In the fifth century B.C., Empedocles of Acragas, the Greek philosopher, proclaimed that the universe is composed of four primal elements: fire, air, water, and earth. While not, perhaps, the most scientific descriptive cosmology, this doctrine nevertheless dominated Western philosophical thought for twenty-one hundred years and is today still favorably regarded by born-again astrologists. But it did not fully satisfy Aristotle, who, writing a century later, explained that while these four material elements could define all earthly substances, a fifth immaterial element must define all heavenly phenomena. He called this element pempteousia, or FIFTH BEING.

Nearly two millennia later, the medieval philosophers, busy transmuting lead into gold and discovering the elixir of life, sought to translate this expression into Latin. But Latin has no present participle meaning BEING. Fortunately, Cicero had long ago solved this problem by taking the existing Latin infinitive esse—an almost exact counterpart to einai, the Greek infinitive governing ousia—and extrapolating from it the hypothetical Latin present participle base essent—to create the neologism essentia, which corresponds to the Greek ousia. Some fifteen hundred years later, the medieval philosophers prefaced this word with the Latin quinta, FIFTH, an ordinal number equivalent to the Greek pempte, thereby establishing the medieval Latin phrase quinta essentia; and these two words eventually coalesced and passed into English as QUINTESSENCE. In this linguistic process, the medieval philosophers had unearthed, seemingly without knowing it, a means of transmuting the lead of a dead language into the gold elixir of living discourse.

Philologically, this occurrence in which the Greek pempteousia was translated, element by element, into the Latin quinta essentia is known as a loan translation or calque, a word derived from the French calque, meaning 'an imitation or tracing' (one language is imitating or tracing the elements of another language into its own elements). The French calque, in turn, is fashioned from the French verb calquer 'to trace or copy,' which is derived from the Italian verb calcare 'to trample,' the earlier Latin verb calcare 'to tread or trample, and ultimately, for our purposes, the Latin noun caix 'heel,' as that part of the foot that does the trampling. As such, calques may very well be the philosopher's stone of discourse, the elixir or mother's milk of living language, an archeology of knowledge, transmuting the violent trampling of translation into the intercourse of loan.
Much can be discovered in this archeology. The ancient Romans, as well as the ancient Greeks, have provided English with a potpourri of picturesque calques. Even at the very dawn of Roman culture, as a Tiberine she-wolf (Acca Larentia?) suckled Romulus and Remus, some inhabitant of the Italic peninsula may have looked up to the sky one moonless night and fancied that faintly luminous band of stars overarching the heavens to be a road or way of milk, or via lactea, a phrase which was translated into Middle English as melky waye (Chaucer) and thence MILKY WAY, ultimately passing into Modern English where it became a candy bar. Or instead, I would tender, the Romans may have partially translated their via lactea from Eratosthenes' kyklos galaxias 'circle of milk,' from which we derive our GALAXY, now a generic term for the Milky Way, though formerly our specific term; and kyklos galaxias may further be the source of what would then prove to be our obsolete English calque, LACTEOUS CIRCLE. In any case, the Latin lac is cognate with the Greek gala and the English MILK, all three words having evolved from a common prehistoric Indo-European base melan- 'to stroke, to rub off, to milk,' whence we derive such modern terms as LACTOSE, LACTEAL, GALACTOSE, GALACTOSEMIA, MILCH, MILCHING, and LETTUCE.

But the Romans and Greeks are by no means our sole legators of calques. In 1891, Friedrich Nietzsche completed Also sprach Zarathustra in which he elaborated upon his conception of the Übermensch, that rationally superior person who spurns conventional Christian "herd morality" and transmutes himself, like a triumphant alchemist, so as to fully realize human potential and creative mastery. Yet in a further transmutation, Nietzsche's Übermensch is popularly misconceived as a man of extraordinary physical strength with a juggernaut-like "will to power" over others. And to culminate the misconception, twelve years after Zarathustra George Bernard Shaw, in attempting to popularize and recast Nietzsche's philosophy, took the task of translating Übermensch into English. But, evidently, he did not find the native rendering of OVERMAN or BEYOND MAN sufficently mellifluous and instead translated the first element über into its Latin equivalent, creating for his new play and all posterity that immortal, hybrid calque...SUPERMAN!

Faster than a speeding bullet!
More powerful than a locomotive!
Able to leap tall buildings at a single bound!
Look! Up in the sky!
It's a bird!
It's a plane!
It's Übermensch!

Yes, it's Übermensch, strange visitor from another philosophaster. Yet anyone who has ever had the pleasure of listening to that scholarly radio serial of the 1940s featuring Bud Collyer or of watching that intellectual television series of the 1950s starring George Reeves (not to be confused with that interloper of late, Christopher Reeve, of no relation) could not help but be struck by the discrepancy between the relatively tame words of this announcer and the preternatural, quasi-omnipotent feats that this star character could (and did) perform. TV commentators do little more than raise tremendous -- all of whose misunderstood -- to something epic and hyperbolic.

But few can agree that it was a period of time which the atom of the Jews, the scapegoat, which we all carry away the sins of the world. But was it not the Hebrew or Aramaic LOFEH/LOPEH that was the source of the word CácK, a cacque of the old Testament, the word for a scapegoat.

An informally assimilation of the atomic structure of the scapegoat, which we find ourselves looking at, is somewhat of a disheartening aspect. For, evidently, he did not find the native rendering of OVERMAN or BEYOND MAN sufficiently mellifluous and instead translated the first element über into its Latin equivalent, creating for his new play and all posterity that immortal, hybrid calque...SUPERMAN!

Faster than a speeding bullet!
More powerful than a locomotive!
Able to leap tall buildings at a single bound!
Look! Up in the sky!
It's a bird!
It's a plane!
It's Übermensch!

Yes, it's Übermensch, strange visitor from another philosophaster. Yet anyone who has ever had the pleasure of listening to that scholarly radio serial of the 1940s featuring Bud Collyer or of watching that intellectual television series of the 1950s starring George Reeves (not to be confused with that interloper of late, Christopher Reeve, of no relation) could not help but be struck by the discrepancy between the relatively tame words of this announcer and the preternatural, quasi-omnipotent feats that this star character could (and did) perform. TV commentators do little more than raise tremendous -- all of whose misunderstood -- to something epic and hyperbolic.

But few can agree that it was a period of time which the atom of the Jews, the scapegoat, which we all carry away the sins of the world. But was it not the Hebrew or Aramaic LOFEH/LOPEH that was the source of the word CACK, a cacque of the old Testament, the word for a scapegoat.

An informally assimilation of the atomic structure of the scapegoat, which we find ourselves looking at, is somewhat of a disheartening aspect. For, evidently, he did not find the native rendering of OVERMAN or BEYOND MAN sufficiently mellifluous and instead translated the first element über into its Latin equivalent, creating for his new play and all posterity that immortal, hybrid calque...SUPERMAN!

Faster than a speeding bullet!
More powerful than a locomotive!
Able to leap tall buildings at a single bound!
Look! Up in the sky!
It's a bird!
It's a plane!
It's Ubermensch!
cient Romans, with a pot­
town of Roman:

ientally luminous

at some

in the middle English

sinaly translated their

escalas may

the Milky

galaxies may

our obsolete

Latin lac is

three words

base melg-

such modern

MIA, MILCH,
single legato-

sprach Zara-

ning the Uber-

trium phant

bermen sch is

nd to cu Imi-

George Ber-

phil-

But few calques have varied so preposterously in so short a period of time. Religious calques, for example, have remained rel-

atively stable over the millennia, many of them deriving from the Hebrew or Aramaic language, the former the language of the Old Testament, the latter the language spoken when Christ lived.

An informative religious calque is SCAPEGOAT. Though not now generally associated with anything religious, it does in fact epit-
omize the atonement of Yom Kippur in which Aaron, the high priest of the Jews, confessed the sins of his people upon the head of a goat, which was then allowed to "escape" into the wilderness, car-

rying away those sins.

But the goat...shall be presented alive before the

LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him

go for a scapegoat into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:10).

SCAPEGOAT actually encompasses two calques and is an example of those words which I call doublecalques (with "double" pronounced doo'-'blih, as in the French manner). SCAPEGOAT was coined by

William Tyndale for his 1530 translation of the Pentateuch as a calque of the Late Latin (Vulgate) caper emissarius 'emissary goat,' itself a calque of the Hebrew 'azazel, the name of a desert demon

which, etymologically, was understood as 'ez azzel 'goat that leaves' -- whence EMISSARY GOAT, whence SCAPEGOAT, whence any person, place, or thing who bears the blame for others.

A more complex doublecalque is HOLY GHOST. This phrase is de-

rived from the Middle English halig gost, which itself is derived from the Old English halig gast -- elements which can be traced, respectively, to the Indo-European kailo- 'whole, uninjured' and gheis-, an uncertain element expressing awe or fright. However, in ancient Hebrew, a Hamito-Semitic language, ruah ha-godesh meant

HOLY SPIRIT, a phrase which was later translated into the Greek pneuma hagion and thence the Latin spiritus sanctus. But not un-

til the Roman missionaries brought spiritus sanctus to the British

Isles in the latter half of the first millennium, did the English combine halig with gost to form a coherent phrase. Thus, while

halig gost is a doublecalque of spiritus sanctus and pneuma hagion, and spiritus sanctus is a doublecalque of pneuma hagion and ruah

ha-godesh, I christen HOLY GHOST a multiple doublecalque. (It

has been suggested that HOLY GHOST be called a triplecalque; how-

ever, such a neologism would needlessly compound the terminology.)
In contemplating multiple doublecalques, we must not overlook parallel doublecalques. GROUNDHOG, for example, is in all probability a calque of the Dutch aardvark, which dissects into aarde 'ground, earth' and vark 'hog, pig.' But, interestingly, a second calque representing an entirely different animal, the South African anteater (Orycteropus afer), is also translated from these same Dutch elements, though in this context it is reconstructed from its alternative English counterparts, EARTH and PIG. So GROUNDHOG and EARTH PIG are parallel doublecalques of the Dutch aardvark, which not incidentally yields, through its seventeenth-century offspring language, Afrikaans, our more learned term for the earth-pig anteater, AARDVARK.

But few calques have the vainglory of being doublecalques. In fact, a substantial number of them can hardly be called calques at all. X-RAY, for example, is a partial rendering of Wilhelm Roentgen’s X-strahl, in which the German Strahl translates into the English RAY, but the X, being an international algebraic symbol for the unknown, remains unchanged. ANTINOVEL, likewise, is an incomplete translation of Jean-Paul Sartre’s antiroman (though the French term was used at least as early as 1627 by Charles Sorel) in which the French roman is rendered by the English NOVEL, but the anti remains unchanged. Such words, then, in which at least one major element is not translated from the original I designate as demicalques. And certain of these words, for example TALL OIL, which is a demicalque of the German Talöl, which itself is a demi-calque of the Swedish talolja are, in fact, doubledemicalques.

But an even more intriguing class of calques — my favorite — is that in which at least one major element is mistranslated from the original. I call these calques cathachresticalques from the Greek-derived rhetorical term catharchesis, which means, in part, an incorrect use of a word, either from a misinterpretation of its etymology or a folk etymology.

SCAPEGOAT, as we have seen, is an example of a doublecalque, but it is also a cathachresticalque insofar as the Late Latin caper emissarius (of which SCAPEGOAT is Tyndale’s English translation) is, in fact, a mistranslation of the Hebrew proper name ‘azazel. And the Greek tragos apopompaios ‘goat sent out’ of the Septuagint is also a cathachresticalque of ‘azazel. So SCAPEGOAT and tragos apopompaios are, in reality, parallel doublecathachresticalques of the Hebrew ‘azazel.

But there are more colorful cathachresticalques reaching into the English language. At about the time the Hebrews were completing the Torah, the Greeks were coining the phrase ourion oon ‘wind egg’ to refer to certain eggs which do not hatch, presumably because they are conceived by the wind. Subsequently, this phrase was translated into Latin as ovum urinum, with the same meaning. But somewhere along the way, the Latin urinum ‘wind’ became confused with the Latin urinae ‘urine.’ So what began, etymologically, in Greek as a wind egg was transmuted, in Latin, into a urine egg. Moreover, in Old English the word for urine was adela, which contracted to adel in Middle English; and the old English word for egg became pronounced in Middle English again, a so.
for egg became, in one of its forms, eye in Middle English (pronounced in two syllables). So the compound *adel-eye* emerged in Middle English, of which the eye later dropped out yielding, once again, a solitary Middle English *adel*. And this word passed into Modern English as *ADDLE*.

So the next time you call someone *ADDLEBRAINED* or *ADDLEPATED*, smile to yourself, for you are really saying far more about that person than that person might ever suspect. And smile again, for you're articulating an alchemical calque, that quintessence of loan which transmutes material as heavy as lead and as light as the wind into the golden immaterial elixir of living language.

**FAMILY WORDS**

In his $6.95 paperback, *Family Words* (Addison-Wesley, 1988), Paul Dickson explores a linguistic byway that has attracted little previous attention: words coined within a family group and only used among its members. He claims "it is all but impossible to find a family that does not have at least one family word," suggesting that the corpus of such words may well exceed unabridged dictionaries in size (even assuming many inadvertent duplications among the 50 million families in this country). By quizzing friends and relatives, and appealing for examples on radio talk shows, Dickson has collected more than three thousand, of which perhaps one-third appear in this book.

These examples give the zany flavor of what he has found:

- **TOAD CLOTH**, a dishrag that has gotten too wet to use
- **OLD MAIDS**, unpopped kernels of popcorn
- **HOMESTEAD**, to stop your car and wait for a parking spot to be created
- **FLINKUS**, an unidentifiable object left in the garage by the former owner of your house
- **CLUNK-WAA**, a child falling out of bed in the middle of the night
- **SNICK**, a droplet of saliva expelled while talking
- **HA-HAS**, eyeglasses (from the sound made when you breathe on them for cleaning)
- **GHOST POO**, white styrofoam packing pieces
- **OIK**, the webbed space between two fingers

If you don't find this book delightful, you are really hard to please!