

Names

So now, little thing, she's got it straight.

chest

belly

bum

Nipple, she calls it apple.
I correct, it becomes nippy.

Apple should be OK, but I'm
her dad and must worry

worry she learns the names of things
and what they do to each other.

-- David McFadden

Hamilton, Ont., Canada

The Penguin English Dictionary

Part of the thrill of any dictionary has always been
looking for dirty words.

As a child there were none of them
you could really call dirty,

but it was enough if words related to subjects
we never discussed with our parents.

I huddled over rape, intercourse and penis
with guilty satisfaction,

convinced that grown-ups must after all talk of such
matters.

And how carefully I memorized the definitions.

Rape was "intimate carnal knowledge of a woman without
her consent."

I learned carnal from that and so added to my vocabulary.

You'd almost think rape was one of the four-letter words
to judge from our reactions in tenth-grade Latin.

We were titillated over an entire weekend

knowing that the imperative of rapio would appear in
Monday's lesson.

Then we hid our sniggering faces in our textbooks,

feeling envious of and sorry for Billy Wheeler,
who had to read the exercise out loud in class.

The funniest word that all of us had discovered
was shittim.

I can't remember what it means now, and while writing
this poem

I have tried to find it, unsuccessfully,
in my new Penguin English Dictionary.

Which brings me to my subject, my new dictionary.
It has the words we looked for that were never there.
Dramatic Breakthrough in Lexicography -- I can imagine
some pedant pronouncing,
while smacking his lips over cunt.
But these words must be less exciting for kids nowadays
when even a dictionary has them,
and if they read modern poetry they're well used
to seeing them all without even asterisks.

My new dictionary seems to have all of the four-letter
words,
and the curious thing is I came across them by chance
without even bothering to look;
and I don't know whether I'm glad they're included or not,
as there goes still another link with my childhood.
The one consolation is the funny definition of fuck
which applies the word to males only: "(of males)."
Now what do you make of the bloke who wrote that definition?
What do you suppose his wife is doing while he fucks her,
having intimate carnal knowledge of her husband?

-- Knute Skinner

Kilshanny, Co. Clare, Ireland

Why Some People Write:

Rabbits, Women

1

Suffering from an attack at nineteen
of wisdom, I began collecting poems,
initially, poems about the poor,
or poems for peace, love, or exposing.

2

After I accidentally drove
over a rabbit on the way home
from a dance, I began
collecting poems about killing