

The Limericks

*a.k.a. Pence, Trump, Mueller, Capitalism, Injustice, Trump, Illness,
Poetry — The Limericks*

By William Eaton

May-September and perhaps beyond

*As of this writing, “limericks” (a form here often bent) continue to be added day after day. Below flows the collection to date. (And check out various cousins: **Oh, say, can you see . . . : The only show left in town;** or **Despondent White House Criminals Should Look Up.**) Far below is a brief explanation of what and how this series is or first was and of how and why it has been evolving. It may be noted that the project involves, *inter alia*, exploring the limits of (or deforming?) the limerick form.*

Il n’y a qu’un homme qui ait le droit d’être anarchiste : moi, le Poète, puisque, seul, je fabrique un produit dont la Société ne veut pas, en échange duquel elle ne me donne pas de quoi vivre. — Henri de Régnier, Les Cahier inédits 1887-1936.

(There is only one person who has the right to be an anarchist, and that is I, the Poet. Because I alone supply the product for which society has no use, and in exchange for which it does not provide me enough to live on.)

Part IV (*No nation on Earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals*)

September 4, 2017 —

Limerick 134

A business wants you to pay more than something’s really worth.

Words like “acumen” and “profit” gild deception if not worse.

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Which the media helps to hide by the trumpeting of scandals,
As if not business itself, but just some bad-uns were the criminals.
While the “successful” must stop at nothing to fatten capital’s fat purse.
9.26.17

133

What matters most about this man Trump
Is that, were he ever to (deservedly) flump—
“No worries,” we’re a lot more than covered
By all Trump’s thieving, deceiving, despising brothers
Incapable of governing or being governed by others.
Our K Street and Wall, our Main and our Pennsy—one vast sump.
9.25.17

132

Sooner or later, an artist one truth—
Making his art is about all he can do.
And often it feels like more than enough—
To theirs and to ALL, I reply with my stuff.
In my hospital quarters, well-nursed phrases are loosed!
9.24.17

131 (Donors are furious)

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, John Barrasso, Roy Blunt, John Boozman, Richard Burr, Shelley Capito, Bill Cassidy, Thad Cochran, Susan Collins, Bob Corker, John Cornyn, Tom Cotton, Michael Crapo, Ted Cruz, Steve Daines, Michael Enzi, Joni Ernst, Deb Fischer, Jeff Flake, Cory Gardner, Lindsey Graham, Charles Grassley, Orrin Hatch, Dean Heller, John Hoeven, James Inhofe, John Isakson, Ron Johnson, John Kennedy, James Lankford, Mike Lee, John McCain, Mitch McConnell, Jerry

Moran, Lisa Murkowski, David Perdue, Robert Portman, Paul Rand, James Risch, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, Marco Rubio, Benjamin Sasse, Richard Shelby, Tim Scott, Luther Strange, Dan Sullivan, John Thune, Thom Tillis, Patrick Toomey, Roger Wicker, and Todd Young,

What don't you understand? Your bill is overdue.

After all the contributions we've given to you

We want decent health insurance gone.

Government for the people is morally wrong.

Politicians who don't help rich donors—expect to lose.

9.23.17

From the *New York Times*, [Behind New Obamacare Repeal Vote: 'Furious' G.O.P. Donors:](#)

WASHINGTON — As more than 40 subdued Republican senators lunched on Chick-fil-A at a closed-door session last week, Senator Cory Gardner of Colorado painted a dire picture for his colleagues. Campaign fund-raising was drying up, he said, because of widespread disappointment among donors over the inability of the Republican Senate to repeal the Affordable Care Act or do much of anything else.

Mr. Gardner is in charge of his party's midterm re-election push, and he warned that donors of all stripes were refusing to contribute another penny until the struggling majority produced some concrete results.

"Donors are furious," one person knowledgeable about the private meeting quoted Mr. Gardner as saying. "We haven't kept our promise."

The backlash from big donors as well as the grass roots panicked Senate Republicans and was part of the motivation behind the sudden zeal to take one last crack at repealing the health care law . . .

As for the Chick-fil-A, this from *The Atlantic*, back in March 2015, [Why Republicans Can't Stop Eating Chick-Fil-A:](#)

Since 2012, when the Atlanta-based fried-chicken chain came under fire for donating millions to groups fighting same-sex marriage . . . Chick-fil-A has become congressional Republicans' fast food of choice, a culture-war statement on a bun. . . . Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a longtime Chick-fil-A aficionado, has the chain cater his birthday lunch party every year.

You can see, too, how questionable Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski's Republican credentials are. Long before the current spate of bills to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), she was complaining to the *Atlantic* reporter: "We always have Chick-

fil-A! I don't mind Chick-fil-A every now and again, but you know, here's my deal: I'm really trying to eat healthier."

Chart giving the names of all the current Senators, Republicans and Democrats, with their phone numbers.

130

In a writer-loving culture I might be whisked

By helicopter! But this I don't wish.

Only to be recognized and respected,

Quite equally, with each and every speck that

Existence has challenged and must in time dismiss.

9.22.17

129

There once was a lady from Greece

Whose breasts met in a darkening crease.

So many eyes fell in

So many heads began to spin

Greek wives had her bra size increased.

9.21.17

This limerick was created so as to not forget the form's roots in silly, bawdy inventions. As someone once wrote:

The limerick packs laughs anatomical

Into space that is quite economical.

But the good ones I've seen

So seldom are clean

And the clean ones so seldom are comical.

128

"No nation on Earth has an interest

in seeing this band of criminals,”
The capo or his front man, perhaps, jested?
“with nuclear weapons and missiles.”

It seems the Russian-Koch-and-Mercer crew

Has bagged the Congress and the White House too,
And given their “suicide mission” and the warheads,
We seek comfort in old-fashioned principles?

9.20.17

The quotations are from Trump’s speech to the United Nations the previous day. As ever with Trump’s attacks, this one is, above all, a self-description. The sentences as reported by the media:

No nation on Earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals arm itself
with nuclear weapons and missiles. . . . Rocket Man is on a suicide mission
for himself and for his regime.

For more on the role of Robert Mercer, who over the past decade “has funded an array of political projects that helped pave the way for Trump’s rise” and been one of Trump’s biggest financial backers, see [**The Reclusive Hedge-Fund Tycoon Behind the Trump Presidency: How Robert Mercer exploited America’s populist insurgency**](#), from *The New Yorker*’s March 27, 2017 issue. That article includes the quotation about Mercer.

There has been a good deal of reporting on the role of the Koch brothers (Charles and David H.) in the funding (with hundreds of millions of dollars) of right-wing candidates and causes. There needs to be more reporting. It’s rather more than unfortunate that major New York cultural institutions continue to prominently affix David H. Koch’s name to their buildings and publicity materials. David Koch has, inter alia, supported the abolition of public schools and Social Security, and he and his brother have been active in opposing attempts to address global warming and in supporting attempts to dismantle the nascent US health-insurance system (a.k.a. the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or Obamacare). Why are the MET Museum and Lincoln Center continuing to allow their prestige to be associated with—and thus tarnished by—this man and thus, too, by the causes he so actively supports?

127

Everywhere we see signs that enough is not enough—
The billionaire would cheat the government to get more stuff,

The famous writer would for a product shill,
And our President we-the-people robs at will.
Oh the crimes with which rich and poor get away,
And still it would seem that the news lead remains:
Even with the latest gadgets life continues rough;
Even with more than the latest gadgets—enough is not enough.

9.19.17

Initially this limerick was to focus on Trump's Mar-a-Lago scam, whereby he is charging the government—the taxpayers—us—\$546/night/room needed by his staff during his frequent visits to the resort. (With all those wishing to come talk with the President paying similar amounts.) There was, too, in the back of my mind the recent stories about the wealthy Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin's unusual interest in using government planes for pleasure trips with his wife.

As for the writers, I recall being shocked, as others were, when, back in 1976 (back when I would have written “news lede”), a picture of the playwright Lillian Hellman appeared in *The New Yorker*: she was shilling for a fur-coat retailer. I do not know if at the time she thought she most needed money, more celebrity, or something to do. And as for Bob Dylan recently doing ads for IBM, I suppose he might say that the money was worth less to him than the value of frustrating people's expectations, the value of knocking himself off the pedestal we keep trying to put him on.

I have the advantages of having a pension and not being likely to be asked to do any shilling. (Though—full disclosure—in my youth I posed for an editorial illustration in *Essence* magazine, I believe it was.) Nonetheless, it is hard for me to imagine myself doing commercial advertising, never mind regularly taking jaunts away from a government job so that I could earn more and more money from my constituents, forced to pay my staff's bills at my hotel (and, for example, for the Secret Service's golf-cart rentals—\$60,000 in a recent accounting).

The still curious might see, or see again:

- [**Mnuchin Inquired About Using Government Plane for His Honeymoon**](#), *New York Times*, September 13, 2017.
- [**The first peek inside the Mar-a-Lago money engine only leaves us wanting more**](#), *Washington Post* September 15, 2017.

126

If this day or tomorrow might be my last,

In what activities should I the time pass?
After giving my son one last kiss,
About 60+ years quickly reminisce?
Or I might just savor one almond's taste,
So this very last day goes not to waste,
I'll finally throw out my youthful journals!
Or yell at a man for missing the urinal?

9.18.17

125

An ambitious young French writer once discovered
Qu'une baronne (somewhat older) sought a lover
Her door she opened *sans chemise*
And the writer was *tellement* pleased
Instead of love he made a novel (with a cover).

9.17.17

Liberally adapting a comment made by Philippe Labro during a recent visit to la Maison Française at New York University, a comment relating to the backstory of his early novel *Un début à Paris*.

124

"If we're not getting a wall, I'd prefer President Pence."
"But not when Trump can be enjoyed at Ryan's expense!
Not when he's in bed with Schumer and Pelosi,
And the venal's prospects don't look so rosy."
"But a magnanimous Trump just doesn't make sense!"

9.16.17

First line is from an Ann Coulter tweet on September 14, 2017. For more, including Trump's backsliding, one might see a *Fox News Insider* story, [**Coulter: 'If We're Not Getting a Wall, I'd Prefer President Pence'**](#), which begins:

President Donald Trump on Thursday said he is working with Democratic leaders on a plan to protect illegal immigrant “Dreamers,” and he said he won’t insist on funding the border wall as part of it.

Coulter’s pro-Pence tweet was apparently broadcast at 8:48 a.m. Previously, at 7:05: “At this point, who DOESN’T want Trump impeached?”

Btw: Poor Mike Pence. This whole limerick project began with thoughts of him, his ambitions and fate, and yet he hasn’t appeared in any of the limericks since #21. I am reminded of **Tom Lehrer's song about another Vice-President, Hubert Humphrey.**

The penultimate verse:

Whatever became of you, Hubert?
We miss you, so tell us, please:
Are you sad? Are you cross?
Are you gathering moss
While you wait for the boss to sneeze?

123

From meetings the general would bar Omarosa

Her cv’s more implants than’er ponderosas

But she was a star of reality TV

Was voted as evil as evil could be

She’s more than earned a spot on Donald’s sofa

9.15.17

From **New White House Chief of Staff Has an Enforcer**, *New York Times*: Kirstjen Nielsen—John Kelly’s (the general’s) longtime aide—

is also responsible for keeping Mr. Kelly’s no-fly list of aides he deems to be unfit to attend serious meetings, the most prominent of whom is Omarosa Manigault, the former *Apprentice* star with an ill-defined job and a penchant for dropping into meetings where she was not invited.

Edited excerpts from **Wikipedia’s article on Omarosa**, consulted September 14, 2017:

Omarosé Onée Manigault, often referred to simply as Omarosa, was a member of President-elect Trump’s transition team. In January she was named Assistant to the President and Director of Communications for the Office of Public Liaison. In years past she had been a Democrat and had worked in the office of Vice President Al Gore. In her first interview after being named to the Trump White House she told the TV-news personality

Megyn Kelly that she was a “Trumplican” and hoped more African Americans would follow her lead.

Omarosa gained fame as a contestant on the first season of Donald Trump’s original American version of *The Apprentice*. She later returned for the television series sequel, *Celebrity Apprentice*, and appeared on numerous other reality television shows. *TV Guide* included her in its 2013 list of the **60 Nastiest TV Villains of All Time**. [Distinguished company, as the list includes J.R. Ewing, Victoria Grayson, Newman, Wile E. Coyote, Alexis Colby, and Al Capone.]

122

[T]oute ceste fricassée que je barbouille ici n’est qu’un registre des essais de ma vie, qui est, pour l’interne santé, exemplaire assez, à prendre l’instruction à contrepoil. (All the slop that I give out here is just a record of my experiences—in a life that, as regards internal soundness, has been exemplary enough—with resisting advice.) — Michel de Montaigne, “De l’expérience”

Tell the world! I was trapped on a hospital cart

Against my will?

I might have just taken pills?

The doctors were bent on rewiring my heart

Which had thought to die in peace

And not by high-tech medicine be policed.

And yet, far from my son was I ready to depart?

And so intubated in intensive care?

Confess: To assert my will I did not dare.

Expertise the experts’ ends too well serves,

And each of us his half-truths deserves.

9.14.17

121

Then there’s the matter of the nuclear codes

In the hands of a President who confidence erodes

But wars and pollution have long shown

Death and destruction: humanity's capstone

With toxic leaders and technology we routinely reload

9.13.17

As I have been re-reading Walt Whitman's *Specimen Days*, a brief excerpt from one of the many strong entries, "A Night Battle Over A Week Since," from May 12, 1863:

The night was very pleasant, at times the moon shining out full and clear, all Nature so calm in itself, the early summer grass so rich, and foliage of the trees—yet there the battle raging, and many good fellows lying helpless, with new accessions to them, and every minute amid the rattle of muskets and crash of cannon, (for there was an artillery contest too,) the red life-blood oozing out from heads or trunks or limbs upon that green and dew-cool grass. Patches of the woods take fire, and several of the wounded, unable to move, are consumed—quite large spaces are swept over, burning the dead also . . .

Then the camps of the wounded—O heavens, what scene is this?—is this indeed humanity—these butchers' shambles? There are several of them. There they lie, in the largest, in an open space in the woods, from 200 to 300 poor fellows—the groans and screams—the odor of blood, mixed with the fresh scent of the night, the grass, the trees—that slaughter-house!

120

Two *Epipremnum* a shower curtain rod shared

Until their untangling a lonely bather dared.

The Pothos divorced soon began to mope.

They could not cry, nor could they hope.

Showering alone leaves us clean but impaired.

9.12.17

119

The impermanence of our homes

The conclusion of disaster's poems

Hurricane, earthquake, election, divorce

The walls of the insecure v. destructive force

Over the debris of human lives cameras roam

9.11.17

This after Harvey, Irma, and the earthquake in Mexico, to say nothing of the floods in South Asia which have apparently affected 40 million people, killing at least 1,200 of them. A whole 'nother limerick might be written about the US media and hurricanes. Prior to landfall, desperate for engaging footage, the news networks make stars of the people who, resisting the appeals or orders of government officials, have decided to ride out the storm in their homes. And then, when the storm hits, should it prove less destructive than advertised, there is that feeling of disappointment.

118

Trump's hair brush asked him, "Are you having fun?

Or do you wish this election you had not won?"

"Well, it does seem a President never stops being tried.

Into my life and my friends, all my actions they pry."

"Before you were a criminal, and now you feel like one?"

9.10.17

117

The squirrel kept posing and for a quite reasonable rate,

But the drawing once done, she was less naked than irate.

To almonds with salt she'd become so accustomed—

Curvy haunches, bushy tail—no longer so winsome?

Inhumanely, however, there's no law suit (to date);

The artist, if disconcerted, has been able to escape.

9.9.17

Based on personal experience.

116

Our know-how's incredible; just a few things we lack

The list we know well; our solutions: zero

Insufficient means our technology to control

A peculiar incapacity to not massacre our own

Just a matter of time till the next nuclear attack

9.8.17

115

On a hill in Geneva, there is a seat high and green

With a view of the Alps, the city and its fountain.

For change there can be snow, or mist, clouds and light.

While here in Manhattan facades indurate govern our sight

And no more than in the Alps can other worlds have been.

9.7.17

This “limerick,” *inter alia*, recalls an idea of earlier days: that this project might include an exploration of possible variations on a poetic form (in this case, the limerick). Other examples: 113, below or 116, 117, 122 and 126-28 above; and 111 and 99 from [*Part III*](#); and 79, 60, [57](#) and 56 from [*Part II*](#); and 38, 30 and 20 from [*Part I*](#).

114

Busy shopping a mother – no comfort – infant bereft.

She has needs, too. Not by her child will she be oppressed.

She's teaching, I suppose, life's war of the wills,

Respect for the pushers of strollers, the payers of bills.

But long before shopping – even the rich need others' largesse.

9.6.17

Would that this limerick could do a little more than it seems able to. There is the Winnicottian idea that infants, in a first stage, need to be able to depend absolutely on their caregivers and to be held securely, affectionately, by them, and not be asked to satisfy any parental needs, practical or psychological. Each child needs to feel, at first, that she or he is the center of the universe.

More in the limerick's shadows, however, is a related political observation: some adults who in infancy depended absolutely on others' care now seek to deny care to those, children and adults, who need food, shelter and useful training. And this denial—though justified as being for the good of the needy or of the society more generally—seems deeply connected to a desire to deny our own infant dependency. This is one of the sad, sick parts of the American myth of our rugged individualism. It blocks our recognizing or cherishing how for our development we have depended—however savagely, selfishly—on one another. And hardly least the rich on the labor of the poor (or enslaved).

113

About Trump and related infirmities much is being said—

As before his fingers approached buttons for warheads

And before he could pardon his criminal friends

And erase progressive policies with the stroke of a pen

And not help the working classes but their bitterness spread—

As before destructive forces elected him President

Of a swamp we might call crazed, criminal, incompetent?

Which, with so many lying in it, has become our feculent bed.

9.5.17

112

After Labor Day the city will come roaring back

And Jill for Jill will elbow Jack for Jack

And there will be classes to take!

And mornings to hate

The warmth of the sun fading on our backs

9.4.17

Part III (*Animals, Capitalism, the News, First Impressions*)

July 2 — September 3, 2017 —

111

Steve Bannon, Mike Dubke, Michael T. Flynn

Become names on a list of the people not in

With the Mooch and the Spice and Sebastian Gork-

Ah Priebus and Higgins and Michael C. Short

And one Dahl and one Walsh and a McFarland (KT),

And Ezra Cohen-Watnick and Derek Harvey

Now back up the van for Trump and his kin!

9.3.17

[Here Are the Top Officials in the Trump White House Who Have Left](#), *New York Times*, updated as of August 26, 2017, and thus ignoring Keith Schiller and . . . ?

110

Except after making love or art, often there is present

A distaste or a regret or embarrassment

And so one draws and writes

And at least longs in the night

Of your deepest connections what would you lament!

9.2.17

109

Politicians like advertisers say what we want to hear;

With words, other symbols disguising their actual careers.

But what, I would ask, have you to date done?

Precious little good for much of anyone?

And voters are surprised to find hope displaced by fear?

9.1.17

This “limerick” had its origins less in the 2016 Presidential election than in a current vigorous campaign for the New York City Council seat in my district. There are numerous eager candidates, thirty-somethings from government and business. And each has her or his

flyers which make much of their support for these or those good causes. They seem to know very well what district voters would like to see accomplished. But when I try to see what these people have in fact accomplished to date? Well, they've been to elite schools and some have worked for known elected officials or in city government. But as for examples of their implementing or helping to implement the sorts of policies they are now championing? Precious little or few. The *New York Times* and others are backing a candidate who worked previously lobbying the Council and city government more generally. Such experience could be useful, though we would want to know if he did any successful lobbying for the causes to which he is now attaching his name.

Much as I am continually impressed by Bernie Sanders' talent for staying on message, for saying the right things over and over again, one might equally ask what his track record has been? This is not to say he is a fraud, but rather that public speaking and implementation may require two quite different sets of abilities. Certainly we would like to be inspired by good public speakers, and—as Trump shows in the breach—good public speaking can be a large part of the good some politicians can do. But we also need elected officials who know how to build coalitions, get things done. See, for example, [this story](#) on how the chair of the Washington, D.C., City Council, Phil Mendelson, was able to bring together his fellow elected officials and other stakeholders to reform the city's tax code in apparently quite successful ways.

108

"I was not mean in the beginning,
Until I began trying to earn a living.
The jobs that for a mortgage paid
Required that I on others preyed.
Hell is the soul alone, beyond forgiving."

8.31.17

Cf., a Thoreau journal entry from August 7, 1853: "How trivial and uninteresting and wearisome and unsatisfactory are all employments for which men will pay you money! The ways by which you may get money all lead downward. . . . You are paid for being something less than a man."

This limerick, however, was "inspired" not by Thoreau, but by a man who joined me in my building's elevator. He had been visiting an apartment, and a look on his face suggested to me that he had been up to no good. Perhaps he had been trying to get someone evicted. But more: there was a look in his eyes or in the bend of his neck or in the way he greeted me—a suggestion that he felt guilty. And his suit and shoes had a slight shoddiness. I also still have in mind an article about how Wells Fargo employees coped with pressures from their bosses

to take advantage of bank customers: [Voices From Wells Fargo: 'I Thought I Was Having a Heart Attack'](#), *New York Times*, October 20, 2016. As for the poor soul, well, there is a hell in not being able to forgive oneself, but also, as I may explore in another piece, in being unable—perhaps for good reason, perhaps in self-defense—to be unable to forgive others. (And if one begins there, unable to forgive others, one might well end up with the weightier predicament: unable to forgive oneself.)

107

Of course Noah was pleased to get out of that boat,
But when he looked around at the ruins along the coast . . .

“Life was, in a sense, easier for those who drowned.”

And, “After all this rain what lessons will be found?”

“Either suffering exalts or we rebuild with false hopes.”

8.30.17

On my mind, tropical storm Harvey and Houston, including its refineries and chemical plants; and the Texas senators who having resisted, on grand principle, providing federal help to the Northeast after Hurricane Sandy, now are calling for federal help; and Trump, who came to some far edge of the storm wreckage to make claims about the sizes of the crowds at his rallies and his TV ratings.

106

A moth polyphemus to a museum came,
Thinking his wings' art might win him some fame.

“Their great beauty is they allow me to survive.”

“And so we these sculptures,” the curators replied.

Much study and technology, the goal remains the same.

8.29.17

Source: Sighting of a wounded male polyphemus moth who was clinging to a concrete wall in the interior courtyard at [Magazzino Italian Art](#) in Cold Spring, New York, which has been showing work by Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, the Merzes, Giuseppe Penone and other Arte Povera artists.

105

Truth, honesty and justice have had their historical hour,
Have been superseded by some new language of power.
Fake news and drug research—parodies of old forms
Like courts where the rich make rule of law squirm.
The poor do others' time, and bitterness, liberated, flowers.

8.28.17

Lines rooted in lines from Theodor Adorno, "Zur Dialektik des Takts" (On the dialectic of tact), *Minima Moralia*, 1951: "Hat doch Takt seine genaue historische Stunde. . . ." Working from E.F.N. Jephcott's translation:

Politeness had its precise historical hour. Now fallen into irreparable ruin, the convention lives on only in the parody of forms, an arbitrarily devised or recollected etiquette for the ignorant.

104

The US: the world's poor keep embracing our dreams.
The Swiss: good infrastructure, hiking, strong currency.
Deluded, we too many facts have ignored;
While Swiss discretion has proved its own reward,
And hopes been replaced by duty staunch, community.
8.27.17

103

I still remember my ex-wife's tree
And sick lying on her couch seeing only leaves.
Again in my home on nice rugs I lie,
But, far from seeing, with thoughts I am plied,
And miss not only Anne but less mindful diseases.
8.26.17

102

Millions upon millions would like to believe
And priests use such desires their own to relieve.
 Anxious to transcend too humble conditions
 We zealously ignore the human composition.
Thinking too wishful makes much room for grief.
8.25.17

101

He assumed, as his mother had:
That after solitude had made its path,
 Returning, he would be embraced
 Find warmth among the human race
That solitude fears, of courage is aghast.
8.24.17

100

There once were some stories about one Louise Linton
Which popped up online with bright ads for Rhodes' diamonds.
 Thus while I was laughing at conspicuous consumption
 I could max out my credit for a five-carat corundum.
The *Times*, *Post* and their news are not selling bubblegum!
8.23.17

“Corundum” is a stretch, the word coming from the Tamil word for ruby. The English word is used most often to refer to extremely hard gemstones, such as diamonds, but more typically rubies and sapphires, which can be used as abrasives. Cecil Rhodes, a British businessman, mining magnate and architect of South African apartheid, formed the De Beers diamond company in 1888. Notwithstanding or because of his reliance on Rothschild funding and his competition with the Oppenheimer diamond merchants, to say nothing of his desire to exploit African workers and natural resources, Rhodes promoted Anglo-Saxons as “the first race in the world” (a line in his will). “The more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race.”

De Beers has also been a leading example of how capitalism and monopsony go hand in hand (see also Amazon, Google, et al.). During the twentieth century De Beers, having merged its operations with the Oppenheims', came to control 80 percent of the rough diamond market, with predictable effect (high prices and profits). De Beers' advertising campaigns also led to the current idea of diamonds as a symbol of love and commitment.

As regards, Linton—since June the wife of U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin—readers who have yet to get enough of her might see the *Washington Post's* [Treasury secretary's wife stirred controversy before, with memoir of her 'living nightmare' in Africa](#). From that story:

Linton's book, *In Congo's Shadow*, described how, as an 18-year-old, she “abandoned her privileged life in Scotland” in 1999 to live in Zambia for six months, a period that she described as “a living nightmare.” She wrote about becoming a “central character” in the “horror story” of Congolese war of the late 1990s, terrified of what the rebels across the border might do to the “skinny white muzungu with long angel hair.” (Muzungu is a Bantu term often used to refer to wealthy white people.)

She added: “Now that I'm a grown woman living in California and pursuing a very different dream—as an actress and film producer—I know that the skinny white girl once so incongruous in Africa still lives on inside me. Even in this world where I'm supposed to belong, I still sometimes feel out of place. Whenever that happens, though, I try to remember a smiling gap-toothed child with HIV whose greatest joy was to sit on my lap and drink from a bottle of Coca-Cola.”

99 (First Impressions)

To return to New York is to return to breasts

And the signs counting down the seconds that are left

The honking, exhaust and anarchy of the streets

And chilly air-conditioning, mix tapes and TVs

And overeating foods overdosed with sweets.

By Lake Geneva, after a swim, I read *la Tribune* and got some rest.

8.22.17

La Tribune de Genève, a daily paper. A reader has e-mailed to note that women in Geneva have breasts, too. Yes, certainly; however, while *les Genevois* are renowned for their discretion, we New Yorkers are “in your face.” And may, thus, also be more drawn to silicone.

98

Keeping up with the news is mind-numbing.

Not the contents, but to the now succumbing.

Brains filled with information

Have no room for contemplation

Sometimes less is less more than invigorating!

8.21.17

97

The Grenoble region daily destroys a tonne of meat

It has spoiled—unsold reached its *date limite*.

The animals' friends might well complain

Hungry humans may be screaming in pain

As capitalism conveniently spews both grub and grief.

8.20.17

Date limite: sale or expiration date. Of course, as regards the quantity of meat destroyed daily, the Grenoble region, with less than 1 million inhabitants, can hardly compare to New York, Paris, and many another place. And my attention was called to the Grenoble statistic because there has been a campaign there to cook some of this meat before it spoils and distribute the food to the poor. French readers might see **Grenoble : ils récupèrent de la viande avant qu'elle ne soit jetée et la cuisinent pour les plus démunis**, *France Bleu*, 6 octobre 2015. A tonne = 1,000 kilograms = 2,205 pounds.

96

Of wolves and many others were we long well afraid

Developed knives, guns and poisons, built our barricades

Of which we can now boast to ourselves alone

While feeling some strange lack in our insulated homes

Might we again find food behind beavers' palisades?

8.19.17

95

Regrettable: Grenoble—overdevelopment;

Tender valleys, once multifarious, resplendent

Now choked by infrastructure, facades and concrete,

By government, retail chains and spreadsheets.

For health and for beauty our imperiousness must relent?

8.18.17

In a sense I—a New Yorker, no less!—am picking on Grenoble, or its once beautiful valley, which is just one of thousands of similar regions around the world—places whose natural beauty and life force are being crushed under the weight and relentlessness of human development. Often such development includes the idea that human beings need parks or clean water and air, while also embracing the idea that we must make more and more for we humans. And this, inevitably, means less and less for many other species and non-organic entities. The view from the heights of La Bastille across the Drac-Isère river valley and the agglomération grenobloise to the magnificent ridges of the Dauphiné Alps, Mont Blanc in the distance . . . it is at once breathtaking and sad. Beauty ruined, polluted, suffocated by human development. One can think of Chernobyl, and not only for the half-rhyme.

94

The meat of grasshoppers can be easily made

A little alfalfa and water, even less terrain.

For *Sus domesticus* and Red Angus you need rather more.

So you can well imagine how soon the working poor

In their fast-food hamburgers may insects find inlaid.

8.17.17

Sus domesticus = pigs. The source of this limerick is the latest story in my favorite newspaper, *la Tribune de Genève*, about how hamburgers augmented with insects—grasshoppers, crickets or mealworms—will soon be on sale in Switzerland. The Merriam-Webster dictionary informs me that mealworm is a name for the larva of a beetle that infests grain products but has often been raised as food for insectivorous animals, for laboratory use or as fishing bait. Below is a chart that the *Tribune* offered. Although it is in French, I think Anglophone readers will quickly grasp its message: it takes a lot less water, feed and land to produce a kilo of insect meat than a kilo of chicken, pork or beef.

It might be said that Amerindians, and particularly those living in dry, relatively infertile regions of the West, knew all this long ago. See “Some Insect Foods of the American Indians: And How the Early Whites Reacted to Them,” from the *[Food Insects Newsletter](#)*, volume 7, issue 3, November 1994. Other issues of the *Newsletter*, available online, include instructions on how to raise insects, their nutritional properties, recipes and medicinal uses.

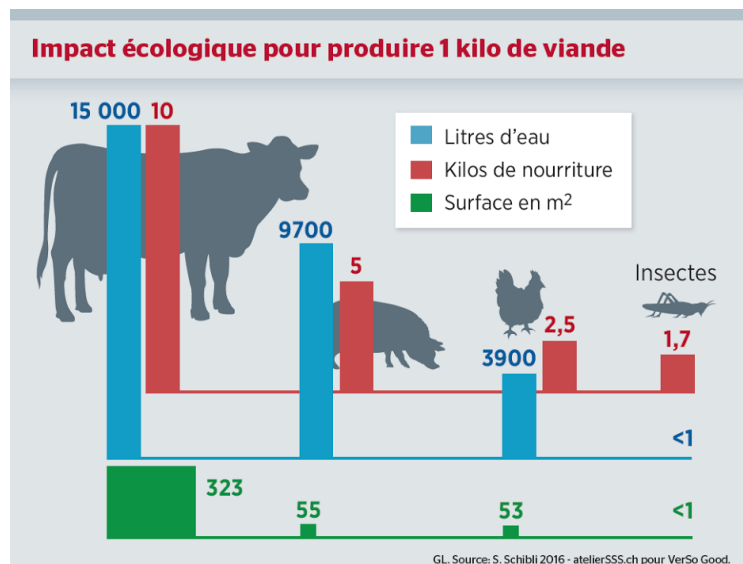
93

Republicans are hardly the first *en mode rétropédalage*

Backpedaling toward slavery, civil war, *le carnage*.

The old Southern Strategy: let them eat hate;

Let the poor and exploited the undaunted castrate.



À Vichy, the liberal future—
hideux, comme le courage.

8.16.17

Translations: *en mode rétropédalage* — in backpedaling mode. Phrase has been used *in a Swiss newspaper* to describe US Vice-President Mike Pence’s meetings with foreign leaders, meetings designed to try to dampen the leaders’ concerns about Trump’s tweeted intentions.

Le carnage — the carnage. *Hideux, comme le courage* — hideous, like the [their] courage.

À Vichy refers to the regime established, with its capital at Vichy, France, after the German invasion at the outset of the Second World War. Instead of resisting the fascists and their rounding up of Jews, trade-unionists and other liberals, the regime collaborated. Wikipedia has proposed: “Vichy sought an anti-modern counter-revolution. The traditionalist right in France, with strength in the aristocracy and among Catholics, had never accepted the republican traditions of the French Revolution. It demanded a return to traditional lines of culture and religion and embraced authoritarianism, while dismissing democracy.” This, Jews and many others might say, is putting it mildly. Of the 340,000 Jews living in metropolitan/continental France in 1940, more than 75,000 were deported to death camps, where about 72,500 were killed. The Vichy regime along with the French police participated in the roundup of Jews. This seems much the same sort of return to wonderful old traditions that Donald Trump has in mind.

92

Poor Socrates devoted himself to living the right life
Which led to his great trial and premature death.

My heart-healthy diet, exercise and low stress
Has led me too early to arterial distress.

“The good” is an experiment, and failure’s midwife?

8.15.17

91

Just seventy-five self-absorbed years ago
With Allies the US united to raze the globe

The Nazis and murderous others were vigorously suppressed
Humane rights and humane structures were loudly professed

But now allies the US needs its own savagery to slow

8.14.17

90

Our lives by commercial music are tightly wrapped in love.
And—so?—considering life’s joys and shortcomings—love.

Love “fusionnel,” as the French would say;

When something in another my me melts away.

And so alone on a mountain path I think of you—love.

Part II (*Pence, Trump, Mueller, Capitalism*)

July 2 — August 12, 2017

89

Kim Jong-un found his blustering much less attractive

After we deployed our weapon the most radioactive—

After the Donald and his mop

On Pyongyang were gently dropped.

The crowds, the last tweet reads, have been “fantastic.”

8.12.17

88

The rich these days enjoy a *nouvelle cuisine*—

From ingredients *pas chers, des saveurs exquis*.

Bravo les nouveaux chefs et leurs assistants,

Expanding profit margins *d'une façon si charmante*.

Not vegans but capitalists of choice flesh will us wean.

Source: Lately I have been sampling some of Geneva's more ambitious restaurants, such as **Le Neptune**, **Café de la Paix** and **La Bottega**. They have offered me various delicacies, including watermelon with cheese, mussels with tofu, and handmade ravioli containing butter, cheese and lemon. While I have appreciated the flavors, the chefs' creativity and the sous-chefs' talents, I have also noted the low cost of the ingredients. I explored this subject at greater length in my 2014 essay **On Savoring**.

8.11.17

Translations:

- *pas chers, des saveurs exquis*—*inexpensive yet delicious*
- *d'une façon si charmante*—*in such a charming way*

87

Might we again have an old-fashioned President

Without the daily photos our eyes to torment?

Without the daily soundbites our ears to distress

Of vacations, golf and relatives a good deal less?

No matter who started this (FDR or NBC?)—Please relent.

8.10.17

86

The Swiss news loves sustainable development

The Geneva IKEA stuffs people's apartments

Raw fish in thick aluminum is wrapped

Each fruit and vegetable gets its plastic bag

Showy projects a noxious economy supplement?

8.9.17

85

Woodstock, San Francisco, Guadalajara,

Where was I going to go, *inshallah*?

And to do what? I wonder,

Into whom would I have blundered?

In Geneva I'm a patient, not a wanderer.

8.8.17

84

Forty-seven million sperm—a fool's paradise

Nineteen million words—for reading is not nice

One is all the average man's got left

Another of UN documents suggests the heft

Would that pesticides made our writing more concise?

8.7.17

The 47 million sperm (per milliliter of ejaculate) is a decline from the average of 99 million estimated forty years ago. The 19 million words are the number translated, year in and year out, by the French Translation Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva, Switzerland. This is just one of dozens of UN translation services around the world. To date there would seem to be no estimates of how many of the words being produced are being read, or were read in their original versions.

From one of the many newspaper articles written about the sperm-count report:

Writing in the journal *Human Reproduction Update*, . . . researchers—from Israel, the US, Denmark, Brazil and Spain—said total sperm count had fallen by 59.3 per cent between 1971 and 2011 in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Sperm concentration fell by 52.4 per cent.

“Sperm count and other semen parameters have been plausibly associated with multiple environmental influences, including endocrine disrupting chemicals, pesticides, heat and lifestyle factors, including diet, stress, smoking and body-mass index,” the paper said. . . .

Chemicals linked to lowering sperm count include some used to make plastics more flexible and flame retardants used in furniture.

The article: [Sperm counts in the West plunge by 60% in 40 years as ‘modern life’ damages men’s health](#), *The Independent*, UK, 25 July 2017. Related articles offered by the online version of the article have included: “Fracking chemicals lower sperm count in mice, says research”; “Men who eat high-pesticide diets have dramatically lower sperm counts”; and “Everyday chemicals ‘reduce sperm count.’”

83

For a while there was a simple set of facts

And diverging interpretations—Repubs’ & Democrats’.

Now *they* have their truths well-proven,

Which for *us*, with ours, are delusions.

Thus Catholics and Protestants long savagely attacked?

8.6.17

82

In Switzerland more barracks keep being constructed,

Compartments of reinforced concrete, with balconies unobstructed.

So that nature, the world—and the enemy?—

May be seen fast advancing—or hurrying away?

In a New York luxury condo one may find one’s soul abducted.

8.5.17

81

Heroic Jane Eyre having achieved independence

Runs to embrace a father figure, now her dependent

What (in God's name) do we really want?

To be on top, the bottom, or deviant?

With lofty principles enjoy erotic transcendence?

8.4.17

The scholarly might see Jean Wyatt, *Reconstructing Desire: The Role of the Unconscious in Women's Reading and Writing* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990). From page 23: "Part of the *Jane Eyre's* appeal lies in the way it allows in the way it allows female readers to work out fantasies of desire for the father and rage against him, fantasies that seem to stem from the power and inaccessibility of a father in a traditional nuclear family structure and his ambiguous position with regard to his daughter's sexuality."

Readers, female and male, may also note that by the end of the novel the now happy heroine is a long ways from the ideal she so wonderfully, passionately stated toward the beginning of her journey:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.

80

An event unexpected and unhealthy

Has my pants pocket reduced to one key

Though bypassed, my heart likes this freedom

Because our keys are for misers and for prisons?

Or because there are sicknesses that bring simplicity?

8.3.17

79

The night nurse arrives with her whole night planned
And you upset everything with your silly demands
 She wants to watch TV
 And you want to brush your teeth?
Understaffing and priorities, what can't you understand?
 But then in huff
 She re-arranges all your stuff
And decides that, in fact, you're her man!

8.2.17

78

There once was a Communications Director
A foul-mouthed, front-stabbing invector
 Among his various tweets
 His Air Force One seat
Till John Kelly pressed the ejector.

8.1.17

Source: **So Much for the Mooch**, “In going after Priebus, Scaramucci sowed the seeds of his own demise”; *New York Times*, July 31, 2017.

77

The beavers' dams are permissive developments—
Low-tech, diversifying and without government.
 Dragonflies, birds and amphibians
 Enjoy watery homes by the mill-i-ons,
While farmers, highways and drains may be less content.

7.31.17

Source: Article in the *Tribune de Genève* —**L’embarrassant retour du castor**—on how the Swiss beaver population has grown since the species was re-introduced in 1956, but farmers

and others are now complaining. For biodiversity, the species, however unintentionally, is a great boon; for human infrastructure and agricultural productivity, at least from a narrow perspective, it causes some problems. Interestingly, the same, July 31, 2017, issue of the paper had an article about taking cold water from the bottom of *le lac Léman* (Lake Geneva) to cool people on the shore. Apparently Hawaiians have previously done similarly with seawater. But what the article did not discuss at all were the potential effects of such water removal and temperature change on ecosystems. Of course beavers are not submitting environmental impact statements, and yet one is struck by how we humans, all our science notwithstanding, so often act as if we are the only species that matters. Even to we ourselves: that is, we often seem to feel that our lives would be better if there were no other species around—let alone re-introduced—to create problems for us.

76

Ah, traveling brings us so much that is new—
New customs and flavors, languages and views;
But the only lesson there is to learn
Is painful and old, simple and stern—
Of the extent of the whole our clues are so few.

7.30.17

75

She may lead me, with penis, to feel some kind of
Best, as I her clitoris might lure warm from its glove.
With generosity, tenderness and trust
We may outdistance the cliffs of our primal lust.
But loyalty, patience and responsibility make love.

7.29.17

74

Epidemiology allows us to associate events,
Project causes, draw conclusions and science invent.
In the process we may save millions of lives

And deepen the confusions that our data belie
It seems not by correlations that my life has been bent.

7.28.17

That is, some of my cardiologists and physical therapists—trying to explain why I, relatively young and with hardly a “risk factor,” ended up with a heart attack—have proposed, using their own terminology, that by forces unknown are our lives often bent.

73

The Articles of Confederation; the War of Secession;
Presidents for thieves and themselves; the Great Depression—

Three existential crises the US has faced down

Temporarily found ways, core conflicts to get around

With the union each time tightened—and still wide open to question.

7.27.17

Journalists and pundits these days love to call the Trump presidency unprecedented, and yet it is difficult to read far into American history without finding parallels. “My” journal *Zeteo* has recently explored two: [the Know Nothing movement](#) and [how Woodrow Wilson’s narcissism was manipulated by the British to get the US to enter the First World War](#) on their side. As for Presidents who have used the office to enrich their particular thief allies, we might be surprised to discover how many Presidencies could be described in this way. George W. Bush, Richard Cheney, and the invasion of Iraq come quickly to mind.

72

In substituting for lovemaking their exercises intense

Their hearts inflame – plaque – arteries dense,

Their blood fighting to maintain its flow,

Lungs – oxygen – to hungry muscles slow.

And how little love will they have made – lives spent.

7.26.17

Source: Social commentary aside, this is also a personal poem as I seem to be one of those who, in part because of physical fitness, have suffered a heart attack at a relatively early age (62). An explanation (likely a simplification): high-intensity anaerobic exercise can cause inflammation which creates plaque. And I have often thought that such exercise, like sex or

in its stead, has a satisfying draining, exhausting quality. It becomes a way of relaxing, if not always a healthy or love-making, one.

71

*At that time, in order not to punish
the guilty, they mistreated the poor.*

Except for police officers and many others, racism has become taboo;
Instead of segregated facilities and lynchings, a “war on drugs” must do.

 This means the search, the extortion and the imprisoning
 Of male and female citizens who happen to have colored skin,
While the toxic frauds of drug companies continue to accrue.

7.25.17

Relevant articles: [A Warrant to Search Your Vagina](#), *New York Times*; [How the War on Drugs is Destroying Black America](#), Cato Institute; [The Drug War is the New Jim Crow](#), NACLA Report on the Americas; [Report: Aide says Nixon’s war on drugs targeted blacks, hippies](#), CNN. And there is Attorney-General Sessions’ dubious claim of there being [a ‘surge’ in violent crime](#), when there seems, rather, to be a surge in white-collar crime in and around the White House and Trump Tower in New York.

Epigraph is an adaptation of the epigraph to Paul Eluard’s 1944 poem, [Comprenne qui voudra](#) (Understand Who Will):

“En ce temps-là, pour ne pas châtier les coupables, on maltraitait des filles. On allait même jusqu’à les tondre.” At that time [after the liberation of Paris from the Germans and the Vichy regime], in order not to punish the guilty [those who had collaborated more significantly with the Germans], they [the people of Paris] mistreated prostitutes. They even went so far as to shave their heads [and parade them through the streets, yelling and spitting at them].

70

With firings and pardons and personal attacks
The Suspect in Chief details how he’ll fight back.

 So Mueller’s team their own defenses may well prepare,
 Of both staff and law enforcement taking special care.
Future generations also deserve a record of every last fact.

7.24.17

69

In a bakery French – *quelle déception !* – a wondrous new machine:

It takes my money, gives me my change, all beeping and pristine.

In other stores will there soon be hands,

Égouttant tout sainement more intimate demands?

Except that desire for human warmth—which will come to seem obscene.

7.23.17

Quelle déception : What a letdown. *Égouttant tout sainement* : Healthily draining (like spaghetti or broccoli rabe, with colander and sink). *L'égout* : the sewer. And this note from Thoreau, *Walden*: “Trade curses everything it handles”.

Of course there are now automatic cashiers like this in all sorts of stores around the world, but what made this particular one, in the Croix-Rousse neighborhood of Lyon, more striking was that the customers’ use of it was being carefully supervised by a human being, who might have rather been manually, tactilely, exchanging money with the customers. Instead she was tasked with promoting the future of the machine and not only her own obsolescence, but also (ultimately) the obsolescence of interpersonal relations.

As for the eventual obscenity of the desire for human warmth, I have been struck by an ad—for a help line—that is running on the buses in Geneva, Switzerland. A young woman is shown saying “Mon mari me forçait à avoir des rapports sexuels.” My husband was forcing me to have sex. Of course we understand the problem—or crime—here. And yet somewhere in the background lie questions such as these:

- Is marriage becoming a non-sexual, legal union?
- To what extent are people now marrying or staying married to good friends even though at least one of them has no enthusiasm for intimate relations or even though an initial excitement has rapidly cooled, or cooled after children were born?
- And may it be coming to seem outrageous, or obscene, if one of the members of such a couple remains attached to an outmoded or barbarous idea: that sex and sexual pleasure are an essential part of a marital union? (Or that we need to make love—or oxytocin—in order to stay in love?)

To give an idea of how far we have come I quote from an article on [**Kosher Sex: Jewish Attitudes Towards Sexuality**](#), from a “Judaism 101” website:

Sex is the woman’s right, not the man’s. A man has a duty to give his wife sex regularly and to ensure that sex is pleasurable for her. He is also obligated

to watch for signs that his wife wants sex, and to offer it to her without her asking for it. The woman's right to sexual intercourse is referred to as *onah*, and it is one of a wife's three basic rights (the others are food and clothing), which a husband may not reduce. The Talmud specifies both the quantity and quality of sex that a man must give his wife. It specifies the frequency of sexual obligation based on the husband's occupation, although this obligation can be modified in the *ketubah* (marriage contract). A man may not take a vow to abstain from sex for an extended period of time, and may not take a journey for an extended period of time, because that would deprive his wife of sexual relations. *In addition, a husband's consistent refusal to engage in sexual relations is grounds for compelling a man to divorce his wife, even if the couple has already fulfilled the halakhic obligation to procreate.* [Italics mine.]

68

If your life memorialize you would in limericks,

My anapests and rhyming schemes can likely do the trick.

The price, however, though already paid, may seem a bit too steep.

I mean the price of feelings—for ideals now put to sleep.

A poet's words in these hateful days must reek of politics.

7.22.17

Source: A friend has proposed I put out a shingle, offering to write limericks for people, as I have done in #67 and #61, writing about friends' woodchucks. Wonderful [Wiktionary](#) tells me that the word "anapest"—a metrical foot consisting of three syllables, two unstressed and one stressed (e.g. the word "interrupt")—comes from Latin *anapaestus*, from Ancient Greek *ἀνάπαιστος* ("struck back", "reversed"). With my limericks I am striking back?

67

From their pool across their lawn the humans dripping pawed,

A grill cover from a woodchuck to violently withdraw.

He knew little of cooking, even less of crime,

But the cover's burnished red was pleasing to his eye,

And along with the Donald he couldn't help thinking—

Strong teeth are nine-tenths of the law.

7.21.17

Note: A younger generation may not know the expression “possession is nine-tenths of the law”; i.e. if you’ve already got your mitts on something, it is easier, even under the rule of law, to hold on to it. Wikipedia adds that the principle bears some similarity to *uti possidetis* (“as you possess, so may you continue to possess”). This principle now underlies the international legal doctrine that colonial administrative boundaries become international boundaries when a political subdivision or colony achieves independence. Under Roman law, however—and from the woodchuck’s perspective as well—*uti possidetis* has been an *interdictum* ordering that a legal party maintain possession of, say, a grill cover until it could be determined who in fact had the greater legal right to the property. (And, from a historical perspective, a Home Depot receipt is ephemeral at best.)

With thanks again to Walter and Alison for keeping me supplied with woodchuck fables. (See limerick 61 below.)

66

Unjustly, a Prez-traitor new judges can appoint

Unjust business interests not wishing to disappoint

With the new by past injustices more than qualified

Signs of any judiciousness not sought, or denied

Has the rape of this vast country just been the main point?

7.20.17

News: [**The One Area Where Trump Has Been Wildly Successful**](#), by Ronald A. Klain, *Washington Post*, July 19, 2017:

[Trump] not only put Neil M. Gorsuch in the Supreme Court vacancy created by Merrick Garland’s blocked confirmation, but he also selected 27 lower-court judges as of mid-July. . . . That’s three times Obama’s total and more than double the totals of Reagan, Bush 41, and Clinton—combined. For the Courts of Appeals—the final authority for 95 percent of federal cases—no president before Trump named more than three judges whose nominations were processed in his first six months; Trump has named nine. Trump is on pace to more than double the number of federal judges nominated by any president in his first year. . . .

How conservative are Trump’s picks? Dubbed “polemicists in robes” in a headline on a piece by *Slate*’s Dahlia Lithwick, Trump’s nominees are strikingly . . . Trumpian. One Trump nominee blogged that [Supreme Court Justice Kennedy] was a “judicial prostitute” for trying to find a middle ground on the court, and said that he “strongly disagree[d]” with the court’s

decision striking down prosecution of gay people under sodomy laws. Another equated the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, upholding a woman's right to choose to have an abortion, to the court's 19th-century Dred Scott finding that black people could not be U.S. citizens. Another advocated an Alabama law that denied counsel to death-row inmates. . . .

Trump is nominating candidates before they are reviewed by the American Bar Association; Judiciary Committee Republicans are arguing that nominees' writings, legal representations and public statements are irrelevant to confirmation. . . .

65

Libido, that's one thing; performance another;

Escaping the first, monks serenity discover?

Lacking the second, yet keeping the first—

For billions, we might say, this is the worst;

Deprived of satisfaction; hope a lost lover.

7.19.17

Cheating a little (explicating my own poem), I would stress that, while “libido” calls sex to mind, and this is where my thoughts began, when I got to the “billions,” I had in mind, too, all the many other ways that people—be they desirous of food and clean water they cannot obtain, or, say, warm if non-sexual companionship, or perhaps even immortality—people often find themselves filled with many more desires than they are able to satisfy. This is a large part of the human predicament, and I doubt that even the greatest monks truly escape from desire. Thanks to tremendous self-discipline, they may be able to ignore or suppress desire. But this could be like pushing and holding water down at the bottom of a well. Among other things, such an endeavor, such discipline, might require a goodly portion of one's psychic energy.

64

Grave illness can teach us to stare at the air

At a book on a table, clouds in a window square

And we want nothing more

Even our health we ignore

With time we are at peace, exalted by our cares

7.18.17

63

Once young, poets for sweet love and sweeter lovers pined.
Then professors, from backyard birds and woodchucks divined
Truths that I, graying, to sins of politics
And to capitalists, insatiable, sadly find affixed,
While those pleasures more sweet, those pleasures more animal—
They lag far behind.

7.17.17

62

In *Macbeth* a strong man is by his own crimes laid low.
He too frightened and too vulnerable, his kingdom overthrown.
Some say that so the Donald can only watch TV
And put on weight and tweet away, a specter of a he.
A warning to all graspers deceitful? Would that this were so!

7.16.17

This limerick stems from having seen a French-language production of *Macbeth* at [le Théâtre de l'Orangerie](#) in Geneva, Switzerland. The production, based on a translation by Jean-Michel Déprats, was directed by Valentin Rossier, and produced in cooperation with the Théâtre Le Public de Bruxelles. Rossier set the play in a hotel room with nothing but a couch and a bar covered with whiskey and glasses. And he cast for the male leads men who hardly looked strong, let alone kingly, and who wore cheap suits and shoes—as if they were just one more set of nebbishes among the millions these days. And this idea that they might be competing and killing for power—a joke at best. This called my attention to the extent to which in the great tragedies—*Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*—Shakespeare was not writing about great heroes of centuries gone by, but about a whole raft of corporate functionaries, small businessmen, schoolteachers, girlfriends and housewives of centuries yet to come. Caught up in the social machinery and eaten by neurosis, such men and women have gotten along, barely, with some help from drink or other drugs, and from therapists of various kinds, and the occasional kick in the pants from an at least equally neurotic spouse. I was also struck by the extent to which *Macbeth* is designed to warn any who might be considering regicide or *coups d'état*—not only will you be quickly defeated by the forces of righteousness

and legitimate power, but you yourself will descend into a psychic hell on Earth. It does not, however, strike me, even in observing Trump from afar, that this is the case. My sense is that Trump's psychic hell began in early childhood and has been cause not consequence of his sociopathic life.

61

Four young woodchucks with a house cat enjoyed a bit of play
Until two red foxes, toothily, wished to join the fray
 Until next arrived a broom and an indignant lady,
 Who not frightened or accepting—motherly, I'd say—
How she quickly made those foxes long for other prey.

7.15.17

Moral in these times oppressed by Kochs, Trumps, Putins . . . : We can still enjoy ourselves and with one another, but only as long as we retain means for chasing predators away. *Note*, too, that this limerick is based on a true story! It was reported to me by Walter Cummins, the father of this limerick series. The heroine in question was his wife, Alison.

60

For bankers, drug companies, and Kochs
Lawyering has made justice a joke
 The venal steal their huge piles
 (or the US presidency)
 Then pay lesser crocodiles
 (some fines and some attorneys)
And jail free, they enjoy power and our dough.

7.14.17

A sense: If in years past we, the Obama Administration included, had been more vigorous and vigilant about putting white-collar criminals in jail—much the way we love to lock up petty thieves—we would not now be in the throes of the Trump nightmare. People like Trump would not have thought they could with impunity grab whatever they wanted to grab and however they wanted to grab it.

59

A songwriter interviewed proposed

For *future* lovers his songs were composed

If ever she and he could meet

And they so love and so well treat . . .

C'est la poésie qui rend la vie en rose.

7.13.17

Last line: It's poetry that allows us to see through rose-colored glasses, as lovers do. The songwriter was James Taylor, and his comment may seem more poignant when one considers lines from the first verse and refrain of one of his best known songs, Something in the way she moves:

Something in the way she moves, or looks my way, or calls my name
That seems to leave this troubled world behind . . .

And I feel fine anytime she's around me now,
She's around me now almost all the time
And if I'm well you can tell she's been with me now
She's been with me now quite a long, long time and I feel fine.

58

A Swiss bird in a neighboring yard

Has seemed to be trying rather hard

To whistle the whole, saccharine tune

That US ice-creamers endlessly croon.

(Though neither children nor sales move this card.)

7.12.17

Escaped from hospital to l'Avenue Trembley in Geneva.

57

There is a face pretending to be new in France,

Il y un visage qui fait semblant d'être nouveau en France

But his legs and others'—the economic war dance.

Pendant que ses pieds reprennent une très vieille danse.

In a democracy it could be

Dans une démocratie elle aurait pu avoir

One step for you, one for me;

Des pas pour vous suivis par autant pour moi ;

But no, the rich must wear bigger and bigger pants.

N'eut été le besoin de toujours écraser—et ses conséquences.

7.11.17

News: Debate begins in France over plans of the recently elected government of Emmanuel Macron (formerly an investment banker and business-friendly Minister of Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs) to “liberalize” labor laws. As Danièle Obono, the spokesperson of the more liberal (Left) *La France insoumise* party, put it on television, there’s nothing new about such plans: for decades the representatives of capital have been trying to dismantle the social contract established in France, as throughout much of Western Europe, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. The goal remains constant: more for capital, less for everyone else. Mme Obono, who has also been elected to the Assemblée nationale, was speaking (truth to power) on the **19H Ruth Elkrief** programme on BFM TV (10 July 2017).

I was reminded, too, as this limerick was coming to me, of Woody Guthrie’s **Talking Union** song, which touches on the courage, solidarity and hard work that, less than a century ago, first brought working people such treats as weekends and vacations.

56

A President (!) is greeted optimistically (and deceived?);

A nurse comes daily to people mired in disease.

Smiling s/he faces and absorbs our distress,

While a Pres is briefed and has options to assess.

The one lost in an office—others by life seized.

7.10.17

55

Sitting before the cameras with Merkel and Putin

He was reminded he was a fraud, no disputin’

An empty suit, a hustler’s artificial hair,

But wouldn’t they be frauds, too, just less self-aware?

Little boys and girls who think they can run the world.

7.9.17

After posting this limerick (my first with stream-of-consciousness italics), I came across the following example of world leadership while editing an upcoming *Zeteo* article (by Martin Green) on World War I:

A major part of Britain's propaganda effort was to sway an audience of one—President Wilson himself. Here they had the help of several of Wilson's key advisors: Colonel Edward House, an independently wealthy, unpaid and unofficial aide to the President who was his chief confidant; U.S. ambassador to Great Britain, Walter Hines Page; and Secretary of State Robert Lansing. These men were committed anglophiles and conveyed the British point of view fed to them by British foreign secretary Lord Grey. House was particularly alert to Wilson's desire to be seen as a savior. House flattered Wilson into seeking a role as the one who could determine the outcome of the war and could play the major role in shaping the post-war future.

54

Is the President no longer so entertaining?

Another boor (or puffy boxer) who insists on staying?

The hatred, lies and tweets

In a sense they're all repeats

What if *Powerless* starts getting better ratings?

7.8.17

Powerless is, or was, an American action comedy series which aired on NBC from February 2, to April 20, 2017, and was officially cancelled a few weeks later. *Business Insider* has rated it **one of the worst TV shows of 2017**. The show took place in the DC comics universe and followed the adventures of Emily Locke (Vanessa Hudgens) as Director of Research & Development at Wayne Security, a subsidiary of Wayne Enterprises, which was based in Charm City and specialized in products for ordinary humans who are poised to be victims of the battles between superheroes and supervillains.

53

If in some new place you lose your way

Your compass's north goes astray

It can be months of confusion
Of annoyance and disillusion
“But there’s no wrong in the night,” lovers say.

7.7.17

A few limericks have been posted in advance, with the idea that after surgery it will be hard to write and post. This one was inspired in part by two lines in Rilke’s *Duino Elegies*, **VIII**:
Uns überfüllt. Wir ordnen. Es zerfällt. / Wir ordnen wieder und zerfallen selbst. It
[existence/everywhere] floods us. We organize. It decomposes. / We organize again and
decompose ourselves. I first came across the lines in the epigraph to Claude Simon, *Histoire*.
There the translation reads: *Cela nous submerge. Nous l’organisons. / Cela tombe en morceaux. Nous*
l’organisons de nouveau et tombons nous-mêmes en morceaux.

52

There once or was it twice or hosannas!
Was a girl or a boy from Savannah?
When the pain grew extreme
S/he took more morphine
And that’s why this limerick’s bananas.

7.6.17

le jour après ma chirurgie à cœur ouvert

51

Our country not free of a Russian stooge
We celebrated independence from Republican Scrouges?
From the ruthless exploitation with which we began?
From what it might mean to be an American?
Countries and peoples depend on delusions.

7.5.17

50

There once was a 4th of July

The usual rockets up in the sky
 But the people being gored
 The rockets they ignored
And the bulls stuffed themselves with apple pie
7.4.17

49

The scientists with absolute faith in their science;
You given other truths by decades of experience.
 In their world of experts they find money and pride;
 On another, smaller planet your well-being resides.
Lost to doubt, they go on insisting; you struggle to stay balanced.
7.3.17

besieged by cardiologists

48

And there would be the day when no limericks arrived
When the poet's body had lost not the will to survive
 In some hospital strange, abandoned somewhere
 And so many distant, well-wishing or unaware
And the future and the sadness—not I.
7.2.17

pensant à Jonah, de mon lit à l'Hôpital Cardiaque de Lyon

Part I (*Pence, Trump, Mueller, Capitalism*)

May 16 — July 1, 2017

47

A child from whom nourishing love is withheld

May to rougher relations find himself compelled—
 Inveighing, gainsaying, affraying, foul playing,
 A heart-warming friction thereby surveying.
Yet the first pain, and the emptiness, will not be expelled.

7.1.17

News: Too many examples on offer; one of the latest being [Trump tweets shocking assault on Brzezinski, Scarborough](#). By way of response, the TV stars attacked co-penned [a Washington post op-ed](#) which might be said to have repeated the obvious: “America’s leaders and allies are asking themselves yet again whether this man is fit to be president.” Why is this a question? Why even a year ago could there have been any answer but no? A question about the US political system. (See Limerick 45 below.)

46

Can the reason be the spectre of the still to come,
And thus I complete tasks formerly half done?
 Like other fellow retirees—
 No obligations; no hours free.
That stubborn weed—time—enjoys the sun.

6.29.17

45

If a system can elect a President incompetent and unstable,
Is the system for electronic times no longer suitable?
 Or are we again learning—flaws fundamental—
 Celebrated rights and checks less legal than financial,
 With our public resources ever enriching the venal
And public-trust-worthy chiefs and lawgivers more rare than exceptional?

6.29.17

In a short *Zeteo* essay—[Trump, de Tocqueville, Democracy, Materialism](#)—published in the run-up to the devastating election, I explored what might be called de Tocqueville’s corner of this topic. A two-paragraph extract follows—the first graph is from *De la*

Démocratie en Amérique (Democracy in America); the second mixes in some of my own commentary.

“[T]he natural propensities of democracy induce the people to keep from power its most distinguished citizens, and these individuals are no less apt to distance themselves from political careers, in which it is almost impossible to retain one’s independence or to advance without degrading oneself. . . . [Instead] it frequently happens that a man does not undertake to direct the fortune of the State until he has discovered his incompetence to conduct his own affairs. . . . In the United States, I am not sure that the people would choose men of superior abilities who might seek public office, but it is certain that men of this description do not come forward.”

De Tocqueville admits one exception to this rule: times of crisis. Extraordinary virtues arise “from the very imminence of the dangers. . . . [G]enius no longer abstains from presenting itself in the arena; and the people, alarmed by the perils of its situation, briefly forgets its envious passions.” De Tocqueville, who visited the United States during one of its populist moments, the era of Jacksonian Democracy, seems to have been looking back fondly at the countries’ Founding Fathers, people such as Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, and (as legislators and lobbyists) Adams and Madison. But his sentences also speak clairvoyantly—about how immanent civil war brought to the Presidency Abraham Lincoln (and made of Lincoln a strong leader), and similarly with the Depression and Franklin Roosevelt.

I also continue to recommend William Hogeland’s *Founding Finance: How Debt, Speculation, Foreclosures, Protests, and Crackdowns Made Us a Nation* (University of Texas Press, 2012). From Chapter 7, “It’s Hamilton’s America . . . We Just Live in It”:

People who call Hamilton smart are understating the case. The whiskey tax was inspired, . . . And all of its mechanisms served the old [Robert] Morris purpose of “opening the purses of the people”: moving widely scattered wealth from the mass of ordinary people upward, to the few bondholders, cementing high finance to national government projects. The tax funded 6 percent tax-free interest in gold and silver for the bondholders. Many of them were the same industrial distillers, commercial farmers, absentee landlords, and merchant lenders whose enterprises directly benefited from the tax as well.

44

Not Freud’s sex but “Cold, hunger and the shame of poverty
Are more likely to affect one’s psychology.”

So Charlie Chaplin once wrote,
And even the rich sometimes know
How hunger's gray . . . one good meal wipes away.

6.28.17

Is this limerick making two long (too long?) bridges—between the culinary wealth of France, the millions starving in Africa, and Chaplin's wonderful *My Autobiography*, which I am reading in lieu of the news? As regards the African famine, see Jackson Diehl, **No one is paying attention to the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II**. As regards sex, Chaplin writes: "Like Balzac, who believed that a night of sex meant to loss of a good page of his novel, so I believed it meant the loss of a good day's work at the studio."

43

In Washington, Democrats, Republicans, embroiled
In southern France, fresh artichokes, roast garlic, olive oil
Grabbing, oppressing, hiding, impeaching
Cherry pudding, cheese, eggplant and peaches
The hatred of living; the fruit of the Earth unspoiled

6.27.17

With special thanks to Mon Bistot à Moi, *son clafoutis et ses artichauts à la barigoule*.

42

For Jonah, now 16, everything seems possible
Life (with news) has taught me obstacles
With pirates drunken we're at sea
To share in the plunder—lies, loyalty
Exc'lence a charade; my son smiles at the carnival.

6.26.17

41

Why do we care that so many of our colleagues—
And not only humans—by Kochs' heels are being crushed—

Without solidarity—I think of you less than me?
Yet still feel the greatness in our being able to be
Touched by suffering or smiling—as if “they” were “we.”

6.25.17

News: A friend e-mails me from the US: “You are so lucky to be away from our news. I can’t bear to hear what they want to do to healthcare. It will get worse.” (And again I have departed from the limerick form, as, in Switzerland, one might step down from a path to rinse one’s face in a stream.)

40

Forgetful of death we may indeed relax
I might pause in any city, believe any fact
Yet one whisper from the mortician
And everything becomes a question
Time is our truth—terrible and steadfast.

6.24.17

Alternative ending: With time we can only fight to the last

39

Addled by the heat they had a dream
Arms becoming bigger than the trees
Slowly backwards, they turned the Earth
Seeking an ecological, healthy rebirth
In olden times cooler—and technology free?

6.23.17

News: *Canicule* (heat wave) *en France*; Phoenix, Arizona too hot for planes to take off.

38

(Wherein Mitch McConnell trashes simple rules of decent limericking as well as some flickering hopes that human beings might actually care for the less fortunate or less venal.)

“We know your health care sucks.

Imagine, then, your good luck.

We’ll care for you much less

While our own taxes we depress.

You can be sicker, we can be richer.

The Indians were just the first to be crushed.”

6.22.17

News: [**What’s in the Senate’s secret Obamacare repeal bill**](#): “The Senate is on the verge of unveiling a sweeping Obamacare repeal bill that would end Medicaid as an open-ended entitlement, roll back health insurance subsidies and strike multiple taxes from the Affordable Care Act.”

37

By aggressors ruthless, results unexpected

The lives of many countries have been deflected

From Russia we’ve been sent a feckless leader

As Germans once east sent comrade Vladímir

Extraordinary actions—sequelae long regretted?

21.6.17

Sources: New York Times opinion piece: [**Was Lenin a German Agent?**](#) by Sean Mcmeekin and [**What the Russian Revolution Can Teach Us About Trump**](#) by Ivan Kratsev. From the latter:

In the way Germany saw the Bolsheviks as instruments for achieving German war aims, Lenin saw Germany as an instrument for achieving his revolution. Something similar is probably true for Mr. Trump. . . . In an atmosphere of radical political polarization, leaders are trusted not for who they are but for who their enemies are. And in the eyes of many Republicans, President Trump may have the wrong character but he has the right enemies.

The story of 1917 may be instructive for President Vladimir Putin’s Kremlin as well. Germany’s strategy of helping the revolutionary forces in Russia to achieve German geopolitical goals happened to have an unhappy ending: Revolution in Russia removed the country from World War I, but it spread revolutionary fever all over Europe — and even brought civil war to Germany. Mr. Putin’s Russia faces a similar risk. A recent report by a

Kremlin-friendly think tank devoted to the rise of technological populism suggests that the populist wave in vogue throughout Western democracies could soon reach Russia — and become a serious threat to the country's political order during the next electoral cycle.

36

An atheist's life is no longer for me
Since S/He has reserved *bôtel* with *piscine*
For *lyonnaise* global sweating
(Far from Washington's blood-letting)

Dommage que les Socialistes got creamed

6.20.17

Les nouvelles : **Le PS subit « une déroute sans appel »** . After the June 18 elections, the French Socialist Party had only 30 seats in the National Assembly, down from their previous 283! Meanwhile a heat wave has the temperature in much of France, Lyon included, close to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Such heat waves, almost unknown twenty years and more ago, have become rather regular summer occurrences, presumably on account of *homo sapiens sapiens* increasing both the amount of carbon-containing gases in the upper atmosphere and the amounts of tiny particles in the lower atmosphere. **Succinct explanation grâce à warmheartworldwide.org.**

35

Lufthansa offers opportunities marvelous
To feel companies making robots of all of us.
Callousness, systems and rules
Hogtie both customers and crews.
We're not patsies or ciphers—we're superfluous!
6.19.17

34

Was the ruling in Citizens United
To illusions a blow or an end of the fight

For some kind of democracy,
For some justice and equality,
For a fair share of this rich country plundered?

6.18.17

33

What matters is loyalty, not talent, we know,
And Trump the limits poignantly shows.
Of children and employees
It's loyalty, loyalty,
Until under the next bus they're thrown.

6.17.17

News: [Trump takes a Twitter swipe at deputy attorney general, a key figure in Russia probe](#)

32

Down the avenues they flow, seeking some station.
Each in her bubble, his aggregation.
Thoughts move their minds;
They do not ask why.

Market share, you know, is a war of attrition.

6.16.17

News: Around 5 p.m. was riding my bicycle up New York's Park Avenue, as many office workers, expensively suited and not, were making their way to Grand Central Station.

31

While we with terrorists have become obsessed
Drug companies' drugs keep fouling our nest.

Alien threats hide inner distress:

62,000 opioid deaths

And the venal's dependence on people to oppress.

6.15.17

News: [Drug Deaths in America Are Rising Faster Than Ever; Ohio Sues Drug Makers, Saying They Aided Opioid Epidemic](#) From the latter of these two *New York Times* stories:

The drugs were once used primarily for acute, or short-term pain, but over the last two decades, doctors have increasingly prescribed them to treat chronic pain, giving them to patients for months or years at a stretch. Drug makers promoted that change [Ohio is charging], spending “millions of dollars on promotional activities and materials that falsely deny or trivialize the risks of opioids while overstating the benefits”. . . . By 2012, the suit says, opioid prescriptions in Ohio equaled 68 pills a year for every resident of the state, including children. Defendants in the case include Purdue Pharma, Teva Pharmaceutical Industries, Johnson & Johnson, Endo Pharmaceuticals, Allergan and others.

30

On the thirteenth of June, in twenty seventeen

In the Senate, the people and justice were demeaned

And a jury considered celebrity aggressions

And a CEO was let go for more indiscretions.

I submitted my estimated taxes

As before in twenty sixteen.

6.14.17

News: [Jeff Sessions's testimony raises more questions than it answers; Cosby trial Day 7: Still no verdict after full day of deliberations; Uber CEO to Take Leave, Have Diminished Role After Scandals](#)

29

On our leaky life rafts, steadfast they endure.

And what of such people—the honest and demure?

“But my life is worth . . . and our feelings matter . . .”

Bailing and rowing, a few of them chatter,

While traitors and liars have all the allure.

6.13.17

28

Plato, the sophists with philosophers opposed;

Now we have lobbyists and lawyers in droves.

And few unafraid of the difficult questions,

Indifferent to loot—truth, money, elections.

Not cinching their ties; feeling air tween their toes.

6.12.17

27

He's "a good guy," Trump said of his Flynn,

A liar and traitor—a good partner in sin.

He's "a good guy," Mr. Comey replied,

Understanding too well—they three were combined.

In dreams another "good" holds goodness within.

6.11.17

26

More than concerned about Trump I can only be,

Yet Comey's picture of himself I did not believe.

He seemed to love playing, an audacious double game,

With private meetings and notes to snare and win acclaim.

Might we have a new government—more duplicity-free?

6.10.17

25

The credit-card usurers and over-priced cablers,

The chiseling airlines, the landlords and bankers—
Government should temper business venality,
Nourish community and channel our bestiality—
Our agribusiness wastes, our greedy employers . . .

6.9.17

24

Comey, his police job wanted to keep,
Doing it well, his boss could have impeached!
And so fell he from the very tightrope
Millions with which struggle daily to cope.

It's sad when gilded nets exceed their reach.

6.8.17

News: [Former FBI Director James Comey testifies before the Senate Intelligence Committee](#)

23

Perhaps CNN's producers are aware
Of the connection between their news and *Hollywood Squares*
The journalists smiling in their boxes
Like Rivers, Lennons, Winters, Coxes.
(No zingers, cash or prizes—market share!)

6.7.17

[Wikipedia on Hollywood Squares](#): An American panel game show in which two contestants play tic-tac-toe to win cash and prizes. The series debuted in 1966 on NBC. The board for the game is a 3×3 vertical stack of open-faced cubes, each occupied by a celebrity seated at a desk and facing the contestants. The stars are asked questions by the host, and the contestants judge the truth of their answers to gain squares in the right pattern to win the game. [MeTV](#) adds: "No game show was funnier than *Hollywood Squares*. Host Peter Marshall played the straight man, setting up comedians with juicy trivia and true-false questions begging for a joke."

22

If US voters the Russians deleted,
Or our vote-counting machines impeded?
The Vice and Chief Tweet selections
Rehash let's in renewed elections.
(And before planet and NATO are defeated!)

6.6.17

News: **Top-Secret NSA Report Details Russian Hacking Effort Days Before 2016 Election.** The government contractor who made this information public, Reality Leigh Winner, has, inter alia, a name worthy of its very own limerick. According to a preliminary **CNN bit** on “Who is Reality Winner?”—

Winner is an athlete who loves animals, her mother said, through tears. She also said her daughter wasn't especially political and hadn't ever praised past leakers like Edward Snowden to her. “She's never ever given me any kind of indication that she was in favor of that at all,” her mother said. “I don't know how to explain it.”

Reality faces up to 10 years in prison for leaking classified information.

21

When lim'ricking our melting world changes,
Post Trump, neither Pence, nor Ryan dangers,
Con capitalism creeps away—
We relate in whole new ways!
If still haunted by an extinct strangeness.

6.5.17

20

There are accidents for which our personal actions are at least in part to blame
And accidents of which we just happen to be victims.
Wrong place, wrong time, quite accidentally.
(Or are we paying a blood tax duly levied on oppressors?)
Civilians not killed or maimed shudder and feel somehow special.

6.4.17

News: van and knife attacks on London Bridge and nearby Borough Market

19

There once was a boy who liked reading
Instead of intravenous news feeding.

But then came the election

Like a viral infection,

And what's left of his mind is receding.

6.3.17

18

To give the news nightly your views
Can give an insider the blues.

At first you're so flattered,

To rule on what matters,

Till your words seem as made up as you.

6.2.17

17

Gaia she whispered to me,

"I can take a few more degrees,

If this puts under water

All these human monsters

Who care less for their children than me."

6.1.17

News: Trump withdraws US government from Paris climate agreement

16

If you of covfefe a limerick can't make,
Your limericking license must be a fake.

 This special code word,
 More sad than absurd,
Means "shut the fuck up for God's sake!"

5.31.17

News: Trump at 12:06 a.m. tweets to the world: "Despite the constant negative press covfefe."

15

It's hard not to thank on a Memorial Day,
The many who for US gave their lives away.
 But the dominant and enlightened
 Scorn violence (and are frightened).
Cowards strew flowers and more speeches than pay?

5.30.17

14

For appearances, ads, conversation—
The sad game has a name—dissimulation.
 Should I too honest be,
 What will people think of me?
To be Trumped is the fate of the nation.

5.29.17

13

A difference 'tween Pences and me—
A tolerance for watching TV?
 But professors, pols and journalists
 For all your gossip guess analysis

We give thanks with all this poetry!

5.28.17

12

We and the Germans first sowed this disorder,
Imposing ourselves on Russia's wheat-bearing border.

Now their flunkey's ours, the White House ransacking,

And they with misinformation continue attacking.

A new kind of war, and our defenses are lacking.

5.27.17

(A new kind of limerick, too—or a grave departure from the form! At least it's still somewhere between anapaestuous and dactylogical.)

11

Russians, we know, tried to swing the election
And met many Trump allies with little discretion.

About all we *don't* know—

The specific quid pro quo

And the limits to Ryan's corruption.

5.26.17

10

No matter what, there's breaking news
And ads for drugs you probably shouldn't use.

Caring, kind words softly spoken?

The family circle that was to be unbroken?

Après le drugged nous—le déluge ?

5.25.17

(The well-known saying of Louis XV, “Après moi, le deluge”—After me, all hell breaks loose; or, for all I care, all hell can break loose—is actually a deformation or reduction of

what Louis's lover, Madame de Pompadour, originally said: "Après nous, le deluge." After *us.*)

9

The house is commodious

"Mr. President" melodious

Should the Pences move early

Many Trumps will be surly

And Russians no longer sui generis

5.24.17

8

Civilians murdered, a tornado disaster

Or, Bernie says, issues are what matter—

Inequality, student debt

Health care (lest we forget)—

A Pence's goals might get lost in such clatter!

5.23.17

7

Renown is engendered, Anderson Cooper said,

By dissatisfactions racing to get ahead.

There's no room at the top for

The well loved and the not sore,

Those grand for their children and happy in bed

5.22.17

6

"The Donald, I, have read your work,

Making my Mike a self-interested jerk.

But he's just a lackey,
And, in fact, he
Likes rubbing his nose in my dirt."

5.21.17

5

For Democrats slower began to seem better
The White House in turmoil, the Congress well fettered
But what to do with the Pences?
Their PAC, their moving expenses?
Ere justice be denied first you must delay her?

5.20.17

News: **Pence Takes Steps to Build War Chest as White House Stumbles**—"Political action committee registered Wednesday with FEC / Neither Biden nor Cheney had active leadership PACs in office"

4

The twenty-fifth amendment states
The impeachment need hardly wait
Just a vote of the cabinet
Saying Trump's too out of it
And the House Mr. Pence levitates

5.19.17

3

Pence prayed to the gods of Mueller:
"Please find a way to make me the ruler.
To Russians and abortion
I prefer discrimination and donations
And guns in the laps of preschoolers."

5.18.17

News: **Robert Mueller, Former F.B.I. Director, Is Named Special Counsel for Russia Investigation.** The name being pronounced « muller », perhaps Pence really wished to be made duller?

2

Obstruction of justice—impeachable offense

Very good for the friends of one Mr. Pence

Comey and Congress willing

The Oval Office they'll be filling

Donald littering the forests of Smolensk

5.17.17

1

There once was a man named Pence

Whose life was held in suspense

If Congress would just act

History he'd redact

And the Koch brothers spring for the fence

5.16.17

(A reader has proposed that this could be the Koch brothers not springing but “sprinting” for the fence. A nice image and more comic for lacking in verisimilitude?)

About the limericks

This undertaking began on 15 May 2017 when I e-mailed a friend, Walter Cummins, saying that Vice-President Mike Pence's role in the current Washington catastrophe interested me particularly, and I had half a mind to write a poem, perhaps Yeatsian—“But I, being VP, have only my dreams . . .” Walter responded with a limerick! The rest is history (and the daily news since then).

When, in late June, I took a summer break from the USA, CNN and MSNBC, the ambit of these short poems—which began in May with just the Vice-President—began to expand. And then, when in early July I ended up spending 10 days in a *hôpital cardiologique* in a suburb

of Lyon—my chest being cut open and four arteries rerouted—the limericking took yet another and more personal turn, coming closer to the goal of “my” journal Zeteo: to combine the personal, the political and the intellectual. By mid-July I was being “re-adapted” in Geneva, Switzerland, returning home to New York in mid-August.

* * *