



***Theatre4You***  
*presents*

***Alan Ayckbourn***  
***Season's Greetings***



***GALLUS THEATER***

***13./14./15.12. 2018 – 20 h***

## *Characters and Cast*

**Neville Bunker**

**Belinda, his wife**

**Phyllis, his sister**

**Bernard, her husband**

**Harvey, Neville`s Uncle**

**Rachel, Belinda`s younger sister**

**Eddie, Neville`s friend**

**Pattie, Eddie`s wife**

**Clive, a writer**

**Karlo Gruja**

**Leah Fitzpatrick**

**Sarnia Jane Schüßler**

**Mike Marklove**

**Jürgen Stockhausen**

**Anna-Sophia Sattler**

**Dominik Schnellbacher**

**Sophia Anspach**

**Mario Mateluna**



### *Creative Team*

**Choreographer**

**Tonja van Helden**

**Photo Design / Digital Set**

**Urs Bauer**

**Costume Design / Director**

**Michael Gonszar**

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 **KULTURAMT**  
**STADT FRANKFURT AM MAIN**

**Karlo Gruja (Neville Bunker)**

Born and raised in Frankfurt, Karlo took his first steps on stage in the US state of Georgia as a singer and dancer in a high school production of "Grease". Back in Germany, he performed in the youth program JAGO! of the Schauspiel Frankfurt ("Die arabische Nacht" as Karpati) as well as in the Chaincourt Theatre Group at Goethe Universität (i.e. "Fool for Love" (Eddie), "Golden Boy" (Joe) and many more). His most recent part was Nick in "Goldfischen" as part of the theatre group "Dubiose Machenschaften" in Hanau. Recent credits at the English Theatre Frankfurt are Thomas Putnam in "The Crucible", a Huntsman in "The Black Rider" and The Mad Hatter in the Musical "Alice in Wonderland". To make a living, he teaches Drama, English, History and Sports at the Weibelfeldschule in Dreieich.

**Leah Fitzpatrick (Belinda, his wife)**

Leah, who was born in Britain and grew up in Germany, played her first role in a children's production of "The Princess and the Pea" at the American Playhouse and staged in various schools. In addition, she performed in the radio play "Under Milk Wood" by Dylan Thomas at the English Department at Frankfurt University. She teaches English, Sports, German and French and has worked at various schools in and around Frankfurt. At present she teaches at the Albert-Einstein-School, Schwalbach. Leah joined the 'NO BrExit' theatre group this year and is happy to play the role of Belinda in Alan Ayckbourn's "Season's Greetings".

**Jürgen Stockhausen (Harvey, Neville's uncle)**

Jürgen was born in Germany but was educated in English schools abroad. His love for acting has always been a key factor in his life. He has acted with the Drama Club at the The English Theatre Frankfurt and with WELT (Wiesbaden English Language Theatre). He played Montague in "Romeo and Juliet", the Warden in "Brave New World", Brabantio in "Othello", the Rabbi in "Fiddler on the Roof", Tiger Brown in "The Threepenny Opera", Old Kuno in "The Black Rider" and Mr. Winterbottom in "Dinner for Five".

His motto: "Life is a book with many chapters, so write it and write it to be remembered and retold!"



**Sarnia Jane Schüßler (Phyllis, Neville`s sister)**

Sharing the love of theatre with her family, Sarnia has been involved in amateur theatre since the age of 12, and has always enjoyed ‚acting up‘ (just ask her Mum!). Acting experience, largely with FEST and WELT, includes playing Amy Spettigue in „Charley’s Aunt“, Gwendolen Fairfax in „The Importance of Being Earnest“ and Miss Sophie in „Dinner for Five“. Sarnia has also directed in the past: „The Heiress“ by Augustus and Ruth Goetz and „Bedroom Farce“ by Alan Ayckbourn. A self-confessed Ayckbourn fan, Sarnia very much admires his talent for creating characters that remind us of friends, family and - more often than not - ourselves!

**Mike Marklove (Bernard, Phyllis`s husband)**

Mike has been acting for the better part of the last 20 years and still refuses to stop. Amongst his most fond theatre memories are the parts of Estragon in „Waiting for Godot“ and Dr. Rance in Joe Orton`s „What the Butler Saw“ at the English Theatre Frankfurt Bar Fringe Productions (alongside with Mario Mateluna and James Morgan), The Old Man in „Fool For Love“ (with Karlo), Macheath in „The Threepenny Opera“ (English Theatre - always a pleasure with Jürgen as Tiger Brown) and Capulet in Shakespeare`s „Romeo and Juliet“. Further credits are Jack in „The Importance of Being Earnest“ (accompanying Sarnia) and Tartufo in „Der Zauberring“ (under the wonderful direction of Anna-Sophie). Mike is very happy that in „Season’s Greetings“ he is reunited with fellow actors and dear friends of nearly all of his past stages – and with Michael Gonszar, who shared many a fine moment and let him on stage at the English Theatre Frankfurt. That led to Mike getting a hug from Sir Ian McKellen. But that is a totally different story.

**Anna-Sophie Sattler (Rachel, Belinda`s sister)**

Anna-Sophie is a Frankfurt-based freelance artist, pianist and répétiteur. She studied Musicology and Comparative Literary at Goethe-University Frankfurt, focussing on film and stage music. Since 2010, she has regularly appeared in numerous theatrical productions, either on stage as an actress (The Cocktail-Party, Smigoc/Chaincourt Theatre Frankfurt 2013; The Duchess of Malfi, Schilling/Kellertheater Frankfurt) or as musical or scenic director (Leonce and Lena, Moritz/Katakomba Frankfurt 2012; LUTHER – The Oratory, Missionary-Benedictines/Tutzing 2017). Her own theatre productions include several chamber plays, a five-piece show about Sweeney Todd (2016/2017) and Jacobowsky and the Colonel by Franz Werfel (2018). Her next production – a show dealing with various adaptations of the myth of Doctor Faustus – will premiere in January 2019.



**Mario Mateluna (Clive Morris, a writer)**

Mario was born in Santiago de Chile but grew up mainly in Canada. He caught the acting bug in High School but did not get back on stage until moving to Germany. His roles in The English Theatre Drama Club productions include Dr. Dysart in the inaugural Drama Club production of "Equus" by Peter Shaffer in 2005, Mercutio in Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet", Jago in "Othello", Mr. Brownslow in Lionel Bart's "Oliver!", Robert in Harold Pinter's "Betrayal", father/psychiatrist in Nicky Siver's "Fat Men in Skirts", Lucky in "Waiting for Godot", John Proctor in "The Crucible" and a Huntsman in Tom Waits' "The Black Rider". Mario makes a living as an English Instructor.

**Sophia Anspach (Pattie, Eddie's wife)**

Sophia Anna Isabel Anspach is an actress based in Frankfurt. After an injury forced her to discontinue dancing, she decided to study acting and graduated from the Wiesbaden Theatre Drama School in 2013. After graduating, she moved to the UK to be surrounded by native English Speakers and lived in London and Brighton where she worked as a translator. Sophia has performed in Frankfurt in "Goethes Faust 2" at the Schauspiel Frankfurt and "Constellations" at the Theater Landungsbrücken. She was hired as an actress and Dance Captain to perform in the Plays for a Young Audience Programme at the English Theatre and has since performed to over 15,000 pupils in "The Witches", "Cinderella" and "The Canterville Ghost". In her free time, she supports and volunteers for a charity organization helping to educate children in Sri Lanka.

**Dominik Schnellbacher (Eddie, Neville's friend)**

Dominik, whose life on stage began at the age of ten in drama class at a school deep in the heart of the Odenwald, is a Frankfurt-based teacher with a soft spot for Shakespeare, musicals and visual arts of any kind. That's why he chose to teach English, Art and Drama at schools in Frankfurt, Cologne and, currently, Dreieich. He has been part of various productions back in his Odenwald days, such as Macheath in Brecht's "The Beggar's Opera", Ariel in Shakespeare's "The Tempest" and Francis Flute in "A Midsummer Night's Dream". Being part of the 'NO Brexit' theatre group and playing the part of Eddie in "Season's Greetings" is a chance for Dominik to get back on stage again after ages.



**Choreographer: Dr. Tonja van Helden (Ph.D)**

In January 2017, she taught Contemporary Cabaret for the International Theatre School Association. She has choreographed for "Living with Lady Macbeth" at the Frankfurt English Theatre. ETF is the largest English speaking theatre in continental Europe. She presented a lecture/demonstration at the Society of Dance History Scholars at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University on her research about contemporary dance video and documentary. Her dissertation entitled, "Expressions of Form and Gesture in Ausdruckstanz, Tanztheater and Contemporary Dance" is available and published by ProQuest.com.

**Director: Michael Gonszar**

Michael studied German, English and Theatre at Frankfurt Goethe University and Hochschule der Künste in Berlin. He acquired additional experience at Schauspielakademie Zürich and worked as a Drama Teacher and freelance director at the The English Theatre in Frankfurt.

With P. Shaffer's "Equus" he launched the TIES Drama Club for the English Theatre in 2005. He directed ten more Drama Club productions: "Betrayal", "Living with Lady Macbeth", "Oliver!", "Little Shop of Horrors", "Fat Men in Skirts", "What the Butler Saw", "Romeo & Juliet", "Waiting for Godot", "Brave New World", "Fiddler on the Roof", "The Threepenny Opera", "The Crucible", "Othello", "The Black Rider", "Alice in Wonderland" and "Blaubart – Hoffnung der Frauen".

**Film and Digital Set: Urs Bauer**

Urs is a film producer and video designer in Frankfurt. After studying Film and Media in Berlin, he worked for various TV and film companies. At present, he specializes in producing commercials and company advertising, is responsible for concepts, directing and camera. His digital sets for The English Theatre were to be seen in the following productions: "Alice in Wonderland" and "Living with Lady Macbeth."

In cooperation with Theatre4You, he has contributed to various educational projects with Kulturfonds Frankfurt Rhein-Main and also created the digital set for "Blaubart - Hoffnung der Frauen" at Gallus Theater in Frankfurt in 2018.



## The Author

Sir Alan Ayckbourn, CBE FRSA (born 12 April 1939) is a prolific British playwright and director. He has written and produced more than seventy fulllength plays in Scarborough and London. Between 1972 and 2009, he was the artistic director of the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, where all but four of his plays received their first performance. More than 40 have subsequently been produced in the West End, at the Royal National Theatre or by the Royal Shakespeare Company since his first hit play, *Relatively Speaking*, opened at the Duke of York's Theatre in 1969.



Major successes include *Absurd Person Singular* (1975), *The Norman Conquests* trilogy (1973), *Bedroom Farce* (1975), *Just Between Ourselves* (1976), *A Chorus of Disapproval* (1984), *Woman in Mind* (1985), *A Small Family Business* (1987), *Man Of The Moment* (1988), *House & Garden* (1999) and *Private Fears in Public Places* (2004). His plays have won numerous awards, including seven London Evening Standard Awards. They have been translated into over 35 languages and are performed on stage and television throughout the world. Alan Ayckbourn's work still divides critics to some extent, though it is largely well-respected by audiences who warm to his distinctive style of comedic drama. Ayckbourn's 26th play, *"Season's Greetings"* was premiered in September 1980 in Scarborough, and in London in October of the same year.

Of *Season's Greetings*, Ayckbourn is quoted as saying (The Guardian, 20 December 2007):

„My late agent, the great eccentric Peggy Ramsay, hated me writing plays set at Christmas. ‚Oh Alan, she'd say, ‚not another bloody Christmas play.‘ But I'd explain to her that Christmas was a gift to a dramatist. You're always looking for a reason to stick a group of people together who can't stand each other, aren't you? Dinner parties are good, but what better time than Christmas? You've got three days together and there's always bound to be at least a cousin no-one can stand. I've seen it at my own Christmases - two relatives arguing bitterly over who should sit in which chair!‘  
And his advice to those wanting to write Christmas-set plays: „Well, I suppose, give them a landmine, but make sure you wrap it in a bit of tinsel“.

If you wanted to contrive a vehicle for stirring up stress, aggravation, sibling rivalry, drunkenness, lechery and much else besides, you could hardly do worse than opt for a family Christmas. Yet, every year, millions of us repeat the same well-trodden process of assembling families for a 2 or 3 day festive celebration that frequently turns out to be disastrous. And that's exactly what Alan Ayckbourn's play is all about – a family Christmas peppered with tensions, fuelled by drink and the stress created when people with little else in common but their biological origins face confinement together.



## The Play

Ostensibly a comedy, there's actually more to „Season's Greetings“ than simply creating humorous situations. Simmering under the surface, and sometimes boiling over it, are tensions which are significantly darker than the merriness we'd like to think of as the hallmark of the season. The play is set over three days from Christmas Eve to Boxing Day, and is notable because of its absence of children in the cast. In fact, this device actually turns out to be highly effective because we witness the adults more or less acting like children.

Cheating at snakes and ladders, fighting over comic books, a bungled infidelity beneath the ,tree. Christmas has arrived in the Bunker household along with family and friends. But as the children lurk just out of sight, it's the adults who are letting the side down.

Presiding over the festivities are two warring uncles, one a kindly, incompetent doctor with an interminable puppet show to perform; the other a bullying retired security guard who dominates the TV, brings toy guns for his nieces and determines there's a foreigner in their midst.

Alan Ayckbourn's second play set at Christmas, following the rather brutal treatment of the festivities in his acclaimed play „Absurd Person Singular“, is a black, though often farcical, comedy about a dysfunctional family Christmas in an average English suburban home. Themes running through the play include the loss of passion in marriage, the tragedy inherent in the achievement of only mediocrity in life, and prejudices against strangers.

*„I think I wrote Seasons Greetings for a spring opening originally. To be honest, Christmas audiences at the theatre can be hard work. It may be the only time they come to the theatre all year and they're very keen to know where the bar is. I'd rather people thought of the theatre as something they can come to at any time of the year.“*

(Alan Ayckbourn)

**Harvey: Fighting the bastard on the streets most of the time. It's an irreversible process. It's all coming apart, you know. The whole fabric. Ripping like tissue paper. One day, we'll wake up if we wake up at all, our socalled civilization will have vanished overnight. I've got a gun upstairs as well. (He laughs) (Scene 10)**



## Strangers

Harvey: Look, I've had over thirty-five years in the security business. I know what I'm talking about. I've seen a million faces like his, sweating at you through a stocking mask. They're a type. You get to know them. The man's a con. Preying on single women like Rachel. One book, that's all he's written. Did you know that? Whoever heard of a writer who's only written one book, eh? Answer me that.

Neville: He's all right, Harvey.

Harvey: I'm watching him like a hawk. Night and day. Once they're in your house that's it. And another thing, I hear he's going to be Father Christmas. A Muslim as Father Christmas. Is that why we have voted for Brexit?

Eddie: Nobody else wanted to be Father Christmas. What's the harm?

Harvey: Well, between us three, Phyllis had a chat with the man last night and she gathered and I trust her instincts, there's a strong possibility the man's not only a foreigner but a secret agent with a double citizenship or even a terrorist.  
(Scene 21)

By Gernot Saalmann

### Solidarity in a Society of Strangers

Modernisation is an ambivalent process. Many people don't feel at home with its outcome. So besides a more philosophical argumentation to abandon this project (Postmodernism) or to control it (reflective modernisation), there is the political and moral claim to revive older elements of social life. In this debate on Communitarianism, we find arguments ranging from conservative to liberal. But instead of taking part in that discussion directly, it seems more rewarding to take a second look at the diagnosis of modern society. Is it really the case that solidarity is so unlikely under postmodern circumstances?

### The Stranger Next Door

In modern societies and especially in big cities, there is no doubt that people come into contact with many others whom they don't know or are not familiar with. Quite often the relationship between them is not really personal but only functional: Urbanites meet one another in highly segmental roles. The urban „way of life“ is characterized by the coincidence of close physical contact and distant social relations.

So today, physical and social proximity do not overlap like in former times within smaller scale groups. No single social group has the undivided allegiance of the „individual“, with the result that the traditional basis of social solidarity is undermined. Characteristic for the modern way of life therefore is the presence of strangers next to us. We can say with Zygmunt Baumann that „strangers are neither neighbours nor aliens or, rather, they are both“. Aliens within physical reach. Neighbours outside social reach. Although physical distance between people may be short, the social distance may grow. One way to keep up social distance is discrimination of others, but in most cases, the great social distance is the outcome of unintended or unconscious processes.

The result is cognitive, aesthetic and moral spacing. Cognitive space is constructed intellectually by acquisition and distribution of knowledge. Aesthetic space is plotted affectively by attention guided by curiosity and the search for experiential intensity. Moral space is constructed through an uneven distribution of felt/ assumed responsibility.

Together with the orientation in social space constructed on these three levels, people require and use a special technique in their everyday social life, which is called „mismeeting“. This term indicates that we don't live together with our fellow citizens, but quite often pay no attention to them, even when they are nearby. So it happens that large parts of potentially social space is de-socialized and we live in semantically empty spaces.

**The question arises: What may hold together such a kind of society? Some kind of solidarity?**



# Pagan Roots? Five Facts about Christmas!

By Stephanie Pappas. LiveScience

## 1. Early Christians had a soft spot for pagans

When you rip open presents this Christmas, you're taking part in traditions, some pagan, that stretch back thousands of years. When you gather around the Christmas tree or stuff goodies into a stocking, you're taking part in traditions that stretch back thousands of years — long before Christianity entered the mix.

Pagan, or non-Christian, traditions show up in this beloved winter holiday, a consequence of early church leaders melding Jesus' nativity celebration with pre-existing midwinter festivals. Since then, Christmas traditions have warped over time, arriving at their current state a little more than a century ago.

„It's a mistake to say that our modern Christmas traditions come directly from pre-Christian paganism“, says Ronald Hutton, a historian at Bristol University in the United Kingdom. „However,“ he says, „you'd be equally wrong to believe that Christmas is a modern phenomenon“. As Christians spread their religion into Europe in the first centuries A.D., they ran into people living by a variety of local and regional religious creeds.

Christian missionaries lumped all of these people together under the umbrella term „pagan.“ The term is related to the Latin word meaning „field“, Shaw told LiveScience. The lingual link makes sense, he said, because early European Christianity was an urban phenomenon, while paganism persisted longer in rustic areas.



Early Christians wanted to convert pagans, but they were also fascinated by their traditions. Christians of that period were quite interested in paganism, „It's obviously something they think is a bad thing, but it's also something they think is worth remembering. It's what their ancestors did.“

Perhaps that's why pagan traditions remained even as Christianity took hold. The Christmas tree is a 17th-century German invention, but it clearly derives from the pagan practice of bringing greenery indoors to decorate in midwinter. The modern Santa Claus is a direct descendent of England's Father Christmas, who was not originally a gift-giver. However, Father Christmas and his other European variations are modern incarnations of old pagan ideas about spirits who travelled the sky in midwinter.

## **2. We all want that warm Christmas glow**

But why do we have this fixation on partying in midwinter, anyway? According to historians, it's a natural time for a feast. In an agricultural society, the harvesting is done for the year, and there's nothing left to be done in the fields.

It's a time when you have some time to devote to your religious life, but it's also a period when, frankly, everyone needs cheering up. The dark days that culminate in the shortest day of the year could be lightened with feasts and decorations.

If you happen to live in a region in which midwinter brings striking darkness and cold and hunger, then the urge to have a celebration at the very heart of it to avoid going mad or falling into a deep depression is very, very strong.

And, while the solstice no longer has the same meaning because you can get rid of the darkness with the flick of an electric light switch, even now, it's a very powerful season.

## **3. The Church was slow to embrace Christmas**

Despite the spread of Christianity, midwinter festivals did not become Christmas for hundreds of years. The Bible gives no reference to when Jesus was born, which wasn't a problem for early Christians. It never occurred to them that they needed to celebrate his birthday.

With no Biblical directive to do so and no mention in the Gospels of the correct date, it wasn't until the fourth century that church leaders in Rome embraced the holiday. At this time, many people had turned to a belief the Church found heretical: That Jesus had never existed as a man, but as a sort of spiritual entity.

If you want to show that Jesus was a real human being just like every other human being, not just somebody who appeared as a hologram, then what better way to think of him being born in a normal, humble human way than to celebrate his birth?

Midwinter festivals, with their pagan roots, were already widely celebrated. And the date had a pleasing philosophical fit with festivals celebrating the lengthening days after the winter solstice. „O, how wonderfully acted Providence that on that day on which that Sun was born . . . Christ should be born,“ one Cyprian text read.

## **4. The Puritans hated the holiday**

But if the Catholic Church gradually came to embrace Christmas, the Protestant Reformation gave the holiday a good knock on the chin. In the 16th century, Christmas became a casualty of this church schism, with reformist-minded Protestants considering it little better than paganism. This likely had

something to do with the „raucous, rowdy and sometimes bawdy fashion“ in which Christmas was celebrated, he added.

In England under Oliver Cromwell, Christmas and other saints' days were banned, and in New England it was illegal to celebrate Christmas for about 25 years in the 1600s. Forget people saying, „Happy holidays“ instead of „Merry Christmas“. If you want to look at a real, War on Christmas, you've got to look at the Puritans - they banned it!



### 5. Gifts are a new (and surprisingly controversial) tradition

While gift-giving may seem inextricably tied to Christmas, it used to be that people looked forward to opening presents on New Year's Day. They were a blessing for people to make them feel good as the year ends.

It wasn't until the Victorian era of the 1800s that gift-giving shifted to Christmas. According to the Royal Collection, Queen Victoria's children got Christmas Eve gifts in 1850, including a sword and armour. In 1841, Victoria gave her husband, Prince Albert, a miniature portrait of her as a 7-year-old; in 1859, she gave him a book of poetry by Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

The consumerism of Christmas shopping seems, to some, to contradict the religious goal of celebrating Jesus Christ's birth. In some ways, excessive spending is the modern equivalent of the revelry and drunkenness that made the Puritans frown.

## America's Gun Addiction

by Renee Garfinkel Ph.D., posted 26th March, 2018

Our nation is addicted to guns, with increasingly deadly consequences. Wherever you find addiction, there you find denial. The alcoholic who says, "I can quit any time I want," and the gambling addict who says, "If I hit this time it'll all work out," are in the same boat as those who say, "Guns don't kill people, people kill people." They are all addicts in



denial, refusing to see the overwhelming evidence of the damage caused by their behaviour. When allowed to continue unchecked, addictions destroy lives.

The neuroscience of addiction is the same regardless of the behaviour or substance. The brain doesn't care if it's porn addiction, shopping addiction, cigarette addiction, video game addiction or whatever you like, including gun addiction. Here's how it works: Dopamine is the brain's neurotransmitter that is released when you expect a reward – when you expect pleasure. The brain is flooded with dopamine when a shooter prepares to fire a gun. Firing a gun releases endorphins – the pleasure hormones – the same ones we experience with sex, with taking certain substances, and with other enjoyable activities. Since the pleasure (BANG! and endorphins) follows the anticipation so quickly and reliably, the brain easily learns to connect the psychological loop: guns – dopamine – pleasure/endorphins. Some brains then become preoccupied with seeking more dopamine. More guns.



The desire for more is another defining characteristic of addiction. The addict develops tolerance and requires more to get the same rush. Americans own more guns in absolute and relative terms than any other nation. The U.S. own about half the world's guns, although they make up only 5% of the world's population. And some own a great many guns. Stephen Paddock, the Las Vegas concert murderer who committed the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history, was found to have an arsenal of 47 deadly weapons. That put him in the 3% of gun owners who own large numbers of guns. This is exactly what addiction theory predicts - some users will seek more guns, bigger guns, with more firepower, in order to achieve the feelings they seek. When President Trump visited the hospital where some of the victims of the latest school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida were being treated, he paid his respects to the doctors.

A genuine show of respect from the President would be heeding the doctors' words about gun policy. Organizations representing nearly half a million physicians and medical students, including family physicians, paediatricians and psychiatrists, called on the President and Congress to do the following:

1. Call gun violence what it is, a national public health epidemic.
2. Establish constitutionally appropriate restrictions on the manufacturing and sale, for civilian use, of large-capacity magazines and firearms with features designed to increase their rapid and extended killing capacity



Belinda: Look, the bullet went right through his suitcase.  
Neville: Good Lord. Probably saved his life but ruined his laundry. They are taking him down to the Infirmary. I said I'd phone the police.  
Belinda: Do you still have to?  
Neville: Yes. If I don't the hospital will. You can't go around shooting the people you have invited to stay in your house, can you? Whatever you might think of them. He can put that in his next book anyway.

(Scene 30)

Harvey: For God's sake, get them used to real life, man. You're a doctor, you ought to appreciate that. Give them some guts.

Bernard (*muttering*): I'm sorry, we don't agree, Harvey.

Harvey (*back at the television screen*): Boom! There goes another one.

Bernard: We never have. It's a vicious spiral. You introduce children to violence in adults and the next thing you know, they're ... imitating them...

Harvey: I'll tell you what I've given them all for Christmas and I'm not ashamed to say so: I've given them all a gun. All except Gary who's got a crossbow because he had a gun last year. But Lydia, Katie, Flora and Zoe, they're not getting any of your wee-weeing dollies and nurses' uniforms from me. They've all got guns, so there.

(Scene 2)



Bernard

*(holding up a puppet to show her):*

Look, see. The Big Bad Wolf. See.

*(Making wolf noises)* Grrr. Wrrr.

Belinda *(smiling faintly)*: Oh, yes . . .

Bernard: Better be careful or he'll huff and he'll puff and he'll blow your house down, eh?

*(Belinda, in a moment, wanders thoughtfully back to the kitchen, as the lights fade)*

(Scene 15)

## The Three Little Pigs Fairy Story

There was an old sow with three little pigs, and as she had not enough to keep them, she sent them out to seek their fortune. The first that went off met a man with a bundle of straw, and said to him: „Please, man, give me that straw to build me a house.“

Which the man did, and the little pig built a house with it. Presently came along a wolf, and knocked at the door, and said:

„Little pig, little pig, let me come in.“

To which the pig answered:

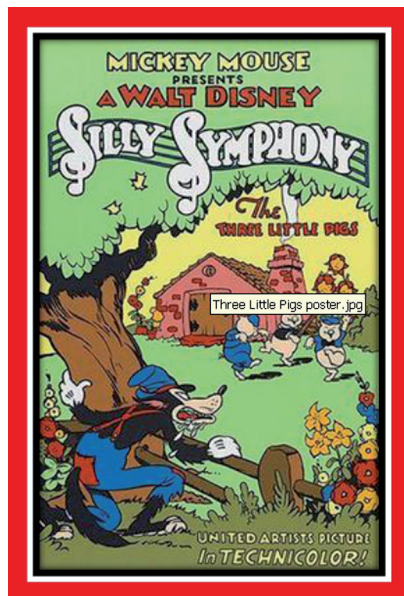
„No, no, by the hair of my chiny chin chin.

The wolf then answered to that:

„Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in.“

So he huffed, and he puffed, and he blew his house in, and ate up the little pig“.

(The story of The Three Little Pigs featured here has been adapted from different sources and from childhood memory. The primary sources are English Fairy Tales, retold by Flora Annie Steel (1922) with illustrations by L. Leslie Brooke from the 1904 version.)



# Stereotypes about Writers: Fact or Fiction?

He's suffering from writer's block, he's procrastinating, he stamps out cigarette after cigarette in his overflowing ashtray. He's pacing, he's alone, he takes a swig from a glass of whiskey. This paints the picture of a common stereotype that Hollywood uses to portray a writer. Writers are shown as being disorganized, brooding, cynical individuals, but how many of these stereotypes are really true? But do many writers really fit their stereotype?

## 1. We are Grammar Nazis

Okay, this is probably mostly true.

Writers almost have to be a little obsessive about grammar, although not unreasonably so since their craft involves word use on a constant basis.

Knowing how to use "they're, their, and there" as well as knowing the difference between "farther and further" is important knowledge to have – and every writer has one rule of grammar that drives them crazy to see misused.

However, writers are people, too, and have their own grammatical weaknesses. I'll admit I still have issues with using "who and that" correctly, and writing in a passive voice. However, I'd still say this stereotype is mostly true.

## 2. We are Alcoholics

Hemingway, Joyce, Faulkner, Cheever, and Thompson are all great writers and also notable alcoholics. There seems to be a link between the creative mind and the addicted mind with many notable cases proving this theory in the writing community as well as other creative people in the musical community and the acting community.

The reasons for alcoholism and addiction affecting some and not others have been debated, but the more likely source seems to have a link with family as well as lifestyle and creativity.

Some writers have said that alcohol helps their creative process; others have utilized it as a way to escape.

Despite there being so many writers with issues with the bottle, there are also many notable writers who didn't use booze as their muse, such as Nietzsche, J.K. Rowling, and Tolstoy.

I do love a glass of wine with my writing on occasion, but I'd say this is mostly false. Alcoholism may have a connection to the creative mind, but it doesn't seem to be true for a good portion of writers.

## 3. We Run on Coffee

Don't most adults run on coffee?

People tend to have too much to do with not enough time to do it in. We are busy, we have a ton of things to do, and our lives are spent in a rush.

Just like any other career, writers have to be awake and coherent, so they may need coffee in order to accomplish that. So why do writers have a stereotype for drinking coffee and frequenting coffee shops?

Possibly because you never know when your muse will strike, and sometimes it's early in the morning, sometimes it's late at night and we have to accommodate for the time of day our creative juices start flowing.

I'd say this one is true, but mostly because many adults run on coffee in general.

#### **4. We Crave Seclusion**

Many creative and intellectual people have shared views on the importance of being alone in order to gather their thoughts and be alone with their creativity. Mozart, Einstein, Picasso, and Sandburg are all quoted discussing the importance of creative solitude.

Writers need time alone in order to complete their work and be alone with their characters. They need to keep themselves within the world they've created, keep their tone consistent, and to focus – being alone is a vital part of completing this process.

Creativity in any medium is such a mental workout that any distractions can really take away from the process.

Do writers crave seclusion? Writers sometimes need seclusion in order to produce their work, but many writers are extremely social people – so this is only half true.

#### **5. We Prefer the Classics**

Ah the debate between classic and contemporary literature. This is another stereotype I'd say is probably mostly true.

Classic literature is timeless for a reason and it's inspirational to read such great writing that transcends the time that it was created in.

However, writers read a lot, so we have a love for all types of writing whether it be classic or modern.

I'd say writers as a group hold classic literature on a higher pedestal and refer to it more regularly.

But in the same sense that we'd sometimes prefer hot wings over steak or Die Hard over Citizen Kane, sometimes we'd prefer some popular fiction over Shakespeare.

#### **6. We are Emotional**

Writing is a creative process and it requires a deep understanding of the emotions of people.

Writers utilize their own emotions but, similar to actors, have the ability to write emotions that they may have never experienced personally.

Writers are seen as being brooding, moody, and depressed individuals. Writers probably have a wider emotional range than most with emotions sitting at the surface readily available to use, but I don't think that most writers are dark and brooding; maybe introspective, but not depressed.

Many popular writers do happen to suffer from mental illness or depression, and many of them are the same ones who battled with substance abuse.

And, similar to the "writers are alcoholics" stereotype, the emotional stereotype is different for every writer.

I do think that many writers have fast access to their emotions, but not that all writers suffer from emotional turmoil like depression. Let's call this one mostly false.

Clive: Book .  
 Phyllis: What?  
 Clive: Only one book. I've only written one book.  
 Phyllis: No, I don't understand that. Tell me about you, then.  
 Clive: Where do I start? My parents emigrated from Irak to Pakistan. They originally called me Karim. ...but when I came to England, my publisher though  
 Phyllis: Karim.... are you a foreigner?  
 Clive: Er... I'm not.  
 Phyllis: That's a relief. A lot of them are, aren't they? Writers. Foreigners.  
 Clive: Well. I don't know. There's a proportion that are. But then there's a proportion in most religions and professions. Probably no more than there are, say, foreign train drivers.  
 Phyllis: What?  
 Clive: Train drivers.  
 Phyllis: What are?  
 Clive: Foreigners.

(Scene 17)

## HOW TO WRITE A BOOK

*Even if you don't have time!*

### And, on Balance...?

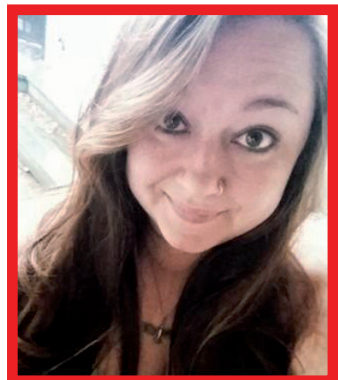
Our stereotypes say we are obsessed with classic literature and grammar, that we are brooding drunks, and that we crave seclusion with a cup of coffee.

Some of these stereotypes seem to be true, others seem to be false, and some seem to be somewhere in the middle.

Overall, however, stereotypes aren't helpful generalizations and detract from each writer's personality no matter how much Hollywood and the lives of famous authors might tell us otherwise.

But don't feel bad if you find yourself correcting grammar as you browse the newspaper accompanied by your cup of coffee...

**This is a post by Chelsy Ranard. Chelsy is a writer from Montana who now lives in Idaho. She graduated with her journalism degree from the University of Montana in 2012.**





**Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet**  
(English Theatre Frankfurt, 2008)  
Director: Michael Gonszar