

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS



No. 42

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS is an independent magazine covering various aspects of folklore, particularly contemporary legends (urban myths), ancient and modern traditions and 21st century culture.

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THE DIARY

Malicious phone call

THE general theme for this column is my old stamping ground of earth mysteries, but first I must share with you the social skills of a former Labour Cabinet member and spin doctor.

"I'm reacting to the piece in the Hartlepool Mail last night," began the intimidating caller. "I want your book. Who do I make the cheque out to?" That was local Member of Parliament Peter Mandelson calling me. You'll see later in this issue information on my latest book, to which he was referring.

Pissed gastroarchaeologist

I WAS old enough to recall watching the disgraceful episode of "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral" where a drunken chairman, Welsh Cambridge don and bon viveur Glyn Daniel was totally shit-faced. This enemy of ley hunting who never organised a dig in his life, despite being a pillar of the archaeological establishment, "had one glass too many. He started perspiring rather heavily. He became confused about how many points he was awarding to whom. 'But that does not matter,' he cried, waving his hands gaily. When the experts failed to identify a small sharp stick made of human bone, he reclaimed it to reveal what it was. 'This', he said, in rather slurred tones, pointing the bone at the camera, 'is used by Australian Aborigines to point at their enemies and bring them death and disaster -- just as I am now pointing it at the viewer who sent me a very silly letter.' We had to explain to the journalists who rang up after the programme that the lights were very hot and Glyn was suffering from a sudden bout of 'flu," so says David Attenborough, his then producer. (The Times Weekend, 14/9/02)

Jack Straw's Castle

I'M not averse to pubs. Rather like saying the Pope's not averse to Roman Catholicism. Anyway, the oddly splendid Jack Straw's Castle, complete only in 1964, is now a listed building on the edge of Hampstead Heath. Paul Devereux once held a moot -- where I was a speaker -- in the early Seventies nearby and we ended up drinking there. I had an argument with fellow author Don Robins ("Circles of Silence" -- a non-book if ever there was one) and while he went to get a round in, his pal told me in all seriousness, "Don doesn't like being talked to like that." Forgive me, I'm rambling. Fanciable talented singer Beth Orton (right) recalls escaping pressure after arriving back from the U.S.A. and going for a walk alone on Hampstead Heath. I was exhausted but I couldn't stop walking. Eventually I sat down in a circle of trees. I decided it was a magic circle and I lay there all afternoon. Then these two old women walked by and I asked them if it was a magic circle. They said it was and told me it was on a ley line. They were like a pair of angels." So, of course, she went home and wrote a song about them. (the times magazine, 20/7/02)



BritArt Crap

By Paul Sreeton

REVIEWING a new book by Anthony Julius, John Preston rightly commented that "much of modern art is concerned solely with violating taboos, with the violators having little idea of what these taboos actually are and little purpose except to create as big a stink -- and as much publicity for themselves -- as possible." And "constantly nihilism in art is being presented as something liberating, yet all it does is leave us feeling demoralised and alienated."

On a contemporary legend level, there's been tales of a misguided cleaner sweeping and binning what he/she perceived as a load of old rubbish dumped in an art gallery. We enjoy and believe the tale because -- apart from some equally misguided but crazy souls -- modern BritArt is frankly rubbish. Literally, too.

'Garbage Bag' (materials: bag, air and tie twist) is one of a series of "pieces" and events by Ceal (a contraction of Cecilia) Floyer which won her a £30,000 bursary from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Ms Floyer 34, a graduate of Goldsmiths Art College (the alma mater of Damien Hirst and many other of the "shock" generation of British artists) calls herself a "maximalist", to distinguish her work from minimalism. The judges said several of Floyer's works merited attention. These include 'Light Switch' (a light switch) and Monochrome Till Receipt (White) (a checkout receipt listing 36 white items bought at a supermarket). Floyer is said to be a critic to trade in humour. Unusually, in a catalogue for a recent exhibition, she tells a joke. It runs: "A woman walks into a bar, goes up to the barman and asks him for a double entendre. So he gives her one." Ha, ha! (D. Telegraph, 18/10/02)

As a traditionalist (favouring J M W Turner and David Shepherd) with an "A" level in art, I despair. But then I chortled to see the art myth come true when in October last year Damien Hirst created an impromptu piece in a gallery window which included empty bottles, cigarette packets and filthy ashtrays. The cleaner binned the lot, understandably taking it for real. "Fantastic ... very funny," said the crackpot "artist". (D. Telegraph, 24/11/01)

Not reported in the nationals, First Great Western "misaid" a £60,000, 13ft glass sculpture that was removed from Reading station's ticket hall, where it had stood since the extension was opened in 1989. It was thought the art, which took nine months to create, had been dumped in a rubbish skip. (Rail, No. 437, 2002)

Back with Hirst, he later apologised unreservedly for congratulating the September 22 hijackers turning the World Trade Centre into a "visually stunning" work of art. Hirst, best known for his sheep in formaldehyde, called the attack "an artwork in its own right". In Britain his remarks were largely ignored, although one commentator dubbed him a "cretin" and said he should be tossed into a tank of formaldehyde. (D. Telegraph, 20/9/02)

As for criminal acts, these are rarely laudable, but I chuckled at the newspaper story of staff at the Lisson Gallery, London, arriving to find paint splattered over their most prestigious artwork, 'Space Closed by Corrugated Metal', by the conceptual Spanish artist Santiago Sierra. The work had been unveiled to the bafflement of critics and collectors who had gathered for the supposed opening of the gallery's new extension to find a boarded-up entrance. A gallery spokesman said police had not yet found those responsible for the attack. Sierra (36), said he did not want the paint to be removed. (D. Telegraph, 21/9/02)

Another protest had a woman strip naked on a dead horse. The Lady Godiva-style activist, in her 20s, climbed on the display at the controversial Body Worlds art show in Brick Lane, East London, and then stripped off to yell that no preserved female cadavers were on show. She was led out after citing Professor Gunther von Hagens as sexist for his 160 plastinations -- corpses soaked in plastics. A gallery spokesman said: "Anyone who gets on a dead horse naked must be a few sandwiches short of a picnic." (D. Sport, 10/8/02)

Earlier a hammer attack on a human corpse at the same exhibition caused £30,000 damage. A man knocked an exhibit called 'Organ Donor' -- which shows a man holding a liver -- to the floor and began hitting it. The attack follows paint being thrown at an exhibit and another being covered with a blanket. This article says Body Worlds featured 25 preserved corpses in various poses, including a pregnant woman with her womb open to reveal the seven-month-old foetus. So much for the Lady Cadaver protest. (The Mirror, 28/3/02)

The Tate values excrement more highly than gold

JUNE 30 2002 *The Sunday Telegraph*

BY CATHERINE MILNER
Arts Correspondent

CRITICS OF modern art will at least applaud the irony. The Tate Gallery has paid £22,300 of public money for a work that is, quite literally, a load of excrement.

The canned faeces of Piero Manzoni, one of Italy's most controversial artists, have been bought by the gallery from a sale at Sotheby's. *Can 004* is one of an "edition" of 90 tins of *merda d'artista* created by Manzoni in 1961 as an ironic statement on the art market. Each can contained 30 grams of his faeces and Manzoni sold it for the same price as if it were gold.

The price paid by the Tate for its *merda* - £745 per gram - exceeds, however, the £550 that the contents of the tin would cost if they were made of 24-carat gold. The gallery yesterday defended its decision to spend taxpayers' money on the work. The money for the purchase came from the Tate's acquisitions budget, which it receives from the Government.

"The Manzoni was a very important purchase for an extremely small amount of money: nobody can deny that," said a spokesman for

the gallery. "He was an incredibly important international artist. What he was doing with this work was looking at a lot of issues that are pertinent to 20th-century art, like authorship and the production of art. It was a seminal work."

The purchase is not the only excreta the Tate has in its collection; it has also bought three paintings by Chris Ofili featuring elephant dung. Although the tin was bought in the Italian art sale at Sotheby's some time ago, the gallery has kept secret the amount it paid. It put the can on display last year without making any public announcement.

Last week the gallery denied that it had tried to play down the purchase. "We buy 500 works a year so we can't talk about every one," said the spokesman.

Manzoni died, aged just 29, within two years of creating his tinned art. He was a hard drinker and his alcohol consumption led to him to suffer from a liver condition. In a letter to a friend, he explained that his motivation for tinning his faeces was to expose the gullible nature of the art-buying public.

"I should like all artists to

sell their fingerprints, or else stage competitions to see who can draw the longest line or sell their s*** in tins," he wrote. "If collectors really want something intimate, really personal to the artist, there's the artist's own s***. That is really his."

The cans were sealed according to industrial standards and then circulated to museums around the world.

In addition to the Tate, both the Pompidou Museum in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York have bought cans since. At least 45 of the original 90 cans have exploded, however. This is exactly what Manzoni intended. Soon after he created the cans he told a friend "I hope these cans explode in the vitrines of the collectors." The Tate Gallery says that it has had no such problems.



And as Victor Lewis-Smith wrote: "A man who must have been stark raving sane attacked a marble effigy of Baroness Thatcher in London's Guildhall Art Gallery, causing serious damage. The chap decapitated it and tried to commit an even more physical assault on the former prime minister's body, before he was finally overpowered and arrested. So far, he's only been charged with causing criminal damage, but I can think of a more fitting charge. How about Statue Tory Rape? (D. Mirror, 6/7/02)

Other works of art can be harmed by sheer carelessness. The last work by the late Polish artist Leikis Topolski became a casualty of disaster-prone Railtrack. Some 40sq ft of a 600ft mural, which spreads under the railway arches near the Royal Festival Hall, was damaged after a tap was left running. The composition is oil and paint on paper and wood, and the wood is now badly warped," said the artist's son Daniel. "We don't know yet how much it will cost to repair. Railtrack is looking into it." This wasn't the first accident to befall the massive mural, entitled 'Memoir of the Century'. Daniel added: "We had trouble with a leaky drain a while back, then someone punched a hammer through one of the panels. I am hoping Railtrack will make a donation to my restoration appeal." (Sunday Telegraph, 21/7/02)

A more public tale was of calamity striking at the Belgravia home of Charles Saatchi, where an elegant sculpture called 'Self' by the artist Marc Quinn was on display in the new kitchen being built for his "domestic goddess" and cook girlfriend Nigella Lawson. It was a bust of the artist's own head, made from nine pints of his own frozen blood and it cost Mr Saatchi £12,000 in 1991 and was presently valued at about £1m. Unfortunately, workmen unplugged the refrigerated plinth inside a freezer in which it was housed and, within a few hours, Mr Saatchi's frozen assets had suddenly been liquidated, as Mr Quinn's vital fluid coagulated in a small crimson pool on the floor. As Victor Lewis-Smith commented wryly: "Honestly, it's enough to make your blood run warm." (D. Mirror, 6/7/02; Fortean Times 163:9)

Here's a round-up of recent "artistic" events:

*** Steve Bradley's works really are rubbish -- he sells packaged litter from the streets. Steve (47) collects anything from drinks cans to cinema tickets. He bags them up, adds his signature and flogs them for up to £5 a time from a market stall in Hull. The university professor from Maryland, USA, won a city arts grant of £2,500. He said: "I'm a serious artist." (Sun, 26/3/02)

*** The Royal Academy of Arts was displaying a piece called 'The Dark Throttle' which consisted of a dirty pub bar complete with overflowing ashtrays and empty lager bottles -- and charging £5 admission. (The Sun via Sunday Telegraph, 22/9/02)

*** A young couple bonked in a gallery window as part of a live art show. For one week Max Whatley (24), an estate agent, and Meg Zakreta (22), a nanny were on full view as they sprawled on a double bed with a full condom machine on the wall. They ate, slept and made love as people wandered past the Blink Gallery in London's Soho. A thin curtain was drawn around the bed when they made love in their "room", which was decorated in red by artist Lam Yeates to create what he described as a more passionate environment. (D. Sport, 29/8/02)

*** Then an American businessman offered £40,000 to have the naked couple who were romping perform in his Florida home. Tax lawyer and art collector Gidon Liberman wanted to move the white double bed into his South Beach apartment and fly in lovers Max and Meg to continue their steamy sex sessions for a weekend. It was claimed the "sex maniacs" got through 64 condoms in the first three days. But the exhibit's sponsor, German condommaker Condomi, rejected the bed bid as it wanted its staff to have the chance to sleep in it at its Cologne headquarters. (D. Sport, 2/9/02)

*** A schoolgirl spent a week walking naked around Santiago as part of an art project. Her mother gave permission to strip off for the artwork, which involved a fellow student going around the Chilean capital filming people's reactions to the girl. (Front, No. 47, 2002)

*** What could easily otherwise have been filed as a proto-legend concerns a huge set of inflatable Western-made male sex organs, twice the normal size, which were put on display at a Peking art show. Police quickly deflated them and closed the show down, saying they made Chinese men feel inadequate. (D. Sport, 31/7/02)

*** An art student changed her name by deed poll to that of her lecturer in the hope of getting her degree. Jo Slasor (22), at City College Brighton and Hove studying for a music and visual arts degree, said: "I was doing badly on the course. We were told Billy Cowie was going to be marking so I thought it would be a bit of a joke. Mr Cowie hasn't said much, just looked amused. My mum doesn't understand. She always says: 'What's this conceptual art stuff about?'" Jo's final degree project will now be a series of documents in her new name. (The Mirror, 13/4/02)

*** An art student arrested for planting pipe bombs in mailboxes in five states was trying to create a piece of art that would form a "smiley face" stretching across the USA. The towns where he struck, injuring six people, former half of the illustration. The "eyes" were in Nebraska and Iowa, the left side of the mouth in Colorado and Texas. The right side was unfinished but,

Lars Vilks is a controversial Swedish artist noted for his sculptures on the seashore of a nature sanctuary at Kullaberg, in the north-west part of the province of Skene.

One of his works from the 1970s, *Nimis* – a massive assemblage of driftwood, complete with ladders and different floors – was so large that it provoked the authorities to attempt to have it dismantled for breaking building regulations. The artist, however, cunningly used rules covering works of art to ensure that his sculpture remained intact.

Under Swedish law, the owner of an art work that had to be dismantled had to be given the opportunity to remove it himself if the dismantling threatened its destruction. Vilks made sure that the ownership of *Nimis* changed so many times that the legal process became helplessly engulfed in its own bureaucracy.

With the planning system defeated, the artist next attempted to defy the state itself – but now it is Vilks who has become engulfed by his own ingenuity. In 1996 he declared the rocky site where his sculptures stand to be the "independent state of Ladonia".

His works had stood there, he said, for 30 years, and their continued existence showed that the authorities were unable to enforce Swedish law on him.

Besides the statues, Ladonia is uninhabited and consists of a few square yards of rocks, a monthly newspaper, *The Ladonian Herald*, and an internet homepage, where people can apply for "citizenship". So far, Ladonia has 6,000 "citizens" – mostly Vilks's friends and supporters.

STATES OF MIND

PAUL SIEVEKING

Sunday Telegraph 14/4/02

The jest began to backfire on Vilks recently when more than 3,000 Pakistanis asked for political asylum in his "state". Vilks had already authorised the "naturalisation" papers of 500 applicants before he discovered that they were taking it seriously. Some of the applicants were businessmen aiming to establish a foothold in Europe, but the majority were impecunious Christians desperate to escape religious persecution

in Pakistan.

Vilks tried to explain that Ladonia was uninhabitable but he wasn't believed and by the end of February this year, between 100 and 200 new applications for citizenship were pouring in every day, so the Ladonian homepage had to be closed down. However, it returned on March 11, with a prominent notice stating that living or working in Ladonia was impossible, and that no visas would be issued.



save police. Luke Helder (21), would have planted more bombs had he not been captured near Reno. He could face life in prison. (D. Telegraph, 11/5/02)

*** Making news the same day, the landlady of a seaside guesthouse complained after two artists won a £6,000 art prize for dismantling one of her bedrooms. Mein Shimmins knew nothing of the award until a guest showed her a postcard from a local gallery of one of her 33 rooms with all the furniture dismantled and stacked in the middle. The creation was the work of Sonya Hanney, 26, and Adam Dade, 28, who had dismantled hotel rooms around Europe. The checked in at the Cae Mor Hotel in Llandudno, North Wales, as ordinary guests and videotaped themselves unscrewing and moving the furniture, then put it all back in place. The completed video, Stacked Hotel Room No. 9, won the annual Oriol Mostyn gallery competition and the £6,000 prize. But Mrs Shimmins, 54, said: "I think it lacked manners. I think it was rude and deceitful of them. I can take a joke but when it comes to art I prefer Monet." (The Times, 11/5/02)

Of course, no article on Bnt Art would be complete without a mention of Tracey Emin (great tits, shame about the face), creator of the £150,000 unmade bed. She has a cat called Docket, which when it went missing, she put up notices on lamp-posts in the Spitalfields area of London, asking for help finding the cat. Local people reckoned they were works of art and could be worth as much as £500 each. Oliver Pritchett commented: "Her agent has firmly stated that these were not works of conceptual art -- just notices to alert her neighbours about the missing cat. I think that the context is very important. The mistake those people made was to take the notices off the lamp-posts. If they had uprooted the lamp-posts with the notices still on they would be looking at a valuable work of art." (Sunday Telegraph, 31/3/02)

Still with Emin, Craig Brown caustically commented: "If Tracey Emin was put on earth for anything, it as surely to make humorists redundant. A few years ago, I wrote a jokey piece about her, inventing a spoof exhibition called "I want to die now, alone and mouldy, hating everyone, always and forever" in which her main exhibit was called "Skid Marks on Clean Linen". A month or two later, she exhibited her unmade bed with soiled sheets for the very first time. Tracey's put art back in the headlines -- and that must be good for art runs the argument. But do transport conferences ring with the sound of people saying: "Peter Sutcliffe's put lorry-driving back in the headlines -- and that must be good for road haulage?" (D. Telegraph, 14/9/02)



All you need to read Modern art

- **ANISH KAPOOR**
Donna De Salvo
Tate Gallery, Pp. 116, £9.99
Photographs of maquettes and sketches, together with conversations with Kapoor record the evolution of his late 'Modern' installations.
- **YOUNG BRITISH ART: THE SAATCHI DECADE**
Ed. by Jonathan Bamber, Booth-Clibborn, £75
How Saatchi and the YBAs took the art world by storm.
- **ON THE WAY TO WORK**
Gordon Burn & Damien Hirst
Paper & Pencil, £25
Interviews with the artists between 1991 and 2000 chart his rise to notoriety.
- **AN INTELLIGENT PERSON'S GUIDE TO MODERN ART**
Stephen Farthing
Duckworth, £14.95
From Eric Gill to Damien Hirst, the artist argues that modern art is for everyone.
- **THIS IS MODERN ART**
Matthew Collings
Allan Lane & Nicholson, £12.99
Irreverent, humorous guide to the new wave of artists.

Apparently Emin, who once tried to commit suicide by throwing herself off the harbour wall at Margate, while drunk, after a botched abortion, studied painting at the Royal College of Art but quickly became disillusioned with it and turned to conceptual art. In fact, a doctor told Emin she was sterile after a bad attack of gonorrhoea in her teens, but then at the age of 26, she became pregnant and had an abortion. Not long afterwards she had a second abortion. In a profile, it was easy to see where Nigel Farnham's agenda was coming from -- "Does it give pause for thought that it would be pretty hard to tell apart a Tracey Emin that someone had cobbled together from going through her bins? Or more pungently: "Are the confessional elements in her art the equivalent of basket-weaving in a lunatic asylum, a form of therapy?" (The Sunday Telegraph, 27/10/02)

On a personal level, I was embarrassed when colleagues asked if the mini-skirted girl on the front page of Hartlepool's Northern Daily Mail wasn't my current girlfriend. Moira Twist, a student at Hartlepool College of Art, hadn't told me of her auto-destructive art publicity bid (i.e. mild arson).

Another girlfriend, Marilyn Pillar, certainly could draw, paint and was employed by a department store as a graphic artist in its advertising department. Sadly she spurned my proposal of marriage and a lifetime of bliss to emigrate to Canada and wed someone else (pictured on the cover and inside).

But life must go on, and I'll let Ivan Massow, chairman of the Institute for Contemporary Art, have the last word: "Let's face it, most people agreed with the cleaner's verdict when last year he 'accidentally' binned a Hirst 'installation' comprising ash trays, half-filled coffee cups and broken beer bottles. It's not the first time it's happened, and with people such as Tim Noble and Sue Webster producing -- quite literally -- piles of rubbish like Dirty White Trash (With Gulls)", it's no surprise that people are fed up. I was at the scene as the artistic wave took off and was often left speechless by some of the rubbish that was passed off as art. However, the problem with art is that people are terribly frightened of expressing an opinion. It's as if they are frightened that 'people who know' will accuse them of not 'getting it', like it's a joke (which a lot of it is). So they follow the herd instead. Already the anti-Brit Art backlash has unleashed a re-evaluation of the Turner Prize, a freefall in auction prices and somewhat of a renaissance in some of the so-called 'traditional skills' -- such as painting for instance." (The Times, 24/8/02)

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MAGAZINES

FORTEAN TIMES. News-stand. £2.70. No. 162. 9/11 attacks revisionism; 19th century Oz - close encounter; Padre Pio; alcoholic animals, mystery hums. No. 163. Antigravity; South American stigmatics; ball lightning; calendar reform. No. 164. Latest crop formations and not particularly well argued on either side debate on reality or otherwise of corn circles; halved worms propagation myth; how John Michell influenced Grateful Dead; zombies; religious apparitions; Chinese mounds; cryogenics.

NORTHERN EARTH. Q. £6.50 for 4. Cheques payable to Northern Earth Mysteries Group. From 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire. No. 91. Sad Gordon Harns back in print on bog tracks; Mayburgh; Arthurian place names; Cretan fresco; Tokyo shrine. Regular features being archaeological round-up, book reviews, editor's musings, letters, events.

AMSKAYA. Newsletter of the STAR Fellowship. £2 for 4. Cheques payable to J. Goddard at 25 Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey, KT15 2PX. No. 51. Life on Mars issue. I must admit that Daniel Ross' arguments for an over-populated Martian landscape with canals left me unmoved. According to Daily Telegraph, 27/9/02, there may be microbes on the red planet and editor Jimmy Goddard could disprove my scepticism by aligning with New York travel agent George Hatten, who has booked 31 passengers for tourist trips to Mars, saying: "I hope to get the first flight away by 2009" (D. Sport, 22/10/02). Also Dirk Schulze-Mazuch reckons finding life on Venus is a possibility, where huge numbers of bugs could live in tiny acidic water droplets which float over the planet (D. Mirror, 26/9/02). Meanwhile, the discovery of a faint glow given off by water in distant solar systems may mean other planets like Earth exist in our galaxy (D. Mirror, 19/9/02). Additionally there's wisdom from the late Tony Wedd here. Plus royals and UFOs. No. 52. More Wedd ponderings and book extracts; TV programme and book reviews.

The Ants are My Friends ...

By Paul Screeton

MISHEARING words is common enough for all of us, but sometimes it is definitely mythical. I believe my friend John Michell is responsible for giving it the term "aural simulacra", but it seems "mondegreen" is the official term for a misheard phrase, name or saying.

The Times last summer devoted several columns over a period to readers' favourite examples. Here are a choice few:

* I rang directory inquires for the Wig and Pen Club. The operator apologetically informed me there was no listing for a Pen Club in Wigan.

* At the outbreak of the Second World War my father registered for potential call-up. Asked his occupation, he replied "pharmacist", and saw the clerk write down "farm assistant".

* A recent letter arrived addressed to Heathfield Wreck Tree. (Heathfield Rectory)

* No anthology of modern mondegreens would be complete without the estimable contribution to The Times some years ago. One of your earlier editions referred to the greatest literary find of the century as a collection of ancient squirrels from a cave near the Dead Sea.

This subject has been covered previously at length (FF27:8-10 passim).

Foul-mouthed toys are a media regular. Julie Blundell, of Birmingham, reckons an electronic voice from the £70 Tomy Alto toy told kids not "This clown has got a kite" but the last word was "cunt". (D. Sport, 25/1/99)

A Pokemon toy whose cheeks turn red when it speaks its name instead turned the air blue with swear words. Shocked parents Tom and Penny Price bought the three-inch high Japanese cult character Picachu for son Noah, eight. But when they switched it on, the naughty toy kept telling the lad "Fuck you". (News of the World, 23/4/00; The Times, 4/11/00)

Talking toy Tigger, the £14.99 Winnie the Pooh character, was withdrawn by Disney from shelves after a Geordie customer bought one for his girlfriend. It was supposed to announce "I'm Tigger" when its foot was squeezed, but Disney conceded some clients misheard it as "wanker". (The Mirror, D. Sport, 3/11/00)

A Teletubbies £14.99 toy radio taught Dianne Burton, of Wisbech's two-year-old daughter to swear. Dianne, 40, said: "Laa-Laa gurgles happily, Dipsy sings a merry little song and Tinky Winky joins in with a catchy tune. But when I pressed the Po button it was saying "bastard, bastard". (The Sun, 3/4/99)

Movie mishearings also crop up, such as when Tony Collins bought a Scooby Doo video for his son and heard Scooby's pal Shaggy boasting that he's "just enjoyed shagging a girl behind a bush". However, film-makers Warner claim the word is "soarking" -- an American term for kissing and cuddling. (D. Sport, 2/10/98)

On the subject of films, the book Quentin Tarantino claims that the enigmatic film title Reservoir Dogs resulted from the film-maker's mangling of "Au Revoir les Enfants" when working in a video store. (HarperCollins)

On air mishearings publicised include Zoe Ball believing sidekick Piers Bradford had said on her Breakfast Show: "We're awaiting the arrival of Melanie's jism". She gasped: "I'm sorry?" before realising Piers had slipped when pronouncing the Spice Girl's surname -- Chisholm. (D. Sport, 15/12/98)

Then Fiona Phillips and Ross Kelly, on ITV breakfast show GMTV, discussed Fred Pontin's TV advert and Ross impersonated the late holiday camp boss and said what sounded like

"Fuck early". Fiona cringed and said: "I hope I didn't mishear that". A GMTV spokeswoman commented: "It may have been his accent but we are convinced he was saying, "For girlie". Oh, yes? Surely "Book early" was intended. (The Sport, 30/4/98)

As for TV, Mr Blobby, normally known only for a limited vocabulary of "blobby" and "blibby", and who starred on Noel Edmonds' House Party, was alleged to exclaim "Fuck it" as he crashed into a goalpost on a top-selling BBC video. (D. Sport, 31/12/93)

Misheard Lyrics

By Jennifer Linsel

Do you remember the TV ad for Memorex blank cassette tapes which featured a man listening to Desmond Dekker's 'The Israelites'? The ad claimed that because the man had recorded the song on a tape not made by Memorex he thought it was called 'Me ears are alight'. Have you ever wondered why the lyrics are printed on the screen for karaoke? The reason is that many people mishear lyrics and sing what they interpret the words to be. After researching this subject I have discovered many amusing misheard lyrics to well-known songs and have included some of the best in this article.

ACROSS THE UNIVERSE (The Beatles) The real lyric is 'jai guru deva' but it was misheard as 'John grew a K-Mart'.

A HORSE WITH NO NAME (America) The words 'no name' have been misheard as 'no legs'.

ALL THOSE YEARS AGO (George Harrison) 'All those years ago' was misheard as 'Although she's a goat'.

ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT (Elvis Presley) 'Do you miss me tonight' was misheard as 'Do you mince meat tonight'.

BAND ON THE RUN (Paul McCartney) The title has been sung as 'Stand on the rug'.

BAT OUT OF HELL (Meatloaf) The real lyric is 'Like a bat out of hell' but it has been misheard as 'Like a battery hen'.

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY (Queen) 'The devil put aside for me' has been misheard as 'The devil has a sideboard for me' and 'Spare him his life from this monstrosity' has been misheard as 'Sparing his life from his pork sausages'.

CAN'T BUY ME LOVE (The Beatles) The title of this Beatles hit has been misheard as 'Kent Bobby Love'.

CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE TONIGHT (Elton John) The line 'It's enough to make kings of vagabonds' has been misheard as 'It's enough to make cheese and crackers on'.

DON'T GO CHASING WATERFALLS (TLC) The first line of the chorus has been misheard as 'Go, go, Jason, water calls'.

DON'T SPEAK (No Doubt) The lyric 'Don't speak, I know what you're thinking' has been sung as 'Don't leak, you know we have a toilet'.

ETERNAL FLAME (Atomic Kitten) The real lyric is 'Am I only dreaming' but it has been misheard as 'In my room is three men'.

EYE OF THE TIGER (Survivor) The title of the song is 'Eye of the Tiger' but it has been sung as 'Ivor the Tiger'.

50 WAYS TO LEAVE YOUR LOVER (Paul Simon) 'No need to be coy, Roy' has been misheard as 'No need to be corduroy'.

FIRESTARTER (Prodigy) 'I am the firestarter' has been sung as 'I am a big fat hamster'.

FROM A DISTANCE (Bette Midler) The line 'God is watching us...from a

distance' has been sung as 'Bodies washing up...from a distance'.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN (Traditional) 'Save' has been sung as 'shave'.

HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE (Bee Gees) 'Summer breeze' has been sung as 'submarine'.

IMAGINE (John Lennon) 'Imagine all the people' has been sung as 'I'm hitting all the people'.

MAMBO NO.5 (Lou Bega) The line 'A little bit of Rita is all I need' has been sung as 'A little bit of weed is all I need'.

PURPLE HAZE (Jimi Hendrix) This is probably the most well-known misheard lyric of all time. Hendrix sings 'scuse me while I kiss the sky' but it has been misheard as 'scuse me while I kiss this guy'.

PUSH (Matchbox 20) The real lyric is 'I want to take you for granted' but it has been misheard as 'I want to take it and plant it'.

RADAR LOVE (Golden Earring) Someone asked in a record shop for 'Red eye love'.

RED RED WINE (UB40) 'Stay close to me' has been sung as 'Steak lobster meat'.

ROBERT DE NIRO'S WAITING (Bananarama) 'Robert De Niro's waiting, talking Italian' has been sung as 'Robin the hero's waiting, the bald-headed champion'.

ROCK THE BOAT (Hues Corporation) 'I'd like to know where you got the notion' has been sung as 'I'd like to know where you got the nose from'.

RUBY TUESDAY (Rolling Stones) 'Goodbye Ruby Tuesday' has been misheard as 'Goodbye groovy Tuesday'.

SCARBOROUGH FAIR (Simon and Garfunkel) 'Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme' has been sung as 'Parsley's angels, Mary and Tom'.

SHARP DRESSED MAN (ZZ Top) The real lyric is 'Every girl is crazy bout a sharp dressed man' but it has been misheard as 'Everyone is crazy bout a souped-up van'.

SHE'S GONE (Hall and Oates) 'She's gone, ooh-ah' has been sung as 'Cheese scones, ooh-ah'.

TEQUILA SUNRISE (Eagles) 'The right words never come' has been sung as 'The plywood's never gone'.

TONIGHT (Whitney Houston) 'Tonight I'll celebrate my love for you' has been sung as 'Tonight I'll sellotape my gloves to you'.

UP WHERE WE BELONG (JOE COCKER/JENNIFER WARNES) 'Love lifts us up where we belong' has been misheard as 'The lid is up where we belong'.

WAKE ME UP BEFORE YOU GO-GO (Wham) 'Wake me up before you go-go' has been misheard as 'Wake me up and throw your cocoa'.

YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE (Gerry and the Pacemakers) 'You'll never walk alone' has been sung as 'You never wore cologne'.



Coronation Street fans thought they heard teenage tearaway Toyah Battersby tell stepdad Les to "Fuck off" in a row over her exam results. An Independent Television Commission spokeswoman commented: "On checking the episode it became apparent viewers had misheard the phrase used 'Toyah, in fact, had told her father to 'bog off'. This would be regarded by most viewers as relatively mild language. We are not sure why they misheard the phrase but they were pretty sure they heard something a lot stronger". (D. Sport, 26/10/98)

Highway tale time. When a stowaway was suspected of hiding in a toilet on a Greyhound bus, the exclamation "There's abum in the bathroom" reached the driver as "Bomb in the bathroom". So driver Charles Boyer stopped when he saw a state trooper in Maryland, U.S.A. To cut a long story short, vagrant Oliver Martin was charged with misdemeanour theft. (Victoria Times Colonist, British Columbia, 31/7/90)

Animals always get in on this topic, such as when police sent a spotter plane and squad cars to a wood after reports of a woman screaming -- and found two foxes mating at Ryde, Isle of Wight. (Sun, D. Sport, 23/4/96)

Now one which is unbelievable, for why would the ghastly soul singer James Brown want Spanish crooner Julio Iglesias as support at a concert -- only to be stunned when he got foul-mouthed rap star Coolio. A Los Angeles promoter misheard Brown's request to "Get me Julio" and booked the ex-gun-toting crack dealer instead. (D. Star, 8/6/96)

Another dubious onebased on the supposed North-South divide allegedly caused problems in Ottery St Mary. According to Exeter's Express & Echo, a Devon tourism officer there gave detailed directions to a holidaying couple from "oop North" who wanted to go on a fishing trip. They were sent to Exmouth, several miles away, with strict instructions about whom to contact to arrange the trip. The disgruntled Northerners returned, says the paper, "angrily claiming they had been sent on a wild goose chase". All they wanted was somewhere to eat fish and chips. (D. Telegraph, 25/5/96)

But I can believe that councillors renamed a new meeting place -- Falcon Hall -- after realising their accent made it sound like a swearword. The venue at Shanklin, Isle of Wight, is now Falcon Cross Hall. (Sun, 19/9/95)

Almost lastly, Chris McGrath wrote of a horse from the 18th century called Eclipse, nearly gelded in his youth. Fortunately he was spared and Eclipse became one of the breed's dominant influences in the following century -- notably through his sons, King Fergus and Pot-8-os. When the latter went into training, Lord Abingdon gave a stable lad a piece of chalk and instructed him to write the colt's name, "Potatoes", on the door of his box. The lad duly scrawled "Potatoooooooo", and his delighted master decided to keep the spelling. Pedigree historians have settled on Pot-8-Os and perhaps some racecourse could honour him with a Pot-8-Os Stakes. (The Times, 3/7/99)

And finally one to make The Vagina Monologues look tame. A woman ventriloquist drove off a rapist by throwing her voice. Elka Lind fooled the pervert into thinking her fanny was talking to him. And the terrified sex fiend fled when he heard Elka's naughty bits snarl: "Don't you dare put that thing in me. I'll snap it off". The 27-year-old nightclub entertainer was at home when the sicko broke in. Elka, who was unharmed in the incident, said: "He had ripped my clothing off and he was pushing me onto the couch. Once I threw my voice, it put him off straightaway. He looked terrified, grabbed his clothes and ran off". Police arrested known sex criminal Kurt

THE MISHEARD MESSAGES THAT MATCH MUSHARRAF'S BLUNDER

By DAVID EDWARDS

WHEN Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf heard that 45 Commando were coming, he assumed just 45 commandos were on their way.

But after aides informed him he'd misheard the message and their total strength was really 1,700, he was worried their presence would cause a riot.

At least he can console himself with the fact that he's not alone.

Such mishaps are legendary. Classic blunders include, "Send reinforcements, we're going to advance," being translated into, "Send three and fourpence we're going to a dance."

And then there's the famously-misquoted lyric by Desmond Decker, "Me Israelites", morphing into, "Me ears are alright."

We uncover more world-class howlers...

● In February, US President George W Bush said the Japanese yen needed to be devalued. He actually meant the country's economic problems were caused by deflation, but by then the country's currency markets had gone into freefall.

● Ford's Pinto car flopped when it was released in Brazil. Executives were embarrassed to discover the word was slang for small penis and hastily renamed it the Corcel, meaning horse.

● Scandinavian vacuum-cleaner manufacturer Electrolux gaffed with its US ad campaign which proclaimed: "Nothing Sucks Like An Electrolux."

● When Coca-Cola launched in China it was read phonetically as Kekoukela which translates into "Bite The Wax Tadpole" or "Female Horse Stuffed With Wax."

● PepsiCo marketed Pepsi in Vietnam with the slogan "Come Alive With The

Pepsi Generation." It was read by locals as "Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back From The Dead."

● When Clairol released its Mist Stick deodorant in Germany, executives didn't realise mist meant animal dung. Few Germans were enthusiastic about buying Rolls Royce's Silver Mist car either.

● The American cigarette slogan "Salem - Feeling Free" translated into Japanese meant "When Smoking Salem, You Feel So Refreshed That Your Mind Seems To Be Free And Empty."

● Mexicans were nonplussed when American Airlines' slogan for its leather business-class seats, "Fly In Leather", translated as "Vuela En Cuero", or "Fly In The Nude."

● Addressing the German people, President John F Kennedy said: "Ich bin ein Berliner," meaning, "I am a doughnut."

● Coors took its beer slogan, "Turn It Loose", to Mexico where it was read as "Suffer From Diarrhoea."

● When Perdue ran its Chicken King slogan, "It Takes A Strong Man To Make A Tender Chicken", in Mexico, it translated as "It Takes A Sexually Aroused Man To Make A Chicken Affectionate."

Sexually Aroused Man To Make A Chicken Affectionate."

● Bob Dylan's 1963 peace anthem Blowin' In The Wind has been misheard through the years. The lyrics, "The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind", have been read by some fans as, "The ants are my friends, they're blowin' in the wind."

● A hall of fame of misheard lyrics has been compiled at www.kisssthisguy.com. Highlights include, "I'll never be your beast of burden", from the Rolling Stones' Beast Of Burden, misheard as, "I'll never leave your pizza burning", and, "There's a bad moon on the rise", from Creedence Clearwater Revival's Bad Moon Rising, turning into, "There's a bathroom on the right."

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WORRIED: Musharraf

16.

** Such writing elan as follows, shows why the critic A A Gill is so popular (except with Gordon Ramsay): "A geisha's raison d'être is to pour drinks, giggle behind her hand, tell men they are handsome, strong and amusing, listen to boastful lies, and never show any emotion except bliss. Occasionally, for a great deal of cash, some will allow men to copulate with them. We, of course, have geishas back in Blighty: we call them barmaids." ("A A Gill is Away", Cassell, 2002)



** Here the boob is educational ignorance: "There is a story -- apocryphal I'm sure -- about the man who asked for some wine in a restaurant. 'Would you like the sommelier?' asked the waiter. 'Yes, that sounds great, which vintage do you have?' he asks. Titter, titter. I'm sure that this myth has its roots in some deep-seated fear we all have of sommeliers, with their curious rituals and irritating habits -- the most heinous of which is putting a bottle just beyond one's reach before disappearing, never to be seen again." (Giles Kime in Sunday Telegraph Magazine, 17/2/02).



RUMOURS OF LOCOMOTIVE NAMES (FF40:4-6 & FF41:6-8). Regarding locos purported to have been selected to receive the name Sir Winston Churchill (FF41), an enthusiasts' magazine published a letter from Mike Hook regarding the unnamed Britannia class engine 70047. His 1960 combined ABC volume had manual entries made against the then unnamed Brits including 70047 Sir Winston Churchill. However, his 1963 books of depot allocations showed it marked with asterisks, denoting being named. A fellow enthusiast reckoned that it had been the intention to withdraw Battle of Britain loco 34051 Winston Churchill and name 70047 accordingly. Steam World's historical consultant, Richard Strange, commented: "No. 70047 is shown with an asterisk as at July 14, 1962, and October 5, 1963, but I have no information about it. (Steam World, September 2002)

Railway expert Andrew Dow, former head of National Railway Museum at York and someone I've lunched with, wrote authoritatively that according to the records of the British Railways Locomotive Naming Committee, Britannia 70047 was never named. No fewer than five sets of names were proposed by the committee for batch 70045-49, but none met with executive approval. After that the committee gave up trying and all but 70047 were subsequently named individually while in service. He adds: "The name Sir Winston Churchill was considered by the committee for the sole class '8' Pacific, but the committee decided to recommend uke of Edinburgh. This was not adopted, probably because Buckingham Palace did not agree -- or perhaps it was suspected that agreement would not be given. The name Duke of Gloucester was eventually selected because he was president of the then forthcoming International Railway Congress. It should be noted that there was then a rule that names would not be recommended if they would duplicate names already in use. For this reason Sir Winston Churchill would have been rejected anyway; the thought that the Bulleid Pacific Winston Churchill would have been withdrawn to release the name is fanciful; at the very least it would have been renamed, but the name was so appropriate to the Battle of Britain class that this idea was almost certainly never even considered. Railwaymen were far too busy to spend time on such issues! (Steam World, October 2002)

** Class 47. The July 1992 issue of The Railway Magazine reported that Rail express systems had advised a further 13 Res names for its locos. However, 12 selected names were applied, but not Research.

JUGGED FISH (FF16:17). Cafe owners in Alsace, France, were furious over a local government order that they must have a jug of water on every table, fearing it would hit wine sales. Now every table has its jug of water -- with a goldfish in it. (D. Sport, 21/6/01).

BOOKS

References: 1) Town's myths and tall tales in print (Hartlepool Mail, 7/11/02); 2) Would ex-Mail Man be game for a laugh? (HM, 8/11/02); 3, There's no such thing as bad publicity (HM, 23/11/02)



READ ALL ABOUT IT; Author Paul Screeton next to a statue of Sir William Gray, who features in the new book. Picture by LOUSIE HUTCHINSON. C28970

A COMICAL review of mix-ups and tall tales has been published by a former journalist.

Seaton Carew man Paul Screeton has compiled some of the town's modern myths and freaky fables for his book *The Man Who Ate A Domino*.

From MP Peter Mandelson's chip shop mix-up, in which he supposedly did not recognise mushy peas, to tales of pub revelry and banter, Paul details the bizarre side of life from the past 10 years or so.

The former *Hartlepool Mail* journalist said: "By hanging a monkey whom they suspected of being a Napoleonic spy, the people of Hartlepool have revealed a mixture of the absurd and the cautionary."

"Since the first decade of the 19th century nothing much has changed."

Paul's book, which he has been writing for the past few years, features dozens of anecdotes from

By JONATHAN WARD

the streets, pubs and clubs of Hartlepool and east Durham.

Many of the places will be familiar as will be the stories, people and legends.

"I have attempted to write a hilarious series of vignettes culled from contemporary newspaper accounts and personal contacts," said Paul.

"There's tales of people coming to harm from electrocution, jumping for Olympic joy and take-away shop violence.

"We've got statues doing strange things, a Hart-born horse's odd relationship with punters, peculiar objects dropped from the sky, curious harvest festivals and rock star rumours."

The book is available from selected outlets at £2.95 or from Paul at 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 2AT, plus post and packing.

The Editor writes ...



I'M PLEASED to see that former Mail journalist Paul Screeton is spending his spare time wisely.

Most of us at the Mail who remember Paul's love of real ale (or not so real ale, if he was pushed) were convinced that his well earned retirement would be spent propping up a bar.

As it turns out Paul has been diligently working away as a writer and has just published his latest book, a pocket-sized volume with the intriguing title *The Man Who Ate A Domino*.

It's basically a collection of amusing stories gleaned from various newspapers over the past few years.

Many of the tales come from the Hartlepool Mail, including an

embarrassing one about my own mother-in-law which I'm sure she'll be delighted to be reminded of.

Oddly enough there are no Paul Screeton tales in the book and colleagues in the office are puzzled why that should be the case.

Perhaps Paul's next work could be based on incidents involving himself. Judging by the laughs we had talking about them, it could be a best seller.

Just to jog his memory we remembered an interesting incident involving a woman from Wolviston and a concrete otter.

Then there was the time he made an interesting exit from a train at Seaton Carew (he also did the same at Newcastle).

And what about the package that arrive for him addressed to 'Paul Scrotum'?

If he can't remember the details of those amusing situations, could we jog his memory about the time he ended up wedged in a wastepaper basket or when a drunken Scotsman gave him the benefit of his journalistic experience.

There's a wealth of material and if he needs any further reminders there's a few people down here who'd be happy to help him relive the tales.

If you like a chuckle or want an unusual stocking filler for someone for Christmas, *The Man Who Ate A Domino* is well worth spending a few pounds on.

It's available at a few local outlets priced £2.95 or you can give Paul Screeton a ring on 296476 and he'll be pleased to make arrangements to send you one.

WELL, they say all publicity is good publicity. Jonathan Ward's piece on myself and newly-published book, *The Man Who Ate a Domino*, was admirable, with a fine picture by Louise Hutchinson, (Mail, November 7).

However, our esteemed editor was somewhat waspish in his congratulations that my life in semi-retirement nowadays has moments of literary endeavour outside pub opening hours.

He was also somewhat mischievous in his half-tributes so beloved when former colleagues recall the misdemeanours of the author (Mail, November 8).

Sorry Harry, I have no intentions of penning a tome of anecdotes from the eventful past 56 years of my misspent life, though a novel on life in journalism seems plausible. Kevin Whatley is a dead ringer to play you in the TV series.

Anyway, allow me to correct and amplify a few points; as you'll agree a right to reply is consistent with Mail policy.

You claim I'm not in the book, but there is a story, albeit indirect, featuring me. I recall the late night telephone call from the poacher prodded by a farmer's pitchfork, who rang from an East Durham pub to let me know how much pleasure my recollection of his court appearance had given him and his mates. The occasion is captured in an illustration by talented collaborator Paul Jermy.

Harry's reference to a concrete otter in Wolviston requires elaboration. Briefly, within a four-page Village Portrait feature on the village I noted the strangeness of an ornamental aquatic mammal so far from a river.

This woman took exception to a mild fashion rebuke and harangued me over the phone. It's always the least expected which causes journalists grief.

"Gutter journalism" she screamed, so loud that colleagues were alerted to the crank call and began laughing loudly. I asked whether she was sure it was her otter I'd maligned.

"I spent three hours yesterday evening checking every garden visible in Wolviston and mine is the only one with a concrete otter. You don't know what sentimental value it has." She added she would never buy the Mail again, so she'll miss this memory lane reminiscence.

As for Seaton Carew and Newcastle railways stations, the less said the better. The former saw me alight at Hartlepool actually and involved an understanding member of the British Transport Police, as did the correctly-attributed latter. No comment.

As for the wastepaper basket episode, I think I'd upset Dick Jacques. The drunken Scotsman's diasporic appointment was a moment of tragic folly when editor Peter Chislett became tired of laying out the front page during a journalists' strike and hired the hack from hell, a drinker who would have put yours truly, The Tippler and Paul "Grayzie" Gray under the table together.

Harry's recollections have not unduly embarrassed me, as doubtless intended, as you have to take it on the chin in this game.

I hope those in my book are similarly forgiving, including Gerry Johnson at Seaton Carew Social Club, the man who thought a woman was incarcerated in Hartlepool Power Station's reactor room, the Horden

Cod Catcher's Club members, the Gary Glitter impersonator electrocuted at the Mayfair Centre, Anne Draper and her artificial limb, Jack Locke and his airborne missile, an incident at Tasty Bites 2, a prominent local businesswoman, sports fan Shaun Cook and Stranton vicar, Stephen Taylor.

There's also tales of moving statues, the Marine Hotel, Jack Dormand and dementia, Glenda Jackson, Elaine Taylor and the man with a frog, editor Harry's mother-in-law Jean Taylor and a hoax letter, plus the various mock mayors of Middleton.

Prince of Darkness and Member of Parliament, Peter Mandelson, tried to sound intimidating when requesting a copy by beginning a telephone conversation with "I'm reacting to a piece in last night's Hartlepool Mail" regarding his alleged inability to see the difference between avocado mousse and mushy peas.

And lastly, I wonder if the Horden man who ate dominoes will be buying a copy or more for his pals at the Horden Hotel. Also the staff at the University of Hartlepool Hospital whose frivolity led to the bland title out of not wishing to commit libel.

Copies are available from me at the address below, costing £2.95 plus 41p postage
Paul Screeton
5 Egton Drive,
Seaton Carew,
Hartlepool TS25 2AT

THE MAGIC OF LABYRINTHS by LIZ SIMPSON (Element, £14.99)

Rather pricey introduction to the turf-cut designs know as "trop towns" throughout pre-industrial Britain. Today they are regarded as a spiritual tool and walking meditation within New Age circles. Mysterious metaphor for the soul? Friendly addition to anyone's self-development library.

SPELL IN YOUR POCKET by KATE WEST (Element, £4.99)

Introduction to witchcraft with principles of magic and spells regarding love, money, healing and protection.



"What else do you do for a living?"

THE GODS WERE ASTRONAUTS by ERICH von DANIKEN (Vega, £12.99)

Oh, no, they weren't.

