SPEECH PLAY

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In the August 1976 Kickshaws, I claimed that linguistics and log­
ology have little in common. Having just read Speech Play, edited by
Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (University of Pennsylvania Press,
1976), I take it back. Although the ten papers in this book are linguis­
tic in style rather than logological, a few are sufficiently nontechnical
that they should interest Word Ways readers.

Most of us have probably been fluent in Pig Latin at some time.
I've read of other 'play languages' (Opish, Turkey Irish, Cockney
backward slang), but never knew anyone who used them, though Max­
ey Brooke mentions speaking 'Carney Hash' as a child (see Novem­
ber 1974 Word Ways). Other cultures use them more: two papers
give examples from Cuna (five types), French, Javanese (seven
types), and Surinam 'Bush Negro' Creole (five types). Particularly
interesting is a play language using the Javanese consonantal alphabet.
Vowels are unchanged, but every consonant is replaced by the corres­
ponding letter of the reversed alphabet: for example, p, the third let­
ter, interchanges with 1, the third from last. People are actually
able to speak it rapidly. This is much more a 'secret language' than
the easily-learned Pig Latin.

'How to Remember Numbers in Japanese', by Anthony E. Back­
house, is a thorough treatment of Japanese number mnemonics, inform­
dally described by A. Martin Cohen in the February 1976 Word Ways. It
includes a table of all standard mnemonic elements, and many exam­
pies. Here are a few:

- 0039 = sankyuu 'thank you' (for a bar)
- 4989 = yoku yaku 'we cook well' (an eel restaurant)
- 0101 = maruimalu (Marui Department Store); maru is Japanese
  for 'circle'
- 5656 = gorgoro 'rumblyly' (Kaminari Confectionaries); kami­
  nari means 'thunder' and gorgoro is a common ono­
  matope for thunder in Japanese

These mnemonics are also used in educational guides sold to school
children. Where possible, they are incorporated into sentences con­
nected with the fact to be learned, and the sentence is memorized as
a whole. Here are some examples, with the mnemonic underlined:

- 1215 (Magna Carta) = hito ni igo oboerare 'learned by people
  thereafter'
The last mnemonic is useful in Japanese because the months are named by numbers: "nigatsu" 'February' is literally 'two-month', and so on. The use of 'samurai' for '11' is interesting; it is a graphic pun on the character for shi 'samurai' (＋) and those for jyuichi '11' (＋).

More than a third of the book is taken up by the editor's 'Bibliographic Survey of the Literature on Speech Play and Related Subjects' (an annotated bibliography). This should prove useful to logologists as well as linguists. The subheadings under 'Genre and Subject Bibliographies' are: Concept of Genre; Play; Children's Play; Word Play; Nursery Lore; Nonsense and Limericks; Play Languages; Numbers, Letters, Mnemonics, and Counting Out Rhymes; Names; Humor; Joking Relationships and Interaction; Verbal Contests; Psycho-Ostensive Expression; Obscenity; Proverb and Speech Metaphor; Riddle; Narrative; Audio-Visual Resources. At least half show clear relevance to logology, and who knows what the rest may hide?

Coverage appears to be good, even in the strictly recreational area. For example, the Word Play section mentions Word Ways first off, and such standbys as Bombaugh, Borgmann and Espy. This is not a book for everyone's shelf, but it's certainly worth recommending to your library.

**POTOMAC MAGAZINE COMPETITION**

Move over, Mary Ann Madden! Potomac Magazine (in the Sunday Washington Post) is featuring reader competitions very much in the spirit of Giant Sea Tortoise. Two recent examples:

Spell a word of five or more letters backward and suitably define it: **REVLOVER** - a girl enamored with her pastor; **PALRUB** - a massage given to a close friend; **LEMAC** - French fast-food concoction; **EMULOV** - ostrich adoration; Invent and define a word containing three of the letters JQXZ: **ZJAX** - a low-grade cleanser; **BRJEXINSQI** - phonetic spelling of the name of Carter's foreign policy expert; **JAQXZ** - what Jill plays with; **J'AQUUZE** - Howard's French cousin and real heir.