FORTUNATE REVERSALS

RICHARD LEDERER
San Diego, California

We intrepid logologists love to switch around letters within words--adjacent letters (UNITED UNTIED), separated letters (CONVERSATION CONSERVATION), and initial and terminal letters (LATCHES SATCHEL). In some words we can interchange each half to form new words. Dmitri Borgmann called these leapfrogging specimens "cyclic transpositions." I prefer the more playful "fortunate reversals."

At least two letters must vault from front word to back word. Thus, single-letter looping anagrams are excluded, such as (and I'm sticking to just animals here) ANT TAN, ASP SPA, DRAKE RAKED, EMUS MUSE, EWE WEE, FLEA LEAF, MANATEE EMANATE (magnificent!), MITE EMIT, OWL LOW, RHEA HEAR, SHARK HARKS, SNAIL NAILS, and SWINE WINES.

Also outlawed are reversible compounds, such as BIRDSONG SONGBIRD, BOOKCASE CASEBOOK, GUNSHOT SHOTGUN, HORSEFACE RACEHORSE, and even JAYVEE VEEJAY and TOKYO KYOTO (a reversal of two morphemes that mean "capital city"). That's because the soul of logology is letter play, not morphemic manipulation, alphabetic accidents, not the syntactic rearrangement of meaning-bearing elements. That's also why I bar particle verbs, such as HOLDUP UPHOLD, OUTTAKE TAKEOUT, and SETUP UPSET, and reduplications and other double-identity words, such as BONBON, DODO, HOTSHOTS, MEME, MURMUR, MUUMUU, and TESTES.

But if, when morphemes are interchanged, two new morphemes emerge, the fraternal twins qualify as bona fide fortunate reversals. The likes of ALLOCATION LOCATIONAL, BLOODSHOT HOTBLOODS, HEADSHOT HOTHEADS, and OWNERSHIP SHIPOWNER do not pass muster because, in each switcheroo, one morpheme changes, and one stays the same. But if two transposed morphemes metamorphose into two new morphemes, as in the two 8-letter examples at the end of this disquisition, they gain an honored seat in the pantheon.

Each reversal must be written as a single word. Hence--weep weep, sob sob, honk honkl--CALLOW LOW-CAL, HOT POTS POTSHOT, and HOT SPOTS POTSHOTS are denied entry.

Finally, as has been my practice over the decades, I minimize arcane words, such as ADMEN MENAD, ANCLE CLEAN, BALSA SABAL, and DOZEN ZENDO.

I do include a smattering of names of people, places, and things, such as LYON ONLY; free-standing roots, such as GAME MEGA; and the British spelling -re, such as CENTRE-RECENT.
Now cast your eyes upon more than one hundred clusters of 4-to-8-letter imposing, transposing, swapping, flip-flopping, rotating, relocating, reciprocating, stupendous, tremendous, end-over-endous fortunate reversals:

4 letters

ALAN ANAL  BOLO LOBO  ELSE SEEL  LYRE RELY
ALBA BAAL  CAIN INCA  EMIT ITEM  MESA SAME
ANKH KHAN  CHET ETCH  ERGO GOER  META TAME
ANNA NAAN  CHIN INCH  ERIC ICER  MOSH SHMO
ARCH CHAR  CHIT ITCH  GAME MEGA  OTTO TOOT
ARNE NEAR  CHOU OUCH  GAVE VEGA  PORE REPO
ARSE SEAR  CODE DECO  ILSA SAIL  PYRO ROPY
ARTS TSAR  DAVE VEDA  ISLE LEIS  RAVE VERA
BOHO HOBO  DEMO MODE  LOOS OSLO  RUTH THRU

5 letters

ADORE OREAD  COSTA TACOS  PEDRO ROPED
ALLOY LOYAL  DERRY RYDER  PESKY SKYPE
ANGLE GLEAN  HADJI JIHAD  PESTY TYPES
ANGST STANG  INTRA TRAIN  PETRI TRIPÉ
ARCED CEDAR  JASON SONJA  RAISE SERAI
ARSON SONAR  KARMA MAKAR  RINSE SERIN
ASIDE IDEAS  LITRE RELIT  ROUTE UTERO
ASPIC PICAS  MANOR NORMA  SEVER VERSE
BARRE REBAR  MENSE SEMEN  SITAR TARSÍ
BOLES LESBO  MITRE REMIT  SLATE TESLA
BOWEL ELBOW  PASTA TAPAS  STATE TESTA
BRAZE ZEBRA  PAVES VESPA  STAVE VESTA

In the above lineup, we observe some semantic relationships within BOWEL ELBOW, HADJI JIHAD, PASTA TAPAS, and ROUTE UTERO. But one 4-step example stands atop this 5-letter cluster: PESTO yields STOPE and TOPES, which in turn yields ESTOP.

6 letters

ABACAS CASABA  CENTRE RECENT  INSOLE OLEINS
ABLEST STABLE  CONGAS GASCON  LYSING SINGLY
ALPINE PINEAL  DENTIN INDENT  MOTHER THERMO
ALTARS TARSAL  ENLIST LISTEN  PERVES VESPER
ASCENT CENTAS  ERRING RINGER  RIPEST STRIPE
BEDLAM LAMBED  GERMAN MANGER  SELVES VESSEL
BERGER GERBER  INGROW ROWING  TACTIC TICTAC

INHERE HERIN
Gleaming out from the 6-letter reversals is ERRANT, which yields RANTER, which in turn yields TERRAN, which, as every sci fi fan knows, means "earth dweller."

7 letters
ASQUINT QUINTAS LESSION SINGLES
INGRAIN RAINING QUESTOR TORQUES
INSPECT PECTINS REDRIVE RIVERED
KERSTIN STINKER REENTER TERREEN
KINGPIN STINKING RESPECT SPECTRE

8 letters
BARSTOOL TOOLBARS MENTALLY TALLYMEN

While it could be argued that BARSTOOL and TOOLBARS share the same morpheme, BAR, the credentials for MENTALLY TALLYMEN appear to be impeccable.

CLOSE CALL
LOUIS PHILLIPS

The artist Chuck Close,
Standing close
To the actress Glenn Close,
Asked: “Should I close
The door & make a close-up of you in your birthday clothes,
Ms. Close?”
“No. Thank you” replied Glenn Close
To Chuck Close.