

“Here, Among The Black Sand Beaches Of Kupang”
A Century Of The American Word Industry In Review

Matthew Baker

“Here, Among The Black Sand Beaches Of Kupang” A Century Of The American Word Industry In Review

In a predominantly capitalist global economy, it was probably inevitable that someone would realize that words, too, were simply a product—although it remains unclear just who exactly that someone was, as five separate copyright applications (and one for a patent) were filed within a matter of weeks, on three different continents, in just as many countries. As is often the case—as it had been with gunpowder, television, the structure of DNA—the breakthrough seemed to arise from a collective consciousness, a hive mind that issued its breakthrough to several humans simultaneously. This breakthrough was that neologisms were a form of art, and that the inventors of those words ought to be paid accordingly.

The six applications were filed by:

1: Beatrice Tesla (of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) for her invention of the adjective *reproable*, which she defined as *a robotics term to be applied to any machine with the ability to duplicate itself in its entirety.*

2: Victor Jean Perse (of Marseille, France) for his invention of the noun *devoirjour*, which he defined (in French, but here translated) as *a word for those wishing to succeed in today's business world, meaning willpower or resolve; goal-setting with ambition and ferocity!*

3: Sasha “The Big D” Deroos (of New York City, New York) for her invention of the verb/noun *plugfuck*, which she defined as *having sex with an electronic instead of a human (or someone that does)*.

4: John Smith and Neil Bowers (of Indianapolis, Indiana) for their invention of the phrase *Gay Farade* (with an alternate spelling *Gay 'Fraid*), which they defined as *any group of people that gather to celebrate their fear of the LGBT community, or to protest its existence*.

5: Jorge Andrade (of General Pico, Argentina) for his invention of the word *medianta* (for which he supplied no definition, saying he was unwilling to publish the meaning of the word until he had been granted its copyright).

6: P. K. Buckman (of Cedar City, Utah) for his invention of the phrase *Mormo metal*, which he defined as *a subgenre of heavy metal, characterized not as much by certain guitar techniques or styles of drumwork as by having overtly Mormon lyrics*.

The French and Argentinean cases were almost immediately overturned, but those applications filed in the United States were given more serious consideration.

Buckman’s case was the first to be dismissed, after it was discovered that Buckman had invented a name for a subgenre of music that itself had not yet been invented. However, publicity surrounding the case was such that, by the end of that winter, over a hundred Mormo metal bands had formed, either inspired by Buckman’s neologism, or simply hoping to cash in on the international media frenzy surrounding the case. By the next summer, Mormo metal bands were playing at every major music festival in the country. Buckman’s best friend C. J. Casey then filed and won a copyright for the phrase, which Casey claimed that *he* had invented while living with Buckman in Cedar City. However, Casey’s copyright differed from Buckman’s in that it defined Mormo metal as *a subgenre of heavy metal characterized by irregular tempos, unconventional ebow use, and dual drum-*

ming, which is what the subgenre had actually become.

Sasha “The Big D” Deroos had filed for the sole patent application of the bunch—possibly confused over the difference between *patent* and *copyright*, or perhaps hoping to challenge the World Trade Organization’s long-established definition of what exactly did and did not merit a patent. Her application was rejected on the basis that words, traditionally, could not be patented, and that the United States Patent And Trademark Office did not deem *plugfuck* worthy of a break with this tradition. The Big D then applied for a copyright, which was again almost immediately rejected on the basis that *plugfuck* did not merit status as intellectual property. Thus: *plugfuck* entered the public domain. However, after the precedent for copyrighted neologisms had been set, The Big D went on to coin *vending pussy* (a girl who’ll put out for anyone with cash), *borough tour* (sleeping with somebody from each borough in a twenty-four hour period), and *asserole* (more or less every recipe to ever come out of the Midwest), all of which were granted copyrights and became immediate bestsellers.

Tesla’s application for *reproable* was delayed by a contention that Sierra Menard, a robotics programmer at a rival corporation, had been the first to use the word. Email records were examined, which established that Tesla had the first documented usage. Menard then asserted a claim that Tesla, or an accomplice of Tesla, had hacked Menard’s email account and deleted any usages predating Tesla’s. Soon after, Menard’s coupe was sideswiped by a semi and knocked from a bridge into a hundred-foot gulch, which effectively ended the whole dispute.

Meanwhile, the Smith/Bower application for *Gay Farade/Gay ’Fraid* had been challenged by the mobs of picketers that had gathered outside the U.S. Copyright Office on Independence Avenue, picketers who seemed not so much opposed to granting the inventors of a word or phrase the power of copyright as much as allowing a historical precedent

to be set by a word or phrase that was almost explicitly anti-Republican and anti-Christian. One sign read: *Keep gay slang Out of our Dictionaries!!!* Another: *give a gay a copyright, next he'll want a marriage!* When interviewed by reporters from the AP, Smith and Bower pointed out that the picketers weren't accomplishing much aside from illustrating that the English language did have a need for their phrase.

At a press conference in Pittsburgh, Tesla publicly gave her support of the Smith/Bower application, joking that she wished them the best of luck, but only as long as her application was processed first. The Big D also gave her support of the Smith/Bower application, calling their phrase a “brilliant” work of art. However, she publicly denounced the Tesla application, claiming that Tesla's work was derivative of her own, being a neologism that was also concerned with “the relationship between sexuality and machines.” Tesla responded later that week with a brief statement in which she observed that *reproable* and *plugfuck* were not even remotely related terms, and that her application had been filed three days prior to The Big D's regardless.

Nonetheless, *Gay Farade/Gay 'Fraid* became the first neologism to be extended the protection of international copyright. *Reproable's* application was approved a week later. Scuttle Me Lover, the most popular band to have emerged thus far from the Mormo metal scene, paid an undisclosed sum of money to Smith and Bower for the use of *Gay Farade* as the title of their forthcoming album. The director of a five-hundred-million-dollar film about a 24th-century war between humans and robots paid a disclosed sum of money—\$100,000—to Tesla for permission to use *reproable* six times in the script of his film.¹ Within a month, the U.S. Copyright Office had received nearly 8,000 additional applications for neologisms—more than tripling their monthly average for applications.

It was a gold rush, the dot-com bubble. The failures were spectacular and widely publi-

¹ Including in its most famous scene, in which Sergeant Droog (the film's hero) says to Assistant Gunner Wallace: “Don't you get it, Barret? That's their advantage, the way they're going to win the war. You only need one reproable robot to make another. But you need two of us to make another human—it's beautiful, dammit, but it may just be our downfall.”

cized. Chani and Chloe Phantham, twin sisters at Pikes Peak Community College, pooled the money their parents had given them for their spring tuition and used it to invest in over a hundred copyright applications,² most of which were rejected, forcing the sisters to drop out of college; a Wichita marriage dissolved over rights to a phrase the couple had created during their honeymoon, *shower choir*, which was replaced a week later by a catchier phrase with a similar meaning; Taylor Mackay, a bartender from Traverse City, sank more than \$11,000 into application fees for a series of words that he had spent months creating, none of which were ever again used, in print or out loud, even by him.

It wasn't enough to invent a word that was clever, or lovely, or funny. For a neologism to become profitable, it had to serve a purpose: had to fill a hole in the language, perform some role that no other English word was capable of performing. Neither was it profitable simply to attach new meanings to an existent word: the U.S. Copyright Office had announced that preexisting words would be considered part of the public domain, and that variations on those words would be considered merely remakes of the original piece of art. P. K. Buckman briefly emerged from the obscurity of his career post-Mormo metal and filed an application for *co-mart*, a word for which several international corporations had already offered him lucrative contracts; his application was denied, however, on the basis that the word *co-mart* had already been coined (albeit with a different meaning) by William Shakespeare. Buckman retreated into obscurity, and was never heard from again.

Many would come to remember this nascent era fondly, as a time when neologians were paid generous royalties by any advertising agency, videogame developer, newspaper columnist, or clothing company that found itself in need of a trendy neologism, but a time in which, although it was possible for copyright laws to be enforced if words were used in print, rarely was it possible to do so when they were used out loud—meaning that anyone

² One for a word whose definition was a coded but fairly transparent joke regarding The Big D's weight.

could use even the trendiest neologism (in the classroom, at the office, on the subway, at the park) without it costing a penny. A small faction of quixotic artists³ argued that neologians ought to be paid for every usage of their words, whether in print or out loud, and would mail invoices to any politician or public speaker whose usage of a copyrighted word happened to have been broadcast online. But it wasn't until the development of *wellians* that neologians were actually able to bill English speakers—stockbrokers, bus drivers, wedding photographers, convenience store cashiers, butcher shop assistants, prison inmates, street vendors, even the unemployed—for each and every spoken usage of a copyrighted word.

Idris Nkeka, one of the more prolific artists to emerge during the nascent era, filed the application for *wellian*, which she defined as *a surveillance device in cellphones (like a tiny black lightbulb) with voice-recognition software, designed to pick out certain keywords from whatever you're saying*. Nkeka's application was almost denied on the basis that *wellian* was simply a remake of *Orwellian*, but Nkeka managed to persuade copyright officials that her word, while derivative of *Orwellian*, was also an original and distinct work of art (a work today considered her magnum opus). Nkeka had filed her application after the release of the first version of the *wellians*, which had been developed by a private manufacturer for the Department Of Homeland Security, but by the time her application had been processed, *wellians* had already been installed in over 70% of the communication devices within the United States. The Department Of Homeland Security began offering incentives to companies willing to install *wellians* in their products, and by the end of the

³ The Big D had founded the Neologian Legal Defense Fund, along with a number of other Bronx-based artists, the sole purpose of which was to protect neologians and their words from censorship. The NLDF had been founded after a particularly vicious logomachy between The Big D and a Lubbock PTA over The Big D's latest neologism, *dickkissed*, a word which the Lubbock PTA had proposed be banned (along with a number of The Big D's other words) not only from public schools, but from public spaces altogether. During the trial, which nearly bankrupted The Big D (she later admitted she had had to sell all of the mementos she had recently inherited from her grandfather—including her grandfather's 1960 Grafton saxophone and a first edition of *Finnegans Wake*—in order keep her apartment), The Big D's fiance dumped her, making a public statement in which he said that she was "obsessed" and "refused to take care of herself... skips meals, goes days without showering, just to work on those fucking words." He also sent a private email to a friend (which was forwarded to the AP almost immediately) regarding the results of a recent fertility test and his desire to "be with someone... I can raise kids and grandkids with. I mean not adopted." After the trial, during which The Big D had been prohibited from using any of her words under investigation, The Big D's first public usage of *dickkissed* was in reference to her now ex-fiance.

decade, wellians were not only in every cellphone and computer in the United States, but also a majority of the refrigerators, televisions, washing machines, alarm clocks, and hair dryers. Some companies offered wellian-free appliances, but without the government incentives, these companies were unable to price their products competitively; wellian-free microwaves, for example, cost nearly double those with wellians, and as wellians were already nearly unavoidable, most consumers opted simply to buy a wellian microwave and save some extra cash.

Originally the manufacturer had named the wellians Governears—after a thirty-million-dollar consumer marketing research campaign studying the receptivity of hundreds of carefully selected test subjects to a number of promising brand names⁴ had established that Governear produced the least resistance, among test subjects, to the prospect of being constantly monitored by machines—but Nkeka’s word proved far more popular, and soon replaced Governears as the units’ true name. The wellians had been developed in order to locate and monitor the conversations of domestic terrorists; designed to recognize words like *anthrax*, *detonator*, *hostages*, and *assassinate*, it was relatively simple to add a second list of words to the software, the use of which would not result in your arrest, as with the first list, but in your registered account being billed for the word.

Some artists charged rather humane fees—Nkeka, for example, charged only \$.01 per wellian—while others were criticized for demanding royalties that were both exorbitant and unfair—most notably The Big D, who charged \$35 per *cum scrooge*, \$35 per *e-rubber*, and \$150 per *alleyfuck*. Fans who had been using alleyfuck for thirty years suddenly found themselves being charged a month’s worth of rent for the use of a couple standard insults. Videos were posted in which fans accused The Big D of selling out, of betraying her fan-

⁴ Including Governear, Wallfly, sKnowglobe, and Wordcage.

base, of losing touch with her roots.⁵ The largest unofficial The Big D website took a poll in which 93% of those polled claimed they would be boycotting The Big D's work until it once again became gratis. Via blog post, one fan announced he was shutting down his blog at www.plugfuck.com, which he had had since he was seven years old, and which had been entirely devoted to his musings on the career of The Big D. If anyone was interested, he said, his new blog could be found at www.goldmouthmitch.com, which would be completely unrelated to The Big D. Via blog post comment, an anonymous visitor then pointed out that *goldmouth* had been coined by The Big D too. Via blog post, the fan then announced he would also be shutting down his new blog at www.goldmouthmitch.com, and instead would be setting up a blog at www.mitchpeterson.com. Meanwhile, The Big D's words continued to top the charts.⁶

Words became status. Studies showed that teenagers in high school cafeterias were spending more money on the words they were using than on the lunch they were eating. Some went without lunch at all, spending a week's worth of lunch money on a choice *skeethole* or *haggy*. The reputations of different school districts became defined by the types of words students from those districts were overheard using at football games, seen using online. In private high schools, teachers used phrases like *hover rail*, *hack op*, *thought con*, while teachers in public schools, restricted by limited budgets, were forced to use antiquated phrases like *subway*, *internet warfare*, *information economics*, phrases which failed to capture the exact meaning of what they were saying. Their students' standardized test scores reflected this failure.

⁵ In an interview with C-22 The Big D pointed out that 10% of her royalties—which that year would be about 3.5 million dollars (the 10%, not the total royalties)—went to nonprofit organizations running neologism programs in underfunded school districts. Her fans responded with more videos in which they pointed out that the remaining 90% went toward her cabin in Prince Albert, her cottage in Reykjavik, her estate in New Barnstable, her museum-sized collection of rare LPs and CDs, her private VR theater, and her two-hundred-and-fifty-foot yacht.

⁶ Despite the fact that she was now fifty, and working in a medium in which the average age for an artist was seventeen.

Genres developed: buzzwords, technologists, sex jargon, insult slang.⁷ Insult slang alone accounted for over 90% of the United States' annual production of neologisms; the year of its release, for example, Americans spent over ten million dollars on *hillbreed* (at only \$.03 a *hillbreed*). These genres were generally held in contempt by more highbrow English speakers; upper-class dinner parties were garnished with words like *boyyote*, *heenless*, *retrosance*, *godbox*, words which were considered to be innovative and cerebral and therefore to have artistic value. Likewise, although the bestselling neologians of the 22nd century were genre artists such as The Big D and Neil Caim, genre artists were rarely recognized for their work by academic critics, and never by foundations such as Nobel or Guggenheim.⁸ Critics instead favored those neologians considered to be artistic, in particular P. S. Salvador West, who since has come to be regarded as the most influential neologian of the century—and who was indisputably the most prolific, with a total of 8,017 copyrighted words and phrases (one of which, *propbomb*, earned P. S. both a Pulitzer and the Nobel). P. S.'s first published series of words—*ji* (which P. S. defined as *a third-person singular subject pronoun; genderless*), *jin* (*a third-person singular object pronoun; genderless*), and *jir* (*a third-person singular possessive pronoun; genderless*)—reflected jir lifelong commitment to concealing jir identity, particularly jir gender. P. S. copyrighted jir words, but made jir words available for free, and jir words were an immediate sensation, especially after appearing in a feature in *Seuss* on progressive neologisms. The “ji phenomenon” lasted several months⁹ before going the way of other trends in neologisms, at which point

⁷ One minor genre consisted entirely of words whose definitions were, again, coded but fairly transparent jokes about The Big D—jokes about her waist size (33), her high school GPA (1.9), her pedigree (daughter of a parking lot attendant, granddaughter of a plumber), her lisp, and so on.

⁸ The Big D alternated between publicly yearning for and publicly belittling these awards. After releasing a series of bestselling fashion neologisms (including the world-renowned *spoff cut*), The Big D sent an email to her current husband (the third, an iron worker from Queens who refused to quit his job even after marrying the multimillionaire, and who died only eight months into their marriage after falling eleven stories from a high-rise in Alphabet City) saying, “They can ignore cum scrooge and dickkissed but let’s see them ignore these.” After she had yet again failed to garner even a nomination for that year’s Nobel, let alone the prize itself, The Big D posted a video to her official website in which she referred to the Nobel Committee as “self-appointed high dive judges who’ll only flash a 10 at people with the right politics” and went on to say that “the last thing I want is a bunch of elderly Swedes hanging out by the side of my pool telling me who’s an artist and who isn’t—I don’t swim for medals, I swim to swim.”

⁹ P. S.'s words appeared in both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and were used publically on several occasions by Senator Kiley Janzen (Michigan).

ji was abandoned for the clumsier but more familiar *he/she*;¹⁰ however, P. S.'s push for genderless pronouns had proven more successful than any previous attempt,¹¹ which solidified jir place in both the neologian community and the English marketplace. Thereafter, jir pronouns were used only when referring to jin—in this way, the pronouns ji intended to reform gendered third-person pronouns instead became jir own set of personal pronouns, used only when referring to P. S. Salvador West jinself.¹²

Overseas, it was chaos. American tourists abroad in underdeveloped (and, therefore, wellian-free) nations enjoyed the free and unauthorized usage of words that back home would have cost them \$20 apiece. Papua New Guinea and West Makassar were especially notorious for word pirating, their resorts even going so far as to advertise to English-speaking tourists with illegal usages of the most costly and posh neologisms on the market (one series of advertisements by Hotel Regal promised that “Here, among the black sand beaches of Kupang, we’re all verbclass”).¹³ Controversy arose when The Big D, recovering from her latest batch of nanotherapy at a beach resort in the Suriname Federation, tossed

¹⁰ Along with the grammatically incorrect *they*, and occasionally the dehumanizing *it*.

¹¹ Foster Stevens notes in his essay “Artificial Flavors: Proppombomb And American Cinema In The 22nd Century” that

The success of P. S.'s pronouns lay in their visual distance from the existent (and divisive) pronouns but their aural nearness. Ji looks nothing like he or she, jin looks nothing like him or her, jir looks nothing like his or her. On the page, it was something new, something far enough removed from the gendered pronouns that it appeared to hold no allegiance to either camp. But the sound of the words were near enough to the sounds of the original pronouns that the shift from one set to the other was relatively simple. The slight “dj” sound used when saying ji aloud was ambiguous—at times it would sound almost like a “sh,” at others like a “h,” at others like a “g.” Jin was resonant of him (and not at all of her), which might have upset feminist speakers, if not for the fact that jir, on the other hand, was resonant of her (and not at all of his). However, in the end, the “dj” sound was too exotic for the consumer of English words.

Incidentally, in a separate essay, Stevens was the first to refer to P. S. as the “Word Bard” (at least in print).

¹² Neologism reviews published countless theories on the identity of P. S. (*C-22* established a monthly column devoted exclusively to the subject, which ran for several years). One theory proposed that P. S. was an experiment being performed jointly by several neologians—Iris Nkeka supported this theory, arguing in one essay that she believed P. S. was “a fake name, a puppet, used by a group of elite neologians to publish their collaborations.” Some theories proposed that P. S. was an escaped convict who could not afford to reveal jir identity and therefore risk jir capture; others proposed that P. S. actually worked for the government. During an interview with *Shibboleth*, several weeks after being diagnosed with stage III cervical cancer, The Big D alluded to the possibility that P. S. was a nom de plume she had chosen to use for publishing her more “artistic” works, although this suggestion was debunked almost immediately.

¹³ *Verbclass*, a P. S. Salvador West product, had a reproduction fee of \$65. The meaning of the adjective had evolved since its original publication (although ji had since revised the copyright to include its new definition, the definition it still holds: *having a level of affluence that permits the use of a limitless number of copyrighted neologisms*). The word's origins lie in an observation from Winnie Arbor's famous 22nd-century study, which established that copyrighted verbs typically cost at least triple that of copyrighted adjectives or nouns. (Although, as a \$65 adjective, verbclass itself proved that this wasn't always the case.)

an English-speaking French national off the patio of a fourth-story cafe. When interviewed by a GNN camera crew moments after the incident, The Big D claimed she had heard the “snailfuck” using one of her most famous coinages, *buttfirst*, repeatedly, “like he owned the motherfucker,” and said she refused to get “dickkissed” by “some cheap alley-fuck who won’t even give credit for his adverbs where the credit’s due.”¹⁴ After being hauled from the pool and inspected by the resort’s doctor, Jean Henri Carnelian (the “snailfuck” in question) explained he merely had been telling a story to some Canadian friends, a story which had required him to use the conjunction/adverb combination “but first” a number of times. The Big D later issued a statement in which she apologized to the citizens of the United States, France, and the Suriname Federation for the incident; however, she also included a brief censure of “those countries that fail to respect the rights of authorship.” She then explained that her recent bouts of nanotherapy had left her “on edge” and had caused her to act in an “uncharacteristic manner.”¹⁵ By the time her private jet had landed at La Guardia, copyright applications for *snailfuck* had already been filed by thirteen different Americans.¹⁶ In an uncharacteristic move—perhaps in an attempt to distance herself from the incident—The Big D did not contest this theft of her latest neologism in any way whatsoever. The copyright for *snailfuck* instead was awarded to Robin Paolini of Three Forks, Montana—his first and only ever published work.

Meanwhile: the grammarians were thrilled.¹⁷ The state of the language was one that grammarians had been trying and failing to achieve for centuries: it had effectively halted in place. The price of those neologisms that actually served some purpose had inflated to costs far beyond the means of the average English consumer, and neologisms that served

¹⁴ She then clarified that by “credit” she meant the \$50 reproduction fee.

¹⁵ This was her twenty-first incident of public assault.

¹⁶ With a variety of definitions, although most of them indicated in one way or another that the word was a derogatory adjective meant for someone either from France or of French decent.

¹⁷ For the first time in the history of their field.

no purpose inevitably faded out of use within weeks of their initial release. Thus, the only words that lower-class and middle-class speakers could afford were those in the public domain—in other words, the archaic pre-Gay Farade language of the 21st century. For professional reasons, many were required to use neologisms at work—nurse anesthetics needed phrases such as *wixy* or *untook*; attorney generals abbreviations such as *BRI* or *HODSO*; financial advisors phrases such as *tesimal trend* or *manni account*—but these expenses were covered by their hospitals, their state governments, their firms.¹⁸ Aside from these technical or political or business-related terms, most English speakers chose to use an old-fashioned *pass me a spoon, hun* as opposed to a \$4 *passlong a tinsil, tivvy* (at \$1.25 a *passlong*, \$.25 a *tinsil*, and \$2.50 a *tivvy*). Whereas before the language had been a collaboration between all of its speakers—a word invented by one generation, crafted by the next, refined by the third, reinvented by another still—neologisms were now stillborn, dead the moment they were printed onto their copyright application.¹⁹ It was possible to modify existing words, but ineffectual, at least as far as the stasis of the language was concerned. Neil Caim, for example, published *moilfuzz* (*a hairstyle characteristic to Mormo metal musicians and their fans—a short cropped cut, buzzed even shorter along the ears*), a modification of *moilingfuzz*, which had been published by Jessie Loup earlier that year.²⁰ *Moilfuzz* sold at \$.75 per oral reproduction and \$.50 per written reproduction, earning Caim \$19,162 in the year of its release—a relatively profitable neologism.²¹ However, these earnings reflected a relatively low usage; *moilfuzz* had been used an average of only 82

¹⁸ Those neologisms reproduced here were afforded only through a grant from the NEA.

¹⁹ It was no longer profitable for artists to copyright a neologism and then offer it for free, as copyright application fees had increased almost tenfold (in order to “discourage those applications for words that will never actually be used, which account for over 70% of our applications,” the U.S. Copyright Office stated). Neologians also had the agent fees, the attorney fees, the insurance fees that were now more or less standard in the business. Some artists did choose to self-publish their works, instead of filing for copyright; Idris Nkeka, for example, self-published a number of words so that English speakers might use the words as often as they liked. However, in each case Nkeka’s word was lifted by an opportunist within a matter of weeks and copyrighted under their name instead. As English consumers were going to be paying for her words one way or another, Nkeka decided they may as well be paying her.

²⁰ With a more or less identical definition.

²¹ The same year, Loup earned only \$2,090 for *moilingfuzz*, at \$.25 per use.

times a day. Considering the number of English speakers at the time—about 4.1 billion—it had had essentially no effect on the language itself.²²

As most neologisms failed to earn even enough to cover the cost of their application fees, many neologians were forced to take corporate positions to survive.²³ Kellogg's was the first company to invest in copyrighted neologisms. As it was in a company's interests for consumers to talk about its product as often as possible, copyrighting the name of a product had (before then) seemed not just impractical but completely idiotic;²⁴ however, when Kellogg's released their newest breakfast cereal Blabbies, they not only copyrighted the name of their product but also supplied it with an alternate definition: *people who talk too much*. They then offered free usage of the word, unlimited. As Kellogg's marketing team had predicted, the word paid for itself overnight—*blabbies* proved so practical and catchy that it was already averaging one usage per day *per English speaker* when the first shipment of Blabbies hit the shelves. Blabbies became Kellogg's leading product overnight.²⁵ In this way, Kellogg's was able to provide English speakers with a free neologism; by using the word (regardless of which definition they were invoking), English speakers were inadvertently advertising the cereal. Kellogg's then copyrighted the name of every product they manufactured. Hasbro, ICD, Z-B Motor, Siemens AG, TATA Group, and Kira soon followed suit, and by the end of the fiscal year, almost every corporation in the world had formed a neologism department responsible solely for the crafting of product names that could double as neologisms. For every product name copyrighted, an alternative definition was included free of charge—some functioned as nouns, others as

²² To compare its usage to that of relatively obscure words from the public domain—that year *bonhomie* had been used an average of 14,010 times a day, *rigmarole* 115,068, and *sockdolager* 1,612. *Chortle* had been used an average of 1,700,310.

²³ And to pay the fees necessary to continue their craft.

²⁴ Companies were able to protect their product names from being copyrighted by unaffiliated parties by registering a trademark for their product, in the same way that they had been protected from cybersquatters who had purchased domain names related to their trademarked products.

²⁵ Surpassing even Cocoa Wiggles in sales.

adverbs, some even as prepositions or conjunctions. It became possible to have entire conversations that consisted solely of copyrighted brand names.

Some neologians sanctioned this new market in the word industry,²⁶ while others condemned it. After almost a decade in remission from cervical cancer, The Big D had recently relapsed, but from her private floor at St. Vincent's, she submitted to an interview with *C-22* in which she said that the industry was broken and corrupt and that there wasn't a single neologian alive with even an ounce of talent left, including herself and P. S. Salvador West. "There's no beauty left in it," The Big D said. "There's nothing left to love, there's nothing left to feel good about. I regret everything I've ever done, and not because the words I made weren't any good, but because they were good, and they're going to be around forever, and that means I'm going to be associated with all of this sleaze and this hack and this madness forever, and I can't live with that." A month later she died in her bed at St. Vincent's. According to her wishes, she was buried under a wordless gravestone. It was unmarked: she had asked that it include not even her name.

However, as P. S. Salvador West notes in his essay "White-Collar Works for Blue-Collar Workers," because corporate slang was free, it soon developed lower-class connotations. Despite that they were neologisms (the use of which had previously been an indicator of affluence), corporate slang was viewed as a lesser breed of language. Most English consumers found words from the public domain preferable to corporate slang: while words from the public domain were free, they had always been free, and had a certain antique quality that even upper-class speakers could value, whereas corporately-funded words were seen as knockoffs, cheap imitations of privately-published neologisms. Using corporate slang became a marker of class—to use it, one had to be not only poor, but entirely unaware of its status as a faux pas. P. S. did not find the initial development of corporate

²⁶ Mainly those neologians now on the payroll of companies like Kellogg's.

slang as troubling as this later development—that corporations were paying neologians upper-class salaries essentially to write the language of the lower-class. “The corporate world now controls not only the words that the working-class can use, but the meanings of those words,” P. S. wrote, “and thus controls what the working-class is capable (or incapable) of even saying. And therefore thinking.”

However, most linguists agree that the development of the word industry has been ultimately beneficial. Now that the evolution of the language has halted, all children learn the same language, almost word for word, that their great-grandparents learned a century ago. All texts written today are written in the same language that will be used in a millennium. This text itself is timeless in a way that its ancestors—*Beowulf*, *Troilus And Criseyde*, *Paradise Lost*—never were, and never could have been. Those texts must now be read in translation, but this text will be understood forever. *Humane* will always be humane, *derivative* always derivative, *contempt* contempt. Eventually it will become—or, perhaps, already has—impossible to imagine a time when neologians went unpaid for their work, a time when English consumers could use whichever words they wanted, could change their meanings, their spellings, on a whim. But, still, there was such a time. And, even then, one suspects, it must have cost them something.

About The Author

Matthew Baker is the author of the graphic novel *The Sentence*, the story collections *Why Visit America* and *Hybrid Creatures*, and the children's novel *Key Of X*. Digital experiments include the temporal fiction "Ephemeral," the interlinked novel *Untold*, the randomized novel *Verses*, and the intentionally posthumous *Afterthought*.

Acknowledgements

“Here, Among The Black Sand Beaches Of Kupang” originally appeared in *Kenyon Review* in 2013.

License

This story is distributed under a Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.