

## Properhood

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## Properhood

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## PROPERHOOD

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A history of the notion of PROPERHOOD in philosophy and linguistics is given. Two long-standing ideas, (i) that proper names have no sense, and (ii) that they are expressions whose purpose is to refer to individuals, cannot be made to work comprehensively while PROPER is understood as a subcategory of linguistic units, whether of lexemes or phrases. Phrases of the type *the old vicarage*, which are potentially ambiguous with regard to properhood, encourage the suggestion that PROPER is best understood as a mode of reference contrasting with SEMANTIC reference; in the former, the intension/sense of any lexical items within the referring expression, and any entailments they give rise to, are canceled. PROPER NAMES are all those expressions that refer nonintentionally. Linguistic evidence is given that this opposition can be grammaticalized, a speculation is made about its neurological basis, and psycholinguistic evidence is adduced in support. The PROPER NOUN, as a lexical category, is argued to be epiphenomenal on proper names as newly defined. Some consequences of the view that proper names have no sense in the act of reference are explored; they are not debarred from having senses (better: synchronic etymologies) accessible during other (meta)linguistic activities.\*

INTRODUCTION. In a previous incarnation, when it was a lecture, this article was called, more polemically, ‘Two thousand years of disinformation about properhood’. This was because there are expressions that every linguist agrees to call proper, but there is no defensible agreed-upon view among linguists of what the state of being proper, PROPERHOOD, is, and, further, because understanding of properhood has been directly hindered by the persistence of assumptions made during the earliest linguistic speculations of western science. The opinions in this article are of a scholar who is not primarily a historian of linguistics or a philosopher, but a historical linguist with a particular interest in the evolution of proper names, especially place names. There is no single theoretically satisfying view about the nature of the set of all the expressions that it is reasonable to call proper names, and while the particles of the different available theories might be characterized by strangeness and charm, beauty is absent. After an investigation of how this disorderly situation arose, this article rehearses the most influential ideas about proper names, offers a critique that shares some features with previous critiques, and concludes with a new idea of my own. This idea, I believe, amounts to a coherent view of the nature of properhood that is, for the first time, essentially linguistic and grounded in the processes of communication, rather than purely logico-philosophical and speculative, which is what all such theories have been before now. I claim that properhood is best understood as a pragmatic rather than a grammatical or structural notion. Not surprisingly, this view throws up philosophical and psychological implications. But they turn out to be of great interest, and they should be positively welcomed.<sup>1</sup>

\* Preliminary exposure of some of the ideas in this article took place at the autumn 1994 meeting of the Henry Sweet Society at the University of Sussex, at the Linguistic Society of the University of Cambridge in March 1995, and at the University of Edinburgh in 1998. An earlier, related but weaker, version was read to the Linguistic Circle of Oxford in 1992. I am very grateful to members of all four bodies for their improving comments, to Ian Pratt for commentary on a different but related seminar paper, to Willy Van Langendonck for discussion and for providing otherwise inaccessible material, and latterly also to Chialing Yang for help with Mandarin data. I acknowledge the formative influence on this article of John Algeo’s book of 1973, but my conclusions are radically different from Algeo’s.

<sup>1</sup> In harmony with European usage, the term ONYMIC is sometimes used for PROPER below, especially in contexts where other senses of proper might prove distracting.

Zelinsky (2002:244) laments the lack of a fully articulated theory of proper names. In his view, a surrogate activity for theorizing has been dominant, namely what he calls ‘the obsession with achieving a rigorous definition of names’, and he complains that too much effort has been wasted in ‘staking out that elusive boundary between proper and common nouns’.<sup>2</sup> Other scholars have concluded that resolution of this issue is impossible (Stewart & Pulgram 1971:1157). I agree completely with Zelinsky’s assessment, and what I propose has the effect of removing properhood from the roster of noun attributes, as a result of which the problem of definition disappears in its primary form: the notion *PROPER NOUN* becomes epiphenomenal (though not unimportant) and characterizable in principle but not, broadly speaking, empirically. The reason and the justification for this surfaces in the course of the exposition. I believe that what results is a genuine contribution to name theory, in the sense that it provides an account of the nature of names, grounded at least speculatively in neurolinguistics and pragmatics and testable within the framework of historical linguistics, and that its postulates have consequences that can be explored.

I use the term *NAME* here to mean ‘proper name’ unless the context makes it clear that a nonproper interpretation is required. Provisionally, name should be assumed to denote uncontroversial examples of the notion, in particular those words generally classified as proper nouns, like *London* and *Sarah*, which have *ONLY* a proper meaning unless they are employed in rhetorical devices. A more refined notion of what it means for proper names and proper nouns to be proper is given after extensive discussion of the general notion of properhood. When more difficult example material is introduced, the transition is clearly flagged.

**1. PROPERHOOD IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND LINGUISTICS: THE QUESTION OF UNIQUE ‘REFERENCE’.** The first issue ever problematized in western linguistics is that of whether names of any sort (proper or otherwise) mean *TRULY* or not, that is, whether they are applied in virtue of, or in defiance of, any meaning they may have or appear to have—hence the word *etymology*, derived from Greek *étimos* ‘true’. Plato’s dialogue *Cratylus* is the key text (Hare & Russell 1970). It takes the form of a debate, assisted by Socrates, between Cratylus, who holds the view that names are significantly applied, having some kind of natural appropriateness, and Hermogenes, who believes they are arbitrarily applied. It takes as its springboard the name of Hermogenes himself. This dialogue is sometimes presented as if it were about the issue of whether names have *SENSE* or not, an issue that I discuss in far more detail below. But to see the dialogue as having to do with sense in names is to view it anachronistically. The notion of sense had not yet been formulated and distinguished from other aspects of meaning, and J. S. Mill had not yet expounded the view that names have none of it; nor had John of Salisbury yet expressed the earlier and less refined formulation of that view, ‘Nominantur singularia, sed universalia significantur’ (translatable with my own spin on it as ‘Individuals are designated by names, but universals are designated by meaningful expressions’; Hall & Keats-Rohan 1991, *Metalogicon* II. xx. 1).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In fact, what Zelinsky emerges with is a typology or taxonomy of names, which is not my present purpose. Taking a natural-science perspective, he further suggests that only ‘weak theory’ can be derived from any onomastic butterfly collection (2002:250) because of the porosity of onomastic category boundaries. I do not accept that respectable theorizing has to be grounded in taxonomy and offer the present article as evidence.

<sup>3</sup> The term *INDIVIDUAL* is used throughout to mean a singleton or particular of any category whatsoever.

But more interestingly, it is clear that sense-bearing is not the subject matter of the *Cratylus* at all. Neither Cratylus nor Hermogenes disputes that Hermogenes's name is meaningful, nor that it means, etymologically and therefore truly, 'sprung from Hermes'. Rather, the question is whether, in the case of the actual person Hermogenes, it means truly or has its meaning held in abeyance, that is, whether the dictum *nomen omen* ('names are auguries',  $\approx$  'X by name, x by nature') is valid. The humor in Cratylus's exposition rests on the fact that Hermes is the god of the intellect, but Plato presents Hermogenes as a person with intellectual limitations. The most we can say about this dialogue is that it foreshadows the possibility of distinguishing etymological from synchronic meaning, and arguably the possibility of distinguishing between a unified concept of etymology/sense on the one hand and pure referentiality on the other. But these distinctions are not grounded and sustained, and the dialogue must be seen as being about natural propriety in naming rather than about any embryonic notion of semantic emptiness in the domain of individual namegiving, or of the Saussurean doctrine of the arbitrariness of linguistic signs.

This issue has remained totally sterile in western theoretical linguistics, but it is deeply embedded in popular culture. Many people select names for their babies on the grounds of the propitious supposed meaning of the names, and at least one newspaper report from the 1990s of an explicit appeal to natural propriety has come to my notice: the weak and sickly baby who was given the name *Kane* on the grounds that it 'means' 'little battler'—presumably in Irish, though this was not said.<sup>4</sup> In fact, more generally, the issue remains a live one in relation to the bestowal (as opposed to the bearing) of names, as witness the vast number of 'name your baby' books offering instant 'meanings' for given names, and in relation to name-bestowal as a literary device (characteronymy), as explored for instance by Barton (1986).

The second, and far more important and fruitful, issue to be raised in Greek theorizing is that of the denotational range of names. Chrysippus the Stoic appears to have been among the first to state that names signify *idia ousia* while nonnames signify *prosegórikē ousia*, and this observation promotes the use of the respective Latin translation-equivalent terms *proprium* and *commune* and their vernacular equivalents in all subsequent literature (Robins 1997:35). This is not the place to get embroiled in the philosophical theory of *ousia* or substance, but we may agree with reasonable confidence that the following is the crucial perception: some words are applicable in principle to individuals and others to classes of individuals, in virtue of the very properties of individuality or classhood; and because of such individualizing, proper names apply discretely in semantic space ('[I]e *proprium* du nom propre est de ne pas admettre un champ d'indétermination': 'what is *proprium* about proper names is that they do not allow any scope for indeterminacy', Swiggers 1982:47) and properhood involves divided (= discrete—*RC*) reference (Van Langendonck 1982:69–70). The definition of properhood, in this framework, is such applicability to individuals. Accordingly, the Stoics distinguished the name from the noun, although the former category was reabsorbed into the latter by the grammarian Dionysius Thrax (Robins 1966:12). Thrax, and all subsequent writers until Anderson in recent work (2004), distinguish the proper and the common merely as species of the same genus, on the grounds of shared inflectional properties and commutability in Greek and other familiar European languages.

<sup>4</sup> Interested readers may consult [www.babycentre.co.uk/bbs/536686/thread1158/message6.html](http://www.babycentre.co.uk/bbs/536686/thread1158/message6.html), from sandksmum (dated 1/21/05, accessed 2/15/05; currently available only through Google's cache).

This Dionysian notion, that ‘nouns’ or naming expressions are either proper or not, and that ‘proper nouns’ or naming expressions are a (sub)category with a membership that can in principle be specified—that is, in principle a noun is either proper or not (even if some participate in homonymous doublets across this gulf)—has been one of the most enduring views in all of western scholarship.<sup>5</sup> Of course, it is not self-evidently foolish, since many nouns may appear self-evidently proper by having only one denotatum, and there is probably consensus on the view that there are prototypical proper names and that certain proper nouns are good examples. But I believe that this view is false, and that it has been disruptive and has impeded a clear understanding of what is essential to properhood, as I argue below. It focuses attention unacceptably on a single class of expressions involved in reference, and on something that is epiphenomenal, even though of great interest and cultural significance.

I mentioned above that properhood was seen as the APPLICABILITY in principle of names to individuals. This term, like DESIGNATED in the first paragraph of this section, was chosen as a deliberate fudge between the notions of DENOTATION and REFERENCE, which are not clearly distinguished until the present century. The denotation of a lexical item is best viewed as its reference potential. A lexical item denotes, or has as its extension, the set of things to which expressions containing the relevant item could validly refer (subject to attributive modification). Reference is the act performed by language users to pick out such real-world things, using expressions fit for the purpose (REFERRING EXPRESSIONS). In *I walked across the field*, I use the expression *the field* to pick out (refer to) some contextually salient field, using the decoder’s presumed knowledge of the potential referential range (denotation) of the lexical word *field*. (On the distinction, see fully e.g. Lyons 1977:Ch. 7.)<sup>6</sup> These notions are still not distinguished at all by some writers, and it is not clear, for instance, what Lehrer means by ‘Proper names are terms for denoting specific individuals’ (1994:3372). Failure to distinguish them is an important matter, because the nature of properhood is radically different depending on whether it is construed (i) as a DENOTATIONAL or systematic, classificatory category, or (ii) as a REFERENTIAL or pragmatic category.<sup>7</sup> Whatever unclarities exist in earlier thinking from a modern perspective, the Stoic and post-Stoic positions clearly view properhood as a systematic category; it is what distinguishes one lexical class or subclass from the others.

Accordingly, discussion of properhood even in modern philosophy is predicated upon the linguistic objects that are generally accepted as deserving the classificatory label *proper noun*. Scholars within this very lengthy tradition who appear to think of properhood as defining a class or systematic category include Priscian and Donatus (Algeo 1973:2); the Modists, for whom any word has its categorial status(es), along with all its various modes of signification, allocated by what they called a ‘second act of imposition’ (Zupko 2003:§3); the Port-Royal grammarians (Lancelot & Arnauld 1660:29); James Harris (1751:345); Cobbett (1818 [1983]:43–44); Jespersen (1954:544), or at least he acknowledges the existence of a class of ‘proper names of the good old kind’ (1922:438); Bloomfield (1933:205); Gardiner (1954:passim); Chomsky (1965:217, n. 26), distinguishing proper from common nouns; Coseriu (1967); Bach (1974:254); and

<sup>5</sup> On the vicissitudes of terminology in this area, see Nicolaisen 1985:69–70.

<sup>6</sup> The concept of DENOTATION is expounded here as if it necessarily had to do with nominal expressions, which is sufficient for present purposes but not, of course, theoretically so.

<sup>7</sup> For a perhaps superfluous defense of the idea that reference is a matter of pragmatics, see Schiffrin 1994:197–99.

Kripke (1980). The list could be bulked out a good deal further, for instance by descriptive linguists as sophisticated as Quirk and his collaborators (see e.g. 1972:§14.40). In fact, the list includes practically everybody. Many of these writers use terminology that for us in the early twenty-first century is ill-defined, but it appears that the term ‘proper’, in relation to nouns, is consistently used as if it had the same kind of status as ‘singular’, ‘accusative’ or ‘subjunctive’, which are evidently not usage categories but systematic, classifying, ones. Those moderns who have escaped from the spell of Donatus in other respects seem to be the most explicit in their espousal of the ancient view. Bloomfield openly says that proper nouns are a class, and that the class-meaning of proper nouns is ‘species of object *containing only one specimen*’ (1933:205; his emphasis).<sup>8</sup> Coseriu, by contrast, says that a proper name is ‘*siempre nombre de un singular*’ (1967:279; ‘always the name of an individual’), showing that Donatus’s very words are still resonant.

Properhood as ‘uniqueness of applicability’ is also central to the revisionist understanding of names developed by Russell and his followers and occasionally espoused by a linguist, for example Brøndal (1948). Working toward the concept of an ideal philosophical language, Russell (1940) noted that conventional typical proper names (i.e. such proper nouns as *London* and *Sarah*) are not ideally suited to the business of uniquely denoting (or referring to) individuals; that should have been obvious at least since Cinna the poet was mistakenly carved up instead of Cinna the conspirator in the time of Julius Caesar. For a linguist, the everyday fact that the same name may apply to more than one individual must deal a fatal blow to the notion that to be proper is ESSENTIALLY to denote uniquely,<sup>9</sup> though not to the notion that to be proper is to refer uniquely. Strawson (1950:340) vigorously promoted the latter view, and, in essence, Hockett also noted its importance (1958:312).

Russellians follow Frege by taking multiple instances, or embodiments, of the same name in a way that to laypeople is totally counterintuitive, and linguists should also ‘gasp, and stretch their eyes’ when they confront it. Russellians believe that names are not descriptions, but are conventional abbreviations for sets of descriptions that are true of the relevant individuals severally (Russell 1918–19:210–11). Therefore, they must conclude that a putative proper name, whose alleged business is to denote an individual, is something suspiciously like a set of homonyms (cf. the critique in Van Langendonck 1982:72–73). *Robert* is as many names as there are Roberts, for each of whom it is possible to construct a different DESCRIPTIVE BACKUP. Exactly which backup is summoned by a use of a proper name is a question of Relevance, as Marmaridou (1989) justly notes. It might be technically possible to distinguish descriptive backup from sense, as later Russellians have argued.<sup>10</sup> But Russell’s system seems to allow such sentence-pairs as in 1 to be identical in meaning.

<sup>8</sup> This bizarre idea is entirely traditional, and its absurdity may be more apparent when it is divested of modern terminology. Thomas Wilson, in *The rule of reason*, offers the proposition *Cato est homo* and says ‘Cato is the nounce propre, whiche belongeth to one manne onely’ (1551:15). There are eight men called *Cato* in Lempriere’s *Classical dictionary*. It is only possible to entertain the notion while denotation and reference are not distinguished.

<sup>9</sup> There are, of course, special cases where denotational uniqueness is a regulated policy, as with the official names of American or British racehorses or the stage names of British actors.

<sup>10</sup> This must be so. The sense of a noun must include an implicit head indefinite (‘a or any token of the type which . . .’), even *pluralia tantum* like *suds* (‘a collectivized token of unspecified cardinality of the type which . . .’), while the descriptive backup of a name must include an implicit head definite (‘the individual who/which . . .’), even onymic *pluralia tantum* like *The Andes* (‘the mountains which . . .’). Kripke (1980: 26) also firmly rejects the identity of sense and descriptive backup.



- (1) a. Napoleon wore a funny hat.  
 b. The victor of Austerlitz wore a funny hat.

Such a system is tantamount to allowing senses to names, as Pilatova (2005:235) affirms. All instances of *Robert*, for Russell, have different descriptive backup; and the name itself is a multiply ambiguous item, therefore a bad proper name. This is a trick with invisible indices (*Robert* is really  $\{Robert_1, Robert_2, Robert_3, \dots, Robert_n\}$ ), but it serves Russell's purposes.<sup>11</sup> For linguists, it should arouse the certainty that 'uniqueness of denotation' is not the most fruitful definition available for properhood. It is also wildly counterintuitive as a characterization of a linguistic object, as opposed to the use of such an object, as noted by at least Strawson (1950:334, 340–41; countering Russell explicitly), Gardiner (1954:16), Sørensen (1963:83), Chafe (1970:112), and Conrad (1985:66–68). Their view is surely right, though they have not all responded in a fruitful manner to the challenge.<sup>12</sup>

If a person names a child after his or her parent, then that person clearly believes they bear the same name, or the exercise would be no different in status from making a pun: using the same linguistic form with two different senses or descriptive backups. My second given name sounds the same as my father's. An anthropological understanding of the context requires us to believe that it is *IN FACT* the same name as the one borne by my father; it is the same linguistic object, not an accidental resemblant or a clone or a photocopy of the original. If we do not share Russell's view that names are proliferating homonym sets, we cannot accept that proper names as ordinarily understood (not in Russell's special sense) constitute a class of uniquely denoting expressions, though that appears to be the logic of the standard dominant view that Russell has here pushed toward what from any nonphilosophical perspective is absurdity.

Sir Alan Gardiner was also vexed by the problem of multiple denotation and came up with the view that properhood is quantifiable (1954:40). If names are in essence words that denote uniquely, as he too believes, then the best, properest, or namiest names are those that as a matter of fact (or rather, axiomatically) denote uniquely, for example, *Vercingetorix*, *Popocatepetl*. These are phonologically identical to meaningful expressions of the languages out of whose lexical elements they are formed, respectively 'great warrior king' in Gaulish and 'smoking mountain' in Nahuatl, a fact that in itself increases the likelihood of their having other denotata than the ones for which they are famous. They may be excellent names but unique only in the view of an English-speaking baronet, not to a Gaul or an Aztec to whom their potential further applicability might be more obvious. The interpretation of a name such as *Popocatepetl* even in an English-language environment involves a unique denotatum only until the name is transferred, to another mountain or to the bay filly who won one of her three starts in South Africa in the 2004–05 season. Gardiner's view simply ignores the enormous

<sup>11</sup> Searle (1958:esp. 172) argued that while the use of a proper name presupposes some identifying knowledge, perhaps even in the form of definite descriptions, that knowledge is not part of the meaning of the name itself, but 'a peg . . . on which descriptions hang'. Such a position is also taken by Wee (2006) in a paper which persuasively argues that the use of certain metaphors that include proper names as sources requires access to some kind of intensional material salient in the context of utterance, even if not senses. No account is taken here of the post-Kripkean debate about the merits of descriptivist and causal theories of the relation between proper names and their referents (cf. Willems 2000:88–90), since both have in common the idea of a permanent relationship between an expression and its referent, and the ideas expounded below are therefore opposed to both of them.

<sup>12</sup> It is not wholly clear to me whether Strawson (1974:60) defends this view when he speaks of proper names as being 'unsystematically variable names'.



wealth of name transfer or name copying that appears to be a cultural universal and cannot accommodate it while the notion of unique denotation holds a privileged place within it. At the very least, unique denotation must be replaced with a context-based notion like SALIENCY TO THE INDIVIDUAL USER SUCH THAT S/HE IS AWARE OF ONLY ONE DENOTATUM.

Gardiner appears to accept the logic of his own view, namely that any act of naming-after (commemoration) makes the name in question less proper. But he appears unmoved by the impossibility of determining whether some name does in fact denote uniquely, or by the fact that the process of naming something after something else is a cultural constant, a high tide undermining the apparently solid cliff of uniqueness. His examples of 'best names' might have been corrupted even as he was writing.

Philosophically at the heart of everything proposed so far is an acknowledgment of the existence of individuals, and of the fact that linguistic material is used to the express presupposition of that existence: material that denotes. In the Frege-Russell system (if we allow such a conflation), names as onomasticians cherish them are epiphenomena—convenient labels for collections of descriptions of those things that are named. But we must turn to Russell's view of what constitute the best proper names, since his stance differs from Gardiner's and is ultimately less sterile when viewed with appropriate hindsight.

For Frege (1892:e.g. 57), Russell (1905), and Searle (1958), a name and a description, while not (for Russell and Searle, at any rate) identical in signification, may be equally good at uniquely denoting, and this is in fact so by definition within their systems. Better, however, for Russell (1918–19:524–25, 1940:116–37) is the job done by the demonstrative pronouns *this* and *that*, which have the advantage (for Russell) of occurring prototypically as the subject of sentences expressing descriptively true propositions which predicate some quality of an individual in contexts of ostensive definition (e.g. *This is a laptop*, accompanied by a pointing gesture). In its context of utterance, *this*, overtly linked with an expression consisting of lexical material amounting to a descriptive phrase, is referentially unique in the context of utterance (or intended as such) and is called a LOGICALLY PROPER NAME. *This* is a name for any unique thing, which the cotext and context disambiguate.<sup>13</sup> An essential insight has been achieved; bizarre though it looks (because properhood appears now to be the key property of a word denoting in principle ANY individual thing), Russell's idea acknowledges that, for a proper name to do its job of uniquely applying to an individual in the most effective possible way, its interpretation needs to be context-bound. Within this tradition, to be truly proper is to be able to achieve successful unique reference in context, as Strawson critically demonstrates in his classic paper (1950), and not to denote uniquely. Russell's unconventional solution to the most appropriate linguistic realization of properhood highlights the dilemma inherent in the standard western view of the concept, a dilemma that makes that view untenable. Proper names as usually understood are members of a class of linguistic objects, which, in order to do that job properly, might be expected to have the property of unique denotation, but they characteristically do not. As Leonard Linsky (1963:76) memorably and mischievously put it, 'Proper names are usually (rather) common names'. Unique reference is an extremely important pragmatic activity that might be expected to be performed by proper names. Very often this is the case, but there are other linguistic means of successfully achieving unique reference: noun

<sup>13</sup> By COTEXT I mean the cooccurring linguistic material, and by CONTEXT I mean any relevant nonlinguistic aspect of the situation of occurrence.

phrases with any degree of internal elaboration from zero upwards, and pronouns. What, then, is additionally necessary for properhood?

**3. PROPERHOOD AND SENSELESSNESS.** To answer the question of what else is necessary for properhood, we must turn to the next important strand in the elucidation of properhood—arguably the first truly novel one for twenty-three hundred years. This was introduced by J. S. Mill in his *System of logic* (1843:§1.2.1ff.), his view foreshadowed some centuries before, as noted above, by John of Salisbury (Algeo 1973:53). Mill proposed that, whatever meaning proper names possess, it is not characterizable in terms of connotation or, in modern terminology, *SENSE*, that is, it cannot be represented as a network of interlocking relations with other names or with lexical items. Names for Mill are names of things, unmediated by concepts that can be formulated or formalized as senses. They apply/denote/refer directly, therefore, and they do so in virtue of nothing but their arbitrary link with what they apply to (their denotata/referents). One might say instead that they have an arbitrary link with *MENTAL CONSTRUCTS CORRESPONDING TO THEIR DENOTATA/REFERENTS* without undermining Mill's view, since such constructs do not have to be senses, that is, representations of semantic content. Mill's view is essentially that adopted by Wittgenstein (1922:§3, 203): 'Der Name bedeutet den Gegenstand. Der Gegenstand ist seine Bedeutung[.]', and is explicitly espoused by Christophersen (1939:59–62), Strawson (1950:338 (§2)), Togeby (1965:215), Ryle (1957:139), Ziff (1960:94, 175 ('There is nothing in a proper name')), Donnellan (1974), those mentioned by Kalverkämper (1978:39), Leys (1979), Kripke (1980:passim), and Conrad (1985), and somewhat implicitly by Kalverkämper (1976:61–62). It has become rather the normal view in modern linguistic semantics (Lyons 1977:219, Allan 1986.I:71–72, Willems 2000:90–93, Hansack 2004:53–54), despite a technical difficulty to which it gives rise. Names identify individuals without utilizing any of their characteristics. On this view, properhood simply is senselessness. It is a view of great and radical simplicity, and also I believe correct, but its beauty cannot be fully exploited until detached from the notion that it is a structural category of the class of nouns, or at any rate of nominal expressions. It is clear, therefore, that I also take what Hansack calls the 'precognitivist (*vorkognitivistisch*) position' (2004:55) of Mill and his successors as my starting point.<sup>14</sup>

The technical problem with the view just alluded to is not a serious one. Mill's view appears to suggest that all names are synonymous by virtue of having the same sense (i.e. none, absence of sense, or as it would be pleasant to say haplogically, ab-sense, or the 'sense' of functioning as a name—see e.g. Pollock 1982:99). But this is a problem only if, despite having no sense, they remain part of the lexicon (defined as a set of items whose senses interlock). This leads to the rejection of the idea that names form part of the lexicon, and this rejection is just an act of theoretical tidying-up. A separate name lexicon or *ONOMASTICON* is required,<sup>15</sup> which takes account of the fact that names

<sup>14</sup> Hansack's 'cognitivist' approach to name theory deserves fuller critique elsewhere. But he concludes: 'Ersichtlich wird, dass man Namenkunde und Namenstheorie strikt auseinander halten muss' (2004:57) ('It will be seen that onomastics and name theory must be kept strictly apart'). It is clear that I cannot agree, since, as I show below, I have exploited the nature of onomastic processes, specifically *BECOMING A NAME*, in arriving at the theoretical understanding of properhood presented here, and offered an integrated view of the relation between proper and nonproper expressions—surely a theoretical matter.

<sup>15</sup> Where an onomasticon as a linguistic construct fits in theoretically has been a problem. Some have denied that names are part of language (Harris 1751, Strawson 1950), which seems an excessively unrefined approach, since names are expressed in linguistic material and obey some linguistic constraints, but it is clearly right to suggest that the entries in an onomasticon have no *NECESSARY* connection with a particular language (implicitly Utley 1963, Algeo 1973). It would be preferable to say (with an appropriate degree of

are a class to which certain (neuro)psychological or linguistic processes apply, including selective agnosia (see Semenza & Zettin 1989, Semenza 1997, Hanley & Kay 1998), and which certain linguistic facts may characterize, such as the existence of the famous proper (i.e. onymic) article *o* in Fijian (Schütz 1985:318, 320), an article that deprives the lexical material within its definite noun phrase of sense without compromising its referentiality. How referring expressions get into the onomasticon is a matter to which I return below.

A problem that vexes Algeo (1973:55–56) is that many names appear to have consequences similar to meaning postulates and therefore to have sense: *Fido* → *dog*, *Gwendolen* → *female human*, *Lofty* → *tall male human* (see also Van Langendonck 1999: 105–6). But it should be clear that these inferences, or what Willems (2000:96) calls CLASSEMATIC MEANINGS, are not logically secure. If *Fido* is a cat, *Gwendolen* a male racehorse, and *Lofty* a short television set, no logical impropriety has been committed in the act of naming: just a violation of conventional expectations. Algeo's inferences are implications that do not even have the security that conversational implicatures have when the relevance of the utterances containing them is calculated. If a foal is said to be 'by *Gwendolen* out of *Fairy Queen*', the inference *Gwendolen* → *female human* is simply inadmissible, or incalculable, on the occasion of its utterance. And if *Lofty* → *tall male human* were valid, 'Switch *Lofty* on' could never be construed as having any relevance in a context where TV sets were the topic. It would be hard indeed to sustain an alternative view that any such usage must be metaphorical in the face of its seeming to be deliberately paradoxical talk.

We must conclude that any case against Mill collapses. Names are indeed senseless.<sup>16</sup> It is trivial to show that some names are (synchronically) senseless (*Saturn*, *Rome*) and therefore that sense is not a necessary attribute of a name, but harder to show, because it is less intuitively obvious, that names that apparently have sense in fact do not. Much of the rest of this article is devoted to this issue. But even if names are senseless, it does not follow that they are meaningless; they may be used to refer, and if one wishes to express it so, the meaning is the referent (Wittgenstein 1922:§3, 203, Kripke 1980: passim); they may set up cultural expectations (Algeo 1973) and carry a great deal of social information (Alford 1988); they may have transparent etymologies (as is self-evident, and as is implied by Laur (1989:103) when he claims that semantic content is of central interest in onomastic research). But referents, probabilistic expectations, and etymologies share the property of not being senses. None of these considerations in themselves undermine the claim referred to by Algeo (1973:63–64, citing Henry Sweet, Michel Bréal, and Otto Jespersen) that names are the most meaningful of all words because of their highly specific referential properties. But I must reemphasize

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idealization) that speakers of a particular language have a characteristic onomasticon, ensuring that *Parigi* 'Paris', for example, occurs in that of Italian speakers, *Allāh* 'God' in that of Arabic speakers, and *Włodzimierz* '[male personal name]' in that of Polish speakers while allowing that the envelopes of their respective onomastica (i) are porous and (ii) in principle may be raided by speakers of other languages. Such a position might be supported by native-speaker intuitions about the form of possible names in different categories in their language, and some research tends to support such intuitions, though only in a statistical sense. See, for example, Cutler et al. 1990 and, for a skeptical rejoinder, Hough 2000.

<sup>16</sup> As noted above, it does not follow from this that names are 'meaningless', and the variety of ways in which names might be said to mean is set out comprehensively by Carroll (1983) and Willems (2000:esp. 98–110). Some of the categories identified are dealt with below. See also Van Langendonck 1979. Some of these 'meanings' would best be called associations, and their nonlogical relationship to names is brought out below.

the need to distinguish between denotation on the one hand, which contributes to licensing sense, and reference on the other.

Adherence to the long-established conclusion that names are senseless was dearly bought, from one perspective. I started my research into this matter determined to show that some names have sense. I had observed that certain place names appear to license entailments from their elements. For instance (with a technically loose but self-explanatory extension of the term ENTAIL to be used of phrases):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (2) a. The Mersey Tunnel                        | entails 'object so named is a tunnel'     |
| b. I went through The Mersey Tunnel             | entails 'I went through a tunnel'         |
| c. The University of Edinburgh                  | entails 'object so named is a university' |
| d. I am speaking at The University of Edinburgh | entails 'I am speaking at a university'   |

But these supposed entailments are nothing of the sort, as, for example, Marmaridou (1989:356–57) notes. We should follow the line adopted for the 'meaning postulates' adhering to *Fido*, *Gwendolen*, and *Lofy* and reclassify even these syntactically elaborate expressions as licensing probabilistic implications, nothing logically stronger, even though the probability in a given case could be extremely high—the implied categorization should always be taken as falsifiable in principle even if not yet falsified. If it were possible to strip the roof off The Mersey Tunnel and make it into a trench, this would not invalidate *The Mersey Tunnel* as a name for the thing. Indeed, in my home town there used to be a perfectly ordinary railway bridge called *Peak's Tunnel*. *Peak's Tunnel is not a tunnel* is not contradictory in the way that *Zeke's funnel is not a funnel* is. To belabor what is now obvious: there is no necessary connection between a name including *Tunnel* and a thing that is a tunnel, even if there is a strong expectation that such a relationship will prove to be valid. Similarly, if some universities were to be reclassified as institutes, with the residue of universities retaining the descriptive term *university* to describe themselves, the institute of Edinburgh could continue to be called *The University of Edinburgh* on the grounds of honorable tradition, even if reclassified. Something very much like this, *mutatis mutandis*, could be said of *Dartmouth College*, a fully fledged university. And, of course, if I were a racehorse breeder, nothing would prevent my validly naming a pair of foals *The Mersey Tunnel* and *The University of Edinburgh*—or *Popocatepetl*.

So we can follow Mill in the strictest possible way in asserting that names are senseless. I claim that the lexical equation PROPER = SENSELESS is not just evidently true, but satisfyingly extensible into domains foreshadowed by the examples involving tunnels and universities, where its applicability is less self-evidently true.

There are still *prima facie* counterexamples to overcome, however. There are expressions in many languages where what appear to be proper names really do seem to license inferences of a logically more secure type than those I have been talking about. Let the Icelandic data in 3 represent such cases. Here are two personal names consisting of a given name and a patronymic, which appear to license the inferences shown.

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| (3) a. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir | → [the female called] Vigdís's father is Finnbogi |
| b. Halldór Gúðmundarson      | → [the male called] Halldór's father is Gúðmundur |

The position taken above requires me to say that, since they bear senses, *Finnbogadóttir* and *Gúðmundarson* are not (proper) names. This apparently perverse opinion receives

direct support from the Icelandic language, which offers two verbs (both translatable in some contexts as ‘to be.3SG.IND.PRES’) the complements of which may be apparent name expressions: *ér*, which allows only patronymics as complements, and *heitur*, which allows only given names. This usage is consistent with the meanings of these verbs in other contexts; *ér* is a general-purpose copula, suggesting that its complement in naming sentences is a by-name (i.e. an expression descriptively true of the bearer),<sup>17</sup> while *heitur* is ‘is called’, suggesting that its complement is a true proper name, arbitrarily referential to its bearer.

I would therefore argue that in general by-names, that is, expressions descriptively true of their bearer and applied because of that fact, cannot be names except in the light of the position I take in the remainder of this article concerning alternative modes of referring. The marginally proper status of by-names is confirmed by the fact that pseudonyms conforming to the naming patterns of a language may be found, while containing elements that are descriptively untrue. If I decided to call myself *Bjarni Sigurðarson*, I might get away with it, despite my father’s name not being *Sigurður*, and despite his not having been Icelandic. (This assertion is modeled on the facts of a real-life instance known to me.) I believe that if I called myself *Bjarni Sigurðarson*, and if others accepted that as my name, then that would in fact be my name precisely where no inferences about my father were intended or drawn—but the reasoning behind this must wait for a few paragraphs.

Scandinavian scholars in particular have been exercised by the rather widespread existence of place names that are homonymous with definite expressions (as shown by the suffixal article in Danish, for example) and of course sharing a historical source with them, which makes the bestowals of their names instances of by-naming; an example is *Kalvehaven*, homonymous with Danish *kalvehaven* ‘the enclosure for calves’ (Dalberg 1985:127). The proper names are clearly in origin NP-expressions headed by common nouns, and they have become proper. Their status has been fudged by calling them SEMI-APPELLATIVAL NAMES (first by Rostvik 1969). Dalberg claims, however, that ‘[t]hese so-called “transparent”, “understandable” names are generally employed without any apparent awareness on the part of the performers [= users—RC] that they correspond to familiar, current appellatives in the language’ (1985:135), an experience familiar enough to any practicing historical onomastician. Essentially the same view is espoused by Ainiala (1998:45). Is there an alternative to the view that names homonymous with their etymological source are members of an intermediate category?

**4. THE NONCATEGORIALITY OF PROPERHOOD AND ITS RELATION TO REFERENCE AND SENSELESSNESS.** As I stated at the outset, perhaps the most commonly held of all views about names is that they are either proper or not proper, in other words that properhood is a categorial or classificatory notion that applies ascriptively to certain lexical items. Noteworthy, and with customary insight, Hockett (1958:312) distinguishes clearly between proper names as a set of linguistic objects that overlap in form with other expressions of a given language, and things that function solely as institutional proper names. But he does not discuss what I believe to be the critical set of cases, namely sets of expressions that may systematically be either proper names or referring expressions of an identifiably different type, of which the *Kalvehaven* type is an example, and other examples of which I explore below.

<sup>17</sup> Readers familiar with German terminological traditions in onomastics should note that *by-name* is not equivalent to *Beiname*.

An alternative to the standard view, that is, that properhood is ascriptive and classificatory, has never, to the best of my knowledge, been proposed, but I believe it is of the utmost importance to open the possibility because the standard view is false and unhelpful. It has presumably remained undisputed because it is thought to be self-evidently true, and as long as the examples used are *Hermogenes*, *Popocatepetl*, *Sarah*, *London*, and *Dartmouth*, it is easy to remain confident that these expressions, which are conveniently regarded as categorially proper nouns, are a set analogous to some supposed set of proper names. The trouble is that, while names of this sort are numerous, salient, and generally regarded as typical, even prototypical, the fact remains that there are other expressions that have an equal claim to be called proper names but that are identical in form with nonproper expressions.

Historical linguists with a special interest in place-name interpretation have noted that many institutional proper (place) names evolve from common descriptive expressions. For instance, in England, the ancestral form of the name *Sedgeberrow* in Worcestershire first appears in the description *viculus qui nominatur aet Segcgesebearuue* in 758 AD (Mawer & Stenton 1927:164); we are told explicitly that the place is called *[a male person named] Secg's grove* (Old English *bearu*). Similarly *Harestock* in Hampshire is recorded in the phrase *of þam heafod stoccam* 'from the head stocks [however one chooses to interpret that]' in 961 AD (Coates 1989:86–87). The mechanism of passage from commonhood to properhood is, where it is referred to at all, simply called BECOMING PROPER (or some synonymous expression), never explained, and not adequately theorized. Pulgram (1954:25–42), for instance, has much to say on becoming proper or ceasing to be proper, but his entire argument is based on proper nouns as conventionally understood; Kalverkämper (1976:134–42) deals specifically with contexts of formal onymization, that is, where there is an explicit metalinguistic indication of the transposition to the condition of properhood. More frequently noticed is the reverse case, the nonproper use of proper names, as in indefinite expressions like English *a hooligan*, *a frisbee*, or *a wellington* (derived from a surname, a business name, and an aristocratic title, respectively, and all now fully nonproper).

This latter usage is relatively easy to explain in a way compatible with the senselessness of names: an attribute of the individual named *X* is reinterpreted, through the use of a rhetorical trope, as the sense of a noun whose form is exactly that of the name commandeered for the process. The former change, nonproper to proper, exemplified by the two Old English place-name expressions mentioned, seems to have remained more problematic, although the fact that such a thing happens is of course well understood in a nontheorized way (see e.g. Singleton 2000:151) and is presupposed by the enterprise of etymology in historical onomastics. Many (e.g. Lamarque 1994:2667) have noted that New College, Oxford, is clearly no longer new in any everyday sense, but perfectly adequately named.<sup>18</sup> It betrays its namehood by the lack of an article (although, as we see below, properness is a prerequisite for the loss of the article, but the absence of an article is not definitional for properhood).<sup>19</sup> *The Old Vicarage*, when applied to the well-known house of literary significance in Grantchester, Cam-

<sup>18</sup> It was originally officially *The College of St Mary*, but informally called new when founded in the late fourteenth century to distinguish it from the old College of St Mary, that is, Oriel College.

<sup>19</sup> The loss of an article in proper names may be for syntactic reasons. English proper names with an article that serve as attributive modifiers lose the article by rule; compare *The Ohio State University* with *an Ohio State University student*, *The Cheviot* with *a Cheviot sheep*, and *shipping in The Channel* with *Channel shipping*.



bridgeshire, does not betray its namehood lexically or morphosyntactically, but a name is what it indisputably is. If the novelist Jeffrey Archer, the present inhabitant, says, 'My house is [i.e. is called or named] *The Old Vicarage*', as opposed to 'My house is the old vicarage', on what grounds could we contradict him?

It is inescapable that BECOMING PROPER means 'losing sense', and that *The Old Vicarage* is a name whenever the user of the expression is not committed to anything that follows from the sense of the words constituting it. Accordingly, we can distinguish two modes of referring, one SEMANTIC, where the entailments accruing from the words used in particular structures are preserved intact, and one ONYMIC, where they are not (these notions were introduced in Coates 2000, the latter under the label ONOMASTIC), as in 4.

- (4) a. SEMANTIC: 'I live at the old vicarage' entails 'I live at the house that was formerly the house of an Anglican priest'.  
 b. ONYMIC: 'I live at The Old Vicarage' entails only 'I live at a/the place called *The Old Vicarage*'.

An anthroponymic case that may seem theoretically difficult, that of circumstance names, as for instance in traditional Yoruba and Ambo naming practices (Oduoye 1972, Saarelma-Maunumaa 2003), can be treated in a similar way. Circumstance names are personal names bestowed because of life events. The linguistic forms corresponding to the names are fully sense-bearing and are applied as names, therefore, BECAUSE OF the 'sense' they bear. For instance, in Yoruba culture, *Ìdòwú* is traditionally given to a male child born after a pair of twins, and *Ọlátòkumbò*, literally and etymologically 'honor has come from abroad', was given to a person whose parents were out of Nigeria when she was born. Are these not fully senseful names? This is where it is crucial to distinguish the BESTOWAL of names from their USAGE. These linguistic objects were clearly bestowed in virtue of their meaning, that is, of their sense, but as in all such cases the act of bestowal is a formal cancellation of the meaning, that is, a license to use the expression in a different referential mode without the mediation of sense. This is a partner of Kripke's contention (1980:96–97) that 'baptismal acts' fix the referents of expressions once and for all.<sup>20</sup> After bestowal, the expression, used to refer to a person, refers onymically, though the sense of its etymological source can be accessed for a variety of cultural reasons and purposes, and licenses a number of expectations. The difference between the cases of *The Old Vicarage* and *Ìdòwú* is that in the former, the possibility of onymic reference may evolve conversationally (while bestowal is not ruled out), but in the latter the onset of the possibility (in fact a requirement rather than a possibility) is formally signaled in a culturally significant act of bestowal. BESTOWAL IS ONYMIZATION, by which I mean that it is understandable not just as a significant act in the life of the individual newly bearing the name, but it may also be a significant act in the 'life' of an expression: a formal suspension of whatever sense it may have, for the purpose of reference. I return more fully to operational aspects of the distinction between SENSE and ETYMOLOGY below. I also go on to amplify the relation between the two referential modes, semantic and onymic, shortly; note for now that the choice between them is precisely what is grammaticalized in the case of the onymic article *o* of Fijian (versus its absence) mentioned above. It is the culturalized counterpart of the use of this article in discourse.

In accepting the consequences of the exposition so far, readers will have accepted that the account I have offered is linguistically satisfying. But it is clear that this account

<sup>20</sup> This approach is sometimes called the CAUSAL-HISTORICAL approach (Lycan 2000:60).



creates problems from other perspectives. How do we know, in languages without an onymic article, whether an expression of the type represented by *the old vicarage/The Old Vicarage* is being used as a proper name or as a common expression? The existence of two referential modes can be tested in artificial ways; the experiments reported by Macnamara (1982:17–31) show, using nonsense syllables serving as both common and proper nouns, that ‘from the beginning of speech [a child] can refer with and without accompanying sense’ (31), but the nub of these experiments is that presence or absence of the definite article is used to flag the distinction. In real-life situations, in ambiguous cases of fully structured noun phrases, we cannot know which referential mode is being used without access to the speaker’s intentions or the hearer’s interpretative response. Kalverkämper (1978:32, 42) claims an expression as a proper name if it is both intended and understood as one, though he does not deal there with structurally complex expressions of the type under investigation here, but with categorially ambiguous [ $\pm$  proper] nouns/names such as *Müller*, a German surname with the etymological sense ‘miller’. I would, as will become apparent, prefer to say that an expression is a proper name for a user who intends or understands it as one that refers onymically. It follows from its nature as a referential mode that properhood is a category of usage, not a structural category. It participates in a contrast of ways in which phrases may refer and does not amount to an ascriptive categorization of lexical items. Philosophers have resisted the idea that one and the same expression can be both proper and common. Typically, Strawson vigorously denies that expressions analogous to *The Old Vicarage* are names and assigns *The Old Pretender* to an intermediate category; ‘[o]nly an old pretender may be so referred to, but to know which old pretender is not to know a general, but an ad hoc convention’ (1950:338–39). This appears to me to miss the point, and in fact to be false. What, following Strawson, could be the status of a sign attached to my house with *The Old Vicarage* on it, which I declare to be the name of the house, where the house has in fact (perhaps unknown to me) never been a vicarage? Strawson’s view appears to require that namelike expressions fall into four categories, not two or even three: proper names, common names, common names applying to unique individuals by ad hoc conventions, and lies (or at any rate untruthfully applied instances of the third type).

The philosophers’ view illustrated by Strawson’s, that name expressions may not be systematically both common and proper, can, I believe, be sustained only while the discussion of proper names is restricted to what have hitherto been seen as the prototypical proper names, those proper nouns (I repeat) such as *Hermogenes*, *Popocatepetl*, *Dartmouth*, *London*, and *Sarah*, which have no sense in the language of discussion (English) or have it only marginally and etymologically. For me, however, these are simply the limiting case of proper expressions where, for reasons of a variety of kinds, no sense would ever be accessed in any context of usage except one supplied by a trope. The traditional term PROPER NOUN seems convenient, though ontologically and epistemologically misleading, as a label for such linguistic objects; the word PROPER in it should not be understood primarily as a categorial label. The category of proper nouns is epiphenomenal upon the basic category of PROPER NAME-EXPRESSIONS, which, as I have suggested, is a category of definite expressions without delimitable membership, defined by their referential properties: nondelimitable because any referring expression may in principle be so used, even though with variable plausibility in the context of use. But little harm is done by retaining the traditional term PROPER NOUN for ‘morphologically simple (noncomplex, noncompound) proper name’, especially since, as suggested below in §5, such items appear to be privileged in first language acquisition and very many have a form that is nonhomonymous with some lexical

item—that is, they function only onymically. While any expression can be used onymically (see again §5), the special or prototypical status of those that are only so used and that have no overt internal structure can be acknowledged.

It is likely to appear that I have shifted responsibility for the ultimate understanding of properhood onto other disciplines. In the present state of our knowledge, discovering whether the expressions that are crucial for my account are proper or not cannot be an empirical matter. One cannot open a speaker's or a hearer's head and discover whether s/he has processed a potentially sense-bearing expression like *The Old Vicarage* in a sense-free way or not. But there is an alternative to simply pretending that philosophy, psychology, or PET scans will some day be able to answer all the relevant questions: we can follow reasoning dependent on typical processes of language change to argue that the position adopted above must be correct.

Let us turn to a detailed analysis of the place name *Hendon* (Ekwall 1960:234, Watts 2004:297), as representing a very large class of comparable names, including *Harestock* and *Sedgeberrow* mentioned above. It is indisputably the proper name of a former village in Middlesex, England, now a suburb of London. It is equally indisputably by origin a nonproper expression, Old English (*æt*) *þæm hēan dūne* '(at) the high down (= hill)'; it is recorded as such in the tenth century, and it still bears the grammatical traces of its origin in such a definite noun-phrase-within-a-prepositional-phrase, namely the *-n* of the weak or definite oblique-case adjective inflection. The case of *Longnor* in Staffordshire, (*æt*) *þæm langan ofre* '(at) the long shoulder-shaped hill', is exactly parallel, though the name is not recorded till the thirteenth century.<sup>21</sup> These expressions have become proper, as demonstrated by the obvious fact that they can be used to refer while having no sense recoverable without philological training. What has happened in their becoming proper? They have lost the overt controlling definiteness marker, and *Longnor* is particularly interesting in that it has continued to contain the etymological reflex of a word *ofer* which has become obsolete and vanished in the course of the history of English. To explain this, we must clearly assume senseless use of the referring expression. That is the only way in which we can explain the continued use of a word that has vanished from the language. Its opacity is a precondition for its survival (just as it would have been for any folk-etymological replacement it might have suffered). If it had been both transparent and used sensefully when uttered, it would have been replaced by an alternative word for a hill as *ofer* died out. The loss of the definite article follows from the opacity of the noun—if the head noun has no sense, one cannot meaningfully apply the distinction [ $\pm$  definite] to phrases containing it.<sup>22</sup> The important thing is that the senselessness of the expression is a PRECONDITION for these phenomena (the retention of an obsolete element and the loss of the article), not a consequence of

<sup>21</sup> Ainiala (1998:44) says 'Toponyms . . . do not gradually emerge from appellatives. Instead they are formed directly as identifiers'. This is contradicted by the example offered here, if appellatives may be taken to include phrases. In cases of bestowed names, she is undoubtedly correct.

<sup>22</sup> Strictly speaking, the loss of the article is LICENSED rather than CAUSED by the senselessness of the noun: some obscure names keep the article, at least when used as ordinary referring expressions (contrast n. 19), for example, the mountain name *The Cheviot* or the waterway name *The Solent*; for the backing of this idea, see Jespersen 1954:417–18. Note that in the text I am dealing primarily with situations where an emergent name *The X* is interpretable because its referent is understood to be an example of *an x*. This is not the same as the case seen in many languages, including Modern Greek, where all referential uses of proper names (as opposed to vocative or nominating uses; for these distinctions see Lyons 1977:641) are marked with the definite article, that is, their inherent definiteness is obligatorily expressed. Recent work by Anderson (2004) has argued on syntactic grounds that names are not in fact definite, but nondefinite members of a category of determinatives. The older alternative view, which essentially is a semantic one, is widely enough held to let the text stand.

them, and it can—must—therefore be assumed that apparently transparent and fully sense-endowed expressions, such as *Redhill*, *The Southern Uplands*, and *The Great Western Railway* may also be used in a senseless way, that is, without commitment to the truth of any proposition logically dependent on the use of the words they ostensibly contain. BECOMING PROPER therefore means ‘coming to be used to refer in a senseless way’.

I propose therefore a succinct definition for properhood: not primarily ‘senseless denoting’, but ‘senseless referring’. To restore a connection with those concerns that others have thought to be defining for this notion, perhaps it would be better to say ‘senseless referring, producing a high probability of successful referring on a particular occasion of use’. Items that never bear sense, the proper nouns that are the prototypical proper names, are the special case where the scope for semantic or senseful referring is or has become zero, unless they have gained a sense anew through being used in a trope.

5. SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE THESIS PRESENTED. There are satisfying conclusions to be drawn from accepting a distinction between semantic and onymic reference. Clearly, reference can be achieved through paying attention to the meaning of the words in a referring expression—that is, ordinary semantic reference. But if it is accepted that expressions may be used to refer unmediated by sense, even where they contain overt sense-bearing elements, then it must be conceded that the same expressions may be used with different processing costs. One might reasonably propose that unmediated (Millian, Kripkean) reference—a direct line from an expression to a referent—is less costly than mediated (Russellian) reference, which involves some high-level processing, whether of linguistic units or of inferences derived from the propositions that contain them. If that is so, we have a rationale for the ONYMIC REFERENCE DEFAULT PRINCIPLE (ORDP; Coates 2005:9), viz. that the default interpretation for any linguistic string is a proper name, as illustrated in extenso by Ziff (1960) using his invented name for a cat, *Witchgren*. This principle falls out from the assumption of distinct modes of referring and from the same kind of abstract assumptions about psychological processing costs as those that underpin RELEVANCE THEORY (Sperber & Wilson 1986:46–50, 123–32; and within the same tradition, on names specifically, Marmaridou 1989:371). The evolutionary advantages of a system allowing direct reference to individuals without needing computation of meaning in order to achieve reference are not hard to imagine. It follows, of course, that in principle, on a particular occasion of use, an established expression is either proper or not. The difficulty of determining whether it is or is not should not lead us to the position, espoused by some, that there is no essential difference between names and common nouns, or that they shade into one another (e.g. Van Langendonck 1997:37), except as regards the fact that we cannot tell exactly how many onymically referring uses of an expression are necessary to ‘gray out’ its sense (disable its pathways of semantic reference) completely, and that there may therefore be an indeterminately long period where neural circuitry allows both referential routes simultaneously. The idea of the ORDP receives further support from Hall’s experiment (1996) in which four-year-olds were presented with a nonsense word in a linguistic context that allowed it to be interpreted as a proper name or as an adjective; they interpreted it as a proper name until the extralinguistic context was varied in such a way as to subvert the ambiguity.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Something suggesting, but not identical to, the ORDP is implicit in Aristotle’s dictum ‘Uttered by themselves, *rhēmata* [roughly = VPs] function as *onómata* [roughly = NPs]’ (*De interpretatione* §3, cited by Robins 1966:9, n. 20).

In light of this distinction of modes of referring, we can return to the case of Icelandic patronymics introduced in 3 above. Rather than baldly saying that the patronymics *Finnbogadóttir* and *Gúðmundarson* are by-names and therefore meaningful and not proper, it would be preferable to say that, like any other NP expression with relevant structure, they may on a given occasion of use be used with either semantic or onymic reference. If a speaker has no interest in the referent's father, on some occasion, and is simply seeking to identify (for example) one Vigdís rather than another, then the mode of referring is onymic and the expression is by definition being used properly. If the opposite is the case, then the mode of referring is semantic. This view can be developed into an operational version of the ORDP, that whenever an expression is used to refer onymically, it enters the onomasticon of the user, which thereby reduces its ability to refer semantically to the same referent on a subsequent occasion. One would expect in principle to find neurolinguistic correlates (perhaps definitions) of this lessened ability: it should be expressed in the properties of neurotransmitters in synapses. It is a trivial psycholinguistic finding that those expressions that everyone accepts as being names are recovered or otherwise processed in shorter times than descriptive referring expressions. As Levelt (1989:200) reminds us, this was established by F. C. Donders as long ago as 1868. (The same expression need not enter the onomasticon of all users of the relevant language(s) at the same time, of course.) It is an equally trivial observation that proper names (especially proper nouns, in the literature) are among the first linguistic entities acquired by children. Van Langendonck (1980:221) observes, following Charles Osgood, that '[t]he cognitive effort that the child has to produce [to process definite expressions] is minimal . . . it is not even necessary that the referential definite expressions contain a concept. If they do not, we are to call them proper names'. Such names are applied consistently to their referents, implying a facilitated physical referential pathway.

A further bonus from espousing the notion of differing modes of referring is that it is possible to give a principled solution to the question of whether singular definite expressions with a unique denotatum are proper names (see more fully Coates 2000). Expressions such as *The Pope* and *The Sun* (Lyons 1977:181, 225), *The Zodiac*, *The Milky Way*, *The Glorious Revolution*, *The Long Parliament*, and so forth, and even *The Onymic Reference Default Principle*, are proper names just in case they are used to refer onymically, that is, with no appeal to any sense possessed by their constituents linked in a particular grammatical structure. It is unlikely that one can find out which mode of referring is being exploited on a particular occasion. If I hear *t/The g/Glorious r/Revolution*, I can compute from the individual words used in a particular construction, in an appropriate context, that the user means the accession of William III and Mary II of Great Britain (i.e. I know what *revolution* means and can work out which revolution my interlocutor is likely to consider glorious), or I can use prior knowledge to access the referent directly from these words taken as an unstructured unity: the referent is a certain individualized packet of events in 1688, whether or not I consider them, with or without irony, to be glorious.<sup>24</sup> It may well not matter much in practical terms which mode is used on a particular occasion, when the most important thing is to refer successfully and not to do so in a particular way, but it does matter in neuro- and psycholinguistic terms; and at least the answer 'maybe onymic, maybe semantic reference' is a principled one that makes the problem a subcase of the one that has been the topic of this article. We should certainly not accept with Searle (1969:81) that titles

<sup>24</sup> It would be a name, not an idiom, in the latter case because it would be only referential.

(as some of the above are for him) ‘shade off into definite descriptions at one end and proper names at the other’ if he means by that that their indeterminacy in some context necessarily amounts to categorial vagueness, as others have also appeared to imply by setting up degrees of properhood (e.g. Gardiner 1954, Kalverkämper 1978). To repeat, the only ‘gray’ area might come from a period of indeterminacy due to uncertainty about the number of onymic usages of an expression necessary to disable or defacilitate its pathways of semantic reference.<sup>25</sup>

Yet another advantage of the notion of differing modes of referring is that, at the theoretical level, properhood can be detached from the noun as a linguistic category altogether. Hamp (1956:347) observes that the usually presumed intimate link between nouns and names, based on their morphological characteristics, is due to Eurocentric knowledge of the spectrum of linguistic structures. In the view proposed here, the link between properhood and the structure(s) that instantiate(s) it becomes a typological matter. While it is clear that, from the point of view of external syntactic relations, names must always be noun phrases (of variable bar-level, depending on whether they are overtly determined or not), it does not follow that the head of any such a noun phrase must have the characteristics of a noun in the language with which the name is associated, nor that the NP itself is structured internally like a noun phrase. Consider for example the sentence-like nature of at least some personal names in Ambo (Saarelma-Maunumaa 2003): *Ndathigwapo* ‘I was deserted’, and Yoruba (Oduyoye 1972): *Babáúndé* ‘father has come back’. Strictly speaking, therefore, Van Langendonck’s claim that names are universally classified as nouns (1997:39) is correct only as regards external relations, and then only with some equivocation about their phrasal status (bar-level). ‘Proper’ nouns are not obligatory heads of proper expressions, but function normally as if NPs, as recognized in MONTAGUE GRAMMAR (Cann 1993:172–73) and AUTOLEXICAL SYNTAX (Sadock 1991:31), or equivalently, it can be shown, on the D (head) branch of a determiner phrase, as suggested by Longobardi (1994).<sup>26</sup> In an alternative tradition within generative grammar, for Sloat (1969), typical ‘proper’ nouns have a zero determiner, which also models, up to a point, their phrase-like characteristics.

**6. A FURTHER CONSEQUENCE: THE ISSUE OF TRANSLATABILITY.** The main apparent difficulty to which the position I have taken here gives rise is that of the translatability

<sup>25</sup> Some readers of this article have been unwilling to discount the possibility that onymic and semantic reference might both occur in the same referential act even after any ‘gray’ period for the acquisition of properhood by a particular expression might be over. It would be easy, or hassle free, to concede that they are right and that both modes are possible simultaneously. But given the physicalist interpretation I have imposed on modes of reference, I cannot do that respectably. It would be like conceding that you can get painlessly from A to B with one foot on the slow train and one foot on the express. The point of the operationalized ORDP in normal simple referential acts is that semantic reference is made redundant by onymization. Given appropriate contextualization, however, the ‘broken’ semantic link might be restored ad hoc. Consider the hypothetical turn-pair: **A:** This stretch of sand just seems to go on for miles and miles. **B:** Well, it is Long Beach.

<sup>26</sup> There are difficulties for this analysis with apparently attributivalized proper names: *Careless Jane got it wrong again; We spent a week in lovely Dubrovnik*. These cases are those referred to by Jespersen (1954: 573), not fully adequately, as ‘ornamental or sentimental’. Semantically, these attributes are not freely chosen from a set of alternatives, but are interpreted nonrestrictively as if definitional for the bearer of the name so ‘modified’. In *the careless Jane as opposed to the careful Jane*, *Jane* does not refer directly to an individual called *Jane* but identifies a member of the category of individuals who are so called—that is, in the relevant respect it is exactly like *the efficient doctor as opposed to the inefficient doctor*. (The problem here is not quite that discussed in Algeo 1973:32 where the interaction of attributive adjectives and accent is at stake.)



of names. This is an issue that needs careful attention and a refined understanding of the processes involved. If names have no sense, they cannot be translated; and some scholars have declared that they are indeed not translated (Mańczak 1968:206, Zabeeh 1968:69, Kalverkämper 1978:85–87). The absence of any indexed reference to translation in the handbook of onomastics edited by Brendler and Brendler (2004) may also be taken as significant. Others, however, have taken it as self-evident that they can be. Albin (2003) begins her article: ‘We can plainly see that translating proper names was common not only in the Middle Ages, but has remained an active practice (and sometimes a necessary one . . .) to the present day’. As a factual and pretheoretical assertion, it appears to be true that they can be translated. The literature is full of assertions of the type ‘*Slobodan* is a translation of Greek *Eleftheros*’ (adapted from Aleksov 2000, discovered at random). There are websites offering to translate my name into Chinese. What could we make of such expressions as the Spanish *Nuevo York*, which acknowledges the *New* in *New York* as the English word *new*, if not that they are translations?

But in a fundamental sense I believe that Mańczak and Zabeeh are right. As an illustration, consider a case that, in the form in which it is presented, is taken from literature, but that it would be reasonable to take as an accurate representation of what actually happened in history. In Brian Friel’s stage play *Translations* (1981), a British army detachment is sent to Ireland with orders to put place names on a new official map. Not knowing Irish, and therefore being unable to write down names used in an Irish-language context consisting of etymologically Irish words and spoken with Irish phonology, they are obliged to anglicize what they hear. One option open to them is to simply anglicize at the phonological level, and write the names as if their phonology were English. That option is of no interest for the thesis under discussion here. But for some names, they work with bilingual consultants, and ‘translate’ names such as *Bun na hAbhann*, for which they come up with *Burnfoot*. This is a more or less accurate rendition into a typical Scots place-name form of the lexical substance apparent in the Irish name, which means ‘lower course of the river’. Whether it is exactly equivalent is of less interest than the fact that translation has been attempted and, in some sense to be explored, achieved.

My position as set out above imposes one of the two possible explanations in 5.

- (5) a. The Irish expression was not a proper name, but a topographical description, and its user was therefore referring semantically when informing the soldiers.
- b. Its user was referring onymically, and the etymology of the name was therefore accessed, not its sense.

Position 5a looks rationally defensible in this case, but consideration of other examples leads to the opposite conclusion. *Bunowen* (the usual orthographic anglicization of this common Irish name) appears frequently in Ireland as the name of an inhabited place, not of a watercourse, and in such instances cannot be interpreted literally as ‘lower course of the river’ except by unpicking a metonymic transfer (cf., though not using this terminology, Dalberg 1985:130–31). If a place had been named by some now unrecoverable act of metonymy, it is ONLY the appearance that could be ‘translated’. Consider the English place name *Hincaster* (Smith 1967:xxxii, 89), which means etymologically ‘hens’ Roman fortification’. There is no archaeological evidence to show what the inhabited place was named from. If I ask you to translate the name of the village into whatever language you choose, you will not do so on the basis of its original application to a different place or object, which is no better than conjectural, nor on

the basis of the word *chester/caster*, which passed out of the living language some eight hundred years ago. At best, armed with appropriate knowledge, you will translate the etymology. That is: a given expression may be used to refer onymically, but if it is capable of being interpreted, and therefore translated, it is the source of the expression, viewed etymologically, that may be interpreted and translated, not the expression AS AN ONYMICALLY REFERRING EXPRESSION (PROPER NAME).

To believe 5b in general, therefore, even in the pertinent Irish case, is not perverse. As a systematic thought experiment, consider being asked to render into a foreign language such British place names as those in 6.

- (6) a. Greenford, Newchurch  
 b. Bridgewater, Waterbeach  
 c. Oldham, Bolton  
 d. Hereford, Machynlleth

On the view that names are translatable (if anyone should hold it), and going by the surface (English) appearance of the names, respecting any apparent lexical structure, it is evident that translatability stops at some point as one works through the list. There are names that seem fully translatable and likely to be fully convincing AS PLACE NAMES in translation (6a); there are names where the relation between the apparent constituent elements may pose translation problems (6b); there are names where translation is likely to remain unconvincing because one or more of the apparent elements, taken at synchronic face value, is unconvincing in a place name (6c); and there are names that are in whole or in part untranslatable (6d). The names in 6c, if translated without philological knowledge, need to be rendered, it would be said with hindsight, in a folk-etymological form (imagine *Oldham* as *Viejo Jamón* or *Bolton* as *Lo que puede ser atado con un cerrojo* in Spanish).

If, by contrast, we continue to believe that names are untranslatable, it must be argued that apparent elements are associated with real words on the basis of their form, and ‘transfer’ can be achieved into another language (only) so long as there are words in the source language that formally resemble the relevant names. Putting this another way, if we assume untranslatability we are required to view the process of apparent translation as a unified one for all of the subtypes represented by 6a-d, and all of it is (folk-)etymological rather than true semantically based translation. This is the direction from which to attack the ‘untranslatability’ view that Algeo (1973:59) finds so uncomfortable, but since he identifies the phenomenon discussed here while being willing to call it translation (1973:60), perhaps we differ only terminologically. Algeo and I could certainly agree that ‘[i]n naming, more than in other aspects of language, users are aware of history’ (Algeo 1985:143), if this viewpoint would permit him to acknowledge that etymology and referentiality may coexist, but on separate planes of accessibility, when a proper name is being used. This is what I had in mind when I wrote above: ‘After bestowal, the expression [a Yoruba sentence], used to refer to a person, refers onymically, though the sense of its etymological source can be accessed for a variety of cultural reasons and purposes, and licenses a number of expectations’. Such a distinction is also fundamental to Šrámek’s distinction between *NAMENETYMOLOGIE* and *NAMENDEUTUNG* ‘name interpretation’ (2004).

While it is hard to produce a knock-down argument against the ‘translatability’ view as applied in instances like those in 6, especially 6a, there is anecdotal support for the correctness of the ‘untranslatability’ view, that is, the view that in such instances elements are translated, whether or not they coincide with those that have historically



given rise to them, and not the names AS NAMES. Sampson (1926:103) reports that it was customary among the Welsh Gypsies to render place names in Britain into Romani, and they would do this wherever there was some apparent lexical content to a name, that is, this was, to all appearances, a unitary psycholinguistic operation. *Cowbridge*, for instance, was rendered literally, and in fact historically correctly, as *Gurunákō p'ūrj* 'cow[-adjective] bridge'. But other names that were not transparent were also subject to the process. *Hereford* (see 6d) was understood or otherwise taken, on the basis of Romani-influenced pronunciation, as English *hairly foot* and done into Romani as *balanō pīrō*, meaning just that. *Machynlleth* (see 6d) was understood absurdly, or otherwise taken, as Welsh *moch yn llaeth* 'pigs in milk' and was rendered in Romani as *bâlē ar'ō t'ud*, meaning just that. It is hard to escape the conclusion that it is the synchronic appearance that is being translated and only accidentally any historically validated etymological sense of the name involved. This is evidently comparable with what the British soldiers do in Friel's play, except that they have local consultants to guide them toward the original sense of the key names; but the quality of the advice they were given was fortuitously good. Nothing would have changed about the nature of the translation process if the Irish speakers had engaged in wild speculation about historically obscure names, as in the case of the Gypsy *Hereford*. Leys (1966:119) draws attention to the heightened susceptibility of proper names to analogical reformation or folk etymology whose effects very quickly get lexicalized ('sich sehr schnell lexikalisieren lassen')—if that term can appropriately be used of onymic expressions—but this must mean that users of proper names may seek to impose discernible form on formally obscure expressions WITHOUT THEREBY NECESSARILY SEEKING TO IMPOSE FORM THAT IS MEANINGFUL IN THE CONTEXT OF USAGE. Such reformations do not usually restore a lost transparency and thereby restore the potential for the meaningfulness of semantic reference—consider his example of the German place-name *Aubruch* 'meadow bog' (1966:115), reformed as *Ehebruch*, a homophone of the lexeme meaning '[lit.] marriage-breach; adultery' (cf. also Leys 1965:50–52). Such an example underscores the fact that users do not require proper names to be transparent, let alone translatable, and that when they manipulate their linguistic form, they do not do it with mediated (Russellian) referentiality in mind.

Now consider the case of the lexically transparent proper institution name *The Body Shop*, a legally protected commercial name belonging to The Body Shop International plc. It has the lexical and grammatical shape of normal referring expressions with compositional meanings such as *the fish shop*, *the clothes shop*, and so on, which can be translated (e.g. *der Fischladen*, *das Bekleidungs-geschäft* in German).<sup>27</sup> If its owners were to set up a new German operation, or rebrand the existing one, and call it *Das Körper-geschäft*, would they have translated the English name? By my view, no; they would have translated the (elements of the) anonymized (i.e. nonproper) expression that lies behind the name and is formally identical with it. If that sounds like hair-splitting, consider the analogous (though not quite identical; Ronneberger-Sibold 2004: 557–58) issue of brand-name translation mentioned by He and Xiao (2003:136). They report that *Yuèjìn* [transliterated] brand floor wax

has long been an export product of China. The Chinese brand name means 'dash' or 'big progress' [literally something like '(aggressive) bound forward'—RC] in English. If it were translated into *Dash*,

<sup>27</sup> I ignore the mild degree of idiomatization that these English expressions have undergone—they need not sell only the items that give them their names, but also, for example, lobsters and padded hangers; the named items are simply the most salient ones in their respective businesses.

then it would be an excellent brand-name in English [according to criteria specified previously by the authors]. But unfortunately it was translated into *Great Leap Forward*. This name is too long and conveys a negative association to consumers that this kind of floor wax will make you fall heavily on the floor.

One may suspect that the authors have misidentified the source of any negativity for westerners, which may rather have to do with the Maoist connotations of the expression. *Yuèjìn* is also used metaphorically as a term of political discourse, a proper name used to refer to the set of Chinese government policies in the late 1950s that favored non-Stalinist applications of technology in production, in which sense it is conventionally rendered *The Great Leap Forward*, the proper name of an event(-cluster) like *The Glorious Revolution* mentioned above. In fact the normal term in Mandarin for The Great Leap Forward is *Dàyuèjìn*; *dà* is literally ‘big, great’. The key point is this: that an expression (*yuèjìn*) may have a literal translation equivalent (whether *dash*, *big progress*, *leap forward*, or whatever), which may be replaced for the purposes of what is arguably a proper name, or what may be used as a proper name, by something not wholly identical in (apparent) sense (*Great Leap Forward*); the translation of an expression and what is perceived to be the translation of its onymic homonym (whether denoting a political event or a registered brand) need not be identical in apparent sense. An expression that is ambiguously nonproper and proper may therefore have a literal translation and an ‘onymic translation’. Thus *the English channel* means ‘le canal anglais’ in French and would be translated as *le canal anglais*; but while *The English Channel* is etymologically ‘le canal anglais’, it denotes the same entity as *La Manche*, and that expression is its ‘onymic translation’ (which is literally and etymologically, or apparently so, ‘The Sleeve’). Accordingly, *the body shop* has a literal interpretation which is translatable as *das Körpergeschäft*; *The Body Shop* is currently onymically *The Body Shop* in German, and if it were rebranded as *Das Körpergeschäft*, that would be an onymization of the German expression *das Körpergeschäft*, a translation of (better, a calque on) the etymological source of the English commercial proper name. I submit that this understanding can be generalized to the claim that proper names AS REFERRING EXPRESSIONS are not translated, and are not, in fact, directly translatable, but that when it appears to happen, it is a case of calquing on the (apparent) etymological source of the relevant name, that is, on the DENOTING EXPRESSION that underlies or appears to underlie it.<sup>28</sup> This is precisely the distinction not made by Kalverkämper (1978:70) when he argues, superficially correctly, that some names have completely identifiable lexical meanings.

Kalverkämper argues also, however, that charactonyms may trade on transparency (1978:79–80), and that it follows from that that they may be translated. This may be correct, but, if one wishes to maintain it, one needs to take into account the context of bestowal. Literature is art, and it is legitimate to suppose that this fact cancels the normal assumptions about name bestowal. Literary name bestowal<sup>29</sup> invites the audience or readership precisely NOT to suspend the connection between usage and etymology, but to perform the complex act of maintaining both the form of a name and its significance—in some cases even the prebestowal senses of the words that constitute it—

<sup>28</sup> The notion ONYMIC TRANSLATION can easily be given greater substance. The Scottish Gaelic female personal name *Fionnghuala* (etymologically ‘white shoulder’) may be onymically translated ‘into Scots/English’ as *Flora*; that is, it is given a conventionalized equivalent in another name system; *al-Quds* is onymically translated as *Yerushalayim* ‘in Hebrew’; the *Snickers* chocolate bar replaced the original (UK) *Marathon* in the US. In none of these cases, of course, is there semantic translation as usually understood.

<sup>29</sup> The ‘meaningful’ variety which Barton (1986:33 et passim) calls CRATYLIC.

active for the duration of the literary event, whether it is watching a play or TV program, reading a novel, or whatever. For that reason, charactonymic translation is possible (e.g. *Dörchen Lakenreisser*, in German, literally and etymologically ‘hypocoristic-Dorothee sheet-ripper’ for *Doll Tearsheet* in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*, part II), and such ‘translation’ may be idiomatic and suggestive rather than purely lexical, just like all other translation. That said, it can still be argued that the act of translating charactonyms is exactly like other onymic translation and accesses the etymology of the name in question; one does not after all (have to) translate a charactonym on-line, in one’s mind, every time it is used.

We should conclude that expressions that are capable of being interpreted as referring either semantically or onymically are not strictly translatable when they are performing the latter function but are not debarred from having senses (better: synchronic etymologies) accessible during other (meta)linguistic activities such as translation, divining personality from given names or charactonyms, punning on names of any kind, inducing new lexical words or toponymic elements from pre-existing place names, and so on.<sup>30</sup>

7. THE INDIVIDUALIZATION OF PROPERHOOD IN CONVERSATIONAL ROLES. It would be consistent with the thesis expounded in this article to say that, just as the utterer may use an expression to refer semantically or onymically, so the message receiver may interpret it in either mode. If the receiver identifies the referent of such an expression through any perceived lexical structure, s/he may translate it, in the normal sense of the word, since ordinary discursal or conversational activity has occurred. If the listener identifies lexical structure that has not actually assisted in the process of achieving successful reference, any ‘translation’ is in fact post-hoc rationalization of the signal perceived. Which has happened on a particular occasion is an ambiguous matter in principle, though when the item being processed is an ESTABLISHED proper name being used conversationally it must be presumed, following the ‘operational’ version of the ORDIP, that successful reference precedes ‘interpretation’ (and therefore also precedes ‘translation’) and that ‘interpretation’ may never take place at all.

8. CONCLUSION. I conclude that the best characterization of the nature of properhood is pragmatic: that it is a type of referring that discounts the sense of any lexical items (real or apparent) in the expression that is being used to do the referring. Expressions used to refer in this way have entered the onomasticon. Properhood is not a structural category or an attribute of such a category, and expressions that have hitherto been characterized as belonging to a category of proper names are in fact simply expressions that are never used with any of their apparent senses or entailments, or those that follow from any recognizable elements that comprise them, intact. Proper nouns simply represent the dark nucleus of the set of such expressions.

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<sup>30</sup> Consider the word *chester* ‘fortified Roman site/town’, used by British archaeologists, induced from modern place-name forms ending in *-chester*, or the lexical usage of *burg* in colloquial US English for ‘inhabited place’; and compare the use of *-grad* in Russian as a living toponymic element, induced from earlier place names, but not as a lexical word.

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