A PREMODERN PALINDROMIC HISTORY

HOWARD RICHLER
Cote St. Luc, Quebec, Canada

It's a heavy burden I carry as a member of the most oppressive group on the planet. Yes, you guessed it. I am a White Heterosexual Adult Male or WHAM. Postmodernist deconstructionist analysis has proved that WHAMs are inherently biased.

I thought that writing for Word Ways would be sanctuary from the slings and arrows of the cultural cognoscenti about my biases but I was wrong. Dave Morice, the Iowa iconoclast, accused me of (for lack of a better term) modernism in the February 1991 Kickshaws. Referring to my "Palindromic History of Civilization" in the November 1990 Word Ways, Mr. Morice stated "His selections were weighted in favor of the 20th century". He then proceeded to emit some pre-20th century palindromes so that symmetry could be restored to recorded time.

There you have it. Morice's j'accuse hit straight to the marrow. I had to admit my piece had a modernist slant. To atone for my bias, I've been dredging the palindromic archives for the last two years searching for premodern palindromes. Here are my dregs.

SEX, REX XERXES? (480 B.C.) An Athenian courtesan propositions the conquering Persian king
SORE DEIFIER REIFIED EROS (399 B.C.) At his trial, Socrates is accused of corrupting youth
WE, PLATO, TAR A TOTAL PEW (365 B.C.) Attributed to an ebullient Aristotle after one of the lads at the Academy spilled tar on a bench
SULLA, CALL US (88 B.C.) Confronted by Sulla that he and Sulpicius are challenging Sulla's rule, Marius gives Sulla a flip-pant reply
DRAW, O CAESAR, ERASE A COWARD (44 B.C.) Caesar ignores advice to do unto Brutus before Brutus does unto him
REVOLTING IS ERROR: RESIGN IT, LOVE (73 B.C.) Spartacus's girl friend implores him not to lead a revolt against Rome
YAWN A MORE ROMAN WAY (39 A.D.) Caligula explains Roman etiquette to a first-term Senator
GALL A ROMAN IN A MORAL LAG (39 A.D.) Further advice is forthcoming from Caligula
TONSURED NERO, RENDER US NOT (68 A.D.) Some prisoners awaiting execution for mocking Nero's skinhead plead for mercy
GNOSTIC, A TACIT SONG (150 A.D.) According to the Gnostic Christians, knowledge, not faith, is the path to salvation
I NAB RUMOR FROM URBAN I (229 A.D.) A bishop eavesdrops on
the first city Pope
LID OFF A DAFFODIL, ALLAH; SHALL ALLI DOFF A DAFFODIL? (650)
Supplication, courtesy of Caliph Ali ibn-abu Talib
GNAT WAS I ERE I SAW T'ANG (668) A bootlicking Korean tries
to curry favor with his Chinese masters
EVIL WAS SALADIN, A MAN I'D (ALAS!) SAW LIVE (1191) Crusader
Richard the Lionhearted gives beurdging praise to his heathen
foe Saladin
SLOG NO MINI MONGOLS (1238) Russian Prince Alexander Nevski
underestimates the Mongols who are about to overrun his country
LIVE FOR A WAR OF ROSES OR FOR A WAR OF EVIL (1455) Henry
Tudor rallies his red rose Lancastrians against their white
rose York foes
RESUME SO PACIFIC A POSE, MUSER (1516) After a lunch break,
Leonardo da Vinci exhorts La Gioconda to resume her previous
expression
ANNE, I STAY A DAY AT SIENNA (1534) Henry VIII discusses his
travel plans with Anne Boleyn
SUMS ARE DEIFIED, ERASMUS (1563) John Calvin decries society's
materialism to Desiderius Erasmus
EGAD! A BASE TONE DENOTES A BAD AGE (1555) French astrologer
Michel Nostradamus uses tonality as a prognostication device
SEX? EVEN A DANE VEXES (1600) His mother's recent remarriage
intensifies Hamlet's revulsion of sex
REGAN, A MEGASTAR, A STAGE MANAGER (1605) Near the end of
his life, King Lear realizes that his daughter Regan's love
for him is only an act
DELIVERY, REVERE, VERY REVILED (1776) A customer complains
after his pizza arrives a week late from Pony Paul's Pizza
Parlor
NOMISTS REIGN AT TANGIER, ST. SIMON (1793) Robespierre tells
French philosopher St. Simon of recent political developments
NO SLENDER EVIL; SNUG WAS I ERE I SAW GUNS-LIVERED NELSON (1805)
Commander Villeneuve of the joint French-Spanish fleet laments
his loss to Admiral Nelson at Trafalgar
EMBARGO? GO GRAB ME! (1807) Senatorial Timothy Pickering tells
President Jefferson what he thinks about Jefferson's planned
embargo
PEEL'S ASLEEP (1834) A British M.P. remarks that P.M. Sir Robert
Peel is somnolent in Parliament
YES, SY, DOOM ALAMO ODYSSEY (1836) Mexican General Santa Anna
gives Lieutenant Sy Gonzales the order to storm the Alamo
STENO MEN INTERPRET NINE MONETS (1866) Pierre Renoir can't
resist a snide comment when he hears some office workers dis-
cussing Impressionism
O, GERONIMO, NO MINOR EGO (1886) Attributed to General Cook
who captured Apache leader Geronimo
I, MAN, AM REGAL; A GERMAN AM I (1898) When asked his identity
at a masked ball, Emperor William II gives this haughty re-
sponse

DARRYL FRANK MITCHELL, 55

The May 7 issue of Time is one of the (then) 37 surname timeliness of Bill Clinton, (the then) 37 surname Clinton) headlines the Alamo and Nixon's resignation.

Note that the MCKINLEY, a M.P. at the lower right, and POLK could be

WASH...