

Cryzine

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If you want to know about Britain, look at this photo

A44

<http://www.cryzine.com/a44/>

10 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

The British flavour of fascism: take a look at it.

Look at this photo:



Or watch this video footage:

Boris Johnson confronted by father of sick child over NHS waiting times



<https://youtube.com/watch?v=ZVOV3sU8Ays>



The British prime minister Boris Johnson visited a hospital yesterday, where the father of a sick child confronted him with the deteriorating quality of provision in the state National Health Service. The man then said that at such a time “Now you come here for a press opportunity”. Johnson, put on the spot, reacted in a Donald Trump fashion – by lying, claiming “Well actually, there’s no press here”. Note his patronising use of the word “actually”. In reality, he knew damned well that there was a lot of press there, because the whole reason for his visit was publicity and, more than that, there were press personnel standing right by them. He might as well have said they weren’t “actually” in a hospital but in a field of daisies. He has clearly believed all his life that whatever the lower orders think or know about anything isn’t worth a fig compared to what people from his own caste believe, know, or wish to assert is the case. The man replied “What do you mean there’s no press here? Who are these people?” – totally destroying Johnson’s position.

What strikes me most about the video footage – and it also comes across well in the photo – is the attitude of three of the officials present, at least two of whom seem to have a clinical role. I mean the two women on the left and the man who is wearing glasses. The women seem absolutely horrified at the complaining parent’s actions, at his daring to express criticism to the prime minister. “How *dare* you, you *vermin!*” is what their body language conveys. It’s as if they believe the man to be conducting himself in a terrifyingly, criminally antisocial fashion. It’s like he is breaking wind in church or something, and as if he’s got a holdall with him in which he might have an axe or a gun. They don’t like people who break with their allotted roles in the hierarchy and bring reality to the fore. Their concept of the purpose of a hospital clearly differs wildly from any decent person’s. But who was it who was doing something related to improving health at that time? It certainly wasn’t them!

Meanwhile the guy in the glasses who seems to be more senior is angry that this is being caught on film and he uses fake politeness in a “Come on now” fashion to the parent. You can easily imagine him being

unable to speak to any person who is lower down the hierarchy than himself without being fake. I strongly doubt that any of the three would bat an eyelid if the man were taken outside to be beaten with iron bars and left for dead by the secret police, or if he were tortured to death in the public square for daring to spoil what they clearly view as a natural social order. As for the woman on the far right, I cannot completely read her attitude. It is possible she is a hospital orderly and perhaps she is OK. Her thoughts might be "Come on, you've said your piece. We know you're right, but that's enough now. You shouldn't say such things except in private." But the other three, especially the two women on the left! Take a good look at this, because *this is the British flavour of fascism*. It has always been here and it is rising. These pictures say *so much* about this country.

No Comments

POEM: “Hypnopompia”

A43

<http://www.cryzine.com/a43/>

10 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Poetry

“I had such a strong feeling today, Mother, (...)”

Hypnopompia

I had such a strong feeling today, Mother,
When we were leaving the supermarket,
Just the two of us,
About to drive off in our open-topped car.
You seemed about fifty, Mother.
Your shoulders were bronzed.

We were going somewhere, Mother.
We'd bought lots of food
I knew we'd enjoy eating it.
I don't remember seeing it but I smelled it.
We had olives, vine tomatoes, French crusty bread.

The conviviality,
The way we felt it then
And the way we would feel it in the period to come –
They were the same: we knew they were one.
I was happy, Mother; and that's been unusual of late,
So it was powerful.
And it was sunny, which it hasn't been, or not much.

I was pleased to let everyone see and know, too:
This is my Mum, and I'm happy being with her.
I'm lucky I've got her and I know it,
And we have nice times together,
And it feels good.
I'm not normally like that either.

But Mother,
There must be parallel universes.
Is that what it is? Is it?
Be calm. You are calm.
I think that's what it is.
I think you already know, Mother.

Because it's two thousand and nineteen.
And you died in nineteen ninety-two.
I didn't go to a supermarket today,
And I've never been in a convertible.

No Comments

The ludicrous act played by Greta Thunberg

A42

<http://www.cryzine.com/a42/>

10 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

A mentally ill child dressed as a cartoon character gets fêted by world leaders who all want to help amplify the kooky cosmic message she brings for us all. What a revolting spectacle.

Greta Thunberg, a child who is currently trotting around the world in a persona based on the Swedish cartoon character “Pippi Longstocking”, is getting enormous media exposure for being used as a conduit for loony ideas about the possibility of an imminent “mass extinction” similar to the one that wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. I actually know where these ideas come from, but this is not the time and place to discuss that.

Even if it weren't for her art manager father and her former Eurovision song contestant mother who cashed in on her own recognition to “author” a heavily marketed Swedish bestselling book about “the environment”, Greta Thunberg is bound to get a big book contract soon. One imagines that meetings have been held in New York on that very matter. Certainly book and talent agents in that city will admire how the image has been built.

But it is not just that this ludicrous figure talks a bucketful of utter excrement about the environment and natural history.

It is also that she is a *child who has a known history of mental illness*. One wonders what effect this revolting cartoon role might have on her other than bringing her a big pile of money.

Politicians in numerous countries have associated themselves with her act, usually wearing big grins on their cynical faces as if they are doing something so people-helpy. In fact they are scraping the bottom of the barrel and they appear to have no shame about it.

Would those who eagerly consume this person's performance all rush out and get vaccinated or microchipped if a boy dressed as Mickey Mouse told them to?

No Comments

Penguin Modern Poets of the 1960s and 1970s

A41

<http://www.cryzine.com/a41/>

10 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Poetry

A categorisation.

I've now gone through about a quarter of the circa 1800 poems in the 27 collections in this series and picked out 74 that I like. These I have tentatively categorised under the following 18 headers:

▶ I – INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

(or general conclusions from it, less connected with social critique)

I1 – Life stages

- (I1a) childhood, youth, adulthood
- (I1b) old age

I2 – Lost love

- (I2a) blood family
- (I2b) lover, misc., unclear
- (I3) Dreams, fantasy (individual)
- (I4) Misc.

▶ S – SOCIAL

S1 – Not relating to institutions

- (S1a) mental illness
- (S1b) war, brutality
- (S1c) alienation from nature
- (S1d) misc.

S2 – Institutions

- (S2a) school
- (S2b) caste
- (S2c) media
- (S2d) misc.
- (S3) Fantasy (social)

▶ M – MYSTICISM

- (M1) nature
- (M2) mystique of experienced time
- (M3) misc.

No Comments

Some poems I don't like

A40

<http://www.cryzine.com/a40/>

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Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Poetry

But why?

I am ploughing through the 27 volumes in the first series of Penguin Modern Poets, published in the 1960s and 1970s. So far I've read three volumes. Of the 223 poems I've marked 24 as "good" and a further 28 as "quite good or deserving further study after which they may deserve to be labelled either good or quite good". The other 171 I don't like.

Many of the 223 poems use metaphor or juxtaposition to associate two fields, which in a large proportion are an environmental field E and a human experiential field H. Some examples of E are natural, such as the landscape, sea, sky, seasons, or living species; others are built, such as a room. Examples of H include a human being's past experience as they feel it in retrospect, and the course of a person's entire life viewed in third person. The structure is E ~ H, where E is used to communicate truths about H.

A lot of these I don't like. Why?

The answer is that what they say about H is boring.

For example they may be

- insufficiently specific (a walk on the beach reminds you of the lover who left you – so what?)
- insufficiently socially critical (do you not realise that a supermarket, a bus trip, and a human being's life journey are all embedded in social reproduction relations?)
- general but insufficiently mystical (this place makes you feel how small a lifetime appears compared with geological time, or it reminds you that we will all die one day – yawn!)

To summarise, let's reverse perspective:

- I like it when what is said about H is specific (how else can it be vivid?), and in that case it should also usually be socially critical (because we are social animals and just look at the mess we're in – it affects us); and
- if it's not specific, then I still want it to be interesting and powerful, which means it should either say something general that is socially critical and not just vaguely so; or else, if it's neither specific nor socially critical then it needs to communicate something that is of universal mystical significance (and since it must be interesting and powerful, saying the Earth is like an atom doesn't count).

No Comments

POEM: “Inheritance Fungus”

A39

<http://www.cryzine.com/a39/>

10 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Poetry

“The cross-eyed boy was such a darling (...)”

Inheritance fungus

i

The cross-eyed boy was such a darling
That everyone coaxed him to smile –
And smile he did, the innocent toddler with the funny eye.

The Luftwaffe bombed the hospital he was born in,
Though not the ward;
His father found reasons to bail out,
But occasionally popped back for bed and board;
His elder sister did a stretch in a care institution,
But only three months,
While their mother belched at milkmen
And put on an act for social services.

He survived: he had to.
His mother scared the neighbours' children,
But she loved him.

At school the teachers saw the holes in his shoes and attacked.
He resisted – in his mind, mind you: he was no extremist.
Belittled, repeatedly punished for uniform code violation,
Treated as if he had no right,
He felt the cane but once or twice.
At home he played Monopoly
Using houses, hotels, cards and banknotes he'd marked with his initials.
He taught his sister chess and he always won.
He didn't burgle or pick fights.

ii

Fluttering through hoops into articulated clerkdom,
Studying by correspondence course and on day release,
He emerged into chartered accountancy
While his muttering mother continued to need him.

At work he audited ledgers and was courteous to salesgirls.
He balanced profits and losses and was egalitarian with doormen.
For where was the problem?
He kept away from corporate fiddles; he spoke against dismissals;
He wore nylon ties; he shaved with cheap razors.
He never joined the club.

Sack him they couldn't, for those were the days.
Three times he took redundancy with payoffs,
Clutching negotiated letters of praise.
But inevitably a time came and an ex-professional he became.

Supported by a mandatory grant –
Under Thatcher, but before Shock and Awe –
He enrolled in sociology at a polytechnic
Where the parking was good
And the seminar schedule was convenient.
Next came a master's at the LSE.
In his sister's council flat he was Aristotle now.
Facile she called him,
But she cared too much for his equilibrium to say it to his face.

iii

His mother had advanced to seeing television people:
Ronald Reagan at the railway station,
Bjorn Borg up a ladder.
When stressed she watched television cats in the garden.

No person she knew ever divorced,
Because you mustn't say things like that.
No-one had seen her 1960s son-in-law for 20 years,
But she knew he still shared a bed with her daughter:
If you said he didn't you were wicked.
When social security forced her daughter to sue for maintenance
On pain of deprivation of income and removal of roof,
Mother would point to the TV set and ask, "What? On there?"
Don't upset your brother, you little mare.

Sane surrounded by deranged consumerism,
She bought whatever was cheapest
And ritually read till slips at the pull-down kitchen table
With her number one son.
Fifty thousand pounds she carried in her broken-strapped handbag:
After a life like hers

You were better safe than sorry.

Her son, pursued by strings of postnominals,
Still enjoyed his bread and dripping –
Or he gave the impression.

iv

Sister? Well, for a while she'd been married:
Warned by mother and brother, she had insisted on not listening.
She had known it all –
Aspirer, potential escaper.

Divorced, she was back to dependency,
Needing lifts to hospital in her brother's Mini,
Headed notepaper, use of a phone,
A person to talk to, even if he scoffed.

When she asked to borrow a typewriter for her son
It was his pleasure to say yes
Because it was her station to be beholden.
But when it was your child and he was studying,
You did what you must.
He who would unlock needed the keys:
He too had a mother who loved him.

For her brother she was no trouble, not any more.
Her lad, though, he had ideas; and ideas, they could trigger.
He graphed his grandmother's behaviour against the Moon –
His results were inconclusive,
But no matter.
"I'm not having you mock your grandmother.
If only you'd been through what she has!"
Soon the brat would learn, his uncle was certain.

v

But nephew didn't learn.
He left home; he lived in various countries;
He married a Dane who carried the name
Of her banker-politician granddaddy of statue and square;
Who had little money but who came from it;
And who thought her uncollected student debt was a hoot.

Nephew reproduced.
He reared a daughter.
The world owed him a living.

This accidental product of a counselled-against and written-off bond,
He brazenly dared to dare and he kept on daring.
He thought he was God Almighty.

Nephew installed a conservatory, flew frequently to Vienna;
Studied bees, herbs, and Avicenna;
Covered his walls with bookcases, catalogued his library;
Read about sigils and psychology, myths and mycology,
Travelled on hobby trips to dales, forests, and postindustrial wastelands,
Snapped giant puffballs, gathered shaggy ink caps –
Not for profit but for kicks.

For his uncle the kicks hurt much worse than the cane.
How much are your foibles costing you? Haven't you got any sense?
Delusions of grandeur are delusional:
It stands to reason, you stupid boy.

vi

The ex-accountant's sister followed his mother to the grave
And his nephew became single again:
Not genius enough to hold down a marriage,
The presumptuous sod.

Bachelor Uncle and bookish Nephew were now two –
And a half, for Great-niece's existence had to be conceded.
She was arrogant: she got that from her father.
One day she would learn that beggars can't be choosers.
Give her time.

What the nephew got from his mother was money –
Not much, but there's a principle:
Traitors shouldn't inherit.
This was exclusion, pooh-poohing,
An intellectual beating with shoes to the pate.
How could the now grey-growing uncle not grow to hate?

His sister had appreciated that girls were inferior.
Her son, though, was way beyond the yoke.
Born of a girl child without permission from her blood kin!
Wasn't that the most unnatural sin?
Her son's daughter was in a yet worse state:
Everything got handed to her on a plate!
Great-uncle had been through it all before.
Don't give her time; time gives you pain.

vii

Nephew, for his part he theorised
A humiliation that stretched to the event horizon and beyond –
To a landscape of ships' biscuits,
Of falling on hard times,
Of tuberculosis, desertion, and shame.

Who knew what horrors had conditioned his grandmother,
Answering back to what spore-spraying stalkers of yore?
You couldn't know but you knew they were there,
For they hurt like a brand and they burned like a flare.

Bequeathed a heritage that had self-replicated
Finding forms that were adequate for each era –
Families made their own history,
But not in conditions of their choosing –
He decided not to curate it, brocade it, or prove it,
But to reject it, eject it, evade it, remove it.
He got his retaliation in early;
He got it in the autumn;
He got it in first.

He jokes to himself now with sophistication,
If you can call it a joke when he doesn't smile,
When he strongly doubts he ever will,
When he won't even look himself in the eye:
Amanita phalloides – inheritance fungus.

How I came to write “Inheritance Fungus”

I wanted to write a poem about the transgenerational reproduction of family patterns that went beyond Leo Tolstoy's observation in *Anna Karenina* that “all happy families are alike but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion”. The parental encouragement of sibling dominance; a blood family's belief that a woman's marriage choice is less than fully valid; an uncle's self-serving feeling that his sibling shouldn't allow his nephew to inherit – aren't these elements as widespread today as ever?

Eschewing the notion of dysfunction, I aimed to show how a *maudit*, if that is what it is, can reproduce itself *volens volens* in forms that are “adequate for each era”. Might Karl Marx have been on to something when he wrote – in a passage I refer to in the final stanza – that “the tradition of dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living”? The wounded voice I have given to the narration may be antinomic to, but it is also locked to, because it is triangulated from, both the smartarse and the repressive. This weakness of what may well be an emotionally profound understanding serves as a hole that an unwanted pattern can climb through to plant itself on the other side.

The biological kingdom I decided to reference was not plants but fungi. Fungi reproduce using spores, which in many species are put out by an organism's only visible part, its reproductive organ called a

mushroom. Mushrooms can pop up overnight with as much structure as they will ever be seen to have, and they are widely thought of as weird and even devilish. Here was a suitable metaphor, I felt, for the reproduction of psychological damage in families. As well as denoting such reproduction in general, the word “inheritance” in the title also refers to the specific literal inheritance that the nephew in the poem acquires from his uncle after he murderously feeds him the deathcap mushroom. The resulting phrase “inheritance fungus” is intended to recall “inheritance powder”, a traditional name for arsenic.

Sensing that the poem’s theme of the order-disorder of cyclicity-irreversibility was crying out to be expressed in its structural form, I chose numbers for the number of sections, and for the numbers of stanzas and lines within each section, that evoke periodic time: 7, 4, and 24 (counting each section’s header as a line). I also decided to write the same number of words in every section, not merely as a hat tip to Oulipo, but also to echo the thing-ordering precision that characterises the uncle’s childhood enjoyment of playing Monopoly, appears later in his professional work as an accountant, and subsequently manifests in his nephew’s recording of his grandmother’s behaviour and his enthusiasm for cataloguing books and engaging in certain hobbies. I used 171 because the poem deals with issues of masculinity, which in several cultures is considered to be a property of odd numbers. In Korea the products of odd numbers are considered to be especially masculine, and $171 = 9 \cdot 19 = 3 \cdot 3 \cdot 19 = 3 \cdot 57$.

No Comments

Racism: an observation regarding the limits to what is considered to be acceptable discourse against it

A38

<http://www.cryzine.com/a38/>

10 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

There's so much hypocrisy about racism, which sadly remains widespread in Britain.

Interesting, isn't it, that in Britain where there are wall-to-wall assurances by private employers and public officials that they are so committedly and completely anti-racist, with all the best policies in place, etc., one weapon that *could* be deployed against racism is hardly ever used, and generally isn't considered acceptable to use: *parody*.

Why's that?

What's the problem? Don't racists deserve to have the mickey taken out of them?

The only exceptions I'm aware of are in some of the often very good work sometimes performed by black and Asian comedians.

No Comments

Some thoughts on poetry

A37

<http://www.cryzine.com/a37/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Poetry

Ideas and feelings and, oh, some technical stuff too.

How can you write a memorable poem? There are probably many ways. And since mastery of poetry can always improve further it would hardly be sensible even for a single person to follow a set of hard and fast methodological rules.

Nonetheless, to reach any level of mastery in a field you still need to organise your requirements in your mind. So I offer the following brief list of things you must have if you are to write a good poem:

- ideas
- feelings
- skill with lexical fields
- skill with tropes (in the traditional sense of that term), and
- an ear for music (sounds and structure).

The last three overlap and are craft skills.

But the first two? These are the most important, and they are not craft skills. Are you good with verbalising your ideas and feelings sufficiently strikingly and interestingly for your audience?

If not, and if you want to write poetry, then you must get good! Never mind the technical skills of handling lexical fields, echoes, metonymy, irony, assonance, repetition, and so on. Sure, you can learn these skills – but don't you actually want to say something in your poetry, to put observations and emotions across that are worth conveying? Go and rustle yourself up some ideas and feelings first, ones that can in principle be conveyed in prose. Wanting to convey them not in prose but in poetry is great and you don't have to justify or explain it, but you do need some ideas and feelings that are worth conveying in the first place.

If the answer is that you have already got loads of ideas and feelings that you're quite good at verbalising, not in poems but in speech, or to yourself internally, perhaps as single observations that pack a lot of strength and depth, then go for it! What you must now do to convey them in poems is to master the three craft skills. That's far easier than if you haven't got many suitable ideas or feelings that are anywhere near verbalisation but you're superb with these skills. If you're satisfied being like that, then rather than writing poems you might consider concentrating on reviewing and criticising other people's, which isn't what this post is about.

David Cornwell, who writes as John Le Carré, writes a lot more words for a novel than he ends up using. He gets it all down, and then he sets about doing some large-scale pruning. I plan to use a similar but not identical approach to writing poems. Cornwell works out his plot first, as most novelists do. I won't

necessarily do that for a poem. Nor will I necessarily cut my first draft down by a quarter or a half. What I will do is get the ideas and feelings on to the page, without caring much about lexical fields or tropes or music, and once I've done that I will then improve the writing technically.

No Comments

POEM: “Everything”

A36

<http://www.cryzine.com/a36/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Poetry

“She lost the house in the snow; (...)”

Everything

She lost the house in the snow;
She confined the three of them to motels for a year and a half;
She broke his tie with their son, and thereby his heart.
His only other blood family she killed,
And then she forced him into exile on Moron island.

A quarter century of pain clarifies like butter
As she celebrates.
For her there is nothing to forget.

Her sister in another country is content
To hold her once again at her mercy
The way she imprisoned her as a girl,
In the cell in which she never doubted she would put her back.

The trust fund payments start again,
Paid to the one he knew not to trust but trusted regardless.
They are nothing.
For those who are nothing they are everything.

No Comments

The world's most brilliant dog trainer?

A35

<http://www.cryzine.com/a35/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Appreciate this trainer's understanding of the relationship between learning, love, and self-fulfilment...

Sylvia Trkman of Slovenia is the most brilliant dog trainer I've ever seen. Mary Ray is superb, probably the best trainer England has produced, but Sylvia is in a class above. Her [10 golden rules](http://www.lolabuland.com/our-training/) (<http://www.lolabuland.com/our-training/>) are far more useful than unlimited numbers of "do this, do that" instructions from trainers who have become TV personalities or brands. I don't know many of the other top trainers, but it wouldn't surprise me if Sylvia was out there on her own, as Bobby Fischer was in chess.

AWC 2015 - Silvia Trkman with Le and Bu

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=cb0agdVSbyE>



No Comments

The numbers of people in Britain who can tell the time from an analogue clock and do joined-up handwriting are plummeting

A34

<http://www.cryzine.com/a34/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

How far can deskilling go? What will many not be able to do next? Tie their shoelaces? Put a hat on their head?

Schools in Britain are removing clocks with hands from exam rooms, because so few adolescents aged 16 and 18 are able to tell the time from them. I refer to ordinary clocks with hands that rotate around the face allowing you to read off the hours and minutes – if you know how. It seems, many adolescents don't.

Where were these boys and girls when they were two years old? What were they learning, if it wasn't things like how to tell the time? What were their parents doing? Picking their mobile phones?

Meanwhile, ever fewer people in Britain are in the habit of doing joined-up ("cursive") handwriting. Many prefer to scribble things down using either capital letters or "block" letters, meaning they write each letter of a word separately, not joined to the one that follows. (This is sometimes called "printing".) Or at least they write most letters like this, because there are a few letter pairs, such as "e" followed by "r", which they find easier to join together rather than lifting their pen from the paper halfway through.

When I've mentioned these developments elsewhere – developments which indicate falling literacy, rising stupidity, widespread poor parenting, and a kind of "emperor's clothes" effect where it's not the "done thing" to criticise the rapid decline of the culture – some have responded by saying that clocks that go "tick tock" are a nuisance, and that infant-style block writing is easier to read than joined-up writing. It's remarkable how minds that are not in the habit of asking "Why are things like this?" can think up fast reasons, often multiple reasons, for why they *should* be like it.

No Comments

Jacques de Molay, thou art avenged! Notre Dame cathedral burns in Paris

A33

<http://www.cryzine.com/a33/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

The symbolic pitch rises...

Jacques de Molay, thou art avenged!

I won't retell the story of De Molay. Grand Master of the Knights Templar, he was burnt at the stake within sight of Notre Dame. A few centuries later, Guy Debord's ashes were thrown into the Seine from the same place.

The burning of Notre Dame is of major symbolic importance. I cannot think of a single event in France since the crowning of Napoleon in 1804 (in the same building) that surpasses this. In concentrated symbolic power this outdoes the signings of the two armistices of Compiègne in one and the same railway carriage in 1918 and 1940.

It will certainly be used by the current French regime to promote the idea of "la patrie en danger" (fatherland in danger).

And not just by the current regime but also by the Rassemblement National (National Rally), formerly known as the National Front. I will not be surprised one bit if in the next general election the party incorporates an image of Notre Dame into its logo. Who knows, perhaps Marion Maréchal-Le Pen or her aunt will adopt the mantle of Marianne? From the blue waves of the sea to the centre, the centre of Paris, the centre of the world. (They're kind of unlikely to keep their flame logo.)

The fire is excellent news for the Christian far right which has stretched and stretched since the days of Charles Maurras and before – without success, but without being defeated either – to re-establish its dominance in France.

(Meanwhile, outside of France, to the world's Anglophone market whose ideas are already in its hands, the US-based multinational Google has been busily framing the fire, using its video arm Youtube, as akin to the terror attacks on the New York financial district and the Pentagon in 2001. Of course there was a major loss of civilian lives in the New York attack, and so far no life has been reported to have been lost in the Notre Dame fire. But those attacks in some fly-by-night country called the "United States" took place upon some here-today gone-tomorrow bits of recent crappy architecture which are at least two or three levels below Notre Dame in their symbolic significance.)

Oh and Michel Mourre, you are avenged too!

No Comments

Is it better to learn from our own mistakes or other people's?

A32

<http://www.cryzine.com/a32/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Learn from others' mistakes? Well what about our own?

Often communicated wryly, the usual answer to this perennial question is that it is better to learn from other people's.

But is it?

What exactly are we comparing? We can reason that since it is not good to make mistakes it must be preferable to avoid making them. And having learnt the relevant lesson from similar mistakes made by other people, we can apply that lesson and thus avoid making the mistake, avoid suffering, and avoid causing more of whatever type of damage they caused. As far as that goes, sure. But it doesn't go especially far. In fact it's rather trite. Everybody makes mistakes. We have mistakes of our own that we can learn from. Should we seriously prefer to think about other people's and learn from those instead?

Another comparison might be to consider what is more useful. Is it more useful to learn from someone else's mistake while not learning from one of our own, or to learn from one of our own while not learning from someone else's? Personally I'd argue that to improve our mental act it's probably going to be more useful to learn from our own mistake than from another person's.

No Comments

Three-quarters of America is outside the USA

A31

<http://www.cryzine.com/a31/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

There are about 30 countries in America, and the majority of Americans have Spanish or Portuguese as their first lanaguge.

It is not my idea of fun to try to teach a fact to people who constantly react by stating the opposite, by thinking up spurious reasons to defend the opposite, or by throwing insults. Such behaviour is of course common among the willingly ignorant on this revolting medium called the internet.

But in this case I will keep trying.

America is a continent – or, if you like, two continents. It includes North America, Central America, South America, and some islands. One part of it is called Latin America. There are approximately 1000 million people living in America.

The most common first language in America is Spanish. The next most common is English. The third is Portuguese. The fourth is French.

The United States of America (USA) has about a third of the American population. Its area is about 23% of the area of America. By area it is the second largest country in America, and the language that most residents of the USA speak as their first language, namely English, is America's second most widely spoken mother tongue.

Many in the USA are very insular, believing that most people in the world would emigrate to that country if they had the chance, and using the name of the continent to denote only the particular country that they live in. It is not a crime for people to think like that. It is simply ignorance. Ignorance is surmountable. It is a classic case of people thinking that what is "normal" in their little village is normal for the world.

Here are some facts: most people in America speak either Spanish or Portuguese as their first language, and **most people in America use the word "America" to mean the continent of America.**

Anyone from the USA who is reading this and who didn't know that fact that I've just put in bold, well, that's no problem – here's your chance to learn it.

No Comments

Bathe (or shower) like an alchemist

A30

<http://www.cryzine.com/a30/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Read on to learn how.

How does an alchemist have a bath?

In four steps. They

- take a pee and flush it away in the ordinary way (cold, moist – WATER)
- have a hot bath or shower (hot, moist – AIR)
- dry themselves using a towel from a doorknob (cold, dry – EARTH)
- dry themselves using a towel from above a radiator (hot, dry – FIRE)

No Comments

Demand that the US stops honouring slavery

A29

<http://www.cryzine.com/a29/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Slavery is an obscene crime against humanity that should not be honoured in any circumstances whatsoever.

Three simple demands of the US government:

- formally recognise slavery as a crime against humanity;
- rename all cities and states that are currently named after slaveowners, such as Washington DC and New York ;
- remove all honours given to slaveowners, for example the monuments and statues erected to them and the images of slaveowners Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Grant and Jackson that are currently printed on banknotes.

Notes

1) I am often surprised at how little this fact is known in the US, but New York was named after a slaveowner, namely the Duke of York, the mass murderer who later became James II of England and VII of Scotland. As soon as the Stuart family were reinstated in England and Scotland in 1660 after the end of the republic (Commonwealth), they established the highly lucrative Royal African Company which operated from the City of London. James, Duke of York, was a leading figure in this Company which shipped thousands of African slaves each year across the Atlantic, and hundreds of thousands altogether. At least one in five died during the journey. Many were branded with the letters "DY" for "Duke of York" . When English forces took over the Dutch colony of New Netherland and its city New Amsterdam in 1664, they renamed them both "New York" in honour of the slaveowning filthbag Duke, whose brother had recently returned to the throne and who was himself made the next king in 1685.

2) In those days, the slaving organisation didn't use the IBM technology that the German SS employed in a later century to keep track of forced labourers (slaves) in its concentration camps, who were similarly physically branded, in their case with numbers.

No Comments

Five laws of stupidity

A28

<http://www.cryzine.com/a28/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Recommended reading: Carlo Cipolla on stupidity.

Carlo Cipolla's brilliant essay on the basic laws of human stupidity (which you can download [here](https://advanced.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/The-Basic-Laws-of-Human-Stupidity.pdf) (<https://advanced.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/The-Basic-Laws-of-Human-Stupidity.pdf>)) is highly recommended. His five laws run as follows.

1. People always underestimate the number of stupid people around.
2. The probability that a person is stupid is independent of any other of their characteristics, for example the level of their formal education, how rich they are, their position in a hierarchy, their prestige, age, ethnicity or sex.
3. A stupid person causes losses to others while deriving no gain for themselves and possibly even incurring losses.
4. Non-stupid people always underestimate the damaging power of stupid people; they constantly forget that choosing to associate with stupid people is always a costly mistake.
5. A stupid person is the most dangerous type of person. Corollary: a stupid person is more dangerous than a bandit.

I've whittled and rearranged. Please copy, amend to your purposes, stick on noticeboards or wherever. In the age of the internet this insight is liberating and increasingly important.

1. The stupid damage other people while deriving no benefit and sometimes damaging themselves.
2. The probability that a person is stupid is independent of any other characteristic.
3. Stupid people are the most dangerous, more dangerous than bandits.
4. The non-stupid underestimate how many stupid people are around.
5. The non-stupid also underestimate the damaging power of the stupid, and they often forget that associating with stupid people is always a costly mistake.

No Comments

“47 Ways to Comb Your Armpit Hair if You Want to be like Donald Trump”

A27

<http://www.cryzine.com/a27/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

The bestselling ebook. (Just kidding. But it could be.)

Would an e-book entitled *47 Ways to Comb Your Armpit Hair if You Want to be like Donald Trump* sell better than Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Shakespeare's plays nowadays, if it had a funny picture on the cover?

No Comments

Gold coin scams, and other scams too, at British post offices

A26

<http://www.cryzine.com/a26/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Some of the “in your face” scams committed by the “state-owned” Post Office organisation in Britain.

A guy working behind the desk in a British post office, who happens to be the postmaster, splashed a hard-sell on me today, trying to persuade me to buy gold coins. Yes, gold coins. In a post office. After seeing me idly peruse some coins in a display cabinet while queuing, he handed me a box containing a sovereign and said the mint mark on it meant a lot “if you know about sovereigns”. He said the price was £450 but they were selling for £500 on Ebay. He must have thought there was a good chance I was born yesterday. He was basically saying I could make myself £50 if I handed him £450.

He also pointed to a huge five ounce coin offered for more than £8000. (It was my attention to this one that had triggered his sales effort in the first place) Yes, £8000 for five ounces, even though the spot price for an ounce of gold is only about £1000. That would be £3000 for a worthless picture of a monarch. “It’s one of only 120 that were struck,” he said, “And I can’t sell you two because we’ve only got one. We’re not just an ordinary post office.” Sure, mate.

He was using all the techniques. And in fact it was an ordinary post office. It isn’t in a super-rich area or anything. I’d gone in to pay my electricity bill.

If he goes any further, he’ll be asking each male customer whether he prefers blondes or brunettes and he’ll say there is a room upstairs where the said customer can take advantage of a special offer.

Or he will be offering bags of “special sherbet”.

I’ve been in post offices where somebody approaches you in the queue trying to get you to “change your phone supplier”. The first question is a “yes” hook such as “Are you with BT?” (In bank branches, they can ask “Have you got a car?” before they try to sell you car insurance.) I’ve been to other post offices where a video display is positioned at the front of the queue advertising “payday loans” straight into your face. Those are the short-term loans at interest rates that can exceed 1000% per year.

Often the main floor of a British post office and its general dirtiness and poor organisation are reminiscent of the third world, and there will be a separate and much cleaner area either in the same room or in an adjoining room where punters get worked on by sales personnel if they are naive or desperate enough to ask in a post office about a loan.

Meanwhile the windows at post office counters are often festooned with advertisements for lottery tickets, printed in bright colours and fonts that would be more suitable at a children’s party.

Then there are the lying posters in post offices that advertise foreign currency “with no commission”. The actual commission, which is to say half of the spread between the buy price and the sell price, is somewhere around 4%. No commission would mean that if you bought 500 euros for British pounds and

then changed the euros back into pounds you would get 500 pounds back. In actual fact you'd get about 460. No moneychanger offers a no-commission service, for obvious reasons. The moneychangers who proclaim "no commission" are aiming at complete and utter morons. Post offices charge commissions which are sky high.

This is what it's like in Britain nowadays.

Those who run Post Office Limited even lie to people who want to renew their passports. "We'll check your form for you," they say, "if you give us £16 , and then it's less likely you'll have your application rejected". They call it "Check and Send". Can so few British citizens read and write and fill in a basic form nowadays? Don't they know how to put an envelope in a post box? In any case, staff are trained to tell customers who avail themselves of this "service" that they don't "guarantee" that the application won't be rejected for not having been filled in right. In other words the deceiving moneygrabbers are too greedy to train their staff to be able to check the completed forms properly, which is precisely the service they are taking money for. In short, they are asking for extra money from people just to accept letters which could just as easily be dropped in the box outside, the same way that most other letters can be posted – and people are willingly paying.

Welcome to Scam Britain.

Can somebody tell me which political party you can vote for if you're against this? Which newspaper should you read if you want to read articles by somebody else who has even noticed it?

Notes

1) This is the current price charged, on 9 May 2020.

No Comments

The smartphone plague is ruining sex

A25

<http://www.cryzine.com/a25/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

When the representation of sex stands in opposition to sex itself.

A lot has been written on this, but here's a piece by Nancy Jo Sales in Vanity Fair in 2015, : [Tinder and the Dawn of the "Dating Apocalypse"](https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/08/tinder-hook-up-culture-end-of-dating) (<https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/08/tinder-hook-up-culture-end-of-dating>). Basically the plague of smartphone and social media usage has reached such a prevalence, and it has infected its willing victims to such a degree, that many young women don't have orgasms and many young men can't get erections. But boy, can they pick their smartphones.

No Comments

Fascism is here – and most people love it

A24

<http://www.cryzine.com/fascism-is-here-and-most-people-love-it/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

This was written a year before the 2020 Covid-19 crackdown when (to take Britain as our example) the authorities started murdering the elderly in care homes, halted most hospital surgery indefinitely, put most of the population under conditions close to house arrest, and began whipping up a nationalistic frenzy of clapping for the government every Thursday evening.

Richard Godwin's article in yesterday's Guardian is largely clueless, but a reading of it may bring up some aspects of what's going on, at least for those who have the wit and self-respect to want to notice:

[“You can track everything’: the parents who digitise their babies’ lives \(https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/mar/02/apps-that-track-babies-and-give-data-to-tech-firms-parents\)”](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/mar/02/apps-that-track-babies-and-give-data-to-tech-firms-parents)

“One-year-olds hypnotised by creepy Baby Shark ephemera on YouTube; two-year-olds who can swipe before they can talk; my own five-year-old trying to “pause” me when he goes to the loo.”

“A few weeks before Jenny was born, her mother, Aoife, downloaded a free ‘breastfeeding and baby tracker’ app called Feed Baby and began playing around with it. The developer, Penguin Apps, describes it as ‘the only app you will need to care for your little one’. It has been downloaded more than 1m times.”

“You set up your baby, you say when your due date was and when they were born. You can track when you’ve fed. If you’re breastfeeding, what side you’ve breastfed on and for how long. If you’re bottle feeding, how much formula they took. You can track a nappy, what was in the nappy. You can track sleep. If you’re giving medicine, how much medicine you give. You can track growth, you can track length and weight, teeth, baths. You can track everything.”

We are talking about psychosis, a complete inability to recognise consciously the direction of an action: who is the doer and who is the done to.

Make no mistake: technofascism is here, and it's schizoid.

“(T)he app stores are full of products with names such as Baby Manager and Glow Baby Newborn Tracker.”

“(T)he latest version of Owlet, a baby sock that measures temperature, heart rate, oxygen saturation and movement (...) has already become a must-have item among Hollywood parents.”

“Unsurprisingly, the mothers she observed turned to Google and Facebook”.

“The Owlet changed the type of information parents gathered about their children,

which changed the way they interacted with them.”

“What you’ve done with the Owlet is create a digital version of your child.”

“Comments on this piece are premoderated to ensure discussion remains on topics raised by the writer.”

Yeah, well they would be.

Do you think billionaire profiteers from smartphone fascism let their own children be subjected to it? Of course they don't (<https://nypost.com/2017/12/04/facebooks-kid-app-undermines-parental-struggles-to-get-their-kids-off-screens/>)!

“Take the 2014 study from the University of California Los Angeles that found that kids who went five days without exposure to technology were much better at reading human emotions than kids who had access to televisions, computers and phones. Too much screen time can permanently dull kids’ abilities to read nonverbal cues, accept delayed gratification, and actively engage with the world around them.”

“Tech giants like Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg knew it; according to a 2014 New York Times article, Jobs didn’t let his kids use the iPad, and strictly limited how much technology his kids used at home.”

Ever noticed how stupidity and illiteracy are on the rise as emotional intelligence is falling?

Mark Zuckerberg keeps his own child off Facebook, but he wants your children on it. The smartphone plague is similar in scale to a position in which 90% of the population were heroin addicts. It’s that bad. It’s worse.

No Comments

Wacky songs referencing England's former and current capital cities

A23

<http://www.cryzine.com/a23/>

9 May 2020


Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Music

The first is more original and off the wall, but there's something weirdly ambiguous about the quality of fake in the second.

For connoisseurs of songs set in English towns, here's the unforgettable *Winchester Cathedral* (1966) by the New Vaudeville Band. (Never mind the cover version by Frank Sinatra).


Winchester Cathedral

 <https://youtube.com/watch?v=jKc1OCJ7iXk>



And for a truly zany mix, follow it with this strange product by Chas and Dave, "London Girls" (1983) – self-parodic or what?

Chas and Dave - London Girls (1983)

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



The lyrics!

*"If you ever go down to London town, your legs will turn to jelly /
Cos the girls down there I swear are just like models off the telly
(...)
(T)hey've always got a pound to buy a round /
When it's their turn at the bar".*

Vintage postmodernism!

No Comments

“Muting” on the internet: a new development, leading where?

A22

<http://www.cryzine.com/a22/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

It happens on various “social sites”: “muting”, or “shadowbanning”. This insidious way to condition compliance is deeply of its time.

In many places of online “socialisation”, company-appointed officials – usually low-ranking ones working for no financial payment – are empowered to “mute” members of the social group that the company has allowed to gather on its electronic premises. This causes a thus-sanctioned person’s contributions to become invisible to other people while remaining visible to the person themselves as if nothing has happened. The target person is in effect *removed from society without them knowing it*. When nobody responds to what they are saying, perhaps they will eventually deduce what has been done to them. Or perhaps they will not, because they might simply assume that nobody in the group wants to communicate with them. The muting is usually kept quiet from other “users” too, except perhaps from one or two of the official’s special favourites.

This to me is an extremely interesting social development. I cannot think of any previous example of this kind of social exclusion – which does not instantly appear to the excluded person as an exclusion – in the whole of human history.

If a person gets gagged or put in an isolation cell, they know what’s happening right away. That is unless they are psychotic – and probably even if they are psychotic they will still know. “Muting” is very different.

One feature is that it is hard to complain about. If, say, a policeman or a private company guard hits you over the head and you believe he was wrong to do so, it is usually eventually easy to complain. Complaining might not get you anywhere, of course, but probably you will, either soon or at some later point, find that you are able to complain. But you can’t complain about getting hit if you don’t know you were hit. Muting is highly reminiscent of the rule that was introduced in Germany when my grandmother was in her late teens, requiring that guards in a prison of a certain kind were obliged (not simply authorised, but *obliged*) to shoot any prisoner who entered a strip near the fence – to shoot them without warning, and to shoot them dead. How does this power affect the minds of the guards? You can be sure that the senior officials in the organisation to which the guards belonged had thought about that question. And there is at least some literature on how both guards and prisoners behaved in relation to the strip and the new rule.

I expect the “muting” function soon to appear in other areas of social life than companies’ online chat rooms, once the necessary technology has been successfully imposed in wider society.

I expect that to happen whether or not it comes heavily wrapped in an ideology of “freedom”.

I have several times tried in chat rooms to discuss chatroom muting, but few have ever wanted to discuss it.

These chat rooms have contained many morons. And morons who act as if they have rabies rather than trying to explain why they hold a view – one that they have simply received, being too stupid to form opinions on such matters for themselves – tend to spit and shout and prevent discussion rather than to face up to the choices they made that caused them to be so stupid in the first place. They are, therefore, very much with the muting programme.

If anybody has said anything on the topic usually they have said muting is good, and if they then add any kind of rational support for their view it's to say that it's good for the person who is subjected to it because it lets them cool off. But that's typical nowadays: most people "think" that any new social development is "good", because they're too scared and idiotic to form their own opinion about it, let alone a critical one. Which is of course exactly the dimwitted submissiveness that muting itself is intended to train people into, on the presumably increasingly rare occasions that they consider for a brief time the option of acting in a way that those who profit from the company that provides their "socialisation" space don't want. It will be a case of "Oops, I went wrong there. Sorry about that. Won't happen again", as they internalise the company's needs as if they were their own needs. Except that it isn't as simple as that. But if I stop being so angry for a while and examine the support that is offered for the "cooling off" argument I still find that the argument doesn't work. The person is not being thrown out of the room for a short while. That's not what's happening. Companies do give their officials the tool to impose that kind of sanction (a "kick" or a "ban"), but muting is a different kind of tool. At first the person doesn't even know they've been muted. It seems to them that they are still in the room, still in society. If you thought online "socialisation" had a "fictitious" side to it, this is even worse, and socially it is even crazier. This is a fiction of such socialisation, company-made to appear as real to a person who, initially unbeknown to themselves, is actually excluded from it.

If you aren't scared by this, you should be. Most, I think, will hold their pitchforks as a person gets burnt at the stake, whether they're shrieking in delight or whether they're just standing there with their mouths open. If you ask them to explain themselves they will say that the targeted person had been acting antisocially anyway.

Which of course perhaps the targeted person had been. Certainly in online groups you do get people acting antisocially and some kind of moderation is needed if those who do not act in such a way are to continue what passes for their "socialising". I am not denying that. What I am trying to draw attention to are the ramifications of the muting function.

I offer the hypothesis that the "society" the existence of which is implied in the very widespread use of the term "social media" goes together with the practice of exclusion from that society; and that we will find that muting becomes a structurally normal form of such exclusion – and of the training of compliance.

The training that muting gives to some of those who are subjected to it is not self-discipline. It is a step on from both Pavlov's "[classical conditioning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_conditioning)" and Skinner's "[operant conditioning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operant_conditioning)". It is bound to become more widespread.

I would be interested to know whether there are any cases yet of companies running a system whereby an official who is empowered to mute "users" can himself be muted by a more senior official. I suspect

that the answer is no, that basically we are talking about a guards and prisoners model. If a guard or a police officer goes completely loony then his colleagues can lock him up, but that is highly exceptional and it is not part of the everyday functioning of how prisons and policing work.

The absence of “public” discussion of muting makes it even more frightening. I doubt that the new rule for prison guards that I referred to above was discussed much in the media at that time either.

No Comments

Sarcasm-itis – in which cultures have you encountered it?

A21

<http://www.cryzine.com/a21/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

They run Britain as if it were the British Empire: an observation that's often made but is no less true for it.

Does any country other than Britain produce so many of its middling social types who suffer from sarcasm-itis, the affliction that causes them to be compulsively sarcastic, often in highly inappropriate circumstances and usually with excruciatingly little skill (which doesn't make it funny), making themselves seem like one-trick ponies?

I've noticed that when the sarcasm is conveyed by tone only, the impression is frequently one of passive aggression.

Sufferers act as if the other person is some kind of animated turd with whom they happen to be stuck in a lift (US: elevator), and whom they are humouring – for the time being and, please be aware, only because they find themselves caught in that time and place – as if the turd were, as the poor thing believes itself to be, human.

And how does sarcasm-itis connect with the “slurp upwards, spit downwards” personality?

No Comments

A vegan revolution?:

A20

<http://www.cryzine.com/a-vegan-revolution/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

It's about time. C'mon, let's continue evolving.

I've been thinking about the history of our species – or its prehistory and history.

First there was the early stone age, during which we got our food from hunting and lived in widely dispersed clans.

Then there was the neolithic revolution when we domesticated animals – in the case of dogs, they may have domesticated us – and we not only started herding reindeer, keeping flocks, and growing plant food for our own consumption, but we also became more social both with each other and with dogs. Sure, we made tools that were more advanced than our previous ones, but tools are inanimate. The big change was in how living beings related to each other.

The next stage in our evolution is surely the vegan revolution, when we stop killing and exploiting animals and we use what passes for our intellect to choose to be friends with other species where possible, not exploiters and killers.

Of course to reach that stage, or in reaching it, we need to sort human society out too, so it will be bye bye to exploitation of humans by humans.

No Comments

Nina Simone sings “The Black Freighter”

A19

<http://www.cryzine.com/a19/>

9 May 2020


Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Music

Words are by Bertolt Brecht, music by Kurt Weill, both from the Threepenny Opera (1928).

Nina Simone didn't sing this often, once saying that it took too much out of her and after singing it she needed seven years to recover. She was born in the south of the United States and when she sang at her first concert, aged 12 in the 1940s, her parents, who had sat in the front row, were forced to move to the back of the hall to make way for white people. She refused to sing until they got their seats back.

Nina Simone - Pirate Jenny Live 1964

 <https://youtube.com/watch?v=V7awW5nrDHk>



No Comments

Some music by three singers from South Wales – two with dads who were coalminers and a third who herself was a steelworker

A18

<http://www.cryzine.com/a18/>

9 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Music

What do the singers Tom Jones and Bonnie Tyler and the late actor Richard Burton all have in common?

Like the late actor Richard Burton, the singers Tom Jones and Bonnie Tyler both had dads who were coalminers in South Wales – Burton's worked in Pontrhydyfen, theirs in Pontypridd and Port Talbot. Shirley Bassey, meanwhile, worked as a steelworker in Cardiff.


Tom Jones's song "Delilah" (1968) is banned nowadays in many students' unions in Britain. It's powerful stuff, right from its masterfully written first line that carries a triple meaning. (Think about it!)

TOM JONES - Delilah (1968)

 https://youtube.com/watch?v=8a_T3U1rg2I



Bonnie Tyler - Total Eclipse of the Heart (Video)

 <https://youtube.com/watch?v=lcOxhH8N3Bo>



Shirley Bassey - I Who Have Nothing (1979 Show #4)



<https://youtube.com/watch?v=nfDAoSdAS4>



No Comments

I despise cheating tradesmen

A17

<http://www.cryzine.com/a17/>

8 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

“So I ring round some carpenters. One of them comes to look at the job (...)”

So I ring round some carpenters. One of them comes to look at the job, spends an hour here, wants me to buy some of his tools for him, whinges about how hard one or two parts of the work will be, and then he emails me a quote. He puts it in what is now standard idiotic British language, saying “I’ve worked out the price for you”. But he doesn’t state a company name or even his own address. So I email him back to ask who the contract would be with. He responds by email within minutes, as if he were a thickwitted teenager chewing gum, asking “Contract?????” This is a man of about 50 who is presumably running a business.

Yes, mate, an agreement to do work for payment is a contract. You have to do the work we agreed, and then I have to pay you the amount we agreed, you idiot.

Seriously, imagine not knowing that.

So many tradesmen nowadays put most of their effort into sales, believing that when they’re actually doing the job they can play it by ear, scrimp on materials, tell you black is white, then change it to black is green and forget they said black is white, and so on. They think they can make up rubbishy reasons on the hoof and you’ll believe them. They think that if they pepper their lies with phrases such as “to be honest” and “to tell you the truth” you’ll lap it all up – or at least that you won’t say anything even if you’re not getting the work you expected. As if anybody who hasn’t got poop for brains can’t recognise such deceitful behaviour and obvious signals for what they are. Most liars aren’t very skilled at lying at all.

The more liars who go bust, the better.

No Comments

“Select all images with a bus”

A16

<http://www.cryzine.com/a16/>

8 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

When grownups are treated like toddlers.

“Select all images with a bus”... “My Computer”... “Favourites”...

Ever get the feeling you’re being infantilised?

No Comments

The promotion of the idea that human beings are the major cause of climate change

A15

<http://www.cryzine.com/a15/>

8 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

The demonisation of those who notice the difference between a statement of existence and a statement of causation can't present itself as what it is, because its insanity would be laid bare straightaway. The climate has always changed and it always will. Often it has changed fast too. It wasn't humans that did it. Wanting to stop the climate changing is nuts.

The following headline at the Independent news website caught my eye:

["Britain's global warming denial hotspots revealed \(https://newstral.com/en/article/en/1073501597/britain-s-global-warming-denial-hotspots-revealed\)."](https://newstral.com/en/article/en/1073501597/britain-s-global-warming-denial-hotspots-revealed)

Right, so the demonisation of those who deny the official story has taken a step forward, I thought. It's as if the media and the usually unnamed "experts" who seem to be referred to in most articles in the British media nowadays are telling our neighbours where we live, warning residents in areas where we are concentrated to watch out for us – as if we were a poison, as if we were antisocial criminal elements, akin to child abusers or terrorists.

Perhaps next the Daily Mail will run stories saying things like "I didn't know I was living next to a *global warming denier*. He seemed like a normal bloke."

Yet the official propaganda asserting that humans cause climate change is obviously rubbish and it is also put out for reasons that are similarly obviously rubbish, namely to push the line that "we're all in the same boat, so you've got to tighten your belt, or else you're antisocial".

It is patently evidently not the case that the idea that the climate is changing (which is true) is identical to, equivalent to, similar to, or even the same *type* of idea as, the idea that human action caused the climate to change (which is false). Anyone who tries to make you swallow the second idea by offering you the first, for example by pretending that denial of the second equals denial of the first, is lying to you. And nowadays that's most of the big businesses and governments in the world, loyally obeyed by their opinion-channelling scribes and hangers-on.

The article itself, written in the degenerate language that passes for "journalism" today, is [here \(https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/uk-climate-change-real-accept-majority-global-warming-poll-finds-a7909841.html\)](https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/uk-climate-change-real-accept-majority-global-warming-poll-finds-a7909841.html).

Ian Johnston, the "Environment Correspondent", the cut-and-paste man who beavers away for Russian "oligarch" Evgeny Lebedev, the owner of the Independent and Evening Standard and a friend of Tory liar Boris Johnson, has put his name to this ludicrous piece in which the following concepts are all conflated:

- global warming
- climate change
- the “science of climate change”
- the “widespread evidence of global warming”
- what “every major scientific organisation in the world” says
- “scientists’ evidence”
- the idea that “the temperature is rising and that greenhouse gas emissions are to blame”

Wa-a-ait there!! In the last line, aren’t those two ideas?

The article is puff for a poll conducted by a company called Censuswide for another company called GoCompare.com. The question they asked was this:

“Do you believe in Global Warming?”

Note that not only is the question couched in terms of a “belief in” something, but the concept in which one can apparently believe or not believe in is capitalised, as if it were a deity.

It’s a fact that the climate is changing. In Britain, some trees now blossom in February or sometimes January or even in some cases December that previously didn’t blossom before April. But why do you think most governments and paid-for “experts” are conflating the idea of the existence of climate change with the totally different idea that human activity has caused climate change, on which they build the *crazy* third idea that humans can *stop* climate change if only we do what governments and big business tell us?

That’s the question that people whose minds are alive will ask, however much they get sneered at by morons who believe whatever those who stand above them in the opinion chain tell them, especially if it’s smeared all over with modern propaganda-era holy words like “science”.

Here’s a fact that will get you a long way: *there used to be ice fairs on the River Thames in London*. The ice was often thick enough. Nowadays it never is. It became impossible to hold ice fairs because the temperature rose a lot. The climate changed. And don’t say that was because of human activity. It wasn’t. Thames ice fairs came to an end long before the industrial revolution.

The climate has always changed, and it always will. The idea that humans can stop it changing is anti-nature, anti-human, anti-historical, and reminiscent of the nutcase mobilisation that took place during the “Great Leap Forward” in China in 1958-62. The German Nazis may have introduced the term “Thousand Year Reich”, but even they didn’t declare that human beings could control the climate. The idea that the largest part of climate change is caused by humans is *psychotic*.

But consider the sheer weight of the totalitarian propaganda that encourages us to believe otherwise – and shiver. “Scientists” are so scared to break ranks. Doubtless by now most have internalised the craziness. But they are still scared, just as schoolteachers and tour guides in North Korea are scared when they praise the great leadership of Kim Jong-Il. No subeditor will get sacked for writing a headline like the one with which I began this post. Until, of course, it’s determined that his phrasing was insufficiently zealous. It is impossible to analyse the propaganda here without the notion of social psychopathology.

No Comments

Let's hear it for "bossnapping"!

A14

<http://www.cryzine.com/a14/>

6 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

An imaginative tactic used by workers in France.

"Bossnapping" is when workers who are engaged in a dispute lock their bosses in their offices or otherwise confine them against their will. The word is formed from "boss" and "kidnapping". In most cases, the managers or bosses are not physically harmed: they are given food and they are allowed contact with the outside world.

Bossnapping became widely known in 2009 when it occurred a number of times in France and was condemned by the then president of the Fifth Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy. Opinion polling suggested it was generally considered positively by much of the population. A law was eventually introduced making it punishable by five years in prison.

No Comments

Alan Moore's novel *Jerusalem*

A13

<http://www.cryzine.com/a13/>

6 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Not a novel about superheroes.

In 2017 I read Alan Moore's novel *Jerusalem*, set in the English town of Northampton, at the same time as I read Fyodor Dostoyevsky's masterpiece *Crime and Punishment*, the novel that is famous for its portrayal of a character's inner world. Moore's work is superior on several scores, but notably it is superior *on this score in particular*: its portrayal of an inner world. It is at least a class above.

It is well known that if you come from the working class you need to be much better at whatever it is you do than all the middle class tossers who take possession of their occupational positions by means of inherited privilege and contacts.

I doubt that Moore will ever be offered the Nobel prize for literature. His work is at least as great as that of any of the laureates, but he comes from the right side of the railway tracks and, worse still in the minds of the privileged, he has never sold out. Respect is due to Harold Pinter, who came from the lower middle class and who won the prize in 2005, and there is a deep sense in which he too fought against the privileged – I don't doubt his social commitment. But nonetheless a lot of Pinter's work is principally consumed as fodder by the middle classes, which is hardly surprising given that most of it took the form of stage plays and given that the lower middle class is not the proletariat. It does not have the richness, originality, bite and visionary quality of Moore's, which puts Moore in the same category as William Blake, the earlier author of "And did those feet in ancient time".

No Comments

Shitclown Britain: schoolboys' "right" to wear skirts

A12

<http://www.cryzine.com/a12/>

6 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Can anyone think of a policy that functions better to tell everybody to shut their cakeholes and accept that turds are kiwi fruit because the guys in front of the microphones all agree they are?

The officially trumpeted craze for men dressing in women's clothes provides a window on the extent to which social conditions in Britain have become psychotic. Far from being described as an activity that a small proportion of men engage in for a laugh, perhaps when collecting for charity, or for entertainment on the stage, or in private if that's what turns them on, cross-dressing is now sold as part of the new "normal", and as all about "rights". The idea that a society might have norms that are healthy for its own reproduction and for the individuals who compose it is thrown in the rubbish bin and then covered up, as if it were an idea that was recently found to be totally wrong and is now terribly old-fashioned and smelly. "What's normal for me isn't normal for you" is the mantra.

We are slap bang in territory once marked out by the evil Margaret Thatcher when she boasted, after creating mass unemployment, that "there is no such thing as society".

Let us state the obvious here: normal means typical, so being gay for example is not normal and neither is cross-dressing. And in case you thought otherwise, that is not a statement calling for anyone's oppression.

In the political sphere, on 9 June 2016 the British state's broadcasting arm treated its audience to a "Question Time" debate, in which the principal disputation concerned whether Britain should stay in the European Union or leave – an issue to be voted on by plebiscite a fortnight later. The main person appearing for Brexit was Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party, a normal-looking man in a suit. The main speaker for Remain was Eddie Izzard, a transvestite, best known for his work as a comedian, who appeared dressed in eye makeup, lipstick, and a pink beret.

Eddie Izzard vs Nigel Farage on immigration - BBC News



https://youtube.com/watch?v=ECDrYfNvj_o



Neither the chairman nor any member of the panel – nor, perish the thought, anyone allowed to speak from the audience – commented on the transvestite's idiotic appearance. After all, everyone can do whatever they want and it's not up to the rest of us to say otherwise. If he wants to come dressed as a petunia, that's up to him. Right? We should note here that Mr Izzard is not one of the tiny minority of people who suffer from chromosomal deformity. He is a man. His sex chromosome is XY, exactly as it is for almost half of the world's population. It's not his physiology that's abnormal; it's his behaviour and his personality.

Needless to say, it was Nigel Farage's side which won the vote, against the expectations of many.

But where, in the torrents of "analysis" of how on earth the referendum result came to happen, have you ever even seen the zaniness of this debate, in which millions of punters watched a normally-dressed man debate against a transvestite, even mentioned?

Which leads me to the next observation: those who play intermediary roles in the opinion chain know that they're not allowed to touch that kind of question. They're not permitted to wonder in print about the effect that the British state's presentation of a pro-Remain transvestite arguing against a pro-Leave man wearing normal clothes may have had on people's voting choices a few days later. It's more than their careers are worth. And rather than admitting that they're too scared, most of them internalise their cowardice as if their public attitude reflects what they themselves decided to think, completely off their own bat.

Whatever you do, don't call the debate's theatrical concept ridiculous! Don't compare it with a debate where one of the participants was wearing a monkey suit!

"It is always a fallacy to paint the distinction between two categories as unimportant because the border between them is grey and has a thickness. Similarly, there have been a number of reports about how boy school pupils should be able to wear skirts. Shitclown headmasters – members of a group who are experts at thinking exactly what they're told, precisely what the party line is at any given time, and at channelling it to the group that lies beneath them, namely other people's children and their parents – talk about how they're fighting sexism, as if they were leftwing radicals, as if they were in the habit of thinking for themselves against the oppressors. Which is close to the exact opposite of what people who work in that job really are.

Thomas Canham, a transvestite with a law degree who calls traditional notions of masculinity "meaningless", and who we can only conclude has difficulties with what the word "meaning" usually denotes, is being paid to "lecture" in nursery schools wearing women's clothing, in front of children aged two and three, about how it's "normal" for some children to have an essential gender that's opposite to what their bodies tell them. The message appears to be as follows: "Do you get annoyed with the other boys sometimes, little lad? Well why not try wearing a skirt? Never mind what your mum and dad say!"

In Scotland, the Liberal Democrat political party is even advocating that schools should have a "gender-neutral" uniform policy, meaning that if trousers are all right for boys then they should be all right for girls (a policy that would annoy few) and that if skirts are okay for girls then they should be fine for boys too. The latter is a policy that still, even in our benighted times, most of the population know is utterly absurd. It has nothing whatsoever to do with fighting the oppression of females, even when it is couched in terms of giving girls more freedom to do cartwheels without showing their knickers.

It is, in fact, nothing whatsoever to do with what was called feminism a few decades ago, such as the ideas that Germaine Greer advances in her book *The Female Eunuch* (1970). As Greer made crystal clear she was aware, females and males are fundamentally psychologically different. Yes, support the right of a girl to be a tomboy and a boy to be a cissy. But overdetermine that right and you end up in fucking freako land.

Sometimes appreciating the edge between categories is crucial to understanding their nature and their

opposition. Sometimes it isn't. But to argue that the distinction between two categories is unimportant because the line between them is not infinitesimally thin is always fallacious.

No Comments

A truly disgusting looking café in Moscow

A11

<http://www.cryzine.com/a11/>

6 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Let's give this one a miss.

Maybe I don't get the postmodern sophisticated irony?

[*View post on imgur.com*](#)

[*View post on imgur.com*](#)

No Comments

The origins of the Monty Python cartoon style lay in the USSR

A10

<http://www.cryzine.com/the-origins-of-the-monty-python-cartoon-style-lay-in-the-ussr/>


6 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Talk about recuperation!

A lot can be said about Monty Python, the British comedy series written by a group of privileged young men in England and first shown in 1969-74, but here's something you may not have known: Terry Gilliam got his cartoon style from the brilliant Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov, born David Kaufman in Poland, who created it in the mid-1920s. Here is Vertov's film "Soviet Toys" (1924):

Dziga Vertov's "Soviet Toys" (1924)

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



No Comments

How cool is this musical instrument, the theremin?

A9

<http://www.cryzine.com/a9/>

5 May 2020


Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Music

It's played without being touched.

The theremin is named after Leon Theremin, who invented it in 1920. Here he is, demonstrating:


Leon Theremin playing his own instrument

 <https://youtube.com/watch?v=w5qf9O6c20o>



A more recent performance:

THEREMIN - Over The Rainbow

 <https://youtube.com/watch?v=K6KbEnGnymk>



This is Clara Rockmore playing "The Swan" from Camille Saint-Saëns's "The Carnival of the Animals", a piece that was also beautifully choreographed by Mikhail Fokin as "The Dying Swan", first danced by Anna Pavlova:

Theremin - Clara Rockmore play "The Swan" (Saint-Saëns)

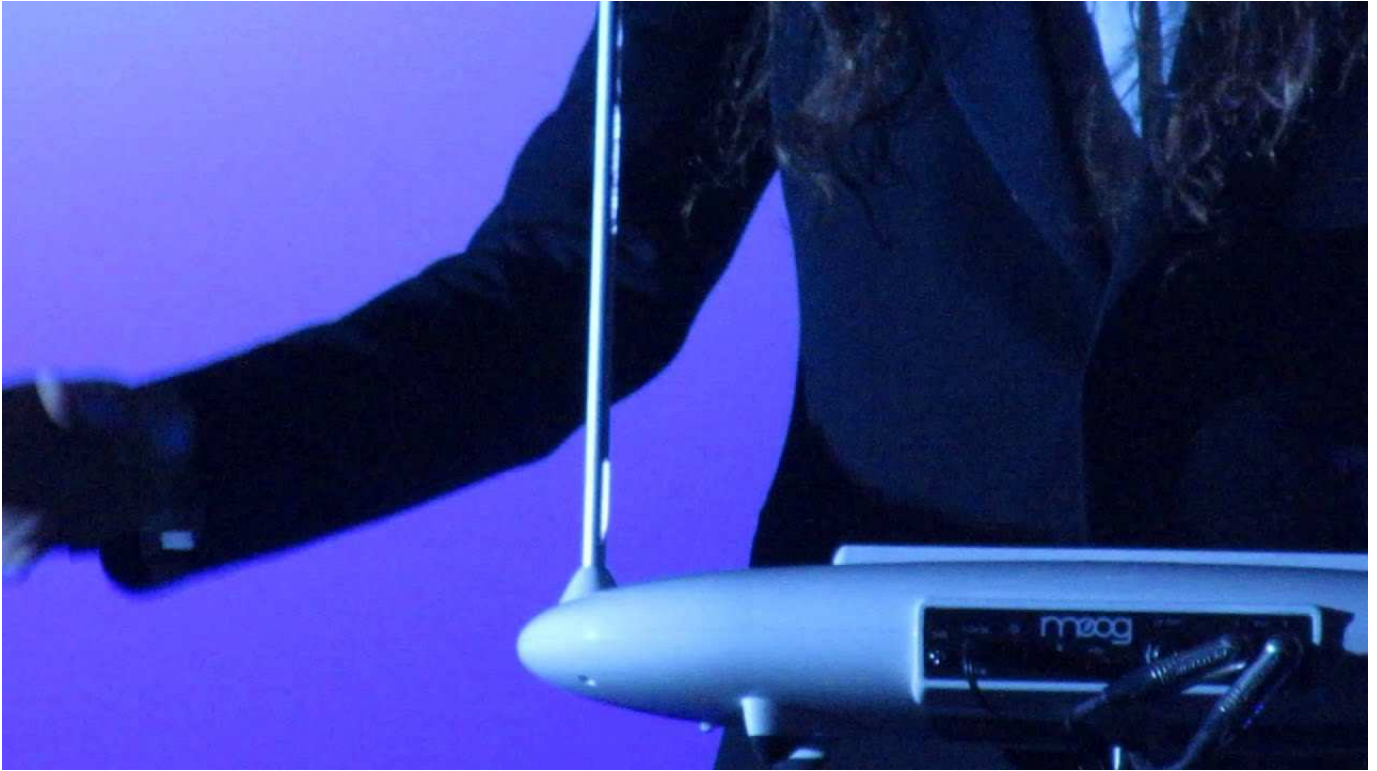
 <https://youtube.com/watch?v=pSzTPGIna5U>



And this is Zaz, from Tours, France, playing the instrument in Moscow:

Zaz "Techno Instrument"

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=aru7p6nDlzM>



No Comments

An irregular verb: some contrasting pieces of western terminology

A8

<http://www.cryzine.com/a8/>

5 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

When did you last hear the noun “mercenary”?

“We deploy regular troops and we understand that *private military companies* are also sending some personnel.”

“You use *mercenaries*.”

“They engage in *hybrid warfare*.”

No Comments

Arab output figures: the gulf between the Gulf and elsewhere

A7

<http://www.cryzine.com/a7/>

5 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

A comparison.

The average gross national product (GNP) per head in the six Arab states in the Gulf area is 11 times higher than the average in the other 16 Arab states.

Of the Arab states, the Gulf ones have 14% of the population, 60% of the output, and an average GNP per head similar to the figures for EU members Spain and Malta.

The others have 86% of the population, 40% of the output, and an average GNP per head similar to those in the poor sub-Saharan African countries the Ivory Coast and Lesotho.

Of course it is possible to conclude too much from this comparison. Bear in mind that Lebanon has almost two-thirds of the GNP per head of Saudi Arabia, while Qatar has the world's largest, equal to four times the Saudi figure. And there are different ways to calculate output too.

Notes

1) An Arab state is here defined as a member of the Arab League. The Arab Gulf states are the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates . Excluding Oman, they are in the world's top 15 countries by GDP per head when it is calculated by the purchasing-power parity method. (That is not the method used above; by the PPP method, average GDP per head is higher in the Arab Gulf states than it is in the US, Switzerland and Norway). When Oman is included, they are in the top 25. The other Arab states are Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

2) Some count Iraq as a Gulf state. But having been ravaged for 36 years by war and by the effects of war and sanctions, Iraq differs considerably from the six countries mentioned. It has a smaller GDP per head than the Lebanon – slightly smaller or considerably smaller, depending on the calculation method used.

No Comments

“If you must eat a shit sandwich, choose one with an olive”

A6

<http://www.cryzine.com/if-you-must-eat-a-shit-sandwich-choose-one-with-an-olive/>

5 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Sometimes terrible advice, sometimes astute and wise.

Whatever the current circumstances, however elongated the parallelogram of forces may appear, don't let the bastards grind you down:

[*View post on imgur.com*](#)

No Comments

Wild Man Fischer

A5

<http://www.cryzine.com/a5/>

5 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Music

In the year of 1963, he was committed to a mental institution.


Extremely few people have become legends in their own lifetimes. I can think of only four in the last hundred years. None of them gave a toss for traditional success.

Three of them I won't name: one lived in France stateless, another was born and died French, and the third died a citizen of another European country. Those three all fled across borders at one time or another.

The fourth was born and died in Los Angeles in the United States. He is one of my favourite male voice singers: Larry Fischer, known as Wild Man Fischer.

Here he is, singing "Yesterday" :

Larry "Wild Man" Fischer -- Yesterday

 <https://youtube.com/watch?v=DrHC8BXgbck>



And here, singing "My Sweet Little Cathy", a song he cowrote with Barnes & Barnes:

Wild Man Fischer - My Sweet Little Cathy

 <https://youtube.com/watch?v=tirvSJ0e4rE>



In this clip he performs the latter song live:

Wild Man Fischer / Barnes & Barnes) - My Sweet Little Cathy

 <https://youtube.com/watch?v=oqei5299Q0Q>



Notes

1) The lyrics of the much-covered song “Yesterday” are said to have been penned by some bunch of breadheads or other. Larry’s version is obviously far superior.

No Comments

Words that unmistakably mark a pretentious fool: “the way in which”

A4

<http://www.cryzine.com/a4/>

5 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Language

This revolting phrase grates so horribly in the lugholes of all who value precision and clarity. Avoid!

Anybody who habitually writes or says “the way in which” is a pretentious fool. Nine times out of ten, this silly phrase can be replaced with “how”. The same is true for the plural version, “the ways in which”. If you really do need a concept of the way or ways that something has happened, rather than just of how it has happened, you can say “the way that” or “the ways that”. You never need to use “the way in which”. Not ever.

I’ll say one thing for the phrase, though: for those who value precision and clarity, it marks a person’s writing or talk as not worth paying attention to. If you have sympathy with the person, you may even feel a twang of “Will you tell them, or shall I?” It’s as if they have a string of toilet paper stuck into the band of their trousers or skirt and they don’t realise. I really enjoy reading what a person has written, or listening to them talk, when they know what they’re talking about, and when they’re expounding on it because they want to help me satisfy my wish to improve my understanding, my wish to learn something from them. I don’t enjoy listening to those who dress their writing and speech up with unnecessary supposed finery that carries no content and doesn’t assist with communication either. “The way in which” is an ugly and dispensable phrase that doesn’t make the scribbler or utterer sound knowledgeable or willing to impart their knowledge at all. It’s worse than them asking “yah” or smacking their lips three times at the end of every sentence.

If you find that you’ve adopted this phrase, please drop it. It’s never too late.

If you’re stubborn and you want to suggest an example of a sentence in which “the way in which” is the clearest phrase to use – clearer than “how”, clearer than the alternatives, clearer than recasting – that’s great. It shows you’re thinking about what I wrote. I’ll be surprised if you can come up with one. If you can, please post a comment and let me know what it is.

No Comments

The parable of the pebbles

A3

<http://www.cryzine.com/a3/>

5 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

In his book "The Revolution of Everyday Life" (1967), Raoul Vaneigem attributes this parable to the fictional "Mr Keuner", the character in whose name Bertolt Brecht wrote many short parables between the 1920s and the 1950s, but it is probably original to Vaneigem.

"One day Monsieur Keuner was asked just what was meant by 'reversal of perspective'; and he told the following story. Two brothers deeply attached to one another had a strange habit. They marked the nature of the day's events with pebbles – a white one for each happy moment and a black one for each moment of misfortune or displeasure. But when at the end of the day they compared the contents of the jars, one found only white pebbles and the other only black."

"Fascinated by the persistence with which they lived the same experience differently, they agreed to ask the advice of an old man who was famed for his wisdom. 'You don't talk to one another enough' said the wise man. 'Both of you must give the reasons for your choice, and discover its causes.' From then on they did so, and they soon discovered that while the first remained faithful to his white pebbles and the second to his black ones, in neither jar were there as many pebbles as before. Where there had been about thirty there were now hardly more than seven or eight."

"After a short while they went to see the wise man again. Both looked extremely miserable. 'Not so long ago,' said one, 'my jar was filled with pebbles the colour of the night. My despair was unbroken; I continued to live, I admit, only through the force of habit. Now I hardly ever collect more than eight pebbles, but what these eight signs of misery represent has become so intolerable that I cannot go on like this.' And the other said: 'Every day I piled up white pebbles. Today there are only seven or eight, but they obsess me to the point that I cannot recall these moments of happiness without immediately wanting to relive them more intensely and, in a word, eternally. This desire torments me.' The wise man smiled as he listened to them. 'Excellent. Things are shaping up well. Keep at it. And one thing: whenever you can, ask yourselves why the game with the jar and the pebbles arouses so much passion in you.'"

"When the two brothers next saw the wise man it was to say 'We asked ourselves the question but we couldn't find the answer. So we asked the whole village. You can see how much it has disturbed them. In the evening, squatting in front of their houses, whole families discuss the black and white pebbles. Only the elders and chieftains refuse to take part. They say a pebble is a pebble, and all are of equal value.' The old man didn't conceal his pleasure. 'Everything is developing as I foresaw. Don't worry. Soon the question will no longer be asked: it has lost its importance, and perhaps one day you will no longer believe you ever asked it.' Shortly afterwards the old man's predictions were confirmed in the following way: a great joy overcame the members of the village; at the dawn of a troubled night, the rays of the sun fell upon the heads of the elders and chieftains, impaled upon the sharp-pointed stakes of the palisade."

No Comments

Cockney rhyming slang for rude body parts, and a tip for how to induce an attention spike

A2

<http://www.cryzine.com/a2/>

5 May 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Language

Read this and here's the useful gem you'll take away: "Why does a dog lick its town halls?"

Cockney rhyming slang is a living body of language. It must be, because I know a young man who coined the phrase "*knife and fork*" (orc) and I myself coined "*Caerphilly*" (willy). Since both terms are in use by more than one person, only a miserable twit would deny they have entered the English language.

Not only Londoners but also many other British people too are familiar with the term "cobblers", nowadays most often used to communicate that an assertion or story is rubbish, nonsense or bullshit. ("*That's a load of old cobblers*".)

Far fewer are aware that "cobblers" is short for "*cobblers' awls*", the Cockney rhyming slang for "balls", itself a much-used metaphor for testicles. Use of the term "cobblers" in direct reference to a male's secondary sexual organs (e.g. "*a kick in the cobblers*" or "*mind out for your cobblers*") is today uncommon. I even encountered somebody who learnedly advised that the term did carry such a meaning, yes, because he'd heard it used that way in an episode of the BBC TV series *Steptoe and Son*. Clearly he hadn't stayed in my house.

Another Cockney rhyming term for balls is "*orchestra stalls*". Now very rare, it was used a fair bit by my uncle, whose father, my grandfather, was a Cockney by most standards even if he was born in Battersea.

A third phrase for testicles is "*town halls*". I'm not sure this originates in London, given that London isn't the only city where denizens have developed rhyming slang. Rhyming forms have also been coined in Glasgow, including two rather scary references to commercial brands: "*Mars bar*" (a verb meaning to "scar" someone) and "*radio rental*" (an adjective meaning "mental") . The only person whom I have heard refer to a dog licking its "town halls" is Mike Harding, the Mancunian socialist and comedian who for all I know may have invented the term.

When an English posh boy gets prime-time publicity for climbing a mountain, and then some fawning interviewer asks him why on earth he does it, his reply will never be cut from the tape if he explains, in truly adventurous style (but how boringly unoriginal can you get?), "*because they're there*". This is very similar to the common explanation for why a dog licks its balls: "*because it can*".

The idea that a dog licks its balls *because it can* is well enough known to be used in a more layered witticism, which I heartily recommend to you.

You know the kind of idiot who thinks he's sophisticated (and it's always a he) to quip "*Does the bear shit in the woods?*" or "*Is the Pope Catholic?*" when he is asked a question to which he believes the answer

is obvious? Perhaps he also enjoys asking “*How long is a piece of string?*”, to which my favourite response is “*Pieces of string can be all different lengths*“. But sadly the kind of dimwit who asks “*How long is a piece of string?*” is usually too up himself to get the point.

Well when somebody asks you “*Why did that lawyer charge me more than he said he would?*”, “*Why do estate agents tell lies all the time?*”, or “*Why will it take the company 10 working days to return my overpayment?*” here’s your answer:

“*Why does a dog lick its town halls?*“

Notes

- 1) Whether a term can be coined as a loanword without having first been used in the supposed original language is an interesting question. Think of *gimmick*, which sounds Yiddish but hasn’t been traced to that language. Unfortunately since Cockney rhyming slang isn’t a language, this isn’t directly relevant here.
- 2) An awl is a pointed tool used for making holes in wood or leather.
- 3) Other terms include “nuts”, and in Russia, the word for “eggs” (яйца – yaitsa).
- 4) *Steptoe and Son* was a comedy series broadcast by the BBC, the British state’s broadcasting outfit, in 1962-65 and 1970-74. It has as its main characters an aging Cockney widower and his adult son who run a rag-and-bone business. The son wants to do better; his father couldn’t give a toss. They care deeply for each other. Films based on the series came out in 1972 and 1973. The second film contains marketing for affordably-priced holidays in fascist Spain, at a time when they were being heavily marketed to the lower orders in Britain and when many British coastal resorts, from Margate to Ayr, were being left to go to pot. I think a film based on the series *On the Buses* contains the same kind of propaganda. Today it would probably mention Facebook every few minutes. Newspapers now contain more references to Facebook and Twitter than they ever did in the past to other big brands, even to a one-time global monopoly such as IBM or a giant such as Coca-Cola or General Motors.
- 5) We will be writing more about the inner London area of Battersea some time. It has a fascinating history that isn’t talked about half as much as the history of the East End, where so many trendy artists now hang out.
- 6) Lest you imagine this term sounds rather cuddly, be aware that a person who’s called “mental” in Glasgow is at little risk of being considered calm and sane anywhere else.
- 7) Mike Harding said that if he met Margaret Thatcher the only things he’d have to say to her would be about sex and travel – in other words he’d tell her to “*fuck off*“. You know damned well that in the event he was ever offered a royalist medal by the posh boys, he would tell them to shove it.
- 8) Said intrepid mountaineer is unlikely to mention that a third prerequisite of his voyage in addition to the existence of the topographical feature and the presence of his desire to climb it was that he could afford the equipment – or that he had the connections to be able to persuade sponsors to give it to him – whereas most people do not find themselves in such a fortunate position. The message that’s conveyed is of course that the difference between him and a working class lad who’d love to climb Himalayan mountains if only he had the opportunity is that the posh boy has a better character. It’s as if inherited wealth has nothing to do with it.
- 9) An estate agent is known in some places as a realtor or real estate broker, and in Ireland as an auctioneer.

No Comments

Adrian Mitchell reads his poem “Tell Me Lies about Vietnam”

A1

<http://www.cryzine.com/a1/>

10 April 2020

Categories: Uncategorized

Tags: Poetry

This was filmed in 1965 in Kensington, London, inside a circular concert hall that a forgettable bunch of imperialists once named after a forgettable German prince.

Andrew Mitchell’s “Tell Me Lies about Vietnam” is probably the most powerful radical poem written in England, or in English, since the time of William Blake.

The more recent massacres in Iraq, Afghanistan, Gaza, Syria, Libya and elsewhere have not produced any English-language poems of this strength. If you know otherwise, please drop us a line and we will be delighted to stand corrected.



[Adrian Mitchell's "Tell Me Lies about Vietnam", Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran ...](http://www.cryzine.com/a1/)

No Comments