

THE POET'S CORNER

Michael Helsem of Dallas, Texas describes himself as an "esoteric poet with logological leanings", an assessment *Word Ways* readers will surely agree with. Here is his translation of a fifth-century triple acrostic on the new hot springs of Thrasamundus. In keeping with the original, word-spacings and punctuation do not count; evidently the Romans had no desire to speed-read. Alternate words are underlined to enable the modern reader to pick out the message:

FLAVIUS FELIX

The streams still source from flow yew water S
 Here good spark leg ob eneath the blazing or B
 Roventhrough chasms Now yclad inal abaster R
 And enormous columns Edge the Septentrion I
 Statues outside glow With marbled crafting G
 And a high wall circle St he sublim e warm bath H
 Much weal does the gre At bath builder impart T
 Usufructuary of ever Lasting peerless fam E
 Nor harm sthe warm th all read the dedication N
 Discover what floods Vernate in deep palk all I
 Ukase her e refreshes Of the dear Vandal clan N
 Standing for thanks a Ward ede each deservin G

The acrostic is THRASAMUNDUS/ RENEWS ALL VOW/S, BRIGHTENING.

Helsem's next poem weaves an intricate alphabetic pattern on the initial letters of its words:

CYNGHANEDD GROES (OUR DRY GARDEN)

A zouave-bright yawp asks zeal beyond yours.
 Certain xeric dewes would create xyloid day's-web
 Easing veldt for us, except very few unicorns
 Get to habit such glebe. Their halcyon stock
 Instead rates jeopardy, quite iracund reviewers, jackal
 quellage,
 Kwashiorkor. Perhaps less optimism? Keep people liking our
 Modern, no-nuance masterpieces; mighty nubile, nicely
 mawkish ...
 Or loathe power, kiss off literary politics, kerygma
 Quackery. Just rhyme in qualmlless jollity, rave; if
 Selves have to go singly, help them green.
 Ultimately, fustian vests each urchin's feverish views enisled.
 World dung-xyster crafts with dense xanthic creed
 Yon baobab zymurgy. Abatis? Yes, but zero axolotl.

His third example is a macaronic sonnet: each odd-numbered line is taken from a well-known author, and the following even-numbered line completes a pangrammatic couplet (uses the remaining letters of the alphabet):

WELTSCHMERZ OF THE ZEITGEIST

Methought upon the tomb-encumbered shore (C. Ashton Smith)
 I saw quick dwarves defile a jade Zyxomma.
 Who loves, raves - 'tis youth's frenzy; but the cure (Byron)
 That damps quixotic jags so kills the lemma.
 My hungry eyes though greedy covetize (Spenser)
 And frequent jokes, wax pebble-cold and stupid:
 From the mix'd mass one sovereign balm derive (Carow)
 A joy-zymurgy working quag pellucid;
 That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse, (Chaucer)
 Quoth jesting Pilaf to a keloid Zugzwang.
 Nor dare I question with my jealous thought (Shakespeare)
 This ziplock vex-bag, since I have for joss
 Blood-quaffing Mars heaving the iron net (Marlowe)
 And wicked Jeep to zyme the frith of Luxon.

The following poem was typed entirely with the left hand by Sarah Montoya of Monterey Park, California. On the whole, it probably makes as much sense as most free verse.

TERSE VERSE DE SARA

Caesar was a czar as was Xerxes
 Dare a deft feat avec few secrets
 As we were bested
 Ad astra star Vega
 Better read
 We deserve defeats
 Dear deceased dead
 Fate fazes scared braggarts see
 Few fewer fewest fears fester
 Facade facets
 Retreat reassert avec zest
 Adverse test case treated
 TWA traverses Qatar Rabat Texas West Va
 Tax evaders beware vested vertebrates
 Tbc arrested
 We are ever eager
 Revere sacred Easter grace
 Castrate sated sages
 Sex starved we vegetate
 Tattered red taffeta dress et tweed rags
 Cabarets waste water
 Cars waste gas
 Federated verb craft defeats great art
 Saved wages are sweet
 Reassert reassess best taste
 Redress greed
 Be aware! et cetera