

This Is Just To Say...

The Poem That Launched A Thousand Parodies



This Is Just To Say

By William Carlos Williams

Published 1934

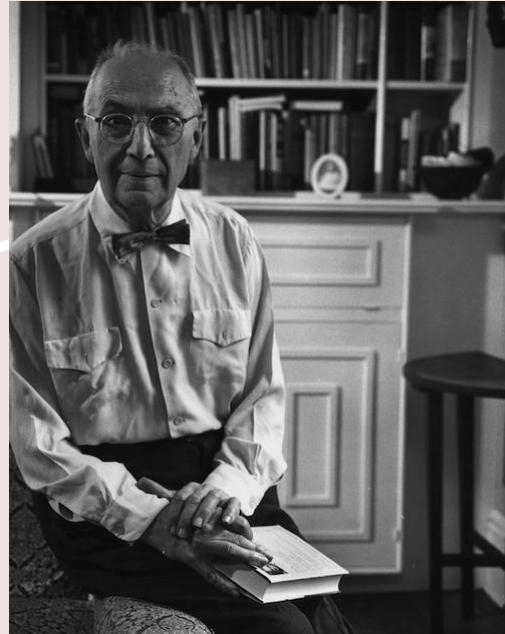
I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

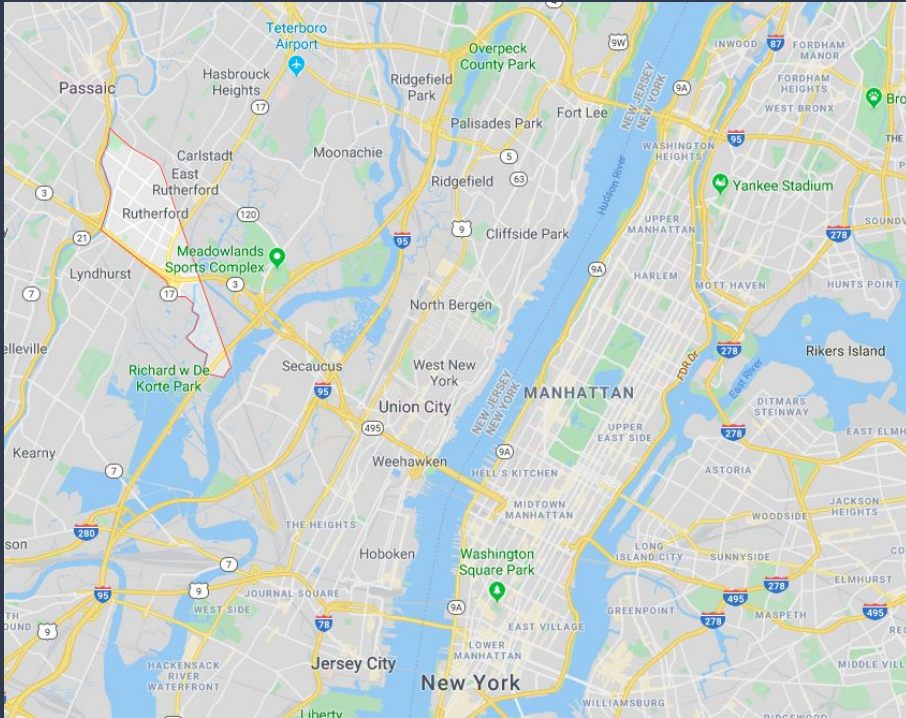
Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

William Carlos Williams

(1883 – 1963)



Biography



- Horace Mann School
- University of Pennsylvania Medical School
- Medical practice: 40 years
- Contemporaries: T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Allen Ginsberg, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), Wallace Stevens

Poetic Philosophy

No

- European
- Romantic, Exotic, Epic
- Ancient Gods, Myths, and Rulers
- Allusion
- High Culture, Refined, Exalted
- Rhymed & Metered

Yes

- American
- Simple, Local, Small
- Contemporary, Ordinary People
- Direct Description
- Colloquial, Conversational
- Free, Unconstrained

Romantic Poems

(~1750 - 1890)



Ozymandias

By Percy Bysshe Shelley

*I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."*

Kubla Khan

Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

By Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Published 1816

*In **Xanadu** did **Kubla Khan***

A stately pleasure-dome decree:

*Where **Alph**, the sacred river, ran*

*Through **caverns measureless** to man*

Down to a sunless sea.

*So **twice five miles** of fertile ground*

With walls and towers were girdled round;

*And there were gardens bright with **sinuous rills**,*

*Where blossomed many an **incense-bearing** tree;*

*And here were **forests ancient as the hills**,*

Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

*But oh! that **deep romantic chasm** which slanted*

*Down the green hill **athwart** a cedarn cover!*

*A **savage** place! as **holy and enchanted***

*As e'er beneath a **waning moon** was haunted*

*By **woman wailing for her demon-lover!***

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,

As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,

*A **mighty fountain** momentarily was forced:*

Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the *sacred river*.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the *caverns measureless* to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the *dome of pleasure*
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an *Abyssinian maid*
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of *Mount Abora*.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

By Contrast...



The Red Wheelbarrow

By William Carlos Williams

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

Marriage

By William Carlos Williams

So different, this man

And this woman:

A stream flowing

In a field.

A Poet's Parody



Variations On a Theme by William Carlos Williams

By Kenneth Koch (1925 - 2002)

1

I chopped down the house that you had
been saving to live in next
summer.

I am sorry, but it was morning, and I had
nothing to do
and its wooden beams were so inviting.

2

We laughed at the hollyhocks together
and then I sprayed them with lye.

Forgive me. I simply do not know what I
am doing.

3

I gave away the money that you
had been saving to live on for
the next ten
years.

The man who asked for it was
shabby
and the firm March wind on the
porch was so juicy and cold.

4

Last evening we went dancing and I
broke your leg.

Forgive me. I was clumsy, and
I wanted you here in the wards,
where I am the doctor!

Twitter Parodies





Joseph @josephsdsu · 6 Jun 2018

Replying to @GParsegova

Which reminds me, I still need **to** choose & order my books for fall.

This Is Just to Say

I have not ordered
the books
that will be on
my fall syllabi

orders which
you are probably
eagerly
awaiting

Forgive me @SDSUBookstore
but there is Scotch **to** drink
so peaty
and so warm



1



5



Deity Of Religion

@DeityOfReligion

Follow

I have eaten
the pokemon
in the pokedex

and which
you were probably
saving
for the tournament

Forgive me
the icebox
had no plums
today

1:39 PM - 28 Jan 2015

8 Retweets 11 Likes



8



11



Jeremy Noel-Tod

@jntod



This is Just to Say

I retweeted
the-plums-
that-were-in-
the-icebox tweet

which you have
probably
already
seen

forgive meme

♥ 1,363 4:26 AM - Nov 29, 2017



💬 424 people are talking about this



@JustToSayBot: <https://twitter.com/justtosaybot>



This Is Just to Say @JustToSayBot · 19 Aug 2018



I have eaten
the skulls
that were in
the hormone

and which
you were probably
chatting
for prostate

degrade me
they were precocious
so much
and so high



1



Pinned Tweet



This Is Just to Say @JustToSayBot · 22 Nov 2016



I have eaten
the horrors
that were in
the toilet

Forgive me
They were postmodern
so ornamented
and so unwavering



3



61



135

What makes it parody-able?



Easy to Riff On

- Short
- Simple vocabulary
- Flexible form
- Relatable
- Can express a wide range of emotions

This American Life Parodies

From [Episode 354: Mistakes Were Made](#)

This Is Just To Say

By Sarah Vowell

I carved

your name, not mine

into the arm of dad's chair

sorry

you were punished

But the wood was so gummy

and my knife was so sharp

This Is Just To Say

By Jonathan Goldstein

I have eaten
the fruit of knowledge
but nothing happened

not a word
no lightning or volcanoes
not even a drop of rain

So I was just wondering
are you there?

Write Your Own!



This Is Just To Say

By William Carlos Williams

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

Show and Tell



Hope You Had Fun!