



ART LESS GNOME MORE!

Posted on June 1, 2021 by Mark Stocker



Some shocked readers will say disbelievingly, "No art this time?" In response, I feel a tautly-argued paper, "The aesthetics of garden gnomes," coming on. I would write it with Andy Williams's "Gnome lovin' man" as background music. If anyone is interested, I did the [comparable exercise with Lego\(TM\)](#). I told the chairman of the board of my museum he would benefit from reading it, and was no doubt unwittingly signing my death-warrant in the imminent restructure.

But I digress. My liberal left-wing mid-century modernist parents, bless them, brought me up to despise garden gnomes as signifiers of vulgar and contemptible petit-bourgeois values upholding hegemonic capitalism. This thesis was confirmed by the late Shirley Williams, an endearing left-liberal British politician, who rapidly came to the conclusion that attempting to canvas any gnome-infested household during elections was doomed to failure, as their guardians were invariably complacent Tory philistines. Naturally I was intrigued by all of this, and felt like sticking up for these delightful little men and their Tory owners, and even defying parental admonitions. Were gnomes not subaltern victims of oppressive academic/art world culture?

It was not until my 50s, however, that I quite summoned up the nerve to buy two "collectible" gnomes, rather worse for wear, and left them happily in their garden when I moved locations and into an apartment. So, after this brief fling, I am once more gnomeless. Any analyst, Lacanian or otherwise, would nonetheless tell from these jokes that I have a deep-seated sense of identity with gnomes, before quizzing me on my love-life and innermost desires, possibly beyond gnomes - but reader, my lips are sealed! Someone who enjoyed a far more colourful love-life than mine was the great poet and writer of the Claudius novels, Robert Graves. He was a war hero with a zest for life, sharp intelligence and lack of political correctness that compares with the badly-missed Prince Philip. The two men would have got on like a house on fire. Graves's famous poem "Down, wonton [sic] down" is brilliantly raunchy - Lord Rochester recast some 250 years later...

What is the favourite poem of Gnomes? Robert Browning: "**Gnome thoughts from abroad.**"

Here's a favourite Gnome saying (NB: they are pretty right-wing): "**A woman's place is in the gnome.**" It vies in popularity with "**Gnome, sweet gnome!**"



German garden gnome.

The government of the Gnomes recently funded a project to determine everybody's DNA sequencing. It was naturally called **the Gegnome Project**.

Gnomes are, as I say, a conservative lot. Accordingly, the standard occupation for their fair sex is "**Gnome-maker**."

What is the favourite magazine of lady Gnomes? *Gnome and Garden*.

What is yet another favourite saying of their culture? "**All roads lead to Gnome**."

A slightly troubled Gnome goes to a psychiatrist, who asks him, "I hope you don't mind telling me as to whom you are sexually attracted?"

"Male Gnomes, of course, the bushier the beard the better!"

"**Ah, then you must be a gnomosexual!**" (I trust this isn't gnomophobic)!

The Gnomes decide to build a very large monument of a triumphant gnome which has the simple and obvious title of Gnome. Being industrious little chappies, the monument is nearly completed by the end of the day whereupon, most unfortunately, the gardener collides into it with his wheelbarrow, causing untold damage. The gnomes are in a state of grief and denial, but their glib project manager tells them reassuringly, "**It's OK, guys, stay cool. Gnome wasn't built in a day.**"

Gnomes are avid historians. Here is a timeline of important events:

- 753 BCE: **Founding of Gnome**
- 1066 CE: **The Gnome-man Conquest**
- 1922 **Gnome rule for Ireland**. Civil war ensues with the Leprechauns.

In their intellectual tastes, our little friends particularly esteem baffling thinkers, e.g., Duns Scotus, Hegel and Heidegger. **Indeed, the more "gnomic" the better!**

Moving right along ...

When Robert Graves was in a Chinese restaurant, a gorgeous dollybird entered the premises and made him choke with emotion. He spluttered: "**Down, wonton, down!**"



Bust of Robert Graves. Deia, Mallorca, Spain.

What is the specialist cuisine of the Chinese navy? **Junk food.**

The Ballymoney Debating Society rashly decided to hold a gentlemanly debate: "This house believes that the Irish have something in common." Fisticuffs and shillelagh-bashing ensued, before the motion was unanimously defeated.

The featured image shows a postcard by Arthur Thiele, ca. 1914-1918.

