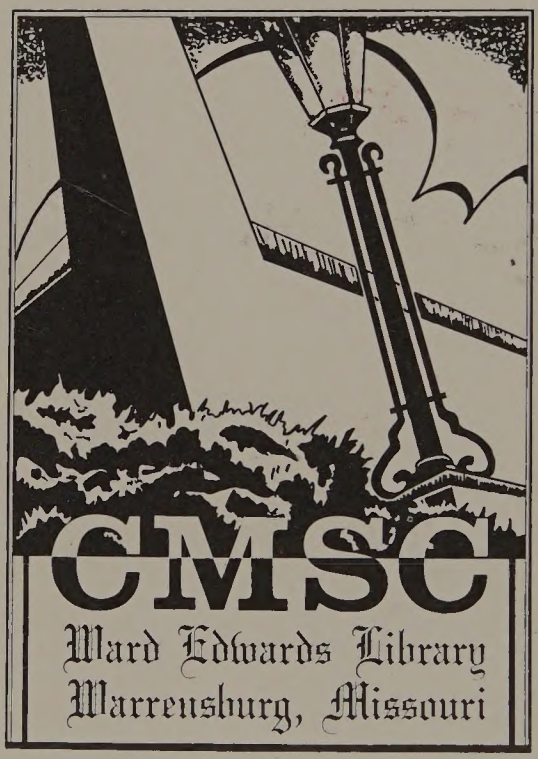

DATE DUE

CMSU

CMSU

CMSU

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

ESSAYS UPON LANGUAGE

BY

ERIC PARTRIDGE

Essay Index Reprint Series

BOOKS FOR LIBRARIES PRESS
FREEPORT, NEW YORK

STANDARD BOOK NUMBER:
8369-1187-3

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER:
75-86775

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FOR

H. L. MENCKEN

WHO HAS MADE
THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE HIS OWN
AND
THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE THE WORLD'S

FOREWORD

THE title alludes to the geographical distribution, and the variety, of the subject-matter. But however ramblingly diverse that matter may seem, there is, as in my other writings upon language, one unchanging principle: that language, being primarily a means – by far the best means – of communication, is the affair of men and women, and not merely the pre-occupation of philologists; that language, being made by and for mankind, is infinitely various and always human: that one should therefore approach it, first as a person and only later as a scholar.

Of the fourteen essays in this book, six*, written especially for it, have not hitherto been published. Of the others, four have appeared (1944–48) only in periodicals (I wish to thank especially the editor of *The Quarterly Review*); one of these in a rather different form as a private 'Christmas card'. But I have also included one essay from *A Covey of Partridge* and three from *Words, Words, Words*, because those two books, both of them out of print since 1939, will not be reprinted and I have been urged, by a number of good-natured persons, to render at least a few of the essays in those books once more available to the public. The four essays rendered thus available, amounting to perhaps two-sevenths of the total wordage, have been revised, brought up to date and slightly enlarged.

* 'The Nonsense Words of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll'; 'The Debt of English to South America'; 'Parlyaree'; 'We Are *the* People; 'American Name into American Word'; 'Brobdingnag'.

In the 'Underworld' article I have, at the risk of adverse criticism, decided to preserve symmetry by retaining matter that has already appeared in the essay on 'Spivs and Phoneys.'

ERIC PARTRIDGE

CONTENTS

DICTIONARY ANTI-NATIONALS

EVERY nation is or can imagine itself to be traduced, slandered, libelled, contemned, ridiculed. Or rather, it could, if it admitted language as sufficient evidence. Every people could take offence at the language of every people, not excepting its own. Or rather, it could, if it were excessively touchy. Does a Welshman 'hit the ceiling' every time one speaks of a *welsher* or orders a *Welsh rabbit*? Does France declare war upon Britain every time an Englishman mentions taking *French leave*? Does the Englishman get 'all het up' because the French return the compliment with *filer à l'anglaise*? Have the Scots seceded from Britain because *scot* and *scotty* are, or were, colloquially used to indicate 'anger', 'angry'? Did the Irish obtain their independence on the grounds that they could not tolerate the idea of Englishmen and Scots and Welshmen using such 'anti-national' expressions as *in a paddy*, 'in a temper', or *too* (something or other) *Irish*, 'That's right'?

Do the United States of America feel affronted because *American cloth* designates that enamelled oil-cloth which serves as a table-cloth in the homes of the less prosperous, or because the English have given that name to an English invention? Do the English think any the less of the Americans, or for that matter of the Canadians, just because in the U.S.A. and Canada *english* serves to name the side-spin imparted by a player to a billiard ball, there being, some persons think, an oblique reference to 'English *side*' or self-display or conceit? Do the Spanish very strenuously object to a

Spaniard (or Italian or Portuguese) being called a *dago*, from *Diego*, a very common Spanish front-name? Do the Jews object to the British employing *Christian name* for what is otherwise called front-name or font-name or given name? Do they object to the British using the synonym *font-name* because it implies a religious practice somewhat different from anything present in Jewish ritual?

Examples could be multiplied in every language and 'against' the nationals of many other countries – certainly 'against' those of every country with which the country concerned has much to do. Some of the examples are very much more 'offensive' than those which I have cited. Why! even within a country there is 'criticism' in one part against the natives and inhabitants of other parts. *To be Yorkshire* is to be shrewd in business and nobody's fool. Certain groups of Jews are uncomplimentarily nicknamed by other groups of Jews. And so on. No! we must preserve a sense of proportion; above all, a sense of humour.

I see from a leading Jewish periodical that there has been a protest against what it refers to as 'the more abusive and defamatory misrepresentations of the word "Jew" ' in a certain recent dictionary. Now I happen to have consulted that particular dictionary and I fail to find any intention of calumny, any evidence of bias or discrimination against the Jews. *Jew* as a synonym of 'money lender' is almost obsolete, precisely as *Lombard* for a 'banker, a money lender' is obsolete and the sense remains only in '*lumber*-room' and *lumber* itself. *Jew* as a synonym, whether of 'extortioner' or of 'heretic', has long been obsolete. But because reference to those three senses occurs frequently in the English literature of the 16th–18th Centuries, a dictionary as comprehensive as

the one in question is bound to include them. To imply *Jew* as a synonym of 'a financially cunning person' is no more offensive than to use *Yorkshireman* in the same way.

But let us take a better example. That of *to jew* for 'to cheat or swindle' (someone). It does not occur in Dr Samuel Johnson's great dictionary, published in 1755. According to the even greater work, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the word appeared first in print in 1845; and there, as in my own *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, it is classified as a colloquialism – something better than slang, yet not admitted into Standard English.

Many otherwise reasonable people hold the opinion that *to jew* was deliberately inserted into the dictionary by some ânti-Semite and they support their contention by adding that some dictionaries omit, or better, 'fail to include' the word. Such dictionaries as exclude it do so, either because it is a colloquialism or because, being small, they have no space for it. As for the suspicion that the word crept into the dictionaries because it got into the earliest dictionary that includes it only as an expression of anti-Semitism, well! all I can say is that in all the dictionaries of English (whether British or American English) I know – and it's part of my business to be conversant with all the more important ones – I have not encountered the slightest indication of anti-Semitism. Not being a Jew I don't tend to look for it; but, invited to write this article, I have investigated the matter and my conclusion is that not only is there no trace of bias, let alone hostility, but also the statement should never have been made. Such statements harm the very cause they are supposed to benefit.

Moreover, I am informed, by men that are a credit

to Jewry and would be a credit to any other body of nationals, that *to jew*, 'to cheat', does not offend English Jews worthy to be called 'English Jews' – that is, Jews whose families have been in Britain for more than one generation and particularly Jews that haven't come from Europe since 1933 and are foreigners rather than Englishmen. A good Jew has no more reason to be offended or to feel himself besmirched by *to jew* than I have to be offended by such phrases as 'the English genius for compromise' or 'British procrastination'. We are none of us perfect, not even Jews, not even Britons: and we *do*, whether we're Jewish or British, possess – or should be the better for possessing – a sense of humour.

But there is another 'angle' or point of view. Language makes dictionaries, not dictionaries language. A lexicographer records; he doesn't judge. More precisely, a lexicographer records usage, language as it is spoken and written here and now or as it was spoken and written in the 18th Century or the 16th or earlier; he does not set up as an exponent of Ethics, as a moralist, as a judge; for one thing, he is too modest to judge, to condemn; for another, it's not his business to do either. A lexicographer would be false to his calling if, for reasons other than those of space, he were to omit *Welsh rabbit*, *American cloth*, *dago*, *English sang-froid*, *British procrastination* or *compromise*, and *to jew*. To suppress something is not to disprove it; but it does make a mystery where there's none, it does impute bias or excessive 'touchiness'; it builds a linguistic mountain out of a factual molehill. The American edition of Roget's *Thesaurus* may, at the instance of American Jews, omit certain senses of a *Jew*. But you'll never find a great Dictionary or, to take a much less important

case, myself, omitting *American cloth*, *English sang-froid*, *to jew*, because of any such consideration.

For two good reasons. We have too much respect for the English language. And we have too much respect for Jews. We refuse to play into the hands of those who have so little faith in Jewry.

(Written in April, published in *The Jewish Outlook* in June, 1947.)

WE ARE *THE* PEOPLE

In the great days of the Aryan myth (say, 1933–1942), the German people found little difficulty in accepting the myth-makers' name for them: *Herrenvolk*, Folk or Nation of Lords, the Master Race. Such arrogance offended some, puzzled other folk.

The puzzlement was unnecessary. Beside Tacitus's scathing indictment, scholars set the etymology of the *deutsch* element of *Deutschland über alles*. Turning to Alfred Götze's careful recension of Kluge's admirable Etymological Dictionary of the German Language, we see that *deutsch*, *Dutch*, meaning 'German' before it came to be applied to the people of Holland but retaining its original meaning in *Deutschland*, Germany, was *duitisc* in Old High German and *thiudisk* in Old Saxon: with the O.H.G. noun, *diot*, compare the Gothic *thiuda*: those nouns mean 'folk, people'. In short, the medieval Germans called themselves '*the* Folk, *the* People, *the* Race'. To pride in their martial ability, they added a dangerously fervent belief in their importance as a race.

Although *Dutch* forms the outstanding European example of national self-importance, it is far from being the only example exhibited by history: very closely comparable to *Dutch* is *Letts*, which, *liuti* in Old High German (Modern German *Leute*) and meaning 'people', derives from an Indo-European stem, *leudh-*, connoting 'to rise' (compare Sanskrit *rōdhati*, he rises or climbs) – as in the Greek *eleutheroi*, Latin *liberi*, Old French *leudes*, all signifying 'free men, free people' and all, obviously,

akin to O.H.G. *liuti*. Without embarking upon a catalogue* of these arrogant self-names of peoples and nations, I think that a selection may be found not uninstructive. Although confining myself to current race-names, I should perhaps mention that, to specify only two sources, Hebrew and Classical Greek could probably supply a few illuminating parallels.

Both European and Asiatic is the not entirely relevant name *Romanies* for the Gypsies, a nomadic race that, originating in India (as the cognates in Hindi and the various Gypsy dialects soon show), migrated to and long sojourned in Egypt (*Egyptian* becomes *Gypsy*) and then went on to Syria, Turkey, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain and other European countries and, later, Britain. *Romany* or, occasionally, *Rommany*, both a noun and an adjective, is, in the Romany dialects, an adjective: *Romano* or *Romani*, 'Gypsy': from Romany *rom*, 'a male Gypsy, a man (*vir* rather than *homo*), also a husband'. Webster, following that great scholar, John Sampson, derives *rom* from Sanskrit *doma* or *domba*, 'a man of low caste; originally, an itinerant musician'. The Romanies, especially in Spain and Hungary, have for centuries been famous as musicians.

But the other Asiatic self-confident race-names are fully qualified. In a fascinating book, the late Professor Lionel W. Lyde's *The Continent of Asia* (2nd edition, 1939), we read, in reference to 'that precise anti-foreign bias which has been common . . . to all parts of China

* I omit, for instance, the name of a certain South American native people and pass over the *Berber*, a name that would require weeks of research before anything approaching certainty could be attained; there is at least a case to be put for interpreting *Berbers* as '*the* Men'. There is no case at all for *Navaho* (or *Navajo*), which I have seen adduced in this connexion.

since the building of the Great Wall', that 'it is important to remember that this anti-foreign bias was based on *contempt*, for during the centuries of isolation the Ch'ins ("*The* Men") came into contact only with surrounding peoples who were very much their inferiors'. The Ch'in dynasty (255–206 B.C.) made of the feudal states a well-knit empire; and it built the Great Wall. *Ch'in*, usually classified as a Pekinese word, has a further significance, for its *in* element is the important one, reappearing in the Ainu language, a language stated by several notable authorities to bear no known relationship to any other. Further research will probably show that Ainu, spoken by 'the hairy Ainu', a race native to Japan, is, like Japanese, derived mostly from Chinese.

Ainu is *a-inu*, which signifies both 'man' and 'men'. (The variant *Aino* may be, not an Ainu but an ordinary-Japanese word: a nickname: *aino*, 'the mongrels' – an odd name to be applied by the ordinary Japanese to an indigenous and ancient race.) *Ainu*, *a-inu*, is clearly akin to *Innuit*, designating an Eskimo tribe of North America: *Innuit*, the prevalent English and American spelling, might better be written *Inuit*: *inu-it*, 'the men; *the* Men'. If we regard *Ch'in*, *Ainu*, *Inuit*, we see that the common factor is *in* or *inu*. The *ch* of *Ch'in*, like the *a* of *Ainu*, appears to be either an intensifying prefix or simply an emphatic 'the' as in '*the* men', the men *par excellence*; and the *it* of *Inuit* appears to be an intensifying suffix.

Now, whereas the Innuits are American, the Yuits are Asiatic Eskimos – as also, probably, were the former, at first. As *Inuit* signifies '*the* men', so *Yuit* signifies 'men': it is, therefore, possible that *Innuit* was the original form: *inu-it*, its etymology ignored, suffers a resyllabization and then drops *in*, the result being *uit*, which easily becomes *Yuit*.

The Innuits have taken us to North America: and North America yields at least two other '*the* men' race-names. The Lenape are popularly known as the Delaware Indians, a virile and warlike tribe, strictly designated the *Leni-Lenape*, consisting of three sub-tribes, the Turkeys, the euphemistically named Turtles, the aptly named Wolves. *Lenape* means 'man', hence 'men'; it also meant '*the* men' when it elliptically served for *Leni-Lenape*, which, in the Lenape language, signifies '*leni*, or real, *lenape* or man'. Every adult male of the Leni-Lenape, formerly the most powerful of the Algonquian tribes of what we now call Canada and the United States, was, by tradition and privilege, addressed as 'grandfather' by the members of all the other Algonquain tribes, to whom, in deed, they were truly '*the* men'.

Among the Algonquian tribes, there existed another confederacy the Illinois. Webster dismisses the etymology thus baldly: 'French, from Illinois *Iliniwek*, literally "men" '. But George R. Stewart, in *Names on the Land*, sub-titled *A Historical Account of Place-Naming in the United States*, has this to say: – 'As early as 1640 there were tales of the Eriniouai. By better report it was written later as Aliniouek or Iliniouek. But anyone knowing the language would see that the last of that word was only an ending, and the root of that tribal name was Ilini, of which the meaning was simply "man". The French added *s* to make a plural, and finally it became even more French-looking as Illinois. Of these people one of the first of the French to visit them wrote: "To say 'Illinois' is as much as to say in their language, 'the men', as if the other savages were to be thought mere animals".' (Note the striking similarity of the *ini* of *Ilini* to the *inu* of *Ainu* and the *in* of *Ch'in*. The Red Indians were of Mongoloid stock.)

Two other 'savage' races took this confident view of themselves: a Polynesian and an African.

In Australia, *Kanaka* denotes a Melanesian employed on a Queensland sugar plantation; elsewhere, a South Sea Islander in general or a Hawaiian in particular. In Polynesian, *kanaka* means 'a man': the Kanakas, therefore, are '*the* men' of the South Sea islands.

In that deservedly standard text-book of geography, *Africa*, Professor Walter Fitzgerald has written: 'The name "Bantu" or "Aba-ntu" is the plural of a word meaning "human being" and is used in reference to the largest group of related negroid communities in Africa'. Now, *Ba-* and *Aba*, like *Ma-* and *Ama-*, are variants of the Bantu prefix *aba-*, indicative of 'persons', as in *Ba-ntu* or *Aba-ntu*, the two names being a combination of this plural-personal prefix and *ntu*, itself meaning either 'an object' or derivatively (?) 'a person'. Thinking, not of the Proper Name *Bantu* (or *Abantu*), but of the common noun *bantu*, we find that *ba-ntu*, 'men', is in fact the plural of *mu-ntu*, 'a man'. (With the final *u* of *ntu*, Swahili *mtu*, compare that of the Swahili *Adamu*, 'Adam'.

At least one Bantu tribe, the Zulus, magnificent of physique and courage, had a better excuse than most of the arrogant races mentioned above to call themselves '*the* Men'. Without being too fanciful, we may imagine how very proudly the forebears of the Zulus said *aba-ntu* or *ba-ntu*, 'the individuals, the persons': 'we, the persons': 'we, the *Bantu*': 'We are *the* people'.

(Written in June, 1949, and serving as that year's Christmas card.)

INSEPARABLE NICKNAMES

Mr Neil Bell, himself a considerable authority on slang and other unconventionalities, has, in his attractive novel, *The Years Dividing*, remarked of a minor and disreputable character, that, like all other Clarks, he was called 'Nobby'. Most of us, too, have heard of or even known, a 'Tug' Wilson, a 'Dolly' Gray, a 'Buck' Taylor, or a 'Dusty' Miller.

Inevitable or inseparable nicknames are, however, comprised of two classes: the general and the particular.

The general denote either nationality or some physical trait. In the former subdivision fall such well-known labels as *Fritz*, used of any person of German nationality or possessing a surname obviously German; *Frenchy* or *Frog* of a Frenchman – 'inseparables', by the way, are virtually confined to men; *Ikey* or occasionally *Moses* of Jews, who, if they are boxers, are apt to be called *Kid*, *Jewy* being applied mostly to Jews surnamed Moss; *Jock* of a Scotsman; *Taffy* of a Welshman and especially of a man named Jones or Owen; and *Mick* of an Irishman. A Frenchman is *Frog* because of the ancient British game of airily attributing to Frenchmen an irresistible predilection for the consumption of frogs; all the other names are diminutives of such Christian names as are very commonly bestowed on males of the nations concerned. The physical nicknames may be direct; thus, a short man risks being called *Bunty*; if he is both slight and extremely short, he will certainly be

called *Tich*, after Little Tich,* that Edwardian comic of great renown, but it is to be noted that the recipient need not necessarily be slight – witness 'Tich' Freeman of Kent cricketing fame; anyone with white or flaxen hair will probably be called *Snowy*, this being also a nickname bestowed, on the analogy of *Dusty* Miller, on all who rejoice in the surname of Baker. Two other 'physicals' are rather different, for *Tiny* is ironically imposed on all very big, tall fellows, and *Bluey* designates a man with red hair.

Shorty, like *Snowy*, falls into both classes, for it labels a man that is short, but it also, for an unascertained reason, labels some of the Wrights. Wrights, however, may also be called *Shiner* – for no more cogent reason, apparently, than that 'Wright' rhymes with 'bright' and 'white'; a man surnamed Bright or White is naturally called *Shiner*, and so, almost as naturally, is he who is surnamed Black. (Compare *Darky* applied ironically to the Whites.) *Shiner* adorns many Greens (others, for some odd reason, being stigmatized as *Dodger* or patted on the back as *Jimmy*), perhaps because of the frequent association, 'bright green'; it is less clear why a Bryant should be thus nicknamed, clear enough why a White, rhyming with 'bright', should be so labelled. The kind of semantic suggestion obvious in *Shiner* appears also in *Lackery* or *Timber* Wood or Woods: in the Indian Army, *lack(e)ry* is applied to a stick or any piece of wood and it represents the Hindustani *lakri*; hence *Timber*.

A more notable group is the vocational. Thus we

* Harry Relph adopted this stage name because he was a claimant to theatrical fame, just as Arthur Orton was a claimant to the *Tich*borne estates and title; Orton was a big man.

have *Doughy* as well as *Snowy* Baker*; *Chippy* Carpenter, with which compare *chips* as the nickname given to anyone who is actually a carpenter; *Dusty* Miller – *Dusty*† being occasionally bestowed also and explicably on the Smiths, though men of this commonest of all surnames are more generally *Darky* or *Smudger* when they are not, more logically, *Shoey*; *Snip* Taylor; and *Spokey* Wheeler or Wheelwright. Closely allied is *Pedlar* Palmer, the nickname arising from the fact that palmers are those pilgrims who, in their return from the Holy Land, used to carry a palm-branch. Some of the modern popularity of *Pedlar* may be derived from a famous pugilist—a clever boxer in the 8 stone 6 class – so nicknamed; certainly *Spike* or *Spikey* accompanies Sullivan because of the fame attaching to prize-fighter Sullivan, a very nasty man to *run up* against, and Smiths may be *Gunboat*, after the American heavy-weight, 'Gunboat' Smith of the Navy.

Spikey‡ and *Gunboat* thus belong to the largest of all the groups: that resulting from the names of famous or notorious persons. A Young is sure to be *Brigham*, from the founder and pluralistic prophet of Salt Lake City. Taylors are *Buck*, from Buck Taylor, a very popular member of 'Buffalo Bill' Cody's first cowboy team to visit England (1887). All *Peaces* are Charley, after the far too famous criminal. The entertainment world has

* Mr Douglas Buchanan reminds me that among Public School 'men' and men, especially Harrovians, a Baker is generally *He-Face*, 'he' being Public-School slang for 'cake'. Baker Pasha (Colonel Valentine Baker, 1827–87) bore this nickname.

† And see later.

‡ Nevertheless, as Mr Douglas Buchanan has said, the origin may be this: In areas where Irish potato-hoers were working, tramps used to take the name of Sullivan when entering a *spike* or casual ward.

given us *Edna* May, from the celebrated actress, though Mays are also likely, for some unknown reason, to be called *Piggy*; *Lottie* Collins – in the City, Collinses are often nicknamed *Wilkie* (from Wilkie Collins, the novelist) – from the music-hall artist, and *Fanny** Fields, from another music-hall star, 'Happy' Fanny Fields, almost as popular early in the 20th Century as the inimitable Gracie is in ours. Moores are *Pon(e)y*, after a once well-known 'sporting' character, Pony Moore of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels, although certain Moores are *Old* after *Old Moore's Monthly Messenger*, and others, by contrast, are *Young*; and *Sloan* must be *Tod*, for was not Tod Sloan a well-known jockey, learning from and succeeding to that Archer who was as prominent in the 1880's as Gordon Richards is to-day. *Tod* graces also those who are surnamed Hunter, after Isaac or 'Mathematics' Todhunter (1820–84), whose very dry and difficult text-books darkened the lives of all those who were unfortunate enough to be at school in the latter half of Queen Victoria's reign. Several naval notabilities have left their mark on nick-nomenclature. *Nobby*, which is best known for its associations with Clark,† is also granted to all Ewarts (thence to

* This nickname is bestowed also on men of dainty physique or dress or manners; e.g., 'Fanny' Walden, the Tottenham Hotspur and England forward, the Northamptonshire cricketer and England cricket-umpire.

† Mr Douglas Buchanan has stated this origin so clearly that it were impertinence to change his words. 'The Clarks', he writes, 'were naturally associated with the clerks in the City who wore silk hats. Did not George Beauchamp sing:

> 'Where did you get that hat, where did you get that tile?
> Isn't it a nobby one—it's just the latest style!'

Nobs is obsolescent slang for the rich or the fashionable; *the nobs* are the important.

Hewarts, Hewetts or Hewitts): Admiral Charles Ewart was, when Captain of H.M.S. *Melpomene* in 1859–62, noted for his 'nobbiness' or neatness of dress and also for his insistence on his ship being kept bright and spotless; so much so, indeed, that once at Malta, at the Opera, 'a crowd of bluejackets in the gallery at one side', on the Captain's taking his seat in the stalls, 'broke out in chorus with "Who white-washed the goose?" Those opposite responded with "Why, Nobby Ewart",' because he had so treated a certain goose kept on board for provisions, as Messrs Fraser and Gibbons relate in *Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases* (1925). All Martins are *Pincher* because of Admiral Sir William Martin, who, commanding in the Mediterranean in 1860–63, gained the nickname 'Pincher' for certain proclivities of his. Likewise, Wilsons are *Tug*, from Admiral of the Fleet Sir A. K. Wilson, V.C., (1842–1921) who, when a lieutenant in the 1860's, was, by the bluejackets serving with him, called 'Tug' as a variant of an earlier nickname, 'Chug' or 'Choog', or so tradition (see Fraser and Gibbons) tells; it is, however, possible that *Tug* was given him by such midshipmen as had been to, or had brothers at, Winchester, to distinguish him from some hyphenated Wilson, *tug* being at that school a 'notion' for ordinary, normal, routine, and several related senses. From these naval annals it would therefore seem that it was the Navy which, in the 1860's, gave rise to inseparable nicknames; they had reached the Army by 1890 at the latest; the War of 1914–1918 effectually distributed them among the lower classes, and even introduced several (notably *Tug* and *Dolly*) among the upper classes, which, for the most part, eschew such manifestations of that poetry of the people which flowers in slang and in such nicknames as these.

Dolly, as might be expected, has been given to those named Gray because of *Dolly Gray*, a song that even the dogs barked during the Boer War; a song that reminds us of those maidens who, in the War of 1914–1918, so cheerily rendered themselves hoarse with 'We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go'. *Betsy* Gay likewise derives from a song; this one had the refrain, 'That charming Betsy Gay'. Not from a song but 'from a celebrated character in naval fiction' comes Chatty Mather, 'whether the uncomplimentary meaning (dirty or untidy) applies . . . or not', as Frank C. Bowen remarks in *Sea Slang*, 1929.

Analogous are the few names that derive from the commonness of some phrase: *Shiner* Green, noted above; *Happy* Day, from the toast 'happy days!'; *Chalky* White, too obvious for explanation; *Smoky* Holmes, from homes too often smoky; *Dusty* Rhodes, from dusty roads; and *Hooky* Walker, from a slang catch-phrase now almost obsolete. But men named Walker are also *Johnny*, from that whisky which is almost as strong (and good) as its going. The only other 'trade' nickname of which I can think at the moment is *Blanco*: for *Blanco* Whites are so called not from the tautologously named poet of the early 19th Century, but from the cleanser for white canvas shoes. In Spanish, *blanco* means 'white'.

The cleverness of *Jumper* Cross, from 'jump across', is not repeated elsewhere, although the play on Arabic words in such Egyptian Army nicknames as *Eska*, *Jebbel* (Hill), *Ketir Mug* and *Mush*,* is not unmeritorious.

* These names appear in my *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, which, at 'Nicknames', lists a few others not mentioned in this essay. See also the entry at NICKNAMES in *A Dictionary of Forces' Slang: 1939-1945*, by Wilfred Granville, Frank Roberts and myself.

But we do not know whether it is cleverness or silliness which has prompted such 'inevitables' as *Dan* Coles, *Knocker* Walker, *Pills* Holloway, and *Wiggy* Bennett; we can merely hazard a guess that a Holloway is *Pills* because some well-known naval surgeon or physician was named Holloway,* and that all Bennetts are *Wiggy*, some few Walkers are *Knocker*, and most Browns *Topper* (occasionally corrupted to *Tupper*), because of certain anecdotes or incidents now forgotten.

To explain all these inseparable nicknames is no longer possible – at least without several years of research. And I doubt whether so short a period would suffice.

(Written in September and appearing first in *John o' London's Weekly*, early in October, 1936, this essay was slightly enlarged – mainly because of interesting comments appearing in the correspondence columns of that periodical – for publication in *A Covey of Partridge*, 1937).

* More probably, however, the nickname derives from Holloway's Pills and Ointments. Thomas Holloway, who died in 1883, was also a great philanthropist. (I owe this to Mr Felix Holt.)

THE WORD *BLOODY*

> Among tragic downfalls from high to the lowest place, the unfortunate and familiar adjectives *blooming* and *bloody* are deserving of sympathetic mention. – Logan Pearsall Smith.

In his 'social pity' novel *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* – one of the best that he wrote after his collaborator Rice's death in 1882 – Besant has this illuminating passage: 'The man replied that he did not know the object of the building; and to make quite manifest that he really did not know, he put an adjective before the word "object", and another – that is, the same – before the word "building". With that he passed on his way, and Lord Jocelyn was left marvelling at the slender resources of our language, which makes one adjective do duty for so many qualifications.' Commenting on this, Professor Ernest Weekley* has compared the British workman's exclusive preference† for *bloody* with the refined circles' *nice*, the schoolgirls' *ripping*,‡ and the schoolboys' *decent*.

Much the same point of view has been expressed by the late Professor H. C. K. Wyld,§ who treats also of a further aspect of great significance. 'There is a certain adjective, most offensive to polite ears' – the Professor avoids mentioning it by name and excludes it from both of the indexes in the book I quote – 'which plays appar-

* *The Romance of Names*, 1914. I have used the carefully revised edition of 1928.

† A preference shared with 'effing'.

‡ In 1946–50 it has been *super* – when not *smashing*.

§ *A History of Colloquial English*, 1920.

ently the chief role in the vocabulary of large sections of the community. It seems to argue a certain poverty of linguistic resource when we find that this word is used by the same speakers both to mean absolutely nothing – being placed before every noun, and often adverbially before . . . adjectives – and also to mean a great deal – everything indeed that is unpleasant in the highest degree. It is rather a curious fact that the word in question, while always impossible, except perhaps when used as it were in inverted commas, in such a way that the speaker dissociates himself from all responsibility for, or proprietorship in it, would be felt to be rather more than ordinarily intolerable, if it were used by an otherwise polite speaker as an absolutely meaningless adjective prefixed at random to most of the nouns in a sentence, and worse than if it were used deliberately, with a settled and full intent. There is something very terrible in an oath torn from its proper home and suddenly implanted in the wrong social atmosphere. In these circumstances the alien form is endowed by the hearers with mysterious and uncanny meanings; it chills the blood and raises gooseflesh.' But *bloody* no longer chills the blood: it is frequently employed to warm the conversation, and it has become one of the tricks of the best-selling, and other, novelists. The Professor's statement, however, accounts for the sensation caused by George Bernard Shaw's employment of the word in 1912.

The O.E.D. dates the low English usage of *bloody*, 'an epithet expressing detestation' when not merely an intensive (especially in the negative, e.g. 'not a bloody one'), from about 1840, and surmises that this sense of *bloody* derives from that of the adverb, which, in good and general colloquial use and odour until about 1750,

became popular during the Restoration in its present form: Etherege in his comedy *The Man of Mode*, 1676, has 'not without he will promise to be bloody drunk', the phrase *bloody drunk* recurring in Dryden. Professor Weekley has, in his *Words Ancient and Modern*, shown that *bloody* for *bloodily* 'is due to an instinct which tends to drop -ly from a word already ending in -y', as in *very*, *pretty*, *jolly*: 'Mr Masefield's beautiful line, "I'll bloody burn his bloody ricks", would lose all its rhythm and much of its charm, if the correct adverb were substituted before "burn" '. (I should like to record my belief that in *The Everlasting Mercy*, 1912 – a 'dramatic poem' sensational for its bad language – Mr Masefield was wrong to use *bloody* thus before *burn*: such a character* would have said 'bloody well burn'.)

Professor Weekley adduces a most helpful example from John Marston's *The Faun*, 1606: there someone is described as 'cruelly eloquent and bluddily learned'. *Bloodily* as an intensive adverb probably came in with the Elizabethans, and I shall feel surprised if research does not reveal that one of the pamphleteers introduced it. The Restoration writers employed the adverbial *bloody* without offence, and in the first half of the 18th Century it was quite respectable, as we see from the following three examples.† Swift in 1714 writes to Stella, 'It was bloody hot walking to-day'; in 1727 in one of his works the Dean has 'His wife . . . said, "Are you not sick, my dear?" He replied, "Bloody sick" '; and in 1742 Samuel Richardson, blameless to the point of goody-goodyness, says of a character in *Pamela*, 'He is bloody passionate'. In 1753 Samuel Foote, the actor-dramatist, has what has become a stock phrase, 'She's a

* See the song 'Raining' quoted later.

† From *The O.E.D.* and Weekley's *Etymological Dictionary*.

bloody fine girl', which represents the transition from the respectable to the disreputable. Thereafter the adverb was increasingly banned, and not until the 1840's* did the adjective become very common with workmen and their social equals, whose privilege it remained until Masefield, Shaw, and the War of 1914–1918 foisted it on the public. The public, it may be remarked, has since 1912 done all the publicity needed to introduce it into every class.

It is worth noting that in the revised Hotten of 1874 stands this significant entry:† 'BLOODY, an expletive word, without reference to meaning as an adjective and an adverb, simply for intensification'. In 1880 Ruskin alluded to its use, 'not altering the form of the word, but defiling the thought in it'. Ten years later, John S. Farmer said of the adjective that although it has many 'vague and varying senses', it usually has no meaning; occasionally it 'carries with it a suspicion of anger, resentment, or detestation'. The same applies to the adverb, as Joseph Wright made quite clear in 1897.

Going back ten years, we see that Charles Mackay, in his article 'English Slang and French Argot' in *Blackwood's Magazine* for May, 1888, speaks of 'such shallow semblances of the broader oaths of a bygone age as "darn" for "damn", "so help me Scott" for "so help me God", and "blooming" for "bloody" '; he notes that *bloody* is much more generally used in England than in America and – this, I must remind you, is in 1888 – 'seldom long absent from the conversation of the vilest classes of low Englishman'. The word does not escape

* R. H. Dana, *Before the Mast*, 1840, has 'You'll find me a bloody rascal'.

† Its significance has been ignored by the standard lexicographers.

that Irish-Gaelic mania which Mackay displayed in his writings on words (he even combed Littré's famous dictionary to impose Celtic roots upon a multitude of innocent French words): *bloody*, he says, 'is not really synonymous with sanguinary in its etymological origin, though it is usually held to be so, but proceeds from a British root of quite a different and altogether inoffensive meaning – from *bloidhe*, "rather"; as when Dean Swift wrote to a friend in England that it was "bloody hot in Dublin", he simply meant in Irish-Gaelic phrase that it was rather hot'. Mackay then sagely remarks: 'But the English lower classes, who employ the word so frequently, though they sometimes substitute "blooming", would not perhaps interlard their talk with it so persistently and offensively if they knew that no greater force attached to it than . . . "rather" '. No, they wouldn't and they don't. It is precisely these classes which have the alternative *bleeding*,* and even *bleed*† for blood as in 'I'll have his bleed'; *bleeder*, for an adjectival chap, was often employed in 1914–1918 by the Tommy and is of Cockney origin. *Blooming* is equally a corruption with *blurry*, which as used in newspapers and books in 1914–1918 was a euphemism, but as used in actual speech is merely a slurring of the original. Likewise, *blinking* is not directly a euphemism for *bloody*: it probably represents *blanking*, i.e. *bleeding*, i.e. *bloody*, as in 'the blinking thing', and the relationship is more clearly seen in *blinker*, pejorative for chap, fellow, man, and very closely resembling *bleeder*.

The difference between the English and the American attitude was again mentioned in 1893, when to *Harper's*

* Wright in *The English Dialect Dictionary* records *bleedy* (or *bleady*) as an adverb. *Bleeding* is both adverb and adjective.

† Now obsolescent.

Magazine (nearly as good then as it is now – we still have nothing like it in England), Professor J. Brander Matthews contributed a revolutionary essay,* somewhat influenced it is true by Lounsbury, on 'The Function of Slang'. There he reinforces Mackay on one point: 'Every American traveler in England must have remarked with surprise the British use of the Saxon synonym of *sanguinary* as an intensive, the chief British rivals of *bloody* in this respect being *blooming* and *blasted.* All these are held to be shocking to polite ears, and it was with bated breath that the editor of a London newspaper wrote about the prospects of "a b—y war"; while, as another London editor declared recently, it is now impossible for a cockney to read with proper sympathy Jeffrey's appeal to Carlyle, after a visit to Craigenputtock, to bring his "blooming Eve out of her blasted paradise".' And Mr Mencken† has judiciously recorded that *bloody* 'is entirely without improper significance in America'.

In the present century, the use of both adjective and adverb has spread in every direction.

It was in 1912 that George Bernard Shaw startled London and, indeed, fluttered the entire British Empire by making one of the characters in *Pygmalion* use the word in ordinary dialogue. In Act III, where Liza Dolittle is being 'inspected' by Higgins's relatives and friends, that young flower-girl from Covent Garden, when Freddy, opening the door for her, asks: 'Are you walking across the Park, Miss Dolittle? If so —', replies: 'Walk! Not bloody likely. (*Sensation.*) I am going in a

* Reprinted in the volume entitled *Parts of Speech*, a most interesting collection of essays and studies on language—English and American.

† H. L. Mencken, *The American Language*, 4th edition, 1936.

taxi.' Much of the interest felt in the play was due to 'the heroine's utterance of this banned word. It was waited for with trembling, heard shudderingly. . . .* Referring to the year 1910, C. E. Montague made one of the characters in *Rough Justice* (1926) declare very acutely: 'All the little different emphasizing particles in Greek mean what an English workman means by bloody'. That would be equally true of the British soldier in 1914–1918, when language was being callously, cynically, mockingly, or desperately and sadistically debased: when, with a supreme disregard to discrimination, the troops could, as W. V. Tilsley in *Other Ranks*, 1931, remarked, say that 'Snow was bloody, khaki was bloody, the sky was bloody, green envelopes were bloody'. Compare their song *Raining* (to the air of the hymn *Holy, Holy, Holy*), which begins:

> Raining, raining, raining,
> Always bloodywell raining.
> Raining all the morning,
> And raining all the night.

and ends

> Marching, marching, marching,
> Always bloodywell marching;
> When the war is over
> We'll bloodywell march no more.†

Bloody was their favourite adverb and adjective: all other 'swear words', frequently as some were used, might be described as 'also-rans'. It even served as an intersyllabic or intervocalic word, as in 'im-bloody-possible' or 'too bloody right'.

* *The New York Times*, April 14, 1914.

† From John Brophy and Eric Partridge, *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier*, 3rd edition, 1931.

In 1919 Mr H. L. Mencken could assert that 'so familiar has it become . . . that it is a mere counter-word, without intelligible significance', and he illustrated this with the story, current since the late 19th Century, of two Yorkshiremen in front of an election poster. 'What do they mean', asks one, 'by one man, one vote?' 'Why,' answered his companion, 'it means "one bloody man, one bloody vote",' to which the inquirer replied, 'Then why the hell don't they bloody well say so?' A decade later, the Very Rev. Dean Inge observed that in the speech of the British workman, *bloody* served merely to indicate that a noun or an adjective might be expected to follow immediately. In its origin, however, the word perhaps sprang* from the 'instinct for adorning every object'; 'like other more or less useless things the adjective is merely used as packing material'.

The origin is somewhat doubtful and, as Mr Mencken has remarked, 'just why it is regarded as profane and indecent by the English is one of the mysteries of the language'. The proposed etymologies number six.

1. Charles Mackay's *bloidhe*, rather. Already mentioned, this fantastic suggestion merits no further space.

2. *By'r Lady*† (originally *by our Lady*), 'an interjection very common in Shakespeare, in no way corresponding in use to *bloody*'. Even in the oft-cited instance in Swift, 'it grows by'r Lady cold', the oath is obviously an oath; like all oaths, it is used for emphasis, but that doesn't make it an adverb, still less the adverb *bloody*. This delusion 'seems ineradicable'.

3. *S'blood* (originally *God's blood*), another ancient oath. As improbable as No. 2.

* Ernest Weekley, *Adjectives and Other Words*, 1930.

† Mostly from Weekley's *Words Ancient and Modern*, 1926.

4. *Blood* in its ordinary physiological sense but with reference to either menstruation (as noted by Mencken) or 'the bloody flux', the old name for dysentery. Ingenious, but the explanation is much too restricted to be valid.

5. *A blood*, a rich (and generally young) roisterer. Of *bloody*, *The O.E.D.* says: 'There is good reason to think that it was at first a reference to the habits of the "bloods" or aristocratic rowdies of the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th Century. The phrase "bloody drunk" was apparently = "as drunk as a blood" (cf. "as drunk as a lord"); thence it was extended to kindred expressions, and at length to others.' It is interesting to note that Captain Francis Grose, in 1785, records the phrase 'drunk as an emperor', i.e. ten times as drunk as a lord, but it does not materially affect the argument, which has been changed considerably by Weekley's example of 1606; this example disposes pretty thoroughly of the 'aristocratic roisterer' theory.

6. *Blood* as physiological blood in general. In 'a man cruelly eloquent and bluddily learned', *cruelly* may retain something of the sense 'severely', 'distressingly', but this adverb early became an intensive, meaning little more than 'very' as in 'cruelly cold'; likewise *bluddily*, as it is there spelt, may preserve some connotation of 'vividly', 'spiritedly', 'heatedly' or 'enthusiastically'. But, all in all, both words connote little more than 'exceedingly'. It is, however, noticeable that the root-idea of blood as something vivid or distressing still colours the use of the adjective, which is, as it has always been, stronger and less 'polite' than the adverb: but then adverbs in general lose their original signification more rapidly than adjectives in general do theirs. There is no doubt that *bloody* has been chosen as an expletive

'for its grisly and repellent sound and sense' and that its frequent association with battle, murder, wounds, outrage, insult and kindred facts has strengthened its appeal to those who like a violent word: at first, these were the rougher members of the lower classes. Its weakened sense is similar to that of *terrible*, *devilish*, *damned*, *beastly*, *filthy*, and their adverbs.

The corresponding word is similarly employed in other languages. The Latin adjective *cruentus* is found not only with *victoria*, *pax*, *bellum*, but with *ira* and *dies*, and, more significantly still, the adverb *cruente(r)* sometimes, in post-Augustan Latin, means nothing more than 'severely'. In Greek we find *heimatöeis polemos*, a bloody war. Professor Weekley shows that the modern languages offer further parallels. He cites instances from the Dutch, French, German, and gives two particularly valuable ones from the second: 'Voltaire, in his "Commentaire sur Corneille", writes, "La princesse Henriette joua un tour bien sanglant (a bloody trick) à Corneille, quand elle le fit travailler à Bérénice", and the word is still used with *injure*, *reproche*, *outrage*, etc. If we go still further back, we find, in a 14th Century report of a marital dispute, that "elle l'appela sanglant sourd et lui l'appela sanglante ordure".' The Dutch equivalent of *une sanglante injure* (a bloody insult) is *een bloedige beleediging* or *een bloedige hoon*. The German *blutig* (in compounds *blut*) can, in certain senses, exactly render the English *bloody* as in 'Ich habe keinen blutigen Heller mehr', I haven't a bloody bean, or, less slangily, I have not even a penny left; *blutarm*, miserably or bloody poor; the archaic *blutdieb* signifies a bloody thief; and 'Das ist mein blutiger Ernst' is, as Professor Weekley reminds us, 'fairly polite German for "I seriously (Shavian *bloodywell*) mean what I say" '.

The sixth, the physiologico-affective etymology and explanation, is the natural one: and there was never any need to be tortuously or pedantically ingenious.

It is in some ways a pity that *bloody* has been thus debased, despite the vigour of its expletive use, for the debasement has been so general that, in serious contexts, we are now, in order to avoid a titter, forced to use 'severe', 'cruel' or 'sanguinary' instead of an excellent word.

(Published, 1933, in *Words, Words, Words.*)

EUPHEMISM AND EUPHEMISMS

Substitution of mild or vague expression for harsh or blunt one; expression thus substituted. – H. W. and F. G. Fowler.

Of the numerous writers who have dealt with this subject, I shall take an assortment chosen for their different nationalities and their varying points of view: an Englishman, an American, an Italian, a Frenchman, and a Belgian. They all assume that we know the etymology of the word, which derives from a Greek verb meaning 'to speak favourably'. Greek provides what is perhaps the most famous of all euphemisms: *Eumenides*, the Kindly Ones, for the Furies or Avenging Gods.

Professor Weekley, in *The Romance of Words*, speaks of euphemism as 'that form of speech which avoids calling things by their names' and observes that it results from 'various human instincts which range from religious reverence down to common decency' and, he implies, a good deal lower. He cites two interesting examples of that modesty which leads to much euphemism: 'In 1829 the use of the word *mouchoir*', a handkerchief, 'in a French adaptation of "Othello" caused a riot at the Comédie Française. History repeats itself, for in 1907, a play by J. M. Synge was produced in Dublin, but "the audience broke up in disorder at the word "shift".' *Handkerchief* itself is a euphemism, with the ludicrous literal meaning of hand-cover-head, while *shift* is an earlier euphemism (literally, a change of raiment) for a smock.

Among Americans, Greenough and Kittredge in *Words and Their Ways in English Speech*, Mr H. L. Mencken in *The American Language*, and Professor George McKnight in *English Words and Their Background* have written both thoughtfully and entertainingly on the subject: where so much is good, the last will serve. Professor McKnight stresses the fact that the Greeks and many other races believed – many people still do believe – that 'there is a direct relation between a thing and its name': this belief links intimately with religious and other superstition. He points out that, contrary to a rather general impression, 'one of the most distinctive features of sophisticated speech, as distinguished from unsophisticated speech in our time' – his book appeared in 1923 – 'is the absence of squeamishness and the ready courage to name things directly': since the War of 1914–1918, in fact, it is only the semi-educated and the uneducated who have persisted in consistent euphemism, and, since civilization began, it has always been the 'half-baked' who practise euphemism the most.

The Italian selected is Niceforo,* who relates all ancient euphemism to superstition of some kind or other and implies that a modern, sincerely disclaiming such an origin and alleging modesty or respect or kindness, is nevertheless traditionalist; that, in other words, he unthinkingly preserves what was once either pure superstition or a social usage based on superstition. The Frenchman is M. Henri Bauche, author of that somewhat technical but interesting work, *Le Langage populaire* (1920). He has contributed to the subject chiefly by pointing out that the distinction between the harsh or the gross word and that which is not condemned as such

* Alfredo Niceforo: *Le Génie de l'Argot*, 1912. His early books were written in his native language; his later, in French.

is somewhat arbitrary in all languages; that the harshness or the grossness does not correspond exactly to the picture evoked by the word; that different peoples and different social classes vary considerably, not only at different but at the same periods, on the question of *which* things, as well as *which* words, are to be regarded as objectionable; and that in one restricted but significant group (that of physical intimacy and the sexual parts) the euphemisms are accountable by the fact that, whereas the anatomical terms would be both misplaced and pompously ridiculous, the 'old Roman words' have, by the power of usage, become too gross to be used by the respectable.

Professor Carnoy, of the University of Louvain, in an even more technical and even more readable work, *La Science du Mot* (1927), has a very important chapter on euphemism and its opposite, dysphemism. Euphemism he neatly defines as discretion, which does, after all, account for almost every example of euphemism – if we understand 'discretion' in its widest sense. He shrewdly notes that euphemism is employed not to hide the truth or the fact or the thing (silence is best for that) but merely to minimize the painful impression on the listener or the unpleasant results for the speaker, this latter aspect having never been adequately treated until Carnoy took it in hand; related to this latter is the speaker's desire to make a favourable impression. All this appears in the Professor's classification of the direct causes of euphemism and the particular reasons for its use, a classification that I cannot forbear reproducing, though I modify it somewhat.

1. *The desire to adapt oneself to the general sentiment suitable to the time, place, and other circumstances.* This desire will take one of two forms: Carnoy notes only the

anxiety not to depart from an elevated or a beautiful style in poetry, oratory, etc., by introducing unseemly or trivial words or metaphors. But, either in very lowly or very friendly circles, or in addressing children, one may try to avoid technical or literary words by employing synonyms that are definitely euphemistic; in conversation with children, euphemism frequently arises from a modesty that would be wholly out of place between adults, or to a wish to spare children knowledge that might, to them, be either painful or meaningless.

2. *The effort to enhance the value of what one possesses or of what one gives.* This is hyperbole, and the relation of hyperbole to euphemism is nowhere so well treated as in McKnight's book already mentioned. As in *saloon* for a bar, *university* for a technical school, *professor* for a teacher or simply an exponent.

3. *Respect for the person addressed, or the desire to impress or please the person addressed.* Under this heading come titles, the stereotyped politeness of the professions and of commerce, the calling of a Jew a *Hebrew*,* a negro *a coloured man* (even *gentleman*), any woman a *lady*. Some of the most ridiculous of euphemisms are caused by this desire and this practice; it is, however, to be noticed that such instances of euphemism result not from a desire to impress or to please but from an often mistaken reluctance to offend either the person addressed or perhaps somebody within hearing, as in the ridiculous *dark gentleman* for an Indian of India and in *charlady* for a charwoman. If one is speaking to a person less directly concerned, the avoidance links up with the next group.

* This is a particularly glaring example, for no decent Jew wants to be called anything other than *Jew*: why on earth should he? for he has nothing of which to be ashamed and much to make him proud of his race.

4. *The need to diminish, to tone down a painful evocation; to soften tragic news.* That, among civilized peoples and especially in refined circles, is the most frequent of all reasons. Death, above all; but also sickness, madness or idiocy; ruin. *To pass away* or *over, be no more, leave this world, be asleep in the Lord, expire, go west,* and many other terms instead of the simple 'to die'. This tendency has spread to undertakers, their functions, their subjects: *funeral director, obsequies, the loved one* and other atrocities.

5. *Social and Moral Taboos.* In every class, there are actions and objects that are either blameworthy or very intimate and therefore not mentioned directly in good company. A mild example is drunkenness, which prompts all sorts of euphemisms: *half seas over, elevated, lively, a bit on, happy.* The 'inferior' physical processes and functions afford a stronger and better example. For these, delicacy, reticence, and politeness devise euphemisms as discreet as *to retire* or *pay a visit* or *powder one's nose.* All that relates to sex is heavily veiled: a pregnant woman is *in an interesting condition*; a person lacking in restraint is *fast*; a mistress is a *friend*; the intimacy of marriage becomes *conjugal relations*; 'obscene' becomes *blue* or *hot* or even *frank.*

6. *Superstitious Taboos and Religious Interdictions.* The word is God; speech has a mysterious power; the name evokes the thing. These three points of view explain many ancient and modern euphemisms: and the same emotion or attitude, at different stages, is represented by the philosophic concept of the *Logos* and the popular belief implicit in *speak of the devil.* The latter is seen in the old superstition that one must be particularly careful how one speaks of God, the gods, important persons, the dead; especially with regard to the Deity, this belief survives in such terms as *by golly!, by gad!, gee-whiz!, the*

deuce! Superstition may, however, become pure reverence; and reverence of another kind is felt by those truly in love, to whom it dictates a euphemistic vocabulary of intimacy.

These six reasons could be reduced to three: fear, kindness, delicacy, as anyone can see if he examines a list of euphemisms. That point need not be laboured. Yet in euphemism and euphemisms there are certain important features that cannot be ignored.

The need for euphemism is one of the chief causes of synonyms, though it is far from being the only one. Any very general act – to eat, to drink, to walk, to sleep – has a rich synonymy; so has any very usual object – a head, a hand, a house. But when, further, that act or object or condition is not thought respectable or when it is very intimate, then the synonymy becomes richer still. The need – sometimes real, sometimes imagined – for euphemism has led to much verbal ingenuity, rarely beautiful, often clever, sometimes amusing, occasionally morbid.

Euphemism may cause the word it displaces to be forgotten or to become obsolete. Frequently it renders successive synonyms suspect, displeasing, indelicate, immoral, or blasphemous. This we see in such words as *lover* and *mistress*, *simple* and *silly*, and, in certain contexts, *weak* and *strong*; an excellent example in French is *fille*. As Weekley has said, 'a euphemism is doomed from its very birth', and as Carnoy has expatiated: 'la vertu adoucissante des termes euphémistiques n'est naturellement pas de très longue durée. Dès que les gens se sont pour de bon habitués à comprendre *B* quand on dit *A*, *A* exprime aussi clairement *B* que le symbole propre à ce dernier. Il faut donc recommencer et aller chercher un nouveau mot qui puisse voiler *B* sans l'obscurcir tout

à fait. Dans l'entretemps, *A* s'est définitivement infecté du sens défavorable de *B* et s'est donc *dégradé*.'

Euphemism may be achieved by directing the thought in the desired direction as in *honorarium*, *convey* (to steal), *spend the night with*; by using an extremely vague phrase as in *she made a slip*; by mentioning a significantly concomitant circumstance, as in *remove* (to kill); by being enigmatical or elusive as in *lose the number of one's mess* (to die); by understatement and the negative litotes, as in *have had a glass* (to become drunk) and *it's not too good*; by irony; by employing another language; by reticence, as in *you know where to go*, i.e. 'go to hell!'; and by abbreviation, as in *w.c.* and *T.B.* (more properly *Tb*).

It was in the 19th Century that euphemism in England and America reached its height. It had gradually increased from the time of the French Revolution until about 1837, and at that pitch it remained for some forty years; nor did a freedom comparable with that of the 18th Century re-appear until the War of 1914–1918. We have not yet returned to such an absence of euphemism as characterized the Restoration and the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean days. There are few to desire such a return.

All in all, as Mencken observes, 'the Englishman . . . is more plain-spoken than the American, and such terms as *bitch*, *mare* and *in foal* do not commonly daunt him, largely, perhaps, because of his greater familiarity with country life. . . . . The Victorian era saw a great growth of absurd euphemisms in England, but it was in America that the thing was carried farthest. Bartlett* hints that *rooster* came into use in place of *cock* as a matter of delicacy, the latter word having acquired an indecent anatomical significance, and tells us that . . . even *bull*

* In his *Dictionary of Americanisms*, 1848; revised edition, 1859.

was banned as too vulgar for refined ears.' (One shudders to think of the repressed dirtiness of mind implicit in these substitutions.) 'In place of it the early purists used *cow-creature*, *male-cow* and even *gentleman-cow*. *Bitch*, *ram*, *boar*, *stallion*, *buck*, and *sow* went the same way. Bache* tells us that *pismire* was also banned, *antmire* being substituted for it. *To castrate* became *to alter*. In 1847 the word *chair* was actually barred out and *seat* adopted in its place. Those were the palmy days of euphemism, 'when table-legs were draped'. Women, who became *females*, were shielded from anything resembling evil: one authority informs us that to mention the word *shirt* in her presence was to insult her; another that *corset* was banned; a third that '*decent* was indecent in the South: no respectable woman was supposed to have any notion of the difference between *decent* and *indecent*'. It was at this period that a wife became *lady*, a leg *limb*, a breast *bosom*,† and *stomach*, as Mencken caustically notes, 'was transformed, by some unfathomable magic, into a euphemism denoting the whole region from the nipples to the pelvic arch'.

The parts of the body, indeed, have suffered gravely from this false modesty; the good English word *belly* is still called stomach; and other instances have just been cited. Moreover, the lewd-minded persons of refinement transferred this abhorrence of anything so unseemly as

* Richard Bache: *Vulgarisms and Other Errors of Speech*, 2nd edition, 1869.

† Weekley, in *The Romance of Words*, quotes from Marryat's *Peter Simple* (early 1830's): 'Fate had placed me opposite to a fine turkey. I asked my partner if I should have the pleasure of helping her to a piece of the breast. She looked at me indignantly and said, "Curse your impudence, sar; I wonder where you larn manners. Sar, I take a lilly turkey *bosom*, if you please." '

legs (male or female), belly (likewise), buttocks (likewise), and breast (especially the female breasts) to the garments that lay next to them. For *smock*, as we have seen, *shift* was substituted; when *shift* became indelicate, the French *chemise* was adopted. *Drawers* (women's) became *knickers* or *panties*, and chemise and knickers, considered together, are often termed *lingerie* or *undies* instead of underclothes or underwear: in 1900, apparently, the term was *flannels* or *linen*. So with men: *shirt*, before ladies, was banned; *breeches* became small-clothes or knickerbockers. The male trousers, indeed, had generated a droll synonymy. *Irrepressibles* is the earliest of the genteel euphemisms for breeches (properly coming to just below the knee) or trousers (full length): it dates from 1790. It was shortly followed by *indescribables*, 1794; thirty years later came *ineffables*. In the 1830's arose *unmentionables*, used in America before being brought to England by Dickens, who in the same year (1836) coined *inexplicables*; and, a year later, *unwhisperables*. During 1840–43 three other euphemisms were coined: *innominables*, *indispensables*, and *unutterables*. Of all these,* the two that have worn best are *inexpressibles* and, above all, *unmentionables*.

Death, madness, suicide, hanging, prostitution, all have numerous synonyms, mostly euphemisms. Death has already been treated, suicide and hanging we shall omit as being rather too grim. Disease of any kind – the word *disease*, literally discomfort, is itself a euphemism – is nearly always glossed over, especially if it be mental. *Mad* became *crazy*, which became *insane*, which became *lunatic*, which became (*mentally*) *deranged*; *crazy* is now almost as harsh as *mad* and is more harsh than *lunatic* or

* I have collected the terms from Hotten and from Farmer and Henley; the dates from *The O.E.D.*

insane; but all these terms have had a long life. Slangy and colloquial euphemisms are (*to have*) *apartments to let*, *a screw loose*, *bats in one's belfry*,* *a tile loose*, *a bee in one's bonnet*, and (*to be*) *batty*, *cracked*, *crackers*, *dippy*, *dotty*, *barmy*, *loopy*, *loony*, *strange* or *queer*, *touched*, *scatty*, *not all there*, *wrong in one's head*, *off one's rocker* (more usually in the form *go off one's rocker*), *off one's chump* or *head*: slang, it will be observed, is not quite so sensitive on the subject as standard English, but it is rarely cruel.

In Victorian days, prostitution was banned as a theme, and 'to this day', wrote Mencken in 1923, 'the effects of that old reign of terror' (the Comstock Postal Act of precisely fifty years earlier) 'are still with us. We yet use . . . such idiotic forms as *red-light district*, *disorderly house*, *social disease* and *white slave*. . . . . The vice crusaders, if they have accomplished nothing else, have at least forced many of the newspapers to use the honest terms, *syphilis*, *prostitute* and *venereal disease*.' That holds rather more of the United States than of England, but it is true of both. Since the War of 1914–1918, however, it has been yearly becoming more permissible to speak of *brothel*, *prostitute*, *procurer*, *pimp* and *syphilis*, not that they are ever likely, in Britain or America, to be made general subjects of conversation. The euphemisms for a prostitute are illuminating, and I leave it to my readers to seek the full details in Wyld's *Universal Dictionary*, or in *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary*. Here are a few: *anonyma*, *incognita*, and the obsolete *quaedam*; *lady of easy virtue* or *accommodating morals* or *more complaisance than virtue*; *sister of the night* and *street-walker*; *courtesan*; *Columbine*; *gay woman* and *pretty lady* and *perfect lady*; an *unfortunate*. This last is very frequent, and Hotten remarks that whereas Tom Hood used the term 'in its widest and more

* Now, *to be bats*.

general sense', this 'modern euphemism' derived from his famous poem *The Bridge of Sighs*:

> One more unfortunate,
> Weary of breath,
> Rashly importunate,
> Gone to her death.

Looking back, I conclude that although it may be weak-minded to employ a euphemism for drunkenness, madness, disease, death (and its analogues), and prostitution, it is a lack of either tact or kindness to force these subjects on those who feel a genuine shrinking, not merely a guilty or sadistic thrill, at their mention; that sexual intimacy is all the better for being respected; that religious matters require no euphemisms; that euphemisms for garments are ridiculous, as are those for non-sexual parts of the body; that perversion is so distasteful to the normal that they naturally avoid talking of it and, if forced to discuss it, are somewhat reticent.

(Published, 1933, in *Words, Words, Words.*)

SLANG AND STANDARD ENGLISH

FOR over a century, there have been protests against the use of slang and controversies on the relation of slang to the literary language or, as it is now usually called, Standard English. Purists have risen in their wrath and conservatives in their dignity to defend the Bastille of linguistic purity against the revolutionary rabble. The very vehemence of the attack and the very sturdiness of the defence have ensured that only the fittest survive to gain entrance into the citadel, there establish themselves, and then become conservatives and purists in their turn.

Some of the contestants, however, are uncertain what they are fighting for – and even what they are fighting about. They have no very clear ideas as to what constitutes Standard English, and only the haziest ideas of what slang is. Even in many esteemed dictionaries the definitions are unsatisfactory. For instance, in a certain dictionary of acknowledged merit the definition of slang is: 'Expressions in common colloquial' – i.e., spoken – 'use but not regarded as standard English'. Now, that does not go far enough; and even in so far as it commits itself it is misleading.

To make himself clear, the quickest and easiest way is for the present writer to be at first arbitrary or even autocratic, and then explanatory.

In every civilized language, there is a hierarchy. That

hierarchy consists, in English, of the following ranks, in ascending order of dignity and respectability: –

Cant;
slang;
vulgarisms (in both senses);
colloquialisms;
Standard English, with its three ascending varieties: –
  Familiar English;
  ordinary Standard English;
  literary English.

(Dialect stands rather to one side; it cannot fairly be placed in the hierarchy at all, for it is primitive and regional. Nevertheless, it forms one of the sources from which Standard English is recruited.)

Cant, more generally known as 'the language of the underworld', is the special vocabulary – rather is it a set of interconnected vocabularies – of criminals and tramps and beggars, of their hangers-on and associates, and of racketeers.

Slang may be replenished, indeed it often is replenished, by recruits from the underworld, but usually it stands self-dependent and self-sufficient, until it dies of inanition or weariness or a change in fashion or, on the other hand, so strongly survives that it is adopted and becomes a colloquialism and is subject to the conditions affecting and governing colloquialisms.

Colloquialisms stand midway between slang and Standard English: they are felt to be more respectable, more permanent than slang, but less respectable, less dignified than Standard English. They are called colloquialisms because they are general and fitting enough in conversation but hardly fitting in serious writings, speeches, sermons. They are used by a larger proportion of the population than is slang.

Standard English is such English as is held to be proper and respectable, fitting and dignified, in all conditions; moreover and especially it consists of all such language as is both adequate and seemly on all serious occasions and in communication with foreigners. The best, the predominant variety of Standard English is that which is neither homely (Familiar English) nor elevated (Literary English). Familiar English is that which is suitable and natural in the ordinary commerce of speech and writing; Literary English is that which is used upon solemn or very important occasions, in sustained and deliberate eloquence, in the most philosophical or aesthetic writings or wherever else the writer may feel that, to do justice to the theme, he must employ only the finest language. Obviously the borderlines between Familiar English, ordinary Standard English, and Literary English are often ill-defined; and the distinctions between these three varieties are much less important than the differences between cant and slang, between slang and colloquialisms, and between colloquialisms and Standard English.

But what of vulgarisms?

Vulgarisms are of two kinds: illiteracies and low language. Illiteracies are, as their name indicates, words and phrases used only by the illiterate; that is, they are words and phrases used incorrectly. Low language, again obviously, consists of expressions avoided by the polite and the decent, at least in polite or decent company. These expressions are not illiterate, they may even be good English – but such good English as, by the association of ideas and by social habit, has come to be avoided in polite company. For instance, *pluck* was once both slang and a vulgarism; at first, the synonymous *guts* was likewise both slang and a vulgarism. In the

hierarchy, vulgarisms may be adjudged co-equal with slang or, at lowest, lying somewhere between cant and slang.

But these generalities remain vague and high-handed unless examples are adduced. Without examples, they are as nothing; more, they are nothing. When Dickens speaks of *cracking a crib* (breaking into a building in order to steal certain contents) he is using cant; it is, by the way, obsolete cant. When a 20th Century novelist or journalist uses the phrase *wide boys*, he also is using cant. If we allude to someone as *a queer fish* or *a rum fellow* we are using slang, for either expression is understood by almost everyone – it is not confined to the underworld, is in fact no longer used by the underworld. When an airmen refers to himself as a *penguin*, he is resorting to the specialized slang of the Air Force; all he means is that he is a member of the ground staff and therefore does not fly; a New Zealand airman would call himself a *kiwi*. Neither a penguin nor a kiwi is a flying bird. If someone calls you *a good chap* or *a decent fellow*, he is employing a colloquialism; for some years, the latter phrase has been qualifying for, though it has not yet achieved, the status of Familiar English. *A nice* (or *decent*) *man* is Standard English. If I say, 'Come, lass', I am using Familiar English; if I address her as 'Dear girl', I am using ordinary Standard English; and if I say, 'Come, sweet maid', I am using Literary English. If, however, I allude to the girl as *a dame* or *a Jane*, I am employing slang; if as *a moll*, I am employing cant; if as – but perhaps I had better not particularize the vulgarisms for 'girl' or 'woman'.

It will be noticed that some of these words and phrases have undergone a change of status since first they were used. This change of status, this shift of sense

and values, is something that affects the entire language, every language, in general and slang in particular; moreover, it exemplifies or, at the least, implies a fact and a factor that affect, even govern, the whole question of the admissibility of slang into Standard English and the related question of the influence of slang upon Standard English. Language, like life itself (of which it is at once the mirror and the chief means of communication), should not – except for the purposes of philosophical or dialectical convenience – be compartmented, for such compartments fail to correspond with the facts. The overlappings are numerous, and inevitable. Every new word either dies or lives; if it lives, it tends to become dignified, therefore acceptable, and therefore part of Standard English. Even a new word that is neither cant nor slang nor colloquialism, neither dialect nor vulgarism, even a new word that, in short, is Standard English – that is, absolutely every new word, even if it starts off as Standard English, is regarded with suspicion or distrust or distaste. At best, it is a neologism; or it may be stigmatized as a technicality – a piece of jargon, of scientific terminology: and only by the passage of time does it become generally accepted and indubitable, unquestioned Standard. A word begins its career as a *parvenu*; if it be cant, as a disreputable intruder; if slang, as 'not quite the thing, don't you know!' But once a word achieves the status of Standard English, a status conferred by its acceptance as the predominant word for the object, activity, process, or condition designated, even the purist, if honest, can decently do nothing but record it; he should no longer judge it or adjudge it.

Let us take an extreme case – the case of words that have risen from the lowest status (cant) to the highest.

Let us also take the less extreme case of words that from slang have either slowly and gradually become Standard English or leapt the transition with an astonishing – yet circumstantially inevitable – speed. 'That's a *queer* thing' or 'He's a *queer* person' is Standard English, as it has been for a century. Yet in the 16th–18th Centuries, *queer* formed part of the language of the underworld; *queer*, in the sense of counterfeit money, is still a cant word. Originally, *queer* meant 'worthless, inferior, cheap; bad'. In its rise in the social scale and in the linguistic world, it has somewhat changed in its sense, with the result that it normally signifies 'odd, strange', yet almost always it contains an implication of 'unconventional' or even 'not good'. In the 16th–mid 18th Century, *queer* was the exact opposite of *rum*, which then, i.e. while it was still cant, signified 'valuable, superior, expensive; excellent'. *Rum*, however, is still no better than slang. The reason why both *queer* and *rum* now mean 'odd, strange' is another story, a delightful semantic tale. *Booze*, 'drink, liquor', for several centuries a part of the underworld's vocabulary, is now both slang and a vulgarism.

Whereas *queer* took centuries to change from cant to slang and at least a generation to rise from slang to Standard English, *blitz* was promoted within three years. In German, the word means 'lightning'; a *Blitzkrieg* is mobile warfare conducted at lightning speed. As a noun, *blitz* soon came to be English slang for a 'bombardment from the air', and by 1942 it was a colloquialism, which, in this sense, it has remained. But *the Blitz* has, since early in 1943, been accepted – that is, Standard English – for the German bombing of English cities in 1940–41; *the London Blitz* for the bombing that, there, lasted from early September, 1940, until

the end of May, 1941. What, then, of *blitz* as a verb, in the sense 'to bombard from the air, to bomb (a place)'? To *blitz* a place means no more than to bomb or air-bombard it; because it is not felt to be a necessary or, at the least, a useful addition to the English language, 'to *blitz*' is not yet, nor likely to become, Standard English; at present it is slang; within a few years it may become a colloquialism, which it will, I think, remain.

The purists have protested against the use of the word *blitz*. These protests have been useless, in respect of the noun; in the respect of even the verb, these protests have probably effected less than has been done by the good sense of the British people.

The sensible person opposes the adoption by Standard English of an unnecessary or comparatively useless word; welcomes a necessary word, irrespective of its origin. But the casting vote, the final approval lies with the general feeling of the people as a whole. Yet sometimes there is no vote, no decision: a word or a phrase may gain a place in Standard English as though by stealth; by being consonant with and appropriate to the genius of the language. It just drops into its place.

(Published, 1944, in *The Persian Quarterly*.)

SOLDIERS' SLANG OF THREE NATIONS: 1914–1918

WITH the adequate lexicography now available, soldiers' slang of 1914–1918 has come into its own. France, Germany and England have excellent dictionaries of this characteristic and vital speech.

Omitting various small works,* we find that France has three glossaries, Germany one, England two. The French are François Déchelette's *L'Argot des Poilus*, 1918, a book with 1,100 entries and much wit, good humour, lively writing, alert intellect, and delightfully readable 'essayettes' on the principal words; Albert Dauzat's *L'Argot de la Guerre*, 1918, second edition 1919, a work containing not only a condensed and admirably clear vocabulary of 1,650 entries but a long and very important study on language (general and particular) in its relation to the War of 1914–1918; and Gaston Esnault's *Le Poilu tel qu'il se parle*, 1919, the frankest and the fullest work (1,800 entries), as erudite as Dauzat's but less attractively written than either of the other two volumes. The German glossary appeared in 1925: *Schwere Brocken*, compiled by Sigmund Graff (author of *Meine Fresse*) and Walter Borman, and wittily, realistic-

* Of these the most notable is the *Wörterbuch der wichtigsten Geheim- und Berufssachen* by Dr Erich Bischoff, who includes soldiers' and sailors' slang along with cant, Yiddish, theatrical slang, etc. The first edition appeared in 1917; my copy is of the second edition, undated.

ally illustrated by Edward Thöny, is, of all the dictionaries listed here, the most efficient* in manner and the tersest in definition; it contains nearly 3,000 words, a number of word-groups, and a list of sayings such as will be found in none of the French works and is paralleled only in Brophy's. In 1925, also, Messrs Edward Fraser and John Gibbons published their valuable *Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases*, the first book to do justice to the 'slanguage' of the Tommy; five years later, John Brophy published his *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier*,† of which the third edition, very much enlarged (the glossary entries totalling 2,000), came out in September, 1931.

One knows that the French, the Germans and the English lament the fact that no adequate record survives of the slang of the Napoleonic Wars; even that of the Crimean and the Franco-Prussian Wars is represented only by a few meagre and disconnected scraps. This regret may serve to indicate the true value of what the conventional tend to consider the riff-raff of speech, the purists as an ugly and unimportant corruption, and the more narrow-minded champions of the honour of the Army as perhaps an affront and certainly an uncomfortable misrepresentation. The truth is that behind a war vocabulary, there lies a fundamental, complex psychology, to which justice can be done neither by lengthy active service undirected by essential scholarliness nor by the most imposing erudition unsweetened and 'unpragmatized' by at least two years' service, pre-

* But not, I need hardly add, more scholarly than Dauzat (the author, since, of a wholly admirable etymological dictionary of French) and Esnault.

† John Brophy had the major share in the first edition; I in the new matter of the third.

ferably in the field*; with neither of these incomplete equipments could a writer hope to set forth, responsibly and equitably, the true meaning of soldiers' slang; he must possess both.

Of each of the French, German and English military slangs it is possible to say that the foreign contributions, although significant, are, in the last analysis, very much more picturesque and informative than basically important. The mixing of the classes has been far more influential than the mixing of the nations. This mixing has, moreover, been more profitable to the educated than to the uneducated: for the latter picked up little more than some arresting or grandiloquent journalese and some useful officialese; the former gained immensely by their acquisition of vivid popular words and phrases and by their perception of the vitality and immediacy characteristic no less of dialect than of urban slang – indeed, many cultured men that had been in danger of becoming effete, pretty-pretty, or wire-drawn, were revivified by contact with their less 'respectable' fellows.

The city has exercised a greater influence than the country. Low urban slang – Parisian *argot*, Berlin *Slang*, and *Cockney* – appealed not only to the country-man but to the highbrow and the near-highbrow. In peace-

* It is doubtless my prejudice as a mere private, but I believe that an educated private or 'non-com' can deal better with soldiers' slang than an officer can. Otherwise I should deplore the fact that there are, in England alone, three Professors of English who, with very fine War records, have done nothing towards that critical dictionary of our soldiers' slang which I desiderate; one of them, however, provided me with some valuable notes for the third edition of *Songs and Slang*. (Note of 1932.)

The difficulty can, however, be overcome by an officer that has risen from the ranks or even by one who is a thoroughly good 'mixer' and an intelligent sympathizer. (Note of 1948.)

time, the cultured hold the linguistic ascendancy; in war-time, the uncultured gain the upper-hand. Such a 'reaction' is beneficial to any language, for, despite the vulgarisms and the solecisms that become general, it prevents that fixing of the vocabulary which both academicism and bureaucracy try to enforce; nor is the effect of war's dynamic 'maltreatment' of a language confined to the armies engaged.

It is unsafe to generalize on the differences of the slang employed by Poilu, Gerry and Tommy, but one can at least say that the first was the most witty, mocking and realistic, the second the most technical, blasphemous and grim, the third the most direct, the most obvious and the best-humoured. In all three, the influence of the Regular Army was somewhat less powerful than that of civilian Paris, Berlin, London; the language of the underworld, like rhyming and back slang, was much less operative in German than in the two others; all three were, in fact, less cynical and Rabelaisian than they appeared to be; all three, in their figures of speech, frequently harked back to home-life; all three stressed food, drink, civilian comforts; all three tended to materialize the spiritual and to brutalize the material, though the exceptions are numerous; and all three were sly or depreciatory in their references to their military superiors, as they were to politicians and other noisy stay-at-homes, French being the most biting, German the most pessimistic, and English the most tolerantly contemptuous. Comradeship, solidarity, patient courage, and the tendency either to ironize or to belittle one's fears, sufferings and discomforts: these qualities were common to, and equally characteristic of, the soldiers of France, Germany, England. Moreover, these soldier-slangs contain no slanderous, no insulting names

for the combatant foe; such amenities being reserved for politicians, profiteers, pressmen, and for the subtler barbarism of peace.

The comparison of particular groups of synonyms will, however, yield more concrete results, most of which speak sufficiently loudly for themselves to render interpretation and explicit deduction supererogatory. To avoid the charge of cooking the facts, I do not choose at all, but cite all the synonyms recorded in the above mentioned glossaries.

The rifle attracts few English, but many French and German synonyms. The commonest French term is *flingue* (with *flingot* as frequent variant), perversely from the German *Flinte*; *Oscar* and *seringue* (syringe) are popular; other synonyms are *petoir*, *raide*, *tue-boches*, *soufflet* (bellows), *nougat*, *clarinette*, *lance-pierres* (stone-thrower, sling) and *arbalète* (cross-bow). With the last compare the German *Flitzbogen*, of the same denotation. Perhaps the two most used German synonyms are *Gewehr* and *Braut* (the soldier's bride), the latter dating from at least as early as 1900 as soldiers' slang, as do *Kuhfuss* (crow-bar), *Knarre* (rattle), and *Schiessprügel* (Brown Bess); common are *Karline* and *Laura*; other terms were *Schiesseisen* (shooting iron) and *Kracheisen* (din-iron, crack-weapon), *Kusine* and *Tante*, both from the French; *Latte*, a lath; *Spritze*, same as the French *seringue*, and *Schinken*, ham, probably short for *Schinkenbein*, a ham-bone. The English terms current in 1914–1918 are *bundook*, from the Arabic for a fire-arm, originally a cross-bow, though the soldier undoubtedly took the word from Hindustani; of Regular Army heredity, as is the phrase *bundook and spike*, rifle and bayonet. So too is *hipe*, perhaps a corruption of *pike*; probably, however, it is an N.C.O.'s makeshift-noise,

so much more easy than *arms* in, e.g., *slope arms*. *Gruel-stick* is less common. Some Tommies, the more learnèd, call the French rifle *Lebel Ma'm'selle* or *Ma'm'selle Lebel*, from the name of the inventor, M. Lebel; these two terms, coming from the Poilu, represent a form of rhyming slang punning on *la belle*.

The bayonet likewise has many names. The Poilu calls it *cure-dents*, which is the exact equivalent of Tommy's *tooth-pick* and Gerry's *Zahnstocher*; *aiguille*, needle, and *aiguille à tricoter* (knitting-needle), *fourchette*, a very popular term to which the German *Kröstenstecher* and the English *toasting-fork* correspond closely enough; *fourchette à escargots*, snail-fork, is probably the original of the preceding term; with *tire-bouchon*, corkscrew (punned as *tire-Boches*), compare *Büchsenöffner*, the equivalent of Tommy's *tin-opener*; analogous to *coupe-choux*, cabbage-knife, are *Käsemesser*, cheese-knife, *Kräppelspiess*, grape-sticker, *Krautmesser*, a Bavarian word meaning cabbage-knife, *Schnitzer*, carving-knife, *Spargelstecher*, asparagus-knife, and *Distelstecher*, thistle-picker, and the English *meat-skewer*; the German *Splint*, linch-pin, has no fellow, although the second element appears in the English *winkle-pin* and the Poilu speaks of *épingle*, pin; French offers nothing to balance *Baugenett* and *bagonet*, the latter (undoubtedly prompting the former) being a very common early form of the modern *bayonet* and taken over from the Regular Army; on the other hand the French *tournebroche*, turn-spit, has a solus position; compare, however, the related and punning *enfile-boche*, Boche-threader or -beader, and *rince-Boche*, approximately Boche-drawer; the French have no companion for *Ratzenstecher*, a rat-sticker, or for *cat-stabber*; Tommy's humorous *persuader* stands alone, as do the following Poilu terms: *tachette*, dialectal

for a small round-headed nail, and *clou*, plain nail; *luisante*, i.e. *la chose luisante*, the shiner; *Joséphine*, heard occasionally, and *Rosalie*, heard very often indeed, though many Poilus avoided it because of its literary origin, it being due to Théodore Botrel, who launched it in the *Bulletin des Armées* on 4 November 1914, as a kind of pendant to the ancient *Durandal*. Still more used among the Poilus themselves is *fourchette*: but, as Déchelette tells us quite definitely, *ils emploient généralment le mot français 'baïonette'*, just as the British troops usually say *bayonet* and the German soldiers *Bajonett* or *Seitengewehr*.

The *Stahlhelm*, *casque de tranchée* (slangily *casquette en fer*), *steel-helmet*, attracts attention. *Bâche* is Parisian argot and means either cistern or tank. The 'hat' connotation appears in *bourgignotte*, *cloche*, *melon*, *toque* and *chapeau* itself (whence *blindé*, armoured hat), as in *steel-jug* and *tin-hat* (the latter much the commoner) and as in *Feld-*, *Gefechts-* and *Gelände-hut*, field-, battle-, country hat – in *Römerdeckel*, Roman cap – in *Gefechts-haube*, battle-cap, like the English *battle-bowler* – in *Offensivhut* – and in *Sturm-hut* and *-zylinder*, storm-hat and top-hat; with the last of these German compounds one naturally aligns *Kriegszylinder*, war top-hat, *Angströhre*, fear-cylinder, and the rather beautiful *Gewitter-tulpe*, the tulip of the storm. Of the mainly culinary type are *lid* and *pudden-basin*, the former being equally popular with *tin-hat* and the second corresponding roughly with the German *Waschbecken*, wash-basin; *Brockenfänger*, crumb-scoop; *Kochkessel*, cauldron, goes with *marmite* and *casserole*; *bocal* (a wide-necked bottle), *bol*, *soupière*, *saladier*, *panier à salade*; *éteignoir*, an extinguisher, very aptly from its shape. *Boutrole* is somewhat more recondite, for it is suggested by the form and the shape of a *bouterolle*, the

iron tip of a scabbard. The shape likewise determines *pot de fleurs* and *pot de chambre*, the latter matching with Gerry's *Nachtpott*; shape slightly, humorous analogy greatly, prompts *Schrapnellschirm*, shrapnel-screen, with its variant *-zylinder*, shrapnel-case. *Wetterverteiler*, lightning-conductor, has no parallel, and *Stellungsgoks* is dialectal and obscure. Finally the French take *Blockhaus*, pill-box, to describe the steel-helmet.

Haversack has fewer synonyms. This comparative paucity arises partly from the fact that some of its slang designations are loosely interchangeable with those of the knapsack. There are only two German terms: *Hungersack*, *Klammersack* (holdfast-bag). And only two English: *jolah*, a Regulars' word from India; *scranbag*, also pre-War, *scran* dating back to ca. 1860 in its two senses of food in general, a meal in particular. The Poilus, however, have some ten words: *armoire* and *armoire à glace*, the latter being a fantastic development; *as* and *as de carreau*, ace of diamonds, in allusion to its shape; *valise*, a playful use of a typically civilian word, with perhaps a wistful regret; *compteur à gaz*, gas-meter, very rarely heard after 1915; *fainéant*, idler, for it is to be carried; *Philibert* and *Azor*, the latter a deliberate corruption of *as* similar to that of *gau* (a louse) into *la famille Gautier*; *vésicatoire*, 'métaphore de sensation musculaire' (Esnault); *dur*, primarily from its hardness against one's left side, with a further allusion to the 'iron rations' therein carried.

But the haversack is only one of the many objects carried by *the P.B.I.*, a term rarely used by 'the poor bloody infantry' themselves. The foot-soldier, the *fantassin*, the *Infanterist*, coins – or is given – some picturesque and significant names. The English names are *Camel Corps*, collective; *grabby*, from the Crimean War;

tray, generally in the plural, probably from the normal use of that useful household article, *something to hang things on* being indeed a synonym; *beetle-crusher*, meaning also an Army boot; *mud-crusher*, dating from about 1880, is of the same group as the German *Dreckfresser*, mud-eater, 'mud-lark', *Dreckstampfer*, mud-stamper, *Schlammtreter*, mud-treader, and *Lakenputscher*, clothes-line, as well as the merely referable *Grabenscheisser* or the French *écrase-merde*; and especially *foot-slogger*, the most used of all. *Foot-slogger* is the late 19th and early 20th Century counterpart of the 18th Century *foot-wobbler*; similar are the French *marche-à-pieds* and *pousse-caillou*, pebble-pusher, and the German *Fusslatscher*, foot-shuffler; analogous are *Kilometer-fresser* and *-schwein*, kilometre-eater and -pig or glutton. The 'animal world' furnishes several interesting terms, for the French have *chat*, the artillery's designation of the less fortunate arm of the service, *écrevisse de rampart*, trench-crawfish, *bigorneau*, periwinkle, and *mille-pattes*, a centipede, this last a delightfully apt 'father to the thought'; the Germans *Blindschleiche*, a slowworm, *Feldmaüse*, fieldmouse, *Sandhase* (and *-latscher*), sand-hare (and -sloven). Rural also is *Stoppelhopfer*, stubble-hopper. *Kanonenfutter*, English *cannon-fodder*, dates from long before 1914; *cannon-fodder* was never very popular with British troops, who, for the most part, found the joke rather too grim. Proper names are restricted to the German *Hannes*, Hans, and *Hansl*, the Bavarian form of the same; the punning *Has! Has!* is the artillery's slightly jeering name for 'poor old Gerry' and reminds us that the French *troufion* (from the North Italian dialectal *trofione*,* large truffle) prompts the usually urbane, even if trenchantly witty

*Albert Dauzat, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, edition of 1946.

Déchelette to write: 'It is thus that the infantryman is baptized disdainfully by the cavalry and artillery, who, as everyone knows, are of a superior essence . . . There is always one half of the world mocking the other, even at the front.' Slightly martial are *lignard*, the man of the front line, and *griveton*, *grifeton*, *grifton*, from the *grive* that, in Parisian argot, denotes a guard. *Bibi*, meaning either an ordinary soldier or an infantryman, perhaps represents a diminutive of *biffin*, very common in this sense, *les gars de la biffe* being also the infantry; this *bibi* may, however, be an adoption of the French slangy endearment *bibi*, itself from *bébé*, baby – compare Italian *bimbo** from *bambino*. The word *fantassin* leads to some quaint transformations, of which the best known is *fantaboche*; *fantabosse*, by way of the execrable pun, *fente à sein*, whence *fente à bosse*, whence . . .; *fantoche* abbreviates *fantaboche*, which by manipulation gives also *bobosse* (not much used by the infantryman himself), *chabosse* (rare), and *dachebosse*, a fusion of *fantabosse* with *Dache*. German dialect is responsible for the obscure *Schniggl* of the Bavarians and the *Piefke* of the North Germans, *Trichterprolet*, mine-, or trench-fellow, chap, the *prolet* being one of the *proletariat*. *Musko*, *Muschko*, *Muschkote*, has three senses, each leading naturally from the other, thus: 'infantryman' from 'musketeer', 'the common soldier' from 'infantryman'. *Fussfanterie* puns obviously on *Fuss*, foot, and [*In*]*fanterie*, and is translatable as foot-puppery. *Backzahn* is subtle, for, meaning back-tooth, it infers that as such a tooth, though not much seen, is exceedingly useful, so the infantryman, though little in the limelight, yet does most of the work.

His home was a *dug-out*, *abri*, *Unterstand*. Here the

* See my *A Dictionary of the Underworld, British and American.*

words fall into no easy groups, and are seen best in three national lists. The German terms are *Grotte*, *U-Boot* (U Boat), *Raucherabteil* (smoking-compartment), *Bollen-keller* and *-lock* (onion cellar, -hole), *Bau* and *Fuchsbau* (kennel, fox's), *Helden-keller* and *röhre* (heroes' cellar, shaft); a reinforced concrete dug-out is called *Bunker*, a very large dug-out a *Tonhalle*, a concert-hall, whereas a makeshift shelter is *Kaninchenloch*, a rabbit-hole, a very small one a *Zigarrenkiste*, a cigar-box, a very wet one *Kaltwasser-heilanstalt*, a hydro; other names were *Laden*, meeting-place, *Tapferkeits-stollen*, valour-gallery, and *Villa Blindgänger* or *Bückdich*, or *Feldgrau*, the Villa Eyes-Closed or Head-Down or Field-Grey. The English slang synonyms are few: the small dug-outs are *cubby-holes*, those so small as to be mere ostrich-pretences are *funk-holes*, and the smallish are *glory-holes*; *dosh* was the generic Canadian name. The French synonymy is both more considerable and more interesting than either the German or the English. The following are of native origin: *canfouine*, little used; *carrée*, occasionally; *cagibi*, from *cage* and *bi*, a common argotic suffix; *case*, among soldiers on the Eastern front – a lingua franca word; *métro*, 'underground (railway)' – a dug-out large enough for an infantry section and having two exits; *calebasse*, already employed analogously by Barbey d'Aurevilly; *camigeotte*, found, like the preceding, in Barbusse's *Le Feu*; *guignol*, big enough for only one person; *pé-cé*, from *Poste de Commandement*. The genuinely foreign words (not words that, like *case* and *calebasse*, are merely of foreign derivation) are these: *estanco*, from the Spanish for a tobacco-shop; *tata*, which, in use only on the various staffs, is of obscure origin; *kasba*, an Eastern word used only on that front; popular are the Arabic words *gourbi* and *guitoune*, extremely popular the Annamite

cagna(t) – the first, the oldest in army use, meaning literally an earth-built house, the second meaning a (camp-) tent, the third deriving from *cai-nha*, a bamboo house, as in Léra's *Tonkinoiseries*, 1896.

For the next three groups – 'thingummy', no man's land (*streitiges Gebiet*), barbed wire (*Stechelzaundraht*), there are no widely used German slang terms; with this compare the fact that whereas the Germans and French have numerous words for a machine-gun,* the Tommy has none. For *thingummy*, Tommy says *oojah*, with variants *oojah-ka-piv*, *oojah-cum-pivvy*, and *oojiboo*, the Canadian *hooza-ma-kloo*; and the Poilu *truc*, with the 'rhyming' development *trucmuche*, the Zouaves favouring *chuchemahure*, of Algerian origin; *truc* has long been the general civilian word.

No man's land, besides having no synonym in German slang, has none in English; and only three in French. *Bled* is fairly common: originally it meant the Moroccan *brousse* or 'bush' – wild and uncultivated country. *Tapis*, carpet, was heard at times. More popular, however, was *billard*, billiard-table. Barbed wire likewise possesses slang synonyms in neither German nor English; in French it is called *barbelé* from *fil de fer barbelé* and, by way of a pun, *barbouillé*.

Thence to *over the top with the best of luck* (after 1916 the *luck* was tacitly omitted) it is a short step. The English phrases for a charge or an attack are *over the top*, *over the lid* (in 1916 only), *over the plonk* and, as verbs also, *hop over* and *go over*. Here, German is less rich; *gib ihm!*, like *drauf!*, is the command. French easily the richest. *A la barbaque!* is 'charge!' – with the bayonet; *barbaque* is an old Parisian slang word for meat, but it

* In 1939–1945 there were several.

comes from the Crimea; *sauter le barriau*, to climb the parapet (in order to attack, to trot across no man's land); *se bigorner*, with the pejorative variants *se faire bigorner*, *aller* or *monter à la bigorne*; *monter sur le billard*, which also means to mount the operating table; *monter sur le tapis*; *monter sur le plateau*; *foncer dans le bled*, *dans la brousse*, and *dans le brouillard*, where *foncer* has the sense 'to charge with the head down', like a goat; *aller à la châtaigne*; *monter aux petites échelles*, to climb the short ladders sometimes provided for clambering into no man's land from a difficult trench; *fantaisie sur fil de fer*, usually a nightmare and not a fantasy; *à la fourchette!*, preceding an attack with bayonets fixed; *lâchons tout!* also means *allons à l'attaque!*; *aux pluches!*, not so common for *à la charge!*; *aller au séchoir*, to attack positions that have their barbed wire intact and well defended, where the implicit idea is that which is expressed more explicitly in *sécher sur le fil*, 'to hang on the old barbed wire'; *monter à la ripée*, to leave the comforting trench for the naked parapet, a phrase that one philologist holds to have at first been *monter à l' R.I.P.*, which is just a little too clever to be probable; *sauter le toboggan*, and *valse lente!* as an order, although one very rarely – except for a distance of 300 yards or less – went at anything more rapid than a slow jog-trot: carrying the weight one did, one could not run, except to dodge a burst (if, indeed, one heard or saw it at all).

In the hop-over, many hoped for and some got a wound sufficiently serious to cause them to be sent 'home' without being a prospective burden to themselves. The terms for 'wounded' are for the most part realistic, either humorously or resignedly or grimly. The right sort of wound received commendation in *sénateur*, a man seriously wounded or ill – as opposed to

a *député*; in *Heimat-schuss* or *-trellerchen*, a 'home'-shot (wound) or *-puller*, and in *deutschlandverdachtig*, suspicious, or smacking, of Germany; and in *have* or *get* or *cop a Blighty* or *a Blighty one*. The phrase to *cop a packet* may mean to be fatally wounded, but often it signifies the lesser wounding; French offers no parallel. German has the phrases *kriegen* (to catch it), *eins vor den Ballon kriegen*, *einen an den Latz* [pinafore] *kriegen*, *einen an den Pinsel* [head] *kriegen*, *ein Stück Eisen ins Kreuz kriegen* (to be severely wounded), *einen gebrannt*, or *draufgebrannt*, *kriegen* (to catch it hot), to which add the analogous phrases *ein Ding* (*verpasst*) *bekommen*, to get something (forgotten or lost), and *verpassen*, to miss something. Other German synonyms are *abfrühstücken*, to breakfast away (sometimes, to be killed); *angekratzt*, scratched, cf. *kitzeln*, to tickle; *angetötet werden*, to be gravely wounded; *eine Motte gewischt kriegen*, to rub against a moth. The French terms not yet mentioned are *amoché*,* which in Parisian pre-1914 slang meant either spoilt, or hurt in an accident; *attigé*, touched, ultimately from the Latin *attingere*; *avoir un accroc*, to get one's clothes torn; *conditionné*; *bien servi*, well served; *complet*; *fadé*, lucky; *avoir son compte*, to get one's dues; *se faire courber une aile*, to get a wing 'bent'; *sucré*, sweetened; *assaisonné*, seasoned; *salé*, salted. The remaining Tommy synonyms are *pipped*, especially by a bullet whether of rifle, revolver, or machine-gun; *to stop one*, to be wounded by bullet or shell-fragment; *tap*, a wound, as in 'a nice little tap on the shoulder'. It may be noted that officially the wounded were either *walking wounded* or *stretcher cases*.

To perish in battle or in the fighting zone, either

* From Parisian *moche*, 'bad': itself from *mauvais*.

killed immediately or dying soon of the wound, has still more synonyms, as might be expected from the finality of such a fate. The German expressions are *glauben*, to have faith, to be a believer; *kalten Arm kriegen*, to catch a cold arm; *parti gehen*, to go to a party; *der alte Herr Heldentod*, old Mr. Heroes'-Death; *es hat ihm das G'stell z'ammdraht*, his frame's crumpled up; *über den Harz gehen*, to cross the mountain; *um die Ecke gehen* (a pre-War colloquialism), to go round the corner; another pre-War colloquialism, *ins Gras beissen*, to bite the dust, is seen, in its literal form (to bite the grass), to bear some resemblance to *dépoter son géranium*, to unpot one's geranium, to die, and *avoir un petit jardin sur le ventre*, to have a garden on one's belly, to be dead and buried, and especially *manger les pissenlits par la racine* or *manger les salades par le trognon*; the two *manger* phrases afford excellent parallels to *push up daisies*, (later) *be daisy-pushing*, which glorious expressions may have been influenced by the much feebler pre-1914 civilian slang, *to turn up one's toes to the daisies*, found first in Barham's *Ingoldsby Legends*, 1837; *a daisy-pusher*, by the way, is a fatal wound, and *to become a landowner* means to be dead and buried, the grave being the estate. The other French terms for 'to be killed' are these: *se laisser tomber*, to let oneself fall; *se faire bigorner*, with which contrast the already cited *se bigorner*; *être brûlé*, to be burnt (against which set *einen gebrannt kriegen* of the preceding paragraph), *brûler*, as 'to kill', dating from Stendhal, 1836; *être gaspillé*, to be wasted, meaning also to be wounded; *se faire niquer*, the latter verb coming from lingua franca; *en jouer* (or *être évacué*) *sur une toile de tente*, to play a role on a sheet of canvas; *avoir la grande permission*, to go on long furlough; *sécher sur le fil*, to be hanging out to dry; *être dézingué*, to have one's zinc

removed; *être dégringolé*, more usually in the active voice; *se faire paumer*, from *paumer*, to lay hands upon; *être bousillé*, *ébousillé*, especially of disruptive death by shell-burst; *être but*, connected with *but*, target; *être capout*, cf. the Low German *gaan kaputt* (or *kapuut*), to die, itself from the French *capot*, the winning of all tricks at piquet; *avoir*, or *gagner*, *la croix de bois*, which, meaning to earn a wooden cross, recalls Dorgelès's *Les Croix de Bois*, perhaps the finest of all the novels dealing with the war of 1914–1918; *être décollé*, to be decapitated; *être descendu*, but chiefly in the active voice, as in *to lay low*; *disparaître*, to disappear; *claboter*, *clapoter*, and *clamecer*, *clamser*, and *clasper* (virtually the same word as *clamser*), all of death swift-coming from wounds; *claquer*, whether on or off the field – a very old civilian slang word; *être escofié*, like *être bousillé* or *zigouillé* (echoic, this), refers to death on the battle-field; *être estourbi*, generally in the active, is from the German; *être étalé*, to be laid out for show; *être évacué*; *être fauché*, to be mown down; *être suriné*, pre-1914 Parisian; and *virer le ventre pour voir passer les aéros*, to turn one's belly up to see the aeroplanes pass. The English synonyms for death, the process of death, and the state of death, are less numerous than the French, more numerous than the German. *Wiped out*, whether of one's person or one's military unit; *loaf o' bread*, by rhyming slang for dead; *mafeesh*, from Arabic, and rarely heard, except among Regulars and Anzacs, on the Western front; *napoo*, meaning also finished, empty, ruined, from *il n'y en a plus*; *off it*, to die (never adjectivally); *snuff it* (pre-1914); *to be buzzed*, from *to buzz*, to send a message on the *buzzer*, the portable telephone officially known as *D mark 3* or *D 3*; *finee*, Tommyese for *fini*; *scuppered*, originally nautical; *gone trumpet-cleaning*, a pre-1914 Regular-Army phrase; *to go home*,

go out; *huffed*; *out of mess*, dead, *to be put out of mess* (cf. the Naval *lose the number of one's mess*), to be killed; *to have one's number up*, to be dead, sometimes merely to be in trouble, while *his number is up* signifies either 'he's sure to die' or, less often, 'he's sure to be found out'; *outed*, from boxing; *to go west*, the finest, most beautiful of all these synonyms, is based on the idea of the setting sun – and it occurs in Classical Greek.

Perhaps death was preferable to the horrors of a fierce bombardment. There are surprisingly few international terms: to the French synonyms I find no exact equivalents in either German or English; but German *es pumpert*, it bumps, balances the jocular *What ho! she bumps!* and *be bumped*, be shelled; *beplastern* is precisely Tommy's *to plaster*, to shell, especially to shell heavily. The other German synonyms are *beasen*, to befoul; *einheizen*, *eingeheizt bekommen*, to warm, to be warmed; *Kartusch*, *Kaschimbo bekommen*, to come under fire, to catch 'cashimbo', i.e. to catch 'hell'; *Kattun kriegen*, to catch calico, from the noise of torn calico or perhaps from the ensuing need for bandages. The French synonyms are more numerous than either the German, the smallest group, or the English. *Arroser*, to spray; *ça barde*, they're going it hard!, from a verb signifying 'to become intense' and admirably treated by Esnault; *busoter*, to bombard, from the Poilu *busot*, a shell; *il y a de la casse*, the crockery is breaking; *ça charribote*, there *are* some shells!; *on tire le cordon*, they're pulling the chain; of heavy fighting, including bombardment, *coup de chien*, *de tabac*, *de Trafalgar*, and *coup dur*; *être crapouillé*, to be 'toaded'; *décoction*, a shell extract; *jactance teutonne*, Teutonic bragging, i.e. German shelling; *faire un jus*, to shell; *marmiter* (transitively), to bombard with heavy shells; *qu'est-ce qu'on prend!* – we, they, are catching it;

être repéré, to be shelled after the enemy finds the range; punning this, *être opéré*; *se faire souinger* (from boxing), to be 'swinged', to be shelled, to cause oneself to be shelled; *faire du tabac*, to bombard; *zinguer* and *zinziner*, the same, only transitively; *qu'est-ce qu'on déguste*, we're tasting something!; *ça se donne*, something's coming, or is about to come; *sonner*, to ring (transitively), from an Apache word meaning to knock against; *ça tape*, *there's* a tapping!; *ça buque*, same meaning, but from dialect. The English words are: *to bonk*, generally in the passive, and *to plonk*, always in the active, both being echoic; *crump*, to shell with 'heavies'; *blow to b—ry*, to shell intensely and intensively; *cane*, to shell, especially to shell heavily; *clod*, to shell, nearly always in the active voice; *strafe*, noun and verb, of a bombardment, cf. *counterstrafe*; *hate*, a bombardment, from Lissauer's *Hymn of Hate*, composed in August, 1914; *pill*, to shell or to bomb; *iron rations*, shells, shelling; *iron foundries*, heavy shelling; *go it*, to bombard, to make an artillery 'demonstration'.

In a bombardment, one looks to one's company, or perhaps one's battalion, Commander, to do the right thing by his men. Yet the nicknames for Captain, Major, Lieutenant-Colonel, and Colonel are comparatively few. The Captain is *the skipper* among officers, *the cap* among the men; *le vieux*, *der Alte*, the old man – *Kapitän*, literally a ship's Captain – *Kompanieverführer*. The Major is *the company's Don Juan*, *the mage*, *the maje*; if the context fits beyond any doubt, *le vieux*, *der Alte* – *Gottoberst*, God Almighty, on account of his inaccessibility – *Raupenzüchter*, caterpillar-breeder, a pun on *Raupen*, caterpillars and the thick epaulette-fringes distinguishing the higher officers. The Lieutenant-Colonel is *the old man*, *le vieux*, and in German the same as for a Major. The Colonel is *the old man*, the *kernel*; *le vieux*; in German, as

for a Major, also *Gottoberster*, God-superior, God-colonel. The Captain, by the way, is also one of *Die 4 Menzel*, the four knaves, i.e. the four Company-Commanders; in this capacity, he has a horse, which is known as *Gefechtsesel*, battle-donkey. In the British Army, all officers, especially if Colonels or higher, are called generically *the heads*.

In no matter what rank, there are *column-dodgers*, men who evade duty or danger. The German terms are these: *abbauen*, to go away, clear out; *verduften*, to evaporate, *verdünnisieren*, to make oneself scarce, cf. *dünn machen*, to make or play thin, small, scarce; trench-poets speak feelingly of *verblühen*, to decay; *Aalemann machen*, to play the eel man, to be slippery; *Flankenheinrich*, to build a 'flank(ing) Henry', to show oneself a 'shrewdy'. The French have *tirer une carotte* and *carotter*, pull a carrot, applied chiefly to a 'wangle' effected by plausible speech; *tirer au flanc, au cul*; with the nouns *carotteur*, *tire(ur)-au-flanc* or *-au-cul*; and *filocher*, to evade duty or to 'wangle' a good job, the man being a *filocheur*. The English terms are *to dodge the column*; *to swing the lead* (often as *swing it*), of nautical origin, the performer being a *lead-swinger* – cf. *swing the hammer*; a *skrimshanker*, an old Army word; *mike*, to dodge duty or, if it were undodged, to work half-heartedly; *come the old man* or *the old soldier*, to shirk, also to bluff, to domineer; *nut-worker*, i.e. *head-worker*, one who lies awake thinking how to avoid fatigues or the front line.

More attractive is the group of words dealing with rumours (some of which were fantastic in the extreme).* German synonyms are of five kinds: the first is based on 'order' or 'instruction', as *Frontbefehl*, an order issuing

* See Stephen Southwold's invaluable essay in *A Martial Medley*, 1931; I was the unnamed editor of that book.

from the front line, and *Kantinenbefehl*, one heard at a (presumably wet) canteen; that consisting of *Parole*, password or parole; the third, *Kolonnenmärchen*, *the transport tale* of the British Army but without parallel in the French; the fourth, *Kombüsenbesteck*, a cook's-galley reckoning, estimate, hence story, originally a nautical phrase, to which the French offer the parallel *rapport des cuistots*, a cook's report, and the English *cook-house official*, which last puns on the pejorative use of *British official*, meaning (from mid-1915 until the autumn of 1918) untrustworthy news; and lastly *Latrinen-befehl*, *-gerücht*, and *-parole*, latrine-order, -rumour, -password, and, late in the War, tersely (*eine*) *Latrine* – the English term being *latrine-rumour*, the vulgar synonym being *shit-house rumour*. The French generally use the word *tuyau*, a pipe, but they also have *mamelouk*, a circularizer of rumours; *perco*, from *percolateur*; cf. *jus*, coffee, which is made with a percolator; *bac*, literally a ferry, probably because ferries are notorious places of exchange for gossip and *canards*; *bobard*, perhaps from a confusion – or a fusion – of *boniment*, tall stories, patter, with *bobèche*, head; and *courant d'air*, a draught (of air), because equally intangible. Other English terms are *gup*; *Furphy*, an Australianism; *clack*; and *propaganda*, an officers' word.

Some of these airy nothings arise from fear, which seems to be a very discriminating emotion, for there is only one locution common to even two of the three nations concerned: *les avoir*, to have them (where *les* is *foies* or any other of the synonyms for fear), corresponding to *get 'em*, to get 'the scares'. The French terms are *avoir les chochotes*, *les colombines*, which, like *avoir mis son pantalon de tremble*, *chier dans son froc*, and *avoir la chaisse*, mean to have one's bowels unpleasantly

perturbed, cf. *avoir la colique*, *la trouille*, the colic; *avoir les flubards*, *avoir* or *mettre les flubes*, pre-1914 and of uncertain origin; *avoir les foies*, *les foies blancs*, *les foies verts*, even *les foies tricolorés*, to have a liver, to have a liver coloured in one of these picturesque ways; *avoir les grelots*, to have the shivers; *avoir* or *mettre les grôles* (or *grolles*); *avoir les grelons* is literally synonymous, *grolles* and *grelons* being dialectal for boots; *avoir les baguettes*, a development from *mettre les baguettes*, to run away, *baguettes* being proletarian slang for legs; *avoir les copeaux*, to have 'the spits'; *avoir les jetons*, rare; *avoir les tricotins*, to have a strong desire to knit (*tricoter*) with one's legs, i.e. to feel like running away; *flancher*, to flinch. The Germanisms are less numerous and less vivid: *Bammel haben*, to be in a funk, a phrase dating from long before 1914, as does *Mangchetten haben*, from the French *manchettes*, stiff *white* cuffs, while *Heiden-bammel haben* is merely a modern variation on *Heidegangst haben*, literally to have a heathen fear, i.e. to have an unholy fear, to be in a dreadful funk; *Bollen haben*, to have onions; *der Arm geht mit Grundeis*, one freezes with fear; and *Zappen haben*, to have the fidgets. The English words may be few, but they are not insipid: *batchy*, which, in addition to denoting unnerved, also means silly or even mad; *poggle(d)*, *puggled*, 'rattled' as well as eccentric and mad-drunk, is a pre-1914 Regular-Army word; *off one's rocket*, 'rattled', also mad; but, above all, both *have the wind up*, to be afraid, later *have the wind vertical* (neither implying disgrace), and *be windy*, a development from *wind-up*, and definitely pejorative, are genuinely and essentially War words, probably originating in the Royal Flying Corps.

Fear causes a few soldiers to act in a way that brings them to confinement to barracks (*C.B*) or even to

prison. 'Gerry'* employs the following terms, some which show a nice sense of humour: *brummen*, to be in prison, a pre-1914 colloquialism that literally means to grumble; *dienstfrei sein*, to be service-free, to be off duty, cf. *Freiquartier*, free board and lodging; *Herberge zur Heimat*, domestic shelter or, rather, lodging-house; *Vater Philipp*, Father Philip, and *Vadder Seeman*, daddy sailorman, with which we may compare our own *Paddy Doyle*; these two words based on furlough (*Urlaub*, itself occasionally used for either arrest or cells): *Erholungsurlaub*, convalescence-furlough, sick leave; *Mittelurlaub*, good behaviour, restricted freedom; *Kahn*, a boat, which recalls the old English naval term, *stone-frigate*; *Kasten*, box, paralleled by the French *boîte*, box or tin, *caisse*, case, and *grosse* (*caisse* or *boîte*) as in *il a quatre de grosse* or *il va à la grosse* (quoted by Déchelette); and *Kittchen*, a concrete place, which reminds us of *jug*, from the 18th Century term *stone jug*, and of its derivatives *juggo*, *jugged*, arrested or imprisoned. The remaining Poilu synonyms are *estanco*, already cited in the sense of dug-out; *Dardanelles*, a term that, meaning prison, is used among prisoners of war in Germany; *sous-marin*, a submarine, among those prisoners denotes solitary confinement in a cell; *hostau*, *houstau*, *ousto*, prison, from the word for hostel; *houste* is a variation on the same root, *ours* (literally, a bear) a deliberate corruption thereof; and perhaps the most general, *tôle* or *taule*, an old military term preserved in barracks, the man so punished being *un tôlier*, *tôlard*, the word *tôle* meaning literally sheet-iron. The English terms constitute the biggest group, which comprises – in addition to those already mentioned – the following: *clink*, from the ancient

* *Gerry*, German, was soon superseded by *Jerry*; in 1939–1945, the former spelling would have been ridiculed.

criminals' name for a prison in Southwark (London) and echoic of the clinking of fetters, just as *jankers* is of their jangling, the latter term having the specifically military derivatives *jankers men*, defaulters, and *jankers king*, a provost sergeant; *cold-storage*, of English origin, and *cooler*, from the vocabulary of American thieves; *boob* is likewise an American import; *opera-house* and *glass-house*,* the latter a pre-1914 Regular-Army term, and both employed of detention (-barracks), guard-room, cells, prison; *spud-hole*, a detention-cell; *chokey*, from Hindustani, for either guard-room or prison; *Bow Street*, the orderly-room in relation to company and battalion trials, from the famous old London police-court, the term being unknown among troops from the Dominions; *hutch*; and *mush*, sometimes spelt and pronounced *moosh*, which, like the preceding word, denotes guard-room or cell(s).

Even in prison or, at the least, in detention, some soldiers managed to 'pinch' things. This, our last group, contains very few War neologisms and many survivals from old cant. There are, once we account for *réquisitionner*, to *commandeer*, and *acheter*, no exact equivalents in the slang of any one country as compared with the other two, although we notice certain common features, such as euphemism, irony, and a most apt military allusiveness. The Germans have three delicious phrases: *besorgen* (their favourite word), to take care of, *aus Versehen fassen*, to seize inadvertently, and *finden*, to find; analogous is *flottweg schaffen*, to procure smartly, which is a pun on *flott wegschaffen*, to clear away quickly; *klausen*, to seclude, as neat a euphemism as I

* From *the Glass-House*, the military prison at Aldershot. (See my *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 3rd edition, 1949. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.—U.S.A.: Macmillan.)

have seen; and *auf Gemüsetour gehen*, to make a tour of the vegetables, a phrase closely allied to *reconnoitre* but only roughly equivalent to the Tommy's *to scrounge about*, which, signifying to seek an opportunity for 'removing' either a particular article or whatever objects chance may offer, derives from *to scrounge*, transitive and intransitive, to steal, to procure by dubious means – such a development from dialect as is often considered to form one of the corner-stones of soldiers' slang, another being *wangle* (pre-1914 but enfranchised by the Tommy), 'to procure goods or an advantage illicitly but without punishment, by the exercise of cunning, moral pressure, [bluff], blackmail or bribery' (Brophy). The French have a wealth of synonyms – nearly twice as many as the British, who in their turn have twice as many as the Germans. *Anglaiser*, 'to English', to remove, to steal, provides an illuminating comment; *se procurer*, *système dé*, usually written *système D*, from *débrouillard*, a handy man; *faire aux as*, where *as* is pre-1914 Parisian argot for money; *asphyxier*; *balancer*, where the semantic progression is to balance, to throw (*parcequ'on balance le bras avant de lancer un objet au loin*, Dauzat), to throw away with a view to finding later, to find later, to remove; *camoufler*, a development from the militarily technical sense, 'to camouflage'; *chaparder*, *choper* and *chipoter*, attenuations; euphemisms such as *balayer* and *faucher*, *emprunter* and *tomber faible sur*, *grouper*, *chauffer*; old locutions or terms such as *rouper* (anciently *roupiner*) and *prendre à la foire d'empoigne*, to get at the fair of take-as-you-please; brutalities like *étouffer*, to stifle, and *voracer*, to wolf; military words like *razzier*, to raid, *embusquer*, and *mobiliser*; energeticisms like *s'emballer sur*, to go 'bald-headed' for, *se faire les crochets sur* or *se casser les poignets*

sur, to get one's hands on at any price; *payer*, or *payer le prix courant*, pay the market-value, the price being assessed by the Poilu at the precise amount of *trois francs cinq sous*, which looks like a sly hit at French bureaucracy; *rabioter*, to take what one hopes is superfluous, to scrounge – Déchelette has a charming 'essayette' on the word; *ratatiner*, to shrivel up; *secouer une chemise* (Dauzat: '*l'objet est tombé tout seul*'); *travailler*, to work, i.e. to procure something by working for it, much like our colloquial *work it*; *faisander*, a fanciful development of *faire* or *faire aux pattes*, which is an underworld term for to steal. English synonyms from the underworld or, at the best, from low slang, are *make*, which dates from the late 17th Century for to steal, soldiers using it chiefly in the senses, to acquire illicitly, to borrow forgetfully; *nab*, older still, with a connotation of speed; *lift*, likewise from the 16th Century; *bone*, from the 18th Century, as is *snaffle* (cf. *snaffler*, a highwayman); *nick*, from a century earlier, as indeed is *win*, of which the 1914–1918 neologistic counterpart is *earn*, both phrases stressing not only a circuitous illegality but also, subconsciously no doubt, the rightness of the taker's course; and *pinch*, 19th Century, with the rhyming variant *half-inch*. Other English synonyms are (*to*) *souvenir*, a War coinage either for to remove without asking permission yet hardly with criminal intention, or for to search for *and* find; *hotstuff*, to appropriate illicitly, to steal, whence *hot-stuffer*, a man given to promiscuous borrowings and dubious removings, and *swipe*, a Canadianism equivalent to *hotstuff*.

In all these groups of words, and indeed in any other relevant group whatsoever, one sees that although the combatants, experiencing a sharp and vivid reaction, respond promptly to the vitally changed conditions and

to the need for new words and phrases or for old words and phrases twisted in form and regarmented in meaning, those men also, instead of constantly and consistently dwelling on the change, hark back to the security, homeliness, comfort, quiet and freedom of peace.

The old vocabulary not merely subserves the demands of the new, but often it is so inwoven with the new that one has to relate the War-time word or phrase to the War itself: one has, in fact, to put oneself in the place of the soldiers. Otherwise, these domestic or vocational terms would mean only what they meant before the War: such terms have been the quickest to disappear from general speech. It is the War-mintings (new either in form or, far more often, in sense only) which have worn best: many of these have become incorporated in the normal spoken language; some few have even achieved rights of literary citizenship.*

But, much more important, those writers who have been through the War (and even those who have merely mixed freely with the survivors) have acquired a hatred for sham, hesitancy, pretentiousness, high-falutin, pomposity, verbosity and verbiage; some of these have gone too far, their influence has done much to destroy the ample, the rhythmical, the musical prose that once was generally recognized to be no less English than the terser, abrupter style that has always been described as 'Saxon'. There are, however, signs† that the pendulum has begun to swing the other way; such a movement

* Compare several essays in my *Words at War; Words at Peace* (Muller, 1948) and the introduction and glossary in *A Dictionary of Forces' Slang; 1939–1945* (Secker & Warburg, 1948) by Wilfred Granville, Frank Roberts and myself.

† Recurrent after the conflict of 1939–1945.

will be beneficial, if only the salutary, war-taught lesson of directness, vigour, simplicity, modesty, true realism and stark sincerity be not forgotten.

(This article was written in 1932 and published in 1933 (*Words, Words, Words!*); a few years later, I carefully revised it; and again in 1948.)

SPIVS AND PHONEYS

DURING the summer of 1947 the spiv had a very good Press. Although he did not quite 'make the headlines', he was the subject of many articles, cartoons and letters. In 1946 he had provided the material for one of those social documents known as the Pilot Papers, this being by Bill Naughton, who has also written – in *Lilliput*, August, 1947 – an entertaining short story about a spiv in love. You would think that the spiv was one of the marvels of the age, one of the phenomena of the times, a by-product of the Black Market.

He is nothing of the sort. True; he has dealings with the Black Market, but then he has dealings with anything likely to yield a large profit at a small expenditure of energy. A spiv is one who makes – I shouldn't care to say 'earns' – a living without working. He dislikes soiling his hands no less intensely than he dislikes soiling his clothes, which are so odd as to be *outré*, so smart as to be suspicious, so exaggerated in cut and colour as to be conspicuous, with padded shoulders and waspish waist, with spectacular shirt, rainbow tie, alarming socks, pointed shoes.

He is not a phenomenon of the age. He's merely what used, in the 1920's and 1930's, to be called a 'wide boy'; perhaps you remember Robert Westerby's grim little novel, *Wide Boys Never Work*, which appeared in 1937. Before that he was known as a 'flash boy' or even 'one of the boys'. Nor is he in any way a marvel. He merely has a rather optimistic opinion of himself, a well-developed

sense of the importance of Number One, and a conveniently elastic conscience – if any.

The spiv, in short, is a relentless opportunist, a picker-up of considerable as well as of unconsidered trifles. In the glossary of his very readable *The Other Half* ('One half of the world does not know how the other half lives'), which, published in 1937, is sub-titled *The Autobiography of a Spiv*, John Worby defined the term as 'a man who gets a good living by his wits without working'. Two years later, in *Spiv's Progress*, he elaborated that definition by adding 'and (if possible) without crime'.

That is the point: *preferably* without crime. When he does commit a crime it is 'small-time stuff'. He lacks the courage to be a gunman or even a professional burglar. He is, essentially, a small-time racketeer. Usually he's a tout, especially in 'the racing game' or in boxing. In fact, one of the earliest records I possess of the term occurs in Lionel Seccombe's wireless-reporting of the Foord-Neusel fight on November the 18th, 1936, the very earliest being in Axel Bracey's novel, *School for Scoundrels*, 1934; and in *The Daily Telegraph* of July 30th, 1947, there occurs this informative note by 'Peterborough':—

The Spiv Defined.

Mr. W. Bebbington, who has spent a quarter of a century on the racecourse watching rogues, tells me that Lord Rosebery's definition of a spiv, which was given in The Daily Telegraph yesterday, is the correct one.

Mr. Bebbington, a retired racecourse detective, is an authority on spivs. He has just written a book about them called 'Rogues Go Racing'.

The word spiv, he tells me, has been in circulation on the course during all his 26 years' experience. He

> defines him, with touching dignity, as 'one who obtains a living on the racecourse without having to work for it'.
>
> Mr. Alfred Cope, whose uncle founded his book-making business 50 years ago, tells me he can take the spiv back to the turn of the century. All spivs, says he, have one thing in common: no visible means of support.

One of the spiv's main activities is the selling of tickets at extortionate prices. You'll see him at Wembley and Wimbledon, the Albert Hall and the Arsenal: wherever there is an opportunity to cash-in on the public's gullibility.

The term, then, is much older than the newspapers of 1947 led the public to believe. What could one do but laugh when, late in July, 1947, and in a reputable daily, one read these innocent words, 'To the best of my knowledge the word spiv first appeared in a printed book . . . published . . . 12 months ago. . . . As the author of this book I have watched with interest the spreading popularity of the word spiv, and its equally picturesque adjective, spivvish. First it was mentioned by the book reviewers, then it caught on in the news columns, until finally it was immortalized in Hansard.' Well, well! Thus are legends born.

Unfortunately, John Worby's excellent *The Other Half* went through seven editions within two years of its publication in January, 1937; *Spiv's Progress* did quite nicely; and on April 7, 1946, Alan Hoby defined the term in the course of a most informative article in *The People*. What is more, I read in *The Daily Telegraph* of July 24, 1947, this 'simple war-time derivation' of the term: '*s*uspected *p*ersons and *i*tinerant *v*agrants', a police classification. But 'spiv' long antedates the war – and it arose in the underworld. So far, the numerous guessers have failed to solve the problem of the origin. But

apparently 'spiv' derives from dialect *spif* or *spiff*, 'smart; dandified; excellent'; compare Scottish and Yorkshire *spiffer*, 'anything first class', and the outmoded slang *spiffing*, 'excellent'. The adjective *spivvish*, 'of or like a spiv', is very recent: it hardly antecedes 1946.

All spivs are phoneys, in that they are very much less respectable and praiseworthy than, to the gullible, they appear. A phoney is a person or a thing disagreeably different from what he or it seems to be; a make-believe, a pretended something or other. To the underworld, a phoney in a 'mob' or gang would be, say, a spy or even a detective.

But 'a *phoney*', noun, derives from *phoney*, adjective, meaning 'pretended, false, unreal', itself from the longer-established senses, 'imitation, counterfeit, spurious; "shady", engaged in a racket'. And whereas *spiv* is entirely British, *phoney* is, in that form, American. It was, you may recall, Americans who named the inactive, stale-mate war of 1939–early 1940 'The Phoney War': not a real war; a mere playing at war. Before then, *phoney* was scarcely known in Britain.

That once famous Irish-American novelist, Owen Kildare, in 1905 used *phoney* (superior to *phony*) for imitation or shoddy jewellery; five years earlier the perhaps even more famous George Ade, the author of *Fables in Slang* and *More Fables in Slang*, used the adjective thus, 'An enormously large diamond pin of the "phony" sort'. From the sense 'imitation jewellery' came that of 'counterfeit paper money'. Our own Edgar Wallace (a story a minute) said, in 1924, 'Slush is funny stuff – they call it "phoney" in America'. A *phoney man* or a *phoney stiff* is a peddler, usually itinerant, of imitation jewellery; a *phoney monniker* is a false name.

Those are Americanisms, but *deal someone a phoney hand* is used by British tramps to mean 'to bluff or to outwit him'; it occurs, for instance, in Matt Marshall's very readable *Tramp-Royal on the Toby*, 1933.

Those terms belong to the underworld. *Phoney* did not become slang in America until about 1930, nor in Britain until 1939. And, like those of so many other underworld terms, its etymology or origin has caused much trouble to scholars; only the inveterate guessers and constant writers of letters to the Press find these things easy.

Spiv had never been satisfactorily explained. No more had *phoney*. Yet both the guessers and the pundits had the key; they failed to use it on the right door. Several responsible persons have proposed or accepted the theory that *phoney* derives from *telephone* or perhaps *telephoney*. *Webster's Dictionary*, usually magnificent for etymologies, thinks that it comes from *funny*, as in 'funny business' (dishonesty or trickery).

But the early form of *phoney man*, peddler of imitation jewellery, was *fawney man*. Now, the British underworld has used *fawney* for a finger-ring, whether of real or of imitation gold, for almost two hundred years. *The fawney rig* was the old game of ring-dropping; *fawney cove*, a man that practised this dodge. 'That's all very well,' you may say, 'but where does *fawney* itself come from?' It comes from the Irish *fainné*, a finger-ring.

In etymology, one has to use not merely knowledge but also good sense and imagination. It's no game for either spivs or phoneys.

(Written on July 25–26, 1947; published in *Lilliput*, October, 1947, in a much shorter form.)

AMERICAN NAME INTO AMERICAN WORD

THE conversion of a Proper Name – the name of a place; a person, whether historical, mythological or otherwise imaginary; the title of a book – into a piece of common property* has been going on for over 2,500 years. 'The Greeks had a word for it': for instance, *soloikismos* (our *solecism*) for unidiomatic or ungrammatical speech, such as that perpetrated by the Athenian colonists of *Soloi*, a town in Cilicia, Asia Minor; and *lakōnismos* (our *laconism*, with adjective *laconic*), applied to any such brief and pointed speech as characterized the Laconians or Lacedaemonians or Spartans. Compare the Romans' *patavinitas*, applied to provincialisms and deriving from the dialect spoken by the inhabitants of Patavium – the modern Padua.

During their comparatively brief history, Americans have done pretty well at this sort of thing. The number of common words that, in geology, mineralogy, zoology and botany, commemorate the discoverers of the things designated runs into thousands; the number of terms that, in technics, derive from the names of inventors and devisers runs into hundreds. In the ensuing paragraphs, I have excluded all such words, unless the discoverer or inventor were a national figure. Also, of course, these

* See my *Name into Word* (Secker & Warburg; 25*s.*), 1949: a dictionary with an introductory essay. (U.S.A.: Macmillan.)

paragraphs,* so far from being exhaustive (and exhausting), are merely representative of five important sources:

States;
Counties, cities and towns, suburbs and parks, rivers and mountains;
Indian tribes;
Presidents of the U.S.A.;
other notables, exclusive of geologists, mineralogists, physicists, chemists, zoologists, botanists.

Except for *okie*, any itinerant farm hand, a general term from the particular *Okie*, an itinerant farm hand from Oklahoma, the State names have yielded a number of common words, but common only in the fields of chemistry, mineralogy and petrology: *alabamine* and *alabamide*; *illinium*, a chemical element discovered, so late as 1926, at the University of Illinois, and *virginium*, discovered four years later in the State of Virginia; and eight terms ending in that *-ite* which denotes 'mineral, rock, stone' – *arizonite*, *arkansite*, *californite*, *missourite*, *montanite*, *nevadite*, *utahite* and *wyomingite*. Frankly, not a palpitatingly instructive lot.

Smaller political divisions, like natural geographical features, show a more entertaining result. What more appetizing than *bourbon*, the sensible form of *Bourbon whiskey*, which, distilled originally in Bourbon County, Kentucky, was widely and affectionately known as 'old Bourbon' even so long ago as the 1840's? Cities and towns have been prolific engenderers of common words. To take only a few of them, we may notice *chicago*, to

* All terms of the *Douglas fir*, *Oregon pine*, *Texas fever* type are automatically ineligible; with very few exceptions, only such terms qualify as are habitually written with a small initial letter.

prevent a card-game adversary from scoring, probably from certain no longer permissible high-pressure business methods current in the days when Chicago moved the great crusading English journalist W. T. Stead (1849–1912) to write *If Christ Came to Chicago*, 1893; compare *Chicago piano*, a multiple pom-pom slangily, yet how expressively, named from the slaughterous machine-gunning dear to the sadistic Chicagoan gangsters of the bad old days of Prohibition. A more peaceable scene is evoked by the Michigan trading-centre of Mackinac (of French Canadian origin), which has given us the comfort of a *mackinaw*. Another amenity is the *saratoga*, or Saratoga trunk, originally a travelling trunk popular among those lucky people who spent their holidays at Saratoga Springs, where they enjoyed the waters and *Saratoga chips* and that variation of the card-game newmarket which early came to be known as *saratoga*; there, too, they could, when light-heartedly golfing, use the *schenectady*, or Schenectady putter (since debarred), named after a town in the same State. Then there is a trio in *-ite*: *franklinite*, from Franklin (New Jersey), a town named after the great Benjamin; *monrolite*, from Monroe (N.Y.), named after the differently famous father of Monroeism, James Monroe; and *warwickite*, from Warwick in the same county.

At least two city-districts and one park have influenced the language: *bronx* and *manhattan* constitute, not libels upon the drinking habits of, but pleasant reminders of the hospitality offered by, Bronx and Manhattan; and *tuxedo* – I'm told that the flippant call it a *tux* – has also become a part of American social history. Tuxedo Park was opened to the public on June 1, 1886; the Tuxedo Club already existed (Orange County, New York State). The Club was very smart; the Park, the

haunt of the smart. In that famous novel, *The Common Law*, by R. W. Chambers in 1911, a fashionable painter 'dined . . . on Fifth Avenue; . . . decorated a few dances, embellished an opera-box now and again, went to Lakewood and Tuxedo for week-ends, rode for a few days at Hot Springs, frequented his clubs'; twelve years earlier, George Ade, in the (except by himself) inimitable *Fables in Slang*, had written, 'Now she began to see the other kind: the Kind that Wears . . . a jimmy little Tuxedo at Night'.

Rivers and mountains have been less fruitful than one might expect. I call to mind only *monongahela*, short for *Monongahela whisky*, now merely historical, which is perhaps as well, for this whisky, manufactured ca. 1815–30 at stills situated on the lands bordering the Monongahela River, had a kick like a mule's. What whisky – and what men! And, deriving from a mountain, only *shastaite*, found on Mt Shasta in California, a peak taking its name from an almost extinct Indian tribe.

Apropos of Amerindian tribes, it is pleasant to see that the white men have retained a high proportion of the native names for geographical features and even for the cities they have built upon the sites of Indian settlements. Those Proper Names, however, are not only no concern of mine, but even if they were I should not dare to compete with George R. Stewart's *Names on the Land*, one of the most delightfully informative, yet basically scholarly, books I've ever read.

Indian tribal names have left a notable mark upon the every-day vocabulary. Not quite every-day, perhaps, are two terms in petrology: *washita*, a coarse whetstone, named either directly from the *Washita* tribe of the south-west or, more probably, via Fort Washita, established in the heart of the Indian territories in

Texas; and *shoshonite*, from the Shoshoni tribe of Colorado, likewise via a derivative place-name, Shoshone Lake in Yellowstone Park.

Nor is *mohawkite* a common term on Dearborn or Broadway, but it conveys us to the no less famous than ferocious Mohawk tribe, the easternmost members of the Iroquoian Confederacy. The warlike activities of the Mohawks, often in the 17th–18th Centuries called *Mohocks*, prompted the fashionable ruffians gang-infesting the London streets early in the 18th Century to adopt 'Mohocks' as their designation. Dean Swift, on March 18, 1712, in his journal to Stella, characteristically described them as 'a race of rakes . . . that play the devil about this town every night, slit people's noses, and beat them'. Their name evokes that of the Mohicans, known to scholars as *Mahicans*, and reminds us that 'in *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper confuses Mahicans with Mohegans' (James D. Hart); Mahicans and Mohegans were so very closely affiliated to each other that Cooper may be forgiven his 'confusion'; even *Webster's Dictionary*, exemplar of exactitude, employs *Mahican* to cover both *Mohican* and *Mohegan*. The title of Fenimore Cooper's world-famous romance, published in 1826, has given a phrase to the English-speaking world. For instance, James T. Farrell employs it allusively in *Studs Lonigan* and in 1942–45 I often heard it used in the R.A.F., especially in reference to the last cigarette in one's possession or to the last of any other set of objects.

The other notable derivatives from tribal names range from the bloodthirsty *apache*, through *catawba*, *cayuse*, *chinook*, *siwash*, to the civilized *stogie* and *wyandotte*. Although depicted earlier in literature, British and American as well as French, the *apache* did not receive its name until 1902, when certain Parisian journalists

named him after the Apache Indians of Arizona ('the Apache State') and neighbouring regions, a nomadic and predatory tribe. The rather gentler Catawba Indians have fathered the *catawba*, a light-red grape, hence the wine therefrom, hence the colour of that wine. A *cayuse*, an Indian pony, has since ca. 1880 indicated an inferior horse. The Cayuse Indians were 'famous fighters', as Nard Jones describes them in that readable and stirring novel, *Scarlet Petticoat*. In the same novel we may read that 'Both the Clatsops and the Chinooks . . . had the short thick legs and the powerful yet misshapen shoulders and arms bespeaking of generation upon generation in canoes'. The Chinooks, by trading with the whites, helped to create the Chinook jargon, lingua franca of northwestern U.S.A. and southwestern Canada; from them came *chinook*, the warm, moist wind of Oregon and Washington. From the Chinook jargon (not from Chinook proper) comes *Siwash*, an Alaskan dog, and the verb *siwash*, both transitive, in the loggers' vocabulary, for 'to draw (logs) up to the main hauling cable', and intransitive for 'to live like an Indian; especially, to travel very light'. In the jargon, *Chinook* means simply 'an Indian', whence it is easy to guess that *chinook* is merely a corruption of the French *sauvage*, 'savage; uncivilized'. Evidently, therefore, *Siwash* is not, strictly, a tribal name and it should be used only in such a context as *Hiyu siwash mitlite yukwa*, 'Many Indians live here', as Edward Harper Thomas makes very clear in his history of Chinook. The Conestoga Indians have given their name to the town of *Conestoga*, where the *Conestoga wagons* were manufactured; thence also comes *stogie*, *stogy*, a long rough cigar, but also a rough heavy boot. From another Iroquoian tribe, the *Wyandottes*, we have the *wyandotte*

domestic fowl, probably with reference to the Indians' war-paint.

Passing to Presidents, we note *washingtonia*, aptly named after George Washington, one good tree deserving another; *jeffersonite*, a pyroxene commemorating Thomas Jefferson, although for no specific reason; and *teddy bear*, in affectionate reference to Theodore Roosevelt, that mighty hunter of bears and other big game who once presented to the Bronx Zoo a number of very young bears.

The already mentioned 18th Century worthy, Benjamin Franklin, is warmly remembered by all users of a *franklin*, or Franklin stove. Another 18th Century character, John Burgoyne, soldier and dramatist, despite his British nationality gave the American language a pair of words, *burgoynade* and *burgoyne*, respectively 'capture of a notable person, especially a general' and 'to capture (such a person)'. In 1804 Captain William Clark, resourceful and courageous explorer, accompanied Captain Lewis in an expedition across the Rockies and discovered the showy herb we know as *clarkia*. In the preceding decade, there had died a Virginia planter and army officer that, by high-handedly suppressing a Loyalist plot, earned himself, Charles Lynch, an undying fame in the phrase *Lynch law*.

In ca. 1840–55, a wealthy Texan, Samuel A. Maverick, owned vast herds of cattle, of which some, quite understandably, failed to get branded: all unbranded cattle, especially calves and yearlings, became *mavericks*: so, derivatively, all masterless, wandering persons. From 'Justin Morgan', a celebrated stallion named after an even more celebrated Massachusetts horse-breeder (1747–91), have come the celebrated light horses we now call *morgans*. Two other benefactors should be

remembered: George Mortimer Pullman (1831–97), for the railroad *pullman*, and J. B. Stetson, that manufacturing millionaire who founded a university and a hat (*J.B.* to hoboes and bums, *stetson* to you and me). Almost a benefactor is America's greatest satirical novelist, Sinclair Lewis, who in *Babbitt*, 1922, forthwith added a word to the language; that word has derivatives, especially *babbittry* or *babbittism*.

The destroyers have an invidious fame in the weapons they invented or devised: the *bowie* (hunting-knife) of James Bowie, soldier of fortune and a victim of the San Antonio massacre (1836); the *colt*, originally *Colt's revolver*, patented in 1835 by Samuel Colt; the *gat*, originally an underworld term for a revolver, from the *gatling*, or Gatling machine-gun, first used in the American Civil War; and *maxim*, short for *Maxim mitrailleuse* or *Maxim machine-gun*, which, coming into general use ca. 1885, was invented by Hiram Maxim.

In conclusion, a Briton may, whereas an American would blush to, 'Hail, Columbia!' by recording *columbium* (and its derivative *columbite*), a chemical element discovered, 1801, in North America, poetically *Columbia*.

(Written in May, 1949.)

THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNDERWORLD

OR, for short, *cant* – the technical name, and the convenient. The noun derives from the verb. In the underworld of the 16th–19th Century, *cant* meant simply 'to speak; to talk'; hence, 'to speak the language of the underworld', a sense that has the same ultimate origin as the better-known one, 'to speak hypocritically or with an implied though baseless piety': a plea for alms sung or rather chanted by religious mendicants, with an allusion on the one hand to the whining tone and on the other to the assumed piety. The word itself presumably comes rather from the Latin noun *cantus*, 'a song, a chant', than from the Latin verb *cantare*, 'to sing; in Ecclesiastical Latin, to chant', itself a frequentative of *canere*, 'to sing', with which compare the Greek *kanakhë*, a sharp, ringing or shrill sound', *kanassein*, 'to gurgle, as of – or with – water', *kuknos*, a swan, and Sanskrit *kôkas*, 'a duck' (English *cock*), although *kuknos*, *kôkas* and *cock* are cognate rather than identical with the stem *kan-* ('to sound') of the preceding words; German *Hahn* and English *hen* are much closer to *kan*.

To define *cant* as 'the language of the underworld' falls short of clarity, as I know who have so often been asked, 'What *is* the underworld?'

The underworld consists of crooks, i.e. professional burglars and pickpockets, cardsharpers, confidence

men, swindlers (including the commercial), racketeers, Black Marketeers, and such hangers-on as fences and spivs; of drug traffickers and white-slavers and prostitutes; of professional tramps and beggars.

Certain words and phrases are common to all or nearly all these classes; some to only one class or to allied classes – for instance, beggars and tramps, or white-slavers and prostitutes. Beggars link with crooks, in that the former sometimes act as look-out men for the latter; tramps may easily, in their search for free or very cheap food and lodging, come into contact with crooks; prostitutes are notoriously and generously kind to beggars and tramps; white-slavers often work hand in hand with drug traffickers; Black Marketeers have contacts among thieves and fences; and so it goes on.

Cant, it must never be forgotten, is a vocabulary, a glossary; not a language with a syntax of its own. It does not trouble to find words for 'a' and 'the', 'to' and 'from', 'is' and 'have' – the small, insignificant coin of speech. Cant is a secret language, but its secrecy extends only to such things, actions, processes, ideas as are, to the underworld, important. For instance, 'to speak, steal, take, murder, hide, kidnap, counterfeit, run away; sentence, electrocute'; 'policeman, detective, prison warder, beggar, burglar, counterfeiter, kidnapper; man, woman, child; prison, cell, house, window, door, staircase; food, drink, clothing; dog, horse, country; moon, road; gold, silver, jewellery, plate, gems; theft, burglary, blackmail; dark, bright, white, hidden, lost, dangerous, rapid, beautiful, ugly, valuable; yes, no, not, very'; and so forth. Only certain words need be secret – only a few.

What, in brief, is the history of cant, whether in the

world as a whole, or in Britain, the Commonwealth of Nations, the United States of America? In brief, for to tell the story adequately would require a book.

In France and Germany, cant seems to have existed in the 14th, certainly it flourished in the 15th Century. Italy and Spain possessed a considerable body of cant by the 16th, as also did Britain; it may easily have arisen in those three countries as early as the 15th Century and probably it did, but, for England at least, we have no irrefutable recordings earlier than the 1530's. In North America, it doubtless existed in the 17th Century, for not all the early emigrants were as respectable as the Pilgrim Fathers: yet our earliest unimpeachable record for the United States is valid for only so early as 1794, after which there is extremely little recorded until the 1840's. To Australia cant travelled with the First Fleet, but lacks an indigenous character until about the 1820's; for New Zealand, South Africa and even Canada our earliest records are astonishingly late – the last quarter of the 19th Century.

In the English-speaking world, therefore, Britain, so far as the documents go, had by far the most prolific cant until the 1840's; the American corpus has been formidable only since that time, but in the 20th Century it has considerably influenced British cant and is, in itself, numerically larger than the British. Since the War of 1914–1918, the cant inter-influence among all English-speaking countries has been considerable; nor had it from (say) 1850 onwards been negligible. For instance, the Sydney Ducks were teaching the Americans something in the Californian Gold Rush days: and the Americans have been teaching the Australians something ever since. Although the English hardly less than the Americans have been telling everybody how great

is the British debt, both in slang generally and in cant particularly, to the United States, yet ever since the 1850's the American debt to Britain has, in cant at least, been equally noteworthy.

But whereas the American and the Dominion cants have always been, in the main, uncultured though not necessarily illiterate, and although the same is true of British cant since early in the 17th Century, British cant of the 16th Century had a large element of learnèd words. 'Once upon a time [cant] was called "Thieves' Latin", a term which is more accurate than would at first appear. At the time of the Reformation many thousands of priests lost their livings, and [some few of them] drifted into the bands of robbers and highwaymen that infested every country at the time. These ex-priests taught Latin (the language with which they were most familiar) to their confederates so that they could communicate with each other with very little danger of having their plans discovered by the ordinary public,' as Detective-Sergeant (in 1943) Alexander Black has written; a passage that needs only these modifications, that cant existed before the Reformation and that almost as important in the early development of the European cants was the coming of the Gypsies to Eastern Europe in the 14th Century, to Italy and Western Europe early in the 15th and to Britain late in the 15th. There have always been educated, cultured elements in British cant, whether words adopted from Latin and occasionally from Greek or from French or Italian or Dutch or German, or allusions to art and literature, but it is safe to say that, after 1620 or 1630, the learnèd element has been small.

Moreover, the native element in all cants has naturally been much larger than the foreign, though no less

naturally the total number of words derived from foreign languages has been rather more impressive. Then, too, the British element ceased, ca. 1850, to be predominant in the cant of the U.S.A., and in the Dominion cants ca. 1870.

There have been numerous books and newspaper articles dealing with the underworld, and a considerable number of these contain examples of underworld speech. To give an account of that 'literature' is no part of my intention, but one or two facts may have their interest. The most important British source of underworld speech has never (before my own researches) been consulted; the most important source of post-1920 American cant has (thus far) been ignored. The most valuable dictionary for British cant had, until 1937, been Farmer & Henley's (1890–1904); and until 1942 the best dictionary for American cant was Godfrey Irwin's, 1931. The three greatest American authorities upon the subject of American cant are Godfrey Irwin, Joseph Fishman and David Maurer; there is, too, a mass of cant in Lester V. Berrey & Melvin Van Den Bark's *The American Thesaurus of Slang*, but it is insufficiently differentiated.

Among non-lexicographical 20th Century users of cant the most notable have perhaps been, in America: Josiah Flynt, Jack London, Jim Tully, Glen Mullin, for tramps; Hutchins Hapgood, A. H. Lewis, Donald Lowrie, George Bronson-Howard, Arthur Stringer, Jack Black, Jack Callahan, 'Chicago May', Charles G. Booth, Charles F. Coe, Edwin H. Sutherland, Lee Duncan, and Don Castle, for crooks.

And in Britain, W. H. Davies, the Rev. Frank Jennings, George Orwell, Matt Marshall, for tramps and beggars; Edwin Pugh, Edgar Wallace (mostly trust-

worthy), Arthur Gardner, George Ingram, James Curtis, Jim Phelan, Val Davis, for crooks.

At this point, a cautionary remark might well be interposed. Rather too many writers upon the underworld are ludicrously ignorant of the speech of the underworld. Some years ago, a very successful play contained the phrase *cracking a crib*, which, used for 'burgling a house', was suitable in Charles Dickens's or even in Charles Reade's day; but throughout the 20th Century the predominant phrase has been *screwing* (or *busting*, now obsolescent) *a joint*; *cracking a crib* has been obsolete since at least as early as 1905. A certain popular novelist employs a cant all his own – some of it genuine, some invented, much of it inaccurately assorted. 'No names, no pack-drill!'

But one can talk, far too long, about something without clarifying what that something is: and so I propose to quote four examples, two British and two American, of cant since 1870.

In the October, 1879, number of *Macmillan's Magazine* there is, edited by the Rev. J. W. Horsley, Chaplain to H.M. Prison, Clerkenwell, London – one who knew much about cant – an 'Autobiography of a Thief in Thieves' Language'. In this brief excerpt the parenthetical explanations are Horsley's; the comments, mine.

> 'I took a ducat (ticket) for Sutton . . . and went a wedge-hunting (stealing plate). . . . . I piped a slavey (servant – the term has since become slang) come out of a chat (house), so when she had got a little way up the double (turning of the road), I pratted (went) in the house. . . . . I piped some daisy-roots (boots – already slang in 1879). So I claimed (stole) them . . . and guyed to the rattler

(railway) and took a brief (ticket) to London Bridge, and took the daisies to a sheney (Jew – already slang) down the Gaff (Shoreditch), and done them for thirty blow (shillings). . . . . I got in company with some of the widest (cleverest) people in London. They used to use at (frequent) a pub in Shoreditch. The following people used to go in there – toy-getters (watch-stealers), magsmen (confidence-trick men), men at the mace (sham loan offices), broads-men (cardsharpers), peter-claimers (portmanteau-stealers), busters and screwmen (both names = burglars), snide-pitchers (utterers of false coin), men at the duff (passing false jewellery), welshers, and skittle-sharps. . . . . I went on like this for very near a stretch (year) without being smugged (apprehended). One night I was in the mob (gang of thieves – often called a *push*), I got canon (drunk) . . . . I got smugged. . . . . They asked me what my monarch (name) was. A reeler (policeman) came to the cell and cross-kidded (questioned) me, but I was too wide for him. . . . . I was sent to Maidstone Stir (prison) for two moon (months).'

This passage shows that, originally, most rhyming slang was cant; and that much cant has a very long life.

Some fifty years later than the *Macmillan's Magazine* sample of British cant is this, taken from *The Police Journal* of October, 1931. There Superintendent W. F. Brown, M.B.E., in a short but valuable article comparable with that of Detective-Sergeant Alexander Black twelve years later, gave several excellent passages containing cant. Into the stirring incident he relates – I modify it slightly – I insert in 'square' parentheses the Standard English words.

'Once a broadsman [cardsharper] met a con-head [confidence trickster] and a tea-leaf [thief] in a spieler [a gaming house], when the broadsman put up the fanny ["told the tale"] to them with the result that the broads [playing cards] were obtained and they started spieling [playing]. They spieled [played] for stakes of a sprazey [or *sprazer*, sixpence], then of a deaner [or *deener*, long slang in Australia – a shilling], then of half a tosh [half a crown], then of an oxford [Oxford scholar, a dollar: rhyming slang, not cant], later to a half [ten shillings] and finally to a oncer [one pound]. The con-head and the tea-leaf, having lost a pony [£25: racing slang] each, realized that they had been twisted [cheated]; there was a bull and a cow [a quarrel—rhyming slang on 'row'] and the broadsman got chived and glassed [razor-slashed and cut with a broken wine-glass or tumbler]. A flatty [ordinary policeman] arrived and knocked-off [arrested] the broadsman and the tea-leaf. At the nick [police station] a lot of scratch [paper money] was in a poke [wallet] found in the tea-leaf's sky [pocket; originally thieves' rhyming slang, *sky rocket*]. They also found his brief [convict's licence] and a couple of kites [dud cheques]. He told the Guv [C.I.D. officer in charge], while his dabs [fingerprints] were being taken, that the whole thing was a drag [unjustifiable arrest]. When the con-head was turned over [searched], it was discovered that he was not stone-cold [short of money], as in a pair of turtles [*turtle doves*, rhyming slang for gloves] and his almonds [*almond rocks*, socks] they found some scratch.'

Of the two American samples, the earlier, taken from

a magazine published in January, 1926, represents the actual speech of a burglar. The insertions are mine.

'About this time I lamped [saw, espied] an old yegg [a tough itinerant bank-robber] I was wise to, who savvied peters [safes], and toward night I decided to play gay cat [look-out man or "finder"] and blew the burg [left town] on the rattlers [train], ... About three, g.m. [gone midnight], we got ditched [stranded] in some hick burg [country town]: the hind shack [guard] beefed [complained], because we wouldn't come across [give him a tip], so we hit the grit [jumped out of the train] an' had to drill [walk] out to the jungles [tramps' encampment] because the old hick bull [policeman] was hostile [unfriendly] an' we couldn't flop [sleep] in a box [empty van or truck]; there was a R.R. mug [railroad detective] on the job. . . . . .

We found another rattler and a few days later I piped [found] a beaut of a jug [bank] in a jay burg [simple country town] and wised th' old yegg.

I next lined up on some flunky graft [took a manual job] in a beanery [cheap restaurant] where I could rubber the lay [now usually *case the joint*: examine the building to be robbed]. The graft [robbery to be effected] was an old peter that was easy. I also got cases on [ascertained the position, etc., of] a couple of flivvers [cheap cars] for a getaway, as we were about fourteen kilos [miles] from the main pike [highway].

The thing came off as per arrangement. . . . . The old hill billy hoofer [rural constable], over in the hoosegow [lock-up, prison], where he was floppin', never even heard the racket, but we nearly

ran over some bimboes [guys, fellows] as we was gettin' out of town.

. . . . . We scooped up about five grand [$5,000] an' beat it, 'cause we was leery [we suspected or feared] th' bulls would be on [alert].

We ditched th' Lizzie [Ford car] soon an' went home on th' cushions [on a passenger train in a comfortable compartment].'

Compare that linguistic curiosity – highly praised by that fine scholar, the late William Lyon Phelps – with the following equally genuine piece of cant.

In 1938 Don Castle succeeded in getting his grim, moving story *Do Your Own Time* published in England; the Americans had – one can't blame them – refused to print it. *Do Your Own Time* deals with the great prison of San Quentin in about 1934. From this remarkable book I take an incident narrated by a convict.

'Th' joke was on me . . . Th' beak [judge] was a Hebe [Jew], an' th' dicks [detectives] knew he was wrong [a crook]; so they kep' him on th' spot [in a difficult position] long enough t' make him promise t' give the broad [girl] a five spot [a sentence of five years] in Walla Walla [a penitentiary for women].

'Y'see, th' skirt [girl] was th' cutor's lay [prosecutor's or judge's mistress], an' t' hand her a fin [five years' term of imprisonment] like that set pretty tough with him [went against the grain]; so he gets me t' tommy-gun [to machine-gun] the tecs. I was in a creep-joint [a gambling-establishment that moves every night] when they comes in f'r a pay-off [share of graft or bribe-money] on a load of M [consignment of morphine], an' I let 'em have it – fas'. They knock off [die] without a whisper [without

speaking]. I scrams [hurried away] an' am batting up the stem [driving my car up the street] at about sixty when a dumb flat-foot [uniformed policeman] yanks [forces] me t' th' kerb. He makes the bus [searches the car], an' pipes [sees, finds] th' Tommy [Thompson sub-machine gun], an' a coupla quarts o' alky [alcoholic liquor], so what does the nob do but bury me f'r the night [hold me in detention overnight].

Th' nex' mornin' they try t' hang th' torpedoin' [killings] on me, but th' beak gets th' office [warning, notice], an' comes down. He goes [arranges an alibi] f'r me, puts me on th' bricks [has me released], an' hands me two grand [$2,000] an' tells me t' breeze th' burg [get out of town]; which I does.

Well, when I hits [arrive in] Frisco th' bulls [police] know me. They frisk [search] me an' pipes [see, discover] the case dough [money reserved against a trial]. I tries t' tell 'em it's square jack [honest money], but they don't fall [believe me], an' th' nex' thing I knows I'm doing a ten-spot in college [serving a ten-years' sentence in prison].'

Almost every one of those words is still current – and most of the survivors are still cant. Cant is much more conservative, tends to last far longer, than slang: usually, cant words and phrases long remain unknown, except to a very few outsiders; also the underworld is slow to perceive that a word has become familiar to detectives, even to journalists, and therefore dangerous.

Apart from its sociological value, which is immense, cant is particularly notable for its word-histories. Among the most fascinating of these are the etymologies of underworld terms that have gained a general

currency in colloquial and slangy speech, much as *bloke* and *cove*, *chum* and *cully* and *pal*; *hobo* and *spiv*; *booze* and *grub; bingo* (now *binge*) and *stingo*; to *doss* and to *snooze*; to *nab*, *nail*, *snaffle*; to *bump off*; a *mug* and a *hick*; *queer* and *phoney* and *rum*; to *bilk* and *do* (swindle); to *lope* and to *hike*; to *go west*; a *bob* and a *tanner*; *racket* and *stir*; and certain others.

But to examine the etymologies of the thirty named terms would verge on excess. On the other hand, to consider less than (say) ten would be extremely misleading. The chosen ten cover a period of over four centuries: *queer* and *rum*, constituting an inseparable pair; *booze*, which oils the idealogical wheels; *racket*, surprisingly early and not solely American; *to go west*, even more astonishingly early; *tanner*; *stir*, not only American; *hobo*, entirely American; *phoney*, less American than you might suppose; and *spiv*, almost offensively English.

Queer (in the 16th Century, often *quire* or *quyer*; in the 17th, sometimes *quier* or *quere*) has always, in cant, signified 'bad, inferior; cheap, base, counterfeit; criminal': and in the 16th–18th Centuries was constantly being opposed to *rum*, 'excellent, superior; valuable, expensive; genuine; handsome; great, important, extremely skilful or intelligent'. In the 19th Century, *queer* assumed the slang senses 'tipsy; ill; unfavourable; slightly mad' and in the 20th, 'homosexual'; in the 19th Century (though recorded in isolation in 1774 and 1777: *The O.E.D.*), *rum* assumed the slang senses 'odd, eccentric, strange; questionable, disreputable; inferior'.

Why has *rum*, from meaning 'excellent', come to mean the opposite – come, in short, to be synonymous with *queer*? Ponder these phrases: *rum bite* or *rum fun*, a clever swindle; *rum blowen*, a beautiful prostitute; *rum*

cull, a man very generous to a woman, a rich man easily duped; *rum diver*, a very dexterous pickpocket; *rum mizzler*, a thief clever at escaping; *rum padder*, a 'superior' highwayman: in these terms, the criminal skill or cleverness is anti-social and, by honest citizens, regarded not as good but as bad, not as profitable but as harmful or damaging; what is *rum* or 'excellent' to the criminal is *queer* or 'very bad' for the rest of society. Now, the early Scottish use of *queer* is probably independent of the underworld use, but both usages probably have the same origin; certainly the underworld *queer* derives from the German *quer*, 'across, athwart, transverse; oblique, crooked': compare the noun *crook*, the adjective *crooked* (dishonest), and the underworld *on the cross*, adjective and adverb for '(by) living dishonestly, especially by theft'.

Rum is a much more difficult word: neither Ernest Weekley nor *The O.E.D.* essays an etymology; 'Webster', on the basis of the 16th–18th Century variant *rome*, tentatively suggests derivation from Romany *rom*, 'a husband, a Gypsy', presumably on the assumption that, to a Gypsy, anything gypsy is good. There is something to be said for Webster's suggestion; nothing for the suggestion that *rum* derives from dialectal *ram*, 'strong' – for *ram* appears to be, certainly it is recorded, much too late. But I believe that Hotten was right when he derived the adjective *rum*, 'excellent', from *Rome*, presumably in its Italian form *Roma*, which, according to Ernout & Meillet, is 'd'origine sans doute étrusque'; Ernout & Meillet omitted to indicate what the Etruscan word was – and what its literary meaning. *Roma* may be cognate with the root that occurs in German *Ruhm*, 'fame' – that old Teutonic radical *hruod*, 'fame', which appears in *Roderick* and *Roger*; or

perhap – less probably? – with Greek *rhuma*, 'shelter, refuge'. Rome – Tibullus's *Roma aeterna*, Catholics' 'The Eternal City', Edgar Allan Poe's 'the grandeur that was Rome' – Rome in the 15th and 16th Centuries was a monument of architectural grandeur and beauty, a mausoleum of almost mythical power; to the Gypsies, who, either from the Balkans or direct from Egypt, came to Italy in the 1420's and again, more numerously, in the late 15th and early 16th Century, Rome must have seemed, must have been, a miracle of material splendour and a vast museum of history, a storehouse of riches, a notable field for the exercise of their nimble fortune-telling tongues and their adeptly 'conveying' fingers. This fact alone, or this fact conjoined with the fact that in Turkey (a country to which the Gypsies early repaired and where they founded a Turkish Gypsy dialect) 'Roman' was *Rum*, would suffice for the equation of the ideas in 'excellent, splendid, rich, superior, exceedingly clever or skilful' with the Italian *romano* ('Roman'), re-shaped to Gypsy linguistic needs. That is not something I assert, merely a possibility I tentatively suggest.

Booze, like *queer*, is recorded in normal speech long before it appears in cant: but *booze*, like *queer*, owes its 19th–20th Century currency to its presence in cant; and its first appearance in cant may be, probably is, quite independent of its earlier existence. *Booze* is the 18th–20th Century form of 16th–20th Century *bouse*, *bouze*, *bowse*. The noun apparently derives from the verb; the verb derives from Middle Dutch *bûsen*, 'to tipple': compare Low German *busen*; indeed, *booze* resembles *carouse* in its geographical origin. Kluge obtains the German word from Middle High German *bûs*, 'swelling, tumidity, inflation'; yet I cannot prevent

myself from thinking that, but for the missing links, we should take *booze* as being, in its earliest form, cognate with Latin *bibere*, Greek *pinein*, Sanskrit *pibati* (he drinks), and Latin *potus* (adjective), 'having been drunk, having drunk'. The Aryan stem for 'to drink' seems to have been *pi-* or alternatively *po-*: and I suspect that *booze* may ultimately be proved to descend from the *po-* alternative of that stem, rather than from a stem meaning 'tumidity'.

Racket, which so many regard as an Americanism for 'an illicit activity, an illegal trade or enterprise', was English long before it became American. Moreover, it was late 18th–mid 19th Century cant before, ca. 1860, it became low slang. James Hardy Vaux, who was transported to Australia as a convict, records it in the glossary, compiled in 1810–12, to his *Memoirs* – as a synonym of *lay* (another cant term become slang), a dodge, trick, plan, occupation, 'line' of business, especially when they are illegal or at the least 'shady'. In Pierce Egan's recension (1823) of Grose's *The Vulgar Tongue* we find *be in a racket*, to be privy to an illegality. As *row* (originally cant), a quarrel, derives from *row*, a noisy disturbance, so *racket*, an illegal activity, derives from *racket*, a noise or disturbance; the latter *racket* is probably echoic and comparable, although only semantically, with Greek *thorubos* and perhaps with Latin *clamor*.

To go west, popularized during the War of 1914–1918 in the sense 'to be killed, to die', may owe something to pioneering in North America and certainly owes much to the idea of the sun dying in the west. But not everything. In 1592, Robert Greene, in his *Coney-Catching*, Part II, has this pregnant passage, 'So long the foists [pickpockets] put their vilanie in prac-

tise, that Westward they goe, and there solemnly make a rehearsall sermon at tiborne'. From Newgate Prison in east London, condemned criminals *rode up Holborn* (*Hill*) – compare Ben Jonson's *the heavy hill . . . of Holborn* (1614) – to the gallows at Tyburn, the place of execution for Middlesex from the late 12th to the latish 18th Century, the gallows standing at the point where the present Bayswater and Edgware Roads join with Oxford Street: in short, *west* London, the West End.

A *tanner*, 'sixpence', arising ca. 1790, superseded the synonymous late 17th–early 19th Century *simon*. Instead of deriving it from Romany *tauno*, 'young' (not 'little', as Hotten says: 'little' is *tikno*) or from Latin *tener*, or saying 'Origin unknown' (Weekley), or 'uncertain' (*The O.E.D.*) or discreetly saying nothing at all (Webster), it is perhaps advisable to see what semantics can do for the perplexed etymologist. From childhood days I have remembered the old riddle, 'What is the earliest banking transaction mentioned in The Bible? – When Peter lodged a tanner with Simon.' The text in Acts reads thus, 'He [Peter] lodgeth with one Simon a tanner' (x. 6) and 'He lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side'.

'He lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner'
He lodges with one Simon, a tanner
'one Simon, a tanner'
one *simon*, a tanner
a tanner = one *simon*
a *tanner* = sixpence.

When in *A Covey of Partridge*, 1937, I proposed that explanation, it was greeted with howls of ribald mirth – except by a very few. Those few have become less few.

Two underworld terms for prison are *jug* (now low slang) and *stir*, the latter being recorded by Henry Mayhew in his great sociological work as early as 1851 – at least a generation before it appears in the annals of the United States, where such a phrase as *stir-crazy* or *stir-simple*, crazed by prison hardships, has obtained a fairly general currency. About the etymology, much nonsense has been talked. The key lies in the synonymous *start*, dating from ca. 1820 and derived from *the Start*, Newgate Prison. *The Start*, also *the old Start* (Grose, 1788), later came to mean the Old Bailey. From either or both of these senses – these buildings were London landmarks – comes the obsolescent sense of *the Old Start*: London. The word *start* represents a shortening of Romany *stariben*, a prison, or of the variant *stardo* (or *stardi*); from the further variant *steripen* comes our *stir*, likewise by abridgement. In one form or another, the word exists in several Continental dialects or variations of Gypsy, and in at least one Continental cant as a derivative from Gypsy: Spanish *estari*, often 'disguised' as *estaribel*,* the Catalan Gypsy being *estaru*. The *star* form is basic: and appears to derive ultimately from an Aryan root meaning 'to hold, to detain'.

Hobo, on the other hand, is wholly American. Originally – Josiah Flynt records it in 1891 – it denoted any tramp, but 20th Century tramps have increasingly tended to differentiate it thus: 'Bums loafs and sits. Tramps loafs and walks. But a hobo moves and works, and he's clean.' Godfrey Irwin in his *American Tramp and Underworld Slang*, 1931, mentions several of the guesses made concerning the origin of the term. The latest 'Webster' curtly remarks that the origin is

* I owe this form to Dr Alberto Menarini, the great Italian authority on cant.

unknown – and leaves it at that. The only proposal worth repetition is the one made by *A Dictionary of American English*: 'Ho! beau' in address to, or among, tramps; that seems to me by far the best guess – and very probably correct.

The noun *phoney* (preferable to *phony*) is entirely American for 'one who, or that which, is not what he or it seems'; it derives from the adjective *phoney*, 'imitation, false, counterfeit; illicit, open to (legal) suspicion', used by the inimitable George Ade, *More Fables in Slang*, 1900. The phrase *phoney man*, later *phoney stiff*, 'a peddler of cheap jewellery, especially jewellery with imitation gems', affords the clue, especially when we find that the earliest American form was *fawney man* (extant in England). Since about 1760, *fawney*, though now obsolescent, has been used in Britain for a finger ring; *the fawney rig* (Grose, 1788) was the famous old trick more widely known as 'ring-dropping'. And *fawney* merely anglicizes the Irish *fainné*.

Phoney suggests spivs, who are phoney members of society. A *spiv* is one who makes a living without working for it. The term arose in the 1890's among racecourse gangs and hangers-on, to designate racecourse touts and other hangers-on; it still is so used. Probably in the 1920's, it began to be applied also to hangers-on of the boxing world; indeed, one of my earliest * printed records, the next morning's newspaper report of Lionel Seccombe's wireless broadcast of the Foord-Neusel fight on November 18, 1936, is of the term used thus. In January, 1937, John Worby's *The Other Half. The Autobiography of a Spiv*, which went through seven editions in two years, and in 1939 the sequel, *Spiv's*

* The earliest I have found occurs in Axel Bracey's novel, *School for Scoundrels*, 1934: see the essay 'Spivs and Phoneys'.

Progress, established the term. But the war caused many to forget that establishment. Then in May–August, 1947, *spiv* had a tremendous Press and was occasionally heard in Parliament. In July–August of that year, journalists employed *spiv economy* to describe the Government's makeshift measures. Numerous correspondents to the Press ventured, nay proclaimed various etymologies, most of which ignore the fact that the term *spiv* had at first belonged to cant and much later became slang, and the further fact that it had existed for more than a generation before the War of 1939–1945. The most likely, indeed the only viable, explanation is this: –

> Compare the obsolescent slang *spiffing*, 'excellent'. *Spiffing* and *spiv* have a common origin in the dialectal *spiff* or *spif*, 'neat, smart, dandified; excellent'; compare also the Scottish and Yorkshire *spiffer*, 'anything unusually good'. For the change from adjective to noun, we have the analogy of *phoney*. By a no less generally accepted linguistic principle – one of the so-called 'laws of language' – the principle of Ease of Pronunciation, *spif* becomes *spiv*.

(Published in *The Quarterly Review*, April, 1948.)

NOTE.—My *A Dictionary of the Underworld: British and American* has at last appeared, in 1950 (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 50*s*.—U.S.A.: The Macmillan Company).

PARLYAREE

CINDERELLA AMONG LANGUAGES

Parlyaree, also known occasionally as *Parlaree* (or *-ey* or *-y*) and rarely as *Palarie*, has not yet found its way into such great British dictionaries as *The Oxford English Dictionary*, *The English Dialect Dictionary*, Ernest Weekley's *An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, nor yet into such great American dictionaries as 'Webster', *A Dictionary of American English*, Berrey & Van Den Bark's *The American Thesaurus of Slang*. Barrère & Leland, 1889–1890, like Farmer & Henley, *Slang and Its Analogues*, 1890–1904, listed terms from its vocabulary. John Camden Hotten had spoken of it, though not by name, as early as 1859. I may have been the first (*Slang To-day and Yesterday*, 1933) to deal with the theme at all adequately – but still very unsatisfactorily.

The earliest trustworthy reference to parlyaree occurs in Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, where in vol. iii, No. 43, published on October the 4th, 1851, he wrote, 'The showmen have but lately introduced a number of Italian phrases into their cant language'. The earliest irrefutable recording of a parlyaree term appears in Jon Bee's *Dictionary*, 1823. But the late R. Crompton Rhodes, who possessed a remarkable knowledge of the byways, as well as of the highways, of the theatre, was convinced that parlyaree existed among itinerant actors and showmen throughout the 18th Century; so am I.

It was among showmen and strolling players that parlyaree originated, partly in self-protection; actors and actresses, especially if itinerant, being a despised class until late in the 19th Century. Henry Mayhew's reference applied particularly to those Italian organ-grinders, musicians and Punch and Judy men who became popular in the 1840's. The men and women living by or in the circus adopted many parlyaree terms, but they have always used also many back-slang and rhyming-slang terms and many taken from Gypsies, as well as much that is natively circus. Others than circus users of parlyaree have adopted a couple of Romany words. In short, parlyaree is not co-extensive with circus slang, which, however, notably includes much of the old parlyaree vocabulary: it came to the circus from independent showmen; and the circus, along with showmen at fairs, is doing much to preserve the old parlyaree. See, for instance, Thomas Frost, *Circus Life*, 1875; P. H. Emerson, *Signor Lippo, Burnt-Cork Artiste*, 1893; Eleanor Smith, *Red Wagon*, 1930; Edward Seago, *Circus Company*, 1933, and *Sons of Sawdust*,* 1934. But we have insufficient evidence to prove whether those showmen got it from strolling players or the reverse: the two groups of entertainers have often merged. Strolling players have long ceased to exist, yet a few of their words and phrases survive among their successors, the troupers. Many of the terms have become known also to cheapjacks, for cheapjacks have mingled with showmen, especially on fair grounds, since the 18th Century – and probably since the Middle Ages; see, for instance, Charles Hindley, *The Life and Adventures of a Cheap Jack*, 1876, and Philip Allingham's diverting and informative *Cheapjack*, 1934.

* This book contains a particularly valuable glossary of circus slang, including one or two parlyaree terms not recorded elsewhere.

The Gypsy element that has crept into such cheapjack and circus slang as is parlyaree has been touched-on in the above-mentioned books by the late Lady Eleanor Smith, by Mr Allingham, and by the distinguished artist-writer, Mr Edward Seago.

These elements will be mentioned in the course of the following account of the specific vocabulary of parlyaree, a glossary with defects that will, I trust, be excused, in part at least, on the ground that this is the first attempt to establish one at all. It must be remembered that at one time there were probably many other terms: obviously I can cite only the survivals.

First, the name itself: *parlyaree* or *parlaree* (or *-y*). The form *palarie* seems to be confined to the verb and to signify 'to speak'; it represents *parlaree* influenced by *palaver*. In *parlaree* we have the Italian verb *parlare* turned into a noun; the *parlyaree* form owes something either to an Italian dialect or to such a part of *parlare* as *parliamo*.

As might be expected, numbers receive an Italianate form. One becomes *una*, two *dooe*, three *tray*, four *quater* or *quarter* or even *quarterer*, five *chinker*, six *sa*, pronounced and usually spelt *say*, seven *setter*, eight *otter*, nine *nobba* or *nobber*, ten *dacha*: wherein we recognize Italian *uno* (feminine *una*), *due*, *tre*, *quattro*, *cinque*, *sei*, *setta*, *otto*, *nove*, *dieci*.

These numbers are often found in combination with the parlyaree terms for money. 'Money' itself is *dinarly* (or *-la*), occasionally *dinali* (*-y*) – compare the termination of *scapali*; especially in *nanty dinarly*, 'I have no money', 'There is no money', or, in the theatre, 'There's no treasury to-day, the ghost doesn't walk'. The general view is that *dinarly* comes either from the Spanish *dinero* (compare Portuguese *dinheiro*) or from Italian *danaro*,

both ultimately from Latin *denarii*; but perhaps it comes, through the agency of Gypsies, from Arabic and Persian *dinar* (itself, clearly, from L. *denarius*), a name clearly given to various Eastern coins.

Italian *mezzo*, 'a half', does duty both as *medza* or *madza* (or either in *-er*), a halfpenny, and in combination, *medza caroon*, half-a-crown; and also, in the plural, as a 20th Century synonym of *dinarly* itself, *medzers* or *medzies* or *metzes* signifying 'money' and *nanty metzes*, 'penniless', as Edward Seago records in *Circus Company*. A penny is *una salter* or simply *saltee* or *salty*, the plural being *salty*; the Italian is *soldo* (L. *solidus*); thus *dacha saltee* is tenpence. A shilling is *beyonek* or more usually *bianc*, from Italian *bianco*, 'white', for the same reason that, in the underworld, a *white* is a shilling: from the whitish sheen of silver. *Caroon* is a crown-piece, or the sum of five shillings, perhaps from Italian *corona*, 'a crown', but probably a mere 'Italianization' of *crown*. There is, however, a further possibility, a possibility not to be ignored, in view of the Romany element in parlyaree: the English Gypsy word for a five-shilling piece is *kroona*; the Welsh Gypsy word is *kuruna*. Moreover, if the Gypsy and parlyaree terms do not corrupt *crown*, they may derive not from Italian but from French, despite the fact that *couronne* is an old, not a modern, French coin. By the way, *tosheroon* (or *tossaroon*) or *tusheroon*, defined by Hotten as a crown-piece, is a half-crown, for clearly it represents a corruption of the *medzer caroon* already mentioned: the *madza caroon* of lingua franca. A pound is *ponte*, often corrupted to *poona*; either from Italian *pondo*, although *pondo* means '*weight*', not a pound sterling, or else as an Italianate re-shaping of the English word.

Punch and Judy showmen – as Barrère & Leland

(*Slang, Jargon and Cant*) recorded in 1890 at *quartereen*, the travelling actors' and itinerant showmen's word for a farthing, Italian *quattrino* – have long had their own set of terms for money. In addition to *mezzo* and *ponte* as above, and to *soldy* for a penny and *beone* as a variant of *bianc*, they prefix to *soldy* (compare *saltee*) the numbers *due*, *tre*, *quarto* or *quatro*, *chickwa*, *sei*, *sette*, *oddo*, *novo*, *deger*, *long deger* – *long deger soldy* being the Italian *undici soldi*, elevenpence.

But money has to be earned and paid. In parlyaree, 'to pay out, pay up' is *parker*, which may further mean 'hand over'; a common phrase is *parker with*, or *from*, *dinarly*. The clue lies in the colloquial English 'to *part* with money or cash': *parker* derives from the Italian *partire*, to depart.

Men, women, children. A man is an *omee* or *omey*, in the circus occasionally aspirated to *homey* and sometimes corrupted to *omney*; it derives from Italian *uomo*, plural *uomi*. The term is often found in combination, as in *omee of the carsa*, usually *omee* alone, a landlord; in *tober omee*, rent-collector on circus field or fair ground; and in *charpering omee*, *joggering omee*. A woman is a *dona*, often written *donah*, occasionally *doner*, rarely in its original, Italian form *donna*; in parlyaree it bears the specific sense of either 'landlady' or, rarely, 'lady of the house'. Thence comes the Australian *donah*, 'girl, sweetheart', as in the proverbial catch-phrase, 'Never introduce your donah to a pal' – from Albert Chevalier's once famous song.* Another name for a woman is *pollone* or *polone* or *palone*, meaning also a girl; Wicks spells it *pollone*, Seago *palone*. Although so very Italian in appear-

* Albert Chevalier (1861–1923) was at the height of his fame in 1891–98. Even better-known songs of his were *My Old Dutch*, *The Coster's Serenade* and *The Future Mrs 'Awkins*.

ance (compare It. *pollone*, a sprout), the word is perhaps derived from the Spanish *polla* (literally, pullet; hence, pretty girl) or is an adaptation of one of its derivatives, but probably it is of the same origin as the English underworld *blowen*, a woman, especially a prostitute: George Borrow compares *blowen* with the *beluñi* of the Spanish Gypsies. Children are often called *chavies* or *chavvies*, which is a Romany word (*chavo*, a child; strict plural, *chavi* or *chavé*), but also *feeliers*, which is 'pure' parlyaree and a sense-development from *feeles*, mother and daughter, or loosely children; *feele* is a girl, a daughter. In all these terms there is derivation from, but also a jumbling-together of, Italian *figli*, sons (singular, *figlio*) or children, and *figlia*, a daughter, and its plural *figlie*.

Before dealing with the parlyaree terms for trades and professions, we should note *gajo*, an outsider, if only to mention that it is non-Italian – indeed, non-Romance – its origin being the Romany *gajo* or *gaujo*, a stranger, strictly one who is not a Gypsy; whereas *gajo* is mainly circus, cheapjacks prefer the form *gorgie*.

A policeman is a *charpering omee*, and a police station a *charpering carsey*, from Italian *cercare*, to search. A prostitute is a *chauvering dona*, where *chauvering* is obscure but probably derives either from lingua franca *cavolta*, horsemanship, or from Romany *charva*, *charver*, to touch. A street, or an itinerant, musician is a *joggering omee*, a man that *joggers*, i.e. plays and sings, or entertains for money: from Italian *giocare*, to play or sport, to jest.

Now these joggering omees are, in the 20th Century, often called *jogars*. In *The Prisoner Speaks*, 1938, H. W. Wicks has, in the chapter on 'Prison Types', remarked that 'The jogars and griddlers . . . had a language of their own, such as: omie, meaning man, pollone –

woman, feelia – boy, . . . manjarie – food, parnie – water, and so on'. Wicks implies that a jogar is an apprentice or tyro busker or griddler. The musical instrument is called a *strill* (earliest recorded by Wicks), which I suppose to spring from Italian *strillo*, a shrill cry, a scream, or the verb *strillare*, to cry or shriek: from the excruciating notes drawn from the too often brutalized instruments. Compare the equally echoic *strimpellare*, to scrape on the violin, to strum tunelessly. Note, however, that the word may have come to England from the underworld of Italy: Neapolitan cant has *strillante*, a cornet* ; and Bolognese cant has *strillano*, a player, or a singer, at the fairs – *strillé*, to practise an itinerant musician's trade – *strell*, a song, a tune – and *fer di strell*, to make a song or a tune – i.e. to play or sing.†

Most parlyaree-speakers prefer a *carser* or *carsey*, i.e. a house, when they can get it; the origin of the term is the Italian *casa*, a spelling often retained even to-day. Nor do they disdain a *letty* or bed in *letties* or lodgings; *letty* also does duty for 'to lodge at a house' or even 'to sleep'; both *letty* and *letties* are employed by all users whatsoever of parlyaree, but few of them remember that these terms originated in the Italian *letto*, a bed, plural *letti*.

Such persons enjoy good food and drink when they have the luck to meet with it. Food may be *manjaree* (*-ie* or *-y*) or *monjaree* or *munjaree*, or quite often any of these three variants with the suffix *-ly* (or *-lee* or *-lie*); *-g-* sometimes takes the place of *j*. The parlyaree forms derive from Italian *mangiare*, 'to eat', hence 'food' (compare French *manger*), probably via lingua franca; for the

* Mirabella: *Mala Vita.*, Napoli, 1910.

† Alberto Menarini, *I Gerghi Bolognesi*, Modena, 1941. I owe his underworld information to Dr Menarini himself.

-ly shape compare *dinarly*; a corruption, common among 19th Century strolling players, is *numyare* or *nunyare*. Drink is *bevie*, pronounced *bevvy*, which also means 'to drink' and 'public-house'. To Henry Mayhew, in 1850 or 1851, a strolling player once said, 'We call breakfast, dinner, tea, supper, all of them 'numyare'; and all beer, brandy, water or soup, are "beware" '. Whether *bevie* or *bevvy* or *beware*, this term comes, via lingua franca, from Italian *bevere*, 'to drink' (preterite *bevvi*); a derivative is *bevvy omee*, a drunkard. But equally common with *bevvy*, in the nuance 'water', is *parnee* or *-nie* or *-n(e)y*, used also for 'rain', as in *dowry of parny*, a heavy shower, much rain. And *parny* came into parlyaree, not direct from Hindustani *pani* (whence the Army's use of the word) but from the Gypsies. Another word for 'water' is *aqua*, not straight from Latin but from Italian *acqua*; but it appears only in Jon Bee's recording, 1823, of *pogey* (or *pogy*) *aqua!*, 'make the grog strong!'; literally 'little water!', Italian *poca acqua*.

The sole clothing term I have encountered is *suppelar*, a hat, recorded only by Wicks. The origin is obscure: to hint a connexion with Italian *suppellèttile*, 'household goods, furniture', does not take us far, even if it isn't a false trail. Nor can I think it profitable to propose a corruption of Italian *cappello*, 'hat' – or *cappelliera*, 'hat-box' – or *cappellina*, 'bonnet'. The one thing certain is that the root, the radical idea, exists in Latin *super*, 'on top': compare the English *topper*.

Showmen, circusmen, itinerant musicians and actors, all take the road or *tober*, a tramps' word adopted from Shelta or the secret language of Irish tinkers, who pronounce it *tobar* – itself perhaps, as Ernest Weekley has remarked, a deliberate perversion of Irish *bothar*. Adopted into parlyaree it bears the specific sense, a

circus ground; hence, among cheapjacks and other 'grafters', a fair ground. Both showmen and cheapjacks use paraffin flares; such a flare is *binco*, from Italian *bianco*, for it gives a white light; compare *bianc*.

Along the road goes the *vardo* or wagon, an adoption from Romany; among grafters it has come to mean 'caravan'. But *vardo* has a sense entirely parlyaree: 'to see, look at, observe, watch'; Cockneys often change it to *vardy*. The verb comes from Italian *vedere*, 'to see': *vedo*, 'I see': *vedró*, 'I shall see'. Along the road *scarper* or *scarpey* – that is, escape – many fugitives, who may also be said *to do a Johnny scaparey*; the former is general parlyaree, the latter mostly circusmen's; but in either shape the origin resides in Italian *scappare*, to run away. Variants of the shorter term are *scaper* and *scapali*, the latter especially among 19th Century actors; with *scapali*, compare *dinaly* and *mungarly*.

The two most frequently occurring adjectives, in parlyaree as elsewhere, are those for 'good' and 'bad'. The former becomes, as in Italian, either *bono*, strictly masculine, or *bona*, strictly feminine, both being used in parlyaree with a delightful disregard for either gender or sex. The latter ('bad') becomes *catever* or, corrupted, *kertever*, from Italian *cattivo*, feminine *cattiva*; *catever* may also perform the functions of a noun, meaning a queer affair, a nasty business, a bad or inferior thing. Frequent, too, is *multy* (or *-i*), rarely *multa*, 'much', from Italian *molto*, and, like *molto*, used also as an adverb, 'very', as in *multy catever*, 'very bad'; whence the occasional modern employment of *multy* for 'bad' (as in Edward Seago's two books on the circus). Similar is parlyaree *nantee* (or *nanty*), not seldom *nuntee* (*-ty*), bearing the senses 'no, none, nothing; No!; Don't!; Be quiet!' The word comes, via lingua franca as does so much

parlyaree, from Italian *niente*, 'nothing' or 'not at all'. For instance, *nanty dinarly* signifies 'no money'. And especially *nanty palaver*, of which Barrère & Leland cite the London corruption, *nanty panarly*; it means 'stop talking, be quiet!' Concerning *nantee palaver*, 'cease talking', *The Oxford English Dictionary* remarks, 'Apparently corruption of Portuguese *não tem palabra* = "have or hold no speech" '. That explanation merits citation for several reasons.

Taken by itself, without consideration of the circumstances, *nantee palaver* could, phonetically and philologically, derive from *não tem palabra* (or *palavra*).

But, parlyaree, a most illiterate or, at the least, a most unconventional vocabulary, with virtually no syntax, ignores – as cant and slang ignore – the so-called 'laws of language'.

Then, *não* does not nearly so closely resemble *nanty* as does the Italian *niente*.

Finally, there is not one proven nor even one probable instance of a parlyaree word derived from Portuguese.

Attention is drawn to these facts, not to discredit *The O.E.D.* on a very minor point, but to hint that much unconventional language cannot be tackled in that way. *Palaver* is here used for *parlaree* or *parlyaree* simply because *palaver* had long been an accepted word, even in its colloquial senses 'excessive talk' or 'mere talk'.

Parlyaree, then, is a glossary, a vocabulary, not a complete language. Little remains. Even that little may disappear.

(Written in July, 1948; a very much shorter form of this essay served as my Christmas card of that year.)

BROBDINGNAG AND LILLIPUT

In 1937, as the result of a 'marriage of true minds' – those of a brilliant Hungarian journalist and a courageous English financier, there leaped nimbly upon the stage of periodical-publishing a very smart little fellow, appropriately named *Lilliput*, sub-titled *The Pocket Magazine for Everybody*. Very soon it was.

A year later, the same pair of minds engendered a large and lusty infant: *Picture Post*, sub-titled *Hulton's National Weekly*. Theoretically, *Picture Post* should have been *Brobdingnag*. But whereas *Lilliput* is easy to pronounce, *Brobdingnag* is hard on the tongue; also, for ten persons acquainted with the adjective *Lilliputian*, only one knows the adjective *Brobdingnagian*. So *Brobdingnag* had to go.

Evidently, someone connected with the launching of *Lilliput* was a lover of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, that novel which, published in 1726, was at once a satirical and a narrative masterpiece. Originally it bore the title: *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World . . . By Lemuel Gulliver*.

That remarkable book has enriched the English language with several new words. This fact is hardly surprising. Swift took great pains with the words he used for the names of imaginary countries and their inhabitants. Even the name of his hero, *Lemuel Gulliver*, was chosen for its meaning. *Lemuel* means 'consecrated to God', hence 'divinely guarded or protected', as he had to be in order to survive the many perils (shipwreck,

storm, piracy, marooning) to which his travels exposed him; and *Gulliver* derives from the French *Golfier*, itself derived from or, at the least, akin to the Old English *Wulfhere*, literally 'Wolf harrying-force', i.e. 'Wolf-army', which indicates 'daring', a quality in which Lemuel Gulliver was not embarrassingly deficient.

Yet the other names, the names that have notably affected the English language and several others, are much more interesting. Apparently arbitrary – invented for the occasion – they had, most of them, an origin either in fact or in relevant fancy. Let us take them in the chronological order of Gulliver's voyages. The first was to *Lilliput*, with its inhabitants the Lilliputians; a *Lilliputian* was 'a human creature not six inches high'; *Lilliputian* became a synonym for 'diminutive'. Now, *Lilliput* is probably 'the Land of Lilliputs': the Land of Little Fellows *: *li'lle puts*; with the two-syllabled *li'lle*, compare the dialectal *lill*, 'little'; in the 18th Century, *put* was a colloquial term for 'a dolt; hence, a fellow'. The magazine *Lilliput* is a little fellow.

On his next voyage, Lemuel Gulliver found himself in Brobdingnag. Although *Brobdingnag* has made little impression, its adjective *Brobdingnagian*, which does not occur in Swift but which was used as early as 1728, has come to serve as a synonym of 'huge' or 'colossal', from the fact that the inhabitants were 'as tall as an ordinary spire steeple'. (By the way, *Brobdignag* and *Brobdignagian* are incorrect.) As *Lilliputian* by its very sound, as well as by its etymology, evokes the idea of littleness, so *Brobdingnagian*, like its noun *Brobdingnag*, by its sound evokes the idea of gigantic size; that idea may have started

* Since writing this, I have learnt that A. B. Gough, in his excellent annotated edition (1915) of *Gulliver's Travels*, had come to much the same conclusion.

from *broad*. These two adjectives have become so much a part of the language that most sensible people now write them with small initials.

On his third voyage, Gulliver, captured by pirates, arrives at Laputa, with its inhabitants the Laputians; although Swift wrote *Laputian*, more recent writers have preferred *Laputan*, whether for the noun or for the adjective, the latter being occasionally employed by cultured persons to mean 'whimsically or eccentrically fanciful; preposterous; impractically visionary': post-war Britain has witnessed and endured much that out-Laputans the wildest schemes of the Laputans. It seems probable that the trenchantly satiric Dean had recently been reading a travel-book dealing with the *Lapps* and their folk-lore. The earlier name, 'Lilli*put*', has doubtless influenced the later, 'La*puta*': as *lill* + *i* for euphony + *put* yielded *Lilliput*, so, we may suppose, *Lapp* + *put* + an ending in *-a* yields *Laputa*, a word that may have been, in part, suggested by *Laplata* or *La Plata*, famous in history and geography.

On that same voyage, Gulliver visited the kingdom of *Luggnagg*, perhaps contrived from *Luzon*. Among its inhabitants, the Luggnaggians, were the '*Struldbrugs*, or *Immortals*' – 'those excellent *struldbrugs*, who, being born exempt from that universal calamity of human nature, have their minds free and disengaged'. Did not our own 'immortal', Mr G. B. Shaw, when in his 89th year speak of the possibility of his becoming an incipient struldbrug? The word has given us an adjective, *struldbruggian*, and a noun, *struldbruggism*, both of which are perhaps more usually spelt with capitals. As for its origin, one cannot speak with certainty; perhaps the most one can say is that *struldbrug* has a basis in reality: its cragginess evokes a picture of the cragginess, often

the noble cragginess, of the human head in advanced age. Its form might be compared to that of 'the Island of Sorcerers or Magicians' – *Glubbdubdrib* – visited by Swift's dauntless mariner on this very voyage; an island that, when mentioned allusively by modern writers, is generally spelt *Glubdubdrib*; a humorous and probably arbitrary word.

The fourth and last part of the book is 'A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms'. The Houyhnhnms, horses both intelligent and high-principled, are what the name, pronounced *Whinnims*, proclaims: 'the Whinniers', from *whinny*. Swift makes them the rulers of the Yahoos, whom he describes as having the form, partly of men and partly of chimpanzees, and all the vices, none of the virtues, of men; disposed to 'nastiness and dirt'. Hence our *yahoo*, with small, not capital *y*.

The origin of *Yahoo* is something of a puzzle. Unlike *Struldbrug*, *Yahoo* is not merely, as *The Oxford English Dictionary* holds, an arbitrary word. *Webster's New International Dictionary* suggests that the name *Yahoos* imitates *Yahos* or *Yaos*, a Cariban tribe living on the coast near the Brazilian-French Guiana frontier. In *The Violent Friends*, his arresting novel concerning Swift's life in Ireland, Winston Clewes represents the Dean as saying to a friend, 'They called me Jacobite, Tom, the puppies. . . . . And so the puppies yelp, and after them comes the pack, yowling and howling, yahooing at our heels. Yahooing, that hits it off – a good word. But I shall master them, these – Yahoos.' That author has, I think, gone closer to the truth than *Webster* has. But *yahoo* does not form, as *yowhow* would have formed, a satisfactory blend of *yowl* and *howl*. I believe that *yahoo* is, in its first element, the coarsely and brutally derisive exclamation,

yah!; and, in its second, either the *who?* of defiant questioning or the loutishly derisive exclamation, *hoo!*

If you look back at all those Proper Names – *Lilliput*, *Brobdingnag*, *Laputa*, *Struldbrug*, and the rest – you will hardly fail to notice, both that he who proposed, and they who accepted, *Lilliput* as the title of a magazine, could not have chosen a better one from *Gulliver's Travels*, and that no other name from the novel – not even *Brobdingnag* – could have been used instead of *Picture Post.*

(Written in April–May, 1949.)

THE DEBT OF ENGLISH TO SOUTH AMERICA

In Walter Skeat's *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (4th edition, 1910), there is an excellent fundamental section on 'Distribution of Words', which serves as an almost equally good jumping-off point for this sketch of the South American contribution to the vocabulary of English, whether the British or the American variety. I quote the relevant part verbatim; any modifications will appear where they should appear.

Peruvian: charqui, inca, jerked (beef), llama, puma.

Spanish from Peruvian: alpaca, coca, condor, guano, oca, pampas, vicuna, viscacha.

French from Spanish from Peruvian: quinine.

Guiana: wourali (curari).

Brazilian: aai, capibara, cayenne, coaita, coatimondi, jabiru, jacona, jaguar, macaw, tamandua, tapir.

French from Spanish from Brazilian: agouti.

Portuguese from Brazilian: ananas, copaiba, ipecacuanha, manioc, tapioca.

French from Portuguese from Brazilian: petunia.

French from Brazilian: acajou, cashew (nut), cougar, jacamar, sapajou, toucan.

South American: araucaria, mahogany, tolu.

Spanish from Araucan: poncho.

French from Caribbean: peccary.

To that list, one must add such Spanish and Portuguese words as have been either coined to designate certain geographical features of South America or specifically applied to those features.

That need is linked to the necessity of making a few general introductory remarks upon the distribution and nature of the languages spoken in that continent since (say) the year 1800.

At the time of the discovery of America by Columbus, the most important linguistic families (or stocks) in South America were the Tupian – especially Tupi, the Guarani language being a post-Columbian development; Quechuan, the language being Quechua or Quichua or Kichua or Khetschua; Arawakan (Arawak); Cariban (Carib); Chibchan; Aymaran (Aymara); Araucanian (Araucan); Tapuyan (Tapuyan or Ge is the language) – the Tapuyas, in the 15th Century, occupying the eastern highlands of Brazil and being, therefore, any non-Tupian Indian of that part of Brazil.

Tupi is the language of the Tupis, the Indians 'dwelling in the valleys of the Amazon, the Tapajós, and the Xingú . . . .; especially, the Northern dialect, Neêngatu or [– as the Portuguese call it –] *lingua geral* [i.e., general, widespread], as distinguished from *Guarani* of Abaneême, the southern dialect. Both have developed under missionary influence from *Abañeênga*, or primitive Tupi, and are mutually intelligible.* The northern dialect was adopted by the Jesuits in Brazil as the language of evangelization, and by the Portuguese colonists for communication with the Indians. It still serves as a lingua franca in the valley of the Amazon' (*Webster's New International Dictionary*, edition of 1934,

* Words common to both dialects are usually referred to as *Tupi-Guarani*.

reprint of 1939). *Guarani*, which has, by the missionaries, been developed from the southern Tupian dialects, is spoken mainly in Paraguay and Uruguay.

Quechua is the more native form of the more Spanish *Quichua*; *Kichua* is an Americanization. This is the ancient *Incan*, the language of the highly civilized Incas. 'It was the language of evangelization in western South America, and it has gained territory from Aymara and other languages' (*Webster's*); its two most important divisions or, if you prefer, sub-dialects, are the Cuzceño of southern Peru and the Quiteño of Ecuador. *Aymara* is still spoken, mostly in Bolivia and southern Peru, by some 2,000,000 persons.

Arawak or *Arawakan* is spoken by the Arawaks and other tribes in Guiana, Colombia, Venezuela, north-western Brazil, and parts of Paraguay and northern Peru: Arawakan, indeed, forms 'the most extensive of American Indian linguistic families' (*Webster's*).

Carib, strictly, is the name of the most important of the *Cariban* tribes; Cariban (Skeat's 'Caribbean') is spoken in parts of northern Brazil, in Guiana, Colombia, Venezuela, to some extent in Bolivia and to a smaller extent in Central America and in the Western Antilles. *Chibcha* or *Chibchan* is an extinct language of Colombia; formerly spoken from Colombia to south-east Nicaragua.

Whence we perceive that by 'Brazilian', Skeat meant either Tupi or Guarani; and by 'Peruvian', either Quechua or Aymara.

Araucan or *Araucanian* is the fast-disappearing language of the Araucanos or Araucanians or Aucanians, 'formerly occupying central Chile and adjacent Andean and pampean regions of Argentina' (*Webster's*).

Tapuyan or *Ge* has already been sufficiently 'placed'.

Also to be noted are *Pano* on the south bank of the

Amazon, on both banks of the Ucayli, and on those of the Inambari, the Mamore, the Beni; the *Tukano* on certain tributaries of the Amazon; *Katukina*, south of the Amazon; *Puinave*, in the Inirida basin and between the Rio Negro and the Yapura; *Guaykuru*, on the banks of the Paraguay and the Parana, also in the Chaco; *Matako-Mataguayo*, in the lesser Chaco. Patagonians speak *Alakaluf*, *Yahgan* and, also spoken by the Ona tribe in Tierra del Fuego, *Chon*.

Many Spanish and Portuguese words have filtered into the native languages and been re-shaped by them; and many native words have been incorporated into the South American species of those two languages*: Portuguese in Brazil and Uruguay; Spanish in all the rest of the continent and also in Uruguay. The majority of those South American native words which contribute to the kaleidoscopic vocabulary of English have, in fact, come via Spanish and Portuguese and, to a much smaller extent, via French.

* * * * *

In this article, I propose to be, not exhaustive but severely selective: to deal only with the terms in Skeat's list and with certain other terms, based upon Dr E. W. Shanahan's admirable *South America* (6th edition) and upon some rather desultory reading. The order of treatment is: Historical; Geographical; animal life and products; vegetable life and products; minerals; mankind; human habits and customs – clothes and ornaments – weapons.

* On these *vice-versa* themes, theses have been published, mostly in Argentina and Brazil; mostly, therefore, in Spanish or in Portuguese. They make very good reading—if you're a fairly serious reader and a fair linguist.

There is only one historical term of general interest. That term is *Inca*. When the Spanish conquistadores arrived, the Incan empire covered western South America from Ecuador to central Chile. The people belonged to the Quechuan tribes; *Inca* is naturally a Quechuan word, *Ynca*, meaning 'prince of the ruling clan'; its modern form is *inka*,* with the simplified meaning, 'king, monarch'.

The first point one notices about the geographical words† is that all of them either originate in Spanish or Portuguese or have taken a Spanish or a Portuguese termination. Their variety is such that one finds it difficult to classify them.

Two Proper Names merit a passing mention: the *Chaco* and the *Matto Grosso*. 'The term Matto Grosso, meaning large forest, is in some degree a misnomer, since much less than a third of the plateau section of the state [of Brazil] is forested' (Shanahan): the Portuguese *matto* (better, *mato*), however, also means 'a place covered with shrubs or bushes'. The *Chaco*, that region (400,000 square miles) of 'ill-drained lowlands', means 'hunting ground', or, rather, 'concerted hunt – a hunting party'; the word belongs both to Quechua and to Aymara.

The best known of all Common Noun geographical terms is, I suppose, *pampa* (adjective *pampean*). 'To the people of Argentina the name Pampa denotes an area of about 250,000 square miles spread out like an open

* Sergio Grigórieff, *Compendio del Idioma Quichua*, Buenos Aires, 1935. All subsequent references to Quechua have been checked by reference to this dictionary.

† All these terms occur in E. W. Shanahan, *South America*, 6th edition, 1946: henceforth mentioned as 'Shanahan'; all 'silent' geographical quotations are from this invaluable book.

fan, with a radial distance of 350 to 400 miles from Buenos Aires. . . . . The distinctive features of this area are first, its natural grass vegetation, and second, its almost uniform flatness' (Shanahan). The singular is a Proper Name; the plural is a Common Noun, *pampas*, with the generic meaning, 'vast treeless plains', with such derivatives as *pampas cat – deer – fox –* and *grass*, this last being a misnomer, since it is neither a grass in the ordinary acceptation of that term nor characteristic of such plains. The word *pampas* is a Spanish plural of the Quechuan *pampa*, a plain; compare the Quechuan verb *pampatjay*, to level. In Aymara, *pampa* signifies 'the plain and everything that lies outside the city', as C. Abregú Virreira remarks in his *Idiomas Aborígenes de la Republica Argentina*, 1942.

Geographical associates are *llano*, *llanura*, *campo* and *sertão*; of these, the last is Portuguese, the third both Portuguese and Spanish, the first and second Spanish. In Shanahan they appear thus: 'the lowlands or llanos of the Orinoco'; 'the Orinoco lowlands and the Colombian llanura' – the differentiation in South American usage appearing in 'the soils of the llanos and of the llanura higher up', although, in Castilian, *llano* and *llanura* are almost synonymous, the former being a plain, the latter a prairie; 'campos or pasture lands' and 'the "campos cerrados" or closed pasture lands . . . the open savannahs or "campos" ' – *Webster's New International Dictionary** defining *campo* as 'a level open tract of grassland in South America, having scattered perennial herbs and, sometimes, stunted trees', with which compare the Italian *Campania* and the Latin *campus*, an uncultivated as opposed to *ager*, a cultivated field; 'The Brazilian Plateau: the North-Eastern Caatingas and

* Hereinafter: *Webster's*.

Sertãos' – concerning which Shanahan elaborates thus, 'the relatively well-watered coastal lowlands . . . . are called the matta; there the original vegetation was forest, thin in most places', *matta* being a dialectal variation of the *matto* we have noted in *Matto Grosso*. Shanahan continues, 'The intermediate parts of the plateau behind the matto are called agrestès * and caatingas, the second . . . being used to denote the open stands of rather short and thorny trees and plants, including cacti, that have adapted themselves to these dry areas', footnoted thus: 'The term 'caatinga' has come into general use throughout the civilized world to describe the peculiar drought-resisting type of vegetation found in the hot, semi-arid regions of the New World'. The Portuguese have adopted *caatinga*† from Tupi and lingua geral *caa-tinga*, white forest. Shanahan immediately adds this: 'Above the caatingas are the sertãos, covering very wide areas in the interior. On the sertãos the natural vegetation consists of brushwood and grasses, interspersed with belts of caatinga.' In European Portuguese, *sertão* (pl. *sertãoes*) means no more than 'interior – or, the heart – of a country': ultimately from Latin *serere*, *sertum*, to interweave, interlace. Professor André Siegfried has, in *The Mediterranean*,‡ said of the maquis that 'the general aspect is that of a closely knit impenetrable mass, into which man may be absorbed and disappear. In Corsica the saying is,

* In European Portuguese, *agreste* means 'rural; wild' (L. *agrestis*) or 'a rustic'; in Brazilian Portuguese, 'uncultivated land—esp., lowland'.

† Spelt *catinga* in R. Garcia's *Diccionario do Brasileirismos*, 1915. In Pernambuco, the word denotes the country between the agreste and the sertão.

‡ English translation by Doris Hemming, 1948.

"Take to the maquis", and in Brazil, "Take to the *sertão*" – in other words, take refuge in the wide open spaces of the plains.'

Linked with the preceding set of terms is this, mentioned by Shanahan: 'Throughout the whole of the [Brazilian] plateau that lies to the west of the eastern heights . . ., denudation has worked unevenly, so as to leave broad, flat-topped areas, called chapadões by the Brazilians, between the river valleys. . . . The chapadões consist largely of open savannah country.' The word is a Brazilian derivative from Portuguese *chapada*, a plain. Compare the low plateaus known as *mesas*, and the *mesetas* or smaller table-lands.

A *bajo* is a deep enclosed valley, a deep depression, especially in Patagonia; from the Spanish *bajo*, low (-lying). Also of Patagonian application is *mallin*,* as in 'the depressions called mallins which are sufficiently well provided with water to have an outlet' (Shanahan). Still speaking of the Patagonian plateau, Shanahan tells us that 'to some extent supplies are obtained from the manantiales, or seasonal sheets of water formed by the rains, which differ from the salitrales in that they do not . . . leave saline deposits on drying up'; in European Spanish, *manantial* is a source, a spring, from *manar* (L. *manare*), to flow.

A *salitral* is explained in the following passage concerning the 'seasonal lakes' and 'huge marshy tracts' that characterize the Chaco 'all the way to the borders of the Pampa': 'A place where a river spreads itself out temporarily without a recognizable channel or proceeds

* Augusto Malaret, *Diccionario de Americanismos*, 2nd edition, 1931, says that in Argentina it means pasture or pasture-land and in Chile, lowland. *Mallin*, however, is an Araucano word, meaning lagoon, esp. a small lagoon; also, a lake.

by infiltration, is called an explayado' – noun from the past participle of Spanish *explayar*, to extend or dilate, akin to *explicar*, to unfold, to explain; 'an area that receives overflow water or the whole discharge of a disappearing river and from which the water is afterwards removed by evaporation so as to leave salt incrustations is known as a salitral*; an undrained hollow that receives flood waters that afterwards dry up and in which the fine sediment carried by them is deposited, is described as a bañado' – from Spanish *bañar*, to bathe or wash, to irrigate; 'an estero† is a deeper bañado, some parts . . . always under water' – *Webster's* defining it too widely as 'swamp land'; 'a malezal is a swamp caused by the drainage water over a wide area having such an imperceptible fall that it cannot flow away' – *malezal* being the South American form of European Spanish *maleza*, (a place covered with) underbrush; a brambly area; 'and a laguna is a permanent sheet of water resembling a lake'; to which must be added 'the cañada or true permanent swamp' (a place or area infested with *cañas*, canes or reeds). Speaking of the Amazonian lowlands, Shanahan mentions that 'In the region traversed now by the Middle Amazon . . . and the Japura, there are numerous backwater swamps known locally as igapos, furos and paranás'; *furo*, in European Portuguese, is a hole made by boring; *igapo* is related to the equally Brazilian *igarape*, branch of

* In European Spanish, a *salitral* is a saltpetre bed or works; from *salitre*, saltpetre. Compare *salar* (likewise ultimately from L. *sal*, salt), a salt-encrusted basin, a large saline area; the Salar of Atacama, like the Salar of Arizaro, covers an area of 'more than 1,000 square miles of salt-encrusted desert' (Shanahan).

† European sense: inlet or estuary. Elsewhere, Shanahan defines esteros as 'semi-permanent lakes'.

a river, the *iga* being perhaps a thinned form* (only in compounds) of Portuguese *aguda*, comparable with Spanish *agua* and its Latin original *aqua*, water; and *paraná* is a generic, formed – with changed sense – from *Paraná*, a large river of Brazil.

Not to be confused with *paraná* is *paramo*. In the chapter on 'The Andes', Shanahan writes: 'Above 10,000 feet in elevation lie the bleak mountain regions known as paramos, occupied only by shepherds with their flocks during the summer months': *Webster's* says 'Spanish', and defines as 'a high bleak plateau or district'. But note that, in European Spanish, *páramo* synonymizes *llovizna*, mist or drizzle, and that in Portuguese, *páramo* is an open, empty space, a desert: there would, in the South American *paramo*, seem to be a mingling of the Spanish† and Portuguese senses.

Cordillera, a mountain range or a mountain system, is as ineligible as *sierra*, a ridge of mountains, irregular in outline; but *serra*, the Portuguese for *sierra*, is eligible because it has been applied as in Shanahan's remark, in the chapter on the Brazilian plateau, concerning highland masses presenting 'the appearance of relatively narrow chains surmounting broader masses of upland', that 'to these apparent chains the general name serras has been locally given, . . . [e.g.] the Serrado Espinhaço or backbone range'; ultimately from Latin *serra*, a saw, from the irregular serrated sky-line they present.

In the country east of the cordillera of the Andes, i.e. in the hinterland of the Pampa, 'the peculiar physio-

* Influenced by the *iga* of the Tupi *igapó*, a wooded, water-covered island: *i* or *y*, water + *caa*, forest (cf. *caatinga*) + *poam*, island, as *Webster's* elucidates it. The true adoption is, via Portuguese, *gapo*—included in *Webster's*.

† Auguste Malaret summarily defines *páramo* as 'llovizna'.

graphical features' have occasioned at least three geographical terms: *quebrada*, from Spanish *quebrar*, to split, burst open, means literally a fissure (cf. Spanish *quebraja*) and in South America 'a deep, ravine-like valley usually dry but occupied by a torrent when rains fall'; *valle*, in European Spanish any valley, is here 'a broad deep valley between the sierras' that has a permanent or semi-permanent stream and 'a natural outlet'; and a *bolsón*, literally 'a large purse' (augmentative of *bolso*, a purse), is here 'a similar deep valley often completely closed toward the lower end, and from which the drainage, if it can escape at all, can do so only by seepage' (Shanahan).

Two geographical features remain: *salto* and *raudal*. Concerning *raudales* – in European Spanish, 'streams, torrents, rapids' – Shanahan says, 'Applied by the Spanish to rapids in the form of a series of cascades, distinct from the *salto* or true waterfall'. *Raudal* comes from *raudo*, swift, impetuous (Latin *rapidus*); *salto* is literally a leap (Latin *saltus*).

Finally, soil yields two eligibles: *tosca* and *varzea*. 'Towards the south-west [of the Argentine Pampa] an ancient limestone stratum, varying in thickness up to several yards and known as tosca,* often rises close to the surface and is sometimes actually exposed' (Shanahan) – from Spanish *tosco*, coarse, unpolished. 'Throughout the middle and lower part of the [Amazonian] basin, . . . a clear distinction is observable between the partly consolidated material lying as a rule well above the flood levels of the rivers and known as terra firme, and the softer recent material liable to floods known as varzea' (Shanahan). *Varzea* represents the Portuguese *vasa* (Fr. *vase*), mud, itself, says Littré, from

* Compare *caliche* in the section on minerals.

Dutch *wase* – compare Old English and Old Frisian *wase*, mud, slime.

ANIMAL LIFE

Before dealing with specific animals and then with animal products, I note a general term in 'the native or criollo animals' (Shanahan), in reference to cattle. In European Spanish, *criollo* means indigenous, domestic, whence *Creole*; the Spanish word comes from the Portuguese *crioulo*, from *criar*, to breed, to rear, L. *creare*.

The *agourara*, a wild dog, but also a crab-eating raccoon, derives via Portuguese from Tupi *guara*, wild dog, and *aguára*, that sort of raccoon. *Agouti*, a rabbit-sized rodent, comes via French from Spanish *aguti*, a mere re-shaping of Guarani *acuti*. Another rodent is the *vizcacha* or *viscacha*, a Spanish re-shaping of Quechuan *uiskacha* or *huiskacha* – compare Aymaran *hiskacha* (or *-o*). Yet another rodent is the *capibara*, from Tupi *capivara*. An *ai* is a three-toed sloth; the Portuguese adopted the word direct from Tupi.

'The rearing of sheep, llamas and alpacas on the poor pastures . . . is carried on over wide areas, mainly by Indians' (Shanahan).

An *alpaca* (hence the material), like the wild *vicuna*, is a kind of *llama*. Spanish *alpaca* varies Spanish *alpaco* (also *paco*) and derives from Aymaran *allpaca* or Quechuan *alpaco* (also *paco*), itself perhaps from Quechuan *pako*, red. *Llama* was likewise adopted, by the Spaniards, direct from Quechua. *Vicuna*, strictly *vicuña*, is the *llama vicunna* of science – of the Andes – and of Richard Walter's *Lord Anson's Voyage Round the World*, 1748: 'There are in all parts of this country' (Patagonia) 'a good number of vicunnas or Peruvian sheep; but

these, by reason of their shyness and swiftness, are killed with difficulty'. *Vicuña* is the Hispanic shape of Quechuan *vicunna* (Malaret), or, more accurately, *huik'uña* (Webster's).

That touch of domesticity reminds us that *pinto*, for any piebald animal, was a South American hispanicism (literally 'painted') before, in south-western U.S.A., it specified a piebald horse or pony.

Pig-like yet not domestic is the *peccary*, the word coming to us, via Spanish *pecari*, from Cariban *baquira*; *Webster's* compares Aparai *pakira*.

Several monkeys derive their names from South American Indian; for instance, the *sapajou*, a French re-shaping of Tupi *sapajú* (compare Aymaran *kossillu*) – etymologically, 'small-eyed, yellow-haired'; and the *coata* or *coaïta*, a spider monkey, adopted by the Portuguese direct from Tupi. *Macaqüa* is a French form of Portuguese *macaco*, adopted from Tupi *macaco*, any monkey, with variant *macaca*; but see *macaw*.

Not to be confused with *coaïta* is the *coati*, short for *coati-mondi* or *-mundi*, a raccoon-like animal: Tupi *coati-mondi*. The Tupian *coati* has a variant, *cuati* or *cuatim*, which explains the etymology: *cua*, belt + *tim*, nose – 'so called from the habit of sleeping with the nose against the belly' (*Webster's*); a very similar form occurs in continental Cariban: *kuasí* or *kuási*.

Whereas the *tamarin* is a silky-furred marmoset and the word comes to us, via French, from Galibi, the language of the Caribs of Guiana, the *tamandua*, a tree-climbing ant-eater, comes, via Portuguese, from Tupi, and the term* does literally mean ant-eater: Tupi *taixi*, ant + *mondê*, to catch, according to *Webster's*; Rodolpho Garcia, in his *Brasileirismos*, explains it thus: a Tupi-

* It exists also in Arawak and continental Cariban.

Guarani word, from *ta*, a contraction of *taci*, an ant + *monduar*, to chase.

The *tapir*, a large animal that resembles a cross between a horse and a rhinoceros, comes via Spanish from Tupi *tapira* or *tapiiara* or *tapiruçú*, meaning any large mammal, and from Guarani *tapié* or *tapii*.

The cat family produces the *jaguar*, which preys upon the tapir and the capibara and is a leopard-like animal that has a heavier body and shorter, thicker legs than a cougar. Tupi *jaguara* means either 'dog' or 'any large feline'; the obsolete variant *jaguaretté* means, in Tupi, a true jaguar; the Guarani name is *yaguareté* or *yajuati*. The *cougar*, a tawny-brown feline, is an anglicizing of Buffon's *couguar*, from *cuguacuarana*, a misspelling of Tupi *suasuarana*,* literally 'false deer' (from its colour: *suasu*, deer + *rana*, false). The cougar's other names are *panther* (colloquially *painter*), *puma*, *catamount* (cat o' the mount), *mountain lion* and *American lion*; originally found from Patagonia to the eastern United States, but now virtually extinct in the latter. The name *puma* comes, not via French but via Spanish; not from Tupi but from Quechua; and not misapprehensively but directly. In Quechua and also, by the way, in Aymara, it has two forms: *puma* and *poma*.

Less impressive but not less entertaining is the armadillo. *Armadillo* is a generic name for a small mammal that is 'armoured' (Spanish *armado*,† from *armar*, to arm, becomes a noun, with diminutive *armadillo*) in bony plates. Perhaps the best known species are the *peludo*,‡

* The Guarani variation is *guaçuara* or *guazuara*.

† Cf. 'the Spanish *Armada*'.

‡ As the *peludo* is the hairy animal, specifically the hairy armadillo, so the French slang *poilu* is the hairy man (the strong, the virile), specifically the hairy soldier—i.e., the infantryman.

the 'hairy' (Spanish *peludo*, hirsute, from *pelo*, hair) six-banded armadillo of Argentina; the *peba*, that small nine-banded armadillo which ranges from Paraguay to as far north as Texas, has a name short for Tupi *tatu-peba* (*tatu*,* armadillo + *peba*, flat); the *poyou*, a six-banded armadillo of Argentina, abbreviates Guarani *tatupoyu*: *tatu*, armadillo (of the) *po*, hand, (of) *ya*, yellow.† In *tatu*, there are two elements‡: *ta*, a scale (here, bony scale) and *tu*, hunched, curled up: several species of armadillo can curl into a ball, armoured at all points.

BIRDS

Of the many South American birds, eight stand out as being well, or fairly well, known to the general reading public: condor, jabiru, jacamar, jacana, jacu, macaw, tanager, toucan.

The *condor* or vast vulture of the Andes comes, by way of Spanish *cóndor*, from either or both of Quechuan *ccondor*, *cundur*, *cuntur*, or Aymaran *cunduri* or *conturi*. The *jabiru*, a stork elsewhere, is in South America the wood ibis. *Jabirú* is a Tupi word, with variant *jaburú;* there is also a Guarani form; and island Cariban has *jabura* or *yab(o)ura*. From *y*, that which, and *abirú*, crammed, stuffed: i.e., that which is crammed: i.e., the bird that is gorged: the bird that has a large maw or crop.§ *Jacamar*, a brilliant tropical-forest bird, has been adopted direct from Buffon's French; Buffon‖ formed it from *jacamarici*, incorrect for Tupi *jacamá-ciri*. The

* Also Guarani. † *Webster's.* ‡ R. Garcia, *Brasileirismos.*
§ R. Garcia, *Glosario da Lingua Tupi*, in the *Revista do Institute Historico e Geographico Brasileiro*, tomo 94–vol. 148, published in 1927. ‖ *Webster's.*

jacana or *jaçana*, a wader found from Colombia to southern Texas, derives its name either from Tupi *jaçanam* (or *jassanam*) or rather from Guarani *yacaná*,* which has come to us through Spanish. (Perhaps I should, for those who have no Spanish and are unfamiliar with the South American Indian dialects, say that Spanish *j* and South American Indian *j* are pronounced as *y*; this holds good also for Central America.) The *jacu*, a Penelope or guan or pheasant of several species, has reached us via Portuguese from Tupi *jacú* and Guarani *yacú*: that which (*y*) eats (*eu*) grain (*a*), as Rodolpho Garcia has explained; compare *jabiru*.

The better-known *macaw* is an importation from Portuguese (*macao*) and is, by *Webster's*, said to be 'probably from Tupi *macauba*, *mocauba*, macaw palm (on the fruit of which they feed), from Arawak *macoya*, *mocaya* (from *amaca*, hammock + Tupi *üba*, tree)'. But *The O.E.D.* cautiously says that the Portuguese word is of 'obscure origin' and that remarkable scholar Georg Friederici† declares that the word did not exist in America before the time of Columbus; that it first appeared there in the Negro speech brought from Angola; that, in the Congo, *macaquo* is attested as early as 1643, *macachi* in 1712, *mackacko* and *mackacka* in 1715 – these last two being merely German spellings of the first and the second; and implies that, in the Congo,

* B. T. Solari, *Guarani*, 1928.

† Author of many learnèd articles upon and an unsurpassed dictionary of South-Americanisms, whether aboriginal or Romance. My heaviest philological debts in this sketch are to Friederici, *Webster's*, Abregú Virreira, Rodolpho Garcia and Augusto Malaret. Amusedly aware of one or two pedants for whom I am 'not a philologist', I wish to add that I have here and there made an independent contribution.

the term means 'the big (bird)'. The macaw is, in fact, one of the largest of the parrots.

The tanager belongs to a numerous species, woodland-haunting, unmusical, bright-plumaged. The word *tanager* anglicizes the New Latin *tanagra*, a metathesis of Portuguese *tángara*, from Tupi *tangará*.

The *toucan*, subject of at least one amusing limerick on account of its excessive beak (very useful in its fruit-eating activities), has a name adopted from French, which took it from Portuguese *tucano*, which represents Tupi *tucano*, *tucana*, *tucanusu*, and Guarani *tuca*; *tucan* is both a Tupi and a Guarani form. Apparently *tu* = *ti*, beak, and *can* = *cang*, bony: (the bird of) the bony beak.

OTHER CREATURES

Only four* remain: the *boa* (constrictor); the *cayman*, an alligator known to science as *Crocodilus Americanus*; the *caribe* or cannibal fish; and the *garapata* or *garrapate*, an insect. *Boa*, strictly, is ineligible, for the Romans applied the word to the largest snake they knew; so, on the discovery of South America, did the Spanish priests to the pythons. Being the Latin name for some kind of *water*-snake, it probably derives from that Sanskrit root which issued in the Latin *bibere*, to drink. Friederici adduces the Tupi, lingua geral, Guarani forms *bóia*, *boya*, *boi*, etc.: the Indians speaking those languages would appear to have re-shaped the priests' *boa*: compare the Aymaran *pithuni* for *python*. *Cayman* is Spanish *caimán*, which, according to *Webster's*, adapts an Arawakan and a Caribbean term (Malaret cites *acagouman*,†

* Not the *anaconda*, originally a Ceylonese word for a Ceylonese python.

† Its variant *acayouman* would supply a better argument.

obsolete Indian word), but which Friederici believes to be of African origin and, like *macaw* or, rather, its Portuguese original *macao*, to have been taken to America by the Portuguese and the Spaniards; it is recorded as early as 1591 as current in the Congo.

The *caribe* or *cannibal fish* is a fresh-water fish as dangerous to men and beasts as it is voracious. Literally, it is the *Carib* fish; and *Carib*, according to Malaret, means 'valiant'. *Webster's* says of *cannibal*: 'Spanish *caníbal*, *caríbal*, through Arawakan, from Carib *calina*, *galibi*, Caribs, literally strong men. Columbus heard the form *caniba* in Cuba, *carib* in Haiti, as applied to the cannibal Caribs in the islands to the east.' Friederici notes that the term has long been current among both the continental and the island Caribans and Arawaks and that its basic meanings are 'strong, brave, enterprising'.

Much less important is 'the garrapate or cattletick' (Shanahan). The usual American form is *garapata*; the correct Spanish, *garrapata*; and the term may also be applied to the sheep-tick. Etymologically, the Spanish word appears to consist of *garra*, claw, fang (hence, clutch) and *pata*, the foot and leg of beasts, but is, in philological fact, a Spanish folk-etymological re-shaping of Portuguese *carrapato*, a tick or a dog-louse, and the Portuguese word is merely an adaptation of a Tupi word – *Webster's* compares the *calapato** of the Omagua, a Tupian tribe of Brazil and Peru.

ANIMAL PRODUCTS

The two most important are guano and charqui. *Guano* is a fertilizer manufactured from the droppings of

* Cf. Quechuan *kara*, skin; hide; pelt, and flesh immediately under it.

sea birds and, as a Spanish word, it derives from Quechuan and Aymaran *huanu*, dung; Quechuan and Aymaran lack the letter *g*.

Charqui has a richer history. 'The works in which dried and salted beef are prepared (xarque in Portuguese, tasajo in Spanish) are called xarqueadas in Brazil and saladeros in the River Plate', as Shanahan tells us; but *xarque* was originally a piece of dried meat, whence *xarquear*, to dry, or to salt, meat, and *tasajo* was originally hung beef or jerked beef. *Jerk*,* as the name of flesh thus cured,† is recorded in 1831, although as *jirk* in 1799; the verb, appearing as *jirk* in 1707 and as *jerk* in 1748, and in *jerked beef* in 1712, derives from the Spanish *charquear*, of which the Portuguese *xarquear* is a mere re-shaping. The Spaniards at first applied the term to flesh, usually beef, dried in the open air *without* salt: and in this they followed the ideas of those South American natives who originated both the practice and the word. In both Quechua‡ and Aymara, dried flesh is *charqui* (often written *ccharqui*), but *charqui* itself is a derivative from the fundamental word for 'flesh': *aycha*, which appears in Quechua and Aymara.

THE VEGETABLE WORLD

Here again has South America contributed many words to English. Here again, nearly all the words are either direct adoptions or Portuguese or Spanish refashionings of South Amerindian terms.

* Cf. western U.S.A. *jerkee*.

† This sentence is, in the main, based upon *A Dictionary of American English*.

‡ Hence among the Mapuche, as offshoot of the Araucanian stock, but long obsolete there. Compare *charquin* among the Allentiac tribe.

Before considering the vegetable products, let us deal with the plants, whether tree, bush, vegetable or flower. Only two flowers need detain us: the jacaranda and the petunia. Now *petunia* is a Modern Latin formation from archaic French *petun*, tobacco, from Portuguese *petum* or *petume*, itself from Tupi *petún* or *petuma* or *putuma*; compare Guarani *peti*, lingua geral *petuma*, *pitimi*, *petema*, and Araucanian *puthem* (obsolete), *pëtrem* (modern).

Modern Latin *jacaranda*: Portuguese *jacarandá*: Tupi *jacarandá*: thus named is the showy blue flower, or the wood, of the tree. In Brazil, *jacaranda* is another name for the Brazilian rosewood; its further etymology is obscure.

Of trees, probably the best known is *mahogany*, an English spelling of the 'obsolete Spanish* *mahogani*, formerly current in the West Indies, probably of Arawakan origin' (*Webster's*). But the origin is very obscure (Friederici) and Skeat seems to be wrong in calling it a *South* American word: it is almost certainly West Indian (island Arawak of Puerto Rico). With *araucaria* we are on much surer ground. This, the monkey-puzzle tree, has a Modern Latin name cognate with *Araucanian*, an Indian of a stock formerly occupying central Chile and the adjacent Andean and Pampean regions: their language is also called Araucan. In short, the *araucaria* is 'the Araucanian tree' *par excellence*; the name comes from *Arauco*, a district in Chile.

'The forests of the Guiana Highlands yield a variety of timbers, most of which are hardwoods. In fact, owing to the prevalence of two characteristic kinds of trees producing timber of this type, the forests in this region are known as the greenheart-mora group among those of South America. Numerous other useful trees, how-

* The modern Spanish is *caoba*, from the language of the island Arawaks.

ever, are found . . . Among these are crabwood, . . . purpleheart and wallaba, . . . Spanish cedar and balsa' (Shanahan). *Mora* derives from that poisonous tree of the Amazonian basin which in Tupi is called *moira* or *mara*; *wallaba* is an Arawakan word; *balsa* is pure Spanish.

The *carnaúba* palm, a drought-resister, is extremely useful: it yields a valuable wax, fruit and (in its roots and pith) other food, timber and (in its leaves) roofing. Its name is of Tupian origin, for Tupi has *carnaiba.*

More valuable as timber is the *quebracho*, which is indeed preëminent in the continent. 'Three main varieties . . . are recognized, the colorado [or coloured], the blanco [or white] and the macho [or robust], of which the first or true quebracho (*Quebrachia lorentzii*) . . . is most widespread and is most extensively exploited for the extraction of tannin. Its wood is very hard, and this feature accounts for the origin of the name (axe-breaker)', as Shanahan tells us; *quebracho* being a corruption of *quiebra hacha*, 'it breaks (the) axe'. Another tannin-yielder is the *divi-divi*, from *diwidiwi*, a word from the language of the Cumanagoto tribe of Venezuela.

In the chapter on the Andes, Shanahan writes, 'The natural vegetation . . . from Central Peru to Tierra del Fuego is . . . scanty. The high mountains and plateaus, as well as the coastal strip down to the latitude of Central Chile, support little plant life except the scattered moss-like yareta bush and the ichu grass of the Peruvian and Bolivian Andes, and ribbons of chaparral and scrub along the water-courses to the coast.' The Spanish form of *ichu* is *icho*, and in addition to serving as food to llamas and other beasts it is used as fuel in the mines.* The form *ichu* is pure Quechua and Aymara,

* Malaret.

with variant *hichu*; the grass is also known as *puna grass*, i.e. *Puna grass*, *Puna* being the name for the higher Andes and adopted from Quechuan *puna*, a bleak region, a desert. *Yareta*, a resinous herb, comes straight from Quechua. Loosely and very generally any dense thicket of stiff or thorny shrubs or stunted trees, *chaparral* is strictly 'a thicket of dwarf evergreen oaks'* – from Spanish *chaparro*, an evergreen oak.

Cultivated for its edible tubers, the *oca* is a wood sorrel. Its name has been adopted from Quechua and Aymara.

VEGETABLE PRODUCTS

Perhaps the most famous is *cacao*, whence *cocoa*; unfortunately, the word is not of South American origin: Nahuatl, i.e. Aztec or Old Mexican, *cacahuatl*, which means the seed. But *coca* – whence *cocaine* – is a South American shrub and its medicinal foliage; the word is Quechuan and Aymaran, with variant *cuca*.

The best-known drug-yielding tree in South America is the *cinchona* (Peru) or *chinchona* (rest of South America, and Cuba), whence the best of all febrifuges: *quinine*. Both *cinchona* and *chinchona* have, in Standard Spanish, been to some extent superseded by *quina* for 'the Peruvian (or Jesuits') *bark*' itself and by *quinina* for its extract. Now, *quina* is short for its alternative, *quinaquina*, from Quechuan *quinquina* (whence, obviously, *cinchona*), meaning cinchona bark. An entirely independent word is *quinoa*, the pigweed, having seeds used widely as a cereal; but it too is Quechuan in origin: *quinoa* or *quinua*.

Still medicinal is that favourite of the conductors of

* *Webster's.*

spelling-bees: *ipecacuanha*. The Western plateaus of Brazil provide almost the whole of the world's supply; a little comes from Colombia and Bolivia. 'The ipecacuanha plant grows in clumps in moist sandy patches' (Shanahan) in the Matto Grosso. The form of the word is Portuguese; the Portuguese performed very creditably with Tupi *ipe-caa-goénë*, literally 'small roadside emetic plant' (*Webster's*): the term occurs also in lingua geral (Friederici) and perhaps in Guarani (Malaret).

Used now, as a form of strychnine, by doctors, but formerly and still by poisoners, is *curare*, the Portuguese and Spanish form, or *curari*, the Portuguese variant. Spanish also has *urari* and *warali*, of which the former provides the key: Tupi *urari* (or *-y*),* literally 'he to whom it comes, falls': *ur*, to come; *ar*, to fall; *y*, he who: as *Webster's* has so ingeniously deduced.

Yet again medicinal: *cashew*, the truly English form (not to be confused with *cachou*, of Malayan origin) of French *acajou*, a tree and its nut: Portuguese *acaju*, *acajuiba*: Tupi *acajú* (or *acayú*), *acaju-iba*, the latter being simply acaju-tree (cf. Guarani *ib*). A well-known medicine is *tolu* (*balsam*), shipped from Santiago de *Tolu* in Colombia.

'Rubber is obtained in the Amazon region from at least three different trees, the balata, the castilloa and the hevea. . . . . The product of the [castilloa] is known in South America as caucho . . . somewhat inferior to that of the hevea' (Shanahan). For *hevea* the originating Indian form is *hyévé* or *hjévé*; in Ecuador and Peru, *jebe* (pronounced *hévé*); in Guarani, *izi*. *Castilloa* is short for *castilloa ulei*, literally 'castle of gum'. *Balata*

* Or *uirari* (or *-y*), as also in Guarani. Moreover, the mainland Cariban has *urari*, *urali*, *kulali*, and the mainland Arawak has *urali*. (Friederici.)

is a Cariban word; both continental and island Cariban. And *caucho* is either a Spanish and Portuguese refashioning of Tupi *caú-uchu* (whence the French, hence the English, *caoutchouc*) or an adoption of Quechuan *caucho* (variant *cauchu*). Moreover, 'two kinds of rubber-producing plants are native of the north-eastern states, namely the maniçoba (*Manihot glaziovii*) and the mangabeira', as Shanahan informs us. *Mangabeira* derives, via Portuguese, from Tupi and Guarani *mangahiba* or *mangaiba* or *mangaba*. Rodolpho Garcia prefers the Tupi-Guarani form *mã-guaba* (pronounced *mang-gooahba*), which he 'translates' as 'thing to eat'; *eira* is a Portuguese suffix indicative of 'tree' or 'plant'. The mangabeira is a vine that, in addition to yielding *mangabeira* (or *Pernambuco*) *rubber*, has a delicious fruit. *Maniçoba* is clearly a Portuguese shape of the Tupi-Guarani *manihoba*, i.e. *mani*, a guttifer + *hoba* (= *çoba*), a leaf. Note that the element *mani*, a resinous plant, occurs also in continental and insular Cariban. It is, however, natural that such words as *hevea*, *caucho*, *mani*, should be widespread: they represent widespread plants or plant-products. *Manihot*, by the way, is also a Tupi word; related to *manioc*.

'Towards the west [in the Orinoco plains] the collection of forest products such as sarsaparilla and sarrapia has from time to time occupied attention' (Shanahan); 'Two . . forest products of some importance in Venezuelan Guiana are the tonka bean or sarrapia . . and Bertholletia nuts' (Shanahan). Malaret adduces two other forms: *sarapia* and *serapia*; a tree known also as *yapé*.

'Bertholletia nuts' are Brazil nuts, yielded by the Brazil-nut tree (*Bertholletia excelsa*), native to *Brazil*, which 'got its name from its red dye-woods, for which

it was first occupied', says William Gauld, *Man, Nature and Time*; partly true, for strictly the state of Brazil was named after a mythical North Atlantic island of Brazil, itself named from its imagined possession of that red dye-wood known as *brazilwood*,* literally 'fire- or flame-wood', from its fiery colour and from French *braser*, to subject to fire, from *braise*, embers, live coals; *braise* is of Teutonic origin.

Another fruit is the *ananas*, the old name for a pine-apple. Perhaps via French and certainly from Spanish *ananas* or *anana*, either from Tupi or from Cariban: Galibi has *nanâ*, as also has Guarani: Tupi, both *nanâ* and *anana*, the latter occurring also in mainland Cariban.

Vegetables include *comendá* or *comandá*, denoting beans and adopted from Tupi and lingua geral; Guarani has the variant *cumandá*; mainland Caribs and Arawaks used *kumáta*. *Mandioca*, 'widely grown in tropical South America' and 'over large areas . . . a staple food' (Shanahan), is perhaps better known as *manioc*, and almost as well known as *cassava*.† *Manioc* or *mandioca* derives from Tupi and lingua geral *maniaca*, *manioc(c)a*, *mandioca*, even *manioch*; Guarani has *mandiog* or *mandió*. *Tapioca* is merely 'a granular preparation of cassava starch', and its name comes from Tupi *tapioca* or *tipioca*, the latter existing in lingua geral also; Guarani *tipiag* or *-og*. *Webster's* analyses the *tipioca* form thus: *ty*, juice + *pŷa*, heart, bowels (i.e., essence) + *ocô*, to be removed. The pepper known as *cayenne* derives, via

* Which has nothing whatever in common with the *Brazil-nut tree*.

† Strictly the flour from the manioc, *cassava* comes, via French from Spanish, from Taino *casavi* or *cuzavi*; therefore a West Indies word. The Tainos, now extinct, were of Arawakan stock.

Tupi *kyinha* (the capsicum), from the island *Cayenne.** *Tagua* nuts, usually called 'ivory nuts', have a name of presumably Colombian Indian origin and of certainly Spanish mediation; large and hard, they are used for carving and for buttons.

Maté or 'Paraguay tea' is an aromatic beverage that combines the acceptability of tea with the stimulation of coffee. The word is Quechuan *mate*, Quechuan and Aymaran *mati*, a calabash: compare *maté gourd*, a gourd or calabash used as a receptacle for maté.

THE MINERAL WORLD

Only four terms are sufficiently well known, even to geographers and geologists, to merit a place: *canga* and *caliche*; *andesite* and *itabirite*. Canga, the lowest of four classes of iron-bearing ores, is 'produced through the cementation of rubber by limonite into a limestone conglomerate' (Shanahan). The word *canga* is an Argentine Spanish mutation of European Spanish *ganga* (cf. Italian *ganga* and French *gangue*), 'ore' or 'vein stone': from German *Gang*, 'road, path', hence 'metalliferous vein': matter through which *gangs* or goes a track or thread or vein of metal.

Caliche occurs in Shanahan's statement that 'the caliche or nitrate-bearing material is found on the margins of salars or salt-encrusted basins'. This is a South American sense of a European Spanish word that means either a crust of lime flaking from a wall (the 'operative' sense) or a pebble burnt in a brick. A South American derivative is *calichera*, earth containing caliche.

* For such terms as *cayenne* and *tolu*, see my *Name into Word*: A Dictionary of Proper Names become Common Words. (Secker & Warburg, 1949.)

Andesite is an extrusive rock, usually dark-grey; it contains a feldspar known as *andesine*. This rock is characteristic of the *Andes*. Compare *itabirite*, a quartzite found at and near the Brazilian town of *Itabira*.

MAN: OCCUPATIONS, CUSTOMS, POSSESSIONS, INVENTIONS

A South American word that very early became familiar to Europeans is *cacique*, a petty king, a chief, of Peru, the West Indies, Mexico. In slang of the U.S.A. it means a political boss: compare the American adoption of the Japanese *tycoon* and the Asiatic Indian *mogul* (ultimately of *Mongol*ian origin). *Cacique* comes from Taino *cacique*; cognate is Arawak *kassequa*, a chief. So says *Webster's*, and Friederici supports that evidence; Malaret, however, makes out an attractive case* for an Arabic origin: *xeque*, i.e. sheik, a chief.

At the opposite end of the social scale is the *peon*, originally a bond servant, now a labourer. This is a sense-derivative from European Spanish *peón*, a foot-soldier, literally one who travels on *foot*: Spanish *pie*, Latin *pes*. Peons are often of mixed blood, as is a *mestizo*. Concerning the Andes, Shanahan writes, 'The whites, and the mestizos who pass for whites, form a sort of propertied aristocracy for whom the Indians are expected to work' – despite the fact that the mestizos are partly of Indian blood. *Mestizo* is a Spanish word, derived, like the French synonym *métis*, Old French *mestis*, from Late Latin *misticius* or *mixticius*, from Latin *mixtus*, mixed, from *miscere*, to mix, to mingle.

* I hope to elucidate this problem in the course of the work upon which I am at present engaged. But Malaret's implication clearly has much in its favour.

One of the most colourful wage-earners is the *gaucho*, herdsman or cowboy of mixed Spanish and Indian descent: in Chile and La Plata, *gáucho*, but in South Brazil *gaúcho*. According to *Webster's*, *gaucho* is a Spanish shaping of Araucan *caucho*, a wanderer; pasture is *cachu* in Araucan, *kachu kachu* is Quechuan: but Friederici shows grounds for supposing it to be a Spanish shaping of a Gypsy word. If it be Gypsy, it is probably cognate with *gajo* (often corrupted to *gorgio**), Gypsy term for a non-Gypsy.

'Attached to these [cattle-rearing] estates [of Brazil] are small colonies of permanent settlers called moradores, whose business it is to cultivate the food crops necessary for the whole patriarchal community' (Shanahan); a special sense of the European Spanish *morador*, a resident or inhabitant. The owner or the manager of a cattle ranch, *estancia*, is an *estanciero*: two words more peculiarly South American Spanish than are *hacienda* (cf. Portuguese *fazenda*) and *haciendero*. A *ranchero* is usually a herdsman or cowboy employed on, occasionally the owner of, a *rancho* or large grazing farm – the *ranch* of the U.S.A. and Canada.

On an estate of a very different kind lives the *seringueiro* of the Amazonian basin: 'The seringueiros, as the rubber gatherers are called, have had to live a hard and unhealthy life' (Shanahan): literally, one who uses a syringe. In Bates's *A Naturalist on the Amazons*, 1848, we read that 'India-rubber is known throughout the province [Amazonas] only by the name of *seringa*, the Portuguese word for syringe; it owes this appellation to the circumstance that it was in this form that the first

* See especially my *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 3rd edition, 1949, both in the body of the work and (for *gaucho*) in the Addenda.

Portuguese settlers noticed it to be employed by the aborigines.'

HABITS. Only two specifically South American habits possess names that are eligible: and both of them are dances. The *argentina* and the *tango*. The argentina is the *danza Argentina*, 'Argentine dance' – a pre-1939 dance that did not retain its vogue long enough for the word to get into the dictionaries. The modern *tango* is short for the *Argentine tango*, a dance that has assumed many Argentine qualities; for instance, it is rather slower than the Cuban tango. The tango came to the ports of the River Plate from Central America or the West Indies, whither, apparently in the 18th Century, it was brought by the Negroes from Africa; the name of the Negro dance, as Dr Percy Scholes informs us in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, was *tángano* – an origination that is, however, disputed by *Webster's*, where *tango* is said to be a Spanish word for a Gypsy festival or dance or music, from *tangir*, to play (a musical instrument) – hence ultimately from Latin *tangere*, to touch; cf. Ovid's *tangere chordas*, to play the lyre.

CLOTHES. The one word of which we should most of us think without effort is *poncho*, a blanket used as a cloak and therefore having a slit in the middle for the head; worn mostly by the gaucho, *poncho* journeys to us, by way of Spanish, from the Araucan, especially the Mapuche, *poncho* or *pontho*. Friederici cannot quite make up his mind whether to accept the Araucanian origin or to believe that the word has been received by the Indians from Castilian. If the word be Castilian, it derives from Latin *ponere*. Far less known than *poncho*, yet meriting attention, is *tucapu* or *tukapu*, designating

'the variously coloured broad and belt-like bands or stripes in the beautifully woven sleeveless shirts of the Inca type' (Friederici); also *tocapu*, *tokapu*. The *tu-* form is Quechuan; the *to-*, Aymaran.

INVENTIONS AND DEVICES. One may include so familiar an object as the *bola* or *bolas*, so skilfully handled by the gauchos whether in hunting horses or wild cattle or as a weapon of offence. Two or three balls (Spanish *bolas*) of iron or stone are attached to a leathern thong or a cord: the primary purpose is entanglement. In South American, the usual term is *boleadoras*; compare the verb, *bolear*, to throw the bolas. *Bola* is strictly a singular, *bolas* strictly a plural, but because the weapon consists of more than one 'ball', the plural form used as a singular is natural enough.

Two native craft are the *piragua* (or *pirogue*) and the *jangada*. A jangada or 'giant raft', or as *Webster's* defines it, 'a very seaworthy, raft-like catamaran, widely used along the coast of Pernambuco and Ceará' (Brazil), although so characteristically South American functionally, is etymologically Malayan *sangadam* or *cannadam* (intimately Sanskrit *samghata*, a join, joinery). It was the Portuguese who transported the term from the East Indies to South America. *Pirogue* is – via French – the most English shape of the form predominant in South America, *piragua*: a very large canoe* formed of a hollowed tree-trunk. *Webster's*, maintaining that *piragua* comes from Arawak and (continental) Cariban, adduces the Galibi *piráua* and the Taino *piraguas*; *piragua* occurs in several Spanish and Portugbese traveller-writers whose works appeared in the period 1530–65.

* *Canoe* is a West Indian word: used by the island Caribs and the island Arawaks.

But I'm a shade sceptical about the Indian origin of this word. Both Spanish *piragua* and Portuguese *peragua* bear a suspicious resemblance to Portuguese *per* (now *por*) *agüa*, Spanish *por agua*, 'by or through (the) water'; or the Spanish and Portuguese *barca* (rather than *barco*) might easily, by the 'ignorant natives', have been converted into *pirdua* or *piragua*. Friederici, I notice, is none too happy about the native origin of the word; he does not, however, advance either of the wild theories I have proposed.

(Written in May–June, 1948.)

THE NONSENSE WORDS OF EDWARD LEAR AND LEWIS CARROLL*

> The divine gift of purely nonsensical speech and action is in atrophy. Would you believe it, a pupil of mine had the impertinence the other day to tick me off for reading him passages regarding the Fimble Fowl and the Quangle-Wangle as an illustration of pure poetic inventiveness . . . .? – Edmund Crispin (i.e. Bruce Montgomery), *The Case of the Gilded Fly*, 1944.

> Miss Snaith, who was devoted to the work of Edward Lear, chose to identify the residuary legatees by names taken from his limericks. – Edmund Crispin, *The Moving Toyshop*, 1946.

> Most remarkable verse it is [– this by Lewis Carroll], whether it takes the form of the inspired jargon of *Jabberwocky*, or of the transmutation of plain sense into pure nonsense of *The Walrus and the Carpenter*. Less popular than it deserves to be, *The Hunting of the Snark* . . . has nevertheless become part of national mythology. – George Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (edition of 1946).

To synonymize Edward Lear with limericks is both too much and too little.

* Editions used: *The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear*, delightfully introduced and edited by Holbrook Jackson (1947; Faber & Faber); *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll*, sympathetically introduced by Alexander Woollcott and containing John Tenniel's drawings (1939; The Nonesuch Press).

Too little: because, although Lear's first book – *A Book of Nonsense* (1846) – consisted of 112 limericks, each with an appropriate line-drawing, in his later books he wrote nonsense songs and laughable lyrics, nonsense stories in prose, nonsense cookery and nonsense botany – likewise both in prose. (In 1872, he published some more limericks, along with other poems.)

Too much: because the limerick became indelicate through no impulse from Lear. He wrote blameless verse and prose for children (of all ages). Too much: also because Edward Lear (1812–88) was forestalled by a quarter of a century when, in 1821, an anonymous author brought out *The History of Sixteen Wonderful Old Women*,* a booklet in cr. 8vo. The sub-title runs 'Illustrated by as Many Engravings; Exhibiting Their Principal Eccentricities and Amusements'; and the title-page bears the epigraph,

> Much credit is due to the Artist, I ween;
> For such Pictures as these can seldom be seen.

The letterpress consists of sixteen nursery-rhyme-type poems of five lines, of the genre we now call limericks. One of the best is No. 14, 'Old Woman of Norwich':

> There was an Old Woman of Norwich,
> Who liv'd upon nothing but Porridge,
> Parading the Town,
> Made a cloak of her Gown;
> This thrifty Old Woman of Norwich.

That, you notice, keeps tolerably close to the pattern: 'A nonsense poem of five anapaestic lines, of which lines 1, 2, and 5 are of three feet, and rhyme, and

* I owe the reference to Burton Stevenson's entirely admirable *Book of Quotations*.

lines 3 and 4 are of two feet, and rhyme' (*Webster's*). Lear follows the pattern, except that he runs lines 3 and 4 together and thus effects both an internal rhyme and a total of four lines instead of five:

> There was an Old Person of Chili,
> Whose conduct was painful and silly,
> He sat on the stairs, eating apples and pears,
> That imprudent Old Person of Chili.

Perhaps imitating the anonymous writer of 1821, Lear tends to make the central character of his limericks (*he* never uses the word) 'Old Man' – 'Old Person' – 'Old Lady', although there are numerous instances of 'Young Person' – 'Young Lady'; and his arrangement is the same, that of a small-scale drawing above each poem.

Nevertheless, it was Edward Lear who, by the many limericks in *A Book of Nonsense*, 1846, and *More Nonsense*, 1872, popularized the form. He has had many imitators, some of them more than somewhat indelicate. One of the best of these imitators was the art-critic and poet, William Cosmo Monkhouse (1840–1901). One year after his death, a small publishing firm issued a collection of his lyrics under the title *Nonsense Rhymes*, amusingly line-illustrated by Gilbert (i.e., G. K.) Chesterton. Regarded as literary compositions, Cosmo Monkhouse's nonsense poems surpassed his master's. (But then, Lear's non-limerical verse bettered his limericks; his nonsensical prose bettered his verse.) Let us take three examples of this unjustly forgotten poet's limericks:

> There was a young lady named Laura,
> Who went to the wilds of Angora,
> She came back on a goat
> With a beautiful coat,
> And notes of the *fauna* and *flora*;

There was an old man of Lyme
Who married three wives at a time.
When asked, 'Why a third?'
He replied, 'One's absurd!
And bigamy, sir, is a crime.'

But Cosmo Monkhouse's best limerick – perhaps the best ever written by anyone – concerns the imaginary land of *Niger* (pronounced *nÿ'gher*):

There was a young lady of Niger
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside,
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

'Yes, quite! But when was the word *limerick* first applied to this sort of nonsense verse and how did it arise – what is its etymology?' *The Oxford English Dictionary* records it earliest at 1898, but obviously it must have been used in the 1880's and probably in the 1870's. *The O.E.D.* accounts for the origin thus: 'Said to be from a custom at convivial parties, according to which each member sang an extemporized "nonsense-verse", which was followed by a chorus containing the words, "Will you come up to Limerick?" ' Burton Stevenson, however, in *Stevenson's Book of Quotations*, quotes the chorus as being, in full,

Oh, won't you come up, come all the way up,
Come all the way up to Limerick?

In 1899, Kipling speaks of 'a good catchy limerick'. Professor Ernest Weekley (*An Etymological Dictionary*, 1921) pertinently comments, 'But it seems likely that the choice of the word may have been partly due to the somewhat earlier *learic*, coined by Father Matthew Russell, S.J. [1834–1912]'. *Learic*, obviously, is a blend

of *Lear* + *lyric*. The uninitiated, who knew not Lear, may have muttered, 'What *is* this word "learic"? Clearly, "limerick" is what they mean!' Some such psychological process is at least plausible.* Then there is a potentially contributory factor in the use of the place-name *Limerick* (in Ireland) in three terms used in angling: *Limerick bend*, *Limerick pattern*, *Limerick hook*, the last, recorded in 1828, being 'a form of fishing-hook with a peculiar bend made originally at Limerick' (*Oxford English Dictionary*): very *catchy*. A *Limerick catch*, therefore, contains a relevant pun.

Although Lear's limericks contain nonsense words, his other verse and his nonsense prose contain more. Before dealing with his contribution to the nonsense element in the English vocabulary, however, I should like to rough-sketch the position occupied by him and Lewis Carroll in the chronology of the subject:

Shakespeare (certain minor characters, e.g. Dogberry):	1591–1613
Urquhart's translation of part of Rabelais†:	1653
Urquhart & Motteux, translation of most of Rabelais:	1694
Urquhart & Motteux & others, all of Rabelais:	1708
Swift, baby-talk in the so-called Journal to Stella	1710–1713
Swift, place-names in Gulliver's Travels:	1726
Smollett, *Humphry Clinker* (Winifred Jenkins)‡:	1770

* I owe the suggestion to my friend, Mr F. G. Rendall of the British Museum Library.

† Rabelais, genius at word-coining, exercised the ingenuity of his translators.

‡ A notable user of malapropisms (imitated, in the character of Mrs Malaprop, by Sheridan, *The Rivals*, 1775) and of other verbal eccentricities.

The History of Sixteen Wonderful Old Women:	1821
Lear's *A Book of Nonsense*:	1846
Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:	1865
Lear's *Nonsense Songs*:	1871
Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass* Edward Lear, *More Nonsense*	1872
Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark*:	1876
Lear, *Laughable Lyrics*:	1877
Carroll, *Sylvie and Bruno*:	1889
,, , *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*:	1893
posthumously, Sir Edward Strachey's selection from Lear's *Nonsense Songs and Stories*:	1895
James Joyce, *Ulysses*:	1922

In that list, only the most notable verbal innovators have been included. Excluded is W. S. Gilbert, who used words amusingly but did not coin nonsense words; excluded are the limerick-writers. Excluded also is E. Clerihew Bentley, who invented the verse-form* known as the clerihew; he began to write them ca. 1891, while he was still a schoolboy at St Paul's, as G. K. Chesterton, Bentley's friend for nearly half a century, has told us in his autobiography. Of these 'baseless biographies' in verse, here is a schoolboy specimen, recorded by Chesterton:

> Sir Humphry Davy
> Abominated gravy.
> He lived in the odium
> Of having discovered Sodium –

reprinted in the volume that gave this verse-form its distinctive name, *Biography for Beginners*, 'Edited by

* 'That severe and stately form of Free Verse': G.K.C., *Autobiography*, 1936, p. 61.

E. Clerihew, B.A., With 40 Diagrams by G. K. Chesterton' (1905), the 'Introductory Remarks' being:

> The Art of Biography
> Is different from Geography.
> Geography is about Maps,
> But Biography is about Chaps.

More Biography, illustrated by himself, his son Nicolas, Victor Reinganum and G.K.C., 1929, and *Baseless Biography*, illustrated by Nicolas Bentley, 1939, furthered the good cause of the clerihew.

Edward Lear, indefatigable artist in water-colour and in black-and-white and an always human and instructive writer (1841–70) of journals dealing with his artist-travels (mostly in the Mediterranean countries), was a whimsical humorist and a genial yet foible-searching wit. That wit appears to even better advantage in his nonsense prose than in his nonsense verse. Two examples will suffice:

The Clangle-Wangle is a most dangerous and elusive beast, and by no means commonly to be met with. They live in the water as well as on land, using their long tail as a sail when in the former element. Their speed is extreme, but their habits of life are domestic and superfluous, and their general demeanour pensive and pellucid. On summer evenings they may sometimes be observed near the Lake Pipple-Popple, standing on their heads and humming their national melodies: they subsist entirely on vegetables, excepting when they eat veal, or mutton, or pork, or beef, or fish, or saltpetre. ('The History of the Seven Families' in *Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany and Alphabets*, 1871.)

TO MAKE GOSKY PATTIES

Take a Pig, three or four years of age, and tie him by the off-hind leg to a post. Place 5 pounds of currants, 3 of sugar, 2 pecks of peas, 18 roast chestnuts, a candle, and six bushels of turnips, within his reach; if he eats these, constantly provide him with more.

Then procure some cream, some slices of Cheshire cheese, four quires of foolscap paper, and a packet of black pins. Work the whole into a paste, and spread it out to dry on a sheet of clean brown waterproof linen.

When the paste is perfectly dry, but not before, proceed to beat the Pig violently, with the handle of a large broom. If he squeals, beat him again.

Visit the paste and beat the Pig alternately for some days, and ascertain if at the end of that period the whole is about to turn into Gosky Patties.

If it does not then, it never will; and in that case the Pig may be let loose, and the whole process may be considered as finished. ('Nonsense Cookery'* in *Nonsense Songs*, 1871.)

Lear poked fun also at pedantry and, a victim of ill-health, at the medical profession; the latter in, e.g., 'an incipient transitional inflammation of their noses' or 'parchment or other anti-congenial succedaneum'.

Of wider interest is his versification, not to be treated here except for the mention of two features. Occasionally Lear rhymed with the audacity of a Browning, as in 'Xerxes . . . Turks is' – 'But quickly snapt up he, was once by a puppy' – 'There was an old Man of th' Abruzzi, So blind that he couldn't his foot see'. Occa-

* The other two 'Receipts for Domestic Cookery' are no less appetizing.

sionally, too, he startlingly foreshadowed the alembicated *jeux d'esprit* of certain modern poets, as in: 'They saw a large Lettuce which . . . had an immense number of green leaves. At which they all exclaimed,

> Lettuce! O Lettuce!
> Let us, O let us,
> O Lettuce leaves,
> O let us leave this tree and eat
> Lettuce, O let us, Lettuce leaves!

Such sportiveness as that appears far more frequently in the games he plays with words – Standard English words at which, in one way or another, he mocks; and in coinings by this most ingenious fellow. In both, he is often brilliant.

In his published work, Lear avoids* those humorous spellings with which he bespangles his private letters (*Letters of Edward Lear*, 1907, and *Later Letters of Edward Lear*, 1911): the sort of thing with which Artemus Ward and Josh Billings in America and *The Young Visiters* in England have familiarized us.

In his published writings he also employed spoonerisms very rarely; indeed, I have noted only two: 'battlecock and shuttledore' (1877) and 'Till he came to Borley-Melling, Near his old ancestral dwelling' (–1888); *Borley-Melling*, I take it, spoonerizes *Merely Boring*. He was one of several anticipators of the Rev. William Spooner (1844–1930), Warden of New College, Oxford; in sober fact, Spooner himself very seldom lapsed into that transference of initials or syllables which is as old as human speech.

Related, perhaps, is Lear's trick of ridiculing certain

* With one exception: *oker* for *ochre*, in 'There was an Old Man with a poker' (1846).

defects of style. To take but one example, he laughs at tautology in 'an incredibly innumerable number of large bottles without corks'.

Edward Lear deserves almost as much gratitude for his humorous misuses of Standard English words as for his neologisms. Of the former, here are some examples:

1846*: 'That intrinsic Old Man of Peru'; 'chased by a virulent Bull'; 'propitious Old Man with a beard'; 'That incipient Old Man at a casement'.

1871†: 'a moony song'; 'The Terrible Zone'; *calico* in the song 'Calico Pie'; 'an island made of water . . . . bordered by evanescent isthmusses'; 'a lovely and glittering appearance, highly prepossessing and efficacious'; 'extreme noise made by the Arctic Bears and the Tropical Turnspits'; 'her light irrigated the smooth and shiny sides and wings and backs of the Blue-Bottle-Flies with a peculiar and trivial splendour';

'plunged into a perpendicular,
spicular,
orbicular,
quadrangular,
circular depth of soft mud';

'He stood on his head, till his waistcoat turned red, That eclectic old man of Port Grigor';‡ 'They pursued their voyage with the utmost delight and

* The dates refer to the publication dates of the five already specified Nonsense books.

† The volume (*Nonsense Songs*) that, I think, contains his finest nonsense verse and prose.

‡ From here to †: all from 'The Story of the Four Little Children'.

apathy'; 'an earnest token of their sincere and grateful infection'; 'slowly eating Custard Pudding with the most satisfactory and polite demeanour'; 'a dazzling and sweetly susceptible blue colour'; 'live continually together in the most copious and rural harmony'; 'perfect and abject happiness'; 'a fizzy extraneous utterance'; 'crusty crabbies' (crabs and crawfish); 'on an accurately cutaneous inspection'; 'exploded surreptitiously'; 'excessive longitudes'; 'cooked in the most translucent and satisfactory manner'†; 'a large well . . . , into which they all fell superficially'; 'hit their heads so vividly against its stalk'.

1872: 'The Rural Runcible* Raven'; cf. 'He weareth a runcible hat' in 'Self-Portrait'; this and *scroobious* are Lear's favourite adjectives.

1877: 'We think so then, and we thought so still!'; 'The Cummerbund. An Indian Poem' abounds with fanciful senses of real (and several imaginary) Hindi and Urdu words.

In that set of misused terms, you will have noted that many are malaprops; but, being deliberate, they are not strictly malaprops at all. When Mrs Malaprop spoke of 'an allegory on the banks of the Nile', she was unaware of the catachresis: when Edward Lear spoke of, e.g., 'sincere and grateful infection', he was blissfully aware of his 'mistake'.

Sometimes Lear achieved much the same effect in his humorous alliterations. Here are a few, taken from

* For *runcible*, correctly used by Lear in 'runcible spoon', see my *Name into Word*. The word is recorded in *Webster's* but not in *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

the '1871': 'for the perpetual benefit of the pusillanimous public'; (these others from 'The Four Little Children' in that volume) 'a crystal cloud of sudorific sand'; 'the Rhinoceros . . . killed and stuffed . . . set up outside the door . . . as a Diaphanous Doorscraper'; (his most sustained example) 'The Blue-Bottle-Flies began to buzz at once in a sumptuous and sonorous manner, the melodious and mucilaginous sounds echoing all over the waters, and resounding across the tumultuous tops of the transitory Titmice upon the intervening and verdant mountains, with a serene and sickly suavity only known to the truly virtuous' – where there is medial as well as initial alliteration.

Of the neologisms, the majority are nouns. Persons and places, i.e. Proper Nouns, account for:

1871: 'And we'd go to the Dee, and the Jelly Bo Lee' (in an '1872' limerick: Jellibolee); 'the great Gromboolian plain', which recurs; 'The Jumblies', jumbled together in a sea-going sieve and mentioned again in 1877, when also 'Jumbly girl'; 'the hills of the Chankly Bore' (to rhyme with 'more'; also in 1877); 'the Great Lake Pipple-Popple' – echoic of *ripple* and of cast stones *plopping* into the water; 'the valley of Gramblamble' (*Grand Lama? – grand brambles?*), also written *Gramble-Blamble*: 'the valley of Verrikwier, near the Lake of Oddgrow, and on the summit of the hill Orfeltugg' – very *queer*, *odd* growth, hill with an *awful* tug or pull or slope.

1872: 'Yonghy-Bongy-Bo' (in 1877, accented '. . . Bò').

1877: 'The Dong with a luminous nose' (an aberrant and anthropomorphic meteor); 'the Zemmery Fidd

Where the Oblong Oysters grow'; 'The Boy of Gurtle' – rhyming with 'turtle'; 'the sunset isles of Boshen' – rhyming with 'motion'; 'The Pobble Who Has no Toes' – perhaps *poodle* + *wabble*; 'the Kingdom of Tess' – rhyming with 'dress'; 'Mr and Mrs Discobbolos' (*discobulos* + *cobble*-stones?); 'the Land of Tute' – rhyming with 'flute'; 'Who, or why, or which, or *what*, Is the Akond of Swat?' – *archon* + the *wand* of magical office. 'The Akond of Swat' is, metrically, Lear's most scintillating poem.

–1888: (the volume of 1895): 'the Tiniskoop-hills afar': *tennis-court* + *hen-coop*?

Of the other coined nouns, here is a majority:

1871: Bong-tree (also, twice or more, in 1877); 'O Timballo! How happy we are' – compare 'And they sang "Tilly-loo!" ' in 'Calico Pie'; 'forty bottles of Ring-Bo-Ree' (perhaps suggested by *stingo* and *ring-a-ring a rosy*); 'To the Sole and the Sprat, And the Willeby-Wat' (? Willoughby, what!); 'a satin sash of Cloxam blue' – cf. *watchet blue* and *Lincoln green*; 'Quangle-Wangle', who recurs in 1877 as 'Quangle Wangle Quee' (he was shaped like a *quadrangle*); 'an enormous Seeze Pider' (*sea spider*); 'the Soffsky-Poffsky trees' (of Siberian habitat?); 'Be particularly careful not to meddle with a Clangle-Wangle' – 'or, as it is more properly written, Clangel-Wangel' (a clangorous offspring of *mangel-wurzel*?); 'a Blue Boss-woss' (a marine creature that resembled sea moss); 'Gooseberry-bushes and Tiggory-trees' (*hickory* that has played *tig* once too often); 'Amblongus pie' (reminiscent of ham, and related to Lear's 'oblong oysters' and Latin *oblongus*?); 'crumbobblious

cutlets' served with 'clarified crumbobblious sauce' – *crumbly* (or its low-slang derivative *crummy*) + *bobbish* + *delicious*? – and influenced by *scrumptious*?; 'gosky patties' perhaps suggested by dialectal *gosky*, 'luxuriantly coarse; (of grass) rank'; *Nasticreechia Krorluppia*, a creepy-crawly in the 'Nonsense Botany' section; 'a Moppsikon Floppsikon bear', with a great *mop* of hair and a *floppy* gait?

1877: 'the Twangum Tree' – through which the wild wind twanged: 'Dilberry Ducks', resembling the *Aylesbury* duck and addicted to *bilberries*?; 'Beasticles, Birdlings, and Boys' – also designated 'Beasts, Birdles, and Boys'; 'To hear the Nupiter Piffkin cry And the Biscuit Buffalo call' – *Jupiter pigeon*?; 'Filled it with dynamite, gunpowder gench' – rhyming with 'trench' and perhaps influenced by '*stench* of gunpowder'; 'the Fimble Fowl, with a Corkscrew leg' – cf. dialectal *fimble*, a thinned form of *fumble*, and *fimbrial*, 'marked by fimbriae' or tiny fringes; 'the Attery Squash, and the Bisky Bat' – cf. the now dialectal *attercop*, 'a spider', and *attery*, 'poisonous', and 'Biscuit Buffalo' above; 'the crumpetty Tree' – reminiscent of the bread-fruit tree; 'Whisky-Whizzgigs', gadgets spirituously invented.

Adjectives evoke fewer yet perhaps even better neologisms.

1846: 'ombliferous' (*umbriferous* + *umbelliferous*); 'conduct . . . scroobious and wily', *scroobious* recurring in the later Nonsense books and blending *screwy* (perhaps) + *dubious* (certainly); 'borascible': *boring* + *irascible*.

1871: 'I wish you'd sing one little song! One mumbrian melody!' – ? *murmurous* (or *mumbling*) + *Umbrian* (reminiscent of Italian music); 'spongetaneous' or *spontaneous* influenced by watery context; 'So that you will look and feel Quite galloobious and genteel' – ? *gay* (or *gallant*) + *salubrious*; '[The Co-operative Cauliflower] in a somewhat plumdomphious manner hurried off towards the setting sun' – a richly pompous manner, evocative of such linguistic luxuriants as *splendiferous* and *catawampus*; 'a himmeltanibus . . . noise' – a hellish (German *Himmel*, hell) and *simultaneous*; numerous *-y*, or diminutive, adjectives throughout the second of the Alphabets in this volume, as, e.g., in

E was once a little eel,
Eely
Weely
Peely
Eely
Twirly, tweely
Little Eel!

1872: 'abruptious' – *abrupt* + (?) *contentious*; *fizzgiggious*, from *fizgig* (now *fishgig*), a harpooner's spear barb-pronged; 'dolumphious' – almost an anagram of 'plumdomphious' above.

1877: 'A hill . . . its purpledicular top' and 'the nearly purpledicular crags'; *perpendicular*, with crest enveloped in a *purple* haze – compare Lear's 'The Perpendicular Purple Polly, who read the Newspaper and ate Parsnip Pie with his Spectacles'; 'a flumpy sound' – from echoic *flump*, to fall heavily yet with dull impact; 'meloobious' – *melodious* + (?) *salubrious*.

–1888: 'Chirping with a cheerious measure': *cheery* + *hilarious*.

Beside the neologistic nouns and adjectives, we should set the compound nouns, compound adjectives and compound verbs; some quaint, some grotesque, yet all possessed of sufficient commonsensible point or basis:

1846: 'She dressed in a sack, spickle-speckled with black'.

1871: 'Mr and Mrs Spikky Sparrow' (? speckled); 'I heard you sniffle-snuffle'; 'ducky-quack' (a duck); 'the star-bespringled sky' (*bespangled* + *besprinkled*); 'all of a tremble-bemble'; 'chatter-clatter-blattery noise'; 'they began to chatter-clatter,
blatter-platter,
patter-blatter,
matter-clatter,
flatter-quatter, more violently than ever'.

1877: 'He tinkledy-binkledy-winkled a bell': compare the child's *ding-dong*, the also echoic *ring-a-ding-ding*, the Latin *tintinnabulum*.

The only Leary adverb I have noticed occurs in the '1871': 'The Moon was shining slobaciously': aud*aciously* yet *slob*beringly (in a sickly sentimental fashion).

Verbs, however, quite apart from the compounds already mentioned, yield the felicitous 'Could no longer preliminate their voyage by sea' (*proceed* + *elongate*; influenced by *eliminate*) and, likewise from the '1871'*,

* Not strictly 'dumped and flumped each other': here, the poet merely invests old terms with new senses.

the remarkable echoic gamut of dull-*u*, muffled verbs in '-uffled':

'All the Seven began to fight, and they scuffled,
and huffled,
and ruffled,
and shuffled,
and puffled,
and muffled,
and buffled,
and duffled,
and fluffled,
and guffled,
and bruffled':

which, musically scaled, has in its design something modestly reminiscent of the Greek pattern-poems.

In every group, the perspicacious reader will have spotted one or more examples of blends or, as Lewis Carroll named them, 'portmanteaus': 'You see,' Carroll remarked in *Through the Looking-Glass*, 'it's like a portmanteau – there are two meanings packed up into one word'. Yet, of Lear's blends (hardly less happy), several antedate Lewis Carroll's by nineteen years. Nor was Lear the first to use them, although he may have been the first writer to coin them deliberately. The earliest blends were, as the latest will doubtless be, the result of confusion: a speaker begins to express an idea before he has formulated it in his mind; he commences a word and immediately continues with another, or the corresponding part of another, word of different yet associated meaning. In *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin*, the late Professor Otto Jespersen showed that these coalescences, blends, portmanteaus, call them what you will, have played a much bigger

part in word-formation than is usually recognized; two other scholars* had already done this for the academic world, it remained for Jespersen to publicize that 'much bigger part' and also to go further in his verdict upon the prevalence of blends. Of his most notable examples, let us consider three:

blot = *black* + *spot* (or *dot* – or both);
frush = *frog* + *thrush*, 'all three names of the same disease in a horse's foot';
twirl = *twist* + *whirl*.

One can easily picture to oneself the perplexity experienced by those etymologists who, in the days before their frequency became recognized, dealt with blends. Blends occur especially in words of echoic origin: and far more words are of echoic origin than used to be recognized before the 20th Century – or, at any rate, before ca. 1880.

Blends, we have seen, are called 'portmanteaus' by Lewis Carroll, with whose nonsense words we are now confronted. That Lewis Carroll (the Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, 1832–98; lecturer in mathematics at Christ Church, Oxford, from 1855 to 1881) was potently influenced by Edward Lear shows in the fact that in *Alice in Wonderland*, 1865, he employed not even one neologism, only one malaprop ('the antipathies' for the *Antipodes*), and only one new form of a Standard English word – *curiouser and curiouser*, which has become a virtual cliché: yet not only does he, in *Through the Looking-Glass*, published in 1872 or one year after Lear's second nonsense book, include that delightfully esoteric poem 'Jabberwocky' of which Alice remarked, 'It seems very

* Of whom the later, by eight years, was Dr Louise Pound, who has done the more valuable work upon the subject, especially in *Blends. Their Relation to English Word Formation*, 1914.

pretty, but it's *rather* hard to understand!' but also in all his later verse he is demonstrably playing variations upon the metrical dexterity displayed by Lear.

Moreover, the particular direction taken by Lewis Carroll in his nonsense books was, I believe, occasioned by the seeds that were scattered, in 1846, by Lear upon a peculiarly receptive soil: even as a boy, Dodgson was quite conspicuously quaint. On the other hand, Lear's nonsense .prose-writings were probably no less profoundly influenced by *Alice in Wonderland* than Carroll's verse was influenced by the Lear volumes of 1871–77. A glance back at the chronological table will show by which Lear books this, that or the other Carroll book *could* have been influenced.

'Jabberwocky' constitutes Carroll's principal contribution to the English vocabulary. It is, in this respect, so much more important than the aggregate of his other writings that we should do well to dispose of everything else before subjecting 'Jabberwocky' to a kind of linguistic *explication française.*

Lewis Carroll employs no spoonerisms and, except where he is representing Bruno's childish pronunciations, no misspellings. Only once does he change the form of a Standard English word: *sillygism* for *syllogism.* Far less often than Lear does he give a whimsical twist to the sense of a Standard word – a characteristic in which the earlier writer excelled; indeed, the only examples I have noted are

> 'As the man they called "Ho!" told his story of woe
> In an antediluvian tone' (1876);
>
> 'And if, in other days and hours,
> Mid other fluffs and other flowers' (1889);
>
> 'nubbly lions' (1893):

where Lear's influence appears so clearly that further comment is unnecessary.

Humorous alliteration, wherein, as we have seen, Lear excelled, does not occur in Lewis Carroll's work until 1893, when, in the poem commencing 'In stature the Manlet was dwarfish', he permits himself these four felicities:

'*r*apture of *r*ollicking sadness';
'*g*roan with *g*loomy de*l*ight';
'p*l*atitudes *l*uscious and *l*imp';
'*ch*eeri*l*y *ch*amping the bun*l*et'.

Puns are even more prolific in Carroll than in Lear; perhaps the richest passage is the latter end of Chapter IX of *Alice in Wonderland*. But Carroll had a pretty wit, seen at his best when he was not punning. In *The Hunting of the Snark*, 'fits' 5–8 begin thus:

'They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care;
They pursued it with forks and hope;
They threatened its life with a railway-share;
They charmed it with smiles and soap':

which is on the same pattern (recurrent in Carroll's verse – and derivative from the Lear of 1871+) as the opening stanza of 'Fit the Third':

'They roused him with muffins – they roused him with ice–
They roused him with mustard and cress –
They roused him with jam and judicious advice –
They set him conundrums to guess'.

The wit sometimes appears in the very form of the verse. With Lewis Carroll the verse-form often serves the same purpose as a signature-tune. In *Sylvie and Bruno*, the form is this:

'He thought he saw a Kangaroo
That worked a coffee-mill:
He looked again, and found it was
A Vegetable-Pill.
"Were I to swallow this", he said,
"I should be very ill" ' –

whereas in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, it is:

'Little birds are writing
Interesting books,
To be read by cooks:
Read, I say, not roasted –
Letterpress, when toasted,
Loses its good looks'.

To return to words in themselves. Outside of 'Jabberwocky', the only neologisms in Lewis Carroll are these: *snark* and *boojum* in *The Hunting of the Snark*, the former being a blend of *snake* and *shark*, the latter an arbitrary formation that echoically evokes a horrible species of snark – suggests *boo*! and *fee, fo, fi, fum*! – and is mentioned again in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*. It is perhaps worth mentioning that as 'Old soldiers never die, but simply fade away', so the human beings that encounter a snark, if it happen to be a boojum, 'softly and suddenly vanish away'.

In *A Tangled Tale*, 1885: *grurmstipth*, an omnibus: obviously an echoic term.

In *Sylvie and Bruno*:

'Ipwergis-Pudding to consume,
And drink the subtle Azzigoom':

where *ipwergis* evokes, for me, *walpurgis* and *haggis*, and *azzigoom* suggests *asti spumante*. In the same story: *phlizz*, a merry deception or joke: perhaps psychological *fizgig* (gadget, thingummy) or *psychological swiz* (swindle).

In *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*: 'No burly big Blunderbore he': *blunderbuss* (or *blundering*) + *bore* or *boar*; and 'Smile, I say, not smirkle': *smirk* + *smile* (or *chuckle*).

But those words have not retained the vitality of the blends, revivals, fancies manifested in 'Jabberwocky' (*Through the Looking-Glass*, 1872) – i.e. 'Concerning the Jabberwock':

'Twas brillig,[1] and the slithy [2] toves [3]
  Did gyre [4] and gimble [5] in the wabe [6]:
All mimsy [7] were the borogoves,[8]
  And the mome [9] raths [10] outgrabe.[11]

Beware the Jabberwock,[12] my son!
  The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub [13] bird, and shun
  The frumious [14] Bandersnatch [15]!

He took his vorpal [16] sword in hand:
  Long time the manxome [17] foe he sought –
So rested he by the Tumtum [18] tree,
  And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish [19] thought he stood,
  The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling [20] through the tulgey [21] wood,
  And burbled [22] as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
  The vorpal [16] blade went snicker-snack [23]!
He left it dead, and with its head
  He went galumphing [24] back.

And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
  Come to my arms, my beamish [25] boy!
O frabjous [26] day! Callooh [27] Callay [27]!
  He chortled [28] in his joy.'

Twas brillig and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

To clear the ground, please note that 4, 20, 22, 25 are revivals: to these already existing words, Lewis Carroll gave a renewed and more vigorous life: *gyre*, 'to whirl, revolve, gyrate', had been not uncommon in the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline writers, had fallen into disuse, was again revived, and is now archaic; Humpty Dumpty explains it as 'to go round and round like a gyroscope'. To *whiffle*, 'to whistle puffily', is perhaps rather dialectal than Standard; as the Sylvie and Bruno stories show, the Rev. C. L. Dodgson was a sharp observer of dialect. 'To *burble*', echoic, is either derived from or, at the least, cognate with *bubble*. And *beamish* is 'radiant' – like the sun's beams: *beam-reddish*.

Merely fanciful or arbitrary – in short, very much in the manner of Lear's fantastic names for animals, birds, trees, etc. – are 12, 13, 15, 18, 23, 27. Lewis Carroll does not explain these, either by the agency of Humpty-Dumpty (*Through the Looking-Glass*, Chapter VI) or in the Preface to *The Hunting of the Snark*; nor, by the way, does he explain any of the other neologisms after No. 15.

No. 12, *Jabberwock*, is partly echoic, in its sound; and symbolic, in its length. The name of this horrid creature, represented by Tenniel as a bat-like dragon, manifestly had nothing in common with *jabber*, 'to talk incessantly and incoherently'; much with the *jabs* to be feared from its formidable talons; probably, too, it owes something to two echoic dialectal terms, *jatter*, 'to shatter', and *whacker*, 'anything enormous'; *wock* has a deeper sound than *w(h)ack*. The *jubjub*, 'that desperate bird' (*The Snark*), may form a grim pun on *jugjug*, imitative

of the note of the euphonious nightingale, and may even blend *jugjug* with *hubbub*. The *bandersnatch*, which reappears in *The Snark*, is a personification of the animal's snatching proclivities, with a reference either to *bandog*, 'a ferocious watch-dog; a huge mastiff, a Molossus', or less probably to *bandar*, Hindustani for 'monkey' – strictly the Rhesus. A *tumtum* tree is intended to make us, by means of the nursery *tumtum* (= *tummy*, stomach), think of that quite innocuous growth, the bread-fruit tree. Lear's picturesque neologistic compounds generated Carroll's *snicker-snack*, an echoic reduplication: *snicker* is also archaic, both for a knife (sword-blade: knife-blade) and for *snack* – a share. *Callooh! Callay!*, merely varying *hurroo! hooray!*, recalls Lear's exclamations (e.g. *Timballo*).

Of the remaining terms, Nos. 1, 3, 6 are what I call cold-in-the-head* words: *brillig* for *brilliant*, *toves* for its 'rhyme' *coves*, *wabe* for *wave*. Humpty Dumpty explains them differently. He says that *brillig* 'means four o'clock in the afternoon – the time when you begin *broiling* things for dinner', patently a 'leg-pull', although *broiling* (cf. 'a broiling day') may be blended with *brilliant*, or the other way about, before the word is adenoided; that *toves* 'are something like badgers – they're something like lizards – and they're something like corkscrews', yet there is a clear allusion to *coves*, 'fellows'; and that *the wabe* is 'the grass-plot round a sun-dial', apparently because these 'queer coves' the *toves* 'make their nests under sun-dials', yet *wabe* obviously recalls *wave*, especially in the light of *gyre* and *gimble*.

No less entertaining and ingenious are the remaining

* Less euphonious but slightly more accurate than 'adenoidal', which simultaneously occurred to me.

terms. No. 2, *slithy*, as Humpty Dumpty informs us, coalesces *slimy* and *lithe*; the *i* is long. But his explanation of *gimble* as 'to make holes like a gimlet' is another jest: alliterating with *gyre*, *gimble* (pronounced *ghimble*, rhyming with *thimble*), it bears an associated meaning, compounded of *gambol nimbly*. We can, however, accept *mimsy* as 'flimsy and miserable' (reversed); we must accept *borogove* (pronounced *bŏrŏgōve*) as 'a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round – something like a live mop', perhaps a *borough* (= citified = dusty and bedraggled) *dove*, with vowels perverted. *Mome*, we learn from Humpty Dumpty, is 'short for "from home" – meaning that they had lost their way, you know', perhaps with an oblique allusion to archaic *mome*, 'a blockhead, a dullard'. On the same authority, a *rath* is 'a sort of green pig', the word being perhaps apprehended originally as a lisped *rat*; and *outgrabe* is the preterite (recurring in *The Snark*) of *outgribe*, whereof the verbal-noun form *outgribing* 'is something between bellowing and whistling, with a sort of sneeze in the middle' – compare the verb *cry out*, the noun *outcry*, and Milton's 'the griding sword', a sword cutting with a grating sound.

There, Humpty Dumpty ceases from his linguistic labours – and his inability to resist the temptation to commit a philological 'phlizz'. But in the preface to *The Hunting of the Snark*, Lewis Carroll disposes of that difficult word, *frumious*, which, before I hunted the snark, I used to think was a blend of *frumpish* + *gloomy*, with the adjectival suffix *-ious*, for he suggests, 'Take the two words "fuming" and "furious". Make up your mind that you will say both words, but leave it unsettled which you will say first. . . . . If you have that rarest of gifts, a perfectly balanced mind, you will say "frumi-

ous''.' Yet we cannot accept his statement that 'Humpty Dumpty's theory, of two meanings packed into one word like a portmanteau, seems to me the right explanation for all': but for most of the 'hard words in that poem' (i.e. 'Jabberwocky'), yes!

From that point, we must steer a course unhelmed by Humpty Dumpty, unfinanced by Lewis Carroll. We are left with 16, 17, 19, 21, 24, 26, 28: *vorpal*, *manxome*, *uffish*, *tulgey*, *galumphing*, *frabjous*, *chortled*.

'*Webster's*' records *vorpal* as 'now often used with about the sense of "keen-edged" ', but does not essay an etymology. A blend, almost certainly; *voracious* + *narwhal*, I think. A male *narwhal*, lest you have forgotten, is a dolphin-familied cetacean with a long, pointed tusk; the substitution of *p* for *wh* may have been caused by the *p* in *torpedo*, the electric ray (fish, not beam).

Equally difficult is *manxome*. The word appears to combine *maniac* + *Manx* (cat, with a rudimentary tail) + *fearsome*. *Uffish* thought seems to mean 'busy, deep and fruitful'; if that supposition be correct, *uffish* may combine *uberous*, 'fruitful' + *officious* in its now rare sense 'efficacious' + the adjectival suffix *ish*. The word recurs in *The Snark*. The *tulgey* wood (or forest) suggests the presence of two or perhaps all three of these terms: *thick*, *bulgy*, *bosky*, with something of the sense of each.

As again in *The Snark*, the meaning of *galumphing* is agreeably easy to determine, for it is a true 'portmanteau' and not, like (say) *frumious*, an imperfect one: *galloping in triumph* or *triumphantly*. Less easy is *frabjous*, now occasionally spelt *frabjious*: its general sense is 'excellent, pre-eminent, surpassing': perhaps it blends *fragrant* (or even *fair* = beautiful) + *joyous*. In 'He chortled in his joy', *chortle* manifestly mingles *chuckle* and *snort* – the *snort* of 'He snorted with mirth'.

Chortle has proved to be the most viable, hence the most popular, of all the Carrollian neologisms; *galumph* runs it close; *mimsy* and *frabjous* come next; and *uffish* has its devotees. Occasionally one hears *brillig* and *frumious*. Rarely the others.

Both Carroll and Lear must, in their philological heaven, be chortling at the thought that they have frabjously galumphed their way into the English vocabulary. For all their fun, they were serious men: as such, they doubtless rejoice that they have belied the fear expressed by the Christ Church don in

> Is all our Life, then, but a dream
> Seen faintly in the golden gleam
> Athwart Time's dark resistless stream?*

(Written in April, 1948.)

* The opening stanza of the poem that ushers-in *Sylvie and Bruno*, 1889. Lear had died in the preceding year.

238267

PE1574
.P3 Partridge
1969 Here, there, and
everywhere