Notes

Corinth

It is a familiar phenomenon to find that a place name has been overtaken by a non-local form spread either by literacy or by diffusion from a superordinate centralized cultural source. Thus just a few years ago I stopped, out of curiosity, for lunch in the southwestern English town of *Cirencester*, where in the course of an hour and a half I questioned (indirectly) some thirty inhabitants. All called their town ['saɪrən,sɛstə], and none that I questioned recognized ['sɪs(ɪs)tə].

The ancient city of Corinth in Greece is known generally in Greek as [i 'kɔrinθɔs] (feminine); it is not important to us that the modern city is located some miles from the ancient site, now a village. From the known development of spoken Greek we would expect the nasal to be lost before the spirant θ. Therefore the form ['kɔrinθɔs] with *n* must be a restored pronunciation arising from classicizing literacy. This is a familiar outcome in Greek culture, with its retrospective pride.

In the dialect of the nearby Arvanitika Albanian enclave village of Sofiko[1] the form of the name is [kɔrθ], definite ['kɔrθi] (masculine). It is not *[kor(ə)nθ] or *[koɾ̃θ], which would result if the normal rule *rn*→*r̃* had applied. Therefore it is in the non-prestigious alloglot dialect of the neighborhood that we retrieve the true continuation of the native *[kɔriθɔs].

Eric P. Hamp

University of Chicago

[1]See E.P. Hamp and D.G. Moutsos, "Linguistic and Cultural Categories in the Toponyms of a Greek-Albanian Township (Deme)," *Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), pp. 310-22.

Game of the Name:
A Quadriplegic Sick Joke Cycle

Misfortunes, preferably someone else's, have been a source of laughter for centuries, and have continued to provide a solid basis for humor. One could even go so far as to argue that the graver the misfortune, the more the human need to laugh as a response to that misfortune. In the cool light of reason, it seems heartlessly cruel to laugh at the mutilation or maiming of a fellow being, but the recorded evidence reveals that laughter is an important defense mechanism, enabling individuals to deal with matters they could not easily face without it. What has been termed "gallows humor" has suggested that even victims of attempted genocide managed to keep their joke-making facilities until the bitter end.[1]

The antiquity of such humor is attested by Homer's striking descriptive of Thersites in the second book of the Iliad.[2] He was "the ugliest man who came beneath Ilion. He was bandy-legged and went lame of one foot, with shoulders stooped and drawn together over his chest." After Thersites criticized Agamemnon for instigating a war for his own personal vengeance, Odysseus quickly rebutted him and physically hit him. "So he spoke and dashed the sceptre against his back and shoulders, and he doubled over, and a round tear dropped from him, and a bloody welt stood up between his shoulders . . ." The response of those assembled is of interest: "Sorry though the men were they laughed over over him happily."[3] This mixture of pity and laughter is not unique. Whipping a hunchback was a cruel act, but it was also a cause of laughter.

A morbid curiosity about monsters and freaks can be easily documented.[4] In part, the history of fairs and circuses with their sideshows of bearded ladies, two-headed calves, Siamese twins and the like demonstrates the fascination with deformity. But whereas one could in former times choose to observe such phenomena by electing to visit the appropriate portion of a sideshow, now various handicapped individuals are making a concerted effort to participate in as normal a life as possible. No longer banished to institutions providing care, individuals aided by the rapid advances in technology, e.g., motorized wheelchairs, are courageously taking part in everyday society. Wheelchair access to public buildings is becoming more and more common. Special parking places are reserved for the vehicles of the physically disabled. So whether an individual is a victim of birth defects (sometimes caused by deleterious side effects of inadequately tested drugs — such as thalidomide) or is injured through war or accident, he may be seen by the general public.

Etiquette dictates that one does not refer to another person's infirmity. Physical infirmity, like death, is either not mentioned at all or is only indirectly alluded to through accepted euphemisms. This taboo against speaking frankly about physical handicaps is probably one of the reasons why jokes about the handicapped exist. The joke typically provides a socially sanctioned outlet for discussing what normally cannot be discussed openly. Surely, one might argue, quadriplegics are an unlikely subject for humor, but the fact is that jokes about them are told. In the early 1980s, a whole new cycle of sick jokes circulated, most of which shared the initial question: "What do you call a man with no arms and legs who . . .?" It is this cycle which is the subject of the present brief investigation.

There have been sick joke cycles in American humor at least since the beginning of the twentieth century. Little Willies were popular in the first decades of the century.[5] Later joke cycles in the same vein include the so-called sick or cruel jokes of the 1960s, the dead baby jokes of the 1970s, and the Helen Keller jokes of the 1980s.[6] The fact that jokes could be told about a truly exceptional human spirit, who despite her being blind, deaf, and dumb was able to live a rich and fruitful life, attests to the penchant in American culture for sick humor. If Helen Keller can inspire a joke cycle, it should really be no surprise to learn that quadriplegics have spurred a similar series of jokes. Some are in standard riddling question format. Question: What is the hardest part of a vegetable to eat? Answer: The wheelchair. Others can be traced back to the 1960s at least. One of the classic jokes about cripples is:

"Can we play baseball with Billy?"
"No, you know he has no arms or legs."
"We know, but we want to use him for 3rd base."[7]

But the cycle to be considered here seems to have emerged in 1982 and 1983. Here are some texts:

1. What do you call a man with no arms or legs *in a swimming pool*? Bob.
2. *on your doorstep?* Matt.

3. *stuffed in your mailbox?* Bill.
4. *in a pile of leaves?* Russell.
5. *in a hot tub?* Stu.
6. *lying on hot pavement?* Flip.
7. *waterskiing?* Skip.
8. *in a hole?* Phil.
9. *nailed to a wall?* Art.
10. *in the meat display case?* Chuck.
11. *on a barbecue?* Frank.

Although most of these jokes involve puns on men's names, a few refer to women's names.

12. What do you call a woman with no arms or legs on a grill? Patty.
13. *on a beach?* Sandy.
14. What do you call a woman with one leg shorter than the other? Eileen.
15. What is a Japanese woman with one leg shorter than the other? Irene.[8]

Occasionally it is animals rather than humans who are described.

16. What do you call a cow with three legs? Lean beef.
17. What do you call a cow with no legs? Ground beef.

With the exception of the few animal examples, all of the jokes involve puns on personal names. Whether it is 'fill' in a hole or a meat 'patty' on a grill, the technique is the same.[9]

It is interesting that most of the names used in this joke cycle are either nicknames or standard shortenings of formal names: Art for Arthur, Matt for Matthew, Phil for Philip, Stu for Stuart, or Bill for William, Rob for Robert, and Chuck for Charles. What we have here is a play on *familiarity*. Only if one is a close friend or associate of Robert can one properly use the more familiar Bob. The familiar nickname contrasts with the unfamiliar referent: a man without arms and legs. It is not easy for individuals possessing all four limbs to speak or refer to paraplegics. It is not that quadriplegics don't have a sense of humor or don't enjoy jokes, but rather that non-quadriplegics tend to be embarrassed in the presence of quadriplegics. There is no doubt more than a hint of guilt for having four sound limbs.

With the rise of an evermore vocal disabled rights group, insisting (rightly) on ramp access to streets and public buildings, and with the remarkable advances in medicine and technology which permit quadriplegics to be much more independent than possible hitherto, no one can reasonably expect quadriplegics to impinge even more on public consciousness. No one likes to be reminded of human fragility and frailty. Even those who are in theory favorably disposed to quadriplegics' struggle to live as normal a life as they can may feel annoyance at having to accommodate such individuals. Someone has to pay for the cost of making public transportation and street corner curbs accessible for the handicapped. But one cannot express one's true feelings of guilt, revulsion, pity, annoyance, etc. I believe this curious joke cycle constitutes an attempt to recognize and articulate the public's discomfiture in the presence of armless, legless, or otherwise disabled individuals.

Alan Dundes

University of California, Berkeley

[1]For a discussion of gallows humor, see A.J. Obrdlik, "Gallows Humor. A Sociological Phenomenon," *American Journal of Sociology*, 47 (1942): 709-716; Elfriede Moser-Rath, "Galgenhumor wortlich

genommen," *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde*, 68/69 (1972-1973): 423-432. Executioners feel anxiety too, though presumably not as much as their victims. But this may explain why contemporary Germans tell jokes about Auschwitz. See Alan Dundes and Thomas Hauschild, "Auschwitz Jokes," *Western Folklore*, 42 (1983) — in press.

[2]The reference to Homer was cited by Max Rezwin in his *The Best of Sick Jokes* (New York: Permabooks, 1962), p. 11. Making fun of handicapped or deformed individuals has been reported in many cultures. Laura Bohannan singled out this feature for the title of her novel, *Return to Laughter*. In this fictionalized account of her fieldwork in Nigeria, she indicates disgust at her informants' pleasure in such humor. One informant told her, "There's nothing funnier than yelling 'Snake!' at a blind man." Her response: "Their laughter at suffering was merely one symbol of the gulf between their world and mine." The gulf is not as great as Bohannan would have us believe. See Elenore Smith Bowen, *Return to Laughter* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 228, 231.

[3]*The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 82-83, Book Two, lines 243-270.

[4]See, for example, C.J.S. Thompson, *The Mystery and Lore of Monsters, With Accounts of some Giants, Dwarfs and Prodigies* (New Hyde Park: University Books, 1968).

[5]For an account of Little Willies, see Alan Dundes, "The Dead Baby Joke Cycle," *Western Folklore*, 38 (1979): 146-148. For a sampling of some ninety texts, see Leopold Fechtner, *American Wit and Gags* (New York: Vantage, 1969), pp. 196-207.

[6]For discussions of these cycles, see Brian Sutton-Smith, " 'Shut Up and Keep Digging': The Cruel Joke Series," *Midwest Folklore*, 10 (1960): 11-22; Roger D. Abrahams, "Ghastly Commands: The Cruel Joke Revisited," *Midwest Folklore* 11 (1961-1962): 235-246; Alan Dundes, "The Dead Baby Joke Cycle," *Western Folklore*, 38 (1979): 145-157; Mac E. Barrick, "The Helen Keller Joke Cycle" *Journal of American Folklore* 93 (1980): 441-449. Typical anthologies of texts include: Max Rezwin, *The Best of Sick Jokes* (New York: Permabooks, 1962); Larry Wilde, *The Official Book of Sick Jokes* (Los Angeles: Pinnacle Books, 1979); and Max Hodes, *The Official Sick Joke Book* (London: Macdonald Futura, 1980).

[7]Sutton-Smith, p. 18. For other versions, see Rezwin, p. 19, Wilde, p. 8, Barrick,p. 445.

[8]This joke depends upon the difficulty encountered by native speakers of Japanese when they attempt to articulate the /l/ phoneme in English. There are other jokes which play upon this same phonological alteration, e.g., What is the sound made by Japanese camera? Crik.

[9]All the texts reported in this paper were collected from oral tradition by members of my fall semester folklore class at the University of California, Berkeley (in 1983). In seeking to gauge the interaction between oral tradition and popular culture, one can profitably examine and trace the increasing extent to which jokes have been included in popular joke anthologies. In Blanche Knott — obviously a nom de plume, *Truly Tasteless Jokes* (New York: Ballantine, 1982), there is a short section devoted, e.g., Stew and Eileen (p. 57). The sequel, *Truly Tasteless Jokes Two*, published in 1983, contained four; Bob, Skip, Matt, and Art (p. 41). In another sequel published in 1983, *Truly Tasteless Jokes Three*, we find Patty, Sandy, and Russell (pp. 45-46). By 1984, we find an entire book devoted to the punning name tradition. Sean Kelly, *A Book Called Bob* (New York: Warner Books, 1984), contains no fewer than 109 texts including those reported in this paper.

Herrick's Corinna

A very common name has so many attachments that it may end up, in our minds, with none. By comparison a less common name starts as a unique flower, associated with one person only. It may in time become a bouquet, but a small one, each addition an event in our lives or education. So it has been with me and the name Corinna or Corinne. Before I had encountered one of the most anthologized and rhythmically compelling poems in the

English language, Robert Herrick's "Corinna's going a-Maying," I had been enchanted as a boy by a star of the silent screen named Corinne. Yes, before Greta there was Corinne, Corinne Griffith, billed as "the orchidaceous star." She came out of New Orleans as the winner of a beauty film. How I should have relished going a-Maying with her, but that was reserved for such leading *men* as Conway Tearle, Milton Sills, and Francis X. Bushman.

It is possible that the christening of the actress (born in 1899) was influenced by the persistent fame of Mme. de Staël's romantic novel *Corinne* (1807). Without any reference to an historical original, this heroine is first seen on the occasion when she is crowned with myrtle and laurel in the Capitol, "la femme la plus celèbre de l'Italie, Corinne, poëte, écrivain, et l'une des plus belles personnes de Rome." She greatly interests the visiting peer from Edinburgh, Lord Nelvil, but after hundreds of pages which constitute a guidebook to Italy (the subtitle is *L'Italia*) she relinquishes him to her half sister and dies of a broken heart. It could have made a fine film, with Corinne playing Corinne, especially as the last scene is a speechless tableau: the false, grief-stricken lover at her feet and she too weak to say anything. Considering what *La Dame aux Camélias* became as play and opera and film, Corinne Griffith, La Dame aux Orchis, missed a chance of which someone may yet realize the potential.

It is surprising how few Corinnes there are in English lyric poetry. (We reck not of Swift's fetid desecrations in "Corinna" and "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed.") The name is a music suitable for song, as in Thomas Campion's much-anthologized "When to her lute Corinna sings." The reason that we should expect more is that Corinna was the pseudonym of the mistress of an ever popular poet, Ovid (who, indeed, is quoted on Herrick's title page). Probably George Chapman's *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* (1595), "one of the most difficult poems in the language" (Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne,* New York, 1971, p. 84), did little for the name in English, though its *narratio* was that of an Ovid peering at Corinna after her bath: "And thus she sung, all naked as she sat, / Laying the happy lute upon her thigh, / Not thinking any near to wonder at / The bliss of her sweet breast's divinity."

Ovid (the real one) proclaimed, "Only Corinna inspired my art" (*Amores* III.xii.16). In the *Amores* the name occurs fourteen times, and in *Ars Amatoria* (III.538) the poet proudly notes, "Many ask who my Corinna may be." Her first appearance, *Amores* I.v., is the most lascivious. Corinna enters as the poet is alone in his bed in the heat of the day. She is promptly stripped and enjoyed. "May such noons come to me often!" That last line was imitated by Milton, of all people, in the conclusion of his Elegia III on the death of Bishop Lancelot Andrewes: "May such dreams come to me often!" *Amores* I.v. is as near as Ovid's Corinna comes to being passive. Mostly she drives the poet mad with activity — nine times in one case (Victor Hugo emulated this on his wedding night), eluding the guardians of morals, embarking on a dangerous voyage, botching an abortion. She is never accused of laziness or oversleeping.

William Cartwright and Robert Herrick have in common that both were "sealed of the Tribe of Ben" Jonson — and both wrote of a Corinna. But there is, after all, only a shadowy connection between the respective poems, and neither could have seen the other in print when both were composing. Cartwright (1611-1643) was dead when Herrick's one book was published, in 1648, and Cartwright's one volume did not come out until 1651. In "Corinna's Tomb" Cartwright drops a foot from his usual heroic couplets:

> Here fair *Corinna* buri'd lay,
> Cloath'd and Lock'd up in silent Clay;
> But neighb'ring Shepheards every morn

With constant tears bedew'd her Urn,
Untill with quickning moysture, she
At length grew up into this Tree:
Here now unhappy Lovers meet,
And changing Sighs (for so they greet)
Each one unto some conscious Bough
Relates this Oath, and tels that Vow,
Thinking that she with pittying sounds
Whispers soft Comfort to their Wounds:
When 'tis perhaps some wanton Wind,
That striving passage ther to find,
Doth softly move the trembling leaves
Into a voice, and so deceives.

Daphne becomes Echo. *Corinna* in fact has the Greek etymology of "maiden," as these heirs of Jonson would have known. The thirty-eight lines continue through to the final requisite conceit of lovers awaiting a cure that does not come:

When, if true sense did quicken Wood,
Perhaps shee'd sweat a Balsom floud,
And knowing what the World endures,
Would weep her moysture into Cures.

If we can imagine Herrick reading this elegy (in manuscript), we can see his resolve to have a sleeping Corinna instead of a dead one, who yet will be urged (shades of Cartwright's tree!), "Rise, and put on your Foliage" ("Corinna's going a-Maying," 15 ff.) (instead of "Die, and put on your foliage"). This, in my view, is as good a rationale as Cleanth Brooks' anthropology in his well-known essay in *The Well Wrought Urn* (New York, 1947, pp. 54-64) or Ronald Berman's crown of thorns ("Herrick's Secular Poetry," *English Studies*, 52, 1971, 20-30).

The name that — in contrast to Herrick's chorus of uses — Cartwright invokes only in his title and first line has no connotations, no background. We do not know who Corinna was or what caused her untimely death. It is just a three-syllable sound with the right rhythm. It might just as well be Belinda —"Belinda's Tomb." In fact it became Belinda — "Belinda's *Grave* — in a plagiarism that Aaron Hill is known to have indulged himself in (*Works*, 1754, III, 313).

Compared to Julia or Electra, "Corinna" is a rarity in Herrick's oeuvre. One is surprised — one scarcely remembers that she occurs at all outside "Corinna's going a-Maying." The only other poem with that name in the title is "The Changes to Corinna," which grimly ends, "But you must die / As well as I," a briefer reprise of "All love, all liking, all delight / Lies drown'd with us in endless night" ("Corinna's going a-Maying," 67-68). Of course this poet knows whose mistress Corinna was before he adopted her. He does not fail to pay tribute to "witty Ovid, by / Whom fair *Corinna* sits, and doth comply" [embrace] ("The Apparition of his Mistresse calling him to Elizium," 39-40). She is enumerated in "upon the losse of his Mistresses": "Next, *Corinna*, for her wit, / And the graceful use of it." Finally, there is the advice-to-a-painter poem, "The Eye," concluding, "Ah! what is then this curious skie, / But only my *Corinna's* eye?"

What does the usage add up to, including the masterpiece itself? Seemingly a convenient name, like a score of others, floating in the poetic air without any basis in reality, not even in mythology, *vox et praeterea nihil*.

There is, however, a curious and hitherto unnoticed link between the opening lines of

"Corinna's going a-Maying" and an historical personage, the lyrical poetess Corinna, usually dated as an elder contemporary of Pindar. Her native city was Tanagra in Boeotia. Landor composes a poem for her in *Pericles and Aspasia* (XLIV), "Corinna to Tanagra from Athens," that includes the rhyme: "And sweetly, sweetly Attic tongues / Lisp your Corinna's early songs." Tennyson referred in *The Princess: A Medley*, III, to "fair Corinna's triumph" over Pindar in the Theban games. Some said her beauty (like Phryne's) swayed the judges. Like Sappho she was at the center of a circle of women, and as with that earlier poet a fair number of fragments or quotations survive. It is one of these, accessible to Herrick, that presents an interesting coincidence.

"Get up, sweet-Slug-a-bed," Herrick's Corinna is bidden. "Will you be sleeping forever? There was a time, Corinna, when you were not a sluggard." So the historical Corinna wrote of herself in a fragment preserved in Hephaestion's *Handbook of Metre*. The Greek and quoted translation are in the Loeb Library *Lyra Graeca*, III, 38-39, edited by J.M. Edmonds (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1949). Hephaestion's little book had been printed in Florence in 1526 and In Paris in 1553. A. Boullet issued a Latin translation in Paris in 1632. Our question then is: was it the real Corinna's self-accusation — in dactylic hexameter — that gave the inception to a seasoned classicist's most famous poem? Secondarily, Corinna's historic wreath of victory over Pindar (gained five times, according to Pausanias) conceivably was the inspiration for "Rise, and put on you foliage," etc. There could also be a play on *corona*, crown.

Edward Le Comte

North Egremont, Massachusetts (01252)

Notes on the Naming of Pandas

Giant pandas have been very much in the news in recent years. Most of the attention related to these bearlike black and white creatures has centered around their procreational activities in various zoos. However, the Fuzhou Zoo, in Fujian Province of China, features Tao Tao and Qing Qing, who have earned some fame as trained animals.

The giant panda (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*) is native to China and, to date, only six have been born outside of that country. Ying-Ying, of Chapultepec Zoo in Mexico City, delivered in 1981 the first panda born in captivity. By 1983, she was pregnant again, having mated with Pe-Pe. In total, three pandas have been born in Mexico City, of whom two survived.

Twin pandas were born in the Madrid Zoo in 1982, but only one survived. These were conceived by artificial insemination. The father was Chia-Chia, of the London Zoo; the mother, Shao-Shao. Chang-Chang, Shao-Shao's regular mate, had failed at mating.

In Tokyo's Ueno Zoo, Kan Kan was presented with a new mate, Huan Huan, in 1980. His previous female companion, Lan Lan had died a year earlier, and no offspring have resulted from either union. Earlier attempts to mate Chi-Chi, London Zoo's famous female panda, also failed. She died childless in 1972 at the age of 15.

The first giant panda birth in the United States occurred at Washington's National Zoo in July 1983, with extensive coverage by the news media. The paternity of the baby is unknown. Hsing-Hsing, a male panda had mated in March with the mother, Ling-Ling, but frozen

sperm from London's Chia-Chia had been used for artificial insemination during the same week. Unfortunately, the baby died. But, had Ling-Ling's cub lived, would it have been named "Hsing-Ling," or perhaps "Chia-Ling"? Probably neither.

During a trip to the Peoples Republic of China in May 1983, with quite different primary objectives, I determined to solve a riddle: Why, it seems, are giant pandas almost invariably given double names?* Why, particularly, does this onomastic anomaly pertain to one of the world's rarest large mammals, and not to other members of the animal kingdom? Within an intensive three-week period of travel, to widely-separated cities such as Beijing, Lanzhou, Sian and Shanghai, including unversities such as Peking, Lanzhou and Fudan, I repeatedly asked these questions of learned individuals whenever the subject of pandas could be blended into a normal conversation. The response was remarkably uniform from a substantial number of people who had never met each other. The consensus was, in brief: "We Chinese view the panda as a very special animal. It is found wild only in China, and is intensely lovable. We do not generally use double words or double names, with two exceptions. One is with regard to our children whom we treasure and quite commonly refer to by nicknames which are repetitive." To illustrate, the director of China's Institute of Atomic Energy, with whom I discussed this conundrum during a luncheon, pointed across the table to each of several staff members, in turn, asking "What is the *name* of your child?" The answer was given, and in each case was a representative Chinese name. "What do you *call* him (or her)?" With equal consistency the response was a double name, a nickname, just as Americans might refer to their children as Jay-Jay, John-John, Jo-Jo, or Mimi.

The second case in which repetitive names are given is for pandas. What appears likely is that the Chinese have a special affection for the native lovable panda much as they have for their own children. Under no circumstances, I was told, would they give a repetitive title to a city (such as Walla Walla, Washington), a river (such as the Río Bio Bio in Chile) or a mountain (such as Banda Banda in Australia), but with great affection, only a double name seems appropriate to the giant panda!

C.W. Minkel

University of Tennessee

*One of the few exceptions is Tohui, the first surviving cub born to Shao Shao in Mexico City. "Tohui," a Tarahumara Indian name, was selected from among many names submitted by Mexican children in an open competition.