TENNO'S SONNET

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Albert Tenno was born in Notton, Yorkshire on 8th August 1888. Some locals claim his father was an Italian immigrant named Alberto Tennoni who came from the town of Onano, northwest of Rome. Others believe that Tenno is an old English name related to Tenny or Tennock. There is no evidence to confirm either story.

By all accounts Tenno led a life of drunkenness and debauchery, mixing with people from all levels of society. He had a passion for words, and was a regular contributor on 'Poets' Night' at the Ennis Inne, Notton. It was a short life, though, as Tenno was tragically drowned while fishing on Lake Uru Uru, just south of Oruro in Bolivia on 2nd February 1922. None of his material was ever published, which is often the way of it with alehouse bards. Tenno himself was described as 'crude and incoherent' by Yorkshire historian Dr. A.R. Everard, so it was perhaps fortunate that there is even one example of his work recorded for posterity.

Tenno's controversial sonnet was found in a shabby rented room in Dregge Rd., Notton, some months after his death. It was scrawled on the back of an old menu. Born on 8.8.88 and dying on 2.2.22, it seems Tenno could not escape his palindromic destiny. Of course his poem is not really a sonnet in the purest sense, as only the opening line displays the characteristic decasyllable. Perhaps it reflects his life, with the first three words deliberately capitalized to spell SIN, and the isolated 'Man' alone in line 11. Even the mention of 'drowned rages' seems peculiarly prophetic for this angry young man, who, despite his rowdy, dissolute public image, remained aloof and secretive in private life.

Another interesting feature is the use of 'zingier', which appears to be the earliest written instance known. P.G. Wodehouse used 'zing' in *Damsel in Distress* (1919), so perhaps that explains it. As to the literary merit of Albert Tenno's palindromic sonnet, maybe it is in the eye or ear of the reader.

NAME ME MAN

Semantic Illicit Names forever!
ebb or aside,
zingier official names
or prognosticated ones,
irony, federal flay or
rose-garden words,
drowned rages

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        or royal flare
      defy no risen ode,
    tacit song or prose,
          -- Man --
      laic if foreignized
        is a robber ever
  of semantic illicit names.
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Using Pentagrams to Classify Documents

Suppose you have a document on a given subject and wish to know
which other articles in a computer database most closely relate to
it. A variety of classificatory techniques to do this are known,
but most require prior evaluation by a reader of each document's
content (identification of key words or ideas). Marc Damashek, in
an article "Gauging Similarity With n-Grams: Language-Independent
Categorization of Text", in the 10 Feb 1995 issue of Science,
proposes a statistical technique that requires no prior knowledge
of the document. Instead, the document is characterized by the
different pentagrams (five consecutive letters or spaces) it
contains. (For example, this sentence contains the pentagrams
FOR-E, OR-EX, R-EXA, -EXAM, etc.) Two documents with a high over-
lap in pentagram content are deemed to be closely related in
subject matter as well. As one can imagine, Damashek's technique
requires heavy computing, but he claims that an off-the-shelf
personal computer using his program can intercompare "hundreds to
thousands" of documents (presumably only a few pages apiece) in a
"matter of minutes". If the database contains more documents than
this, then preliminary screening is needed to identify possibly-
similar ones; the time for full-time analysis goes up as the square
of the number of documents.