THE PARATRANSPOSITION

DMITRI A. BORGmann
Dayton, Washington

This article sets forth a theory of the alphabet which does for logology what Einstein's theory of relativity did for physics and astronomy: achieve a fundamental unification. In particular, it demonstrates how any English word or name can be related logologically to another one by a certain transformation of its letters.

In an ordinary transposition, the letters of a word or name are rearranged to form another word or name, as TRIANGLE to INTEGRAL. Although this is perhaps the most basic transformation in logology, it suffers from one critical defect: many words and names, such as SYZYGY and JONQUIL, are simply not transposable to other words. Many years ago, the transposition was generalized to the substitute-letter transposal, in which one is allowed to alter one letter of the word or name before proceeding with the transposition. However, this transformation suffered from the opposite defect: it was too easy to find a substitute-letter transposal for most words, cheapening considerably from the viewpoint of logological aesthetics. (In the National Puzzlers' League, substitute-letter transposals presented in the form of "flat" puzzles were too difficult for the average solver, as there were too many possibilities to consider; eventually, after many solver objections, contributors were requested not to submit any more of them.)

Something intermediate is clearly needed: the paratransposition. In a paratransposition, one--and only one--letter of the original word is replaced by the letter immediately preceding or following it in the alphabet before the letters are rearranged. For example, GENITALS is a paratransposition of STEAMING (L changed to M), TRIANGLE (S changed to R), or INFLATES (G changed to F). In the world of the paratransposition, the alphabet is circular. The two letters adjacent to the letter A are Z and B. For 2 of the 26 letters to be flanked by only one other letter would introduce a mathematically unacceptable incongruity into the picture.

Notice how much more restrictive the paratransposition is: for every 25 letter replacements allowed in a substitute-letter transposal, only two are permitted in a paratransposition. This makes paratranspositions 12 1/2 times as difficult to find, elevating them to the status of challenging logological problems. Furthermore, their mechanics place them just a whisker away from true transposals.

Paratranspositions have other desirable logological properties in
common with transpositions. If a word is a palindrome, that fact is obvious at sight, without the expenditure of any effort. In contrast, a paratransposition is not something self-evident -- it is something that must be searched for consciously. Finding a paratransposition bestows a degree of logological satisfaction on the one who has striven, a satisfaction entirely absent in palindromy.

The full glory of the paratransposition is displayed on groups of related words. Thought of in groups, paratranspositions become extraordinary challenges, and surmounting those challenges falls in the category of logological art at its finest.

Just as relativity theory applies to the entire universe, not only to the observable portion of it, so does the universe of the paratransposition encompass all English words and names, not only those specimens collected in dictionaries and other printed works. So-called dictionary words are analogous to the observable universe of astrophysics, while derivative terms correspond to those much greater portions of the physical universe beyond the range of earth-based instruments. Consider the word EARTH-BASED in the previous sentence: obvious and necessary though it is, it has never appeared in any dictionary!

It is comparatively easy to paratranspose the average English word. The real test of the method comes when it is applied to groups of well-known names. Names are far more intransigent, because they are atypical: many of them are of other than ultimate English, Latin, or Greek origin, or of above-average length. Paratransposing each member of a given set of names is a nerve-wracking, mind-wrenching, soul-searing challenge that tries the mettle of even the most proficient logologist. Let anyone who doubts that statement experiment for himself!

In deference to conventional thought about words, the following paratransposition sets are ranked qualitatively: the greater the percentage of words in dictionaries or other reference sources, the higher the quality of the set. This ranking may be dismissed as an expedient sop to orthodoxy by more broad-minded logologists. All derivative terms are indicated by asterisks.

Sun NUT
Mercury To ENCURRY* is to curry (EN- is an intensive prefix)
Venus UNSEW
Earth SHARE
Mars TRAM
Jupiter PURITIE is a 17th-century form of PURITY, in the OED
Saturn BRUNTS
Uranus UNTARS
Neptune PUNNEES* are the victims of punners or punsters
Pluto LOUPS

It is truly fascinating that two consecutive names in this set, Saturn and Uranus, happen to be mutual paratranspositions. 80 per cent of the words are consonant inl

January
February
March
April P
May AN
June a
July YU
August
September
October
November
December

In this list, 7 out of the 15 names are

Washington
Jefferson
forehead
Madison
Van Buren
Harrison
Tyler ST
Jackson
Taylor
Fillmore
Pierce
Buchanan

Lincoln
Johnson (comp.)
Grant
Hayes
Garfield
requisite
Arthur
Cleveland
McKinley
Roosevelt
Taft
PRES
Wilson
Harding
Coolidge
pare
the words are dictionary-sanctioned; in 3 out of the 10 cases, vowel-
consonant interchanges are involved.

January JAVANRY* is the state or fact of being of Javan birth
February a BY-ARGUER* is a nearby or substitute arguer
March RANCH
April PAILS
May ANY
June a NUKENE is a nuclear weapon (Random House)
July YULK
August GUTTAS
September PERMEATES
October to BESCOOT* is to scoot (BE- is another intensive)
November OVERNAME
December REED-MACE

In this list, 75 per cent of the words can be found in dictionaries; in
5 out of the 12 cases, vowel-consonant interchanges are involved.

Washington TOWN-HATING*, the opposite of "town-loving",
listed by the OED in lightface type
Adams SALAD
Jefferson FOREFINES* is a verbal form meaning "fines beforehand" (compare "forecondemns")
Madison MASONIC
Monroe ORMOND
Jackson KOSCIAN is a town in west-central Poland (TIG)
Van Buren UNCRAVEN
Harrison ROARINGS
Tyler STYLE
Polk LOOK
Taylor PARTLY
Fillmore FOREMILK
Pierce PRICED
Buchanan CHANUCAN* means "relating to Chanuca", the pre-
ferred F&W spelling of "Hanukkah"
Lincoln a NONBILL* is anything that is not a bill or invoice
(compare the Random House adjective "nonbillable")
Johnson NOONISH* means "occurring approximately at noon"
(see the lightface listings of "fiveish" and "eightish" in M-W)
Grant GNATS
Hayes SHADY
Garfield GAS FIELD qualifies as a paratransposition because it
requires the shifting of three letters to creat an internal space
Arthur HURRAS
Cleveland WELL-CANED
McKinley NICKELLY* means "nickel-like" (compare "kernelly")
Roosevelt OVERSLEPT
Taft FAST
Wilson OWLISM
Harding DASHING
Coolidge a CODELING* is an adherent to a code of rules (com-
pare "hireling", "nestling")

That fact is

in contrast, something

paratransposition

has

in groups of

become

changes falls in

e, not only

the paratrans-

tionally those spe-

So-called

red of astro-

which greater

th-based in-

vious sen-

appeared in

English

ted to groups

be English

lish, Latin,

posing each

a.

exp-eriment

following

and the per-

or as an ex-

ensive prefix)

, in the OED

unsters

et, Saturn

per cent of
Of the 34 different presidential surnames, 76 per cent can be para-transposed to dictionary words. In 13 of the 34 cases, vowel-consonant interchanges are involved.

Albania BALBINA is the name of a hacienda in Ecuador (TIG)
Andorra RADBRON is an English surname, a variant of "Rad-burn" in Bardsley's Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames
Austria BURIATS
Belgium HUMBLE is a 16th-century spelling of "humblly" (OED)
Bulgaria a TRAILBAG is a bag used for carrying things when hiking on trails (compare "gamebag", "saddlebag")
Cyprus CRYPTS
Czechoslovakia SHAKO-VOCALIZED means "sung while wearing a shako, a stiff military headdress" (compare "fame-sung", a dictionary word even more difficult to define)
Denmark RANKLED
East Germany A-MATTERNGE is a poetic inflectional form of the verb "to matter"; the -yng suffix is shown explicitly in an OED quotation dated 1528
Finland LANDING
France CAREEN
Great Britain HAT-BARTERING* means "trading in hats" (compare "horse-trading")
Greece DEGREE
Hungary GUN-GRAY* means "of the same color as a gun that is gray" (compare "stone-gray", "wolf-gray")
Iceland MEDICAL
Ireland HANDLER
Italy SAILY
Liechtenstein CHINEE-SMITTEN* means "struck by a Chinese" (compare "arrow-smitten", "thunder-smitten")
Luxembourg an EX-SUBMOGUL* is someone who was formerly a subordinate autocrat (compare "ex-king", "subking")
Malta LAMAS
Monaco CON MAN
Netherlands SENATOR-HELD* means "in the possession of a Senator, such as a free franking privilege"
Norway NOWAYS
Poland a COPLAN* is a plan formulated and executed jointly with someone else
Portugal a PART PLUG* is an object which fulfills the function of a plug or stopper only partially (compare "part owner")
Romania a NONARIA* is any melody or tune other than one sung by a single voice in an opera
San Marino ANTI-ROMAN
Soviet Union NOT-NOVITIES* are things that are not novities or novelties (NOT- is a prefix synonymous with "non-")
Spain PAINT
Sweden RENEWED is a spelling of "renewed" used by Milton in his epic poem Paradise Lost
Switzerland LANDWAITERS
Turkey TRUELY
Vatican City the term A COACTIVITY is accepted on the grounds that no noun is really complete without a definite or indefinite article attached to it
West Germany WEST-NEARYNG* means "nearing the west" (compare "west-going"; "-ying" is an old variant of the present participial suffix "-ing", in lightface type in the OED)
Yugoslavia YALU-SAVING* means "saving the Yalu River, which forms the boundary between China and North Korea, as from drying up or from being seized by enemy forces"

The preceding list includes several states which could be excluded as nations of Europe, depending on the frame of reference used: for example, Cyprus is included because it is a member of the Council of Europe, even though it is geographically in Asia. 63 per cent of the paratranspositions are dictionary words, and vowel-consonant interchanges occur in 15 out of the 35 cases.

Alabama A LABANA is someone such as Labana, listed in the KJV of the Apocrypha as the head of an exiled family returned from Babylon
Alaska ALALAS
Arizona AN ORIYA
Arkansas KANTARAS are places bearing the name Kantara, two of which are listed in the TIG: El Kantara, Algeria and Kantara Castle, Cyprus
California CALIFANO, JR. is the full form of the surname of the current Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare: Joseph A. Califano, Jr.
Colorado CORDONAL* means "of, or relating to, a cordon" (compare "organizational", "hormonal")
Connecticut NEOSUCCINCT* is newly or recently succinct (compare "neofascist", "neoromantic")
Delaware LEAFWARD* is in the direction of a leaf (compare "rootward", "stemwards")
Florida FORMAID is a clothing trademark listed in the 1977 Trademark Register of the United States
Georgia GEARING
Hawaii A VAIIHI is a locality such as Vaihi, on the island of Tahiti, in French Polynesia, listed in the TIG
Idaho DINAH
Illinois JILLIONS
Indiana A HAND-IN
Iowa WAIN
Kansas NASALS
Kentucky JUNKETCY* is the action or practice of going on junkets
or pleasure trips (compare "baronetcy", "bankruptcy")

Louisiana ITALIANOS are Italians; the word is both a Spanish and an Italian word, but has wide currency in Italian and Latin American ethnic centers in the United States, as well as in the media, making it an integral part of the American scene

Maine ALIEN

Maryland RELAYMAN is a verb meaning "to make a layman of again", not a man connected with some sort of relay

Massachusetts a CHASM-STATUSER is one who attempts according a high status to any sort of charm or yawning abyss

Michigan CHAINING

Minnesota TENSIONAL

Mississippi SPIRI-IPSISM* isipsism or masturbation (see Dorland’s medical dictionary) with a twist

Missouri SURMISIN is a form of "surmising" that reflects omission of the G sound in words ending in "-ing", fashionable in England according to Mencken's The American Language (4th edition, p. 348)

Montana A MANSON is someone such as Charles Manson, remembered for his part in the 1969 slaying of actress Sharon Tate

Nebraska SEA BANKS

New Hampshire PARISHEN-HEWN* means "hewn by the members of a parishen (a Scottish parish), as a place of worship in the side of a natural wall of rock"

New Jersey SWEENEY, R. I. is a shortened form of Sweeney, Robt I, an actual name listed in the July 1977 Chicago Telephone Directory

New Mexico an EX-WINEDOM* is an area that was formerly the domain of wine and its drinkers (compare "wifedom")

New York LYE-WORN* means "worn down or out by lye, a strong alkaline solution or solid caustic (compare "surf-worn")"

North Carolina ORNITHOCANALS* are channels or watercourses frequented by birds

North Dakota ROBOT-THANK'D* means "thanked by a robot" (for "thank'd" see an 1819 quotation from Byron in the OED)

Ohio HOFI

Oklahoma a LAMBHOOK* is a meathook used only for lamb

Oregon GORDON

Pennsylvania PLANTA-ENNYIN' is defined as "envious of, or envying, the planta (the sole of the foot)"

Rhode Island SLED-ADORING*, said of children, means "adoring sleds"

South Carolina to be LOCUTION-BRASH* is to be impetuous or foolhardy in using particular forms of expression

South Dakota TAHA-SOLD-OUT* means "sold out of tahas, or South African weaverbirds": a term used in pet shops

Tennessee to be TEN-SENSED* is to have ten senses instead of the usual five or six, a word applied to supernatural beings

Texas WASTE

Utah THAT

Vermont MONTURE

Virginia WARING, II is the full form of the surname of a Waring
whose first and middle names happen to be identical to those of his father, and who has a son carrying on as Waring, III
Washington TOWN-HATING* is discussed in the presidential list
West Virginia SHIRT-WEAVING* is defined as "weaving a shirt out of a material such as wool"
Wisconsin DISOWNIN' S is a form of "disownings" (compare the popular "fixin's")
Wyoming YOWLING

62 per cent of the paratranspositions are dictionary words, and vowel-consonant changes occur in 23 of the 50 examples.

Sunday UNEASY
Monday YEOMAN
Tuesday to BESTUDY* is to study (BE- is an intensive prefix)
Wednesday ODE-SWAYED* means "influenced by the beauty of an ode" (compare "passion-swayed", "Muse-inspired")
Thursday DUST-GRAY* means "made gray in appearance by being covered with dust" (compare "ash-gray", "smoke-gray")
Friday to DISFAY*, in shipbuilding, is to disjoin or disunite
Saturday BUSTARDY* means "like a bustard" (compare "peacock", "sparrowy")
Yesterday SEXY-RATED* means "considered sexy"
Today Jessica TANDY is a London-born actress
Tomorrow WORM-TORN* means "torn to pieces by worms" (compare "worm-eaten", "vulture-torn")

Only 30 per cent of the paratranspositions are dictionary words; in 8 of the 10 cases, vowel-consonant interchanges are involved. These abnormal numbers probably reflect the extreme difficulty of paratransposing this particular group of names.

The six groups of names examined in this article are fully representative of the toughest sets of words and names that exist in normal English. My complete success in paratransposing all 150 different names -- ranging in length from 3 to 14 letters -- constitutes adequate empirical proof that all English words and names can be subjected to this particular kind of transformation.

Paratranspositions, in the form presented in this article, constitute a unique, unprecedented logological achievement. Never before has one particular kind of logological process successfully been applied to all English words and names. In fact, it is doubtful that this problem has ever even seriously been considered before. Furthermore, it is unlikely that any other logological process exists that could be made to succeed in the manner of paratranspositions. This uniqueness is what renders paratranspositions supremely worthwhile and interesting, investing them with the ultimate logological cloak.