

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.

Abbreviations in this Kickshaws: 9C = Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary; N12/N13 = Merriam-Webster New International Dictionary, 2nd/3rd edition; N1 = N12 or N13; OED = Oxford English Dictionary; WW = **Word Ways**.

A Couple of Hectowords on Prefixes

A recurring topic in my previous Kickshawses was metric prefixes. Johns Hopkins Magazine asked its readers for examples, and I have a copy of the semi-metric result. The date is missing and I forgot how I got it, but the era is shown by two of the examples: '10⁶ feet in the mouth = 1 megaWatt'. '2x10⁷ microcosmos = 20 cosmos = 1 icoSagan'. More:

1 mentality = 100 centimentality	2 tribes = 1 diatribe
2x10 ⁶ pinpricks = 1 MHz	10 glassfuls = 1 decanter
3 camp beds = 1 tricot	1½ dice = 1 trice
10 ⁻⁶ fish = 1 microfiche	10 ⁻¹⁵ homicides = 1 femtofatale
3 unicorns = 1 triceratops	2 itches = 1 bitch
10 ⁻¹² surprises = 1 picoboo	10 ⁶ cops = 1 megapolis
1 magnum opus = 10 grand opera	2000 mockingbirds =
10 ⁻¹² dillies = 1 picodilly	2 kilomockingbirds

Two related thoughts from the same source: If a journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step, does a journey of one mile begin with Milwaukee? The amount of suspense in a mystery novel should be measured in whod units.

This Section Title is Self-Referential

Another recurring topic is self-referentiality. The best collection of self-referential prose is in Douglas Hofstadter's magnificent Meta-Magical Themas, a collection of his columns from Scientific American, with addenda. The first three chapters contain a fascinating array of self-referential sentences and paragraphs, and even an entire hilarious story in that mode. Just a few from the hundreds:

If I had finished this sentence.

This is not a complete. Sentence. This either.

This prophecy will come true.

This sentence every third, but it still comprehensible.

You have, of course, just begun reading this sentence that you have just finished reading.

This analogy is like lifting yourself by your own bootstraps. This line from Shakespeare has delusions of grandeur.

On a more mundane level, here are some self-referential linguistic terms (most of them forced into the mold); I compiled the list back in 1970 when I should have been taking lecture notes. Noun, adjectival, or verbalized as seemed appropriate:

pherosis, apocop, asphiration, issimilation, tefoicink (foiceless), distimilation, epenethesis, frozen metaphor (and, conversely, molten metaphor), gemmination, Germanikh khonsonans shift, haplogy, labiogwelarize, lagsing, metasethis (or pertumation), palachalize, plurals, mprenasalize, eprothesis, reduduplication, rhotaciration, sivilanths, sfiranthization, syncpe, teensyng (some linguists argue a tense/lax distinction in vowels makes sense in English where long/short does not), umlaut, gvelarize, o vocative!, voizing, vowel r'ducsh'n

Gnomes

The page of self-referentials had a few other miscellaneous observations. Sources unknown, but I suspect some came from my favorite professor, former WW contributor Charles E. Elliott:

Los Angeles is 18th magnitude as seen from Mars.
 June is the subproforepreantepenultimate month of the year.
 [Anything before pre is just imagination]
 Santa Claus has charismas.
 The cost of copying no pages is xero.
 Paradigms 20¢ (plus 6% syntax).

Metamagical Themas

Metamagical Themas deserves mention for more than its self-referential sentences, which make up less than a tenth of the book. Like its Pulitzer-Prize-winning predecessor, Gödel, Escher, Bach, this is one of the most enjoyable and stimulating books I have ever read. The self-referential sentences of the first chapters are great fun, but they also tie into serious topics. The necessity of self-referentiality in intelligence, for example, and the self-reproduction of sentences (sentences and ideas which impel their own spread, like 'This book is true and if you don't believe it you'll go to Hell'). Even the annotated bibliography is fascinating reading.

Two topics that may be of particular interest to WW readers:

Nonsense, and what is it? He cites some excellent nonsense, and some prose and poetry, presumably intended as serious, that is indistinguishable from nonsense. I am reminded of Temple Porter's National Philosophy Tests in the 1968 WW--real and counterfeit quotations from Aristotle, Plato, Kant and other philosophers, with the reader challenged to tell the difference.

'Variations on a Theme as the Crux of Creativity', with typo-

graphy as one of the fields from which he draws examples. It might seem simple to define the letter A, but he shows examples from various typefaces that could probably falsify anything you came up with. Yet people can still recognize them all as As; how do they do it? This serves as an entry point into the whole question of artificial intelligence. It also serves as an entry point into 'ambigrams', what Scott Kim calls 'inversions', one of the most artistic forms of word play. An example is the frontispiece, which consists of the five lines 'Meta/Magical/Themas/by Douglas R./Hofstadter written so as to be bilaterally symmetrical. Marvelous.

An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics

One of the things that brought me into linguistics was the resemblance of some of its activities to puzzle-solving: working out a phonological system from a mass of raw phonetic data, for example. A nice example is a toy language from my Linguistics 306 class, invented by Kenneth Pike in his book Language, and accessible to non-linguists, too. Try it:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1. los | it is smoke |
| 2. mif | it is a ball |
| 3. kap | they are eyes |
| 4. losmif | the ball is smoking |
| 5. miflos | the smoke is rolling |
| 6. mifmif | the ball is rolling |
| 7. mifmiflos | the smoke is rolling in round puffs |
| 8. mifmifkap | he is rolling his eyes around
the eyes are rolling around |
| 9. losmifkap | his eyes roam darkly |
| 10. mifkaplos | the smoke is trying to escape
the smoke looks around |
| 11. kapmifmif | I can see the ball rolling |
| 12. mifkapkap | he is looking around |
| 13. losloskap | his eyes are smoldering menacingly |
| 14. kapmiflos | |
| 15. kapkapkap | |

Problems: Describe the grammar of this language. Translate 14 and 15 into English. (Answers are given in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.)

Czech it out

Another thing that drew me to linguistics was interest in foreign languages. I remember that in high school I drew up a list of the numbers from one to ten in scores of languages. So I enjoyed Harry Partridge's Czech rhyming and stuttering sentences:

- Piš: Víš, když bdíš, zříš myš spíš výš, níž již tíž (you know, if you watch you see a mouse the higher the lower [its] weight). Literally 'rather higher, lower already the weight'.
 Sám Vám tam dám rám (I myself will give you the frame there).
 Šest cest měst čest jest (it is an honor to sweep six streets).
 Kuli kuli kuli (the coolies forged bullets).

Žid leží dle židle (the Jew reclines beside the chair).

Abbr.

One of the things that brought me into computer programming was the resemblance of some of its activities to puzzle-solving. But there are significant differences from linguistics. Pays better, for one thing. And you have a better chance of working at IBM, where you get to see the conferences: discussions on IBM's world-wide internal network, to which anyone may contribute, on any arguably business-related topic that interests at least two people. Sometimes the discussion gets positively logological, as when people got onto the topic of 'This page intentionally left blank' pages in manuals. The sentence falsifies itself; how should it be done right? 'This page intentionally not left blank' is correct, but somehow it misses the point.

Abbreviations, one of my minor logological interests, find a natural home here. Trudy Donovan wrote in NITPICK FORUM: 'I once had occasion to call a colleague and ask, "Did the DOS ITF PLM TNL get to PID?" Then I said, "My God, did you hear what I just said?" to which she replied, "Even worse, I understood it."'

And in a communal grump about excessive abbreviations in IBM (one thread of the WHYOHWHY FORUM discussion), someone proposed 'VRNA' as the 'best' one:

VRNA = VTAM RSCS Network Application
 VTAM = Virtual Telecommunications Access Method
 RSCS = Remote Spooling Communications Subsystem
 SPOOL = Simultaneous Peripheral Operations On-Line

Three levels deep, with VTAM on the side. Write everything out and it's pretty impressive. 'Spool', by the way, is one of the most successful acronyms; it's always lower-case, and most people forget that it started as an acronym at all.

I've long hoped for an attested four-level abbreviation, but since I know of only five three-level ones, I may have a longer wait ahead of me. MUG (with M = MUMPS (with first M = MGH)) has already appeared in WW. Others: M1CF = MICS Information Center Facility, M1CS = MVS integrated Control System, MVS = Multiple Virtual Storage. GOCB = GTMOSI OSD Control Block, OSD = OSI Session Driver, OSI = Open Systems Interconnection (and GTMOSI = General Teleprocessing Monitor for Open Systems Interconnection, so we get a double dose of OSI).

My favorite, though, is ARM = ACRE RETAIN/370 Merge, ACRE = APAR Control Remote Entry, APAR = Authorized Problem Analysis Report. All three levels are acronyms, not just abbreviations, with a fourth (RETAIN = REremote Technical Assistance Information Network) as a bonus.

All this is, of course, ignoring recursive acronyms, which have an infinity of levels. Computer hackers love recursion, so it's not surprising that their jargon includes examples. Their favorite edit-

ing program, EMACS, built using an impossibly obscure language called TECO, seems particularly prone to spawning them. It started as Editing Macros And Computing System, but some people reinterpret it as EMACS Makes All Computing Simple. Derivative editors include EINE (EINE is not EMACS), ZWEI (ZWEI Was EINE Initially), and MINCE (MINCE Is Not Complete EMACS). The latter was implemented in TINT (TINT Is Not TECO). EMACS's original author, Richard M. Stallman, has also created a derivative called GnuMACS, for use with a clone of the UNIX operating system that is called GNU (GNU's Not UNIX).

How to Conjugate Nouns

Conjugations of the form 'I steal the keel, I stole the coal, I have stolen the colon' have appeared in WW before, and doubtless in many other places as well. Inspired by a set in Verbatim, IBMer Mike Anglin came up with a batch and began using them as sign-offs. Here's a selection, in approximately ascending order of outrageousness:

I tear the hair; I tore the whore; I have torn the horn.
 I see the sea; I saw the saw; I have seen the scene.
 I draw the law; I drew the loo; I have drawn the lawn.
 I throw the bow; I threw the boo; I have thrown the bone.
 I sink the mink; I sank the manque; I have sunk the monk.
 I choose the booze; I chose the bows; I have chosen the bosun.
 I weave the leaves; I wove the loaves; I have woven the love-ins.
 I forsake the cake; I forsook the cook; I have forsaken the whole mess.

And now variations on the variations:

I break the brick; I broke the brake; I have broken the bracken.
 I shirr the burr; I share the bare; I have shorn the born.
 I scare for the mare; I score for the more; I have scorn for the morn.
 I am the Ma'am; you are the Mr.; she is the Ms.
 I began the Begin the Beguine.

Postscript: Solemnly, Marcus conjugated the verbs: 'I now pronounce you preterite and pluperfect.'

Brenner Kickshaws

Another IBMer, Norman Brenner, has been accumulating a file of word snippets, called WORDS JOT, for years: sort of an on-line commonplace book. Here are a few selections from it:

Ambiguous: Entrance to this movie is restricted to persons under 17. An author is a fool who does not write for an audience.

Caligula wasted no time in gathering troops to fight the German invasion.

Hypercorrection: 'BEST OFTER' on car window.

Irish turkey = corned beef and cabbage. Welsh rabbit = melted cheese sandwich.

'We hasten the young boy off my garage path to show which edge owls could view.' This contains every phoneme of a

General American dialect exactly once, and is used to test the clarity of radio transmissions. [Several schwas, but otherwise it seems to be as advertised.]

The reduplicative new word 'househusband' should be replaced by 'housechurl' or 'cotquean'.

Types of cloth or garment named after their places of origin: afghan, baldachin, damask, denim, fustian, gauze, jeans, jersey, muslin, nankeen, sleazy, suede, tawdry, tweed.

Parallel evolution: 'kind' and 'gentle' as adjectives meaning approximately the same thing. But both derive from words meaning a grouping or classification: the nouns 'kind' and 'genus'. (They are in fact distant cousins, as are 'kin' and 'king' and 'genial' and 'genital'.) Similarly, English 'habit' and Spanish 'costumbre'. Divergent evolution: 'general' and 'special' from 'genus' and 'species'.

The Roman general Tacitus literally could not 'call a spade a spade'--he refers to the legionary's all-purpose digging tool as 'per quae terra egeritur' = 'that by which the earth is turned'.

The Spanish phrase 'de donde' = 'from where' contains the Latin particle 'de' used in three places.

'Ouate de phoque' (allegedly 'Seal Blubber', a Quebecois novel about the sealing industry, reported by P. Salus).

Liberté, égalité, fraternité (French revolutionaries). Métro, boulot, dodo ('Subway, job, sleep'--Parisians' reply).

What language do robots speak? Servo-creation.

What if a company buys back 100% of its stock? Does it own itself?

A class was shown films of ex-New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia speaking to crowds, but without the sound, and the class had to guess what language he was using. They correctly guessed that when he moved his hands at the wrist, he was speaking English, and when he swung his hands from the shoulder, it was Italian. But they could not guess what language he was using when he bent his arms from the elbow. It was Yiddish.

'Forse che si, forse che no' ('maybe yes, maybe no') is the motto on the coat of arms of the Gonzaga family, Dukes of Mantua.

Other tidbits gleaned from the IBM conferences:

There were (probably apocryphal) rumors in early 1988 of an impending merger between Fairchild and Honeywell that fell through because of fears that the merged company would become known as Farewell-Honeychild. The merger of Stop & Shop and A & P failed for a similar reason.

Is an eight-ounce glass containing four ounces of water half-full or half-empty? Answer: It's half-full on partly sunny days.

IBM: Institute of Binary Magic. It's Bloody Marvelous. It Breaks Monthly. International Brotherhood of Magicians. It's Better Manually.

What's the difference between a window? The cleaner you wipe it, it gets.

Jabbering

Faith Eckler's experimental logology last issue, trying to figure out the principles behind her typewriter's spelling checker, reminds me that IBM has a checker called PROOF with a much bigger vocabulary. If it does not recognize a word, it gives a list of up to six possible 'correct' words; you can select one and have it replace the one in the text. This does not always work, however. David Silverman (no relation to the original Kickshaws editor) used it and came up with:

Teas broiling, and the silty tomes
Did gyrate and gamble in the wave;
All misery were the boroughs,
And the mime rashes outraged.

'Beware the Jabberer, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jujitsu bird, and shun
The furious Bantering!'

He took his voracity sword in hand:
Long time the maximal foe he sought--
So rested he by the Tom-Tom tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in Irish thought he stood,
The Jabberer, with eyes of flame,
Came waffling through the Tulsa wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The voracity blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went glamoring back.

'And hats thou slain the Jabberer!
Come to my arms, my bleakish boy!
O farmhouse day! Calculi! Canary!
He chortled in his joy.

Teas broiling, and the silty tomes
Did gyrate and gamble in the wave;
All misery were the boroughs,
And the mime rashes outraged.

Now it makes sense, of course, but the rhyme suffers. Note that 'chortled' survives, but 'galumph' (which is also in 9C) does not. Reminiscent of the OuLiPo's experiments in word-substitution, eh?

From an append by Julian Thomas: 'The best one I've seen from PROOF is a suggested spelling of 'stargaze' for 'strategize'--how often it's true!'

The Poet's Corner

What is unusual about this verse, which Martin Gardner found in Carolyn Wells's collection of light verse, Idle Idyls?

The year had gloomily begun
 For Willie Weeks, a poor man's son.
 He was beset with bill and dun,
 And he had very little mon'.
 'This cash,' said he, 'won't pay my dues,
 I've nothing here but ones and twos.'
 A bright thought struck him, and he said:
 'The rich Miss Goldrocks I will wed.'
 But when he paid his court to her,
 She lisped, but firmly said: 'No, thir.'
 'Alas,' said he, 'then I must die!
 Although hereafter I may fry.'
 They found his gloves, and coat, and hat.
 The Coroner upon them sat.

Another logological verse, which I found in The Book of Nonsense, edited by Paul Jennings (Ballantine, 1980), is James Michie's 'Out Of A Hot Lapis Lazuli Sky, by Pia Holst'. It begins:

PILOT HAS CRASHED, HITS PALO ALTO.
 SHIP TAIL HOPS MILE, DIGS STREETWIDE PIT.
 SHOAL OF DEAD BODIES! headline screamed.
 I, Osip, survived. Condemned to phials
 Of Pathosil and to palish tea...

The poem is 'written in hospital, and containing more than one anagram on that word.'

From AAAA to ZZZZ

The 4-set project (see WW May 1983), finding words containing all possible sets of four letters, proceeds slowly. The list is so complete that even outlandish science-fiction words like 'Ittekill-ykx' often add nothing new. I recently filled in JQQZ, though, with the language group Quiché-Tzutujil-Cakchiquel from the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The list of 23571 sets begins AAAA anabata, AAAB abaca, AAAC abaca, AAAD alada, AAAE azalea, AAAF afara. Guess how far down the list one must go to find a set that is not in NI.

F. Middle Last

Another list, and one that I've been accumulating for decades, is one of people who turn their first names into initials and use their middle names. I have examples for all initials but X; I didn't keep sources, but appropriate Who's Whos should make it possible to recover most. Names marked with an asterisk belong to a

sublist, science fiction and fantasy authors.

- A Bertram Chandler*, Valé Vins (number theorist), Philip Randolph (labor leader)
- B Rodney Bertram (agronomist), Carroll Reece (Tennessee senator, chairman of the Reece Committee)
- C Northcote Parkinson, Wright Mills
- D Ewen Cameron (Albany doctor, NY Times Oct 9 1966), Howard Doane (Farm Management Service)
- E Power Biggs (organist), Phillips Oppenheim, Everett Evans*, Hoffman Price*
- F Scott Fitzgerald
- G Bromley Oxnam (Methodist bishop), MacDonald Wallis*
- H Allen Smith, Rider Haggard*, Beam Piper*
- I Toguri D'Aquino (Tokyo Rose), Bernard Cohn (educator-writer), Rice Pereira (painter)
- J Edgar Hoover, Paul Getty
- K Martin Carlson* (SF fan), Roald Bergethon (college president)
- L Frank Baum*, Sheridan LeFanu*, Ron Hubbard*, Sprague DeCamp*
- M Nell Andrews (lawyer), Lelyn Branin (educator-writer), James Arachtingi (Wall Street analyst)
- N Bunker Hunt (son of H.L.), Richard Nash (author), Spencer Barnes (foreign service officer)
- O Roy Chalk, Wayne Robbins (hectomillionaire), Kenneth Bates (educator)
- P Schuyler Miller*, Dempsey Tabler (played Tarzan)
- Q Forrest Walker (economist), Claudius Quadrigarius and Aelius Tubero (annalists of Rome)
- R Buckminster Fuller, Sargent Shriver, DeWitt Miller*
- S Fowler Wright*, Burton Heath (winner of 1940 Pulitzer for reporting)
- T O'Connor Sloan*, Stanhope Sprigg*, Bruce Yerke*, Everett Hare (editor)
- U Alexis Johnson (US ambassador to Japan)
- V Gordon Childe (anthropologist), Blasco Ibanez (author)
- W Somerset Maugham, Paul Cook*, Anders Drake*
- X
- Y Zeev Shek (Israeli journalist), Scott Matsumoto (on Hiroshima A-Bomb Casualty Commission)
- Z Vanessa Helder (painter), Harry Gutstein (Haggadah translator), William Birnbaum (University of Washington math professor)

While scanning a Who's Who in America for names, I found some other names with interesting structures: J. Houston M. Clinch, Elbert Benton Op'tEynde Borgheroff, and Mildred V.M. Brant Bayer.

Uu!

As the genesis for another list, I quote verbatim an end-of-page filler from American Speech 61 [1986] 119:

Timothy Perper (AS 60 [1985] 279-280) lists six words in English with two u's (continuum, duumvirate, individuum, menstruum, residuum, and vacuum), and discounts a seventh lituus because 'it

doesn't really seem to be an English word.' In fact, there are at least twenty-six -uu- words in the Merriam-Webster unabridged. In addition to Perper's words, these are Carduus, duumvir, duumviral, Equus, intermenstruum, (lituus), mutuuum, muu muu, obliquus, praecipuum, premenstruum, semicontinuum, Smectymnuus, squush, suum, triduum, Uuchathon, vacuumize, Weltanschauung, and zuurveldt.

[The unabridged in question is N12, as the presence of 'Uuchathon' testifies. It also contains 'vacuum-packed' and 'squushy'. Challenge: how many can you add by going to N13? 'Vacuum-clean' and 'vacuum-tube [voltmeter]', for starters. If Perper didn't consider 'lituus' English, just because it's a name for an object of Roman antiquity, he probably didn't accept everything on the longer list. Presumably he didn't know 'lituus' is also a mathematical term for a type of spiral.]

Words to Live By

Nisi defectum haud reficiendum.