FORTUNATE REVERSALS

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We intrepid logologists love to switch around letters within words--adjacent letters (UNITED UNTIED), separated letters (CONVERSATION CONSERVATION), and initial and terminal letters (LATCHES SATCHEL). In some words we can interchange each half to form new words. Dmitri Borgmann called these leapfrogging specimens "cyclic transpositions." I prefer the more playful "fortunate reversals."

At least two letters must vault from front word to back word. Thus, single-letter looping anagrams are excluded, such as (and I'm sticking to just animals here) ANT TAN, ASP SPA, DRAKE RAKED, EMUS MUSE, EWE WEE, FLEA LEAF, MANATEE EMANATE (magnificent!), MITE EMIT, OWL LOW, RHEA HEAR, SHARK HARKS, SNAIL NAILS, and SWINE WINES.

Also outlawed are reversible compounds, such as BIRDSONG SONGBIRD, BOOKCASE CASEBOOK, GUNSHOT SHOTGUN, HORSEFACE RACEHORSE, and even JAYVEE VEEJAY and TOKYO KYOTO (a reversal of two morphemes that mean "capital city"). That's because the soul of logology is letter play, not morphemic manipulation, alphabetic accidents, not the syntactic rearrangement of meaning-bearing elements. That's also why I bar particle verbs, such as HOLDUP UPHOLD, OUTTAKE TAKEOUT, and SETUP UPSET, and reduplications and other double-identity words, such as BONBON, DODO, HOTSHOTS, MEME, MURMUR, MUUMUU, and TESTES.

But if, when morphemes are interchanged, two new morphemes emerge, the fraternal twins qualify as bona fide fortunate reversals. The likes of ALLOCATION LOCATIONAL, BLOODSHOT HOTBLOODS, HEADSHOT HOTHEADS, and OWNERSHIP SHIPOWNER do not pass muster because, in each switcheroo, one morpheme changes, and one stays the same. But if two transposed morphemes metamorphose into two new morphemes, as in the two 8-letter examples at the end of this disquisition, they gain an honored seat in the pantheon.

Each reversal must be written as a single word. Hence--weep weep, sob sob, honk honk!--CALLOW LOW-CAL, HOT POTS POTSHOT, and HOT SPOTS POTSHOTS are denied entry.

Finally, as has been my practice over the decades, I minimize arcane words, such as ADMEN MENAD, ANCLE CLEAN, BALSA SABAL, and DOZEN ZENDO.

I do include a smattering of names of people, places, and things, such as LYON ONLY; free-standing roots, such as GAME MEGA; and the British spelling -re, such as CENTRE-RECENT.
Now cast your eyes upon more than one hundred clusters of 4-to-8-letter imposing, transposing, swapping, flip-flopping, rotating, relocating, reciprocating, stupendous, tremendous, end-over-endous fortunate reversals:

4 letters

ALAN ANAL     BOLO LOBO     ELSE SEEL     LYRE RELY
ALBA BAAL     CAIN INCA     EMIT ITEM     MESA SAME
ANKH KHAN     CHET ETCH     ERGO GOER     META TAME
ANNA NAAN     CHIN INCH     ERIC ICER     MOSH SHMO
ARCH CHAR     CHIT ITCH     GAME MEGA     OTTO TOOT
ARNE NEAR     CHOU OUCH     GAVE VEGA     PORE REPO
ARSE SEAR     CODE DECO     ILSA SAIL     PYRO ROPY
ARTS TSAR     DAVE VEDA     ISLE LEIS     RAVE VERA
BOHO HOBO     DEMO MODE     LOOS OSLO     RUTH THRU

5 letters

ADORE OREAD    COSTA TACOS    PEDRO ROPED
ALLOY LOYAL    DERRY RYDER    PESKY SKYPE
ANGLE GLEAN    HADJI JIHAD    PESTY TYPES
ANGST STANG    INTRA TRAIN    PETRI TRIP
ARCED CEDAR    JASON SONJA    RAISE SERAI
ARSON SONAR    KARMA MAKAR    RINSE SERIN
ASIDE IDEAS    LITRE RELIT    ROUTE UTERO
ASPIC PICAS    MANOR NORMA    SEVER VERSE
BARRE REBAR    MENSE SEMEN    SITAR TARS
BOLES LESBO    MITRE REMIT    SLATE TESLA
BOWEL ELBOW    PASTA TAPAS    STATE TEST
BRAZE ZEBRA    PAVES VESPA    STAVE VEST

In the above lineup, we observe some semantic relationships within BOWEL ELBOW, HADJI JIHAD, PASTA TAPAS, and ROUTE UTERO. But one 4-step example stands atop this 5-letter cluster: PESTO yields STOPE and TOPES, which in turn yields ESTOP.

6 letters

ABACAS CASABA    CENTRE RECENT    INSOLE OLEINS
ABLEST STABLE    CONGAS GASCON    LYSING SINGLY
ALPINE PINREAL    DENTIN INDENT    MOTHER THERMO
ALTARS TARSAL    ENLIST LISTEN    PERVES VESPER
ASCENT CENTAS    ERRING RINGER    RIPEST STRIPE
BERGER GERBER    GERMAN MANGER    SELVES VESSEL
BERGER GERBER    INGROW ROWING    TACTIC TICTAC
BERGER GERBER    INHERE HEREIN

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Gleaming out from the 6-letter reversals is ERRANT, which yields RANTER, which in turn yields TERRAN, which, as every sci fi fan knows, means "earth dweller."

7 letters
ASQUINT QUINTAS LESSING SINGLES
INGRAIN RAINING QUESTOR TORQUES
INSPECT PECTINS REDRIVE RIVERED
KERSTIN STINKER REENTER TERREEN
KINGPIN STINKING RESPECT SPECTRE

8 letters
BARSTOOL TOOLBARS MENTALLY TALLYMEN

While it could be argued that BARSTOOL and TOOLBARS share the same morpheme, BAR, the credentials for MENTALLY TALLYMEN appear to be impeccable.

CLOSE CALL
LOUIS PHILLIPS

The artist Chuck Close,
Standing close
To the actress Glenn Close,
Asked: “Should I close
The door & make a close-up of you in your birthday clothes,
Ms. Close?”
“No. Thank you” replied Glenn Close
To Chuck Close.