

She waited at that desk for news of the world to come. Seeds of information flitting via the thrum of telegraph poles. Stop. Birds on the wires taking flight, feet tickled by the news. Stop. Were these primordial tweets? Stop.

Sophia Al Maria  
**TBH IDK FTW**



In the spring of 1915 an editorial assistant called Dorothy Parker hung a full-color centerfold of a cadaver above her desk at *Vogue*. She had pulled it out of an undertaker's trade rag called *Sunnyside*. The image was instructive to the novice mortician who might want to learn the best insertion points for embalming fluid but repulsive to her boss, who soon fired her.

She'd later infer that writing 140-character captions for fashion magazines during wartime led her to believe civilization was dead.

These and other thoughts were thunk in the presence of information, which she ingested voraciously. Whole books and plays and Hollywood scripts were written against a backdrop of a stack of books and other analog scenery. Printed matter and word-of-mouth were the distractions du jour. She was prolific even through (or perhaps because of) a fug of booze. Sometimes chemical interference is the only thing that makes information feel manageable. A



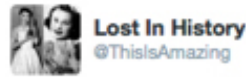
A digitally customized tombstone displays Dorothy Parker's suggestion for her own epitaph.

famous American novelist said nothing good is written in the presence of the Internet. I don't agree. But I get it.

I Google "1915 undertaker magazine" and find ads for Esco's Anti-Odorant Softener and the labels of Ozoform Concentrated Jaundofiant and Control Arterial Hyersol Velva-Glo.

But no cocktail of embalming fluids or fossil fuels could resuscitate this world she declared dead – this fashionable hellscape, this real world.

I like to track centennial tweets. They are a social-media subgenre. Every day a new fact is dredged up from the swamps of the early twentieth century. Here are a few.



Lost In History  
@ThisIsAmazing

Little Nap, the Napoleon of the Chimpanzee World, 1915.



31 May 1915, we remember Islington residents Henry & Caroline Good & others who died in London's first #WW1 air raid

## VICTIMS OF THE AIR RAID.

### CORONER ON BARBAROUS WEAPONS.

#### VERDICT OF MURDER.

An inquest was held yesterday on the bodies of Henry Thomas Good, 49, and his wife, Caroline Good, 46, two of the victims of the German air raid on Monday night.

The Coroner said that the jury were inquiring into the cause of death of two innocent persons who were apparently burnt to death by the explosion of a bomb dropped by a Zeppelin by the orders of the German Army, he supposed. It is not desirable, he added, to make much connection about this



**RetroSikh**  
@RetroSikh

#Worldwar1 The Darkest Day !  
4th June 1915 Third Battle of  
Kirthia 380 of 514 from  
Ferozepore Sikh Regiment killed.

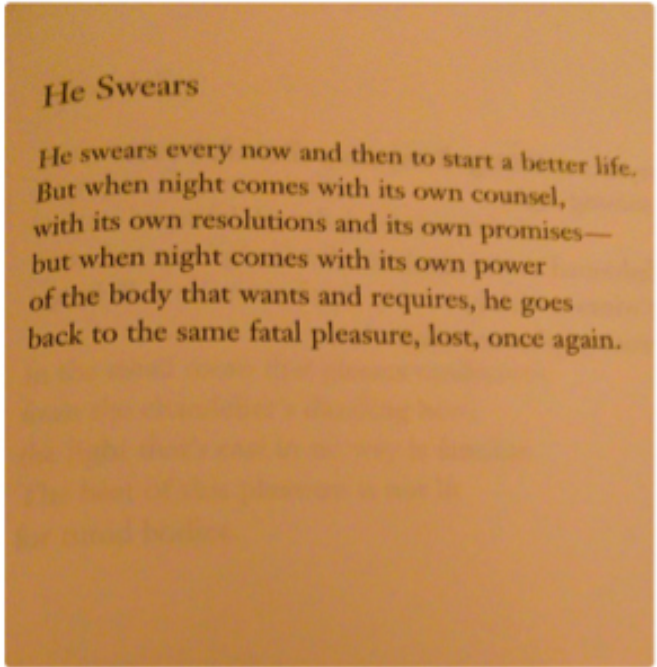


02/06/2015 10:25



**Denis Spillane**  
@spillaneda

'He Swears'  
(from Poems: 1905-1915)  
Constantine P. Cavafy



*He Swears*

*He swears every now and then to start a better life.  
But when night comes with its own counsel,  
with its own resolutions and its own promises—  
but when night comes with its own power  
of the body that wants and requires, he goes  
back to the same fatal pleasure, lost, once again.*

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TBH IDKFTW 1/06/2015 23:55



Historical Images  
@Historicalimages

Turkish official teasing starved Armenian children by showing bread during the Armenian Genocide, 1915.



01/06/2015 19:10



Old Pics Archive  
@oldpicsarchive

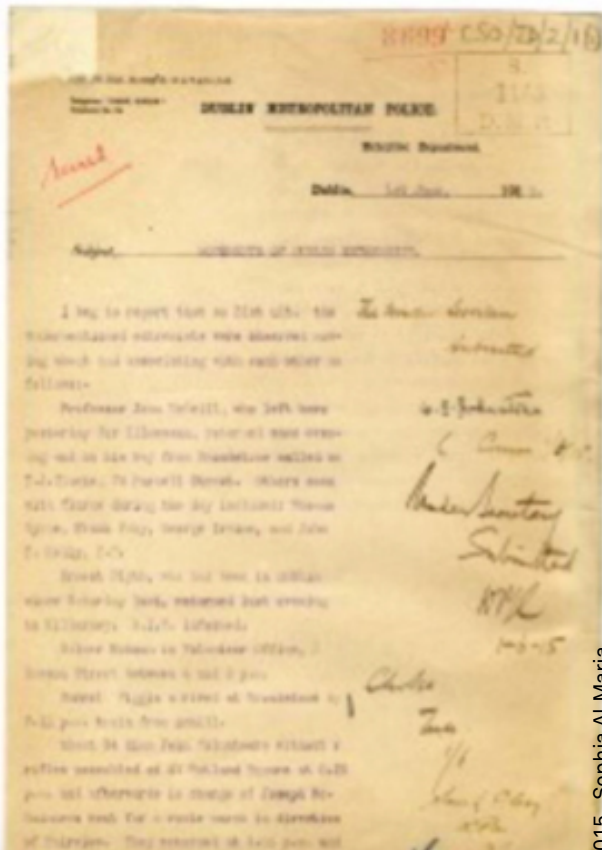
Miss Elinor Blevins, Woman Auto Racer in 1915



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1st June 1915. DMP reports tracing Dublin  
extremists from 100 years ago via  
[nationalarchives.ie/digital-resour...](http://nationalarchives.ie/digital-resour...)



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TBH IDKFTW

You see, 1915 AD is MCMXV is the year of  
the wood rabbit is 1333–1334 Hijri is Taishō 41 is  
Holocene 11915 and Hongxian Year Zero.

This year a zeppelin is dropping bombs on  
Islington.

There is mutiny in the whispers of the  
British Indian Army.

A garden in Gympie dies from a drought.

The brakes fail on a train carrying 900  
people to Guadalajara.

The Dingbat Family teach vaudeville how to  
do the maxixe.

A donkey dies on a road somewhere outside  
of Zagazig.

The workers of the Bayonne refinery strike  
Standard Oil in New Jersey.

The Armenian genocide is occurring.

1915 is Dorothy Parker's second year  
at *Vogue* and you can feel the seeping force of  
trickle-down tragedy.

Fast-forward exactly a hundred years to  
2015 and to a new kind of cultural entity called  
Kim Kardashian. She has had the cover of *Vogue*.

She has 32 million followers. More than Moses.  
Bigger than Jesus. All that.

Some complain about the Kardashians: that  
they are TMI on tap.

It's April and Kim goes to visit the genocide  
memorial in the global gully called Yerevan. It is a  
frightening and appropriately austere monument  
of black marble and it looks like the unfurling  
crown of a mother ship at the top of a gray crag  
of mountains. I was there just a few months  
earlier. Shaken down on the road from Georgia by  
a bribe-seeking cop in an absurdly high peaked  
officer's cap.

We drove through snowy mountains past a  
chrome-clad UFO as alien as an airstream in  
these foothills, dead earth dusted with a  
sugaring of snow and then passed into what we  
thought was bad weather but was in fact a  
leaden cloud of pollution, a haze that clutched  
the city. Is this what Beijing is like on a bad day?

I am invited to the home of an online friend.  
She is from Nagorno-Karabakh. She grew up in  
the enclave during the war with Azerbaijan. Once  
she went with her cousins to fetch water and  
returned to find their home gone. She now  
“works in tech.” I tell her I'm a little surprised the  
Wi-Fi in Yerevan is so fast and pure and uncut. At  
least, it's better than anywhere I've ever been.  
We are the same age and knowing her makes me  
feel inexperienced on this Earth – domesticated  
by the data I don't understand.

She says the Internet makes her feel the  
weight of knowing too much. Irritating things.  
Irrelevant things. Irreverent things. Irrevocable  
things. But I'm afraid of erasure. The wiped drive  
of my mind. I know I know nothing. There's less  
and less to understand every day. Information  
ground into digital dust. The world stopped  
making sense a long time ago. Parker called it  
before she died the afternoon of June 8, 1967.  
Her epitaph reads: “Excuse My Dust.”

And today on the anniversary of her death I  
am in Baku. In order to obtain a visa for  
Azerbaijan I was required to declare that I had  
never visited the formerly Autonomous Oblast of  
Nagorno-Karabakh. This declaration is an easy  
one for me but wouldn't be for my friend. On our  
way into the city we pass a Zaha Hadid building.  
It is called the Heydar Aliyev Center. Its banners  
toast in all caps: “TO THE FUTURE WITH  
VALUES!” I Google him and find he was a KGB  
officer. A mafioso. An oligarch. A president. He  
was the amasser of a fortune made of Caspian  
Sea caviar. And father of the current president,  
Ilham Aliyev who is in turn the father of a teenage  
boy. It is said this boy owns nine Dubai mansions  
worth \$44 million, which is calculated to amount  
to approximately “1,000 years' worth of salary for  
the average citizen of Azerbaijan.”

A millennium of money.



Liam Hogan  
@Limerick1914

"Why" (The Day Book, 29 May 1915) #Chicago

<p>an hardly f</p> <p>If a negro</p> <p>woman th</p> <p>lynch him</p> <p>men insult</p> <p>see? Why</p> <p>ame work</p> <p>e not draw</p> <p>y do negro</p>	<p>t belong by</p> <p>egroes, for</p> <p>an citizens?</p> <p>is such?</p> <p>ome good</p> <p>arts will give</p> <p>are other v</p> <p>ited I cannot</p>
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02/06/2015 14:23

1  
RETWEET

6  
FAVORITES





# PHOTO



♥ 25 likes

🗨 Odonyadolma0 ⭐ 🌍 la8erz 🌍 ⭐





I visit the Palace of the Shirvanshahs and find myself standing in front of a Shia mosque riddled with one-hundred-year-old bullet holes. A woman stands in front of the thick wall performing her historical tour as if she is on a stage. "This is where the genocide of Azeris by Armenians happened a century ago. On these stones we are standing on right here." She calls it genocide. But what is genocide? The noun used always in retrospect – a kind of atrocity in most vital and urgent need of definition. It is not for liberal application. I seek to make sense of this statement online and of course do not find it. Wikipedia clarifies: the Armenian–Azerbaijani War "was a series of brutal and hard-to-classify conflicts."

This sounds more like the truth.

That afternoon I have an encounter with the disembodied bust of Heydar Aliyev.

I tweet this:

09/10

the property of an elderly woman where fiber-optic cables were found severed in the boughs of her tangerine trees. The old woman was uncertain of what she'd done wrong. She'd just been out pruning her fruit trees. How should she know she had sliced right through the cords tying Armenia to the rest of the planet? They explain to her that she's broken the internet. A very serious offense. The old woman blinked at them and asked, eyes wet with worry, "What is internet?"

×



SophiaAlMaria  
@SophiaAlMaria

Downloading a president on dial up



It reminds me of the olden days when the Internet was slow and you had to trade "phone privileges" for modem time. It also reminds me of a funny story my friend in Yerevan told me about the Internet.

Two years ago there was a mass blackout of the WWW in Armenia. Panicked officials couldn't track down the cause but suspected terrorists or espionage. They followed the cables leading north out of the city and found the problem on

Sophia Al Maria is based in London now, where she writes screenplays for a living.

1  
See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D\\_period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taish%C5%8D_period)

10/10

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