Fabric

ANTHONY ETHERIN

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Introduction

The poems of *Fabric* are at ease with their poemhood. Some discuss poetry itself, while others are more introspective, eager to evaluate the principles and rules by which they were constructed.

Fabric is a work of experimental, constraint-based poetry. Many of its constraints are alphabetical: anagrams, palindromes, lipograms, and their variants. Others use metrical constraints, presenting tightened versions of traditional poetic forms.

With the exception of the final poem, the poems of *Fabric* are very short. Brevity here is itself a restriction, as most of these poems were originally written to satisfy the character limit of Twitter (presently 280 characters, but some of these poems were composed when the limit was 140).

Fabric is divided into seven sections of structurally related works. Most chapters end with an "Elucidation", in which the poems' constraints are revealed.

— Anthony Etherin,
December 2021

Transformations

Transformations

Transformations
first ran on atoms
in strata — no forms
or mantras. No fits....

A firm noon starts,
as from torn satin.
Soon, far tints arm
far moon transits.

Transformations
form stars, anoint
arts, form nations
of man or transits
of storms — in an art
far torn into mass,
stir formats anon.

Four Strategic Lines

These four strategic lines are anagrams:
A rearranging set of letters aims us. Each
grain reuses a strange, formal aesthetic —
terms reassign, as a literature of change....

Thirty-Four Letters

These five lines use thirty-four letters.
This one's feverish yet restful.... True, I let
it run over — yet, see, this fulfils Set Three.
Line Four is thrust here, yet settles Five
(the foreseen result) verily. The suit fits.

Anagrammed Lines

Anagrammed lines
mangle and rise. (Am
I glad namers name
enigma — and realms?)
Dream-names align
anagrammed lines....

Scrabble

A game
of S[c]rabble
is a jolly
experience.

I act
in duty:

organize
square
tokens

on top
of a grid.

I hunt
valued
word[s].

I view them.

Form In Reinterpretation

Reinterpretations
enter repartitions.
I reorient patterns —
instant repertoire!

Form In Metaphor

Some poems think they are free.
Keen fires, they metamorphose,
yet here make prisons of theme.
(See: they seek form in metaphor....)

Form In Memories

Some poems reverberate like
bespoke memories: Ever later,
ever earlier.... Some keep tombs.

Elucidations

The poems in this section use anagrams.

Transformations, **Four Strategic Lines**, **Thirty-Four Letters**, **Anagrammed Lines**, **Form in Reinterpretation**, **Form in Metaphor**, and **Form in Memories** are each composed of perfectly anagrammed lines.

Scrabble is a perfect anagram of the letter tiles in an English Scrabble set (including blanks, which are, in this case, assigned c and s).

Reflections

Muses!

Cite,
open or often,
no sadness.

Send a song of bards,
time opal as opera.

Muses!

Palinodes revered,
I ride, reversed on:

I lapse,
sum a reposal (a poem).

Its drab fog no sadness,
send a sonnet for one poetic.

Seers!

Seer,
ever *this* see —

as, temporal,
a poem sees
odes seem polar:

A poem's tease
is the reverse.

Maestros!

You forced voices,
played trade.

So, maestro mind,
pale to palindromes —

to made, strayed places,
voiced for you.

Errors

Pe**st**s!
I maybe lapse.
I call a few trades:
I tame **th**e vital error….

A lu**ng** is drawn in a yell.

Avatar,
remi**nd**,
enact i**ntent**.

It can e**nd**.

I'm errata, valley:
an inward,
si**ng**ular or relative,
thematised art….

We fallacies pale,
by a mis**st**ep.

Aelindrome in i[i]

2-0-7-8-7-9-5

In rigid skills,
this string fits
digits.
If limits dig,
its string fills
this rigid skin.

Fibonacci Aelindrome

1-1-2-3-5-8-13

No sires,
a progeny
of tenacious sums,
we deny,
often,
a progression.

Elucidations

Reflections features a sequence of palindromes and palindromic variants.

The first poem, **Muses!**, is a straightforward palindrome, reading the same backwards as forwards, by letter. Following this, **Seers!** is a 'palindrome-by-pairs', reading the same backwards as forwards by *pairs of letters* (i.e. the first two letters, 'se', reflect as the final two, keeping 'se' intact). Similarly, **Maestros!** is a palindrome by segments of three letters, or a 'palindrome-by-triples'.

Errors presents an error-strewn palindrome: Here, each of the five most common consonant digraphs in the English language — st, th, ng, nd, and nt — remains unreversed upon its return.

In a related corruption of the palindrome, **Aelindrome in i^i** and **Fibonacci Aelindrome** are 'aelindromes' (a constraint of the author's invention). These poems palindromically parse their letters according to premeditated numerical sequences. For example: The phrase 'Melody, a bloody elm' is an aelindrome in the sequence 1-2-3-4, since its letters are palindromically parsed thusly: M(1) - el(2) - ody (3) - ablo (4, a central pivot) - ody (3, returning) - el(2, returning), m(1, returning).

Fibonacci Aelindrome takes as its basis the first seven numbers in the Fibonacci sequence, while **Aelindrome in i^i** employs the first seven digits of i^i (or, $(\sqrt{-1})^{\sqrt{-1}}$). In addition, **Aelindrome in i^i** uses only one vowel: i.

Limitations

Typewriter (Top Row)

Typewriter. Top row.
Write your poetry or quote.
Tier your repertoire.

Typewriter (Left Side)

Draft a severe verse.
Draw a reader. Weave a craft.
See fetters free art.

Typewriter (Right Side)

Joy, in looping ink,
lining my obliging book....
Bibliophily.

Keyword: Palindromes

Laid an ode, drowsy.
Eked one poem:
O, some open ode!
Keys worded on a dial.

Even Combination

Thumb, touch a button.
Motion a combination:
communication.

Odd Conversation

We press speedy keys.
We express, else we defer.
Freely, we reply....

Aria

I roar eerie air:
a rare aurora, or a
rarer aria....

Ode

I add audio.
I add a due idea —
I aid a dead ode.

The Consonants In Order

Abaci do fog.
'Hue,' I joke, 'loom on!' — I pique,
or stave wax. You zoo.

Mazes

Zaniness blazing,
jazzy stanzas waltz bizarre
wizardly mazes.

Linguistics

Trilingual linguists
knowingly intermingle
linguistic kingdoms.

Reins

Reins guide, using whims,
while quick skill edits thick print,
eking swift haiku.

Elucidations

Limitations presents various types of lipogram, in which certain letters or words are strictly prohibited.

Typewriter (Top Row) employs only those letters found on the top row of a qwerty keyboard. **Typewriter (Left Side)** limits itself to the use of the letters q, w, e, r, t, a, s, d, f, z, x, c, and v, the 13 leftmost letters on a qwerty keyboard. **Typewriter (Right Side)**, similarly, limits itself to the use of only y, u, i, o, p, g, h, j, k, l, b, n, and m, the 13 rightmost letters on a qwerty keyboard. All three poems are haiku.

Keyword: Palindromes is a palindrome-by-letter that uses only and all of the 14 letters of its title, while discussing its composition on a mobile phone (a true story!). The haiku **Even Combination** uses only those letters found on the even numbers of a standard phone dial, while its counterpart, **Odd Conversation**, uses only those letters found on odd numbers.

The haiku **Aria** and **Ode** are uniconsonant lipograms, each of which employs only one consonant (r and d, respectively). **The Consonants, In Order** is a pangrammatic haiku, in which all twenty consonants appear in alphabetical order and each only once.

The remaining three haiku are reverse lipograms. Every word in **Mazes** contains the letters a and z (as an additional rule, the '–ize' suffix was prohibited). Every word in **Linguistics** contains the three-letter sequence 'ing' (as an additional rule, the '–ing' suffix was prohibited). Finally, every word in **Reins** is five-letters long and has the letter i as its central (third) letter.

Variations

Free From Constraint

I tried to start
again and shed
the binding thread
that ruled my art.

I let my heart
control my head....
It only bled
and fell apart:

For talent's not
some mystic seed
the soul must find;

instead, its plot
alone is freed
by watchful minds....

Sonnet for Sound Poetry

The time
has come:
Let's hum
or chime,

so mime —
half-dumb,
half-numb —
the rhyme.

You hold
this task
needs words?

That's bold.
Let's ask
the birds.

Acrostic Sonnet

Around
Constraint,
Resound
Or paint

Some thought
To stroll
In taut
Control....

See lines
Obey
New signs
Now they

Explore
Their law.

Six-Letter Sonnet

As seasons tease
a toast anon,
so neatness sees
a set as one.

Sonatas soon
atone, to sate
a neon noon.
Notes assonate.

A neat sestet
attests to stone —
a sonant net,
a tenet's tone —

as assets test
a sonnet's nest.

Sonnet Fuel

To rule, sent fine,
I turn one's fleet.
Feet run to lines.
Lines run to feet....

Note, fluent sire!
Flee not its rune.
Tune stolen fire.
Fire stolen tune.

Turn: Lone, see fit:
Enlist fourteen —
seen fortune lit,
lit fortune seen.

Fit one sent rule:
Tier sonnet fuel.

The Bard Grows Old

Emit a null
lore. Mirth gilts all.
Like rule, we dull,
as, drab, we fall.

Eye rust, eye bold.
Rage regal law:
A rose so old —
eyed loose, so raw.

All age regard —
Lo! Be yet sure.
Yell! A few bards
allude we lure.

Kill last, light rime —
roll Luna, time.

Elucidations

The poems in this section are sonnets, further constrained by metrical brevity.

Freedom from Constraint is a Petrarchan sonnet in iambic dimeter, while **Sonnet for Sound Poetry**, also Petrarchan, takes the constraint further, employing only one metrical foot per line (iambic monometer).

Acrostic Sonnet is a Shakespearean sonnet in iambic monometer. The first letters of its lines together spell out the poem's title.

Six-Letter Sonnet is a Shakespearean sonnet in iambic dimeter. It is also a lipogram, employing only the letters a, s, t, n, o, and e.

Similarly, **Sonnet Fuel** and **The Bard Grows Old** are both Shakespearean sonnets in iambic dimeter. The former is composed of perfectly anagrammed lines, while the latter is a palindrome-by-letter.

Meditations

Pangrams

My pangram-haiku:
Letters squeezed inside a box.
A refractive jewel.

Tautograms

The tautogram ties
terms to their typography —
tightening this text.

Lipograms

A glossarial
origami, prim as glass,
rolls a lipogram.

Homovocalisms

Ask, of bold constraint,
a homovocalism —
a smooth, formal script.

Palindromes

Sure, flip.... Ah, play mage!
Modes, reversed, omega my
alpha — pilfer us.

… And What's a Haiku?

Basically, the paced
heptadecasyllabic
blade; a patchy slice.

A Villanelle

Motifs compel
me now to free
a villanelle.

Restrictions sell
the melody
motifs compel.

Allusions swell
in harmony —
a villanelle

whose echoes yell
the formulae
motifs compel.

A sacred spell.
A symphony.
A villanelle.

I hear it tell
its form to me:
motifs compel
a villanelle....

A Triolet

The form is short;
some lines repeat
(though terms distort).
The form is short,
its meaning caught
in metered feet....
The form is short
some lines? Repeat.

A Quatrain

From 'four', this tiny poem grew.
Each atom thus made ever fine.
You'd trap, then free, with able glue.
You'd bind each foot, each word, each line....

A Limerick

A limerick leaps from its poet,
and before we are able to know it,
catchy rhythms enshrine
a penultimate line,
with another line resting below it.

Elucidations

The poems of *Meditations* know themselves.

The opening six poems in this section are alphabetically constrained haiku: **Pangrams** uses every letter of the alphabet at least once. **Tautograms** uses only words that begin with the letter t. **Lipograms** uses only the letters of its title: l, i, p, o, g, r, a, m, and s. The three lines of **Homovocalisms** uses the same vowels, in the same order. **Palindromes** reads the same backwards as forwards, by letter. While **… And What's a Haiku?** answers its titular question in the form of a haiku whose lines are perfect anagrams of each other.

A Villanelle, **A Triolet**, **A Quatrain**, and **A Limerick** discuss their traditional forms. **A Villanelle** and **A Triolet** are further restricted by brevity, each having been composed in iambic dimeter. **A Quatrain** uses only tetragrams (four-letter words) and each line is composed of exactly four metrical feet (it is in iambic tetrameter).

Rotations

woRd play
held paem

Jaded
paper

titling

builtit

poemSealed

paleaSwood

Elucidations

These four minimalist poems are ambigrams, a type of visual palindrome. Each poem reads the same, whether the page is held upright or upside-down (i.e. rotated 180 degrees).

Together, they make the self-descriptive poem:

Wordplay held poem,
jaded paper;
titling built it,
poem sealed pale as wood.

Mutations

Mutations (The Scribes Are Time's Fabric)

The scribe's frames are atomistic. But in
mutations, the scribe afar scribes time.
Become a rubric, matter shifts in its sea,
but its core, its fabric, remains the same.

It is a coin, a fresh cast. But it remembers.
It is the ember cut from a cane. It is brass.
It is a cabinet, a crib, the summer forests.
But its core, its fabric, remains the same.

It is a ceramic urn; a fresh tomb. It besets.
It is a feather nimbus; a comber, its crest.
It is an actress. It becomes a brief thrum.
But its core, its fabric, remains the same.

It is the brief but mesmeric sonata's arc.
It is chamber music or better fantasies.
It is a manic orchestra's ebb. It must free.
But its core, its fabric, remains the same.

It is a rebus, macabre form, the scientist.
It is ice: mathematics, before stars burn.
It is a far-set, cosmic number. It breathes —
but its core, its fabric, remains the same.

It is a bust of Artemis — her bent ceramics.
It is a statue from birch — timber séances.
It is a tribe's rich number — a totem's faces.
(But its core, its fabric, remains the same.)

It is a burst, beatific sermon — the scream!
It is an Arabic secret; the umber of mists.
It is a burnt fresco. It has time's embrace.
But its core, its fabric, remains the same.

It scribes afresh. It embraces mutation.
A chimera of cries its ebb, it transmutes.
Acts remember the fabrications: *It is us.*
But its core, its fabric, remains the same.

About the Author:

Anthony Etherin is an experimental formalist poet, a pub-
lisher, a podcaster, and a musician. He tweets his poetry
@Anthony_Etherin and he archives his published works
online at anthonyetherin.wordpress.com.

He lives in the United Kingdom, on the border of England
and Wales.

Acknowledgements

"We name 'operose'
now, one sure plan.

My hero — look:
cuckoo
book? — cuckoo
lore? — hymnal!

— peruse now one
sore poem, anew."

—Christian Bök

"Anthony, as a scenarist in an ancient
theatre, scans the traces, absorbs,
snatches, scratches, or shifts those
obstinate narrations to refabricate or
refashion, to create other contrarian
constraints, set fire to certain certain-
ties, rotate those tones, those tints, in
his forensic ear or eye. His art, tiny or
airy, ironic or heart-torn, astonishes
the brain, enchants the senses. This
shifty acrobatic craft - see it, hear it,
try it!"

— Mary Frances