

# 畫蛇添足

## Adding Feet to the Snake

These revisions are taken from an essay by a Polish-speaking student of International Affairs, and illustrate a problem which in English is called 'Gilding the Lily', and in Chinese, more graphically perhaps, 'Adding feet when drawing a snake'. Snakes are all very well in their way, and so are rats: but to add a rat's feet to a picture of a snake is not to produce an improved snake, or an improved rat: it is merely to produce an oddity.

Original	Revisions
When the Soviet Union broke up, few in Ukraine envisaged what independence would bring, although euphoric expectations were running high.	. . . although expectations were running high.
	. . . although the national mood was euphoric.

My newspaper data show that 'expectations' does indeed collocate with 'run high' though it not as common in that context as nouns such as 'feelings', 'emotions' or 'tensions':

1 esponsibilities in every area. But feelings are running high in Kingston and elsewhere because, witho  
2 Ian Huffer, for Mrs Walton, said: "Feelings are running high. These are items which both parties have  
3 came to mind this February, when emotions were running high over the long hours worked by junior doc  
4 to ethnically cleanse the region. With tensions running high between the two Balkan neighbours, there  
5 deal was announced last week. Expectations are running high, especially as Hearts could well experie

However, to describe the expectations as 'euphoric' does indeed seem to be adding feet to the snake: if expectations are running high, it hardly needs to be added that they are euphoric. Examination of the data shows that the commonest collocation with 'euphoric' is the noun 'mood', which gives the possibility of the alternative revision shown.

6 ve given us an ideological sword.' The mood was euphoric, blissful, a touch of the Valhallas . .  
7 . England flew into Port Elizabeth yesterday in euphoric mood after achieving one of the most remarka  
8 k Lawrenson finds the born-again Gary Player in euphoric mood on the eve of his 40th Open  
9 a criminal tendency. As the drug wears off, the euphoric mood is replaced by one of depression and pa  
10 tt-Jones and Lindy Alexander. So we were all in euphoric mood when the star of the evening, Stefan Be