

THE POET'S CORNER

In this column, run whenever a sufficient number of poetic effusions have been collected by the editor, **Word Ways** readers comment on a variety of logological and grammatical topics.

DUCK, POET! HERE COMES ANOTHER SIGHT RHYME!

Willard Espy

How nicely **panache** - **ache** - **Apache** - would rhyme
If eyes were the judges! But ears need a **chime** -
Ears rhyme **ache** with **steak** and **opaque**; rhyme **panache**
With **ash** and **rehash** and **bedash** and **abash**.
Ears know that a rhyme for trochaic **Apache**
Has endings like **scratchy**, **hibachi**, **seecatchie**.

And ears know that **passage** can't rhyme with **massage**,
Which has a last-syllable stress, like **barrage**.
As far as I know there's just one rhyme for **passage** -
A word for "expenses of coinage" called **brassage**.

The eye sees accord between **science** and **prescience**;
The ear knows that **prescience** rhymes only with **nescience**,
While **science** rhymes **giants**, **alliance**, **defiance**,
And ten or so more, all in metric **complicance**.

Take **naked** and **baked** - it is wise to recall
That **naked's** a word having no rhyme at all.
And **shallow's** unable to rhyme with **allow**,
Since **shallow** rhymes **hallow**; **allow** rhymes with **cow**.

And finally, **eat** does not rhyme with **hereat**.
No, **eat** rhymes with **feet**, and **hereat** rhymes with **cat**.

The moral? Appearance is often deceiving.
Do not take for granted that seeing's believing.

A PARSER'S PARODY

Joseph F. Ryan

Subject-verb agreement, tend,
Otherwise, it do offend;
The comma? You've heard me shout,
"When in, doubt, leave it out."

Oops, there's another comma splice,
Everyone knows that isn't nice;
And spare me the common dash --
That kind of writing has no class.

Be careful, too, of the cliché,
 Avoid it as you would the plague;
 Word choice, watch, as you should,
 Because the point is to write good.

The semicolon is a useful tool,
 Equal elements; that's the rule;
 Awkward phrasing should not be used,
 You'll leave no doubt the ones confused.

Disdain, of course, redundant prose,
 The prose superfluous and verbose;
 Be sure to watch your wordiness, or
 Before you realize it, you will have gone too, too far.

Enough of this innocuous pap,
 It's time to grade another stack!

FLAUNTED GAUNTLET

Kay Haugaard

"It's impossible!" Words such as these serve to poke us.
 We will prove they are wrong - it's our passionate focus.
 Say it cannot be done and I'll bet that some jerk'll
 Exercise his lame brain till he finally rhymes circle.

DISCOMBOBULATED DISCOBOLUS

Don Laycock

When I went out to throw the discus
 I went and sprained some little viscus.
 Since that disruption of my viscera
 I don't go out and throw the discera.

Leonard Ashley, Professor of English at Brooklyn College, recently received from a Swedish colleague, Erik Gunnemark, a poem illustrating the pitfalls of English pronunciation. He straightened it out a little in terms of scansion and rhyme, and passed it along to **Word Ways** for use in The Poet's Corner. The poem is closely related to one composed by Willard Espy for his book An Almanac of Words At Play (see February 7 entry); its predecessor was devised shortly after World War II by a group of Britishers to aid NATO personnel in learning the language.

Here is for your information,
 Dearest creature in creation,
 English's pronunciation.
 Let me teach you in my verses
 Sounds of corpse, corps, horse, and hearses.
 It will keep you, Susy, busy,
 Make your head with heat grow dizzy...

Pray console your loving poet:
 Make my coat look new, so sew it.
 Just compare heart, beard, and heard,
 Dies and diet, lord and word,
 Sword and sward, retain and Britain.
 Mind the language, how it's written.

Made has not the sound of bade;
 Say, said; pay, paid; laid and plaid.
 Now I surely will not plague you
 With such words as vague and ague.
 But be careful how to speak now:
 Say bread, steak, but bleak and streak now.

Previous, precious, fuchsia, via,
 Pipe, snipe, recipe and choir.
 Cloven, oven, how, bough, stow, low,
 Script, receipt, shoe, poem, toe, slough.
 Hear me say (devoid of trickery)
 Daughter, laughter; chore, terpsichore.

Typhoid, measles, topsails, aisles,
 Exiles, similes, reviles,
 Wholly, jolly, signal, signing,
 Thames, examining, combining.
 Scholar, vicar, and cigar,
 Solar, Micah, war and far.

Admirable from admire;
 Lumber, plumber, bier but brier.
 Chatham, brougham, renown but known,
 Knowledge. Done but gone and tone.
 One, anemone, Balmoral,
 Kitchen, lichen, laundry, laurel.

Banquet's bouquets on the parquet
 (Which is said to rhyme with darky).
 Viscous, vicount, load and broad;
 Toward to forward to reward.
 Your pronunciation's OK
 When you say correctly croquet.

Rounded, wounded, grieve and sieve.
 Friend and fiend, alive and live.
 Liberty, library, heavy, heaven,
 Rachel, ache, moustache, eleven.
 We say hallowed but allowed,
 People, leopard, towed but vowed.

Suit, suite, ruin; circuit, conduit,
 Rhyme with "shirk it" and "beyond it."
 Muscle, muscular, gaol, iron,
 Timber, climber, bullion, lion,
 Worm and storm, chaise, chaos, chair,
 Senator, spectator, mayor.
 Ivy, privy, famous, clamor
 And enamor rhyme with hammer.

Pussy, hussy and possess
 Desert but dessert, add address.
 Golf, wolf, countenance, lieutenants
 Hoist (in lieu of flags) left pennants.
 River, rival, tomb, bomb, comb,
 Droll, soul, roll, and some and home.
 Stranger doesn't rhyme with anger;
 Neither does a word like hanger.

L'Envoi

From post to pillar you've been bounced.
 The difficulties are pronounced!

A DICTIONARY OF DAYS

Written by the British onomastician Leslie Dunkling, A Dictionary of Days (Facts on File, 1988; \$18.95) is a 156-page book containing more than 850 named days. Many are specific to a given date (such as Dec 25 for Christmas or Feb 2 for Groundhog Day), but Dunkling also includes generic days such as Wash Day (the day of the week washing is performed), Halcyon Days (a period of about 14 days of calm weather in mid-winter), or The Livelong Day (all day, the entire length of the day). Some days, such as Insipid Day or Shaving-Day, seem to be honored only in the writings of Jonathan Swift. A more up-to-date literary example is provided by Bel Kaufman in Up the Down Staircase, where she proposed Teacher for a Day Day (a day when high-school seniors run the school). One wonders whether Dunkling should have bothered to include a nonce-day such as Super Flush Sunday (Jan 25, 1987), a name coined by the NY Commissioner of Environmental Protection to commemorate the drop in water pressure that occurred when people watching the Superbowl on TV all went to the bathroom during breaks in the action. Despite caveats such as these, the book is entertaining to browse through; there is little doubt that Dunkling has mined a large number of obscure references to obtain the information he presents. Where else can one find such gems as the fact that Cussing Day (Ash Wednesday, when one is reminded of God's anger) is followed in two days by Kissing Day (the Friday following Shrove Tuesday, when a girl can be kissed by any boy she chances to meet)? Or where else can one enjoy such tongue-in-cheek days as First Sunday After Placido Domingo, Stepfather's Day, Bash-A-Pom Day, or the Day of Miraculous Conception of Germaine Greer?