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Hiawatha's Calculations

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WILLIAM WILBORN

Hiawatha's Calculations

As his birthday was impending
Hiawatha asked his mother,
Yellow-backed Ticonderoga,
For a pocket calculator
With its batteries included.
Hiawatha had no pocket
But he had Monongahela,
Leather pouch Monongahela
Which he slung upon his shoulder.
Up to now he kept a slide rule
In the pouch Monongahela,
Kept it limber at the ready
Should the East Wind, Potrzebie,
Call for any calculations.
But he knew that Hewlett Packard
Marketed a better unit
Smaller than a pack of Luckies
Or the can Sir Walter Raleigh
He could carry where he wandered
When he stalked the deer Probono
Through the dewy dell primeval,
Tracked him to his secret dwelling
Where he hung his mossy antlers.
But his mom Ticonderoga,
Deaf and rather absentminded,
Rather than a multiplier
Bought a pocket *stultifier*
Which she gave to Hiawatha
On his seven hundredth birthday.
('Twas the era patriarchal:
People lived almost forever.
That is why the bow and arrow
And the tomahawk and slide rule
And the pocket stultifier
Coexisted all together.)
Hiawatha took to texting
Spinabifida, his cousin,
Im lik etn pnut bter
smpn stiki lik wtevr.
And in short our Hiawatha

Who'd excelled at calculation
Scorned his spelling and his woodcraft,
Sank into a moral quandary.
So the West Wind, Nancylopez*,
Came and blew his soul asunder,
Lost it in the farthest reaches
Of Aurora Borealis
As a guide to those who wander
In the cybernetic stupor
Of a pocket apparatus
When they might be hunting squirrels
For their meat to make some tacos,
For their hides to make pajamas.

*Poetry abhors a quibble.
Yes, I know that Nancy Lopez
Is a golfer -- and a good one!
Why must women be restricted
To the kitchen and the bedroom?
Miss Lamarr took out a patent
On the musical torpedo*;
Miss Jane Russell had the muscle
To sustain the cantilevered
Howard Hughes brassiere in earnest.
Why must we deny these women?
Let them make their contributions!
Thus Ms. Lopez is the Zephyr.
Everyone should have a hobby.

*Miss Lamarr and Mr. Antheil
(George Antheil, the great composer)
Thought to put the mechanism
Of a parlor pianola
In the tube of their torpedo
So to lull the German sailors
With Beethoven, Brahms and Schubert
To a state of inattention
Till the unforeseen explosion
Caused a lengthy interruption
In their sailorly procedures.
But the admirals objected
To the size of pianolas
Not to mention the expenses
Entertaining German sailors,

Therefore kept their own torpedos,
Sleek American torpedos
Which but rarely had exploded
When by luck they hit their targets,
Since the bulk of these torpedos
Sailed beneath the hun's destroyers.
So the dreams of Mr. Antheil
And the plans of Hedwig Giesel
Came to absolutely nothing
Till the birth of the computer
And the pocket stultifier,
Which but rarely miss their target,
Thus redeeming their contraption
As an agent of destruction.
Thus all civil culture ended.
This ironically completed
What Herr Goebbels had intended.

Poe Pourri

Years ago, when I was sober
last, 'twas in the month October
(August for the fact of it,
October for a better rhyme),
'twas the month when you were married.
Oh, my lost one, how I carried
on in metered feet of time,
those metered, teetered, feet of mine
that pattered, nattered, never mattered
nohow to that heart of thine,
designing, whining Proserpine.
For you to Dis and Dat were married,
to the underworld were carried
by those brothers of dispersion
(they are brothers in my version
simply for the somber sa-ake
of the lovely verse trochaic
and because the thing's perverse:
only that and nothing worse).
As I said, when I was sober
not just now, back in October)
you were married to these brothers
both, and possibly to others,
representing, subtly venting,
your objections to my rhymes.
Which you voiced at other times
in a manner quite specific,
in a torrent too terrific
for this tender heart of mine:
"Go to hell," quoth Proserpine.

Down beside the river reedy,
dressed in dandy duds but seedy,
scribbling on a dumpster wall,
I bequeath my verses subtle
knowing there is no rebuttal
needed where we poets go
(bathos is in Greek "below")
and our words are published all.

-- This must be a different Hades
from the one where lords and ladies,
kings and counsellors abide;
different from the grounds milady
treads with her companions shady,
Dis and Dat and Dese and Dose
and some perhaps more gentrified,
proctologists and men of pride.
Where the gold and glitter gathers,
where the cappuccino lathers,
where the maid discreetly knocks
to comb her hyacinthine locks,
whilst I languish in a box
with half a jug of Riunite
scratching at these gray graffiti
and she tongues a plate of ziti,
peas, and heavy cream and ham
paid for by an alderman.

May her uterus prolapse,
both her udders pert collapse,
the veins in her fine shanks advance
till she resembles maps of France,
a fat girl in elastic pants.
And when, grown grossly adipose,
a bag of jelly for a nose,
may my lady get a dose.
And I, whose heartstrings were a lute
distempered, light a fine cheroot
and brood upon a state of things
where the poets pull the strings,
where I regain my lost Lenore,
where no damned bird croaks "Baltimore."