

KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors. All contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

Hmm ... Humuhumunukunuku-a-pua'a...Hmm...

Hawaii's state fish is the tiny salt-water humuhumunukunuku-a-pua'a, a name familiar to some older readers from the 1930s song, "Little Grass Shack in Kealakekua," by Bill Cogswell, Tommy Harrison and Johnny Noble. The song ends this way:

I want to go back
To my little grass shack
In Kealakekua, Hawaii,
Where the humuhumunukunuku-a-pua'a
Go swimming by.

Humuhumunukunuku-a-pua'a has nine Us. What word in Hawaiian has the most Us? Are there words in the language with many Us and no other vowels? What is the English translation of humuhumunukunuku-a-pua'a?

Knittelverse

One term that has never been applied to Espy verses is poetry. They have been called other names aplenty - doggerel, amphigory, nominy, crambo clink. But however well-intended and even apt these terms may be, there is something about them that smells of derogation; so for some time I have been looking for a distinguished-sounding foreign expression for the same general idea. At last I have found it. The German word Knittelvers - club verse - turns readily into the English-sounding knittelverse. It is a translation of the Latin for rhopalic verse, a largely forgotten form in which each metric foot is a syllable longer than the one preceding it; the thing grows thicker as it goes along, like a club. Goethe is said to have used knittelverse to excellent effect, but nowadays it simply means inexcusably bad writing in metric form. So from now on I am calling my rhymes knittelverse, and I hope my friends will do the same. Sounds pretty distinguished, don't you think?

This is knittleverse (please, pronounce the K):

Darius Green Didn't Make Such a Great Pegasus, Either
Now bounds from crag to crag my Word,
As it would vault the sky.
That mist, about its shoulders blurred -

Is't wings, psyched up to fly?

It soars! - No, plummets! - to the heather's
Flung down! - and there it lies...

What was that shoulder-mist? Horsefeathers? -
Or should I say horseflies?

A Sequence of Pentagrams

Question: in what natural order should the following ten pentagrams be arranged: actit, arthl, aspoo, ectar, elvem, enatr, mipro, ndato, nodiz, verto? The answer can be found in Answers and Solutions.

Rest Rooms

It is no secret to the readers of this column that the brightest jewels in my books on the light side of language are filched - with credit, I add hastily - from the pages of **Word Ways**. The following entry is from my current project, still in the draft stage. The working title of the book is Now That You Mention It: My Book of Days, and it will probably not be in the stores for another eighteen months.

And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. --Matthew XIV, 22

"In some places there is only one door to the rest room, available on a first-come-first-served basis, with an inside lock. Usually these are plainly labelled, but a noteworthy exception, which I read about, was the Melbourne pub; its sign was HERE."

So, back in 1977, R. Robinson Rowe began his report in **Word Ways** on rest rooms around the country, with primary emphasis on the labels that set apart the male and female varieties. A later issue carried as a sort of postscript this sentence from the New York Times travel section: "When we stopped to eat at the Cow Palace [in White Sulphur Springs, Montana], the boy at the next table returned to report, 'Mommy, one was marked "Bulls" and one was marked "Heifers," and I didn't know where to go!'"

The following sonnet is based on Mr. Rowe's thought-provoking report. Unfortunately there was no room for a few pairs such as Visitors Inmates (at a sorority house in less emancipated days) and Pointers Setters, in a restaurant called the Dog House (location not given).

<Ladies Gentlemen>

When urgent nature whispers low, "Thou must,"
And male and female answer to the call
In public places, they repose their trust
In signs that steer each gender to its stall.
Fie now on <Ladies Gentlemen>; too coy's
The modern mood for such an honest line:
Today it's <Adam Eve>;¹ or <Gulls and Buoys>;²
Or <Harlequin next door to Columbine>;³

<Beaux Belles>;⁴ <Colts Fillies>;⁵ <Heifers (never Cows)
 Across from Bulls>;⁶ and <Bucks across from Squaws>;⁷
 Here, <Jane; there, Tarzan>;⁸ <Angels here, there
 Devils>;⁹
 <Trunks eye Bikinis>;¹⁰ <Dudes and Dolls>¹¹ hint reveals.
 Yet pudency still slows sign-writers' pens;
 No restrooms yet are labelled <Cocks and Hens>.

1. Paradise Inn, Mount Rainier
2. Cove Bar, Naubimmy, Michigan
3. A little theater, place and name not given
4. Moulin Rouge, New Orleans
5. Several race tracks
6. Cow Palace, White Sulphur Springs, Montana
7. The Wigwam, near Long Beach, California
8. The Jungle Inn, place not given
9. The Hades Club (a bar), place not given
10. An ocean bathhouse, place not given
11. The Doll House, near San Francisco.

Word Square

When I arrive at a word square in **Word Ways**, I generally skip. They are indeed extraordinary feats of mental agility, and it is utterly unfair that they always remind me of Samuel Johnson's comparison between a woman's preaching and a dog's walking on its hind legs ("it is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all"). There it is; they simply do not trigger my juices. One word square may indeed lust after another, as a he hippopotamus lusts after his she; but their emotion is intramural. I do not share it.

None of that applies to the word square that follows. No eight-letter or nine-letter words here; just friendly little fellows that don't look down on their surroundings. My sort - and enough of them to make a classical news story without having to go outside for a single word.

And Now the News
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W h e r e n o w h o w h a t
 H e r e n o w h o w h a t h
 E r e n o w h o w h a t h e
 R e n o w h o w h a t h e r
 E n o w h o w h a t h e r e
 N o w h o w h a t h e r e n
 O w h o w h a t h e r e n o
 W h o w h a t h e r e n o w
 H o w h a t h e r e n o w h
 O w h a t h e r e n o w h o
 W h a t h e r e n o w h o w
 H a t h e r e n o w h o w h
 A t h e r e n o w h o w h a
 T h e r e n o w h o w h a t

Flattops and Seabottoms, Maybe?

A Los Angeles friend of Martin Gardner's telephoned him, challen-

ging him to come up with clever names for a doctor's office shared by a proctologist and a psychiatrist. His examples: Nuts and Butts, Queers and Rears, Odds and Ends. Can **Word Ways** readers add any?

Hickey

Hickey. Of unknown origin. From original application to devices used in electrical trades, it was quickly embellished to do-hickey, meaning a gadget or tool used to manage some simple operation. Of still further interest is the variety of picturesque expressions for the same concept and idea, like do(o)dad, rigmajig, thing-(a)bob and what-do-you-call-it. 1. Of dermatologic interest is application of the word to a pimple (papulo-pustule) and to the erythematous and later ecchymotic mark (passion purpura) of a playful bite or pinch, usually on the cheeks (of the face or buttocks), the neck or breasts, incurred in hanky-panky.

--A Dictionary of Dermatological Words, Terms and Phrases, Leider

The foregoing extract arrived from Dr. S. A. Rosenthal, of the Department of Dermatology at the New York University Medical Center. My emotions were aroused:

The Hickey

Deep in a dictionary medical,
'Mid other items tricky,
Is named an epidermal pedicle
Identified as hickey.

"Of root unknown, but full of riches,"
The definition reads -
"As, gadgets for electric switches;
From this same word proceeds

"Do-hickey, for a tool that can
Abet some trifling aim -
So unpretentious that a man
Cannot recall the name;

"Sometimes called doodad, thingumbob,
And other terms as simple;
Upon the skin, a vexing knob -
In laymen's terms, a pimple;

"But oft an ecchymotic mark
On buttock formed, or cheek,
Or throat, or breasts, from after-dark
Pinch, nibble, bite, or tweak

"By lovers (to such whims addicted)
On loved parts, plump or lanky.
This hickey's oftenest inflicted
In course of hanky-panky."

Ever Meet Tommy Turbyfill?

Faith and Ross Eckler, driving through the Southwest in the summer of 1985, jotted down the names of some of the Indian reserva-

tions they passed through - and some of the people they met there. The knittelverse that follows is a freehand reprise of the trip.

One Good Turn Deserves Another

An auto vacation us took, her and me,
Through N-M, and U-T, and also A-Z.
We touched in our journey on various spots
With names to give onomasticians the hots.

Through Lechee and Chinle we dawdled; went on to
Kayenta and Greasewood, Tohatchi and Shonto.
We met and we spoke and we ate and we slept
With folk of the region, some oddly y-clept:

At Navajo, Fishbrab was one of the men;
At Shiprock, one Lookingglass bade us good den.
With Silentman, Bitsilly, Shorthair we talked;
At Ringhand and Shortman and Oldman we gawked.

We bantered with Curleyhair, lingered to smooch
With Manygoats; Dishface; with Lookingglass; Hootch.
With Bluehorse and Goldtooth we rested.

Alack,

Politeness required us to ask them all back.

From N-M, U-T, and A-Z, and the rest,
They'll come - and we're wondering how to be dressed.

Others whom the Ecklers encountered on their trip, at least in the telephone books, included Frank Blackgoat, Ethel Poorthunder, J. Whitesheep, Isabell Whitehair, Thomas C. Turbyfill, Calvin Applewhite, John W. Redhair, Sister Isabell Whitehead, Lee Sombrero, Harrison Watchman, Terry Rockbridge, and Earl R. Freestone.

The Little Old Cog Labin

J. Cary Davis sent this spooneristic verse, which he said he read years ago in a pulp magazine. He cannot identify the author. Can you?

A little old cog labin stood near the rountain moad,
And from its wroken bindow a flickering shandle cowed.
A baint but friendly feacon whose light wone on theshay
That those githout its widance might not go star afray.
The davin coor was opened and from it meered a paid,
Intent on soing gomewhere, and in rad glags arrayed.
But when she law the sightning and heard the rashing
 dain,
She wumbled to the teather and dut the shoor again.

Reversible Verse

The reversible words that open the first line and close the last in the knittelverse below stand by themselves, quietly disregarding the words that intervene. They were created by a monk named Dom Silvester Bouedard, and were relayed to me by John Furnival.

Too Late

deus till I lay here dying,
 I forgot you frown on lying.
 Till no time was left to live,
 I was sure You would forgive.
 I ignored, in days of lust,
 That the ways of God are just.
 Till my time to take the rap,
 I thought heaven was a **snap**

You Say Rumpedibum, I Say Rumtitum

Onomatopoeic sounds can be differently rendered, depending on how the ear identifies them - and the same ear may hear them in different ways on different occasions. In any one language, however, the rendition tends to become formalized; generally in English a snake hisses, a dog barks, a cat meows, a duck quacks. In other languages the same sounds may turn into quite different words. Nino Lo Bello points out in Editor and Publisher (26 April 1986), relayed to the editor by Dennis J. Bird of Dorchester, Massachusetts, that in European comics a volcano erupts with a spritzz-bitzzz. A door shuts with a ploch; a pistol goes sbeng. "A whip," says Mr. Lo Bello, "lashes zaff, water splashes pluff, and swords clash scleng. The ringing bell does not go ting-a-ling but dlin dlin, whereas a coin falls to the ground with a svimm and not a plink. And horses' hooves go tamtam as the galloping quadrupeds neigh with an equine whine that is written whll. Europe has its own interpretations of such familiar sound effects as bang-bang, wham, whoosh, and zing - all standard noises in American comics."

But though the details may vary, the onomatopoea remains. Bang and sbeng may not be identical twins, but twins they are nonetheless. So are ting-a-ling and dlin dlin. The foreign rumpedibum is instantly equated with rumtitum by an American. Whether the clash of swords is rendered as scleng or clang, the ear understands the meaning.

Mr. Lo Bello says that the Italians, particularly, are onomatomaniacs. "Their comic books dote on noise-words that begin with the letter S followed by a consonant. Here's a sample from just one issue of an adult adventure magazine: scassh, stug, svimm, sdoing, sdugh, slang, scrash, sdok, sclaff, svesh, sbeng, sboing, sprak, and scleng. Whew! Scrabble, anybody?"

Rx

I assume the doctors understand the prescriptions they write, and I trust the pharmacists do; but I don't.

When Jones went down the spout,
 They wrote above his bod,
 "He couldn't figure out
 What's prn? What's ud? What's od?"

What's gtt̄s and po and bid?
 What's hs and pc and qod?
 What's qam and ac and tid?"
 Jones knew not "with" was c̄;
 Knew not s̄ meant "without,"
 And stat was Greek to he;
 And what was os about?
 DAW, qd, ss̄, qid, ut dict?
 Poor fellow! - for his sins,
 Because he never spikt
 Those names for medicines,
 A grinding gripped his gut,
 Black shame wore down his pride.
 A pharmaceutical butt,
 He bowed his head, and died.

Just in case you are as ignorant about these symbols as I was until I found them with definitions in a newspaper, the meanings are as follows: prn - take when needed; ud - as directed; od - right eye; gtt̄s - drops; po - by mouth; bid - twice a day; hs - at bedtime; pc - after meals; qod - every other day; qam - every morning; ac - before meals; tid - three times a day; c̄ - with; s̄ - without; stat - at once, immediately; os - left eye; DAW - dispense as written; qd - every day; ss̄ - one-half; qid - four times a day; ut dict - as directed.

Anagrammatic Translation

Prince Djoli Kansil of Honolulu points out that the Indonesian word for water is air (pronounced "ah-er").

Several English words, he adds, turn into their equivalents in other languages if the last letter of the English word is shifted to precede the first. Thus, in Spanish our tuna is atun. In Indonesian, our and is dan. In Dutch, our the is het.

Can Word Ways readers supply additional examples?

Narrowing Things Down

Taxonomy: The science of classification in a broad sense, usually restricted to biological classification.

--The Encyclopaedia Britannica

Narrowing Things Down

Taxonomically, gang,
 Start out with the Primal Bang.
 With a mighty puff disperse
 This into a Universe.
 Sifting through phenomena,
 Pick a likely Nebula.
 And from its diversity
 A convenient Galaxy.
 From that swirling, murky ruck
 A fine Solar System pluck.
Planets nine its sun begird:
Counting outward, pick the third.

Land on it; when you arrive
Scoop up everything alive.

These in Kingdoms sort, and pile 'em
Each into its proper Phylum;

Whence Subphylums next amass,
And from each, a Superclass.

These in smaller Classes break,
And, from one, Subclasses take.

Into Cohorts them divide,
Wherein Superorders hide.

Each of these its Orders yields;
Separate them into fields

Called Suborders, all of which
Are in Infraorders rich.

Infraorders keep in store
Superfamilies galore.

Families split off from these;
Thence emerge Subfamilies.

All with Tribes to them belonging,
These with Subtribes from them thronging.

Subtribes Generes deliver;
In each Genus, Species quiver.

And the taxonomic end

Is Subspecies - YOU, my friend.

No Vowels Withheld

Vatsala Muralidhara of Fair Haven, New Jersey, forwards the following twenty-six twelve-letter words, each showing only the vowels. With the help of the clues (jumbled), determine the correct words.

A***E*IA*IO*	doctor for animals	1
*I*E***E**IA*	communicable lung disease	2
O*EOA***	dark sourdough bread	3
*E*I*A*E***E*	study of the sea	4
E***A*A*A***A	worker on the docks	5
A*E***E1*	surgical removal of the uterus	6
*O***E***OO*	study of animal distribution	7
****E*E***O**	totally enthusiastic	8
I**E***E**A*E	shortened word, phrase	9
*U*I***U*E**	unclear wordy jargon	10
*I**E***A**E*	power beyond natural laws	11
*O****O*E*A*	two hundredth anniversary	12
*OO**I***I**	creating, arranging dances	13
*E**OU***A**	animal without backbone	14
O*EA*O**A***	engaging in illegal business	15
*U**E**I**E*	spectacular event, production	16
*UA**I**E*I*	state of being young	17
*A**E*EE*I**	working at additional job	18
*U*E**A*U*A*	cannot be substantiated	19
*U*E**U*O*I*	skilled in the law	20
U**E*I*IA***E	class before formal schooling	21
*E*E*I*A*IA*	shop selling prepared foods	22
O*E*EAE*	man-like monster in fiction	23

*l**I**E**U*	Canada's newest province	24
*OU***U**E**	paralysed from the neck down	25
*OO*EO**A***	part of the breast bone	26

For answers, see Answers and Solutions.

When Flocci-nauci-nihili-pili-fication Is Not Enough

SWM 36, seeks erudite SWF
w/keen sense of
floccinaucinihilipilification, strong
libido & O.E.D. 744-9071

"That was the first personal ad I ever answered," Dotty Hillman writes from Philadelphia, "and you can see why. I thought it was a match made in heaven."

But you can see, too, why the SWM turned out to be a disappointment. A couple cannot spend all their time flocci-nauci-nihili-pili-ficating. And there is something fishy about a man who doesn't even own his own O.E.D.

Quickie

Leroy Meyers asks "What word is changed into its opposite by inserting Z in it?"

At Last - The Alphabet in Alphabetical Order

I had just dropped the foregoing nullities into the mail when I espied, lying on the floor where it had dropped from my source-file unnoticed, the following list.

The Alphabet in Alphabetical Order

Aitch	Ex
Are	Eye
Ay	Gee
Bee	Jay
Cue	Kay
Dee	Oh
Double U	Pea
Ee	See
Ef	Tee
El	Vee
Em	Wy
En	Yu
Ess	Zee

What struck me first was the signature in the right-hand margin. "Why," I thought, "that has to be my friend Sid Harris, one of the funniest cartoonists extant! This is going to be good!"

And good it is. Mr. Harris has spelled out the sound of each letter of the alphabet, and arranged the resulting combinations by the alphabetical order of the opening letters in each set. The result bears no likeness to our standard ABCs. "Ef" is a dialectical variant of "if"; "ess" is the way a baby says "yes"; and many

of us - too many - pronounce "why" as "wy." In the meaningless knittelverse that follows I took no liberties with the listed spellings except to shorten "bee" to "be" and lengthen "yu" to "you."

Alphabetic Nonsense

H "Aitch - alphabetically first -
 R Are you commander in this war?"
 A "Ay, Kay dear - challenge me who durst!
 B Be sure he'll get the old what-for!"
 Q Cue up, men! Let us by the River
 D Dee drill the troops, tents laid out as a
 W Double U! Now, Dutchy, shiver!
 E "Ee!" you will squeal from your piazza
 F Ef some of our rough lads march through!
 L El - Syrian godhead! - volunteer!
 M 'Em Dutch will sure be scared of you!
 N En, priest of Babylon, sign here!
 S 'Ess sir, we're ready! Aim and shoot!
 X Ex out the foe - and keep a close
 l Eye out for anything to loot!
 G (Gee, even the least bellicose
 J Jay would enjoy all this pizzazz!)
 K Kay dear, triumphant we'll come back -
 O Oh yes - all heroes! Easy as
 P Pea soup will be our grand attack!
 C See the fat Dutchies huff and puff!
 T (Tee hee!) ... They whimper as they run,
 V "Ve vill surrender! Shtop dis shtuff!"
 Y Wy stop now, when we've all but won?
 U You soon can join us by the Zuyder
 Z Zee, Kay dear, swigging beer and cider.