ASLEEP IN THE GARDEN OF DROMES AND DROWS

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In yonder garden palindromes

Flaunt morphemes mined from slithy tomes

As, hidden from the whiffling crows,

Dewed doublets, dreaming, drowse in drows.

Once Lewis Carroll framed a game,
And gave it doublets for a name;
Word ladders is the term today,
Though doublets took less time to say.

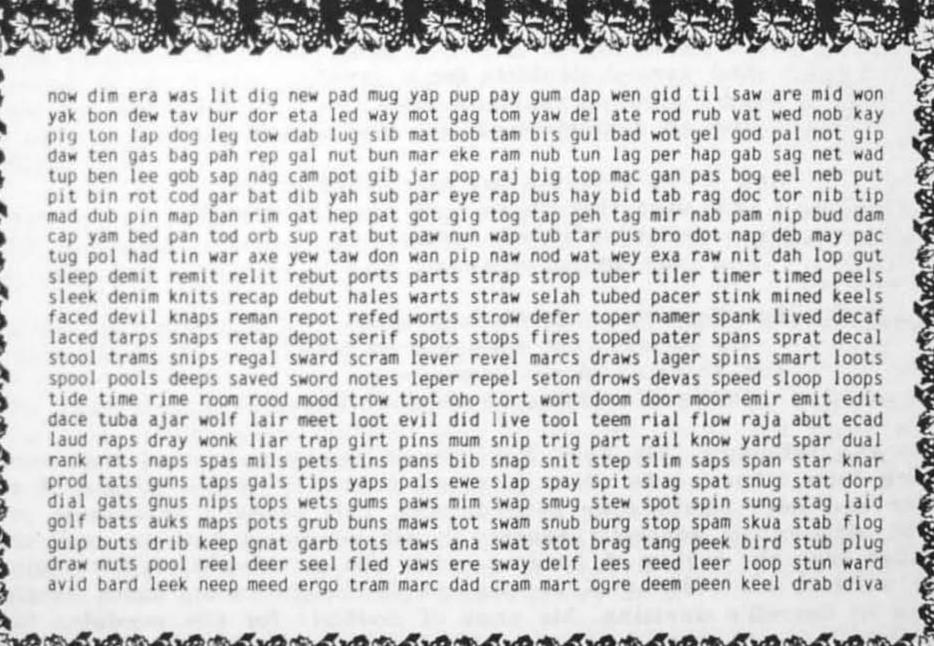
And words reversed are now called drows
(But does that rhyme with cows or crows?)
Semordnilap? It's sadly splay,
And isn't aptest, anyway.

But Word Ways...In the age ahead,
'Tis omened that name will be read,
For, thinking in the Roman way,
What's W(ord) W(ays) whirled? Why, Y2K!

In the February 1996 Word Ways, Peter Newby suggested that words which form other words when reversed be called drows instead of the older and more cumbersome semordnilaps. This seems a reasonable proposal, although if generally adopted it will represent another small chip spalled from the legacy of Lewis Carroll, who is thought to have coined the word in his 1889 novel Sophie and Bruno. In recent times another word of Carroll's devising, his name of doublets for the wordplay form he invented, has been largely supplanted by the apter if longer term word ladders.

These two Carroll-connected topics, drows and word ladders, have been combined with palindromes to create the word garden on the next page. Both the dromes (the horizontal rows and their center words) and the drows (all of the other words) are readily apparent, but can you spot those lounging ladders in their natural camouflage? If so, what letters do they delineate? (The ones at top and bottom are not too hard to pick out, but those in the center sector may be a challenge to discern.) The ladders can follow any horizontal, vertical or diagonal routes, and may make any number of turnings. For a view of the solution, see Answers and Solutions.

The garden and the verse on the preceding page both allude to the curious fact that Word Ways' initials, when inverted, denote a number of looming portent.



Protective coloration: delitescent doublets
drowsing in drows