

## LIGHT VERSE

I Rhyme, therefore Iamb

JERRY DORBIN

jdorbin@gmail.com

Santa Fe, New Mexico

### The Tower of Babble

The melting pot distills a lot of dialects and dictions.  
No doubt in older, harsher times, it also whetted frictions.  
The wind that blows the Roman nose once also fresh't John Ruskin,  
But few, I'm sure, in Sussex say their prose as if Etruscan.  
The Persians don't parse Farsi and the Turkish won't speak Kurd.  
The Bantu can't do Hindu, which the Bangla find absurd.  
An Anasazi glottal, when it's hot, 'll cause a stir,  
But a more romantic twaddle is a rolling Scottish burr.  
It's hard to understand folks as one roams the latitudes.  
The way they move their mandibles affects their attitudes.  
In parts of Gaul it's not a shock to hear the quaint Langue d'Oc,  
But on the massif, Franks employ a different language stock  
Caucasian khans in north Iran speak Saka with a yawn,  
And somewhere east of Suez, there's a pidgin-speaking Shan.  
Yea, even in our common bond there's vast disparity.  
The Boston Brahmin doesn't sound as if from Tennessee.  
A schoolboard out in Oakland touts Ebonics as a tongue,  
With dumbing-down proposed as an ideal for their young.  
It takes three syllables to give assent when Texas girls want fun,  
So how can they articulate a No in less than one?  
Then, do do that Urdu that you do with such glee;  
No matter how you spout it out, it all sounds Greek to me.

## Canterbury Tale

The Miller and the Pryoress were hedded threwe the Glen.  
The Sergeant and the Summoner were watching over them.  
A pylgrimage was not, juste then, they thought the proper Place  
For publick Demonstrations of the genitive Embrace.  
The Monk, meanwhile, was begging Alms throughout the Caravan;  
His Cause so juste it culd be herd in far Tajikistan.

The Merchant tried to peddle Weares around the evening Fyre,  
Less Entertaynment than Distraction to the touring country Sqyre.  
The Wyfe of Bath culd not but wunder why she left her own  
J'Accusi at a handsom House to trye the Spa unknown.  
In sum, they formed a motly Crewe whitch tried to make the best  
Of traveling Conditions that wode put a Sainte to Test.

Eache nyghte when Trayne was halte and weeled Waggon's huddled close,  
The Hoste charged all the pylgrims to recyte a Tale verbose.  
And thus, to eache was borne the Taske a Metafore to spinn;  
A Verse to rime, Romàn a Clef, or Chronickle of Synn.  
The Fryar had his Pych Pype out and croon'd from Dusk to Dawn,  
The wile accompanied by Dulcimer, Zyther and Yawn.

## Rule, Britannica

I'm a looker-upper. I have to check each lambent thought

In Bartlett's, Roget, the O.E.D.

Or Espy, newly-caught.

Upon my wooden shelves, well-thumbed and early age'd

Lie encyclopedia and thesaurus,

The latter neatly-paged.

Neat, that is, before I pencil-in amendments overwrought,

Corrections and citations

That the editors forgot.

How can, one can't but wonder, thesaurus entry, *Courtiers*,

No mention make of knights or earls,

Of esquires, nor consortiers?

I leap to mind remembered names or grasp to reposition.

You cannot google John D. Smith,

But you can Xenon Andrusyshyn.

Grammar? Common usage? Our scansions off a mile?

Grasp at with obsessive verve

*The Chicago Manual of Style*.

How grand that the philosopher has shed us so much light,

But now we have to double-check

The case in *Strunk & White*.

My songbook with the spine that once was stitched so taut

Will need at least ten extra leaves

When I chase who-wrote-what.

A stock price isn't timely if you list it in a book,

But you can check your Shakespeare quotes;

They're everywhere you look.

So patience, dear, at my desire for reference to seek.

I'll be along to bed as soon

As I translate this Greek.

## On Genre

I've read *Leaves of Grass* in Italian  
And perused my domestic *Benét's*.  
I'm clear on the style of O'Faolain  
And characters that he portrays.

Oh, I can tell Yeats from O'Casey,  
And Marlowe to me is distinct.  
I still get my words' worth from *precis*  
Or authors whose rhymes are succinct.

Tho' studying verse is my solace,  
And contrasting odd lines from evens,  
I can never remember which Wallace  
Is Stegner, and which one is Stevens.

## Hypertext

When streams of nouns have reached their peak  
And adjectives commence to leak,  
It's time to halt the verbal creaking.  
But sometimes, textually speaking,  
We cannot.

### **And the Chat Ate Up on the Mouse**

There you go, writing again;  
You've been warned many times about that.  
Lay aside your bloody pen  
And turn your thoughts to chat.

No longer is the reader  
(For better or for worse)  
Trying to sound out metre  
At twenty-five cents-a-verse.

No longer the medium, paper;  
Electrons now the source.  
We use computers to caper,  
And chat rooms for intercourse.

### **Paraplegic**

There once was a poet named Nimmerick  
Who claimed to be deft at the limerick.  
When asked to show craft,  
He proved to be daft.  
The best he could do was a pun.