

Euphemisms

by Harry Dunn

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I remember, long ago, when spades were just called spades,
But if you wanted one today, you would have ask the man
For *utensils, agronomic or horticult'ral aids* ,
And along the way, if you should see a sign that says -
With breathless optimism -
Fashion Garments for the Budget-conscious Matron,
You know that what they really mean,
Is - Cheap Clothes for Older, Fatter, Women,
But that might offend their valued patron,
So they resort to euphemism.

Folks don't seem to die these days,
We say *they pass away*;
God knows why we say they've *passed*,
Because we've all been been with dying folks
And they remained just where they lay,
And most of us poor oldies succumb to heart attacks or cancer
But we pass it off by saying -
We've had *trouble with our ticker*,
Or we've been told we have *Big C*, or got the *Old Jack Dancer*.

A man I know just got the sack,
They said *they had to let him go*
Which almost sounds like fun,
Because in his *exit interview*, on and on they went
About the t'rific job he'd done;
You're just an unintended victim, they said when summarising-
An unfortunate poor victim
Of *corporate down-sizing*

When I was young, I used to rent
A flat in trendy down-town South Yarra,
With tiny rooms, no bigger than compartments;
I drove past the old flat recently,
And the agent's sign outside it said:
Available for lease - Executive Apartments,
Suit Upwardly-Mobile Young Execs. and Retirees, Independent
To cover all the ages, aspirations and presumptions,
But that old flat is still a flat,
Basic, out-of-date and tiny
And all those lovely euphemisms can do nothing to change that.

When it comes to court reporting, about chaps who break the law,
The euphemism is a saviour,
So most crims are not called *crims* these days, and crimes are not called *crimes*,
Only just a harmless bit of fun, they say,
At worst, it's called *Anti-social* , *juvenile behaviour*,
Or at best - *a sign of troubled times*.

And crooks these days are seldom just arrested
As used to happen, according to the local copper's diaries;
Not now - these days we're told that they are out there -
Assisting police with their enquiries.

And a gentleman with "form", now out there on the run
Accused of changing other chaps from *present* to immediate *past tense*,
With bloodied hands and still-warm smoking gun,
He's described only as:
A Person of real interest -
Because, like us, the cops don't want to give offence.

And if they say that you're *disturbed*,
It *could* mean you're barking mad,
And if your official diagnosis is *psychotically unwell*,
You will probably by now be tightly strait-jacketed,
Attired only in your undies
In a bright new padded cell,
But it sounds a whole lot better
To say that you are now - *in psychiatric care, and responding very well*,
According to a usually reliable source.
But if things get worse, and you need a hearse
For want of something more expressive,
They'll say that you were *bi-polar, melancholy, sad*,
Clinically-addicted, suicidal, aggressive and depressive,
But they will never simply say - that you were raving mad.

When governments are running short of dough -
A prospect less than pleasing,
They crank up the old printing press, at the national money-mint;
They say this isn't printing money:
Absolutely not! this is *quantitative easing* -
And they do it when they're skint.

Tennis-players never lose a round
If beaten at the Open, or other tennis capers;
These days they're just been *bundled out* -
According to the papers.
And cricketers are never dropped,
When they are out of form;
There's another explanation,
We are told that they are *resting*,
Or simply *on rotation*.

A public toilet was a 'loo, a lavvy or a dunny,
But now it's called a *rest-room, comfort station*,
A wash-room or convenience - and you might think that this sounds funny,
But you are not allowed to rest in one, much less be given comfort,
Or do the family washing in a "wash - room" water closet,
No way - you're supposed to make a noise in there,

And leave a small deposit.

**So why use all these euphemisms
When simple words would do?
Perhaps because we're civilised and don' want to give offence
We've all taken to it, too.**

**So, now I will be heading out
Intent on cool *libation*, before I have my tea
And some *social fraternising* at a certain Bowling Club
Located in the local *Recreation Precinct*,
Just past the *CBD*:
My GPS can find it, by *automotive instinct*,
And the *sommelier* down there
Knows how to service *me*,
With his boundless good-will and sense of humour, and his alcoholic cheer.
In short, without these euphemisms: I'm heading for the Bowling club,
To buy myself a beer.**

*The Oxford Dictionary defines Euphemism as:
"the substitution of mild or vague expressions for harsh or blunt ones."*