



Monday 2nd January 2017
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

Members present: Amy (Guest), Denise, Helen, Marilyn, Margaret H, Mike S, Margaret T, Pam P, Pam W, Phil, Viv B, Viv S.

12 members were present.

There remains just one month for which we need a member to offer to do the summary – December 2017.

Phil kindly and efficiently organised the drinks order. The Lion Hotel appeared to change the way they charged for the drinks and the bill came to an amount greater than the money collected but Phil used his legal negotiating tactics to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of both parties.

It was agreed that the minutes taken at each meeting should be in the format of a short summary and that café society members' names should not be attributed to the comments and conversation.

o Discussion Topics

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

Is marriage a good thing after the age of, say, sixty?

- This was a follow-on question after last month's topic 'Is Love Worth It' generated so much discussion. It was clarified that the extended question revolved around the issues of living in a marriage as opposed to the marriage ceremony itself and that marriage is essentially a committed relationship. "These days, it is nothing to live to the age of 90, so this is a very relevant and interesting topic", a group member exclaimed.
- It was pointed out that in the UK, the 'widow's pension' entitlements were discontinued in 2001 and the group suggested that there should be a review of automatic pension rights for spouses.

- In general, much of the discussion about marriage after retirement centred around practicalities of care and finances. With the gradual depletion of state benefits, a member commented that “we have entered an era where we have to take care of each other”. With this in mind, it was felt that one of the main advantages of re-marrying in later life was to pool together resources and form a mutual care relationship, although several members of the group found this notion alarming.
- One group member felt that healthcare should not be pivotal for marriage in retirement and that a new committed relationship should open up a world of celebration, travel with new possibilities and advantages. “Grasp the moment, live your life *now*, get on with it”, proclaimed another.
- The opinions of children from existing marriages were mentioned. It was thought that children who expect inheritance often disapprove or are sceptical of their parents who wish to remarry.
- Other group members questioned whether it was necessary or important to get married at an older age, pointing out that many young couples do not get married ‘in the eyes of the law’ as they regard their commitment to be between themselves. With this having been highlighted, one group member thought it interesting that modern people regarded marriage as a relation authorisation by the state as opposed to one authorised by the church.
- But getting married or re-married much later in life must be a very difficult decision to make. “Baggage makes people hesitate, and there’s *always* baggage in a second relationship”, said a member. “When one is older, one has far more life experience and one needs to fully rationalise decisions like marriage”, added another.

Do we choose who we love?

- This topic was launched with the theory that “we like to believe we have more choice than we truly possess but many of our decisions and preferences are in fact predisposed”.
- It was discussed whether physical attraction really was the number one factor when it comes to falling in love. Money, power, friendship, shared interests and compatibility were also mentioned. It was generally agreed that physical attraction can often appear later after falling in love for other reasons.
- The subject of internet dating was brought up and was regarded by the group as a big game-changer. It was widely agreed that older equivalents like ‘lonely hearts’ adverts in newspapers generated much stigma whereas internet dating carries no ridicule in fact many group members felt that it has a number of advantages over traditional methods of meeting a partner. It was explained that internet dating can act as a very useful filter to quickly and painlessly weed out those unsuitable matches.
- One group member suggested that the whole concept of love is quite over-sold by our society and that the idea of falling in fairy-tale love, forever, rarely happens. This might account for the modern divorce statistics (47% divorce/marriage rate, UK 2009, Wikipedia). “I think divorce is a wonderful thing”, proclaimed one group member, highlighting that society in the UK trapped females in undesirable marriages up until a few decades ago.
- Returning to the issues of love and choices, a member of the group experienced in dealing with divorce proceedings made the observation that many individuals make the same bad mistakes in love and marriage over and over again. Although one group

member admitted that in matters of love, they were far more sensible at the age of 21 than they regarded themselves to be at their current age.

- On a lighter note, it suggested that the perfect husband was “a plumber... who can read” or “a billionaire with a heart condition” and the group was reminded of the late Caroline Aherne who (in the character of Mrs Merton) infamously asked the magician’s assistant Debbie McGee, “what was it that first attracted you to millionaire Paul Daniels?”.
- The point was raised that opposites often attract and that couples with complementary characteristics may well turn out to be a good match. “Background and education are far more important than looks and interests”, added another group member.
- The group closed the topic pondering the thought that it is possible to fall in love with a range of people rather than to be predisposed to a particular type of person. In other words, it was thought that it was quite normal for subsequent (successful) relationships to be formed with quite differing people

Is it time to move on from ‘he/she’ pronouns and use a non-gender specific one like ‘ze’ instead?

- The group overwhelmingly understood that language is a constantly changing conception and that it is impossible to enforce rights and wrongs. It was therefore accepted that the use of new words is generally healthy and whatever becomes common use becomes a reality. The group admitted that older generations tend to disapprove of new words and terms whereas the younger generations tend to coin and create them.
- Some members of the group regarded the term ‘ze’ as causing confusion as to whether a person in question was male or female. Another member of the group understood the term to mean that a person in question was transgender. Other members of the group questioned why in normal circumstances it should be necessary to know the gender of a person in question.
- One member of the group thought that in terms of language it would be very handy to have a word that meant either ‘he’ or ‘she’, particularly when used for writing instructions and guidelines.
- Discussion on this topic degraded into group members revealing their ‘pet hates’ of modern terms. Phrases like “very unique”, “I will give 150%” and “you guys” were particularly frowned upon.
- It was proposed that “it is okay to break grammar rules but one does need to know them”.

Could Turner himself win the Turner Prize these days?

- This topic was raised for discussion due to the seeming absurdity of modern art, although it was quickly noted that, at the time, Turner’s own style of art was revolutionary and not necessarily to the taste of critics. “Turner was intuitive, he was ahead of his own time,” commented a group member, “maybe ze would be quite thrilled with the change and development demonstrated by the modern winners”.
- Another group member was comfortable in the thought that “Turner doesn’t need to win the Turner Prize, he’s already won it”.
- The common point of view that art is subjective was soon raised alongside the acceptance that art may need to be placed within the context of its own age and

culture. After all, what *is* art? Does art *have* to be a painting to be taken seriously? If a critic refuses to acknowledge an 'installation piece' of two wooden pallet crates with a red paintbrush, can the critic justify a painting of the same two wooden crates as being a valid work of art?

Is it right to imprison a 101 year-old found guilty of historic sex offences?

- This topic was raised in light of a recent media story involving a custodial sentence imposed on a 101 year old British person, thought to be the oldest convicted for historic child sex offences (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-38343295>).
- The group gave a quick show of hands to determine how many thought that prison was the correct place for the offender. There were eight votes in favour of the sentence and three votes against.
- Those in favour of the ruling felt that age should not be taken into consideration when applying the law, "once you become an adult".
- Regarding the historical nature of the crimes, most of the group thought that the amount of time passed since the crimes was irrelevant. One member of the group felt that a significant gap between a crime and prosecution leads to unreliable evidence and false witnesses.
- Most of those in favour of the sentence felt that it was justified due to the nature of the crimes and that the age of the offender was not the key issue of the topic.

o Future Topics

There are no topics as yet for next month. Please have a think and send your ideas to:

vivienne.barker@gmail.com

o Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on Monday 6th February at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room). Helen was kindly volunteered to compile the discussion summary at the next meeting.