LEISURE: CROSSING WORDS

1. Introduction

Aptly capturing the ways we ease into leisure after periods of work, the Australian crossword expert, Noel Jessop, writes:

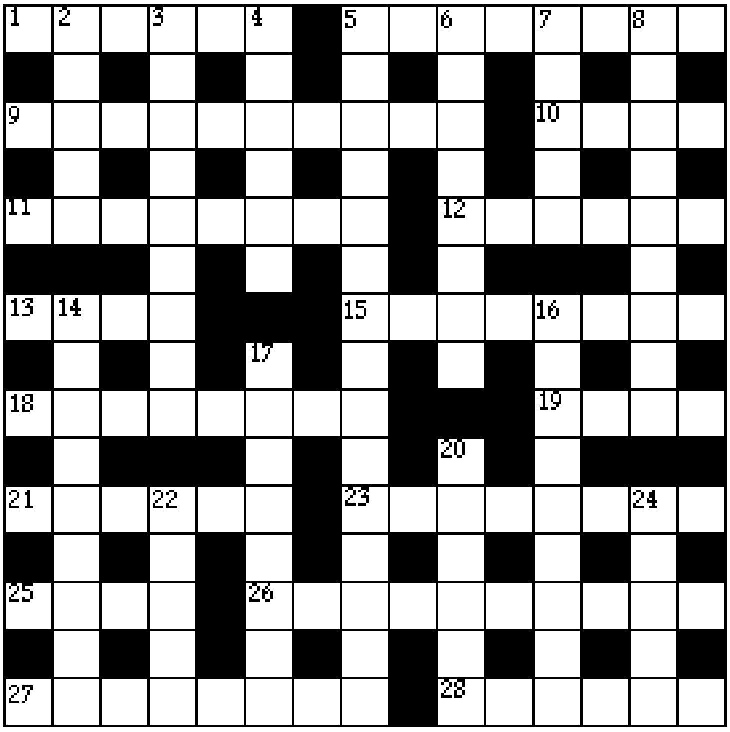
> You've had a trying day at the office, shop or factory. Now you're heading home. Navigating a course through the throngs of your fellow afternoon escapees, you board your train, bus or ferry, and with the goddess of good fortune smiling on you, you find a seat and settle back with a sigh of relief.
>
> Now you unfold your evening paper, glance at the depressingly sensational headlines, turn to the back page and groan at the glum report of the latest Aussie cricketing debacle (or maybe exult over the glowing accounts of the team's latest phenomenal success), then in desperation turn to the only thing in the newspaper worthy of your time and attention ... the crossword. (Jessop 1)

But what actually occurs from this moment on; once the puzzle is before us, the pen poised, the white squares sitting ready to be filled? In the section below, we want to try to access the "lived experience" of this common, everyday, sequence of events. That is, we want to show the commonsense technical knowledge-in-action of crossword puzzle solvers -- knowledge they use every day as part of a quasi-intellectual form of leisure. Then in the third section, we will go on to look similarly (if more briefly) at the practices of compiling crosswords. While, of course, our interest here is specifically in crosswords and the work they require as leisure activities, our analyses and discussions here are also intended as perspicuous examples of how it's possible to take <u>any</u> ordinary mundane event-sequence and break it down in such a way as to display the methods and techniques that constitute it. And this is because, here and throughout this book, we're concerned to show that culture is constituted <u>procedurally</u> -- by methods and techniques -- rather than <u>substantively</u> -- in terms of its "objective" contents.

2. What the solver does

Because crosswords are most often done by a single person, we will soon move into the first person singular. Additionally, as part of the analysis, we invite readers to follow the solver's own steps and to write the answers in sequence into the blank grid provided below, in order to see at first hand how the solver's practices actually work.

1. What I see first is a 15x15 square grid, white on black, with numbers marking the start-letters or "initials" of each "light" -- a light being an answer or, more strictly, the "across" or "down" spaces where an answer can be written. I peruse the grid before looking at the clues beneath it.



[Source: Times puzzle no. 4624, The Australian, 21st April 1997, p22; originally published in The Times (London) as puzzle no. 20,433]

2. What I notice first is that the grid is only just a fair one. That is, of its 29 lights, about one third (ten) have "orphaned" initials -- their start-letters stand alone, unconnected with other intersecting lights. However, I also notice that eight of the ten orphans are on the extreme left of the grid; and this means I won't have the advantage of getting a large block of "across" initials by solving the "down" clue(s) at the far left. So the grid is a bit extraordinary today.

3. Now it's time to look at the clues and I begin in my usual way by looking at 1A. My normal procedure is to look there first and, if I can't get the answer and fill the light, I read the clues through until I can get one. Today I know that 1A isn't as crucial as it usually is because it's not going to allow me into 1D and a group of initials on the left-hand side -- there is no 1D today. Still, the clue, perhaps in compensation for the grid, turns out to be easy enough: "Part of shoe conforming with others (6)". I quickly parse the clue as a double synonym: so I need a single word for both "part of shoe" and "conforming with others". With 6 letters in the light, the answer is almost certain to be INSTEP. The compiler is allowed a little licence here: combining two words, "in step" to make one.

4. Now I have a letter N at 2D, a T and 3D and a P at 4D. In sequence then, I turn first to 2D. The clue reads: "None of the relay team have set off in this direction (5)". Because clues almost always have a synonym of the answer either at the start (in "theme" position) or at the end ("rheme" position), I take the word "this" to be pointing to the word "direction" as the synonym. Compass directions (if that's what we're dealing with here) only have four

possibilities -- and only one of those begins with N. So the light probably requires NORTH. This checks out from the initial letters of "None of the relay team have". So it's almost certainly NORTH, though I'm puzzled as to why "set off" is trying to tell me to take only the first letters. "Start off" might have made more sense. But (a) it's wouldn't be grammatical and (b) it would be pretty much a giveaway, so I move on without further thought.

5. Next in my self-selected sequence is 3D, starting with T. The clue gives me the following: "Where cobbler should stick throughout life (2,3,4)". My experience with "split" clues -- clues with multiple word answers -- suggests to me that I'm probably dealing with a well-known phrase with a double meaning, one more literal and one more metaphoric; so I go looking for puns and the like. The first word is T*, so it's pretty much got to be TO. Followed by a three-letter word, we're most likely looking at TO THE ****. Now all I need is something to do with cobblers, taking up four letters: AWLS? No, it's LAST. So the answer's going to be TO THE LAST.

6. Although the previous step has given me quite a number of intersections and 9A is looking especially interesting, I stick with the plan of going to 4D: "Englishmen in Perth rapidly firing gun (3-3)". Now, being an Englishman who lives in Perth, Australia, I'm immediately suspicious: this clue must have nothing to do with Englishmen in Perth (Australia or Scotland); it must be some kind of red herring. And because I've got an initial P, I go looking for partial anagrams of "Perth", and wondering how "Englishmen" could give me the missing sixth letter. However, the split clue also alerts me again to the possibility of a double synonym. So much for the 2D, 3D, 4D plan then. I draw a blank at 4D and take a look instead at the rather promising 9A.

7. The clue is: "'R' for 'Reckoning'" (10). With a *R*T beginning I suspect something like WRITING (as one of the "three Rs"). But I can't take it any further.

8.. Then it occurs to me that "Perth" in 4D is just an instance of an Australian place, such that an Englishman might be a "pom". If this is plural, then POM-POM is a possibility. Chambers dictionary has "pompom" as a machine gun, but the word has no hyphen. Still, it's too good not to be right. So now I know that 9A isn't connected with "writing" since it runs: *R*T*M****.

9. Now the nice set of intersections, *H*E*O**, takes me to 11A, where the clue is "Garden tool has cut round -- it helps to put heel in (8)". The letters I already have suggest "hoe" as the garden tool in question -- sheer serendipity because putting that word in, I get *HOE*O** and this leads to a strong suspicion of a word beginning with SHOE**** because of the connection with "heel". What puts the heel into a shoe is a shoehorn. And so I write out SHOEHORN and find that it consists of "hoe" (garden tool) around/"round" the word "shorn", meaning "cut". So the answer is complete.

10. Moving down the page to 13A, the clue is "Singer, mid-morning, finally got out of bed (4)". Because "singer" is in theme position, I suspect DIVA. But "mid-morning" suggests the letter "N" (it's in the middle of the word "morning"), so I pass on, thinking it's maybe the name of a well-known singer rather than DIVA.

11. Given that there's now not much left in terms of helpful intersections, I decide to have a look at the "big one", 5D. If I can get this, I'll have a new bank of potential intersecting lights available, and I'll have the initials for 5A, 15A and 23A. Also: the clue is split, so it's probably a well known phrase: "When it's very cold, one may look sharp (3,4,6,2)". The last word, I guess, is most likely a preposition: TO, UP, ON, etc. And the four-letter component, as so often in crosswords, is likely to be ONE'S or, less likely, YOUR. So I work with something like *** ONE'S ****** TO/UP/ON. This means that the start-letter for 15A is very likely an S. But I can't fill the light for 5D yet. Nothing comes to mind that can connect very cold weather (is it weather, or just the letters V and C?) with looking sharp (which may have to do with hurrying or else being observant). There are too many possibilities here, so I return to the idea of 15A starting with S.

12. The clue for 15A reads: "Sallying out in striking fashion (8)". This is interesting because both "out" and "fashion" could signal anagrams. Moreover, both "sallying" and "striking" have the correct number of letters. So it's either an anagram of "sallying" meaning "in striking fashion" or else an anagram of "striking" meaning "sallying out". Starting with S, the first option would suggest S**INGLY, but the A and the L won't fit the blanks. On the other hand, "striking" yields the simple anagram SKIRTING. But this looks too simple and, more importantly, "skirting" doesn't seems to mean "sallying out". Checking the Chambers, however, the verb "skirt" describes what a pack of hunting dogs does as it breaks formation. Sally out? So I decide to pencil in SKIRTING, though with some reservations.

13. Because I don't have strong confidence in SKIRTING for 15A, I decide to move back over to the left, perhaps out of the habit of going there for important intersections, sadly missing from today's puzzle. The next cab off the rank there is 18A: "Two coins (one new, one old) -- this should cover stamp (8)". Again the inclusion of "this" appears to point to something that covers a (postage?) stamp as the answer. So I should be able to make this up from the names of two coins. The one intersection I have is: ***T**** and one obvious stamp covering is a postmark. It fits, and "Mark" is certainly a coin -- but "Post"? I'm slightly confident here, so I pencil in POSTMARK, just to look at the effect on 5D.

14. Returning, then, to 5D, the position of the K suggests the six-letter word begins with SK****. So now I have something like: *** ONE'S SK**** TO/UP/ON. The connection between cold weather and speed then occurs to me because of the SK**** -- it's SKATES and the well-known expression is going to be PUT ONE'S SKATES ON.

15. The first thing this supplies me with is the next intersecting letter for 9A: *R*T*M*T**. And, of course, I should have seen this all along: the one of the "three Rs" that is synonymous with "reckoning" is ARITHMETIC.

16. But then I remember that 5D has also given me an entrée into 23A where the answer literally stares out from the clue: "Capitalism, anarchism -- both hold charm (8)". Despite the distracting comma between the first two words of the clue, the word "hold" points back to them as including the answer: capiTALISM ANarchism. This is the type of clue known to some as the "light inclusive" and, at least as a matter of compiler etiquette, there's normally only one of these in each puzzle. So now I know I have that one for today and won't bother to search for more.

17. Another starting letter that 5D has furnished is that for 5A: "Collapse under strain, having accepted a freebie (8)". I can't get the parsing of this clue. The answer is probably a synonym of "collapse", or of "freebie". The only thing beginning with P that I can think of is PROLAPSE. But it's too close to "collapse" in the clue. Nothing happening here, and so time to go back to the left.

18. Here I choose 27A because it will at least give me final letters for four other lights: "Criminal takes two fools in (8)". Well, if "Englishmen" in 4D can be "pom" repeated, so "two fools" looks like being "ass" repeated. If this then takes the word "in" at the end, we get ASSASSIN. This doesn't seem too hard and suggests a look at the new final letters I've got from it.

19. Reading the clue for 17D, I'm simply at a loss again: "Doctor visited Sanders' subordinate (8)". Who can Sanders be? "Doctor" can mean a word has to be doctored, anagrammed. Or else it can be MO, DR or MB. Again, I simply can't parse this clue. Nothing at all comes to mind.

20. So what's left now? My guess at 15A, SKIRTING and the answer to 23A give one possible and one definite letter for 16D: "Derived from forebears from parts of Lancaster (9)". With nine letters, this looks like an anagram of "Lancaster" (my old alma mater). So I write out the letters in a circle and underneath: T***S****. So now I need to insert the letters L/A/N/C/A/E/R into the spaces to get a word meaning "derived from forebears". It could have to do with genealogy, or else with wills and inheritances. After a closer look at the circle of letters, though, it looks as if it's going to be ANCESTRAL. And so, after all, SKIRTING was wrong. Out with the eraser.

21. Now I know from the A of ANCESTRAL that 15A is going to be an anagram of SALLYING and that it's going to mean "in striking fashion". Again writing the letters in a circle to delete their linearity, giving each letter the same visual status, I find SIGNALLY.

22. But now I also have a new start letter -- for 19A: "Policeman putting mafioso finally inside prison cell (4)". Typically with short (three- and four-letter) answers, the clue always looks too long! But "mafioso finally" is just

going to be the last letter, O, and "policeman" rendered in three letters is pretty much going to be "cop". Hence COOP can go into the light at 19A.

23. This gives me an O for the last letter of 8D -- a fairly rare ending -- so that's worth a look now. The clue is interesting too: "A jolly bad fuss about it -- Kipling described how it started (9)". Now the word "bad" again suggests there's anagram activity going on here, and "a jolly" has six letters. So maybe I need those letters and a three-letter word for "fuss". That would be "ado". So I circle out the letters A/J/O/L/L/Y/A/D/O. Because of the word "about" in the clue, I'm assuming that the ADO part goes around/about the other letters. But I can't get anywhere with this. The J seems to be a serious problem. Perhaps it's a proper name -- some place in a Kipling story?

24. The next candidate in terms of intersections is, by now, 6D: "Chap with a passion for church architecture (8)", **C***G*. The G* ending along with "passion" suggests "rage". So: **C*RAGE. If the "chap" is "Vic", then it's going to be VICARAGE, so I revise "passion" retrospectively to "<u>a</u> passion" to include the other A. That makes better sense. And the V looks interesting for the next step.

25. Now, that is, 5A has a curious and (in terms of English words, very delimiting) start: P*V*****. Can't think of any eight-letter words to do with "collapse" or "freebie" that start this way. In fact I can't think of any words at all of this kind. No good looking here. But the top right is starting to look a tiny bit better.

26. I have the start-letter for 12A: "Without you, as they say, what's left to settle? (6)". The question-mark may be there for grammatical reasons, or else to signal a slight twisting of clue etiquette. Which could it be? Probably the former. So we most likely need a word for "what's left", and then we have to take the letter U from it ("you, as they say" => U). That's probably the parsing, but I can't think of a synonym for "what's left". I toy with REST, but nothing really works along that front.

27. So back to the final letters generated by the answer to 27A. The next going right to left (why that way?) is 22D: "Steps taken to eliminate salt from cake (5)", five letters, ending in A. It probably means "steps taken"; something to do with "measures" perhaps. Too obscurely Brechtian? But then a word for "salt" has to be taken out of a synonym for "cake". Could "salt" be NA? No that's just sodium, the element.

28. I'm really starting to run out here. 14D is a possibility though. If POSTMARK is right for 18A, then it's **O* ****S. The clue reads: "None the less, corrosion's ruined this medal (4,5)". Could there be a typo, "medal" for "metal"? After all I'm doing this in the <u>Australian</u> newspaper which frequently mis-sets copy from the (London) <u>Times</u>. For some reason, I want "rust" in here. But it doesn't go.

29. This is the first hiatus; though I'm not sure whether that's the right word. More likely: I'm just stuck as far as the stepwise procedure goes of

moving from light to light, led by intersection values. So all I can do is have a general scan of the remaining clues, especially including those I've passed on so far. The first of these is 13A which I wanted to be DIVA. How could that be? Well now I can see it. The N has to be <u>deleted</u> ("got out") and it has to come from the <u>end</u> of another word ("finally") and that word has to mean "bed". So DIVAN minus N gives us DIVA.

30. This then means that the first, four-letter, word of 14D looks like this: I*O*. The only possibility here is IRON, and the "medal" synonym means it's almost certainly IRON CROSS. No typo: it is a medal after all. But why that? I've missed it all along: an anagram of "corrosion"! And the "None the less" just marks a certain irony. <u>Iron</u>y? But the clue is neat -- and the answer lends some more weight to 18A being POSTMARK.

31. Getting the answer to 14D at least gives some (albeit non-initial) intersection possibilities: at 21A and 25A. The first of these reads: "Creature once regarded as divine, namely horse (6)". So we're probably looking for a divine creature. Then if the word begins *C, the "namely" could be "SC" (or "sc.", namely). That plus a four-letter horse will get the light. "Arab" comes to mind -- a common synonym in crosswords for "horse" -- generating SCARAB as the answer.

32. This then gives us some intersections for the mysterious 17D which now reads: *A*B***S. Is it possible to use MB here (as in "doctor")? If so, I can try *AMB***S. Perhaps Sanders' subordinate was LAMB***S. Or perhaps there's a hint of "Dr Lamb" here? Still no breakthrough with this one yet.

33. Seems I've overlooked the start-letter I had all along for 24D: "Plant arbours? (5)". It may be a double synonym with a "twist" (marked by the question-mark). But I can't get a word with two such meanings. Even with a twist.

34. This leaves the L intersection in 28A and the clue looks a bit easier: "Join up broken lines, given time (6). Well "given time" looks like just being a final T. So it's **L**T, and the "broken" suggests an anagram of "lines". Therefore, ENLIST.

35. Now I've reached another sticking point or hiatus. Time for an inspiration or epiphany. Something of that kind: a stroke of luck or some accidental bit of thinking. I decide, then, to go to a light with no intersections at all so far, something I haven't tried yet, 7D. The clue is: "'A', for instance, stands for 'Auspices' (5)". Soon I see that it's a straightforward charade made up of A + EG ("for instance") + IS ("stands for") so that the synonym for "auspices" is AEGIS.

36. Now 5A looks very odd indeed: P*V*A***. There's surely nothing like this in English. So something must be wrong. It turns out to be 5D! After all <u>GET</u> ONE'S SKATES ON would be just as good an answer and that gives a much better set of possibilities for 5A: G*V*A***. This means the ultimate shame of getting out the correction fluid and altering something I was

previously sure of. (This is quite different from pencilling in answers as tentative rather than certain.) Still it does yield an answer for 5A as GIVEAWAY: a synonym for "freebie" made out of an expression for "collapse under strain" ("give way") and the letter A.

37. This still leaves me very little to go on. None of the top right is making much sense at all. The Kipling clue at 8D seems to be holding things up. So I scan around again: to the point where it looks as if the method of rational progression has now completely given way to this. It now seems as if the rule is: get what you can, anything you can. Hence to some new territory, 26A.

38. Here the clue reads: "Spy or nark -- 'e gets busily involved (4,6)". The apostrophe in "'e" suggests a cockney expression. But it's also the case that "Spy or nark 'e" has the right number of letters, ten. So I try using an anagram circle on these letters. To no avail.

39. But for some reason, while I'm actually doing this, working with the circled letters, my attention drifts up or over to 25A: "Wander around city, talking (4)": "drifts" in the sense that I move up a clue on the page and also to the left on the grid. Here the "talking" part suggests a simple pun, the kind of clue often marked by "we hear", "for auditors" and "according to rumour". And the city that sounds like "wander around" is, of course, Rome. So the light is ROAM.

40. Now I have all the intersects for 22D, R*M*A. That's pretty limited and I figure just on the look of the letters (the way Scrabble® players do) that it has to be RUMBA. Well that's a dance, so "steps taken" seems just about fair as a synonym. So the missing "salt" is going to be AB, a sailor, an able seaman. If those two letters are dropped from "rumbaba", a kind of cake, the light appears.

41. I still want the Kipling in 8D, and it occurs to me that Kipling wrote stories about how the so-and-so got its so-and-so. Animals! So the answer could be an animal involving the letters from "ado". Well that suggests the possibility of "armadillo". It fits! But now the retrospective problem of trying to find why. After a few attempts at the parsing it ends up looking like this: "fuss" is ADO and "bad" is ILL. Put the latter inside the former: ADILLO. Now where do we get the ARM? I have to suspect that "A jolly" is a Royal Marine. Jolly-Jack-Tar? Now maybe I'll go and find out how the armadillo got its ... armour? Out with the dusty old Kipling. The anagram was, after all, a red herring.

42. This makes 10A look very possible: G*M*. "For instance, go for disabled quarry (4)". Sadly, the answer is GAME and we're dealing with Short Clue Overload Syndrome: the triple pun. OK, it's cryptic, but it's not very polite.

43. The Kipling answer also gives me the intersects for 12A. I've already toyed with a word for "what's left" minus its letter U. Now it seems that word is "residue". Minus U => RESIDE ("settle").

44. Another quick look here at 17D. Its current status is as follows: *AMB***S?? Or could POSTMARK actually be wrong? It's still only pencilled because of my uncertainty over POST as "coin". Does it make more sense like this: **MB***S? Still nothing here.

45. I haven't paid any attention yet to 20D. Perhaps I have an aversion to bottom right corners because they don't usually help with anything except themselves? If we work left to right and top to bottom, then the bottom right is pretty much going to be the most isolated corner. At 20D, there's "Pass by the Spanish Church's eastern end (6)". Should have looked here earlier because "the Spanish" is routinely "el". This gives me EL***E. Do I get that final E from "eastern"? Or do I need a four-letterer meaning the eastern part of a church?

46. Still fascinated by 17D, I guess awfully (Scrabble®-wise) at IAMBUSES!!!

47. Also 24D is proving strange. At least one thesaurus gives me "axle" as a synonym for "arbour". Is "axles" a kind of plant? Then what of the question-mark? But if I try that, it might help 26A. Sadly, though, that would give an L intersection in 26A and there's no L in the "Spy or nark 'e" anagram -- which I still can't get.

48. For some reason, the solution to 35 now becomes clear. I have no idea why. The eastern end of a church is the apse. Hence ELAPSE.

49. Now the second word in 26A runs P*R***. Taking out PARKER from the anagram, I'm left, yes, amazingly, with NOSY!

50. So what are the "arbours" in 24D: A*E*S. Could the "arbours" have a question-mark because they're really "harbours" with a missing H? Then I'd need another word for "harbours" beginning with an H which, when dropped, gives the name of a plant. Perhaps "harbours" is a verb? Thesaurus time again, then. <u>Roget</u> comes up right away with "haven" and <u>Chambers</u> gives "avens" as "any plant of the hardy rosaceous genus <u>Geum</u>". A sigh of relief here because it looked as if AVENS would be the remaining clue to be checked in tomorrow's paper; the word that would bother me all day; the word bringing the shame of incompletion.

51. Back to the POSTMARK. Perhaps "post" just means "old"? But then "post-" usually signifies just the opposite: after. New?

52. I decide to retry the idea of LAMB*N*S for 17D but still can't get a word here. Not even a proper name. Then the word "visited", with respect to doctors in particular, makes me think of "saw". So it's SAWBONES, a synonym for doctor. I still don't know where the "bones" comes from. Must have been some underling of someone called Sanders. Of the River?

53. That leaves POSTMARK. So I'm just going to put it in!

3. What the compiler does

Below is an exchange of e-mail letters between one of the present authors and a well-known crossword compiler. In part, it shows the work of crossword compilation. But at one point it also alludes to some of the conjectures we already have about how crosswords are both made and solved and, moreover, how those making and solving practices may be related. We will return to this, our central topic, the question of the making-solving inter-relation in section 4 below.

Letter 1
Dear _____,
[... preliminary lines deleted]
Would it be possible for you to send me a brief list of the basic stages you go through in compiling a cryptic? What interests me is the <u>order</u> of the procedure. I don't need loads of details <u>about</u> each stage -- just a rough ordering of the stages. Would that be possible?
Cheers,
Alec

Letter 2
Dear Alec,
Being the maverick heretic of this cryptic game, I may not be the best person to ask about the procedure of creation, but you asked for it.
• I write cryptic clues for fun, without having used the word or phrase in an actual puzzle, but you know about my file of 45,000 plus entries.
• I compose only in 12 standard diagrams developed years ago to give a good cross-section of words of all lengths, and to conform to my own rigid set of rules concerning grid construction.
• On a work-sheet of empty grids I put an A in the top left-hand corner of the first grid, a B in the second and so on ... or a P and Q if the last puzzle I completed started with an O.
• On the Mac-Dos machine I ask <u>Axword</u> (a Windows program) to show me the A words of the appropriate length and hunt through them for one that takes my fancy. On the other machine I ask <u>File</u> [a Macintosh database] if I have written a clue for that word or phrase, and if I've already used it in puzzles for the publication I'm currently setting for. A bit of care needs to be taken here. I never put in an answer without checking to see if the crossing cells and the end might present problems with the intersecting words, but I've done so many that it's rather instinctive now. You would just have to be steady as she goes.
• The "fill" (there's a good Yankee cruciverbal term for you) gets built up in this way, using the wild-card search facilities of each program as more and more letters get set in the grid. Eventually I get a fill!
• Next I use <u>Crossword Magic</u> to enter the raw puzzle to the computer. <u>CM</u> is a piece of infantile software that just happens to have the best entry method of all the crossword software I've seen. <u>Crossmaster</u>, and now <u>Crosspuzzler</u>, both access puzzles made by <u>Crossword Magic</u>, so I convert the original to the new format and it's ready for cluing.

• On the top half of the [Macintosh] Performa screen I display the puzzle and arrange my Cryptic Clue file on the bottom. I ask File to list the words of the puzzle, and if I have a clue already written I type it into the puzzle. If not, I write one, adding it to the CC file and the puzzle. A bit of double-checking of one thing and another and print. Voila! A puzzle!
Reading that back over, I feel it to be a bit simplistic, but then you didn't want a novel. If the above fails to quench your thirst let me know.
Cheers,
_____

Letter 3
Dear _____,
Thanks a million. I didn't want to say what it was for -- because that may have influenced your response. In fact, I suspect that compiler-competence is solver-competence in reverse (and vice versa!) What you've sent is invaluable to a wee thing I'm working on right now. I'll get back to you with more later -- I'm being called to make the pasta sauce. A real man's job!
Alec

Letter 4
Dear _____,
This will, I promise, be my last bit of bothering. What I want to know about is how you construct a clue: that is, if you don't have one in your database. Can I do the following: send you a short list of words and ask you to give the steps by which you arrive at the clue? This can be painful I know, because it may mean trying to explain something totally intuitive. But sadly that's what my awful discipline (called, would you believe, ethnomethodology) works on: how everyday events are brought off. At least some sketches of the order by which you make the clue would be handy for me right now. So, if you're willing, here are my target words:
SIGNALLY
TALISMAN
VICARAGE
SHOEHORN
Cheers,
Alec

Letter 5
Dear Alec,
This will be stream-of-consciousness and likely to be incomprehensible.
SIGNALLY: Toss around definitions -- settle on "Remarkably" as correct enough but not too obvious -- turn to secondary indication [...] -- look at parts of words -- Sally around a mixed gin, ugh, too clichéd -- Sign + Ally seems okay -- Toss around the many ways to represent these -- "Sign" a footballer = Engage -- "Ally" = Associate, of course. Make it gel -- "Remarkably engage associate" -- Not brilliant, but beyond criticism. It'll do.
TALISMAN: Amulet, charm, fetish, ju-ju all good definitions -- Charm suitably ambiguous -- What about an anagram ... I think I see some animals in there, oh, there's a T left over -- Okay, a partial ... "Charm wild animals" will cover the last seven letters -- so, something for the T -- Model, Tenor,

Ton ... no, they won't run -- Back to the old shorthand list ... back to front, beginning to tire, hasty heart, third of October ... Yair, that's it "Charm wild animals after the third of October (at the end of August)".
VICARAGE: A clergyman's residence ... that's sexist and too obvious. Am in a shitty mood so give the solver heaps ... Residence, that's plenty for them -- There's a car in there; a long time, a V for opposed or five ... Oh, man, there's all sorts -- whirl the whole thing round in the skull like clothes whizzing around in a washing machine and see what pops out -- Give 'em a melange of bits -- "Opposed to (meaning at) one (I) about (Ca - Circa) fashion (rage) residence (definition) -- doesn't make a lot of sense, but all the bits are accounted for. Take it. "Opposed to one about fashion residence".
SHOEHORN: Looks like a horrible thing to find a definition for without giving the game away by mentioning shoe or footwear -- but the word can be a verb! I see a "Shorn" around the outside, maybe "Fleeced", "Clipped" or some such -- and a hoe inside "Garden tool" "Implement" "Weed" ...? Ah, but there's also an OEH inside ... can't see those letters without automatically thinking "Old English Hospital". Okay, what about: "Clipped around Old English Hospital to squeeze into a tight space". Let 'em see if they can make any sense of that, although why they'd want to defeats me.
How the hell did you know I had already written clues for those words? Just don't ask me to write a cryptic clue for ephnodistemocophology, or whatever it is that's softening your brain these days.
Win the Lotto!
Cheers,
_ _ _ _ _

4. Production and recognition

It should already be evident from the "data" above that there is an immense degree of overlap between the methods and techniques used by the solver and the compiler respectively. It's as if one, the compiler, carefully knits together an artefact, stitch by stitch and then leaves cryptic instructions for the other, the solver, so that he can then unravel those stitches using very similar sets of implements. Putting this another way, we might say that compilation is a kind of "progressive knotting into" the grid, while solving is a "disentanglement from" the same knots, to borrow terms from Thomas Pynchon's <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u> (1). Compiling tightens or compacts; while solving loosens or decompacts. So the techniques remain reasonably constant between the two parties while the <u>ordering</u> of the techniques is, almost but not quite, reversed in each case. Let's explore this further.

The compiler's task is taken up mostly with the achievement of a "fit". For some compilers (though not for the one in question here) the "fit" is achieved at the same time as the grid itself. That is, in some crossword programs, all the squares begin as lights. The compiler then enters an initial word followed by a dark square, as a kind of punctuation mark or separator. The computer program then "mirrors" each dark in order to eventually generate a half-symmetrical grid. This very "raw" method requires much trial and error. It can sometimes even mean scrapping a whole puzzle and starting again -- a situation that occurs when impossible intersection combinations arise. The problems that arise in this case are similar to those encountered by our solver at step 36. above: the combination P*V*A*** cannot produce an English word. For a compiler in this situation, the word has to be changed somehow. For the solver, though, the change has to be related to a "mistake" in one of the intersecting lights.

Our present compiler, however, works instead with a set of given grids: "12 standard diagrams developed years ago to give a good cross-section of words of all lengths, and to conform to my own rigid set of rules concerning grid construction" (Letter 2). From previous correspondence on this matter we know that the rules concern giving the solver a fair chance: not having too many orphaned initials, not having lights with fewer than half their cells intersecting and so on. Interestingly enough, the solver also begins out with a brief inspection of the grid according to at least one of these rules -- the one concerning orphaned initials (see step 2). So here's a case where, briefly, the order of the setting and the order of the solving are the same. But from this point on things diverge considerably in terms of sequencing -- though not in terms of the techniques that constitute each sequence.

For the compiler, as we have noted, the time-consuming question is the "fit": the clues literally get tacked on at the final stage. The solver's sequence works opposite to this: the <u>clues</u> are the crux of the game. They are what generate the solver's sense of the "correctness" of his answers -- especially in the early stages of the proceedings. Eventually, the clues come to be supplemented by the already-entered answers so that the solver can work, as he says, Scrabble®-wise, from the secondary hints given by the intersecting letters. At points, for example in the very final step, the grid is in fact all the solver has to go on. So the rough sequence of operations for the solver is:

> Solver: clues => clues + grid => grid only

And here we can note that we're not dealing with discrete stages but rather an analogic progression, albeit that our solver does experience a couple of episodes which he calls "hiatuses" (steps 29, 35 and 37) where he alters his methods of attack. Then, for the compiler, the motion is reversed:

> Compiler: grid => grid + clues => clues only

We can justify the inclusion of the "middle" term of the compiler's sequence here by looking at how he refers to the clue-relatedness of the "fit" as it builds up:

> I ask [the database] if I have written a clue for that word or phrase, and if I've already used it in puzzles for the publication I'm currently setting for. A bit of care needs to be taken here. I never put in an answer without checking to see if the crossing cells and the end might present problems with the intersecting words, but I've done so many that it's rather instinctive now. You would just have to be steady as she goes.

What I take this to mean is that a word can get selected for the "fit" <u>not just</u> in terms of its use in providing "good" letter intersections (where "good" would mean something like: likely to produce actual English words in the intersecting light), though this <u>is</u> an important aspect of word selection. But another criterion is whether the word has been used before in the publication. If it hasn't, then well and good, because the clue for it, from the database, can simply be entered. If it has been used before, then it is either discarded or a new clue is written -- presumably depending on whether the particular word is the <u>only</u> one that can fit into the grid, in this particular space, at this stage of the composition. The compiler does not want to alter a fit-so-far if it can be avoided, because each alteration has the potential to affect previously-decided entries, and so on recursively until the fit, at least potentially, might undo itself. As we have seen, he no more wants to do this than the solver wants to go back to <u>clues</u> to see whether or not a particular answer entry is right. However, this is not to say that there is no revisability. The compiler feels obliged to make revisions if the fit starts to look impossible (grid-wise) or, indeed if the candidate word starts to look troublesome (clue-wise). For both compiler and solver, then, some entries are tentative (in which case the solver pencils them first) and some are firm. But, it is also the case that, in such instances, the compiler must look back to the grid-so-far, while the solver looks back to the clues-so-far. And, correspondingly, in these cases, while the compiler looks ahead to the clues-to-come, the solver looks ahead to the "shape" of the grid-to-come.

So we have, in a sense, reversed temporal traversals of the same path and, perhaps at the mid-point of those two traversals, something like a "meeting point" where solver and compiler, literally, <u>cross</u>; though each looks ahead towards his own, quite different, indeed opposite, destination. As the compiler gets progressively locked in grid-wise, so the solver gets progressively locked in clue-wise. Then each must turn to the alternative: solvers to grids and compilers to clues. This is because, to some extent, the compiler-side of things displays a sensitive dependence on initial conditions (SDOIC) (to borrow a phrase from chaos theory). He begins his grid with a letter A, for example, as he says in Letter 2. Given the grid, this locks him into, say, a seven-letter word beginning with A. Then he chooses whichever takes his "fancy" from a computer-generated list. But the "fancy" is constrained by the intersectional work ahead of him. The word ANXIOUS, for example, might be avoided because it leaves an X initial for its first intersect. And at least in theory, it must be possible for the first entry simply to be the "wrong" word to start with: one that will prevent <u>any</u> possible complete fit. Hence, SDOIC. By contrast, the solver has a trajectory which is sensitively dependent on its <u>final</u> state: everything must end up not just with a <u>possible</u> fit (consisting of <u>any</u> English words) but with an <u>actual</u> fit such that the grid is filled with the specific words that the clues permit (in the first place) in combination with the grid intersections (as the puzzle progresses). Hence: at step 21, the solver finds that the word ANCESTRAL gives an A intersection with 15A. If the word at 15A contains an A, then it must be an anagram of "sallying" and not of "striking", though the sheer parsing of the clue allows both. Note here, that we're in the middle phase of the solution (23 out of 53 steps); the grid intersections are beginning to inform (for example, to disambiguate) the parsings of the clues. So how it is that the solver can tell that he's "on track" or getting things right is that a definite <u>end</u> is in sight: an end, moreover, which has been predetermined, as the solver knows, by the compiler. For the compiler, there is no such predetermination: the fit may take on any shape that it can and there are no "clues" to guide him, precisely because he invents them once the fit is completed. So, again, we have roughly this pattern:

Solver: clues => clues + grid => grid only => determined final conditions

Compiler: determinable initial conditions => grid => grid + clues => clues only

Interestingly enough, we can make this "circular" and interactive by taking the compiler's final term ("clues only") and assuming it to be identical with the solver's initial term ("clues"). For indeed, they are "the same" clues.

But in another sense, they're not quite the same clues, as we can notice from Letter 5. The compiler always starts with a synonym or, as he calls it, a definition. He then builds up the clue mechanism ("secondary indication") by which the solver is supposed to find the synonym's other that is the answer. In doing so, he tries to hide the synonym (while observing the "rule", which the solver also knows, of placing the synonym in the theme or rheme position in the clue). He does this in a number of ways:

- By changing the part of speech of the synonym: so that, for example, TALISMAN (noun) => "Charm" (verb); SHOEHORN (noun) => "squeeze into tight space" (verb), and so on.
- By making the synonym "semantically" related to the clue mechanism: "Charm wild animals"; "engage associate", and so on.
- By using words that are cryptically ambiguous in order to, perhaps, have the solver do cryptic work on the <u>synonym</u> instead of the on the clue mechanism. Hence "fashion residence" suggests an anagram of "residence"; "squeeze into" suggests a part inclusion of one word in another, and so on.

This means, again, that the solver has to <u>begin</u> by trying to spot the synonym. The words "this..." and "for this..." sometimes help here -- but they're few and far between. This is what our solver calls "parsing": separating out the synonym from the clue mechanism that will lead to its other, the answer. While the compiler, that is, has to do the work of disguising the two parts of the clue, the solver has to do the work of revealing them. But at the same time, each uses the same resources for the work, and these will include:

- knowledge of how clue-types work; for example, that "split" clues often refer to well-known phrases
- knowledge of letter-counting; such that the solver might try to put in a decoy anagram indicator (plus a word of the right length) in order to put the solver off the track of the synonym
- knowledge of certain abbreviations; V => "against" or "five", CA => "about" or "circa", and so on
- knowledge of signals such as "about" or "around" to indicate words containing others
- knowledge of indicators; for example, anagram indicators ("doctor", "wild", "made out", and so forth), and light-inclusive indicators ("hold", "contains", and so on)
- knowledge of how puns can be put on the agenda with "we hear", "for auditors" and the like

• knowledge of shorthand; "mid-morning" => N; "third of October" => T, and the rest

We can put this formally as follows, using superscripts to show that we're dealing with two words that are synonymous, one of which goes into the clue and the other into the light.

> Compiler: determinable synonym^1 in clue => clue mechanism => disguise tactics
>
> Solver: parsing tactics => clue mechanism => determined synonym^2 in light

In addition, the ideal for solvers (which would be the worst scenario for compilers) would be for their parsing tactics to work as the exact reverse of the compiler's disguise tactics. This shows that at least one sub-component of the game (the cluing part) has pretty much the same reversed procedure as the whole game itself (which we sketched above). If this is indeed what's going on we can say that (again, almost but not quite): compiler and solver competences are identical but work counter-sequentially to each other. We find this extremely interesting because it's one of the few instances we know where a fairly precise and symmetrical instance of reflexivity occurs. And we mean this term more in Sacks's sense than Garfinkel's. While Garfinkel, that is, assumed that accounts and the actions they account for are reflexively constituted (Studies in EM), Sacks took the theoretical lesson from this a little further. That is, he was much more interested in how a culture could be formed. He wanted to know the kinds of techniques and methods that people know, use and share in order to establish a common culture, a common "everyday". And what he conjectured is, we think, displayed in our materials and our short analysis of them above.

What Sacks conjectured was that, for a culture to exist, people in it must have methods for producing cultural objects (like promises and hammers) and also methods for recognising them as the sorts of cultural objects they have been produced as. In may cultural theories (in fact in all the ones we know) the theory consists of a conjecture about how it is that the production part relates to the recognition (or reception) part. Marxist theories of production and consumption controlled by an "economy" of relations between them are good cases in point. Chomsky's positing of the "wired in" grammatical competences of the "ideal speaker-hearer" is another. Piaget's theory of a progressive equilibration between organism and environment is a third. Each of these relies on complex theorisations of the connections between two different parts of a culture: its production and recognition parts. But Sacks does not offer just another one of these complex theoretical mechanisms. Instead, he says, we think very boldly:

> A culture is an apparatus for generating recognizable actions; if the same procedures are used for generating as for detecting, that is perhaps as simple a solution to the problem of recognizability as is formulatable. (Sacks, Lectures I, p226)

This means, in effect, that if we look at everyday life closely enough, and if we shift our attention away from matters of "substance" and "content", looking instead at the methods and techniques we find there, we will begin to see that, at that level -- the level of methods, techniques and procedures -- the "problem" of culture effectively disappears. We no longer have to conjecture about how production and reception (or generating and recognising) are connected. At the level of method, they are no longer different entities that have to be connected. Methodologically, they are identical. A culture is, in fact, where I recognise what you're doing because, for all of us, culturally, that's how we would do it. If there's a deep problem of a distinction between production and recognition, then there simply isn't a culture. We are only entitled to say that there is a culture of crosswording at all because the methods for the production and the methods for the solution of crosswords are identical. Practitioners in that culture must assume as much. The work of a cultural analyst, however, must go further and demonstrate as much. What we have seen in the present chapter is, we think, an empirical demonstration that (at least to a large extent) supports Sacks's conjecture, and we would encourage readers to construct similar demonstrations from detailed step-wise reconstructions of their own everyday activities to further test this conjecture.

References

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