

Hyperbole and Anti-Woke Lyrics

by [Kenneth Francis](#) (February 2020)



Musicians, Nicolas de Stael, 1953

Have you ever listened to songs of the past and pondered on

the hyperbole and anti-woke words in some of the lyrics? Crooner Tony Bennet once sang about leaving his heart in San Francisco, where “high on a hill, it calls to me.” I can’t imagine the hyperbole or metaphor would work so well had he left his liver or kidneys on a hill. Doesn’t have the same poetic ring to it, don’t you think?

In the song examples below and in the light-hearted spirit of hyperbole, I’ll exaggerate my interpretations for the fun of it. Firstly, consider this 1976 disco hit by The Real Thing’s “You to Me Are Everything.”

I would take the stars out of the sky for you
Stop the rain from falling if you asked me to
I’d do anything for you, your wish is my command

I could move a mountain when your hand is in my hand

Most men nowadays haven’t the courage to ask a woman out on a date for fear of being accused of sexual harassment; and if they did, they’re so full of soy they’d hardly move a mountain, not to mention stopping the rain soaking their multi-coloured beanie hat.

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Other hyperbole songs concentrate on falling on one’s knees and praying, like the 1957 doo-wop classic by The Heartbeats,

“A Thousand Miles Away.”

On my knees every day, all I do is pray, baby, just for you
. . .

I’ve yet to see a man fall to his knees and pray all day every day because he misses his girlfriend while she’s away. He would more than likely be in a bar with friends, doing a workout at the local gym, or at home watching sports on TV. But I suppose it wouldn’t sound as good in a song to sing, “in the gym every day, I workout and play, baby, just for you . . .”

But don’t knock praying. The pop idol Barry Ryan, in 1968, gave the Persian poet Hafez a run for his money when he sung about the sun, stars and getting down on his knees to pray for some steamy goddess called “Eloise.”

You know I’m on my knees yeh

I said please

You’re all I want, so hear my prayer

My prayer

My Eloise is like the stars that please the night

The sun that makes the day

That lights the way

And when the star goes by

I hold it in my hands and cry

Her love was mine

You know my sun will shine.

Whooh . . . steady on, young man! You're quest for this sizzling siren is on a par with the Holy Grail. That's idolatry. She's probably at home cleaning her crack pipe with a little bottle brush or sleeping with your best friend.

From fantasy babes called Eloise, to bedsit, lonely bachelors: what is one to make of the love-struck creature in the 1970 song "Knock Three Times," sung by Tony Orlando & Dawn?

Hey girl, whatcha doing down there
Dancing alone every night while I live right above you
I can hear your music playing
I can feel your body swaying
One floor below me, you don't even know me
I love you

Oh my darling, knock three times on the ceiling if you want me

Twice on the pipe, if t he answer is 'no'

Consider what many women would think about this scenario: A kind of peeping Tom, who lives one floor above a single woman who he never spoke to, with him secretly in love with her while he fantasises on her body swaying as she listens to

music in her flat below him. But the lyrics get creepier . . .

If you look out your window tonight

Pull in the string with the note that's attached to my heart

Read how many times I saw you

How in my silence I adored you

Imagine relaxing by the window and a string with a note attached to it dangles in front of your eyes? Whatever you do, don't yank on the string as the heart of the tenant who lives above you might pop out. And don't presume the protagonist of this song looks like the then handsome Tony Orlando. He might resemble Quasimodo, dressed in string vest and dirty Y-fronts, lying on the floor with his ear to the boards listening to the music and imagining her body swaying, with him sounding like Hollywood legend Peter Lorre's creepy voiceover, saying: "One day you'll be mine . . . all mine."

And what if she manages to hang a picture on the wall by hammering a nail three times? Isn't there a chance he'll dash down the stairs half naked to grope his bedsit neighbour? There's a name for this weirdo's kind of behaviour that rhymes with the word 'walker'. When a male stranger you never met before says he loves you and fantasises on your body, it's time to purchase pepper spray, a stun-gun, and install CCTV outside your front door.

Then there's the 1956 classic from the Broadway musical hit,

My Fair Lady, "On the Street Where You Live."

I have often walked down this street before

But the pavement always stayed beneath my feet before
All at once am I several stories high
Knowing I'm on the street where you live.

On the street near the college where I work, hundreds of identical-looking hipster students mill around the area trying to look different (even the dogs and cats in the alleyways have whiskers). However, every year on Valentine's Day, as the waft of vegan burgers and craft beers permeate the air, a sea of beards scurry down the road anxiously clutching their to-go gluten-free lattes and bunches of cheap flowers. And none of these stooping soy-boys look like they feel several stories high—more like, "If she suspects I bought these flowers in a gas station, I hope the pavement beneath my feet opens up and swallows me."

From gas stations to picket-fence suburbia, where planting twigs to yield big trees ain't funny for an oversensitive woman: what Boomer could ever forget the 1968 tearjerker, "Honey," sung by Bobby Goldsboro. This sentimental song drips of treacle and schmaltz. The song's protagonist, who misses his wife, says,

She was always young at heart

Kinda dumb and kinda smart and I loved her so.

The sisterhood of the #MeTo movement would have this chauvinistic clown strung up on a lamppost for his condescending, sexist rhetoric. He's more or less saying his late wife was intellectually impaired but cute. And he goes on to lament the death of this unfortunate creature after she runs around the house slipping, wrecking the car and bawling her eyes out at late-night TV tearjerkers. We don't know how she died, but it appears "the angels came" to take her away. One wonders was it the Hell's Angels? Being quite dumb, she might've rode off with them after becoming a biker babe. Anyhow, the innocent, yet seemingly condescending lyrics in this song would not go down too well today with the Jihadi feminists against patriarchy. And neither would "This is My Song," written by Charles Chaplin and was a huge hit in 1967 for Petula Clark.

Why is my heart so light
Why are the stars so bright
Why is the sky so blue
Since the hour I met you
Flowers are smiling bright
Smiling for our delight
Smiling so tenderly
For the world, you and me.

I guess everything visual is greatly enhanced when you are madly in love, but when flowers start smiling back at you, it's time for the psychiatrist's chair.

More about a woman in love: in 1963, Little Peggy March sung "I Will Follow Him"—a song about a woman so madly in love with a man, she is willing to follow him everywhere (even to the bathroom?). This is one lady who wouldn't be seen dead wearing

a Pussy Hat.

I will follow him, follow him
Wherever he may go,
And near him,
I always will be,
For nothing can keep me away,
He is my destiny . . .
I love him, I love him, I love him,
And where he goes, I'll follow, I'll follow, I'll follow.

Speaking of “following”: butterflies usually follow the sun and the trees of the forests. But not the macrolepidopteran clade creature (try saying that after a few drinks!) in Bob Lind’s 1965 hit song, ‘Elusive Butterfly’. When I first heard this sweet tune, I loved it, but my antennae twitched when the butterfly man spoke of heavy breathing; I thought: What’s that all about?

[edited] You might have heard my footsteps
Echo softly in the distance through the canyons of your
mind . . . If you remember something there
That glided past you followed close by heavy breathin’

As a humorous antidote to the maudlin but quaint lyrics of such songs, in 1969, the crazy Bonzo Doo-Dah Band penned a send-up romantic ditty called “Canyons of your Mind.” The opening lyrics are as follows.

In the canyons of your mind

I will wander through your brain
To the ventricles of your heart, my dear
I'm in love with you again
Across the mountains of your chest
I will stick a Union Jack
To the forest of your cheek, ah . . .
Through the holes in your string vest.

Leaving aside holes in string vests, in 1977, the singer, Charlene, sang "I've Never Been to Me," an Easy Listening standard about a young woman travelling round the world in search of love, happiness . . . and hot studs.

I've sipped champagne on a yacht
I've moved like a Harlow in Monte Carlo
And showed 'em what I've got
I've been undressed by kings
And I've seen some things
That a woman ain't supposed to see
I've been to paradise but I've never been to me.

God only knows what those things are that a woman ain't supposed to see, but that aside, who were those kings who undressed her? And what did she show them what she'd got?

However, it wasn't always lovey-dovey in the wonderful music lyrics of yesteryear. In 1967, Tom Jones sung about "Delilah," a giggling floozy who cheated on her jealous lover.

At break of day when that man drove away, I was waiting
I crossed the street to her house and she opened the door
She stood there laughing

I felt the knife in my hand and she laughed no more

What a lowdown, deadbeat coward, stabbing the woman for laughing at him, despite her cheating on him. She should've met him at the doorstep with a rolling pin in her hand, and he should've walked away and found a faithful woman.

As well as hyperbole and anti-woke lyrics, some songwriters struggle with rhyming, often resulting in the following example from the 1978 hit, "Lucky Stars" by Dean Friedman. The co-singer in the duet, Denise Marsa, sings:

Listen hon', I know you're dumb,

But that's ok, you don't have to look so glum

Because he's dumb, wouldn't a better choice of words be: " . .
. But that's ok, I still have you under my thumb"? Or, ". . .

But that's ok, at least you're not lowlife scum" (on second thought, maybe not).

And let's not forget the following alleged double entendre lyrics. The 1975 Grammy Award-winning hit by Standard Vocal Band, "Afternoon Delight," did not (cough!) have sexually suggestive lyrics; only a pervert with a mind like a sewer would think otherwise. It was probably an innocent ditty about an astronaut going home for his lunch, as he and his girlfriend watch rockets launch in the distance. As Freud once said, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar," and a rocket, is, well you make up your own mind on this:

[Edited] Gonna find my baby, gonna hold her tight

Gonna grab some afternoon delight . . .

Thinkin' of you's workin' up my appetite

Looking forward to a little afternoon delight

Sky rockets in flight

Afternoon delight

Afternoon delight

But songs and my light-hearted interpretations of them aside: As a literary device, the Bible also uses hyperbole for effect. One example of this is seen in Matthew 5:29: 'If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.' Jesus is not saying we should do such a thing literally, but that we should not tolerate sin in our lives and to be quite aggressive in order to avoid or stop sinning in order to be redeemed and go to Heaven in the next, spiritual life.

However, in this worldly life, in 1960, the late Eddie Cochran sung about the path to heaven on Earth.

Now there are three steps to Heaven
Just listen and you will plainly see
And as life travels on
And things do go wrong
Just follow steps one, two and three
Step one, you find a girl to love
Step two, she falls in love with you
Step three, you kiss and hold her tightly
Yeah, that sure feels like Heaven to me

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Of steps to a spiritual worldly Heaven, the Bible says, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.” (Matthew 7:13)

One prays that the late, brave Eddie Cochran made his peace with God and is Heaven bound. On Saturday, April 16, 1960, close to midnight, while on tour in England, Cochran was involved in a traffic accident. Travelling in a taxi through Chippenham, Wiltshire, on the A4 road, the taxi driver lost

control of the vehicle because he was speeding and crashed into a lamppost on Rowden Hill. There were no other vehicles involved in the accident. However, during the crash, Cochran, who was seated in the centre of the back seat, threw himself over his fiancée, Sharon Sheeley, to shield her, thus he was flung out of the car when a rear passenger door opened during the force of the collision (singer Gene Vincent was also in the car but survived). Cochran was taken to St Martin's Hospital in Bath. He had suffered serious injuries to his head and died aged 21, at 4:10pm the following day, Easter Sunday, the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that, dear readers, is what I believe to be a true story, not hyperbole.

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