THE POET'S CORNER

From time to time, Word Ways receives a variety of short poems related to recreational linguistics, some original, others previously published. As poetic output cannot be easily predicted, these will be presented on an irregular basis.

The Poet's Corner this issue is entirely devoted to the work of Jonathan V. Post, a software engineer with Boeing in Seattle. He has written Science Poems, an intriguing survey of the widely-scattered literature connecting science (in particular, Artificial Intelligence) and poetry. (As yet unpublished, the manuscript is stored in a computer file.) Several of his own poems are used as examples, including the wordplay-related ones quoted below.

His "hyper-anagram" is an acrostic poem with added structure, reminiscent of Walter Shedlofsky's Anachutters. Note how the first word of each line forms a definition of "creativity", a version of the frequently-played acronym game (LETTERS = Little Etchings That Transcribe Every Readable Sound; BRA = Breast Remolding Apparatus). The word is spelled phonetically by the end of each line in the poem.

CREATIVITY DE-FIND
CREATIVITY means, first of all, to SEE
RARE vision indeed, to see what we ARE.
ENERGY: in every mass, this hidden E
ATOMIC, brilliant as the bomb named "A"!
THOUGHT stands beyond Time, and calls it "T",
IMAGINATION is the inner EYE.
VISIONS, victorious, veer in a VEE:
INSIGHTS, birds in the boundless sky of ... I.
TRUTH is more than what logicians label "T".
YES, most important of all is the WHY!

His "Anagrammatic Isogrammatic Fable" echoes much earlier Word Ways work, particularly that of James Rambo (February 1976, August 1978), Tom Smith's Traffic (May, August and November, 1977) and Sam Edelston's name (August 1978). In fact, the technique was used by H. B. McPherrin ("Hercules" of the National Puzzlers' League) in the Enigma as early as 1924. Jonathan Post claims his poem is "something SHTREAM-of-consciousness" but "tugs at ART'S HEM".

He, smart hamster, Mr. Haste, "Re-mash'it!"
Master H., "Sam Hert", The Arms, Mr. Heart;
hates Mr. Mars, the set harm: "Harmest?"
Mather's rash-met "Trash 'em!" Shame! Tr-
Word squares are rarely, if ever, used as the basis of poems. Here is one devised by Jonathan Post on the famous square on the word CIRCLE:

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Falling, then, from the solar
Fell the burning winged
Son of Daedalus, wearing
Artificial wings his father did
Too high he flew in the sunlight!
He falls in myth, falls not in our

CIRCLE
CARUS
ARST
REAT
STRE
ESEM
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As Jonathan Post points out, numerous authors have constructed mnemonics for remembering the digits of pi by the lengths of words; one example, to 30 places, is given in the August 1968 Word Ways. To get around the zero digits of pi, he uses the word "O" in the following effusion:

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NOW I know a value
(certainly do!)
Number whose use
gives circular functions
Purpose: numerical, too.

"Pi!" its cognomen
when verbal
or symbol;
Uses for all,
interest for he
science intrigues.
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Think O! to assemble
decimals' form
I memorized stanzas

I summed endlessly
the character mnemonics
And finally cried I
"O! That's harmonic!"

Pi, O! marvelous decimal
that eternally will grow
while computers go
and O! compute
Numerals I deduce flee
O! surely
to infinity!

Poetry, my O! pathetic
technique retentive
conceals circle
of geometry: O!
The fine pleasure it shall
now give.

So I a hundred
O! verily hundred
Multiplex decimals
of a Math Produced
(O!)
Fabulous number know,
A few in addition
to end, O!

MODIFIERS

Modifiers, by Laurence Urdang (Verbatim editor), published by
Gale Research Corporation for $45, is a slim (203-page) book
that exploits the idea that adjectives do not always resemble the
nouns they correspond to. For example, if you wish to use the
adjective like a frog, how do you find out Lea standard diction­
a ry that the word you seek is canine or batrachian? Or that wax­
like is ceraceous? The book lists approximately 16,000 non­
standard adjectives corresponding to 4000 nouns in alphabetical
order, and indexes the adjectives alphabetically as well.