

GYPSY HOBBY GRY

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As I dismounted from my mule in the courtyard in front of the low two-storeyed gray-stone farmhouse, the windowless door opened and out stepped a besmoked Dr. Wombat. Greeting me and my mule with equal cordiality, he ushered the latter into a spacious room on the ground floor and me into a cozy parlor on the second where Mlle. de Carabas was roasting chestnuts. Soon we were all seated before the grateful fire, drinking eggnog, and exchanging news. The masfa was about twenty miles inside Spain from Port d'Oo.

"Louis XIV sure was wrong!" I exclaimed. "He said there were no longer any Pyrenees."

"Louis XIV was always wrong," rejoined The Wombat. "That is one of the many reasons that France is not only no longer a great power, but is also beset with almost insoluble problems."

"Like everyone," purred Mlle. de Carabas.

"My mule had a hard time climbing the Spanish slope," I continued.

"So she told me," replied The Wombat. "But you can find out for yourself. Do take this plate of figs down to her; Diane will go down with you and serve as interpreter. In the meantime, I will read this fascinating article by Mr. George H. Scheetz about words ending in -gry in the November 1989 *Word Ways* which you have so kindly brought me."

Anyone who has watched a mule, an ass, or a donkey, if you will, eat figs off a silver platter will not find it hard to believe that a certain Classical philosopher died of laughter witnessing such goings-on. Even Mlle. de Carabas could have been mistaken for the Cheshire Cat while my mule was relishing her fruit and at the same time telling me, through Mlle. de Carabas, of her imminent retirement, which she planned to devote to getting the vote for all jackasses and congeners, saying the most of them were old enough to vote and certainly smarter than most people who did.

It was therefore in high but tranquil spirits that we repaired to the second floor on being summoned by The Wombat beating his alpenstock on the floor (or ceiling, depending on your orientation).

"Splendid article!" he exclaimed. "We all, boongry maugry, owe thanks to Mr. Scheetz for his assiduity in setting forth the anamnesis of this problem, but like everyone who appreciates a good job of work I also bring along with my appreciation a certain apport,

as it were, of my own."

"And that is...?" quoth I in keen expectation.

"To begin with, this," replied The Wombat, pointing to the word JAGRY on page 200. "JAGRY is a place in the Caucasus, almost on the Persian frontier. Mr. Scheetz failed to find it because it is spelled DZHAGRY in modern editions of the Times Atlas, but it can be found under JAGRY in the 11th edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. To continue," said he, indicating Mr. Scheetz's list of words on pages 201-203, "I deny that compounds or variant spellings of -gry words are independent items. This would eliminate, or rather reassign to a subordinate heading, the items numbered

07,09,11,13,14,17,19,20,22,25,27,28,30,32,36,38,39,41,44,45,48,49,51.

This leaves 28 actual -gry words, to which I have already added JAGRY. I can furthermore add the following:

AGRY DAGH (Mount Agry), the Turkish name for Mount Ararat.

This is a transliteration from the Turkish as written in Arabic script (11th Britannica)

BADAGRY, place name in Nigeria (11th Britannica)

COGRY, place name in Great Britain (BBC Pronouncing Dictionary of English Names)

GAGRY, place name on the Black Sea in the Caucasus (11th Britannica)

LANGRY, place name on Sakhalin Island (Times Atlas)

MENAGRY, a version of "managery" (OED)

MESSAGRY, (1a) office or function of a messenger, (1b) performance of a message or errand, (2a) body of messengers (all OED)

PODAGRY, a variant of "podagra", the dodder in plants (OED)

SCAVENGRY, found in a 1715 quote under "scavengery" (OED)

SEAGRY, a place and lake name in Wiltshire, England (11th Britannica)

TINGRY, a place name in France, occurring in the title of the Princesse de Tingry, the greatest heiress in France at the time of her marriage to her cousin in 1661 (11th Britannica)

YMAGRY, variant of "imagery" (OED)

"There are, there must be, many more," continued The Wombat. "I had a whole little pile of slips on my desk; a bird came to the window to sing at me; I opened the window to hear his plaint; the wind swept my pile away. One I remember was PELICANRY, a place where pelicans breed, not a -gry word but a -ry word."

"We must not forget that the suffix -ry/-ery, like the suffix -dom, is alive in English. We find it in JEWRY; we can use it in HOGRY, viz., 'All HOGRY is grateful to JEWRY for not eating pork.' Of course, we also have the word HOGGERY 'a place where hogs are raised.' We may even have BINTURONGRY 'the community of binturongs' and PARTRIDGRY 'all partridges taken together,' just as we may have HOGDOM, BINTURONGDOM, PARTRIDGEDOM. So here's a tenth-year-of-the-decade toast to DOGRY, HOGRY, FROGRY, GOLLY-WOGRY, POLLYWOGRY, PYGARGRY, NAGRY, BUGRY, PLUGRY, CYBORGRY, WOBEGONGRY, QUAAUGRY, THUGRY..."

Luckily The Wombat abstains from strong drink, else his repeated

potations might have drawn a spiritous veil over his agile brain.

"Bravo, bravissimo! I hereby dub thee Sir Gryot-on-His-Hobby Gry!" shouted I.

"Nay, dear boy, I want no, need no title other than The Wombat. Nor have I exhausted the subject of -gry; but I toss the torch to other hands, leaving unilluminated the division of -gry words among the parts of speech; the strange but verisimilitudinous, nay, the veracious and veritable relationship of ULGRY to Russian VER-BLYUD 'camel'; the White UGRY of history; the IGRY SLOV among the Slavs; the..."

"Why are you depriving us of these things?"

"Others can find them and reap the glory, the Ph.D.s; we Wombats do not want to hog everything. And indeed everything is possible now that the Wall has fallen, the Pineapple is in the refrigerator, the Danube of Thought has debouched into the Black Sea of oblivion, the Hunchback has become The Man of The Decade, the..."

Again I felt it necessary to interrupt my furry fere. "Let us play a game of ombre, hombre," said I.

Why not, forsooth.

And a Happy New Year to all!

LANDERS REDIVIVUS

The May 1989 Word Ways reported that columnist Ann Landers swore off word-games after being inundated with -GRY words: "a hoax designed to provoke hours of useless brain-racking... I have had enough of word games for awhile". In December 1989 a Grandview Michigan reader asked her to survey her readership for US place names longer than SOUTH WILLIAMS-PORT PENNSYLVANIA or NORTH MYRTLE BEACH SOUTH CAROLINA. Her January 7, 1990 column reported the results: dozens of examples of 30 or more letters, with the champions being the 36-letter specimens HILLSBOROUGH LOWER VILLAGE NEW HAMPSHIRE and HILLSBOROUGH UPPER VILLAGE NEW HAMPSHIRE. She reports being "crosseyed from the mail, and there's a ton I haven't opened."

Word Ways readers are encouraged to submit ideas for worthwhile logological investigations that Ann Landers's vast audience could readily research, such as examples of personal names in which the first name is a transposal of the last name, or who legally has the last surname (not just a multiple-Z vanity listing in a telephone directory). I doubt that she could be persuaded to use her column for logological research, but one can dream...