

# KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors. All contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

## Language Without Words

"A dream: a man who unlearns the world's languages until nowhere on earth does he understand what people are saying." Elias Canetti proposes this dream in his short book, The Voyages of Marrakesh, A Record of a Visit (Continuum Press, New York, 1978). He goes on, "What is there in language? What does it conceal? What does it rob one of?" He preferred to listen to the sounds of the Arabic and Berber in this Moroccan city, savoring these feelings, and concerned lest translations of the words spoil his insights.

At first glance, it would seem foolish to want to know less rather than more. Yet, it is easy to imagine (and even to name) a beautiful opera written in a beautiful language (Italian), with a second-rate libretto. Not knowing Italian might offer a distinct advantage. Beautifully drawn calligraphy in a language undecipherable to the viewer might provide a powerful esthetic experience, which would be abruptly diminished on learning that one was viewing a laundry list.

The sound and musicalness of language is known, at least to the neurologist, as prosody, and the Norwegian neurologist C.H. Monrad-Krohn pioneered in the study of the medical significance of normal prosody and what happens to it in various states of disease. If one hears a child of, say, seven months of age babbling in the next room, one may think that the child is speaking his own language. Actually, the child has yet to speak a single word - his babbling is a practicing of the phonemes of the language he will start to speak months later. So, toddlers babble in English, Chinese, Norwegian. And it is only one's mother tongue that is learned this way - all subsequent acquired languages are taught first with words, and only later (or, possibly at the same time) with prosody. Languages learned after the mother tongue are spoken dysprosodically - that is, with an accent.

It would be interesting to know if the toddler learns only the "cold" phonemes of his native tongue as the bottom of a dictionary page might list them, or if it also learns at the same time those manipulations of sounds which convey emotional content. It would almost have to be so, but I don't know if that has been studied.

## Beating the Triple Negative

Before leaving the world of neurology, I will update the medical polynegative. The brain produces a hormone which prevents the kidneys from excreting excessive urine, and is, sensibly enough, called **anti-diuretic hormone**. At times, the central nervous system releases too much of this hormone, or at the wrong time. This condition is called **inappropriate secretion of anti-diuretic hormone**. The origin of the term is clear enough, but it does contain two negatives, **inappropriate** and **anti-diuretic**, making it tricky to figure out whether in this state there is more or less urine.

The neurologists have gone one better. Loss of the ability to read is termed **alexia**, and loss of ability to write, **agraphia**. Usually, when the brain is damaged, if one occurs then both occur, since the parts of the brain carrying out these functions are quite near each other. Rarely, though, a very small lesion in the brain affects only one function. And so, there is **alexia without agraphia**, again very sensibly named, but a triple negative. The simplifying designation, **pure alexia**, has not really caught on.

**Hemianopsia** is the loss of vision to one side of space, and it, too, often accompanies agraphia and alexia - but not always. Enter S.H. Greenblatt (in the journal *Brain and Language*, 1976) who describes **alexia without agraphia or hemianopsia**. Yes, a quadruple negative, although the **or** does break the clear string of no-words.

B. Jennett and F. Plum (*Lancet*, 1972) decry "... the unnecessarily arcane jargon that often makes neurology needlessly difficult for others to understand." It has been suspected by other physicians that those neurologists who specialize in speech disorders (sometimes called **aphasiologists**) deal with a contagious disease. After sufficient study of these disorders, it is no longer possible to be understood.

## Chaetura Drab, The Color Bear

A Dr. Seuss children's story? No. Under the entry **Chaetura drab**, in Webster's Second New International Dictionary, is the definition: The color bear. And bear is a color yellow in hue, of low saturation and low brilliance.

Special Publication Number 440, of the National Bureau of Standards is Color, Universal Language and Dictionary of Names (K.L. Kelly and D.B. Judd, 1976). It is a wonderful rainbow of colors and words, from **opaq** to **puke**, including a discussion of when it is gray and when it is grey.

As there are many colors very close together in optical properties, there are also many very similar names. Here is a sample of synonyms, or near-synonyms:

gaude	oold	wau	wield	wod
olde	wald	weld	woald	wold

These are all listed under **acacia**, and therefore all are yellow.

Woad, which is blue, is therefore not to be included in this list, even though it looks like it belongs.

The longest list of very similar words is of a dead-leaf color:

feuille morte	filemort	philamot	phyliamort
feulamort	fillemot	philimot	phyllamort
fieulamort	folimort	philomot	

Finally, a quiz. Some colors are named for famous artists. Name the color attached to the following names: Goya, Monet, Rameau, Rembrandt, Titian, Vandyke (two colors), Veronese (two colors), Watteau. (Yes, I know Rameau was a composer, but answer it anyway.) Answers for this and other quizzes can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

### Miniabbreviations

The ultimate in abbreviations consists of reducing one or more words to a single letter. This is the usual procedure employed in the production of acronyms, but a sizeable number of single words, as well, are abbreviated to single letters. The listing of individual letters in Webster's Third New International Dictionary indicates which abbreviations or symbols are in favor in contemporary English. The vast majority of single-letter abbreviations consist of the first letters of the English spelling of the word.

Below is a list of 25 words and one phrase. Each is abbreviated, or symbolized, according to Webster's Third, by a single letter. Each of the 26 letters of the alphabet is used but once, but in no case is the abbreviation the same as the first letter of its definition.

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| 1. admittance    | 14. impedance          |
| 2. and           | 15. inquire            |
| 3. book          | 16. law                |
| 4. born          | 17. left               |
| 5. brother       | 18. left               |
| 6. cathode       | 19. magnetic induction |
| 7. cross         | 20. noon               |
| 8. emperor       | 21. penny              |
| 9. eye           | 22. slow               |
| 10. father       | 23. tungsten           |
| 11. film         | 24. turn               |
| 12. hundred      | 25. volume             |
| 13. illumination | 26. year               |

### Abajo to Zuni

That is the range of entries in a book edited by T.M. Pearce, New Mexico Place Names, A Geographical Dictionary (University of New Mexico Press, 1965). A brief discussion of each entry, which includes all geographic names (towns, rivers, canyons, etc.) past and present, includes enlightening information about the names themselves. There are approximately five thousand entries in the 187 pages, and the logologist spots a number of oddities.

There is an entry for the letter X, namely X Ray, a post office in Torrance County from 1917 to 1920. It can join Xenia OH and some very tiny places (Xenia IL, Xavier KS, Xenia KS) in the exclusive list of USA geographical X-entries.

There are palindromes: Pep and Otto. And tautonyms: Quiqui and Yunque Yunque (an ancient pueblo site). Also, two-word place names with triple letters: El Llanito and Wall Lake. There are acronyms: JAL (for John A. Lynch) and Maljamar (for Malcolm, Janet, Margaret). There are several unusual vowel combinations, usually based on native Indian languages: Abiquiu, Bueyeros, Saa Creek, Taaiyalone Mountain, Toayallone and Tyuonyi. There are isolated letters in place names, relating to ranch brands: T Bar Canyon and V Cross T Lake. There is a creek called Tio Grande, changed in just its first letter from the much more watery Rio Grande.

Names just outlandish or colorful abound, in this wild region, with so many cultural influences. Note Bathtub Draw, Bug Scuffle Canyon, Humbug Creek, Me Own Hills, Piggly Wiggly Canyon, Quien Sabe Creek (meaning "who knows?" in Spanish), Skinned Ass Canyon, Walking, and, of course, Truth or Consequences (known locally as T or C) - which was a renaming of Hot Springs in 1950 for the radio program of that name hosted by Ralph Edwards. It did not subsequently change again to This is Your Life.

Belly-Ache Mesa (also known as Gut-Ache Mesa) is so called "because a cowboy cook warmed over some soured frijoles", or, in another version, the culprit was "bad son-of-a-gun stew". And there's Guajolotes, in San Miguel County. The derivation of the word is as follows: "New Mexican Spanish, 'water dog or salamander,' a corruption of Aztec axolotl, 'salamander,' by confusing it with Aztec huexolotl, 'turkey.'" The confusion persists.

In introductory remarks on the Indian languages of the region, it is stated that one of the four major Indian stocks is Tanoan, and that this stock comprises three major groups, Tiwa, Tewa and Towa. In nearby Arizona, there is a place called Tawa Point, in the Petrified Forest National Park. For completion, the fifth vowel can be found in Tuwa Beni Ibrâhîm, a place in Egypt, listed in the Times Atlas of the World.

### Nervous Mnemonic Enrichment

John Henrick in the May 1984 Word Ways describes a medieval mnemonic which deals with syllogisms. It is remarkable in that each word of the mnemonic conveys much more information than simply the first letter of the word requiring memorization. In fact, there are a number of ways in which mnemonics, including some of the old war-horses, might be enriched.

For medical students, a time-honored favorite runs: On Old Olympus's Topmost Top, A Finn And German Viewed A Hop, for the twelve pairs of cranial nerves: olfactory, optic, oculomotor, trochlear, trigeminal, abducens, facial, acoustic, glossopharyngeal, vagus, accessory, hypoglossal. Actually, it is much more often

recited as "Fat-Assed German", but not so often written that way. In Sinclair Lewis' Arrowsmith, the term is "Fat-Eared German", and without further explanation. The letter needed after F is A, and not E. It is true that the acoustic nerve is related to the Ear, but it seems more likely a bowdlerization, in this 1925 book.

The problem with the mnemonic as written is that there are three nerves beginning with the letter O, three with A, and two with T, so that information carried by the phrase is less than there might be. Consider the following two alternatives:

Oldsters OPpose OCCasional TRoupes, TRipping ABout, FAnCifully  
ACcruing GLory, VAulting ACcessible HYenas

Even here, the initial bigrams are not unique, but the initial trigrams for TRoupes and TRipping identify the two choices correctly. I could not do as well for the two names beginning with AC.

Oily OrC OR TendeR TrolL AlarmS Fearful ArtistiC GirL, VisitS  
Any Hotel

All the beginning and ending pairs of letters are unique and also match the list of nerve-names.

One more try: Kindly Place Cover On Fresh Green Spring Vegetables, mnemonizes biological taxonomy: kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species, variety.

KIng PHilip CLaims OR FAnCies GEntle SPanish VARmintS

Kettledrum PrograM CelebrantS Offer Fidelity; GlockenspielS  
Stress Velocity

We should update other mnemonics to make them carry more information.

### Stately Quiz

The answer to each of the following ten clues is the same as the name of one of our fifty states:

1. a Confederate pirateer
2. a genus of Noctuid moths
3. a mixed yarn of long-staple cotton and carded wool
4. medium in color and strength; said of cigars
5. an Indian of Barbacoan tribe of Ecuador
6. an American grape
7. the card game Newmarket
8. the game Bagatelle
9. a forested region, esp. the eastern slopes of the Andes
10. a structure on a Mississippi steamboat

### Quoth the Caribird, Preëe

For a short trip to the Caribbean island of Montserrat, I obtained the 4th edition of Birds of the West Indies, by James Bond (who also seems to have been featured in the movie during the flight there). The illustrations are not as informative as the best

of the USA bird guides, but there is much more inventiveness in spelling out the calls of these beautiful birds.

Occasionally, no call is given, but just a description: the voice of the ruddy quail dove is "a prolonged, booming note, reminiscent of the doleful sound of a fog-buoy." Most of the voices, though are spelled out in detail. The rufous nightjar calls Jacques-pas-papa-ou, which on the English-speaking island of St. Lucia, is probably lost to the listeners. For the mangrove cuckoo, listen for ga-ga-ga-ga-ga-ga-gau-gau-gau-go. An "emphatic" preëë is the sound of the dusky-capped flycatcher, which ought to be distinguishable from the pre-e-e of the lesser Antillean pewee. The Grenada dove is stuck with oooo, the rufous-collared sparrow works himself up to wis-wis-wis-wiswiswis, and the black-faced grassquit manages tik-zeeëë.

Spelling out these voices misses only the letters F, M, V and X. I suspect that bird and animal sounds could easily fill a Webster-sized dictionary, even if only the "English" transliterations were used.

### More than Meaning

From an entry in Webster's Second is to be found the following ostensible editorial commentary against the death penalty: TO ELECTROCUTE IS A BARBARISM. This forceful remark appears under SOLECISM, where it is written in the form "'to electrocute' is a barbarism." It is included to illustrate a phrase ("to electrocute") not then in accepted linguistic usage, the improper use of language being termed a "barbarism". It is hard to imagine that the double entendre was completely missed by the editors.

I am also suspicious that whoever wrote the definition for TOCO was partly amusing himself: "A flogging or thrashing; sometimes a tongue-lashing". The poetic doggerel makes it easier to remember and perhaps should have been used more often.

And I note, without comment, that BARAGNOSIS is defined as: the loss of BAROGNOSIS.

Please notice that the pre-election phrase WEST VIRGINIA CAUCUSES contains four consecutive palindromic trigrams: ini-aca-ususes. I discussed words with consecutive palindromic trigrams ("Agamemnon Words") in the May 1980 issue of *Word Ways*, but this is a nice example of a long string from common parlance, overflowing into more than one word.

Here are some further thoughts on pseudoredundancy, originally discussed in the November 1982 *Kickshaws*. Consider the designations KANSAS CITY, KANSAS and OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA. They appear identical in information content, but the second OKLAHOMA is redundant, while the second KANSAS is pseudoredundant, since it conveys the very important piece of information that Kansas City, Missouri is not intended. If there were a tiny village of nine souls, in Nebraska, called Oklahoma City, would the second Oklähoma become pseudoredundant? How many people would a second town have to have, for redundancy to change to pseudoredundancy?

Perhaps we have here the seeds for quantitation of this concept. I will leave this to our statistician-editor.

### An Orthographic Paradox

How can two different spellings of the same word be identical? Begin with the crying need for a word to refer to the inside of the food-pipe. The prefix for "inside" is END-, or ENDO-, and the food-pipe is the ESOPHAGUS or OESOPHAGUS. Thereby create: 1. END-ESOPHAGEAL, 2. END-OESOPHAGEAL, 3. ENDO-ESOPHAGEAL, 4. ENDO-OESOPHAGEAL. Removal of the hyphens (applause) results in the second and third words being spelled the same, ENDOESOPHAGEAL. They are pronounced differently, the third word having an extra -O- syllable. This is a kind of linguistic convergent evolution, akin to fish and whales both having fins.

### BOCODS, and Other Scary Fish

The catalogs of the Harvard University Press list for each entry the author, date of publication, number of pages, price, catalog number, and a six-letter capitalized acronym made up of the first three letters of the author's last name, followed by the first three letters of the name of the book. So, for James, Edward T., Ed., et al, Notable American Women 1607-1950, we find JAMNOT. The science editor for HUP affirms that these book codes are called "book codes".

Here are some of the very few real words produced by the book-coding of HUP books:

CHAINS	Chapman, R.F., The Insects: Structure and Function
CHORES	Chow, T.-T., Research Guide to the May Fourth Movement
FROSTY	Frolock, W.M., Style and Temper: Studies in French Fiction
TRUANT	Trueblood, A.S., Antonio Machado: Selected Poems
BREMEN	Brenner, M.H., Mental Illness and the Economy
FUCHOW	Fuchs, V.R., How We Live: An Economic Perspective on Americans from Birth to Death

We can extend bookcoding to non-books, and non-HUP sources. Massenet's opera, Herodiade, provides MASHER, a fit description of Herod in the action of the opera. For Shakespeare, Merry Wives of Windsor, and Merchant of Venice both give SHAMER; Pericles, Prince of Tyre gives SHAPER; and the poem Venus and Adonis yields SHAVEN.

Additions are welcome, but not permissible is the writing or commissioning of a work simply to generate a salacious bookcode.

### Some Unlikely Words

In Guido Majno's book, The Healing Hand (1975), the name for a physician in ancient Egypt is given as SWNW. The author explains that the ancient words came to us only with their consonants, and the vowels are missing. Perhaps the same explanation lies behind the names of the three angels sent by God to subdue Lilith, according to G. Scholem in his book, Kabbalah (1974).

They are called SNWY, SNSNWY and SMNGLF. Lilith does not obey them - perhaps they had too much trouble introducing themselves.

### Alphabetica

The pangram and its variants have been discussed often in Word Ways. Searches are underway for the shortest fragment of legitimate prose containing all 26 letters (the pangrammatic window), and also for the shortest - ideally 26-letter - sentence using all 26 letters. Another variety of pangrammatics is the search for the shortest list of items that has members beginning with all 26 letters. (Of course, the list of the letters of the alphabet solves the problem finally and minimally.) All large dictionaries and encyclopedias have entries for all 26 letters, but the total number of entries are usually in the many thousands.

An example of an unusually short pangrammatic list is the list of the world's languages in Roget's International Thesaurus (R.L. Chapman, Fourth Edition, 1977), where all 26 letters are represented in 394 entries.

Here is an example for each letter from a list of several thousand. Can you identify the list?

Ababa	Jenny	Saes
Brutus	Klopstock	Texas
Caaijman	Lioba	Unique
Donders	Mars	Vuurbaak
Edmee	Ninon	Wodan
Faust	Obelisque	Xerxes
Geefs	Potgeiter	Yolande
Hecla	Quasimodo	Zulu
Ibis	Ripperda	

### Lipolists

A spinoff of the search for short pangrammatic lists is the search for lists of words beginning with 25 different letters. Clearly, lists missing only X will be easiest to find. It is possible that lists missing only S will be unfindable in English-language sources.

The list of flowers in Roget's Thesaurus is one of many easy-to-find lists that lacks only X. A list of cities and towns in Ohio with more than 5,000 inhabitants, according to the 1919 World Almanac, lacks the letter Q (Ohio was chosen so as to make use of Xenia and Zanesville).

The Index to First Lines, in The Annotated Mother Goose, by W.S. and C. Baring-Gould (1962), misses only Z. The X-entry is: "X shall stand for playmates ten."

The Great Wall, by L. Zewen et al (1981) has in its index, entries for all but V. Here, the current Chinese city names with X and Z made this book a likely candidate for a lipolist.

Orchids, A Golden Guide (1970), lacks only U in the index, as



does a list of all the shades of the color orange, from Color, Universal Language and Dictionary of Names.

The ABC's of Old Glass, by D.W. Drepperd (1949), and The Human Impact, Man's Role in Environmental Change, by A. Goudie (1982) share the property that in each index, the letter Y is not represented.

I leave the gathering of as many as possible of the other twenty lipolists to Word Ways readers.

### FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH USAGE

The August 1978 issue of Word Ways described in some detail the Kucera and Francis million-word corpus of writings first published in the United States in 1961. The same authors published in 1982 a companion volume with the title above (subtitled Lexicon and Grammar), in which they classify the million words into 87 grammatical categories and arrange related words in super groups. The flavor is best given by an example:

*get* (verb, 1486 cases) includes the present tense *get* (with variant spelling *git*) with 753 cases, the third singular present form *gets* with 66 cases, the past participle *got* (with variant spellings *gotten* and *gotta*) with 164 cases, the past tense *got* with 339 cases, and the gerund *getting* (with variant spelling *gettin'*) with 164 cases.

In addition, the book arranges the super groups of words such as *get* in a list of descending frequency. To account for the fact that some words have abnormally high frequencies because they happen to be heavily used in a single specialized text in the corpus (such as *polynomial* in a mathematics article), Brown and Kucera calculate an adjusted frequency which discounts the actual frequency in such cases. The most extreme adjustment occurs of the feminine given name *Linda*, which as 45 occurrences in two references but which is adjusted to a frequency of only 5.12; some other big losers are *pip*, *pulmonary*, *emission*, *fallout*, *binomial*, and *Gorton*. On the other hand, *the* goes down from 69975 to only 69792.84, a drop of only 0.26 per cent. Words with an adjusted frequency of less than 5 are not listed; in practice, this means that most words with an actual frequency of less than 9 do not appear.