

THE IMPERIAL SOTADIC LEGACY

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DRAT SADDAM A MAD DASTARD is worthy of ranking among the classic English-language palindromes and yet no one seems willing to claim authorship. By contrast, ABLE WAS I ERE I SAW ELBA is grudgingly attributed to Napoleon even though such an authority as Howard Bergerson, in his *Palindromes and Anagrams* (Dover, 1973), hints that the notoriously modest Leigh Mercer may have had some association with it.

To determine the truth, I consulted New Bybwen's Professor Ross E. Forp who asserts that the Corsican French-speaking emperor really was an adept in English Sotadean statements and singularly proud of the fact that he was alone among Gallic scholars in possessing such a gift. But, as Ross informed me, one day the emperor was being driven around Paris when, to his horror, he saw scrawled on his Arc d'Triomphe the following piece of graffiti:

BONAPARTE TRAP A NOB!

This so infuriated the imperial wordsmith that he not only had the offending statement removed but, to prevent its repetition, changed the spelling of this name to Buonaparte. Feeling pleased with himself, he ordered a repeat of his previous drive through Paris climaxing in a passage through the newly-cleaned Arc. To his chagrin he discovered a new graffito:

TI, BUONAPARTE TRAP AN OUBIT!

"My nob ain't a hairy caterpillar!" he yelled as he thrashed his coachman, "and what's TI go to do with it?" The poor bewildered coachman fled, leaving the emperor busily scraping the Arc d'Triomphe with his sword.

Forp reminded me that the palindromic gifts also extended to his nephew, Louis, who, as Napoleon III, had to choose between fighting the Prussians or attending a concert in his honour. His gallant reply was:

SEDAN ERE SERENADES.

Finally, Forp posed the conundrum "Was it Mercer or Napoleon II, the boy-king of Rome, who compiled:

YAWN A MORE ROMAN WAY?"