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Jan/Feb. 2012.



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'Why America's 99 per cent have rebelled', published in *New Internationalist*,
Dec. 2011.



Why America's 99 per cent have rebelled

If you haven't seen it yet, you owe yourself a visit. If you're already familiar with it, go back to remind yourself why the #Occupy movement is so powerful.

I am referring to the 'We are the 99 per cent' blog¹, the most direct and articulate explanation available of why so many – across the US and beyond – have rebelled. The site is a blog to which people submit pictures of themselves. Usually, a person holds out a notebook or sheet of paper, their face partially obscured. On the paper, they have written their stories. Almost always, you can see their eyes.

A stocky man with a short beard, maybe in his forties, has written neatly in marker: '947 days unemployed. 2,000+ resumes sent out. 0 job prospects.'

A young woman in light lipstick: 'I'm a full-time grad student and a full-time worker. I have chronic, excruciating migraines. I live in fear of the next attack. I can barely cover rent, gas, and groceries. I can't afford a doctor's visit, let alone health insurance.'

A woman with a weary stare: 'My husband has been looking for work for five years. I support him, myself, our six-year-old son, and (increasingly) my ageing parents. Now my job is in jeopardy too.'

They write: 'I am one paycheck away from not being able to make my loan payments.' 'I am 32 years old and live with my mother.' 'I have lost hope.' 'What am I doing wrong?'

They sign their messages, 'I am the 99%.'

You will not get through all of the stories. As I write, there are 185 pages of them. Yet the message of the site is immediately clear: while our society's richest one per cent enjoys a hugely disproportionate share of wealth and income, the economy has left the vast majority of us behind.

The majority has had enough.

Conservatives say that those

protesting Wall Street are just complaining. Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain tells them, 'Get a job'.

As a response to the movement's website, rightwingers have made a blog called 'We are the 53 per cent'. It is based on the misleading notion that since only around half of Americans pay federal income taxes, the rest are freeloading. (In fact, even those not subject to federal taxes on income

nevertheless pay state and local taxes, gas and excise taxes, plus mandatory contributions for Medicare and Social Security.)

The '53 per cent' stories are testimonials to dogged determination. One man, a father of a five-month-old, expresses pride in working 70-hour weeks in an effort to pay \$100,000 in student loans. 'I will be responsible for my own success through character and hard work,' he writes. Another story that has gained notoriety reads: 'I am a former Marine. I work two jobs. I don't have health insurance... I haven't had four consecutive days off in over four years. But I don't blame Wall Street. Suck it up, you whiners.'

These stories only reinforce the message of the occupations. For if you're working nearly all of your waking hours, we think you deserve healthcare. We want you to be free of crippling debt. In fact, we want these things for those who work 40 hours per week. We believe a just society should allow you to spend time with your children.

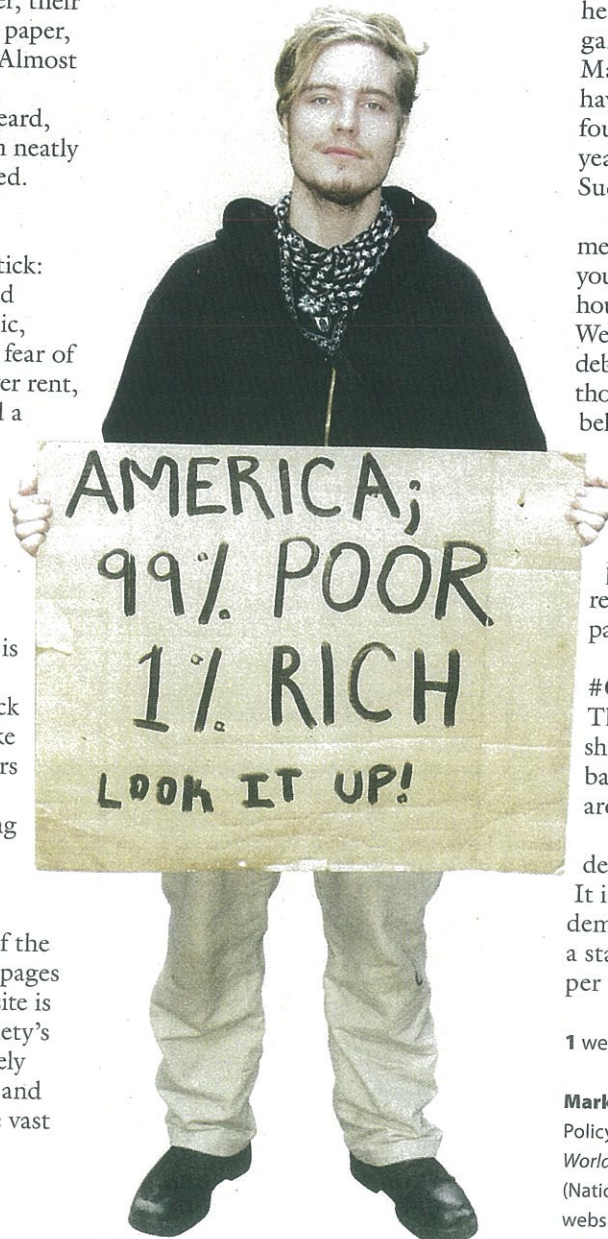
In large part, the difference between the two blogs is not the description of our economic plight. It's whether individuals have recognized their personal struggles as part of something larger.

Those who have joined the #Occupy movement are not whining. They are drawing strength from shared experience. They are laying bare the failure of a system. And they are doing something to change it.

Their signature is not merely a denunciation of economic inequality. It is an assertion of a solution: true democracy and collective action. It is a statement of power. We are the 99 per cent. ■

¹ wearethe99percent.tumblr.com

Mark Engler is a senior analyst with Foreign Policy In Focus and author of *How to Rule the World: The Coming Battle Over the Global Economy* (Nation Books, 2008). He can be reached via the website: DemocracyUprising.com



'XOXO Karen', *Girl's Life Magazine*, Feb/Mar. 2012.

xoxo Karen

GL CREW CONFESSIONS

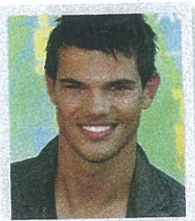
Who's your celeb crush?



"I'm obsessed with Willie Geist, who is on *Morning Joe*. Not only is he totally hot, he's super smart and hilarious." —Karen



"I just love Matt Damon. He's adorable and he really seems like a down-to-earth person." —Patty



"I don't think I'll ever stop crushing on Taylor Lautner. I even have a life-size cutout of him in my house!" —Trish



"I've been into Paul Walker ever since I saw *Into the Blue*." —Brooke

I am the world's best ex-girlfriend. Don't get me wrong, I'm not a bad person to be in a relationship with (I'm mildly amusing! I occasionally say interesting things! Sometimes, I even wear my hair not in a ponytail!), but if you really want to know the real me, hang out with me for a couple months...then promptly break up with me.

The truth is, I simply don't have the patience to do the "gonna get the guy" stuff other girls do flawlessly: Being available but not too available, asking just the right number of interesting questions, blow-drying my hair so it tumbles in loose waves that seem to be softly blown by an ocean breeze at all times.

But when I do fall for a guy (which only happens about every two years), I try not to screw it up by channeling one of those girls who plays everything just right. Which means that I generally spend the first couple months totally faking it.

When I want to say, "You're it and I look forward to getting into your head, your heart and your sweater as much as possible," I wind up saying things like "I love watching UFC matches" and other stuff I don't mean in an attempt to get them to like me. In short, I try to turn myself into whatever I think they'd think is the perfect future girlfriend.

To their credit, I tend to like boys smart enough to know something's off with me, and, inevitably, the whole thing falls apart after a few months. But because I also tend to choose guys I have actual stuff in common with, we usually end up friends.

And that's when I actually start to look and act like a normal person. The adorable outfits? Gone. The expertly applied makeup? History. My fondness for fighter Chuck Liddell? Yeah, actually, don't care, next topic. I'm not rude or disrespectful, of course, but once the "OMG, are you the one for me?" pressure is off, I'm just...the real me.

Which, considering how many of my exes have asked to get back together once we're friends, should probably lead me to just relax and be myself from the start and finally give up the "please think I am funny, please notice how awesome I am, please like me to bits and let this work out" act.

That's my 2012 romance resolution: Instead of waiting for the worst to happen before the best of me comes out, I'm just going to be me from the get-go. Right after I pretend we've already broken up.

♡ KB



"When I was 11 and *Armageddon* came out, I watched it over and over again on repeat. Ben Affleck was my first celebrity crush...and some things never change!" —Kelsey



"I've been crushing on Ryan Gosling since *The Notebook*. And who hasn't? He's definitely cuter than a puppy." —Jess



"Who says Neville's not a catch? Matthew Lewis is seriously magical in a tux." —Brittany

'How to go from girl friend to girlfriend', *Girl's Life Magazine*, Apr./May 2012.

How to go from girl friend to girlfriend

Crushing hard on your best guy bud? Make the move from chummy to coupled up...without saying a word.



You and your BGF have been a perfect pair since preschool. But lately, your feelings for your bud have gone from friendly to flirty. Now what? Taking the leap from just friends to more can be tricky. Move too fast and you'll freak him out. Wait too long and you may miss a major opportunity. If you're ready to make that boy your BF, here are five ways to tackle the transition with all the right moves.

SWITCH THINGS UP

Every day after school, you and your guy wind up playing Wii 'til it's time for dinner. Fun stuff, but if you want him to see you as more than just his bud, you've gotta bust out of that routine. Change things up by suggesting that you two check out that new Bruce Willis flick he's been dying to see or ask him if he wants to grab a smoothie. Keep it low-key—no fancy dinners or over-the-top activities—but do something out of the

ordinary, just the two of ya. He should get the message loud and clear that you're ready to take it to the next level—without you even having to say it out loud.

FLIRT A LITTLE

Expressing yourself with a little body language can subtly show your BGF you're interested in being more than pals. We're not suggesting you break out the hair twirl and start blowing kisses at him during class, but there's a way to flirt without making things awkward. Touch his arm when you're chatting. Smile at him from across the caf. Compliment his new shirt. By offering up a little more attention than usual, you'll get on his GF radar and send him all the right signals that, yes, you like him like *that*.

COMPARE HIM TO OTHER CUTIES

Your BGF is everything you ever wanted in a guy, right? Well, let him know it! In

an indirect way, of course. Start by drawing some comparisons to guys like him. Do ya think Michael Cera is adorably hilarious? Bring up a funny scene from *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* and then say, "You know, he kinda reminds me of you." Or mention your older sister's soccer stud of a boyfriend and tell him, "He's good and all, but you could *totally* take him." Hopefully, he'll put two and two together and realize what you're thinking. Bonus? You'll boost your boy's confidence by letting him know you view him in an amazing light.

SHOW HIM ANOTHER SIDE

Your BGF is used to you being all-business in student government meetings or talking smack on the b-ball court. And sure, he likes you just fine like that. But if you wanna step up your game, it's time to show him a different side. Instead of calling him up to review the class budget again, invite him over to sample a few cupcake recipes so he can decide which one you should make for the bake sale. Or ask him to go for a run on that secret trail you love instead of hitting the hoops court again. Revealing your hidden talents and interests will open his eyes to another version of you—one he can envision coupling up with in the near future.

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

While using one guy to get another's attention is a serious no-no, showing your BGF that you're a girl other guys dig is a surefire way to get on his radar (welcome to every teen rom com ever). Find someone fun to flirt with, hang with, sit on the bus with, whatever. Keep it casual, as too much, too fast could just lead to hurt feelings and heartbreak all around. Chances are, your BGF will notice other guys scoring your attention—and that'll set off an alarm that he has to make his move before it's too late. If he *still* doesn't make a move? Then it might just be time for you to move on. After all, there are plenty of other cuties out there who'll be crushing on you! ✿

'Culture and etiquette', *The Rough Guide to Central America on a Budget*.
2011.



Culture and etiquette

Despite a pervasive media image portraying Latin America as a scantily clad world of steamy salsa and sizzling-hot spirit, the reality is much more conservative. Throughout Central America the Church (both Catholic and Evangelical Protestant) retains a powerful influence on everyday life.

DRESS

Traditional family values are prevalent throughout Central America: children are commonly considered to be a blessing – a sign of virility and in many cases an economic asset – and consequently families are often large in size. **Homosexual** relationships are publicly frowned upon if not actively condemned; gay and lesbian travellers should be discreet.

While undeniably friendly, local people can seem shy and unsure about the gringos squeezed into their chicken bus. You will seldom experience hostility, but it pays to greet fellow passengers with a simple "Buenas" and a smile to break the ice. **Politeness** is valued highly, so even if your Spanish is poor, take the trouble to learn key pleasantries and they'll serve you well.

Information about social customs specific to each country is given in the relevant chapter.

Most locals **dress modestly** but smartly and visitors not wishing to draw unwelcome attention should do the same. You will make a better impression if you do – especially worthwhile with officials. Flashy exhibitions of wealth are not recommended (jewellery should be left at home). Shorts (for men and women) are not generally worn away from beaches, but low-cut tops for women are becoming more usual, especially among the young. If visiting places of worship, especially, dress modestly – skimpy shorts and flesh-revealing tops are not appropriate. Women will probably also want something to cover their heads.

MONEY MATTERS

Travellers to Central America, especially Westerners, are likely to experience the

uncomfortable assumption by locals that you are in fact a multimillionaire (even if you are looking scruffy). Although you may be on a strict budget, the very fact that you have been able to travel abroad, coupled with your potential earning power back home, means you have an economic freedom unobtainable to many you will encounter. As a rule, however, you will ultimately be judged on your conduct and not your wealth: it isn't helpful, therefore, to be too liberal or too mean with your cash. Instead, show appreciation for good service by **tipping** (as part of your budget), pay what will satisfy both parties when haggling and exchange friendship and hospitality for free. **Haggling** is accepted in markets (both tourist and local). You can also haggle – gently – over room prices, tour prices and taxi fares. Prices in shops are generally fixed, although it's usually worth asking if there are discounts if you buy more than one item.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Machismo is an ingrained part of Central American culture – **female travellers** will

frequently experience whistling, tssking and even blatant catcalls, though probably not anything more sinister than guys showing off to their friends. Ignoring such attention is the easiest way to deal with these situations, as retorts or put-downs are often seen as encouragement. No matter how modestly you behave, though, you will probably not counteract the view that foreign women are not only desirable, but also easily attainable.

Despite this, most female travellers report positive experiences in the region. Indeed, several will testify that they feel better treated by locals than their fellow male travellers. There are, however, still **precautions** to be taken. Golden rules when dealing with hopeful suitors include staying sober, and involving outside parties if you feel uncomfortable. At night, female travellers should try to move in groups.

Women travelling as part of a straight couple should be prepared to be invisible in many social interactions. Even if the woman is the only one to speak Spanish, for example, locals will often automatically address their reply to the man's perceived authority.

'Hello Honkies', *52 Brilliant Ideas for Giving Stunning Speeches*, Barry Gibbons, 2005.

Hello Honkies

With some trepidation, let's venture into the subject of including slang and/or swear words in your speech...



Most reference books are crystal-clear in their advice: leave it out. I differ.

Used sparingly and sensibly in most speeches, a well-chosen swear word or piece of slang can have three times the effect of any sanitised equivalent.

Times have changed. Whether you treat it as good news or bad news, it is a fact that people both use and accept profanity and slang on a much more widespread basis than ever before. Unless you are facing an audience of 'born-again's' it is not only possible to use and get away with a sprinkling of Class B profanities – it is likely you will lose some potential impact if you do not.

The words 'sprinkling' and 'Class B' are the important ones in the last sentence. I'm talking about one, two or three in a forty-minute speech, and I am not talking about the 'serious' four letter words. With the 'progress' we are making, the time may come when these will be acceptable, but for now they have no place in any speech I can envisage you giving – even if it is a bit wild and after dinner. Mitch Murray, in his excellent *Handbook for the Terrified Speaker*, suggests that in most

Here's an idea for you...

Try alluding to very rude words without actually using them. A few years ago, I was working with Tom Peters. Prior to us both going onstage he mentioned that he'd just been in one of my company restaurants. Everything had been OK, but the whole experience was (I quote), 'Ho fucking hum'. It was a very powerful business point (i.e. when you do it right, it's still ordinary) and we decided to use it, and I have used it since. I will (with a smile) either call it 'HfH' – explaining what the first and last words are, but noting that 'the middle word begins with an "f" and I can't use that here in Cheltenham'. I have never openly used the word in question. I have never had to. It always works as a combination of a powerful point and a bit of fun, and it wouldn't do so without being rude.

settings you can safely use words like 'pissed', 'bullshit', 'crap' and 'bonk' – and I would agree, adding 'bollocks' as a personal favourite. And I'm now sitting at my keyboard wondering if anybody has ever previously written a single sentence which contained all those words.

This all comes down to you and your judgement. If you are not comfortable in normal life with a few rude expressions or slang words, then leave them out. If you don't mind a few of either or both, and judge the audience and occasion to be suitably receptive, go with a sprinkling. What is important is that this is used solely to support and enhance your content. Do not use it just for its shock effect – and there really is no place for common vulgarity, 'lavatorial' humour or sexual references in most speeches.

The Camping Book: Stay Dry. Sleep Well and Eat Great Food, Ed and Kate Douglas, 2009.

Something to sleep in

If you feel constricted in a sleeping bag, it's fine to go camping with your duvet or blankets, and a sheet. Some manufacturers now make duvet-style sleeping bags so you can have all the comfort of home in your tent. You may find, however, that your duvet takes up a lot of room in the car, and carrying them for any distance is impractical.

Natural or synthetic?

There are many factors to consider when choosing the right bag for you. Whether you're off for a mountain adventure or beach-side break, think before you buy.



Down sleeping bags

Either natural goose or duck feathers are used to line down sleeping bags. The quality of down sleeping bags is measured on a temperature, or "fill rating" system, which peaks at "800 Fill Down" – the warmest.

Warmer per gram of filling.

Loses its shape when wet. Loses insulating properties when wet. Takes a long time to dry.

Lightweight. Will pack smaller for backpacking.

When not in use, is best stored in a large mesh bag, to allow air to circulate, so can take up more space.

Expensive.

Synthetic sleeping bags

Materials such as PrimaLoft or Spirafil, and which are used to stuff household duvets, are also used in synthetic sleeping bags. Their properties are different to natural down bags as shown below here.

Needs more weight of filling for a similar level of warmth.

Maintains its shape when wet. Maintains most of its insulating properties when wet. Dries relatively quickly.

Heavy. Cannot be compressed as much as a down sleeping bag.

Takes up less space when stored. Not affected by storage.

Inexpensive.

Summer camp

Summer camping sleeping bags are very cheap, and are made in roomy, box shapes for comfort, making them the ideal choice for car camping, festivals, or the beach.

WEIGHT

This sleeping bag weighs almost 2kg, (4lb 8oz) too heavy and bulky to be much use in backpacking. A down-filled sleeping bag offering the same insulation would weigh less than half this amount.

ZIP

The zip extends all the way round the bag, allowing it to be opened completely on hot days, or combined with another to form a double. But buy one with a right zip and another with a left, if that's your plan.

HOOD

This has a drawstring, allowing you to cinch the top of the bag around your head on cold nights, trapping the warm air.

LINER

Nylon fabric inside your sleeping bag can be sticky and uncomfortable, especially in summer. This bag has a removable polyester and cotton inner.

FILLING

Cheaper sleeping bags use artificial fibres as their filling. These offer a lot of insulation but tend to be heavier. However, they are also easier to clean.

SHAPE

The rectangular shape allows free movement of the legs. That means that it has colder spots, and that air can move more freely, which could be a disadvantage in lower temperatures.

The Global Soul: Jet-Lag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home, Pico Iyer,
2000.

The Filipinos who live and work in Hong Kong—130,000 of them in all, most of them rented mothers and vicarious housewives—tend to get lost in all the official equations involving Empire and Emporia; “domestic outsourcers,” as the chilling euphemism has it, they tend to fall between many of the publicized categories in a city that conjugates all the ways one does not belong, as expat or exile or refugee or stateless person. They’ve come here by choice, after all, to support the families they’ve been forced to leave at home, and, like Filipino nannies and nurses and go-go dancers everywhere, they belong to a kind of unofficial economy, which provides the human services that the official world likes to delegate. I’d seen Filipinos running most of the stores and security checks at San Francisco Airport and spinning the roulette wheels in Reno; in Osaka’s airport, I was used to seeing Filipinas from the local bars perfectly imitating the inflections of fourteen-year-old Japanese girls as they giggled their good-byes to the gangsters who kept them, and boarded planes with stuffed animals in their arms. In Hong Kong, gathering around the fifty-story glass towers, they could seem the most visible and voluble inhabitants of Central, stuck in the throat of the global metropolis like a piece of the global village.

The next day in the paper I read an article headlined **DEATH-LEAP MAID COMPLAINED OF SHOUTING**, and describing how a local professor had slept through the night while her Filipina maid, on only her fifth day in the city, had thrown herself out of a twelfth-floor window (“Police found a pair of scissors and a chopper lying on the maid’s bed”). The professor told investigators that her worker seemed happy, and protested, “I had no time to shout at her as I was always away till nine o’clock.” Another incident to get filed next to the numberless cases of Filipina maids attacking their employers and molesters in Singapore and Arabia, where local values were not always made for pious Catholic girls from Asia.

Here in the Worldwide Building, though, the women were smiling, mostly, as they snapped up copies of the souvenir *Filipinos in Hong Kong* yearbook, and sparkled back at Instamatic cameras as they flashed. You could almost hear them preparing stories for the sweethearts back home, or anxious parents, about the city where there were more Rolls-Royces per capita than anywhere else in the world, and where even a spot in the local cemetery could cost eighty thousand dollars. Study Bibles, wedding dresses, cream for removing stretch marks; a sign near Best Friends Jewelry saying **NO PRETENDING FRIEND.**

Fast Food Nation: What the All-American Meal is Doing to the World, Eric Schlosser, 2001.

ONE NIGHT I VISIT a slaughterhouse somewhere in the High Plains. The slaughterhouse is one of the nation's largest. About five thousand head of cattle enter it every day, single file, and leave in a different form. Someone who has access to the plant, who's upset by its working conditions, offers to give me a tour. The slaughterhouse is an immense building, gray and square, about three stories high, with no windows on the front and no architectural clues to what's happening inside. My friend gives me a chain-mail apron and gloves, suggesting I try them on. Workers on the line wear about eight pounds of chain mail beneath their white coats, shiny steel armor that covers their hands, wrists, stomach, and back. The chain mail's designed to protect workers from cutting themselves and from being cut by other workers. But knives somehow manage to get past it. My host hands me some Wellingtons, the kind of knee-high rubber boots that English gentlemen wear in the countryside. "Tuck your pants into the boots," he says. "We'll be walking through some blood."

I put on a hardhat and climb a stairway. The sounds get louder, factory sounds, the noise of power tools and machinery, bursts of compressed air. We start at the end of the line, the fabricating room. Workers call it "fab." When we step inside, fab seems familiar: steel catwalks, pipes along the walls, a vast room, a maze of conveyer belts. This could be the Lamb Weston plant in Idaho, except hunks of red meat ride the belts instead of french fries. Some machines assemble cardboard boxes, others vacuum-seal subprimals of beef in clear plastic. The workers look extremely busy, but there's nothing unsettling about this part of the plant. You see meat like this all the time in the back of your local supermarket.

The fab room is cooled to about 40 degrees, and as you head up the line, the feel of the place starts to change. The pieces of meat get bigger. Workers — about half of them women, almost all of them young and Latino — slice meat with long slender knives. They stand at a table that's chest high, grab meat off a conveyer belt, trim away fat, throw meat back on the belt, toss the scraps onto a conveyer belt above them, and then grab more meat, all in a matter of seconds. I'm now struck by how many workers there are, hundreds of them, pressed close together, constantly moving, slicing. You see hardhats, white coats, flashes of steel. Nobody is smiling or chatting, they're too busy, anxiously trying not to fall behind. An old man walks past me, pushing a blue plastic barrel filled with scraps. A few workers carve the meat with Whizzards, small electric knives that have spinning round blades. The Whizzards look like the Norelco razors that Santa rides in the TV ads. I notice that a few of the women near me are sweating, even though the place is freezing cold.

Sides of beef suspended from an overhead trolley swing toward a group of men. Each worker has a large knife in one hand and a steel hook in the other. They grab the meat with their hooks and attack it fiercely with their knives. As they hack away, using all their strength, grunting, the place suddenly feels different, primordial. The machinery seems beside the point, and what's going on before me has been going on for thousands of years — the meat, the hook, the knife, men straining to cut more meat.

advertisement for global café direct, published in *New Internationalist* Mar.
2012.

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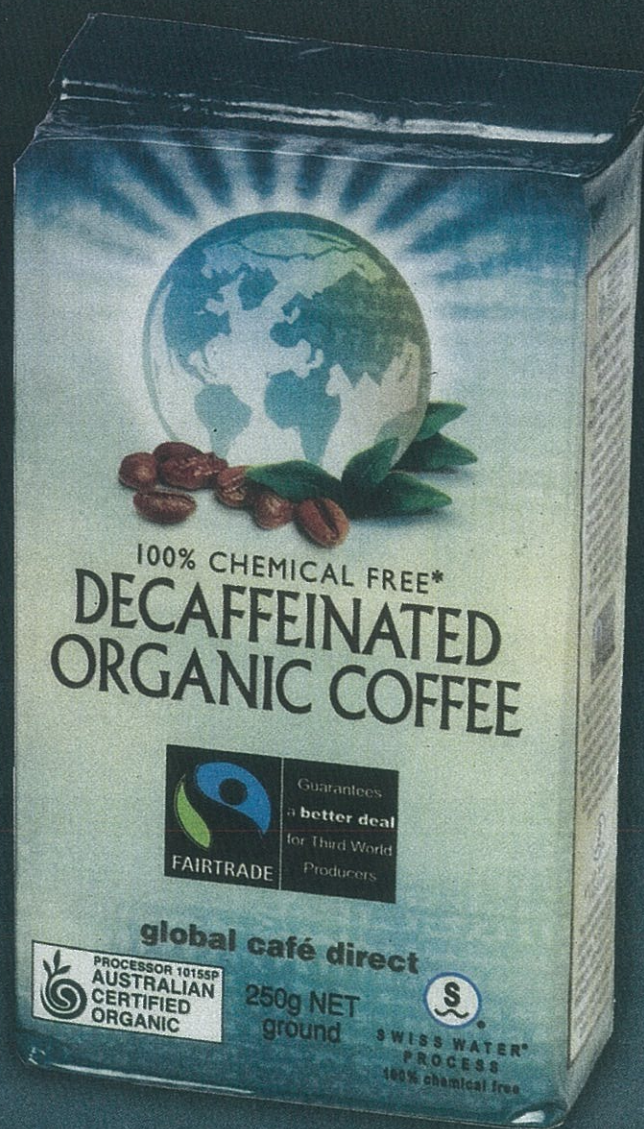
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Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation, Lynne Truss, 2003.

The Tractable Apostrophe

In the spring of 2001 the ITV1 show *Popstars* manufactured a pop phenomenon for our times: a singing group called Hear'Say. The announcement of the Hear'Say name was quite a national occasion, as I recall; people actually went out in very large numbers to buy their records; meanwhile, newspapers, who insist on precision in matters of address, at once learned to place Hear'Say's apostrophe correctly and attend to the proper spacing. To refer in print to this group as Hearsay (one word) would be wrong, you see. To call it Hear-Say (hyphenated) would show embarrassing ignorance of popular culture. And so it came to pass that Hear'Say's poor, oddly placed little apostrophe was replicated everywhere and no one gave a moment's thought to its sufferings. No one saw the pity of its

position, hanging there in eternal meaninglessness, silently signalling to those with eyes to see, "I'm a legitimate punctuation mark, get me out of here." Checking the Hear'Say website a couple of years later, I discover that the only good news in this whole sorry saga was that, well, basically, once Kym had left to marry Jack in January 2002 – after rumours, counter-rumours and official denials – the group thankfully folded within eighteen months of its inception.

Now, there are no laws against imprisoning apostrophes and making them look daft. Cruelty to punctuation is quite unlegislated: you can get away with pulling the legs off semicolons; shrivelling question marks on the garden path under a powerful magnifying glass; you name it. But the naming of Hear'Say in 2001 was nevertheless a significant milestone on the road to punctuation anarchy. As we shall see, the tractable apostrophe has always done its proper jobs in our language with enthusiasm and elegance, but it has never been taken seriously enough; its talent for adaptability has been cruelly taken for granted; and now, in an age of supreme graphic frivolity, we pay the price. Too

many jobs have been heaped on this tiny mark, and – far from complaining – the apostrophe has seemingly requested "More weight", just like that mar tyrish old codger in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, when religious bigots in black hats with buckles on are subjecting him to death by crushing. "More weight," the apostrophe has bravely said – if ever more faintly. "More weight," it manages to whisper still. But I ask you: how much more abuse must the apostrophe endure? Now that it's on its last legs (and idiotic showbiz promoters stick apostrophes in names for purely decorative purposes), isn't it time to recognise that the apostrophe needs our help?

Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America. A memoir, Elizabeth Wurtzel, 1994.

I start to get the feeling that something is really wrong. Like all the drugs put together—the lithium, the Prozac, the desipramine, and Desyrel that I take to sleep at night—can no longer combat whatever it is that was wrong with me in the first place. I feel like a defective model, like I came off the assembly line flat-out fucked and my parents should have taken me back for repairs before the warranty ran out. But that was so long ago.

I start to think there really is no cure for depression, that happiness is an ongoing battle, and I wonder if it isn't one I'll have to fight for as long as I live. I wonder if it's worth it.

I start to feel like I can't maintain the facade any longer, that I may just start to show through. And I wish I knew what was wrong.

Maybe something about how stupid my whole life is. I don't know.

My dreams are polluted with paralysis. I regularly have night visions where my legs, though attached to my body, don't move much.

I try to walk somewhere—to the grocery store or the pharmacy, nowhere special, routine errands—and I just can't do it. Can't climb stairs, can't walk on level ground. I am exhausted in the dream and I become more exhausted in my sleep, if that's possible. I wake up tired, amazed that I can even get out of bed. And often I can't. I usually sleep ten hours a night, but often it's many more. I am trapped in my body as I have never been before. I am perpetually zonked.

One night, I even dream that I am in bed, stuck, congealed to the sheets, as if I were an insect that was squashed onto the bottom of someone's shoe. I simply can't get out of bed. I am having a nervous breakdown and I can't move. My mother stands at the side of the bed and insists that I could get up if I really wanted to, and it seems there's no way to make her understand that I literally can't move.

I dream that I am in terrible trouble, completely paralyzed, and no one believes me.

In my waking life, I am almost this tired. People say, Maybe it's Epstein-Barr. But I know it's the lithium, the miracle salt that has stabilized my moods but is draining my body.

And I want out of this life on drugs.

I need the thing that happens when your brain shuts off and your heart turns on.

And I know it's around me somewhere, but I just can't feel it. What I do feel is the scariness of being an adult, being alone in this big huge loft with so many CDs and plastic bags and magazines and pairs of dirty socks and dirty plates on the floor that I can't even see the floor. I'm sure that I have nowhere to run, that I can't even walk anywhere without tripping and falling way down, and I know I want out of this mess. I want out. No one will ever love me, I will live and die alone, I will go nowhere fast, I will be nothing at all. Nothing will work out. The promise that on the other side of depression lies a beautiful life, one worth surviving suicide for, will have turned out wrong. It will all be a big dupe.

It is Saturday night, we're about at that point when it starts to be Sunday morning, and I am curled up in fetal position on my bathroom floor. The black chiffon of my dress against the stark white tiles must make me look like a dirty puddle. I can't stop crying. The twenty or so people who are still sitting in the living room don't seem at all fazed by what's going on with me in here, if they notice at all, between sips of red wine and hits on a joint someone rolled earlier and chugs on Becks or Rolling Rock. We decided—my housemate, Jason, and I—to have a party tonight, but I don't think we meant for two hundred people to turn up. Or maybe we did. I don't know. Maybe we're still the nerds we were in high school who get enough of a kick out of the possibility of being popular that we actually did bring this on ourselves.

I don't know.

Tehran, Lipstick, and Loopholes, Nahal Tajadod, 2010.

I was born in this place, I know Tehran, I've got friends here. Soon I'll have to head back to Paris, where I live. My return ticket, with Iran Air, is ready. One slight concern, nothing really: I need to renew my Iranian passport.

I'm used to it. It normally takes three days. I've got ten days to spare: that's more than enough.

To renew my passport I have to get, amongst other things, Islamic-style ID photos: no hair appearing beneath the scarf, no visible make-up, no smile. Basically you have to produce a picture of a woman looking straight at the lens when, in her day-to-day life, she isn't allowed to look men in the eye.

In order to compose a photograph like this – and it really is a composition, not a snapshot – I absolutely have to find a professional photographer. They're used to this sort of exercise: they have at their disposal a range of thick plain scarves, make-up remover for eyes and lips, and a long coat with a collar that buttons right up, in other words all the paraphernalia needed to transform an ordinary woman – whatever length her hair, however much

make-up she's wearing, and whether she's wearing a print dress or jeans and a T-shirt – into an Islamic woman.

The way an Islamic woman looks has been carefully thought out. It means something: the veil covering her head represents martyrs' blood shed during the Iran-Iraq war (more than a million dead on the Iranian side); the buttons on her collar, pressing on her throat and choking her slightly, are an allusion to the healthy state of her husband's or brother's honour, for the simple reason that those buttons ensure no one can see her female flesh.

Before going to one of these photo studios – I can think of a couple not far from home – I take the precaution of not reapplying my lipstick in case the photographers are short of lotion, and I choose a black scarf and crinkle-effect blouse with a high collar, bought at Pleats in Paris. The design doesn't reveal, or even suggest, a single bodily curve because it drowns the bust under swathes of pleated polyester. In Iran very few people know the designer Issey Miyake, and covering up with one of his ample garments can't betray the least sartorial affectation, which might be seen as questionable.

Still, I do decide to put on a bit of perfume. A glance at my dressing table and I choose Santa Maria Novella's Rose. Perhaps I'm secretly hoping that, thanks to my perfume and the unsuspected elegance of my top, I might be able to contaminate the Islamic prototype with a bit of womanliness thanks to a few subtle, invisible and undetectable hints of Japan and Florence.

Extract from the *Australian National Dictionary*, W.S. Ransom (ed.), 1988.

Introduction

For the purposes of this dictionary an Australianism is one of those words and meanings of words which have originated in Australia, which have a greater currency here than elsewhere, or which have a special significance in Australia because of their connection with an aspect of the history of the country. The aim of the dictionary is to provide as full an historical record of these as possible.

In the simplest analysis Australian English, the English used by Australians, differs from that used elsewhere in the ways and to the extent that the circumstances of life in this country and the history of its people have been distinctive. Most obviously, there are words and meanings of words which have originated in Australia because of the need to give a name to a bird, a plant, an artefact, or a feature of the landscape encountered here for the first time: the application of a largely descriptive nomenclature to species of indigenous flora and fauna, and the borrowing from Aboriginal languages of terms for Aboriginal implements and weapons are illustrations of this.

But Australian English reflects also the composition of the immigrant population and an experience which while in part distinctive was in part common to other British colonies. Regional dialect and slang words which have remained non-standard in Britain became generally current in Australia. Occupational vocabularies, made up in part of traditional, often dialect, terms, in part of new terms required by new circumstances, acquired greater prominence: some mining terms, for instance, obtained general currency when gold-mining, in several parts of the new world, became a popular as distinct from a specialized pursuit. Words necessary to describe the opening up of an unfamiliar country, often originating in another colony or common to more than one, became part of an active vocabulary in Australia, of a largely passive one in Britain. Words formed from standard elements, as compounds formed on main elements like *bullock*, *canvas*, *cattle*, *sheep*, and *stock*, acquired a special significance because of the importance of the activity with which they were associated.

It is a reasonable presumption that a word recorded by the *Oxford English Dictionary* and its four-volume Supplement (OED(S)) or the *English Dialect Dictionary* (EDD) as British regional dialect is rightly so described even if it can be antedated in Australian use. In many instances, also, a substantially earlier American history establishes an American origin for a word borrowed into Australian. But it would be hazardous to argue an Australian origin for *round up* or *puncher* (as in *bullock puncher*) simply on the ground that both are recorded earliest in Australia. And, in fields like gold-mining, sheep-raising, shearing, and Services speech, New Zealand and Australia have so many words in common that the location of the earliest written evidence may well be fortuitous. It has therefore seemed best to interpret 'Australianism' liberally, not making undue claims but including in the dictionary many words which are of undoubted significance in the Australian context but about the precise origin of which there remains uncertainty.

Zen and the Art of Writing: Essays on Creativity, Ray Bradbury, 1990.

It isn't easy. Nobody has ever done it consistently. Those who try hardest, scare it off into the woods. Those who turn their backs and saunter along, whistling softly between their teeth, hear it treading quietly behind them, lured by a carefully acquired disdain.

We are of course speaking of The Muse.

The term has fallen out of the language in our time. More often than not when we hear it now we smile and summon up images of some fragile Greek goddess, dressed in ferns, harp in hand, stroking the brow of your perspiring Scribe.

The Muse, then, is that most terrified of all the virgins. She starts if she hears a sound, pales if you ask her questions, spins and vanishes if you disturb her dress.

What ails her? you ask. Why does she flinch at the stare? Where does she come from and where go? How can we get her to visit for longer periods of time? What temperature pleasures her? Does she like loud voices, or soft? Where do you buy food for her, and of what quality and quantity, and what hours for dining?

We might start off by paraphrasing Oscar Wilde's poem, substituting the word "Art" for "Love."

Art will fly if held too lightly,

Art will die if held too tightly,

Lightly, tightly, how do I know

Whether I'm holding or letting Art go?

For "Art" substitute, if you wish, "Creativity" or "The Subconscious" or "Heat" or whatever your own word is for what happens when you spin like a firewheel and a story "happens."

Another way of describing The Muse might be to reassess those little specks of light, those airy bubbles which float across everyone's vision, minute flaws in the lens or the outer, transparent skin of the eye. Unnoticed for years, when you first focus your attention on them, they can become unbearable nuisances, ruptures in one's attention at all hours of the day. They spoil what you are looking at, by getting in the way. People have gone to psychiatrists with the problem of "specks." The inevitable advice: ignore them, and they'll go away. The fact is, they don't go away; they remain, but we focus out beyond them, on the world and the world's ever-changing objects, as we should.

So, too, with our Muse. If we focus beyond her, she regains her poise, and stands out of the way.

It is my contention that in order to Keep a Muse, you must first offer food. How you can feed something that isn't yet there is a little hard to explain. But we live surrounded by paradoxes. One more shouldn't hurt us.

Tales from a Broad: An Unreliable Memoir, Fran Lebowitz, 2004.

Two weeks later, we are on a 22-hour flight, heading 10,000 miles away into a 12-hour time difference, with two small kids. We are heading to Frank's Singapore office on an extended business trip. We fly up the front of the plane. We give each kid a lot more than the recommended dose of cough syrup. I display it with a wink-wink, nod-nod to the other passengers so they'll know we have their comfort in mind. The meds have the desired effect on Huxley. In fact, they work so beautifully that any time we see his eyes flutter – probably just REMing but who wants to take chances – I scream, '*Dose him!*' We might as well club the poor kid.

Unfortunately, but predictably, the cough syrup has the opposite effect on Sadie. She never goes to sleep. She never stops talking, except when she is simply yelling. Hundreds, thousands of times a minute she barks out something like 'I want to go on that plane!' or 'I'm going to Thingapore!' She rattles the back of her seat, jumps in her chair, runs up and down the aisle, up and down the stairs, in and out of the bathroom, dragging the toilet paper with her. We try to settle her down but lack the wit to do anything more creative than scream at her, spank her, hiss at her, threaten her, and toss her to each other saying, 'Your turn!'

She drives us crazy. I don't know about the other 30 people who paid \$10,000 to fly themselves in style and comfort. It's entirely possible that they are a little annoyed. I don't ask. I don't want to disturb them.

All told, with the drive to the airport and the two hours waiting around, by the time we land we have been at it for about 27 hours. The very thought of fighting people in the baggage claim, juggling the kids as backpacks slide down my shoulder, elbowing my way into the taxi line, figuring it all out . . . I'm sure I don't have enough kick left to manage it. Frank has a serene look on his face. He's always fairly mel-low, but this is something more. This is intense satisfaction; this is the look of a man in his finest moment. He is just so danged proud to be introducing us to his mistress, The Far East.

Lo and behold, our luggage practically leaps into our arms just as we get to the belt. But, of course, we still need to slog through Immigration and Customs. Slog? Wrong! In fact, Immigration and Customs wave happily to us. They give us candy. They are embarrassed to ask questions and demur about seeing our passports until Frank insists that we all want the stamp.

This is the single best airport in the world, bar none. I smile at Frank and he knows what I am thinking: We've really landed.