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# WORD-MAKING POTENTIALITIES OF ENGLISH

Georgie A. Gurney  
*Longwood University*

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THESE

WORD-MAKING POTENTIALITIES OF ENGLISH

by

George A. Gurney

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of Longwood College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Arts in Secondary Education.

Farmville, Virginia

April 26, 1957



## PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the various methods of word-formation in the English language, to ascertain which methods are active in the post-World War II world of today, and to decide, if possible, which methods are coming into increasing use and which methods are temporarily out of favor.

For this study materials over a seventeen-year period 1939-1956 were consulted, and then the war words which seemed to find no permanent place in the language were discarded. Many of the war words were retained, however, if they seemed to fill a continuing need.

Of course, any judgment concerning what is, or what is not, a useful word is a personal evaluation, although an attempt to justify this decision by application of linguistic principles has been made.

I have received valuable help and advice from Dr. R. C. Simonini, Jr. of Longwood College and to him my thanks are due. The staff of Longwood College has collected new words for me, and has borne patiently with my peculiar requests. I am especially indebted to them.

G. G.

April 26, 1957



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION - WHAT IS A WORD?

In this thesis we are going to consider the different methods of making English words, methods that are used widely and frequently and methods that are less exploited. Before we approach these delightful mysteries, however, it may be well to stop and consider one problem - what is a word? Does "word" refer to the written form, or to the utterance, or to both? If "word" has many senses, which sense is primary?

Much confusion seems to exist on this subject. "Every word," says Jaberg, "has its own history."<sup>1</sup> And according to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "It does not need that a poem be long. Every word was once a poem."

Both of these quotations we would admit to be thought-provoking. Not only are they valid on the surface but they are true in the sense that they open our minds to the enormously rich background behind any language and particularly behind our own English tongue.

But there perhaps we have it. English tongue we say, not English hand or printing press. If speech comes first, and the written word follows much later, is not the primary meaning of "word" oral? Some of our language authorities would seem to agree with this concept, while some have no clear boundary in their writings between the spoken and the written word.

1 Jaberg 6. Quoted by Leonard Bloomfield in Language (New York, 1933), p. 328.



Perhaps the first twentieth century grammarian to write on the subject is Jespersen, who says: "If he (the traveller) were at first inclined to take ilaaime<sup>1</sup> as one word, he would on further acquaintance with the language discover that the elements were often separated . . . . . This is the crucial point."<sup>2</sup> Jespersen goes on to say that "Words are linguistic units, but they are not phonetic units. On the other hand words are not notional units. Neither sound nor meaning in itself shows us what is one word and what is more than one word."<sup>3</sup> Jespersen concludes that "Isolability in many cases assists us, but it should not be forgotten that there are words, which we must recognize as such, and which yet, for one reason or another cannot be isolated."<sup>4</sup>

Jespersen thus stresses isolability as the criterion for judging what constitutes a word. Edward Sapir keeps this criterion and adds to it his concept of the psychological entity of a word. In his book on Language he says: "The true significant elements of ~~language~~<sup>language</sup> are generally sequences of sounds that are either words, significant parts of words, or word groupings."<sup>5</sup> "The word is one of the smallest completely satisfying bits of isolated meaning into which the sentence resolves itself. It cannot be cut into without a disturbance of meaning."<sup>6</sup> "In many, perhaps in most languages the single word is marked by a unifying accent, an emphasis on one of the syllables, to which the rest are subordinated."<sup>7</sup> "The word is merely a form, a definitely molded entity that takes in as much or as little of

2 Otto Jespersen, Language (London, 1922), p. 422.

3 Otto Jespersen, The Philosophy of Grammar. (London, 1924), p. 92.

4 Ibid., p. 94.

5 Edward Sapir. Language (New York, 1939).

6 Ibid., p. 25

7 Ibid., pp. 35-36.



the conceptual material of the whole thought as the genius of the language cares to allow." "The word, the existent unit of living speech, responds to the unit of actually apprehended experience, of history, of art."<sup>8</sup> "Linguistic experience, both as expressed in standardized written form and as tested in daily usage, indicates overwhelmingly that there is not, as a rule, the slightest difficulty in bringing the word to consciousness as a psychological reality."<sup>9</sup>

In 1942 Bloch & Trager came forth with a new term for "word" - free form.

"Any fraction (of an utterance) that can be spoken alone with meaning in normal speech is a FREE FORM; a fraction that never appears by itself is a BOUND FORM. A FREE FORM which cannot be divided entirely into smaller free forms is a MINIMUM FREE FORM or word.

A word containing one or more bound forms is called COMPLEX; a word made up wholly of smaller words is called COMPOUND."<sup>10</sup>

Harold Whitehall, writing in 1956, is more concerned with the written word. "In writing, words are recognized as words by the spacing. Spoken words are recognized as words only because speaker and hearer are familiar with the total design of the language. In this recognition four speech factors seem to be of importance:

- a. Every word is likely to occur at some time in some context before and after juncture.
- b. Many words mark their beginnings and endings by phonetic boundary signals. In the expression That's tough /t/ is aspirated; in That stuff

8. Edward Sapir, Language (New York, 1939), p. 33.

9 Ibid., p. 34.

10 Bernard Bloch and George Trager, Outline of Linguistic Analysis (New York, 1942), p. 54.



/t/ is not aspirated. In That's odd /s/ is slightly articulated; in That sod /s/ is strongly articulated.

c. Clusters of consonants mark the beginning and end of some words. 11

d. Prefixes and suffixes mark the beginnings and endings of others.

Whitehall also distinguishes between words that are compounded, and those that remain noun groups. On the first - compounds - we use falling stress; on the latter - noun groups - we use rising stress. My own examples would be tablecloth, a compound showing falling stress, as contrasted with table leg, which remains a noun group.

The latest authority to consider at any length the meaning of the term "word" is Joshua Whatmough, who proposes in its place his own term epilegma. Writing in Word Study for October 1956 he says:

Authorities on linguistics still use the term word, but always with apology, such as writing "word" or speaking of "what would usually be called the word." The inadequacy of one widely accepted definition of word (minimum free form) is also now openly admitted in recent theory. Greek has exactly the term we need, epilegma in the sense of 'a longer or shorter extract from the stream of speech'.

I have suggested this term in my recent book Language in order to avoid the use of word, a term about which there is no agreement.

Epilegma will thus be the name of a class of units of utterance upon which logical operations can be performed . . . . thus an epilegma is a sequence of phonemes (including juncture e.g. its wings contrasted with it swings, and stress, e.g. construct: con-

11 Harold Whitehall, Structural Essentials of English (New York, 1956), p. 141.



struct) governed by external and internal statistical probabilities which determine respectively (a) the beginning and end of the epilegma, and (b) the internal sequence of phonemes.

The only criterion for identifying a word (or epilegma) is form. We do not omit stood because of stand; we must reckon both went and go.

The wheel has come full circle; we are back to "word" as meaning the spoken word. And truly, all methods of word formation, except perhaps one, the acronym, are based on sound, not sight.



## CHAPTER II

### WORD BORROWING IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

How many words do we have in English today? In the most comprehensive modern dictionaries there are over one million words, a figure predicted in 1942 by Dr. Charles Funk. Dr. Mario Pei estimates that 20,000 English words are in full use. Of this number 4,000 have come from Old English, 4,000<sup>1</sup> from diverse sources and 12,000 from Latin, Greek and French.

There is not much point in tracing the historical movements which put so many words of foreign origin in the English language. Jespersen has<sup>2</sup> treated this subject both simply and fully.

But what we do not realize is that the borrowing process is still going on. Whenever we see a word in a foreign language that seems to be more suitable and concise than the English word for the same thing we have a great habit of simply appropriating the foreign word, without any change whatsoever. Bungalow and shampoo, both from India, came into the language this way not so many years ago. Chauffeur, chassis, garage, aileron, fuselage are comparatively modern borrowings from the French, as are casserole, hors d'oeuvres, bisque, consommé, bouillon and other cooking terms. Words for dress materials and styles are apt to be French along with the word chic itself.

From Italian we have many cooking terms taken over without change - spaghetti, macaroni, ravioli, antipasto, pizza, pasta. Of these words, spaghetti and macaroni have been in the language for centuries, the others are recent borrowings.

1 Mario Pei, The Story of English (New York, 1952), pp. 96-97.

2 Otto Jespersen, The Growth and Structure of the English Language (New York, 1955).



From Mexican-Spanish many terms have been taken into American usage - siesta, fiesta, hombre, chile con carne, tamale, enchilada.

World War II brought in the German term ersatz, blitzkrieg, Smorgasbord is a recently borrowed word from Swedish.

The examples given above are merely a sampling. When we appropriate a foreign term and incorporate it into English, not only do we preserve its spelling but we try to approximate its pronunciation. These two tendencies are in direct opposition to earlier ones which Anglicized a foreign borrowing until it was no longer recognizable. Radio and television have put more emphasis on preserving the pronunciation of a foreign term, and the newspapers have preserved its original spelling, so that we become familiar with both pronunciation and spelling while the word is still new in the language.

But word-borrowing is hardly to be considered a word-making method of the English language, and it is the word-making methods inherent in our language that we are considering today. How does one make up a word? There are two general methods: one is ROOT CREATION which may include PURE ROOT CREATION, ACRONYMS, ECHOISM and SOUND SYMBOLISM, and REDUPLICATIONS. The other word-making methods may be considered under the broad heading of ADAPTATION or the changing or adapting of words already in the language. Let us consider first of all the method of root-creation.



## CHAPTER III

## ROOT CREATION

## A. PURE ROOT CREATION

First of all the methods which we may call ROOT CREATION is PURE ROOT CREATION, sometimes called spontaneous creation. There are very few words current in the English language today which are true examples of PURE ROOT CREATION. This is the process of forming from existing possible sounds a word which never existed as such before in the language. Often a word which seems brand new to us will have come into the language from a foreign tongue. However some of our most used words are those whose origin is obscure. Mario Pei lists boy, girl, cut, fit, fog, put, as arising spontaneously in the language. In the United States similar innovations are bogus, blizzard, jitney, sundae. The origin of brave, zinc, and bronze is obscure.

By centuries, Dr. Pei lists bad, big, lad, lass, as arising in the 13th century; blab, tot, chat, are from the 15th century; dad, jump, bet, from the 16th; job, fun, and hump from the 17th; fuss from the 18th, and slum from the 19th. All of these words, except perhaps the American innovations have a great currency in the language.

How did they arise? We do not know. Mark Twain relates that Eve gave the name dodo to the bird because, to her, "it looked like a dodo". But this is humorous reasoning, reminiscent of the lady who told the astronomers that, to her, their most mystifying feat was "finding out the names of the stars and planets."

2

Robertson and Cassidy point out that although there are hundreds and

1 Pei, The Story of English. p. 116.

2 Stuart Robertson and Frederick G. Cassidy, The Development of Modern English (New York, 1954), pp. 185-186.



thousands of mono-syllables (not to mention polysyllables) which can be pronounced in English and still are not used as words, the fact is that so many similar syllables already exist as words that the new syllables, by association, would seem partly meaningful. The new trade-names Dreft and Drene suggest - in the case of Dreft - drift (of snow, I suppose) and in the case of Drene - dream, drain. Many trade-names deliberately cultivate these associations. Pure root creations are limited to such names as Kodak, Tek, Saran, Probak. Several brand names which would seem to be new creations turn out to be reversals - Klim, Serutan or simple shortenings - Rem (for remedy), Rel (for relief). The most prevalent ways of forming trade-names are by adding suffixes - o, e, ola, ox to already meaningful syllables, by compounding or blending already meaningful syllables or by mis-spelling meaningful syllables.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Jess Stein, "How to Form a Trademark", Inside the ACD,  
(February, 1955), p. 1.

See also - Morton Yarman "What's in a Name - Trade Name That Is?"  
New York Times Magazine, October 10, 1954.



## B. ACRONYMS

Occasionally we run across a word that we take at first glance to be a pure root creation, but we find that it has been coined by putting together either the initial letters or the initial syllables of a word group. Sometimes the initial syllable of one word is joined with the final syllable of another. This coinage is called an ACRONYM (literally tip word). Examples which come readily to mind are the familiar trade-names Alcoa (Aluminum Company of America), Socony (Standard Oil Company of New York), Esso (S. O. for Standard Oil), Duoco (Dupont Company), Nabisco (National Biscuit Company), Necco Wafers (New England Confectionery Company).

Preferably an acronym should be pronounceable, but this quality is considered unimportant by some writers on the subject. H. L. Mencken believes that the acronym had its beginnings in such reductions to initial letters as COD, FOB, DAR, GOP which are still pronounced letter by letter and not as syllables.

This statement may be true as far as we know, but applies only to the English language. Acronyms were used in other languages in very ancient times; according to some authorities the whole development of our alphabet came about when Egyptian overseers of the Seirite workers taught them to keep simple records by using symbols for initial sounds instead of having to learn the complicated hieroglyphics. This was in 1850 - 1800 B. C.

One very early acronym, familiar to students of church history, is the one of the Greek word ichthus (fish). This word was used to represent the whole phrase "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior." The first letter i stood for Jesus; the ch (a single letter in Greek) stood for Christ; the th

1 The Story of Writing. American Council on Education (Washington, 1932), pp. 30-64.



stood for God in the possessive case; the u stood for Son, and the s for Savior. From this acronym the symbol of a fish came into wide use in the early Christian church and is still used today.

But to return to modern times, the first real impetus to word formation by acronym took place at the time of World War I, according to S. V. Baum,<sup>2</sup> with the substitution of the initials A.W.O.L for the words "absent without leave". DORA (Defense of Realm Act) was a British contribution, and ANZAC for Australia and New Zealand Army Corps dates back to 1914 - 1918. REO for R. E. Olds Company and the already-mentioned SOCONY were two early commercial uses of the acronym. PBX for private board (telephone) exchange was another early acronym.

Under the New Deal acronym came into their own with NIRA (later NRA), TVA, CCC, FERA, first used with periods after each letter, later without. CIO and AFL followed.

The tendency toward acronyms did not abate, and in World War II it became a serious word forming method. When the Dupont Company announced a new synthetic material it was named nylon from New York and London. WAAF, WRENS, WAC (first WAAC) apparently just happened to have initials that were pronounceable as words. Not so WAVES - the name was decided upon first and the justifying title put together later (it is Women's Appointed Volunteer Emergency Service, a rather lame name).<sup>3</sup> The most ingenious acronym formation was SPAR from "Semper Paratus", the Coast Guard motto.

Radar (radio detecting and ranging), loran (long range navigation), jeep (general purpose vehicle) are firmly established in the language today.

<sup>2</sup> S. V. Baum, "From AWOL to VEEP - The Growth and Specialization of the Acronym," American Speech, XXX (May, 1955), p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Baum. See also: John Lancaster Riordan, "Some G. I. Alphabet Soup," American Speech, XXII, No. 2 (April, 1947).



FIDO for Fog Investigation and Dispersal Operation has died out with the operation's demise.

The Navy has been a great coiner of truncated word acronyms. COMSUBS-PAC, CINCLANT, COMESCARPAC and similar terms facilitated the Navy's mailing procedures during World War II. CB for construction battalion became sea-bee, which seemed so apt that air-bee was coined later by analogy.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the acronyms used in World War II were not immediately decipherable. D-Day was not translated into Decision Day until long after the event. Vips was quickly understood to mean "Very Important Persons" but posh, used in the same connection was not thought to be an acronym. However, upon investigation, it turned out to be "port out, starboard home" and referred to the position of the cabins of Vips travelling to the Orient and back through the red-hot Red Sea.<sup>5</sup>

After the war CARE (Cooperative American Remittances to Europe - later to Everywhere) came into being, along with SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe), NATO, ANZUS and UNESCO. UNICEF and WHO, acronyms for two other agencies of the United Nations, have not become secure in the language, according to Mr. Baum.

How many persons realize that Basic English is really British and American Scientific International Commercial English? But it is said to be. VEEP (for Vice President) has been a term of affection reserved for former Vice-President Alben W. Barkley. Benelux has become a familiar acronym to describe the trade agreement between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg - while Delmarva is a combination of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

4 Pei, The Story of English, p. 248.

5 Ibid., p. 249.



With the end of the war, the craze for acronyms for popular consumption died out. Right now the acronym is not widely used except in politics, business and in the scientific world. Fannie Mae is still used for the Federal National Mortgage Association; banking still uses Lisa for "life insured savings account."<sup>6</sup> BINAC (binary automatic computer), UNIVAC (universal automatic computer), MANIAC (mathematical analyzer, numerical integrator and computer), AUDREY, the girl in the advertisements of the Bell Telephone Company (automatic digit recognition) are a few modern usages. The 1953 verb riffing for reduction-in-force-ing has still some currency, but, on the whole, the acronym right now is a potential rather than an actual word making method.<sup>7</sup>

6 Ibid., p. 247-248.

7 Faum, p. 109.



## C. ECHOISM AND SOUND SYMBOLISM

There is a type of word-creation which goes back to the very beginnings of language - in fact this method has been proposed as the explanation of the origin of language. These words are the onomatopoeic terms that "make their own names". If, as Robertson and Cassidy<sup>1</sup> point out, it were literally true that certain natural, human or animal noises make the names by which they are known in language, this would be, in the strictest sense, word creation. But in reality no word of any language ever reproduced accurately the sound which it initiated. Cuckoo and meow are nearer the actual sounds made by the bird and the cat than bob-white and bow-wow for the quail and the dog.

Sir James Murray proposes the name ECHOISM for this method of word-making by more or less accurate imitation. A very real degree of root-creation is felt in echoism. The words babble, titter, whiz, hiss, fizz, sizzle we do not need to look up to recognize that they are echoisms.

The borderline between echoisms and reduplications is extremely shadowy. The bird's chirp tweet-tweet is both echoism and reduplication; so is hush-hush, a term once echoic, now used with political overtones. Many echoisms for intensification of meaning repeat either their exact sound or a modification of it, as in clop-clop, slip-slap.

Another shadowy border is that between echoism, strictly speaking, and SOUND SYMBOLISM which is at once broader and more conventional. Robertson and Cassidy<sup>2</sup> warn us about searching for sound symbolism everywhere in words, since we would be subscribing to the erroneous doctrine that there is

1 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 187.

2 Ibid, p. 189.



a natural correspondence between sound and sense. Perhaps if we admit that the correspondence may be rather conventional within a certain language than natural to all languages we may explore the subject further. In English, for example, the short i [ɪ] is used many times to indicate smallness or slightness - little, slim, thin, imp, bit, slip; the higher and tenser [i] indicates still smaller size - wee, teeny, nightie, hanky and all the diminutives in ie or y come under this heading.

Consonants, particularly initial consonant clusters have symbolic associations. Thus, use of the breath is suggested by bl as in blow, blast, blab, bluster, bubble; movement and light is suggested by fl - flight, flee, flare, flash, flicker; light moving by gl - gleam, glitter, glow, glance, glimmer, and ogle. scr stands for grating impact - screech, scream, scratch, scrimmage; sn for nasal function - snore, snout, snuff, sniff, sneer, snob.

End sounds are a very prolific source of sound symbolism - ash as in splash, hash, dash, lash, smash, thrash, denotes movement and broken sound; ump is mass and awkward movement - bump, dump, hump, lump, thump; itch is a derogatory ending - bitch, itch itself, switch, twitch, witch; allow is also derogatory - callow, fallow, shallow.

Morton W. Bloomfield<sup>3</sup> writing in American Speech for October 1943 lists thirty-four root-forming morphemes in final position. He has not included any simple vowel symbolism nor any initial consonant clusters. This is an indication of the prevalence in the language of sound symbolism.

3 Morton W. Bloomfield, "Final Root Forming Morphemes", American Speech, XVIII (October, 1943), pp. 62-73  
See also: Dwight L. Bolinger, "Word Affinities", American Speech, XV, pp. 62-73



D. REDUPLICATION

We are apt to overlook a very fertile source of words in English -- the making of words by REDUPLICATION. REDUPLICATION refers to the repetition of the principal sound of a word in a following word, such as tweet-tweet, hanky-panky, or knick knack. Robertson and Cassidy<sup>1</sup> prefer to call such words iteratives but, by the majority of writers, reduplication is the term commonly used.

Robertson and Cassidy classify reduplications in the following way. First come exact duplications (or iteratives) which they feel are either duplicated for the echoism or for intensification of meaning. Second comes the type with the initial change. In both these types only the first part "appears to be the meaningful base, while the second (the iteration) is chiefly phonic."<sup>2</sup> In a third type, where the second part of the reduplication shows vowel change, this second part is also meaningful; tip-top, ship-shape, walky-talky, and peepie-creepie all add new meaning in their second part.

This classification is ingenious, but we must note that all the reduplications of the third type listed by Robertson and Cassidy have, for second part, a word (or diminutive of a word) which already exists in the language. Perhaps we would do well to leave aside all considerations of meaning (or meaningful and non-meaningful parts) and classify reduplications purely by form. A formal classification of reduplications in English yields four different types.

- (1) Under exact reduplication we might put the following: bonbon, cancan, dodo, goody-goody, honk-honk, mama, murmur, peep-peep and tweet-

1 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 188.  
2 Ibid, 189.



tweet, where the second part serves merely to intensify the first.

(2) The list of reduplications with initial letter change is longer.

Under change from one single initial letter to another we would put: bow wow, down town, fuddy-duddy, fuzzy-wuzzy, handy-Andy, heebie-jeebies, heyday, higgledy-piggledy, hobnob, hobo, hobson jobson, hocus-pocus, hodge-podge, hoodo, hotch-potch, hotpot, hokey-pokey, holus-bolus, hubbub, huff duff, hugger mugger, humpty-dumpty, hurdy-gurdy, itty-bitty, itsie-bitsie, mumbo-jumbo, namby-pamby, nitwit, okey-dokey, peewee, peetweet, pegleg, pell mell, powwow, razzle-dazzle, rat-tat (tat), roister-doister, roly-poly, superduper, voodo, walky-talky, yoohee willy-nilly.

Perhaps under (2) we should include the reduplications which show not only initial change in the second part, but also the addition of another syllable, as in hickory-dickory-dock, ten penny, hill-billy, hob-goblin, holy roller. (Conversely we have honky-tonk and fliberty-gibbet). It is hard to know how to classify variants which show evidence of reduplicative influence, without being, strictly speaking, reduplications. I refer to such forms as coca cola, eager beaver, hop-scotch, punch drunk, sad sack, and turn turtle.

(3) Another group of reduplications changes from a single initial consonant in the first part to a consonant cluster in the second part (or vice versa). This gives us: back-track, blackjack, clap-trap, harum scarum, helter-skelter, hot-shot, humdrum, hurry-scurry, peepie-creepie, tootsie-wootsie, squeegee, true blue, tutti frutti. If we include the reduplications which add another syllable we have short-snorter and slap-happy.

(4) Reduplications with vowel change in the second part are those which change their interior vowel (usually from [i] to [ae] or from [i] to [au])



while preserving the same consonantal framework. Our list would certainly include chitchat, crisscross, dilly dally, ding dong, doodad, flimflam, gewgaw, higgle-haggle, jejeune, hippity-hoppity, jimjam, jingle jangle, king kong, knickknack, mingle mangle, mish mash, pingpong, pitter patter, rickrack, riffraff, rip rap, seesaw, shilly-shally, ship shape, sing song, skimble-skamble, slip slop, slipper-slopper, snipsnap, tell-tale, tick tock, tiptop, whosis whatsis. Whippersnapper is a fine expressive old word which shows both vowel and initial consonant cluster change. Orang-outang shows change from one vowel sound to another in the first syllables, not the second.

It will perhaps be noticed that many reduplications come to us from nursery stories and songs. I refer to such terms as Georgie Porgie, hickory dickory dock, higgledy-piggledy (my black hen), piggly-wiggly, (old Mother) Slipper-Slopper. We have only to think of the tale Chicken Little which abounds in names like Henny Penny, Ducky-Lucky and Turkey-Lurkey to realize how strong the tendency toward reduplication is in the English language. This is not to say that every reduplication qualifies as standard English; many reduplications come into the language through the backdoor of slang and never advance to standard usage, but a surprisingly large number of reduplications are acceptable on any level of usage short of the choice.

James T. Barrs<sup>3</sup> lists under the heading "Regular Reduplication with Connectives" the following: bric-a-brac, heart to heart, kith and kin, pitapat, spick and span, tete-a-tete, time and tide, tit for tat. I have not included these terms in my lists because I cannot justify them to myself as anything but examples of the continuation into modern English the alliterative characteristic of Old English poetry.

<sup>3</sup> James T. Barrs, "More Reduplications", Word Study, (December, 1951), ~~XXVII~~<sup>3</sup>.



Under the heading "Varied Reduplication with Connectives", Barrs has put best by test, folderol, flotsam and jitsam, rub a dub, Stop and Shop, turn and burn. One of the editors of Word Study adds to these pish tish and hem and haw. These "Varied Reduplications with Connectives" are hard to eliminate and still harder to classify unless we put them with expressions showing reduplicative influence.

Why are reduplications so common in English? James T. Barrs writes very convincingly of the rhythm and rhyme noticeable in REDUPLICATIONS and suggests that the origin of REDUPLICATIONS lies in the poetic dawn of the English language. He notes too that since REDUPLICATION is repetition, it is easy to remember and to hand down by oral tradition, without recourse to writing.

One interesting point made by Barrs is that the phoneme h (aspirated) seems to be the most prolific initial among examples of reduplications. I believe this same fact was mentioned in an early article on reduplications in Word Study, October 1941. Both this article and a later one<sup>4</sup> mention the most usual vowel change from [I] to [ae] or from [I] to [au].

4 P. Burwell Rogers, "Reduplications", Word Study, XXIX (February, 1954). See also: Frederic G. Cassidy, "Iteration in Jamaican Folk Speech," American Speech, XXXII (February, 1957), pp. 49-53.



## CHAPTER IV

## ADAPTATION

We have dismissed word borrowing as an easy way of acquiring new terms but hardly a word-making method. We have admitted that ROOT CREATION including all its variants of ACRONYM, ECHOISM, SOUND SYMBOLISM and REDUPLICATION, is not a prolific source of new words. What other methods, then, account for our vast English vocabulary?

The methods are many and of varying productivity — some are practically defunct, while others are called into increasing use. All word-making methods other than pure root creation, whether they are rich or poor, dead or alive, we may lump together under the heading of ADAPTATION, for all of these methods start with words already in the language and change or adapt them into something different.

A. GRADATION

Gradation is the process of word-making, now defunct, which accounts for so many words with the same consonantal framework. Often these words were present, past, and past participles of a strong Germanic verb, to which forms a closely related noun was added. The consonantal framework stood for a generalized idea, and the vowel supplied the specific application. Thus the framework r - d gave us ride, rode, ridden, road and raid; s - ng gave us sing, sang, sung and song; b - r supplied bear, bore, born, borne and also the nouns bairn, birth, bier, barrow, burden; t - l provides tell, told, and tale; g - v resulted in give, gave, and gift; sp - k in speak, spoke (spake), and speech; t - k in take, took and token. Shr - v gave us shrive, shrove, shriven and shrift. ("Shrove" Tuesday and "short



"short shrift" are the only active words in the language with this particular consonantal framework). Thr - v supplied thrive, throve, thriven and thrift. Today, although the word thrift is much used, it has acquired a different connotation. The gardener's expression a "thrifty plant" has the older meaning. The old past throve has been edged out by thrived in the present-day language.

Today GRADATION as a word-making method has died out. We sometimes hear in dialectal speech the expression brung for brought (bring, brang, brung by analogy with sing, sang, sung), thunk for thought (think, thank, thunk by analogy with sink, sank, sunk). Fit for fought is from fight, fit by analogy with light, lit.<sup>2</sup> Dizzy Dean used slud as the past of slide. Mike Jacobs' "I should have stood (stayed) in bed" is another famous example of GRADATION, in this case mistaken gradation.

1 Robertson and Cassidy, pp. 190-191.

2 Pei, Story of English, p. 230.



## B. COMPOUNDING

COMPOUNDING, on the other hand, is a vital word-making method which seems to be flourishing today as indeed it has flourished throughout the whole history of the English language. This method, which consists of joining two or more words together to make a new term usually self-explaining, is a characteristic Germanic tendency. Almost any parts of speech may be put together: noun plus noun, as in railroad, week-end, house-party, dinner-bell, tablecloth, guest-room and countless others; noun plus adjective produces ice-cold, heart-sick, foot-sore, flower-fresh; adjective plus noun gives hot-house (in American usage green-house), blueberry, blue-bird, redbird, roundhouse; adverb plus noun results in up-shot, overhead, underwriter, downfall; noun plus adverb gives head-on, hands-off, off-color, after-thought; adverb with verb produces overflow, income, output, upkeep, undergo, bypass; verb plus adverb, perhaps our most characteristic modern compounding, results in dug-out, walk-over, shoo-in, kick-off, touch-down, pay-off, pushover, walk-away. Politics contributes write-in, throw-away,<sup>1</sup> and hand-out. According to Margaret Schlauch, these last terms come largely from the Germanic elements in the language.

Other combinations are those of noun with verb, such as side-swipe; verb with noun - cry-baby, playboy; adjective with verb - short-cut, high-flown, down-trodden; adverb with adjective - overdue, undernourished, underprivileged, evergreen.

The compound formed may, as Robertson and Cassidy point out, be different in part of speech from either of its components.<sup>2</sup> For example, the

1 Margaret Schlauch, The Gift of Language, p. 89 (New York, 1955), p. 83.

2 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 192.

See also: Edwin R. Hunter, "Verb ≠ Adverb = Noun", American Speech, XXII, (April, 1947).



verb-adverb combination kick-off is a noun in actual use, while the noun plus noun combination guest-room may be used as an adjective in expressions like guest-room, daybed.

In addition to the two-word compounds we have discussed, there are a number of three and four word compounds - notwithstanding, nevertheless, hand-to-mouth, mother-in-law, out-of-the-way, Johnny-come-lately, Jack-in-the box, hard-to-find, in which we are no longer conscious of the individual words. Take-home-pay is a recent addition to this group.

We are not at all consistent in our manner of writing compounds. As Scott, Carr and Wilkerson point out we write textbook as a single word, story-book with a hyphen and reference book as two separate words, although each term is a noun plus noun compound in which the first noun denotes a particular class of the second noun.<sup>3</sup> Various theories for hyphenating or not hyphenating have been proposed. One writer suggests that when parts of a noun plus noun compound have lost their force as distinct ideas, the compound is written solid, as spellbinder, housekeeper.<sup>4</sup> The same general idea is advanced by the Leggett, Mead and Charvat Handbook for Writers, which cautions that the proper writing at any given time cannot be arbitrarily defined, since dictionaries are conservative and actual usage far outstrips them in dropping the hyphen.<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting to note the shades of meaning arrived at by the compounding of the same two words. Boathouse differs from houseboat in meaning; overhang differs from hang-over. Generally, in noun plus noun compounds, the first noun is the modifying element. This is contrary to practice in the Romance languages in which the second noun is the modifier: wagon-lit,

<sup>3</sup> Scott, Carr & Wilkinson, Language and Its Growth, (Chicago, 1935), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Herman O. Makey, "Compound Words", English Journal (December, 1951), p. 568.

<sup>5</sup> Leggett, Mead and Charvat, Handbook for Writers (New York, 1951), p. 284.



ballon-sonde, café concert, fete-Dieu.

An ambitious cross-classification of appositional compounds has been undertaken by Anna Granville Hatcher<sup>6</sup> who uses the symbol AB for a noun plus noun compound. She distinguishes five classes with variations:

(1) the function of B is A - spotter plane, fuel oil, panty-girdle; (1a) non-material A interprets B -- test case, refresher course, protest strike (although the reverse order is newer idea wedge, thought poison); (2) B has rank of A - mother country, sister ship, master plan; (2a) A is excellent, a veritable B - biography sensation, perfume success, suit classic; (3) B consists of A - teardrop, woodpile, snowflake, smoke-screen; (4) B is comparable to A - potbelly, featherbrain, hatchet face, butterfly table, floodlight; (5) B is  $\sqrt{\text{an}}$  A or A is a member of class B - pumice stone, elm tree, London town, loophole, pathway, death penalty, teaching profession.

Jespersen calls attention to a special type of compound, the verb plus object type.<sup>7</sup> Examples he gives are pick-pocket, cut-purse, know-nothing, sawbones, break-neck, stopgap, scarecrow, tell-tale. We might add the familiar cut-throat and do-little. These compounds frequently function as adjectives, according to Jespersen.

Perhaps we should mention here the compounds which have been made of two terms borrowed from another language, very often Greek. Thus telegraph is composed of tele (far) and grapho (I write). Phonograph is "sound writer"; telephone is "far sound"; thermometer is "heat measure".

Occasionally we have horribly confused Latin and Greek elements, particularly when we arrive at a pseudo-scientific term like halitosis. These compounds from two different languages are called HYBRIDS. Examples of

6 Anna Granville Hatcher, "Modern Appositional Compounds of Inanimate Reference", American Speech, XXVII (February 1951).

7 Jespersen, Growth and Structure, p. 183.



hybrid words given by Scott, Carr and Wilkerson are motorcycle (Latin plus Greek), birthplace (Germanic first syllable plus Greek last syllable), multigraph (Latin and Greek), speedometer (English plus Greek - or rather, plus the mistaken Greek ending ometer as in thermometer and barometer).<sup>8</sup>

English is not guilty of making up all the hybrid words that exist in the language. Automobile (Greek and Latin) had already been formed in French, monocle (Greek plus Latin) is a late Latin word, as is petroleum, (Greek and Latin).

New hybrid formations are often vigorously denounced in print by Latin and Greek scholars, but hybrids have a learned flavor that appeals to the layman. Once proposed in the language, these terms are usually adopted with gusto, and soon become hallowed with usage.

One factor in compounding that we have not yet discussed is ANALOGIC CREATION, an increasingly productive source of new expressions. The process is briefly this: one compound exists already in the language; this compound is used as a pattern for making other compounds, which are obviously similar. Thus from telegram by analogy we make Santagram; from automat -- laundromat; from automatic - hydromatic, and all the other terms in-matic; from manuscript we get typescript; from cavalcade we form aquacade, motorcade. Through train helps us form through way; express train makes express way; snowtrain shows us how to form theater train, a fairly recent innovation.<sup>9</sup>

Analogic creation is sometimes illiterate, as in the formation of dance-a-thon and walkathon from marathon. Marathon came into the language as a name for a long-distance running race, usually 26 miles. It was named after the reputed feat of the Greek who ran from Marathon to Athens bearing news of

<sup>8</sup> Scott, Carr and Wilkerson, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> See also: Louise Pound, "Hamburger Progeny", American Speech; XIV (April 1939).



victory (490 B.C.). But somehow the athon part of marathon was taken to mean endurance, and dance-a-thon and walkathon were felt to be legitimate terms for endurance dancing or walking. Similar misunderstandings account for many illiteracies in ANALOGIC CREATION. But in spite of its misuse, ANALOGIC CREATION is still a productive word-making method.

To see how compounds change with the changing customs, let us observe beach wagon, a conveyance originated perhaps to haul children to beaches. With our increasing suburbanization beach wagon became station wagon. Now the term station wagon is yielding to the newer ranch wagon. Ranch wagon suggests the wide open spaces; the connotation is more agreeable than the connotation of the deadly monotony of meeting the 5:15 train night after night. Blackboards are green in the newer schools, hence the word chalk-board has been formed for what we would otherwise term a "green blackboard." 10

10 See also: Lester V. Berrey, "Newly Wedded Words", American Speech, XIV, (February, 1939) and Adeline C. Bartlett, "Full Word Compounds in Modern English", American Speech, XV, (April, 1940).



## C. IDIOMATIC COMPOUNDS

According to Mario Pei, few dictionaries pay enough attention to the two and three word compounds so prevalent in English today. These expressions are not those described by Jespersen as FREE COMPOUNDS<sup>1</sup> since those involve no change of meaning. The expressions mentioned by Pei he calls a bridge between word creation and semantic shift.<sup>2</sup> Such expressions consist of words which taken by themselves leave a very familiar and specific meaning, but when these words are combined they acquire a very special connotation. In this way they would differ from the self-explaining compounds we have discussed.

Pei mentions as examples white elephant for unwanted gift; to carry the expression a step farther a white elephant table at a fair or bazaar is a booth which sells superfluous household treasures, superfluous that is, to the person who donated them to the cause. For some reason clothes are never white elephants, a rummage sale is still a rummage sale. Another example given by Pei is Gin Rickey, named after its principal ingredient plus the name of the inventor, but also crossed with jimricksha, the man-drawn vehicle of the Far East.

Spelling bee, husking bee, quiting bee all refer to the swarming of neighbors to cooperate on a project. Free lance, career man, fellow-traveller, pin money are other expressions with special connotations. Others mentioned by Pei are scorched earth, lend-lease, swing shift.

How are we to classify these expressions? Some linguists refer to them as neologisms; Pei in The Story of English reserves the term neologism for new single words or close compounds, but in his Dictionary of Linguistics he defines neologism as "(1) a newly coined and as yet not generally accepted

1 Jespersen, Growth and Structure, p. 182.

2 Pei, The Story of English, p. 118.



word or expression, (2) the coining and the use of new words or the use of established words in a new sense."<sup>3</sup> Robertson and Cassidy prefer the term new expression and note that the political field is most productive of these new expressions, referring to the 2000 entries in Professor Hans Sperber's dictionary.<sup>4</sup> "Even in this field, however, not many out-and-out coinings are to be found; usually the trick of arousing enthusiasm or inspiring contempt is accomplished by giving particular application to a phrase that is scarcely a novelty."<sup>5</sup> Roosevelt's "New Deal" is a familiar example of an idiomatic compound in the field of politics.

American Speech lists new words and new expressions together under the heading Among The New Words. There seems to be no generally accepted and understood label for the expressions which have a special connotation. Perhaps we may call these expressions IDIOMATIC COMPOUNDS to mean a compound which is not self-explaining but which has a distinct, specific meaning of its own.

By far the most famous of these IDIOMATIC COMPOUNDS today is iron curtain, first used by H. G. Wells in his novel The Food of the Gods, published in 1904.<sup>6</sup> But Wells did not use the expression in its present day sense. It is uncertain just who did use it first in this sense, since there are many claimants. However its wide circulation and adoption is traceable to its use in 1946 by Winston Churchill. Bamboo curtain was formed by analogy on the same pattern. Today these two terms have a highly specialized meaning, which has nothing to do with iron, bamboo or curtain in their literal senses.<sup>7</sup> American Speech also lists brass curtain and silken curtain as analogic creations based on iron curtain.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Pei. Dictionary of Linguistics, p. 146. *edited by*

<sup>4</sup> A Dictionary of Political Words and Phrases, Hans Sperber.

<sup>5</sup> Robertson and Cassidy, p. 231.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Fussell, Jr., American Speech, XXV (February, 1950), p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> See also: Dwight L. Bolinger, "Fifth Column Marches On", American Speech, XIX/

<sup>8</sup> "Iron Curtain Progeny", American Speech, XXVI (May, 1951).



## D. BLENDS

A method of word-making which is very popular today is that of making BLENDS. A blend is the putting together of the first sounds of one word and the last sounds of another when the two words have some sound in common. This is the usual procedure, although in some blends a more complete "telescoping" is done.

Lewis Carroll is the best known proponent of this word-making method; in fact, he invented the name portmanteau words for the innovations which occur when a speaker, confronted by the choice of two words for a single occasion, happens to be clever enough to put the two terms together into one.<sup>1</sup> A portmanteau word thus has the element of wit, while a simple blend does not. Lewis Carroll himself invented many blends; among them chortle (chuckle + snort) and galumphing (gallop + triumphing) have had wide acceptance.

A brief look at some older blends will explain their prevalence in the language. Boost is from boom and hoist; flaunt is from flout and vaunt; slide slip and glide; twirl from twist and whirl. All of these terms have been readily accepted.

Walter Winchell gave the expressions infanticipating and renovated to the world. Japinazi was a coinage of his during World War II. Right now, Time magazine is particularly fond of the blend. Socialita, cinemactor, cinemactress, adman, funnyman, Satevepost are a few of Time's inventions.

The Los Angeles Air Pollution District Office has come forward with some interesting weatherblends: smog (smoke and fog), smust, smaze, smoud, sneet (snow and sleet),<sup>3</sup> rail (rain and hail). Bing Crosby is said to have invented

1 Lewis Carroll in the preface to The Hunting of the Snark.

2 Joseph J. Firebaugh, "The Vocabulary of Time Magazine", American Speech, XV (October, 1940).

See also: "Time Makes a Word For It", Redder's Digest (March, 1936) and E. B. White, "A Guide to the Pronunciation of Words in Time", New Yorker (March 14, 1936), p. 16.

3 Quoted in "Time", February 14, 1955.



the expression smogdown for a shutdown on account of smog.

It is hard to predict just which blends will last and which will not. The blend, at best, is a very good pun. Psychoceramic for crackpot is certainly witty. Jacques Barzun, saying "What the modern realistic novel needs is Bovaryectomy,"<sup>4</sup> is expressing in one felicitous invention a chapter, at least, of meaning. At its worst, the blend is distressingly self-consciously smart. James Thurber, writing in the New Yorker, condemns modern carcinomenclature, which he defines as a malignant tendency to put everyone and everything into categories. He condemns particularly the globaloneyism growing out of the Timethod (Time method) of wordoggle (word boondoggle). Mr. Thurber recommends prefectomy (getting rid of prefixes) among other suggestions. He closes his article with the paraphrase "Ill fares the land, to galloping fears a prey, where gobbledygook accumulates, and words decay."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps he has a point; blends do have a habit of getting out of hand. But whether we approve or disapprove of the blends we have heard, the ability<sup>6</sup> to make new words by combining old, adds to the flexibility of the language.

4 Jacques Barzun, Writers on Writing. New Hampshire Writers Conference. Brickel, 1949.

5 James Thurber, "The Psychosemanticist Will See You Now, Mr. Thurber". New Yorker, May 28, 1955.

6 See also: Robert Withington "Verbal Pungencies", American Speech, XIV (December 1939), pp. 269-275.



## E. DERIVATION

DERIVATION is the word-making method which probably accounts for most of the words in the dictionary today. DERIVATION differs from compounding in this way: compounding, as we have seen, joins two whole words together to make a new word; DERIVATION, on the other hand, takes a single whole word and joins to it a prefix or suffix, thus giving us a new word. The whole word can be either borrowed or native; the prefixes and suffixes may come from Latin, Greek, Romance or other languages, as well as from native English.

For example, let us take the word moral, which came from Latin. To it we add the native English suffix -ly -- giving us morally; or we might prefer the Latin prefix in- giving us by assimilation immoral. Perhaps a new word is needed meaning "outside the sphere of morals." Then we can use the Greek prefix a- and arrive at the word amoral, which is newer in the language than the other derivations mentioned.

In the process of borrowing so many words throughout the ages, some of the native formative elements were gradually lost or discarded. The Old English affixes ed-, ge-, -els, -ol were lost.<sup>1</sup> Jespersen also mentions the lost feminine suffix -en (seen in the word vixen).<sup>2</sup> The native suffix of agency -er is still extremely vital in the language but not so -estre, a feminine suffix of agency seen in spinster and the proper names Webster and Baxter ("weaving woman" and "baking woman").<sup>3</sup> In Modern English -ster is still used to some extent as in rhymester, trickster and panster, but it has lost its sense of the feminine and of agency. Certainly gangster, huckster,

1 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 195.

2 Jespersen, Growth and Structure, p. 168.

3 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 194.



teamster, youngster show that -ster as a suffix has a new meaning, which is one belonging to an age or occupation group.

Old English affixes that are still prolific are the prefixes - un-, be-, (which now has acquired a derogatory connotation), mis-, and the more numerous suffixes such as the verb-making -en (harden, soften, weaken), the adjective suffixes -ed (conceited), -ful (thoughtful), -ish (childish) now uncomplimentary in connotation, -ly (matronly), -less (fatherless), and -y (mousy). Substantive suffixes still used are -dom (boredom, officialdom), -ness (correctness) and -ship (kinship).<sup>4</sup>

From Latin we have borrowed long since the prefixes pro-, post-, -pre-, ante-, super-, and the suffixes -al, -ment, -able, -ous and -ary (all of Latin origin); from Spanish or Italian (through French) we got the suffix -ade; from Greek the prefixes a-, hyper-, and the suffixes -ist, -ize, -ism, -ic, -itis.<sup>5</sup>

These borrowed affixes are used with great freedom; they may be attached to any word that is established in the language, no matter where the word came from. Some derivations thus arrived at will be more useful than others; some will be more pleasing to the ear and perhaps will be more widely used on this account. It would be indeed pedantic to insist that a Greek affix be used only with a Greek borrowing - what would become of the word bicycle?

The reason, according to Robertson and Cassidy, for so many borrowed affixes attached to native words is that native affixes may die out. One example given is that of the suffix -th, once indispensable in the formation of nouns like wealth, health, filth, youth, growth, warmth, strength and

<sup>4</sup> Jespersen, p. 171.

<sup>5</sup> Robertson and Cassidy, pp. 196.



breadth. The last -th word to be formed was growth, dating from the Elizabethan period. Later words in -th have been made but have not come into popular usage.<sup>6</sup> Time proposed lukewarmth on January 6, 1941, but it has remained a nonce word.

The native suffixes -ship, -head and -dom are no longer widely used except in words formed by analogy. Campership is a new word, but it is analagous to the old word scholarship. Only the native suffix -ness seems to be resisting the inroads of the borrowed suffix -ism, which came originally from Greek, but through Latin and French.<sup>7</sup>

Between the native prefix un- and the borrowed prefix in- (im-, il-, or ir- when assimilated) there is still great rivalry. The tendency has been for in- to be used with a borrowed base, taking the place of the earlier un-<sup>8</sup> in such words as unglorious, unpossible and unpatient, now inglorious, impossible, and impatient. This tendency is not always followed; we still have unpleasant, undesirable, unprogressive. The native un- would seem to have a stronger feeling of rejection than the borrowed in-; at least when repeated as it is in the line, "unwept, unhonored and unsung."

Sometimes both native and foreign affixes are retained, each giving a difference in meaning to the base. Robertson and Cassidy<sup>9</sup> cite unbelief and disbelief, uninterested and disinterested, mistrust and distrust as pairs of words that are not at all synonymous.

Perhaps we should mention the super-abundance of derivations in modern scientific language which uses Latin and Greek affixes and roots to make new words almost daily. Thermo-dynamic and electro-magnetic, once new, seem old beside psychosomatic and cybernetics. As Margaret Schlauch<sup>10</sup> points out,

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 196-197.

<sup>7</sup> Robertson and Cassidy, p. 197.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>10</sup> Schlauch, p. 105.



these neo-classical derivations, developed by modern science, pass from one language to another, because their meaning is clear to anyone with a classical education or background. Superheterodyne is quoted by both Margaret Schlauch and Robertson and Cassidy<sup>11</sup> as a hybrid monstrosity, since it places the Latin prefix super beside the Greek hetero.<sup>12</sup> However, as Robertson and Cassidy go on to state, we cannot be sticklers for purity when the English language itself is such a hybrid. Consider the word re-macadamized; re is Latin, mac is Celtic, adam is Hebrew, ize is French (from Greek) and the final d is English.<sup>13</sup>

11 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 201.

12 See also: E. N. Lockard, "Fertile Virgins and Fissile Breeders: Nuclear Neologisms," American Speech, XXV (February, 1950).

13 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 201.



## F. BACKFORMATION

There are several processes of word-making which add words to the language not by making longer words, as do compounding and derivation, but by shortening words we already have. One of these shortening processes is BACK FORMATION, in which the existing word is mistakenly analyzed and taken to be a derivation. Then its supposed base becomes a new word. For example, the noun editor was taken to be a verbal stem plus an or suffix of agency. The supposed suffix was dropped and the new word edit came into being. In reality the or of editor is not a suffix but an integral part of the word as it was borrowed.

The French mendicant order of Beghard is said to have given us our noun beggar. The verb beg is a backformation from this and a very early one. Peddle from pedlar is another early backformation.

It might be well to mention here the point that Dr. Mario Pei makes about BACKFORMATIONS. He insists that the BACKFORMATION differs from other types of word-shortening in that it involves a change in function or part of speech,<sup>1</sup> (usually from noun to verb).

Some additional backformations listed by Robertson and Cassidy are: diagnose (from diagnosis), rove (from rover), grovel (from groveling, which is not a present participle but an old adjective), darkle and sidle (from darkling and sidling, adjectives like groveling), greed (from greedy), gloom (from gloomy).<sup>2</sup> These are all considered words in good standing. Enthuse, orate, jell, emote, donate, reminisce, are backformations used colloquially. Intuit from intuition is a backformation which is much used in literary criticism today.

1 Pei, The Story of English, p. 116.

2 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 203.



Jespersen mentions the backformations listed above plus difficult (from difficulty) cad (from cadet), pet (from petty - French petit).<sup>3</sup>

Bloomfield lists among backformations the verbs act, afflict, separate, from the nouns action, affliction, and separation. The nouns came into use in the early years of the 14th century; the verbs were not formed until after 1384. Commune (from communion), aspire (from aspiration) were later formations. There is another later backformation from aspiration - aspirate.<sup>4</sup>

Two backformations from the same original word are not uncommon. Denotation, first used in 1532 according to the NED, gave rise to the verb denotate in 1599 and to the second verb denote in 1612. Commentator, that modern word, was first used in 1432, commentation in 1579, and commentate in 1794.

The noun brindle is a backformation from the old adjective brindled;<sup>5</sup> filtrate is a backformation from filtration. Pyles lists among backformations the verbs to practice teach and to perk (of coffee);<sup>6</sup> Bryant contributes the verbs to launder and to sunburn.<sup>7</sup>

We have not begun to mention all the backformations that exist in English today. Many of these formations are hard to find and harder to prove. We can, however, mention that backformation is one of the processes which keep English a language of comparatively short words. Perhaps the newest backformation to be adopted widely in the last twenty-five years is televise from television. This form was suggested by Dr. Milton Harris of New York in the column "Book Marks for Tomorrow" in the New York World Telegram for December 17, 1931.<sup>8</sup>

4 Leonard Bloomfield, Language (New York, 1933), pp. 415-416.

5 Margaret Nicholson, A Dictionary of American-English Usage (New York, 1957), p. 44, ¶. 63.

6 Thomas Pyles, Words and Ways of American English (New York, 1952), p. 183.

7 Margaret Bryant, Modern English and Its Heritage (New York, 1950), p. 312.

8 Henry L. Mencken, The American Language, Supplement I (New York, 1945), p. 396.



## G. MISTAKEN "S" SINGULAR

Sometimes an -s which belongs to the stem of the word is taken to be the sign of a plural ending, and a new singular is formed on the basis of this misunderstanding. Thus the word peas, really singular because the plural was peasen, was taken to be a plural, and the new singular form pea was adopted. According to Samuel Butler, author of Hudibras, this happened about 1633.<sup>1</sup>

Other new singulars formed in this way were cherry from the French borrowing cerise, riddle from riddles, eave from eaves. Skate and burial are two other examples.<sup>2</sup><sup>3</sup>

There seems to be a strong feeling in English that words in -s are necessarily plurals; from this arises the popular tendency to change Chinese into Chinee and Portugese into Portugee. For example, the word aborigines was used only in the plural in Latin; it had no singular. When the word came into English as a borrowing it was used only in the plural at first, but now, in spite of handbooks of usage to the contrary,<sup>4</sup> the form aborigine is perfectly acceptable, and listed in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as a singular. Even those with a knowledge of Latin accept aborigine as a form made up of ab plus the ablative case.<sup>5</sup>

The popular tendency to form a new singular is illustrated by Sturtevant who claims to have heard a salesman talking about stockings say "Now this is a nice hoe". He also reports hearing "This is a nice pant". Again he cites the example of the New Yorker saying "Here, boy, give me a Time for New York Times."<sup>5</sup> Whether these exchanges are true or apocryphal, they do point out the popular tendency to make a new singular when the old one ends in -s or an -s sound.

1 Jespersen, Growth and Structure, p. 199.

2 Ibid., p. 199.

3 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 204.

4 I refer to A Dictionary of American English Usage (New York, 1951), p. 4.

5 Edgar H. Sturtevant, An Introduction to Linguistic Science (New Haven, 1947), p. 102.



## H. STUMP WORDS

The most common method of word-making by shortening is that of simple abbreviation. Usually the original word is clipped after the first or first two syllables, hence the term clipped form used by some writers. One might think that this clipping had resulted from the English tendency to stress the first syllable of a word and slide over the rest, but this does not seem to be the case - prof (from professor), gym (from gymnasium), piano (from pianoforte) gin (from Geneva), curio (from curiosity), zoo (from zoological park), gas (from gasoline), fan (from fanatic) are a few examples that argue against the theory of shortening to leave only a stressed syllable. In all of these clipped forms, the stressed syllable in the original word has been discarded completely.

There are word shortenings which retain not the first part but the end of the original word. Jespersen has an interesting idea to explain what part of a word is retained after shortening. STUMP WORDS as he calls them, fall into two classes: those abbreviated by adults, who retain the first part of the word, and those abbreviated by children, who retain the last part.<sup>1</sup> Thus by his theory the stump-words bus, phone and plane had their origin in children's language. This is debatable.

Robertson and Cassidy do not go along with Jespersen's theory, since so many of the STUMP WORDS that have become standard are hardly words in a child's vocabulary. They cite wig (from periwig), drawing room (from withdrawing-room), still (from distillery), sport (from disport), spite (from despite), mend (from amend), tend (from attend), lone (from along), fend (from defend), fence (from defence).<sup>2</sup>

1 Jespersen, Language, pp. 169-171.

2 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 205.



It is interesting to note that when a word is shortened so that only the middle or last syllable is left, the stressed syllable of the original word is the one almost invariably retained. One possible exception to this might be cotton gin from engine.

What is the status of stump words in the language? Some of these clipped forms never rise above humorous or colloquial usage. Students, particularly college students, use many abbreviations that are rarely heard off-campus. Indeed, the favored abbreviations vary from college to college.

Other abbreviations or stump words come into standard usage and take on a meaning which is not exactly synonymous with that of the original word - mend and lone do not have the same connotation as amend and alone. When this happens, the two words, original and clipped, may exist side by side.

Occasionally a stump word becomes so acceptable that it pushes the original word almost out of common usage: cab has replaced cabriolet, fad has replaced fadaise, mob has replaced mobile vulgus in this way.



## I FUNCTIONAL SHIFT

FUNCTIONAL SHIFT adds no new words to the vocabulary at all. What it does is make a word function in a different way - a noun may become a verb, for example, as in the headline Mario Pei quotes, "Police police police poll."<sup>1</sup> In this gem the first police is a noun, the second a verb, the third is either an adjective or the limiting element in a noun group.

Jespersen traces this tendency to make verbs from nouns and nouns from verbs back to Old English, where verbs and nouns of the same root were distinguished only by the endings. When the endings were dropped during the Middle English period, the noun and verb became identical in form. This identity was used as the pattern for making foreign borrowings alike in noun and verb. Now English speech instinct takes it as a matter of course that whenever any need for a verb arises, it may be formed from a substantive without any change. Similarly, we change a verb into a noun.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes turning a simple verb into a noun gives us two nouns with different flavors. We have from the verb combine the nouns combine and combination. We have a visit as well as a visitation, a move as well as a movement, a kill as well as a killing, a meet as well as a meeting.<sup>3</sup>

Robertson and Cassidy mention the present tendency to make occupational verbs out of lengthy nouns: the commercial verbs to requisition and to recondition, the librarian's verb to accession, the publisher's verb to remainder. The electrician's verb to contact has been seized upon joyfully by the whole American-English speaking world. The verbs to service and to process are also widely used.<sup>4</sup>

1 Mario Pei, The Story of English, p.117

2 Jespersen, Growth and Structure, pp. 171-174.

3 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 208.

4 Ibid., p. 207.



Nouns and verbs are not the only parts of speech that are interchangeable. A noun can easily serve as adjective -- corner stone; a noun can become an adverb -- prison made; a verb can become an adjective -- crack shot; an adjective can become a noun - the good die young; an adjective can become a verb - dull a knife; an adjective can become an adverb - pretty good; an adverb can become a noun - ins and outs, an adverb can become a verb - to near the goal; an adverb can become an adjective - under dog.<sup>5</sup>

Many grammarians will not admit that a noun can modify a noun. In expressions formed by compounding noun with noun as in girl friend, they prefer to regard girl as an adjective. If this is so, functional shift has taken place.

Perhaps under functional shift we might mention NONCE-WORDS, which by definition are words that are used on one occasion, or in one connection, and then are allowed to die out. Exchanges similar to the one given are familiar to all of us - "Johnny, what are you doing with that bread?" "I'm making a castle." "I'll castle you." Now the expression "I'll castle you" has no place in the language, but it is expressive of a reaction to a given situation. In this case, the noun castle is used as a verb in the parent's reproach.

This use of substantive as verb on one occasion and one only is an important source of NONCE-WORDS. Jespersen quotes Scott as saying "But me no buts I have set my heart upon it", and Trollope as saying "Diamonds indeed ! I'll diamond him." Tennyson said "~~Prize~~ me no prizes, for my prize is death."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Robertson & Cassidy, p. 209.

<sup>6</sup> Jespersen, Growth and Structure, p. 174.



These examples seem to bear out Jespersen's assertion already mentioned, that a verb may be formed from a substantive without change when the need arises.

Of course not all (NONCE-WORDS) are made by functional shift; the example of a NONCE-WORD given in the Handbook for Writers is "My son has a bad case of baseballitis."<sup>7</sup> NONCE-WORDS are indeed words which are coined for a special occasion, but they differ from AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS, which are more or less serious DERIVATIONS, and also differ from INDIVIDUAL COINAGES which are usually BLENDS.

<sup>7</sup> Leggett, Mead and Charvat, p. 185.



## J SEMANTIC SHIFT

SEMANTIC SHIFT is simple transfer of meaning in a word. When we refer to the "eye" of a potato, the "head" of the stairs, the "mouth" of a river, we are using metaphors which illustrate semantic shift. But our problem in this paper is not with metaphors although they are an important part of SEMANTIC SHIFT. Rather we are interested in semantic shift as a force in the making of new words in English.

When a proper name is taken for the new name of a process or thing we have semantic shift. We say Gladstone bag, Prince Albert coat, Chesterfield (coat, sofa, and cigarette), a bowie knife. From names of scientists and inventors we make the nouns ohm, watt, faraday, volt, ampere, and the verbs galvanize, pasteurize, and mercerize.

Robertson and Cassidy give a list of common nouns from surnames: boycott, davenport, derrick, hansom, mackintosh, pompadour, raglan, sandwich, shrapnel, silhouette, and zeppelin. From Christian names we make a few words: timothy hay (from Timothy Hansen, its originator) guy from Guy Fawkes), and bobby (from Sir Robert Peel).<sup>1</sup>

Verbs formed from proper names include lynch, boycott, macadamize, mesmerize, as well as the newer hollanderize and sanforize.

Articles of food and drink are often named for their place or supposed place of origin: frankforts, hamburgers, bologna, wieners, champagne, madeira, port.

Textiles often bear the name of the region or town where the particular weave originated. Thus we have among the woolens tweed, worsted, and cheviot (as well as the name for overcoat: ulster); among the cottons we have buckram (from Bokhara), muslin (from Mosul in Mesopotamia), calico (from Calcutta),

1 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 211.



cambric and chambray (both from Cambrai, France), cashmere (from Kashmir), denim (from serge de Nimes), jean cloth (from Genoa), jersey (from the Isle of Jersey) lawn (from Laon), lisle (from Lille), madras (from Madras) paisley (from Paisley, Scotland), satin (from Tzu-t'ing, China), shantung (from Shantung), tulle (from Tulle, France).

Other clothing terms from proper names are: burberry (from Burberry, Ltd. the originators), the already mentioned raglan (from Baron Raglan), cardigan (from The Earl of Cardigan), tam-o-shanter (from Burns' character), jodhpurs (from Jodhpur, Rajputana), oxfords (from Oxford), tuxedo (from Tuxedo Park, N. Y.), wellingtons (from The Duke of Wellington), hamburg embroidery, Levis (from the first manufacturer of copper-riveted blue denim overalls - Levi Strauss).

Names of conveyances were formerly very often taken from the names of their inventors: hansom (from A. Hansom), brougham (for Lord Brougham), tilbury (from Tilbury, a London coach builder). The name landau is from its place of origin, Landau, Germany; berlin is from Berlin. Similarly, the Conestoga wagon was named after Conestoga, Pennsylvania, the same town that gave us the word stogie for cigar.

In the early days of automobiles in America this custom of naming the car after its originator was still very strong. We had the Ford, the Stanley Steamers, the Franklin, the Chevrolet, the Durant, the Duryea, the Dodge, and the Oldsmobile. Later on, car manufacturers named their cars after early explorers - De Soto, La Salle, Cadillac, Marquette, or after famous men or places - Pontiac, Lincoln, Plymouth. Right now with the single exception of the new Ford model, the Edsel named in honor of Edsel Ford, the tendency is towards imaginative names, Corvette, Thunderbird, Eldorado, Caballero, particularly in the higher priced cars.

The reverse tendency is seen in floriculture; the earlier names, love-in-a-mist, baby's breath, forget-me-not, bleeding heart, have been kept for old



fashioned flowers, but the newer blooms bear the names of their originators, or are named in honor of someone important. Begonia is for Michael Begon, governor of Santo Domingo; buddleia is for Adam Buddle, an English botanist; clarkia is after William Clark, an American Explorer; dahlia is for A. Dahl, a Swedish botanist; forsythia is for William Forsyth, an English botanist; freesia is for E. M. Fries of Sweden; fuchsia is for Leonhard Fuchs, a German botanist; gaillardia is for Gaillard de Marentonneau, a French botanist; gardenia is for Alexander Garden, an American botanist; poinciana is in honor of Poinci, governor of the French West Indies; poinsettia is for J. R. Poinsett of South Carolina; rudbeckia is for Olaus Rudbeck, a Swedish botanist; wistaria is for Caspar Wistar, an American anatomist; and zinnia is for J. G. Zinn, professor of medicine at Gottingen University, Germany. The seed catalog lists still other names not yet in the dictionary - bignonia, browallia, campsis, gerbera, Kochia, matthiola, saintpaulia, stevia, thunbergia, all of which seem to be formed from names.

If we were to try to enumerate all the words that have been formed from names of mythological characters and the Greek and Roman gods we should be overwhelmed with verbs like vulcanize and tantalize and adjectives like Jovian and cyclopean. But we must mention a few words, common in the language, which have come to us straight from the pages of a known book - the adjectives gargantuan from Rabelais' hero Gargantua, lilliputian from Swift's Gulliver's Travels, quixotic from Gervantes' Don Quixote.<sup>2</sup>

An interesting transfer of meaning is from Defoe's character in Robinson Crusoe - "my man Friday". This expression was changed, back in the 30's, to "girl (or gal) Friday" and is now very much in evidence in the want ads of any cosmopolitan newspaper. A "girl Friday" is a super-efficient private secretary,

2 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 212.



who is willing to serve in the capacity of factotum.

From the expression mal à propos Sheridan named his character Mrs. Malaprop in his play The Rivals. Mrs. Malaprop had a habit of using almost, but not quite, the right word or expression. The term malapropism for a similar misuse of language has been formed from her name.

Another distortion of words, the Spoonerism, consists in the humorous exchange of initial sounds in the words of a phrase. A well known spoonerism is "blushing crow" for "crushing blow"; another is the mangled hymn-title "Kinquering Kongs Their Titles Take". The spoonerism is named for the Rev. W. A. Spooner, who was famous for this habit of humorous distortion.<sup>3</sup>

3 See also Rossell Hope Robbins, "Spooner and Spoonerisms" Word Study, XXXI, (February 1956).



## K SLANG, CANT AND JARGON

SLANG, CANT, AND JARGON are three kinds of language outside standard usage. They differ from each other in several ways. SLANG is a class dialect, composed largely of coined words or words used with an extended meaning. It may or may not be vulgar. CANT is the language of criminals, and is not meant to be understood by those outside the group. JARGON is the shop-talk of any particular occupational group and is not to be secret. Jargon can be on any level; there is professional jargon as well as ditch-diggers jargon. Gobble-dyhook, federalese or officialese is government jargon.

As a source of new words or expressions in the language slang and jargon far surpass cant, although some cant terms may enter the vocabulary of slang and become well-known on a sub-standard level of usage. For example Robertson and Cassidy mention the word scram, once said to be criminal cant, now part of almost everyone's recognition vocabulary at least.<sup>1</sup>

The underworld terms ice (for diamonds or other jewels), hot ice (for stolen diamonds), snow for drugs, reefers for marihuana cigarettes, vipers for drug addicts. And other similar expressions have become widely known through the movies and television. Theoretically, as soon as the underworld terms become popular, new secret terms should be invented by the trade, but whether this is true or not we have no way of knowing.

Jargon is much more apt to come into wide acceptance than cant. Psychological and medical jargon right now are very productive of new expressions. Medicine has given us the expressions allergy and allergic, now used in a very broad sense - "I'm allergic to history" meaning "I can't stand it". Psychosomatic, which by definition means "pertaining to the functional interrelationship between mind and body," is a word now used loosely by everyone with the

1 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 258.



meaning "whatever you have is all in your mind." Psychological terms like intelligence quotient, mental age, achievement test, sibling rivalry, are used by those who have no acquaintance with psychology.

Robertson and Cassidy mention the garage mechanic jargon to jack up, as coming into slang with a change of meaning (to take to task, rebuke).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the slang expressions tear down and take apart came from the same source.

The jargon of a trade or profession changes with changing discoveries or practices. One can readily understand that the medical or hospital jargon of the 1950's would not have much in common with the medical jargon of the turn of the century. And as new terms, often learned and scientific, are created they are adopted into standard usage if they are felt to fill a real need in the language.

Slang changes too, with the changing times. In 1909 G. P. Krapp in his book Modern English<sup>3</sup> listed a great many illustrations of slang current at that time. Today his illustrations read like ancient history -- there is nothing so dead as old slang.

Of course all slang expressions do not die a quick death although a good many of these expressions drop out of use entirely, a favored few slang expressions are used continually and in a more elevated sense and become part of the standard vocabulary of English. Another possible fate of a slang expression (and the rarest) is that it may exist for decades or centuries just outside the gates of standard usage. Robertson and Cassidy point to booze as an example of lingering slang. And, according to them, the expression beat it has not only outlived its contemporaries skidoo and twenty-three, but has at least as

2 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 258.

3 G. P. Krapp, Modern English, Its Growth and Present Use (New York, 1909), pp. 199-211.



much currency as its younger rivals scram and blow.<sup>4</sup>

There seems to be some disagreement among writers as to whether slang words are coined with or without regard for linguistic principles. Mario Pei in his Dictionary of Linguistics defines SLANG as "a type of language in fairly common use, produced by popular adaptation and extension of the meaning of existing words and by coining new words with disregard for scholastic standards and linguistic principles of the formation of words; generally peculiar to certain classes and social or age groups."<sup>5</sup>

Robertson and Cassidy, on the other hand, think that SLANG "not only exemplifies but exaggerates general linguistic processes."<sup>6</sup> A slang expression is as useful to a linguist as a white mouse is to the scientist, and for the same reason: its life cycle is short. A slang word is introduced, popularized, overused, and forgotten all in the course of a few years; then another way of saying the same thing takes over. Robertson and Cassidy quote in chronological order the slang for cynical disbelief "Tell it to the marines," "Tell it to Sweeney," "Is zat so?" "Says you", "So's you old man," "Oh, yeah!", "So what?"<sup>7</sup>

College slang, although it varies from campus to campus is the same in the methods of formation it uses: clipping, deliberate distortion of sounds, and lively metaphor. Since all slang is usually created anonymously, or rather by an individual living in a group, any slang substitution for the more formal expression is understood by the group. The more familiar the word becomes, the more rapidly it may change, with clippings, elisions and losses of syllables.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson and Cassidy, p. 264.

<sup>5</sup> Mario Pei, A Dictionary of Linguistics, (New York. 1954), p. 199.

<sup>6</sup> Robertson and Cassidy, p. 258-259.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 259.



Slang uses many figures of speech such as hyperbole, metonymy, metaphor. The most important is metaphor, which, according to Robertson & Cassidy, is the most characteristic type of slang creation -- the substitution of a metaphorical term for the plain literal expected word.<sup>8</sup> The metaphor becomes changed in the using and gives rise to other metaphors for the same idea. Occasionally the metaphor drives out the legitimate word - as Kopf in German has driven out Haupt, and tete in French has driven out chef. English retains the formal word head, but bean, block, nut, dome, upper story, belfry, coco are well-known slang metaphors.

This list of examples brings to mind a comment of Mencken's in which he described the great concentration of slang words on a very few ideas, that is, slang words for intoxicated, girl or young woman, dead, and in jail abound, while other words are almost without slang equivalents.

Slang is important to the standard language as a natural resource; it is important as a language laboratory. Slang creation points up the difference in appreciation of humor between British and American usage, since American slang leans heavily on hyperbole, while its British counterpart goes in for humorous understatement. In short, slang has its own indisputable place in the study of linguistics.<sup>9</sup>

8 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 261.

9 See also the following articles in American Speech:

William Stewart Cornyn, "Hotel Slang", (October 1939).

David W. Maurer, "The Argot of Confidence Men", (April 1940).

Allen W. Read, "Drunk in Slang" Addenda", (February 1941).

Glossary of Army Slang, (October 1941).

David W. Maurer, "The Argot of Forgery", (December 1941).

Julius G. Rothenberg, "Peanuts - The Pickle Dealers", (December 1941).

Ruth Mulvey, "Pitchman's Cant", (April 1942).

Bernard H. Porter, "Truck Driver Lingo", (April 1942).

Elrick B. Davis, "Paul Bunyan Talk", (December 1942).

Jack G. Arbolino, "Navy Yard Talk", (December 1942).

W. F. Cottrell and H. C. Montgomery, "A Glossary of Railroad Terms", (October 1943).

Sir St. Vincent Troubridge, "Words of the Theatre", (October 1947).

Ervin J. Gaines, "Talking Under Water: Speech in Submarines", (February 1948).

John L. Riordan, "AVG Lingo", (February 1948).

A.S. Fleischman, "Words in Modern Magic", (February 1949).

Cedric Larson, "Terms of the Fur Industry", (April 1949).



## L A NOTE ON DIALECT

Slang should not, however, be confused with another non-standard use of language called DIALECT. DIALECT is the form of language, spoken in a certain geographic area, which differs sufficiently from the standard language to be considered a distinct entity. It differs in pronunciation, grammar, and idiom.<sup>1</sup> DIALECT is like slang or even jargon in that it is spoken by a certain group of people; it is readily understood within the group; it has no purpose of concealment; and it is non-standard language. However, it differs from slang in that slang is a conscious creation, consciously used, while dialect is purely unconscious in its native speakers. Only as one dialect is taken to be indicative of superior status is that dialect consciously cultivated by those not born to it.

Here in Virginia the "Eastern Virginia Dialect" would most certainly be the most copied. There are young adults saying cyar and gyarden who most certainly did not grow up in that tradition. In reality, anyone under sixty years of age who uses the intrusive glide is suspect.

In England "Received Standard" is the term usually given to that peculiarly desirable type of pronunciation used, in its purest form, by educated residents of southern England. In the opinion of others, it is not a geographical, but a class dialect,<sup>2</sup> and thus conceived is sometimes called "Public School English." As a mark of social status, "Public School English" is consciously cultivated not only in England but in the Eastern boarding schools and finishing schools of the United States.

These two dialects, "Eastern Virginia" and "Public School English" are examples of class dialects which are felt to be superior to ordinary speech,

1 Mario Pei, Dictionary of Linguistics, p. 56.

2 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 401.



and for this reason consciously practiced. But most dialects as we have already said, are wholly unconscious, and in this unconsciousness lies their value to the linguist. By a study of dialect the linguist can determine what old strong verb forms are still retained: clum for climbed, fit for fought, et for eaten; and he can learn not to mistake these forms for illiteracies. Similarly in an expression like "a-runnin'" in dialect, one can see the retention of the Early Modern English form of the Middle English "Y-ronnen". Similar mistakes are seen through the study of dialect to have a legitimate linguistic background.

To give another example: the retention or disappearance of the r before consonants and at the end of words is a regional characteristic throughout the United States, a characteristic that can be understood when the historical and linguistic backgrounds of early settlers in these regions are studied. The study of these regional variations in speech is called linguistic geography.

Linguistic geography is merely the recording scientifically of the speech differences between various parts of the country, differences of which we have always been aware and which we call "hill-billy or mountain talk," "cowboy lingo," "Brooklynese," "Southern drawl" or "talking with a mouthful of mush," "talking through your nose," "rolling your r's" and so on. Radio and television have made us much more conscious of these differences, so much so that any popular magazine article which purports to show us where pancake becomes griddle cake or flapjack has a wide reading. Then too the popularity of Andy Griffin's record "What It Is, Is Football" attests to the wide interest in the subject of regional differences in speech.

The method of the linguistic geographer is to record on a map the locality where a given pronunciation, grammatical construction, or word usage prevails. By interviewing both the older and the younger generations,



he can tell whether the local usage is still flourishing or is dying out. By comparison of one locality with another he can determine whether the influence of the area is spreading or not. Pronunciation, grammatical construction, and word usages or idioms fall into geographical patterns which can be mapped as isogloss areas. By means of these isogloss areas, local deviation from General American can be seen at a glance.

This is not to say that General American is the Standard and all other varieties are sub-standard. In a way, all of us speak one dialect or another, but for purposes of comparison it is useful to refer to the pronunciation which is felt to prevail generally the central and western United States and throughout most of Canada.<sup>3</sup>

Dialect puts no new words in the language, but it does account for the retention in some parts of the country of expressions which have died out in other parts of the country. For this reason, we have included this note on dialect.

3 Mario Pei, Dictionary of Linguistics, p. 81.



## CHAPTER V

## WORD-MAKING TODAY

We have discussed at some length the various methods of making words in English. It is our purpose now to try to decide which word-making methods are still active, and which methods are in disuse. This will be done on the basis of words which have appeared between 1939-1956, a period of 17 years.

Now this 17 year period is hardly long enough to justify a scientific prediction, although according to Joshua Whatmough "we are now in a position to predict, given data over a sufficiently long period of time, the course which language is following; and also to see that reverse predictions are possible."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Whatmough brings forward the principle of selective variation to account for the possibility of prediction of future developments in any given language. Indeed, according to this theory, we can determine what forms, now missing in a language, were once present. All language is selective, not only in phonology, but in morphology, in syntax and in vocabulary. Historical linguistics teaches us that language is forever changing, but that the changes are not whimsical,<sup>2</sup> but follow a certain pattern.

A young French mathematician, Mandelbrot, who has occupied himself with the problem of the relative frequencies of occurrence of any given entity in any given language has arrived at the somewhat obscure formula

$$P_n = \frac{p}{(n + m)} B$$

in which  $p_n$  represents the frequency of the  $n^{\text{th}}$  entity.  $P$ ,  $m$ , and  $B$  are positive constants,  $m$  being significant when  $n$  is small,  $B$  when  $n$  is large. The formula represents quite accurately the statistical data obtained from a great variety of languages.<sup>3</sup>

1 Joshua Whatmough, Language, a Modern Synthesis (New York, 1956), p. 168.

2 Ibid., p. 169.

3 Ibid., p. 257 - from B. Mandelbrot "Contribution à la theorie Mathématique des Jeux de Communication."



But to apply this formula, we need masses of linguistic material. It is interesting to note that Dr. Whatmough confines himself to the following predictions about the English language:

1. Strong verbs (e. g. sing, sang, sung) are disappearing. By 3000 A. D. they will be practically extinct.
2. New self-explaining long compounds have been on the increase since 1900 (e. g. better-than-leather-miracle-covering, December 1950 in one of the popular magazines).<sup>4</sup>

In view of the scantiness of Dr. Whatmough's predictions, perhaps we may be excused for presenting our findings over a period of merely 17 years as being merely personal findings, not to be taken as a scientific analysis of language development.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 249-250.



## CHAPTER VI

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS are not very important in the language today as a source of new words. By AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS we mean seriously intended made-up words, or word-borrowings introduced for the first time. Throughout the whole history of the language there have been periods of plenty and periods of famine in this regard.

Some of the poets who contributed to the vocabulary were: Chaucer, who introduced for the first time many word borrowings from the French - among them attention, duration, fraction, position; Coverdale and Tindale, the translators; Coverdale who gave us loving-kindness, tender mercy, blood-guiltiness, noonday, morning-star and kind-hearted, and Tindale, who contributed peacemaker, long-suffering, broken-hearted, stumbling-block and beautiful.<sup>1</sup>

Spenser, according to Robertson and Cassidy, is the first English writer who deliberately and self-consciously created words. Among them are drowsi-head, elfin, dreariment, blatant, braggadocio, and probably briny, horsy, and shiny. Shakespeare's inventions are endless - among them control (as a noun), dwindle, homekeeping, and lonely are often lost sight of in the consideration of such words as multitudinous and incarnadine.<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare's compounds were his special contribution - pigeon-livered, muddy-mettled, cloud-capped, heaven-kissing, sea-swallowed. Out was a favorite compound - out-tongue, out-villain, outvenom, outvoice.<sup>3</sup>

Milton's contributions are fewer than Shakespeare's, but very characteristic. Emblazoning, dimensionless, ensanguined, irradiance, infinite are a few of his creations. Pandemonium created on the pattern of Pantheon is another Milton contribution, as are anarch and the overworked sensuous.<sup>4</sup>

1 Robertson and Cassidy, pp. 216-217.

2 Ibid., pp. 218-219.

3 John Calvin Metcalf, Know Your Shakespeare (Boston, 1949).

4 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 220.



Keats' contributions to the language were not usually single words, but compounds like deep-damasked and full-throated and particular felicitous phrases like alien corn, perilous seas and magic casements. Tennyson's compounds have lasted; evil-starred, fairy tale and moonlit are said to be his.<sup>5</sup> Browning's artistry is very active in the language today.

Prose writers Wiclif, Malory and Caxton made individual contributions. Sir Thomas Browne, the 17th century writer is very prolific in word-making. Among his most useful creations are: antidiluvian, hallucination, insecurity, incontrovertible, precarious, retrogression. Electricity, literary and medical are his also.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Johnson's contributions are fiddlededee and irascibility; Lord Chesterfield introduced etiquette, friseur and persiflage from the French; Byron gave us bored and blasé; Shelley contributed idealism, and Miss Burney propriety.

In the 18th century the two great word creators were Edmund Burke, with colonization, diplomacy, electioneering, federalism, and municipality, and Jeremy Bentham with minimize, detachable, meliorability, cross-examination and exhaustive.<sup>7</sup>

Sir Walter Scott in the 19th century introduced into his words many Scottish words and phrases: raid, gruesome, uncanny, glamour; he created free-lance, red-handed, passage of arms and Norseman and re-introduced smouldering, weird (in the sense of "fate") and fiery cross.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas Carlyle also borrowed terms from Scots dialect: feckless, lilt and outcome. He translated swansong from the German, and coined decadent, environment and self-help.<sup>9</sup>

5 Ibid. pp. 221-222.

6 Ibid. p. 223.

7 Ibid. p. 224.

8 Ibid. p. 225.

9 Ibid. pp. 225-226.



Since Carlyle there has been no author who has added more than a few words to the vocabulary. Why not? Margaret Schlaugh tries to answer this question by a discussion of language and poetic creation. Poets do not need to create new words because they can fall back on the lively older meanings of abstract compound words. These abstract terms are really faded metaphors, and if the metaphor can be rejuvenated, a new experience of the word is possible, without sacrificing comprehension.<sup>10</sup> This process is called "semantic rejuvenation." James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, C. D. Lewis and Hart Crane are all users of this "semantic rejuvenation."

Hart Crane also uses blends as in his galvothermic for thunder. Thomas Hardy created the verbs unbe, unillude, unbloom, and the nouns unease and lippings.

James Joyce has created words by compounding: wavyavy - eavyheavy eavy eavy and longin-dying, endlessnessnessness. Some of these self-explaining compounds are echoes as steelhoofs ringhoff ring. He also uses punning, and verbal and phrasal distortion.

T. S. Eliot specializes in the creation of new images by the placing together of words with warring connotations. He rarely creates words. Other poets employ the method of using abstractions to express concretes, and concretes to express abstractions.<sup>11</sup> The creation of new words has been largely abandoned by authors and left, according to Robertson and Cassidy to scientists,<sup>12</sup> to journalistic humorists, to gossip columnists and radio clowns.

10 Schlaugh, pp. 230-238.

11 Ibid., pp. 246-247.

12 Robertson and Cassidy, p. 228.



## CHAPTER VII

## INDIVIDUAL COINAGES

Although authors' contributions to the language are on the decrease INDIVIDUAL COINAGES are certainly on the increase. These individual coinages are apt to be blends, or portmanteau words. Occasionally they are compounds, derivations, analogic creations or functional shifts. Let us examine the blends first.

We have already mentioned Jacques Barzun's portmanteau word Bovaryectomy, and we have listed numerous Time coinages, all blends. Other blends worthy of mention are these: Dr. William A. Brady's gloomerous, a blend of gloomy and numerous ("duodenal ulcer, angina pectoris, and other ills too gloomerous to mention"), pollyanodynes, a blend of Pollyanna and anodyne, coined by Albert Lewin of Hollywood when describing certain "sweet" films, Noel Busch's mingy, a blend of mean and stingy, Patric Dickinson's coinage to describe e. e. cummings' love for typographical novelty, typograbatics, a blend of typographical and acrobatics, Christopher Morley's kinsprit, a blend of kindred and spirit, and his neon-platonist, a blend of neon and neo-platonist, E. B. White's helter-skeleton, a blend of helter-skelter and skeleton, Dorothy Draper's Brazilliance, a blend of Brazil and brilliance, coined to describe an interior decorating effect, Edgar Bergen's telephone snoopervisor, a blend of snoopy and supervisor, Donald P. Geddes abstrosities, a blend of abnormal and monstrosities, Henry J. Taylor's governmentalists, a blend of government and mentalist, Rodeo, a blend of road and rodeo, created anonymously, but reported in the New York Times of October 12, 1952, selevator, a blend of self-service

1 Reported in American Speech, XI (October, 1947).

2 Reported in Word Study, XVII (January, 1942).

3 Time and Tide, XXIX (January, 1948).

4 One Man's Meat, 1942.

5 Saturday Review of Literature, June 5, 1943.



and elevator, first proposed in the New York Times column "Talk of the Times", Elizabeth N. Troy's drownpour (drown / downpour) and her woman-euvers (woman / maneuvers), alco-joyed, a blend of alcohol and overjoyed, coined by Tom Knapp, Omaha city welfare law inspector, Mademoiselle's blend for executive secretary, executary,<sup>7</sup> and The Ladies' Home Journal's column title Journalities, a blend of Journal and personalities.<sup>8</sup>

Word Study reports consumics for consumer economics, malassignment (presumably a blend of malaise and assignment).<sup>9</sup> Norman Corwin is said to be responsible for curgatory (cur / purgatory), and globilliterate (global / illiterate).<sup>10</sup> Clifton Fadiman in Party of One praises Ogden Nash and thinks he should be Pulitsurprised, a blend of Pulitzer Prize with surprise.

Max Eastman coined drigmal day (drizzly / dismal) and abdominable type (abominable / abdomen), Sinclair Lewis is responsible for Kiplingo (Kipling / lingo), hobohemia, and philathrobber.<sup>11</sup> Blaboteur may be blabby / saboteur. It was used in the review of the movie Saboteur in the New Republic, May 18, 1942.

An anonymous student in the National Guard coined the blend trudgery to describe his duties. Dr. Mary B. Deaton of the State Teachers College in Superior, Wisconsin reported this coinage. Yiddioms is an expression proposed by Julius G. Rothenberg in American Speech XVIII (February 1943). The Reader's Digest for January 1939 listed alibiology and glamored for attention (clamor / glamor). The Saturday Evening Post for October 11, 1956, reports the blend rurban (rural / urban) for non-farming country dwellers.

6 Reported in American Speech XVI (December, 1941).

7 Reported in Word Study XXVIII (April, 1953).

8 XVII (January, 1942).

9 XXII (December, 1946).

10 Reported in Word Study XXIV (October, 1948).

11 Quoted in Word Study XXIV (October, 1948).



If the blend is the most popular coinage for individuals, the next most prevalent individual coinage is compounding, although it is sometimes hard to distinguish between a brand new compound, and a compound formed, consciously or unconsciously, by analogic creation. Certainly J. F. Brown writing on psychodynamics in 1940<sup>12</sup> formed a new compound in all seriousness; just as certainly Dr. Wallace Sterling, the president of Stanford University, created the compound psychoceramic (crackpot) analogically. The word extrapolation has been explained as (1) a new compound (2) a compound created on the pattern of interpolation (3) a blend of extra / interpolation. Then too we have a combination of methods, compounding and derivation in the word unlaydownable. Foiblesome, a compound, was the word used to describe Angela Thirkell by Elyth Morley<sup>14</sup> but a good case for foiblesome as analogic creation could be made — meddlesome, tiresome, troublesome are all words that come to mind.

Nokay created by Molotov is another analogic compound.<sup>15</sup> William DeBeck's horsefeathers is another. So is underwhelming, coined by Howard Brubaker in the New Yorker.<sup>16</sup> An old coinage by Donald Gordon, whodunit (1930)<sup>17</sup> has led to a flock of analogic compounds: whydunit, a term for psychological mystery stories, first used by Newsweek in July 1950 was followed by howdunit in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine in October 1950.

Similarly the older term what have you? provided the pattern for who have you?<sup>18</sup> coined by H. S. Canby. A somewhat similar coinage is howcome by

- 12 The Psychodynamics of Abnormal Behavior (New York, 1940).
- 13 Alfred A. Knopf book review, New York Times (January 21, 1951).
- 14 New York Herald Tribune (August 7, 1949).
- 15 Quoted in American Speech, XXIII (December, 1948).
- 16 Quoted by Word Study, XIX (May, 1944).
- 17 Quoted in Word Study, XXI (May, 1946).
- 18 Writing in the Saturday Review of Literature for September 1940.



Christopher Morley ("the more intimate howcome of American emotions")  
 writing in the Book-of-the-Month Club News.<sup>19</sup> Is this analogous to outcome  
 and income and overcome? And Westbrook Pegler's revolutioneering, is it  
 analogous to electioneering, to engineering, or to both?<sup>20</sup>

Max Beerbohm coined narrowcast after broadcast. The television term  
telecast appeared, another analogic creation, and still later Variety coined  
simulcast for a simultaneous radio and television broadcast.<sup>22</sup>

Genocide, coined in 1950 by Dr. Raphael Lemkin of Yale<sup>23</sup> was followed  
 by Life's menticide in 1952,<sup>24</sup> and in 1957 by This Week's pedestricide  
 (February 24).

Science fiction has given us the compounds spaceship (cf. airship),<sup>25</sup>  
astrogation (cf. navigation) and astronautics (cf. aeronautics).

In the field of medicine, we began with the compound steptomycin, a  
 chain mold. In 1949 we added aureomycin and neomycin; in 1950 terramycin  
 was named; 1951 gave us viomycin and 1952 gave us both erythromycin and  
baccillomycin.<sup>26</sup>

Christopher Morley is fond of compounds ending in phile. Infrancano-  
phile (lover of the under-dog) is his, and so is indexophile (lover of an  
 index).<sup>27</sup> Another of his compounds is cross-fertility, also said of an index.

This Week, always a good source for new words and expressions, intro-  
 duced the idiomatic compound highway hypnosis on June 1, 1952. On July 29,  
 1956 This Week reintroduced the expression. On August 5, 1956 the magazine  
 proposed the compound urbiculture for the new science of city planning.

19 Quoted by American Speech XIX (October, 1944).

20 New York World Telegram (January, 1941).

21 Quoted in Word Study, XXII (April 1947).

22 Quoted in Word Study, XXV (April, 1950).

23 Quoted in Word Study, XXVI (February, 1951).

24 Quoted in Word Study, XXVIII (April, 1953).

25 Quoted in Word Study, XXVIII (October, 1952).

26 Quoted in Word Study, XXX (February 1955).

27 Preface to the 11th edition of Bartlett's Quotations (Boston, 1937).



Crash-worthiness is another This Week coinage.

Brainstorm is not a new compound; it dates back to the Loeb-Leopold case but the words brainstorming and brainstormer were introduced by the Associated Press in September 1956 and printed in the Richmond Times-Dispatch on Sunday, September 16 with the head "Bright Young Men Mine Ideas on Madison Avenue." On December 9, 1956 This Week had an article advertised as "How To Be A Brainstormer" and titled "Need An Idea? Try Brainstorming." This new compound applies to a group experiment in problem-solving. Cosmetic surgery was another This Week innovation, dated February 3, 1957. Of course cosmetic surgery was formed by analogy with plastic surgery.

The idiomatic compounds talking sheep and sheep talk were coined by Clifton Fadiman in Party of One, but this is the only example of an idiomatic compound to appear.

Derivation accounts for Ted Shane's brightling and for This Week's July 1, 1956 offering, be-much, although of course be-much was coined with Jefferson's be-little (1793) in mind. Other derivations are John Mason Brown's tough-guyese, Philip Wylie's nomism, Time's licit passion (used of Grace Kelly),<sup>28</sup> Elsie Robinson's grownsters, Westbrook Pegler's unioneers, Christopher Morley's boloniana, Good Housekeeping's exurban (introduced in August 1956), Time's bonhommousness, Mrs. Enrico Caruso's discography,<sup>29</sup> now generally accepted, Dr. Irwin Edman's complicitly, and desatellization, a word coined in Yugoslavia, according to the Associated Press account in the Richmond News Leader for October 18, 1956.

<sup>28</sup> Time, January 28, 1955.

<sup>29</sup> Candle in the Dark, 1939.



Functional shift is very prevalent among individual coinages. Separates as a noun is quoted frequently in the New Yorker; big and other bigs was a New York Herald Tribune expression.<sup>30</sup> Frank Tannenbaum in Crime and the Community wrote ". . . he puzzled to the warden."

Semantic shift is for the most part confined to using a name as a verb; to winchell is Don Bloch's contribution. E. Lavery used the expression do a Truman to mean win unexpectedly, but this is forgotten now.<sup>31</sup> Clifton Fadiman described American men as mittier than others. This of course was a reference to Walter Mitty, the dream hero.

Backformation is infrequent among individual coinages. Delia M. Pugh of Burlington, New Jersey is responsible for the verb to stinge "she stinged all through the depression"; Robert M. Yoder in "One Mah Riot" wrote "It took several blocks of driving before Wilbur regained much desire to benefact and benevol."<sup>32</sup> Leonard Weckworth, a wandering bookseller said "I have itinerated 105,000 miles'for free'."<sup>33</sup>

Steve McNeil in The Writer for December 1949 mentions a wife who gets culturitis, but this was the only nonce-word noted.

An interesting example of sound symbolism occurs in blinger used by Paul de Kruif in The Reader's Digest for December 1949. It is explained as a double phonestheme, a blend of the bl- blow family and the -ing family.<sup>34</sup>

The only example of pur root creation is Maury Maverick's now famous gobbledegook.

30 Both quoted in Word Study, XXVII (October, 1951)

31 Saturday Review of Literature, April 16, 1949.

32 Saturday Evening Post, November 7, 1948.

33 Quoted in American Speech, XXVI (May 1951).

34 American Speech, XXVI (February, 1951).



## CHAPTER VIII

## COMMERCIAL COINAGES

COMMERCIAL COINAGES for the most part are not inspired. The word-making methods most commonly used are derivation, blends, and some compounds. H. L. mencken writing on prolific suffixes in American Speech for February 1946 listed the following suffixes, most of which have been widely applied in the commercial world: -ability, -burger, -cide, -ee, -eria, -steer, -ette, -ist, -ium, -ogenic, -olator, -orium, -ster. Pyles' list would agree with this with the addition of -dom, -ery, -furter, -ize and -wich.<sup>1</sup>

Louise Pound in 1951 noted the use of medial Q and A as in Ray-Q-Vac and Stack-A-Door, and she also noted the use of the suffix -tex or -ex as in Bondex.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these suffixes perhaps we should mention the prevalent -matic as in instamatic, simplimatic and hydramatic.

Blends used commercially are sometimes rather apt - ghostess (Don't be a ghostess!) a blend of ghost / hostess seems apropos. Other blends are scaddle (scale / ladle), humiture (humidity / temperature), cafetorium and cafegymtorium, revusical (revue / musical), motel (motor / hotel), lizagator shoes, conformal shoes, Caterpillar's Traxcavator (tractor / excavate), teleprompter, telemeter, telecourse, telecon, videclinic, the University of Iowa's speech library, the libratory, bascart from the supermarket and singspiratious.

The New Yorker for July 14, 1956 had an interesting account of the I. B. M. machine commissioned by Charles Pfizer and Company, a Brooklyn pharmaceutical house, to produce a dictionary of forty-two thousand nonsense words with a scientific look and sound. The dictionary was compiled by

1 Pyles, pp. 186-188.

2 Louise Pound, "Medial O", American Speech, XXVI (October, 1951).



feeding the machine with ten endings -il, -sil, -mine, -phyl, -mycin, -cide, -ane, -ate, -ite, and -ol, and with two-syllable prefixes. No syllables were to be repeated. The machine produced the forty-two thousand word dictionary in two hours.<sup>3</sup>

Among commercial compounds we have already discussed the compounds with -thon; moviethon, telethon, talkathon and meltathon are the latest additions. They, of course, are all analogic to marathon. John Lotz writing in American Speech for July 1954, mentions the prevalence of -rama, citing cinerama, liquorama, audiorama, autorama, telerama, vistarama and the musical comedy Wonderama.

Master is also a frequently used compound - Roadmaster, Rainmaster, Snowmaster, Fogmaster, Inkmaster, Cakenaster, Sirmaster, Trashmaster are all names of commercial devices.<sup>4</sup> Other masters are moist master, load master, electromaster and quizmaster. Mobile is a useful compounding element: we had bloodmobile, bookmobile, Cubmobile first; then came mixermobile (for concrete), scoopmobile, buggymobile, scrapermobile, towermobile and freezermobile.<sup>5</sup> From photogenic we have acquired by analogy videogenic, telegenic and phonogenic (Bell Telephone ad).

We have all kinds of clinics: auto, baseball, canning, clothing, credit, flute players, football, golf, mortgage, parole, and price control, plus the vedec clinic already mentioned.<sup>6</sup>

3 "Il, Sil, Mine, Phyl", New Yorker, July 14, 1956.

4 David McCord, "Mr. Master", Atlantic, April 1951.

5 Reported in American Speech, XXIII (December, 1948).

6 "Clinics", American Speech, XXIV (October, 1949).



CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION - THE REST OF US

Where, then, do our new words come from? We have dismissed authors' contributions as adding few new words to the language but relying instead on semantic rejuvenation and startling juxtaposition; we have examined individual coinages and found them to be largely blends and compoundings; we have discovered that commercial coinages rely heavily on a few over-worked suffixes and another few compounding elements. What do the rest of us - the anonymous public - do when we need a new word?

Just as an experiment 324 new words reported in American Speech in the New Words Section and bearing the date 1945 or later were examined. Of these words 136 were compounds: 100 new compounds and 36 analogic compounds. Twelve might be called idiomatic compounds.

Derivation accounted for 85 new words, and blends for 44 more; acronyms had dwindled to 19 entries; functional shift accounted for 16 words and semantic shift (usually the figurative use of an already known word) accounted for 14.

Backformations were only four in number: to chain smoke (1946), to hallucinate (Journal of the AMA 1946), to re-une (Dartmouth 1947), and dols (from dolorimeter) 1949.

Borrowings were three: apartheid, letterism, and berm. Sound symbolism may account for blooper and tweeter, but the origin of hassel (or hassle) is unknown.

Compounding seems to be the simplest way for most of us to create a new two or three word expression, particularly when we are dead serious, and since the language is so flexible about what may be compounded with what,



the possibilities are limitless.

When we are not so serious, our most common impulse is to create a new word by analogy. We have heard the expressions bird's eye view and worm's eye view, so we come up with robin's eye-view, man's eye-view,<sup>1</sup> road's eye-view, tourist's eye-view, doctor's eye-view and others.

Or we pick on the compounding element - happy. If we say slap-happy, why not scrap-happy, sap-happy, snap-happy (a Kleenex ad), tap-happy (a movie ad),<sup>2</sup> hate-happy, power-happy, footlight-happy? Other very popular compounds are those with - wise. We have as new words atomic-wise, advertising-wise, highway-wise. The AAUF Bulletin 1951 used the expression enrollment-wise. During World War II - buster was a frequently used object-compound form in both literal and figurative use. Today it seems to have died out.

If we are proud of our learning we are apt to work in -phobia as a word ending. Inside the ACD (November 1954) quotes basophobia (fear of standing up), kakorrhaphiophobia (fear of failure), apierophobia (fear of infinity), skopophobia (fear of spies). While this list may be humorously intended, the -phobia ending has been frequently and seriously applied.

Derivation, next to compounding the most favored method of word-formation today, is used by all of us in about the same way and with the same affixes as in commercial usage.

In a recent study of word formation in English the major suffixes were listed. The most frequently occurring suffix was -ion, noted 1138 times in the Thorndike-Lorge list. Next frequent was -er, occurring 1031 times, -y/cy appeared 798 times, -al 702 times, -ate 515 times. -ic, -ity and -ous all occurred over 400 times, -able, -ant, -ness, -ry and -ian

1 "Eye-view," American Speech XXIII (December, 1948).

2 "Suffix-happy," American Speech, XXIX (February, 1944).



appeared over 300 times.

The suffixes -hood (22 times), -some (29 times) and -ess (51 times) seem not to be very productive.<sup>3</sup>

The small number of words examined precludes any definitive statement as to the direction of the English language stream, but certainly compound-  
ing and derivation seem to be two of the leading methods of word-making in English at the present time.

3 F. W. Harwood and Alison M. Wright, "A Statistical Study of English Word Formation". Language, XXXII (April-June 1956).



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