

ALL END-LETTERS DIFFERENT IN A POEM

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In the July 22, 1972 New Yorker magazine there appeared the following sonnet by George Starbuck:

O for a muse of fire, a sack of dough,
Or both! O promissory notes of woe!
One time in Santa Fe, N.M.,
Ol' Winfield Townley Scott and I ... but whoa.

One can exert oneself, *ff*,
Or architect a heaven like Rimbaud,
Or if that seems, how shall I say, *de trop*,
One can at least write sonnets, *apropos*
Of nothing save the do-re-mi-fa-sol
Of poetry itself. Is not the row
Of perfect rhymes, the terminal *bon mot*,
Obesiance enough to the Great O?

"Observe," said Chairman Mao to Premier Chou,
"On voyage à Parnasse pour prendre les eaux.
On voyage comme poisson, incog."

Darryl Francis complained in the February 1976 *Word Ways* that three lines (N.M., incog., ff.) overstepped poetic license. He supplied a list of thirteen different endings rhyming with say. The verse below is built around these thirteen different endings, though a few of the words are not those of his examples. The trick would, of course, be impossible without using Anglicized French terms:

One afternoon, in mood *très gai*
Because of playing the gourmet
(I'd taken wine with *déjeuner* -
A light and lilting Beaujolais
Plus biscuits, cheese and *pousse-café*),
I dared a blazing sun, *à pied*,
To pay a little visit *chez*
Miss Janet, who said, "You OK?
You may have had a *coup de soleil*."

Said I, "I've writ a poem, J.,
With no last letter twice in play,
And yet the whole thing rhymes with *a*."

Note that I had to violate Darryl Francis's strictures once, using J as an initial instead of a word, but as a versifier - not a logologist - this seems to be to be quite acceptable.