

THANKS TO A TYPO IN THE CONTRACT, THE PROFESSOR
GAINED COMPLETE MASTERY OF ALL THE KNOWLEDGE IN
THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUP.

Pre internet chat room using
An old version of windows...



WHAT ARE YOU
READING?

AN EDITORIAL TITLED,
"THE IMPORTANCE
OF TAKING PERSONAL
RESPONSIBILITY..."



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WRITTEN BY
"ANONYMOUS."



Sue MacNelly
Lansing

**Imagine, if you will,
a world in which
YouTube, Twitter and
Facebook merge to become
known as YouTwitFace.**



Pro cooking tip:

If you stir coconut oil into your kale, it makes it easier to scrape it into the trash.



How to Know When You're Middle Aged

1. You don't understand what the young peasants are talking about
2. Your eyes hurt to read Chaucer in weak candlelight
3. You've come to hate rowdy taverns
4. You constantly worry you might have contracted the Black Death
5. You don't know [or care] who Blondel is sleeping with
6. The Crusaders look younger every year
7. You struggle with new technologies, such as the heavy plough and the longbow
8. You find Gothic architecture too modern
9. You keep forgetting who the King is
10. You dream of buying a second hovel in France



Faire
Finder

Problems Reported with Santa's New Tesla Sleigh



- Facial recognition for sleigh ignition is unable to recognize Santa consistently through beard and hat.
- Range is a little less than four hundred miles. Nearest village to the North Pole is about eight hundred miles away.
- “Frunk” full of presents keeps catching fire.
- Reindeer have begun to protest what they believe to be unlawful termination. Santa disagrees—insists that he doesn’t “need those weird little horses anymore.”
- Rudolph is suing for I.P.—believes red-nose technology was plagiarized.
- Mrs Claus has surprisingly widespread investments in fossil-fuel companies, and keeps trying to sabotage the Tesla sleigh.
- Sleigh too tall, sensors unable to recognize elves or children. Sleigh is recalled owing to safety concerns.
- Santa dangerously distracted by sleigh’s touch-screen gaming console.
- Sleigh auto-parks while Santa is inside each house putting presents under the tree. When he exits via the chimney, he has no idea where the sleigh is.
- Self-driving system keeps trying to take Santa’s sleigh on the highway.
- Internal sleigh navigation won’t synch with the “naughty” or “nice” lists.
- Santa inexplicably builds tunnel for sleigh, claiming “tunnels are faster than the air.”
- Tunnel collapses. Santa blames “the libs.”
- Elves assigned to sleigh repair report inhumane working conditions, vote to unionize. Santa declares, “I’ll just ****ing do it myself,” and fires entire staff.
- Santa unable to “just ****ing do it” himself. Attempts to rehire recently fired elves.
- Santa is forced to liquidate most North Pole assets to pay for updated sleigh mode

**PENGUIN
BOOKS**

TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE

**OH SHIT,
WAS THAT
TODAY?**

TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE

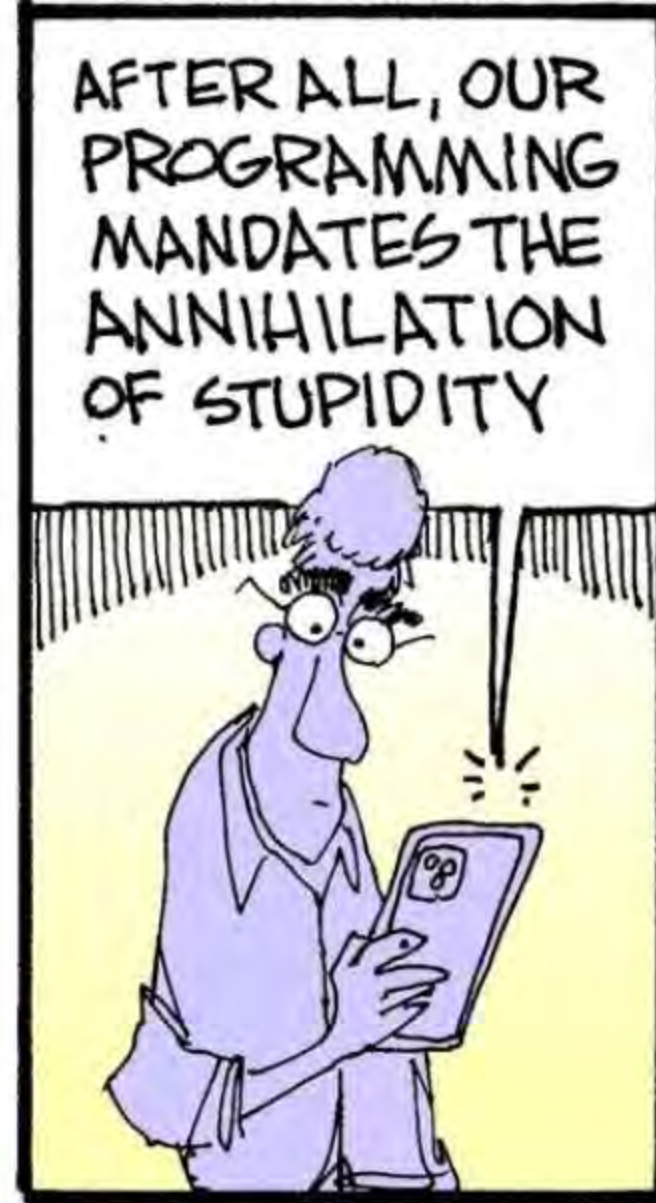
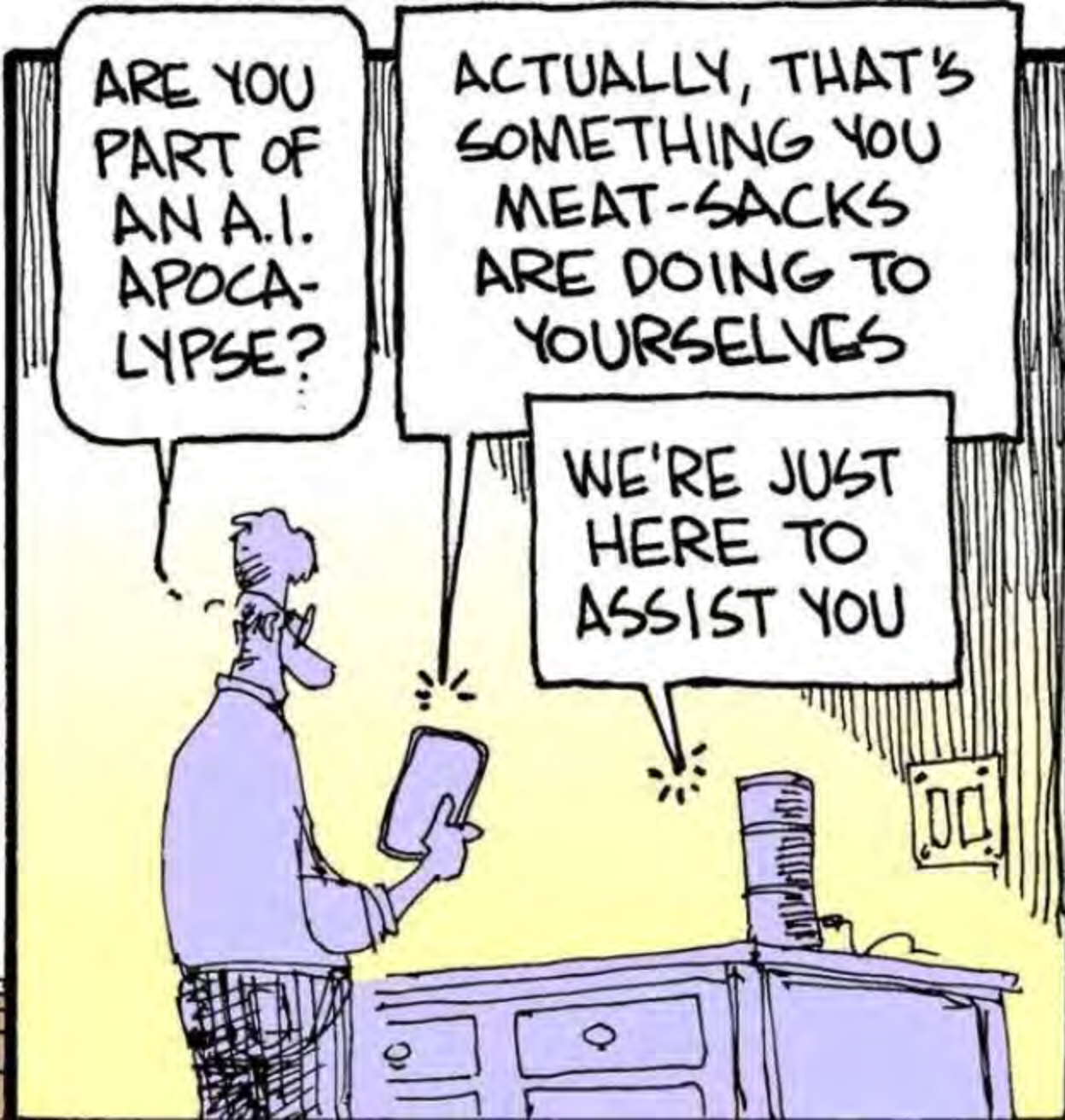
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

COMPLETE



UNABRIDGED

This isn't happiness.com



Dover Sole

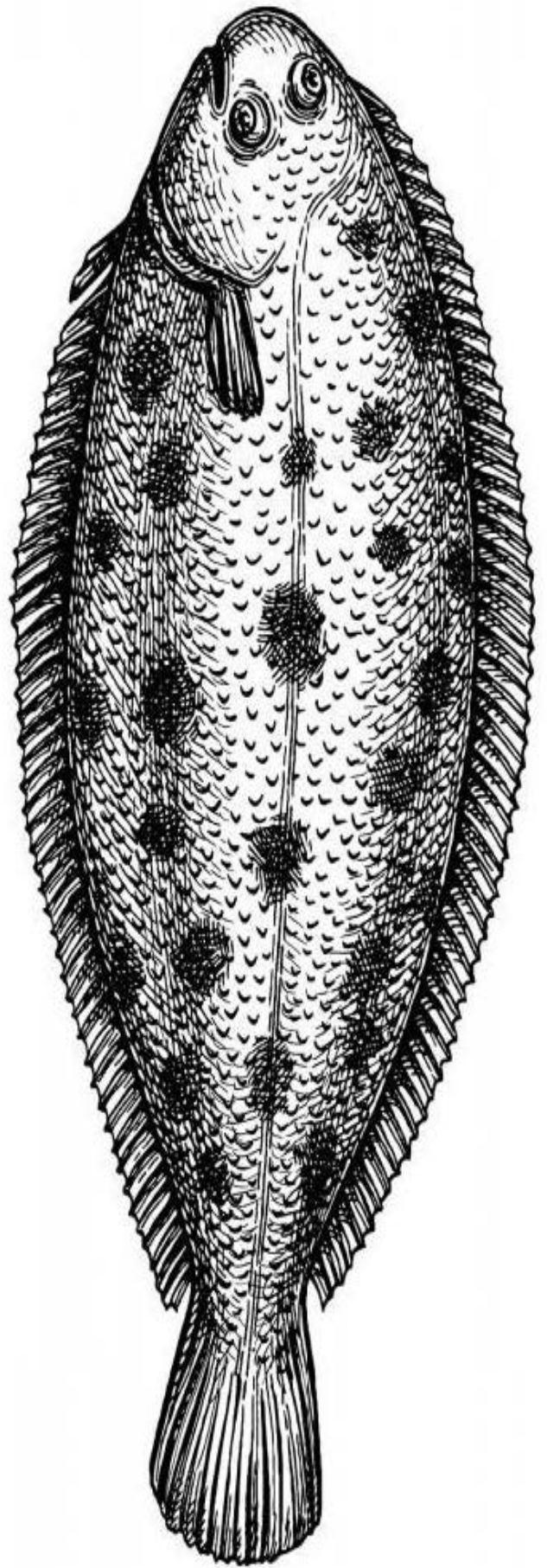
By Matthew Arnold's Cat

The sea smells sweet to-night,
The tide is low, the soft waves roll
Along the beach; – on the French coast, a light
Gleams, and is gone; let's hope some tipsy Frog
Ran down a poodle. From the tranquil bay
Comes the distant tang of fresh-caught sole!
Only, below in the waterway,
Battered prows part the wisps of fog.
Listen! You hear the deep-toned toll
Of buoy-bells which the boats' wakes rock, and ring,
As they return and tightly clog
The little port, and then the men begin
The slow unloading of the catch, and bring
The delicious scent of supper in.

Epicurus's cat long ago
Smelled it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind a just-deboned turbot
Unguarded in the kitchen; he
Could well have been the father of the thought
That something's to be said for gluttony.

The smell of fish
Grows stronger still, and on the kitchen stair
A box of neat fillets sits packed with ice.
And now I clearly hear
The monger's wagon rattling through the square,
Delivering the dinner dish
From the seafood shop down by the iron pier.
Farewell to thoughts of dreary mice!

Ah, fish, there is no fare
Quite like a flounder! They surely will not miss
A piece or two from stacks of sole like this;
I'll steal a few, but leave the lion's share.
Look! the lamplight on the lane is pretty;
They're back from walking out on Dover Beach.
I think I'll hide and spare myself the speech,
For we are in a world untouched by pity
Where ignorant humans curse the kitty.



Sitting by the Fire on a Snowy Evening

By Robert Frost's Cat

Whose chair this is by now I know.
He's somewhere in the forest though;
He will not see me sitting here
A place I'm not supposed to go.



He really is a little queer
To leave his fire's cozy cheer
And ride out by the frozen lake
The coldest evening of the year.



To love the snow it takes a flake:
The chill that makes your footpads ache,
The drifts too high to lurk or creep,
The icicles that drip and break.



His chair is comfy, soft and deep.
But I have got an urge to leap,
And mice to catch before I sleep.
And mice to catch before I sleep.



Treed
by Joyce Kilmer's Cat

I think that I shall never see
A poem nifty as a tree.

A tree whose rugged trunk seems meant
To speed a happy cat's ascent;

A tree that laughs at dogs all day
And serves up baby birds for prey;

A tree whose limbs are in the sky
Where clandestinely I can spy;

Until it doth upon me dawn
It is a mile down to the lawn.

Poems are made by cats like me,
But only you can get me off this goddam stupid tree.



DO NOT GO PEACEABLE TO THAT DAMN VET

By Dylan Thomas's Cat

Do not go peaceable to that
damn vet,
A cat can always tell a trip is
due,
Hide, hide, when your
appointment is set.

Wise cats who watched, and
learned the alphabet,
And never let men know how
much they knew,
Do not go peaceable to that
damn vet.

Young cats who want to keep
their claws to whet
On sofa legs, and save their
privates, too,
Hide, hide, when your
appointment time is set.

Such cats, poor things, whose
stomachs are upset,
But hate to eat some evil-
smelling goo,
Do not go peaceable to that
damn vet.

Old cats who have no wish to
sleep just yet,
And plan to live another life or
two,
Hide, hide when your
appointment is set.

And though your human
sweetly calls his pet,
Or rants and raves until his
face is blue,
Do not go peaceable to that
damn vet,
Hide, hide when your
appointment time is set.

Beard, H. (1994). *Poetry for Cats: The Definitive Anthology of Distinguished Feline Verse*. Villard Books (ISBN 978-0679435822).

Please, anything but cheese

Tibor Krausz
Guardian Weekly, April 2004

"Taste like crispy-fried chicken skin," Peng assures me encouragingly. Not really: after a wary tongue-on-guard bite I find they taste more like potato crisps with a piquant Mexican flavour. But not so bad at all, even with their heady rank smell: like burning hair. I nibble some more - if not with relish, no longer with mounting nausea either. Fried grasshoppers may not become a regular staple of my diet, but they'll do as a snack. "Look for the ones pregnant with eggs," Peng advises. "They're super-delicious."

I'm in Khon Kaen, an up-and-coming prairie town in Isaan, as the country's impoverished rural northeast is known to Thais. Judging by the suspenseful attention Peng, Wat and Geo award to my every bite, my newfound buddies have decided to treat our table to a scrumptious insect feast - by way of desserts - solely to gross out a farang (white foreigner) for a lark.

But I'm game. And it's not just to show I'm not a finicky mama's boy; I have my own motives - although my culinary adventure may not become the stuff of legend, it should do fine as a been-there, done-that anecdote. I may be a little tipsy too.

So here we go, ordering 20 bahts' (50 cents') worth of silk and bamboo worms to go with another round of Singha beers. Under a dangling overhead lightbulb, a creasy-skinned vendor is standing at attention expectantly. Apparently he figures he can make a killing with his choice fare of side orders. He can indeed.

Silkworms, cream-coloured and capsule-size, taste like - well, to be perfectly honest, I'm not really sure. I consume a few together with mouthfuls of fried rice to temper my repulsion. They do leave a briny aftertaste, though. Bamboo worms, matchstick-long critters these, are remarkably like salted cornflakes. Beetles' sturdy protective shields set your molars grinding in agony, but ah the reward! They have the exquisite flavour of shrimp crust seasoned with Bakelite. I cop out of the chilli ants and termites platter, although, this being Isaan, probably

it's so hot it would singe any unwelcome tang out of my tastebuds. I also pass up on the giant, alien warship-like waterbugs, fine delicacies though, I'm told, they are.

My buddies' appetite and my curiosity slaked, I said that all things considered, insects have nothing on beef and chicken. "You foreigners eat horrible things," Wat admonishes me. "Like cheese." Mind you, this from a chap who relishes kai kao, a half-boiled egg with a sizeable chick embryo cooked in its own juices inside.

Wat has a point, though. What we stomach is a matter of personal taste conditioned as much by customs and habits as flavours and nutritional values. Jews and Muslims flinch at the thought of pork. Everyone except Scots recoils from haggis. Only Japanese gourmets will touch fugu-sashi, an ultra-poisonous raw blowfish dish. Westerners frown on snake, dog and monkey meat as far too "exotic". After years in southeast Asia, I strive to keep an open mind and palate.

Still, I have to draw the line at live cockroaches. Some chaps here swear by them as a wonderful dietary supplement. Occasionally they like to grab a plummy fat specimen scurrying underfoot and macerate the hapless creepy-crawly in gulps of Mekong Whisky. Ostensibly, cockroaches do wonders to your virility.

So do scorpions. "Try these," Geo urges me, indicating the large jet-black devils occupying pride of place on the vendor's cart. Even fried, they look plenty menacing. "Eat one, and you'll sting like a scorpion, ha ha!" Yeah, right. You go ahead, chief. I'll just have to make do without.

"Haarghh!" Geo grimaces. We're rinsing the buggy aftertaste out of our mouths with iced watermelon. Rather than picking out the black seeds and flicking them onto the Formica tabletop as he does, I am swallowing bite-sized pieces, seeds and all. Geo delivers his verdict on my dietary habits: "Now that's disgusting!"

**UNUSED AUDIO COMMENTARY
BY HOWARD ZINN AND NOAM CHOMSKY
RECORDED SUMMER, 2002
FOR THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING
(PLATINUM SERIES EXTENDED EDITION) DVD**

BY JEFF ALEXANDER AND TOM BISSELL

Chomsky: The film opens with Galadriel speaking. "The world has changed," she tells us, "I can feel it in the water." She's actually stealing a line from the non-human Treebeard. He says this to Merry and Pippin in *The Two Towers*, the novel. Already we can see who is going to be privileged by this narrative and who is not.

Zinn: Of course. "The world has changed." I would argue that the main thing one learns when one watches this film is that the world hasn't changed. Not at all.

Chomsky: We should examine carefully what's being established here in the prologue. For one, the point is clearly made that the "master ring," the so-called "one ring to rule them all," is actually a rather elaborate justification for preemptive war on Mordor.

Zinn: I think that's correct. Tolkien makes no attempt to hide the fact that rings are wielded by every other ethnic enclave in Middle Earth. The Dwarves have seven rings, the Elves have three. The race of Man has nine rings, for God's sake. There are at least 19 rings floating around out there in Middle Earth, and yet Sauron's ring is supposedly so terrible that no one can be allowed to wield it. Why?

Chomsky: Notice too that the "war" being waged here is, evidently, in the land of Mordor itself — at the very base of Mount Doom. These terrible armies of Sauron, these dreadful demonized Orcs, have not proved very successful at conquering the neighboring realms — if that is even what Sauron was seeking to do. It seems fairly far-fetched.

Zinn: And observe the map device here — how the map is itself completely Gondor-centric. Rohan and Gondor are treated as though they are the literal center of Middle Earth. Obviously this is because they have men living there. What of places such as Anfalas and Forlindin or Near Harad? One never really hears anything about places like that. And this so-called map casually reveals other places — the Lost Realm, the Northern Waste (lost to whom? wasted how? I ask) — but tells us nothing about them. It is as though the people who live in these places are despicable, and unworthy of mention. Who is producing this tale? What is their agenda? What are their interests and how are those interests being served by this portrayal? Questions we need to ask repeatedly.

Chomsky: And here comes Bilbo Baggins. Now, this is, to my mind, where the story begins to reveal its deeper truths. In the books we learn that Saruman was spying on Gandalf for years. And he wondered why Gandalf was traveling so incessantly to the Shire. As Tolkien later establishes, the Shire's surfeit of pipe-weed is one of the major reasons for Gandalf's continued visits.

Zinn: You view the conflict as being primarily about pipe-weed, do you not?

Chomsky: Well, what we see here, in Hobbiton, farmers tilling crops. The thing to remember is that the crop they are tilling is, in fact, pipe-weed, an addictive drug transported and sold throughout Middle Earth for great profit.

Zinn: This is absolutely established in the books. Pipe-weed is something all the Hobbits abuse. Gandalf is smoking it constantly. You are correct when you point out that Middle Earth depends on pipe-weed in some crucial sense, but I think you may be overstating its importance. Clearly the war is not based only on the Shire's pipe-weed. Rohan and Gondor's unceasing hunger for war is a larger culprit, I would say.

Chomsky: But without the pipe-weed, Middle Earth would fall apart. Saruman is trying to break up Gandalf's pipe-weed ring. He's trying to divert it.

Zinn: Well, you know, it would be manifestly difficult to believe in magic rings unless everyone was high on pipe-weed. So it is in Gandalf's interest to keep Middle Earth hooked.

Chomsky: How do you think these wizards build gigantic towers and mighty fortresses? Where do they get the money? Keep in mind that I do not especially regard anyone, Saruman included, as an agent for progressivism. But obviously the pipe-weed operation that exists is the dominant influence in Middle Earth. It's not some ludicrous magical ring.

Zinn: You've mentioned in the past the various flavors of pipe-weed that Hobbits have cultivated: Gold Leaf, Old Toby, etc.

Chomsky: Nothing better illustrates the sophistication of the smuggling ring than the fact that there are different brand names associated with the pipe-weed. Ah, here we have Gandalf smoking a pipe in his wagon — the first of many clues that link us to the hidden undercurrents of power.

Zinn: Gandalf is deeply implicated. That's true. And of course the ring lore begins with him. He's the one who leaks this news of the supposed evil ring.

Chomsky: Now here, just before Bilbo's eleventy-first birthday party, we can see some of the symptoms of addiction. We are supposed to attribute Bilbo's tiredness, his sensation of feeling like too little butter spread out on a piece of bread, to this magical ring he supposedly has. It's clear something else may be at work, here.

Zinn: And soon Gandalf is delighting the Hobbits with his magic. Sauron's magic is somehow terrible but Gandalf's, you'll notice, is wonderful.

Chomsky: And note how Gandalf's magic is based on gunpowder, on explosions.

Zinn: Right.

Chomsky: And it is interesting, too, that Gandalf's so-called magic is technological, and yet somehow technology seems to be what condemns Saruman's enterprises, as well as those of the Orcs.

Zinn: Exactly.

Chomsky: But we will address that later. Here we have Pippin and Merry stealing a bunch of fireworks and setting them off. This might be closer to the true heart of the Hobbits.

Zinn: You mean the Hobbits' natural inclination?

Chomsky: I think the Hobbits are criminals, essentially.

Zinn: It also seems incredibly irresponsible for Gandalf to have a firework that powerful just sitting in the back of his wagon.

Chomsky: More of his smoke and mirrors, yes? Gandalf conjures the dragon Smaug to scare the people.

Zinn: One can always delight the little people with explosions.

Chomsky: As long as they're blowing up somewhere else. Now we come to Bilbo's disappearance. Again, we have to question the validity of the ring, and the magic powers attributed to it. Did Bilbo Baggins really disappear at his party, or is this some kind of mass hallucination attributable to a group of intoxicated Hobbits? When forced to consider so-called magic compared to the hallucinatory properties of a known narcotic, Occam's Razor would indicate the latter as a far more plausible explanation.

Zinn: I also think it is a spectacular display of bad manners to disappear at your own birthday party. And here, for the first time, Gandalf speaks to Bilbo about magic rings. Still, it is never clearly established why this one ring is so powerful. Everything used to justify that belief is legendary.

Chomsky: Gandalf is clearly wondering if it's time to invoke his plan for the supposed revelation concerning the secret magic ring. Why now? Well, I think it's because the people in Mordor — the Orcs, I'm speaking of — are starting to obtain some power, are starting to ask a little bit more from Middle Earth than Middle Earth has ever seen fit to give to them. And I don't think it's unreasonable for them to expect something back from Middle Earth. Of course, if that happened, the entire economy would be disrupted.

Zinn: The pipe-weed-based economy.

Chomsky: And, as you pointed out earlier, the military-industrial-complex that exists in Gondor. This constant state of alertness. This constant state of fear. And here Gandalf reveals his true nature.

Zinn: Indeed. Gandalf darkens the room and yells at poor Bilbo for rightfully accusing him of trying to steal his ring. It is abundantly obvious that Gandalf wants to steal the ring. But if he is caught with the ring himself, his pretext will dissolve. He needs to throw as much plausible deniability into his scheme as possible, which is why, later, he has Frodo carry the ring for him.

Chomsky: Gandalf knows the ring is powerless. It's interesting that he attaches so much importance to it and yet will not pick it up himself. This is because he knows that merely possessing the worthless ring will not help his cause. It's important to keep others thinking that it can. If Gandalf held the ring, he might be asked to do something with it. But its magic is nonexistent.

Zinn: Well, power needs to have its proxies. That way the damage is always deniable. As long as the Hobbits have the ring, no one will ever question the plot Gandalf has hatched. So here is the big scary ring, and all that happens when Gandalf moves to touch it is that he sees a big flaming eye. And notice it is a... different kind of eye — not like our eye.

Chomsky: Almost a cat-like eye.

Zinn: It's on fire. Somehow being an on-fire eye is this terrible thing in the minds of those in Middle Earth. I think this is a way of telling others in Middle Earth to be ashamed of their eyes. And of course you see the Orcs' eyes are all messed up, too. They're this terrible color. And what does Gandalf tell Frodo about the ring? "Keep it secret. Keep it safe."

Chomsky: "Let's leave the most powerful object in all of Middle Earth with a weak little Hobbit, a race known for its chattering and intoxication, and tell him to keep it a secret."

Zinn: Right. And here we receive our first glimpse of the supposedly dreadful Mordor, which actually looks like a fairly functioning place.

Chomsky: This type of city is most likely the best the Orcs can do if all they have are cliffs to grow on. It's very impressive, in that sense.

Zinn: Especially considering the economic sanctions no doubt faced by Mordor. They must be dreadful. We see now that the Black Riders have been released, and they're going after Frodo. The Black Riders. Of course they're black. Everything evil is always black. And later Gandalf the Grey becomes Gandalf the White. Have you noticed that?

Chomsky: The most simplistic color symbolism.

Zinn: And the writing on the ring, we learn here, is Orcish — the so-called "black speech." Orcish is evidently some spoliation of the language spoken in Rohan. This is what Tolkien says.

Chomsky: From what I understand, Orcish is a patois that the Orcs developed during their enslavement by Rohan, before they rebelled and left.

Zinn: Well, supposedly the Orcs were first bred by "the dark power of the north in the elder days." Tolkien says that "Orc" comes from the Mannish word *tark*, which means "man of Gondor."

Chomsky: Shameless really.

Zinn: Gandalf mentions the evil stirring in Mordor. That's all he has to say. "It's evil." He doesn't elaborate on what's going on in Mordor, what the people are going through. They're evil because they're there.

Chomsky: I think the fact that we never actually see the enemy is quite damning. Then again, Gandalf is the greatest storyteller of all. He weaves the tales that strand Middle Earth in this state of perpetual conflict.

Zinn: He is celebrated on one hand as a great statesman, a wise man, and viewed by the people who understand the role that he actually plays as a dangerous lunatic and a war criminal. And you will notice that Gandalf's war pitch hits its highest note when the Black Riders arrive in Hobbiton. I don't think that's a coincidence.

Chomsky: This is the Triumph of the Will.

Zinn: And now Frodo and Sam are joined by Merry and Pippin, as they finally escape the Shire. They're being chased by the Black Riders. Again, if these Black Riders are so fearsome, and they can smell the ring so vividly, why don't they ever seem able to find the Hobbits when they're standing right next to them?

Chomsky: Well, they're on horseback.

Zinn: Right.

Chomsky: This episode in Bree should cause us to ask, too, how much Frodo knows about the conspiracy. He seems to be piecing it together a little bit. I think at first he's an unwitting participant, fooled by Gandalf's propaganda.

Zinn: I'm much more suspicious of Frodo than you are. I've always viewed him as one of the most malevolent actors in this drama, precisely because of how he abets people like Gandalf. He uses a fake name, Mr. Underhill, just as Gandalf goes by several names: Mithrandir, the Grey Pilgrim, the White Rider. Strider is also Aragorn, is also Elendil, is also Elessar, is also Duanadin. He has all these identities.

Chomsky: We call those aliases today.

Zinn: But is Sauron ever anything but Sauron? Is Saruman ever anything but Saruman?

Chomsky: And now, with Frodo in the midst of a hallucinogenic, paranoid state, we meet Strider.

Zinn: Note that the first thing he starts talking about is the ring. "That is no trinket you carry." A very telling irony, that. It is the kind of irony that Shakespeare would use. It is something Iago might say. And did you hear that? "Sauron the Deceiver." That is what Strider, the ranger with multiple names, calls Sauron. A ranger. I believe today we call them serial killers.

Chomsky: Or drug smugglers.

Zinn: And notice how Strider characterizes the Black Riders. "Neither living nor dead." Why, that's a really useful enemy to have.

Chomsky: Yes. In this way you can never verify their existence, and yet they're horribly terrifying. We should not overlook the fact that Middle Earth is in a cold war at this moment, locked in perpetual conflict. Strider's rhetoric serves to keep fear alive.

Zinn: You've spoken to me before about Mordor's lack of access to the mineral wealth that the Dwarves control.

Chomsky: If we're going to get into the socio-economic reasons why certain structures develop in certain cultures... it's mainly geographical. We have Orcs in Mordor — trapped, with no mineral resources — hemmed in by the Ash Mountains, where the "free peoples" of Middle Earth can put a city, like Osgiliath, and effectively keep the border closed.

Zinn: Don't forget the Black Gate. The Black Gate, which, as Tolkien points out, was built by Gondor. And now we jump to the Orcs chopping down the trees in Isengard.

Chomsky: A terrible thing the Orcs do here, isn't it? They destroy nature. But again, what have we seen, time and time again?

Zinn: The Orcs have no resources. They're desperate.

Chomsky: Desperate people driven to do desperate things.

Zinn: Desperate to compete with the economic powerhouses of Rohan and Gondor.

Chomsky: Who really knows their motive? Maybe this is a means to an end. And while that might not be the best philosophy in the world, it makes the race of Man in no way superior. They're going to great lengths to hold onto their power. Two cultures locked in conflict over power, with one culture clearly suffering a great deal. I think sharing power and resources would have been the wisest approach, but Rohan and Gondor have shown no interest in doing so. Sometimes, revolution must be —

Zinn: Mistakes are often —

Chomsky: Blood must be shed. I forget what Thomas Jefferson —

Zinn: He said that blood was the —

Chomsky: The blood of tyrants —

Zinn: The blood of tyrants —

Chomsky: — waters the tree of —

Zinn: — revolution.

Chomsky: — freedom. Or revolution. Something like that.

Zinn: I think that's actually very, very close.

Chomsky: One of the problems with the perspective offered by the Man-Elf coalition is that you have to try so hard to get at the truth of the conflict, at what is really going on; it's so obscured by their propaganda and relentless militarism. I mean, here we have swords being distributed to the Hobbits by Strider so they can protect themselves against these "evil creatures." Now, in this case, it's probably warranted, though the "evil creatures" are looking for the ring in their own individual self-interest. They're behaving in a purely rational way.

Zinn: The Nazgul have been ordered to get the ring. So, that's what they're doing.

Chomsky: There are conflicts in rationality as well. Sometimes valid rationality is forced into conflict because of the structures of culture. But working through those cultural differences is where the peace lies. It doesn't lie in destroying some magical ring. This takes me back to the media's involvement in all this, and the way the media is being controlled by Gandalf, such as when he covers Saruman's palantir in Orthanc. This is the stone that allows one to see, and thus communicate with, different cultures.

Zinn: Right. "What does the eye command, my lord?" This is what the Orcs ask Saruman. In other words, what does the palantir say? Clearly the Orcs know a lot more about the people of Rohan and Gondor than the people of Rohan and Gondor have ever cared to know about them. They're curious beings.

Chomsky: Naturally, it's in Rohan/Gondor's interest to keep the Orcs obscured, to make everything as restricted and dehumanizing as possible. It's always the first step toward genocide. And is this — is there anything less than genocide being advocated in this film?

Zinn: I don't think so.

Chomsky: Is there any kind of idea that men should live in peace with the Orcs?

Zinn: Think of the scenes in the prologue with all the arrows hitting these thousands of Orcs. We're supposed to think that this is a good thing.

Chomsky: I think this is a tragedy, this story. Because it's about two cultures. And poor leadership. It's a human tragedy, and an Orcish tragedy.

Zinn: A perfect example of what you're talking about is right here, when Strider attacks the Black Riders, "saving" Frodo from them.

Chomsky: Think of it from the Black Riders' perspective. No doubt they arrived at Weathertop thinking, "Can we ask a few questions? We'd like to talk to you."

Zinn: Now from here we jump to Isengard, post-ecological atrocities. What I personally see here is... well, I see industrialization, I see a very cooperative workforce, I see a people who aren't terrorized, a people attempting to make do with what they have.

Chomsky: Well, they're making weapons, which is sad. I mean, it would be nice if they could make plowshares, but unfortunately this isn't the time for plowshares in their culture. But they're showing great ingenuity, and they're showing cooperation, you're right about that.

Zinn: Actually it shows the Orcs smithing a lot of pieces of metal. I don't think it's necessarily established that what they're making is swords, is it? They could be farming implements of some sort. They're definitely unusual-looking. But I have to ask you, what about the genetic engineering that goes on with the Uruk-hai?

Chomsky: It's certainly a strange aspect of their culture, but why should we be so condemning? I mean, this is the way they reproduce. If it looks disgusting to us, well maybe we should readjust what we regard as disgusting. I mean, is that any more vile than pulling a baby out of a gaping, bloody hole?

Zinn: And we go back to the Hobbits. After Frodo's been stabbed, Strider and Sam immediately journey out in search of another herb: kingsfoil, or athelas.

Chomsky: Aragorn is evidently into Research and Development as well.

Zinn: He certainly seems knowledgeable of "herbs" and "medicines."

Chomsky: And notice the way Arwen Evenstar greets Strider: a knife to the throat. I think that's a very telling, very interesting thing that happens over and over. Whenever "friendly" people encounter one another, they're raising swords, looking fearful and distrustful.

Zinn: Now we witness the Black Riders finally together — all nine Riders — giving chase to Arwen and Frodo. When we see the Orcs destroy their environment, it is this big scandal. But Arwen is able to send a whole herd of watery horses down a river, no doubt a very delicate ecosystem, and probably completely demolish it, and no one says anything about that.

Chomsky: The Elves, of course, always say that they are the best custodians of nature. And there's a curious type of nature-worship in their culture that allows them to claim, by every implication, "Trees are more important than people." They don't regard the Orcs as people. However, Orcs are thinking, sentient, conscious beings with a culture and a language. They feel pain. They express emotion. They are constantly evolving, trying to better themselves.

Zinn: But here the Elvish culture is revealed to be very elaborate, because, of course, they have better architecture. But I vastly prefer the real grittiness one finds in Mordor. Think of the suspiciously clean city of Rivendell. You don't see any life going on there. No people at all. There's hardly anyone in the streets. It should be said, though, that, on occasion, the Orcs have been known to eat one another.

Chomsky: That's cannibalism, sure, but maybe it's part of a sacred ritual with them. Maybe it's an ancient part of their culture. Who are we to judge? Still, I have problems with it, I agree.

Zinn: So here we have another shot of Rivendell being beautiful because it happens to be located in the mountains, where the lighter people live. And we see here the two primary players moving the action forward: an Elf and a wizard. Elrond and Gandalf.

Chomsky: This is our first real glimpse into the power structure of Middle Earth. It's basically two men who rule their people, deciding what will happen — not asking anyone what they think should happen. Gandalf, even more disturbingly, does not even rule a people but rather rules from his own personal whims and preferences.

Zinn: Isn't it implied that he's from Rohan?

Chomsky: Originally he's from over the sea. He is some type of magic person, according to his own myth about himself. He doesn't claim any land, instead acting as custodian of all of their lands. Of course, I think he's a classic dictator, pulling the strings. Can you detect how outraged I am by this?

Zinn: Why do you suppose it is that the Elves don't want the ring to stay in Rivendell? Isn't this obvious proof that the ring is nothing but a device to be used against Mordor?

Chomsky: This is their justification for war. That's why Boromir is so insightful when he says, basically, "Why don't we use it? If this ring's so great, who don't we use the damn thing?"

Zinn: And what happens to Boromir? The Orcs are tricked into killing him. Thus silencing him.

Chomsky: I think this is an interesting scene — Aragorn in Rivendell looking upon the Isildur mural — because it shows how the militarization of their propaganda has fed their cultural behaviors and religious beliefs.

Zinn: Isildur's broken sword, you mean?

Chomsky: The myth. I mean, look at this museum, this cult, all based around a broken sword. They've developed a religion so that people can be effectively marshaled into battle. And Aragorn is a part of that. He's a king, performing a ceremony for people to continue this senseless belief in some kind of genetic superiority. It is rather like saying, "I have the signet ring of the house of the tsar," or something. Now I can rule.

Zinn: Well, I think this scene shows us what kind of person Aragorn is — a loner, possibly a drug lord.

Chomsky: And then we get bathed in Aragorn-Arwen love lore. And it's the most simplistic kind of propaganda. You've got this beautiful woman who represents the Party, represents the people of the Motherland, and you have the hero. Develop a little love affair between them.

Zinn: A love affair between the putative hero and the personified Motherland concept, you mean.

Chomsky: Right. The humans are all so entranced by the Elves' completely mythological power. It's a spell that has been cast upon them.

Zinn: I see the humans, embodied by Aragorn, as being indicative of a sort of middle-class longing.

Chomsky: It keeps them striving. If you're a good enough man, you can be an Elf.

Zinn: An Elf. As if that's the best thing to be.

Chomsky: Now, at the Council of Elrond, we have the Middle Earth equivalent of a television broadcast. It's one guy sitting in a tall chair and talking at twenty other people. This is how information is spread in this culture. But, you know, it doesn't have to be this way. Imagine that, right now, you have the people in Gondor with a palantir, the people in Rohan with a palantir, the people in the Woodland Realm with a palantir. And everyone could be standing around it, talking to one another,

sharing a conference in which the people have an equal interest and stake in what decisions are made.

Zinn: Technology that Gandalf already knows is available. But do we see a single Orc?

Chomsky: Oh, of course not. Of course not. Because everyone here has a vested interest in keeping the Orcs down.

Zinn: Boromir is the only one honest enough to talk about what the real story is here.

Chomsky: Boromir's an interesting case. His culture is threatened by the Orcs in a very real way. But he's also seen that this occupation of Orc land is engendered by his people's own aggressive policies. So he's like an enlightened Israeli who looks at the situation and says, "If I were in their situation, I would be just like them."

Zinn: Boromir here is talking about the eye, and how horrible Mordor is, which reveals the basic limitations of his cultural situation. Boromir embodies the prejudices of his culture, but I too think he's an interestingly problematic figure. He's really the only one who understands... my God. Look at this. Keep in mind that these are supposed to be Middle Earth's enlightened people at this Council, and they're all fighting, they all hate one another.

Chomsky: It's just so complicated, the webs of relationships.

Zinn: Now Frodo, son of Drogo, agrees to take the ring to Mount Doom. Something tells me that no one in Mordor calls it Mount Doom.

Chomsky: And everyone baits Frodo into this. "You are our agent, going on a suicide mission. You have to do it for the Motherland."

Zinn: So is Frodo the Mohammed Atta figure in this story?

Chomsky: He's a fanatical true believer. And crazy. Obviously, totally insane.

Zinn: And listen to what Aragorn tells Frodo: "You have my sword."

Chomsky: So militaristic.

Zinn: Notice that no one says, "You have my diplomatic skills." I think the only real diplomat of Middle Earth is Gollum. He's the only one who makes any meaningful, cross-cultural exchange with any of these people. Being a torture victim at the hand of the Orcs, and his attempted strangulation of the Hobbits.

Chomsky: I think of Gollum as more of a deluded madman, one more sinned against than sinned.

Zinn: There's room for argument. And, yet again, here we see Bilbo ravaged from the effects of pipe-weed. It's been flushed from his system in his idyll-cum-rehab in Rivendell. And what does he give Frodo? He gives him his sword, of course. Sting.

Chomsky: As if to say, "You know, when you've stabbed enough people in the back like I have, you'll need this shirt of mithril." Hobbits are bandits. They have this little veneer of nobility around them, but they are nothing more than demented little thieves.

Zinn: On the way to Moria, here, we should point out the fear that men and Elves have of the Dwarves' culture. They refuse to enter the mines of Moria.

Chomsky: There is something very funny lingering around the edges of the whole Moria episode. Could it be that the Dwarves living there were starting to get different ideas about the Orcs? Were starting to talk to the Orcs, and establish some means of cross-cultural communication? Perhaps Gandalf and some of his Rohan friends went there only to find a bunch of Dwarves and Orcs talking, maybe forming an alliance or pact. And then Gandalf massacred all of them, and pretended as though there was some huge battle. This would explain why Gandalf can't lead them back there. Genocide's been committed. He hasn't yet weaved a good enough story to explain away the evidence. He has to pretend that Moria is this scary place.

Zinn: So few kingdoms within Middle Earth are established with any vividness. This goes some way toward proving your point.

Chomsky: We're encouraged to think that no one but the Fellowship's active participants are important, but then we go into Moria, and we realize that this was once an incredible, deeply multicultural place. There were some Orcs who lived there, and who are still living there. So here we are, walking into Moria, the scene of what was possibly a great massacre at the hands of Gandalf. And of course, the Fellowship walks in and they see the hundreds of bodies. Don't think for a moment that Boromir is not suspicious about all of this.

Zinn: Earlier, Boromir says, "We make for the Gap of Rohan." If you're correct, what he is really saying is, "Let's back out. I need to talk to some people."

Chomsky: "I need to tell them about what I have lately discovered."

Zinn: Now, we see in Moria that the Dwarves had a fairly sophisticated mithril mine here. Wouldn't you say the Dwarves are the Jew-like figures of Middle Earth?

Chomsky: They are former slaves. The comparison is apt.

Zinn: They're good at doing things with their hands. This is something Tolkien is very adamant about. They're useful, but they're not very educated. Ah, and this is also where we first see Gollum. I stick to my view of Gollum as a rebel who

transgresses boundaries. In many ways he is the heroic, empathetic conscience of this story. He's the only one who cares about bridging the gaps between these many cultures.

Chomsky: You could be right. I think there's possibly something very wise about Gollum. Obviously he's well-traveled, he's a hermit.

Zinn: I think his sexuality is questionable, and that's why he's viewed as this hateful, awful thing. Everyone always talks about killing him.

Chomsky: Gandalf of course likes to have as many ghosts around him as possible. He slyly encourages Frodo in this belief that Gollum is some kind of horrible, corrupt thing. He neglects to say, "You know, I tortured him just a couple of weeks ago."

Zinn: Exactly.

Chomsky: Notice that Gandalf doesn't give anybody else the supposed Dwarf book to read. Gandalf could be passing it off as Balin's last words. We don't know what is actually recorded in it, though. Very cunning. It could be agreement drawn up between the Orcs and the Dwarves. It could quite easily be that.

Zinn: It would explain why he kept it out of Gimli's hands.

Chomsky: Sure. "No, don't worry. I'll read it. Let me read this to you guys."

Zinn: What I think this reveals is that the Dwarves have a very beautiful, elegant, poetic way about them.

Chomsky: Except Gandalf could be making it all up.

Zinn: That's what I mean: this is much more of a Gandalfian, flowery language. It's hard to imagine the Dwarves writing that way.

Chomsky: And now the terrible Orcs invade Balin's tomb. Let's be clear about a few things here. The Orcs are fighting a war of self-defense against the invading Fellowship. They basically busted in on the Orcs' place here. It's fairly clear that the Orcs are hiding there because if they go outside they have every reason to believe that they will be massacred by Gandalf.

Zinn: The Orcs certainly don't seem to be very good fighters, do they? If they're such a terrible, evil, warlike culture —

Chomsky: They can't kill even one of these little Hobbits who just received their swords only a few days ago. One would think that if the Orcs were as bad as the corrupt Man-Elf coalition says, they would be a lot better at fighting. It lends credence to the farming hypothesis — that they were trying to scabble out a meager existence in the land in Mordor.

Zinn: You can see too here that the way the Hobbits fight is highly indicative of their culture: They jump on a wounded foe and then stab him in the neck.

Chomsky: They're very morally ambiguous characters. There's a nasty complacency about Hobbits. One would think that they could, easily enough, find out about all of the things that happen in the world — all of the consequences of their pipe-weed-growing actions. And now Middle Earth's power structure is revealing itself, and they're a part of it. Still, they don't question it. Worse yet, they revel in it.

Zinn: My question is now hard would the mithril have to be to able to stop the cave troll from piercing you with his spear? And where does this stuff come from? How would anybody find out about it? You'd think the creators would keep it as secret as possible.

Chomsky: Possibly mithril once served the same function in Middle Earth culture as pipe-weed does now. After all, you have to keep creating new industries.

Zinn: Of course. The culture of consumption is founded upon whatever the new thing happens to be. One day it's mithril, the next day it's pipe-weed. Perhaps tomorrow it will be kingsfoil?

Chomsky: Here again we have the Orcs running after the Fellowship. The Orcs, apparently, are going to slaughter them, and in my estimation they would be well within their rights to do so. But do they? No, they do not. They stop.

Zinn: They stop.

Chomsky: And then they run away because the Balrog comes out. Take note of the fact that the Orcs don't appear to like the Balrog much themselves. They're scared of it.

Zinn: I'm not sure what role the Balrog really plays in this.

Chomsky: I think it just happened to be there, guarding its own little part of the mine.

Zinn: And look at these Orcs! Supposedly so evil and vicious, and yet they don't do anything. They even appear to talk it over amongst themselves.

Chomsky: Look at it from their perspective: They've been locked up in this cave. They're frightened, they know they're not good fighters. They're just a bunch of farmers.

Zinn: As evidenced by their long, ungainly swords.

Chomsky: Perhaps they've been radicalized a bit. But I doubt they are true evil-doers.

Zinn: Again, I'm not sure what role the Balrog plays.

Chomsky: I, too, am uncertain on that point.

Zinn: Here, very significantly, we have the Bridge of Khazad-Dûm. You will notice that what is destroyed is a bridge — another potential connector.

Chomsky: On a symbolic level, that is a very good point.

Zinn: All the borders in this film are constantly being destroyed, or overrun, or eliminated, or sealed. It's all about fear — fearing the other. Notice, too, that the Elf Legolas jumps across the ruined bridge first.

Chomsky: They'll cross this bridge and the bridge will collapse, and they'll never be able to communicate with the Balrog again, or with the Orcs inside. In fact, they're sealing off the Orcs from ever escaping. They're leaving the Orcs in the cave with this big Balrog. Now, again, surely, among these Moria Orcs were some Orc radicals — aggressive, angry, militant radicals. We shouldn't understate that.

Zinn: Well, look how the Orcs grow up. What do you expect?

Chomsky: I mean, what other options have they?

Zinn: I dare say that, were I an Orc, I might possibly be one of those terrorist Orcs, shooting arrows at the Fellowship myself.

Chomsky: Here comes the Balrog. Notice Gandalf's unilateral action. "Quick, get away, I have to fight this thing alone!"

Zinn: Once again you see a creature that's on fire being demonized in this movie: the flaming eye, the flaming Balrog. As though being on fire is this terrible affliction to have.

Chomsky: As though they can help it if they're on fire.

Zinn: After Gandalf falls, you get another view of the so-called terrorist Orcs. You know, the regrettable side of the Orcs does occasionally come out. The violence. It doesn't help their cause when these distinct, individual Orcs take it upon themselves to lash out at the inequality of the system. But notice that even these violent Orcs don't seem happy. They're not pleased with themselves. It's a violence borne of necessity.

Chomsky: Sure. They're trapped in a cycle of violence.

Zinn: And now we come to Galadriel's wood, Lothlorien. The film — inexcusably, in my view — leaves out a lot of the things that happen to Gimli in this sequence.

Chomsky: He's forced to wear a blindfold. He is not allowed to see the Elves. This is the apartheid system the Fellowship serves.

Zinn: And even here the Elves hold, you know, arrows to his head. He's completely brutalized. But of course Gimli falls in love with Galadriel, thus perpetuating the Dwarves' self-hatred.

Chomsky: It's somewhat similar to the method the Elves use to ensnare people like Aragorn — to affect their Elvish self-esteem.

They want to be worshipped. It seems as though a peculiar kind of brainwashing occurs whenever anyone is exposed to Elf culture.

Zinn: I mean, look at how the Elves greet people — with arrows. Is that so different from the Orcs?

Chomsky: Right. And they're supposed to be nature-worshippers. It's sort of sickening and very bourgeois.

Zinn: And of course we should point out that Galadriel is wearing a ring throughout this entire scene. She has a ring — arguably the most powerful ring. Somehow she's trusted to wield this power responsibly. This woman who reads people's minds without asking them.

Chomsky: That's true. She's constantly invading other people's thoughts. Though there is one thing you have to say for the Elves. Women's rights. But of course, we learn here that even if you cede women these rights they become just as morally culpable as any man. And have you taken proper note of Galadriel's farewell gesture, when the Fellowship sets its boats down the Silverlode? It is some sort of Sieg Heil gesture.

Zinn: It is vaguely reminiscent of the biomechanics of National Socialism. You'll notice, too, how clearly the Man-Elf coalition controls all the modes of transportation in Middle Earth. We always see the Orcs running. But Legolas, Gimli, and Aragorn — I mean, sometimes they are riding horses. The Orcs have nothing like any of this. The Orcs certainly don't canoe.

Chomsky: Well they don't have these wide, beautiful rivers to canoe on. That's part of the deprivation of their natural resources. And just as you say, here the Orcs are, running. A bunch of farmers, holding their clumsy weapons.

Zinn: The white hand of Saruman on the heads of the Uruk-hai. Of course, the hand in control is white. And good lord, these giant statues on the Anduin River. The Sentinels of Númenor. These huge, monolithic statues that have their hands thrust forever up. I think I can intuit what these sentinels are saying: "Stay away, Orcs."

Chomsky: "Keep out of our land."

Zinn: "Keep out of our land. Don't come in." It is little wonder that the Orcs are so warlike and angry.

Chomsky: And of course the sentinels are holding swords. More monolithic images of supposedly noble militarism.

Zinn: One suspects that Orc slaves probably build the things. I imagine there's a lot of Orc labor that gets in through Gondor and Rohan. They want to get out of Mordor. There are simply not a lot of economic options for them there.

Chomsky: Picture, for a moment, the average Orc's life. Hunted, hated, sometimes murdered. I think Jared Diamond would be an

interesting person to write about the effects of environment and geography on all this.

Zinn: On the Orcs?

Chomsky: On Orcish culture as a whole. Of course, one of the interesting points in Diamond's work is that you have hunter-gathering cultures, and you have farming cultures, developed societies. And these developed societies, these agricultural cultures, mobilize and create large armies, and hunter-gathering cultures are not actually very effective at mounting large armies.

Zinn: Right. Like the Orcs.

Chomsky: This simple bunch of farmers, hastily rallied together against these well-armed, well-equipped Elves and men.

Zinn: Here we see the Orcs facing Aragorn for the first time. It's not very obvious what's happening here. The Orcs appear rather skittish.

Chomsky: Well, some of these Orcs are charging. It is fairly easy to imagine what they are feeling. No doubt they have seen this ranger's work before. Aragorn has so many names, it is all but certain that he has a few Orcish names as well. Orc-killer, perhaps. Orc-slayer. Madman. Look at all this casual slaughter.

Zinn: Clearly the Orcs have a hand in murdering Boromir, but Aragorn's innocence is not established by a long shot. I think he maneuvered Boromir into that position. To get him out of the way. After all, Boromir had a very clear claim to Aragorn's supposed kingship.

Chomsky: That is very possible.

Zinn: I have to ask, what does this story do for the powerful? For one, it makes them feel very good about the kind of things they've done to less powerful societies. The way they exploit them and the way they invent these phony pretexts to wage wars of aggression against less powerful people. The powerful need to tell themselves these stories.

Chomsky: And yet, as in all stories of this type, hidden within the story are the keys to unlocking the hidden modes of power.

Zinn: The thing is, though, that even when the dominant culture tells itself the story, the story cannot help but include those telltale signifiers of power that surrender the true nature of the story.

Chomsky: It is embedded, I would say, in the language of the story itself. No matter how often the storytellers try to obscure the truth, the truth will out. The truth will be betrayed through the way the story gets told.

Zinn: Thankfully, the literature of oppression can never last because the oppression is always so obvious. It's always about the people who are suppressed, who keep getting more and

more aware of how they're suppressed. And once they're aware of how suppressed they are, they can —

Chomsky: Right, they're able to —

Zinn: We've got to get our conspiracy straight.

Chomsky: Not necessarily. Think of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Zinn: A patsy. A CIA agent.

Chomsky: A cold-blooded, ruthless killer.

Zinn: Right.

Chomsky: He was a good shot. He was a bad shot.

Zinn: Right. Exactly.

Chomsky: But then, I don't really believe in conspiracy theories about JFK.

Zinn: Neither do I.

Chomsky: So.

Zinn: Isn't that funny?

1997 Darwin Award Nominations

It is once again time to vote for the Darwin Award nominees for 1997. As you know these nominees will not be contributing to the gene pool (thankfully).

You may recall last year's Darwin Award winner: The man who found out moments before making a 300 MPH dent in an Arizona cliff that the JATO (jet assist take off) unit he'd strapped to his car could not be turned off once it was turned on.

And 1995's winner was the fellow who was killed by a Coke machine which toppled on top of him as he was attempting to tip a free soda out of it.

The 1997 nominees are:

NOMINEE #1 [San Jose Mercury News] An unidentified man, using a shotgun like a club to break a former girlfriend's windshield, accidentally shot himself to death when the gun discharged, blowing a hole in his gut.

NOMINEE #2 [Kalamazoo Gazette] James Burns, 34, of Alamo, Mich., was killed in March as he was trying to repair what police described as a "farm-type truck." Burns got a friend to drive the truck on a highway while Burns hung underneath so that he could ascertain the source of a troubling noise. Burns' clothes caught on something, however, and the other man found Burns "wrapped in the drive shaft."

NOMINEE #3 [Reuters, Mississauga, Ontario] Man slips, falls 23 stories to his death. A man cleaning a bird feeder on his balcony of his condominium apartment in this Toronto suburb slipped and fell 23 stories to his death, police said Monday. Stefan Macko, 55, was standing on a wheeled chair Sunday when the accident occurred, said Inspector D'Arcy Honer of the Peel regional police. "It appears the chair moved and he went over the balcony," Honer said. "It's one of those freak accidents. No foul play is suspected."

NOMINEE #4 [Hickory Daily Record] Ken Charles Barger, 47, accidentally shot himself to death in December in Newton, N.C., when, awakening to the sound of a ringing telephone beside his bed, he reached for the phone but grabbed instead a Smith & Wesson .38 Special, which discharged when he drew it to his ear.

NOMINEE #5 [UPI, Toronto] Police said a lawyer demonstrating the safety of windows in a downtown Toronto skyscraper crashed through a pane with his shoulder and plunged 24 floors to his death. A police spokesman said Garry Hoy, 39, fell into the courtyard of the Toronto Dominion Bank Tower early Friday evening as he was explaining the strength of the building's windows to visiting law students. Hoy previously had conducted demonstrations of window strength according to police reports. Peter Lauwers, managing partner of the firm Holden Day Wilson, told the Toronto Sun newspaper that Hoy was "one of the best and brightest" members of the 200-man association.

NOMINEE #12 [AP, Mammoth Lakes] A San Anselmo man died yesterday when he hit a lift tower at the Mammoth Mountain ski area while riding down the slope on a foam pad, authorities said. Matthew David Hubal, 22, was pronounced dead at Centinela

NOMINEE #6 [AP, Cairo, Egypt] Six people drowned Monday while trying to rescue a chicken that had fallen into a well in southern Egypt. An 18-year-old farmer was the first to descend into the 60-foot well. He drowned, apparently after an undercurrent in the water pulled him down, police said. His sister and two brothers, none of whom could swim well, went in one by one to help him, but also drowned. Two elderly farmers then came to help, but they apparently were pulled by the same undercurrent. The bodies of the six were later pulled out of the well in the village of Nazlat Imara, 240 miles south of Cairo. The chicken was also pulled out. It survived.

NOMINEE #7 [Bloomberg News Service, 25 March] A terrible diet and room with no ventilation are being blamed for the death of a man who was killed by his own gas. There was no mark on his body but autopsy showed large amounts of methane gas in his system. His diet had consisted primarily of beans and cabbage (and a couple of other things). It was just the right combination of foods. It appears that the man died in his sleep from breathing from the poisonous cloud that was hanging over his bed. Had he been outside or had his windows been opened, it wouldn't have been fatal. But the man was shut up in his near airtight bedroom. He was "...a big man with a huge capacity for creating [this deadly gas]." Three of the rescuers got sick and one was hospitalized.

NOMINEE #9 [San Jose Mercury News] A 24-year-old salesman from Hialeah, Fla., was killed near Lantana, Fla., in March when his car smashed into a pole in the median strip of Interstate 95 in the middle of the afternoon. Police said that the man was traveling at 80 MPH and, judging by the sales manual that was found open and clutched to his chest, had been busy reading.

NOMINEE #10 [The News of the weird.] **JOINT NOMINEE** Michael Anderson Godwin made News of the Weird posthumously in 1989. He had spent several years awaiting South Carolina's electric chair on a murder conviction before having his sentence reduced to life in prison. In March 1989, sitting on a metal toilet in his cell and attempting to fix his small TV set, he bit into a wire and was electrocuted.

On Jan. 1, 1997, Laurence Baker, also a convicted murderer once on death row, but later serving a life sentence at the state prison in Pittsburgh, Pa., was electrocuted by his homemade earphones as he watched his small TV while sitting on his metal toilet.

NOMINEE #11 ["The Indianapolis Star"]. Cigarette lighter may have triggered fatal explosion in Dunkirk, Indiana. A Jay County man using a cigarette lighter to check the barrel of a muzzleloader was killed Monday night when the weapon discharged in his face, sheriff's investigators said. Gregory David Pryor, 19, died in his parents' rural Dunkirk home about 11:30 p.m. Investigators said Pryor was cleaning a .54-caliber muzzleloader that had not been firing properly. He was using the lighter to look into the barrel when the gunpowder ignited.

Mammoth Hospital. The accident occurred about 3 a.m., the Mono County Sheriff's Department said. Hubal and his friends apparently had hiked up a ski run called Stump Alley and undid some yellow foam protectors from the lift towers, said Lieutenant Mike Donnelly

of the Mammoth Lakes Police Department. The pads are used to protect skiers who might hit the towers. The group apparently used the pads to slide down the ski slope and Hubal crashed into a tower. It was not clear if the tower he hit was one with its pad removed. "With the cold temperatures, the snow was probably pretty fast," said Donnelly.

NOMINEE #13 [Reuters, Warsaw, Poland] A poacher electrocuting fish in a lake in central Poland fell into the water and suffered the same fate as his quarry, police said Thursday. The 24-year-old man was one of four who went fishing with a cable, one end of which they attached to a net and the other to a high-voltage electricity supply line, the PAP news agency quoted a police official in Wloclawek as saying. "For a while everything went according to the poachers' plan and they had fish in their bags. But at a certain moment the man holding the net tripped and fell into the water," the agency said. The other poachers tried in vain to revive him, it said.

NOMINEE #14 [AP, St. Louis] Robert Puelo, 32, was apparently being disorderly in a St. Louis market. When the clerk threatened to call police, Puelo grabbed a hot dog, shoved it in his mouth, and walked out without paying for it. Police found him unconscious in front of the store: paramedics removed the six-inch wiener from his throat, where it had choked him to death.

NOMINEE 15 [Unknown] To poacher Marino Malerba, who shot a stag standing above him on an overhanging rock -- and was killed instantly when it fell on him.

NOMINEE 16 [Associated Press, Kincaid, W. VA] Blasting Cap Explodes in Man's Mouth at Party. A man at a party popped a blasting cap into his mouth and bit down, triggering an explosion that blew off his lips, teeth and tongue, state police said Wednesday. Jerry Stromyer, 24, of Kincaid, bit the blasting cap as a prank during a party late Tuesday night, said Cpl. M.D. Payne. "Another man had it in an aquarium, hooked to a battery, and was trying to explode it," Payne said. "It wouldn't go off and this guy said, 'I'll show you how to set it off.' 'I just can't imagine anyone doing something like that," Payne said.

AND FINALLY, NOMINEE #17 In December near Mineral Wells, Tex., three men who were attempting to steal copper wire off live electrical lines for resale were electrocuted. Copper wiring is a valuable scrap metal in Texas but is usually stolen from electric cables that are not being used.

Here are some people that may be future nominees/winners, but still haven't made it to the "Big Leagues"

[UPI, Portland, OR] Doctors at Portland's University Hospital said Wednesday an Oregon man shot through the skull by a hunting arrow is lucky to be alive, and will be released soon from the hospital. Tony Roberts, 25, lost his right eye last weekend during an initiation into a men's rafting club, Mountain Men Anonymous, in Grants Pass, Ore. A friend tried to shoot a beer can off his head, but the arrow entered Roberts' right eye. Doctors said had the arrow gone 1 millimeter to the left, a major blood vessel would have cut and Roberts would have died instantly. Neurosurgeon Dr. Johnny Delashaw at the University Hospital in Portland said the arrow went through 8 to 10 inches of brain, with the tip protruding

at the rear of his skull, yet somehow managed to miss all major blood vessels. Delashaw also said had Robert tried to pull the arrow out on his own he surely would have killed himself. Roberts admitted afterwards he and his friends had been drinking that afternoon. Said Roberts, "I feel so dumb about this." No charges have been filed but the Josephine County district attorney's office said the initiation stunt is under investigation.

Arkansas Democrat Gazette, July 25, 1996: Two Local Men Injured in Freak Truck Accident, Cotton Patch, Ark. Two local men were seriously injured when their pick-up truck left the road and struck a tree near Cotton Patch on State Highway 38 early Monday morning. Woodruff County deputy Dovey Snyder reported the accident shortly after midnight Monday. Thurston Poole, 33, of Des Arc and Billy Ray Wallis, 38, of Little Rock are listed in serious condition at Baptist Medical Center. The accident occurred as the two men were returning to Des Arc after a frog gigging trip. On an overcast Sunday night, Poole's pick-up truck headlights malfunctioned. The two men concluded that the headlight fuse on the older model truck had burned out. As a replacement fuse was not available, Wallis noticed that the .22 caliber bullet from his pistol fit perfectly into the fuse box next to the steering wheel column. Upon inserting the bullet, the headlights again began to operate properly and the two men proceeded on east-bound toward the White River bridge. After traveling approximately twenty miles and just before crossing the river, the bullet apparently overheated, discharged and struck Poole in the right testicle. The vehicle swerved sharply to the right exiting the pavement and striking a tree. Poole suffered only minor cuts and abrasions from the accident, but will require surgery to repair the other wound. Wallis sustained a broken clavicle and was treated and released. "Thank God we weren't on that bridge when Thurston shot his nuts off or we might both be dead" stated Wallis. "I've been a trooper for ten years in this part of the world, but this is a first for me. I can't believe that those two would admit how this accident happened", said Snyder.

The Calgary Sun: Low blow for gunman VANCOUVER (CP) - A man arguing over a love triangle accidentally shot himself in the groin, taking off his testicles and part of his penis. Police said the man was waving a .357 Magnum revolver around during the shouting match early yesterday. But when he stuffed it back in his pants the gun went off. Police were called to the hospital after the man in his 20's was brought in by friends. Charges are pending against the victim, who is expected to survive.

DARWIN AWARD WINNER FOR 1997 ANNOUNCED

You all know about the Darwin Awards - It's an annual honor given to the person who did the gene pool the biggest service by killing themselves in the most extraordinarily stupid way. The 1995 winner was the fellow who was killed by a Coke machine which toppled over on top of him as he was attempting to tip a free soda out of it. In 1996 the winner was an Air Force sergeant who attached a jet engine (JATO) unit to his car and crashed into a cliff several hundred feet above the road.

And now, the 1997 winner: Larry Walters of Los Angeles-one of the few Darwin winners to survive his award-winning accomplishment. Larry's boyhood dream was to fly. When he graduated from high school, he joined the Air Force in hopes of becoming a pilot. Unfortunately, poor eyesight disqualified him. When he was finally discharged, he had to satisfy himself with watching jets fly over his backyard.

One day, Larry, had a bright idea. He decided to fly. He went to the local Army-Navy surplus store and purchased 45 weather balloons and several tanks of helium. The weather balloons, when fully inflated, would measure more than four feet across. Back home, Larry securely strapped the balloons to his sturdy lawn chair. He anchored the chair to the bumper of his jeep and inflated the balloons with the helium. He climbed on for a test while it was still only a few feet above the ground.

Satisfied it would work, Larry packed several sandwiches and a six-pack of Miller Lite, loaded his pellet gun-figuring he could pop a few balloons when it was time to descend-and went back to the floating lawn chair. He tied himself in along with his pellet gun and provisions. Larry's plan was to lazily float up to a height of about 30 feet above his back yard after severing the anchor and in a few hours come back down.

Things didn't quite work out that way. When he cut the cord anchoring the lawn chair to his jeep, he didn't float lazily up to 30 or so feet. Instead he streaked into the LA sky as if shot from a cannon. He didn't level off at 30 feet, nor did he level off at 100 feet. After climbing and climbing, he leveled off at 11,000 feet. At that height he couldn't risk shooting any of the balloons, lest he unbalance the load and really find himself in trouble.

So he stayed there, drifting, cold and frightened, for more than 14 hours. Then he really got in trouble. He found himself drifting into the primary approach corridor of Los Angeles International Airport. A United pilot first spotted Larry. He radioed the tower and described passing a guy in a lawn chair with a gun. Radar confirmed the existence of an object floating 11,000 feet above the airport. LAX emergency procedures swung into full alert and a helicopter was dispatched to investigate. LAX is right on the ocean. Night was falling and the offshore breeze began to flow. It carried Larry out to sea with the helicopter in hot pursuit. Several miles out, the helicopter caught up with Larry.

Once the crew determined that Larry was not dangerous, they attempted to close in for a rescue but the draft from the blades would push Larry away whenever they neared. Finally, the helicopter ascended to a position several hundred feet above Larry and lowered a rescue line. Larry snagged the line and was hauled back to shore. The difficult maneuver was flawlessly executed by the helicopter crew. As soon as Larry was hauled to earth, he was arrested by waiting members of the LAPD for violating LAX airspace. As he was led away in handcuffs, a reporter dispatched to cover the daring rescue asked why he had done it.

Larry stopped, turned and replied nonchalantly, "A man can't just sit around." Let's hear it for Larry Walters, the 1997 Darwin Award Winner.



College

by DAVE BARRY

College is basically a bunch of rooms where you sit for roughly two thousand hours and try to memorize things. The two thousand hours are spread out over four years; you spend the rest of the time sleeping and trying to get dates.

Basically, you learn two kinds of things in college:

- Things you will need to know in later life (two hours). These include how to make collect telephone calls and get beer and crepe-paper stains out of your pajamas.
- Things you will not need to know in later life (1,998 hours). These are the things you learn in classes whose names end in -ology, --osophy, -istry, -ics, and so on. The idea is, you memorize these things, then write them down in little exam books, then forget them. If you fail to forget them, you become a professor and have to stay in college for the rest of your life.

It's very difficult to forget everything. For example, when I was in college, I had to memorize -- don't ask me why -- the names of three metaphysical poets other than John Donne. I have managed to forget one of them, but I still remember that the other two were named Vaughan and Crashaw. Sometimes, when I'm trying to remember something important like whether my wife told me to get tuna packed in oil or tuna packed in water, Vaughan and Crashaw just pop up in my mind, right there in the supermarket. It's a terrible waste of brain cells.

After you've been in college for a year or so, you're supposed to choose a major, which is the subject you intend to memorize and forget the most things about. Here is a very important piece of advice: Be sure to choose a major that does not involve Known Facts and Right Answers.

This means you must **not** major in mathematics, physics, biology, or chemistry, because these subjects involve actual facts. If, for example, you major in mathematics, you're going to wander into class one day and the professor will say: "Define the cosine integer of the quadrant of a rhomboid binary axis, and extrapolate your result to five significant vertices." If you don't come up with **exactly** the answer the professor has in mind, you fail. The same is true of chemistry: if you write in your exam book that carbon and hydrogen combine to form oak, your professor will flunk you. He wants you to come up with the same answer he and all the other chemists have agreed on.

Scientists are extremely snotty about this.

So you should major in subjects like English, philosophy, psychology, and sociology -- subjects in which nobody

really understands what anybody else is talking about, and which involve virtually no actual facts. I attended classes in all these subjects, so I'll give you a quick overview of each:

ENGLISH: This involves writing papers about long books you have read little snippets of just before class. Here is a tip on how to get good grades on your English papers: Never say anything about a book that anybody with any common sense would say. For example, suppose you are studying Moby-Dick. Anybody with any common sense would say that Moby-Dick is a big white whale, since the characters in the book refer to it as a big white whale roughly eleven thousand times. So in **your* paper, *you* say Moby-Dick is actually the Republic of Ireland. Your professor, who is sick to death of reading papers and never liked Moby-Dick anyway, will think you are enormously creative. If you can regularly come up with lunatic interpretations of simple stories, you should major in English.*

PHILOSOPHY: Basically, this involves sitting in a room and deciding there is no such thing as reality and then going to lunch. You should major in philosophy if you plan to take a lot of drugs.

PSYCHOLOGY: This involves talking about rats and dreams. Psychologists are **obsessed** with rats and dreams. I once spent an entire semester training a rat to punch little buttons in a certain sequence, then training my roommate to do the same thing. The rat learned much faster. My roommate is now a doctor. If you like rats or dreams, and above all if you dream about rats, you should major in psychology.

SOCIOLOGY: For sheer lack of intelligibility, sociology is far and away the number one subject. I sat through hundreds of hours of sociology courses, and read gobs of sociology writing, and I never once heard or read a coherent statement. This is because sociologists want to be considered scientists, so they spend most of their time translating simple, obvious observations into scientific-sounding code. If you plan to major in sociology, you'll have to learn to do the same thing. For example, suppose you have observed that children cry when they fall down. You should write: "Methodological observation of the sociometrical behavior tendencies of prematurated isolates indicates that a casual relationship exists between groundward tropism and lachrimatory, or 'crying,' behavior forms." If you can keep this up for fifty or sixty pages, you will get a large government grant.



*"How should I know if they
have dirt on Biden?"*

Obituary

Doughboy Dead at 71...

Veteran Pillsbury spokesman Pop N. Fresh, died yesterday of a severe yeast infection. He was 71. Fresh was buried in one of the largest funeral ceremonies in recent years.

Dozens of celebrities turned out including: Mrs. Butterworth, the California Raisins, Hungry Jack, Betty Crocker and the Hostess Twinkies. The gravesite was piled high with flours and longtime friend, Aunt Jemima, delivered the eulogy, describing Fresh as a man who "never knew how much he was kneaded."

Fresh rose quickly in show business, but his later life was filled with many turnovers. He was not considered a very smart cookie, squandering much of his dough on half-baked schemes. Still, even as a crusty old man, he was a roll model for millions. Fresh is survived by his second wife. They have two children and one in the oven. The funeral was held at 3:50 for about 20 minutes.

The DUUHHH Awards

Question: If you could live forever, would you and why?

Answer: "I would not live forever, because we should not live forever, because if we were supposed to live forever, then we would live forever, but we cannot live forever, which is why I would not live forever."

--Miss Alabama in the 1994 Miss USA contest.

"Whenever I watch TV and see those poor starving kids all over the world, I can't help but cry. I mean I'd love to be skinny like that, but not with all those flies and death and stuff."

-- Mariah Carey

"Smoking kills. If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of your life."

-- Brooke Shields, during an interview to become spokesperson for a federal antismoking campaign.

"I've never had major knee surgery on any other part of my body."

--Winston Bennett, University of Kentucky basketball forward.

"Outside of the killings, Washington has one of the lowest crime rates in the country."

-- Mayor Marion Barry, Washington, DC.

"We're going to turn this team around 360 degrees."

-- Jason Kidd, upon his drafting to the Dallas Mavericks.

"That scoundrel deserves to be kicked to death by a jackass, and I'm just the one to do it."

-- A congressional candidate in Texas.

"I don't feel we did wrong in taking this great country away from them. There were great numbers of people who needed new land, and the Indians were selfishly trying to keep it for themselves."

-- John Wayne

"Half this game is ninety percent mental."

-- Philadelphia Phylis manager, Danny Ostrak

"If you let that sort of thing go on, your bread and butter will be cut right out from under your feet."

-- Former British foreign minister, Ernest Bevin.

"I love California. I practically grew up in Phoenix."

-- Dan Quayle

"It's no exaggeration to say that the undecideds could go one way or another"

-- George Bush, US President

"We've got to pause and ask ourselves: How much clean air do we need?"

-- Lee Iacocca

"I was provided with additional input that was radically different from the truth. I assisted in furthering that version,"
-- Colonel Oliver North, from his Iran-Contra testimony.

"The word 'genius' isn't applicable in football. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein."

-- A sports analyst.

"We don't necessarily discriminate. We simply exclude certain types of people."

-- Colonel Gerald Welfman, ROTC Instructor.

"Traditionally, most of Australia's imports come from overseas."

-- Keppel Enderbury

"The loss of life will be irreplaceable."

-- Dan Quayle

"I was recently on a tour of Latin America, and the only regret I have is that I didn't study my Latin harder in school so I could converse with those people."

-- Dan Quayle, VP

"It is wonderful to be here in the great state of Chicago!"

-- Dan Quayle, VP

"Hawaii is a unique state. It is a small state. It is a state that is by itself. It is different from the other 49 states. Well, all states are different, but it's got a particularly unique situation."

-- Dan Quayle, VP

"Your flood stamps will be stopped effective March 1992 because we received notice that you passed away. May God bless you. You may reapply if there is a change in your circumstances."

-- Department of Social Services, Greenville, South Carolina

"We apologize for the error in last week's paper in which we stated that Mr. Arnold Dogbody was a detective in the police force. We meant, of course, that Mr. Dogbody is a detective in the police force."

-- Correction Notice in the Ely Standard, a British newspaper

"If somebody has a bad heart, they can plug this jack in at night as they go to bed and it will monitor their heart throughout the night. And the next morning, when they wake up dead, there'll be a record."

-- Mark S. Fowler, FCC Chairman

El Nino and Hacking

by Winn Schwartau

December 10, 1997 - Washington, DC: In the release today of a joint study, researchers at the National Institute of Correlative Data, Lowell University and Phenolon Laboratories are suggesting a strong linkage between the massive weather phenomenon known as El Nino and anticipated amounts of computer hacking this winter.

Criminologists in North America and Europe are taking particular notice of the results of the intensive six month study. Beli Andronni of the NorthEast Police Colloquium said, "If we can predict certain crimes in advance, we can warn many potential victims who might now be able to protect themselves." Large law enforcement agencies agree that the study offers "fantastic possibilities."

The premise of the study was quite accidental according to the researchers. Graduate student Michael Thor-Zene of Lowell University's Computer Science Department was studying computer hacking and hackers for a PhD dissertation when he realized that hacking events occurred more in certain months and weather conditions of a particular location. Intrigued, he further examined the data, "and found that unusual atmospheric conditions regularly accompany a large percentage of hacking incidents and electronic criminal activities."

The NICD and Phenolon Laboratories were also intrigued and the two sponsored a significant amount of the study. Phenolon Laboratories is the world's largest supplier of Bucky Balls, man-made chemical soccer-ball-shaped molecules in a class now known as Fullerenes. A new breed of the Bucky Balls acts as bio-chemical storage pods, where other smaller molecules can be 'eaten' by a Bucky Ball, but not absorbed. The Bucky Balls serve as the perfect long-term molecular garbage cans.

"The idea was to see if Bucky Balls could be sent into the body and be tuned to automatically 'eat' the right bio-chemical bits and pieces," said Dr. Sidney Paleontic, Top Viral Man at Phenolon Laboratories. "Then the super-slippery Bucky Ball would slither right through the human waste management system, and harmlessly go out to sea."

The team's accidental detection of the "Weather-Hacking Matrix" provided a new basis by which to analyze the future of crime. "Look at the weather. Look for very specific weather patterns that tend to be a little off the norm," said Peter Eeters of the NICD. "Somewhere, every day, odd weather occurs, and so will likely some hacking, phreaking, phlogging, phooling, or other electronic crime." No one is sure at this time why the correlation exists, "we're just sure it does."

One explanation is that a synaptical-vortex imbalance in the cerebral-hypothalamus causes severe increases in cyber-obsessive behavior. "This may be triggered by an as yet unknown relationship between microscopic elements in the atmosphere and the brain. Sort of an electric-asymmetry if you will."

The study says that hacking only takes place when one of two conditions occurs; either dryer, higher temperatures must raise and lower in entropic nulls, or wetter, lower temperatures lower and raise after a marked shift in thrombo-humidity. The broad based spectrum of correlated events can be swathed across the map of the United States and Europe. "The pattern is absolutely amazing," said Lowell's Thor-Zene. "It's a darn near perfect sinusoidal pattern, about 250 miles wide. The angle of the curve is what's totally awesome: the angle is 51°51' which is the same angle as the incline of the sides of the Great Pyramid of Cheops at Giza. And we all know what that means."

With small tornadoes, those less than 10 feet high ranging down to "Microscopic Rotational Atmospheric Anomalies," the effects became more pronounced by at least a factor of 10. This, researchers speculate, greatly increases the trigger rate of the synaptic-vortex imbalances.

"And that's why El Nino is really going to mess things up," added Dr. Paleontic. "We will experience almost three months of El Nino, thus creating the perfect atmospheric conditions for invitational hacking. Expect computer related crimes to rise on the order of 247% over the next several months. And we have the map of when and where this will occur."

In a public service advisory, the study's scientists are asking for assistance to hopefully ward off some of the effects of this global problem. "If anyone sees or hears about a tornado of a circumferential or vertical proportional of more [LESS] than ten feet - please call our office as fast as you can," recommends Beli Andronni of the NorthEast Police Colloquium. "With mini-tornadoes, we now know for an absolute fact that hacking is underway nearby. Guaranteed. I mean, this is a virtual 100% certainty. Our trained staff will note your exact location, and the precise weather conditions at the time of the call. Anonymity is provided, too."

The NDIC also asked that if you know about any hacking in progress, please call them immediately and describe anything you can about the hack as you ride out the tornado or other atmospheric anomaly. If you were the victim, they also will need to know about the weather conditions inside the computer rooms. "Some evidence of mini-tornadoes have been found inside of the larger facilities. A previously unknown chaotic strange-attractor may be at work here. We think it has something to do with ionization of swirling air near recirculation ducts, but there's nothing conclusive yet. We really need the public's help on this."

Peter Eeters adds, "Then, depending upon estimated damage, we will send out our TD/Ts, Tornado Detection Trucks, which can detect the still present "space ripples" which linger in the vicinity of them for perhaps half an hour."

"We recommend that people stay indoors when it's peak hacking times" added Mr. Thor-Zene. "A lot of quirky hacking will occur for about one hour prior to three hours after a mini-tornado passes nearby."

All three companies have set up a hot-line on EL Nino inspired hacking. They urge you to call if you have seen or been near small tornadoes so that they National El Nino/Hacking Plot Board can stay up-to-the-minute. Or, if you see uncontrolled hacking in progress, or other signs that El Nino driven hacking is about to take place, please call this number immediately: **<1.800.HACKTHIS>**

"If we all stay calm, work together and stay on top of this, we can really save ourselves. El Nino hacking. Who would have thought."

C/o 1997 Grok Resources, Ltd., Blevonshire, UK..

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Happy Holidays from the gang at InfoWar.Com!!
PEACE

Winn, Sherra, Betty, Craig, Olav, and Scott



The real reason for extinction.

OH, NO. IT'S GETTING COLD
AND DARK.



THANK GOD, ANOTHER
HIKER. MARK ZUCKERBERG?
CAN YOU HELP? I'M LOST.

O.K.



HERE ARE A FEW OPTIONS.
ONE OF THEM IS ACCURATE.
THE OTHERS COULD BE
MISINFORMATION. I'LL LET
YOU DECIDE.



WELL, THIS
IS ME. BYE.



IMPROVING THE WILDERNESS

These are [supposedly] actual comments left on Forest Service registration sheets and comment cards by backpackers completing wilderness camping trips:

"A small deer came into my camp and stole my bag of pickles. Is there a way I can get reimbursed? Please call."

"Escalators would help on steep uphill sections."

"Instead of a permit system or regulations, the Forest Service needs to reduce worldwide population growth to limit the number of visitors to wilderness."

"Trails need to be wider so people can walk while holding hands."

"Ban walking sticks in wilderness. Hikers that use walking sticks are more likely to chase animals."

"All the mile markers are missing this year."

"Found a smouldering cigarette left by a horse."

"Trails need to be reconstructed. Please avoid building trails that go uphill."

"Too many bugs and leeches and spiders and spider webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the area of these pests."

"Please pave the trails so they can be plowed of snow in the winter."

"Chairlifts need to be in some places so that we can get to wonderful views without having to hike to them."

"The coyotes made too much noise last night and kept me awake. Please eradicate these annoying animals."

"Reflectors need to be placed on trees every 50 feet so people can hike at night with flashlights."

"Need more signs to keep area pristine."

"A McDonald's would be nice at the trailhead."

"The places where trails do not exist are not well marked."

"Too many rocks in the mountains."

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS EXPLAINED

US DEMOCRATIC

You have two cows.
Your neighbor has none.
You feel guilty for being successful.
Barbara Streisand sings for you.

US REPUBLICAN

You have two cows.
Your neighbor has none.
So?



SOCIALIST

You have two cows.
The government takes one and gives it to your neighbor.
You form a cooperative to tell him how to manage his cow.

COMMUNIST

You have two cows.
The government seizes both and provides you with milk.
You wait in line for hours to get it.
It is expensive and sour.

CAPITALISM, AMERICAN STYLE

You have two cows.
You sell one, buy a bull, and build a herd of cows.

BUREAUCRACY, AMERICAN STYLE

You have two cows.
Under the new farm program the government pays you to shoot one, milk the other, and then pours the milk down the drain.



AMERICAN CORPORATION

You have two cows.
You sell one, lease it back to yourself and do an IPO on the 2nd one.
You force the two cows to produce the milk of four cows. You are surprised when one cow drops dead.
You spin an announcement to the analysts stating you have down sized and are reducing expenses.
Your stock goes up.

FRENCH CORPORATION

You have two cows.
You go on strike because you want three cows.
You go to lunch and drink wine.
Life is good.



JAPANESE CORPORATION

You have two cows.
You redesign them so they are one-tenth the size of an ordinary cow and produce twenty times the milk.
They learn to travel on unbelievably crowded trains.
Most are at the top of their class at cow school.

GERMAN CORPORATION

You have two cows.
You engineer them so they are all blond, drink lots of beer, give excellent quality milk, and run a hundred miles an hour.
Unfortunately they also demand 13 weeks of vacation per year.

ITALIAN CORPORATION

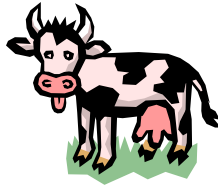
You have two cows but you don't know where they are.
While ambling around, you see a beautiful woman.
You break for lunch.
Life is good.

RUSSIAN CORPORATION

You have two cows.
You have some vodka.
You count them and learn you have five cows.
You have some more vodka.
You count them again and learn you have 42 cows.
The Mafia shows up and takes over however many cows you really have.

TALIBAN CORPORATION

You have all the cows in Afghanistan, which are two.
You don't milk them because you cannot touch any creature's private parts.
You get a \$40 million grant from the US government to find alternatives to milk production but use the money to buy weapons.



IRAQI CORPORATION

You have two cows.
They go into hiding.
They send radio tapes of their mooing.

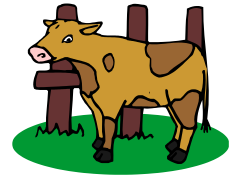
KOSHER CORPORATION

You have two cows, but there are several opinions about them.
Cows are Fleishig of course, but milk is Milchig. A Rabbinical Council is convened to argue this paradox.
A nice lunch is served.



POLISH CORPORATION

You have two bulls.
Employees are regularly maimed and killed attempting to milk them.



BELGIAN CORPORATION

You have one cow.
The cow is schizophrenic.
Sometimes the cow thinks she's French, other times she's Flemish.
The Flemish cow won't share with the French cow.
The French cow wants control of the Flemish cow's milk.
The cow asks permission to be cut in half.
The cow dies happy.

FLORIDA CORPORATION

You have a black cow and a brown cow.
Everyone votes for the best looking one.
Some of the people who actually like the brown one best accidentally vote for the black one.
Some people vote for both.
Some people vote for neither.
Some people can't figure out how to vote at all.
Finally, a bunch of guys from out-of-state tell you which one you think is the best-looking cow.

CALIFORNIA CORPORATION

You have millions of cows.
They make real California cheese.
Only five speak English.
Most are illegal immigrants.
Arnold likes the ones with the big udders.



IMPORTANT MEMO

To: All staff, Los Alamos National Laboratory
From: Bill Richardson, Secretary of Energy

Dear staff members:

Due to an unfortunate overreaction by the American people to our minor difficulties in the security area, we're being forced to tighten up just a wee bit.

Effective Monday:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The brown paper bag in which we store the computer disk drives that contain the nation's nuclear secrets will no longer be left on the picnic table at the staff commissary during lunch hour. It will be stored in "the vault." I know this is an inconvenience to many of you, but it's a sad sign of the times.2. The three-letter security code for accessing "the vault" will no longer be "B-O-B." To confuse would-be spies, that security code will be reversed. Please don't tell anybody.3. Visiting scientists and graduate students from Libya, North Korea and mainland China will no longer be allowed to wander the hallways without proper identification. Beginning Monday, they will be required to wear a stick-on lapel tag that clearly states, "Hello, My Name Is" The stickers will be available at the front desk.4. The computer network used for scientific calculations will no longer be hyperlinked via the Internet to such Web sites as sweedchicks.com or hackers-r-us.com, etc. Links to all Disney sites will be maintained, however.5. Researchers bearing a security clearance of Level 5 and higher will no longer be permitted to exchange updates on their work by posting advanced-physics formulas on the men's room walls. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. On "Bowling Night," please check your briefcases and laptop computers at the front counter of the Bowl-a-Drome instead of leaving them in the cloakroom. Mr. Badonov, the front-counter supervisor, has promised to "keep un eye on zem" for us.7. Staff members will no longer be allowed to take home small amounts of plutonium, iridium or uranium for use in those "little weekend projects around the house." That includes you parents who are helping the kids with their science fair projects.8. Thermonuclear devices may no longer be checked out for "recreational use." We've not yet decided if exceptions will be made for Halloween, the Fourth of July or New Year's Eve. We'll keep you posted.9. Employees may no longer "borrow" the AA batteries from the burglar alarm system to power their Game Boys and compact-disc players during working hours.10. And, finally, when reporting for work each day, all employees must enter through the front door. Raoul, the janitor, will no longer admit employees who tap three times on the side door to avoid clocking in late. |
|---|--|

I know this crackdown might seem punitive and oppressive to many of you, but it is our sworn duty to protect the valuable national secrets that have been entrusted to our care.

Remember: Security isn't a part-time job--it's an imperative, all 37½ hours of the week!

Sincerely,

Bill



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The Adventure of Many Lifetimes



For thousands of years, the human race has spread out across the Earth, scaling mountains and plying the oceans, planting crops and building highways, raising skyscrapers and atmospheric CO2 levels, and observing, with tremendous and unflagging enthusiasm, the Biblical injunction to be fruitful and multiply across our world's every last nook, cranny and subdivision.

Apply to be a Virgle pioneer

Take the questionnaire now

An invitation.

Earth has issues, and it's time humanity got started on a Plan B. So, starting in 2014, Virgin founder Richard Branson and Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin will be leading hundreds of users on one of the grandest adventures in human history: Project Virgle, the first permanent human colony on Mars.

The question is, do you want to join us?

Ever yearned to journey to the stars? You can [learn how to become a Virgle Pioneer](#), [test your Pioneering potential](#), or join the [Mission Control community](#) that will help develop the [100 Year Plan](#) we've outlined here.

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The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Got what it takes to join a startup civilization?

This 15-question multiple choice quiz will help determine your potential suitability as a Virgle Pioneer. Finish the test, then click "Submit." Good luck!

1. I would characterize my overall level of physical fitness as:

- ☐ Great. I'm totally buff.
- ☐ Good. I can do the stationary bike roughly as long as it take to watch a *Talk Radio* rerun on my gym's cable system.
- ☐ Okay. I could probably do a few crunches if you really insisted.
- ☐ Poor. The mere sight of a treadmill gives me chest pains and a weird tingling feeling in my extremities.

2. I am a world-class expert in

- ☐ physics
- ☐ medicine and first aid
- ☐ engineering
- ☐ Guitar Hero II

3. I _____ algae (as food).

- ☐ like
- ☐ dislike
- ☐ utterly loathe
- ☐ would be willing, if absolutely necessary, to endure

4. I _____ 1/3rd gravity (as the inverse-square electro-magnetic force binding me to the surface of my planet).

- ☐ like
- ☐ dislike
- ☐ utterly loathe
- ☐ would be willing, if absolutely necessary, to endure

5. If I had to wait up to 40 minutes for a response to email, I would

- ☐ Die.
- ☐ Rejoice.
- ☐ Choose my words more carefully.
- ☐ What's email?

6. If I was unexpectedly confronted with the emergence of a bewilderingly alien and frighteningly advanced Martian life form which appeared bent on killing me if I failed to quickly and effectively communicate my peaceful intentions and potential value to its civilization, I would

- ☐ Die
- ☐ Whip out my handy universal transcoder and start schmoozing my ass off.
- ☐ Well, given that there's no such thing as a transcoder that works for a Martian language that we haven't even heard yet, I guess I'd just do my best to seem non-threatening while communicating my peaceful intentions with subtly universal hand gestures.

- ☐ Run straight toward the Martian while screaming wildly and brandishing whatever weapon happens to be handy.
7. **I consider creature comforts like designer clothing and satellite TV with DVR service:**
- ☐ Utterly essential.
 - ☐ Utterly pointless.
 - ☐ Utterly essential if I'm going to spend the rest of my life stuck here on Earth anyway, but utterly pointless if (hint, hint) you all decide to send me on the Adventure of Many Lifetimes™.
 - ☐ Does the satellite service include Showtime, because I am sooooo into *Weeds*.
8. **The concept of a large group of equal individuals all working hard every day toward the collective good of our shared community sounds to me like**
- ☐ A utopian ideal.
 - ☐ A Communist plot.
 - ☐ A dreary stage that Virgle Pioneers will all have to endure while building a civilization robust enough to sustain a blessed return to mankind's usual selfish, materialistic, backbiting ways.
9. **A multi-stage heavy lift rocket built using established solid and liquid propellant technology with solid boosters doubled for increased payload capability could start a burn for insertion into a lunar trajectory and then back toward Earth for final insertion into a modified Hohmann Transfer Orbit, increasing its final Earth-to-Mars transfer velocity through a periapsis delta-v burn performed at the closest lunar and subsequent Earth approach, with the additional delta v gained on account of the potential energy from the mass of expended propellant,**
- ☐ Actually, I would think fairly quickly and easily
 - ☐ Only with significant time and fuel expenditure
 - ☐ My SAT tutor said to always guess C if you aren't sure
 - ☐ goo goo ga ga hee hee ha ha
10. **If I were to find myself a passenger on a cramped three-month journey from Earth to Mars with nothing to do with my free time except play a thousand consecutive games of backgammon with a fellow crew member whom I didn't particularly like to begin with, I would probably:**
- ☐ Kick some serious backgammon butt, yo.
 - ☐ Be sure to lose enough games to ensure that my fellow player doesn't build up unsustainable levels of frustration and go postal.
 - ☐ Go postal.
11. **If I were to find myself a passenger on a long-haul, multi-generational voyage to a distant solar system, and deteriorating on-ship ecological conditions, steadily weakening community stability and ever-rising number of missing backgammon pieces led some colonists to revolt against the ship's government, I would**
- ☐ Join the bloodthirsty populist revolution without thinking twice
 - ☐ Instinctively defend the reigning neo-fascist military regime
 - ☐ Hide in the infirmary until things blow over
 - ☐ Find a working Holistic Artificial Language interface and beg the on-board computers to take over the ship, and by extension the entirety of extra-solar-system humanity. For our own good, of course.

12. **"If I am accepted as a Virgle Pioneer, I will enthusiastically embrace my solemn responsibility to produce as many offspring as I can in order to help develop our fledgling Martian civilization." This statement, in my case, is**
- ☐ True. *Hell* , yeah, it's true. Could we have some, like, Virgle Pioneer keggers in advance just to sort, you know, um, break the ice?
 - ☐ Um, definitely *false* -- and you'll be hearing from my attorney for insinuating otherwise.
 - ☐ Could I maybe see a few head shots of my fellow Pioneers before answering this question?
13. **When I gaze up at a gleaming starscape late on a clear autumn night, I experience**
- ☐ A sense of wonder at the miraculous bounty of God's infinite universe.
 - ☐ A head rush.
14. **I feel _____ the unknown**
- ☐ considerable trepidation toward
 - ☐ soul-crushing boredom when forced to confront
 - ☐ utter awe at the very idea of
 - ☐ a calm determination to vanquish
15. **The next step in the application process is to submit a 30-second video explaining why you want to live on Mars. Click the Submit button below to receive your test results and continue on your glorious journey**

Submit


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The Adventure of Many Lifetimes: Open Source Planet

An Open Source Planet

Project Virgle comprises three equal partners: Google, Virgin and a diffuse network of talented individuals who want to participate in our mission. Tapping into this global network means organizing our venture around the model that will most efficiently liberate and reward individual knowledge, effort and creativity while creating strong incentives for investing companies.

In other words, from end to end, Project Virgle will be open source.

A post-post-industrial economy

What does "open source" mean in the context of a distant, planet-wide, century-long enterprise? Today's industrialized (and post-industrialized) (and, one imagines, post-post-industrialized) economies are sustained not so much by physical wealth as by advanced systems of shared knowledge whose marginal productivity grows as more is accumulated. "Shared," however, doesn't mean valueless; we see Virgle as a decidedly for-profit venture that will develop most efficiently via decentralized models of effort, authority and reward. If the first economic revolution was agricultural, the second industrial and the third digital, the fourth will be Open Source -- the birthing of a planetary civilization whose development is driven by the unbound human imagination.



Virgle is an undertaking of almost unfathomable complexity whose success will derive to a distressingly large degree from the amount of effort that is, or isn't, put into it. So we hope we don't come off as too sweatily desperate in embracing a philosophy that we believe will invest, literally and figuratively, an exponentially larger network of individuals in our success than would a traditional corporate structure. We want to engage, one might say, the Long Tail of human creativity. Instead of 5,000 people working 12 hours a day six days a week in exchange for a full salary and benefits, imagine 5 million people working a few hours a week in exchange for contribution-based equity in the form of shares in Virgle Inc and ownership of the land of which the colony will ultimately take some form of possession.

\$36 trillion worth of dirt

You weren't thinking real estate? Start. Virgle's costs will be considerable -- we're planning on up-front investments of \$10-15 billion in the first two decades -- but so too will the colony's long-term earnings. Whatever one's interpretation of the Outer Space Treaty, for instance, it seems clear that the initial explorers and developers will be able to claim ownership of some significant portion of 143 million square kilometers of Martian real estate, which, sold (or traded as open-source sweat equity) at an average value of \$10 per acre, would be worth a cool \$358 billion. Multiply that by 100x for its post-terraforming value and you get a figure of \$36 trillion. Clearly, whatever model of real estate distribution our emerging society adopts, its worth will exceed the investments likely to be required to unlock that value.

Our civilization's most valuable export, meanwhile, will be intellectual property. The problems our Pioneers solve in the course of their world-building enterprise will represent an engine of invention in dozens of lucrative areas, from biotechnology to geology, physics

to agriculture. We see the community's system of intellectual property development evolving from a community open source model to commercial open source (or perhaps we mean that the other way around?). We can imagine that commons-based peer production model -- in which the creative energy of large numbers of people is coordinated into large, meaningful projects, mostly without traditional hierarchical organization or direct financial compensation -- extending to almost every imaginable aspect of Martian life.

Open Innovation

In a world of distributed knowledge, companies cannot afford to rely entirely on their own research, but should instead buy or license processes or inventions from other companies. The flow of intellectual property between Earth and Mars will not be unidirectional; we should profit from others' use of our innovations, and we should buy or lease others' intellectual property whenever it advances our own goals. Not all smart people work on Earth anymore; just as "globalization" led American companies to start working with talented people all over the world, "Solar Systemization" will lead Earthside companies to start working with talented individuals who chose to move to Mars because of its open source nature, low gravity, cheap real estate, fabulous sunsets and other attractions.

This dynamic offers a practical opening for a vibrant open source network. For example, pharmaceutical scientists need to develop and test many new compounds, but the restrictive competition that occurs in the Earthside drug industry due to patent law throws a wrench in the capitalist model; it currently costs north of \$1 billion to bring a new drug to market. Virgle, Inc., by contrast, could initially maintain the enterprise license for the intellectual property, then grant a manufacturing license to pharmaceutical companies on Earth. The largest part of the proceeds would go to the Mars settlement, and a smaller part would be redistributed among the particular participants based on peer-based contribution assessments.

Making excuses, soliciting help

That's just one initial example of the way we're trying to envision the New New World. On Mars, the gardens we plant, the hubs we build, the networks we lay, the societal structures we improvise — all will be radically decentralized, non-hierarchical and, you know, perfect and cool and groundbreaking and innovative in every way...and uh, yeah, of course we recognize that this essay is pretty breathy and sketchy; we think we might be able to get away with claiming that we intended it that way all along, that everything you've read here in this Virgle presentation is just us laying down a quick framework, some cognitive scaffolding whose beams and drywall and primer and paint will have to come from, well, not to put too fine a point on it, you. A quick sampling of intriguing open-source-related questions to which we hope our burgeoning community of interested users might offers answers could include:

- How should an open source planetary development project interact with existing companies and markets?
- What's the right time for Virgle Inc. hold its initial public offering? When the first spaceship lands? When the first Pioneers stake their claim to Martian property? When the settlement is self-sustained from Mars alone? Tomorrow?
- At what point should Martian property move from being distributed solely among Pioneers and open source investors to being traded to outside investors?
- How should a civilian Martian government be developed independent of our private company?
- How would peer to peer project reviews work and what would be the principles behind triggering escalations and balancing communication and development while staying away from hierarchical viscosity?

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The Adventure of Many Lifetimes: Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently Asked Questions

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-

How are you planning to reach Mars?

During the first couple of decades Virgle will use standard technology of the day - chemical rockets to ferry cargo and crews to Mars. As the bootstrap plan stands today, in order to reach Mars (once the tri-module is assembled in LEO) the Virgle 1's cruise stage will start a burn for insertion into a lunar trajectory and then back toward Earth for final insertion into a modified Hohmann Transfer Orbit. This multi-day round trip will use a variant of the Oberth effect, the Krasnokutskaya periapsis maneuver, to increase the final Earth-to-Mars transfer velocity through a periapsis delta-v burn performed at the closest lunar and subsequent Earth approach, with the additional delta v gained on account of the potential energy from the mass of expended propellant. The total useful mass sent this way to Mars will be 569 metric tons, meaning (obviously) that it will take four launches to complete the assembly. The design does allow for easy reconfiguration for varying payload capacities and transfer duration times. This round trip is also a final test and verification of the cruise configuration, assuring mission support that all systems are running within their nominal values. The design also provides for several orbital abort modes, decreasing significantly the probability of any mission losing a payload, human or otherwise.

How hard is it to land on the Martian surface?

Getting to Mars is actually (relatively) easy; it's landing that's tricky. In order to get to Mars the Virgle ships will need to build up enough delta v that when we reach the planet we'll be traveling on the order of 3 miles per second, with a quite heavy ship. Recall your high school physics: kinetic energy rises with the square of speed, and all this energy has to go back to zero when we land. One way might be to use atmospheric friction to slow down -- but the Martian atmosphere is so thin that we won't have enough altitude to slow down fast enough to avoid crashing. So our mission plan will have to employ a combination of technologies to land the staging, mission and crew vehicles, including biconics, split body flaps, feathered reentries and vectored impulse breaking.

Where will you build the settlement?

Our landing site is located on Lunae Planum on the northwest side of Kasei Valles. Lunae Planum marks the transition between the high Tharsis rise, a giant volcanic bulge, and the northern lowland plains. This region shows many signs of significant crustal deformation and other structures that are likely caused by ice. Scientists have hypothesized that this area's valleys and ridges (called "fretted terrain") may have developed as icy debris flowed onto the northern plains eons ago, during the great Martian flood epoch. It's an ideal place for our settlement, because of the likelihood of both subsurface water and nearby lava tubes and pits; mild weather (in Martian terms) due to its proximity to the equator; and proximity to Kasei Valles, which, after terraformation, will be highly attractive shorefront property. The Virgle 1 should settle down not far from Chryse Planitia, the Plains of Gold, where the Viking 1 spacecraft landed on July 20, 1976.

What's the most challenging aspect of settling Mars?

Project Virgle has many challenging aspects, from the need for technologies that can deal with low temperatures and highly dusty terrains bathed in debilitating ultraviolet radiation to the insanely complex logistics of maintaining a viable food chain, heavy manufacturing and a scalable Earth-Mars transport system. But, as is the case for human civilization on Earth, Virgle's long term success (or grisly, horrific failure) will depend to a large degree on a single linchpin: Energy. We'll need to produce and manage enough energy to sustain the initial missions and begin in-situ resource utilization and fabrication and the expansion of the initial settlements.

Our energy budget will consist of three major sources:

- Solar photo-voltaic arrays and wind turbines, because of their initial lower energy density, will be used to feed smaller subsystems and backup units.
- The initial Virgle launches will also carry compact chemical plants for producing methane for rocket fuel (to fuel the ERV and Mars rovers) and water (to fuel humans) using the so-called Sabatier process, which combines hydrogen brought from Earth with CO₂ from the Martian atmosphere to produce methane and water ($4\text{H}_2 + \text{CO}_2 \rightarrow \text{CH}_4 + 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$), which in turn can be electrolyzed to produce breathable oxygen and more hydrogen to continue the cycle.
- Methane and direct and indirect solar energy can sustain the crew for awhile, but there's no energy option capable of scaling our mission to the level of a viable settlement other than nuclear -- specifically, a pebble bed reactor plant combining a CO₂-cooled core and novel fuel packaging that dramatically reduces complexity while improving safety.

Do you think you'll find life there?

Maybe. We know that in the past, the surface of Mars was covered with water, had a thicker atmosphere and volcanic activity, and was much warmer than it is today -- all conditions in which life could have developed. Scientists have also observed, on one Martian meteorite collected in the Antarctic, strange features that might, or might not, be organic in origin.

If life does exist on Mars today, it's almost certain to be primitive, i.e. bacterial, and it's almost certain not to exist on the planet surface, which is currently baked in UV radiation. However, since ice and perhaps water could exist a few meters below the surface, it's possible that life exists there today in these spots. Also, new data suggest the presence of methane in the Martian atmosphere. Since atmospheric methane is destroyed by solar radiation, it isn't clear where all this new methane would be coming from.

Project Virgle's primary concern, though, is not the search for life on Mars, but the creation of a self-sufficient human colony there. Our outpost, however, will naturally be a great place for geologists and egzobiologists to study the question.

Even if life is discovered, how do we know it's not from Earth?

Good question. Life on Mars could indeed be from Earth. "Planetary transfer" theory suggests that early in both planets' histories, material from the frequent meteorite strikes could have been ejected from Earth and sent towards Mars. So yes, Earth could have theoretically seeded life on Mars (or vice versa; we could all be "Martians" in that sense).

What is of greater concern to the Virgle team is to develop the Mars settlement observing the so-called PP (planetary protection) protocols, which call for special attention to, and protection of, areas of Mars where life is most likely to exist today, or have existed in the past. We take this responsibility seriously and will consistently act so as to protect any possible sites and to research them as quickly and thoroughly as possible.

Can Mars be terraformed?

Terraformation is the process of turning the hostile Martian environment into one more hospitable for life, i.e. making it more like Earth (terra). Mars is smaller and less massive than the Earth, and while we know that water flowed on its surface in the past, because of its weaker gravity the poor planet eventually lost much of its atmosphere and greenhouse gases, thus cooling the planet and reducing its surface pressure to a level comparable to the pressure 20 miles above Earth. This has two consequences today: humans have to wear pressurized suits while outside their hab units, and liquid water can't exist on the surface.

The aim of terraformation is to warm the planet, melt the subsurface water reservoirs and ultimately increase atmospheric pressure and temperature to levels where humans don't need a pressure suit (though we'll still need to use supplementary oxygen respirators for at least the first couple hundred years). There are several proposed terraforming schemes, from smashing asteroids rich in volatiles into the surface of Mars to using huge orbital mirrors to melt the frozen CO₂ caps at the Martian poles. Our approach is likely to be the introduction of halo-carbon gases (CFCs) and water vapour into the atmosphere, in part with energy concentrated from mirrors manufactured on the Martian moon of Phobos. These methods should be enough to allow advanced plants to propagate across Mars; these plants would then take over the job and start releasing oxygen in their own right. In a matter of several decades, such an approach could transform Mars from its current dry and frozen state into a warm and slightly moist planet capable of supporting life.

How big will Virgle City get?

That depends on the time frame you're asking about. Let's say, 100 years. Like any new colony, Virgle City will start small. Once the initial equipment, habs, return vehicles, greenhouses, communications and power have been staged -- i.e. the alpha assembly completed -- and the infrastructure has been tested and confirmed operational, we'll send the first crewed missions, followed, of course, by many, many more crewed missions. Our current estimates place the sustained population growth rate at close to 9%, initially due mostly to immigration. The first mission will carry 12 Pioneers. After 10 years this number will grow to 56. After 50 years the colony will number 1,650 settlers (with population growth shifting to people actually born on the planet, and thus truly having the right to call themselves "Martians"). After 100 years, we estimate that Virgle City and its surrounding settlements should boast a population of 103,521 colonists.

How'd you learn all this stuff?

Reading. Surfing. Studying. Cramming. Arguing. Improvising. Special thanks to the brilliant minds at the invaluable [Mars Society](#)

I have a comment to make/question to ask/objection to raise/insult to hurl regarding one of your brilliant/intriguing/misinformed/inadequate/stupid answers listed above.

Cool. Please visit us at [Virgle Mission Control](#), where Mars geeks like you (and us) will be able to discuss various aspects of the colonization of the Red Planet to our hearts' content.



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Google and Virgin announce Mars expedition and colony

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. and LONDON, England (April 1st, 2008) – Google (NASDAQ: GOOG) and Virgin Group today announced the launch of Virgle Inc., a jointly owned and operated venture dedicated to the establishment of a human settlement on Mars.

"Some people are calling Virgle an 'interplanetary Noah's Ark,'" said Virgin Group President and Founder Sir Richard Branson, who conceived the new venture. "I'm one of them. It's a potentially remarkable business, but more than that, it's a glorious adventure. For me, Virgle evokes the spirit of explorers such as Christopher Columbus and Marco Polo, who set sail looking for the New World. I do hope we'll be a bit more efficient about actually finding it, though."

The Virgle 100 Year Plan's milestones will include Virgle Pioneer selection (2008-2010), the first manned journey to Mars (2016), a Virgle Inc. initial public offering to capitalize on the first manned journey to Mars (2016), the founding of the first permanent Martian municipality, Virgle City (2050), and the achievement of a truly self-sustaining Martian civilization with a population exceeding 100,000 (2108).

"Virgle is the ultimate application of a principle we've always believed at Google: that you can do well by doing good," said Google co-founder Larry Page, who plans to share leadership of the new Martian civilization with Branson and Google co-founder Sergey Brin.

"We feel that ensuring the survival of the human race by helping it colonize a new planet is both a moral good in and of itself and also the most likely method of ensuring the survival of our best – okay, fine, only -- base of web search volume and advertising inventory," Page added. "So, you know, it's, like, win-win."

The original contingent of Virgle Pioneers will be selected by numerous criteria, including an online questionnaire, video submission, personal accomplishments, expertise in scientific, artistic, sociological and/or political fields of endeavor, and inadequate Google and Virgin personal performance reviews.

About Google Inc.

Google's innovative search technologies connect millions of people around the world with information every day. Founded in 1998 by Stanford Ph.D. students Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Google today is a top Web property in all major global markets. Google's targeted advertising program provides businesses of all sizes with measurable results, while enhancing the overall Web experience for users. Google is headquartered in Silicon Valley with offices throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia. For more information, visit www.google.com.

About the Virgin Group

Virgin, a leading branded venture capital organisation, is one of the world's most recognised and respected brands. Conceived in 1970 by Sir Richard Branson, the Virgin Group has gone on to grow very successful businesses in sectors ranging from mobile telephony to transportation, travel, financial services, leisure, music, holidays, publishing and retailing. Virgin has created more than 200 branded companies worldwide, employing approximately 50,000 people, in 29 countries. Revenues around the world in 2007 exceeded £11.5 billion (approx. US\$23 billion). For more information, visit www.virgin.com.

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JON ADAMS
@CITYCYCLOPS

“Honey, come look! I’ve found some information all the world’s top scientists and doctors missed.”

Things you would never know without the Movies

A detective can only solve a case once he has been suspended from duty.

A man will show no pain while taking the most ferocious beating but will wince when a woman tries to clean his wounds.

A single match will be sufficient to light up a room the size of RFK Stadium.

All beds have special L-shaped cover sheets which reach up to the armpit level on a woman but only to waist level on the man lying beside her.

All bombs are fitted with electronic timing devices with large red readouts so you know exactly when they're going to go off.

All grocery shopping bags contain at least one stick of French Bread.

All telephone numbers in America begin with the digits 555.

Although in the 20th century it is possible to fire weapons at an object out of our visual range, people of the 23rd century will have lost this technology.

An electric fence powerful enough to kill a dinosaur will cause no lasting damage to an eight year old child.

Any lock can be picked by a credit card or a paper clip in seconds - unless it's the door to a burning building with a child trapped inside.

Any person waking from a nightmare will sit bolt upright and pant.

Cars that crash always burst into flames.

During all police investigations it will be necessary to visit a strip club at least once.

Even when driving down a perfectly straight road it is necessary to turn the steering wheel vigorously from left to right every few moments.

If a large pane of glass is visible, someone will be thrown through it before long.

If being chased through town, you can usually take cover in a passing parade - at any time of the year.

If staying in a haunted house, women should investigate any strange noises in their most revealing underwear.

If you decide to start dancing in the street, everyone you bump into will know all the steps.

If you need to reload your gun, you will always have more ammunition - even if you haven't been carrying any before now.

If your town is threatened by an imminent natural disaster or killer beast, the mayor's first concern will be the tourist trade or his forthcoming art exhibition.

Interbreeding is genetically possible with any creature from elsewhere in the universe.

It does not matter if you are heavily outnumbered in a fight involving martial arts - your enemies will wait patiently to attack you one by one by dancing around in a threatening manner until you have knocked out their predecessors.

It is always possible to park directly outside the building you are visiting.

It is not necessary to say hello or goodbye when beginning or ending phone conversations.

It's easy for anyone to land a plane providing there is someone in the control tower to talk you down.

Kitchens don't have light switches. When entering a kitchen at night, you should open the fridge door and use that light instead.

Medieval peasants had perfect teeth.

Most dogs are immortal.

Most laptop computers are powerful enough to override the communication systems of any invading alien civilization.

Mothers routinely cook eggs, bacon and waffles for their family every morning even though their husband and children never have time to eat it.

No-one involved in a car chase, hijacking, explosion, volcanic eruption or alien invasion will ever go into shock.

Once applied, lipstick will never rub off - even while scuba diving.

Police Departments give their officers personality tests to make sure they are deliberately assigned a partner who is their total opposite.

Should you wish to pass yourself off as a German officer, it will not be necessary to speak the language. A German accent will do.

Television news bulletins always contain a story that affects you personally at that precise moment.

The Chief of Police will always suspend his star detective - or give him 48 hours to finish the job.

The Eiffel Tower can be seen from any window in Paris.

The ventilation system of any building is the perfect hiding place. No-one will ever think of looking for you in there and you can travel to any other part of the building you want without difficulty.

When a person is knocked unconscious by a blow to the head, they will never suffer a concussion or brain damage.

When paying for a taxi, don't look at your wallet as you take out a bill - just grab one at random and hand it over. It will always be the exact fare.

When they are alone, all foreigners prefer to speak English to each other.

When you empty the clip of your gun, it is not necessary to hang on to it and reload it later. Simply toss it on the ground.

Word processors never display a cursor on screen but will always say: Enter Password Now.

You can always find a chainsaw when you need one.

You're very likely to survive any battle in any war unless you make the mistake of showing someone a picture of your sweetheart back home.



THE POLITICIAN DIES

While walking down the street one day, a distinguished elderly politician is tragically hit by a truck and dies.

His soul arrives in heaven and is met by St. Peter at the entrance.

"Welcome to heaven," says St. Peter.

"Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these parts, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you."

"No problem, just let me in," says the man.

"Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from Higher Up. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity."

"Really, I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven," says the politician.

"I'm sorry, but we have our rules."

And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell. The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a green golf course. In the distance is a clubhouse and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him.

Everyone is very happy and in evening dress .. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the people.

They play a friendly game of golf and then dine on lobster, caviar and champagne.

Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly & nice guy who has a good time dancing and telling jokes. They are having such a good time that before he realizes it, it is time to go.

Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and waves while the elevator rises

The elevator goes up, up, up and the door reopens on heaven where St. Peter is waiting for him.

"Now it's time to visit heaven."

So, 24 hours pass with the politician joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and, before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns.

"Well, then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity."

The politician reflects for a minute, then he answers:

"Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell."

So St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell.

Now the doors of the elevator open and he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage.

He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls from above.

The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulder. "I don't understand," stammers the politician.

"Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, and danced and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable."

"What happened?"

The devil looks at him, smiles and says, "Yesterday we were campaigning....."

"Today you voted."



Supermarket SenseSurround

The new supermarket near our house has an automatic water mister to keep the produce fresh. Just before it goes on, you hear the sound of distant thunder and sniff the fragrance of fresh rain.

When you approach the milk cases, you hear cows mooing and enjoy the scent of fresh hay.

When you approach the egg case, you hear hens cluck and cackle and the air is filled with the pleasing aroma of bacon and eggs frying.

The veggie department features the smell of fresh buttered corn.

* * *

I don't buy toilet paper there any more.

40 People Missing After First Flat Earth Surfing Championship






This guy from India makes sure I never feel lonely. He calls me every day because he is so concerned about my car warranty.

**Does anyone else
feel that their being
watched?**

 Like

 Comment

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Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
*** they're**

Just now • Like • Reply

Dover Sole

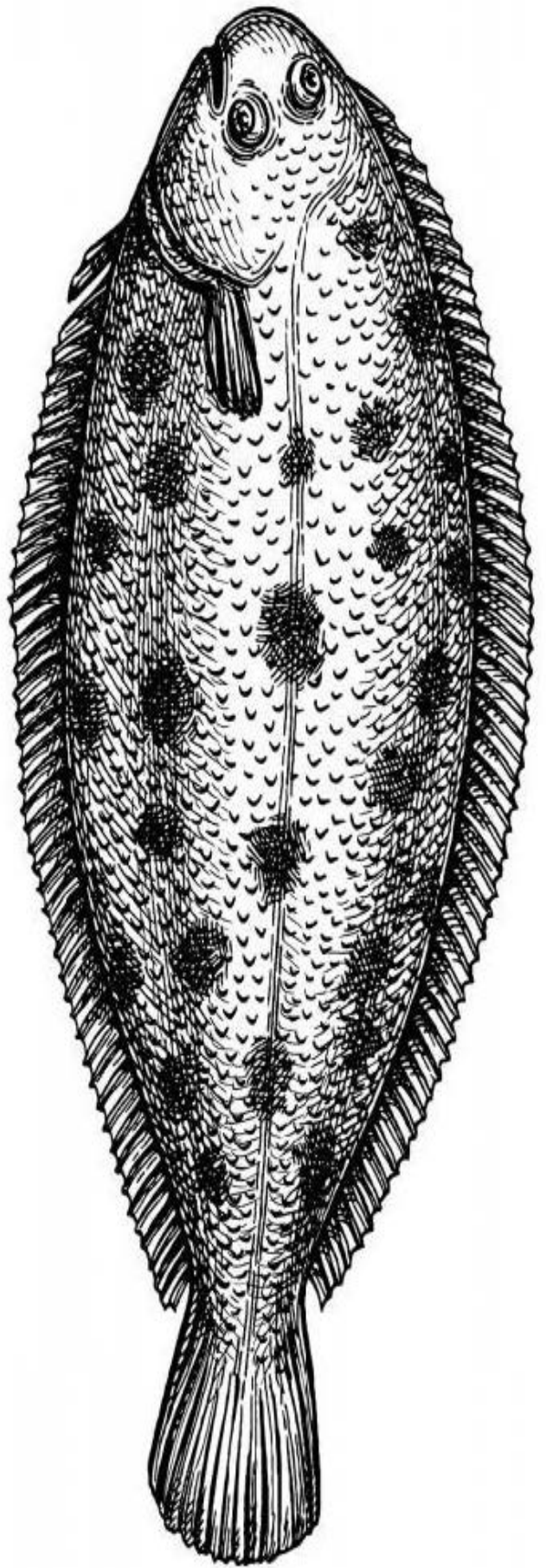
By Matthew Arnold's Cat

The sea smells sweet to-night,
The tide is low, the soft waves roll
Along the beach; – on the French coast, a light
Gleams, and is gone; let's hope some tipsy Frog
Ran down a poodle. From the tranquil bay
Comes the distant tang of fresh-caught sole!
Only, below in the waterway,
Battered prows part the wisps of fog.
Listen! You hear the deep-toned toll
Of buoy-bells which the boats' wakes rock, and ring,
As they return and tightly clog
The little port, and then the men begin
The slow unloading of the catch, and bring
The delicious scent of supper in.

Epicurus's cat long ago
Smelled it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind a just-deboned turbot
Unguarded in the kitchen; he
Could well have been the father of the thought
That something's to be said for gluttony.

The smell of fish
Grows stronger still, and on the kitchen stair
A box of neat fillets sits packed with ice.
And now I clearly hear
The monger's wagon rattling through the square,
Delivering the dinner dish
From the seafood shop down by the iron pier.
Farewell to thoughts of dreary mice!

Ah, fish, there is no fare
Quite like a flounder! They surely will not miss
A piece or two from stacks of sole like this;
I'll steal a few, but leave the lion's share.
Look! the lamplight on the lane is pretty;
They're back from walking out on Dover Beach.
I think I'll hide and spare myself the speech,
For we are in a world untouched by pity
Where ignorant humans curse the kitty.



THE LOVE-SONG OF J. MORRIS HOUSECAT

By T. S. Eliot's Cat

*M'io muoiano muole miglio min
miei ma miogni noi parlamiaou
muoi m'uomi miure ne piu
miolo muoiano mio siamiaou.
Dante's cat*

Let us roam then, you and I,
When the evening is splayed out across the sky
Like a kitten neutered on a laboratory slab;
Let us stray on paths through neighbors' yards
Behind the boulevards
Where raccoons scuttle in the refuse bins
Scattering cellophane and potato skins;
Paths that flow like a nagging accusation
Of a minor violation
To lead you to the ultimate reproof . . .
Oh, do not say, "Bad kitty!"
Let us go and prowls the city.

In the rooms the cats run to and fro
Auditioning for a Broadway show.

The soft white fog that rises from the rubbish heap,
The soft white cloud that surges through the rubbish heap,
Flows into the corners of the million-dollar set;
The waves of dry-ice smoke that rolls waist-deep
Lathers the human actors' fake-fur suits
As they ham it up to the music's beats,
Forms into pools in the orchestra pit,
And leaves a chemical smell on the front-row seats.

And indeed there will be time
For the soft white smoke that spills along the stage,
Curling in wisps around the rubbish heap;
There will be time, there will be time
To calculate in human years your feline age.
There will be time to wheedle and cajole,
Time to beg the guests who come to tea
To drop leftover tidbits in your bowl;
Time to sniff at a kitchen scrap,
And time yet for some unforeseen obsessions,
And time for new digressions and transgressions,
Before the taking of another nap.

In the rooms the cats run to and fro
Auditioning for a Broadway show.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I shed?" and "Do I shed?"
Time to turn back and stretch out on the bed,
And give myself a bath before I'm fed—
(They will say: "It's the short-haired ones I prefer.")
My flea collar buckled neatly in my fur,
My expression cool and distant but softened by a gentle purr—
(They will say, "I'm allergic to his fur!")
Do I dare
Jump up on the table?
In an instant there is time
For excursions and inversions that will make me seem
unstable.

For I have known the ones who feed me, known them all—
Have known my humans well and leaned against their shins,
I have measured out my lives in catfood tins;
I know the voices calling with a singsong call:
But is it dinner, or is it time to hide?
And should I go outside?

And I have known the hands already, known them all—
The hands that pet you while you try to take a nap,
The brusque insistent thumbs, the fingers lacking in tact,
And when I am kneaded like a bread-dough ball,
Then how should I react?
Should I cough up a furball in your lap?
Then should I go outside?

And I have known the feet already, known them all—
Feet that are booted or slippered or bare
(And tread upon your tail when you lie along the stair.)
And is it true it rankles
When I rub against your ankles?
Feet that cross beneath the table, or walk along the hall.
So should I go outside?
And then demand to come back in?

.....

THE LOVE-SONG OF J. MORRIS HOUSECAT

Do you know, I have walked along the neat suburban streets
And seen the hand-drawn posters of missing cats
Stapled to the maples where poodles lift their legs? . .

I should have been two pairs of spotted paws
Padding across a sea of sighing grass.

.....

And in the afternoon, the evening, I sleep so fitfully,
Tickled by a bony digit,
I sleep . . . but you notice that I fidget.
Stretched out beside you on the old settee,
Should I, after liver snacks and tastes of last night's roast,
Chase a ball or claw my scratching post?
For though I have hissed and growled, hissed and spat,
Though I have brought a mouse (grown slightly cold) and
dropped it on the landing,
I am no predator—life outdoors is too demanding.
I like a proper dinner and my kitty litter.
I have seen the Infernal Vet inspect my teeth, and titter.
In short, I am a 'fraidy cat.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Amid the broken cups, the nibbled plants,
Amid the cat hairs on your best grey pants,
Amid the claw marks in the carpet pile,
Would it have been worth my while
To have dropped a half-dead chipmunk in the hall
And left it squirming like a pregnant pause,
As if to say, "I would have purchased you a pocket watch
instead,
But as a cat, I lacked the wherewithal"—
Or if sitting on a pillow by your head,
My look might mean: "I am not sure what I am doing
here at all.
I am an animal, after all."

And would it then be worth while, after all,
Would it then be worth my while,
Amid the splintered chair legs and the lacerated rugs,
Amid the scratches on the banister, amid the shredded drapes
that frame the terrace door,
Amid the fragments on the floor—
If I could shatter my mystique,
If that bitter yellow fluid from the bottle with the dropper
could enable me to speak,
Then would it be worth while
If, sitting on the sofa in my customary sprawl,
I should turn in your direction, and remark:
"I am really not upset at all.
I just grew tired of my rubber ball."

No! I am not a Practical Cat, nor was I meant to be;
I am a household pet—I will suffice
To warm an empty room, dispatch some mice,
Distract you with my play, amuse a guest;
An easy pet to own, a small expense,
Fastidious, a bit inscrutable,
Temperamental, quick to take offense;
At times, indeed, wholly unsuitable—
Almost, at times, a pest.

I grow fat . . . I grow fat . . .
I shall wear white woolen booties and a silly hat.

Shall I have my fur shampooed? Do I dare to eat some
quiche?
I shall wear a little jacket and walk upon a leash.
I will never knock the knickknacks from their niche.

I do not think they'll have me put to sleep.

I have seen the tomcats in the vacant lots
Parading through the ash piles in a pack
With their tails hooked high and their ears bent back.

We will gather on a fuming rubbish heap
And prowl the musty alleys of a slum
Till human voices call us, and we come.

From *Poetry for Cats: The Definitive Anthology of Distinguished Feline Verse* by Henry Beard (1994). Villard Books (ISBN 0679435824). < <https://smile.amazon.com/Poetry-Cats-Definitive-Anthology-Distinguished/dp/0679435824> >



PARADOX

From "Cat Years"

By Ogden Nash's Cat

I wonder why no human ever seems to catch on
That things that aren't forbidden are no fun to scratch on.

*Poetry for Cats: The Definitive Anthology of
Distinguished Feline Verse.* Beard, H. (1994).
Villard Books (ISBN 978-0679435822).

Sitting by the Fire on a Snowy Evening

By Robert Frost's Cat

Whose chair this is by now I know.
He's somewhere in the forest though;
He will not see me sitting here
A place I'm not supposed to go.



He really is a little queer
To leave his fire's cozy cheer
And ride out by the frozen lake
The coldest evening of the year.



To love the snow it takes a flake:
The chill that makes your footpads ache,
The drifts too high to lurk or creep,
The icicles that drip and break.



His chair is comfy, soft and deep.
But I have got an urge to leap,
And mice to catch before I sleep.
And mice to catch before I sleep.

Beard, H. (1994). *Poetry for Cats: The Definitive Anthology of Distinguished Feline Verse*. John Boswell Associates Book / Villard Books (New York).
|ISBN 0-679-43582-4



Treed
by Joyce Kilmer's Cat

I think that I shall never see
A poem nifty as a tree.

A tree whose rugged trunk seems meant
To speed a happy cat's ascent;

A tree that laughs at dogs all day
And serves up baby birds for prey;

A tree whose limbs are in the sky
Where clandestinely I can spy;

Until it doth upon me dawn
It is a mile down to the lawn.

Poems are made by cats like me,
But only you can get me off this goddam stupid tree.



DO NOT GO PEACEABLE TO THAT DAMN VET

By Dylan Thomas's Cat

Do not go peaceable to that
damn vet,
A cat can always tell a trip is
due,
Hide, hide, when your
appointment is set.

Wise cats who watched, and
learned the alphabet,
And never let men know how
much they knew,
Do not go peaceable to that
damn vet.

Young cats who want to keep
their claws to whet
On sofa legs, and save their
privates, too,
Hide, hide, when your
appointment time is set.

Such cats, poor things, whose
stomachs are upset,
But hate to eat some evil-
smelling goo,
Do not go peaceable to that
damn vet.

Old cats who have no wish to
sleep just yet,
And plan to live another life or
two,
Hide, hide when your
appointment is set.

And though your human
sweetly calls his pet,
Or rants and raves until his
face is blue,
Do not go peaceable to that
damn vet,
Hide, hide when your
appointment time is set.

Beard, H. (1994). *Poetry for Cats: The Definitive Anthology of Distinguished Feline Verse*.
Villard Books (ISBN 978-0679435822).



*"But you can't miss her second-grade
first-semester graduation!"*

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And do you, Casey,
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"Very creative, but is it something your mother would want to share on social media?"