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QUELQUE CHOSE

DMITRI A. BORGMANN
Dayton, Washington

The word kickshaw is derived from the French quelque chose, meaning "something"; in English, the word means "a bauble, trifle, or knock-knock" or "a fancy tidbit." Kickshaws transpose to sick hawks, meaning "unhealthy attempts to clear the throat of phlegm" - not, I trust, an accurate description of the following.

Beginning at the Beginning

The alphabetically first meaningful combination of three letters has always been AAA - best known to Americans, probably, as standing either for the American Automobile Association or for a comparatively narrow shoe width size. More interesting meanings of the letters as an initialism include Acute Anxiety Attack, American Albino Association, and Awaiting Aircraft Availability.

More remarkable than any of the initialisms, however, are the three letters united to form a word, one adorned with two palindromically-positioned circumflexes: AA'A. Shunned by all general dictionaries, the word has led a furtive existence, recognized by an occasional medical dictionary only. It is certainly eye-catching, being the only modern English word to use three consecutive A's. (KAAAWA, a town on the northeast corner of Oahu Island, about 15 miles north of Honolulu, immediately comes to mind, but this is a proper name, not an ordinary word.) The few medical dictionaries listing the AA'A DISEASE define it as the endemic anemia, hookworm disease, or ancylostomiasis of ancient Egypt. The term ANCYLOSTOMIASIS is, in its turn, equated with various mutually nonsynonymic diseases: dochmiasis, brickmakers' anemia, tunnel anemia, miners' cachexia, Egyptian chlorosis, and uncinariasis.

The word appears 28 times in the Ebers Medical Papyrus and 9 times in the Hearst Medical Papyrus. These are two of the ancient Egyptian medical papyri, both dated at around 1550 B.C. Both are believed to be copies to works hundreds of years, or even a thousand years, older - works lost to posterity. The actual identification of the ailment is uncertain. Two eminent authorities, F. Jonckheere and B. Ebbell, have identified the disease with bilharziasis or schistosomiasis (blood fluke infestation). Another expert, P. Chalougui, argues that the disease was much more probably a polyhelminthic infestation: a multiple parasitic infection involving bilharziasis, ancylostomiasis (hookworm disease), ascariasis (roundworm infestation), oxyuriasis (threadworm infestation), and/or other worm infestations.

In addition to being a word, AAA is also a name. According
to William R. Cooper's An Archaic Dictionary, from the Egyptian Assyrian, and Etruscan Monuments and Papyri (London: Bagster, 1876), AAA was the chief of the signet-bearers in the land of Kens (a nome in Nubia sacred to Khnum-Ra, the incarnation of the divine breath or spirit of Amen Ra), in the court of King Aspalut of the XXVth dynasty. Aren't you going to wonder how you ever managed to get this far in life without that bit of esoteric knowledge?

From the Ridiculous to the Sublime

Getting interested attention in recent years has been one of Hollywood's more uninhibited young actresses, a certain BO DEREK. Even logologists, however, seem not to have noticed the startling similarity of the actress's screen name to that of Harvard University's current president, DEREK BOK. Could the actress have been trying to upgrade her image by associating it with America's most prestigious university, when she settled on her screen name?

Our Rotating and Revolving Alphabet

American children are expected to learn 62 printed symbols: 26 capital letters, 26 small letters, and 10 numerals. A careful examination of these symbols shows that they could have been designed by an evil genius bent on making it as difficult as possible for young children to master them.

In the physical world, changing the position of an object does not alter its nature -- chairs, dominoes, and teapots remain what they are no matter how they are placed -- and children soon internalize the principle of object constancy. They therefore reverse or invert letters and numerals freely in their first encounters with them. Adults, however, insist perversely that each symbol must be placed in a certain position only. This demand is reinforced by the fact that some of the letters and numerals turn into other symbols when they are rotated or revolved in certain ways: they become identical with those other symbols or at least acquire a strong resemblance to them. The catalog of such relationships is an impressive one:

Left-to-right reversals: b/d, p/q, E/3
Same-plane inversions or upside-down placements: M/W, 4/h, 6/9, 7/L, E/3, g/6, n/u, p/d, q/b
Same-plane 90-degree rotations: N/Z, M/E, E/W, 3/M, C/U

Adults must learn to cope with additional symbol relationships. For instance, the numeral 8, rotated 90 degrees in either direction in its own plane, turns into the mathematical symbol for infinity (∞). The Greek capital letter sigma (ς) resembles a capital E in its usual position. Rotate it 90 degrees in a clockwise direction, and it resembles a capital M; rotate it another 90 degrees in the same direction, and it resembles the numeral 3; rotate it yet another 90 degrees in the same direction and it resembles a capital W. The Greek small letter omega (ω) resembles a lowercase w.

Rotating it 180 degrees, it resembles a capital N (‘), flip it in its own plane, and in its own position it resembles a capital symbol X in its own plane, less than”). It is a left parenthesis.

As already change at all, 0; the majority 1, and the small letter v often make a or even unav

How many symbol scenes

Political Puzzle

For the sake of unusual puzz

1. What is the answer?
2. What is the answer?

To solve the need to enga

Cymric Sotad

The constant that has b

two features of palindromes before comes a science magazine, 1979, pp. 15-17

NIA, N I L

(Unlike h

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Rotate it 180 degrees in either direction in its own plane, and it resembles a lowercase m. Take the Greek capital letter gamma (Γ), flip it over (perform a left-to-right reversal of the letter in its own plane), then rotate it 180 degrees in either direction in its own plane, and it turns into a capital L. Turn the minuscule v on one side in its own plane, and it becomes the mathematical symbol > ("is greater than"). Turn the v on its other side in its own plane, and it becomes the mathematical symbol < ("is less than"). The capital C resembles an opening parenthesis as it is; a left-to-right reversal of the C transforms it into a closing parenthesis.

As already indicated, some symbols resemble others without any change at all. Thus, the capital O closely resembles the numeral 0; the majuscule letter I, the minuscule letter i, the small letter i, and the numeral 1 all closely resemble one another; and the small letter g resembles the numeral 9. These striking similarities often make a contextual differentiation of symbol identity useful or even unavoidable.

How many symbol relationships has my impromptu survey of the symbol scene overlooked?

Political Puzzles

For the serious student of foreign affairs, we present a couple of unusual political problems:

1. What independent nation of the world has literally gone bananas in the past 5 years?
2. What such nation has been governed by a pair of shoes and more - for almost two decades?

To solve these problems with aplomb and dispatch, you will need to engage both hemispheres of your cerebral cortex. You will find your right-hemisphere abilities particularly important; holistic, synthetic abilities and a Gestalt perception capable of organizing and processing data in terms of complex wholes, relying on imagery and structural similarity.

Cymric Sotadics

The construction of sensible palindromic sentences is an art that has been stagnating among English-language logologists, who have been concentrating on length at the expense of quality - two features of palindromes forever at war with each other. News of palindromic progress on the part of our Cymric soulmates therefore comes as a refreshing breath of air. The five following palindromes were the winners in a competition sponsored by the Welsh science magazine, Y Gwyddonydd (Volume 17, Number 4, December 1979, pp. 159-160):

NIA, NI LEFAR ' ARA ' FEL ' I NAIN
(Unlike her grandmother, Niua does not speak quickly)
OD NAD WYF Y FYW DAN DO
(It is strange that I am not to live under a roof)
LLE DA I DDIADELL!
(An ideal place for a flock of sheep!)
Lôn AC YNYSLYN CANOL?
(A road with an island in the middle?)
A DYMÆR ADDEWID DIWEDDAR AM Y DA
(And this is the latest promise concerning the cattle)
Note how all of the palindromes speak of a simple, rustic life.

Palindromes No. 2 is a line fitting that form of Welsh poetry
known as Cynghanedd. The line satisfies its strict metric rules,
involving alliteration and rhyme.

Socially Useful Logology
The time has come to engage recreational linguistics in a higher
cause - that of serving socially utilitarian ends. One way of real­
izing that noble purpose is to evolve words which exhibit extraordi­
ary, record-breaking logological characteristics, at the same
time conveying essential meanings for which one-word terms have
heretofore been missing from the English language. For starters,
I offer three examples:

1. EXOTARTRATOXE. The longest bona fide English word palin­
drome. It designates a bathtub skillfully suspended from the ceiling
and just below it. The prospective bather gets into it by climbing
a rope ladder. It is valued for economizing both on bathroom floor
space and on water (the bather uses coarse sand as a cleansing
agent). The do-it-yourself assembly kit in which it is sold at
all leading stores includes a 687-page instruction manual and
a 32-rung rope ladder handcrafted from the finest sisal hemp,
free of charge. Only $975.95 - get yours while the supply lasts!

2. LASCHTSCHPHRONG. The only English word featuring 10 consec­
tutive consonants. The verb is defined thus: "To worship the herma­
phrodite gods and goddesses of Ancient Atlantis on days of the
month evenly divisible by three." To achieve maximum potentiation
of his or her prayers, the supplicant needs to direct them to the
AA deities from inside one of the subterranean chambers of the
Great Pyramid of Egypt: preferably, one not yet discovered.

3. EVITARETILLA. The longest English word that becomes another
word (ALLITERATIVE) when it is spelled backwards. It refers to
a coordinating conjunction placed between, and linking, two words
or phrases which have no grammatical or semantic relationship
of any sort. Its function is to preserve intact writing or printing
space that would otherwise almost certainly be devoted to meaning­
less twaddle.

These words are just a humble beginning. Readers of Word Ways
are cordially invited to contribute to a comprehensive glossary
of such terms.

Butterflies on the Loose
For the past two centuries, philologists have been at great pains
to demonstrate the close relationship between different languages
and their in­
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and Danish, BYW; the Pol­
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The Good Book
Faith Eckle
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by Dr. Charl­
in 1962 by the
and their individual words. Logologists have, as a consequence, been equally assiduous in trying to show that there is virtually no relationship between the words for a given concept in the various languages.

Ideal for logological purposes is the case of the word BUTTERFLY, so normally designated in English. How do other languages call the butterfly? Well, the French word is PAPILLON; the Spanish, MARIPOSA; the Italian, FARFALLA; the Portuguese, BORBOLETA; the German, SCHMETTERLING; the Swedish, FJÄRIL; the Norwegian and Danish, SOMMERFUGL; the Dutch, VLINDE; the Welsh, GLOYN BYW; the Polish, MOTYL; the Greek, PSYCHE; and the Hawaiian, PULELEHUA. Thirteen different languages, thirteen different words! Is my selection of languages biased? Only slightly. I have purposefully omitted Latin (PAPILIO), Slovak (MOTYL), and Maltese (FARFETT).

How many other unrelated terms for the butterfly are there in still other languages? Is there some other concept displaying even greater designational diversity?

The Good Book — Pre-visited

Faith Eckler's February 1984 Kickshaws column presented Bible statistics accumulated by a convict sentenced to a long term of solitary confinement. The statistics had been published in 1877 as part of a book, Curiosities of the Bible. The patient prisoner had found that the King James Version of the Bible includes 773,692 words and 3,586,489 letters; uses the word AND 16,277 times; and similarly vital information about the Scriptures.

That convict was, alas, upstaged almost a century earlier. The August 1778 issue of a British periodical, the Moral Magazine, carried a comprehensive set of such statistics, some of them contradicting the convict's figures. For example, while MM agreed that the number of words in the Bible was 773,692, it stated that the number of letters was only 3,566,480 (2,728,100 in the Old Testament, 838,380 in the New Testament), and claimed that the word AND occurred in the Bible only 46,227 times (35,543 in the Old Testament, 10,684 in the New Testament). Included as well were some figures for the Apocrypha, said to contain 6,081 verses and 152,185 words (the counter must have tired at some point, for the number of letters in the Apocrypha was not mentioned in MM). The magazine stated that it had taken three years to compile the statistics presented.

The discrepancies between the two sets of statistics should be profoundly disturbing to all good Christians. What reader of Word Ways will be the first to re-count the letters and words of the Bible, to establish the facts? I suggest that each volunteer register his or her intention with the editor, to avoid duplication of effort.

Of possibly greater interest is the volume Is That in the Bible?, by Dr. Charles F. Potter, first published in 1933 and republished in 1962 by the Fawcett World Library in New York. The work asks...
and answers many hundreds of questions about the Bible. Some representative examples:

1. Where is the death penalty commanded for disobedient children?
2. What verse quotes Jesus as opposed to preventive medicine?
3. Where is music compared to vinegar on soda?
4. What woman preacher taught fornication?
5. Who made lime from a king’s skeleton?
6. What is the shortest verse of the Old Testament?

**Missing Opposites**

Many English words and names are unbalanced, in the sense that their logical opposites do not exist. Thus, we have FOREARMS but not HINDARMS; we live on a CONTINENT, but have no PROTINENT to which to migrate if we so choose; a famous clock is known as BIG BEN, but has no correlative LITTLE BEN to go with it; the PACIFIC OCEAN has yet to be offset by a MIFIC OCEAN, and the INDIAN OCEAN by an OUTDIAN OCEAN; the State of CONNECTICUT is without its twin, the State of PRONECTICUT; YEOMEN cannot mate with YEOWOMEN; we use HANDKERCHIEFS but scorn FOOTKERCHIEFS; we can buy a ROCKING CHAIR, but not a ROCKING TABLE (useful for ouija boards); university students are asked to prepare MASTER’S THeses, but not SLAVE’S THeses; the State of MARYLAND is without its twin, the State of JOHNLAND; we sometimes use ELBOW GREASE, but never KNEE GREASE; we practice PENCILMANSHIP, but not PENCILMANNISHIP; NORWAY is without a NEITHERWAY preceding it; English has PRONOUNS, but has overlooked ANTONYNS; we like POPCORN, but have never even given a thought to MOMCORN; ICE CREAM is nice, but STEAM CREAM would be even nicer, since it rhymes; the concern for CIVIL RIGHTS does not extend to CIVIL LEFTS; some of us live in BUNGALOWS, but none of us in BUNGAHIGHS; mankind has known about SYCAMORE trees since Biblical times, but has yet to discover SYCALESS trees; our LAKE SUPERIOR has no LAKE INFERIOR to go with it; our zoos feature MONKIES but not NONLOCKS; and so on, ad infimum and ad nauseam.

Research into missing opposites has turned up some curious specimens of a higher order. If we reverse both portions of a term, we ordinarily produce only another missing opposite. For example, the opposite of URBAN RENEWAL is RURAL LAPSE, not particularly edifying. However, if we double-reverse HANDSPRING, we suddenly have FOOTFALL, an already existing word totally unrelated in meaning to the original. A weaker example in the same vein is the title of a former television science-fiction series, LOST IN SPACE. Its double-reversal is FOUND IN TIME (“The money was found in time to pay the loan shark off”). Unfortunately, there is no systematic way of searching for more such examples. Will Word Ways readers undertake to assist in the search for such words and names? The stakes are, as you know, high!

**The Ten Most Common English Words**

According to the Computational Analysis of Present-Day American English by Brown University, in English and HE – in that order – plebeian of all time.

1. THE. A true to mean.
2. OF. The one.
3. AND. A rea con.
4. TO. A hot too.
5. A. The w point.
6. IN. A hop chemica.
7. THAT. A that t.
8. IS. A for ver.
9. WAS. An a reve.
10. HE. A rev.

The logolog do not end word on the. Continuing the the is left as an Untex on the. In the spirit of the I have exam limiting them of the Funk section of Websters’ these lists, culine and female:

Alexis
Alva
Bobby
Carmen
Carol
Chris
Clare

This list made
English by Henry Kucera and W. Nelson Francis (Providence Rl: Brown University Press, 1967), the ten most frequently used words in English are THE, OF, AND, TO, A, IN, THAT, IS, WAS, and HE - in that order. How logologically interesting are these most plebeian of all words? More than most of us would suspect:

1. **THE.** A transposal of the Dutch word HET, which happens also to mean "the."
2. **OF.** The only common English word in which an F is pronounced like a V.
3. **AND.** A reversal of DNA, deoxyribonucleic acid, the chromosomal constituent of living cell nuclei which determines what each of us is.
4. **TO.** A homonym of TOO, TWO, and TU - as in TU QUOQUE ("you, too").
5. **A.** The very first English word, from an alphabetical standpoint.
6. **IN.** A homonym of INN and a reversal of Nl, symbol for the chemical element nickel.
7. **THAT.** An alphagram or first-letter change of the question that it answers (WHAT?).
8. **IS.** A form of the most irregular of all English verbs - a verb the various forms of which start with five different letters of the alphabet (A, B, W, L, and S); also, a reversal of S1 ("yes").
9. **WAS.** Another form of the most irregular English verb, and a reversal of the word SAW.
10. **HE.** A reversal of the interjection EH.

The logologically interesting qualities of the most common words do not end with the first ten of them. For instance, the eleventh word on the list IS IT, a reversal of IT, the musical syllable. Continuing the record to the 100th or 1000th most common word is left as an exercise for readers.

**Unisex on the March**

In the spirit of advancing the interests of the unisex movement, I have examined the lists of given names in three dictionaries, limiting themselves to the most common such names: the 1963 edition of the Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary, the 1949 edition of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, and the 1963 edition of Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. Browsing through these lists, I have found 33 given names identified as both masculine and feminine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alexis</th>
<th>Connie</th>
<th>Jean</th>
<th>Marion</th>
<th>Shirley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alva</td>
<td>Dale</td>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>Meredith</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
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<td>Bobby</td>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>JO</td>
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<td>Terry</td>
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<td>Carmen</td>
<td>Evelyn</td>
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<td>Pat</td>
<td>Toby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Robin</td>
<td>Vivian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Gene</td>
<td>Leslie</td>
<td>Ronnie</td>
<td>Willie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>Hilary</td>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This list makes no pretense of being complete or even comprehensive.
in its coverage. It would be interesting to see how long the list can be made. For starters, the editor once attended an American Names Society talk in which the names Cary, Frankie, Jackie, Lou, Ray, Val, Joyce, Tracy, Jocelyn, Leigh, Noel and Sydney had all been identified as unisex. Won't you help extend it? Use any sources you like!

An Exercise in Synonymy

Existing thesauruses and crossword puzzle dictionaries can be most unhelpful when it comes to providing synonyms for some particular word or term. As an example, I cite the heart condition commonly known as ANGINA PECTORIS, which is marked by attacks of chest pains. You will not find the following collection of synonyms for the term in any synonymicon:

Angina
Angina Cordis
Angor
Angor Pectoris
Breast Pang
Cardiac Angina
Cardiac Neuralgia
Cardiagras
Cardiogmus
Heart Pain
Heart Spasm
Heartstroke
Neuralgia Cordis
Prunella
Spasm of the Chest

The synonyms just listed have been culled from the principal unabridged and large medical dictionaries - but without any systematic method for locating them. How many more designations for this specific heart condition are there, lurking in the bushes?

A Name-Finding Problem

Hidden in the two-word term A CHANDELIER are at least 18 names of nations. How many of them can you locate in, say, 30 minutes? It is entirely possible that, while missing some of my names, you will discover ones that I have overlooked. Mine range in length from 3 to 7 letters. Can you expand this range? You may not use any letter more often than it appears in the phrase A CHANDELIER.

Two-Letter Transadditions

I have been amusing myself with the thought that it is always possible to take a word or name, add two letters to it, and then rearrange all of the letters to spell some sort of reasonable word, name, or phrase. As a test case, I have taken the names of 58 well-known European cities, producing the following results. All of the cities are present or former capitals.

1. AMSTERDAM (The Netherlands): DISARMAMENT
2. ANDORRA (Andorra): ROAD BRAND
3. ANDORRA LA VELLA (Andorra): DOLLAR AVALANCHER
4. ANDORRA-LA-VIEJA (Andorra): A JAVELINA OR ZERDA
5. ANGORA (Turkey): A PARAGON
6. ANKARA (Turkey): ARKANSAS
7. ATHENS (Greece): UNCHASTE
8. BELFAST (Northern Ireland): SHIFTABLE
9. BELGRADE (Yugoslavia): BARELEGGED
10. BERLIN (Germany): RINSABLE
11. BERN (Switzerland): BANKER
12. BERNE (Switzerland): BERN
13. BONN (West Germany): BRAND
14. BRATISLAVA (Czechoslovakia): SAVAGE
15. BRUSSELS (Belgium): BUSS
16. BUCHAREST (Romania): BUSH
17. BUDAPEST (Hungary): BUST
18. CARDIFF (Wales): BIRD
19. COPENHAGEN (Denmark): HANG
20. DANZIG (Poland): ZIG
21. DUBLIN (Republic of Ireland): DIN
22. EAST BERLIN (East Germany): BRIN
23. EDINBURGH (Scotland): BURG
24. GDANSK (Poland): DASK
25. GENEVA (Switzerland): NAVA
26. GIBRALTAR (Spain): GIBI
27. HAGUE, THE (Holland): HAGE
28. HELSINKI (Finnland): KINH
29. KAUNAS (Lithuania): NASK
30. KIEV (Ukraine): KIVE
31. LONDON (England): DONL
32. LUXEMBOURG (Luxembourg): BUXI
33. MADRID (Spain): DAIM
34. MINSK (Belarus): NSIM
35. MONACO (Monaco): ANCO
36. MOSCOW (Russia): CMOS
37. NICOSIA (Cyprus): SNICO
38. OSLO (Norway): ONSL
39. PARIS (France): RAPS
40. PRAGUE (Czecho-Slovakia): GARE
41. REYKJAVIK (Iceland): JAVIR
42. RIGA (Latvia): GIRA
43. RIGA (Latvia): RIGA
44. ROME (Italy): MERO
45. SAN MARINO (San Marino): NRAS
46. SOFIA (Bulgaria): SOFA
47. STOCKHOLM (Sweden): HOLMS
48. TALLINN (Estonia): LINT
49. TIRANA (Albania): ANIR
50. TRIESTE (Italy): EIST
51. VALETTA (Malta): TELVA
52. VATICAN (Vatican City): VATCAT
53. VIENNA (Austria): NAVE
54. VIENNA (Austria): NAVE
55. VILNIUS (Lithuania): LIVNI
56. WARSAW (Poland): SAWW
57. WEST BERLIN (West Germany): BERL
58. ZAGREB (Yugoslavia): GREG

Many of the designations are quite reasonable, but others are less so. It is up to you to seek and
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12. BERNE (Switzerland): ENROBED
13. BONN (West Germany): BENSON
14. BRATISLAVA (Slovakia): TRAVIS A. BLAIR
15. BRUSSELS (Belgium): SUBURBLESS
16. BUCHAREST (Romania): SUBCHAPITERS
17. BUDAPEST (Hungary): DISPUTABLE
18. CARDIFF (Wales): FAIR-FACED
19. COPENHAGEN (Denmark): CHANGEPERSON
20. DANZIG (Danzig): DAZZLING
21. DUBLIN (Ireland): BUILDING
22. EAST BERLIN (East Germany): CELEBRATIONS
23. EDINBURGH (Scotland): UNDERBRIGHT
24. GDANSK (Danzig): SNAKE GOD
25. GENEVA (League of Nations): ENGRAVED
26. GIBRALTAR (Gibraltar): DR. GALBRAITH
27. HAGUE, THE (The Netherlands): KATE HUGHES
28. HELSINKI (Finland): SHRINELIKE
29. KAUNAS (Lithuania): UNALASKA
30. KIEV (The Ukraine): KNIVES
31. LISBON (Portugal): NOBELIST
32. LONDON (The United Kingdom): NONSOLID
33. LUXEMBOURG (Luxembourg): REGULAR/BUXOM (clothing size)
34. MADRID (Spain): DISARMED
35. MINSK (The Soviet Union): KANTISM
36. MONACO (Monaco): CAMEROON
37. MOSCOW (The Soviet Union): CODWORMS
38. NICOSIA (Cyprus): CITATIONS
39. OSLO (Norway): SCHOOL
40. PARIS (France): WARSHIP
41. PRAGUE (Czechoslovakia): UPGRADED
42. REYKJAVIK (Iceland): KIRK J. HARVEY
43. RIGA (Latvia): TRAGIC
44. ROME (Italy): MORALE
45. SAN MARINO (San Marino): MARINATIONS
46. SOFIA (Bulgaria): OARFISH
47. STOCKHOLM (Sweden): THOMAS LOCKE
48. TALLINN (Estonia): SLANT LINE
49. TIRANA (Albania): PARTISAN
50. TRIESTE (Trieste): RESETTING
51. VADUZ (Liechtenstein): ZOUAVED
52. VALLETTA (Malta): LEAST VITAL
53. VATICAN CITY (Vatican City): L. TITICACA NAVY
54. VIENNA (Austria): VENETIAN
55. VILNIUS (Lithuania): INCLUSIVE
56. WARSAW (Poland): JAWWARDS
57. WEST BERLIN (West Berlin): NEIL BRESTER
58. ZAGREB (Croatia): BEGAZERS

Many of the two-letter transadditions presented above are admir-
able, but a few leave room for improvement. Readers are urged
to seek and report suitable improvements.
The Alphabetical Bias of Kickshaws Guest Editors

From 1976 through 1984, there have been 36 Kickshaws columns guest edited by logologists bearing 18 different surnames: Albert, Beaman (2), Bergerson, Bostick (4), Brooke (2), Cohen (4), Eckler (5), Espy (2), Francis (4), Gardner (2), Grant, Hazard, Lederer, Phillips, Shortz, Sunners, Ulrich, and Wolpow (2). Of these surnames, two-thirds are located in the first one-third of the alphabet (A through H). What are the odds that 12 or more of 18 surnames taken at random from (say) a telephone directory behave in this manner? The editor points out that it is not fair to assume that surnames are equidistributed among the letters of the alphabet; in Morris County, New Jersey, the probability that a randomly-selected telephone subscriber has a surname in the range A-H is 0.425. Using this figure, the probability of randomly drawing 12 or more surnames out of 18 from the letters A-H is, according to the editor, approximately 0.032. The surprisingness of this result is accentuated by the fact that the most active guest editors are even more overwhelmingly represented in the A-H range - of the 36 Kickshaws columns, 29, or more than 80 per cent, qualify. Can it be that the earlier a person's name is located in the alphabet, the more inclined he is toward logology in general and Kickshaws editing in particular? (As additional evidence, note that the three editors of Word Ways since its founding in 1968 fall even earlier in the alphabet, in the A-E range.)

Editor's Note: I caution against an over-hasty endorsement of Dmitri Borgmann's interesting discovery. The randomness argument presented above is flawed by the fact that the split point between H and I was presumably selected after an examination of the data to make the case as strong as possible. Had the same calculations been carried out for some other split point, the results would have been somewhat less dramatic (the final probability would have been larger than 0.032). For example, according to the article by Alan Frank in the August 1984 Word Ways, the mid-point of a typical American telephone directory lies in the vicinity of the surname Lacey. Finding 12 of 18 surnames earlier than the midpoint is exactly as unusual as seeing 12 heads in tossing 18 coins. The probability of 12 heads is, in fact, 0.071; of 13, 0.033; of 14, 0.012; and so on, for a total of about 0.12 - considerably less unusual than 0.032.

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"To be, or not to be, that is the question."

Dmitri Borgmann's interesting discovery has been widely publicized, and I have received several letters to the editor to the effect that a span of data as bordering on The Maxims by David McKay as "Proverbs" set forth by David K. Hyman (New York, 1977) in these pages is an oddity of guiding moments.

My initial response was to point me on to interesting such proverbial statements as
1. Strike while the iron is hot.
2. Procrastination is the thief of time.
3. The early bird catches the worm.
4. Make hay while the sun shines.
5. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
6. God helps those who help themselves.
7. Time and tide wait for no man.
8. Delays are dangerous.
9. Don't fence me in.
10. Leave nothing to chance.
11. Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.
12. A stitch in time saves nine.
13. Take the bull by the horns.
14. There's a fine line between".
15. He who hesitates is lost.
16. Plow deep and sing a song.
17. He who laughs last laughs best.
18. Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.
19. First come, first served.
20. Faint heart never won fair lady.
21. If you want something done, do it yourself.
22. That which we cannot bear, we must bear.
23. The gold of youth can never be got back to.
24. The first house is the best house.
25. Well begun is half done.
26. Nothing is so easy as to think it easy.