recall the Fiat advert-slogan: "if it were a lady, it would get its bottom pinched," that one clever woman vandalised with the words "if this lady was a car she'd run you down". *The Guardian* 16 April 2015

From Pablo Neruda's memoirs: "I ... learned that among Stalin's papers found after his death there was a list that read: 'Do not touch,' in his own handwriting. That list was headed by the composer Shostakovich, followed by other eminent names: Eisenstein, Pasternak, Ehrenburg et cetera."¹⁰

"Hold your fire until we hear the ayes of our whites." (Barney Frank, US politician, at a Democratic convention discussing racial integration.)

⁹ With thanks to Michael Gunton

¹⁰ My work on the Aga Khan humanitarian programme during the civil war in Tajikistan required lobbying in Moscow. One of my interpreters was Vera Kleimann, the daughter of the curator of the Russian Film Museum. During pauses between appointments, I set up a temporary office, surrounded by Eisenstein's papers (including some of his original sketches), in the apartment that had belonged to his widow where Vera was collating scraps of film from his archive - a moment of rare privilege.