

## *The Cryptic Communication Function of Anagrams in Specific Literary Contexts*

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### **Abstract**

The concept of anagrams as a form of cryptic communication has not gained much currency of usage in our contemporary world, particularly in the global South. Apart from its usage as a pastime in leisure and entertainment activities in games and puzzles, its usage has not transcended these pedantic forms and formats into more professional communicative utilities. This study is interested in investigating the communicative forms and formats inherent in the use of anagrams, especially in cryptic communication. It also hopes to emphasise the historical use of such cryptic systems as anagrams, secret codes, and underground symbolic and literary forms of communication, deliberate misinformation, disinformation and propaganda in our contemporary world. The study is nestled within the “Diffusion of Innovations theory” of mass media, which traces how people adopt a new idea or practice based on the available information. The study avers that much utility is inherent in the adoption of a cryptic communication system that can be derived from anagrams and other forms and systems of discreet, secret or crypto-communication, both for deific, ritualistic, medical, psycho-therapeutic, civilian and militaristic uses.

### **Keywords**

Crypto-Communication, Anagrams, Esoterism, Ciphers, Antigrams, Codes

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## **Introduction**

### **Concept of Cryptic Communication**

Communication, particularly the literary genre, is a dynamic, creative specialty of human beings and their societies. John Dewey, cited in Peterson, Jensen and Rivers (1965) avers that “of all affairs, communication is the most wonderful”. But apparently, it is not an exclusive human activity, because animals and even plants have their respective forms of communication. The distinguishing dynamism between mankind’s and other earth-bound species’ communication abilities is the human ability to engage in meaningful intra-species and inter-species communication, as well as extramundane or esoteric communication. Respective societies have as their society evolved and developed, adopted, adapted and created means of exchanging messages, information and other shared means of creating meaningful intercourse and developing their communities through didactic and storable, retrievable forms of communication such as writing and literature. As scholarly research by various scholars of communication have revealed in various epochs, communication and its accoutrements such as literature and literary expressions can be observable as an art form, a social science and even as a scientific and technological expressionism. Thus, it can be opined that communication is dynamic since it involves people and their respective milieu in which they live and function.

Cryptic communication, or more succinctly put, ‘Crypto-communication’ derives from the bona-fide communication systems itself. But it is markedly unique and dynamic in itself and in its literary applications. Crypto-communication refers to the esoteric, the extra-mundane, the social, the general literary, the scientific, the specific professional and technological setups or contexts that serve the specialised communication needs of respective associations, civil-societies, industries and even the military and paramilitary organisations worldwide. Moreover, crypto-communication possesses inherently elusive meanings that are not easily decipherable, except for the trained, expert user, the habitual hobbyist user and the practising initiate or confirmed professional.

### **Nexus of Anagrams with the Diffusion of Innovations Theory**

The “Diffusion of Innovations” theory was pioneered in 1943 by Bryce Ryan and Neil Gross of Iowa State University, but was popularised by Everett Rogers in 1962. This theory traces the process by which a new idea or practice is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system. The model describes the factors that influence people's thoughts and actions and the process of adopting a new technology or idea. Within the ambit of this theory, it is possible to evaluate anagrammatic communication séances as innovation because anything that is novel, newly adopted, adapted or in the process of being adopted or adapted is

viewable as an innovation. Also, cryptic information or the system of cryptic communication used in ritualistic rites of communication could be seen as novel by the non-initiate. Of course, cryptography or cryptology is novel to the non-initiate. So, it can be averred that adopting or adapting such cryptic systems on wider scale, whether civilian, military or psychic could be a novel phenomenon which needs to be diffused before it can gain wide acceptance and frequency of usage. Of course, innovations and innovators face resistance and antagonisms at the very onset of their revelation or introduction, because not everyone will buy the idea immediately. This may be due to the incredulity of their novelty or perhaps opposition may arise by the very nature of their application. Of course, documented history recounts the stringent opposition to the inventions of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, particularly the refusal even by governments to approve the use of steel or metal in constructing ships, the motorcar – with opposition from the horse-drawn wagoner, the opposition to the Wright brothers and their heavier-than-air flying machine, especially having in mind the not so distant memory of the Hindenburg airship balloon disaster. Even in the present age, similar sentiments are aroused in both people and governments whenever innovations or new ideas, discoveries and inventions come to light. Of course, bearing in mind the adoption of innovations requires time and a process of adaptation, as Ryan and Gross (1944) posited.

### **Theory of Meaning, Hermeneutics and Anagrammatic Contexts**

“Hermeneutics is the study of the “system of rules, principles and methods that are applied during interpretation and explanation. It is also considered to be the art of explication and translation. This art focuses on understanding the written discourse of another person correctly by dissolving language into thought. The need for hermeneutics is due to the differences in historical time and the cultural gap between the periods in time when the text was first written and now when the text is being consumed. The third reason is the difference in worldviews, a philosophical gap that hinders spontaneous and accurate understanding of text. Hermeneutics investigates the process of interpretation, the communication of meaning through a text and linguistic competence in a conversation...”

The term “theory of meaning” has figured, in one way or another, in a great number of philosophical disputes over the last century. Unfortunately, this term has also been used to mean a great number of different things. In this entry, the focus is on two sorts of “theory of meaning”. The first sort of theory—a semantic theory—is a theory which assigns semantic contents to expressions of a language. The second sort of theory—a foundational theory of meaning—is a theory which states the facts in virtue of which expressions have the semantic contents that they have.”

### **Meaning and Context of Anagrams**

For the purpose of this discourse, Grammarly, a specialized literary organization’s definition would suffice in its applicable context. Its website, [www.grammarly.org](http://www.grammarly.org) has the following entry about the use, objective and purpose of anagram inter alia as -

*A literary device where the letters that make up a word, phrase, or name are rearranged to create new ones. The original word or phrase is the subject of the anagram, the anagram is what is created by repurposing those letters. Anagrams are a form of wordplay in which the letters of a word or phrase are rearranged to create a new word or phrase. Anagrams are used in writing for a variety of purposes, including to provide humor, embed mystery and create a new identity. In literature, anagrams tap into a reader’s sense of surprise by presenting what is already in front of them in a new way. This sense of discovery can be useful for writers trying to embed a mystery or solve a riddle.*

Further, [grammarly.com](http://grammarly.com) contextualizes anagrams according to their intended functions:

**As a Commentary:** A satirical or critical take on the subject of the anagram. **Example:** The American fast-food giant McDonald's→Digest a ton of fat and random chemicals.

**As Synonymy:** A new word with a similar meaning. These are called “synanagrams,” which is an incredibly fun word to say. **Example:** angered→enraged.

**As Antonymy:** Arrangements that mean the opposite of their subject. These are called “antigrams,” and they're often created with a hint of sarcasm. **Example:** funeral→real fun.

**Full phraseology:** Anagrams that rearrange the first half of the phrase to create a complete sentence. **Example:** For the evil that men do→doth live on after them.

**Pseudonymy:** Sometimes an author or artist rearranges the letters in their own names to create a pseudonym. “Mr. Mojo Risin” is a famous anagram of “Jim Morrison”. ([Grammarly.com](http://Grammarly.com))

### **History of Anagrams and their Usage**

Historically, cryptic communication codes, signals, symbols, letters, literary and contextual arrangements, specialised as well as exclusive alphabets and their accoutrements have long been in use since humans have been in the quest to communicate between their own specific kind, and prevent easy access to in-group information from others deemed out-group or outsiders. Perhaps, this is the reason for the continuous development of different human languages and even cryptic codes and cues within in-group specific environments. It finds potent usage in the dissemination and transmission of in-group specific communication, to the exclusion of the out-group members. The most elementary form of cryptic communication among humans is that which is used by mother to child, father to child and between moon-struck lovers. It could be in the form of repetitive facial-signs, eye-contacts, hand gestures, tactics, sounds, clicks, numbers, symbols and other member-contrived specific alliterative and ascriptions given to communicate meaning between participants in a specific or repeated communication encounter. However, at the advanced level, cryptic communication could be in the form of diagrams, garbled or warbled texts, words, sounds, sentences, idioms, proverbs, parables and other dicta not easily decoded by the non-initiate or the untrained. It also involves literary devices such as alliterations, pun, synecdoche, anecdotes, allegories, syllogisms, allusions, lexis and structures, lexico-syntactical elements. It also includes other specialised, grammatical and literary expressions that need special training or equipment in order to be able to appropriately decipher and decode their hidden meanings, contexts and to also attach the meaningful contents and intents to such cryptic communications. Besides, much cryptic communication is carried on even in daily usage with the application of light and smoke signals, cryptic codes, tactile and specialised or innovative/emergent communication infrastructure found in many African societies. Good examples of these cryptic codes in the pre-colonial African societies are the Nsibidi and the Hieroglyphs or pictograms, as well as the definitive dance-alphabets of pre-history and African initiate-masques. This cryptic esoterism ecosystem inherent in African ritual communication is in current usage and in fact, there is a resurgence of this form of communication even in contemporary African cultures and civilizations.

Among animals, cryptic communication is most observable in the communicative dance of bees, piss-signing or coding of dogs and other canine, feral species to mark territory as theirs, signal their exclusive possession of mating rights, while communicating “no entry” to outsiders. As such, in most cases of seemingly unprovoked violent human-animal contact resulting in injury or death of humans, it has been discovered that humans either did not understand the animal's subtle, cryptic communication cues, or failed to notice the tell-tale warning signs to “keep off” and not “trespass” on marked, possessed territory.

Human habitat and settlement patterns also indicate communication about the management of spatial communications. For example, the arrangement and distance of ‘kraals’ among the Zulu and the Xhosa, ‘obis’ among the Igbo and ‘obi-ogwa’ Ukwuani, could be used as a communicative function to denote relationships and the state of affairs in the community, and it can also communicate that a householder is holding forte therein. Broken walls could thus be construed to mean a householder is demised. Smoke-signals, broken branches and leaves strewn along a pathway or road also constitute communicative instances. Spatial and haptic communications are highly valued forms of communication that are used to distinguish social strata and relationship spectrum in many human societies. In European and American societies, the distance in relationships between individuals and their lebensraum is highly formal, guarded and coveted, whereas, in other societies of the global South, relationships are conducted on a more closer informal level. As such, visits in American and European societies must be announced in advance, whereas in African and the Global South’s societies, impromptu visits are not unwanted, nor unwarranted. These few cited instances of anagrammatic communication, are rife in Africa’s rich cryptic communication experience and practice. Unspoken or wordless communication is a given in African and many other human societies. That is why the study of communication as a human activity cannot de-emphasise non-verbal cues and other unstated forms of communication behaviours, even in their rudimentary states.

Regarding the history of the usage of anagrams, Wikipedia has this entry- “Anagrams can be traced back to the time of the ancient Greeks, and were used to find the hidden and mystical meaning in names. They were popular throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, for example with the poet and composer Guillaume de Machaut.”

*In the early seventeenth century scientists established priority of discovery by means of an anagram. A sentence announcing a discovery was encrypted into an anagram, which was then deposited with an official witness. The scientist could then continue his work at leisure. If any competitor publicly claimed the same discovery, the original scientist could then refer to his witness to unscramble the anagram, and in this way establish his priority! Meadows (1974), gives the anagram that Galileo wrote to Kepler in 1610: smaismrmilmepoetalevmibunenugttaviras. Kepler was unable to solve the anagram and Galileo later told him that it stood for altissimum planetam tergeminum observari (I have observed the uppermost planet triple). This referred to the rings of Saturn which Galilei had observed for the first time. By this means he was able to gain time to check his observations before making a public official announcement.*

However, Britannica’s entry avers that the -

invention of anagrams is often ascribed without authority to Jewish writers,... because the Kabbalists in particular were fond of them. In earlier Talmudic and Midrashic literature, anagrams were used to interpret the Hebrew Bible. Anagrams were also known to the ancient Greeks and Romans. The Latin words *ars magna* mean “great art,” and their letters when transposed form the word *anagrams*. This coincidence has often been cited to demonstrate a thriving culture of anagrams in ancient Rome. No documented proof of this culture exists, but Latin anagrams exist in the form of phrases such as *Quid est veritas?* (“What is truth?”), which transposes to *Est vir qui adest* (“It is this man here”).

No doubt, anagrams possess immense hitherto unevaluated communicative values. In secretive or discrete communications, anagrams are highly efficient communication tools. Again, we can see that “...anagrams were ‘divine notes’ in which providence and destiny might be discovered. Considered as mysterious texts, they might conceal great matters. By far, their

commonest appearance was in names, especially the names of the great. Good anagrams, however, were difficult to find". Thus, it can be inferred that anagrams are oracular or can be adaptable to serve oracular, religious, ritualistic as well as secular, socio-cultural, scientific and ingratiated communicative functions. Anagrams must therefore, be viewed as applied communication tools that possess inherent symbolic, cryptic and regular communicative value in both the esoteric/extramundane and the default communication contexts of the contemporary world.

Cryptography or cryptology, is a step further in the development and usage of anagrams for communicative functions. Cryptography or cryptology itself has witnessed three epochs of development spanning the centuries of human civilization and quest for exclusivity and domination of others of his kind. The first epoch was the period of "manual **cryptography**, starting with the origins of the subject in antiquity and continuing through World War I...cryptography was limited by the complexity of what a **code** clerk could reasonably do aided by simple **mnemonic** devices."

The second epoch was the -

mechanization of cryptography, began shortly after **World War I** and continues even today... involved either telephone and telegraph communications (employing punched paper tape, telephone switches, and relays) or calculating machines such as the Brunsvigas, Marchants, Facits, and Friedens (employing gears, sprockets, ratchets, pawls, and cams). This resulted in the rotor machines used by all participants in **World War II**. These machines could realize far more complex operations than were **feasible** manually and, more importantly, they could encrypt and decrypt faster and with less chance of error."

The third epoch, "dating only to the last two decades of the 20th century, marked the most radical change of all - the dramatic extension of cryptology to the information age: digital signatures, authentication, shared or distributed capabilities to exercise cryptologic functions, and so on."

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond, Cryptology or cryptography has gone even further the concerns of security, conquest, domination and commerce has made it inevitable to **devise** even more discreet ways for cryptic information gathering, processing, storage and transmission to perform all of the functions necessary to ensure the secretiveness of official state secrets, to prevent it getting into wrong hands, and in the even that it does, to ensure the enemy cannot make sense of it.

In the 1940s, during the WWII, the Japanese, ground, air and naval military forces held sway in the Pacific theatre of the WWII against American air, marines and naval forces for as long as they maintained very discreet, secret or cryptic communication lines.

To emphasise the importance of cryptic communication and by extension, its affiliate, anagrammatic communication, in its entry on **Natural Encryption**, the Encyclopedia Britanica states that August 14 is Navajo **Code Talkers Day**, a celebration of the Native Americans who helped the Allies achieve victory in **WWII**. Further, it informs us that -

The U.S. military, unable to create an uncrackable code, recruited about 400 Native Americans to transmit sensitive info over open airwaves in their native tongue. Since Native American language was passed down through an oral tradition, their alphabets were unwritten and therefore indecipherable. The "code talkers" proved crucial to victory in Japan, declared on this day in 1945.

It was not until the American forces cracked the Japanese cryptic code using their famed "Enigma machine" and deciphered their meanings and communication contexts that they were able to turn the tide of the war in the Pacific against the Japanese. The knowledge of these

clandestine, cryptic codes and information, shared with the allies in the European front also thwarted Hitler's forces' advances in his maddening quest to dominate Europe and the world.

### **Literary Contexts of Anagrams in Communications**

A few examples of the creation of anagrammatic contents using the first names of the authors will appraise us of the infinite possibilities of the communicative capabilities of anagrams as a potent communication tool for this our contemporary world and the world to come. However, anagrams, as in other cryptic communication formats, demand being schooled or well-trained in the content and contexts of their usage before one can be able to effectively make sense of them, and function within the specific literary and communicative contexts of such anagrammatic communication encounters.

**ANAGRAMS OF CHIDINMA:** AMID, AMIDIM, AMIND, AMINDICHI, AMINDA, ANIMA, AMIMA, ADIM, ADIMA, ADIMMA, ADINMA, CHI, CHICHI, CHI-CHI, CHIDI, CHINMA, CHY, CHYCHY, CHY-CHY, CHIS, CHIDE, DECHI, DICHI, DICHINMA, DICHIMMA, DIMA, DIMMA, DIN, DINA, DINACHI, DINAN, DINAM, DINAMMA, DINANMA, DINMA, IDI, IDIMMA, IDINMA, INMA, IMMA, MA, MADI, MADINA, MMADINA, MAM, MAMA, MAMMA, MANMA, MMAMMA, NMANMA, MMAMDI, MMAMDINA, MMAMDINACHI, MMA, MMAM, MMACHI, MMADI, MANDI, MANDINA, NMADI, MID, MIDI, NMADICHI, NMA, NMADINACHI, MMANDI, NID, NIDA,.

**ANAGRAMS OF ROSELINE:** EEL, EELINE, ELISE, ELOISE, ELROSE, ENROE, EROS, ESINROLE, IN, INS, INORE, INSELN, LEROSINE, LESINROSE, LINER, LINROSE, LINEROSE, LINO, LOSE, LOSER, LOSERINE, LONE, LONERS, LORE, LORES, LORESINE, NELIROSE, NESLER, NESLERINE, NEROS, NILE, NILER, NOSE, NOSER, NOSERIL, NOSERILE, NOSERINE, OLE, OLERINE, OLERINES, OLEROSE, OLEROSINE, OLIN, OLINER, ORE, ORES, ORELINES, ORESLINE, ORSELINE, RESIN, RESINOLE, RISEN, ROE, ROEL, ROELISE, ROELISEN, ROLE, ROLES, ROELS, ROELSIEN, ROELSINE, ROENSEN, ROENSILE, ROLIN, ROLINS, ROLINES, ROSE, ROSEL, ROSELN, ROSIE, ROSIEL, ROSIELE, ROSIELN, ROSIELNE, ROSEN, SEELO, SELORINE, SELINE, SELINRO, SELINEROS, SENORILE, SINORILE, SLINEORE, SLORESIN, SLORESINE, SOLE, SOLER, SOLERINE, SOLERINES, SNORE, SNORES, SNORINE, SNORINEL, OSEE, OSEEN, OSINERO, OSINROL, OSINROLE, OSINROLEE, OSERINE, OSERINEL, SOREL, SORELIN, INROLE, ROSEL, ROSELN,.

**ANAGRAMS OF CLETUS:** CELTUS, CELST, CELSTU, CEST, CETUS, CETULS, CESTU, CESTUL, CETULS, CLET, CLETS, CLEST, CLESTU, CLUES, CLUEST, CLUCE, CLUCES, CLUCEST, CLUSET, CLUSTE, CLUTES, CLUTSE, CULEST, CUT, CUTS, CUTES, CUTLE, CUTLES, CULT, CULTS, CULTTE, CULTTES, ECLETS, ELT, ELTUS, ELU, ELUE, ELUS, ELUT, ELUTES, ETUS, ETUSE, ETUSCL, EUCLETS, LEC, LECT, LECTU, LECTUS, LECSTU, LEST, LESCT, LEST, LESTU, LESTUC, LETS, LETUCS, LETUS, LUCE, LUCES, LUCEST, LUST, LUSTE, LUSTEC, SETLUC, SUCLET, TESCUL, TELUS, TELUSC, TESULC, TUCLES, TUCSEL, TUS, TUSE, TUSEL, USELC, SLUT, SLUCTE, SLUTES, TUES, TULSEC, SECTUL, TUCLES, SUELT, SCELTU, SLETCU, SUTLEC, TUCELS, UCLETS, ULEST, ULECST, ULTESC, US, USE, USES, USTELC, UTES, UTESC, UTELS.

These multifarious renderings of these names above could be used to denote a plethora of meanings, significances, ideas, semblances, codes, symbolisms and configurations. Likewise, such usages and their adaptations could be adopted for different applied communication functions, whether open or discreet applications in our contemporary world, and going forwards into the future of communicative enactments and programming. Further, these and similar renderings can be manipulated into datasets fed into programmes for both civilian, open society, military and

esoteric functions. Examples of such usages include the Ouija boards, the thesaurus and other word-based and scrambled-letter communication séances used to calibrate, encode and decode meanings as may be deemed necessary.

## Conclusion

From the common and simplistic to the simple, to the complex, to the difficult and then to the intractable – common things given meaning, simple things made difficult, while difficult things are made complex and complex things made intractable and inscrutable. As can be seen from the foregoing anagrammatic renderings, humans are in a constant search for meaning and the transition or transposition of meaning into further complexities – the meaning of things, the meaning of ideas, the meaning of concepts, the meaning of self; why are we here, why were we born, and the very meaning of life itself. Then when we are able to grasp a little meaning of things, the urge and sentiment to cache these little gleanings of knowledge and revelations of the mythic, the cryptic and the esoteric overcomes us. Thus, the inherent infinite possibilities in the use of anagrams, is a subject that should interest every literary scholar. Apart from the arrangement, re-arrangement and further organization of textual entries and inputs, as revealed above in the constructions of the authors' names, there is also the inexhaustible possibilities of meanings derivable from the literal renderings of the anagrams of any word or literary work to generate cryptic meaning, and literary outputs with its several implications for the arts, the social sciences, sciences and technology. It also has implications for psychology, medicine, psychotherapy/logotherapy, national security, military and intelligence operations at the highest levels of the social constructs.

## Anagrams as Logo-therapeutic Tool

Anagrams are veritable tools adapted and used in Logo-therapy, which is a form of medical treatment using carefully contrived words and expressions. Logo-therapy is a therapeutic system of treatment which is used to examine the physical, psychological, and spiritual (noological) aspects of a human-being, and it can be seen through the expression of an individual's functioning. It is often regarded as a humanistic–existential school of thought but can also be used in conjunction with contemporary therapies (McMullin, 2000). Logograms, logographs, logogriphs, otherwise called ideograms are single written symbols that can be used to represent entire words, phrases, clauses and sentences. In contrast to Freud's "*will to pleasure*" and Adler's "*will to power*," logotherapy is based on the idea that we are driven by a "*will to meaning*" or an inner desire to find purpose and meaning in life (Amelis & Dattilio, 2013). Anagrams in themselves are created in the quest for meaning, for concealing meaning and as well as for decrypting meaning from scrambled or cryptic communications, and logo-graphs derive from this ability to communicate and interpret communication activities for specific literary and other purposes.

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