KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Associate Editor. All answers appear in the Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

Elemental Words

In the February issue Mary Youngquist introduced the concept of "elemental words", e.g., CATER, which remains a valid word, CARBONATER when the element carbon is substituted for its symbol, C. Other examples given were SATED - SULFURATED and FEY - IRONY, plus a couple I threw in that didn't quite make the grade. Mary, Phil Cohen and Murray Pearce have extended the list to include FEED - IRONED, AGED - SILVERED, SIC - SULFURIC, SNED-TINED, SNY - TINY, SOUS - SULFUR, SET - SULFURET, SING - SULFURING, SIZING - SULFURIZING, CUED - COPPERED, and the cleverest of the lot: BASIS - BASILICONS. RES can be converted to either RHENIUMS or RESULFUR, making it the only known doubly-elemental word.

Anagram Classification II

In the February issue we listed 21 of the 24 possible anagram patterns for four-letter words. Mary Youngquist has plugged two of the gaps: for 3142 she gives IDLE - LIED, and for 4132, ALUM - MAUL. That leaves only one gap: 2431. The two words must appear in the Pocket Webster's as separate, self-contained entries with the first word earlier in dictionary order. A copy of my just-published book, Your Move, to the first solver.

More Contributions

Except for the two pesky letters EPSILON and UPSILON, Darryl Francis has succeeded in encapsulating the entire Greek alphabet:

kitALPHA, reBETAke, macroGAMMAglobulinemia, DELTArium, azETAs, parasynTHETA, mETAlworker, biOTAxy, sKAPPAh,
LAMBDAcism, comMUlst, peaNUt, lexICographer, micrOMICRON, comPlation, cirRHosis, unSIGMAtic, cenTAUr, delPHic, MICHigan, gyPSIologist, sOMEGAte

He challenges the readers to permute the alphabet in such a way that no word of more than three letters exists with its letters appearing in the order imposed by the permutation. The closest he's come is with the permutation U I A O E Y S D B P M H T G N L R K C F W V J Q X Z which unfortunately admits IAOS. This is the only four-letter word he has found that follows the order of his rearranged alphabet.

From sources such as Time Magazine, Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary, and standard unabridged dictionaries, Darryl has gleaned what may be called "super Heads 'n Tails words": ULLALULLA, POTENT-COUNTERPOTENT, CONVEXO-CONVEX, POQUET-CROQUET, PRESENTATIVE-REPRESENTATIVE, KETOGENIC-ANTIKETOGENIC, and PRESIDENTIAL-VICE-PRESIDENTIAL.

Is UNDERGROUNDER the only unhyphenated word in Webster's Unabridged having a head and tail at least five letters long?

Another Franciscan contribution is pairs of words that are both synonyms and anagrams. Darryl offers: APITPAT - PITAPAT, TOPER - POTER, INGENE - ENGINE, THORA - TORAH, YATCH-YACHT, ACRON - ACORN, ASCHER - BOABAB, BARNSTOCK - BRANSTOCK, BARMBRACK - BRAMBRACK, and ALGUM - ALMUG. Let me contribute ENTRAP - TREPAN to the list; Ross Eckler contributes LAUDATORY - ADULATORY. Now it is not really surprising to find cognate synonyms as anagrams of each other. It is surprising when the two words of an anagram - synonym pair are etymologically unrelated. This appears to be true in the case of two pairs listed above: TOPER - POTER and LAUDATORY - ADULATORY.

Pursuing the question of the spellings of Shakespeare, Darryl and I can put a pretty good lower bound on the number of "acceptable" spellings, based solely on the variations produced by The Bard himself (whom Darryl infers was obviously illiterate -- even though it is now conjectured that he was the real author of "Bacon's" essays) and by Will's friends. First we must consider the variants that contain an X and are, therefore, not separable into two syllables in the usual way: SHAXPR, SHAXPER, SHAXPERE, SHAXPEARE, SHAXPIR, SHAXPIRE, SHAXPUR, SHAXPYR, SHAXPYRE, SHAXPIER, SHAXPIERE, SHAXPEAR, SHAXPEYR, SHAXPEYRE. That's 14. In each case, we may replace the SH either with CH, SCH, or just plain S. That brings the total to 56. Now we count the combinations in which X does not appear. First syllable can be SAC, SACK, SAK, SAKE,
Again each of these syllables appear with S replaced either by SH, CH or SCH, for a total of 72. The second syllable has appeared variably as PR, PRE, PIR, PIRE, PER, PERE, PYR, PYRE, PUR, PIER, PIERE, PEAR, PEER, PEYR, PEYRE, among others. That is 16, giving a total of 1152 combinations not involving X and a grand total of 1208. It should be emphasized that not every one of these alternate spellings has been found, but that the components have been. The estimate of 1208 is probably low by at least a factor of two. As we suggested some time ago, if you will grab the nearest moppet who has just barely attained literacy, hand him or her (we need a single word badly here -- I suggest "hirn" -- what would you suggest for the subjective case?) a pencil and paper and ask hirn to spell Shakespeare, I will be very surprised if (s) he does not produce one of the 1208 "correct" spellings.

Readers have shirked a challenge I posed in the May 1970 issue. An isolano is a word incapable of being misunderstood in a message as the result of a single garbled letter, since no word (in Big Web III) agrees with it in all but one letter. BANKRUPTCY is obviously an isolano. Kickshaws produced the only known four-letter isolano (LLYN) and invited the readers to find others and even search for a three-letter isolano (probably non-existent). Then we did our usual flip-flop and considered the reverse phenomenon, the onalosi which admit a garble in every position. We found SHORES (CHORES, STORES, SHARES, SHOVES, SHORTS, SHORED) and solicited a seven-letter onalosi. Leslie Card matched me with SHARES (CHARES, SCARES, SHIRES, SHAVES, SHARPS, SHARED) and almost reached the seven-letter level with CLINKER (BLINKER, CHINKER, CLANKER, CLICKER, CLINGER, CLINK-R, LINKED).

Darryl Francis introduces the concept of hospitable words, which produce new words by the addition of an appropriate letter in any position. Thus, RAP is hospitable, admitting the words TRAP, REAP, RASP and RAPT. Darryl offers CARES which admits SCARES, CHARES, CADRES, CARES, CARETS and CARESS. He challenges readers to dream up a six-letter hospitable word.

If a word can be hospitable, why not charitable? SEAT, PEAR and PEAT are all charitable words; each can give up any of its letters and remain a word. Can you find a longer charitable word? Can you find a word of at least three letters that is both charitable and hospitable? (The task of finding a charitable word would be much easier if one were allowed to anagram the remaining letters after giving up each letter in turn; this game is discussed in "Word Groups With Mathematical Structure" in the November 1968 Word Ways.)
Darryl calls your attention to the definitions a croak, a type of gum, a drinking bowl, a plane, to dig, a boatswain, and a small coin, all from Big Web II. These are all commonplace definitions for words that we usually associate only with ultra-modern physics, viz. QUARK, LASER, MASER, MESON, PION, BOSON and LEPTON.

Darryl Francis and Murray Pearce have provided me with what may be an exhaustive list of phobias. (I mean the words, not the phobias themselves.) Ten are presented here, and the reader is asked in each case that which is feared. A score of one is considered passing, and three is frightfully good:

1. Ballistophobia
2. Bromodrosiphobia
3. Dographobia
4. Dysmorphophobia
5. Eisoptrophobia
6. Ergasphobia
7. Lyssophobia
8. Maleusiophobia
9. Siderodromophobia
10. Sitophobia

Murray is one of those who take an afternoon to look up a dictionary word because they can't resist the side-trips. There should be a word for this sort of individual, who, like Murray, provides us with some splendid words. I'm just waiting for the opportunity to spring them casually at a cocktail party or a barbecue. "Hmm, yes," I see myself holding forth, apropos of very little: "During my sophomore year, before I became a logodaedalist I was addicted to lecanoscopy." Murray advises that the first is a crossword puzzle addict, the second, the act of gazing fixedly at water in a basin. And if you've wondered about "ucalegon", a word with which we're barraged at least once every century, it means "a neighbor whose house is on fire". Murray has also found that a "laclabphiliac" is one who makes a hobby of collecting cheese labels. And if such a collector confines himself to Camembert cheese labels, he's a "tyrosemiophiliac". Personality, I prefer Stilton, but until I find what in-group I belong to the labels go into the trash.

Washington Recrosses The Delaware

Remember the 6-line poem in the May 1970 issue in which each line anagrammed "Washington Crossing the Delaware"? Murray Pearce sent in the following sonnet from the June 1936 Enigma:

A hard, howling, tossing water scene;
Strong tide was washing hero clean.
"How cold!" Weather stings as in anger.
O silent night shows war ace danger!
The cold waters swashing on in rage,
Redcoats warn slow his hint engage.
When across general wish'd train t' go,
He saw his ragged continentals row.
He stands while crew sit, an oar going
And so this general watches rowing.
He hastens -- Winter again grows cold;
A wet crew gain Hessian stronghold.
George can't lose war with 's hands in;
He goes astern -- Allight, O crew, and win!

Another Challenge

Harvey Dawson of Detroit, Michigan sent in a fine 6-by-6 crossword puzzle (without nulls) in which every word is common enough to appear in Webster's Collegiate. He challenges readers to top his offering with a 7-by-7.

1. Jew or Arab 7
2. Aggregate of freemartins 8
3. Stomach lining 9
4. Fly 10
5. Tease 11
6. Penetrates 12
7. Smooth
8. Football squad
9. Unitarian
10. Inherent
11. Wobble
12. Organic salts

Identify the Sequence I

M. H. Greenblatt, the author of Mathematical Entertainments (Crowell, 1965), is also a confirmed logophile. He sent in an intriguing word list that Ross Eckler has transmogrified into an unusual sequence problem: in what sense do these six adjectives form a sequence?

(impulsively) changeable, genital, practical, warlike, jolly, sullen

Identify the Sequence II

Restate this sequence as concisely as possible: Brief article, Broadway opening, Artichoke heart, The end of the road, Last in line, A lot of fluff, Fag end, The middle of nowhere, An extremely personal letter, Left in jeopardy, The capital of Kentucky, Most of all, Middle initial, Third in hand, Second in command, Right in step, Precedes you, Appears twice in reruns, Bus terminal, Orthocenter, Second personal letter, Center of gravity, War front, The last of the Heroic Six, Happy ending, Ed follows in England. If you have problems with either
The Language Barrier Again

Business Week reports that advertising copywriters have their translingual problems too. Catch-phrases such as Esso's "Put a Tiger in your Tank" come out well in any language. But Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing and General Motors both emerged with scars in their Japanese promotion campaigns. The Scotch Tape slogan "Sticks Like Crazy" came out "Sticks Foolishly" and "Body by Fisher" was rendered "Corpse by Fisher".

The View From Down Here

"...y'know, like it's really groovy -- I mean they really dig each other, y'know. Like, well, they're not up tight, y'know. I mean like they really enjoy their thing..."

Never mind where the quote is from. It's genuine and it's typical of a language style that's been pandemic for a number of years and may well last a century or two. The style itself is just that - a style, and if it's meant to be communicative, it fails. Like the signal-to-noise ratio is too low, y'know.

But then what of it? If it's blameworthy, who are to blame? The children? Hardly; children generally don't invent speech mannerisms; they mimic them. If all of us were exposed from infancy only to eloquence of the order of that associated with the late Igor Stravinsky (to choose the best example that comes to mind), then who would talk like a stoned saxophonist? Only a stoned saxophonist, of course.

But is this sort of speech blameworthy? All of us should beware of being guilty of that which we indict. The English gentleman over here objects to the eye-glazing frequency of the particle "y'know". Who does he think invented it? This other fellow tells me that "turned-on talk" is a form of language constipation. The words, he says, impede the flow of thought. But only last week I heard this arbiter linguæ say: "You may commence immediately if you so desire". I know what he meant, so just in case your language is English, I'll translate: "Start now if you wish".

And there's a bore I know who remarked: "People that talk that way betray a poverty of intellect". The same man says "How are you?" one or two hundred times a day when he really means "hello". Given the alternative, I'll take the style he criticizes, especially in the morning, over his own. When I hear someone tell me: "Oh, wow!"
Like you really should try Tartar Steak, y'know -- it's groovy, y'know," I can shrug or simply hold my peace without giving offense. But the Idiot-Idiom "How are you?" demands an idiot-Idiom re-

And you whose speech is faultless and who view with alarm the decay in our language apparent in the speech of the young or on "adult" television talk shows -- would you have passed muster a century ago? No way! You would have sounded to an educated audi-

So stop making like King Canute with the tides and face it. There's not the remotest thing you can do about linguistic change. So like you might as well learn to live with it. Y'know?

Rhyming Animal Groups

Nine pigs rooting in a mudhole is a commonplace and uninspiring sight for most people, but to Scott Hattie of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia they are pure poetry: nine swine. This set him to wondering: could similar rhyming groups of animals (or vegetables) be found for all the numbers from one to ten? His best effort, slightly modified by Ross Eckler, is given below:

one dun six chicks
two gnu seven Devons
three algae eight skates
four men-of-war nine kine
five hives ten men

The entries for five, seven and eight are defective; can the reader find groups of animals unmarred by the non-rhyming terminal S?

Condensed French

Philip Cohen sent in some background information about his friend Helen. To find out where she came from, read the following letters using the French pronunciation: L N E O P Y, L N I A E T L V. Baffled readers: see Answers and Solutions.