A rebus is a puzzle in which a letter or group of letters, called the rubric, represents the word or phrase to be guessed. An example is TLARH = 'labyrinth' (LA by R in TH). In a phonetic rebus, the sounds of the rubric play a part; for example, PK = 'puck' (P; you see K) or QT = 'cutie' (cu tie). In an enigmatic rebus, the letters as they stand are insufficient to give the answer, and something not shown must be assumed; for example, Q = 'one-tenth square mile', where the not-shown SUAREMILE plays a part in the answer. Other examples of rebi can be found in the May and November 1972 issues of Word Ways.

David Silverman has asked what the longest non-enigmatic rebus might be. The non-enigmatic criterion is necessary, since the above example with Q could be extended indefinitely, a single letter representing one trillionth of a trillion-letter phrase. Furthermore, any length can be reached by making the rubric long enough, so I proposed a further condition: the number of symbols in the rubric must be at most one-third the number in the answer. This still allows for trickery like 1000 periods representing the 4000-letter answer 'stop, stop, stop--' but let that pass.

I decided to see if any such super-rebi had already been composed. Even adding the requirements of non-phoneticity and a minimum of thirty letters, I found 24. The list may be of interest as showing how far the rebus idea can be stretched. With each answer, I give in parenthesis the rubric/answer ratio.

1. C M C
   N N
   Cannon to the right of them, cannon to the left of them, cannon in front of them (.080)

2. ALL
   S E S
   Alone, alone, all, all alone, alone on a wide, wide sea (.150)

3. GE VILL OBASF AMS
   ER
   Somewhere apart from the village, and nearer the basin of Minas (.269)

4. ER ER
   ER
   Northerner, southerner, easterner, westerner (.195)

5. MB Y
   The bandit sprinted after the money (.100)

6. JX
   A left hook followed by a right cross (.067)
I believe this is a complete list of super-rebi published in The Enigma, although several others could have made the grade with minor corrections. Some make little sense without the original cluing verses.
It should be noted that quotations from well-known literary works were frequently used. 1. from 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', is not a strictly accurate quote; with two superfluous the's omitted, it remains with a rubric/answer ratio of .089. The same lines inspired a (.243) version by Arcanus and a (.116) one from Ben Aml. 2 is from 'The Ancient Mariner', 3 from 'Evangeline', 7 from Macbeth, 8 from Twelfth Night, and 17 and 19 from the Bible.

The Silverman challenge elicited a number of original super-rebus that have not been previously published.

29. O H/R_LDGNNOCMDBRWRG/HEGF ETMY

The horrendous, ethereal, owl-eyed, frightening, nocturnal, Argentine monster nematode invertebrate was lashing his tail in great agony (.265)

30. # T DR LHT EDCSCBFEHDAW

A sharp-taloned night heron sat covertly on derby-hatted scarecrow; dingbat, feathered lethal foe clips even daft ern (.227)

27. WRIGHTLY/C

Not a whit selfishly, ingratiatingly or confusedly (.279)

28. HYDH RNS

They'd run together in double harness (.226)

29. ST

GmOF

Just a slight misunderstanding of the situation (.146)

30. ORULE M DOFM OBOM NMLS M/D/WSO

One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them, / One ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them / In the land of Mordor where the shadows lie (.230)

The syntax in 26 is reminiscent of cryptogram English. Note the use of 'stern' in 25, 'eclipse' in 26, 'nota' (cf. 'nota bene') in 27. The April Fool (1973) issue of The Enigma had a travesty designed to put an end to the question once and for all.

31. A

The initial letter of the Roman alphabet stands alone on its own two legs with its arm crossed and its head straightforwardly pointing toward the uppermost edge of the page in The Enigma on which it has been printed in black ink through the use of the offset printing method (.0044)

The suber, or reversed rebus, is a rebus in which the rubric clues the answer spelled backwards, as in ØP = 'dessertspoon' (no O; P
stressed). Clearly, no tricks like 31 can be applied; a long suber must be a constructional feat. What, then, is the longest suber? So far, there is only one that qualifies as a super-suber.

32. E We must ere long nip pilferage losses seen SLEM & & O LT W in motels (.325)

The exclamation 'ole' is oddly placed, but this is venial in such a tour de force.

In conclusion, here are a few rebi that do not fit the criteria but are still worth seeing: 33-36 are partially phonetic, and 37-38 are enigmatic. 33, another quote, also uses rather rustic grammar.

33. WE O We look before and after, and sigh for what is not
34. D&M IYT Here's the damn purse, and the money is in it
35. G20 1/2 20-1/2 A scoreless first half followed by a high-scoring second half
36. usC CT SS SE \n Yes, depress your dimmer switches
37. Y I was cut off at the northeast, and 'e was cut off at the south
38. 1 F

Authors of these rebi are Azungu (18), B. Natural (1, 2), Emmo W. (3), Evergreen (5, 24), Grulla (4), HoHo (6, 7, 8), Ixaxar (9, 10), Larry (20), Macropod (11), Merlin (31, 34, 35), Nemo (12, 13), Nightowl (25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32), Penny (21), Plantagenet (14, 15, 16, 33), Quirk (19), Stilicho (22, 23, 37, 38), Tartarin (36), Treesong (29, 30), and Winkie (17). 3 and 38 were slightly modified.