

# New Proper-Noun Derivatives in American English

GARLAND CANNON

**S**INCE THE PUBLICATION OF Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* (*W3*) in 1961, the flow of new words and new meanings for old words into American English has continued. The 1966 Addenda to *W3* contained 1,182 of these as main entries; the 1971 Addenda, 2,547 main entries, which essentially reprinted the 1966 *corpus* and added more items. Webster's *6,000 Words* (1976) includes most of these and adds enough new items to constitute 4,881 main entries. There are also 1,331 boldface run-ons, run-ins, and inflected forms, totaling the 6,212 vocabulary entries that give the book its title. Three aspects of the proper-noun derivatives are of particular interest: (1) the proper nouns from which the new words are constructed, (2) the linguistic processes involved in these word formations, and (3) the semantic shifts that sometimes accompany the new word or meaning. Though *6,000 Words* provides no dates so that we might construct the chronology, we can check those items which also appear in *The Barnhart Dictionary of New English since 1963* (1973) and/or the *A-N Supplement* of the OED (1972, 1976; hereafter, OED-S), all of which have dated citations.

A summary of the proportions, some of which must be arbitrary because of inevitable overlapping, is in order:

- 896 new meanings
- 1,443 affixations (with no more than one free form)
- 1,365 compounds (with at least two free forms)
- 249 borrowings
  - 48 Briticisms and Old English
- 246 proper-noun derivatives
- 179 shortenings
- 166 initialisms
- 97 functional shifts
- 192 others

We will describe every item that derives from a proper noun. Thus *golden-ager* will be analyzed, though it might be called an affixation (*Golden Age* + *-er*) or even a shortening (*Golden Age club* + *-er*).

#### THE 1966 AND 1971 DELETIONS

We will first consider the relevant items in the 1966 and 1971 Addenda Sections that do not appear in *6,000 Words* and technically do not belong in our *corpus*. Yet their very omission indicates their importance, if only as examples of items that Webster's describes as having "a brief vogue, when they are on practically every tongue, then disappear" (Preface, p. 17a). The 16 nouns of nationality in 1966 could almost be included in our *corpus*, since they were transferred to the body of *W3* by plate change in 1971. None is in *Barnhart*; five are in OED-S, with the earliest date given below as we classify them. All derive from African names except the French *Seychellois*, which, like *Nigerois*, contains *-ois*. Only *Bechuana* (1804) has no suffix, though *Central African* could be analyzed as a clipping of the earlier *Central African Republic*, where *Africa* was already suffixed. The suffix *-an* occurs in nine items like *Gambian* (1906), *Malawian* (1963), *Malian* (1960), and *Mozambican* (1971). There is *-ian* in *Cameroonian* and *Chadian*; *-er*, in *Ivory Coaster*.

Why did Webster's drop these 16 place-name items by incorporating them into *W3* long before *W4* can be put together? The only explanation is the private comment that space was needed in *6,000 Words* for a number of other new items. As this was a convenient set for deletion, the reason for adding these rather than some other items to *W3* was likely not frequency. A much-larger set for which a decision must be made is items built from names of cities. *W3* has no separate "Geographical Names" as do its collegiate editions; *W4* may well not either. The city's size may have to be the criterion, generally excluding its association with a famous person and/or event. If so, we can expect to find *San Francisco* and *San Franciscan* retained, but no new *\*Plainsian*. If *W4* continues Webster's tradition of including no more words than can be accommodated in one volume, then the answer to this question may be onomastically painful.

Among the other relevant deleted items from the 1966 Addenda is the only prefixed form, *sub-Sahara*. *Ruly English* and *peso boliviano* (1872 as *boliviano*, which is in *W3*) complete the trio. In 1976 *Gaussian plane* seems to have been replaced by *Gaussian integer* (1874, as adj. *Gaussian*). *Monte Carlo method* becomes *Monte Carlo*, defined as method (*Barnhart*, 1968). *Kremlinologist* (*Barnhart*, 1968) becomes a subentry to the new *Kremlinology*, in a lexicographer's chronology that inverts the apparent linguistic one. Finally, *Lawrencium* (discovered by Ernest O. Lawrence) is retained in 1976, but its separate abbreviation—main entry *Lw* is corrected to *Lr*. Only two relevant items were dropped from the 1971 Addendum: *Afro-Asian* (1955 citation from *Newsweek*) and the old *Foggy Bottom* (*Barnhart*, 1967).

## THE PROPER NAMES

We next consider the proper names used in our 246-item corpus. Specific people are named in 119 items, a few with duplications as in *Mao* "jacket" and *Maosism*. There are 37 American, 24 British, 13 French, 13 German, five Italian, five Russian, four Austrian, two Chinese, two Swedish, and two Swiss, and one each of Aztec, Canadian, Cuban, Dutch, Hungarian, Indian, Jamaican, Norwegian, Romanian, and Scottish, as well as *Jesus freak*. The great majority have lived in recent decades; many are alive today. After Jesus, some of the oldest are the Italian mathematician in *Fibonacci number*; the ruler in *Montezuma's revenge*; the French scientists in *Cartesian plane* and *pascal*; the mathematicians in *Rolle's theorem*, *Taylor's series*, *witch of Agnesi*, and *Laplace transform*; and the naturalist in *Darwin's finches*.

Most have been engaged in scientific work. There are 24 mathematicians; with two other mathematics-related researchers, including names like that in *Markov process*. We find ten physicians, with five other medicine-related men, reflecting recent developments as in *Lippes loop* and *Hollerith card*. There are nine physicists as in *fermi* and eight political leaders as in *Castroism*. There are six astronomers as in *Seyferi galaxy*, and five engineers, with three engineering-related figures as in *Wankel engine*. Another 19 science-related names occur in adjectives like *Skinnerian* and *Rorschach*, and in nouns like *tesla* and *Richter scale*. Thirteen miscellaneous, nonartistic items include *Chomskian* and *Bibb lettuce*.

Of the 15 artistic sources, eight are writers as in *Hemingwayesque* and *Brechtian*. The composers are *Bartokian*, *Mahlerian*, and *Stravinskian*. There are also *Hitchcockian* and the only two women named in the 119 items, in *Mary Gergory* and *chicken Tetrazzini* and *turkey Tetrazzini*, the latter two representing the singer's poultry taste rather than an operatic style. We might add to this group seven items constructed from "anonymous" names. Three denote food as in *beef Wellington*, to which we might add *John, Murphy's Law*, and *Parsons table*.

The second largest group contains 64 items. Fifty-two are place-names as in *Kuanti war*. America leads with eight as in *Boston arm* and *Texas citrus mite*; China has seven as in *Canton enamel*; and Japan has six as in *Karatsu ware*. Italy has four as in *Soave*, one of a trio of wines named for an Italian village. There are 34 population centers as in *Baltimore chop* and *ting war*, 11 countries as in *Sri Lankan* and *Vietnamization*, four bodies of water as in *Atlanticism*, two continents as in *Pan-Africanism*, and *Appalachian*. Nineteen items denote products made in the place as in the 11 pottery sources named in *Bennington ware* and *Canton china*, or in *rya* "Swedish rug." Another nine items name peoples, all common names as in *Amerasian* and *Belgian Malinois*. There are also *off Broadway*, *off-off-Broadway*, and *Kremlinology*.

A third group contains 16 items representing organizations, a term which we will interpret loosely so as to include four restaurants as in *fettuccine Alfredo*, along with traditional types like *Bircher* and *Black Panther*. Next we find 11 derived from literature, of which five are titles as in *green goddess dressing* and *blackboard jungle*, and four are characters as in *Uncle Tomism*, along with Orwell's *newspeak*. There are

ten "native" names like *kora* "Senegalese musical instrument," with seven naming coins as in *tambala*. Eight technical items denote biological or botanical forms as in *subtilisim*. Another five might be said loosely to constitute borrowings apart from the groups previously discussed. These are affixed as in *Quadrantid*, "pure" as in *Victoriana*, or translated as in *beef Bourguignon*. Then we have two of the type *eightfold way* and four trademarks like *Mickey Mouse*, which has separate main entries as an adjective, noun, and verb.

These three occurrences of *Uncle Tom* for the highest number for a proper noun. The lack of dates complicates our explaining the linguistic chronology. *Uncle Tomism* (n., *Barnhart*, 1966) and *Uncle Tom* (v., *Barnhart*, 1967) first appeared in the 1971 Addenda. We might project the verb first. It then took *-ism* to produce a noun, unless the existing noun provided two independent developments—a functional shift to give us a verb, as well as the *-ism* suffixation for another noun. In 1976 Webster's added the reduced verb *tom* (*Barnhart*, 1966). This verb was likely the newest of the trio, regardless of the paucity and inconclusiveness of the known dates. We must be more indefinite about the chronology of the "Mouse" trio, which do not even have suffixation or reduction as clues.

## THE LINGUISTIC PROCESSES

We will now consider the linguistic processes involved in the construction of our 246 items. We have named the three verbs—*mickey-mouse*, *tom*, and *Uncle Tom*. The 31 adjectives derive from the names of 25 men, three places, a botanical order, a restaurant, and a trademark. The men's names are all of individuals except in *Hardy-Weinberg* and *Watson-Crick*. Five adjectives built from persons' names do not have a suffix. *Doppler* is typical, possessing the formula definition that characterizes most of the adjectives, "of, relating to, or suggestive of X or his work." Two others do not refer to a discovery as in the *Mao* and *Nehru* jackets. The 18 suffixes added to men's names are phonologically and orthographically predictable: three *-esque* as in *McLuhanesque*, three *-an* as in *Wildan*, and 12 *-ian* as in *Orwellian*. The *-ian* is so productive that *Barnhart* accords it a main entry and lists six of our items. The "place" trio contain a suffix as in *Eurocentric* and *psilophytic*, or are the blend *Oxford + Cambridge*.

The 212 nouns comprise five clear linguistic groups. The simplest contains 59 items, of which 14 are essentially performed as in *Yellow Pages* or the title *Peck's bad boy*. The other 45 consist of the name as in the coins *sengi* and *ngwe*, items which not only add new count nouns that take a  $-\phi$  plural, but also in the latter adds a new *ng-* item that requires an initial vowel in English pronunciation. *Mary Gregory* "a glassware style" is the only complete name used in our *corpus*. The spelling pronunciation *billibi* "the soup liked by the industrialist William B. Leeds, Jr.," while excluding the surname, includes Leeds' initial. *Hugo* (pl. *Hugos*, from *Hugo Gernsback*) is the only other item which utilizes a first name. We have excluded from our *corpus* the only folk etymology in 6,000 Words, where *Mary Jane* "marijuana" is influenced by the Spanish *Juana*

“Jane.” There is other clipping in *Caerphilly* (listed in 1966 as *Caerphilly cheese*) and *bialy* “breakfast roll,” from the city *Bialystok*.

The second group contains 73 uninflected compounds. Structurally, these are Name + Common Noun except for four items compounded with more than one common noun, of which the longest is *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory*. *Pap smear*, from *Papanicolaou*, is one of the most extreme clippings in our *corpus*. *Stevengraph*, which has the alternate *Stevensgraph*, is an apparent misunderstanding of Thomas Stevens’ name. *Caesar salad*, though deriving from the Tiajuana restaurant *Caesar’s*, loses the possessive presumably because of the initial sibilant in *salad*. The bulk of the common nouns used are unique occurrences in our *corpus* and shed light on the person’s career as in *Ekman dredge* and *Hilbert space*, or on something associated with the name as in the almost extinct bird in *Bermuda petrel* and *Lantian man* (from *Lant’ien*). *Ovshinsky effect* is interesting in that the American inventor’s name also led to the blends *Ovonic* and *Ovonics* (from *electronic*).

The third group contains 14 nouns that are the structural reverse. Three have more than one common noun as in the pair *ovals of Cassini* and *witch of Agnesi*, and prepositional modification of a compound noun in *off-off-Broadway*, which has an adjectival subentry. Among the other 11 is a semantic subgroup of eight items like *chicken Kiev*, with two occurrences of *beef*, two *chicken*, and one each of *fettuccine*, *oysters*, *steak*, and *turkey*. The geography may be obscured as in *white amur* “grass carp,” expressly delimited as in *off Broadway*, or deliberately general as in *middle America*.

The fourth group has 30 nouns of the type Name + Suffix + Word(s). Seventeen contain the possessive form of the person’s name as in *student’s t distribution* (from *Student*, the British statistician’s pen name). This joins *Chinese fire drill* and *German wire-haired pointer* as the only items of the group with more than one word added to the name. As in the second group, the common noun often names the discovery for which the person is known as in *Chandler’s wobble*. In the remainder there are five *-ian* as in *Whorfian hypothesis*, four *-an* as in *American dream*, and *Japanese quail*.

The last group consists of 36 nouns in which the name is nonmedially affixed. *Neo-Dada* and *destalinization* are the only prefixed items. The latter manifests the suffixational pattern characterizing the rest of the group. These contain seven *-ism* as in *Garveyism*, six *-an* as in *Biafran*, three *-er* and *-te* as in *Bircher* and *Friedmanite*, and two *-id*, *-in*, and *-ology* as in *Leonid*, *acrisin*, and *Pekingology*, as well as single occurrences of other suffixes as in *Bantustan*.

The more frequent terminal nouns in our 246 items are eight *ware* as in *Bizen ware*, six *effect* as in *Hawthorne effect*, four *disease* and *syndrome* as in *Wilson’s disease* and *Down’s syndrome*, and three *law* as in *Parkinson’s Law*. There are dual occurrences of the common nouns in *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis*, *Reuben sandwich*, *Rolle’s theorem*, *Laplace transform*, and *Maclaurin’s series*, as well as in the initial *beef* and *chicken* which have been mentioned. The other common nouns have single occurrences, including *model*, *principle*, *process*, and *theory* as in *Watson-Crick model*, *Peter Principle*, *Markov process*, and *Galois theory*. The great majority of the single

occurrences denote scientific orientation as in *Bernoulli trial*, *Epstein-Barr virus*, and *Burkitt's tumor*.

### THE SEMANTIC SHIFTS

Twelve of the 896 new sets of meanings for old words, or about one percent, were originally constructed from proper names. Only the adjectives *Byzantine* and *Native American* have two new meanings; the rest have one. *Byzantine*, which continues to denote the city or architecture or church, has undergone major pejoration, to "in a devious and usually surreptitious manner." There is major amelioration in *mafia*, adding "a group of people prominent or powerful in a particular field or enterprise" to the earlier meanings "terrorists" and "criminal society." The major specialization is in *zelnik* "a certain Japanese tree of that genus," from the continuing "small genus of shrubs and trees." It and five other items have undergone a primarily geographical shift. Two are paired, as in the generalization of the two *Native American* main entries from "early political party" to "American Indian." The adjectives *nordic-alpine* shift from the continuing meanings of "people, geography, terrain" to the contrasting "competitive ski jumping and cross-country racing" and "slalom and downhill racing." *Montagnard* shifts from "Athapaskan people" to "highland people in southern Vietnam."

There are three shortenings, in which the earlier nouns *Black Muslim*, *Black Panther*, and *Uncle Tom* lose the initial adjective. The latter two also lose some social status, as has the female counterpart *Doris Day* (not in Webster's). They raise a lexicographic question, since Webster's chose not to classify *Panther* as a new item but to add the "Black Panther" meaning to the old *panther* "kind of cat," while listing *Black Panther* as a new item. The incorporation of the "Uncle Tom" meaning with the "male animal" ones is equally disturbing. If *W3* can justify separate entries for the mammal *bat* and the baseball *bat*, why should *sloppy joe* "ground-beef dish" not be similarly separate from the "sloppily-dressed man" item?

As has been indicated, most of our 246 new items in *6,000 Words* are linguistically simple and partly self-defining. Thus *Turner's syndrome* denotes the American physician Henry Herbert Turner's discovery about a genetic condition, with neither lexical constituent semantically biased. The major shift is in *Jesus freak*. *Freak* abruptly gains much stature through its compounding with *Jesus*, which is simultaneously pejorated. The name in *Vietnamization*, which is still a politically loaded word, gains a negative quality, as perhaps does the otherwise generally neutral *-ize*. *Brownie point*, deriving from a respectable girls' organization, becomes negative through the implication of improving oneself through currying favor. *Clio*, the Greek muse, also loses stature when it appropriately receives a main entry as a new word meaning "a commercial statuette." The pejorative *limbo* gains an accidental amelioration because of the new homonym meaning "West Indian dance," though *W4* may combine *Clio* if not *limbo* as new meanings of the old words.

Sometimes there is pejoration within a set of words. *A-go-go*, deriving from the French restaurant *Whiskey à Gogo* "whiskey galore," has an apheresed adjective entry in *Barnhart* in 1966; a noun one, in 1967. The unaphesized pair appear in Webster's 1971 Addenda. *Barnhart* has a 1968 entry for *go-go girls*; a 1967 one for *go-go fund*, which is clipped to *go-go* in a 1967 citation. Thus much of the original sophistication gives way to potential lewdness or financial speculation. Such shifts may also generalize the name as in *everglade* "swampy grassland," a singularized apocopation of *Everglades*. There is a surprisingly late generalization of Coleridge's *Xanadu* "place of idyllic beauty" in the crassly commercial citation "this is a *Xanadu* only about half an hour by electric train from the . . . hum of the parent city." Perhaps the ultimate commercialization of this literary place-name is its employment as the name of a perfume and cologne. In *Quasimodo* we find almost the reverse of Kemp Malone's "Fictitious characters with characterizing names,"\* where the definition "a surfing feat in which a surfer squats on the board, leans forward, and extends one arm straight forward and the other straight back" may have been stimulated by the movie image of the deformed hunchback seen by millions.

The semantic shift may be large. The noun *Bluegrass* (in *W2*) apparently gave the performing group Blue Grass Boys their name, which was then generalized and clipped into "a certain kind of country music." The shift may be whimsical as in the old *Montezuma's revenge* "tourists' diarrhea in Mexico," which Webster's added in 1976. As said, some of the associations are straightforward, as in *Waterford glass* "flint glass made in Waterford, Ireland" or even *oysters Rockefeller* "the oyster dish that John D. liked." The association is more tenuous in *capri pants*, which are not made in Capri and might be worn at hundreds of resorts, or in *Malibu board*, which is not made there though it might well be used there as a principal place for American surfing. Another association leads to a note of mystery—*Italian sandwich*, which has a 1967 OED-S citation and the same definition as Webster's, "hoagie or hoagy." This well-known word is uniformly labeled "origin unknown."

In summary, only 12 of the 896 old items that gain new meanings were originally constructed from names. Half involve geographical shifts. Webster's has dropped only three proper-noun derivatives from those listed in the 1966 Addenda; two, from the 1971 Addenda. Of the proper nouns underpinning our 246 items in *6,000 Words*, the great majority of the 119 people named are Americans or Europeans who have lived in recent decades and have engaged in scientific work often identified in the term itself as in *Michaelis constant*. Such identification characterizes 64 items primarily built from place-names as in *Canton china*. The other 63 items derive from organizations, literature, "native" names, biological or botanical forms, and other sources.

There are three verbs, 31 adjectives, and 212 nouns. The nouns include 59 items that are either the proper noun alone or a preformed unit like O'Connor's *last hurrah*. another 87 nouns are uninflected names that are preceded or followed by a common

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\*"Meaningful Fictive Names in English Literature." *Names*, 5:1 (March, 1957). 1.

noun as in *steak Diane* or *Phillips curve*. The remaining 66 have a terminal suffix as in *Zorn's lemma* or *stishovite*, except for two prefixations. Although barely five percent of the 4,881 main entries are constructed from names, they further document the vitality and productivity of proper nouns in the expanding English language.

Texas A&M University

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C.M. Rothrauff  
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