

Thomas Cranmer's 42 Boxes and his Vanishing in Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*



The upper left image (c. 1630) is a detail from a [print](#) which shows the burning of Thomas Cranmer. The lower left image (1876) is a +135° rotated detail from Henry Holiday's illustration (right side) to the final chapter *The Vanishing* of Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*.

In *The annotated ... Snark*, Martin Gardner wrote about Henry Holiday's [illustration to the last chapter of Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*](#): "Thousands of readers must have glanced at this drawing without noticing (though they may have shivered with subliminal perception) the huge, almost transparent head of the Baker, abject terror on his features, as a giant beak (or is it a claw?) seizes his wrist."

I think, there is neither a beak nor a claw.



Faiths Victorie in Romes Crueltie (published by Thomas Jenner, c. 1630)

British Museum:

“Anti-catholic print showing English Protestant martyrs standing around a bonfire: immediately to the right, Cranmer (A) holding his hand in the flames; on the far right, Latimer (B) and, between the two, Ridley (C); at lower right, Hooper (D); at lower left, Philpot (E); to the left of the fire, and holding a bundle of faggots, Bradford (F); behind him, Rogers (G); to the right of the fire, beside Latimer, Saunders (H); behind Cranmer, Taylor (I); behind Philpot, Bilney (K); between Philpot and Bradford, Ferrar (L); behind him, Glover (M); a mass of other figures are ranged beyond, some of them named in the verses below the scene.”

Information:

- [British Museum](#), London
- [Folger Shakespeare Library](#), Washington DC
- [Huntington Library](#), San Marino, California

On the first page you saw a pictorial allusion to [Thomas Cranmer's](#) burning - when he met the *Boojum* after his own *Snark* hunt. This detail in Henry Holiday's illustration could have accompanied textual allusions by Lewis Carroll to Thomas Cranmer's burning at the stake and to his [Forty-Two Articles](#). Surely the Reverend Dodgson (aka Lewis Carroll) knew the Forty-Two Articles. As far as I know, Dodgson also refused to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles and thus could not become an ordained priest.

In Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark* the *Baker* is introduced with more lines than any other member of the *Snark* hunting party:

021 There was one who was famed for the number of things
022 [He forgot](#) when he entered the ship:
023 His umbrella, his watch, all his jewels and rings,
024 And the clothes he had bought for the trip.

025 He had [forty-two boxes](#), all carefully packed,
026 With his name painted clearly on each:
027 But, since he omitted to mention the fact,
028 They were all [left behind](#) on the beach.

029 The loss of his clothes hardly mattered, because
030 He had [seven coats](#) on when he came,
031 With [three pairs of boots](#)--but the worst of it was,
032 He had wholly forgotten his name.

033 He would answer to "Hi!" or to any loud cry,
034 Such as "[Fry me!](#)" or "[Fritter my wig!](#)"
035 To "What-you-may-call-um!" or "What-was-his-name!"
036 But especially "Thing-um-a-jig!"

037 While, for those who preferred a more forcible word,
038 He had different names from these:
039 [His intimate friends](#) called him "[Candle-ends](#),"
040 And his enemies "[Toasted-cheese](#)."

041 "His form is ungainly--his intellect small--"
042 (So the Bellman would often remark)
043 "But his courage is perfect! And that, after all,
044 Is the thing that one needs with a Snark."

045 [He would joke with hyenas, returning their stare](#)
046 [With an impudent wag of the head:](#)
047 [And he once went a walk, paw-in-paw, with a bear,](#)
048 "Just to keep up its spirits," he said.

049 He came as a Baker: but owned, when too late--
050 And it drove the poor Bellman half-mad--
051 He could only bake Bridecake--for which, I may state,
052 No materials were to be had.

As for missing material for bridecake, we can assume that no [brides](#) were to be had on board of the *Snark* hunters' vessel.

A whole chapter is dedicated to the *Baker*:

Fit the Third
THE BAKER'S TALE

173 They roused him with muffins—they roused him with ice—
174 They roused him with mustard and cress—
175 They roused him with jam and judicious advice—
176 They set him conundrums to guess.

177 When at length he sat up and was able to speak,
178 His sad story he offered to tell;
179 And the Bellman cried "Silence! Not even a shriek!"
180 And excitedly tingled his bell.

181 There was silence supreme! Not a shriek, not a scream,
182 Scarcely even a howl or a groan,
183 As the man they called "Ho!" told his story of woe
184 In an antediluvian tone.

185 "My father and mother were honest, though poor—"
186 "Skip all that!" cried the Bellman in haste.
187 "If it once becomes dark, there's no chance of a Snark—
188 We have hardly a minute to waste!"

189 "I skip forty years," said the Baker, in tears,
190 "And proceed without further remark
191 To the day when you took me aboard of your ship
192 To help you in hunting the Snark.

193 "A dear uncle of mine (after whom I was named) The Baker got his memory back! (See line 032)
194 Remarked, when I bade him farewell—"
195 "Oh, skip your dear uncle!" the Bellman exclaimed,
196 As he angrily tingled his bell.

197 "He remarked to me then," said that mildest of men,
198 " 'If your Snark be a Snark, that is right:
199 Fetch it home by all means—you may serve it with greens,
200 And it's handy for striking a light.

201 " 'You may seek it with thimbles—and seek it with care;
202 You may hunt it with forks and hope;
203 You may threaten its life with a railway-share;
204 You may charm it with smiles and soap—' "

205 ("That's exactly the method," the Bellman bold
206 In a hasty parenthesis cried,
207 "That's exactly the way I have always been told
208 That the capture of Snarks should be tried!")

209 " 'But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the day,
210 If your Snark be a Boojum! For then
211 You will softly and suddenly vanish away,
212 And never be met with again!'

213 “It is this, it is this that oppresses my soul,
214 When I think of my uncle’s last words:
215 And my heart is like nothing so much as a bowl
216 Brimming over with quivering curds!

217 “It is this, it is this—” “We have had that before!”
218 The Bellman indignantly said.
219 And the Baker replied “Let me say it once more.
220 It is this, it is this that I dread!

221 “I engage with the Snark—every night after dark—
222 In a dreamy delirious fight:
223 I serve it with greens in those shadowy scenes,
224 And I use it for striking a light:

225 “But if ever I meet with a Boojum, that day,
226 In a moment (of this I am sure),
227 I shall softly and suddenly vanish away—
228 And the notion I cannot endure!”

If the "Baker" stands (also) for Thomas Cranmer, then “A dear uncle of mine (after whom I was named) // Remarked, when I bade him farewell—” (lines 193 and 194) perhaps could hint to [Thomas Bilney](#), [Thomas Cromwell](#), [Thomas Dugate/Benet](#), [Thomas Hitton](#), [Thomas More](#), [Thomas Wyatt](#), etc.

They all met the Boojum. Could Bilney's fate have come closest to Cranmer's?

However, besides Thomas Cranmer, some other persons may live in the Baker as well. For example, it also is assumed that the “dear uncle” may be a reference to Lewis Carroll's (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's) uncle [Robert Wilfred Skeffington Lutwidge](#). Furthermore, I associate the lines 45~46 with [St. Macarius](#) and the lines 47~48 with [St. Corbinian](#).

In the following pages I will quote from those parts of the poem, which tell us more about the *Baker*. I start with a suggestion made by the *Baker*:

071 But the Bellman declared that would never agree
072 With the plans he had made for the trip:

073 Navigation was always a difficult art,
074 Though with only one ship and one bell:
075 And he feared he must really decline, for his part,
076 Undertaking another as well.

077 The Beaver's best course was, no doubt, to procure
078 A second-hand dagger-proof coat—
079 So the Baker advised it— and next, to insure
080 Its life in some Office of note:

081 This the Banker suggested, and offered for hire
082 (On moderate terms), or for sale,
083 Two excellent Policies, one Against Fire,
084 And one Against Damage From Hail.

The *Baker* is fokused on *Snark* hunting. But mentioning the *Boojum* is too much for him:

145 "Come, listen, my men, while I tell you again
146 The five unmistakable marks
147 By which you may know, wheresoever you go,
148 The warranted genuine Snarks.

149 "Let us take them in order. The first is the taste,
150 Which is meagre and hollow, but crisp:
151 Like a coat that is rather too tight in the waist,
152 With a flavour of Will-o'-the-wisp.

153 "Its habit of getting up late you'll agree
154 That it carries too far, when I say
155 That it frequently breakfasts at five-o'clock tea,
156 And dines on the following day.

157 "The third is its slowness in taking a jest.
158 Should you happen to venture on one,
159 It will sigh like a thing that is deeply distressed:
160 And it always looks grave at a pun.

161 "The fourth is its fondness for bathing-machines,
162 Which is constantly carries about,
163 And believes that they add to the beauty of scenes—
164 A sentiment open to doubt.

165 “The fifth is ambition. It next will be right
166 To describe each particular batch:
167 Distinguishing those that have feathers, and bite,
168 And those that have whiskers, and scratch.

169 “For, although common Snarks do no manner of harm,
170 Yet, I feel it my duty to say,
171 Some are Boojums—” The Bellman broke off in alarm,
172 For the Baker had fainted away.

(I associate “feathers, and bite” and “whiskers, and scratch” also with two printmaking techniques.)

Whiskers again:

271 The Baker with care combed his whiskers and hair,
272 And shook the dust out of his coats.

Compare this to line 041:

293 The Beaver went simply galumphing about,
294 At seeing the Butcher so shy:
295 And even the Baker, though stupid and stout,
296 Made an effort to wink with one eye.

Fit the Eighth
THE VANISHING

529 They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;
530 They pursued it with forks and hope;
531 They threatened its life with a railway-share;
532 They charmed it with smiles and soap.

533 They shuddered to think that the chase might fail,
534 And the Beaver, excited at last,
535 Went bounding along on the tip of its tail,
536 For the daylight was nearly past.

537 “There is Thingumbob shouting!” the Bellman said,
538 “He is shouting like mad, only hark!
539 He is waving his hands, he is wagging his head,
540 He has certainly found a Snark!”

541 They gazed in delight, while the Butcher exclaimed
542 “He was always a desperate wag!”
543 They beheld him—their Baker—their hero unnamed—
544 On the top of a neighbouring crag.

545 Erect and sublime, for one moment of time.
546 In the next, that wild figure they saw
547 (As if stung by a spasm) plunge into a chasm,
548 While they waited and listened in awe.

549 “It’s a Snark!” was the sound that first came to their ears,
550 And seemed almost too good to be true.
551 Then followed a torrent of laughter and cheers:
552 Then the ominous words “It’s a Boo-”

553 Then, silence. Some fancied they heard in the air
554 A weary and wandering sigh
555 That sounded like “-jum!” but the others declare
556 It was only a breeze that went by.

557 They hunted till darkness came on, but they found
558 Not a button, or feather, or mark,
559 By which they could tell that they stood on the ground
560 Where the Baker had met with the Snark.

561 In the midst of the word he was trying to say,
562 In the midst of his laughter and glee,
563 He had softly and suddenly vanished away—
564 For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.



John Martin: *The Bard* (ca. 1817).
The inset is a segment from an illustration (1876) by Henry Holiday to the chapter *The Beaver's Lesson* in Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*. Also in the illustration to *The Vanishing* are allusions to *The Bard*.

The Forty-Two Boxes

When I started my Snark hunt, I soon realized that I need to understand more about the history of England in order to find allusions of Lewis Carroll and Henry Holiday. At school in Germany I didn't learn too much it and my main interests were in engineering. So I read [a little book about UK history](#). When I reached the pages about Thomas Cranmer and his Forty-Two Articles, I got curious: Lewis Carroll (the Reverend Dodgson) used "forty-two" several times in his writings. (And Douglas Adams built some references to Lewis Carroll into his *Hitchhikers Guide*.)

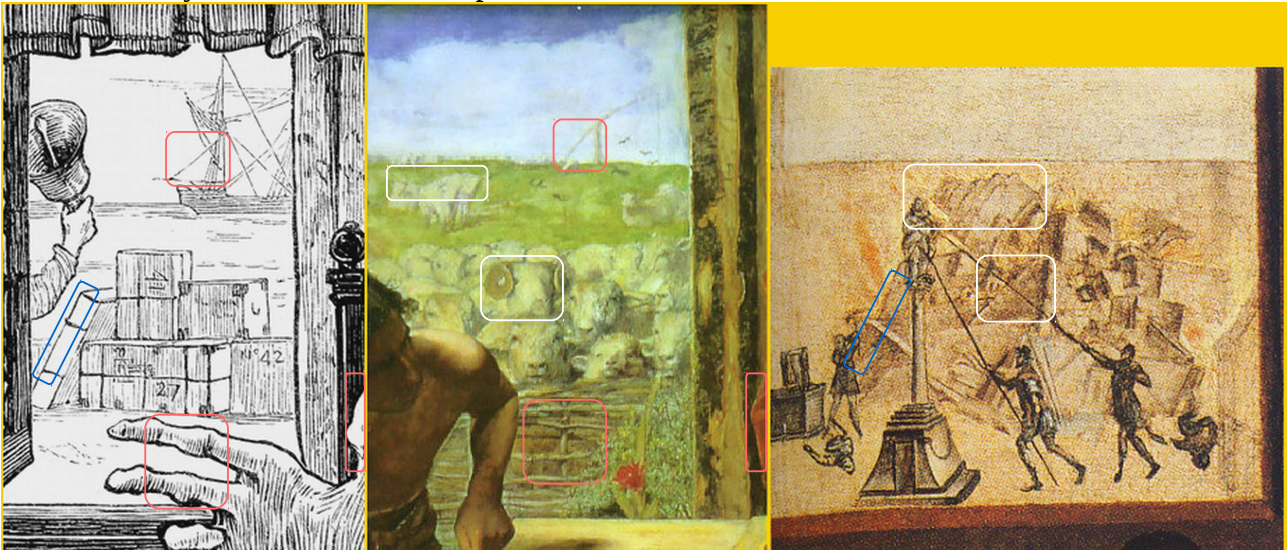
Thomas Cranmer wrote the Forty-Two Articles. Later he recanted ("forgot"?) them. In the tragical end, he recanted the recantation. In *The Hunting of the Snark* the hero the *Baker* is introduced with more lines (starting with line 021, see above) than any other member of the Snark hunting party. He "forgot" his own name, which was written on his forty-two boxes. But he couldn't look them up either, as he "forgot" these forty-two boxes as well. Thus, he was travelling without luggage and has been given not only one but even four somehow "burned" names. Also it may be have been quite some black humor on Carroll's side to call the most prominent hero in his poem the *Baker*.

Already in Lewis Carroll's introduction the Number 42 is associated with rules, and the first mentioning of the *Baker* takes place in a footnote. (By the way, [I assume, that the Boots and the maker of Bonnets and Hoods are two names for the same person.](#)):

The Bellman, who was almost morbidly sensitive about appearances, used to have the bowsprit unshipped once or twice a week to be revarnished, and it more than once happened, when the time came for replacing it, that no one on board could remember which end of the ship it belonged to. They knew it was not of the slightest use to appeal to the Bellman about it— he would only refer to his Naval Code, and read out in pathetic tones Admiralty Instructions which none of them had ever been able to understand— so it generally ended in its being fastened on, anyhow, across the rudder. The helmsman¹ used to stand by with tears in his eyes; he knew it was all wrong, but alas! Rule 42 of the Code, "No one shall speak to the Man at the Helm," had been completed by the Bellman himself with the words "and the Man at the Helm shall speak to no one." So remonstrance was impossible, and no steering could be done till the next varnishing day. During these bewildering intervals the ship usually sailed backwards.

¹ This office was usually undertaken by the Boots, who found in it a refuge from the Baker's constant complaints about the insufficient blacking of his three pairs of boots.

As for the forty-two boxes, there are pictorial allusions as well:



[top left]: Segment from Henry Holiday's depiction of the Baker's visit to his uncle (1876) in Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*. Outside of the window are some of the Baker's 42 boxes.

[top center]: Segment from **John Everett Millais**: *Christ in the House of His Parents* (1850)

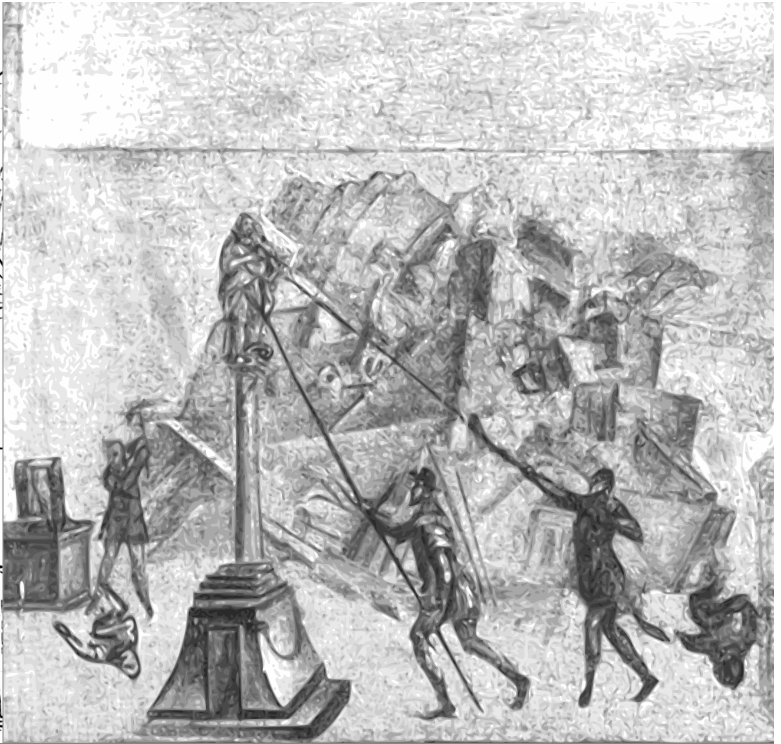
[top right]: Segment from *Edward VI and the Pope, An Allegory of Reformation*, mirrored view (Anonymous, 16th century); depiction of iconoclasm. In *The King's Bedpost: Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait* (1994, p. 72), the late Margaret Aston compared the iconoclastic scene to prints depicting the destruction of the Tower of Babel (Philip Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, 1567). From Margaret Aston's book I learned that the section showing the iconoclasm scene is an inset, not a window.



Holiday quoted pictorial elements from both paintings (**Millais and Anonymous**). I assume that he must have noticed, that Millais quoted from the 16th century painting.

In the painting *Edward VI and the Pope*, Thomas Cranmer, a vehement iconoclast, sits below the iconoclasm scene.





Götz Kluge, 2016-06-16 (1st: 2015-01-24; after 2016-05-15: I added page 11 and one paragraph to page 5)