

noting in this connection that some other islands, such as Rum, Bute and Arran, though not mentioned by Adamnán, have apparently pre-Norse names.

A reasonable inference to be drawn from these considerations is that the Scottish churches owing allegiance to Iona in Adamnán's day never attained to sufficient importance or independence for their names to survive the generally more troubled conditions of the ninth century and later. Their names, in other words, whatever the fate of the churches themselves, were simply not deep-rooted enough in the local or regional toponymic landscape for their acceptance by new systems of naming to become probable. A plausible conclusion must be, therefore, that Iona kept a tight grip on her dependent churches; and that the organisation and administration of the Columban federation in Scotland were highly centralised.¹

Examination of the Irish evidence tends neither to confirm nor contradict this hypothesis, whether with regard to Scotland in particular or, by extension, to the Columban federation as a whole. There is basically too little material to go on. Of five certain, probable, or possible Columban churches named by Adamnán, three still have recognisably the same names: Durrow, Derry and Drumhome (Co. Donegal). The other two church names have disappeared: Cloni-finchoil and Lathreg-inden. All that can safely be said, therefore, is that the rate of survival is better for Ireland than for Scotland. It may be noted that Adamnán's other Irish church names do not, in the main, present serious problems: Clonmacnoise, Trevet (Co. Meath), Coleraine, Clogher, Aghaboe, Terryglass; less certainly, Carrickmacross (Co. Monaghan), Camus (Co. Derry), Kilmore (Co. Roscommon), Slanore (Co. Cavan). But it is perhaps more noticeable in Irish than in Scottish contexts how often Adamnán is not concerned to name a church explicitly: topographical specificity in general is not a characteristic of the Life.

Iona may not have been able to exercise the same control over her Irish as over her Scottish dependencies, at any rate until the foundation of Kells in the early ninth century: a hazardous sea voyage intervened between the two countries, long before the arrival of the Vikings. That is not to say, of course, that such control was not attempted, or that it was likely to have been totally unsuccessful. A preliminary search of the Annals of Ulster, for instance, indicates that no abbot of Durrow is mentioned therein until 793 (though Durrow is involved in warfare in 764 and 776); and no abbot of Derry until 882 (though a scribe of Derry is mentioned in 724, the burning of the monastery in 788, and a battle there in 833). No doubt many possible reasons, more or less satisfactory, can be adduced to account for this; the observation is worth making nonetheless. Indeed, the power of the Columban federation may always have been seen as residing in the mother country and in direct contact with other great Irish monastic paruchia - perhaps even more after loss of control of the Pictish churches: Durrow and Derry were both, when all is said, great houses at a later date. It seems possible to suggest that the vulnerability of Iona to Viking attack was not the only reason for the removal of GHQ to Kells: disruption of communications and consequent weakening or actual loss of control of Irish churches may have been equally important considerations.

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1. This suggestion should perhaps be more properly restricted to the named churches and so to those (mainly) of Scottish Dál Riata. Adamnán names explicitly no church in Pictland, where events subsequent to his day may have produced a different result, as possibly in the case of Urquhart: Iona apparently lost control of all or some of the Pictish churches in the early eighth century. Little enough is known about the Pictish Church and its constituent churches at any period.

Where
man has not been
to give
them names
objects
on desert islands
do not
know what they are -

- a poème en prose, or the converse, culled for us by a Bear of Great Brain from the musings of Ivor Cutler.¹ The Year of the Rat (nihil rodentis a me alienum) has seen a record harvest, with gleaners - harvest-mice, moles and beavers - bearing home, not in mere sheaves but by shocks, grist for the mill entwined with flowers of fancy. Master Ratoun did his usual yeoman service. Split-language newsletters (with parallel texts for the ambiculate) winged their way o'er the foam. The mind, it's clear, playeth where it listeth, and so we've changed our rubric . . .

De microtoponymibus . . .

Nowhere does mind play more provocatively than in local government. Last year its St Elmo's Fire flickered over Hayward's Heath and Cardiff [NOMINA VII, 115]. This year it has shone upon Brighton, yet so fitfully as to leave matters partly dark to non-cognoscenti. Residents in a district called Whitehawk were asked whether the name - to outsiders, passably picturesque - should be changed for one less opprobrious. When councillors proposed calling rebuilt streets after near-by villages (Pitdown, for instance), a Labour representative cried shame on his colleagues for despising 'the old names of Brighton', whereat an SDP one retorted that villages-names were preferable by far to those of 'councillors or former Labour ministers' [(Brighton) Evening Argus, 10.xi.83, p.3 - with thanks to our indefatigable Master Ratoun].

Elsewhere a Lab/Lib proposal to change Kimberley Road to Nelson Mandela Avenue aroused reactions varying from the predictable joke about Personde la to alarm among estate-agents [Cambridge Town Crier, 27.x.84, p.3]. As for the GLC, its administrés have constantly to be on the qui-vive. One, recalling French-Revolutionary extirpation of all terms denoting royalty or religion, feared for pub-names: 'The Gay Hussar might reappear as The Peace-Pledge Signatory [Why not The Livingstone Arms or The Merry Newt? - S.]. Another, following up Lambeth Council's proposed re-naming of Rhodesia Road as Zimbabwe Road, suggested

'that Birdcage Walk be changed to RSPB Flyover; Blackheath to Ethnic Minority Heath; Grand Union Canal to NUM Water; and Marlborough Street to Government Health Warning Road (dead end)' [letters to The Times, 19.vii.84, p.13, and 16.xi.84, p.17, as usual, silently abbreviated].

Punch-drunk, I fear; and understandably so. No ideologically-aligned (some might say 'strident') address - be it Benn Boulevard or Thatcher Drive - ought to be foisted upon people hoping to end their days in the near-anonymity of Acacia Avenue. Besides, ANY change of address, even a voluntary one, is a damned bore.

Euphemismus therapeuticus

What dismay greeted numbering of a hospital's new wards! One protestor urged turning the Geriatric Department into The Queen Mother Wing, with other sections likewise named for royals (presumably as appropriate, though one foresees embarrassment

over some specialities); another suggested flower-names, 'with a flower-painting by a local artist as the focal point of each ward' [Cambridge Evening News (CEN), 7.ii.84, p.9].

Being admitted, committed rather, to Ward OMEGA Z/z 007 might indeed be unsettling. But, if any ward gets the name of being one from which no sufferer returns, it matters little whether it be entitled Mandragora, Hellebore, or Crocus. Besides, names spawn confusions as numbers hardly can - witness the following real-life interchange:

Would-Be Visitor: 'I've come to visit Mrs Tittlemouse.'

Receptionist: 'Mrs Tittlemouse . . . Mrs Tittlemouse . . . Ah yes, she's in Piltdown.'

W-B V, aghast: 'But I was told she'd been taken to THIS hospital, HERE.'

R, pitying, crushing: 'Mrs Tittlemouse is in PILTDOWN WARD. Up that stone staircase in the corner . . .'

Phonæsthesia

The Meaning of Liff by D. Adams and J. Lloyd (Pan Books, 1983; our thanks to the Bear of Great Brain) aims at finding jobs for the 'thousands of spare words loafing about on signposts pointing at places', thus:

'HICKLING - Not only arriving late to a centre-row seat but also loudly apologizing to and patting each member of the audience in turn.'

After what happened to my off-hindpaw the other evening, that sounds the broadest of euphemisms.

Et Burton-sur-Trent?

Glyn Daniel (whose own name is subject for a boutade better not repeated) noted among hints for passing votre weekend chez Shakespeare a recommendation for Bourbon-on-the-Water; is this, he asked near Bourton-on-the-Rocks? Pat came a correction: visitors athirst for Shakespeare's England ought first to be directed to The Wallops. [letters to The Times, 28.vi.84, p.13, and 5.vii.84, p.13].

Where there's brass . . .

'Think of the pits. Think of the indescribable, hideous villages. Think of a place actually called Grimethorpe' [James Cameron, in Guardian, 23.x.84; with thanks to Digger, our Yorkshire mole].

Members of the EPNS know better; they know there's nothing grubby about the name, which simply means 'secondary settlement associated with Grīm or Grímr' (in the West Riding, probably the latter) [cf. PNYW, p.268]. Wait: disproportionately often that personal name is linked with poor lands and, because Vikings called Grímr cannot always have drawn the short straw, it's then likely to be not a man's name but a by-name for 'devil' [cf. Gelling, Signposts, pp.148-50, 233-4]. Pejorative connotations may, that's to say, go back to ancient times. Pejorative connotations? - doesn't the name Grimethorpe in fact suggest to the outside world not 'squalor', but 'brilliant brass band'?

'Cock's Corner'

Were mine the only (round, furry) ears to twitch whenever the locus of a recent crime was called Coggy-Shawl? [cf. PNESS, pp.365-6].

Better Null than Nuts

'My husband's keener on Vanessa': that snatch overheard in a greengrocer's recalled a disquisition on product-names sent in by a correspondent in Gloucester - a Mr Simpkin, if I remember rightly. Venture not to market Giftware in Germany nor yet [Whyever NOT? - Squirrel Nutkin] Ginger Nuts in the United States [Management, November 1979, pp.113-16; cf. ante VII, 115]. Hence some leaden-footed side-stepping:

'Port Royal Porcelain, of Sandy, will now be known as the Port Royal Division of Morgan Matroc. Matroc, which does not stand for anything in itself, was selected with the help of consultants as a trading name which would be valid throughout Europe' [CEN, 1.xi.84, p.9].

A propos, mes souriceaux, a new sports shop in Paris taking as emblem the winged foot of Mercury calls itself Athlete's Foot [The Times 'Diary', 24.xi.84, p.8]; yet your scribe has it on the word of a pharmacien that piéd d'athlète means just what an Anglophone might suppose.

Flighty notions

Continuing the chronicle of Hector the ex-Tower-of-London raven (a prime example of personality-as-name), Paul Pickering reported his feathered fiend as outraged that the USAF had named an aircraft-type Raven and fearing this might besmirch 'Corvus Corax's carefully-nurtured new image as the thinking man's crow' (it was overt anti-Americanism that got H. cashiered from the Tower). A spokesman consulted - Yaple or Yaffle the name was - defended the choice of an avian appellation. Another, at the Imperial War Museum, proved more forthcoming:

'It's very Anglo-Saxon, this naming of planes; but ravens do possess a rather sinister connection with carrion and battlefields. There is certainly no British plane called the Raven. Some names, like, say, *Dachshund, one just would not use, although the RAF did call one plane [A new model? - S.] a Wildebeest' [The Times, 22.iii.84, p.12].

And ashamed

What a pity the trade-union NACODS didn't consult a reliable Anglo-Saxonist!

What's NOT in a name

A Bill (if that's not too hypocoristic) to legalize installation of TV-sets and other comforts in betting-shops kept getting thrown out of the Commons. Then,

'on 7 March it was suddenly withdrawn, and all assumed that its sponsor had finally thrown in the towel. Not so: he had simply changed its name from the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment) Bill to Specified Premises (Improvement) Bill' [The Times 'Diary', date absentmindedly snipped off].

And it went unopposed through its Second Reading.

Capital offences

A correspondent took the Sunday Times to task for over-zealous minusculation:

'I know instantly what the House is [With respect, the expression is ambiguous. - S], but the house does not signal "Westminster" to me at all. The television act of 1953 could be something by Morecambe and Wise instead

of the Act passed by Parliament. I never knew of Sir John Donaldson's being a baker, but you label him master of the rolls' [12.ii.84, p.11].

Initial confusions

My venerable friend Professor (J.) Ermytrude Stoaate complains that bibliographers attributing her works to one Joan E. Stoaate divorce them from her. They into the bargain frustrate would-be readers (once I found a pink-cheeked freshlad almost weeping over a copyright-library catalogue seemingly innocent of any entry for [C.] Anthony [R.] Crosland).

Pertinent prefixes

News that one thitherto known as Ms Mustell had changed her working name to Mrs Stoaate implied not simply matrimony but some Road to Damascus; for, if Ms proclaims marital status irrelevant, why any change, ever?

True, we're here on the shiftiest of sands [cf. ante VII, 111-12]. A single woman arraigned for anti-Establishment manoeuvres was Miss Tisdall to most papers but Ms to her ally the Guardian [10.i.84]. AUT Woman got even grammar in a twist:

'For the woman without a PhD or a chair who is known to be married the unstable state of usage means that colleagues must go in continual fear of giving offence. Mrs is a menace to the woman who has already published under her own name. If she changes her name, bibliographical schizophrenia ensues. If she doesn't, she is liable to get Mrs anyway, thus becoming identified with her own mother. Male colleagues often react badly to having their wives called Ms, but not all female colleagues are keen on it either. Asking people what they prefer to be called seems the only sound basis for courtesy. But in so far as it divides the ladies from the women, it will inevitably reinforce the radical overtones of Ms' [C. Macafee, in AUT Woman 3, Autumn 1984, p.2].

In a community as over-articulate as a university, to dread giving unwitting offence is bizarre. Whether to assume for any or every purpose her current husband's surname is nowadays, one hopes, up to the individual. Anyone doing so of her own accord must be assumed to want the prefix Mrs; because Ms does proclaim marital status irrelevant, Mr and Ms Stoaate is absurd. Macafee's trouble is indeed 'schizophrenia': aching to force a 'less discriminatory' style, fluoride-like, on all and sundry, she still cannot quite forget her manners.

She is, in any case, wrong to suppose Ms 'non-sexist'. Such handles are already used unselfconsciously to indicate special status (Dr, Professor, Councillor, and so on), and ideally a universal one ought to be available. In Muritania we use Elector: unlike Taxpayer and Ratepayer, it fits all adults regardless of fiscal standing, and associations with Kurfürst make it less contentious than Comrade or Citizen.

Meanwhile, the Grauniad noted, with anthropological eye, a survival of courtly traditions: 'A letter inviting bigwigs to suggest smallerwigs' for invitation to a Royal Garden Party stipulated that, 'if the name of a married lady appears, her husband's Christian name and not her own should be given' [20.iii.84, p.15]. Mrs F. R. Leavis, thou shouldst be living at this hour!

Initiating a masculine variation on the theme, a Mrs Quest-Ritson besought enlightenment from fellow Times-readers:

'What is today considered the appropriate age to address one's son as Esquire on envelopes? Is it the new age of majority, or the old; leaving school; going up to, or coming down from, university; managing to obtain gainful employment [TRADE! -S.]? Or perhaps the custom is about to disappear anyway.'

Unless one knows the form instinctively, can one's son be gentleman enough ever to merit the style? After some facetiousness ('From the time they first addressed me as squire', 'On his move to public school, as he then became a Man of Property: his school uniform and an exhibition'), there came a broadside: 'The probably correct answer would be "Never"', backed by citation of an 1893 ruling by the College of Heralds that, unless born more or less in the ermine, one accedes to the style only by following an appropriate calling, such as that of Commissioner of the Court of Bankruptcy or of Herald [letters to The Times, 10.xi.84, p.9; 15.xi.84, p.17; 16.xi.84, p.17; 22.xi.84, p.13; 27.xi.84, p.15].

On a cognate topic Godfrey Smith waxed reminiscent, almost nostalgic:

'Paul Scott had one endearing habit: always to address one as Smith. In a world where people use first names at the drop of a hat (I am a principal offender), it was rather refreshing. There is a moment in E. M. Forster where he, or one of his characters, writes to somebody: "But enough of this Mr Blenkinsop; may I call you Blenkinsop?" The unadorned mode is still used, I'm told, at the Bar. Collision of old and new styles can give unwitting offence, as when, for example, a retired general calls a young engineer Blenkinsop, and the engineer imagines it's condescension . . .'

[A month later] 'Smith, Mr Smith, or just Godders old bean? Readers differed on the right style nowadays. Christopher James tells me that when he was an articled clerk nearly thirty years ago the senior partner called him Christopher; when he qualified as a solicitor and was promoted to assistant, he became Mr James; then when he became a partner, "he always addressed me as James - to my great satisfaction"' [Sunday Times, 15.i.84, p.20, and 12.ii.84, p.11].

No traditionalist himself, though, is Godders:

"Dear Godfrey Smith, I was intrigued to notice you addressed me as Dear Margaret Spencer. Then I remembered that I had addressed you in like manner. It seemed the natural thing at the time, but certainly I have never been saluted in that way before and I wonder whether you always echo the greeting of your correspondents." The short answer, darling Margaret, is that I always, as a matter of courtesy, address readers exactly as they address me. Whether I'm right to do this is anyone's guess' [ibidem, 2.xii.84, p.28].

Never ever, Miss Spencer? What a deliciously sheltered existence you must enjoy. Still, on the principle that any style qualifies as (fairly) courteous if used to all alike, this one may pass muster.

Impertinences

An elderly farmer boasted of his lack of side:

'A man of mine's been with me over thirty years, and we're on Christian-

name terms - leastways, he doesn't call me anything, but I always call him Bill' [BBC2, All Our Working Lives, 25.v.84].

A fellow-congressiste (most formidable as well as most erudite of rodents) remarked wryly to your scribe:

'After all these years our learned Director has at last asked leave to use my Christian name, whereas some of these young men of his seem to think I have no other.'

'Have students no respect for their elders any more?' asked The Times Diarist:

'Those at Brasenose College have voted to ignore an instruction that college servants should address undergraduates not by their Christian names but as Sir or Miss' [8.xi.84, p.14].

For BNC, read TCD? Mary Kenny eulogized Shirley Williams:

'She is, as a person, impossible to dislike. She has the American trick - except that with her it comes over very naturally - of using your first-name easily in the conversation: "But look, Mary, . . ." [Sunday Telegraph, 29.v.84, p.18].

Greeted, when on a rank-pulling errand to Conservative Central Office, with 'What can I do for you, Your Grace?', 'Just call me Miles,' the Duke of Norfolk replied [Sunday Times, 20.v.84, p.18].

Those with fewer quarterings than the duke's to sustain their self-esteem may be uneasier at the spread of quasi-mandatory first-naming in purely business relationships, as between a junior-under-assistant copy-editor (whose telephone voice suggests a chit of a child) and an author over twice her putative age - no context this for pulling rank, however, because the activities even of unrebuked copy-editors are at best equivocal. How much better they order these things in France, with an unqualified Monsieur / Madame!

Onomo-kinesis

Three people called Gamble, Luck, and Riches each won nearly £50,000 on the Pools [Guardian, 15.iii.84]. A Mrs Amor was poisoned by her lover, and a Rev. John Vile gaoled for unmentionable crimes; a Miss Eunice Flashman, aged 78, 'copied the dress style of Boy George', and came to a sad end; a bureaucrat from Havering urged that grammatical instruction should give place to 'broader and more liberal understanding of the purposes of English teaching' [The Times, 13.iii.84, p.3; 17.vii.84, p.3; 19.xi.84, p.3, 10.x.84, p.15]. Jason Binge gatecrashed a party [CEN, 28.xi.84, p.5]. An archaeologist was unearthed by name of Delve [Conduit ix (September 1984), p.12]. A nonagenarian Miss Sloman was had up for not exceeding 15 m.p.h. while driving a motor-vehicle on the public highway [reference reprehensibly mislaid (RRM)] - O si, O si sic omnes! A legal journalist pontificating on TV was called Crook. A Mr Fynn managing a fresh-fish counter had as supremo a Mr Anglin [CEN - RRM]. A contrario, a Miss Rodd denounced council-sponsored fishing-lessons [CEN, 7.ix.84, p.19]. A Dr Mould condemned Bodley's book-storage conditions as unduly dry [The Times, 27.x.84, p.4]. A colleague couldn't get Scotch from a shop in Jedburgh 'kept by one yclept Hiccup' [with further thanks to the Bear of GB]. A couple called Thelwall demonstrated horse-training techniques [Cambridge Weekly News, 19.vii.84, p.19]. And whiter than white was the name-magic worked on two heavy horses, Samson and

Delilah, bought by the GLC and rechristened Peace and Friendship, for one of the nuclear-free darlings 'promptly took a bite at the rear of the then deputy GLC chairman' [The Times 'Diary', 28.viii.84, p.10].

Out of the Frying-Pan . . .

'It's no joke being a Crank, so 43-y-o Len Crank has changed his name legally to Len Adams - "I'm fed up; all my life I've had to put up with endless leg-pulling . . ." [Daily Mail, 23.ii.84].

Let's hope our new Mr Adams never finds himself twitted about apples, ale, or ants. Some fifty years past a young man - since become a distinguished photographer - found himself established in England but embarrassed by a name that Englishmen couldn't pronounce; so, having read and admired The Beggars' Opera, he took as his own the name John Gay, with its then innocently optimistic ring [Sunday Telegraph, 22.vii.84, p.9]. Safe choice requires at times an impossible degree of prescience.

Thwarted aspiration; or, No Rough Breathing, Please, We're Tykes

'For an agonizing few minutes Lord Hanson thought he would have to appear at his First Opening of Parliament in vest and socks. Ede and Ravenscroft insisted there was no trace of his gowns. Finally it emerged they were checking the list under A. The good baron is a Yorkshireman' [The Times 'Diary', 8.xi.84, p.14].

Alias

In 1983 a novel appeared by one Jane Somers; a year later Doris Lessing claimed responsibility, explaining she'd done it to expose the name-fixatedness of publishers and reviewers, and musing on how her trick had recoiled:

'As Jane Somers I wrote in ways that Doris Lessing cannot. . . . Some may think this a detached way to write about Doris Lessing, as if I were not she; it is the name I am detached about. After all, it is the third name I've had; the first, Taylor, being my father's; the second, Wisdom (now try that one for size!), my first husband's; and the third my second husband's. Of course, there was McVeigh, my mother's name, but am I Scots or Irish? As for Doris, it was the doctor's suggestion, he who delivered me, my mother being convinced to the last possible moment that I was a boy. Born six hours earlier, I would have been Horatia, for Nelson's Day, what could that have done for me? I sometimes wonder what my real name is . . . ' [Introduction to The Diaries of Jane Somers (London, 1984); quoted from London Review of Books, 15.xi.84, p.21].

Noting en passant that, unlike Aurore Dupin and Mary Ann Evans, Lessing took a nom de guerre of the same gender, we too may meditate on 'realness' of name. Can it be defined? Does it exist? Some may go from font to funerary urn with one unchanging appellation, not even momentarily hypocorized. Lucky, or perhaps not, they're surely rare. Neither birth-certificate nor passport necessarily shows a form under which friends, or public, readily recognize the bearer, let alone one corresponding to her/his self-image. Academics may fairly regard as a colleague's 'real' name that under which s/he publishes; but the restricted validity of that criterion is proved by our very text. Some authors have, besides, several personae, distinct from one another and from the one the neighbours know. Everyone has various styles: Jeremy Fisher, Esq., may be Jerry to some, Fishy to others, Froggy or Frog's Legs to yet

others, and Mr Fisher to the tradesmen. If we cannot define a 'real' name, how can we define a pseudonym? Waters run muddy as well as deep.

Personalia

A first-name 'means' one's cumulative experience of its bearers. For your scribe there looms for ever over Alfred the Great the shadow of a rattish uncle; and others are no less autobiographical in their reactions:

'We were seven then, and I was in love; long, long ago, but you are still my Susan of Susans. If a strange woman telephones and says she is a Susan, I immediately imagine fat blond plaits and Startrite shoes. Curious, the resonance of names. I have never trusted anyone called Norman since one sneaked on me thirty years ago. I feel guilty towards all Toms because I once played a mean trick on a Tom . . . '

The peg this was hung on consisted of findings by a Dr Philip Erwin, of Manchester Polytechnic, that,

'if you are called Beryl or Norman, or even Bernard, Frank or Bridget, then examiners tend to give you low marks, simply because they take against the name even before they have read the answers' [Christopher South, in CEN, 8.xi.84, p.12; cf. Sunday Telegraph, 4.xi.84, p.11].

Are some numbers, too, less prepossessing than others?

'It is impossible,' Roy Hattersley averred,

'to treat seriously anyone called Daisy. I know an extremely scholarly Suzy; and friends claim to have met a Polly who is periodically profound. But anyone called Daisy is condemned in my mind to spend eternity on the back seat of a tandem . . . ' [Guardian, 10.vii.83, p.17; cf., however, ante VII, 105].

Careful, Hattersley; for some people Roy means a much-loved lab-with-a-small-l, and they may resent profanation of the name.

A Potteries anniversary inspired a mini-survey:

'Ah, Josiah! . . . Josiah evokes the past, in particular the eighteenth century. There are two Josiah Wedgwoods alive today, both living in the United States. What though of Britain? . . .

[A week later] 'One might suppose the name would be dying out; one or two Josiahs confess that they haven't "lumbered" their sons with it. But at Cradle House Farm you will find seven-month-old Josiah Rose: "Josiah was a family name, last used by my grandfather," his mother says, "and when my son was born we thought it time to bring back this good old solid Biblical name" ' [Sunday Express, 28.x.84 and 4.xi.84].

Marketing exploits these cumulative, corporate images; not so much by adorning artefacts - key-rings, necklets, mugs, and so on - with anthroponyms seldom found on people, as by using names for labelling merchandise, thus, Eleanor for a blouse high-necked and almost strait-laced (though with openwork insets), Suzanne for one with a high but frilly neckline, Julia for an open-collared one, and Amanda for the décolleté one [Sunday Express Magazine, 7.x.84 and 4.xi.84]. If you don't see the point, then consider how a (hypothetical) 'Which model do you prefer, madam, the Ethel, the Edith, or perhaps the Ermytrude?' conjures up a whole stagesetting,

cast, properties, and all. There's also Essex Radio's target listener, a cut or two below Rattigan's Aunt Edna:

'Doreen isn't stupid, but she's only listening with half an ear, and doesn't necessarily understand "long words". She's a housewife, with a working husband and children at school. Doreen doesn't work outside the home; she does all the housework and is generally content' [Guardian, 18.vi.84, p.8].

Bearers of a name sometimes react with embarrassment to the image predecessors have given it:

'The Chairman of the All-England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club wishes to be known, he insists, as Buzzer. R. E. Hadingham will inform you, if pressed, that the initials stand for Reginald Edward. "But none of my friends knows I'm called Reginald," he adds hurriedly; "I didn't want to be a Reggie. I'd have had to wear eye-glasses or something." He was preserved from this fate when his elder brother, aged two and a half, called him "my baby buzzer" ' [Observer, 24.vi.84, p.34].

Doris Lessing feels 'detached' from her name. Bel Mooney uses a supposedly unisex form as stalking-horse for catching prejudices:

'An occasional advantage of my odd, abbreviated first name is that readers weaned on French are unsure of my sex. After a certain article I received two letters: one rebuked me roundly, saying that the piece proved I hate men; the second addressed me throughout as Mr and congratulated me on a 'rigorously logical' argument. If all serious novelists used only their initials, might the patronizing reviews founded on gender-prejudice ("a woman's novel", &c.) cease?' [Sunday Times, 12.iii.84, p.44].

1984

It was good to hear, in this auspicious year, of a Blair family that included a teddy-bear called Eric [letters to The Times, 9.i.84, p.9, and 12.i.84, p.11].

Committee-work

Shaikh Mohammed has named one of his racehorses Mugassas, after his favourite camel [The Times 'Diary', 31.iii.84, p.8].

For next year, by the way, we plan a hipponymic supplement, with a contribution from Cousin Mauserl, manger-mouse at the Stallburg and much envied by the poor relations up the road in Stephansdom.

O nimis f*1*s!

'I used to know a lot of c*ts called Kitty and Tabby, and Smokey and Whiskers and Miss Tibs. Now all the whimsical Beatrix-Potter names are disappearing. C*ts of my acquaintance are now called more dignified names: Bernard, Oliver, Elizabeth, Augustine, Garibaldi. In the custody battle over Marmaduke Gingerbits or Sunny, the tug-of-love c*t, I thought it significant that the f*1*n*'s grander identity triumphed. My c*t is called Suzy, but I wonder now if she feels she really ought to be called Susannah, so as to be regarded earnestly, like the rest of us humans' [Mary Kenny, in Sunday Telegraph, 15.vii.84, p.14].

Or, as Roy Strong put it: 'C*ts deserve interesting names, and I've no time for anything called Ginger or Blackie' [The Times, 5.xi.84, p.8].

Faut le dire avec l'accent

'Ken Livingstone goes into a pub trailing a small lizard-like creature on a lead. "What do you call that?" asks the barman. "Tiny," replies Ken, "because it's my newt" [The Times 'Diary', 20.xi.84, p.10].

Caveat emptor

Patrick Cook's Favourite Names for Boys and Girls (London, 1983) - shelved by most booksellers among household-hints and such - aims to be 'an invaluable friend to parents, acquaintances and interfering relatives'. Herewith an extract relevant to historical anthroponymy as well as the social scene:

'WILLIAM. From the same stable as Norman [q.v.: "swarthy, bow-legged snail-eater"]. To the Anglo-Saxons it meant "wogs in steel hats". After the invasion it came to mean "Your Highness".

The article on Henry ('a contemptuous French expression meaning "backbone of asparagus" ') and Harry ('compulsive winker') would even less bear full quotation.

Nobis natus est (bis)

The scribal heart leapt not upon hearing that shortly the world would greet a further royal sprogling - too soon, much much too soon after 1982's orgy of anthroponymical archness. Again the circus threatened:

'Victoria is 10-1, and a man placed £100 on it yesterday. At Esals Bookmakers you can get 8-1 on Elizabeth, 12-1 on Richard, 14-1 on Alexandra and 33-1 on either Wayne or Tracey' [Guardian, 15.ii.84, p.17].

At any price at all I'd as soon do 15-y-o Dobbin for the Derby as Wayne or Tracey for a prince(ss)ly name. There were rumours of Elvis at 500-1.

In the event, swift parental decision curbed speculation. Henry Charles Albert David: good, traditional names, with admirably ample family connections on both sides; but still with a hint of cold porridge [cf. ante VII, 107].

PapaPapaPapaPA

Other notable birth-announcements included that of one to be yclept Edward Finbarr O'Leary-Stembridge, 'a playmate for Papagena' [The Times, 7.ii.84, p.30].

Despite 1982's royal choice, 1983 saw no landslide victory for William [cf. ante VII, 104]. According to The Times's correspondents, it rose again from 3rd to 2nd place, pushing Edward (N.B.) down a notch; according to the Torygraph's (the two lists, although similar, by no means entirely coincide), it tied for 4th place [6.i.84, p.11; 2.i.84, p.8]. Henry was once again out of The Times's top ten [cf. ante VII, 105] and not even mentioned by the Telegraph: a good test-case for the future power of royal example.

Hooray for Harry

In one way clearer-minded, in another the royal parents prove capricious: whereas William is not for public hypocorizing, replacement of Henry by Harry is prescribed. The father's own name underlines need for care in these matters (whereas Uncle Charles inspires legitimate expectations, Uncle Charlie - despite, or because of,

being so proper - has all too often to be visited, at fair expense, on the Isle of Wight). Odd, though, if a reputed fan of The Goons failed to notice that currently a rival Prince Harry was figuring as brother to the Black Adder. Predictably, correspondents to The Times made alternative suggestions. All too predictably; but one letter I cherish not so much for its proposing the form Prince Hal, 'in memory of a play which has done a lot for the image of his family and kept many of our profession from starvation', as for being signed by Mr Peter Corneille of the Green Room Club [19.ix.84, p.11].

Brüderlein, . . .

Curious indeed are the resonances of hypocoristics. By signing as Jim Stepney a pontificating letter to The Times [10.xi.84, p.9], a bishop threw into focus correspondence the previous summer in the Sunday Telegraph. Protest against the signing of official letters as Bill / Bert Somebody and animadversion on like styles in the Royal Shakespeare Company ('If they were starting their careers today, should we be hearing about Trev Nunn and Pete Hall?) evoked the explanation that

'an abbreviated Christian name implies eminence. At an educational conference, for instance, nearly all speakers affect homely handles of the Sid and Dick variety. An outstandingly humdrum nickname is a sign that one has, or thinks one has, reached the top' [15, 22, and 29.vii.84].

It's a matter of milieu. On Stop the Week two tales were told: of a suburbanite greeting a new neighbour as Stan only to get the response, 'StanLEY, if you DON'T mind'; and of Clem[ent] Attlee, at table beside the editor of the Herald, Percy Cudlipp, to whom he'd not been introduced, turning and mumbling, 'Pass the salt, would you, Perce' [Radio 4, 10.x.84]. Yet even the bebugbled-o'er Graf Danilo recognized the privilege implied by 'Kosenamen - Lolo, Dodo, . . . '

Cauda

Be eager, my beavers; harvest diligently, my mice. Just for the record, the Editor would like you to let him know to what species or, if not a rodent, to what genus you belong.

Incidentally, if travels take you to Batrachia, keep an eye out for an Hôtel de la Conception Immaculée et Commercial (mind the adjectival genders there): ever since hearing rumours of it in a Radio 3 talk [31.x.83], our Editor has been agog to verify the reference and reproaches your reporter for never having lodged there.

SOURIS

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NOTE

1. 'What', quoted from A Flat Man (Trigram Press: Hebden Bridge, 1977) by kind permission of Ivor Cutler, whose recent works include Life in a Scotch Sitting Room, II (Methuen), Large et Puffy and Private Habits (Arc Publications).

ERRATUM

NOMINA VII, p.116, l.6: for London read Lesbos.