

EDWARD LEAR

*The Owl and the Pussycat*  
*(1/2)*

I

*The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea  
In a beautiful pea-green boat,  
They took some honey, and plenty of money,  
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.  
The Owl looked up to the stars above,  
And sang to a small guitar,  
"O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,  
What a beautiful Pussy you are,  
You are,  
You are!  
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"*

II

*Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!  
How charmingly sweet you sing!  
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:  
But what shall we do for a ring?"  
They sailed away, for a year and a day,  
To the land where the Bong-Tree grows  
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood  
With a ring at the end of his nose,*



EDWARD LEAR

*The Owl and the Pussycat*  
*(2/2)*

*His nose,  
His nose,  
With a ring at the end of his nose.*

III

*"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling  
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."  
So they took it away, and were married next day  
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.  
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,  
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;  
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,  
They danced by the light of the moon,  
The moon,  
The moon,  
They danced by the light of the moon.*



MARTIN ARMSTRONG

*'Mrs Reece Laughs'*

*Laughter, with us, is no great undertaking,  
A sudden wave that breaks and dies in breaking.  
Laughter with Mrs. Reece is much less simple:  
It germinates, it spreads, dimple by dimple,  
From small beginnings, things of easy girth,  
To formidable redundancies of mirth.  
Clusters of subterranean chuckles rise  
And presently the circles of her eyes  
Close into slits and all the woman heaves  
As a great elm with all its mounds of leaves  
Wallows before the storm. From hidden sources  
A mustering of blind volcanic forces  
Takes her and shakes her till she sobs and gapes.  
Then all that load of bottled mirth escapes  
In one wild crow, a lifting of huge hands,  
And creaking stays, a visage that expands  
In scarlet ridge and furrow. Thence collapse,  
A hanging head, a feeble hand that flaps  
An apron-end to stir an air and waft  
A steaming face. And Mrs. Reece has laughed.*



OGDEN NASH

*'To my Valentine'*

*More than a catbird hates a cat,  
Or a criminal hates a clue,  
Or the Axis hates the United States,  
That's how much I love you.*

*I love you more than a duck can swim,  
And more than a grapefruit squirts,  
I love you more than a gin rummy is a bore,  
And more than a toothache hurts.*

*As a shipwrecked sailor hates the sea,  
Or a juggler hates a shove,  
As a hostess detests unexpected guests,  
That's how much you I love.*

*I love you more than a wasp can sting,  
And more than the subway jerks,  
I love you as much as a beggar needs a crutch,  
And more than a hangnail irks.*

*I swear to you by the stars above,  
And below, if such there be,  
As the High Court loathes perjurious oaths,  
That's how you're loved by me.*



WENDY COPE

*'1st Date - she' (1/2)*

*I said I liked classical music.*

*It wasn't exactly a lie.*

*I hoped he would get the impression*

*That my brow was acceptably high.*

*I said I liked classical music.*

*I mentioned Vivaldi and Bach.*

*And he asked me along to this concert.*

*Here we are, sitting in the half-dark.*

*I was thrilled to be asked to the concert.*

*I couldn't decide what to wear.*

*I hope I look tastefully sexy.*

*I've done what I can with my hair.*

*Yes, I'm thrilled to be here at this concert.*

*I couldn't care less what they play*

*But I'm trying my hardest to listen*

*So I'll have something clever to say.*

*When I glance at his face it's a picture*

*Of rapt concentration. I see*

*He is totally into this music*

*And quite undistracted by me.*



WENDY COPE

*'1st Date - he' (2/2)*

*She said she liked classical music.*

*I implied I was keen on it too.*

*Though I don't often go to a concert,*

*It wasn't entirely untrue.*

*I looked for a suitable concert*

*And here we are, on our first date.*

*The traffic was dreadful this evening*

*And I arrived ten minutes late.*

*So we haven't had much time for talking*

*And I'm a bit nervous. I see*

*She is totally lost in the music*

*And quite undistracted by me.*

*In that dress she is very attractive –*

*The neckline can't fail to intrigue.*

*I mustn't appear too besotted.*

*Perhaps she is out of my league.*

*Where are we? I glance at the programme*

*But I've put my glasses away.*

*I'd better start paying attention*

*Or else I'll have nothing to say.*



JOHN BETJEMAN

*'Slough' (1/2)*

*Come friendly bombs and fall on Slough!*

*It isn't fit for humans now,*

*There isn't grass to graze a cow.*

*Swarm over, Death!*

*Come, bombs and blow to smithereens*

*Those air -conditioned, bright canteens,*

*Tinned fruit, tinned meat, tinned milk, tinned beans,*

*Tinned minds, tinned breath.*

*Mess up the mess they call a town-*

*A house for ninety-seven down*

*And once a week a half a crown*

*For twenty years.*

*And get that man with double chin*

*Who'll always cheat and always win,*

*Who washes his repulsive skin*

*In women's tears:*

*And smash his desk of polished oak*

*And smash his hands so used to stroke*

*And stop his boring dirty joke*

*And make him yell.*

*But spare the bald young clerks who add*

*The profits of the stinking cad;*

*It's not their fault that they are mad,*

*They've tasted Hell.*



JOHN BETJEMAN

*'Slough' (2/2)*

*It's not their fault they do not know*

*The birdsong from the radio,*

*It's not their fault they often go*

*To Maidenhead*

*And talk of sport and makes of cars*

*In various bogus-Tudor bars*

*And daren't look up and see the stars*

*But belch instead.*

*In labour-saving homes, with care*

*Their wives frizz out peroxide hair*

*And dry it in synthetic air*

*And paint their nails.*

*Come, friendly bombs and fall on Slough*

*To get it ready for the plough.*

*The cabbages are coming now;*

*The earth exhales.*