

COLLOQUY

Anil asks about Jim Puder's "Foldedness Factor in Letter Arrays" in the May issue:

I suspect there [is] a fatal flaw in his argument. By excluding words already embedded in the Greek alphabet sequence he strongly stacked the deck in favour of the more folded arrays, since they would have fewer original sequence words not to count. What would the numbers look like if he had not excluded them? I bet the differences between the A and C groups would largely or totally disappear...Have I failed to grasp his rationale for the exclusions? Do they not make it a self-fulfilling conjecture?

Stuart Kidd corrects various errors in "Mizmaze" in the August 2000 issue: (1) in the H stanza, mazhor should be mahzor; (2) in the U stanza, there is no UT bigram ("But the vacuum..."); (3) in the Z stanza, arzunite should be arzrunite; (4) in the M stanza, there is no MJ bigram ("might place the circumjacent gymkhana firmly in the community column...").

Susan Thorpe writes "Noah would like it made clear that none of Rex Gooch's examples in the August 2002 Colloquy qualify for entry to the Ark...only words with two of each different consonant are allowed...Rex's words have more than two of some consonants. Noah won't admit the Borgmann coinage either, even though consonant-wise it would 'qualify'. Today I offered Noah the word DEGERSTENSGRUNDET, the name of an island in Sweden. It has two each of six different consonants: DD GG NN RR SS TT. Noah had no hesitation in allowing it into the Ark."

Rex Gooch writes about "Azorean: New Spelling for the 21st Century":

I'm a little hesitant to comment too strongly on this, as I am sure a great deal of work went into it, and the article would not have been able to address the many issues raised. I find it is the representation that causes the problems, rather than the essential idea, which I hope many would support (I live a few miles from the abode of George Bernard Shaw, who left money in his will for promotion of simplified spelling in English). I welcome many things, such as the return to the Anglo-Saxon differentiation between the two TH sounds.

Firstly, I am horrified by the use of punctuation symbols as letters. This means that all artificial grammars will have to be rewritten (i.e., the definition of all programming languages), quite apart from confusion in texts. Why not use accents? These are a proven solution to the problem, covering also the ch and sh sounds (by using c and s cedillas, Turkish). Accents are easy to implement on a normal keyboard, simply by designating one key (as a dead key). To type an e acute, you press e, then the dead key, then (e.g.) the /. That's how we cope with Ancient Greek, with multiple accents and breathings on a vowel...The keyboard should not dictate to this extent.

Secondly, I am unhappy with the pronunciations in some cases. English uses multiple vowel sounds, for example A (asymmetric) is pronounced with a mouth which closes during the sound, unlike most European languages, in which the mouth has a constant position for pure vowels. Indeed, the mouth position in French (and others) takes up successive positions to represent, for example, differently accented Es. This leads to difficulty with some of his comparisons.

Chris McManus responds to a query in the February 1970 *Word Ways*, which gave an 8x7 crossword containing the 26 letters of the alphabet once each, and asked for smaller solutions. The next issue gave two solutions of 6x7, and a flawed 5x8 solution. The following solution also uses 42 total spaces, but in 3x14 format:

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J      H      W      F      Q      P
U N D I S C O V E R A B L Y
G      M      K      Z      T      X

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The following reduces the crossword to 3x13, or 39 total spaces, but includes the proper noun Qum, a city in Iran. Sh, hm, and vac are all found in the OSPD Third Edition.

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Q      W      J      V      F      P
S U B O R D I N A T E L Y
H M      K      G      C      Z      X

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Rex Gooch comments on "Of Visa for the Mind":

Your article in this issue was interesting. The alleged machine translation of "out of sight, out of mind" was "blind, mad"! I am surprised that you remarked on the importance of accents; they are so fundamental I would have thought their importance went without saying. On the other hand, it probably was worth remarking on the asymmetry of translations. If I choose one English word to translate a foreign one (and note that it may have to be a phrase), then again face a choice when translating back, the scope for error is high because you often have multiple choices.

You chose diddy translators. For many years, machine-assisted translation of foreign texts has been common—for example, Russian technical texts into English. Typically, such programs divide the screen into two, with the translated text on the right. Queries are highlighted, alternatives given, and instantly available are extremely detailed descriptions of the use of any word on the screen, often pages long, going far beyond 'verbal noun' and the like. Indeed, I understand that speech is now translated on the fly.

Darryl Francis noted in the Sep 5 issue of the *London Times* the following 77-letter pangrammatic window in an article about dressy food writer Nigella Lawson (review section, page 3):

"Call me Scheherezade," she e[x]claims, apropos of a saffron-scented chicken pilaff, "but I'm in my turquoise gauze veil and jew]elled slippers for this one."

Jeff Grant writes about "My First Ten-Square"

Well done, Rex! I can only imagine the time he must have taken to assemble the 10-letter word database that made the square possible. It is only a matter of time before a fully-acceptable 10-square is found. It certainly looks exotic with all those foreign place-names. I thought TAUTOLOGIA may have existed in an older English dictionary or an early synonym for 'tautology', but can't find it in any of my books. You can tell the square is computer-generated—what formist would consider using MAHRAS DAGI as a base word?

Did any reader note the unusual feature of the May Table of Contents?