A FEW TRICKY LIMERICKS

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It's been more than a decade since Maxey Brooke surveyed the various ways in which the limerick has been gimmicked (see "Limerick-Gimerick", February 1980). It's time to revisit this specialized niche of wordplay.

First, a pure back-slang limerick. Vertical lines have been inserted as an aid to scansion:

Ereth eco | saw a wollef | dellac mad,
Ni evol | a lerig | dellac ava,
Neth eh decked | reh taf esra,
Dena neth esh | dais, "Elba,
Saw I | ere I was | mada, dam-a."

Translation:
There once was a fellow called Adam,
In love -- a girl called Ava,
Then he kicked her fat arse,
And then she said, "Able
Was I ere I saw Adam, a-mad."

The ultimate would be a true, correctly rhyming limerick-palindrome. Whoever comes up with one should be buried next to Shakespeare -- scalped and upside down!

Now for some other slang. If you are an Oxford man, you won't need any translation of this one:

A young Oxford man with degrugger
Put a po on the Maggers Memugger.
After such a great ecker,
He got a stern lecker
By a buller and thrown from the Ugger.

For those from that other university, that's: A young Oxford man with a degree put a chamber-pot on the Martyr's Memorial. After such exercise he got a stern lecture by a proctor's assistant and was thrown out of The Union.

From Oxford let us go down to Cockney. I use that word "down" merely in the sense that when an Oxford man leaves Oxford he goes "down" (and, of course, an Oxford feminist does exactly the same thing).

"He's a bad artful dodger," she swears,
"He runs down the apples and pears."
It's a gooseberry puddin'
Sends his plates o' meat thuddin',
"No bird time for quiet," he declares.

In English? "He's a bad lodger," she swears. "He runs down the stairs, it's a woman that sends his feet thudding." "No time for quiet," he declares.

I don't know whether this one will be allowed by the editor, but:

A garage mechanic in Georgia
Said, "Mistah, ah've something to tell yia.
If y'all lose all your all,
Y'all be sore as a ball,
'Cause your water'll all ball awayia."

Pig Latin? The progenesis of the following one is a non-limerick verse in similar "pig Latin" form:

O, TOME, ISA ERES AGO,
FORTIBVS ES IN ARO,
NOBILE, NOBILE,
THEMSTRVX, YVSLIE,
SEWAT SINEM -- IVST GVANO.

The translation can be found in Answers and Solutions in August.

The palindrome here is not new but so far as I know the limerick is:

Naomi met a new pal in Rome,
Who devised her a new palindrome.
After eating boloney,
He then said, "Naomi,
Sex at noon taxes, I moan."

As for royal mottoes:

If honi soit qui mal y pense,
The dieu et mon droit's my response,
If evil's to be
Then let it be me,
Sic transit gloria mundi at once.

See a good dictionary if you need translations!

Incidentally, the limerick beat is generally anapestic: I am mon | arch of all | I survey. Fine, until the next line: My right | there is none | to dispute (both from William Cowper). What happened to the anapest in the first beat of line two? Ah, say the poetry professors, an iambus can be used instead of an anapest anywhere in the line — especially in the first foot. It just shows how frustrating it can be trying to "scan" the beat of poetic lines. All of which is simply to lead us to a limerick Mrs. Malaprop surely must have written (actually I did!). She is here under an attack from a stern taskmaster:

"It's a true | actuar | ial fact," anaapest, anaapest, anaapest
Said Ms. Mal | apropr un | der "a tact," anaapest, anaapest, anaapest
"It's never dactylic, iambic, anapest.
The stern limerick, iambic, dactylic
It's a ve|ry didactic fact." anapest, anapest, anapest
So mix your meter, but be careful: Mrs. M. just about gets away
with it. (She knows it's an actual fact.)

I finish up with a limerick in Greek:
A Grecian called γ baked an ι,
Made her friends on the δ all φ,
"If one ι we n,
Your ι it will φ,
ν ι we could not eat in x."

Again, look up the translation in Answers and Solutions in August.

ISMANIA
What should one call an uncontrollable urge to collect words
ending in -ism? Alan and Theresa von Altendorf, the husband-
and-wife compilers of Isms: A Compendium of Concepts, Doc-
trines, Traits and Beliefs from Ableism to Zygodactylism
(Mustang Publishing, Memphis TN, 1991; $16.95) obviously
suffer from this not-yet-medically-recognized ailment. In
a book of 335 pages, they have collected and defined some
two thousand isms, from dictionary-sanctioned entries such
as atheism to spur-of-the-moment inventions in newspapers
and magazines such as Nancyism (polices or practices of
Reagan's wife). A few isms peculiar to logology are included
(anagrammatism, lipogrammatism, spoonerism, malapropism)
as well as the family based on Greek letters (iitacism, iota-
cism, rhotacism, etacism, mutacism, lambdacism). There are
even a few isms that relate to real objects rather than ab-
stract beliefs (jism, chrism), plus the occasional tittletism
(logarithm, an
ism for someone with a speech impediment).
Based on a small sample (isms beginning ra- or re-), I
note 35 isms, comparing favorably with the 50 tabulated
in Gale Research Company's -Ologies & -Isms (Third Edition,
1986), but somewhat less favorably with the 59 in a reverse-
alphabetical listing of 3900 isms from Webster's Unabridged
Dictionary, Second Edition. If one is willing to overlook
the authors' political biases (expressed in such entries as
the ones on Reaganism, capitalism, communism, historical
materialism, etc.), the book is a delightful browse through
such oddities as wowserism, booksellerism, ipsedixitism, jog-
trottism, pussyfootism, upperhandism and the like. The book
is illustrated with a wide variety of droll drawings from
the last century, supplied by Dover Publications.