

# Sweet Lips and Drunkard

A Partly Cloudy Affair

We know them by name. Which is to say we know their “given names,” each a lively characterization of temperament and personality; Sweet Lips, Tipsy, Tipler, Cloe, Searcher, Taster, and finally Drunkard. We know these given names, and not least a taste of their *notoriety*. They are names, *given* after all by the first President of the United States. We know that the seven lived out comfortable lives on Mount Vernon, the President’s estate. We even know their ancestors were French, but then, beyond these plainly nebulous outlines, details grow increasingly faint, a partly cloudy affair. To say more would be difficult, if not, indeed, *unsayable*.

Let’s chance something. What if we were to risk what seems to be, on the face of it, an unreasonable test of reasonable definitions – and use the accounts of innovation and invention shaped by Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950), the Harvard Professor of Economics – in order to tease out more *faithful* identities for them all, from Sweet Lips to Drunkard. With Schumpeter as our guide, we might infer that each and every one of them *had a hand*, so-to-speak, authoring “innovation,” rather than “invention.” And believe it or not, all of this hazy, blue-sky speculation and slightly disorienting approximation locates, for us, a place to begin. It’s possibly absurd, nearly droll and surely a paradoxical setting somewhere between Harvard and animal husbandry, which deserves description as some sort of an interdisciplinary no-man’s-land. Territory uncharted. So, shall we begin there?

Schumpeter was clear that an “innovation” like a chemical compound, possessed properties different from its constituents. And why? Once the constituents were combined, it represented a *new substance*. In Schumpeter’s view, an innovation was, above all, precisely that: a fresh fusion with promise, *the new substance*. In this respect, Sweet Lips and Drunkard qualify as co-

authors of a “fresh fusion,” and to follow on, let me tell you how. George Washington, a foxhunter, was devoted to breeding hunting dogs (about breeding, it could be said that Sweet Lips and Drunkard wrote the book), something Marquis de Lafayette, his French comrade in arms, knew very well. Amongst his papers, held in the Library of Congress, Washington jots down that he wanted to breed “a superior dog, one that had speed, sense and brains.” According to the same papers, in 1785, Lafayette sent to Mount Vernon, his gift of seven French Staghounds, (there were three dogs and four bitches), also known in the Marquis’ home country as the Grand Bleu de Gascogne. Washington crossbred Lafayette’s Grand Bleu de Gascognes with his own black and tan hounds. From the papers I’ve seen, assuredly Washington’s were Bluetick Hounds from Robert Brooke, whose family landed in the colonies in 1650. So, between the Blueticks and Grand Bleu de Gascogne, the President *innovated* a new (cross-disciplinary, if you will) breed – the American Foxhound - to which Sweet Lips and Drunkard contributed their part, we imagine with pleasure. Or, in other words, the President was literally the innovator (as well as *instigator*), while Sweet Lips and Drunkard, as they mated with the Bluetick Hounds, literally took on the role of inventors, or even entrepreneurs doing, as with all entrepreneurs, “what comes naturally.” Sweet Lips and Drunkard, in addition to the five others, Topsy, Tipler, Cloe, Searcher, and Taster, inventors to the last, are memorialized in Steven Kellogg’s charming illustration from *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out*.



Once the dust settled - so-to-speak - things could be diagramed accordingly:

Grand Bleu de Gascogne + Bluetick Hounds = American Foxhound

And this schema speaks for itself, assigning roles; the amorous Sweet Lips and Drunkard were the inventors (along with their *anonymous* Grand Bleu de Gascogne companions), the President the innovator, and the American Foxhound the innovation. As an aside, we can imagine that of this lot, Sweet Lips and Drunkard had the greater fun by far, and without anyone taking especial notice.

And?

Well, first and possibly most valuable to know is that while the love story between Sweet Lips and Drunkard opened more doors than it closed, *this was hardly a bad thing*. And? Their story triggers crucial questions that we may have otherwise been blinded to, inviting us to shape relevant answers across a myriad of disciplines and professions. And? Well, as they say, mustn't you ask the *right* question to get the *right* answer? This would be nevermore so true, than when the answers themselves seem *unsayable* . . . . .  
. . . . for example, the answer to: *Does Invention Exist Without Innovation?*  
(Or, customized to our story: *Did Invention Exist Without Innovation in the*

*Love Story of Sweet Lips and Drunkard?*). Well? In a *BusinessWeek* article titled “Innovation Always Trumps Invention,”

[http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/jan2011/id20110114\\_286049.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/jan2011/id20110114_286049.htm)

Thomas D. Kuczmarski, who teaches at Northwestern University’s Kellogg Graduate School of Management, offers working definitions of Invention and Innovation, which I’ve summarized by my own shorthand:

Invention – basic research at a start-up, university or corporate R and D – the eureka moment – discovery recognized, a patent filed

Innovation – need is identified and product or service emerges to fill that need i.e. the light bulb, and iPhone

And? In Kuczmarski’s article we find a useful preamble to our answer. Plainly said, *Invention* and *Innovation* appear to shadow the abiding “chicken or egg” *impasse*. And that being true, my initial answer provides no great surprise: “Innovation *cannot* exist without invention.” Ironically, what invention and innovation also, and crucially, share is capturing the unsayable, an expression in its first sense of pure discovery, of what had been left unsaid (the Earth is round not flat), and then pronounced with reasonable proof, if not sufficient imaginative conjecture, based upon what has already been put into words, or known, or *sayable*. And why? Discovery is first to *formulate the unsayable question*, before uncovering its answer in the very moment it is unsayable. It seems a circular argument only because it is, something approximating the chicken and egg dilemma.

I feel comfortable that capturing the unsayable question through analysis, interpretation and even intuition, asking it before anyone else *can*, creating an answer blended from fact, imagination and experience before anyone else *does*, revealing what is likely to come of your initial estimation over time and across disciplines, before anyone else *knows*, is roughly the future forecaster’s *raison d’être*. And granted, it is no more than an approximate identity, but that is, of course, its influence, to consistently defer

any final answer for the state of being perpetually irresolvable *but not* perpetually indefinable. And so then, what's it to be? Chicken or egg?

### Approximate Identity

From here, with this *raison d'être* in hand, we cross between disciplines, passing now into the realm of psychology, where we hear the Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman describing how theories appear: “We can't live in a state of perpetual doubt,” he reasons, “so we make up the best story possible and we live as if the story were true.” It is as if Kahneman is forecasting the future of future forecasting. To do this is to take a risk, but one worth to take, minimized to the extent any risk can be, using unflinching analysis and predictive interpretation. With language that would have felt familiar and comfortable in Washington's ear; what the President would have heard from Kahneman, and what I mean is vouchsafing, that is, to give someone a promise or privilege. *He vouchsafed the secret to only a few chosen disciples.* Future forecasting is the future form of what Washington would have known as vouchsafing, as opposed to say, conjuring. For example, Washington vouchsafed his secret *reading*, his *seeing into the future* of what the superlative hunting dog would be, and then he *created the future*, which is the authentic power and tangible influence, the reach of forecasting the future into, but as well its influence *onto* the world. It's all a matter of navigating through a partly cloudy affair, until things are perfectly clear, or the insight arrives *to know to know no more* because you realize that things are as pure as they'll ever get. Sweet Lips and Drunkard, I assure you, could only agree.

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