

# PARODIES OF LOST



Dai Lowe

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## **Parodies Lost**

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(Sometimes based on original material  
ripped off from people too long dead to complain)

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## Parodies Lost

some poems by Dai Lowe

What *is* parody?

Some would say it's nothing more than an enfeebled mode of discourse, barely disguising a paucity of imagination and wit; a ride hitched on the coat-tails of genius, by writers or artists with no original or valuable thoughts of their own.

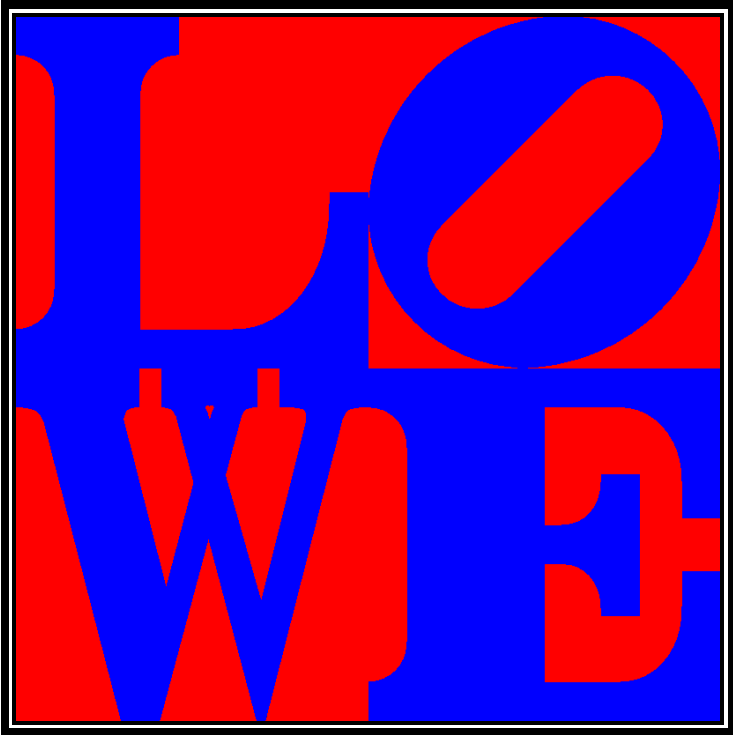
And if that is how you view it, you can just *SOD OFF!* 'Cos I'm a bleedin' post-modern intellectual, and I say it's all about *intertextuality*, all right?

Troubadours from John Dowland to Leonard Cohen have harnessed their inner miserable gits, taking the personal and communicating something universal, and even consoling. But, as a parodist, I can take that 'we've all been there' vibe, and make it all about *me*, as in the poem which riffs on Hardy's melancholic mopings, adding humorous touches to throw my abject misery into sharper relief.

Most of all though, it's about having a laugh, with varying degrees of reverence (or disdain) for the source material. Like Carroll with Southey, we can poke fun at a *schmaltzig* original, or use a familiar original to satirise something else altogether.

I hope the following verses will serve to demonstrate the wide variety of effects that can be achieved by ~~stealing from~~ revisiting over-familiar and even forgotten works, from updated comedy, to trivialised sincerity and even embittered social comment.

Now shut up and leave me alone.



**Self Portrait**  
(after Robert Indiana)

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## By way of introduction ...

### Dai Lowe and Friends

(solo performance)

Are you doing a show? people often enquire  
As I stroll down the Mile in some garish attire  
Or stand at the bar like the brightest of sparks  
Making ev'ryone laugh at my comic remarks.

I have gags, songs and anecdotes, some little wit,  
But perform them to order? That's heavier shit.  
I don't think I could, as a matter of fact,  
Stand up ev'ry night and repeat the same act.

I've known any number of talented guys  
Who can raise gales of laughter or gasps of surprise  
In a pub or an office, far better than I —  
But put us on stage and we'd probably die.

As it is, if I'm being flamboyant or loud  
Just depends on my mood — or that of the crowd;  
And then, if I feel I'm beginning to bore  
I can shut up and let someone else have the floor.

If I choose to act flashy with tiresome persistence,  
It's a way to embrace and enhance our existence.  
Life IS a performance, sir, didn't you know?  
Why spoil it by pausing to put on a show?

## **Confessional**

(after Gilbert & Sullivan)

I am the very master of the intertextual reference  
I use them just for fun but with a large amount of deference  
My poetry is brimming with a thousand writings notable  
In fact I squeeze them anywhere that I find something quotable

(In fact he puts them anywhere that he finds something quo-ta-quotable)

There's Shakespeare, Joyce and Oscar Wilde and loads of lines from G&S  
And Tolstoy, Proust — well, anything that isn't just by me, I guess.  
When folks say all my writing looks like something copied from a list  
I simply say that I prefer to call myself 'post-modernist'

(He likes to think that he's post modern-odern-odernist)

I quite accept my writing has no true originality  
But anything I do that's new just doesn't have the kwality  
You're bound to fail if you don't play up to your natural aptitudes  
Dan-Brownian motion only leads to loads of fuck-filled platitudes

(He has a filthy mouth and a bad atti-attitude!)

There is no end in sight (I tell you, just in case you're wondering)  
I quite intend to go on with my literary plundering  
As long as I can do it with due relevance and deference,  
For I am the very master of the intertextual reference!

## **Bathetic fallacy**

I have a muse perverse that spurs me on  
(or would do were I not so sodding lazy).  
Yesterday's intent, today is gone;  
Last night's ideas, by morning far too hazy.

In all artistic fields invention thrives;  
I'm filled with hope by each new inspiration,  
convinced my work will touch a million lives —  
but something robs me of all motivation.

My labours left unfinished would amaze.  
So what's the catch? I'll tell you what the catch is —  
I have a speech of fire that fain would blaze —  
if only I could find the bloody matches!



## Parodies Regained

### *Au Louvre*

(after Francis Thompson, *At Lords*)

It is more I am drawn to the paintings of the Northern folk,  
Though Italian artists seem to steal the show;  
It is more I am drawn to the paintings of the Northern folk,  
Though Italian artists rule the roost, I know.  
But my heart is moved more deeply by a small domestic scene  
Or demons stretching bodies on some devilish machine  
Or an isolated watermill beside a Flemish stream,  
Where the evening swallows flicker to and fro,  
To and fro —  
Oh my Ruisdael and my Breughel long ago!

2010, *au* Royal Scottish Academy

**Verses on the 65th Birthday of Peter D Lowe, Esq.**  
(after Lewis Carrol, after Robert Southey)

"You are old Father Peter", his family purred,  
"And your bus pass is shiny and new,  
"So we'd like to be certain that you're well insured,  
"And your will is right up to date too."  
"Though I'm sure it won't please you to hear," said their Dad,  
"I can say, without any regrets,  
"That I've spent far more money than I've ever had:  
"So you'll only inherit my debts."

"You are old, Father Pete," said his children with mirth,  
"And you've never been much of a rover,  
"Yet you recently travelled half way round the earth:  
"Why start now, when your youth is well over?"  
"In the war," the old hero responded with glee,  
"I shelled the Far East for a bet;  
"So I thought it was time that I went back to see  
"If they've finished repairing it yet."

"You are old, Father Pete, and we feel we must add  
"That you've never been noted for taste  
"But now you buy trendy new outfits like mad:  
"Don't you think that's a bit of a waste?"  
"Years ago," he explained, "it was never much fun  
"Buying clothes which were soon out of date  
"But now I'm encouraged by my eldest son  
"Next to whom an old sack would look great."

"You are old Father Peter," his offspring all cried,  
"And your gut keeps increasing in size  
"But there's hardly a foodstuff that you haven't tried  
"Do you think, at your age, this is wise?"  
"In my youth," Father Peter replied with a sigh,  
"Nowt exotic would get past my lips  
"Now I've sampled Italian, Chinese and Thai  
"But I still prefer sausage and chips."

"You are old Father Pete," said the family Lowe,  
"And it's time you were settling down,  
"Yet you're out on the golf course come sun, rain or snow  
"And at night you go out on the town!"  
"In the past, when I watched the tv from my chair,  
"You complained that my sloth was a sin.  
"Now I'm active, you're whinging that I'm never there —  
"It would seem that I can't bloody win!"

"You are old Father Pete, if you see what we mean,  
"And your hair grows increasingly grey  
"Yet you chase after girls like a lad of sixteen:  
"Why on earth are you acting this way?"  
"In your youth," the old bugger replied to his brood,  
"You showed very little respect;  
"But your questions today are exceedingly rude —  
"Now sod off, or I'll break all your necks!"

1990, to my Father (1925–2012)

(Carroll's *You are Old, Father William*, was itself a piss-take  
of Southey's moralising poem *The Old Man's Comforts*)

## **On Hampstead Heath**

(after Thomas Hardy, *At Castle Boterel*)

As I walk up the hill from the ponds for boating  
And the drizzle bedampens my threadbare shirt  
I look back down through the twilight's gloating  
And see on its slope, now mired with dirt,  
Through eyes that hurt

Myself and a girlish form together  
On a drier day. We climb the lane  
And reach a bench. We sit, though whether  
For love or easing of footsore pain,  
I can't explain.

What we said as we climbed or what we were thinking  
Matters not much, nor the sex in the trees;  
And whether 'twas coffee or wine we'd been drinking  
Outside Café Mozart is lost on the breeze.  
Like my mud-stained knees,

It's been scrubbed clean by time and love's forgetting,  
And all that remains is the thought it was nice  
And should never have ended. But no point in fretting  
Or letting the value be marred by the price.  
Take the wise man's advice,

And try not to weep that the good times are ended  
But smile at the knowledge that great times were had.  
They might have gone sour had their days been extended:  
Just tell yourself this, and try to be glad,  
And not to go mad.

Now to me, though my love has grown bigger,  
Her heart is turned cold as a stone;  
So the sun sets now on a solit'ry figure  
Who gazes, sad, at his unringing phone,  
And sits there alone.

“Hampstead Heath”, as it tells us on Wikipedia,  
“Rests on a deep band of London Clay,  
“Is rambling and hilly;” but none of the media  
Refers whatsoever to that long-lost day  
When we two passed that way.

But I look and see us there, fading, fading;  
I look back at it through the rain,  
Not minding if folks find my tears degrading  
For I shall never be halfway sane  
Ever again.

## **Psychopathic Nurse**

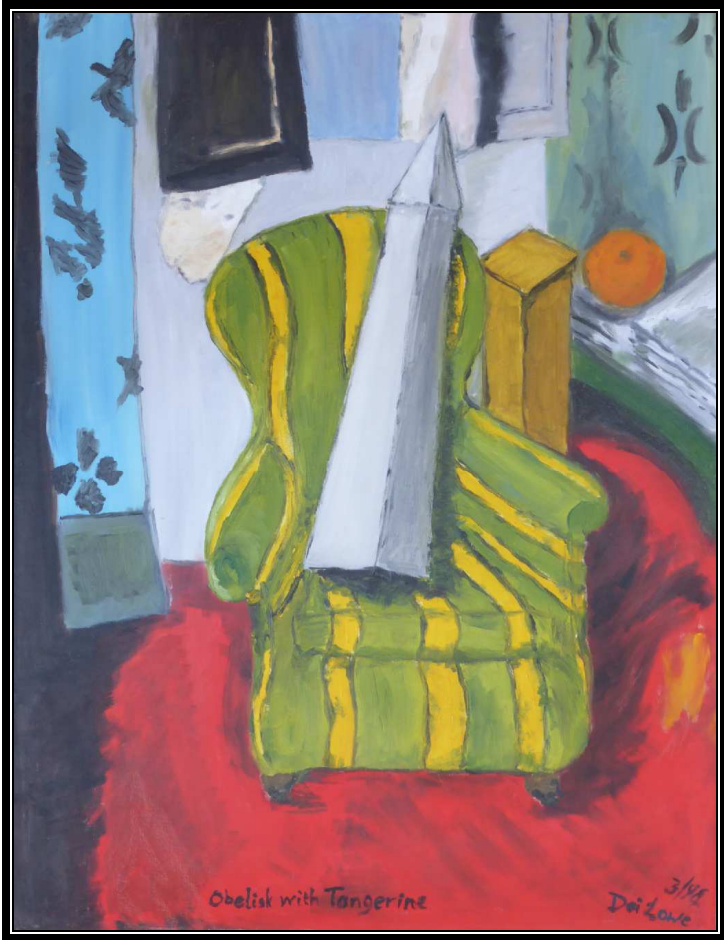
(inspired by John Cooper Clarke)

All things come to he who waits, as some thick prat once said  
But before you rush in blindly where those cheering angels tread  
Just pause a while and ask yourself, which option would be worse —  
A psychiatric patience or a psychopathic nurse?

You never know quite where you stand, no exes mark the spot  
Her heart is stone, her blood runs cold, but the rest of her is hot.  
You're on a roller coaster with no brakes and no reverse —  
You lose your heart, you'll lose your mind to a psychopathic nurse

Your body's on the table, your emotions on the rack;  
She takes your pulse and raises it but never gives it back.  
A thousand mocking Cupids pronounce the dreadful curse —  
You're banged up in a padded hell with a psychopathic nurse

Oh, she can make the patient but not disturb the bed;  
She treats all of your senses and discharges you half dead.  
As you climb aboard the night bus, it's a double-decker hearse —  
May you ever rest in pieces with your psychopathic nurse



**Obelisk and Tangerine**  
(after Henri Matisse, *Odalisque and Tambourine*)

## **That's yer Lottery**

(after Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Lady of Shalott*)

I dreamed last night that Sky News said  
“The King is Queer, the Queen is Dead.”  
And then intoned the words of dread  
“The country has been sold instead  
To bingo callers, Camelot”  
Maggie the family silver sold  
Then Tony gave away the gold  
The future's bright? The future's cold.  
I'm sorry — that's yer lot.

Your last right's gone, don't call a priest  
This sceptred isle has been re-leased  
Tagged with the barcode of the Beast  
Your one-way ticket to the feast  
Sponsored by good old Camelot  
So Mr Starbuck takes the wheel  
While Ronald serves a Crappy Meal:  
Blandness with no hope of appeal —  
I'm sorry — that's yer lot.



Though oil supplies have passed their peak  
Consumption rises week on week.  
One wonders what on Earth the meek  
When their inheritance they seek  
Will get from lofty Camelot.  
So one last wasteful short-haul flight  
Goes mental into that good night  
No use to rage at dying light  
I'm sorry — that's yer lot.

While other ways I would endorse,  
My pen's run dry, my throat is hoarse  
My parody has run its course.  
My arguments have little force  
Against the might of Camelot.  
And so good luck to one and all  
Six numbers *and* the bonus ball  
I'll see you in the shopping maul  
That really is yer lot.

2006

(... when Camelot controversially won the right to continue running the lottery, despite a tender from Richard Branson which — so he claimed — would cream off less in profit and give more of the proceeds to chariddies and in prizes)

***La Barista sans Merci***

(after John Keats, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*)

Oh what's up with thee, sad old git,  
That you sit there faintly wittering?  
Your cappuccino has gone cold  
And your phone don't ring

I see a biscuit by thy cup  
Its sell-by date proclaims it old  
And on thy plate a croissant stale  
All flecked with mould

I met a lady in a caff  
Her flashing eyes my soul unlocked  
Ambrosia her espressos were  
And her lattés rocked!

I spent whole days just sitting there  
Until the caffeine wrecked my heart  
While she was there I found that I  
Could not depart

She made me cappuccinos sweet  
With syrups rich with flavours new  
And in her accent strange she said,  
"I fency you!"

She took me to her Sighthill flat  
And we the night in passion spent  
She asked if I could spare some cash  
To pay her rent

Right there, shagged out, I fell asleep  
And there I dreamed, oh bugger me,  
The last damn dream I ever dreamt  
With spirit free

I saw sad poets, musicians too,  
Each sat and nursed his gelid cup.  
They cried, "*La barista sans merci*  
Has fucked you up!"

I saw their coffees, void of foam,  
Their mouths a hollow, silent laugh,  
And I awoke and found me here  
In this cold, drear caff

And that is why I sojourn here  
Alone and faintly wittering  
Though my cappuccino has gone cold  
And my phone don't ring

2013,

from *Life, Measured Out: lonely visits to the coffee shops of Edinburgh*

## Constance and the Elephant

(after Marriott Edgar)

I

It's a long way from Nott'n'm to London.  
It were further in Nineteen-nineteen:  
There were no motorway, so it took half a day,  
And young Connie had never yet been.

Constance Lilian Priestley  
Worked in the textile trade.  
She were eighteen years old, rather timid than bold,  
But a pretty and lively wee maid.

So when t'mill owner told 'em that summer,  
They were off for a trip to the zoo,  
Our lass were delighted and very excited  
And probably proper chuffed too.

Remember TV weren't invented  
And Attenborough (Dave) not born yet.  
For a working-class child to see animals, wild:  
Well, a picture book's closest you'd get.

Lions and tigers and monkeys!  
(They may not mean that much to us)  
But the creature that she most wanted to see  
Were an elephant, big as a bus!

She just couldn't wait for the day of the trip  
And her mind, I need hardly remark,  
While she worked on her seams, and at night in her dreams,  
Were as crowded as old Noah's Ark.

At last came the day of their outin'  
She were wearin' her best summer dress  
It were pretty and light (but not showy or tight)  
And it cost two days' wages, no less.

We'd better say nowt of the coach trip:  
Just like any school outing today;  
Crackin' rather crude jokes, makin' eyes at stray blokes  
And singin' daft songs all the way.

## II

At last they arrived, down at Regents Park Zoo  
And to start they piled into the caff  
For summat to eat: "Is this kangaroo meat?"  
Connie asked, which made everyone laugh.

Lions and tigers and monkeys,  
And hundreds of others besides!  
Back then, at the Zoo, you could feed 'em all too  
And climb up on t'big uns for rides.

But young Connie were gettin' impatient;  
She said nowt, not to make any fuss;  
Till her eyes, they grew wide, when at last she espied  
An elephant, big as a bus!

"Are t'a goin' to feed 'im, our Connie?"  
And though Connie were timid and shy,  
She said that she would, 'cos she'd bought 'im some food  
(Even though he seemed thirty foot high).

So Connie stared up at the creature:  
At first it were all rather fun:  
She curtsyed wi' charm and she 'eld out 'er arm  
And showed him a large currant bun.

The elephant stared down at Connie  
The elephant reached out 'is trunk  
But when it came near, she got taken wi' fear  
And she pulled 'er 'and back in a funk.

"Give 'im the bun, you great cissie!"  
Her colleagues were havin' a ball.  
"E just want's 'is cake, and yon's 'ardly a snake —  
"It's only 'is nose, after all!"

Well, strangely, that weren't reassurin' —  
To be touched by a nose seemed all wrong:  
A nose wrinkly and grey, that could snatch things away —  
And a nose that were near four foot long!

### III

But our Connie were not to be beaten;  
She'd hate to be seen as a wuss.  
So, proudly, she sniffed and re-offered 'er gift  
To the elephant, big as a bus.

The elephant stared down at Connie  
Quite content to forgive (not forget)  
And to feed 'im she tried, ee, so 'ard she near cried,  
But she still couldn't do it, not yet.

As the elephant reached for the bun in 'er 'and  
Connie pulled it away wi' a squeal  
And 'e groaned wi' despair, as 'is trunk grabbed thin air;  
All this fuss over such a small meal!

"Give 'im the bun, you great cissie!"  
'Er chums all repeated wi' laughter  
"E' won't do you no harm and it isn't yer arm —  
"It's only the bun what 'e's after!"

"Give 'im the bun, you great cissie!"  
And so she resolved, there and then  
To make one last attempt to dispel their contempt  
And she 'eld out 'er 'and once again.

The elephant stared at the bun in 'er 'and  
You could tell that the fellow weren't sure.  
'E felt 'e'd been teased and were mighty displeased,  
When young Connie withdrew it once more.

The elephant stared down at Connie.  
'E seemed to be tremblin' wi' rage  
But 'e calmed 'isself down and turned slowly around  
And retired to the back of 'is cage.

"Now look what tha's done: tha's upset 'im!"  
Said 'er mates, as she stared at the floor.  
"We didn't just come to tease animals, dumb —  
"That's what our kid brothers are for!"

## IV

They weren't takin' much notice o' t'creature  
'Cos they thought it were such a good game  
To poke lots of fun at young Con and her bun  
As t'poor lass 'ung 'er 'ead down, in shame.

They weren't takin' much notice o' t'creature  
And if they were, what would they think?  
That 'e'd just wandered off, stuck 'is trunk in 'is trough —  
'E were obviously 'avin' a drink.

So when t'elephant walked back to t'front o' 'is cage  
They thought it were really good fun  
To say, "Look, it's yer friend; 'e don't want it to end:  
"E must 'ave come back for 'is bun!"

The elephant stared down at Connie  
And Connie looked up at his nose —  
Which pointed straight at her and sprayed 'er wi' watter  
And soaked 'er from t'noggin to t'toes!

Poor Connie just stood there all drippin'.  
She cried, "Look at me best summer dress!  
"It's all soaking wi' grot — and elephant snot  
"I must look a complete ruddy mess!"

Her friends they were quite sympathetic  
Though they couldn't 'elp laughin' a lot  
And they did what they could to make 'er look good —  
When they'd cleaned off the elephant snot

And Connie 'erself saw the 'umorous side:  
You can't keep a young girl's spirits down.  
And they say that she sang on the old charabanc  
All the way back to Nottingham town

But when she got home, all bedraggled  
'Er mum and dad made a right fuss  
"Ee, what 'appened today? Did it rain?" She said, "Nay:  
"Twere an elephant, big as a bus!"

2006 (a true tale of my Grandmother)

## Ticklish Allsorts

### Salmond Chanted 'Evening'

(You may not have heard, but in September 2014, people living this side of the Border have a chance to say whether they wish to remain a vassal region of the Kingdom of Bullingdon Bankers, or to rebrand themselves as the People's Republic of Salmondia. Or something like that. This is not so much about that choice, but the fact that the first casualty of a referendum campaign is truth — or, it would seem, anything remotely resembling rational debate.)

According to the Scottish *Mail*,  
Yer jobs're doomed, yer crops'll fail,  
Yer bairns will all end up in jail,  
If youse vote 'Aye';  
Yer teeth'll rot, yer pies turn stale —  
And then ye'll die.

The 'Salmond' will replace the pound  
(Wan hunnerd 'Sturgeons', I'll be bound);  
Its value, mair dire than its sound,  
Will plunge in stages,  
Till just tae buy yer pals a round  
Tak's three month's wages.

If Darling's pleas are a' rejected,  
Mandat'ry kilts will be inspected,  
And men wi' pants will be ejected  
Frae this fair land.  
If wily Alex gets elected,  
Sex will be banned.



Och, swallow a' this propaganda,  
A' this pathetic trumped-up slander,  
Ye'd think this place the next Ruanda,  
Wi'out a doot;  
And even Embra's baby panda  
Wad get kicked oot!

But don't assume yon ither lot  
Are ony better, 'cos they're not;  
Wi' their rose-tinted tommy-rot  
An' tartan shite.  
What chance has puir wee Scotty got  
Tae choose aright?

So I'm no saying 'Aye' or 'Nae',  
Or tryin' tae tell ye which damn way,  
On thon braw, bricht September day,  
Ye ought tae go;  
It's no fer Sassenachs tae say,  
Based here or no.

But, Ah'm a man o' Northern bent,  
Whose folk them London powers resent,  
And offer no encouragement,  
So please tek 'eed:  
Let yer new border be the Trent —  
Not just the Tweed!

## Philosophy Museum in Cash Crisis

*Some talk of Aristotle, of Kant and Socrates,  
Of Bergson and Spinoza and such great names as these*

Oh, do not ask '*where is it?*' of a place what don't exist:  
The Museum of Philosophy is far too eas'ly missed.  
The Government won't fund 'em and they've gone into arrears  
So they're forced to raise the dosh they need by selling off ideas.

They've closed the Marx and Engels wing – politic'ly unsound  
And thrown out moralistic thoughts that no one wants around.  
Truth and Beauty, in the Forms Room, they're fighting hard to save –  
See *the Socrates Experience* from a large glass-fibre cave.

Then go out, past Good and Evil to the Friedrich Nietzsche wing  
(Ignoring nihilists who tell you it don't mean a thing)  
The Berkeley Room's kept Locked unless somebody wants to see it  
And Hobbes and Hume don't have a room: there's nowt it's like to be it.

The Larkin room is popular, there's a video display  
Where kids can press a switch and have their parents blown away.  
The Deconstruction Annexe pulls the punters in all right  
But it costs so much to pay the staff to clean up ev'ry night.

The Theology curator prays for guidance from above  
And the New Age people still believe that *all you need is love*  
("The Oriental Rooms were such a hit in sixty eight  
We're sure they'll get another life, we only have to wait")

Existentialism's doomed and there's no place for Solipsists  
Who believe that just one person (who may not be them) exists.  
The realists and pragmatists accept that there's no cure  
When your critics are a load of Kants whose reason's far from pure



*La foratura di Veneri*  
(after Edgar Degas)

In the nineties non-society we have no place for thought:  
Blimey, even Roger Scruton's being hunted down for sport  
(And it was his consultancy which started all this rot  
With its pioneering slogan *They don't think, therefore they're not*)

And they'll respond, if you ask why admission is so dear,  
"Though we agree that man's born free, it costs to come in 'ere"  
And very soon the day will come when none of us can tell  
The thinkers from the wankers or the heavenly from Hell

*Some talk of Aristotle, of Kant and Socrates,  
But all the thoughts they left us are now mere commodities*

**Translation: The Girls of Llanbadarn**  
(or *The Last Unlaid Minstrel*)

Frustrated passion bends me double  
A plague on girls, they're too much trouble!  
Because I never get a lay  
from any one in any way.  
No sweet young thing, no cheeky bitch  
No naughty wife nor ugly witch

What nastiness, what sinful traits  
Make me so crap at finding mates?  
Yet no fair lass e'er deems it good  
To take me to some thick, dark wood.  
No shame for her if there we fled  
To roll upon a leafy bed

Throughout my life I always loved  
(So clinging has my ardour proved:  
More than the guys down Garwy way!)  
One or two girls every day  
Yet even so I never scored  
With one I fancied — or abhorred.

In Llanbadarn no Sunday passed  
(Now pious folks will be aghast)  
But I'd be eying up some broad  
With just my neck turned to the Lord.  
And after I had long surveyed  
The parish beauties, thus arrayed,  
You'd hear one bright, fresh little chit  
Say to her friend, who's known for wit:

"That pale lad with the sneaky face  
"And girlish hair all o'er the place —  
"He's got bad things on his mind  
"His ways are of the evil kind!"

"So that's the nature of his lies,"  
The other sexy minx replies,  
"Do it with him? Ha! What a farce!  
"The stupid twat can kiss my arse!"

It's rough for me but beauty's curse  
Repays me with a meagre purse  
No recompense my ardour wins  
But sticks me with frustration's pins.

Somehow I'll have to cut this noose  
If all I'm left is self-abuse  
Poor wretch, I'll run from all this strife  
And go and live a hermit's life  
And meditate on lessons learned  
From too much looking, rearward turned.

So I, whose verses folks call great  
Yet shuffle off without a mate.

*Merched Llanbadarn*, by Dafydd ap Gwilym, c1350  
Translated from the Welsh, 2009

## **By their anoraks shall ye know them**

By their anoraks shall ye know them,  
By their hair and their National Health specs  
And their unpleasant smell: with their mothers they dwell  
And they certainly never have sex

All alone they sit with their computers  
Or discuss algorithms on-line;  
They are strangers to hope, human contact — and soap  
But their programming skills are just fine

Yet they may be our ultimate line of defence  
Against governments, crooks and the man:  
When you simply can't clean spyware off your machine  
There's a guy in a bedsit who can

So while 'normal' folk treat them with caution  
And the cool set regard them with mirth,  
You just mark my words: be nice to your nerds,  
For the geek will inherit the earth

## HE, CLAUDIVS

Consider the guy she leaves you for, or the chap she takes up with later: what if he seems crap at everything that she once praised in you, yet now she sings those selfsame praises louder over him? How can this be? Were he quite unlike you, you'd say, "it's shit, "but something in her wants a change, or maybe it "is simply true that I am not the type she really needs; "at least, not now"; and, though your heart still bleeds, and every thought insists it's her mistake, at least your ego's only slightly bruised. But feast your eyes on this buffoon's appearance, hear the weak attempts at wit or intellectual utterance this freak so entertains her with. OK, Gertrude's poor husband died, yet even he was pained beyond the grave. It's not just pride that's hurt, but that it leaves one nagging thought: were you as fake and posturing a nincompoop as he? Is her mistake a rerun of the one she made before? Or can you cling to that self-confidence she made you feel when she would sing *your* praises to the very skies? Is it just, on your part, jealousy? Or is she so easily impressed, her heart can override her common sense? Can you find excuses, reasons even, for new delusions in old abuses, that do not cast a shadow over you, but let you flatter yourself that you *are* Hyperion, *he* the satyr?

## Love Letters (to everyone)

Your soulmate's gone and left you all alone  
And smashed to smithereens your heart of glass.  
Your love lies bleeding on a slab of stone;  
You snap at those who tell you, "This will pass."  
You're in no mood to mind your Ps and Qs:  
Why bother, when you've nothing left to lose?

Before you start to turn your pain to hate  
Or nurse dark thoughts involving pills or rope,  
If you ever really loved your erstwhile mate  
May I point out a gleaming ray of hope?  
My message is as plain as A B C,  
So dry your tears and listen now to me.

Love is important only 'cause you *give* it:  
What can't survive rejection can't be true.  
Love is life, so go and bloody *live* it,  
And show in everything you say and do,  
To every street in every A to Zed,  
Love grows in strength, the further it gets spread.

So just hang in there, all you love-lorn swains;  
Let goodwill quench the fiercest flames of hell.  
The fire of loss is swamped by True Love's gains,  
So join your voices with me while we tell  
Of how they brought the news from X to Y,  
That Love is fine and never has to die.



## **This Sporting Life**

We call it a game, which often confuses,  
As there's never a winner but plenty of losers  
And everyone plays by the rules that he chooses  
And acts as his own referee

The players not screaming are usually snoring  
It's rarely exciting but commonly boring  
And no one has any idea of the scoring  
Or when they should go in for tea

It may be a sport but it's really not cricket  
And few folks can stretch to the price of a ticket  
It's hardly surprising that so few can stick it  
So what is its lasting allure?

Ah, that is a thing that there's no way of knowing  
But life has a rather strange habit of showing  
To get out of this race you just have to keep going —  
You're not sick but there isn't a cure

So before you complain that the strip doesn't suit you  
Or wonder why no other side will recruit you —  
Just be grateful that nobody's trying to shoot you  
Or using your head as the ball

And don't give a damn if the crowd never shows up  
Or the critics and fans turn their communal nose up  
Either way when the timekeeper finally blows up  
You're gonna be left with sod all!

## Red Light Blues

I was sitting at home feeling full of self-pity,  
So I took a short plane ride to Amsterdam city,  
To find lots of young ladies so sweet and so pretty,  
    So fair both of figure and face.

They were doing their best to give me an erection  
By waving bare breasts in my general direction —  
But turned out to be blokes upon closer inspection —  
    Something tells me I'm in the wrong place!

When down these dark alleys a young fellow goes, he  
Finds many strange windows with glows that are rosy;  
But, not wishing to peer in too close or seem nosey,  
    How is he to know which are men?

Those give-away signs, how come I didn't spot 'em?  
Those bulges they have where real ladies ain't got 'em?  
But now that I've had a few stuffed up my bottom —  
    Why, I think I might go there again!

## Rubaiyat

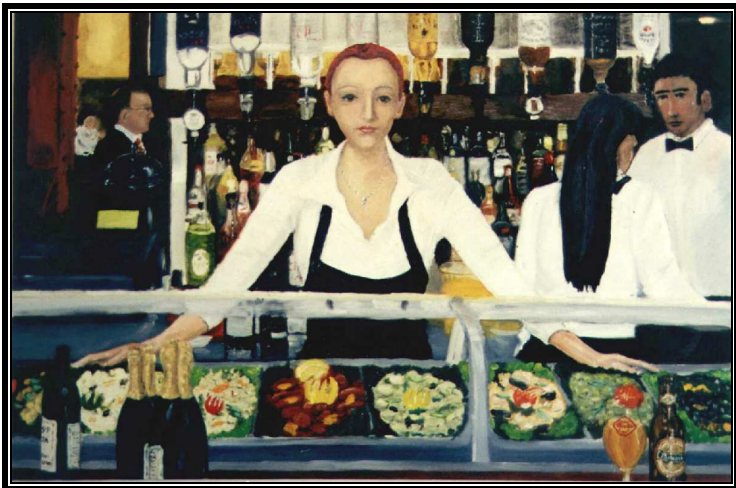
Write your story on the wind;  
All your former loves rescind.  
Your confession proudly shout:  
"Bless me Satan, I have sinned".

As they drag you from the dock,  
Lose the key and seal the lock,  
No defense or alibi:  
"It was pure delight to shock. "

Eating *foie gras* in your cell,  
Hear the tolling of the bell,  
While the window bars break up  
Your panoramic view of Hell.

In the isolation ward,  
Where your dying hopes are stored,  
Gasp your last unheeded prayer:  
"Please don't let me be ignored! "

2012



*A Tapas Bar in London*  
(after Edouard Manet, *A bar at the Folies-Bergère*)

## Clerihews

Edward Clerihew Bentley  
Said, most unsentiment'ly,  
"For famous folk a curse is  
Appearing in one of my verses"

Mr Guy Ritchie  
Seen without a stitch? He  
Should remain fully dressed:  
Films is what he does best.

The first line of a Clerihew  
(I looked it up, I know it's true)  
Should 'solely (or almost solely)' consist  
Of the name of the person praised or dissed.

William Topaz McGonagal  
Hardly ever said "Hoots mon!" at all  
But he did not just sit round doing bugger all  
Rather he did take it upon himself to write  
long rambling verses in doggerel

Edward Hopper  
Came a bit of a cropper  
Whenever he felt pressed  
To paint someone undressed

## Smalls

### Mrs Casanova's Lament

I'm not sure if I miss him  
Now he's dead and gone  
His last words *were*, "I love you"  
But he added, "Pass it on."

### The Rime of the Ageing Gourmet

It is an ancient gourmet and he goes among the Swiss  
"Show me, dear friends, what food you make I can't afford to miss?"  
They started him with muesli, then fondue and raclette;  
They followed up with many cakes and lots of chocolate.  
He had to buy a longer belt, his trouser seams were torn;  
A sadder and a wider man, he rose the morrow morn.

1998

### Xmas Card greeting.

It isnae correct (in 'political' terms)  
To say 'Happy Christmas' these days  
To save giein' offence (if that makes any sense)  
We reword it in mealy-mouthed ways:

“Happy Holidays/Year End/Seasonal Time”  
Sae lang as we don't *name* the season:  
Just spend a' your cash on o'erpriced trash  
And forget the original reason.

I'm no a believer, I freely admit,  
But I'm sad to see Noël get neutered;  
Oh let it be still a time o' goodwill —  
And a damn guid excuse to get blooterred!

2006

## **Many Pancakes**

"Now, what's the problem?" asked the shrink.  
"Well," I replied, "my family think  
"I'm crazy." "Tell me why."  
"They say I'm touched and ev'ryone makes  
"Fun of me, cos I like pancakes,"  
I answered with a sigh.

"I hardly think that means that you  
"Are mad — I'm fond of pancakes too:  
"I'd even say I love 'em"  
"That's great," I cried, with deep affection.  
"You must call round — see my collection —  
"I've got a *million* of 'em!"

2002

## **Scientific Analysis** (after Dorothy Parker)

It isn't just chemicals flooding synapses  
Or particles quantumly quarking;  
No, love is a waveform that never collapses —  
And I must be totally barking!

2011

## **Fallback**

If it's good enough for Clacton  
Then it's good enough for me  
I'll be your last resort  
If you've got no one else to see

1990

## **Vealanelle**

Braise or grill or roast or fry,  
All of us boil down to meat;  
All that's born to live must die.

In a stew or in a pie,  
Give yourself a tasty treat —  
Braise or grill or roast or fry.

You're a veggie weirdo? Why?  
Close your eyes and just repeat,  
"All that's born to live must die."

Your spirit's willing? Flesh? Oh, my!  
Nothing else can taste as sweet —  
Braise or grill or roast or fry.

Don't heave that disapproving sigh;  
No creature can the reaper cheat —  
All that's born to live must die.

Still so many beasts to try;  
Still your life is incomplete;  
Braise or grill or roast or fry —  
All that's born to live must die.

## **If I could sing or write music, these would be songs ...**

### **Avoiding Clichés Like the Plague**

Well some guy makes you an offer that you just cannot refuse  
So you run off with my sunshine and you leave me with the blues  
Now I've nothin' left to play for and ev'rything to lose by  
Avoiding clichés like the plague

You took the wind out of my sails, I can't believe my eyes  
Were all of your sweet nothings just an empty pack of lies?  
You say I'm full of crap but you don't seem to realise I'm just  
Avoiding clichés like the plague

Now ev'ry hackneyed phrase seems to fit my situation  
But I can't find no words that can bring me consolation  
The only thing to do is protect my reputation:  
Best foot forward; don't be vague

So I'm swallowin' my pride, I ain't about to blow a fuse  
I'm pulling out the stops and putting on my dancin' shoes  
'Cause I've ev'rything to play for and nothin' left to lose from  
Avoiding clichés like the plague



## **I'm Settling for Falling in Love**

All the people here are crazy  
And if I wasn't so darn lazy  
I'd go crazy too, just thinkin' of you  
But I'll settle for fallin' in love

I can hear the music playin'  
From the sofa where we're layin'  
I'd get up and dance but I'm in a trance  
Since I settled for fallin' in love

Oh why ask me to waste energy  
On doin' loads of stuff,  
When I've recently found, with you around,  
That breathin' is more than enough

Oh my agent keeps on ringin'  
But I can't be bothered singin'  
I'm so satisfied, lyin' by your side  
Now I've settled for fallin'  
I don't care who's callin' —  
'Cos I've settled for fallin' in love

## **I Know He Loves Me**

I know he loves me,  
Even though he's not aware of it.  
He can't stop thinkin' of me,  
Though he tells himself he just don't care — not a bit.  
I'm so sympathetic to his plight  
But what's a girl to do,  
Knowing that he loves me  
And wishing that he knew it too?

Everythin' about me  
Keeps him awake at night.  
Couldn't live without me,  
If only he could see the light — that's right.  
Don't know how he copes with his achin' heart;  
The poor guy must be livin' in hell.  
I know how much he loves me;  
I only wish he knew it as well.

He needs the woman of his dreams to make him whole,  
Though they say that ignorance is bliss.  
But unrequited love is bad for the soul —  
He needs to be aware of this!

If I don't save him,  
His heart will surely break.  
So how can I help him  
To realise his big mistake — what will it take?  
He can't forget the taste of my sweet lips,  
Although we've never even kissed,  
But I have no doubt he'd love me,  
If he only knew that I exist!

## **A Girl in a Thousand**

You're a Girl in a Thousand and now that I've met you  
I'm longing to make you my own  
To pursue you and woo you and, hopefully, screw you  
as soon as I get you alone  
But I hope you won't mind when one fine day you find out  
that you're not my sole concubine  
You're a Girl in a Thousand, so where are the other  
nine hundred and ninety nine?

Though to some it sounds crass, it takes more than one lass  
to satisfy my appetite  
I'm not needy, just seedy and terribly greedy,  
some might say a bit of a shite.  
It's not that you're faulty, too short or too salty,  
your features are simply divine  
You're a Girl in a Thousand, but I want the other  
nine hundred and ninety nine

There are plenty of women who aren't always slimmin'  
and who don't have an unpleasant smell  
Don't have scabies or rabies or even want babies  
or live with the Mother from Hell  
They aren't physical wrecks and can even face sex  
with a dick as unpleasant as mine  
You're a Girl in a Thousand, so bring on the other  
nine nine nine

Please don't misunderstand me, castrate me or brand me,  
you're truly the one love I seek  
You're so sweet, you're petite, you have very nice feet  
but then nobody's really unique  
Though you're very impressive, my lust is excessive,  
to monogamy I don't incline  
You're a Girl in a *million*, but I want the other  
nine hundred and ninety nine thousand  
nine hundred and ninety nine

## About the author

Dai Lowe is a Boston~born\* Sassenach from Nottingham with a Welsh name, who has lived in Manchester, York, Warwick, London and Cádiz, but is settled now in Auld Reekie in the Glorious People's Republic of Salmondia.



A self~confessed dilettante (or, as we say in Scotland, 'waster'), he is a sporadic 'Sunday painter' or even 'Sunday conceptualist', who also dabbles in writing, web-design and anything else to fill the time. More often he sits in coffee shops and annoys the other customers. He hopes soon to graduate to lurching drunkenly down streets, yelling obscenities at lampposts.

Currently he is thinking about working on at least three books, not to mention a card game, a phone app, and a range of stationery items. He probably won't though.

Bleeding chunks of his assorted witterings, daubings and scrawlings, for every audience from precocious children to infantile adults can be found at [www.lucidity.ltd.uk](http://www.lucidity.ltd.uk), which he might tidy up a bit soon.

Because it rhymes, he 'tweets what he eats' @dailowe, linking to recipes which may one day become *The Wullie-nae-mates Cookbook* ("dishes for the lonely to sob into on a modest budget").

Like his life, not all of his poetry rhymes, let alone makes any sense. Who cares? He's so happy, he has a *Dignitas* loyalty card!

\*Lincolnshire, of course

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