**Speak Google**

**or**

**Nothing is Lost, But What is Gained?**

The Democratic Primary preceding the 2008 election was remarkable in that a fierce battle between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama was fought openly in the full glare of the media coverage. Though I was surrounded by pro-Obama friends and by neighborhood signs, I was pro-Hillary, thinking her the better of the two candidates. I sent contributions to her campaign, once, twice. The Democrat I loved (so to speak) was a woman, and its realization, first unconsciously and then consciously, let me to the memory of a phrase that lay buried in my mine for seventy-five years: *The girl I love is a Democrat*.

In the Fall of 1931 I was in the fifth grade of the Alexander B. Bruce Grammar School in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

The country was then in the middle of a deep economic depression. Unemployment was rife; there were bank failures, foreclosures, bread lines. Herbert Hoover --- a Republican --- was the President, and a national election was coming up in November, 1932. What were the issues? Unemployment, of course, but also and quite importantly, the repeal of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment took effect in 1920 and prohibited the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcoholic drinks of all kinds (with the exception of sacramental wines).

Apart from the fact that Prohibition was a great failure, with bootleggers, run-runners --- as a child, my friends and I played, "Rum-runners and Coast Guard" as well as "Cowboys and Indians". There was smuggling and speakeasies. (Fast forward and consider the "smoke easys" that are around today. As yet, there is no constitutional prohibition against smoking.) There were drunks everywhere on the street, with the "smart set" openly defying the prohibition and with the Europeans mocking the puritanical Americans. It was commonly thought that the manufacture and sale of such beverages would give employment to millions and thus benefit the economy.

The word "repeal" became a fighting political slogan; prosperity would come through beer. The end of Prohibition was approaching, and I, at the age of nine, hastened it by wearing a tie to school that displayed a flowing mug of beer.

On the cheerful side, popular music was around in great strength. For 10 cents hawkers in downtown Lawrence sold sheets with the current hot-off-the-presses lyrics. (I read somewhere that the sale of ballad sheets go back to the 1500's.) Singing was strong. Movie theaters with Wurlitzer organs had sing-alongs. When I graduated from Grammar School in 1935, the class sang an excerpt from Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* in three part harmony. (I sang "tenor-alto".)

It was the early days of radio, and some of the finest, tuneful popular songs were written in the '30's. Does suffering and turmoil lead to great art? On the contrary, can comfortable living in Eden result in intellectual and artistic stagnation?

Throughout the '20's and early '30's, we lived in the first floor of a two story brick house on Hillside Avenue. My uncle, aunt, and their two sons lived on the second floor. In many ways our two families were quite close to one another. My two cousins, the older Morrey --- later a distinguished ENT doctor --- and the younger Barney (nicknamed Tibby) --- later a rather eccentric figure in the popular entertainment and music business --- mixed it up frequently with my brothers and sister, particularly my older broth, also named Barney (and nicknamed Rummy).

In those days, communal (amateur) musical performances were frequent. (No TV; and not every family had a radio or even a victrola.) A performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* was organized by our next door neighbor, Edmund Ford (later an Assistant Attorney General in Washington). John Ford, his son, my sister Tilly, brothers, cousins, friends, were swept into the production. I sat by as they rehearsed, and I absorbed all the songs. I could easily have played prompter to the company. I recall the cast rummaging around in piles of discarded clothes to create costumes. The operetta was put on outdoors on the Fords' summer property at Canobie Lake in nearby Salem, New Hampshire. (One performance and to great éclat.)

If my memory holds, there were no printed programs, but here was the

Cast for *H.M.S. Pinafore*

Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B. Morrey Young

Captain Corcoran Tibby Young

Ralph Rackstraw Rummy Davis

Dick Deadeye Atty. Edmund Ford

Josephine Cousin Miriam

Little Buttercup Tilly Davis

Sisters & Cousins & Aunts and Chorus Friends & Neighbors

Director: Atty. Ford

Pianist: I can't recall who played

Mise en scène: Ditto

In the Fall of 1931, my brother Barney was a Junior at Dartmouth. He was a skillful musician and could play the clarinet, oboe, saxophone, guitar, and piano. He had been a member of the Lawrence High Scholl Band and was then in the Dartmouth College symphony orchestra. His cousin Tibby, who played the melophone in High School, was then a senior at Harvard and had fallen in love with the popular song business in all its aspects. Fortunes had been made by Tin Pan Alley song writers such as George M. Cohan, Irving Berlin, or Al Dubin. Why not get a start while still in college (jobs for graduates were scarce) and get a toehold in the business.

It was pretty clear by 1931 that the Democrats were going to win the election. During the Democrats' Convention, held in the Summer of 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the overwhelming favorite --- his main opponent was Al Smith. By the fourth ballot, Roosevelt had won the nomination. "Roosevelt and Prosperity" was the slogan of a juggernaut movement of Democrats, and in the 1932 election, he won against Hoover with an overwhelming majority of the electoral votes.

Despite the gloom of the Depression, but reacting to themoney, excitement of the upcoming election, Tibby suggested to my brother Rummy that they collaborate and write an election song: He would write the lyrics while Rummy would write the music. My brother agreed. I recall the two around the piano, with, perhaps, Tibby's older brother Morrie, adding in his two cents. Was this project merely a college undergraduates' lark?

Publishing a popular song was more complicated than one might think:

Who would make the arrangement?

Who would do illustrations and layout for the cover sheet?

Who would publish it?

Who would distributed it?

What about a copyright?

Who could get it sung on the radio?

How could one connect up the song with the local and national Democratic committees?

The solution to all these questions cost money, and I suspect, but I did not overhear the arrangements, that my uncle and aunt laid out a fair amount of the costs. In any case, most of these questions got answered. The music and the lyrics got written, and the day finally arrived when the published sheet music was available to the Great American Public --- particularly to the Democrats.

And what was the upshot? Very, very little, I am afraid. *The Girl I Love is a Democrat* --- for such was the name of the song --- made no waves. At least I never heard that fortunes were made on it. In the 1932 Convention the Democrats marched to the tune of

Happy days are here again

The skies above are clear again

So let's sing a song of cheer again

Happy days are here again.

(Actually, this is a pre-Crash song. The "Happy Days" referred to the great recovery and economic euphoria following the Depression of 1922.) These lines and their catchy tune became the Democrats' identifying theme song, their "audio-logo" for this and many subsequent elections.

One of the popular songs of the day came to mind only recently; I learned it from my brother, and I could sing it long before I understood what the words meant:

I walk along the street of sorrow,

The boulevard of broken dreams,

Where gigolo and gigolette

Can take a kiss without regret

So they forget their broken dreams.

Though we owned several copies of *The Girl I Love is a Democrat*, strangely I nevere learned the lyrics or the tune. For years copies of the song were in our piano bench that could open up, and was tucked in among such music as Theodore Presser's *Exercises for Grade 3, Under the Double Eagle March*, and Beethoven's *Für Elise*.

The economic depression deepened. My father was hit early on by the bank failures and local unemployment. Roosevelt's "New Deal" programs, the WPA, the CCC et alii, helped a bit, more psychologically, perhaps, than economically. Rummy had hopes for me musically and used to send me dollars for piano and later for clarinet lessons. Though I liked to sing, listen to records, and read scores, I was simply not an instrumentalist.

My brother Rummy died in 1939, and in the agony, depression, and chaos that accompanied the family's move to New York City, the piles of music and much, much more got dispersed and scattered to the winds. Put away one's childish things? The wind took care of that automatically.

\*\*\*\*

More than seventy-five years have now passed since the events just described*. The Girl I Love is a Democrat,* though not entirely forgotten, was never on the forefront of my memory.

Recently, sitting in front of my computer terminal on which the computer maven had just provided me with the facility of *YouTube*, I was informed that if I typed in the name of a song --- any song --- it would be sung, and with photo clips of the artists if available. Hillary was not out of the running. Nonetheless, I typed in *The Girl I Love is a Democrat*. I waited microseconds with the classical bated breath. Lots and lots of output were put out, but no *Girl* that the *Democrats* and *I loved*.

Ah yes, such is fate. Who now remembers Ozymandias of Egypt of whom "nothing remains round the decay"?

wow! Google came up with a **Teacher's Guide to the 1932 Presidential Campaign**, featuring questions and suggested answers for students, and --- would you believe this? --- a PowerPoint slide of the cover sheet of *The Girl I Love Is A Democrat!* A young flapper holding a mug of foaming beer rides on a cheerful Democratic Donkey and together they head towards "Prosperity". This was beyond belief for me; I had no recollection of the cover nor of the lyrics.

Here are a few clips from the **Teacher's Guide**:

**1932 Doc. #2: "The Girl I Love is a Democrat"**

Sheet Music

MEDIA CONSTRUCTION OF PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS 1932 DOCUMENT

QUESTION: **What message does this image give about the Democrats? What evidence do you have to support your views?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER: The Democrats are for women, the end of Prohibition, and for prosperity.

EVIDENCE: The flapper is smiling and holding a mug of beer; she and the donkey are kicking up their heels and heading toward "Prosperity".

QUESTION: **Who are the target audiences for this image? Why do you think this?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Target audiences include young women and men.

EVIDENCE: The flapper is a sign of youth culture; the song is published by the Intercollegiate Music League.

SUGGESTED ANSWER: It also targets those opposing Prohibition.

EVIDENCE: The beer mug says "Repeal"; the flapper is happily drinking beer.

QUESTION: **Why would this images have been unlikely 20 years earlier?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER: In 1912 women could not vote. The style of the woman's dress would have been different. Liquor was legal in 1912 and the call for "repeal" would not be heard until the 18th Amendment prohibiting alcohol was passed in 1920.

QUESTION: **Does this image support the empowerment of women? Why or why not? Is it appropriate for alcohol and partying to be used as means to get votes? Why or why not?**

From an obscure tune in 1931 to a *Teacher's Guide* in 2008, complete with PowerPoint and a political agenda. To what shall I compare this metamorphosis? After a lapse of many years, I recently heard a radio performance of Arnold Schoenberg's romantic piece *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night), a composition I first heard when I was twelve and that I liked very much. The music thrust me deep into the memory mode and reawakened the word *Verklärt* : A state of clarity or of etherialization achieved; in short, a transfiguration. Have I made a ridiculous comparison? Mein Bruder's Gesang Verklärt? My brother's song transfigured? Have our lives been transfigured by today's computerized communications? Or simply transmogrified?

To return to my story. According to some science fiction writers and some mystic philosophers, no action, no image, no spoken words are ever lost. All these are vibrations that float around forever in a platonic and physical metaspace; they are all recoverable. Where are the songs of yesteryear? They are around somewhere. All the songs that Sappho sung can be recaptured. Well, as Lord Wellington said, if you can believe that, you can believe anything; But I know that Google did not pick *The Girl* up from vibrations of twenty six dimensional hyperspace. *The Girl* must exist in an archive somewhere.

I recalled that the John Hay Rare Book Library at Brown has a very large collection of popular sheet music. I contacted Rosemary Cullen, curator of this collection. No, she reported back to me rapidly, *The Girl* was not in the collection, but it was in a collection at the University of Colorado In Boulder and could be requested by Interlibrary Loan. Here is Rosemary's message to me (abbreviated):

Hi, [Standard salutary opening these days, replacing "Dear ..."]

We checked our holdings, and as far as I can see, we don't have it. I looked in WorldCat , and there is a copy at the University of Colorado at Boulder. You could ask for a copy on interlibrary loan.

(Record for Item.

Get this Item) Location: Library Code US, CO UNIV OF COLORADO AT BOULDER COD

Accession Number: 58733621

Title: The girl I love is a democrat

Author(s): Davis, Rummy

Young, Tibby

Pearce, Charlie

Young, Morrey

Publication: Cambridge: Intercollegiate Music League.

Year: 1933

Description: 1 score (5 p.) 31 cm.

Language: English

SUBJECT(S)

Descriptor: Popular music --- 1931 - 1940

Songs with piano

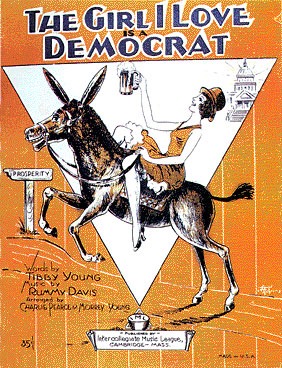
Note(s): For voice and piano

First line of text The burning questions were depression

First line of chorus: I says to her love me, Miss Prosperity

Database: WorldCat

After a lapse of several weeks a full copy of *The Girl I Love* (cover sheet and music) arrived from the Howard B. Maltz Music Library of the University of Colorado, Boulder.



The lyrics began:

*The burning questions were depression*

*Who would win the next election?*

*Then you heard the banks were bad*

*Stock were low; bulls were mad*

*I found a cure for my depression*

*A girl has won my love election*

*I've nothing left to worry at*

*For the girl who won was a Democrat.*

Is there a First Law of Communication that nothing is ever lost?

Why do we exhume the past? What do we want from it?