



Anthony Etherin

A Loris Abandons an Opera

A Loris Abandons an Opera: Experiments in Palindromic and Anagrammatic Forms

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A Loris Abandons an Opera is a strange and useless work of fiction. The 'heterogeneous palindromes' are entirely fictitious. The palindrome-haiku, palindrome-sonnets and first four anagram-poems comprise fictionalised transformations of allusions to the names, terms, ideas and themes the author associates with the works of various artists and scientists – in order, Dali, Tesla, Poe, Einstein, Kafka, Schrödinger, Picasso, Bohr, Borges, and Satie – and are thus fictions inspired by, rather than accurately descriptive of, their subjects. The anagram-soliloquy for Shakespeare employs an extended quotation (Hamlet's soliloquy) to similar ends. The purpose of this book is to showcase the art of palindromic and anagrammatic manipulation; its poems' subjects are used as a basis for such manipulations, and are not the primary focus of this book.

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Introduction: The Constraints

A Loris Abandons an Opera is a work of experimental poetry, focusing on the art of literary restriction. Inspired in part by the French literary group Oulipo, the first half of the book explores a variation on the palindrome, while the second combines palindromes and anagrams with traditional metrical and formal considerations.

Heterogeneous Palindromes

A palindrome is a word, sentence, passage or number that reads the same backwards as forwards. Most literary palindromes are by single letter ('dash to be both sad') or single word ('Might I, as struggle commands, give up? Give commands, struggle as I might?'). However, one may also compose palindromes whose unit of palindromism is plural. For example, the following haiku, which I wrote for Salvador Dali's *Swans Reflecting Elephants*, is a palindrome by every two letters (i.e. the 'An' of 'Answer' echoes the 'an' of 'swan', etc.):

Answer: Ink must 'to
or fro'. I remake, mirror,
foot, tusk – miner swan?

An example of a two-word palindrome is, 'I go out whenever I lose. I lose out whenever I go'. (Naturally, three- and higher letter or word palindromes are also possible: e.g. 'The writer: "Wait – he's eerie. See the waiter writhe!"'[Three-letter].)

The above, be their unit of palindromism single or plural, are what I call 'homogeneous palindromes', since the unit is consistent. In a heterogeneous palindrome, on the other hand, the unit of palindromism varies according to a premeditated sequence. For example, given the sequence 4-3-2-1-2-5, a palindromist might write: 'Host, urge our star, pursue our ghost'; that is, Host (4) – urg (3) – e o (2) – u (1) – r s (2) –

tar pu (5, centre) – rs (2, reflected) – u (1, reflected) – e o (2, reflected)
– ur g (3, reflected) – host (4, reflected).

(Note that homogeneous word palindromes are effectively heterogeneous letter palindromes in sequences not premeditated, but incidental: ‘Might I, as struggle commands, give up? Give commands, struggle as I might?’ is both a single word palindrome and a heterogeneous letter palindrome in the sequence 5-1-2-8-8-4-2.)

The heterogeneous palindromes in this collection obey the additional restriction that they must have at their centre the twentieth unit of their sequence, such that their total number of units is 39 ($[20 \times 2] - 1$). (Zeros count as units: absence is reflected as absence; if a sequence has, say, five zeros in its first twenty figures, the resulting heterogeneous palindrome will appear to have only 29 units in total ($[\{20-5\} \times 2] - 1$.)

For this collection, I generally chose sequences based on the decimal expansions of famous irrational numbers; however, a few simple rational sequences are also included. Though the constraint does not lend itself to coherence, I endeavoured to run with ideas and images when they presented themselves, and to, where possible, obliquely discuss a set of pertinent themes – namely, the use of form and constraints in the arts; the relationship between science and art; and the myth of the Minotaur.

Palindrome-Sonnets

The remainder of this book consists of combinations of constraints, beginning with five palindromic sonnets. These sonnets are palindromes by (single) letter. They are written in iambic pentameter and obey the Shakespearean sonnet’s rhyme scheme (ABABCDCDEFEGG), albeit with the occasional half-rhyme. As an additional constraint, the poems were written to include multiple allusions to the terms, images, ideas and themes I associate with the works of specific individuals: in turn,

Nikola Tesla, Edgar Allan Poe, Albert Einstein, Franz Kafka, and Erwin Schrödinger.

Anagram-Poems

The works in this section, which combine anagrams with traditional poetic constraints, are directly inspired by the work of the Oulipo, the first poem being in a form (anagram-sestina, sestanagrammatina or *sexanagrammatine*) invented by Oulipian Michelle Grangaud in her book *Formes de l'anagramme* (1995), and the second, third and fourth being variations on this form.

In the first, the works of Pablo Picasso are discussed in a sestina (in iambic pentameter) whose 39 lines are anagrams of each another. In the second and third poems, the Shakespearean sonnet form – again in iambic pentameter and with all lines anagrammed – is applied alongside allusions to the works of, respectively, Niels Bohr and Jorge Luis Borges. The fourth poem, whose subject is Erik Satie, is a villanelle of anagrammed lines.

While the first four anagram-poems employ reference and allusion, the fifth creates anagrammed verse from an extended quotation. Here, Hamlet's famous soliloquy is anagrammed *line-for-line* (e.g. 'To be, or not to be, that is the Question:' becomes 'I sob to *be*, to quiet that other sonnet:'). The content of the anagrammed soliloquy takes inspiration from the original's metre and themes.

Heterogeneous Palindromes

In the Sequence 1-2-3-4

(12341234123412341234)

Melody, abloom,
treads a dale
in gloomy March.

A season,
and he abandons
a search.

May, looming,
leads a dream
to a bloody elm.

In the Decimal Expansion of Feigenbaum's First Constant

(46692016091029906718)

Sonatas perish, losing,
so fool thorn and nail.

Stubborn, find that surge
of tenfold change and haste.

Find range and hold,
charge often.

Find that sun frail, stubborn,
and nothing so foolish, lost as persona.

In the Decimal Expansion of π

(31415926535897932384)

And she,
Apollo's toy muse,
scents a wake for Ceres...

Here, Athena meditates
to find callous stars,
but ends piercing none.

Coercing no spin,
duteous stars bind –
call it a test of the named.

Here, Ares' forces
awaken toy muses –
cellos to heap sand.

**In the Decimal Expansion
of the Hilbert Number ($2^{\sqrt{2}}$)**
(26651441426902251886)

A nuclide of none, his rotting cove.
Seas eat warmth for the mask.
Seas unbrace rations and, inland,
turn sand in laceration.

A sun breaks for them
a swarm that eases,
coveting
this roof non-Euclidean.

In the Decimal Expansion of $\sqrt{2}$ (14142135623730950488)

The art,
a losing sun,
as she emerges,
only a swan
to her suffering,
may be dark
as turns of sky...

Do seas turn
so dark, maybe
suffering her
as wantonly,
so emerge as she –
sung in a lost heart?

In the Decimal Expansion of $\sqrt[3]{3}$ (17320508075688772935)

Skulls.

A winsome arrow
in a nucleus aglow.
Barbed sanity
in our partisan Earth.

A rebirth:
Art
is a near pity.

In our beds,
an airway battles a star...

... my raw
Amadeus a glow
in a nuclear room –
in skull saws.

In the Decimal Expansion of the Golden Ratio (16180339887498948482)

I irradiate the red sky.
Andromeda red, overseas
in lethal, adrenal love.

Sawtooth evocations heaved my heat.
What now?

We fortress odic stress:
“O, die for what?”

Now wheat-sheaved,
my vocation saw too
the love adrenalin let:

Halo verse, as Rome dared,
and sky-tethered air radii.

In the Sequence 3-7

(373737373737373737373737)

Its song off to a tonal id's,
a loris abandons an opera...

“I torment myself
when it's useless refraining.”

No ringed Minotaur maze.
No tinge.
D minor, raining refuse.

“Less itself when my storm entrains,
an open door is a basalt
on a lid to a song of fits.”

In the Decimal Expansion of π^e (22459157718361045473)

In spread quantum views,
pitch dices the ardent firmament,
foams let reality quake,
duet,
stage violins,
age violets.

Take duty!

Quiet realms lament,
foam-dent fires...

The arch dictum views piquant, read spin.

In the Decimal Expansion of e^π (23140692632779269005)

“To photons, every moment,” he silenced,
“lives in us. No wave therein, forever is
one flicker, life, link...”

See her lifeline flick on!

Forever is there

in snow:

Avenues, iced,

liven men,

the silvery moonset photo...

In the Decimal Expansion of i^i (02078795763507619085)

Utopia, stray with my eye of cloaks...

See my other burn – is he light, limp?

See a dark shine cut air.

See a rat.

Limber statues,

timber star...

See a ratline cut a dark ship.

See a limelight burnish other oaks...

See my eye of clay,

with myopia,

strut.

In the Decimal Expansion of $\ln(2)$ (06931471805599453094)

Helium suns end other narcissi.
Lent wombs or rot,
Earth thereafter ligatures the worm.

Its nova sows.
The lark allows the larva;
sits now or matures thee after.

Light her tear,
tomb sorrows' silent arc
in her sun's endothelium...

In the Decimal Expansion of e (27182818284590452353)

Used, these dearth-ready areas
one's pent Minotaur oversees.

To sip has so sold pay...

Know warm voices:
"May voids, may vice, vow war?"

My Knossos, old Pasiphaë's tour
over, set a pent Minos
a reasoned,
year-threaded
Theseus.

In the Decimal Expansion of e (Univocalic) (27182818284590452353)

The bled
epentheses feed,
were screeched.

Gelled, flee the metered,
germless wedge.
Tempted keep, secede!

Fleece deeps;
kempt, edge termless...

We dredge, meted,
flee the leech.

Edge-led, we rescreen theses' feeble depth.

In the Sequence 1-2

(12121212121212121212)

This art's sand,
a stem we posit.

Bricks crib its poem.

We stand as stars hit...

Palindrome-Sonnets

Radar (for Tesla)

Wolf, snort celestial pelts across a moon.

A tonal set, a tad elite, I troop.

So, losses or awards are not a tune.

My ports erupt loves old or ward a loop.

Scan I no wire fed (tactile, mal-fed).

“O, name to trial Edison!” we drew.

A radar after germ, I’m hotel let.

Ohm, I’m regret. Farad, a rawer dew.

No side lair. Totem: anode flame, lit cat.

Defer: I won! In AC’s pool, a draw.

Rod, lose volt purest (ropy menu, tat),

on eras draw a rose’s solos poor.

 Tie, tile data, Tesla. Not a ‘no’...

 O, mass or castle plaits, electrons’ flow...

My Pym (for Poe)

Noon lives are Poe's. I'm orphaned. On, we hide...

Reversed, I here help meta-trap an ape.

We make *rue morts*. Lea, MS.: Finites tide.

I trope, revile yet raise. Do lives elate?

I re-enact. First, I, Pym, 'nevar' ask.

Cat! Tap a rate. Mere tales tell, abet.

A feline stuck. Same rut. Purr rupture, mask.

Cut senile fate. Ballets elate, re-met.

A rap attacks. A raven, my pit's rift.

Can eerie tales, evil odes, I art?

Eye, live! Report: I edit, set in ifs.

Maelström! Eureka! Me! We pan apart.

 A temple here hides, revered. I, hewn,

 o den – ah! – promise opera's evil noon!

Sprawl Warps (for Einstein)

Sprawl ever, wonder relative, cap speeds.

Eyes pro-cognate sum time but level space.

Lags laid a tended day, by all a deed.

Nil warps? Not we. Notes robe. We relapse pace.

Model an 'if'. Repel (oh!) mid a deep.

Star-upset is: "To data set a lid."

Emit dirge! Riemann ups some dyad's keep.

Noon peeks day. Demo's spun name I re-grid.

Time dilates at a dot-site. Spur at speed!

A dim hole per finale: Dome-capes pale.

Re-web or set. O, Newton, sprawl indeed!

Allay, by added net, a dial's gale.

 Caps level, tub, emit. (Muse: tango-corpse?)

 Yes, deep space – vital, erred – now revel-warps.

Wall Law (for Kafka)

Go day, also. G. Samsa, crash too big?
Of strain, I wonder: Castle folk wall air.
Tax I. New sire, peek. Drown onward, dig.
O, laid onsets! A tree, sward I prepare.
Reviled? No canon asked. A few saw all.
Law, I fill. Ecrú Odradek laws tell,
“Air tastes mood, loops a traded art, a spool...”
Doom sets a trial; lets walked ardour cell.
If I wall law as we fade K.s anon,
a con deliverer (a perp) I draw.
Seer tastes? No dialog. ID drawn on,
word, keeper, is we nix a trial law.
 K. – lo! – felt sacred now, in I, art’s fog.
 I booth sarcasm as go slay a dog...

Reifier (for Schrödinger)

We met a lap, a tell. I rep, allot.

Go moot paws' time, dualism. I, a space.

Diced ruffle-stats, a tactic at a spot,
knit feline dyad; dim a set-on trace.

Diced rises, pal, locate by nametag, tools,
test fed rot or a grey metallic's odd.

Ado not in an epoch, promise rules!

Use lures I morph. Co-pen an 'I' to nod.

Add, oscillate my erg, a rotor deft.

Sets loot, gate many. Bet a collapse, sir!

Decide, cart notes. A midday den, I left.

Ink tops a tacit cat, a stat (self-fur).

Decide caps. Aims I laud, emit; swap too.

Mog, toll a peril, let a palate mew...

Anagram-Poems

Anagram-Sestina for Picasso

The cubists paint the looming astral plane,
a torn plateau. Pale nothing stitches limbs
to planate space – to slash light, burn in time
the regal plans that motions built in space,
that multiple abstraction, song-line, shape,
that tragic spine: the point man labels 'soul'.

A primal tone can light, best paints, the soul;
its shape but this long-learnt atomic plane.
In mottling blue, Picasso learnt that shape.
In rose, the taut pleats hang Platonic limbs –
a blatant premise, thought on, in still space,
as points to help glance basal Truth in time.

That stolen pigeon calls a paintbrush time:
“Grant main the plane!” A bottle chips its soul...
So halt that trouble planning: time is space,
all things abrupt to that one seismic plane,
all separate paths one night cut into limbs,
one mulish, abstract glint: potential shape.

In Guernica's still lamp, that too-bent shape,
a battle haunts horse-clapping lost in time,
then too-tall paper statues, chaining limbs,
collapse in threatening baptism. That soul,
that battle springs malicious on the plane;
its night-lamp boils to haunt eternal space.

The Minotaur, 'Bastille', tonight plans space.
The beast, pulling a cart, its moon-lint shape
about to slip, retains the calm night's plane.
The bathers' paints pull long a coast in time;
that beach a still appointment, Ingres' soul
(that plain, that scope) in long, austere limbs.

Close-plait guitars, that neon pan, the limbs
in trail, the plant, smooth but a single space.
Plain talent meant the bright Picasso soul
(to mull) a plastic Einstein: both grant shape
to change, to lanterns, publish spatial time,
both aim at – sculpt their song – a silent plane.

Can't night, our limbs – a palette lost in shape –
repaint that song in space? Lull, as both time,
soul, marble this the poignant static plane?

Anagram-Sonnet for Bohr

In atoms dealt Copernican, sum Earth
and Mars electrons – tie-up, atom-chain.

And each no more a static plum, insert,
inside the atom's man-cut arc or plane,
its throne, a map-made nucleonic star...

Then data! Pulses aim in concert, roam
as oceans, do their tunnel impact, mar
(in heart) a planet's turn, a 'cosmic dome'.

Harmonic contrast! See an amplitude
and particle unite, as common hearts –
at arms, apart in ethos – mine, conclude
no map, no master. Hence, dualistic art...

In Latin, scoop a drama, sum the centre:

“Contraria”, he said, “sunt complementa”

Anagram-Sonnet for Borges

The library and the boundless forking paths,
Asterion's keep, by hold and half-truth, brings;
its half-sprung blood, here taken in dry baths
of Labyrinth: blank shrouds, repeated things.
In Alephs, earths: The first, long bound by dark,
turns bays, a prank of shore, the blinded light –
its harbours blend the fine and ghostly park,
the sharply blurred banditos' sneak of night.
Then *Orbis Tertius*, flaked by hand, harps long:
the fold unbars, births theory speaking land.
Its one full breath and spark the hybrid song,
the flared, sprung Labyrinth. The book is sand.
 Graphs robe, as truth and *Tlön* – 'I' fleshed by ink.
 By half-sound, Borges' thread, paths interlink.

Anagram-Villanelle for Satie

A sly full moon, nigh under Satie's pen...
For all, ennui, Gymnopedies halt suns,
a playful ruin molds the Gnessienne.

Gulf anthems' lonely sound, *Parisien*,
among the oily spires and sullen fun,
a sly full moon, nigh under Satie's pen.

Unsung, lay sail if 'phonometre' lends
its one-line hums and gallery of puns,
a playful ruin, molds, the Gnessienne.

And only pulsing formulas, the Seine,
may feel, inspire song, hold Luna – stun
a sly full moon, nigh under Satie's pen.

My *sonneries*! The pull unfolds again.
In golden ratios, he names, fully spun,
a playful ruin, molds, the Gnessienne.

Pianos' forms indulge a sun, yell; then,
afore us, angles pull, my ninth is done;
a sly full moon, nigh under Satie's pen
(a playful ruin), molds the Gnessienne.

Anagram-Soliloquy for Shakespeare

i. *Input: Hamlet [Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories & Tragedies (First Folio), 1623]*

To be, or not to be, that is the Question:
Whether 'tis Nobler in the minde to suffer
The Slings and Arrowes of outrageous Fortune,
Or to take Armes against a Sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them: to dye, to sleepe
No more; and by a sleepe, to say we end
The Heart-ake, and the thousand Naturall shockes
That Flesh is heyre too? 'Tis a consummation
Deuoutly to be wish'd. To dye to sleepe,
To sleepe, perchance to Dreame; I, there's the rub,
For in that sleepe of death, what dreames may come,
When we haue shuffel'd off this mortall coile,
Must giue vs pawse. There's the respect
That makes Calamity of so long life:
For who would beare the Whips and Scornes of time,
The Oppressors wrong, the poore mans Contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd Loue, the Lawes delay,
The insolence of Office, and the Spurnes
That patient merit of the vnworthy takes,
When he himselfe might his *Quietus* make
With a bare Bodkin? Who would these Fardles beare
To grunt and sweat vnder a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The vndiscover'd Countrey, from whose Borne
No Traueller returnes, Puzels the will,
And makes vs rather beare those illes we haue,
Then flye to others that we know not of.
Thus Conscience does make Cowards of vs all,

And thus the Natiue hew of Resolution
Is sicklied o're, with the pale cast of Thought,
And enterprizes of great pith and moment,
With this regard their Currants turne away,
And loose the name of Action. Soft you now,
The faire *Ophelia*? Nimph, in thy Orizons
Be all my sinnes remembered.

ii. Line-for-Line Anagram

I sob to *be*, to quiet that other sonnet:
the End himself, the wrens of retribution...
To suffer sorrow's league and air out nothings
or break its stalemate-saga out of reason
and die, deploy, be gone to thy spent poems?
A wooden temple broadens any eyes;
hence thou, snared, ask that thou hear tell, and ask
that Life Incessant rooms you – His the atom!
Yet, Piety, the loud weed looses doubt...
Our death creeps there, becomes the leap inert,
a nowhere – falsehood, myth, peacetime fast dreamt.
Or *does* the faithful soul, which fell, fame new?
Persist must we. The rest vague speech
that lies, can't mollify a smoke, a fog
of bitter fear, deep wounds, low shores which moan...
To perch or plummet, go to prayers' shown oneness?
Steal Life, his gazed supply, or Death endow?
To pause in coffin-flesh or end the scene?
That is the private torment: Know thy fate
when Kismet, hem high, qualifies the muse,
but know so bare the braided whole, His feared Law,
until fate's verge, a red or tawny dawn
(both fade), is granted to the heart that fumed.

Endure or rot? My choice – whose tune-fond verbs
return the azure soul's repellent will –
reveals a howl-bruised heart, the meek as sane...
The rotten know a fly-hot snow of teeth;
clocks swerve the coals, and so I am confused:
Do I unleash into the now, thus *feature*?
Depart with haste; choke life, its gothic soul?
Do I Zen-path and grant for me time present?
Draw weary curtains, shattering their hurt?
Of acts (they mount)? Of noose? A wooden nail?
Thy infinite horizon or his hem? Appeal!
Remember: man sees blindly.

