ONE HUNDRED SHADES OF EE
Dmitri Borgmann’s Dream Comes True

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A long time ago in a Word Ways far, far away—November 1978, to be exact—I published “Orthograftiti,” an article that explored the chasm that stretches between phonology, the way words sound, and orthography, the way words are spelled. In that disquisition, I presented the multilore ways that the sounds SH, AY, EE, EYE, OH, and OO can be written.

Six years later, in “The Ultimate Homonym Group,” in the November, 1984, issue, Dmitri Borgmann snatched the relay racer’s baton and ran with it to a finish line of 84 different spellings of the long E sound. After he laid out his capacious at-EE’s list, Borgmann mused, “A group of 84 letter homonyms is nice - but a group of 100 would be even nicer. I therefore invite readers to try finding another 16 representatives of the long E sound.” Now, more than three decades later, I am able to o'erleap that challenge.

In hooking up graphemes with phonemes, Borgmann and I shared one guiding principle: Since sound and spelling don’t match in English, how does one know how to allocate which printed letters to which sounds? In particular, if a silent consonant follows or precedes a vowel or combination of vowels, as in aisle, feign, rhea, and ginkgo, should that consonant be credited to the variant spelling of that vowel sound? Independently, we decided that it should. In other words, if a certain sound springs from the territory inhabited by a cluster of letters, all those letters are assigned responsibility for generating that sound.

Ladies and gentlemen! Boys and girls! Lettermen, estrogeniuses, and logologists of all ages! Step right up and witness Dmitri Borgmann’s dream, which he articulated in 1984, come true 31 years later.

First, the undercard: my runner-up candidates for orthographic heterogeneity. For EE’s of consumption, I list alphabetically the cluster spellings that generate each sound under consideration. The total is more than double the number I displayed 37 years ago.

**SH** (27 variants):

- C appreciate
- CE ocean
- CH chef
- CHE quiche
- CHSI fuchsia
- CI suspicion
- HS Hsian
- PSH pshaw
- S sugar
- SC Crescendo
- SCH schwa
- SCHSCH
- gescholzia
- SCHE tusche
- SCIO conscious
- SEO nauseous
- SH shoe
- SHCH shchlo
- SHE wished
- SJ sjöml
- SS assure
- SSH Asshur
- SSHE Bysshe
- SSI mission
- SZ szlachta
- T initiate
- TI nation
EYE (36 variants):
A naive  AIY Rubaiyat  HI rhino  IJ rijsttafel
AAI braai  AU Dolgallau  HY why  IS island
AE maestro  AY Haydn  I I  IVE fivepence
AEI scarabaei  AYE aye  IC indict  O coyote
AI samurai  EI heist  IE tie  UI guidance
AIE shanghaied  EIGH height  IG sign  UY buy
AILLE trouvaille  EY geyser  IGH high  UYE guyed
AILLES Versailles  EYE eye  IGHE sighed  Y my
AIS aisle  HAI kowhai  IGHY Nighy  YE rye

OH (50 variants):
AO Curacao  EO yeoman  O go  OL yolk
AOH pharaoh  EOT Peugeot  OA oak  OO brooch
AU chauvinist  EOU Seoul  OAH American  OP de trop
AUD Rimbaud  EUX Clarenceux  Pharaoh  OS apropos
AULD La  EW sew  OAT boatswain  OST Prevost
Rochefoucauld  EWE sewed  OD Pernod  OT depot
AULT Foucault  GO ginkgo  OE toe  OTE picoted
AULX Prevaulx  HAU haute couture  OEH Poehler  OTS bon mots
AUT comme il faut  HAUD Milhaud  OEW Loewe  OU soul
AUX faux  HAUT haut monde  OG cologne  OUGH dough
EAU bureau  HO ghost  OGH Van Gogh  OUGHE furloughed
EAUE plateaued  HOA whoa  OH oh  OW tow
EAUX trousseaux  HOE echoed  OHE ohed  OWE owe

This list has inspired me to become such a Wizard of OHs that I now unveil a twenty-three word sentence in which every word yields an OH sound, yet each OH is spelled differently:

Although Seoul yeoman folk owe Pharaoh's Vaud bureau hoed oats, gauche Van Gogh, swallowing Curacao cognac oh so soulfully, sews grosgrain, pictoted, brooched chapeaux.

The AY list (52 variants):
A aorta  AY day  EIG feign  EYE obeyed
AA baal  AY day played  EIGH sleigh  EYO eyot
AE sundae  AYY sayyid  EIGHE weighed  EZ rendezvous
AI aim  E egg  EII Pompeii  HA chaos
AIG campaign  EA break  EIL Soleil  HAI kowhai
AIGH straight  EAGH Loch Neagh  EILLE Marseilles  HEY whey
AIS Beaujolais  EAY Reay  ER dossier  I feng shui
AIT parfait  EE matinee  ES demesne  IE lingerie
### OO (52 variants):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AULT Sault</th>
<th>IEWE viewed</th>
<th>OUGHA brougham</th>
<th>UEUE queue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAU beauty</td>
<td>IOUX Sioux</td>
<td>OUGHE sloughed</td>
<td>UGH Hugh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU sleuth</td>
<td>IU jiu-jitsu</td>
<td>OUI bouillon</td>
<td>UGHE Hughes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUX Devereux</td>
<td>O to</td>
<td>OUP coup</td>
<td>UH buhl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EW brew</td>
<td>OE canoe</td>
<td>OUPE coupied</td>
<td>UI suit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWE chewed</td>
<td>OEU manoeure</td>
<td>OUR bourgeois</td>
<td>US au jus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEU rheumatic</td>
<td>OO boot</td>
<td>OUS rendezvous</td>
<td>UT debut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOO whoop</td>
<td>OOE mooed</td>
<td>OUSE rendezvoused</td>
<td>UTE debuted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOU silhouette</td>
<td>OOH pooh</td>
<td>OUT ragout</td>
<td>UU muumuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU rhubarb</td>
<td>OOHE ooded</td>
<td>OUTS bouts-rides</td>
<td>UYL Schuylkill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEU lieu</td>
<td>OU soup</td>
<td>OUX roux</td>
<td>W cwm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEUX adieux</td>
<td>OUE denouement</td>
<td>U gnu</td>
<td>WO two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEW view</td>
<td>OUGH through</td>
<td>UE true</td>
<td>WOO Twoomey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now for the main EE-vent, 100 iterations of a single sound—the luscious harvest from decades of playing with the shape-shifting collide-o-scope of English orthography. About half of the examples are Borgmann’s, about half mine. Let’s start with 50 uncapsalized words in which variants of the sound EE are embedded:

| A bologna       | EY valley   | IH shih tzu | OISE chamoised |
| AE aegis        | EYE keyed   | ILL tortilla| OY buoy |
| AEL utraei      | HE rheostat | ILLLE ratatouille | OYE buoyed |
| AGH shillelgh   | HEA wheat   | IS debris   | UAY quay |
| AH shillalah    | HEE whee    | IT esprit   | UEE marquee |
| AY cay          | HEY dinghey | IX grand prix | UI quiche |
| E be            | HIE dinghies| IY teriyaki | UIE soliloquies |
| EA heat         | HOE diarrhoea| JÖ sjömil   | UIS marquis |
| EE see          | HY dinghy   | OE amoeba   | UIT por aquit |
| EI weird        | I ski       | OEI onomatopoeia | UY guyot |
| EIP receipt     | IE grief    | OI chamoix  | Y happy |
| EO people       | IG vignette | OIS chamois | YE gramarye |
| ES desmesne     |             |             | YS fleur-de-lys |

Now cast your eyes upon 25 proper nouns, with accompanying pronunciations where necessary:

AL Dalziel (Dee-ell)  
AI Ngaio (Nah-zhee-oh)  
IEH Diehl  
IEU Nieuwe Maas (Nee-veh)
AIY Rubaiyat
AOGHAI Dun Laoghaire (Lear-ee)
AOI Aoife (Ee-feh)
AOIGH Laoighis (Leash)
EAGH Killyleagh
EAU Beauchamp (Bee-chim)
EIGH Leigh
EL Belvoir (Beaver)
HAE Rhaetia
HEI Rheims
HI Gandhi
IGH Denbigh
IGHT Kircudbright (Cur-coo-bree)
II Hawaii
ILH Anouilh (Ah-noo-ee)
J Ljubljana (Lee-you-blee-a-nuh)
OUGH Colclough (Coke-lee)
U Llanruug (Lan-reeg)
UE Portuguese
UIA Pacquiao
YY Krasnyy Sulin

Last up are 25 combinations of letters and punctuation marks. This category played a major role in Dmitri Borgmann’s 1984 taxonomy and is not included in my SH, EYE, OH, AY, and OO clusters:

A- bologna-tasting
E- he-man
E’ we’ve
E. E. Rockaway
EA- tea-scented
EA’ sea’s
EE- knee-deep
EY’ key’s

EE- kidney-shaped
HEE! whee!
HEY’ dinghey’s
HI’ Gandhi’s
I- teriyaki-flavored
ILH’ Anouilh’s
ILLE’ ratatouille’s
IS- debris-covered
IT’s esprit’s

IX’ grand prix’s
OUGH’ Colclojugh’s
OY- buoy-shaped
UAY’ quay’s
V- V-grooved
Y- bushy-tailed
’ve maître d’
. D.C.

Good grief! Gee! Whee! With a volley of 100 conceived grand prix feats in receipt, people are keyed up and buoyed by the uncanny esprit of the marquee EE.