

Doggerel

by [Peter Dreyer](#) (February 2025)



Doggerel (Karl Wirsum, 1966)

*Then, in a free and lofty strain,
Our broken Tunes we thus repair;*

*And we answer them again,
Running division on the panting Air:
To celebrate this feast of sense,
As free from scandal as offense.*

–Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, act 4, scene 5

“Doggerel” in French is *vers de mirliton*,
In Spanish, it’s *copia de ciego*.
In German, *Knittelvers*–
An *Arzneimittel* [drug] one fears!
Yet worse, in Dutch, it’s *kreupelrijm*,
Which plainly gives away the game!
It’s *poesia burlesca*, though, in Portuguese,
A language ever sure to please!
In Russian, it’s нескладный
In Mandarin, 不押韵
In Japanese, 不韻
If you can’t tell how the last three rhyme,
I beg you not to waste our precious time,
Your frontal lobes are quite unfit to scan–
A tragic case of unpoetic man!
And should you dare dub my own verses “doggerel,”
I’ll bid you, vile poetaster, go to Hell!
“Stand not upon the order of your going
[so Macbeth commands], but go at once!”
Unworthy, as great Virgil once said,
“To teach your grandma to suck eggs,
Much less critique artful prosody!”
Honi soit qui mal y pense.[†]

[*]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaching_grandmother_to_suck_egg
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See

[†] “Shame on them who think this wrong!” Motto of the Order of the Garter, the highest British chivalric order.
https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honi_soit_qui_mal_y_pense

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Peter Richard Dreyer is a South African American writer. He is the author of *A Beast in View* (London: André Deutsch), *The Future of Treason* (New York: Ballantine), *A Gardener Touched with Genius: The Life of Luther Burbank* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan; rev. ed., Berkeley: University of California Press; new, expanded ed., Santa Rosa, CA: Luther Burbank Home & Gardens), *Martyrs and Fanatics: South Africa and Human Destiny* (New York: Simon & Schuster; London: Secker & Warburg), and most recently the novel *Isacq* (Charlottesville, VA: Hardware River Press, 2017).

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