

12. On this point see also Cecily Clark, 'Some Early-Twentieth Century Aberdeen Nicknames', Aberdeen University Review 162 (Autumn 1979), 195-9, and 'Nickname Creation: Some Sources of Evidence, 'Naive' Memoirs Especially', in the present issue of NOMINA, pp.83-94.
13. Cecily Clark, 'People and Languages in post-Conquest England', Journal of Medieval History II (1976), 1-33, and 'Thoughts on the French Connections of Middle English Nicknames', NOMINA 2 (1978), 38-44.
14. One gets a flavour of what was possible from the witty nicknames invented by Nicholas Bozon (a late-thirteenth- and early-fourteenth-century Franciscan friar of the north Midlands) for four types of religious hypocrite:
- Roungemesere e Kokenplu,  
Siflevent e Cheftondu.
- Friar William Herbert showed a matching deftness in translating the Anglo-Norman into Middle English as:
- Vreteboede, Byrinekoc,  
Whystlebone and Shorelok
- that is, 'chew prayer', 'bedraggled cock' (byrine means 'rained upon, soaked'), 'hiss prayer' (for Bozon's 'Whistle wind'), and 'shorn lock' (alluding to the tonsured head). See Brian J. Levy, Nine Verse Sermons by Nicholas Bozon, Medium Aevum Monographs, N.S. XI (Oxford, 1981), pp.90-6.

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NUGAE ANTHROPONYMICAE II

Nothing further, alas, on genetic or astrological determinism. A few of the usual skittish pieces about accidentally funny anthroponyms and toponyms - for instance, variations by Bernard Levin on Remarkable Names of Real People by one John Train [The Times, 19.ii.81, p.14; for the toponymic equivalent, see the running collection offered by Godfrey Smith in The Sunday Times]; but, as the Editor has emphasized, such trivia concern us not. A mildly sinister commentary on the names oil-companies choose (? econyms, but cf. NOMINA II, 65) got nearer the mark, noting 'the lengths to which they go to stress, or play down, or ignore completely the essential (hit-or-bust) nature of their business' [Sunday Telegraph, 26.iv.81, p.26].

Consumer Viewpoints

On the other hand, the worm's-eye view, the feelings of the name-bearer, nay, name-victim are better represented. Jay Ames of Toronto sent us a catalogue raisonné of his own nicknames so striking that we are printing it, tel quel, as an Appendix (let that be an enticement to the rest of you). And Jancis Robinson contributed to The Times [21.viii.80] a descant on her own name-problems, ending with a psychological hypothesis the very converse of last year's determinism:

'Life is tough for a 30-year-old with an unusual name. ... I am grimly aware that ... almost every person I have ever met ... has asked me how I got my name. ... Contemporaries with equally uncommon names agree that the explanation they choose to give is a near-perfect barometer of how they feel towards the particular interlocutor. ...

'Most babies are given unusual names by parents who felt they had missed out by having very ordinary names themselves. ... Fellow-victims are those born in peculiar circumstances of history or geography which their parents think worthy of lifelong commemoration: those Armistice babies called Peace, for instance. ...

'Name-choosing should be no jolly parlour-game, for there is no doubt that names can shape personality. "Hugo wouldn't have been Hugo if he'd been christened John" is an observation heard long ago but not forgotten. After all, in the early years before we have had time to develop those quirks and vices that identify us now, our names, and particularly Christian names, are more than anything what we are to others and often to ourselves. There is a school of thought that believes that names determine behaviour in an even more detailed and certain manner. Would Unity Mitford's life have been different had her middle name not been Valkyrie? Aren't all Beths rather meek, and Tobys relatively cheerful? ... .'

Nor is naming a parlour-game in those countries where the state regards it as too potent a force to go unregulated. One correspondent sent in a (translated) Russian account of official Spanish attitudes:

'Victor Sanchez and his wife Natividad Gomez agreed together to name their baby Patricia Libertad Sanchez Gomez. But the clerk at the local registration office refused to register the name, on the grounds that he objected to Libertad, quoting a section of the Registration Act which states that "outrageous, subversive or disrespectful names will not be acceptable". Two months passed, during which the parents several times came to protest that there was nothing subversive about the name Libertad; but the official remained adamant.' [Krasnaya Zvezda, 6.iv.80, slightly abbreviated]

The First and Second Friends (O best beloveds), and Others

'Although dogs are not infrequently named after people, the reverse is seldom true' - thus Iktis in The Field [25.iii.81, p.500]. A similar point, together with others recalling Nugae 1980, was made in The Times's 'London Diary' [12.v.81] à propos of a league-table of cats' names:

'The most popular Christian [sic] name is Sooty, closely followed in descending order by Smoky, Brandy, Fluffy and Tiger.

'The only correlation ... between the human and feline name-lists is that Tom appears in the top half-dozen of both. Few cats appear to be called Richard, and I am not personally acquainted with many humans named Rum Tum Tigger. Cat-owners indulge in quite spectacular flights of fancy when naming their pets, a trend they mercifully curb (at least I suppose they do) when naming their children. The survey produced ... such preposterous pussy-handles as Japonica Troggs, Lydia la Poose, Seraphim-Simkin, Pussonia, Czumczucz, and Twee. I would not care to stand at my front door trying to get Japonica Troggs in at night.' [but surely Czumczucz would present problems even more insuperable... ]

For all that, zoonymity is not confined to scribes (many a shudder that last excerpt cost me, gentle readers). For instance, last summer, at the peak of The Flat (so to speak), a certain church-mouse's Parish Magazine recorded the baptism of one Kris - apparently named, at one remove, after a sort of Malaysian dagger and directly after a strikingly handsome, not to say dashing, chestnut son of Sharpen Up.

More frequent as it is, the reverse transfer, from bi to quadruped, can open unexpected doors. One of this year's most promising birth-announcements read:

'MOSS. - On April 4th, at Woburn Abbey, to Mrs. Moss - a son, a brother for Pushy.' [The Times, 6.iv.81]

A pity Father did not get a look in; but his name, perhaps, might have given the game away (Pushy's sire was also, by coincidence, Sharpen Up; but in the equine world that is neither herenor there). Our belated congratulations to Mrs. Moss, and equally to Lady Tavistock, for seizing upon the possibilities opened by her favourite's eminently respectable name.

At times name-transfers go much further. Perhaps the naming of a diesel locomotive after Lady Diana Spencer - 'Bridal train', as The Thunderer put it [4.iv.81, p.2] - should not too much astound us. After all, early French engine-drivers, we are told, regarded their massive and snorting pets almost as mistresses, spontaneously naming them after great ladies (your reporter, *comme son nom l'indique*, does not hold with circumscribing cultural frontiers too closely): for instance, "'l'Eugenie", car Jeandot avait baptisé sa bouzine du nom de l'impératrice' [H. Vincenot, La vie quotidienne dans les chemins de fer au xix<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris, 1975), 164-5, cf. 99]. Those, however, were steam-engines; whereas a diesel...

On this topic the last word perhaps rests with the irresistible lyric stanza quoted by Iktis as a coda to his piece on dogs' names:

'I've lost my love; midsummer's dream is over.  
We parted when she said she didn't care.  
But I'll keep her memory burning bright for ever,  
For I've christened my bitch bolting-ferret Claire.'

Honour for Thieves?

The name of Mrs. Moss - and likewise those of Mrs. Penny (still single), Mr. Nice Guy, and many others - remind us that the titles and honorifics on occasion prefixed to personal names may deserve more socio-linguistic attention than they usually get outside second-language manuals: a point especially relevant nowadays, when so many formalities and courtesies have been thrown in the melting-pot, if not out of the window (your reporter's correspondents, for instance, betray a lamentable indifference towards finding an appropriate handle for a zoonym - manners, please, in future).

But some still care: a letter recently published in the Cambridge Evening News [17.vi.81, p.7] took that journal to task for its mealy-mouthed style of

'referring to convicted felons. The term Mr. is surely a courtesy title. Yet you apply it punctiliously to men who, by the malignancy of the crimes of which they have been convicted, have forfeited the right to any courtesy whatsoever. ... Is your policy a result of legal caution? It is fully appreciated that while under arrest or still on trial the absence of Mr. might conceivably be considered as prejudicial to an accused; but the point I would make is that its use is continued by you following conviction and sentence. ... Again, might your attitude be that of etiquette, the observance of polite consideration due to all mankind? If so, why are such gentlemen as a leading racehorse-trainer, a Cambridge University cricketer and a cinema actor briefly indicated as Balding, Edwards, and Norris? ... Do they not merit a formality equal to that accorded to convicted murderers, thugs and swindlers? ... This may seem a trivial issue. Nevertheless, I feel that any implicit lack of condemnation of vicious and evil men may in some imperceptible [sic] way seem to condone them; and that, in this era of rising criminal ferocity, is not trivial.'

John Doe Drives Again

The right name will (as I said before) take you anywhere, work any oracle; it can even conjure a serviceable entity from ink, paper, and thin air. A friendly Field-mouse culled from The Times Law Reports a delicious episode of nominalist fantasy [22.xii.80 - a date when a harvest-mouse must be preoccupied with stocking less intellectual store-cupboards]. The context was a problem arising from Crown immunity from prosecution and the consequent need when, say, a Government Department vehicle has committed a traffic offence to nominate a surrogate defendant: should a real Civil Servant be involved, he would risk incurring a string of convictions. The Bench therefore suggested resuscitating *ad hoc* one John Doe (natus c. 1657), who had originally figured in fictitious leases needed for proving freeholders' status, and commented:

'John Doe's services to the law had thus far been confined to the civil jurisdiction and he had never before been called upon to serve the Crown. However, there was no reason why he should be unable or unwilling to assist the courts with the present new problem ... John Doe would have been particularly well qualified in the present case since the Department of the Environment was known to its intimates as "DoE". ... Their Lordships trusted that their suggestion would not lead to John Doe acquiring any considerable criminal record, but if he did ... he would have the consolation of having yet again rendered a signal service to the law.'

Toponymic Tail-Piece

A piece of folk-etymology culled by our Editor himself (and for which he may perhaps be forgiven for perpetuating that canard about an encounter with a farmer's wife) left a squeakless scribe choking over the sparrow-grass soup. Talk in a train returning from Wales was related in a letter to the Sunday Express [26.x.80]:

'A lady in our compartment asked: "What is the name of that large bridge?" When [told] it was the Severn Bridge, she replied, in all seriousness: "What with the Severn Bridge and the Forth Bridge, it's very confusing. Why don't they give them names instead of numbers?"'

\* \* \*

Please, learned readers, be alert to socio- and psycho-onomastic phenomena and let us know about them. One harvest-mouse alone can never glean enough to keep this column supplied. Besides, we need wider coverage: this year's pickings make it only too clear that top onomasticians, and rodents too, indeed read The Times - but precious little else!

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## Appendix

The Nicknames of Jay Ames

As a lad in western Canada where I was pupped - my family nicknames were Sunny Jim and Rufus. Outside the home I was as likely to be Red, Redtop, Shorty, Shortstop and Little Bit. Moving to England while Dad was in the R.F.A. in France, I had to become used to such nicknames as Ginger (Ginge), Bloodnut, Coppernob, in addition to Titch.

In my teens and later I got Bricktop, Sorreltop, Stutz, Kuss, Kleiner, Basso, Iazzo, Maleck, Malenko or Malenki, Piccolo - depending on the ethnic origin of the crew I was working with. In Wales, I was sometimes, though not always, called Cochin-bach (mostly by girls); fellow-dockers, deckhands or the like renamed me Shunny, Shunny-bach and Tanto, not being too familiar with a name such as Jay. Irish and Scottish co-workers, and Army comrades at a later date, altered Jay to John, Jake, Joe, or Shawn, Jaimie, even Jummie, and wee Wull, or wee Ahmess, and wee Aymish - a neat, near play on Hamish and on my complete signature.

Among Germans - both before the war and since, and no better able to cope with the name Jay - they've opted for dubbing me Hans, Hansi, Yan and Janni, even Joe. Slavic-speaking mates, &c., have done almost the same, save that their use of Joe or John is as apt to emerge as Yishko and Yanko. Italians and some of my French-Canadian buddies and neighbours have elected, over the years, to dub me Pepi and Pepino, or again, plain John. Oddly, they've never seen me as a Jean or even a P'ti-jean, as I might have expected.

Cockneys I've worked with overseas, disbelieving or doubtful about my Canadian origins, have variously dubbed me Yank, Scottie or Jock, Irish,

Paddy, and Iaff or Iaffy. Obviously my accent is (or was) neither English nor Canadian.

One current Greek neighbour and his family call me Stavrides - after a teacher the man had as a boy in Greece. Another neighbour, also Greek, gave me the name Colonel from a fancied resemblance to the late Harlan B. Sanders, America's once-famed Chicken King. I fail to see it because I'm handsomer, smoother, funnier, and still living - though he was undoubtedly far better dressed and wealthier than I'll ever be (if that counts for anything). The same goes (or went) for the name Beaverbrook I acquired for a short spell during WW II in Malta, given me by a C.O. we had at that time also over-pretentious for a damn roughneck, farmhand, miner, log swamper, who'd also been a fence-rider, railroader, mule-skinner, bridge-painter, deckhand, stevedore.

Perhaps the oddest nickname ever was the one Stuka, bestowed on me by German nurses and ward-orderlies when in Field Hosp. in Athens and Salonika, in 1943-44. Happily, it 'dive-bombed' by the time I was moved to similar quarters in Germany proper. It was based, of course, on my POW dog-tags, number 88. But why they'd bother nicknaming one of the 'enemy' puzzled me, and still does, years after the event.

Beachball was another nickname I neither liked nor was proud of owning - even on a short-term basis. Happily, I lost both, when I became no longer 'too short for my weight' as we quaintly put it; the once ugly 'beergut' or 'bay-window' or what we dub a 'Molson muscle', and the uglier monicker, have disappeared - long may they keep their distance!

The shipping-room crew of a firm I worked in and out of for eight years changed Jay to Jay-jay; through a handful of stages - Jay-bird, Blue-jay, Blue-bird - it was ultimately reduced to plain Blue. It should have made me feel doggy, at the very least. Had I been a 'coon dawg' or basset (bastard) 'hayound' in the Tennessee or Carolina hills or the bayous of 'Luziana', it might have better suited. Not that it ever had me baying at the moon; but I did think I was in danger of being obliged to wear a flea-collar - or put to stud.

Two glabrous-headed non-com buddies from Malta days were called Helio-head and Shino respectively, if not respectfully. There was also a Ghoolie Ball and Lakry Wood. At a much later date, in the '60s in fact, a non-hispid type I worked with part-time had been given the three-decker nickname Chrome-dome Brome (never having seen his name in writing, I'm not sure if he spelled his name thus or Broom, Broome, Brougham, Brohm or Brohme); it is the only one of its kind I've ever known, and would make an admirable addition to any collection of such esoterica.

JAY AMES

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