CHRISTMAS PUDDING

2017

T

STOP PRESS

Broad Majority of Americans Support Moving Trump to Jerusalem
By Andy Borowitz, *The New Yorker*, December 6, 2017

WASHINGTON—In a new poll conducted on Wednesday, a sweeping majority of Americans said they support moving Donald J. Trump to Jerusalem.

The sixty-three per cent of survey respondents who approved relocating Trump to Jerusalem placed few conditions on such a move, other than that it take place "as soon as possible" and that it be "permanent."

In other poll results, an overwhelming majority of respondents said that they would support relocating Trump to any number of other foreign destinations, including Russia, the Philippines, and "that station where scientists live at the South Pole."

Though Americans were strongly enthusiastic about moving Trump to Jerusalem, in a rare consensus both Arabs and Israelis vehemently opposed the move.

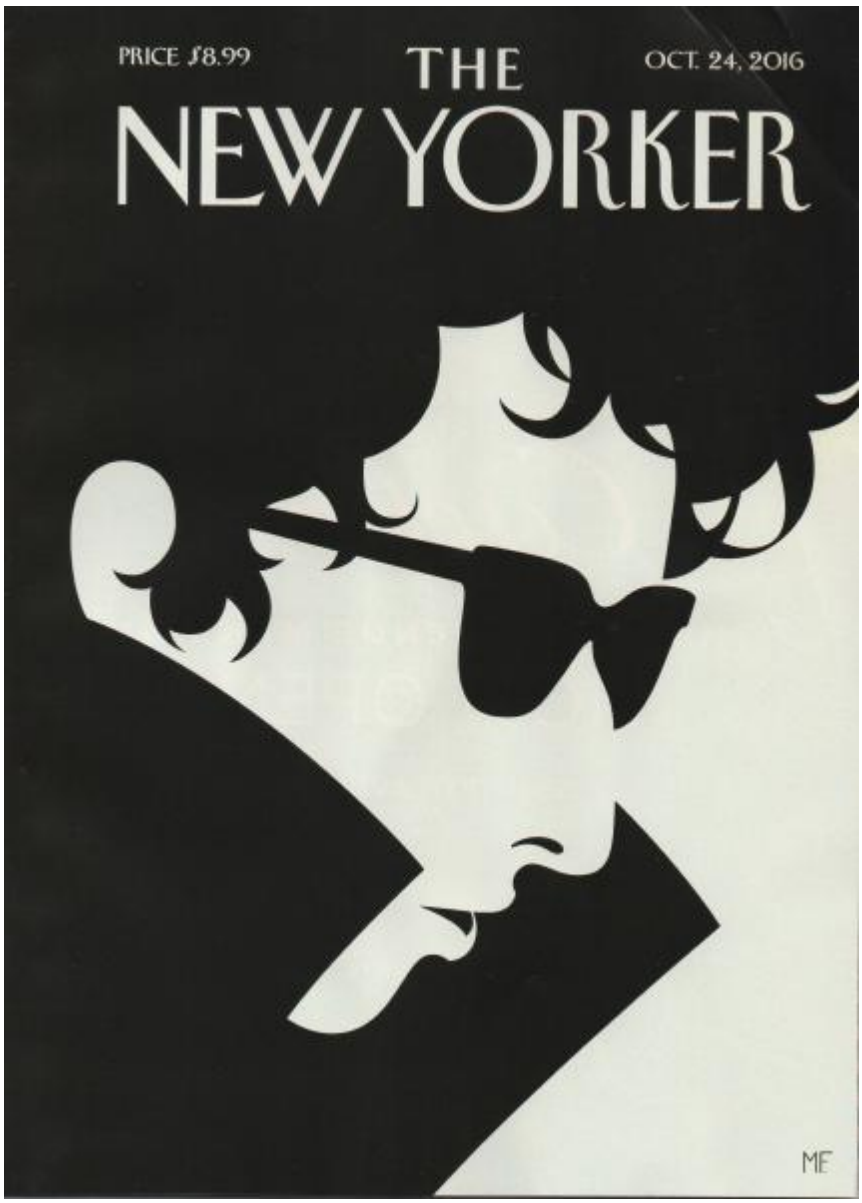
Robert Middleton

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.

After studying under Graham Storey and Frank Leavis in Cambridge, I was deeply influenced by the literary criticism of Yvor Winters at Stanford University in the early 1960s, by his rigorous insistence on the distinction between connotation and denotation in poetry and by his moral crusade against the decline of reason as a precept in art and literature (and life) since the end of the eighteenth century. The accompanying relaxation of content and meaning that characterises verse for the last two hundred years is, at least in part, responsible for a breakdown in communication between writer and reader: today, 'anything goes' - much verse is obscure and, if it were not divided into lines, would be indistinguishable from prose. I share Winters' view that the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century was a golden age for poetry and that several poets of this age developed a 'timeless' medium for poetic expression characterised by the clear communication of ideas and emotion, using words not only for their sound, rhythm and imagery but also to convey meaning. I recognise, however, that the poetry of this period may not be easily accessible to the general reader as a result of unfamiliar poetic conventions and shifts in the meaning of words. I also dissent from Winters' rather pessimistic view that not much of comparable quality has been produced since. Until 2011, *Christmas Pudding* drew heavily on poetry of the 'golden age'; since then I include much modern and contemporary verse that, in my opinion, meets Winters' strict criteria. If I no longer insist on form, my criterion remains nevertheless quality of language and content - and, a new ingredient, wit.

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

The inspiration for *Christmas Pudding* is *Christmas Crackers*, an anthology of wisdom, wit and linguistic surprise collected by the 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.



Bob Dylan - 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature

"…. is the good news that the [Swedish] Academy is modern, open-minded and far-sighted? No, the celebration is self-praise. In actual fact, the Academy and all friends of Bob Dylan and of the Nobel Prize for Literature can only have one wish: that he doesn't pick up the phone. As a major affront, it would be the appropriate answer to a monumental misunderstanding. On the 10th of December, only the Academy deserves the Medal." *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 24 October 2016

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Visit my website www.pamirs.org
All previous editions of Christmas Pudding can be found on
http://www.pamirs.org/Christmas-Pudding.htm

CHRISTMAS PUDDING 2017

Is the award of the Nobel Prize to Bob Dylan a release from "bookishness" or the end of serious literature as we know it? More later. Also included: some reflections on Tao and Winnie the Pooh; with another nod to my readers of German language, much German, together with John Le Carré on learning German (a good exercise for those of you who may need German visas in the post-Brexit future); the sometimes surprising secrets of Cockney rhyming slang and what to beware of if you use some words without understanding their etymology; *Marginalia* and Marlene Dietrich; nothing on Donald Trump, best passed over in disgusted silence, but something on a subject close to his heart, guns; *Carpe Diem*, Robert Frost, Evelyn Waugh, Hugo Loetscher, Comma Queens, Ben Jonson and some contemporary poets; cartoons from *The New Yorker*, and, as usual, a little port. Enjoy!

T T T T

Seasonally Appropriate

An Old Man's Winter Night - *Robert Frost (1874-1963)*
All out of doors looked darkly in at him
Through the thin frost, almost in separate stars,
That gathers on the pane in empty rooms.
What kept his eyes from giving back the gaze
Was the lamp tilted near them in his hand.
What kept him from remembering what it was
That brought him to that creaking room was age.
He stood with barrels round him -- at a loss.
And having scared the cellar under him
In clomping there, he scared it once again
In clomping off; -- and scared the outer night,
Which has its sounds, familiar, like the roar
Of trees and crack of branches, common things,
But nothing so like beating on a box.
A light he was to no one but himself
Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what,
A quiet light, and then not even that.
He consigned to the moon, such as she was,
So late-arising, to the broken moon
As better than the sun in any case
For such a charge, his snow upon the roof,
His icicles along the wall to keep;

And slept. The log that shifted with a jolt
Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted,
And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept.
One aged man -- one man -- can't keep a house,
A farm, a countryside, or if he can,
It's thus he does it of a winter night.

T T T T

Bob Dylan's Nobel Prize - Could this be the end .... ?

The Swedish Academy was clearly nervous about the public reaction to the choice of Dylan. After the announcement, the permanent secretary, Sara Danius, said she hoped the academy would not be criticised for its choice. "We hoped the news would be received with joy, but you never know," she said. "We're really giving it to Bob Dylan as a great poet – that's the reason we awarded him the prize. He's a great poet in the great English tradition, stretching from Milton and Blake onwards. And he's a very interesting traditionalist, in a highly original way. Not just the written tradition, but also the oral one; not just high literature, but also low literature."

Danius said that although Dylan is considered by many to be a musician, not a writer, the artistic reach of his lyrics and poetry could not be put in a single box. "I came to realise that we still read Homer and Sappho from ancient Greece, and they were writing 2,500 years ago. They were meant to be performed, often together with instruments, but they have survived, and survived incredibly well, on the book page. We enjoy [their] poetry, and I think Bob Dylan deserves to be read as a poet." (*The Guardian*, 13 October 2016)

As Shakespeare would have said: "The lady doth protest too much ...." Putting Dylan in a tradition beginning with Homer and Sappho, and continuing with Milton and Blake "onwards" puts the bar very high. In his acceptance speech, delivered by the US Ambassador to Sweden, Dylan was modest enough to admit that he was stunned and surprised when he was told he had won a Nobel prize because he had never stopped to consider whether his songs were literature. "If someone had ever told me that I had the slightest chance of winning the Nobel prize, I would have to think that I'd have about the same odds as standing on the moon."

So it's not his fault. I will look at some of his songs later. For now, a little historical background to the prize and the Swedish Academy that awards it. Making the award, Horace Engdahl, a Swedish literary historian and critic and member of the Academy, responded to international criticism of the choice of Dylan. Engdahl said that when Dylan's songs were heard first in the 1960s, "all of a sudden much of **the bookish poetry** in our world felt

anaemic." (*The Guardian*, 10 December 2016)

I wonder if Mr. Engdahl would be surprised to learn that almost all of the world's literature is to be found in books. What then are we to understand by bookish? Did Ms Danius tell him that the work of Homer and Sappho is only known to us thanks to the efforts of bookish scholars and researchers?

According to *Wikipedia*, in October 2008 Engdahl told the *Associated Press* that the United States is "too isolated, too insular" to challenge Europe as "the center of the literary world" and that "they don't translate enough and don't really participate in the big dialogue of literature .... That ignorance is restraining." At the time of the interview, no American author had received a Nobel Prize in Literature since 1993. His comments generated controversy across the Atlantic, with the head of the U.S. National Book Foundation offering to send him a reading list. Engdahl was reported "very surprised" that the American reaction was "so violent". He did not think that what he said was "that derogatory or sensational" and conceded his comments may have been "perhaps a bit too generalizing". A case of tin-ear-itis?

Could it be that Mr. Engdahl wanted to compensate for his arrogance by the bold step of nominating Dylan? On the other hand, for those who love Machiavelli, the choice of Dylan could be interpreted as a way of confirming his earlier derogatory remarks by choosing a song-writer because there were no poets worthy of consideration.

The glitterati rushed to pay tribute. I will analyse three of their favourites from Dylan's body of work. Let me begin by saying that I enjoy Dylan's music and his lyrics and sing several of his songs. Andrew O'Hagan, currently a creative writing fellow at King's College London, (he could have been expected to know better) suggested that *Workingman's Blues #2* contains lines as good as anything in American poetry:

> In the dark I hear the night birds call
> I can feel a lover's breath
> I sleep in the kitchen with my feet in the hall
> Sleep is like a temporary death.

However, a few felicitous lines do not make a poem - in the case above, we may ask why the writer sleeps in the kitchen with his feet elsewhere - this superfluous and silly line spoils the other three.

Tambourine Man is cited frequently by Dylan admirers and it does, indeed, contain memorable lines and memorable images, of which my favourite is:

> Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky
> With one hand waving free
> Silhouetted by the sea ....

It is accompanied, however, by a series of striking but meaningless images:[1]

> And take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind
> Down the foggy ruins of time
> Far past the frozen leaves
> The haunted frightened trees
> Out to the windy beach
> Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow ....
>
> Circled by the circus sands
> With all memory and fate
> Driven deep beneath the waves .....

Another song cited in Dylan's defence is *A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall*. It is derivative, inspired by Child Ballad No. 12, that Dylan knew (and sang):

> Oh where ha'e ye been, Lord Randall my son?
> O where ha'e ye been, my handsome young man?"
> "I ha'e been to the wild wood: mother, make my bed soon,
> For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."
> "Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randall my son?
> Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?"
> "I dined wi' my true love; mother, make my bed soon,
> For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."

Dylan's version is remarkable for the incantatory crescendo of lines full of alliterative imagery, culminating dramatically:

> I'll walk to the depths of the deepest black forest
> Where the people are many and their hands are all empty
> Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters
> Where the home in the valley meets the damp dirty prison
> Where the executioner's face is always well hidden
> Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten
> Where black is the color, where none is the number
> And I'll tell and I'll think it and speak it and breathe it
> And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it
> Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin'
> But I'll know my songs well before I start singin'

Perhaps here is the issue: Dylan's songs contain much highly suggestive imagery, the accumulation of which, when sung, hides their lack of meaning. Connotation not denotation: Yvor Winters is turning in his grave, but he would have had a field day with Dylan's lyrics. Again - as in Trump's *Twitters* - we are in a mode of "stream of consciousness" that is, as Shakespeare put it, "Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

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[1] Compare with "Another Day of Life" by Tom Sleigh below.

Winters pointed out that a large and self-protective academic industry has grown up around the exegesis of obscure poetry - and today it includes the work of cult songwriters. Professors and teachers of English try to gain students' attention by introducing popular songs in class. In the USA, moreover, it is not politically correct to rate dead white men's work above that of contemporaries whose work appears more accessible.

Elijah Wald, author of *Dylan Goes Electric!*, made a frank assessment of Dylan's stature:

> I've always had mixed feelings about the people who call Dylan a poet, or call his songs literature, because songs tend to reach far more people, and often touch them more deeply, than poetry or novels. Dylan transformed the role of lyrics in popular music, and it is hard to argue that any writer of the last 50 years, in any form, has been more influential. But millions of people, all around the world, have loved Dylan's recordings *without understanding the words.* (My emphasis - *The Guardian*, 13 October 2016)

For my part, I recognise myself among the "fulminating wingnuts" (Alexis Petridis, in the same edition of *The Guardian*) saddened by the decision.

If there had to be a song-writer at some point, why not **Paul Macartney**?

Let it be
When I find myself in times of trouble,
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be
And when the broken hearted people living in the world agree
There will be an answer, let it be
For though they may be parted, there is still a chance that they will see
There will be an answer, let it be
Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be ....

Or **Paul Simon**?

Kathy's Song
I hear the drizzle of the rain:
Like a memory it falls,
Soft and warm continuing,
Tapping on my roof and walls.
And from the shelter of my mind,

Through the window of my eyes,
I gaze beyond the rain-drenched streets
To England where my heart lies. ....
And so you see I have come to doubt
All that I once held as true.
I stand alone without beliefs -
The only truth I know is you.
And as I watch the drops of rain
Weave their weary paths and die,
I know that I am like the rain:
There but for the grace of you go I.

Or **Leonard Cohen**?

Suzanne takes you down to her place near the river
You can hear the boats go by
You can spend the night beside her
And you know that she's half crazy.
But that's why you want to be there
And she feeds you tea and oranges
That come all the way from China
And just when you mean to tell her
That you have no love to give her
Then she gets you on her wavelength
And she lets the river answer
That you've always been her lover
And you want to travel with her
And you want to travel blind
And you know that she will trust you
For you've touched her perfect body with your mind. ....

Or **Charles Aznavour**?

Vers les docks, où le poids et l'ennui
Me courbent le dos,
Ils arrivent, le ventre alourdi de fruits,
Les bateaux.
Ils viennent du bout du monde
Apportant avec eux des idées vagabondes
Aux reflets de ciel bleu, de mirages
Traînant un parfum poivré
De pays inconnus
Et d'éternels étés,
Où l'on vit presque nu,

Sur les plages.
Moi qui n'ai connu, toute ma vie,
Que le ciel du nord,
J'aimerais débarbouiller ce gris
En virant de bord.

Emmenez-moi au bout de la terre,
Emmenez-moi au pays des merveilles.
Il me semble que la misère
Serait moins pénible au soleil ....

Or **Reinhard Mey?** - in my opinion the best living songwriter -

Über den Wolken
Weisse Schluchten, Berg und Tal,
Federwolken ohne Zahl,
Fabelwesen zieh'n vor den Fenstern vorbei.
Schleier wie aus Engelshaar
Schmiegen sich beinah' greifbar
Um die Flügelenden und reissen entzwei.

Manchmal frag' ich mich.
Was ist es eigentlich.
Das mich drängt aufzusteigen
Und dort oben meine Kreise zu ziehn.
Vielleicht, um über alle Grenzen zu geh'n,
Vielleicht, um über den Horizont hinaus zu seh'n
Und vielleicht, um wie Ikarus
Aus Gefangenschaft zu flieh'n.

Hagelschauer prasseln grell
Und ein Böenkarussel
Packt das Leitwerk hart mit unsichtbarer Hand.
Wolkenspiel erstarrt zu Eis,
Ziffern leuchten grünlich weiss
Weisen mir den Weg durchs Dunkel über Land. .....

Or Léo Ferré (*Merde à Vauban*), Georges Brassens (name one of his songs that isn't eligible as literature) Gilles Vignault (*Gens du Pays*), Rod Stewart (*Downtown Train*), Joni Mitchell (*Both sides now*), Gordon Lightfoot (*Song for a Winter's Night*) and many others, not to mention the "bookish" professional poets, some of whose work is included in this year's *CP*.

T T T T

Rhyming slang

Many expressions from Cockney rhyming slang, such as "use your loaf" (loaf of bread = head) have found their way into current usage. However, you may want to understand the etymology before you call someone a Berk or blow him a raspberry and kick him up the Khyber for talking a load of old cobbler's - if you do, you'd better scarper. Let the following selection serve as a warning.

"Keep your minces off her [Barnet, Bristols, Chalks, Scotches]"

Minces - Mince Pies - Eyes
Barnet - Barnet Fair - Hair
Bristols - Bristol cities - T***ies
Chalks - Chalk Farms - Arms
Scotches - Scotch Pegs - Legs
Khyber - Khyber Pass - Ar**
Raspberry - Raspberry tart - F**t
Berk - Berkeley Hunt - C**t
Cobblers - Cobblers' awls - Ba**s
Scarper - Scapa Flow - Go
North and South - Mouth
Hampsteads - Hampstead Heath - Teeth
(Have a) butcher's - Butcher's Hook - Look
(My old) China - China Plate - Mate
Plates - Plates of Meat - Feet
Trouble and strife - Wife
Titfer - Tit-for-tat - Hat
Brahms - Brahms and Liszt - Pissed (drunk)

and, in conclusion, a touch of class:

A Desmond - Desmond Tutu - a 2:2 (lower second class degree)

T T T T

God

"Quick! I need some more charitable donations"

"Well, all your good deeds appear to be in order - now all that's left is the cavity search"

"Oh! that's what those are for"

"Do you have anything with a view of God?"

T T T T

Clerihews

CP 2008 contained a few. They're a bit queer but more are here:

The Naughty Preposition - *Morris Bishop (1893-1973)*
I lately lost a preposition.
It hid, I thought, beneath my chair.
And angrily I cried: 'Perdition!
Up from out of under there!'

Correctness is my *vade mecum*,

And straggling phrases I abhor.
And yet I wondered: 'What should he come
Up from out of under for?'

Phyllis Oder

Golda Meir
Couldn't travel to Zaire.
The Knesset
Wouldn't bless it.

Richard Armour (1906-1989)

Shake and shake
The catsup bottle.
None will come,
And then a lot'll.

The Little Man - *Hughes Mearns (1875–1965)*
As I was going up the stair,
I met a man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today,
I wish, I wish he'd stay away.

When I came home last night at three
The man was waiting there for me
But when I looked around the hall
I couldn't see him there at all!

John Hollander (1929-2013)

Higgledy piggledy,
Benjamin Harrison,
Twenty-third president
Was, and, as such,

Served between Clevelands and
Save for this trivial
Idiosyncrasy,
Didn't do much.

Max Adeler (C.H. Clarke - 1841-1915)

Stranger pause and drop a tear,
For Susan Sparks lies buried here:
Mingled in some perplexing manner
With Jane, Maria and portions of Hannah.

Doctor Fell - *Tom Brown, about 1683*[2]
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell.
The reason why, I cannot tell;
But this I know, and know full well,
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell.

T T T T

Pass the Port

Two clergymen are discussing contemporary morals.

First Clergyman to second Clergyman: "I never slept with my wife before we were married. Did you?"

Second Clergyman: "What was her maiden name?"

T T T T

2017 Selection

Tom Sleigh (*1953) has published nine books of original poetry, one full-length translation of Euripides' *Herakles*, essays and plays. He is currently director of the Hunter College Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing, where he also teaches poetry writing. In an interview published in the literary journal *AGNI*, Sleigh lists his poetic influences:

> I'd have to say that Browning for his technique; Wallace Stevens for a certain quality of gravitas, what Keats feels near his death, when he said he was living a sort of posthumous existence; Philip Larkin for his sense of extremity; Pound for his fluidity of conception and hardness of execution; Baudelaire for his music and intense scrutiny and affection for street life; and Bishop and Lowell for their immersion in the physical world, would be my fathers and mothers.[3]

The Fox
Marine helicopters on maneuver kept dipping toward swells at Black's
Beach, my board's poise giving way to freefall of my wave tubing
over me, nubs of wax under my feet as I crouched under the lip, sped
across the face and kicked out— all over Southern Cal a haze settled:
as if light breathed

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[2] Dr. John Fell, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, allegedly pardoned Tom Brown, who was facing expulsion, if he could translate extemporaneously Martial's epigram 33:

Non Amo te, Sabidi, nec possum dicere quare;
Hoc tantum Posso dicere, non amo te.

[3] I like this metaphor and would choose (metaphorically) J.S. Bach as my father; Telemann as my wife, and Locatelli and Albinoni as mistresses if the occasion arose.

that technicolor smog at sunset over
San Diego Harbor where battleships at anchor,
just back from patrolling the South China Sea, were
having rust scraped off and painted gray.
This was my inheritance that lay stretched before me:
which is when I felt the underbrush give way
and the fox that thrives in my brain,
not looking sly but just at home in his pelt
and subtle paws, broke from cover and ran
across the yard into the future to sniff my gravestone,
piss, and move on. And so I was reborn into
my long nose and ears, my coat's red, white, and brown
giving off my fox smell lying heavy on the winds in the years when I'd
outsmart guns, poison, dogs and wire, when the rooster and his hens
clucked and ran, crazy with terror
at how everything goes still in that way a fox adores,
gliding through slow-motion drifts of feathers.

Blueprint

I had a blueprint
of history
in my head —

it was a history of the martyrs
of love, the fools
of tyrants, the tyrants
themselves weeping
at the fate of their own soldiers —

a sentimental blueprint,
lacking depth —
a ruled axis X and Y
whose illusions
were bearable . . .
then unbearable . . .

In that blueprint, I wanted to speak
in a language
utterly other, in words
that mimicked
how one of Homer’s warriors
plunges through breastplate
a spear past
breastbone, the spearpoint searching
through the chest

like a ray of light searching
a darkened room
for the soul
unhoused, infantile,
raging —
but my figure of speech,
my “ray of light” —
it was really a spearpoint
piercing the lung
of great-hearted Z
who feels death loosen
his knees, the *Menos*
in his *thumos*
flying out of him —

the fate of his own soul
to confront me
beyond the frame:

no room, no X, no Y, no “ray of light,"
no *Menos*, no *thumos*, no Z —

only sketched-in plane
after plane after plane
cantilevering upward and forever throughout space.

Another Day Of Life

I’ll die in my apartment on a cold bright day,
with nobody around, the apartment next door gone
dead still while wind whistles through the balcony,
though the branches somehow aren’t moving, just as the sun

doesn’t move, everything’s so quiet, so frozen.
Parked cars, plastic bags bleached in the bare trees,
a couple of those Mylar balloons tied to a chair on
the balcony next door, celebrating something, maybe?

... now sagging listless on the floor,
as if every last molecule had been pierced by a needle —
Tom Sleigh is dead, he stared up into the air,

the sky was pale blue as usual and he couldn’t feel
the cold coming through the window, and there wasn’t
much to say or not say — and nobody, anyway, to say or not say it.

John Hollander (1929-2013) was an American poet and literary critic and Sterling Professor Emeritus of English at Yale University. The poem below

was sung by The Eagles on their album *Long Road out of Eden.*

No more walks in the wood
The trees have all been cut down
And where once they stood
Not even a wagon rut
Appears along the path
Low brush is taking over

No more walks in the wood
This is the aftermath
Of afternoons in the clover fields
Where we once made love
Then wandered home together
Where the trees arched above
Where we made our own weather
When branches were the sky
Now they are gone for good
And you, for ill, and I
Am only a passer-by

We and the trees and the way
Back from the fields of play
Lasted as long as we could
No more walks in the wood

No more walks in the wood:
The trees have all been cut
Down, and where once they stood
Not even a wagon rut
Appears along the path
Low brush is taking over.

Clive James (*1939) is an Australian author, critic, broadcaster, poet, translator and memoirist. His website http://clivejames.com, is well worth a visit, not least for his "guest poets" and for his self-deprecatory notes about himself: "Visitors might find this sub-section the easiest to ignore on the entire site, but I thought it might be useful, if only to avoid interrogation on the telephone, to assemble in the one spot any information that editors and producers might want to employ when they are engaged in the task - increasingly less common, I'm glad to say - of summing me up."

Front Flip Half Twist
In the video from Wales, my granddaughter
Steps to the wall's edge. Just a yard below
The beach begins, a long way from the water.

A pause for thought. She then proceeds to throw
A cartwheel through the air, and, when she lands,
Stand upright on the sands, all done no hands.

She came to her miraculous mastery
Of this manoeuvre by a strict process –
She still insists it was no mystery –
Of more and more to reach down less and less
Until, one day, the finished thing was there,
Made manifest entirely in mid-air.

I who can fly no longer feel I'm flying
When I watch her describe that graceful arc,
So perfectly alive. I can't be dying
If I see this. The sky will not grow dark
While she spins through it, setting it alight,
Making my day by staving off the night.

Play it again. A poem that has taken
Its final form is radiant like this.
Beginnings left behind, but not forsaken,
Its history beyond analysis,
What starts by growing slowly, like a pearl,
Takes off and turns into a whirling girl.

Star System

The stars in their magnificent array
Look down upon the Earth, their cynosure,
Or so it seems. They are too far away,
In fact, to see a thing; hence they look pure
To us. They lack the textures of our globe,
So only we, from cameras carried high,
Enjoy the beauty of the swirling robe
That wraps us up, the interplay of sky
And cloud, as if a Wedgwood plate of blue
And white should melt, and then, its surface stirred
With spoons, a treasure too good to be true,
Be placed, and hover like a hummingbird,
Drawing all eyes, though ours alone, to feast
On splendor as it turns west from the East.

There was a time when some of our young men
Walked plumply on the moon and saw Earth rise,
As stunning as the sun. The years since then
Have aged them. Now and then somebody dies.
It's like a clock, for those of us who saw

The Saturn rockets going up as if
Mankind had energy to burn. The law
Is different for one man. Time is a cliff
You come to in the dark. Though you might fall
As easily as on a feather bed,
It is a sad farewell. You loved it all.
You dream that you might keep it in your head.
But memories, where can you take them to?
Take one last look at them. They end with you.

And still the Earth revolves, and still the blaze
Of stars maintains a show of vigilance.
It should, for long ago, in olden days,
We came from there. By luck, by fate, by chance,
All of the elements that form the world
Were sent by cataclysms deep in space,
And from their combination life unfurled
And stood up straight, and wore a human face.
I still can't pass a mirror. Like a boy,
I check my looks, and now I see the shell
Of what I was. So why, then, this strange joy?
Perhaps an old man dying would do well
To smile as he rejoins the cosmic dust
Life comes from, for resign himself he must.

Derek Walcott - Peter Doig

"The village of Paramin, in Trinidad's high northern mountains, is a scattering of humble homes. Known for the peppers and thyme its farmers grow on hillside plots, the village is reachable only by vertiginous roads plied by old Land Cruisers that serve locals as communal taxis. .....

No Trinidadian will read the title of the new book by Derek Walcott, the Nobel Prize-winning poet from the nearby island of St. Lucia, and Peter Doig, the celebrated Scots-Canadian painter long resident on the island, without thinking of such traditions. "Morning, Paramin" is a collaboration between two foreigners who have both spent chunks of their lives in a country that is, as Walcott writes, "full of paintable names." The book finds Walcott, who has himself always made paintings, and who will soon turn eighty-seven, responding to the dreamscapes of the painter thirty years his junior." (Joshua Jelly-Schapiro, *The New Yorker*, 12 January 2017)

Paramin
She loved to say it and I loved to hear it,
"Paramin," it had the scent of cocoa in it,

the criss-crossing trunks of leafy gommiers straight
out of Cézanne and Sisley, the road rose then fell fast
into the lush valley where my daughters live.

The name said by itself could make us laugh
as if some deep, deep secret was hidden there.
I see it through crossing tree trunks framed with love
and she is gone but the hill is still there
and when I join her it will be Paramin
for both of us and the children, the mountain air
and music with no hint of what the name could mean,
rocking gently by itself, “Paramin,” “Paramin.”

Peter Doig, “Lapeyrouse Wall,” 2004 - From the book “*Morning, Paramin*”

Love after Love

The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.

Sit. Feast on your life.

Midsummer, Tobago
Broad sun-stoned beaches.
White heat.
A green river.
A bridge,
scorched yellow palms
from the summer-sleeping house
drowsing through August.

Days I have held,
days I have lost,
days that outgrow, like daughters,
my harbouring arms.

T T T T

Pass the Port again

A vicar and a lady from his parish are playing golf. On the first green, the vicar misses his putt and shouts "Goddammit! I missed"

On the second green, the same thing happens again - "Goddammit! I missed" shouts the vicar.

This greatly upsets his lady partner who says: "I really don't think it appropriate that you should swear so loudly each time you miss a putt."

"You're right," answers the vicar - "I will try to control my temper."

All goes well until the ninth green - the vicar misses a birdie putt. "Goddammit ..." he begins, and then apologizes to his lady partner: "Madam, if I swear again, may God strike me dead."

Again all goes well until the 13th green - but the vicar misses another easy putt. "Goddammit ..." he begins, but the sky darkens, thunder clouds roll close overhead and a flash of lightning comes from the heavens - and kills the lady.

A voice from above says: "Goddammit, I missed!"

T T T T

Comma Queen - 1

In *CP 2005*, I mentioned the death of Eleanor Gould, long-standing copy editor at *The New Yorker*, and paid tribute to her vast knowledge of English language and usage. To a remark by James Thurber that “facetiously” was the only word in English that had all six vowels in order, she replied: "What about “abstemiously”? The edition of *The New*

Yorker of 23 February 2015 included a piece by Mary Norris, who worked under her. Here is the first of two extracts.

> The big challenge in collating was what were called Gould proofs. Eleanor Gould was *The New Yorker's* head grammarian and query proofreader. She was a certified genius—a member not just of Mensa but of some übergroup within Mensa—and the magazine's editor-in-chief at the time, William Shawn, had complete faith in her. She read everything in galley—everything except fiction, that is, which she had been taken off of years earlier, as I understood it, because she treated everyone the same, be it Marcel Proust or Annie Proulx or Vladimir Nabokov. Clarity was Eleanor's lodestar, *Fowler's Modern English* her bible, and by the time she was done with a proof the pencil lines on it looked like dreadlocks. Some of the fact pieces were ninety columns long, and Mr. Shawn took every query. My all-time favorite Eleanor Gould query was on Christmas Gifts for Children: the writer had repeated the old saw that every Raggedy Ann doll has "I love you" written on her little wooden heart, and Eleanor wrote in the margin that it did not, and she knew, because as a child she had performed open-heart surgery on her rag doll and seen with her own eyes that nothing was written on the heart.
>
> Then I was allowed to work on the copydesk. It changed the way I read prose—I was paid to find mistakes, and it was a long time before I could once again read for pleasure. I spontaneously copy-edited everything I laid eyes on. I had a paperback edition of Faulkner's *The Hamlet* that was so riddled with typos that it almost ruined Flem Snopes for me. But, as I relaxed on the copydesk, I was sometimes even able to enjoy myself. There were writers who weren't very good and yet were impossible to improve, like figure skaters who hit all the technical marks but have a limited artistic appeal and sport unflattering costumes. There were competent writers on interesting subjects who were just careless enough in their spelling and punctuation to keep a girl occupied. And there were writers whose prose came in so highly polished that I couldn't believe I was getting paid to read them: John Updike, Pauline Kael, Mark Singer, Ian Frazier! In a way, these were the hardest, because the prose lulled me into complacency. They transcended the office of the copy editor. It was hard to stay alert for opportunities to meddle in an immaculate manuscript, yet if you missed something you couldn't use that as an excuse. The only thing to do was style the spelling, and even that could be fraught. Oliver Sacks turned out to be attached to the spelling of "sulphur" and "sulphuric" that he remembered from his chemistry experiments as a boy. (*The New Yorker* spells it less romantically: "sulfur," "sulfuric.")

When Pauline Kael typed “prevert” instead of “pervert,” she meant “prevert” (unless she was reviewing something by Jacques Prévert). Luckily, she was kind, and if you changed it she would just change it back and *stet* it without upbraiding you. Kael revised up until closing, and though we lackeys resented writers who kept changing “doughnut” to “coffee cake” then back to “doughnut” and then “coffee cake” again, because it meant more work for us, Kael’s changes were always improvements. She approached me once with a proof in her hand. She couldn’t figure out how to fix something, and I was the only one around. She knew me from chatting in the ladies’ room on the eighteenth floor. I looked at the proof and made a suggestion, and she was delighted. “You helped me!” she gasped.

I was on the copydesk when John McPhee’s pieces on geology were set up. I tried to keep my head. There was not much to do. McPhee was like John Updike, in that he turned in immaculate copy. Really, all I had to do was read. I’d heard that McPhee compared his manuscript with the galleys, so anything *The New Yorker* did he noticed. I just looked up words in the dictionary to check the spelling (which was invariably correct, but I had to check) and determined whether compound words were hyphenated, whether hyphenated words should be closed up or printed as two words, or whether I should *stet* the hyphen. It was my province to capitalize the “i” in Interstate 80, hyphenate I-80, and lowercase “the interstate.”

In Part II of *In Suspect Terrain*, I came to this sentence and thought I might have spotted an error: “But rock columns are generalized; they are atremble with hiatuses; and they depend in large part on well borings, which are shallow, and on seismic studies, which are new, and far between.” The itchy-fingered copy editor hovered at the threshold. I wanted to let her in. I wasn’t going to touch the comma, but I was desperate to correct that “new, and far between” to “few, and far between.” I could save McPhee from making a horrible mistake! But many people with finer minds than mine were lined up to read the copy when I was through. They would not assume that “new” was a typo for “few,” and if they had any doubt they could query it, asking the author through his editor, and there would be no harm done. But I was hellbent on rectifying what might be a glitch in a cliché. It was a Friday—I remember, because I knew that if I made this change I would have to live all weekend with the possibility, which could swiftly morph into a certainty, that I had made a mistake. Two mistakes: I would have gone beyond my province, and I would have introduced an error into McPhee’s carefully wrought prose.

So I stayed my hand, the itchy-fingered hand with the pencil in it, and spent the weekend with a clean conscience. As soon as I left the office, I felt relieved that I had let it alone. What ever made me think that McPhee would misspell, or even mistype, the word “few”?

That was more than thirty years ago. And it has now been more than twenty years since I became a page O.K.’er—a position that exists only at *The New Yorker*, where you query-proofread pieces and manage them, with the editor, the author, a fact checker, and a second proofreader, until they go to press. An editor once called us prose goddesses; another job description might be comma queen. Except for writing, I have never seriously considered doing anything else.

One of the things I like about my job is that it draws on the entire person: not just your knowledge of grammar and punctuation and usage and foreign languages and literature but also your experience of travel, gardening, shipping, singing, plumbing, Catholicism, Midwesternism, mozzarella, the A train, New Jersey. And in turn it feeds you more experience. The popular image of the copy editor is of someone who favors rigid consistency. I don’t usually think of myself that way. But, when pressed, I do find I have strong views about commas.

T T T T

Garden Gloves

I acquired recently a pair of gardening gloves. Despite my defence of the technical regulations of the European Union (*CP 2016*), the following was too much (in 30 languages .... for a pair of gardening gloves!).

The gloves are designed to protect against the following risks:

All Guide gloves are corresponding to CE Directive89/686 and EN420.

EN388:2003 - Protection against physical and mechanical risks. The figures next to the pictogram for the EN standard indicate the results obtained in each test. The test values are given as a 4-figure code, for example 4112. The higher the figure is the better is the result. Fig 1 Resistance to abrasion (performance level 1-4) Fig 2 Resistance to cutting (performance level 1-5) Fig 3 Tearing resistance (performance level 1-4) Fig 4 Resistance to puncture (performance level 1-4)

Glove marking: Test results for each model are marked on the glove and/or at its packaging, in our catalogue and on our web pages.

We recommend that the gloves are tested and checked for damages before use.

If not specified the glove doesn't contain any known substances that can cause allergic reactions. It is the employer's responsibility together with

the user to analyze if each glove protects against the risks that can appear in any given work situation. Detailed information about the properties and use of our gloves can be obtained through your local supplier or on our website.

Storage: Store the gloves in a dark, cool and dry place in their original packaging. The mechanical properties of the glove will not be affected when stored properly. The shelf life cannot be determined and is dependent on the intended use and storage conditions.

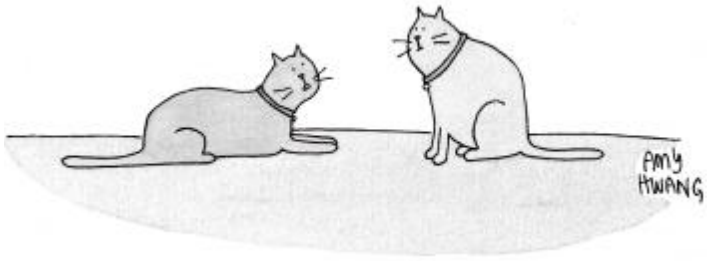
Disposal: Dispose the used gloves in accordance with the requirements of each country and/or region.

Cleaning/washing: Achieved test results are guaranteed for new and unwashed gloves. The effect of washing on the gloves' protective properties has not been tested unless specified.

Washing instructions: Follow the specified washing instructions. If no washing instructions are specified, wash with mild soap, air dry.

T T T T

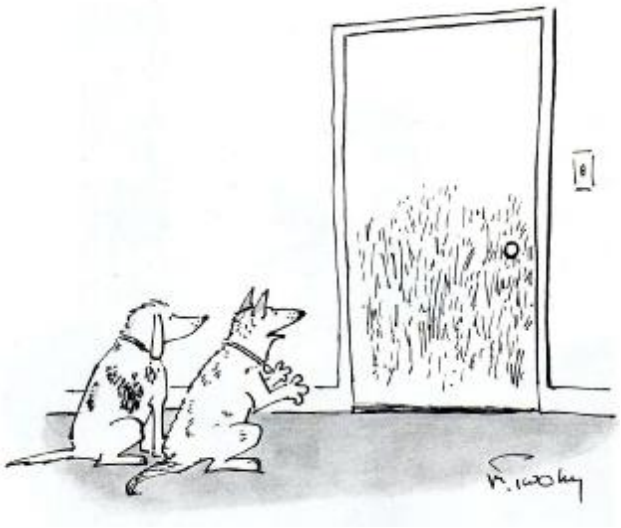
Cats and Dogs



"Is oversleeping a real thing?"

"Every day I live in fear that our jobs will be replaced by pillows"

"Yes, I came back. I always come back."



"All my work deals with the theme of exclusion"

T T T T

More Ben Jonson

To the Reader

Pray thee, take care, that tak'st my book in hand,
To read it well—that is, to understand.

On my first son

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy;
My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy.
Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.

Oh, could I lose all father now! For why
Will man lament the state he should envy?
To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage,
And if no other misery, yet age!

Rest in soft peace, and asked, say, Here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.

For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such
As what he loves may never like too much.

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk doth make Man better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night—
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures life may perfect be.

Epitaphs i
Wouldst thou hear what Man can say
In a little? Reader, stay.
Underneath this stone doth lie
As much Beauty as could die:
Which in life did harbour give
To more Virtue than doth live.
If at all she had a fault,
Leave it buried in this vault.
One name was Elizabeth,
The other, let it sleep with death:
Fitter, where it died, to tell
Than that it lived at all. Farewell.

Ben Jonson's Grace before King James
Our royal king and queen, God bless,
The Palsgrave and the Lady Bess;
God bless Pembroke, and the state,
And Buckingham the fortunate;
God bless the council and keep them safe
And God bless me, and God bless Rafe.[4]

Simplex Munditis
Still to be neat, still to be drest,
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powder'd, still perfumed:
Lady, it is to be presumed,

[4] Rafe was the tapster at the Swan near Charing Cross - King James gave Jonson £100 for the joke.

Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all th' adulteries of art;
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

T T T T

Travellers - Evelyn Waugh

With thanks to Jean-Pierre Naz for the suggestion, I am including some examples of Waugh's impeccable prose from *When the Going was Good* .[5]

Preface

The following pages comprise all that I wish to preserve of the four travel books I wrote between the years 1929 and 1935 : *Labels, Remote People, Ninety-two Days* and (a title not of my own choosing) *Waugh in Abyssinia*. These books nave now been out of print for some time and will not be reissued. The first three were published by Messrs. Duckworth & Co., the fourth by Longmans, Green & Co. There was a fifth book, *Robbery under Law*, about Mexico, which I am content to leave in oblivion, for it dealt little with travel and much with political questions. "To have travelled a lot," I wrote in the Introduction to that book, "to have spent, as I have done, the first twelve years of adult life on the move, is to this extent a disadvantage. At the age of thirty-five one needs to go to the moon, or some such place, to recapture the excitement with which one first landed at Calais. For many people Mexico has, in the past, had this lunar character. Lunar it still remains, but in no poetic sense. It is a waste land, part of a dead or, at any rate, a dying planet. Politics, everywhere destructive, have here dried up the place, frozen it, cracked it, and powdered it in dust. In the sixteenth century human life was disordered and talent stultified by the obsession of theology; to-day we are plague-stricken by politics. This is a political book." So let it lie in its own dust. Here I seek the moon landscape.

From 1928 until 1937 I had no fixed home and no possessions which would not conveniently go on a porter's barrow. I travelled continuously, in England and abroad. These four books, here in fragments reprinted, were the record of certain journeys, chosen for no better reason than that

[5] Reprint Society, London 1948.

I needed money at the time of their completion; they were pedestrian, day-to-day accounts of things seen and people met, interspersed with commonplace information and some rather callow comments. In cutting them to their present shape, I have sought to leave a purely personal narrative in the hope that there still lingers round it some trace of vernal scent.

Each book, I found on re-reading, had a distinct and slightly grimmer air, as, year by year, the shades of the prison-house closed. In *Labels* I looked only for pleasure. Not uncritically I examined the credentials of its varied sources and watched the loss and gain of other seekers. Baroque, the luxurious and surprising; cookery, wine, eccentric individuals, grottoes by day, the haunts of the underworld at night; these things I, like a thousand others, sought in the Mediterranean.

How much we left unvisited and untasted in those splendid places! Europe could wait. There would be a time for Europe," I thought; "all too soon the days would come when I needed a man at my side to put up my easel and carry my paints; when I could not venture more than an hour's journey from a good hotel; when I needed soft breezes and mellow sunshine all day long; then I would take my old eyes to Germany and Italy. Now, while I had the strength, I would go to the wild lands where man had deserted his post and the jungle was creeping back to its old strongholds." Thus "Charles Ryder"; thus myself. These were the years when Mr. Peter Fleming went to the Gobi Desert, Mr. Graham Greene to the Liberian hinterland; Robert Byron—vital today, as of old, in our memories, all his exuberant zest in the opportunities of our time now, alas, tragically and untimely quenched—to the ruins of Persia. We turned our backs on civilisation. Had we known, we might have lingered with "Palinurus"; had we known that all that seeming-solid, patiently built, gorgeously ornamented structure of Western life was to melt overnight like an ice-castle, leaving only a puddle of mud; had we known man was even then leaving his post. Instead, we set off on our various stern roads; I to the Tropics and the Arctic, with the belief that barbarism was a dodo to be stalked with a pinch of salt. The route of Remote People was easy going; the Ninety-two Days were more arduous. We have most of us marched and made camp since then, gone hungry and thirsty, lived where pistols are flourished and fired. At that time it seemed an ordeal, an initiation to manhood.

Then in 1935 came the Italian invasion of Abyssinia and I returned there, but no longer as a free traveller. As a war correspondent, lightly as I took my duties and the pretensions of my colleagues, I was in the livery of the new age. The ensuing book betrayed the change. I have omitted many

pages of historical summary and political argument. Re-reading them, after the experience of recent years, I found little to retract. Hopes proved dupes; it is possible that present fears may be liars. This is not the place in which to attempt to disentangle the *post hoc* from the *propter hoc* of disaster.

My own travelling days are over, and I do not expect to see many travel books in the near future. When I was a reviewer, they used, I remember, to appear in batches of four or five a week, cram-full of charm and wit and enlarged Leica snapshots. There is no room for tourists in a world of "displaced persons." Never again, I suppose, shall we land on foreign soil with letter of credit and passport (itself the first faint shadow of the great cloud that envelops us) and feel the world wide open before us. That is as remote today as "Yorrick's" visit to Paris, when he had to be reminded by the landlord that their countries were at war. It will be more remote to-morrow. Some sort of reciprocal "Strength-through-Joy," *dopo-lavoro* system may arise in elected areas; others, not I, gifted with the art of pleasing public authorities may get themselves despatched abroad to promote "Cultural Relations"; the very young, perhaps, may set out like the Wandervogels of the Weimar period; lean, lawless, aimless couples with rucksacks, joining the great army of men and women without papers, without official existence, the refugees and deserters, who drift everywhere today between the barbed wire. I shall not, by my own wish, be among them.

Perhaps it is a good thing for English literature. In two generations the air will be fresher and we may again breed great travellers like Burton and Doughty. I never aspired to being a great traveller. I was simply a young man, typical of my age; we travelled as a matter of course. I rejoice that I went when the going was good. (*Evelyn Waugh, Stinchcombe, 1945*)

A Coronation in 1930 - pp. 95-98

But perhaps the most remarkable visitors were the Marine band. They arrived on the same day as the Duke of Gloucester, under the command of Major Sinclair, strengthened by a diet of champagne at breakfast, luncheon, tea, and dinner throughout their journey, and much sage advice about the propriety of their behaviour in a foreign capital. At Addis they were quartered in a large, unfinished hotel; each man had his own bedroom, furnished by his thoughtful hosts with hairbrushes, clothes-hangers, and brand-new enamelled spittoons.

Perhaps no one did more to deserve his star of Ethiopia than Major Sinclair. Eschewing the glitter and dignity of the legation camp, he loyally remained with his men in the town, and spent anxious days arranging appointments that were never kept; his diary, which some of us were

privileged to see, was a stark chronicle of successive disappointments patiently endured. "Appointment 9.30 emperor's private secretary to arrange for this evening's banquet; he did not come. 11. Went as arranged to see master of the king's music ; he was not there. 12. Went to see Mr. Hall to obtain score of Ethiopian national anthem—not procurable. 2.30. Car should have come to take men to aerodrome—did not arrive . . ." and so on. But, in spite of every discouragement, the band was always present on time, irreproachably dressed, and provided with the correct music.

One morning in particular, on which the band played a conspicuous part, remains vividly in my memory as typical of the whole week. It was the first day of the official celebrations, to be inaugurated by the unveiling of the new Menelik memorial. The ceremony was announced for ten o'clock. Half an hour before the time, Irene Ravensdale and I drove to the spot. Here, on the site of the old execution-tree, stood the monument, shrouded in brilliant green silk. Round it was a little ornamental garden with paving, a balustrade, and regular plots, from which, here and there, emerged delicate shoots of newly sown grass. While some workmen were laying carpets on the terrace and spreading yellow sunshades of the kind which cover the tables at open-air restaurants, others were still chipping at the surrounding masonry and planting drooping palm-trees in the arid beds. A heap of gilt armchairs lay on one side; on the other a mob of photographers and movietone men were fighting for places. Opposite the carpeted terrace rose a stand of several unstable tiers. A detachment of policemen were engaged furiously laying about them with canes in the attempt to keep these seats clear of natives. Four or five Europeans were already established there. Irene and I joined them. Every ten minutes or so a police officer would appear and order us all off; we produced our laissez-passers; he saluted and went away, to be succeeded at a short interval by a colleague, when the performance was repeated.

The square and half a mile of the avenue approaching it were lined with royal guards; there was a band formed up in front of them; the Belgian colonel curvetted about on an uneasy chestnut horse. Presently, punctual to the minute, appeared Major Sinclair and his band. They had had to march from their hotel, as the charabanc ordered for them had failed to appear. They halted, and Major Sinclair approached the Belgian colonel for instructions. The colonel knew no English, and the major no French; an embarrassing interview followed, complicated by the caprices of the horse, which plunged backwards and sideways over the square. In this way the two officers covered a large area of ground, conversing inconclusively the while with extravagant gestures. Eventually Irene heroically stepped out to interpret for them. It appeared that the Belgian colonel had had no orders about the English band. He had his own band there and did not

want another. The major explained he had had direct instructions to appear in the square at ten. The colonel said the major could not possibly stay in the square; there was no room for him, and anyway he would have no opportunity of playing, since the native band had a programme of music fully adequate for the whole proceedings. At last the colonel conceded that the English band might take up a position at the extreme end of his troops at the bottom of the hill. The officers parted, and the band marched away out of sight. A long wait followed, while the battle between police and populace raged round the stand. At last the delegations began to arrive; the soldiers presented arms; the native band played the appropriate music; the Belgian colonel was borne momentarily backwards through the ranks, capered heroically among the crowd, and reappeared at another corner of the square. The delegations took up their places on the gilt chairs under the umbrellas. A long pause preceded the Emperor's arrival; the soldiers still stood stiff. Suddenly up that imposing avenue there appeared a slave, trotting unconcernedly with a gilt chair on his head. He put it among the others, looked round with interest at the glittering uniforms, and then retired. At last the Emperor came; first a troop of lancers, then the crimson car and silk umbrella. He took up his place in the centre of the Court under a blue canopy; the band played the Ethiopian national anthem. A secretary presented him with the text of his speech; the camera-men began snapping and turning. But there was a fresh delay. Something had gone wrong. Messages passed from mouth to mouth; a runner disappeared down the hill.

One photographer, bolder than the rest, advanced out of the crowd and planted his camera within a few yards of the royal party; he wore a violet suit of plus-fours, a green shirt open at the neck, tartan stockings, and parti-coloured shoes. After a few happy shots of the Emperor, he walked slowly along the line, looking the party critically up and down. When he found anyone who attracted his attention, he took a photograph of him. Then, expressing his satisfaction with a slight inclination of the head, he rejoined his colleagues.

Still a delay. Then up the avenue came Major Sinclair; and the Marine band. They halted in the middle of the square, arranged their music, and played the national anthem. Things were then allowed to proceed according to plan. The Emperor advanced, read his speech, and pulled the cord. There was a rending of silk and a vast equestrian figure in gilt bronze was partially revealed. Men appeared with poles and poked away the clinging folds. One piece, out of reach of their efforts, obstinately fluttered over the horse's ears and eyes. The Greek contractor mounted a ladder and dislodged the rag.

The Marine band continued to play; the delegations and courtiers made for their cars; the Emperor paused, and listened attentively to the music, then smiled his approval to the major before driving away. As the last of the visitors disappeared, the people broke through the soldiers, and the square became a dazzle of white tunics and black heads. For many days to come, numbers of them might be seen clustering round the memorial and gazing with puzzled awe at this new ornament to their city.

T T T T

Carpe Diem

Ode 1.11 - *Horace* [Translation by John Conington, 1882]

Tu ne quaesieris, scire nefas, quem mihi, quem tibi finem di dederint, Leuconoe, nec Babylonios temptaris numeros. Ut melius, quidquid erit, pati. Seu pluris hiemes seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam, quae nunc oppositis debilitat pumicibus mare Tyrrhenum. Sapias, vina liques et spatio brevi spem longam reseces. Dum loquimur, fugerit invida aetas: **carpe diem**, quam minimum credula postero.	Ask not ('tis forbidden knowledge), what our destined term of years, Mine and yours; nor scan the tables of your Babylonish seers. Better far to bear the future, my Leuconoe, like the past, Whether Jove has many winters yet to give, or this our last; This, that makes the Tyrrhene billows spend their strength against the shore. Strain your wine and prove your wisdom; life is short; should hope be more? In the moment of our talking, envious time has ebb'd away. Seize the present; trust tomorrow e'en as little as you may.

To Celia - *Ben Jonson (1572-1637)*

Come my Celia, let us prove,
While we may, the sports of love;
Time will not be ours for ever:
He, at length, our good will sever.
Spend not then his gifts in vain.
Suns that set, may rise again:
But, if once we lose this light,
'Tis, with us, perpetual night.
Why should we defer our joys?
Fame, and rumour are but toys.
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household spies?
Or his easier ears beguile,
So removèd by our wile?

'Tis no sin, love's fruits to steal,
But the sweet theft to reveal:
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been.

Gaudeamus Igitur - *Christian Wilhelm Kindleben (1748-1785)*

Gaudeamus igitur Iuvenes dum sumus. Post iucundam iuventutem Post molestam senectutem Nos habebit humus.	While we're young, let us rejoice, Singing out in gleeful tones; After youth's delightful frolic, And old age (so melancholic!), Earth will cover our bones.

Carpe diem - *Martial, Book V:58* (Translated by A. S. Kline)

Cras te uicturum, cras dicis, Postume, semper: dic mihi, cras istud, Postume, quando uenit? Quam longe cras istud! ubi est? aut unde petendum? Numquid apud Parthos Armeniosque latet? Iam cras istud habet Priami uel Nestoris annos. Cras istud quanti, dic mihi, possit emi? Cras uiues? Hodie iam uiuere, Postume, serum est: ille sapit quisquis, Postume, uixit heri.	Tomorrow you will live, you always cry; In what fair country does this morrow lie, That 'tis so mighty long ere it arrive? Beyond the Indies does this morrow live? 'Tis so far-fetched, this morrow, that I fear 'Twill be both very old and very dear. "Tomorrow I will live," the fool does say: Today itself's too late - the wise lived yesterday.

À Cassandre - *Pierre Ronsard (1524-1585)*

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

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

Donc, si vous me croyez, mignonne,
Tandis que votre âge fleuronne

En sa plus verte nouveauté,
Cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse :
Comme à cette fleur, la vieillesse
Fera ternir votre beauté.

To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time - *Robert Herrick (1591-1674)*

John William Waterhouse (1849-1917)

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

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

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

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

Martin Opitz (1597-1639)

Ach liebste lass uns eilen
Wir haben Zeit
Es schadet uns verweilen
Uns beyderseit.
Der Edlen Schönheit Gaben
Fliehen fuss für fuss:
Dass alles was wir haben
Verschwinden muss.
Der Wangen Ziehr verbleichet
Das Haar wird greiss
Der Augen Feuer weichet
Die Brunst wird Eiss.
Das Mündlein von Corallen
Wird umgestalt
Die Händ' als Schnee verfallen
Und du wirst alt.

Drumb lass uns jetzt geniessen
Der Jugend Frucht
Eh' wir folgen müssen
Der Jahre Flucht.
Wo du dich selber liebest
So liebe mich
Gieb mir das wann du giebest
Verlier auch ich.

Georg Rudolf Weckherlin (1584-1653)

Schönheit nicht wehrhaft

Lasst uns in den Garten gehen,
Schönes Lieb, damit wir sehen,
Ob der Blumen Ehr, die Ros,
So euch eure Farb gezeiget,
Da sie heut der Tau aufschloss,
Ihren Pracht noch nicht abneiget.

Sieh doch, von wie wenig Stunden
Ihre Schönheit überwunden,
Wie zu Grund liegt all ihr Ruhm!
Wie sollt man, Natur, dich ehren,
da du doch ein solch Blum
Einen Tag kaum lasset wehren?

Was ist es dann, dass ihr fliehet,
Indem euer Alter blühet,
Von meinet Lieb Süssigkeit?
Ach, geniesset eurer Jahren!
Die Zeit wird eure Schönheit
Nicht mehr, dann die Rosen, sparen.

Walzer - *Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg - 1772-1801)*

Hinunter die Pfade des Lebens gedreht
Pausiert nicht, ich bitt euch so lang es noch geht
Drückt fester die Mädchen ans klopfende Herz
Ihr wisst ja wie flüchtig ist Jugend und Scherz.

Lasst fern von uns Zanken und Eifersucht sein
Und nimmer die Stunden mit Grillen entweihn
Dem Schutzgeist der Liebe nur gläubig vertraut
Es findet noch jeder gewiss eine Braut.

T T T T

Comma Queen - 2

A headline in *The Guardian* of 16 March 2017 read "Oxford comma helps drivers win dispute about overtime pay - An overtime case that will delight language nerds everywhere hinges on the absence of an Oxford comma." What is the "Oxford comma"? I turn once again to the comma queen, Mary Norris (see above).

> The comma as we know it was invented by Aldo Manuzio, a printer working in Venice, circa 1500. It was intended to prevent confusion by separating things. In the Greek, *komma* means “something cut off,” a segment. (Aldo was printing Greek classics during the High Renaissance. The comma was a Renaissance invention.) As the comma proliferated, it started generating confusion. Basically, there are two schools of thought: One plays by ear, using the comma to mark a pause, like dynamics in music; if you were reading aloud, the comma would suggest when to take a breath. The other uses punctuation to clarify the meaning of a sentence by illuminating its underlying structure. Each school believes that the other gets carried away. It can be tense and kind of silly, like the argument among theologians about how many angels can fit on the head of a pin. How many commas can fit into a sentence by Herman Melville? Or, closer to home, into a sentence from *The New Yorker*?
>
> Even something as ostensibly simple as the serial comma can arouse strong feelings. The serial comma is the one before “and” in a series of three or more things. With the serial comma: My favorite cereals are Cheerios, Raisin Bran, and Shredded Wheat. Without the serial comma: I used to like Kix, Trix and Wheat Chex. Proponents of the serial comma say that it is preferable because it prevents ambiguity, and I’ll go along with that. Also, I’m lazy, and I find it easier to use the serial comma consistently rather than stop every time I come to a series and register whether or not the comma before the “and” preceding the last item is actually preventing ambiguity. But pressed to come up with an example of a series that was unambiguously ambiguous without the serial comma I couldn’t think of a good one. An ambiguous series proved so elusive that I wondered whether perhaps we could do without the serial comma after all. In my office, this is heresy, but I will say it anyway and risk being shunned in the elevator: Isn’t the “and” sufficient? After all, that’s what the other commas in a series stand for: “Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!” A comma preceding “and” is redundant. I was at risk of becoming a comma apostate.
>
> Fortunately, the Internet is busy with examples of series that are absurd without the serial comma:

"We invited the strippers, J.F.K. and Stalin." (This has been illustrated online, and formed the basis of a poll: which stripper had the better outfit, J.F.K. or Stalin.)

"This book is dedicated to my parents, Ayn Rand and God."

And there was the country-and-Western singer who was joined onstage by his two ex-wives, Kris Kristofferson and Waylon Jennings.

The bottom line is to choose one and be consistent and try not to make a moral issue out of it. Or is it? Maybe it's better to judge each series on its merits, applying the serial comma where it's needed and suppressing it where it's not. Many newspapers, both American and British, do not use the serial comma, which underscores the idea that the news is meant to be read fast, in the dead-tree version or on the screen, because it's not news for long. It's ephemeral. Print—or, rather, text—should be streamlined and unencumbered. Maybe the day is coming when the newsfeed-style three dots (ellipsis) between items, like the eternal ribbon of news circling the building at One Times Square, will dominate, and all text will look like Céline. Certainly advertising—billboards, road signs, neon—repels punctuation. Leaving out the serial comma saves time and space. The editors of Webster's Third saved eighty pages by cutting down on commas.

But suppose you're not in a hurry. Suppose you move your lips when you read, or pronounce every word aloud in your head, and you're reading a Victorian novel or a history of Venice. You have plenty of time to crunch commas. If I worked for a publication that did not use the serial comma, I would adjust—convert from orthodox to reformed—but for now I remain loyal to the serial comma, because it actually does sometimes prevent ambiguity and because I've gotten used to the way it looks. It gives starch to the prose, and can be very effective. If a sentence were a picket fence, the serial commas would be posts at regular intervals.

The term "Oxford comma" refers to the Oxford University Press, whose house style is to use the serial comma. (The public-relations department at Oxford doesn't insist on it, however. Presumably P.R. people see it as a waste of time and space. The serial comma is a pawn in the war between town and gown.) To call it the Oxford comma gives it a bit of class, a little snob appeal. Chances are that if you use the Oxford comma you brush the crumbs off your shirtfront before going out.

T T T T

Have some more Port

In *CP 2016* I included a story about a Syndic (Mayor). Here is another.

Syndic Bolomey was returning from a visit to a nearby village. The meeting ended with the traditional "verre d'amitié". As the "amitié" between the villages was strong, more than one "verre" was enjoyed.

Arriving back in his village, Syndic Bolomey was stopped by a policeman. He wound down his car window and said: "Syndic Bolomey returning from a meeting, no alcohol." The policeman waved him on.

Thirty meters further on, Bolomey was again stopped by a policeman. Again he wound down his window: "Syndic Bolomey returning from a meeting, no alcohol." The policeman waved him on.

After another thirty meters, Bolomey was stopped yet again. He began his phrase: " Syndic Bolomey returning ...." but the policeman interrupted him: "Monsieur le Syndic, next time round I suggest you take the first exit on your right into the village."

T T T T

"Oh, what a big gun you have"

"Series of reimagined fairytales have been published on the gun advocacy group's family website, which see Hansel, Gretel and Little Red Riding Hood sport rifles

The US pro-gun lobby is entertaining its younger members with its own take on classic fairytales, but they have a unique twist: firearms.

The National Rifle Association's *nrafamily.com* website is featuring the pro-firearms stories. The latest *Hansel and Gretel (Have Guns)*, written by Amelia Hamilton and posted last week, is accompanied by a picture of the titular siblings lost in the forest, as is traditional, but rather than being petrified of the story's witch they're supplied with rifles.

The story opens with their family bemoaning their lack of food and deviates from the classic text with the lines: "Fortunately, they had been taught how

safely to use a gun and had been hunting with their parents most of their lives. They knew that, deep in the forest, there were areas that had never been hunted where they may be able to hunt for food. They knew how to keep themselves safe should they find themselves in trouble."

Not falling foul of the witch in her gingerbread cottage themselves, they instead find some other children held prisoner: "The boys directed Hansel to the key that would unlock their cage while Gretel stood at the ready with her firearm just in case, for she was a better shot than her brother."

Another story published on the site in January follows a similar theme – *Little Red Riding Hood Has A Gun*. Red is off to visit grandma, as usual, but when she's approached by the predatory wolf things unfold rather differently: "As she grew increasingly uncomfortable, she shifted her rifle so that it was in her hands and at the ready. The wolf became frightened and ran away."

In the NRA re-telling, little old grandma doesn't fall foul of the salacious beast either. The story doesn't get as far as the wolf gobbling her up and the usual "what big eyes you've got" exchange, it stalls when grandma whips out her scattergun. What a big gun you've got, indeed.

Author Amelia Hamilton is described on the site as "a lifelong writer and patriot" who is also "a conservative blogger" and author of the *Growing Patriots* series of children's books." (David Barnett, *The Guardian*, 24.3.2016)

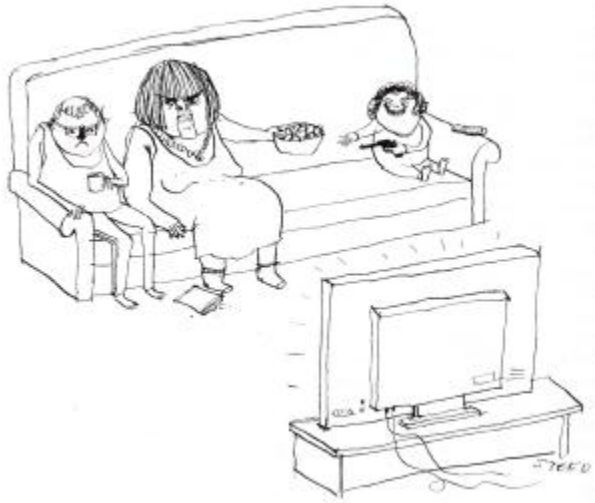
The site says she has a master's degree in both English and 18th century history from the University of St Andrews in Scotland, and a post-graduate diploma in fine and decorative arts from Christie's London. She should be ashamed.[6]

T T T T

[6] In the aftermath of the Las Vegas massacre on 1 October, *The Guardian* published the following facts about guns in the USA: There are 88 guns for every 100 inhabitants of the USA; 3% own half the guns; 1,516 mass shootings have taken place in the USA in the last 1,735 days; most people who are killed by guns kill themselves; people who have a gun in the house are far more likely to be shot dead than those who don't; if more guns really made you safer, America would be one of the safest places in the world - as it is seven children or teenagers are shot dead on average every day; once a week a toddler injures someone with a gun

"For extra protection, this one is armed with a tiny gun of its own"

"Use your indoor gun"



"I'm starting to wish we'd never bought that thing"

"I'd like to keep my gun on"

T T T T

"Niene geit's so schön u luschtig" - Hugo Loetscher (1929-2009)

"Niene geit's so schön u luschtig, wie deheim im Ämmital" - so singt das Volkslied: Nirgendwo geht es so schön und lustig zu wie daheim im Emmental. Schon immer wollte ich einen Ort kennen lernen, wo es schön und lustig ist wie sonst nirgendswo. Also, auf ins Emmental. Nur - ist es im Emmental überall gleich lustig und gleich schön? Fährt man mit Vorteil nach Langnau oder auf die Moosegg? Ist es das ganze Jahr lustig? Auch während dem Heuet? Oder erst mit der Metzgete?

Während ich daran war, solches herauszukriegen, hörte ich am gleichen Radio, in dem eben noch das Emmental besungen worden war, ein Lied über Innsbruck: "Was ist wie du an Schönheiten voll, du Perle vom Tirol."

Wenn aber Innsbruck so einzig voll von Schönheiten ist, wie kann es dann im Emmental schön sein wie nirgendswo? Aber vielleicht verhält es sich so:

In Innsbruck ist es nur schön, im Emmental hingegen schön und lustig zugleich.

Warum soll ich nicht zuerst ins Emmental und hinterher nach Innsbruck fahren? Es gibt vom Emmental über Bern nach Innsbruck schliesslich eine Zugverbindung. Zudem könnte ich erst noch in St. Gallen die Fahrt unterbrechen und einen Abstecher ins Appenzell machen. Denn das hatte ich inzwischen auch herausgefunden: "E Ländli händs, Gott Lob und Dank, ke söttigs wit und brät."

Von diesem Ländchen, wie es ein solches weit und breit nicht gibt, von diesem "schönste Fleckli Wölt", fahre ich dann zur "Perle vom Tirol, die an Schönheiten ist voll". Und wenn schon in Osterreich, kann ich gleich nach Wien gehen; denn "Wien, Wien nur du allein, sollst stets die Stadt meiner Träume sein". Die Gefahr, dass sich inzwischen etwas geändert hat, droht kaum, denn "Wien bleibt Wien".

Allerdings würde ich dort nicht bleiben; auf der Rückfahrt würde ich über Kufstein reisen. Sollte mich jemand in Zukunft fragen: "Kennst du die Perle, die Perle Tirols?", kann ich sagen, ich kenne zwei Perlen, Innsbruck und Kufstein am grünen Inn, und ich könnte erst noch angeben, ob es Natur- oder Zuchtperlen sind.

Als ich meinen Bekannten erzählte, ich würde ein Rundreise-Ticket zusammenstellen für Orte, die schön sind wie keine andern, fragte mich der eine, ob ich nach Kopenhagen gehe? Ehe ich eine Antwort geben konnte, meinte ein zweiter: "Wieso Kopenhagen? Er fährt nach Palermo."

Der eine summte mit Freddy "Wonderful Kopenhagen, keine Stadt ist wie du". Dem andern aber hatte Peter Alexander anvertraut: "Palermo, wer deinen Zauber kennt, versteht meine Sehnsucht." Ein dritter zitierte melodisch Maurice Chevalier: "Paris, la plus belle ville du monde."

Gut, es gibt einen europäischen Reisepass. Also fahre ich vom Emmental über Paris nach Kopenhagen, von dort ins Appenzell und über Innsbruck und Wien nach Kufstein und von da nach Palermo. Aber in Neapel steige ich nicht aus: Denn "Neapel sehen und sterben" würde bedeuten, dass ich nie nach Palermo käme, wo "es klingt und schwingt in den Palmen".

Die Faldum-Alp lasse ich auch aus. Obwohl: Der Mann, der sang "am liebsten bin ich auf der Faldum-Alp", tat es recht überzeugend. Diese Alp muss im Wallis liegen. So sehr ich dem Mann glaubte, dass er gerne auf dieser Alp ist, er ist sicher nur im Sommer dort; den harten Winter muss er unten im Tal bei Frau und Kind verbringen.

Aber es ist immer das gleiche: Hat man etwas im Kopf, hat man es auch schon im Ohr. Je entschiedener ich mir vornahm, dorthin zu gehen, wo es

schön und lustig ist, um so verwirrender wurde das Angebot. Sang doch eines Nachts spät Jonny Hill: "So schön wie Kanada ist kein anderes Land." Jetzt fing es auch noch mit Ubersee an. Und ich, der ich bereit gewesen wäre, mein Herz in Heidelberg zu verlieren, hätte es dort auf dem Fundbüro wieder abholen müssen, sonst hätte ich keines gehabt, um es in San Francisco zu lassen.

Die Sache wurde allmählich teuer und unerschwinglich. Denn auf die Frage von Tony Christie, ob ich je in Georgia gewesen sei, hätte ich beschämt gestehen müssen: "Nein". Und dies, obwohl es dort "im Frühling wie Manna vom Himmel regnet", worauf dann Sonnenschein folgt.

Ich begann mich überhaupt zu fragen, ob es sich vielleicht nicht gar so verhält, dass es überall lustig und schön ist wie nirgendswo. In mir stieg der Verdacht hoch: Vielleicht gibt es ein Lied über Zürich, die Perle - an der Limmat, eine Stadt wie keine andere, wo es genauso lustig und schön ist wie nirgendswo auf der Welt.

Wenn dem so wäre, müsste ich nicht wegfahren. Dann hätte ich ja alles hier, auch wenn ich mir lustig und schöner vielleicht anders vorstelle, als ich es für gewöhnlich zu Hause antreffe.

Aber haben wir nicht schon als Jugendliche das Lied gesungen von "kein schöner Land in dieser Zeit, als hier das unsre weit und breit"? Wir taten es als Pfadfinder am Lagerfeuer. Später erfuhr ich, dass es auch ein Lied war, das die Hitler-Jugend sang. Es war eben ein allgemein gültiges Lied, das man überall und zu jeder Zeit singen kann: Denn es gibt nun mal "kein schöneres Land in dieser Zeit als das unsrige", und zwar "weit und breit"."

T T T T

The Pooh Way

Of course, anyone of my generation who grew up in England will be totally familiar with the stories of Pooh and Christopher Robin, and will have vivid visual memories of the delightful original drawings by Ernest H. Shepherd. Here, however is a different take on Pooh from *The Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet* , by Benjamin Hoff (Egmont 2002, pp. 90-97).

> "When you work with Wu Wei**,** you have no real accidents. Things may get a little Odd at times, but they work out. You don't have to try very hard to **make** them work out; you just let them. For example, let's recall the Search for Small. Small - which is short for Very Small Beetle, we were told - disappeared one day on his way around a gorse-bush. Nobody knew what happened.
>
> So the Search was begun, and soon everyone was trying very hard to find Small. Everyone, of course, had been organized and directed by Rabbit.

Everyone, of course, except for Pooh:

Bump!

"Ow!" squeaked something.

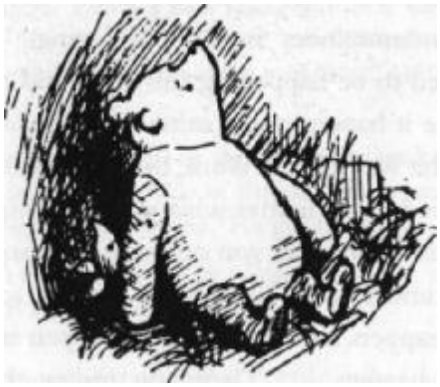
"That's funny," thought Pooh. "I said 'Ow!' without really oo'ing."

"Help!" said a small, high voice.

"That's me again," thought Pooh. "I've had an Accident, and fallen down a well, and my voice has gone all squeaky and works before I'm ready for it, because I've done something to myself inside. Bother!"

"Help - help!"

"There you are! I say things when I'm not trying. So it must be a very bad Accident." And then he thought that perhaps when he did try to say things he wouldn't be able to; so, to make sure, he said loudly: "A Very Bad Accident to Pooh Bear."



"Pooh!" squeaked the voice.

"It's Piglet!" cried Pooh eagerly. "Where are you?"

"Underneath," said Piglet in an underneath sort of way.

"Underneath what?" Well, after that had been straightened out. . .

"Pooh!" he cried. "There's something climbing up your back."

"I thought there was," said Pooh. "It's Small!" cried Piglet.

Those who do things by the Pooh Way find this sort of thing happening to them all the time. It's hard to explain, except by example, but it works. Things just happen in the right way, at the right time. At least they do when you let them, when you work with circumstances instead of saying, "This isn't supposed to be happening this way," and trying hard to make it happen some other way. If you're in tune with The Way Things Work, then they work the way they need to, no matter what you may think about it at the time. Later on, you can look back and say, "Oh, now I understand. That had to happen so that those could happen, and those had to happen in order for this to happen ..." Then you realize that even if you'd tried to make it all turn out perfectly, you couldn't have done better, and if you'd really tried, you would have made a mess of the whole thing.

Let's take another example of Things Work Out: Eeyore's birthday party, as arranged by Pooh and Piglet. Pooh discovered, after Eeyore told him, that it was Eeyore's birthday. So Pooh decided to give him something. He went home to get a jar of honey to use as a birthday present, and talked things over with Piglet, who decided to give Eeyore a balloon that he'd saved from a party of his own. While Piglet went to get the balloon, Pooh walked off to Eeyore's with the jar of honey.

But after a while, he began to get Hungry.

So he sat down and took the top off his jar of honey. "Lucky I brought this with me," he thought. "Many a bear going out on a warm day like this would never have thought of bringing a little something with him." And he began to eat.

"Now let me see," he thought, as he took his last lick of the inside of the jar, "where was I going? Ah, yes, Eeyore." He got up slowly.

And then, suddenly, he remembered. He had eaten Eeyore's birthday present!

Well, most of it, anyway. Fortunately, he still had the jar. And since he was passing by the Hundred Acre Wood, he went in to see Owl and had him write "A Happy Birthday" on it. After all, it was a nice jar, even with nothing in it.

While all this was happening, Piglet had gone back to his own house to get Eeyore's balloon. He held it very tightly against himself, so that it shouldn't blow away, and he ran as fast as he could so as to get to Eeyore before Pooh did; for he thought that he would like to be the first one to give a present, just as if he had thought of it without being told by anybody. And running along, and thinking how pleased Eeyore would be, he didn't look where he was going . . . and suddenly he put his foot in a rabbit hole, and fell down flat on his face. BANG!!!???***!!!

Yes, well, after Piglet fell on Eeyore's balloon, it wasn't so . . . well, it was more . . . that is, it was . . .

"Balloon?" said Eeyore. "You did say balloon? One of those big coloured things you blow up? Gaiety, song-and-dance, here we are and there we are?"

"Yes, but I'm afraid — I'm very sorry, Eeyore — but when I was running along to bring it to you, I fell down."

"Dear, dear, how unlucky! You ran too fast, I expect. You didn't hurt yourself, Little Piglet?" "No, but I — I - oh, Eeyore, I burst the balloon!"

There was a very long silence. "My balloon?" said Eeyore at last. Piglet nodded. "My birthday balloon?"

"Yes, Eeyore," said Piglet sniffing a little. "Here it is. With — with many happy returns of the day." And he gave Eeyore the small piece of damp rag.

"Is this it?" said Eeyore, a little surprised. Piglet nodded. "My present?" Piglet nodded again. "The balloon?"

And just then, Pooh arrived.

"I've brought you a little present," said Pooh excitedly.

"I've had it," said Eeyore.

Pooh had now splashed across the stream to Eeyore, and Piglet was sitting a little way off, his head in his paws, snuffling to himself.

"It's a Useful Pot," said Pooh. "Here it is. And it's got 'A Very Happy Birthday with love from Pooh' written on it. That's what all that writing is. And it's for putting things in. There!"

Then Eeyore discovered that, since the balloon was no longer as big as Piglet, it could easily be put away in the Useful Pot and taken out whenever it was needed, which certainly can't be done with the typical Unmanageable Balloon . . .

"I'm very glad," said Pooh happily, "that I thought of giving you a Useful Pot to put things in."

"I'm very glad," said Piglet happily, "that I thought of giving you Something to put in a Useful Pot."

But Eeyore wasn't listening. He was taking the balloon out, and putting it back again, as happy as could be.

So it all worked out.

At its highest level, Wu Wei is indefinable and practically invisible, because it has become a reflex action. In the words of Chuang-tse, the mind of Wu Wei "flows like water, reflects like a mirror, and responds like an echo."

T T T T

Marginalia

"To the many reasons we have for admiring Marlene Dietrich can now be added the fact that she was an inveterate scribbler in books. In a volume describing the love affair between Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh, she commented: 'This is without a doubt the worst writing I ever laid eyes on.' In her copy of Anthony Burgess's novel *Earthly Powers*, the famous first sentence – 'It was the afternoon of my eighty-first birthday, and I was in bed with my catamite when Ali announced that the archbishop had come to see me' – is annotated with the simple: 'That's when I stopped reading.' The woman sure had style.

If writing rude comments in books is a sin, then the greats are all guilty. On the title page of his copy of a book by the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, William Blake wrote: 'This man was hired to depress art.' Another voluminous jotter, Mark Twain, wrote exasperatedly in the margin of one novel that a 'cat could do better literature than this.'

Marginalia are where we let our hair down and say what we really think, but they can also develop into a kind of shorthand. One of my most used codes as a book reviewer is a marginal 'lol' for something I find ridiculous. Samuel Taylor Coleridge developed this into a fine art, deploying in his marginalia the abbreviations 'LM' for 'ludicrous metaphor' or simply 'N' for 'nonsense.'

Some people wouldn't dream of writing in their books, out of a superstitious reverence for the object. But for most writers, any book is a working tool, and may even be improved by some judicious commentary. Indeed, the historian of marginalia H.J. Jackson suggests we call such a marginalia-added volume a BEPU, or 'book enhanced for personal use.'

Perhaps the most celebrated text of such enhancement is the copy of the Greek treatise *Arithmetica* owned by the 17th-century French mathematician Pierre de Fermat. In its margin he scribbled a mathematical idea and added: 'I have discovered a truly marvellous demonstration of this proposition that this margin is too narrow to contain.' That became known as *Fermat's Last Theorem*, which puzzled mathematicians for centuries until Andrew Wiles finally proved it.

To the kind-of-heart, especially bitchy marginalia might seem a little disrespectful. Coleridge went so far as to use red ink, like a splenetic schoolmaster, which seems excessive to me. (I write all over my books in mechanical pencil.) But then, he was Coleridge – and friends actually lent him books so he'd write in them.

Generally speaking, just as people say things over the internet that they would never dare say to someone's face, abusive marginalia is not meant for

the author's eyes. In an age when furious readers fire off torrents of poorly spelled invective directly to the author via email or Twitter, simply writing rude comments in a copy of the book that the author will never see seems the height of good manners.

Which is not to say that no one else will ever see them. Indeed, there is an aspect of performance about marginalia that the scribbler expects others to see. As Kevin Jackson relates in his book *Invisible Forms*, the dynamic of such marginal oneupmanship was beautifully caught by Flann O'Brien, writing as Myles na Gopaleen, who came up with the idea of a service for the idle rich to make their libraries look well-used. The expert team of book-handlers would not only dog-ear and stain the volumes but write marginal comments such as 'Rubbish', 'Why?', or 'Yes, but cf. Homer, Od., iii, 151.'

Stern library authorities speak of 'defacing' books, and it is indeed a selfish act in that context, even if the playwright Joe Orton's obscene alterations to books from Islington public library were apparently very funny. (At the British Library you must not even bring a pen into the reading rooms.) And yet books in university libraries can provide much light relief – and occasionally even edification – with their marginal dialogues between successive generations of bored students. Public marginalia risk becoming sheer vandalism, but at their best constitute real intellectual exchange.

In this way, then, the centuries of marginalia in printed books make up a kind of invisible republic of readers and writers having extended conversations through history. By contrast, the fact that you can't scribble in the margins of electronic books reflects the paradoxical atomisation of an internet age in which everything shouts about how 'social' it is. And so here is one more reason to cherish the printed book: you can talk back to it, and to future readers.

So, book-defacers of the world, unite: you have nothing to lose but a misplaced respect for the blank margin. Still, there have to be some rules. So can we all at least agree that underlining passages of a book (usually discussed under the heading of marginalia, though of course it doesn't occur in the margins) is a philistine and idiotic practice that ought to be criminalised as soon as possible?" (Steven Poole, *The Guardian*, 6 January 2017)

T T T T

Marlene Dietrich's Marginalia

"The actress Marlene Dietrich spent the last ten years of her life bedridden, in her apartment on Avenue Montaigne, in Paris, refusing to see old

acquaintances and avoiding photographers. In her biography of Dietrich, her only daughter, Maria Riva, wrote that her mother's legs 'withered. Her hair, chopped short haphazardly in drunken frenzies with cuticle scissors, was painted with dyes.' She surrounded herself with a hot plate, telephone, scotch—and books.

She coped with isolation by running up a three-thousand-dollar-a-month phone bill and reading everything from potboilers to the pillars of the Western canon. She consumed poetry, philosophy, novels, biographies, and thrillers—in English, French, and her native tongue, German. When she died, in May, 1992, her grandson Peter Riva was tasked with clearing out nearly two thousand books from her apartment, many of which arrived at the American Library in Paris.

Simon Gallo, the library's former head of collections, told me recently that only a few hours separated Riva's initial phone call and the arrival of a truckload of books at the library's back door. A portion of Dietrich's collection was given to the Film Museum in Berlin, and some items—such as her personal copies of *Mein Kampf* and first editions of Cecil Beaton—were sold to private collectors. Many books donated to the American Library were simply marked with a bookplate and put into circulation. As of 2006, students could still check out Dietrich's personal copy of *The Collected Works of Shakespeare. .....*

Perhaps the most moving books in the collection are Dietrich's volumes of Goethe. In her autobiography, she speaks of "deifying" Goethe in boarding school; after her father's early death, she looked to Goethe as a father figure. 'My passion for Goethe, along with the rest of my education, enclosed me in a complete circle full of solid moral values that I have preserved throughout my life,' she wrote. In her copies of his books, Dietrich noted passages of interest with small 'X's and with sheets torn from a notepad with a stamped

red directive: Don’t Forget."

(Megan Mayhew Bergman, *The New Yorker*, 26 December 2016)

T T T T

Marlene Dietrich Quotes

- It's the friends you can call up at 4 a.m. that matter.
- Sex. In America an obsession. In other parts of the world a fact.
- Think twice before burdening a friend with a secret.
- Most women set out to try to change a man, and when they have changed him they do not like him.
- If there is a supreme being, he's crazy.
- Superstitions are habits rather than beliefs.
- The tears I have cried over Germany have dried. I have washed my face.
- Darling, the legs aren't so beautiful, I just know what to do with them.

Her poems are like her marginalia - short and pithy:

When
My heart
Stands
Still
It will
Be heard
All over
The world
And after
Two days
It will
Be
Forgotten

It's a lonely
Afternoon
And I see
Geraniums bloomin'
And there's
Not a single
Human
In view.
And I know
One place that's quiet
Where there's
No-one passing

By it
12 Avenue Montaigne
Apartment 4 G Two.

Ich wünschte
Ich wäre Heine
Um Dir
Zu sagen
Du bist
Die Eine
Die mir
Am Herzen liegt.

Oscar always
Needs a star
Walkin'
Talkin' - there you are!
If you're dead -
That we dread!.

T T T T

What is Dying? - Bishop Brent

Charles Henry Brent (1862-1929) was an American Episcopal bishop who served in the Philippines and western New York. He is best remembered for what has become a poem, but was probably part of a sermon. There are several versions on the Internet, among which some very good translations.

I am standing upon that foreshore, a ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean.

She is an object of beauty and strength and I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come down to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says, "there! she's gone!"

"Gone where?" "Gone from my sight, that's all", she is just as large in mast and spar and hull as ever she was when she left my side; just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of her destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her.

And just at that moment when someone at my side says, "there! she's gone!" there are other eyes watching her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "here she comes!"

And that is dying.

A horizon is just the limit of our sight. Lift us up, Oh Lord, that we may see further.

Ein Schiff segelt hinaus und ich beobachte
wie es am Horizont verschwindet.
Jemand an meiner Seite sagt: "Es ist verschwunden."
Verschwunden wohin?
Verschwunden aus meinem Blickfeld - das ist alles.
Das Schiff ist nach wie vor so gross wie es war
als ich es gesehen habe.
Dass es immer kleiner wird und es dann völlig aus
meinen Augen verschwindet ist in mir,
es hat mit dem Schiff nichts zu tun.
Und gerade in dem Moment, wenn jemand neben
mir sagt, es ist verschwunden, gibt es Andere,
die es kommen sehen, und andere Stimmen,
die freudig Aufschreien: "Da kommt es!"
Das ist sterben.

Je suis debout au bord de la plage.
Un voilier passe dans la brise du matin, et part vers l'océan.
Il est la beauté, il est la vie.
Je le regarde jusqu'à ce qu'il disparaisse à l'horizon.
Quelqu'un à mon côté dit : "il est parti!"
Parti vers où ?
Parti de mon regard, c'est tout !
Son mât est toujours aussi haut,
sa coque a toujours la force de porter sa charge humaine.
Sa disparition totale de ma vue est en moi, pas en lui.
Et juste au moment où quelqu'un prés de moi dit : "il est parti!"
il en est d'autres qui, le voyant poindre à l'horizon
et venir vers eux, s'exclament avec joie :
"Le voilà!"
C'est ça la mort !
Il n'y a pas de morts.
Il y a des vivants sur les deux rives.

T T T T

John Le Carré on "Why we should learn German"

"I began learning German at the age of 13, and I'm still trying to explain to myself why it was love at first sound. The answer must surely be: the excellence of my teacher. At an English public school not famed for its

cultural generosity, Mr King was that rare thing: a kindly and intelligent man who, in the thick of the second world war, determinedly loved the Germany that he knew was still there somewhere.

Rather than join the chorus of anti-German propaganda, he preferred, doggedly, to inspire his little class with the beauty of the language, and of its literature and culture. One day, he used to say, the real Germany will come back. And he was right. Because now it has.

Why was it love at first sound for me? Well, in those days not many language teachers played gramophone records to their class, but Mr King did. They were old and very precious to him and us, and he kept them in brown paper bags in a satchel that he put in his bicycle basket when he rode to school.

What did they contain, these precious records? The voices of classical German actors, reading romantic German poetry. The records were a bit cracked, but that was part of their beauty. In my memory, they remain cracked to this day:

Du bist wie eine Blume – CRACK – *So hold und schön und...* – CRACK (Heinrich Heine)

Bei Nacht im Dorf der Wächter rief… – CRACK (Eduard Mörike's *Elfenlied*)

And I loved them. I learned to imitate, then recite them, crack and all. And I discovered that the language fitted me. It fitted my tongue. It pleased my Nordic ear.

I also loved the idea that these poems and this language that I was learning were mine and no one else's, because German wasn't a popular subject and very few of my schoolmates knew a word of it beyond the *Achtung!* and *Hände hoch!* that they learned from propaganda war movies.

But thanks to Mr King, I knew better. And when I decided I couldn't stand my English public school for one more day, it was the German language that provided me with my bolt-hole. The year was 1948. I couldn't go to Germany, so I went to Switzerland and at 16 enrolled myself at Bern university.

And in Switzerland, instead of Mr King, I had another admirable teacher in Frau Karsten, a stern north German lady with grey hair in a ponytail, and she, like Mr King, rode a bicycle, sitting very upright with her grey hair bobbing along behind her.

So it's no wonder that when later I went into the army for my national service, I was posted to Austria. Or that after the army I went on to study German at Oxford. And so to Eton, to teach it.

You can have a lot of fun with the German language, as we all know. You

can tease it, play with it, send it up. You can invent huge words of your own – but real words all the same, just for the hell of it. Google gave me *Donaudampfschiffsfahrtsgesellschaftskapitän.*

You've probably heard the Mark Twain gag: "Some German words are so long they have a perspective." You can make up crazy adjectives like "my-recently-by-my-parents-thrown-out-of-the-window PlayStation". And when you're tired of floundering with nouns and participles strung together in a compound, you can turn for relief to the pristine poems of a Hölderlin, or a Goethe, or a Heine, and remind yourself that the German language can attain heights of simplicity and beauty that make it, for many of us, a language of the gods. And for all its pretending, the German language loves the simple power of monosyllables.

The decision to learn a foreign language is to me an act of friendship. It is indeed a holding out of the hand. It's not just a route to negotiation. It's also to get to know you better, to draw closer to you and your culture, your social manners and your way of thinking. And the decision to teach a foreign language is an act of commitment, generosity and mediation.

It's a promise to educate – yes – and to equip. But also to awaken; to kindle a flame that you hope will never go out; to guide your pupils towards insights, ideas and revelations that they would never have arrived at without your dedication, patience and skill.

To quote Charlemagne: 'To have another language is to possess a second soul.' He might have added that to teach another language is to implant a second soul.

Of course, the very business of reconciling these two souls at any serious level requires considerable mental agility. It compels us to be precise, to confront meaning, to think rationally and creatively and never to be satisfied until we've hit the equivalent word, or – which also happens – until we've recognised that there isn't one, so hunt for a phrase or circumlocution that does the job.

No wonder then that the most conscientious editors of my novels are not those for whom English is their first language, but the foreign translators who bring their relentless eye to the tautological phrase or factual inaccuracy – of which there are far too many. My German translator is particularly infuriating.

In the extraordinary period we are living through – may it be short-lived – it's impossible not to marvel at every contradictory or unintelligible utterance issuing from across the Atlantic. And in marvelling, we come face-to-face with the uses and abuses of language itself.

Clear language – lucid, rational language – to a man at war with both truth and reason, is an existential threat. Clear language to such a man is a direct assault on his obfuscations, contradictions and lies. To him, it is the voice of the enemy. To him, it is fake news. Because he knows, if only intuitively, what we know to our cost: that without clear language, there is no standard of truth.

And that's what language means to a linguist. Those who teach language, those who cherish its accuracy and meaning and beauty, are the custodians of truth in a dangerous age.

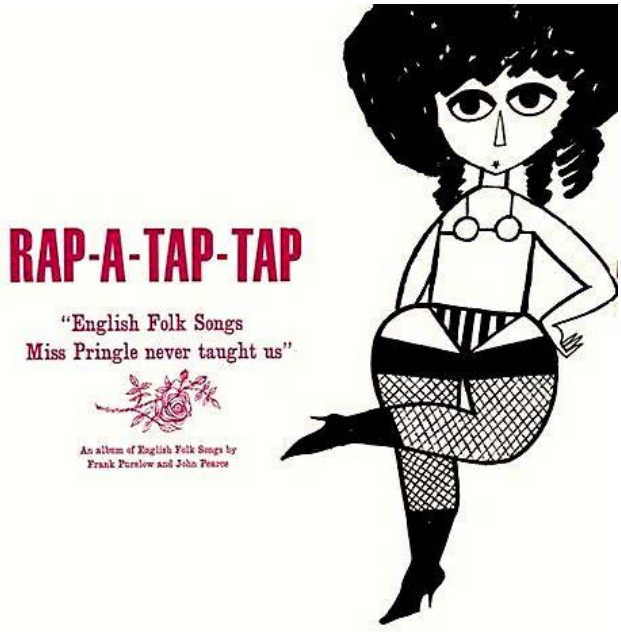
And if they teach German – and teach it in this my beleaguered country – they are quite particularly to be prized, all the more so because they are an endangered species. Every time I hear a British politician utter the fatal words, "Let me be very clear", these days I reach for my revolver.

By teaching German, by spreading understanding of German culture and life, today's honorands and their colleagues will be helping to balance the European argument, to make it decent, to keep it civilised.

They will be speaking above all to this country's most precious asset: its enlightened young, who – Brexit or no Brexit – see Europe as their natural home, Germany as their natural partner, and shared language as their natural bond." (*The Guardian*, 2 July 2017)[7]

T T T T

Songs Miss Pringle Never Taught Us



Chilbridge Fair

As I was going to Chilbridge Fair
To my Heyho Derry Derry Down
As I was going to Chilbridge Fair
To my Hey
As I was going to Chilbridge Fair
I met pretty Sally a-selling her ware
And along with my Sally I did go.

I asked her what she'd sell to me
She said she'd a lock without any key
So along with my Sally I did go.

I said to her "Let me come with you,
For I have a key that I think will do."
And along with my Sally I did go.

[7] With thanks to Bibi Ruperti. This text was originally part of a speech given by Le Carré at an award ceremony at the German Embassy for German teachers on 12 June.

'Twas about the hour of half-past two
The lock was open and the key went through
And away from my Sally I did go.

The Shoemaker's Kiss
There was an old woman lived down in the West,
So green as the leaves they are green, green, green, green,
So green as the leaves they are green
And she had a fine daughter that never was kissed,
And you know very well what I mean, mean, mean, mean,
And you know very well what I mean.

One morning she rose and she put on her clothes
And away to the shoemaker's shop she did go.

"Shoemaker, shoemaker, have you any shoes?"
"Why yes, pretty maiden, I think I'll fit you."

So into the shoemaker's shop she did trip
Good Lord! How he caught her and kissed her sweet lips.

When twenty long weeks they were over and past
This silly young girl she got thick round the waist.

When forty long weeks were over and done,
This little, bold wench had a big, bonny son.

"Oh daughter! Oh daughter! How come you by this?"
"Oh mother! Oh mother! 'Twas the shoemaker's kiss."

T T T T

Odds and Ends

The story of the Chinese called Murphy (*CP 2016*) could be true: Eddy Clarke tells me that the French counter-tenor Philippe Jaroussky relates that when his father came to France, the Police asked him his name and he answered in Russian " Ya Russky" (Я русскйи - I am Russian).

The difference between the comic side of things, and their cosmic side, depends upon on one sibilant. (Vladimir Nabokov)

A simple spelling mistake led to a 10-year-old Muslim boy being interviewed by British police over suspected links to terrorism. The boy, who lives in Accrington in Lancashire, wrote in his primary school English class that he lived in a "terrorist house". He meant to write "terraced house". (*The Guardian,* 20 January 2016)

Recently I replaced a dish washer ("lave-vaisselle") and received an invoice for a "lave-aisselle" meaning armpit wash.

Why Art? Because you will never have to change batteries or remember passwords or read directions or fear obsolescence. (Advertisement by Questroyal Fine Art, *The New Yorker*, 11 April 2016.)

There are 3 kinds of economists: those who can count and those who can't.

E-mail disclaimer: "Typed using a device smaller than my fingers or dictated with Apple autocorrect overrides. Apologies in advance." (Thanks Antoinette)

"All this time we've been worrying that the danger is Artificial Intelligence. Turns out, it's natural stupidity...." (Stephen Colbert)

My Bonnie leaned over the gas tank,
The height of its contents to see,
I lit a small match to assist her,
O Bring back my Bonnie to me.

If anyone teases you about getting older, remember what you learned in Sunday school:

Turn the other cheek

(Thanks Renate and Andreas)