Scoff Lore: An Introduction to British Words for Food and Drink

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FROM THE TIME OF THE ELIZABETHANS, if not longer, the British have been notable for their food. In the "spacious days of great Elizabeth," it was for the variety of their "groaning boards": the fat capons and other fowl, the rich soups and broths, the fresh and *powdered* (salt) meat (both game and otherwise), the fish (sometimes in a *high Dutch sauce*) and shellfish, the *white meat* (dairy products, such as eggs and milk, cheese and butter), the salads (one was named *Good King Harry* for Henry VIII), the *comfits* (today called *comforters* in England, *sookies* for "suckers" in Scotland, *chews* in Wales) and *sweets* (still a common word, though we also hear *lollies*, from "lollipop," if it dissolves easily in the mouth, and *gob-stopper*, if it does not). In William Harrison's *Description of England* (second edition, 1587) there is mention of "suckets" (today *sucks* or *suckers*), "condiniacs" (rewards for worthiness?), "marmalades," "marchpane" (of unknown etymology, *marzipan* since 1494), "sugar-bread," "gingerbread," and "florentines" (a kind of tart or meat pie), etc. Harrison also mentions other "savoury knacks" and dainties.

There is a traditional verse, whose origin I do not know, that describes their cheer:

> Good bread and good drink, a good fire in the hall,
> Brawn, pudding and souse, and good mustard withal.[1]

[1] Meat (especially pig's feet) or fish (compare the Danish *sylt*) were *soused* in vinegar or some other pickling solution. The word is related to the German *Sulz*. Wentworth & Flexner's *Dictionary of American Slang* (p. 505) tells us of the modern meaning: "*Prob. the most common sl. word for 'drunk.' Since c1900; very common by c1915.*" The British have no need to depend on *soused* for "drunk," having at least two hundred common words that mean the same thing. P. G. Wodehouse, quoted in Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (p. 67), described a drunken man: "He was oiled, boiled, fried, plastered, whiffled, sozzled, and blotto."

Then came other times, including the Victorian – recall those monstrous repasts in Dickens – and at last the present, when English cooking is the laughing stock of Europe and America (itself recently "gourmet conscious"). English cooking has worsened, if anything, since Spam and World War II, and English coffee, said Christopher Fry in the *New York Post* (November 29, 1962), "is just toasted milk."

Though English cooking may be tasteless today, the names the English use for food are delicious, a colorful part of their speech. Books will do you little good, but if you travel in Britain and keep your ears open, you will find the common folk's words for food and drink pleasing as well as puzzling. It is the purpose of this paper to record, and explain (where possible), some of the most interesting vocabulary of the language of *scoff* (food, also *scran*). Welcome to our banquet of words, some sweet euphemisms, some bitter observations, some sour cynicisms, some salty vulgarities.

Many of these words need explanation. One might think that Elizabethan words, for instance, would be obscure today, but we can cope with *sack* and *conies*, *warden pies* and *shred pies*, and so on, probably because of our familiarity with Shakespeare. Or we can consult a dictionary, which (though it is likely to tell us, for instance, that it does not know the origin of "warden," a "warden pie" is one made from "an old variety of baking pear"). Occasionally we may misinterpret an Elizabethan term, *mince pie* for instance, but we are seldom stymied.[2] More modern terms, strangely enough, pose greater difficulties, for we may know Shakespeare's language better than that of some of our contemporaries. Our names for food and drink

[2] A recipe for "*An Elizabethan mince-pie*" quoted in John Dover Wilson's *Life in Shakespeare's England* (1949), p. 289, from the second edition of Gervase Markham's *The English Hus-wife* (1623):

> Take a leg of mutton, and cut the best flesh from the bone, and parboil it well: then put to it three pound of the best mutton suet, and shred it very small: then spread it abroad, and season it with pepper and salt, cloves and mace: then put in [a] good store of currants, great raisins and prunes, clean washed and picked, a few dates sliced, and some orange-pills [peels] sliced: then being all well mixed together, put it into a coffin [container], or into divers coffins, and so bake them: and when they are served up, open the lids, and strew [a] store of sugar on the top of the meat, and upon the lid. And in this sort you may also bake beef or veal; only the beef would not be parboiled, and the veal will ask a double quantity of suet.

are as various as their origins – and not all of them have been honored by inclusion, or accompanied by explanation, in such books as Eric Partridge's valuable *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (fifth edition, enlarged, 1961) and *Origins* (second edition, 1959). There are many old books (for example J. C. Hotten's *Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant and Vulgar Words*, 1859) – but what was current a century ago may no longer be so. There are learned articles and books by industrious Germans, for example, but these have been written after the study of publications, not people.[3] The real knowledge of such folkloristic things as this vocabulary I am to discuss must come from life, not literature. Of course such carefully-recorded speech as that in Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851)[4] is appreciated, but it is more fruitful and more fun to go out and listen and then come back and *listen to oneself* (as the Irish say for "think"). Sometimes the words sound baffling to our ears and are even more baffling to track down. One has to know the people and their speech very well – or how could one trace a *ra* to a "fart" (ra < raspberry < raspberry tart < fart)? You have to know what toll was charged, long ago, to cross the bridge before you realize why a half-penny was called a *waterloo*. *Resurrection pie* strikes you immediately with the humor that can be brought to a meal of scraps; *twice-laid* might elude you, until you recall that the food in leftovers has been twice laid on the table. In a Cockney's speech a *Jenny* can be a "window." You have to discover *Jenny* is *Jenny Linder*, not Jenny Lind (as it should be), and recall that "window" is pronounced "winder" within the sound of the Bow Bells. Having conquered the difficult rhyming slang of London's mysterious East (which is largely disappearing, so that even the "native speakers" of Cockney cannot always help you), you may have to cope with Anglo-Indian *kincob* (fine dress) speech. *Time* magazine has made *pundit* known to us all – though we seldom associate it with Pandit Nehru – but such

[3] Cf. W. Franz, "Die Dialektsprache bei Charles Dickens," *Englische Studien*, XII (1889), an example of a learned literary article, and Heinrich Baumann, *Londonismen*, Berlin, 1887, typical of book-length studies.

[4] The 1861, three-volume re-issue of Mayhew has been edited and abridged by Peter Quennell and published by Spring Books (London) as *Mayhew's London* and *Mayhew's Characters* (both n.d.). Quennell also provided a new version of Mayhew's supplement of 1862 on London's prostitutes, swindlers, thieves, and beggars, *London's Underworld* (1950).

mustas (sometimes *musters*, samples) as *karibat* (food, literally rice with curry) and *tiffin* (luncheon, very commonly used today) may leave one as still and mute as a *kitmegur* (footman). Our language has become, as the English who served in China would say, a *chow-chow chop*, a small vessel loaded with small, miscellaneous items, souvenirs the British brought back from all over the world to add to the bric-a-brac invented at home. In *The Shepheardes Calendar* Edmund Spenser (using the cooking term *gallimaufry* coined a generation or two earlier to describe a stew or ragout) wrote: "So now they have made our English tongue a gallimaufry or hodgepodge of all other speeches." In the light of the inventiveness and the acquisitiveness of the English, small wonder it is that research into their common speech is not merely fascinating but also difficult.

It is not only that the English eat and drink some things with which others are unacquainted, say periwinkles. ("A typical family ... lives ... on a nutriment of winkles and gin," quotes the *Oxford Universal Dictionary* under the date 1800.) If we read or hear about a *winkle* – someone might, for instance, refer to the pointed shoes of a *teddy boy* or *mod* as "winkle-pickers" – we can, presumably, consult a lexicon. We just might not happen to have one with us on the beach at Brighton. If we hear about some strange culinary concoction of the Island Race, we can always fly to a cookery book (often called *Mrs. Beeton's*, whether by that Victorian author or another) to look up any trifle (a *trifle* is a dessert) and its recipe. But if we can't find *Hyde Park railings* there we may have to consult a Cockney, who will tell us of the similarity between park railings – an American would say something like "an iron fence" – and a breast of lamb (which the Englishman would probably call "mutton"). There are some instances in which no dictionary or reference book can help, unless it be a most unusual one, and even the simplest things can perplex. On the other hand, any British child can tell you that a *door-step* is merely a thick slice of bread and a *flight of stairs* is either "pears" (in Cockney rhyming slang) or, more likely, a stack of slices of bread (visualize an uneven stack). Surely English is as baffling a language as, say, French – in which *lait* means both "milk" and "egg-white" and *pommes* are both apples and potatoes. Take what Americans (not the French) call "French fries." Everyone has heard of the English-

man's abiding passion for *fish and chips*. An American would call that dish (actually it is considered best in a piece of newspaper – *The News of the World*, for choice) "fish and french fries." To us potato *chips* are the things that break off in *dips*, the things the English call *crisps*. Potatoes themselves are variously called *poor creatures*, *murphies* or *donovans* (from their popularity with the Irish), *praties* (in Ireland), etc. I have heard them called *tiaties* in Dorset and I am sure they have other local names wherever they are popped into *potato-traps* (the Cockney for "mouths").

Even familiar expressions have colorful histories. *Cha and a wad* (tea and a bun), the mainstay of many a Briton, requires you to recall that when tea reached England in 1616 it was for a while known exclusively by the Chinese name, *ch'a*. (Then it was *tea*, long pronounced "tay," as it is still in certain Irish and English dialects. Alexander Pope rhymed it with "obey.")[5] A *wad* is eminently descriptive of the average doughy English bun, but it is actually intended to mean something closer to "a load", a term in musketry since the sixteenth century and in cannonry since the seventeenth, when it also came to mean "to lay up (the cut haulm of beans, peas, etc.) in bundles." (Compare the America *wad* of bills and "He shot his wad," where it means "load.") Nonetheless a *wad-scoffer* is a bun eater generally, although in the armed forces the expression is used of a teetotaller (who "teetotally" abstains from alcohol) who won't join you in a *wet*.

Some British expressions and names are simple enough for a foreigner to decipher. *Umble pie* (now *humble pie*, probably from

[5] In *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto III:

> Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
> Dost sometimes counsel take — and sometimes tea.

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries coffee, "which makes the politician wise" (Pope), was the rage in London and at one time there were more than two thousand coffee shops serving all types and tastes. From the fact that each attracted its own clientel sprang literary clubs, political clubs, the gentlemen's clubs of the next century, the insurance firm founded in Lloyd's coffee house, etc. The coffee houses were the poor man's club, the "penny university." (Admission was 1*d*., coffee 2*d*.) By mid-nineteenth century, however, England had decided to "take tea and see" and beer and gin had replaced coffee and conversation. "Thank God for tea!" exclaims the Reverend Sydney Smith (1771—1845) in *Lady Holland's Memoir*. "What would the world do without tea ? — how did it exist ? I am glad I was not born before tea." The names for tea and tea-table terms require an article to themselves.

the fear of losing status by being thought to drop an "h") was made from a deer's umbles (entrails). A *bakey* is a baked potato, generally, not only in the *pishery-pashery* or *gibble-gabble* (chatter) of Cockneys. Children call a *bakey* a *Rock of Gibralta* when it is underdone and hard. The *little 'uns* (*squirts*, *shrimps*, *small fry*, *half-pints*, and *dolly mixtures* – from a kind of very small assorted candies – to use only some of the food-connected epithets for children) call a biscuit (we'd say "cookie") a *bikky* in nursery talk. Nursey talk accounts for a great many food names among grownups, especially in that class which continues to say *ta* (for "thank you") and *ta-ta* (for "good-bye") through life. We recognize that *treacle* is molasses (in America *molasses* or *cream puff* is an attractive used car, from the idea of bait, while the opposite is a *lemon*) and we may even recognize it described as *beetle-bait* (where *bait*, from "fish bait," may mean simply food, *grub*, *scranner*, or *chuck* – compare our *chuck wagon* of the West – and not "trap"). We can see the processes by which milk became *cow*,[6] a hard candy became a *bullet* and toffee *stick-jaw*, a licorice stick a *stickerish lick*, eggs *chicken-berries*, beer *froth* and a shot of gin *a flash of lightning*, a cook *lick-fingers*, cucumbers *cukes*, daily bread *daily*, food in general *inside lining*, and a nice cup of tea a *cuppa*. Once we *cotton on to* the backwards trick of the costermonger (called a *split asunder*), used in the cant he invented (claims J. C. Hotten)[7] to foil the police, we recognize *neergs* as greens, *edgenaro* as orange, *egabac* as cabbage (*cabbage* means to steal), and *shif* as fish. (Suddenly mere Cockney *trullibubs* or *flip-flap*, worthless things, like the old words *yob* for boy and *traf* for fart, make sense.) We may guess that *bacon-hole* in the Navy and *cake-hole* (heard on Army stations, formerly called *lobster boxes*, because of the read coats there) is "mouth" in ordinary language. We begin to try to cope with *Mother Bunch* (water) and *ninny-broth* (coffee). We learn that a *smelt* is a guinea and *half a hog*

[6] Jan Harold Brunvand reports an old Swede in Michigan saying, "Yust pass me dat tin cow, if you please." Milk is also known as *cow-juice* or (Navy) just *cow*. *China's cow* is the soya bean (Anglo-Chinese), *cow and calf* = half ("turf accountants," bookies), and *Cow and Gate* a brand of tinned (canned) milk.

[7] J. C. Hotten, *Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words*, 1859 (much reprinted to 1874). Also useful are such books as "Ducange Anglicus," *The Vulgar Tongue* (1857); Edwin Pugh, *The Cockney at Home* (1914); Farmer and Henley's *Slang and Its Analogues* (seven volumes, 1890–1904); etc.

(or *half a grunter*) a sixpence.[8] We learn the use of ancient words like *helpa* (apple) and *kegmeg* (tripe) and *jossop* (gravy). We discern the difference between *meat-fosh* (hash) and *fish-fosh* (also called *kedgeree*). We learn that *peach* is not a fruit but a betrayal (compare Mr. Peacham in John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*) and *honest trout* a woman. A *squab* is a fat man, *chubs* are dupes, *puddings* guts, a *goosgog* a gooseberry. We discover a *slap-up* (fine) game in studying the word *lush*, which in the language of Cockney *maltworms* (drinkers), *muzzy* (intoxicated) in the *boozer* (public house), means not "drinker" but "beer" itself,[9] also called with amusing inventiveness by such names as *Porter's Guzzle*, *Carmen's Comfort*, *humming tipple*, and *Politician's Porridge*. We learn that Johnson defined *lushy* as reddened (by drink), "opposite to pale." Also, there was a Victorian brewer named Lushington. And Henry Mayhew's London had a Lushington Club in Bow Street, Covent Garden. We accept the invitation to *dig in* (the Australians say *bog in*) to a feast of language in which a *desert chicken* is bully beef (ex the 7th Armoured Division in the North African campaign, 1941–1943) and *Johnny-cake* is a confusion. To an Australian, for instance, a johnny-cake is a wheat cake cooked in the ashes. To Americans it is a corn-meal cake baked in the oven, a trick we learned from the Indians – who had *Shawnee cakes* – in the eighteenth century.[10]

[8] In the language of the costermongers, reported Mayhew (*Mayhew's London*, pp. 61ff.), a *flatch* was a halfpenny, a *yenep* a penny, *owl-yenep* twopence, *exis-yenep* sixpence, and so on up to a *gen* (shilling). *Flatch-ynork* was half a crown (2/6), *ewif-gen* a crown (5/—), *net-gen* half a sovereign (also *half-courer*), and a *couter* a sovereign. This complex code seems to have died out and the only code as elaborate I know in general use is that of the British antique dealers, based on ten-letter words or phrases (ROMANTIQUE, BE MINDFULL, I'M SHERATON, or the dealer's initials + ANTIQUE, sometimes with the final letter being Z, for "zero"). The London *Sunday Times Magazine* for August 14, 1966, ascribed the practice to the fact that Continental customers expect to haggle — or "plain sharp practice." It gave this advice: "Many codes can be broken quite simply by asking the price of everything in the shop. With good luck, it might be possible to drive the dealer to the state of distraction whereby he is prepared to drop the practice."

[9] The many names for beer range from a *pint* to words as difficult as *pong* (Anglo-Indian? From the hindi *pani*, "water"?), often elaborated into *pongelo* (Army). Anyone who gets *topsy-boosy* (drunk), or knows those who do, can offer long lists of words for beer, ale, stout, lager, *Wallop* (Bitter in London, Mild in the North), etc.

[10] "I'm Frank Thompson, all the way from 'down east.' I've been through the mill, ground, and bolted, and come out a *regular-built down-east johnny-cake*, when it's hot, d...d good; but when it's cold, d...d sour and indigestible." Jan Harold

However, are *canaries* so-called because they are yellow or because they come from the Canary Islands? (They are bananas.) Whence comes the Collins of *collins* (a strong drink), and *Tom Collins* and *John Collins*? We know *Sir Walter Scott* (beer – i.e., a pot), *Lord John Russell* (a bustle), and may guess that the *Dan Tucker* of "butter" comes from the folk song, while *Everton* (for coffee) probably derives from Everton Toffee. But who are *Ben Flake* (steak), *Billy Button* (mutton), *Jack Dandy* (brandy), *Joe Savage* (cabbage), and *Tom Jint* (beer – a pint) – and will we recognize them as simply *ben*, *billy*, *jack*, *joe* and *tom*, which is how they usually appear? (A Cockney will call stairs *apples*, because *apples and pears* rhymes with "stairs" and, though the rhyming slang is disappearing,[11] it is still greatly in evidence in certain circles, including highly sophisticated ones in which it is thought to be *darling* and *chic*.) Sometimes we need to be erudite even to recognize the existence of a slang word, for there are those who might order a *finger* in a bar and make us think only of a method of measurement while actually they have at the back of their minds *finger and thumb*, which rhymes with "rum." One person ordering "a bowl" of soup might mean the container, a common way of asking for soup, while another asking for *a bowl* means *bowl and hoop*, which happens to rhyme with "soup." In some circles *bouze* means "beer" and *booze* means "to kill," while in others *booze* is any alcoholic drink (as opposed to *slip-slops*, soft drinks). It's a *blinkin'* (euphemism for *bloody*, short for *By your lady*) puzzle; it is often a *bit o' luck* that is needed to find an explanation so that one can say

Brunvand quotes this from Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840) in his "Sailors' and Cowboys' Folklore in Two Popular Classics," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, XXIX (1965), p. 271, where he also gives Dana's definition of *scouse* ("one rare treat") as "a stew made of 'biscuits pounded fine, salt beef cut into small pieces, and a few potatoes boiled up together and seasoned with pepper.'" Andy Adams' *The Log of a Cowboy* (1903), Brunvand's other classic, calls bacon *fried chicken*. The Royal Navy occasionally says *cowboy chicken* for "bacon" and *cowboys* for "beans," while *chicken-food* is "blancmange," though not nearly as common as *rabbit-food*, used of any salad.

[11] "Only the *crocks* [old folks] use it now," one teenager told me, himself busy with the new *mod* [modern] slang which has replaced the language of the *teddy boys* (from their neo-Edwardian dress) and the *rockers* (the leather-jacket set, from their favorite music). The "Mersey Sound" has much influenced American teenage music and, in return, American *hippies*, Yank "pop" musicians, and Yank *flicks* and *mags*, have contributed greatly to the British teenager's speech.

with the Gypsies (who gave us *gibberish*, I think), "*That's the cheese*," that's the exact thing![12] Why, after all, is a thing described as *fit as a pudding*? Isn't it *rather of the ratherest* (too much) to ask us to go from *cheap* to *cheap and nasty* to *pasty*? That, *me lumps of coke* (blokes), requires us to be able to fathom not only rhyming slang but the pronunciation of Australians who call a Western movie a *bangotcher* ("Bang! Got you!").

Once you are *aware* that you are dealing with such things, you can then go to Eric Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (1961), keeping something like Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner's *Dictionary of American Slang* (1960) on the side for comparison. You then discover that a *cowardly custard* is inedible (being merely a child's taunt), that a *pennorth of jam* is not a penny's worth of anything (its a girl, otherwise known as a *bit of fluff*, etc.), that a *Norfolk dumpling* is an inhabitant (not a food) of that district, that *Dunbar wether* and *Yarmouth capon* are both *red herrings*, that a *muffin-baker* is a Quaker and does not necessarily have anything to do with a *muffin-worry* (otherwise a *tea-bash* or a *bun-fight*). *Laced mutton* has meant a certain kind of woman,[13] since Shakespeare's time. An *Officers' Mess sandwich*, which looks simple, is a complicated situation in the *tombola* or the game of *housey-housey*, both of which would take pages to explain here. *Cocoa* is the head and *coffee and cocoa* means "say so," while *coffee pot* is part of a barrage balloon. A *currant bun* is the sun, while in Cornwall currant buns themselves are *fuggen*, while currant cake (Eccles cake) is described as a *flies' cemetery*, say Iona and Peter Opie in *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (1959), a book that is essential ("Ugh! O lor! Golliwogs! What a chiz!") for anyone who wants to know what the *moppets* are saying.[14]

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[12] One of the earliest (and still useful) studies was B. C. Croft and H. T. Crofton, *The Dialect of the English Gypsies* (revised, 1875).

[13] In academic circles there is a good story of the search for an appropriate collective noun — you know, a *pride* of lions, and all that that Fowler goes into so well — for a group of prostitutes. A *baking of tarts*, or what? Three professors of literature are said to have suggested useful collective nouns. The Shakespeare scholar offered *a flourish of strumpets*. The Victorian scholar proposed *a chapter of trollopes*. The critic of modern literature is supposed to have won the contest with *an anthology of pros*.

[14] The Opies worked (1951—1959) very largely "*direct from oral tradition*" with

Egg wiped means Egypt as *Wipers* meant Ypres. To *get a bar of chocolate* in the Navy is to be praised by a senior officer. To have *a bun in the oven* (in America "one in the oven") is to be pregnant. A *bottle of cola* is a bowler hat (pronounced "bowla") and a *bottle of Scotch* is a watch. (I have heard a *bottle of snottle* for lemon squash, while the Opies report *lemon snoddy* from Golspie as well as the standard *squonk*, also used for "cider," and Kilcaldy's *skoosh* – I have heard *squoosh* farther South – which can also mean other kinds of "squirt," such as gingerale, not to be confused with *ginger beer* or simply *Ginger*, the universal nickname for a redheaded boy.) *Cough and sneeze* means *cheese*, but *bread and cheese* means *sneeze*, so that in some groups *sneeze* is *cheese* and *cheese* is *sneeze*. *Cheese*, as we have said above, can also mean simply "the thing." (Cheese pie is *splidge* in Manchester; *splodge* is "to *schlepp*, or trudge," an American might say.) A *Darby roll* comes not from the baker but from wearing shackles until it affects your gait, generally under the supervision of *bully-beef* (a chief, or warder in a prison). One can see why a scholar might need not only Julian Franklyn's reliable study of *The Cockney* (second edition, 1954) but a whole shelf of books on various dialects or – best of all – a good tape recorder, or a fast shorthand and a sound phonetic training, and a big library. Even then it takes time and inspiration to see that *sugar* is "money" (*sugar and honey*), that a *plate* is a "street" (*plate of meat*), that *tommy* is soft bread in naval talk (mentioned in Little Buttercup's song in Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore* – perhaps related to the name for soldiers, taken from a sample form in the nineteenth century where a specimen name was entered as "Tommy Atkins"). When you have reached the stage at which you can figure out that *tommy* is also food in general because *Tommy O'Rann* rhymes with *scran* (*scrannel* = broken victuals and in Burn's *Autobiography of a Beggar-Boy*, 1855, a *scran-bag* is a sack for food scraps), then – *"Bob's your uncle!"*[15]

American speech has had its effect on the British and other speakers (more or less) of the English language, so it sometimes

children aged six to fourteen. Morris Marples has given us surveys of other educational institutions in *Public School Slang* (1940) and *University Slang* (1950).

[15] This common expression means "Everything's O.K." Can it come from *bobbie* (also *peeler*, after Sir Robert Peel, founder of the Metropolitan Police) and mean that things are fine because even the police are on your side?

happens that, though we have particular problems with *mother and darter* (*daughter*, rhymes with "water" pronounced *warter*) and *navigators* (= potatoes, i.e. *taters*), for example, we are quick to understand some unusual words which puzzle the English. The American *Dixie cup*, for instance, has given the Australians a name for ice cream (*dixie*; British *ices*, *ice-lollies* on a stick, *okey-pokey*, or *I screams*). The American *hot dog* has become a *doggie* or a *roaster*. Some Londoners call our *hamburger* (or a pale imitation of it) a *Wimpy*, after the character who wolfed them down in the Popeye cartoons. English *litotes* (*a bit of bother*) is seen in *a drop of wet and warm* (weak tea), naval humor in *half seas over* and *three sheets to the wind* (staggering drunk), and cleverness (*too clever by half!*) in *dynamite* (the baking powder that "blows up" cakes for Hungry Harry and Gobble Gobble Gertie, the famous *piganogs* – pigs and hogs). *Eye-wash* is a weak drink and *eye-opener* a strong one, especially the first one of the day, often taken before *the sun is over the foreyard* (in America almost always misquoted as *over the yardarm*), which F. Bowen's racy *Sea Slang* (1929) defines, without quoting the naval regulation involved, as "the time by which a drink is permissible."[16] A suet-and-treacle pudding or a raspberry jelly roll or roly-poly is a *dead baby* and pink blancmange, the Opies say, is *baby-in-the-bath*, though I have never encountered anyone who has heard the expression. There is conscious humor in *Sarspidilly* and children's inventiveness in *sugarolly water*, *popo-lolly*, and *Spanish juice* (all made by soaking bits of liquorice, *tar*, or *nigger babies*, in water). *Gammon* and *spinach* is bacon and greens, but *gammon and spinach* is nonsense. There is a ballad from the sixteenth century often called *Frog he went a -Courtin'* (or by some similar title) which had by the nineteenth century acquired for its nonsense refrain: "With a rowley, powley, gammon and spinach / Heigh ho! says Anthony Rowley."

Sometimes initials are used, and baffling: the Australians and New Zealanders of World War II gave their initials to the *Anzac wafer*, a hard biscuit. As we have noted, what the British call a *biscuit* we would most often call a *cookie*, though a biscuit (from

[16] Other rich stores of salty slang are "Taffrail"'s *Carry On* (1916) and Fraser and Gibbon's *Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases* (1925). For some American sources see *American Speech* and Wentworth & Flexner's bibliography, and Leland P. Lovett, *Naval Customs, Traditions and Usage* (1939).

"twice-cooked" in French) should be hard and a cookie softer. What they call a *cookie*, Americans call a cook. What the inhabitants of Glasgow call a *cookie*, Americans call a prostitute! You can see that American travelers in Britain have more to worry about than *being knocked up in the morning.*[17] Professor Gloria Glikin, one of my colleagues at Brooklyn College of The City University of New York, in Cornwall recently to research a biography of the novelist Dorothy Richardson, came back with a story of misunderstandings arising from her habit of saying "call" for "telephone," which led people there to expect a visit in person. (She was supposed to have said she would *ring*, not *call.*) The two countries, as Churchill well observed, are indeed divided by a common language.

A slice of pie (in the Royal Air Force *a piece of cake*) is easy work, which decoding some British speech is not. (One often encounters *a regular trosseno*, a really bad one, as the costermongers say.) *Raspberry fool* is a dessert and a *raspberry tart* is breaking wind, while *giving the raspberry* (a derisive noise, our "Bronx cheer") is being imported from America. The *char* who *did for* a friend of mine in London (came in to clean regularly) treated me to a long and pseudo-learned disquisition on *the Roseberry*, which she contended was a contemptuous method of greeting the prime minister of that name, suffered in Commons in her grandmother's day. (The English are proud of their traditions and, if necessary, will invent one for you rather than admit they lack one or do not know its history. The field researcher must be wary.) Thus the restaurants of the *Scouses* (inhabitants of Liverpool, Liverpuddlians) are called *cokes* (which confuses Americans) and there are those who venture the wild hazard that this is because these places served cocoa in the nineteenth century. This is less convincing than even the derivation of *Picadilly* from the "pikadille" neckcloth.

[17] In American slang *knocked off* is "murdered," *knocked down* is "reduced in price," *knocked over* is "robbed," *knocked in* is "broken into," *knocked together* is "improvised," *knocked out* is "exhausted" or "rendered unsconscious," and *knocked up* generally means "pregnant." *Knocked up* used to mean "to prepare or serve food," however, and still retains in England the meaning of "to awake in the morning," now archaic in America. Most Americans who have visited Britain seem to claim personal experience with the amusing aspects of this opportunity for international misunderstanding. Now the British, having heard the joke too often, are beginning to use *knocked up* instead of some expression like *got stout.* ("She was only a barmaid's daughter, 'til she pulled the wrong knob and got stout.")

An *apple-dumpling shop* is a woman's bosom. A *melon* is a new cadet at the Royal Military Academy (where a Scottish professor's mispronunciation of "sweat" in the last century gave us *swot*, a student who *grinds* hard). The *melon* may be connected with a disreputable proverb, ascribed to the Arabs, involving the sexual usefulness of boys and melons. A *salt eel* is a rope's end, but a *saltee* is a penny (in Parlyaree).[18] *Fresh milk* is a freshman at Cambridge, *fresh water* is a punishment on a training ship, a *tea spoon* used to be (a century ago) £5000 among *Smokers* (Londoners – Margery Allingham has a detective story set in the capital called *Tiger in The Smoke*) and a *tea-cake* is now a child's fundament in Yorkshire. Tapioca is *snotty gog pie*, but is not related to *snoddy gogs*, where a *gog* is a gag for the mouth or a punishment for profanity and a *snoddy* is a corruption of *swaddy* (*swoddy*), since Grose's *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785, and often reprinted, re-issued in modern times) known to mean a soldier, often a new recruit. So, when you feel pretty sure you know precisely what is meant, be careful – a *poached egg* can just as easily be a small child or a traffic signal!

Some names for food can be positively stunning in their complex origins. For *ackermaracker* (tea) Eric Partridge says: "The form (*acker-mar-acker*) suggests *tea* reversed and distorted from *aet* to *ack*; *ack* elaborated to *acker*; and, with a swift *mar* interpolated, *acker* repeated." For *Band of Hope* (lemon syrup) one has to know the history of the Temperance Movement, which also helps with *ruin* (gin, from Geneva originally, *Mother's ruin*, eventually) and *bane* (brandy), not to mention *demon rum*, while a *rum cove* is an odd or dangerous bloke, a *rum duke* used to mean "a handsome man" and a *rum dubber* "a pickpocket," a *rum go* is an odd development but *rum peck* is good food and *rum ruff peck* used to be understood as as "Westphalian ham." For *billy* (water) as in *billy can* (water pot), one must know the Australian aboriginal word *billa* (water). In *drunok* must hear "drunk" and in *Madame Bishop* (port, sugar, and nutmeg) one must recognize the name of a long-defunct Australian hotel-keeper, "formerly well-known" says Partridge. For *black ointment's* meaning (meat) it is necessary to think of meat used as a poultice for black eyes (what Americans,

[18] *Parlyaree* was the *lingua franca* of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century actors and more modern showmen and costermongers. It deserves a study in itself and is reserved for someone with an equal competence both in Italian and street English.

not the English, call *shiners*, *Shiners* having been the Northumberland Fusiliers – for their *spit and polish* – in England and "show-offs" in Australia). The *bonk-bag* in which a cyclist carries light provisions does not get its name, as many have supposed, from the fact that it goes "bonk" against other objects: it is related to going *bonkers*, the naval term for light-headedness due to hunger. To understand why *Burma Road* is rice – "Rice pudding, says a Manchester boy, is 'Three-six-five pudding' ('because it is served every day')," add the Opies – one must know the history of the Army in Iraq in World War II. To know why *colonial duck* or *colonial goose* means a boned leg of mutton it is necessary to know what Australians (for that is the colony) eat at Christmas and other feasts in place of the standard British festive fare. One must know the language of British India and of British troops and travelers around the world.[19] One must have heard the language of the streets and the schools, the highest classes and the lowest. *Clean-skins* (those who have no criminal record) will hardly have heard that a *cob* is a roll of bread and Americans may be forgiven for imagining that it has something to do with corn, which the British call *maize* (since their "corn" is wheat, etc.). Who could guess that *Bryant and Mays* are light ales? (Bryant and Mays made matches, matches are lights, and so on.) Who has noticed that a chabot (fish) looks like a *Miller's thumb*? Or that *gorgonzola* (cheese) and the ribbon of the Army's Africa Star both have yellow and green streaks? At Christ's Hospital *kiff* is tea, coffee, and cocoa, all three. ("Does it taste like gnat's-piss tea? Then it's coffee. The coffee tastes like soap.")

A fine example of a tangle is *bombo*, an Australian word for whisky, fairly common in certain parts of Britain. ("Australia, where all the convicts go?" and the reply, "England, where all the convicts come from?")[20] Tobias Smollett used the word *bumbo* in 1748 to describe a drink made of rum, sugar, water and nutmeg, a drink many of us must have had since under another name. Partridge quotes the *Session Papers of the Central Criminal Court*,

[19] Cf. Frank Richards, *Old-Soldier Sahib* (1936), and other books on service slang with sections on British India.

[20] Cf. Jice Doone, *Timely Tips to New Australians* (1926); E. E. Morris, *Austral English* (1898); and Sidney J. Baker's various books on the speech of Australia and New Zealand.

1729–1913 in his *Supplement*, tracing the word back to *bumbow* and an even earlier date. Grose's famous dictionary uses a similar word for an eighteenth-century mixture of brandy, water and sugar. We note that *bumbo* is the Italian child's word for a drink (not alcoholic) and scholars have noticed that *mimbo* is used in America for what is served today in Paris as *grog américaine*. Now *grog* (non alcoholic) is a child's word for tea and *grog* (alcoholic) is watered rum. Then we have to trace *grog* back to Admiral Vernon.[21]

The Opies investigated some 70 primary, secondary, and grammar schools, but not "private, fee-charging establishments." The great public schools of Britain (so called, by the way, because they are private) have languages as well as accents all their own and often put a stamp on a student's speech which he cannot (and often does not want to) eradicate in later life. A graduate of Marlborough, for instance, would call bread and butter pudding *Channel crossing* (presumably suggesting vomit). School dinners (*Y.M.C.A.* – Yesterday's Muck Cooked Again)[22] are described in a jingle the Opies quote that speaks indelicately of the subsidized, government provided school *dinners* (Americans would say "lunches"):

> Scab and matter custard,
> Green snot pies,
> Dead dog's giblets,
> Dead cat's eyes
> And a cup of sick to wash it down.

Marlborough boys are no more delicate: to them prunes in custard is *donkey-drops in custard*. Stew to Cockneys is *bonnets* (*bonnets so blue*, stew); public schoolboys greet it with names even less quotable than the ones used by the *tikes* in the schools the Opies visited. What the junior boys think of as *Brylcreem* or *sick* (vomit) sauce may remind their older brothers of semen.

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[21] Admiral Vernon, who wore a *grogram* cloak (probably mohair and wool, from the French *gros grain*) and who already had been nicknamed *Old Grog*, in the summer of 1740 ordered the Royal Navy's rum to be diluted with water, producing *grog*, whence *groggy* (staggering drunk), *grog-blossom* (red pimple on the nose — the Scots call whisky *pimples and blotches*), *grog on* (drink heavily), and so on.

[22] Cf. the American joke of "Never Anger Adam Clayton Powell" (technically a criminal in the State of New York, technically a congressman in Washington just now) for N.A.A.C.P.

To the average Englishman *A.B.C.* suggests the shops of the Aerated Bread Company, early *Corner Houses*, little, cheap restaurants a notch or two higher than New York's cheap *eateries*, among which are the Nedick's chain and the Chock Full o' Nuts (from a cream-cheese and walnuts sandwich, once their staple) group. ("I'm *not* a snob," British actress Hermione Gingold is supposed to have said. "Why, I'd eat in *Nedick's* – if there *were* such a place!") But to the graduate of Christ's Hospital (which is, of course, not a hospital but a school) *A.B.C.* may recall the ale, bread, and cheese of the cold "going-home" suppers of the last century. An *Ouse whale* is fish served at Ouse School, and at Cotton College *cork* is new bread and *chots* are potatoes. Public School English is a *smashing* subject that deserves a *wizard* book of its own, but it might take a wizard to write it, if only because the Old Boys want to keep their languages as exclusive as their admissions rolls. An Eton vocabulary, or some recognizable bits of one retained long past its usefulness as a *lark* or a clannish cant, can be as useful as the Old School Tie itself in adult years. An accent or a word that plainly says "Oxbridge" is a social asset, even in these days when a new status is being attached to working-class accents and regional dialects (which show "how far you've come").[23]

As words can place you, so they can date you. Some foods have picked up their names from people in the news: we can tell how long ago *dripping* (fat) came to be called *Doctor Crippen* after the famous murderer. Few such old names have lasted, but this desperate doctor caught and held the public imagination as successfully as did Jack the Ripper. Was there once a Jack Shea who gave his name to tin pots? Or does *Shea*, as I surmise, rhyme with that old pronunciation of *tea*? Who was the *Dutchman* who gave the name to the hard lumps in brown sugar? How far is it from the town of Melton to the *melton* cloth that prompted tailors, because of its close-cut nap, to give its name to the coarse dry bread of the 1860's? And why is a pensioner at Greenwich a Greenwich *goose*? Just for the alliteration? It is not that the words are simply old.

[23] A study might be done of American college dialects starting as early as the *Harvard College Magazine* article of May, 1858. I noticed that Princeton, particularly the "eating clubs," had a vocabulary of its own. Benjamin A. Hall in 1851 made a collection of "College Words and Customs," now preserved in a scrapbook in the British Museum, which ought to be studied.

An obsolete word like *cunnel* (potato) can be tracked down in a big enough dictionary. But how did a Britannia metal spoon get to be a *smash feeder* – and was Britannia metal so called because it was good for making false coinage that bore the figure of Britannia? Back slang such as *korp* for "pork" – "Yum, yum, pig's bum!" – yields up its secret rather quickly, but it takes more time to see that *Mud Salad* is really Covent Garden and plenty of research to discover that the reason the jail made world-famous by Oscar Wilde's *Ballad of Reading Gaol* was called *The Biscuit Factory* was that it was next to a Huntley & Palmer factory. The nation that altered *athanasia* to *tansy* and *pyramid* to *pediment*, *chère reine* cross to "Chining Cross" and *gordelpus* (God help us – who knows what?) into "Piccadilly", in other fields can be counted upon to be imaginative and unpredictable in its names for food and drink.

A correspondent, Mr. Tony Kirby, of Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire, has sent me a list of English names that raises as many questions as it answers. Are *gobbets of beef* related to "gobs" (in which case they would be small pieces) or do they suggest *gob-box* or *gob* ("mouth" – "Shut your gob" is an Irish expression for "Be silent")? Mr. Kirby says *melting moments* are "cookies, in your lingo" – but the reference books speak of ardent passion and coition between fat men and women. He uses *dabs* for fish in general, but dabs are properly only *Pleuronectes limanda*, resembling the flounder. He says *blueberry grunt* is a "Canadian pudding" – but Canadian correspondents say it is an English *canard*. He identifies *brawn* as head-cheese, but the dictionary says it should be made of boar's meat only. He distinguishes three kinds of bread: distinguished, plait, and pulled – but the British Information Service in New York has never heard of such things. He spells *cocky-leeky* (a cock boiled with leeks) *cock-a-leekie*, as do many British menus. (The English can be said to have no word for "menu." They call it by the French word or term it a "bill of fare," which is a list of prices, not a description of food. This tells us something about the people, as does the fact that the French have no word for "home.")

Mr. Kirby sent me in vain to the dictionary for *cabinet pudding*, which I have indeed seen on menus but have never been moved to order. Does it resemble *cottage pudding*, stale cake "enlivened" by a sauce? The dictionaries have also no knowledge of *doodle cake*, *patriotic cake* (some wartime austerity?), *pankail*, and *lamingtons*

(sponge cake). He lists "caragheen" (*Carrageen* or *Carragheen*), a sort of blancmange made from the jelly of *Chrondus crispus*, a seaweed incorrectly called "Irish moss," only a little more appetizing than *fish eyes in glue* (tapioca, at Charterhouse school *cod's eyes in bath-water*) and other white *puds* (puddings). He reminds me of *cardoons* (*Cynara cardunculus*) but cannot explain why the English use the French word for egg plant. He sent me to a Welsh dictionary to discover the origin of *flummery* – it's *llymru*, wheatmeal and oatmeal coagulated – but confuses me by calling it *Dutch flummery* (which is made of milk, flour, eggs, etc.). He writes "*girdle* scones, the English do not say *griddle*," and goes on to list *sly cakes*, which I cannot identify, and *maids of honour*, tea-cakes which have given their name to a chain of ladies' tea-shoppes. (The Irish actor Milo O'Shea, appearing in New York in *The Staircase*, a British play which makes mention of one of these shoppes, explained in a radio interview that the nearest thing to them in America are Schrafft's.) Mr. Kirby does not distinguish between *marbled rabbit* and *jugged hare* and does not known that *epigrammes* (small cutlets) are more than two centuries old. His *pinnicky pawnee*, for drinking water, we can trace to *penee ka panee* (Hindi) if we take a *dekko* (from *dekho*, glance) at a *pukka* (excellent) Anglo-Indian dictionary (where *rootie* or *rooti*, the beggar's word for bread, also originates). But we must be thankful for such correspondents, and Mr. Kirby is no humbug (a word which also designates a kind of candy).

He, and many another Englishman, can tell you the receipt (recipe) for *Pig's pettitoes* or *raspberry kissel*, *Lardy John* or *Soused Herring*, any kind of Cockney *sengwich* or *Hotch-Potch* (not "hodge-podge"). They know the slang of the theatre (*kidney punch* = lunch) and the complicated speech of Cockneys (*to do a thick 'un* = a dirty trick, but *a thick 'un* = a slice of bread), the old expressions (a clerk's luncheon used to be "air pie and a walk around"), and the fast-dying customs of yore (like *bulling the tea*: putting soda in it to strengthen it). The British make a butt of the fat boy (often "*Billy Bunter*" after a character in boy's stories)[24] and since Elizabethan times or earlier have had the expression *greedy guts*, but

[24] Frank Richards wrote of boys at "Greyfriars' School." See George Orwell's essay on "Boys' Weeklies" which first appeared in *Horizon* 3 (March, 1940) and was collected in *Inside the Whale* (1940), *Critical Essays* (1946), and the Penguin

their habit of stopping for tea – a government bureaucrat once posted a request that his staff take a "work break" in the mornings – and of eating at frequent intervals, *odtaa* (one damned thing after another, from John Masefield's novel of that title, 1926), has been much remarked by visitors. The old tradition of the hearty harvesters which Andrew Haggard described in 1847 has, however, disappeared: they had, in addition to their three square meals a day, snacks called *the dew bit*, *elevenses*, *fourses*, and *the morn bit*. Of these, in devaluated and demoralized Britain, only *elevenses* remain and as for the cooking, it's a nation (as the expression goes) where "they can't cook hot water for a barber."

England is the land of *pig in a poke* (sausage roll) and a *draw* (drink) of *bottled sunshine* (beer) for lunch and *turn it up at that* (that's all), some say. But she remembers the old *Welsh rabbit* (actually a "rare bit"), the *Bombay duck* (a fish called *bummalo*) and the *Bombay oyster* (no more an oyster than the American's *Rocky Mountain oyster*, the *Bombay oyster* is a double dose of castor oil in a glass of milk). *Pudding* might be a piece of pie, or cheese.

To an Englishman *faggotts* are rissole potatoes and *toads* bits of toast put into beer (originated at Winchester College in the nineteenth century; the idea sounds *puce* – which is somewhere between bloody and putrid!). *Toad in the hole* is a meat dish (as well as a name for an advertising sandwich board) and *spots on burnt* an all-too-often-accurate description of two poached eggs on toast. (Americans have called this *Mae West on a raft*, while anyone who has been "in service" – which in Britain means employed as a servant, but in America means having served in what used to be called "the armed forces" – recalls other combinations like *shit on a shingle*, creamed chipped beef on toast.)[25] *Bubble and squeak*, which most visitors to England have heard if they have dined dangerously (as opposed to limiting themselves to Indian, Chinese, and other

Selected Essays of George Orwell (1957). Here is all the lore of the schoolboy's *tuck shop* and *bun-feed*.

[25] Warning: there will be more "taboo" words in later paragraphs. "My rule," as Eric Partridge said and I echo, "in the matter of unpleasant terms, has been to deal with them as briefly, as astringently, as sceptically as was consistent with clarity and adequacy; in a few instances I had to force myself to overcome an instinctive repugnance; for these I ask the indulgence of my readers." There will always be those who say *bull shit* instead of *applesauce*. As Archie used to say on the radio program "Duffy's Tavern," – "Leave us face it."

foreign cuisines), is cold meat fried with potatoes and greens, or (if one is especially unlucky) that particularly distasteful English cabbage (often called *garbage*). This horrifying dish seems to be named for the sound it makes while cooking – or in the stomach after eating. Wash it down with a *B and B* (Bitter and Burton).

Treacle scones can be either edible or a children's game. Similarly tricky are those foods which can go by many names. *Roly-poly* pudding will suffice as one example here. Most persons who have spent any time in England will have encountered it at least once, generally as the glum culmination of a cheap meal that began inauspiciously with a watery *mulligatawny* (Tamil for "pepper-water") soup. (An alternate ending is pie with a watery custard, resembling *up-chucking* or vomit, which children call *old man's dung, baby's barf* – compare our *barf on a board*[26] variation of *shit on a shingle* – or even *come*, suggesting sexual orgasm.)

Roly-poly pudding was mentioned by Thackeray and in latter days has been called *dog in a blanket* or *bolster pudding* (from its shape, which George Eliot called "a roll up," for it can resemble what Americans call a *jelly roll* and what Scots term a *jam roll*). With currants in it it becomes *bugs in the bolster, spotted dick, spotted dog*, even *plum duff*, because the word "dough" has changed to both *dog* and *duff*.[27] I have even heard *spotted dick* called *Moby Dick*, though this reference to American literature cannot, surely, be widespread. To an English working chap *Moby Dick* is more likely to suggest venereal disease than last century's fiction, for *dick* means "male member" to millions who never heard of Melville.

Spotted dick is also used for a kind of sausage (or *girl and boy*, saveloy) in the Army and refers, of course, to the spots. Another meaning of *spotted*, that of "suspected," came into English about 1864 and is still to be heard in the Army name for *tinned* (Americans would say "canned") *beef*: soldiers call it *spotted mystery*. It is almost as famous a *tinned* ration as *armoured cow* (canned milk).

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[26] This American onomatopoetic term for regurgitating, I think from the comic papers, is rather striking. Some may find such expressions more *sick-making* than the vulgar or obscene ones. "*What you lose on the swings, you make up on the roundabouts.*"

[27] "Once or twice a week Dana and his shipmates received a pudding-like 'duff' made of flour, water and molasses with plum added for Christmas." —Brunvand *loc. cit.*

The *spotted dick*, though, is usually a *sweet*, and the Opies tell us that it is called *tiggy pudding* in Cornwall and, when topped with custard, is described by *tother* (non-Public School) children as covered with *green sling*. When the topping is warm treacle, it's *squeezed cow giblets*. One can see that school children can be vulgar without being *effing and blinding* (obscene). *Spotted leopard* is their kindest name for *roly-poly*.

We have lingered long on food and we must turn *directly minute* (without ado) to a cursory examination of a natural concomitant of food – that is, drink. When the Britisher *puts his snout in the trough* (goes "pub-crawling") and winds up *harry-flakers* (half-drunk), *tostificated* (inebriated), or worse, he may call his drink *lunatic soup*, *Africa Speaks* (strong liquor from South Africa), *stagger juice*, *king kong* (if it makes him act like the giant gorilla in the old Fay Wray film), *plonk* (inferior Italian brandy), *steam*, *red ned* (cheap muscatel), *sheepwash*, *tiger's milk*, or by hundreds of other names, depending on his class, his location, his drinking habits, and his degree of sobriety. It is incredible how many names he has for beer alone, the staple of his *pubs* (public houses). Stout is *In and Out*.

America may have more, and more colorfully-named, cocktails: *Maiden's Prayer*, *Lamb's Wool* (said to be a corruption of *al maes abhal*), *French "75,"* the *Sidecar*, the *Stinger*, and all the rest, including the non-alcoholic *Shirley Temple*. But the British are at least equally well supplied with spiritous liquors, spend more time in *pubs* than Americans do in bars, and have displayed plenty of onomastic skill ever since the olden times in which ale was called *English*, beer *Dutch*, sack *Spanish*, bastard (a sweet Spanish wine) *Italian*, rhenish wine *Grecian*, whisky (*usquebagh*, the water of life, compare *aquavit*) *Irish*, metheglin *Welsh*, alicante *Latin*, muscatel *Greek*, and hippocras (named from the fact that it was filtered through a sleeve whose invention was attributed to Hippocrates) *Hebrew*.

Those who don't want a *horse's meal* (food without drink) will find Britain hospitable, though those who want a drink without a meal may encounter *Tom Drum's entertainment* (a rough time, Shakespeare called it *John Drum's entertainment*) with the extremely odd opening and closing hours of *pubs*. The only rule seems to be, as one Londoner told me who boasted that he could drink almost around the clock by rushing from one sector of London to another

at carefully plotted times, that "the cry of 'Time, gentlemen, please' is always as close to you as God's curse to a whore's ass." Should you make a visit to a *pub*, you will need to know what to order at the *clinic* (the place where "just what the doctor ordered" is provided). *Half and half* (half *mild* and half *bitter* ale) will not puzzle a foreigner, but he might be surprised to hear a *Geordie* from Durham ask for a *my goodness* (a Guiness).[28] The American *boiler-maker* is a jigger of whisky in a glass of beer; the British *boiler-maker* is half draught mild, half bottled brown ale, while liquor and beer mixed is a *dog's nose* (gin and beer) or some other concoction. (Beer and ginger-beer mixed is well-known as *shandygaff*.) An eighteenth-century drink still heard of is *hot flannel* (gin and beer heated with sugar and nutmeg). *Huckle-my-buff* is beer, egg, and brandy. Another very old favorite is *rum gut[t]lers*, which contains no rum, only canary wine. Anyone would know what *port and lemon* was, but a non-Cockney would hardly recognize that a *didn't ought* was a glass of plain port. (It's rhyming slang again, of course, but the trick is that "ought" is pronounced "ort.") Those who have been on "The Continent" – as if there were only one! – might ask an English *landlord* (*publican*, pubkeeper) or *Rosie* (the barmaid) for *café avec*. When *café* is pronounced "kaff" (as it commonly is when referring to a small restaurant) the phrase is more puzzling still, and the *du rhum* is to be understood. The French are lucky not to have suffered more from the nation that made *shaloon* out of *Chalon*, *van rooge* out of *vin rouge*, *swarry* out of *soirée*, *Sidney* out of *St.-Denis*, *Beecham* out of *Beauchamps*, *Buckley* out of *Beauclerc*, and so on.[29] They are luckier than other foreigners: witness the Victorian farewell in Clerkenwell which was spelled as pronounced, *boner nochey*.

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[28] The advertisement "My goodness, my Guiness!" later changed to "Guiness is good for you." When a member of parliament attacked the slogan, Lord Iveagh (of the brewing family) is said to have made the shortest maiden speech in Lords: "Guiness *IS* good for you!" The slogan impressed itself on the British mind almost as deeply as did those "adverts" for Pear's Soap and Bovril and the recent *Drinka Pinta Milka Day*. Draught Guiness is *Diesel*, *soup*, or *Streptomycin*.

[29] See my "French Surnames and the English" in *Names*, XI (1963), 177–181, and my article "They're Borrowing Our Language" in *Pageant*, XX, No. 16 (Dec., 1964), 141, for what dozens of other nations are doing with English. (*Jonrón*, a Spanish term in *beisbol*, is only one example, *pikku nikku*, the Japanese for "picnic," another.)

The beatniks have recently contributed *spodiodi* (cheap port mixed with whisky), a concoction which outclasses the martini in certain circles.[30] The British have never wholly adopted the *Martini* (which properly should contain some of the vermouth produced by the firm of Martini and Rossi), so popular in America. In the 'Twenties and later the smart set of Mayfair said *Gin and It*, and used *It*alian vermouth. Today, as *It* is present in ever-diminishing quantities – vermouth being sprayed over a beaker of gin from an atomizer or otherwise elaborately added in miniscule quantities, lemon peel being refused with scornful remarks such as "If I wanted lemonade, I'd ask for it" – the martini is rapidly approaching *Mother's ruin* (straight gin).[31] This is true of the Americanized Englishmen and the "international set." The True-born Englishman is more liable to offer you a warm martini with one part of vermouth to two parts of gin. Naval persons tend to drink *pink gin.* Most Americans eschew the British martini and would sooner drink *sour dook* (Scottish for buttermilk) than gin at room temperature, even the room temperature of those British homes proudly lacking central heating.

Not to be found in a British *pub* is *Domain cocktail*, any more than a *Molotov cocktail* is to be expected in an American "lounge,"

[30] It has been suggested that this term *spodiodi* comes from the Italian *asti spumanti*. *Sploudy* (excited)-*loudy* is equally unlikely. It may have been created just for the sound.

[31] You will not recognize the standard recipe for a martini: 1 part gin, 1 part Italian vermouth, 2 dashes of orange bitters, add pickled onion, twist lemon peel over the glass, and serve. Most people today mix five or six parts of gin to one of the dryest (French) vermouth obtainable, stir with a great deal of ice — there is a theory that shaking "bruises" the gin, part of what Mencken would call the *American Credo* — and serve with an olive or a twist of lemon peel. As with all serious drinking, the martini is surrounded by folklore: the bartender who makes them so dry "you can blow dust off the top," the man who turns the label of the vermouth bottle (briefly) *toward* the gin, the man who calls his martini (a "Gibson") a "deep-dish onion pie," the woman who drinks them only because she "loves olives," the man who freezes gin (how do you freeze gin?) in the ice-cube tray and has instant martinis on hand (well, nearly instant — the ice has to be allowed to melt a little, but the drink never gets "watery"), and the man who always orders two in a bar and only drinks the second ("I can never stand the taste of the first one"). There is an article on this material every year or less, but never a good book, and meanwhile no one has even come up with a convincing explanation of the origin of *cocktail.* There is a lot of research to be done here — and all of the expenses involved are tax-deductible if you publish!

though in one recipe their contents are rather similar. Named for the Sydney Domain (Australia) where the *Domain dossers* (deadbeats) favor it, the *Domain cocktail* can be made of *petrol* (gasoline) and pepper or methylated spirits ("denatured alcohol") mixed with *boot polish* (shoe polish) and Flytex (our DDT). Another kind of *Molotov cocktail* is a home-made gasoline and alcohol bomb, as used by the Russians against the Nazi invaders in World War II and in American street riots in Watts, Newark, etc.

Visitors to pubs may legitimately ask "What is it?" when they see or hear the name of some strange punch or cocktail, as they do at home, but, *me old Tosh* (friend), if your *China* (pal) doesn't know either, use your *conk* (nose) and *pies* (eyes), determine if it *pongs* ("smells 'orrid"), and perhaps take a *flyer* (chance) on *a lot of how's your father* (whatever it is). You can always point and demand an *oojamiconk* (that there) or *diddlybush* (thingamajig). Or make up a name! In *boozers* where the dart players call 13 "*Dick Turpin*" (after the highwayman) and use *queer dicky birds* (odd words) as they smoke the *dimps* ("fag-ends," butts) of their *do-me-goods* (Woodbine cigarettes, a cheap brand), your ingenuity will be appreciated. Just thank your stars if you are not put in the position of the Quaker (member of the Society of Friends, who originally were mocked for quaking in fear of the Lord) in *The Quaker's Opera* (1728). He tried to ask questions in an eighteenth-century pub and received this genial response:

> Sir, you may have what you please, Wind or right Nanty or South-Sea, or Cock-my-Cap, or Kill-Grief, or Comfort, or White Tape, or Poverty, or Bunter's Tea, or Apricock-Water, or Roll-me-in-the-Kennel, or Diddle or Meat-Drink-Washing-and-Lodging, or Kill Cobler, or in plain English, Geneva [gin].

Pubs no longer advertise "Drunk for a Penny. Dead drunk for Tuppence" and simple tests, administered by the *bobbies*, *Peelers*, *blues*, etc., for the alcoholic content of drivers are beginning to take the fun out of getting *spifficated*. Even what the Cockney would call their *normanclature* has grown less interesting with the years in the *saloon bars* and public houses, though many a *brown* (copper) continues to go for a share of the *brown cow* (barrel of beer).

Also, Britain has turned more to Americanisms – though experts can still publish books on the differences between the two languages

on either side of the Atlantic – and her slang, much influenced by ours of late, sounds less strange to us than it used to (or used to do, as an Englishman would say). But enough difficulties remain in British names for food and drink from the days before Sir Winston Churchill came along to preside, unwillingly, over "the dissolution of the British Empire." The "empire" became a "Commonwealth" and then largely a memory; the English no longer hold dominion (as Rudyard – named for an English lake – Kipling, their bard of empire wrote) "over palm and pine." Nor do they administer now the "empire on which the sun never set." But some of us still remember how much red or pink there was on the maps of our youth. Britain's sons went forth to conquer and govern, to exploit and to educate a great deal of the globe and returned with the tastes and tongues of other peoples. They not only prefer the French *aubergine and courgette.* The "fiery spirits" of their Navy call brandy *argadente,* from the Spanish *agua ardiente,*[32] and a teetotaller is an *abdar,* from the Hindi for "water-carrier." A leg of lamb has become a *jigot* (*gigot* in French) of mutton and a *jimbugg* is a sheep (from *jumpbuck* or *jumbuck,* which Partridge suggests is *pidgin,* i.e. business, English for "a white mist, the only thing with which a flock of sheep could be compared" in the language of the Australian aborigines). Some colonial expressions are *as dead as a moa* (an extinct bird of New Zealand), just as a *sexton* (for cake, after the character Sexton Blake) is no longer understood with the passage of time, but some remain and have been incorporated into the vocabularies of many who have never been *East of Suez.* Only a few old "Africa hands" call water *mainga* now (from the Zulu *amanzi* or *manzi* ?) but many words picked up in the *woggeries* of the world are still used at British tables.[33] For every puzzler such as *culch* (meat scraps, from the native South East and South West dialectic

[32] "American mountain men corrupted *agua ardiente* in the southwest too," writes Professor Brunvand in a letter. "Frequently spoken of in Garrard's *Wah-To-Yah* (1850) as *agwerdenty.*" The question can be pursued in indispensible reference books like H. L. Mencken's *The American Language* and supplements and M. M. Matthews' *A Dictionary of Americanisms,* Craigie and Hulbert's *Dictionary of American English* (1938–1944), and later books.

[33] C. Pettman's *Africanderisms* (1913) was a pioneering study. J. L. Hunt and A. J. Pringle's *Service Slang* (1943) and other books record the language of the troops *in partibus infidelibus* among "the blacks," "the *wogs* ("*W*esternized *O*riental *G*entlemen"), and others.

culsch) one hears several Indian or equally exotic names for food which baffle the ordinary English speaker. "What do they know of England," asked Kipling, "Who only England know?"

Moreover, one has to understand what the British do to words,[34] not only know where they get them, for by the time a Cockney, for instance, gets through with a foreign word, even its own mother tongue wouldn't recognize it. *'Arry's gaters* may sound English now (we think of a clergyman's gaiters), but it came to London in 1943 from Japan, where *arrigato* means "thank you." Half English and half foreign were many of the children – and the words, too. Take for example *muttongosht*, a really Anglo-Indian word one might hear at a *burra khana* (banquet) of Retired Colonels, relics of the *raj* (rule) in India. How is it related to *fish-fosh* and *meat fosh*? A *gin coaster* (pink gin and soda) takes us back to the British in West Africa. The influences that made a pudding *splodge* and a Cornish pastry *tatie oggy*, that put *wee-wee* and *piddle* together to make *widdle*, that made servicemen call a newspaper *Screws of the World*, that made a prostitute *dead meat*, that made a willing girl *on for a tater* (perhaps from *tête-à-tête*) and a new recruit a *gherkin* (for his greenness?), are neither easy to grasp nor *choota* (unimportant). Yet those who have to undertake to discover that the butler at Felstead School in the late 'Forties was named Ling' (whence the punning *Underling* for an under-butler in schoolboys' slang) should not be stopped by *bevie casey*, the Londoner's name for a pub, or pork or bacon called *cozza*.[35]

[34] J. R. Ware's *Passing English* (1909) is one of the better books, with more explanation than is found in Barrère and Leland's *Dictionary of Slang, Jargon, and Cant* (1889–1890). What is needed are fewer lists and dictionaries, more systematic studies and stimulating articles that will form theories or arouse interest in research.

[35] *Bevie casey* is from "bev[erage] *casa*," the latter word being Spanish for house (public house here). *Cozzer* is what Jewish barrow boys call a policeman (and sometimes a *nark* or police informer). That is a real *mandozy* word (a telling hit) – and that term I derive from the last century, when it was popular because of the noted Jewish pugilist Daniel Mendoza (1764–1836). He ran an inn in Whitechapel in the nineteenth century and gave his name for a term of approval in common use. The names of *pubs* themselves, the old Bull and Bush (popularized in a music hall song by von Tilzer, Sterling, and Krone called "Down by the Old Bull and Bush," sung by Florrie Forde, 1876–1940), the Rose and Crown, the Crown and Anchor (but *crown and feathers* is the female genitals), the Star and Garter (spoonerized into the *Gar and Starter*) and all the rest, have had some useful and entertaining studies done on them already. The nation that made a doctor a *crocus* ("croak us") and picked up

The famous Cairo confectioners Groppi gave their name unofficially to a World War II medal: the Africa Star, for service in that theatre of war, was widely known as *The Groppi Gong* in the Eighth Army after 1943. The First Army called the same decoration the *Naffy Medal* after a sort of USO service organization known by the initials N.A.A.F.I.[36]

Whether in the *Naffy* or the *pub*, the British have "muddled through" gloriously in name-making for the activities, occupants, and products of the *boozing kens*, for they have always passed up *Adam's ale* (water) in favor of *voting for the alderman* (taking a drink, an expression which recalls the alcoholic bribes of old parliamentary elections as well). They delight in *knocking back a few* before the *A.B.F.* ("absolutely bloody final" drink). Some sip and some *take the Colonel's cure* (down it in a gulp) and ask the *curate* (an ironic name for a bartender, as James Joyce showed us in *Dubliners*, 1914) for another. Some drink *day and night* (which does not mean "continuously" but "light ale," the rhyming slang operating on "light"). Some *daffy it* (drink gin). Some merely *hang about* (Americans would say "hang around") hoping to be asked to *belly up to the bar* (accept a free drink) by some *mockered up toff* (well-dressed gentleman) inclined to *decorate the mahogany* (put money on the bar), doing *a moan on* for sympathy and getting *dehydrated* (thirstier) every minute. With a *don't mind of I do* or the philosophical observation that *a little of what you fancy does you*

mungaria (for "food" in North Africa) and *mzuri* ("O.K.," from the Burmese) has *played the cat and banjo* with *pub* names. A famous example is the common *pub* sign and name of *Elephant and Castle*, now officially designating a whole section of London, derived from the title of a Spanish princess who became involved with English royalty: the *Infanta of Castille*. I am now preparing a full study of London *pub* names.

[36] As an adjective *naffy* means "*N*o *a*im, *a*mbition, or *f*ucking *i*nitiative" and is in the tradition of *snafu* (a *ballocksed up* situation, "*s*ituation *n*ormal, *a*ll *f*ucked *u*p") and *comfu* ("*c*omplete *m*ilitary *f*uck *u*p"), words often used by persons unaware of their backgrounds. Similarly, *Sweet Fanny Adams* (formerly *sweet fuck all*, nothing) and "*in the words of the Chinese poet*," the "poet" being "*Ah Shit*," not to mention the Army motto of World War II *imbars bidbib* (*I may be a rotten sod, but I don't believe in bullshit*). Some British names for food and drink have had to be eliminated from our discussion here because they are equally or more indelicate. The lower clases of Britain and her colonies have often been great artists in names and, as H. L. Mencken observed in *Prejudices*, "The great artists of the world are never Puritans, and seldom even ordinarily respectable."

good they then might order *demon vino* or *plonk* (cheap Italian wine or brandy, the first obviously based on the Temperance Movement's "Demon Rum") and *do a Gaynor* (smile through their tears).[37] A lady might accept a small port ("Any port in a storm, dearie") or, if she knows theatrical parlance, a *Derry-Down-Derry* (sherry). An Australian willing to assist a Scot to get *greetin' fu'* (crying drunk technically, but just plain drunk in many people's usage) might put a *scrieve* (banknote – we'd say "bill" – from the Italian *scrivere*) on the bar for a *Yankee particular* (Yankees would say a "shot of whisky") or a *wampo* (from a Scottish word meaning to wave the arms about). Those *doing a perish* (almost dying) for a *draw* of beer or a drink might seize the occasion for *a dirty night at sea* (nocturnal binge) and end up *passing in their dinner pails* (dying, or, occasionally, only passing out) or with *diddleums* (*delerium tremens*).

In any case, most of the people getting *canned* (Americans say "tanked up") in *The Local* (*pub*) will agree with the Australian who says it is *a good place to tie up a dog*. Spending some time and a *tosheroon* (pound) or two, or even a few *bob* (shillings), is a pleasant way to do research. If one listens carefully to the *carry-on*, some *Brummy* from Birmingham or some *Applecheek* from Somerset or some Londoner from *The Smoke* may *go the guntz* (after the Yiddish) and tell you all about the language of the people and how it works. So go have a *tumble* ("tumble down the sink" = drink).

The word "vulgar" is not accidentally associated with the common people. ("God must have *hated* the common people," one *refeened* English lady replied in answer to me quoting at her one of the remarks most often attributed to our Abraham Lincoln. "He made them so terribly *common*.") One has to be prepared to hear porter or beer called *droppings* (from their dark color) and the expression "*I could shit through the eye of a needle*" on the morning after. A low and disrepectful answer to a question about contents or ingredients may get you a reply like "*shit and sugar mixed*." If this kind of language bothers you, then the editor was wrong in encouraging me to take out my mentions of "unmentionable words" and put in the words themselves – and you might be uncomfortably shocked while drinking your *apple fritter* (bitter) in the *battle*

[37] After the actress-singer Janet Gaynor.

cruiser ("boozer," ordinary *pub*).[38] You had better stay with the prim books which discuss how *sangría* was naturalized into *sangaree* or how how *barbatoge* was developed out of *Barbadoes.*[39] *Hooting pudding* (in which the raisins are so far apart they have to yell to hail each other) is amusing; *cowyard cake* and *d.f.m.* ("dog-fucked mutton") and even the tots' names for *dog vomit* (bad food) can be *werry wulgar*, as one Londoner warned me. But we have to *challik it oop* (put in to their credit, in the dialect of Nottinghamshire) to the folk in the locals in London and "The Provinces," whether Elizabethan *roarers* or modern *yobbos*; for all their *jank* (impudence) and *shice* (not nice) vulgarity, the people, albeit *disgustigatingly* vulgar at times, have a living, lively language of their own. If you show a keen interest in it they will *swallow a sovereign and shit silver for you* to be obliging. Especially if they are sure they won't outrage your sensibilities! Have a *pint* or a *Rosie Lee* (cup of tea) with them, whether they be in *tats* (rags) or *roast-meat clothes* (our "Sunday best"), and listen. If they don't think you are *risy* (that they can get a "rise" out of you), you can listen, learn, and have a *pennorth of paradise* (gin) with them on friendly terms.

"Any more for any more?" There's some *lovely grub* (good information, *gen*) about the Navy *chuff*,[40] for instance. Since space is limited, let's learn just one special *lingo*, the language of the *custard bosuns* (warrant cooks) and *slushies* (cooks), and *Jack Dusties* (stores assistants), the *darts* (Dartmouth-trained officers) and common *dab-tees* (seamen), the *banana balancers* (officers' stewards) and *Jagos* (victualling paymasters) and *demon chandlers* (suppliers) of the Royal Navy.

[38] Not everything is rhyming slang, as one might begin to think after a while, but some things that do not appear to be rhyming slang are, which causes trouble. Example: a *Bath bun* = a son, though there is a *Bath bun* too, a large fruit bun with a sugared top named for the *spa* (low-class *spaw*) in the West of England.

[39] *Barbatoge* (champagne, brandy, and Curaçao) a *pick-me-up* for *the morning after the night before*, is presumably from *Barbadoes*, itself derived from the Portuguese *las barbadas*, descriptive of the Indian fig-growers there. (In slang, a *fig* is an indecent gesture.)

[40] *Chow* (Chinese for "food") > *chough* > *chuff*, just as *dough* > *duff* (as in *plum duff*). *Duff* is also a tin out of which pudding is eaten and a useful verb meaning "to ruin" (from the Royal Air Force *duff* weather, "unsuitable for flying") and "to get pregnant," whether from the idea of "ruin" or from *duffer*, "a clumsy fellow." It may also have some vague connection with to *duffer out* ("become unproductive," like a mine) and with *duffle bag* (from Duffel, near Antwerp, where the cloth was made) through the expression "*get stuffed.*"

The *scran* (naval food) in the *cookery nooks* (galleys) and on the *beef-chits* (wardroom menus) of the R. N. has many colorful names. *Back ducks* are pieces of fried bread, named for their impermeability. *Ballock drill* is custard with rhubarb. *Pusserpock* is purser's pork. A *banger* (as on land) is a sausage, but in the Navy it often appears *in red lead* (in tomato sauce). *Jack Sprat* is fat, *Jack the Ripper* a kipper, *Jack Tar* a bar or a common sailor (Americans are *Jackies*), *Jack Nasty* an ugly fellow, *Jack Shilloo* a braggart, *Jack the Painter* strong tea, and *cut the painter* (rope) is to depart without ceremony (or warning). Over in the *Cad's Corner* (junior officers' section of the wardroom or the public bar) when they decide to *exercise P. U.* (drink) and everyone is feeling *inboard* (safe) and comfortable there are frequent calls for *black varnish* (canteen stout) and cries of *board you!* ("pass the bottle") or orders for *brown food* (beer).[41] "*Chugarow!*", cries someone ("Shut up, chuck your row, *stow it*!") On British ships there are daily rations of *grog* and many are the *gripes* should *deep-sea tots* (short measures, supposedly caused by the sudden roll of the ship) or *cap-tally drinks*[42] be served.

The Navy uses a lot of *conner* (canned food, "in tins"). This has nothing to do with cans, of course, but is derived from the name of the firm (Maconachie) which has, since World War I, supplied "tinned" *glue* (stew), etc. This is but one example of how one might be easily misled. *Bug-rum*, for example, is not drinking rum at all but *bay rum* (originally from the bayberry tree) confused in naval parlance with *bug-run* (the part in the hair). Any *jackdaw* (acquisitive person) of naval slang knows that, but one who knew no *limeys* (English sailors, from the use of lime juice to ward off scurvy) might *bind you rigid* with some wrong *rig* of a theory about *bug-rum* that *couldn't knock the skin off rice pudding* (often known as *slosh*)[43].

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[41] Eric Partridge adds bitterly "Ex colour and (former) substantiality of beer," *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* and *The Supplement* (two volumes in one, 1961), p. 1016, a book to which we all must be grateful.

[42] Ashore these are called *collar-band pints*, not filled to the top. The *cap-tally* of a British sailor bears the name of his ship (sometimes called his *H. M. S. — h.s.* is sexual "hot stuff").

[43] Among the *ratings* of the lower deck beer is *sloosh* (because it "slooshes around" in the mug?). Some scholars suggest *sluice*. *Slewed* means "tipsy." Certainty is *Q.B.I.* ("*Q*uite *b*loody *i*mpossible") here.

An R. N. menu might feature *cosh-me-gosh* (sliced beef and vegetables – Hindi influence here?) or *Dalmatian pudding* (the naval version of *spotted dog*, here named after the black-and-white Dalmatian dogs we used to associate in America with firehouse companies), *deep-sea beef* (haddock) or *Digby duck* (herring – after Digby, Nova Scotia?). The *dooser* (*deucer*, second steward) or his assistant (traditionally a *duck-fucker*) might operate the *electric cow* (a machine for making "milk" from milk powder). The *salt-beef flag* (Blue Peter, in anticipation of the diet) might be hoisted by the *nip-cheese* (a clever name for the miserly purser).[44]

The ship's canteen is generally called the *pig and whistle* (which is the name of a food chain in America and in England a popular inn sign)[45] on the *sanakatowzer* (big, a word coined in Bulawayo) and *dinky* (small) ships of the fleet. There the sailors can have a *tea boat* (their equivalent of the Cockney's *cuppa*) or, if they are among those who *draw* (collect their daily ration of *grog*), a *tot* (drink). The language is a little rougher, perhaps, but no less colorful than the cries of the mess, such as "*Any gash clacker leafing?*" ("Any more pie available?")

As one should expect, not all naval items that sound like food or drink are so. A *one-gun salute* (court-martial in the Navy) to him who is not careful! *Nova Scotia soda* is not a drink; it is sand and canvas supplied (in lieu of soda) for cleaning paintwork. A *macaroon* is a new recruit (because he "takes the biscuit," Americans would say "the cake" if they remember our cake-walks, for freshness). *Navy cake* and *chutney* are what American *gobs* would call "scuttlebutt" (gossip or rumor). *Crab* is a verb (complain), a noun (a junior midshipman), or an adjective (perverse). In a language where *dish up* means to "wash up" and not to "dish out," we must be cautious.

[44] With the purser are associated a number of short measures (*purser's candle*, *purser's dirk* or *dagger*, *purser's grind*, a method of *knee-trembling*, or coition, calculated to make up for equipment of insufficient size) but to *be pusser* (and *purser* often appears as *pusser*) is to be ship-shape, *pusser-built* means "thorough-going" (often used in place of *bloody*), and a *pusser ship* is *spanking neat*, very trim.

[45] I believe I can solve the puzzle of this often-heard name. Before the 1880's, the 71st Light Infantry had a badge of an elephant and a hunting horn which they called the *Pig and Whistle*. Perhaps some connection was intended, too, with the fact that in Scotland to go to *pigs and whistles* means "to go to pieces." The 71st was a Scottish regiment. I have heard another guess based on the story of the meat-packer who contrived to use "all of the pig but the whisle," but I think my conjecture has less *cow confetti* in it.

We would not like to get too *Rolls Royce* (fancy) in our theories and be *puff-balled.*[46]

The British tar is no more a "soaring soul" than his countrymen in general, however, when it comes to clever names for food and drink, nor is his speech more *salty* than theirs. A nation with the Cockney's rhyming slang and the coster's backwards slang and the schoolboy's vivid imagination is going, on the whole, to do better than calling a Fleet Class minesweeper *Smokey Joe* (because it burned coal). It will notice that a man with bags under his eyes is a *commercial traveller.* Its street urchins will shout "*Beaver!*" at a bearded man and greet anyone wearing a top hat with cries of "Come out from under that, I can't see yer feet!" It will do more than borrow the American *sunny side up* description of fried eggs. It noticed that mid-Victorian bread and cheese tasted like *putty and soap* and will *take a dim view* of modern descriptions that lack the vigor and vulgarity of Elizabethan underworld slang ("the leud, lousey language of these lewtering luskes and lazy lorels," as Thomas Harman described it in *A Caveat or Warening for Commen Cursetors,* 1587). British slang of today, it has often been lamented, lacks the inventiveness of the American, the genius that created *rubber-neck* ("one of the best words ever coined," testified Scottish professor J. Y. P. Grieg). Where, ask the British, are the island's equivalents of *bossy in a bowl* (the American hash-house waiter's "beef stew"), or *whistleberries* (beans), or *a pair of drawers* (two cups of coffee), or *Arizona* (buttermilk, presumably from its healthfulness – "Why should I live in Arizona?" asks a character in a recent off-Broadway play by the prolific Tom Eyen. "I don't have asthma")? As the Japanese have picked up *aisukurîmu* (ice cream) and the Hungarians *ai donker* ("I don't care") from the Americans, so the British have Americanized their language, especially with the more colorful bits of slang.

But English English is not only, as Maury said, "the most difficult, arbitrary and careful of all languages," it is also among the most magpie-like, and it constantly picks up both colored pebbles

[46] Partridge, *op. cit.*, p. 665: "In the 1890's, John Masefield tells us in his history (1933) of the *Conway* Training Ship, 'large cakes of soft bread were moulded at tea-time to the size and similitude of dumplings and then thrust down the victim's neck between his shirt and his skin': a mess's punishment of an 'impossible' member." What other instances are there in folklore of the use of food and/or drink for punishment?

and pure gems from other speech. Britain's people may or may not be, as Voltaire alleged, froth at the top and dregs at the bottom, but her wits have an inventiveness and, more especially, her lowest classes a verve. They have noticed, for example, that a turkey's plump breast, decorated as it is in England with link sausages, looks like the badge of office on a fat belly, an *alderman in chains*. They greet anyone who *barges in* on a conversation with "*Who pulled your chain?*" They will describe a meal at the Army and Navy club as "a rag and famish affair." Soda water they will call *sober water* and speak of turning to drink as *breaking the tea-pot*. Necessity drives the Chinaman to call what the British call a *cinema* a *tien-ying-yüan* or "electricity shadow hall," but it is humor that makes a Yorkshireman call a pig a *bacon tree* and Cheshire *wags* to raise a rural smile with "as much wit as three folks – two fools and a madman." The British may resist certain American concepts and coinages – the Swedes have their *blajnpigg* ("blind pig") from America, but not the British – and Captain Hamilton in *Men and Manners in America* was patronizing our colonial barbarism in speech a generation or so before Mrs. Trollope came over to sneer at the *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, but the language of London today is peppered with the Yiddish speech of New York and the *hippie* neologisms of "Haight-Ashbury" in San Francisco, while the British *ketchup* and the native *catsup* are battling it out in these United States. Moreover, just when the British are ceasing to be shocked by *bloody*, Americans of certain sets are taking it up for forceful use. Today the explication once offered in London of one of Prime Minister Lloyd-George's famous posters, "One Man, One Vote" ("It means," a *navoy* is supposed to have carefully elucidated to his *chum*, "one *bloody* man, one *bloody* vote!") is probably more amusing on this side of the *Puddle* (the Atlantic).

To risk a generalization – and there has not been a really sound one about *Dear Old Blighty* since 1799, when Novalis asserted that "not only England, but every Englishman is an island" – the British have less slang, in relation to food as in connection with everything else, than the Americans simply because the British have to a much lesser degree than the Americans the trait with which St. Paul, I think it was, tagged the Athenians: the constant desire to see or hear some new thing. They will stick with an old expression until its very origins are obscured by time and the joke

is almost obliterated: British topers, for example, still call a drink of rum, ginger, lemon, and hot water a *Lola Montez*, because it is as warm and cozy (not to say tart) as that Irish girl, now almost forgotten, who posed as a Spanish dancer and won the heart of a Bavarian king. To the outsider, the reason for this name is as hard to see as how the expression "son of a gun" is not a watered down version of "son of a bitch" but really the Neapolitan *sanimagogna* (from *questa anima gogna*, "that villainous soul"). The British will go on with old slang, and catch phrases like "It's Friday, so keep your nose tidy," until William Matthews (*Cockney Past and Present*, 1938) or some monograph such as this becomes necessary to explain the "slanguage" of the English *to* the English, let alone to *foreigneering coves* (foreigners) who want to understand their *gorgery gab* (language of feasting), despite the British tradition (say the same foreigners) of *cooter gosht* (bad food, literally "dog's meat" in Hindi).

Perhaps this sort of article has not been written before because too many scholars have preferred to work with ponderous tomes such as W. J. Burke's *The Literature of Slang* (1939) rather than with the great unwashed who speak the language in the streets. Perhaps the same sort of reticence that introduced asterisks into Eric Partridge's monumental works and his "*son of a Bitch*" in the name *Soab*, which Mencken in *The American Language* (fourth edition, 1962) says he found on an official Geological Survey map of Canada, has frightened some serious investigators away. It is true that British slang moves quickly from *fuggy* (a schoolboy's bun) to something else and little children in Manchester will call prunes *black-coated workers*, with a pun on "workers" which the *Professoren* (as Mencken would say) will miss. What might not shock Americans, speaking a slightly different language in which *outter-muslin* is "cheese-cloth" and a *screw-spanner* is a "monkey-wrench," might shock Britons, as when Australian immigrants (returning to the land of their criminal ancestors after finding their place *down under no good to Gundy*) enriched London *bake-shops* (American: "bakeries") with *bugger in the coals*.[47] But for the student who combines a

[47] "A thinnish cake speckled [sic] with currants and baked hastily in the glowing embers." William Kelley, *Life in Victoria* [Australia] (1859). Not unlike the *Garibaldi biscuit* in taste, though that contains the currants (*squashed flies*) as a paste between two layers of sandwiched biscuit.

love of language with a fascination for folklore and a firm belief that in the way people speak is ample evidence for the old belief that "people are more fun than anybody," what is "common" or even "vulgar" need not be repellant. Mencken spoke of the differences between American and British speech, "including even cookery." This study has explored that area and asserts that from the fifteenth-century *merry-go-down* (strong ale) to the modern *barmaid's blush* (lemonade + port or rum + raspberry syrup), from the schoolboy's *flie pies* (cookies with raisins) to the Cockney's *ice cream freezer* (a "geezer," a *bloke*), from the *joint* (which is a roast) to the *roast* (which is an arrest), British food and drink has had many amazing and amusing names.

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