"Quote... THE Unquote" NEWSLETTER

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AMBITIONS, ASPIRATIONS, DESIRES

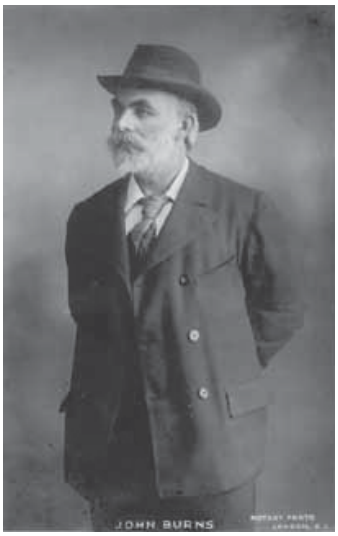
I think it was when Antony Jay was working on the first edition of his *Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations* (1996) that the question arose as to who had said, 'The real tragedy of the poor is the poverty of their aspirations' (Q314). Tony thought he had heard it attributed to Adam Smith but had not found it. Geoffrey Wheatcroft said he had heard the phrase given as 'poverty of *ambition*' and attributed to both those old Labour Party stalwarts, Aneurin Bevan and Ernest Bevin. It would seem, however, that Bevin tended to quote it as 'poverty of *desire*.' And that is where things rested until the ever-persistent Joe Kralich googled his way to a book called *Interpreting the Labour Party: Approaches to Labour Politics and History* by John Callaghan, Steven Fielding and Steve Ludlam (2003).

These authors refer to Bevin's annoyance at poor people's 'poverty of *desire*' and note that the phrase 'was borrowed from John Burns [the redoubtable Labour MP] who in a 1902 pamphlet – "Brains Better than Bets or Beer" – argued that "the curse of the working class is the fewness of their wants, the poverty of their desires".' They further note that their information came from Chris Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture 1884-1914* (1990) published by the Manchester University Press.

This clue enabled us to find that the pamphlet was sometimes given the title 'The Straight Tip to Workers: Brains Better Than Bets or Beer' and was published by the Clarion Press. Now, all we need is to find a copy to check the wording. Meanwhile, Chris Waters provides us with the complete remark:

> **'The curse of the working class is the fewness of their wants, the poverty of their desires, the overloading of a few sensuous tastes, the absence of a varied set of elevated and healthy desires.'**

Burns (1858-1943) is usually described as the first working-man to become a Cabinet minister. Born in London of Scottish parents – 'I am not ashamed to say that I am the son of a washerwoman' – he aligned himself with the Liberals in 1906 and served as President of the Board of Trade



until he resigned at the outbreak of war in 1914. Until now, the Burns remark that is in all the quotation books is this one:

> **'I have seen the Mississippi. That is muddy water. I have seen the St Lawrence. That is crystal water. But the Thames is liquid history.'**

This was quoted in a *Daily Mail* report (25 January 1943) at Burns's death. The remark was reputedly made to an American who had spoken disparagingly of the River Thames. There are various versions of it. Denis Bridge commented (1994) that he used to live near Burns on North Side, Clapham Common, London. His father's version of the Burns remark went: 'The Mississippi is dirty water. The St Lawrence is cold, dirty water. But the Thames is liquid history.'

The version I prefer is the one uttered with Burns's characteristic dropped aitch: 'The Thames is liquid 'istory!'

Series 40 of the radio show (which will include the 400th edition) will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in the UK and streamed on the Internet, somewhere in the middle of 2007. It will also be in a new time slot. More details in due course.

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FOR GOD, FOR COUNTRY AND FOR YALE!

The above line is said to have been given as a crossword puzzle clue in *The New York Times* (answer: 'anticlimax') but that is not referred to in the newly-arrived *Yale Book of Quotations* (although the song from which it comes duly is). In fact, the long-awaited arrival of the *Yale Book* is anything but an anticlimax. I had been aware that Fred Shapiro and his team were beavering away for several years and I have to say straightaway that they have produced a worthy competitor to the *Oxford* and to *Bartlett*.

The *Yale BQ* scores initially, simply by starting from scratch rather than being an nth revision and although the 'standing on the shoulders of giants' quotation is invoked in relation to earlier dictionaries, there is a welcome freshness and originality of approach in this one. I think where Fred Shapiro achieves most is in having thoroughly studied the second generation of quotation books – in which he kindly includes some of mine, as well as the estimable Library of Congress *Respectfully Quoted* – books that dig a little deeper and more rigorously than the older dictionaries have either the space or the inclination to do.

Above all, the *Yale BQ* is the first major dictionary of quotations in which one feels that the opportunities of modern research – I mean online ones, of course – have been thoroughly explored, almost on a quote by quote basis. It is no secret that in this *Newsletter*, for example, the method used by Joe Kralich and others to solve so many previously intractable quotation queries is painstakingly to use google, google books and other search engines to achieve their results. The *Yale BQ* also scores through its use of the new online newspaper and magazine archives, particularly that which allows one to retrieve information from small-town American newspapers going back to the 19th century.

Here are just a few examples of how these new methods have turned up useful nuggets of information on some of *Quote ... Unquote*'s problem queries:

Q20 Until now the earliest attribution to Lord Chesterfield of **'The pleasure [of sex] is momentary, the position is ridiculous, and the expense is damnable'** was in a 1970 issue of *Nature*. Before that there were only vague allusions in Evelyn Waugh (1954) and D.H. Lawrence (1928). Now *Yale* finds it directly attributed in Somerset Maugham's *Christmas Holiday* (1939).

Q433 Some years ago we agonized over the remark **'I've been poor and I've been rich. Rich is better!'** but could not confirm the usual attribution to Sophie Tucker. *Yale* has now found it ascribed to one Beatrice Kaufman in *The Washington Post* (12 May 1937) and notes that this is 'years before any evidence linking it to Tucker'.

Q3545 One of the million remarks lazily ascribed to Mark Twain (though I had got it into my head that it was H.L. Mencken) – **'The only person entitled to use the imperial "we" in speaking of himself is a king, an editor, and a man with a tapeworm'** – was attributed to Robert G. Ingersoll in the *Los Angeles Times* (6 October 1914).

And a couple more discoveries that have not appeared on our queries list ... Although I had found the non-Conan Doyle quotation **'Quick, Watson, the needle'** in P.G. Wodehouse (1922) and a film (1939), along comes *Yale* with the news that the line was spoken by 'a Sherlock Holmes impersonator' in Herbert Blossom's operetta *The Red Mill* (1906) ...

As for '**Wake up and smell the coffee'**, *Yale* asserts that this catchphrase was popularized by the columnist Ann Landers, as in the *Chicago Tribune* (21 December 1955), but that 'an earlier anonymous usage is found in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (18 January 1943)'.

Now, the only quibble I would have concerns the number of 'quotations' from recent pop songs and especially rap 'lyrics'. To my mind, just because words from a song are familiar through frequent performance does not necessarily make them quotations. And one has to remember the dreadful example of the 1999 edition of the *Oxford DQ*, stuffing in remarks and supposedly quotable lyrics from the Spice Girls. What a surprise that they have mostly gone from the most recent edition.

But, anyway, as I say, a very welcome new entry into the quotation market and I know which book I will probably be reaching for first in the immediate future.

ALBUM TIME

As ever, Jaap Engelsmaan in Amsterdam keeps us on our linguistic toes. So fascinated have I always been by the invitation to sex – **'Come up and see my etchings' –** that I have failed to note the similarly nudging invitation from a man to a woman, **'Come and have a look at my photograph album / stamp collection.'** This apparently passed by Eric Partridge and Paul Beale completely. The 'etchings' remark, as though he were an artist plotting to seduce her, was probably established by the 1920s, at least.

A bit puzzling why the man should choose 'etchings' rather than anything else, but there we are. There is a James Thurber cartoon of a man and a woman in a hotel lobby, to which the caption is: 'You wait here and I'll bring the etchings down.' But Jaap spotted this in Somerset Maugham's *Cakes and Ale*, Chap. 26 (1930), Rosie speaking:

> 'When we'd finished our supper Harry said: "Well, what about it?"
>
> '"What about what?" I said.
>
> 'There wasn't any dancing in those days and there was nowhere to go.
>
> '"What about coming round to my flat and having a look at my photograph album?" said Harry.
>
> '"I don't mind if I do," I said.
>
> 'He had a little bit of a flat in the Charing Cross Road, just two rooms and a bath and a kitchenette, and we drove round there, and I stayed the night.'

Someone in Jaap's Notes & Queries group also spotted that in performing the song '(Have Some) Madeira, M'Dear' in *At the Drop of A Hat* (1960ish), Michael Flanders sang: 'He had slyly inveigled her up to his flat / To view his collection of stamps' – sometimes adding, 'All unperforated – ha ha ha!'

WHAT'S MY LINE?

Allan Hollinghurst's novel, with the intriguing title, ***The Line of Beauty***, won the Man Booker prize for fiction in 2004. A recent TV adaptation introduced the story to a wider audience, some of whom may just have wondered what relevance the title had to a story of gay sex in Thatcher's Britain of the 1980s. I'm told that it refers to an architectural motif – an ogee, a line of beauty that is a double curve, in the shape of a letter S, but that it also refers, more relevantly to the novel, to the curve of a man's lower back and buttocks or to a line of cocaine. The painter Hogarth used the phrase in his *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753), and the *OED2* has Laurence Sterne using the term 'line of beauty' in 1760. But Alison Adcock drew my attention to this (albeit) later verse: 'In the days when small white china vases, lighthouses, boxes etc. carrying coloured coats of arms, were cheap in junk shops, I collected them,' she says. 'One was a teapot stand, on which, as well as the coloured coat of arms, a verse was written (in black letter Gothic)':

> Straight is the line of duty;
> Curved is the line of beauty;
> Follow the straight line, thou shalt see
> The curved line ever follows thee.

Having been alerted to this by Alison, I was able to track down the verse to a certain William MacCall, Scottish poet (1812-88), which is later, of course, than Hogarth. There has recently been a short story entitled 'Curved Is the Line of Beauty' in *Learning To Talk* by Hilary Mantel (2003). It is 'a story of friendship, faith and a near-disaster in a scrap-yard. The title story sees our narrator ironing out her northern vowels with the help of an ex-actress with one lung and a Manchester accent.' (Q3628.)

MY HUCKLEBERRY FRIEND

From time to time on the radio show I like to tease my guests by asking them to identify the songs from which 'detached lyrics' come. I like to think that disconnected from the music and the context, they may be hard to source. Recently, a listener suggested that I put the phrase **'My huckleberry friend'** as a question. The answer was soon forthcoming that it was from Johnny Mercer's lyric for 'Moon River'. He wrote the words and Henry Mancini the music for the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (US 1961). Famously, the head of production at Paramount told Blake Edwards, the director, 'The song has got to go'. It didn't and went on to win an Oscar for best song.

But what about the 'huckleberry' phrase? I rather assumed it was an allusion to Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* which is about two friends and what they did on a river but, if anything, Twain's name for his hero is doing the alluding to the actual source. One's 'huckleberry' has several meanings but in particular refers to 'the very person for a particular requirement; the right person' and as such has been around probably since the American Civil War and definitely since the 1880s. Similarly, it is an American tradition to pick huckleberries (a type of blueberry) in the school holidays with your very best friend. So that's what a 'huckleberry friend' is. I believe that Johnny Mercer once explained in an interview that the line was an allusion to his own childhood happiness and innocence. Well, you learn things all the time. I also discovered that there is an actual Moon River in Savannah, Georgia, and Mercer had a house overlooking it. (Q3680)

QUOTER'S DIGEST

Some of the quotations recently received. Where no source is given, the quotations should be treated as unverified. Verification would be welcome, of course.

'When you've bought tickets for the pantomime you want to see it through to the end' – Sir Bob Reid, when asked if he would resign as Chairman of British Railways as a result of an unexpected ministerial decision on the route of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, c. 1991.

'Liverpool, though not very delightful as a place of residence, is a most convenient and admirable point

to get away from' – Nathaniel Hawthorne (who was American consul there) in *Our Old Home*, 'Consular Experiences' (1863).

'The Labour Party owes more to Methodism than Marxism' – Morgan Phillips, General Secretary of the TUC, at a Socialist International Conference in Copenhagen in the early 1950s – speech prepared by Denis Healey.

'Dignity is [the] one thing that can't be preserved in alcohol' – Anon. in *The Fredericksburg News* (8 July 1937). This is the earliest appearance we have found of a common observation. Evan Esar had included it in one of his humorous quotation books by 1943. In *Quotations for Our Time* (1979), Laurence J. Peter ascribed it to Heywood Broun, the American sportswriter and commentator (1918-2001). (Q4000)

''Does anybody want any flotsam?
I've gotsam.
Does anybody want any jetsam?
I can getsam' – Ogden Nash, 'No Doctor's Today, Thank You'. (Q3679)

'Science talks about the world, while philosophy talks about talk about the world' – Gilbert Ryle, 'Logic and Professor Anderson', *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (December 1950) – this was the best we could do in finding a written citation for Ryle well-known trope about philosophy being 'talk about talk' (Q4010).

Contributors: John D. Beasley; Thomas D. Fuller; Joe Kralich; Diana Lashmore; Linda Livingstone; Jonathan Metcalfe; Tony Percy

ANSWERS

A912 The query was: who said, **'We commit indiscretions in youth so that we have something to regret in old age'?** Joe Kralich found this priceless example of 'the vagueness is all' in *Ashenden, Or, The British Agent* (1928) by W. Somerset Maugham: 'Was it La Rochefoucauld or Oscar Wilde who said that you should commit errors in youth in order to have something to regret in old age?'

Maugham by Sutherland

Well, who knows? Could this be Willie Maugham airily passing off one of his own observations in the way so many quoters do? Or was it really the Duc or Wilde? I think we should be told.

But, hold on, this is the third mention of Maugham in this *Newsletter* so clearly he should not be dismissed lightly.

A922 Return visit: 'I am an octogenarian, so my memory goes back a long way, although not always accurately,' wrote Jack Brookes. 'I once heard said, **"Servants talk about people but people talk about things!"**' We only got as far as finding a Penelope Lively short story entitled, 'Servants Talk About People: Gentlefolk Discuss Things', first published in *Nothing Missing, But the Samovar* (1978). Now I have just come across this in John Keatley's privately published *Commonplace Reflections* (2002):

Third class minds talk about people,
Second class minds talk about things,
First class minds talk about ideas.

It is credited, without any supporting information, to Cressida Gaitskell, daughter of Labour Party leader, Hugh.

Mr Keatley includes quite a few other interesting attributions, whether true or not, and a good deal of interesting new material. Re Q2789, I was interested to find that he suggests that the most depressing welcome from a dinner hostess – which we believe was submitted by Geoff Horton to a *New Statesman* competition somewhere in the period 1979-88 as, '**Sir Geoffrey's in sparkling form tonight'**, was in fact referring to Sir Geoffrey 'Dead Sheep' Howe. Seems plausible.

Re Q1177, the famous unfavourable view of the future for computers, Mr Keatley plumps for Thomas Watson, Chairman of IBM in 1943, saying: '**I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.'** In fact, the new *Yale BQ* enables us to correct this date to 1953, together with a gloss that Watson was talking about a specific machine, IBM's first production computer designed for scientific calculations, of which the company eventually managed to get orders for a more substantial eighteen ...

A1394 In 2000, James McKinney asked about the origin of: **'Bring me two dozen of claret and call me the day after tomorrow.'** James commented: 'It sounds as if it might have been some Regency buck instructing his valet**,** or maybe even Prinny, but I've never been able to discover who it was.' Progress on the query was negligible until Joe Kralich found this in an obscure book entitled *Wine, the Vine, and the Cellar* by Thomas George Shaw (1864). Writing about a certain Twistleton Fiennes, Shaw writes that as Fiennes was going out to dinner once, a new servant called John asked if he had any orders. Came the reply: 'Place two bottle of sherry at my bed-side, and call me the day after to-morrow.'

Note the change of drink from claret to sherry. This brings it nearer to what the poet Keats wrote in a letter (14 Au-

gust 1819): 'My friends should drink a dozen of claret at my tomb.' Now, John Keatley, as above, asserts (without source) that the sherry version was spoken by Lord Saye and Sele – but which one and when?

A2211 In 2002, Gillian Bockley asked about a motto or mantra that she had heard for getting one through difficult situations. We found that it seems to have originated with Blanche Warre-Cornish, who was the wife of a master at Eton College in the late 19th century. If ever tempted by depression, she would repeat three things to herself: **'I am an Englishwoman. I was born in wedlock. I am on dry land.'** The immediate source for this is a rather obscure little book *Bensoniana & Cornishiana* (1999), although Joyce Grenfell in *In Pleasant Places*, Chap. 15 (1979) has this as 'said to her [Mrs Cornish's] daughter Charlotte, "Even after a Channel Crossing, I say to myself, 'I am English; I was born in wedlock; and I am on dry land.'"' I thought of this recently when reading what John Osborne wrote in his Notebook for 1964: 'Whatever else, I have been blessed with God's two greatest gifts: to be born English and heterosexual.'

A2422 Alison Adcock, Jean English and Muriel Smith all assure me that **'London's burning'** was being sung before my 1950s suggestion. Muriel adds: 'In the 1930s we used to sing:

London's burning, London's burning,
Fetch the engine, fetch the engine,
Fire fire, fire fire,
Cast on water, cast on water.

'It was definitely "Cast on water" not "Pour on water".' Still no news as to when and how this version of the old rhyme caught on. Jean notes: 'In my childhood one seemed constantly dragooned into taking part in this "round", which teachers seemed to find quite fascinating, and we sang combinations or variations of the two versions you quote. I was at Junior School from 1938 to 1942. Moreover, my older sister confirms my impression, which would put the date back to the early 1930s. She sang it in the Girl Guides as well – there was no escape!'

A3068 Chris Gray asked about the saying, **like buses (**or **streetcars): there'll be another coming along soon.** This is an observation from the US around 1900, slightly later in the UK. The earliest citation so far found is: 'Once he was heard to say: "No need to fuss over any girl; let the girls fuss after me. Are they not like London 'buses: one goes, another comes"' – George Huddleston, *The White Fakir: A Tale of the Mystical East* (1932). Compare this allusion to the saying by Derick Heathcoat-Amory when British Chancellor of the Exchequer (1958-60): 'There are three things not worth running for – a bus, a woman or a new economic panacea; if you wait a bit another one will come along.'

Talking of London buses, there is also, of course, the saying that **'It's a bit like London buses – you don't see any for ages and then three come along at once.'** 'Prefab apartment buildings are a bit like London buses: you don't see any for a couple of decades and then three come along at once' – *Icon* Magazine (June 2003).

A3299 Tony Faversham was looking at the film *Empire Records* (US 1995) when one of the characters, 'Lucas', said: **'I do not regret the things I have done, but those I did not do.'** 'This was so unlike the rest of the dialogue that it made me think it might be a quote from somewhere?' Mark Lloyd commented: 'My father once advised me (circa 1972) that he would rather be on his death bed asking, "How could I have done?" rather than, "Why didn't I do?"' – which suggested that this might be in the way of being a commonplace. Whatever the case, Dennis Lien spotted an instance of a superstar saying something like it in *The New York Times* (20 January 1957): '"I have had a wonderful life," [Ingrid Bergman] asserted. "I have never regretted what I did. I regret the things I didn't do. My life has been rich and full of interesting things ... "'

A3317 In 2005, Tim Fielding wrote: 'An acquaintance of mine, aged 87, has tried for 50 years to trace the origin of the following quotation:

His ready tongue with sophistry at will
Can say, unsay and be consistent still,
Can this day censure and the next retract,
In speech extol yet stigmatize the act.

'Your help would be appreciated.' My first thought was, Alexander Pope, but he did not show up in any of the searches I made. I left it to Joe Kralich who recently truffled this up from Vol. LXI of *Macmillan's Magazine* (November 1889-April 1890) in an article entitled 'Twenty Years of Political Satire'. It seems to be a *parody* of Pope or another 18th-century poet, Mark Akenside, and comes from George Ellis's contribution to *Criticism on 'The Rolliad'* (papers collected together in 1791). The subject is Henry Dundas, Scottish jurist and politician (1742-1811), who sided with Lord North in supporting the war with America. It goes:

For true to public virtue's patriot plan,
He loves the *Minister* not the *man*;
Alike the advocate of North and wit,
The friend of Shelburne, and the guide of Pitt.
His ready tongue with sophistries at will
Can say, unsay and be consistent still,
This day can answer and the next retract
In speech extol yet stigmatise in act
Turn and return whole hours at Hastings bawl
Defend, Praise, Thank, affront him and recall.
By opposition he his King shall court
And damn the People's cause by his support.

A3335 Tony Percy came across a reference to Walter Bagehot's remark: **'The English public man should have first-rate capacities and second-rate ideas.'** But where had he said this? Joe Kralich found confirmation that Bagehot did say something along these lines in the posthumously-published *Biographical Studies* (1895). Here

he writes in connection with Sir Robert Peel: 'No man has come so near our definition of a constitutional statesman – the powers of a first-rate man and the creed of a second-rate man.' By 'our definition', I presume he is quoting himself.

A3513 Question was asked by Giuliana Steele-Kendrick about the origin of **'Hunt them down like the dogs they are'** – an expression used by her father. No reports of anything quite like this but C.A. Thomas recalls: 'In the film *Jesse James* (US 1939), the elderly newspaper proprietor calls often for Roy, the compositor, to lay out another campaigning editorial, cuss words included, attacking the latest individual to incur his wrath, e.g.: "'If ever we are to have law and order in the West, the first thing we gotta do is take out all the railroad presidents and shoot 'em down like dawgs.' Paragraph ... "' Indeed, 'shoot them down' may be the more correct form. Joe Kralich found that in William Faulkner's 1936 novel *Absalom. Absalom!* there is a 'shoot them down like the dogs they are' and also elsewhere in Faulkner.

A3553 For once, Joe Kralich posed a query that even he could not answer himself. He had come across Gustav Holst's Second Suite for Military Band in F Major (1911) of which the third movement is based on the Hampshire folk-song, 'The Song of the Blacksmith'. Joe said that 'this British wind band march is driving me crazy', so it was obviously an urgent matter ... Mark English came to the rescue with:

Kang, kang, ki ki kang kang
For the blacksmith courted me, nine months and better;
And first he won my heart, till he wrote to me a letter.
With his hammer in his hand, for he strikes so mighty and clever,
He makes the sparks to fly all around his middle.

The song was collected by G.B. Gardiner.

A3583 Peter Radburn wrote and said, 'I heard this in the library one day: **"Choice not chance determines destiny"' –** and wanted to know if it was a quotation. Well, various people have latched on to it but David Challener found that the first notable user of the idea was William Jennings Bryan in his 1899 book *Republic or Empire?: The Philippine Question*: 'Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for it is a thing to be achieved.' But then David stumbled upon a 1760 use – indicating, I would say, that it was almost a proverbial saying by then, in *The Dramatic Works of Aaron Hill, Esq*: 'I curb my longing glances, lest they judge / 'Tis choice, not chance, that guides me ... '

A3641 Mike Morgan-Finch was puzzled by the American armed forces' idiom **'He bought it / bought the farm / bought the ranch'**, meaning 'he died/was killed'. How had it arisen? Robert L. Chapman in his *Dictionary of American Slang* (1987) suggests that it began with the earlier USAF term 'to buy a farm', meaning 'to crash' – 'probably from the expressed desire of wartime pilots to stop flying, buy a farm, and live peacefully.' I went with this and put it on the radio show. Then the floodgates opened of what I think of as 'popular folklore origins':

'My understanding is that the saying originated in the earliest days of flying in the USA. The early aviators used farmland to land and take off. It was apparently an accepted convention that crops damaged by aircraft landing of taking off had to be paid for by the pilot. From this derived the phrase "buying the farm" or "he bought the farm" meaning the crash was so serious that they might as well buy the farm ... Tom Wolfe used this explanation in *The Right Stuff*' – D.D., Oxford. 'I have it on good authority from a friend of mine from Mississippi that the expression "bought the farm" goes back to the American Civil War or earlier. Apparently, unlike the British Army, who have difficulty obtaining life insurance, American soldiers who went into combat were given life insurance by the government. They were mostly from subsistence farms, so signing up was a good way out of their misery. If they were killed in combat, the money was sent to their families' – Nic Jamin. 'In the Second World War, GI insurance for death in action was $10,000 and said to be the cost of a mid-America (e.g. Iowa) farm' – Roberto Hoyle, Spain. 'The term refers not to WW2 fliers but to the fact that American farmers took out life insurance which would cover their mortgages – so when the farmer died, the farm loan was paid off. Thus, by dying, "he bought the farm"' – Julia Vitale, North Carolina. So, plenty of theories to choose from here.

A3661 No news yet of whether the Duke of Wellington did or didn't say that **'It's easy to get into Kabul but it's much more difficult to get out.'** However, Tony Percy was prompted to recall a line from the sketch 'Common Entrance' that Frank Muir and Denis Norden wrote for a Peter Sellers record album. The dreadful school called 'Cretinby' is described as: 'In the heart of the swamp country. Difficult place to get into and harder still to get out of.'

A3666 Tim Kidd asked: 'My niece has asked me to look into the usage of the term **"soldiers"** to describe the strips of bread or toast dipped into a boiled egg yolk. She is a dress designer and her latest collection is called "Boiled egg and soldiers".' The *OED2*'s earliest citation is only from 1966 but I felt sure that the term probably dated back to Victorian nursery usage when soldiers were carved out of single strips of wood that the bread or toast could be said to resemble, being straight and narrow and mostly upright in shape. Jaap Engelsman chimes in from Amsterdam: 'In Dutch these are known as *soldaatjes* (always plural, diminutive). They serve – or used to serve – more or less as croûtons or grissini, eaten with soup or spinach. The citation in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* is from 1905.'

That's more like a proper date, if you ask me. Now, as this is not strictly a quotation query, we'd better find a quotation including the word. How about this from Paul Scott's

novel, *Staying On* (1977): 'He cut his buttered bread into soldiers to dip into the yolk.'

A3672 Chris Padley started this one off by writing: 'In architecture, design and engineering, there are several versions of a maxim that **"If it looks right, it is right".** This is the same sentiment as that behind the Bauhaus slogan "form follows function"; and William Morris's exhortation to "have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful and believe to be useful" also carries this implication that good functional design and beauty go together.'

My mind instantly went back to June 1969 when the then new plane, Concorde 002, flew over the Queen's Birthday Parade. I remember hearing a BBC panjandrum declare: 'If it looks good, then it probably *is* good.' A search of the internet produced any number of similar instances in design, art and engineering literature.

Michael Lewis volunteered these thoughts: 'I suspect that this is a truism of engineering and that no single point of origin will be found. But it does seem to have particular currency among aviation engineers, not least because it certainly was one motto of Clarence "Kelly" Johnson (the other was "Be Quick, Be Quiet, And Be On Time"). Johnson was responsible for a series of revolutionary aircraft, culminating in his direction of the legendary Skunk Works that produced the U-2 and the A-11/SR-71 Blackbird. Ben Rich of Skunk Works said: "All of us had been trained by Kelly Johnson and believed fanatically in his insistence that an airplane that looked beautiful would fly the same way".

'I am tempted to adapt Churchill's famous October 1939 quotation about the USSR and say that all these queries seem to end up with "a saying wrapped in truism inside a cliché". But does that count as quote abuse?'

Marian Bock added: 'Duke Ellington said "If it sounds good, it is good" – and there have been many variations on the theme, all of them disputed. Peter Schickele (creator of PDQ Bach and a bona fide music scholar) uses the Ellington quote as the motto of his radio program, "Schickele Mix." (Peter signs off with his own motto: "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that certain *je ne sais quois*").'

A3673 Our sister publication in the US, *The Executive Speaker*, was asked whether it was true – as it says all over the internet – that Churchill said: **'You make a living by what you get; you make a life by what you give.'** The official Churchill website lists it under 'misquotations' and observes that a search of over 2.5 million words by and about Churchill in The Churchill Centre's research database fails to show that Churchill ever spoke or wrote these words. Equally encouraging, perhaps, are words he *did* utter in Dundee, Scotland, on 10 October 1908: 'What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone? How else can we put ourselves in harmonious relation with the great verities and consolations of the infinite and the eternal? And I avow my faith that we are marching towards better days. Humanity will not be cast down. We are going on swinging bravely forward along the grand high road and already behind the distant mountains is the promise of the sun.'

A3687 Keith Harrison who had been watching the recent BBC TV adaptation of *Jane Eyre* wrote: 'The heroine is indicated as being "plain". Is this in fact the origin of the term **"a Plain Jane",** meaning an unattractive, very ordinary female not likely to appeal to the desire of men and the envy of women?'

Ruth Wilson as Jane

While Jane, as narrator, makes no bones about her plainness – at one point she describes a 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain' – I doubt whether this gave rise to the phrase, of which there is no record anyway before 1912 (Charlotte Bronte's novel was published in 1847). Interestingly, when Compton Mackenzie uses it in Chap. 2 of his novel *Carnival*, he gives a fuller version of the expression: 'She sha'n't be a Plain Jane and No Nonsense, with her hair screwed back like a broom, but she shall be Jenny, sweet and handsome, with lips made for kissing and eyes that will sparkle and shine.' The capitalization of 'Plain Jane and No Nonsense' suggests an established phrase but also one conveying that although the female is plain-looking, she is reliable and capable.

A3688 Sometimes a query comes along and I have to say, You know, I've never thought that about at all – and clearly, because you ask, I should have done ... Out of the blue, Noel Harley asked: 'What is the origin of the expression **"at it like knives"** which seems to apply to frenzied sexual activity?' Hmm. What is the image here – knives being vigorously sharpened or one participant carrying on as though repeatedly stabbing the other? I still don't quite understand the mechanics of this expression but, after initially not finding it used before 1997 on the internet, while

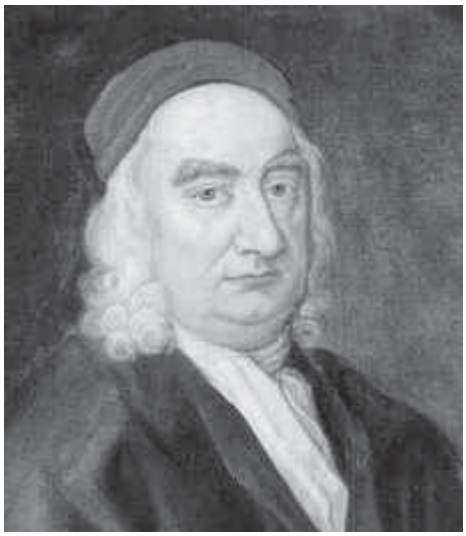
being assured that some people used it in the 60s, suddenly up came an excellent citation from an unexpected source. Dennis Lien found this in a collection of 'conversations with Tennessee Williams'. In an interview he gave to *Playboy* in April 1973, Williams said: 'Blanche in *Streetcar* was at it like knives from the time of the death of her husband, f—— those soldiers at camp. She had to expiate for feeling responsible for killing him.'

A3693 Neil Kendrick asked for the derivation of the saying, '**That's my name, don't wear it out!'**, adding, 'I think I have heard it on *The Simpsons* and have a feeling that W.C. Fields may have said it.' A good example was soon turned up from the film of the musical *Grease* (US 1978), in which Sandy (Olivia Newton-John) is finding it difficult to get through to Danny (John Travolta) when they meet up again:

> Danny: That's cool, baby, you know how it is, rockin' and rollin' and what not.
>
> Sandy: Danny?
>
> Danny: That's my name, don't wear it out.
>
> Sandy: What's the matter with you? ... What's happened to the Danny Zuko, I met at the beach?

I consulted Marian Bock in New York, who opined: 'It's definitely not original to *Grease* – more likely the screenwriter remembered it as an expression from the age the movie is set in, twenty years before. I think I heard it in the 1960s, but can't document that.' As if to confirm that *Grease* did not originate the phrase, there was a short film, made in Britain indeed, with the title *That's My Name, Don't Wear It Out*, shown as part of the CBS Children's Film Festival (which ran from 1967-77).

A4004 Tony Morrison asked: 'Who wrote (presumably in a diary or letter), **"Stayed in bed till eleven, thinking of wit for the day".'** My first reaction was that this must be some Pooterish person but I take that back now that it has been revealed to me the person was Jonathan Swift. I don't know who first told the tale but in an edition of *The Works of Jonathan Swift* (1841), it was said: 'In his latter days he was an early riser, and fond of exercise; though at one period of his life he was said to lie in bed and think of wit for the day.'



A4008 Dr Richard Winfield in Cork was trying to trace a quote that he thought was from the head of RKO to Orson Welles and along the lines of, **'Next time, a little less genius and a little more of what the public wants.'** Well, the RKO boss was Charles Koerner but whether he said it to Orson Welles (even if he was thinking of him) is not clear. He did propound it as the studio's motto, however, and 'Showmanship instead of Genius' was duly printed on every piece of paper that emanated from RKO. Thomas Fuller wonders whether a much older saying has been grafted on to this motto to produce what Dr Winfield seeks. In *Rip Van Winkle Goes to the Play* (1926) by Brander Matthews, we read: 'No doubt [Constant] Coquelin agreed with the remark that Emile Augier [playwright, 1820-89] is reported to have uttered to a temperamental actor rehearsing a leading part, – "A little less genius, if you please, and a little more talent!"'

QUOTATION QUERIES

I am not listing any new queries this time as they are all on the website. It is quite clear what the latest postings are as they are all dated. I am still getting over the fact that we are now beyond query number Q4000 and that the clearance rate has risen to about 58%. Thanks to all who contribute.

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