

Life & Letters Today



London
SUPPLY AND DEMAND: Britain's tiny tots have negotiated giant pocket money increases in the past year, happily ignoring all Uncle Nigel's warnings about the dangers of excessive growth in the money supply.

The under-11s in Northern Ireland have squeezed a rise of 65% out of their parents in the past year, their Scottish branch has stuck out for an extra 21%, and those in south Wales and the West have pocketed an extra 22.9%. The fat cats in London managed a rise of just 2.7%.

But unlike many of their superiors, children seem to know that it is a good idea to save at least some of their income. About half the children questioned said the main reason for saving was for "a rainy day". This was particularly so among London children.

Those financial institutions engaged in a battle to attract the budding financiers of tomorrow may not be pleased to hear that children's main concern when opening a savings account is "a good rate of interest". Astonishingly, 46% of the under-fives said they were looking for the highest yield on their savings, while they were the least likely to be attracted by offers of Donald Duck, Snoopy or Garfield money boxes.

THE INDEPENDENT

New York
PALINDROMANIA: U Nu, the former leader of Burma, is back in the news [writes William Safire]. He was the Last Palindrome—the only recent head of government whose name is spelled the same backwards as forward. We palindromaniacs missed you—and U Nu it all along.

NEW YORK TIMES

London
JOIST & GOETHE: There aren't many jokes about Goethe, and I thought [Simon Callow writes] the management of the Lyric Hammersmith (putting on "Faust" last year) had annexed them all for its T-shirt campaign ("Goethe Blazes" being the most unashamed). But a friend drew my attention to a joke of Dave Allen's about an Englishman and an Irishman after a job on a building site.

Foreman: Here's a little test (taking Englishman aside). What's the difference between a joist and a girder?

Englishman: Easy. A girder is a beam made of iron—a joist is a beam made of wood.

Foreman: Good (taking Irishman aside): Now what's the difference etc?

Irishman: Easy, Joist wrote *Ulysses* and Girder wrote *Faust*.

The joke reminded me of when I worked in the box office of the National Theatre. One that used to crack me up completely was when people asked for two tickets for "Three Sisters". Silly, I know.

THE TIMES

London
SOUND OF VILLAINY: Fallen idol David Jenkins, once a British Olympic silver medallist and now in prison after pleading guilty to running a multi-million dollar smuggling operation supplying athletes with illegal drugs, gave

a remarkably cool performance on television recently.

One thing that puzzled me [Peter Paterson writes] was the assertion by USA government investigator, Phillip Halpern that Jenkins was discovered to be behind the smuggling racket because of his English accent.

DAILY MAIL

New York
SELLING CACOPHONY: For people who work at home but want a background of businesslike sounds during their telephone calls, a tape recording of typewriters, adding machines, and file drawers has gone on sale in Kingston, New York, at \$14.95. It was created by Laura Newman,

"A customer told me it really works [she said]. 'It's subliminal, and people don't question it. They just assume you're in an office.'"

Ms Newman had started a business at home and worried that sounds of the television set, squabbling children and other domestic cacophony might project less than a professional image.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

London
IN A WORD: Officials at the Foreign Office have been quietly advised to cast about for an alternative to the term "conservatives" when referring to die-hard Kremlin opponents of Mikhail Gorbachov's reforms.

Such application of the word is said to find ill favour with No 10.

DAILY TELEGRAPH



London
PEACE POEM: British Telecom [writes John Ezard] is stopping its Dial-a-Poem service, launched with cultural fanfares several months ago, after a quarrel about whether the art is flexible enough to include such closet bards as Barbara Cartland, Frank Bruno, and the English soccer captain Bryan Robson.

BT was all in favour because it would be good for publicity. The English Language Society, the project administrators, said yest to a week starring Ms Cartland but "drew the line", at Bruno and Robson.

The project editor, Mr John Rety, protested to BT: "If the peace of the world depended on Barbara Cartland reading her poems, I would be stupid and wicked to bar her."

Otherwise her inclusion would mean a "deprecation" for other, more purist, poets and humiliation for him. Most other poets backed Mr Rety. One, Jeremy Reed, wrote of Ms Cartland's "execrably boring" works. Nevertheless, the bestselling novelist was featured on the 25p a minute service for a week. But plans to star Bruno and Robson reading their favourite poems were dropped after the protests. The result has reaffirmed the old truth that poetry rarely thrives without publicity, star names, patronage, sponsorship or advertising.

THE GUARDIAN

L I T E R A R Y T R A D I T I O N S

Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition

LAWRENCE LIPKING

Foreword by
Catharine R. Stimpson

The figure of the woman forsaken has long been at the heart of poetic tradition. Lipking explores major and minor poems, from many times and translated from many languages, written by both men and women, to explain the perennial fascination of this image. He also uses the poems to compare the ways in which men imagine women and women imagine themselves. *Women in Culture and Society series*

Roman Erotic Elegy

Love, Poetry, and the West
PAUL VEYNE

Translated by David Pellauer

In this witty foray into the love poems of Propertius, Tibullus, Catullus, and Ovid, Veyne asserts that the philological tradition has erred in reading them as autobiographical. He argues that elegy in ancient Rome was purely artificial and that cleverness in the use of poetic and rhetorical devices, rather than existential sincerity, was the elegists' primary goal.

The Art of Naming

ANNE FERRY

To solve the perplexities of sixteenth-century English verse, Ferry approaches its language as one very different from modern English. She notes the looseness with which the alphabet was used and the liberties taken with spelling, punctuation, and grammar, relating the different concept and experience of language at that time to the actual practices of Shakespeare, Spenser, Sidney, and others.

Mary Shelley and Frankenstein

The Fate of Androgyny
WILLIAM VEEDER

In this fresh reading of both Mary Shelley and her masterpiece, Veeder emphasizes her deep concern with the harmonious balance of traits traditionally seen as "masculine" and "feminine" and the desolating polarization of these traits into machismo and weakness. "An original, stimulating, and *important* book.... Neither the Shelleys nor this novel will look quite the same again."—James Rieger

The Historical Renaissance

New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture

HEATHER DUBROW and
RICHARD STRIER, editors

The essays in this volume exemplify the ways in which modern scholars and critics are fusing what once might have been compartmentalized as "literary" and "historical" concerns. Subjects range from religious, legal, and political treatises to major literary works and topographies of London. The contributing historians and literary critics display a variety of approaches to the interplay of discursive and non-discursive phenomena.

Ezra Pound among the Poets

GEORGE BORNSTEIN,
editor

"Be influenced by as many great writers as you can." So said Ezra Pound and so he was. Ten leading scholars here explore Pound's relationship to other poets—from his precursors to his contemporaries—both those who influenced him and those whom he influenced.

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