

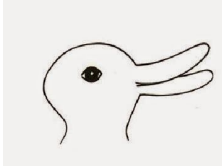
**'There is a Catskill eagle in some souls that can
alike dive down into the blackest gorges, and
soar out of them again and become invisible in
the sunny spaces'**

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

Poems of the week

***Epitaph on an Unfortunate Artist* Robert Graves**

He found a formula for drawing comic rabbits:
This formula for drawing comic rabbits paid,
So in the end he could not change the tragic habits
This formula for drawing comic rabbits made.



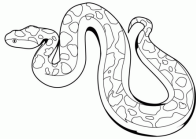
Or is it a duck?

***Ireland* Paul Muldoon**

The Volkswagon parked in the gap.
But gently ticking over.
You wonder if it's lovers
And not men hurrying back
Across two fields and a river.

***Siesta of a Hungarian Snake* Edwin Morgan**

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Runny Babbits?

Spoonerisms are slips of the tongue that mix up the start of words. They're named after the Rev William Archibald Spooner, a professor at Oxford University, who was famous for them. In one of his sermons he supposedly announced:

'The Lord is a shoving leopard'.

July 23 was National Spoonerisms Day, so here's an extract from a poem by Brian P Cleary about a boy who spoke them all the time:

He once proclaimed, 'Hey, belly jeans!'

When he found a stash of jelly beans.

But when he says he pepped in stew

We'll tell him he should wipe his shoe.

And to finish, a frankly dodgy one:

'Sir, you are certainly a shining wit'

A puzzling paradox

A traveller was walking one day when he met an old man sitting beside the road smoking a pipe.

'The first thing said to you by the first person you meet today will not be true,' said the old man. 'Trust me – don't believe what he says!'

'Ok,' said the traveller. 'But hang on a minute: you're the first person I've met today.'

'Exactly!' said the old man.

It seems that if the old man speaks the truth, then the first thing he says is not true. But if the first thing he says is not true, then the first thing he says is true. Can what he says be both true and not true?

(from Stephen Law, *The Philosophy Gym*)

Sporting triumphs

Match each book below to its sport:

1. *Into Thin Air*, Jon Krakauer
2. *Fever Pitch*, Nick Hornby
3. *The Jordan Rules*, Sam Smith
4. *Pocket Money*, Gordon Burns
5. *Open*, Andre Agassi
6. *Slaying the Badger*, Richard Moore
7. *The Natural*, Bernard Malamud
8. *Selection Day*, Aravind Adiga
9. *The Sport of Kings*, C E Morgan
10. *Bleachers*, John Gresham

- cycling
- cricket
- US football
- horse racing
- snooker
- baseball
- tennis
- mountaineering
- football
- basketball

Descent of Species

In the afterlife you are treated to a generous opportunity: you can choose whatever you would like to be in the next life. Would you like to be a member of the opposite sex? Born into royalty? A philosopher with bottomless profundity? A soldier facing triumphant battles?

But perhaps you've just returned her from a hard life. Perhaps you were tortured by the enormity of the decisions and responsibilities that surrounded you, and now there's only one thing you yearn for: simplicity. That's permissible. So for the next round, you choose to be a horse. You covet the bliss of that simple life: afternoons of grazing in grassy fields, the handsome angles of your skeleton and the prominence of your muscles, the peace of the slow-flicking tail or the steam rifling through your nostrils as you lope across snow-blanketed plains.

You announce your decision. Incantations are muttered, a wand is waved, and your body begins to metamorphose into a horse. Your muscles start to bulge; a mat of strong hair erupts to cover you like a comfortable blanket in winter. The thickening and lengthening of your neck immediately feels normal as it comes about. Your carotid arteries grow in diameter, your fingers blend hoofward, your knees stiffen, your hips strengthen, and meanwhile, as your skull lengthens into its new shape, your brain races in its changes: your cortex retreats as your cerebellum grows, the homunculus melts man to horse, neurons re-direct, synapses unplug and replugin on their way to equestrian patterns, and your dream of understanding what it is like to be a horse gallops toward you from a distance. Your concern about human affairs melts, and even your human way of thinking begins to drift away from you.

Suddenly, just for a moment, you are aware of the problem you overlooked. The more you become a horse, the more you forget the original wish. You forget what it was like to be a human wondering what it was like to be a horse.

This moment of lucidity does not last long. But it serves as the punishment for your sins, a Promethean entrails-pecking moment, crouching half-horse half man, with the knowledge that you cannot appreciate the destination without knowing the starting point: you cannot revel in the simplicity unless you remember the alternatives.

And that's not the worst of your revelation. You realise that the next time you return here, with your thick horse brain, you won't have the capacity to ask to become a human again. You won't understand what a human is. Your choice to slide down the intelligence ladder is irreversible. And just before you lose your final human faculties, you painfully ponder what magnificent extraterrestrial creature, enthralled with the idea of finding a simpler life, chose in the last round to become a human.

From David Eagleman, *Sum: Tales from the Afterlife*

ANSWERS

Sporting Triumphs

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|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. mountaineering | 2. football | 3. basketball | 4. Snooker | 5. tennis |
| 6. cycling | 7. baseball | 8. Cricket | 9. horse racing | 10. US football |

