

inspire better than facts and truths. Is it a Catholic thing? I don't know. Do I believe this stuff? My Papist interest in graven images perhaps comes from my own interest in things and people, relics and reliquaries, portraits and biography. A relic is a tangible part of this holy person, just as in my line of work a brushmark is a tangible relic of the artist. It is a direct link to the past and it brings a charge of life, and it is these links in life, the six degrees of separation between that being which created me, and me, that link does not make me believe, but it eases passage on the journey.

But as a somewhat traditional scholar I need more than simply the object itself to explain all. While some would accuse me of being a hetero-patriarchalist I like to work from original sources, from documents and objects that speak clearly of some evidence. That is why Butler's last paragraph on Christina, where he cites two reliable contemporary accounts of this extraordinary and enjoyable figure, means a lot to me as a thinking person dealing with an astonishing life.

"Do you believe this stuff?"

CLIPS AND SNIPS IV - RHYMES FOR OUR TIMES

November 8, 1999

Norman A. Levy

The clips and snips referred to in this title, are mostly headlines from newspapers and magazines - extended, improbably, into light verse, and used as a thinly disguised platform for excursions into social commentary.

I've written such verses, for my own amusement, on and off, all of my adult life. . .and for this club for my last three times "at bat". While I have also presented to you over the years, verse in more "serious" poetic forms, on "weightier" subjects, I have always returned to clipping and snipping. Clearly,

there must be some inner imperative at work. . . probably no more complicated than, for me, this is an intensely satisfying kind of mental and word "play"... and that this forum provides a captive, and unusually congenial audience. This imperative has been heightened since I retired from P&G two and a half years ago. I now can read, all the way through, the daily and Sunday New York Times, The Economist and the many other publications that, previously, owing to time constraints, I might only have skimmed. The result is an ever growing pile of clips and snips - representing vast amounts of foolishness - awaiting, demanding, virtually pleading for critique, interpretation, deconstruction and other deformations of thought.

Further, I note what appears to be almost an extinction of light verse in most publications. . . even in The New Yorker, which for many years gave voice to this fragile poetic form. Clearly, I had no choice but to soldier on, to witness for cleverness, improbable rhymes, juicy puns and "smartass" observations, and to pursue yet another round of Clips and Snips, Part 4, Rhymes for Our Times.

January 14, 1999 - The New York Times

(A quote in an article on the economic turmoil in Brazil)

"MARKETS HAVE A FUNNY WAY OF REACTING
TO REALITY ONCE THEY THINK IT THROUGH"

A market that can "think it through"!
I've never met one. . .think. . .have you?
A market can at times be funny.
I've seen one laugh - then eat my money!
If markets really think at all
They know two things; to rise. . .then fall!

A "Warning Statement" included in the product instructions of a new electric iron

"NEVER IRON CLOTHES
WHILE THEY ARE BEING WORN"

In this cruel, litigious world
The "warning flag" is now unfurled.
"Cautions" offered willy-nilly
Of risks quite real-risks quite silly.
I'll add one to the list of woes
Important when you iron clothes.
(For lawyers this may seem astute)
"Do press a shirt - don't press a suit!"

FEBRUARY 5, 1998

PSYCHICS BANKRUPT

The parent company of the Psychic Friends Network has filed for bankruptcy in Baltimore. . .
(Assets \$1.2 million, liabilities \$26.3 million)
Behind the trouble: high rates for TV
infomercials and increased competition from
(other) psychic lines. . .The network, founded in
1990 once employed 2000 psychics.

I doubt that costs or competition
Explains our Psychic Friends' condition.
Two thousand seers with special magic
Missed the signals - to me that's tragic.
Their lame excuses just seem numbing -
Real psychics would have seen it coming.

December 1, 1997 - Forbes Magazine

SIGN IN VESTRY OF A NEW ENGLAND CHURCH

"WILL THE LAST PERSON TO LEAVE PLEASE SEE THAT THE
PERPETUAL LIGHT IS EXTINGUISHED."

"Forever" is a lengthy span
For either deity or man -
A long tim to invade the till
T pay a large electric bill.

New England's thrifty, heaven knows
 I'm not surprised one might propose
 Saving light 'til the end is near -
 It's then you'll want it bright and clear.

Obituary in The New York Times - July 21, 1999

HUGH FISH, 76, WHO MADE THE THAMES SO CLEAN
 THE SALMON CAME BACK

Hugh Fish, a British environmental engineer whose love of pristine rivers help clean up the Thames - clean enough for salmon to thrive after 150 years - died on May 26. . . he was 76. . . (Mr. Fish) was knighted in 1989.

The eponymous Mr. Fish
 Got his cherished life long wish
 And thankful salmon now defer
 And call their benefactor "Sir".

P.S.

Here is a thought that should remain anonymous -
 At last - a chance to use the word "eponymous"!

New York Times - June 16, 1999

STEAL THIS BOOK:
 WHAT THE BIBLE AND THE BEATS HAVE IN COMMON

"The (popular) choice of shoplifters include the Bible as well the works by (Beat) poets like William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. . ."

There's something wonderfully perverse
 When people take to filching verse
 Or risking eternal liable
 By nicking the Holy Bible.

For those romantically inclined
 These deeds are plausibly defined;
 Acts of simple desperation
 By seekers of their salvation.

Those folks more legally disposed
 Find simple guilt - the case is closed;
 But, special merit is observed -
 To see poetic justice served.

The New York Times - July 27, 1999

AGENCY WILL ASK CONGRESS TO DROP
 GASOLINE ADDITIVE

Ingredient that was meant to clear the air has been
 found to pollute the water

Such good intentions gone astray
 In an environmental way.
 Another sad improvidence
 Of unintended consequence.
 If you can't breathe it, you'll drink it -
 Neat paradox don't you think it!

March 9, 1999 - The New York Times

POWER DRESSING ON THE PLAYING FIELD

". . .Penn State university tested hundreds of
 athletes. . . of all ages, abilities and fitness
 levels and found that wearing form-fitting shorts,
 also known as compression garments. . .increased
 athletic performance by an average twelve percent
 and by as much as thirty percent . . ."

Who'd have guessed it - one can enhance
 Performance with your choice of pants.
 The mantra now. . . "high compression"
 Soon to be the new obsession.
 Greedy hands of time have beckoned -
 Pants squeeze out that extra second.

March 13, 1999 - The Economist

HOW DENTISTS SANK THE SHIPPERS

What is the connection between German dentists and the collapse of Asia's shipping industry? . . . The German government, in the . . . 1990's, created a tax shelter. . . that would commission new freighters. . . it was a good deal, and plenty of (so called) "dentist boats" were built. . . and arrive (just) as the Asian (economic) crisis hit. . . a record number of vessels are now headed for the scrap yards.

This metaphor may seem banal-
But, here's a "fiscal root canal".
this dental greed may well deserve
A shock to dentists' "wallet nerve".
Past bills and drills could just explain
Why this time I don't feel their pain.

November 23, 1997 - Ad in The Economist (Education Section)

GET A COLLEGE DEGREE IN 27 DAYS

BS/MS/PHD, etc. including graduation, ring, transcript, diploma. Yes, it's real, legal, guaranteed and accredited.

COLUMBIA STATE UNIVERSITY

It's real, it's legal, it's guaranteed
You receive a diploma and ring
With graduations
Congratulations
It feels like the genuine thing.

It's fake, it's foolish, terribly sad
It's hollow and grim to the core

Just look deep within
 Find this singular sin
 You're as dumb as you were before.

The Cincinnati Enquirer-February 12, 1998

AFGHAN QUAKE VICTIMS VASTLY OUTNUMBER SUPPLIES

Rustaq, Afghanistan - Thousands of people huddling against the cold overwhelmed aid-workers reaching earthquake-wracked northeastern Afghanistan. . .with supplies too meager to ease the enormous suffering. . . Villagers from. . .tiny hamlet(s) gathered on a cliff to watch a Red Cross aid convoy approach. They quickly realized that their suffering was far from over. The convoy consisted of only one car full of supplies. . .and three cars bringing reporters.

Through eyes of the starving one might see
 "The Press" as feeding on their misery.
 Peasant throngs from desperate quarters
 Cast hungry eyes on plump reporters.

Gannett Editor's Choice Headlines

MAN GETS TWO YEARS IN VIOLIN CASE

When someone steals a violin
 It's tantamount to mortal sin.
 A judge feels freedom to invent
 A novel form of punishment.
 Put that felon on the griddle-
 Face the music-pay the fiddle.
 Here's a thought; why not require
 The object of the thief's desire
 Be ever close to his embrace
 And occupy the self same space?
 Incarcerate the man within
 The case that holds the violin.

Does this punishment fit the crime?
 Cogent question-but, here not prime.
 This basic issue takes its place-
 Does the prisoner fit the case?

October 1998 - Event Notice in publication "What's New
 in Washington"

". . .ELVIS (PICTURES ON VELVET, PAINT BY
 NUMBER CANVASES, AND OTHER QUESTIONABLE
 WORKS FROM THE MUSEUM OF BAD ART. . .
 THROUGH OCTOBER 18. . ."

An edifice to horrid taste
 Seems criminal (though crimeless)
 It's not entirely a waste
 It proves: bad taste is timeless!

PLASTIC OR PAPER?

(A choice offered to every shopper at the
 supermarket checkout lane)

Life is full of many choices-
 Conflicting pleas, strident voices.
 Choose good or evil, ying or yang
 Choose peace and light or sturm und drang.
 But, now there comes a pure delight-
 A choice - where either choice is right.
 Paper? Plastic? Plastic? Paper?
 Controversy turns to vapor.
 Whichever choice - your goal's attained-
 To have your groceries contained.
 A magic state-no saints, no sinners,
 No goats, no losers-only winners!

March 25, 1999 - New York Times

ON THE HORIZON: A WAY TO WRITE IN THIN AIR

"The (new) pen called Smart Quill, will feel in the hand like a typical ball-point, but it will contain motion sensors that will record every movement a hand makes as it writes. To translate these movements into digital text, users will dip the pen into an electronic inkwell connected to a PC. . .users can even write in the air."

And. . .

Future models will send a shock
To jolt you out of writer's block!

The New York Times - March 12, 1999

WORLD BANK BEATS BREAST FOR FAILURES IN INDONESIA

A breast-beating bank - now there's a surprise.
A bizarre anthropomorphic surmise.
Do banks have other erogenous zones?
Prurient interest? Libidinous loans?
Principle mounting or corporate assault?
It's best we leave and not open this vault.

Cincinnati Enquirer - June 19, 1999

GLORY OF ROME CASINO IN INDIANA TO REOPEN

Caesars Indiana expects to reopen its riverboat casino. . . two weeks after the Glory of Rome was closed due to a buildup of silt. . .beneath it. . .By law the 452 foot long, 4000 passenger boat must maneuver the river during at least part of its two hour gambling excursion. . .The

company won't say how much it lost because of the shut down.

"Dat ole man river" hates the ruse
That holds a gambling boat must "cruise"
(if only 10 years from the shore)
A scheme right out of Pinafore.

The River's weapons are but few-
In fact, they're limited to two-
Rising waters or heavy muck
Anathemas to Lady Luck.

Glory of Rome has bid adieu
To weeks of gambling revenue
Unaware of the River's stealth
And plots to undermine its wealth.

The New York Times (date not noted)

MEXICAN EXECUTIVE ACQUITTED OF FRAUD

A Federal District court judge (in Mexico City) said (the man) committed "a mere omission" when he failed to pay five million dollars in taxes. . .

It's fun to do business in this Mexican wonderland.
And refreshing to note there's no malice in blunderland.

September 23, 1998 - Washington Globe and Mail
(reporting a quote from The London Observer)

"MOST GLOBAL CONFLICT CAN BE BLAMED
ON A BASIC IMBALANCE: MANKIND IS MADE
UP OF 5000 ETHNIC GROUPS WITHIN ONLY 190
COUNTRIES TO LIVE IN. . ."

Solutions abound - if only one dares;
 Start a world contest of "musical chairs".
 5000 ethnic groups marching around
 Music commences - a slow, martial sound.
 Then silence. . .which spurs a furious fight
 To grab off the country closest in sight.
 If you lose - there's no special mystery -
 You're lost - and as such you are history.
 The more civilized way - is simply to cease
 Man's brutish behavior - and just live in peace.

The New York Times - January 28, 1999
 (Correction noted in Business Section)

An article in Business Day (section) on January 18
 about Sam L. Ginn, chairman of Airtouch
 Communications
 misstated his holdings of. . .options and their
 value. . .
 Mr. Ginn. . .has 2.61 million options worth \$178.3
 million - not 1.75 million options worth \$170
 million.

Apologies to Mr. Ginn
 For dire journalistic sin.
 The call for truth and justice mounts
 When every extra million counts.

March 18, 1999 - The Cincinnati Enquirer

HELMS OBJECTS TO FUNDING SEX-ED IN
HAITI DURING VODOO CEREMONIES

Sen. Jesse Helms., R-N.C., is accusing the U.S.
 Agency For International Development (AID)
 of subsidizing witchcraft in Haiti - and he wants
 it stopped.

The long arm of old Jesse Helms
 Extends to odd, exotic realms

Where birth control and facts on sex
 Draw the Senate's special hex
 Voodoo priests, with vitriol
 Push needles in their Jesse doll.

The New York Times - August 15, 1999

CANADA SNIFFS AND DISLIKES THE SMELL

". . .in Halifax, Nova Scotia. . .some buildings and businesses have declared themselves fragrance-free zones. The Halifax Herald newspaper has a no-scent policy. Employees may not wear perfume, after-shave lotion or scented hairspray at work. School children may be sent to the principal's office if the teacher can smell them. . .

Most folks, if they had their druthers
 Would respect the rights of others-
 Aim to be satisfactory
 In most matters of olfactory,
 Fragrance is indeed subjective
 One can quickly lose perspective.
 To guard against undue offence
 Apply a dab of common sense!

The New York Times - August 27, 1999

BANK FIRES OFFICER FOR "GROSS MISCONDUCT"

The Bank of New York said yesterday that it had dismissed a vice-president involved in a Federal money-laundering investigation. The bank officer, Lucy Edwards, was fired for "gross misconduct", falsification of bank records and failing to cooperate with investigators. . .She was also apparently, an expert on money laundering. In June she was a featured speaker at a conference in Riga, Latvia. Her topic was "Money Laundering: Latest Developments."

Students proclaim they're often weary
 Of fuzzy, wishy-washy "theory".
 Now, here comes one who proudly teaches.
 And does believe in what she preaches.
 It's "Money Laundering 101"
 An enriching form of fiscal fun
 (Until you're caught through interdiction)
 Which turns belief into. . .conviction!

New York Times - November 25, 1998

POSTAL COMPOST

". . .The Dallas-Fort Worth post office is trying to compost some of its junk mail problem away. . .the post office hopes to sell about (500 tons of undeliverable junk mail-mostly mail-order catalogs) to a composter which would sell the finished product to gardeners. . ."

Mary, Mary quite contrary
 What makes your garden grow?
 It's compost paste from postal waste
 And catalog seeds I sew.

Mary, Mary it's moist and airy
 Your vegetables are green
 So good for lunch, such snappy crunch,
 May I munch an L.L. Bean?

Mary, Mary I'm rather wary
 So humbly beg your pardon
 What's that growing? What's that showing?
 Your Victoria's Secret garden?

The New York Times - August 8, 1999

NORTH KOREA SEES PLOT AFTER DEATH OF
GIFT COWS

SEOUL, South Korea. . .In an encouraging sign that relationships between the Koreas were improving. . .500 head of cattle, a gift from Chung Ju Yung, Hyundai's billionaire founder, (was sent) to help feed the famine stricken North. . .A year later, North Korea announced that about half the cows had died, casualties of a . . .sinister plot by South Korea's National Intelligence Agency said. . ."It is absolutely untrue that we planted any type of surveillance device on (or in) the cows."

Said Chung Ju Yung. . ."Now, here's the plot,
We take these cows, that fart a lot,
And plant devices in their udders
To hear the North's complaints and mutters.
And as for pesky gas and mumbles
Filters will decode the jumbles.
Thus fitted up each bovine moo
Will show that this ingenious coup
Can help our South Korean sleuths
To learn more North Korean truths."
One year later, the plan's a bust-
Half the cost have bit the dust.
This spying plan has proved absurd
Surviving cows are seen-not heard.

Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913)

ZARF - A metallic, cuplike stand used for holding a finjan.

FINJAN - In the Levant, a small coffee cup without a handle, such as is held in a cup or stand called a zarf

A NON-HEROIC CUPLET

Finjan upon his Zarf perched tall
 Finjan of high degree
 He saw his Zarf as low and small
 Himself-nobility.

The Zarf bore Finjan firm, aloft
 Each day on endless day
 There was no downy pillow soft
 To ease the Zarf's hard way.

Alas, the Zarf, depressed, ignored
 Was treated with disdain
 Finjan perceived himself as "Lord"
 Which caused the Zarf much pain.

One night, a careless hand would drop
 Finjan (brim full of brew)
 Above a marble table top-
 He hurtled down thereto.

The Zarf observed Finjan descend
 And flip-flop through the air
 He raced, and braced a firm up-end
 And caught Finjan full square.

Finjan, unbroken, lost control
 He wept-(then thought a lot)
 His loyal Zarf had saved him. . .whole
 Though he deserved it not.

Finjan now humble, now contrite
 His haughty days at end
 Pursued the way of peace and right
 He called his Zarf-his friend.

Moral

The essence of this story's plan
 Unfolds as if a scarf
 Don't judge a Zarf by it's Finjan
 Nor, Finjan by it's Zarf!

The New York Times - June 6, 1998

WHY ARE THE LILY PADS EMPTYING?

In 1989 in Canterbury, England the world's leading experts on frogs. . .gathered for their first ever world congress. . .They realized that they were all seeing the same problem: Their frogs and toads were dying-not just in disturbed habitats, but in the most pristine nature preserves. . .Today, the case of the dying frogs is well documented. . .but no one knows exactly why they are.

It's a mad apocalyptic joke-
Where frogs are just the first to croak!

The New York Times - August 15, 1999

DON'T FORGET TO FLOSS

What's the perfect accouterment for a date in the 1990's? How about a "Get Lucky Pak" - a wallet-sized package offering a LifeStyles condom and a sample of new Dental Dots, dime-sized pads soaked in mint toothpaste with an adhesive backing to adhere to the index finger for a quick cleaning.

Sex at the end of the twentieth century
Is blatant, brazen and often adventurous.
Is this good. . .is this bad. . .hopeful or
piteous?
One positive thing. . .it seems more fastidious!

New York Times - July 19, 1999

MAINSTREAM TV BETS ON "GROSS-OUT" HUMOR

This summer the movies have been filled with crude language, bathroom humor and sex scenes that include the defiling of an apple pie. Brace yourself for the fall television season. . .It is all part of what some television executives and social scientists see as the rapid disappearance of most taste and language restrictions in mass media, a trend fueled by shifting standards of what is socially acceptable. . ."

The shocking thing in decades hence
Will be to see our innocence!

THE GAY NINETIES

November 15, 1999

Harold G. Porter

I found I approached this, my second literary paper, in much the same manner that I had approached my weekly sermon these past 37 years. Which is to say, never easy. As I did, it seemed that I had fallen into my same old routine, waiting for a last minute revelation, searching for a theme that would be novel, personally challenging and ripe for the moment. But, surprisingly, and hopefully in time, a theme for this occasion quietly arose, but it came with some angst.

The paper would focus on homosexuality, at least some aspects of it, for it is as broad as heterosexuality, that is, of humanity itself.

My refinement of the subject was also a squirmy process until I thought why not address what the nineties has uniquely brought to the fore and what the critics of homosexual behavior ultimately fear - the legality of same-sex marriage. In my view, because of our fair-minded society of egalitarian law, such marriages seem both necessary and inevitable and,