PALIMERICKS

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Limericks and palindromes both being popular forms of linguistic re-creation, it occurred to me to wonder whether the two could be sal-utarily combined. Is it possible to compose a decent limerick which is also an end-to-end palindrome? And if so, is it worth the trouble?

The answer to the first question, if my recent experience is any guide, is "maybe". As the following examples demonstrate, it is feasible to mold palindromes into at least coarse approximations of limericks. But while the contriving of palindromes which conform to the limerick's AABBA rhyme scheme is not especially difficult, controlling the meter and syllable count in such verses generally is. Consequently, the typical palimerick, as such hybrids might be called, tends to resemble a limerick in shape and rhyme pattern but to leave much to be desired in other respects.

Despite the poor literary quality of my results, however, I do feel that palimerick writing offers certain rewards. For one thing, it's an interesting challenge to try to work one of them out. Unlike ordinary palindromes (which tend to be open-ended, with sites for possible expansion ever beckoning), the construction of a palimerick constitutes a self-limiting and intricate little puzzle--one similar to, say, a crossword or a cryptogram. But as is not the case with crosswords and crypto-grams, when you have finished "solving" a palimerick you are left with an original and unique creation--one which might, imaginably, even be hailed as an ornament of logological literature some day.

Unlikely ever to be regarded as being ornamental are any of the half-dozen palimericks I've managed to complete so far, but here they are anyway. My first effort to cross a limerick with a palindrome engendered this beast:

> Girded a feral, gnomed Hesse lad named Ig
> On an ever-"on " Gorgon mask (said a shade big).
>   "Gin?" Ig gibed, "Ah, sad!...I ask, Sam, no grog,
>   Nor even a nog;
> I demand a less (eh?) 'demon glare'-faded rig!"

Way too many syllables, especially in that double-length third line. In an effort to improve, on my next attempt I mixed in foreign words:

> "Du, Ag," Nita Satin said, "bist odd!
> I assume Doc, in gaga Sumer, was a tin god?"

        A "dog" Nita saw Remus,
        A "gag" Nicodemus...
    Said Dot, "Sib Dias, Nita's a...tin <u>gaud</u>!"

I don't know if I'd even want to know what was going on in that one, but I do have a scenario ready for this next item. It seems that an eccentric old bachelor, one Ibrahim Dido by name, has died intestate. So, following the funeral, Ib's friends gather at his shack to apportion among themselves the poor old fellow's meager estate. Here, one of them reports on that distribution:

    "We lotted Ib's bidet to Lew;
    To Will, it's tan Dido's toga; Dan, a non-new shoe.
        Oh, Swen! Nona <u>nada</u> got!
        So did Nat; still I wot
    We lotted Ib's bidet to Lew!"

Wait a minute--two identical lines in a limerick? Well, not really--they just look alike. A bidet, you see, can be either a small horse or a bathroom fixture, and as old Ib had one of each...Moving along, my next palimerick was written as an entry in a contest conducted in The Palindromist (see February 1997 Word Ways, p 79), the object of which was to write a palindrome incorporating the name Leno:

    "One loner nimrod, sirrahs, was I, ere <u>she</u>, no?
    We were, Dev, love's <u>pupils</u>, not 'lovers'," drawled Delino.
        "Son, I <u>led</u> Del Ward's revolt on!
        ('Slip-ups' evolved, ere we won,
    Eh?)...Sere, I saw Sharri's dorm in Reno, Leno."

A rather baffling rumination, that, but then that's a palindrome for you. By now I seemed to be getting a feeling for the mechanics of palimerick writing. At any rate, this next one seemed to come together with relatively little effort on my part:

    Dennis was mad; Adam saw a sled;
    Nate made Nell a "ten"; Anita sat in bed.
        Deb Nita sat in a net,
        Allen Eda met--
    And Elsa was mad Adam saw <u>sin</u>, Ned?

Well, what did she expect, around that crowd? Lastly, in view of the interest which exists in logological parodies of the Mary Had A Little Lamb nursery rhyme, I tried to compose a palimerickal equivalent, but could only come up with an ill-proportioned shaggy sheep story (baah!):

    Mary had a derogatory ram
    Dias had named "Rotator". ("Adam? <u>Sad</u> namer!" did Ada damn.)
        Eh, when mad Ada did remand
        As "mad" a Rotator demand...
    "Ah!" said Mary. "Rota <u>gored</u> Ada, Hyram!"