THE ACEINORST TRANSPOSAL PROBLEM

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During a visit to Dayton, Washington, in July 1988, the editor discovered among the late Dmitri Borgmann's papers five articles which he had prepared for Word Ways prior to his death but had never mailed. These will be published in this issue and future issues of Word Ways.

In Language on Vacation (1965), I presented 17 transposals of the 9 letters ACEINORST. For that time in the history of logology, the feat was a record-setting one.

Darryl H. Francis of London, England, one of my readers, bode his time--perhaps significantly, for 16 years. In the August, 1981 Word Ways, he rejected one of my transposals, apparently to reduce my total to only 16 transposals. He then added 16 new transposals, neatly doubling my reduced total, and chid me for not having found many or most of his additions myself.

Such a stellar performance deserves an encore. I have reinstated my seventeenth transposal and added 22 previously unknown ones, to bring the overall total to 55. That number is, alas, no integral multiple of 16, but it does possess the virtue of being a palindrome. The entire list follows, including corrected definitions and source specifications.

Darryl divided his list of 32 ACEINORST transposals into two sections: my transposals and his transposals. I have adopted what seems like a more useful two-part classification: single, solidly-written words and names, and fractured transposals--those scarred aesthetically by punctuation marks and/or word breaks. Reference sources are indicated by means of code letters, defined at the end of the article.

The first list, of 33 solid transposals, is in straight alphabetical order. The second list, of 22 fractured transposals, has been arranged so as to group words and names of a given type together, thereby reducing the length of the explanations required.

Readers may wish to try finding additional transposals that both Darryl and I have overlooked. Those readers appalled by the probable difficulty of such an undertaking may wish to work on a related problem. Only two of the 55 transposals shown below--CREATIONS and REACTIONS--are common enough to be included in the 5 collegiate dictionaries published in the United States today. By contrast, the nine-letter group AEILNORST, replacing the C of the ACEINORST group with an L, produces at least 6 words included
in one or more of the five collegiate dictionaries: ORIENTALS, ORLEANIST, RELATIONS, SEROTINAL, TENSORIAL, and TIROLEANS. Does that mean it is possible to find a grand total of 165 (or more) AEILNORST transposals? The possibility is one worth exploring.

Solid ACEINORST Transposals

ACTIONERS. Handicraftsmen who make the mechanisms used for opening and closing the breeches of those firearms that receive the charge at the rear of the bore (W1, W2, SO, OX).

ACTORINES. Actresses: a vogue or slang word sometimes used contemptuously (M4, BV, WG).

ANCORITES. Hermits or recluses: a 15th-century spelling of anchorites (OX, CD).

ANORETICS. Drugs causing loss of appetite (W3, RH, DI).

ANTICORES. Circumscribed swellings on horses' necks, usually resulting from the pressure of badly-fitting harnesses: a 17th-century spelling of anticors (OX, CS).

ATROSCINE. Racemic scopolamine: an alkaloid used to dilate the pupil of the eye, or as a mild depressant (W2, W3, F2, BL, ST).

CAROTINES. The yellow, orange, or red pigments or coloring matters found in carrots and in some other plants, and converted into vitamin A by animal livers: a variant spelling of carotenes (CD).

CARSONITE. A trademark in International Class 17 (rubber goods), registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office on April 6, 1976 and assigned registration number 1,037,465 (TR). Also, a resident of Carson City, Nevada (A5, CC). Also, a member of the Carsonites, a militant political faction in Northern Ireland (NA, MG).

CASTORINE. A white, crystalline substance obtained from the mineral castor or castorite (a white, crystalline form of petalite); also, a cotton-velvet fabric not further described (CD).

CATERINOS. Males bearing the Italian first name Caterino, apparently the names Used in WB). No masculine form Caterino in English is generally preferred.

CENTROSIA. a tree genus of the family Cannaceae as the general name is used in the Travels.
ENTALS, OR LEANS. Does (or more) Loring.

ed for open- receive the used con-

~s used con-

ing of anchor-


CERATIONS. The reductions to a waxlike state of hard, unliquefi-

able substances: a 17th- and 18th-century alchemical term (WI,

W2, F2, OX).

CERTOSINA. A Renaissance Italian technique for inlaying light-col-

ored bone, ivory, metal, or wood in elaborate mosaic designs,

on a dark ground (RH, W2, W3, F2).

CITROSENA. A genus of plants of the family Monimiaceae: a family

of chiefly tropical American trees and shrubs; or, perhaps, a

genus of plants of the family Atherospermataceae, which is very

similar to the family Monimiaceae; the dictionary contradicts itself

on this point. The genus is also known as the genus Siparuna

(WL).

CONARITES. Minerals consisting of hydrous nickel silicate, occur-

ring as small green crystals or grains: a variant spelling of

connarites (W2, W3, F2, OX).

CONISTRAE. In ancient Greek gymnasiums, either the places where

sand was stored for sprinkling the wrestlers, or the wrestling

grounds (W1). The singular form of the word, conistra, came into

English from New Latin, making its correct plural, conistrae.

CORTAINES. Curtains: a 16th-century spelling (WI, OX, CD).

CORTESIAN. Relating to the period during which Hernán Cortés (Her-

nando Cortez), the early 16th-century Spanish explorer, conquered

and ruled Mexico. The word has, thus far, been found only as

part of the term pre-Cortesian (W3). It is, however, logically

impossible for Mexico to have been pre-Cortesian at one time un-

less it became Cortesian at a later time.

CRANIOTES. Those vertebrates belonging to the class Leptocardiidae

(F1, F2, C5).

CREATIONS. Original, imaginative works of art (W2, W3, RH, FW,

SO).

ESCONTRIA. A genus of Mexican plants of the cactus family (WL).

ESCORTINA. A name suggested for a planned successor to the Ford

Cortina automobile, the successor being described as a stretched

Ford Escort with a separate, lockable boot (DY). Builders of hot

rods, custom cars, and other special or variant automobiles have

produced hybrids of the Escort and the Cortina, also calling any

such hybrid an Escortina (FR).

NARCOTISE. To subject to the action of a narcotic; to stupefy: a
variant spelling of narcotize (RH, quotation in OX).

NEORACIST. An adherent to a new version of racism (SC).

NICOTERAS. Towns such as the town of Nicotera, in Catanzaro Province, in the Calabria region of southern Italy, near but not on the Gulf of Gioia, and noted for its baroque cathedral and 11th-century castle (CL, NG, RI, T4). Pluralizing the name is aesthetically preferable to apostrophizing it to form the possessive singular Nicotera's.

OSTRACINE. Pertaining to the common oysters and allied bivalve mollusks comprising the suborder Ostracea or Ostraeacea (W1, W2, F2, OK).

REACTIONS. Physiological responses to stimuli (W2, W3, RH, FW, SO).

TENICROAS. Genera of Old World plants such as the genus Tenicroa: a genus of plants of the lily family. The genus is also known as the genus Urginea. Pluralizing the name produces a more pleasing effect than does apostrophizing it, as the possessive singular form Tenicroa's must be (WL).

TINOCERAS. An extinct genus of plant-eating mammals, from the Eocene epoch of Wyoming, resembling elephants in size. The genus is also known as the genus Dinoceras or as the genus Uintatherium. Similar to each other as the names Dinoceras and Tinoceras are, they are not variant spellings of each other, and no dictionary mentions either one of them in defining the other: a curiosity (W2, F2, CD, SO).

TRICOSANE. A paraffin hydrocarbon obtained from petroleum and melting at a low temperature (W2, W3, F2, SO).

TROČENIAS. Geographic locations such as the one bearing the name Trocienia: another proper name pluralization chosen in preference to an apostrophized singular form. The name Trocienia appears in the Index to Andrees Handatlas, a German atlas published in the early 1920s. The justification for treating names in that atlas as English-language names is the fact that an English edition of the Index has also appeared. At this moment, I do not have access to this atlas or to its index, explaining why I am unable to define the name Trocienia more precisely, but a geographic name it is. The location it designates must be comparatively minor, because I have not been able to find the name anywhere else.

Broken ACEINORST Transposals

ACRI-STONE. A trademark name in Prior United States Class 6 (Chemicals and Chemical Compositions), registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office on November 20, 1973 and assigned registration number 973,182 (TR). The name is a hyphenated one.

RIOT CANES. Wooden rods about four feet long, which Japanese police use against demonstrators (RU). The term is written as two separate words.

TRI OCEANS. Products bearing the trademark name Tri Ocean. The name is hyphenated and is written without dramatic and Adven
ture.
name is listed in International Classes 7 (Machinery), 35 (Advertise-
ing and Business), and 42 (Miscellaneous). It was registered
with the United States Patent and Trademark Office on December
1, 1981 and assigned registration number 1,179,834. The name
is written as two separate words. Pluralizing the name is aes-
thetically preferable to apostrophizing its singular possessive
form Tri Ocean's. The disparity between the classifications Machinery
and Advertising and Business in both of which the name appears
is striking and invites investigation (TR).

SO CERTAIN. A phrase found in William Shakespeare's The Winter's
Tale, Act IV, scene iv, line 581 (BA, pages 40, 212, and 1092).
Alas, the fourth act of that play has only three scenes! However,
I have found the phrase in the following speech by Camillo, the
Sicilian Lord, toward the end of scene iii (SH, page 369).

A course more promising
Than a wild dedication of yourselves
To unpathed waters, undreamed shores, most
To miseries enough: no hope to help you;
But, as you shake off one, to take another:
Nothing so certain as your anchors; who
Do their best office if they can but stay you
Where you'll be loath to be: besides, you know
Prosperity's the very bond of love,
Whose fresh complexion and whose heart together
Affliction alters.

Considered by itself, the phrase so certain is not a particularly
distinguished one. Since, however, Shakespeare "is considered
by many to have been the greatest dramatist in world history"
(NC, page 3571), the appearance of the phrase in one of his plays
qualifies it for inclusion in this list. Unfortunately, Shakespeare
was quite unable to communicate his thoughts to moderns such
as me. Can any reader translate the quoted 74-word sentence
into meaningful English?

CERTAIN SO. A phrase found in William Shakespeare's Much Ado
About Nothing, Act II, scene i, line 181 (BA, page 212; SH, page
144), in the following speech by Claudio, the young Lord of Flo-
rence.

Thus answer I in name of Benedick
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
'Tis certain so;--the prince woos for himself...

The same evaluative comments made with respect to the phrase
so certain apply to this phrase. Note the coincidence: both Camillo
and Claudio are Italian lords; both names are 7-letter, 3-syllable
names beginning with C and ending with O.

NEAR-OSTIC. Almost, but not quite, Iroquoian (W2). Both as an
adjective and as an adverb, near can be placed in front of nouns,
and as an adverb in front of adjectives, to indicate closeness
in some sense, either physical or otherwise. It is, therefore,
impossible for dictionaries to list all or even many such terms, but
all collegiate and unabridged dictionaries provide these definitions and uses of near, giving illustrative examples. Some uses are so common as to warrant listing and definition in dictionaries: note, for instance, near beer, near-fall, near-legged, near-money, near-print, near-seal, and near-wit in W3, and a list of 18 representative adjectives beginning with near—given in boldface type in W2. It follows that near or near-, as the case may be, can be placed in front of any English noun or adjective whatever, forming a legitimate English term.

NEAR SCIOT. Someone who is almost, but not quite, an inhabitant or a native of the Greek island of Chios (W2, W3, F2, CD). The Greek name of the island is Khfos; the Italian name, Scio; the Turkish name, Sakis-Adasi (WN).

NEAR STOIC. Someone who is almost, but not quite, a Stoic (W2, W3, F2, RH).

RECOASTIN’. A clipped form of the verb participle recoasting, meaning “coasting again” (W2, F2, RH). In informal, dialectal, and careless speech, the last letter of the participial (and gerundial) suffix -ing is very frequently clipped—so frequently, that no dictionary has made any attempt to list the clipped forms. The clipped forms do, however, appear in print quite frequently, in books, magazines, and newspapers. The terms woofin’, signifin’, and shuckin’ and jivin’ do, however, appear as boldface entries in SB; terms such as fixin’s, makin’s, and trimm’in’s appear in print in BV; fixin’s and makin’s also appear in MM, in quotations illustrating use of the standard spellings of the words; and M1 observes that omitting the final letter of the suffix -ing in speech is fashionable and a mark of social status (page 348). All -ing words may, therefore, be so clipped.


A-SECTORIN’. Dividing into sectors: the clipped form of a-sectoring, which is an archaic and dialectal form of the present participle sectoring (W2, W3, FW, RH, WO). All collegiate and unabridged dictionaries define the prefix a- (which originally imparted the meaning “in the act of” but often serves as little more than an intensive today), letting users of the language attach it to present participles at their pleasure. Noted instances of its use in recognized literature include Henry Fielding’s verse “A-Hunting We Will Go”; Martin Luther’s comment that “truth goes a-begging” in his Table Talk; and Izaak Walton’s statement that “I have laid aside business, and gone a-fishing,” in The Compleat Angler (FQ).

A-COSTERIN’. Hawking fruits or vegetables from a street stand, cart, or barrow: the clipped form of a-costering, which is a form of costermongering (W2).

A-CORSETIN’. Dressing or furnishing (oneself or someone else) with a corset: the clipped form of a-corseting, which is a form of cor-
these defini-
tions. Some uses...
linear-money,
out of 18 rep-
dold face type...
may be, can...
e whatever,
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8). All ing

setting (W2, W3, FW, RH).

CANISTEO R. A river in southwestern New York, the Canisteo River,
about 60 miles long, flowing through Allegany and Steuben Coun-
ties (WN). The abbreviated form of the name appears on the maps
of various atlases (HI, page 160; H2, page 276; EB, map 172-73;
RE, page 116).

CRESTON, IA. A city, the seat of Union County, Iowa, noted for its
dairy products, packed poultry and eggs, lubricators, and
concrete blocks (CL). The abbreviated form of the name appears
in various Postal Service and other publications (ZC, page 1994;

E. CORTINAS. The eastern sections of Italian towns named Cortina:
towns such as Cortina d’Ampezzo and Cortina Vecchia (T1). The
letter E is a recognized abbreviation for the word eastern (ME,
Rx, AH, NW). Although the eastern or other directionally-identified
sections of cities and towns are never listed by name in gazetters,
atlas indexes, or elsewhere, it is an indisputable fact that they
exist because any area on the surface of the earth whatever, large
or small, can be divided into directionally-identified sections.
Anything that exists has an absolute right to be identified by
its natural, logical name. How would you feel if that section of
the city or town in which you happen to reside were prohibited
from being mentioned, either in speech or in writing?

E. NICASTRO. The eastern section of Nicastro, a town in Catanzaro
Province, in the Calabria region of southern Italy, noted for the
ruins of an ancient castle (CL, T4, EB map 28-29).

IT. NOCERAS. Italian towns named Nocera: towns such as Nocera
Inferiore, Nocera Superiore, Nocera Terinese (or Tirinese), and
Nocera Umbra (CL, TI,

The abbreviation
It. is a recognized
one for the word Italian (ME, AH, NW, FC). Someone writing about
the various Noceras and wishing to designate them as specifically
Italian may obviously place the abbreviation It. in front of the
pluralized name Noceras.

ANGEROTIC’S. The adjective anerotic means "nonerotic" (W2). When
it is used or referred to simply as a word, it becomes what is
known as a hypostasis, citation form, or quotation noun. The plu-
ral of a hypostasis is formed by adding an apostrophe and the
letter S to the original word (Handbook of Style, in ME, page
1514; Guide to Punctuation, Mechanics, and Manuscript Form, in
NW, page 1682; Handbook of Style, in WO, preliminary buff-colored
page 111). Example: How many anerotic’s are there in this para-
graph?

CANTORIE’S. The citation form plural of cantorie: the choir galle-
ries in Italian churches (W3). The word cantorie is itself a plu-
ral, of the word cantoria. The singular form, with its plural left
to the reader’s imagination, is also included in other dictionaries
(W1, W2, F2).

CORTINAE’S. The quotation noun plural of cortinae: the cobwebby
remnants of the veils which hang from the borders of the pilei in mature specimens of certain fungi (W1, W2, W3, CD). The word cortinae is itself a plural, of the word cortina. The singular form, with its plural deliberately suppressed, is also included in other dictionaries.

TOCINERA'S. The hypostatic plural of Tocinera, the last word of the name Cayos de la Tocinera, a group of keys off the north-central coast of Cuba (Tl). What that name means in Spanish is "the keys of the pork butcheress (of the woman who sells pork or bacon)" (VQ). That name seems like a most curious one to bestow on a group of islets.

SOURCE IDENTIFICATIONS

AS American Speech, Volume 23 (Oct-Dec 1948), article by H.L. Mencken, page 165
CC Letter dated October 3, 1985 from Leona B. Wood, Executive Director, Carson City (Nevada) Chamber of Commerce, addressed to me; Ms. Wood states that she has been in Carson City for 28 years and has never heard its residents referred to by any name other than Carsonites
CD The Century Dictionary, 6 volumes, 1889-1891
CS The Century Dictionary Supplement, 2 volumes, 1909
DY Dymock, Eric, quoted in Word Ways, May 1983, page 93
FC Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary, 1973 Edition
FR Francis, Darryl, quoted in Word Ways, August 1981, page 139
Fx Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language (Unabridged Edition), 1945
F2 Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language (Unabridged Edition), 1963
WORDS NOT YET IN THE DICTIONARY

The Facts on File Dictionary of New Words ($19.95 in hardcover) is dedicated to the proposition that the English language continually creates new words and phrases, or new uses of old words, which dictionaries haven't yet recognized. Approximately 500 of these have been collected, briefly defined, and placed in the second (1988) edition. They include words such as intifada, mommy track, couch potato and skunk works, familiar to most newspaper or magazine readers, along with more specialized jargon like karaoke, an electronic device to provide background music for the do-it-yourself vocalist, front end bra, a vinyl cover protecting a car's grille from flying gravel, and rubber mirror, a device used by astronomers to cancel the shimmering of the atmosphere. There appears to be only one word relevant to wordplay: cruciverbalist, defined as an expert crossword-solver.

Not all these words will survive long enough to make it into future dictionaries. Facts on File claims, however, that nearly half of the words in their first (1985) edition subsequently appeared in the Second Edition of the Random House Dictionary two years later.