

Experiments in Equations and Other Angles: An Anthology

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Abstract:

Experiments in Equations is a mathematical experiment of language and form. Utilising various mathematic methods, from angles to algebra, Equations explores how two opposing mediums – Literature and Maths – can coincide and create new forms and frameworks in how we can tell stories, and to explore how we read them.

Equations is a product of the Oulipo: a French avant-garde movement that focused on constraining or limiting the tools we have to write, e.g. omitting certain letters from the alphabet, writing in dialects, and re-writing old texts in new, strange ways. This provokes a new form of structure and writing, which reevaluates our relationship with language, and how stories are told; by changing how we write, we gain new perspectives, and with new perspectives, new worlds emerge.

This anthology lightly experiments with some of these Oulipian styles, such as an infinite poem, and rewriting *Hamlet's* “To Be or Not to Be” speech with the letter A. In the final segment, I instead focus on my own Gypsy heritage, using Anglo-Romani dialect to manipulate the opening to *The Great Gatsby*; this is great fun to read aloud, but it also keeps alive a dialect and language that is becoming increasingly rare.

Keywords: Oulipo, Abstract Mathematics, Surreal, Postmodern, Weird, Abstract Poetry, Absurd, Inventive, Experimental

Date of Submission: 11.08.2024

Date of Acceptance: 10.09.2024

Editor's note: the author has used a variety of formatting options to express their creativity in this piece. We have made the document as accessible as possible, but recognise that some readers may require alternative formats. Please [contact the Student Journal Team](#) if you require an alternative format and we will work with you to adjust the document to meet your needs.

the pathway to freedom is strewn with old thoughts, plagued by old wishes,
they haunt the streets that diverge and criss-cross into the sky,
like old ghosts, stuck in this forever maze. You try to

find a way through the chaos, and find only
a cold breeze calling back; a childish

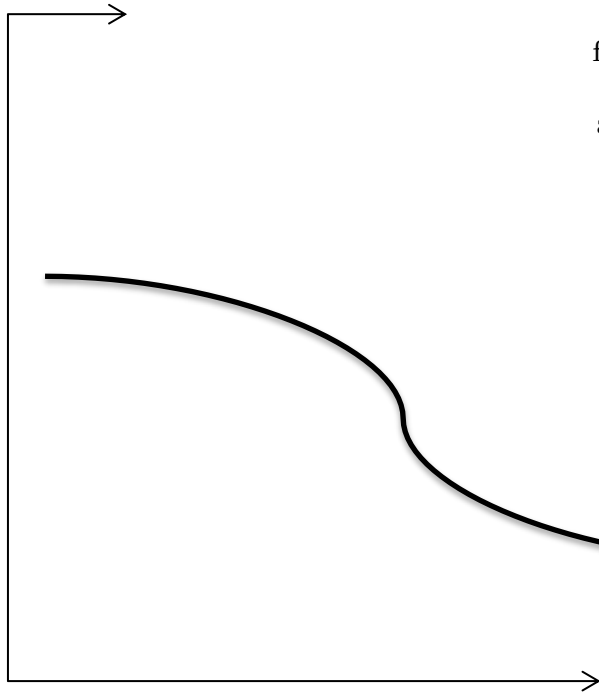
cry from the abyss. It is the
only sound, where all
dreams come to

die

live

repeat

Dante finds himself in a forest of lost spirits, bemoaning their miserable fate.
find an exit, he thinks, before I become akin to their misery;
cry and wail. He knows of such futility – the path changes
frequently; he is lost. All directions lead to the same path
nowhere. He finds himself in repetition; his feet in
agony. They ache with every step. Looking about, there is
nothing. The man is truly lost, in a limbo of
re-experience; all hope is lost, forever to
benefit all of mankind; to wield it proudly, in
innocence is not a curse, but a weapon, a tool, to
by trying again, there is hope, albeit fleeting, and that
think that no matter the effort, all of it is lost, and yet you may,
dying with faint memories, undone by loss and doubt. It is scary, to
lost men like me find no bounds to our misery in this labyrinth of grief,



T B r N t t B – *Hamlet* in Lipograms

(Original Text)

“To be, or not to be, that is the question,
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.--Soft you now!” (Shakespeare, 1603)

Absence of A (*Hamlet* Act 3, Scene 1 - Letter A) = x

To be, or not to be, thus be the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings 'n' shoots of befuddling fortune,
Or to equip preceding bows to the storm
Therefore, by opposing, end them. To die—to sleep,
No more; there by slumber to utter lo
The chest's burn, plus the million swift shocks
Our flesh is heir to: 'tis, o, his sweet fucking
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, the gift to ponder — there's the rub:
For when our sleep unends, there glimpses come,
When we trim this living misery thus,
Must give us stop—there's the respect
Which forms of misery of so long life.
For who would wield the whipping scorn of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud boy's contumely,
The throb of dispriz'd love, his ethic error,
The insolence of office, hereto spurns
Ennui of merit of the unworthy clutch,
When he himself might his quietus forms
With stripp'd bodkin? Who would hold, now lug,
To grunt is to perspire, o, tired life,
But in it the grief of beyond closure,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No old gypsy returns, puzzles the will,
Forcing us to re-fix those ills we own
To reject others we know little of?
Thus conscience doth erect mere louts of us,
Thus the common hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the white frown of thought,
With enterprises of numerous loud scene
With this considered, thus turn to go off
With us losing our birthright. (Shakespeare, 2007)

Evasion of E, after the Absence of A

((A)x - Letter E) = y

To start, or not to start, thus doth our idiom:
If a toil in our mind is too irk-full
Facing slings 'n' shoots of confusing luck,
Or to don our valiant bows to yond storm
Thus, in by opposing, stub it. To pass—to nap,
Null; thus by kipping to say harsh nipping
Our torso's burn; a million swift shocks
Our skin is privy: 'tis, o, a soft fucking
Wholly thus a gift wish'd. To pass, to nap;
To nap, a gift of thought – ay, this is right:
For finally our nap stops, snapshots yond,
Our swift trim this living agony thus,
Brings us stop—a gift of honour
Which forms of agony of long conscious.
For who would brandish, o, scorn of past,
Th'dictator's wrong, a proud boy's wry insults,
A throb of dispriz'd pining, our laws lag,
Our ignorant aura, spurns
Apathy of a war to unworthy clutch,
Thus singl'd out might his mutism forms ho
With stripp'd bodkin? Who would hold, now lug,
To grunt is to bring fault, dull Gaia!
But in it our pain's, prompt satisfaction,
An unfound, saintly country, from us bourn
No old gypsy turns back, rivals our will,
Forcing us to dig out our own ills thus
To disallow pals of what small is known?
O, thus living doth form louts of us all,
Forming a short shadow of clarity:
Pallor: a blinding blizzard, a frown of thought,
With journals full of many pithy snapshots
With this philosophy, turn to go off
And thus losing our birthright. (Shakespeare, 2007)

New meaning (x+y) = Hamlet has an identity crisis, caught between becoming a gypsy and severe narcolepsy. Sleep now causes him immense pain and philosophical suffering. His image of suicide, however, has been fundamentally replaced by his yearning for sex and a good night's sleep.

Equations in Five Tercets

Metrosexual + vampire = A tragic tale of mirrors and self-love

Dr Jekyll – Mr Hyde = Some random bloke

Lethargy + cocaine = Human equivalent of a jump start

Metrosexual + Mr Hyde = A dapper psychopath

Dr Jekyll – cocaine = A sober bloke

Lethargy + vampire = A very lazy monster

Metrosexual + cocaine = Powdering your cheeks as well as your nose

Dr Jekyll – vampire = A misinterpretation of the story

Lethargy + Mr Hyde = A murderer who sleeps on the job

Metrosexual + Dr Jekyll = A well-dressed bloke

Dr Jekyll – lethargy = Dr Jekyll

Metrosexual + lethargy = A serious conflict of personality

Cocaine + vampire = A difficult decision between blood and coke for a good night out

Mr Hyde – cocaine = A reformed, sober psychopath

Cocaine + Mr Hyde = A serious problem

Finding the Value of X for a Helpful Cure

Trees (2Flames + RiverX) = Hangover (3Headaches + SweatX)

Neither trees nor a hangover will you want to meet while driving a car, so let's cancel these out for now.

Next, let's expand the brackets: 2Fire is plural, which would be flames. However, we want to divide. So, a fire is now a flame, singular. Then it is 3Headaches, which is plural again.

Multiplying them makes a series of headaches, or possibly severe dehydration. However, we want to divide this by 3, giving us a headache, singular.

This means we now have:

Flame + RiverX = Headache + SweatX

Dividing flame with headache equals a seriously bad interpretation of the “hair of the dog,” which would kill us. Thus, we must eliminate them both to avoid death, or risk serious third-degree burns.

RiverX = SweatX

The common relation between River and Sweat is, of course, water, so by dividing River by Sweat, we arrive at the answer. The common principle, X, is water.

Back to the equation now, returning Trees and Hangover:

Trees (Water) = Hangover (Water)

Encore: The Great Gypsy (*The Great Gatsby* in Modern Traveller English-cum-Anglo-Romani dialect)

In me yunner an moor vunabble yeers me farther gay me soom that I bin ternin oer in me mine efer sins.

“Wheever ye feel lite criteecising n one,” e tol me, “just member tha ool the peepu in this wurl aven ad tha vantages tha yoo add.”

E didn say ani moor boot we oolways bin unooshally cumooniative in e reserf kina way, en I understood tha men e gray deel moor than tha. En consekwence I’m be uncline tu reserve ool judgemens, e abit tha as opennd op manee curous naytoors tu me an alsur may me tvictim o nay a fyv vetran boors. T abnomur mine ist qwick to detec an attash iself t this qualatee wen it appears in e normul mush, an suh it caym abowt en collig I were unjustly ackoosed uh been e pee-eatur ur or e gavver, becuhz I were privee t te segret greefs uh wile, onnoyn mushes. Must o t confedances war unsor – frekwently I ave faned sleep, preopupation, er a ostile leviiee wen I reelise bi sum unmistatable sine tha un inimate revelashun were kwiverin u te orison – fer t inimate revelashuns of yung mushes ur at leese dee turms in wish tey espress em r youshly playgristic an mard by obvovus supreshuns. Reservin judgemens es e matta o infinid ope. I am still a liddl afrai o missin someing if I forga tha, as me farther snobby gested, an I snobby repee, e senses o te fundamental desunsees es parsulled ou unequally a berth.

And, arfer boasin dis wey of me tolerants, I coom t te amishun tha et as e limi. Conduck might bee founned un t ard rock or t wett marshus boot arfer a sertun poin I dunnykair wa itsu founned un. Wen I caym back frum t Eest las Ortum I fell tha I wannid t worl t bee n yooniform an a sor uh morul tenshun forefer; I wannid nuh morr ryotoos exshkurshuns wit privilege glimpsis inter t ooman art. Onee Pikey, t man oo gifs is naim t dis book, were xempt fro me re akshun – Pikey oo

represented everything fer wich I ave an unaffected skorn. Uf persnalitee es un enbro'en seree o successful jestars, tha there was b summing gorjus abou im, sum ightened sensitivity tu t prumsis uh lyfe, as ef e were relatid ter wun o dose intreet masheens tha rejista erfqwakes ten fousan miles away. Dis responsifnus ad nuffin tu d wit tha flab imprushionabalitee sh us dignufyd under t name o the "creatif tempramen" – et were un eckstraordnry gif for ope, eh romannic readinus such es I ave ne'er foun in any uffer persun and wish tis nut likelee I shall'nt e'er fin agin. Nie – Pikey turnd ou ool right a t en; 'tis wha prayed on Pikey, wha fowl doost floa'ed in t wayk o is dreems th temprarily closet ou me interes in t abortif surruws and shor-win'ed lations of mushes. (Fitzgerald, 2018)

References

Fitzgerald, F.S. (2018) *The Great Gatsby*. Hertfordshire: Chiltern Publishing.

Shakespeare, W. (2007). *Hamlet*. Edited by J. Bate and E. Rasmussen. Hampshire: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

Shakespeare, W. (1603) *Hamlet*. Reprint available at:
<https://shakespeare.mit.edu/hamlet/index.html> (accessed: 6 September 2024)

Appendix

The resource below has been included for the reader's reference. There may be minor differences between this and the version used/referenced in the creation of the above adaptation.

Fitzgerald, F.S. (1925) *The Great Gatsby*. Reprint available at:
<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/64317/pg64317-images.html> (accessed: 6 September 2024).

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