



THE LAST RESORT GALLERY

# Morning Ghazal

By William Dennis

## **Affinity Fraud**

*from Paul Krugman's New York Times blog of 1-18 -13*

Affinity fraud

seemed an obvious twist, once I turned it; take sex and money,  
it was from my family that I learned it.

But fiscal affinity

fraud--a foreign concept, if ever there was: money was never  
drawn to me; the bit I got, I earned it.

I knew that I was

right, no point in going over numbers. I trusted friends;  
when others offered their advice, I spurned it.

A busy thief

needs many friends; I found them round the punch bowl; they're the sort  
whom, when I loaned a friendly hand, I burned it.

Bill, half

my education was the company I kept; picking up  
their dropped enthusiasm, I returned it.

## **The Opposite Result**

*After Albert O. Hirschman, "The Rhetoric of Reaction"*

You use psychology  
to yield the opposite result, while I use irony  
to yield the opposite result.

You withhold love  
to make me value more the bit I get. Know what? This seems  
to me to yield the opposite result.

Of course, I say I love you,  
but you take it wrong, quite often; my history as  
a joker yields the opposite result.

To make me love you more,  
you swear you never, ever loved me; are you surprised,  
this seems to yield the opposite result?

But, Bill, don't fall  
into this foolish error of belief: that good  
intentions always yield the opposite result.

## Place in Jeopardy

*After Albert O. Hirschman, "The Rhetoric of Reaction"*

Fine goals, in truth,  
but look at what they place in jeopardy; against uncertain gains,  
weigh goods you place in jeopardy.

I've got you there!  
Absolutely nothing is to lose; it's cold dislike my burning  
love may place in jeopardy.

Or you've got me--  
a little kindness now and then, a smile--these are treasures gambling  
hearts would place in jeopardy.

To justify inaction,  
do you pretend I've much to lose? Is friendship something threat  
of love may place in jeopardy?

Everyone on [Neurath's](#) boat\*  
works hard to make repairs, and Bill, it's you  
passivity would place in jeopardy.

## **Futile Exercise**

Opposing laws  
of nature is a futile exercise; to tie your nature  
to my laws is futile exercise.

Though reason does  
afford respectability, I know, to parse  
the Invisible Hand from God's is futile exercise.

My tortoise love  
could never seize your beauty's trailing hem; how wearying  
for you to watch my futile exercise.

Not just you,  
but how could any woman love a man? Both God and nature  
render love a futile exercise.

Just look at all  
the energy you waste, you idiot, pursuing money,  
love, Bill, art--what futile exercise!

## **At Center**

We harbor plausible deniability at center;  
not surprised, while chatting, denials wrapped in word-play enter.

I dare not violate your privacy to specify  
all those occasions when your confidence was breached this winter.

This noxious brew of disavowal, structured ignorance  
and deceit-as-policy lists no one as inventor.

Mistakes were made. Who made them? No one...or else you and I.  
It's history, so forget it. Guilt's a sin and blame's a tempter.

As long-sought root of misery, my childhood works well;  
blame once assigned, the tale is done and calls forth no more wonder.

That there are consequences is a lesson we'd unlearn,  
while disavowal's art and craft never lack a mentor.

Lo, plausible denial--offspring of princes, presidents;  
but plausible guilt's a bastard, one that calls you progenitor.

Life's massive known unknown, this impotent half-knowledge, Bill;  
you said you'd read the warning, though in mouse print: Caveat Emptor.

## **Defeat That**

*after Paul Krugman's blog of Feb. 3, 2013, "Despicable Me"*

They like to make a man of straw to which they fix your name and defeat that;  
when you protest, it isn't you, they simply raise their voices and repeat that.

And claiming you and all your arguments are made of straw and yet breathe fire,  
they joust against the empty armor of their reasoning and unseat that.

"Come now, and let us reason together," the prophet, Jeremiah advocated;  
we gather, but we mostly have to set a lower standard and meet that.

As they assume they must be mirror images to you, and oozing sweetness--  
which they always say will trickle down--you must be full of bile and secrete that.

Their claim you ignore evidence, Freud called 'projection', if not cold contrivance;  
just open up a fresh tin can of exegesis, Paul, and reheat that.

## **Each Day**

*One death is a tragedy but a million deaths is a statistic. – Stalin*

Quaint ploys, uncoupling cruelty from conscience, worked for Clausewitz each day;  
no strategist, I fumble to excuse acts everyone commits each day.

What could I do but frown in anger when I beat my dogs and sons?  
Somehow anger follows my decision to set limits every day.

Not to play down risk of harm, by any means, but really, don't you know,  
I never hurt them more than they can stand, or taste permits each day.

Look, life is hard for everyone, it's good experience if they get used  
to having someone firm but fair—like me, say—standing on their tits each day.

If to do my duty means I got to step on toes, toes will get stepped on, see;  
I try to be as nice—I can't be nicer—as the job permits each day.

Hey, don't blame me, Bill—plenty others pull stuff I would never dream of trying  
they take care of number one and still they get to cash their chits each day.



## **Give Thanks, Grumbling**

Your other friend near dies of thirst, while floods set my banks crumbling;  
for just a desert with a spring, we both would give thanks, grumbling.

What was clouds and then was rain, now floods about my knees;  
yet my incendiary heart, somehow, still ranks burning.

Burning at the western end and flooding in the east,  
I wholly sympathize with poor Australia, my flanks stinging.

The road-runners have had to leave, yet there are men insisting  
on golf courses, swimming pools, and fish in tanks, swimming.

You'll know how Arizona feels, Bill, some day they will say  
there were cities, orchards, lovers, and you in their ranks, singing.

## **Hard Times, USA**

*after the [AlterNet article, by Paul Buchheit](#) 9-1-13*

One teen-aged mutant genius in five lives poor. That's Tough Love.  
For black young super-heros, one in two, but that's just tough, love.

We've gone from working stiffs to being among the least employed;  
when Joe College ekes out minimum wage, that's real rebuff, love.

It's twice as likely Grandma will taste poverty these days;  
her thirty k of 401k isn't near enough, love.

If minimum wage matched productivity, then it would be  
sixteen fifty-four an hour, and we could buy more stuff, love.

And since '08, the first to go were high-wage jobs, like yours;  
the jobs they've been replaced with--poet, say--are low-wage guff, love.

My life confirms the link between physical stress and money;  
the lucky folks on Medicare, that's who's looking buff, love.

Though overall, women earn four fifths of what men earn,  
you childless, urban, under-thirty gals are looking chuffed, love.

While young black dudes, in fact, do dope at lower rates than white guys,  
they're still the ones the cops think they should drag off by the scruff, love.

Our median financial wealth--two hundred bucks for blacks,  
but thirty-six thou for them that sit on white duffs, love.

This year--a tax of five percent on Forbes Four Hundred's earnings:  
next year-a full time, low wage job for all those sleeping rough, love.

Children, students, the elderly, wage earners, sick and disabled, women, minorities,  
the homeless.... Who's left, Bill? White male fluff, love.

## **In Brief, I Love You**

In brief, I love you.

In chief, I love you.

Your serf, dear lady,

in fief, I love you.

To cry out boldly—

relief. I love you!

Ignored once more, then,

in grief, I love you

It's what you're good for:

mischief--I love you.

Bill, tells her off-ish—

You thief, I love you.

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## Innocent Synonymies

after *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, by Steven Pinker

A nicer way to say the same is innocent synonymy;  
circumlocution avoids a name with innocent synonymy.

The subtle, civil art of plausible deniability  
is like a lie, but bears less blame through innocent synonymy.

In revolutionary-era France they practiced no mob rule,  
just "*effervescence*," so they claimed in innocent synonymy.

*Collateral damage* makes it clear that children, women and passing men  
were never in our heroes' aim, through innocent synonymy.

While disrepute..., infamy..., attaches to the Trails of Tears,  
*transfer of population* sounds quite tame, an innocent synonymy.

Than genocidal murderers, none get worse reviews, flat none;  
yet *ethnic cleansing* passed review through innocent synonymy.

While lend-lease torture sounds extraordinary, *extraordinary rendition*  
only seems a war game, via innocent synonymy.

A thorough dunking in barbarity wants some explanation;  
the *Final Solution* ducks the shame through innocent synonymy.

And, William, none of this strikes home because you have full confidence  
you never lie, you just re-frame in innocent synonymy.

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## **Men are Fallible**

My sweet-tooth thinks illusion and delusion are delectable;  
sweetie, you teach me both men and women are fallible.

There is no evidence of angels, except you, excluding  
that from orders which to us poor men are available.

If I sought reason to believe, I'd never believe you;  
but I am much like all men are, and men are gullible.

I knew I shouldn't take so much on faith when we first met,  
but then, that's what faith is, and men are fallible.

And should I seek good reason when I choose to think you love me,  
among the strange beliefs to which men are susceptible?

My recipe for error: whip faith and dogma with authority,  
ingredients which even to poor men are available.

Revelation and tradition baked in a pie...  
by knaves, in cases where no pie-men are available.

Sift your certainty till free of subjectivity;  
more cups of error than acumen are available.

I am capable of reason, although swayed by passion;  
I propose this as the reason men are gullible

The indispensable dispensed and then dispensed with: reason,  
honored in its absence, that's why men are gullible.

While I cry, Vive la difference! however superficial,  
similarities in men and women are fundamental.

Although we cannot speak the tongue, we like the food abroad;  
behind their cloying words, the tongues of men are universal.

When you are kind, while I am mean; do I feel better off?  
I feel unfit to live where men are altruistic at all.

I'll stop, if you will, claiming God for my side--QED:  
the traits shared by men and women are universal.

You laugh; I cry; I laugh; you cry...about the self-same things;  
let's not deny the rights of other men are reasonable.

I'm glad I bore you: you find obvious those things which only  
by a child of the Enlightenment are called banal.

From every church door scripture calls and Jesus tugs my sleeve,  
whispering of afterlife..., that unlike souls, men are mortal.

My ears grow bored with sports teams' cheers and patriotic anthems;  
what they propose as needs of men are empty ritual.

So, Bill, your nation, race and class, like dignity and honor --just fetishes to make  
you think the goals of men are mystical.

## **Ms America**

*(with a tip of the hat to Slavoj Žižek)*

Ms America, are you dreaming dangerously again?  
I'd feel proud to see you scheme courageously again.

It's not your sleep that's easily broken: your awakening is fragile;  
but view us through exhausted eye lids, numinously, again.

But underneath, the work dissatisfaction does goes on,  
and I look forward to your waking clangorously again.

While you'll neither go with me to see the moon's dark side  
nor bide at home, you're stirring restlessly again.

I used to wonder what would please you, sure that it was good;  
but now I'd rather see you move mysteriously again.

True paranoia is not ruled out by enemies alone;  
you first treat lovers listlessly, then viciously again.

Shadowing your acts, your brows grow shadowy from shady;  
outraged, then incensed, you pout umbrageously again.

We were no better reconciled once we went abroad;  
in foreign parts, you beat your drum obliviously again.

Our ignorance and hope were foolish things, which sheltered weeds  
among our fruits, and now they're growing avariciously again.

You've reasoned all this out before, with better men than me;  
don't mix up science with religion tendentiously again.

Desiring their welfare, you said you loved the yearning poor;  
but now you're giving them the eyeball lecherously again.

When you set your mind on justice, I can only cringe;  
my need is for compassion, given generously again.

In the sixties you painted coach-boy statues' faces white;  
what to paint the gays, who stand out obviously again?

That's some rough crowd you run with, they all had to be reborn;  
we both doubt birth certificates tremendously again.

If God mixed man from clay, it does explain the belly-button;  
you're drawn to simple explanations credulously again.

On climate change, instead of logic drilling down to bedrock,  
doubts drip in your ear oleagiously again.

Dare I call you Hope? It's not how you are now I love,  
it's how you might act--contagiously generously again.



## **Radical Unknowing**

Although we simply can not know, despite all quid-pro-quo-ing,  
we gain that inverse confidence called radical unknowing.

It's to your credit that your lie by policy, not whim;  
so faithful to untruthfulness, what principle you're showing!

It's left to novelists to play disfunction up for all it's worth;  
the living breath can not pay truth the mouthful that is owing.

To lie so well, you have the need for truthful-sounding stories;  
from confidence and weariness the farcical is growing.

And you attempt to live by self-aware mismanagement,  
Bill, as if the hare might win his race by willful slowing.

## **Understand My Heart**

*"To condemn much is to understand little."* Lewis Fry Richardson

Condemn my life—I pray you will not outright ban my heart;  
I line out words in hope that you may understand my heart.

The myth of pure evil holds that I intended harm;  
real wickedness lay in the changing gusts that fanned my heart.

Whoever said condemning much means understanding little  
might very well have found those words here, branded on my heart.

And even Hitler had a point of view, you understand;  
I strain to know him with his victims stranded in my heart.

That Bill, by relativizing evil or by blaming the victim,  
he'd excuse every impulse landed in my heart.

## **Us Few, At Least**

Great Pan, of hoof and horn and syrinx--remembered by us few, at least;  
upon whose timely death no panic need ensue, at least.

Good spirits, drink them down! A toast to mourn the death of Bacchus.  
He never lived: we do; but that he's dead is true, at least.

Among the gods, the best are dead--chronicity pandemic;  
though Mammon lives in fear of Marx, they share a Sunday pew, at least.

They're easy missed, the old ones--parents, customs, gods and all.  
What tears dissolve is spare; we're made with proper glue, at least.

You grapple with the death of God, Wilhelm, sans nihilism;  
Nietzsche's basic project is complete, for you, at least.

## **Used To Recognize**

This is not the country I used to recognize;  
it's one I've read about, we used to demonize.

Friends grown strange are silent..., when we meet at all;  
and those who speak so loudly, we used to ostracize.

For things we've thought and done quite openly today...,  
we used to do then, but...we used to apologize.

Liberty, Fraternity, Equality,  
you turn from me, whom I used to apostrophize.

Pluck, liver..., what's missing, Bill, can it be your lights?  
Now you triangulate; you used to polemicize.

## **Air and Water**

While in the ranking of my needs, only air and water  
are your peers, I could make do without the air and water.

The vendors on the thoroughfare are hawking sweets and beer,  
but in your absence they're dry crusts of prison fare and water.

Neither breast nor loin is needed to nourish up my love;  
it strengthens on the merest sip of what is fair and water.

Adam and Eve climbed in the trees unclothed and unembarrassed;  
for all your clothes, my eyes and mouth can only stare and water.

You'll find old age, Bill, desolate and dry,  
although it could still blossom forth, if it got care and water.

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## **What Won't Do It**

*after "The Better Angels of Our Nature," by Steven Pinker*

Revenge tastes best when you who should police your own won't do it;  
though one loose cannon, smashing things up on my own won't do it,

So credit Solzhenitsyn: you need ideology  
to kill your millions; here's the insight--raw hate alone won't do it.

My loved ones are so mixed with yours, separation's grisly;  
simply yearning for a state to call your own won't do it.

Of course, we do expect our far-flung, expat legions back;  
support from folks abroad will help when those home-grown won't do it.

Our patience short, our memories long, of course--we're famous for it;  
and we have myths to flesh them out when dry, old bones won't do it.

There's nothing to repent in anything we've ever done;  
vague tales and wild claims about the first-hurled stone won't do it.

The glory shed by myth gilds history and our origins  
where frankly crappy government, to which we're prone, won't do it.

If just laws and generous, objectively applied  
never covered strangers, Bill, your liberal moan won't do it.

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## **With Self-Control**

after "*The Better Angels of Our Nature*," by Steven Pinker

Since Adam and Eve and the fruit of knowledge, we've striven with self-control;  
and for a lesson—it's better sometimes to give in with self-control.

Odysseus, being a sailor, stiffened his spine with the mast: Homer  
and I fall back on the pen, for lapsing is given with self-control.

The grasshopper drank and smoked and gambled, and maxed-out his credit cards;  
poor ant, meanwhile, had a terrible time, ridden with self-control.

"*Lord, make me chaste—but not yet.*" Saint Augustine—he did alright,  
if not all right, since he had reservations with self-control.

That's not me at all, lashing out at insults to my honor;  
I'd rather give the impression I'm a villain with self-control.

When will you learn? The means of self-respect and dignity  
is hidden in plain sight. Need more? Begin with self-control.

Even clearly-labeled-rumor mills won't touch this one—  
you, Bill, you—seen slipping round a bend with self-control!

## **Wits Unprotected**

Yes, I admire the naked frog, who lives by his wits, unprotected;  
change sun for moon, passion abides--as weather permits--unaffected.

Without faith in government, I'm drawn to politics?  
I wish they'd learn to leave us idiots unelected.

And real, true love--let's say, yours for your gun, when mass murder's been done,  
and children have died, and mothers have cried--your love, it's unaffected.

Rather than a neighbor, they'd like a servant quartered nearby;  
though they suspect it's their soup in which he spits, undetected.

Although a climate crank's own home may blow or wash away,  
still, his opinion, made of sterner stuff, sits unaffected.

See, maintaining science in one realm, faith in another,  
to this day, Bill, you leave important bits unconnected.