

Brian Culhane

*Problems of Usage*

i. Disinterested / Uninterested

Best disinterested like a judge,  
Not arrested by dislike  
Or its converse, not molested  
By the tug of a mind  
Out on some hike  
Laboring behind  
With unspoken grudge,  
But rather wholly free  
As one who, past the chasm,  
Peers into infinity  
Without spasm:  
Quizzical, perhaps,  
That Death came so near  
(Only to disappear, running laps  
With his companion, Fear).  
But you're uninterested,  
Dear, already gone to bed.

ii. Imply / Infer

Regarding last night's shove:  
I must infer your love,  
As from such gestures made,  
Whose meanings (lie, lay, laid?)  
Under cover of night,  
I extrapolate delight

When muscles tense.  
Just as this sentence  
Makes its implication felt  
Rather than openly spelt,  
So your touch may turn  
Out to be a hint  
The one shoved must learn.  
Take color and tint:  
A difference of heft,  
Like leaving and left.  
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iii. Cite / Sight / Site

Every affair  
Has a site  
Where  
Two met:

A first set  
Of coordinates,  
With dates  
And times.

The lines  
Crossed there!  
Lovers can cite  
Each stair,

Each stone,  
Or how near  
Their sight  
Once alone.

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iv. Ensure / Insure

Uncertain means unsure,  
But ensure not insure.  
Does dirty mean impure?  
And when's a fly a lure?  
Or some trip a tour?  
Or wall in, immure?  
Our thesaurus holds no cure:  
The last may not endure.  
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v. To / Two / Too

Too true  
That two  
Who diverge  
May yet merge,  
Come to  
Their senses,  
Make amends,  
Mend fences,  
Again become  
A sum  
Beyond friends.

vi. Weather / Whether

Love's natural weather  
Is where you are.

Love's a romp in heather  
If you're there.

Love's never a tether,  
Ever.

And this is so, whether  
You love me or no.

vii. Number / Amount

Mistakes which weigh  
On grammarians may  
Be of little account.  
So number and amount.

Who cares if pins, coins,  
Stamps, foes, kisses, loins  
Come to a goodly number,  
Or that standing lumber,  
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Sheer terror, heart's delight,  
However solid or slight,  
Can never be added up  
Like chips from a broken cup?

The number of headaches,  
Amount of trips to lakes:  
Aren't arbitrary rules  
Fit for pedantic fools?

Aren't such truly made  
To be lost or mislaid?  
Three centuries from now

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Will any strike a brow  
On encountering such?  
Dear, we love so much,  
No solecism mars  
The meaning that is ours;

Indeed no usage book  
Helps parse a narrow look  
Or insures happiness,  
Or makes joy any less.

Weather teachers agree  
Or site our impropriety,  
We'll lay together long,  
Content in being wrong.