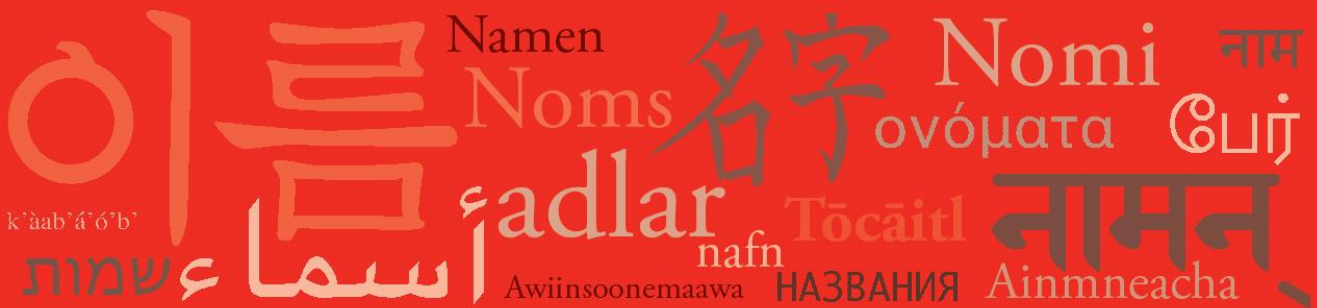


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Name of the Year Report 2022

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Summary

On January 23, 2023, for the 16th year in a row, the American Name Society (ANS) held its annual conference of the American Name Society. The 2023 online vote was chaired by Deborah Walker, the former ANS Name of the Year (NoY) Coordinator. This report gives a summary of this year's NoY deliberations and offers readers background information about some of the leading onomastic nominations.

Introduction

Each year, during its annual conference, the American Name Society (ANS) holds a special session in which it deliberates over the nominees for the Name of the Year (NoY). This year, the deliberations were conducted online which allowed names researchers from around the world to review the nominations received throughout the year. Nominations are made anonymously by members of the international onomastic community as well as interested members of the general public. In addition, during the formal NoY review, nominations may be accepted from the floor. After debating the competing merits of each of the candidates, the NoY session members cast their vote for the name they felt best represent one of the six NoY sub-categories: fictional names, personal names, place names, trade names, e-names, and miscellaneous. The nominations for each category are assessed on their degree of linguistic innovation and productivity as well as their overall recognizability and usage within North American discourse. The degree of popularity or infamy of the entity named is not a consideration in the evaluation.

Once the arguments in favor and against each nomination are examined, a closed ballot election is held for each sub-category. The votes, this year, were automatically tallied online using the Zoom poll function. As per ANS tradition, the nomination which receives the over 50% of the votes is designated the winner. In instances, when no single entry meets this threshold, subsequent runoff elections are held between the onomastic candidates with the highest share of votes until a winner emerges. Then, in accordance with NoY tradition, the winners of each onomastic category are pitted against one another in a final election to determine the overall NoY winner. The following report presents background information about this year's top candidates and gives a general overview of the deliberations. It also provides the numerical election results for the six NoY sub-categories and the overall 2022 winner.

Category Winners

Personal Names

The names nominated for this category may designate either an individual or an entire group. This year, 85.71% of the nominated anthroponyms referred to a single person whose name featured prominently in the world news. Interestingly, of those nominations, only one was the name of a US American. *Ketanji Brown Jackson* is the name of the first African American woman to be officially appointed to serve on the United States Supreme Court. There are several features that make Judge Jackson's name of onomastic interest. In contrast to her extraordinary career, the venerable Supreme Court appointee happens to have two of the most common surnames in the US. According to onomastic data gathered by the US Bureau of Census, the surnames *Brown* and *Jackson* both rank amongst the top 20 most common surnames for US residents. In 2010, *Jackson* ranked 19th among last names and 708,099 US Census respondents were reported as having this surname. In that same year, *Brown* ranked 3rd and was reportedly the last name of 1,437,026 US Census-takers. Not surprisingly, ten years later, the two surnames still rank in the top 20 in the US (Moss 2023). Like many professional women of her generation, upon marriage, she elected to combine her maiden name, *Brown*, with her spouse's surname, *Jackson*, to form her double last name *Brown Jackson*. The commonality of the venerable judge's surnames is also a striking contrast to her unusual first, *Ketanji*. In a 2022 interview with Girls United, Judge Brown

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Jackson shared her personal name story: “When I was born here in Washington, my parents were public school teachers, and to express both pride in their heritage and hope for the future, they gave me an African name; ‘Ketanji Onyika’, which they were told means ‘lovely one’, she said” (White 2022, para. 4).

The second nomination for this category comes from across the ocean: *King Charles III*, the official name of Great Britain’s new reigning monarch. As per British royal tradition, after the death of a predecessor, the new British sovereign succeeds to the throne during what is formally called “The Accession” (Torrance 2022; The British Monarchy Official Website n.d.). It is during this event that the new ruler announces his/her/their official name. In the case of King Charles III, there were two traditions which he could have followed to change his moniker from *Prince Charles*. First, he could have chosen one of his many other forenames, *Philip Arthur George*. This decision was made by *Queen Victoria* who was born *Princess Alexandrina Victoria of Kent*; and *King George VI* who was christened *Albert Frederick Arthur George*. Instead, the new King elected to follow the second tradition, in the footsteps of his illustrious mother, Queen Elizabeth II. When asked before her own Accession which name she wanted to carry, she reportedly replied: “My own name, of course. What else?” (Elston 2022: para. 15). Linguistically speaking, the nomination *King Charles III* is not only interesting for its prominence within US discourse in the year 2022. It is also rather unusual in it is both a personal name and an official title. It shares this double status with another nominee in this category, *Elizabeth*: the name of King Charles III’s mother and predecessor who reigned as Queen in the UK and the Commonwealth from 1952 to 2022. Putting aside this historic reign of the royal name-bearer, the only feature which made this candidate linguistically outstanding for the year 2022 was the prominence of this name in US American speech as a function of the Great matriarch’s death on the 8th of September 2022.

Another nominee in this category also belonged to a person of great international prominence. Referred to as “the King” or “O Rei” in his hometown of Três Corações in Brazil, the world grew to know and love him as *Pelé*. Designated Player of the Century by the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) [The International Federation of Football Associations], *Pelé* was born *Edson Arantes do Nascimento*. He received the nickname *Pelé* in his early childhood. According to family legend, as a child, he had great difficulty pronouncing the name of his favorite soccer player, *Bilé*, a teammate of his father’s at Vasco de Gama (Green 2023). Try as he might, he always devoiced the initial bilabial plosive. The name stuck and his friends affectionately referred to him as *Pelé*. In this respect, the origin of *Pelé* is an excellent example of a highly productive pattern for personal nicknames. As many readers can probably attest, family nicknames are often born through children’s mispronunciations. Another feature of this nomination that makes it linguistically interesting is the fact that many of soccer’s greatest players are known by a nickname rather than their birthnames. Aside from *Pelé*, other examples include the following: Francesco Totti → *Er Pupone* ‘The Big Baby’ (Amico 2022); Cristiano Ronaldo → *CR7* (Hubble 2011); Zinedine Zidane → *Zizou* (Hubble 2011); Thierry Henry → *Titi*, Lionel Messi: *Atomic Flea* (Fitzpatrick 2016); Franz Beckenbauer → *Der Kaiser* ‘the Kaiser’ (FIFA 2020); Diego Maradona → *Pelusa* ‘The Dishevelled One’ (Claro 2020).

The next nominee in this category is also the personal name of someone who has captured the world’s attention: The President of Ukraine, *Volodymyr Zelenskyy*. Since Russia’s invasion and armed occupation of Crimea on the northern coast of Ukraine, the name of Ukraine’s head of state has been continually in the news, oftentimes in pieces that feature the name of Russia’s current Prime Minister, *Vladimir Putin*. The fact that the two leaders’ forenames, *Volodymyr* and *Vladimir* are etymologically related is a tragic reminder of the cultural ties that once connected these two countries. Variants of the Ukrainian President’s dithematic forename which is said to mean “Great Ruler” or “Ruler of Peace” are common throughout Europe: *Vladan* (Serbian), *Voldemārs* (Latvian) *Valdemar* (Swedish), *Waldemar* (German), *Włodzimierz* (Poland), *Voldemar* (Estonian). Variants of the Ukrainian President’s surname *Zelenskyy* are also found throughout the modern-day world. In Ukrainian, the name is spelled in the Cyrillic alphabet Володимир. In the English-language press, this name is often transliterated as *Zelenskyy*. This is the spelling which the Ukrainian President is said to prefer. It is also the spelling that appears in his passport. However, in Russian, the spelling of this name in Cyrillic is Влади́мир. When this variant is transliterated into English, it becomes *Zelensky*, with a single “y” word-finally. According to CNN Editor-at-large, Chris Cillizza (2022), some media outlets such as the Associated Press, Fox News, and MSNBC use the double “y” ending, while CNN, the New York Times, and The Washington Post all use a single “y” variant. Reuters, however, “goes in a completely different direction, spelling his last name “Zelenskiy”” (Cillizza 2022, para. 2). Although the pronunciation remains the same, the political meaning differs, especially at a time of war. While some English-speakers have been careful to select one spelling variant over another to indicate their personal alliances, others seem to be completely unaware of the significance. The only group name to be nominated for this category fell into the same semantic category as the personal name *Volodymyr Zelenskyy*. That name was *Ukrainian*. However, aside from the frequency with which this name

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was used in US American speech, there were no outstanding linguistic features which were found to recommend this nomination.

The final individual name nominated in this category was *Olivia*. Although no specific reason was offered by the person who suggested this anthroponym, it is assumed that the motivation for this nomination was the 2022 death of singer-actress Olivia Newton John. According to data gathered by the Social Security Administration (SSA), the name *Olivia* has ranked amongst the top five most popular baby names for girls in the USA since 2003, with the exception of 2007 and 2006 when it ranked seventh. From 2018 to 2021, *Olivia* ranked number one among the most popular girls' names in the US (SSA n.d.).

After the arguments for each of the above nominations were weighed, a vote was taken. In the chart below, the results of the vote are presented. The nomination receiving the highest number of votes is given the ranking of 1.

Table 1: ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Personal Name of the Year

Nominations	Rank
Elizabeth	4
Ketanji Brown Jackson	4
King Charles III	4
Olivia	3
Pelé	2
Ukrainian	4
Volodymyr Zelensky(y)	1

N.B. Rankings are presented instead of percentage here as the original data was not available.

As shown in the table above, the two nominations which received the largest number of votes were *Volodymyr Zelensky(y)* and *Pelé*. A comparison of the percentages revealed that *Volodymyr Zelensky(y)* received the clear majority of votes with 42%. By comparison, *Pelé* received only 24%. Given this result, *Volodymyr Zelensky(y)* was designated the category winner.

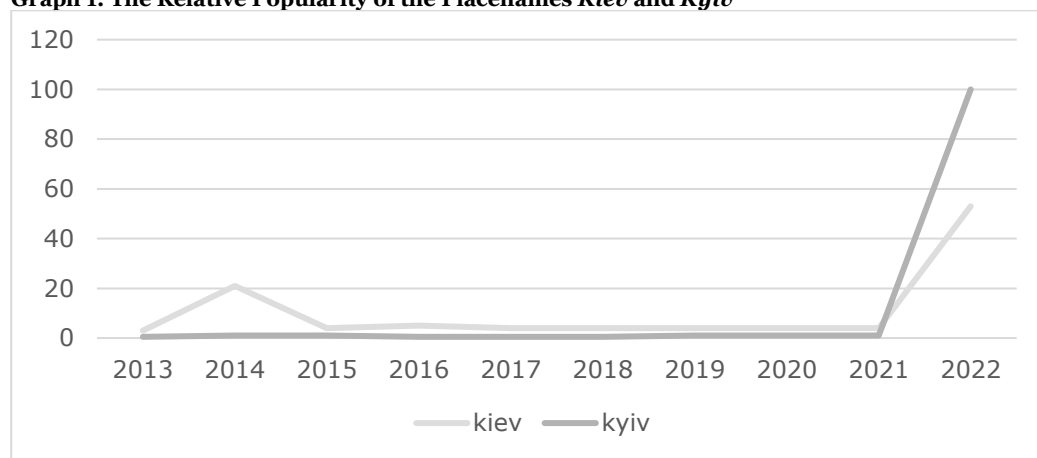
Place Names

Like the personal names category, the nominations for this category included names for many entities outside of the United States. These foreign toponyms included the following: (1) *Danube*; (2) *Qatar*; (3) *Russia*; (4) *Mariupol*; (5) *Kyiv*; and (6) *Ukraine*. Even a tertiary look at these names reveals another similarity with the personal names category: the thematic prominence of the current war between Russia and Ukraine. Aside from the frequency of use, another commonality which many of these nominations share is the controversy in the US American media over their orthography and/or pronunciation. Starting with the name of Ukraine's capital city, *Kyiv*, this nominee is transliterated directly from the Ukrainian language (i.e. Київ). By contrast, *Kiev* is transliterated from the Russian placename, Киев. Before the war, the Russian-based spelling and pronunciation were the ones most commonly used by US American speakers. It is included, for example, in the name of the iconic dish, *Chicken Kiev* (BBC Good food). Not surprisingly, perhaps, the origins of this buttery breaded delicacy are also a source of international rancor. The Ukrainians assert that the dish rightly bears the name of their capital in homage to a 19th century Ukrainian chef who elevated the once mundane recipe to haute cuisine¹. The Russians argue that the original recipe came from Moscow (Croft 2019). Since the outbreak of war, the dispute over ownership of the recipe has been re-politicized. Amongst English-speakers, there are two competing versions of the recipe name: *Chicken Kyiv* vs. *Chicken Kiev*.² Within the Russian Federation, a new provocative alternative has reportedly been introduced to the menus of government canteens: *Chicken Crimea*, in allusion to the recent Russian occupation of the Crimea. For English-speakers who are neither foodies nor politically-inclined, the fight over whether to call the stuffed, breaded chicken breasts *Kyiv* or *Kiev* might have been lost. However, as Dr. Yuri Shevchuk, a Lecturer of the Ukrainian language at Columbia University's Department of Slavic Languages, explains, the choice in placename is far from meaningless. According to the professor: "If you use Kiev, you signal (whether you want to or not) that you support Russian imperialism" (Kushner 2022, para. 10). In the US American media, there has been a palpable shift towards *Kyiv* and away

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from *Kiev*. This movement is also reflected in general parlance. In the following line graph, the Google searches for the two toponymic variants, conducted in the United States, from 2013 to 2022, are displayed.

Graph 1: The Relative Popularity of the Placenames *Kiev* and *Kyiv*



The data in Graph 1 are based on Google’s normalized value scale of popularity where the highest rank is set at 100 and the lowest is 0. Google’s construct of POPULARITY is based on the number of searches registered within a designated geographical region and time period. In this case, two interesting spikes are seen. The first occurs in 2014, the year of Russia’s annexation of the Crimea. At this time point, the name *Kiev* experienced a clear surge. The second peak begins in 2021, when both placenames evidenced a marked increase. However, for the first time over the time period examined, the Ukrainian-based toponym surpassed the Russian-based option. It remains to be seen whether the popularity of *Kyiv* will continue and eventually replace *Kiev* in US American speech.

One nominee which will no doubt have great longevity in the English lexicon is *Ukraine*. Although the toponym itself is by no means new, its usage without the definite article is. One of the questions which can plague learners of English is when to use “the” before a place name. There are many complicated, often contradictory, grammatical rules for this pattern. Amongst native speakers, linguistic convention (aka group habit) is usually the deciding factor. However, these language patterns can change in response to powerful societal developments. Such is the case with *Ukraine*. After the country became an independent sovereign nation, it formally declared its name to be *Ukraine* and not *the Ukraine*. The article-less toponym also appears in the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Ukraine which was adopted by the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic on the 16th of July 1990. In this document, the following declaration is made: “The people of **Ukraine** are the only source of the state government of the republic” [emphasis added] (340). This usage can be seen in the English-version of the country’s Declaration of Independence from August 24, 1991 (worldhistorycommons.org). Here, for example, it is declared that “the territory of Ukraine is indivisible and inviolable” and “**Ukraine** is a sovereign and independent, democratic, social, law-based state”. [emphasis added] (Article I) (www.justice.gov). According to Oksana Kyzyma of the Ukrainian Embassy in London: “The use of the article relates to the time before independence in 1991, when Ukraine was a republic of the Soviet Union”. (Geoghean 2012, para. 6). The “the” then is said to harken back to a period when Ukraine was “the borderland” which is reportedly reflected in the Polish term “Ukrajina” (Temnycky 2016, para. 1). A similar explanation is offered by William Taylor, the former US Ambassador to Ukraine, from 2006 to 2009. According to Taylor, “**The Ukraine**’ is the way the Russians referred to that part of the country during Soviet times [. . .] Now that it is a country, a nation, and a recognized state, it is just Ukraine. And it is incorrect to refer to ‘the Ukraine’, even though a lot of people do it [emphasis added]”. (Steinmetz 2014, para 3). The latest version of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (c.) agrees. However, the explanation that independent statehood

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alone is the reason for eliding the definite article is, of course, in direct conflict with the English names of many other sovereign nations such as *the Gambia*, *the United Arab Emirates*, *the Bahamas*, *the Philippines*, *the Sudan*, *the Netherlands*, *the United Kingdom*, and of course *the United States of America*.³ The switch from *the Ukraine* to *Ukraine* has not only increased public discourse about these conventions, but also raised sensibilities to the social, political, and historical importance of placenames. It is important here to mention, the place name *Russia* was also nominated for this category. However, no explanation was offered by the person who anonymously suggested this toponym. A possible linguistic reason for this nomination is the prominence of this place name in US discourse, thanks to continuing political tensions and the outbreak of war in 2022.

Another category nominee which also managed to capture public attention was *Qatar*. In 2022, it was the official host of the Soccer World Cup. This marked the first time that a nation in the Middle East had been selected by FIFA to host the prestigious competitions which can be likened to the Olympic Games of the soccer world. Although FIFA's choice was applauded by many as an important step towards making good on its ethnicity, diversity, and integration objectives, there were just as many others who criticized the decision as a clear violation of that very same commitment, given Qatar's record of human rights abuses against immigrants and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Criticism against Qatar's selection was particularly prominent in Europe and the United States, where calls to boycott the games were repeatedly voiced. However, in the face of the police murder of George Floyd, many observers countered that the volley of criticism coming from the West was sickeningly hypocritical, if not also blatantly anti-Muslim.

The political tensions were played out linguistically on the world stage when Western journalists were increasingly criticized for "mispronouncing" the name of the host country as "kahtah(r)". Technically speaking, this contentious production was not due to a phonological error but rather an English lexical choice. It would be the equivalent of an English-speaker saying "Paris" instead of Pah-REE. Generally, the English variant would be accepted as a neutral choice by a native-English speaker, particularly during a monolingual English conversation. **However**, within the increasingly antagonistic atmosphere of the 2022 World Cup Games, selecting the English-language toponym over the one used by Arabic-speakers was increasingly read as an insult. Phonological and political tensions came to a head, during what would normally have been a routine pre-game televised interview. In November 2022, in the middle of the Cup, Tyler Adams, Captain of the US team, faced the international media. Normally, the journalists would have focused on the upcoming game and the team strategy. Instead, Adams, an African-American, was repeatedly questioned about police brutality in the United States and the ongoing conflict between Iran and the US. When Adams attempted to maintain a neutral position and stress that neither he nor his teammates had a conflict with the people of Iran, Iranian journalist Milad Javanmardy lashed back: "You say you support the Iranian people, but you're pronouncing our country's name wrong. Our country is named 'ee-ron', not 'i-ran'. Once and for all let's get this clear". (Press TV IR 2022, para 4). Adams and the US Soccer Coach immediately apologized for their pronunciation. In the aftermath of that event, non-Arabic speaking sports commentators and players from around the world also attempted to adopt the Arabic pronunciation of *Qatar*. During their televised reports from the Cup and in subsequent stories printed by news outlets, guidance was given for non-Arabic speakers to pronounce *Qatar* in Arabic (Willingham 2022).⁴ The controversy surrounding this placename was instrumental in sparking new public discussions about the importance of toponyms in cross-cultural communication.

The remaining toponyms in this category were nominated for their connection to disturbing historic events. For example, *Uvalde* is the name of the Texas community where a mass shooting took place in a local Elementary School on May 24, 2022. The school shooting ended in the deaths of twenty-two victims and left approximately 18 others wounded. *Mariupol* is the name of a city in the Donetsk region of Ukraine. Along with the tens of thousands of Ukrainians who have been forced to flee, the name of the city has become synonymous for the grisly assortment of war crimes committed there (Human Rights Watch 2022). Finally, the pair of river names *the Mississippi* and *the Colorado* was also nominated for consideration by the ANS. According to the nominator, the pair was suggested to help call public attention to the environmental disaster faced by these two mighty waterways which have experienced historic drought thanks to continued failure of local and national government officials to take the necessary actions to stop the mounting climate disaster. Without doubt, the shockingly low water levels of both rivers was a frequent topic in the US American media. This environmental warning sign was also the reason was given for nominating the other hydronym in this category, *Danube*: it too dropped to dangerously low levels in 2022. As Sinjin Eberle of the environmental protection group "American Rivers"⁵ explains, the situation is dire and immediate action is required. While many governments remain stubbornly derelict, as Eberle states, the people of the world do not have to wait to get involved. Each one of us can make an important positive impact. As Eberle advises: "[t]he best thing (people) can do to help the river(s),

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[...] is to eat more local food and keep their food choices more locally oriented” (Bergeron 2022, para. 26).

After the relative merits of each of the candidates were reviewed, a vote was taken by online poll. The results yielded three strong contenders for the winner of the place name category. As the percentage of votes shared between these three nominees was so close, a second round of voting was held to determine the final winner. The results of these two rounds are presented in the table below. Once again, the nominees are presented in alphabetical order:

Table 2: ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Place Name of the Year

Nominations	Percentage	
	Round 1	Round 2
Danube	5	
Kyiv	35	48
Mariupol	20	24
Mississippi and Colorado	0	
Qatar	0	
Russia	0	
Ukraine	15	
Uvalde	20	28

As shown in the table above, in the first round of voting, 75% of the votes were given to the three nominees: *Kyiv*, *Mariupol*, and *Uvalde*. In the second round, *Uvalde* and *Mariupol* took second and third place, respectively. And, with nearly a quarter more votes than its competitors, *Kyiv* emerged as the winner of the 2022 Place Name of the Year.

Trade Names

Overall, the ANS received seven nominations for the category of trade/brand names: (1) *Amazon*; (2) *Azovstal*; (3) *FTX*; (4) *NASA*; (5) *Netflix*; (6) *Twitter*; and (7) *Vinamilk*. For most English-speakers in North America, the majority of these candidates will be immediately familiar. The only reason for their nomination in 2022 was the sudden surge in attention these names received due to certain news events—from the financial and political tumult resulting from Elon Musk’s takeover of *Twitter* to NASA’s spectacular launch of the Artemis I lunar flight test. However, from a linguistic point of view, there was little new about the majority of these nominations. Even the onomastic blend *Vinamilk*, the name of one of Vietnam’s largest dairy company (vinamilk.com), did not present anything striking or unusual in its usage or formation [*Vietnam* + **milk** → *Vinamilk*] despite it being comparatively unfamiliar to *NAMES* readers. The other foreign trade name on the list of nominations which *NAMES* readers might not immediately recognize is *Azovstal*. Although this company name may have faded from many English-speakers’ memories, the events connected to it will no doubt remain for many years to come. *Azovstal* is the name of the metallurgical facility located in the heart of Mariupol in eastern Ukraine. When Russian troops advanced into the city, hundreds of Ukrainian civilians took shelter in the safety of the steel factory’s underground system of tunnels. The residents were offered further protection by armed Ukrainian soldiers who set up their defenses in the bowels of the factory. What started out as a haven soon transformed into a hellhole as Russian commanders cut off food and water supplies to the city. Initially, it was believed that the desperate circumstances would force the stronghold to surrender. However, the Ukrainians held up their resistance for ca. 82 days, only giving up their position after the terms of their release had been secured. In this respect, the name *Azovstal* is similar to the toponymic candidates *Uvalde* and *Mariupol*: historic markers of tragedy and resistance.

The final candidate in this category is also a company name, but one with a very different history. The abbreviation *FTX* stand for *Futures Exchange* and is the name of the one-time cyptocurrency giant FTX Trading Ltd.. Founded in May of 2019 by Gary Wang and Sam Bankman-Fried, FTX grew to become the third largest cyptocurrency exchange in the world, making its owners two of the wealthiest and most powerful men on the planet. Just two years after its founding, the owners were in the position to pay for the name of the athletic stadium, the *Miami Heat Arena*, to be changed into the *FTX Arena* (Forbes 2022). Bankman-Fried used much of the company profits to lobby for the introduction of legislation favorable to cyptocurrency. It is estimated that he donated over 20 million US dollars in campaign funds to both the Republicans and the Democrats. Unfortunately for the FTX investors, the majority of those funds appear to have been stolen from

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creditors. In 2022, the proverbial bubble burst and in November during what Forbes Magazine has nicknamed the “Lehmann Brother’s Moment of Cryptocurrency”, FTX officially filed for bankruptcy (Forbes 2022). Outside of the insular world of high-stakes finance, few people understood then (or even now) how cryptocurrency actually works (Morrow 2023). That lack of understanding was allegedly used by the company to solicit high-profile celebrities to encourage investments from middle- and low-income people. At its height, the company was estimated to have a worth of 32 billion US dollars. Today, Sam Bankman-Fried, who is often referred to as *SBF* in the financial news, was placed under arrest after leaving the US for the Bahamas, the former company headquarters. He is now facing charges of fraud by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and criminal wrong-doing by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). In the meantime, FTX has been hit by an 11 billion-dollar-classaction lawsuit by financially ruined investors. The inscrutability of the financial machinations of FTX are ironically mirrored in the alphabetism used for the company and its short ignominious history (e.g., FTX CEO SBF, ONCE INTL VIP, HIT BY DOJ & SEC, AFTER AWOL IN BAMA.). Table 3 displays the voting results.

Table 3: ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Trade Name of the Year

Nominations	Percentage
Amazon	5
Azovstal	14
FTX	57
NASA	0
Netflix	5
Twitter	14
Vinamilk	5

As can be seen clearly in Table 3, *FTX* was able to secure over 50% of the votes in the first round and was therefore declared the category winner.

Artistic Names

In total, eight different nominations were received for this category. In alphabetical order, these candidates were (1) *Avatar*; (2) *Black Panther*; (3) *Don’t Worry Darling*; (4) *Encanto*; (5) *House of Dragon*; (6) *Megan Thee Stallion*; (7) *A Man Called Otto*; and (8) *The White Lotus*. In contrast to 2021, when the majority of names considered for this category were characteronyms (e.g., *Dexter*, *Spider-Man*, *Seong Gi-hun & Kang Sae-bo*) (Nick 2022), for 2022, almost all of the nominees were names of films that had been recently released. The prevalence of this media is particularly striking given the financial obstacles which the international cinema industry has faced thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. The governmental quarantines not only kept movie-goers away from the theaters, they also made it impossible for production crews to meet safely in the same space. However, as the pandemic receded and the health restrictions eased, many film-lovers slowly but sure returned to the theaters in search of much needed popcorn and fun with family and friends. The much-anticipated sequels to award-winning films *Avatar* and *Black Panther* were released in 2022. Along with these guaranteed box office hits was psychological thriller with the deceptively calming name *Don’t Worry Darling*. For movie-lowers who preferred to stay at home, 2022 also had much to offer. Home Box Office issued two award-winning made-for-streaming series that made the ANS list of nominees: (1) the dark psychological comedy, *The White Lotus*, which won 10 Academy Awards in 2021 for its first season; and (2) *House of Dragon*, the name of the prequel to the enormously popular fantasy series “Game of Thrones” that was based on George R. R. Martin’s beloved classic, “A Song of Fire and Ice”. Aside from the enormous popularity of these productions and their undisputable contribution to the Arts, few of these names demonstrated striking linguistic innovation in and of themselves.

The exception was *Black Panther*. This nominee has several references both inside and outside of the cinematic world. Within the film, it simultaneously serves as the name of the film and the superhero main character, T’Challa, the Black warrior-king from the legendary land of Wakanda. The character was reportedly developed in 1966, during the height of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. DC Comics pioneers, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, debuted the revolutionary character in issue number 52 of the *Fantastic Four* series. By 1970, the character had earned his own series and story-line where he fought against the same kind of

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discrimination and prejudice faced by his small but loyal fan-base (Marqua 2020). Coincidentally, when it officially formed in Oakland, California in 1966, Black Power Movement also chose the same moniker as the DC comic book character for its autonym (Burroughs 2018). In an effort to boost sales amongst non-Black readers by de-coupling the name of DC comic book character from the political group, marketing executives decided to switch the superhero name from *Black Panther* to *Black Leopard*. The name change proved extremely unpopular and soon T'Challa was back to fighting injustice under his original name. Today, thanks in no small measure to the rise of Black Lives Matters Movement, the *Black Panther* franchise enjoys unprecedented popularity. Within the Marvel comic world, the character is credited for paving the way for a new generation of superhero characters and names: *Black Lightning*; *The Falcon*; *The Cage*; and Wonder Woman's long-lost superhero half-sister, *Nubia* (Marqua 2020).

For many lovers of rap music, the next name belongs to a real-life super heroine, *Megan Thee Stallion*. The name is one of the many monikers of *Megan Jovon Ruth Pete*, a 27-year-old rapper from Houston, Texas. Her other artistic pseudonyms include *Htown Hottee*, *Tina Snow*, and *Hot Girl Meg*—all names inspired from the artist's biography. The same is true of the nominated artistic name *Megan Thee Stallion*. However, while her other stage names are autonyms, the origin of *Megan Thee Stallion* is different. According to an interview given to “Cosmopolitan Magazine”, the recording artist was reportedly given the name in her early teens. She recalls:

Since I was younger, probably about 15 or 16, I've always had the same body. Older guys would always be like, ‘**Oh, you a stallion.**’ So I finally had to ask like, is that a good thing? Everybody pretty much took it and ran with it, and then I put it as my main name on Twitter, and ever since then, everybody's just been calling me Stallion. (Bonner 2021, para 3).

Once the artist came into her own, she embraced the nickname, rejecting the linguistic convention that the noun “stallion” is exclusively reserved for males; and imbuing the title with her female transformative powers.

The final nomination in this category is also related to the subject of magic. In 2022, Disney released the animated film, *Encanto*. Briefly, the film tells the story of an enchanted homeland where all of the inhabitants have magical gifts. The one exception is the film heroine, who learns to recognize her own special power lies in the love she has for herself, her family, and her culture. Set in Colombia, the film has been celebrated as another important step in the US film industry embracing cultural diversity on the screen and among movie-goers. As film critic Monica Castillo wrote: the Disney movie has the potential to “give a new generation a better sense of belonging” (www.rogerebert.com). The power of the film and the main character to heal through magic passed through one's cultural roots is mirrored in the film name *Encanto*. This is not the only onomastic feature which recommends *Encanto*. It is also one of the few films in Disney's history which is named after a place and not a main character (e.g., *Bambi*, *Dumbo*, *Peter Pan*, *Cinderella*, *Lady and the Tramp*, *Tarzan*, *Bolt*, *The Princess and the Frog*, *Mulan*, *Alladin*).⁶ In addition, the fact that the film name is not in English is also rather unusual for the animation giant. Take, for example, the blockbuster Disney hit *Frozen*. Although the film plot is set in Germany, the title still appears in English. By contrast, the film name *Encanto* is in Spanish. The name is taken from the first-person singular form of the polysemous verb “encantar” meaning “to love” and/or “to enchant”. Simply by uttering the name of the film, movie-goers say the transformative words: “I love”/“I enchant”. In 2022, *Encanto* received the Academy Award for best animated feature film. It was also nominated for best original song and best original score (Giardina 2022). The movie was not only a favorite amongst critics, however. To date, the film has grossed 216 million US dollars worldwide with particularly high sales in countries with large communities of Spanish-speakers (boxofficemojo.com).

The final candidate in this category was *A Man Called Otto*. The film features Tom Hanks in the lead role as *Otto*, a suicidal widower who re-discovers his will to live after being adopted by his new neighbors. The US film enjoyed only moderate success at the box office and among critics. This tepid reception was in marked contrast to the original European film upon which the Hollywood screenplay was based: the Swedish hit entitled *En man som heter Ove* or “A Man Called Ove”. The onomastic feature which made this name of particular interest lies in the contrasting personal names. Evidently, somewhere along the way, Hollywood decided that the Swedish masculine personal name *Ove* would not attract US audiences. As a result, the decision was made to substitute it with the name *Otto*. Although both *Otto* and *Ove* exist in the Swedish onomasticon, the name *Ove* has much less familiarity in the US than *Otto*. A further potential argument against retaining the name *Ove* may have been the desire to avoid misunderstandings. It stands to reason that a certain segment of potential US American movie-goers would assume that the ending “-e” in the name *Ove* meant the

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name belonged to a female character. Operating under that assumption, these ticket-buyers might interpret the title “A Man Called Ove” to be for a film about gender diversity. The challenge faced by the writers was to select a name for US American audiences which would carry nearly the same associations of the original character name *Ove*, in terms of the perceived age, gender, personality, and generation of the fictional name-bearer.

After the relative pros and cons of each nomination were discussed, the vote was conducted. The results are displayed in Table 4 below.

Table 4: ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Place Name of the Year

Nominations	Percentage
Avatar	0
Black Panther	9
Don't Worry Darling	0
Encanto	50
House of Dragon	0
Megan Thee Stallion	9
A Man Called Otto	32
The White Lotus	0

As shown above, the lion's share of the votes (82%) was given to two nominees: *Encanto* and *A Man Called Otto*. As the *Encanto* reached the 50% threshold, the decision was made to declare it the category winner.

E-Names

As in several of the other categories, most of the nominations for this category were for names which were prominent in the news. The following seven names were nominated for this category: (1) *NFT*; (2) *Office 365*; (3) *Optimus*; (4) *#StopWar*; and (5) *Wordle*. The Microsoft product *Office 365* has been a part of the US American English lexicon for over a decade now. There was nothing new or unusual detected about this name; nor sadly was any detailed explanation given for this nomination. For that reason, attention quickly went to the other nominees on the list. For exactly the same reasons, the examination of the hashtag was also comparatively short. This meant that the majority of the time was spent discussing the three remaining options. The name *NFT* is an abbreviation for the term “non-fungible token”. Explained briefly, it is a digital asset with legal ownership that has been authenticated and electronically stored in a “blockchain”. In contrast to tangible interchangeable commodities which can be bought, sold, and traded, an NFT is as Merriam-Webster Dictionary explains: “a unique digital identifier that cannot be copied, substituted, or subdivided” (b.). In 2021, *NFT* was nominated for e-name of the year and placed third in the first round of voting. In 2022, NFTs entered North American discourse again, when the former 45th US President decided to begin selling NFT trading cards. The cards feature the 77-year-old's face superimposed on the body of 20-year-old-bodybuilder dressed, for example, as a cowboy, an astronaut, and a baseball player (<https://collecttrumpcards.com/>). During the deliberations, it was noted that although the concept and name are still a part of active discourse, very few people actually understand what an NFT is, or what the term “fungible” means for that matter. The contrast between the term's increasing frequency of use and lagging semantic transparency made this nomination somewhat noteworthy.

The only true newcomer to the field was *Wordle*, the name of the wonderfully addictive word game invented by Welsh software engineer, Josh **Wardle**. The similarity between the creator's surname and the name of the puzzle is no accident. As Wardle has explained in multiple interviews, the word game name was an intentional play on his own last name [**Word** + **Wardle** → **Wordle**]. With reference to the genesis of his brain-teaser, Wardle states that the inspiration for his web-based word puzzle was his partner, Palak Shah, who is a word game aficionado (Doubek & Rivers 2022). “The goal”, Wardle explained, “was to make a game that my partner would enjoy playing”. (Vick 2022, para. 10). Wardle more than succeeded. Not only did his invention capture his partner's heart, it became the beloved obsession of puzzle fans around the world. To date, versions of the game have been translated into more than 30 different languages. In 2022, Wardle sold *Wordle* to the “New York Times” which will integrate it into its legendary store of brain teasers (Schiffman 2022). The

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American Dialect Society, the mother organization of the American Name Society, listed -dle as one of the most productive English suffixes, generating fun new forms like “Heardle”, “Absurdle”, “Foodle”, and “Worldle” (American Dialect Society 2022). It remains to be seen, however, how much longevity these new formations have.

The final candidate in this category is both new and old. *Optimus*, also known as the *Tesla Bot*, is the name which Elon Musk gave his new humanoid robot. According to the company, *Optimus*, contrary to the fact that its name means ‘optimal’, is a prototype “electromechanically actuated, autonomous bipedal ‘general purpose’ humanoid [...]” (Ackerman 2022, para 1). More humanoids are apparently to yet to come. The name of the first in the upcoming assembly-line of robotic beings takes its name from one of the main characters in the Transformers film, *Optimus Prime* (Truly 2022). Borrowing an established name to create a new name for a business venture is a strategy which Elon Musk has used before. In this case, a characteronym from science fiction was taken to name a new product line. In 2003, when the e-car company was officially founded, the name *Tesla* was taken from the personal name of the famous engineer and inventor, *Niklas Tesla* (1856–1943).

As shown in the following table, the winner for trade name of the year could not be decided in a single round of voting.

Table 5: ANS Voting Results by Percentage for E-Name of the Year

Nominations	Percentage	
	Round 1	Round 2
NFT	48	60
Office 365	0	
Optimus	10	
Wordle	38	40
#STOPWAR	4	

After not failing to make the final cut in 2021, *NFT* prevailed to take first place in the second round of voting in 2022. If *Wordle* continues its current pattern of productivity, however, there is every reason to believe that it will return next year for another round of voting.

Miscellaneous Names

As the name implies, this category is reserved for name types that do not fit neatly into the other established categories. This means the nominees tend to be wildly divergent, which can make it difficult to select the winning entry. This year, however, there was one name which easily garnered the majority of votes, despite competing in the largest field of contention. In total, there were 9 names nominated for this category. In alphabetical order they were (1) *ChatGPT*; (2) *Don’t Say Gay*; (3) *Folklore* (the name of Taylor Swift’s 2022 Album); (4) *January 6th*; (5) *Pyong Yang*; (6) *Slapgate*; (7) *Special Military Operation*, Vladimir Putin’s euphemistic descriptor for the large-scale war against Ukraine; (8) *TERF*; and (9) *World Cup*. Of these candidates, several could be immediately eliminated from the list of front runners as the primary reason for their nomination appeared to have been a function of their frequent appearance in the media rather than their linguistic innovation. These included numbers 2, 3, 5, 7, and 9. This left three serious candidates to consider.

ChatGPT is an abbreviation formed from the following elements: [**Chat**bot +**Generative Pre-trained**]. Explained briefly, this product uses artificial intelligence developed by the AI industrial leader, Open AI, to engage, for example, engage in online conversation with site visitors through iterative interlocutor questioning and response refinement (openai.com). Although the function itself is revolutionary, its name is simple and traditional. Similar points were made for the acronym *TERF* which stands for “**t**rans-**e**xclusionary **r**adical **f**eminist”. Although the debate over the inclusion or exclusion of transwomen in spaces traditionally held by non-trans women is of unquestionable social and political importance, the linguistic formation process for the acronym is by no means novel nor is the continuing academic debate over whether or not the name is pejorative. However, the homophony between the acronym *TERF* and the English-term “turf” meaning “territory” certainly lends itself to feminist discussions over the contested spaces of gender, power, privilege, position, and identity.

The third candidate in the running, *Slapgate*, refers to the slap which Will Smith gave Chris Rock during the 94th Academy Award ceremony after the comedian made a comment about Smith’s wife, Jada Pickett (The Guardian 2022). The event itself caused a firestorm of international public and media interest, especially given

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the fact that that same evening Will Smith also made cinematic history by becoming one of the handful of African American actors to be given an Academy Award (ABC News 2022). However, where the name is concerned, *Slapgate* is of comparatively little linguistic interest. It is simply formed with the productive suffix -gate. The suffix -gate was originally taken from the name of the Washington D.C. hotel, “the Watergate”, which was political ground zero in the 1970’s when disgraced President Nixon was forced to resign from Office after his involvement in a network of illegal activities was finally brought to light (Merriam-Webster, n.d. (c)). *Slapgate* is one in a long line of names for public scandals that were subsequently produced with the combining form -gate (e.g., *Nipplegate*, *Irangate*, *Skategate*, *Spygate*, *Bridgegate*, and *Deflategate*). However, as many readers will note, the exact details of many of these events has long since faded from active memory. So too have many of the names themselves.

This fate will most likely not befall the third and final candidate of the miscellaneous category. Interestingly, this nomination is related to another US President whose term was marked by historic disgrace and sociopolitical turmoil. The nominated name was *January 6th*. Initially just a date on the calendar, the events which took place on that Wednesday have become a permanent part of US and world history. The following is a description that appears in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

January 6 U.S. Capitol attack, storming of the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021, by a mob of supporters of Republican Pres. Donald J. Trump. The attack disrupted a joint session of Congress convened to certify the results of the presidential election of 2020, which Trump had lost to his Democratic opponent, Joe Biden. Because its object was to prevent a legitimate president-elect from assuming office, the attack was widely regarded as an insurrection or attempted coup d’état. (Duignan 2023, para 1)

Aside from the property damages which have been estimated to have reached upwards of 30 million US dollars, five persons died as a direct result of the insurrection and more than 200 law enforcement officers suffered physical and psychological injuries. The ongoing criminal investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives has resulted in approximately 1,000 US residents facing criminal charges. The term *January 6th* has since been used as a modifier to label the congressional investigations into and numerous reports about the series of clandestine criminal events leading up to the deadly event to stop the US Government from fulfilling its Constitutional duties. For example, to date, the phrase “January 6th hearing” has been searched 71, 600,000 times; and “January 6th attack”, 48,600,000. In 2022, the importance of the name on the global stage was seen when a Brazilian mob staged a similar attempt to oust the incumbent democratically elected Brazilian President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, after his rival, Jair Bolsonaro, lost his bid for re-election. As live images of the violence filled the international media, comparisons were immediately drawn with the US insurrection. The ousted Brazilian President was nicknamed *Trump of the Tropics* and the event was referred to as “Brazil’s January 6th”. Some sample headlines from international news agencies are shown below:

Table 6: International headlines featuring “January 6th” as a modifier for insurrection attempt in Brazil and Beyond.

News Agency	Headline
The New Yorker	“A January 6 th for the Trump of the Tropics”
France24	“Brazil’s January 6 th pro Bolsonaro rioters inspired by Trump movement”.
UK Guardian	“Bolsonaro supporters try to storm the police HQ in ‘January-6 th -style’ rampage”.
CBC News	“The road to Brazil’s ‘January 6 th Moment’”
Al Jeezera	“Brazil may have its own January 6 th moment—or worse”.
Jerusalem Post	“January 6 riot in Israel? Likud MK tells police he’s concerned”
The Nation	“Kenya’s January 6 th moment: A wake-up call on risk of self-coups”.

As these headlines show, *January 6th* has come to be used as a descriptor of violent anti-government uprisings, no matter the date. The name of the insurrection has also been used to label the reckless, racist, behavior of individuals. For example, when US American podcaster host, Joe Rogan, used the n-word several times on air, his behavior was condemned by CNN commentator, John Blake, in the following manner: “This is another

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January 6 moment” (2022). Such usage is another indication that the word “January 6th” has moved from being a simple calendar date, to the name of a specific political event, to a name for a dangerous group or individual behavior. A review of all the above arguments for each of the nominations was again followed by a vote. The results are presented below.

Table 7: ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Miscellaneous Name of the Year

Nominations	Percentage
ChatGPT	5
Don't Say Gay	0
Folklore	0
January 6 th	58
Pyongyang	0
Slapgate	0
Special Military Operation	15
TERF	11
World Cup	11

As *January 6th* was able to garner enough votes to surpass the 50% rule, it was named the winner of the Miscellaneous Category after a single round of voting.

Overall Winner

In accordance with ANS tradition, to determine the overall Name of the Year, winners from each category were automatically entered into the running. In addition, nominations from the floor were also taken during the deliberations. In Table 8, the percentage of votes given to each of the onomastic candidates is given:

Table 8: ANS Voting Results by Percentage for Overall Name of the Year

Nominations	Category	Percentage	
		Round 1	Round 1
Encanto	Artistic Name	5	
FTX	Trade Name	5	
January 6 th	Miscellaneous Name	16	
King Charles III ⁷	Personal Name	11	
Kyiv	Place Name	16	
NFT	E-Name	0	
Ukraine	Place Name	21	74
Volodymyr Zelensky(y) ⁸	Personal Name	26	26

As shown above, it took two rounds to determine the winning name for 2022. In the first round, names associated with the ongoing war in Ukraine captured the majority of the ballots (63%). In the second round, the two top names from this thematic sub-set were compared and contrasted against one another. In the end, the arguments in favor of *Ukraine* swayed nearly two-thirds of the voters, making this placename the 2022 Name of the Year.

Endnotes

¹ Another player in this culinary dispute is France which claims that the original idea for the breaded chicken dinner came from the iconic dish “Cordon Bleu” (Croft 2019).

² Another modern example of a political dispute becoming the motivation for a food name change came in 2003. In the US, there was a brief movement to change the name *french fries* to *freedom fries* in protest against the perceived failure of the French government to support the US war against Iraq. This change in nomenclature was made in some privately owned food chains and was even temporarily adopted by the cafeteria that served the US House of Representatives (Michaels and Zhi 2007).

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³ For more on this issue, see (Motschenbacher 2020).

⁴ It is important to note, that it is not always positively received when foreign speakers attempt to adopt a native-speaker pronunciation of toponyms. In the United States, monolingual English-speakers who are not accepted members of the Spanish-speaking LatinX community may be perceived as being culturally insensitive when they, for example, attempt a Spanish pronunciation of the placename *Mexico*. Linguistic trespassing of cultural boundaries without permission may not only be negatively perceived when languages are involved. The same negative reaction may be triggered when speakers are perceived as overstepping in-group:out-group boundaries of other demographic groupings (e.g., dialect, gender, sexual orientation, age, etc.).

⁵ For more on this organization and to learn how you can get involved, see: <https://www.americanrivers.org/>

⁶ Another animated Disney film with a toponymic title is the 1940 classic, *Fantasia*.

⁷ *King Charles III* was nominated from the floor.

⁸ Before the final vote for overall NoY, internal discussions resulted in an ancillary vote to determine whether electors preferred the names *Volodymyr Zelensky(y)*, *Zelensky(y)*, or *Volodymyr Oleksandrovych Zelensky(y)*. The first of these three options was selected.

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