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Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, mleeperoptonline.net
Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, eleeperoptonline.net
Sending Address: evelynchimisleepergmail.com
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More Supermarket Complaints (comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I complained a few weeks ago about the complexities of sales, affinity cars, digital coupons, clippable coupons, "Supercoupons", and so on, ad infinitum. But there is another axis of complexity: sizes. And not just sizes, especially in beverages.

Take Canada Dry Ginger Ale. Even if you decide on plain old ginger ale (not flavored, or diet, or bold), you have ten choices:

- 2-liter bottle (67.6 oz)
42.2-oz bottle
1-liter bottle (33.8 oz)
20-oz bottle
6 16.9-oz bottles
8 12-oz bottles
6 10-oz bottles
12 12-oz cans
6 12-oz cans
10 7.5-oz cans

Seriously, is there any reason (other than trying to monopolize shelf space) to have that many sizes, and that many unit counts (individual, 6-count, 8-count, and 12-count)? (I should have checked Diet Coke; they had a 24-pack of cans of Diet Coke last week, and you have to decide between Diet Coke and Zero Sugar Coke as well.)

And don't even get me started on the yogurt aisle. [-ecl]

A Blast from the Past (AI in 1983) (comments by Richie Bielak):

Richie Beilak submits his recent posting on how AI looked in 1983:

https://rbielak.substack.com/p/blast-from-the-past-an-article-on

Women Speculative Authors of Yore (column by James Davis Nicoll):

James Davis Nicoll's column a few weeks ago started:

Some recent online conversations started me thinking about the women speculative authors of yore. Not the recent yore, when I was a teen or at least a kid, but days even more of yore than that: the 1950s and earlier.

Wondering what I mean? Here are five works of speculative fiction from an era so long ago that even I did not exist. No doubt a few of the following works are known to you. The few that are not might be worth reading. [-jdn]

For the list, see https://reactormag.com/five-vintage-works-of-sf-from-women-writers/

THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD and STAR WARS (letter of comment by Tom Russell):

Tom Russell writes:

We watched the DVD version of the 1934 movie THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD recently.

I was struck by how many similarities there were between that movie and STAR WARS. Just replace the swords with light sabers. [-tr]

Word Use and Mis-Use Redux (letters of comment by Paul Dormer, Peter Trei, Andy Leighton, and Gary McGath):

In response to his own comments on word use and mis-use in the 05/17/24 issue of the MT VOID, Paul Dormer writes:

And another follow-up, just seen a plot description of a film on TV today in which a person is described as a "latter-day Mary Whitehouse".

For those that don't know, Mary Whitehouse was a teacher in the Sixties and later who campaigned against the permissive society, but she didn't come to prominence until the mid-Sixties, so latter-day is wrong.

(Incidentally, the BBC did a biopic of her a few years ago, after her death. In one scene, she decides to start an organisation called Clean Up National Television. Her husband takes her aside to point out the unfortunate acronym.) [-pd]

Evelyn notes:

Nice story, but the Wikipedia article on FILTH: THE MARY WHITEHOUSE STORY claims this was dramatic license rather than actual fact. [-ecl]

Peter Trei responds:

The Sixties were sixty years ago. How long ago does something have to be to be able to say 'latter-day' for a new incarnation?

Mary was sincere, and if I recall correctly fought cleanly, but she was on the wrong side of history.

Most amusingly, her presence led to the launching of a British skin magazine titles 'Whitehouse'. [-pt]

Andy Leighton adds:

Although Mary Whitehouse kept going until around 1994 (she died in 2001). [-al]

Paul Dormer responds:

I missed out from my previous post that the film in question [that the description referred to] was from 1956, about eight years before Mary Whitehouse's rise to prominence. [-pd]

Gary McGath asks:

Related question: How long does it take to determine someone is on the right or wrong side of history? Trends can be reversed, and long-lasting ones eventually come to an end. Was Augustus Caesar on the right side of history? The Roman Empire lasted for centuries after him. Was Lenin? Some people who were alive during the Russian Revolution were still alive when the USSR ceased to exist. [-gmg]

This Week's Reading (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I recently decided to read THE MEDITATIONS by Marcus Aurelius and checked out the Robin Waterfield translation (the annotated edition) (Basic Books, ISBN 978-1-541-67385-4). But when I decided I wanted to highlight some passages, I figured I would just do that in the Project Gutenberg edition. But much as I love Project Gutenberg, I have to admit that the translations of ancient works (or even less ancient, more modern ones) are often less than ideal.

To start with, Project Gutenberg has *three* editions, the oldest almost four hundred years old, and among them the numbering of the sections within the Books is completely out of sync. And the English language has changed over the last four hundred years.

Examples (the "G: number is the Project Gutenberg number):

Fourth Book:

G2680 (Meric Casaubon, 1634) XIV. Not as though thou hadst thousands of years to live. Death hangs over thee whilst yet thou livest, whilst though mayst, be good.

G6920 (George Long, 1862) 17. Do not act as if thou wert going to live ten thousand years. Death hangs over thee. While thou livest, while it is in thy power, be good.

G55317 (George W. Chrystal, 1902) 17. Order not your life as though you had ten thousand years to live. Fate hangs over you. While you live, while yet you may, be good.

(Robin Waterfield, 2021) 17. Don't act as though you were going to live for ten thousand years. Fate is hanging over your head. While you live--while you can--be a good man.

Sixth Book:

G2680 (Meric Casaubon, 1634) V. The best kind of revenge is, not to become like unto them.

G6920 (George Long, 1862) 6. The best way of avenging thyself is not to become like [the wrong-doer].

G55317 (George W. Chrystal, 1902) 6. The best revenge is not to copy him that wronged you.

(Robin Waterfield, 2021) 5. The best form of defense is not to become like one's enemy.

Eighth Book:

G2680 (Meric Casaubon, 1634) XXXI. Receive temporal blessings without ostentation, when they are sent and thou shalt be able to part with them with all readiness and facility when they are taken from thee again.

G6920 (George Long, 1862) 33. Receive [wealth or prosperity] without arrogance; and be ready to let it go.

G55317 (George W. Chrystal, 1902) 33. Receive the gifts of fortune without pride; and part with them without reluctance.

(Robin Waterfield, 2021) 33. Accept graciously, let go easily.

Eighth Books:

G2680 (Meric Casaubon, 1634) XLIX. Not to be slack and negligent, or loose, and wanton to thy actions, nor contentious, and troublesome in thy conversations, nor to love and wander in thy fancies and imaginations.

G6920 (George Long, 1862) 51. Neither in thy actions be sluggish nor in thy conversation without method, nor wandering in thy thoughts, nor let there be in thy soul inward contention nor external effusion, nor in life be so busy as to have no leisure.

G55317 (George W. Chrystal, 1902) 51. Be not languid in action, nor confused in conversation, nor vague in your opinions. Let there be no sudden contractions or forth-sallyings of your soul. In your life be not over-hurried.

(Robin Waterfield, 2021) 51. When doing something, don't be sluggish; when talking to people, don't be muddled; when thinking don't be vague.

Eleventh Book:

G2680 (Meric Casaubon, 1634) XII. Will any contemn me? let him look to that, upon what grounds he does it: my care shall be that I may never be found either doing or speaking anything that doth truly deserve contempt.

G6920 (George Long, 1862) 13. Suppose any man shall despise me. Let him look to that himself. But I will look to this, that I be not discovered doing or saying anything deserving of contempt.

G55317 (George W. Chrystal, 1902) 13. Does any man contemn me? Let him look to that. And let me look to it that I be found doing or saying nothing worthy of his contempt.

(Robin Waterfield, 2021) 11-13. Is someone going to despise me? That's his concern. Mine is to see that I don't do or say anything that deserves to be despised.

Twelfth Book:

G2680 (Meric Casaubon, 1634) XIII. If it be not fitting, do it not. If it be not true, speak it not. Ever maintain thine own purpose and resolution free from all compulsion and necessity.

G6920 (George Long, 1862) 11. What a power man has to do nothing except what God will approve, and to accept all that God may give him.

G55317 (George W. Chrystal, 1902) 17. If a thing be not becoming, do it not; if not true, say it not.

(Robin Waterfield, 2021) 12-17. If it's not right, don't do it; if it's not the truth, don't say it. Your impulses should be under your control.

On the other hand, I checked out a library book of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS (Kregel, no ISBN): 800 pages, 18 characters per inch, 8 lines per inch. I think that works out to 4-point type. (The cover claims 'Enlarged Type'; I shudder to think what the regular type looked like!) Plus the translation in the book (William Whiston, 1737) is the same as the Project Gutenberg edition, and I have also read that it was based on inaccurate Greek copies of Josephus. So here I opted for the Project Gutenberg edition, because the translation is the same but at least I can crank up the font size.

So in one case the "dead-tree" version is much better--modern translation, annotations, and readable type--and in the other the e-book is better, not just for the readable font, but because it doesn't weigh almost three pounds. [-ecl]

Mark Leeper
mleeperoptonline.net

Quote of the Week:

The enthusiastic, to those who are not, are always something of a trial.

--Alban Goodier



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