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Semantic Variation in the Connotations of Personal Names

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INTRODUCTION

Much of the idea for this paper originated in a joke. Several years ago, evangelist Oral Roberts proclaimed that if he did not receive eight million dollars by a certain date, God would "call him home". Stand-up comedian Robin Williams responded, "Is God some man named Vinnie, saying 'give me my money?'" To fully understand this joke, it is necessary to correctly interpret information being communicated through the name, 'Vinnie', which predicates semantic features allowing us to understand the sense of 'God' as a gangster or a mafioso. This use of personal names forces us to reexamine some of the roles of names in natural language, especially in light of the overwhelming amount of scholarship which claims that personal names have no meaning other than to signify their bearers.

This paper will explore the theories of sense, reference and connotation which contribute to our understanding and use of personal names. The hypothesis is that names suggest descriptions regardless of their referential function. Of principal importance for this study, to quote Jespersen, "is the way in which names are actually employed by speakers and understood by hearers" (cited in Zabeeh 1968: 58).

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Before beginning, it is necessary to clarify the way in which certain terms and concepts will be used so as to provide a foundation for argument. The word "name" itself is often used in the study of language as a designation for any noun. This use of the word arises because the labels we assign to various objects or ideas are primarily arbitrary. The essence of semantics is naming (Lyons 1977) as names are given to objects or ideas to refer to or to signify the concepts around us.

Personal names are part of a larger category known as proper nouns, sometimes referred to as proper names. These terms are considered to have as an inherent property some designation of individuality (see Ullmann 1962: 73). Central to this focus on the topic of personal names, however, is the idea that names can have some central meaning other than the simple identification of their bearer. To distinguish these two different uses of meaning I shall use the terms "reference" and "meaning". Reference will be used to describe the link between a name and a specific individual. For example, in the sentence 'Bob hit Bill', the names "Bob" and "Bill" refer to the individuals who can be identified by these two expressions. The people themselves would then be the referents of the individual names (see Lyons 1977: 178). The term "meaning" will be used to include the concepts of cognitive or descriptive meaning (Lyons 1977: 196) since when I claim that names have "meaning" I am using the terms to indicate a mental image or descriptive set of characteristics we may perceive from the name itself, which may or may not correspond to a person who bears the name.

Such descriptive or cognitive meanings can be understood in terms of "scripts" which designate the semantic properties or features evoked by a particular word or phrase (Raskin 1985: 80-81). Gumperz (1979: 2) describes the script (often called frame or schema) as that which primarily functions to fill in meaning unspecified or indirectly referred to in an utterance. Without the notion of semantic scripts, theories of competence cannot account for the sentences in (1):

(1) (a) John was a dime short and had to do without milk.
(b) Mary saw a black cat and immediately turned home.

Raskin (1985: 68) explains that (1a-b) can only be correctly interpreted through competence processes which include money-commodity relationships in (1a) and black cat-bad luck scripts in (2b) (for a further discussion of scripts see Fillmore (1976) and (1985).

This notion of scripts is directly linked to that of connotation. Connotations of words, as defined herein, are the emotive or affective components which may surface in addition to a central meaning of a word. I suggest that connotations are the relationships between previously established scripts which develop through individual and communal experiences such that the words and the objects or ideas they represent may acquire both personal and/or shared associations. These socially shared associations may be used to convey information and thereby attribute meaning to the name without invoking a specific referent. Personal names are often used in this way by authors, comedians, advertising agencies, screen writers, poets, parents, as well as in everyday conversation.

TRADITIONAL VIEWS ON THE ROLES OF PERSONAL NAMES

Our earliest recorded definition of nouns comes from the Greek scholar Dionysis Thrax. He defines the noun as a part of speech having case-inflections, signifying a person or thing and (being) general or particular" (Vorlant 1978: 69). He goes on to distinguish the common nouns from proper nouns where proper nouns are those particular names we give to people, places and sometimes objects. In each case the purpose of these names is to either emphasize the individuality of that which is being named or to personalize it (Michael 1970: 85-86).

Grammarians and philosophers down through the centuries have deviated very little from these early characterizations. In the Renaissance when grammarians were attempting to write grammars of Latin in English, they were forced to define grammatical categories and features for the first time in English. Many of these definitions have continued to prevail and influence the thinking of modern grammarians and philosophers. From the work of such scholars as Lily, Linacre and Wilkins, we retain the ideas that proper names are not preceded by articles; they also cannot occur in the plural and they do not

have connotations (Michael 1970: 290-297; see also Allerton 1987: 64-68; Pulgram 1954: 20). For these grammarians, as with the early Greek scholars, the primary difference between the proper noun and the common noun was that the proper noun inherently contained the notion of individuality and uniqueness.

Primarily, personal names are said to involve two principal functions: the referential— expressly indicating the presence, existence or relevance of the person being named, and the vocative—attracting the attention of the same (Lyons, 1977: 216-217). Unlike common nouns, proper nouns, especially personal names, inherently contain the idea of individuality or uniqueness. It was the very characterization, attributed to Dionysis Thrax, that John Stuart Mill was attempting to capture when he set down his theory of names.

Mill argues that common nouns act more like definite descriptions, than proper names, in that common nouns can connote attributes of their referents, while proper names do not. He claims that while common nouns have both reference and meaning, proper nouns have reference only and do not have meaning. Although they did not agree on all aspects of naming, Kripke (1972) agrees with Mill that proper names do not have meaning, but only reference.

Ullmann (1962: 73) draws upon Mill's work to categorize all proper nouns as being marked for specific referents. These would function very differently from common nouns which incorporate representative elements under a single classification. For Ullmann, the lines between these two categories of nouns cannot be blurred since common nouns only refer to objects and proper names must refer to people or places (77).

Lyons claims that, though not completely universal, it is widely accepted that proper names do not have sense or meaning (1977: 198). R.M.W. Dixon (1976) goes one step farther, echoing Mill, as he emphatically declares "the only names of objects which connote nothing are proper names".

Searle (1969: 170-171) argues that the referents of proper names are distinguished from the referents of definite descriptions and demonstratives in that proper names do not presuppose contextual conditions, or specify any characteristics of the

objects to which they refer, while definite descriptions and demonstratives do. Certainly the bearer of a name has certain definite characteristics, but there is nothing in the name itself to suggest these. Proper names exist, Searle goes on to say (171-172), to avoid having to refer to objects by description. For him, proper names are not shorthand descriptions which evoke definite characteristics (169, 172). They cannot be said to have sense such that they describe or specify characteristics of objects, but can only loosely be connected to these (173).

Long's position (1969: 109) agrees with Searle's, claiming that the "effective central meanings" of proper nouns are unique referents and that the fundamental emphasis is on the individuality of the bearer. Similarly, Schegloff (1971: 110) claims that personal names are "neutral with respect to the categories of which their bearers are members". He continues by adding that while in English such names may indicate gender, ethnicity and sometimes social class, they are otherwise mute. He seems to support the view that names may contribute to some general presuppositions about their referent, but other than this names have little or no meaning. Indeed there seems to be general agreement that when names are thought to have any sense at all, it is only in terms of their bearers (Bean 1980: 306).

This position, that names have meaning only in terms of their bearers, is the central underlying assumption of most theories of proper names. Miller and Swift (1986: 441) clearly represent this view: "Like other words, names are symbols; unlike other words, what they symbolize is unique." While there is much debate over how to treat names in a theory of language (regarding their referential function), there is little disagreement over the assumption that names do not have sense (see Carroll (1983) for a more complete summary of the literature).

Pickeral (1988: 67) explains that some scholars don't consider names to be words at all, in the same way as common nouns are, since the meaning of a word must be a combination of both sense and reference, and proper names do not have sense. This sounds a great deal like Paul Ziff (1960), who is adamant in his argument that names have no meaning at all and are not even a part of language in the same way as common nouns are (see Kripke (1972: 32) for further discussion). Nelson (1977: 120)

concurs in her claim that terms such as "Mrs. Brown" and "Fido" lack generality and as such do not express "concepts". The names themselves recognize the individuality of the bearers, thus referring to one object only. She bases her argument on Fodor (1971) and Piaget (1937) to illustrate that proper names are not extendable to all exemplars of a concept in the way that general or common names are (120-121). While she does not claim that the referent of a proper name is the only instance of a particular concept, she specifically insists that linguistically, proper names are not generalizable (122).

Katz (1977) supports the claim that proper names have a unique referent but no sense. His aim is to refute Kripke's theory that names may express a set of properties about their specific referent, in other words the one individual the name refers to. He also attacks scholars such as Frege, Church, and indirectly Russell for suggesting that names stand for abbreviated descriptions of their referents (4-5). For Katz, proper names do not have meaning, as they contain no semantic properties in themselves and thus contribute no semantic properties to the proposition or sentence (12-13). As evidence that this is true, Katz asserts that a sense for proper names cannot be determined from the question, "What does it [the name] mean?" as a sense can for common nouns. Furthermore, he argues that names do not exhibit coreference, ambiguity, or semantic entailments (the latter arise from substitutions such as 'nightmare' for 'frightening dream').

Katz's proposal for a theory of proper names is that they do not have sense, but they may contain in their reference encyclopedic information which would include all the idiosyncratic entries people mentally associate with individual names, including any stereotype or other information about the world, that we process along with the name (such as Aristotle being a philosopher who lived in a certain period of time in ancient Greece). While this appears useful for the purposes of this study, Katz's focus is still on the bearer of a specific name and all the encyclopedic information he discusses is based on a specific referent for a particular proper name (see especially 57-60). In other words, when we hear the name Aristotle we think of the specific historical figure (for more on this see 1.4). Katz's principal

claim is that proper names contribute little or nothing to the semantic properties and relations of the sentence, and thus have no meaning in and of themselves.

Russell's position has often been linked with Frege's (what Kripke calls the "Frege-Russell view"). Basically the two have been interpreted as arguing that names stand for definite descriptions and act as such in an utterance. These senses or descriptions are always based on the specific referent.

A few scholars claim that names may exhibit connotative features (Jespersen (1965); Carroll (1983); Marmaridou (1989)) but such features are again based upon specific referents. This is precisely what Jespersen (1965) means when he says that proper names are rich in connotation, and so may come to function as common nouns (see 1.4 below). His definition of a name is "the complex of qualities characteristic of the bearer of the name" (67). Jespersen quotes Oscar Wilde's "Every great man nowadays has his disciples, and it is always Judas who writes the biography" to show there is little distinction between the meaning of a proper name and that of a common noun (66).

To summarize, the two main theories of naming can be described as follows: one view holds that proper names have reference but no meaning, and the second holds that they have reference and meaning in terms of properties invoked by the bearer of the name similar to a definite description, but not as rigid (2a-f). In the name "George Washington", for example, different people may focus on different characteristics which we know about the referent George Washington if they know anything about him in the first place. Whenever the expression is invoked, some may focus on his being a great general in the Revolutionary War, others may think of his being the first President of the United States, and still others may think of his having wooden teeth. Sometimes certain features may not even be accessible to various speakers by virtue of them never having learned for example that George Washington was a slave holder, or that he supposedly once chopped down a cherry tree and then told the truth to his father. Because of these non-fixed designations of features, many would argue that while proper names may act like definite descrip-

tions, their descriptive function is not fixed to one sense.

MEANING IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC REFERENTS

While the primary function of personal names is referential, this fact does not preclude naming expressions from functioning otherwise. In this section, we will discuss several cases (2a-f) where names function as definite descriptions in terms of a specific referent as Frege, Russell and others have argued.

2   (a) She is a Benedict Arnold
     (b) Take it from me, that man is a Judas.
     (c) He pulled another Lester.
     (d) He's wearing a Ralph Lauren.
     (e) That's (not) the Jane I married.

In (2a) we see the illustration of Katz's encyclopedic information. When we read or hear the name Benedict Arnold, our interpretation process defaults to the historical figure. In an utterance such as:

3   (a) I just met Benedict Arnold

we are taken aback since the default value of the long dead revolutionary war traitor does not allow for such a meeting. The name of many historical figures becomes so connected with what they have done or said that the utterance of the name calls to mind a certain set of characteristics. In (3a) the Benedict Arnold in question may be different from the historical figure, but then the context must serve to disambiguate. In (4a-b) we can see the name of a historical figure used in place of the characteristics of the person:

4   (a) What are you, some kind of Einstein?
     (b) Thanks for the advice, Einstein!

The name "Einstein" in (4a) could easily be substituted with the characteristics he is most strongly associated with, "genius", and the sentence could be clearly understood: "What are you, some kind of genius?" This use of the name incorporates the stereotypical view that our particular culture shares of the man. His political or religious views as well

as other characteristics of his life are not called to mind since these are not as well known, and therefore are not salient.

In (4a) the form of the question is interesting because the speaker did not ask, "WHO are you, some kind of Einstein?" but used the pronoun "what". According to traditional theories, this should not be possible when dealing with personal names since they normally answer the question "who?" not "what?". Although a speaker could utter the same proposition using the interrogative, "who", it would seem that most would choose "what" in this instance. This reveals even more strongly that one primary function of names can invoke in the reader's/hearer's mind a set of properties where the referential function is clearly secondary or non-existent (enabling us to dispel Katz's objection that a naming expression cannot provide an answer to the question "What does it (the expression) mean?"). This will be dealt with more extensively below in Section 2.

(4b) operates along the same principles as (4a), except that in (4a) the modifier "some kind of" allows us to understand that a comparison is being made to something which is Einstein-like about the hearer (some action or state which fits the stereotype, such as being a genius). In (4b) the comparison is much more indirect and sophisticated as the speaker is invoking the set of characteristics stereotypical for the expression "Einstein" and applying them (probably sarcastically) to the hearer.

The sentence (2b) is very similar to those concerning Einstein (4a-b) since the historical figure Judas is most known for his betrayal of Christ. Much like the name Benedict Arnold, Judas's name is synonymous with "traitor" or "betrayer". Oscar Wilde's statement, "Every great man nowadays has his disciples, and it is always Judas who writes the biography" is used by Jespersen to show the strong ties between a proper name and its referent. This principle is the same one which prompts many celebrities to use only their first name (such as Cher or Madonna) so that when people hear the name they will default to the particular entertainer. Others become so famous that their first name is enough to call up their characteristics, such as Elvis, Groucho, Sammy or Arsenio.

(2c) shows that characteristics associated with

other names than those of historical figures or celebrities may be also used as descriptions. "To pull a Lester" would indicate that a characteristic or set of characteristics, which a group of people associate with a person they know named "Lester" (clumsiness, style of joking, or some specific mannerism or speech pattern for example), had been exhibited by the agent "He". This use of the personal name, as with the previous examples from (2) and (3), still involves the referential function of proper names with the exception that these examples illustrate a more semantic involvement of the name since the name is being used to convey specific information, even if that information is referential.

(2d) is an unusual case where the name of a person stands for what he or she has created or designed. In this sense the personal name becomes a common noun. Ullmann (1962: 77) distinguishes this type of naming expression from regular personal names because it refers to objects rather than people. I would suggest that it actually refers to both especially where the name of the creator and the creation are linked. In (2d) the object being worn may be a sweater, pants, shirt, cologne or any other Ralph Lauren product, each individual product having its own common noun to describe it. The speaker, meanwhile, has chosen to use the personal name of the designer to stand for the object. This is the very type of phenomenon Jespersen was addressing when he claimed that proper names often become common nouns.

What is being communicated in (2d) is not a set of personal characteristics, as with the other examples in (2) and (3), but an actual connotation itself (from the existing metonomic relationship)—in this instance, the style and social status that has become a part of wearing these types of products. This specifically shows one way in which names may acquire connotations. Pullgram (1954: 20) admits that proper and personal names, while primarily referential, may involve "unequivocal connotations". For Pullgram, as well as for others (see Bean (1980), Ullmann (1962), and Zabeeh (1968)), however, these connotations are directly linked to characteristics of specific referents.

The description implied in (2e) (where (2e) is spoken to the referent) demonstrates, probably better than any other example, the ability names have to

suggest a set of characteristics. In the utterance, the speaker is referring to some aspect or aspects he associates with Jane-ness (in the same way that someone can refer to the quality of chair-ness an object possesses; see Bean (1980) for more on this) which, according to the speaker, Jane does not seem to be complying with, but which she did when she and the speaker were first married. In this example, the name acts a substitute for the definite description, "the woman" in addition to an unspecified set of attributes. The speaker of (2e) could also have said:

5 (a) That's not the woman I married
   (b) That's not the girl I married
   (c) That's not the wife I married
   (d) That's not the person I married

and less successfully

   (e) ?That's not the female I married

Each of these examples conveys the speaker's intent that some characteristic or set of characteristics which the speaker wishes were present are not. Here the name or the definite description invokes some variable action or personality trait depending on the speaker. The features invoked in (2a-d), while perhaps variable, are much more constrained than in (2e, 5a-e) since there is some social consensus on which finite set of properties may apply. The expression "Jane" (in 2e), as well as the gender of the hearer, can easily be substituted with any name without changing the meaning or intention of the utterance. This is not the case in (2a-d).

In the fields of philosophy and linguistics there is an almost overwhelming belief that personal names only function referentially and have no meaning outside of a reference specific to its bearer. In this section we have seen several examples (2a-e, 3, 4a-b, and 5a-e) in which names exhibit connotative value, but these have also been specific to their bearers.

RELEVANT PROPERTIES OF COMMON NOUNS

In this section we will examine specific uses of personal names which invoke features or properties of meaning but have no reference. Since their first recorded definitions, common nouns and proper nouns have been said to be distinct. Although there is still much debate on reference, sense and connotation as applied to common nouns, generally it is agreed upon that common nouns have reference and sense, and may develop connotations. Some elements associated with common nouns which will be important to our discussion in this chapter are that they: (A) can be broken down into sets of features shared by members of a specific class, (B) rely on script-based and prototype knowledge of speakers to provide meaning apart from any referring function, (C) may invoke a certain set of properties in addition to the central meaning, (D) may appear in NPs (noun phrases) which are definite or indefinite, and (E) may be used predicatively. Some explanation of the above five points is necessary.

The first point under the functions of common nouns (A) is based on the traditional definitions of what common nouns are as outlined above (1.3). Early scholars defined common nouns as those things which, by virtue of their having the set of certain properties shared by a certain class, could be said to be members of the group represented by the common noun expression.

To a large extent the meanings of common nouns rely on script-based information available to native speakers of a language (B). Scripts are basically the set of semantic information surrounding a particular expression. This information does not include the encyclopedic information which a speaker may know about a phenomenon, but includes the linguistic knowledge of the native speaker (for more on the notion of semantic scripts see Raskin (1985) and Raskin and Weiser (1987)). The main function of scripts, according to Gumperz (1979), is to fill in meaning unspecified or indirectly referred to in an utterance. The script for "doctor" (as in medical doctor), for example, would include such information as the person who is a doctor is human and adult, that he or she has studied medicine in the past for a number of years, that she or he

probably works in a hospital or an office (although here we see the overlap with prototype theory as it may happen that a particular doctor has never worked in an office for any number of reasons), that a doctor works to cure illness, and prescribes treatment to patients (Raskin and Weiser 1987:133). The script for "doctor" would not include such encyclopedic information as average salaries.

Point (C) states that common nouns may invoke a certain set of properties in addition to any central meaning. The range of properties will vary from one lexical item to another. A set of properties may not result from every lexical expression, but if so the features or set of properties may range from a simple positive or negative association to a well-developed, sophisticated set of characteristics. In the sentence "The coffee has a smell" the expression "smell" has a negative expression. This is more clearly illustrated in "The coffee smells" which should simply mean that the coffee has a smell to it, making no judgment about whether the particular smell is good or bad. In our society, however, if a "smell" is particularly noticeable, it is usually negative. Notice that this even works with "These flowers smell". In "The coffee has aroma" there is a definite positive connotation to the word "aroma" even though again the central meaning affords no judgment about what type of aroma, good or bad, the coffee should have. Advertisers and authors are especially conscious of such connotations and often use them to invoke the desired properties for their audiences.

Common nouns can also be used predicatively (E). In (8a)

8   (a) George is the President.

the NP (noun phrase) expression "the President" is being predicated of "George". A similar process is being carried on in (8b).

8   (b) George is President.
    (c) George, the President, is here.
    (d) President George is here.

In (8c-d), however, the expression "President" is not being used predicatively at all, but attributively. This can be also shown in the difference between "live (as opposed to 'dead')" and "alive". The

expression "Live catfish" is used attributively, while "The catfish are alive" is used predicatively.

PROPER NAMES AND THEIR NON-REFERENTIAL USE

Having illustrated certain relevant properties of common nouns, we are now ready to begin our discussion of the non-referential use of personal names. The examples in (9) will provide us with the necessary starting point with which to begin our discussion:

9   (a) Is God some man named Vinnie saying,"give me my money"?
    (b) That's the Fido I went out with last week.
    (c) There's going to be some loser named Ned there.
    (d) I guess it's hard to aim on a tractor, ain't it Clem?
    (e) What a Bertha!
    (f) I want my news from a Nigel or a Margaret.
    (g) That's funny, you don't look like a Reginald

(9a) comes from the Robin Williams joke mentioned at the beginning of the paper (1.1). Here we see the expression "some man named Vinnie" being predicated of God. Here, the naming expression functions much more like a common noun than a proper noun. Within the NP, "Vinnie" is predicating the properties of [Italian], [mafioso] and [menacing] onto "man" which in turn, through an inheritance process, is able to then predicate those same features onto "God". Hence we are able to get the superimposition of scripts (B above) which provides the understanding of the text—"is God a mafioso demanding money in some type of shakedown operation?". This internal predication within the NP occurs primarily because of the expression "Vinnie" and its non-referential, connotative function. While some contextual information is provided by the quote "give me my money", the intended connection between God and a mafioso is most strongly established through the name "Vinnie".

Besides its unusual semantic function (non-referential, but connotative), the fact that "Vinnie" occurs in the syntactic position that it does in (9a) is even more unusual in terms of how proper nouns

are supposed to behave. This syntactic structure, as well as other related ones, provides even stronger evidence that personal names used non-referentially have exhibit something which has not been documented before in the literature on Proper or Common nouns. Of all the possible structural representations of nouns in terms of their demonstration of reference and meaning so far the literature has only dealt with those NP expressions which are either [+reference/+meaning] or [+reference/-meaning]. The data in (9) and the rest of the data provided in this chapter demonstrate a [-reference/+meaning] representation (of course a [-reference/-meaning] relationship would not seem to be possible since this defies every accepted definition of what a sign is).

(9c), "There's going to be some loser named Ned there." is structured very much like (9a) as far as the naming expression is concerned. The data comes from the May 18th Top Ten List on the David Letterman show, outlining the top ten reasons Mills College girls did not want the college to become co-ed. Reason number seven read "There's going to be some loser named Ned there asking them out". With the exception of (d), all the naming expressions follow a determiner, but more importantly for our discussion, the expressions in (a), (c), (e) and (f) follow indefinite articles. According to traditional definitions of a proper noun, this is not supposed to be able to happen at all. Once again we see these proper nouns behaving more like common nouns (see (D) above).

In (9b) we see the personal name attributing the feature [+dog] rather than [+human] as most of the other names discussed in this thesis will. The expression "Fido" has become a stereotypical name for a dog just as the expression "Vinnie" has become a stereotypical name for an Italian mafioso (9a). Here, however, we don't get the features normally associated with "dog", but instead get the substitution of "Fido" for "dog". Both expressions give the same reading when used in this context—predicating the feature [unattractive] onto the unspecified person being referred to. In some ways this is like (2e) (That's the Jane I married) in that the name can be directly substituted for a common noun expression without any loss of meaning. (9b) and (2e) are different, however, in that the former invokes

specific features while the latter does not.

(9d) at first seems like it is being used referentially, but this is not the case. The text comes from a monologue by comedienne Pam Stone. In her routine she describes a performance where she's making fun of Tennessee. Playing off the comedienne's California home, one supposed member of the audience responds with "At least in Tennessee, we don't drive all over our freeways and shoot and kill people." To this she responds "No, but you should. Of course, I guess it's hard to aim on a tractor; ain't it Clem". In this utterance "Clem" is not being used vocatively or referentially in that we have no reason to believe that the heckler is actually named Clem. In fact the semantic script for such a situation allows us to understand that the performer does not get to know the names of the members of the audience. The expression "Clem" is being used to predicate a set of properties onto the heckler—that of his being a "hick" and all that this connotes in terms of lower intelligence and the lack of sophistication on the part of the audience member. Ms. Stone invokes a different set of features for another person she only describes as "a friend named Tiffany". With only a small amount of contextual information the hearer is quickly able to deduce that "Tiffany" is not very intelligent either. In both of these examples information about the non-existent referents in these jokes is being communicated to the audience through the use of these naming expressions (see Zhao 1987 for further discussion on the communicative aspects of joke telling).

(9e), like (9b), provides a strong definite description. In this example, the expression "Bertha" invokes the properties of [fat], [unattractive] and [female] onto the unspecified referent. Whether the referent is actually named Bertha or not is not an issue; rather what is an issue is that the non-referential use of the name invokes, in the hearer's mind, specific connotations intended by the speaker. The expression "Bertha" is specific because it has acquired these associations through time whereas an expression such as "Lester" (as in (2c)) has not. If someone were to say, "What a Lester!" it would not imply specific features to any but perhaps a small number of people directly associated with the "Lester" the expression refers to. The expression "Bertha", on the other hand, invokes the same

features in the vast majority of native speakers of American English (the author's survey and its results verifying this and other feature specification will be more thoroughly discussed in chapter 3).

There is a vast difference in meaning between "I want my news from Nigel or Margaret" and "I want my news from a Nigel or a Margaret". The first implies specific referents in the speaker's mind, while the presence of the indefinite articles preceding the other naming expressions strongly marks them as non-referential. Hence the Hearer/Reader must invoke other semantic processes to fully parse the utterance. (9f) was taken from Comedian Gilbert Godfried's monologue at the Ninth Annual Comedy Awards. He was lamenting the NBC release of Jane Pauley and subsequent replacement with Deborah Norville. He commented that he didn't want his news from a Debbie; he wanted it from a Nigel or a Margaret. It is interesting to note that when he constructed his remarks Gilbert Godfried chose to refer to Ms. Norville by "Debbie" and she herself uses "Deborah" as her professional name. Using each of the names this way he was invoking these semantic processes in the minds of the audience members. The occurrence of these names after an indefinite article only strengthens one of the claims of this paper that these names are indeed functioning non-referentially.

In (9g) the utterance indicates that the name "Reginald" predicates some associations or properties which do not fulfill the speaker's expectations when he or she meets someone who bears the name. While the name is referential in the sentence to the extent that the hearer is named "Reginald", there exists an expression "Reginald" in the native speaker's lexicon which contains the set of properties he or she associates with the name. This is partially illustrated in the use of the article-name construction "a Reginald".

There is a great deal more data than that offered in (9) which attests to these non-referential uses of names in common experience. In the October 5th, 1990 issue of the *Chicago Reader*, an article on zippers states that the reader's idea of a zipper factory "might be a couple guys named Izzy and Mort (or the equivalent in Japanese) in some crummy loft in the garment district". The new guidelines on offensive words to avoid using in print (published by the Multicultural Management Program at the University of Missouri School of Journalism) list "Ivan" as a word to avoid because it is "a common and offensive substitute for a Soviet person". This illustrates precisely the cases where stereotypes are subsumed under some representative name and then the name may be used to predicate specific features.

In the film *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, a woman auditions for the role of the singer. She tells the Baker brothers that her name is Monica. She explains that this is only her stage name since her real name, Blanche, didn't have the "pizazz" necessary for show business.

The following is an excerpt from an article which appeared in The *Seattle Times* several years ago. It is representative of the way native speakers, authors, comedians and others use personal names to suggest semantic features. The article lists the top twenty five ways to go about organizing a company softball team. The data pertinent to this paper has been incorporated into (10):

10 (a) Pick Vinny from the shipping department. If there's no Vinny, pick Frank. No doubt Frank will know a Vinny, probably from some other shipping department, and Vinny will know another Vinny. Or Eddie. So you end up with three guys, either Vinny, Vinny, and Vinny, or Frank, Vinny, and Vinny, or Frank, Vinny, and Eddie. This, by the way, is your starting outfield.

(b) Never pick a Seth.

(c) If it's a co-ed team, anyone named Brenda gets on automatically.

(d) Only players named "Pepper" or "Spike" or "Scooter" can be your shortstop. But only if that's his real name. Have him bring a birth certificate. I mean, anyone can call himself "Scooter", right? You want the guy whose parents thought it up.

(e) If Rita, the redheaded receptionist, is at all interested, sign her up. The heck with her average.

If personal names truly had no meaning to contribute to a sentence then in the following paradigm the native speaker of American English would not be able to perceive any difference in the utterances. If we ask the question, "How would you like to be locked in a room with someone named _____?", filling in the blank with various names, we can generate sentences such as those found in (11):

11 How would you liked to be locked in a room...

    (a) ... with someone named Bruce.
    (b) ... with someone named Stanley.
    (c) ... with someone named Ed.
    (d) ... with someone named Monique.
    (e) ... with someone named Tiffany.
    (f) ... with someone named Ida.
    (g) ... with someone named Cornelius.
    (h) ... with someone named Pete.
    (i) ... with someone named Jane.
    (j) ... with someone named Brenda.

and so forth. In each case a very different mental image surfaces in the mind of the speaker, some being more marked than others in terms of specificity and intensity of association. The lack of a specific referent (partially indicated by the generalizing "someone named") initiates a search in the hearer's prototype and script-based lexicon to fill in the gap left by the absence of a referent and thereby supply the sentence with meaning.

The existence of these scripts also allows us to examine other pertinent information regarding personal names and their connotations. Raskin and Weiser (1987: 196) indicate that what words connote affects the existence of redundancy in an utterance. Their own example (12)

12 Imagine a mental picture of someone engaged in the intellectual activity of trying to learn what the rules are for how to play the game of chess.

illustrates a number of such occurrences, where "imagine" connotes "creating a mental picture", and "chess" indicates within its script both "game" and "intellectual activity" (the latter of which is also redundant with "trying to learn"). Such redundancy occurs because the same semantic features are

invoked or predicated (allowing inference) by several constituents in a sentence (196). The same processes can be shown for the connotations of personal names, as seen in (13):

13 How would you like to be locked up in a room with a large man/woman named ....

    (a) ... a large man named Bubba?
    (b) ... a large man named Vinnie?
    (c) ... a large woman named Bertha?

In each of these three examples, the redundant phrase "large man/woman named" is recoverable because of the features predicated by the name expression. Interestingly enough, however, the meaning of "large" in each instance is not the same. These differences, however, are also recoverable because of the scripts involved. In (13a) "Bubba" invokes the features of [human], [male], and [large-size] (among others not specified such as [singular] and [personal name]). It therefore can predicate "a large man with the name" or "a large man named". Note that while this use of the name contains some aspects of reference as described thus far, its use is still not completely referential as the presence of the indefinite article indicates. There is not one specific referent of Bubba that the speaker can point to in his/her question. The speaker merely wants to know the hearer's reaction to being locked in a room with someone of that name. The lack of a specific referent invokes the non-referential connotative meaning to fill in the referential gap. It is the connotative features which are important to the sentences in (13).

(13c) invokes the same features as (13a) except for the gender difference of [female] rather than [male]. (13b) also invokes the features invoked by (13a) except that [large] in this case does not necessarily have to mean size. Rather there is a more strongly marked reading for [large-menacing]. This occurs because of the intersection of the possible scripts for "Vinnie" and "large".

At this point we can even impose truth values on this use of personal names. For example, we can say that to use the expression "Bertha" to designate someone who is thin is false. This example leads us to ask further questions (addressed elsewhere (see Baltes (1991)) about the saliency of features.

For years authors, comedians and even housing developers (who invoke positive connotations with such place names as Pine Bluff Villa and Rolling Green Acres) have realized the connotative meanings of such naming expressions as we have seen herein. That these uses and meanings have not been sufficiently accounted for in linguistic or philosophical theory does not preclude their existence, nor does it negate their importance. The data provided in this paper clearly demonstrate the existence of the non-referential but connotative functions of personal names.

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