

Tracking the weakening of a taboo

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It is universally recognized that language and social mores change over time; changes to what is tabooed are one part of that continuum. This essay tracks progressive stages in the weakening over time of one taboo, namely, constraints on the use of the lemma *fuck* as evidenced in print. The strength of taboo on uttering *fuck* is demonstrably very much weaker than it was 90 years ago. Gossipy anecdotes about individual public figures swearing were never uncommon. For instance, John F. Kennedy, 35th POTUS, described as a ‘fuck up’ the excessive expenditure on a maternity suite for his wife at Otis Airforce Base in July 1963. The Watergate scandal of 1972–1974 brought President Nixon’s deleted expletives into strident public controversy. Since the 1970s, *fuck* used as expletive or epithet has come to achieve wide public acceptance. Today, although it is regularly bleeped out or otherwise euphemized in news broadcasts and even printed news articles, nevertheless it commonly gets printed explicitly in novels and dramas, and now in histories like Niki Savva’s *Bulldozed* (2022) and Prince Harry’s *Spare* (2023), where it is claimed both Harry and his brother use it just like their contemporaries among the hoi poloi.

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1. Taboo mutations

It is universally recognized that language and social mores change over time; changes to what is tabooed are one part of that continuum. Taboos mutate: in sixteenth century Europe the penalties for religious blasphemy were very harsh (Gildersleeve 1961; Hughes 1991); today such behaviour is only very weakly tabooed – it may be frowned upon but is not subject to legal penalty. The punishments for flouting sexual taboos such as adultery, unwed parenthood, and homosexuality have been diminishing from severe before the second world war (1939) to being very much weakened today in most of the western world¹. Certain other taboos have concomitantly strengthened, in particular ageist, classist, racist, sexist, sizeist, speciesist, etc. dysphemisms which Allan and Burridge 1991 dubbed –IST dysphemisms.

¹ In other cultures, such as the Muslim world and many Asian communities, these taboos remain firm, see Allan 2019.

They refer to personal appearance, characteristics, ethnicity, social identity, and the like. This essay plots the progressive stages in the weakening over time of one taboo, constraints on the use of the lemma *fuck* as evidenced in print.

2. The observable weakening over time of the taboo on *fuck*

Less than a century ago, the lemma *fuck* was such a strongly tabooed epithet or expletive² that in Allen Read's article of 1934, 'An obscenity symbol' discussing 'the colloquial verb and noun, universally known by speakers of English, designating the sex act' (Read 1934: 267), not once is the lemma *fuck* printed in any form anywhere in the article!

Little more than half a century later, Allan and Burrige 1991 wrote:

A *Sydney Morning Herald* article of May 17, 1989 reports [...] that a Brisbane magistrate 'found that a commonly used four-letter word [*fuck*] had "well and truly" ceased to shock the public.' The courts may well have ruled that *fuck* is no longer obscene – which is sensible, since the word is neither infrequent in movies, nor on television in Britain and Australia, and it has even been heard on home grown American tv recently – but apparently the word maintains its evil power in print. Not one of the many newspaper articles reporting on each of these cases actually dared to quote any of the offensive expressions in full. (Allan and Burrige 1991: 232)



Figure 1. We Stand with Ukraine February 26, 2022. Helsinki (rajatonvimma)

On March 30, 2022, *The Guardian* newspaper ran the headline 'Ukraine gives medal to soldier who told Russian officer to 'go fuck yourself''³ reporting on the medal given to Roman Hrybov, Ukrainian border guard on Zmiinyi Island, for replying to a Russian warship demanding surrender 'Русский военный корабль, иди на хуй,' translated as "Russian

² Epithets are adjectival (*fucking moron*) or nominal, for example calling someone or something *a fucker*. Expletives are kinds of exclamatory interjection, which may also function as discourse particles, as in an exclamatory *Fuck!*

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/29/ukrainian-soldier-russian-warship-medal-snake-island>.

warship, go fuck yourself” (see https://youtu.be/_1J65DWUIns) which went viral, see Figure 1.

So, the taboo on printing the expletive or epithet *fuck* has been weakening over time and is much diminished since 1934. Indeed, it has so greatly relaxed that *fuck* now has the royal imprimatur: it recurs at least 20 times in *Spare*, the autobiography of the Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, and is recorded being used by, among others, Harry himself and his brother William, Prince of Wales (Prince_Harry 2023).

3. Reports of public figures saying *fuck*

There is no good reason to imagine that a public figure such as a politician swears any less than the ordinary member of the hoi polloi. Gossipy anecdotes about individual public figures swearing are not uncommon. For instance, though it was never publicly reported in print at the time, John F. Kennedy, 35th POTUS, described as a ‘fuck up’ the excessive expenditure on a maternity suite for his wife at Otis Airforce Base in July 1963. In the Canadian Parliament of 1971, Liberal opposition leader Pierre Trudeau was accused of telling the Tories to ‘fuck off’ (though he denied it). But it was the Watergate scandal of 1972–1974 that brought 37th President of the United States Richard Nixon’s expletives into strident public controversy. When the White House tapes were released in 1974, the profanity and vulgarity in the tapes was infamously replaced in printed transcripts with ‘[EXPLETIVE DELETED]’. In the British House of Commons, Labour MP Reg Race became the first member ever to utter the word *fuck* when, in 1982, he cited advertisements for prostitutes that read ‘Phone them and fuck them’. Hansard recorded it in print as ‘f*** them’, but the Speaker (George Thomas) deprecated even that euphemized version. Since 2003 British Hansard has explicitly recorded 12 instances of *fuck* in the Lords, Commons, and Westminster Hall, with gradually increasing frequency. Since the 1970s, then, the taboo has weakened to the extent that *fuck* used as expletive or epithet by luminaries has come to achieve wide public acceptance (Sheidlower 2009: xvii). This is far less true of the homonymous verb meaning “fornicate”.

Performers (actors, comedians, musicians) probably led the way in publicly using *fuck* with increasing frequency. So far as musicians go ‘812,079 lyrics, 32 artists, and 50 albums’ employ the lemma (<https://www.lyrics.com/lyrics/FUCK>, October 2, 2024).⁴ At the 2022 Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts, Olivia Rodrigo and Lilly Allen had

⁴ To compare *fuck* with other dysphemisms: *shit* is more prevalent: 1,135,968 lyrics, 59 artists, and 91 albums. All other dysphemisms occur less frequently: *bitch* 823,553 lyrics, 61 artists, and 87 albums; *cunt* 11,577 lyrics, 8 artists, and 0 albums; *nigger* 5,298 lyrics, 2 artists, and 1 album..

a crowd of 200,000 people chanting ‘Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you very, very much ... Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you! Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you, fuck you!’ in condemnation of the Supreme Court of the United States overturning the right to a safe abortion (<https://users.monash.edu.au/~kallan/LSI/FUSCOTUS.mkv>), during the performance ‘FUCK YOU’ was projected on a huge screen behind the performers: see Figure 2.⁵

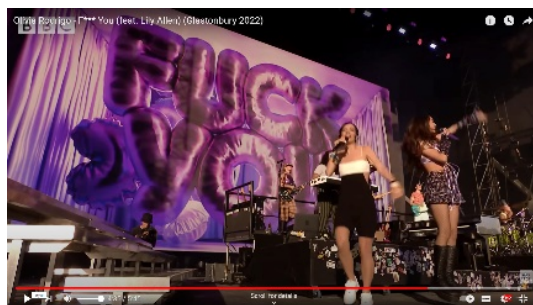


Figure 2. Allen and Roderigo at Glastonbury 2022

However, public figures other than entertainers are typically more circumspect, and explicit reports of them using *fuck* have been sparse until the beginning of the 21st century. For instance, printed reporting of *fuck* in the United States more or less begins with Monica Lewinsky being quoted in the *New York Times* of September 12, 1998:

In a recorded conversation later on October 6 [1997], Ms. Lewinsky said she wanted two things from the President [Bill Clinton, 42nd President of the United States]. The first was contrition: He needed to “acknowledge . . . that he helped fuck up my life.” (<http://www.ibiblio.org/report/6narrit.htm>; Sheidlower 2009: xxv)

On June 25, 2004 the *Washington Post* reported that on the previous day:

The exchange ended when [Vice President Dick] Cheney offered some crass advice [to Senator Patrick Leahy]. “Fuck yourself,” said the man who is a heartbeat from the presidency.

Sheidlower 2009: xvii writes:

While a few [American] publications still refuse to print *fuck* regardless of the circumstances, the word can be found quite easily in most places. The more literary magazines have printed *fuck* for some time, but now even *Newsweek* and *Time* have used the uncensored word.

So, too, in Australia. In her book *Bulldozed* recounting the fall of Australian Liberal Prime Minister Scott Morrison, respected veteran Australian political journalist Niki Savva quotes an Australian Liberal MP complaining about the public in early 2022:

⁵ There is extensive discussion of Olivia Rodrigo and Lily Allen performing ‘Fuck you’ at the 2022 Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts in Allan 2023.

‘We destroyed our economic narrative and economic DNA to save them with JobKeeper [during the Covid-19 Pandemic]. Fucking no one remembers.’ (Savva 2022: 41)

Scott Morrison flaunted his religiosity.⁶ ‘As prime minister, Morrison would host gatherings of his prayer group in his Parliament House office’ (Savva 2022: 72) This upset some MPs, one of whom told Savva:

‘There were prayers in the prime minister’s office, and crap like that,’ one MP said. ‘People were going in there and praying. It was just fucked.’ (Savva 2022: 73)

Morrison’s religiosity did not stop him swearing at colleagues:

After [John] Brogden announced on 25 March 2002 that he was going to challenge Kerry Chikarovski for the New South Wales Liberal leadership, he received an unexpected phone call from Morrison, the party’s state director.

Morrison launched into an expletive-studded tirade, asking him what the fuck he thought he was doing. Brogden was taken aback, firstly by the frequent use of the f-bomb, which he says he did not expect to hear from someone so religious, and secondly by the intervention itself. (Savva 2022: 70)

Savva’s Chapter 7 is titled ‘I Am the Prime Minister (and you are a fuckwit)’. In July 2021 Morrison called NSW treasurer Dominic Perrottet ‘a fuckwit’ before numerous distinguished witnesses when the latter was questioning aspects of Morrison’s JobSaver package (Savva 2022: 127). And around this time too, when Morrison was interfering with the preselection of electoral candidates,

Another federal MP, who believed that proper preselections protected the party, described Morrison’s approach thus: ‘I am a fucking genius, and you are all idiots.’ (Savva 2022: 128)

So, it is on a variety of public records that politicians swear. According to *Spare*, so too do Princes.

4. Prince Harry

The British Royal Family are not only celebrities, they are also politically powerful, and their behaviour influences standards of behaviour among people within the Commonwealth of Nations and well beyond. This is why Prince Harry’s fairly frequent use of the lemma *fuck* as an expletive or epithet signals that the taboo on its use in polite society has weakened: Prince Harry has bestowed on *fuck* the royal imprimatur.

⁶ The Australian Liberal party is rightwing.

What other tabooed lemmas are used in *Spare*? Well, *cunt* appears only once, euphemized in a quote attributed to Elton John speaking of paparazzi:

“They can say I’m a fat old c—. They can say I’m an untalented bastard. They can call me a poof. But they mustn’t lie about me.” (Prince_Harry 2023: 420)

The only reference to that other shibboleth, *nigger*, is where Prince Harry condemns social media contributors for slurring his wife Megan ‘being a “yacht girl” and an “escort,” or calling her a “gold-digger,” and “a whore,” and “a bitch,” and “a slut,” and the N-word—repeatedly’ (op. cit. p. 423).

To get some perspective on Prince Harry’s use of the lemma *fuck*: he makes more frequent use of *shit*, on which the taboo is milder. He uses *shit* as an epithet (pp. 53, 69, 78, 119, 124, 145, 166, 188, 272, 340, 357, 360, 417) and as an expletive (pp. 124, 198, 239, 251, 281, 302, 313, 317, 322, 354, 364).⁷ However, he makes slightly greater use of *fuck* than the much milder *bloody*. Part 2 of *Spare* is entitled ‘Bloody but Unbowed’ (p. 128) which, like most instances is an epithet, other instances are found on pp. 49, 75, 91, 121, 137, 148, 176, 192, 208, 210, 213, 250, 251, 257, 299, 324, 387, 435. To complete the picture, he uses *piss* “urine” (pp. 120, 240, 301); and *taking the piss* occurs a couple of times (pp. 91, 151).

When we consider Prince Harry’s text in *Spare* it becomes clear that he was not intending to create controversy by reporting outrageous behaviour: the language he uses reflects his quotidian life. When *Spare* was published, Prince Harry was 38 years old and was no longer undertaking ‘royal duties’. In part this came about because he believes his family disrespects and is prejudiced against his African American wife, Meghan née Markle, Duchess of Sussex. Harry has established a life in California and experiences strained relations with the royal family in Britain. Nevertheless, he remains Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, and his children are Prince Archie of Sussex and Princess Lilibet of Sussex (<https://www.royal.uk/succession>). Harry himself claims no literary or intellectual talent, so he employed an accomplished ghost-writer John Joseph Moehringer to help produce *Spare*. Harry never had any desire nor the acumen to attend university, he was happier to be in the armed forces, where he rose to Major in the Army and Squadron Leader in the Airforce. In the military (2007):

I was happy [...] For the first time I was *just* a name, a random name, and a random number. No title. And no bodyguard. *Is this what other people feel like every day?* I savored the normality, wallowed in it, and also considered how far I’d journeyed to find it. Central

⁷ There is also *bullshit* used as an epithet (Prince_Harry 2023 pp. 116, 287, 408) and one instance of the epithet *horseshit* (p. 211).

Afghanistan, the dead of winter, the middle of the night, the midst of a war, while speaking to a man fifteen thousand feet above my head—how abnormal is your life if that's the first place you ever feel normal? (Prince_Harry 2023: 154)

Spare reveals Harry to live in a gilded cage, at all times (even throughout schooling) protected by body-guards and beset by the hated 'paps', paparazzi, whom he denigrates as 'arseholes' (p. 175) and 'bastards' (p. 359).

I didn't lead a normal life, because I couldn't lead one. *Even my father* [now King Charles III] *reminds me that unfortunately Willy* [Prince of Wales] *and I can't be normal*. I told the reporter that no one but Willy understood what it was like to live in this surreal fishbowl, in which normal events were treated as abnormal, and the abnormal was routinely normalized. (Prince_Harry 2023: 102)

Harry is obsessed by the death of his mother Diana, Princess of Wales (1961–1997), whom he refers to constantly. He blames her death on paparazzi who, he claims, were responsible for the car crash that killed her and who photographed her injured body without offering help (pp.117f). In addition to this primary cause of his PTSD, as the title *Spare* indicates, he felt as a youth that his life had no other purpose than to be the spare should the heir to the throne, Prince William, Duke of Wales, predecease him. After the birth of William's son Prince George of Wales in 2013, Harry felt that his life was even more pointless. In 2013 he sought medical help for depression and panic attacks and it is possible that this state of mind had some bearing on a temporary over-indulgence in his admitted drug taking of alcohol, cannabis, and cocaine.

5. Functions of the lemma *fuck* in *Spare*

Because Harry's dead mother is omnipresent in *Spare*, it is probably memories of Diana that invoked the following, with its euphemized occurrence of *fuck*:

The past is never dead. It's not even past. When I discovered that quotation not long ago on BrainyQuote.com, I was thunderstruck. I thought, Who the *fook* is Faulkner? (Sic, p. 18)

The unintellectual Harry is ignorant of William Faulkner and his *Requiem for a Nun* (the quote is from Act I scene iii, Stevens to Temple) and so the euphemistic dysphemism⁸, '*fook*' is an expletive of uncomprehending surprise (Stephens and Zile 2017).

⁸ A euphemistic dysphemism names a locution that is at variance with the reference and illocutionary point of the utterance (i.e. what the speaker is intending to bring off in making the utterance) see Allan and Burridge 1991: 30.

There are many other examples of expletive *fuck* in *Spare*. For instance, while camping in Botswana in 1999, a leopard walked close to 14 year-old Harry's tent:

The leopard walked away, like a prima ballerina, across the footpath where I'd just been. I turned back in time to see the adults all look at one another, mouths open. *Holy fuck*. Then their eyes turned towards me. *Holy fuuuuck*. (p. 60)

Here '*fuck*' is used by the Prince as a cathartic exclamative expletive (Allan 2024; Pinker 2007; Popușoi, Havârneanu and Havârneanu 2018) strengthened by the epithet '*Holy*' and additionally intensified in the elongated '*Holy fuuuuck*'.

Cursing intensifies emotional expressions in a manner that inoffensive words cannot achieve. (Jay 1992: 68; Jay 2000: 91, 137)

In Afghanistan in 2006 the Taliban fired on serviceman Harry's patrol group, creating 'a huge explosion behind' them:

I remember one of our guys whispering over and over: *Fuck me that was close*. (p. 166)

Harry was quoting a fellow soldier, but it seems clear he had a similar thought: the tension relieving expletive '*Fuck me*' uttered when the speaker has come close to being 'fucked' in the sense of being in severe trouble, in this instance to the extent of possibly being killed.

A little later, listening in to mission-reports, he hears that:

Red Fox was about to be murdered. I [...] knew with total certainty that Red Fox was me [his red hair].

Now the voices were saying more explicitly that Red Fox's cover had been blown, that he was exposed to the enemy, that he needed to be extracted immediately.

Fuck, I said. Fuck fuck *fuck*. (p. 168)

It is understandable to utter expletives when one's life is in imminent danger: it relieves stress (Allan 2023; Allan and Burrige 2006; Gray, Hughes and Schneider 1982; Popușoi, Havârneanu and Havârneanu 2018; Ross 1960). Harry was moved elsewhere. Although the assassination of Prince Harry would have been a symbolic morale raiser for the Taliban and a field-day for the tabloid press in several countries, it would not have made any significant difference to Britain's military operations.

In 2008 Harry is learning to fly a helicopter with instructor, Nige:

But I let one mistake ruin many a flight.

Sometimes my self-loathing would spill onto Nige. After having a go at me, I'd have a go at him. *Fuck it, you fly the damn thing!* (p. 190)

A frustration expletive – presumably because he felt himself to be inadequate – and concomitantly, perhaps, a bantering insult to his mentor. Harry had respect and affection for Nige:

He had a herculean will. You'd never have guessed it from his appearance. Average height, average build, steel-gray hair combed neatly to one side. He wore spotless green overalls, spotless clear spectacles. He was a Navy civvie, a kindly grandpa who loved sailing—a top bloke. But he had the heart of a fucking ninja.

And at that moment I needed a ninja. (pp.190-191)

Here, '*fucking*' is used to mark intensity of feeling towards a companion playfully accredited with superpowers.

In January 2016 Harry was partying with a bunch of actors in Los Angeles:

I whispered to my mate: *Where do I know this guy from?*

My mate laughed. *Batman.*

Sorry?

Batman.

I was into my third or fourth tequila, so I was having trouble understanding and processing this remarkable bit of new information.

Fuck—yes! Batman LEGO movie. I turned back to the actor and asked: *Zit true?* (It was Will Arnett, though he is not named in the book; p. 300)

That was Harry uttering the exclamative expletive in surprised delight.

Later in 2016, Harry tells William and Kate about meeting Megan Markle and we have William, Prince of Wales, using the exclamatory expletive '*Fuck off*' meaning something like 'you're kidding'.

I casually mentioned that there was...a new woman in my life.

They surged forward. *Who is she?*

I'll tell you, but please, please, please, I need you both to keep it a secret.

Yes, Harold, yes, yes—who is it?

She's an actress.

Oh?

She's American.

Oh.

On a show called Suits.

Their mouths fell open. They turned to each other.

Then Willy turned to me and said: *Fuck off!*

What?

No way.

Sorry?

Impossible!

I was baffled, until Willy and Kate explained that they were regular—nay, religious—viewers of *Suits*. (pp. 331-332)

In Afghanistan during 2012, military man Harry reports:

We all got into body armor and stood in the doorway to await the next instructions. As I double-checked my vest and helmet one bodyguard kept up a constant patter: *I knew this was going to happen, I just knew it, I told everyone, but no one would listen. Shut up, they said, but I told them, I told them, Harry's going to get hurt! Fuck off, they said, and now here we are.* (p. 236)

He is recording here the report of servicemen who told his bodyguard to ‘*Fuck off*’ – in other words, not to be so over cautious about Harry’s safety. This is the dismissive *fuck off* that might otherwise be expressed as the mildly scornful and insulting *Don’t be such a wuss*.

In November 2020 Harry’s relationship with the Royal Family was in tatters, and the Palace denied him the opportunity to lay a wreath on Remembrance Day.

In the end I rang one of my old instructors at Sandhurst and asked him to lay my wreath for me. He suggested the Iraq and Afghanistan Memorial, in London, which had just been unveiled a few years earlier.

By Granny.

Yes. That’s perfect. Thank you.

He said it would be his honor.

Then added: *And by the by, Captain Wales.*⁹ *Fuck this. It’s proper wrong.* (p. 449)

This reports a fellow serviceman expressing empathetic disgust at Harry’s mistreatment. The ‘*Fuck this*’ indicates strong deprecation.

In 2019, on the character of a courtier close to the Queen whom Harry nicknames the Wasp¹⁰:

Because he seemed so weedy, so self-effacing, you might be tempted to push back, insist on your point, and that was when he’d put you on his list. A short time later, without warning, he’d give you such a stab with his outsized stinger that you’d cry out in confusion. *Where the fuck did that come from?*

⁹ Strictly speaking Harry does not have a surname. In the military he was known as Captain Harry Wales, because his father and mother were, when he was born, Prince and Princess of Wales. His son’s birth certificate names the son Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor, so presumably Harry could be Harry Mountbatten-Windsor.

¹⁰ Said to be Clive Alderton, Charles’ private secretary.

I disliked these men [the Wasp and other courtiers], and they didn't have any use for me. They considered me irrelevant at best, stupid at worst. (p. 417)

'*Where the fuck did that come from?*' is an adverbial exclamatory expletive in response to feeling hurt by the perceived disdain of the courtiers.

Writing about fellow schoolboys mocking the Ludgrove School matron Pat back in 1997:

She'd lunge, grab a fistful of boy. Aha! That lad would then be well and truly fucked. (p. 34)

Here we have the predicative epithet 'fucked' meaning 'in deep trouble and subject to unwelcome punishment'.

Working as a jackeroo in Outback Australia during 2003, Harry writes:

Whenever George and I found a group of strays, a rebellious little cattle cabal, that was especially challenging. It was vital to keep them together. If they scattered, we'd be proper fucked. It would take hours to round them up and then the day would be wrecked. (p. 95)

Another predicative epithet: Harry is talking about the kind of trouble caused by the scattering of cattle during a round up.

In 2014,

One night, leaving a club, I saw two men come racing around a corner. They were headed straight for me and one had a hand on his hip. [...] They [familiar paparazzi] didn't have guns, and I don't know what one of them was reaching for on his hip. But Billy [the Rock, bodyguard] held him and screamed into his face: *How many times do we have to tell you? You're going to get someone fucking killed.* (p. 279)

Harry's report of the bodyguard condemning a perpetrator by uttering the deprecatory epithet '*fucking*' at a panicky, heated moment.

In December 2015 in Namibia, a male and female lion had been tranquilized with darts.

[O]ne of the Namibian soldiers brushed past me, crouched beside the other lion. A big male. The soldier held up his AK-47, asked one of his buddies to get a photo. As if he'd made a kill.

I was about to say something, but Billy the Rock beat me to it. He told the Namibian soldier to get the fuck away from the lions. (p. 297)

The bodyguard used the intensifying adverb 'the fuck' modifying the adverb 'away' in this angry reaction to the Namibian soldier's deed.

6. Conclusions

This essay has tracked the observable weakening of the taboo on printing the lemma *fuck* since the 1934 publication of Alan Read's 'An obscenity symbol'. We noted the gradual

weakening of the taboo from the merely anecdotal use of *fuck* by various political figures in the 1960s, to its inclusion in printed records from the 1970s with growing frequency up to the present day. So weak has the taboo become that, in Prince Harry's autobiography *Spare*, published in 2023, the lemma *fuck* appears more than 20 times.

In *Spare*, Harry never used *fuck* to denote fornication. That topic is only referred to once and then somewhat euphemistically:

[M]y recent loss of virginity. Inglorious episode, with an older woman. She liked horses, quite a lot, and treated me not unlike a young stallion. Quick ride, after which she'd smacked my rump and sent me off to graze. Among the many things about it that were wrong: It happened in a grassy field behind a busy pub [2001 near Eton College]. (p. 78)

But, as we have seen, Prince Harry does quite frequently use *fuck* as an expletive or epithet. Harry's own use and all the other instances that he reports are mundane: there is no evidence that he is intending to be outrageous or flamboyant. All instances seem utterly typical for a man approaching middle age, in particular a man who feels close camaraderie to servicemen: servicemen swear (Brophy and Partridge 1931) and notably Private Carr¹¹ in Chapter 15 of *Ulysses* (James Joyce 1922).

Inadvertently (presumably), Prince Harry gives *fuck* the royal imprimatur, which shows just how much the taboo on it has changed during the last 90 years.

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¹¹ E.g. 'I'll wring the neck of any fucker says a word against my fucking king.' (Joyce 1922: 563). 'I'll do him in, so help me fucking Christ! I'll wring the bastard fucker's bleeding blasted fucking windpipe!' (Joyce 1922: 566).

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