

ON COMPOSING PALINDROMIC POETRY

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Many years ago, Leigh Mercer constructed several dictionaries to aid the aspiring palindromist. In these dictionaries, he listed various words which contain interior reversals; for example, PRETTIFY contains the word FITTER. The value of such dictionaries lies in the arrangement of the words for quick and easy access; one very useful method is to arrange all words in reverse alphabetical order, sorted out by the number of hanging letters they contain. Thus, Y FITTER P, with a single hanging letter in front, appears toward the end of one dictionary. A second dictionary lists reversed words with double hanging letters, and a third, words with multiple hanging letters.

The number of usable words of all lengths is amazing. For example, there are hundreds of words containing the name Nita in reverse, and palindromes celebrating Nita can be improvised in all sorts of ways, a few of which I put in my forthcoming book, Palindromes and Anagrams (Dover Publications):

Did I, ameliorating Nita, roll Ema? I did.

Did I, debating, Nita dating, Nita bed? I did.

Degenerating, I do maim -- assail, alienating Nita.

I came, fleecing Nita -- I dare ululating Nita.

Rape's era now is gelatinating; Nita, I've done no deviating.

Nita! Nita! Legs I won are separating!

Nita Lulu -- radiating nice elf -- emaciating Nita,

Neil, alias Sam, I am! O dig? (Nita reneged!)

Ah Satan, derogating Nita, hating Nita, gored Natasha.

The long palindrome is not good, but it suggests the multitudinous possibilities. The word peccadillo can be used with the word accept:

Emma, doll, I'd accept Nan Guper as a ton tub --

But not as a repugnant peccadillo, dam me!

The word semasiologists can be used (I go, Lois Ames), the word dendrologists (I go, Lord Ned), the word apocalypse (espy lac, O Pa). Note the poem in homeopath, the rebec in iceberg. Even Q can be used:

In an allen, old elf fabliau,
Quail baffled lone Ha Nan.

Fret, sulk suggests luster, which suggests the fragment "Go fret, sulk, calllopsis I spoil. Lackluster fog ..." Another fragment: "... mastoiditis. I visit Idiot Sam." In the book I employed the word histolytic in a palindrome: "Lattimer asks a remittal, Eva, histolytic city lots I have -- Lattimer asks a remittal." But I didn't get around to hydrolytic:

Even words wed salacity. Lordy!
Here smut-arts busy my substratum, sere, hydrolytic!
Alas, dewes drown Eve.

In this case, tempted by a pun on even - odd, I expanded it to:

Even words wed salacity ...
Lordy, here's Midas! (Even awed am I!)
O, smut-arts busy my substratum so!
I made wan Eve; sad, I'm sere, hydrolytic.
Alas, dewes drown Eve.

However, this seemed to complicate it without improving it. Also:

Warder, adieu!
O can a demi-rep pain gala, idyllic Nepal?
Lord, Signora's sarong is droll!
A pencil, Lydia!
Lagniappe-rimed Ana Coue I dare draw.

I left out quite a bit of my own palindromic work from the book, long and short, rough and finished -- I tried to represent other people as fully as possible. In a general way I attributed all my own palindromic work to a nineteenth century logological poet, very obscure and not to be confused with the more famous Edward Fitzgerald because of a similar-sounding name, namely, Edwin Fitzpatrick. I told all sorts of fairy tales about that worthy gentleman which I hoped would be entertaining and presumed would be more or less transparent. You could have knocked me over with a feather when Dover asked me if I knew whether Edwin Fitzpatrick's works were ever published and when he died!