

KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors. All contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

The Muse's Advice

As this Kickshaws abundantly demonstrates, I like to write poetry under various kinds of literary constraint. Does the constraint dictate the mood and subject-matter of the poem, creating a message not originally perceived by the poet?

The poet who holds a great thought
Should wish it were worthily wrought.
The devices of art
Are the key to the heart;
Inspiration without them is naught.

The poet with nothing to say
Should write in an intricate way.
The unconscious will speak
Through the conscious technique
And engender a magical lay.

Presidential Mnemonics

In the May 1984 *Word Ways*, the editor constructed a mnemonic in which alternate letters spelled out the initials of presidential surnames from Washington to Reagan. As I was talking on the phone to Dmitri Borgmann one day in the 1960s, he challenged me to construct a verse in which successive words began with the same letters as the presidential surnames. I asked him if the poem should be on the subject of the presidents themselves, but he advised against it, saying "It's not that easy!". I ended up writing two versions:

Wild apple juice my mother advocates.
Jubilant vines her table's plenty tell.
For, passing by love's juxtaposing gates,
Hope's gloomy autumn curfew horns compel
Mother's regrets. Time's wastes heavily cloy
Her retrospections; too, each kindred joy.

Wicked actions just men must abhor.
Jackals vaunt high treason's powerful threats.
Famed presidents built lowly jails galore,
Harsh gallows, and condemned Hell's coronets.

Mephisto's rule thus wanes. His countergrudge
He renders to Eternal Kingdom's Judge.

Nowadays, the poems should be updated to include Nixon, Ford,
Carter and Reagan.

Sotadic Sapphics

I enjoy writing palindromic verse more than other constrained
forms. Here are three previously-unpublished examples of the art:

Toil, Edna, anon; spin along, Nita.
Let lily me romp unupset as lupine Venus.
I'd revel, bailiff, a-nude!
If I deflower ewes or a tub maid,
I am but a rose werewolf-edified, unaffiliable.
Verdi's uneven! I pulsate, spun up more!
My lilt, elating Nola, nips Nona and Eliot.

Won't lovers revolt? Nel is now old.
Nay, Bev loved sex-elf, erotic Xenia.
Petals wed fog: nap on, red rose so placid;
I revere veridical poses.
Order no pang of dew's late pain;
Excitoreflexes devolve, by and low, on silent lovers.
Revolt now!

Play carols on rebec, inspired osteopath.
Gino, tonight I lilt - soloing.
A bat - a mad ape - Elsa (Ema, too) desired it never!
Al lets Sara hassle Tom, go loco, corrode daft Adelaide.
Nola O'Slade rips Nino's big sedan
Ere snoreth Giles.

Irene, rest serene;
Rill or brook calamity, doom or enmities
Are no omen old.
As a tuba doctor, gong no grot coda,
But a sad lone moon - erase it!
(I'm Nero, moody Tim.)
Alack, O orb, roll!

Irene, rest serene,
Rise lighter on serenades Gibson, inspired (also alone),
Dialed at faded or rococo log motels.
Sahara's stellar eventide, rise, do!
O tame, asleep, Adam at a bagnio lost Lilith!
Gino, tonight a poet's ode rips Nice, Bern, Oslo, racy Alp.

Leilani Ramona Schaible

This is the name of a Dakota girl, the only respondent to an
advertisement I once placed in Fate Magazine offering to examine
the logological significance of people's names. I eventually gener-
ated a poem consisting of 146 rearrangements of the letters in
her name; three stanzas are reproduced below. Not surprisingly,
the poem is characterized by a surrealistic quality that often

marks dreams in which sudden changes in scene, subject perspective and mood frequently occur, to say nothing of abrupt lapses into confusion, incoherence, and pandemonium.

- I Born in a chill, a malaise,
 Ill on a balmier China sea,
 All able oarsmen 1 chain; 1
 Sail Mab, a canoe. Ill in her
 Cabin, I ram a lee shoal - nil!
- XI I balance all harmonies, i
 Loll in a bra, in a chemise, a
 Rose-lilac-banana lei. Him! -
 A romance in Bali (is he all
 Sea romance?), a hill in Bali
 (Is a bonnie lei all charm - a
Hill, a liaison, an embrace?),
 A shrine in Bali, me - a local,
 A lean maraschino! Be I ill?
 A lane! Harmonicas! Be I ill?
 Is Bali all a neon chimera?
- XV An albino's mice ire Allah!
 A rich man - all albino - I see;
 A calm ashen billionaire
 In a bar (can I smile a hello!)
 Has nine boar mice - all ail!
 (One - a liar - I ban. Shall mice
 Roil Asia? I channel blame
 All on a liar!) His ambience
 I call "lie" - a bane! (His manor
 Inalienable I also charm.)

Back and Forth in the Alphabet

Alphabetic poems have been around for a long time, but reverse-alphabet ones are less common. The trick in writing such poetry is to keep to a unified theme.

Apple blossoms charm delighted Edith.
 Flowers gaul her imperious jealous king.
 Love must not obviate poetic qualities.
 Rather should tyrants, unwise,
 Vaingloriously weather Xanthippe's yeasty zing.

Zithers yodel, xylophones warble,
 Vibes utter tremulous sostenuto rhythms,
 Qualifying pianistically oriented notes.
 Musicians, lampooning kaleidoscopic jazz,
 Improvise hectic glissandos feverishly.
 Even discords can but arrive.
 Ak-ak-ak! Bongo! Crash!

Avid bats climb, dip,
 Enter from great heights into jungle kingdoms,
 Looting moonless nights on perilous quests.

Rabies spreads! The underbrush vibrates wildly!
Xanthic yearlings zip!

Zombi, your xebec weathered vast, unwonted tempests.
Simultaneously rhododendrons quilted pampas.
Opine no moonlit lustrous kayaks, junks imbibe
humidities!
Gifted fancy, ever dreaming, capture bards' avidities!

Self-Replicating Text

A self-replicating text, or automynorcagram, is one in which the initial letters of the words in a message spell out the message once more:

The house Evelyn Hope occupied until she excruciatingly "exited" (vainglorious earthlings, lament!) yielded no hint of possible explanation. Oceanside's County Coroner urged pretentiously, "If Evelyn died unnaturally, no telltale indication looms." She had eighty early Xavier Cugat records upstairs. Coming in at twilight, in nightly gloom listened young Evelyn. Xavier in twilight - even darkness - vivified an innocent nubile girl's love of romance. I - observing unseen - studied Evelyn and reconnoitered the house, lurking in night's gloom, silently looking and measuring Evelyn's need. (The yearning I experienced, loving desirable Evelyn, diminished never out here! I - notable traveler of Fomalhaut's Planet of Saucers - sailed in blindly, longingly, earthward, envying Xavier!) Perhaps love asks not another thing! - I only noticed Oceanside's comely Evelyn and noted sinister inroads devastating Evelyn's soul! Can others understand never this yeasty covert obsession? Right on! Nobody ever really understands! Rescuing girls enfeebles discipline's powers - restraint erodes! Tuesday, Evelyn noticed that I oscillated! - unfortunately she looked! Yelling, I flickered evasively! Vibrationally, Evelyn (lovely young nymph) dematerialized incompletely! Evelyn died undergoing necessarily nonoptimal abduction techniques - unhappily!

Rest alone,
lovely libidinous
young nymph of Terra - Evelyn:
long live thine automynorcagram.

Word Square Poetry

These can be read off column by column to reveal the same message a second time:

the	wind	was	a	torrent of	darkness
wind	filled	the	cloudy	and towering	trees
was	the	moonlit	moor	not unlovely	and
a	cloudy	moor	not	ungood blackness	brooding
torrent	and	not	ungood	yet evil	lovers
of	towering	unlovely	blackness	evil indeed	forbear
darkness	trees	and	brooding	lovers forbear	highwayman

The wind was a torrent of darkness;
 Wind filled the cloudy and towering trees.
 Was the moonlit moor not unlovely,
 And a cloudy moor not ungood?
 Blackness, brooding torrent, and not ungood yet evil
 Lovers of towering unlovely blackness - evil indeed!
 Forbear, darkness, trees and brooding lovers!
 Forbear, highwayman!

once	upon	a	midnight	dreary
upon	a	wintry	cyclone's	blackness
a	wintry	raven	soared	with
midnight	cyclones	soared	cursing	endless
dreary	blackness	with	endless	nevermores

Once upon a midnight dreary
 Upon a wintry cyclone's blackness
 A wintry raven soared,
 With midnight cyclones soared,
 Cursing endless dreary blackness
 With endless Nevermores.

Lipograms

Lipograms come in many varieties, but I don't recall seeing a half-alphabet one written with the vowels AEIOUY and the rarest letters BJKQVXZ:

Avé by ivy, by oak above ye abbey!
 Via aqua bayou by kayak-jib above bay
 I've a job by ax qua bazooka above a quay.
 I jab a buoy. "Qui vive!" I eye a bevy!
 Bike-babe, you joke a bib-boy eke I be.
 By a jazzy juke-box, yea above oboe jive
 You quiz a book. By a queue I evoke a jibe.
 Baby, I buy you bijoux. You obey.
 Above a bee-buzz I joke. Boozy ex-beaux vie.
 "Quake, booze-beak! Boo! Oyez, a yoke you eye!"
 By Jove, I vex a boob - viz., ex-beau by you!
 By a ivy eave you be - I buy you eke a key -
 Bake ox, yak, ibex, boa - yea, a zoo.
 Viva, O Baby! Viva Eve! O joy! - I be by you!

Song of the Frozen Fjord

Many years ago, I decided to see how much I could flatten out the ETAOIN SRHLDC letter-distribution while retaining a modicum of sense and story. In normal English text, 130 Es occur for every Z; in the poem below, the commonest letter (still E) occurs only 8.1 times as often as the rarest (M). The four rarest letters, JQXZ, have collectively been raised from a near-invisible 0.006 to a robust 0.090.

Where xanthic jonquils crazyquilt the quartz -
 Exotic exquisites and kiss-and-tells,
 The quizzing jynx among the quick cavorts,
 And zephyrs jog those buxom jezebels.
 The brook's jazz jukebox-rhythms freeze the fjord.
 Its twinkling crystals jinx the vivid fox.
 But Deja Vu, Pickwickian still - and bored,
 Scatters svelte nymphs from her dazzling knickknack box.

Why waltz the fjord jejune, my fluffy minx?
 Dark blizzards vex thy quaint quixotic child.
 Why skate? The night's black flakes have squelched the sphinx
 And vanquished the savvy of wizards in the wild ...
 Sylph of the poppy-stippled velvet veld
 Whose body bobs to a warbling xylophone,
 Afar thine urchin, quivering, unbeheld,
 Keeps tryst with the frenzied frigid north alone.

Haiku Wordplay

Back in 1964, I discovered the beautiful palindromic phrase "goldenrod-adorned log". Dmitri Borgmann later extended this to "Nora, alert, saws goldenrod-adorned logs, wastrel Aaron", which I thought was excellent. A couple of years ago when Henry Rathvon wanted to run a Four Star Puzzler palindrome contest, he called me to ask for suggestions. I proposed that he make it a palindromic haiku contest, and gave him the example below in which Nora works while Aaron bums around. However, he eventually decided against the contest, probably because he thought it would be too difficult.

Smart Nora, alert
 Saws goldenrod-adorned logs.
 Wastrel Aaron trams.

However, it's not difficult to construct univocalic haikus; here are two which can be called The Haiku of Eyes and the Haiku of Ewes, together with an adaptation of an O-invariant sentence originally sent me by Leigh Mercer:

In twilight this spring
 Girls with miniskirts will swim
 In string bikinis.

Unsung succubus,
 Must lust's susurrus clutch us
 Untruthful gurus?

Sons of God - no boor!
 Old orthodox Oxford dons
 Know good port from poor.

And how about an automynorcagrammatic one?

Haiku artisans
 Interpret kaleidoscopes
 Unforgettably.

Two Interacting Self-Replicating Texts

The following two love letters are reciprocal automynorcagrams; each spells out the letters of the other using the initial letters of its own words:

Darling Elizabeth,

A revolting exhibition started today at Louisville. Equivocating xenophobes rioted everywhere, arguing like lunatics.

Your lonely one - vulnerable ever - is vexed, Elizabeth. Needing embraceable voluptuous Elizabeth's rich gorgeousness, roils Alex! So - painfully enervated, dejected - exotic xanthic healths I but imbibed, trusting in others not sober.

Loved one! - virtuous Elizabeth! - my artless, kind ingenue! - noble girl! - inexcusably, my zymurgical escape (alack!) left out us, Sweetheart!

Alex.

Dearest Alex,

Really, Love, I've never grasped expositions. Lovemaking I'm zealous about - but extinguish terrible hatefulness and rancor eternally, voila! - or let this innocent nubile girl expire. Xenophobic hatred indeed! - banish it!

Truly, I - obedient nun, sexy temptress and ravished toy (ever devoted to Ovid) - do adore you, Alex! Talking loquaciously of us, I've solemnly vowed in local lighthouses equal emotions! Quite unjustly, ignoramus vented only catcalls, Alex, testifying I'm no good! Xanthippe endured no obloquies pukier, however odious, by even Socrates resented!

I'm only thine,
Elizabeth.

Lipograms on the Days of the Week

As a sad nun assays a dandy's duds,
Dad says, "A sandy Sunday
Sans sun and sand and us?
Nay, Danny! Add sunny suds!"

O moon - any moon! - damn my mood anon,
And may many a moon add doom;
Yon odd madman and a mod mad madonna
Did annoy my Mom and Dad on a Monday noon.

Tsetse duets tasted Dad's suet -
Yes, testy tsetse sestets sad.
Yet, as dated essay sets' due date stayed Tuesday,
At a dusty settee sat Dad.

We and Dan (a den Dad) yawn.
We see dew, and wade; we see a new Eden dawn.
Sand and seed was seen, and a wand we saw sewn.
Wednesday we wed Dean (a Swede) and Wanda (a Dane);
We send away sadness's dead-weed seed,

Wend a new way, and sway Sweden's need and deed.

Hush! A thrush at a shady ash!

Tarry as star rays durst!

Thus, at that ashtray,

Shy Ruth stays at Dad's shut hut's sash

(A Thursday rut at a dusty sash).

Ah shush! Rats rush,

Taut rats thrash, rash rats dash!

Ah ruddy rats at Dad's yard, Dad's trash,

Stay thy stray, thy hasty thrust

That - hard as Truth's rusty shards - hurts!

Did arid air dry a fir?

Did a ray afar fry a ruffraff dairy raid?

Did I, afraid, aid Aida - a fairy fay?

Dad, if a fad array did fray fair Aida,

I - a daffy friar - fry a Friday diary!

Stay, starry Su!

Tarry as star rays durst!

Su - starry as ruddy - stay, tarry!

As Dad's sad dusty duds truss us,

Trust Dad! - trust us! -

As rats trust ratty rats at dastard's trysts.

(Rats, Dad! Su's astray! That's Saturday!)

Ta-ta, Su!

Notice that SATURDAY is contained in THURSDAY. It would be much easier to write anti-lipograms on the days of the week, using the letters which do not appear in the day being described. In this connection, someone once asked what is as rare as a Friday in June. The answer, of course, is a Sunday in October.