

# FOUR FROM FOUR ISN'T ZERO

JOHN HENRICK  
Seattle, Washington

The title applies to the following tetrad of poems, written entirely in four-letter words. In these pages in November 1986, I reported on the results of a prior experiment which I had conducted to test the literal sense of a Cole Porter lyric which claimed that contemporary authors now only use four-letter words in their writings. Prose presented definite difficulties, but verse appeared to be moderately tractable.

Two examples of the latter were offered at that time, one metrical and rhymed, the other in free form, fashioned loosely after a familiar passage from Shakespeare. The present update illustrates the complete viability of free verse form subject to an ostensibly severe constraint. In these four specimens, additional stylistic restrictions are introduced, suggesting potential abundance amid austerity.

Number I is a type of haiku, although the syllables are not distributed in the customary 5-7-5 English arrangement. Number II concludes with an acrostic. Number IV utilizes a number of palindromic lines, as well as a pair of four-letter abbreviations, to be enunciated letter by letter. Most of the poems contain traces of the macaronic.

I

Lone loon sits upon thin nest.  
Mist ices beak, feet, eggs.  
Noël, Noël.

II

Here once more.  
"¡Mira allí!"  
One's eyes gaze long.  
Late, this moon sees Puno yawn, then doze.  
Next, Lima sees this same pale face peer down amid snow caps  
Upon Perú.

III

Dawn - sun's rays defy rain omen.  
Noon - game over, lost; less bold, weak rays glow once more  
only, fade.  
Soon, neon cuts dank dusk.

Numb, soft paws wake, seek, find, feel jade cool turf.  
 Thin iron keys turn, thus make each gate sure.  
 Last, odds join ends,  
 Long odds even,  
 Long shot odds.

## IV

When Ovid ages past told Rome  
 That gods make love like folk down here,  
 None flew into high rage.  
 Amor, Roma?  
 Okay!

SWAK,  
 SPQR.

Eras pass, alas!  
 Gods? Poly gets mono.  
 Eros sees sore!  
 Soon mere hugs seem lewd.  
 Good guys just won't play - they prey.  
 Snub buns.  
 Laud dual.  
 Live? Evil!  
 Pals? Slap!  
 Snug? Guns!  
 Mood? Doom!  
 Hail, hail, this gang goes bang.  
 Honi soit ...

fini

**MEETING NOTICE**

*The annual meeting of the American Names Society will be held in conjunction with the North Central Names Society at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois on October 14-15, and the McCormick Center Hotel in Chicago on October 15-16, 1988. The themes of the meetings will be: toponymics, and social and historical aspects of both place names and personal names. To submit papers (20 minutes in length), send abstracts (about 100 words) to Larry Seits, English Department, Waubonsee Community College, Sugar Grove, Illinois by June 1, 1988.*