

Cover

Editorials

Columns

Arts

June Issue coming out May 28

In This Issue:

Tabooing the Language Marien Helz

The Ethics of Silence Susan Johnson

Word Worth's Site of the Month Environmental Therapeutics

Poetry Reading by Alastair Reid

Water Color-Ink Pei-Hua Chiang

A number of years ago, Bill Watterson attacked sloppy language usage by having his Calvin character say that he was going to do some "verbing the language." Verbing the language is the annoying habit that some people have of turning any word into a verb. "Verbing the Language" is a clever example of the point Watterson was making. A far more annoying habit is tabooing the language.

Part II "Sonar violates every environmental law there is," says Dr. Green, "...And it's just as harmful to humans. A Navy diver who was in the water near one of the areas being tested suffered severe seizures and was hospitalized. A water guide who is still recovering from severe endocrinological problems was in the water during another test and suffered symptoms that were described ... as the result of 'acute trauma'."



in [Editorials](#)

in [Columns](#)

in [Arts](#)

Please Visit our Sponsor Click: [The Old Orchard](#)

See also: [Vidler's Maryland Realtor Center](#) [Potomac Garden Financial Planning for Educators](#)



Word Worth Volume II issues are available in [Archives](#)

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>March 2002 V II N3</p> <p>Editorials: Timeless Poetry—M H Perry Columns: Lotusland—Susan Johnson Arts: Selected Poetry—by Alastair Reid</p> | <p>May 2002 V II N5</p> <p>Editorials: Tabooing of Language—Marien Helz Columns: The Ethics of Silence—Susan Johnson Arts: Water Color-Ink—Pei-Hua Chiang</p> <p>February 2002 V II N2</p> <p>Editorials: ...Frederick Douglass—Marien Helz Columns: Xeriscaping—Wayne Johnson Arts: Photography—Armin W. Helz</p> | <p>April 2002 V II N4</p> <p>Editorials: Innocent by Insanity—Marien Helz Columns: A Right to Silence?—Susan Johnson Arts: Photography—Tiffany M. Stuck</p> <p>January 2002 V II N1</p> <p>Editorials: Choosing A College—Marien Helz Columns: Winter Landscape—Susan Johnson Arts: Photography—Tiffany M. Stuck</p> |
|--|--|--|

Word Worth Volume I archives are available in page [2001](#)

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>December 2001 V I N12</p> <p>Editorials: Season of Evergreen--Marien Helz Columns: Bah Humbug!--Susan Johnson Arts: Father Heart--Banwell Goddard</p> | <p>November 2001 V I N 11</p> <p>Editorials: Tolerance: Double.... --Marien Helz Columns: Suddenly, It's Clear--Susan Johnson Arts: Father Heart--Banwell Goddard</p> | <p>October 2001 V I N10</p> <p>Editorials: Learning the Right...--Marien Helz Columns: Fall Colors--Susan Johnson Arts: Father Heart--Banwell Goddard</p> |
| <p>September 2001 V I N9</p> <p>Editorials: The Censorship ...--Marien Helz Columns: Organic Gardening--Susan Johnson Arts: Father Heart--Banwell Goddard</p> | <p>August 2001 V I N8</p> <p>Editorials: Pro Life and Choice--Marien Helz Columns: Oriental Rugs--Susan Johnson Arts: Father Heart--Banwell Goddard</p> | <p>July 2001 V I N7</p> <p>Editorials: Independence Values--Marien Helz Columns: The Sixth Extinc...--Susan Johnson Arts: Father Heart--Banwell Goddard</p> |
| <p>June 2001 V I N6</p> <p>Editorials: East of the Dawn--Marien Helz Columns: Buffalo in Bloom--Susan Johnson Arts: Father Heart--Banwell Goddard</p> | <p>May 2001 V I N5</p> <p>Editorials: Parents as Friends--Marien Helz Columns: Wedding Flowers--Susan Johnson Arts: Father Heart--Banwell Goddard</p> | <p>April 2001 V I N4</p> <p>Editorials: Everyday Linguistics--Marien Helz Columns: Great Lakes Racing--Susan Johnson Arts: Father Heart--Banwell Goddard</p> |
| <p>March 2001 V I N3</p> <p>Editorials: The Peter Pan Gen...--Marien Helz Columns: Thyme for the M...--Susan Johnson Arts: Photography by David Clark</p> | <p>February 2001 V I N2</p> <p>Editorials: Driven to Distr...--Susan Johnson Columns: A Valentine for My Mother Arts: Photography by Armin Helz</p> | <p>January 2001 V I N1</p> <p>Editorials: Hale Chatfield--M H Perry Columns: Havasupai--Susan Johnson Arts: Poetry By Hale Chatfield</p> |
| <p>Introductory issue December 2000 V I N ii</p> | <p>Editorials: Election 2000--Marien Helz Columns: Natural Born Killers--Susan Johnson Arts: Season's Poem and Photograph</p> | |

Word Worth Publisher: [M H Perry](#) Senior Editor: [Susan Johnson](#) Editor: [Marien Helz](#) Associated Editors: [J Aurelia Perry](#) [Scott H H Perry](#)

Contributors: [Banwell Goddard](#) [David Clark](#) [Tiffany M. Stuck](#) [Wayne Johnson](#) [Alastair Reid](#) [Pei-Hua Chiang](#)

Distinguished Selections: [Hale Chatfield](#) [Armin W. Helz](#)

Word Worth®—On line monthly magazine of Ideas & the Arts

©2002



Tabooing the Language

by Marien Helz

A number of years ago, Bill Watterson attacked sloppy language usage by having his Calvin character say that he was going to do some "verbing the language." Verbing the language is the annoying habit of some people to turn any word into a verb. A common example of this is the use of the word "party," a noun, as a verb. Instead of saying, "Let's go to a party," or "Let's have a party," saying "Let's party." Since the word *verb* is a noun, "Verbing the Language" is a clever example of the point Watterson was making.

A far more annoying habit is tabooing the language. This begins with using a word as a euphemism for another word. For example, in pediatric offices the staff uses the word *tinkle* when they mean *urinate*. The problem with this is that a whole generation of children has grown up with the notion that the word *tinkle* is a dirty word. Tinkle is an onomatopoeic word with a very specific and lovely meaning. Try singing it in a Christmas song at this point.

The Anglo-Saxon word for urinate became taboo long ago which means that it can't be used in pediatric or medical offices, or in any situation in which one wants to say what one means. When our children were little and were at the doctor's office for their yearly exams, the nurse handed them a plastic container and said, "Tinkle in this." They looked at her blankly. We told her that they didn't call it that. "What do they call it?" she asked. "Urinate," we said. She looked at us as though we had committed child abuse.

It's not that children can't handle the word. *Urinate* has only one more syllable than does the word, *tinkle*. Well before children are two years old, most do very well with three syllable words.

The unfortunate habit of inventing euphemism after euphemism creates more and more taboo words until very precise and fine words can't be used for what they had, for centuries, meant. A good example is the word, *breast*. With the problem of unsavory uses of the internet, offices responsible for cracking down on misuse targeted sites using that word. This meant that breast cancer sites were being charged with being pornographic. Mammary cancer really ought to be called mammary cancer and not breast cancer. The breast had always been considered the area that was the "hearth" of the body, seat of emotions and container of the heart. Poems mentioning "Robin red breast" were common. Robins, not being mammals, don't have mammary glands. The word *bosom* still means something like *breast* once meant, but perhaps not for long. I have heard more than one person use the word similarly to: "He was staring at my bosoms!" She probably would have been outraged if someone informed her that she had only one.

When the word *gay* was first being used to refer to gay people, some complained that gay had had a very specific meaning which was lost when it was coined to mean homosexuals. A gay writer responded that no one complained about the words *pansy*, *queer*, *fairy*, *dyke*, *butch*, and *queen* being "lost" when they were used in a pejorative sense to refer to gays.

The word *gay* in its new meaning at least provides a word to refer to a group of people which that group doesn't find objectionable, and the word was not used very often in its classic sense. The loss of the word *queer* is, however, much more of a loss. When used to refer to gay people, it is used derogatorily, and therefore, is never used that way by conscientious people. Now, when it's used in its classic meaning, it tends to bring forth foolish snickers, so its use is avoided altogether. This is unfortunate because it did have a shade of meaning different from either eccentric or weird which contributed to more precise expression.

There is the constant practice of giving ancient and honorable names such as *John, Dick, and Johnson* foolish meanings. Additionally, just try using the word *pussy* to describe the velvet catkins of a spring willow or to call your fluffy tabby back to the porch. The word has been ruined in its denotation.

The most absurd tabooing a word, however, is with the growing use of the word *adult*. In the new troglodytic usage, it is anything but adult. One drives by windowless concrete huts with signs advertising *Adult* videos. *Adult* websites are foisted on web surfers searching for such things as airline information.

One can imagine a parent remonstrating with a child in late adolescence, "Act like an adult! Or —No! Forget I said that!"

They ought to say what they mean and label their concrete huts and their websites Pornography Sites. They are obviously ashamed of what they do, but not enough so to desist. Perhaps a more clinical description would be more to their liking: *Sites for the sexually dysfunctional who need aberrant stimulation in order to perform.*

At the very least, they ought to stop tabooing the language.

[[Editorials](#)] [[Columns](#)] [[Arts](#)]

Word Worth Publisher: [M H Perry](#) Senior Editor: [Susan Johnson](#) Editor: [Marien Helz](#) Associated Editors: [J Aurelia Perry](#) [Scott H H Perry](#)
Contributors: [Banwell Goddard](#) [David Clark](#) [Tiffany M. Stuck](#) [Wayne Johnson](#) [Alastair Reid](#) [Pei-Hua Chiang](#)
Distinguished Selections: [Hale Chatfield](#) [Armin W. Helz](#)
Word Worth®—O n line monthly magazine of Ideas & the Arts

©2002



The Business and Politics of Noise

by Susan Johnson

Individuals who are fighting for natural silence in wilderness areas are joined by environmental groups as well as by scientific communities who are concerned about the long-range effect of man-made noise on wildlife. It was commercial watercraft and their effect on whales that first drew the attention of Dr. Marsha Green, founder of the Ocean Mammal Institute, and a psychobiologist who has been studying and conducting Albright College's student research projects on whales off the coasts of Hawaii for more than fifteen years.

"In the mid-80's," says Dr. Green, "residents began complaining that the humpbacked whales were no longer swimming as close to the shore as they had in the past. We suspected that the sound levels of the engines of a number of recreational boats—sightseeing boats, jet-skis, para-sails, and others—were disturbing them. Our research found that when engines reached 120 dBs and greater, that the whales swam two to three times faster than normal to get away from the boats."

"Whales are acoustic animals," she explains. "Hearing is for them what sight is to humans and the engine noise was interfering with their ability to communicate with one another." After she testified in court and then presented her research to the state legislature of Hawaii, proving the correlation of boats to the absence of whales, the state finally banned activity from certain areas along the coastline during the animals' mating season.

Dr. Green's research on commercial watercraft then led her to discover the use of an even more lethal form of sound. She is now opposing the Navy's request for a new permit to deploy sonar that is even more damaging than the deadly level that they used in the Bahamas in 2000, resulting in a well-documented massacre of whales and dolphins.

"Sonar violates every environmental law there is," says Dr. Green, "from the Endangered Species Act to the Marine Mammal Protection Act. And it's just as harmful to humans. A Navy diver who was in the water near one of the areas being tested suffered severe seizures and was hospitalized. A water guide named Chris Reid was in the water during another test and suffered symptoms that were described by her attending physician as the result of 'acute trauma.' She is still recovering from severe endocrinological problems."

The Navy's task of protecting the U.S. from potential enemies is, admittedly, formidable. However, protection need not come at the expense of our friends—the whales and dolphins—nor of our food sources—the marlins and tunas and shrimp and thousands of other fish that are injured or destroyed by sonar. There are passive listening systems that are equally accurate and that pose no harm to humans or animals. In fact, it is the Navy's responsibility to use these devices instead of sonar in order to protect the populations of the sea and to send a clear message that the Navy understands the value of the oceans' resources to Americans and to humanity. To do otherwise is to make their motives questionable.

Consideration for others and the appropriateness of venue are issues at the heart of the ethics of silence. As technology takes every conceivable tool and conveyance and adds bigger and more powerful engines, the sides sparring on the issues are, frequently, the proponents of big and small businesses against individuals and their right to quiet.

Those who revere natural silence usually feel no hatred for recreational and other machinery when it's used in places where there are the expectations of man-made sound. It is only when decibels needlessly violate a space that should be quiet that there generates a debate.

Unfortunately, the manufacturers of snowmobiles, watercraft, leaf blowers, and other ear-shattering machinery don't comprehend that they could sidestep a certain amount of animosity by encouraging the use of their products in appropriate ways and appropriate areas. Instead, they are leading the battles for encroachment in fragile environments that are home to endangered species, not least among them, the kind of human beings who are content with their own thoughts.

These are the same humans who, when faced with an individual who doesn't realize that noise is thoughtless and destructive, will gently try to educate that person. They are also the same people who, when faced with a for-profit enterprise that is deliberately sacrificing silence in order to indulge its own pocketbook, begin to think of ways to strike back. Investors with a conscience can be educated to be as sensitive to noise pollution caused by a company's products as they have been to PCBs and other forms of contamination. With such high profile fights as the one now being fought at Padre Island National Seashore in Texas where those who want the area returned to nature are facing down the personal watercraft industry, it will be sooner rather than later that investors turn away from sound polluters.

Other current battles include the fight against sightseeing planes and helicopters that are operating in Sedona, Arizona, the Grand Canyon, and near almost every other natural wonder of the Western world. Here the aircraft owners and pilots are simply raping the wilderness for their own profit with no regard for others who are trying to see and hear what the national forests and parks have to say to someone who has come, humbly and without malice, to listen and learn. The flyers see it differently and are quick to defend their presence and the noise they make by saying that they are there to help the handicapped and others who, for one reason or another, cannot sightsee without the aid of a combustion engine.

This is, of course, rubbish. If the handicapped were beating a path to the doors of the helicopters, one would see them lined up in their wheelchairs. And, if these operators actually were benevolent, they'd be investing in handicapped-adapted horses and other methods of transporting these special people through the woods and canyons in a non-intrusive manner that would truly impart to their customers the solace of nature.

The truth is that sightseeing aircraft have invaded areas that were meant to remain undeveloped in every sense of the word. When President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Congressional Act to establish Yellowstone, the United States' first national park in 1872, the Secretary of the Interior was ordered to "make such rules and regulations that shall provide for the preservation from injury and spoliation of allwonders within such park and their retention in their natural condition".

Grant's foresight in setting aside this national treasure, at a time when the United States still had vast undeveloped areas, was brilliant and came none too soon. Poachers were already invading the area, massacring whole herds of buffalo just to cut off their heads and sell them as trophies. There is no difference between those park poachers of 1872 and today's park polluters of 2002 and, just as the poachers were captured and punished in 1872, so should the sound polluters of 2002.

We must fight every business and agency that is trying to tear from us and from the creatures of the earth the natural silence of our parks and forests and oceans, for once we have lost the sanctuary of these great places, we will have irretrievably severed our connection to nature and, having lost that we will have lost our future. And we will never get it back.

[[Editorials](#)] [[Columns](#)] [[Arts](#)]

Word Worth Publisher: [M H Perry](#) Senior Editor: [Susan Johnson](#) Editor: [Marien Helz](#) Associated Editors: [J Aurelia Perry](#) [Scott H H Perry](#)
Contributors: [Banwell Goddard](#) [David Clark](#) [Tiffany M. Stuck](#) [Wayne Johnson](#) [Alastair Reid](#) [Pei-Hua Chiang](#)
Distinguished Selections: [Hale Chatfield](#) [Armin W. Helz](#)
Word Worth®—Online monthly magazine of Ideas & the Arts

©2002



Water Color-Ink by Pei-Hua Chiang

Pei-Hua Chiang studied in Taiwan and China for sixteen years. She studied under masters Lee ko-mei and Wang Hsih-yu.

The Four Seasons— Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter



[[Editorials](#)] [[Columns](#)] [[Arts](#)]

Word Worth Publisher: [M H Perry](#) Senior Editor: [Susan Johnson](#) Editor: [Marlen Helz](#) Associated Editors: [J Aurelia Perry](#) [Scott H H Perry](#)
 Contributors: [Banwell Goddard](#) [David Clark](#) [Tiffany M. Stuck](#) [Wayne Johnson](#) [Alastair Reid](#) [Pei-Hua Chiang](#)
 Distinguished Selections: [Hale Chatfield](#) [Armin W. Helz](#)
 Word Worth®—On line monthly magazine of Ideas & the Arts

©2002

