ACRO-CROSSWORDS

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In "The Case of the Aero-Double", a short mystery story in the November 1972 Word Ways, the hero, Farley West, mentions a book by the murdered Guy Orient containing Anachuttle, Acro-Doubles, Acro-Triples and Acro-Crosswords. Word Ways readers are familiar with the first three constructions; in this article I introduce the concept of an Acro-Crossword.

An Acro-Crossword is an acrostic poem (that is, one in which the initial letters of the lines spell out a word or phrase) in which several double word squares (that is, word squares in which the vertical words differ from the horizontal ones) are embedded. In addition, a second acrostic is developed from the initial letters of the lines following the word squares. All this is much harder to describe than to illustrate. The Acro-Crossword below contains two six-by-six word squares which to date are the largest ones I have been able to construct in this format.

Reserved spiritualist at a SPARSE Minor seance, counts each nose;
Enraged, forgoes her silent NOVENA Opens with chants to voodoo doll;
Invokes shades, but Mexican OPATAS Rudely manifest, rubbery,
Noncommittal, she points to UPTAKE Truant ghosts fade in shrubbery;
Concentrating, she evokes a TEAMER A driver and serpentine moll;
After donating necklace of STRASS Last carne when truck on rail bars froze.

Rapidly, serene spirits and ACHERS Anguish still, from Veil now blend:
Novitiate from some church CHAPEL Vies with cottager who is Swiss,
Artless damosel dressed in CALICO Alchemist with chlorine compound.
Tame one's her incantations ELICIT Triple tho se of he roic sound.
Ectoplasmic mist drains, so SEDATE Aged seeress cites chant to dismiss.
Departing shades vanish in STELES Rapt viewers watch the stage descend.

The first acrostic is REINCARNATION, which is echoed by the second acrostic MORTAL AVATAR. To some, the meaning of the poem may be a bit elusive; however, remember that one is constrained to relate the poem to twelve wildly dissimilar words appearing in the two word squares. One is reminded of a literary pastime called Bouts Rimes (Rhyming Ends), popular on both sides of the Atlantic more than a century ago. In this game, the object was to take a set of rhyming words and attempt to write a poem around them. A simple example, cited in Bombaugh's Oddities and Curiosities of Words and Literature (Dover, 1961), is built around the four words PLEASE, TEASE,
MOAN and BONE, supplied by a belle to her swain:

To a form that is faultless, a face that must please
Is added a restless desire to tease;
O, how my hard fate I should ever bemoan,
Could I but believe she'd be bone of my bone!

Perhaps this cured her of asking him to exercise his poetic inventiveness!

In any event, the meaning of the above poem may be clarified by a few definitions of the words in the word squares. OPATAS are an Indian people native to Mexico; an UPTAKE is a flue leading upward; a TEAMER is the driver of a motor truck; a STRASS is an imitation gem made of paste; ACHERS are yearners; and STELES are upright slabs of stone.

Acro-Crosswords involving four-by-four or five-by-five double word squares are considerably easier to construct. I present one of each as an exercise for the reader. The words in the word squares have been omitted, but the reader should be able to fill many of them in from the context of the poem (beware -- the later four-by-four squares are more difficult). Readers who are still baffled can find the answers in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

Clever scholars, do you
Regard every word from
Scan finely, maybe some
Sagely, we watched this
Dally, smooth panel and
Zloty, shak, ctenoid and
Coolly, crazy crooks shoot

Regard every word from
A word that is faultless, a face that must please
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Intrepid, they overrun the Crash in isinglass door;  
Startled by downthrow, and A howling monkey walls;  
Troubled and agitated, mad Panics, leaves nawab's store;  
Imundated by torrent from Each by a barrel quails;  
Caught by man brandishing Rascals bow to fisher's roar.

QUERY

Nearly every logophile knows that ALMOST and SPONGE are interesting words because the former has its letters arranged in alphabetic order (123456) and the latter in reverse-alphabetic order (654321). For certain other arrangements, it appears to be much more difficult to find uncapitalized words in boldface type from Webster's Second or Third:

613542 (Salome)  
326451 (Edwina)

Can readers find any uncapitalized examples?

A L I T E

JUDITH T

The term "treatise" has, like its successors "glimmer, gleaming, glistening," been used by Mary Young. Recently, John Muirhead has commented that a civili- tion's Space" contains insufficient sequences and that a civilization's "GIST, GILT, LIMNED, D" need to exceed ten hundred words. (Assuming the previous sequence was a "half word sequence")

Randomly selected word-sequence "half word-sequence"

It is interesting that the treatment of composition, it is ne- cessary to use sequences in which words are far better the others.

Note that the word-sequence 'LIMNED, GILT, GIST, GILT, LIMNED, D' has insufficient sequences and that a civilization's "Space" contains insufficient sequences. As a result, the term "treatise" has, like its successors "glimmer, gleaming, glistening," been used by Mary Young. Recently, John Muirhead has commented that a civilization's "GIST, GILT, LIMNED, D" need to exceed ten hundred words. (Assuming the previous sequence was a "half word sequence")

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