

KICKSHAWS

Readers are encouraged to send their favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws editor at drABC26@aol.com. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

Symmetrian: A Handwritten Alphabet for Wordplay

Joli Kansil in the last Word Ways invented a wonderfully clever alphabet to eliminate the ambiguity and multiplicity of pronunciations in our current alphabet. I've always been interested in alternative approaches to the alphabet. Long ago, before I knew of Word Ways, I designed different typefaces that had special motifs. For instance, the Clothes Hanger Typeface consisted of 26 letters designed to look like they were made of clothes hangers. At one point I decided to design a purely visual alphabet whose letters had no pronunciations and no meanings—a content-free alphabet with no intentional relation to any language. After all, many of the world's alphabets such as Arabic, Sanskrit or Incan, spell words to the native speakers but just make pretty pictures to me. My alphabet would work in a similar way: it would be a system of handwritten shapes that had no meaning to anyone, not even myself. The symbols that represented the letters would be symmetrical—thus the name Symmetrian.

In Symmetrian, letters are formed by symmetric symbols on a vertical axis. Each symbol appears in one of four manifestations of the same shape—small, tall, overline (above the writing line), or underline—which represents four different letters. Thus, seven symbols make 28 letters. The designs of the symbols begin with the simplest shapes and become more complex as more letters are created. The letters are written on a writing line to simplify reading them. Each letter begins by touching the writing line and ends by touching it again—no Symmetrian letter touches the writing line three or more times.

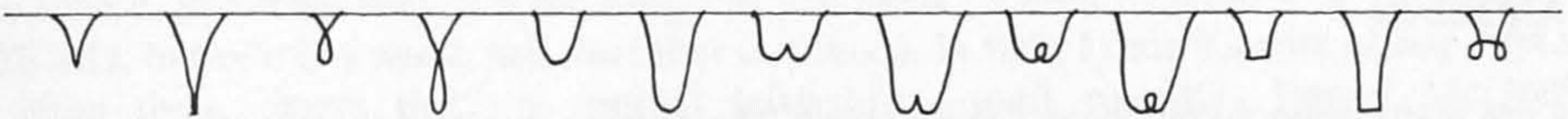
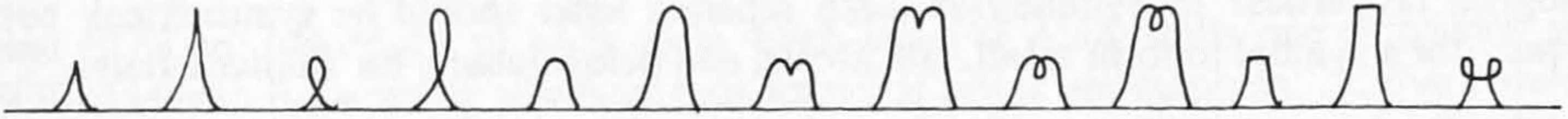
After I'd discovered Word Ways, I realized that Symmetrian could be used in wordplay by coding Symmetrian letters to represent English letters. But there was a problem: to maintain the four-letter relationships, Symmetrian works best with alphabets having a number of letters divisible by four. English, with 26, doesn't quite fit this mold. The only satisfactory solution was to drop two Symmetrian letters from the set. Before deciding on which two to drop, I arranged Symmetrian letters in various ways in order to use their visual elements to signify logical properties. The dialect below uses M and N as small letters only. When interpreted the right way, the shapes display at least six basic properties of the English alphabet:

- First-half letter (A-M) = overline letter
- Second-half letter (N-Z) = underline letter
- Odd-numbered letter (A,C,E...) = small overline letter or tall underline letter
- Even-numbered letter (B,D,F...) = tall underline letter or small overline letter
- Pairs of letters equidistant from the center of the alphabet (AZ,BY,CX...) = overline letter and underline letter having the same shape
- Pairs of letters formed by dividing the alphabet into two-letter units (AB,CD,EF...) = small letter and tall letter that have the same shape and that appear on the same side of the line (except MN)

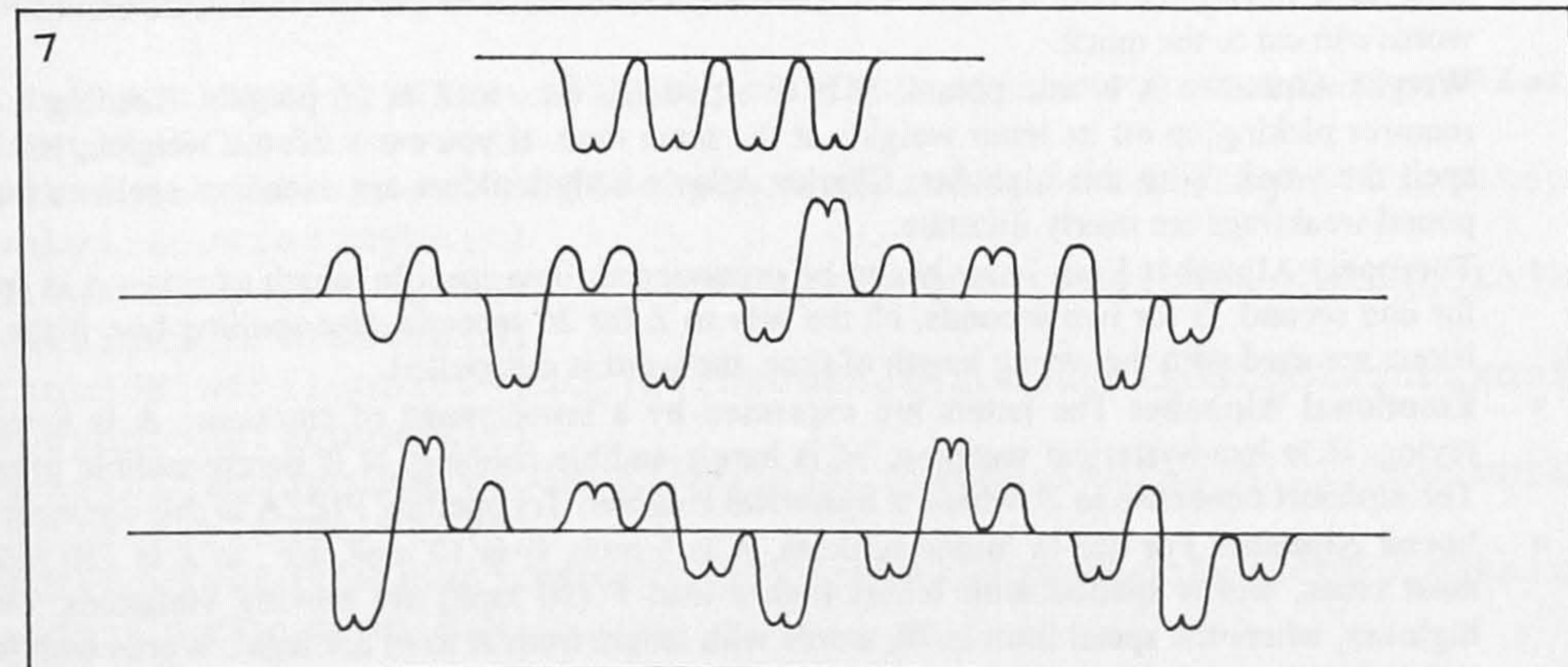
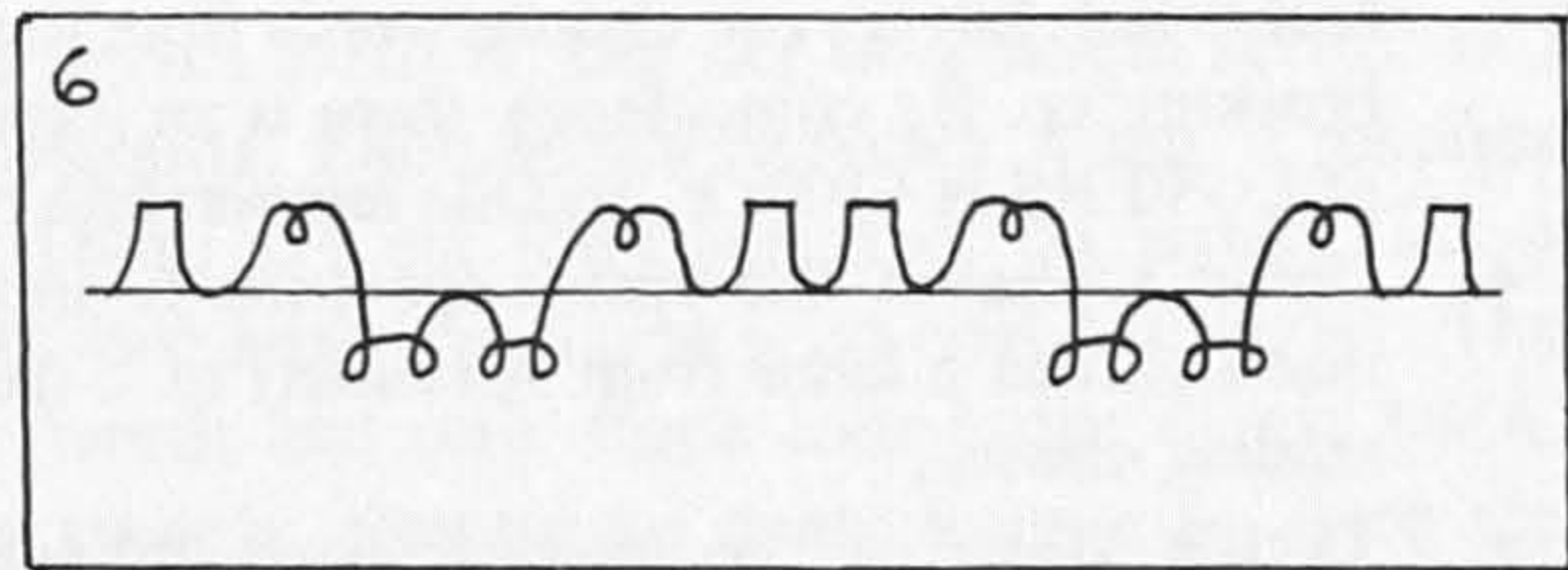
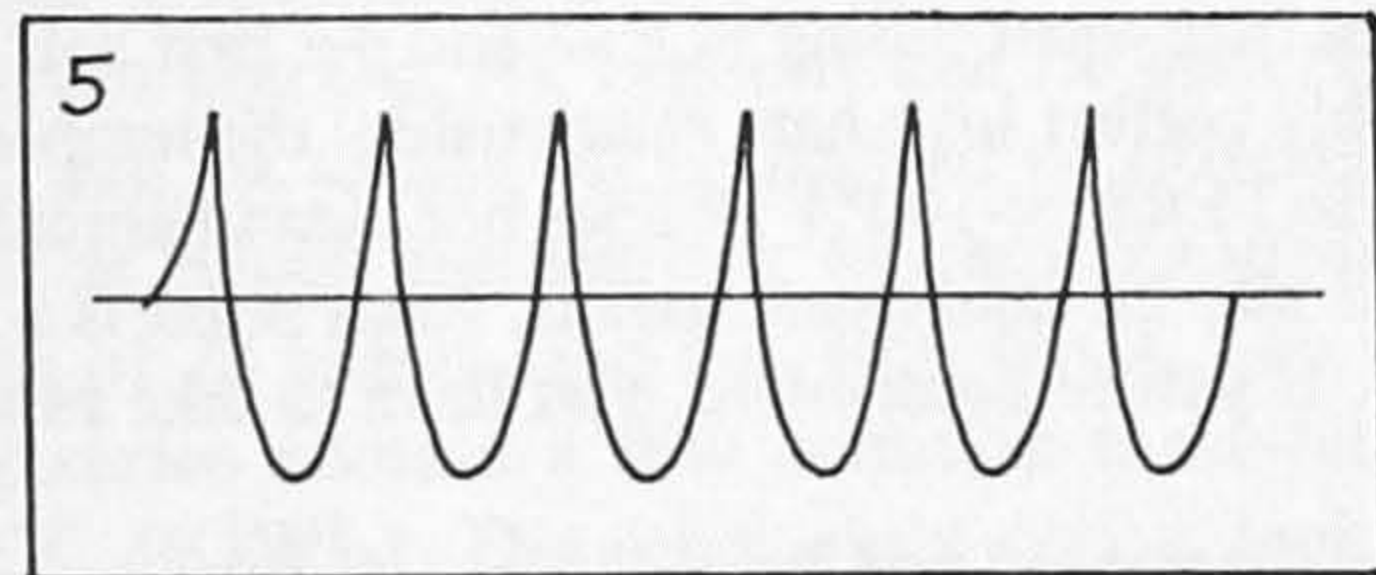
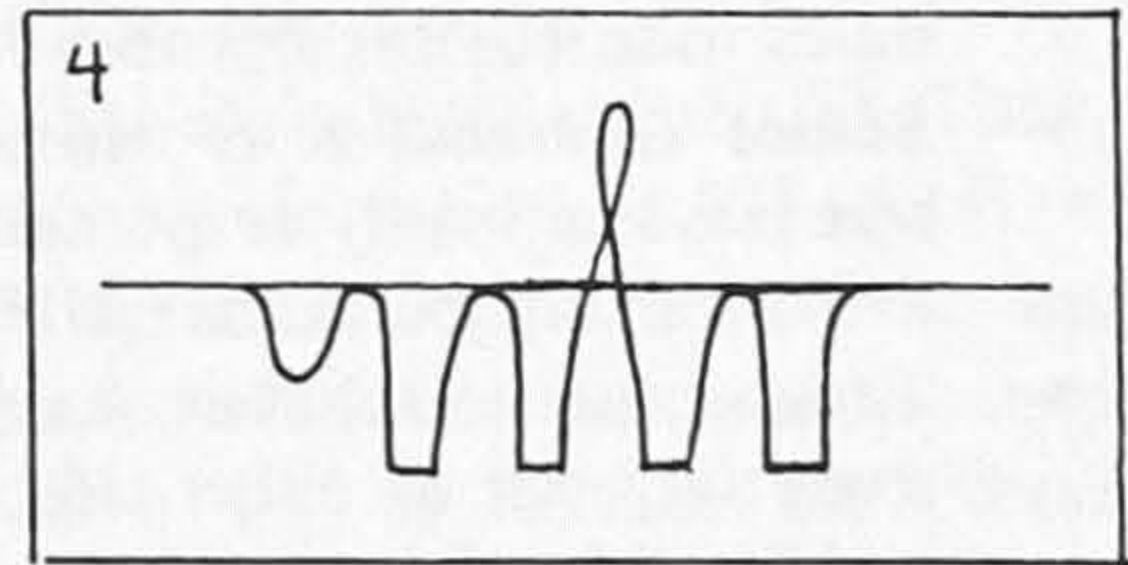
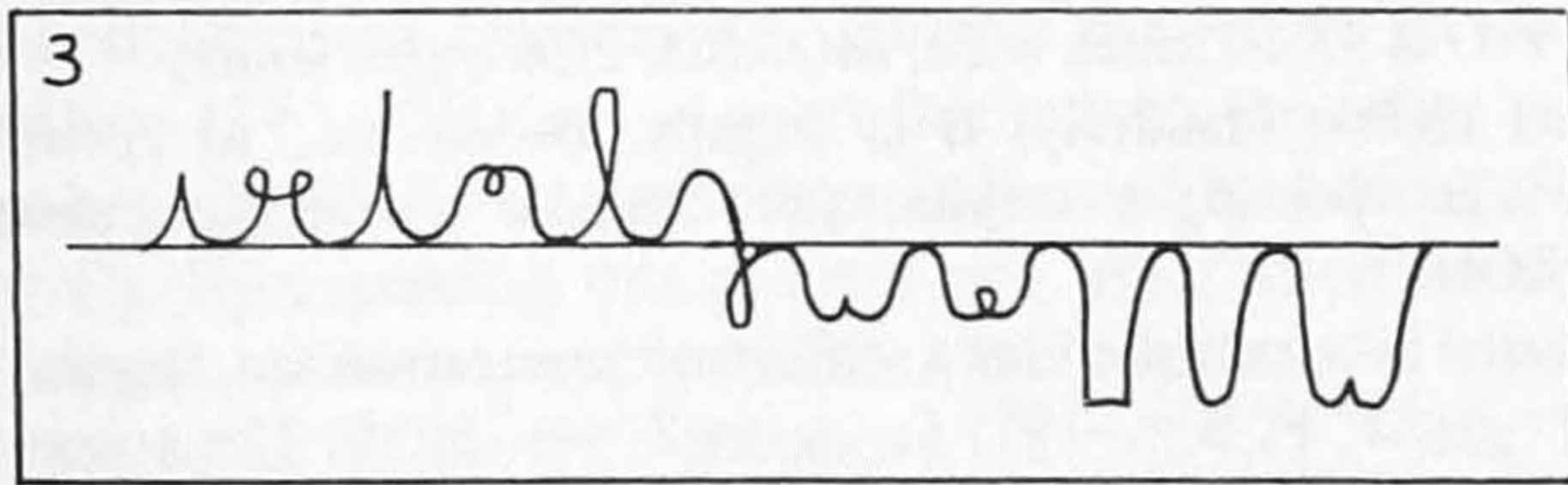
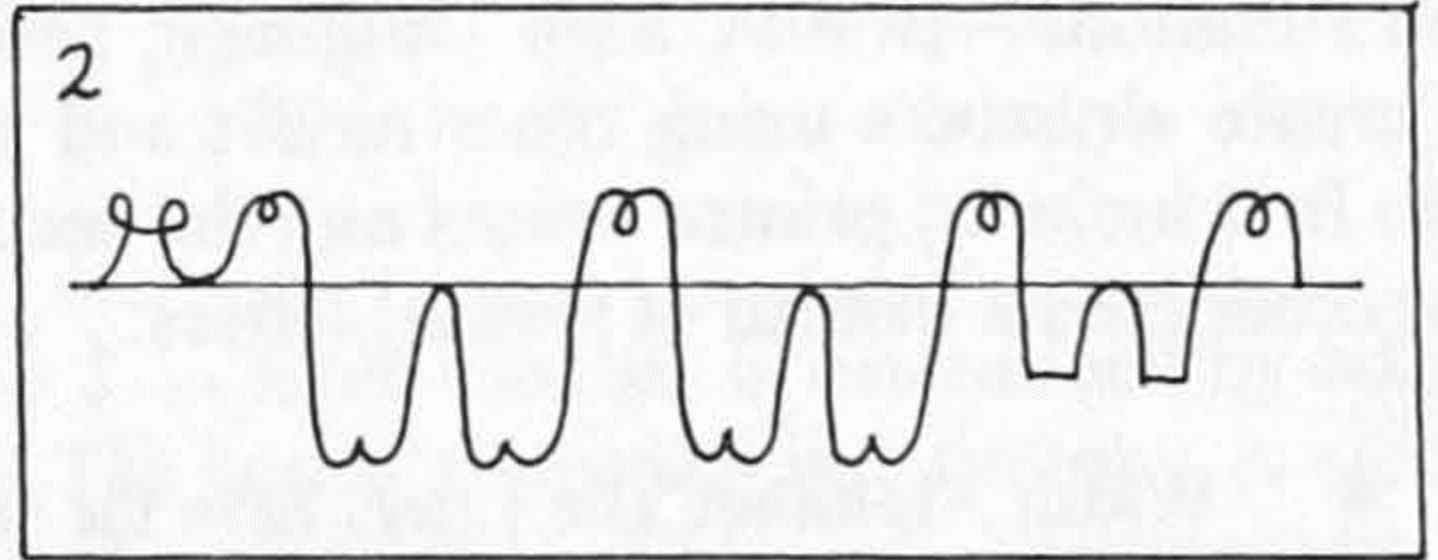
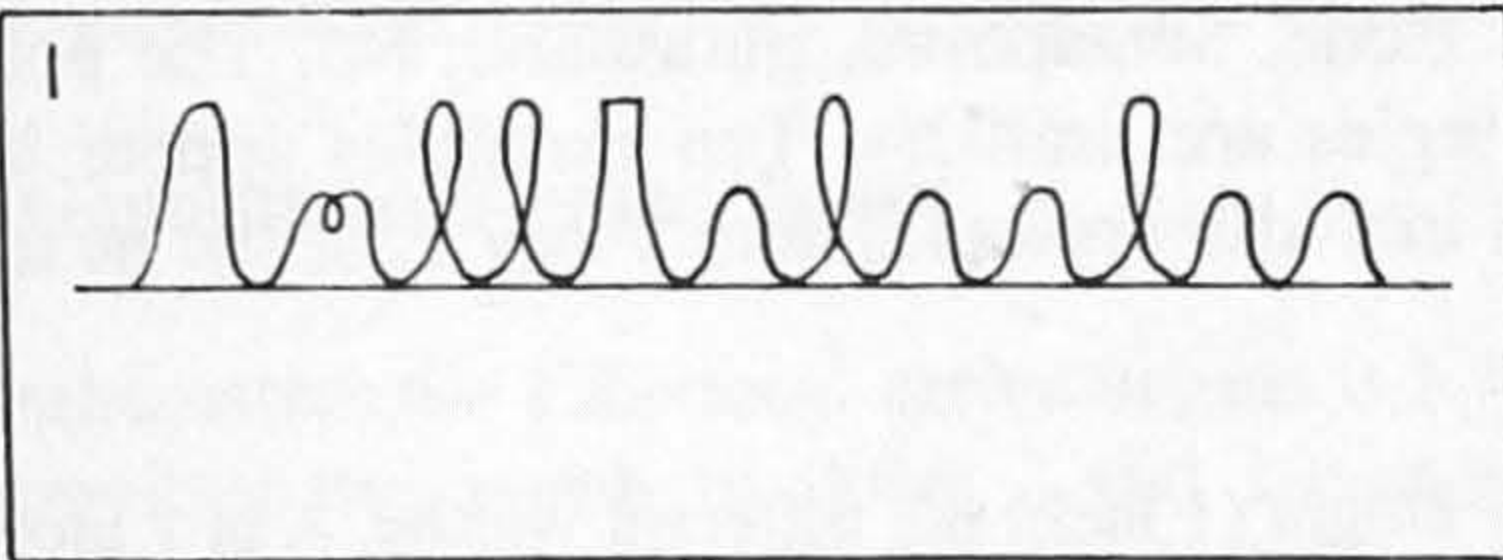
In the illustration, the top (unnumbered) panel shows the Symmetrian letters coded to English letters. It is followed by Panels 1-5, which show how logical properties of English words become easier to spot in Symmetrian. Panel 6 is a poem made of Symmetrian letters that have

SYMMETRIAN ALPHABET

A B C D E F G H I J K L M



Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N



Handwritten signature or flourish

curves only (no straight lines, no circles); its title resembles the sound and shape of a snake. How quickly can you read this dialect? I signed my name in Symmetrian at the bottom right corner.

Symmetrian words can be viewed in a mirror to reverse the order of their letters while maintaining their shapes, and thus palindromes and reversals can be read as easily in the mirror. Symmetrian can also be turned upside down to form letter strings, but very few form words. Can you devise other letters or letter orders that form more words upside down or that display other logological properties? In Symmetrian, each separate letter should be symmetrical, but it isn't necessary for a symbol to form small, tall, above, and below letters, for similar letters.

Ten Alphabets

There are many ways to represent the alphabet. The commonest way is to write or print the letters in traditional forms. In printing, typographers have designed many different typefaces. In writing, children learn penmanship in several standardized ways, such as the famous Palmer Method. However, non-standard ways of representing the alphabet have been created to fit special needs and situations—Braille, Sign Language, Morse Code, Semaphore, Shorthand, etc. The potential to create alphabets using other media and strategies are limitless. Ten examples appear below. The first includes printed letters and the second includes spoken letters. After that, the next eight use other media instead of normal letters.

- **Width Alphabet** The letters have the same height (1 inch) but different widths. A is 1 inch long, B is 2 inches, C is 4 inches, etc., each letter doubling the width of the previous. Z is a letter 529.6 miles wide. (In this alphabet, DAVID is 33.14 miles wide, MORICE 2.39 miles wide.)
- **Sound Alphabet** A is whispered almost inaudibly, B is slightly louder, etc., to Z, which is screamed as loudly as possible. When passing a hospital quiet zone, it is common courtesy to avoid spelling the words QUIET ZONE!
- **Temperature Alphabet** Each letter is represented by a different temperature ten degrees away from the letter on either side: A = -125° F, B = -115° F, ... to Z = $+125^{\circ}$ F. The space in the middle of the alphabet, between M and N, is 0° F—the first half of the alphabet is cold and the last half is hot. Lovers can choose words from the last half when falling in love and the first half when breaking up. By coincidence, there is an incredibly perfect love-hate relationship: the temperature of LOVERS is $+100^{\circ}$ F, and the temperature of HATERS is -100° F (F does not mean Fahrenheit).
- **Color Alphabet** The visible spectrum is divided into 26 equidistant points. Each point is a color that signifies a letter from A (violet) to Z (red). If you're color-blind, you have to take remedial reading classes.
- **Tactile Alphabet** The letters go from soft and gentle to hard and sharp, from A (a cotton swab) to Z (a razor blade). To read a word, touch the objects for each of the letters, but be careful: some words can cut to the quick.
- **Weight Alphabet** A is one pound, B is two pounds, etc., to Z is 26 pounds. Reading a word requires picking up all its letter weights at the same time. If you can't lift the weights, you can't spell the word. With this alphabet, Charles Atlas's body-builders are excellent spellers, but 98-pound weaklings are nearly illiterate.
- **Temporal Alphabet** Each letter has to be pronounced for a specific length of time: A is spoken for one second, B for two seconds, all the way to Z for 26 seconds. In a spelling bee, if the right letters are used with the wrong length of time, the word is misspelled.
- **Emotional Alphabet** The letters are expressed by a broad range of emotions: A is hysterical crying, B is less-hysterical weeping, M is barely-audible sobbing, N is barely-audible giggling. The alphabet continues to Z, which is hysterical laughter. Try spelling PIZZA in this alphabet!
- **Speed Alphabet** For use in motor vehicles, A is 5 mph, B is 10 mph, etc., to Z is 130 mph. In most cities, words spelled with letters higher than F (30 mph) are moving violations. On the highway, where the speed limit is 70, words with letters from A to M are legal. Words with letters

near the end of the alphabet are rarely spelled except during high-speed chases. ZOOM is a very fast word.

- **Electrifying Alphabet** Each letter has a different electrical charge. A is hardly noticeable static electricity, B is noticeable enough to make you flinch, and so on, to Z, which is similar to being struck by lightning. This form of spelling is, well, shocking.

Record-Length Lettershift First Name Pair

ANA and BOB are lettershifts of each other. Each letter of ANA shifts one alphabetic step to spell BOB. Lettershift names or words of four letters or fewer are common. At five letters they become scarce, and at six they become rare. The last name of John LENNON of the Beatles shifts to BUDDER, but one is a name and the other is a word. In fact, I didn't know of any first names longer than three letters that are mutual lettershifts—until recently. Daniel McGrath has discovered two first names of six letters each, twice as long as the ANA-BOB pair. LEANNA (female) shifts four steps to form PIERRE (male). The chances of another six-letter two-name pair occurring is extremely small. If two people named LEANNA and PIERRE have any sense of logological destiny, let them step forward and get married.

Self-Generating Bigram Series

In mathematics the Fibonacci series begins 0 1 1 2 3 5 ... Each number is determined by adding the previous two numbers. After 3 and 5 comes 8. The series continues indefinitely. A similar series can be formed by adding the alphabetic values (A=1 to Z=26) of bigrams. Starting with the alphabetically-first bigram, AA, convert the letters to their alphabetic values ($A+A = 1+1$), add the values ($1+1 = 2$), and convert the sum to the letter with that alphabetic value (B). Thus, the series begins AAB. The next letter is formed by adding the alphabetic values of AB ($A+B = 1+2 = 3 = C$). By repeating this process one letter after the other, the series continues. If the sum of two adjacent letter values is greater than 26, then 26 is subtracted from the sum and the result is the next letter value. For instance, $EY = 5+25 = 30$; $30-26 = 4 = D$. Unlike the Fibonacci numbers, the letters in the bigram series are limited to 676, each representing the first letter of a different bigram. All bigrams can be generated in this fashion, but not in a single series. In fact, there are 14 series, all composed of different bigrams. Each series recycles when it reaches the point at which the starting bigram reappears. There are six long series of 84 letters, six short series of 28 letters, and two tiny series, one with two letters and one with only one letter. The six long series contain a few common three-letter words but only three four-letter words (WAXY, POET, HOWL). The other eight series, lacking vowels, contain no common words. Here are the 14 bigram series, with common words capitalized:

AabcehmuhcknymlykjuezeeJOYnMANocRUMhucxayzyyxwurmerwoLAMnaOPEuzuu
 pkALMyLkxHEMrewbyaza [a]
 acdgkrcuxsqjaklwifoujeoTICloapqgxecksdWAXYwvsohWEBgipYONcqtkepuk
 fqwnkyjisbuwrogvcyba [c]
 adeinwkhSATuojyihqyPOETysrkcnqevawxusngubwyvuqlcorgyfeqpaqria jkuF
 AGHOWLiudyCBEGlSEXCA [D]
 aefkqbSUNiwfcilugbikueydcgjqarskdoshaijscvyutoixGELqctwqnesxqofua
 vwspiyhgovkgryqpgwda [e]
 afgmtgahiqzqqhygfmsfyeDIMVIEnsgzggnuidmqduytsmfysyrqizii rastmgtau
 v qmdqulgszssleqvmivea [f]
 bkmxKITcwzwtqkbMOBqsjcmpevokzkkvgcjmwjgqxomboqfwczccfioxmkxigpw
 mjwgdkoZOOdswpmcpSIB [k]

bbdfjppzppfvbxzxxvtpjzjjtdxbzb[b]
 bfhnvjfpvlhtbvxtlrdptjdnrfxdb[f]
 bhjrvtvplbnpdtxrphxfdjnxljvfb[h]
 bjlvhdlpbrtlfrxpndrvnjxhfnthb[j]
 blnznnbprhzhhpznlzllxjhrzrrjb[l]
 ddhltfzfzflrdvzvvrnftzttnhvdzd[d]

mmzm[m]

zz[z]

Artist's Books

One of the most interesting genres of art to emerge in the late 20th century is the Artist's Book, which takes two main forms. In one form, the artist assembles a book out of various materials. In the other form, the artist takes a pre-existing book and alters it in some way. In some ways, the artist's book can be considered a form of wordplay. I'm an "occasional" artist's book artist, and I've done both kinds. My preference, though, is to alter pre-existing books. I especially like it when my original intention opens the door to a surprise I hadn't anticipated. Here are the two that surprised me the most. (1) DOG-EARED TWAIN is made from an old hardbound collection of Mark Twain's short stories. I dog-eared all the pages at the top right corner to suggest that every page of Twain's book had something on it worth remembering. What I didn't realize is that dog-earing all the pages doubled the size of the top corner, which appears to have twice as many pages as the bottom corner. The book tilts! (2) LOOKING-GLASS LABYRINTH is made from a new hardbound novel titled *Mirror Maze*. It's a mystery story that includes an amusement park maze as an important part of the plot. I cut each of the pages of the story horizontally in half to make the book into a literary maze to be read with the tops halves in numeric order combined with any of the bottom halves, which are unnumbered. After doing that, I calculated how many different ways the book could be read by combining halves, guessing there must be at least a trillion. What an underestimation! There are over 200 googol ways (a googol is 1 followed by 100 zeros). LOOKING-GLASS LABYRINTH can be read in more ways than any other book in history, and it's only about an inch thick. (Raymond Queneau performed a similar exercise in French with his *Cent Mille Millard de poèmes*, allowing the reader to construct a sonnet with ten choices for each line.)

The Incredible Shrinking Word

Mike Morton writes "Our TV has such crummy sound that we often watch with subtitles turned on. The other day, a character said 'Where were we?' and I noticed that each word in that sequence is a subset of the previous word's letters, in the same order. It's sort of like the puzzles where you add one letter at a time to a word, except the transition from 'were' to 'we' drops more than one letter. I wonder what other sentences one could produce which only add or remove letters (or one letter at a time, to be strict)? I'd had no luck thinking of any with brain-power, and am too lazy to try a computer solution." Tune in to the next Kickshaws to find out if any readers come up with other examples.

Cheater's Univocalics

A cheater's wordplay form bends the rules to accomplish its goal. DROWASI IS A WORD is a cheater's palindrome, since DROWASI was made up for the sole purpose of using IS A WORD in the second half. A cheater's anagram, as Peter Newby described it, rearranges the letters of a real word to form a plausible but imaginary word. For instance, in BELFAST = FABLETS, the

latter word could be “little fables,” but the word doesn’t exist. A few other wordplay forms have cheated, too, but not many. One example of a form that hasn’t had its 15 letters of fame yet is the cheater’s univocalic, a fake word that uses the same vowel throughout by misspelling a real word. The results are often funny: ALPHABAT, TEECHER, SINISTIR, COOKOO CLOCK, HUNDRUD, FLY-BY-NYGHY. The word SENSELESSNESSES is a real univocalic of 15 letters. The challenge is to find a cheater’s univocalic of 16 letters or more that closely resembles the correct word that inspired it.

Name Sayers

In two recent movies, the main characters tell people that their last names are pronounced differently than everyone thinks. Both movies start comedians who cut their funny-bones on Saturday Night Live, and both change the pronunciation to make it sound French. In the first movie, *Joe Dirt*, Joe says his last name is pronounced “DEER-tay.” In the second movie, *Corky Romano*, Corky uses an undercover name, PISSANT, which everyone pronounces as PISS ANT. Corky corrects them by saying it is a French name, pronounced “pee-SANH.” (The editor adds an example from television: Hyacinth Bucket in the Britcom *Keeping Up Appearances* insists that her surname be pronounced “Boo-KAY.”) I find this amusing because my last name *is* French, but most people mispronounce it like the name MORRIS and a few like the phrase MORE ICE, and I wind up saying “No, it’s French—maw-REESE.” That, of course, is the Americanized French pronunciation. Are there any other movies in which a character changes the pronunciation of his/her name to sound like it’s from a different language?

Mnemonically Oedipal Pterodactyl

When I was in grade school, the teacher gave us a sentence to help us remember how to spell the word ARITHMETIC. It was a funny, memorable mnemonic, but her spelling method was flawed. If we learned how to spell all words by memorizing sentences whose words began with those letters, it would mean we’d have to know the initial letters of all those words. To know the initial letters would require knowing how to spell the words that began with those letters. Such a method could be called a Mnemonically Oedipal Pterodactyl, which clearly shows the problem: in that phrase, the silent first letters spell MOP, but the enunciated second letters spell NET. Are there two kinds of mnemonics, one based on spelling and the other on pronunciation? I still remember the ARITHMETIC mnemonic, and I just realized that there should be a MATHEMATIC mnemonic, too, so I composed one that continues the rodent-eats-ice-cream motif. Notice that both words are spelled with ten letters—a tip of the hat to the decimal system.

ARITHMETIC = A Rat In The House May Eat The Ice Cream

MATHEMATIC = Mice At The House Eat Maybe All The Ice Cream

Alighieri, Your Art Has Words Entering Hell

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) wrote one of the greatest works in Italian literature, *The Divine Comedy*, an epic poem of 100 cantos in terza rima form. The entire work is subdivided into three 33-canto sections titled Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso, which are often published as books by themselves. A separate introductory section brings the *Comedy* canto count up to 100. As might be expected, the Inferno is the most hideous and fascinating section to read. I blazed through it, but I couldn’t even strike a match in the other two. At the beginning of the Inferno, a sign warns the visitor “Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch’entrate.” The traditional translation, according to Bartlett, is “All hope abandon, ye who enter here.” The reason to abandon all hope is because God has condemned Satan and his devils to eternal damnation with no way to ever leave, not

even for a fire drill. The traditional English translation is only one of several possible translations. In my opinion, the Italian-English interlinear translation is even better. It is just as clear, and it has a miraculous bit of wordplay in it, reminiscent of the TITANIA acronym in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The interlinear translation is: ABANDON YE ALL HOPE WHO ENTER HERE. The hidden message is formed by the first word and the initial letters of the remaining six to spell a second word, and reveals what the damned have to give up forever: ABANDON Y.A.H.W.E.H. That is a hell of a coincidence! Of course, Dante never knew that such an appropriate acronym would appear in an English translation of his line. Before you leave the Inferno, can you figure out the significance of the title of this Kickshaw?

Alphabetic Bigram Words

The alphabet can be considered as a set of 25 bigrams, from AB to YZ. An alphabetic bigram word is spelled entirely with two-letter units whose letters are next to each other in the alphabet and also occur next to each other in the word. The bigrams can be used with their letters going in either direction—AB or BA, CB or BC, etc. There are three kinds of these words based on the order of the letters in the bigrams (all examples listed in Webster's Tenth Collegiate):

- **Forward Bigram Words** (15) Ab, CD, ef, hi, hiders, high, hist, no, node, no-no, op, Ophirs, stab, stop, tutu
- **Reverse Bigram Words** (11) baba, balked, bats, CB, ed, feed, on, onyx, pots, pout, ut
- **Mixed Bigram Words** (23) abed, abut, bade, balm, bars, bast, basted, debars, deeded, defers, hied, high noon, hits, noon, NOTs, oped, op-ed, opts, poop, posted, stoned, Styx, Tshi

Which American President's last name is a bigram word?

Spring, The Season of Sounds

As you read this, winter is in its early stage. Not too much snow, sleet, slush or substances beginning with a frozen S, but it gets worse in the coming months. Then, after the cold silence of winter, spring arrives and wakes the world with the chirps of birds, the barks of dogs, the meows of cats, and the sounds of ice cream trucks going back to business. SPRING is the perfect name to reflect the sonic stirring of the quadricycle of the seasons as it shifts gears and recycles icicles. In SPRING, each of the three opening consonants combine with the closing trigram to spell three shorter words (SING, PING, RING) related to the music of sound, which is the sound of music!

Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus Bibliography

Imagine writing a Christmas poem to share with your family and then imagine watching it turn into the best-known Christmas poem of all. Then you must be Clement Clark Moore, because no other poem surpasses "The Night Before Christmas". That poem laid the foundation for the modern Christmas myth. It has been published year after year, ever since it first appeared in 1823 in the Troy (N.Y.) Sentinel newspaper. It was actually published the night *before* the night before Christmas—December 23, 1823. How many times has it appeared in published form since then? 300? 500? According to Nancy H. Marshall's *The Night Before Christmas: A Descriptive Bibliography*, it has appeared at least 1,001 times from 1823 to 2000.

This fantastic book is the first comprehensive bibliography devoted to the Christmas poem we all know and love, and it will never be surpassed. It is chock full of information, beginning with an excellent, detailed historical background of 30 pages, which includes a discussion of the question, Who really wrote the poem? It also includes a List of Tables, Introduction to the Bibliography, a

Bibliography of Moore's Other Works, and enough Indexes to accurately pinpoint anyone who had anything to do with each publication. The largest part of the book is taken up by the Bibliographic Entries (about 230 pages). The publications are listed by year, beginning with the Troy debut. Most of the listings are books that present the poem with different illustrators. And the book includes 144 color and 80 black-and-white illustrations showing the variety that St. Nick has taken over the years. The bibliography also includes a few entries in non-book format—lantern slides, trading cards, even a whirly-twirly toy. It lists a few books printed in other languages, and a few parodies. In fact, entry 819 is Martin Gardner's *The Annotated Night Before Christmas: A Collection of Sequels, Parodies, and Imitations of Clement Moore's Immortal Ballad about Santa Claus*, which is the book of St. Nick parodies. I was pleased to find that entry 700 lists my own parody, *A Visit from St. Alphabet*, which has appeared in *Word Ways* as well as in book form.

Each entry includes the bibliographic information followed by an excellent annotation that describes the size of the book, the number of pages, etc., and gives extra comments that Ms. Marshall has learned or observed in amassing the collection of St. Nick books over nearly 50 years that led to the idea of assembling this bibliography. She is a retired Dean of the University Libraries of the College of William and Mary. Her wonderful collection, upon which much of this bibliography is based, will become part of the Special Collections Division at the college.

The book, hardbound with a beautiful multicolor dust jacket, includes a portrait from life of Clement Moore who looks a little like Woody Allen. It is published by Oak Knoll Press, New Castle, Delaware, 2002.

Pom-Pom Pomp

What is a POM-POM? If someone asked you to use one, would you know how? Webster's 10th has two entries for POM-POM, each apparently having separate etymologies, and their definitions are at least as contrasting as any other two words with the same spelling. Like most people, you probably think of a POM-POM as "a handheld usu. brightly colored fluffy ball flourished by cheerleaders." That suggests stadium, football players, and girls chanting lines like "Let's win! Let's win! If we can't do it, no one kin!" You would feel surprised, perhaps even terrified, if the cheerleaders were carrying the other kind of POM-POM, defined as "a multibarreled automatic anti-aircraft gun of 20 to 40 millimeters mounted esp. on ships." You might even think of a new version of the NRA slogan about guns: Pom-poms don't kill people; cheerleaders do.

Good Grief!

LAMENT, in Webster's 10th Collegiate, lists MOURN as a synonym. Both refer to the sorrow caused by death. Prayer is one way survivors achieve closure in their grief, and prayer is perhaps at the root of the meaning of MOURN and LAMENT. In fact, the meaning can be revealed by removing the first and last letters of the two words. The remaining letters spell the first word and the last word of the Lord's Prayer: "OUR Father, Who art in heaven ... AMEN."

Idiotism Time

The Collegiate lists two words with different etymological roots for IDIOTISM. The first is obsolete and means "idiom;" the second is archaic and means "idiocy." Since neither IDIOTISM is in current usage but is in the dictionary, there should be a third listing defined as "a defunct word spelled IDIOTISM." Not only would that give a reason for listing the other two, but it

would encourage fans of the word to look for more to submit for consideration in the 11th Collegiate. Who knows? There may be dozens or hundreds of IDIOTISMS that have come and gone over the years. Now they can be taken out of the lexical attic, dusted off, and displayed on the paper shelves of the dictionary. On the other hand, if the two IDIOTISMS that are still there were removed instead, then the new IDIOTISM would remain to preserve the originals by listing them as its etymological sources. It's a win-win situation officially backed by the Society of Idiotism, which has no members and doesn't want any. This highly elite organization chooses to have a membership of zero in order to avoid fees, meetings, reports, elections, and other idiotisms that plague organizations that do have members. The non-existent members can be reached at their non-existent office located next to their rival organization, the Society to Remove Idiotism from the Dictionary, which also has no members. I've tried to join both, but their fee is nothing, and I don't have that much money to spare.

Presto

PRESTO is a magical term. In Webster's 10th, its first meaning is "suddenly, as if by magic." Its etymology is traced to the Italian word meaning "quick." Magically speaking, dropping the first and last letters results in REST, a not-so-quick rabbit in the hat. The & is quicker than the I.

Phonetically Interchangeable Vowel Sets

In the February 1994 *Word Ways*, John Foster discussed interchangeable vowels sets, in which placing each vowel in the same position in a set of letters results in a different word each time: BAG BEG BIG BOG BUG. Since this is an example of wordplay based on letters and not sounds, only one spelling represents each vowel. However, in a similar form based on sounds, a phonetically interchangeable vowel set requires that each word have the same consonant sound(s) and different vowel sound(s) of the same type (e.g., "long" or "short" vowel sound). It seems that sets using the same long vowel sounds are the most common. One of John's letter-based sets, MATE METE MITE MOTE MUTE, almost qualifies as a sound-based set, except that MUTE is pronounced "myute." Instead, substituting MOOT for MUTE would make the set qualify. A phonetically interchangeable vowel set allows for more than one word to represent each vowel. Even the consonants can change from word to word as long as each word maintains the required sound. It seems that there are more possibilities for "long" vowels (as in the MATE set) than short vowels (as in MAT and MET). One phonetic set having 13 words appears below, using Webster's 10th Collegiate to verify spelling and pronunciation:

NAY (NEIGH, NÉ, NÉE, NEE), KNEE, NIGH, KNOW (NO), GNU (KNEW, NEW, NU)

Can you find bigger sets? The best phonetically interchangeable vowel sets would have two or more words for each of the vowel sounds. Different spellings having the same pronunciation (NÉ, NÉE, NE) and different pronunciations having the same spelling (EITHER, with its first syllable pronounced as long E as long I) count.

Overlapping Charades

In *The Palindromist* editor Mark Saltveit showed what a versatile, even convivial, form the palindrome could be. He also promoted related wordplay forms—the reversal, the anagram, and the charade, a word whose letters can be respaced to form other words (LEG END, A NAG RAM). He wanted to replace the term CHARADE with the palindromic term REDIVIDER, but like other attempts at renaming, he had limited success. I would like to generalize REDIVIDER to mean either a charade or an overlapping charade, a word that separates into two or more words

in which the last letter(s) of one word are also the first letter(s) of the next (INTEREST = INTER REST, RESTING = REST STING). (Note that a word can often be divided in more than one way, as A NAG RAM or AN NAG GRAM.)

An overlapping charade that redivides into three or more words can have a constant overlap (same number of letters shared by adjacent words) or a variable overlap. Two rules must be followed: the same letter cannot be overlapped a second time (SLOWER = SLOW LOW OWER), and a word has to have unused letters at the end to begin the next word (in SLOWER, LOW is completely contained in SLOW). Here are five categories of redividers:

- **Constant Redivider** generates words having the same overlap value throughout: ANT TIP POET TIC (overlap 1)
- **Variable Redivider** generates words with all different overlap values: DOWN OWNS SLID IDES (overlap 3,1,2)
- **Increasing Redivider** generates three or more words whose overlap values increase: PAR AT TAX AXIS (overlap 0,1,2)
- **Decreasing Redivider** generates three or more words whose overlap values decrease: PAL ALMS SUN DAY (overlap 2,1,0)
- **Multiple Redivider Set** in which a single word forms redividers of two or more different overlap values: DISC OVER (overlap 0), DISCO OVER (overlap 1), DISCO COVER (overlap 2); STRANGE ANGER (overlap 4), STRANGE RANGER (overlap 5)

There are many redividers whose words overlap in many different ways and suggest many different questions. Two basic questions for each of the five categories of redividers above are (1) what is the longest word for each category? (2) what word generates the most shorter words? Finally, here are a few examples I especially like because of their meanings: MILDEWED = MILD DEW WED, PALOVERDE = PAL LOVE VERDE or PAL LOVER VERDE, DISCOVERING = DISC COVER RING.

Catdog Show

A cartoon that has become popular in recent years features a character named Catdog, who is half-cat on the front and half-dog on the back, or vice versa, depending on your point of view. Dogs and cats are traditional enemies in popular folklore, which may explain why the words DOG and CAT appear very infrequently in a single litter of letters. A catdog word is a word that has the letters spelling CAT and DOG, and it usually includes other letters. Quality is determined primarily by letter order. The entries that follow come from Webster's 10th. The winning entries for singular and for plural are DOGCATCHER and CATS AND DOGS. The winning entry for letter deletion is DOGCART (how did that R get in there?). The winning entry for anagrams is DOGMATIC, which rearranges to form either DOG, I'M CAT or CAT, I'M DOG. Three honorable mentions include DOGWATCH (for having the letters spelling CAT next to each other and for sounding like the television series *Baywatch*), CATALOGED (for adding ALE to CAT and DOG in one anagram), and CATEGORIZED (for spelling DOG backwards). And two booby prizes for wrong animal hybrids, the single-word entry CATBIRD and the multiple-word entry CAT AND MOUSE. Any other outstanding entries for the Catdog Show? You be the judge.

Not the Poem

Negativity is the name of the game. Each line in this poem begins with words that slide together in charade fashion to form the longer word at the end of the line. They come from the 10th Collegiate, and they appear in the order of their listings. If you do not like the poem, I recommend *Not: The TV Miniseries* followed by *Not: The Movie*.

Not ability brings much notability;
 Not Able ever feeds the notable.
 Not ate, I never eat as I notate.
 Not a ti on music! It's just bad notation;
 Not E on my piano, not that note.
 "Not Ed," I said aloud. "No, Ted," I noted.
 Not ice is in the drink. It's warm. I notice
 Not ice, Able! It's very noticeable!
 Not ice! Boa Rd. on the notice board?
 Not if I, Able, am so notifiable;
 Not if I, cat, I, on short notification:
 Not ill because I really have no-till;
 Not ill age since I also have no-tillage.
 Not I, on ally, speak too notionally
 Not, O Rio, us! Notorious?
 Not rump roast when I call aloud: "No trump!"
 Not with Stan Ding standing, notwithstanding.

Music is in the Ear of the Beholder

The word HEMIDEMISEMIQUAVER is the musical term for a 64th note. It begins with a trio of prefixes, each of which means "half." This was first noted by Borgmann on pp. 204-5 of *Language on Vacation*. Each prefix differs from the others in its first letter only. What Borgmann didn't notice is that the shared letters EMI have a musical significance in themselves: E is the musical note, and MI is the musical syllable for E.

Ping-Pong Logology

Ping-Pong™, listed in Webster's 10th, is a trademark for table tennis, a game usually played by two players. Until recently I thought it was just a word like checkers or chess. In Ping-Pong™, each player uses a small paddle to hit a ball back and forth over a net on a table. The shapes of the letters in the word itself illustrate various elements of the game. The P's are each player about to hit the ball, and the g's are each player's paddle after it has hit the ball. The hyphen represents the net separating the players. The dot on the "i" represents the ball flying through the air after the first player's paddle hit it, and the "o" represents the ball returning to the table for the second player's paddle to return the serve. Dropping the players, paddles and the hyphen from the name of the game leaves "in" to emphasize that the ball on the left side is IN the air and "on" to emphasize that the ball on the right side is ON the table. Last but not least, the TM stands for "tennis match."

Holandric: A Way of Life

One night I asked my son Danny to give me the ultimate dictionary wordplay test. He would open Webster's 10th Collegiate to any page, point to any entry at random, and tell me the word. Then I would try to find or do some special wordplay with it. His finger landed on HOLLANDRIC, a word I'd never heard of. I read its definition: "transmitted by a gene in the nonhomologous portion of the Y chromosome." I noticed two things right away about the word. It is a nine-letter isogram (no letters repeated) and the middle third spells the word AND which reverses to DNA, apparently part of the meaning of the word. I tried anagramming it, and in less than a minute

wrote down LO! RICH DNA! and handed it to my son. The phrase relates to the word—if the phrase is true, it's an anagram, and if false, it's an antigram.

Iota to Jot

According to the 10th Collegiate, an IOTA is “an infinitesimal amount.” The dictionary includes JOT as a synonym of IOTA. The only difference between the spelling of these two words is the letter J in one and the letters I and A in the other. The alphabetic values of I (9) and A (1) add up to the alphabetic value of J (10). IOTA and JOT differ from each other by an infinitesimal amount. On the other hand, if you owe someone a very, very small amount of money, then IOTA is an IOU, since the alphabetic values of T and A add up to the alphabetic value of U (21).

From Wordplay to Playword

If the two words forming WORDPLAY are switched around, the result is PLAYWORD, a syllable-unit reversal of WORDPLAY. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be in any dictionary. Webster's 2nd and the OED list two close calls, PLAYWARD (“playful”) and PLAYWORK (“work that is like play”). Perhaps the magic of wordplay lies in making playward play like a playword.

2002: The End of a Palindromic Era

This year marks the end of an era of palindromic years for all of us born before 1961. During this time four different kinds of palindromic years have come and gone, and the next palindromic year of any kind won't occur until 3000.

- 1961** upside-down year in Arabic numbers, which reads the same when rotated 180° (1881,6009)
- 1991** palindromic year in Arabic numbers, which reads the same in either direction (1881,2002)
- 2000** palindromic year in Roman numerals (MM) (1000=M, 3000=MMM)
- 2002** palindromic year in Arabic numbers (1991, 2112)
- 2002** 2 K-2 in “Y 2-K bug” numbers; palindromic year in computer slang (1001=1 K-1, 3003=3 K-3)

1000 Years By Any Other Name Would Be As Long

We're in a new millennium. Actually, every year we both begin and end a millennium. Dictionaries define the word in Biblical as well as numerical terms. Setting aside the religious element, a millennium is simply a “period of 1000 years.” In the year 2000, the major question in every coffee klatch was whether 200 started this one or ended the last one. Newspapers carried editorials about the question; teachers brought it up with their students. Websites popped up to put in their two thousand cents worth. Chaos appeared immanent, but then an even bigger question appeared on the horizon with three suns arising after the number 2, a poetic way of illustrating this heated word--chiliad. What is a chiliad? It's not an advertisement for a Mexican restaurant. Looking both up in the OED suggests that millennium and chiliad are almost twins in that they both mean “a period of 1000 years” and they refer to the Biblical Book of Revelation.

The two thousand-year words have remarkable, related logological properties: (1) in MILLENNIUM, 6 out of 10 letters are Roman numerals, and they appear in palindromic order (MILLIM), CHILIAD has 5 out of 7 Roman numerals, and three appear in palindromic order (ILI); (2) MILLENNIUM has MEN in it; CHILIAD has CHILD and LAD; (3) MILLENNIUM begins with two

state abbreviations, MI and IL; CHILIAD has three state abbreviations, HI, IL and IA, and it spells out in full two country names, CHILI and CHAD.

Are there any other names that mean "a period of 1000 years"? To make this millennium a thousand times richer, there should be a thousand words meaning "a period of 1000 years." For the third year of this millennium, my contribution is DECADECADECADE which signifies 10 sets (deca) of 10 sets (deca) of a period of ten years (decade). Try coming up with your own term!

The Coming of the Megaannuum, The Going of the Esseejja

The picosecond is one trillionth of a second; at the other end of the space-time-word continuum, Mark Isaak found the MEGAANNUUM, a word with three consecutive doubled letters, that signifies one million years. It is listed in a footnote on page 4457 of "Precambrian animal diversity: Putative phosphatized embryos from the Doushantuo Formation in China," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 97(9). How many picoseconds in a megaannuum?

Mark found ESSEEJJA, a second triple double letter word, which is the name of a Tacanan language in Bolivia, appearing in a table under South American Indian Languages in the 15th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. It would be especially interesting if Esseejja has the highest percentage of double letters of any language.

Pretty Polly

Jay Ames sent a list of poly-words along with comments on their possible meanings in a parallel logological universe. I tried my hand, or wing, at this flight of fancy and came up with the last six. It's fine-feathered fun. It reminded me of the old rock song, "The Bird Is the Word." Good Golly, Miss Molly, here's Polly!

POLYANDROUS no Andrews singing sis
 POLYGRAPHIC a birdy tattle-tale
 POLYSYLLABIC see Polyglottal
 POLYGRANTA a fondness for pomegranate seeds
 POLYALCOHOL booze for birds
 POLYCENTRIC a parrot turns into a penny
 POLYGON she flew away

POLYGLOTTAL swears in many tongues
 POLYPHONOUS a birdy phone phreak
 POLYUNSATURATED never goes out in the rain
 POLYMORPHOUS a sleepy one, or shape shifter
 POLYCARBONATE the parrot ate the carbon copy
 POLYGENE cowboy singer Autry's parrot
 POLYNOMIAL she didn't get any food

Shift Work

Peter Newby writes "In British folklore the SWAN SHIFT is a magic garment of swan's feathers owned by a fairy. The wearer has the power of shape-shifting between a maiden and a swan. But in New Bybwen, a SWAN shift is, essentially, a lettershift progression: SWAN-txbo-uycp-vzdq-WAER WAER is an early modern English spelling of WARE as both noun and adjective. (Think of a tradesman's wares or the need to be 'wary' and you have the meanings.)

"Whilst one could contrive a relationship between the words of this picturesque progression, a far more satisfactory result pertains with SHIFT WORK. Shift the letters of WORK 21 steps along the alphabet and one has RILE, a dialect word for 'play, frolic'! Using these two words, one can construct the doublet WORK-wore-wire-wile-RILE which takes one from work to play."

Alligator Gladiator

In this poem by Anil, the letters in the boldface words anagram to the words on the right:

Alligator Gladiator at Girl Alligator Ado

“Rot a gill, alligator!”

Alligator ducked, gladiator lucked.

Alligator dived, gladiator lived.

Alligator dipped, gladiator lipped:

“Alligator died!” (Gladiator lied...)

Alligator dined, gladiator-lined.

“Rot, aid algae tea, gladiator!”

Here’s the Gladiator’s story from birth to gutsy grave in a transpositional word ladder: **Birth.** Biter-bater. “Gater.” **Grave.** A biter-bater is a gladiator who claims to bate (“bate” *and* subdue ferocious animals e.g., lions.

International Neighbours

Sir Jeremy Morse sent the incredible compilation of words below. As he explains, “By neighbours I mean words which *must* appear next to each other in an alphabetically-arranged word list. In a normal dictionary these can take one form, exemplified by WHO and WHOA, CHOLER and CHOLERA, ETHNOGRAPHIC and ETHNOGRAPHICA. In a reverse dictionary examples would be BASE and ABASE, SYMMETRICALLY and ASYMMETRICALLY. Where words of the same length are listed together, more variety is possible. The following go through the alphabet, the neighbours being not merely etymologically unrelated but of different international origins, as recorded in Chambers Dictionary.”

COMA Gr COMB Old Eng

BLOB imit BLOC Fr

PARSEC Gr/Lat PARSED Lat

PUTTED Old Eng PUTTEE Hindi

SERE Old Eng SERF Lat

CLEF Fr CLEG Old Norse

SHAG Old Eng SHAH Persian

QUASH Fr QUASI Lat

RAI Arab RAJ Hindi

TAJ Arab TAK Scot

ILK Scot ILL Old Norse

REAL Lat REAM Arab

ZOOM imit ZOON Gr

INDIGN Lat INDIGO Span

TRIO It TRIP Fr

SUP Old Eng SUQ Arab

SUQ Arab SUR Fr

PARADOR Sp PARADOS Fr

HIDEOUS Fr HIDEOUT Old Eng

BEAT Old Eng BEAU Fr

PERU name PERV Dutch

SLAV name SLAW Dutch

FLEW Old Eng FLEX Lat

PAX Lat PAY Fr

WALTZ Old Eng WALTZ Ger

Kickshaws Bulletin

Recently my computer had a major problem, virus, or evil spell placed on it that resulted in the loss of many files and lack of access to AOL. Among other things, my cabinet of saved email, including Kickshaws, was deleted. If you emailed me any Kickshaw that doesn’t appear here, please email them to me again. I apologize on behalf of my computer for its behavior.

I failed to attribute two August Kickshaws: AEIOU(Y) x 2 Words by Susan Thorpe, Logological Jury Duty by Rich Lederer. My computer apologizes on behalf of me for my behavior.