 THE POET’S CORNER

From time to time, Word Ways receives a variety of short poems related to recreational linguistics, some original, others previously published. As poetic output cannot be easily predicted, these will be presented on an irregular basis.

The palindromic poem is alive and well, as witnessed by the following contributions from James I. Rambo of Palo Alto, California and D. L. Polonsky of Newtonville, Massachusetts. The second poem uses words rather than letters as the basic units.

Pipe lit,
A Lover upset a lot;
So Pallas meets enemy -
Hot catnip!
Moral:
Ever Aesop posed
Under a demode dome.

Dared nudes oppose a revel,
A romp,
Intact?
O, Hymen esteems all apostolates,
Pure
Volatile
Pip!

The Landlord

"Wind the watches," he grinned.
He then went hungry and sinned.
The rent! The pay!
Can't they, since they are poor, stay?
Poor are they.
Since they can't pay the rent,
The sinned and hungry went.
Then he grinned.
He watches the wind.

Jay Ames of Toronto, Canada, bemused by the well-known George Bernard Shaw spelling of "fish" as GHOSTI, wrote the following.

My sister Toti
Caught a giant ghoti
And gave it to the zoo.
Like the sisters Goti,
Her fondest wish
Was to be world-famous, too.

Walter Shedlofsky of St. Louis, Missouri has constructed a clever acrostic alphabetical poem:

| Argument: | Acrimony, babel, circumlocutory. |
| Lecture: | Drowsy, endless fluency. |
| Press: | Garbled harassing invective. |
| Humor: | Jester's kidding lunacy. |
| Address: | Minister's nodding ordeal. |
| Boast: | Pompous, quixotic, rodomontade, selective. |
| Epistle: | Tautological ungrammatical verbosity. |
| Tirade: | Wrathful Xanthippe's yammering zeal. |

Ralph Beaman, on noting that Webster's Third has the separate entries HOGSHEAD, HEADCHEESE, and HOG'S HEAD CHEESE, was moved to write the following poem (best read aloud).

I keep HOGS in a HOG SHED
Out of sight - that's my due.
And CHEESE in a HOGSHEAD
On site - that I do:
HOGSHEAD is one word,
HEADCHEESE is too:
But the HOG'S HEAD I heard
Clearly is two;
CHEESE in a HOGSHEAD
Is not HOG'S HEAD CHEESE;
There's confusion, I dread,
It's not easy to please;
If HEADCHEESE is HEAD CHEESE
When preceded by HOG'S,
Then HOG'S HEAD CHEESE - (Jeez!)
My mind boggles and fogs) -
When preceded by HOGSHEAD
Is ... PHEW! ... 

The Poet's Corner would not be complete without a contribution from Willard Espy, the master of light verse. Here is a colloquy between a devout man and his wicked echo.

A good man muttered to himself as he walked on a hill;
And Echo followed after him, as Echo always will.

Good man: I bend my neck to be Thy sacrifice;
My final throe will win me Paradise.

Echo: (My final throw will win, me pair o' dice.)

Good man: I, who seek God behind his shining gate,
Care not how sin and evil scintillate.

Echo: (Care not how - sin! And Eve'll sin till late.)
A good man muttered to himself as he walked on a hill; And Echo followed after him, as Echo always will.

In the book Poems One Line and Longer, Ted Hipple wrote a haiku honoring the traditional grammarian as poet:

Haiku, you ku, he,  
She, or it ku, we ku, you  
Ku, they ku, thang ku.

There, said Willard Espy, is a haiku that is worthwhile -- deserving the following reply:

Haikus prove I.Q.'s.  
High I.Q.'s like haikus. Low  
I.Q.'s -- no haikus.

Oxymorons fascinate Espy. Swinburne described the archetypical poet as a "bird of the bitter bright grey golden morn" with "poor splendid wings", and Erasmus made an oxymoron out of one word: "foolosophers". More recently, a cosmetic ad says "Honest makeup". Oxymorons ought to cancel themselves out, but the effect more often seems to be synergistic.

You alone are: Faultily faultless,  
Splendidly null,  
Politely insulting,  
Brilliantly dull.

I alone am: A little bit big,  
Enormously little;  
Idly laborious,  
Gummily brittle.

We together are: Modestly arrogant,  
Sadly amused,  
Cheerfully mournful,  
Clearly confused.

1, 2 - Tennyson. 3 - Thurber. 4 - The British Foreign Office, reporting on the situation in Iraq.